

BCA Dispatch

Newsletter of the **Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy** May 2004

When choosing between two evils, I always like to take the one I've never tried before.
—Mae West

ALLIANCE NEWS (Continued on Page 7)

Chapter Calendar

** What Youth Wants **

The Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy will meet on **Wednesday, May 19, from 7:00 to 9:15 p.m.** at **Cambridge Friends Meeting house**, 5 Longfellow Park (9-minute walk from Harvard Square T station, west on Brattle St.)

— Agenda —

* The world is a mess. Have middle-aged folks run out of ideas? Do young people have better ideas? What about wisdom? This meeting will give us all a chance to express and explain our wishes for a better world—"Another World Is Possible". Our invited guests include **Stacey Cordeiro**, 27, of Cooperative Development Institute and Jamaica Plain Mutual Aid, **Ernesto Arroyo**, 30, of Nuestra Comunidad Development Corp and *The Foundation* hip hop band, and **Thad Williamson**, 34, of Harvard and Dollars & Sense Collective. At least one of these thought this would be a good billing: Radicalism: The Next Generation.

Everybody, young and old, is invited to **bring two objects** for "show and tell"—something to represent what's wrong with the present system, and something to represent what could be good about a future system. If needed, we will have a boom-box.

* Supper everyone! Free pizza, and healthier food too.

An Open Letter To Senator John Kerry

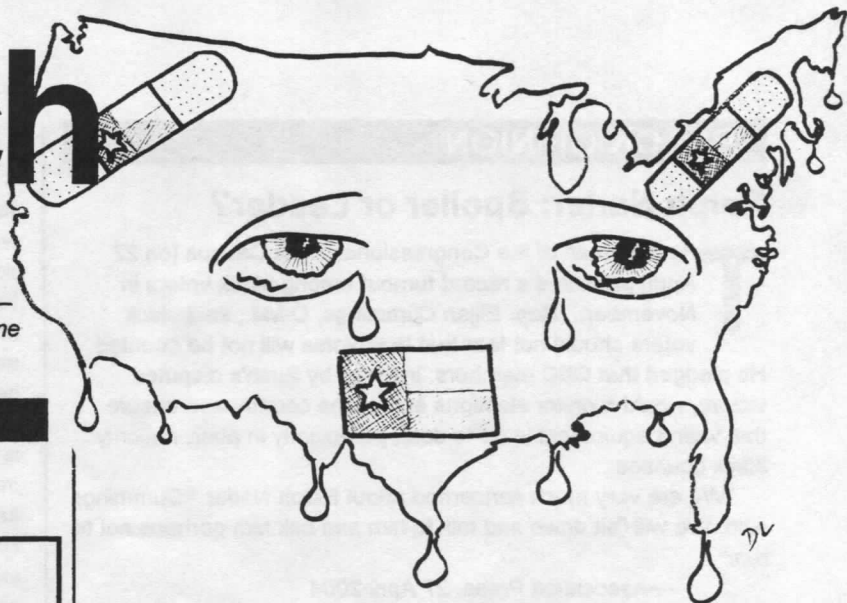
by *Bill Haff, Massachusetts Bay South chapter of AfD*

Congratulations, Senator Kerry. It is now apparent you will be the Democratic nominee for president. There are even signs the democratic process itself has been revitalized, transformed by the political undercurrents animating this primary season.

Many of us plan to vote for you this fall. That does not mean that we completely trust you, however. We are not sure you appreciate those undercurrents that gave life to your campaign. You have adopted aggressive rhetoric, but you are a politician, and sometimes politicians seem more in touch with their own strategies than they are with the needs of their constituents.

We are not politicians. We are the people who bear the brunt of political events, here at the grass roots. For the past 20 years and more we have watched as increasingly powerful forces shaped the national debate, and attacked the values we once thought of as characteristically

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Europe Leaves the U.S. Behind On All Progressive Issues

by *Steven Hill, CommonDreams.org*, 29 April 2004

Spain's new left-leaning government attracted the ire of the Bush administration recently when it withdrew its troops from Iraq. Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero fulfilled a campaign pledge when he announced the withdrawal, aligning the Spanish government with the overwhelming sentiment of the Spanish people, as well as with most governments and peoples of Europe.

Receiving less attention than the troop withdrawal, in his speech Zapatero announced other priorities that further separated his government from the White House. Zapatero pledged greater spending on education and affordable housing for low- and middle-income families. He also pledged a crackdown on violence against women — a scourge he called Spain's "greatest national disgrace" — and recognition of gay marriage. The last one no doubt will be dismaying to religious fundamentalists in both the Bush administration and the Taliban.

From inside the White House, Zapatero must look like a flaming leftie and certainly no ally. But actually he is quite within the mainstream of European politics, both on foreign policy and domestic matters. The fact is, even the conservative parties of Europe are to the left of the Democratic Party in the U.S. The European political center is where the American left would love to be. Europe's famously generous social state is still alive and mostly well, though under attack by globalization and corporate opportunists who would like to bury it and render Europe more like — the United States.

