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SHELF DEATH

Nuked Meat Makes it to Grocery Cases

First there were nuclear bombs. Then, nuclear power. Would you believe that nuclear food treatment is next?

By MARK WORTH

Don't blame Tom Harkin for being fooled. He was just trying to tell a good story.

On a fall day back in 1985, Harkin, newly elected Democratic senator from Iowa, told his former colleagues on a House subcommittee about how, while serving as a Navy jet pilot during the 1960s, he lived on pork that had been treated with radiation, ostensibly to make it safer to eat by killing harmful bacteria.

"I can remember eating some processed meat — I think it was bacon or ham — that had been irradiated and kept on the shelf in a vacuum-sealed package. I think it was preserved for seven years," Harkin told the panel, which was debating a food irradiation bill at the time. "We ate it, and I had never heard of such a thing. I thought to myself at the time, 'Why aren't we pursuing things like this?'"

Harkin's fascination surely would have been doused had someone leaned over and told him that in 1968, the year after he left the Navy, it was revealed that rats fed irradiated food by military scientists died younger, gained less weight, and apparently grew more tumors than rats fed normal food.

Fooled once.

Later that fall day, the House subcommittee heard an American Medical Association official proclaim that using radiation to rid food of bacteria "is not a public safety hazard, and I can't emphasize that strongly enough."

Too bad no one was there to remind the fellow that just a year earlier, he wondered in a memo to his AMA colleagues whether irradiated food might harm the offspring of animals (not to mention humans) who eat it, create mutant radiation-resistant bacteria, or sicken people who eat the stuff for long periods of time.

Fooled twice.

Since that hearing in 1985, Americans have been fooled time and

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illustration by DOLORES CULLEN

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AN EDITORIAL

End Silicon's Free Ride

Mom and pop need to get in the game if they want to keep their Main Street shops on a level playing field with the dot.com retailers on the Silicon Freeway.

Congress appears determined to make sure that "e-commerce" retailers on the Internet keep their advantage over mom-and-pop stores in your local community. The House Judiciary Committee, without hearings, on May 4 rushed ahead with a bill that would extend the moratorium on Internet sales taxes for five more years after the current moratorium ends in October 2001. Despite concerns of the nation's governors and city officials who stand to lose billions in tax revenues, as well as small business owners who would remain at a competitive disadvantage to Internet retailers who don't charge sales tax, the House leadership apparently has put HR 3709 by Christopher Cox, R-Calif., on a fast track for approval this spring.

The advantage for online retailers doesn't seem to bother the Republican-oriented National Federation of Independent Businesses, which called the GOP-led effort a "high-tech vision" on its web site. Instead, the bipartisan National Governors Association has led the fight to slow down this assault on the state and local revenue base and protect the interests of local retailers. Sales and gross receipts taxes now account for nearly half of state government revenue but a University of Tennessee study forecast that the loss of state sales tax revenues could reach \$20 billion annually by 2003. That means if Internet retailers don't cough up sales taxes, states and local governments will have to either increase other taxes — income and/or property taxes — or slash services.

When it passed the first three-year moratorium in 1998, Congress set up an Advisory Commission on E-Commerce with 19 members. It included eight from states and local governments, eight from Internet-related corporations and three from the administration. Tellingly, the commission did not include representatives from brick-and-mortar stores.

Despite a mandate to come back with a consensus, the commission was unable to reach the two-thirds supermajority to make formal recommendations. Instead, on an 11-8 vote the commission approved a report written by the "Business Caucus," representatives of AT&T, Charles Schwab, MCI, AOL, Time-Warner and Gateway, that sought the continued sales tax exemption. Despite the opposition of 42 governors, Congress, with re-elections to finance, is poised to grant the extension with bipartisan support. The only question is whether it would be made permanent, as Sen. John McCain proposes.

Make no mistake: We don't like sales taxes, which are among the most regressive forms of taxation; they hit poor people hardest, there is no doubt. We don't have any problem with other bills to prohibit tax on Internet access and to repeal the 3 percent telephone excise tax. But exempting sales on the Internet only gives a break to people who have Internet connections and credit cards that enable them to order their goods online. Poor people who lack a PC and those who prefer to patronize local businesses still must pay the sales tax.

Bookstore owners complain that people browse their shelves to find books that interest them, then order the books from Amazon.com. The same goes for practically all goods that are now offered for sale online. Internet retailers offer inventories that are unmatched locally, and hard-to-find products that might require a lengthy search of local stores are available with the click of a computer mouse and are delivered to your home or office. The buyer of a new computer can save hundreds of dollars in sales tax by making the purchase online. But locally owned stores have enough problems competing with the chain stores and the "category killers," who are able to get discounts on their merchandise that are unavailable to smaller retailers, without giving Amazon.com, Dell and their online competitors the advantage of not charging the sales tax.

Under current law, retailers are required to collect sales taxes only for states in which they have a physical plant, such as a store, warehouse or service center. But some retailers set up separate corporate entities to handle online sales so they don't have to collect taxes outside of the state where they have their warehouse. People who buy products from out of state are supposed to remit the sales tax to their respective state, but that requirement is roundly ignored.

Electronic commerce should be treated no differently from other commerce. Remote sales, including online sales, should be taxed at the rate set by the state of the destination of the sale (the buyer) and remitted by the retailer. Software that computes individual sales taxes for each state already exists and could be made available to online retailers. Exceptions could be made for small-scale retailers.

Members of Congress are looking toward the deep pockets of high-tech companies to finance their re-elections this fall. But it's not too much to ask that online retailers collect the same taxes that Main Street retailers do. Regular citizens may have to remind their Congress members that their first responsibility is to Main Street, not the Silicon Freeway. Call Congress at 202-224-3121 and make your views known.

April 30 was the 25th anniversary of the end of the war in Vietnam. The 30th anniversary of the Kent State University massacre followed on May 4. Historians and commentators have been revisiting the theme of who won the war and who lost the war, and whether it was a noble cause, while most of us would rather forget about it.

For kids now leaving high school the events surrounding Vietnam are as remote as World War II was when I was growing up in the late '60s. They need to know about the ill-starred conflict that cost us our innocence and our confidence in government as well as 58,197 dead, 153,000 wounded and countless others emotionally scarred.

In the years since the last helicopter full of American refugees pulled up from the roof of the American Embassy in what was then Saigon, we have learned that the Gulf of Tonkin incident, in which a US warship supposedly was attacked by North Vietnamese gunboats, was fabricated to justify sending US troops into the fight. War never actually was declared, but working-class kids were drafted and sent to fight while college students got deferments. In the past few years we have discovered that many of the original prosecutors of the conflict had their own doubts, including Defense Secretary Robert McNamara and President Lyndon Johnson as the American presence grew. Johnson regretted that he had to throttle down his Great Society domestic initiatives to pay for the war in Vietnam. Richard Nixon was elected in 1968 with the promise of a secret plan to end the war. Instead Nixon and Henry Kissinger expanded the war to Cambodia and Laos.

As resistance began to grow, protesters were vilified, spied upon and assaulted in the streets. Unarmed students at Kent State University who protested the expansion of the war were fired upon by National Guardsmen and four students were shot dead. Nixon blamed the students, despite the fact that they were no threat and they were 90 to 130 yards away from the Guardsmen when they were shot. One was on her way to a speech therapy class. In 1972, Nixon promised that peace was at hand, but the war went on even after he won re-election.

Nixon and Kissinger's incursions into Cambodia and Laos destabilized those neighboring governments, with disastrous results. We discovered that not only was Vietnam not the pawn of China, as we were told, but that North Vietnamese leaders hated the Chinese, and the two neighbors would fight their own war a few years after the US cleared out. And we have continued to fight wars for dubious reasons without getting declarations from Congress.

What is the lesson from Vietnam? As Jefferson said, eternal vigilance is the price of liberty, but plainly we've been asleep too long. We have lowered our expectations of our elected officials. We need to demand better.

—JMC

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Cover illustration by Dolores Cullen

JIM HIGHTOWER

Crime and Punishment

Why should crime be a class issue? If you do the crime, you should do the time, right — no matter what your title is or how fat your wallet is?

Then explain to me the very different treatment of two men caught up in America's drug war. One is Col. James Hiatt — the army big shot who headed the Pentagon's entire anti-drug operation in Colombia ... until the embarrassing discovery recently that Col. Hiatt's wife was smuggling packages of heroin from Colombia into the US, using the official diplomatic mail pouch to make her deliveries. Col. Hiatt himself confessed that he helped to launder and spend her drug money. His punishment? Less than 18 months in jail. Plus, he gets to retire from the Army, drawing a fat monthly retirement check from us taxpayers for the rest of his life.

Terrance Stevens, on the other hand, doesn't have much life left. When caught for simple possession of five ounces of cocaine, he was already in a wheelchair from the painful, debilitating disease of muscular dystrophy. His punishment? A mandatory sentence of 15 years or more in a New York prison. His breathing labored and painful, his bodily functions out of control, Mr. Stevens doesn't expect to get out of prison alive, much less get a pension from taxpayers.

What about mass murderers? They're considered satanic and usually get the death penalty. So why is Paul Norris walking around pretty as you please, living in luxury and treated like a respectable citizen? He's CEO of W.R. Grace & Co., and already nearly 200 people in Libby, Montana, are dead at the hands of Mr. Norris' corporation. W.R. Grace's mining operation in Libby knowingly poisoned the whole area with deadly asbestos, neither protecting or informing the residents because that would have hurt corporate profits and the paycheck of the CEO.

This is Jim Hightower saying ... Why should we respect the law if elite drug profiteers and corporate killers get privileged treatment?

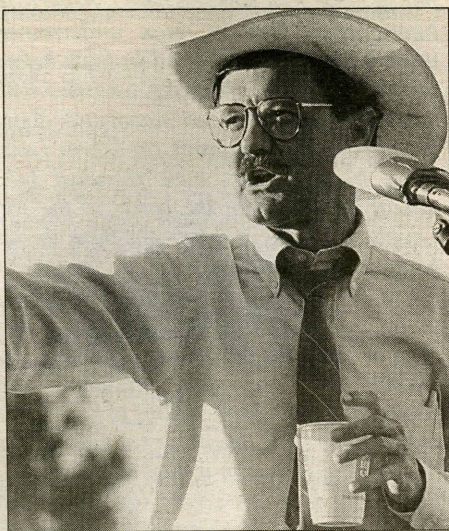
The Bush Oil Gusher

George W. Bush is campaigning as just a regular guy — the kind of fellow who could be a good buddy to you. Never mind that this "regular guy" is a son of privilege who summered at Kennebunkport, prepped at Andover, got a rich-boy's pass into Yale, and has always gotten ahead because of help from his daddy's wealthy friends — he has shown again and again that he can be a good buddy ... to his political cronies.

Just as the Texas legislative session convened in 1999, George W. suddenly blurted out: "People are hurting." Wow, we thought, maybe he is a compassionate conservative after all, maybe he's realized that Texas ranks dead last in number of children with health care coverage. But, no, it was not uninsured children he felt for — it was oil producers.

Crude oil prices were low back then, and Bush said he wanted to help the small royalty owners who were being squeezed. He designated his special, \$45 million oil tax break as his Number One legislative priority and rammed it through. He said this was not for Exxon, but for Elmer and Earline — the little guys. Well, Exxon got way more than Elmer and Earline, of course, but the big winner turns out to be Richard.

Richard Rainwater is his name. He's a Fort Worth billionaire, one of the 400 richest people in America — and he's a



Col. Hiatt himself confessed that he helped to launder and spend his wife's drug money. His punishment? Less than 18 months.

big Bush buddy. Indeed, he made George rich, having brought him into the Texas Rangers baseball deal in 1989, then giving him a sweetheart payoff of \$15 million when the team was sold while Bush was governor. Rainwater also had donated \$100,000 to put young George into the governor's office.

This is Jim Hightower saying ... Governor Bush paid off with a gusher of tax dollars for Rainwater, whose oil company ended up being the top recipient of the Governor's tax break, getting a million dollars as a result of his buddy Bush's compassion for "little people."

Bush's and Gore's Top Bundlers

Let's call the roll: MBNA Corporation — the bank and credit card giant; Vinson & Elkins — the lobbying firm; AXA Financial — the huge Wall Street firm and insurance conglomerate; Anderson Worldwide — the financial conglomerate; and Ernst & Young — the corporate accounting and consulting giant.

These are the Big Five contributors, so far, to George W. Bush's presidential run, each having bundled up between \$155,000 and \$208,000 to curry favor with the guy they hope to put in America's most powerful office. But wait — corporations can't give money to presidential candidates, and even CEOs are limited to \$1,000 individual donations. Where there's a will, however, there's a loophole, and the watchdog group Center for Responsive Politics points out that the top honchos of these firms simply dun each of their fellow executives, their suppliers, and their clients for \$1,000 checks, then bundle their collections into a fat wad to present to Bush in the corporate name.

So let's check Al Gore's Big Five: Ernst & Young — again; Viacom — the media giant that's taking over CBS; BellSouth — the regional phone baron; Goldman Sachs — the Wall Street deal maker; and Citigroup — the financial and insurance conglomerate. These bundlers have put between \$67,000 and \$125,000 into Gore's campaign pocket, making a mockery of our nation's campaign finance limits.

Ernst & Young, which boasts a who's who of corporate clients with a long list of favors they want from the next president, is taking no chances, backing both Bush and Gore with hefty bundles. The Ernst & Young honcho in charge of bundling for Gore finds nothing unsavory about this: "It's Civics 101: Get Involved" he says to a *Wall Street Journal* reporter.

This is Jim Hightower saying ... That's your civics lesson for today — "getting involved" now means sacking-up checks for both candidates so your corporation wins, no matter what the voters do.

Making Mismanagement Pay

A million bucks in pay used to be considered real money in the golden world of corporate executives, but these days, a million-dollar CEO is the equivalent of corporate trailer trash.

Now, it takes a \$10 million annual pay package to put you in the respectable corporate class, and *Forbes* magazine recently proclaimed the dawn of a new era of elitism: the nine-digit class. For those of us who have difficulty getting our minds around so many digits, that's at least \$100-million a year — or, for those of you who think in terms of hourly wages, it comes to roughly \$50,000 an hour. Never mind that about 80 percent of Americans make less than \$50,000 in a year, we're assured that making the big bucks is warranted because the top dogs are so smart and capable. Yet, ability doesn't really have anything to do with executive pay.

Take Xerox Corporation. Its CEO is pulling down a respectable \$10 million a year — yet the company is a mess. Mismanagement from the top led to a decline in revenue, chaos in the sales force, tumult in the back office, and seething anger among customers. So, who gets fired? Xerox has announced it's punting some 5,000 manufacturing workers, middle managers, and clerks. In Rochester, where 2,000 of the cuts will come, the mayor said bluntly, "they are targeting blue-collar jobs, people who are primary breadwinners."

By eliminating these jobs, top executives expect to jack-up Xerox's stock price, producing even higher pay for them. It's a clever act of income redistribution — the executives mess up, so they off 5,000 of their underlings, which saves the corporation millions of dollars in wages those families had been getting, and, through the resulting stock-price increase, moves millions of dollars more into their pockets.

This is Jim Hightower saying ... Who needs ability when they're millions to be made in mismanagement?

A Deadly Pentagon Boondoggle

Nineteen people are dead, but the gang that killed them will not be prosecuted.

The 19 dead were Marines flying in a recent test of the V-22 Osprey — an experimental aircraft that's supposed to take off and land like a helicopter, then tilt its propellers down in mid-air to fly like a regular airplane. The gang of killers consists of members of Congress, top brass of the Marine Corps, and honchos of Boeing and Bell Helicopter Textron — all of whom have demanded for their own selfish reasons that the Osprey fly ... even though the experts have said that it's "an engineering impossibility" to make it work and that it has been rushed into production for political and profit reasons without concern for the safety of those commanded to fly it.

The V-22 Osprey is a technological novelty that's bedazzled a wide-eyed Congress, which also was seduced into financing this fantasy because production of various parts of the plane are spread out to factories in 40 states, allowing senators and House members to brag that they brought Osprey money and jobs to the home folks. Lots of money — the boondoggle has been in development for 18 years, at a cost, so

far, of \$37 billion.

The *New York Times* reports that senior Pentagon officials have tried to cancel the plane — too iffy, too costly. But Boeing and Bell lobbied hard to keep the manna flowing. Marine commanders have their careers pegged to getting the Osprey, and lawmakers want to keep the money and jobs in their districts ... so the funding continues.

Of the five planes actually produced for testing, two have crashed, killing seven soldiers the first time, and now 19 more. A congressional supporter of the boondoggle told the *Times*: "Two crashes do not tell us anything ... They are to be expected in testing a new military system like the Osprey."

This is Jim Hightower saying ... Great, how about we use him — along with the corporate lobbyists, the Marine brass, and members of Congress — to serve as the test crews from here on out?

Microsoft's Computer Games

Microsoft Corporation, the monopolistic bully of the computer market, is used to making up its own rules as it illegally crushes competitors and uses strongarm tactics to hang onto its monopoly. The operating strategy of Microsoft's gabbillionaire owner, Bill Gates, is: If brute force isn't working, you're probably not using enough of it.

Not only does Gates pour it on in the marketplace, but also in the PR and lobbying world, where he tries to use his money to re-write reality for his own selfish interests. When Mr. Microsoft was going to have to testify before congress about his firm's anti-competitive tactics, he demanded that his staff produce a survey of software developers showing that they approve of his corporate tactics — he even specifically requested "a survey showing that 90 percent" of them supported him. Apparently, Gates wants 90 percent of everything!

Likewise, with a federal anti-trust case and a dozen state anti-trust cases being brought against this microchip monopolist, a recent Zogby poll suddenly popped out asserting that the American public opposes these lawsuits. Unreported was the fact that Microsoft not only paid for the Zogby poll, but it even wrote the questions.

Now comes news that Microsoft's money and its minions have reached into the top hierarchy of the George W. Bush presidential campaign. The company quietly hired Ralph Reed — the former head of the Christian Coalition and now a top consultant to Bush — to lobby George W. and get him to promise to drop the federal case if he gets to be president. Not coincidentally, Microsoft has put up more than \$350,000 so far to put Bush in the White House.

This is Jim Hightower saying ... Public exposure caused Reed to back out of his under-the-table lobbying gig for Gates & Co., but the whole sorry scheme just shows that Microsoft is the undisputed master of underhanded computer games.

*Jim Hightower has a radio talk show week-days (listen online via www.jimhightower.com). His new book, *If the Gods Had Meant Us to Vote They Would Have Given Us Candidates*, is out from HarperCollins. Write him at PO Box 13516, Austin, TX 78711, call 512-477-5588, or email info@jimhightower.com.*

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JUNE 1, 2000 — 3

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

No Need for Immigrant Bashing

I feel compelled to write and express my disgust with the comments made by Howard Pellett in a letter to the editor (4/15/00 PP). Pellett wrote in to denounce two wonderful journalists, Patrisia Gonzales and Roberto Rodriguez, who speak up in their column on issues concerning the Latino and immigrant community.

Pellett whines that the *Progressive Populist* doesn't "balance" Gonzales and Rodriguez with the same kind of far-right, immigrant-bashing crap that we already get in the mainstream media. No thanks. I can turn on Rush Limbaugh if I want to hear that crap. Rather than demand that the mainstream media include the news and perspectives found in the *Progressive Populist*, Pellett thinks the critical media issue of the day is the lack of anti-immigrant perspectives in the *Progressive Populist*. What nonsense.

Regarding some of the anti-immigrant myths and stereotypes perpetuated by politicians and the mainstream media, I cite the following points made by the Fair Share Network in their September 13, 1993, newsletter:

Myth 1: "The welfare rolls are swamped with immigrants."

In fact, according to the US Bureau of Labor statistics, immigrants come here to work, not to go on welfare, and use substantially less public services than people born in the US. (1985).

Immigrants make up 22 percent of the population of California, but are only 12 percent of the population receiving AFDC. (California State Department of Finance 1991-92.)

Immigrants do not receive permission to enter the US unless they can demonstrate that they are not likely to need public assistance. Most new immigrants are automatically disqualified from receiving public assistance for three years. (Immigration and Nationality Act, section 212 (a)(4).)

Undocumented immigrants are ineligible for all public benefits except for emergency medical and perinatal services.

Immigrants legalized under the federal amnesty program were not allowed to receive Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) or Medi-Cal for five years after obtaining permanent residency. (Immigration and Nationality Act)

Myth 2: *Immigrants and refugees cost government more in revenue than they pay in taxes.*

In fact, newcomers pay more in taxes than they use in services. The problem in that most tax revenues generated by refugees and immigrants are collected by the federal government while the cost of providing health and education services to newcomers are borne primarily by local and state governments. A January 6, 1992, *Los Angeles Times* analysis piece, which accurately summarizes the best research available, comes to the following conclusions:

"Immigrants contribute mightily to the economy, by paying billions annually in taxes, by filling low-wage jobs that help keep domestic industries competitive, and by spurring investment and job-creation, revitalizing once-decaying communities. Many social scientists conclude that the newcomers, rather than drain government treasuries, contribute overall far more than they utilize in services."

Further, a 1994 Urban Institute Study found that, annually, immigrants pay over \$70 billion in taxes and receive only \$5.7 [billion] in benefits — a net contribution of nearly \$65 billion.

In addition, Pellett ignores how the

US has, throughout our history, stolen land and/or resources from indigenous populations around the world. While we have benefited from this, we conveniently ignore that the indigenous populations starve or are brutally oppressed by the dictators we put in power and support. How dare Pellett begrudge what benefits we give immigrants when, in comparison to what we have stolen from third world countries, it is chump change.

Finally, so focused is Pellett on what immigrants at our borders are taking from him that he is blind to the effects of the global economy on immigration flows. Sasha Sasson, a teacher of urban planning at Columbia University, points out in an article entitled "Why Migration?" (*Race, Poverty, and the Environment*, Summer 1993) that "Measures commonly thought to deter immigration — foreign investment, or the promotion of export-oriented agriculture and manufacturing in poor countries — have had precisely the opposite effect (emphasis mine). Such investment contributes to massive displacement of small-scale agricultural and manufacturing enterprises."

More recently, the *Progressive Populist* ran an article by family farm activist Merle Hanson who made a similar point about the impact of the global economy on immigration flows. In an article entitled "Farm Crisis and the Progressive Community" (4/96 PP), Hanson writes the following regarding the potential impact giant agribusiness may have on family and subsistence farmers the world over: "If we continue to allow this elite group of economic giants to dominate the farm and food sector, we are poised to dump two billion of the 3.1 billion people who still live in the rural areas of the world into the cities."

One wonders if Pellett can take the ideological blinders off long enough to understand and acknowledge that the immigrant he spends his life resenting are victims of these economic policies. Instead of resenting those at the bottom who are the victims of Machiavellian economic policies that have such disastrous impacts on their lives, he should be directing his wrath UP at the people who would construct a global economy that has the potential of destroying the ability of BILLIONS of people to live and survive.

LARRY SIEGEL
Bedford Hills, N.Y.

Close the Borders

I'm with letter-writer Howard Pellett. Dump your open-border mouth pieces, Gonzales and Rodriguez. Immigration is an income redistribution program that transfers \$160 billion/year from workers to employers. Halting immigration will do far more to help low-income taxpayers like me than any puny raise in the minimum wage. Foreign nations should not be allowed to export their overpopulation problem into my country. Ralph Nader did not say a word about immigration, so I will be voting for Pat Buchanan.

PATRICK CLIFFORD
Menasha, Wisconsin

I further suggest you rid *The Progressive Populist* of Gonzales and Rodriguez who hate the USA and find some Mexicans that believe in the USA.

WILLIAM A. HOWLE
Laguna Woods, California

Editor's Reply: We welcome a variety of viewpoints on immigration, and we believe the United States has the right to regulate immigration, but we think the blame is too often placed on the immigrant rather than the political and economic forces that attract third-world refugees to our bountiful nation. For example, the credibility of a prominent group critical of immigration

policy, the Federation for American Immigration Reform, was undermined when it broadcast a TV ad in Iowa before the presidential nominating caucuses with misleading and alarmist statements about the impact of immigrants on Storm Lake, Iowa. Meat packers have recruited men almost literally from the banks of the Rio Grande in Texas and brought them to our hometown to process meat at wages far below the scale of the meatcutters whose union was busted in the '70s, but in our view the fault for this job displacement lies mainly with Congresses, presidents and courts that allow corporations to flout labor organizing laws, thwart organizing drives and bust unions with virtual impunity and then move factories across state lines and national borders if necessary to find more compliant workforces. On the other hand, immigrants not only have helped to maintain Storm Lake's population level and prevented the closing of schools by replacing natives who have moved elsewhere, but they are, in the main, good, hard-working neighbors — and it is now possible to get good Mexican and Asian food in northwest Iowa, which is not a bad thing. The local schools also now field stellar soccer teams, although the immigrant community probably would be more celebrated locally if their children showed more of a knack for football and basketball.

Our Own Banana Republic

Back around 1935 I was a junior high student in Mr. Staley's social studies class. We used the Charles Rugg textbook which I understand was later removed from the Watertown (NY) schools, apparently because it emphasized social justice and individual rights over property rights.

For example, with Mr. Staley's coaching, we understood that Rugg hinted that maybe the Indians had legitimate grievances when they circled the wagons. And maybe the in-effect theft of Manhattan for 24 bucks was really nothing to boast about as favored textbooks were prone to do.

To move on — one day the topic discussed was South and Central American countries and the nature of their ever-changing governments. The class consensus was that the governments were corrupt, bribery was condoned, and the main concern of the politicians was to stay in power rather than benefiting the citizens.

Next, we all agreed, despite Mr. Staley's caution, that Americans were too smart, our politicians were too honest, and our Supreme Court was too objective for our democracy ever to be in jeopardy.

So 65 years later it appears that our opinion of everlasting democracy was dead wrong. We're no better than the so-called Banana Republics as corporate wealth has influenced our politicians to the extent that we'll never see meaningful campaign finance reform because the Democrats and Republicans will never let it come to a vote. Our politicians have proven that their main goal is getting elected by catering to corporate priorities and corporate "contributions" rather than public interest. And the Supreme Court is generally in the pocket of the party lucky enough to control the appointments.

So let's be honest; aren't most politicians just an homogenized bunch of suits seeking financial support from bottomless corporate cash reserves and aren't we all a bunch of boobs if we keep tolerating our false democracy?

STEWART MacMILLAN
Guffin Bay, N.Y.

Free Miami and Leave Cuba Alone

The negotiations and events leading to the reuniting of Elian Gonzalez with his father also questions the behavior of Miami's Cuban Americans and their mayor. It appears they consider themselves a government in exile!

To disabuse them of this attitude,

we should lift the 40-year mean-spirited embargo against this small island! None of our allies in the Free World support this senseless trade embargo.

To enforce the embargo, Cuban Americans have funneled *mucho dinero* to politicians who support their aims.

Preceding the Castro-led revolution, the Battista dictatorship enjoyed the support of US mobsters who controlled gambling, prostitution and drugs.

I'm sure José Martí, the heroic Cuban patriot executed for leading a revolt against Spanish rule, would approve Fidel Castro's ousting of all the unsavory elements that undermined Cuba's freedom.

