

NAOMI KLEIN IN BRAZIL • MICHAEL MOORE VS. KENNY BOY

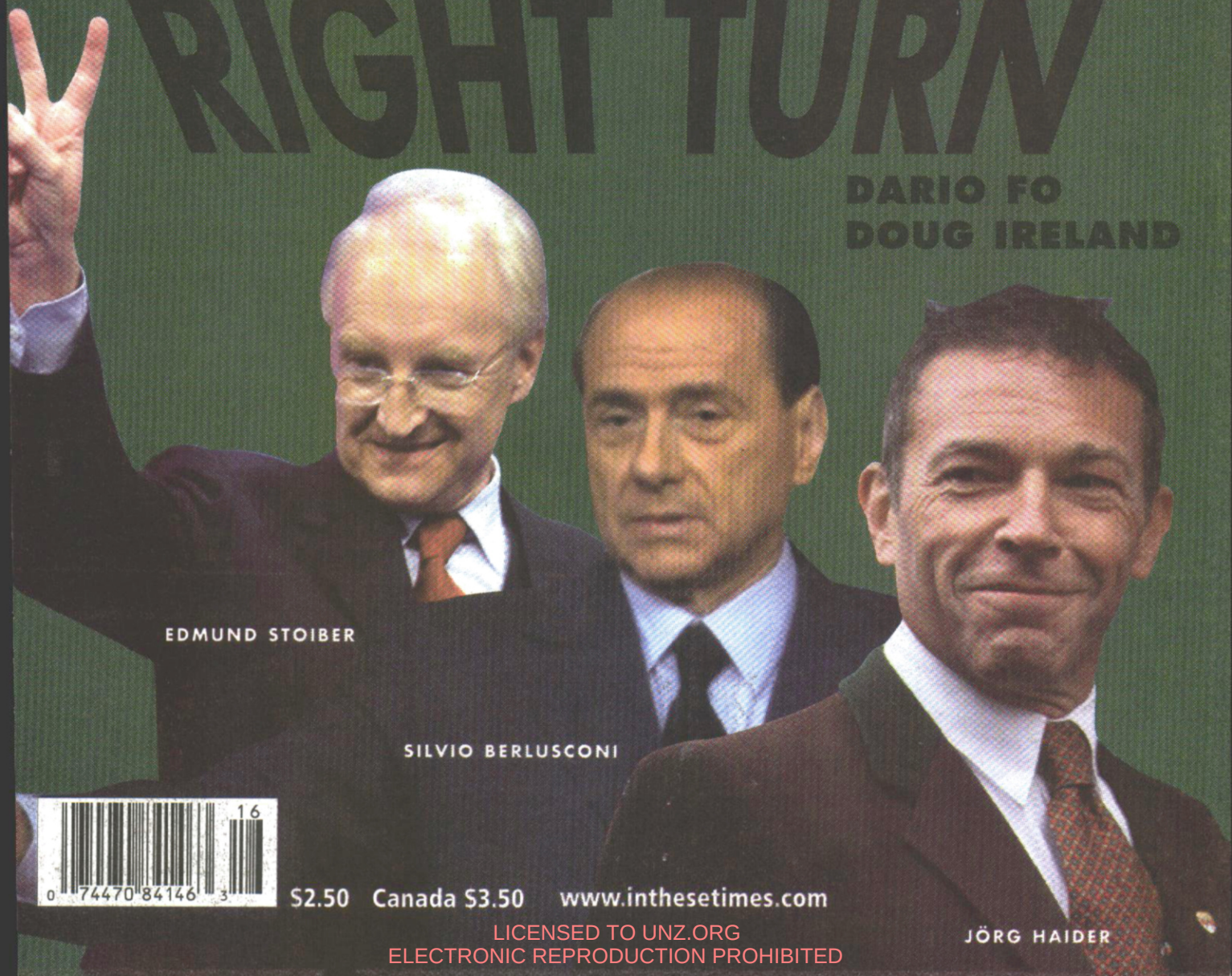
In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

March 18, 2002

EUROPE'S RIGHT TURN

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Editorial

A Scandal Bigger than Enron

Just as President Bush pretends that he barely knew "Kenny Boy" Lay, the major financial backer of his career, many conservatives are pretending that Enron is a scandal of business, not politics. The roster of business misdeeds is already long and likely to grow, but the rise and fall of Enron is a major political scandal on at least three levels.

