

BCA Dispatch

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

ANNALS OF PSYCHOPATHY

...Reagan at least had sense to know that he was an actor, hitting his marks, tipping his cap, milking the script for laughs; George W. Bush thinks the movie is real.

---Lewis H. Lapham, *Harper's Magazine*, Aug 2004

ALLIANCE NEWS (Continued on Page 7)

Chapter Calendar

** Share Your Forum Experience **

Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy will meet on **Wednesday, June 16**, 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 —

From July 20-29 Boston hosted the **Alliance for Democracy**, the **Boston Social Forum**, the **Veterans for Peace**, the **Democratic National Convention**, other forums at Faneuil Hall and **Roxbury Community College**, maybe 700 events in all—outstanding speakers, news, heated discussion, discovery, learnings, meeting stars and old friends, films, inspiration, protests, encounters, music... The Social Forum drew 5000 and grossed \$250,000.

AfD's Stolen Election panel was riveting. And now followup. — **Were you energized? — Frightened? — Disappointed? — Reconnected? — Come, share your perceptions and feelings, or just listen (;->)**

— Refreshments —

EDITORIAL

The End of Representative Government What Should Our Democracy Look Like?

by *Dave Lewit, Boston-Cambridge Alliance*

Representative democracy is infuriating. Representative democracy is failing. A small group of "conservative" representatives currently dominate the national government—legislative, executive, and judiciary. And the system makes it very difficult to dislodge them. They represent the hopes, views, and interests of only a small minority of citizens—larger corporate shareholders, Christian fundamentalists, and yahoo talk-show fans. Not the 50 percent of adults who never vote, not renters, not unionists, not liberal professionals, not mainline Christians, not people of color, not the incarcerated, not many artists or writers, not many readers.

These "representatives" are not conservative. They do not conserve the best of our culture. They do not conserve the hard-won advances of our less-privileged folk. They favor the speculator and the corporation rather than the creative individual or the diligent worker. They are looking out **(Continued on page 4 >>)**



PROTECTING VOTERS

California protester feigns pelvic ventriloquism at Dem Convention

ELECTION FORECAST

Bush Claims Victory;

Kerry Cries "Fraud"

Millions Protest Counts; Law Suits Readied

by *Jonathan Simon, Poll Analyst, Boston*

BOSTON, 2 November 2004 —

In a series of startling developments as polls closed and electoral votes were awarded earlier this evening, the results of Election 2004 have been put into doubt.

President Bush, the apparent winner of 277 electoral votes, with 271 needed for reelection, claimed victory just before midnight EST, when Fox News called the states of Ohio and Washington in the President's favor.

Almost simultaneously, however, reports were received from locations throughout the United States that large groups had begun to assemble in protest. From major cities to out-of-the-way towns and villages, Americans alleging that the votes were not fairly counted have taken to the streets in great and growing legions.

Among the protesters, whose numbers were difficult to estimate but were thought to be in excess of 12 million at press time, warehouseman Greg Goodeborn of Springfield, Missouri, was typical. Asked what had brought him out at midnight on a cold November evening, Mr. Goodeborn, a member of the Paul Revere Election Protection Brigade who had joined a group of about a thousand others at the Battlefield Mall, said that he had received a key message from an internet organization to which he belonged.

"At about 11 p.m.," Mr. Goodeborn said, "I found out that the results they were giving us on TV in several states did not jibe with the special exit polls which **(Continued on page 2 >>)**

BUSH CLAIMS VICTORY (Continued from page 1)

the election monitors had commissioned. We were informed that the chance of all these discrepancies occurring together in the absence of foul play was less than one in a million."

Goodeborn added that he had been alerted in advance to check his email for such a message on election night, and if necessary to join with others similarly prepared in the protest at the Battlefield site which had been chosen by the Brigade and participating organizations for this purpose.

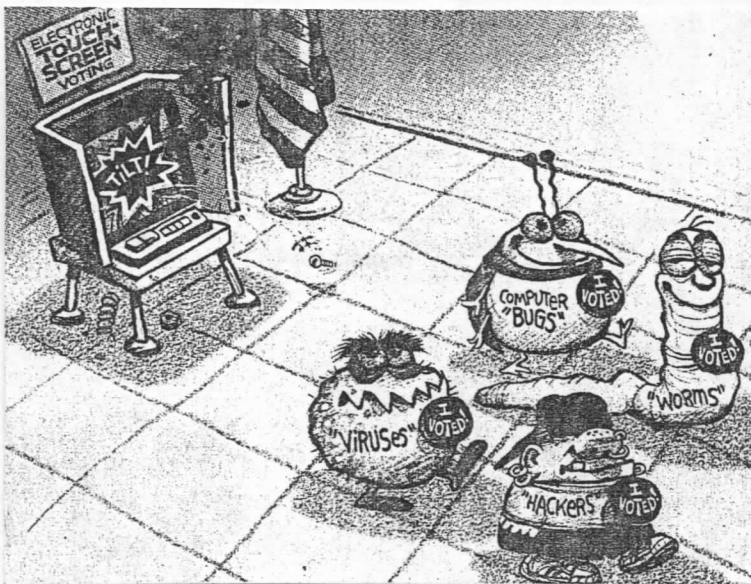
In a throng of several thousand at the Statehouse in Atlanta, Georgia, Candace Compson, an insurance adjuster of nearby Conyers, stated that she had joined the national protest even though she believed Bush had won her home state fairly. She, along with Mr. Goodeborn and millions of others, had been signaled and mobilized through her membership in an internet group.

