

# BCA Dispatch

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

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

*Millions of us watching the healthcare fight from the cheap seats have been yelling to Obama, "Punch back for christ's sake! We know you can dance like a butterfly. Now sting like a goddamned bee!"*

—Joe Bageant

## COMMUNITY NOTES

Grasp this opportunity! Join the BCA/NorthBridge planning group—next meeting: 28 Sept, 7pm, AfD Office, 760 Main St., Waltham MA. Info: 781-894-1179.

Instead of one national convention, the Alliance for Democracy opted for a set of regional conventions this year. Boston-area planners discussed logistics, and decided to try a unique decentralized, multi-local convention. We will talk with members in MA, ME, NH, VT, and RI and see what *(Continued on Page 8 >>)*

## Leaf-Power MIT/UK Scientists to Tap Endless Electricity

by Alok Jha, *The Guardian/UK*, 12 August 2009

IT IS ONE OF EVOLUTION'S CROWNING ACHIEVEMENTS—a mini green power station and organic factory combined and the source of almost all of the energy that fuels every living thing on the planet.

Now scientists developing the next generation of clean power sources are working out how to copy, and ultimately improve upon, the humble leaf. The intricate chemistry involved in photosynthesis, the process where plants use sunlight to convert water and carbon dioxide into sugar, is the most effective solar energy conversion process on Earth. And researchers believe that mimicking parts of it could be the ticket to a limitless supply of clean power.

The untapped potential for using the sun's rays is huge. All human activity for a whole year could be powered by the energy contained in the sunlight hitting the Earth in just one hour. Harnessing even a small amount of this to make electricity or useful fuels could satisfy the world's increasing need for energy, predicted to double by 2050, without further endangering the climate.

Most solar power systems use silicon wafers to generate electricity directly. But although costs are coming down, these are still too expensive in many cases when compared with fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas. Scientists are keen to develop more efficient and cheaper alternatives sources of energy.

At Imperial College London, researchers have embarked on a £1m project to study, and eventually mimic, photosynthesis. Part of a project called the "artificial leaf", involves working out exactly how leaves use sunlight to make useful molecules. The team then plans to build artificial systems that can do the same to generate clean fuels such as hydro- *(Continued on Page 7 >>)*



Typical hog finishing facility, similar to Krochmal Farms' in Tewksbury. However, a Krochmal farmer says their pigs periodically go to a feeding area at one end of the building.

## Toxic Tewksbury Factory Farm Can Pigs and People Just Get Along?

by Dave Lewit, *Alliance for Democracy*, 15 September 2009

**P**IGS—GOOD. PIG POOP—BAD. At least when concentrated in a tank beneath a megabarn housing 1000 hogs being fed for market. And later much of the foul goo is sprayed onto fields and plowed. "Unbearable" odor for people breathing the air within a mile or two.

That's the situation in an around Tewksbury, Massachusetts, a town of 30,000 upwind of I-93 between Boston and Lowell. I haven't smelled anything like that since I was a kid in New Jersey, motoring with windows shut tight past Secaucus where pigs were fed garbage from New York City restaurants. (Secaucus has since been cleaned up and gentrified.) Sometimes kids in Tewksbury gasp and even vomit when leaving the school bus, and have refused to go outside for recess. Adults too stay indoors much of the time, at the cost of mixing with neighbors.

This has been going on since 2005, when Krochmal Farms—a local piggery with some cattle and a petting zoo and hayrides—went industrial, building a "finishing facility" for handling pigs more efficiently. Nearby suburbanites rebelled and drafted a Home Rule Petition to get the state legislature's permission to strictly regulate the conditions on the two piggeries within town limits. At a special town meeting, the petition passed easily.

On 1 September the State House's A-2 hearing room was totally packed, with an additional 30 people standing in back, listening to testimony for three hours. Other Alliance for Democracy people and I had heard of the Tewksbury matter only a few days before. We had spoken on the phone with David Powers, a leader of the revolt and producer of [www.TewksburyOdor.org](http://www.TewksburyOdor.org), and two of us were there to observe.

### Deeper than Tewksbury

Why should the Alliance care at all? Because the issue of Home Rule is fundamental to localization *(Continued >>)*

in Massachusetts and many other states. And because the Alliance is dedicated to going beyond regulation to the banning of corporations (organizations, enterprises) which disrespect citizen rights, town rights, and the rights of nature (environment). If we are going to change the system of corporate domination, here may be a key issue.

Tewksbury's townsfolk, supported by state representative James Miceli and petition-writer Michelle Walsh, are farm-friendly, but pollution-averse. How to protect their children's health? How to protect the air they breathe and maybe even the well water they drink? State regulation of farming is weak both in standards and enforcement. But town select boards and boards of health are limited in what they can do by the state government's insistence on equal treatment (regardless of inherent inequalities) of all townships across the commonwealth, and on constitutional claims to protect "agricultural" as well as "mineral, forest, water, air and other natural resources" as "rights" (Constitutional Amendment 97).

The petition, running seven pages, demands annual permits for pig-raising, with requirements about facilities and monitoring. While supporters bitterly complained about what amounts to assault from ammonia, hydrogen sulfide, and other pig-waste by-products, Krochmal Farms' owners and Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation officers claimed to be defending "family farms" and ensuring our food security. They complained that nearby home-owners were intruders (not old-time residents) who knew that they were moving in next to normally-smelly farms, and that they were trying to drive pig farmers out of business.

From a systemic point of view, these are surface concerns. Everyone seems to want direct communication among residents and farmers and town officials, but Krochmal owners seem reluctant, and Farm Bureau leaders seem to resent impediments to "progress"—conversion to Iowa-style factory farming with expensive odor abatement equipment like what Krochmal recently installed after three years of stench and complaints. The odor has abated some, but is still offensive and probably unhealthy.

