

BCA Dispatch

Newsletter of the

Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy

December

2003

American planes had bombed the entire city [of Pyongyang] multiple times in the Korean War and obliterated virtually everything in it... Clearly in light of the photographs we saw, the leveling of entire cities and civilian targets stands as a heinous act equivalent to the bombing of London, Coventry, Rotterdam, Dresden, Hamburg, Tokyo, and Hiroshima. We questioned why such carpet-bombing of civilian urban areas has not been prosecuted as a war crime. —2003 National Lawyers Guild delegation to North Korea

ALLIANCE NEWS

(Continued on page 8)

Chapter Calendar

** Boston Social Forum *** Books **

Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy will meet jointly with Mass Bay South AfD on **Wednesday, December 17th**, from **7:00 to 9:15 p.m.** at **Cambridge Friends Meeting**, 5 Longfellow Park (9-minute walk from Harvard Square T station, west on Brattle St.)

— Agenda —

* If you liked the World Social Forum in Brazil (or India next month), you'll love the official **Boston Social Forum** (because it's HERE). This July it will summon thousands of people who want deep social change. BCA will participate with workshops maybe on localization, system awareness...and??? **Jason Pramas** (Jobs with Justice) will preview and lead discussion.

* **What your fellow activists are reading.** Discuss their exciting books—maybe you'll select one as a gift for your niece. Each review gets 5 minutes, plus 5 minutes' discussion time.

—**Lawrence Goodwyn** "The Populist Moment: The agrarian revolt in America" Reviewed by Bill Haff

—**Robert Jay Lifton** "Superpower Syndrome: America's apocalyptic confrontation with the world" Reviewed by Jed Schwartz

—**Ched Myers** "Who Will Roll Away the Stone?: Discipleship queries for First-World Christians" Reviewed by Brit Eckhart

—**Bob Altemeyer** "The Authoritarian Specter": Embracing antidemocratic, fascistic policies. Reviewed by Milt Raymond

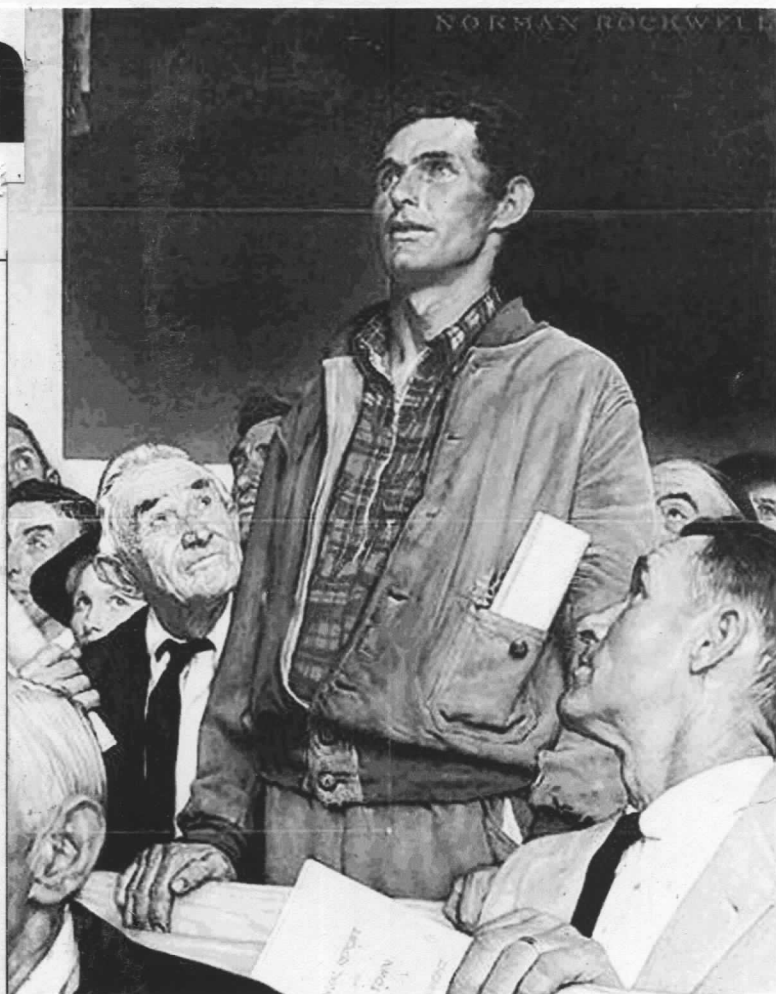
—**Jonathan Schell** "The Unconquerable World: Power, non-violence, and the will of the people" Reviewed by Dave Lewit

Your Book HERE: Join the panel; call Dave at 617-266-8687.

North Korea: "Pleasant Surprise" BCA Member's Trip to the Fingered Nation

by Neil Berman, Somerville, 22 Nov 2003

In March of 2003 I was talking with a colleague about the news concerning North Korea, and how we knew nothing about place, except reports which all seemed to have an agenda. Imagine my pleasure at finding an email the next day announcing a delegation being organized by the National Lawyers Guild (NLG) to meet with the Korean Democratic (Continued on page 6 >>)



"Norman Rockwell - 'Freedom Of Speech' c. 1942"

EDITORIAL

Rethinking the Secret Ballot Your Secrets, or Corporate Secrets?