But the differences between Europe and the U.S. are growing, registering like a series of small quakes on the Richter scale. Trade disputes over agriculture, steel, and genetically modified foods; broken treaties and promises on global warming, sustainability, nuclear test bans, and the international court; sharply differing opinions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and on the use of militarism vs. diplomacy to resolve disputes; eastward expansion of the European Union into traditional NATO areas; multi-lateralism vs. unilateralism, the list is long and growing. European

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BLACK OPINION

Ralph Nader: Spoiler or Leader?

The chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus [on 27 April] predicted a record turnout among black voters in November... Rep. Elijah Cummings, D-Md., said black voters should not fear that their votes will not be counted. He pledged that CBC members, inspired by Bush's disputed victory, would monitor elections across the country and ensure that voting equipment is up to date, particularly in poor, majority black counties...

"We are very much concerned about Ralph Nader," Cummings said. We will "sit down and talk to him and ask him perhaps not to run."

—Associated Press, 27 April 2004

This news, forwarded to members of the Black Radical Congress, resulted in a flurry of responses to the BRC list. Many demanded that Nader withdraw (see Amiri Baraka, below). But environmental activist (Greenpeace) and Black Voices for Peace founder Damu Smith, dissented, saying, in part:

...If Bush wins this election it will be because of the once again pathetic, racist, take people of color for granted, right-of-center politics of the Democratic Party and the new master of the Democratic Party Plantation, John Kerry and his run from his own shadow, go with wherever the wind blows, no spine or guts, and chump political mentality. The already marginalized and turned-off voters and voter age eligible who already plan not to participate in another election, can not be energized to turn up at voting booths in November by this kind of approach and attitude from the Democrats AGAIN!!!

Those who are spending so much energy and time trying to urge Nader to drop out need to spend ten times of that time telling Kerry to stop being a chump for corporate America and at least pretend like he wants to energize what is no longer a for-real base of the Democratic party.

If Kerry wants to win, let him lead and educate people on the issues that matter to most of the people of this country and help wake up the sleeping giant that would rise up if he knew or felt that the Democrats really would make a difference and give us a real choice in this election.

My goodness, we need at least one voice speaking to some of the issues progressives care about to try and keep the discourse honest: he ain't perfect, but please, run Nader run!!

—**Brother Damu Smith** 202-265-4919/202-232-5690

...The point is To Stop Bush.

Granted Bush & K have similar class backgrounds, though different sectors of that class. But a campaign to Fight For A People's Democracy focused on BEAT BUSH & Continue the Education, mobilization and organization of Cultural Revolution.

We Need to Stop Bush! Bush can be defeated if we unify the many and struggle to Stop him. Nader, on the other hand, can do nothing but elect Bush, as he did before. And make a few petty bourgeois liberals, who really want to share power with Bush, &c, feel they have done something significant. They will have—the question, as it was in '00, is WHAT?

UNITY & STRUGGLE, —**AMIRI BARAKA** amirib@aol.com

* Brother Baraka:

The system is a fraud, and if it honestly is, and has not been liberating for Black people, and all poor people (globally), then we must expose it for its criminality. Kerry is a rabid pro-Israeli advocate, and thus contributes to racism, in just this one area. He has made it clear that he opposes the revolutionary government of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, and would continue to exert imperialistic pressure against that government. There will be no respite from the intensified incarceration of Africans in the United States (as it multiplied under Bill Clinton), under Kerry. It is time to adopt a clear revolutionary stance and stand firmly on moral ground, as opposed to participating in a system that is fundamentally criminal, and urges expediency—"vote for Kerry, so that Bush is out." These two folks, are part of the same exploitative, genocidal, and ecocidal system, and therefore, do not warrant our votes. Bush is an imperialist president who is unabashed and unashamed about his racism, sexism, and colonial violence practices. Kerry obscures the true nature of the oppressive system in sweet-talk about democracy, health care, educational opportunity, etc, but stands essentially for the same oppression that Bush overtly executes.

We need a new system, and like the masses in Iraq and Colombia, Palestine and Nigeria, must mobilize towards that end. We are not struggling for the amelioration of slavery, but the removal of our chains, and voting for Kerry will not break those chains.

Peace.... —**Julian Kunnie**, Director and Professor, jkunnie@u.arizona.edu Africana Studies, University of Arizona

(We still remember your wonderful visit last spring!)

The question we need to answer is what distinguishes us as black radicals. Do we go along to get along? What does it get us?...

I take the long view. Will Kerry winning help us build the movement against the policies he supports? No, not just because he wins. We have to let him and the other neo-cons/liberals know that we don't like what they stand for.

You say you've done negotiations. Let me say, I would never go into negotiations without making the bosses believe we are ready to strike or make their lives otherwise miserable.

After welfare reform and all that other bad stuff (people in prison, no health care, etc), why would we let the DP think we're okay with that? Why not find another place to go? Why not make another place for ourselves?

I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired. Will we wait for white liberals to take the lead on some expression of independent political action? How sad.....

