



graphic: Matt Wuerker

Corporate "Rights" & War

by Jan Edwards

What is the connection between corporate constitutional rights and war?

There is a saying that in war there are no winners, only losers. Well actually, there are some big winners. Corporations always profit in wartime. It is not just the weapon and uniform makers. The entire economy "rises" during war. What is really happening is the taxpayers are going into debt to pay for the many war necessities produced by the corporations. It is a huge transfer of the people's wealth into corporate coffers.

No one is surprised to learn that corporations profit, even profiteer, from war. But do they play a role in deciding to go to

war? Are they just seeing opportunity and seizing it, or are corporations actually wagging the dog?

We know corporate money plays a big role in wielding corporate power, but it is corporate rights in the constitution that actually allows corporate rule. Remember that in our constitution, we the people rule over the government. With personhood rights, corporations now are part of we the people and are ruling over the US government. Back that up with corporate financial clout, and we can see that corporations are not just the tail wagging the dog, but have become the dog.

Here's how it works. As legal persons, a corporation has the free speech guarantees of the First Amendment. The Supreme Court in an ever-expanding definition to include money as speech has given corporations the right to give unlimited money to overturn laws and the right to lobby the government. With their voice amplified through their money/speech, doors lubricated with political donations, and well connected lobbyists (often former legislators), the corporate managers and lawyers can make a case for whatever action is seen as in the corporate interest. Quite often, war is the action rec-

ommended. Since the same corporate money elected the lawmakers, it is presumed that they share the same values. Lawmakers, with the help of corporate media, spin the decision as in the interest of the country and its citizens. And here is the best part: The citizens pay for the war, often with their lives, and the corporations reap the profits.

Once in the war-torn foreign land, the corporations divvy up the spoils: oil fields, mining rights, banking franchises, farmland—anything of value is now privatized by free market corporate owners. The US taxpayers continue to foot the bill for security of this newly grabbed corporate property. Those foreign citizens still alive are out of luck.

There is corporate money driving the process, but it's the constitutional rights that allow that money to interfere with the democratic system of government. If corporations did not have constitutional rights, we the people could forbid all corporate political activity. That means no political donations, no advertising on issues, no lobbying and no more corporate rule.

Surely, corporate rule is not the only reason for wars. But it does seem to be the principle reason for certain wars, Iraq included.