

## **“These are the Times. . .”**

by John Perkins via stan - ICH *Friday, Nov 4 2011, 10:37pm*  
international / imperialism / other press

### **“A man in debt is so far a slave.” - Ralph Waldo Emerson**

My job as an economic mercenary during the 1970s was to enslave nations that had resources our corporations coveted by burdening them with debts they could never repay. We then demanded that they sell those resources cheap, without social or environmental regulations, to our corporations.

It was an incredibly successful strategy. In essence it created the world's first truly global empire and the first one that was not built primarily through military occupations. It also transformed geopolitics. The power of elected officials was usurped by those who sit at the top of the multinational corporations (the 'corporatocracy').

This success led to the realization that similar strategies could be applied in the United States in order to emasculate a population that was exerting its democratic rights in ways that threatened the corporatocracy – forcing an end to the highly profitable Vietnam War, demanding racial and gender equality, increasing social security, Medicare, education, and other services.

By 1980, the Reagan administration understood that its most effective weapon to protect corporations against labor movements was debt. Borrowers were deceived into believing that they were paying low interest rates when in fact balloon payments, adjustable rate mortgages, and other technically complex packages resulted in higher overall rates that made it increasingly difficult to break the shackles of debt.

This story continued. Regulations that protected our rights were demolished. New wars erupted. Family businesses were wiped out by the unfair practices of huge chains. The media was commandeered by a handful of giant conglomerates. Unemployment, poverty and foreclosures escalated. The upward trend line of a growing and prospering middle class plummeted.

We the people fell into a trance of lethargy.

Until now!

We have finally realized that we are serfs of a system that reflects the feudal Middle Ages. Modern-day lords of the castle, the corporatocracy had convinced us – we who live outside the walls and supply all the food and conveniences for them – that if we didn't pay our “debts” and service their every desire we would be raped and pillaged by soldiers from neighboring castles. But we are no longer buying their lies.

Across this planet, we have marched into the courtyards of those castles with the message that we are no longer blind. We will not be hoodwinked by their false promises or by their fear tactics. The Occupy movement spans seven continents. Participation expands at seemingly exponential rates, online as well as at the front lines. It is the largest mass protest since those against the Vietnam War – and may well turn into the largest in human history.

Those at Wall St. and in the financial and political system who operate above the law without remorse or penalty and have believed for a long time that workers saddled with debt will not strike, quit, or demand justice, are hearing our message.

There are those among us who express skepticism. They say nothing will come of this. They are wrong. The Occupy movement has already changed the world and we must continue forward. With the recent arrests and uptake of policing these events, we must pay attention that our democracy and free speech is at threat.

The corporatocracy are striking back. They are writing new laws forbidding us to assemble in places like Wall Street. They are attempting to censor the Internet (as they did in Egypt). They will come up with schemes we can't even imagine.

Each time they do this we must utilize their energy to inspire and empower us further. Coming from a place where we know we are right, we will employ the aikido of love, compassion, and cooperation to keep expanding our energy, our resolve, and our creative responses.

At a time during the American Revolution, when things looked very dire, Tom Paine wrote:

"These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. . . A generous parent should say, "If there must be trouble, let it be in my day, that my child may have peace." . . . 'Tis the business of little minds to shrink; but he whose heart is firm, and whose conscience approves his conduct, will pursue his principles unto death. . . By perseverance and fortitude we have the prospect of a glorious issue."

This is another of those times. Our souls are being tried. This is our opportunity to stand firm, to show our perseverance and fortitude. This is a time our children and grandchildren will sing about. Their ballads will praise us for bringing them the world we all deserve..

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