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In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

November 13, 2000

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In These Times
INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

"... with liberty and justice for all"

James Weinstein
Founding Editor and Publisher

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Publisher's Notes

This edition of *In These Times* marks the beginning of my term as publisher. Permit me a few words of introduction.

First, I want to express my thanks to Beth Schulman, who has done so much to solidify the economic situation of the magazine. Beth will remain on the *In These Times* board, and I'm counting on her experience and wisdom as I make the transition. Second, I am honored to follow in the footsteps of James Weinstein and fortunate that his experience and wisdom will also be available to me.

I am from California, and probably the most California person you could meet. I was born in Hollywood, played football, surfed and eventually found my way to Stanford. I began writing computer programs in the '60s and have worked in the computer industry for much of my professional life, ending up as the founding vice president of engineering at a then tiny company called Cisco Systems.

Though I became part of the Silicon Valley scene, I am more a product of the anti-war movement than corporate America. Through my anti-war activism, I made contact with the Society of Friends, and eventually became a Quaker. This has been a cornerstone experience in my life along with meeting and marrying my wife, Kathy. We live in Berkeley (as do three of our six children).

These are times that demand that we speak the truth to each other and to the nation.

I retired from Cisco eight years ago and became involved in the movement for economic justice. I helped found and, until recently, served as co-chairman of Responsible Wealth, an offshoot of United for a Fair Economy. From that platform, I spoke to groups across the country about the growing economic divide in the United States. In Berkeley, I'm involved with a variety of activist groups; I am chairman of Berkeley Youth Alternatives, the most comprehensive children's center in the Bay Area.

How does all this prepare me to be publisher of *In These Times*? Since I've never been a publisher before, I have a lot to learn (with good people to learn from). But like most organizations on the left, *In These Times* relies on donations to balance its budget. Through my work with other nonprofits, this is a familiar situation to me. All of us have a part to play in strengthening this institution, so don't be surprised when you receive a letter from me asking for your help.

As for my politics, I am a Quaker and I believe deeply in equality. I've become increasingly aware of my privilege as a white man and a person of means. Like many readers of *In These Times*, I share a belief in economic democracy and a concern for the plight of our many fellow citizens from whom the promise of a better life has slipped away. In most eyes, I'm a classic "techie," differentiated only by my love of literature and my enjoyment of writing. *In These Times* has seldom covered new technology, so you will read me weighing in on its social implications. I am married to a feminist and have three activist daughters, so I'm interested in making sure *In These Times* intensifies its feminist perspective. Because of my participation in the peace movement and faith-based social activism, I will argue for expanding coverage of those segments of the movement as well.

Quakers place an unusual emphasis on "speaking the truth." Quakers do not take oaths (such as judicial oaths—customarily required for jury duty), because to do so would imply that there are two standards of truth—a loose standard for everyday use and a strict standard for special occasions. I believe that *In These Times* has a strong tradition of speaking the truth, telling it like it is, whether through investigative reporting or merely talking about what lies in the shadows of American society.

These are times that demand that we speak the truth to each other and to the nation. If we do not speak the truth we risk seeing democracy slip out of our grasp. In that spirit I accept the torch that has been passed to me by Beth and Jimmy.

I look forward to publishing the truth, vividly, as widely as possible. And I look forward to hearing the truth from you.

Bob Burnett

In These Times

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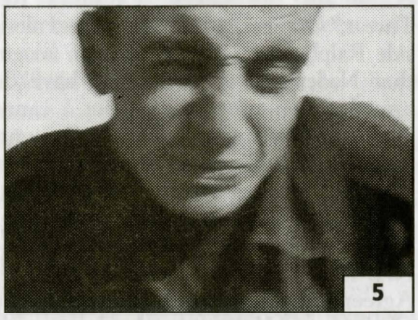
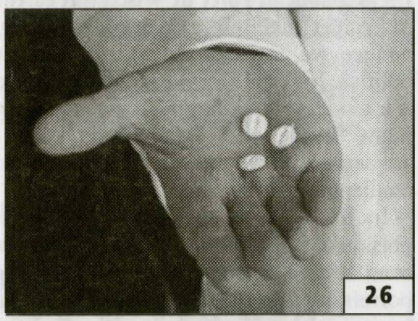
Cover Illustration: Terry LaBan





Letters

Strategy Battles

Robert McChesney asserts that I "fraudulently masquerade as someone who supports Nader on the issues" ("Ralph's Real Threat," October 16). I have worked alongside Ralph Nader for 30 years. I imagine that Nader and I occasionally have disagreed on an issue or two, but I cannot recall any examples. Our fundamental approach to public policy during those years has been remarkably close. Most recently we have worked together, very closely together, on issues relating to trade—NAFTA, the Multilateral Investment Agreement, the WTO and trade with China. I would be interested in knowing the public policy issues on which McChesney believes Nader and I so fundamentally disagree. I simply don't know of them.

As for my "mean-spirited and vicious diatribe against Nader," the only arguably critical comment I make is that he is "not a man with the slightest inclination to build a democratic institution." If McChesney thinks Nader has built such organizations, he should cite them.

McChesney asserts that my "career has been filled with attempts to reduce the influence of the left in the Sierra Club and to keep it respectable for corporate America." I have no idea where he derived this charge unless he is one who mistakes Alexander Cockburn's skilled polemics as fact-based. It's laughably inaccurate.

McChesney also accuses me of "disingenuous and sloppy" propaganda for claiming that Bob La Follette didn't believe in third parties. I stated no such idiocy. I talked about how La Follette went about capturing the Republican Party in Wisconsin early in his career precisely as a model of how I believe we can best advance progressive politics. Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition is a model for building a progressive movement inside the Democratic Party. I advocate that we put our efforts into such challenges, not into the Green Party.

In his 1924 independent campaign for president, La Follette, a Republican senator from Wisconsin, refused to allow his supporters to organize a third party. I would invite readers to compare the political impact that La Follette was able to have prior to his taking this route in 1924 with his marginalization afterwards. McChesney tells us that La Follette left "out of disgust." Disgust is not a strategy.

Carl Pope
San Francisco

Robert McChesney responds: *I confess that I knew nothing about Carl Pope when I was presented with his original piece attacking my arguments on behalf of supporting Ralph Nader. I contacted three highly respected people active in environmental politics for the past 25 years to inquire about him. One of the three supports Nader; another is undecided as far as I can tell; and the third is vehemently pro-Gore and detests both the Nader campaign and the slightest notion of working for a third party. My characterization of Pope's role in the Sierra Club and the environmental movement came from nearly identical reports from all three.*

Pope again says he and Nader are in agreement on nearly every environmental and trade issue, so it is unfair for me to characterize him as a bagman for the Gore campaign. If indeed Pope agrees with Nader on every environmental and trade issue, I do not see how he could possibly support Gore—or, at the least, his support for Gore would be qualified by strong denunciations of Gore's record. That Pope could write a piece devoid of any concern about Gore's record, or the corporate domination of the Democratic Party, suggests either his affinity with Nader is not quite what he suggests or he is politically schizophrenic.

Finally, let me rise to the defense of Robert M. La Follette, who has sustained a crude and factually inaccurate attack from Pope. Yes, La Follette was personally marginalized after his 1924 campaign, a brutal race in which he astounded pundits by claiming 17 percent of the vote against Democratic and Republican candidates sponsored by Wall Street. (Sound familiar?) La Follette died within a year at age 69.

But his legacy did not die. New York Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, Roosevelt's Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, Oregon Sen. Wayne Morse—all La Follette aides in the 1924 campaign—were just a few of the progressive leaders who traced their political roots to their participation in La Follette's third-party bid. The Wisconsin Progressive Party, the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party and the New York American Labor Party—three of the most successful third-party endeavors in American history—all explicitly acknowledged that La Follette's 1924 campaign helped to break the two-party mold and to create an opening for their growth. As La Follette's progeny noted, he put principle above party and believed strongly in building an independent political force free of both the Democratic and Republican parties.

That Pope is so unfamiliar with La Follette's contribution and his values provides perhaps the clearest explanation for why he now dismisses Ralph Nader's candidacy. When it comes to independent, progressive politics, Pope just doesn't get it.

Lessons of 1948

As James Weinstein points out, Henry Wallace lost by a landslide in 1948 when liberals abandoned him for Harry Truman ("And Why I'm Not," August 21). Then came NATO, the Cold War and liberals without political power. If you want to "win" the current election, just vote for the person you think will win. But if you want political power, support the candidate who takes your positions—and stick with it. That is the real lesson of 1948. Vote for Ralph Nader.

Tod Landis
Ben Lomond, California

James Weinstein responds: *This is a good example of the non sequitur—or disconnect—that afflicts the Naderite brain. If Wallace had challenged Truman in the primaries, instead of starting a feckless third party, he might well have helped several progressive legislators survive. By dragging them with him into the Progressive Party, he weakened the progressive wing of the Democratic Party and facilitated what Tod Landis complains of. The same holds true for the insistence of Progressive Party leaders that the heads of left-led CIO unions endorse Wallace. By doing so, these Progressives facilitated the CIO leadership's expulsion of 11 "Communist-Dominated" internationals from the CIO, and the subsequent internecine warfare in the labor movement that so weakened it in the '50s and '60s.*

This is not an argument over political principles or issues, as those who think with their hearts rather than their brains seem to believe. The question here is whether simply to make a statement that ends up hurting the left because it isolates, or to find a way to make the statement and still remain in mainstream discourse.

Playing the Spoiler

Oh, what a surprise! The executive director of the Sierra Club promoting Al Gore over Ralph Nader ("Power over Prophets," October 16). The Sierra Club is joined at the butt to the Democratic Party and always has been. Has it worked out well for them? Have those environmental side agreements for NAFTA/GATT/WTO (championed by Gore) been implemented? Or are we still experiencing the global commodification of the Earth's resources in the name of profit? The Sierra Club's perennial attachment to the Democrats condones the status quo and constitutes an endorsement of the two-party system. The time has come to show the Republicrats that there are alternatives to their marginally different political perspectives.

Continued on page 33

Terms of Engagement

By Salim Muwakkil

Did Vice President Al Gore have too much bronze tint in his make-up to look credible during the first debate? Did Texas Governor George W. Bush's affability effectively disguise his ignorance? Did he use enough multisyllabic words (like "egregious," "atrophy" and "Chernomyrdin") to dispel his reputation for lightness? Did Gore's sartorial risk of a blue tie cost him crucial polling points in the second debate? Was the vice president appropriately sigh-less? What about Bush's smirk?

These questions may seem tangential to the information citizens need to choose national leadership, but in our constricted political discourse, answers to those questions may help to decide the election. Rather than discussing the issues that are most crucial to our identity as a peace-loving, pluralistic democracy—the catastrophic, racially disparate incarceration epidemic, the bloated military budget, the domestic devastation of the drug war, the power of corporate influence, etc.—our political leadership offers us feel-good ephemera and poll-tested nostrums.

Gore and Bush decried racial profiling as something alien to America, "not what America is all about," as they both noted. Their distaste for the practice is commendable, but some truth about our history would also be helpful. We would better understand our current racial impasse if national leadership explained that racial profiling indeed has been what America is all about. For most of our history, in fact, racial profiling was not just conventional wisdom, it was statutory. Candor about our past would help bring context and clarity to our racially contentious present.

Meanwhile, the inner workings of Bush and Gore's political campaigns are mired in the cold calibrations of segment marketing, demographic analysis and polling, instead of holding vigorous discussions on the hot ideals that fuel political passions. Presidential debates, with their focused audience and singular purpose, have the potential to serve the electorate as unparalleled venues of public policy discussion. But instead they have become performance spaces for corporate-sponsored politicians trying to project an image that is least alienating to the most people.

Still, one of these men will be elected president of the world's richest and most powerful nation, and we are the ones who will decide which one it is. For better or worse, the debates aid that choice. But watching the concert of agreement between Gore and Bush on issues like the death penalty, the murderous sanctions on Iraq and uncritical support of the International Monetary Fund, observers might well wonder where the differences lie.

Our political leadership offers us feel-good ephemera and poll-tested nostrums, not discussion of issues.

People seeking the kind of engagement offered by idealistic politics must look elsewhere. A few are looking to the Libertarians, whose free-market fundamentalism strikes a responsive chord among some of those attracted to idealistic politics. Pat Buchanan, the candidate of the hijacked Reform Party, has drawn surprisingly little interest from those idealistic right-wingers who were thought to be his natural constituency; perhaps Buchanan's brigade of glowering xenophobes have been converted into Naderites.

While that's highly unlikely, those enormous crowds drawn by Green candidate Ralph Nader are coming from somewhere. The 10,000-plus crowd he recently pulled in Chicago is part of a movement of idealistic, mostly young people properly put off by the cynical maneuvers and stultifying centrism of the parties in charge. At Nader's Chicago stop, enthusiastic supporters roared their approval in a show of support so vigorous it sparked hopes that a movement is ready to take off. This Nader phenomenon is comprised of many elements: part spectacle, part faddish indulgence and part incipient social movement.

On stage in Chicago, Nader was joined by Eddie Vedder of the rock group Pearl Jam who performed an inspired rendition of Bob Dylan's "The Times They Are A' Changin'." And for just a moment, it seemed like maybe they really are. ■

Terry LaBan

Milosevic Is History

So what's next for Yugoslavia?

By Jeremy Scahill

BELGRADE—It's 3 p.m. on October 5. Hundreds of thousands of people pack the streets in front of the Yugoslav Parliament on Bulevar Revolucije. Riot police stand nervously smoking cigarettes or tapping their batons against plastic shields.

The deadline set by the Democratic Opposition of Serbia for Slobodan Milosevic to recognize their candidate, Vojislav Kostunica, as the country's new president is at hand. In the center of the street, opposition politicians speak from a flatbed truck. But there is no mention of the deadline, and no announcement of the "drastic" action they had promised.

On the frontlines of the demonstration are thousands of people from provincial Serbia—farmers, coal miners, auto mechanics, even veterans of the Kosovo war. They stare down the police, shouting, "*Gotov Je*" ("He is finished"). They are restless. Many of them drove 10 hours to get to Belgrade, some even walked. They didn't come to hear any more speeches from politicians.

At 3:30, there's still no call for action. But a contingent of about a hundred sturdy men from Cacak, a town in central Serbia, decide to wait no more. They break past the police line and storm the Parliament. Police launch dozens of tear gas canisters, and batons swing wildly into the mob. But the crowd quickly overwhelms the police. Within moments the forces are fleeing and the Parliament is burning. Seventy-two hours later, Kostunica is sworn in as the new president of Yugoslavia. The revolt in the streets turns into a boisterous celebration. "Serbia is being born again today," says 28-year-old Jelena Djukic.

"Look around," her husband Dusan, 31, adds. "Young people, old people, all of us are here to celebrate the defense of our elections and our lives."

Meanwhile, Western leaders pose before cameras hailing "Serbia's new democracy." The calls have poured into Kostunica's office, as country after country congratulates him. Many of the calls have come from leaders of the NATO countries that bombed Yugoslavia for 78 days last year. But Kostunica is no NATO ally. He has called their action "criminal" and "sins against our country and our people," and has stated repeatedly that he will not turn Milosevic or other indicted war criminals over to The Hague, calling it "a private court for the U.S. government."

The new president says there will be no independence for Kosovo; Montenegro breaking from the Yugoslav Federation is not on the table. In an interview with *In These Times*, Kostunica pledged to "protect Western political values in Yugoslavia from Western policy."

"I will say this right now," Kostunica declared in his inaugural address. "The only way that I will accept our return to the international community is in a dignified way, respecting and defending our national interests and national integrity."

Kostunica's coalition, the Democratic Opposition of Serbia, is hardly a unified bunch. Kostunica certainly wasn't chosen because all 18 member parties support his views. In fact, members of his coalition privately express concern about his nationalism. The decision to propel Kostunica, the head of a small opposition party, to center stage was a strategic decision based on who could best win against Milosevic.

"He can hardly be called a NATO spy," says University of Belgrade historian Dusan Batakovic, a Kostunica supporter. "The regime couldn't attack him because he was one of those firmly against the NATO bombing, and condemning NATO policy as illegal and anti-humanitarian. On the other hand, he was telling people that Milosevic is the largest part of the problem we have with the rest of the world. Therefore, he is one of those few who has offered a useful synthesis of being anti-Milosevic, and being a strong and devoted Serb at the same time."

BRACA NADEZDIC/NEWSMAKERS

Vojislav Kostunica and supporters in Belgrade on the night of October 5.

Although they are now paying lip-service to him, Kostunica makes many Western officials nervous. Compared with other coalition leaders, Kostunica is reserved when speaking about future relations with the United States and Western Europe. He seldom mentions America when he talks of rebuilding ties with the international community. He never traveled abroad appealing for assistance from foreign governments to unseat Milosevic. There were no jaunts to have tea at foreign chancelleries. In fact, he criticized other opposition figures for such meetings during the NATO bombing.

That leaves the question of who will define democracy in the "new" Yugoslavia—those seeking Western acceptance or Kostunica and his independent-minded allies?

During the Cold War, Yugoslavia's longtime Communist leader, Josip Broz Tito, was known as a bridge between the United States and the USSR. Even under Milosevic, Yugoslavia has not yet gone the same route as many former Eastern Bloc countries, which are opening their markets to multinational corporations, privatizing state-owned industries and deregulating their economies.

Though the West may encounter a stern figure in Kostunica, it seems the economic aspirations of the United States and its European allies for Yugoslavia are secure. The very figures who propelled Kostunica from relative political obscurity to president—mainly the politicians he criticized during the NATO bombing—are working diligently to put Yugoslavia on the globalization fast track. "The new government will have a program of economic reform and we are sure that this will be acceptable for the International Monetary Fund and World Bank," says Mladjan Dinkic, head of the pro-West economists group G-17, which has authored the economic program adopted by the opposition. "We will start to make an economic environment favorable for private and other investments."

In addition to increased management by the IMF and World Bank, the economic program of the new government, endorsed by Kostunica, calls for rapid privatization and foreign investment. As one high-level opposition official says, "The process of destroying the old political establishment will be finished in one month."

Though the country remains in a state of euphoria over the ousting of Milosevic, there are those who fear the fate of Yugoslavia's neighbors who have recently found "Western democracy." In places like Bulgaria and Romania, workers face high inflation and rising prices, while social welfare programs have been gutted by IMF austerity measures. The most vulnerable in these countries face increasingly bleak realities. "I am very much conscious and aware that this is going to happen," says political scientist Novak Gajic. "The rhetoric here right now is about integrating with Western Europe, but the reality is that, with the planned economic reforms, Yugoslavia will look more like the newest members of the Third World—the countries of Central and Eastern Europe—than France or Britain. As a region, we in the Balkans are quickly becoming part of the Third World."

Serbia's honeymoon with "something, anything but Milosevic," as one young protester put it, is beginning. But the "economic shock therapy" the new government speaks of may not be well-received by the broader population. "All these people celebrating are living in a fantasy land," says Nebojsa Djordjevic, 30, who voted for Milosevic and comes from five generations of Communists. "What will they say when the foreign companies own this country? I'm not for Milosevic, but I am against globalization."

Though the process may be painful, as has been the case in so many Eastern European countries, Yugoslavia could eventually see the re-emergence of a credible democratic left as an opposition to the new government. The question though is how long this will take and what the people of Yugoslavia, who have experienced four wars in a decade, tough economic sanctions and tyranny, will have to live through first. ■

Jeremy Scahill *is the Belgrade correspondent for Pacifica Radio's* Democracy Now! *He reported from Yugoslavia throughout the NATO bombing and was one of the few foreign journalists in Belgrade during the overthrow of Milosevic.*

The Road to War

Counting the dead in the West Bank

By Charmaine Seitz

RAMALLAH, THE WEST BANK—It is a harrowing dance. At the flashpoints—the places in the West Bank where Palestinian-controlled areas adjoin those under Israeli control—boys and young men hurl stones and Molotov cocktails at Israeli army jeeps. The Israeli soldiers take aim behind the doors of their vehicles. Sometimes the Palestinians are successful in pushing the jeeps back a few yards into Israeli territory. More often, the whine of a waiting ambulance comes closer to rush a wounded Palestinian to an already-crowded hospital.

The popular unrest began on September 28, when right-wing Israeli politician Ariel Sharon visited Jerusalem's Haram al Sharif along with hundreds of Israeli security officers. Angered by the thought of Sharon, architect of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, at the holy Islamic site, Palestinians protested and scuffles broke out.