First, the Bush administration is perhaps the most unabashedly pro-corporate ever. No industry has more influence than the energy sector, and no company had more clout than Enron. At least eight of the most powerful members of the administration, including both Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney, had significant ties to Enron—receiving pay or campaign contributions, investing in the company, or gaining appointment on the basis of Enron's recommendation. Enron's tentacles reach even further into Congress, state governments and the Republican Party, whose new head, Marc Racicot, was an Enron lobbyist.

In just its first year in office, as Rep. Henry Waxman (D-California) catalogued in a request for an investigation, the Bush administration delivered almost everything Enron wanted: an energy plan with at least 17 policies Enron favored, opposition to electricity price caps in California (which Cheney announced a day after meeting with Lay), numerous interventions by Cheney and others to help Enron sell a controversial power plant in India, a proposed repeal of the corporate minimum tax (further helping a company that had already avoided paying taxes for five years), appointment of Enron's choice to head the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, and opposition to efforts by the other major industrial countries to rein in offshore tax havens (where hundreds of Enron special enterprises were set up).

Enron couldn't overpower other corporate interests to win support of the Kyoto agreement (and its lucrative promise of emissions trading), and the company didn't get a bailout, but it was stunningly successful at influencing the administration.

The second level of scandal is that Enron's contributions and influence spread across the political spectrum. Corporate money not only won influence among ideologically sympathetic Republicans, but corrupted the Democrats, who have largely abandoned the party's claim to represent the "little guys" and the broader public interest.

The Democrats are marginally better on corporate issues: In recent years, some Dems tried to push modest regulations that would have restrained abuse of tax havens and retirement plans, as well as the use of auditors as consultants. But much like the savings-and-loan debacle of the '80s, this is a scandal tainting both parties.

Yet the biggest scandal is ideological. For at least the past 25 years, there has been a concerted attack on government and a worshipful adulation of the "free market" as the answer to all problems, including the ones it creates. The balance sheet of this ideological attack deserves to be audited—but not by Arthur Andersen.

Such an audit would show that few of the promises have been delivered, and that the Democrats have offered weak resis-

There has been a a worshipful adulation of the 'free market' as the answer to all problems, including the ones it creates.

tance and frequent collusion. At the same time, social and economic inequality and instability have grown, and democracy has been undermined.

Congressional and courtroom investigations may expose some of the political dimensions of the Enron scandal in the Bush administration. And real campaign finance reform—public financing of elections, not the weak compromise recently approved by the House—could seriously reduce the corruption of politics.

But it will take a broad citizen movement on the scale of the Populist or Progressive movements of a century ago to dig out the roots of the Enron scandal—overwhelming corporate power—and demand the revival of democracy and government in the public interest.

—David Moberg

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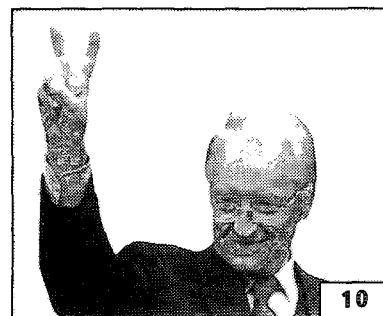
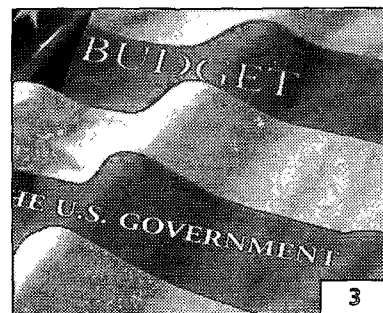
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Letters

Not So New America

The United States did not initially impose uniformity upon newcomers as G. Pascal Zachary contends ("The New America," January 21). A vibrant German language community thrived until World War I and Prohibition. (German-speaking socialists customarily plotted strategies in the beer halls.) Other linguistic communities, especially Spanish and Chinese, have always existed in the United States. The situation today does not differ markedly from the situation in the 19th century and earlier, when immigration was free to whoever got here.

It is mostly in the 20th century that immigration restrictions were imposed and "Americanism" was promoted. These restrictions had less to do with race-based nationalism and more to do with anti-communism. Restrictions were suspended for people "fleeing" from "communist" societies. The United States has always granted citizenship to someone born here, while countries such as Germany have not.

Chris Vail
San Jose, California

A Dose of the Truth?

Rep. Nancy Pelosi—writing in the February 18 issue in response to Doug Ireland's "Liberty on the Defensive" (January 21)—should be calling the IRS concerning David Pasquerelli, who operates an annual \$1.6 million medical marijuana business. He and his AIDS-denialist cult hypocritically sell pot to those with a disease they say doesn't exist. Truly bizarre.

