

To the Ester Republic

During a radio interview I heard recently, I learned something that I'd like to pass on to young people. Author Thom Hartmann was being interviewed about problems with corporations as monopolies, and this led to a discussion of what fascism is, what it means. It's a word and a political system, which I very much want young people to fully comprehend, and to recognize it when they are experiencing it. The Hartmann interview was important because he pointed out his discovery of a compelling fact. He said that the dictionary definition of fascism had been changed between the 1960s and the 1990s. I don't know how he discovered this, but I have checked. He is quite correct. Here is a definition from a 1965 G.C Merriam dictionary:

Fascism [Ital. Fascismo, from fascio, to bundle together] 2: a political philosophy, movement, or regime that exalts nation and race and stands for a centralized, autocratic government headed by a dictatorial leader, severe economic and social regimentation, and forcible suppression of opposition.

If you look up fascism in a more recent dictionary, here's how that definition changes, for instance in the 1992 World Book dictionary: fascism 1. Any system of government in which property is privately owned but all industry and labor are regulated by a strong national government, while all opposition is rigorously suppressed.

I think any reasonable person would say the second, later version of what fascism means is watered down, milder, and might even fit modern America after September 11, 2001. What is the USA Patriot Act if not a rigorous suppression of opposition? The Fairbanks city council and local Bill of Rights Defense Committee should be thanked regularly for comprehending this and passing the first resolution against it in Alaska.

Some questions immediately arise. Why would the dictionary definition of a savage and discredited form of government change like this, and who would do it? It is not an accident. Why the clear emphasis on private property in the later definition, and not in the first? The fundamental means of controlling people is to control their language, and try to give new meanings to old concepts. This is what propaganda is all about. The American Civil Liberties Union is dedicated to protection, with unswerving devotion, of our basic rights as expressed in the Bill of Rights. Get to know the ACLU (and the Alaska Civil Liberties Union) and what it stands for. The civil liberties you enjoy are your inalienable rights, your legacy as an American. Protect and honor them. The price of liberty, as Thomas Jefferson proclaimed, is eternal vigilance. Your greatest freedom is dissent. It is also your highest duty, as a patriot, when you see your government heading in a bad direction, to point it out and protest. That's the way to build a civilization.

And it is also what those people are doing at the corner of Geist and University Avenues every Saturday. You might want to give them the same thanks and high regard. They deserve it too.

Ever watchful,
Rich Seifert