LOU ROTHMAN
Tallahassee, Florida

Spook Secrecy is Unconstitutional

Your easy reference to the secrecy of the "intelligence" agency budgets [in the editorial reply to "Too Many Spooks," Letters, 4/15/00 PP] does not begin to express the outrage that these unconstitutional (Art. I, Sec. 9, para. 7, US Constitution) expenditures represent. I have addressed this topic to many members of Congress and been (almost) totally ignored. ...

Josh Gumina ["Don't Worry About Eavesdropping," Letters, 5/1/00 PP] doesn't know how dangerous a fellow he is. The more sweeping government access to and control of personal information becomes, the greater the ease of fabrication of cases against dissidents becomes.

Anyone who hasn't understood how out of control prosecutors have become, how unscrupulous ambitious, corrupted, is a dangerous dummy.

And for David Whiteis ["Computers Not Evil," Letters, 5/1/00 PP]: Computers are instruments of control, not freedom.

ROBERT C. SOMMER
New York, N.Y.

Bribery Library Offered

When I retired from engineering I studied bribery, especially in politics. Apologists for campaign money say it is merely supporting the candidates who agree with the giver, but I learned that only 9 percent of campaign money is given ideologically. Other apologists say that campaign funds are a small burden on the economy, but my research revealed that the social cost of bribery was vastly greater than the amount of the bribes. That is because of the waste in public looting and political "pork".

These results startled me. Bribery was not merely unethical, it also was destructive to the economy and it stopped the growth of real income for the middle class.

During my research I accumulated a small library of a few hundred books and several hundred photocopies. Old age has now halted my activities, but I hate to see such exciting results forgotten. I hope that someone will be interested in continuing this research, and I will donate and ship my "library" to anyone who seems sincerely interested in keeping the materials together.

Individually, my books would have little appeal for the average librarian: half are paperbacks, I highlighted some and tabbed a few of them. They are valuable only in a special collection. Not only that, many libraries depend on public funding, and some of the books actually criticize Congress! Horrors!

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Please keep them brief

RURAL ROUTES/*Margot Ford McMillen*

Baby Steps, but Steps Nonetheless

Congratulations, Dear Consumers. And keep up the good work. Two months ago it seemed impossible, but last week McDonald's told its suppliers "no more biotech French fries."

So whether you marched in Washington D.C., dressed like a butterfly in Seattle, made a phone call to your local Mickey-D's, wrote a letter to the editor, or just told your friends about genetically-modified foods, you, Dear Consumer, have accomplished something amazing.

Baby steps. Baby steps. The potatoes in question — Monsanto's — were one of the first GMO experiments. In 1999 only about 50,000 acres of a million potato acres were devoted to these "NewLeaf" spuds.

Like other GMO crops, "NewLeaf" had an unnatural gene added to the natural mix. In this case, a gene from a bacteria called *Bacillus thuringiensis* (aka Bt) was added, enabling the potato to make its own insecticide against Colorado Potato Beetle, a major pest.

The trouble is, the insecticide also killed all sorts of other non-pest critters, including the larva of the Monarch butterfly and other butterflies. Besides that, the Bt-potato had never been tested on consumers. Does it harm us to eat pesticides that kill beetles and butterflies? We have no clue. The scientists were only paid to invent the plant, not to see if it hurt anything.

Other food processors have announced they won't use GMO spuds. Frito-Lay, Pringles, Burger King and other fast food stores have told suppliers not to plant biotech. Hardee's is dragging its feet. Stay tuned.

Processors continue to use other biotech plants, but the French fry ban proves that consumers have power.

Bt has been implanted in a half dozen other veggies. Another favorite genetic modification is producing a "Roundup-Ready" crop, with a gene that protects plants from death by Monsanto's Roundup. A farmer can drive a sprayer across the field, dousing it with Roundup and killing all the weeds, but leaving the soybeans green and healthy.

It will be extremely difficult to convince food processors to reject all biotech crops, but we can do it. An estimated 60 percent of last year's soybean crop was genetically modified. Consumer resistance has sent that acreage downwards, and there will be far fewer biotech sales in 2000. Soybeans are used in thousands of processed foods, from pizza to ice cream to mayonnaise to salad dressing to chicken pot pies. Baby steps. Baby steps.

Of course, we don't have to eat processed foods at all. We can put our money where our mouth is and buy from local farmers. That action turns baby steps into giant steps, and it's much easier now, during Farmer's Market season.

As Senator Paul Wellstone of Minnesota might say, "keep on marching, keep on speaking, keep on writing, keep on voting, keep on working." Even when it's inconvenient.

I'm the first to admit that I avoid the inconvenient. In fact, I'm quite a scrooge when it comes to my free time. It's not that I'm worn out or even particularly busy; it's just that life goes by so fast.

So when my neighbor Lewis called and asked if I'd help kick off his run at the Democratic nomination for state legislator, I felt a little resentment. Lewis is a farmer, and he wanted his fundraiser to feature local food. Would I call some of our food circle members and get

them to help?

Our food circle networks with farmers to help them connect directly with consumers who want to buy food directly from the farm. This gives the farmer a better income, and consumers get fresh food treated the way they want. Meat without hormones or antibiotics. Produce from a few miles away, not from a continent away.

"I'll be tied up with this all day," I told my husband. "Why can't he just hire a caterer like the other politicians do?"

"You don't have to do it," said my husband. But he knew I was already committed. The chance to get publicity for our local farmers was too much temptation. A politician who cares?

My fellow food circle members were way less selfish than I. "This is what we've wanted," said Bryce, "a candidate who's not bought out by the corporations." He was already imagining Lewis's name next to the Ralph Nader sign in his front yard.

Working at the fundraiser wasn't convenient for any of us. Bryce and Jenny were in the middle of tree-planting. DeLisa had been selling spinach at the Farmer's Market and making deliveries all day. Linda had been teaching, and the kids she brought along really wanted to be some place else.

Still, on the evening of the fundraiser, there were a half dozen of us in the meeting hall kitchen slicing locally-raised hams, putting the meat on locally-baked buns, setting out dishes of Julie's special pepper jelly and honey, and brewing mint tea. The food wasn't all local — we used vegetable trays from a grocery store because the local veggies weren't ready — but the message was clear.

There were daffodils from our backyards on every table, and a local band, led by Lewis's brother, playing music you might call "country rock." The place was jammed with neighbors and county politicians shaking hands, little kids running around, grandmas in wheelchairs.

Lewis gave a speech, and, yes, it was heartwarming and corny and rousing and all of that. He joked that he wanted to supplement his farm income, and it was either driving a truck or running for office, and that to drive a truck you have to take a test. Then he got serious.

He told about growing up within five miles of the farm where he lives now. He told how his mom struggled to get by, his dad battled with TB, and how the government helped them through some rough times. He said governments can help people, and he wants to be a part of that.

He asked me to say a few words, so I talked about the food, how Lewis didn't want to serve food from overseas to his supporters, how we were so proud to help out.

Lewis has good ideas, but has he got a chance of winning the nomination? Darned if I know. Everyone around here is crazy about him, but he'll have to win the other parts of our very large county, and the county seat. The outgoing legislator is big-business-minded, and it looks like she's tapped someone else.

But, you know what? There are a couple of months before the election, and a lot can happen. If you doubt that we have power, think about Mickey D's French fries.

Baby steps. Baby steps.

Margot Ford McMillen farms and teaches English at a college in Fulton, Mo. Email: mcmillm@jaynet.wcmo.edu

CONVERSATIONS/*Jim Van Der Pol*

We Keep Our Dogs Grinning

Dogs, because of their habit of panting instead of sweating in the heat, seem often to be laughing. So it has been, since the first canine crept in close to the fire of some Adam, that the dog has had to dodge the occasional well aimed stick. Man does not take easily to being laughed at and is easily provoked.

We are dog people in our family. Cats we tolerate because we know that they are an important part of the farm's food chain. We have a colony in the haybarn, and another bunch in the loft over the sowbarn. We don't feed them; they do that for themselves. Come right down to it, as arrogant as cats are, they probably think of themselves as tolerating us.

Dogs, on the other hand, are constant companions, spirit lifters, service providers, and, when they sit on their haunches and laugh at me, a wonderful antidote to pomposity and self importance. This work they do nearly as well as my wife, and she might be thought to have signed on to the job, where the dogs just fell into it.

Pepper, the current dog in residence around here, is a weird combination of shepherd and hunter, which she expresses in the most useless ways. What she might be good for, in the range of things available for a dog to be good at, appears to puzzle even her. When she is around livestock and could be at least minimally useful, the labrador comes out and she chases through the middle of the bunch. The lab is also in full play each and every night when she drags at least one long time dead carcass on to the lawn.

When she is out running with the tractor, which she loves to do, the border collie is apparently in control, for she stopped just last week in the middle of an old badger town in the alfalfa field where a fox and six pups had just ducked underground. She sat down there, scratched her ear, and watched the tractor for a bit before getting up and plodding away. Later, while I was loudly cussing her for a fool from inside the tractor, she took off after a jackrabbit and tried to chase it into the next county.

This farm produces lambs and some chickens and could use a dog that would keep the local colony of foxes light on their feet. Jackrabbits are not much of a threat.

Besides, it would take two of her to catch a jack. And if she ever did, the border collie in her wouldn't know what to do with it. With all her shortcomings though, she is the first animal I speak to in the morning and she never fails to walk with me on my nightly after dark rounds. For that I will cut her some slack. And she laughs at me. That is worth something.

That is worth a lot! Listen, she runs with the tractor. And I don't know if it is that this particular dog is smart enough to make me understand, or if I am managing to get a little smarter myself as I age. Now the little tractor work that goes on around here what with the big experiment in pasturing and the lack of patience for the road farming that we used to do, happens close enough to home that the dog can run with at will. And I have noticed something. When we go out, she runs gaily with for at least three or four rounds. She is regularly distracted by flocks of birds that need chasing, as well as the need to ram her nose as far as it will go down a gopher hole from time to time. But all in all, she paces the tractor for those first rounds. By the time we get an hour or so into it, though, she is beginning to change her mind.

First she fails to make it all the way

to the end, stopping instead about two-thirds of the way and whiling away the time until I return. Then, after several turns at this, she sits down on a hill somewhere near the center of my endless back and forth trip and watches me. After a few passes she might even lie down. The picture that stays with me is the dog sitting on her haunches, tongue lolling out, laughing at me! A good dog can make a round or two in the field just for the heck of it, because she feels good and because the morning is cool and because she might run in to something interesting. But after awhile, she cannot see the use of going somewhere you are just going to come right back from. Eventually she goes home and lies under the deck waiting.

These last years, I cannot get the laughing dog out of my mind. Do you suppose she knows how to listen to the markets?

Jim Van Der Pol farms near Kerkhoven, Minn.

FRANK LINGO

Media Impede Environmental Progress

Hate to distract you from the alien Elia saga, but on April 22, more than half a billion people gathered in 183 countries to celebrate Earth Day 2000.

Although more people participated than in any themed event in world history, the *New York Times* ran only a small story on page 19, while splashing the Elia raid on more than half the front page.

And that Friday, ABC News blabbed about the Cuban boy for at least the first third of its newscast before doing a hatchet job on recycling. To bad-mouth recycling, ABC trotted out a spokesman from the pro-business Cato Institute, which is like having a member of Aryan Nations explain the significance of Passover.

All this proves once again that the public is light-years ahead of the media in appreciating the importance of real news. Ever since the O.J. trial, Jon Benet Ramsey, and the Bill and Monica farce, print and broadcast journalism have been obsessed with melodramatic morality plays that have zero to do with our lives.

Yet in national surveys by Roper and Gallup, a consistent 70 to 80 percent of Americans say they consider themselves environmentalists and express a desire for more environmental coverage in newspapers and on TV.

Like on the pollution and degradation of the Missouri River, which is listed as the nation's second most endangered river for 2000 by the environmental group American Rivers. Compared to the abundant wildlife of islands, channels and wetlands when Lewis and Clark paddled up two centuries ago, the Missouri is now a rock-lined barge canal. Since there will be key decisions made this year about the river's future, extensive media coverage is essential.

The worldwide connection of Earth Day indicates a change for the better. Young people around the globe are far more interested and knowledgeable about ecology than we were just a generation ago.

But Earth Day isn't just for kids and it's not like Mother's Day, as one cynical editor put it. Despite having to guard against corporate sponsors greenwash-

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Battling Retail Giants

Some practical advice

By **MARIANNE COMFORT**
American News Service

It may seem like national chain stores and fast-food restaurants are gobbling up locally owned businesses and redefining the American landscape, but it doesn't have to be that way, says the author of a book published by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance.

Concerned communities are revising land use plans and zoning rules to favor locally owned businesses, reports author Stacy Mitchell in *The Home Town Advantage: How to Defend Your Main Street Against Chain Stores ... And Why it Matters*.

Lingo ...

Continued from preceding page

ing their phony environmentalism, Earth Day provides a great opportunity for people to feel responsible and act on taking up a cause. *Erin Brockovich* shows the power that one trash-talkin' individual from Lawrence, Kansas, can exert.

The main problem facing us lies in the scandal of political campaign contributions. Until it becomes socially unacceptable, like wife-beating, our politicians will prostitute themselves and pander to their polluting patrons.

Around the world, the problem boils down to poverty. With half the planet's people living on less than two bucks a day, they'll never be able to care for the Earth. Unfortunately, rich companies like General Electric and Nike would rather practice corporate colonialism than offer workers in developing countries anything over slave wages.

The recent demonstrations against the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in Washington, D.C. revealed a growing awareness and resentment of these institutions' policies that have only perpetuated poverty. Poor countries, saddled with huge and hopeless debt, can't make economic progress under the crippling rules imposed by the fancy suits.

Here again the media's portrayals of the demonstrators was narrow and superficial. In advance of the protests, National Public Radio and other outlets described the authorities' efforts to avoid a repeat of Seattle's violence. Hello? The violence in Seattle was perpetrated first by random vandals unconnected to the protests, and second by the police, who basically went nuts.

Robert Weissman, with Essential Action, a watchdog group founded by Ralph Nader, was at the D.C. demonstrators' headquarters when the place got shut down. "Two fire marshals and about 150 police came in on the pretext of fire-code violations," he said. Despite this harassment, there were still 30,000 people who participated.

With our tax dollars being used to keep the "Wretched of the Earth" in poverty, we need to tell our senators and representatives to support Jubilee 2000, the movement to forgive third world debt. Billions of people would then stand a chance for recovery.

And so would the Earth.

Frank Lingo of Lawrence, Kansas, is a columnist for the Kansas City Star. Email lingo@earthvote.net.

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Independent retail trade associations and cooperatives, meanwhile, are growing more aggressive in competing with corporate retailers.

"The trends ... are dismal," writes Mitchell, a consultant to communities concerned about economic welfare and historic preservation. "But trends are not destiny."

The book opens with a portrait of the current retail landscape, and the numbers tell the tale. More than 5 percent of all retail dollars are now spent at Wal-Mart. More than 25 percent of book sales are captured by Barnes & Noble and Borders Books. Home Depot and Lowe's account for nearly one-quarter of hardware and building supply sales.

While these large retailers tout the new jobs and sales taxes they will generate, Mitchell cites studies finding that chains deliver much less in the way of community benefits — especially when the loss of jobs in other stores and the amount of sales simply siphoned away from existing local businesses are factored in.

Mitchell also documents other negatives like the gradual abandonment of traditional downtowns once chain stores open on the outskirts, and communities left with large vacant stores they couldn't fill when a corporate retailer later pulled out.

Mitchell argues that public policy is encouraging these trends through lax antitrust laws, local tax breaks given to large retailers and lack of effective zoning regulations. She argues that public policy can be reshaped to turn these trends around.

"Increasing numbers of communities are rewriting the rules around a different set of priorities that encourage a homegrown economy of humanly

scaled, diverse, neighborhood-serving business," she writes.

The most successful community approach is to adopt comprehensive plans that serve as guidelines for reviewing development permits and rezoning applications, which can be used later as legal protection if land use decisions are challenged in court, Mitchell writes.

She cites many examples of communities that have included in their plans an intention to preserve and strengthen local businesses or to limit commercial development to downtowns or other existing retail districts.

Manchester, Vt., for instance, has tried to moderate the invasion of high-end discount retailers through a plan that calls for the town to "create and maintain a business environment which is hospitable to locally owned and managed businesses."

Skaneateles, N.Y., imposed an 18-month building moratorium and used that breathing space to develop a comprehensive plan that limits retail stores to no more than 45,000 square feet and shopping center sites to no more than 15 acres.

And in an effort to maintain a unique local flavor, Carmel, Calif., enacted an ordinance that in effect bans chain restaurants.

Recognizing that one town's success against keeping out a corporate retailer often just means the store opens a few miles away instead, Mitchell argues for more regional approaches to planning.

She uses as an example the Cape Cod Commission, a regional planning agency that has the authority to approve or reject proposals for new construction larger than 10,000 square feet and changes of use for commercial sites exceeding 40,000 square feet. The

regional policy plan provides guidelines for reviewing projects, encourages locally owned businesses that employ local residents, and expresses concern for preserving the unique character of the area.

On an even-larger scale, Mitchell describes efforts to use federal and state antitrust laws to create a more fair competitive playing field for independent businesses. She says the American Booksellers Association has filed suit to halt what it terms the unfair pricing advantages granted large chains. And an Arkansas court has ruled that Wal-Mart violated the state's Unfair Practices Act by pricing goods below cost with the intent to drive three independent pharmacists out of business.

Mitchell encourages further use of larger-scale public policy to thwart the retail giants through tougher enforcement of antitrust laws and the institution of statewide graduated business fees that increase according to the size of a retail chain.

At the back of the book, Mitchell lists several resources for organizing community campaigns to limit corporate retail development and for defending the interests of independent businesses. She also refers readers to a Web site — newrules.org — for examples of policies, laws and court cases.

The Home Town Advantage was published in paperback in 2000 by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance. It sells for \$14 and may be ordered by writing the Institute at 1313 Fifth St. SE, Minneapolis, Minn. 55414. See its web site: www.ilsr.org

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SOLUTIONS/*American News Service*

As Organic Market Grows, Farmers Do Own Field Testing

Greenfield, Ohio

Farmers, whose skills have traditionally included agronomy, mechanics and debt financing, are adding one more profession to their resumes: research scientist.

Frustrated by the lack of hard science on sustainable and organic agriculture, a group of farmers in Ohio has decided to do its own research. In the past eight years, group members have experimented with cover crops, studied diluted applications of chemical herbicides and this spring will test 12 varieties of corn seed on their own land.

"It's a cheap way to do research," says Charlie Eselgroth, who farms 600 acres southwest of Columbus and helped found Innovative Farmers of Ohio. "We've got the equipment and the interest, and we can apply this stuff directly to our farms."

As the prices of corn, wheat and soybeans drop to their lowest levels in years, farmers increasingly are drawn to the premium prices that organic products bring. A \$6 billion-a-year business, organic farming has taken off in the last several years among even the most skeptical producers, said Eselgroth.

"People that basically never showed an interest before — we can actually talk about it (now) and they don't roll their eyes and walk away," he said. "I don't see any great rush in my neighborhood to do this, but there are certain neighbors that you can get together."

There are about 200 members of Innovative Farmers interested in alternatives to conventional practices, said Keith Dix, who coordinates the group in Wooster. While not all of them have shunned chemicals, everyone wants to use fewer herbicides, fertilizers and production practices that are both expensive and increasingly unpopular with consumers.

The trick is to find earth-friendly and cost-effective substitutes to boost production and keep weeds, pests and fungi at a minimum.

Traditionally, farmers have taken questions like these to Cooperative Extension Service agents, who operate out of land grant universities that conduct on-site research. But the Extension Service has been slow to pick up on sustainable agriculture, farmers say.

What research has been done, they add, was under such controlled conditions that it's not applicable in the field.

That's changing, according to Phil Rzewnicki, farm

research coordinator at Ohio State University. Not too long ago, 22 extension agents from around the state attended a workshop on organic grain farming sponsored by the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association.

"Across the board you won't see support, but you're getting a third, at least, in Ohio that are empathetic and want to work with producers to find sustainable methods," he said. Which makes sense, he added, considering organic production is "the only sector of agriculture that's really growing."

Organic farmers have long suspected that the corn seed planted for traditional harvest may not be best for them, Eselgroth said. A heavy feeder, corn traditionally has been boosted with lots of synthetic fertilizers that organic farmers shun.

So this spring, backed by a grant from the US Department of Agriculture's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program, Eselgroth and 16 other producers will plant a dozen seed varieties on each of their farms to see which ones scrounge for nutrients most effectively and shade in quickly between rows to keep weeds back.

Working with Ohio State University researchers, they'll each turn 3 to 5 acres on their medium-sized farms into randomized, scientifically valid test plots. Each will receive \$500 plus the free seed.

Research like this is more work for the farmer, but those participating understand the long-term benefit could be their farm's viability, Eselgroth said.

"I see sustainable and organic agriculture as a way that the medium-sized family farm can stay in business," he said.

If prices stay high — and the government predicts demand for organic commodities will continue to outstrip supply — farmers might even be able to make more money on less acreage and have more time for family and community, Rzewnicki said.

"I would be happier if I could do 300 to 400 acres," said Eselgroth, who is in the process of turning his entire operation into a certified organic farm. "I think I can get smaller and have a better income."

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CALAMITY HOWLER/A.V. Krebs

Activists Agitate for Chavez Holiday

"This is a beautiful movement coming from the ground up," said Evilina Alarcon, a community activist in East Los Angeles. "We're proving that there's so much passion for this day."

Legislation stalled for half dozen years and vetoed by former Gov. Pete Wilson appears to be heading through the California Assembly as a bill which will not only make the birth of Cesar Chavez, founder of the United Farm Workers (UFW), a paid annual state holiday for state workers, but will ask teachers to spend part of the day giving California's nearly six million students lessons on Chavez and leading them in an afternoon of community service in his name.

For the past year, working nights and weekends, spreading the word from churches to concerts, Alarcon has championed the Chavez holiday cause, enlisting celebrities such as Carlos Santana and Edward James Olmos. Dozens of county governments have also passed resolutions in support of a holiday while the holiday supporters have bombarded the capital in Sacramento with 100,000 petitions and postcards.

Thus, the *Washington Post's* Rene Sanchez reports, California lawmakers have been deluged in recent months with petitions demanding a Chavez holiday and with tens of thousands of postcards bearing his portrait and comparing him to slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. Rallies to promote the Chavez holiday have been staged around the state.

State politicians have become sensitive to the Chavez holiday as Hispanics are the fastest-growing portion of California's giant electorate and occupy nearly one-fifth of the seats in the state legislature, including the speaker's chair. Demographers are forecasting that in five years, Hispanics will make up one-third of the state's population, up from one-fourth in 1990.

"Just about the last thing most politicians, Democrat or Republican, want to do in California anymore," Sanchez points out, "is antagonize that constituency — especially by balking at memorials to a man many Hispanics regard as a latter-day saint."

Two other states — Arizona and Texas — both faced with new pressure from Hispanic activists, have also adopted Chavez holidays recently, each more limited than the one proposed for California. In Arizona, where Chavez was born on March 31, 1927, the holiday for him received support from Republican legislators worried that a vote against the bill could turn Hispanic voters against their party in the upcoming November elections.

In California, the Chavez holiday legislation will soon reach the desk of Gov. Gray Davis. Although the Democrat has been publicly circumspect, Davis's aides say he has "deep respect" for Chavez.

"This is historic. This is extraordinary," said Richard Polanco, a Democratic state senator from Los Angeles who is the chief sponsor of the holiday in the legislature. "It is the right thing to do." Arturo S. Rodriguez, Chavez's successor as president of the United Farm Workers, which currently has about 27,000 members in California, praised the new plan for the holiday. "It would be what Cesar was all about," he said. "We can't think of a more meaningful way to honor his legacy."

As Susan Samuels Drake in her poetic memoirs, *Fields of Courage: Remembering Cesar Chavez & the People Whose Labor Feeds Us* (Many Names Press: Santa Cruz, California: 1999) observes:

"So who was Cesar Estrada Chavez? Certainly, no single word or phrase or book can contain him. His titles were many: organizer, prophet of sustainable development, eager recycler (he even saved vegetable seeds from his garden to plant year after year), health nut, student of dozens of subjects. He was a powerful, persuasive speaker, labor leader, charismatic hero; American-born farm worker of Mexican descent; the Mexican Martin Luther King; America's Gandhi."

The one-time secretary to Chavez, Drake adds: "Friend and foe alike admit that no one accomplished what Cesar did. No one else inspired 100,000 farm workers to shed their independent ways and sign up for membership in a fledgling labor union. No one else used non-violence so effectively as an organizing principle; only a handful of others had even tried to, in the 1930's. Cesar integrated people from diverse cultural backgrounds into a movement that swept its way into political, medical, legal, economic, environmentalist and religious circles."

Meanwhile, California labor officials recently ruled that some 600 pickers at the nation's largest strawberry grower should be represented by separate bargaining units in Oxnard and Watsonville, increasing the likelihood that the UFW will once again represent pickers in Ventura County. The ruling, affirmed by the Agricultural Labor Relations Board, clears the way for a June election at the Coastal Berry Co.'s Oxnard operation.

In June, 1999 the UFW lost an election to represent all of Coastal Berry's workers in Oxnard and Watsonville to a rival union, the Coastal Berry of California Farm Workers Committee. The UFW filed scores of objections to that election, including one saying that Coastal Berry's pickers would be better served by separate bargaining units. A state labor judge last month agreed and the state labor board has upheld that ruling.

Copies of Susan Samuels Drake's book can be ordered through: Capitola Book Cafe, email crystal@capitolabookcafe.com or phone 831-462-4415.

Farmworkers' Preschool Kids Exposed to Poisons

"It's cause for concern, but not cause for alarm. The point is, we don't understand what pesticides do or don't do in small children. And we need to keep an eye on those who get more exposure than others." — Dr. Richard Fenske, Director of the University of Washington's Pacific Northwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center.

A study of urine samples of 109 children in Washington State's Chelan and Douglas counties, the first such study using biological measurements, has shown preschool children of farmworkers are being exposed to chemical poisons at higher levels than federal regulators consider safe. However, none of the children in the alarming study were engaged in farm work, but were rather exposed through chemical poison residue in their homes, and from food consumption.

Dr. Fenske said the UW study, to be published in the June issue of *Environmental Health Perspectives*, a journal of the National Institutes of Health, showed some children were exposed to levels as much as 20 times the safety standards set for adults by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). But most who exceeded the lim-

its were no more than three times over.

As the *Seattle Times's* medical writer Warren King notes, "scientists don't know whether the children have suffered long-term adverse effects from the exposure. Another extensive UW study is examining what levels might be dangerous for children. Existing federal rules for safe levels of exposure to pesticides focus only on adults."

Researchers looked at the children's exposure during 1995 to two chemical poisons in regular use to fight codling moths in apples: azinphos-methyl and phosmet, both organophosphate chemicals. Of 91 children of farmworkers, 56 percent showed exposures to azinphos-methyl beyond federal limits. Of 18 nonfarmworker children who lived more than a quarter-mile from an orchard, 44 percent had exposures over the limits.

Prior research in 1995 found chemical poison levels in the house dust of the state's Wenatchee-area agricultural workers were five times that of non-farmworkers' homes.

