

BCA Dispatch

Newsletter of the
Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy

May
2007

I see President George W. Bush suffering the "delusions of omnipotence and omniscience" that invariably accompany the concentration of great power in too small a space... and I think of the last Ming emperor, enfolded in the cocoon of his concubinate, believing that he was the Son of Heaven, informed by his corps of eunuchs that he could command the oceans with a gentle scratching of his vermilion pencil or by subtle movements of his yellow parasol.

—Lewis H. Lapham

CHAPTER NEWS (Continued on Page 12)

Chapter Calendar

* * **Turning from Empire** * *

Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy's next meeting will be on **Wednesday, May 23, at 6:45 p.m. at Cambridge Friends Meeting house**, 5 Longfellow Park (10-minute walk from Harvard Square T station, west on Brattle St.), Cambridge.

— Agenda —

Part I (6:50): Chapter business. Continuing discussion of priorities and projects. Types and timing of working groups and general meetings. Leadership and roles...for you!

Part II (7:30): Video: **The Great Turning**, with **David Korten**. PowerPoint and discussion—From Empire to Earth Community. "We are the cutting edge of a national supermajority." Korten worked for World Bank and USAID around the globe. Changed, he wrote *When Corporations Rule the World*, *The Post-Corporate World*, and now *The Great Turning*. See YES! Mag.

Open to All — Refreshments

Brave New England

Part II: Community and Governance

by Dave Lewit, Alliance for Democracy, 15 May 2007

OUR HORIZON OF DESIRE reveals not only the economy we want, but the social system which supports it. Last month we looked at features of such an economy. Here we flesh out a democratic social system—the ways we can stay connected with one another, and the system or systems of governance that can realize and promote that dream.

Information

Essential for any democracy is free communication of information and opinion. During the second quarter of the 20th century the totalitarian governments of Italy, Japan, Germany, and the Soviet Union strictly controlled telephone communication and mass media. Public gatherings were prohibited, unless official. In the third quarter newly-emerged China and the satellites of the Soviet Union did the same. However, in the burgeoning US empire—expanding militarily, economically, and culturally—the media remained relatively free, with telephones and travel accessible to most citizens.

In the fourth quarter Reagan's and (Continued on Page 8 >>)



Ex-Candidate Royal US acting pres. Bush Pres-Elect Sarkozy

France: Racist Plutocrat Elected Many Oppose Sarkozy, but Weak and Divided

by Doug Ireland, direland.typepad.com, 6 May 2007

IN THE THIRD CONSECUTIVE DEFEAT FOR THE FRENCH LEFT in a presidential election, Nicolas Sarkozy has been chosen to lead France with a comfortable 53 percent of the vote, as the pre-election opinion polls had predicted. His Socialist opponent, Segolene Royal, received 47 percent. A whopping record 82 percent of French voters went to the polls today to give an unambiguous victory to the autocratic, demagogic, hard-right nationalist Sarkozy, who campaigned on promises of a "rupture" with France's mixed economy and its welfare state, one of the most extensive in Europe.

The crowd in the hall where Sarkozy declared victory after the polls closed repeatedly sang the national anthem, *La Marseillaise*—with its famous xenophobic refrain, "Marchons, marchons! Qu'un sang impur abreuve nos sillons!" (*Translation: Let us march, let us march, May impure blood soak the furrows of our fields.*) And Sarkozy's campaign was marked by incessant appeals to racism and the fear of immigrants, symbolized by his adoption of a slogan used by the neo-fascist leader Jean-Marie Le Pen, "France, love it or leave it," and by his proposal for a new "Ministry of Immigration and National Identity," which was widely criticized by the left and by anti-racist groups for amalgamating the two concepts and suggesting a fundamental opposition between the two.

In fact, the campaign strategy of "Sarko," as he is referred to in France, was based on appeals to the electorate of Le Pen (right) and his Front National party, which in the last presidential election in 2002 had beaten the Socialists for the place in the run-off against then-president Jacques Chirac. That lurch to the right five years ago by a significant portion of formerly left voters was confirmed by today's vote, in which more than two-thirds of former Le Pen voters—many of them from the one-time Communist-dominated working class suburbs—went for Sarkozy, according to the exit polls.

Indeed, as the weekly *Le Canard Enchaîné*—which has the best insider political gossip—reported a couple of weeks ago, a

Sarkozy confident of victory had already discussed his long-term political strategy for remaining in power—for, as *Le Canard* revealed, he plans to integrate the Front National into his ruling UMP party in his second term, uniting the hard-right and the neo-fascist extreme right in an alliance imitating that operated by the Italian Silvio Berlusconi with the "post-fascist" Alleanza Nazionale of Gianfranco Fini, who was Berlusconi's vice-premier.

In his victory remarks within minutes after TV declared him the winner, Sarkozy—frequently referred to in the French press as "Sarko l'américain" for his aggressively Atlanticist views and his sympathy for Bush—promised a cheering audience of supporters that "the American people can count on our friendship" and that the war on terrorism "is of primary importance in the world, it is a fight that will be our fight" under his leadership. In fact, President Bush called Sarkozy within a few minutes after the polls closed to congratulate him, according to a report on France 2 public television. (At left, a widely-circulated satirical poster, based on the French title of the movie "Fatal Attraction," showing Sarkozy during a visit with George W. Bush in the White House. This famous photo was widely commented upon in France, for it shows Sarko the same height as Bush—even though the diminutive Sarkozy is several inches shorter than the U.S. president. Sarko had worn lifts in his shoes for the photo-op meeting to make them seem of equal height. No wonder the iconoclastic centrist magazine *Marianne* recently portrayed Sarko on its cover as Napoleon, another tiny authoritarian.)

But in reality, what Sarkozy's victory means for France is something closer to the so-called "Reagan Revolution" in the U.S. that began in 1981 the process of dismantling and destroying the institutional New Deal legacy of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Chirac was a Gaullist, and the political heritage of General Charles De Gaulle, who led France from 1958 to 1969, included a vigorously statist approach to the economy and defense of a wide series of social protection and social safety-net measures that had been instituted by the left's Popular Front government in the mid-1930s, and which were renewed and extended by post-war governments dominated by the political activists of the Resistance movement to Nazi occupation, who had a conception of government as a guarantor of economic security for all. Sarkozy is of a new generation than his predecessor Chirac and, ideologically, is not a Gaullist—but rather Sarko is in phase with the "Chicago school" of economics led by Milton Friedman.

Sarko believes in minimal government, a slimmed-down state that interferes as little as possible in the economy, an aggressively laissez-faire approach that is dear to the economic barons of the MEDEF, the French business leaders' association, whose tycoons were solidly behind Sarkozy's candidacy. Sarkozy has already promised to, in effect, abolish the ISF (the tax on large fortunes), accord more tax breaks to big business and the upper-middle-classes, and make more cuts in the state-run national health system (declared by a U.N. survey to be the finest in the world in terms of delivery of health services and quality of care.) Sarkozy's economic program is designed to help the already-privileged classes retain and extend their socio-economic position, to the detriment of the have-nots (the massive pro-Sarkozy vote in the upper-income neighborhoods today confirms that they understood Sarko's message to them.) And he has promised a major down-sizing of the civil service employed by state agencies.

Sarkozy is a skilled demagogue who, on the stump, tried to give the impression (like Bush's first presidential campaign did) that he was a "compassionate conservative." But Sarkozy's

so-called "compassion" is strictly rhetorical—his concrete economic orientation is bound to deepen the gulf between the haves and the have nots, to aggravate what Jacques Chirac—in a famous phrase from his 1995 re-election campaign—had baptized the "social fracture."

Sarko's speech tonight had accents of Petain, when he declared that his election represented "a break with the past," and that he intended "to rehabilitate work, authority, morality, respect and merit." Another odious moment in Sarkozy's victory peroration came when he proclaimed that France would no longer be a country of "repenting"—this was a dig at Chirac, who was the first French president to apologize for the crimes committed by the Vichy French state against Jews under the Nazi occupation, and who'd sent an ambassador to apologize to the Algerians for the French massacre of thousands of civilians in the city of Setif that had triggered the bloody war for Algerian independence from France's colonial rule. It was an ugly moment in Sarko's frightening speech, and a bow to Le Pen's notorious anti-Semitism, and Sarko's "break with the past" means a closing of the books on the most unsavory parts of France's recent history.