The next day, at Friday prayers, Israeli soldiers entered the mosque, shooting live and rubber-coated ammunition and killing several Palestinians. While Israeli security officials say that no shots were fired until Palestinian stones began flying onto the Western Wall where Jews pray, eyewitnesses say that Israeli police fired first. Since then, clashes have resulted in funerals and more angry demonstrations. As *In These Times* went to press, Israeli helicopter gunships were bombing Ramallah and Gaza, including the compound of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat. The death toll was nearing 100 Palestinians with more than 2,500 wounded. Five Israeli soldiers have been killed in the fighting.

Israel was ready for this, its defense officials say. After bloody clashes in 1996, the Israeli Defense Forces beefed up their sniper units in the West Bank and Gaza, military sources recently

boasted to the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*. During the long hours of clashes, the camouflaged snipers can be seen among the trees, carefully firing long-range, high-caliber rifles at Palestinian protesters.

The Israeli use of snipers caused Palestinian planning minister Nabil Shaath to accuse the Israeli government of "premeditated murder." Israeli minister of public security David Tsur responded that snipers had been used after Friday prayers at the holy Muslim shrines, but that soldiers only shot at the legs of protesters. The Palestinian ministry of health, however, says that at least 40 percent of Palestinian casualties have come from head and chest wounds. The vast majority of deaths have occurred when rubber-coated metal bullets explode inside the wounded, say doctors.

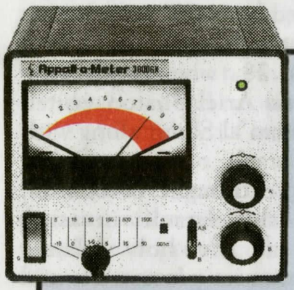
At dusk, the big guns take over. In Ramallah, artillery shelling begins at night, coming from the direction of an Israeli settlement. In Gaza, two brand new apartment buildings and a Palestinian police headquarters were shot to rubble by Israeli artillery fire and then bulldozed.

Early on, Palestinians themselves could be heard echoing the Israeli sentiment that Arafat was orchestrating violence for a reason. Israel claims that Arafat orchestrated the original demonstrations to force Israel to make concessions in negotiations over a final status agreement. "It's a shame that so many have to die for an agreement," said one young Arafat supporter after the first wave of deaths.

But those Palestinian voices have grown silent. The surprise explosion of the Arab communities inside Israel, where 12 demonstrators have died from Israeli bullets, is only one indication of Palestinian frustration with their lot. Public anger is so intense that some are wondering if Arafat, who most recently enjoyed only a 40 percent popularity rating, can bring the clashes to a close. "That means that Mr. Arafat has to cancel the funerals," said Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat in a televised interview. "My God, can't people see the emotion, the anger, as Palestinians bury their dead?"

On October 10, Palestinians in Ramallah buried another casualty, a 40-year-old father named Issam Hamad, who was out for a drive and disappeared. Last seen near a settlement, his body was found on the outskirts of town, bones broken and face scarred with burns. Palestinians blame Israeli settlers in the West Bank for his clearly tortured death. "It feels very unsafe here to be Arab," said his cousin Marwan Hamad after his funeral.

Complicating the situation, Israeli



Appall-o-Meter

By David Futrelle

Ex Offender **6.8**

Least convincing explanation of the month: It seems that John Paulk, a leader in the so-called "ex-gay" movement, has been put on probation by his employer, the right-wing Focus on the Family ministry, because he was recently spotted in, you guessed it, a gay bar. Paulk, who describes himself as an "ex-gay," had headed up Focus on the Family's Exodus International, an organization devoted to exorcising the homosexuality out of guilt-ridden gay and lesbian fundamentalists.

But then came his nighttime visit to a Washington nightclub called Mr. P's—where he was spotted and photographed by some fellow clubbers. After the photos hit the Internet, Paulk had some explaining to do. "When asked why he was in the bar," the *Denver Post* reports, "Paulk initially said he went there at random to use the bathroom, but then he changed his story and said he knew he was going to a gay bar and went there to see if the lifestyle had changed."

All Apologies **9.3**

The United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia, an umbrella organization of right-wing militias, evidently felt a smidgen of remorse for kidnapping an injured guerrilla en route to a hospital in a Red Cross truck—and killing her. In retrospect, it wasn't so much the murder that bothered them—it was the fact that they had dragged the Red Cross into the whole sordid mess.

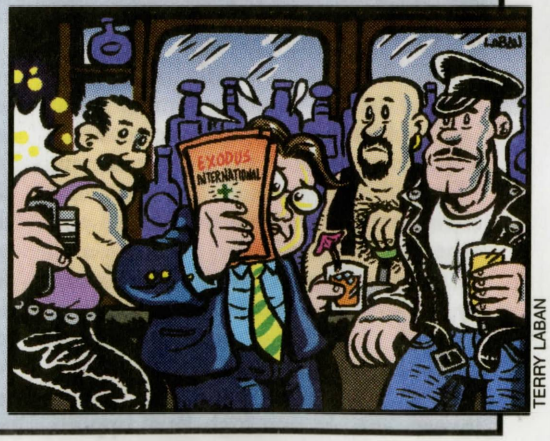
So, The Associated Press reports, they decided to send along a little note to smooth things over. "We accept our responsibility for this lamentable incident that put at risk the good work of the International Red Cross in Colombia," the letter from the militias explained.

They may be fascist thugs, but at least they're polite about it.

Scrooged **7.4**

Don't give a penny when a ha' penny will do. Better yet, keep the ha' penny for yourself. According to London's *Observer* newspaper, the British government is launching a $360,000 ad campaign designed to discourage people from giving money to beggars. "There may be public good will toward these people," one government official explained, "but it isn't necessarily helpful to give them money."

The ad campaign, naturally, will launch four weeks before Christmas.



TERRY LABAN

AMI VITALE/NEWSMAKERS

A Palestinian officer flees as Israeli helicopters bomb a Ramallah police station.

Prime Minister Ehud Barak must soon either attempt to form a new government with the Israeli right wing or hold new elections—a contest he is likely to lose. In the last session of the Israeli Parliament, Barak's government was voted out for suggestions he put forward at the Camp David summit with Palestinians. And popular former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was cleared of charges of fiscal irregularities, opening the way for him to challenge Barak in new elections.

But speaking on October 7, after three Israeli soldiers were kidnapped by Hezbollah on the Lebanese-Israeli border, Barak indicated that he was shaping a unity government that would include the very Sharon who set this tinder afire. Barak first gave Arafat 48 hours, and then another four days, to mull over the thought of dealing with the Israeli right wing in any future talks.

Sharon has said that he will not join in a unity government, but will support Barak if he goes to war. Faced with a hostage situation in Lebanon and unrest in the territories Israel occupies, that very well may be where Barak is headed. The world has acknowledged this by sending its emissaries out to Arab capitals and Israel to try to ease the current crisis.

But Arafat is refusing to meet with Barak until the "violence against Palestinians stops." He has not yet shut down the television stations replaying nationalistic music and footage of the violence, a tacit endorsement that the demonstrations go on. The anger that is now boiling over in the territories and among Arabs in Israel has been on the burner for months as Palestinians have watched the peace process unfold with few real results. Arafat knows that if this anger is not vented at Israel now, it could very well turn on him and his government.

When asked if this is the end of the "peace process," Palestinian leaders say that they will always be ready to return to the table. After all, the very existence of Arafat's people in the territories is beholden to the negotiations—it was talks with Israel that put them in charge of the portions of land in the West Bank and Gaza that Palestinians now control. It seems that it is Israel who will decide when the fighting is no longer just an outbreak of violence, but a return to war. Barak may have just closed that door. ■

Robber Baron

Dick Cheney profits from lucrative deals with Iraq

By Anthony Arnove

There has been no shortage of examples of the cynicism and cruelty of the sanctions imposed on Iraq for the past decade. But Texas Gov. George W. Bush's selection of Dick Cheney as his Republican running mate provides yet another.

As Secretary of Defense under President Bush, Cheney helped lead the Gulf War, which claimed tens of thousands of lives, left Iraq's infrastructure thoroughly damaged and created long-term negative consequences for Iraqi citizen's health and mortality, as well as the environment. In 1995, when Cheney became the chief executive of Halliburton Company, the world's largest oil-field services and construction corporation, he became one of the leaders of more than a dozen American corporations directly profiting from the sanctions on Iraq by servicing its oil industry.

Cheney thus has been in the position of supporting sanctions on Iraq while overseeing business deals with the country, and receiving help from the government for Halliburton's massive foreign operations (contracts and guaranteed loans worth more than $3.8 billion during his time at Halliburton) while speaking out against "big government."

Two Halliburton subsidiaries, Dresser-Rand and Ingersoll-Dresser Pump, helped supply Iraq's oil industry with spare parts and retool its oil rigs in 1998 and 1999. "The joint ventures sold spare parts to Iraq through European subsidiaries," Halliburton spokesman Guy Marcus told the *Washington Post*. Halliburton sold its shares in both joint ventures to Ingersoll-Rand of Woodcliff Lake, New Jersey earlier this year.

According to one U.N. diplomat, Halliburton's subsidiaries signed $29 million in contracts for spare parts with Iraq through affiliates in Austria, France, Germany and Italy. The exact number and nature of these contracts has been hard to determine. The U.N. Office of the Iraq Program, which oversees contracts for rebuilding Iraq's oil

industry through the so-called "oil-for-food" program, pulled information about specific contractors off of its Web site once it learned of a *Washington Post* investigation into Halliburton's work in Iraq. Halliburton spokeswoman Cindy Viktorin did not respond to questions from *In These Times* about Hallburton's view of the Iraq sanctions or its past work in Iraq.

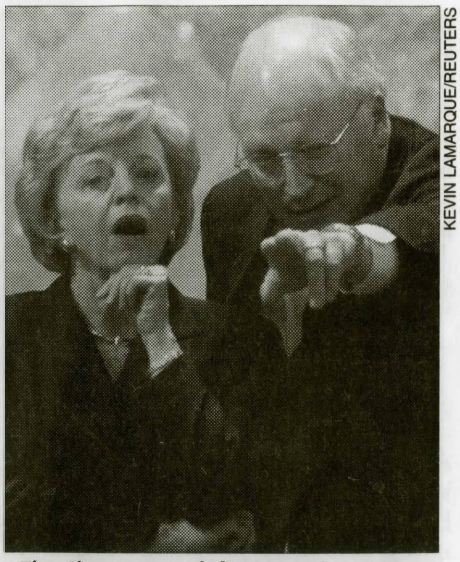
Since 1996, Iraq has exported oil to the world market and used the revenue to purchase goods for humanitarian purposes under strict U.N. supervision. The ceiling on how much oil Iraq could export was lifted in December 1999, but officials on the U.N. sanctions committee in New York, which is dominated by the United States, routinely have blocked essential items from being delivered through the program, arguing that they have a potential military "dual use." Presently, $18.9 billion in contracts for civilian goods (14.5 percent of current oil-for-food contracts) is being blocked by the committee, a figure that has been increasing in recent months. The inadequacy of the oil-for-food program led the past two directors of U.N. humanitarian operations in Iraq, Denis J. Halliday and Hans von Sponeck, to resign in protest.

Although Cheney has stepped down as chief executive of Halliburton, his role at the company has raised awkward questions that he has tried repeatedly to duck as a candidate, including inquiries into his position on sanctions as an increasingly blunt tool of U.S. foreign policy.

Halliburton recruited Cheney in 1995 in the hope that he would translate political connections into lucrative contracts for the company. "When we brought Cheney in, it really wasn't to run operations," says Thomas Cruikshank, the former head of Halliburton. "It was to make the proper strategic decisions and to establish relationships."

Halliburton became the fifth largest U.S. military contractor with the help of Cheney, who secured a $1.1 billion contract to support the Pentagon's military operations in the Balkans after the end of the bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999. (Cheney's personal ties to oil and defense contracting extend far beyond Halliburton. Cheney's wife, Lynne, has been a paid director of the Lockheed Martin Corporation since 1995, earning $120,000 a year for her services.)

Cheney also brought Halliburton into the industry-based anti-sanctions organization USA Engage and made several statements criticizing the U.S. government's reliance on trade sanctions. Halliburton Energy Group included Iraq in a November 1996 list of sanctioned countries "whose economies are of interest to some U.S. suppliers." Cheney called Washington officials "sanctions happy" and boasted in a June 1998 speech to the libertarian Cato Institute, "We [the oil industry] bring in 9 million barrels of oil a day from around the world they don't want to produce here, and we sell it ... cheaper than water."



KEVIN LAMARQUE/REUTERS

The Cheneys are deft at spotting ways to make money off the U.S. military.

Cheney has said that Iraq offers an example of "an appropriate use of multilateral economic sanctions." And in the October 5 vice presidential debate with Joe Lieberman, he said "you'd have to give very serious consideration to military action," if evidence emerged that Iraq was rebuilding it nuclear, biological or chemical weapons capacity. But Cheney had no problem with profiting off the destruction of Iraq's oil industry and social infrastructure that he directed during the Gulf War. Nor has Cheney had problems profiting off oil deals in other countries that sponsor human rights abuses. As Cheney told a 1996 energy conference in New Orleans: "The problem is that the good Lord didn't see fit to put oil and gas reserves where there are democratic governments." ■

Anthony Arnove *is the editor of* Iraq Under Siege: The Deadly Impact of Sanctions and War.

Halliburton's Love Affair with Burma's Dictators

In a new report, EarthRights International,, an NGO that monitors environmental and human rights abuses, has uncovered business ties between Halliburton Company and the dictatorship in Burma (Myanmar). While Cheney served as its chief executive, Halliburton subsidiaries worked on the Yadana pipeline project in Burma. In August 2000, according to the report, a U.S. federal District Court found that the Yadana pipeline consortium "knew the [Burmese] military had a record of committing human rights abuses; that the Project hired the military to provide security for the project, a military that forced villagers to work and entire villages to relocate for the benefit of the Project; [and] that the military, while forcing villagers to work and relocate, committed numerous acts of violence."

Natural gas deposits were found in the Andaman Sea off Burma's coast in 1982. In 1997, European Marine Contractors (EMC) was hired to lay more than 200 miles of offshore pipeline for the Yadana project. EMC is a joint venture between Halliburton's Energy Services Group and the Italian company Saipem. In 1998, Bredero-Price (now named Bredero-Shaw), a subsidiary of Halliburton-owned Dresser Industries, manufactured coatings for the Yetagun pipeline, which runs parallel to the Yadana pipeline. Bredero-Shaw is a joint venture between Canada's Shaw Industries and Halliburton. The Yadana pipeline runs from the Andaman Sea via Burma to Thailand.

In March 1996, Cheney personally signed an agreement between the national Gas Authority of India and Brown & Root International, a wholly owned subsidiary of Halliburton, to build a pipeline between India and Burma's offshore deposits.

Not surprisingly, USA Engage and Cheney played a role in defeating a Massachusetts selective purchasing law, which was overturned by the Supreme Court this June. Cheney filed an amicus brief against the law, which sought to isolate the Burmese regime because of its well-documented human rights abuses, including forced labor and torture.

The full report, "Halliburton's Destructive Engagement: How Dick Cheney and USA-Engage Subvert Democracy at Home and Abroad," can be found on EarthRights' Web site (www.earthrights.org). **A.A.**

Venezuela's Robin Hood

Hugo Chávez remakes OPEC into a champion of the poor

By Steve Ellner

CARACAS, VENEZUELA—As gas prices escalate worldwide, OPEC member nations are standing up against renewed Western pressure to lower the price of crude. Here at the OPEC summit in late September, the oil producing countries blamed high prices on taxes, middlemen and bottlenecks. But they did not say that changes within OPEC itself are also beginning to have an impact on the market.

Spearheading these changes is Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, whose outspoken positions have reshaped OPEC policy and thrust Venezuela into a leadership role within the organization. Since Chávez took office in February 1999, Venezuela has gone from being OPEC's most notorious violator of assigned quotas to its most disciplined member, inspiring other oil exporters to follow suit.

Chávez's initiative in calling the summit, his promotion of the "band system" (in which crude oil prices are allowed to oscillate between $22 and $28 per barrel) and his insistence on including the problem of the foreign debt in the meeting's closing document have transformed him into a Third-World paladin. The Parisian daily *Le Monde* wrote that the Venezuelan leader has gone from being an advocate of "a peaceful revolution against his nation's oligarchy and corrupt political class to the main spokesman for an offensive—this time at the planetary level—against savage globalization."

In an effort to enlist international cooperation for the goal of stable prices, OPEC members drafted the "Declaration of Caracas," which calls for "channels of communication between oil producing and consuming nations to achieve market stability." The declaration also urges "developed nations to recognize that the greatest environmental tragedy confronting the world is human poverty."

To make the proposed dialogue a reality, OPEC nations will be meeting with oil-importing ones in Saudi Arabia in mid-November. Venezuela's foreign relations minister Jorge Valero told *In These Times* that unlike previous meetings of its kind this one will involve people with decision-making power. "In the past," he says, "the developed countries sent technicians and the ministers stayed home."

Speaking at the summit, Chávez mocked the notion that current crude oil prices are exorbitant. Amidst the laughter of several otherwise stoic Iranian delegates, Chávez pointed out that a barrel of Coca-Cola costs nearly three times as much as a barrel of crude.

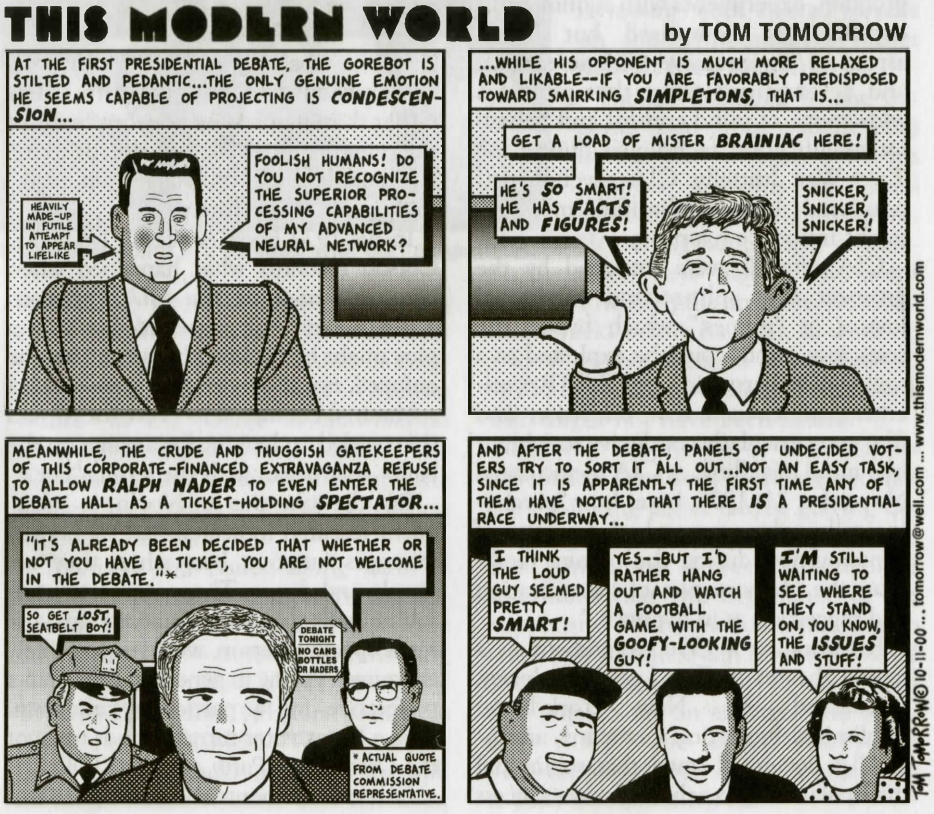
OPEC's argument is widely accepted in Europe, where taxes contribute more to prices at the gas pump than crude oil (as much as 70 percent of the price in England, where taxes are the highest). The fact that OPEC production has declined from more than 50 percent of the world's output to less than 40 percent makes it less vulnerable to accusations of constituting a monopolistic "cartel."

Chávez's critics at home argue that the summit was a mere repetition of the first one held in 1975, and that the organization has not advanced at all in 25 years. They claim Chávez's proposal to establish an OPEC bank as a substitute to the IMF is a mere embellishment of the "OPEC Fund," which was created at the first summit to provide grants to poorer nations.

