

BCA Dispatch

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

Newsletter of the **January–February**
Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy 2010

*To the Supreme Court: You force us to defend our democracy
—a democracy of people and not corporations—by going
in breathtaking new directions. And so we shall.*
—Doris "Granny D" Haddock

COMMUNITY NOTES

Hey, **HAPPY BIRTHDAY, DORIS!** (now 100, goin' on 200!) Read her latest article, from which the above quotation is taken, on CommonDreams.org for 21 January. It's about campaign finance reform and the Supreme Court's malfeasance. She says "The Supreme Court, representing a radical fringe that does not share the despair of the grand majority of Americans, has today made things considerably worse by undoing the modest reforms I walked for and went to jail for..." She recommends "free campaign advertising...required as a condition of every community's contract with cable providers (long overdue), or...a mad dash for public campaign financing..."

(Continued on Page 14 >>)

Court Rips Democracy

Grants Corps Unlimited Election Spending

by Adam Liptak, *New York Times*, 21 January 2010

SWEEPING ASIDE A CENTURY-OLD UNDERSTANDING and overruling two important precedents, a bitterly divided [US] Supreme Court on Thursday ruled that the government may not ban political spending by corporations in candidate elections.

The latest on President Obama, his administration and other news from Washington and around the nation. Join the discussion. [New York's US Senator Charles E. Schumer reviewed the Supreme Court decision with members of his staff on Thursday. Mr. Schumer is calling for Senate hearings on the decision.]

The ruling was a vindication, the majority said, of the First Amendment's most basic free speech principle — that the government has no business regulating political speech. The dissenters said allowing corporate money to flood the political marketplace will corrupt democracy.

The 5-to-4 decision was a doctrinal earthquake but also a political and practical one. Specialists in campaign finance law said they expected the decision, which also applies to labor unions and other organizations, to reshape the way elections are conducted.

"If the First Amendment has any force," Justice Anthony M. Kennedy wrote for the majority, which included the four members of its conservative wing, "it prohibits Congress from fining or jailing citizens, or associations of citizens, for simply engaging in political speech."

Justice John Paul Stevens read a long dissent from the bench. He said the majority had committed a grave error in treating corporate speech the same *(Continued on Page 10 >>)*



Death in NAFTA-induced "war on drugs"

SPP Militarization of Mexico

Obama Abets Human Rights Disaster

by Laura Carlsen, *americas.irc-online.org*, 23 Nov 2009

MEXICO IS THE UNITED STATES' CLOSEST LATIN AMERICAN neighbor and yet most U.S. citizens receive little reliable information about what is happening within the country. Instead, Mexico and Mexicans are often demonized in the U.S. press. The single biggest reason for this is the way that the entire binational relationship has been recast in terms of security over the past few years.

From a neighbor and a trade partner, Mexico has been portrayed as a threat to U.S. national security. Immigrants are no longer immigrants, but criminals, "removable aliens," and even potential terrorists. Latinos, mostly Mexicans, are now the largest group of victims of hate crimes in the United States.

Although Mexico-bashing has been a favorite sport of the right for years, this terrible conversion of Mexico, from an ally to a "failed state" and narco-haven in the media and policy circles, began in earnest under the Bush administration and has only intensified since then. The Merida Initiative and the militarization of Mexico are the direct outgrowth of the national security framework imposed on bilateral relations.

There is a misconception that the Merida Initiative, named after a meeting between Presidents Calderon and Bush in the city of Merida, originated when Calderon requested assistance in the drug war from the U.S. government. The U.S. government, this story goes, agreed to comply. When the U.S. government cited its share of responsibility in the transnational drug trade as the world's largest market, pundits heralded the admission as unprecedented and a new step in binational cooperation.

This is largely myth. In fact, Plan Mexico—as it was first called—has its roots in the Security and Prosperity Partnership that grew out of the North American Free Trade Agreement. When the regional trade agreement was expanded into a security agreement, the Bush administration sought a means to extend its national security doctrine to its regional trade partners. This meant that both Canada and Mexico were to assume counter-terrorism activities (despite the absence of international terrorism threats in those nations), border security (in Mexico's case, *(Continued on Page 12 >>)*

Yemen "Underwear" Patsy False-Flag Operation by CIA, Israel, Oil Corps

by Paul Craig Roberts, *Vdare.com*, 08 January 2010

WHAT ARE WE TO MAKE OF THE FAILED UNDERWEAR BOMBER plot, the Toothpaste, Shampoo, and Bottled Water Bomber plot, and the Shoe Bomber plot? These blundering and implausible plots to bring down an airliner seem far removed from al-Qaida's expertise in pulling off 9/11.

If we are to believe the U.S. government, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the alleged al-Qaida "mastermind" behind 9/11, outwitted the CIA, the NSA, indeed all 16 U.S. intelligence agencies as well as those of all U.S. allies including Mossad, the National Security Council, NORAD, Air Traffic Control, Airport Security four times on one morning, and Dick Cheney, and with untrained and inexperienced pilots pulled off skilled piloting feats of crashing hijacked airliners into the World Trade Center towers, and the Pentagon, where a battery of state of the art air defenses somehow failed to function.

After such amazing success, al-Qaida would have attracted the best minds in the business, but, instead, it has been reduced to amateur stunts.

The Underwear Bomb plot is being played to the hilt on the TV media and especially on Fox "news." After reading recently that *The Washington Post* allowed a lobbyist to write a news story that preached the lobbyist's interest, I wondered if the manufacturers of full body scanners were behind the heavy coverage of the Underwear Bomber, if not behind the plot itself. In America, everything is for sale. Integrity is gone with the wind.

Recently I read a column by an author who has a "convenience theory" about the Underwear Bomber being a Nigerian allegedly trained by al-Qaida in Yemen. As the U.S. is involved in an undeclared war in Yemen, about which neither the American public nor Congress were informed or consulted, the Underwear Bomb plot provided a convenient excuse for Washington's new war, regardless of whether it was a real attack or a put-up job.

Once you start to ask yourself about whose agenda is served by events and their news spin, other things come to mind. For example, last July there was a news report that the government in Yemen had disbanded a terrorist cell, which was operating under the supervision of Israeli intelligence services. According to the news report, Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh told Saba news agency that a terrorist cell was arrested and that the case was referred to judicial authorities "for its links with the Israeli intelligence services."

Could the Underwear Bomber have been one of the Israeli terrorist recruits? Certainly Israel has an interest in keeping the US fully engaged militarily against all potential foes of Israel's territorial expansion. The thought brought back memory of my Russian studies at Oxford University where I learned that the Tsar's secret police set off bombs so that they could blame those whom they wanted to arrest.

I next remembered that Francesco Cossiga, the president of Italy from 1985-1992, revealed the existence of Operation Gladio, a false flag operation under NATO auspices that carried out bombings across Europe in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. The bombings were blamed on communists and were used to discredit communist parties in elections.

An Italian parliamentary investigation unearthed the fact that the attacks were overseen by the CIA. Gladio agent Vincenzo

Vinciguerra stated in sworn testimony that the attacks targeted innocent civilians, including women and children, in order "to force the public to turn to the state to ask for greater security." What a coincidence. That is exactly what 9/11 succeeded in accomplishing in the U.S.

Among the well-meaning and the gullible in the West, the supposition still exists that government represents the public interest. Political parties keep this myth alive by fighting over which party best represents the public's interest. In truth, government represents private interests, those of the office holders themselves and those of the lobby groups that finance their political campaigns. The public is in the dark as to the real agendas.

The U.S. and its puppet state allies were led to war in the Middle East and Afghanistan entirely on the basis of lies and deception. Iraqi weapons of mass destruction did not exist and were known by the U.S. and British governments not to exist. Forged documents, such as the "yellowcake documents," were leaked to newspapers in order to create news reporting that would bring the public along with the government's war agenda.

Now the same thing is happening in regard to the non-existent Iranian nuclear weapons program. Forged documents leaked to *The Times* (London) that indicated Iran was developing a "nuclear trigger" mechanism have been revealed as forgeries.

Who benefits? Clearly, attacking Iran is on the Israeli-U.S. agenda, and someone is creating the "evidence" to support the case, just as the leaked secret "Downing Street Memo" to the British cabinet informed Prime Minister Tony Blair's government that President Bush had already made the decision to invade Iraq and "the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy."

The willingness of people to believe their rulers and the propaganda ministries that serve the rulers is astonishing. Many Americans believe Iran has a nuclear weapons program despite the unanimous conclusion of 16 U.S. intelligence agencies to the contrary.

Vice President Dick Cheney and the neoconservatives fought hard with limited success to change the CIA's role from intelligence agency to a political agency that manufactures facts in support of the neoconservative agenda. For the Bush Regime creating "new realities" was more important than knowing the facts.

Recently I read a proposal from a person purporting to favor an independent media that stated that we must save the print media from financial failure with government subsidies. Such a subsidy would complete the subservience of the media to government.

Even in Stalinist Russia, a totalitarian political system where everyone knew that there was no free press, a gullible or intimidated public and Communist Party enabled Joseph Stalin to put the heroes of the Bolshevik Revolution on show trial and execute them as capitalist spies.

