

BCA Dispatch

Newsletter of the **Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy** **January 2006**

When the autopsy of our democracy is performed, it is my belief that media silence will be given as the primary cause of death.

—Jonathan Simon

CHAPTER NEWS (Continued on Page 8)

Chapter Calendar

**** Democratizing Boston's Budget ****

The Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy's next meeting will be on **Wednesday, January 18 at 7:00 p.m.** at **Cambridge Friends Meeting**, 5 Longfellow Park (9-minute walk from Harvard Square west on Brattle St.), Cambridge.

Boston City Councilor **Chuck Turner** explains how Boston's public money is controlled by corporations and Mayor Menino, and what we folks have been able to do about city spending. Chuck will be with us in person, after we see the 45-minute video of his presentation to leading activists and municipal officials on "participatory budgeting", in Burlington VT last September.

Chuck will lead discussion of how the people can take control of city development and finances. Come at 7 for the video of his VT presentation, and join Chuck at 8 for discussion.

Please read overview of Chuck's talk in article, below, Page 3.

— Refreshments —

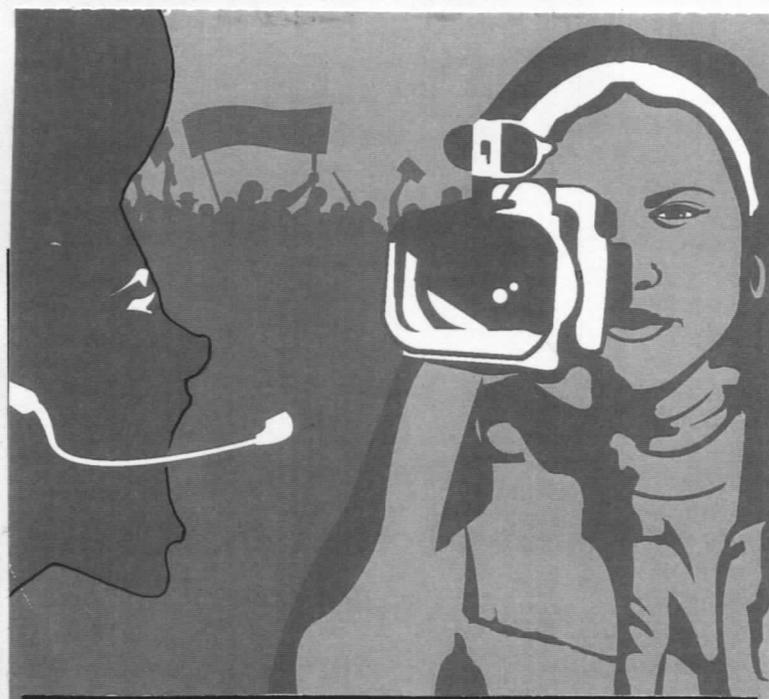
WTO Dealmakers Brazil & India Join the Big Boys

by Walden Bello, *Focus on the Global South*, 21 Dec 2005
(excerpt)

The reason for the developing countries' collapse was not so much lack of leadership, but leadership that brought them in the opposite direction. The key to the debacle of Hong Kong was the role of Brazil and India, the leaders of the famed Group of 20.

Even before Hong Kong, Brazil and India were prepared to make a deal. For Brazil, the bottom line was the specification by the European Union of a date for the phase-out of agricultural export subsidies, and this was an item that Brazilian negotiators and many others expected would be delivered by the EU at the ministerial, though for negotiating purposes the Europeans would not reveal it till the last minute. Brazil also came to Hong Kong willing to accept a Swiss formula in non-agricultural market access (NAMA) and the plurilateral approach in services. India, for its part, arrived in Hong Kong with its positions well known. It would accept the plurilateral approach in services negotiations and the Swiss formula in NAMA and follow Brazil's lead in agriculture. The only question for many was: would India press for developed country concessions

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WI-FI and MEDIA JUSTICE

THIRD WORLD MAJORITY www.cultureisaweapon.org

"Wi-Fi" = a local or citywide wireless internet connection cloud

>> See pages 4-6 <<

Censoring the Internet Google, AoL "Cooperate" with Bush Admin

by Wayne Madsen, waynemadsenreport.com 12 Dec 2005

Internet censorship. It did not happen overnight but slowly came to America's shores from testing grounds in China and the Middle East.

Progressive and investigative journalist web site administrators are beginning to talk to each other about it, e-mail users are beginning to understand why their e-mail is being disrupted by it, major search engines appear to be complying with it, and the low to equal signal-to-noise ratio of legitimate e-mail and spam appears to be perpetuated by it.

In this case, "it," is what privacy and computer experts have long warned about: massive censorship of the web on a nationwide and global scale. For many years, the web has been heavily censored in countries around the world.