The danger of electronic vote fraud is surfacing in the *New York Times* (Paul Krugman's op-ed, 2 Dec; editorial, 8 Dec), National Public Radio (*On Point*, 4 November), and other news providers. The villains are Diebold and other manufacturers of "touch-screen" ("direct recording electronic"—DRE) voting machines, their relentless sales staffs, and government buyers of their machines. The heroes ought to be the folks in towns which continue to rely on hand-counted paper ballots, as in Canada and Europe, while US go-go society goes for speedy machines, however vulnerable to error and fraud.

We here in Boston, and most of New England (except Connecticut) feel safer because the only state-approved voting machines are "optical scanners" where you choose your candidates and fill in their bubbles with a soft-tipped pen. You check what you've marked ("voter verification"), carry the ballot to your precinct's one optical scanner (sitting on a 3-foot high box) and slip it into the scanner's mouth, which registers your choices and swallows the ballot into the box for possible recount. Here the voting machine manufacturer's insistence on trade secrecy of his software is of little concern, because our voting equipment includes paper ballots, and a way of hand-counting them if the machine tally is questioned. (Continued on page 2 >>)

Privacy a Priority

The day after Boston's recent city council election the *Globe* reported complaints by voters that the kiosks for marking ballots allowed people to look over your shoulder, and similarly people might see your ballot while you inserted it into the mouth of the optical scanner. Many voters weren't told that they could insert the ballot face down and it would still be properly scanned.

Privacy is important to many voters, some of whom consider the secret ballot to be sacred, and essential to the democratic process. Essential for whom? Not for the lean, handsome working man standing and speaking out at a public meeting, chosen as a model by painter Norman Rockwell to illustrate Freedom of Speech & Expression—one of Franklin Roosevelt's basic "Four Freedoms" [see cover]. Having spoken his mind, it would have been clear to all how this citizen would vote in a town election. Similarly, in organizational meetings where democratic consensus is sought, votes are rarely taken, since almost everyone has spoken his/her mind.

Perhaps secret balloting is important only where (1) the voter fears that a local elite or tyrannical government would otherwise punish dissenters, or (2) individual voters wish to remain anonymous and politically detached. If the New England Town Meeting is our standard, it shouldn't matter if anyone sees how you vote—unless you are one of the many who don't attend the Meeting.

Going a step further, what may matter is citizens' confidence that the outcome of an election is fair and reflects the popular will. If voting is secret, we are at the mercy of the vote-counters to reveal the popular will. If those counters are your neighbors of different political hues, they will check one another and assure accurate results. If the counters are electronic machines whose internal routines may be manipulated, and—as with most touch-screen machines—no recount is possible, *and if we all know this*, then many voters will be anxious that the outcome may reflect the wishes of special interests at the expense of most people.

Even if the touch-screen machines are fitted or retrofitted to produce a "receipt" which the voter can examine to be sure his/her votes are accurately registered, and those receipts are all collected for possible hand recount, the question remains—WHEN should a recount be required? First, just because the receipt satisfies the voter doesn't mean the machine didn't go on to switch his/her vote. Experts in electronic machine security say that machines currently on sale are vulnerable to such choice-switching. (See Alice Copeland Brown's "Want To Steal An Election?", *BCA Dispatch*, Aug-Sep 2003.)

Hand-Counting Is the Criterion

So a recount should be required if there is evidence that any of a district's machines is not secure. That means all the touch-screen machines in the country, because none is demonstrably secure from hacking or programmer (e.g., repair personnel) manipulation or error. And if a model or a particular machine is not independently tested, certified, and sealed, it is suspect. Programmer Jesse Burkhardt of BCA has suggested a certain checksumming operation to test machines, although he prefers hand-counts. Going all the way, electronic voting-machine guru Rebecca Mercuri advocates a dual method: optical scan counts AND mandatory hand-counting of all ballots—one method confirming the other. Ultimately the hand-count is the criterion.

But the great day of universal hand-counting—whether supported or not supported by machine count—will not come in time for the November 2004 elections, when another Bush steal is probable. Some states require a hand recount whenever an election is very close. But manipulating the electronic programs can "throw" elections with however wide a margin you want. There is no safe, large-enough difference to trigger recount. We

have to ask, WHY might we suspect a rigged result? Because all the prior evidence pointed to some other candidate as the likely winner. Or better, because careful exit polling showed some other candidate to be the more frequent choice. The 2002 "surprise" election to the US Senate in traditionally Democratic Nebraska of Republican talk-show host and voting machine manufacturer Chuck Hagel over popular labor-and-small business Democrat Charlie Matulka is an example.

In 2002 exit polling was done, as in several previous elections, by Roper for Voter News Service (VNS), a consortium of CBS, CNN, NBC, and Associated Press. Ostensibly due to a computer crash precluding timely weighting of respondent samples, the exit polls were not released until almost a year after the elections—far too late for challenging official election results. VNS has been disbanded.