In the U.S. we are developing our own show trials. Sheikh Mohammed's will be a big one. As Chris Hedges recently pointed out, once government uses demonized Muslims to get the new justice (sic) system going, the rest of us will be next.

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Guarding Haiti

UN/Brazil Was Already There

by Gabriel Elizondo, Aljazeera, 17 January 2010

TENSIONS BETWEEN BRAZIL AND US OVER MILITARY COMMAND in devastated Caribbean nation could undermine rescue and security efforts.

There appear to be some rising tensions between countries leading the relief efforts in Haiti. We know the US is sending in upwards of 10,000 troops to the country. But since 2004, Brazil's military has been the commanding force leading the Haiti UN peacekeeping mission, technically referred to as MINUSTAH [Mission des Nations Unies pour la Stabilisation en Haïti]. Brazil has about 1,700 soldiers in Haiti and commands about another 5,300 UN forces in Haiti.

Nelson Jobim, Brazil's defence minister just came back from Haiti and made a point of that saying Brazil would not voluntarily relinquish any of its command duties. Essentially, what he was saying was that Brazil, not the Pentagon, would continue to lead the UN forces. When pressed, Jobim also admitted that the US military doesn't take orders from foreign forces.

So who will answer to whom in Haiti?

There could be a brewing operational command power struggle. I don't see Brazil backing down. They have long considered Haiti a critical part of their foreign policy, and aren't going to bow easily to the US military when it comes to commanding forces in Haiti during these critical times.

This earthquake is personal to Brazil. The country has lost 14 UN soldiers and four civilians thus far, not to mention Luiz Carlos da Costa, the number two UN diplomat in Haiti. Brasilia feels an obligation to be a leader from here on out, no matter how many boots the US puts on the ground.

Brazil—like the US, U.N. and France—is in Haiti for the long haul. Jobim said on Saturday that his country would have a major presence in Haiti for at least the next five years.

Brazil is not only shouldering a big part of the UN role in Haiti, but is also leading the humanitarian efforts, sending cargo planes loaded with supplies to Haiti as fast as they can be loaded. It is also taking aid from neighbouring Uruguay and Paraguay, as well as any other country that wants to donate but can't handle the logistics on their own.

This, too, is a growing issue. Three Brazilian planes loaded with supplies were held up and not allowed to land in Haiti by the FAA (America's agency that handles air traffic, which is now in control of airspace in Haiti). Celso Amorim, Brazil's foreign minister, apparently was so upset about it that he put in a call to Hillary Clinton, the US secretary of state, and asked that Brazilian aeroplanes be given priority over chartered flights.

I imagine Brazilian commanders were thinking to themselves: "How dare the US hold up our planes—we run the UN forces in Haiti!"

With tens of thousands of people dead and millions in need of immediate help, it might be easy to pass this off as political/military rubbish that doesn't matter. But it does matter.

With a monumental task in front of them, and no serious Haiti security force available, Haiti's law and order will rest in the hands of the US, the UN, Brazil and maybe France for the foreseeable future.

Military folks usually don't like to take orders from other countries. We all know this. But the bottom line is also this: There is a massive task ahead in the coming days, months and years in

Haiti. These command issues must be worked out at some point soon. Because in Haiti, a country on the precipice of absolute collapse, there is simply too much at stake.

Ed. Comment: *US military involvement in Haiti cannot be simply to prevent criminal activity—looting, rape, arson, and so on. Ten thousand troops in a country whose people quickly and peacefully have organized what little they have to save lives, bury the dead, and provide comfort—a people who sustained decades of murderous abuse by the Ton Ton Macoute paramilitary under the Devaliers and still sing. No. The US has treated Haiti as a pariah for 60 years and a colony thereafter, using military occupation and cruel embargo as it wished to control other pretenders to power—internal as well as external. Today is no exception, with US troop deployment part of the grand scheme of empire well beyond the arbitrary Monroe Doctrine.*

Now Brazil—as much a neighbor of Haiti as the US—is rising not merely as an economic competitor but as an ideological threat, partnered with Venezuela, Argentina, Bolivia, and other somewhat socialistic countries of the South. Will the US face off and risk embarrassment or defeat, or will the UN-supporting majority in the US finally step over the dissimulating apparatus of State and allow our enlisted young men and women to experience the pride not of Rambo, but of Martin Luther King?

Blaming the Victim in Haiti

NYT Columnist Promotes Paternalism

by Yifat Susskind, MADRE, 16 January 2010

IS DAVID BROOKS [NEW YORK TIMES COLUMNIST] COMPETING with Pat Robertson [veteran TV evangelist who sees the earthquake as part of Haiti's pact with the Devil] to make the most callous commentary on Haiti's earthquake?

As Lawrence E. Harrison "explained" in his book *The Central Liberal Truth: Haiti, like most of the world's poorest nations, suffers from a complex web of progress-resistant cultural influences. There is the influence of the voodoo religion, which spreads the message that life is capricious and planning futile. There are high levels of social mistrust. Responsibility is often not internalized. Child-rearing practices often involve neglect in the early years and harsh retribution when kids hit 9 or 10.*

We're all supposed to politely respect each other's cultures. But some cultures are more progress-resistant than others, and a horrible tragedy was just exacerbated by one of them.

Yes, poverty is the underlying reason that Port-au-Prince now lies in ruins. But his claim that Haiti's poverty is rooted in its "progress-resistant" culture is otherwise known as blaming the victim. Like all poor people, Haitians are used to being blamed for their own poverty, but David Brooks picked a hell of a time to point his finger.

[I]t's time to promote locally led paternalism. In this country, we first tried to tackle poverty by throwing money at it, just as we did abroad. Then we tried microcommunity efforts, just as we did abroad. But the programs that really work involve intrusive paternalism.

Ironically, Brooks' prescription of "intrusive paternalism" to "fix the culture," aptly sums up US policy towards Haiti for the past 100 years: a brutal military occupation from 1915 to

1934; support for dictatorship from 1957 to 1986; and more recently, the imposition of trade policies that have further impoverished people. What the outside world needs to "fix" is not Haitian culture, but its own self-serving policies that have left thousands of Haitians literally buried alive.

Ed. Comment: Not 100 years, but for more than 200 years has the US been abusing Haiti: Jefferson was ambivalent about Haitian independence and the US didn't recognize Haiti for sixty years. *How dare these upstart slaves declare themselves a decision-making American republic! Rebelling against our revolutionary ally, France. By example encouraging our own slaves to rebel. By example displaying an autonomy our own black freedmen up North don't enjoy? Good for the French for re-invading and trashing the new Haitian republic, and exacting tribute! Look at those green hillsides going to waste: take the trees for masts for our proud clippers and men-o-war...*

And now, fast forward to our generation: After the fall of the US-supported Papa Doc and Baby Doc Duvalier keptocracies, *look at what these ignorant black folk elected—the agitator commie priest Aristide! How will US marketing fare with that sort of leadership? For starters, call in the US Dept of Agriculture: round up all these skinny, black pigs rooting around the Haitian countryside, and instead sell the Haitians chunky pink Iowa hogs in cement pens, and sell them the grain to further fatten them. Never mind that the little black pigs feed themselves and provide income when the peasant wants his kid to have books and a school uniform. Never mind that subsidized US grain undercuts Haitian rice farmers' livelihood and drives them to urban slums...*

Sins of our fathers. And ourselves? Do we owe the Haitians something? Does it matter that we unwittingly set up a disaster (earthquake) many times greater in death toll than 9/11—and which could have been far, far less if the Haitians had had a chance at adopting building standards, emergency readiness, and honest government promised by their ages-ago revolution and more recently repromised by Aristide? *No, we must kidnap their duly elected president, force concessions, kidnap him again when re-elected, and exile him to South Africa. No, we are the future, and the devil take the hindmost!*

Pitiful Ladies Bountiful

Well...Helping Me Helps Those Haitians

by Robert Booth, *The Guardian/UK*, 18 January 2010

SIXTY MILES FROM HAITI'S DEVASTATED EARTHQUAKE ZONE, luxury liners dock at private beaches where passengers enjoy jet-ski rides, parasailing and rum cocktails delivered to their hammocks.

The 4,370-berth Independence of the Seas, owned by Royal Caribbean International, disembarked at the heavily guarded resort of Labadee on the north coast on Friday; a second cruise ship, the 3,100-passenger Navigator of the Seas is due to dock.

The Florida cruise company leases a picturesque wooded peninsula and its five pristine beaches from the government for passengers to "cut loose" with watersports, barbecues, and shopping for trinkets at a craft market before returning on board before dusk. Safety is guaranteed by armed guards at the gate.

The decision to go ahead with the visit has divided passengers. The ships carry some food aid, and the cruise line has pledged to donate all proceeds from the visit to help stricken Haitians. But many passengers will stay aboard when they dock; one said he was "sickened".

"I just can't see myself sunning on the beach, playing in the

water, eating a barbecue, and enjoying a cocktail while [in Port-au-Prince] there are tens of thousands of dead people being piled up on the streets, with the survivors stunned and looking for food and water," one passenger wrote on the Cruise Critic internet forum.

"It was hard enough to sit and eat a picnic lunch at Labadee before the quake, knowing how many Haitians were starving," said another. "I can't imagine having to choke down a burger there now."