That censorship continues at this very moment. Now it is happening right here in America. The agreement by the Congress to extend an enhanced Patriot Act for another four years will permit the political enforcers of the Bush administration, who use law enforcement as their proxies, to further clamp censorship controls on the web.

Internet Censorship: Warning Signs Were Not Hidden

The warning signs for the crackdown on the web have been with us for over a decade. The Clipper chip controversy of the 90s, John Poindexter's Total Information Awareness (TIA) system pushed in the aftermath

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A Year of Sweet Victories

by Katrina vanden Heuvel, *The Nation*, 31 Dec 2005

In the dark days after the election of 2004, the mainstream media was touting the making of a permanent rightward shift, and the progressive community was deeply deflated. It was difficult, in those times, to maintain a sense of hope—as corruption, war, lies and injustices large and small loomed all around, and outrage about the Right's assault on our democracy threatened to overwhelm us.

A year later, the dark and menacing clouds that hovered over *The Nation's* November 2, 2004 cover ("Four More Years") seem to be slowly lifting. Millions of us are organizing, agitating, mobilizing—and there are many hard-fought victories to celebrate. The attempt to destroy Social Security has been successfully blocked, the movement for withdrawal has captured the majority of the public's support, the mainstream media is slowly rousing from its slumbers, the White House's surveillance state is being revealed, there is talk of impeachment in the air, Vice President for Torture Cheney suffered a stinging rebuke when John McCain's torture ban passed, the GOP is mired in corruption and cronyism ("Jack Abramoff seems to have the whole party on his payroll," Katha Pollitt writes in her end of year review for *The Nation*), and scores of local, statewide, and national victories have been won. Here are some of my favorite "sweet victories" of '05—to savor as we head into 2006.

Electoral Reform

Portland, Oregon becomes the first city in the country to approve full public financing of elections. Connecticut passes the strongest campaign finance reform bill in the country, banning contributions from lobbyists and state contractors. Additionally, the legislation creates a publicly funded election system encompassing all statewide races, including House and Senate seats (also a first).

Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

Maine becomes the sixth and final New England state to outlaw discrimination against homosexuals in employment, housing, credit, public accommodations, and education.

Residents of **Topeka, Kansas** rejected Fred "Got Hates Fags" Phelps' attempt to overturn the city's ordinance banning discrimination of gays in municipal hiring. And in the city council primary, Phelps' granddaughter and fellow anti-gay activist, Jael Phelps, lost big to Topeka's first and only openly gay council member, Tiffany Muller.

Massachusetts General Hospital announced the creation of the Disparities Solution Center—the first institution specifically dedicated to bridging the racial gap in health care service.

Iowa's Governor Tom Vilsack restored voting rights to thousands of Iowans, reversing an unjust state law that imposes lifetime disenfranchisement for anyone convicted of a felony. Reform was badly needed in Iowa, where, despite the state's two percent black population, 25 percent of those affected by the disenfranchisement law were African-American—the highest percentage in the country. In March, Nebraska also overturned its lifetime disenfranchisement law for convicted felons, and currently only four states—Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, and Virginia—continue to uphold this absurdly punitive law.

Montana became the fifth state to officially condemn the USA Patriot Act. Joining Alaska, Hawaii, Maine, and Vermont—not to mention more than 375 local governments—Montana's state legislature passed the strongest statewide resolution against the Patriot Act yet.

Environment and Health

California's Safe Cosmetics Bill is signed into law. The bill—which requires manufacturers to disclose to the California's Department of

Health Services any product ingredients linked to cancer, mutations, or birth defects—is the first of its kind in America.

Six new Democratic governors—Rod Blagojevich (IL), Jim Doyle (WI), Christine Gregoire (WA), Ted Kulongoski (OR), Janet Napolitano (AZ), and Brian Schweitzer (MT)—joined an earlier three—Jennifer Granholm (MI), Ed Rendell (PA), and Bill Richardson (NM)—in embracing the Apollo Alliance's goal of achieving sustainable American energy independence within a decade.

Colorado passes the Renewable Energy Initiative. A precedent-setting victory for renewable energy, the bill requires the state's largest electric companies to increase their use of renewable sources such as wind, solar, biomass, geothermal, and small hydro from less than two percent today to 10 percent by 2015. Amendment 37 is expected to save Coloradans \$236 million by 2025, create 2,000 jobs, and significantly reduce gas prices in the state.

New York City agrees to issue taxi medallions for hybrid cars, the latest in a string of victories for the "Green Fleets" movement. Earlier, legislators in Charlotte, NC voted to hybridize the city's municipal fleet, and Denver, Seattle, and Madison have also made strides in converting their fleets to green.

