

BCA Dispatch

Newsletter of the **October**
Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy 2008

When does a capitalistic business cease to be an economic phenomenon? When its size transforms it into a social phenomenon...

—Benito Mussolini

CHAPTER NEWS

The next meeting of BCA/NorthBridge will be on **Wednesday, November 5th at 7pm** at the Alliance offices, **760 Main Street, Waltham MA**. It's just behind the fieldstone church, on the #70 bus line from Central Square, Cambridge. Big parking lot. As usual, we will deal with our active and potential projects. For agenda and project info, call Barbara Clancy at 781-894-1179.

Bioterror Lab

Many friends of the Alliance were among the capacity crowd at National Institute of Health's 14 October (Continued on Page 8>>)

My Holiday with John McCain (You'll never see this in the corporate media)

by Ana Dubey, San Francisco, 14 September 2008

IT WAS JUST BEFORE JOHN MCCAIN'S LAST RUN at the presidential nomination in 2000 that my husband and I vacationed in Turtle Island in Fiji with John McCain, Cindy, and their children, including Bridget (their adopted Bangladeshi child). It was not our intention, but it was our misfortune to be in close quarters with John McCain for almost a week, since Turtle Island has a small number of bungalows and their focus on communal meals force all vacationers who are there at the same time to get to know each other intimately.

He arrived at our first group meal and started reading quotes from a pile of William Faulkner books with a forest of Post-Its sticking out of them. As an English Literature major myself, my first thought was "if he likes this so much, why hasn't he memorized any of this yet?" I soon realized that McCain actually thought we had come on vacation to be a volunteer audience for his "readings" which then became a regular part of each meal. Out of politeness, none of the vacationers initially protested at this intrusion into their blissful holiday, but people's buttons definitely got pushed as the readings continued day after day.

Unfortunately this was not his only contribution to our meal-time entertainment. He waxed on during one meal about how Indo-Chine women had the best figures and that our American corn-fed women just couldn't meet up to this standard. He also made it a point that all of us should stop Cindy from having dessert as her weight was too high and made a few comments to Amy, the 25 year old wife of the honeymooning couple from Nebraska that she should eat less as she needed to lose weight. McCain's appreciation of the beauty of Asian women was so great that David the American economist had to move his Thai wife to the other side of the table from McCain as McCain kept aggressively flirting with and touching her.

Needless to say I was irritated at his large ego and his rude behavior towards his wife and other women, but decided he must have some redeeming qualities (Continued on Page 7 >>)



"STOP THIEF!"

In 1871 the cartoonist Thomas Nast depicted corrupt New York City "Boss" Tweed and other officials stampeding before the citizens who finally discovered the magnitude of Tammany Hall embezzlement.

Ironically it was business as usual for the "thieves" in the ensuing days and weeks. Eventually, however, the Ring leaders went to jail.

The Tragedy of Congress Calm Down, Reform the System

by Dave Lewit, Alliance for Democracy, 21 October 2008

PUBLIC OPINION POLLS SHOW that the US Congress has ever-sinking ratings, with 51 percent of "likely voters" saying that Congress is doing a "poor" job, while only 9 percent give Congress "positive ratings" (Rasmussen Report, 27 August). Two-thirds say that "members of Congress are more interested in furthering their own political careers than in genuinely helping people. Just 16 percent believe the reverse." Why?

The polls focus on the end result—good or bad legislation. On that basis, it's hard to disagree. Still, under the rules and pressures they face, the many well-meaning representatives cannot translate their popular, humanistic sentiments into law. "Politics is the art of compromise"—dare we say compromise of majority wishes with elite power and calcified procedures? Therein lies the tragedy of Congress. Like the Greek Tragic Hero, some inherent flaw and some callous external forces turn good Congress members into losers.

Hyped Threats and Stampedes

We all know roughly what happened on Wall Street and in Washington since mid-September, 2008. Investment houses couldn't sell the junk securities they had pyramided—junk because millions of cajoled homeowners couldn't pay their jacked-up mortgage premiums which backed these securities. They were thrown out on the street—with nobody waiting to move in. As financial firms floundered, their investors panicked, selling their shares for whatever they could get as stock prices plunged. For lack of reliable reserves, commercial banks stopped giving business loans. The Treasury secretary—a former Wall Street CEO—figuratively "put a gun to his head and said, 'Give us \$700 billion or I'll shoot!'" and Congress caved in.* The unfettered private financial system, rotten as it is, must be continued, they believed, as our standard—There Is No Alternative. In just a few days of closed-door negotiation and bill-writing, taxpayers were suddenly obligated to cover the huge losses of so-called capitalists, to pay off Congress members in district and corporate pork, and (Continued on next page >>)

finally to recognize the falsity of Reaganomic "sunshine". Wall Street and the private banking system was saved, sort of, while housing, small businesses, and jobs continue to dissolve. The massive payout to private business has been called a "stickup", a "swindle", and "socialism for the rich". So much for the "people's branch" of government!

Two-hundred sixty-three representatives—60 percent of the House, the bulk of them Democrats—voted for the larded bailout after 74 percent of the Senate had done so. Votes this lop-sided on major issues, with extreme remedies, after little investigation or debate, have occurred often in US history in the heat of perceived—or shouted—threat to the nation: the Sedition Act during the maritime war with France in 1798, the declaration of war against Mexico in 1846, the granting of usurped powers to President Lincoln during the Civil War, the Espionage Act after the US entered World War I, the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II, the Gulf of Tonkin resolution precipitating the Viet Nam war, "fast track" abrogation of congressional democratic process in 1974 when threatened by Japanese trade competition, the Afghanistan invasion and Patriot Act after the 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, as well as the loosening of FISA for domestic spying, and now the massive Wall Street bailout after the financial collapses of September, 2008. Most of these acts proved diversionary, ineffective, unconstitutional, or disastrous with respect to short-term or later developments.

