

Transcript of the recorded section of a lecture given by Jay Bennis

Recorded in MP3 format on an iPod by Sean Allen.

Transcribed by Pro-Reason.info

**Bennis:** '... democratically elected president of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez, two years ago, if we're not trying to deliberately control other parts of the world? Why do we have troops in Colombia fighting in their civil war for over thirty years? Most Americans don't even know this: for over thirty years, America has had soldiers fighting in Colombia in a civil war. Why are we fumigating cocoa [coca] crops in Bolivia and Peru if we're not trying to control other parts of the world? Who buys cocaine? Not Peruvians. Not Bolivians. Who buys cocaine?'

**Class:** 'Americans.'

**Bennis:** 'Americans! Hmm? Why are we destroying the farmers' lives when we're the ones that consume that good? Can you imagine? What is the world's number one single cause of death by a drug? What drug is responsible for the most deaths in the world?'

**Boy:** 'Cocaine.'

**Bennis:** 'No!'

**Boy:** 'Cigarettes.'

**Bennis:** 'Cigarettes! Who is the world's largest producer of cigarettes and tobacco?'

**Boy:** 'The United States.'

**Bennis:** 'The United States! Where... what part of our country grows all our tobacco?'

**Boy:** 'The South.'

**Bennis:** 'Anyone know what states in particular? Mostly what's called North Carolina. All right? That's where all the cigarette capitals are. Durham, North

Carolina — that's where a lot of them are located from. Now, if we have the right to fly in to Bolivia and Peru and drop chemical weapons on top of farmers' fields because we're afraid they might be growing cocoa [coca] and that could be turned into cocaine and sold to us, well then don't the Peruvians and the Iranians and the Chinese have the right to invade America and drop chemical weapons over North Carolina to destroy the tobacco plants that are killing millions and millions of people in their countries every year and causing them billions of dollars in health-care costs?

'Make sure you get these definitions down. Capitalism. If you don't understand the economic system of capitalism, you don't understand the world in which we live. Hmm?

“Economic system in which all or most of the means of production, &c., are owned privately and operated in a somewhat competitive environment for the purpose of producing profit!”

'Of course, you can shorten these... shorten these definitions down. All right? Make sure you get the gist of it. Do you see how when you, you know, when you're looking at this definition, where in this definition does it say anything about “capitalism is an economic system that will provide everyone in the world with the basic needs that they need”? Is that a part of this system? Do you see how this economic system is at odds with humanity? At odds with caring and compassion? It's at odds with human rights.

'Any time you have a system that's designed to procure profit, when profit is the bottom motive... money... that means money is going to become more important potentially than... what?

**Boy:** 'People?'

**Bennish:** 'Safety, human lives, &c.'

'Why are we invading Iraq? How do we know that the invasion of Iraq for weapons of mass destruction — even if weapons had been found — how would

you have known, how could you prove that that was not a real reason for us to go there?

'There are dozens upon dozens of countries that have weapons of mass destruction. Iraq is one of dozens. There are plenty of countries that are controlled by dictators, where people have no freedom, where they have weapons of mass destruction and they could be potentially threatening to America. We're not invading any of those countries!

[Pause]

'I'll give you guys another minute or two to get some of these [definitions] down. I... I agree with Joey. Try to condense these a little bit. I took these straight out of the dictionary.

[Pause]

'Anyone in here watch any of Mr. Bush's [State of the Union ] speech last night?'

**Boy:** 'About two seconds of it.'

**Girl:** 'Just the last minute.'

**Bennish:** 'I'm gonna talk a little about some of things he had to say. [...] there are some other sections of this. Sean, did you enjoy it last night? I wanna make sure you finish, though. If anything, I'd like you to finish, all right.'

**Girl:** 'Sure.'

**Bennish:** 'Twenty minutes.'

'One of the things that, y'know, I'll bring up now, since some of you are still writing, is, y'know, Condoleezza Rice said this the other day and George Bush reiterated it last night. And the implication was that the solution to the violence in the Middle East is democratization. And the implication through his language was that "democracies don't go to war; democracies aren't violent; democracies won't want weapons of mass destruction". This is bl... called blind, naïve faith in democracy.

'Who is probably the single most violent nation on planet Earth?'

**Boy:** 'We are.'

**Bennish:** 'The United States of America. And we're a democracy — quote-unquote.'

'Who has the most weapons of mass destruction in the world?'