Life for the have-nots will become even more difficult under Sarkozy's hard-right, anti-immigrant, law-and-order society. He has announced "zero tolerance" for illegal immigration, has deported tens of thousands of immigrants during his two terms as Interior Minister and split up immigrant families while making it tougher for them to become French citizens. He has proposed strict minimum sentences for all sorts of crimes, thus removing all discretion from French judges, and France's already-crowded prisons will soon be overflowing with expanded, and younger, populations. French prisons, like ours, are training institutes for criminals, and by sending ever-larger numbers of young people to them for petty offenses Sarko will, in fact, be manufacturing new generations of hardened voyous (thugs in French.) (Above left, Sarko as his puppet character in the popular satirical TV show "Les Guignols," showing him as the Chilean dictator Pinochet. Above his head, the balloon has him saying, "Too much liberty kills liberty.") In 1986, I was in Paris during the legislative elections that made Jacques Chirac prime minister for the first time—and the next day, the police—who sensed that the right's victory had unleashed them—displayed an openly hostile and noticeably new aggressive posture toward people of color in the streets. I've had reports from French friends that the same thing happened after Sarkozy's strong, lead showing in the first round of this presidential election two weeks ago. Now, with Sarkozy's election, one can expect that the forces of law-and-order will consider that all restraints on them have been removed, and it will be more unpleasant than ever to be an Arab or black in France, no matter how many generations one's family has lived there or how perfectly one speaks French. (Remember Sarkozy's hard-line program of repression during the October 2005 ghetto riots against racism, exclusion, and unemployment that had all France in flames?)

Sarkozy absolutely hates the left—in part because the Communists burned his aristocratic family's chateau in Hungary (from whence his family emigrated to France) in 1944. And, in a major campaign speech just days before the election, Sarkozy surprisingly devoted 20 minutes of his discourse to a violent denunciation of the May 1968 student-worker revolt (Sarko was only 14 at the time of that rebellion.). The heritage of May '68, Sarko thundered, must be "liquidated." He blamed it for a generalized attitude of "laxisme," for France's having become a country "in which work has no value, in which people think they

can do anything they feel like doing, in which people are lazy," and on and on. May '68 was, of course, the fountain of social ferment that led to the sexual revolution, to women's liberation and the legalization of abortion, the gay liberation movement and the eventual repeal of laws criminalizing homosexuality, the relaxation of censorship laws, and a whole series of other cultural changes that opened up a stuffy, paternalistic, arteriosclerotic French society. But May '68 was also a general strike by 11 million French workers that gained union recognition in many factories, higher wages, and that won a reinforcement of the social safety net in an agreement (negotiated on behalf of then-President Georges Pompidou by a young Jacques Chirac) that became known as "les accords de la rue de Grenelle" (the agreement of Grenelle Street). What was unstated in Sarkozy's anti-May '68 speech was that all that sort of thing, too, must be "liquidated." Dark days are ahead for those who love liberty, equality, and fraternity in France. (Continued in next column)---- >>

2008 War Budget: \$900b +

A Bipartisan Feeding Frenzy

by Winslow T. Wheeler, Center for Defense Information,
4 March 2007 (excerpts)

President Bush's request for a Pentagon budget for fiscal 2008 (FY 08) is "\$481 billion"...

To determine total U.S. security costs, add \$142 billion to cover the anticipated costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan... Add \$17 billion requested for nuclear weapons costs in the Department of Energy; add another \$5 billion for miscellaneous defense costs in other agencies, such as the General Services Administration's National Defense Stockpile, the Selective Service, and some Coast Guard and international FBI costs; and you get a grand total of \$647 billion for 2008...

Also include homeland security costs beyond the ones already in the Defense Department—add \$36 billion.

In addition, there are other essential U.S. security costs in the budget of the State Department for diplomacy, arms aid to allies, U.N. peacekeeping, reconstruction aid for Iraq and Afghanistan and foreign aid for other countries [*Israel!* —Ed.]; add all or most of the International Affairs budget—\$38 billion.

The human costs of past and current wars—add another \$84 billion for the Department of Veterans Affairs. Add the share of annual payments on the interest of the national debt that can be attributed to the Defense Department—\$75 billion. There's more—various defense-related costs, such as costs to the Treasury for military retirement, are distributed all over the federal government.

The total for costs identified here come to \$878 billion for 2008...

The chiefs of the military services are just now sending to Congress what they describe as their list of "unfunded requirements" (also known as "wish lists") for additional programs to be added to the FY 08 Defense Department budget...The total to be added is "only" \$36.5 billion...

Who should pay? The Democrats in Congress are unlikely to make any tough choices. Neither will the Republicans. None of them will tell us how they will pay for the gigantic national security budget.

On the other hand, their decision will be very clear to our grandchildren...

Ed. Note: ...unless those grandchildren disavow it, and "settle" with the heirs of those greedy war contractors and sad vets!

What explains the Socialist candidate's decline in the polls? Ten days ago, Segolene Royal unveiled her new campaign platform designed to jump-start her sagging campaign: her "100 Propositions" (a notion borrowed from the late Socialist President Francois Mitterrand's "110 Propositions" in his winning 1981 campaign) which she proposed as a "Presidential Contract" with the French electorate. Segolene presented her "Contract" at rally of 8,000 Socialist Party activists bussed to a Paris suburb and carefully chosen to applaud every comma in her endless, two-hour speech. (She even chose the same man who had run the kick-off rally for Mitterrand's '81 campaign to stage-manage what was billed as her "comeback:")...

Her "100 Propositions" turned out to be a mix of expensive promises to poll-chosen slices of the electorate (something for the young, something for the elderly, something for the teachers, and the like) which voters know quite well there is no money in the national treasury (groaning under a crushing national debt) to pay for. She reiterated some of her Right-Lite law-and-order proposals, like putting the military in charge of juvenile delinquents, and—as an avowed admirer of Tony Blair*—enunciated a number of Blairite, Third Way, pro-capitalist themes, as when she declared that "We need to reconcile the French with business" (with tens of thousands of French workers being laid off or fired each month after plant-closings by rich French-based multinationals who move their factories to low-wage countries, that was a discordant note to strike with the left electorate.) And the rest of her speech was a lot of pretty but vague rhetoric cooked up by her ghost-writers and her ad-agency pals to con various constituencies.

—Doug Ireland, shortly before the runoff election

* Blair is resigning the prime ministership as of 27 June, next month.

...The Socialist Party is a bourgeois organization, with no relation to Marxism whatsoever. It has failed to find an answer to the challenges of a society marked by racist resentment against immigrants, divisions among regions, and deep skepticism directed at Paris politicians and intellectuals.

—Julio Godoy, IPS

Letter to Our Representatives

Boston 12 May 2007

Dear Mike (Rep. Capuano): [*Sen. Kennedy*] [*Sen. Kerry*]

As your constituent, I thought we were turning around the NAFTA-corporate advantage over us regular citizens. Now here come Charlie Rangel (Dem chair of Ways & Means) and Max Baucus (Dem chair of Finance) with the blessing of Dem Speaker Nancy Pelosi—cutting a pro-corporate, anti-union, anti-consumer, anti-democratic deal with Bush. Supposedly pro-labor and fairness provisions are nullified by phony enforcement provisions (US Chamber of Commerce is pleased). Please read David Sirota's analyses at TomPaine.com.

I am active in the local and national Alliance for Democracy. We are keeping our members informed. We want you to stand up against this sham deal. God forbid, it opens the way to Fast Track and accelerates the Race to the Bottom, along with grinding war and global climate change. WHAT IS WRONG HERE? Are we going to let our know-nothing GOP colleagues and their Dem friends bleed us dead before we wake up?

PLEASE hold hearings with plenty of time for excluded progressive advocates for labor, environment, and citizen-law patriotism to testify. Do not let this back-handed assault on our society and local economies slip through. Do not betray the hopeful voters who put a Dem majority in the House and Senate.

