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The Most Powerful People in America

By Joel S. Hirschhorn

They are not the rich and superrich, nor the politically powerful running the two-party plutocracy, nor the greedy heads of banking and finance companies, and certainly not the media moguls and bloviating pundits.

The most powerful people are US, American consumers that account for over 70 percent of the economy. It is exactly now, when the economy is in the toilet, that consumers hold the maximum power. So why are we the people still deluding ourselves that the path to a better future rests on electing a new president? We are suckers, conditioned by decades of clever marketing and advertising to believe the lies of politicians, and worst of all to believe that elections and our votes provide us with power. Wrong. Our real power can only be manifest through our spending dollars.

The overwhelming majority of Americans have been severely damaged by economic oppression by government policies that have produced historic economic inequality. Yet, despite revolting conditions, Americans seem unwilling to revolt by using their remaining economic power. They have let themselves become economic slaves.

What is amazing and depressing is that there are no national leaders from the worlds of politics, religion, education, media or public interest that are attempting to harness consumer power at this critical time. No one is capturing the public's attention by making it crystal clear that consumers could obtain any political or economic reform in the public interest by joining together to withhold their discretionary spending.

Where are the anti-Iraq war leaders? Why are they not shouting about forcing an immediate commitment to ending the Iraq war by using the power of a massive consumer boycott that clearly could destroy the whole economy? Tell President Bush that consumers will greatly curb their spending for a month to give him time to implement a plan for withdrawal from Iraq. Make it clear that the coming federal rebates will not be used for spending. Make it clear that Bush inaction will result in continuation of the boycott.

Where is Ralph Nader, the ultimate consumer advocate? Why is he not proclaiming the brilliance of a consumer boycott as the winning tactic to force effective government assistance to the millions of Americans screwed by the sub-prime mortgage fiasco and about the lose their homes?

Where is Barack Obama, who supposedly wants to produce change? Rather than

putting all his energy into satisfying his egoistic hunt for the presidency, why is he not talking about harnessing consumer power right now to get political reforms, like .ending trade agreements that are destroying the middle class? Why does he not send a clear message to his million-plus contributors to join a national consumer boycott to obtain immediate concessions from the Bush administration?

Where are the professors who have published books making the case for a second constitutional convention as the way to restore American democracy? Not one has the courage to say that the way to get Congress to obey Article V of the Constitution and convene that the first Article V convention is by American consumers threatening to plunge a dagger into the heart of American business.

Now is the time for all the millions of Americans that make up the 81 percent who see the nation on the wrong track to take action, to think like patriotic revolutionaries and take the power that now only exists with their spending. Sounds simple. All this strategy needs is leadership. Rather than spending so much time and energy on the media-hyped presidential campaign, we the people should demand that someone step forward to inform and mobilize consumers to become powerful citizens by using their spending as the ultimate populist political weapon.