Were they undemocratic? Technically, no—the people's representatives voted for them, even though they may have broken some House or Senate rules along the way. But those representatives voted within a complex, constraining institution—the Constitution- and rule-structured national Congress embedded in business- or church-led districts and the federal matrix—under tidal wave and stampede conditions. Except for relentless perpetrators—the Bush crowd and associated lobbyists, congressional promoters, and Supreme Court partisans—we are all in some sense victims of prevailing political forces.

The Dynamics of Congress

Have you ever tried to talk with a Congress member on the street or in the airport? The snappiness of their response can be enough to be called rudeness. Other officials—city, state—are busy enough but approachable; representatives in Congress may be the most overloaded managers on earth, always on call when not conferring with staff, in committee, talking with key colleagues, talking with lobbyists, meeting with delegations, meeting with reporters, on the House floor, going back and forth to the district, meeting key constituents, giving speeches... When's there time to read bills, read background, read the news and opinion surveys, watch the TV his/her constituents are watching, read for deeper knowledge or broader visions, talk with individual constituents, spend time with family? All this pertains to popular representatives. Elite members may be less accessible and more focused on insider dealing.

So how do representatives prepare to deal with issues and shape legislation? Congress processes thousands of bills each session, of greater or lesser importance, bulk, complexity, cost, relevance to one's favorite issues, connectedness to various departments, businesses, congressional factions, constituent interest groups, and so on. Few bills are written by one's own self or staff; many are presented by Administration offices, and who writes bills for them? Many are written by partisan think-tank lawyers, some by civic organizations, then put into legislative language by Administration staffers, and revised by reps

who know necessary additions or cuts wanted by colleagues. How can a bill's premises be checked against facts, and how can its potential impacts be evaluated? The rep's staff is limited but may get help from the Congressional Office of Management and Budget. The Congressional Office of Technology Assessment was shut down years ago by Newt Gingrich's allies in Congress. There is no government institute to study and provide impartial estimates of impacts of a given piece of legislation—notwithstanding the cerulean promises of political candidates. A committee may invite comment in writing or in public hearings. Professors and other experts will testify along with government administrators and fellow congress members. Will C-Span cover a particular hearing for the public? Will any daily newspaper or news service? Will the committee chairperson order or ignore such input? In the end, one or a few congress members' word will suffice to enable many colleagues to support a bill. Cronyism and corruption will thrive.

That somewhat chaotic, or at best folksy process holds in normal times. In times of national emergency, which may be hyped or even manufactured—e.g., very likely the 9/11 disasters which immediately "required" a war, and very likely the purported end of the republic as trumpeted by Treasury Secretary Paulson if his bailout were to be postponed—the process becomes polarized: any representative is either for this solution or for disaster. Journalist Naomi Klein has written about this sort of thing in *The Shock Doctrine* wherein secretly prepared remedies are rushed through a legislative body in a time of perceived emergency. The "threat" posed by Cuba similarly led the National Security Council on the eve of a Miami-based paramilitary's invasion to decide to support that ill-fated effort, as described and analyzed by social psychologist Irving Janis in *Victims of Groupthink*. The effects of such actions are often cause for regret by the nation, if not by the few who profit, such as neoconservatives, corporate defense contractors, oil production corporations, and the government elite itself (including venal congress members) in the case of the current wars in the Middle East.

Piled on top of the somewhat chaotic grind of congressional compromise and corruption, the tragedy of emergency stampedes is that the good guys—the nay-voters like Dennis Kucinich and vote-switchers like our own John Tierney—are helpless to present alternatives, to fight and win. It seems to take a prepared movement, publicly aired with many leaders committed, to enable an alternative policy to be approved and implemented, usually well after the emergency "solution" is legitimized. Civil rights legislation, stimulated by Martin Luther King Jr and many others, decades after enactment of Jim Crow legislation in the South, exemplifies this path. If the mass media were cooperative, such alternatives could make real competition for insider-prepared solutions, winning during an emergency or even precluding such emergency.

Changing the Legislative System

Congress would need, however, to be prepared to accept such alternatives. To enable such preparation may require changes in the structure of Congress and indeed in other organs of government with which Congress is articulated. Reducing the legislative branch to one chamber—the House of Representatives—would release a lot of money used by the Senate including campaign funding while eliminating the elite status represented by that body, and making the process of legislating less complex and problematic—and the legislation itself less compromised.

Another such change would be the reduction of the Supreme Court to an advisory body, transferring the judgment of constitu-

tionality to Congress and the States, while allowing lower federal courts to decide individual cases as usual. Another change to reduce the power and hubris of the presidency would be to require the popular election of vice president and cabinet secretaries.

Liberalizing the constitutional amending process would seem necessary for such changes. To prepare the way for a liberalizing amendment, a movement to sponsor rewrites of the whole Constitution—and to spin off draft regional constitutions as well—may be in order, which may soon be possible in the chaos of yet another stolen presidential election for which the Republicans have been preparing (which may be contested during or after the election by Obama's army of lawyers and conscientious citizens at the polls).

If large majorities of Democrats are seated in the House and Senate in 2009, and if the conservative "Blue Dog" Democrats can be disciplined in voting, vital changes in House and Senate rules may be possible. The arbitrary powers of committee chairpersons must be curbed. A requirement for periodic evaluation and reconsideration must be built into all new laws, making stamped laws less viable. Mandatory hearings may halt stampedes; emergency measures taken by the administration can be held to constitutional limits by the involvement in implementation of mandatory congressional-state oversight committees—well staffed and funded. To reduce presidential overreach such immediate oversight needs to be extended to all administrative initiatives, such as generating international trade and security agreements.

