

February 27, 2002

The Paul Revere Forum: National Security Whistleblowers Speak, Canon House Office Building, Room 402

Remarks by Frank Serpico, retired New York City Police Detective

Good morning and welcome to all of our speakers and guests. I am honored to be here today among such a courageous group of people of conscience. I feel I am finally with my peers and do not have to explain myself.

I am particularly fond of the name POGO, not only for the great and necessary work this organization is doing but also because I once had a dog named Pogo. He was my loyal companion, and although quite small, warned me of intruders.



In today's forum, we pay homage to revolutionary war hero, Paul Revere. I must confess that since the first time I heard myself referred to as a whistle-blower, I cringed, and I am still uneasy with that term. It sounds demeaning. Demeaning for so noble a cause.

When Paul Revere was given the task of riding to Lexington to warn Sam Adams and John Hancock that the British troops were coming to arrest them, it is said that as he approached the house where they were staying the sentry asked him not to make so much noise, to which he cried "Noise?!? You'll have noise enough before long." After successfully warning the citizenry, he was himself arrested.

Revere lit or arranged for the lamps to be lit and hung high in the tower. He was a lamp lighter and that is the term I much prefer than whistle-blower. LAMPLIGHTER. We can still holler and shout but we have to light the lamps that shed the light on corruption, injustice, ineptitude and abuse of power. When we do, you will see the villains scurry into the woodwork the way roaches do when you turn on the light. Some of you are fortunate enough never to have witnessed roaches and poverty. However, they do exist feeding off the crumbs of the poor. We may be told "don't make so much noise" and we can reply, "you'll soon hear noise enough before long," and we may be arrested as Revere was.

When I was a plainclothes cop and first started to make waves, a desk Lieutenant said to me, "ok wise guy now you're under arrest." I threw my gun and shield on his desk and said, "Before you arrest me as a police officer, I quit. I'd rather eat out of garbage cans than work with the likes of you." While in my sick bed recovering from a gunshot wound, received in the line of duty under dubious circumstances, the police department harassed me hourly with bed checks. I was subjected to all sorts of humiliation. While traveling I was detained, strip-searched and warned by Customs Agents, --"if we want

you we got you" was their message. Somehow they knew of my supposedly secret meetings with top police investigators. Finally, after retiring, I was run out of Switzerland due to pressure brought to bear by none other than the FBI. A clear indication of the cooperation among government agencies to prevent the exposure of corruption in one of their crony organizations. I do not mean to discourage anyone but it is best to know what you may expect for your courage and forthrightness. Cornel West says it takes more courage to muster the exercise of critical intellect than to fight on the battlefield.

On a more positive note I am pleased to report that I continue to receive dozens of e-mails from honest dedicated civil and federal employees, albeit complaining of similar corruption and retribution. One officer was shot in the chest by fellow officers. His bulletproof vest saved him; he was later accused of attempting suicide. Repeatedly, I am touched to hear from these men and women of courage telling me how they were inspired by my actions taken over 30 years ago. Recently here in Washington, DC at the National Association of Police Organization's Top Cop Awards Ceremony, an award recipient told me, that at age 8, his father took him to see the movie Serpico. At that early age he decided he was going to be a good cop someday.

We must support and inspire each other. It is no small task we undertake. Government oversight is dealing with "the little big guys." I say little big guys, because I remember in my ordeal, confronting corruption in the NYPD, when the big shots were exposed they became like little babies or babbling idiots in front of the cameras. Today it is becoming harder to speak out, with the inception of the Patriot Act, the president has legislated free speech to be a crime. Frightfully reminiscent of the McCarran Act or Internal Security Act of 1950 which also involved our national safety and individual liberties. But being a man of conscience, President Truman vetoed the act on the grounds that it "would make a mockery of our Bill Of Rights and would actually weaken our internal security measures." His veto however was overturned and the rest is history. And unfortunately history repeats itself.

It would behoove all of us to review those McCarthy hearings. One of it's victims was W.E.B. Dubois, the NAACP's Director of Research. He was indicted after calling upon the United Nations to hear the crimes of the U.S. government against it's own people. Hoover's FBI set up shop and conducted hearings for the next twenty seven years. One of the provisions of the McCarran Act, was its authorization of concentration camps for "emergency situations."

Today, as always, it is clearly a case of ordinary citizens against the corporate giants like Enron, the Carlyle group and the so-called war on terrorism. Just last week John Poindexter, of Oli North and Iran contra guns for hostages fame was appointed to head the new 'big brother' Information Awareness Office. God help us. It reminds me of a verse in one of my favorite poems -- Crow's Theology, by Ted Hughes:

Crow realized there were two Gods
One of them much bigger than the other□
Loving his enemies□

And having all the weapons

But it took David just one well placed stone to take down the giant. On 9/11, the most powerful nation in the world, equipped with the most sophisticated spying technology available and a \$396 billion defense budget was brought to its' knees by a handful of rouges with 99 cent box cutters. In my opinion, there is something very foul smelling about that. I believe that in time, the truth will come out. The mayor of New York, Time Magazine's man of the year, ordered thousands of tons of WTC steel sold and melted down before a proper investigation of the greatest crime scene the country has ever witnessed could be conducted. Much of it was sent to South Korea where Bush/Bin Laden's Carlyle Group has a massive investment. Something foul smelling about that too. In my opinion, an 85% approval rating only proves one thing. Einstein was correct when he said: "Two things are infinite, human stupidity and the universe, and I am not sure of the latter."

In closing, my admiration and thanks to Uri Avnery, Israeli Journalist and decorated war hero and the hundreds of other courageous Israeli soldiers who are refusing to fight against unarmed Palestinian civilians and children, citing the Israeli occupation of Palestine as, "oppression in the extreme." Never has there been a greater need for Lamp Lighters than today. Never has there been a greater need for independent thinkers who are informed enough to know that most of our not so mainstream media is partisan, corporate owned and yielding to government pressure. We must hold our lawmakers accountable and our courts responsible, or democracy and freedom of speech in America will soon become extinct. Never have there been agencies better suited to investigate, expose, and seek to remedy systemic abuses of power, mismanagement, and subservience by the federal government to powerful special interests than POGO and its affiliates, our faithful watchdogs.

Thank you.