**Boy:** 'America.'

**Bennish:** 'The United States. Who's continuing to develop new weapons of mass destruction as we speak?'

**Pupils:** 'America.'

**Bennish:** 'The United States. So, why is Mr. Bush think that other countries that are democracies won't wanna be like us? Why does he think they'll just wanna be at peace with each other? What makes him think that when the Palestinians get their own state that they won't wanna pre-emptively invade Israel to eliminate a potential threat to their security just like we supposedly did in Iraq? Do you see the dangerous precedent that we've set by illegally invading another country and violating their sovereignty in the name of protecting us against a potential future — sorry — attack? [Bennish speaks in a lower voice] I can't spit on you all the time [...] actually I think I will.'

**Girl:** 'Ughh!'

**Bennish:** 'Why doesn't Mexico invade Guatemala? Maybe they're scared of being attacked. Hmm eh? Why doesn't North Korea invade South Korea? They might be afraid of being attacked. Or maybe Iran and North Korea and Saudi Arabia — and what else did he add to the list last night? — and Zimbabwe, maybe they're all gonna team up and try and invade us because they're afraid we might invade them. I mean, where does this c... c... c... cycle of violence end?'

**Boy:** [Seems to mumble something about 'Saddam'.]

**Bennish:** 'You know? This whole "do as I say, not as I do" thing — that doesn't

work! What was so important about President Bush's speech last night — and it doesn't matter if it was President Clinton still; it would just as important — is that it's not just a speech to America; it's a speech to who[m]?'

**Pupils:** 'The world.'

**Bennish:** 'The whole world! It's very obvious that if you listen to his language, if you listen to his body language, and if you paid attention to what he was saying, he wasn't always just talking to us. He was talking to the whole planet. Threatening the whole planet!

'He started off his speech talking about how America should be the country that dominates the world. That we have been blessed essentially by God to have the most civilized, most advanced, best system and that it is our duty as Americans to use the military to go out into the world and make the world like us. Sounds a lot like the things that Adolf Hitler used to say: "we're the only ones who are right. Everyone else is backwards. And it's our job to conquer the world and make sure they live just like we want them to." Now, I'm not saying that Bush and Hitler are exactly the same. Obviously, they are not. Okay? But there are some eerie similarities to the tones that they use. Very, very "ethnocentric", all right? "We're right. You're all wrong." I just keep waiting. You know, at some point I think America and Mexico might go to war again. You know? Any time Mexico plays the USA in a... in a soccer [football] match, what can be heard chanting [chanted] all game long?'

**Boy:** [Distortion. Seems to mutter something about "America".]

**Bennish:** 'Close, pretty close. Now, do all Mexicans dislike the United States? No. Do all Americans dislike Mexico? No. But there's a lot of resentment — not just in Mexico, but across the whole world — towards America right now. We told — Condoleezza Rice said — that now that Hamas [has] got elected to lead the Palestinians, that they have to renounce their desire to eliminate Israel. And then Condoleezza Rice also went on to say that you can't be for peace and support armed struggle at the same time. You can't do that. Either you're for peace or

you're up... you're for war. But you can't be for both. What is the problem with her saying this?'

**Boy:** 'That's what [... ]!' [the next word perhaps sounds like “dictators” or “Dick Cheney” ]

**Bennish:** 'That's the same thing we say. That is exactly the same thing that this current administration says. We're gonna make the world safe by invading and killing and making war. So, if we can be for peace and war, well, why can't the Palestinians be for peace and for war?'

**Boy:** [Mumbles something perhaps along the lines of “I wanna learn to fight...” ]

**Allen:** 'Isn't... Isn't there a difference of, of, of having Hamas be like, “we wanna attack Israelis because they're Israelis”, and having us say “we wanna attack... ah... people who are known terrorists”? Isn't there a difference between saying “we're going to attack innocents” and “we're going to attack people who are not innocent”?’