On the other hand, it was easy for two of us to talk with Greg Cave, a member of the farm family, who gave us an overview with all the details we asked about, and more, when we drove up to the farm six days after the hearing. Greg's grandfather bought the farm in 1941 and eventually had 5000 pigs rooting and roaming about the countryside. Now surrounding pastures have given way to suburban homes, whose occupants experienced a sudden intensification of foul odor in 2005 when Krochmal converted from wooden piggens to their massive finishing facility.

Of particular interest was the lack of a direct connection with any large corporation. Krochmal Farms has its own large truck which takes 100 hogs at a time to the livestock auction in New Holland, Pennsylvania, where they are sold to the highest bidder which may be a corporate meat packer, but without prior contract. At the starting end nine months earlier, Krochmal breeds and maintains ownership of its pigs.

### The Big Issues

Where can a factory farm operation fit into the larger picture of agriculture in Massachusetts or New England?

Despite picturesque Vermont farms, New England produces only a small percentage of its food. Part of this is due not just to a relatively short growing season but to loss of farms because of the cost of labor and materials, compared with costs on tropical plantations dictated by supermarket chains, or mass handling of

livestock in the South and Midwest—both with heavy damage to the environment. Part is due to year 'round demand for meat like that for orange juice and lettuce. Part is due to unexpected price shifts as for milk, which has closed many Northeast farms. Part is due to (formerly) cheap fuel for shipping in food from thousands of miles away. But as food prices have climbed, and as contaminated food has become more common, so locally grown food, without insecticides or hormones or preservatives, has become more popular. Urban agriculture has begun—on lots, greenhouses, and rooftops. As world climate, soil, water conditions, and ocean fisheries deteriorate world-wide, New Englanders will have to become regionally more self-reliant, more seasonal in tastes, and simpler (or more creative) in eating habits—including much less pork and beef. Assurance of full and nutritious food supply (Food Security) is needed. All this in a decade or two—and we will be the healthier for it.

But wouldn't a mass pig operation like Krochmal's be perfect for New England ham, bacon, and pork lovers? Not if their meat is processed and sold outside of the region. Selling Massachusetts hogs in Pennsylvania is not local production for local consumption. **(The Alliance may want to help research corporate involvement in the Tewksbury matter, for example, the role of the Farm Bureau Federation. To volunteer, call Dispatch editor or Alliance coordinator at 781-894-1179.)**

So what about government involvement? The US Department of Agriculture has long since sold out to giant corporations and fosters unsustainable and environmentally damaging mass production for profit, as well as destruction of peasant farming in Latin America and Africa as part of US imperial policy. (The Alliance has been working for years to replace NAFTA and WTO with a democratic world trade system—google "Common Agreement on Investment and Society". Also, **volunteer to help with our globalization impact bill to establish a Massachusetts citizen trade commission—call Dispatch editor or Alliance coordinator at 781-894-1179.**)

At the state level the departments of Public Health, Agricultural Resources, and Environmental Protection appear to be hamstrung or corporate-dominated. Standards, oversight, regulation, and enforcement are weak. Coordination with regional and local agencies is problematic.

Home Rule may be a key to change. Following the legislative hearing I spoke with chairman Senator Jamie Eldridge of the Joint Committee on Municipalities & Regional Government. He said that the committee plans to rethink Home Rule, with an eye toward more distributed power. Now may be a great opportunity for the Alliance and sister groups to become involved for systemic change—horizontal communication, less hierarchy and logjams, local funding for consultants, maybe even participatory budgeting! Happily, the senate vice-chair is Pat Jehlen, another liberal.

At present, a substitute bill—much shorter and more sophisticated—might be enacted as an ordinance by Tewksbury or neighboring Wilmington town meeting, modeled after water protection measures taken in Barnstead NH, Shapleigh ME, and other places, sparked by Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund ([www.CELDF.org](http://www.CELDF.org)) and driven by Alliance for Democracy organizers and educators ([www.TheAllianceForDemocracy.org](http://www.TheAllianceForDemocracy.org)). Such an ordinance, possibly leading to a town charter change, would exclude factory farm operations within town limits (though sustainable farming, including organic, would continue) based on regional food security and rights to health and rights of nature. Without citing rights,

conservative townships in central Pennsylvania have warded off external corporate threats by passing such ordinances.

Yes, there will be conflict with corporations which have designs on town resources as well as with factory-minded farmers. Legislators concerned with Home Rule will weigh in with possibly very progressive changes in state law. It may also stimulate thinking and planning between towns and states in New England about regional agriculture sufficiency, public banking for sustainable enterprise, and regional economic integration. Small actions such as this one in Tewksbury may help us gain the momentum we need for larger systemic change.

*Readers: Please identify friendly spirits on this committee, which conducted the farm hearing and is concerned with Home Rule, and contact Editor:*

**Committee on Municipalities & Regional Government**

**Senators:**

Eldridge of Middlesex and Worcester (Chair) 617-722-1120  
Jehlen of Second Middlesex (Vice-Chair) 617-722-1578  
Fargo of Third Middlesex 617-722-1572  
Galluccio of Middlesex, Suffolk and Essex 617-722-1650  
Kennedy of Second Plymouth and Bristol 617-722-1200  
Tisei of Middlesex and Essex 781-246-3660

**Representatives:**

Donato of Medford (Chair) 781-395-1683  
Spiliotis of Peabody (Vice-Chair) 978-531-3269  
Sullivan of Fall River 508-676-1008  
Curran of Springfield 413-746-2728  
Puppolo of Springfield 413-596-4333  
Richardson of Framingham 617-722-2582  
Clark of Melrose 617-722-2220  
Ashe of Longmeadow 617-722-2090  
Madden of Nantucket 508-540-0035  
Barrows of Mansfield 617-722-2488  
Hargraves of Groton 978-448-5456

## Wanted: AgriCorps

### Restoring Food Integrity with Real Farmers

by Lisa M. Hamilton, *Counterpunch.org*, 12 May 2009

**W**HEN THE AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT RELEASED its 2007 census recently, the news appeared surprisingly good: For the first time since World War II, the United States did not lose farms, it gained them—75,810, to be exact, for a total of 2.2 million.