The role of political minorities—Republicans, probably, in the next Congress—needs to be reexamined. To ignore and steamroller them will only lead to resentment and conflict. Public debates, well televised, should be held with the leavening of minor and new parties to bring out critical differences and similarities between the major parties and among all parties, eking out new areas of cooperation.

Two reforms may be key to most others: preferential voting, and public media. Preferential voting will allow the full range of opinion to shape public policy. One type—"instant runoff" voting or IRV—enables minor, often new, candidates to compete in debates and balloting, and possibly be elected to executive office or legislative bodies or courts—national, international, regional, state, and local. The other type—proportional representation or PR—enables various political philosophies to be fairly represented in legislative bodies and to help shape public policy. Both end stultifying monopoly on how we may think and conduct our lives.

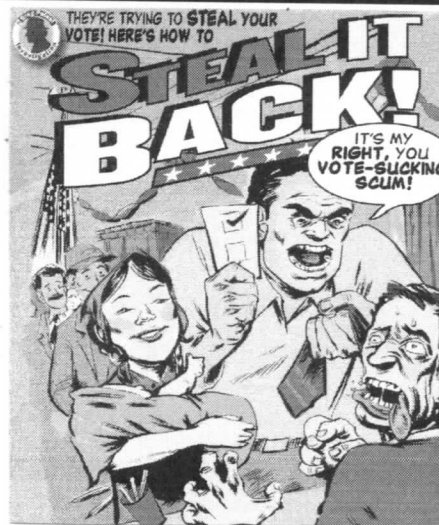
The second key reform is public media. Democracy requires public information and participation—forum. Presidential power to control public information through appointment of members of the Federal Communication Commission is outrageous. Partisan concurrence by senate consent is no help. Fully-funded, completely commercial-free radio and television networks are essential, as is a free and open Internet. Transparency of public institutions and processes is essential to an adaptive democracy. Such transparency must involve two-way communication—interactivity—which talk-shows already embody. More formally, the parliamentary Question Period may help at the congressional level and at the levels of state legislatures and city councils regarding law enforcement—including the work of police and federal district attorneys.

The time for reforms—radical reforms—is now, when the economic and ecological crises are melting down our obsolescent notions of governance, and people expect hope to be

translated into reality.

* Paraphrased from the more expansive parody by economist Dean Baker: "[The Wall Street bankers] have a gun pointed at their head, and they're trying to tell us that if we don't give them seven trillion dollars** they're going to pull the trigger—and I'm willing to live with that."

**\$7 trillion = the value of the housing bubble, over and above the trend line of housing prices in earlier years



Republican challenger who insists you're a fraud!

"It's Already Stolen"Unless You Read This Comic Book!

by Robert F. Kennedy Jr. & Greg Palast, *Rolling Stone*,
17 October 2008

DON'T WORRY ABOUT MICKEY MOUSE or ACORN stealing the election. According to an investigative report out today in *Rolling Stone* magazine, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and Greg Palast, after a year-long investigation, reveal a systematic program of "GOP vote tampering" on a massive scale.

- Republican Secretaries of State of swing-state Colorado have quietly purged one in six names from their voter rolls. Over several months, the GOP politicians in Colorado stonewalled every attempt by *Rolling Stone* to get an answer to the massive purge—ten times the average state's rate of removal.

▶ While Obama dreams of riding to the White House on a wave of new voters, more than 2.7 million have had their registrations REJECTED under new procedures signed into law by George Bush. Kennedy, a voting rights lawyer, charges this is a resurgence of 'Jim Crow' tactics to wrongly block Black and Hispanic voters.

▶ A fired US prosecutor levels new charges, accusing leaders of his own party, Republicans, with criminal acts in an attempt to block legal voters as "fraudulent."

▶ Digging through government records, the Kennedy-Palast team discovered that, in 2004, a GOP scheme called "caging" ultimately took away the rights of 1.1 million voters. The *Rolling Stone* duo predict that, this November 4, it will be far worse.

▶ Since the last presidential race, "States used dubious 'list management' rules to scrub at least 10 million voters from their rolls." Among those was Paul Maez of Las Vegas, New Mexico, a victim of an unreported but devastating purge of voters in that state that left as many as one in nine Democrats without a vote. For Maez, the state's purging his registration was particularly shocking—he's the county elections supervisor.

The Kennedy-Palast revelations go far beyond the sum of questionably purged voters recently reported by the *New York*

Times. "Republican operatives—the party's elite commandos of bare-knuckle politics," report Kennedy and Palast, under the cover of fighting fraudulent voting, are "systematically disenfranchis[ing] Democrats... If Democrats are to win the 2008 election, they must not simply beat McCain at the polls—they must beat him by a margin that exceeds the level of GOP vote tampering."

Author Note - Kennedy and Palast are releasing, simultaneously with the Rolling Stone investigative report what they call, the vote-theft 'antidote': a 24-page full-color comic book, *Steal Back Your Vote*, which can be downloaded or obtained in print from their non-partisan website, StealBackYourVote.org For updates and video reports, go to RollingStone.com, www.GregPalast.com, and StealBackYourVote.org.

Follow the Bubbles

Current Financial Crisis Made Easy

by Walden Bello, *ForeignPolicyInFocus*, 26 Sept 2008 (excerpt)

...How do bubbles form, grow, and burst?

