

# BCA Dispatch

"The issue is not issues; the issue is the system"  
—Ronnie Dugger

Newsletter of the **Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy** **May 2009**

*Lincoln didn't believe that his first priority was abolishing slavery. But the anti-slavery movement did, and the abolitionists said, "We're not going to put ourselves in Lincoln's position. We are going to express our own position, and we are going to express it so powerfully that Lincoln will have to listen to us."... They worked, they acted, they organized, they rioted if necessary to bring their situation to the attention of people in power. And that's what we have to do today.*

—Howard Zinn

## COMMUNITY NOTES

Don't be left out! Join the BCA/NorthBridge planning group—call Barbara Clancy for time of next meeting: 781-894-1179.

There is bad news and good news from **Wells, Maine**. The good news is that the Alliance- and CELDF-promoted "rights" ordinance bill reached the town citizens in a special town meeting this Saturday, 16 May, with the support of many citizens including the selectboard chairperson. *(Continued on Page 8 >>)*

## Armed Xenophobia

### Training Boy/Girl Scouts to Fight 'Terrorists'

by Jennifer Steinhauer, *New York Times*, 13 May 2009

IMPERIAL, CALIF. [*southernmost inland county, pop. 146,000, near naval air facility, national parachute test range, and Salton Sea*] — Ten minutes into arrant mayhem in this town near the Mexican border, and the gunman, a disgruntled Iraq war veteran, has already taken out two people, one slumped in his desk, the other covered in blood on the floor.

The responding officers—eight teenage boys and girls, the youngest 14—face tripwire, a thin cloud of poisonous gas and

loud shots—BAM! BAM!—fired from behind a flimsy wall. They move quickly, pellet guns drawn and masks affixed.

"United States Border Patrol! Put your hands up!" screams one in a voice cracking with adolescent determination as the suspect is subdued.

It is all quite a step up [?] from the square knot.

The Explorers program, a coeducational affiliate of the Boy Scouts of America that began 60 years ago, is training thousands of young people in skills used to confront terrorism, illegal immigration and escalating border violence—an intense ratcheting up of one of the group's longtime missions to prepare youths for more traditional jobs as police officers and firefighters.

"This is about being a true-blooded American guy and girl," said A. J. Lowenthal, a sheriff's deputy here in Imperial County, whose life clock, he says, is set around *(Continued on Page 6 >>)*



### Workers Take Over Tile Factory in Neuquén, Argentina

*In 2000 workers went on strike against the union-busting management of Argentina's top-ranking ceramics factory Zanon. The employer implemented a lock-out and the workers responded by occupying the factory. In October 2001, the workers officially declared the factory to be 'under worker control'. By March 2002, the factory fully returned to production. In April 2003, the courts ordered the police to forcibly take the factory out of the hands of the workers. In response the workers developed a broad-based campaign and as the police began to move in over 3000 citizens of Neuquén formed a picket in front of the factory. During the period of worker control, the number of employees has increased from 300 to 470, and wages have risen by 100 pesos a month, and the level of production has increased. Accidents have fallen by 90%.*

[libcom.org/files/zanon\\_workers.jpg](http://libcom.org/files/zanon_workers.jpg)

## Fire the Boss!

### Workers Take Over Derelict Factories

by Naomi Klein & Avi Lewis, *CommonDreams.org*, 14 May 2009

IN 2004, WE MADE A DOCUMENTARY called "The Take" about Argentina's movement of worker-run businesses. In the wake of the country's dramatic economic collapse in 2001, thousands of workers walked into their shuttered factories and put them back into production as worker cooperatives. Abandoned by bosses and politicians, they regained unpaid wages and severance while re-claiming their jobs in the process.

As we toured Europe and North America with the film, every Q&A ended up with the question, "that's all very well in Argentina, but could that ever happen here?"

Well, with the world economy now looking remarkably like Argentina's in 2001 (and for many of the same reasons) there is a new wave of direct action among workers in rich countries. Co-ops are once again emerging as a practical alternative to more lay-offs. Workers in the U.S. and Europe are beginning to ask the same questions as their Latin American counterparts: Why do we have to get fired? Why can't we fire the boss? Why is the bank allowed to drive our company under while getting billions of dollars of our money?

Tomorrow night (May 15) at Cooper Union in New York City, we're taking part in a panel that looks at this phenomenon, called "Fire the Boss: The Worker Control Solution from Buenos Aires to Chicago". We'll be joined by people from the movement in Argentina as well as workers from the famous Republic Windows and Doors struggle in Chicago. It's a great way to hear directly from those who are trying to rebuild the economy from the ground up, and who need meaningful support from the public, as well as policy makers at all levels of government. For those who can't make it out to *(Continued on next page >>)*

Cooper Union, here's a quick round up of recent developments in the world of worker control.

### Argentina

In Argentina, the direct inspiration for many current worker actions, there have been more takeovers in the last 4 months than the previous 4 years... [For example] Arrufat, a chocolate maker with a 50 year history, was abruptly closed late last year. 30 employees occupied the plant, and despite a huge utility debt left by the former owners, have been producing chocolates by the light of day, using generators.