Currently, the University of Washington is conducting extensive research in chemical poison exposure and its effects on children. A five-year, \$6.6 million study is looking at everything from how farmworkers bring chemical poison residues into their homes, to children's genetic susceptibility to the chemicals.

Use of Undocumented Workers Depresses Wages

Olivia Mendoza and Juana Mendiola, two Mexican nationals, have accused two Yakima Valley fruit growers and packers — Zirkle Fruit and Matson Fruit — of colluding with a Yakima employment agency — Selective Employment Agency — to systematically hire undocumented workers in an effort to depress farmworker and packinghouse wages.

In an unprecedented class-action lawsuit filed in US District Court in Spokane, Washington, in early April, the workers charged that all other legal agricultural workers are harmed by depressed wages because of the deliberate employment of undocumented workers willing to work for less.

David Lighthall of the California Institute for Rural Studies in Davis, California, told the *Seattle Times's* Lynda Mayes that the lawsuit was unprecedented. "I haven't heard of anything like this, where you have documented workers disgruntled because jobs are going to undocumented workers. Obviously, if this case were successful, that would be a very big deal, but what might be more important is the light this will shed on the whole hiring system."

The workers' attorney, Steve Berman, told Mayes that the class-action suit is an effort to improve wages and

working conditions for agricultural workers. "Illegals will work for less because they are afraid to assert their rights," Berman said. "That depresses wages for legal workers, and also makes it harder for legal workers to stay employed, because there is this big pool of illegal workers out there."

If the suit is successful, Berman acknowledged, it could hurt undocumented workers by denying them work. "You have to start somewhere. Growers will never respond with better working conditions if they can use the illegal workers against the legal ones, to keep them down."

Mayes reports that all three Washington companies, or their attorneys, have denied the workers' claims. Mike Gempler of the Washington Growers League called the allegations "absurd. They don't care about the industry or the people in it, who they hurt, or how ridiculous they look over here in the agricultural community," he said of attorneys bringing the suit. "They are only in it for the money."

Gempler said the employers named in the suit pay about the same wages or more than others in the Washington agricultural industry. Packinghouse workers typically make about \$7.50 to \$8 an hour. Pickers get about \$9 an hour for apples and pears, and more for cherries, depending on the farm and the workers' speed and skill.

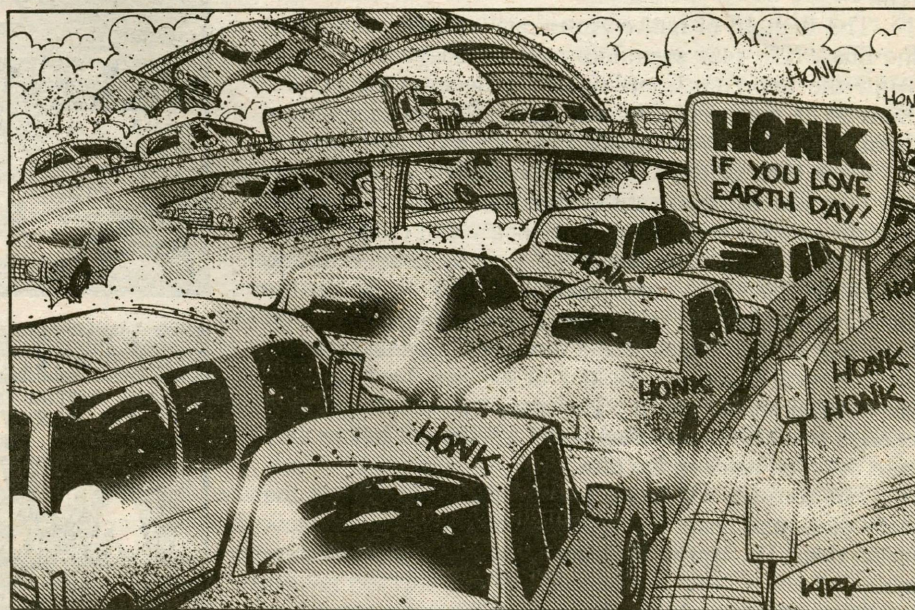
Growers have estimated that in recent years as many as 70 percent of farmworkers do not have valid papers, depending on the location of the farm, the season and the crop. About 90,000 seasonal workers are employed in the agricultural industry every year.

Despite reported efforts to screen all workers for legal status, growers point out that false documents are easy and cheap to obtain, and that employers are legally restricted in their ability to verify them. If they look too closely or too long, employers can be accused of discrimination.

The US Immigration and Nationalization Service estimates there are five million undocumented workers in the US, including about 52,000 in Washington State.

Growers, meanwhile, are urging a new immigration law be passed by Congress, legislation that has some support from labor. The bill sought by growers would create the country's first major amnesty program since 1986. In it, workers could become legal residents in return for working 180 days a year in agriculture in each of the next five years. The AFL-CIO, however, is calling for outright amnesty for the millions of agricultural workers.

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JUNE 1, 2000 — 7

Sioux Occupy Contested S.D. Island

By CHARLES MICHEAL RAY and JOSHUA WELSH
Special to the Progressive Populist

La Framboise Island is connected to Pierre, the capital of South Dakota, by a causeway. Visitors to the island come to stroll through the among the massive cottonwoods and maybe catch a peek of a mink or a plover. For the last year, visitors have also been able to see tipis camped in the campground.

For more than a year a group of Native American protesters occupied the island. They set up the tipis and tents and lit a sacred fire, which burned throughout the year. They came to protest the Mitigation Act, a bill passed by Congress that transfers federal lands to the state of South Dakota and two tribes. They stayed throughout the winter.

In question are 200,000 acres of land along the Missouri River Corridor. During the 1950s, the federal government took the land from the state and the Sioux people to dam the Missouri and create huge reservoirs. Hundreds of people were forced from their homes. Forty years later, the Native Americans who lost land have only been partially compensated. The Mitigation Act gives back to the Cheyenne River and Lower Brule Sioux tribes that land which is within their tribal boundaries. The rest of the shoreline lands go to the state.

For its part, the state says that the Mitigation Act will benefit both the state and all the tribes. In addition to handing over the jurisdiction to the state and the tribes, the Act also creates a trust fund to pay for restoration of river resources.

The Secretary of the South Dakota Game Fish and Parks, John Cooper says that the funds can be used to restore wildlife habitats along the river. He also says that the Act will enable the state to protect natural resources and provide better recreation facilities to the public. As Cooper puts it, "We're stronger together as state and tribes than we are separated."

But the protesters say that the transfer violates their treaty rights. Some feel that the state is more interested in exploiting the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition — coming up in 2004 — than in preserving cultural resources. And one protester was concerned that the state has little interest in protecting the cultural resources and historical artifacts found buried in the soft shale along the river.

But the situation is complicated, even to the Native Americans involved. Two of seven tribes in the state will benefit. Five would get nothing. And Greg Borland, the Chairman of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe — one of the tribes which will receive lands — says that the lands on the west bank of the river should go to the Sioux people, not the state. He bases this on the 1868 treaty, which gave all the land west of the Missouri to the Sioux Nation. "Until clear title can be established, we don't see how the federal government can transfer these lands to the state."

The protesters agree. Charmane Whiteface refers to the 1868 treaty, saying, "This treaty is still valid. This issue is much broader than most people think."

Activists say that treaty rights are at the core of an issue the state cannot ignore. Some activists in South Dakota still claim that the Black Hills and all the federal land west of the Missouri River should belong to the Sioux people. At a protest march last Fall, one activist joked: "We won't kick the Wasicu [Non-Indians] out, we just want back rent."

The thought of native Americans actually controlling the Black Hills may seem ludicrous to most whites but in 1980 the Supreme Court upheld a decision paying the Sioux \$17.1 million plus interest from 1877 to compensate them for the loss. (\$17.1 million was the estimated value of the Black Hills in 1877.) And despite grinding poverty on the reservations, the Native Americans have refused to take the money, so as not to lose their claim to the Hills.

The state says that this is not a treaty issue, referring instead to the 1889 congressional act that broke up the Sioux Nation. An aide to Senator Tom Daschle, D-S.D., who helped push the Mitigation Act through Congress, says that the Corps of Engineers will look at the west bank lands in an environmental study. "The state has been gracious enough to allow the environmental assessment before they take over the lands in fee title."

The transfer will begin to take effect this fall as the state leases and restores recreational sites on the east bank of the river. The rest of the transfer will take years to complete.

[Note: In late April, the sacred fire was moved to Rosebud, South Dakota. The tipis have been taken down, but some of the protesters were still camped on the island.]

Charles Micheal Ray and Joshua Welsh are journalists in Rapid City, S.D. Contact them by email c/o Hurricanejosh@aol.com.

On the manufacture of homelessness

By MIKE MADIAS

Poverty is experienced as a bad and a progressively worsening condition, even for the working poor. Below a true poverty line, not the abstract government statistic, but a stone cold street reality, one tends to get poorer and poorer, despite having a job and getting a paycheck.

The fear of eviction from rental property, ruin and homelessness is a chilling part of the life of the working poor. The poor usually rent on a month to month leasehold. At any time the rent may increase. In 30 days or less, one might be on the street.

The reason that the working poor fear eviction, is that they are without the buffers and safety nets that are taken for granted by others. For the poor, it is more difficult to hold on to employment, maintain an automobile, retain a healthy physical condition, or a good working wardrobe. As a consequence it is harder to maintain employment. Ultimately it is easier for a working poor family to find itself without a home.

Homelessness is manufactured in a city like metropolitan Detroit. Here it will cost someone \$3000 a year or more to maintain an automobile in legal and mechanical condition to drive to work. If someone does not have a good portion of that amount, they will lose the car when they can no longer afford to repair it, refuel it, or replace it after a theft.

Without a car, a person can only be employed close to home or somewhere close to a well traveled DOT or SEMTA line. Many employment opportuni-

ties are beyond their reach. The busses are full of the working poor who despite their labor cannot afford to keep a car.

The working poor without automobiles eat a less healthy diet. They shop at a neighborhood grocery, where the selection of healthy food alternatives is limited. Beer and pork products are in abundance. A large variety of seasonal fruits and vegetables are not available. This of course increases the possibility of obesity and adult onset diabetes.

If a working poor person cannot afford to maintain a younger healthy body, they will have even more trouble coping with an older body that has a chronic debilitating condition like diabetes, arthritis or gout.

This is why the poor are also usually the fat and why poor people take up walking with a cane at a younger age than others.

It is also harder to buy clothes and look well dressed if someone is fat. If someone stays lean, they can purchase hand me down fashions from the Salvation Army store. If one is obese, they are often limited to "casual wear" from the Value Village.

Perhaps the washer in a poor person's building will work this week. Perhaps it will just eat the quarters and not wash or dry the clothes. This happens all the time.

It is harder to get out there and take that damned bus in the morning, come rain or come shine, and get to work on time day after day. Yet irregular attendance and frequent tardiness will eventually cost a job.

Loss of health, inability to hold on to an automobile leads to loss of a job. It can lead to eviction, and loss of a home. One condition predisposes a family to the next.

Mike Madias is an independent journalist from Detroit.

DISPATCHES

US Recognizes Cold War Casualties

The Clinton administration, in the first acknowledgement that workers who built the US nuclear arsenal during the Cold War suffered long-term health problems from radiation exposure, has proposed to spend \$400 million over the next five years to compensate injured workers. The plan, which offers payments as high as \$100,000, is subject to congressional approval.

A study ordered by Energy Secretary Bill Richardson found that workers at 14 DOE facilities were found to have increased risks of death from various cancers and nonmalignant diseases after exposure to radiation and other substances. Robert Alvarez, former senior policy advisor to Richardson, wrote in Salon.com on May 6 that workplace safety has been minimal at nuclear projects, where private contractors until 1988 were shielded from any crim-

inal or legal liability for their operations. "This aggressive policy to avoid legal liability for worker compensation at all costs persists, despite the best efforts by a succession of energy secretaries to change it," Alvarez wrote.

"Even though the American victims of the Cold War have a powerful supporter in Energy Secretary Richardson, he will soon be gone, perhaps even before the end of the Clinton administration. In his wake, many questions will remain: Will the next energy secretary be as committed as Richardson to helping the sick workers? Even if Congress enacts compensation legislation this year, will it be enough? And will Congress be willing to continue the program next year? If the DOE is allowed to decide on compensation, will sick workers get as much priority in the next administration as nuclear weapons production and environmental cleanup? What form of justice, if any, will America's Cold War veterans ultimately get?"

Continued on page 11

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

ELIAN'S MOTHER COURAGEOUSLY SACRIFICES HER LIFE SO THAT HER SON MAY ESCAPE TYRANNY!



ELIAN'S MOTHER RECKLESSLY ENDANGERS HIS LIFE FOR THE SAKE OF HER NO-GOOD BOYFRIEND!



AFTER MONTHS OF DELAY, FIDEL CASTRO TAKES DECISIVE ACTION!



AFTER MONTHS OF DELAY, JANET RENO TAKES DECISIVE ACTION!



HIS MIAMI RELATIVES SELFLESSLY CHAMPION THE BOY'S RIGHT TO LIVE IN FREEDOM!



HIS MIAMI RELATIVES CYNICALLY EXPLOIT THE BOY'S VALUE AS A POLITICAL SYMBOL!



NOW, ELIAN MAY SOON BE SENT BACK TO THE LIVING HELL THAT IS CUBA!



NOW, ELIAN MAY SOON RETURN TO THE ISLAND PARADISE THAT IS CUBA!



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JOHN BUELL

Student Activism and the Global Economy

Political activism has returned to many college campuses. Though less sweeping and hardly as disruptive as the anti-war politics of the late sixties, today's student movements offer significant prospects of educational and economic reform. Their efforts have addressed both internal academic governance and relations with the outside world. In this column I will focus on relations between the academy and the larger economic order, and I will consider internal governance in a subsequent column.

This generation of students may show little interest in building a "participatory democracy" or in radically transforming America's military role in the world. Nonetheless, many do insist that the schools they attend practice the humane values those colleges profess. Last year, students at such elite institutions as Duke University demanded that clothing bearing the college insignia not be produced by child labor or in low wage, sweat shop conditions. These campaigns have contributed to a significant social struggle and afforded many students a greater understanding of the challenges posed by corporate globalism and the role of organized labor in resisting corporate exploitation.

Here in Maine, students at College of the Atlantic became the first in the nation to pass a policy requiring the purchase of coffee stamped with the "fair trade" seal of approval. Students insisted that coffee purchased by the college come from firms that ensured

their workers received a living wage, regardless of the price paid by the college. Rob Fish, a senior at the College, argued that "The college has a responsibility to use its purchasing power to further the human ecological ideas it espouses," (*Bangor Daily News*, March 18, 2000.)

Most recently, students from all over the country, including six Maine colleges, assembled in Washington to protest the role the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund play in buttressing corporate globalism. Both institutions have diverted taxpayer money to corporate megaprojects and financier bailouts while imposing harsh wage standards and restrictive government spending limits on developing nations. In the process, wages and public capital formation world wide are driven down. The short-term interests of multinational firms and currency speculators are served, but the race to the bottom in wages, social services, and environmental standards depresses consumer demand and long term economic development.

Students at several colleges and universities have also forced multinational clothing manufacturers to disclose the location of their plants and to make those facilities open to inspections. Other students have worked with union activists in campaigns to unite workers across borders in efforts both to organize factories and to expose violations of domestic labor and environmental laws. L. A. Kauffman, a historian of the New Left, commented recently in AlterNet that this generation of student activists "are finding new common ground, from the increasingly multiethnic and multi-generational campaigns against police brutality and the prison industrial complex, to the new collaborations between organized labor and immigrant groups to secure amnesty for the undocumented."

Student efforts to reform corporate labor practices and the international financial system are both politically and educationally significant. Students gain an understanding of the dynamics of corporate globalism

and the practical problems involved in building cross border coalitions. They are also contributing to a process that can reduce tensions and suspicions between labor in the "developing world" and workers in the industrialized West. During the protests late last year in Seattle, mainstream media endlessly argued that workers in developing nations rejected the idea of international labor standards as one more protectionist ploy labor by well paid workers in the West.

Suspensions certainly abound, and US industrial unions do have a long history of protectionism. Nonetheless, claims that all workers in developing nations reject any form of labor standards were made without attempting to speak directly to those workers, whose interests are often poorly represented by their own governments. Students especially have an interest in gaining direct information regarding such topics. Both students and workers everywhere clearly do share an interest in 1) the right to organize and 2) access to information about plant locations, potentially dangerous technologies, and productivity levels.

Students interested in gaining a greater understanding of the dynamics of the global economy can naturally contribute both to pressure for greater access to information and to the process of building common frameworks for cross border labor cooperation. Ultimately, when workers everywhere share certain basic information and enjoy the right to organize, flexible wage standards reflecting each nation's productive capacity can be enacted and enforced. A student movement that contributes to such a process not only enhances its educational experience, it also helps build a more enduring democratic politics.

John Buell lives in Southwest Harbor, Maine and writes on labor and environmental issues. He is co-author, with Tom DeLuca, of *Sustainable Democracy: Individuality and the Politics of the Environment* (Sage). He invites comments via e mail at: jbuell@acadia.net

JOHN NICHOLS

Historian Zinn Foresaw Protests

Washington, D.C.

The students who flooded into the nation's capital for the protests against the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund brought books with them.

And why not? While they are activists, they are still finishing up classes this spring.

But, perhaps not surprisingly for so rebellious a bunch, they did not always bring assigned texts. I ran into one protester from western Massachusetts who was paging through a Noam Chomsky book before a forum on globalization. Some of his classmates had books by the Indian physicist Vandana Shiva and other participants in the forum.

Down the row was a young woman reading Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*.

Could there have been a better text for this most American of movements?

Zinn may be close to four times as old as many of the participants in the A16 (April 16) protests, but he is their perfect comrade. Brilliant historian, consistent radical and kind and gentle soul, he recognized immediately that this new movement of opposition to corporate globalization is very much in the tradition of the American people's movements he has so ably chronicled and championed.

In a very fine piece for the issue of *The Progressive* published after last fall's Seattle protests against the World Trade Organization, Zinn made the connections. But that came as no surprise to anyone familiar with his work as a historian and an activist.

Zinn has always made the connections.

A People's History of the United States, the book my young friend was reading before the forum, was published 20 years ago. Yet the text's closing chapter, "The Coming Revolt of the Guards," reads as if it was written in the spring of

2000 — not 1980.

"People with time, in friendly communities, might create a new, diversified, nonviolent culture, in which all forms of personal and group expression would be possible. Men and women, black and white, old and young, could then cherish their differences as positive attributes, not as reasons for domination. New values of cooperation and freedom might then show up in the relations of people," Zinn wrote.

"To do all that, in the complex conditions of control in the United States, would require combining the energy of all previous movements in American history — of labor insurgents, black rebels, Native Americans, women, young people — along with the new energy of an angry middle class. People would need to begin to transform their immediate environments — the workplace, the family, the school, the community — by a series of struggles against absentee authority, to give control of these places to the people who live and work there.

"These struggles would involve all the tactics used at various times in the past by people's movements: demonstrations, marches, civil disobedience; strikes and boycotts and general strikes; direct action to redistribute wealth, to reconstruct institutions, to revamp relationships; creating — in music, literature, drama, all the arts, and all the areas of work and play in everyday life — a new culture of sharing, of respect, a new joy in the collaboration of people to help themselves and one another."

Anyone who saw the broad coalitions that came together in Washington to protest on behalf of a new vision for a just and humane global economy would have to agree that Howard Zinn either has a mighty fine crystal ball or he really has put all those years of studying the people's history to good use.

Certainly, the young people who came to Washington have learned the lessons. They are building a movement that more closely matches Zinn's vision than any that has come before.

John Nichols is editorial page editor of *The Capital Times*, P.O. Box 8060, Madison, WI 53708, in which this originally appeared. Email him at jnichols@captimes.madison.com.

DENNIS FOX In Defense of Class Resentment

As a teacher of courses on inequality and justice I've often speculated about why Americans put up with so much economic unfairness. There's always some supposed explanation for why the income and wealth gap between the top of the economic pyramid and the broader base fails to generate a sense of public urgency. But the truth is I just don't get it. Where's the mobilization of class resentment when you really need it?

The gap is real, and growing. Since 1977, average real income for the poorest fifth of US households has decreased by almost 10 percent, and the middle fifth has increased just 8 percent; but the income of the richest 1 percent has more than doubled. Corporate CEOs now make 419 times as much as the average worker — up tenfold from 1980's ratio. In booming Massachusetts, 6 of the 10 fastest growing occupations pay under \$19,000 a year.

These facts are consistent with other trends: Mind-boggling housing prices force long-time residents out of the neighborhoods they were born in. Poverty persists and even worsens despite the decline in welfare rolls. Journalists salivate over a bounding stock market, failing to ask presidential candidates what they propose for those without portfolios.

What saddens me most is that so many people grow up aiming for privileged lives. We don't have just an income and resource gap. We have an expectations gap.

Inflated expectations are everywhere. Twentysomething entrepreneurs aim to retire at 50 with enough money to spend more years in retirement than on the job. The newly rich tear down half-million-dollar houses to build bigger ones, and the butler business is booming. The next President's salary will double to \$400,000 a year and some people think it's not enough.

We all lose when society routinely legitimizes desires such as these. The fantasy misdirects us. It entices us to play the market, to aim for the high-paying career regardless of its human cost, to define the American Dream as a golden parachute rather than a better life. It encourages politicians committed to those at the top rather than to the majority. And it reinforces both institutional and personal disregard of those whose lives have worsened, people dismissed as just too lazy or too stupid to log on to E-Trade.

The traditional conservative believes that life is a struggle, a fight among people with inherently unequal strengths. Life's like a Monopoly game, but with a difference — the winners keep their property at the end, and start the next game already ahead.

Liberalism at least tries to turn capitalism into a reasonably fair fight. There are still winners and losers, but that's tolerable if education and other factors are equalized, and if the state offers the victims enough support to keep the winners from feeling too guilty. In the idealized liberal world and in the real Monopoly game — but not in the real world — winnings go back into the pot and the game starts afresh.

Radicals propose something different: life doesn't have to be a fight for survival, especially in societies such as ours where there's more than enough to go around. Monopoly is an exercise in selfishness rather than foresight. We can choose instead to construct a society not defined as a war of all against all. We can construct a society in which the rich and power hungry can no longer depend on societal institutions to protect their suspect winnings.

That should be our goal.

But where are the mainstream presidential candidates tapping into justified class bitterness, calling on people to vote for a more egalitarian society? Do we all suspect that the old anarchist slogan — if voting could change the system, it would be illegal — makes even more sense today than in the past?

If it takes the threat of class warfare to force a change, what will it take to start the mobilization?

Dennis Fox is associate professor of legal studies and psychology at the University of Illinois at Springfield. Email: dennis-fox@mail.com.

Maine's Clean Election Donor Chase

By JEAN HAY

I laughed when I saw the April 1, 2000, *New York Times* front-page story "Mainers Trying a Donation-Free Campaign." That's because the headline is dead wrong.

Maine's new "Clean Election" law does not ban private donations, it demands them — dozens of them for each House candidate, three times that for state Senate candidates, thousands upon thousands of them in the aggregate for the 115 legislative candidates who have qualified under this law so far.

In fact, the collection of these private campaign contributions is the only way for a candidate to get public funding. There is no alternative. The way Maine's law is now written, a candidate must clearly demonstrate a strong fund-raising ability, and come up with more private donors than usually found in a traditional campaign, or forget the public funds.

It's the craziest, and most contradictory, requirement anyone could have devised. But there it is.

I recently finished jumping through all the legal hoops in Maine's new law, and I am now, officially, a Clean Election Democratic candidate for state Senate in District 10, a rural district that covers 17 towns. So I speak from experience.

To qualify for public financing, I had to do a couple of things.

I had to get my name on the ballot. For a senate candidate, that involves collecting 100 nominating signatures from registered political party members in my district. House candidates need 25 signatures. (Non-party candidates need twice as many, but any registered voter can sign.)

Second, I had to declare my intent to qualify as a Clean Election Candidate, and then to go out and find a minimum 150 registered voters in my district who were willing to write out a personal check in support of that campaign. (House candidates needed 50 checks.)

Each check was for \$5, made out to the Maine Clean Election Fund. Each of those private donors had to then sign a form declaring that they had not been reimbursed the \$5 or promised anything else for their contribution. These signatures, like the nominating signatures, had to be verified by the Registrar of Voters in the town where each voter lived.

This is my third political campaign. I can assure you that the time and effort involved in soliciting a campaign contribution is no less for a \$5 check than for a larger donation. That time and effort is considerable.

This new law attempts to address that issue. It allows (but does not require) a state Senate candidate to privately raise \$1,500 in "seed money" — no more than \$100 from each person — to pay the expenses involved with collecting those \$5 private contributions. House candidates can raise up to \$500 in "seed money." Do the math. The law clearly anticipated that as much as \$10 might have to be spent in order to collect each \$5 check. All this is private money, from private donors, duly reportable on campaign finance forms.

One problem I have with this legislation is that it seems to assume that \$5 is acceptable because it is a throw-away amount. For a lot of people in my district, people whom I consider a crucial part of my constituency, that is simply not the case. Quite a few senior citizens on fixed incomes told me "I'll vote for you, dear," but that heating bills that doubled this past winter, or drug costs that went up almost as much, eliminated any spare change they once had.

One guy said he had five kids, would gladly sign my nomination papers, but he wasn't about to send \$5 my way. I couldn't fault him his priorities.

But the basic question remains: Why should a candidate have to undertake a major fundraising effort, and beg dozens or hundreds of private donors for money, just like in the old days, in order to qualify for public funds?

The *New York Times* article explained that the cumbersome process was designed to weed out the frivolous candidates from those who are "serious." Apparently the drafters of this legislation sincerely believe that candidates who can't go out and convince a whole lot of people to give them money aren't legitimate, viable candidates, regardless of their stands on the issues.

Doesn't that sound painfully familiar? And more than a little bit arrogant?

Another part of the argument, which came out at public hearings on this law, went like this: If a promise to abide by spending limits were the only requirements for public campaign money, a flood of candidates would rush into the system. We can't afford that.

First, that argument flies in the face of Maine history. All it takes to become a Maine House or Senate candidate free-of-charge is a little leg-work and persistence collecting those freely-given signatures. And yet most years both major parties have trouble finding enough bodies to fill all the slots on the ballot.

But even if there were a flood of new candidates, isn't that the whole idea behind campaign finance reform?

The vast majority of declared Clean Election candidates this year are either Democrat or Republican. The primary contests would eliminate all but one contender from each party, and we would end up with the usual number of candidates on the ballot for the fall election. A lot of primary candidates would energize the system, and would not appreciably increase the costs.

It also made no sense to me that all of these private contributors had to be found, courted and nailed down between Jan. 1 and the filing deadline of March 16 — in other words, before the campaign was even supposed to begin. That's 10 weeks in the dead of a Maine winter. So, where does one find 150 likely donors in those 10 weeks? From the same sources a traditional candidate found traditional donors — groups with membership lists. Like church groups, service organizations, non-profit and activist outfits, people you work with, unions, political parties.

So much for taking special interests out of campaigns.