Some booked on ships scheduled to stop at Labadee are afraid that desperate people might breach the resort's 12ft high fences to get food and drink, but others seemed determined to enjoy their holiday. "I'll be there on Tuesday and I plan on enjoying my zip line excursion as well as the time on the beach," said one.

The company said the question of whether to "deliver a vacation experience so close to the epicentre of an earthquake" had been subject to considerable internal debate before it decided to include Haiti in its itineraries for the coming weeks.

"In the end, Labadee is critical to Haiti's recovery; hundreds of people rely on Labadee for their livelihood," said John Weis, vice-president. "In our conversations with the UN special envoy of the government of Haiti, Leslie Voltaire, he notes that Haiti will benefit from the revenues that are generated from each call ...

"We also have tremendous opportunities to use our ships as transport vessels for relief supplies and personnel to Haiti. Simply put, we cannot abandon Haiti now that they need us most."



"Friday's call in Labadee went well," said Royal Caribbean. Everything was open, as usual. The guests were very happy to hear that 100% of the proceeds from the call at Labadee would be donated to the relief effort."

Forty pallets of rice, beans, powdered milk, water, and canned foods were delivered on Friday, and a further 80 are due and 16 on two subsequent ships. When supplies arrive in Labadee, they are distributed by Food for the Poor, a long-time partner of Royal Caribbean in Haiti.

Royal Caribbean has also pledged \$1m to the relief effort and will spend part of that helping 200 Haitian crew members.

The company recently spent \$55m updating Labadee. It employs 230 Haitians and the firm estimates 300 more benefit from the market. The development has been regarded as a beacon of private investment in Haiti; Bill Clinton visited in October. Some Haitians have decried the leasing of the peninsula as effective privatisation of part of the republic's coastline. ■

A Patient's View

of the Senate Christmas Healthcare Gift

by Donna Smith, CommonDreams.org, 24 December 2009

SO, ALL THE GREAT FANFARE and all the king's horses. The great and almighty U.S. Senate has spoken. I will have to buy private health insurance—forever, amen. The defective product that has left me wanting for real healthcare for all of my adult life is now a step closer to being the law of the land. A lump of Christmas coal all polished up with sparkling rhetoric.

On Sunday, the *Chicago Tribune* published an exhaustive front-page analysis by Northwestern University's Medill News Service and the Center for Responsive Politics of how it was done. The main culprit: "a revolving door between Capitol Hill staffers and lobbying jobs for companies with a stake in health care legislation."

The study found that 13 former congressmen and 166 congressional staffers were actively engaged in lobbying their former colleagues on the bill. The companies they were working for—some 338 of them—spent \$635 million on lobbying. It was money extremely well spent—delivering a bill that, by forcing people to buy a shoddy product in a market with no real competition, enshrines into law the public subsidy of private profit.

As we approach the end of Obama's first year in office, this public subsidizing of private profit is becoming something of a habit. It is, after all, exactly what the White House did with the banks. Just as he did with insurance companies, Obama talked tough to the bankers in public, but, when push came to shove, he ended up shoving public money onto their privately held balance sheets. This is not just bad policy, it's bad politics.

Now, back to my own thoughts as a patient:

I went broke while carrying health insurance, a disability insurance policy and a small healthcare savings account. And if I get sick under this mess of a plan, it will happen to me again. Little has changed except that millions more of my fellow citizens will join my ranks.

How does it happen to insured people under this plan? Easy. Step-by-torturous-step. Slowly. Like water-torture.

1. Buy health insurance at work or on the new exchange;
2. Avoid using insurance due to co-pays, deductibles and out-of-pocket maximum exposures—not to mention lost work time and the worry about losing one's job in a tough economy;
3. If symptoms are noticed, treat by internet medical site suggestions and over-the-counter drugs until no other option but going to a doctor are available;
4. Attempt to make appointment with doctor but first find one who accepts both new patients and your insurance;
5. Go to doctor and pay co-pay up front before ever speaking to anyone about medical problem;
6. Sit in outer waiting room for as long as required, missing work and worrying;
7. Sit in exam room waiting for doctor for as long as required;
8. See doctor for five or six minutes, if lucky, during which time you will either be prescribed some expensive drug to fix a problem the doctor isn't sure you have, referred to another doctor who may have a month or two wait for appointments, be directed to get some tests done you aren't sure your insurance will allow or pay for, and do it all sitting in your underwear or less;
9. Leave medical office owing more than what you thought your insurance and co-pay advertised (and never get an explanation for how that is possible) and never sure if this experience was

much different than being to a used car lot where the sales folks have assessed your financing mechanism before showing you anything at all and then only show you what fits the financing not what you need or want;

10. In the alternative, if you collapse or wait until symptoms get so severe that going for an office appointment is impossible, go to an emergency room—repeat steps five through eight—and either be admitted to the hospital if your insurance is adequate and you have any available sick-time from work (if not, beg for drugs and to be released) or go to number nine.

11. Need a dentist? Too bad. Have dental insurance? Still too bad. You might get a cleaning and some x-rays, but getting the care you may or may not need will be again totally related to your ability to pay whatever portion of the dental work is not covered (and amazingly, every penny of what dental insurance will cover will be eaten up by whatever problem you may or may not have)—in the alternative, avoid dentists or just pull teeth as they go bad;

12. When the bills roll in, try to pay some after trying to find out how you can possibly owe hundreds if not thousands more than the insurance policy you have indicates is possible;

13. When the collectors call to collect all of the balances due, try to negotiate payments but endure threats of lawsuit, garnishment and worse as the collectors report back to the doctors you saw for a few moments in number eight;

14. Try to get your meds—if too costly, go without;

15. Try to get well—if you cannot, go back to work;

16. Try to act like this is all wonderful and you are grateful to have any insurance at all;

17. Get sued by a collection agency for a doctor bill or hospital bill you cannot cover;

18. Sell your house and use whatever proceeds you have to try to pay some of the debts;

19. Collectors for the doctors and hospitals are not happy if you don't pay it all in full and up-front most of the time;

20. Feel stress, fear, anguish—but don't gripe and don't show it at work—buck it up, chump;

21. Sell keepsakes and anything valuable to try to stay afloat;

22. Stress, more stress. Fear to answer the phone. Friends and family fall away as they don't want you to ask to borrow money;

23. Keep working—sick or not, keep working or you'll lose that damn insurance if you cannot pay the premium—or you'll be back out on the exchange trying to buy another policy that is cheaper and even worse;

24. Watch your elected officials claim victory and history as they work to make sure your kids and grandkids must suffer the same fate if they need healthcare in America;

25. Have a Merry Christmas, so says your U.S. Senate.

Don't think this can happen to you because it hasn't yet? Count your blessings this Christmas.

I'd really like the gift of healthcare. Medicare for all, single-payer healthcare would remove so much of this awful process. That would be a gift.

Donna Smith is a community organizer for the California Nurses Association and National Co-Chair for the Progressive Democrats of America, Healthcare Not Warfare Campaign.

Military Backfire

Suicides of Soldiers, Vets Top War Deaths

by James Cogan, *World Socialist Web Site*, 6 January 2010

AMERICAN MILITARY PERSONNEL ARE CONTINUING to take their own lives in unprecedented numbers, as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq wars drag on. By late November, at least 334 members of the armed forces had committed suicide in 2009, more than the 319 who were killed in Afghanistan or the 150 who died in Iraq. While a final figure is not available, the toll of military suicides last year was the worst since records began to be kept in 1980.

The Army, National Guard and Army Reserve lost at least 211 personnel to suicide. More than half of those who took their lives had served in either Iraq or Afghanistan. The Army suicide rate of 20.2 per 100,000 personnel is higher than that registered among males aged 19 to 29, the gender age bracket with the highest rate among the general population. Before 2001, the Army rarely suffered 10 suicides per 100,000 soldiers.

The Navy lost at least 47 active duty personnel in 2009, the Air Force 34 and the Marine Corp, which has been flung into some of the bloodiest fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, 42. The Marine suicide rate has soared since 2001 from 12 to at least 19.5 per 100,000.

For every death, at least five members of the armed forces were hospitalised for attempting to take their life. According to the *Navy Times*, 2 percent of Army; 2.3 percent of Marines and 3 percent of Navy respondents to the military's own survey of 28,536 members from all branches reported they had attempted suicide at some point. The "Defense Survey of Health-Related Behaviors" also found "dangerous levels" of alcohol abuse and the illicit use of drugs such as pain killers by 12 percent of personnel.

The trigger for a suicide attempt varied from case to case: relationship breakdowns, financial problems, substance abuse, tensions with other members of their unit, a traumatic event. What is clear, however, is that military service has seriously impacted on the physical and mental health of the victims.

The suicide figures for serving personnel are only one indication. The most alarming statistics are those on mental illness related to the hundreds of thousands of veterans of the two wars who have left the military and sought to reintegrate into civilian life.

While there is no exact figure, studies estimate that as many as 20 to 30 percent of veterans suffer some degree of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), hindering their ability to hold down jobs, maintain relationships, overcome substance abuse and, in some cases, maintain their will to live. The worsening economic conditions facing working people in the US are aggravating the difficulties.

