

BCA Dispatch

Newsletter of the **October**
Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy 2007

"I didn't study all these years in order to turn black babies into mindless little robots, denied the normal breadth of learning, all the arts and sciences, all the joy in reading literary classics, all the spontaneity and power to ask interesting questions, that kids are getting in the middle-class white systems."

—first-grade teacher, quoted by Jonathan Kozol

(Note: See related article by Luc Schuster, Page 6 >>)

CHAPTER NEWS (Continued on Page 6)

* * Working Groups to Meet * *

Boston-Cambridge and North Bridge Alliances at this time would rather work directly to promote democracy locally, than to present educational public discussions and hope that systemic changes happen. So don't expect regular monthly forums.

Late last month dedicated members of the two chapters met over dinner and laid 7 live projects on the table. **Turn to page 6 for details.** The same interchapter group, with a few changes in our roster, showed up on 10 October in AfD's Waltham office to continue deliberating. Instead of further examining these projects one by one, deductively, we brought our experiences together inductively to promote local democratic systems concerned with environmental sustainability. Some of the 7 projects will no doubt go forward, but with new framing and elements. Our meeting was essentially a support group for local projects, adding the prospect of recurrent insights and experiences from other system-change activists.

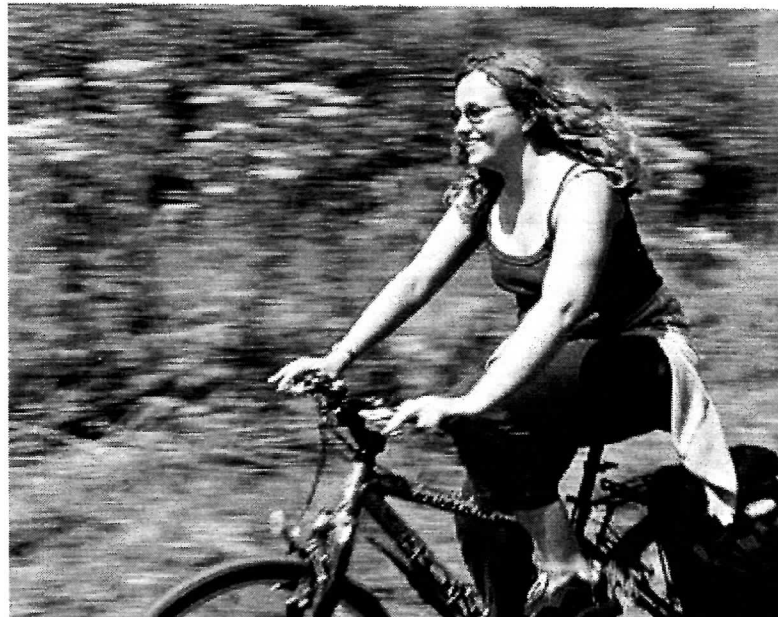
It's never too late to join these deliberations. **Our next meeting will be in mid-November. Call Barbara Clancy at the AfD office, 781-894-1179, for details.** Public educational meetings will be announced from time to time.

Burma's Saffron Revolution People's Strategic Nonviolence Will Win

by Cynthia Boaz & Shaazka Beyerle, *CommonDreams*, 7 Oct 07

JUST BECAUSE WE CAN'T SEE PROTESTORS ANY LONGER doesn't mean they aren't there. The Burmese regime wants us to believe their claims that they have "restored normalcy" to the country. They want us to conclude that the repression was successful and that the resistance has been crushed. But that's not the real story from Burma.

No one should be surprised that the regime cracked down; after all, that's what regimes do when faced with dissent. The effects of the protests may be much deeper and longer-lasting than the effects of the most recent round of terror against Burmese citizens. Exiled pro-democracy leaders, monks, and students all claim that the movement survives and that, in the words of one refugee, the people "have committed themselves to victory in the struggle for Burma." There are some encouraging signs that this commitment is being (Continued on Page 3 >>)



Massachusetts Plans Bike Network Reduce CO₂, Foster Health, Localization

by Peter J. Howe, *Boston Globe*, 8 October 2007

AS OFFICIALS CUT A RIBBON TOMORROW to launch construction of a 6-mile bicycle "rail trail" from the Lowell-Chelmsford line to Westford, top state parks planners say it could be the first in a latticework of more than 100 miles of bike trails they are planning statewide.

The state's parks agency, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), has mapped out a dream plan of \$82 million in trails that it says would one day allow riders to bike 120 miles from Lowell to Westfield, or up the Ware River Valley almost to New Hampshire, or along the Mystic River to the beaches of Lynn.

