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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: Book Burnings & Conspiracies

From: Alfred Lehmborg <Lehmborg@snowhill.com>
Date: Fri, 28 May 1999 09:36:04 -0500
Fwd Date: Sat, 29 May 1999 07:49:37 -0400
Subject: Re: Book Burnings & Conspiracies

>To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <updates@globalserve.net>
>From: Jerome Clark <jkclark@frontiernet.net>
>Subject: Re: Book Burnings & Conspiracies
>Date: Thu, 27 May 99 08:44:41 PDT

>>Date: Wed, 26 May 1999 09:35:11 -0500
>>From: Alfred Lehmborg <Lehmborg@snowhill.com>
>>To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <updates@globalserve.net>
>>Subject: Re: Book Burnings & Conspiracies

>>>To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <updates@globalserve.net>
>>>From: Jerome Clark <jkclark@frontiernet.net>
>>>Subject: Re: Book Burnings & Conspiracies
>>>Date: Tue, 25 May 99 12:09:58 PDT

>>>>From: Greg St. Pierre <StrmNut@aol.com>
>>>>Date: Sun, 23 May 1999 23:15:23 EDT
>>>>Subject: Re: Book Burnings & Conspiracies
>>>>To: updates@globalserve.net

>>>>>To: UFO UpDates - Toronto <updates@globalserve.net>
>>>>>From: Jerome Clark <jkclark@frontiernet.net>
>>>>>Subject: Re: Book Burnings & Conspiracies
>>>>>Date: Sun, 23 May 99 19:35:37 PDT >>

>>>Suspecting that a few agencies of the U.S. government are
>>>concealing UFO secrets -- an entirely reasonable position --

>>>>>>>Your argument, sir, seems to suggest that there is no
>>>>>>>conspiracy.

>>>>>>>Precisely.

>>It would appear that you want to have it both ways, sir. <not an
>>affectation but a sincere expression of respect. I owe everyone
>>initial respect.>You seem to admit to the tips of some very
>>dirty 'bergs.

>I confess that with each passing posting, I understand less and
>less of what you're trying to say.

Conversely -- I think I understand you perfectly.

>Recently, you seemed to
>argue that because you'd never heard of the Protocols of the
>Elders of Zion (which I first learned of when I was in high
>school, while reading a book on political extremism and
>conspiracy theory)

That explains it. The draft was breathing on me heavily and I
was drinking beer and chasing girls. Fool that I was -- I was

making hay as that furtive sun shone. Likely -- I'll catch up.

>this amounted to evidence of a plot to keep
>such knowledge from you.

. . . Knowledge kept from most of us, Mr. Clark. You too. I think you find that singularly insulting to your, perhaps, too proud sensibility.

>Now you want us to believe that
>because governments keep secrets, they are by definition
>involved in extraordinary (and, needless to say, sinister)
>conspiracies.

No -- that the potential for these larger conspiracies (in an abused privilege of arguably *necessary* secret keeping) is at least considerable, not beyond the scope of probability, and perhaps even likely!

>This is on par with your inability to discern the
>simple difference between exercising editorial judgment and
>burning books --

A difference that is mistaken and distorted by many, or you haven't heard that the "The catcher in the rye" is on the endangered species list yet again.

>which in itself tells me that your ability to
>read phenomena in the world is impaired by poor vision.

While I, on the other hand, feel that I leave behind me what remains far before you. <g>.

>If you
>expect to be taken seriously, you'd better start employing
>arguments that make sense.

I expect to continue writing my conscience, Mr. Clark. That my arguments make no "sense" to you is not exactly crippling me with surprise.

>>>is not the same as believing in vast, sinister conspiracies.

>>In as much as there is no real forthcoming way to know the
>>breadth and scope of the conspiracy you admit to, your
>>preceding statement is meaningless, isn't it?

>See above.

Let me break it down for you. On the one hand you say people cooperate in agencies to hide facts about UFO's. If done unethically or illegally (my strong suspicion) as many from your "light side" maintain, then it is a conspiracy. Yet conspiracy does not occur. You would argue that there is no evidence of huge *sinister* conspiracy, and therefore there is none. In answer, I can only resurrect the old polemic, " absence of evidence does not mean . . ."

>>>Of course all governments keep secrets;

>>I believe you and I think it may be possible to that this
>>prerogative has been richly abused.

>Most secrets are kept for the most trivial reasons, such as
>bureaucratic lethargy.

Would that we could examine the mechanisms of that bureaucratic lethargy -- find some surprises there too, I would bet.

>Unfortunately, the very existence of
>secrets, however banal, gives conspiracy theorists the
>opportunity to richly abuse reason and evidence in service of
>paranoia.

A great way to keep the bottom nice and murky, huh? A forthcoming current from government, media, and church would wash it all away. Yet, that current does not come.

>>>For the difference between sane
>>>speculation on one side and mad fantasy on the other, just think
>>>of Donald Keyhoe as representing the former and the Dark Siders

>>>(Cooper, Lear, English, et al.) the latter.

>>A division forgetting, for a moment, how the latter can gain,
>>maintain, and keep the popular attention, while the former
>>languishes in amused and unfounded ridicule. What's the
>>mechanism of that, sir? I'm sure the answer would surprise both
>>of us.

>Again, I have no idea what you're talking about.

I'm talking about a huge volume of photographic, quality
anecdotal, and trace evidence that exists already -- fair
BEGGING for a mainstream in depth investigation that is just
NOT forthcoming! Instead, the mainstream focuses on the new age
woo woo weird music aspect of mindless conspiracy speculation
and keeps misdirecting tongues buried in prevaricating cheeks.
The dross profits while the serious researcher is ruined
sometimes to the point of taking their own lives. What's the
mechanism of that? Get it?