But even if the second summit takes OPEC back to where it was in 1975, that is not entirely negative. At the time, OPEC was a trailblazer, but in the '80s, with U.S. political and economic supremacy no longer in dispute, the Third-World movement petered out. If the movement is now revitalized, it will have the advantage of not being caught in the Cold War crossfire of two superpowers. It will also benefit from the popular campaign to check globalization's inhumane and disruptive features.

The implications of what Chávez calls the "relaunching of OPEC" go far beyond oil prices, and are of vital significance to developed and developing nations alike. ■

Steve Ellner *teaches economic history at the Universidad de Oriente in Venezuela. He is co-editor of* The Latin American Left: From the Fall of Allende to Perestroika.



Tricky Dick's Dirty Trick

Nixon, the CIA and subliminal messages

By Martin A. Lee

Someone smelled a rat—or spied a reference to one. And that sparked front-page revelations of subterfuge by the Bush campaign for running an anti-Gore attack ad in which the word "rats" flashed for a split second across the TV screen. Gore campaign officials denounced it as a dirty trick designed to influence Americans by subliminally suggesting that the Democrats were untrustworthy vermin.

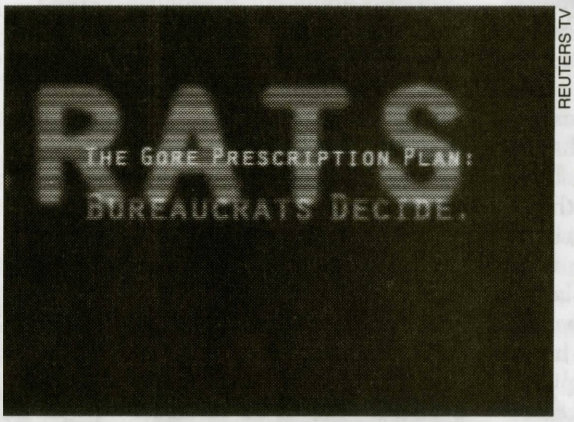
As it turns out, the Bush team was not the first to contemplate using subliminal projection to sway voters. In the mid-'50s, then Vice President Richard Nixon became curious when he got wind of CIA testing of subliminal manipulation for espionage purposes.

Conducted partly under the auspices of the super-secret MK-ULTRA program, experiments with subliminal conditioning comprised but one aspect of an extensive CIA research and development effort that probed a wide range of mind control and behavior modification techniques during the Cold War. Initially, CIA psychologists pondered how subliminal messages might influence hypnosis.

CIA officials were intrigued by the prospect that split-second subliminal images or "primes," which bypass the conscious mind, could be exploited as a tool of mass persuasion. MK-ULTRA scientists understood that television and film are particularly conducive to subliminal mind meddling. A CIA memo dated November 21, 1955, notes how "psychologically the general lowering of consciousness during the picture facilitates the phenomenon of identification and suggestion as in hypnosis."

Referring to a 1956 experiment at a movie theater in Fort Lee, New Jersey, conducted by New York-based Subliminal Projection Company, another CIA document states that subliminal manipulation "has achieved some success in commercial advertising, as 'Eat Popcorn' or 'Drink Cola' projected on a screen in certain movie theaters for a fraction of a second at 5 second intervals." The unnamed author of this January 17, 1958 CIA report goes on to conjecture: "It may be that subliminal projection can be utilized in such a way as to feature a visual suggestion as 'Obey [deleted]' or 'Obey [deleted]' with similar success."

Seeking to duplicate the findings of the Fort Lee experiment (which has since been debunked), the CIA tested subliminal techniques in a number of movie theaters in the United States. On one occasion, according to U.S. intelligence veteran William R. Corson, an audience in Alexandria, Virginia was admonished to "buy popcorn," but rather than purchasing popcorn many of the viewers lined up at the drinking fountain because the suggestion seemingly made them thirsty.



REUTERS TV

Democrats smell a rat.

In his 1977 book *Armies of Ignorance*, Corson recounts what happened when Nixon learned of the CIA's popcorn caper. Tricky Dick suggested that such a ploy might be "politically useful," but, he quipped, not if movie-goers were given a subliminal command to "vote for X" and then ended up looking for a name on the ballot that began with the letters "For."

But the joke was on Nixon, as subsequent research indicated that subliminal messages function best when they are simple and direct. Thus, any attempt to subliminally persuade someone to vote for a specific person would more likely encourage voting in general rather than a preference for a particular candidate. And a larger voter turnout tends to favor the Democratic Party, not the GOP.

Nixon's comments about using subliminal messages to manipulate voters "were worth a laugh," Corson writes, and the MK-ULTRA crew "went back to their laboratories content in their belief that their efforts were being appreciated" by the vice president.

Nixon never explained to what extent, if any, he actually pursued using subliminal techniques during any of his election campaigns. And the CIA remains mum on the issue. Most MK-ULTRA documents were summarily destroyed on orders of outgoing CIA chief Richard Helms in 1973. The files were shredded because of "a burgeoning paper problem," according to Dr. Sidney Gottlieb, the sorcerer-spook who ran the MK-ULTRA program. Gottlieb admitted as much when he testified at a 1977 Senate hearing on CIA mind-control scandals. Gottlieb was never grilled about the CIA's subliminal research.

But this may not be the end of the story, as far as American espionage and subliminal manipulation are concerned. Ample fodder for conspiracy buffs has come by way of Hollywood. One of the most popular films of the '70s was *The Exorcist*, based on the best-selling novel by William Blatty. A former CIA operative who worked under U.S. Information Agency cover during the '50s, Blatty subsequently served as Policy Branch Chief of the Psychological Warfare Division of the Air Force. As it turns out, subliminal stimuli—death masks, rotting skulls, contorted screaming faces—are interspersed throughout the film version of his book.

There is no evidence that Blatty's expertise in psychological warfare had any bearing on the decision to insert subliminal flashes in the movie, which was re-released last month with much fanfare.

Meanwhile, the Federal Communications Commission has launched an investigation into possible subliminal wrongdoing related to the GOP's "rats" ad. FCC policy guidelines, which apply to TV and radio, but not the entire motion picture industry, condemn the use of subliminal techniques because they are "intended to be deceptive." ■

Martin A. Lee *is the author of* The Beast Reawakens *and* Acid Dreams.

Puppets Behind Bars

By Ben Winters

In what has become one of the more notorious incidents from this summer's Republican National Convention, 75 people were arrested on August 1 while building puppets and costumes for use in the demonstrations.

Dave Bailey and Rebecca Tennison are two of these so-called "puppetistas." Like many of those arrested, the two Chicagoans are young—both 24—and more artistic idealists than fiery radicals. They interrupted a vacation to offer their puppet-making skills to friends at work in Philadelphia and never expected to hang around for the protests, let alone get arrested. Both are now out on bail, facing up to five years in jail.

Tennison and Bailey grew up within a few blocks of one another in Chicago's Rogers Park neighborhood. By 16, Tennison had discovered her love of performance and puppetry. Since then she has been involved in a score of local arts groups, including teaching theater games and storytelling to kids and co-leading Theater Dank, which hosts the annual Chicago Puppetry Festival.

Bailey didn't get into puppetry until recently. He's a union carpenter with strong political opinions, who only discovered the medium—and its possibilities as a form of political expression—at this year's Puppetry Festival.

When the two traveled to Philadelphia, it was to be one stop on a summer road trip. "I have good friends in Philadelphia who are puppeteers," says Tennison of their presence at the now infamous "puppet warehouse." "When we got there, the people we knew were rallying, trying to finish these puppets in time for the convention."

They stuck around to pitch in, showing up each day at the warehouse, where a loose group of 70 or 80 people were busily constructing, among other things, a giant "Copzilla" float and 138 skeletons representing victims of Texas executions.

And there they were on August 1, when the building was surrounded by police and everyone was arrested on a variety of charges, including possession of an instrument of crime; everyone, that is, except for the four undercover policemen who had represented themselves as union carpenters from Wilkes-Barre.

Under a 1987 mayoral directive, Philadelphia police are barred from exactly that kind of infiltration, a restriction sidestepped by the use of state policeman.

In their application for the search warrant that allowed the sting operation, state police reference a report from the Maldon Institute—a far-right think tank funded in part by the Clinton-baiting multimillionaire Richard Mellon Scaife—as the source of information that protesters were funded by "Communist and leftists parties [and] the former-Soviet-allied World Federation of Trade Unions."

JOEFF DAVIS

Philadelphia police in a standoff with the "puppetistas."

Tennison and Bailey, along with 73 other "puppetistas"—comprising approximately 20 percent of total arrests made during the RNC—were tossed in holding cells, where Tennison would remain for 10 days, Bailey for 11, before both were released on $1,000 bail. "We saw people being strangled, held up against the wall for height measurements," says Tennison, recalling what she describes as the "surreal" treatment of those arrested. "One kid came out hog-tied, and he was bleeding all over the place because it was on so tight. I've never seen the police do shit like that."

To Bailey and Tennison the charges seem as laughable as the McCarthyite language of the search warrant: Canisters worn around the waist to support puppet poles were presumed to be bombs, and police claimed the warehouse was full of kerosene-soaked rags, a charge Bailey says is completely fabricated.

Meanwhile, in the days immediately following the arrests, Philadelphia Mayor John F. Street declared that none of the protesters arrested in his city would go unpunished: "In other cities after these mass protests, at the end of the day, individuals were allowed to just walk away," he proclaimed at a City Hall press conference. "That will not happen here."

Bailey and Tennison go to trial at the end of October, meaning a third trip to Philadelphia in as many months. They are represented by public defenders, but the cost of the trips is beginning to mount; both elected to take on the 14-hour drive rather than fly back again for trial.

Though frustrated by the ongoing legal process, Bailey has no inclination to lay down his puppets, nor his newfound dedication to the movement. "It strengthened my conviction," says Bailey, who went back to Philadelphia in early October, three weeks before his trial, to work on a local puppet troupe's street festival. "450 people are now diehard protesters who might not have been before."

But the experience in Philadelphia has rattled Tennison, to the extent that she's thinking about maybe getting out of Chicago for a while, taking a hiatus from performing. However, she remains convinced that the experience of the puppetistas illustrates that something so seemingly harmless can have a powerful affect on the public. "I'm convinced that puppets are an effective and beautiful thing," she says. "They're so peaceful and direct. What a great way to rally a community." ■

JUAN GONZALEZ

Why Not Nader?

With election day looming and opinion polls pointing to one of the closest presidential races in years, the debate has intensified among progressive Americans—Nader or Gore?

Those on either side of the debate who pretend this is an easy choice are deluding themselves. Sure, Al Gore and Joe Lieberman represent the neoconservative wing of the Democratic Party, but it is wrong to simplistically equate them with the Republican ticket. There are substantial differences between the candidates in many important areas—public education, Social Security, labor rights, the environment and abortion, to name just a few. A George W. Bush-Dick Cheney victory, regardless of what happens in the congressional elections, will reinvigorate the most rapacious elements of this country's large and growing conservative movement, and likely will mean new attacks on the most vulnerable sections of our population.

Ralph Nader is clearly the superior candidate when it comes to fighting against corporate control of government, invasions of individual privacy, neoliberal free trade policies and U.S. military intervention abroad, or when it comes to defending labor, consumers and the environment.

But Nader's weaknesses should not be minimized. He continues to pay little attention to issues that deeply affect racial and ethnic minorities—job discrimination, police brutality, the scandalous incarceration rate among blacks and Hispanics, the continuing controversy over affirmative action. His campaign style up to now, à la Jesse Jackson's campaigns in 1984 and 1988, seems more geared toward promoting himself than to building the Green Party as a future vehicle for independent politics.

Many honest and dedicated progressives will find themselves on different sides of the fence come November 7. But more important than what happens on Election Day is the ongoing need to nurture and expand the vibrant new people's movement that has grown since the WTO protests in Seattle.

That new movement combines several separate streams of popular resistance that have managed to build an embryonic alliance:

- A labor movement that has started to reclaim its place in American society as a force for social change. Increasingly, as new immigrant and Third World workers form a larger share of the work force, a profound revolution within the union movement is inevitable.

- A new pro-democracy movement that has targeted the mass media as a pillar of corporate social control and has started devising ever more ingenious ways to provide the population with independent sources of information.

- An idealistic, democratic, anti-consumer-culture youth movement, which is determined to save the earth from ecological devastation and end the growing worldwide gap between rich and poor.

- A growing movement within black and brown communities against rampant police brutality, wholesale incarceration, racial profiling and the death penalty.

More important than any candidate or election is strengthening the long-term alliance of these four movements, and finding the organizational forms with which that alliance can win the support of the American people. The Democratic Party is becoming more conservative with each passing day and can never be the vehicle to represent that alliance.

Most progressives recognize that this nation needs a new people's party. American voters repeatedly have showed their deep discontent with the two major parties, either by refusing to vote or by backing third-party candidates such as Ross Perot and Jesse Ventura. Each time, however, the major parties have been able to contain the challenge, to steer their dissidents back into the fold.

Nader and the Green Party represent the best opportunity in half a century to place a progressive agenda on the national scene. The Nader candidacy has already forced Al Gore to adopt populist anti-corporate rhetoric into his campaign. It has brought hundreds of thousands of white youth into electoral politics in much the same way that Jackson's Rainbow Coalition movement brought disaffected blacks to the voting booth in the '80s. Moreover, Nader has inspired young people to believe that global capitalism can be resisted even in the absence of any viable socialist alternative.

Most important is the need to nurture and expand the vibrant new people's movement.

Unlike Jackson, who became increasingly co-opted by his access to corporate honchos and his role as a "spiritual adviser" to the Clinton White House, Nader could end up making the Green Party a genuine alternative force, should he garner more than 5 percent of the popular vote—and I believe he will do that handily if he reaches out to those who usually stay home on Election Day.

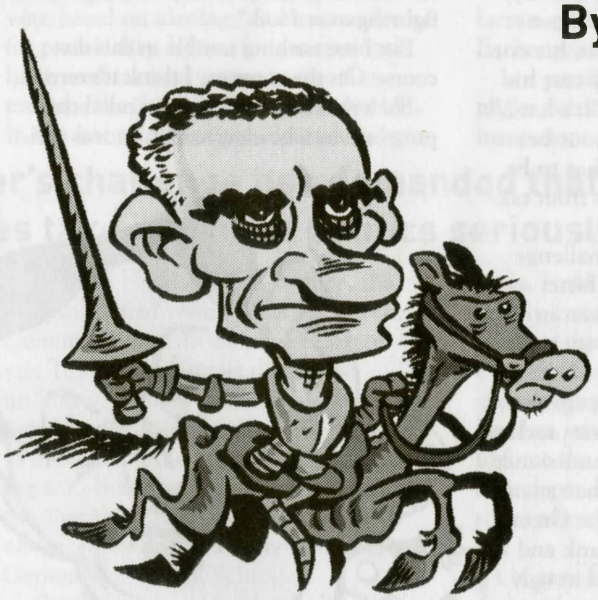
Those of us who came of age in the '60s grew up with Ralph Nader. We watched him tilt at windmills for decades, always speaking truth to power, always accomplishing more than others thought possible. His seat belt victory against the automobile companies alone may have saved more lives than did any general in American history.

Sure, four years of Bush-Cheney seems a horrible fate, but 20 or 30 more years of this periodic circus of two parties sponsored by the same corporate advertisers seems far worse. ■

THE GREAT DEBATE

The Nader challenge has inspired bitter disputes on the left. Isn't it terrific?

By John Nichols



ILLUSTRATIONS BY TERRY LABAN

Leaning across the coach-class aisle of his flight from Washington to Boston, where 12,000 people would rally to protest his exclusion from the first presidential debate, Ralph Nader mused, "If I hadn't run, what would there be for the left to talk about in this election?"

One need not wear Green colors to acknowledge that the Green Party nominee for president makes a good point. Love Nader or hate him, support his candidacy as an inspired challenge to politics as usual or oppose it as a vain and dangerous fool's mission, but, please, don't deny the impact of this campaign on progressives. For the first time in more than 50 years, the left is fully engaged in an intense, issue-driven, tactically sophisticated dialogue about how to get the most out of the electoral process.

In the thick of the debate, especially when Al Gore backers label Naderites naïve cogs in a right-wing Republican machine—or when the Naderites counter by decrying their detractors as naïve cogs in a right-wing Democratic machine—the whole endeavor can seem unsettling. And it is. The dialogue over how to approach this year's presidential election is shaking up the left, rousing it from a long neglected and frequently dysfunctional relationship with electoral politics. Where exactly the Gore-Nader tug-of-war will land the great, ill-defined mass of progressive voters on the American political landscape remains to be seen. But there is good reason to believe, whatever the count on November 7, that the left will end this year in a better place than where it stood prior to the 2000 campaign.

There's even the possibility that this discourse will lead American progressives toward an understanding of the prospects for a politically savvy electoral strategy that mirrors the sophisticated approach of European, Indian, Australian, Canadian and Mexican activists. At the very least, Nader has succeeded in forcing progressives to think anew about how and why they will cast their ballots this fall.

Without Nader, the 2000 election campaign would have been the most dismal presidential competition for American progressives since Grover Cleveland and Benjamin Harrison faced off in a 1888 campaign so hideously devoid of idealism that it spawned the Populist movement. Yes, in a no-Nader context, the overwhelming majority of progressives would have cast grudging ballots for Gore. But what would there have been to say about those votes except perhaps that, once more, in the contest between voting and not voting, the lessons of fourth-grade civics teachers won out? And, perhaps, that they kept the smirking Texas executioner out of the Oval Office.

Now, whether they are planning to vote for Gore or Nader, or whether they are still agonizing over the choice, progressives are talking about this election campaign. Endlessly. Energetically. And fruitfully. The initial success of the Nader candidacy—measured by summer poll results that put the Greens' strength near 10 percent in several key states—made real the question of whether it was nobler to cast a ballot for the best candidate and the better politics that might follow, or to lend a vote to the inferior candidate with the clearest shot at defeating the really dangerous contender. "Never in my life have I had so many discussions with so many people I generally agree with about how to vote in a November election," says Ed Garvey, a labor lawyer who was the 1998 Democratic nominee for governor of Wisconsin. "People really are thinking about where to go this year; they're weighing the choices, asking themselves where to compromise, where to stand firm."

Garvey, who like many Democrats is also a longtime Nader admirer, is one of

the people doing the agonizing. He appeared at a huge Madison rally organized by the Greens and asked the cheering crowd to imagine what a better nation this would be with Nader as president. After he delivered his impassioned speech, however, Garvey confided that if the contest between Gore and Bush remains close in his crucial swing state, he'll probably cast his ballot for the vice president. "It's hard," Garvey says. "Do you follow your heart or do you do what you think has to be done to prevent right-wingers from taking charge of everything?"

Yes, it is hard. The Nader challenge has inspired some of the most bitter internal disputes the left has seen in decades. Old "Nader's raiders" such as former Rep. Toby Moffett (D-Connecticut) are campaigning against their mentor. Lifelong Democrats such as former Texas Agriculture Commissioner Jim Hightower have torn up their membership cards and jumped to the Greens. Massachusetts Rep. Barney Frank and other Democrats have engaged in ugly and unwarranted attempts to portray Nader as insensitive to the concerns of women, gays and lesbians and racial minorities. At the same time, Greens have tossed brickbats at Gore's pragmatic union supporters, dismissing them as Democratic Party stooges who would abandon the Seattle coalition for an empty promise of access to the Oval Office—or perhaps a night in the Lincoln bedroom.

So intense has the internal conflict on the left grown that, in Boston on the night of the first presidential debate, Ironworkers gathered outside the hall to cheer Gore clashed with students, there to demand Nader's inclusion. "I don't know if I've ever seen so many people who agree on so many issues so divided over a single election," says Mel King, a former Democratic legislator who ran a "Rainbow Coalition" race for mayor of Boston and now is campaigning for Nader. "People are more worked up about Nader-versus-Gore than anything in years."

Terrible, terrible, terrible gripe the cautious minders of an almost always too-cautious left. They worry about "wasted" energy and "wasted" votes. They fret about the damage the dissing discourse will do to a broad constituency that, when it disagrees, in the words of New Party founder Joel Rogers, can mirror the worst excesses of "hungry people fighting over food."

But I see nothing terrible in this discourse. On the contrary, I think it's terrific.