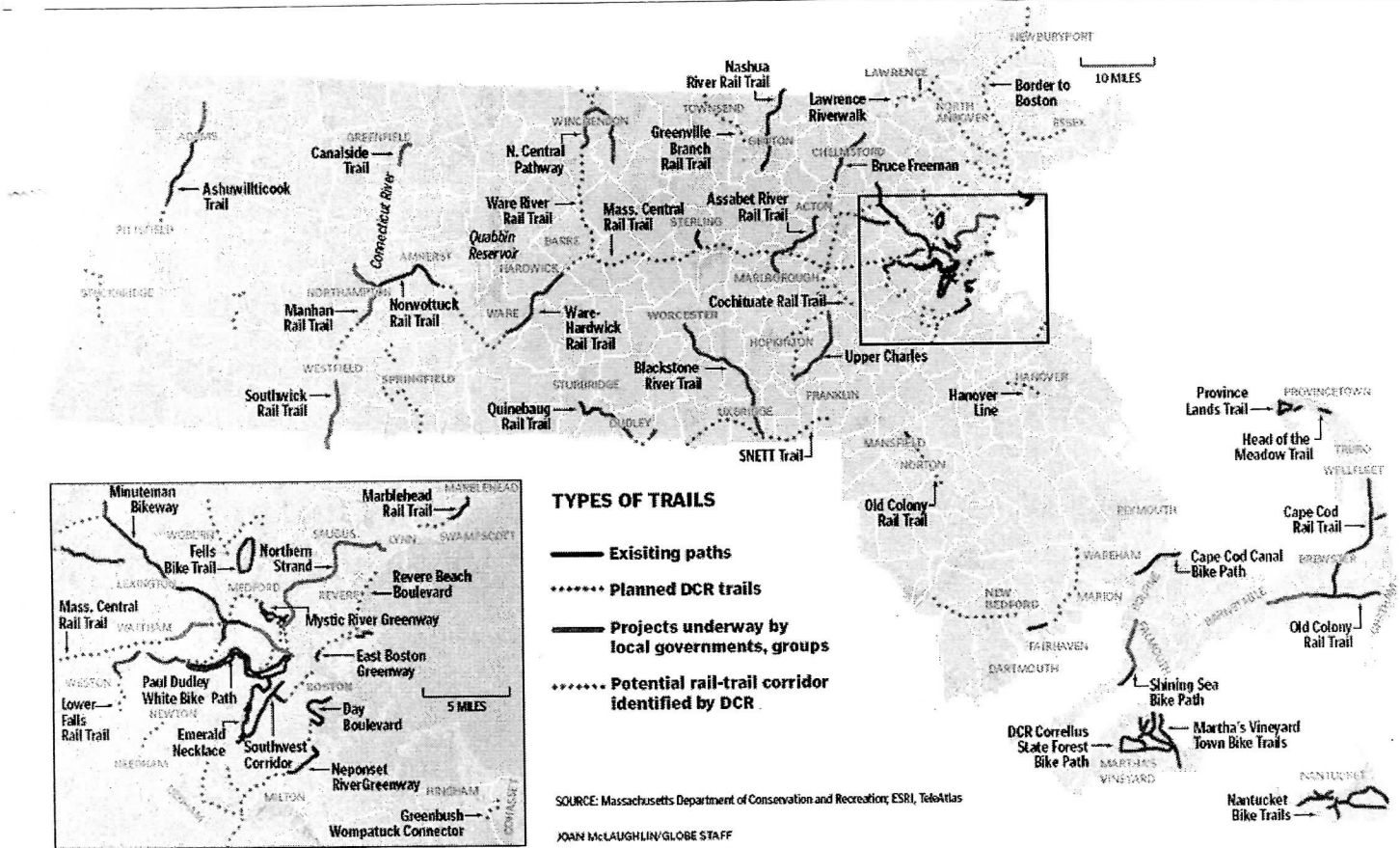
The plan, DCR officials say, is a blueprint that could take years, if not decades, to make a reality; rail trails—bike paths built on abandoned rail beds—are notoriously difficult projects to complete, with delays often caused by opposition from abutters, squabbles over funding, and plodding bureaucracies.

But state officials and trail enthusiasts are feeling more optimistic than they have in years about the prospects for making the state a national showpiece for off-road biking, hiking, and rollerblading trails.

"Bike trails involve modest investments of public resources but pay enormous dividends in public health and well being," said state Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Ian A. Bowles, who oversees DCR. "A small program of investment, over time and with mostly federal dollars, can result in an extensive network of trails where citizens can walk, ride bikes, and enjoy the great outdoors."

Advocates see a host of factors falling into place: Existing trails such as the Cape Cod Rail Trail and the Minuteman Bikeway through Lexington and Arlington have proven to be immensely popular; Governor Deval Patrick has begun working to maximize state access to federal rail-trail funds; public concern about global climate change and childhood obesity has increased interest in more and better bike trails; and the growing market of nature-and-trail-loving "eco-tourists."

"There's potentially a big logjam that's about to break," said Steve Winslow, president and founder of Bike to the Sea, a group campaigning for a "Northern (Continued on Page 2 >>)



Strand Community Trail" along an old railroad from Everett to Lynn whose supporters earlier this year laid down 40 tons of stone dust for a 500-foot Everett stretch. "The Commonwealth is getting a little more involved, which is great, because they're realizing that someone needs to marshal the communities and get them to work together."

Even as the Patrick administration faces a \$19 billion backlog of transportation maintenance, Bowles said he is confident bike-trail spending is affordable and a good investment.

Dan Driscoll, the DCR's senior "bikeways and green infrastructure" director who earlier in his career helped spearhead development of miles of new trails along the Charles River, recently completed the agency's statewide bike trail plan. The plan includes existing trails and potential new ones being pursued by state and local government and private groups. Driscoll said the state could construct crucial trail segments, including connections from the Minuteman Trail to both Charles and Mystic River trails, for \$82 million—a small fraction of \$19 billion in transportation spending Patrick identifies as needed.

DCR and the MBTA are negotiating terms of a 99-year lease by the parks agency of an old rail corridor the T controls between Waltham and the Central Massachusetts town of Berlin. Nonprofit local land groups, including Wachusett Greenways and the East Quabbin Land Trust, have begun working on upgrading the rail line for cyclists and strollers west of Berlin to connect to the existing Norwottuck Trail from Belchertown to Northampton.

The Massachusetts Highway Department is scheduled later this year to award an estimated \$550,000 contract for a 1-mile stretch of new rail trail in Mattapoisett that would link to an existing Fairhaven rail trail and serve as a key link in a future route extending through Marion and Wareham to the Cape Cod Canal.

Meanwhile, officials on several fronts are working to reduce common objections to rail trails. For example, in response to concerns from residents in some rural areas about the urban look of paved trails, DCR is considering the use organic soil additives to create firm, smooth surfaces in the Ware River Valley and the Southern New England Trunkline corridor along the Rhode Island border.

State Senator Pamela P. Resor, an Acton Democrat who leads a caucus of legislative bike-path supporters, said pending legislation to make sure land owners face no legal liability from accidents on paths using their land or easements could remove one significant obstacle to path development.