With a loan of less than \$5,000 from the The Working World, a capital fund/NGO started by a fan of "The Take", they were able to produce 17,000 Easter eggs for their biggest weekend of the year. They made a profit of \$75,000, taking home \$1,000 each and saving the rest for future production.

### UK

Visteon is an auto parts manufacturer that was spun off from Ford in 2000. Hundreds of workers were given 6 minutes notice that their workplaces were closing. 200 workers in Belfast staged a sit-in on the roof of their factory, another 200 in Enfield followed suit the next day.

Over the next few weeks, Visteon increased the severance package to up to 10 times their initial offer, but the company is refusing to put the money in the workers' bank accounts until they leave the plants, and they are refusing to leave until they see the money.

### Ireland

A factory where workers make legendary Waterford Crystal was occupied for 7 weeks earlier this year when parent company Waterford Wedgwood went into receivership after being taken over by a US private equity firm. The US company has now put 10 million Euros in a severance fund, and negotiations are on-going to keep some of the jobs.

### Canada

As the Big Three automakers collapse, there have been 4 occupations by Canadian Auto Workers so far this year. In each case, factories were closing and workers were not getting compensation that was owed to them. They occupied the factories to stop the machines from being removed, using that as leverage to force the companies back to the table—precisely the same dynamic that worker takeovers in Argentina have followed.

### France

In France, there's been a new wave of "Bossnappings" this year, in which angry employees have detained their bosses in factories that are facing closure. Companies targeted so far include Caterpillar, 3M, Sony, and Hewlett Packard. The 3M executive was brought a meal of moules et frites during his overnight ordeal.

A comedy hit in France this spring was a movie called "Louise-Michel," in which a group of women workers hires a hitman to kill their boss after he shuts down their factory with no warning.

A French union official said in March, "those who sow misery reap fury. The violence is done by those who cut jobs, not by those who try to defend them."

And this week, 1,000 Steelworkers disrupted the annual shareholders meeting of ArcelorMittal, the world's largest steel company. They stormed the company's headquarters in Luxembourg, smashing gates, breaking windows, and fighting with police.

### Poland

Also this week, in Southern Poland, at the largest coal coking

producer in Europe, thousands of workers bricked up the entrance to the company's headquarters, protesting wage cuts.

### US

And then there's the famous Republic Windows and Doors story: 260 workers occupied their plant for 6 world-shaking days in Chicago last December. With a savvy campaign against the company's biggest creditor, Bank of America ("You got bailed out, we got sold out!") and massive international solidarity, they won the severance they were owed. And more—the plant is re-opening under new ownership, making energy-efficient windows with all the workers hired back at their old wages.

And this week, Chicago is making it a trend. Hartmarx is 122-year old company that makes business suits, including the navy blue number that Barack Obama wore on election night, and his inaugural tuxedo and topcoat. The business is in bankruptcy. Its biggest creditor is Wells Fargo, recipient of 25 billion public dollars in bailout money. While there are 2 offers on the table to buy the company and keep it operating, Wells Fargo wants to liquidate it. On Monday, 650 workers voted to occupy their Chicago factory if the bank goes ahead with liquidation...

*Naomi Klein is an award-winning Canadian journalist whose latest book is Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism. Avi Lewis is a filmmaker, journalist, and the host of "Fault Lines" on Al Jazeera English.*

## Our Hobbit Cousins

### Tiny Human Species Existed in Indonesia

by Steve Connor, *The Independent/UK*, 7 May 2009

**A** MINIATURE SPECIES OF EXTINCT HUMANS, nicknamed "hobbits", possessed unusual anatomical features explained by their complete isolation from the rest of humanity for thousands of years on their remote island home in Indonesia, studies have found.

The tiny people, who grew to an adult height of no more than three feet, astounded scientists in 2004 when a skull and partial skeletons were unearthed from a cave on the island of Flores. Radiocarbon dating suggested that the species, *Homo floresiensis*, had lived in and around the cave for tens of thousand of years before dying out about 17,000 years ago.

The latest research into *Homo floresiensis* has found that they were flat-footed, long-toed creatures who could walk easily on two legs but would have found it difficult to run at speed. A separate study suggests that their very small heads, which were perfectly in proportion to their bodies, were the evolutionary outcome of living on such a remote island for so long.

Two studies published in the journal *Nature* also cast further doubt on the idea that the hobbits were ordinary people suffering from some kind of pathological condition, such as microcephaly—when the skull fails to grow normally. Many scientists believe there is now little doubt that the hobbits were indeed a human species who had evolved as a result of island dwarfism, when larger animals gradually become smaller over the generations.

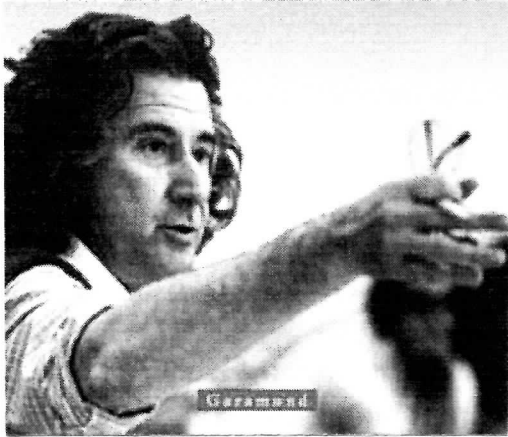
"That evidence has been overwhelming for some time now. Our study provides additional and unequivocal confirmation that we're dealing with a new species. The pathology debate is officially over," said Professor Bill Jungers of Stony Brook University in New York, who led the study into the hobbit's foot bones. "Their big toe was surprisingly short and more similar to a chimpanzee's in relative length than to humans.