—**Theresa El-Amin**

TheresaElAmin@aol.com

Comment: "The system is a fraud" says Brother Kunnie. True. Arguably, European systems are more democratic—politically, economically, and socially—than that in the US, though "democracy" is our mantra. The structure of our government largely prevents democracy from working here—excessive Federal power, swollen executive power, congressional majority and

seniority rules, lack of public media. A step in the right direction would be Instant-Runoff Voting (IRV), but this is only one step in one of the above elements.

The media element may be the key to changing the others, by bringing all elements of society into the dialog and sharing visions of who or what is the elite and who are the democratic actors, and of conflict and conciliation. Only then will we be able "to escape the matrix" and emerge, like the Vietnamese, as autonomous human communities. Meanwhile, we need candidates who articulate this vision as decisively as Bush speaks. —Ed.

White American Manifest Destiny is dead, having gasped its last deep breath in Iraq. More than a defeat for the Bush cabal, the Iraqi fiasco has exposed America's glaring unfitness to play a leading role in a modernizing world. Its armed forces, in particular, drawn from a population that has been reared in a continental bubble of ignorance and white supremacist delusion, are incapable of treating non-whites as people.

The blooming of Iraqi national solidarity is in part a result of American racism and, at times, barbarism. Among the soldiers are men who revel in ripping Korans, who used sniper rifles to murder women and children in Fallujah, and whose commanders have refused from the beginning of the occupation to even record the deaths of the Iraqi civilians whom they purport to protect.

Even the British, who former UN Ambassador Andrew Young once said "invented racism," are appalled and alarmed at American behavior in Iraq—conduct that threatens the lives of British soldiers in charge of the southern part of the country. The UK *Telegraph* reported the comments of a "senior Army officer." Speaking from his base in southern Iraq, the officer said: "My view and the view of the British chain of command is that the Americans' use of violence is not proportionate and is over-responsive to the threat they are facing. They don't see the Iraqi people the way we see them. They view them as *untermenschen* [German for "sub-human"]. They are not concerned about the Iraqi loss of life in the way the British are. Their attitude towards the Iraqis is tragic, it's awful.

"The US troops view things in very simplistic terms. It seems hard for them to reconcile subtleties between who supports what and who doesn't in Iraq. It's easier for their soldiers to group all Iraqis as the bad guys. As far as they are concerned Iraq is bandit country and everybody is out to kill them."

American racial warfare was horrifically successful against Native Americans, Mexicans, Filipinos and many other victims of Manifest Destiny—but was defeated, at terrible cost, by the Vietnamese. The Iraqis are thwarting them again. The American worldview, stunted and deformed by racism, does not prepare the nation to interact with non-white populations without reverting to type. Thus, the American military is a blunt instrument with limited uses. Only its machines make the US a military superpower. The human resources of the United States, civilian and military, are patently unfit to rule the globe. This elemental fact will become more obvious with every deployment—even to Americans.

The U.S. can punish darker nations and peoples, but it cannot exercise lasting authority over them. Unless it learns to coexist with others on the planet, it will be shunned and eclipsed. The Bush Plan for global conquest was doomed from the start, based

as it was on peculiarly American delusions that are organic to the nation's hyper-racist history.

John Kerry doesn't have a plan for Iraq. Good.

—*BlackCommentator.com*

Nader Listen: 2-for-1 Voting Using the Electoral College for IRV

by Bruce Ackerman, *New York Times*, 5 May 2004
(Italics added. —Ed.)

With Ralph Nader bobbing along at 2 percent to 7 percent in the polls, now is the time to consider whether our system is flexible enough to avoid another election in which a candidate loses the popular vote but wins the presidency. The answer is yes—if Mr. Nader chooses to cooperate.

In November, Americans won't be casting their ballots directly for George Bush, John Kerry, or Ralph Nader. From a constitutional point of view, they will be voting for competing slates of electors nominated in each state by the contenders. Legally speaking, the decisions made by these 538 members of the Electoral College determine the next president.

In the case of Mr. Bush and Mr. Kerry, electors will be named by each state's political parties. But Ralph Nader is running as an independent. When he petitions to get on the ballot in each state, he must name his own slate of electors. While he is free to nominate a distinctive slate of names, *he can also propose the very same names that appear on the Kerry slate.*

If he does, he will provide voters with a new degree of freedom. On Election Day, they will see a line on the ballot designating Ralph Nader's electors. But if voters choose the Nader line, they won't be wasting their ballot on a candidate with little chance of winning. Since Mr. Nader's slate would be the same as Mr. Kerry's, his voters would be providing additional support for the electors selected by the Democrats. *If the Nader-Kerry total is a majority in any state, the victorious electors would be free to vote for Mr. Kerry.*

This plan is consistent with the original understanding of the founders. When they created the Electoral College, they did not anticipate the rise of the party system; they expected voters to select community leaders who would make their own judgments when casting their ballots for the presidency. In designating Kerry electors rather than insisting on his own slate, Mr. Nader would be giving new meaning to this tradition that refused to view electors as simply vehicles of a candidate's will. In effect, he would be enabling his supporters to rank their choices: Mr. Nader first, Mr. Kerry second.