Ensuring Exit-Polling

Are the Roper Organization and VNS the only organizations capable of exit-polling—providing collateral information on voter preferences? Roper derives its methodology from university survey research centers. Every region in the country has at least one university capable of administering exit polling. They have the added advantage of being non-corporate, or less corporate controlled than the commercial media organizations that directed VNS, and they work for the public interest. Such universities could develop common standards of exit-polling, and apply them under local or regional electoral supervision. Thus they would have some of the advantages that local hand-counting of votes has—civic responsibility and trust.

Beyond these technical considerations, the bigger question remains: "Does secret balloting conflict with accurate determination of winners?" A still bigger question is "Do we need winners, or should all people of talent and honesty participate in governance?" The answer depends on what we want of a winner—what an elected official should be doing.

Civic Space Trumps Secrecy

A radical response is that the official should not only be the agent or the leader of the most vocal constituents, but should help to make political life a safe place for free expression of concerns, personal experience, and ideas of all the people. That means safe from being fired, blackballed, or intimidated for certain opinions or ideas. Beyond safety, making the public office a place where such ideas can be aired—including mass media—and evaluated, and used to generate social experiments for the good of all. That may require the long-delayed reforms of shifting to paid time-off from work for civic activity, including voting as well as forums. Frequent community surveys and focus groups, managed by community people, are another means for surfacing citizen concerns and ideas.

Social scientists in our regional universities need to study how democracy works—the many forms that lead to solving the problems brought on by "modernization" and corporate insinuation into media, representative government, and elections themselves. When does secrecy generate security, and when anxiety? Does openness, as a part of neighborliness, ensure security? Civic activity needs to be given a chance to become as attractive as stylish housing and professional football. Then shared views will be more valued than secret choice. Then we may be able to kick the habit of majority—or bogus majority—rule.

—Dave Lewit

Nevada Gaming Experts May Judge Voting Machines

by Anjeanette Damon, Reno Gazette-Journal, 2 Dec 2003

As Nevada Secretary of State Dean Heller considers which electronic voting machines to buy for the state, two national computer experts said their tests show the devices are unreliable and should not be bought until questions about security and accuracy can be answered. But the manufacturers disagree, and Heller said he plans to enlist the expertise of the Nevada Gaming Control Board to ensure the machines are secure and accurate.

Avi Rubin, associate professor at Johns Hopkins University, said he found major security flaws with the system used by one of the companies that is in the running for a contract to provide voting machines across Nevada. "No one really knew what was going on in those machines," he said. "I don't think what we saw was fixable. They can't plug all the holes."

Rubin said voting-machine companies could learn a security lesson from slot machine manufacturers, which follow stringent procedures to prevent tampering. "They do background checks on all of the programmers. They have outside auditors monitor the code. These (voting machine) companies are just building them in secret."...

California Requires VV Paper Trail But Not Enforced Until July 2006

by Kim Zetter, Wired News, 21 November 2003

California will become the first state requiring all electronic voting machines produce a voter-verifiable paper receipt. The requirement, announced Friday by California Secretary of State Kevin Shelley, applies to all electronic voting systems already in use as well as those currently being purchased. The machines must be retrofitted with printers to produce a receipt by 2006.

With a receipt, voters will be able to verify that their ballots have been properly cast. However, they will not be allowed to keep the receipts, which will be stored at voting precincts and used for a recount if any voting irregularities arise.

Beginning July 1, 2005, counties will not be able to purchase any machine that does not produce a paper trail. As of July 2006, all machines, no matter when they were purchased, must offer a voter-verifiable paper audit trail. This means machines currently in use by four counties in the state will have to be fitted with new printers to meet the requirement.

"The schedule I have set forth for implementing a VVPAT (Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail) will ensure that there is adequate time for new voting systems to be properly certified," Shelley said in a statement released by his office Friday afternoon. "This also allows time to train elections officials and poll workers and to educate voters... As the state progresses with new technology, all Californians must have confidence that every vote cast is a vote counted. These new requirements will provide this confidence."...

According to the California Voter Foundation, 21 percent of the ballots cast nationwide in 2002 were on paperless electronic voting machines. That's double the amount in 2000. California

currently has four counties using paperless electronic voting machines. That number is expected to increase to 10 in time for the March primary...

Media Concentration Setback Bushies Fool Congress, New Battle Coming

by Josh Silver, www.MediaReform.net, 27 Nov 2003

During the last two days, powerbrokers in Congress once again went behind closed doors, ignored the public interest, and acted on behalf of giant media conglomerates instead of democracy and the public interest.

Despite the heroic efforts of many members of both the House and Senate—both Democrat and Republican—Congressional leadership and the White House used tricky tactics and trickier legislation to create the illusion of a partial FCC (Federal Communications Commission) rollback while serving up yet another give-away to Big Media...

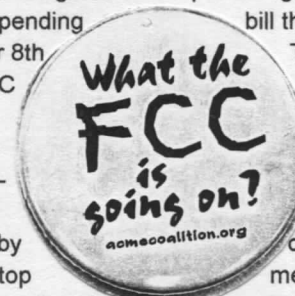
This week Congress put a bogus FCC rollback provision into a giant spending bill that will likely pass as early as December 8th. The only provision of the rule changes that was considered during the negotiations was the "national broadcast cap" of American stations owned by one company. For those of us trying to stop media monopoly, this rule is much less important than the newspaper/TV/radio cross ownership and television duopoly/tripoly rules that were not even on the table in this most recent negotiation.