Ireland himself should have noted that for six years the denialists have conducted a calculated, deliberate campaign of stalking, intimidation, harassment, threats and physical violence designed to silence anyone who disagrees with their views, including people with AIDS and activists fighting pharmaceutical companies.

These cultists have largely succeeded in their efforts. For some time it has been impossible to have a public forum or meeting on HIV treatment or prevention issues in San Francisco without a heavy, armed security presence. As a result, few such meetings have occurred.

Two years ago, more than 1,300 members of the Bay Area AIDS and queer communities signed a statement asking the San Francisco district attorney to bring charges against Pasquerelli and his partners in crime. District Attorney Terance Hallinan ignored the petition and only brought charges when asked to do so by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, which obviously

carries more weight than those of us working against AIDS in the trenches everyday.

Only in San Francisco. Pass the Kool-Aid, please. And give Doug Ireland a dose of the truth.

John Iversen
ACT UP/East Bay
Berkeley, California

Smoke and Mirrors

David Moberg's editorial on the Enron scandal is no doubt accurate, but it is inadequate for a socialist newsmagazine ("Market Magic's Empty Shell," January 21). Perhaps Enron's deliberate rip-off of its own stockholders and employees represents a new level of greed in the corporate world. Yet many of Enron's practices are just business as usual: the shameless influence-peddling with our elected officials, the lies to investigators and the public, the use of taxpayers' money to bolster private profit, and the justification of all such immoral actions under the term "free enterprise."

A socialist analysis of this situation needs to look beyond the smoke and mirrors of Enronomics to the very question of whether society can justify the existence of such entities. Certainly, if we have to live in a world with faceless and unanswerable corporations, the very least we need to advocate is some form of genuine corporate accountability (not just to the stockholders, but to the public affected by their actions) and some real restrictions on what these creatures can get away with.

This fiasco should be ammunition for questioning the very notions of "free" mar-

kets, globalization and the corporate charter. To do any less is to deprive our ideas of any meaningful contemporary critique.

Joel Hildebrandt
Berkeley, California

Word Choices

In "Treaty's End" Jeffrey St. Clair makes reference to a meeting and uses the word "pow-wow" (January 21). I know it's unintentional, but the use of this Native American word is incorrect in that its usual context is "dance" or party or reunion. We white folks "appropriated" it wrongly, like so many other things, and use it as a cute way to say "meeting." I would encourage resistance to this urge. There are better words in our own language.

Jan and Patrick Pesek-Herriges
Clayton, Wisconsin

Mind Your Ts & As

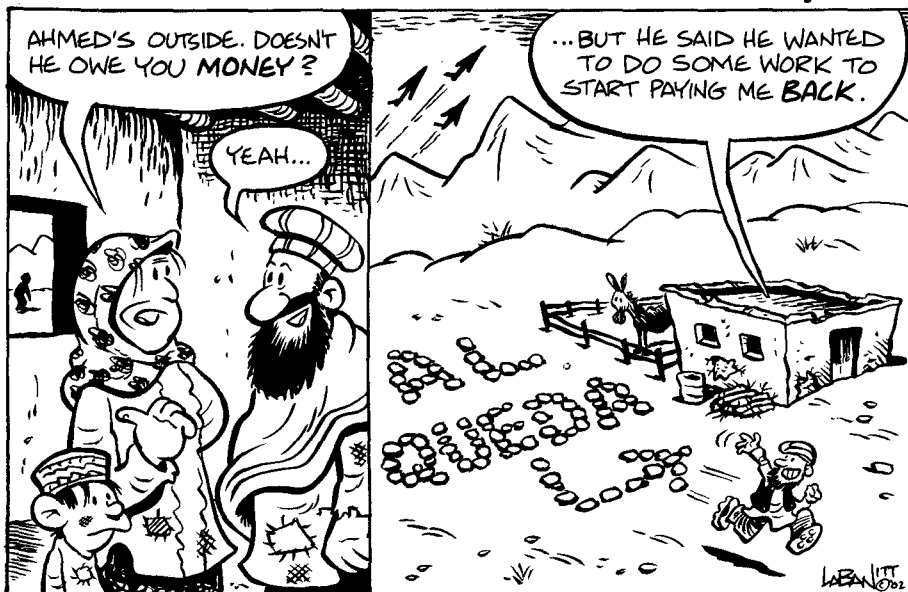
I was greatly discomfited by Terry LaBan's drawing in the November 12 Appall-o-Meter. Please don't do anything like this again. If the problem is not obvious, consider a couple of focus groups.