Over the centuries, the electors have become creatures of their parties, though they sometimes cast independent votes. Yet the Supreme Court has made only limited concessions to this reality. It has allowed political parties to protect the integrity of their mission by giving electors a place on their party's ticket only if they promise to vote for the candidates nominated at their national conventions.

But the court has never allowed any state to impose sanctions on an elector who later chooses to vote independently. Indeed, its leading decision recognizes that any promise an

elector makes to his party may well be legally unenforceable because it would violate "an assumed constitutional freedom of the elector."

Nevertheless, about half of the states have sought to compromise electors' independence by compelling them to vote for the candidate or party that put them on the ballot. As a consequence, officials in these states might be tempted to reject Mr. Nader's effort to name a slate of electors who are not pledged to vote for him in the final count. In response, the Nader campaign would be obliged to go to court to vindicate the independence of the Electoral College as well as its own First Amendment right to select the electors who best fulfill its political purposes. In contrast, it will be easier to carry out the strategy in the many states that have no laws against elector independence.

The choice, then, is Ralph Nader's. If he truly has no desire to be a spoiler in November, he can structure his candidacy to allow his supporters to vote both for him and for Senator Kerry. But he must act now, when he is organizing his campaign to get on the ballot.



Planning Economic Alternatives for Boston Social Forum.
From left: Julie Petot, Adria Scharf, Pasqualino Colombaro

Bush's War Will Wreck US Economy Oil Fix Is as Foolish as Old Spain's Gold Fix

by James K. Galbraith, *Los Angeles Times*, 26 April 2004

However badly the war is going in Iraq, on the home front it is still a good thing for George Bush—so far. A year ago, the push to Baghdad doubled the economic growth rate and got a recovery started. Now, the literally untold billions in military payrolls and equipment purchases that keep the war going also help to propel our economy along.

This is normal. All wars bring cheerful economic news at first. They stimulate production. They raise capacity utilization, which helps business cover costs and improve earnings. This is good for the stock market. Wars create jobs and also usually draw young men and women away from the labor force, cutting unemployment. (So far, this war has been fought by a handful of over-stretched professional soldiers, so the job effects have been small. That could change, especially if the draft is resurrected, as some would like.)

But the good news doesn't last. Soon enough, profiteers see their chances. Bottlenecks happen. Prices go up. Long before unemployment disappears, wars generate inflation. Indeed, inflation—and the depreciation of private wealth and public debt that it

brings—is the ages-old way in which governments pay for war.

Wars upset the trade balance. They gobble imports. And they tend to pull critical resources—scientific talent and key materials—away from exports. Our trade deficit is already staggering. As the economy grows, it will get worse. Under wartime conditions, it will get worse still.

Wars aggravate the national external debt. Already we borrow half a trillion dollars yearly from abroad. How long will Japan and China keep sending us goods and piling up uncashed IOUs in return? No one knows.

And what do we get for our blood and treasure? Security is priceless, of course—if, in fact, you get it. But in material terms, do we get, for instance, cheaper oil from our Saudi ally? Certainly not at the moment. Bob Woodward does tell us that Prince Bandar ibn Sultan, the Saudi ambassador to the U.S., has arranged a few months of relief for his friend, George W. Bush, this coming fall. But don't expect that largess to outlast the election.

The U.S. had one good economic experience with war. World War II conquered the Depression, reindustrialized the country and built the middle class. But that was special. The U.S. fought WWII with full mobilization, super-high taxes, super-low interest rates, big deficits, price controls and rationing. Iraq isn't going to be like World War II.

Economically, the Iraq war is more like Vietnam: insidiously underestimated, sold to the public and Congress on false premises, improperly budgeted and inadequately taxed. During the Vietnam years, there was also economic growth at first. But then came creeping inflation, followed by worldwide commodity shocks, the oil crisis of 1973, international monetary disorder and a decade of economic troubles.

Could it happen again? Yes, it could.

Did Team Bush think through the economics of a long and costly war? There is no evidence it did. It counted on the war being quick, cheap and self-financing. If it thought about the long-range economics, there seems to have been only one goal: control of oil.

Spain's Philip II believed that control of the gold of Peru and silver of Mexico would guarantee his nation's predominance in Europe. Elizabeth I and Sir Francis Drake disagreed. Louis XIV and Napoleon I trusted in conquest to enrich France. Their ministers—Turgot and Talleyrand—knew better. Winston Churchill vowed not to preside over the end of the British Empire. But his successors gave it up when they couldn't afford it anymore. Luckily, the U.S. was there to take over, and we had the support of the free world. But that was then.

By going into Iraq with few allies, we've assumed the entire economic cost. The home-front damage is small now, but it will build over time. And it will take time and effort to repair. The future American economy will especially need a new energy direction, emphasizing conservation and renewable energy, and concerted investment in the world's next generation of technologies—both to reduce our oil dependence and to help balance our trade deficits.