Asked about her reliance on the exit poll data, Ms. Compson responded that she had at first been skeptical about its capacity to detect fraud. "But," she said, "I was given a clear explanation of how the polls work, and remember that they've been using exit polls to call close races for years and years. The vote machines here in Georgia—and in a lot of states, from what I've heard—they're black boxes: no idea what votes have been counted for whom, and no paper trail to check.

"The exit polls were done very carefully by a nonpartisan group and they're amazingly accurate. I'm just not accepting something that would happen less than one time in a million. It looks to all of us like the folks in power have tried to steal this election, and it's up to us to stop it. We'll stay out here as long as it takes, until the courts decide. It's not just who's president; democracy's too important to let them pull this."

In a related development, there were widespread reports that teams of trained observers had been mobilized to precincts and county seats where voting irregularities had been reported through a citizen's hotline. The purpose of these "SWAT" teams was to insure that voting equipment, records, and ballots were preserved intact for recounts and pending investigations of problems.

Teams of lawyers have also been dispatched to trouble spots and, according to several who were interviewed, are prepared to



file legal challenges in each of the hundreds of venues where significant errors or foul play are alleged to have occurred. Statewide legal challenges were also planned, based in part on the wildly improbable statistical discrepancies revealed by the exit poll monitoring.

At press time crowd numbers were continuing to increase rapidly and it now appears that, for better or worse, there will be no "business as usual" in America, today or for the immediate future.

How They Could Steal the Election This Time What You Can Do

by Ronnie Dugger, excerpt from *The Nation*, 16/23 Aug 2004

Public interest groups are mobilizing to head off another Florida. Petitions calling for a paper trail for DREs have attracted something approaching half a million signatures. Lou Dobbs's quick poll on CNN on "paper receipts of electronic votes" was running 5,735 to 85 for them on July 20. Greg Palast and Martin Luther King III have more than 80,000 signatures on their petition against paperless touch-screens and the purging of voter rolls. Global Exchange, the San Francisco-based organization, is inviting twenty-eight nonpartisan foreign observers to monitor the US election. Eleven members of Congress asked Kofi Annan to send UN monitors. Cindy Cohn of the Electronic Frontier Foundation is organizing attorneys for litigation against paperless electronic voting.

In mid-June the California secretary of state approved the nation's first set of standards for a verified paper trail for touch-screen machines. A recent "Voting, Vote Capture and Vote Counting" symposium at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government has produced an "Annotated Best Practices," available at www.ljean.com/files/ABPractices.pdf. On June 29 the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights and the Brennan Center for Justice, with the endorsement of Common Cause, the NAACP, People for the American Way and most of the leading scientific critics of paperless touch-screen voting, sent the nation's local election officials a "call for new security measures for electronic voting machines," including local retention of independent security experts; the full report is available at www.civilrights.org/issues/voting/lccr_brennan_report.pdf

Douglas Kellner, the New York City election expert, believes the best practical remedy for the dangers of computerized vote-counting is voting on optical-scan systems, posting the election results in the precincts and keeping the ballots with the machines in which they were counted. In all computerized vote-counting situations the precinct results should be publicly distributed and posted in the precincts before they are transmitted to the center for final counting, Kellner says. Once they are sent from the precinct the audit trail is lost.

Citizens can stay current on election developments via several websites: electionline.org, a reliable and up-to-date source; VerifiedVoting.org, Dill's group; notablessoftware.com, Mercuri's site; blackboxvoting.org, Bev Harris's site; countthevote.org, the site of the Georgia group led by Jekot;

and these will key into many others. For a steady flow of news stories on this subject (and a few others) from around the country, get on the e-mail list of resist@best.com. Official information concerning each state is available online at each state's website for its secretary of state.

People should go down to their local election departments and ask their supervisor of elections how they are going to know that their votes are counted—and refuse to take "Trust us," or "Trust the machines," for an answer. They can be poll watchers. Many organizations are fostering poll watching, including People for the American Way's Election Protection 2004 project. Common Cause "has made election monitoring a major project," a spokesperson says. VerifiedVoting.org is concentrating on having people watch election technology, including pre-election testing as well as the procedures on election day. Bev Harris is organizing people to do such work (see her website).