Let's first use the Asian financial crisis of 1997-98, as an example. First, capital account and financial liberalization took place in Thailand and other countries at the urging of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the U.S. Treasury Department. Then came the entry of foreign funds seeking quick and high returns, meaning they went to real estate and the stock market. This overinvestment made stock and real estate prices fall, leading to the panicked withdrawal of funds. In 1997, \$100 billion fled the East Asian economies over the course of just a few weeks.

That capital flight led to an IMF bailout of foreign speculators. The resulting collapse of the real economy produced a recession throughout East Asia in 1998. Despite massive destabilization, international financial institutions opposed efforts to impose both national and global regulation of financial system on ideological grounds.

The current Wall Street collapse has its roots in the technology-stock bubble of the late 1990s, when the price of the stocks of Internet startups skyrocketed, then collapsed in 2000 and 2001, resulting in the loss of \$7 trillion worth of assets and the recession of 2001-2002. The Fed's loose money policies under Alan Greenspan encouraged the technology bubble. When it collapsed into a recession, Greenspan, to try to counter a long recession, cut the prime rate to a 45-year low of one percent in June 2003 and kept it there for over a year. This had the effect of encouraging another bubble—in real estate.

As early as 2002, progressive economists such as Dean Baker of the Center for Economic Policy Research were warning about the real estate bubble and the predictable severity of its impending collapse. However, as late as 2005, then-chair of President's Council of Economic Advisers and now Federal Reserve Board Chairman Ben Bernanke attributed the rise in U.S. housing prices to "strong economic fundamentals" instead of speculative activity. Is it any wonder that he was caught completely off guard when the subprime mortgage crisis broke in the summer of 2007?

According to investor and philanthropist George Soros: "Mortgage institutions encouraged mortgage holders to refinance their mortgages and withdraw their excess equity. They lowered their lending standards and introduced new products, such as adjustable mortgages (ARMs), 'interest-only' mortgages, and promotional teaser rates." All this encouraged speculation in residential housing units. House prices started to rise in double-digit rates. This served to reinforce speculation, and the rise in

house prices made the owners feel rich; the result was a consumption boom that has sustained the economy in recent years."

The subprime mortgage crisis wasn't a case of supply out-running real demand. The "demand" was largely fabricated by speculative mania on the part of developers and financiers that wanted to make great profits from their access to foreign money that has flooded the United States in the last decade. Big-ticket mortgages were aggressively sold to millions who could not normally afford them by offering low "teaser" interest rates that would later be readjusted to jack up payments from the new homeowners.

But how could subprime mortgages going sour turn into such a big problem? Because these assets were then "securitized" with other assets into complex derivative products called "collateralized debt obligations" (CDOs). The mortgage originators worked with different layers of middlemen who understated risk so as to offload them as quickly as possible to other banks and institutional investors. These institutions in turn offloaded these securities onto other banks and foreign financial institutions.

When the interest rates were raised on the subprime loans, adjustable mortgage, and other housing loans, the game was up. There are about six million subprime mortgages outstanding, 40% of which will likely go into default in the next two years, Soros estimates. And five million more defaults from adjustable rate mortgages and other "flexible loans" will occur over the next several years. These securities, the value of which run into the trillions of dollars, have already been injected, like virus, into the global financial system.

For Lehman Brothers, Merrill Lynch, Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and Bear Stearns, the losses represented by these toxic securities simply overwhelmed their reserves and brought them down. And more are likely to fall once their books—since lots of these holdings are recorded "off the balance sheet"—are corrected to reflect their actual holdings.

And many others will join them as other speculative operations such as credit cards and different varieties of risk insurance seize up. The American International Group (AIG) was felled by its massive exposure in the unregulated area of *credit default swaps*, derivatives that make it possible for investors to bet on the possibility that companies will default on repaying loans. According to Soros, such bets on credit defaults now make up a \$45 trillion market that is entirely unregulated. *It amounts to more than five times the total of the U.S. government bond market.* The huge size of the assets that could go bad if AIG collapsed made Washington change its mind and intervene after it let Lehman Brothers collapse.

There will be more bankruptcies and government takeovers. Wall Street's collapse will deepen and prolong the U.S. recession. This recession will translate into an Asian recession. After all, China's main foreign market is the United States, and China in turn imports raw materials and intermediate goods that it uses for its U.S. exports from Japan, Korea, and Southeast Asia. Globalization has made "decoupling" impossible. The United States, China, and East Asia in general are like three prisoners bound together in a chain-gang.

In summary, the Wall Street meltdown is not only due to greed and to the lack of government regulation of a hyperactive sector. This collapse stems ultimately from the *crisis of overproduction* that has plagued global capitalism since the mid-1970s.

The *financialization* of investment activity has been one of the escape routes from stagnation, the other two being *neoliberal*

restructuring and globalization. With neoliberal restructuring and globalization providing limited relief, financialization became attractive as a mechanism to shore up profitability. But financialization has proven to be a dangerous road. It has led to speculative bubbles that produce temporary prosperity for a few but ultimately end up in corporate collapse and in recession in the real economy.

The key questions now are: How deep and long will this recession be? Does the U.S. economy need another speculative bubble to drag itself out of this recession? And if it does, where will the next bubble form? Some people say the *military-industrial complex* or the "disaster capitalism complex" that Naomi Klein writes about will be the next bubble. But that's another story.

Walden Bello is professor of sociology at the University of the Philippines and senior analyst at the Bangkok-based research and advocacy institute Focus on the Global South. He is the author of, among other books, *Dilemmas of Domination: The Unmaking of the American Empire* (2005).

