

Our Privatized Government

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Stories have appeared in the press in recent weeks reporting the failure of contractors to complete their obligations in Iraq. This is not surprising in light of the failures witnessed in the Bush administration to "out source" government work. In addition to the failure of the contractors, many of whom are nationally known corporations, to complete schools, hospitals, water systems and oil field restoration, we have seen numerous problems with the use of private security companies filling what once would have been Marine Corps functions.

To those who have observed this administrations attempt to outsource work done by Federal employees and members of the military, these failures come as no surprise. Since year one of the Bush administration, OMB has attempted to replace Federal employees. This was done by a program called "completive outsourcing." A number of federal jobs were put up for bid. Those holding the position were "invited" to bid against non-federal individuals or corporations. The net result was the creation of morale problems in the civil service. Very few federal employees lost in the bid process. As the project progressed it became apparent that the private sector could not or would not under bid the federal worker.

This came as no surprise for those of us who have worked with federal employees. The private sector generally offers better salaries. I have known of several engineers who left their federal job for a substantially higher salary in area companies. Does that mean that those staying in federal employment were not as qualified or hard working? It is been long assumed that many worked for local, state or federal government because of the greater job security. Retirement benefits are frequently better in the government sector and in the long run evens out the income. I recall one retired public employee saying, "My wife earned the money while we were working. I earn the money since we've retired."

In recent months the OMB program of "completive outsourcing" has been pronounced a failure. We can now add almost all of this administrations attempt to transfer work to the private sector. Our public employees may not always be the best and most efficient but they do seem to get the work done and probably at a dollar bargain.

"Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction." Pascal