Labor and Economic Rights

Vermont, New Jersey, Hawaii, Connecticut, Minnesota, and Wisconsin vote to raise state minimum wages. Meanwhile, the national minimum wage has remained stagnant for nine years, the second longest period in U.S. history.

In **California**, an Alameda County judge ordered uniform giant Cintas to pay 219 workers more than \$1 million of back wages in what is being hailed as a landmark decision. Paul Sonn of NYU's Brennan Center for Justice, called it "the first large scale enforcement effort involving a large group of workers in a class action suit."

Students at Georgetown University in Washington D.C. and Washington University of St. Louis stage protests and convince administrators to provide a living wage for university employees

After a massive three-year boycott against Taco Bell, Yum Brands Inc.—the world's largest fast-food corporation and the chain's parent company—agrees to improve working conditions for its tomato pickers in **Florida**, increasing their wages by paying an extra penny per pound of tomatoes picked.

Maryland passes the Fair Share Health Care Act, requiring Wal-Mart and other large companies in the state to provide health benefits for employees. Throughout the year, Wal-Mart Watch and Wake Up Wal-Mart—who helped get the bill passed—wage a tireless campaign to reform Wal-Mart, forcing the retail behemoth into P.R. crisis mode.

Antiwar & Peace Movement

Chicago's City Council votes 29 to 9 to become the largest US city to pass the "Bring Them Home Now" resolution. The Windy City joins Philadelphia, San Francisco, Sacramento and more than fifty other municipalities that have called for withdrawal.

The Congressional Progressive Caucus—comprised of the strongest anti-war voices in Washington—gets in gear, hiring Hill veteran Bill Gould as its first full-time staffer.

The **United Methodist Church** and the Union for Reform Judaism pass resolutions calling for withdrawal.

Let's dance, sing and laugh on New Year's eve and celebrate these victories and the organized efforts behind them. But let's also admit that there's little time for pause. Much important work remains to be done and many critical battles loom ahead for all those who wish to rebuild America into a country we can be proud of once again. ■

LOCALIZATION

Controlling Boston's Finances Can We Re-Create and Fund Our City?

An overview of Boston City Councilor **Chuck Turner's** roundtable remarks in Burlington VT, 25 Sept 2005, by Dave Lewit, Dispatch editor, with input from Cynthia Ritscher, North Bridge AfD.

In the coming year the City of Boston will have about \$2.05 billion to work with, to take care of the needs of some 600,000 people living within the city limits—\$3400 per person, more or less—and many others who use or enjoy the city. Separately budgeted and funded are the Mass. Water Resources Authority, the Metropolitan Boston Transportation Authority ("T"), and the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) which controls much Boston land and property.

How much power do the people of Boston have regarding the plans and operations of Boston's needed and wanted functions? Not much indirectly through their elected city councilors, still less in direct discussion, and hardly any in direct decision making. Boston has a "strong mayor" system of government, whereby the city council can cut but not increase the spending for selected functions. The mayor and his departmental specialists get to frame the budget to start with, and he (or she) appoints—and presumably controls—most of the members of the School Committee and BRA board of directors.

The people get to read (on the web) proposed budget measures, and testify at limited neighborhood and City Hall hearings, only weeks before the Annual Budget must be approved by the Council and the Mayor. These meetings are held on weekdays—inconvenient for most wage workers. And their input is only advisory. Chuck Turner says that each year the people have significant input and power only with regard to the \$25 or 30 million (about 1.4 percent of the city's budget) provided through Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development each year mainly for low income housing. About a quarter of this goes to community organizations, while community meeting recommendations can be changed by city departments and the mayor's priorities. The people are concerned with many city government functions, and participate in CDBG discussions because they can make some difference.

The depth and intensity of this participation is far less than in Brazil's city of Porto Alegre where the people get to control roughly \$200 million dollars and elect a special Council of the Budget whose decisions cannot be changed by the city council and up until now have been treated as a mandate by the mayor. It is also far less than participation in budget-making in Concord and other town-meeting towns in Massachusetts, and somewhat less than in Burlington, Vermont—a very people-conscious city, somewhat hamstrung by Vermont law.

In all these cases the state is a shadow power—Massachusetts, Vermont, Brazil, the US. The state charters the city, sets limits on its spending and governance processes, and returns tax

revenues ("state aid") according to state-wide priorities and federal mandates.

State aid has been cut to less than a quarter of Boston's current revenues, and laws limit other sources so that more than half of revenues must come from real estate taxes—residential and commercial. Chuck described how he and citizen groups confronted the BRA, forcing them to agree to share with community groups the fees they get from leasing out city-owned properties. This may be a first step in democratizing BRA's structure and functioning, turning it from corporate benefit to people's control and benefit.

