

POLARIZING RHETORIC?

I hear a lot of talk these days about “polarization.” People complain that “polarizing rhetoric” poisons our democracy by “polarizing” the American electorate. It’s funny that we lay the blame for the complete failure of our government to address global climate change, on political “polarization.” I don’t buy it at all. Yes, something has poisoned our democracy, and it has something to do with our current political environment, but “polarization” is not the right word for it.

The word “polarization” implies a two way process. Politically, the word “polarization” implies that both the right and the left have become radicalized. I see no evidence of this. I’ve watched a steamroller of right-wing radicalization crush left-wing radicals, crush unions, and crush the Democratic party for the last four decades. It began in the ‘80s with the unholy union of the Evangelical Christian Movement and the Republican Party, which brought Republican greed, avarice and thirst for power into league with the Christian values of bigotry, sexism and disdain for science and reason. They gave us Reagan.

Reagan broke the unions. Bush amped up the War on Drugs, but Clinton was all about compromise. Instead of standing up for working people and Democratic principles, he sold out the American people with NAFTA and Welfare Reform, which the Republicans could have never done on their own. Then in 2000, the Democrats proved their complete impotence and demonstrated their willingness to settle for nothing when Al Gore conceded the 2000 presidential election. W pushed that radical right-wing steamroller, full throttle for eight years, getting us into two intractable wars. Then he made millions of people homeless, a few of his friends rich, and completely wrecked the economy.

Obama convinced us to bail out the banks, and gave us the Affordable Care Act, which insures maximum profits for insurance companies, doctors and drug manufacturers and makes the most expensive health-care system in the world available to people with pre-existing conditions, for the first time, even though they still can’t afford it. Obamacare was a terrible compromise. It was such a bad compromise, that the Republicans can’t even imagine a plan that they would like better. In fact, Obama sold the American people a health-care plan devised largely by Republicans, and again, like Clinton, did to the American people what they would never let a Republican do.

Now we’re back on that right-wing steamroller, led by the most obnoxious, egotistical, chauvinistic, bigoted asshole they could find, an asshole who inspires and emboldens obnoxious bigoted assholes all across the land, an asshole who takes pride in his privilege, and has no shame or moral principles. Trump is a perfect pig, who leads a regime of pirates that reign over a nation of overworked, underpaid wage slaves who live paycheck to paycheck if they’re lucky. That radical right-wing Republican steamroller has crushed working people for forty years straight, while Democrats have become the party of compromise, collapse and capitulation. That’s not polarization. That’s four decades of hard right turns.

This radical shift to the right was accomplished by a massive and relentless propaganda campaign that began with radical right-wing pundits like Rush Limbaugh, George Will and Morton Downey Jr, not to mention a throng of TV preachers like Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell, and continuing to this day with the likes of Pat Buchanan and Sean Hannity. These guys have spewed radical right-wing bigotry, hate and lies 24-7-365, for 40 fucking years. The radical right owns thousands of TV and radio stations. The left has PBS,



NPR and Community Access Television, all of which they must share equally with the right.

In the last 40 years, the radical right has revolutionized and reshaped our society, our institutions and our culture, in their image, and they didn’t do it with civil debate in an open marketplace of ideas. They did it with cunning opportunism and sleazy propaganda full of hatred, bigotry and lies. They spent big money on it, and when that didn’t work they used violence without hesitation. They don’t care about the “quality of the debate.” They want it all, and that includes the contents of your life, and they’ll do anything to get it.

Meanwhile, the Democrats have moved steadily to the right, and they continue to look for ways to sell out the American people. They refuse to stand up for working people. They refuse to stand up for the poor, and they refuse to stand up to the Republicans. When Bernie Sanders excited their base, they cut him off. Bernie Sanders is no radical, but even his brand of moderate socialism is just too far to the left for the Democratic Party leadership. So where is this other pole?

