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## America under the Management Cult

### *The Story So Far*

by SAM SMITH

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Save for residual rhetoric, at the beginning of 2014 the United States lies further from its intended course than at any time during its history.

Never has it had an elite so powerful yet so removed from its purported purposes, one more loyal to multinational corporations than to domestic citizens, and one whose conscience has been drained by decades of increasing corruption.

The components of this dismal establishment includes not only the obvious such as the most reactionary right since the Civil War, but major factors that are either ignored or denied such as a national leadership without moral voices, a Democratic Party backed by its liberal fans that has been dismantling 60 years of progress accomplished by the New Deal and Great Society, an academia heavily beholden to its funding sources – whether government or corporate, a media whose Washington branch is deeply embedded in the interests of the very institutions and individuals about which it is supposed to be telling the truth, and a culture driven by the corporations that control it rather than by the artists creating it.

There are other problems, such as intelligence institutions wielding unprecedented improper powers. The NSA, for example, is the most prolific – albeit not most violent – criminal operation in the country, with its victims of illegal spying numbering in the millions. And its challengers are getting at best only mild support from a media that used to care when the government broke the law.

But then we live in an America in which every president since 1988 has had a direct or familial connection with the CIA.

In the latter category are the two Bushes, the elder having been its director. Unreported, however, is the fact that this connection is also shared by Bill Clinton who worked as a CIA informer while briefly and erratically a Rhodes Scholar in England. And Barack Obama worked for a CIA front operation called Business International and reportedly had his tuition debt at Columbia paid off by BIC. Yet, as William Blum has written, “In his book, not only doesn’t Obama mention his employer’s name; he fails to say when he worked there, or why he left the job.” It also appears likely that his mother and grandfather had intelligence connections.

And now the Democrats appear headed towards nominating Hillary Clinton despite her seedy past, her several criminal associates and her less than progressive politics. If she wins and survives two terms, for over 50% of the previous half century America will have been run by two of the most corrupt families to reach the top of our country’s politics. For nearly three quarters of the previous half century our country will have been run by those with direct or familial connections to the CIA. And, for a topping, for two thirds of the half century the country will have been run by graduates of Harvard Business School or the Harvard or Yale law schools.

This is not the America we were taught to love and assist in its noble purposes. But then, these days most of our children are nor even introduced to such thoughts in any meaningful way, except, say, as Answer C in a multiple choice exam.

You can’t have a working democratic republic without an education that supports it, but with No Child Left Behind and Common Core, corporate interests and their political serfs are reducing education to robotic exercises in preparation for students’ similarly robotic experiences in adult life.

But then this is the goal of the multinational corporations that have grasped control of our land and its leaders. Not since the pre-revolutionary colonial days of the British East India Company has America been so much a hostage to such alien institutions. Thanks to such expediencies as

Citizens United and international trade agreements, if one follows the money, it leads inexorably away from the natural interests of the United States to huge corporations that are challenging whole countries, including ours, as major possessors of power.

And it is power that offers neither progress nor perspicuity. For example, during the very decades that America has been remodeled along lines concocted by business schools, these institutions' graduates have led America into an economic decline matched in some ways only by the Great Recession.

The management cult run amuck can be found in Washington's politics where, for example, Obamacare is floundering thanks in part to the corrupt intent of individual mandates – i.e. to subsidize insurance companies with payments of the healthy young (without even a public option) – and an massive inability to even make such a scheme work efficiently.

Dismal as this may all appear, it helps to remember that history is full of times when those at the top gorged their greed and created vast gaps between the strong and the weak. During such times the weak have found all sorts of solutions such as the self-sufficiency of farmers and fishers, tradesmen carrying out business far from the castles whose moats and walls symbolized not only power but fear, and the monks in the monastery.

Further, all across America there are places and people practicing the values our leaders have scrapped. While contemporary liberals are trapped in the illusion that salvation always comes from the top, we have no choice to save our country but from the bottom up. We need to move closer to the “small republics” that Jefferson dreamed of, communities where every citizen became “an acting member of the common government, transacting in person a great portion of its rights and duties, subordinate indeed, yet important, and entirely within his own competence.”

Any place, any community, any gathering can become what Hakim Bey called a temporary autonomous zone, an oasis of freedom, decency and hope, in which a new culture can take sprout. Name it, enjoy it, use it. It's the best we have at the moment.

And we have some models, such as the buy local and local food movements as well as organized labor rediscovering the power of cooperatives and reaching out to the unorganized. We can learn to organize from the gay and marijuana movements. We can learn from the beats and the punks the value of rejecting establishment definitions of our culture. We can learn from some of the great organizers of the past to build new alliances on issues rather than the shared presumed purity of those involved. We can learn to stress the unity that economic policy can build across

ethnic and other cultural gaps. And, in a society obsessed with commodities, we can learn to boycott those products tied to the evil at the top.

Finally, we have a whole new year in which to try it out. Go for it.