Corporate? Chuck explained how large developers are not held strictly to account for violating regulations because by law they must send money—according to the size of their developments—to the city's Job Trust Fund and its Affordable Housing Fund—and so, because of federal and state cutbacks to cities, the people develop a dependency upon these corporations. Thus the developers and the banks which finance them have developed inordinate influence on the direction of development of the city—forcing gentrification and higher tax assessments and rents, making continued local residence impossible for more and more people of lesser means.

Part of Chuck's dream is Martin Luther King's three-fold dream: end Racism, Militarism, and Materialism. The city could get the revenue it needs from its own citizens (and immigrants) if their resources were not so drained from top-down national war and greed, wasting so much human capital. Thus we must organize to confront US policy as well as state and local power. Chuck calls his program "Funding the Dream". He has drawn together many citizens and groups, focusing first on Boston's unemployed, who are now talking about creating their own jobs and worker-owned businesses.

Changes in state law governing Boston must be approved by the state legislature. Eventually we may develop the organization and power to re-charter the city—with more democratic structure and people-centered functioning.

Forbidden Ideas US Firms Help Internet Censorship in China

by William Falk, *New York Times*, 30 Dec 2005 (excerpt)

With more than 100 million users, the Internet is booming in China. The American Web giants Microsoft, Yahoo and Google have all grabbed a piece of the lucrative Chinese market—but only after agreeing to help the government censor speech on the Web. In providing portals or search engines, all three companies are abiding by the government's censorship of certain ideas and keywords, like "Tiananmen massacre," "Taiwanese independence," "corruption" and "democracy." Most foreign news sites are blocked. This year, Yahoo even supplied information that helped the government track and convict a political dissident who sent an e-mail message with forbidden thoughts from a Yahoo account; he was sentenced to 10 years in jail. "Business is business," said Jack Ma, Yahoo's chief in China. "It's not politics."

WI-FI and MEDIA JUSTICE

Hands Off Our Wi-Fi Network! Philadelphia Model City-Owned System

by Dianah Neff, news.com.com February 10, 2005

Why are Wireless Philadelphia and other city wireless programs such a big threat? More precisely, why do the big boys keep trying to kill our Wi-Fi networks? Tell me who among incumbent local exchange carriers (ILECs) —have deployed ubiquitous, high-speed wireless networks that support roaming/mobile capabilities. No ILEC. Who provides high-speed, broadband, ubiquitous services at dial-up rates for the underserved populations? No ILEC. Who is working to get equipment and training into the homes of low-income and disadvantaged portions of our community? Again, no ILEC.

The truth, of course, is that the incumbent local exchange carriers want unregulated monopolies over all telecommunications. No, they'd rather charge the city governments with having an unfair competitive advantage because of the governments' access to tax-exempt financing. But who says we are financing Wireless Philadelphia with tax-exempt funding? What about all the incentives the ILECs have received the past two decades? When was the last time they were elected to determine what is best for our communities? If they're really concerned about what is important to all members of the community, why haven't they built this type of network that meets community needs or approached a city to use their assets to build a high-speed, low-cost, ubiquitous network?

For all the money they've spent lobbying against municipal participation, they could have built the network themselves. The truth, of course, is that the incumbent local exchange carriers want unregulated monopolies over all telecommunications.

On this point, Dr. Mark N. Cooper, research director at the Consumer Federation of America, notes that about 95 percent of high-speed Internet access service customers are served by internet service providers (ISPs) associated with cable or phone companies. In a paper he wrote for the Journal of Telecommunications and High Technology Law, Cooper found that this dominance was the result of leveraging control of physical facilities, not the result of winning in a competitive market.

Maybe—just maybe—they should see what the City of Philadelphia is proposing before they attack. "Cable companies have not sold Internet service in any product and geographic market where they do not control a monopoly wire," Cooper wrote. "Telephone companies have done very poorly as ISPs in the dial-up market. Consequently, 95 percent of the customers in the dial-up market take their service from independent ISPs—treating AOL as an independent in the dial-up market. In other words, incumbent monopolists have a 95 percent market share where they can leverage their market power over their wires, and a 5 percent market share where they cannot."

Since the 1980s, ILECs have been talking about installing fiber as long as they were given incentives to protect their investments.

Now, in Pennsylvania, they've been given another 12 years, and they promise to upgrade some share of the homes passed to fiber optics if, and only if, they don't have to let competitive local exchange carriers (CLECs), Internet service providers or video program providers onto their network. (And by the way, let's prohibit governments from serving their community with



Dianah Neff

low-cost Internet access to strengthen economic development in the neighborhoods, to help overcome the digital divide or to help families with children better communicate with teachers and the administration to improve their kids' education.)

Who says the government is going to be the ISP or build the network? What about the old public-private partnership models? Maybe—just maybe—they should see what the City of Philadelphia is proposing before they attack.