Let's hope Sen. John F. Kerry makes this point on his manufacturing tour this week. And let's hope that Americans understand. Real security begins at home.



HAVEN'T YOU HEARD?...



"If you fuckers start tearing up savannah, you won't have to worry about the fucking cops, the citizens arent what you protest whimps are used to. We won't lay down adn take shit lightly."

—anonymous email from fuck@off.com

1 So what's this about? On June 8-10 the G8 (wealthiest 8 countries' governments) will meet on an island off Brunswick (near Savannah) Georgia, USA—to discuss informally policies to enhance their international system and protect their clients. Brunswick's Robert Randall is organizing a "G8 Carnival" to draw 10,000 to protest such policies and celebrate change possibilities, but has now been confronted with new local permitting laws which inhibit free speech and assembly. The ACLU may sue...

Re: the above email threat, What if 7 or 8000 of those protesters turn out to be Georgia citizens? See ACTION ALERTS for attending the event.

2 In 2003, a medical transcriber in Pakistan threatened to post [American] patients' records on-line unless the University of California San Francisco (UCSF) Medical Center paid the wages owed to her by the U.S. subcontractor that had sent the work to her... Heartland Information Services, an Ohio-based company that **offshores medical records work to India**, received a similar threat from a group of disgruntled employees in Bangalore, India. The Indian workers said that they would release confidential records unless they received a cash payoff from the company... The only liability in the Pakistani transcriber case would reside with the U.S. companies having created no disincentive for the bad conduct by the overseas provider...

Now US accountants are sending your confidential income tax records offshore. —Ed.

3 Some surveillance technology goes well beyond mere videotape. Several airports across the country, including Logan Airport in Boston and Oakland International Airport in California, are testing **software that scans people's faces** as they pass through checkpoints and compares those digital photos to a database of mug shots that includes suspected criminals and people on watch lists supplied by the CIA, FBI, and other agencies. Visionics' Facelt system can scan as many as 15 faces a second. For now, though, the technology is far from foolproof: Sunglasses, smiles, and hats can confuse it.

—Popular Science, 2004

4 Police in Savannah GA are harassing forum organizers who will protest or teach-in at the **G8 summit** of governments of the world's 8 richest countries, June 8-10, on secluded Sea Island, 80 miles south. "We have never had this degree of surveillance," said Trent Schroyer, president of TOES, or The Other Economic Summit, and a professor of sociology and philosophy at Ramapo College in Mahwah, N.J. "I have no affiliation with any groups dangerous to the country in any way—unless rational discourse is a real threat." Local organizers rented a racetrack for a benefit concert during the G8, but police calls convinced the track owner to renege. Gov. Sonny Perdue has arranged for 20,000 fed, state, and local law officers.

Hey, isn't there any place where national ministers can meet without pesky citizens looking over our shoulders?

Gerrymandering Nixed in Boston Court Democratizes Spkr Finneran's District

With support from many concerned citizens, MassVOTE and Boston voting rights organizations and activists won a landmark case against the House leader's discriminatory redistricting plan.

The victory, won in the final hours in First Federal Circuit Court of Appeals, brought changes to three key districts:

1. Made the Mattapan district, represented by Speaker Finneran, into a true majority of black voters,
2. Restored another Roxbury/Jamaica Plain district as a black/Latino opportunity seat, and
3. Undid the political apartheid of the House plan which packed black voters into a few districts in an overt attempt to reduce their voting power in others.

In a second lawsuit in Chelsea, the Court ruled in favor of incumbents and against a claim by Latino voters, who had asked to be paired with similar parts of East Boston rather than with Charlestown. Clearly, there is more work to be done.

Key case: 12th Suffolk District (Mattapan, Dorchester, Milton):

House Speaker Finneran has held this seat for 26 years. This is the 3rd redistricting during his tenure in which he has "whitened" this majority black seat adding white voters, subtracting black voters. The new plan forced him to restore a significant black majority where black voters are once again the decisive voting bloc of this Mattapan centered district.



Planning Economic Alternatives tracks for Boston Social Forum.
From left: Vickie Johnson, Isaac Ashton, Ethan Miller (Maine)

LETTERS

Couldn't some persons in your alliance chapter, or elsewhere, help Doris Haddock (Granny D)? I'm pretty sure National [AfD] still owes money to Dennis [Burke] and Doris and has given them none for a long time. [94-year-old] Doris and Dennis are on a 14-month trip around the country, living hand to mouth, registering primarily women workers to vote. We send them money when we can, and say it's from AfD to reduce that debt still on national's books.

Checks can be made out to "American Town Hall" and mailed to American Town Hall, Doris Haddock (Granny D), Box 492, Dublin NH 03458. Thanks!

—Lew and Pat Hammann, Orrtanna PA

corporations are expanding around the globe, challenging their U.S. counterparts. A rising Euro now is competing with the dollar as a global currency. The Europeans are closer to putting their John Hancocks on a new Constitution that will bind them closer as a continent.

