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Obama's Corporate Plantations

Deregulation, Privatization, and Cheap Labor

by MIKE WHITNEY

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The man who promised to restore hope and bring change to America, has announced a plan to open five corporate plantations in the United States. On Thursday, President Barack Obama, whose policies have resulted in the greatest number of public sector job losses in US History (Public sector jobs have declined by 718,000 jobs since Obama took office.) announced the opening of five “Promise Zones” located in San Antonio, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, southeastern Kentucky, and the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. According to an article in USA Today:

“Under the proposed Promise Zones, the federal government plans to partner with local governments and businesses to provide tax incentives and grants to help combat poverty.” (“Obama to name 5 ‘Promise Zones’ for assistance“, USA Today)

Combatting poverty’ has nothing to do with it. Obama plans to shower the nation’s biggest corporations—which recorded record profits in the last year and are presently sitting on more than

\$1.3 trillion in cash—with more lavish subsidies and tax breaks while providing an endless source of cheap slave labor to boost future earnings. The president believes that the wealth generated in these profit zones, er, promise zones will trickle down to the area’s residents, even though—as the Christian Science Monitor notes—“it can be hard to tell whether a program’s benefits reach the poorest people, rather than flowing largely into the hands of the business owners who get the tax credits.”

Here’s more from USA Today:

“Obama said his administration plans “to partner with 20 of the hardest-hit towns in America to get these communities back on their feet. We’ll work with local leaders to target resources at public safety, and education, and housing.” (USA Today)

Translation: The Obama administration is committed to assisting the corporate oligarchy whenever possible even if it means further eviscerating the rapidly-diminishing US middle class and reducing millions of hard-working Americans to grinding third world poverty. Deregulation will allow corporations to privatize policing, education and any other lucrative public resource or service. According to the New York Times: “White House officials said the Promise Zones initiative would not provide new money, rather it would be aimed at providing the local governments and agencies “aid in cutting through red tape to get access to existing resources.”

No new money??

How do you like that? So, the man that helped push through the multi-trillion dollar Wall Street bailouts is not going to give one red cent to the nation’s poorest and most needy people. Instead, he is going to do whatever he can to eliminate the rules that keep voracious corporations from feeding at the public trough.

Conservative Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky — “praised the proposed Promise Zone for Eastern Kentucky saying:

“I wrote a letter last year supporting this designation because this region has suffered enormous economic hardship over the last several years,” McConnell said in a statement.”

Mitch McConnell likes Obama’s plan. That says it all, doesn’t it?

Plantations were a familiar feature of the antebellum South, but were abandoned following the Civil War. Now a new generation of corporate kleptocrats want to revive the tradition. They

think that weakening consumer demand and persistent stagnation can only be overcome by skirting vital labor protections and shifting more of the cost of production onto workers. Obama's promise zones provide a way for big business to slip the chains of "onerous" regulations and restore, what many CEO's believe to be, the Natural Order, that is, a Darwinian, dog-eat-dog world where only the strongest and most cunning survive. This is a world in which Obama has done quite well, although he's had to distance himself from his political base and throw friends under the bus (Jeremiah Wright) in his relentless climb to the top. Even so, selling out has never been an issue for Obama.

Special economic zones are not a new idea, in fact, they've been tried in the UK, Australia and other places where the global bank cartel exerts its grip. In Tokyo, last month, right-wing PM, Shinzo Abe announced the launching of his own "Special Economic Zones". Here's a short summary of Abe's plan from an article in the Japan Times:

"Special zones aimed at spurring corporate investment through deregulation and tax incentives are to be created in Tokyo as well as Osaka and central Aichi Prefecture....Other deregulation steps to debut in such zones will let private firms operate public schools, let experts without teaching licenses teach classes, expand the scope of treatment that can be administered by non-Japanese doctors and nurses, facilitate the use of foreign drugs and increase the number of hospital beds." (Japan Times)

Sound familiar? Deregulation, privatization, and cheap labor; the toxic cocktail that has vaporized the US middle class and wiped out a good portion of the developing world.

Obama calls these promise zones. We think corporate plantations is a more fitting moniker.