Trade law is key to recovery from corporate "investors" hoodwinking us with "free trade" rhetoric, and spoiling the popular advances of 70 years. Arcane?— Well, make it Easy! Look out for the Peru and Panama Free Trade Trojan Horses.

I look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely, *Dave Lewit*, Editor, BCA Dispatch

Co-chair, AfD campaign, Corporate Globalization & Positive Alternatives

Au Revoir, "River"

Iraqi Family Forced Into Homelessness

by River, *Baghdad Burning* (blog), 26 April 2007

Four months ago (*Dispatch*, Jan 2007) we published this young woman's incisive account of the Saddam hanging. Now the American occupiers have arranged the building of a concrete wall around a certain district of Baghdad. River and her family are planning to leave the country. —Ed.

The Great Wall of Segregation—which is the wall the current Iraqi government is building (with the support and guidance of the Americans). It's a wall that is intended to separate and isolate what is now considered the largest 'Sunni' area in Baghdad- let no one say the Americans are not building anything. According to plans the Iraqi puppets and Americans cooked up, it will 'protect' A'adhamiya, a residential/mercantile area that the current Iraqi government and their death squads couldn't empty of Sunnis.

The wall, of course, will protect no one. I sometimes wonder if this is how the concentration camps began in Europe. The Nazi government probably said, "Oh look—we're just going to protect the Jews with this little wall here- it will be difficult for people to get into their special area to hurt them!" And yet, it will also be difficult to get out.

The Wall is the latest effort to further break Iraqi society apart. Promoting and supporting civil war isn't enough, apparently—Iraqis have generally proven to be more tenacious and tolerant than their mullahs, ayatollahs, and Vichy leaders. It's time for America to physically divide and conquer- like Berlin before the wall came down or Palestine today. This way, they can continue chasing Sunnis out of "Shia areas" and Shia out of "Sunni areas".

I always hear the Iraqi pro-war crowd interviewed on television from foreign capitals (they can only appear on television from the safety of foreign capitals because I defy anyone to be publicly pro-war in Iraq). They refuse to believe that their religiously inclined, sectarian political parties fueled this whole Sunni/Shia conflict. They refuse to acknowledge that this situation is a direct result of the war and occupation. They go on and on about Iraq's history and how Sunnis and Shia were always in conflict and I hate that. I hate that a handful of expats who haven't been to the country in decades pretend to know more about it than people actually living there.

I remember Baghdad before the war- one could live anywhere. We didn't know what our neighbors were- we didn't care. No one asked about religion or sect. No one bothered with what was considered a trivial topic: are you Sunni or Shia? You only asked something like that if you were uncouth and backward. Our lives revolve around it now. Our existence depends on hiding it or highlighting it- depending on the group of masked men who stop you or raid your home in the middle of the night.

On a personal note, we've finally decided to leave. I guess I've known we would be leaving for a while now. We discussed it as a family dozens of times. At first, someone would suggest it tentatively because, it was just a preposterous idea- leaving ones home and extended family- leaving ones country- and to what? To where?

Since last summer, we had been discussing it more and more. It was only a matter of time before what began as a suggestion—a last case scenario—soon took on solidity and developed into a plan. For the last couple of months, it has only

been a matter of logistics. Plane or car? Jordan or Syria? Will we all leave together as a family? Or will it be only my brother and I at first?

After Jordan or Syria- where then? Obviously, either of those countries is going to be a transit to something else. They are both overflowing with Iraqi refugees, and every single Iraqi living in either country is complaining of the fact that work is difficult to come by, and getting a residency is even more difficult. There is also the little problem of being turned back at the border. Thousands of Iraqis aren't being let into Syria or Jordan- and there are no definite criteria for entry, the decision is based on the whim of the border patrol guard checking your passport.

An airplane isn't necessarily safer, as the trip to Baghdad International Airport is in itself risky and travelers are just as likely to be refused permission to enter the country (Syria and Jordan) if they arrive by airplane. And if you're wondering why Syria or Jordan, because they are the only two countries that will let Iraqis in without a visa. Following up visa issues with the few functioning embassies or consulates in Baghdad is next to impossible.

So we've been busy. Busy trying to decide what part of our lives to leave behind. Which memories are dispensable? We, like many Iraqis, are not the classic refugees- the ones with only the clothes on their backs and no choice. We are choosing to leave because the other option is simply a continuation of what has been one long nightmare- stay and wait and try to survive.

On the one hand, I know that leaving the country and starting a new life somewhere else- as yet unknown- is such a huge thing that it should dwarf every trivial concern. The funny thing is that it's the trivial that seems to occupy our lives. We discuss whether to take photo albums or leave them behind. Can I bring along a stuffed animal I've had since the age of four? Is there room for E.'s guitar? What clothes do we take? Summer clothes? The winter clothes too? What about my books? What about the CDs, the baby pictures?

The problem is that we don't even know if we'll ever see this stuff again. We don't know if whatever we leave, including the house, will be available when and if we come back. There are moments when the injustice of having to leave your country, simply because an imbecile got it into his head to invade it, is overwhelming. It is unfair that in order to survive and live normally, we have to leave our home and what remains of family and friends... And to what?

It's difficult to decide which is more frightening—car bombs and militias, or having to leave everything you know and love, to some unspecified place for a future where nothing is certain.

River's statement was floated at riverbendblog.blogspot.com and posted at informationclearinghouse.info



9/11 Conspiracies

Really, Mr Monbiot, Which View Is Cowardly?

by David Ray Griffin, *Information Clearing House*, 7 March 2007

IN "BAYONETING A SCARECROW: THE 9/11 CONSPIRACY THEORIES ARE A COWARD'S CULT." (*Guardian*, February 20), George Monbiot accuses members of the 9/11 truth movement of being "morons" and "idiots" who believe in "magic." Having in his previous attack—"A 9/11 conspiracy virus is sweeping the world," *Guardian*, February 6—called me this movement's "high priest," he now describes my 9/11 writing as a "concatenation of ill-attested nonsense."

If my books are moronic nonsense, then people who have endorsed them must be morons. Would Monbiot really wish to apply this label to Michel Chossudovsky, Richard Falk, Ray McGovern, Michael Meacher, John McMurtry, Marcus Raskin, Rosemary Ruether, Howard Zinn, and the late Rev. William Sloane Coffin, who, after a stint in the CIA, became one of America's leading civil rights, anti-war, and anti-nuclear activists?

If anyone who believes that 9/11 was an inside job is by definition an idiot, then Monbiot would have to sling that label at Colonel Robert Bowman, former head of the U.S. "Star Wars" program; Andreas von Bülow, former State Secretary in the German Federal Ministry of Defense; former CIA analysts Bill Christison and Robert David Steele; former *Scientific American* columnist A. K. Dewdney; General Leonid Ivashov, former chief of staff of the Russian armed forces; Colonel Ronald D. Ray, former U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense; all the members of Scholars for 9/11 Truth, Scholars for 9/11 Truth and Justice, Veterans for 9/11 Truth, and Pilots for 9/11 Truth; and most of the individuals listed under "Professors Question 9/11" on the "Patriots Question 9/11" website.

One of the reasons these people reject the government's conspiracy theory is that, if they were to accept the official account of the destruction of the World Trade Centre, they would need to affirm magical beliefs. A few examples:

*The Twin Towers came straight down, which means that each building's 287 steel columns all had to fail simultaneously; to believe this could happen without explosives is to believe in magic.

*At the onset of each tower's collapse, steel beams were ejected out as far as 600 feet; to believe that these horizontal ejections could be explained by gravitational energy, which is vertical, is to believe in magic.

*Virtually all of the concrete in the towers was pulverized into extremely fine dust particles; to believe that fire plus gravity could have done this is to believe in magic.

*WTC 7 and the towers came down at virtually free-fall speed, meaning that the lower floors, with all their steel and concrete, provided no resistance to the upper floors; to believe this could happen without explosives is to believe in magic.

*Pools of molten metal were found under each building. Because steel does not begin to melt until it reaches about 1,540°C and yet the fires could not have gotten over 1000°C, to accept the fire theory is to believe in magic.