Trails often face opposition from homeowners and business owners who fear the impact of hordes of bikers and other trail users. Plans for one trail north of Boston are being battled by a Topsfield group called the Coalition for Children's Safety and Serious Concerns Regarding the Proposed Topsfield Rail Trail Project. In Concord and Sudbury, homeowners battling planned trails say the trails are bad for the environment because they could threaten habitats for endangered species, arguments state regulators have not ruled on.

Driscoll, battling assertions by some groups that trails could bring crime to nearby residential neighborhoods, cited several national studies that conclude bike trails have no impact on crime or reduce it. "Nationwide, all the concerns over crime and vandalism—they never happen," Driscoll said. "There are not many groups they don't make happy, with the exception of abutters."

Ed. Note: Rail trails? Maybe for now, but what about need for more train tracks as car traffic wanes? And could more curvy and interesting bike routes also be developed?

translated into a systematic strategy to undermine the junta's sources of support and control.

For starters, the movement learned how to coordinate "lines" or layers of leadership, so that if one group of leaders was jailed or otherwise neutralized, another would quickly step up in its place. And that is exactly what happened after the first wave of arrests, then the second, and then the third. And it is believed by some Burma observers that there are still more—many more—ready to take their places.

Next, with monks in the vanguard, the movement has revealed the regime's utter lack of political legitimacy and moral authority. By cracking down on the most respected and revered part of its society, the regime has cracked down on the very soul of Burma. This has activated parts of the population that have up till now stayed on the sidelines, including teachers, villagers, and even government workers. A *BBC World Asia* correspondent recently said, "It is obvious that despite their best efforts to stifle any opposition, the question Burma's ruling generals need to ask themselves is not if the anti-government protests will return, but when."

It hasn't taken long. Already, news broke that citizens in Rangoon were engaging in "silent protests" such as turning off the state news reports en masse, or turning off their lights—to symbolize their rejection of the regime's propaganda. Ordinary people have withdrawn their consent to the regime, and are willing to take action—if creative, low risk options are presented to them. They will follow in the footsteps of courageous non-violent resisters who battled against Pinochet's junta in Chile, the apartheid regime in South Africa, and the Marcos dictatorship in the Philippines. They all faced repression yet devised nonviolent actions to disrupt their oppressive systems and mobilize people.

Rank and file members of the military and police are finding themselves in a dilemma. To disregard their orders might get them into trouble, but to obey will only put their souls in peril in this devoutly Buddhist country. If the movement can achieve a critical mass, some soldiers and police may hesitate to repress if they know that people from their own communities or extended families could be the ones being hurt. Such was the case in Serbia during the nonviolent uprising against Slobodan Milosevic, otherwise known as the "Butcher of the Balkans." When police were asked why they did not fully obey orders, some answered that they could not shoot into the crowd because they didn't know if their own children were in it.

A final sign of the strategic planning and strength of the movement is its ability to maintain "nonviolent discipline." Despite the horrors committed by the regime over the past days, there has not been a single report of protesters becoming violent. And why should they use violence? It would only give the regime more pretext to repress, and perhaps even allow many individual soldiers and police officers to rationalize doing something they otherwise could not bring themselves to do. The maintenance of nonviolent discipline—along with the growing size, diversity, and commitment of the resistance in Burma—has garnered more sympathy from the international community, and is a critical factor in building the movement's own legitimacy.

The latest rumor making its way through the streets and alleys of Rangoon is that the wife of General Than Shwe, the junta's alpha dog, is house-shopping in Dubai. Rather than debate whether or not the crackdown on the Saffron Revolution was successful, perhaps the more intriguing question we should be asking is who is more afraid of whom. (Continued, next column)

Cynthia Boaz is assistant professor of political science and international studies at the State University of New York at Brockport. Shaazka Bey-erle is senior adviser at the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict.

----- **A CommonDreams Reader Comments** -----

Sadly, based on really ugly and way-too-close experience, I have to say that we can't get even remotely optimistic about Burma, where I have many friends, and I know exactly what's happening to them right now. "The ship was doomed to sink." That's what everyone said in China when I was there on June 3, 1989. "So it will be with any other country (be it yours or mine) whose misrulers take it down the path of authoritarianism."

I'd sure like to think so, Brother, but the reality is that China and Singapore—whatever their external blather to keep Westerners happy and their money rolling in—are way-too-powerful supporters of Burma's regime for it ever to fall under demonstrations or even outside pressure. The generals are laughing in their sleeves at the monks as they listen to their screams at night.

China's government leaders—those noted experts in crowd control—are Burma's closest ally, and now its adviser in this situation. Singapore—an insidious, snarling, and viciously brilliant little high-tech dictatorship and key US ally, due to US bases there—are never going to let Burma become an example of the power of people. The US government will never pressure China for economic reasons, or Singapore for strategic reasons.

Only massive, massive, and I mean massive ECONOMIC pressure on China and Singapore—both—will bring down Burma's regime. A boycott of the Chinese Olympics is the best hope and last chance for Burma. Singapore's egotistical and insecure leaders would tremble, pee their pants and follow through if China pulls out...

—"Zell", October 7th, 2007

So Who's Afraid of the Israel Lobby? (excerpt)

by Ray McGovern, ConsortiumNews.com, 5 October 2007

Israel's killing 34 US sailors in a 2-hour attack on USS Liberty in 1967 was hushed up (Dispatch, July 2007). Now the truth is leaking out...

