

Progress Means Siring Satire & Parenting Parody

Written by Alex Baer
Friday, 14 March 2014 17:11

Once upon a time, life in America made sense, at least in everyday comings and goings. There were unspoken bargains of reasonableness in effect. These were the handshakes and nods of fairness in play. When it came to some sort of public issue, there were more tipped hats than launched birds-of-a-middle-finger flocking together.

Of course, back then, we were a hat-obsessed nation, with head coverings of all sorts trickling their way into the language. When we weren't hanging around, hats in hand, we were taking our hats off to this or that person or idea. We even had feathers that others gave us, to put into our caps, thinking or otherwise. You could actually wear a Pork Pie, right on your head.

(We could even do something quite crude to fill up a hat, in one hand, and then wish in the other, in order to find out which event might happen first -- a sort of an early barometer of misfortune and an early betting calculator.)

Life here wasn't perfect, not by any means. But, it was earnest and shared. Then came the birth on these shores of Satire and Parody, the two hipster kids from the big city, corrupting our farm-hand sensibilities as we kept morphing into a nation of city dwellers, where a couple major corporations would come to own all the food and farms, and our roots, in order to keep competition nonexistent, but always espoused, and to give farm subsidies a place to go when they got tired of hanging around the Treasury.

Whatever happened, you at least knew which world you were shambling around in -- in a predictable airliner, flying along like always, or in the antidote to a happy reality, which was hitching a ride with barnstorming Republicanism, stoked from sniffing way too much biplane canvas dope.

That world, viewed from the biplane, looked like unmoving, catatonic paralysis -- the kind seen from their side of the aisle in Congress for the last 2,300 consecutive days or so. Splitting hairs, I know.

Yes, the lines between worlds have been getting blurry ever since. Corporations, of course, always had plenty to eat, so they grew up to be nice and strong, and thought of as healthy

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people. This was even though we all winked back and forth at each other a lot, still trying to uneasily access the jokes, jibes, and thin wimsies of lobbyists, attorneys, and politicians. We still tell ourselves that we get that joke, that we understand how companies are people, every time we encounter individuals and organizations who keep telling us that knee-slapper.

Corporations are people? Now, now. We all know corporations are a twined bale of legal filings, some logos and letterhead paper, and that one chipped coffee cup that's been in the employee's communal kitchen sink since day one, soaking. Corporations are made up of stock certificates and bonus checks for the topmost members. Corporations are made up of *Employee of the Month* photos on the bulletin board, and *Certificates of Appreciation*.

These are handy items of paraphernalia if you suddenly have amnesia at work, and cannot for the life of you remember which proverbial ladder rung you're on. In this situation, you can simply consult your working area for clues. Hint: Real wood panelling and cubicle walls with many Sharpie notations can be helpful. So can any displayed *Certificates of Depreciation* -- the kind where the longer you have them, the less they are worth.

One can also get one's bearings with this giveaway clue: If your break room has a dented microwave that should be touched only with forceps, and pictures on the wall that say things like "Teamwork" and "Goals" and "Aztec Heart Sacrifice is not too much to ask," you are not in the executive lounge. For one thing, you have no crystal tumbler of 30-year-old scotch, nor are you clad in a wet bathing suit and thick, terry-cloth robe, in line at the 10 or 12 catered, linen-draped buffet tables over by the pool and hot tubs.

We persist on insisting that corporations have the same rights as people. We can readily see, for example, how both react when drunk. For actual people, it's usually booze that causes them to wrap their cars around trees, trying to get the front and back bumpers to shake hands. For corporations, it's always hunger for money and power that causes them to fly our economies into the sides of mountains, then flee offshore with their untaxed trillions.

The Congress, in response, bless their hearts, has had the IRS trolling for dumb trillionaires, asking for any volunteers who want to declare any loose barges of cash they've smuggled out of the country, for U.S.-taxation purposes. This old-home-week program is turning out to be as popular as that *Win Donald Trump's Comb-Over for a Year!* contest a while back.