Columbus Day: Day of Mourning Intrepid Admiral, Cruel Avaricious Slaver

by Graham Keeley, *The Independent* (UK), 22 July 2006

Wampanoag in Plymouth MA and other tribes world-wide have renamed October 12th Day of Mourning—the beginning of Europe's globalized, genocidal Conquest in grasping the world's riches. Can we celebrate Columbus' nautical courage while ignoring the disaster in its wake? "With representatives from 120 Indian nations from every part of the Americas, the all-Indigenous First Continental Conference on 500 Years of Indian Resistance, held in Quito, Ecuador in July 1990, saw itself as fulfilling a prophecy that the Native nations would rise again when the eagle of the north joined with the condor of the south..." —Dina Gilio, UNM student. Many are celebrating Oct 12 as Indigenous Peoples Day. Compare Columbus' criminal courage with the moral/political kind sorely needed today.

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS WAS A DESPOT who ruled his subjects with an iron fist, according to documents which have emerged 500 years after his death. The man who discovered America for Europe routinely tortured slaves and starved his subjects in colonies on the Caribbean island of Hispaniola.

Columbus was known to have mistreated native people when he was viceroy in Santo Domingo, the capital of today's Dominican Republic, at the end of the 15th century. But until now it had been put down to his lack of political sensitivity. The documents suggest a hidden face to the man who, after arriving in the Caribbean in 1492, fell from grace eight years later because of his conduct in Santo Domingo. In 1500, Columbus was brought back from the city as a prisoner on the orders of the Spanish monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella, to stand trial.

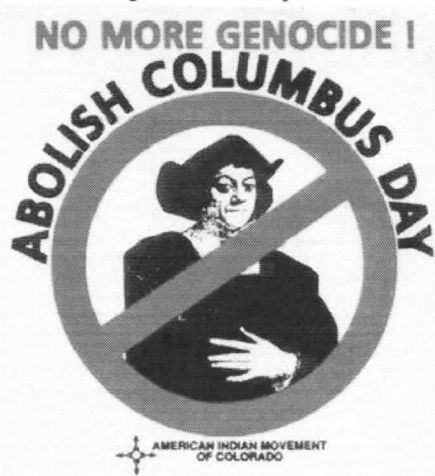
Statements from 23 witnesses at his trial were uncovered at the archive of Simanacas, near Valladolid, by an archivist, Isabel Aguirre, who spent a year transcribing them. Consuelo Varela, a historian in Seville, has studied the documents and believes it is the most important discovery about Columbus's life for a century. Her research, which appears in *La Caída de Cristóbal Colón* (*The Fall of Christopher Columbus*), reveals the brutal life in the first colony which Columbus set up.

Varela told the Spanish daily *El País*: "Life in the colony in these first seven years was hard and terrible. There was a great deal of hunger, envy, rancour and rumours of all sorts. It was a primitive, insular life, rather like what we see in Western films." She said people, including white Spanish slaves, were auc-

tioned in the main square of Santo Domingo. "We hear of a poor boy who was caught stealing wheat grain. They cut off his ears and nose and put shackles on him and made him a slave. Columbus ran the colony with an iron fist.

"One woman happened to say that Columbus came from a working-class family and that his father had been a weaver. Columbus's brother Bartholme had her tongue cut out, after parading her naked through the streets on a donkey. Christopher congratulated his brother on defending the family honour." There were many attempts at mutiny in the colony, she said.

The 46-page document shows Columbus and his brothers Bartolme and Diego as tyrants who ruled through summary justice. They also forbade natives from baptism so they could be used as slaves. Varela said the documents showed Columbus's "immense greed". "Even [trusted friends] told of the atrocities that happened...



Columbus's government was tyrannical, with no trials or any thing similar." He was eventually arrested, tried and dismissed as viceroy of Santo Domingo and governor of the Indies. The revelations come as the world marks the 500th anniversary of Columbus' death in 1506.

Strange White People Who Lack Love

"Columbus designed a tribute system. Spaniards would not deign to dig any gold for themselves, so the natives had to. Every Taino over 14 years of age was to give a hawk's bell (about the size of a thimble) of gold to the rulers (Columbus and his men) every three months. Upon receipt of the gold, the natives were given tokens to wear around their necks as proof of payment. It was a simple system. When the Spaniards found Tainos without the appropriate tokens, they chopped their hands off, leaving them to bleed to death and making examples of them. It is estimated that about ten thousand Taino died handless that way.

"The quota was impossible to meet. The natives had to stop growing food and taking care of themselves to try mining gold. They began starving, falling prey to European disease and all manner of horror, even if the Spanish did not murder them for "sport." The natives fled as far as they could go: across the island, up into the hills, even to other islands. There was no permanent escape, except by death. Mothers began killing their children before they took their own lives. The Tainos had mass suicides by jumping from cliffs and poisoning themselves, yet the Spanish killed far more, and in ingenious ways. Guacanagarí, Europe's first ally in the New World, was eventually driven into the mountains himself by the Spanish depredations, dying alone, wandering the mountains of his ruined world...

"It is said, by [Father Bartolome de] Las Casas [16th Century eye-witness] among others, that what perplexed the Tainos of Española most about the strange white people from the large ships was not their violence, not even their greed, nor in fact their peculiar attitudes toward property, but rather their coldness, their hardness, their lack of love."

—Wade Frazier, *Columbus, the Original American Hero*
ahealedplanet.net.

Ed. Note: We are told that Samuel Eliot Morison, the historian who is deified in bronze on the Commonwealth Avenue Mall in Boston's Back Bay, had only one sentence about such cruelty in his biography of Columbus.