The good part is that I did meet a lot of new and wonderful people in this process. I deeply appreciate the 160 people who helped me test this new public funding law. I now have my \$1,785 primary money from the Ethics Commission, with another \$12,910 promised in June for the general election, and I can turn my attention to the issues and to getting my campaign underway.

But I have to say the private donation requirement in this law has left a really bad taste in my mouth. This law was supposed to eliminate the scenario of candidates begging people for campaign contributions. It does not do that.

Maine's Clean Election Law must be changed to eliminate private donations as the trigger for public funding. The way it stands now, Maine's groundbreaking campaign finance reform law is not marching to the tune of a different drummer. It is simply playing a warped variation on the same old theme.

Jean Hay is a resident of Dixmont, Maine. She was a Maine Democratic primary candidate for Congress in 1994 and for US Senate in 1996.

Vermont Moves Toward Clean Elections

By MARTY JEZER

Baseball has just started yet we're already deep into the election season. I like politics as much as anybody but, hey, this is way too early. Does anyone care — or should anyone care — what the candidates are saying at this point in the contest?

All across the country, incumbents and their challengers are pandering to special interests in order to hit them up for money. Candidates spent \$1.5 billion in the 1998 congressional elections. With the presidency up for grabs, that total ought to approach \$3 billion for this election cycle. A lot of schools can be built with the money politicians spend on consultants, polls, and 30-second attack ads. Is our democracy any stronger for all that squandered money?

Some candidates like fund-raising and are good at it. But accomplished fund-raisers don't necessarily make good public servants. That's why what is happening in Vermont right now is exciting and important. Candidates for Governor (and for the other statewide offices) are quietly going to their core constituents and asking them for small "Qualifying Contributions" (or "QCs") of \$50 or less. The goal, in the race for Governor, is to collect \$35,000 from at least 1500 registered Vermont voters. The candidates who can raise that money are then eligible for full public financing for the November election. There is one catch, however: candidates who raise these "Qualifying Contributions" and who choose the option of public financing cannot raise or spend any other money from private contributors. That means no more fund-raising from PACs, special interests, corporations, labor unions, rich people, poor people, out-of-state donor; no five thousand-dollar-a-plate chicken dinners (and no one-dollar-a-serving spaghetti suppers); no fund-appeal letters; no dunning phone calls; no additional fund-raising whatsoever.

Candidates who pass the qualifying threshold — and thus prove that they have substantial popular support rather than, as in other most other states, the ability to raise large amounts of money — will receive \$300,000 to spend during the general election (less the money they raised and spent getting the "Qualifying Contributions"). Governor Dean, because he has the benefit of incumbency and is in the news simply by being Governor, will only get to spend \$265,000.

For constitutional reasons, public financing is voluntary. Candidates can reject public financing (the "clean money option") and still go out, as they've done all along, and raise money from the wealthy, PACs, and special interest lobbies. But, under the new Vermont law, there are caps on what they can collect from any single source and, as with the clean money candidates, a limit on what they can spend for campaigning.

The public financing aspect of the Clean Money reform passes constitutional muster. The parts of the law that limit contributions and expenditures for

candidates who don't take public money are under legal challenge, as is a clause that counts independent expenditures as a candidate expenditure.

Regardless of the outcome of the court's decision, candidates for Governor who can prove that they have popular support, will, from now on in, be competing against one another on a financially-level playing field. From now on in, Vermont Governors will come into office unburdened by the favors they owe their "big money" benefactors.

Three candidates are known to be raising "QCs" for public financing in the race for Governor. Howard Dean is sure to qualify with the grassroots backing of the Democratic Party. Progressive Anthony Pollina is also a likely qualifier. Pollina, who in 1984 ran for Congress as a Democrat and lost to Jim Jeffords, is a founder of Rural Vermont and a well known organizer for VPIRG on agricultural, health care, and environmental issues. He has a track record and a core constituency.

The Republicans have a primary contest. One candidate, William Meub, a Rutland lawyer, is raising "QCs" and will, if he wins the primary, run in the general election with clean money. His opponent, Ruth Dwyer, is rejecting the clean money option and will be raising money from private sources. Right-wingers have a good fund-raising apparatus and she'll not lack for money.

Many Democrats fear that Pollina will take enough votes from Governor Dean to throw the election to Ms. Dwyer. I share their concern but am convinced it cannot happen. First, Dwyer has to win the Republican Primary. This is a race for the soul of the Republican Party. Meub is a Republican in the Aiken-Jeffords tradition and I expect Republican moderates to mobilize to defeat Dwyer and take back their party. In 1998 Dwyer got 41 percent of the vote in her losing race for Governor. Given her intolerant and polarizing positions, there is no way she can increase that to 50 percent. Yes, if she beats Meub in the primary, she may end up with more votes than Dean or Pollina, but not more than Dean and Pollina. Under Vermont law, a candidate must get more than fifty percent of the vote to become Governor. If no candidate has a majority, the election is decided by the legislature where Democrats and Progressives (and perhaps even a moderate Republican or two) are likely to negotiate a solution to keep Dwyer from becoming Governor.

This year's Vermont Governor's race is a beacon into the future. Arizona, Maine and Massachusetts also have new clean money election laws and many other states are moving toward it. Get big money out of politics. Level the playing field so qualified candidates can compete fairly. Lift the burden of fund-raising that discourages so many otherwise qualified candidates from running for public office.

Candidates should be elected on merit, not on their ability to raise money. Legislation should be supported on the basis of public need, and not, as it so often is, custom-crafted to meet the demands of special interests as pay-back for their campaign contributions.

Marty Jezer is a free-lance writer from Brattleboro, Vt., and welcomes comments at mjez@sover.net. As a member of the Working Group on Electoral Democracy, Jezer helped draft the model legislation on which the Vermont clean money law is based.

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Without elaborate digging, that counsel will find convincing evidence to support the case.

First, over the past five years states have given health insurance to millions of women and children whose incomes are too high for Medicaid. Statistically, the federally-funded Children's Health Insurance Program has been a success, and states can take a bow. States' successes, though, have not whittled away at the overall number of uninsured Americans. Rather, public insurance has substituted for private coverage. The Center for Studying Health System Change reported that over five years the percentage of low income children with public coverage increased from 29 percent to 33 percent, but the percentage with private coverage fell from 47 percent to 42 percent. More low-income parents found themselves without insurance — from 31 percent to 35 percent. Vice President Gore has pledged to extend CHIP, portraying it as a way to reverse the mounting toll of the uninsured — now up to almost 44 million. Yet, given the recent data, no evidence suggests that an expanded CHIP will fill that promise.

Second, because most adults get insurance via their jobs, the common-sense wisdom has predicted that a spurt in employment should translate into comparable insurance statistics. That hasn't happened: We have created a net

increase of 35 million new jobs over the past decade — many of them paying respectable salaries. Unemployment is at a record peacetime low. Yet we haven't raised the net number of people with insurance. Nor has the other economic good news translated into more people with insurance. Today investment is up, productivity is up, inflation is down. The federal deficit has become a surplus. We are a prosperous country, with a private sector market that other countries envy. Yet the toll of the uninsured climbs.

Finally, the much-vaunted "safety net" has grown porous. Governor Bush has touted the crowded waiting rooms of hospital emergency rooms as evidence that people without insurance are getting medical care. Yet the Balanced Budget Act cutbacks have strained the capacity of hospitals to fill their mission. Neighborhood health centers exist; but tight budgets, coupled with a growing census of the uninsured, have stretched them. In Texas, one-quarter of residents have no health insurance — a herculean burden for the most committed institutions.

In sum, the obvious solutions have not worked. Even while states have covered more people, and our economic indices have soared, more Americans find themselves without health insurance. And the safety net — never especially large or finely-meshed — has shrunk.

A generation ago, Congress solved the problem of the uninsured elderly. With Medicare, the federal government insured all Americans over age 65, regardless of health, wealth, employment, or home state. Congress can do the same for younger Americans.

The time, though, is now. Eventually this wondrous economic cycle will dip: employment, productivity, and investment will slump — if only temporarily. That is the nature of cycles. If Congress won't enact a federal solution to a glaring inequity now, when will it?

Joan Retsinas is a sociologist who writes about health care in Providence, Rhode Island.

Marcus Welby Meets Managed Care

The first time I realized things had changed at my doctor's office was when I, as a patient, became involuntary, unpaid office help. "Fill this out," I was instructed by the receptionist, as she handed me a multi-paged medical form that resembled the longer version of the US Census. The form included questions about my health going back to childhood: illnesses, symptoms, treatments, family history, and so on.

These were questions the medical staff had formerly asked and recorded. No longer; they were too busy for that. The patient was now required to do the work, much as service station customers pump their own gas and bank customers deposit or withdraw their own money through an ATM. Though I didn't know it at the time, my extensive dossier would form the basis for my future medical care, providing the rationale for a barrage of arbitrary testing procedures.

This was my welcome to the brave new world of managed care. My doctor, a formerly independent, fee-for-service physician, had joined forces with an umbrella organization that relieved him of administrative duties and expenses, but simultaneously transformed him into a shareholding business partner with obligations to a group practice. Among these was the need to see more patients in less time. No more friendly, informal chats preceding examinations. Office visits were now strictly commercial affairs. Every procedure, however minor, and every minute spent, were duly itemized and billed.

My doctor had not joined a large HMO. These have not yet come to Maine in any meaningful way; we're too small a market. Managed care is another matter. The independent physician, hanging out his own shingle, is rapidly disappearing, and group medicine of one kind or another is the new reality. This is leading, inevitably, to impersonal health care, where organizational considerations are paramount. The doctor's job remains the practice of medicine, but he's also charged with generating business, maximizing revenues, and adhering to a strict bottom line.

One bizarre outgrowth of this trend is the phenomenon of treating the healthy. David Brown, a writer for the *Washington Post*, recently illuminated this new, income-enhancing form of medicine, where statistical risk is treated as a disease. Conditions, says Brown, that were once common to most presumably healthy adults (and considered part of the natural aging process) — somewhat elevated cholesterol or glucose levels, slightly increased blood pressure, moderate weight gain, and so forth — have been redefined as serious health problems requiring aggressive intervention. One-fifth of all visits to US doctors, he reports, are now for addressing such relatively benign "abnormalities" among the otherwise well.

To some degree, this is a good thing — simply the next logical step in applying preventative medicine to achieve optimal public health. If America had a European-style medical system, one not ruled by profit, it might be possible to be more sanguine about the movement toward discovering new "diseases" and treating the outwardly well. Doctors could be given the benefit of the doubt; it could be assumed they had only the best interests of the patient at heart.

Unfortunately, that's not the case in much of modern American medicine, where HMOs, managed-care partnerships, for-profit hospitals, pharmaceuti-

cal firms, and, of course, insurance companies have a common vested interest in growing the business of medicine. The current tactic of revising health guidelines and declaring more Americans sick may make some rational sense from a medical standpoint; that's certainly debatable. What's not debatable is the fact that it unquestionably improves the bottom lines of medical providers.

Two cases in point illustrate what's happening. In 1998, responding to what it calls a growing epidemic of diabetes, the American Diabetes Association lowered the official fasting blood-sugar (or glucose) number that defines the disease from 140 to 126 milligrams per deciliter. Simultaneously, it identified a new at-risk category (fasting levels of 110 to 125 mg/dl), which it labeled Impaired Fasting Glucose, or IFG. These initiatives instantaneously added millions of formerly healthy people to the ranks of the diabetes afflicted or threatened, thereby increasing the perceived epidemic. These newly "sick" individuals can now be subjected to regular blood tests, repeated check-ups by doctors, consultations with dietitians, and (if necessary) prescription drugs — all for a price, of course.

The guidelines for identifying those with elevated cholesterol and triglycerides (factors in heart disease) have also been altered. In 1993, the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the highly respected government agency charged with maintaining disease control, recommended keeping overall cholesterol levels below 240 milligrams per deciliter (preferably under 200 mg/dl) and triglyceride levels below 200 mg/dl. A large part of the private medical establishment, however, dismissed these recommendations as insufficiently stringent, implying that federal health officials were reluctant to truthfully publicize a growing problem.

Doctors William Castelli and Glen Griffin, the authors of a widely circulated book on cholesterol (*Good Fat, Bad Fat*) that is endorsed by many physicians, have impugned the NIH guidelines as being inspired by unspecified political considerations. They and their supporters call for lowering everyone's cholesterol and triglyceride levels to under 150 mg, 50 points or more below what is advocated by NIH researchers. Since the average cholesterol reading for the American public at large is in the 210-220 mg/dl range, the economic incentive for the medical establishment is obvious: the creation of a huge new pool of patients requiring periodic examinations, blood tests, and (most especially) supervised drug therapy. It is probably no accident that the Castelli-Griffin tract is sponsored and disseminated free of charge to physicians (including my own) by the Bayer Corporation and SmithKline Beecham Pharmaceuticals.

The accelerated creation of treatable diseases has several unforeseen effects, according to David Brown. These include mental stress on the unnecessarily worried patient and budgetary stress on the entire health-care system, including the struggling Medicare program, as the search for sufficient dollars to meet rising treatment standards proceeds apace.

Brown might have added that such problems are the logical outgrowth of an American medical structure increasingly based on business values and the profit motive, and characterized by an incestuous relationship between health practitioners and the drug industry. Reversing the trend toward entrepreneurial medicine brought about by private-sector managed care should be the first step in reordering our medical priorities. A government-based national health-care system should be the second.

Wayne O'Leary is a writer in Orono, Maine.

Dispatches ...

Continued from page 8

BRITS SNOOP ON E-MAIL, WEB BROWSING. By the end of this year, the British intelligence agency MI5 will have the capability to read any e-mail passing through the UK and track every web site that a person visits. According to the *Christian Science Monitor*, the British government is building a \$39 million Internet spy center to watch all online activities. It's also requiring local Internet service providers, such as AOL, to hardwire links directly to the spy center at the expense of the ISPs. Privacy groups are appalled by the scope of the British effort, which rivals the Russian capacity for invasion of Internet privacy. Other governments are watching the British model closely. US spy agencies already have the capability to monitor private telephone conversations, faxes and e-mail messages around the world through the Echelon network, operated by the US National Security Agency in partnership with intelligence services of Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The American Civil Liberties Union has asked the House Government Reform Committee to hold hearings on the threat to privacy and civil liberties posed by Echelon. [See "Watching Big Brother Watch Us," 3/1/00 PP, or www.echelonwatch.org.]

BIOTECH REGS DISAPPOINT ADVOCATES. New rules on testing and labeling of genetically engineered foods announced by the Food and Drug

Administration May 3 drew criticism from advocates for scientific, consumer, environmental and farm groups.

"This initiative is little more than window dressing on what remains a rickety regulatory structure," said Dr. Margaret Mellon, director of the Agriculture and Biotechnology Program at the Union of Concerned Scientists.

"FDA will not be doing any testing on genetically engineered food, but instead relying solely on industry data," said Andrew Kimbrell, Executive Director of the Center for Food Safety. He predicted that the FDA's call for voluntary labeling of genetically engineered food will result in no labeling.

"The FDA fails to require mandatory labeling for all genetically engineered food products even though polls show that 70-90 percent of Americans want it," said Mark Silbergeld of Consumers Union. "Therefore, most foods on the supermarket shelf are unlikely to contain label information about GE content, whether they are GE or GE free. Consumers will be given little of the information they say they want when they do the family food shopping."

More than 50 scientific, consumer, environmental and farm organizations in March petitioned the FDA demanding the development of a thorough pre-market and environmental testing regime and mandatory labeling for GE foods. [For more information see www.centerforfoodsafety.org, www.consumersunion.org or www.ucsusa.org.]

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COVER STORY

Nuked food ...

Continued from page one

time again — by government bureaucrats, and food and nuclear industry executives trying to sell irradiation as a way to kill *E. coli*, *Salmonella* and other food-borne pathogens, while extending the shelf life (and, thus, the global market reach) of meat, fruit, vegetables, spices and prepared foods such as TV dinners and baby food.

Like salespeople, though, they're not telling the whole truth. Information that could help citizen/consumers make better decisions — information about how irradiation depletes nutrients in food, causes health problems in laboratory animals, spawns mutant life forms, kills beneficial microorganisms, turns some food rancid, marginalizes already struggling family farmers, encourages the proliferation of nuclear technology, and masks filthy slaughterhouse conditions that foul meat with feces, urine, and pus — has been craftily excised from the public debate.

While an all-out scientific and philosophical war is being waged over genetically engineered food, federal officials and corporate interests such as Kraft, Tyson and Wal-Mart are quietly attempting to legalize and commercialize an under-tested, over-hyped technology — which claims to make food safer by zapping it with the equivalent of tens of millions of x-rays — that could pose just as many dangers to the public. If not more.

Listening to the Past

Though it was fully 100 years ago that an MIT professor discovered that radiation could be harnessed to kill bacteria in food, it wasn't until the 1950s — under President Eisenhower's *Atoms for Peace* initiative (which also promised that nuclear power would be "too cheap to meter") — that food irradiation began to nudge toward the mainstream. But once the procedure started to gain popularity, it didn't take long for problems to crop up.

That pork that a young Tom Harkin ate when he was in the Navy? Turned out it might not have been safe after all. Military-sponsored tests yielded all sorts of nasty problems in lab animals fed irradiated food. A short time later, three executives of the firm hired by the military to research irradiation during the 1970s were convicted of doing fraudulent work. No matter. The federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) continued to allow potatoes and wheat flour to be irradiated and fed to the public.

Then came the innocuous-sounding Byproducts Utilization Program, under which the federal Department of Energy (DOE) started hunting around for places to pawn off deadly waste from its nuclear installations — such as the radioactive cesium-137 wallowing at the nuclear bomb factory at Hanford, Washington (arguably the most polluted place in the Western Hemisphere).

With the government's blessing — if not its encouragement — the private sector started to get into the act. Given the spotty record of companies using radiation to sterilize medical supplies, however, one wonders how the government could have allowed them to start irradiating food. From 1974 to 1989, there were 45 recorded accidents at US irradiation plants. Among the worst:

- In 1977 a worker at the Radiation Technology plant in Rockaway, New Jersey, received a near-fatal dose of radiation, after which company president Martin Welt ordered staffers to give false information to federal investigators. After some 32 violations for such offenses as throwing out radioactive garbage with the regular trash, Welt was forced to resign (though the government soon after hired him as a

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\$100-an-hour consultant and he eventually started another irradiation company.)

- In 1982 cobalt-tainted water was flushed down the public sewer system at the International Nutronics plant in Dover, New Jersey, leading to the federal conviction of a company executive who tried to cover up the incident.

- From 1985-99 the Neutron Products plant in Dickerson, Maryland was cited for 192 safety and other violations. The place was so hot with radiation that a company vice president's contaminated clothes set off an alarm at a New York nuclear plant he was visiting in 1988.

- In 1988 a Hanford-harvested capsule of cesium-137 sprung a leak at the Radiation Sterilizes plant in Decatur, Georgia. The ensuing cleanup cost taxpayers more than \$45 million.

Government officials and industry execs still hold out hope that cesium-137 will find a niche in the food irradiation market, despite the Decatur disaster — and despite the deaths of four people in Goiania, Brazil, whose bodies were buried in lead-lined caskets after they mistakenly handled radioactive cesium in 1987.

Ruining Your Appetite

If irradiation plants sound scary, listen to what happens to *food* when it's blasted with gamma rays, electrons or x-rays.

For starters, dozens if not hundreds of formal studies conducted over the past 40 years — all rejected by the FDA as being poorly done — have revealed serious health problems in lab animals fed irradiated food. You name it — shorter lifespans, low birth weight, kidney damage, immune and reproductive problems, chromosomal abnormalities, tumors. If it could go wrong, chances are it did.

In one of the few recorded studies conducted on people, Indian researchers discovered in the mid-1970s that malnourished children fed freshly irradiated wheat developed polyploidy, a defect in the chromosomes of blood cells. (FDA officials triggered an international incident by rudely discounting the study, going so far as to publish false information in the *Federal Register*.)

What's worse, irradiation — with all of its deadly unknowns — creates an entire new class of mysterious compounds by literally smashing apart the chemical bonds in food and sending electrons flying all over the place. Even though these "unique radiolytic products" — as well as well-known toxins such as formaldehyde, benzene, and formic acid that irradiation can produce — have mutagenic and carcinogenic potential, government officials have not come close to adequately studying how they could harm people. And, irradiation can stimulate the creation of carcinogenic aflatoxins in grains and toxic solanine in potatoes, the latter of which sent 17 English boys to the hospital in 1979.

What's worse still, vitamins and nutrients take a beating under the onslaught of irradiation, destroying up to 95 percent of vitamin A in chicken, 86 percent of vitamin B in oats, and 70 percent of vitamin C in fruit juices. Essential amino acids and polyunsaturated fatty acids can be depleted as well.

A host of other unintended consequences can result, including onions that turn brown on the inside and meat that smells like a wet dog, the elimination of such beneficial microorganisms as the yeasts and molds that help keep botulism at bay, and the possible mutation of bacteria into forms resistant to radiation.

Reinventing Government

Without exception, FDA officials — for one reason or another — have chosen to ignore the

piles of research suggesting that irradiating food may be problematic. But that's not the half of it. The government has built its entire case in support of irradiation on a mere five studies — none of which were done after 1980 — that officials not-so-enthusiastically said two decades ago "do not appear" to indicate the process is potentially harmful.

Moreover, since the FDA began stepping up its approval of the food and nuclear industries' irradiation requests in 1983 — beginning with a request by the infamous Martin Welt to irradiate parsley, sage, rosemary, thyme and other seasonings — no significant research has been done on whether the process is safe for the additional food groups and at the higher doses. For instance, FDA officials, who said in 1982 that irradiating food with 1 kiloGray of radiation was *probably* safe, have little or no idea whether it's safe to irradiate beef and lamb with 7 kiloGrays, which the agency approved in 1997.

The government, as is often the case, should know better. The feds ignored the concerns of one of their own experts, former high-ranking FDA scientist Marcia van Gemert, who cautioned back in 1982 that no long-term studies had been done on irradiated food likely to become a significant part of people's diet.

Van Gemert's warning is as timely as ever. At this writing, the FDA is considering a proposal from the powerful National Food Processors Association to irradiate ready-to-eat food such as TV dinners and luncheon meat. The agency has also provisionally allowed pre-packaged food to be blasted with electrons (or "e-beam"), even though US Food Safety and Inspection Service chief Thomas Billy wrote that "we have no data specifically supporting the assumption" that the procedure is safe.

Donald Louria, chair of preventive medicine and community health at the New Jersey University of Medicine, has been raising red flags about the dangers of food irradiation for more than 10 years. And he's still as worried as he's ever been: "Until the industry is willing to agree to nutritional studies on each type of irradiated food and to put the results on the label, and until there is a proper study of the potential chromosomal damage of irradiation, we should not be irradiating our foods."

In Our Hands

Slowing — much less stopping — the government-blessed, corporate-bankrolled food irradiation movement is a tall order, to say the least.

This spring, Wal-Mart — the largest retailer on Earth with \$160 billion in annual sales — began test-marketing irradiated meat to its customers. Wal-Mart is buying the products from meat-packing giant IBP, which zapped them at an e-beam facility in Sioux City, Iowa, operated by Titan Corp., an erstwhile defense contractor notorious for its polluted iron plant in Keasbey, New Jersey. Titan is also irradiating meat for Tyson, Cargill-owned Excel, and Philip Morris-owned Kraft, among other major players in the ever-consolidating, ever-globalizing meat industry.

Corporate giants are also showing up on the research end of things. For instance, work at the Illinois Institute of Technology, one of the nation's leading irradiation research installations, is funded by Coca-Cola, ConAgra, Kraft, Nestle, and Pepsico. And, many "food safety" advocacy groups throwing their weight behind irradiation are actually industry front organizations. The corporate-funded American Council on Science and Health, for example, is chaired by A. Alan Moghissi, whose anti-environment and anti-consumer positions include fighting the removal of asbestos from schools and proclaiming that higher levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is a good thing for the agriculture industry.

Funny, the food industry hasn't

always been unified in its support of food irradiation. Just seven years ago, the editors of *Meat & Poultry* magazine took the technology to task, warning that it should not be embraced as a panacea to protect people from contaminated food. "To think we can literally cram irradiation down the throats of consumers because it is the 'right' answer to our problems," the editors wrote, "is to step on the opinion of the very people we depend on for survival."

With industry and the government evangelizing in unison for food irradiation, it is, in fact, only the consumers can stop this under-tested, over-hyped technology from being crammed down their throats.

Mark Worth is senior researcher at *Public Citizen's Critical Mass Energy and Environment Program*. Those interested in voicing their concerns about food irradiation can contact:

Wal-Mart: 1-800-966-6546 (ext. 3) or 1-800-WAL-MART

Donna Shalala, Secretary, US Department of Health and Human Services: 202-619-0257 or 1-877-696-6775

Thomas Billy, administrator, US Food Safety and Inspection Service: 202-720-7025

For more information on food irradiation, call *Public Citizen's Critical Mass Energy and Environment Program* at 202-546-4996, or visit www.nonuked-food.org.

Arkansans Protest Wal-Mart plans to sell meat treated with radiation

Fayetteville, Arkansas

Civic leaders, concerned citizens and Wal-Mart customers on May 2 urged Wal-Mart not to test-market irradiated meat in its Supercenters.

Food irradiation is a process where food is exposed to high levels of radiation in order to kill bacteria and extend shelf life for up to 35 days. While proponents of the process state that irradiation will make food safer, no one really knows the health impacts of eating irradiated food.

"We oppose food irradiation because it merely masks the problem of poor meat processing practices that leave meat contaminated with feces, urine and pus," said Marquette MyCue, a local community leader in health related issues, in a news conference at the Fayetteville Hilton. "At a minimum, Wal-Mart should warn consumers of the dangers of irradiated meat with labels that state irradiation does not kill all bacteria, that it destroys important vitamins and enzymes, and that it leads to the formation of potentially carcinogenic chemicals in food."

"Irradiation translates into big profits for Wal-Mart, but something entirely different for consumers," said Wenonah Hauter, director of Public Citizen's Critical Mass Energy Project. "Corporate agribusiness has convinced the government to abandon its protective role, allowing companies like Wal-Mart to use food irradiation to extend the shelf life of meat beyond what is appropriate and mask the unhygienic conditions in which animals are raised, slaughtered and processed."

Most American consumers share the views expressed at the news conference. A 1999 poll commissioned by the American Association of Retired Persons and Center for Science in the Public Interest found that 88.6 percent of Americans want labels to indicated food has been irradiated. A 1997 CBS News poll found that 77 percent of Americans would not buy irradiated food.

Another problem with irradiated meat is the threat to small farmers in the United States as well as around the globe. Family farmers and small food

Continued on next page

Time Warner-Disney Conflict Threatens Consumers

The immediate victims in the raging battle between Time Warner and Disney were the 3.5 million households who on May 1 suddenly lost cable access to *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire* and other ABC programming.

Win, lose or draw for Time Warner and Disney — and a truce was negotiated to put ABC back on the cable a day later — the entire consuming public will be the long-run losers.

Underlying the dispute is the massive consolidation in the media business, which has placed a half dozen megacorporations in control of a wide range of broadcast and cable television networks, movie production, book publishing and radio networks, as well as, increasingly, the cable, satellite, internet and telephone system conduits to deliver media content.