Moreover, in numerous ways average Americans are falling behind our European counterparts in this age of globalization. Even with recent cutbacks, still Europeans have free health care for all, cradle to grave; free education through university level; generous retirement for their elderly; an average of five weeks paid vacation, more sick leave, and parental leave. Social spending in Europe runs some 50 percent above that in the United States. Alternate energy development (wind, hydro, tidal and hydrogen cell power), food safety, organic and anti-GM laws, and labor laws are the envy of activists in the U.S. For those pro-Iraqi war American workers who patriotically joined in the dumping of French wines and the renaming of French fries to "freedom fries," they might want to consider that they now work a full day longer per week – about seven weeks longer per year – than French workers. Even the specter of higher unemployment, usually the American rebuttal to European superiority in so many other categories, turns out to be not so clear cut, with many European countries by 2003 having lower unemployment rates than the U.S., once the stock market bubble of the 1990s had burst.

And yet the American media is not reporting much of this. The typical American depiction of "old Europe" usually is fraught with stereotypical extremes, either colorful vacation adverts about castles on the Rhine or goose-stepping neo-Nazi parties. One headline in an American daily newspaper, in contemplating the apparent superior standing of average Europeans, blared the ridiculous question "Do European Workers Have It Too Good?" As if workers can have it too good – obviously we know who owns that newspaper. The row at the United Nations seemingly burst from nowhere, but if the American media hadn't been so asleep at the wheel, they would have seen it coming.

Key Institutions

Why are Europeans outpacing Americans on so many social, political and economic fronts? The answers are complex but basically they boil down to the fact that, for the last 60 years in the post-WWII period, Europeans have been incubating markedly different "fulcrum institutions" – the key institutions and practices on which everything else pivots. In particular, three fulcrum institutions form the foundation for the rest – the political, economic, and media institutions. These three play an Archimedean role in deciding ever-evolving policies that affect people's lives, on matters ranging from health care, education, housing, transportation and taxes to the energy régime, corporate structure, immigration, foreign policy and national security.

In the political realm, Europe utilizes full representation electoral systems that gives representation to voters across the political spectrum, public financing of elections that fosters debate, universal voter registration, voting on a weekend or on a holiday, and national electoral commissions that establish nationwide standards and practices. Women and third parties have far greater representation at all levels of government. In the U.S., we are still stuck with our 18th-century winner-take-all system, privately financed elections, poor voter participation, poll-tested sound bites

aimed at undecided swing voters, voting on a busy work day, and haywire decentralized election administration left to over 3000 counties scattered across the country.

In the media realm, Europe boasts a robust public broadcasting sector (radio and TV) and subsidized daily newspapers, leading to more media pluralism, a better-informed citizenry, more people reading newspapers, and a higher level of what political scientist Henry Miiner calls "civic literacy." In the U.S., we are still stuck with corporate media gatekeepers, media monopolies, an astonishing loss of political ideas and a poorly informed citizenry.

In the economic realm, Europeans have developed practices such as "codetermination," which provides meaningful worker representation on corporate boards of directors, and powerful works councils in the workplaces. There is more of a balance of stockholder and stakeholder rights, forcing business leaders to confer more extensively with their workers and labor unions. There also are continent wide minimum labor and environmental standards, including more union-friendly laws.

Taken together, these fulcrum institutions work coherently to form the basis of a "European Way" that is distinctly different from the "American Way." This provides a rough blueprint of where institutional development in the United States needs to go in the 21st century. Those who care about the future of our country should take their cues from Europe.

Steven Hill is senior analyst for the Center for Voting and Democracy and author of "Fixing Elections: The Failure of America's Winner Take All Politics".

LETTER TO SEN. KERRY

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"American." We also watched as politicians offered increasingly feeble responses to these attacks, then abandoned the effort altogether. You cannot blame us for being skeptical of you.

The list of setbacks is now a long one. When Reagan undermined the social contract and demonized the poor, when neo-liberal economists attacked the public sector, when right-wing vitriol entered the mainstream media, it was all dismissed as "politics as usual." When the 2000 election was decided by judicial fiat, when the administration it installed abandoned our global commitments, when it actually floated proposals for a new American empire, no one in power opposed them. Only here at the grass roots have people realized this is not "politics as usual," and each year more of us have looked for ways to fight back.

These developments have created a larger perspective for us. We have experienced it like a growing national trauma, one more profound than September 11th. To us the nation's response to the terrorist attacks was more disturbing than the attacks themselves. As we absorbed the shock of that terrible day we turned to an administration we already distrusted, hoping it might rise to the occasion and protect us. Instead we saw the administration use the tragedy to intimidate critics and promote everything from tax cuts to war to political candidates. Though some were heartened by the new "moral clarity," we saw leaders who veered towards police state tactics, and whose reckless understanding of the world actually made further attacks more likely. We saw, once again, that no one in power had the courage to fight back.

