

KILL THE BILL

This is Clive's entry in Hospital Doctor on 5th August. If you are in doubt about the value of putting your head above the parapet then read the following text sent to me by Michael Moore in which he describes precisely why the USA is in such a mess with the really rich getting very much richer and the rest getting nothing.

He puts this down to the American middle classes failing to put their heads above the parapet when Ronald Reagan was the US President. Remember also that he and Maggie Thatcher were buddies.

And what did Maggie Thatcher do for the NHS?

Yes. That's right. She started to kill it off with a cumulative poison, like arsenic, whereby the hands of the administrators are no longer obvious by the time the victim dies.

<http://www.hospitaldr.co.uk/blogs/nhs-consultants-association/we-all-need-to-get-behind-anti-health-bill-campaign>

Michael Moore's seminal assessment of the folly in keeping a low profile.

30 Years Ago Today: The Day the Middle Class Died ...a letter from Michael Moore

Friday, August 5th, 2011

Dear Friends,

From time to time, someone under 30 will ask me, "When did this all begin, America's downward slide?" They say they've heard of a time when working people could raise a family and send the kids to college on just one parent's income (and that college in states like California and New York was almost free). That anyone who wanted a decent paying job could get one. That people only worked five days a week, eight hours a day, got the whole weekend off and had a paid vacation every summer. That many jobs were union jobs, from baggers at the grocery store to the guy painting your house, and this meant that no matter how "lowly" your job was you had guarantees of a pension, occasional raises, health insurance and someone to stick up for you if you were unfairly treated.

Young people have heard of this mythical time -- but it was no myth, it was real. And when they ask, "When did this all end?", I say, "It ended on this day: August 5th, 1981."

Beginning on this date, 30 years ago, Big Business and the Right Wing decided to "go for it" -- to see if they could actually destroy the middle class so that they could become richer themselves.

And they've succeeded.

On August 5, 1981, President Ronald Reagan fired every member of the air traffic controllers union (PATCO) who'd defied his order to return to work and declared their union illegal. They had been on strike for just two days.

It was a bold and brash move. No one had ever tried it. What made it even bolder was that PATCO was one of only three unions that had endorsed Reagan for president! It sent a shock wave through workers across the country. If he would do this to the people who were with him, what would he do to us?

Reagan had been backed by Wall Street in his run for the White House and they, along with right-wing Christians, wanted to restructure America and turn back the tide that President Franklin D. Roosevelt started -- a tide that was intended to make life better for the average working person. The rich hated paying better wages and providing benefits. They hated paying taxes even more. And they despised unions. The right-wing Christians hated anything that sounded like socialism or holding out a helping hand to minorities or women.

Reagan promised to end all that. So when the air traffic controllers went on strike, he seized the moment. In getting rid of every single last one of them and outlawing their union, he sent a clear and strong message: The days of everyone having a comfortable middle class life were over. America, from now on, would be run this way:

* The super-rich will make more, much, much more, and the rest of you will scramble for the crumbs that are left.

* Everyone must work! Mom, Dad, the teenagers in the house! Dad, you work a second job! Kids, here's your latch-key! Your parents might be home in time to put you to bed.

* 50 million of you must go without health insurance! And health insurance companies: you go ahead and decide who you want to help -- or not.

* Unions are evil! You will not belong to a union! You do not need an advocate! Shut up and get back to work! No, you can't leave now, we're not done. Your kids can make their own dinner.

* You want to go to college? No problem -- just sign here and be in hock to a bank for the next 20 years!

* What's "a raise"? Get back to work and shut up!

And so it went. But Reagan could not have pulled this off by himself in 1981. He had some big help:

The AFL-CIO.

The biggest organization of unions in America told its members to cross the picket lines of the air traffic controllers and go to work. And that's just what these union members did. Union pilots, flight attendants, delivery truck drivers, baggage handlers -- they all crossed the line and helped to break the strike. And union members of all stripes crossed the picket lines and continued to fly.

Reagan and Wall Street could not believe their eyes! Hundreds of thousands of working people and union members endorsing the firing of fellow union members. It was Christmas in August for Corporate America.

And that was the beginning of the end. Reagan and the Republicans knew they could get away with anything -- and they did. They slashed taxes on the rich. They made it harder for you to start a union at your workplace. They eliminated safety regulations on the job. They ignored the monopoly laws and allowed thousands of companies to merge or be bought out and closed down. Corporations froze wages and threatened to move overseas if the workers didn't accept lower pay and less benefits. And when the workers agreed to work for less, they moved the jobs overseas anyway.

And at every step along the way, the majority of Americans went along with this. There was little opposition or fight-back. The "masses" did not

rise up and protect their jobs, their homes, their schools (which used to be the best in the world). They just accepted their fate and took the beating.

I have often wondered what would have happened had we all just stopped flying, period, back in 1981. What if all the unions had said to Reagan, "Give those controllers their jobs back or we're shutting the country down!""? You know what would have happened. The corporate elite and their boy Reagan would have buckled.

But we didn't do it. And so, bit by bit, piece by piece, in the ensuing 30 years, those in power have destroyed the middle class of our country and, in turn, have wrecked the future for our young people. Wages have remained stagnant for 30 years. Take a look at the statistics and you can see that every decline we're now suffering with had its beginning in 1981 (here's a little scene to illustrate that from my last movie).

It all began on this day, 30 years ago. One of the darkest days in American history. And we let it happen to us. Yes, they had the money, and the media and the cops. But we had 200 million of us. Ever wonder what it would look like if 200 million got truly upset and wanted their country, their life, their job, their weekend, their time with their kids back?

Have we all just given up? What are we waiting for? Forget about the 20% who support the Tea Party -- we are the other 80%! This decline will only end when we demand it. And not through an online petition or a tweet. We are going to have to turn the TV and the computer and the video games off and get out in the streets (like they've done in Wisconsin). Some of you need to run for local office next year. We need to demand that the Democrats either get a spine and stop taking corporate money -- or step aside.

When is enough, enough? The middle class dream will not just magically reappear. Wall Street's plan is clear: America is to be a nation of Haves and Have Nothings. Is that OK for you?

Why not use today to pause and think about the little steps you can take to turn this around in your neighborhood, at your workplace, in your school? Is there any better day to start than today?

Yours,
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P.S. Here are a few places you can connect with to get the ball rolling:

Showdown in America

Democracy Convention

Occupy Wall Street

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How to Join a Union, from the AFL-CIO (They've learned their lesson and have a good president now) or UE

Change to Win

MoveOn

High School Newspaper (Just because you're under 18 doesn't mean you can't do anything!)