"However, like chimpanzees again, (*Continued on Page 6 >>*)

## Rest In Peace, Augusto Boal Participatory Theater of the Oppressed

by The Times/UK, 7 May 2009

**A**UGUSTO BOAL WAS BRAZIL'S LEADING DRAMATIST and an influential figure in world theatre. His theories about the power of drama to change society and transform lives attracted followers in many countries, and left-wing critics mentioned him in the same breath as Brecht and Stanislavski. His growing international reputation was reflected in his appointment, a few months before he died, as a UNESCO ambassador



for the theatre, and last year he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. Brazil's socialist President, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, a former trade union leader, praised him as "an exemplary comrade who devoted his life to bringing about

social change through art".

Boal's views were summed up in one of his last interviews, with a Brazilian magazine, in which he claimed that "today all forms of expression and communication are in the hands of the oppressors". He described most television and radio output as an "aesthetic crime".

Augusto Pinto Boal [pronounced Bo-AHL] was born in Rio de Janeiro in 1931, the son of a Portuguese immigrant. After reading chemistry at the state university in Rio, he travelled to New York to study for a doctorate in chemical engineering at Columbia University. While there he also took a course at the School of Dramatic Arts under John Gassner, who had taught Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller, and observed Stanislavski's theories put into practice at the Actors Studio.

Back in Brazil, in 1956, he joined the Arena Theatre in São Paulo, and helped to turn it into one of the country's most important theatre companies. He worked both with young Brazilian playwrights and on giving distinctively Brazilian treatments to classics of world theatre, including Molière and Lope de Vega. Influenced by Brecht and the educationist Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Boal had, by the end of the 1960s, developed a set of techniques that he called the Theatre of the Oppressed, which was based on the concept that theatre is not an event but a way of life in which everybody can take part. "All human beings are actors, because they perform," he said. "They are spectators, too, because they stand and watch. We're all spectators."

He regarded simply being a spectator as less than human, and disapproved of political theatre, which set out to deliver a message to the audience. He considered that preaching to people about what they should do was arrogant, and believed that theatre should instead provide them with the means to transform their own lives and discover their own solutions.

After the Brazilian armed forces seized power in 1964, Boal put on a show of protest songs, Opinion, as an act of defiance,

and was arrested and tortured for his temerity. In 1971 he went into exile, and two years later published his first book, *The Theatre of the Oppressed*, in Argentina. This work set out his view that drama must be liberated from the influence of Aristotle's *Poetics*, which, by separating theatre and politics, effectively acted as an instrument of state oppression. He spent two years in Portugal, working with A Barraca theatre company and helping to train numbers of young actors and playwrights. He then moved to France where he taught at the Sorbonne and in 1979 set up the Centre du Théâtre de l'Opprimé-Augusto Boal — which was later directed by his son, Julian.

Boal returned to Brazil in 1986, after the end of the dictatorship, and was invited by the sociologist Darcy Ribeiro to create the Popular Theatre Factory, which set out to make theatrical language accessible to all. In the same year he created a Brazilian centre for the Theatre of the Oppressed in Rio, which took his ideas on combining theatre with social action out of the art house and into the streets. From 1993 and 1997 he was a city councillor in Rio for the left-wing Workers' Party (PT), an experience distilled in his book *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics* (1998).

His techniques and theories have been applied in schools, prisons and psychiatric hospitals, as well as by theatre companies, in more than 50 countries, including Britain. One example was an open-air event, based on Boal's idea of "forum theatre", and organised by two students from Bath Spa University, which took place in the centre of the city last month. Focusing on issues such as sustainable development and transport, the event encouraged members of the public to participate by taking on roles and raising their own concerns about Bath's problems.

In addition to Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed*, published in English in 1979, his influential *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (1992) and *The Rainbow of Desire: the Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy* (1995) are also available in translation, along with his memoirs *Hamlet and the Baker's Son: My Life in Theatre and Politics* (2001).



Augusto Boal, dramatist, was born on March 16, 1931.  
He died of leukaemia on May 2, 2009, aged 78



## Einstein Vs. Zionism

### Likened Israel to Tyrannical Am. Pilgrims

by Jaisal Noor, *The Independent/NYC*, 15 May 2009

A review of *Einstein on Zionism and Israel: His Provocative Ideas About the Middle East*. By Fred Jerome. St. Martin's Press. May 26, 2009.

COUNTLESS BOOKS AND ARTICLES have been written about the life of the great physicist and thinker Albert Einstein, and since his death in 1955, a near consensus has existed that Einstein was a staunch supporter of the state of Israel. Veteran journalist Fred Jerome uses hundreds of pages of Einstein's own letters, articles and interviews—many published for the first time—to refute this thesis.