Dianah Neff is chief information officer for the City of Philadelphia. The city plans to offer wireless broadband access to residents by the summer of 2006. NOTE: Pennsylvania legislators under pressure by industry lobbyists recently passed a law forbidding communities from owning their own wi-fi systems. Philadelphia was exempted.

Boston Wi-Fi To Grow Organically Menino Backs Privatization, Bit by Bit

by W. David Gardner, TechWeb.com, 20 May 2005

Boston has so much of a good thing—a bunch of public free Wi-Fi hotspots for starters—that it's unlikely to implement a citywide, municipally sponsored free Wi-Fi network. That, at any rate, seems to be the consensus that came out of the Boston Wi-Fi Summit meeting Thursday night. Mayor Thomas Menino said he looks forward to "a public-private partnership" to deliver wireless broadband to the city's residents. Almost on cue, two Wi-Fi deployments offering free public Internet access were switched on in two Boston neighborhoods, West Roxbury and Roslindale Thursday. Colubris Networks, which supplied the hardware and software for the two districts, plans to spread public access to other Boston neighborhoods.

"Boston isn't a city where you'll see a single widespread city-wide rollout like Philadelphia," said Michael Oh, founder of a Wi-Fi advocacy group that has promoted and installed some public access hotspots in Boston and neighboring Cambridge. Philadelphia and some other cities are installing single citywide Wi-Fi hotspots.

The Boston public Wi-Fi model has been growing organically, first via small neighborhood hotspots, then building gradually toward comprehensive coverage by multiple hotspots covering the entire city. "Right now, there's good coverage in the nicer neighborhoods and around the universities," said Oh, who pioneered early public hotspots in Boston. "A great place for future Wi-Fi will be in poorer neighborhoods."

Oh noted that the Boston approach should be acceptable to the current major providers of broadband in the city—Verizon Communications and Comcast. Those providers of DSL and cable broadband haven't spoken out directly on the issue, but they haven't supported the Philadelphia model in which the city is funding a single citywide Wi-Fi hotspot.

Bob Olson, director of marketing at Colubris Networks, said Colubris is providing the wireless hardware and software, as Wi-Fi is rolled out throughout the city. Boston's Main Streets, a unit in the city's Department of Neighborhood Development, is partnering with neighborhood businesses in 19 different districts to install public-access hotspots. The initial funding will be granted by the city, but major funding is expected to come from the sale of business advertisements on the neighborhood pages.

"We're rolling out neighborhoods one at a time," said Olson. "We're hoping to do all 19 districts. It's a similar program to the one we did in Washington." Colubris set up a network of public hotspots in the nation's capital. The company boasts some 1,000 customers and more than 30 percent of the hospitality market, which includes hotels and airports.

The Boston Summit has pulled together organizations and individuals from all walks of life. A charity, the Boston Foundation, has donated \$25,000 towards the effort to spread Wi-Fi throughout the city, while the city's Museum of Science has surveyed Wi-Fi implementations. In addition to Mayor Menino, Boston City Councilor John Tobin has been a Wi-Fi advocate. The deployment of the Colubris gear was carried out by Single Digits Inc. and Ascio Wireless. 📶

Ed. Note: Be wary of "public-private partnerships". With respect to old utilities like water/sewer, electric power, transit, and schools, private management means that the knowledge base of city employees is lost, regulation languishes, and pricing generates profit—not service or adaptability geared to public concerns. Companies may sell out, sticking taxpayers with bills and starting over. With respect to new enterprises like wi-fi, small companies may often be more inventive and eager to meet public goals, but as they grow and merge, the same monopoly problems arise as with old utilities. Cities must maintain control by legislative oversight, board election, effective regulation, or complete municipalization. The media and general public must have full accounts and access to information—e.g., in part via some of the 500+ cable TV channels.

One Laptop Per Child Attack of the Little Green Machines

by A. T. Marunda, <http://4africa.blogspot.com>, 5 Dec 2005

The US\$100 laptop prototype that has been subject to global debates, was unveiled at the World Summit of the Information Society in Tunis by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and MIT Media Lab Chairman Nicholas Negroponte.

Debates have focused on the relevance of the lime-green machine to children in the developing nations when access to

clean water & health are still a dream for many. Other potential problems raised are affordability vs quality of the laptop, theft and creation of a grey/black market of the laptop and availability of the necessary support infrastructure. However, these debates have not dampened the enthusiasm of US corporations, such as Advanced Micro Devices; Brightstar; Google; News Corporation; Nortel Networks and Red Hat providing active participation in the One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) project. While initial discussions have been held with China; Brazil; Thailand; Egypt and South Africa with regards to distribution.