CAPTAIN WARD BOSTON [US Navy lawyer], now 84, signed a formal declaration on 8 Jan 2004 in which he described himself as "outraged at the efforts of the apologists for Israel in this country to claim that this attack was a case of mistaken identity:

"The evidence was clear. Both Admiral Kidd and I believed with certainty that this attack...was a deliberate effort to sink an American ship and murder its entire crew...Not only did the Israelis attack the ship with napalm, gunfire, and missiles, Israeli torpedo boats machine-gunned three lifeboats that had been launched in an attempt by the crew to save the most seriously wounded—a war crime...I know from personal conversations I had with Admiral Kidd that President Lyndon Johnson and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara ordered him to conclude that the attack was a case of 'mistaken identity' despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary."

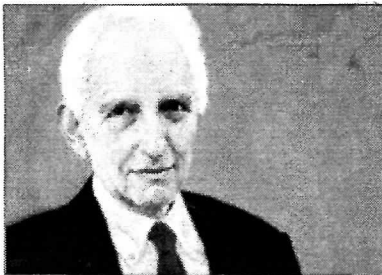
Why the Israelis decided to take the draconian measure of sinking a ship of the U.S. Navy is open to speculation. One view is that the Israelis did not want the U.S. to find out they were massing troops to seize the Golan Heights from Syria, and wanted to deprive the U.S. of the opportunity to argue against such a move. Another theory: James Bamford, in "Body of Secrets," adduces evidence, including reporting from an Israeli journalist eyewitness and an Israeli military historian, of wholesale killing of Egyptian prisoners of war at the coastal town of El Arish in the Sinai. The Liberty was patrolling directly opposite El Arish in international waters but within easy range to pick up intelligence on what was going on there. And the Israelis were well aware. ##

Dan'l Ellsberg Fears Attack on Iran So Please Leak Planned Cover Story Now

by Michael Yoder, Lancaster (PA) *Intelligencer Journal*, 28 Sep 2007

DANIEL ELLSBERG WAS A 33-YEAR-OLD on his first day at the Pentagon as special assistant to Assistant Secretary of Defense John McNaughton. It also was the day [4 August 1964] the North Vietnamese navy allegedly fired 21 torpedoes at U.S. naval vessels in the Gulf of Tonkin. Ellsberg was one of 100 people who saw top secret transmissions later in the day saying the attack never happened, yet President Lyndon Johnson used the alleged incident to drive the U.S. into full-scale war in Vietnam.

"I knew Congress was being deceived into a declaration of war and that the public was being totally deceived into a landslide victory for a man who was about to plunge them into a big war," Ellsberg told a crowd of more than 200 people Thursday evening at the inaugural Ware Seminar on Global Citizenship at Elizabethtown [PA] College's Center for Global Citizenship.



Daniel Ellsberg

The 76-year-old activist gained notoriety during the Vietnam War when he released the Pentagon Papers to the *New York Times* and other newspapers, detailing internal U.S. policy decisions regarding the war and its escalation.

Ellsberg said in the last few weeks he has begun to think a coup has occurred in the presidency of George Bush, which he characterized as a "rogue administration." He said that if a new 9/11 terrorist attack happens in the United States, the president would not hesitate to suspend and dismantle the Constitution and that hundreds of thousands of Middle Easterners and dissidents could end up in detention camps. "I think we're in danger—we're in a crisis," he said.

Ellsberg pointed to actions taken by Bush that he said violate the law, including endorsing warrantless surveillance and lying to Congress about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. At the same time, he was quick to chastise the Democrats in Congress, saying that by going along with Bush's war they've failed their duty to uphold the Constitution.

He said the Senate resolution passed Wednesday declaring the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organization is an invitation for Bush to declare war on Iran. Ellsberg compared Wednesday's resolution to the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, passed Aug. 7, 1964, that gave Johnson a virtually blank check for combat in North Vietnam.

He laid out a scenario of \$200 a barrel for oil, the possibility of retaliatory attacks against the U.S., and the president keeping open the "nuclear option" to attack Iran. He said he is asking people in government who have information that could stop such a war before it happens to not do what he did by releasing the Pentagon Papers after the war started. He said they should do what he didn't do—release the information *before* a disaster happens. "Don't wait till the war has started," Ellsberg told the audience. "Don't wait till the bombs are falling or thousands more have died."

Ellsberg said he has been called a traitor numerous times for breaking a "vow of secrecy" when he released the Pentagon Papers. But Ellsberg said he took an oath of office to uphold the Constitution—the same oath all military and public servants are required to take. "It is not an oath to the president," Ellsberg said. "And it's not an oath to keep secrets. And it's not an oath to the commander in chief, or the Fuhrer or Caesar or to the flag. It is an oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States, so help me God, against all enemies, foreign and domestic."

Ed. Comment: We need two courageous people. One to reveal Iran plans. The other to confess to 9-11 preparations.

9/11 Commission Report "A Joke" Former CIA Experts Challenge Official Story

Full comments excerpted below can be found at www.opednews.com/articles/genera_alan_mil_070922_seven_cia_veterans_c.htm

"I think at simplest terms, there's a cover-up. The 9/11 Report is a joke." —**Raymond McGovern**, former Chairman of the National Intelligence Council and 27-year CIA veteran

"We very seriously need an entirely new very high level and truly independent investigation of the events of 9/11. I think you almost have to look at the 9/11 Commission Report as a joke and not a serious piece of analysis at all." —**William Christison**, former National Intelligence Officer (NIO) and former Director of the CIA's Office of Regional and Political, and 29-year CIA veteran

"The final report is ultimately a coverup. I don't know how else to describe it." —**Melvin Goodman**, PhD, former Division Chief of the CIA's Office of Soviet Affairs and Senior Analyst from 1966-90

"Until we get a complete, honest, transparent investigation ..., we will never know what happened on 9/11." —**Robert Baer**, 21-year CIA veteran and specialist in the Middle East, who was awarded the Career Intelligence Medal upon his retirement in 1997

