

OCCAM'S RAZOR*Published
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About four months ago I saw the film "Allies". Most of it was a well presented but highly partisan attack on the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and it concluded with an equally unbalanced account of the sins of Prime Minister Hawke. I first marvelled at the willingness of the socialist forces to cut up one of their own, but then my wonderment turned to where they found the resources to produce such a very expensive hatchet. Who would want to finance an attack on a Labor Party Prime Minister accusing him of being a tool of the CIA ?

In view of all the variety of natural wonders, it is surprising how much effort the environmental lobby concentrates on the West's energy sources. Of course hydro dams, oil transported through sensitive seaways, oil drilling, uranium mining, nuclear and thermal power stations do impinge on the ecosystem but they seem to be singled out for special attention.

In view of all the barriers to efficient economy raised by despotic governments and monopolies of capital and labour (it is remarkable that the free world's financial system should be blamed for third world poverty.) It is remarkable that although most aid comes to the poor nations from Western nations that a New International Economic Order should not concentrate, at least initially, on the Communist block's failure to contribute as much. It does seem that at least sometimes the target is not third world poverty but the West's economic system.

South Africa and Israel both look to me to be governed by illiberal regimes which have far too much unrestrained power to push around the people who live within their respective borders. Both governments have an essentially socialist approach to regulation, and in my judgement both governments exercise authority to the detriment of liberty. South Africa denies votes to blacks and coloureds and is also thus a flawed democracy. However, compared to Uganda, Libya, Iran, Vietnam, USSR and many others, they don't seem so very bad. Why are they singled out for criticism ?

Why does the peace movement demand unilateral disarmament of USA but never stages a decent demonstration in any of the Warsaw Pact capitals ? Again it is not the fact of the peace movement but the extraordinary imbalance which is remarkable. 84-2

Considering that multi-national companies are comprised of local, mostly unionised, voluntarily employed workers, and they have neither police nor armies, the sins of which they are accused do seem beyond their capacity.

It seems as though any institutional arrangement which contributes to the West's economic or military strength is the subject of a well financed conspiracy of denigration.

The trouble with most conspiracy theories is that they advance complicated explanations for simple events. A time honoured principle for rational conduct of argument, attributed to William of Occam, is that no more things should be presumed to exist than are absolutely necessary, or that unnecessarily complex explanations of observed phenomena ought not to be accepted. "Occam's Razor" actually lends support to the theory that Communists conspire through the activities of some protest and lobby groups to weaken the Democracies.

Shorn of leftist assumptions of good and bad, dishonest use of juxtaposition to imply what could not be stated, and cruel quotation of fine men who had reached their dotage, "Allies" would still have made the point that the CIA uses influence and argument to advance the interests of the United States in Australia. This is hardly a revelation.

The same must be expected of the Soviet equivalent, the KGB. A KGB or other Soviet agent who does not advance the interest of the Soviet Union by the means which he judges most effective and least costly to the Soviets would not be a fit agent. The most important difference between the two organisations is the restraint imposed on the methods employed by the CIA by a liberal democratic people.

It is cheaper and less risky to encourage free people to oppose industries and weapon systems than it is to launch missiles at them. Although manned by the sincerest of people, demonstrations at Pine Gap, on Greenham Common and elsewhere serve Soviet strategic ends. It would be surprising - too surprising to be credible - if the Soviets do not try to subsidise 'movements' in Western Countries which enhance the relative strength of the Soviet Union. 84-2

The CIA's task is more difficult. Sit down strikes in Red Square are not possible. The CIA must rely on a few clandestine newspapers and Voice of America broadcasts. Similarly, on the grounds that it would be surprising if it did not, I have no doubt that, in Western and Third World Countries, the CIA subsidises opinion in favour of liberal democracy and the Western defence system.

One of the important differences between Communist and free societies is that we let them try to influence us. We should; even the KGB won't always be wrong, and rules which stifle the KGB would stifle other legitimate views. However, although all views deserve an equal opportunity, not all views deserve equal repute. When confronted by argument which might be emotionally motivated we should ask who benefits. The answer to that question will not necessarily tell whether us ^ it is right but it could explain a lot.

I believe it explains why the greeny and peacenic arguments are so one-sided and so well financed, and even explains attempts to discredit a Labor Party Prime Minister who reaffirmed solidarity with the Western Alliance. Nice people who use money and potted arguments often have no way of knowing their origin, and even if they do know that the source is foreign, if they believe in their case then they are entitled to accept help to put it.

It is often difficult to separate propaganda from argument but when an "argument" benefits a nation which has both the motive and the capacity to subsidise its presentation, scepticism is only prudence.

Tolerance of opposing views is proper, but (a liberal society is under no obligation to tax itself to subsidise conservation and peace movements) which almost exclusively advance arguments which undermine that society, The subsidies of our opponents, in an otherwise free market of ideas, are enough.