Cuban Offshore Oil Bonanza Self-Reliance, Export, Seen within Decade

by Rory Carroll, *The Guardian (UK)*, 18 October 2008

FRIENDS AND FOES HAVE CALLED CUBA MANY THINGS—a progressive beacon, a quixotic underdog, an oppressive tyranny—but no one has called it lucky, until now.

Mother nature, it emerged this week, appears to have blessed the island with enough oil reserves to vault it into the ranks of energy powers. The government announced there may be more than 20bn barrels of recoverable oil in offshore fields in Cuba's share of the Gulf of Mexico, more than twice the previous estimate.

If confirmed, it puts Cuba's reserves on par with those of the US and into the world's top 20. Drilling is expected to start next year by Cuba's state oil company Cubapetroleo, or Cupet. "It would change their whole equation. The government would have more money and no longer be dependent on foreign oil," said Kirby Jones, founder of the Washington-based US-Cuba Trade Association. "It could join the club of oil exporting nations."

"We have more data. I'm almost certain that if they ask for all the data we have, (their estimate) is going to grow considerably," said Cupet's exploration manager, Rafael Tenreyro Perez.

Havana based its dramatically higher estimate mainly on comparisons with oil output from similar geological structures off the coasts of Mexico and the US. Cuba's undersea geology was "very similar" to Mexico's giant Cantarell oil field in the Bay of Campeche, said Tenreyro. A consortium of companies led by Spain's Repsol had tested wells and were expected to begin drilling the first production well in mid-2009, and possibly several more later in the year, he said.

Cuba currently produces about 60,000 barrels of oil daily, covering almost half of its needs, and imports the rest from Venezuela in return for Cuban doctors and sports instructors. Even that barter system puts a strain on an impoverished economy in which Cubans earn an average monthly salary of \$20. Subsidised grocery staples, health care and education help make ends meet but an old joke—that the three biggest failings of the revolution are breakfast, lunch and dinner—still does the rounds. Last month hardships were compounded by tropical storms that shredded crops and devastated coastal towns. "This news about the oil reserves could not have come at a better time for the regime," said Jonathan Benjamin-Alvarado, a Cuba energy specialist at the University of Nebraska.

However there is little prospect of Cuba becoming a communist version of Kuwait. Its oil is more than a mile deep under the ocean and difficult and expensive to extract. The four-decade-old US economic embargo prevents several of Cuba's potential oil partners—notably Brazil, Norway and Spain—from using valuable first-generation technology. "You're looking at three to five years minimum before any meaningful returns," said Benjamin-Alvarado.

Even so, Cuba is a master at stretching resources. President Raul Castro, who took over from brother Fidel, has promised to deliver improvements to daily life to shore up the legitimacy of the revolution as it approaches its 50th anniversary.

Cuba's unexpected arrival into the big oil league could increase pressure on the next administration to loosen the embargo to let US oil companies participate in the bonanza and reduce US dependency on the middle east, said Jones. "Up until now the embargo did not really impact on us in a substantive,

strategic way. Oil is different. It's something we need and want."

Ed. Comment: More carbon pollution makes this discovery bitter-sweet. Will Cuba turn its pharma-proven sci-tech skills to tidal, thermal, solar, wind and other renewables-development?

USA: It's A Coup Already

"Pass the Bailout Bill---Or Else!"

by Naomi Wolf, *AlterNet.com*, 8 October 2008

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS WERE TOLD THEY COULD FACE MARTIAL LAW if they didn't pass the bailout bill. This will not be the last time.

The First Brigade of the Third Infantry Division, three to four thousand soldiers, has been deployed in the United States as of October 1. Their stated mission is the form of crowd control they practiced in Iraq, subduing "unruly individuals," and the management of a national emergency.

I am in Seattle and heard from the brother of one of the [First Brigade] soldiers that they are engaged in exercises now. Amy Goodman reported that an Army spokesperson confirmed that they will have access to lethal and non-lethal crowd control technologies and tanks.

George Bush struck down Posse Comitatus, thus making it legal for military to patrol the U.S. [*Ed. Note—That was in October, 2006. Thanks to Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt, Posse Comitatus was restored—notwithstanding Bush's signing statement to the contrary—in January, 2008.*] He has also legally established that in the "War on Terror," the U.S. is at war around the globe and thus the whole world is a battlefield. Thus the U.S. is also a battlefield.

He also led change to the 1807 Insurrection Act to give him far broader powers in the event of a loosely defined "insurrection" or many other "conditions" he has the power to identify. The Constitution allows the suspension of habeas corpus—habeas corpus prevents us from being seized by the state and held without trial—in the event of an "insurrection." With his own army force now, his power to call a group of protesters or angry voters "insurgents" staging an "insurrection" is strengthened.

U.S. Rep. Brad Sherman of California said to Congress, captured on C-Span and viewable on YouTube, that individual members of the House were threatened with martial law within a week if they did not pass the bailout bill: "The only way they can pass this bill is by creating and sustaining a panic atmosphere.

... Many of us were told in private conversations that if we voted against this bill on Monday that the sky would fall, the market would drop two or three thousand points the first day and a couple of thousand on the second day, and a few members were even told that there would be martial law in America if we voted no."

If this is true and Rep. Sherman is not delusional, I ask you to consider that if they are willing to threaten martial law now, it is foolish to assume they will never use that threat again. It is also foolish to trust in an orderly election process to resolve this threat. And why deploy the First Brigade? One thing the deployment accomplishes is to put teeth into such a threat.

I interviewed Vietnam veteran, retired U.S. Air Force Colonel and patriot David Antoon for clarification:

"If the President directed the First Brigade to arrest Congress, what could stop him?"