Monbiot, regarding the 9/11 truth movement's conspiracy theory as a wrong-headed distraction, fails to see that the obviously false and truly distracting conspiracy theory is the official 9/11 myth, which has been used to justify imperial wars and increased militarism, thereby distracting attention from global apartheid and the ecological crisis. We focus on the 9/11 myth because, until it is exposed, getting our governments to focus

whole-heartedly on the truly urgent issues of our time will be impossible.

David Ray Griffin has published over 30 books, including four about 9/11. His latest book, *Debunking 9/11 Debunking: An Answer to Popular Mechanics and Other Defenders of the Official Conspiracy Theory*, was released in April.

Don't Stamp Out Brainy Magazines

...Even If Time-Warner Doesn't Give a Damn

Editorial from *The Boston Globe*, 27 April 2007

SMALLER MAGAZINES across the country, such as *The Nation*, *the American Spectator*, *Ms.*, and *The New Republic* could end up getting a bad case of what postal officials call "rate shock." The cause is the United States Postal Service's dubious plan to raise the price of mailing periodicals on July 15.

The *Nation* says its costs could jump by \$500,000. But this isn't just whining about the rising costs of doing business. This is a clash pitting big-time publishers against small journals that enrich the public debate far more than their modest budgets suggest.

The new rate increase is based on a plan devised by Time Warner, the mammoth publisher of more than 100 magazines, including *Time*, *People*, *Fortune*, and *In Style*. Not surprisingly, Time Warner's plan is generally considered fair to the kind of large-circulation magazines that Time Warner publishes. But smaller magazines say that this plan would force them to pay a higher percentage increase than large magazines.

More troubling is the fact that the Postal Service itself proposed a different plan that would have spread the increases more evenly, so that small publications would have paid less. But the service's Board of Governors, appointed by the president, opted to go with a modification of the Time Warner plan, delaying the implementation until July so that the Postal Service and publishers would have time to adjust to the new plan's complex pricing.

Here's the rub: The Postal Service's mission, set by federal law, is to "bind the nation together through the personal, educational, literary, and business correspondence of the people." It has a history of protecting the spread of information. So whether grandma lives down the street or in another time zone, a stamp for her birthday card costs the same.

Price protection has also been crucial for small magazines, helping them to add politically and socially diverse voices to the public arena. "In short, the post office and press together constituted the most important mechanism for the dissemination of public information at least until the Civil War," Richard B. Kielbowicz writes in his book *News in the Mail: The Press, Post Office, and Public Information, 1700-1860s*.

Now, of course, there's the Internet, which makes publishing seem easy and cheap. But as *The Nation's* president, Teresa Stack, says, mailing out copies to paying subscribers is still largely how small magazines make money. Web content is often an extra that doesn't generate income. Without income these publications can't survive, and the public loses out when those voices are silenced.

Congress should take a fresh look, and pursue a more public-minded rate plan. The post office is no longer a federal agency, and it does have to support itself. But the country still needs a mail service that protects public access to as much information as possible. ##

Eat Hot Lead, Gaylord! The Psychology of 9-11 & Afghanistan

WHAT BEGAN AS A LARK for two Bay Area mouth-breathers and their dates ended in death and jail time.

After a party last Halloween, reports the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Jonathon Porter, 20, and Timothy McKeivitt, 19, broke into an ostrich ranch in Half Moon Bay, Calif., with a small group of young women in tow. The women wanted to see the ostriches, according to prosecutors, and the young bucks sought to impress them at the expense of a very large bird named Gaylord.

What Porter and McKeivitt did not consider is that evolution had equipped Gaylord to handle much more fearsome adversaries than two simply manneens. With a few deft ostrich ninja moves, Gaylord kicked their asses—much to the amusement of the female company.

Not to be bested by a fucking bird, Porter and McKeivitt drove the women home and then showed Gaylord what happens when you piss off homo sapiens.

"We knew what had to be done," Porter later told detectives.

Returning with a shotgun and a rifle, according to the *Chronicle*, the men took seven blasts to avenge their humiliation.

Porter was convicted in March of felony animal abuse. McKeivitt, who has pleaded innocent, goes on trial this summer.

—Dave Mulcahey, *In These Times*, May 2007



individuals such as Broad and Gates have led us to believe that "failing" public schools will cost America its global economic dominance. We must ignore for the time being the fact that the same people support off-shoring the very jobs they claim schools must prepare children to enter.

Are schools failing? In 1983 members of the Reagan administration told America that if we did not radically change the way we ran our schools we would be speaking Japanese or German. We did not radically change our schools. I was in school in 1983. I teach in schools now. The only real difference is the amount of money schools spend on tests.

Today corporate America tells us if we don't radically change our schools we are going to take our marching orders from China or India. These are the same public schools that supported the economic boom years from 1991-2001, but no one praised public schools for that decade of economic success. Is it not odd that public schools are now accused of spawning future economic catastrophe?

Am I the only one that saw the Dow break 13,000 yesterday? Given that 89% of Americans attend public schools, am I supposed to believe that it was a failing country that created the conditions for that particular economic spectacle?

German propagandist Joseph Goebbels explained that "If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it." Americans are beginning to wake up to the fact that they were sold a false bill of goods on the Iraq war, a war that would not have been entered without another tactic employed by Goebbels, who reminds us that propaganda "must confine itself to a few points and repeat them over and over."

Think weapons of mass destruction...

Bill Gates funds at least four "independent" think tanks: The Education Trust, The Education Sector, The Aspen Institute, and Strong American Schools. All four of these organizations repeat the same few points over and over:

- * Our schools are failing.
- * Poor teaching is to blame.
- * It's time for tougher standards.
- * America needs a national curriculum.

I do not deny that our country's school system needs help. The fact of the matter is, our country needs help.

In a recent report UNICEF ranked the United States the second worst industrialized country for a child to grow up in. That rating had nothing to do with public education and everything to do with a lack of healthcare, an incarceration industry, and a growing poverty rate. One out of five children comes to school hungry. Tougher standards will do nothing to help them learn, neither will "highly extra super qualified" teachers, as called for by each one of Gates' "independent" think tanks.

One can only wonder why Gates and other captains of industry believe a national curriculum will ensure that America retains its place as global economic leader. Arguably, it is creativity, exploration, risk-taking, and liberty that helped this country earn its place as the sole global superpower. Forcing American teachers and children to follow the same script undermines all of the above.

If I had \$60 million to spare on a media campaign, I'd ask this country who benefits from all of us thinking the same way about the same things at the same time. It certainly isn't "we the people."

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Corporatize American Schools! Gates, Broad Mount Propaganda Campaign

by Philip Kovacs, *CommonDreams.org*, 26 April 2007

From Wikipedia: "Propaganda is a type of message aimed at influencing the opinions or behavior of people. Often, instead of impartially providing information, propaganda can be deliberately misleading, or using fallacies, which, while sometimes convincing, are not necessarily valid. Propaganda techniques include: patriotic flag-waving, glittering generalities, intentional vagueness, oversimplification of complex issues, rationalization, introducing unrelated red herring issues, using appealing, simple slogans, stereotyping, testimonials from authority figures or celebrities, unstated assumptions, and encouraging readers or viewers to 'jump on the bandwagon'" of a particular point of view.

Unhappy with the state of American public education, yesterday Eli Broad [SunAmerica Inc. and KB Home Corp. founder] and Bill Gates [Microsoft Corp. founder] announced that they would spend \$60 Million dollars over the course of 18 months in order to "wake up the American people that we have got a real problem and we need real reform." The wake up call consists of massive advertising and online media campaigns aimed at influencing the opinions and behavior of all of us.

What must we believe, and how must we behave? We must believe that the "schools are failing" and the only way to save them is by following corporate messiahs.

It is time for Americans to start challenging this simple slogan, to ask if celebrities such as Broad and Gates aren't deliberately misleading us using fallacies, glittering generalities, intentional vagueness, oversimplification of complex issues, and patriotic flag waving. With the use of pseudo science and media hype

Road Deaths Rival TB, Malaria

Walking, Biking Poor: Victims of Auto Trade

by George Monbiot, *The Guardian* (UK), 15 May 2007

Corporate social responsibility often resembles the adventures of *The Good Soldier Svejk*. In 1914, about to be conscripted into the Austro-Hungarian army, Svejk puts on his old uniform and a volunteer's buttonhole and, waving his borrowed crutches and shouting "To Belgrade, to Belgrade!", has his landlady push him to the recruiting office in a bath chair. Jaroslav Hasek's marvellous creation is lauded by the newspapers for his extraordinary patriotism.

