

Letters from our readers

12 February 2013

On “Netflix’s US remake of House of Cards stands up despite weaknesses”

I welcome Netflix’s *House of Cards* as an antidote to the popular, long-running TV series *The West Wing*. The latter was a liberal fantasy in which serving in the executive or legislative branch was a noble calling, in which navigation of the corridors of power would eventually lead to a good end.

The new *House of Cards* nicely shows how both branches of government are filled with thugs, liars, con men, and murderers. The political and the corporate are interchangeable. In fact, the ex-press secretary of the main character, Francis Underwood, is now the main lobbyist for a large natural gas multinational corporation; in this capacity, he and Underwood continue their conniving and scheming.

Much of what Underwood does in this series parallels the intricate, self-serving machinations of Lyndon Baines Johnson in Congress and in the presidency, as detailed in Robert Caro’s masterful multivolume biography (Underwood actually has a framed photo of himself shaking hands with LBJ hanging in his office). I’m sure that Caro’s books were a major resource for this series.

I also recommend, based on my viewing of the first season, the popular cable series *Homeland*. It has a *Manchurian Candidate* kind of plot, and its pivotal event (so rarely mentioned anywhere else on TV) is the drone bombing by the US of the Middle East and its cover-up by the administration and its intelligence agencies.

Marty J
Cambridge, Massachusetts
11 February 2013

I liked the original and usually eschew (esp.) US remakes (such as *Traffic*). Your analysis decides me otherwise.

So thanks!

Siusaidh

9 February 2013

On “Eighty years since Hitler’s coming to power”

Dear Peter,

I think that your article answers a question that David Walsh, art and culture critic at WSWs, posed in his recent article: “How many Jimmy Lee Dykeses are there in the US...?”

The answer is: Roughly same number you’d have found in Nazi Germany in 1933. These “dregs of society”, drawn from the “desperate layers of the petty-bourgeoisie and the lumpen proletariat” are being mobilized, so to speak, within the ranks of US government agencies. They have been for years.

To say, as Mr. Walsh states it, that these “ultra-right and even fascistic elements” are “anti-government” is correct, but imprecise. What is happening is that they are occupying positions at every level of the government to thwart any application of existing laws that were passed under historically liberal administrations. These laws are being systematically dismantled under the Obama administration, at about the same rate that the ice caps are melting, with similar social consequences.

This manifests itself in curious ways in the workplace. In my field of work—natural resource management—the entire work environment is inverted. The cadres of science—hydrologists, chemists, anthropologists, etc—provide a phony framework to advance careers in administration, maintenance and law enforcement, and not to perform any useful management of national resources in the public interest. The researchers and field technicians are the Merovingian kings of the government service, preserved for strictly ceremonial functions—or worse. The non-science staff tolerates them with amused contempt.

The career-level scientists are complicit in this charade. The level of cynicism is breathtaking. The

reason for this is that none of the career staff adopts a stance against the business interests that profit handsomely from use of public lands—timber, mining and cattle grazing, and dominate land use policy. And none of the resource managers considers mobilizing workers in opposition to the destructive practices that have been underway for decades.

The hiring personnel see to it that resumes and references are fully vetted to weed out any trace of independent thinking or action in the prospective labor pool. The “desperate layers of the petty-bourgeoisie and the lumpen proletariat” are identified and given preference. The government agencies are nothing but thug-o-cracies, with a few well-mannered spokespersons to offer platitudes on the need for responsible government.

The Democratic Party has provided us with President Barack Obama as Thug-in-Chief, or more correctly, the “Dyke”-in-Chief, as he personally fingers individuals for the Pentagon’s weekly “terrorist kill list”.

Are not these developments analogous to those that emerged in Germany during the years leading up to 1933?

Randy R
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7 February 2013

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