But on closer inspection, the numbers aren't so hopeful. The discrepancy stems from this tricky question: What is a farm? The census has changed its definition nine times since 1850, most recently to "any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the census year."

This loose definition is meant to err on the side of inclusion, but ultimately it just errs. Take, for example, the four chickens I keep in my back yard. I sometimes sell eggs to neighbors, and at the going rate I could make \$500 a year. If I got four more hens, my suburban home could qualify as a farm.

Silly, right? But where do you place the lower limit—or the upper limit? The Cargill feedlot in Lockney, Texas, consists of 60,000 cattle kept in dirt yards and fattened on feed grown elsewhere. Is that a farm? While the census says yes, most Americans would say no.

So then, what is a farm? To answer that, we must first ask: Why do we care? Really, why is it good news when farms—and, more importantly, the farmers who run them—increase?

There are sentimental reasons, of course, but there is also a practical reason. Farmers are valuable because they bring human scale to our massive food system. Think of how many people, in the wake of each new salmonella scare, turn to the farmers market. We do so because we know that farmers bring oversight and ethics to food production, contributions that only individual humans can offer.

In the future, farmers' importance will only grow. Their intimate, human-scale knowledge of the land is what will allow agriculture to adapt to climate change. And as the cheap energy that industrial agriculture depends on disappears, it is farmers, with their small-scale innovation and sheer manual labor, who will feed us. Why do we care about having more farmers? Because deep down we know they are essential to a functioning food system.

So I offer this new definition of a farmer: *someone who grows crops in sufficient quantity to be a true commercial entity, yet is still close enough to the ground to bring human scale and values to the process* (italics ours—Ed.). Not the backyard chicken enthusiast, nor the corporation behind the feedlot, but the individual human on the land, growing our food.

Revisit the census with this definition, and the good news vanishes. The USDA's reported increases occurred exclusively in farms with yearly sales of less than \$2,500 or more than \$500,000—that is, the backyard operations and the corporate-scale businesses. In every other category, the numbers dropped or, in one case, stayed the same. Between 2002 and 2007, the United States actually lost 43,603 real farms.

To stop this hemorrhaging, we must shift from blindly encouraging production to investing in a system that values farmers and propagates them. We need to help new farmers obtain markets, land and credit. And we must inspire nonfarmers to enter the profession. Imagine, for instance, a program that puts interns on farms—an AmeriCorps for agriculture. In this "AgriCorps," participants would learn the skills of farming and experience the lifestyle; hosts would receive valuable labor to bolster their businesses.

Such a program would face an obvious objection: AmeriCorps offers volunteers to public service organizations, but most farms are private businesses. Why should the rest of us help support them?

But maybe we need to reconsider that line of thinking. By defining farms and farmers as purely economic entities, we condemn them to a system that inevitably eliminates them. What if instead we began to see farmers as the public servants they are, and enabled them to be the public servants we need: stewards of our soil and water, pillars of our rural communities, and guardians of our food. Perhaps by redefining what farms mean to us, we can help their numbers grow—this time, for real.

*Lisa M. Hamilton is the author of the new book Deeply Rooted: Unconventional Farmers in the Age of Agribusiness. She wrote this comment for the Land Institute's Prairie Writers Circle, Salina, Kan. Hamilton lives in California.*

## Spokane Thinks Outside the Box

### Citizens Adding Bill of Rights to City Charter

by Thomas Linzey, DemocracyNow.org, 21 April 2009

(from interview conducted by Amy Goodman; edited by Dispatch)

**A**MY GOODMAN [INTRO]: A coalition of community activists, union members and environmental groups here in the Spokane WA area have begun gathering signatures to get a number of wide-ranging changes to the Spokane City Charter on the November 2009 general election ballot.

The changes are part of a proposed "Community Bill of Rights" drafted in a series of workshops and town hall meetings over the last year by a group called Envision Spokane. The changes include giving greater control to neighborhoods over new development, creating legally enforceable rights...

**TOM LINZEY:** Some folks would not normally think of Spokane as being a cutting-edge place for activism, but these 24 different groups—labor union locals, environmental organizations and neighborhood councils—have actually come together to model a Community Bill of Rights which deals with a bunch of different issues, from healthcare, to housing, to unionization, to protecting the Spokane River to a greater extent from the pollution that it's been subjected to over the past couple decades...

#### Bill of Rights in City Charter

Spokane operates under a city *home rule charter*. Some cities in the United States operate under those. It's basically a local constitution for the city. Citizens can come together to actually petition to change that home rule charter. The idea about driving in a *bill of rights* was to say to folks in Spokane..."what aren't we getting over the past couple decades of our work [as active citizens]?" It seemed to some people that our conventional, traditional activism was failing. In other words, writing letters to congressmen and doing what we perceived as traditional activism in terms of protesting and soliciting comments at regulatory hearings and those types of things [wasn't working]. It seemed that folks have increasingly felt a need to seize their local government entities to actually begin to build their values into those frameworks of law. Rather than simply waiting for other people to come and save us, [they would] do that work themselves. And so, these folks have stepped forward to actually drive their values into the city home rule charter here.