By this means, Svejk attempts to persuade the authorities that he is doing everything he can to get to the front, even if, to his enormous regret, his rheumatism prevents him from having his brains blown out. By noisily volunteering to subject themselves to stricter standards, the corporations try to pre-empt the rules which might otherwise have been imposed on them. This, they hope, will allow them to participate only when and how they see fit.

In Svejk's case it didn't work. His patriotism was rewarded with enemas and emetics until his rheumatism was miraculously cured. The corporations, on the other hand, always seem to persuade the authorities of their undying commitment to the causes they espouse, which ensures that they can enter the war on their own terms. This seems to be the way that the global campaign for road safety is going.

Death and injury on the roads is the world's most neglected public health issue. Almost as many people die in road accidents—1.2 million a year—as are killed by malaria or tuberculosis. Around 50 million are injured. Some 85% of these accidents take place in developing countries. The poor get hurt much more often than the rich, as they walk or cycle or travel in overloaded buses. The highest death rate is among children walking on the roads.

The annual economic cost to developing countries, in lost productivity alone, is \$65-\$100bn, roughly the same as the amount they receive in foreign aid. I caught a glimpse of the human cost when I was hospitalised in northern Kenya. Some of the men on the ward had bullet or axe wounds inflicted in tribal wars, others were dying of HIV/Aids, but over half had been smashed up in road accidents. They could not afford good painkillers, and sobbed and screamed through the night. It looked like a scene from the first world war.

The problem is likely to become much worse. By 2020, according to the World Bank, deaths from road accidents are expected to fall by 28% in rich nations but to rise by 83% in poorer ones. By 2030, they will overtake the deaths caused by malaria. But while \$1.9bn of foreign aid will be spent on tackling malaria over the next five years, the annual global aid budget for road safety is less than \$10m. This issue has been neglected partly because it is something the rich inflict on the poor, and partly because it is widely perceived as an unavoidable price of doing business - as the global transportation industry expands, so must its human costs. Governments are just beginning to wake up to the problem. But the corporations got there first.

In 1999, at the invitation of the World Bank, the motor and oil companies joined something called the Global Road Safety Partnership. It was supposed to bring together "governments and governmental agencies, the private sector and civil society organisations". But its executive committee contains no one from a civil society organisation and only two representatives of

government. BP, Total, DaimlerChrysler, General Motors, Michelin and Volvo, however, are all represented.

Professor Ian Roberts at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine compared the prevalence of certain words in the partnership's annual reports to their prevalence in a similar report written by the World Health Organisation. In the partnership's reports, he found a pattern of systematic neglect of pedestrians and cyclists. In the WHO's report, "speed limit" occurred 17 times in every 10,000 words; in the partnership's reports, just once. "Pedestrian" was used 69 times by the WHO, and 15 times by the partnership; "buses" and "cyclists" were mentioned 13 and 32 times respectively by the WHO, and not once by the partnership. "Reclaiming the streets for walking and cycling," he notes, "will not serve the interests of the car makers."

Instead, the Global Road Safety Partnership emphasised better training for drivers and better safety education for children. These measures do not interfere with the commercial interests of the transport industry. Neither, according to peer-reviewed papers Prof Roberts cites, do they work.

The motor industry also appears to dominate the most prominent international body on road safety. Three weeks ago, the racing driver Michael Schumacher wrote a column—quite a good one—for these pages to mark Global Road Safety Week. He described himself as a member of the "independent Commission for Global Road Safety". The commission launched the Make Roads Safe campaign, which is modelled on Make Poverty History. But how "independent" is it?

It was established by the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile Foundation, which is run by motoring and motorsports associations. Of the eight commissioners, one is an executive of General Motors, one runs the Bridgestone Tyre Corporation, one is a trustee of the FIA Foundation, one is chairman of the FIA Foundation and a president of the Automobile Club of Italy and one is Michael Schumacher. The commission's secretary is the director general of the FIA Foundation.

Its report is better than the material published by the Global Road Safety Partnership. There is more emphasis on speed limits, road design and traffic management. But there are some odd gaps and contradictions. It complains that "participation by middle- and low-income countries in the existing international road safety organisations ... is low" and that there is a "lack of ownership" of road safety programmes by the governments and people of developing countries. So why do all its own members come from the G8 nations? The commission prescribes an "action plan" for global road safety, to be run by something called the Global Road Safety Facility. This—surprise, surprise—also turns out to have been launched and partly funded by the FIA Foundation.

Most importantly, it calls for the developing nations to follow the path taken by richer countries in reducing deaths and injuries. But at no point does it mention that much of this reduction was the result of cyclists and pedestrians being driven off the roads. This is a much bigger issue for poor nations—where the great majority of people who use roads do not own cars—than for rich ones. Is this the vision that the space now used by pedestrians and cyclists and ox carts and rickshaws is surrendered to car drivers? If so, it might reduce fatalities, but it would also represent a classic act of enclosure, through which the rich are able to secure the resources of the poor.

Michael Schumacher is in danger of finding himself in the same position as Bob Geldof—a celebrity who claims to speak for the poor and weak but who is informed and guided by the powerful. We need a global campaign on road safety, but it must belong to the people on whose behalf it acts. ##

Prankster Fools *Dispatch* Bush-Cheney 3rd Term Still an Issue

April's *BCA Dispatch* carried a well-written article supposedly reporting a speech by [acting*] vice-president Dick Cheney to soldiers [marines] at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. The article reputed Cheney to say that his administration is seeking to challenge the 22nd Amendment, which bars any president from holding the office for more than two terms. The kicker, which got by your editor, is that the dateline was April 1 (April Fools Day) and the author was "Philip McCrack" ("fill up my crack"!).

This matter was brought to our attention by Bonnie Preston, a dedicated Alliance leader in Blue Hill, Maine. Thank you, Bonnie! We immediately started searching the web for verification. Someone had actually set up a "BushCheney08.org" web site to amend the Constitution. The site most loaded with comment was that of the progressive loud-mouth Randi Rhodes (therandi-rhodesshow.com), with many readers skeptical after having read the bogus article relayed on the site. Your editor's subconscious skepticism came from its lack of direct quotations from those whom the writer might have interviewed for her (his?) insightful context.

The article nevertheless had the virtue of citing several ploys which Bush-Cheney lawyers might take in reinterpreting the 22nd Amendment. One which the Rhodes readers did not cite was that Cheney might legally run for president with Bush running as vice-president. The Amendment says nothing about vice-presidents. As several readers pointed out, however, Cheney and Bush have reached such low esteem among US voters that they would be foolish to run again. So who would be their proxies to continue the race to US domination of an incinerated globe? Pat Robertson and Hillary Clinton? ##

* *George W Bush and Dick Cheney are usurpers acting as president and vice president, though they were not properly elected, having disrupted the vote-counting process in Florida—quite apart from voter and machine manipulation all over the country—never mind the stacked Supreme Court.*
—Dave Lewit, Editor

BRAVE NEW ENGLAND (Continued from Page 1)

Thatcher's "free trade" or neoliberalism—current even today—supported media and telecommunication consolidation within a few giant transnational corporations. Only now are scandals and popular pressure melting this money-and-sect-controlled system, even though those media were able to sidetrack most information about corporate phasing out of local news, liberal opinion (including opinion from abroad), diverse analysis, and increasingly anti-corporate public opinion.

Thus today, aided by public sensing of imperial and ecological disaster, the American public may be able to turn away from Reaganism toward the self-reliance of local communities supporting one another regionally and beyond. Perhaps, with vision, the turn may be accomplished by the end of the first quarter of this century. And with New England's tradition of face-to-face town meetings and hi-tech sophistication, we may lead other regions in North America. So what might information systems, education, community, and governance look like in our Brave New England? Let's look at a few features.