It is well known that Einstein, a German Jew, witnessed European anti-Semitism firsthand and spoke out against both prejudice and Nazism. These experiences convinced Einstein to support Zionism and a Jewish homeland. After gaining immense fame for his scientific breakthroughs, he was offered the presidency of Israel in 1952 after the death of the country's first president, Chaim Weizmann.

In reality, while Einstein was sympathetic to the Zionist cause, he repeatedly warned that a "narrow nationalism" may arise if a Jewish-only state was founded and peaceful co-existence with the Palestinians was not achieved. Instead, Einstein advocated Cultural Zionism—the creation of Jewish cultural and educational centers within a bi-national state with equal rights for both Arabs and Jews.

When Einstein was offered the Israeli presidency, Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion stated, "I've had to offer him the post because it was impossible not to, but if he accepts we are in for trouble."

In a letter written in the same year, Einstein compared the Zionists' project with that of the Pilgrims, noting, "how tyrannical, intolerant and aggressive [they] became after a short while." And in Einstein's last media interview, which ran in the *New York Post* a month before his death, he stated "We had great hopes for Israel at first. We thought it might be better than other nations, but it is no better."

Jerome has authored two previous books about Einstein; *The Einstein File: J. Edgar Hoover's Secret War Against the World's Most Famous Scientist* and *Einstein on Race and Racism*, co-authored with Rodger Taylor. These books are essential to understanding Einstein, a self-described "revolutionary," who publicly stated that he would use his fame and celebrity status to bring attention to the causes important to him. For example, *Einstein on Race and Racism* details for the first time Einstein's 20-year friendship with Paul Robeson. While the first two books were aimed at filling a large gap in the knowledge about Einstein's radical beliefs and political activism, *Einstein on Zionism and Israel* seeks to debunk the myth that Einstein was a supporter of Israel.

In the process, Jerome reveals much about the nature of mainstream propaganda. Einstein's opposition to Israel was widely known and reported on during his life. In fact, the myth of Einstein's support of Israel was born the day after Einstein's death in his obituary in *The New York Times*, which shamelessly wrote that he "championed" the establishment of the Jewish state.

This contradicted decades of reporting from the "Newspaper of Record." Jerome provides some examples, including a 1930

article headlined "Einstein attacks British Zion Policy," a 1938 article stating Einstein was "Against Palestine State" and a 1946 article stating Einstein "Bars Jewish State."

The book ends with a quotation from author and intellectual Gore Vidal, "The only question that really matters: Why?" Jerome follows with, "Why have we not known?"

Note: Interview with Fred Jerome at

<http://www.independent.org/2009/05/14/reclaiming-einstein/>

## Why "Cinco de Mayo"?

### Two Views, with a gloss on "Mariachi"

IN THE 1860S AS THE CIVIL WAR in the United States began, European monarchs looked for ways to intervene in the Americas. With Mexico verging on bankruptcy, Mexican President Benito Juárez declared a two-year moratorium on payment of the foreign debt. In response the British, Spanish, and French crowns all sent troops to occupy the port of Veracruz. Juárez negotiated terms with the British and Spanish governments and they withdrew their forces. The French rulers rejected negotiations and launched an invasion.

After Mexico routed the invasion at the battle of Puebla on May 5, 1862, which has become a national holiday in Mexico—Cinco de Mayo, the French government sent massive reinforcements and soon took the capital. They installed Ferdinand Maximilian Joseph, an Austrian nobleman, as "Emperor" of the country with the support of Mexican conservatives. The government was forced to move to Ciudad Juárez on the U.S. border to organize the resistance and continue the fight.

Aided by Lincoln and the Union Army the Juaristas carried out three years of revolutionary struggle and guerrilla war. French soldiers were forced to withdraw and Maximilian was captured and executed. On July 15, 1867, Juárez returned to Mexico City and resumed the presidency, using the next five years in office to take the first steps toward building a modern nation.

—*The Militant* (Socialist newsweekly/NYC; excerpt)

THERE IS A VERY IMPORTANT PART MISSING in the [above] Juárez account. The French were "invited" by the Conservative Party (predecessors of the modern PAN) and assisted the French. Puebla fell only two days after the battle of May 5 (no reinforcements needed for that, the French simply underestimated the power of the resistance in Puebla.) Ignacio Zaragoza and Porfirio Díaz were captured and imprisoned in Puebla (at what is now the main campus of the University of Puebla.)

When Maximilian was executed he had company—the two leaders of the Conservative Party, Miramon and Mejia were also executed at El Cerro de Las Campanas in Guanajuato. Carlota, the now deposed Empress, was returned to Europe and a new song was created for the occasion: "Adios Mama Carlota". This was not all bad, without this episode there would be no *Mariachi* bands, the groups that sang at weddings—"marriage." (The French pronunciation sounds like Mariach and so they just added the "i" to it, and *voilà!*)

Juarez was able to return to Mexico City thanks to the threats from the US to the French, not because of greater prowess or strategy or numbers.

—Ignacio Castuera, *Claremont CA*

## Rewrite the Constitution

### Why Latin America's Left Keeps Winning

by Mark Weisbrot, *The Guardian/UK*, 3 May 2009

**A** FEW MONTHS AGO I RAN INTO AN ECONOMIST who was formerly head of the Bolivian Central Bank, in the La Paz airport. He had been reading Nouriel Roubini, the New York University economist whom the media has nicknamed "Dr Doom", and was predicting a very gloomy economic future for the hemisphere, the region and especially his own country.