There is no doubt with advancing technology that a US\$100 laptop will eventually be built. No doubt that African governments and parents, will continue to look at every opportunity to sacrifice US\$100 for their children to obtain the green machine. There is also no doubt that it will also create a "haves and have nots" scenario among African children.



Hand-powered laptop requires wi-fi to connect with internet

The big doubt is whether the green machine, with its envisaged distribution strategy will be useful to the African child's education. Will an African child, really be able to "learn learning" through independent interaction and exploration? While this pedagogical thinking is the way forward for learning in the future, it is better explored and achieved through web services such as Google Scholar & FLE3 and mobile services such as South Africa's MobiDic.

Where does the teacher fit in the green machine initiative? Teachers in Africa work under difficult conditions and circumstances (e.g poor salaries & benefits, lack of learning resources). Yet, in spite of these limitations they have done a good job of transferring the required knowledge to students.

What if we empowered the teacher? What if the core of the initiative was "One Laptop Per Teacher"? If anyone is going to change the way the African child learns—it will be the teacher. These green machines should be first distributed to teachers in order for them to create learning objects and curricula that will be relevant to the African child.

By building the capacity of the teachers, every African child has hope of being touched by learning objects applicable to him/herself. Either by a book, handout, weblog, citation and/or thesis that a teacher has written that are accessible through classrooms, libraries, mobile devices, computer labs, internet cafes and village information centres. ■

CENSORING THE INTERNET (Continued from Page 1)

of 9-11, backroom deals between the Federal government and the Internet service industry, and the Patriot Act have ushered in a new era of Internet censorship, something just half a decade ago computer programmers averred was impossible given the nature of the web. They were wrong, dead wrong.

Take for example of what recently occurred when two journalists were taking on the phone about a story that appeared on Google News. The story was about a Christian fundamentalist move in Congress to use U.S. military force in Sudan to end genocide in Darfur. The story appeared on the English Google News site in Qatar. But the very same Google News site when accessed simultaneously in Washington, DC failed to show the article. This censorship is accomplished by *geolocation filtering*: the restriction or modifying of web content based on the geographical region of the user. In addition to countries, such filtering can now be implemented for states, cities, and even individual IP [internet] addresses.

With reports in the Swedish newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* today that the United States has transmitted a Homeland Security Department "no fly" list of 80,000 suspected terrorists to airport authorities around the world, it is not unreasonable that a "no [or restricted] surfing/emailing" list has been transmitted to Internet Service Providers around the world. The systematic disruptions of web sites and email strongly suggests that such a list exists.

News reports on CIA prisoner flights and secret prisons are disappearing from Google and other search engines like Alltheweb as fast as they appear. Here now, gone tomorrow is the name of the game.

Big Providers Selectively Control Information Superhighway

Google is systematically failing to list and link to articles that contain explosive information about the Bush administration, the war in Iraq, Al Qaeda, and U.S. political scandals. But Google is not alone in working closely to stifle Internet discourse. America On Line, Microsoft, Yahoo and others are slowly turning the Internet into an information superhighway dominated by barricades, toll booths, off-ramps that lead to dead ends, choke points, and security checks.

America On Line is the most egregious in stifling Internet freedom. A former AOL employee noted how AOL and other Internet Service Providers cooperate with the Bush administration in censoring email. The Patriot Act gave federal agencies the power to review information to the packet level and AOL was directed by agencies like the FBI to do more than sniff the subject line. The AOL term of service (TOS) has gradually been expanded to grant AOL virtually universal power regarding information. Many AOL users are likely unaware of the elastic clause, which says they will

be bound by the current TOS and any TOS revisions which AOL may elect at any time in the future.

Essentially, AOL users once agreed to allow the censorship and non-delivery of their email. Microsoft has similar requirements for Hotmail as do Yahoo and Google for their respective e-mail services.

There are also many cases of Google's search engine failing to list and link to certain information. According to a number of web site administrators who carry anti-Bush political content,

A Petition for Publicly Owned Wi-Fi

The time has come for the Town of Chapel Hill to build a free, community-owned, public municipal network. The network should have wireless access and provide an open, unfiltered, and unmonitored connection to the Internet available to ALL people. It must be maintained by a local nonprofit for the people of Chapel Hill. Not by a private business or corporation.

We request that the Chapel Hill Town Council act swiftly to bring this service to the people.

Read 42 citizen comments in email conversation at orangepolitics.org/2005/12/sign-the-free-public-wifi-petition/ It's a real education on public concerns about cost, coverage, fairness, alternatives, etc., of WiFi.

this situation has become more pronounced in the last month. In addition, many web site administrators are reporting a dramatic drop-off in hits to their sites, according to their web statistic analyzers. Adding to their woes is the frequency at which spam viruses are being spoofed as coming from their web site addresses.

