

My son and I recently attended a talk regarding Income Inequality at the Orpheum Theatre in downtown Vancouver. I went because the speaker has had hundreds of his articles published in progressive websites like OpEdNews, and I always had thought of him as one of the good guys.

Now I don't.

I've tried a number of different approaches to writing about the event and I thought it was best to keep the speaker anonymous for now and just let his statements speak for themselves.

What's happening in the United States, the divisiveness, the polarization, again, is related to this fundamental economic problem. Because when so many people feel that they're working so hard, they're working harder than ever, but they're not getting anywhere. They're actually falling behind. They feel economically insecure.

*When all of those people feel that the game is rigged against them, they get angry. They get frustrated. **They're very prone to demagogues on the left or the right** - it doesn't matter who want to point the finger of blame at immigrants or at the poor or at the rich, at corporations or at government or at the trade unions. There's a lot of blame to go around."*

This was the first WTF moment.

They're very prone to demagogues on the left or the right

The definition of a demagogue is a person, especially an orator or political leader, who appeals to the emotions, fears, prejudices, and ignorance of less-educated citizens in order to gain power and promote a political agenda.

My first thought was and were talking about the United States now where oh where are the *demagogues on the left?*

Were up to our
eyeballs

with Right-Wing Demagogues. We've got the Tea Party infesting the Senate with Paul, Rubio, and Cruz with Bachmann, Gohmert, and King in the House. How about the entire FOX News roster and every single cretin on right wing talk radio? But where in the hell are these Left Wing Straw Man demagogues he referred to? Left Wing demagogues dont exist today, nor have they existed in the U.S. over last century.

But Right Wing demagogues have been around for *years*.

You can point to Father Charles Coughlin in the 30s, the anti-commie crusaders in the 40s and 50s personified by Joe McCarthy, and racists rallied behind George Wallace in the 60s. Ronald Reagan blew up the Fairness Doctrine in 1987 and Rush Limbaugh has been polluting the airwaves ever since.

It is true that angry, frustrated, uninformed people are very prone to demagogues. But in the United States, the demagogues are historically the Right-Wing variety.

Its interesting to note the speaker was giving his talk during the time Right-Wing demagogues had successfully shut down the government of the United States.

The next WTF moment came when the speaker talked about globalization, one of the fundamental forces driving income inequality.

He said, *Globalization is one of those words to have gone from obscurity to meaningless without any intervening period of coherence. Everything is coming from everywhere. There is not any such thing as an American car, a United States car, a British car. Everything, parts for almost every product, are coming from all over the world. We tend to think that everything is going to go to the place with the lowest wages.* ***That's another fallacy.***

Seriously? I've got a *house* full of products that prove him wrong. So do you. From televisions, computers, media players, and smart phones, to toasters, coffee makers, clothing, and shoes they *all* are manufactured where wages and working conditions are substantially lower than found in the U.S..

The example he gave to show that low wages are not the critical variable in deciding where to manufacture a product was a medical device designed in France and fabricated in Germany. Then he said, *Its not just wages, in other words. Its actually productivity, its innovation, it is value, and much of that in turn depends on education.*

That's nonsense.

The manufacture of the hard drive in my computer is an extremely toxic process, and gives cancer to women in Thailand and elsewhere who assemble them. They work 60 hours a week and are paid about \$270 a month. The company that manufactures computer hard drives didn't choose to have the work done in Thailand instead of the U.S. because the workers are more *ed ucated*

. They chose Thailand because they could get away with it.

Then came the third WTF moment.

In the fight against income inequality, the speaker cautioned against playing The Blame Game. When he said that, it reminded me of Barack Obama's opposition to investigating the crimes of the Bush/Cheney Regime citing what he called " *a belief that we need to look forward as*

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opposed to looking backwards.

"

I don't call it The Blame Game. I call it Accountability.

The people who championed free trade agreements which allowed businesses to set up sweat shops around the globe should be held accountable.

The people who supported repealing the Glass-Steagall Legislation thus unleashing Wall Streets ability to gut the worlds economy and millions of peoples lives should be held accountable.

The people who lied the U.S. into the death and destruction of war should be held accountable.

The people who rape and pillage the planet for easy cash should be held accountable.

The people who gamed the political system to turn a representative democracy into an oligarchy should be held accountable.

Without accountability how can *anyone* take the first micro-baby steps to address income inequality?

But if he wants to call it The Blame Game I cant stop him. He says pah-tah-toe and I say pah-tay-toe and all these bastards should be doing serious jail time.

Throughout the talk, the speaker made some good points:

Raise the minimum wage

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Strengthen workers voices

Invest in Education

Reform Wall Street

Fix the Tax System

And Get Big Money Out of Politics.

But as long as the people dont have a clear idea of how we found ourselves in this brave new world of massive income inequality the chances of implementing his ideas are right around zero.

Its time to end the cheap suspense. The Speaker was Dr. Robert Reich whose wiki entry reads:

Robert Bernard Reich is an American political economist, professor, author, and political commentator. He served in the administrations of Presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter and was Secretary of Labor under President Bill Clinton from 1993 to 1997.

At the end of the talk Reich received a standing ovation. The only reason I stood up was to get the hell out of there.

You can find a transcript of his talk here:

<http://www.straight.com/news/498931/robert-reich-explains-how-globalization-technology-and-natural-resources-are-reshaping-global-economy>

...and a complete video of the event is on Youtube. Just search for An Evening with Robert Reich.

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http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AnzCvW_R0IM