"I am forced to conclude that 9/11 was at a minimum allowed to happen as a pretext for war. ... I have to tell anyone who cares to read this: I believe it. I believe it enough to want a full investigation that passes the smell test of the 9/11 families as well as objective outside observers." —**Robert David Steele** has 25 years of combined service in the CIA and the U.S. Marine Corps. Second ranking civilian in U.S. Marine Corps Intelligence from 1988-92. Member of the Adjunct Faculty of Marine Corps University

A letter to Congress expressing their concerns about "serious shortcomings," "omissions," and "major flaws" in the 9/11 Commission Report and offering their services for a new investigation. —**Lynne Larkin**, former CIA Operations Officer who served in several CIA foreign stations before being assigned to the CIA's Counter-Intelligence Center. There, she co-chaired a multi-agency task force, which coordinated intelligence efforts among the many intelligence and law enforcement agencies. She was one of twenty-five signers of this letter. Also signing was —**David MacMichael**, PhD, former Senior Estimates Officer at the CIA with special responsibility for Western Hemisphere Affairs at the CIA's National Intelligence Council. Prior to joining the CIA, he served for four years as a civilian counter-insurgency adviser to the U.S. government, and prior to that was a U.S. Marine Corps officer for ten years. ##

CAFTA's Pyrrhic Victory?

Costa Rica OKs It After Elite and US Threats

by Pablo Gamaz, Radio Netherlands, 5 October 2007

On 7 October, citizens of the only country whose legislature was brave enough or democratic enough to allow the electorate to decide a major trade arrangement, voted on the Central American Free Trade Agreement. CAFTA narrowly won, 51-49 per cent, and a recount is under way. Because Costa Rica is still a free country, and because of the social dynamics described in the pre-election report below, we can expect the contest to continue between the wealthy and the rising public.
—Ed.

DEMOCRACY IN CENTRAL AMERICA'S MOST STABLE COUNTRY is rocking on its foundations. On Sunday, Costa Rica will vote on a free trade agreement with the United States. The country is so divided that everyone is worried about the future, whatever the result of the referendum.

Demonstrations in every corner of Costa Rica have dominated the national debate for months. With flags bearing a heart in the colours of the national flag, protestors formed the word "No". No to CAFTA, the Central American Free Trade Agreement, which gives Central American countries a special status in economic relations with the US. Thousands have joined demonstrations organised by the movement opposed to the agreement. Binding The referendum on Sunday will be binding. If Costa Rica joins CAFTA, as the last country in the region to do so, it will complete a free trade zone taking in the whole of North and Central America. The agreement is already in force in the other Central American countries, but there is much resistance to it in Cost Rica. It is the first time a country in the region has held a referendum. From the start the opponents have cast doubt on the value of CAFTA. They fear it will prevent the country from making its own decisions in many areas and make it dependent on Washington.

The agreement's supporters are chiefly members of the traditional political elite, represented by the current president and winner of the Nobel peace prize, Oscar Arias Sánchez. Agricultural exporters, the assembly industry and companies with international connections support the initiative. Its opponents are farmers, teachers, social organisations such as trade unions, students and staff of the four major universities, and the Indian population.

Corruption scandals

The parties in favour of the agreement, the governing social democratic party, Partido de Liberación Nacional, and the conservative Unidad Social Cristiana, have recently been hit by corruption scandals. This hasn't helped to boost public confidence in their policies. Former conservative president Miguel Angel Rodríguez stepped down as Secretary General of the Organization of American States because he was facing charges of corruption. Former president Rafael Ángel Calderón is also implicated in corruption scandals.

In recent months, President Arias has been strongly arguing the case for the free trade agreement. He has repeatedly warned that 300,000 jobs will be lost in Costa Rica if the country doesn't approve CAFTA, and he has even predicted there will be a rash of suicides. Mr Arias defended his position in an exclusive interview with Radio Netherlands. He argues that if Costa Rica doesn't extend its markets to include the United States, it

will no longer be seen as a serious partner in negotiations with the European Union or the Asian countries, and particularly with China.

NeoLiberalism

CAFTA's opponents stress the negative effects of an open market on Costa Rica's welfare state, built up over the past 50 years. The country has free education, excellent social provisions and low electricity and telecommunications charges. The opponents are afraid all this will disappear and neo-liberalism will rule the day. Only a small group of powerful businessmen will benefit. This is denied by Mr Arias, who claims it is a tissue of lies invented to persuade people to vote no.

A month before the referendum, a memo was leaked to the press from Costa Rica's vice-president, Kevin Casas, and a member of parliament, advising Mr Arias on the best way to scare the public. They suggested he should warn people not only that jobs would be lost but also that the movement opposing CAFTA had been infiltrated by foreigners, and represented a threat to the country's democratic institutions. The vice-president was forced to resign because of the leaked memo, a unique occurrence in the country.

Historic For Costa Rica, 7 October 2007 has already become a historic date. The fevered debate leading up to the referendum has made the country—usually an island of peace and democracy in the region—look increasingly like the rest of Latin America. There is a fundamental conflict between the social classes, in which US policy plays an important role. The "Switzerland of Central America" will be a thing of the past if the government doesn't manage to end the increasing polarisation—whatever the result is on Sunday. The future of Latin America's oldest democracy is in the balance.

Remember Bolivia Water Struggle? Bechtel Corp Is Cheating Again, in Ecuador

The Alliance for Democracy signed on to a letter to Bechtel CEO/Chair Riley P. Bechtel demanding that his company acknowledge the right of all people to clean water, and to conform to international standards of water service.