A survey last year found that at least 15 percent of former soldiers in the 20 to 24 age bracket were unemployed. An article by the *Florida Today* site on January 3 reported that 450 of the 800 homeless in Brevard County were Iraq or Afghanistan veterans. Shelters in California are reporting twice as many requests for assistance from new veterans compared with 2007. At the current rate, they will eventually outnumber the more than 100,000 homeless Vietnam vets.

A study of veterans with PTSD published last August by the *Journal of Traumatic Stress* found that 47 percent had had suicidal thoughts before seeking treatment and 3 percent had

attempted to kill themselves. The US Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) has been compelled to substantially upgrade its services. Since its 24-hour, seven-days a week suicide hotline was belatedly established in July 2007, it has counselled over 185,000 veterans or their families and claims to have prevented at least 5,000 suicides. It now has 400 counselors dedicated to suicide prevention though even the Pentagon admits far more are needed.

People who served in either Iraq or Afghanistan make up a growing proportion of the 6,400 veterans that VA estimates take their own lives each year. A 2007 CBS study put the rate among male veterans aged 20 to 24 at four times the national average—more than 40 per 100,000 per year.

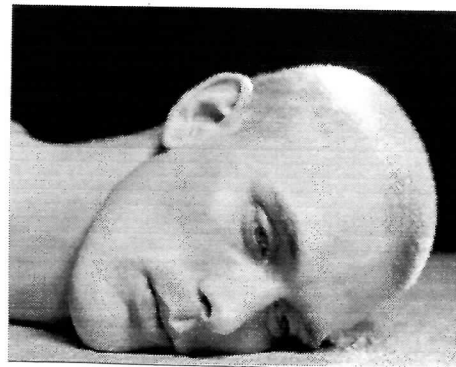
The suicide estimates do not include the hundreds of young veterans who die each year in auto accidents, many of which are linked with excessive speed or driving under the influence and kill or injure others as well. In 2008, veterans who served in Iraq or Afghanistan were 75 percent more likely to die in an auto accident than non-veterans and 148 percent more likely to die in a motorcycle crash. Suicide statistics also do not count deaths that are classified as accidental drug-related overdoses.

American society will continue to pay for the harm caused by the Iraq and Afghan wars for decades to come.

There is a growing medical consensus that a significant factor in PTSD is actual physical damage to the brain. Developments in vehicle and

body armour, combined with advances in medical treatment, have enabled thousands of soldiers to survive bomb blasts that might have taken their lives in earlier conflicts. They survive with trauma to their brain however.

The Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury estimated in early 2009 that between 45,000 to 90,000 veterans of the two wars had been left with "severe and lasting symptoms" of brain injury. Overall, the Defense Department estimates that as many as 20 percent of veterans had suffered some degree of brain injury due to bomb blasts while in Iraq or Afghanistan—a staggering 360,000 men and women.



"Trees Have Standing"

Will Courts Respect Rights of Nature?

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_O._Douglas#.22Trees_have_standing.22

IN THE LANDMARK ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CASE, *Sierra Club v. Morton*, 405 U.S. 727 (1972), Justice Douglas famously, and most colorfully argued [in his dissent] that "inanimate objects" should have standing to sue in court:

"The critical question of 'standing' would be simplified and also put neatly in focus if we fashioned a federal rule that allowed environmental issues to be litigated before federal agencies or federal courts in the name of the inanimate object about to be despoiled, defaced, or invaded by roads and

bulldozers and where injury is the subject of public outrage. Contemporary public concern for protecting nature's ecological equilibrium should lead to the conferral of standing upon environmental objects to sue for their own preservation. This suit would therefore be more properly labeled as *Mineral King v. Morton*...

"Inanimate objects are sometimes parties in litigation. A ship has a legal personality, a fiction found useful for maritime purposes. The corporation sole—a creature of ecclesiastical law—is an acceptable adversary and large fortunes ride on its cases... So it should be as respects valleys, alpine meadows, rivers, lakes, estuaries, beaches, ridges, groves of trees, swamp-land, or even air that feels the destructive pressures of modern technology and modern life. The river, for example, is the living symbol of all the life it sustains or nourishes—fish, aquatic insects, water ouzels, otter, fisher, deer, elk, bear, and all other animals, including man, who are dependent on it or who enjoy it for its sight, its sound, or its life. The river as plaintiff speaks for the ecological unit of life that is part of it."

Ed. Note: As many readers know, the Alliance for Democracy—especially with regard to water—together with Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund has been working for the Rights of Nature for several years, and has succeeded in helping townfolk in New Hampshire and Maine to pass ordinances affirming these rights.

Racism Rampant in Israel

General's Daughter Reveals Indoctrination

by Nurit Peled-Elhanan, speech at rally, 2 January 2010

Tel Aviv— GOOD EVENING TO ALL WHO CAME to mark the first anniversary of the Gaza carnage, and to protest on the comfortable complacency which inhabitants of this city and this country exhibit in face of the slow annihilation which goes on and on in Gaza and throughout Palestine. Had Israeli preschoolers been asked "What did you learn at school this year, dear little boy of mine?" there are all kinds of answers which we might have gotten.

An enlightened and critical child might have answered: I learned that the sun is still shining, and the almond tree is blooming, and the butcher butchers, and there is nobody to judge him.

And the child who is less used to theorizing might rejoice and say: I learned how to cheat Americans, deceive Palestinians, to kill Arabs, to expel families from their homes, and to curse whoever tells me that I am a nasty brat when I have been a nasty brat. And I learned that the Jewish People lives and that Gilad Shalit [*captive (2006) Israeli tank-soldier whom superiors refused to accept in exchange for releasing 1000 Palestinian captives*] also lives. Still.

And the new immigrant boy, who terribly longs to integrate and belong, might say: I learned whom to hate, I learned who needs to be killed and who should be spat upon, and I am ever ready for the task, whenever you call upon me. The Religious-Zionist child, who attends the fenced and well-guarded kindergarten in the settlement, might say: I learned to be a good Zionist, to love the Land, to die and kill for its sake, to expel from it the invaders, to kill their children, to destroy their homes, and never to forget that in each and every generation the persecutors arise to annihilate us and that all gentiles are the same and that they are all antisemites who must be annihilated.

And the most important is that the sun is still shining, and the almond tree is still blooming, and soon we will go planting all

over the mountains Samaria and Judea and guard well the saplings against the herd of sheep which invaded our country in the two thousand years that we have not been here to guard it. [*Most European-Israeli Jews are not, according to U of Tel Aviv historian Shlomo Sand, descended from Israelites, but are descendants of converts. —Ed.*] In the past year our children have learned that to kill a non-Jew, of whatever age, is a great commandment. This they learned not only from the rabbis, but also from the soldiers who ceaselessly boast of what they have done.

This was expressed well by Damian Kirilik, when the police arrested him and charged him with murdering the entire Oshrenko Family. Quite coolly he asked the police investigators: why are you making such a fuss over the killing of children? Damian Kirilik is a new immigrant who does not understand the nuances and sophistry of the rabbis' command to kill gentle children. But this assassin from the outside quickly got the general idea—that he had arrived at a place where the murder of children is taken very lightly.

Our children have learned this year that all the disgusting qualities which antisemites attribute to Jews are actually manifested among our leaders: deceit and deception, greed and the murder of children. While accused of trading in transplanted organs, the unperturbed Government of Israel is engaged in trading in whole humans—for the time being. It can be conjectured that for many years to come, when many cars would bear the bumper sticker "Gil'ad—born to be free", the captains of the pirate ship known as Israel will continue their scheming and still haggle over how many kilograms of Jewish flesh, which is probably shrinking, could be traded for how much Palestinian flesh which is also not all that it used to be, as we learned from the news item about theft of skin and corneas at the Abu Kabir Forensic Center. And they will continue to kill in Gil'ad's name and starve and suffocate in Gil'ad's name and to annihilate the Palestinian people slowly but surely, and on the way encourage the flourishing of the Palestinian bad "weeds that always legitimize the ongoing killing .

As in every rotten and corrupt society, the word "values" recurs again and again in every speech of every politician, especially the wanted ones. The values of Zionism and the values of Judaism and the values of the IDF. The values of Zionism we have seen this year in their full glory at the expulsion of families out of their homes in Sheikh Jarrah. The values of Democracy and the Rule of Law are expressed in Palestinians who are suspected of a violent act being extrajudicially assassinated in their homes, in front of their children, while Jewish terrorists enjoy to the full the amenities of the judicial system.

That is what our children learn in the Jewish democratic state. Therefore, one can wonder at the supposed shock expressed in face of violence in schools and nightclubs, in streets and on the roads. After all, this violence is nothing but practicing the values of the IDF, a course of basic training towards the activities and operations waiting for these youths on their horizon. This is these youths' way of showing that they have learned something from their parents and elder brothers, from their teachers and guides. The only problem which apparently disturbs the educational and law enforcement authorities is that there are no Palestinians in the Jewish schools and the Jewish night clubs and the Jewish streets. For lack of them, the young Jews direct their violence at each other—and that should not happen, a Jew should not

harm another Jew. Violence should be disciplined and regulated, guided by blind obedience to the racial laws, directed only and solely at those who are not Jewish.