Government disruption of the political side of the web can easily be hidden amid hyped mainstream news media reports of the latest "boutique" viruses and worms, reports that have more to do with the sales of anti-virus software and services than actual long-term disruption of banks, utilities, or airlines.

Internet Censorship in the US: No Longer a Prediction

Google, Microsoft, Yahoo, and Cisco Systems have honed their skills at Internet censorship for years in places like China, Jordan, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Vietnam, and other countries. They have learned well. They will be the last to admit they have imported their censorship skills into the United States at the behest of the Bush regime. Last year, the Bush-Cheney campaign blocked international access to its web site—www.georgewbush.com—for unspecified "security reasons."

Only those in the Federal bureaucracy and the companies involved are in a position to know what deals have been made and how extensive Internet censorship has become. They owe full disclosure to their customers and their fellow citizens. ■

in Mode 4 of GATS—that is, get the US and EU to agree to the entry of more professionals from developing countries? As it turned out, it decided not to press Washington on this.

“New Quad” Screws Poorer Countries

It is a matter of debate whether the final agreement will result in a net gain for Brazil and India, though if the balance ends up with a net loss, this would likely be smaller than for the less advanced developing countries. However, the main gain for Brazil and India lay not in the impact of the agreement on their economies but in the affirmation of their new role as power brokers within the WTO.

With the emergence of the G 20 during the WTO ministerial negotiations in Cancun in 2003, the EU and the US were put on notice that the old structure of power and decision-making at the WTO was obsolete. New players had to be accommodated into the elite. The circle of power had to be expanded to get the organization back on its feet and moving. The EU and US’s invitation to Brazil and India to be part, along with Australia, of the “Five Interested Parties (FIPs),” was a key step in this direction, and it was agreement among the FIPs that solved the impasse in the agriculture negotiations, which led, in turn, to the Framework Agreement at the General Council meeting in July 2004.

In the lead-up of the Hong Kong ministerial sessions, Brazil and India’s new role as power brokers between the developed and developing world was affirmed with the creation of a new informal grouping known as the “New Quad”. This formation, which included the EU, US, Brazil, and India, played the decisive role in setting the agenda and the direction of the negotiations. Its main objective in Hong Kong was to save the WTO. And the role of Brazil and India was to extract the assent of the developing countries to an unbalanced agreement that would make this possible in the face of the reluctance of the EU and US to make substantive concessions in agriculture. Delivering this consent was to be the proof that Brazil and India were “responsible” global actors. It was the price that they had to pay for full membership in new, enlarged power structure.

It took a lot of lobbying before and during Hong Kong, with both governments putting their reputation as leaders of the developing world on the line, but they succeeded in getting everybody, though not without some grumbling, to assent to a bad deal. It was no mean feat for it involved:

- getting the least developed countries to agree to a “development package” that consisted mainly of a loophole-ridden provision for the “duty free” and “quota free” entry of their products into developed country markets and a deceptively named “aid for trade” deal that would consist partly of loans to enable them to make their economic regulations WTO-consistent, increasing their indebtedness in the process;
- cajoling the West African cotton producers to accept a deal whose main content was giving the US a whole extra year to eliminate export subsidies that it should have eliminated a year and a half ago, following a WTO decision against these subsidies, and which totally ignored their demand for compensation for the enor-

mous damage these subsidies had inflicted on their economies;

- coaxing the holdouts in the services negotiations—Indonesia, Philippines, South Africa, Venezuela, and Cuba—to give up their opposition to Annex C of the draft declaration, which stipulated plurilateral negotiations; and
- neutralizing the more dissatisfied members of the so-called “NAMA 11,” (of which Brazil and India were themselves members) which wanted to tie the North’s demands for a fast pace of liberalization in industrial and fishery tariffs to the North’s concessions in agriculture.

Mutual Admiration Club

The final G 20 press conference in the late afternoon of December 18 was notable for its lack of substance and for its symbolism. As if to preempt hard questions on whether the ministerial text represented a good deal for developing countries, Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim repeatedly claimed “We have a date,” referring to the 2013 phase-out date for export subsidies. Then Amorim and Indian Commerce and Industry Minister Kamal Nath engaged in a round of backslapping, congratulating one another for doing a great job in coming out with an agreement that protected the interests of developing countries. Then, with so many of those in attendance poised to ask questions, Amorim hurriedly cut short the press conference and quickly left the room with Kamal Nath, ostensibly for another meeting but obviously so as not to be on the line of fire from skeptical reporters and NGO representatives.

At the closing session of Sixth Ministerial, Pascal Lamy, the director general, said that in Hong Kong, “the balance of power has tilted in favor of developing countries.” The statement was not entirely cynical and untrue. The grain of truth in his statement was that India and Brazil, the big boys of the developing world, had become part of the big boys’ club that governs the WTO.