Rebecca Mercuri says that if you believe an election has been corrupted through voting equipment, you should collect affidavits from voters; get the results from every voting machine for all precincts; get the names and titles of everyone involved; inventory the equipment, including the software, and try to have it impounded; demand a recount; and go to the press. Noting that all counties that have rushed to purchase DRE voting systems also have paper-ballot systems in place to handle absentee voters, motor-voters and emergency ballots for when the system breaks down, she suggests mothballing the DREs and using paper ballots. "Counties are saying there's nothing they can do but use the DREs in November, and that is simply untrue," Mercuri declares.

Much of this would be unnecessary if Congress enacted either the Graham-Clinton or the Holt bill, which would empower voters to verify their own votes and create a paper trail.

The computerized voting companies have precipitated a crisis for the integrity of democracy. Three months to go.

AfD Panelist Advises on Election Theft Go to a Swing State; Document Everything

Remarks of Ben Scotch, former chief staff attorney of Vermont Supreme Court, and former executive director of Vermont ACLU, at the biennial convention of the Alliance for Democracy, Boston, 21 July 2004.

*Recording and transcription courtesy Caroline Botsford, NY, NY.
Video recording courtesy Martha Spiess, Freeport, ME.*

It probably appears true to all of you that we're really working with 10% of the possibilities of preventing a theft of an election. But what about that 10%? Stuart [Comstock-Gay] began to give you an example of what you can do, specifically. That 10% may be the 10% that tips a very close election in the right direction

People ask me what can be done? I summarize it, really, in three statements. Probably all of them are controversial in a meeting like this. Paper is wonderful. I hope we see paper in 2006 and 2008. We are not going to see paper—Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT)—in any significant amount in 2004. Just take

an informal poll from your secretaries of state if you don't believe that. We have to keep arguing for paper because paper is our security in the end. It is not going to happen in the next three and a half months. So what results from that if we focus all our efforts on the VVPAT? A lot of energy is devoted to something that isn't going to happen.

In addition, talk with candor out of both sides of your mouth. Stuart, you referred to—and Jon [Simon] as well—the need for turnout. One of the unfortunate results of the debate over paper is that a fair number of people who traditionally vote Democratic are not going to vote if they believe that their ballots are not going to be counted. So we're in an ironic position of saying, "Let's do something about these rotten machines", the technology that Alice [Copeland Brown] so clearly went through. At the same time, when push comes to shove, we need to tell voters that we've done everything that we possibly can to assure that their vote will be counted. So it's really a two-pronged message. Both prongs are important.

Third advice is: Get out of town. Get out of Massachusetts. Go to New Hampshire. Go to other swing states. And what are you going to do there? Let me go into that quite specifically. History repeats itself, first as a tragedy and then as a farce. But the first thing I think we need to recognize is that Florida is not going to happen exactly as Florida happened in 2000. The potential for theft is really great but it will be in ways that we can hardly imagine or, unfortunately, that we can imagine.

Prepare—think about it now. If you think you know what is going to happen—it's really not necessary—but the steps you can take now, in that 10% fraction that I'm talking about, are valid. Paper is not everything. Even without a paper trail, there's much that you can do to enhance reliability—discourage tampering. Despite the fact that you will get no guarantees, no matter which experts come up and talk. There are no guarantees with software with holes large enough to drive a truck through. There's an old expression, to those who might have been to dental school at one point—"If it looks good, it is good." The very fact that there are people in the polls—20,000, 30,000, 50,000—taking action, that is not trivial, that may work in the 10% margin, will discourage some people who are faint-hearted tamperers.

I have a 7-page handout that will elaborate. In addition to poll watching and getting people to vote—the "GOTV"—there are things you can specifically do that are addressed in the Brennan Center Report. They're addressed in the Robert Report and other reports.

You can go confront a precinct provided you and your organizations have prepared the way ahead of time so that the natural resistance to your inquiring into their work is worn down. Through Freedom of Information [Act], through lawsuits, through the kind of collaboration that you're going to need if you want to get your mitts on what's happening. You can ask about planning and training, chain of custody is vital, hardware and software. And you can see the rest of my list. As one witness before a Congressional Committee said the other day, "Test, test, test. Train, train, train."

Careful ballot creation, communication with voter groups. I think precincts that communicate, and are encouraged to communicate, will be much more likely to work with you on

Election Day. Are the election officials keeping a log? A log will be vital when it comes to evidence.

OK. Prevention. Get out the vote (GOTV)—the ultimate inoculation, I call it. Some of the oldest traditions are important here. If you don't want to get involved in DREs directly: Get out the vote. Leave town. Write, communicate, and meet.

I want to give my last minute to what will happen in court in the unlikely event that we have an election that is justiciable. With all due respects, Jon, to exit polling, justiciability—whether that will be heard in court or not—is a big question.