Letters-to-the-editor is the most-read section of local newspapers. Citizens look for diverse opinions of their peers on issues of local and wider importance. Still, editors choose what is to be printed, constrained by the political and economic interests of

the owner and increasingly transnational advertisers. Just as the Federal Communications Act of 1934 still requires broadcasters to provide time for diverse views—increasingly abused, so newspapers might be required to provide some balance. For example, the largest-circulation daily newspaper in each county in the region could be required to carry an independently edited Indy Page in each issue, or in several issues per week. The Indy Page editor might be elected along with sheriff and other county officials, and charged with running news and opinion neglected by the corporate editor. Such work might be aided by a citizens' regional news service operated like Indymedia (radio and TV) or Wikipedia (on the internet) with massive citizen input, and by regular review of locally-originated blogs. In some cases cost to the paper might be offset by taxes, but only if the addition of an Indy Page does not substantially increase circulation and advertising revenue. Noncompliance could be penalized in part by removal of street vending boxes and refusal of postal delivery.

Low-power radio is a means of informing, engaging, and entertaining people in neighborhoods. There are 3000 low-power FM stations in the US, and many more in Brazil, Kenya, and around the world. Low-power radio has the multiplier effect of bringing people to otherwise unknown local meetings, if just the excitement of being on the air isn't enough. Also, local businesses can provide personalized ads. Low-power radio is cheap to equip (\$5-8,000) and operate, and despite the false claims of the National Association of Broadcasters, the signal does not interfere with network broadcasts. Besides NAB and the current Federal Communications Commission, LPFM is under attack from corporate copyright-holders defending monopoly on music broadcasting. Regional autonomy would bypass the problem of federal licensing of local radio, and would internationally confront obsolete and biased copyright laws.

Internet—email and web sites—is fast becoming as standard a medium of communication as the telephone. Often the web-connected computers in local libraries have waiting lines. The beauty of the internet is virtually free access to all web sites in the world, free sending and receiving of emails, and instant access to homemade video clips. Now AT&T and Verizon are proposing to discriminate in broadband service according to ability to pay. A democratic New England would preserve "net neutrality"—equal quality for all.

Currently the US Postal Service is proposing to adopt Time-Warner corporation's plan to discriminate in magazine delivery rates according to volume and area of circulation, raising mailing costs more for small mags and journals than for mass circulation mags (see *Boston Globe* editorial elsewhere in this issue). A democratic New England, with its own postal service (coordinated with all others, of course) might discriminate on a different basis—the amount of advertising matter (on average) contained in the publication. Thus *BCA Dispatch* and other newsletters and small magazines and journals would get a deeper discount, not a penalty. By the way, why not bring back the 5-cent postcard (postcards now cost \$.41—same as letters! Sorry, community groups, about your cheap announcements!), and have free 5-minute street-phone calls?—they might reduce social service costs and tend to empower the poor.

Education

In order for education to serve society rather than corporations, we need to rethink schools. Decades ago Ivan Illich in *Deschooling Society* showed how damaging corporatist US schools are for a democratic society. For a "brave" New England—courageous and gallant—we need more than school-

rooms, boxy curricula, simplistic computer programs, tests (MCAS) which "account" for standardized utility, and frustrated teachers and students. Adults as well as youth need to observe and understand joint causation, feedback, adaptability, and how systems work—social and ecological systems as well as physical or biological. On the community level they—we—need to create and engage in a "new civics" where politics is not just lobbying, campaigning, and voting, but recognizing the vulnerabilities of local school and city systems, and redesigning corruption-prone systems in light of community needs and capacities. For example, can students understand the difference between basic utilities (for food, water, housing, power, phone, health, finance, law enforcement, etc.) and infrastructures which support novelties (music, cars, appearance, drinks, drugs, celebrities, etc.) and destruction (military, mining, chemical farming, clear-cutting, suburban development, etc.)? System changes will occur. The question is whether citizens broadly or a self-oriented elite will induce the changes.

A progressive, autonomous region will foster diversity and variability among communities according to their resources and conditions. With their own as well as regional visions, they may model their educational systems along lines similar to the local and regional world they are striving for. Because ecological disaster is at our heels, the revolutionary pedagogical principles of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire may serve well—

* No education is ever neutral—education is either domesticating or liberating.

* Relevance—harness issues of importance now to participants' issues with strong feeling—excitement, hope, fear, anxiety, or anger.

* Problem-posing—in contrast to the banking approach to knowledge.

* Dialogue—co-learners, a mutual learning process.

* Reflection and Action (praxis)—the "Action/Reflection Spiral".

* Radical transformation—of communities, not only individuals.

The year-old Boston Student Advisory Council and Cambridge's 16-year-old Coordinating Council for Children, Youth & Families (Kids' Council) are publicly funded and heavily involve youth. They are rapidly advancing consistent with Freire. The Cambridge council has yet to be integrated with the schools (or vice versa), but the school committee is hiring a full-time consultant to bring new civics to all relevant courses and practices at Cambridge's only high school, Rindge & Latin. The Boston council is not a tool of the school committee, but instead lobbies the committee. Alternatively, as in revolutionary Venezuela, these community councils could be transformed and multiplied into a parallel free educational system, especially in view of the growing numbers of immigrants and others left out or bumped out of the privileged classes of New England given to traditional and esoteric schooling.

Universities in an autonomous New England will rethink their involvement with corporations, which currently influence curriculum through grants and endowed chairs, and students through burdensome loans—both practices shaping and "domesticating" graduates as well as generating privately profitable research, deflecting talent from needed community-related research and learning. With public schools, colleges, and universities costing roughly one-third of city and state budgets, a regional withdrawal from funding modern war capacity including military contracts—and moving that money instead to a much less expensive new civil defense, conserving the rest—will make possible a needed revolution in education.

Schools and universities could provide free education for all

who want it, including funding of field study with associated living expenses (partially offset by community sharing). Rather than military ROTC, students of all ages and community residents can be trained in strategic nonviolence including nonlethal martial arts, negotiation, organizing, communication, endurance, community support of captives and travelers and those in need of food, etc. [Note: The best systematic source of theory and practice of strategic nonviolence known to us is *Nonviolence Speaks: Communicating against repression* by Brian Martin and Wendy Varney, Hampton Press, Cresskill, N.J., 2003.]

Some competitive team-sports may give way to circus-like entertainment and to martial arts with a community philosophy, not necessarily Tao or Zen individualistic or cosmic philosophy. These in turn may partially displace sedentary, stereotyped, commercialized TV entertainment. Indeed, with popular training in TV-video-web production, students may localize and revolutionize (through apprentice and journeyman initiatives) home entertainment, combining it with video journalism, theater, art, and educational film production. Such innovations may be key to recruiting some school faculty from nontraditional, community sources of experts or masters, working or retired, thus moving much of instruction to community bases. This will help break tedious and confining school routines and integrate youth and adults in community development. It may also help provide community employment after formal schooling.

Governance

What does government by the people look like? Direct participation: Town meeting. Popular assembly.

Participatory budgeting. We've seen it in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, in Venezuela, and know about it in Brazil and Argentina. Anywhere between 50 and 1000 people voluntarily in the room, focused on a common set of problems, listening to one another's experiences, learning from specialists or neighbors, modifying problem definition, exploring resources, appreciating records and evidence, identifying options, testing choices, establishing priorities, considering exceptions, talking to one another during breaks, selecting negotiators and drafters. Respecting a moderator or facilitator. Not needing a leader.

Participatory budgeting is particularly instructive because linkages are clear among many assemblies. Porto Alegre, Brazil, is a city of 1.5 million, dividing itself into 16 districts for local assemblies—further divided into neighborhood assemblies—and adding a half dozen topical assemblies as well—like housing, transportation, health, recreation, and so on. Typically, up until 2003, meetings at the start of the year were biweekly and instructional, then later monthly and testimonial, then establishing priorities, then electing two representatives each to a council of the budget. The council met frequently to apply formulas and establish city-wide priorities. Return visits provided feedback to assemblies. Hundreds of millions of dollars—much of it from federal sources—were allocated, and work resumed or begun on prioritized projects. Back-room deals disappeared. Altogether, in its heyday three years ago, 50,000 people—half of them poor—participated. That's 5% of the adult population. All citizens could monitor projects regularly on a web site. At the beginning of each year the allocation formula was modified in light of experience.