Rather than roll back the national TV cap to the pre-June 2nd 35% level, Congress changed it to 39% and professes that it will be "permanent." This is not a randomly selected number. It just so happens that Viacom (owners of CBS) currently owns stations reaching 38.8% of American households, and News Corp (owners of Fox) owns stations reaching 37.8%. Both purposely violated the old legal limit hoping Congress or the FCC would change the rule. Had the 35% limit stuck, they could well have been forced to sell off some stations to come into compliance. With a 39% limit, CBS and Fox can keep their stations while NBC and ABC can substantially expand holdings. Further, the new legislative language allows any company to violate the rules for up to two years without penalty—a loophole that will invite precisely the same kind of chicanery that resulted in Viacom and Fox getting a 4% increase in the broadcast cap to accommodate their illegal acquisitions...

All that holds them back at present is the September decision by a federal court to stay the rules pending a judicial review of their integrity. Failing a heroic judicial victory next year by attorneys with the Media Access Project (MAP) who are challenging the FCC, these rules will be implemented with very little attention from Capitol Hill...

What can we do now?

...In January, [Free Press, Northampton MA] will continue to press the Senate on the issue, building more cosponsors for Senate Bill 1046 (a permanent nearly-total rollback of all the rules). In the



House, a coalition of supporters will attempt to push for a vote on the "resolution of disapproval" already passed by the Senate. Should they succeed, all of the FCC rules will be rolled back and a major milestone will be reached.

GOP leadership in the House blocked that vote this fall, despite a letter to the Speaker requesting a vote that was signed by 205 Members, including 11 Republicans. In 2004, the House will launch its own "resolution of disapproval" and attempt to force a vote using a discharge petition. This is not the same thing as the letter with 205 signatures. This is a formal, procedural document, which not only calls for a vote on the House resolution but would force a vote if it collected 218 signatures. We begin gathering names from scratch in January, and we'll only win with your active participation. #

A DIFFERENT WORLD

Bolivian Farmers Challenge BioPirates Threaten US and UN Patent System

The Guardian (UK), 28 March 2001

Mostly indigenous peoples who had been enslaved in silver mines by Spanish conquistadors, ordinary Bolivians are not going to take it any more. They rebelled in Cochabamba several years ago, and despite killings forced the government to rescind its contract with US giant Bechtel Corp to privatize city drinking water. More recently, despite 30 police killings they forced the government to annul the payroll tax that the IMF had demanded.

Currently these people are demanding that the government —led by US-educated descendents of Spaniards—cancel plans to pipe huge quantities natural gas to California via Chile, but rather, as the sign in the accompanying picture says, "[Our] gas is not for sale; it's for [our] industrialization". In the process President Sanchez de Lozada was forced into exile in Miami.

The story below tells of another current demand—that Bolivian farmers have the right to any commercial development of a traditional food staple. These demands fly in the face of rules of the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). ---Ed.

The nuña bean is part of the Andean heritage. It is our treasure. For a company to patent a nuña cross, claiming the bean-nut popping bean as an invention with absolute world novelty is immoral and violates the rights of all indigenous groups, said Elias Carreno, Coordinator of the Stop Biopiracy in the Andes Campaign of the Asociacion Kechua-Aymara for Sustainable Livelihoods, ANDES (translated from Spanish).

Indigenous elders from six Andean communities that grow nuña beans met in late February for a traditional Quechua tribunal to deliberate on US Patent No. 6,040,503 on the bean-nut popping bean awarded to a US food processor, Appropriate Engineering and Manufacturing.

The popping bean trait is found only in the Andean nuña bean. After hearing testimony from expert witnesses, the tribunal rendered their decision. Their verdict was unflinching in its criticism of intellectual property monopolies that are predatory on the knowledge, rights and resources of indigenous people.

Ayahuasca, quinoa, and now nuña, said Carreno, referring to controversial US patent claims on traditional Andean medicinal plants and food crops. (The ayahuasca and quinoa patents were

subsequently overturned or abandoned due to the protests of indigenous peoples.) These plants represent the collective heritage and knowledge of our people, and we won't sit back and allow our popping-bean to be appropriated by a monopoly patent.

The tribunal issued a strongly worded public declaration promising to fight the popping bean patent, and demanded that CIAT — The International Center for Tropical Agriculture based in Cali, Colombia — uphold its obligation under a United Nations trust agreement to keep farmer-bred bean varieties in the public domain and off-limits to intellectual property.

The Not-So-Novel Nuña

The subject of the patent that has shocked bean breeders, indigenous peoples, and other civil society groups is an Andean bean that "hops when it pops" and "flies when it fries". The nuña bean (pronounced noonya) is nutritious — with a faintly peanutty taste. More importantly for farming communities in the arid Andes, cooking nuña requires little fuel wood. The bean is roasted not boiled. A few minutes over the fire and the beans literally pop out of their shells ready to munch.