If you are going to the polls, keep a log of what you see and hear. If you see long lines, take your digital camera out and take pictures. Monitor interruptions in service that you see. Talk to people going in and going out, in addition to the exit polling. Speak to colleagues. Make a record of what's going on. If there is a massive record, in addition to exit polling, we have a much greater chance.

Last, if the farce happens, stay tuned. Keep your coalition together. Do not abandon them on Election Day. Be patient but not silent. Make sure that young people are involved. They flee the polls in droves. Turn them to the polls. If the farce happens, or if it doesn't happen for that matter—if there is to be agitation—and I hope there would be in the case of a stolen election—war is not the answer, nor is civil war the answer. Lead by example—your own example. Firm affirmation. And I think we will win, and we will all win. Thanks. #

Public Enterprise in the Wild West

In 1888 the town of Ulysses, in far western Kansas, was engaged in a bitter contest with a nearby hamlet to become the seat of government for Grant County. In order to help secure this prize, believed in those days to guarantee eternal prosperity, Ulysses issued \$36,000 in bonds. The official story was that the money would go for municipal improvements, but in fact it was used to prosecute the county-seat war, spent on "professional voters" and gunfighters (the town was founded by a cousin of Wyatt Earp) who would lend a hand in the great showdown.

Naturally Ulysses prevailed, and after winning, it proceeded to erect a county courthouse—along with an opera house, four hotels, twelve restaurants, a host of saloons, and the rest of the *GunsSmoke* set—before collapsing swiftly into destitution. Drought, deflation, and the allure of new territory shrank its population from fifteen hundred down to forty.

In 1908 the bonds matured, to the tune of eighty-four grand. Not a lot of money these days, perhaps, but back then it was equivalent to one-third the assessed value of the entire county. To pay off the bondholders in New York, the handful of citizens left in Ulysses would have had to shoulder an impossible burden.

What they did instead was toss the collections man in jail while they thought up a plan for moving the town. Impoverished but resourceful, the citizens of Ulysses cut the town's buildings into pieces and dragged them across the prairie to a new location, "leaving the bond-holders," as the 1939 WPA guide to the state puts it, "40 acres of bare ground on which to foreclose."

The only social actor capable of that kind of defiance today is the corporation...

—Thomas Frank, *What's the Matter with Kansas*, pp.85-86.

for their own fortunes, while they preach log-cabin folksiness and disdain of the cultivated—who are often among the privileged they reward. In their strident calls for "reform" they arouse the frontier images of buffalo/Indian shooter, gold prospector, oilfield roughneck, deputy sheriff, and born-again preacher. They also evoke images of the wise banker, the future-is-here programmer, and the paternalistic community leader. Although these images are popular, they stir the selfish, exploitive, and combative tendencies of constituents more than the reasonable and public-spirited cover images.

Who or What Is to Blame?

US history is full of favoritism and corruption, and the character of the present is hardly different from past episodes. Our culture leads us to blame individuals (Reagan, Bush, Cheney) or social philosophies (neoconservatism, fundamentalism) for this corruption. Certainly we must neutralize the bad characters and bad philosophies which construct and drive today's dominant politics. We must act within current choice structures to oust Bush, who is intractable, and install Kerry, who is wily but may be persuaded. We must prepare now to minimize election fraud (see page 3).

But regardless of who is in the White House come January, we have our systemic work cut out for us. Our airwaves and sources of information are monopolized by corporatists. Our congressional system is locked into hierarchical process control, overcontrolled debate, and uncontrolled conniving with corporate mentors. Our electoral system favors the wealthy and bars dissenters from a fair hearing. Our federal and global systems have continually eroded local and regional initiative and defense of our natural and social resources. Checks and balances have collapsed. Chauvinist capitalism has captured the Congress as well as the other branches of government, and has crippled the fundamentally impotent United Nations.

These abuses have reached a crisis point not because they are historically off track, but because social and technological developments have seated us on the global population bomb, ecology bomb, poverty bomb, and the bomb of military self-destruction. I confess that this litany resembles our Declaration of Independence. Our system is bankrupt. It must be put into our receivership. We need to restructure our republic to give democracy a chance.

Three Goals: Knowledge, Selection, and Localization

We hold that only democracy—participatory governance—can scrub corruption and encourage and test new forms of government. A good example is Participatory Budgeting (PB), functioning in 100 Brazilian cities, wherein hundreds of thousands of ordinary citizens participate annually in constructing and monitoring city budgets and the projects they mandate. In Porto Alegre, for example, 5 percent of the adult population—pretty much a cross-section—voluntarily meets in neighborhood assemblies and issue assemblies (health, education, sports, etc.). They learn budgetary methods and set priorities. They follow projects on the internet. The underprivileged get what they need. Corruption—backroom deals with contractors and other fat cats—has disappeared. Participation—even only a

willing and available 5 percent—and transparency make all the difference. Rio de Janeiro, however, has no PB because their mayor is uncooperative—not a progressive or socialist like the mayor of Porto Alegre or Inacio Lula da Silva, the nation's new president. The 100 PB cities all have Worker Party (PT) mayors.

