

Dispatch

Newsletter of the
Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy

May
2005

The reason you find an army of right-wingers ratcheting on the radio and so few liberals is simple: Republicans are in need of affirmation, they don't feel comfortable in America and they crave listening to people who think like them. Liberals actually enjoy living in a free society; tuning in to hear an echo is not our idea of a good time.
—Garrison Keillor

CHAPTER NEWS (Continued on Page 7)

Chapter Calendar

* * **Outrages & Insights** * *

Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy will meet on **Wednesday, May 18 at 7:00 p.m. at Cambridge Friends Meeting house**, 5 Longfellow Park (9-minute walk from Harvard Square T station, west on Brattle St.)

— Agenda —

Is there one issue that grabs you? Or nags you? May 18th is your chance to air it. Bring that book or article to quote. Or just your notes. Take up to 5 minutes to share this concern with everybody. Then we'll all discuss it.

To get things started, Milt will talk about **energy**, and show his electric bike. Jed will talk about "**war gives us meaning**". Diana will discuss **Wendell Berry's stories** "The Wild Birds" and "The Boundary". Dave will talk about the **coming of regionalism**.

And YOU? Are you concerned with honest voting? Social security? Nuclear war? Better TV? Crazy leaders? Stronger Democrats? Or what? Do you have an ANSWER?

IS THERE A COMMON THREAD? Come and help find it!

— Refreshments —

Boston: City of Enlightenment, or War?

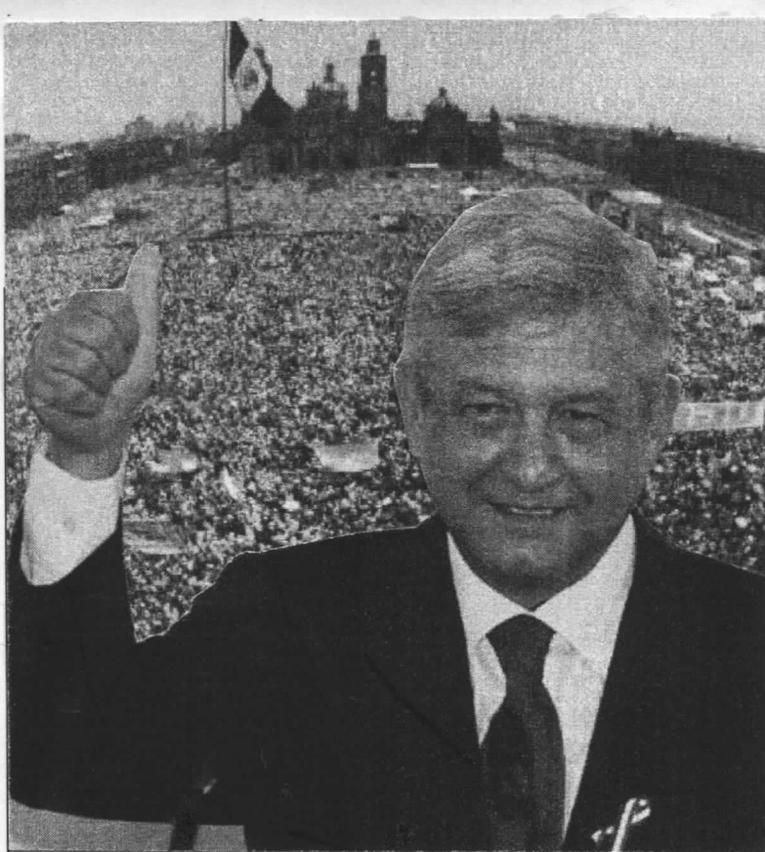
Rep. Lynch Wants War Games in So. Boston

by Michele McPhee, *Boston Herald*, 5 May 2005

Boston's waterfront will look like a battle zone—with military gunfire, circling choppers and Navy SEALs (SEa Air Land special forces) on the attack—under a Pentagon war-games plan that has the support of a high-powered Southie pol but is still under review by the mayor. "We need to do this. It's part of the training for our troops," U.S. Rep. Stephen F. Lynch (D-South Boston) said yesterday. "The Navy wants to put its special ops forces through realistic situations, an approximation of what they might face in a major city, what they might face in Iraq."

But Mayor Thomas M. Menino said yesterday he has not signed off on the idea of having Boston look anything like downtown Baghdad. "I don't know about any live fire, that's for sure," Menino said. "We're still looking at all the details. We don't want the lives of the people of South Boston and East Boston disrupted by this."

Some 50 elite Navy SEALs would (Continued on page 2 >>)



Mexico City's mayor A M Lopez Obrador has redistributed money from programs for the rich to programs for the needy. Mexico's President Vicente Fox and the center-right Congress tried to jail him to keep him from running for president, July 2006. But Obrador refused to roll over, and Fox relented on 6 May. Obrador is way ahead in the national polls. Background: 1.2 million protest Obrador's *desafuera* (being stripped of immunity), signified by the tricolor lapel ribbon, in Mexico City, 24 April.

Populism Surges in Latin America Neoliberalism Defied, Ecuador Army Helps

by Immanuel Wallerstein, *SUNY/Binghamton*, 1 May 2005

There was an old Chinese torture called Ling chi, a death by a thousand cuts. The cuts are all small, but in the end the person dies. This is what is happening to U.S. dominance of Latin America.