Cooptation Enables WTO to Survive for Now

It is paradoxical that the G 20, whose formation captured the imagination of the developing world during the Cancun ministerial, has ended up being the launching pad for India and Brazil’s integration into the WTO power structure. But this is hardly unusual in history. Vilfredo Pareto, the Italian thinker, referred to history being the “graveyard of aristocracies” that took a hard line against change in power relations. To Pareto, the most successful elites are those that manage to coopt the leaders of the mass insurgency that set out to remove them for power and enlarge the power elite while preserving the structure of the system. Though divided on agriculture, the US and the EU had as a common priority since the collapse of the Cancun ministerial the survival of the WTO, and they successfully managed a strategy of cooptation that snatched victory from the jaws of defeat in Hong Kong.

Before the events in Hong Kong, the most striking recent cases of cooptation involved the Worker’s Party-led government of President Luis Inacio Lula

(Continued on Page 8)

FLASH 6 Jan 05

Water Privatization Contract Voided People Win: US, Spanish Investors Get Zip

The people of Cochabamba, Bolivia, and water-guardians everywhere can celebrate a victory over Bechtel (US) and Abengoa (Spain)—transnational corporations suing Cochabamba for \$25million for breaking its water privatization contract. The International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes (secret WTO court, Washington) approved a settlement of a token 2 bolivianos (\$0.30) for those corporations to turn over their shares of Aguas de Tunari, the ill-fated private water company.

The victory was spearheaded by Coordinadora del Agua, the grassroots organization which came together in 2000 "to resist the privatization of all water in Bolivia, and in particular the city water of Cochabamba, imposed by the World Bank and obsequiously organized by the Bolivian government.

"After days of street blockades involving practically the whole population and street battles (in which the police were firing live ammunition), the US multinational Bechtel was thrown out of the country, parliament was obliged to revoke the privatization law. In Cochabamba the coordinadora is now self-managing the water of the city. First result, the water company is for the first time making a tidy profit, while charging a tiny fraction of the rates that Bechtel wanted!" ◀

Alito Authored Bush Dictatorial Method Is Senate Set to Cap Fascist Supreme "Court"?

by Sidney Blumenthal, *Salon.com*, 6 Jan 06 (excerpt)

Last week, when Bush signed the military appropriations bill containing the amendment forbidding torture that he and Vice President Cheney had fought against, he added his own "signing statement" to it. It amounted to a waiver, authorized by him alone, that he could and would disobey this law whenever he chose.

Not coincidentally, the legal author of this presidential strategy for accreting power was none other than the young Samuel Alito, in 1986 deputy assistant attorney general in the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel. Alito's view on unfettered executive power, many close observers believe, was decisive in Bush's nomination of him to the Supreme Court.

These *coups de main* [lit: attacks from the hand] not only have overwhelmed the other institutions of government but have taken place almost without notice. "This *tour de force* [stroke of genius] has been carried out in such a systematic and careful fashion that few in Congress, the media, or the scholarly community are aware that anything has happened at all." ●*

WTO Dealmakers (Continued from Page 7)

da Silva in Brazil and the Congress- led coalition government in India. Both came to power with anti-neoliberal platforms. But in power, both have become the most effective stabilizers of neo-

liberal programs, with both enjoying the support of the International Monetary Fund, the transnational corporate lobby, and Washington. It is not unreasonable to assume that there is a connection between the domestic record of these governments and their performance on the global stage in Hong Kong.

Walden Bello is executive director of the Bangkok-based research and advocacy institute Focus on the Global South.

☞ **Evo Morales**, newly-elected indigenous president of Bolivia, is economically more likely to be like Brazil's President Lula than like Cuba's Castro, despite the crowd-pleasing rhetoric. That is, his history of dealing differently with different interests suggests that he will accommodate IMF and existing US-owned gas corporations. —Ed.

ACTION ALERTS

Sat. 14 Jan. 7-12pm. Boston. Party for Another World. Send-off for Boston Delegation to World Social Forum, Venezuela. Live music, dancing, cash bar, delicious food—"If I can't dance I don't want your revolution" ☺ 33 Harrison Ave., Chinatown. Info: 617 566-2861 (English), 617 325-7609 (Espan) \$\$Help\$\$

Mon. 23 Jan. 8-10pm. Cambridge. Poetry to Fund the Dream. Gary Hicks, Diana Saenz, others. Your \$12 goes to Chuck Turner initiatives (see this issue, above, page 3) on employment, ex-con rights...Poetry Theater, 47 Palmer St, nr Harvard Coop. Info: Richard, 857-928-5557 or richardcam@aol.com

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