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Corporations, so far, don't have the same responsibilities as people. When a person gets a DUI or harms someone while drive-partying, there are a lot of bad feelings and regret and crying and ripping up money and loss of means of getting around, and on and on. And that's just at the initial roadside stop. When corporations take the economy with both hands, like a hall rug needing a good shake-out, and flip off the entire country -- both from being situated on the rug, and elsewhere -- they become superstar inspirations for even more heady, inebriated rounds of unfettered, unbridled, and unreasoning, fall-down-drunk capitalism, behind the wheel of large, powerful forces capable of crippling tens of millions of people at a clip.

That's progress for you. *Better living through improved ability to overlook the obvious*: It's a new program Congress has been funding. It's an offshoot of the voluntary offshore disclosure thing that's knockin' 'em dead from coast to coast.

We've certainly been taking it in the rear pants pockets from corporations, and right where we sometimes carry cash, our brains, and our 143-page digital service plan contracts. And some padding, so our bony selves do not overly dent the waiting room chairs which we occupy, while waiting for these so-called people to become less listless and more interested in some hot-and-run puncture-feeding, even though they're long ago full up on blood.

So, we wait for the economy to recover, and wait to be hired by this person or that -- persons who, as paperwork-people, regularly used to hire a few million employees to help them run their assorted body-counting houses and sheep-fleecing operations.

Like the old adage says, it's a big person who can hire 23 million people for their world-wide operations and still have time for a movie, and maybe some pinochle, before they have to get up in the morning, and resume their quest for world domination.

Somehow, though, paper-and-profit corporations don't have the same responsibilities as actual, blood-and-bone people. For example, Walmart has received more than \$1 billion in direct government favors, let alone the fact that taxpayers must fund social welfare programs to take up the long loops of slack from that corporation's unliving wages.

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Such a thing should become known as Zombie Wages. It's a lot different from Zombie Banks, where millions and millions of dollars change hands for every single dollar bill brought home by wage slaves, a circular logic situation which perpetuates Zombie Employees. And Zombie Products. And Zombie Consumers. And a Zombie Nation, *aka* the rabid, bubble-biting Fox News audience.

Today, the Fox definition of a fact is anything The Talking Hairdos want to say -- anything off the top of their alleged minds, all the way down to the bottom-most part of their seat cushions. No matter how absurd or wrong or goofy or ignorant or harmful.

There should be a new program, funded by Congress, and carried out by the IRS, maybe, in conjunction with their popular offshore "hit me!" program, that would warn people to not let Fox News get its hands on their brains. This could be done via valuable Public Service Announcements, intervention clinics at shopping malls, and through emergency checkboxes placed on tax-filing forms.

Ruth Brown was right: *A fox is a wolf who sends flowers.*

The Double-Standard Rule is, of course, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Golden Rule -- that wonky, broken one, that goes *Thems With the Gold Makes the Rules*. Not the *Be Kind* one. So, while the NFL continues as a non-profit corporation, and while Berkshire Hathaway is now down to their hand-wringing wit's end, with just \$20 billion in profits, I am still expected to be a human-people, not a paperwork-people, and pay *my* taxes.

Different deal, that. Fresh off the bottom of the deck. This year is a bargain, after all: There are \$6500 in back taxes due -- which is a real break, and very reasonable, especially as I earned absolutely no income whatsoever last year. Thank heavens! For a while there, I was really scared that my taxes would go up, and that I would be faced with a punitive, discriminatory tax policy between poor and rich, between *people* and *People*.

Whew! Glad that's not happening. It would be the same kind of un-American thing that the Family Values crowd burbles about, when not off somewhere, urgently trying to make more

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Families, through repeated practice, with as many Values-oriented partners as they can muster up, or when just stealing something large -- like freighters, under their coats, out the front door.

But, you know, downtrodden corporations will always be with us. I don't hold their hard luck against them, not even in these times of record-obliterating profits, unimaginable only during the era leading up to the previous "Great Recession," in the 1930s, when regular people got by selling matches and enjoyed a hearty, nightly supper of Cream of Shoe soup.

It all balances out, and in almost the exact same way as an ice cube, placed on a see-saw on a typical August day, at high noon, local time, will steady an elephant on the other end -- if not actually cause that elephant to go flying. It's that action-reaction thing, a situation where physical laws are obeyed, and not like trickle down, which followed the Reagan-era rules of propaganda, imagination, appeasement, revolt-avoidance, and grand-scale pettifoggery.