With our new perspective we now see that society's barometers do not truly reflect our lives. We see a robust stock market and gross domestic product that communicate nothing about our real levels of prosperity. We see tax breaks that barely register in our pocketbooks, alongside financial strains in the affairs of state that matter most - public safety, social services, education, retirement. We see injustice and tragedy in our increasingly unaffordable health care. And we share a sense of fear and anger, because life in this country is slowly deteriorating for all but the lucky and the well-placed.

Perhaps more important, beneath our anger is a tremendous pang of hurt. The political attack against our interests has been waged with the help of a well-crafted culture war. We have been regarded as pariahs for suggesting simple truths - that taxes are necessary for a functioning society, that "free markets" often eliminate competition and choice, that restrictions on civil liberties don't make us safe. In this latest crisis, we were accused of supporting terrorism simply because we opposed war.

Reconciliation and a reaffirmation of America's real values must occur if this country is to move forward - a process that will require leadership. We do not want to go on feeling that our neighbors—who supposedly share the right wing's "heartland" values—are our enemies. We know many of them share our values and concerns. We assume they do not want to be at war with their fellows. The culture war has been whipped up by those who use divisiveness for political gain. In the current crisis this manipulation of people's emotions is a shameful betrayal, and at long last we ask you as a person with some power to address crimes like these.

We do not know if you can sense or act upon these realities, Senator Kerry. We have seen you shift with the political tide. We worry about your response to the current moment. Then we stop and consider how in the past you campaigned against unjust wars, and political corruption, and we hope that just as the rest of us have become aware of our country's current crisis—in our own way, and in our own time—that you are becoming aware of it too.

Conventional wisdom says "everything changed" after September 11th. For many of us, another date marks a more pivotal moment: January 20th, 2001. That was the day George W. Bush delivered inaugural remarks that promised healing, only to launch the most radical phase yet of the conservative counter-revolution. Everything has changed since that day, and the dividing line is between those who get exactly what is at stake in this election, and those who don't.

Our question for you is: do you get it, Senator Kerry?

(Signed)

Bill Haff, Easton MA

Brian Moriarty, Duxbury MA

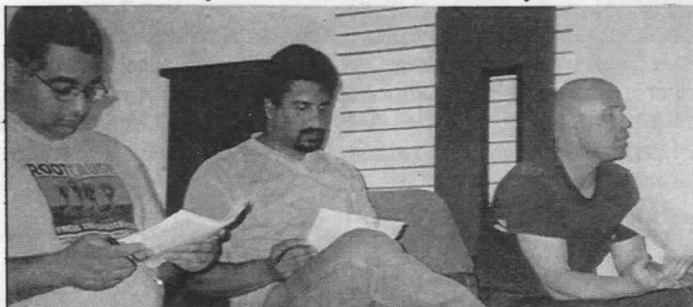
Janice Mullen, Hull MA

Pat Garrity, Duxbury MA

Katherine Henderson, Hull MA

Randy Johnson, Weymouth MA

Mass Bay South Alliance for Democracy



Boston Social Forum program committee organizers Suren Moodliar (center) and Jonathan Leavitt (right)

Desperate Letters to Victoria Chechens in Refugee Camps in Azerbaijan

A typical letter received by Victoria Poupko, Brookline

Hello, dear Victoria.

How are you? I heard you were sick? Please, be well, you are our only source of help. We spoke about my father. The problem: about his surgery still remains. It cost \$650. I got \$200 from you. Then we spoke about our emigration to another country, but you told me that the problem with your father should be solved first. Then another problem arose: my son. He died before my eyes and my wife's. We could do nothing. My son died 24/1/04 from, frankly saying, cold and dampness. We have one room and a kitchen, and it was so cold there, believe us. There was nothing inside and we slept on the floor. I lost my beautiful beloved son. I also have parents and a widowed sister, who has three children. Victoria, I can't look them in the eyes. I am crying, I can't speak with them. I am losing my dignity. There are only two men in the family: my father 7-month pregnant. I don't want her to deliver here, because every new day has new problems. And I can't leave behind my parents and my sister with her daughters. Victoria, I am asking you, as if I ask my mother: help us to get out of here. I don't have any more my cell phone. I sold it for food for my children, but I have a telephone at home 96-34-68. Please, Victoria, send me if possible for my father's surgery. I swear, you are like a mother to me. Nobody has heard us except of you.

Yours, respectfully, Turko Usparov. 14/2/04

CHAPTER AND ALLIANCE NEWS

Alliance biennial convention, July 20-22, Simmons College, Boston. "A hands-on, participatory, non-hierarchical, member-focused, chapter-building, movement-building, tool-kit-building, grassroots-developing, brand new approach, far outside the corporate structure but, as old as the instincts in peoples' hearts! Maybe we ought to call it the 2004 AfD "un-convention!"

In its workshops and circles, the convention will focus on popular education, re-visioning, alliances, and communications, with plenty of time for networking, socializing, and celebration. Substantively, we are enlarging our national campaign to save our public water from corporate privatization. AfD will focus on CT, MA, and ME by organizing Water Watch Councils and Alliance chapters. Sounds like a good time for developing a New England Alliance, reviving our effort to establish a regional web site.