Nader's challenge has demanded that progressives take electoral politics as seriously as do their comrades in other lands—and, perhaps more importantly, as seriously as do their domestic foes on the corporate and religious right. Finally, progressives are asking the right question: How do I use my vote, my energy, my talent, my influence, my resources to achieve the most left-wing result possible?

That the answers will differ is not merely understandable but necessary. To achieve the most left-wing result that is possible in Kansas, for instance, may require progressive populists to cast their ballots in Republican primaries for moderate state school board candidates—if only because they want their children to be taught evolution. To achieve the most left-wing result that is possible in this year's New York Senate race, trade unionists from Buffalo to the Bronx will eschew the Democratic line and cast their ballots for Hillary Clinton on the line of the Working Families Party—theorizing that because New York allows the fusion of votes from different parties, Clinton will read the results and know that she could not have won without the votes of people who object to the Democratic Party's rightward drift. To achieve the most left-wing result that is possible in several Vermont state legislative districts this fall, local activists will cast their ballots for candidates of the newly chartered Vermont Progressive Party—which should win more seats in a state legislature this year than any left party since the Minnesota Farmer-Labor and Wisconsin Progressive parties folded their third-party efforts in the '40s.

And what of the presidential race? Again, the pursuit of that most left-wing result will take voters in myriad directions. In the District of Columbia, where a Democratic victory is only slightly less certain than that of the Assads in Damascus, progressives will cast their ballots for Nader—in hopes that the D.C. Statehood/Green Party alliance will displace the Republicans as Washington's No. 2 party. In Alaska, where Gore is about as competitive as, well, Nader, progressives will take a serious shot at pushing the Greens into second place.

In other states, it gets harder. But, for those who would like to see the left become a more serious player in American electoral politics, hard is good. If we recognize that it is unlikely either the Democrats or the Greens are going away after November 7, then the task of determining the issues and the circumstances that might lead a voter to break with the Democrats—or to stick with them—is healthy for progressives who have been on the losing end of a dysfunctional relationship with the Democratic Party pretty much since the day FDR died.

For the first time in decades, the term "tactical voting" is being given its proper place in the language of the American left. Progressive voters are actually checking poll figures, not to figure out which of the evils is ahead, but rather to determine whether they can safely cast a ballot for the good. These are people who would not risk handing the White House to Bush, but who hope to be able to cast a Green vote as a warning to Gore and Democratic Party leaders that there is indeed a constituency that stands to the left of the Democratic Leadership Council.

The point at which any particular progressive voter decides to embrace or abandon the lesser evil is not the point. What matters is that the Nader candidacy has opened dialogues—both internal and external—about the wisdom and potential for tactical voting. This, as they say in China and at Billy Bragg concerts, is a great leap forward.

If there is a single constant in left electoral work internationally, it is an understanding of the value and the power of tactical voting. Indeed, before the 1997 British election that dispatched the Conservative Party from power after 18 years of Margaret Thatcher and John Major, the watchword of the left was "tactical." The week before the election, Britain's *New Statesman* magazine published a chart suggesting the best vote that its lefty readers could cast in each of more than 600 local contests for Parliament. The strategy involved backing the strongest contenders against the Conservatives from a list that included candidates of Labor and the smaller Liberal Democrat, Welsh and Scottish nationalist parties. The strategy worked—not only were the Tories defeated, but voters elected the largest Labor and Liberal Democrat blocs since the end of World War II.

In more recent European Parliament elections, the tactical approach has expanded to include instructions to vote for Greens and left-wing offshoots of the Labor Party, with considerable success. In the recent London mayoral election, which put Labor renegade Ken Livingstone in the mayor's chair and Greens in a number of key positions, tactical voting was raised to something of an art form by creative new coalitions of traditional Labor voters, Greens and independent leftists.

In France, where a two-tier election system makes it possible to cast a first vote based on ideology and a second vote for practicality, leftists for generations have used tactical voting as a tool to pressure the Socialist Party to move left. In the last rounds of presidential and parliamentary elections, for instance, the millions of first-round votes for Green, Communist and Trotskyist candidates—yes, Trotskyists actually do top the million-vote mark in France—clearly signaled to the Socialists that they needed to move left. And they did, implementing a 35-hour work week and challenging the cautious "third-way" philosophy advanced by Britain's Tony Blair and Germany's Gerhard Schröder.

Ralph Nader's challenge has demanded that progressives take electoral politics seriously.

Similar stories of strategic alliances, careful plotting and—dare we say it?—success can be found around the world. Such tales are especially common in Scandinavia, where Social Democratic and purer "Third Left" parties compare, contrast, compete and, at times, come together—as in Finland, where the Left Alliance Party, which could reasonably be referred to as "Naderite," recently entered the government as a junior coalition partner.

Of course, tactical voting is only one hammer that can be extracted from the toolbox of electoral strategies that could be employed by progressives who are determined to alter the political landscape—internationally and domestically. The variety of approaches is actually rather well illustrated by the tentative, yet clearly hopeful steps taken this year by New York's Working Families Party as it makes real the promise of fusion, Vermont's Progressive Party as it forges a genuine third force, and the Greens, who have chosen not to run candidates against progressive Democrats while at the same time mounting needed races against New Democrats such as California Sen. Dianne Feinstein—who faces a spirited challenge from Global Exchange's Medea Benjamin.

Is it possible that the American left might eventually develop the structures, institutions and—most critically—the instincts required to move in and out of the Democratic Party, to cast tactical votes, build complex alliances and, ultimately, create an alternative politics that is bigger than the Democratic Party, or even the Green Party? Can the rare accomplishment of Vermont Rep. Bernie Sanders, who has proved that it is possible to force the Democrats to play nice with an independent socialist, be replicated in states where voters outnumber dairy cows?

It is easy to suggest that America's absurd and constricting winner-take-all electoral system renders comparison

with other countries useless. It is even easier to claim that the American left lacks the electoral traditions, the organizational strength and the communications infrastructure that has enabled progressive forces in other lands to forge effective electoral strategies. It is easiest of all to question whether there even is a left in America—and to state with puffed-up certainty that, even if such a team can be identified, its players could never be expected to agree long enough to take the field of political battle and make a difference.

Dismissing the left's prospects—electoral or otherwise—is a national pastime in this country. But I seem to recall that, exactly a year ago, I heard questions about whether it made any sense to try and pull together demonstrations outside the Seattle sessions of a trade group that even some well-read leftists could not identify. Last fall's anti-WTO protests proved that a diverse coalition of progressives could take a page from their international allies and mount a powerful challenge not only to corporate power, but to the naysayers within the left's own ranks. And the great Nader-Gore debate suggests the possibility that—far from destroying itself—the broad American left may finally be prepared to steal a page from the electoral playbook of its international comrades.

Sen. Paul Wellstone, the Minnesota Democrat who backs Gore but eschews criticism of Nader, knows better than perhaps anyone else on the American left the challenge and the potential of a more engaged and tactically savvy left politics. Not long ago, I sat with Wellstone in a room full of progressives who agreed on every issue, but who were almost evenly divided on the Nader-versus-Gore question. The dialogue between Wellstone and his friends was thrilling—filled with the intensity, mutual respect and hope that is so often missing from activist discussions.

"I really do believe it's important that Gore beat Bush," Wellstone said to me as we were walking out of the room. "But I want to tell you something: It's just as important that we capture the energy of this dialogue that we've got going on the left and turn it into something. November 7 is important because it's Election Day, but November 8 may be even more important for progressives. On November 8, no matter what happens, we've got to take all these questions and arguments, all this energy that's being poured into beating Bush with Gore and into building an alternative with Nader, and turn it into something."

Wellstone is right to see reason for hope in the electoral turbulence that has gripped the left this fall. Ralph Nader has stirred the pot. He has forced progressives to begin to come to grips with the question of how they will engage with the electoral process. And, no matter how they answer that question, the nature of their engagement will be more sophisticated, more nuanced and more significant than it has been since the days when no one questioned whether there was a left in America. ■

John Nichols *is editorial page editor of the* Capital Times *in Madison, Wisconsin. A fellow with The Nation Institute, he writes "The Beat" column for* The Nation *and frequently contributes to* The Progressive *and* In These Times. *His new book, written with Robert W. McChesney, is* It's the Media, Stupid! *(Seven Stories).*

A FEW GOOD CANDIDATES

RACES TO WATCH IN NOVEMBER

By Hans Johnson

Falling leaves and mums aren't the only colors cropping up in front yards and median strips this autumn. As October dwindles toward Election Day, many-hued campaign signs blossom on the nation's roadsides, especially in the Midwestern "swing states" whose voters may hold the keys to the White House and command posts in the next Congress.

Democrats' need just seven more House seats and five Senate seats to claim majorities. Turnout from union households, inching up since 1994, will be decisive for Democrats in most of the 25 key House races and 12 pivotal Senate contests on which control of the next Congress hinges.

Another key factor across the country may be whether progressives—especially environmental activists—remain unified. It's not just a question of Al Gore versus Ralph Nader in the presidential race. Former Democrats now running on Green, Progressive or Independent ballot lines in several congressional and gubernatorial races could be the mice that roar—leaving some gleeful elephants to roam their state capitols and rule both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue.

Here are a some of the candidates to watch on Election Day:

SOUTHERN ACCENTS


Folsom

ALABAMA

In the 4th District, spanning north-central Alabama, realtor and local school board member **Marsha Folsom** is giving two-term incumbent Robert Aderholt a scare.

Aderholt has voted against campaign finance reform and, in the wake of the Columbine High School shooting, sponsored legislation to allow posting of the Ten Commandments on government property as a deterrent to juvenile crime.

The wife of former governor Jim Folsom, the challenger is pro-choice and hasn't flinched in the face of accusations from the Aderholt campaign that she endorses witchcraft. Folsom's opponents made the charge after receiving an invitation to debate her from the Alabama Interfaith Alliance, a mainstream religious group whose members range from Muslims to Methodists and include a few Wiccans. Aderholt would prefer debates sponsored by the state Christian Coalition.

FLORIDA

Veteran state legislator **Elaine Bloom** is trying to nudge aside Rep. Clay Shaw, a conservative first elected in the 1980 Reagan landslide in the moderate-to-liberal 22nd District, which runs north from Ft. Lauderdale.

Though labor faces many roadblocks in Florida, a "right-to-work" state, Shaw burned bridges to the unions with his 1997 vote in favor of so-called "paycheck protection." Bloom supports abortion rights and handgun limits and, as a result, has enjoyed the financial backing of pro-choice powerhouse Emily's List and Rosie O'Donnell, the talk-show-host-cum-gun-control-advocate.

Bloom herself was a TV and radio personality in the late '70s, when gay-rights nemesis Anita Bryant stalked the state. If Bloom wins, look for her to emerge as a gay-rights ally in this district that more and more same-sex couples of all ages call home.


Nelson

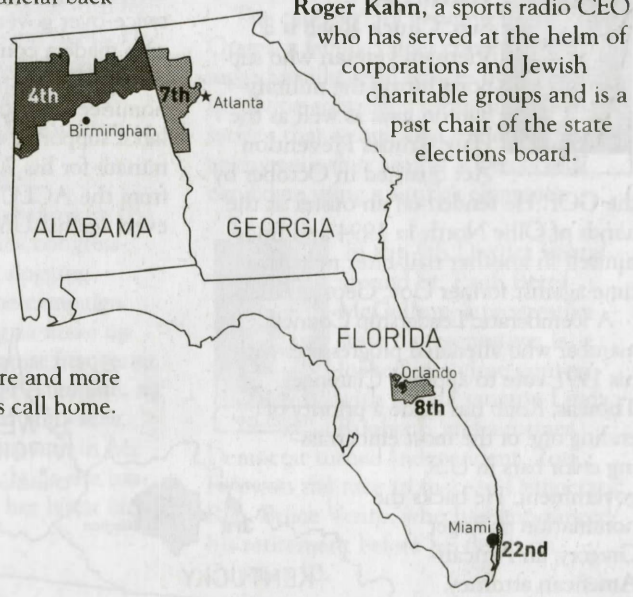
In the Senate race, Florida insurance commissioner and treasurer **Bill Nelson** faces Rep. Bill McCollum in a race to replace retiring GOP Sen. Connie Mack. Former Democrat Willie Logan's independent bid could undercut Nelson.

In the central Florida 8th District seat vacated by McCollum, **Linda Chapin**, a former elected leader of Orange County, vies against attorney Ric Keller.


Kahn

GEORGIA

In west suburban Atlanta's 7th District, Rep. Bob Barr—best known as a leader in the House drive to oust President Clinton and the serial divorcer who sponsored the anti-gay Defense of Marriage Act—faces **Roger Kahn**, a sports radio CEO who has served at the helm of corporations and Jewish charitable groups and is a past chair of the state elections board.




Baesler

KENTUCKY

Victories by progressives in two congressional races in Kentucky could signal a switch in control of the House. On Election Night, polls in the Bluegrass State close early, so look to these results as an early barometer of the evening's trends.

In Lexington, many liberals are backing **Scotty Baesler**'s bid to wrest back the 6th District House seat he gave up two years ago, when he narrowly lost a Senate race. Baesler, a pro-choice gun-control supporter, faces one-term incumbent Ernie Fletcher, a foe of abortion rights and a doctor whose opposition to health care reform has alienated fellow medical professionals. Yet Baesler may see his comeback hopes go up in smoke if Democrats defect to Gatewood Galbraith, a one-time party insider whose current Reform Party appeal rests mainly on calls for hemp cultivation.

In Louisville's 3rd District, state Rep. **Eleanor Jordan** wants to replace two-term incumbent Rep. Ann Northup, a perennial target of labor unions who voted against campaign finance reform. Though he backed another candidate in the primary, centrist Democratic Gov. Paul Patton is eager to build the state's depleted ranks of federal office holders and now supports the insurgent bid by Jordan, an African-American.

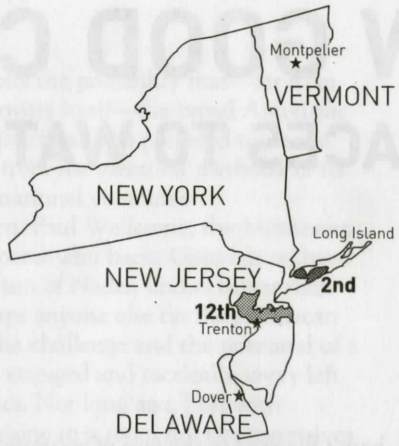

Robb

VIRGINIA

Sen. **Chuck Robb** is a Vietnam veteran who supports lifting the military ban on gays as well as the Hate Crimes Prevention Act quashed in October by the GOP. He fended off an ouster at the hands of Ollie North in 1994 and finds himself in another nail-biter race, this time against former Gov. George Allen.

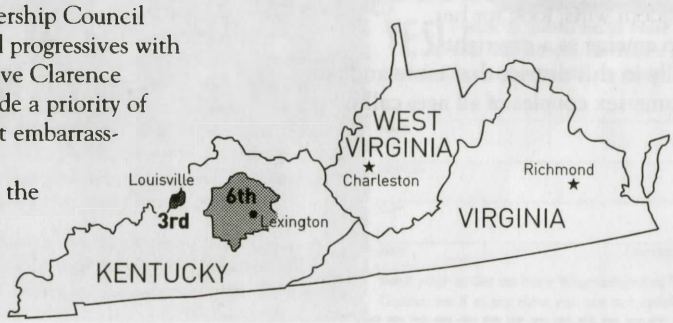
A Democratic Leadership Council member who alienated progressives with his 1991 vote to approve Clarence Thomas, Robb has made a priority of ending one of the most embarrassing color bars in U.S. government. He backs the nomination of Roger Gregory, an African-American attorney, to the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. The panel covers Virginia and other Southeastern states, a region with the highest percentage of black residents of any of the 13 circuits, yet it has no black members and four vacancies.

With a GOP logjam by the Senate Judiciary Committee keeping this all-white club intact, the panel has issued some of the most contemptible opinions in recent jurisprudence, even attempting to overturn the landmark *Miranda* ruling. In pressing Gregory's case, Robb invoked George Wallace to chide Republicans on the committee for "standing in the door of the courthouse blocking his nomination."



WEST VIRGINIA

Bob Wise, a nine-term representative in Congress, contends for the governor's mansion against Cecil Underwood, 78, a twice-over governor first elected in 1956 who made a comeback four years ago as centrist Democrats nitpicked over liberal nominee Charlotte Pritt. Wise, a strong labor supporter whom conservatives fulminate for his 70 percent approval rating from the ACLU, is currently running even against Underwood.



BACK EAST

DELAWARE

Two fixtures of state politics go head-to-head as Gov. **Tom Carper**, a moderate Democrat finishing his second term, challenges conservative six-term Sen. William Roth, father of the eponymous IRA. A minimum-wage hike and campaign finance reform loom as major issues, since Roth opposes them. And Roth's 1996 vote against the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which would bar anti-gay bias on the job and failed in the Senate by just one vote, could cost the incumbent some support.

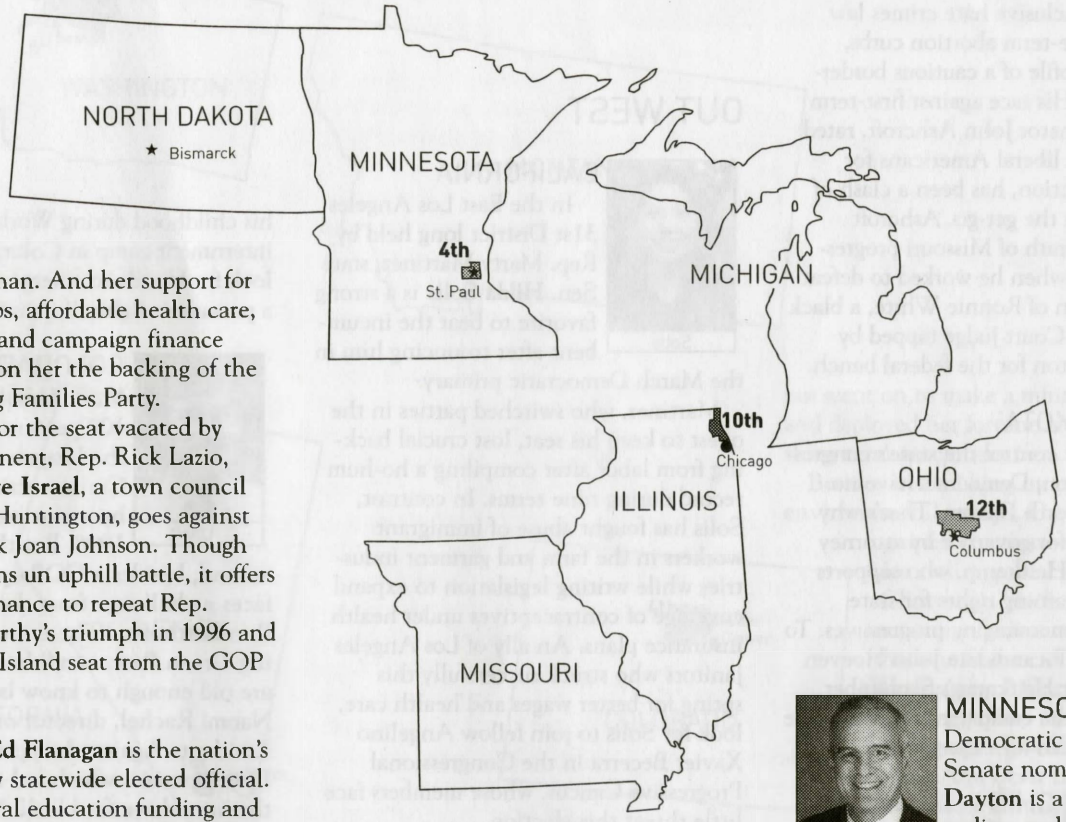
NEW JERSEY

Jon Corzine's multimillion-dollar infusions to his own campaign for the seat of retiring Democrat Sen. Frank Lautenberg have made headlines far beyond New Jersey. But beside his deep pockets, the former Goldman Sachs CEO also has one of the most staunchly progressive platforms among candidates this fall. Corzine, who faces Rep. Bob Franks, would bar permanent replacement of strikers and raise the minimum wage beyond the proposed $1 hike.

Rush Holt, a physicist and first-term congressman from the Princeton-area 12th District, has inspired bumper stickers saying "My Congressman Is A Rocket Scientist." Now a comeback bid by moderate Republican and former Rep. Dick Zimmer and a Green challenge by erstwhile Democratic primary loser Carl Mayer threaten to downgrade Holt's trajectory. The third-party bid comes despite Holt's anti-sprawl activism and 100 percent rating by the League of Conservation Voters. In Congress, Holt also has distinguished himself with an effective drive to prevent corporations from undermining academic freedom by using sunshine laws to pry into the research of professors who receive federal funding.