The latest small cut, and it is a small cut, has happened in **Ecuador**. Ecuador is a small country with however several important features: It is an oil producer. It has a very large indigenous population which has historically been excluded from power and is of course economically and socially exploited. It borders Colombia where a civil war has been going on for a very long time now, and in which the United States is heavily implicated in support of the very conservative government. It is also a country in which in the last ten years three presidents have been forced out of office by popular uprisings, each time with at least the tacit support of the armed forces.

In 1997, Abdala Bucaram, who had been elected on a platform of fighting the oligarchy, instead began pushing a severe austerity program, as advised by the Argentine former finance minister, Domingo Cavallo, of the kind the IMF had been pushing (and which Cavallo had previously implemented in Argentina). After a two-day strike by labor unions, students, womens' groups, human rights organizations, and CONAIE, the federation of indigenous nationalities of Ecuador, the Ecuadoran congress dismissed Bucaram, on the grounds of

mental instability. The next election brought in another conservative Jaime Mahuad, who proceeded to "dollarize" the economy. So in early 2000, another popular uprising evicted him. This one was led by a combination of indigenous organizations and "populist colonels," whose leader was Lucio Gutierrez, and who was thought by the United States to have links to Chavez in Venezuela (see [Wallerstein] Commentary No. 33, Feb. 1, 2000).

The forces of order took hold once again. Gutierrez went into exile and the Vice-President, Gustavo Noboa, took over. In the next elections in 2002, however, Gutierrez defeated Noboa with the strong support of the indigenous movements. The election was hailed as a victory for the left. Once in office, nonetheless, Gutierrez changed his stripes. In 2003 he visited Washington and declared himself "the best friend of the United States" in Latin America. Soon, the indigenous movements pulled out of the government and Gutierrez proceeded to offer a new military base to the United States, become an enthusiastic supporter of Plan Colombia (the U.S.-led plan to support the Colombian government against the guerillas and also, the U.S. argued, against narcotraffickers). And Ecuador was in full negotiations over a free trade treaty with the United States. While the oil price rise was aiding the government budget, none of that money reached the vast majority of the population. The drop that made the cup overflow was that Gutierrez changed the Supreme Court so that the new one would pardon Bucaram, who promptly returned to Ecuador, and had his party in parliament support Gutierrez.

So this April, there was another uprising in Ecuador. Gutierrez called the demonstrators *forajidos*—fugitives. The demonstrators immediately assumed the name with pride, and within days were able to make Gutierrez into the *forajido* instead. This time, the uprising included not only the usual suspects—the movements of the indigenous populations but also segments of the middle class who were revolted by the corruption of Gutierrez and Bucaram. Once again the army stepped back and Gutierrez has now been succeeded by his vice-president, more to the left, Alfredo Palacio. Since then, there have been confusing indications of the new policy. Palacio appointed a moderately left Catholic, Rafael Correa as finance minister, one of whose first statements was to deplore that 40% of the government's budget went to paying off the debt and only 2% to health and education. While the government has assured the U.S. it will permit its existing base to remain, it is not going to build the additional larger base to which Gutierrez had agreed.

The U.S. has warily recognized the new government after much delay. Castro and Chavez have hailed the change, but some "revolutionary" groups are decrying the fact that it is not doing a lot more. What may we expect now? Probably this time, a great slowdown on anything that smells of neoliberalism. Already the indigenous parties have recovered some parliamentary seats which they had lost because some of the representatives elected on their list had shifted parties to support Gutierrez.

The Ecuadoran uprising fits into a pattern that has been going on now for a decade in Latin America, and especially since George W. Bush came to power. Not so long ago, when a government in Latin America displeased the U.S., the U.S. was usually able to change it—by direct force if necessary, or by using the local military. This was the fate of Guatemala, of the Dominican Republic, of Chile, of Brazil, and many others. The only notable failure in this regard was Cuba, and the U.S. was able to mobilize almost all Latin American countries to cooperate in isolating/blockading/boycotting Cuba.

In the last five years, on the other hand, many Latin American countries have moved to the left both via the ballot box and via popular demonstrations, but always less than totally left. The list is long: **Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Bolivia, Chile, Venezuela.** Indeed, the only government in South America which the U.S. government really likes these days is **Colombia.** Just recently, there was an election of the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States. And for the first time in the history of this organization, the U.S. candidate did not win. The Mexican government recently tried to eliminate from the next presidential competition the candidate of the left party. And it had to back down under popular pressure from within **Mexico.** **Cuba** is no longer isolated in Latin America. None of this is being celebrated in Washington.

Now these are all small cuts. None of these states, even Venezuela, have pushed too far. But **Brazil** did organize the G-20 revolt in the World Trade Organization which has brought that organization to a virtual standstill. And **Argentina** did defy the world financial community and reduce outstanding debts remarkably. And the Free Trade Association of the Americas (FTAA, ALCA in Spanish initials) is getting nowhere, although it remains the prime economic objective of the U.S. in Latin America.

