

The Republican-stimulated Roaring 1920s: Will it Happen Again in 2016?

H. L. Mencken's Prediction

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Global Research, November 08, 2016

Region: [USA](#)

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"When a candidate for public office faces the voters he does not face men of sense; he faces a mob of men whose chief distinguishing mark is the fact that they are quite incapable of weighing ideas, or even of comprehending any except for the most elemental ones. The whole thinking of such voters is done in terms of emotion...(and the) dominant emotion is dread of what they cannot understand. So confronted, the candidate must either bark with the pack or be lost...All the odds are on the man who is, intrinsically, the most devious and mediocre - the man who can most adeptly disperse the notion that his mind is a virtual vacuum. The Presidency tends, year by year, to go to such men. As democracy is perfected, the office represents, more and more closely, the inner soul of the people. We move toward a lofty ideal. On some great and glorious day the plain folks of the land will reach their heart's desire at last, and the White House will be adorned by a downright moron." — H. L. Mencken - known as the "Sage of Baltimore"

"Those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities." - Voltaire

NOTE: This column was written the day before the dreaded Election Day of 2016 and submitted for publication to Global Research before any election results were announced. Because I had already done everything in my power over the past decades of my political activism to influence the vote of thinking folks, I intend to turn off the TV on election day and try not to pay any attention to any of the over-analyzed political commentary and election-season information overload until the morning after.

At this point I think - since it is too late in the season to take the day off and go fishing - that I might actually go - right after I vote - to some distracting daytime movie that my wife wouldn't want to see anyway. Then, following my regular Tuesday night tennis match, I will come right home and go right to bed without getting myself all tied up in knots.

I realize that it is futile to try to change the political minds of folks who have already chosen to affiliate with anti-democratic folks who exhibit behaviors that are compatible with sociopaths, sexists, xenophobes, racists, homophobes, Islamophobes, anti-Semites, neo-fascists, pro-war/pro-violence Christian fundamentalists, aggressive militarists, climate change deniers, anti-science types and the varieties of demagogue-devotees who have already pledged their allegiance to certain candidates who refuse to be influenced by rational pro-democracy arguments.

"Donald Trump may be bad for the nation, but he's good for CBS."

I have long suspected that the major news outlets always try to make every national election season into a breathless and unnecessarily tight two-person horse race no matter if one of the candidates is totally unfit for the job. We certainly saw that happen in the two George W. Bush campaigns.

That strategy was revealed recently by the CEO of CBS when he blurted out to fellow corporate elites that “Trump may be bad for the nation, but he’s good for CBS.” He was actually speaking for every one of his Big Media competitors, for they all know how lucrative long political campaigns can be for their corporate bottom line. That may be the major reason that media lobbyists will never allow our elected and bribed representatives to legislate sensible and much shorter political campaigns.

Job #1 for all for-profit corporations is to maximize income for shareholders and executives, and the main goal for Big Media is to artificially increase campaign advertising income by being sure that no political race is a runaway. To me, that is seriously reckless, perhaps treasonous behavior that needs to be condemned, and this year I will refuse to subject myself to any unnecessary emotional stress enduring hours of TV speculation from the hundreds of talking heads. This year I will wait until the morning of November 9 to hear the results and ponder my strategies for any forthcoming apocalypse.

H. L. Mencken saw through the corrupted politics of his day and expressed his cynical opinions in his regular columns in the Baltimore Sun. His comment above was written soon after the Republicans and Democrats had decided on their 1920 candidates for president.

In that campaign, the pro-business Republican Party nominee Warren Harding (and his running mate Calvin Coolidge) were opposed by the Democratic Party nominee James Cox (whose running mate was Franklin Delano Roosevelt). The Harding/Coolidge ticket won in a landslide on November 2, 1920.

But there were other third parties in the running. Indeed, the American Socialist Party candidate Eugene Debs (a prominent union organizer) garnered a million votes, despite being imprisoned at the time. During the campaign, Debs was in a federal prison serving a long sentence for sedition for criticizing the U.S. government, thus violating the 1917 Espionage Act. Responding to public outrage, Harding commuted Debs’ sentence soon after the election, but his U.S. citizenship and right to vote or run for office, which had been revoked at his 1918 sentencing, was only restored posthumously in 1976.