BCA is contributing by organizing an evening panel on July 21, on Contesting A Stolen Election: Before & After Bush-Kerry 2004, featuring **Alice Copeland Brown** (BCA), **Ronnie Dugger** (AfD), **Jonathan Simon** (BCA), **Stuart Comstock-Gay** (National Voting Rights Inst.), and a law professor specializing in election law. Dave Lewit is also looking for a former secretary of state.

For fun and inspiration, **Dave Rovics** will sing—"the musical version of Democracy Now". Register now for the program and for housing at Simmons College through July 25 if you wish, by calling **Vikki Savee** at 916-921-9000 (work) or 916-359-5687.

Boston Social Forum, July 23-25, UMass/Boston, Columbia Point. Sandwiched between the Alliance convention and the Democratic National Convention in Boston, the Boston Social Forum should draw 3,000-5,000 activists from New England and beyond. **Ruth Weizenbaum** (North Bridge, AfD Council) is spearheading 2 series of workshops and panels, on Democracy and on Environment. **Dave Lewit** (BCA) is similarly organizing series on Strategic Nonviolence and on Economic Localization. To impress delegates of the Democratic National Convention, **Amy Hendrickson** and Ruth Weizenbaum are organizing a special program for delegates, at Faneuil Hall one afternoon during the DNC, emphasizing truly democratic policy.

Alliance member **Ruth Caplan** just returned from Our World Is Not For Sale network meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, where global leaders of the anti-corporate globalization movement gathered to set strategy for the coming year and to begin discussion of alternatives to corporate globalization and WTO rules. The Alliance has been part of OWINFS since its formation in Seattle back in 1999.

The WTO is hoping to recover from its Cancun debacle by adopting a negotiating framework in July. Without this, which must include highly controversial issues around agriculture, WTO negotiations will stall. It will also be very difficult to get countries to agree to have more of their services covered by WTO rules in the GATS. This would be a welcome development since stopping GATS is part of the Alliance's national campaign on Corporate Globalization and Positive Alternatives which Ruth co-chairs with Dave Lewit.

Diana Palmo, a.k.a. **Brit Eckhart**, is heading for Maine to supervise resort employees and to paint landscapes and seascapes. Contact her through the BCA Dispatch. **Milt Raymond** is recovering nicely, thank you, from an eye operation, and will be moving shortly to Medford MA, but hopes to continue participation in BCA.

Last month's offer to print the best speculations about a Bush "October Surprise"—to tilt the November election—drew only one response, from **Jesse Burkhardt**. Technically, it doesn't count because we wanted to pick the best 2 out of 5, and besides, he suggested his before any contest was announced, and was the impetus for the contest. Anyway, he's away in Cambodia for a few weeks, so we don't yet have his permission.

ACTION ALERTS

Thu, 20 May, 7pm. Cambridge. WORKERS RIGHTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN COLOMBIA: A FIRSTHAND REPORT. Premiere showing of a rough cut of a new short film by Julie Rosenberg: "Hector Giraldo: Trade Unionist". Speakers: Joshua Rubenstein, Northeast Regional Director, Amnesty International USA, Elaine Bernard, Executive Director, Labor and Work Life Program, Barbara Salvaterra, Global Justice Organizer, Jobs With Justice, Hector Giraldo, municipal worker and trade union activist, Antioquia Province, Colombia. Langdell South, Harvard Law School. Information: 617-524-8778.

Tue, 25 May, 7pm. Boston. Video: "The Promised Land: US Media & the Israel-Palestine Conflict", by Bathsheba Ratzkoff and Sut Jhally. How American foreign policy-working in combination with Israeli public relations strategies-exercise a powerful influence over news reporting about the Middle East conflict. An examination of factors that distort U.S. media coverage and, in turn, American public opinion. Community Church of Boston, 565 Boyiston St. \$5 voluntary donation.

Call today! The mayor of New York City has denied protesters a permit to assemble on the Great Lawn of Central Park during the Republican National Convention in Manhattan on August 29th. He cites damage to the grass and shrubs. Larger crowds have been granted permits in the past. Press him to reconsider: Mayor Michael Bloomberg Parks Commissioner Adrian Benepe
phone 212-788-3000 phone 212-360-1305
fax 212-788-9711 fax 212-360-1345

More info at www.unitedforpeace.org or call 212-868-5545.

Tue-Thu, June 8-10, Brunswick, GA. Free Speech & Carnival at the Sea Island G8 Summit. Join 10,000 protesters, learners, and fun-seekers opposed to corporate-driven globalization. Call/see Robert Randall (912) 262-1274; www.geocities.com/g8hospitality and <http://freesavannah.com>. For TOES teach-in info, call Trent Schroyer at (201) 684-7740.

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. #2h, 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: _____

Street, No./Box/Apt: _____

Town and Zip: _____

Phone: Day _____ Night: _____

E-mail: _____

COLOPHON

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