Heyday, because three years ago voters replaced the mayor due to corruption in his national (Lula's) party. The conservative new mayor, while promising to continue PB, undermined it by not sending specialists to the meetings and not sticking to the priorities. Last month Porto Alegre's government made clear the statistics-based, partially privately funded, top-down method with

which they are replacing PB. PB worked well for 16 years, and because of its popularity may again, when and if the populist Workers Party returns to power or when funding can come entirely from city sources.

The Porto Alegre PB experiment came after 25 years of turbulent and sometimes dictatorial governance. Popular assemblies seem to work when crises have devastated a region, as recently in Argentina and long ago in the towns and counties of colonial Massachusetts before the British quit. But the New England town meeting proves that participatory budgeting can continue after crisis. A truncated form is common—the legislative hearing, for example, at the city council in Boston. But representative government cannot resist corruption the way town meeting or neighborhood assembly can, albeit sometimes compromised by Roberts Rules and midnight sessions. Overall, scale matters. Our national scale of government is highly corrupted, with citizen participation impossible and transparency—e.g., C-SPAN—spotty. States can also be bad, with citizen participation difficult. City counselors we can know and deal with directly, but only occasionally or with persistence.

In Brave New England we might achieve direct participation in neighborhood assemblies of 10% or more by involving youth—starting with PB for school districts, expanding to city budget priorities, meeting in high school gymnasiums or auditoriums. Presently Cambridge MA youth are lobbying to reduce voting age to 17 for local elections, thus enabling high school juniors and seniors to participate as full-fledged citizens. Their “new civics” curriculum would almost ensure participation of those students and a parent. “Budget boredom” may become “budget mania” when students intern—even younger than 17, at minimum wage—in budgeted city projects. They can be supervised by retired teachers and civil service workers, volunteering or supplementing their incomes also at minimum wage, or by graduated 19-year olds. Perhaps there is a critical mass—15%?—where civic participation and civil service becomes as common as church or sports participation, and cannot be undermined by partisan “reformers”.

One of these city projects is policing. In Brave New England police would not stand over and apart from us as they now do at public rallies—they would be familiar to us personally as civic participants. This could be done by youth and retirees (or middle-agers who might otherwise have been army reservists) joining police exercises as interns or partners. Patrolling. Going out on calls. Testifying in court. Questioning suspects. A related project would be reporting public safety issues for the county Indy Page or YouTube. And police could be encouraged to participate identifiably in civil events as peers. We do have a tradition of deputy, part-time, officers.

Finance and Nonviolence

In limited form we already have governance features which could burgeon in a system of nonviolence. Environmental impact statement requirements could be rooted in studies by full-time ecological system departments of government. System conceptualization and evaluation can be applied not only to limited projects, but to whole regional economies and societies taken together with their environments. The US has an Environmental Protection Agency and had a congressional Office of Technology Assessment which were financially decimated by hostile administrations. The UN had a Center on Transnational Corporations which was destroyed by Bush Sr and Clinton’s “adviser” to the Secretary General. Such offices were set up to monitor critical elements of complex systems and take regulatory action before systems were irrevocably upset like a house

of cards. Without CTC, corporate abuse abetted by congressional intransigence has run rampant internationally, with ecological melt-down in sight—resource exhaustion, rising oceans, insect infestation, crop failure, disease, and so on.

Consequent low sperm count and declining birth rate is one manifestation which might have a silver lining—population reduction, and easing of the burden on ecosystems necessary for life. Other disasters may likewise cut population, tending toward crisis which may induce popular assemblies to change our institutions and culture for sustainability—unless that disaster is enduring war, especially nuclear war, which could be fatal for humankind. Thus popularly controlled regional government and intercultural solidarity may become necessary for survival, as well as a boon for the competitively and economically stressed.

What we are saying is that a near-trillion dollar annual military drain with a mammoth national bill for debt service is a deadly luxury that starves every region of this country, albeit a sop to the habits of the very rich. If we in New England divert our share—perhaps 70 billion dollars a year—to a New England Development Bank and convert our arms industry and military recruitment to regional development, there would be enough jobs for all and a sharply reduced crime rate and demand for police violence. Present demand originates largely from yahoos and war profiteers whose frightened constituents are given free rein on TV and in legislative chambers, when evidence for domestic terrorism, present or future, is virtually nil. As routinely in Britain and other places, police would be able to maintain order without firearms.

Because of the likelihood of occupation by armed deputies and soldiery when New England refuses war taxation, nonviolent civil defense training would become a regular feature of daily life until the federal government resigns itself to regional autonomy—which need not be full secession. This can be combined with all sorts of civic fun—jamborees, hikes, games, theme festivals, camp-outs, and so on. Federal resignation is likely when debate about the US Constitution’s structure and weaknesses is permitted and the Articles of Confederation re-examined—not for re-adoption, but for edification in constructing new constitutions for regions. But we will save this for Part III.

Meanwhile, some other features of good governance could be considered for regional constitutions:

* As a fourth (or “first”) branch of government, local assemblies should have funding, networking, and strong oversight powers when acting in concert. Groups of assemblies should be able to require legislative action for the region. Similarly, assemblies should be able to pardon the unjustly imprisoned.

* All campaigns for public office should be short and publicly funded, with access to debates for all candidates.

* Any proposed law should carry two titles, one by its sponsors and one by principal opponents. Forecast of effects of proposed laws should be based on technical and system assessment, not fear, hollow promises, and bombast. Algorithms used in assessment should be made public.

* Laws should regularly be reviewed in light of assessment by prior, objective criteria, and modified or terminated if necessary. Those criteria should include systematic surveys of effects on people and their attitudes, on the ecosystem, and on the political and economic systems.

* Public officials should be systematically evaluated like laws, and be easily recallable. Judges should be elected because lifetime appointments have given repudiated administrations enduring power. Offices should be fillable by pairs or teams, not

just individuals, provided that all are accountable. Psychopathic candidates like G.W. Bush should be identified as such.

* Penal code should be rewritten to reconsider all cases in light of restorative justice, not retributive imprisonment or execution.

Social Relations

Having a degree of sovereignty, a small autonomous region with a claim to enlightenment could "break out of the pack" and at its inception institute long overdue social reforms. Unburdened of military expenses, it would be feasible for New England's constitution to institute the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights which guarantees economic well-being as well as education, housing, medical care, dignified living, and other basics.

Human Rights is one of four pillars which together can support an ideal state for the 21st century. The second is denial of personhood to corporations. The third is primacy of local decision-making, including hand-counted paper balloting. The fourth is the preservation of nature. Most of what follows from these pillars constitutes a system which is democratic, just, and sustainable.

Corporate personhood is the doctrine of corporate rights without social responsibility. Whereas corporations before the Civil War were narrowly chartered to ensure public good, in 1886 a Supreme Court clerk prefaced a decision with the notion (which the Court accepted) that corporations are "persons" before the law, and thus enjoy protections of the First, Fourth, and Fourteenth Amendments and other Constitutional rights—free speech, privacy, voice in public policy-making, and due-process guarantees of longevity. (This doctrine was the spawn of Social Darwinism—the inappropriate inversion of Darwin's concept of natural selection in animals—saying that since corporations have grown so huge as to dominate human affairs, they must have been preordained to do so and should be privileged—popularly: "survival of the fittest". Never mind that their growth was in part due to war exigencies, in part to political corruption, and in part to naive consumer belief in purchasing personal improvement—P. T. Barnum's [source disputed] axiom "There's a sucker born every minute.") Whatever its origins, corporate personhood enables swarms of corporate lawyers and lobbyists to trump popular sentiment until well after damage has been done and the corporation has moved on to other moral, environmental, or civil violations.

Primacy of local decision-making, or "subsidiarity" as it is known in Europe, is essentially embodied in hand-counted paper balloting in elections to offices at all levels. Today, this means the scrapping of electronic voting and counting machines which are vulnerable to secret manipulations, and the re-establishment of the social process of hand-counting at the precinct or village level. Accuracy is assured by passing each ballot around a politically heterogeneous circle of neighbors who audibly agree the tally, and by publicly posting the tally at the precinct entrance for reporters and citizens to collect and add up. This process not only reassures the public of accuracy, but tends to reinforce amity among people with different political views.