Antifa? Black Lives Matter? Standing Rock? Me too? If you call that “radical,” then mutual self-defense must be a “radical” idea to you. If mutual self-defense seems like a radical idea to you, then you haven’t been exposed to many radically leftist ideas. If you haven’t been exposed to many radically leftist ideas, it’s probably because there aren’t many radical leftists left in the US. There aren’t many radical leftists in the US because Republicans persecute them and Democrats disown them. Democrats are disowning radical leftists when they say things like, “polarization is poisoning our democracy.”

When Democrats complain about “polarization” they aren’t complaining about the fascist propaganda machine on the right, they are complaining that their traditional working class base refuses to settle for their pathetic compromises. They use the term “polarization” to include the “Bernie Brohs” they betrayed, in their condemnation of the Steve Bannons and David Dukes behind Trump. There is no polarization. This is just another right turn by Democrats.

“Polarization” is the word Democrats use to blame their own base for their complete failure. You’ll even hear them say “it’s on both sides.” A lot of rich Democrats would like to see the Democratic Party look even more like the Republican Party, but with legal abortion and equal rights for gay people. They want to screw working people as much as Republicans do, and they’ve learned that sometimes that’s easier to do as a Democrat. Those are the people who complain the most about this alleged “polarization.”

The Republicans empower their radicals, while Democrats disown theirs, and as long as Democrats continue to disown leftist radicals, Democrats have no power and nothing to negotiate because they have no base. If you can’t stand up to defend your life and protect your home without being labeled a “radical,” then, damn it, we need more radicals on the left, and if we want more leftist radicals we’ll need a lot more fiery and inspiring rhetoric.

- John Hardin
lygsbtd.wordpress.com



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Fishermen Petition: Stop Pollution of Salmon River

The Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen’s Associations, Institute for Fisheries Resources, and Environmental Law Foundation has petitioned California’s State Water Resources Control Board to regulate large scale pesticide pollution from lily bulb farms in the Smith River’s estuary. The Smith River in far Northern California’s redwood region is the state’s only undammed and undiverted river. Fishermen say large-scale pesticide pollution is killing salmon and impacting the fishing industry in this rural and economically depressed area. In October, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board announced that it was abandoning a seven-year long process to establish a permit for lily bulb cultivation in favor of a purely voluntary program.



“The Smith River salmon restoration potential is unparalleled,”

stated the federation’s director Noah Oppenheim. “Despite its outstanding upstream habitat quality, the Smith has the state’s heaviest pesticide use per acre directly adjacent to its estuary, with virtually no regulatory oversight. California salmon fisheries are heavily regulated, and North Coast fisheries have been severely curtailed or closed in recent years. It’s time for other industries that impact ours to clean up their act; our coexistence depends on it.”

At issue is roughly 2,000 acres of the Smith River’s estuary farm land that is used for lily bulb farming. Growers use nearly **300,000 lbs. of fumigants, herbicides and fungicides** Annually in the estuary. The estuary is critical habitat for coho salmon, a threatened species. Residents and federal agencies have complained of health impacts, drinking water contamination, and impacts to salmon from unregulated pesticide use from farms for over 30 years. Recent studies have confirmed water contamination in the estuary.

The petition claims that the Regional Board has failed to follow its own laws and policies by proposing a voluntary program. The Water Code and State Board policies require an enforceable permit for agricultural pollution that contains certain concrete features.

“The water in Smith River belongs to all Californians,”

said Nathaniel Kane, attorney for Environmental Law Foundation. “The Regional Board’s failure to regulate lily bulb farming violates laws intended to protect people and ecosystems from exactly this kind of contamination. We are petitioning today to demand the accountability and results that the law requires.”

The groups point to the fact that recent tests detected 17 pesticides in the tributaries and ditches that feed the estuary, 10 instances of contamination of the aquatic life, and copper contamination up to 8 times the levels that are toxic to salmon. These are major violations of state and federal law.

“It would take very little regulation and action to stop the pesticides from entering the Smith River,” said Regina Chichizola, a local policy coordinator for Institute for Fisheries Resources. “Simple actions like stopping direct chemical runoff to creeks, not spraying in the rainy season, creating streamside buffers and restoring salmon habitat could protect public health and the economy on the state’s wildest river.”

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