I didn't agree about Bolivia, which has more international reserves relative to its economy than China. But it was striking to see the same thing in all the countries that I visited: Opposition economists and political leaders everywhere reminded me of communists in the 1930s, praying for the collapse of the capitalist system—in this case, somewhat ironically, so that they could rid themselves of the left governments that the voters had chosen in Bolivia, Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Ecuador and elsewhere.

In all of these countries the vast majority of the mass media, to varying degrees, shares the opposition's agenda and in many cases appears willing to present an overly pessimistic or even catastrophic scenario in order to help advance the cause.

#### Ecuador Advances Under New Constitution

But despite the worsening of the world and regional economy, the left keeps winning in Latin America. The latest left victory was that of President Rafael Correa of Ecuador, an economist who was first elected at the end of 2006 and was re-elected last Sunday under a new constitution. This gives the charismatic 46 year-old four more years, and he can be re-elected once more for another term.

There are a number of reasons that most Ecuadorians might stick with their president, despite what they hear on the TV news. Some 1.3 million of Ecuador's poor households (in a country of 14 million) now get a stipend of \$30 a month, which is a significant improvement. Social spending as a share of the economy has increased by more than 50% in Correa's two years in office. Last year the government also invested heavily in public works, with capital spending more than doubling.

Correa has delivered on other promises that were important to his constituents, not least of which was a referendum allowing for a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution, which voters approved by a nearly two-thirds majority. It is seen as one of the most progressive constitutions in the world, with advances in the rights of indigenous people, civil unions for gay couples and a novel provision of rights for nature.\* The latter would apparently allow for lawsuits on the basis of damage to an ecosystem.

Many thought Correa was joking when he said during his presidential campaign that he would be willing to keep the US military base at Manta if Washington would allow Ecuadorian troops to be stationed in Florida. But he wasn't, and the base is scheduled to close later this year.

He also resisted pressure from the US Congress and others in a multi-billion-dollar lawsuit that Ecuadorian courts will decide, in which Chevron is accused of dumping billions of gallons of toxic oil waste that polluted rivers and streams.

And in an unprecedented move last November, Correa stopped payment on \$4bn of foreign debt when an independent Public Debt Audit Commission, long demanded by civil society organisations in Ecuador, determined that this debt was illegally and illegitimately contracted.

In the United States, these policies have mostly been dismissed as "populism" or worse. A *New York Times* editorial in November 2007 entitled "Authoritarians in the Andes" summed up the foreign policy establishment view that Correa, Bolivia's President Evo Morales and President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela were "increasingly interested in grabbing power for themselves." For Correa and Morales, wrote the *Times* editorial board, "their confrontational approach is also threatening to rend Bolivia and Ecuador's fragile social and political stability."

#### Latinos Prefer Broad Democracy

*The Times* (and Washington's foreign policy establishment) have proven to be wrong, as Ecuador and Bolivia are now more politically stable than they have been for decades. (Ecuador has had nine presidents over the last 15 years). They are also more democratic than they have ever been.

In fact, most of Latin America is going through a democratic transition that is likely to prove every bit as important as the one that brought an end to the dictatorships that plagued many countries through the first four decades of the post-second world war era. Ironically, the region's economic performance was vastly better in the era of the dictatorships, because the governments of that era generally had more effective economic policies than the formally democratic but neoliberal governments that replaced them.

A few years ago there were fears, backed by polling data, that people would become nostalgic for the days of real (not imagined) authoritarian governments because of the much greater improvements in living standards during that era. Instead, they chose to vote for left governments who extended democracy from politics to economic and social policy.

The left governments have mostly succeeded where their neoliberal predecessors failed. Partly they have benefited from an acceleration in world economic growth during most of the last five years. But they have also changed their economic policies in ways that increased economic growth.

Argentina's economy grew more than 60% in six years and Venezuela's by 95%. These are enormous growth rates even taking into account these countries' prior recessions, and allowed for large reductions in poverty. Left governments have also taken greater control over their natural resources (Ecuador, Bolivia, Venezuela) and delivered on their promises to share the income from these resources with the poor.

This is the way democracy is supposed to work: people voted for change and got quite a bit of what they voted for, with reasonable expectations of more to come. We should not be surprised if most Latin American voters stick with the left through hard times. Who else is going to defend their interests?

*Mark Weisbrot is Co-Director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR), in Washington, DC.*

*\*Ed. Comment: Ecuador invited Tom Linzey, the radical Pennsylvania lawyer with whom the Alliance for Democracy works, to help construct the "rights of nature" part of their new constitution. Linzey and the Alliance are helping citizens to change their municipal constitutions (charters) in Pennsylvania, New England, and other parts of the US, so as to ensure rights of communities as well as nature. If enough localities succeed in defending such charters against corporate and federal lawsuits, perhaps citizens will be emboldened to radically change the machinery of US government to ensure human rights and end imperialism and ecocide.*

director of Learning for Life. Since the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, many posts have taken on an emphasis of fighting terrorism and other less conventional threats.