**[Q: The corporate charter movement?]** [We have come to understand] that our activism is limited in the United States. We're, in essence, placed into a box, which is limited by something called corporate rights. Corporations today have the same constitutional rights as you or I, but because of their wealth, of course, they can exercise those rights to a greater extent. So, even though you and I have First Amendment rights and Fourth Amendment rights—Bill of Rights protections under the US system of law—corporations have those rights too...

What the folks in Spokane have started to say—as a hundred-odd communities on the East Coast have begun passing these ordinances and laws as well—is to say to themselves, "We can't build a sustainable—environmentally, economically sustainable—system, if our activism is defined for us within that box. And so, we need to break out of that box somehow." And one of the most amazing things about this particular bill of rights, which is being amended into the Spokane city home rule charter, is that it actually deals with that, declaring in that bill of rights that *corporations don't have rights that can actually exceed those*

*rights of people* within the city of Spokane. And so, it's pretty groundbreaking stuff, in addition.

#### Local Rights in New England

**[Q: Shapley, Maine?]** Fascinating stuff is happening in New England right now. You have Nestle Corporation, which owns Poland Springs, coming into several small communities—not just Shapleigh, but also Newfield and Wells; Barnstead, New Hampshire; Atkinson, New Hampshire—bunch of different places. And instead of these activists saying to themselves, "We're going to do the same thing that we've done for the past forty years," which is go and beg and plead in front of a regulatory agency to try to limit the number, thousands of gallons, that can come out of our aquifer in these communities, these folks have moved forward and at town meetings have actually passed law that bans corporations from withdrawing water from within their aquifer, and then have also taken steps within those town meetings to strip corporations of those constitutional rights, which would normally be used to overturn those laws that are being passed in those areas.

And so, what's happening is almost like a grassroots revolt, where people have said, "We're not going to wait for the regulatory agencies to come in and save us. We're not going to wait for the Sierra Club to come in to save us." These rural, relatively conservative towns are rising up to seize their own lawmaking authority to say, "We are not going to allow the corporatization of our water in these areas."

#### Rights of Nature

**[Q: You've also been consulting with the government of Ecuador in rewriting its constitution. How does this relate?]**

Well, it's this concept that we've never really had in environmental movement in the United States, because our environmental movement has always been based on nature as property. In other words, if you own ten acres of ground in the United States, [that deed] carries with it the legal ability to destroy the ecosystems on that ten-acre piece of property. What is increasingly growing is a realization that for a real environmental movement to occur, ecosystems must have legally enforceable rights of their own.

And so, folks in Ecuador who were rewriting their constitution, their national constitution, heard about what was happening in the United States, because we have thirteen municipalities in the United States now that have passed local laws that say that *nature and ecosystems are no longer property, but actually have legally enforceable rights of their own*. And Ecuador became the first country in the world to take that concept of moving to a rights-based environmental protection system and ensconce it into their national constitution. It's now law.

**[Q: What would it take to get the Community Bill of Rights here in Spokane into the city charter?]**

Well, first it takes 2,800 signatures [—done!—twice that number] to put it on the ballot. And then it's going to take about 25,000 votes within the city of Spokane. And what's amazing is you have environmental groups sitting down with labor union locals, sitting down with community organizations, folks that normally wouldn't sit down across from each other, who have actually unanimously endorsed this Community Bill of Rights.

*Lawyer Thomas Linzey founded the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund (CELDF.org) and is a consultant to Spokane's "Envision Spokane" movement. The Alliance for Democracy coalesced with his Democracy Schools in working with New England townsfolk.* ■

## Corporate Personhood on Trial Pro-Democracy Groups Ply Supreme Court

by Jeff Clemens & David Cobb, DUHC.org, 18 August 2009

**O**N AUGUST 1ST DEMOCRACY UNLIMITED [of Humboldt County, CA] filed a brief in the U.S. Supreme Court challenging "corporate personhood"—the illegitimate and undemocratic legal doctrine which allows courts to overturn democratically elected laws that attempt to control corporate harm and abuse.

Democracy Unlimited joined the Program on Corporations Law & Democracy, the Women's International League for Peace & Freedom, Shays2: The Western Massachusetts Committee on Corporations & Democracy [all friends of the Alliance for Democracy —Ed.], and the Clements Foundation in making the legal argument. The brief was drafted and filed by attorney Jeff Clemens, who represented all five organizations in the matter.

The groups filed the brief in the case of Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission, urging the Supreme Court not to overturn laws preventing corporations from making political contributions in federal elections. Their *amicus curiae*, or "friend of the court," brief argues that corporations do not have the same Constitutional rights as people. As such, democratically enacted regulations of corporations do not violate the Constitution's guarantee of free speech.

"The notion that corporations have the same speech rights as people under our Bill of Rights is contrary to the words, history, spirit and intent of our Constitution," said Clements. "The organizations that joined to bring these arguments to the Court have worked with others for many years to empower democratic self-government. They remind us that corporations do not vote, speak, or act as people do, but are products of government policy to achieve economic and charitable ends. As such, corporations need not be allowed to influence our elections if Congress and State governments judge that such influence is detrimental to democracy."

The Supreme Court is considering overturning federal campaign regulations for corporations, originally enacted in 1907, and may soon overrule previous Supreme Court decisions that have upheld the Constitutionality of legislative restrictions on corporate money in politics.