Alejandro Argumedo, a Quechua of the Peruvian Andes and coordinator of the Indigenous Peoples Biodiversity Network (IPBN), was astonished to learn that a US company had patented the bean he has enjoyed since childhood.

The bean has everything — except novelty, says Argumedo. My mother used to roast them for us, Argumedo recalls, They were a favourite. I can't believe that anyone could pretend they invented a popping bean!



While virtually unknown to the snack addicted US market, the bean is an important part of Andean culture and a widely cultivated staple food in many regions.

Patently Ridiculous

The US patent was granted one year ago on March 21, 2000, to Appropriate Engineering and Manufacturing through "inventors" Mark Sterner and Jeffrey Ehlers of California.

The "inventors" have also received what is known as a WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organisation) patent (WO99/11115)

under the Patent Cooperation Treaty and have indicated that they will apply for patents in as many as 121 countries.

The patent gives Ehlers and Sterner exclusive monopoly ownership over nuña crosses with characteristics allowing it to grow outside the Andes. The patent encompasses crosses involving at least 33 Andean nuña varieties traditionally bred and developed for centuries in Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Colombia.

Breach of Trust

The patent is particularly offensive to Andean farmers and indigenous people because it extends to crosses involving at least 33 Andean nuña varieties traditionally bred and developed over centuries in Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador and Colombia. US Patent 6,040,503 lists all 33 accessions of nuña bean held in the USDA's national germplasm collection.

All of the nuña bean varieties listed in the patent were freely provided by Andean farming communities, who allowed their bean varieties to be put into the public realm in order to ensure the continued maintenance of the world's seed biodiversity.

In 1994, mounting concern over public collections being privatised led the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations to declare designated germplasm in CGIAR (Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research) gene banks to be in trust, meaning that the germplasm cannot be restricted by monopoly patents.

Of the 33 nuña bean varieties listed in the patent, nine are also held in CIAT's international bean collection. All are designated in-trust accessions and all are farmers' varieties collected in Peru.

High Nuña

Groups in Latin America are also anxious to challenge the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) for their part in this case. WIPO is allowing this patent to go for adoption in other patent offices around the world. Yet WIPO says it wants to support the conservation and development of indigenous knowledge.

The patent usurps the genius of Andean farmers for the commercial gain of a US company. Taking the genius of Andean farmers without compensation is bad enough, but the patent also makes it difficult or impossible for Andean farmers to develop a potentially lucrative export crop for the world market — a crop which belongs to the people of the Andes.

Indigenous groups in the region agree. This is a fight the people of the Andes are going to win, Argumedo concludes.

Posted by Action Group on Erosion, Technology, and Concentration www.etcgroup.org formerly RAFI — Rural Advancement Foundation International, Winnipeg, Canada

Notes from Miami

Fighting FTAA, Defending Our Water

by Ruth Caplan, AfD Campaign on Corporate Globalization and Positive Alternatives, 7 Dec 2003

Lines of cops all in black. Pepper spray. Tear gas. Billy clubs. All at the ready. Cops on horses. Cops on bikes. War zone. Fascist state? Is this what we have come to? We who in America pride ourselves on democracy? What kind of economic system requires such repression? One where corporations rule the world, as David Korten would say. One where power is held by the wealthy and where our inalienable right to our "lifestyle" as

Bush Sr. proclaimed, makes the U.S., the once oppressed, the land where freedom rings, into the oppressors around the world and on the streets of Miami.

The week started out more auspiciously. I boarded an American Airlines flight out of National Airport (never "Ronald Reagan" Airport) Monday evening. Walking past the first class rows, I gasped with surprise, "Are you Robert Zoellick [U.S. Trade Representative]?" "Yes," he evenly responded. So I, sounding the fool, said "Well, I work a lot on trade issues too." "And so do many people," he responded.

Engaging The Man

Midway through the flight, I made my way back to the first class section to continue the conversation. Getting Zoellick's attention by first thanking him for not agreeing to the European request that the U.S. include water for human use in the WTO General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), I went on to point out that public services are not protected despite claims to the contrary by WTO staff. He had asked Pascal Lamy, the European chief negotiator, about this, he said, and had been reassured. "But the EU's request proved otherwise," I responded, for in fact, if the request were to be accepted by the U.S., the European giants Suez, Vivendi (now Veolia) and RWE/Thames would have had a much easier time taking over municipal water and sewer systems in the U.S.

Now we were engaged. I pointed out the weakness of GATS language intended to protect government services and Zoellick asked about the FTAA (proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas). "Same language there," I responded. He took out a small note card from his vest pocket and made a note. A few more words and I returned to my seat.

Later in the week, as I looked at the tall chain link fence and felt the oppression of the cops protecting Zoellick and the other negotiators from the likes of me, I felt sadness. Sadness became rage when after the peaceful march, the cops charged protestors who had lined up in front of them. Yes, a smoke bomb had been lobbed toward the police, but with police dressed as anarchists in the demonstration, I wondered who had thrown that smoke bomb. How could a peaceful march justify the \$8 million for Miami defense included in the \$87 billion Iraq aid bill? Now they could show their stuff.