Amelia Sreen
Lebanon, New Hampshire

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Terry LaBan



Sky High

The military busts the 2003 federal budget

By Frida Berrigan

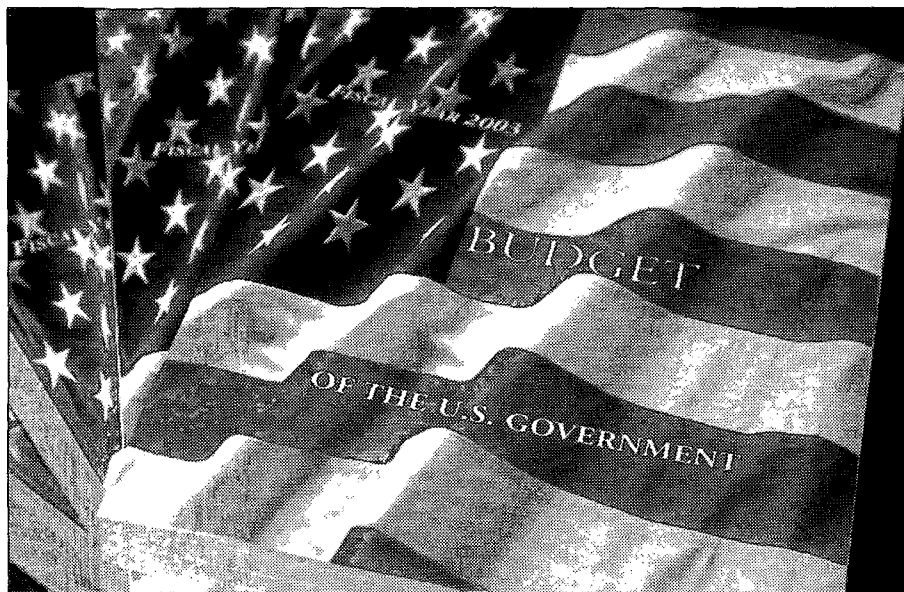
Clad in a leather bomber jacket and surrounded by the weapons of the war on terrorism, President Bush was certainly trying to link his new budget to the fight against the "axis of evil." At the Elgin Air Force base in Florida on February 4th, he announced his request for a \$48 billion increase in military spending, the largest in almost two decades.

If Bush has his way, the total budget for military spending in 2003—including military functions of the Coast Guard and the Department of Energy—will reach \$396 billion, an \$87 billion increase from when he took office in January 2001.

Standing against a backdrop of F-15 and F-16 fighter planes, an A-10 warthog, and a huge American flag, Bush argued that the United States needs new military spending to address new threats and a new security environment. "It is very clear that the defense budget is cheap when one compares it to putting our security at risk, our lives at risk, our country at risk, our freedoms at risk," Bush said. But his rhetoric ignores the fact that this new military spending spree has little to do with fighting the war on terrorism.

About one-third of the \$68 billion allocated for weapons procurement in the new budget proposal would pay for Cold War systems with no relevance to the current war or future conflicts being imagined by war planners. This includes an additional \$12 billion to fund three new fighter plane programs: the Joint Strike Fighter, F-22 and Super Hornet. On the campaign trail, Bush repeatedly said that the U.S. could not afford and did not need all three systems.

The 70-ton Crusader artillery system, despite being designed to fight land battles against the Soviet Union, too would be fully funded at \$475.2 million. These and other Cold War relics are slated to receive \$21.2 billion in the fiscal year 2003 budget. The Bush administration's proposed increase alone is larger than



\$48 billion in military spending increases, wrapped in the flag.

the entire military budget of every other country in the world except Russia, which spends about \$60 billion on the military each year.

Bush's new budget is a four-volume tome printed on heavy glossy paper. The cover is a picture of the American flag, and the pages are full of photographs and charts. In language clearly drafted before the Enron scandal hit the front page, the budget calls on government to emulate the efficiency of the private sector, saying, "dollars will go to programs that work, those programs that don't work will be reformed."

What works and what doesn't can depend on where you are sitting.

Jesse McDonnell and other high school students at the Youth Opportunity Center in Portland, Oregon probably thought their program was working pretty well. President Bush even told them so. On a West Coast jaunt in early January, Bush dropped in on the center that provides job training to about 1,400 students in one of Portland's poorest neighborhoods. He praised "the good instructors" there for "helping people help themselves."