The Time Warner-Disney conflict is one example among many of how media concentration empowers corporations while limiting consumer choice and diminishing the diversity of publicized political viewpoints.

The flashpoint in the current controversy is Disney's demand that Time Warner Cable Systems include more Disney-owned programming in its cable packages. Disney has asked Time Warner to include the Disney Channel in basic cable package, and to feature two other Disney channels, Toon Disney and the Soap Channel. Disney has also reportedly demanded \$300 million from Time Warner for the rights to carry its channels.

Refusing to concede to these demands, Time

Warner pulled the plug on Disney programming, including the programming aired by seven Disney-owned ABC affiliates.

Time Warner's contract to air the Disney shows originally expired at the end of 1999, but had been repeatedly extended a month at a time. Disney offered to extend the deal for another 24 days — through the "sweeps" period. Time Warner counter-offered to prolong the arrangement for eight months. Neither side would budge before the May 1 deadline.

Time Warner complains that Disney is asking too much for its programming. The source of this complaint is Disney's gambit to leverage the power derived from its ownership of the ABC affiliates — whose programming Time Warner must air to offer a viable product — to force Time Warner to air other Disney channels, and on terms Time Warner finds onerous.

Time Warner has a good point. This structural advantage gives Disney a leg up on independent cable networks, and may undermine viewer choice (to see networks Time Warner won't air in slots given to Disney channels) and increase viewer cost.

For its part, Disney says it is fearful that, especially if its merger with AOL is approved, Time Warner will leverage its enormous power to discriminate against networks which it doesn't own. Disney fears that Time Warner — which owns both conduit (the cable networks) and content providers (including CNN and the WB network) — will block competitor channels and networks from using emerging interactive technologies to deliver advertisements or enhanced programming. For example, Disney spokespeople say that Time Warner, favoring Time Warner-owned CNN, might block ABC News from access to the two-way communications needed to ask individual viewers if they would like more information on a topic delivered to them.

Disney has a good point, too. Time Warner's structural advantage may portend additional income streams for its programming only, to the detriment of

competitors — and, consequently, viewer choice.

Much more important than the immediate Disney-Time Warner dispute is what the conflagration highlights: The ongoing merger mania in the media and telecommunications industries will profoundly shape the face of information dissemination in the coming century. And all signs now point to enhanced influence for the media giants, steady deterioration in programming diversity and increasing news and public affairs homogenization — at the expense of the cacophonous public debate featuring political perspectives from A to Z (not just of ABC) which should be the foundation of a democratic society.

The first step in addressing these problems is a national moratorium on major media mergers (including blocking of the Time Warner-AOL merger).

Not only would a moratorium halt dangerous trends in media concentration, it would give the public and politicians time to sort through the democratic damage that has already occurred, and to craft appropriate remedies.

We could begin a national debate about far-reaching proposals to enhance our culture and democracy: breaking up the media giants, imposing strict limitations on horizontal and especially vertical integration in the media markets, demanding monetary and in-kind payments from the broadcasters for the public handover of the digital and broadcast spectrum (including creation of an audience network governed by the public and financed by the broadcasters), transferring the entire over-the-air broadcast spectrum to public television outlets, requiring the provision of free television time to electoral candidates and other measures worthy of serious consideration.

Mokhiber is editor of the Corporate Crime Reporter (contact 202-737-1680 or russell@essential.org). Weissman is editor of the Multinational Monitor (202-387-8030 or rob@essential.org). A collection of their columns, Corporate Predators: The Hunt for MegaProfits and the Attack on Democracy, was published by Common Courage Press. For information see their web site, www.corporatepredators.org, or call Common Courage Press at 1-800-497-3207.

MEDIA BEAT/*Norman Solomon*

Break Up Microsoft?

Then How About The Media 'Big Six'?

The push by federal regulators to break up Microsoft is big news. Until recently, the software giant seemed untouchable — and few people demanded effective antitrust efforts against monopoly power in the software industry. These days, a similar lack of vision is routine in looking at the media business.

Today, just six corporations have a forceful grip on America's mass media. We should consider how to break the hammerlock that huge firms currently maintain around the windpipe of the First Amendment. And we'd better hurry.

The trend lines of media ownership are steep and ominous in the United States. When *The Media Monopoly* first

appeared on bookshelves in 1983, author Ben Bagdikian explains, "50 corporations dominated most of every mass medium." With each new edition, that number kept dropping — to 29 media firms in 1987, 23 in 1990, 14 in 1992, and 10 in 1997.

Published this spring, the sixth edition of *The Media Monopoly* documents that just a half-dozen corporations are now supplying most of the nation's media fare. And Bagdikian, a longtime journalist, continues to sound the alarm. "It is the overwhelming collective power of these firms, with their corporate interlocks and unified cultural and political values, that raises troubling questions about the individual's role in the American democracy."

I wonder what the chances are that Bagdikian — or anyone else — will be invited onto major TV broadcast networks to discuss the need for vigorous antitrust enforcement against the biggest media conglomerates. Let's see:

► CBS — Not a good bet, especially since its merger with Viacom (one of the

Big Six) was announced last fall.

► NBC — Quite unlikely. General Electric, a Big Six firm, has owned NBC since 1986.

► ABC — Forget it. This network became the property of the Disney Co. five years ago. Disney is now the country's second-largest media outfit.

► Fox — The Fox network is owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp., currently number four in the media oligarchy.

And then there's always cable television, with several networks devoted to news:

► CNN — The world's biggest media conglomerate, Time Warner, owns CNN — where antitrust talk about undue concentration of media power is about as welcome as the Internationale sung at a baseball game in Miami.

► CNBC — Sixth-ranked General Electric owns this cable channel.

► MSNBC — Spawned as a joint venture of GE and Microsoft, the MSNBC network would see activism against media monopoly as double trouble.

► Fox News Channel — The Fox cable programming rarely wanders far from the self-interest of News Corp. tycoon Murdoch.

Since all of those major TV news sources are owned by one of the Big Six, the chances are mighty slim that you'll be able to catch a discussion of media antitrust issues on national television.

Meanwhile, the only Big Sixer that doesn't possess a key US television outlet — the Bertelsmann firm based in Germany — is the most powerful company in the book industry. It owns the mammoth publisher Random House, and plenty more in the media universe. Bertelsmann "is the world's third largest conglomerate," Bagdikian reports, "with substantial ownership of magazines, newspapers, music, television, on-line trading, films, and radio in 53 countries." Try pitching a book proposal to a Random House editor about the dangers of global media consolidation.

Well, you might comfort yourself by thinking about cyberspace. Think again. The dominant Internet service provider, America Online, is combining with

already-number-one Time Warner — and the new firm AOL Time Warner would have more to lose than any other corporation if a movement grew to demand antitrust action against media conglomerates.

Amid rampant overall commercialization of the most heavily trafficked websites, AOL steers its 22 million subscribers in many directions — and, in the future, Time Warner's offerings will be most frequently highlighted. While seeming to be gateways to a vast cybergalaxy, AOL's favorite links will remain overwhelmingly corporate friendly within a virtual cul-de-sac.

Hype about the New Media seems boundless, while insatiable old hungers for maximum profits fill countless screens. Centralization is the order of the media day. As Bagdikian points out: "The power and influence of the dominant companies are understated by counting them as 'six.' They are intertwined: they own stock in each other, they cooperate in joint media ventures, and among themselves they divide profits from some of the most widely viewed programs on television, cable and movies."

We may not like the nation's gigantic media firms, but right now they don't care much what we think. A strong antitrust movement aimed at the Big Six could change such indifference in a hurry.

Norman Solomon's latest book is The Habits of Highly Deceptive Media. Write him at P.O. Box 13193, Oakland, CA 94661 or email mediabeat@igc.org.

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Arkansas ...

Continued from preceding page

producers are finding it impossible to compete economically with corporate factory farms. The extended shelf life resulting from irradiation will enable foreign meat producers to drive the small American farmer out of business.

The body of research on irradiated food is sketchy at best and has yielded conflicting results. There are no studies on the long-term health effects of irradiated food on humans. Among the unknowns: whether irradiation has different effects on frozen food as compared to fresh food; how irradiation affects irregularly shaped foods; its effects on helpful bacteria; and the effects of irradiation on plant workers who oversee the treatment of food.

According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) documents, a

1982 FDA review of 413 studies found 344 to be inconclusive or inadequate to demonstrate either the safety or toxicity of irradiated foods, while 32 indicated adverse effects and 37 showed the procedure to be safe.

In February, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) legalized the irradiation of raw meat and meat products such as ground beef, steaks and pork chops. The government declared food irradiation safe by using mathematical calculations supported by just five animal studies conducted primarily in the 1960s and 1970s that were of questionable quality.

Under the USDA's labeling requirements, meat served in such places as restaurants and cafeterias will not have to be labeled, so consumers will have no idea when they are eating irradiated meat. However, irradiated meat sold in stores must be labeled as such.

GRANNY D'S JOURNAL/*Doris Haddock*

Reform Energy

(Doris Haddock's remarks at a Massachusetts Common Cause luncheon, April 30, 2000)

I would first like to congratulate you for the wonderful work you have been doing here. Government reform in a democracy is difficult and never-ending work.

We are having important reform victories throughout the country, and I feel very heartened by the rise of a grand new alliance that is forming between pro-democracy reformers, environmental reformers and social justice reformers. The politics of this new century is taking shape in an explosive-energetic and effective way.

I think this evening might be a good time to look at how we might better shape these new energies.

We need to ask ourselves if things are better now than they were thirty years ago in the areas where we work for reform.

We have enjoyed environmental victories, but the earth is slipping away from us quickly.

We have had governmental reform victories, but many people think we have lost the war against big money's influence. Individual citizens have tuned out of the process, because they sense that their participation is so marginal as to be less than useless. I say less than useless, because many people feel that, by participating, they would help validate a corrupt system.

Why have we had this great decline? In some areas of reform, the Civil Rights Movement, for example, we have seen great victories. What is the difference between the approaches of Civil Rights and, say, Campaign Finance Reform?

What is your image of the Civil Rights Movement? What is your image of the Campaign Finance Reform effort? I know that, when I think of the Civil Rights Movement, I see individual sacrifices and courage. I see the marchers in Selma and the brave teenagers at Little Rock High School.

Americans, to force social and political changes upon themselves, must see people engaged, people caring, people making a sacrifice. Unless this debt of caring is paid to overflowing, no reform can be purchased from the hearts of the public. Organizations can be founded, offices can be opened in Washington, and press releases and studies can be issued, but unless they speak for a massive number of individual people who are putting themselves on the line and at risk, then those studies will just cost us more trees.

A movement must be people. The people must be fully engaged in a cause they believe is right. It is useless to think that an organization can do much if it is too interested in looking nonpartisan and civilized. You can perhaps raise funds for such an organization, and you can get invited to the nicer parties, but you cannot create real change.

I say that because all this Seattle-type energy that is coming to campaign finance reform has many people in the campaign reform community a little uneasy. I have seen e-mails from some leaders saying that they fear being in any street protests, because they have carefully built up a nonpartisan image on both sides of the political spectrum and they don't want to look like the crazies. I have invited the top leaders of some so-called reform organizations to walk with me or risk arrest with me, and they have turned me down for fear, I think, of looking too strident.

These people should look for work in certified public accounting and get out of the reform business.

If we are not enough convinced of

the fact that what we are fighting for is the very survival of democracy and of nature, then we have no place in the movement. We ARE fighting for those things and we had better be damned strident. We had better be willing to sacrifice our little egos and false dignity.

Now, how should we all proceed organizationally? If you haven't noticed, let me tell you that the old-line reform organizations are falling off a demographic cliff because the generation of people who have high expectations of government are dying off. Younger people do not trust institutions to do their bidding for them, whether those institutions are governments or nonprofit associations, and they are not angry about government corruption because we have told them a million times that that is the way it is. They accept it. They volunteer directly as individuals in the causes they support, usually giving their time rather than their money.

That very simply is a fact, and any new organizing approach must take it into account. People want to make a difference, and they want to do the work themselves. What could be a more perfect situation for a true reform movement?

The Internet, of course, finally makes such organizing possible without a big budget. It is quite possible for hundreds of thousands of people to be coordinated without the need for heavy fundraising. Where money is necessary, people are generous — so long as they see the immediate application of the funds to the project at hand.

And as to facilities and headquarters, I think we have learned by now that Washington is the place where you celebrate the victories of reform, but it is not where you fight. Having a headquarters in Washington may be emotionally counterproductive to the cause. If groups must have physical headquarters, I would put them in high-energy cities like New York, Boston, Chicago or San Francisco before I would put them in Washington, which is often little more than a black hole for our energies and our money.

It will be hard for people who have been involved in the reform fight to shift gears and take advantage of new generations and new opportunities. New leaders may take their place, coming from the barricades of Seattle and Washington and elsewhere — people who are not afraid to look like young fools. I hope you will be one of the young fools, regardless of your age.

This is the beginning of a great time of individual action in defense of our most cherished civic dreams and in defense of our natural world. It is insufficient to write a check to some organization and think that they can do that work for us — though we must write the checks, too. It is time for individual action. The powers who claw against democracy and the environment are not fighting us from across the sea somewhere. They are at our door and coming into our homes. It is, in many ways, an internal battle of the soul for each of us. We are very fortunate to live in a time when so much is at stake.

Thank you very much.
Your old road is
Rapidly agin'.
Please get out of the new one
If you can't lend your hand
For the times they are a-changin'.
—Bob Dylan

Doris Haddock, aka Granny D, is a 90-year-old retired secretary from Dublin, N.H., who walked 3,200 miles across the country to bring attention to the need for campaign finance reform. She and 29 others were arrested April 21 for demonstrating inside the Capitol building. To help defray Granny D's expenses, send a check, payable to "The Doris Haddock Fund," to: New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, 37 Pleasant St., Concord, NH 03301.

GRASSROOTS/*Hank Kalet*

Military Might Doesn't Make Right

When US war ships were sent to the coast of Vieques in Puerto Rico last month, they continued a tradition that dates back to World War II.

That's when the U.S. military expropriated about 35 or so square miles — about three quarters of the 52-square-mile island — and forced about half the population to move so it could build a \$35 million naval base and use the island for training. The land included the island's best beaches and land used in Vieques' once-thriving sugar cane and agricultural industry, according to the *Orlando Sentinel*.

The protesters who forced the showdown with the American military also were continuing their own tradition. From the time the military moved in, Puerto Ricans have been protesting the use of the island — and neighboring island-municipalities — for practice bombing and the environmental degradation the Navy has caused. They've been pushing to get the Navy to close the Camp Garcia range and to leave the island.

But the Pentagon calls the bombing range, located on the eastern third of the island, "vital to national security because it provides live-fire combat training before every deployment of Atlantic Fleet carrier battle groups abroad, practicing precision bombing as well as amphibious assaults," according to the Associated Press.

The most recent protests have occupied the Vieques range since April 1999, when two US jets dropped 500-pound bombs during target practice, missing their mark by three miles, according to the *Orlando Sentinel*. One of the errant bombs hit an observation post, killing security guard David Sanes Rodriguez and injuring four others. The accident triggered protests through Puerto Rico, a US territory of 4 million people.

Over the last year, Puerto Rican protests — sometimes numbering in the tens of thousands — marched to close the base and two groups of base foes established campsites saying they would remain there until the Navy leaves or they are arrested.

In January, President Bill Clinton ordered the reopening of the range, following a deal with Puerto Rican Governor Pedro Rosello. Under the terms of the deal, according to Time.com, Washington was to pay \$40 million to conduct operations using dummy bombs this spring and to abide by a referendum to be held in the next two years among the island's 9,000 residents. If residents vote to allow use of live bombing exercises, they would be given an extra \$50 million in aid if they vote to allow the resumption of live ammunition exercises.

Protesters didn't like the deal, however, and the military sent in troops, including three Navy frigates carrying "helicopters and vehicles of the kind used to transport prisoners," according to a report by the Puerto Rican daily *El Nuevo Dia*. The FBI and federal marshals also participated in the operation, which was successful in removing the protesters.

The protesters left peacefully, but not before making their opposition to the federal government's use of the island known.

Their reasons are simple: They say the US government, through its navy, has violated their civil and human rights through the "displacement by the navy of thousands of Puerto Ricans from their land and homes during World War II," according to the *New York Times*. "According to protest organizers, navy ownership of three-quarters of the island has strangled the local economy, reduced its population from 30,000 to 9,300 and led to high unemployment and other social problems."

According to the Vieques web site (www.vieques-island.com), 8,000 tons of sugar were produced in 1941, but with the navy taking a large chunk of farmland, agriculture suffered. All told, about 3,000 residents were relocated to St. Croix.

Islanders believe the military base has become "a symbol of the arrogance shown by US corporate and military complex," Joe McIntire wrote in a November report on the Vieques Island web site. "Since the accidental killing of a Puerto Rican in April — by a stray bomb, the struggle for the 'liberation' of Vieques has become an expression of the Puerto Ricans' indignation for the intellectual, cultural and environmental degradation of the once pristine islands. Since then, several citizens' groups, with the help of local fishermen, have occupied the beaches around the bomb site in an ongoing demonstration of nonviolent civil disobedience."

They also are concerned with the health effects of repeated American bombings. The Navy admits to accidentally firing 263 rounds loaded with depleted uranium, recovering just 57, and health reports on the island have discovered that the incidence of cancers and leukemias were about 30 percent higher than on the main island.

Residents of Vieques want the land turned back over to them, cleansed of the debris and contamination, so they can rebuild their economy and regain their sovereignty.

The federal government needs to acknowledge this history of imperial privilege and allow the residents of Vieques to reclaim their land and their economy. To use military might to protect our own narrow interests will just prove that the islanders' criticism of US policy is right on the mark.

Hank Kalet is a newspaper editor and poet who lives in New Jersey. For more information see the Vieques Island web site: www.vieques-island.com, or the *Puerto Rico Herald*: www.puertorico-herald.org.



Quantum Politics: Making a Green Citizenship

[Against All Odds: The Green Transformation of American Politics, by John Rensenbrink, 1999, Leopold Press, PO Box 1237, Raymond, Maine, 04071]

John Rensenbrink, one of the longest-term participants in US Green politics, has produced out of the fire of many struggles over what it means to be Green a masterful integration of ecology, politics, state and society. In doing so, Rensenbrink has revealed a new politics that is neither boring, nor a distasteful but unavoidable duty. Instead, Rensenbrink presents a vision of a truly ecological politics as a natural, organic element of human life that can fulfill our highest possibilities.

The apoliticism rampant in American society has deep cultural roots ranging across the political spectrum, the author shows. The Christian tradition views the state as a necessary evil, as does proprietarian individualism. Marxists see the state as temporary stage, while anarchists look upon it as inherently a tool of hierarchical domination. Little wonder that disgust with politics and government is so easy to elicit, while drawing people into politics can seem like pulling teeth.

Rensenbrink finds inspiration in older traditions of citizenship that view public life as offering the best contributions people can make, from the Greek tradition of the citizen to the revolutionary heritage of Paine, Jefferson and Hamilton. The vital connection between the tradition of the free citizen and ecological consciousness, which makes Green parties so much the natural vehicle for a transformation of politics, is "intelligent caring for the whole." Ecology "represents a tremendous breakthrough for viewing *res publica* (public things) as a natural sphere...."

If politics and government seem too often to bring up the worst, rather than the best in us, that goes with the turf. For this realm is "where tough decisions get displaced." Politics is our means for resolving and the conflicts which inevitably rise in human life. As such it can be a healing force. "It is the only real alternative to warfare invented by human beings," Rensenbrink writes. One might add dictatorship as another albeit undesirable alternative.

Rensenbrink has truly been through the political wars that have wracked Greens in the US. Those fires have refined a sense desperately needed by grassroots political activists, who so often have battled one another over narrow points of ideology. No matter how "progressive" or "radical" proponents of those narrow views have proclaimed themselves, they nonetheless represent a dated view — either/or and the polarization of opposites. Transformation, in Rensenbrink's view, very much entails getting to the both-and. It roots in a very basic understanding, the Heisenberg uncertainty principle applied to the political realm:

"No one observer, no one discipline, no one institute or organization, no one of anything, can claim to see everything about a given object or context or whole."

Green hallmarks, including diversity and democracy, lead to a new politics that respects the limitations of any one view, seeks a balance of many, and stays open to new information. The transformation of politics is the application of quantum and ecological understandings, says the author: "... nature is diverse,

dynamic, interactive, replete with difference, and always open to evolutionary change."

Much of the book details the conflicts the broke out in the early '90s among Greens, which continue to percolate to some degree. The group that Rensenbrink represents, oriented to broad outreach to the mainstream and engagement in electoral politics, essentially hit a brick wall among "new age Greens" more interested in building alternative community institutions, and left-anarchist Greens deeply suspicious of conducting politics above the municipal level.

A both-and approach, in which Greens pursued the various strategies that drew their passion while respecting the choice of others, could have held the Greens together. For a politics driven by human energy, rather than money, this kind of diverse and experimental approach makes lots of sense. But it was not to be. Left-greens, insistent on central control that was far more old left than Green, essentially drove Rensenbrink and electorally oriented Greens out of the national organization, which they rechristened the Greens/Green Party USA.

"They often seemed to exude all the trappings of a left activist culture, a kind of ideo-fundamentalism more concerned about the letter than the spirit, about being pure of dogma rather than actually bringing about change," Rensenbrink writes.

But having "no conceptual tools" other than "left vs. right" to view the issue, the Left Greens characterized Rensenbrink and others as "Right Greens" and "elitists," charges some still echo today. The absurdity of those claims is evident in this book's sections on Green economics, multicultural society and on the emerging "Oligarchy USA." Rensenbrink, who headed the national organization's platform process before the big early '90s breakup, details Green positions that are progressive in every way, resonant in many respects with those of democratic left groups such as the Labor Party. The added strength of the Green view is embedding those positions in the wholistic perspective of ecological citizenship.

In a sense, the national break-up set Rensenbrink and others free to pursue their own agenda, which since manifested as formation of state political parties across the US, the Nader '96 campaign, and the foundation of the Association of State Green Parties. Now, while people from the two national organizations continue to fire shots at each other, perhaps the issues that divided them are fading. In particular, the debate about whether to go electoral at all levels has gone to the "yes" side in both groups, while many GPUSA members are also part of ASGP. In effect, both-and is prevailing.

John Rensenbrink, as does Ralph Nader in his introduction to this book, urges us to get on with the life-fulfilling project of citizenship and public life. This entails going beyond the protest mentality that has shaped grassroots progressive politics since the 1960s, which Rensenbrink correctly identifies as a childish hectoring of the parental powers that be. Instead, we must prepare ourselves to take charge, to offer a full set of alternative policies that make sense to a broad reach of the population, to fully involve ourselves in democracy, and ultimately to transform politics and America itself. The odds against this may be imposing, but the kind of clear thinking Rensenbrink lays out in this book improves them substantially

Patrick Mazza is a former co-chair of the Association of State Green Parties. He currently serves on the Coordinating Council of the Green Party of Seattle.

Globalization of Ben & Jerry's

So Unilever has gobbled up Ben & Jerry's. The \$45 billion megacompany that rose from the British and Dutch colonial empires (turning palm and coconut oil into soap and margarine) has acquired Vermont's outrageous little ice cream maker for \$326 million. The American dream at work. A couple of hippies invent wild new ice cream flavors in their garage and end up multimillionaires.

There are so many different ways to take this news:

- Well, I guess the New York Super Fudge Chunk will still taste just as good.

- Heck, why did I sell at 13? (Unilever is paying a whopping \$43.60 per share.)

- Whoa, I wonder how long my job will last. (Unilever has announced its intention to shed 25,000 workers worldwide over the next five years. Ben & Jerry's CEO Perry Odak announced at the press conference that the multinational will continue to make Ben & Jerry's products only in Vermont "at least for now" and will even keep up the amazing fringe benefit of three free pints per employee per day. Antony Burgmans, a Unilever co-chair is quoted in the *Wall Street Journal* as saying with regard to Ben & Jerry's, "For two years there will be no layoffs.")

- What will happen to the Ben & Jerry's Foundation? (As a condition of the deal, Unilever will continue giving away 7.5 percent of all pre-tax profits and will contribute an up-front \$5 million to the foundation — plus another \$5 million for minority-owned business startups and yet another \$5 million to employees. What the Foundation will fund in the future remains, of course, to be seen.)

- So much for social responsibility (such as paying dairy farmers a premium). So much for irreverence (the infamous "what's the Doughboy afraid of?" campaign, making public fun of competitor Pillsbury, when it tried to use corporate muscle to push Ben & Jerry's off supermarket shelves). So much for freedom (refusing to use milk produced with bovine growth hormone in spite of Monsanto's threats). So much for fun. (Friday afternoon back massages for the staff. Free scoop days. The world's craziest stockholder meetings.) The engulfed Ben & Jerry's will still have its own board, including both Ben and Jerry, but can you imagine such unconventionality within the Unilever corporate culture?

Truth is, the freewheeling Ben & Jerry's has been less free since going public and growing big enough to bring in professional managers. In order to attract those managers, the company said it had to sacrifice its self-imposed limit on the gap between its lowest and

highest compensation rates. That's when we all knew the point had been crossed, the awful point beyond which a business has to make serious tradeoffs between getting bigger and sticking to its principles.

But who's to say the upstart David can't transform the multinational Goliath, rather than the other way around? Vermont's lone congressman, Bernie Sanders, at least holds out the possibility: "My hope is that ... Unilever will change its position on agricultural issues and advocate for policies in Washington and elsewhere that preserve family farming in Vermont, instead of policies that drive family farmers off the land." And Ben, the very Ben Cohen himself, reportedly was hooked when a Unilever executive looked him in the eye and said, "Ben, do you realize the opportunity you have here to help this company grow in its social commitment?"

I try hard not to be a cynic, so I'll challenge Unilever not to give me and everyone else the excuse to do so. I will believe that a huge corporation can be principled if Ben & Jerry's continues to refuse to use milk produced with bovine growth hormone. And if, as Unilever's advertising clout swells the market for Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough, milk will be bought in Mexico or Brazil at a price that lets small farmers keep farming — and does not undercut farmers in Vermont. And if, as Chunky Monkey starts being made in Mexico and Brazil, workers there get paid enough to raise their families in safety and dignity — and do not undercut workers in Vermont. And if, as they wash out Phish Food vats in any part of the world, they meet Vermont standards about not letting that wastewater pollute the phish ... fish.

Of course I fear there's not a Triple Caramel Chunk's chance in hell of any of this happening. Most Ben and Jerry's stockholders prided themselves on their social responsibility (and made out well in the end anyway). Unilever will have to find such stockholders, or educate them, or do the right thing in spite of them.

Maybe there's a chance. Ben and Jerry and Unilever, I wish you success, measured in more than money. But if it doesn't work, if five or twenty years from now there's nothing more than a Ben & Jerry's historical marker in Vermont, maybe we will be willing to rethink the system that rewards corporations for seeking the cheapest raw materials, workers, and environmental standards in order to produce the fastest growth. Maybe, instead of being cynics, we'll become activists in forging a corporate environment that measures success, as Ben and Jerry's did, in more than money.

Donella Meadows is an adjunct professor at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire and director of the Sustainability Institute in Hartland, Vermont.