1. Knowledge comes from broad education, wide-ranging daily information, and respect for folk learning such as craft knowledge including unpaid work knowledge, and organizational knowledge including community organization. Presently in the US public education is hierarchical and narrow, having derived a century ago from the factory model to prepare citizens for corporate employment. Higher education is specialized, following the 19th Century German model of compartmentalized professional education—efficient but nonadaptive. Our community college movement, begun after World War II, provides a higher education base for the underprivileged, but more than four-year colleges and universities focuses on employee specialties—sort of advanced trade schools. Even entrepreneurship, burgeoning today, has become a corporate discipline. (Nevertheless, these knowledge bases may be put to work outside the corporation if circumstances sufficiently change attitudes and social movements provide support. Consider the recovery, with informal local initiatives, of the Argentine economy. Local informal assemblies developed barter systems and profitable cooperative enterprises, sometimes taking over abandoned businesses, succeeding in the face of debt from previous owners, government sops, and union pressures for dominance.)

Reform of education must be radical, with support for many systemic innovations, stimulated by community-wide and regional forums. High school and community college students could receive credits in adult education programs, and vice versa, regardless of union and professional qualifications, opening instructional functions, e.g., in computer technology and music, to students. Semester, specialty, and institutional constraints could be relaxed and community priorities in housing, health, recreation, energy, agriculture, etc., could be addressed on a practical as well as conceptual level. Financing could come under a participatory municipal or regional budget, which could also function on the income side by withholding state and federal taxes to offset certified losses due to the federal system. And so on, as generated in local and regional forums. If enough autonomous projects are undertaken in enough linked communities, federal enforcement capability will be exceeded and degrees of new autonomy mutually recognized. The key may be the inclusiveness of folks in the forums, which has worked in Brazil and to some extent in New England towns and cities.

Daily information comes through TV, radio, newspapers, and internet, and also by word of mouth from many personal sources, often with access to extraordinary knowledge aired on the internet or experienced in some specialty. Monopolization of media has reached a crisis point with the corporate feeding frenzy in writing the Telecommunications Act of 1996, and the corruption of the Federal Communications Commission, whose chair is the son of the US military chief and now State Department chief.

Repeal of the Act; empowering of low-power, local radio and TV; funding of truly public radio and TV; and reinstatement and enforcement of anti-trust laws will go a long way toward generating "wide-ranging daily information" required by democracy.

Similar anti-monopoly changes might be required of newspaper and magazine chains, and book publishers, whose practices constrain manuscript production as well as book selection and distribution. As with class-action awards against tobacco companies, communities might seek more systematic reparations from media corporations.

But these are merely catch-up. We need to support local-based video production and broadcast. Just as most people gradually are learning to use computers and the internet, the same could apply to camcorder and studio planning, operation, production, broadcast, and archive streaming on the internet. Community cable TV presently provides some of these opportunities on a limited basis, but what would happen if CTV production were required and encouraged as widely as US history, for example? And speaking of US history, what if Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*, for example, were made a public school text option?

Most importantly, we need to introduce community-empowering knowledge into public curricula. Throughout the elementary level we need media literacy instruction, to combat the pseudo-reality of TV and the lure of advertised products, and to prepare young people to generate their own media. Courses in history, theory, and practice of nonviolent change—if widely taught—could displace the huge drain of the military on our resources both in civilian-based defense and war prevention. Such knowledge could go far in restraining imperial ambitions of current national leaders. The roles of different types of communication in successful nonviolent movements is systematically developed by Australian sociologist Brian Martin in *Nonviolence Speaks*. A federal department of peace might help develop and support such a curriculum, adapted to local concerns.

2. Selection refers to who gets to represent people in the community. In ancient Greek democracy there were no elections—representatives were periodically chosen by lot. In many New England towns everyone is welcome to participate in town meeting—you represent yourself. In Brazil you just show up and you participate, representing your neighbors as well as yourself. Such mass assemblies also elect two or three of their number to a city-wide Council of the Budget accountable to the assemblies. These systems are very different from "party" primaries in the US, where few voters attend ward meetings of political parties and most voters don't directly know the candidates, only by newspaper or TV and reputation. Reform Party presidential candidate Ross Perot, who copped 8 million votes in 1996, advocated an electronic town meeting of millions, but interaction would be limited to a select few in a question & answer period. Advances in electronics may eventually offer a high degree of interaction for all in virtual "breakout groups" and other possibilities using video teleconferencing.