Left intellectuals and some left movements are unhappy in each of these countries with all the things the supposedly left governments have not done. But the U.S. is even unhappier with what they have done. The fact is that today the U.S. no longer can be sure that it has control—economic, political, or diplomatic—of its backyard, the Americas. It is dying the death of a thousand cuts—all small ones, but quite deadly, nonetheless. ##

WAR GAMES (Continued from Page 1)

practice sniper fire with paint balls and perform hostage extractions, water landings, sea-mine evasions and other urban combat maneuvers from June 6 to June 18 as part of the exercises to be conducted by the Naval Special Warfare Development Group. The Navy is also hoping to land helicopters in urban areas and take advantage of the city's narrow streets to simulate combat situations in labyrinthine neighborhoods, according to Pentagon requests delivered to the city. The Navy hopes to take over Drydock and Kennedy avenues at Black Falcon Terminal, as well as the Reserved Channel along the Boston Inner Harbor, for the "urban military training" games. (More >>>>)



Rep. Stephen Lynch



A Navy SEAL



Gene Sharp

Lynch is urging the city to welcome the Navy, saying the military's presence will boost the city's economy and security. On Monday, he wrote to Naval Special Warfare Commander Capt. E.G. Winters, saying he supports efforts to give commandos "techniques and training necessary to defend themselves and our nation's interests around the globe."

Navy Special Warfare Lt. Cmdr. Andrew Levitz said the training will not "cause any problem for local residents."... "Tentatively, we will not allow any live fire, not allow any explosions," said Carlo Boccia, Boston's homeland security director. "If they do conduct exercises, it will be in relationship to the port. We would like to get this done as soon as possible, but we are not going to do it unless it satisfies the city's requirements." #

Editor's comment: Tories vs Patriots. Shiites vs Sunnis. NRA vs Wetbacks. Navy Seals vs phantom Terrorists. Southie vs People's Republic. Will this be The Boston Massacre all over again? Or just another Oakland, where formerly liberal California governor Jerry Brown, as mayor, sponsored military exercises a few years ago? Should Boston be the site of imperial training, or training of Massachusetts National Guard to defend our soil?



Elise Boulding (right) and Severyn Bruyn at her peace imaging workshop

If tories like Stephen Lynch can rouse the good citizens of South Boston to practice Spies & Bullets, can Boston-Cambridge's many peace advocates mobilize a Nonviolent Resistance? Boston is home to the Albert Einstein Institution, founded by Gene Sharp and dedicated to nonviolently resisting military takeovers and repressions everywhere in the world. Why not in Boston? Boston (Needham) is also the home of Elise Boulding, long promoting a nonviolent future with seriously reflective and well-trained nonviolent peace forces. Are young and middle-aged peace militants ready to take the torch from these elders, and carry it into our schools and councils? ##

You Won't Believe This Bush-Ratzinger-binLaden-Saddam-Jiang Axis

by Chris Floyd, *Moscow Times*,* 29 April 2005

It seemed, at first, like nothing more than a novelty item in the news briefs, the kind of odd, meaningless side-fact thrown off by most major stories: "New Pope, President's Brother Had Link in Swiss Group." But a look beneath the surface of this innocuous connection reveals a vast web of sinister alliances—and moral corruption on a world-shaking scale.

The network links a bewildering line-up of players—the Bushes, the Vatican, bin Laden, Saddam Hussein and China's

Communist overlords, among others—in a staggering array of crime and turpitude: prostitution, pedophilia, mass death and war profiteering. Yet this is not some grand "conspiracy theory," a serpent's egg hatched in Bilderberg or Bohemian Grove. It's simply the way the Bush boys do business, trawling the globe for sweetheart deals and gushers of blood money from the war and terror they foment.

At the center of this particular nexus is the unlikely figure of Neil Bush, the feckless, fraudulent brother of the current president. Neilsy, as he's known in the family, is most famous for costing American taxpayers \$1 billion to bail out a savings-and-loan he had ruined with secret insider loans to his own business partners. For this massive fraud, he was fined—by his father's administration—the princely sum of \$50,000, which was actually paid by one of his dad's political bagmen, of course.

You see, the Bushes are robber barons, not capitalists: They never risk any of their own money in the competition of the marketplace. Nor do they ever pay the price when their deals go belly-up. Just ask George W., whose first business was jump-started with secret cash from the bin Ladens, laundered through their U.S. frontman, James Bath—who was also hired by W.'s dad, then-CIA director George Bush Sr., to set up offshore companies for shifting CIA money and aircraft between Texas and Saudi Arabia, the Texas Observer reported.

Neilsy's latest business ventures include a partnership with one of China's own influence-peddling oligarchs: Jiang Mianheng, son of former President Jiang Zemin. He's paying Bush \$2 million for "advice" in a field—the semiconductor industry—which Neilsy cheerfully confesses he knows nothing about. Bush also trousered \$1 million for "introductions and advice" from the CP Group, a Bangkok conglomerate spreading bipartisan gravy around Washington. In return for supplying his paymasters with a golden conduit to the White House, Neilsy received a special perk: free prostitutes, served up fresh to his hotel room during business trips to Asia.

But between his sessions of bouncy-bouncy with trafficked women, Neilsy was also sitting down with hard-line cleric Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the former soldier for Nazi Germany now translated to glory as Pope Benedict XVI. The two men were board members of an obscure Swiss institute ostensibly devoted to "interfaith dialogue." Although the organization did have some prominent ecumenical figures on the board, none of them could say exactly why pimp-daddy Neilsy was invited to join, Newsday reported.

Perhaps there's a clue in the group's incorporation. Dunn & Bradstreet lists the supposedly nonprofit foundation as a "management trust," designed for "purposes other than education, religion, charity or research." The group's spokesman says this designation was a "mistake," and anyway, the institute is hastily being "re-launched" with a "new focus" on its religious mission. But a cynic—i.e., anyone with the slightest acquaintance of Bush business practices—might think that a "management trust" masquerading as a religious charity would be an excellent place to launder money or park assets away from the taxman's prying eyes.