NEW YORK

Hillary Clinton has quieted her naysayers with an adroit Senate campaign focused on issues such as patients' rights, children's health and school funding. Given her stature on domestic and international issues, the First Lady more than fills the shoes of retiring Sen. Daniel



Patrick Moynihan. And her support for living-wage jobs, affordable health care, workers rights and campaign finance reform have won her the backing of the state's Working Families Party.

In the race for the seat vacated by Clinton's opponent, Rep. Rick Lazio, Democrat **Steve Israel**, a town council member from Huntington, goes against Islip town clerk Joan Johnson. Though the race remains un uphill battle, it offers Democrats a chance to repeat Rep. Carolyn McCarthy's triumph in 1996 and snatch a Long Island seat from the GOP

VERMONT

State auditor **Ed Flanagan** is the nation's first openly gay statewide elected official. Increased federal education funding and improved access to health care are his premier issues in a long-shot Senate race against two-term incumbent Jim Jeffords. But with Vermont awhirl over a newly adopted law allowing same-sex civil unions, Flanagan reluctantly has watched his candidacy converted to a referendum on gay rights. "In an ideal world, my sexual orientation would be an incidental fact in my present campaign," he told the *Gay & Lesbian Review*. "Again I find myself struggling to be accepted as a whole candidate and judged, like anyone else, on my entire record."

Gov. **Howard Dean**, a four-term liberal who took office in 1991, faces a tough fight to retain power in Montpelier. After Dean signed the state's landmark law granting same-sex couples the right to form civil unions, his GOP opponent, Ruth Dwyer, made repealing the law the focus of her campaign. The third party gubernatorial bid of the Progressive Party's Anthony Pollina could complicate Dean's re-election, since contests in which no candidate garners 50 percent go to the legislature, which anti-civil-union Republicans are fighting hard to retake.

THE HEARTLAND

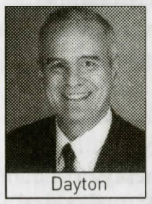
ILLINOIS

In the suburban 10th District just north of Chicago, state Rep. **Lauren Beth Gash** faces Mark Kirk, a Republican who served as chief of staff to retiring GOP Rep. John Porter. Gash faced no primary opponent this spring, while Kirk did battle with fellow Republicans over abortion rights. He is pro-choice, mitigating some of the crossover vote from GOP women that Gash needs for a ticket to Washington.


Stabenow

MICHIGAN

Debbie Stabenow, a Lansing-area congresswoman, is slogging through the campaign mud trying to make up ground against first-term incumbent senator Spencer Abraham, an abortion-rights foe. Fans of Stabenow, heralded as a gifted stateswoman in her rise through state politics, hope she hasn't hit the glass ceiling in her latest bid.


Dayton

MINNESOTA

Democratic Farmer Labor Senate nominee **Mark Dayton** is a former state auditor and Mondale aide who plays down his privilege as heir to the Target department store fortune. Dayton's appeals to voters center on universal health care and broader access to higher education. "We are penny-wise and pound-idiotic if we don't make it possible for all of our young adults to receive the best possible education with our support rather than at their expense," he told the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*.

The campaign of incumbent Sen. Rod Grams, a family-values conservative, has sagged amidst legal scrapes by his son involving controlled substances and accusations that a campaign staffer distributed anonymous slurs against a Democratic candidate using a Kinko's computer.


McCollum

In the 4th District in and around St. Paul, **Betty McCollum**, a progressive state representative, is locked in a close contest with a state senator, Linda Runbeck, and a former Democrat turned Independent, Tom Foley, in the race to succeed Democratic Rep. Bruce Vento, who had announced his retirement before his death on October 10.

MISSOURI

Democratic Gov. **Mel Carnahan**, who has signed a gay-inclusive hate crimes law and vetoed late-term abortion curbs, defies usual profile of a cautious border-state centrist. His race against first-term incumbent Senator John Ashcroft, rated a "zero" by the liberal Americans for Democratic Action, has been a clash of the titans from the get-go. Ashcroft incurred the wrath of Missouri progressives last year, when he worked to defeat the nomination of Ronnie White, a black state Supreme Court judge tapped by President Clinton for the federal bench.

NORTH DAKOTA

Although they control the state's congressional delegation, Democrats have no cakewalk in North Dakota. That's why the strong bid for governor by attorney general **Heidi Heitkamp**, who supports collective bargaining rights for state employees, is encouraging progressives. To his credit, GOP candidate John Hoeven did not exploit Heitkamp's September absence from the campaign trail while she was being treated for cancer.


O'Shaughnessy

OHIO

Maryllen O'Shaughnessy, a Columbus City Council member, hopes to take the seat of Republican Rep. John Kasich, who is retiring from the downtown and north-suburban 12th District. In her face-off with state Rep. Pat Tiberi, O'Shaughnessy is wrapping herself in the same issues popularized by Al Gore and other party standard-bearers: prescription drug coverage for seniors under Medicare, protecting Social Security, improved access to health care and better schools. Still, the slight GOP tilt of the district makes hers an uphill fight.

OUT WEST


Solis

CALIFORNIA

In the East Los Angeles 31st District long held by Rep. Marty Martinez, state Sen. **Hilda Solis** is a strong favorite to beat the incumbent after trouncing him in the March Democratic primary.

Martinez, who switched parties in the quest to keep his seat, lost crucial backing from labor after compiling a ho-hum record during nine terms. In contrast, Solis has fought abuse of immigrant workers in the farm and garment industries while writing legislation to expand coverage of contraceptives under health insurance plans. An ally of Los Angeles janitors who struck successfully this spring for better wages and health care, look for Solis to join fellow Angelino Xavier Becerra in the Congressional Progressive Caucus, whose members face little threat this election.

In Burbank's 27th District, two-term Rep. James Rogan, another House impeachment manager, faces **Adam Schiff**, a liberal state senator who has kept pace with Rogan in the dollar chase. Schiff has tapped the largess of visitors to www.moveon.org, a Web site that emerged during the impeachment fiasco as a conduit for public protest against the proceedings and has morphed into a potent fundraising vehicle for viable candidates against right-wing members of Congress.


Honda

Mike Honda, a state assemblyman and former Peace Corps volunteer and teacher, is running hard in Silicon Valley's 15th District to replace Rep. Tom Campbell, the moderate Republican who gave up his seat to challenge Sen. Dianne Feinstein. Honda is a friend of local techies who bested GOP challenger Jim Cunneen in the state's open primary in March. He goes into the general election buoyed by endorsements from the League of Conservation Voters, gun-control and pro-choice groups. A Japanese-American born in California, Honda spent part of his childhood during World War II in an internment camp in Colorado. If he wins, look for Honda to emerge in Congress as a persuasive fighter for civil rights.


Udall

COLORADO

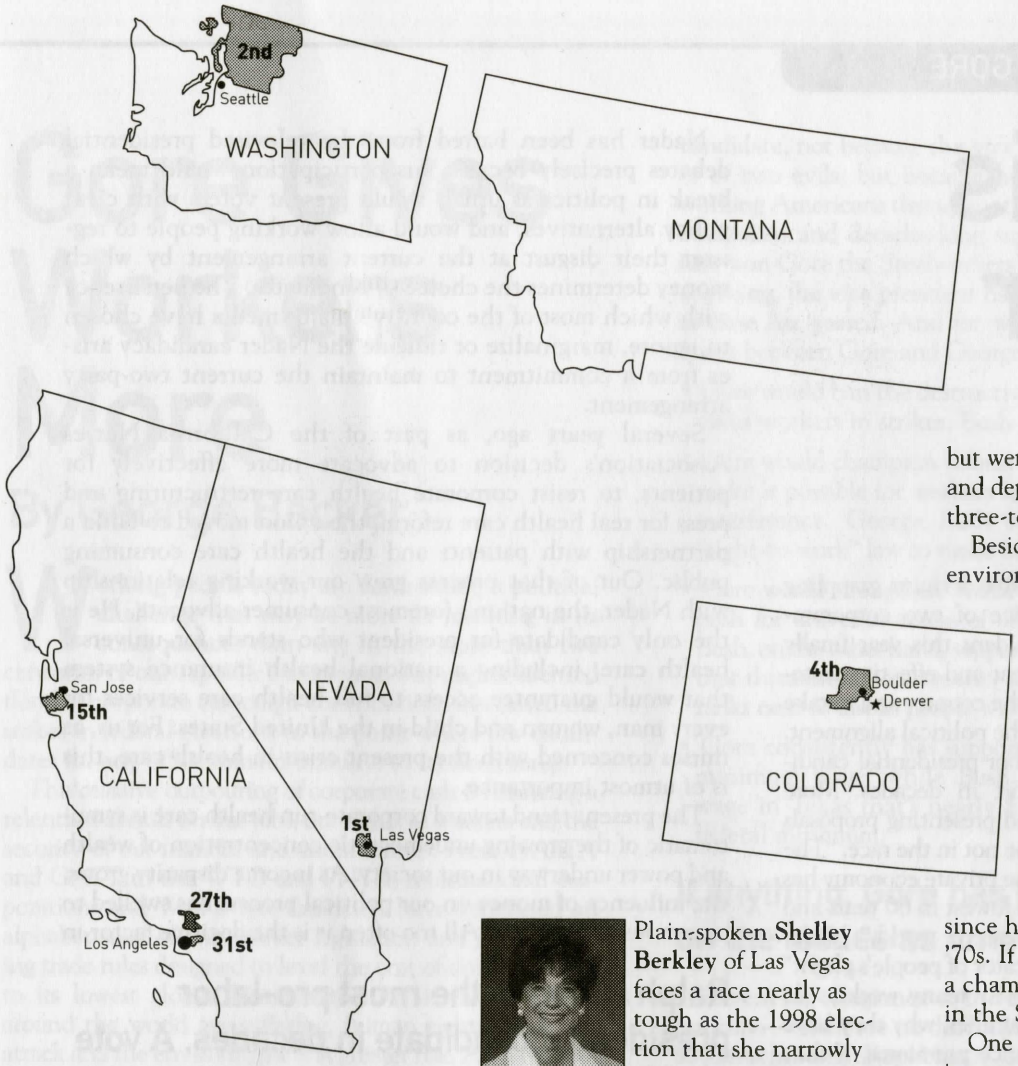
Mark Udall, who boasts a 100 percent rating from the League of Conservation Voters, won by a pine needle's width in 1998. But this time around, besides a GOP opponent, he faces a challenge from the Green Party's Ron Forthofer. "There are people backing Green Party candidates here who are old enough to know better," says Naomi Rachel, director of Boulder's Residents Against Inappropriate Development, which led a 1998 get-out-the-vote drive for Udall. "Without the Green Party challenger this time, Mark would not be endangered."

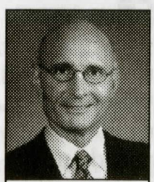
MONTANA

Brian Schweitzer made national news by leading busloads of cash-strapped seniors on prescription drug runs over the Canadian border, where pricing schemes by pharmaceutical-makers allow for sales of some medications at less than half U.S. prices. In his Senate race, he faces two-term incumbent Conrad Burns, named one of the "Dirty Dozen" by the League of Conservation Voters for his lifetime 5 percent voting record.


Keenan

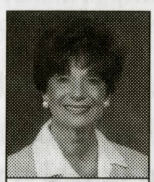
Nancy Keenan, the state superintendent of public instruction, aims to reverse a slide for Big Sky progressives that began with the 1996 departure of Pat Williams, a champion of federal arts funding who had won the state's lone House seat in 1992. Keenan supplements her calls for economic development with support for a minimum wage hike. Boosted by feminists' donations from in and outside the state, she has battled lesbian-baiting in the race and leads her opponent, former Lt. Gov. Dennis Rehberg.




Bernstein

NEVADA

Ed Bernstein is up against Promise Keeper and voucher advocate John Ensign, a former congressman who nearly beat Sen. Harry Reid two years ago for the state's other Senate seat. Bernstein, a personal injury attorney, has tried to corner Ensign on abortion, and a large corps of well-marshaled labor activists may add fuel to Democrats' get-out-the-vote drive.


Berkley

Plain-spoken **Shelley Berkley** of Las Vegas faces a race nearly as tough as the 1998 election that she narrowly won. National appeals by Emily's List have aided her fundraising, and the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada has added some of the city's numerous newcomers, including many Latinos, to the voter rolls. Her 1st District continues to grow so fast that it is likely to split and yield two seats after reapportionment next year. Berkley is counting on strong turnout to help her overcome current challenger Jon Porter, a state representative, and survive to navigate those redrawn lines as the incumbent.


Cantwell

WASHINGTON

Maria Cantwell continues Washington Democrats' recovery from their 1994 meltdown, when the House delegation went from 8-to-1 Democratic to 7-to-2 Republican. Cantwell lost her own seat in that blitz but went on to make a mint at Microsoft and deployed her fortune to take on three-term incumbent Sen. Slade Gorton.

Besides her backing by pro-choice and environmental groups, Cantwell has gained traction with support for online privacy and a Clintonian pitch for more accommodation of diversity that she frames as "One Washington." Gorton himself gives resonance to the theme, warring openly with many Native American tribes in the state, whose fishing and gambling rights he has challenged since his stint as attorney general in the '70s. If Cantwell wins, look for her to be a champion for Indian American issues in the Senate.

One of the youngest and most promising progressive candidates this fall is **Rick Larsen**, a 35-year-old Snohomish County Council member and health care administrator facing John Koster in the race to succeed GOP Rep. Jack Metcalf. The 2nd District stretches from Seattle's northern suburbs to the Canadian border and includes some of the San Juan Islands. Larsen's commitment to protecting open space earned him the Sierra Club's backing, which along with thumbs-up from several unions and the Human Rights Campaign may pave his way to victory. ■

Nader is Best for Labor

By Kay McVay

Union members and progressive activists grappling with a disappointing choice of two corporate-backed candidates for president this year finally have an opportunity to make a clear and effective statement about the state of politics in the country and to take a meaningful step toward shifting the political alignment.

Ralph Nader is the most pro-labor presidential candidate to attract significant support in decades. More importantly, he is raising issues and presenting proposals that would be totally absent were he not in the race. "The percentage of union members in the private economy has just dropped below 10 percent, the lowest in 60 years and the lowest percentage in the Western world," Nader points out. He says this is an "indicator of people's plight" and "explains much more about why many workers do not earn enough to support their families, why they have to bear more of the health insurance premiums, if they receive any from their employer, and why they go without or endure shrinking retirement benefits."

As he has gone about the country, Nader has argued for a living wage for all workers, repeal of the anti-labor Taft-Hartley Act, triple back pay for workers fired illegally in organizing drives, expanded power for the National Labor Relations Board to stop unfair anti-union practices, and a ban on permanent replacement of strikers. He has expressed firm opposition to the unfair trade treaties and institutions such as NAFTA and the WTO. Nader's stand on these issues of importance to labor are in sharp contrast to those of the other candidates, even though the positions he takes enjoy wide support among the electorate. But as long as only the two major candidates frame the issues, these matters will never be raised.

Nader is the only candidate in this campaign who is talking about unrestrained corporate power and its effect on our political institutions, economy, media, culture and democracy. He and Green vice presidential candidate Winona LaDuke are the only candidates presenting a comprehensive program to improve the quality of life for all of our people. It includes eradicating poverty, narrowing the income gap, enhancing labor rights, ending the death penalty, halting the "drug war" and the discrimination in our criminal justice system, protecting our environment and democratizing our elections.

Nader has been barred from the televised presidential debates precisely because his participation would mean a break in politics as usual, would present voters with clear policy alternatives, and would allow working people to register their disgust at the current arrangement by which money determines the choice of candidates. The persistence with which most of the country's major media have chosen to ignore, marginalize or ridicule the Nader candidacy arises from a commitment to maintain the current two-party arrangement.

Several years ago, as part of the California Nurses Association's decision to advocate more effectively for patients, to resist corporate health care restructuring and press for real health care reform, the union moved to build a partnership with patients and the health care consuming public. Out of that process grew our working relationship with Nader, the nation's foremost consumer advocate. He is the only candidate for president who stands for universal health care, including a national health insurance system that would guarantee access to full health care services for every man, woman and child in the United States. For us, as nurses concerned with the present crisis in health care, this is of utmost importance.

The present trend toward corporate-run health care is symptomatic of the growing undemocratic concentration of wealth and power underway in our society. As income disparity grows, the influence of money on our political process has swelled to enormous proportions. All too often it is the decisive factor in

Ralph Nader is the most pro-labor presidential candidate in decades. A vote for him is not a vote for anyone else. It's a vote for the best candidate in the race.

the deliberations and actions of politicians and legislators on matters that affect our lives and the environment in which we live. With this has come a growing disillusionment of millions of people who are increasingly cynical about elections and opt out of the democratic process.

"Feelings of powerlessness and the withdrawal of massive numbers of Americans from both civic and political arenas are deeply troubling," Nader says. "This situation had to be addressed by fresh political movement arising from the citizenry's labors and resources and dreams about what America could become at long last."

If we continue to accept the choice presented by the two major parties as the only one possible, the alienation of people from the political process will only grow. A strong showing by Nader will have a positive effect long past November. We have a chance to break with the past and raise the standard of political debate and decision-making in our country. A vote for Nader is not a vote for anyone else. It's a vote for the best candidate in the race. And it's a vote for breaking with politics-as-usual and revitalizing the democratic process. ■

Kay McVay *is president of the California Nurses Association.*

Gore Gives Workers More

By George Becker

Working people today are confronting a political challenge that may be more far-reaching in its consequences than any in the more than two centuries of our republic's existence. An unprecedented flood of corporate campaign contributions has raised the stakes in federal elections to the point where few candidates for any office remain immune to its siren song.

This massive outpouring of corporate cash is financing a relentless assault on our jobs, our rights as workers and the security of our families and communities. From NAFTA and GATT to the WTO and PNTR, multinational corporations and Wall Street financiers have concocted an alphabet soup of anti-worker legislation and job-destroying trade rules designed to level the cost of doing business to its lowest global denominator. As a result, workers around the world are suffering, human rights are under attack and the environment is at greater risk. All have gotten in the way of the drive to maximize profits by seeking the cheapest labor and the least taxation and regulation.

Corporate bagmen roam the halls of Congress and the executive branch, corrupting Republicans and Democrats alike with their destructive agenda. When politicians of both major parties are marinated in corporate money, the greatest threat to working people's security comes not from right-wing zealots, but from our so-called friends, many of whom have double-crossed working families time and again. Now more than ever, issues are more important than party labels. And while Democratic control of both Congress and the White House remain desirable, it is largely because Republican control is so much worse.

Some might say this analysis points to an endorsement of Ralph Nader for president. The United Steelworkers of America feel differently.

More than most, our union's members have demonstrated a willingness to challenge the corporate agenda in all its forms, whether on the picket line, in the halls of Congress or on the streets of Seattle. And far more often than not, we have found ourselves working shoulder-to-shoulder with Ralph Nader, whether the issue was health and safety on the job, the ability of workers to organize, or opposition to job-destroying trade agreements.

Yet by overwhelming margins, our membership supports the candidacy of Al Gore over that of any other candidate, not because the vice president represents the lesser of two evils, but because he consistently has supported working Americans throughout his political career. It was this outspoken and decades-long support for workers rights that first won Gore the Steelworkers' endorsement last October. If anything, the vice president has gotten stronger on the issues as time has passed. And for working Americans, the differences between Gore and George W. Bush are crucial:

- Gore would ban the destructive use of permanent replacement workers in strikes. Bush would not.
- Gore would champion reform of our nation's labor laws to make it possible for workers to organize without employer interference. George Bush would push for a national "right-to-work" law to make organizing even harder.
- Gore would strengthen Social Security and Medicare, and push for universal access of all Americans to health care. Bush, on the other hand, supports risky privatization schemes that threaten seniors' security and presides over a state that ranks next to last in people with health care coverage.
- Gore consistently has supported increases in the federal minimum wage, while Bush defends a state minimum wage in Texas that's nearly $2 per hour lower than the federal minimum.

If anything, Gore has gotten stronger on the issues as time has passed.