The case now before the Court began when a tax-exempt non-profit corporation calling itself Citizens United challenged the Constitutionality of a federal ban on expenditures for "electioneering communications" by corporations and labor unions within sixty days of an election. The ban is part of the federal Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002. Under the Act, corporations and labor unions may still contribute to Political Action Committees.

Citizens United argued that the restrictions under the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act violated the Constitution as applied to the corporation that sought to distribute an anti-Hillary Clinton movie during the 2008 presidential primaries. A panel of three federal district court judges upheld the regulation of corporate expenditures, and agreed that the Federal Election Commission could enforce the law. The District Court relied on a 2003 Supreme Court case, *McConnell v. Federal Election Commission*, 540 U.S. 93 (2003), that had ruled that the corporate expenditure regulation did not violate the free speech guarantees of the First Amendment. Citizens United appealed to the Supreme Court.

If the Supreme Court overrules *Austin* and *McConnell*, First

Amendment rights claimed by corporations will be significantly expanded, and local, state, and federal governments will be further restricted in the ability to regulate corporations and corporate influence on our democratic processes.

The brief filed by Democracy Unlimited argues that corporations are legal entities created by state or federal law for economic, charitable or other purposes, and were never intended to be included within the Constitution's Bill of Rights. The brief also highlights the fact that the doctrine that corporations are "persons" under the due process and equal protection clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment is doubtful, and an activist federal judiciary should not intervene to prevent elected officials from protecting the integrity of the electoral process.

*The Supreme Court has heard further oral argument in the case early this month (9/09). Their decision is expected in six or eight months. A copy of the amicus brief can be read at [www.clementsllc.com](http://www.clementsllc.com). For further information contact: Jeff Clemens, Clements Law Office LLC, Concord MA, 978-287-4901, [jclements@clementsllc.com](mailto:jclements@clementsllc.com); or David Cobb, Democracy Unlimited of Humboldt County CA, 707-362-0333, [david@duhc.org](mailto:david@duhc.org)*

**Ed. Note:** This case strikes at the heart of democracy, progressive populism, and the Alliance for Democracy. If the Court extends rather than restricts the "speech" rights of giant corporations, it affirms "corporate personhood"—that corporations have a right to spend unlimited dollars on television advertising, propaganda mills, film-making, university chairs, text book production, parades, and so on, on behalf of their favorite policies and candidates before elections, further degrading "representative democracy" and empowering the authoritarian and oligarchic institutions US Chamber of Commerce and Business Roundtable, a.k.a. America, Inc., already embedded in the federal government.

This would seriously challenge all pro-democracy organizations not just to tilt a future Court away from corporate rule, or from electoral *laissez-faire*. *It would challenge us to develop new forms of democracy in which elections for federal and even state office may become irrelevant to public institutions, linking them instead to popular concerns through, e.g., tax diversion, participatory budgeting, local autonomy, regional union, referendum by public surveys, liberalization of electronic communication (TV), new civics in schools, and so forth.* Representative government, in which one person supposedly represents the interests of half a million people (House) or of a whole state (Senate) or of 300 million people (White House, Supreme Court), may finally be recognized as absurd.



KABUL, Aug 26 (Reuters) - A U.S. military helicopter carrying ballot boxes packed with votes from last week's Afghan election accidentally dumped some of them somewhere over the rugged mountains of Nuristan, officials said on Wednesday. Some 50 ballot boxes were being carried in a "sling load" beneath a Chinook helicopter from the provincial capital Paroon when the accident happened, they said. "During transport, apparently some of the materials came out of the load as it was traveling," U.S. army Lieutenant Tommy Groves told Reuters.

## **Golpe** (Coup — Honduras)

Lyrics & Music by Simon Rios

*Hear this—Nicaraguans, Salvadorans,  
Indians, Garifunas, Brazilians,  
Northamericans, Argentines, Venezuelans,  
Chileans, Cholos, Potorros and Portefios:  
This is a call, in the name of Hondurans,  
We all must rise, to set this right,  
We must defend our people, with fist and brain  
We must defend our people, with fist and brain!\**

June 28th, two-thousand-nine was the day  
When they uprooted los catrachos\*\*, from the *progressive* way.  
Mel Zelaya was the president, who'd gone from right to left,  
He was a magnate of the old school, but was calling out the theft  
& pillage of Honduras, & the whole of the continent  
by los gringos assassins, & their local *helpers*.  
So they kidnapped Mel at gunpoint, at five o'clock in the morn  
And America woke that Sunday, said what the hell is going on?  
*What the fuck is going on? Another military coup!  
Another September eleventh, another time to shout!*  
This isn't about Manuel Zelaya, it ain't about the constitution,  
Its about the *oligarchy*, and its about the revolution.  
The Honduran *constitution*, was designed by the ruling class  
With the oversight of Washington, & the rulers of the past  
And Zelaya wanted reform, to promote participation  
'Cuz democracy ain't about pulling a lever & waiting patient  
It ain't about a rich *aristocrat*, sucking blood out of the nation  
Its about power to the people, & the old order is changing  
So America is changing, along socialist lines,  
Anti-fascist, against the damned coupsters.  
300,000 in the streets saying Zeleya won't go!  
The coupsters talk democracy and all along make a coup.  
Its like saying save the trees, while revving a chainsaw  
Its like saying it ain't me babe, when you're the one I saw.  
And the *coupsters* waved a banner, reading we shall overcome  
Which side would Martin be on, if Martin could've come?