Debs wrote: “Wars throughout history have been waged for conquest and plunder and it is the working class who fights all the battles; the working class who makes the supreme sacrifices; the working class who freely sheds their blood and furnishes their corpse; and it is they who have never yet had a voice – in either declaring war or making peace. It is the ruling class that invariably does both. They alone declare war and they alone make peace. They are continually talking about their patriotic duty. But it is not their duty but your patriotic duty that they are concerned about. There is a decided difference. Their patriotic duty never takes them to the firing line or chucks them into the trenches.”

The two-term Democratic Party US President Woodrow Wilson (1913 – 1921) had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1919 for his heroic efforts in birthing the League of Nations after World War I (AKA “The War to End All Wars”). Wilson’s efforts concerning the League were vigorously opposed by the Republican Party, whose control of the Senate

prevented the US from ever joining the League, thus dooming its efforts at preventing international conflicts, including future world wars.

Woodrow Wilson was rejected by his Democratic Party from running for a third term. During his second term American women were given the right to vote when the 19th Amendment was passed and ratified.

The Resurgence of the KKK During the Republican Roaring 20s

The ultra-right-wing Ku Klux Klan and the related American eugenics movements peaked during the Republican administrations of Harding and Coolidge, both of whom, just like the modern GOP, urged a severely restrictive immigration policy that discriminated against war refugees. Many political leaders thought that the US had become Europe's "dumping ground" for "aliens" during WWI. Harding signed into law the Emergency Quota Act soon after taking office and Coolidge signed into law the equally restrictive Immigration Act of 1924.

President Coolidge signed the Revenue Act into law in 1926. That law further cut the size of the Federal government, reduced income taxes for the wealthy and cut into other sources of revenue, in spite of the evidence that the national economy was seriously troubled.

Corrupt Crony Capitalism and the Inevitable Crashes

The Republican-dominated Roaring 20s also featured the Scopes Monkey Trial of 1925 (pursued because fundamentalist Christians were opposed to the teaching of evolution in Tennessee's public schools). It also featured the scandalous, xenophobic Sacco and Vanzetti trial of 1927.

The GOP's conservative, low tax and small government politics hyper-stimulated the economy and caused the Wall Street speculative boom and then the Crash of 1929, which provoked a world-wide depression that directly led to the rescue of the nearly bankrupted German Nazi Party, the triumph of Hitler, the Nazi concentration camps and World War II.

The infamous presidential campaign of 2016 has exposed many of the similarities between the American pro-business two party system and what happened during the evolution of European fascism. The fact that so many Americans are historically illiterate should be a concern of every serious voter. (For just one alarming example, the American Friendly Fascist-leaning Donald Trump has admitted that he never reads books, including, apparently, history books that could have taught him something about European fascism!)

The following 13 quotes are from the megalomaniacal, demagogic, sociopathic, fascist Adolf Hitler. Each one sounds familiar to American politics and therefore should concern every American (except for the closet NeoFascists and racists among us), particularly when we understand that Hitler was a right-wing pathological liar who was wildly cheered – even worshipped – by huge crowds of otherwise "Good Germans" who blindly wanted to disregard his lies and instead believe his promise that he would single-handedly make Germany great again – all the while secretly planning for the brutal conquest of the world via his huge military machine, his obedient and very willing executioners and his world-class assortment of lethal weapons. Read these quotes and weep – and then go vote

"The streets of our country are in turmoil! The universities are filled with students rebelling

and rioting! Communists are seeking to destroy our country! Russia is threatening us with her might! Our republic is in danger, yes, danger from within and without! WE NEED LAW AND ORDER!" — Original quote from Adolf Hitler (indistinguishable from the rhetoric of Ronald Reagan two generations later).

"It also gives us a very special, secret pleasure to see how unaware the people around us are of what is really happening to them."

"What good fortune for those in power that the people do not think."

"Through clever and constant application of propaganda people can be made to see paradise as hell, and also the other way around, to consider the most wretched sort of life as paradise." – From Mein Kampf, 1923

"The fascist state must not forget that all means must serve the ends; it must not let itself be confused by the drivel about so-called "freedom of the press"...it must make sure that (the media) is placed in the service of the state." – From Mein Kampf, 1923

"I believe that I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator; by defending myself against the Jews, I am fighting for the Lord."

"Today Christians stand at the head of our country. We want to fill our culture again with the Christian spirit. We want to burn out all the recent immoral developments in literature, in the theatre, and in the press — in short, we want to burn out the poison of immorality which has entered into our whole life and culture as a result of liberal excess during the past years."

