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Extinguishing Liberty's Light and Independent Views

Thinking for yourself is now a crime

By Paul Craig Roberts

01/04/08 "ICH " -- -- What was the greatest failure of 2007? President Bush's 'surge' in Iraq? The decline in the value of the US dollar? Subprime mortgages? No. The greatest failure of 2007 was the newly sworn in Democratic Congress.

The American people's attempt in November 2006 to rein in a rogue government, which has committed the US to costly military adventures while running roughshod over the US Constitution, failed. Replacing Republicans with Democrats in the House and Senate has made no difference.

The assault on the US Constitution by the Democratic Party is as determined as the assault by the Republicans. On October 23, 2007, the House passed a bill sponsored by California Democratic congresswoman Jane Harman, chairwoman of a Homeland Security subcommittee, that overturns the constitutionally guaranteed rights to free expression, association, and assembly.

The bill passed the House on a vote of 404-6. In the Senate the bill is sponsored by Maine Republican Susan Collins and apparently faces no meaningful opposition.

Harman's bill is called the 'Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act.' [<http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h110-1955>] When HR 1955 becomes law, it will create a commission tasked with identifying extremist people, groups, and ideas. The commission will hold hearings around the country, taking testimony and compiling a list of dangerous people and beliefs. The bill will, in short, create massive terrorism in the United States. But the perpetrators of terrorism will not be Muslim terrorists; they will be government agents and fellow citizens.

We are beginning to see who will be the inmates of the detention centers being built in the US by Halliburton under government contract.

Who will be on the 'extremist beliefs' list? The answer is: civil libertarians, critics of Israel, 9/11 skeptics, critics of the administration's wars and foreign policies, critics of the administration's use of kidnapping, rendition, torture and violation of the Geneva Conventions, and critics of the administration's spying on Americans. Anyone in the way of a powerful interest group--such as environmentalists opposing politically connected developers--is also a candidate for the list.

The 'Extremist Beliefs Commission' is the mechanism for identifying Americans who pose 'a threat to domestic security' and a threat of 'homegrown terrorism' that 'cannot be easily prevented through traditional federal intelligence or law enforcement efforts.'

This bill is a boon for nasty people. That SOB who stole your girlfriend, that hussy who stole your boyfriend, the gun owner next door--just report them to Homeland Security as holders of extreme beliefs. Homeland Security needs suspects, so they are not going to

check. Under the new regime, accusation is evidence. Moreover, "bur" elected representatives will never admit that they voted for a bill and created an "Extremist Belief Commission" for which there is neither need nor constitutional basis.

That boss who harasses you for coming late to work--he's a good candidate to be reported; so is that minority employee that you can't fire for any normal reason. So is the husband of that good-looking woman you have been unable to seduce. Every kind of quarrel and jealousy can now be settled with a phone call to Homeland Security.

Soon Halliburton will be building more detention centers.

Americans are so far removed from the roots of their liberty that they just don't get it. Most Americans don't know what *habeas corpus* is or why it is important to them. But they know what they want, and Jane Harman has given them a new way to settle scores and to advance their own interests.

Even educated liberals believe that the US Constitution is a "living document" that can be changed to mean whatever it needs to mean in order to accommodate some new important cause, such as abortion and legal privileges for minorities and the handicapped. Today it is the "war on terror" that the Constitution must accommodate. Tomorrow it can be the war on whomever or whatever.

Think about it. More than six years ago the World Trade Center and Pentagon were attacked. The US government blamed it on al Qaeda. Scant evidence has been presented. The 9/11 Commission Report has been subjected to devastating criticism by a large number of qualified people--including the commission's chairman and co-chairman.
http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/02/opinion/02kean.html?_r=1&th&emc=th&oref=slogin

Since 9/11 there have been no terrorist attacks in the US. The FBI has tried to orchestrate a few, but the "terrorist plots" never got beyond talk organized and led by FBI agents. There are no visible extremist groups other than the neoconservatives that control the government in Washington. But somehow the House of Representatives overwhelmingly sees a need to create a commission to take testimony and search out extremist views (outside of Washington, of course).

This search for extremist views comes after President Bush and the Justice (sic) Department declare that the President can ignore *habeas corpus*, ignore the Geneva Conventions, seize people without evidence, hold them indefinitely without presenting charges, torture them until they confess to some made up crime, and take over the government by declaring an emergency. Of course, none of these "patriotic" views are extremist.

The search for extremist views follows also the granting of contracts to Halliburton to build detention centers in the US. No member of Congress or the executive branch ever explained the need for the detention centers or who the detainees would be. Of course, there is nothing extremist about building detention centers in the US for undisclosed inmates.

Clearly the detention centers are not meant to just stand there empty. Thanks to 2007's greatest failure--the Democratic Congress--there is to be an "Extremist Beliefs Commission" to secure inmates for Bush's detention centers.

President Bush promises us that the wars he has launched will cause the "untamed fire of freedom" to "reach the darkest corners of our world." Meanwhile in America the fire of freedom has not only been tamed but also is being extinguished.

The light of liberty has gone out in the United States.

Paul Craig Roberts wrote the Kemp-Roth bill and was Assistant Secretary of the Treasury in the Reagan administration. He was Associate Editor of the Wall Street Journal editorial page and Contributing Editor of National Review. He is author or coauthor of eight books, including The Supply-Side Revolution (Harvard University Press). He has held numerous academic appointments, including the William E. Simon Chair in Political Economy, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Georgetown University and Senior Research Fellow, Hoover Institution, Stanford University. He has contributed to numerous scholarly journals and testified before Congress on 30 occasions. He has been awarded the U.S. Treasury's Meritorious Service Award and the French Legion of Honor. He was a reviewer for the Journal of Political Economy under editor Robert Mundell. He is the co-author of The Tyranny of Good Intentions. He is also coauthor with Karen Araujo of Chile: Dos Visiones – La Era Allende-Pinochet (Santiago: Universidad Andres Bello, 2000).

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