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**WHO'S FROM ANOTHER PLANET?
YOU DECIDE**

As the House committee investigating Jan. 6 held its first night of prime-time hearings, Fox "News" host Tucker Carlson, wasn't looking. The "most disturbing" part of that day, as he described it wasn't the mob of Trumpers attacking the Capitol to violently interrupt the democratic process in support of a lie, but rather Sen. Lindsey Graham instructions to Capitol police to use their guns to protect the Capitol and legislators.

Remarkably, for an hour Fox didn't air any commercials that might tempt channel surfing by hearing curious viewers, opting instead for a steady stream of guests brought on to denigrate the select committee's work.

Through the first half of Carlson's show, two tactics emerged: downplay the insurrection, and complain that the House wanted to investigate it. Then Carlson introduced a new conspiracy trope, declaring that for the committee "The point is not to get to the truth," but rather, "It's to hide the truth."

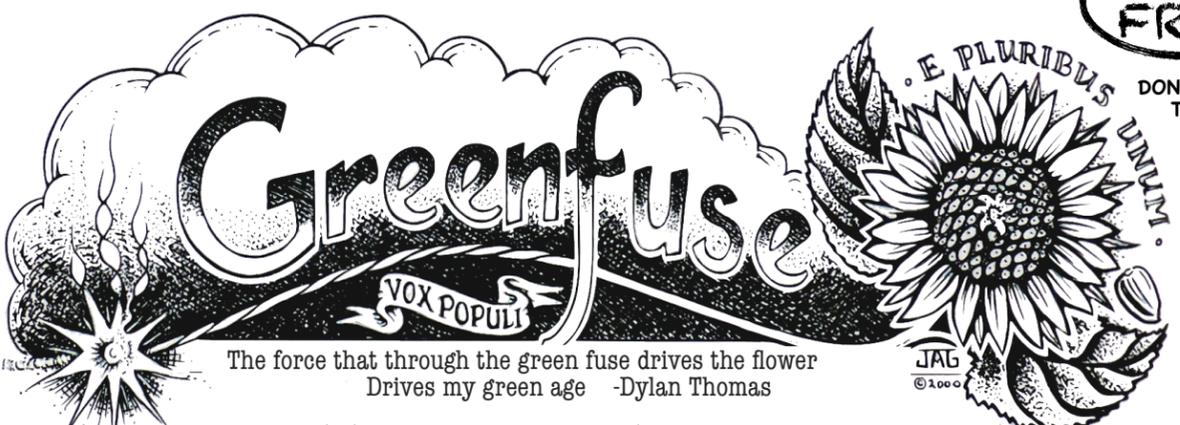
According to Carlson, the motivation of the hearings is to provide a pretext "for the Democratic party to declare war against millions of American citizens who oppose their agenda."

To support this, Carlson - finally - shared some of the hearing. Observing that Republican Liz Cheney is helping this war, he explained: "Here she is just moments ago screeching about disinformation."

He then cut to a clip of Cheney, the extremely conservative member of Congress, speaking in a measured tone about the attempt by Team Trump to overturn the 2020 election through a misinformation campaign that "provoked the violence on January 6."

Carlson continued his outraged rant:

"She is off on another planet, why is Liz Cheney abetting the destruction of America's civil liberties, and our sacred norms?"



A Well Regulated Militia?

When it comes to the U.S. constitution just one sentence makes a world of difference in the minds of the faithful:

"A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed."

The first half of that sentence, despite its archaic construction does have some meaning. History had shown that governments had a habit of using soldiers to oppress the people. Something was needed to prevent the United States from having a professional standing army, potentially a powerful and dangerous institution that did not fit within the framework of limited powers and did not conform to the principle of a free citizenry. Anti-Federalists at the time argued that the proposed Constitution would take from the states their principal means of defense against federal usurpation. The Federalists responded that fears of federal oppression were overblown, in part because the American people were armed and would be almost impossible to subdue through military force. By design the peoples elected representatives would control military influence by the "power of the purse" while still relying on militias to respond to sudden invasions or other emergencies- a militia of civilians who would supply their own weapons, and with a bit of training they could be considered "well regulated."

A concept then enshrined by the second amendment.

Well, so much for that idea! Clearly we are in a different world now. Reliance on a 235 year old document to adequately govern anything today seems a bit quaint, as does timely debate and appropriate change, but here we are.

There are estimated to be over 400 million guns in the United States. Over 98% of those guns are in civilian hands, the equivalent of 120 firearms per 100 citizens. Besides all the Glock's made in Austria and the Barreta's made in Italy, etc., domestic gun makers produced 11.3 million firearms in 2020, and the way the sales statistics look probably made more last year, and probably will make even more this year. Just what we need - an endless supply of devices specifically designed to kill and menace.

And kill we do. In 2020, the most recent year for which complete data is available, 45,222 people died from gun-related injuries in the U.S., by far the most on record, representing a 14% increase from the year before, a 25% increase from five years earlier and a 43% increase from a decade prior.

The Satirical paper, *The Onion*, ran this headline recently: **'No Way To Prevent This,' Says Only Nation Where This Regularly Happens.**

The truth of this statement echoes the sentiment of those who hold gun ownership sacred while ignoring the statistics from other countries with effective gun regulation - impossible in the home of the brave and land of the free.

