

Incompetence + Arrogance = Woke

We know the nature of mass hysterias in history, and how they can overwhelm and paralyze what seem to be stable societies.

We know the roots and origins of the cult of wokeness.

And we know, too, how such insanity—from the Salem witch trials to Jacobinism to McCarthyism—can spread, despite alienating most of the population, through fear and the threat of personal ruin or worse. These are the dark sides of the tulip, hula-hoop, and pet-rock fads, the mass obsessions so suited to past affluent Western societies.

But does wokeism serve another purpose as well? Specifically, does it either hide preexisting incompetence or fuel it?

In the last 18 months, we have seen most of our major institutions go woke and spend considerable amounts of time, capital, and labor on what might be called “commissarism.” Yet in their zeal to rectify society in general and sermonize, virtue signal, pontificate, and perform to the public, many institutions are increasingly failing at what they were established to do.

Of course, public servants have long suffered the “Bloomberg effect”—focusing on misdemeanors to virtue signal competence as penance for failing to solve the existential crises. If you cannot clear New York City of snow in a timely manner, then lecture the trapped on everything from global warming to the dangers of super-sized soft drinks. Yet wokeism is a bit different since it now pervades our societies as a pandemic of its own.

Take Delta Airline CEO Ed Bastian. He earns \$17 million in annual compensation, and lectures the state of Georgia and the nation at large on our supposedly racist voting laws. The issue at hand is mostly a requirement to show a valid ID to vote—in the manner one must present identification to enter the boarding area of Bastian’s planes. Surely if one should vote without an ID, why not then be allowed to board a Delta flight?

I also suggest the public try to call Delta's consumer helplines to fix the airline's post-quarantine screw-ups with credits, refunds, rebooking, and recalibrating charges. Just try it—but expect several hours of wait time on the phone. We know now Delta is woke, but what we don't know is whether one's past purchase of a ticket will ensure a spot on a Delta flight, or whether prior money or mileage credited will ever be returned or applied to future travel.

A cynical observer might suggest that if Ed Bastian cannot ensure adequate consumer service, it won't matter since he weighs in on voting laws. (Or is it worse than that? Because he pontificates on voting laws and other assorted woke issues, he thinks he can simply worry less about his own consumer services?)

American Airlines CEO Doug Parker is woke, too. He has denounced a new Texas voting law likewise requiring tougher ID usage—although he later admitted that he had never read the new statute before virtue signaling its illiberality.

I suggest Parker might first ensure that his airline has not become a Third-World carrier before he seeks to enlighten Americans on their supposed backwardness. I just took a flight on one of Parker's American Airlines flights from central California to Dallas, Texas. But right before boarding the full flight, passengers were apprised that American did not have enough gas in the plane to make it to Dallas—and couldn't find any in Fresno. So it was "stopping off" on the way in San Francisco to "fill up"—180 miles away and in the exact opposite direction of its eventual destination. I've only twice been on a plane without enough fuel to reach its destination and in need of a detour to find gas somewhere—once 15 years ago in Mexico and the other in 1974 in Egypt.

We've seen an epidemic of well-compensated professional (and Olympic) athletes lecture the country on its various sins of racism, sexism, and the usual affiliated -isms and -ologies. Like the now passé Colin Kaepernick, they devote enormous time to what in normal times would be called extraneous efforts or even distractions from their business at hand.

Is there a connection between their wokeness and the general lack of interest in the NBA, Major League Baseball, NFL, and the Tokyo Olympics? Is the public sense not just that they do not wish to be talked down to by such privileged and spoiled 20- and 30-somethings, but also that the level of play of professional and amateur sports seems on the decline as well? Or is it

that these woke, young athletes can handle sports or social hectoring, but not both—and it shows in their performances and in the lack of mass appeal?

Hollywood is the worst offender. Almost daily a mega-star joins the outrage twitter chorus to remind us of her exemplary virtue or his singular outrage over “social injustice.” They belong to this strange collection of celebrity-obsessed multi-millionaires whose homes, lifestyles, modes of transportation, and fashion are Versailles-like—yet whose daily lives never quite match their sanctimonious barking.

The real travesty is that Hollywood simply makes poor movies, or rather mostly remakes them ad nauseam, ensuring only that they are “diverse” and proportionally—or now reparationally—representative of “the other.” Two genres tend to dominate the current movies: computer-enhanced comic-book films (sometimes apparently white-washed by progressive executives so as not to offend the racist 1.5 billion-viewer Chinese market), and “the hero versus the Man” movies.

The latter usually pits an attractive and courageous young investigator, lawyer, journalist, whistleblower, or public servant against a malicious conspiratorial corporation whose racism, environmental desecration, sexism, and thievery must be exposed in gallant, lone-ranger fashion. Not only are these Maoist scripts boring and repetitive but they sprout from a self-indulgent, hyper-corporate Los Angeles capitalist culture that gave us the Hollywood-beloved, and woke-before-his-time Harvey Weinstein.

