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The Fourth Estate

by

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I'm sure all you folks out there watched many of the anniversary broadcasts of the 9/11 attack and relived your thoughts of that day as the scenes unfolded. Can you imagine there are people who actually believe the propaganda that President Bush and the Jews planned that attack to generate enough hatred of Muslims to allow us to declare war on those in the Middle East? Shades of Michael Moore! The members of the 4th Estate have been quick to take up the chant of a conspiracy as well, giving credence to the story.

Everytime I see old newsreels and movies documenting the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor I remember being told about some of the 4th Estate formulating their own scenario of how Democratic President Franklin Roosevelt conspired and initiated key acts against Japanese interests to incite them to attack our fleet at Pearl, thereby giving Roosevelt an excuse to declare war. The same 4th Estate had a major role in manipulating our people and Congress into war with Spain over the sinking of the Battleship Maine in Cuba, about which I'll say more later.

What is, or who are the 4th Estate you ask? When and by whom did that term originate? Sources say it was originally coined by a member of the British parliament in the 18th century, Edmund Burke. Burke spoke from the Parliament floor concerning the Three Estates in Parliament who ran their country... The Priesthood (Church); The Aristocracy (Royals & Nobles); and the Commons (Lower House.) He said... "There were Three Estates in Parliament; but, in the Reporters' Gallery yonder, there sat a Fourth Estate more important than they all. It is not a figure of speech, or a witty saying; it is a literal fact... Printing, which comes necessarily out of Writing, I say often, is equivalent to Democracy: invent Writing, Democracy is inevitable. Whoever can speak, speaking now to the whole nation, becomes a power, a branch of government, with inalienable weight in law-making, in all acts of authority. It matters not what rank (it) has, what revenues or garnitures: the requisite thing is that (it) has a tongue which others will listen to; this and nothing more is requisite."

Thomas Carlyle, a 19th century writer and historian quoted Burke in one of his books to expand his thought that the 4th Estate was a "newly found power of the man of letter" and by association, the newspaper reporter. Carlyle said the press was the 4th Estate adding to the three estates as existed in British politics at that time.

Those miscreants within the 4th Estate are quick to cry "foul" today when I and others accuse them of trying to shape the news rather than reporting it, saying it is their intent only to make sure "the people" are informed of what's going on in the world, leaving no stone unturned. Let's look at one instance mentioned above where some in control of the news helped instigate war.

Remember the Maine? Today not many Americans do but there was a time it was as popular a slogan as “Remember the Alamo.” Although an investigation by both the United States and Spain, into the sinking of the Maine in February, 1898, found no guilt of Spain, two of the largest newspaper publishers in the United States, Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst took it upon themselves to convince the people of our country that Spain was the culprit. By the end April of that same year, only two months later, the anger they exploited and stirred up had helped to drive the United States into a war with Spain. We think the power of the press is huge today... this account shows just how far back the press was involved the same way.

Let’s look back again into the 1800s at a quote of the Playwright Oscar Wilde and see how he viewed the press of his day...“In old days men had the rack. Now they have the press. That is an improvement certainly. But still it is very bad, and wrong, and demoralizing. Somebody - was it Burke? - called journalism the fourth estate. That was true at the time, no doubt. But at the present moment it really is the only estate. It has eaten up the other three. ... We are dominated by Journalism. In America the President reigns for four years, and Journalism governs for ever and ever. Fortunately, in America journalism has carried its authority to the grossest and most brutal extreme. As a natural consequence it has begun to create a spirit of revolt. People are amused by it, or disgusted by it, according to their temperaments.”

Unfortunately the same power is claimed by our media today... and not just limited to newspapers and periodicals pedaled on the street corners and newsstands as in the 19th Century. Their influence today reaches into our homes, offices and vehicles through radio and television. America’s 4th Estate is the fourth “power” usurping and supplanting the checks and balances of our current three powers, Legislative, Judicial and Executive. Be wary folks!

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