Meanwhile, Ratzinger spent his time on the Swiss board trying to bury the Vatican's massive pedophilia scandal, the London Observer reported this week. In a secret 2001 letter, he ordered Church officials to prevent police from learning about abuse allegations—a theological innovation more commonly

known in the United States as "obstructing justice." Given this criminal high-wire act, perhaps the good cardinal thought it prudent to cultivate some personal ties with a presidential sibling.

Whatever Neilsy and Das Panzerkardinal were up to in Switzerland, Ratzinger repaid their camaraderie with a decisive intervention in brother George's 2004 election, issuing a fatwa that essentially condemned any Catholic voting for John Kerry to eternal hellfire. With the Vatican's iron hand on the scales, Bush reaped an extra six percent of the Catholic vote—a huge boost in a tight race.

But it's Neilsy's long-time partnership with Syrian-born businessman Jamal Daniel that has provided the true mother lode: war profiteering. Daniel, also a boardmate in the Swiss adventure with Ratzinger, is a principal in New Bridge Strategies, a firm set up by top Bush insiders to steer corporate clients to the fountains of blood money flowing from George W.'s conquest of Iraq. The company makes frequent use of Neilsy's "introductions" and Middle East connections, *The Financial Times* reported. It also operates a profitable sideline in mercenaries.

Daniel brings his own unique connections to the regional porkfest: His family was instrumental in the creation of the Baath Party in Syria and Iraq, *The Financial Times* noted. And of course, the Bush Family's covert arm, the CIA -- whose headquarters bears the name of George Sr.—assisted not one, but two, Baathist coups in Iraq, including the bloody upheaval that brought Saddam Hussein's family faction to power, historian Roger Morris reported. Still later, the CIA would supply Osama bin Laden and his fellow extremists with weapons, money and terrorist training: a shrewd investment whose long-term consequences—the current "war on terror"—are still paying fat dividends for Bush coffers.

Sure, thousands die and millions suffer from these dirty deals—but it's not a "conspiracy." It's just business—the Bush way.

ANNOTATIONS

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- Pope 'Obstructed' Sex Abuse Inquiry.
The Observer, April 24, 2005
- New Bridge: New Strategy for GOP Insider's Iraq Development Co.
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- The Barrelling Bushes *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 11, 2004
- President's Brother Helped New Bridge Businessmen
Financial Times, Dec. 12, 2003
- Neil Bush's Business Dealings *Financial Times*, Dec. 12, 2003
- Ratzinger and the N Word
Max Blumenthal (blog), April 19, 2005
- With Great Diligence, In Iraq (New Bridge Security Spin-Off)
Haaretz, July 7, 2004
- A Tyrant 40 Years in the Making
New York Times, March 14, 2003
- The Bush Family's Favorite Terrorist
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- The Profiteering Bush Brothers *Scoop*, Jan. 31, 2005
- New Pope Intervened Against Kerry in 2004 Election
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- The Bush-bin Laden Connection *Texas Observer*, Nov. 9, 2001
- The Bush-bin Laden Connection *One Nation*, Dec. 7, 2004
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*The Moscow Times is an English-language daily published in Russia since 1992. Its web site clogs 250,000 hits per month.

OUTSIDE THE BOX

Mini-Congresses Toward Participation and Real Democracy

by Dave Lewit, *Alliance for Democracy*, 2 April 2005

George Bush, the Neocons, and the congressional Newtists have commandeered the federal government. They are not a majority in the country—they represent less than one-third of eligible voters—but they have jumped into the driver's seat and roar as if they were the majority. Their accession to power depended upon a carefully developed machine and a dirty-tricks finish, displacing the true—though narrow—majority of voters for Gore in 2000 and Kerry in 2004.

Noam Chomsky has made it clear that the majority of adults in this country are liberal on most issues, despite a pro-Bush, establishment bias of the mass media.¹ The public opinion surveys on which Chomsky bases his conclusions sample the entire adult population including nonvoters. If all eligible citizens were to cast votes, and those votes were fairly counted, the Republicans would not control the White House or Congress, although they would be a formidable opposition.

Presently we have a condition of "pluralistic ignorance" where, because of suppression and distortion of popular political information, most people believe that the people in charge do represent the citizenry at large.² What can dispel that ignorance? Wishful thinking would have dirty-tricksters confess, or Fox TV really present "fair and balanced" coverage up front, including survey results. An arduous practical alternative has been to muster record numbers of citizens as voters, including youth, labor, and racial minorities.

Another approach would be to research and educate the public about the efficacy of democratic deliberation and leadership around the country and the world, and about how democratic processes are compromised, with results that often confound the interests of government supporters. The former—democratic deliberation and leadership—needs to be featured and credibly endorsed, offering models to adapt and realize.

An Immodest Proposal

What if Congress truly represented the whole people of each district? Possibly we would have a new New Deal, addressing social and environmental needs as well as corporate and military concerns. But when we take into account incessant visits from corporate lobbyists and built-in campaign finance bribery, special interest pressures may prevail. More importantly, the seniority and hierarchical structures, rules, and extraordinary perks of both houses limit congressional populism and reinforce personalism. Unlike the British House of Commons, there is little tradition of rebellion contrary to rules, in part due to lack of party ideological coherence. So it may be that we must change the structure of Congress as well as its composition—a daunting if not revolutionary task.