Sign-on to this letter at mfiill@fwwatch.org to Riley P. Bechtel, Chair and CEO of Bechtel Group, San Francisco (abridged)

Aided by the World Bank, your subsidiary, Interagua Ltda in Guayaquil, Ecuador, contracted to take over the water and sanitation services there in October 2000, just after the Cochabamba fiasco in Bolivia wherein your subsidiary was forced to withdraw after massive protests for bad service and high prices. Now in Guayaquil it is documented that you are responsible for:

- * Repeated residential water cut-offs for 12, 24, 36 or more hours at a time
- * Residential water cut-offs of senior citizens and other low-income residents due to inability to pay
- * Failure to extend services to specific neighborhoods, especially low-income residents
- * Failure to meet contractual obligations for rehabilitation and expansion of services
- * Public health problems such as respiratory problems, skin rashes, asthma and diarrhea due to lack of wastewater treatment
- * Environmental contamination due to lack of wastewater treatment
- * Hepatitis A outbreak in June 2005 which was investigated by local authorities (Commission for Civic Control and the Public Defender's office) who concluded that the water was "not apt for human consumption".

The people of the city demand, and we support them, that you take action to correct all these conditions [spelled out], and that you address citizen demands that water and other public services, be locally and publicly owned, controlled and managed with active citizen oversight and participation.

Access to clean and affordable water and basic sanitation services are fundamental human rights.

Signed: Food & Water Watch, and the following organizations-----

No Child Left Untested

Fed System Would Destroy Public Schools

by Luc Schuster, Cambridge School Committee, Oct 2007

RECENTLY THE CONSERVATIVE MASSACHUSETTS BOARD OF EDUCATION—under the direction of Board Chair James Peyser, a former executive at the Pioneer Institute—itself moved to discredit our public schools by raising the minimum passing score on the state's MCAS exam (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System). Rather than celebrating the fact that over the years students were doing better on the test and passing at higher rates, the board's response was to argue that a high pass rate necessarily meant that the test was too easy. Raising minimum pass scores in response to rising pass rates has occurred in several other states as well.

The lofty rhetoric of high academic standards for all, while accepting no "excuses" for failure, was designed by the same right-wing organizations—the Heritage Foundation, the Pioneer Institute, the Business Roundtable—that brought us the "death tax" and "partial birth abortion," issues strategically framed to mask a fundamentalist, neoconservative vision of government. The bar of reaching 100% proficiency for every individual student by 2014, including those with limited English proficiency and severe disabilities, is a set-up of epic proportions, similarly audacious to requiring the Cambridge Police Department to eliminate all crime over, say, the next ten years in order to avoid private take-over.

School vouchers, which seek to redirect public education dollars for private school tuition, were originally the centerpiece of the "No Child Left Behind" Act (NCLB). It is this federal act which requires standardized achievement testing in grades 3-8 and 10 in every state of the Union. While vouchers were ultimately left out of the law only when they threatened its bipartisan support, President Bush and current Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings have already declared their desire to have them written back into NCLB this year.

Addressing technical problems with NCLB would be a giant step in the right direction, but such fixes would stop well short of reversing the anti-government, pro-privatization agenda that has propelled NCLB since its inception. While most of NCLB's supporters are sincerely motivated to improve education for chronically underserved students, a small group of others—namely those who first placed this landmark federal legislation on the public agenda—actively seeks to discredit and undermine public education.

No Child Left Behind is changing American education in another important way: redistributing control over individual classrooms, schools, and districts away from teachers, administrators, and local governing bodies to state and federal legislators who rarely have meaningful connections to local needs and lack educational expertise. Fading away is the archetypal image of the one-room schoolhouse where lifelong teachers designed curricula relevant to the local community.

Classroom instruction is now marked by highly prescribed pacing guides derived from state and national curriculum frameworks that outline precisely what skills are to be imparted to kids at precisely what time of year. "Qualified" teaching is increasingly defined by a teacher's knowledge of a particular content area rather than on actual teaching skills and one's ability to respond to the divergent needs of children. Teachers are treated less like skilled professionals and more like employ-

ees to be managed. Schooling is becoming streamlined and sanitized.

Since NCLB's accountability measures are so narrow, and because the repercussions for failing to meet annual benchmarks are so severe, individual schools have been forced to narrow the educational experience in order to strive for "adequate yearly progress." Elementary school teachers lament the loss of instructional time for the arts, foreign languages, and physical education. Many schools have even abandoned regular instructional time for social studies and history, since these are not yet tested subjects under NCLB. Paradoxically, kids in poor urban schools, who benefit the most from a school experience that expands their horizons, have had their education most narrowed as a result of NCLB's blunt accountability.

Congressional debate over the reauthorization of the 2002 No Child Left Behind Act has focused on the legislation's myriad technical problems, many of which have seriously handcuffed local school district efforts to educate all children. Congress has not fulfilled its promise to fill the cavernous funding disparities that plague an education system funded primarily by local property taxes. Progress towards academic proficiency for all students by 2014, the goal around which NCLB is structured, is measured by comparing snapshots from year to year, rather than by mapping individual students' progress as they move up in grades. And since schools are targeted for sanctions when progress lags for even one demographic subgroup in one subject—say, fifth grade Latino students in math—diverse schools with more identifiable subgroups are by definition more likely to be labeled as failing.

In Massachusetts we are in a unique position to resist this movement in public education. Senator Kennedy is NCLB's most prominent Democratic supporter and Massachusetts regularly leads the nation in scores on standardized tests. Without sounding like sour grapes, we can lobby our senior senator to change his mind and begin to speak persuasively about the dirty underbelly of top-down standardized education. We know the value of a rich public education and we should be leading the movement to preserve local control over schools.

Luc Schuster is a member of the Cambridge School Committee and an organizer for the Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education.

See ACTION ALERTS for [hearing on Human Rights in Boston schools](#).