"Before it was more about the basics," said Johnny Longoria, a Border Patrol agent here. "But now our emphasis is on terrorism, illegal entry, drugs and human smuggling."

The law enforcement posts are restricted to those ages 14 to 21 who have a C average, but there seems to be some wiggle room. "I will take them at 13 and a half," Deputy Lowenthal said. "I would rather take a kid than possibly lose a kid."

The law enforcement programs are highly decentralized, and each post is run in a way that reflects the culture of its sponsoring agency and region. Most have weekly meetings in which the children work on their law-enforcement techniques in preparing for competitions. Weekends are often spent on service projects.

Just as there are soccer moms, there are Explorers dads, who attend the competitions, man the hamburger grill and donate their land for the simulated marijuana field raids. In their training, the would-be law-enforcement officers do not mess around, as revealed at a recent competition on the state fairgrounds here, where a Ferris wheel sat next to the police cars set up for a felony investigation.

Their hearts pounding, Explorers moved down alleys where there were hidden paper targets of people pointing guns, and made split-second decisions about when to shoot. In rescuing hostages from a bus taken over by terrorists, a baby-faced young girl screamed, "Separate your feet!" as she moved to handcuff her suspect.

In a competition in Arizona that he did not oversee, Deputy Lowenthal said, one role-player wore traditional Arab dress. "If we're looking at 9/11 and what a Middle Eastern terrorist would be like," he said, "then maybe your role-player would look like that. I don't know, would you call that politically incorrect?"

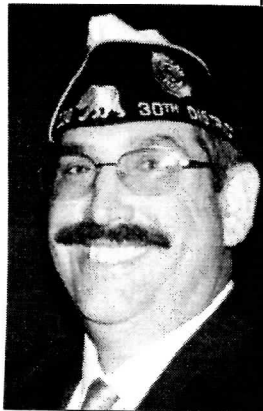
Authenticity seems to be the goal. Imperial County, in Southern California, is the poorest in the state, and the local economy revolves largely around the criminal justice system. In addition to the sheriff and local police departments, there are two state prisons and a large Border Patrol and immigration enforcement presence.

"My uncle was a sheriff's deputy," said Alexandra Sanchez, 17, who joined the Explorers when she was 13. Alexandra's police uniform was baggy on her lithe frame, her airsoft gun slung carefully to the side. She wants to be a coroner.

"I like the idea of having law enforcement work with medicine," she said. "This is a great program for me."

And then she was off to another bus hijacking. ■

Ed. Note: An A. J. Lowenthal played in one (only one) feature film, a "horror" film, as the son of the male and female leads—"Spookies" (1986) Plot: Some partiers find a dilapidated mansion inhabited by a sorcerer [lead?] trying to resurrect his dead bride. The visitors contend with the sorcerer's zombies and ghouls... Readers: If anyone watches this film—available on DVD—please compare the face of the young son with the current photo above, and let us know whether their characteristics match.



Andrew J. Lowenthal

## Six Comments on This Explorer Program

from posting at CommonDreams.org

1. from the **BOY SCOUT MANUAL**, "Handbook for Boys" circa 1931, p 544 (NOTE: This is no longer part of the manual.):

*"War is one of the tragedies of the life of the world. In its wake stalk sorrow, poverty, disease, mortal let down, debt, hatreds, fears.*

*"One-third of the taxation of the world is either to pay for old wars or prepare for new. War tears down civilization. The effort of home, church, school and state is for us to guard life and respect property—war says kill and destroy. Tragic as is the wastage of billions in property and millions of lives—this reversal of the channels of civilized order is yet more serious in its influence upon youth.*

*"The insane thing about war is that after killing and destroying THEN folks must gather around a table, find what the points at issue are and adjust them finally. In the same world, this would be done FIRST. It is not CONFLICT but CONFERENCE that settle. Therefore, have it first."* (Emphasis in Manual)

We close down schools and open up new prisons. The Boy Scouts are the new Mao Kids or Hitler's Youth. As a species, we are totally despicable. Long have we wallowed in invincible ignorance.

—SarahRuth, Eugene OR

2. [The above quotation] serves as a good reminder to the overly cynical that the US was not always so warmongering and Americans were not always so callous and selfish. The 1930's with the horrors of WW1 and the capitalist abuses of the 1920's still fresh in people's memory, were positively pacifist and socialist compared to today.

I recall an early WB Looney-Tune where Porky Pig is being chased by the terrifying man from the draft board—who was the villain of the cartoon.

Lots of the other cartoons—plus the 3 Stooges—the Marx Brothers, and the Little Rascals/Our Gang all has a subtle and often not-so-subtle criticism of war, nationalism, and capitalism.

—SaboCat

3. ...there indeed IS a 'god' who blesses this mess and it's Mars, the 'god' before which so many in America lend homage. Churches unwittingly bow to this lord and master when they support war, as do taxpayers who don't blink when the majority of their hard won funds are seized for combat missions, that is when they're not used to build the latest weapons. And when and if homage to Mars should fail, there's Mammon waiting in the wings to profit from every form of bloodlust or ingenious effort to deliver some struggling worker from his pay check. These lesser gods are doing quite well in the modern world. I call them by name since so many don't recognize the degree to which they've consumed the lifeblood of so many. Of course none of this is what JESUS would do; but don't tell the Christians that, they might get the idea that they've been seduced by the master of deception. And then they would not be able to project their own character defects onto gays, feminists, ecologists, or mystics.