"Nothing. Their only recourse is to cut off funding. The

Congress would be at the mercy of military leaders to go to them and ask them not to obey illegal orders."

"But these orders are now legal?"

"Correct."

"If the President directs the First Brigade to arrest a bunch of voters, what would stop him?"

"Nothing. It would end up in courts but the action would have been taken."

"If the President directs the First Brigade to kill civilians, what would stop him?"

"Nothing."

"What would prevent him from sending the First Brigade to arrest the editor of the Washington Post?"

"Nothing. He could do what he did in Iraq—send a tank down a street in Washington and fire a shell into the *Washington Post* as they did into Al Jazeera, and claim they were firing at something else."

"What happens to members of the First Brigade who refuse to take up arms against U.S. citizens?"

"They'd probably be treated as deserters as in Iraq: arrested, detained and facing five years in prison. In Iraq a study by Ann Wright shows that deserters—reservists who refused to go back to Iraq—got longer sentences than war criminals."

"Does Congress have any military of their own?"

"No. Congress has no direct control of any military units. The Governors have the National Guard but they report to the President in an emergency that he declares."

"Who can arrest the President?"

"The Attorney General can arrest the President after he leaves or after impeachment."

[Note by author: **Prosecutor Vincent Bugliosi has asserted it is possible for District Attorneys around the country to charge President Bush with murder if they represent districts where one or more military members who have been killed in Iraq formerly resided.**] So—Vote for Charlotte Dennett for Vermont Attorney General, who will appoint Bugliosi. [Ed. Note: **MA School of Law in Andover has already organized a group of lawyers to do just this. Likewise in Vermont.**]

"Given the danger do you advocate impeachment?"

"Yes. President Bush struck down Posse Comitatus—which has prevented, with a penalty of two years in prison, U.S. leaders since after the Civil War from sending military forces into our streets—with a 'signing statement.' He should be impeached immediately in a bipartisan process to prevent the use of military forces and mercenary forces against U.S. citizens"

"Should Americans call on senior leaders in the Military to break publicly with this action and call on their own men and women to disobey these orders?"

"Every senior military officer's loyalty should ultimately be to the Constitution. Every officer should publicly break with any illegal order, even from the President."

"But if these are now legal. If they say, 'Don't obey the Commander in Chief,' what happens to the military?"

"Perhaps they would be arrested and prosecuted as those who refuse to participate in the current illegal war. That's what would be considered a coup."

"But it's a coup already." "Yes."

Naomi Wolf is the author of *Give Me Liberty* (Simon and Schuster, 2008), the sequel to the best-seller *The End of America: A Letter of Warning to a Young Patriot* (Chelsea Green, 2007). Wolf elaborates the parallels between Bush steps and those taken by 20th Century dictators: Mussolini, Stalin, Hitler, Pol Pot, Pinochet, etc., to destroy democracy.

as he had adopted a handicapped child from Bangladesh. I asked him about this one day, and his response was shocking: "Oh, that was Cindy's idea?? I didn't have anything to do with it. She just went and adopted this thing without even asking me. You can't imagine how people stare when I wheel this ugly, black thing around in a shopping cart in Arizona. No, it wasn't my idea at all."

I actively avoided McCain after that, but unfortunately one day he engaged me in a political discussion which soon got us on the topic of the active US bombing of Iraq at that time. I was shocked when he said, "If I was in charge, I would nuke Iraq to teach them a lesson." Given McCain's personal experience with the horrors of war, I had expected a more balanced point of view. I commented on the tragic consequences of the nuclear attacks on Japan during WWII??—but no, he was not to be dissuaded. He went on to say that if it was up to him he would have dropped many more nuclear bombs on Japan. I rapidly extricated myself from this conversation as I could tell that his experience being tortured as a POW didn't seem to have mellowed out his perspective, but rather had made him more aggressive and vengeful towards the world.

My final encounter with McCain was on the morning that he was leaving Turtle Island. Amy and I were happily eating pancakes when McCain arrived and told Amy that she shouldn't be having pancakes because she needed to lose weight. Amy burst into tears at this abusive comment. I felt fiercely protective of Amy and immediately turned to McCain and told him to leave her alone. He became very angry and abusive towards me, and said, "Don't you know who I am?" I looked him in the face and said, "Yes, you are the biggest asshole I have ever met" and headed back to my cabin. I am happy to say that later that day when I arrived at lunch I was given a standing ovation by all the guests for having stood up to McCain's bullying.

Although I have shared my McCain story informally with friends, this is the first time I am making this public. I almost did so in 2000, when McCain first announced his bid for the Republican nomination, but it soon became apparent that George Bush was the shoo-in candidate and so I did not act then. However, now that there is a very real possibility that McCain could be elected as our next president, I feel it is my duty as an American citizen to share this story. I can't imagine a more scary outcome for America than that this abusive, aggressive man should lead our nation. I have observed him in intimate surroundings as he really is, not how the media portrays him to be. If his attitudes toward women and his treatment of his own family are even a small indicator of his real personality, then I shudder to think what will happen to America were he to be elected as our President.

This shocking account was written by Ana Dubey, a friend of my cousin and her husband, who have known Ana for many years. Ana has a PhD in psychology and has a private practice in San Francisco. My cousin's husband went to business school with Ana's husband, who has since started and sold a number of successful companies. Ana's husband is currently a Managing Director of a private equity firm in the Bay Area. Ana and her husband are not political activists and don't have any personal ax to grind. In fact, in writing this account of her experience with John McCain, Ana is acting outside of her own economic self-interest as she and her husband are among the top 3-5% of our population who would benefit from the McCain tax/economic policies. Please pass this on to anyone you know who might vote for John McCain. Also please post it on blogs and send it to newspapers and radio stations.