And we who demonstrate every week, every month, at every carnage, at every anniversary of a carnage—what is our power? Nothing. Bereavement and failure is our lot in this country. Last Thursday we all stood at the gates of Gaza, disciplined and obedient to the conditions of the police permit, happy to see each other and find out that we are still alive and chanted slogans loudly at an audience of robot-like police and soldiers, totally incapable of comprehending what we had to say. But we did not pull down the wall. We did not succeed in saving even one child from the plague of meningitis which infests Gaza for several months already.

What shall we do with our impotence and failure? What is left to be done about an educational system which demands of its graduates a total identification with Jewish guerilla fighters who were before 1948 executed by the British on charges of terrorism—and at the very same time a total identification with their executioners? To identify with the victims of Auschwitz, and at the same to behave with cruel indifference to the suffering of anyone who is not a member of our race? What can peace seekers do in a country which is run by the army, whose schools are infested with war criminals coming to instill their teachings, where pupils are obliged to experience a week in the pre-military Gadna (Youth Squads) and listen to heroic tales by the criminals of the Gaza carnage, on whom all possible psychological and social and educational means are applied to make them part of the killing machine?

These are our sons and daughters—and we have no access to the system which guides their lives. Where is there space left for us to instill in them one or two of our own values? What values of beauty and goodness can we squeeze into such a sophisticated apparatus of brainwashing and reality distortion?

It seems that the only value which we still have the power and means to instill is the value of refusal. To learn to say no. To teach our children who have not been poisoned yet to resist the brainwashing, to reject the viruses with which their brains are being injected. It is a hard and sisyphic task, but it is the only way of reasserting our humanity. To say no to evil, no to deceit and deception, no to trade in human beings, no the racism which is spreading over here like wildfire, a racism which does not stop at the Kalandia Checkpoint nor at the Erez Checkpoint but spreads like cancer to the shameful immigrant absorption centers, to the schools which proclaim integration and practice segregation, to all cultures and all beliefs in this country. If we don't learn to refuse and reject evil, to refuse the evil laws and regulations, we will find ourselves refusing and rejecting ourselves, our inmost truth. We must refuse to feel ourselves an extinct minority, refuse the fear and apprehension—and the alienation—which are imposed on us, refuse to be accomplices. Only refusal can save us from surrender, from bankruptcy, from despair.

We stand here today as an alien and alienated minority, hated and persecuted. But together with our peace-seeking friends beyond the Wall, beyond the barbed wires, we might become a majority. Only the refusal to surrender to walls and checkpoints can open the gates of our ghetto so that we could pull down the walls of their ghetto. To see at last that there is an outside world, that there are regions around which the Jewish National Fund had not destroyed. That there is a culture and there are people whom it is worth living to meet, to know and make friends with, to learn from them about this place where we live as resident aliens

and remember that this place can be a place of surpassing beauty.

Dr. Nurit Peled-Elhanan is a lecturer in language and education at Hebrew University (Jerusalem) and an expert on Israeli school textbooks. Her father was a Zionist officer during the Nakba—ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in 1948—and a general in the 1967 war. She lost her 13-year-old daughter in a suicide bombing in Jerusalem in 1997. In 2001 she was awarded the Sakharov Prize for Human Rights and Freedom of Speech by the European Parliament.

Her contact is nuritpeled@gmail.com

EDITORIAL

Complacency vs. Fedupness

*Just after Massachusetts Republican state senator Scott Brown won the vacant seat in the US Senate, commentator David Sirota leapt over the result to express humiliation over the gutless performance of national Democrats over recent years. He is moving from "embarrassment" toward "alienation"... Nova Scotian Janet Eaton, who contributed to *BCA Dispatch* (January 2007) on the proposed *Security & Prosperity Partnership for North America* (see "SPP Militarization of Mexico", this issue) forwarded Sirota's article. Our response...*

A Massachusetts resident, I was somewhat surprised but not dismayed to learn about Scott Brown's senatorial victory. On a practical level within the system, my views are consistent with Sirota's, but I am closer to his "alienation". And I have been dismayed at the strength of the Military establishment which since the failure of a "peace dividend" (after Soviet collapse) ascended to an autonomous force commanding the lion's share of taxpayer funding, totally in bed with transnational corporate interests, the Masters of Space christian fundamentalists, and the Playboys of the UnderWorld—the CIA. Brown is a reserve officer and military booster.

For a long time I have been thinking about regional autonomy—separation from the rotten national system with its backward institutions like the elitist Senate and Supreme Court. I have been depending upon a sophisticated public here in New England to want to assert independence from corrupt Washington and establish an autonomous government. Now, with a large turnout for this senatorial special election, it appears that the appeal of sexy personal "image" (Brown) is greater than tired liberal issues (Coakley). Again dismay—that a majority of New Englanders may not ever support an independence movement. After all, Greater Boston is home to Fidelity, MIT, Raytheon, and other corporatist institutions. Then again, in 1774 the independence patriots were a minority, though a commanding one. And today, sexy vs. liberal may be no choice at all—having excluded any refreshing radical.

But am I despairing too soon? So much depends on the media, e.g., in projecting "image" and touting "dependability" and "pride" of the military (Brown's National Guard service). Could we have a really corporate-free media that might give credence to Instant Runoff Voting, and maybe constitutional reform? Perhaps starting smaller—state or town autonomy rather than regional autonomy. Vermont has a small but persistent independence movement, and Brattleboro VT set up its own independent media. But why be stuck on a geographic region? A social movement (for autonomy) need not require a coherent geography.

So, Janet, are Canadians ready to start a cross-border movement for socially responsible government? Or should Yankees join the Council of Canadians, or the Greens? ■

Grayson Fights Court Coup

5 Bills to End Corp Political Involvement

by Arthur Delaney, *huffingtonpost.com*, 18 January 2010

ANTICIPATING A SUPREME COURT DECISION that could free corporations to spend unlimited amounts of money on political campaigns [*announced 21 January —Ed.*], Rep. Alan Grayson (D-Fla.) introduced five bills on Wednesday to choke off the expected flood of corporate cash.

"We are facing a potential threat to our democracy," Grayson said in an interview with HuffPost. "Unlimited corporate spending on campaigns means the government is up for sale and that the law itself will be bought and sold. It would be political bribery on the largest scale imaginable."

At issue in the Supreme Court case is whether the government can limit corporate spending during presidential and congressional campaigns. The case is pitting Citizens United, a conservative group, against the Federal Election Commission. The FEC banned ads for Citizens United's film bashing Hillary Clinton during the 2008 election season.

Grayson introduced a handful of bills on Wednesday :

- The *Business Should Mind Its Own Business Act* would impose a 500 percent excise tax on corporate contributions to political committees and on corporate expenditures on political advocacy campaigns.
- The *Corporate Propaganda Sunshine Act* would require public companies to report what they spend to influence public opinion on any matter other than the promotion of their goods and services.
- The *End Political Kickbacks Act* would restrict political contributions by government contractors.
- Two other measures would apply antitrust regulations to political committees and bar corporations from securities exchanges unless the corporation is certified in compliance with election law.

"This case is basically about an effort to get around that. Citizens United took corporate money and tried to influence an election," said Lisa Gilbert of the U.S. Public Interest Research Group. "These are all pieces of good policy. I hope they draw attention to the potential frightening implications of Citizens United."

ABCNews reported on Wednesday that Democratic leadership is hard at work on a legislative response to the Supreme Court's expected ruling. Grayson told HuffPost that he had consulted with leadership before launching his preemptive strike.

Jeff Patch, a spokesman for the Center for Competitive Politics, an organization that advocates for lifting campaign finance restrictions, said Grayson's bills were too focused on corporate spending. "These are totally targeted at corporations, but Citizens United is widely believed to affect corporations and unions and nonprofits equally."

Grayson disagreed. "One year's profit for Exxon is greater than the entire political expenditure of all unions put together," he said.

Grayson added that he wanted to send the message that people are paying attention to the Supreme Court.

"This issue transcends the usual political arguments. I don't think the teabaggers would be very happy if our government was bought and paid for by a huge national corporation," he said.



Amherst to Welcome Detainees

Obama Misses Guantánamo Release Date

by Alex Spillius, *The Telegraph/UK*, 22 January 2010

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA MISSED HIS OWN DEADLINE for closing Guantánamo on Friday, amid difficulties in re-locating inmates overseas and delays in putting dozens on trial. But a university town in Massachusetts is doing its utmost to encourage his effort, having become the first in the country to pass a resolution welcoming detainees from the prison on the US naval base on Cuba.

Amherst remains a liberal hot spot in a state that until the shock election of Republican Scott Brown to succeed Edward Kennedy in the Senate was regarded as reliably Democratic.

Unlike Thomson, Illinois, where residents expect a jobs boom from seeing an unused, expensive prison receive detainees judged too dangerous to free, Amherst wants to welcome any former terror suspects who have been cleared for release into its general population of 34,874.

It has set its sights on two men in particular who are languishing in Guantánamo unable prevented from returning to their home countries by the likelihood of maltreatment. Ravil Mingazov, a former ballet dancer in the Russian army, said he was persecuted by the authorities because of his conversion to Islam. He traveled to Afghanistan in 2001 before his arrest in Pakistan in early 2002.