FENCING STOLEN GOODS

ARIANNA HUFFINGTON

Elian and Elio

While psychologists have been exploring just how traumatized Elian was by that rifle-wielding Border Patrol agent, I've been reading about Elio, another little boy, this one living in the South Bronx, surrounded by gunfire, families being evicted, hungry people begging in the street. His mother works at a drugstore near St. Ann's church; his father is "upstate" — South Bronx short-hand for prison.

Elio's story can be found in Jonathan Kozol's moving new book *Ordinary Resurrections* (Crown). Elian's story is, of course, everywhere — it's been All Elian, All the Time. Every nuance of his existence — from the length of his hair to the breadth of his smile — is noted and analyzed. He has logged more airtime than Regis Philbin, and political leaders of every stripe are vying to prove who cares for him the most. "Frankly, Tim, I can feel for Elian," gushed Rep. Tom DeLay (R-Texas) on *Meet the Press*.

As a culture, we need to ask the question: Why do we feel so much for Elian and so little for Elio? Why are we doing everything we can — trips to Disney World, Nintendo games, playmates flown in from Cuba — to make Elian happy, while leaving Elio to fend for himself? In his book, Kozol analyzes Elio's smile in a picture taken in the kitchen of St. Ann's where he attends an after-school program: "It conveys some of the tension that is present in his eyes on days when he's been struggling to keep his spirits up ... balanced about halfway between cheerfulness and something like the vaguest sense of fear."

Most of the time, Elio and his friends are placed in impersonal categories — inner city, Hispanic, poor. But, in fact, as Kozol guides us into Elio's world and the world of Ariel, Pineapple, Raven, Isaiah and the other children in *Ordinary Resurrections*, we begin to feel for them and to see just how much of their existence cannot fit into social constructs and generalities. "The life of a child," as Kozol puts it, "is made up of much smaller things like stomachaches or hurtful words or red Crayola crayons. A narrow lens is often better than a wide one in discerning what a child's life is really like."

But a narrow lens is what we use when we care for someone — as we've been caring for Elian. There were repeated questions about whether Elian had been given anti-anxiety drugs. But there are no questions about why we are dosing so many inner-city kids with Ritalin and Prozac. "An awful lot of those kids," Kozol told me, "would be able to thrive without any medication if they were in a school that was not overcrowded, that had plenty of counselors and resources and maybe a doctor to talk to them once a week."

Why hasn't Diane Sawyer stood on her head for these kids? And how come Gloria Estefan never canceled a concert to protest the plight of poor, Hispanic kids such as Elio, whose promise is being snatched away far more brutally than Elian was removed from Little Havana? "When I'm with Elio," Kozol says, "I feel persuaded that the light within his eyes will never be extinguished The light is darkened much too soon for many children in this neighborhood and others like it to be found in cities all over the nation; and the longing of so many to bring their gift of goodness to our nation's table is too often stifled and obliterated long before they are 15 years old."

According to the Casey Foundation's "Kids Count" report, we have more than 9 million children "growing up with a collection of disadvantages that are cause for exceptional alarm" — 9 million Elios whose light is likely to be extinguished all too quickly. Yet we are obsessing about Elian. Psychologists and psychoanalysts are endlessly consulted, examining Elian and reporting their findings — "he's fine" — to an anxious nation.

Time has put Elian on its cover three times, and on a recent visit at ABC News in New York, I passed a two-tiered cart marked "Elian" filled to overflowing with video tapes. When will we begin to see network video carts stacked high with tapes labeled "Elio," "Pineapple," "Raven" or "Ariel"?

For the moment, families in Elio's neighborhood subsist on around \$10,000 a year. So far, the US government has spent the annual income of 58 of those families on Elian. To say nothing of the millions the media have spent pursuing his story. So what do we value? Conflict and suffering that can be turned into soap opera — and require nothing of us except a voyeuristic interest?

"My father is going to come home," Elio tells Jonathan Kozol in the book. "When I asked how soon ... he seemed to indicate this was not as certain as he'd made it sound. I've been giving my prayers to God," he said with a shy smile."

In a neighborhood in which incarceration rates for men are higher than high school graduation rates, there are many children such as Elio who long for their fathers. I'm certainly glad that Elian has been reunited with his. But it's time that people started caring for the Elios of this country — enough to form human chains around them, protecting them from what lies ahead that, odds are, will destroy them.

Huffington's new book is *How to Overthrow the Government*. Write her c/o P.O. Box 428, Santa Monica, CA 90403, email: arianna@ariannaonline.com; web site: www.ariannaonline.com

16 — APRIL 15, 2000

PLAIN TALK/Dave Zweifel

Flag Burning for Elian Showcases Hypocrisy

An old friend, Chris Wren of Madison, sent along a note in the wake of the Elian Gonzalez circus with a few pertinent questions.

"In the wake of newspaper and wire service reports that in the aftermath of the seizure of Elian, residents of Little Havana burned and otherwise destroyed American flags:

"1. Have any congressional sponsors of the constitutional amendment to ban flag desecration condemned these multiple desecrations of the flag?

"2. How many flag desecrations occurred in Little Havana, and how does that number compare with the number committed throughout the United States during the past 10 years? Twenty years? Fifty years? The history of the United States?

"3. If the flag desecration amendment passes, and Congress or any states enact legislation criminalizing flag desecration, will Congress make conviction of flag desecration an offense requiring deportation of legally admitted immigrants or revocation of naturalized citizenship?

"4. Will any of the impending congressional hearings inquire into flag desecrations in Little Havana?"

Chris, of course, succinctly captures the hypocrisy of so much of the congressional Republican leadership in the Elian aftermath. Trent Lott, Tom DeLay, Orrin Hatch and Dan Burton apparently only get excited about flag burning when it is done by long-haired, left-wing hippies.

The Cuban-Americans in Little Havana are

mostly rock-ribbed supporters of the GOP. Not one mention about torching Old Glory came from the mouths of Trent and the boys while they condemned and deplored Bill Clinton and Janet Reno.

Those who attended the town of Porter meeting earlier this week on the factory farm that had been proposed near Gibbs Lake came away with a renewed faith in grass-roots democracy.

While the powers that be — including, shockingly, representatives of state government — were lined up to secure approval for this antithesis of the family farm, the town residents weren't going to roll over.

They showed up, many spoke eloquently and the town's zoning committee paid heed, unanimously declaring that the town doesn't want a huge corporate farm and all its attendant problems.

Many also left the meeting with a bad taste in their mouths about state bureaucracy. Of all places in America, Wisconsin was built and nurtured by family farmers. To now see its representatives, including the ag department and the Department of Natural Resources, sit idly as if they didn't care about a factory farm in the heart of family farm country disheartened more than a few.

But there are signs that the people have seen enough of wealth and power dictating the future.

Just these past few months they have rebelled against Perrier siphoning off the water supply, the attempt by big utilities to string another power line across northern Wisconsin, a huge chicken farm near La Crosse, and now the factory farm near Evansville.

The politicians, always eager to take corporate campaign handouts, might want to start paying attention.

Dave Zweifel is editor of *The Capital Times*, Madison, Wisconsin, in which this originally appeared. Contact him c/o *The Capital Times*, P.O. Box 8060, Madison, WI 53708 or email dzweifel@captimes.madison.com.

ALEXANDER COCKBURN

Drug War/Police State

Maybe Elian Gonzalez will have achieved a miracle after all, alerting mainstream America to the fact that the Bill of Rights have disappeared, restrictions on the role of the military in domestic affairs have been thrown overboard, and all the appurtenances of a police state are in place. Twenty-five years after the war ended in Vietnam, we see what happened when that war came home. We lost abroad. And at home, we've lost, too.

For blacks and Hispanics, the reactions to that famous photograph of the Elian snatch by the INS team have been comic in a macabre sort of way. After all, they've been putting up with these no-knock forcible entries by heavily armed cops or INS agents for decades. On the religious right, fears about the onrush of tyranny hardened into certainty back at the time of Waco, in the dawn of the Clinton era.

The week before the Elian raid, the left saw the state in action against their demonstrations in Washington D.C., against the World Bank and WTO. Here's how Sam Smith, longtime Washington reporter and editor of *The Progressive Review*, evoked the events unfolding in the capital: "Illegal sweep arrests. Print shops intimidated into closing by police. Universities canceling public forums under pressure from officials. Homes of opposition leaders broken into and ransacked. Headquarters of the opposition raided and closed by police. These were the sort of things by which we defined the evil of the old Soviet Union. And now, they have become characteristics of the federal government's handling of the current protests."

It should be added that in Washington, the treatment of arrested people (some of them delegates swept up in the cop rampage) makes for hair-raising reading, with random beatings, denials of food and water for 24 hours, racial abuse, threats of rape and refusals to allow consultations with attorneys. As in the 1960s, white, middle-class demonstrators (and their parents) are learning what happens to poor people all the time.

There's no sign that mainstream politicians were a whit perturbed by police conduct in Seattle or Washington D.C. The picture of the Elian snatch did elicit some reaction. Illinois Rep. and House Speaker Dennis Hastert proclaimed sternly that "our government has invaded the home of

American citizens, who deserve the protection of our laws and a certain respect for their rights."

Will Congress take a serious look at the rise and rise of our jackboot state? On the evidence of the last 30 years, no. Both parties have eagerly conjoined in militarizing the police, extending police powers, and carving away basic rights. Very often, the Democrats have been worse. It was Republican Rep. Henry Hyde of Illinois who led the recent and partially successful charge against asset seizure. It was Democratic Sen. Charles Schumer of New York who was the factotum of the US Justice Department in trying to head off Hyde and his coalition.

The rise of the jackboot state has marched in lock step with the insane and ineffective "War on Drugs," and this has been a bipartisan affair. Its consequences are etched into the fabric of our lives. Just think of drug testing, now a virtually mandatory condition of employment, even though it's an outrageous violation of personal sovereignty, as well as being thoroughly unreliable. In the era when America has been led by two self-confessed pot-smokers — Clinton and Gore — the number of people held for drug crimes in federal prisons has increased by 64 percent.

No-knock raids — a prime feature of any police state — are becoming more common as federal, state and local politicians and law-enforcement agencies decide that the War on Drugs justifies dumping the Fourth Amendment. Even in states where search warrants require a knock on the door before entry, police routinely flout the requirement.

The Posse Comitatus Act forbidding military involvement in domestic law enforcement is rapidly becoming as dead as the Fourth Amendment. Because of drug-war exceptions created in the Posse Comitatus Act, every region of the United States now has a Joint Task Force staff in charge of coordinating military involvement in domestic law enforcement.

In many cases, street deployment of paramilitary units is funded by "community policing" grants from the federal government. The majority of police departments use their paramilitary units to serve "dynamic entry" search warrants. The SWAT team in Chapel Hill, N.C., conducted a large-scale crack raid of an entire block in a predominantly African-American neighborhood. The raid, termed "Operation Redi-Rock," resulted in the detention and search of up to 100 people, all of whom were African Americans. (Whites were allowed to leave the area.) No one was ever prosecuted for a crime.

There are signs of popular unrest and mutiny.

Continued on next page

TED RALL

Weird Science

Social Engineering by Economics

Dayton, Ohio

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are calling for a 20 cents per six-pack tax on beer, claiming that gonorrhea rates would drop by nearly 9 percent as a result. An analysis of clap cases between 1981 and 1995 concludes that the residents of states with higher beer taxes experienced less unpleasant burning and itching than states where beer flows free of government fund-raising.

"Of the 36 beer tax increases that we reviewed, gonorrhea rates declined among teens aged 15 to 19 in 24 instances," Dr. Kathleen Irwin of the CDC's Division of Sexually Transmitted Diseases Prevention said. "Drinking can influence a person's judgment. For example, when drinking they may be more likely to have sex, to have sex without a condom, to have multiple sex partners, or to have sex with high-risk partners."

Feeling thirsty yet?

Without getting into the specifics of the scientific relationship between beer taxes and the clap — why beer and not wine? Why the clap and not herpes? And if a 20-cent tax cuts the clap by 9 percent, wouldn't a \$2.20 tax hike eliminate it entirely? — this proposal to favorably adjust human behavior patterns via taxation is an exciting attempt to hit Americans where they actually live. After all, traditional means of containing excess vice — laws, religious prohibitions, spouses — have outlived their usefulness in an age when our choice of consumer goods is the only thing that defines us.

Therefore, in the proud spirit of Dr. Kathleen Irwin, the CDC and the Tax Reform Act of 1986, I've spent the past few minutes pondering other unlikely relationships between the social and dismal sciences. Even if only one of these surprising, yet absolutely rational, theories is accepted and eventually signed into law, the world will be a better place. So much for those who claim punditry is nothing more than base criticism!

The Link Between Murder and the

Cockburn ...

Continued from preceding page

The ACLU and the National Rifle Association have jointly called for President Clinton to appoint a commission to investigate lawlessness in law enforcement. States with democratic processes such as ballot initiatives have seen brave efforts to curb the war on drugs. California has a medical marijuana law, and Hawaii's legislature just passed one. Oregon and Arizona have also moved to decriminalize personal use. The feds' reaction has been to attack these states by threatening to withhold highway funds, the usual mode of persuasion.

Let's see what those legislators indignant about the INS snatching of Elian do next. Right now, the swelling police state is an expression of the War on Drugs. No politician who does not call for a cease-fire and a rollback in that cruel, futile war — our domestic Vietnam — has any standing to bewail the loss of our freedoms.

Alexander Cockburn is co-editor, with Jeffrey St. Clair, of *CounterPunch* (see www.counterpunch.org or call 800-840-3683) and co-author with St. Clair of *Whiteout: The CIA, Drugs and the Press* [Verso].

Gas Tax: After thinking about it, I am happy to announce that a 25 cents per gallon federal tax on gasoline would save 1,600 Americans from being murdered each year. Consider these frightening statistics: Of the roughly 16,000 Americans who are murdered each year, 68 percent are shot, 13 percent are stabbed and 5 percent are poisoned, blown up, drowned and/or drugged. Higher gas prices would reduce driving to the store to pick up the guns, knives, toxins, explosive devices, narcotics and swimming pool supplies that murderers use to dispatch their victims. Granted, the rate of killers who prefer to employ "personal objects" (hands, fists, feet, etc., in police parlance) might rise from its present rate of 6 percent, but why let that stand in the way of sound taxation for the higher good? A vote against the gas tax is a vote for genocide!

The Fire Extinguisher/Obesity Postulate: One out of four Americans will watch their homes destroyed by fire

during their lifetimes — many from the inside, pounding on a locked door, screaming as the flames lick their skin. Slapping a 50 percent sales tax on fire extinguishers would make fire-control devices less affordable, less common and therefore less available. Over time, now-sedentary Americans — knowing that they could burn to ashes at any moment — would develop the instant reflexes of a cat. Like their feline brethren, their high-strung dispositions would cause them to lose weight, thus virtually eliminating the tricky problem of obesity overnight (over time, of course). Moreover, nearly 2 million fires destroy some \$8.5 billion in property per annum. Increasing those figures means more jobs for those who make goods to replace what's been burned in a labor market shrunk by fire deaths — resulting in high-wage, low-unemployment nirvana!

The Chocolate Fidelity Corollary: Applying 12.2 percent of revenues col-

lected from the fire extinguisher tax to subsidize low chocolate prices would slash divorce rates by as much as a third. It's as simple as the relationship between saltwater tadpoles and nuclear fission: Cheaper chocolate means fatter women. Chubbier women means fewer temptations to cheat among men, who are statistically eight times more likely than women to stray. Families stay together, children lead stable lives and society wins — thanks to the chocolate subsidy!

Next time: Why I got expelled from engineering school.

Ted Rall, a cartoonist and columnist, is the winner of the 2000 Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award for outstanding coverage of the problems of the disadvantaged. He previously won in 1995. Contact him c/o Universal Press Syndicate, 4520 Main St., Kansas City, MO 64111.

LABOR TALK/Harry Kelber

This Peculiar Election

Long before the primaries, both parties had chosen their presidential standard-bearers. The Republicans picked Texas Gov. George W. Bush, showered him with endorsements and helped him become the monarch of money-raising with a \$51 million kitty.

Vice President Al Gore, scared off potential challengers with an ever-lengthening list of big-name Democratic supporters, including the prized, endorsement of the 13 million-member AFL-CIO. With his political clout, raising campaign money from wealthy contributors was no problem.

Fortunately for the voters, challengers did appear in each of the parties. Arizona Sen. John McCain, with his strong message on campaign finance reform, won all of New England except Maine but could not match Bush's vote-getting prowess elsewhere, and gave up.

On the Democratic side, former New Jersey Sen. Bill Bradley came forward with "big ideas" on health care, race relations, women's rights and the environment. He gave Gore a scare in New Hampshire, but thanks largely to organized labor he couldn't win a single primary and was forced to quit the race.

So after March 7, Super Tuesday, we were back at Square One, featuring Bush vs. Gore, but with this difference: both candidates, in the primaries, had already detailed their views on Social Security, Medicare, taxes, campaign finance reform, education, gun control, abortion and other major issues. They agreed they had become better candidates as a result of being tested by challengers in the primaries.

With seven long months between Super Tuesday and the elections, what else can they say that they have not already told us?

We are now submerged in the photo-op stage of the campaign. Managers work at "humanizing" them. We now know that George W. likes Cheez Doodles and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Here is his self-description: "I am not a snob, not an egghead, not a slave to any kind of fashion — sartorial, aesthetic or intellectual." Just a regular, down-home, kinda guy whose father was President.

The Vice President has reinvented himself so often that we can't be sure who's the real Al Gore. He's now in the blue jeans-polo shirt mode. A wooden personality? No, he's really a fun-loving, warm-hearted, relaxed guy in private life, we are told.

But what makes Election 2000 unusual is that Vice President Gore and his chief supporters, the AFL-CIO's unions, are on opposite sides on the crit-

ical issue of international trade. Their conflict will come to a head during the week of May 22, when Congress votes on whether or not to grant China permanent normal trade relations status with the United States.

Gore favors a Yes vote, because it will give American corporations access to Chinese markets. The AFL-CIO opposes giving China a "blank check" that would allow it to continue its outrageous violations of human and worker rights, environmental protections and religious freedom. There appears to be no room for compromise.

It's ironic that the most notable third party presidential hopefuls see eye-to-eye with the AFL-CIO on inter-

national trade. Ralph Nader, the likely candidate of the Green Party, supports unions not only on trade, but also on worker rights and other issues. Patrick Buchanan, seeking the Reform Party ballot line, is a strong critic of Clinton's trade policies, but no friend of organized labor.

If the AFL-CIO wins the May vote on China trade, its relations with Gore will improve and so will the prospects for a big labor turnout in November.

If, however, Congress approves the Administration's proposal on China trade, a lower labor turnout would endanger Gore's bid for the presidency.

Kelber, a longtime labor activist, edits the newsletter, *The Labor Educator*, P.O. Box 1002, New York, NY 10276-1002. Email hkelber@igc.apc.org. Web site <http://www.laboreducator.org>

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JUNE 1, 2000 — 17

THE AMERICAS/*Patrisia Gonzales & Roberto Rodriguez*

Naming Names at the UN

Ybarra, Oregon, Brawley, Dominguez, Diallo, Hernandez, Young. These names from states such as Oklahoma, Texas, California, New York and Rhode Island read like the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial wall. In a way these names are similar, but they're of people recently killed by law enforcement. Since 1990, they actually number in the thousands. There are many other names that belong on a similar list — names like Rodney King and Alicia Sotero — and tens of thousands more, mostly from communities of color who've also been subjected to law-enforcement brutality.

We shudder to think of the size of a list that would go back to the 1960s. There's no wall for these names, though perhaps there should be — and the City of the Angels would make for a good location, considering the current Rampart scandal.

Most of the names of those killed come from the national Stolen Lives Project. Most too are victims, we would argue, of hate crimes perpetrated by law-enforcement officers. But they never appear on annual hate-crime reports. Oftentimes people deny that these brutalities are racial in nature because sometimes the perpetrators are officers of color or because the officers didn't use racial slurs. That's not important.

What is important is that most victims are people of color. That's due to dehumanization, which can be learned by anyone. Beyond that, they're also victims of

human-rights violations that never make it to the US State Department's annual human-rights report, though Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have begun to view them as such. Our hope is that members of Congress one day will direct the State Department to tally law-enforcement abuse as human-rights violations and that it include the United States on its annual list.

No one has satisfactorily answered why all these brutalities happen primarily to people of color. This is not about law-enforcement officers being brutal, but about them targeting people of color and believing they have permission — on the basis of dehumanization — to racially profile, falsely imprison, brutalize and terminate people, and to do it with impunity.

The ongoing LAPD scandal highlights that it's not the police alone who act with impunity. Rather, they're assisted by compliant district attorneys, judges and juries, by pandering politicians, and by the media that traditionally look the other way. New York, San Diego, Denver, Houston and Providence, R.I., are currently having to contend with similar high-profile cases.

With all these names, our prisons should be overcrowded, full of errant law-enforcement officers. They're overcrowded indeed, not with outlaw officers, but in many instances, with the targets of their frame-ups.

We maintain that the media have helped create the fear and hatred of people of color, criminalizing and dehumanizing them to the point where it's acceptable to brutalize, maim, kill or annually imprison them by the tens of thousands.

How did we get here? The better question is, How

do we get out?

Fully funded, independent, civilian review boards with actual investigative and subpoena powers and the creation of special federal prosecutors independent of local politics would be a good start. Racial and gender balancing of our law-enforcement agencies would also help. But to actually make a dent in this problem requires viewing both the problem and solution within the realm of human rights. Only when we begin to see that thousands of human-rights violations are taking place annually in this country can we appreciate the gravity of the situation.

Additionally, when cases begin to be presented before human-rights tribunals of the Organization of American States and the United Nations — when other countries start asking us about our human-rights situation — perhaps only then will there be a movement to halt the dehumanization of people of color in this country. To move in this direction, perhaps we need to establish a national truth commission to move us beyond denial and toward justice and the rehumanization of our society. And if the government refuses, perhaps a nongovernmental one can be created.

Some of course think that any process outside of normal police complaint procedures — including civilian review boards — is an affront to law enforcement. So the idea of taking these brutalities before national or international human-rights bodies for some must seem scandalous. Indeed. That is precisely why this is warranted.

Patrisia Gonzales and Roberto Rodriguez are authors of Gonzales/Rodriguez: Uncut & Uncensored (UC Berkeley, Ethnic Studies Library). They can be reached at PO Box 7905, Albuquerque NM 87194-7904, email XColumn@aol.com. Previous columns are archived on the web at: www.uxpress.com.

PRIMAL SCREED/*James McCarty Yeager*

Significance Lying in the Tall Weeds

Washington D.C.

The Bill Gates monopoly trial is a lot more meaningful to America's future than was the Elian custody case. The alliance of labor and students in opposing economic globalization at the International Monetary Fund and World Bank will have more impact on the average American citizen than does the twenty-fifth anniversary of the fall of Saigon. So guess which one of each pair of events got bigger mass media explanations as this spring season wound down?

Of course, it makes no sense to expect mass media to understand any political issue more complex than the horse-race aspect of elections. And we shouldn't expect them to explain any governmental-corporate shenanigans not involving the theft, sex and bloodshed aspects of the criminal law. On the evidence, even the major media are not remotely capable of getting right such historic matters as rampant monopoly or military defeat. But, as Sigmund Freud is alleged to have said about women, so might enlightened citizens say about the media: "They are the best thing of their kind that we have."

In the print and broadcast media there have been few thoughtful expositions of the dangerous Microsoft monopoly. *Washington Post* and *New York Times* coverage has been largely limited to the horserace aspects of the trial — government says this, Microsoft says that. The networks did not, on the whole, manage even that level of complexity. Some of the trade press have been more insightful, although it has been noted that Microsoft's four PR agencies have been expert at placing exculpatory stories and letters throughout the trade magazines. Especially useful was John Dvorak's condemnation of Microsoft's scorched-earth policy as being actually detrimental to software innovation. (See *PC Magazine*, May 2, 2000, or www.zdnet.com/pcmag/stories/opinions/0,7802,2559857,00.html)

As we close in on the middle of the official millennium year it seems more and more likely that Microsoft will have to remedy at least some of its monopolistic and harmful practices over the next ten years. The stock market gyrations as investors react to the potential diminution of Microsoft's monopoly profits may be delivering the slow-down to speculation long desired by Federal Reserve Board Chairman Alan Greenspan. How ironic if Greenspan's chestnuts are saved from the fire by Federal Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson, presiding in the Microsoft antitrust case.

With second-rate applications so rampant throughout the Microsoft stable, it must be some personal characteristic of Bill Gates that causes Microsoft to be so aggressive at marketing and so spectacularly unable to deliver on its promises of innovation. Technical observers are reasonably sure there is no fully working Microsoft technology that was not either stolen or bought. The federal judge who

long ago let Microsoft copy the Macintosh user interface for Windows is as great a cause of Bill's wealth as Judge Jackson is of Bill's angst. What the federal judiciary gives, the federal judiciary can take away.

The worst potential remedy that the government could seek for Microsoft's documented monopolistic behavior would be to forbid Microsoft from selling any software that doesn't actually work. At one swell foop there go Windows, Word, Excel, Back Office, and Internet Explorer, er, Explorer. After they put as much energy in to fixing the known bugs in these programs as they do in preventing competitors from getting to, or taking advantage of, the market, then they might be allowed to sell these programs again.

Surprisingly, his is a case in which the Democratic Party is indispensable to liberty. Republicans have been trying to kill antitrust enforcement since Franklin D. Roosevelt. George W. (Shrub) Bush's putative Attorney General would doubtless kill the Microsoft appeal as his first act in office. But the other thing to note is the role of the federal judiciary. A Democratic Senate and a Democratic President in 2001 can begin to unjam the backlog of federal judgeship nominees that Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Orrin (Original Smirker) Hatch has refused to confirm since well before the impeachment fiasco began in the fall of 1998. (Scorecard: Republican Senate confirms seven judges so far in 2000 under a Democratic president. Democratic Senate of 1992 confirmed 66 judges under a Republican president.)

As many structural reasons as there are for castigating the Democrats, and their number is legion, there are quite a few offsetting ones for relying on them. (See Sigmund Freud, above.) The Democrats may have a battle on their hands for the souls of Al (Stick) Gore and Dick (McDonnell-Douglas) Gephardt coming up when they become President and Speaker of the House, respectively, in January of 2001. They may well be cautious, centrist, corporate-influenced, and sclerotic Democrats. But the Democrats will at least appoint lifetime members of the judiciary who can be counted on, most of the time, to notice that neither the Constitution nor the country is exclusively intended for the benefit of white corporate males.

Everybody's good ol' Uncle Karl noted that the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat was a political struggle. Despite the difficulty of defining office drudges and other software users as either the one or the other, the struggle remains. The politics of the Microsoft case, as with the environment, women's rights, world peace, and economic justice, require that the imperfect, maddening, and infinitely improvable beast known as the Democratic party be forced to govern again, not only in the White House but the House of Representatives and the Senate. It will be a lot easier to hold their feet to the fire when they don't have the Republican Congressional majorities to blame for inaction.

James McCarty Yeager fulminates from a Maryland coign of vantage.

Dispatches ...