But this show of force could not bring Zoellick what he had come for, what the U.S. corporations wanted. The meeting of trade ministers ended after just one day. All that Zoellick got was an agreement to negotiate FTAA-lite, without even any negotiating guidelines to start the process. Brazil, which co-chaired the ministerial with the U.S., insisted that countries should be able to decide what parts of the FTAA they would sign on to. Zoellick tried to divert attention from the failure by announcing that bilateral trade agreements would be initiated with several small economies, a consolation prize which was brushed aside by the Business Roundtable.

Circles of Inclusion

Following the WTO failure in Cancun and the near failure of Miami, there is some opening for all of us who believe "another world is possible," but taking back our country will require courage. Where do we begin? There are many beginnings. One was across the bay in a Miami Beach hotel immediately following the FTAA meeting where water activists gathered in an open circle.

(Continued on next page >>)

People came from Laredo TX where the colonias settlements have no water and people have to drive many miles and put quarters in a meter to get city water; from tribal lands in Washington, Oregon, Arizona, New Mexico and Minnesota; from the Mexican-American traditional ejidos and acequias of New Mexico; from the front lines in Detroit fighting water shut-offs; from rural NH threatened by USA Springs; from Lawrence MA where the people overpowered Suez.

People of many colors and cultures gathered to listen and learn from each other, to begin the process of building a movement to fight the water profiteers and protect indigenous rights to water. This grassroots movement will be built on trust, mutual support, and dispersed leadership through working groups. A coordinating group was selected made up of 50% people of color. No tokenism here. We'll try to model in our organizing the kind of society we want to build. It's one beginning.

North Korea (continued from page 1)

Lawyers Association (KDLA). After a summer date was postponed due to SARS, we visited for 5 days, from September 29 to October 4.

In preparation for the trip I used the web, and a comparative law book I had read during law school in the early 1990's. The first web site I checked was the *CIA Worldbook*, listing information on every country. There was much to learn, among many other things the CIA reports that the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea (DPRK) has 99% literacy, universal suffrage at age 17, and a German/Soviet legal system. I also learned that arable land is only 14% of the country which is not enough to grow all the food the country needs, and when coupled with climate problems (floods at harvest, draught when planting). I also read many conflicting reports on the history of Korea since WWII, and began to understand that the lack of communications is the main issue between the DPRK and the USA.

Of course in truth I didn't know what I was going to find. I first began to think what I was going to find was a normal place when we went to the DPRK consulate in Beijing to get our visas. We met two others getting visas, a Canadian visiting to check on the distribution of food from Canada and planning to meeting with government officials concerning agricultural projects. The second person there was a 20-something Irish man, who was going to visit because he was curious. Maybe the country wasn't as closed as we heard here in the US, the plane the next day confirmed this. There were numerous westerners (and Asians, of course), I met people from all over, including Canada, Russia, Germany, Austria, the Congo, and England. When we arrived, customs was relaxed, they didn't open our bags, though they ask for, then take mobile phones (to be returned when we left).

One thing I noticed, and which remained true throughout the trip, was the absence of guns. The only time we saw guns the whole trip was at the DMZ, and ceremonial guns held by guards at a pair of museums in Myohyangsan. We also had no restrictions (except for time and the logistical problems of being in a country with few English speakers and fewer signs (none)), as to where we went and what we took pictures of.

After we cleared customs, we met our hosts, two lawyers. Mr. Jo spoke English and translated for us, Mr. Bang was a senior member of the KDLA. They escorted us to a bus, in which we drove around Pyongyang to the guesthouse where we

stayed on the Taedong River, northeast of the city. The initial impression of North Korea was of people walking everywhere. There were buses, trolley & a subway, and bicycles & cars (more then expected but still not many) but the prevalent mode of transportation is walking. There were streams of people walking along the side of the road and through fields everywhere we went. Everything is very clean, both due to constant cleaning and the lack of industrialization. There are traffic control officers at all main intersections, usually women in light blue uniforms and white go-go boots, who were machine-like in their movements. We saw kids playing everywhere, including the parks with whimsical statues of animals to climb on.

At the guest house, we quickly began to learn more about the DPRK. We met two American soldiers, there overseeing teams in the field looking for remains from the war. They said they had expected a horrible place, but found the people wonderful. We also learned at the guesthouse that the Koreans are the Germans of the East. They are very strict with scheduling (they had a hard time herding lawyers, and by the last day had given up), have a sense of superiority and a curtness as well. They also were shy in odd ways, such as asking if we needed to clean our hands whenever bathroom was available.

We had an introductory dinner with a KDLA lawyer who was also a member of the Presidium. He explained the political system as being a series of votes from the bottom up. The local governing bodies elect the provincial governments, who in turn elect the Presidium, and the Presidium elects the national leaders.



He also said, as many did after this, that the major desire of the North Koreans is to reunify all of Korea (we met a few South Korean tourists and they said the same thing). The dinner was about 15 courses (the Koreans believe there are 3 hierarchies of food; raw, cooked, and fermented, and

each meal included all 3 types). We also learned of the custom of never pouring a drink for yourself, but for others who then fill your glass, usually followed with a toast. This meal, as all other lunches & dinners, had water, beer & hard alcohol (usually the local Sujo).