—Kate Marianchild, Ukiah CA (Continued ----->

Ed. Note: Like ourselves, KM wanted to authenticate the story, so she called on Frances Moore Lappé, author of many books including *Diet for a Small Planet* and *Democracy's Edge*. Here is FML's response:

Kate,

I just spoke with Ana, who was wonderful. Sounds like NBC is on it. Sure hope an interview gets aired. Thank you so much for asking her to call me. I admire Ana very much.

Frankie

CHAPTER NEWS (Continued from Page 1)

open forum in Dudley Square, Roxbury, on the proposed \$200m BU Biosecurity Lab—a secretive federal facility to study the world's most toxic germs like Anthrax, Ebola, and Marburg and their mutations. A "blue ribbon" panel of 13 scientists were on stage to hear citizen concerns to help shape the panel's recommendations to NIH about "risk assessment". Although the Albany Street building has been completed, a US district judge stopped further work a year ago pending a proper environmental impact assessment, and will probably not give a judgment for another year.

Many local residents were desperately concerned about escaped germs and impossibility of area evacuation, emphasizing racial/class bias, and demanding early involvement of local citizens in planning. Our concern about the lab's development of offensive biological warfare agents is finally being voiced by a few citizen speakers, Councilor **Chuck Turner** decrying the lab's linkage with Bush foreign policy. Three other Boston city councilors also spoke, with former council president **Michael Flaherty** changing from endorsement of the lab to opposition. Former State Rep **Mel King** called BU "arbitrary and capricious". Nurses Ass'n spokesperson **Sandy Eaton** said "Germs don't scare me; arrogance and ignorance scare me." NIH is channeling funds from fed departments of Homeland Security and Defense.

Honors

Stalwart BCA and Veterans for Peace member **Paul Brailsford** received the first "Champion of Peace" award from Salem State College, on 21 September, on behalf of VFP north shore Samantha Smith chapter. All VFP activists on stage also were graced with fragrant leis flown in from Hawaii by Paul's daughter **Robin**.

New England Trade Watchdogs

Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont citizen commissioners pow-wowed in Manchester NH on 19 September to compare notes on striving for fair trade. While MA has been struggling for eight years to establish a citizens' trade commission to oversee state impacts, ME, NH, and VT have commissions up and running, and reporting at this conference. Observing from MA were BCA's **Dave Lewit** and MA Rep. Byron Rushing's aide **Heather Ross**, along with former State Attorney **Tom Barnico** who argued our Burma Law before the US Supreme Court, and **Christa Bleyleben**, Exec Director of MA Office of International Trade and Development. The conference was organized and chaired by **Peter Riggs** of the Forum on Democracy & Trade.

Citizen trade commissions are pending in MA, CT, RI, and NJ, so the Northeast is leading the nation in grassroots engagement in fair trade—against the corporate-driven neoliberalism of recent US administrations—and against federal and foreign (China!) direct intrusions into state lawmaking. State trade commissions and trade missions are hampered by failures of the US Dept of Commerce to gather/provide adequate trade data, as



well as "Star Chamber" secrecy of trade negotiations and arbitration. Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) was only briefly touched upon, with concerns for democracy and sovereignty... However, the meeting was a success in building network and morale, and looking forward to the enactment of Massachusetts Globalization Impact Bill, among others, in 2009.

ACTION ALERTS

Tue. 28 Oct. 7pm. Dedham. Power Behind the Scenes: The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). Control of money, war, UN, US Gov, etc. Author **James Perloff**. At Endicott Estate, 656 East St. Free. Info: John Birch Society (are you curious?), 617-361-5066. Transportation: BCA, 617-266-8687.

30-31 Oct, 10am-5pm Thu; 9am-5:30pm Fri. Cambridge. Public conference: **"Postcolonial Wars: Current Perspectives on the Deferred Violence of Decolonization"**. Radcliffe Gymnasium, 10 Garden St. Free. Info: 617-495-8600.

Fri. 7 Nov. 7pm. Cambridge. "The Meaning of Sacco & Vanzetti" Historian **Howard Zinn** lectures on these MA immigrant "anarchist"/activist martyrs and threats to liberty today. Dante Alighieri Society Italian Cultural Center, 41 Hampshire St. Info: Sergio Reyes, 617-290-5614. Free. info@saccoandvanzetti.org www.saccoandvanzetti.org

Tue. 11 Nov. 12-2:30pm. Boston. Veterans Day Peace Contingent. Join **Veterans for Peace** marching for the right to advocate peace. For years Boston's mayor—and city council—have allowed the pro-war American Legion to make the rules, and bar peace veterans from marching with signs in the Armistice/Veterans Day Parade. Last year they allowed VFP to march—in the rear with the horse-manure sweepers. Same this year, but we will have more "peace" and "free speech" signs. Gather on the Common at Beacon & Charles Streets. Parade begins at 1pm. Once again we will try to speak to the JROTC-and-citizen crowd at City Hall Plaza. Be ready for police arrests. Info: 781-643-3307, <http://smedleyvfp.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. #2h, Boston, MA 02116.)

BOSTON-CAMBRIDGE ALLIANCE for DEMOCRACY PLEDGE

___ \$33/Year - "Count me in!"

___ \$66/Year - "Contributor" (We need to average this amount.)

___ \$111/Year - "Sustainer" (Helping us thrive.)

___ \$222/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 (for occasional contact): _____

COLOPHON

Dave Lewit, Editor 617-266-8687 dlewit@igc.org

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