Continued from page 11

BANKRUPTCY OVERHAUL TARGETS PENSIONS. Consumer advocates are mounting a last-ditch effort to prevent passage of a bill that would place more onerous conditions on debtors who file for bankruptcy. Sen. Paul Wellstone, DFL-Minn., is using parliamentary tactics to stall a bill that has bipartisan support but would impose harsh penalties on families that file for bankruptcy. One troubling provision would allow lenders to require, as a condition of receiving a loan or obtaining credit, that a borrower give up the traditional protection of pension and retirement benefits in the event of bankruptcy. "These institutions are just out of control. They've gotten so greedy that they're ready to steal from our grandmothers," said Kim Gandy, executive vice president of the National Organization for Women. Edmund Mierzwinski, consumer program director for the US Public Interest Research Group in Washington, D.C., said the bill was a "bipartisan rush to take away the rights of people who in many cases have to commit bankruptcy because of some medical or other family emergency. ... This industry is papering the Congress with campaign contributions and, most importantly, it is papering the parties with soft money. And they're expecting a return for their dollar."

MEDICAL BILLS ARE MAIN CAUSE OF BANKRUPTCIES. Ruinous health-care costs, not profligate spending, are the leading cause of personal bankruptcy among Americans, a new study has found. "American families live just one illness or accident away from complete financial collapse," said Elizabeth Warren, a professor of law at Harvard Law School and one of the authors of the study cited by the *National Post* of Canada April 27. About 500,000 people sought bankruptcy protection in the United States last year because of the burden of medical expenses, says the study, to be published next month in *Norton's Bankruptcy Adviser*, a specialty periodical for lawyers. One million Americans filed for bankruptcy protection last year. The survey, carried out with Teresa Sullivan of the University of Texas and researcher Melissa Jacoby, looked at bankruptcies in eight federal judicial districts across the United States, from California to Pennsylvania.

Warren said her research painted a very different picture from the image presented by the credit card companies of lavish spenders trying to escape the consequences of their debts. Although joblessness remained the main cause of bankruptcy, she pointed out the "echo" effect in that "when people lose their jobs, they also

Continued on next page

IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST/*Ralph Nader*

Break Up Microsoft to Ensure Competition

As the titanic antitrust case against Microsoft moves into its end-game, the question of the hour is what remedies will be effective in taming this wealthy and ruthless monopoly.

The goal of any set of remedies should be to ensure that there will, in fact, be innovation, competition and reasonable prices in some of the most important sectors of our economy — software, computers and telecommunications.

Consider the following remedies:

► Free PC manufacturers from Microsoft's grip. Microsoft has used its monopoly power to bully original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) into installing only Windows on computers. A court-ordered remedy of non-discriminatory OEM licensing of Windows would go a long way toward solving this problem. Pricing and licensing should be "transparent" — openly published and even-handedly applied.

► Don't let Microsoft use its other software monopolies to limit competition. Just as Microsoft used its Windows monopoly to threaten the competition, so it is using its Office franchise to scare off competitors and dominate new Internet markets. Its preferred strategy is the notorious "embrace, extend and extinguish" gambit: embrace the new Internet authoring tools as part of the dominant Office software suite; extend control of the new market by introducing proprietary standards that are incompatible with competitors'; and extinguish competing software through manipulative licensing and bundling deals with OEMs.

The court should require Microsoft to separate Microsoft Office from Windows, and the new owner of Office should be required to port the entire platform to multiple non-Windows operating systems.

► Ensure that "Internet navigation" options remain open. Microsoft has insisted to OEMs that it retain control of the "first screen," or default choices for Internet navigation menus. It has done so in order to retain control over the time and attention of computer users, whose reliance on the default "first screen" can be used to channel them to certain e-commerce sites. Here's the danger: If any single firm exercises too much control over Internet navigation, competition in e-commerce markets will suffer. Microsoft should be prohibited from imposing such terms.

► Protect interoperability of hardware, software and network protocols. The usefulness of software programs depends upon their ability to work (and coexist) with other software programs, with hardware systems, and with the protocols of

telecommunications networks. It should come as no surprise that Microsoft frequently and deliberately introduces barriers to compatibility and interoperability, preventing competitors from working with Microsoft's monopolizing Windows or Office products. One remedy is to force Microsoft to support open standards for software and to provide extensive technical information in a timely manner to any requesting company in usable formats and protocols.

► Adopt structural remedies, because the record shows Microsoft cannot be trusted. The past six years of antitrust problems with Microsoft have demonstrated that the company cannot be trusted. Its conduct during the trial itself offers the best evidence of this point. The company subverted the intent if not the language of a 1995 consent order, by integrating its browser into the Windows operating system. Effective remedies should, as much as possible, avoid "conduct remedies" that require continuing court oversight. A better alternative is "structural remedies" — such as a breakup — that permanently alter Microsoft's organizational structure and the incentives by which it operates.

Ideally, a breakup of the company would go further than the Justice Department proposal to divide the operating system line of business from the application and other lines of business. The court could insist that Microsoft separate the Internet Explorer browser from Microsoft Office. That way, the browser market could become competitive again and the owner of Microsoft Office would find a way to function with more than one browser. This would be an important result in a world where the browser is key in setting web publishing standards and links to e-commerce sites, and where Microsoft is driving for dominance in Internet authoring tools.

The court should also consider forcing Microsoft to spin off, as a separate company, all of its online services and minority interests in networking companies. There is no legitimate tie between the software businesses and online/network services — only anti-competitive mischief.

The antitrust remedies that ultimately bring the marauding Microsoft to heel will have far-reaching consequences — on future software design and choices, on consumer prices, on the competitiveness of e-commerce, on the very structure of the Internet and hence our culture.

The factual case against Microsoft has been made devastatingly clear. If Microsoft's long record of deception and untrustworthiness is to be ended, the public remedies must be as bold, sweeping and effective as the company's private power.

Ralph Nader is the founder of several public-interest groups and candidate for president with the Greens. Contact him at P.O. Box 19367, Washington, DC 20036 or see www.votenader.org.

And the disparity begins before the kids get in trouble. Too many of these children are raised against the odds. They grow up on mean streets. Their mothers work, but they have no day care or Head Start. They go to school hungry. Their schools are falling apart, their classes crowded, their teachers inexperienced. Zero tolerance puts some on the street. Racial profiling targets those who are on the street. And then the system of juvenile injustice kicks in, making it harder for them to complete their education, to get jobs, to become decent husbands and fathers.

Juvenile injustice tags youngsters for life. Sending kids to prison too often gives them an education in crime. More than 7 percent of the black population has spent some time in jail. Almost half of young African American males in the nation's capital are in prison, on probation or parole. Locked up primarily for nonviolent drug offenses, blacks are disenfranchised, separated from their families, shorn of their jobs and hopes.

This is a national disgrace, demanding immediate action. The study's authors timidly ask for the Justice Department to be given \$100 million to work on reducing racial disparities. Needed are a national inquest and state and local mobilization to change the system.

When Elian Gonzalez was taken forcefully back to his father, Republicans — sensing political capital to be collected — jumped to the defense of his Miami relatives. Senate Leader Trent Lott hauled Attorney General Janet Reno in for harsh questioning. Senate and House committees announced hearings. Republican politicians flooded the talk shows to express their outrage.

But when an authoritative report shows that the US juvenile justice system is a disgrace, the legislators are

nowhere to be seen. Lott has no comment. No hearings are scheduled. For all of his show of compassionate conservatism, George W. Bush has nothing to say on a juvenile injustice system in which his own state is deeply implicated. No politicians clamor to get on talk shows.

President Clinton has gained the loyal support of the African American community. But this juvenile injustice takes place on his watch. And some of the policies he has trumpeted — three strikes and out, zero tolerance — have had unintended consequences that contribute to mass incarceration. Now there are two million in jail, 500,000 more than the Chinese — with minorities suffering disproportionately. He must take the lead in mobilizing officials at a local, state and national level to redress a disgrace that robs children of hope. A national inquest should be started. All governors should convene a special commission to investigate their own system.

This shameful injustice mocks the values the United States claims to represent in the world. It disgraces the rule of law. It cannot be accepted as natural or immutable. If the elected leaders of the nation will not lead, then the people must act on their own.

Those whose children get privileged treatment will not challenge the injustice. The slaveholder did not end slavery. Those whose children are betrayed must challenge this systemic disorder. Surely, people of conscience of all colors and creeds cannot sit idly by and watch a nation spend more energy on a spectacle involving one Cuban child than on a scandal scarring the lives of an entire generation of American children.

Write Jesse Jackson Sr. c/o the Rainbow Coalition, 1002 Wisconsin Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20007.

OUCH!/

Public Campaign

Cute Cuban Aliens vs. the Rest

Corruption

Perception Index

Percent of Americans who believe Elian Gonzalez's father should be granted permanent custody of the six-year-old boy: 76.

► Contributions from leaders of anti-Castro Cuban American National Foundation, their families, and the Free Cuba PAC, to Sen. Connie Mack (R-Fla.), lead sponsor on a bill to grant citizenship to Elian: \$150,000.

► How Sen. Mack voted on the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, which imposed tough new penalties on illegal immigrants including speedier deportations: Yes.

► Number of illegal immigrants the US Immigration and Naturalization Service removed from country in 1999: 179,367.

► Number of immigrants who would be allowed into the United States this year to work for the high-tech industries if legislation introduced by Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-UT) succeeds: 195,000.

► Contributions to Sen. Hatch from computer industry: \$68,869.

► Total contributions to federal campaigns and parties from computer industry, which is lobbying to employ high-tech foreign workers: \$8 million.

► Chances an American favors tripling current federal campaign contributions limits from \$1,000 to \$3,000: 1 out of 11.

► Chances a member of the House of Representatives has voted to raise federal campaign contribution limits from \$1,000 to \$3,000: 1 out of 3.

► Chances an American favors giving full public financing — "Clean Money" — to federal candidates who raise no private money and abide by spending limits: 2 out of 3.

OUCH! is a bulletin on how private money in politics hurts average citizens, published by Public Campaign, a non-partisan organization. For more information (and for detailed sourcing on these statistics) visit www.publiccampaign.org or phone (202) 293-0222.

Dispatches ...

Continued from preceding page

lose their health insurance. The combination creates a blow that families cannot recover from without bankruptcy."

SENATE UPHOLDS NUKE DUMP VETO

For the third time this year, the nuclear industry lost an attempt to pass a bill that would move deadly nuclear waste from reactors across the country to Yucca Mountain in Nevada, as 34 "nay" votes were registered to sustain President Clinton's veto. Joan Claybrook of Public Citizen, which opposes the bill as a threat to public safety, noted that Sen. Frank Murkowski (R-Alaska), the sponsor of the Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act of 2000 (S.1287), received over \$18,000 from nuclear PACs last year, while Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott got over \$58,000 from nuclear PACs. "Although many senators are willing to risk the safety of their constituents for campaign dollars, there are enough lawmakers who will stand up for America and vote down

Continued on page 22

JESSE JACKSON

Juvenile Injustice

"Racial Disparities Pervasive in Juvenile Justice" read a *New York Times* headline on April 26. But the story didn't even make the front page in the *Washington Post*. And the rest of the media — so focused on the drama of Elian Gonzalez — had no time to report on the tragedy of an entire generation of American children. The story was treated like a weather report, accepted with a shrug as part of the natural order.

"And Justice for Some," the study by the Justice Department with six of the nation's leading foundations, detailed what many have feared. Minority youngsters — African Americans and Latinos primarily — are more likely than their white counterparts to be arrested, held in jail, sent to adult court for trial, convicted and given more severe prison terms.

The disparity in treatment is staggering. For those charged with crimes who have never been in prison before, blacks are six times more likely than whites to be sentenced to prison. For those charged with a violent crime for the first time, black teenagers are nine times more likely than whites to be sentenced to prison. For drug offenses, black youths are 48 times more likely than white to be sentenced to prison.

Hugh Price, president of the Urban League, concludes that we are faced "with a very serious national civil rights issue, virtually making our system (one of) juvenile injustice."

HAL CROWTHER

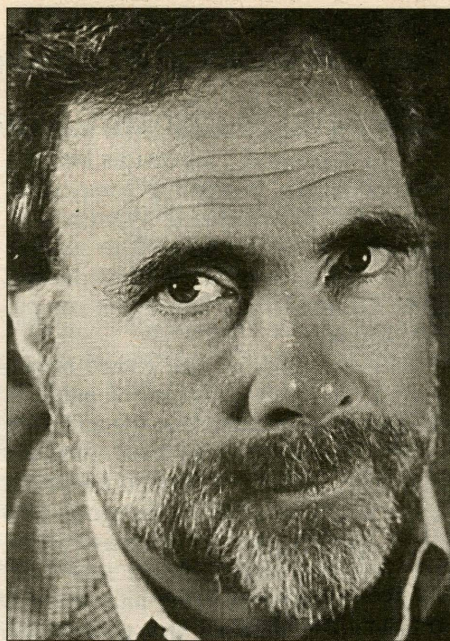
Stoned out of our minds

Everyone in Washington knows that Al Gore and George W. Bush used illegal drugs when they were younger men — only how much and how much younger remain unclear, tabloid mysteries that might still throw a little color into a drab election year. When Gore stopped smoking marijuana and whether Bush once eluded prosecution for cocaine would be hot debates already, at least on the Sunday morning news shows, but neither side is ready to pull the pin on these particular hand grenades. At the moment it's a case of mutual deterrence, two enemies with nuclear arsenals who are dying to attack but terrified of the response and the fallout.

This is the pitiful state of American politics. To the best of my recollection I never smoked anything with Al or George; it's my guess that the Dope Inquisition might give me a cleaner rating than either one of them. But I recall inhaling on several occasions. And as a contemporary of these candidates, I'd like to set the historical record a little straighter than any candidate for higher office is likely to set it.

For a period of at least a dozen years, from the mid-'60s to the late '70s, I never attended a social gathering of any description, with the possible but not certain exception of a funeral, at which illegal drugs were not present. They weren't consumed by everyone present, they weren't always consumed publicly. But they were on the premises, available if you were looking for them. Someone at every party was stoned or planned to be. Allowing for class and regional variation, and tossing out the Christian Right, this would conform to the experience of nearly everyone my age, including Al Gore and George Bush. If you don't believe me, you're well over 60 and you're in serious denial. (Or you're 19 and you can't believe these arthritic old fossils invented all the disreputable behavior you're still out there emulating.) I remember one New Year's Eve party in New York where my lady friend and I, innocent drinkers, were mystified to find \$500 added to what we expected to pay for our share of the evening's festivities. The champagne was good but it wasn't vintage Dom Perignon. The next morning we discovered that there had been bowls in the rest rooms — which we failed to notice — filled to the brim with premium cocaine. If someone today outed that party (1979?) to the Dope Inquisition, to discredit some candidate or other, a lot of very well-placed grandfathers and grandmothers would be caught in the wringer. And me along with them, I guess, though I swear I sat there eating cheese puffs and singing "Auld Lang Syne" without a clue in the world.

That was the way it was. At the time, we never dreamed that our respectability in middle age and senescence would depend on lying about these memories. You couldn't have convinced us, for one thing, that marijuana would still be illegal in the year 2000, and that harmless people could still be doing 20 years of hard time for selling it to their friends. There's a lot of room to make fun of the '60s, but those of us who grew up in that decade were some of the most optimistic people America ever produced. We honestly expected certain things to improve. When idealists were clubbed and teargassed in Alabama, when they were shot at Kent State — or when idealists of another stripe were bleeding in the rice paddies and eating Agent Orange — they weren't shedding their blood to make the world safe for hypocrisy. When did strategic



Since 1998, US spending in Colombia has tripled and cocaine cultivation has soared 50 percent, with another 50 percent increase projected by 2002.

hypocrisy become a way of life, when did false outrage become the media's dominant idiom? How did the most narrow, hypocritical, pharisaical minority come to set the standards and define the scandals, and dictate which sections of our lives are fit for public consumption and which are not?

Marinated in this cant, the public part of our culture no longer takes its cues from reality. To those of us familiar with the effects of exotic chemicals, it's America the Beautiful that seems to be "on drugs," a junkie nation sinking into some extended narcotic nightmare. Prozac and other antidepressants are prescribed carelessly, it seems to me, for nearly every adult who feels out of sorts; the same drugs, along with Ritalin, have been mobilized to hold our bewildered children within some artificial social norm. But the drugs parents and physicians provide don't offer enough insulation from real events and real emotions, apparently — the number of kids 12 to 17 who supplement their prescriptions with marijuana increased dramatically during the '90s, and heroin use for the same group nearly doubled.

How many Americans behave as if mind-altering substances have robbed them of their judgment and their will? A mass audience addicted to the cheapest tabloid sentiment is herded by the media from scandal to melodrama like cattle to feeding stations, and whichever ensilage they eat most enthusiastically becomes "the news." Supplemented with freakish "talk" shows, wrestling, roller derby and monster-truck races on TV, a steady diet of violent or adulterous celebrities will keep most of the herd chewing happily. But you didn't see the worst of the media machine and its political parasites until they invited the livestock to feast on the miseries of a frightened child. The Elian Gonzalez episode settled my contempt for the media in a place far beyond anger or indignation, in a region of cold hopeless loathing.

As a nation we gorge ourselves on controlled substances and consume mind-candy of every description. We embrace anything — chemical, commercial, electronic, pseudo-spiritual — that offers a moment's respite from the hard truths and tough choices that wait just beyond the veil of our delusions. In this way, I imagine, we resemble nearly every society since the dawn of humanity. The critical difference is that America, in full flight from clear vision and unimpaired judgment, persists in a posture of vengeful fury against anyone who traffics in the few drugs that have arbitrarily been declared illegal. It's the

same kind of contradiction that makes America the most puritanical of countries and the most sexually obsessed. Where we find weakness in ourselves, we strike out violently against the same weakness in others, and human frailty becomes a theater of war. The stubborn "War on Drugs" has wasted billions of dollars and thousands of lives, destabilized foreign governments and made a shambles of our overtaxed courts and prisons. Foreigners are astounded and appalled by the destructive energy of our denial.

"What is the purpose of plunging countries into civil war, strengthening guerrilla groups and unleashing enormous violence and corruption upon entire societies," writes Mexican political scientist Jorge Castaneda, "if American leaders can simply brush off questions about drug use in their youth?"

"I don't understand this," said a Yemeni waiter in New York, as narcotics officers arrested three of his friends for possession of khat, a mild narcotic as common as chewing gum in Arab countries. "In my country, khat is easy. Everybody, the president, they have it." "At the end of the day, the United States does not care if we all kill each other," said Alejo Vargas, vice rector of the National University of Colombia. "All that matters to them is that we get rid of the drug crops."

For all the bloodshed and political insanity, for all the expense — the military effort in Colombia alone is budgeted at \$1.6 billion for the next two years — the international War on Drugs is a ridiculous failure. Since 1998, US spending in Colombia has tripled and cocaine cultivation has soared 50 percent, with another 50 percent increase projected by 2002. Somehow the money we spend to eliminate cocaine ends up in the pockets of people who produce it. Half the world is laughing at us, the other half is weeping for the harm we've done. Colossal ironies abound. The wife of Col. James Hiett, one of America's key anti-drug warriors in Colombia, was arrested for smuggling several kilos of cocaine from Bogota to New York, and the colonel himself has since been implicated. While our forces in the Andes shoot down every private airplane that rises above the tree-line, at least 50 American Airlines employees were smuggling cocaine into Miami in jetliner food bins, ashtrays and garbage bags. While draconian Reagan-era sentencing laws have clogged the penal system with drug criminals, most of them have been able to score drugs inside the prison walls.

But ironies that could crush an elephant make no impression on the White House and its drug "czar," Gen. McCaffrey, or on the zero-tolerance bloc in Congress. On some news show I saw one of these congressmen, a Rep. Peterson from Pennsylvania, talking about "marijuana that leads inevitably to the hard stuff." I thought I was time-traveling, back to the era of *Reefer Madness* movies.

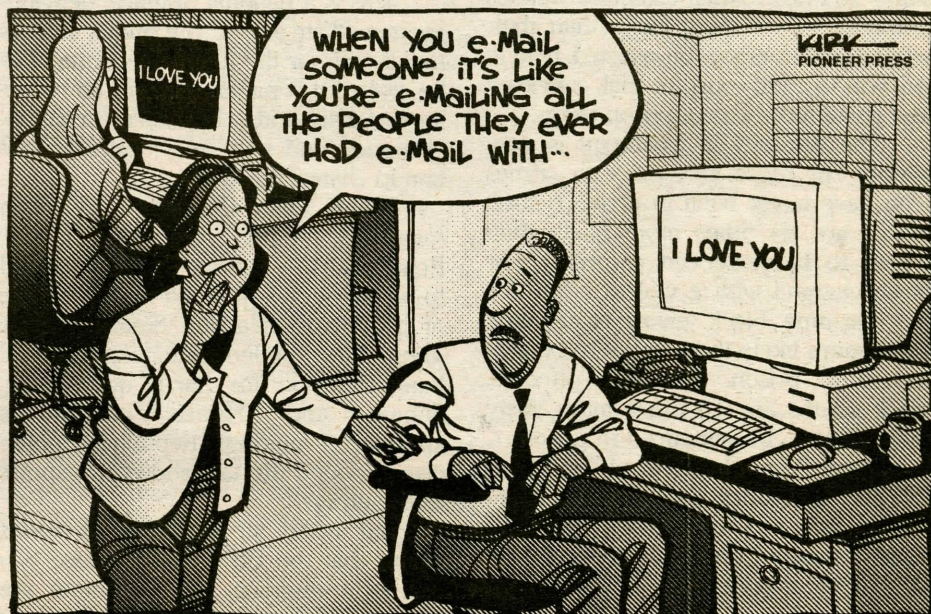
Hypocrites or simpletons, some-

times both, these politicians are suspended in time but oblivious to history. Would it change their perspective to learn that the biggest drug dealer of all time was not some Colombian *cartelito*, but Queen Victoria of England? The British East India Company was chartered by the Crown and controlled, after 1773, by their Britannic Majesties' cabinets. And in 1844 alone, from the port of Bombay alone, Company merchants shipped Malwa opium worth nearly two million pounds to China. Do the math. In 1839 the new queen's government fought a war against China to protect the opium trade, an income indispensable to her sprawling empire. Would Gen. McCaffrey have sent troops to chastise England, the dealer, India, the producer, or China, the consumer? Drug policy assumes zero-tolerance for logic. Stubborn denial is broad and bipartisan; a simple rule of thumb is that no politician with further ambitions ever endorses decriminalization. Republican elders like William F. Buckley and George Schultz endorse it, in the unlikely company of Libertarians, old hippies and young punks. But among prominent elected officials only Minnesota's bizarre — and unaffiliated — Gov. Jesse Ventura has come out foursquare for decriminalization.

Some say the ex-wrestler has been hit with too many folding chairs, but what he says about drug abuse makes elegant sense to me — that it's a health problem, a social problem and an educational problem, but only a criminal problem if we choose to make and keep it one. Cautious decriminalization must be worth a try, if only to remove big mobs and big money from the equation. No one knows exactly what to expect when heroin and cocaine are controlled substances like alcohol and nicotine, or when addiction is a cop-free affliction, treated like any other disease. But we've exhausted other options. And only an idiot will argue that a coke dealer who doesn't sell to children or machine-gun his competitors is morally inferior to Seagram's or R.J. Reynolds.

Yet idiots argue just so, and nothing budes. Of all the folly, hypocrisy and cul-de-sac thinking that make this stumbling republic so much less than it ought to be, drug policy is a kind of centerpiece, a towering monument to the flaws in our character. Will the monument finally crumble when everyone who's supposed to be fighting drugs is using them, or at least remembers using them? Or does hypocrisy outlive the hypocrite and achieve an immortality of its own?

Hal Crowther is a columnist for the weekly Independent in Durham, N.C. He won the H.L. Mencken Award for column writing in 1992. A collection of his essays, Unarmed but Dangerous, was published by the Longstreet Press, Atlanta. Write him at 219 N. Churton St., Hillsborough, NC 27278.



CHARLES LEVENDOSKY

Court Waffles on Fourth Amendment

This term, the US Supreme Court heard appeals in three cases that involve the Fourth Amendment. Amazingly, what's left of the Fourth Amendment came out unscathed in two out of the three court decisions.

This may indicate a tiny change of heart among the court's more conservative justices. It's too little, too late — in the past two decades, the high court has hacked most of the essential protections out of the Fourth Amendment.

The Fourth Amendment once guaranteed: "The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures shall not be violated, and no warrants shall issue but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized." However, the words "secure," "warrants," "probable cause," and "particularly describing" in the amendment's prescription against government intrusion have been shredded into mere confetti by the court.

The high court allows random drug testing of groups of people — with no probable cause and no particular person as a target. "Reasonable suspicion" has replaced "probable cause" as a criteria for many police searches and seizures. The court allows law enforcement officials to seize and keep citizens' property based upon so-called reasonable suspicion, even when no criminal charges have been made.

The best recent news for the Fourth

Amendment comes from the case, *Bond vs. United States*, decided April 17, in which the high court reversed the ruling by the Fifth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals.

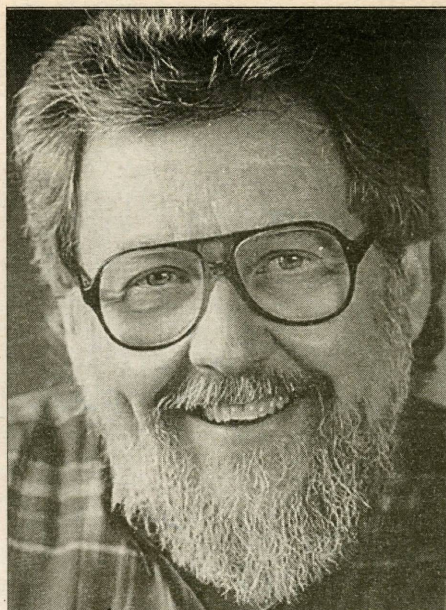
Steven Bond was a passenger on a Greyhound bus traveling from California to Arkansas. The bus stopped at a border patrol checkpoint in Texas and a border patrol agent boarded the bus to check the immigration status of the passengers. According to court documents, the agent worked his way to the back of the bus and was satisfied that the passengers were lawfully in the country. He began walking back to the front of the bus, but along the way, he squeezed the soft luggage which passengers had placed in the overhead racks.

When he squeezed the green canvas bag belonging to Bond, he felt a brick-like object in it and asked Bond if it was his bag. Bond admitted that it was. The border agent asked if he could inspect it, and Bond agreed to allow the agent to open his bag. The agent found a brick of methamphetamine wrapped in duct tape and rolled in a pair of pants.

Bond was found guilty of possession and sent to prison. He appealed on the grounds that the agent's manipulation of his canvas bag was an illegal search in violation of the Fourth Amendment. The court of appeals upheld his conviction.

Chief Justice William Rehnquist wrote the 7-to-2 decision for the Supreme Court. He asked two pivotal questions. Did Bond, by his conduct, exhibit an actual expectation of privacy in regard to the contents of his luggage? And was Bond's expectation of privacy "one that society is prepared to recognize as reasonable"?