—SiouxRose

4. Well said Sioux Rose... We are spiritual beings having a physical experience rather than physical beings having a spiritual one...

It is important to discern and then differentiate the different



## HOBBIT COUSINS (Continued from Page 2)

the free parts of the lateral toes were relatively very long and the bones within were curved, whereas human toes in this region are short and straight," Professor Jungers said.

The investigation of the hobbit's foot bones also revealed that the miniature humans lacked an arch. In other words, they were flat footed. "They still walked just fine despite having relatively long feet and funny proportions, but they needed to lift their feet a little higher off the ground to clear their toes, possibly by flexing their ankles or knees more. They were designed quite adequately for walking, but were poorly adapted for long-distance running," Professor Jungers said.

A range of small stone tools found alongside the bones suggest that the hobbits hunted and butchered local animals that lived on the island at the time, such as pygmy elephants, giant rats and reptiles, such as the Komodo dragon. But their ancestral origins remain a mystery.

The long toes of *Homo floresiensis* suggest they could be the direct descendants of a hominin similar to an early human ancestor such as *Homo habilis*, rather than the more recent *Homo erectus*, a species known to have migrated out of Africa long before the migration of our own species, *Homo sapiens*.

Alternatively, the hobbits may be the descendants of a dwarfed *Homo erectus* that not only underwent a miniaturisation of its body, but reverted to more primitive features. Professor Jungers said that both scenarios are possible, although at present he favours the idea that the hobbits were descended from a bipedal hominin that had escaped Africa before *Homo erectus*.

A separate study by researchers from the Natural History Museum in London investigated the problem of the hobbit's very small skull and brain by comparing it with the skull of extinct pygmy hippos that lived on the island of Madagascar. Like the hobbit, the hippo's skull had become smaller over time and in perfect proportion to the miniaturisation of its body.

Eleanor Weston, who led the study, said that the hippo shows for the first time that island dwarfism results in the miniaturisation of skull and brain seen in the hobbit. Dr Weston said: "Whatever the explanation for the tiny brain of *Homo floresiensis* relative to its body size it is likely the fact it lived on an island played a significant part in its evolution."

### Intelligence test: The concept of island dwarfism

A key difficulty with the idea that the hobbits are a new species of human is that their brains are so small. How could a brain about the size of a grapefruit provide the intelligence to make and use the exquisitely carved stone tools found alongside the bones of *Homo floresiensis*?

Adrian Lister and Eleanor Weston of the Natural History Museum in London believe that their expertise in studying "island dwarfism" in other animals has resolved the problem. Their study of an extinct species of dwarf hippo on the island of Madagascar showed for the first time that skull and braincase do indeed become smaller in direct proportion to the miniaturisation of other parts of a dwarfed body. In other words, the exceptionally small head and brain of *Homo floresiensis* can be explained by evolutionary pressures resulting from living on an island, rather than the result of some kind of medical condition. And they seemed to have lived happily with small brains.

Island dwarfism is a well-known phenomenon. Extinct pygmy mammoths have been found on Wrangel Island in Siberia, along with dwarfed elephants on Mediterranean islands.

Dwarfism is a way of surviving the limited resources of an isolated habitat, Dr Weston said.

"We found that the brain sizes of extinct dwarf hippos were up to 30 per cent smaller than you would expect by scaling down their mainland African ancestor," said Dr Weston. "If the hippo model is applied to a typical *Homo erectus* ancestor, the resulting brain capacity is comparable to that of *Homo floresiensis*."

*\*The novelist J R R Tolkien, in his popular Lord of the Rings (1954), called his little people Hobbits.*

## ARMED BOY SCOUTS (Continued from Page 1)

the Explorers events he helps run. "It fits right in with the honor and bravery of the Boy Scouts."

The training, which leaders say is not intended to be applied outside the simulated Explorer setting, can involve chasing down illegal border crossers as well as more dangerous situations that include facing down terrorists and taking out "active shooters," like those who bring gunfire and death to college campuses. In a simulation here of a raid on a marijuana field, several Explorers were instructed on how to quiet an obstreperous lookout. "Put him on his face and put a knee in his back," a Border Patrol agent explained. "I guarantee that he'll shut up."

One participant, Felix Arce, 16, said he liked "the discipline of the program," which was something he said his life was lacking. "I want to be a lawyer, and this teaches you about how crimes are committed," he said.

Cathy Noriego, also 16, said she was attracted by the guns. The group uses compressed-air guns—known as airsoft guns, which fire tiny plastic pellets—in the training exercises, and sometimes they shoot real guns on a closed range.

"I like shooting them," Cathy said. "I like the sound they make. It gets me excited."

If there are critics of the content or purpose of the law enforcement training, they have not made themselves known to the Explorers' national organization in Irving, Tex., or to the volunteers here on the ground, national officials and local leaders said. That said, the Explorers have faced problems over the years. There have been numerous cases over the last three decades in which police officers supervising Explorers have been charged, in civil and criminal cases, with sexually abusing them.