*I wish I could sing a happier song to you  
But the coup in Honduras, makes me mutherfucking angry  
I wish this was a nightmare, or a skit on cha cha cha  
But its real as rigor mortis, 'cuz they made a coup d'etat  
We have to rage, people—Honduras is America  
The same blood and watchword, from Ushuaia to Merida  
And from there to Recife, and from there to Torreón  
From the woods of Chapultepec, to the mines of Cerrejón.  
It doesn't matter what day, it doesn't matter what place,  
Yes, the common hope is wanting to kill them  
And they speak of an invasion by *Venezuelan* agents  
And we don't hold back, they say, 'cuz we're a sovereign nation.  
Sovereign nation? With a gringo base in Chaperola?  
You mean sovereign to the people? Or sovereign to Coca Cola?  
You'd be foolish if you thought that the gringos didn't play a role  
You think that the ambassador, Hugo Llorens, didn't know?  
This ain't the US of Obama, but of [Otto] Reich & of la CIA  
The ones who planned the *coup against* Hugo Chavez Frias  
The ones who killed Allende, & who tried to kill Fidel  
The ones who speak of freedom, while manifesting hell  
The ones who infiltrated the mighty Tupamaros  
The ones who drew & quartered, the brave Tupac Amaru  
The ones who own *the press, and the plantations and border factories*  
The ones who stand to profit, from the riches of the *mines*  
And the reporters of the mainstream, are more full of shit & piss  
Than the sewage tank at midnight, on the Chinatown Express  
Sowing fear of *communism*, and a thousand fucking lies  
'Cuz *the press is sold, and your people, bought*  
*Eating bullets, while the poor eat garbage,*  
And they still can't understand, why there's *so much bitterness**

And you think they give a damn about the starvation of a people?  
The disenfranchising of a people? the genocide of a people?  
'Cuz they're killing little kids, & they're killing *journalists*,  
They're killing *hopes*, & they're killing *unionists*.  
Here's a fist up for Murillo, martyr of Tegucigalpa  
Whose death served to make *the resistance stand taller*.  
Here a fist up to COFADEH, OFRANEH, and COPINH  
From the *land* of Geronimo, & Martin Luther King.  
This is the wakening of Honduras, in the form of a class war  
It's a fight of good & evil, & the good ones are the poor  
Nothing more, and it sure ain't nothing less  
And it won't stop till the coup drops, and *justice* is addressed.  
*The dictatorship will fall like all the rest  
And a time of justice will arrive, justice with peace  
But meanwhile the tears, I'll disturb them with my song  
In front of the march, with more dash than a thousand Rambos  
Both sides of the left and from below  
Hondurans will win—try even harder, Catrachos!*

\* *Golpe* = *coup*. Throughout, italics indicate our rough translation from the Spanish. Special thanks to Ignacio Castuera. Non-italic is English in the original. \*\* Catrachos = Hondurans

## **Honduran Coup Threatens Natives AFL-CIO Readies Boycott Against Regime**

by Willie Thompson, San Francisco Bay View, 4 Sept 2009

**T**HE HONDURAN DE FACTO COUP GOVERNMENT under Roberto Micheletti plans to eliminate the Honduran Garifuna\* people and culture. Micheletti has rescinded the Manuel Zelaya authorization to teach in the Garifuna language in school and to teach the language itself. All scholarships to Garifuna students have been eliminated.

Now, Micheletti, with no opposition from the U.S. State Department, has set Sept. 1, 2009, to take over the Garifuna built and operated hospital and fire its Latin American Medical School (ELAM) trained Garifuna physicians, including Dr. Luther Castillo Harry, its founder.

Dr. Castillo Harry has been targeted for assassination in order to decapitate the Garifuna leadership. The original open assassination strategy has been revised to arrest and imprison Castillo Harry and have him killed in jail as a way of covering his assassination. Dr. Castillo Harry never travels alone; he never sleeps in the same place and keeps his appointments and engagements secret. Targeted assassination of leaders for social change is a strategy to cut off the head of the movement, making it leaderless and more vulnerable to extermination.

The Garifuna doctors were trained at ELAM in Cuba and have served Garifuna and Meskito patients since 2005. Health indicators of these communities have shown considerable improvements since that time and their work is receiving increasing international recognition and support, such as from Project CHIMES under the direction of Bill Camp of the Sacramento Labor Council. The latter group provided funding and other support for the construction of the hospital and is continuing and broadening its support.

According to Bud McKinney, vice president of the Sheetmetal Workers International Association, Local 162, the hospital was built brick-by-brick by the Garifuna, who are now the proud owners of the only Garifuna hospital in the world which could soon be taken away by the de facto coup government with no protest from the U.S. State Department and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Lanny Davis\*\*, former campaign manager for Hillary Clinton and chief of staff for President Bill Clinton is now

the chief defender of the criminal Honduran coup government under Micheletti.

Black physicians in the United States have experienced similar discriminatory prejudicial treatment as recently as the 1980s, only 25 years ago. According to Dr. Otis Brawley, chief medical officer of the American Cancer Society, "local chapters of the American Medical Association (AMA) had rules against Black members well into the 1960s and policies that made Blacks feel uncomfortable well into the 1980s." Local medical societies in the U.S. beginning in the 1800s barred Black doctors, which prevented them from treating their patients in local hospitals. Abraham Flexner, chair of the AMA Commission on Schools in 1910, deemed all Black schools except Howard and Meharry universities substandard and urged they be closed.

Bill Camp, executive secretary of the Sacramento Central Labor Council, is preparing a resolution for the AFL-CIO National Convention in Pittsburgh Sept. 14-17 to embargo all trade with the U.S.-supported de facto coup government in Honduras. This is the most efficient and effective way to prevent the genocide of the Garifuna, to return democratically elected President Manuel Zelaya to Honduras, punish Roberto Micheletti and the coup government and rescue the United States from its support of the Honduran coup government.

