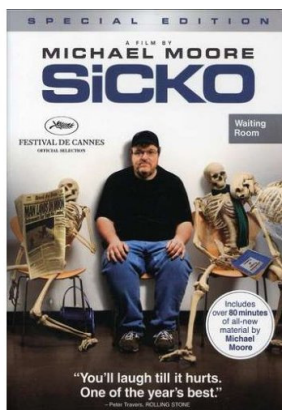


Healthcare, corporate payoffs, and your news

August 2, 2007

Have you ever gone to a movie and not been able to get it out of your head – so that weeks or even months later you’re still thinking about it? That’s what happened to me after I saw Michael Moore’s new film, “Sicko.”



“Sicko” told me a lot of things I already knew about American healthcare, having experienced much of it myself – about how little America values human life; and about how we are only given medical care if someone, somewhere makes a profit from it.

I already knew most of that stuff, because I’ve been denied medical care myself, since gay people aren’t eligible for VA benefits and since people with chronic illnesses are “uninsurable” in America. What stuck in my mind, after watching “Sicko,” had less to do with how we Americans are metered out healthcare and more to do with how people in England, Canada, France and even Cuba all receive excellent healthcare – because in the rest of the civilized world, a person’s life is apparently considered more important than corporate and political kickbacks.

One American who now lives in France summed up the entire film in a few words that ring so true that I can’t get them out of my head. In France, she said, “The government is afraid of the people, they’re afraid of protests, they’re afraid of reactions from the people, whereas in the States people are afraid of the government. They’re afraid of acting up, they’re afraid of protesting, they’re afraid of getting out.”

That’s what I’ve been thinking about these past few weeks – that remark about Americans being afraid of our government – and I’m afraid that truer words have never been spoken.

It hasn’t always been this way. I remember growing up in a small Kansas town in the 1970s, when we still believed in our government, and when the policeman on the corner was someone you would turn to when you needed help. Fast forward to 2007, and the government barely even tries to hide it’s own corruption -- and we pray, as we pass the policeman on the corner, drunk with his own power, that he will



not improperly detain or arrest us. Driving the speed limit is no longer sufficient for Americans... we must also pray that the officer behind us isn't having a bad day, because he's just as likely to give us a ticket for speeding regardless of our actual speed.

In a nation so marked and so affected by near universal corruption, one must wonder where we can go from here. Is there still hope in a country where we are taught to cower in fear from the very people we hired to protect us?

Thank God for the press! We may live in fear of our power-hungry and corrupt government, but America is still great, because we have a free press, right? Well... that used to be right... but alas, that's changing, too.

Let's look at FOX News, which was purchased a few years ago by Australian media magnate Rupert Murdoch. Almost immediately, the "news" Fox reported began to less resemble truth and more look like Murdoch's own ultra-conservative platform. Of FOX News, MoveOn.org says, "Fox isn't a legitimate news channel. It's a right-wing mouthpiece like Rush Limbaugh and the Drudge Report—repeating false Republican talking points to smear Democrats." If you were not aware of how bad things really are at FOX, I would direct you to their official stance on global warming and gay rights. Most recently, they've claimed repeatedly that global warming is a fiction (http://foxattacks.com/gameshow.php?utm_source=rgemail) and that lesbians pose a serious threat to our children (http://www.glaad.org/action/calls_detail.php?id=4031). The New York Daily News gave FOX an "F" for their portrayal of gays in their news reports: http://www.nydailynews.com/entertainment/tv/2007/08/07/2007-08-07_fox_gets_f_for_gay_portrayals.html?ref=rss.



If you still have any doubts about FOX News' radically wrong positions on ultra-conservative matters, you'll find similar campaigns against their blatant lies against humanity at Fox Attacks (<http://foxattacks.com/>); GLAAD (<http://www.glaad.org/>); The Sierra Club (<http://www.sierraclub.org/>); Democrats.com (<http://www.democrats.com/>); MoveOn.org (<http://www.moveon.org/>); and Brave New Films (<http://bravenewfilms.org/>); among many others.

You may be wondering how I got from healthcare to corruption to the press to FOX News... and if you

are... you're helping me to get to my point. You see, this Rupert Murdoch guy doesn't only own FOX News, he owns the New York Post and (curiously) MySpace.com and most recently... on August 1, 2007, successfully gobbled up the Wall Street Journal.



Wow... The Wall Street Journal! If you're like me, you may not read the "Wall Street Journal," even if it's comforting just knowing it's there. "The Journal," as it's affectionately called, has always been famous for its accurate and non-partisan news reporting, and it's the source of many of the investment decisions made in America and around the

world by thousands of the planet's wealthiest and most powerful people.

And already CNN is reporting major concerns that this man Murdoch just bought up too much power – and that his infamously inaccurate conservative agenda-driven news approach will instantly destroy the validity of this heretofore-trusted news source. According to the CNN report, within hours of the decision, New York newspaper executives were getting literally drunk at a party mourning the death of truth in American journalism.



Rupert Murdoch

Of course, the Republican Party doesn't seem interested in enforcing antitrust laws when the players are so vocally supportive of the Republican agenda. The Republican party, for all practical purposes, seems to have become the "corruption party".... And what of the Democrats? Can they just sit back and glibly allow themselves and the American people to continue to be victimized by the interests of big business? The answer seems to be yes.

One can only ask, "why?" Why would we allow Bush, Cheney and Gonzalez to destroy our civil liberties, claiming that the laws of our land don't apply to them? Why does someone not say something when the most obviously corrupt journalist in the history of the world buys out the penultimate American financial journal? Are we that afraid? Have we Americans become so jaded about our own potential that we have forgotten that in this country the citizens wield the real power?

Thirty years ago, the American people bought into this idea that, if we allowed a very few political and business leaders to wield absolute power over us, then these leaders would allow just barely enough sustenance to "trickle down" for our survival. Well, the experiment failed, because we are not surviving. We have lower life expectancies and higher infant mortality rates than any other civilized country. Our apathy and failure to monitor our own leaders has caused nothing but misery and suffering and death and we have no one to blame but ourselves.

The good news? Well... the good news is that I'm not giving up – and I challenge you not to give up, either. I would challenge all of us to prove wrong anyone who claims Americans are too fearful to speak out. Let's all speak out fearlessly in our daily lives and especially at the polls – and prove we are more compassionate than our currently-corrupt government may make it seem. We are better than this... let's prove it!

-- Troy Carlyle