CHAPTER NEWS (Continued from Page 1)

Boston-Area Alliances on Joint Projects

Nine Alliance stalwarts met over dinner on Wednesday, 26 September, to discuss projects and what we in the Boston area should be doing. The meeting was held at Bertucci's restaurant at the Alewife T station to be convenient both for T-riders from Boston-Cambridge and drivers from North Bridge suburban towns. Included were **David Whitty** (Ashland 508-881-6297), **Barbara Clancy** (Waltham 781-894-1179), **Karen O'Donnell** (Waltham 781-891-1326), **Lynn Gargill** (Lincoln 781-259-1173), **Cynthia Ritsher** (Lincoln 781-259-8104), **Mary White** (Concord 978-369-1181), **Joanna Herlihy** (Cambridge 617-864-0506), **Jed Schwartz** (Somerville 617-776-6645), and **Dave Lewit** (Boston 617-266-8687) who served as moderator. Due to a change in announcements, **Mary Rossborough** (Marblehead 781-639-0354) showed up on Tuesday, luckily connecting with Dave for an impromptu dinner meeting there. **Soesan Kae Clarke** (Boston 617-524-4736) sent regrets and suggestions, while **Lois Voltmer** and **Stan Robinson** (Wayland 508-358-

2282) also could not make it.

David Whitty, it was announced, has been nominated for the national Alliance's new co-representative for the Northeast along with **Ruth Weizenbaum** (Pawtucket).

The major themes discussed as objectives were Anti-empire and Localization. [These may be viewed as opposite sides of the same coin—means to democracy. Anti-empire is a “defensive” activity, while Localization is “constructive”.] Perhaps the critical role for individual Alliance members is to participate in local civic groups and help them to reframe their concerns and solutions in terms of military-corporate-political interests such as privatization.

On the project level, AfD in cooperation with Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund and Sierra Club is generating local education and resolve to protect their resources and environment through local ordinances which defy megacorporate encroachments, defending themselves against consequent corporate and state law suits. This “rights-based local action”—contrasted with regulation—should be a backup position for our local efforts.

The specific projects put forward were

* Democracy Protection—engaging city and town residents and officials to protect the community against Homeland Security demands contrary to civil rights and community interests. See www.NewEnglandAlliance.org for papers comprising a working kit. **Dave L** requests help in working with Boston City Councilor **Chuck Turner** in forming a delegation to interview city officials, prior to publicizing and debating their plans for protecting our community. **Paul Brailsford** and others in Ipswich are moving ahead in their community. **Dave** calls for such efforts in all communities where we live. We are looking into the Deval Patrick administration's revised State Homeland Security Strategy.

* Book Reading—getting us all “on the same page”. **Cynthia** suggested we all read and discuss Naomi Klein's new “Shock Doctrine—The rise of disaster capitalism”. She also suggested that we scrutinize Nationalism—the good and the bad. Others felt that we must concentrate on action projects. [Of course, such reading can be done informally.]

* Globalization Impact—a bill drafted by Boston-Cambridge Alliance ten years ago, and re-introduced in the state legislature biennially by Rep. **Byron Rushing**, setting up a commission to screen all pending federal foreign trade and investment proposals in terms of Massachusetts interests. **Karen**, a former state legislator, suggested that we help Byron to host a public meeting at the State House.

* School Civics—to introduce people's civics into high school studies partially to combat conditioning of No Child Left Behind subsidies and universal testing which has demoralized students and teachers throughout the commonwealth, and mainly to promote student initiatives for community democracy. **Dave L** announced a meeting on 1 October in Jamaica Plain to launch a hearing of student, teacher, and parents' relevant experience. **David W** [see other attachment] said that each community's concerns for school civics are different—in Wayland the major concern for school programs is tied to property tax limits: how to solve that problem.

* Ending Exxon-Mobil Dominance. **Mary W** explained that film-maker **Tom Jackson** (UNH) is promoting his environmental film “Out Of Balance” focused on depredations of Exxon-Mobil and advocating their conversion to doing good. She urged that we join the effort by helping to nullify Exxon-Mobil's exclusive

contract to supply fuel along the Mass Turnpike. Others noted that other oil giants would move in with their gas stations along the pike. Still, it might serve as an example to corporatists and for activists.

* Water—A simple initiative. At the micro-level, Alliance members can rid public event platforms of bottled water. It is especially embarrassing that progressive organizations sometimes use bottled water when public water is non-corporate, pure, and much cheaper. **Dave L** offers any activist a tap water kit consisting of a 1.3 quart graceful glass pitcher, paper cups, brochures, and “caution” tape to be tied around bottles—to persuade and gift conference organizers. **Barbara** took one kit to the AfD office. **Dave** has six others, ready to distribute.

* Strategic Nonviolence. The Gandhi Circle kit, for interactively educating folks about strategic nonviolence, is available for use with groups, at www.NewEnglandAlliance.org. It needs to be “sold” to community leaders, e.g., church committees.

In absentia, **Kae** suggests that Massachusetts have a single highest priority project to work on collectively—school civics or democracy protection, for example. **Mary R** teaches in Salem and knows the community and thinks it would be another good place to try Democracy Protection.

from David Whitty: Ashland Isn't Boston

With regard to the October 10 meeting and selecting one or more projects to work on, I think it will be very difficult to get agreement and commitment. For my part, as an Ashland resident, I cannot work on projects in Cambridge/Boston or Concord/Lincoln. My local base is Ashland.

If I were to come to BCA/Northbridge meetings occasionally I need to offer something and get something in return. What I can offer is what I'm working on in Ashland in relation to BCA/Northbridge priorities.

Let's take the Civics in High School project. I can relate to that in terms of my local organizing work in Ashland, but only by adapting it to the local situation. I mentioned property taxes, override votes, and school budgets because I know that those are hot button issues in Ashland. Through those local concerns it is possible to raise the issue of “corporation of schools.” It might not take the specific form of Civics in High School. I need to relate it to the ongoing struggle in the town over the cost and method of paying for schools. One thing I can certainly do is documentaries about the subject, possibly inviting an Ashland High School teacher as guest speaker. Beyond that there are lots of possibilities for action, but always the problem, for me in Ashland, is finding a few people willing to do something.

