

The Winter of Our Discontent?.
Posted On:December 31, 1969

Shakespeare's Richard III (before he became king) mentioned "the winter of our discontent." That certainly describes much of today's world, with a vague sort of discontent over bad governments, unjust laws, and looking for someone to blame for floods, fires, and famines. Many people complain, but prefer fantasy and demagoguery to sound policies. There are always those who seize the imagination of mobs because they promise them everything.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, a standing joke was: "There'll be pie in the sky by and by" and the wonderful Popeye cartoon character Wimpy, who always promised: "I'll gladly pay you Tuesday for a hamburger today."

In England in 1430, there was plenty to complain about: terrible governance by a weak King (Henry VI), nasty nobles, a greedy church, and rampant abuse of both peasants and shopkeepers. Add to that a shortage of food, the Black Plague, and the nation's tax money wasted on a century of stupid warfare with France.

A man of mysterious origins with a number of aliases, the most famous being "Jack Cade," seized the opportunity to lead a rebellion of peasants and shopkeepers. Shakespeare's version of this real person claimed to be the illegitimate son of royalty. He had been a soldier at one time and seemed skilled at directing an armed rebellion. The mob was actually successful in their first skirmishes and set out to storm London.

The first thing they did was break into a prison and free all the thugs. Negotiations with the King stopped when the mob began looting. Shakespeare's Cade promised the mob "maidenheads (rape of virgins) and pissing conduits (sewers) running with wine." The nobility responded by massacring the mob. They found Cade hiding in a garden. He was wounded and died before they could hang him.

Since 1430, there have been many replications of Jack Cade. These were all demagogues who promised mobs the equivalent of maidenheads and sewers running with good wine. Mussolini was the first of these in the 20th century, with Lenin and Hitler following. They promised their "discontented" populations that they would take the wealth from the elites and give it to the poor. They offered scapegoats to hate (journalists, aristocrats, Jews) and promised pie in the sky by and by. They all failed.

A modern sort of Jack Cade was Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, a country with oil wealth and a history of selfish elite governance, creating genuine discontent. Chavez promised the mobs free everything, and used both oil wealth and extortion of businesses to create a perfect workers' paradise. The only problem was that the workers did not work and the major customer for their oil (the US) was alienated, slashing revenues. Venezuela, although years after the death of their demagogue, is doing very badly.

The government now provides a two-day workweek because there is not enough electrical power to support more. Brownouts and blackouts prevent the people with so much leisure from watching television, going out to movies or restaurants, or otherwise entertaining themselves. There are now food riots as well, predictable when Chavez bamboozled an ignorant population into believing that they would have pie in the sky by and by. Even the oil money is running out.

ISIS runs the latest con game from the Muslim world, promising not only pie in the sky, but 72 virgins for each "martyr" (dead sucker). They have already halved the lavish salaries of their foot-soldiers and are losing territory, leaders, and the disillusioned, who escape when they can.

Donald Trump is our latest populist con man, promising to reverse the tides of history. Coal miners will return to a dying industry; Mexican immigrants will be rounded up and deported; angry White men will put down uppity women, Blacks, and snooty elites; Mexico will pay for a great wall keeping Mexicans out of our country. Really? How does he propose to do these things?

Bernie Saunders has a better heart than Trump. He is more like Wimpy: "We will gladly pay you Tuesday for a hamburger today." Really?

675 words

Dr. Laina Farhat-Holzman is a historian, lecturer, and author of God's Law or Man's

Law. You may contact her at Lfarhat102@aol.com or www.globalthink.net.