The next few days were a whirlwind of museums, a circus, the DMZ (about 100 miles south of), Myohyangsan (about 100 miles north), and various restaurants. People seemed industrious and proud of what they had accomplished while being harassed by America. Many Koreans welcomed us and said they were glad to meet Americans, admitting they were scared of America.

On of my last memories of the trip is a picnic on a river above Myohyangsan. While we ate, other groups sent us steamed clams & other foods. When we went for a walk after lunch we learned of the Korean custom of singing after a meal. We were requested to

sing at various spots, and managed to mangle "We Shall Overcome" and "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?". One group gleefully stuffed our pockets while we sang. As we left we stopped to clean our hands at a resort hotel, and met in the lobby hundreds of Chinese tourists. I spoke to a few and they said they had been touring for about a week, and were enjoying the visit.

While I certainly didn't see everything I wanted to, particularly courts, law schools and prisons (though we were told the 1992 Amended Constitution outlawed the death penalty), we did cover a lot of territory. I would like to visit the South to see what similarities & differences I would find. I also hope to lead a delegation from the Massachusetts chapter of the NLG next year.

Find the peace delegation's very readable 24-page report at www.nlg.org/programs/international/North_Korean_Delegation_Report2003.pdf

Neil served as secretary of BCA in the early days. His wife, singer/songwriter Janet Feld, entertained us between gigs. Next year they will make their home in the Azores.

LETTER FROM BRITAIN

Bush Go Home And Take Blair With You!

Paul Brailsford is a dedicated Veterans for Peace and Alliance for Democracy activist. Born in England, shipmaster during World War II, he lives in Ipswich and is a director of the New England Fisheries Development Association. This October he demonstrated with VFP against the war in Iraq, then flew to England to be with relatives on his 88th birthday, to reunite with fellow mariners trained aboard the T.S. Mercury, and in London to participate in the huge demonstrations against the war and the visiting American president.

I had begun my protest by sending to *The Guardian* and *The Observer* newspapers a copy of the Veterans for Peace Spring 2003 press release calling for the impeachment of President George W. Bush, Vice President Richard B. Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, and Attorney General John David Ashcroft, for clearly violating both the constitutional and international laws all veterans had sworn to uphold.

I included a letter to the editor that stated I was taking part in upcoming protests because our selected-not-elected President had ignored world opinion by abrogating the Kyoto Accord and the Anti Ballistic Missile Treaty, and was doing his best to undermine the objectives of the International Criminal Court in The Hague whilst trying to bully and bribe UN members to support the neoconservative objectives of the military-industrial complex that chose him for president.

I went on to state that I was scared for my own and the world's survival when he threatened to use tactical nuclear weapons against any nation that stood in his way. I was shocked when he announced he intended to make America MASTER OF SPACE in order to achieve world hegemony.

Things began to fall into place at an evening rally at the original Friends Meeting House in Eustan Square on Tuesday, November 18th. Poet-playwright Harold Pinter, followed by former Labor MP George Galloway and injured Vietnam War veteran Ronald Kovic—author of the book *Born on the Fourth of July*—made passionate speeches to STOP WAR. While they

clearly appreciated American democratic values, they were teed off that Blair had twisted the Queen's arm to get our Toxic Texan bed & breakfast at Buckingham Palace.

I had a chance to talk with Kovic, telling him I had e-mailed a copy the Veterans for Peace press release that called for Bush's impeachment. I was delighted when he invited me to walk next to his wheel chair at the head of the American expatriates' contingent in Thursday's big protest march to Trafalgar Square.

The following morning, Wednesday, I joined a state procession that assembled at Jubilee Gardens on the South Bank, London, with anti-war floats and horse-drawn carriages. I was able to ride on a double-decker London bus owned by Stop The War. It was plastered with anti-Bush posters. As the bus passed along



London's crowded streets I used its powerful public address system to protest Bush's use of depleted uranium to destroy tanks. Once vaporized and ingested by friend or foe, DU caused Gulf War Syndrome as well as massive genetic damage and horrible birth defects in children. Reason enough to call for the impeachment of Bush and his cabinet.

On Thursday morning Bush laid a wreath at Westminster Abbey. Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of people began to assemble on Malet Street, central London, to begin a demonstration organized by the Stop The War Coalition. It was led by American expatriates together with Ronald Kovic who, because of his Vietnam war injuries, had to ride in a wheel chair. I was proud to be wearing a Veteran for Peace (VFP) badge and carrying a sign that stated VETERANS FOR PEACE CALL FOR IMPEACHMENT OF GEORGE W (for War) BUSH..

We moved out at 11 a.m. filling the streets for miles as we walked to Trafalgar Square. Because of a chronic leg problem, I was unable to stay in the lead for more than half a mile, so I had to watch from the sidewalk as the huge crowd moved relentlessly onward. At the Embankment tube station I took the train to Trafalgar Square. I had to push my way thru a dense crowd to get to cordoned-off Nelson's Monument. Once I identified myself as an American who was with Ronald Kovic, they let me rejoin him.