Absent his allegiance to the current administration's trade policies—which are no different than those of the past three administrations, Republican or Democrat—Al Gore has consistently supported working people's rights since his first election to Congress. He's even crisscrossed the country supporting the right to strike.

But even on trade, there are crucial differences between Gore and Bush. In contrast to current trade policy, which the governor wholeheartedly supports, the vice president has promised to push global labor standards upward and integrate labor rights and environmental concerns into international trade agreements.

While Nader's positions on workers rights, global trade and corporate accountability may be closer to some of labor's positions, the differences between Gore and Nader pale in comparison to the differences between Gore and Bush—with one crucial exception. Either Gore or Bush will win the election. Nader won't.

If Bush wins the election, we can look forward at least four years of open season on workers and their unions, with frontal assaults on our ability to organize, participate on an equal basis in the political process and even govern our own organizations.

A Gore administration, at the very least, would give American workers the room to build on the gains we've made over the past eight years. At best, we will find the kind of support for working families that we've sought for nearly 30 years. ■

George Becker *is international president of the United Steelworkers of America.*


BILL STAMETS

By Randy Shaw

Julie Daniels earns $28,000 a year working full time as a certified nursing assistant for Stamford Health System in Stamford, Connecticut. A member of Local 1199, Daniels and her three children have been unable to obtain affordable housing within traveling distance of her job. The family's only available housing option has been a homeless shelter, and the prospects for Daniels obtaining a safe and affordable home remain grim.

The Daniels family is among an increasing number of working families whose paycheck is not sufficient for them to obtain a decent, permanent place to live. Unfortunately, we have heard very little this political season about the housing problems faced by them and the nearly 6 million other American families unable to secure affordable housing. While the presidential candidates have highlighted the problems of working families, they have been silent on the shortage of affordable units that plagues people across America.

This silence is, in many respects, a mystery. During the past decade, America's housing crisis has spread from rapidly gentrifying urban centers to the suburbs. An affordable housing shortage once limited to both coasts now strikes such heartland states as Missouri, Kentucky, Ohio and Colorado. Nationally, more than 1.5 million low-cost housing units have been lost in recent years, and millions of children are growing up in housing that is substandard, unaffordable or dangerous.

The lack of affordable housing now affects the middle class as well as the poor. In San Francisco, the Department of Housing and Urban Development is financing subsidized housing for public schoolteachers. California business groups complain that the state's housing shortage deters the hiring of skilled workers, and chambers of commerce are linking affordable housing development to continued economic growth. Support for affordable housing construction thus has extended beyond the tenant and nonprofit housing groups that have long spearheaded such advocacy.

One reason candidates are not talking about housing is that they have nothing to brag about. The Clinton-Gore administration and Republican Congress have presided over a steady decline in the percentage of eligible families receiving federal housing assistance. Both parties supported the HOPE VI program, which will eliminate more than 80,000 public housing units for the very poor. Neither provided funding to prevent the conversion of more than 100,000 federally subsidized dwellings to market-rate housing in the past three years. Although HUD Secretary Andrew Cuomo has fought Republican efforts to cut housing funding, his agency's budget requests barely have exceeded what was necessary to renew existing programs.

The agreement reached on the federal housing budget for the next fiscal year represents yet another bipartisan failure to address the housing crisis. No new funding was provided to address the two chief priorities of housing groups—building new housing and preserving the existing affordable housing supply. The $5 billion Federal Housing Administration surplus, which could have tripled affordable housing construction next year and assisted 200,000 working families, is still tied up in Washington.

Missouri Republican Sen. Christopher Bond made a late effort to create a $1 billion housing production program, but the Clinton administration's failure to promptly put forth its own new construction proposals left too little time for reaching a deal. Massachusetts Democratic Sen. John Kerry unsuccessfully tried to direct at least a portion of the FHA surplus for housing production; Kerry's legislation to create a federal housing trust fund to secure FHA surpluses for housing will be the top legislative priority for housing advocates next year.

Yet neither the Gore, Bush nor Nader campaigns has devoted a day, or even a single speech, outlining specific proposals for solving the nation's rental housing crisis. Gore's housing platform pledges to continue incremental HUD budget increases. It does not even mention Kerry's legislation.

Nader's Web site includes positions on Makah whaling and industrial hemp, but affordable housing did not make the list. Nader has referred to the housing crisis in speeches, but has done nothing to make it an issue in his campaign. But by ignoring housing, Nader has missed an opportunity to win support from low-income working families and communities of color who particularly suffer from the crisis.

Bush has done little to address the affordable housing shortage in Texas, which primarily affects the working Latinos he claims to care about. Bush's housing platform proposes to spend $1.7 billion on "investor-based tax credits" to build single-family homes for low-income families over five years

There's No Place Like Home

Yet Washington ignores the national housing crisis

and $1 billion on an "American Dream Down Payment Fund," whereby the government contributes up to $1,500 to help low-income families buy homes. Such measures would not come close to addressing the needs of Texas, let alone the nation.

Paralleling the presidential campaigns, the media have absolved the federal government of responsibility for the inability of working families to obtain safe and affordable housing. Stories on the victims of the housing crisis are designed to arouse pity, not action. Typical is an August 24 *Chicago Tribune* article reporting that there is only one available apartment for every six entry-level jobs in two Chicago suburbs. Although the story concluded that it was harder than ever for the working poor and even middle-income people to find affordable apartments, it made no mention of any government action that could address the problem.

Similarly, a lengthy September 13 article on working families in the *New York Times* focused on a widow whose $24,000 salary could not support her three children even when "squeezed" into a one-bedroom, $600-a-month apartment in the Bronx. The notion that increased federal assistance for building new affordable housing could alleviate the plight of such families was not addressed. Although the *Times* has extensively covered the Senate race between Hillary Clinton and Rick Lazio, neither candidate was asked to respond to the plight of poor families. Considering that Lazio is chairman of the House Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity, this absence is striking.

Sparking national action to end the housing crisis requires at least two developments. First, organized labor must strengthen its national housing advocacy. Labor support was crucial to the passage of the landmark 1949 Housing Act, which first set "a decent home and suitable living environment for every American family" as a national goal. During the two decades following World War II, labor was instrumental in dramatically increasing federal housing assistance. In New York alone, a labor-backed housing corporation built tens of thousands of affordable units for union members. During the '60s and '70s, however, labor's housing advocacy was restricted by rank-and-file opposition to racial integration in federally constructed projects. Labor remained on the sidelines as federal support for housing was drastically cut from the '80s through the mid-'90s.

President John Sweeney has renewed the AFL-CIO's interest in housing. The AFL-CIO Housing Investment Trust, which invests union pension funds in housing, grew dramatically in the past decade, doubling its assets from 1995 to 1998. In Connecticut, the national AFL-CIO is spearheading a multi-union organizing drive that has built worker support through vigorous advocacy on housing issues. Labor organizers joined with tenants in convincing the Stamford City Council to reject the HOPE VI program and have aligned with tenants on other public housing issues. Linda Chavez-Thompson, executive vice president of the AFL-CIO, committed $50 million in union pension funds to build affordable housing in Connecticut and publicly challenged Republican Gov. John Rowland to match the amount. This high-profile tactic forced the conservative Rowland to allocate $10 million to address the state's affordable housing shortage.

The AFL-CIO clearly recognizes that the affordable housing issue can bring unions and community groups together to improve the lives of working people. As rising rents undercut wage gains, stronger housing advocacy becomes imperative. While the union's first goal is to get a fair contract for workers, observes the AFL-CIO's Jane McAlevey, who heads the Stamford organizing drive, "if we've accomplished that and the next day they get kicked out of the house, we haven't gained much."

The second development necessary is the mobilization of the thousands of nonprofit housing development corporations, community-based organizations, student groups and neighborhood associations who build and/or support affordable housing. Grassroots activism has made affordable housing a major political issue in cities across America. But few community or campus-based groups push for the increased federal funding necessary to solve local affordability problems. As a result, politicians in Washington are free to ignore the crisis.

This pattern will continue until groups exert as much pressure on Congress to support affordable housing as they do on local politicians. Students who work in local homeless shelters or who fight for more campus housing must combine their service and community work with the type of national campus advocacy that recently has proved so effective in fighting sweatshops. Pro-housing groups can shape national policies best by working in their own backyards; for example, pressure by tenant groups in St. Louis has led Bond to support critically needed affordable housing programs.

Kerry's federal housing trust fund measure represents the ideal vehicle for a national housing campaign that can unify pro-housing constituencies. National People's Action and Housing America already have started strategizing for such a campaign. The Kerry measure could bring $20 billion for new affordable housing construction in the next five years, setting the country on a new direction toward ending our national housing and homelessness crisis.

Last March a story in the *Washington Post* discussed the lack of attention to the housing crisis during the presidential primary season. The article quoted HUD Secretary Cuomo to the effect that, unlike health care and education, housing "does not poll well."

Let this be the last election campaign when that is the case. ■

Randy Shaw *is director of Housing America and author of* Reclaiming America: Nike, Clean Air, and the New National Activism.

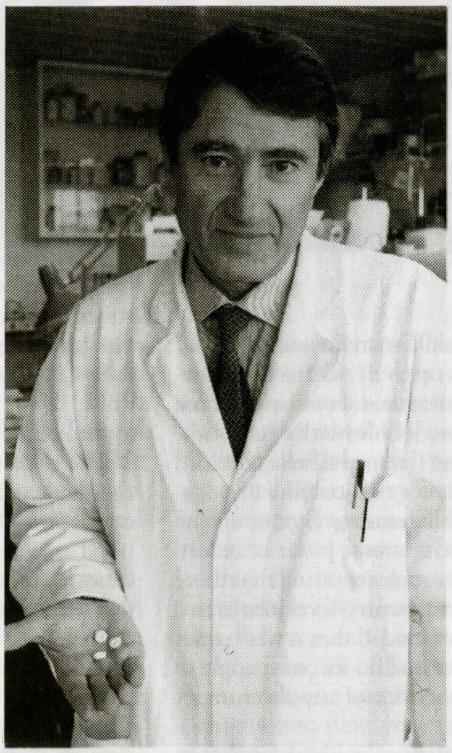
New Pill, Old Problems

By Barbara Seaman

The first time we stood up together to talk about our abortions, Florence M. Rice, the Harlem consumer activist and star of black radio, was 50; I was a 34-year-old medical journalist. It was March 1970, during the final countdown to legalization in New York. Rice and I were invited to speak out at the Judson Memorial Church, home of an underground abortion service in Greenwich Village, the very neighborhood where radical feminists introduced such provocative slogans as "abortion is no man's business" and "keep your laws off my body."

Rice, a former domestic worker, described her back-alley ordeal: how she became sick from it, how she was carried into Harlem Hospital where a nurse informed her that she hadn't been expected to live. In contrast I, whose teen-age boyfriend had access to the princely sum of $500 (it was 1954!), knew of a respectable Manhattan doctor whose clandestine abortion practice had rendered him adept at both local anesthesia and uterine evacuation. My abortion didn't even hurt.

Let no one doubt, Florence and I avowed, that desperate women have abortions whether the law allows them or not; that abortion rates are similar in "legal" and "illegal" cultures, the difference being that in "illegal" cultures, many more women either die in the process or have their health ruined; that most victims of botched abortion are poor, since quality clandestine abortions can be obtained almost everywhere—for a price.



French physician Dr. Etienne-Emile Baulieu first developed RU-486 in the '80s.

For all who cherish the health rights of women, the good news is that on September 28, FDA approved RU-486 (also known as mifepristone or Mifeprex) as an "early option pill." Now women have a medical as well as a surgical choice. With RU-486, we arrive at a new chapter in abortion rights.

But we must not overlook the cautionary lessons of the past. In New York, when midwives were outlawed early in the 20th century, immigrant women lost their folk knowledge (often carried by the midwives) of "menstrual induction" through pharmacologically active herbs, of which today's RU-486 might be deemed a variant. A number of herbs have long served as abortofacients. Even today, in some regions of Mexico, for one example, knowledgeable women still administer them with frequent success. Sadly, organized medicine in the United States has a reprehensible history of reducing access to every sort of safe abortion—whether surgical or medical/pharmacological—first by lobbying to criminalize abortion, and then by persecuting midwives. (This history has been documented extensively by the classic feminist texts *Witches, Midwives and Nurses* by Barbara Ehrenreich and Dierdre English and *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood*, by Kristin Luker.)

Without access to information about their bodies, poor women resorted to chilling back-alley methods of pregnancy termination. In the mid-'60s, anthropologist Steven Polgar and sociologist Ellen Fried collected information about 322 abortion attempts among 126 poor women in New York. In 3.4 percent of these cases, the women died. The common uterine methods included Lysol "douches," coat hangers, knitting needles, bark and *la sonda* (the tube), a method commonly used in Latina communities. About half of the respondents tried to abort by ingestion of toxic substances such as turpentine, Clorox bleach and massive doses of quinine. It appears that under such circumstances, many abortion deaths are mistakenly recorded as suicides, poisonings or accidents.

Women in consciousness-raising groups also collected and shared tragic abortion stories. Largely due to this grassroots movement of radical feminists, surgical abortion was legalized in New York in April 1970. Fortunately, the welfare of women getting New York abortions (they streamed in from all over the world) and the record of safety to be compiled—or not—fell to a feminist-minded pediatrician and public health physician at the New York City Department of Health, Dr. Jean Pakter. The meticulous director of the Bureau of Maternity Services and Family Planning, Pakter energetically assumed the task of setting and enforcing standards and monitoring the outcome statistics. The rate of pregnancy-related deaths in New York fell swiftly and sharply, and Pakter's compelling evidence helped influence the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision.

On October 26, Florence and I will again stand together at the Judson. I am a grandmother now, and she has become a great-great grandmother. She still has her own talk show, now on cable TV. The occasion is the 30th anniversary speakout on feminism and abortion rights, sponsored by History in Action. The old abortion activists, along with

many inspired young ones such as Jennifer Baumgardner, co-author with Amy Richards of *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism and the Future*, will explore why we are moving backward, why access to abortion is in decline—and how the new arrival of RU-486 may fit in.

Since *Roe* there have been 32 Supreme Court cases affecting abortion. In 1999 alone, 400 restrictions on abortion were brought before state legislatures. Since 1977 there have been seven murders, 17 attempted murders, and more than 2,400 other acts of violence against abortion providers. The number of providers has fallen 30 percent since 1982, and 85 percent of U.S. counties now lack abortion services.

It's no surprise to Florence and me that the cruelest limits on abortion are again directed at poor women; under Medicaid and other federal programs, abortions are severely restricted to cases of rape, incest and endangerment of life, and the kinds of dreadful methods uncovered by Polgar and Fried are again on the rise.

We had hoped that the approval of RU-486 would alter this landscape, but it's too soon to say. One major disappointment is that the cost will not be less than the surgical alternatives. Another drawback with RU-486 is that it actually produces a greater array of side effects than the surgical alternative. Surgical abortions are faster and more conclusive than medical, and are usually performed under anesthesia, local or general.

However, some women fear the invasiveness of the surgical procedure, which does include a small risk of infection or uterine perforation. In France and Sweden—but not England, where RU-486 thus far has been a flop—some women say that medical abortion seems more private and more natural. However, the success of this procedure is less predictable, often involves more cramping and bleeding than the surgical alternative, may take weeks to complete, and may require hospitalization.

Some pro-choice advocates also are disappointed that the use of RU-486 is limited to the first 49 days of pregnancy. However, from a safety point of view, this makes sense. Studies of 2,121 women at 17 U.S. centers show that the medical abortion worked in 92 percent of women under 49 days, but only 77 percent of those under 63 days. Complications, including abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and bleeding also increase notably as pregnancy advances.

The FDA's decision to approve RU-486 was actually made last February, when the agency notified Danco, the drug's manufacturer, further advising that specifics of regulation and labeling would be announced later. By June, some pro-choice activists grew edgy at the delay, and rumors abounded that unnecessary restrictions fostered by right-wing extremists would all but paralyze distribution. In fact, as the restrictions now stand, most seem to be in the legitimate interest of the users' safety, and reflect the cautionary standards that consumer protectionists and health feminists advocate for the initial use of many new drugs.

Those who are cautious of new drugs and treatments suggest this rule of thumb: Don't try something new until it has been on the market for five years, unless you really need it and don't have any alternative. But RU-486 should be welcomed in the hope that five years from now, medical abortions will become more effective, more private, more widely available, safer, more in the woman's hands—and cheaper. To this end, the National Institutes of Health or the FDA should call a series of conferences where providers and patients would detail their experiences with various methods and regimens, which would then be objectively examined and contrasted.

In the opinion of the National Women's Health Network (NWHN), most of the precautions required by the FDA are desirable. Patients must be counseled and provided with informed consent statements, as well as medication guides telling how the drugs work, side effects and warning signs of problems to watch out for. Providers must be qualified to date pregnancies accurately, diagnose ectopic pregnancies and either provide or arrange for surgical abortion backup, if needed.

All in all, the NWHN's only quarrel with FDA restrictions is the requirement that the patient must return to the provider's office for her second round of pills, prostaglandins called misoprostol. Already on the market for other purposes, recent research confirms that misoprostol can be safely used at home. What's more, other new research indicates that misoprostol may be most effective when inserted in the vagina, and that under this regimen, only one RU-486 tablet is required instead of three. Prostaglandins have been explored as abortofacients since the early '70s, when Swedish scientists found that vaginal suppositories by themselves produced a high rate of early abortions.

Most restrictions on RU-486 reflect the standards health feminists advocate.

In the meantime, anyone who wants to learn about the full story of RU-486 is urged to read the Journal of the American Medical Women's Association's 2000 supplement titled *Medical Abortion*, edited by Dr. Wendy Chavkin, an expert on RU-486. (For information, contact Chavkin at Columbia University—CPFH, 60 Haven Avenue, B-3, New York, NY, 10032.) Perhaps coincidentally, she was Dr. Pakter's successor—and mentee—at the New York Health Department. Fortunately, we now have a second generation of women physicians who know how to keep the focus of abortion practice where it should be: on women's health—above profits, above politics, above population control. ■

Barbara Seaman *is co-founder of the National Women's Health Network (www.womenshealthnetwork.org) and vice president of Abortion Rights Mobilization (ARM). Her 1969 book,* The Doctors Case Against the Pill, *formed the basis of the 1970 U.S. Senate Hearings on oral contraceptives, which led to patient warnings on the Pill—the first on any prescription drug. Seaman's most recent book, with Gary Null, is* For Women Only! Your Guide to Health Empowerment.

Rough Trade

By David Moberg

In the happy-talk version of the new global economy, rich nations like the United States slough off bad jobs to poor nations like Mexico. This opens new opportunities for the impoverished people of the world to lift themselves up and for workers in the rich countries to find more skilled and rewarding work. Everybody wins.

The Selling of Free Trade: NAFTA, Washington and the Subversion of American Democracy
By John R. MacArthur
Hill and Wang
388 pages, $25

Mollie's Job: A Story of Life and Work on the Global Assembly Line
By William M. Adler
Scribner
352 pages, $27.50

Unfortunately, that's not the way the world really works. Two recent books, each following a job from a factory that was closing in the United States to its relocation in a new border-zone *maquiladora* in Mexico, vividly show how workers and their communities lose on both ends of the transfer, while the owners of business win.

Confronted with this unhappy version of globalization, many commentators—and even a few workers in these tales—shrug and say it's sad but inevitable. Yet these two accounts illustrate that this mutually destructive job exodus is not a fact of nature, but a function of how the rules of the game are written. These rules encourage a concentrated, absentee corporate control of economic activity that brutally ignores the welfare of workers and communities. They also encourage the export of capital in search of lower wages and powerless employees. Indeed, the heart of *Harper's Magazine* publisher John R. MacArthur's book, *The Selling of Free Trade*, is the sordid tale of how President Bill Clinton, with the able assistance of Al Gore, rammed a deal through Congress to encourage investment that undermines the jobs and well-being of people like Mollie James and Gorica Kostrevski.

James is an African-American woman who moved north in 1950 from Virginia to make ballasts for fluorescent lights at a Universal Manufacturing factory in Paterson, New Jersey—an early industrial center that journalist William Adler uses in *Mollie's Job* to quickly frame two centuries of U.S. economic history. Kostrevski, the exemplary figure in MacArthur's book, is a Yugoslavian immigrant who worked at a Swingline staple factory in Long Island City, New York. Both lost their jobs as their companies moved to Mexico, with intermediate stops in Mississippi and Arkansas in Mollie's case.