All groups should pass similar embargo resolutions and begin now to boycott all Honduran products such as coffee, fruit etc. Obviously, the situation is urgent. The life and culture of the Garifuna people are at risk as are democracy and justice for the Honduran people.

\* The Garifuna people—600,000 in coastal Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Belize, and a few Caribbean islands—are descended from Carib, Arawak, and African tribal people. —Ed.

\*\*The brash, venal American lawyer and PR man Lanny Davis is "our man in Honduras". He is in the pay of the top dogs of CEAL, the Honduras chapter of the Business Council of Latin America—principals behind the coup. Davis has worked for big business, defended Bill Clinton against the blow-job-obsessed Republicans, and has been close to Hillary Clinton for many years. —Ed.

## Culture for All

### Brazil Scheme Helps Theaters, Workers

by Marcelo Cajueiro, *Variety*, 28 July 2009

**T**HE BRAZILIAN GOVERNMENT has announced a tax-break program aimed at helping low-income locals enjoy more cultural pursuits, which is expected to inject some 600 million reals (\$315 million) into the local entertainment industry each month. Following years of debate, President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva submitted to Congress a bill creating the cultural voucher program and is pressuring legislators to speed its approval.

The program is an attempt to open up cultural events to low-income Brazilians. Theatrical tickets are relatively expensive here, and studies show that the vast majority of moviegoers are from the wealthier, upper classes.

Local companies taking part in the program will be entitled to a tax break of 1% on their revenues. Companies must use that money to buy cultural vouchers from the government, which they must sell on to employees at 10% of the face value. The program is aimed at workers earning up to \$1,200 a month.

The vouchers can be spent in several ways, such as renting DVDs, buying tickets to films, plays and concerts, and buying books, CDs and DVDs. Those making higher wages can also apply for the vouchers, but will have to pay more than 10% of the face value, according to a sliding scale. ■

## LEAF-POWER (Continued from Page 1)

gen and methanol. These would then be used in fuel cells to make electricity or directly to power super-clean vehicles.

Similar projects are gathering pace around the world: the US is poised to approve a federal research budget of around \$35m a year for ideas that could create fuels from sunlight and the Dutch government has allocated €40m for similar research.

According to James Barber, a biologist at Imperial College London and leader of the artificial leaf project, if artificial photosynthesis systems could use around 10% of the sunlight falling on them, they would only need to cover 0.16% of the Earth's surface to satisfy a global energy consumption rate of 20 terawatts, the amount it is predicted that the world will need in 2030. And unlike a biological leaf, the artificial equivalent could be placed in the arid desert areas of the world, where it would not compete for space agricultural land.

Ultimately, Barber hopes to improve on nature's own solar cell. "If the leaf can do it, we can do it but even better," he said. "[But] it doesn't mean that you try to build exactly what the leaf has. Leonardo da Vinci tried to design flying machines with feathers that flapped up and down. But in the end we built 747s and Airbus 380s, completely different to a bird and, in fact, even better than a bird."

Photosynthesis starts with a chemical reaction where sunlight is used to split water into hydrogen and oxygen. The oxygen is released into the atmosphere while the hydrogen is used to create sugars and other organic molecules for the plant. The aim of Barber's artificial leaf project is to find an efficient way of mimicking that water-splitting reaction to create a clean and limitless source hydrogen. Unlike normal leaves, the new devices would not suck CO<sub>2</sub> out of the atmosphere.

Hydrogen is a clean, energy-rich fuel that could be used in fuel cells to make electricity or else combined with carbon dioxide from the atmosphere (or from the exhaust of fossil-fuel power stations) to make methanol, a fuel that could be dropped into vehicles without the need for any engine modifications. "The challenge is to get hydrogen out of water using a ready supply of energy," said Barber.

For domestic purposes, Dan Nocera, a chemist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has calculated that using artificial leaf to split a few litres of water a day into hydrogen and oxygen would be enough to supply all a home's energy needs.

Scientists can already produce hydrogen by splitting water but current techniques are expensive, use harsh chemicals and need carefully controlled environments in which to operate. The critical part of the artificial leaf project is developing catalysts made from cheap materials that can be used to split water in everyday conditions.

John Loughhead, executive director of the UK Energy Research Centre, described the artificial leaf idea as very promising because "we know that plants have already evolved to do it and we know that, fundamentally, it's a workable process on a large scale."

He added: "Ultimately, the only sustainable form of energy we've got is the sun. From a strategic viewpoint, you have to think this looks really interesting because we know we're starting from a base of feasibility."

Barber's colleagues at Imperial, led by chemist James Durrant, have recently developed a catalyst from rust that carried out part of the water-splitting reaction. So far the process is not very efficient, so Durrant's team is looking at improving this by engineering the surface of the rust. "We're looking at adding small catalytic amounts of cobalt onto the surface of the iron

oxide to make it more efficient."

Nocera is also working on a catalyst made from cobalt and phosphorus that can split water at room temperature. Speaking last year, when he published his preliminary results in the journal *Science*, he said efficient water-splitting technology would be useful as a way of storing solar energy, which is a major problem for anyone who wants to use large amounts of solar power. During the day, an artificial leaf could use sunlight to split water and, at night, the stored hydrogen would be used to make electricity as it was needed. Chemical fuels such as hydrogen can store far more energy per unit mass than even the most advanced batteries.

Both Durrant's and Nocera's catalysts are many years from becoming commercial products.