>All I can say
>is that if you want to attract attention, what you do is this:
>broadcast as loudly as possible the most extreme, absurd,
>paranoid claims, promote them fiercely, and shout with every
>breath that a vast conspiracy is keeping the "truth" from the
>citizenry -- and believe me, you'll have a whole herd of the
>terminally frightened among your paying customers. Keyhoe was
>too sane, too responsible, and too honest to play that game.

Well -- we could certainly have wished him more success. Seems
he took an inordinate amount of ridicule for his pains. What
is the mechanism of that ridicule?

>>>Contraails are the latest fad on the far right, perhaps soon to
>>>replace black helicopters as something to keep conspiracists up
>>>at night, weaponry in hand.

>>And all of them basted in an ignorance that you won't cop to the
>>mechanisms for; all of them smelling smoke easily blown away by
>>a forthcoming unprevaricating breeze.

>I'm glad that we agree that contrail believers are ignorant. (I
>am taking a benign reading of what you're trying to say here, of
>course. Your words are sufficiently muddled that they could be
>read either way, but I prefer to believe the best about you.)

Well, thank you sir! And I return the sentiment.

>I confess that I don't understand all of the "mechanisms" that
>underlie paranoia and belief in conspiracy theories.

Oh -- I think you would find that they all hovered around a
second rate education system, lack of forthcoming leadership,
misdirecting press, and intolerant religious institutions.

>One,
>however, may be a deep desire to simplify a world that is, in
>fact, hugely complex and unpredictable. Even a belief in an evil
>larger order is, in an odd way, comforting, because it implies
>that order can be imposed on the profoundly unsettling chaos of
>reality (and of course it holds out the hope that, once the
>sinister controlling forces have been vanquished, a benevolent
>order can take their place). As all of us who live in the real
>world know, it doesn't work that way.

No! WE understand that it is a lot more contrived and convenient
than that and that the non benevolent order will continue to
hold sway <g>.

>In an interesting essay in The American Prospect (May/June
>1999), Alan Wolfe looks back on sociologist C. Wright Mills's
>The Power Elite (1956), a now nearly forgotten but once highly
>influential book which sought, in effect, to posit an
>intellectually respectable version of a left-wing conspiracy
>theory. Mills was a particular influence on New Left thinking
>during the 1960s, but his ideas are now mostly discredited.
>Wolfe, himself a sociologist, points to the inherent problem of
>conspiracy theories (though he does not use the term; neither
>did Mills, who was too canny to do so):

>"Only in a society which changes relatively little is it

>possible for an elite to have power in the first place, for if
>events change radically, then it tends to be the events
>controlling the people rather than the people controlling the
>events. There can be little doubt that those who hold the
>highest positions in America's corporate hierarchy remain, as
>they did in Mills's day, the most powerful Americans. But not
>even they can control rapid technological transformations,

. . . just profit from them -- regardless of cost.

>intense global competition,

It's ALWAYS been good to be King . . . most will continue to try.

>and ever-changing consumer tastes.

. . . Largely dictated to us in an unrelenting campaign of constant advertisement.

>

>American capitalism is simply too dynamic to be controlled for
>very long by anyone."

Which won't stop the ubiquitous sociopath from trying.

>Coincidentally, I happen to be reading a splendid book, John
>Lewis Gaddis's We Know Now: Rethinking Cold War History (1997).
>While reading it, I couldn't help thinking (1) how real
>scholarship, as opposed to the unfettered speculation we see in
>conspiracist polemic, is conducted and (2) how that scholarship
>shows how incredibly complex, varied, and vast are the forces
>that underlie and drive relationships in societies and among
>nations. The notion that they are, or even could be, controlled
>by a massive conspiracy -- one whose existence, moreover, can't
>even demonstrated to the satisfaction of reasonable people -- is
>as sensible as the belief that the earth is flat and rests on
>the back of an enormous turtle. (Or maybe that is what the
>conspiracy is about: to keep us ignorant of the turtle.)

Perhaps -- you wouldn't know.

>>>>Where do I draw the line? Where do you?

>

>>>I try to keep this principle in mind: the real world is bad
>>>enough.

>>The real world is a lot badder than you know. "Enough" is just
>>wishful thinking.

>Dream -- or, in your case, nightmare -- on, my friend.

Hey hoss -- I'm a conscious man of conscientious conscience, but a
product of my times. Nightmare is the order of the day.

>Meanwhile, while you and your friends are pursuing imaginary
>evils, the world's many real and terrible problems continue,
>ignored and unaddressed by you.

Still -- I'll push for courage to ask questions, make
observations, and draw tentative conclusions on my own. Then,
like you, I'll write about them.

>To revive an old slogan: You're
>part of the problem, not part of the solution.

Exactly the charge I would have leveled at you. I suppose, that
for the moment, we should do as I suggested earlier and just
agree to disagree. That would be a reasonable step forward,
wouldn't you think? Be that as it may, you should keep me around
to see the forest you've lost in the observation of your single
tree.

Lehmberg@snowhill.com

--

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<Updated 27 May>

John Ford Restoration Fund -- Send your checks and money orders to _me_, Alfred Lehmborg (cut out the lawyers, they got their's) at: 304 Melbourne Drive, Enterprise AL, 36330. Strict records kept. \$350.00 pledged -- \$200.00 collected!

"I cleave the heavens, and soar to the infinite. What others see from afar, I leave far behind me." - Giordano Bruno, burned at the fundamentalist's stake.

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