Yet Maria del Refugio Hernandez, who started work in a factory on the U.S.-Mexican border at age 15 and eventually took over Kostrevski's job at Swingline, and Balbina Duque Granados, who assumed Mollie's job after migrating to Matamoros, were not prospering. They were living in crowded and miserable colonies of makeshift shacks and earning barely enough to survive, less in real terms than the textile mill workers of Paterson who conducted an epochal strike in 1913.

The mutually destructive job exodus since NAFTA is not a fact of nature, but a function of how the rules of the game are written.

Those Paterson workers had struck because their employers had cut pay and sped up work, "ostensibly so the mills could remain competitive with those in states with lower wages and weaker labor laws," Adler writes, but the competition came from plants that the mill owners had built in rural areas of Pennsylvania, where they could pay half of the prevailing Paterson wage. Now companies move across national, rather than state, borders, but "globalization" is not some new, liberating phenomenon. It is a continuation of an old dynamic of capitalism played out on a grander scale.

In both of these books, scrappy entrepreneurs built medium-sized companies to prominent positions in their markets, then were bought out by large, diversified corporations that eventually shut down unionized factories that paid decent but still modest wages. Although the original owners were more anchored in their communities and had paternalistic ties to workers, they were hardly generous toward labor. They happily collaborated with corrupt unions that workers fought, with mixed results, to get better representation and contracts. In both cases, modest surges in union militancy triggered planning to move production and avoid unionization.

Universal's founder opened a plant in Mississippi to avoid his union: It was nevertheless unionized after a massive, ugly anti-union campaign. But both companies became more hostile to unionization and more inclined to move to Mexico as ownership changed hands to corporate executives who were much more focused on maximizing financial returns from their firm's many different operations than on the nitty-gritty of the shop or the provision of customer service.

The shift of jobs to Mexico's northern border started in the mid-'60s, when Mexico and the United States changed their laws to make it possible for U.S. companies to export materials for processing to border factories, then pay a tariff on only the miniscule value added by low-wage Mexican labor. By 1990, as MacArthur recounts, the heavily indebted Mexican government was desperate for foreign capital, and U.S. businesses were more than interested in building factories in Mexico. "The only rational reason for an American company to decline Mexico's standing invitation to exploit its low-cost labor environment (and easily polluted natural environment)," MacArthur writes, "was the concern that angry Mexicans ... would rise up and seize American assets" as they did in 1938.

Thus NAFTA was born, more as an investment agreement than a trade

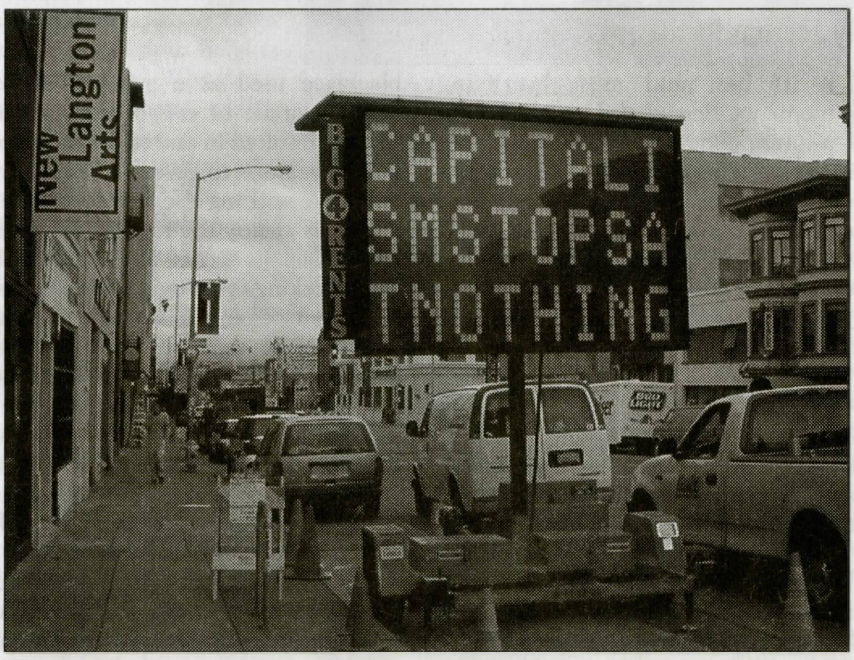
agreement. While it established strong protections against nationalization, NAFTA also opened up opportunities for investment throughout the Mexican economy, protected intellectual property claims and locked the Mexican government into maintaining a sympathetic climate for foreign businesses. Ultimately, however, the Mexicans resisted U.S. demands to open investment in the oil industry, and the United States refused Mexico's request to open up the borders to the movement of workers.

When President George Bush proposed NAFTA, the business establishment did not immediately embrace the idea with enthusiasm. Beyond their traditional divisions over free trade, many business leaders worried about Bush's suggestion that the agreement could deal with labor rights and the environment. While there were significant Democratic misgivings, Congress greased the way for NAFTA by approving the fast-track presidential negotiating authority—and MacArthur is especially critical of then House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt, often a leading critic of unfair trade, for failing to fight vigorously against fast-track. Politically hobbled by the still sluggish economy in 1992, Bush tried to use progress on NAFTA negotiations as proof that he was creating new jobs. Clinton could not repudiate Bush's NAFTA deal, since he had campaigned in the primary as the free trade candidate.

Citing Rep. David Bonior and others, MacArthur argues that Clinton was such a fervent advocate of trade liberalization because it helped his campaign raise money and aligned him with the country's powerful elite. But Clinton needed to mollify union members and other free trade skeptics. Presented by his staff with a strong option—to reject NAFTA until it had vigorous labor and environmental protection—and a weak alternative, Clinton embraced the strategy of supporting Bush's agreement but adding some modest labor and environmental provisions, thus making NAFTA less of an issue in the election.

Yet once elected, Clinton had to sell NAFTA to a skeptical Congress. MacArthur details the development of this sales campaign, described by a key participant, advertising executive Leo Kelmenson, as "the most carefully manipulated program of public persuasion since Hitler." The Clinton White House worked intimately with the Business Roundtable, top Washington lobbyists and major corporations to sell NAFTA, even turning over White House polling data. Some business executives hesitated to help a Democratic president win a legislative battle, but Newt Gingrich angrily lectured them on the necessity of fighting hard for NAFTA. Other executives had assumed that, especially with fast-track provisions, NAFTA would sail through easily.

But the opposition proved formidable. Both Democrats and Republicans were already divided, although Republicans in the House were more favorably disposed to NAFTA. But the emergence of Ross Perot, the opposition of organized labor and many big environmental groups, and the grassroots campaigns around the country made the sales job tougher, even with the help of stars like Lee Iacocca and Clinton (whom Kelmenson described as "the best advertising man in the world"). "George Bush could never have passed NAFTA," argues Mickey Kantor, Clinton's former trade representative. "No Republican President could have, because he couldn't have brought [along] enough Democrats."



Portable Electronic Message Board, 2000, by artist collective Together We Can Defeat Capitalism. Other messages appear on the rented traffic sign, including "Income Gap Ahead" and "Danger: Stock Market Crash Ahead." From **C2C (Consumer to Capitalist)**, on display at New Langton Arts in San Francisco through November 11.

The NAFTA advocates had plenty of money: USA*NAFTA, the main business group, spent at least $10 million in two months, and the Mexican government paid Washington lobbyists at least $6.9 million. Besides the television ads, there were fake grassroots ("astroturf") groups for NAFTA, dubious academic studies and, in the final stretch, an orgy of special favors to win undecided members of Congress, including Clinton's pledge to go duck hunting with one member. Although Clinton did go hunting, many of the promises never materialized. For example, the highly touted North American Development Bank provided minuscule aid to clean up the border.

One turning point was the debate between Al Gore and Ross Perot. The grassroots movement against NAFTA, including local union leaders, environmentalists, consumer advocates, farm groups, Public Citizen, Citizens Trade

Campaign and others, was a more effective threat than Perot—although MacArthur does not give the movement proper credit. But Perot was big news, and the White House—especially Gore and his staff—wanted to identify the opposition to NAFTA with Perot, since he could be made to appear wacky or extreme. If Gore had debated Ralph Nader, for example, he might not have fared as well. But Gore rattled Perot. He also tossed in anecdotes about Mattel and a supposed "textile" manufacturer (actually a producer of chemicals for synthetic fibers) who would move operations after NAFTA's passage to create jobs in the United States. Neither anecdote was true, MacArthur argues, but Gore's "fibs" in the debate were not unusual for NAFTA advocates.

Most of the dire consequences NAFTA proponents warned would happen if NAFTA were rejected actually occurred—after it passed. Most of the benefits have not been realized: The U.S. trade surplus turned into huge deficits; hundreds of thousands of U.S. jobs have been shifted to Mexico; the peso crashed (partly an inevitable aftermath of the Mexican government's politically motivated efforts to inflate its value before the NAFTA vote); and most of the modest wage gains since then have been eaten up by inflation.

Despite similarity with MacArthur's book, Adler attempts to paint a broader-brush history of the American economy over the past century, giving the NAFTA debate only a brief summary. While recounting the rise of Universal Manufacturing and its transformation into part of MagneTek, a 1986 spin-off from the Litton conglomerate, he weaves in the story of Paterson, a discussion on race relations, a history of the Teamsters, an account of General Electric's efforts to block efficient fluorescent lighting technology, and the formation of economic development policies in both the South and Mexico. These digressions illuminate broader trends but also distract from Adler's strong narrative about Mollie James' job.

The strength of Adler's book is not in its analysis or new revelations about globalization but in the very particular illustration of how a job moves—from Paterson to Simpson County, Mississippi and on to Matamoros, Mexico. The law eased the move: It limited what workers could do to restrain capital mobility, and subsidized the move with both outright tax breaks and less direct financial aid (from right-to-work laws in the South to corrupt and phony unions in Mexico). At one point, the U.S. government even encouraged businesses to relocate to Mexican *maquiladoras*.

In Matamoros, Balbina Duque explains how her paycheck doesn't go far enough to cover her meager expenses, but she's also aware that unions in Matamoros occasionally have been more demanding than in other border towns, like Reynosa, where MagneTek opened a new plant two years ago. Adler asks if she would follow her job—originally Mollie's job—to Reynosa, if the company moved it there. "And what if they were to move again?" she replies. "Maybe to Juarez or Tijuana? What then? Do I chase my job all over the world?"

MacArthur's narrative ends on a similarly poignant note as he returns to the closed Swingline factory in Long Island City, then occupied by a few businesses that paid much less than Swingline did. Sitting in a nearby diner, he is approached by a young immigrant Ecuadorian woman, looking for a job. As businesses flee workers who try to raise their standards of living, workers elsewhere abandon their homes and communities in search of those mobile jobs, creating an economic rat race that suppresses the aspirations of workers everywhere.

Neither Adler nor MacArthur offer solutions, other than presumably not passing investment agreements like NAFTA. But they do a great service by showing in a direct and visceral way how political decisions intensify the toll of globalization on women like Mollie and Balbina, or Gorica and Maria. Outside the Panglossian realm of trade theory, the story of the new global economy is often not very happy at all. ■

That's Entertainment

By Joshua Rothkopf

In its best and most horrifying moments, *Bamboozled* has the feel of a future gone sickeningly wrong: an America painted in blackface—everyone from the rabid TV studio audiences howling for a modernized minstrel show called *Mantan*, to the performers guiltily smudging their faces backstage, to the shamelessly corked-up network executive grinning in the control room and "keeping it real."

Bamboozled
Written and directed by Spike Lee

This is explosive stuff, closer to Orwellian dystopia in its tactics than any kind of media satire, beyond even the hyperbolic variety where television turns us all into maniacs (see *Network*). The images tap straight into some hotwired place, almost derailing the movie itself—as they have most critics, whose dutiful mortification at seeing blackface used as a guerrilla strategy (even a crude or misguided one) has, indeed, resulted in one of the most compelling reasons to go see it. *Bamboozled* hurts like nothing else released this year.

This is clearly the raging protest that Spike Lee, its writer and director, has been working up to over several years of harsh outspokenness on issues of race. There's a lot that Lee finds objectionable: Jar Jar Binks, Quentin Tarantino's ear for certain vernacular, the hero-slaveowner of *The Patriot* and, most recently, the selection of Michael Mann (who is white) to helm the forthcoming biopic of Muhammad Ali, a project Lee is said to have wanted for himself.

But whatever your take is on this partial list, there's no dismissing this breadth of concern that holds even the most disposable pop culture (including the means of its production) politically accountable. *Bamboozled* springs from that cinema-junkie's intensity like none of Lee's previous work; finally he has broken

through to something deeply felt. His struggle makes for something alarmist, often incoherent but provocatively personal.


DAVID LEE/NEW LINE

Everybody's been *Bamboozled.*

Lee sets things up speedily: ratings are in critical condition at CNS, a bottom-feeder of a network in need of a hit. The senior vice president, Dunwitty (Michael Rapaport), gets furious with his writing staff but has inexplicable faith in his sole black creative, a pompous snob named Pierre Delacroix (Damon Wayans) who strides stiffly down hallways with his Harvard mug dangling a teabag. Favoritism is made clear after a visit to Dunwitty's office, decorated wall to wall with sports photos and African art: Pierre is the Great Black Hope to Dunwitty's wannabe homey, who flaunts his black wife and biracial kids as the necessary credentials to act like Flava Flav. (Rapaport takes the role to delirious heights of insensitivity.) Why can't Pierre quit "frontin', trying to be white," he pleads, and provide them with the urban show they so desperately need?

This is all a little too much for Pierre, who hopes to make his point by pitching a "coon show" so patently offensive it's sure to bring disgrace on his boss while releasing him from his contract in the bargain. His intellectual's revenge seems flimsy from the start, and this is Lee's first big irony, pinpointing a potential genesis for racism in Pierre's sophisticated obliqueness. Subtlety will never survive this pipebomb in development—complete with watermelons, pickaninnies and the talents of two homeless street performers, Manray (Savion Glover, a tap master) and Womack (Tommy Davidson), who are drafted into the cause for want of "a little income coming in." Even after the full nature of their big break is made shockingly clear to them, and they've been rechristened "Mantan" and "Sleep 'n' Eat," they insist only that they be paid more; Lee's corrosion of their dignity is positively Marxist.

The public loves *Mantan* and takes up blackface with a passion. But Lee, showing a nation suddenly indulgent of its buried racist tendencies, ends up dulling the overall accusation to something less than trenchant—a general paranoia that belies the real bamboozling at play. Lee, up to then, is going for a very singular indictment of racism—the complicity of blacks in their own commodification. The revival of minstrelsy by the disparaged themselves raises suggestive questions about community and stardom.

But for mass audiences of all races to come to love it, like a zeitgeist, wouldn't they have to arrive at some kind of self-bamboozlement as well? Or are they already predisposed to obey any illuminated sign that says "applause"? Once this volcano erupts, there's nothing but a rain of molten drama, but the fallout is more than compelling, as if shattering the taboo of blackface lets in a apocalyptic gust of frenzy. Wayans, in a sour and remote turn, refuses to modulate Pierre into the guilt and self-doubt that might have helped anchor the increasing chaos; instead he maintains a gaping vacancy that, as luck would have it, yields to bizarre fringes. (My imagination reels at the thought of an alternate casting with Lee himself in the role.)

There's too much movie in the movie, though much of it works: a smarmy Jewish media consultant who Pierre slams as a "niggerologist," a scathing running gag on "Timmi Hillnigger" jeans, a diversionary subplot involving sex and social climbing, a black comedian on the club circuit resigned to telling racial "street jokes." Didn't Lee know he could make another movie out of all this material? Another three?

The frame is busy with noise, and not just from the digital videography that douses the images in a grainy soup. (The choice of format seems less an attempt at dogmatic realism than a fear of lavishing too much prettiness on all the transgression.) By the time a terrorist hip-hop squad called the Mau Maus (did I not mention them?) organizes its frontal assault on the network—one stereotype pitted against another—the discordant ironies have become choking; Lee captures their inarticulate rage with a split-second montage of each rapper angrily agreeing, "Know'm saying?" It's the whole film in microcosm: None of them know what they are saying.

Lee comes dangerously close to not knowing either, but what he shows is enough, including the dozens of minstrel collector's items that accumulate on the shelves of Pierre's office—toys from a brutal era still charged with menace. *Bamboozled* has the audacity of a horror film that reminds us of our own capacity for monstrousness. It's the political film of the year. ■

Tragically Hip

By Hillary Frey

The most accurate, though potentially least helpful, way to describe Belle and Sebastian's most recent record, *fold your hands child, you walk like a peasant*, is to say that, if such a thing is possible, it sounds even more Belle and Sebastian-like than any of their previous records. But that takes for granted that you, dear reader, have heard Belle and Sebastian—a logical assumption here in Brooklyn, where Scottish-looking hair-boys decorate most every corner—but, nevertheless, an unjust thing to do. So let me try another tack.

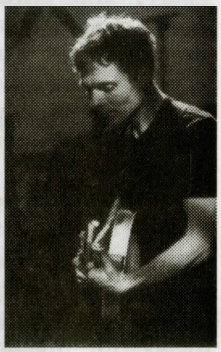
fold your hands child, you walk like a peasant
Belle and Sebastian
Matador/Jeepster

If one were to buy a wind-up music box that played rock 'n' roll, I'm quite sure it would play a Belle and Sebastian song. A group of gentle indie-kids from Scotland whose namesake is a French children's television cartoon based on a novel, Belle and Sebastian are a band hooked on fairy tales. Their songs are pretty and fey, full of twinkly piano sounds, little girl voices, simple melodies, brassy announcements of love, and party chatter. Contrasting other Britpop bands of late—say, Travis with their crooning and wanting, or Oasis with their brash demands—B&S seem unburdened, if not always blissful. Many of their tunes promote a triumphant, punk-rock sort of individualism, along with a forward-looking, come-what-may attitude toward life-in-general. B&S's pure fun is a rarity.

Take "Women's Realm," the ninth track on *fold your hands*. It's a back-and-forth between a boy and a girl who are trying to meet up late at night after a party. (Beware: there are no men and women in B&S songs—everyone exists in a strange, post-*Trainspotting* late adolescence.) They play back and forth for a bit, the girl wavers, and the boy gives it to her straight: "Are you coming or are you not? / There is nothing that would sort you out / An interesting way of life / Deny yourself the benefits of being alive." Restrained at first, the song swells to the end with sped-up drums, shrill strings, guitar and hand-clapping; the urgency, excitement and thrill of an uncertain rendez-vous charges through, making your own heart beat a little faster with the snare.

Who knows if, in the end, the hook-up is complete. But that's part of the fun. Ambiguity and unresolve play a big part in *fold your hands*, and not just in the context of relationships. B&S play with gender, too; whether some songs are addressed to a girl or a boy is often to be decided by the listener. "I Fought in a War," the album's first track, seems the perfect boy-soldier to boy-back-home missive, though the lyrics could just as easily be sung to a wife or girlfriend. Lead man Stuart Murdoch lays out his prettiest high pitch when addressing his lover, in the most unsoldier-like way: "and I reminded myself of the words you said when we were getting on / and I bet you're making shells back home for a steady boy to wear."





© LAURENT ORSEAU

In "The Chalet Lines," Murdoch uses a tired version of the same pitch to sing about a rape. At first listen, it seems plausible that he's singing about a male/male violation. But on closer inspection, Murdoch is stepping into a girl's shoes: "He raped me in the chalet lines / I had just said no for the final time / Although it's last month it's like yesterday / I missed my time, I don't think I could stand to take the test." Needless to say, the music on "The Chalet Lines" is without highs and lows; a faint piano, dragging vocal and crying violin work to make a song of post-trauma and sorrow.

With *fold your hands*, some fans have complained that B&S have become "too democratic," meaning that Murdoch has loosened the reins a bit and let others in his strange, collective band-family sing and write songs. (There are seven full-time members of the group, though 18 more players, mostly of strings, are listed as guest performers on this record.)

Well then, I say hooray for democracy. Isobel Campbell, the band's cellist, wrote "Family Tree," what can only be called a protest song. You have to listen closely, but floating along the nursery-rhyme melody scheme is a message for young women everywhere. Looking for "somebody just like me," the school girl in the song only finds "mannequins / Looking stupid, being used and being thin ... The way they act, I'd rather be fat than be confused," she surmises.

