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# American 'corporarchy'

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## American 'corporarchy'

What was the real reason behind the Aug. 14 power blackout? And how might George W. Bush's tough talk be boiled down to a matter of "power lust"? Next Thursday these and other questions will be discussed by Dan Butts, a Pleasant Ridge psychologist and recent author of "How Corporation\$ Hurt Us All." Butts is a columnist for the Southfield-based phenomeNews and co-founder of the Michigan and Metro Detroit Holistic Health associations. Daniel Sturm interviews Butts:

Q: You argue that corporations are hurting us all. How so?

Butts: It isn't just corporate money, but also the corporate culture due to teams of political lobbyists, lawyers and spin masters that make corporations into something like hydra-headed monsters. In a real sense, we live under a "corporarchy."

Q: And how does a "corporarchy" affect U.S. democracy?

Butts: Candidates either have to be wealthier or willing to cow-tow to wealthy corporate interest. And when that happens, there is of course an obligation that comes with these wealthy corporate contributors. This influences who's able to run, who gets elected and what kind of policies are imposed on everybody.

Q: Do you think the Democratic Party will be able to turn this situation around?

Butts: It would be great if we had a truly "Democratic" Party. One democratic candidate, Howard Dean, says he is a representative of "the democratic wing of the Democratic Party." Third parties also certainly play a role, but in terms of making our electoral system fairer, there are campaign finance reform movements in a number of states. For example, Ferndale recently held a City Council meeting to discuss Choice Voting, which has been adopted in many countries throughout the world. With Choice Voting, those who voted for Ralph Nader in the 2000 election would not have wasted their vote. Their second choice would have been the operative one, when Nader didn't get enough votes. That would have given Al Gore the victory.

Q: George W. Bush, who was arguably never elected president, has now pushed the United States into another war. Despite huge opposition, he seems to be getting away with it. Any thoughts on this?

Butts: Yes. If more people knew the truth, for instance that we'll soon have spent about \$500 billion in Iraq, they wouldn't approve of Bush's war politics. This spending means that all kinds of social programs are being cut, that schools close, that we have fewer police on the beat and that we suffer from things like power-shortages.

Q: How do you interpret the power crisis, then?

Butts: The power crisis in 2000 in California is very instructive. Afterward, rates in some communities went up 300 percent. One lesson the nation needs to learn is that conservation does make a difference. I have a whole chapter in my book on this subject. Technology helps some, but being more aware creates power! My God, it can be as simple as turning out the lights when we leave a room.

And there was another thing that made a difference in California, in terms of getting away from a 'profit at any price' mentality: The communities that maintained reasonable prices after the power crises were Sacramento and San Francisco. They have community-owned utility companies and a lot more control. And they're also getting power from green energy sources.

Q: You use the term "power-lust" to describe the current Zeitgeist of western societies. What exactly do you mean?

Butts: It is our male conditioning and imperialism that really plays into this. In a democracy, I think, we need leaders who empower the people, rather than imposing power.

Q: So, would you prescribe psychological therapy for George W. Bush?

Butts: Well, that's not a bad idea - subjecting politicians to some kind of test. It doesn't have to be formal, but why not let the public be aware of any serious psychological character problems they might have? In the last chapter of my book, I envision an era of new leaders, who could recognize their own limitations and power-needs.

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