So what if we just do it ourselves—form many democratic mini-congresses? Yes, they would lack formal authority but, depending on how they are constituted, they may carry moral authority capable of toppling an unpopular regime if not system.³ We can take our cue from the success or partial success of many nonviolent movements in the 20th Century against authoritarian regimes, e.g., in India, South Africa, Poland, and so on.⁴ One instrument of strategic nonviolent

struggle is "parallel government" such as tribal governments in disarrayed Taliban Afghanistan today, Solidarity in Communist/Catholic Poland in the 1980s, or the linked dozens of town meetings formed in central and western Massachusetts before 1775. There the revolution was accomplished bloodlessly, with Crown magistrates driven from office.⁵ Blood flowed only when the British attempted to reconstitute a colony by force. The popular parallel government became the actual government until a more comprehensive government was agreed.⁶

In Massachusetts today the US state security apparatus, or the Republican Party apparatus, is not strong enough to effectively oppose the formation of local or regional councils on foreign and domestic affairs, even if they labeled them "terrorist" or "anti-American". (Such labeling might be plausible if the councils voted to recall National Guard units from Iraq, as 48 of 52 deliberating towns in Vermont did recently.) I am suggesting the formation of many mini-congresses with the following features:

1. Random selection of deputies from the local district. Random selection assures greater representativeness than any current government including town meeting.⁷ As with jury selection, substitutes from a random pool may be used in cases of hardship.

2. Capacity for virtual and transparent deliberation (phone, internet, postal links) and decision. With little or no pay, many poor people could not afford time to attend actual assemblies. (Note however that the poor attend participatory budgeting assemblies in great numbers in 1000 Brazilian and other Latin American cities, largely because their priorities get tangible results.⁸) Using phone links for most deliberation and decisions may encourage participation of the overworked. Pay for the most needy might be raised or contributed from tax resources.

3. Deputies make their own rules. Each district's mini-congress may function differently, under different rules than their city's council or their state legislature or US Congress. The variety may suggest what works best.

4. Deputies create their own agenda—issues. Each mini-congress chooses key issues of domestic and foreign policy to deliberate and resolve. Because their time is more limited than Congress', their selections may be telling. Because their range goes from the local to the global and beyond, they avoid jurisdictional self-censorship.⁹

5. They allocate virtual funds equal to the region's annual contributions to the US Treasury. Playing with Massachusetts or New England revenues may stimulate thinking about revision of the US federal system toward greater regional autonomy and fairness of exchange.

6. Capacity for simulating and assessing the positive and negative effects of their proposals—virtual laws and resolutions. The many universities of our region may contribute novel means of simulation and assessment.

7. Actual news dissemination through cable TV, community radio, internet, newsletters, and working relations with mainstream news reporters and editors. These media may thereby increase in importance, challenging corporate media to improve.

8. Capacity to attract and process feedback from the public, with public accessibility—e.g., focus groups or call-in radio hearings. Such feedback may involve the public more than ever, and encourage public monitoring of Congressional effects (and maybe wean some folks from reality TV).

Overall, mini-congress outcomes may provide lessons for US Congress members and their constituents, to the extent that they are at odds with what Congress has been doing, and the extent that they are similar from one mini-congress to another, or vary according to interesting contexts. This applies to their voluntary rules and processes as well as outcomes. Powerful algorithms for impact assessment may displace conventional indexes of economists, in part because the mini-congresses may factor in social and environmental effects. Most important, the public may become more engaged in political decision making—consulting directly with local officials, holding Congress members more accountable, and ultimately changing the rules of Congress and other governmental institutions.

How To Grow Mini-Congresses

Some might be constructed as creatures of ad hoc committees or task forces of municipal or state governments. Officials concerned with jury selection and others concerned with home rule or international trade or cultural missions might be some of the committee members.

Some might evolve from model legislatures and model UNs in high schools and colleges, and include faculty members and community members as well as students. Others might evolve from state political party conventions, with later efforts to join Dem, GOP, and other versions. Others might evolve from union and civic organizations with large numbers of retirees who have time for extended deliberations. Still others might evolve from professional organizations such as the American Political Science Association, National Lawyers Guild, and World Future Society. Most of these organizations are class-biased, and must be superceded by random selections from the general population.

Many foundations may be interested in providing help—e.g., stipends for needy participants—including establishment sources such as Ford Foundation, Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation, and Kettering Foundation as well as social change sources such as Soros Foundation, Jefferson Center, Demos, and Civicus. Alternatively, citizen subscription may provide seed funds.

The point is to get two or three mini-congresses started and sustained for several years, with first-rate video documentation and news coverage. Their "legislation" may then be compared with actual history as it unfolds. If mini-congresses are shown to anticipate trends and promote positive solutions and systems more often than Congress itself, congressional and electoral reformation may become mandatory—or regional governance structures begun.

NOTES:

1. Noam Chomsky/Alan Taylor, *Sunday Herald/UK*, 20 Mar 2005
2. Floyd Allport, *Social Psychology*, 1924; et seq., e.g., Miller, Monin & Prentice, 2000
3. Richard Falk & Andrew Strauss. "Toward a global parliament" *The Nation*, 22 Sept 2003.
4. Peter Ackerman & Jack DuVall, *A Force More Powerful*, 2000
5. Ray Rafael, *The First American Revolution*, 2002
6. Jonathan Schell, *The Unconquerable World*, 2003
7. Brian Martin, *Nonviolence vs. Capitalism*, 2001
8. David Lewit/Gianpaolo Baiocchi, *Yes!*, Winter 2003
9. In 2002 Some Boston city councilors argued that a state-level Globalization Impact Commission should not be debated because it was not a local concern. This is an often-heard argument. The resolution nevertheless passed.