Also handed over to the Americans in Pakistan was Ahmed Belbacha, a 40-year-old Algerian accountant. Though deemed not to be a threat by the Pentagon in 2005, he asked to stay in Guantánamo because he so feared torture by his country's security services. His lawyer has said he "would love to move to Amherst".

For that to happen, Congress would need to reconsider legislation preventing detainees with cleared status settling in the US, a decision that has contributed to Mr Obama missing his deadline. But with dozens of detainees probably moving into detention in Illinois, that could be changed.

Mingazov and Belbacha "would be a great addition to the community, and both are able to work," said Ruth Hooke, 82, a staunch supporter of the motion passed by the town council. Observing that Mingazov was "an ardent Muslim", the retired university teacher said: "We have a mosque here in Amherst, so he would fit right in".

Gerry Weiss, a member of the town's select board, or executive committee, compared Amherst with a town in occupied France that sheltered 5,000 Jewish people during World War Two.

Others were appalled at Guantanamo's legal regime, which has incarcerated innocent men for years and brought only a handful of terror convictions.

Nancy Talanian, director of No More Guantánamos, said the motion was "a wonderful message for Congress and the world that there are communities that are willing to stand up for what is right".

Some residents however believe the motion is profoundly wrong. Stanley Gawle warned that if any detainee from the US prison on Cuba moved to Amherst he would start carrying a gun. "I feel that our government is in a hurry to clear Guantánamo out, and I have reservations about how thorough the clearing process is going to be," he said at the meeting that passed the resolution.

Stephanie O'Keeffe, the only select board member to oppose the motion, thought the closure of the world's most notorious prison was simply not within the purview of a small town's ruling body. "We all have opinions for sure, but that's not the same as having real information for careful decision making. This is somewhat beyond our expertise," she said.

Angry, prospective parents have called her threatening not to send their children to Amherst College, a private school regarded as one of the best in the country.

The 240-member town council has previously voted to impeach former President George W Bush and vice president Dick Cheney, called for an end to genocide in Darfur and urged the government to pursue diplomacy with Iran.

The town's name is properly pronounced "Amerst"—without the "h". The bumper sticker most commonly seen around its quaint, collegial streets reads: "Amherst: Where Only the H is Silent".

Watch Out for the Anointed*

IN 1871 A REVOLUTION LEFT PARIS, FOR THE SECOND TIME, in the hands of the Communards.

Charles Baudelaire compared the police to the god Jupiter, and warned that with no aristocracy the cult of beauty would disappear.

Theophile Gautier offered an eyewitness account: "Stinking beasts, with their savage howls, are invading us."

The short-lived government of the Commune burned the guillotine, took over the barracks, separated church from state, handed factories closed by the bosses over to the workers, outlawed night shifts, and established secular, free, and mandatory schooling.

"Secular, free, and mandatory schooling will do nothing but increase the number of imbeciles," predicted Gustave Flaubert.

The Commune did not last long. Two months and a bit. The troops that had fled to Versailles returned, attacked, and after several days of combat they crushed the workers' barricades and celebrated their victory with firing squads. For a week they killed night and day, machine guns killing by the dozen. Flaubert urged them to show no compassion for the "rabid dogs", and his first recommendation was "to do away with universal suffrage, which is shameful to the human spirit."

Anatole France also celebrated the butchery: "The Communards are a committee of murderers, a pack of scoundrels. At long last the government of crime and lunacy is rotting before the firing squads."

Emile Zola declared: "The people of Paris will recover from their fevers and grow in knowledge and splendor."

The winners erected the Basilica of Sacre-Coeur in Montmartre to give thanks to God for the victory He bestowed.

Today that giant cream pie is a big tourist attraction.

---Eduardo Galeano

(from Mirrors, 2009—one of more than 600 pithy vignettes from Adam & Eve to the present). Galeano is the Uruguayan journalist and novelist whose book Open Veins of Latin America was recommended by Hugo Chavez to Barack Obama.

**This piece was originally titled "Don't Step on My Flowers".*

Ed. Note: In 1880 some survivors of the week of butchery became celebrated public officials under the Third Republic. Later Zola attacked the military to vindicate the scapegoated Jewish artillery officer Alfred Dreyfus.

LETTERS

Net Neutrality

I'm a news and public affairs radio producer, one who reaches outside government and corporate mainstream for materials and information. I can't do my job without net neutrality.

Net neutrality is particularly important when the mainstream is promulgating mischief, lies, or both. For example: a "crisis" in which officials assert that trillions of taxpayer dollars must quickly, quickly, quickly be diverted from health, education, welfare, and public works to replenish the coffers of financial institutions and their executives. Another example is even more serious: a "crisis" in which U.S. officials assert (based on lies and nonsense) that war must begin or war must escalate or war must continue.

I'm failing my duty if I can't look beyond the lies in the official story. Without net neutrality, the sources I trust and need are likely to be blocked.

—Stan Robinson, Wayland MA

Stan's show, Truth & Justice Radio, airs on WZBC Sunday mornings 6-9:30. Also at WZBC.org, "archive stream".

Chavez a Dictator?

Interesting to see front page articles about non-violent conflict and John Brown!... You ever run into [former MA state rep] Paul Demakis? He was doing some interesting work in Venezuela. Not a fan of your friend the dictator there!

—Eric Weltman, Brooklyn NY

Ed. Comment: (1) True, abolitionist John Brown advocated violence after trying persuasion. He lived before Gandhi, telephone, and mass media. Few nonviolent movements are pure—without some violent actors. (2) I haven't heard from Paul in years, though we keep sending him the Dispatch. I'd like to hear his take on Hugo Chavez and Venezuela. I was there for a week with Jorge Marin and others as an official observer of the last presidential election, and had no sense of Chavez as a dictator. He certainly is charismatic, voluble on everything important, unapologetic, and more fostering of popular participation—rule by the people—than US leaders.

COURT RIPS DEMOCRACY (Continued from Page 1)

as that of human beings. His decision was joined by the other three members of the court's liberal wing.

Senator Russ Feingold of Wisconsin, an author of the McCain-Feingold campaign finance law, called the ruling "a terrible mistake."

"Ignoring important principles of judicial restraint and respect for precedent, the Court has given corporate money a breathtaking new role in federal campaigns," said Mr. Feingold, a Democrat.

Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the Republican leader and a longtime opponent of that law, praised the Court's decision as "an important step in the direction of restoring the First Amendment rights of these groups by ruling that the Constitution protects their right to express themselves about political candidates and issues up until Election Day." President Obama issued a statement calling on Congress to "develop a forceful response to this decision."

"With its ruling today," he said, "the Supreme Court has given a green light to a new stampede of special interest money in our politics. It is a major victory for big oil, Wall Street banks, health insurance companies and the other powerful interests that marshal their power every day in Washington to drown out the voices of everyday Americans."

The case had unlikely origins. It involved a documentary called "Hillary: The Movie," a 90-minute stew of caustic political commentary and advocacy journalism. It was produced by Citizens United, a conservative nonprofit corporation, and was released during the Democratic presidential primaries in 2008.

Citizens United lost a suit that year against the Federal Election Commission, and scuttled plans to show the film on a cable video-on-demand service and to broadcast television advertisements for it. But the film was shown in theaters in six cities, and it remains available on DVD and the Internet.

The lower court said the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002, usually called the McCain-Feingold law, prohibited the planned broadcasts. The law bans the broadcast, cable or satellite transmission of "electioneering communications" paid for by corporations in the 30 days before a presidential primary and in the 60 days before the general election. That leaves out old technologies, like newspapers, and new ones, like YouTube.

The law, as narrowed by a 2007 Supreme Court decision, applies to communications "susceptible to no reasonable interpretation other than as an appeal to vote for or against a specific candidate." It also requires spoken and written disclaimers in the film and advertisements for it, along with the disclosure of contributors' names.

The lower court said the film was a prohibited electioneering communication with one purpose: "to inform the electorate that Senator Clinton is unfit for office, that the United States would be a dangerous place in a President Hillary Clinton world and that viewers should vote against her."

The McCain-Feingold law does contain an exception for broadcast news reports, commentaries and editorials.

On its central point, Justice Kennedy's majority opinion was joined by Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. and Justices Antonin Scalia, Samuel A. Alito Jr., and Clarence Thomas. Justice Stevens's dissent was joined by Justices Stephen G. Breyer, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Sonia Sotomayor.

When the case was first argued last March, it seemed a curiosity likely to be decided on narrow grounds. The court could have ruled that Citizens United was not the sort of group to which the McCain-Feingold law was meant to apply, or that the law did not mean to address 90-minute documentaries, or that video-on-demand technologies were not regulated by the law. Thursday's decision rejected those alternatives.

Instead of deciding the case in June, the court set down the case for a rare re-argument in September. It now asked the parties to address the much more consequential question of whether the court should overrule a 1990 decision, *Austin v. Michigan Chamber of Commerce*, which upheld restrictions on corporate spending to support or oppose political candidates, along with part of *McConnell v. Federal Election Commission*, the 2003 decision that upheld the central provisions of the McCain-Feingold campaign finance law.

On Thursday, the court answered its own questions with a resounding yes.

