

THE COCKROACH VS THE DINOSAUR

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Today we are witnessing the unfolding of new conditions of life resulting ultimately from the unheard of speed and scope of profound technological changes. These conditions are creating both a newly emerging class of poor folks and new means of struggle to be wielded by this new social and global force. These new means are necessitating new methods for using them. Such means of struggle as housing takeovers, tent city struggles, cooperative survival projects, the poor and homeless use of their own eNews and computer networks, etc are all considerations in the emerging new war to end poverty forever. The art of leadership, that is the art of strategy and tactics in this war, is the art of adapting the newly arising means of struggle to the objectives of human survival and human happiness. Leaders must be educated and trained in this art. Comparing the ways and means of the cockroach to those of the dinosaur gives us some lessons in this regard.

The dinosaurs are extinct. They could not adapt. In other words, they could not take up and use other means of survival left or placed at their disposal by new conditions. The new conditions eliminated or made obsolete their old means of survival and they perished.

The mass extinction of the dinosaurs took place 65 million years ago. So far most theories agree that the extinction was not a slow evolutionary process but one that was "leap-like" concentrated in a relatively short period of time. Increasing fossil evidences seem to give more scientific credence to a leading theory on how and why the extinction happened. This theory says that a cataclysmic bombardment of the earth surface by a gigantic meteor took place. This created a huge dust that blocked out the sunlight for a period the estimates of which range from many months to a thousand years. The dinosaurs-the dominant life forms at the time- were destroyed in turn as death went up the food chain starting with the plant life immediately and totally dependent on sunlight. The cockroaches lived through this period. Their make-up, capabilities, and sensibilities enabled them to survive and adapt to the new environmental conditions created by the cataclysmic changes.

The cockroaches are one of the oldest species still in existence. They are 350 million years old. They are most noted for their adaptability to changing conditions of life. Contributing to this highly developed adaptability is their large scale reproductive capacity (one cockroach can give birth to 400,000 descendants in a year) and the size, structure, and chemical make-up of their bodies. Their antennas and other sensory organs give them extreme sensitivity to light and air movements, which contribute to their speed and quick maneuverability. Their ability to keenly sense tiny food nutrients in extremely varied and scarce environmental situations make them resourceful and resilient.

These capabilities constitute their main strengths and limitations and therefore helped define their "tactical" and long-term methods of survival. They operate mainly at night while most other animal species are asleep. Their main method of defense is rapid retreat. "Bases of operations" are the last line of retreat created out of hidden places most difficult to access and less frequented by predators or killer sprays. The "bases of operations" serve as temporary protection for especially the impregnated females (who are capable of giving birth to 16-32 roaches per egg carried). These females reside in the center of the "bases" and produce new "soldiers" in the struggle for survival. Another effective method of defense is the ability of an entire cockroach concentration to scatter and quickly retreat to a new and harder to reach "bases of operation" when old ones are exposed to direct assaults.

Few animal creatures have exhibited such flexible abilities for extended existence. Only human beings have exhibited comparable potential abilities. They lie in their unique mental capacities. This gives them the ability to study and predict generally the changing conditions and to adopt and adapt, in the most advantageous strategic and tactical way, the means of survival and struggle provided by environmental, economic, and social conditions. Leadership is essentially the art of the possible, which includes most importantly an appreciation of necessity. In other words, this means a leader is someone who has the ability relatively quickly to assess a problem presented by conditions and to ascertain the appropriate means for its solution. Political leadership is the putting forth and organizing of social solutions to social problems involving the art of strategy and tactics. It is therefore necessary to human survival especially in social and political conflicts. However it's only source is the human mental process.

Let us do as the cockroach and not as the dinosaur. Let us develop, train, and use our strength of adaptability as expressed through our capacity to think and study the survival problems we face so as to solve them. The sensitive instincts of the cockroach must be matched by our mental capacity to attain accurate knowledge about our conditions and about the strengths and limitations of both our enemy and ourselves. This is essential if we are to defend ourselves and defeat our enemies who benefit from and defend a presently unnecessary profit-driven, poverty-producing and human-murdering system.

The instincts of the dinosaur could not prevent it from becoming extinct. If we persist in only using short-sighted individual "instincts" in our day to day struggle for survival without thinking, without the needed knowledge that takes us beyond the surface to the substance of the matter, then those "instincts" will not add up to even those of the dinosaur. This is to say nothing of the sophisticated intelligence of our enemy and the complexity of our ever-changing economic and social environment.

To out-fight our enemies we must out-smart them. Nowhere in world history can anyone find where a dumb force rose up and defeated a smart force. The source of smart strategy and tactics, and the most powerful and revolutionary weapon in the struggle for human survival, is the human thinking and feeling capacity. Political and theoretical education and training in the strategic, tactical, and technical skills of organizing and fighting are the keys to wielding this weapon, to acquiring and adapting the necessary means of building a broad and powerful social movement to eliminate poverty all together and to better the lives of all.

This is what the Annie Smart Leadership Development Institute is all about. It is an education and training institute created and run mostly by poor and homeless people. In the war to end poverty we cannot allow or rely on our enemy to create and provide "leaders" for us. Daily the growing struggles for survival are producing new soldiers with the potential to become new leaders who can see further and feel deeper. The Institute is about the development of these soldiers into generals. To accomplish this, our approach must include not only "popular education" but also intermediate and advanced education. Smart leadership not only put forth solutions to problems but also organizes the carrying out of those solutions. Generals must be educated and trained to organize a mighty army to wipe out poverty and homelessness forever.

POWER, RACE, AND DEMOCRACY

Power and Wealth Define "Race":

Excerpt from *Ideology and Race in American History*

by *Barbara J. Fields*

According to a story that is probably apocryphal but nonetheless telling, an American journalist once asked the late Papa Doc Duvalier of Haiti what percentage of the Haitian population was white. Duvalier's answer, astonishingly enough, was "Ninety-eight percent." The startled American journalist was sure he had either misheard or been misunderstood, and put his question again. Duvalier assured him that he had heard and understood the question perfectly well, and had given the correct answer. Struggling to make sense of this incredible piece of information, the American finally asked Duvalier: "How do you define white?" Duvalier answered the question with a question: "How do you define black in your country?" Receiving the explanation that in the United States anyone with any black blood was considered black, Duvalier nodded and said, "Well, that's the way we define white in my country."

Their Democracy and Our Democracy:

Excerpt from *Storm from the Mountains* (Documentary on the Zapatistas' March from Chiapas to Mexico City, February, 2001)

"Mexico has advanced by throwing out the PRI [the political party that has ruled Mexico for the last 70 years], but it hasn't advanced with democracy. For us, democracy is essential. It's not just stuffing a piece of paper into a box and goodbye, see you in six years! For us, it has to do with daily life. We learned that from the Zapatistas and we learned it from our own struggle.

"There is no democracy in health. There is no democracy in the economy. There is no democracy in education. Only a few have healthcare, education, and work.

"There is no democracy in food. The poorest of this country don't eat and they die of hunger.

"There is no democracy in justice, the poor are in jail.

"And it's the majority that doesn't eat. It's the majority that lives in malnutrition.

"It's the majority that doesn't go to school. It's the majority that doesn't have healthcare."