Such elaboration of direct participation in candidate selection is overkill in our present system of "winner take all" where in one round of voting a plurality determines the winner. However, it would probably be popular were we widely to adopt Instant Runoff Voting (IRV or 1-2-3 Voting) in which any number of candidates can compete for a given office, everybody vote for their favorite, and no one inadvertently cause their nemesis to be elected, because they get to name their 2nd and 3rd (and 4th,

5th, etc.) preferences, should their first choice bottom out. So the winning candidate really has a majority—of first choices, and of second or third choices where the voter most preferred a candidate very unpopular with other voters. And that winner will have debated on a much wider range of issues coming from a real diversity of candidates.

We are a long way from parliamentary democracy and may never support it, since it depends on distinct political parties whose members are disciplined and more or less interchangeable. In the US we seem to prefer accommodating one another, if at all, on an individual rather than a party level. This means that voters must discriminate far more patterns of what candidates advocate, and candidates are far less likely to assert viable priorities. It must be said, however, that since the "Gingrich revolution" Republican congressmembers and their constituents are more disciplined and, with Democrats uncommitted, likely to get their way through bullying rather than accommodation.

Vote fraud, exclusion, and intimidation are our current nightmare. The 2000 presidential election was stolen, and we are set for a rerun. This time the thieves can make use of the vulnerability and inscrutability of nonballot touch-screen (direct-recording electronic, DRE) machines to reverse just enough votes in any state so as to reverse the election of a senatorial or presidential candidate, with no basis for recounting. Will we Americans allow this to happen? Not if we volunteer and organize to counter intimidation with rights-guides, exclusion with inspection of rolls, and fraud with insistence on paper alternative-ballot availability at the polls, documentation of voter complaints, and cooperation with lawyers prepared to challenge stolen votes (see Ronnie Dugger's suggestions, page 2).

In some quarters there is clamor for voting online, just like bill-paying, although security is a problem. We must produce documentary films showing that hand-counting is not only the most fool-proof and accurate method of vote-counting, but a means to bring together citizens of different stripes in a reconstruction of community. Already some states have mail-in registration, and all have absentee mail-in voting on paper ballots. According to Massachusetts town clerks, the main reason we use machines is to speed the announcement of results under pressure from TV and other reporters. With two months before new officials take office, what difference will a two-day delay make? And think of the money we'd save by cancelling machine orders! (The Bush-approved Help America Vote Act [HAVA] provides counties with \$\$\$ they can hardly resist, thus increasing the chances of electronic fraud.) And for the vote-counters, jobs! (See "Election Officials Wanted", page 8.)

3. Localization is how we must go to strengthen democracy, avert planetary disaster, and prepare for a sustainable future. Federal power, with its geographic and social distance from citizens and its hidden connections to giant corporations, makes democracy a sham. Centering political power in ten thousand autonomous but networked localities on earth (each about the size of a congressional district, or the city of Boston) allows all citizens to travel, even by bicycle, to and from forums or other meetings in a single day. (See Local System Organizations, in A Common Agreement on Investment and Society [CAIS] at www.thealliancefordemocracy.org and click on campaigns/corporate globalization/democratic alternatives.)

Contrary to fashionable economic theory based on 18th century assumptions, reducing long-distance trade is likely to improve rather than undermine local economies, and to conserve our water, air, a proper atmosphere for agriculture, and our health. At present most economists work for corporations or corporatist governments and universities. Academic education in economics, politics, and engineering needs to catch up with "general system" realities and abandon profit-orientation made possible by ignoring business costs settled onto taxpayers, consumers, residents, displaced peasants, and indigenous tribes. Big business isn't more "efficient" if you make them pay for their waste and their damage to environment and society. Where do we think payment to CEOs, financiers, and shareholders comes from? Democratic accountability works better. And democracy works when people—at least a critical percentage of people who are in touch with others—participate in the public business of goal-setting, budgeting, and review. This can best be accomplished locally, where people have easy access to one another and to officials.

Yes, we need prudent trade and other exchanges and collaborations between localities, but much of what we presently import into communities we can produce ourselves. Called import substitution, it shortens transportation and storage lines, and provides more local employment and social well-being. In the US, Michael Shuman, and in the UK, Colin Hines, have detailed solutions to finance and other transition problems, but one sticky point is corporate patents and copyrights which legally bar local companies from using their product and process designs. These laws, originally designed to encourage invention, now serve principally to augment corporate profits through monopoly pricing and licensing. They have to be changed, especially to reward the craftsmen and scientists who made the patented innovation possible, and to serve the fellow communities providing labor to corporate profiteers.

Since the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, predatory corporate practices have accelerated, threatening our common resources of water, air, minerals, trees, fish, family farms, indigenous communities, schools, health facilities, landscape, and so on. Trade ministers, urged by corporations, are trying to spread these practices to all parts of Central America (CAFTA), the western hemisphere (FTAA), and the world (WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services—GATS). Brazil, India, and other "developing" nations have led a movement to significantly set back the corporate timetable and perhaps agenda.