Universities are the old-new woke bastion. We will probably never know the machinations used by our elite colleges and universities to warp race in favor of some, and against others, among this year’s first incoming class of the post-2020 riot era.

Mostly wealthy, white bicoastal administrators and middle managers across all sectors send out communiques, on spec, attesting to their own superior virtue with vocabulary so trite and predictable that a computer programmer could institutionalize and improve on the boilerplate in a few hours. Their bogeyman target is the noxious white male heterosexual—of course, exempting the memo writers themselves, due to their superior morality.

The woke have unleashed a veritable jihad to root out and banish those infected with “whiteness” among us. But aside from their main mission of promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion, can we say that woke universities—on the side—are turning out talented and educated graduates who will ensure American prosperity, freedom, preeminence, and the sort of lifestyle the young now assume as their birthright? To ask the question is to know the answer. What else could happen when there are more diversity, equity, and inclusion facilitators on elite campuses than there are history professors?

Is the general knowledge of the college student superior to his counterpart of five, 10, or 20 years ago? Did the great experiment with various “studies” courses (black studies, peace studies, environmental studies, equity studies, Asian studies, La Raza studies, etc.) result in better writers, thinkers, speakers, analysts, mathematicians, and scientists than what was produced by the old Shakespeare English course, or Western Civ highlights from Homer to Locke, or advanced calculus? Is the campus more tolerant than it was in 1980, more open to free speech, more determined to protect the constitutional rights of its students?

The military is an especially good example of a major American institution whose woke credentials are now ostentatious, but whose performance in a cost-to-benefit analysis seems increasingly anemic.

We know that the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley, is popular for the moment with the Left in Congress. As a result, like many of his predecessors, if he wishes, Milley can gravitate to lucrative defense contractor boards upon retirement—without a finger-pointing Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) castigating him as a get-rich, revolving-door apparatchik.

Milley and others, such as Admiral Michael Gilday, have given spirited, if incoherent, defenses of why they want their enlistees to read Ibram X. Kendi’s texts on “antiracism”—or at least why they want the Washington elite to know they recommend them to their soldiers and sailors. We know that multimillionaire ex-Raytheon board member, consultant, and now defense secretary, General Lloyd Austin is auditing the ranks to weed out suspicious white male insurrectionaries, an investigation that so far seems to lack any actual data to justify said witch hunt. The chain of command, which can enact social change by fiat, is in this case beloved by the Left. And the officer corps has made the necessary adjustments to ensure their own rapid promotions.

Thus, there is little protest about the military budget being slashed by the beloved Joe Biden, after it was markedly raised by the hated Donald Trump, who among his many other sins jawboned the NATO allies finally to pony much of their promised military contributions to the alliance.

Milley's earlier apologies for doing a photo-op with President Trump while the rascal supposedly cleared the environs with tear gas were mostly empty virtue signaling, given the inspector general of the Interior Department found no such presidential edict or any use of such an agent.

Indeed, a dozen or so of our best and brightest retired four-stars had blasted their former commander-in-chief as fit for removal the "sooner, the better," a veritable monster who employed Nazi-like tactics, emulated Mussolini, and took his immigration policy in part from Auschwitz.

But was such energy, rhetorical imagination, and refined conscience evident in our stellar victories in Afghanistan and Iraq? Was the Libyan intervention a model of military planning, on both the strategic and tactical levels? Have our innovative weaponry, training, and displays of strength deterred the Chinese military? Have our latest naval and aviation acquisitions proven to be models of brilliant cost-effective investments? In our woke age, do our soldiers die on the battlefield in proportion to their sex and race, in conformity with the new proportional representation gospel and in all other areas of military endeavors?

We could ask the same of the FBI and CIA, given the loud, recent wokeist careers of John Brennan, James Clapper, Kevin Clinesmith, James Comey, Andrew McCabe, Lisa Page, and Peter Strzok. From such sanctimony we might assume the FBI had successfully ferreted out and preempted the Boston Marathon bombers, or the San Bernardino terrorists; or that we knew from the CIA the threats posed by the Phoenix-like reappearance of the "J.V." ISIS killers in Iraq, the Spratly Island aggrandizement by China, the true nature of the Wuhan lab leak, the location of existing stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq or Syria, and the current status of the Iranian nuclear program.

The point is not to berate our institutions, but to warn them. Either their abilities to carry out their assigned tasks are becoming diminished by Nineteen Eighty-Four-like wokism, or they are using ideological camouflage simply to mask their unaccountability—and their increasing incompetence.