I wasn't given an opportunity to speak, but was thrilled to be at the center of this huge gathering with speaker after speaker protesting our selected-not-elected president's visit. One after another they called out STOP BUSH! The crowd joined the call—"BUSH GO HOME, AND TAKE BLAIR WITH YOU!"

A leader announced that 400,000 people now filled the streets and marchers were still leaving the Malet Street assembly point.

Right alongside of me, a paper-mache effigy of Bush—holding a missile in his arms—was lassoed and pulled down. The 75,000 gathered in the square echoed wave after wave of approval. Afterwards when music played I danced for joy with my sign, and for a moment got to the microphone to ask the crowd to dance together for peace.

Tired and happy, I got back to my cousin's apartment in Notting Hill at midnight, set my alarm for 6 a.m., caught the 7:15 bus to Gatwick, and arrived just in time to board my flight back to my home in America.

Brave Hearts Dismay Queen's Guards

...On Wednesday, there were smaller protests all over the city with the most interesting being Critical Mass (CM). CM rode their bikes right into the Queens Horse Guards during the changing of the guards in the afternoon. The Horse Guard in their regalia and sabers drawn were thrown into confusion and many of the horses bolted (while the police ran to control the surging crowds). I saw on the same day, a group of senior citizens run through a hole in a police line at Victoria Station and open the whole street up so that all of the other protesters would not be boxed in...

—Michael Fournier, Univ. of London grad student, Politics.

SURVEY

Alliance Alerts, the quarterly newsletter of the national Alliance for Democracy, is surveying members. Your input could be valuable. Use extra paper. Please send your responses to Alliance for Democracy, 760 Main St., Waltham MA 02451. You may also want to send a copy to BCA Dispatch, 271 Dartmouth St #2h, Boston MA 02116.

- 1) What is the nature of AfD's mission and has it changed—and if so, how and in what respect?
- 2) How does AfD's mission fit with the rest of the movement?
- 3) What is our particular role in the movement, and has it shifted?
- 4) How are we doing at it?
- 5) What is our structure (administrative, organizational, etc.)?
- 6) Are we structured and organized to address our role, to accomplish it?
- 7) If not, how can we change to do so, or if yes, improve to do so better?

ALLIANCE CHAPTER & REGIONAL NEWS

Dear Friends:

All your detailed local news has disappeared down the computer's black hole. I couldn't get my new software to print a proper Christmas banner, and in trying to delete the mess I'd created I blew away the completed but unsaved Chapter and Regional News!!! So I'm just going to free-associate- - - - -

Adolf Hitler. Only 6 members showed up for him—the film "Architecture of Doom". Actually a fantastic documentary of Hitler's prosaic artwork metamorphosed into huge plans and models for a huge triumphal Berlin, while infinite waves of Allied bombers were turning Germany into rubble and ashes. I hope this month's program—on the forthcoming Boston Social Forum and current book reviews by BCA and Mass Bay South members

---will whet your appetite. And for the future, if you have a program idea, try it out on a friend, and then call me or Brit, or Bill, or Jed, or Milt, or float it yourself at a steering committee meeting.

Well, the Alliance national office in Waltham is still open, with volunteers. AfD's financial crisis continues, and Stephanie was laid off for a second time. If you're anywhere near 760 Main St., call Lynn Gargill, 781-259-1173, and volunteer.

BCA's Voting Integrity committee in collaboration with Alex Brown of IEEE, Robert Plotkin of ACLU, Kerry Costello of LVW, and others is organizing a February conference. There'll probably be a technical panel on a legal/administrative panel. Not only questions about making machines secure and votes auditable, but how to get rid of machines—like returning them for refund. And opening the fundamental question of trade secrets (like Diebold's software) vs. public interest (our democracy).

Bioterror lab. Few BCA members seem concerned, or wish to be involved. An exception is Carol Dwyer of Concord, who scrutinizes the development plans and comes into town for demonstrations. And yes, at this evening's Boston Public Library-Mayor's forum touting the lab, I displayed a sign "Bio Terror Lab: for DEFENSE, or ATTACK??"

Subway station musicians. Early this month they were going to ban instruments with amplifiers as well as horns. Otherwise how could folks hear anti-terrorist instructions on the (garbled) P-A system? Your protests, and testimony about the ill fate of banned musicians, caused T officials to think again, and they backed off. Now musicians will only have to turn down the volume.

FREE: new ink cartridges HP20 and HP26. Call 617-266-8687.

NOW — MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL! -----Dave

JOIN THE BCA

YOU DON'T HAVE TO LIVE IN BOSTON TO LOVE BCA

Please help us as we fight to make a better future for ourselves and our children -- Join the Boston/Cambridge Alliance for Democracy. (Cut out this form and send it to Dave Lewit, 271 Dartmouth St., Boston, MA 02116.)

BOSTON-CAMBRIDGE ALLIANCE for DEMOCRACY PLEDGE

- ___ \$26/Year - "Count me in!"
- ___ \$52/Year - "Contributor" (We need to average this amount.)
- ___ \$104/Year - "Sustainer" (Helping us thrive.)
- ___ \$208/Year - "Community Steward"
- ___ \$500/Year - "Realize the vision"
- ___ What's fair for YOU? _ \$ ___

Name : _____ Date: _____

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