**Bennish:** 'I think that's a good point. But you have to remember who's doing the defining of a terrorist.'

**Boy:** 'We are.'

**Bennish:** 'And what is a terrorist?'

**Allen:** 'Well, when people attack us on our own soil and... um... are actually attempting to take American lives and want to take American lives, whereas Israelis — in this situation — don't... aren't saying “we want to blow up Palestine”'

**Bennish:** 'How did Israel and the modern Israeli state even come into existence in the first place?'

**Allen:** 'We gave it to them.'

**Bennish:** 'Sort of. Why? After the Israeli... Zionist movement conducted... what? Terrorist acts. They assassinated the British prime minister in Palestine. They blew up buildings. They stole military equipment. Assassinated hundreds of

people! Car bombings — you name it. That's how the modern state of Israel was made... was through violence and terrorism. Eventually we did allow them to have the land. Why? Not because we really care, but because we wanted a strategic ally. We saw a way to us to get a foot into the Middle East. If we create a modern nation of Israel, then — and we make them dependent on us for military aid and financial aid — well then we can control a part of the Middle East. We will have a country in the Middle East that will be indebted to us.'

**Allen:** 'But is it just to say it is okay to attack Israel? Um, if it's okay to attack known terrorists, is it okay to attack Israel?'

**Bennish:** 'If you were Palestinians, who are the real terrorists?'

**Boy:** 'We are?'

**Bennish:** 'The Israelis, who fire missiles that they purchased from the United States government into Palestinian neighbourhoods of refugees and maybe kill a terrorist, but also kill innocent women and children. And when we shoot a missile into Pakistan to quote-unquote "kill a known terrorist", and we [have] just killed seventy-five people that have nothing to do with al Qaeda, as far as they're concerned, we're the terrorists, who've attacked them on their soil with the intention of killing their innocent people.'

**Allen:** 'But did we... we did not have the intention of killing innocent people. We had the intention of killing a known al Qaeda terrorist.'

**Boy:** 'Well, that's what we say!'

**Bennish:** 'Do you know that?'

**Allen:** 'So, you're saying that the US has intentions to kill innocent people?'

**Bennish:** 'I don't know. I don't know the answer to that question.'

**Allen:** 'But, but what gain do we get from killing innocent people in the Middle East? What gain does that... what gain does that pose to us?'

**Bennish:** 'Let me ask you this: During the 1980s...'

**Allen:** [whispers something like:] 'I think this should be a good one.'

**Bennish:** 'Iran and Iraq...'

**Boy:** [whispers to Allen something that seems to end with the word 'suspended']

**Allen:** 'Yes!'

**Bennish:** 'During the 1980s, Iran and Iraq were involved in an eight-year-long war. The United States sold missiles, tanks, guns, planes... to which side?'

**Pupils:** 'Iraq.'

**Bennish:** 'Both. The answer is both. Why would we send armaments to two sides that are fighting each other? That seems to be self-defeating; don't we just want one side to win?'

**Pupils:** 'No.'

**Bennish:** 'Not always. Sometimes you just want there to be conflict! The British — this is one of the grand strategies of the British Imperial system, was to play local animosities off each other to prevent them — it's the "divide and conquer." Do we really want the Middle East to unite as one cohesive political and cultural body?'

**Class:** 'No.'

**Bennish:** 'No! 'Cause then they could what?'

**Pupils:** 'Be a threat.'

**Bennish:** 'Threaten our supremacy. We want to keep the world divided. Now, do we really want to kill innocent people? I don't know; I don't know the answer to that. I know that there are some Americans who do. People who work in the CIA, people who have to think like that, those kinds of dirty minds, dirty tricks, that's how the intelligence world works. Sometimes you do want to kill people just for the sake of killing them. All right? I mean, when... listen: between the years 1960 and 1962, the United States, through the CIA, conducted over 7000 terrorist sabotage attacks against the small island nation of Cuba. Over 7000 terrorist

attacks were waged against just one little country called Cuba in a two-year period. Intentionally — bl... let me restart... rephrase that — intentionally blowing up medical supplies. Intentionally burning down crops that feed their country, thereby creating starvation. All right? Intentionally trying to make that system collapse. And we're willing to expend however many thousands of people die because we just want to get rid of Castro. And the sad reality is that there are some policy planners who are willing to let people die in order to achieve their objectives. Now, the idea that President Bush says "I'd like to go kill some innocent Palestinians," — I don't think he thinks like that. But I also know that he's not the only one making decisions. And I also know that after September [the] 11<sup>th</sup> [2001], President Bush got on TV and he said, "You will feel our wrath! You will feel the full force of the United States military! There will be payback!" He said it again last night! He said "we killed a lot of top-ranking al Qaeda members, and those of you who weren't killed yet, your day will come!" All right? That kind of language to me is very obvious. And when you go trying to kill one particular kind of person, you know that you're going to kill other people, too. And let me ask you this...'