These 12 mom-and-pop corporations, for example, constantly teeter on the brink of ruin: IBM, GE, Honeywell, Xerox. Dow, Caterpillar, Motorola, 3M, United Tech, Science Apps, and Dupont. Thank goodness they received governmental, *hey-good-lookin'* eye winks of emergency welfare dollars of at least 10 to 50 bucks. Times a million. Each.

You've no doubt been accosted and pan-handled, out in the street, by their CEOs, looking rumpled and dog-eared from this brutal recession at the top, asking for a little spare change of a few dozen-million dollars, to buy a grilled cheese sandwich and a cup of coffee -- one the size of Arizona. Or Arizona itself.

Yes, during the restful heydays of America, it was common sense to buy into the concept of common sense. People were even told verifiable, observable facts on the news -- a concept too shocking for today's audiences. Thanks to Fox News, we now have the freedom to say whatever we want, and call it news. No pesky reporting, no expensive double-checking operation. The Fox rule of thumb: If we can think it, and our test hyenas howl at it, then, it's a good-enough fact to use, and to browbeat audiences with mercilessly.

This is especially true of statistics used by newscasters there, which, until very recently, had been occupying a portion of their lower G.I. tracks, before its presentation on the public airwaves. Thank goodness Fox won its Florida court case, granting permission to lie on the

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news!

Yes, a hotbed of progressive thinking percolates on that great, marshy peninsula. And people say that Southerners have no sense of humor. Or understanding of the scientific method. Or the age of the Universe. Or an operable mind, wanting George Zimmerman's autograph. Or why they are living in a place where palmetto bugs, in demo derbies, routinely tear apart big, old Buicks -- the really sturdy ones with steel frames.

It must all come down to that bedrock sensibility Americans have always had, since pioneer days, to instantly feel affection for, and bond with, anyone connected to their television sets and big screens, hauled across mountain ranges in their Conestoga wagons. People famous for being famous is a relatively new phenomenon here, and we're still working out the kinks -- all Anthony-Weinergate-sexting jokes aside. Way aside.

Yes, we love everyone connected to teevee, no matter how tenuously -- *even the drugstore people who sell them little metal-tube thingies that have to go in the underneath part of the remote, under the duct tape, to make it go.*

The stuffy, artificial lines between worlds are erased, just like the protections from those old-fashioned rules that kept banks' gambling and banking operations separate, in order to not accidentally collapse the economy, and eliminate the entire financial system -- taking counting by twos with it.

Yes, we've come a long way in this country. For example, once there were robber barons, high-level con men, and public thieves of all kinds running free, making money hand over fist. Our time is unlike the late 1800s. Today, we have robber barons, high-level con men, and public thieves of all kinds running free, making money hand over fist.

Pass the Cream of Shoe soup.

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Walmart & The Welfare Queens:

<http://thinkbynumbers.org/government-spending/corporate-welfare/corporate-welfare-statistics-vs-social-welfare-statistics/>

and: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/taxanalysts/2014/03/14/where-is-the-outrage-over-corporate-welfare/>

Trillions of booty:

<http://moneymorning.com/2013/05/01/check-out-whos-hiding-32-trillion-in-offshore-accounts/>

Trolling for dumb trillionaires: <http://www.irs.gov/uac/2012-Offshore-Voluntary-Disclosure-Program>

Zombie Banks: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zombie_bank

George of the Gun Show: <http://www.msnbc.com/the-last-word/zimmerman-signs-autographs-gun-show>

Old-timey protections: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glass-Steagall_Legislation

Today's bonus: An award-winning documentary from the National Film Board of Canada. It is about the universe. It is simple, straightforward, and very nicely done -- even elegant. It's the film that inspired Kubrick to make "2001." He even borrowed the film's narrator, Douglas Rain, for the role of Hal-9000 in "2001." (Other fine films are here, too.)

<http://beta.nfb.ca/playlists/1960s-explosion-creativity/viewing/universe/>

and: The antidote to "Teamwork" photos: <http://www.despair.com/lithographs.html>