Letter from Ireland Nuking Iran and Beyond

by Richard K. Moore, Cyberjournal.org, 7 May 2005

Given plausible predictions of an invasion of Iran in June, this seems like a good time to share with you folks my own perspective on our current global situation...

The place to start, in assessing our current situation, is to consider how the world looks from the perspective of those in the White House. They came into power with a plan, and they have proceeded systematically to implement that plan—basically the PNAC document [neoconservative's *Project for a New American Century*—with great success so far. They took a drastic step, and committed themselves to the course, when they blew up the World Trade Center. And they seem to have gotten by with it, despite glaring contradictions in both the evidence and their cover stories. They took another drastic step, and committed themselves further to their course, when they invaded Iraq on trumped-up charges and contrary to international law. Again, they seem to have gotten by with it, despite the quagmire, and despite all their lies having been revealed.

These people, in their own minds, are on a roll. They've found a sure-fire formula for world conquest. On the domestic front, the main tool is terrorism hysteria, which can be stirred up at any time with a simple false-flag incident, blamed on whoever they choose. The media never asks questions about such claims, it simply parrots them. On the global front, the main tool is the demonization of "rogue states"—"threats to security"—which continues to be effective despite the lies around Iraq. Again the media acts as an amplifier.

One thing we need to understand about these people is that they have pulled out all the stops. They will do whatever they consider necessary to pursue their stated objectives. They proved this on 9/11. They are willing to take significant risks, if they believe they have covered all the angles adequately. We must keep this determined ruthlessness in mind when we consider their attitude toward using nuclear weapons.

From a cost-effectiveness point of view, nukes offer great advantages. They could enable a conquest of Iran without the quagmire and with less expense, as compared to Iraq. Given their world-conquest agenda, I would imagine they are eagerly seeking ways to open the nuclear Pandora's box. Presumably they'll say "Nukes save lives", in the same way the Nazi's said, "Total war is shortest war." What the neocons will need is to do is to create an incident that they can use an excuse to move the game up to the next level of technology.

That's why the article "Israel, Iran, Mossad and a Nuclear False Flag Attack" was notable: (www.cyberjournal.org/cj/show_archives/?id=462&lists=newslog). Mossad [Israel's CIA] is a very convenient agency to carry out projects such as 9/11—they share the neocon's ruthlessness and objectives, they're very competent, and they're relatively isolated from the Beltway gossip networks, as compared to domestic covert agencies. If Mossad could blow up a U.S. nuclear facility, and that could be blamed on Iran, that would give the neocons an excuse to go into Iran with 'tactical' nukes. The scenario is a highly plausible one, and the claims in the article seem to be well documented.

But enough about Iran. It's only a stepping stone, a fueling

depot, as regards geopolitics. The game being played has three main players: the U.S., China, and Russia. The U.S. wants to rule the world, and Russia and China are the only significant obstacles to that objective. Both China and Russia are well aware of this fact. China has been rapidly upgrading its military capabilities in anticipation of a U.S. attack, and Russia has been taking an increasingly harder line as a nationalist power, even as the CIA peels one regime after another from the Russian orbit.

The question here is how long will Russia and China continue to play the appeasement game? From their perspective, the only difference between the Nazis in 1939, and the U.S. now, is that the U.S. has more powerful weapons and control of the seven seas. Russia and China both know that appeasement only delays confrontation, and improves the strategic position of the aggressor. Just as England and France drew the line at Poland as regards Nazi expansionism, so we must expect that Russia and China will draw a line somewhere, with regard to the neocons.

We may be getting close to that line already. It's hard to tell. I did read one report that claimed Putin had warned Washington and Tel Aviv that an attack on Iran or Syria would lead to a nuclear response by Russia against Israel. Apart from the predictions in Revelation, I haven't seen confirmation of that report from other sources. But surely, there must be such a line somewhere.

With their revived and dubious Star Wars project, and their distribution of nuclear weapons to field commanders, the neocons seem to be making every preparation for nuclear confrontation, despite the uncertain risks. I'm sure they are confident of their ability to create whatever excuses are necessary, for whatever initiatives they deem necessary. The question here is what domestic losses the neocons consider to be "acceptable" in a nuclear exchange. Given their demonstrated lack of regard for civilian lives generally, whether domestic or foreign, one shudders to imagine the definition of "winning" that exists in their deranged minds. They probably dream of themselves as the undisputed masters of a post-apocalyptic world, cleansed of excess population and culled of unfavored races, a world all cleared away and in dire need of reconstruction, via Halliburton and ilk.

* * *

That's a geopolitical perspective. We could also look at things from a global economic perspective, or from an environmental or human-rights perspective. All such perspectives are equally dismal, and in their own ways equally apocalyptic. Because of the way our societies are organized, and how decision are made, the energy and resources of our civilization are being devoted to making everything worse as quickly as possible and in as many ways as possible. It is totally insane.

I say these things not to depress you, but to help us all refocus our attention on the real issues of the day, as opposed to the trivia carried in the media. The purpose of the media is to give us a comfortable sand-patch in which we can bury our heads, tempting us down the path of the ostrich. It might feel better, but it doesn't help our situation.