Ed. Comment: "We the People." The five so-called conservative justices of the US Supreme Court have effectively amended the Preamble of the US Constitution, so as to begin: "We the People of the United States and the Corporations of the World ..." Insofar as the People consider elections and electioneering to be the definition of democracy, we have been screwed. Large corporations collectively have vastly greater discretionary funds than labor unions, or than citizens collectively. It will be simple for for-

ign corporations to directly influence US elections by creating a US subsidiary. Thus the US Chamber of Commerce and the International Chamber of Commerce—sister megacorporate alliances—have in effect become a Ministry of Propaganda for our society—nationally, state-wide, and locally.

This immediately has several implications.

One—We must understand and practice "democracy" more broadly than elections and electioneering: We must voice principles (as in constitutions) and rules (as in laws and regulations) in all public matters—governance, commerce, public safety, international affairs, education, economic welfare, etc.—as needed, not after years or decades of system inertia and rot. To do this we need to end corporate control of TV, radio, and (incipiently) internet. If this means we must set up and fund local nonprofit Governance Societies, then we ought to able to divert some of our income from national taxes to a local public bank (which we must create by the hundreds), and borrow from that bank to fund the Society. If enough citizens band together at points of enforcement of pro-corporate laws against the Society, the old laws will selectively become unenforceable. This may involve ordinances and re-education (and new jobs) directed at police and prison personnel.

Two—It is logical that if the Court nullifies restrictions on corporate and union spending, and if corporations are not limited in their profit-taking (e.g., bank interest and fee increases), then it ought to nullify laws limiting labor unions in their organizing and dues collection. Congress ought to pass the pending legislation to this effect. This syllogism would become moot if Congress reviews and rejects this arrogant Court decision. Hearings on this issue could become the hottest of the pre-election season.

Three—Corporate Personhood. Hearings on this issue ought to become the cause célèbre of the next Congress. The Roberts Five based their decision on the First Amendment right of free speech, and they are affirming the assumption that corporations have such a right as "persons" under the Constitution. Dispatch readers know that neither the Constitution nor the Congress gave corporations that right or that standing. The 1886 US Supreme Court assigned that lofty standing to corporations at the height of corporate ballyhoo under the pseudo-Darwinian notion that those entities which survive and thrive in the rough-and-tumble of competition, immigration, and corrupt politics are superior beings, at least as entitled to political speech and privacy as members of the "huddled masses". Is this our assumption in today's globalized, war-torn, resource-drained, overheated world? Haven't corporations led the way to these escalating disasters? Does the Massachusetts constitution give or imply such a right? Or the constitution or legislature or even high court of Maine, New Hampshire, or Vermont—or any state?

Congressional hearings don't require a 3/5ths vote. Let us start the Personhood debate.

Ed. Note: The Alliance for Democracy in concert with Liberty Tree, Democracy Unlimited, POCLAD, WILPF, and other citizen organizations anticipated this Supreme Court decision and formed the Campaign to Legalize Democracy (CLD). Its web site is MoveToAmend.org. Go there to endorse (free) the campaign to Amend the US Constitution with these points:

● Firmly establish that money is not speech, and that human beings, not corporations, are persons entitled to constitutional

rights.

- *Guarantee the right to vote and to participate, and to have our votes and participation count.*
- *Protect local communities, their economies, and democracies against illegitimate "preemption" actions by global, national, and state governments.*

Further Ed. Comment: With respect to the Court's composition, the Democratic and Republican parties are reaping the toxic fruit of decades of Presidential corruption—in naming Court candidates—by corporate bribery, even legalizing it. If the CLD campaign is successful, we might immediately try for amendments for

- *Total public funding of elections,*
- *Instant Runoff voting in all federal elections, engendering a much wider range of contestant policy principles,*
- *Popular election of Supreme Court justices, and*
- *National referenda, to force the President to be faithful to campaign promises, and by proportional representation to elect a Public Media Board with funding for quality programming, fully as guaranteed as Social Security, to remove corporate influence from at least one universally accessible electronic network.*

MEXICO

(Continued from Page 1)

to control Central American migrants), and protection of strategic resources and investments. Assistant Secretary of State Tom Shannon called it "arming NAFTA."

The Bush announcement of the three-year Merida Initiative in October of 2007 extended U.S. military intervention in Mexico from this base. The plan is dubbed a "counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics, and border security initiative" although it's the war on drugs that has received the most attention. Although U.S. troops cannot operate by law in Mexican territory, the plan significantly increases the presence of U.S. agents and intelligence services, now estimated at 1,400, and of U.S. private security companies throughout Mexico.

The terms of the Merida Initiative sends the full \$1.3 billion appropriated so far to U.S. defense, security, information technology and other private-sector firms, and the U.S. government. One hundred percent of the money stays in the United States since the plan prohibits cash payments to Mexico.

In other words, what it does is ensure an expanding market for defense and security contracts, in an undeclared war that has no exit strategy in sight.

Does this sound familiar?

It's important to note that despite obvious threats to Mexican sovereignty, the Calderon government lobbied actively for the Merida Initiative, balking only at certain human rights conditions. There is a reason for Calderon's enthusiasm, which has to do with this particular moment in Mexico's fragile democracy.

Recall that Felipe Calderon took office after courts proclaimed he had won the elections by half a percentage point. The courts blocked a demand for a full recount, despite evidence of irregularities and the narrow margin. The elections decision enraged an already divided populace and failed to resolve accusations of fraud.

The military had enabled Calderon to take office by physically escorting him into a Congress occupied by protestors and placing the presidential banner [sash?] over his shoulder. The country was in the throes of massive protests involving at least half the populace.

Once in office, Calderon launched the war on drugs. This strategy allowed a weak president with little popular legitimacy to cement his power, based on building an alliance with the armed forces under a militarized counternarcotics model.

The war on drugs model created an external enemy to distract from the internal protests and division. With its focus on interdiction and supply-side enforcement, the model was originally developed by President Richard Nixon in the 70s to increase presidential power, by taking counternarcotics efforts out of the hands of communities, where it was treated largely as a community health issue, and placing it in the hands of the executive, where it was treated as a security issue.

Applied in Mexico, the immediate effect was to send more than 45,000 army troops into Mexican communities. The presence of the army in all aspects of public security is now the major cause of the grave increase in human rights violations and drug-related violence in Mexico.

The militarization of Mexico has led to a steep increase in homicides related to the drug war. [More than 16,000 people have died in drug-related violence, including hundreds of police officers, prosecutors and soldiers in the last three years. —Washington Post, 11/23/09] It has led to rape and abuse of women by soldiers in communities throughout the country. Human rights complaints against the armed forces have increased six-fold.

Even these stark figures do not reflect the seriousness of what is happening in Mexican society. Many abuses are not reported at all for the simple reason that there is no assurance that justice will be done. The Mexican Armed Forces are not subject to civilian justice systems, but to their own military tribunals. These very rarely terminate in convictions. Of scores of reported torture cases, for example, not a single case has been prosecuted by the army in recent years.

The situation with the police and civilian court system is not much better. Corruption is rampant due to the immense economic power of the drug cartels. Local and state police, the political system, and the justice system are so highly infiltrated and controlled by the cartels that in most cases it is impossible to tell the good guys from the bad guys.

The militarization of Mexico has also led to what rights groups call "the criminalization of protest." Peasant and indigenous leaders have been framed under drug charges and communities harassed by the military with the pretext of the drug war. In Operation Chihuahua, one of the first military operations to replace local police forces and occupy whole towns, among the first people picked up were grassroots leaders—not on drug charges but on three-year old warrants for leading anti-NAFTA protests. Recently, grassroots organizations opposing transnational mining operations in the Sierra Madre cited a sharp increase in militarization that they link to the Merida Initiative and the NAFTA-SPP aimed at opening up natural resources to transnational investment.

All this—the human rights abuses, impunity, corruption, criminalization of the opposition—would be grave cause for concern under any conditions. What is truly incomprehensible is that in addition to generating these costs to Mexican society, the war on drugs doesn't work to achieve its own stated objectives.

We know this not only from the relatively recent Mexican experience, but from other places—especially Colombia and the Andean region. As Plan Colombia goes into its tenth year, the cost of drugs on U.S. streets has gone down and regional production has risen. In Mexico, interdictions dropped between 2007 and 2008. The number of arrests went up but seems to have little effect on the hydra-headed cartels. Actual indictment and prosecution rates following arrests are suspiciously not reported. Illegal drug flows to the U.S. market

appear to be unaffected overall.

The U.S. Role

To understand the U.S. role in this mess, it's necessary to step back a moment. There is no question that the power of organized crime in Mexico is real. There is also no question that the current approach to combating it is a disaster in its effects on human rights and democracy, and a quagmire in strategic terms.

In this context, the question is why, particularly now that George Bush is out of office, would the U.S. government continue to concentrate its aid to Mexico in a way that demonstrably empowers corrupt security forces, violates Mexican human rights, and leads to an increase in violence? This is a huge mistake with extremely high costs.

At a time when Mexico faces one of its worst economic crises in history, U.S. foreign policy toward our neighbor to the south reduces one of our most important and complex bilateral relations to miscast and failed security cooperation under a discredited war on drugs model. We know that there are powerful economic and political interests behind creating a war front in Mexico. But we also know that we too can have a powerful voice. The question is how?