Getting There

The general effect is to encourage local and regional self-development and self-reliance. So how do we in the US get there? Partly by solidarity with change organizations in Brazil, India, and every nation seeking autonomy and respectful cooperation. Their examples and support as well as our own history of popular movements encourage us to organize in every vulnerable community against privatization of public resources, as the Alliance for Democracy is doing with respect to water reserves and distribution systems in California and New England. If Kerry wins in November, we must still study nonviolent change and organize accordingly. If the current regime in Washington triumphs, we must prepare for massive civil disobedience. They have no right to our resources, nor our very lives. If we succeed our communities will be stronger. Perhaps we will be so proud of our diverse political preferences, and our capacity for mutual accommodation, that we will no longer need secret ballots and vote counts. #

The Magic of 28 Words

Is Corporate Social Responsibility an Oxymoron?

July 26 2004

by Lois A. Levin & Robert C. Hinkley, CommonDreams.org

Ed Note: The Code's use of "corporate citizenship" is oxymoronic. Corporations are not and should not be citizens, but instruments of citizens. That's why most Alliance members want to abolish "corporate personhood"—which allows full personal rights (free speech, privacy, due process) and then some (limited liability, special low taxes, infinite life expectancy) to giant, robotic, predatory entities (the larger, publicly traded corporations). Here, a Harvard psychologist and a corporate lawyer take a middle road, defining what corporations must do, rather than not do.

The voices calling for corporate reform are getting louder. "Corporate social responsibility is an oxymoron", according to a recent book and documentary film "the Corporation" by law professor Joel Bakan. He says corporations are like amoral "psychopaths" - manipulative, incapable of being empathic or remorseful, and, while causing tremendous damage to the environment and other elements of the public interest, they refuse to take responsibility for their behavior. Harsh words, but they resonate with those uttered by critics of corporate power throughout history.

Corporations are powerful institutions. They do not serve humanity well when their pursuit of profits leads to strategies that degrade the environment, violate human rights and the dignity of employees, endanger public health and safety and otherwise undermine the welfare of communities.

People who run corporations are mostly decent human beings; many are pillars of their communities. They care about the environment and other people; they want to be recognized as good citizens. Corporate abuse of the public interest does not stem from flaws in the characters of corporate personnel; it stems from a flaw in the rules under which corporations operate.

State laws that create corporations promote behavior which managers and shareholders do not condone in their personal lives. Those laws encourage managers to act as if shareholders are psychopaths -- concerned only that their company makes more and more money without regard for the human or environmental costs. They allow managers to excuse the damage they do by claiming they are only doing what the law requires - promoting the interests of shareholders.

There are 80 million shareholders in the US. It is absurd to presume that what they have in common is a desire to make money without regard for the public interest. Nonetheless, by conforming to laws that enshrine that faulty premise, good people in corporations (managers) make decisions on behalf of other good people (shareholders) that cause their institutions to engage in antisocial behavior.

Legislatures pass laws to control that behavior, but they are merely treating the symptoms of a problem while ignoring its underlying cause. A better solution, to prevent the problem from occurring in the first place, is to change the laws that create it.

People understand that doing well and doing good are not

mutually exclusive. Shareholders are increasingly supporting stockholder resolutions that address issues of corporate responsibility, even when those resolutions support action that may not be in their short-term financial interest. More and more corporations are taking steps to protect the environment and to adopt policies that enrich the communities in which they operate. But these changes are slow, piecemeal and vulnerable to backsliding. We cannot afford to wait decades to deal with climate change and other serious threats while corporations come around voluntarily.

Corporations have the potential to embrace human values if we, the citizens in whose name the corporate laws were enacted, demand it. To deal effectively with institutions that exhibit psychopathic behavior, as with psychopathic individuals, it is essential to provide structure, embodied in a code of conduct that articulates expectations and standards clearly, sets limits on such behavior and proscribes appropriate sanctions when the code is breached.

We can begin by asking state legislators to enact the Model Code for Corporate Citizenship, which would add the following sentence to the corporate law: "The pursuit of profits must not come at the expense of the environment, human rights, public health and safety, the dignity of employees or the welfare of communities".

Those 28 words will create a new set of incentives and eliminate the excuse corporate managers now use to justify antisocial corporate behavior. By making it clear to everyone in the corporation that protection of the public interest comes before making money, corporations will evolve and operate in healthier and more holistic ways which truly reflect the values of those who own them and those who work for them.

Hopefully, removing the excuse for behaving irresponsibly is all that will be needed for corporations to start behaving responsibly. If not, the Code may be amended to make its provisions legally enforceable. Either way, the Code will have a salutary effect on corporate decision-making. The sooner we make this change, the better.