Richard K Moore is an American computer engineer and interactive essayist living in Wexford, Ireland. He is the author of the forthcoming "Escaping The Matrix: Global Transformation—Why we need it, and how we can achieve it". See www.cyberjournal.org.

On "Bullshit" Is It Like Lying---In Ignorance, Not Deception?

adapted from Timothy Noah, *Slate*, 2 March 2005

We live in an era of unprecedented bullshit production," observes Laura Penny, author of the forthcoming (and wittily titled) *Your Call Is Important to Us: The Truth About Bullshit*. But what is bullshit, exactly? How does bullshit differ from humbug, poppycock, hogwash, and so on?

In 1986 Princeton philosophy professor Harry G. Frankfurt took a whack at it in an essay titled "On Bullshit." Now republished as a very small book of the same title, Frankfurt's conclusion is that bullshit is defined not so much by the end product as by the process by which it is created.

Although Frankfurt doesn't point this out, the word "bullshit" is both noun and verb, and this duality distinguishes bullshit not only from Menckenesque antecedents, but also from its contemporary near-relative, *horseshit*. It is possible to bullshit somebody, but it is not possible to poppycock, twaddle, or horseshit anyone. When we speak of bullshit we speak, implicitly, of the action that brought the bullshit into being: Somebody bullshitted. In this respect the word "bullshit" is identical to the word "lie," for when we speak of a lie we speak, implicitly, of the action that brought the lie into being: Somebody lied.

Frankfurt's definition is provocative because it allows for the little-recognized possibility that bullshit can be substantively true, and still be bullshit. Last summer, the *Financial Times* reported on evidence that the infamous war-justifying "16 words" in President Bush's 2003 State of the Union address ("The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa") may have been true after all.

When those words were written into the speech, the president and his staff lacked the evidence needed to support them. They were bullshitting. So the 16 words remain bullshit, and will continue to remain bullshit even if the charge is eventually proved true.

Telling lies does not tend to unfit a person for telling the truth in the same way that bullshitting tends to. The bullshitter does not reject the authority of the truth, as the liar does, and oppose himself to it. He pays no attention to it at all. By virtue of this, bullshit is a greater enemy of the truth than lies are.

Why should bullshit be so prevalent now? Cable television and the Internet have created an unending demand for information, and there simply isn't enough truth to go around. So, we get bullshit instead. Indeed, there are some troubling signs that the consumer has come to prefer bullshit. In choosing guests to appear on cable news, bookers will almost always choose a glib ignoramus over an expert who can't talk in clipped sentences. In his underappreciated book *Public Intellectuals: A Study of Decline*, Richard Posner found a negative correlation between media mentions and scholarly citations for the 100 public intellectuals most mentioned in the media—and these 100 accounted for 67.5 percent of all media mentions!

By Frankfurt's lights, what Bush does isn't lying at all. It's bullshitting. Bush's indifference to the truth is indeed more troubling, in many ways, than what Frankfurt calls "lying" would be. Richard Nixon knew he was bombing Cambodia. Does George W. Bush have a clue that his Social Security arithmetic fails to add up? How can he know, if he doesn't care?

LETTERS

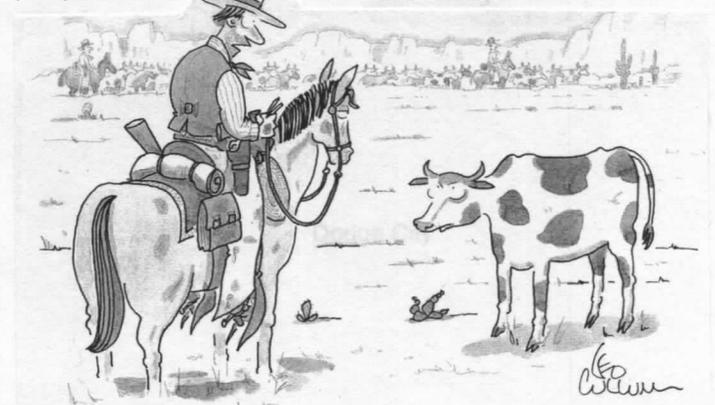
Many Anti-Bush In Texas

Don't know if I ever told you, but I routinely read every article of the BCA newsletter. I thoroughly enjoyed the lead up to the presidential elections—was really hoping that Bush would get sacked. Although a career military officer for nearly 30 years, now retired as you know, I cannot support any of Bush's policies.

I do have a question about Social Security reform: Has any proposition ever recommended having government civil service employees pay their fair share of social security taxes? As I recall, active duty military members have always paid the same social security rates as everyone else in the country, except civil service employees who get all the same benefits, but pay none of the taxes. That one item alone won't fix the shortfall, but could help close the forecasted gap in 25 years. If 500,000 civil service employees started paying taxes, wonder how much that would contribute to the account????

Meanwhile, Patty and I are trying our best to nourish our "blue state" mentality inside of this Texas-Bush "red state" environment. You would be amazed how many of our friends here are anti-Bush—we help each other keep things in perspective.

—Ron Reed, Fort Worth TX



"No one is making you do anything you don't want. I'm just saying we're all headed for Dodge City and we think you should come along."