The court answered "yes" to both questions. The bag was opaque and Bond had placed it directly above his



The high court allows random drug testing of groups of people — with no probable cause and no particular person as a target.

seat. Passengers may expect bus employees to move their bags but not prod them in an exploratory manner. Therefore, the court ruled, the border agent in his "physical manipulation" of Bond's bag "violated the Fourth Amendment."

This ruling seems to pull back from the high court's previous decisions that allow police to sift through garbage bags on public streets, to use aircraft to look into a fenced backyard of a home, and to use dogs to sniff for drugs hidden inside luggage. This clash with prior decisions caused Justices Stephen Breyer and Antonin Scalia to dissent.

On March 28, in the case, *Florida vs. J.L.*, a unanimous Supreme Court ruled that an anonymous tip, which lacks any indication of being reliable, cannot be used as the sole reason to jus-

tify a police officer stopping and frisking a person for a gun.

This ruling comports with previous rulings of the court but clarifies the limits of anonymous tips. The high court also denied the Justice Department's request for an exception to the stop-and-frisk law when it involves firearms. Pat-downs cannot be conducted simply on the whim of a police officer. There must be reasonable suspicion, says the court.

On Jan. 12, a 5-to-4 Supreme Court decided the case, *Illinois vs. Wardlow*, in which it ruled that law enforcement officials can stop and frisk a person who flees a high crime area when the police arrive.

Rehnquist wrote for the majority: "Headlong flight — wherever it occurs — is the consummate act of evasion: it is not necessarily indicative of wrongdoing, but it is certainly suggestive of such." And triggers the notion of "reasonable suspicion," according to the court. Therefore, the stop-and-frisk does not violate the Fourth Amendment, wrote Rehnquist, because the "stop is a ... minimal intrusion, simply allowing the officer to briefly investigate further."

The four dissenting justices found Rehnquist's expansive notion of "reasonable suspicion" unreasonable.

The very wording of the Wardlow ruling indicates just how much has been eliminated from the protections supposedly guaranteed by the Fourth Amendment. The court now claims that a stop-and-frisk is merely a "minimal intrusion."

I doubt whether the framers of our Constitution would have considered it that.

Charles Levendosky is the editorial page editor for the Casper (Wyo.) **Star-Tribune**, Box 80, Casper, Wyoming 82602; email levendos@trib.com. He also edits the First Amendment Cyber-Tribune on the Internet at (<http://w3.trib.com/FACT>).

MADE IN THE USA/Joel D. Joseph

Ten Reasons to Vote Against the China Trade Deal

Congress is very close to giving its rubber stamp of approval to President Clinton's trade agreement with China. This agreement will allow China to join the World Trade Organization and to function as an equal with the democratic nations of the world. Once we approve this agreement, there is no going back. If the agreement is approved we will be prohibited by international rules from retaliating against China for its abuse of human rights, its violations of religious freedoms and its crackdown on the forces of democracy.

Here are ten major reasons why Congress should vote against the China deal:

1. You can't have free trade with a communist nation. Most enterprises in China are still controlled by the government. Many exporting businesses are owned by the People's Liberation Army. Thousands of factories are in Chinese prisons making products for American shelves in violation of US law. Workers are not allowed to organize and bargain collectively. Before further opening up trade with China, we should open the doors to trade with Cuba and lift the trade embargo of our neighbors to the South.

2. De-linking trade and human rights has not worked. The US State Department has concluded that human rights and religious freedom in China are more restricted now than several years ago. This clearly shows that if we want human rights and religious freedom restored to China we must re-link trade and human rights. If you give China permanent Most Favored Nation status we will be giving away our leverage.

3. The terms of the agreement with China are not very good. The terms of this agreement are worse than those negotiated in April, 1999. Unlike the earlier agreement, American companies will not be allowed to acquire a majority interest in Chinese cor-

porations, even though under the agreement in April, 1999 they could.

In an area of great concern to American business and workers, the auto industry, we agreed to let the Chinese keep high tariffs for far too long. Under this accord, auto tariffs will be reduced by China over seven years, and then will remain at 25 percent, more than we now charge any nation to sell autos in the United States. This is a change from the April 1999 terms, where auto tariffs were reduced much more quickly.

4. We don't want China in the WTO. In fact, we should withdraw from the WTO ourselves. Most of the time when we file complaints we are outvoted by smaller nations who control the organization. The United States, as the largest market in the world, has more leverage when negotiating with a country one-on-one.

5. China won't buy much from us anyway. China is a very poor nation with wages as low as thirteen cents per hour. Their one plus billion people will not be able to afford American products for many years to come, especially if we support the communist system which holds wages down.

6. China steals our technology. China has stolen our missile technology and our nuclear secrets. Why should reward this outlaw nation with a favorable trade agreement?

7. China steals our intellectual property. It is well-known that Chinese firms illegally copy our video tapes and music CDs. It is not well-known that Chinese companies are stealing American crafts. Many crafts products that are sold at Target and Wal-Mart stores are being illegally made in China.

8. China is a military threat to Taiwan, Japan and the United States. Why should we strengthen China when it has announced its intentions of annexing Taiwan? Trade with China directly strengthens the People's Liberation Army. The PLA sells products to the United States and turns around and buys Russian tanks and other military equipment which it can use against our military forces.

9. China is not a democracy and is not likely to become one if we continue to deal with it on a "business as usual" basis. In the past several years China has cracked down on religious freedoms, arresting the

leaders of the Falun Gong, an eastern religion, and used forced to stop democratic groups. The State Department's annual report on human rights has been very critical of the Chinese regime. Should we reward a government, that does not value our freedoms, with more and more business?

10. A long-term agreement with China is a treaty under the constitution and should be approved as the constitution requires. The US Constitution provides that the Senate shall approve all treaties by a two-thirds margin. A treaty is a substantial agreement with a foreign country. Why are we rushing to enter into a long-term agreement with China now? Because President Clinton has only a few months left to create his legacy. The legacy of NAFTA will haunt his presidency more than Monica Lewinsky will. The addition of China to the WTO will ensure that Clinton will be remembered as the President who gave away secrets to China, accepted political payoffs from the Chinese and then entered into an agreement with China that will harm the United States for decades.

Let's save ourselves from Bill Clinton's legacy building and vote no on China.

Joel D. Joseph is chairman of the Made in the USA Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting American products in the United States. Write him at P.O. Box 5402, Washington, D.C. 20016 or call 800/USA-PRIDE, email madeusafdn@mindspring.com. Call any member of Congress on this issue toll-free via the AFL-CIO Congressional Hotline, 800-393-1082.

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MOLLY IVINS

Humility's a virtue when it comes to Chinese trade

To say that my knowledge of Chinese trade issues is inadequate is a wild understatement — it's not a hot topic in Nacogdoches. But at least I approach the subject with appropriate humbleness, instead of the damn-fool certainty that seems to afflict the other 2 percent of our countrymen who care about this issue.

And I must say it seems to me an area that calls for a becoming tentativeness. I have yet to find any evidence that anyone knows what all the consequences of "permanent normalization" of trade with China will be.

In some ways, this is a political no-brainer — American business positively salivates at the prospect of Chinese markets, and the Clinton administration is siding with business, arguing that it's a bonanza. Most Republicans, responding to the siren call of their campaign contributors, favor the deal. Labor, religious, environmental and consumer groups are pressuring Democrats to vote "no."

Labor's argument is that the agreement will encourage US companies to move their operations to China, where low wages and the lack of labor standards mean that the companies can make big profits, and the result will be another exodus of American jobs overseas. About two-thirds of the D's now oppose the agreement, even though President Clinton — a longtime Democratic Leadership Council free-trader — is leading the charge.

Adding to the festivities is one of those rare harmonic convergences of the far left and the far right. The left is convinced that unrestrained globalization is a bad deal for everyone, while the Pat Buchanan right is just convinced that it's a bad deal for American workers. Plus, your religious right is all worked up about persecution of Christians in China, though the geriatric regime there appears to be a nondiscriminatory persecutor of practically anyone with a belief system.

The human rights lobby is in a quandary. A major school of thought holds that the best way to get the Chinese government to improve its human rights record is to involve the nation in the world community, to open it up to outside influences and let its citizens see the light. Ostracizing the country for all those years certainly didn't do dog for human rights.

A peculiar report in the right-wing *Washington Times* alleges that the Hong Kong businessman Li Ka-shing (can I help it if his name sounds like a cash-register noise?) is planning to take over the Panama Canal.

"Li is directly connected to Beijing and is willing to use his business influence to further the aims of the Chinese government," says a declassified Pentagon intelligence report, according to the newspaper. The implication is that these fiendishly clever Sino-commies are thinking long-term, while our greed-blinded business community can't look farther ahead than next quarter's profits.

True, Li's company, Hutchison Whampoa, has leased two ports at each end of the Panama Canal for the next 23 years. On the other hand, that's what his company does; the guy's a really big businessman from Hong Kong, perfectly familiar to the business press, which simply regards him as a major capitalist.

He has 18 container terminals around the Pacific, and one-tenth of the world's trade passes through them, according to *Time* magazine. His port operations handle 30 percent of Hong

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Adding to the festivities is one of those rare harmonic convergences of the far left and the far right.

Kong's trade.

From a business point of view, the only impact of the vote by Congress to normalize trade relations is whether the US gets to take full advantage of China's expected entry into the World Trade Organization. Congress has no role in that decision.

Pretty much your whole Establishment is in favor of this — economists, including 13 Nobel laureates, 200 top CEOs, a group of former Treasury and State Department secretaries going back five administrations, 47 governors and a partridge in a pear tree. If that isn't enough to make you suspicious, what is?

Now comes forth the administration with yet another argument: national security. They claim that this deal is such a bonanza — the Chinese have made all these concessions and all we have to do is treat the country like all our other trading partners — that if it is rejected, the Chinese will never believe it was for economic reasons. They will conclude that it is a strategic decision to "pursue a course of confrontation, contention and containment," says Sandy Berger, the national security guy. Also, Berger says it would upset Japan and South Korea.

House Minority Leader Dick Gephardt is opposed to the deal. He keeps trying to find some compromise that will include "a methodical way" to ensure that China abides by its treaties, a mechanism to evaluate its human rights record and a code of conduct for American companies doing business in China. Imagine how popular that last item is making him with the chamber of commerce.

One can see why the Chinese would get real tired of having Congress do this annual review of their trade status. Congress' election-year politics, grandstanding, posturing and playing to various interest groups are probably enough to make 'em think democracy stinks.

So where do we come out on this, those of us who don't export soybeans or dream of selling skis to the Chinese? Robert Reich is a former Clinton labor secretary who always seems on the side of... how to put this? The Average Joe or the Little Guy are so demeaning — maybe just The Rest of Us.

Anyway, Reich thinks labor should set a price for China trade while it still has the votes to stop the deal and the other side is eager to move forward. Reich thinks the mistake labor made on NAFTA and GATT was just to oppose them, rather than set a price for cooperating. Labor lost both times and got nothing.

But rather than impose labor, environmental or human rights standards on the Chinese, Reich recommends that labor go for some clout here at home — a ban on the permanent replacement of striking workers, a tripling of fines against employers who illegally fire

workers for attempting to organize a union (which, I hate to tell you, is as common as dirt).

Reich's point is that if we get more power for blue-collar Americans, they'll be in a better position to protect their jobs against cheap foreign labor. This could well be the way to go.

Neither presidential candidate will talk about it, but I think it's clear to most Americans that free trade without restrictions is not a good deal for us. In polite political circles, where free trade is as great an idol as the Golden Calf, followed by blind worshippers, no one wants to hear from populist doubters. But the Rest of Us got the message a long time ago.

Taking the gospel to Silicon Valley and beyond

"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." Easter, it seems to me, is a good time to consider the gospel, and Silicon Valley seems like a good place to start.

Think "Silicon Valley," and what do you get? Multi-zillionaires, mansions, fancy cars and the heartbreak of Suddenly Acquired Wealth Syndrome — that's the tragic dilemma afflicting those who become billionaires before they're 30 and are left trying to figure out what to do with the rest of their lives.

Would it surprise you to learn that seven out of every 10 jobs being created in Silicon Valley pay less than \$10,000 a year? How much have you heard about that 70 percent of the residents?

The news media supposedly hold up a mirror of our society, but it seems more and more like a funhouse mirror. Headlines and great stretches of air time are devoted to the gyrations of the stock market, yet 50 percent of us own no stocks.

[Be] not greedy of filthy lucre.

Thy money perish with thee.

The *New York Times* devoted some space in its Sunday magazine recently to the poor, apparently on the theory that they're still with us. Well, actually, it wasn't an article about the poor — it was an article about how little the rest of us ever see or think about the poor.

One function of the income gap is that the people at the top of the heap have a hard time even seeing those at the bottom. They practically need a telescope. The pharaohs of ancient Egypt probably didn't waste a lot of time thinking about the people who built their pyramids, either. OK, so it's not that bad yet — but it's getting that bad.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

The very structure of our cities and suburbs hide the poor from the rest of us. We live increasingly in enclaves of people who are about as rich as we are, not matter what that level is. When Ralph Ellison wrote his book *Invisible Man*, he was talking about black people, but the invisible people today are not black but poor. ("Poor and black" remains a special category.)

And though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

Baruch Spinoza, the 17th-century Dutch philosopher, wrote: "To give aid to every poor man is far beyond the reach and power of every man — Care of the poor is incumbent upon society as a whole." That seems obvious, but the political temper of the times is resistant — perhaps, again, because we don't see what is happening to our countrymen.

With the exception of the PBS documentary *Surviving the Good Times*, by Bill Moyers, I cannot think when I have last seen struggling working-class Americans speaking on television. Of course, we get those statistical reports — more people without health insurance, more people living in dilapidated housing and paying more than half their income to get it, more people working

two and three jobs. But all of those people together have not received half the attention that the media have lavished on Martha Stewart and her deathless advice on how to entertain beautifully.

Make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.

So much of our political life is a shell game — tax relief plans that benefit the rich, health-care plans that won't help, vows of environmental concern from those who demonstrably have none.

Bill Greider has suggested a tax relief plan that makes real sense. Three-quarters of all Americans pay more each year in Social Security taxes than they do income taxes. Yet the pols keep talking about income tax brackets, which mainly affect those in the highest brackets.

The incomes of top earners are largely exempt from FICA taxes. The tax is capped after \$76,200 — you don't have to pay another nickel, no matter how much you make. That's 6 percent of all Americans. (If everybody you know makes more than \$76,200 a year, you might want to re-examine the earlier point about the invisibility of the poor.)

Greider suggests cutting the present rate of FICA, which is 12.4 percent, by 2 percent and offset the lost revenue by abolishing the cap so that those making more than \$76,200 will continue to pay. Greider says that average working families would get about \$700 in relief on an income of \$35,000. For someone making \$1 million a year, the bite would be about \$100,000 — which, Greider points out, would make FICA precisely the flat tax advocated by conservatives.

And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple.

As I have detailed in other columns, there are several kinds of financial institutions that specialize in ripping off poor people. They offer loans at usurious rates, prey on poor homeowners and aggressively recruit poor borrowers. There oughta be a law — there really ought to be a law.

And distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

Well, you can't get a quorum in this country for redistributing income from the rich to the poor. But wouldn't it be a good idea if we stopped redistributing income from the poor to the rich?

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another.

Happy Easter.

Molly Ivins is a columnist for the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* and author, with Lou Dubose, of *Shrub The Short but Happy Political Life of George W. Bush* (Random House). Write her at 1005 Congress Ave., Suite 920, Austin, TX 78701; phone 512-476-8908; or email mollyivins@star-telegram.com

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this bill," Claybrook said.

The bill would allow temporary waste storage at Yucca Mountain as early as 2006, with waste traveling through 43 states for the next 25 years, past the homes and workplaces of 50 million Americans. [See "Mobil Chernobyl," by Karen Charman, 5/98 PP.] Spent nuclear fuel and high-level waste is currently kept at 77 sites across the country and would have to be transported by truck or rail to Yucca Mountain if that site near Las Vegas is approved as a geologic repository. "It is unfortunate that lawmakers have ignored the risks of a catastrophic release of radiation in the event of a crash," Claybrook said. "We are encouraged by the number of lawmakers who voted against the bill, however, and hold out hope that a veto will be sustained."

Continued on next page

AN ESSAY BY EUGENE MCCARTHY

The Olfactory Test

Not all presidents have been subjected to the test of the five senses. Yet four of the five sensory tests to which political candidates, their candidates, their campaigns, or administrations have been subjected — those of sight, hearing or sound taste, and touch — have been applied to President Clinton and his administration. The fifth, that of smell, the olfactory one, has not yet been used.

The touch test usually is based on handshake techniques and general physical behavior. Estes Kefauver was judged to have a passive but not a weak handshake. President Johnson's technique was aggressive. It involved moving in close, invading the target's space, and then either by hand hold alone or with help from an elbow grasp, moving the person forward or backward. In less social meetings, in which Lyndon was trying to persuade someone to accept the President's point of view, he would lean over a shorter person, or if the quarry were taller than the President, move in close and come up from below, like a badger. The experience of this approach prompted Senator Edmund Muskie to say that he previously had never known why people had the hair in their nostrils clipped. President Clinton, it has been noted, is not so aggressive as was President Johnson. He does move in close, and then grasping his target's upper arms in firm hold, temporarily immobilizes the person, a kind of passive domination.

The sense of sight is obviously applied to decide whether the politician — the president — is looking well. Do his clothes fit well? Are they appropriate? Does he wear hat or cap? President Kennedy refused to wear a hat, to the dismay of Alex Rose, then president of the hat making union in New York. Eisenhower introduced the cap, at least for golf. George Bush was heavy into caps, but occasionally wore a hat. President Clinton obviously is a cap person; his haircuts and styles have

received more attention than his headwear.

Through the years, the manner in which presidents and other office holders and politicians cry has been subject to careful observation. President Nixon cried, or seemed to cry, out of the inside corner of his eye or eyes, President Johnson, out of the outside corner. In the case of Senator Muskie in the New Hampshire primary of 1972, he seemed to cry out of the middle of his lower lid, a la Bette Davis. The senator denied crying, and what was reported badly was melting snow. Some politicians merely well up, or become misty eyed, without condensation. This seems to be the case with President Clinton.

The sense of taste is regularly applied in judging the eating habits of president and other office holders and candidates, especially in relation to ethnic food. President Ford was reported to have eaten tamales including the corn husks, and another presidential candidate is said to have eaten Louisiana shrimp shell and all. The test among Korean American constituents now is Kimshi, a fermented cabbage dish, rank and kind of an onion-leek; it is the ultimate test in West Virginia. President Clinton's addition to "junk food" has received more press attention than White House menus and culinary changes, quantity rather than quality having more significance for the press.

The sound test usually is applied to voice, but more particularly as more distinctive, to laughter. President Kennedy never went far beyond a silent smile. Presidents Eisenhower and Carter were judged to laugh well. President Bush's laugh never was quite right, too hearty, or too soon, or too late, or too long continued. The Clinton laugh is still to be defined although it has been noted that he sometimes opens his mouth, tentatively, as though about to laugh and then does not follow through.

The fifth sense, that of smell, is not so readily, regularly, nor directly applied in politics. The "odor of sanctity" has long been attributed to holy persons, as in the case of St. Teresa, "The Little Flower." In some cases, the odor is of roses; in others as noted by the poet,

Alternatively, he noted, the revenue from the tax could be used to fund national health care insurance, or expansion of Head Start and Child Care. For more information, see his paper "Taxing Financial Speculation: Shifting the Tax Burden From Wages to Wagers," online or by calling 202-293-5380 x 206.

ADA ENDORSES GORE. The National Board of Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), the nation's oldest independent liberal political organization, endorsed Vice President Al Gore for the presidency on May 2. "We believe he is the best candidate because he will continue the fight for social and economic justice, protect a woman's right to choose and push for quality, affordable health care for all as well as greater educational opportunities," National Director, Amy Isaacs, said. Gore's ADA Lifetime Voting Record from his terms in the House and the Senate is a moderate 66 percent, but Isaacs noted, "It is important to remember that his voting record stops in 1992 when he became vice president. Since then, he has changed and grown."

CALIFORNIA TOWN REJECTS CORPORATE PERSONHOOD. The Point Arena, Calif., City Council on a 4-1 vote April 25 passed a resolution that questions whether corporations are persons and should be granted civil rights under the 14th Amendment. For details contact Jan Edwards of the Redwood Coast Alliance for Democracy, phone 707-882-1818; email janedwards@mcn.org.



George McGovern, at the time he was nominated to be the Democratic Party candidate in Miami in 1972, reported that he had experienced "the sweet taste of victory." He did not mention any accompanying odor.

William Butler Yeats, that of violets. Football teams, anticipating playing in the Rose Bowl game, have been observed by sportswriters as "smelling the roses," as have horses anticipating running in the Kentucky Derby.

The earliest recorded application of the sense of smell in US politics goes back to John Randolph of Virginia who sometime in his political career (he died in 1833) said of a political opponent, Edward Livingston: "He's like a dead mackerel in the moonlight. He stinks and shines."

It is not unusual in presidential campaigns to have at least one report that he has sensed the "smell of death," for one candidate or another. There is no historical record of the reliability of the sense

of smell as useful as a political indicator or standard for judging progress or failure. George McGovern, at the time he was nominated to be the Democratic Party candidate in Miami in 1972, reported that he had experienced "the sweet taste of victory." He did not mention any accompanying odor.

Former Vice President Walter Mondale, among recent politicians, seems to have relied more on olfactory determinations than others. In February of 1980, speaking in New Hampshire in support of President Carter and himself, in the face of Senator Ted Kennedy's challenge to their renomination as the party's candidates, Walter was reported to have said, "I smell victory in this room." Again in 1984, in his own bid for the presidential nomination, after losing to Senator Gary Hart in a number of primaries in New England states, he was reported by the *Washington Post* as having said, "There seeped into my campaign and maybe into my mind a front runner inevitability, psychology, that the people smelled."

Distinctive odors or scents have not historically marked whole campaigns or administrations in recent decades. President Carter came close in his identifying a malaise as being present in the country during his administration, although he did not go so far as to identify any accompanying odor. No particular odor or scent has been identified as distinguishing the Clinton administration which may, like the gladiola, be without scent or perfume. The current campaign, too, seems to be odorless, although it is likely that an alpha odor or cologne may emerge in the general election.

Eugene J. McCarthy was a teacher and congressman before he became a Democratic-Farmer-Labor senator from Minnesota from 1959 through 1970. His latest book is No Fault Politics: Modern Presidents, The Press and Reformers (Times Books 1998).

Dispatches ...

Continued from preceding page

SPECULATOR TAX COULD RAISE \$100B. The Tax Foundation, a conservative think tank, dubbed May 3rd as "Tax Freedom Day," calculating the percentage of national income that goes to state, federal, and local taxes and determining the date when the same percentage of the year has passed. But the Center for Economic and Policy Research noted that this method significantly overstates the tax burden for a typical family because wealthy households pay a larger portion of their income in taxes. "A typical family in the middle of the income distribution pays approximately 28 percent of its income in taxes, which would place its 'Tax Freedom Day' at approximately April 12th," the CEPR stated.

One way to make the tax system more progressive, and further move up a typical family's Tax Freedom Day, is to place a tax on financial speculation such as the buying and selling of shares of stock, options, futures, and other financial instruments. Dean Baker, the CEPR's co-director, calculated that a modest tax of 0.25 percent on the sale or purchase of stock, along with comparable taxes on other financial instruments, could raise more than \$100 billion a year in revenue, which could finance an income tax cut of 40 percent for a typical working family. Such an income tax cut would move up "Tax Freedom Day" for a typical family to the beginning of April, or possibly the end of March.



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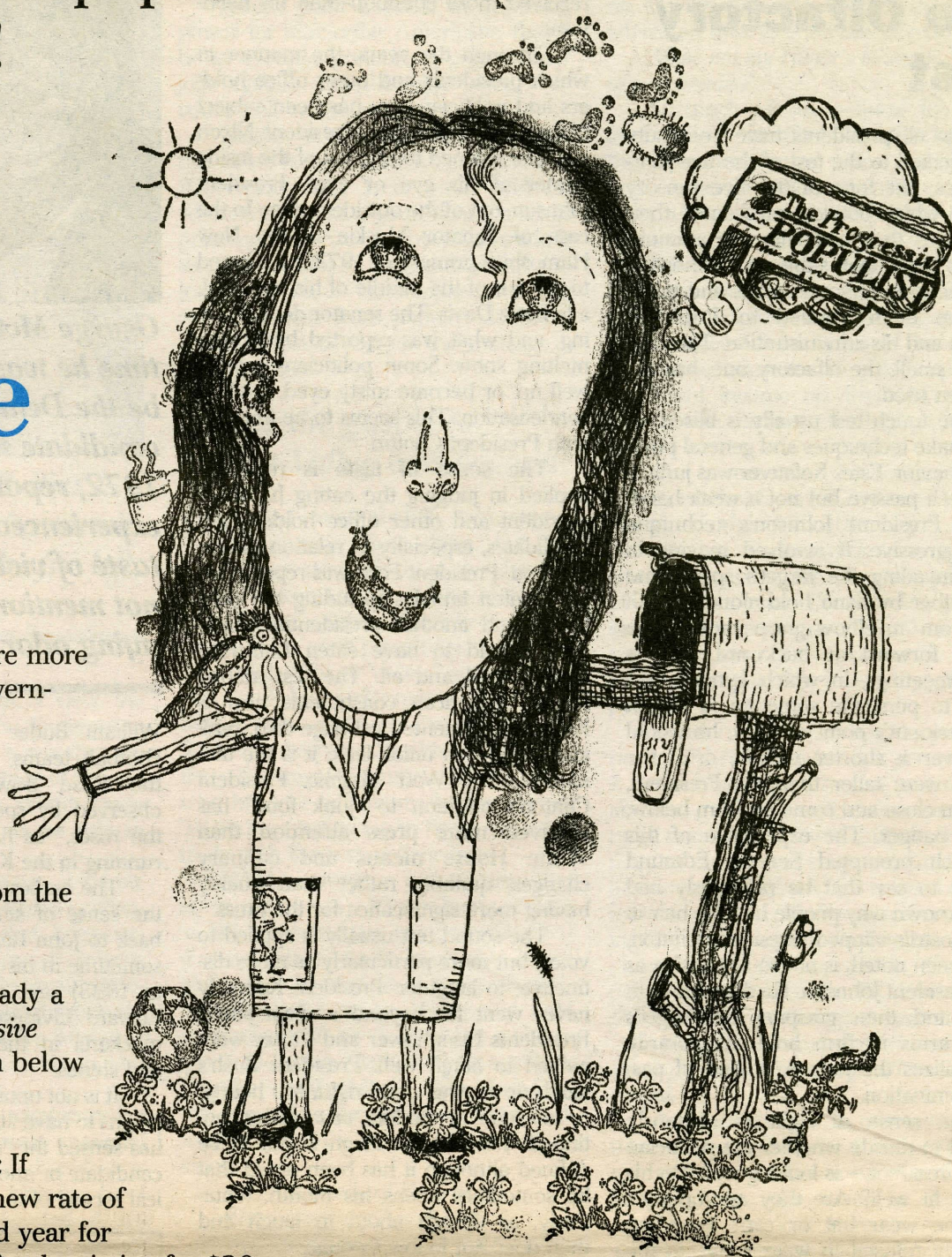
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