



OWS: Overlooking Corporatism's Silent Partner

"Occupy Wall Street" has become something of a Rorschach test: observers find in it whatever they want to. If you consider protests a left-wing remnant from the turbulent 1960s, you'll probably perceive the residents of OWS's encampment as dirty hippies who foully curse the visiting bourgeoisie. If your hatred of the corporatist police-state lends you sympathy for its victims, OWS's tents are friendly enough to tour with your teen-aged sons, eminently peaceful, and libertarian if not anarchic.

I can't comment on OWS from personal experience: I avoid crowds like the plague (yep, that's tough when you live in New York City. They don't call me The Miracle Worker for nothing). But even if I enjoyed mixing with the great unwashed, I would still keep my distance from Zuccotti Park: regardless of his niche on the political spectrum, everyone admits the cops are swarming there. Prizing my life and liberty, I eschew police even more than I do crowds. The militarized thugs with which New York's rulers control us will sooner or later fire on the protesters. Thanks, but I'll mourn The Bankers' Massacre from my safe and comfy office.



One point on which OWS's 99% agree is that they represent thousands of opinions on virtually every topic. They also insist they don't necessarily have any answers, that they simply want to emphasize how wrong things are.

Nonetheless, all this open-mindedness and humility didn't keep them from issuing a "[first official document for release](#)" that "was unanimously voted on by all members of Occupy Wall Street last night, around 8pm, Sept 29." That's pretty impressive unanimity from such disparate strangers. Of course, OWS was still fairly small and unknown then; the corporate media was ignoring it when it wasn't laughing at it, predictably enough. And OWS's "members" as well as their views may have changed by now.

Still, this "living document," entitled "Declaration of the Occupation of New York City," seems far closer to Marx's *Manifesto* than it does the Declaration of Independence it consciously mimics.

"As we gather together in solidarity ...," it begins. That's worrisome by itself, especially to anyone as leery of crowds as yours truly. Besides, only labor unions, commies, and Che Guevara's fans prattle



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about “solidarity.”

By the second paragraph, we’re even deeper into Marxist presuppositions and terminology: “As one people, united [yep, more shudders], we acknowledge the reality: that the future of the human race requires the cooperation of its members...”

Uh-oh. Do they mean “voluntary” cooperation, *i.e.*, without the market’s exchange and payment? Somehow I suspect they do; I also suspect they harbor the usual vague, collectivist double standard — that “workers” they approve should receive compensation beyond what they’re worth while “capitalists” they don’t must donate their time.

“... that a democratic government derives its just power from the people...”

“But the country wasn’t founded as a democracy,” you’re wailing, you historical scholar, you. True, but it’s certainly degenerated into one.

“... corporations do not seek consent to extract wealth from the people and the Earth...”

Whoa, whoa, *whoa!* They most emphatically do: it’s called “mutually beneficial transaction” and “market share” and “I can’t wait to buy that new iPod!” and “Dad, I’m hungry, can we stop at McD’s?” and “I need more socks, I think there’s a sale at Walmart this week.”

Perhaps even scarier than this factual ignorance of how markets work — or, more sinister, the protesters’ deliberate confusion of capitalism with corporatism — is the underlying assumptions: that the “Earth’s wealth” belongs to everyone and that those who “extract” it are thieves. In reality, they’re heroes applying their ingenuity to trees so the rest of us can enjoy homes, paper, mulch, furniture; to mines so we can drive cars over bridges; to fields so we can dine sumptuously on tomatoes, onions, pasta, apple pie; to sand and silicon so that I can analyze OWS via my computer and bore you with my impressions.

On the other hand, corporations that lobby for laws and regulations favoring themselves over competitors or their industry over others; that solicit subsidies, grants, and bail-outs; that supply government with the tools for its wickedness in abominable “public-private partnerships,” do indeed “extract wealth from the people” without “consent.”

And that’s OWS’s fundamental, perhaps fatal, flaw: it does not differentiate between corporations and corporatism, between the legitimate, entrepreneurial practices in which many businesses, large or small, engage while simultaneously and illegitimately exploiting us through government. OWS damns profits and politics alike.

That’s tragic. Indeed, carried to its logical extreme, this mistake has starved or otherwise slaughtered hundreds of millions in the twentieth century alone.

Sans government, Halliburton, Citibank, Boeing and GE become not only harmless but as helpful and lovable as Apple Computers: striving to please customers, giving us what we want, making life easier at affordable prices. But add government’s compulsion and corruption to these corporations, and they become monstrous parodies of capitalism, greedy, manipulative, as happy to manufacture bombs as baby bottles.

Government suborns every thing it touches; nothing survives its filthy contagion. Whether the State “collaborates” with religion, education, communication or free markets, it always triumphs, always subsumes its victim’s values under its own, always converts its prey to its own brutal tyranny. It is humanity’s most lethal, venomous enemy, a corporatist’s best crony, the original 1%. It is most



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definitely *not* our savior from entrepreneurs banding together in corporations, whatever OWS supposes.

“...corporate power has risen beyond the power of government to control it,” [opines one socialist who cheers OWS’s hostility to capitalism](#). “It has corrupted our political processes and fused with the most corrupt of our elected representatives to become an oppressive monolith that tyrannizes the American people ...”

He has it exactly backwards. Government has corrupted corporations; so long as it exists, trying to rid ourselves of corporatism is as quixotic as chasing the wind: government’s purpose is to further empower the already powerful while subjugating everyone else to their interests. Destroy — or worse, “reform” — ABC News and Goldman Sachs while leaving the State alone, and thirty more corporations will sprout in their places, eager to benefit from government’s compulsion and exploitation of us.

If OWS — or anyone else — truly hopes to improve our world, it must attack the root of the problem and enabler of evil: the State.



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