CHAPTER NEWS

John Grebe Defends Community Radio

BCA's guest on 20 April was the producer and host of "Sounds of Dissent", a two-hour radio show every Saturday at 11 a.m. from WZBC—1000 watts, 90.3 FM, at Boston College. John Grebe's interviews have featured such local and national figures as Noam Chomsky, Phyllis Bennis, Scott Ritter, Byron Rushing, Jonathan Simon, and George Capaccio—commenting on the attack on the World Trade Center, the illegal war on Iraq, UN search for WMDs, corruption in the state legislature, election fraud, and experience of Iraqi families.

John brought a hand-cranked pocket radio as used by Zapatista people in the forests of Chiapas, Mexico, to bring in a Boston community broadcast squeezed on the dial between nonprofit giants WBUR and WGBH. He also brought a DVD (digital video disk) showing himself with a guest in the studio, during the Boston Social Forum last summer, to illustrate studio work and what you hear on the radio. (They were talking about

Israel's violation of international law by building its serpentine wall, and why they should pay reparations to Palestinians.)

Most of what you hear when you scan the radio dial is the screaming of popular music, advertisements, and right-wing blather. But discriminating listeners can tune in "good, gray" National Public Radio, college stations with some alternative commentary, other community stations broadcasting neighborhood news and commentary, or in some localities municipal (tax-supported) programming (New York City, and Blue Hill ME, are you listening?). Boston has no municipal radio, but for "public interest" does have NPR, college (with some progressive Pacifica programming, and some church services), and neighborhood stations, but few if any fundamentalist religious stations.

Increasingly there are more than ten "Christian" radio networks buying up small local stations to use to spread their fundamentalist networks using "translators"—robot local stations activated by some central broadcasting studio. One such network is Calvary Satellite Network International (CSN) with 200 stations at present, and seeking 4000 including 6 in Massachusetts. BCA Dispatch for March ran an article on CSN's grab for a robot station in Plymouth whose 20,000 watt signal could interfere with WZBC, forcing it, according to John, to lose a potential 200,000 listeners. *To stop this robot application, you can still write to Martene H. Dortch, Secretary, Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Office of the Secretary, 9300 East Hampton Drive, Capitol Heights, MD 20743. As few as 200 letters can make the difference in this case, and also help to reverse the trend toward*



Amy Goodman (Democracy Now) John Grebe (Sounds of Dissent)

megacorporate media monopoly. (See Ben Bagdikian's Media Monopoly; also visit www.Democracies.com. Even with 500 TV channels, choice is a myth.)

Radio-TV collaboration is aiding in the struggle to sustain community radio. About 3 percent of cable vendors' revenue is funneled as a federal subsidy into community radio, negotiated locally with professional help. Community cable and Free Speech TV partnerships with radio are seeking a regular national satellite hookup, with Emerson College involvement. John suggested that BCA support Boston Coalition for Independent Media—a possible bellwether for the nation. Fight the corporate Digital Millennium Copyright Act. "Communities should actively help shape communications policy." Call John at 617-987-0677.

ACTION ALERTS

Tue. 17 May, 7:30pm, Concord. A Journalist's View of the **Climate Crisis**, with **Ross Gelbspan**, author of *The Heat Is On* (global warming) and *Boiling Point: How Politicians, Big Oil and Coal, Journalists and Activists Are Fueling the Climate Crisis—And What We Can Do to Avert Disaster*. Sponsor: North Bridge Alliance for Democracy. Alcott School Auditorium, 93 Laurel St. Info: 781-259-1173 or 781-259-8104.

Sat. 21 May, 7:30pm, Cambridge. **Ballot tampering and Election Reform**: What you can do about it. Lecture and **training workshop**, with **Bev Harris**, premier investigator of electronic vote fraud. www.blackboxvoting.org Sponsor: Coalition Against Election Fraud, and others. Friends Meeting House, 5 Longfellow Park (off Brattle St., 9 min. walk from Harvard Sq.). \$10 more or less. Info: 617.524.2223 www.caef.us.

At your convenience, archived on the Internet: **BBC's "The Power of Nightmares"**. A 3-part, 3-hour series on the **Neocons, the Radical Islamists, & the myth of Al Qaeda**—how Americans, the British, and their media have been incredibly conned. An historical documentary video by Adam Curtis, with script/text. "Fear of a phantom enemy is all the politicians have left to maintain their power." www.informationclearinghouse.info/video1040.htm

Mon. 13 June, 7-9pm, Boston. Local-and-beyond impact of BU's proposed "**bioterrorism lab**". Forum with Prof. **Daniel Goodenough** (cell biologist, Harvard Med.) and Prof. **Jonathan King** (molecular biology, MIT). Sponsors: Pax Christi Boston, Safety Net, others. Paulist Center, 5 Park St. Info: 617-442-7822.

JOIN THE BCA

YOU DON'T HAVE TO LIVE IN BOSTON TO LOVE BCA

Please help us as we fight to make a better future for ourselves and our children -- Join the Boston/Cambridge Alliance for Democracy. (Cut out this form and send it to:

Dave Lewit, 271 Dartmouth St. #2h, Boston, MA 02116.)

BOSTON-CAMBRIDGE ALLIANCE for DEMOCRACY PLEDGE

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 \$52/Year - "Contributor" (We need to average this amount.)
 \$104/Year - "Sustainer" (Helping us thrive.)
 \$208/Year - "Community Steward"
 \$500/Year - "Realize the vision!"
 What's fair for YOU? \$_____

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Dave Lewit, Editor 617-266-8687. Pls apply as Assoc Editor.

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