A sensible and functional legislature certainly could come up with something to limit or reduce the numbers of guns and ammo available, or how they are sold, or to whom... or at least hold the manufacturers responsible, like makers of other products that do harm - or require liability insurance, or training, or testing, or something... **or anything!**

But of course we don't have a sensible or functional legislature, so despite evidence that fewer guns leads to fewer gun crimes, It's hard to imagine meaningful action takes place before the next Unimaginable event.

Their hands are tied by the Second Amendment. And, you know- Guns are necessary to feel safe, are our heritage, our bulwark against tyranny, our right, or for some, perhaps more honestly- just plain fun to brandish and cool to shoot.

But wait a minute- The second amendment says absolutely nothing about infringing upon the manufacturing and marketing of arms, which is very different than keeping and bearing them. Neither is there any mention of who owns the arms that people can keep and bear. It's time to get with the rest of the civilized world and work out what it takes to wean ourselves off the need to add super-lethal arms to our whacked-out social psyche. And, while we're at it, do everything else that needs doing to get our acts together and help each other survive whatever comes next.

УНДЕРСТАНДІНГ УКРАЇНИ: THE NEW COLD WAR IS HOT

Kieven Rus' and its 988 conversion to Eastern Orthodoxy lie at the foundation of the Russian nation. In the 1400s, Ukraine became part of the Lithuanian and later Polish empires. As a consequence, those in the Galician west are predominantly Catholic, Western oriented, and Ukrainian speakers, while those in the east are primarily Russian Orthodox, Russian oriented, and Russian speakers. In pursuit of creating a warm water port for a Black Sea fleet, Russia's Catherine the Great annexed Crimea in 1783, and during three Russo-Turkic wars and divisions of Poland during her rule, Ukraine fell fully under Russian control.

In the 20th century, millions of Ukrainians died of starvation in the 1930s as a consequence of Stalin's brutal agricultural collectivization. With no love for the Soviets or Russia, anti-Soviet forces in Ukraine allied with Hitler and joined his devastating march to the east. The first major Holocaust massacre of Jews was inflicted at Babi Yar, a ravine near Kyiv. At war's end, Ukraine was re-unified with the Soviet Union, with Khrushchev transferring Crimea to Ukraine in 1954.

With the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine became an independent state, surrendering the arsenal of Soviet nuclear weapons that had been left behind in exchange for solemn Russian, U.S., and European commitments to honor Ukraine's territorial integrity.

As a consequence of its historic ties with Russia and the Soviet Union, eastern Ukraine's economy was deeply integrated with Russia, while many in the west sought prosperity through ties with the West. In 2013, application was made to join the European Union, but when the E.U. demanded an all or nothing relationship, that ties to Russia would have to be severed, Ukraine's Prime Minister Yanukovich withdrew the application, which precipitated mass and initially nonviolent demonstrations in the heart of Kyiv. Contrary to the norm of respecting the national self-determination of other countries, Senator McCain, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland, and CIA Director Brennan felt called to join the revolt. A compromise, moving up the date for elections, was reached but was then breached by armed protestors, leading Prime Minister Yanukovich to flee the country. Proclamations of independent Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics in eastern Ukraine, reinforced by the intervention of Moscow's "little green" and unofficial military forces followed. Russia reclaimed Crimea and its Black Sea Fleet, and the relatively low intensity civil war followed until the attempted invasion by Russia. Creating chaos, death and destruction of infrastructure.

A ridiculous war of aggression met with Western military support in defense of Ukraine now make this a hot proxy war, with no end in sight.

THE FOG OF WAR IS TOXIC

Since Russia invaded Ukraine, exploding chemical plants have become a frightening reality for its citizens. But they're just one example of the staggering toll that war is taking on the nation's environment.

Though not as visible as the thousands of lost lives, the environmental costs of war are insidious, quietly harming people and wildlife for decades after fighting stops. Armed conflict is one of the leading predictors of animal declines and a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. The US military alone emits countries' worth of carbon dioxide. Besides the usual carnage of war, it is also linked to lasting human health problems, cancer and birth defects.

Ukrainian environmental groups are keeping track of the damage, which some experts say amount to war crimes. So far, they've logged nearly 270 cases of potential harm, ranging from damage to power plants to impacts on marine ecosystems.

**Now, the question is:
Will Russia be held accountable for them?**

Ukraine covers less than 6% of Europe's land area, but is home to more than a third of the continent's biodiversity.

It's also highly industrialized, with hundreds of chemical plants, nearly 150 coal mines, and more than a dozen nuclear reactors - including Europe's largest.

International laws, including the Geneva Conventions, prohibit severe and lasting damage to the environment. Under some circumstances the International Criminal Court (ICC) considers those actions war crimes.

But it's incredibly hard to prove that environmental damage violates international law. Ukraine would have to show that the destruction is widespread, long-term, and severe. There's no easy route to prosecute Russia. The ICC tries individuals, not nations, and Ukraine will also face hurdles if it seeks environmental reparations through the UN's International Court of Justice. There are calls for a new Geneva Convention that will more explicitly declare protections for the environment during war. Begging the age old question: **WAR, what is it good for?**

ABSOLUTELY NOTHING! - Say it again.

A division of the UN called the International Law Commission has developed a set of non-binding principles that help clarify how international war laws apply to the environment. The damage and disruption war brings to people, animals, plants and the environment is unacceptable.

Wars of aggression are already illegal under international law. **Apparently law can't prevent wanton destruction.**