To be sure, *fold your hands child, you walk like a peasant*, for all its childish charm, is a more mature record than either *If You're Feeling Sinister* or *The Boy with the Arab Strap*, B&S's best known other records, not to mention *Tigermilk*, their recently reissued debut. (However, allow me to make a pitch for *Lazy Line Painter Jane*, the 3-CD box set of EPs. The collection offers a good sampling of B&S's range, and they've thrown in a real guitar-driven rock song or two for good measure.) With *fold your hands*, the band has seemed to drift a bit away from that young-group convention of writing cool, passive-aggressive tunes about cutting records and being famous (or not, as the case may be). Maybe it's because Murdoch & Co. don't have to worry about it so much anymore. ■

Hillary Frey *is assistant literary editor of* The Nation.

Continued from page 2

On another note, third parties don't spoil elections. The antiquated, 18th-century electoral system does. Most other democracies in the world have evolved to proportional representation and other forms of preference voting. Imagine a presidential election where you can rank all candidates in order of your preference. As the least popular candidates are eliminated, their votes are transferred to the voters second or third choices. There are no spoilers in this type of election. You can vote your conscience for your first choice and vote pragmatically for your second choice. Maybe if we spoil enough elections, the keepers of the status quo will wake up to the realities of the 21st century.

James Stauffer
San Jose, California

Carl Pope responds: *James Stauffer seems to be under the impression that the Sierra Club supported NAFTA, GATT and the WTO. We didn't. We said at the time that the side agreements wouldn't work. They haven't. Were we joined to the Democrats at the hip when we threw ourselves into that battle?*

And yes, preference voting probably should be tested, and could eliminate the spoiler problem that has dogged third parties in this country since the 1840s. So let's support preference voting, not spoil an election. Because if the Greens manage to elect George W. Bush, it seems unlikely that the Republicans will suddenly discover the virtues of making sure they never do so again by embracing electoral reform.

In the Trenches

I am a Christian pastor and certainly not a "leftist"; only something of a fellow traveler who has for many years been occasionally interested in supporting your causes and in listening to your internecine debates. I am beginning to find insufferable the pretentious posturing of James Weinstein and Joel Bleifuss, who say it is time to vote like grown-ups—as if their condescension could pass for sage wisdom and voting for Al Gore could mark a relative advance toward the good.

By any measure of policy and conduct, both major parties are substantially identical in their prescriptions and in their corruption. The true distinction between them is that the Republicans have been dead for a long time and the Democrats have been dead for a shorter time. Nonetheless both are dead. The time has come to vote for a politics that has a future. Clearly the environmentally troubled 21st century will require of the living that they color themselves Green.

Rev. Gordon Scoville
Newton, Kansas

It may not be evident to you, but out here in the trenches it's starting to stink. Neither party gives a damn about the workers. Like the aristocracy before the French Revolution, the rich in this country have reached that stage of utter contempt for the masses. And like the French ruling class, they feel we are too stupid to do anything about it. Half the population has dropped out of voting because it is a fraud. Yet liberals like you keep telling us to vote for some whore because he will be a little less evil than the other one.

When my subscription to *In These Times* runs out, I'll be looking for a more progressive publication.

Harry Schmidt
Philadelphia

At my parents' house I recently picked up a few *In These Times* back issues with articles that interested me and decided to subscribe. But confronted with your "lesser-of-two-evils" endorsement of Al Gore over Ralph Nader, I decided to send this letter instead.

I am stunned by the myopia of so-called progressives who endorse Gore. Right now, more than a billion people survive on less than a dollar per day, and close to 800 million (more than twice the U.S. population) don't know where their next meal is coming from. It is sad that people with progressive ideology are willing to ignore the cries of the global poor, casting their lot with those who would allow them to continue to starve to death.

You who will vote for Gore rather than Nader, try this exercise: Look in the mirror. Pretend you are speaking to one of the thousands of starving victims of IMF "structural adjustment programs." Explain your vote.

Bruce G. Friedrich
Norfolk, Virginia

I finally (and sadly) am at the point of withdrawing my support for *In These Times*. The reason is your longtime, consistent denigration of the Greens as a political movement. While you agree with the Green platform on most immediate issues, when the chips are down your editors always target the Greens as naïve visionaries.

What is realpolitik and what is tilting at windmills depends on one's time frame. If one views the next election as the ultimate watershed between survival and disaster, then one is indeed driven by the tired old clichés of the Democratic left. With the election over, the Democratic Party once more compromises with power, and the center moves farther to the right. We have been watching this happen for 40 years. But if like Winona LaDuke one looks ahead seven generations (or even one), then the need for fundamental change is devastatingly clear and the congealing of radical thought around the Green movement is inevitable. It is the only political party that dares to face the fact of global limits.

Joel Bleifuss dismisses this as "the basis for a noble educational campaign, not a presidential one." Can he suggest a more effective tool of education than politics?

Rhoda R. Gilman
St. Paul

Joel Bleifuss responds: *Yes, politics can provide a political education, especially if the right lessons are learned. The Nader campaign has energized many on the left. But to what purpose? The Democratic Party, with its myriad of faults, is the political arena where the left's natural constituents—African-Americans, Hispanics, environmentalists, unionists, feminists, gays and lesbians—operate, and not always ineffectively.*

The Progressive Caucus in the House of Representatives, with its 65 or so members, is not only the largest caucus in Congress, but also the most significant left presence in American political life. Why not work to increase the size and conviction of this group by developing a political organization that can run candidates in the Democratic primaries and then elect members to Congress? Isn't that better than opting to operate in a manner that guarantees perpetual marginality?

The cold hard fact is that our electoral system, while structurally stacked against third parties, is open to any individual or group that wishes to operate within one of the major parties. Why can't the left do in the Democratic Party what the Christian right did in the Republican Party? What is to stop a left organization from pursuing a strategy that works with the left's natural constituents rather than cuts them off?

Being a visionary is well and good. But having a vision means that you can see where you are going. It means thinking seriously about how to make the most of what you've got.

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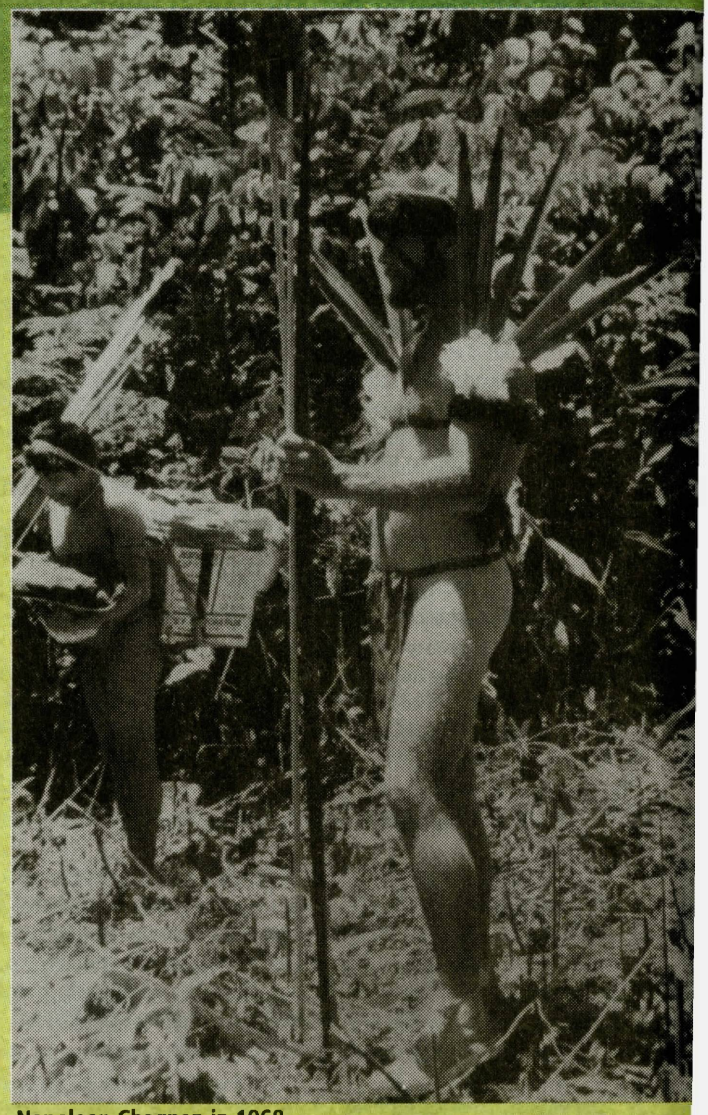
SYLVIA — **By Nicole Hollander**

What did this man do to the Yanomami?

By David Graeber



Napoleon Chagnon in 1968.
(Serious anthropologists do not do this sort of thing.)

Did James Neel, a geneticist working on a grant from the Atomic Energy Commission, commit an act of mass murder? In 1968, did he, in a fiendish experiment that resulted in hundreds of deaths, intentionally unleash a measles epidemic on a population of Yanomami Indians in Venezuela? It seems extremely unlikely. Was he, instead, guilty of some kind of mass manslaughter, by intentionally using an outdated and extremely powerful vaccine on a notoriously vulnerable and immune-deficient population, then skipping off with all the trained medical personnel in the area as the epidemic spread? We'll probably never know for sure.

Still, the possibility that he might have, along with other claims made in *Darkness in El Dorado: How Scientists and Journalists Devastated the Amazon*, a book by investigative reporter Patrick Tierney, has sparked an enormous, burgeoning scandal in the world of anthropology—which might seem rather surprising, considering that Neel was not an anthropologist, and the book has not even been released.

Here is the story so far.

In mid-September, two anthropologists who had read advance copies of Tierney's book e-mailed a letter to the president of the American Anthropological Association (AAA), warning her that the organization should begin to brace itself. The mother of all scandals was about to hit the discipline. It concerned anthropology because Tierney's book was largely focused on one man, Napoleon Chagnon, one of the world's most famous anthropologists, who along with filmmaker Timothy Asch is responsible for having made the Yanomami—his notorious "fierce people"—perhaps the single most famous "primitive" society on the face of the earth.

Not only had Chagnon assisted Neel in his inoculation campaign, he was also, according to the book, a bully, a fraud and an irresponsible adventurer who staged most of his famous movies, created endless wars by his heavy-handed intervention in Yanomami affairs, tried to carve out a jungle empire with corrupt Venezuelan officials and gold miners, systematically doctored his data to represent the Yanomami as incurably warlike and treacherous, and, in doing so, played directly into the hands of miners and government officials who used his writings as justification for a campaign meant to seize their lands and destroy their society. Clearly, this was going to be bad news for the discipline.

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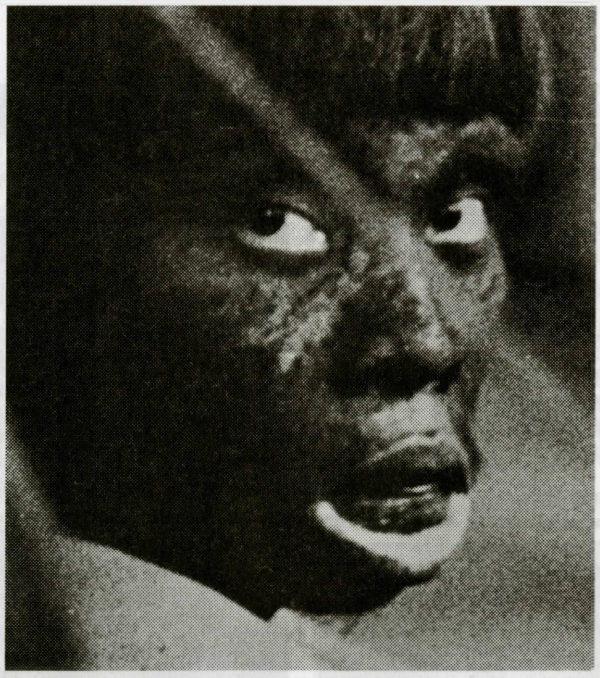
According to Terry Turner, one of the authors of the original letter to the AAA president, it was never meant for public distribution. But as so often happens, someone leaked it, and it then began careening through cyberspace so rapidly that within a matter of days, there was probably not an anthropologist who didn't have a copy. Newspapers and magazines soon began to pick up the story. Neel died eight months ago, but Chagnon, very much alive and notoriously combative, is talking about lawyers; W.W. Norton, Tierney's publisher, has announced the book's release will be delayed; galleys have become unavailable; an excerpt due out in *The New Yorker* did appear, but so heavily chopped up it was almost incoherent; and the AAA has now declared that it will devote a special section of its annual meeting in November to trying to sort the whole thing out.



FROM: YANOMAMÖ: THE FIERCE PEOPLE

Some journalists have already started to treat this as yet another paroxysm in the perennial crisis of anthropology—a discipline that has only begun to gain its feet again after subjecting itself to endless self-criticism in the '80s. This, however, would be very much mistaken. For most anthropologists, Napoleon Chagnon's reputation was already hovering somewhere in the neighborhood of that of Bozo the Clown. His behavior (if he indeed did any of things he is accused of) is hardly representative of the discipline. Chagnon is a devotee of sociobiology, a tiny but extremely aggressive minority within the discipline who believe that human behavior is largely genetically determined. He also genuinely believes that it is actually possible to find pristine, untouched "primitive" societies whose way of life has remained essentially unchanged since the Neolithic. Most serious anthropologists stopped talking this way in the '30s.

Neel felt that the Yanomami were the perfect test case for his theories of human prehistory—in particular, his belief that the great engine of human evolution was the fact that stone-age societies were divided into small inbreeding populations, in which males competed over headmanship and the winners got to have multiple wives, thus allowing their superior genetic material to quickly propagate itself within the gene pool. The creation of mass society had put an end to this, allowing weaklings to reproduce at almost the same rate as the strong.

Chagnon, who is reported to have once remarked that he went to the Amazon to study "warriors, not wimps," believed it too. Never mind that the Yanomami were not hunter-gatherers, which is what all humans were for 99 percent of their evolutionary history (in fact they cultivated plantains, which aren't even originally native to the Americas). But unlike any actually existing hunter-gatherers, the Yanomami had an advantage for Chagnon's purposes. They appeared to be extraordinarily violent.

Yanomami society, as represented in Chagnon's work, was one of constant warfare, chest-pounding contests, axe-fights, wife-beating, gang rape and every conceivable variety of mayhem. This not only made for excellent cinema, but allowed Chagnon to add an even more dramatic kink to Neel's model: In Yanomami society, he argued, it was successful killers who managed to have the most sex and, hence, pass on their genetic materials. The motor of human evolution, then, was successful male aggression.

All of this makes Chagnon a bizarre and extremely marginal figure in modern anthropology: someone out of the '20s maybe, a swashbuckling barrel-chested adventurer who believes the people he is studying really are savages. If his work is taken seriously at all in the anthropological world, it is overwhelmingly for one reason: violence sells.

And Chagnon is an excellent salesman. His work is written in an admirably clear and accessible style, his descriptions are often vivid and, most of all, accompanied by excellent movies, which seem the perfect combination of science and sensationalism: bloody axe-fights, replete with careful analysis, tense feasts between enemy villages, and shamans snorting hallucinogens and vomiting green slime. It is hard to find an undergraduate anthropology major who hasn't seen at least one of them, or who doesn't have a battered old copy of *The Fierce People* tucked away somewhere in the house.

As for the general public, it often seems like there is only one question that they really want anthropologists to answer: "Man in a state of nature—good or evil?" Now, one could probably compile a list of a hundred different reasons why this is a stupid question (starting with the word "man"). One can explain that actually, hunter-gatherer or horticulturist societies are all different; some are egalitarian, some hierarchical; some peaceful, some warlike; some obsessed with ritual, others relatively free of it.

One can explain further that this is because no one lives in a "state of nature," and being human means we actually have some control over how we live. One can point out that it is the special promise of anthropology to be able to show us that the possibilities for human existence are far, far wider than most of us could presently imagine. But in the face of all this, a good violent movie backed up with an argument that says, hey, Hobbes and St. Augustine were right—that, all of us, or all males anyway, are motivated by irrepressible drives for dominance, and therefore human life will always be based on competition—will always get an audience.

So Chagnon has remained among us, despite the fact that within the discipline, almost all his concrete claims are considered long ago debunked. His argument that killers tend to have twice as many children, for example, is based on a survey of men who had undergone a purification ritual which, it turns out, is not just given to those who had killed in warfare (or claimed to have) but also to those who had wreaked death on an enemy by, say, magically stealing his footprint.

In 1995, Brian Ferguson wrote a book providing extensive documentary evidence that Yanomami warfare, far from being a constant, has tended to flare up precisely wherever Chagnon, or other outsiders, were currently operating. It's easy to see how this might have happened if one looks at some of the reminiscences Tierney collected from Yanomami who remembered Chagnon's descents on their villages. According to one, he appeared garbed as a shaman, painted red, chanting, snorting hallucinogens and firing his pistol into the air to "prove he was fiercer than the Yanomami." People were terrified:

> "He said to my brother Samuel, who was the headman, 'What is your mother's name?' My brother answered, 'We Yanomami do not speak our names.' Shaki"—the Yanomami's name for Chagnon—"said, 'It doesn't matter. If you tell me, I'll pay you.' So, although they didn't want to, the people sold their names. Everyone cried, but they spoke them. It was very sad."

Unsurprising that they did so, considering that Chagnon was offering to "pay" people with steel axes and machetes, and that they must have been well aware that he had probably already made a similar offer to their worst enemies, or was about to.

Most anthropologists would look at such behavior with horror. If Chagnon was capable of it—if he was capable of painting himself red, dressing in feathers and trying to terrify people—he did it because, paradoxical though it may seem, he was convinced he was a scientist. He was there to accumulate data—genealogical lists, blood samples, demographic material—and lots of it, from as many villages as possible. To be a scientist meant to be willing to do whatever it took to get that information. To be a scientist, for Chagnon, clearly meant to be a hard man. Another telling anecdote in Tierney's account comes from a Venezuelan graduate student who accompanied Chagnon on one of his genealogical surveys. At the first village they came to, everyone ran away. Then:

> "When we first arrived at Iwahikoroba-teri, everybody was sick, throwing up and moaning and lying down in their hammocks," Cardoza said. "I remember a little girl, Makiritama. She was vomiting blood. She was defecating blood, too. ... I went to Chagnon and said, 'You know these people are really sick. Some of them could die. I think we should go and get medical help.'
>
> Chagnon told me that I would never be a scientist."

A scientist, then, is a person willing to paint himself red, cover himself with feathers, and fire off pistols to frighten people, but not one who would go out of his way to get medical attention for the sick. It is probably all for the best, then, that most anthropologists—who have gradually, over the years, learned to regard the people they study simply as fellow human beings, sharing the same contemporary world if in radically different circumstances—feel rather ambivalent about whether the word even applies to them.

Chagnon and his sociobiologist allies make much of this fact in replying to their critics. For years now, he has been attacking critics of his theories as dishonest, politically motivated, envious liberals, "cultural anthropologists from the Academic Left" mired in some kind of mushy postmodern relativist political correctness. He, on the other hand, has facts. Hard facts. Many of these people, he crows, don't even believe in facts or science or even reality. "Many cultural anthropologists," he noted in a letter to *Time* magazine, "even despise the words 'empirical evidence.' "

Not me. Like many anthropologists, I actually do believe in reality. I just think that social realities are so much more complicated than the kind studied by chemists or biologists that anyone who applies the same methods to both is bound to ... well, shall we say, do violence to reality.

All this brings to mind the story about the feminist historian of science who, annoyed by the male bias implicit in the idea of "soft" and "hard" sciences, proposed that we change the terms to "dry" and "wet." Indeed, Chagnon ends up being a kind of perfect foil for those who like to critique positivist science. It would be difficult to make up a better target: big, blustery, male, destructive and dramatically, ridiculously wrong.

But really, for all his contempt for "postmodernism," Chagnon is the ultimate Foucauldian: a man who seems to really believe that the only truth is power—indeed, the only reality. His strange inability to tell the difference between the struggle for dominance and the struggle for truth (a truth that apparently comes down to the universal nature of the struggle for dominance) casts him into the ultimate pomo hall of mirrors.

How else to explain the bizarre spectacle of Chagnon's village actually going to war with that of a rival anthropologist ("my people can beat up your people!") or that strange feathery costume? For most of us cultural anthropologists, just looking at those pictures of Chagnon strutting about in full shamanistic regalia has always caused an instinctual shudder of embarrassment: We do not do this sort of thing—though most of us, I imagine, could not say precisely why.

Now, I guess, we know.

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