**COMMUNITY NOTES** (Continued from Page 1)

what they think. The concept is to have a dozen or so people at each location---perhaps Boston MA, Blue Hill ME, Manchester NH, Montpelier VT, and Providence RI---for a 10-5 p.m. session, drawing mainly on a 2-hour driving perimeter but including mobile members and friends from other meetings---circuit-riding to provide overlap among localities. Later we would consolidate upshots of meetings using videos, email, and web. The meetings will probably be held in November, on dates convenient for participants. Perhaps AfD's northeast region will become a network. Please call AfD office in Waltham, 781-894-1179 to offer help, and to discuss how New England members can participate in national council elections if not at these local sub-conventions (National AfD has October deadlines).

Meanwhile, BCA/NorthBridge members are proceeding with several projects:

● **Cynthia Ritsher** will try to arrange a public lecture or seminar with attorney Jeff Clements of Concord MA, who drew up the Friend-of-the-Court brief for the US Supreme Court to reduce corporate participation in elections (see article, p.5 above).

● **Dave Lewit** is investigating MA home rule laws after he and **Jed Schwartz** attended State House hearing on Tewksbury's home rule petition to locally regulate air-polluting pig farms there. Cynthia and Dave visited Tewksbury and managed to interview a pig farmer there, after having talked with a protest spokesperson there (see article, p.1 above). State **Sen. Jamie Eldridge**, co-chair of the legislature's joint committee on Municipalities and Regional Government, said that the committee is reviewing home rule law with an eye toward broadening local powers---a key concern of the Alliance. We may want to help in the committee's effort (see list of members at box, p.3 above); please alert us to any contact you have on the committee, and join the project if you can.

● As a climate-change activist **Joanna Herlihy** alerted us to the Tewksbury matter, and linked us with the MA Relocalization Conference (see Action Alerts, this page) through **Eli Beckerman** of Mass Coalition for Healthy Communities, the sponsor. Dave (phone 617-266-8687---call to help) will be the point person for the Democracy segment of the conference, and AfD's **Ruth Caplan** will be in town to help with that workshop.

● **Joanna Herlihy** (phone 617-864-0506) needs help in working with Climate SOS to take local actions---especially in Cambridge MA---to slow climate change. Please attend the City Council hearing on Thursday 9/24 (see Action Alert, this page).

● Globalization Impact Bill H.341 now in the legislature needs your representatives' support Call **Rep. Byron Rushing's** office (617-722-2006) or Dave (617-266-8687) to find out how. The bill would set up a citizens' trade commission like that of ME,

NH, and VT to help the legislature withdraw support for unfair corporate-driven economic policies.

**ACTION ALERTS**

Thu. 24 Sept, 5:30 pm, Cambridge. **Climate Change Emergency.** Scientists explain new findings. City Hall, Council Chamber, City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Ave. PLEASE COME--- City Council needs to see residents there. Info: 617-864-0506.

Sun. 27 Sept, 2 pm, New York City. **March for 9/11 Truth.** Support referendum for independent investigation. Speakers include 9/11 family members, TV personalities, etc. Battery Park, Manhattan, by Ground Zero to City Hall. Info: nyccan.org.

Thu. 1 Oct, 7 pm, Boston. **Creative Nonviolence** to End US Military & Economic Warfare with **Kathy Kelly**, Nobel prize nominee, on costs of violence in Haiti, Bosnia, the Occupied West Bank, Beirut, Jordan, Baghdad, Gaza, Pakistan, and the US. Paulist Center Aud, 5 Park St. Info: 781-286-5004.

Sat. 3 Oct, 10 am-4 pm, Ware MA. **Nonviolence and Reconciliation With Nations at War.** Kathy Kelly, Rabbi Sheila Peltz Weinberg, Raymond Helmick SJ, Skip Schiel, Imam Talal Eid. Potluck supper follows. Agape Community, 2062 Greenwich Rd. Info: 413-967-9369

Mon. 5 Oct, Groton CT. **Vigil against weapons in space.** Electric Boat shipyard. Info: Atl Life Cmunity (860) 437-8890.

Sat. 10 Oct, 11:30 am, Bath ME. **Vigil against weapons in space.** Bath Iron Works, Wash. St. VfP+ Info: (207) 763-4062.

Sun. 18 Oct, 9 am-6:30 pm, Boston. **Mass. Relocalization Conference.** Workshops: Climate-War-Energy, Health, Food, Democracy (AfD-led), Economics, Transitions. Speakers: Frances Moore Lappe, Bill McKibben, Mel King, Reggie Lewis Ctr., 1350 Tremont St. (Roxbury Crossing) Info: 617-821-1453 [www.relocalizemassachusetts.org](http://www.relocalizemassachusetts.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. #2h, Boston, MA 02116.)

BOSTON-CAMBRIDGE ALLIANCE for DEMOCRACY PLEDGE

- \_\_\_ \$33/Year - "Count me in!"
- \_\_\_ \$66/Year - "Contributor" (We need to average this amount.)
- \_\_\_ \$111/Year - "Sustainer" (Helping us thrive.)
- \_\_\_ \$222/Year - "Community Steward"
- \_\_\_ \$444/Year - "Realize the vision"
- \_\_\_ What's fair for YOU? \_\$\_\_\_\_\_

Name : \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Street No./Box/Apt: \_\_\_\_\_

Town and Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: Day \_\_\_\_\_ Night: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail (for occasional contact): \_\_\_\_\_

**COLOPHON**

Dave Lewit, Editor 617-266-8687 [dlewit@igc.org](mailto:dlewit@igc.org)

Visit the Alliance web site: [www.TheAllianceForDemocracy.org](http://www.TheAllianceForDemocracy.org)

Visit our regional web site: [www.NewEnglandAlliance.org](http://www.NewEnglandAlliance.org)