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Corporate Idiocracy and the Manufacturing of Productrump

By Gabriel Rockhill

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Millions of people around the country—and around the world—are asking themselves the same simple question: how could such a blathering dummy be in a position to become the next president of the United States? There is no need to mention any names here, of course, because the dimwit is all too well known. This, in fact, is precisely one of the problems. As Amy Goodman, an unrivaled torchbearer for alternative media, has recently reminded us: the simpleton's name has been one of the most oft repeated on all mass media platforms in this election cycle. Let us not, then, utter the dummy's name but instead call for a general moratorium on it. It is time to recognize it for what it is—a product of the media-money complex—and talk only of productrump, or more simply product rump.

The term 'dummy,' like its synonyms, might sound disparaging to some, but I use it here in a purely technical sense. I am referring to the mindless puppet used by ventriloquists to channel their voice. In and of themselves, dolls like this have no original thoughts or things to say. This is precisely what makes them ideal vehicles for other ideas and voices. In the realm of administered politics and for-profit media, dummies are the spokespeople for the corporatocracy, pseudo-democracy and spectacle culture.

The United States has known many dummies in recent history, including a clueless B-grade Hollywood actor and the ignorant loser son of a Texas oil tycoon-turned-politician. Like the current moron, they were just as much products of the system, packaged and sold by the

corporate idiocracy, which seeks to keep people dumb and distracted in order to favor business interests and the powers that be. Its initial motto, ‘make them dumb and keep them down,’ has developed over time into a powerful mantra: ‘make them even dumber so they keep themselves down!’

Moreover, the system is completely rigged, such that you actually do not need to stultify—or buy—that many people. The media frenzy around the question ‘what makes productrump so popular?’ misses the point entirely. The real question is: ‘how has the corporate thought machine succeeded in producing the illusion that productrump is so popular?’ To begin with, there is very little discussion of the fact that “only about 64.6 percent of adults are actually registered to vote” in the U.S. According to the same article, “only 23 percent of Americans identify as Republican.” In the broken primary system that we have, Athena Gavranian has pointed out that “the Republicans are seeing their biggest turnout in modern U.S. history — a whopping 17.3 percent of the eligible voting population” (meaning registered republicans), and “big victories were won by less than 10 percent of the registered voting population in many states.” Since rumproduct often garnered around 1/3rd of the votes cast by this fringe group of 10% of registered republicans, its support stands at a fraction of a fraction of a fraction.

This is nothing new, of course. It is simply American-style corporate democracy at work, busily pushing products on the people through propaganda and overinflated attention. What is perhaps novel, at least according to some, is that productrump has surpassed earlier brands of consumer idiocy. The divisive party and power infighting right now is certainly significant in this regard. The movements of the current puppet are so unpredictable, self-serving and authoritarian that even the system that produced it is nervous that strange things might happen, such as the dissolution of free-trade agreements or the opening up of competitive bidding in the drug industry. The system of opportunism has spewed out the ultimate opportunist: a plaything that is willing to gamble with certain parts of the system itself.

However, let us not fall into the trap of attributing too much power or prowess to the product. Being successful in this context simply means being an even more conniving and manipulative toy of the establishment than the next freebooter. In this sense, our dolly has succeeded. But we must not forget that it is the system, not the person, that is the ultimate problem. In fact, there is not really a person here. There is productRump, the tail end of the corporate glitz machine, the rump of a debunk system of hype and distraction in the name of profit and power. Although this butt looms particularly large in its vulgar posturing and machismo, we must not let the backend mask what is behind it. It is only the protruding derrière of an enormous network of media-cracy—i.e. mediocrity—that has produced it.

Productrump’s MO is all about brand recognition and buzz. Its watchword is ‘say anything!’ The more outlandish and incoherent the statements are, the more likely they will create hype. For this media huckster and insult clown, any news is good news. There is no need for content, a stable platform, concrete policies, real issues or even reality (which worries some members of the establishment). There is also no need to think. The dummy can just spout off insipid inanities—spiced up with a ‘signature’ mix of bravado, strongman populist rhetoric, misogyny, racism and xenophobia—and be assured that the paparazzi will catch every last drop of mindless drivel and immediately export it to the four corners of human consciousness.

Consider, for a moment, what would happen if the twit had no echo chamber, if no one was broadcasting nearly every moment of the dimwit's life. Imagine if this election were not a never-ending reality TV show hell bent on demonstrating that television does not record reality but actually makes it. Envisage a media moratorium on productrump: a blackout on the blather and a boycott on the broadcasting. Imagine the name itself withdrawing into the dark crevasse out of which it crawled: the backside of a spectacle industry that is content to endlessly chew and recycle its own fecal matter if it draws attention and capital. Even better, think of a world that would have never even concocted such a bum product, such utter crap, a world not dominated by the image-capital complex. Never produced and never broadcast, that would be the true end to rumproduct, finally flushed out into obscure oblivion.

Yet, since it is already oh so present on the marketplace that is electoral politics, let us individually and collectively shut it out and never utter the name, unless it is to remind everyone that this is only the butt end of a corrupt political, economic and cultural system. The latter needs to be completely overhauled, and there are many who are already laboring at this important task, such as the trailblazers of alternative, publicly funded media. In the meantime, the rumproduct needs no more attention. It is time to boycott, divest and sanction. It is time for a blackout and a general strike of consciousness: no more media coverage of the dummy! Shut down the screens when the rump appears, refuse the images and ads, ignore the backend banter, clear your minds of the opportunist idiocy, and set your sights on the heart of the system!