Many U.S. citizen groups have been grappling with that issue. The effort to place human rights conditions on the military-police aid package to Mexico turned out to be counterproductive. The original conditions withheld 15% of some Merida Initiative aid pending progress on the prohibition against torture (a common practice by Mexican security forces to punish community leaders and extract confession), consultation with human rights groups, transparency, and committing the army to civilian courts where permitted under law. None of that happened in a real way.

Nevertheless, the State Department recently sent a human rights report to Congress showing that the Mexican government had not made significant progress on conditions, while asking Congress to release the funds on the basis of good intentions. Congress promptly complied.

For this reason, our organization [Americas Program, Center for International Policy (CIP)] and many other U.S. and Mexican groups are calling for a halt to Plan Mexico as the three-year cycle closes. The Obama administration has pledged to continue military funding to Mexico and Central America under the plan, but we believe that a thorough analysis of the results and consequences will demonstrate the need for a more integral and effective aid strategy and help us chart a binational relationship focused on peaceful cooperation and community-building.

We are not alone in demanding that the war-on-drugs model be replaced. In Mexico, recent polls show that the majority of the population has lost faith in the drug war model. Last May, 52 Mexican human rights organizations called for an end to military aid to their government under the Merida Initiative. Their letter reads:

"We respectfully request that the U.S. Congress and Department of State, in both the Merida Initiative as in other programs to support public security in Mexico, does not allocate funds or direct programs to the armed forces ...

"We urge the United States to consider ways to support a holistic response to security problems; based on tackling the root causes of violence and ensuring the full respect of human rights; not on the logic of combat."

In the United States, the AFL-CIO has come out against the Merida Initiative, in part as a protest against the violation of labor rights particularly in the case of the mining union but also as a rejection of the drug war model. U.S. labor took this position even

before Calderon used the army last week to wipe out Mexico's oldest union and throw 45,000 unionized workers out of jobs overnight. The drug war facilitated the use of the army to take over the state-owned company's installations.

The 1.7 million-person Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, non-governmental organizations including CIP Americas Program and Global Exchange, religious organizations including Witness for Peace, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, and Tikkun, and grassroots activist organizations like the Latin America Solidarity Coalition, Alliance for Democracy, the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador, and Friends of Brad Will have all called for U.S. citizens to oppose the plan and redirect aid to Mexico to health and development programs.

The immediate change needed is relatively simple, although the situation is not. The U.S. government should:

1) Understand shared responsibility in the transnational drug war not as intervention into Mexican security issues but as assuming its own responsibilities in reducing demand, increasing health services, and attacking corruption within its borders. Much public funding and political commitment is needed here, as well as a serious search for models to replace the failed drug war.

2) The U.S. government must rechannel harmful security aid to Mexico into development and anti-crisis aid that will address the root factors that have led to the expansion of drug consumption and trafficking in Mexico. Proposals for this type of aid have already been presented before Congress.

Militarization is not the way to deal with Mexico's political crisis and infusing government money into industries based on blood is not the way to deal with the U.S. economic crisis.

Mexico should be a U.S. priority. But providing exclusively security-focused equipment and training to Mexico is like pouring gas on a fire.

Citizens in both countries stand to lose by viewing the complex binational relationship through the reductionist lens of national security. Critical issues have fallen from the agenda or receive merely lip service. Among them: trans-border livelihoods in the world's most integrated borderlands, immigration, regional environmental threats, trade, and a sustainable energy future.

We must return the U.S.-Mexico relationship to the simple equation that a healthy neighbor equals better trade, security, and cultural relations.

A strong and mutually beneficial relationship must cover the full range of issues between the two nations. The Obama administration and Congress must reorient the militarized relationship with Mexico. A new approach must go to the roots of the illegal drug trade by addressing inequality, poverty, employment, and the high costs of prohibitionist policies. Instead of seeking to bolster the Calderon administration, and police and military forces characterized by corruption, we must stand by human rights, democratic institutions, and a strong role for civil society.

Laura Carlsen (lcarlsen@ciponline.org) is the director of the Americas Program (www.americaspolicy.org) for the Center for International Policy in Mexico City.

This text is a speech presented to the Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Oct. 22, 2009. Carlsen began: "I have been a political analyst and writer in Mexico for the past two decades... As a human rights advocate and a mother, today I speak to you, frankly, with a great sense of urgency." ■

COMMUNITY NOTES (Continued from Page 1)

Other than **Mary White's** continuing to organize a Personhood forum for next month, BCA/NorthBridge members have been too busy with other matters, including national AfD responses to news referenced elsewhere in this issue, to work on local Alliance issues. So for the moment, let's consider the Haitian emergency to be "community", and present here some highlights from *Green Left Weekly* issue #823, 27 January 2010:

...**The first relief flight to arrive in Port-Au-Prince** following the earthquake was from Venezuela. It contained aid, doctors and search and rescue teams. It arrived on January 13, as did a medical team from Cuba. There were already more than 300 Cuban medical workers working in Haiti, providing free health care to the poor. Three other planes have come from Venezuela. [At least one arrived from China, and others from Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Peru, Brazil, and Chile. —Ed]

However, since the country's airport was taken over by the US military, the high volume of military traffic has prevented many aid flights from landing. Five planes belonging to Doctors Without Borders (MSF) have been turned back by the US forces.

On January 16, when US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton demonstrated her government's compassion by flying in to Haiti for a press conference, the airport was closed to other flights for three hours, further disrupting the arrival of aid.

However, an even bigger problem is that upon arrival, most aid and aid workers have not left the airport. The reason is an alleged threat to security posed by marauding gangs of Haitian looters—also the pretext for the US military occupation.

Times Online said on January 17 that "many aid workers are reported to have orders not to venture out without armed guards ... Most media coverage has fueled this hysteria. However, some journalists, as well as others including MSF aid workers and Cuban doctors, who have braved the streets have reported that, far from mob violence and looting, Haitian survivors are displaying remarkable resilience and social solidarity...

Inter Press Service reported on Jan 15: "In the absence of any visible relief effort in the city, the help came from small groups of Haitians working together. Citizens turned into aid workers and rescuers... Others reported that, on the rare occasions food aid was distributed, far from rioting (as US defence secretary Robert Gates predicted they would), people formed orderly lines and made sure that children and the weak were prioritised.

While the US responded to the earthquake with armed troops the International Monetary Fund showed its compassion with a \$100 million loan, with conditions. This brings Haiti's IMF debt to \$265 million. [Many ask: Is this another US occupation? —Ed.]

ACTION ALERTS

Any weekday. **Prevent Foreclosure and Eviction.** Four bills now in legislature are stuck in Judiciary Committee. Get them out for vote by calling your MA state rep and senator! They are:
Temporary Moratorium on Foreclosures (HB1510/SB1751)
Tenant Protections from Eviction in Foreclosed Properties (HB1232/SB1609)
Requiring Judicial Foreclosures: Right To A Day in Court (HB1729/SB1778)
Massachusetts Foreclosure Mediation Program (HB4003)
Full texts of the bills and sponsors are under Current Legislation when you google Mass Legislature Bills.

Rep and Senator phones under www.wheredoivotema.com/bal/myelectioninfo.php
Info: Virginia Pratt 617-524-4820.

Sat. 30 Jan, 10:30am-6pm, Cambridge. **New England AntiWar Conference.** Panel discussions: "Drive toward Empire and Endless War" (Glen Ford, **Bruce Gagnon**, others); "Debunking the War on Terror" (Danny Schechter, **Peter Dale Scott**, others); Workshops (war costs, nukes, climate/war, students, vets, 911, Palestine, Latin America, others). Gaza organizing. At **MIT Bldg. 34-101, 50 Vassar Street.** Social follows. Ten sponsoring peace groups New England-wide. Registration (\$15, \$10, for students, scholarships), box lunch, info at <http://newenglandunited.org/>.

Mon. 1 Feb, 6:30pm, Boston. **Break the Siege of Gaza.** Speaker: Hon. **George Galloway**, MP/UK. Proceeds to Viva Palestina aid convoys to Gaza: \$20, \$10 students, refreshments. At Palestinian Cultural Center for Peace, **41 Quint Ave., Allston.** Info: vivapalestina.org/. \$1000 private reception with Mr. Galloway. Parking limited; use Green (B) line to Harvard Av.

Thu. 11 Feb, 3pm-7:30pm, Boston. Symposium: **Globalization and Grassroots Movements** (indigenous people, women, food, housing, localism, Left in Latin America). University panelists, Jeffrey S. Juris moderates. At 97 Cargill Hall, **Northeastern Univ. Law School**, Forsythe St stop, Green (E) line. Sponsors: NU departments. Free. Info: grassglobsymposium.wordpress.com/

Mon. 15 Feb, 5pm, Cambridge. **Obama's National Security Agenda: a Critique.** Speaker: **Daniel Ellsberg** (who revealed Pentagon Papers; in Boston to launch film: "The Most Dangerous Man". At Cambridge Friends Center, 5 Longfellow Park, 1/2 mile west of Harvard Sq., off Brattle St. \$10 (funds raised for AFSC; or \$40 for reception with Ellsberg, 4pm). RSVP: 617-661-6130 x119.

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? _\$_____

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COLOPHON

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