**Allen:** 'There's more... there's more in that. He... he stated that he's trying to kill innocents...'

**Bennish:** 'I understand. But hold on, you've got to understand something. That when al Qaeda attacked America on September [the] 11<sup>th</sup>, in their view they're not attacking innocent people. Okay? The CIA has an office in the World Trade Centre. The Pentagon is a military target. The White House was a military target. Congress is a military target. The World Trade Centre is the economic centre of our entire economy. The FBI, who tracks down terrorists and so and so forth around the world, has offices in the World Trade Centre. Some of the companies that work in the World Trade Centre are these huge multinational corporations that are directly involved in the military-industrial complex, in supporting corrupt dictatorships in the Middle East, and so in the minds of al Qaeda, they're not attacking innocent people. They're attacking legitimate targets. People who are...

have blood on their hands as far as they're concerned. We portray them as innocent because they are our friends and neighbours, family, loved ones. I mean, I had one of my best friends, from high school, elementary school and birth, lives in lower Manhattan. You know, he was right there; he was four blocks away from it. So this is, y'know, any time it comes close to home you begin to see things differently. Now, in no way am I implying — I don't know, you gotta figure this stuff out for yourself — but I want you to think about these things. You know, think about this right here. [Bennish indicates American flag in classroom.] Here's the real homeland security, "fighting terrorism since 1492". I mean, to many Native Americans, that flag is no different than the Nazi flag or the Confederate flag. It represents the people that came and stole their land, lied, brought disease, rape, pillage, destruction, &c. So, it all depends on various people's perspectives. And of course, we're going to see ourselves as being in the right, at least that majority of us, because that's us.

**Allen:** 'But we... but, but, we were the ones that were attacked first. On September [the] 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, we were the ones that were attacked. We were not attacking; we were not attacking anybody until that point, then we said, "okay, we're going to go to Afghanistan", then we said, "okay, the Iraqi government has ties with al Qaeda; we're gonna go into Iraq". We were the ones that were attacked.'

**Boy:** 'That's only what they tell you. That's not true.'

**Bennish:** 'In actuality, if you remember back to my first day, the September [the] 11<sup>th</sup> attacks were, according to bin Laden, a direct response to our — number one — support of the nation of Israel, which they considered to be a terrorist régime that does not have the right to control the land that the Palestinians lived on for over fifteen hundred years. And they also did it because of what George Clinton did — Bill Clinton, I called him "George Clinton"! — They had a parliament documentary on PBS last night; I was watching just a little bit. Uh, Bill Clinton, when he launched the missile attacks into Afghanistan and Sudan, and killed thousands of innocent Africans and Afghanistan's peop... Afghans, that had

nothing to do with al Qaeda or anything. In fact, in Sudan we blew up the country's largest pharmaceutical plant, which was producing medicines. All right? Um, that's as far as... in their eyes, that was retaliation for those attacks. And so this whole idea of "who attacked who first?" "How far back in time do you wanna go? This is the whole thing with the Arab-Israeli conflict. Well, who was there first?'

**Boy:** 'Them.'

**Bennish:** 'Well, if you believe the Bible, you say, well, "God gave the land of Canaan to the Israelites". But who was in that land when they got there?'

**Allen:** 'Palestinians.'

**Bennish:** 'The Canaanites. Who, some archaeologists would argue, are the ancient descendents of the Palestinians. You know? So then it's like, other archaeologists say, "well, actually, the Hebrews didn't really come from Egypt. They actually were just a group of Canaanites who decided they didn't like the other Canaanites and then developed this story afterwards to justify how they killed all their neighbours and took over the land."

'All right? So, this becomes very, very muddled. And I'm not in any way implying that you should agree with me. I don't know if I'm even necessarily taking a position. But what I'm trying to get you to do is to think... right... that... about these issues more in-depth, you know, and not just to take things from the surface. And I'm glad you asked all of your questions, 'cause they're all very good, legitimate questions, and hopefully that'll allow other people to think about those things, too! All right?'

'Okay! Talking about globalization... we'll do a whole unit on globalization eventually. So you can get the first definition down. The most important thing, essentially globalization is talking about how the world shrinks over time. How the world is shrinking over time. And they're not shrinking literally, but shrinking...?'

**Boy:** 'Metaphorically.'

**Bennish:** 'Metaphorically. You know? And we call it "the friction of distance".  
Globalization is not new. After all, these human beings have been in contact...'