Several years ago, two University of Nebraska criminal justice professors published a study that found at least a dozen cases of sexual abuse involving police officers over the last decade. Adult Explorer leaders are now required to take an online training program on sexual misconduct.

Many law enforcement officials, particularly those who work for the rapidly growing Border Patrol, part of the Homeland Security Department, have helped shape the program's focus and see it as preparing the Explorers as potential employees. The Explorer posts are attached to various agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation and local police and fire departments, that sponsor them much the way churches sponsor Boy Scout troops.

"Our end goal is to create more agents," said April McKee, a senior Border Patrol agent and mentor at the session here.

Membership in the Explorers has been overseen since 1998 by an affiliate of the Boy Scouts called Learning for Life, which offers 12 career-related programs, including those focused on aviation, medicine and the sciences.

But the more than 2,000 law enforcement posts across the country are the Explorers' most popular, accounting for 35,000 of the group's 145,000 members, said John Anthony, national

"gods" or reality models in order to restore autonomy and sovereignty to the individual and sacredness to nature and humanity alike... Once one realizes that war, exploitation, and bigotry are the vices and devices of the abrahamic traditions and their offshoots, then it is easier to dissociate from the "religion" of empire with it's sick senses of entitlement, heirarchy, xenophobia, competition, exceptionalism and justification of violence... And easier to embrace a "higher" vibrational frequency of Universal Love based on the virtues of cooperation, integrity, honesty, autonomy, and lovingkindness... There are many names for this universal truth... Ein Soph, Tao, Universal Spirit, Brahma, etc... Which transcend the ambiguous and generic "God"... Which means whatever you want it to mean, when Christianity was co-opted by the Roman Empire to justify their wars of conquest...

—GoldenMean

5. Explorer groups are explicitly INTENDED to introduce youngsters to possible career paths in law enforcement, fire service, or search and rescue. There is nothing inherently wrong with introducing kids to the more realistic aspects of police work - crisis intervention, accident scene safety, first aid and CPR, communications protocols, record-keeping, the court system.

That said, I used to train police to do what they tended to dismiss as social work until they understood that their safety depended far more on good communication and crisis intervention skills than on the threat or use of physical force. Part of my job was to help the trainers to weed out recruits who were never going to get it. The weedees were almost invariably ex-military. Although most had never seen combat (this was the early 80s), their military training, the emphasis on weaponry, and their utter contempt for civilians made them very poor candidates for police work. Programs like the one described in the article are completely inappropriate for youngsters who wish to enter law enforcement - apart from the Border Patrol, which is where many of our weedees ended up.

—realdim

6. I remember too when the Boy Scouts was based in New Brunswick, NJ. I was a Webelo [pre-scout] and in the Boy Scouts where I lived in NJ. I had a good time in it going camping at the Forestburg Scout camp in New York State. My fondest memories of youth are traveling on the bus to camp with my camp mates and taking merit badge courses like canoeing, rowing and swimming we couldn't pass without access to the camp facilities. Other than the uniforms, which I had no problem wearing, it was as non military as you get. You had your job responsibilities like gathering food, cooking or cleanup. There was competition over who had the best camping equipment. Swiss Army knives were popular. I got my introduction to ham radio in the Boy Scouts.

Even the Explorers were a kind of vocational program. I was invited to join the Computer Explorer Post which would have given me access to the Bell Labs facility where I lived in Holmdel, NJ.

How disturbing and sad to hear this now. A positive step would be to move it back to NJ but more importantly remove the fundamentalist bigots who are in charge of the organization.

—radio\_tec

## LETTERS

I really enjoyed your comments on the recent Chris Hedges article "Specter of Population Growth". My question to Mr. Hedges would be to ask if he's had a vasectomy. Of course the male sperm count (globally) has dropped dramatically since the '50s, so maybe he might not need one.

—Weldon Morgan, Boston

## COMMUNITY NOTES (Continued from Page 1)

The ordinance, like similar ones in 120 other towns across the country, would have protected the town's water from private exploitation and would have denied corporate personhood... The bad news is that the proposed ordinance was defeated before a packed room. The moderator forced a vote before 100-200 people waiting in line were certified. Of seven recognized speakers, only one supported the ordinance while a vote denied the principal organizer the floor. The ordinance was opposed in well-funded campaigns by Poland Spring (Nestle) and business groups, who held that it would chill business and erode their tax base.

Meanwhile, on 8 May, Alliance activists including **Ruth Caplan** from AfD's "Defending Water for Life" campaign met in our Waltham office. To promote our Globalization Impact bill we hope to partner with Mass Coalition for Healthy Communities and other groups, distribute literature, and to citizen-lobby legislators... To end corporate rule Ruth advocated that we campaign to strengthen Home Rule, with allies from environmental and agricultural sectors... Outreach for single-payer health care US H.R.676 is being developed possibly with help from state senator **Jamie Eldrich** and others... For a NE regional convention this fall, we discussed focusing on members—their wishes, resources, methods and sharing.

## ACTION ALERTS

Sat. 30 May, 1:00pm, Boston. **City Councilor Chuck Turner re-election campaign strategy** discussion. First Church in Roxbury 10 Putnam St., across from Timilty School. Info: 617-427-8100.

## 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.)

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## COLOPHON

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