"I would like to thank Providence and the Almighty for choosing me of all people to be allowed to wage this battle for Germany." – On the Berlin March, 1936

"Never in these long years have we offered any other prayer but this: 'Lord, grant to our people peace at home, and grant and preserve to them peace from the foreign foe!'" Nuremberg Sept. 13, 1936

"If we pursue this way, if we are decent, industrious, and honest, if we so loyally and truly fulfill our duty, then it is my conviction that in the future as in the past the Lord God will always help us." – Spoken at the Harvest Thanksgiving Festival on October 3rd, 1937

"An evil exists that threatens every man, woman, and child of this great nation. We must take steps to ensure our domestic security and protect our homeland." — In proposing the creation of his homeland security group, the Gestapo

"We stand for the maintenance of private property ... We shall protect free enterprise (capitalism) as the most expedient, or rather the sole possible economic order."

"...in the Big Lie there is always a certain force of credibility; because the broad masses of a nation are always more easily corrupted...and thus in the primitive simplicity of their minds they more readily fall victims to the Big Lie than the small lie...It would never come into their heads to fabricate colossal untruths, and they would not believe that others could have the impudence to distort the truth so infamously...the grossly impudent lie always leaves traces behind it...a fact which is known to all expert liars in this world and to all who conspire together in the art of lying."

“If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it. The lie can be maintained only for such time as the State can shield the people from the political, economic and/or military consequences of the lie. It thus becomes vitally important for the State to use all of its powers to repress dissent, for the truth is the mortal enemy of the lie, and thus by extension, the truth is the greatest enemy of the State.” — Joseph Goebbels, German Nazi “Minister of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment”

“The people want wholesome dread. They want to fear something. They want someone to frighten them and make them shudderingly submissive.” — Ernst Rohm, good “friend” and ally of Hitler and chief of the SA, later to be betrayed and murdered on Hitler’s orders during the Night of the Long Knives, 1934

“Those who cast the votes decide nothing. Those who COUNT the votes decide everything.” — Joseph Stalin

“Fascism should rightly be called corporatism as it is a merger of state and corporate power.” — Benito Mussolini

“It is not necessary to bury the truth. It is sufficient merely to delay it until nobody cares.” — Napoleon Bonaparte

“(It isn’t) that US foreign policy is cruel because American leaders are cruel. It’s that our leaders are cruel because only those willing to be inordinately cruel and remorseless can hold positions of leadership in the foreign policy establishment; it might as well be written into the job description. People capable of expressing a full human measure of compassion and empathy toward faraway powerless strangers...do not become president of the United States, or vice president, or secretary of state, or national security adviser or secretary of the treasury. Nor do they want to.” — William Blum, from *Rogue State: A Guide to the World’s Only Superpower*

“If Tyranny and Oppression come to this land, it will be in the guise of fighting a foreign enemy. Of all the enemies to public liberty, war is, perhaps, the most to be dreaded because it comprises and develops the germ of every other war...No nation could preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare.” — US President James Madison, Chief Architect of the Constitution

Finally, the lyrics of the song below seem pertinent in my experience in too often having had to cast defensive votes for the “least worst” candidate.

Election Night

By John Wesley Harding

I met you on election night
As we cried over our beers
Nothing you could do would cheer me up
We broke up later that year
How come you and I aren’t winners?
Why weren’t we born on the other side?
And it’s raining
It’s raining

On election night

You fight, you fight and nothing changes
And when it does the payback's worse
We arrived here in a limo
We drove home in a hearse
And we are none the wiser
I guess we're not so bright
So I'll see you
Yes I'll see you
Next election night

The balloons look so deflated
As they burst and float on down
It's been four years we've waited
For those balloons to hit the ground
Looks like you backed a loser
Who thinks that life is black and white
But he'll be back again
And we'll be back again
Next election night.

Dr Kohls is a retired physician from Duluth, MN, USA. He writes a weekly column for the Duluth Reader, the area's alternative newsweekly magazine. His columns deal with the dangers of American fascism, corporatism, militarism, racism, malnutrition, Big Pharma's psychiatric drugging and over-vaccination regimens, and other movements that threaten the environment, health, democracy, civility and longevity of the populace. Many of his columns are archived at http://duluthreader.com/articles/categories/200_Duty_to_Warn, http://www.globalresearch.ca/authors?query=Gary+Kohls+articles&by=&p=&page_id= or at <https://www.transcend.org/tms/search/?q=gary+kohls+articles>

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