

Ill Wind

*By Pete Clark*

My first introduction to the use of propaganda came in the form of radio advertisements for breakfast food and patent medicines. Although I was subjected to the propaganda of advertising businesses as a preschooler, I did not become familiar with the word, or the conceptual use of propaganda, until many years later. It was a bit jarring to realize those nice voices coming out of my mother's radio, talking about good food and Sky King Secret Compartment Rings, were intent on manipulating my wants and needs. They were successful. I ate a lot of cereal and ordered many rings.

My interest to political propaganda began with listening to a radio broadcast of a John Birch Society attack on Senator Gale McGee of Wyoming. The tirade was poorly done. A few spoken words from a McGee speech would be played back and the commentator would attack those few words, leaving the listener with no idea of the context. This system might work for ideologues, but not so well for independent thinkers.

In 2001 the Bush Administration entered into an undeclared war against Afghanistan as a reprisal for the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers and other sites that September. While good progress was being made against the Taliban in Afghanistan, the United States gave in to its covetousness of Iraq's ability to extract crude oil from its rich petroleum deposits. The first gusher of crude oil in Iraq spouted from the earth's surface in October, 1927. At that time oil exploration and production in Iraq was under the domain of the Turkish Oil Company, known as TPC, who would pay royalties to the Iraqi Government. TPC was owned by European oil companies and the five largest American oil companies. TPC became the Iraq Oil Company, IPC, in 1928. By 1934 Standard Oil of New Jersey and Socony-Vacuum had squeezed out the other three American companies.

The British installed Hashemite Monarchy was overthrown by the Ba'ath Party in 1963 and Iraq's oil production was nationalized in 1972. Saddam Hussein assumed power in the mid 1970's, using the Iraqi security forces he had created, to insure his success. Iraq under Saddam Hussein was sanctioned by the United States and the United Nations for using poison gas against Iraqi citizens. More than one million Iraqis, mostly the very old and the very young, died from starvation and lack of medications due to these sanctions.

After the invasion of Afghanistan in October, 2001, the Bush Administration began a propaganda campaign that played on American fear of terrorism and hatred of Moslems. The key point of the propaganda effort was lies about intelligence data supposedly showing Iraq having a stock of Weapons of Mass Destruction. The propaganda provided a thin veil of justification for an invasion, but people tend to believe what appeals to them. The American invasion of Iraq destabilized the entire Middle East, giving strength to the Taliban and allowing vicious groups like ISIS to arise amid the desolation.

The current administration uses propaganda based on Alternative Facts to justify the unjustifiable.