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: _____

LETTERS

A CALL TO ACTION

We, of Unitarian Universalists for Verified Voting (uuvv.org), call for an intensive effort to lobby all Senators and Congressmembers who have not yet co-sponsored to S1980 and HR2239. These bills mandate voter verified paper ballots for 2004 and prohibit wireless communication devices in voting. We believe that it is not yet too late to put safeguards in place for the November election and that it is imperative to do so.

We are seeing a growing awareness of the threat to our democracy posed by voting computers that can't be audited and that prevent recounts. We believe that the only solution is to increase public awareness and for the public to object loudly and insistently. We do not accept that it is too late to fix this problem and see it as one of political will—not a problem of technology. In jurisdictions where ballot printers cannot be attached to existing computers we call for the use of paper ballots for federal offices in November.

We ask each reader to take advantage of every available contact and group association that you have, to conduct letter-writing and call campaigns and to do this intensively. Get involved through churches, synagogues, unions and civic clubs.

To find out which legislators in each state need to be lobbied to be co-sponsors go to

<http://www.verifiedvoting.org/stateview.asp?state> Find your own legislators at www.votesmart.org Call 1-800-839-5276, ask for your senators and representative, and tell them we need their **co-sponsorship** on S1980 and HR2239.

We ask that you make it your own personal mission to tell people every day about why voting computers are a danger to democracy. (If you do not know why, please read the articles at <http://www.uuvv.org/LearnMoreQA.htm>) Talk to strangers. Speak in public. Ask your waitress if she knows about this. Get signatures on letters—get several every day. Better, persuade people to write in their own words. We have been doing all these things and we sense a change in the level of concern. Most of the people we speak to in the street want to sign our letters when we explain that these machines don't adhere to business practices universally accepted in other industries.

It is foolhardy to fail to take all possible action now to avert the loss of our democratic processes. It is equally foolhardy to believe that if we cannot marshal the popular support to demand legislative change now, that people will mass in their millions to protest an election outcome that they didn't care to protest before the election.

How much time does this effort deserve? Well how many hours a day can you devote to it—this issue that underpins all others—defending our democracy?

"If we want control over our lives we must be able to fire and hire our elected officials. They must remain our public servants or they may become our lords and masters."

---Heleni Thayre, Brookline
Teresa Hommel, New York City

ACTION ALERTS

ELECTION OFFICERS WANTED

The Boston Election Department is currently recruiting Election Officers to serve at assigned Polling Locations throughout the City for the upcoming 2 Elections—the State Primary on Tuesday, September 14, 2004, and the State Election on Tuesday, November 2, 2004. The hours are from 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. or until the completion of the closing of the Poll. Training will be provided.

Stipends are paid and range from \$100 to \$150. \$15 will be added for attending a training session. Good written and oral skills are required. All candidates must live in the City of Boston and be a registered voter by the election date. Anyone interested in applying, please contact Lynne Onishuk at 617- 635-4491

General Duties of Election Officers:

WARDEN - The Warden is the Chief Election Officer at the polling location. The Warden is responsible for maintaining order, preventing interference with the voting process and handling violations of Election Law. The Warden is also responsible for assigning other Election Officers their tasks. The Warden reviews and supervises the completion of all forms and any other duties that are necessary for the completion of the Election process.

CLERK - The Clerk is responsible for maintaining a written account of any occurrences on Election Day in the Clerk's book. The Clerk records any problems, issues, and complaints from voters. The Clerk checks off the names of voters from the Voting List, tabulates and records the final tally figures and any other duties that are necessary for the completion of the Election process.

INSPECTORS/TRANSLATORS - Inspectors assist the Clerk in checking off the names of voters from the Voting List and direct voters to available Voting Booths. Inspectors also assist in the opening and closing of the polls and any other duties that are necessary for the completion of the Election process.

Election Officers are not allowed to influence a voter's choice for a candidate, party or ballot question, either by making a suggestion, a remark or asking for an opinion.

MORE INFO? kyle.robidoux@cityofboston.gov (617) 635-3115

Office of City Councillor Felix D. Arroyo, Boston City Hall,
One City Hall Square, Boston MA 02201

Sat. 21 Aug. 10am— Nashua NH. DO IT IN A SWING STATE!

— Register Voters in New Hampshire — Win prizes for the most signatures, knocking on most doors, reaching most voters. Daniel Webster College (Eaton-Richmond Bldg.) at 20 University Drive in Nashua, NH. Info: Graham Roth at

groth@act4victory.org or call (603) 296-1418. Or sign up at www.AmericaVotes.org/action. For Sunday, in 10 NH towns: Emily Mintz 603-296-1408 <http://newhampshire.act4victory.org>

COLOPHON

Dave Lewit Bill King (Please apply.)
Editor Ed. Consultant Ed. Consultant

617-266-8687 617-244-3557

271 Dartmouth St. #2H, Boston MA 02116. dlewit@igc.org

Visit the Alliance web site: www.TheAllianceForDemocracy.org