"Subsidiarity" says that any decision that can be made at a lower level should be made there rather than at a higher level in a societal, state, or corporate hierarchy, where intimate knowledge of actions, circumstances, and consequences is lacking. Under this principle inclusive local councils are empowered to generate policy as well as choices, and in so acting cooperatively, generate involvement, mutual responsibility, and pride in democracy. Thus policy regarding racial or class-based or

sexist or age-based discrimination becomes embedded in a process of community amity, strengthening adherence, respect, and cooperation.

Beyond discrimination, subsidiarity may generate positive programs such as healthy community-based entertainment and broadcast standards, employment of talented seniors, fitness rather than medical fixes, empowerment of women, relief from onerous insurance payments, and preservation of natural resources and beauty.

Finally, constitutions should embody preservation of nature—the whole ecosystem of earth, oceans, air, and animals—its beauty, power, and nurturance. Mandates like this would generate support for scientific and civil directions which would not only sustain life and community, but reassure everybody that they are part of a grand creation rather than feeling alone, endlessly striving and competing, and fearful of decline and death.

Inter-City and Extra-Regional Relations

Brave New England would need a grand debate before convening any constitutional convention. New England is losing US Congressional seats and control of its fate (under present political conditions) as other regions grow faster. How far can or should we go with autonomy? Should New England renounce "growth" in favor of "quality of life"? Trends in inter-city cooperation, within and between states, need to be examined. The effects of differing state rules for municipal charters and home rule considerations need to be factored in. The role of existing states should be revisited and revised in view of onerous federal requirements (federal income tax, USA Patriot Act, etc.) and of initiatives from municipalities, counties, tribal nations, and interstate bodies. Should state borders be redrawn or abolished? Should special economic or bio-regions be created? Should networks of sister cities within the region and externally be fostered? US Treaties with Canada and other external nations—NAFTA and the unratified Security and Prosperity Partnership, for example—need to be reviewed for their impacts on New England governments, Maritime Provinces governments, upper New York State, and border Quebec. Resource adequacy should be evaluated with attention to possible development of domestic sources of food and energy, and the limits of conservation and population change.

One important goal of autonomy will be economic self-reliance and minimizing long-distance external trade. Should tariffs be charged to restrict certain imports and not others? Should out-of-state tuitions to private schools and universities be taxed? Should wind and tidal power be subsidized? Should rural and industrial polluters be taxed in proportion of their degrading of the environment? Should rural and historic areas be re-zoned to bar developers? Should new farmers be subsidized? Should electric rates be escalated for heavy or wasteful users?

Should relations with violent nations be suspended? Should relations with over-consuming nations be restricted? Should New England be opened to all refugees? Should New England remove US military bases and other federal facilities from its soil? Should New England block transfer of its citizens who are federal employees and wish to remain in New England? Should New England renounce obligation under US treaties and apply for UN membership? These and many other questions remain to be settled by debate and framing of a New England constitution, or constitutions of municipalities, etc., within New England.

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"*Brave New England*" will conclude in our next issue with "Part III: Getting There". Letters are welcome.

Vatican Abolishes Limbo

www.RadioNetherlands.nl 21 April 2007

The Vatican has revised its old teaching that babies who die without being baptised would be forever in limbo. According to tradition, this was a place on the edge of hell where children who died before being baptised went instead of heaven. Pope Benedict XVI said the concept led to an unduly restrictive view of salvation. In a document explaining the move, he said that excluding innocent children was incompatible with Christ's love for the very youngest. Last year, an International Theological Commission advised the Pope to remove limbo from Roman Catholic teaching.

Ed. Comment: OK for kids. But what about Limbo for unredeemed adults hooked on the American Way of SUVs and "war on terror"? Or your Ordinary American who hasn't a clue how to protest effectively or imagine Another World? And for those already stuck in Limbo, what about Christ's love for teenagers and adults (the true love of the Gospels, not about stuff written after)?

CHAPTER NEWS

Minutes: Boston-Cambridge Alliance Meeting, May 2, 2007, 6:45 pm at Friends' Meeting, Cambridge -----

Present: Hadassah Fleishon, Joanna Herlihy, David Lewit, Diana Licht, Ruth Weizenbaum. (Attendance at BCA restructuring meetings has varied from 4 to 11. Several people who couldn't come called Dave beforehand.)

Discussion ranged over consideration of BCA focus, projects, type and frequency of meetings. We concluded that we need various types of meetings, i.e. general meetings, working group meetings and possibly workshops (or seminars). The purpose of general meetings would be to hear one another, to be informed and to encourage working groups. Diana proposed seminars in social activism and/or economic democracy.

Ruth and Hadassah stressed that we need doable, concrete, finite projects. Such projects might revitalize membership and attract new people. Meanwhile, working for localization--while in line with BCA's anti-corporate, pro-democratic focus--is a long term, wide-ranging and difficult project. Diana and Ruth said that BCA hasn't worked enough on the "democracy" part of the Alliance mission. Dave said the need is to prepare for devolution--people need to take decentralized responsibility.

BCA projects were reviewed. Dave suggests that we add "New Civics in Schools" as a project. (Progress so far reported in April Dispatch.) Ruth suggests that for the Water project we condense information against bottled water to fit on a postcard which could be used for tabling. She will take leadership to accomplish this. Dave sees the card as a tool for guerrilla action. Bottled water at conferences run by people who ought to know better could be tied off with yellow CAUTION tape. The postcard would explain the reasons. We might supply pitchers and paper cups for the speakers' table. BCA members interested in election reform this past year have helped out Jonathan Simon's Election Defense Alliance. EDA suggested to us last year that an appropriate local project might be to find a town that would like to try paper ballots or their own election auditing. For BCA to start their own project would require a meeting of interested people. Dave will continue his 3-part series on "Brave New England" in the Dispatch.

Unresolved was the question of meeting frequencies. Proposed were 4 to 6 general meetings per year involving an

informational presentation such as a guest speaker. Business (or steering committee) meetings may need to be scheduled separately. Working groups can meet on an as-needed basis with communication by telephone and e-mail. The next BCA meeting will be May 23rd. Dave and Ruth will review a David Korten DVD for viewing. For June, we have a guest speaker from the Cambridge Energy Alliance.

—Joanna Herlihy

ACTION ALERTS

Mon 21 May, 5:30-8pm. Boston (Allston). Free food, speakers, discussion and films about directly democratic **Neighborhood and Popular Assemblies** in practice today in Oaxaca, Mexico; Buenos Aires, Argentina; and the US. Sponsor: Allston-Brighton Neighborhood Assembly. We're a directly democratic association of neighbors and workers, mostly dealing with Harvard's invasion of our neighborhood. Honan/Allston Library, Auditorium. 300 N. Harvard St. (5 blocks SE of junction with Western Ave. Bus #66 Harvard-Bro-Dudley). Info & notices: Jake at trenchesfullofpoets@riseup.net

Sat 26 May, 1-4pm. Boston (Allston). Meeting, **Allston/Brighton Neighborhood Assembly**. Honan/Allston Library (see details above).

Sun 27 May, 4:30-6:30pm. South Boston. Film: **Voices in Wartime**. Talk: poet **David Connolly** (see "To Irish Americans Who Fought in the Vietnam War", *Dispatch*, March 2007, p.6-7) Free. Paraclete Center, 207 E St. (at W. 8th St.)

Fri-Sat 22-23 June. N.Andover MA. **Redefining Power Across Color Lines**. Leadership Conference -- all welcome. Info: Northeast Action 617-541-0500 x307, www.neaction.org

JOIN THE BCA

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

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

Dave Lewit, 271 Dartmouth St., Boston, MA 02116.)

BOSTON-CAMBRIDGE ALLIANCE for DEMOCRACY PLEDGE

___ \$26/Year - "Count me in!"

___ \$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? _ \$ _____

Name : _____ Date: _____

Street, No./Box/Apt: _____

Town and Zip: _____

Phone: Day _____ Night: _____

E-mail: _____

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Visit the Alliance web site: www.TheAllianceForDemocracy.org

Visit our new regional web site: www.NewEnglandAlliance.org

Web builder: Sergio Reyes. Webmaster: Stan Robinson