In other communities like Concord/Lincoln the Civics in High School idea, which is really a vehicle for raising and responding to the corporatization of schools, might take yet a different form. That is to be expected. Everything must be adapted to differing local situations. **Mary** mentioned her work with the nascent climate action group in Concord. **Lynn** and **Cynthia** will be doing documentaries at Lincoln library and asked if they could borrow from my collection. Exactly how a general issue like school corporatization can be translated into local action is for **Mary**, **Lynn**, and **Cynthia** to decide. Certainly everyone would agree that creating linkages and alliances in the local school system is part of the overall objective of organizing for systemic change in any community.

Everyone would like to have a project that connects to local

schools, but how to organize a few people to get something going is the hard part in my experience. For you and others that may not be the hard part. Each organizer and each community has different difficulties.

BCA/Northbridge combined meetings could be useful by endeavoring to support local organizers by listening and offering suggestions. I am not the solution to your need for people to attend a meeting with Chuck Turner, for example. I cannot be. I'm too far away and I do not live in the community and cannot play an ongoing role in the project. Likewise you or Lynn or Mary are not the solution to my need for a few people to work on property taxes in Ashland.

Occasional BCA/Northbridge meetings might be successful as support meetings. For example, one or two people present their project/experiences/successes/difficulties and the group responds with constructive criticism, encouragement, suggestions, pointers to resources, and other helpful replies.

Certain ideas are constantly suggested and never work and I think never will. Among them are that we should all read the same books, that we must decide on what we are about, Earth Democracy or global warming or anti-Empire or whatever, and that having decided then we can take action. I will not continue to attend meetings for that discussion.

I don't think a BCA/Northbridge group can undertake action except occasional meetings because the geography is too large and the numbers too small. I would suggest experimenting with the support group idea at the next meeting. Mary, I'm sure you recall, previously suggested support group as the main purpose of a combined meeting. I would ask Mary to make a presentation. One would be enough. After the presentation and response we could then evaluate the experience. Does support group provide us with a reason for meeting or not?

...and from Toni Serafini: Mobil, Brita

Still in NY until the 16th or so...heavy into trying to stop electronic voting here....

Regarding minutes of your last meeting...I think I noticed that two stations on the Mass Pike were converting to something else...maybe Gulf?

My ideas....

1. Educate people to not fill up on the Pike if they must travel it ...but to fill up before in their local town...the Pike gas is always more expensive by 8-10 cents.
2. Let the thruway authority know you are encouraging a boycott of Mobil.
3. Send out the name and number of the official at the authority who makes this decision and get all of us to call and say that we will not be buying gas on the Pike as long as its Mobil.....
4. I don't know if they have these, butbuy Citgo or Hess gas gift cards to give to relatives in lieu of other gifts to force them away from Mobil.

RE: environment and localization efforts:

I have totally overhauled my entire gift givingI recently gave a Brita water filter as a shower gift to a friend who I know buys bottled water.....and as a gift, a supply of recycled toilet paper and napkins etc to a friend who I know shops at WalMart (and won't admit it) I have become very observant in my friends homes to see what they are buying and then I give them the best environmental or local alternative as a gifts....last Christmas everyone got energy efficient bulbs..including a food pantry.

ACTION ALERTS

Thu 18 Oct, 5pm. Boston City Hall. Council hearing: "Human Rights in Action"—toward a new civics curriculum in Boston's high schools. Students, teachers, and parents want pro-social, interactive civics blended in with a wide range of studies—rather than pro-corporate MCAS-test-oriented instruction. Presentations by students, citizen testimony. Chair: Cnclr. Chuck Turner. Council Chamber, Gov't Center T stop. Info: 617-635-3510.

Sat 27 Oct, 12-3pm. Boston Common. Regional anti-war demonstration. "Troops home now; End funding; Fund human needs here; Don't attack Iran; Defend civil liberties; Defend human rights." Many speakers including spokespersons for history, Arabs, Iranians, Bostonians, veterans, humanitarians, labor, etc., plus hip-hop and folk. Buses, trains from all over New England; part of national demonstration. March to Copley Square at 2pm. Info: call UJP, 617-491-4857.

Thu-Sun 1-4 Nov. Tucson, Arizona. Alliance for Democracy's biennial Convention: "Shifting Power from Corporate Rights to the Rights of People and Nature" Special guest: Thomas Linzey, Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund, empowering towns to protect their resources and extend democracy. Workshops to empower AfD and local chapters. Pre-convention Democracy School, post-convention tour of border and Nogales, Mexico. Info: www.theAllianceforDemocracy.org or phone AfD office: 781-894-1179.

Job Opening. Michael Shuman, author of *Going Local* and *The Small-Mart Revolution*, seeks a project associate for \$40-50k/yr for one year or more. Research, writing, web-site building, blogging, and marketing with respect to (1) global case studies of local food businesses, and (2) harmful effects of state business subsidies on rural local businesses. Based in MS's office, Takoma Park MD but out-of-staters may apply—with published writing samples. BA, BS, B-. shuman@igc.org.

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 or copy this form and send it to Dave Lewit, 271 Dartmouth St., Boston, MA 02116.)

BOSTON-CAMBRIDGE ALLIANCE for DEMOCRACY PLEDGE

___ \$26/Year - "Count me in!"

___ \$52/Year - "Contributor" (We need to average this amount.)

___ \$104/Year - "Sustainer" (Helping us thrive.)

___ \$208/Year - "Community Steward"

___ \$500/Year - "Realize the vision"

___ What's fair for YOU? \$_____

Name : _____ Date: _____

Street No./Box/Apt: _____

Town and Zip: _____

Phone: Day _____ Night: _____

E-mail: _____

COLOPHON

Dave Lewit, Editor 617-266-8687 dlewit@igc.org
271 Dartmouth St., #2h, Boston MA 02116

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