Bush's new budget slashes \$545 million from job training programs around the country. For the Youth Opportunity Center, that is likely to mean 80 percent cuts in funding and maybe the end of the program. McDonnell was stunned when he heard about the cuts. "I was like, 'How could you come visit here if you're going to do that?'"

A Bush administration official defended the cuts, saying the aim was to get rid of "duplicative services" and support proven programs like the Job Corps. But job-training programs such as the Youth Opportunity Center are only two years old, and program backers say it is too soon to gauge their overall impact. The center's executive director, Antoinette Edwards, says, "Given the time we've had, it feels as though we're about to have the plug snatched out. We feel like we're onto something big."

It's not just job training that Bush seems to think "doesn't work." The White House's budget proposes cuts at the Justice and Labor departments and appropriates no new money for Commerce, Agriculture or the Interior. Moreover, proposed increases in the budgets for education, the environment and space exploration do not reach the rate of inflation.

But the Pentagon wants even more money. The ink was barely dry on the White House proposal when the Pentagon began preparing its case that the \$48 billion increase over last year's allocation is not enough money. Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, addressed Congress the next day to call for increased spending of more than \$100 billion a year "for several years." Can we really afford that? ■

Frida Berrigan is a senior research associate with the World Policy Institute's Arms Trade Resource Center.

Word Games

Bush stealth-attacks reproductive rights

By Annette Fuentes

With Washington and the rest of the nation transfixed by the unfolding political and financial fiasco at Enron, the Bush administration in one week unleashed a double whammy against women's reproductive health rights, according to abortion rights advocates.

First, on January 31, Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson unveiled a new health care policy to expand the state Child Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to provide prenatal and delivery care to eligible pregnant women. CHIP, created by Congress in 1997, covers some 3.3 million children up to age 19 whose family incomes are too high to qualify for Medicaid, but too low to be able to afford private health insurance. The new policy would include prenatal care by

allowing states to cover children "from conception to age 19"—in essence defining a fetus as an unborn child.

Thompson said the proposal was motivated by the need to provide care to women and children, saying, "Prenatal care for women and their babies is a crucial part of the medical care every person should have through the course of their life cycle."

But his announcement was hailed by anti-abortion activists and attacked by reproductive rights advocates as a cynical ploy to chip away at the right to abortion. "It's political maneuvering and worse," says Vicky Saporta, executive director of the National Abortion Federation. "It's a clever backdoor attempt to undermine *Roe v. Wade*. By granting medical benefits to a fetus, it creates a precedent to overturn *Roe*."

Establishing personhood from conception has long been a goal of the Christian right. If a fetus is a person, according to conservative strategy, abortion could be defined as murder and made illegal. The political underpinnings of the new policy were hard to miss: Thompson announced it at the

29th annual Conservative Political Action Conference, where attendees reportedly greeted the news with cheers.

The CHIP proposal is troubling, say women's health advocates, because it offers low-income women vitally important prenatal care. "We're strongly in favor of extending prenatal care as well as comprehensive health care for women," says Amy Allina, program director of the National Women's Health Network. "But I don't want to see fetuses granted personhood in order to get at pregnant women. Women shouldn't have to be pregnant to get health care."

The CHIP proposal will likely become policy after the brief public comment period, and it is unlikely it could be successfully challenged in court, Crepps says. But if the language of the new policy were ultimately used to take legal action against a pregnant woman on behalf of an "unborn child," that could provoke a legal challenge by abortion rights advocates.

Then, on February 4, Attorney General John Ashcroft filed an amicus brief supporting Ohio's ban on late-term abortions. The Ohio ban was overturned by a lower court, which ruled that it didn't adequately guarantee that a woman could get a late-term abortion if it was medically necessary. The Sixth Circuit court is hearing an appeal of that decision.

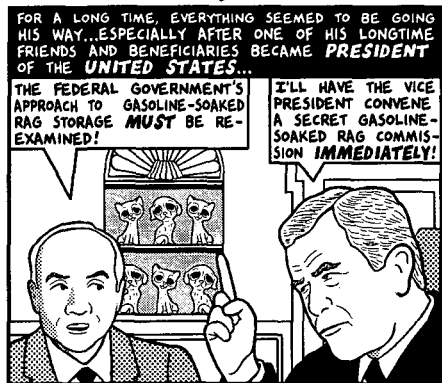
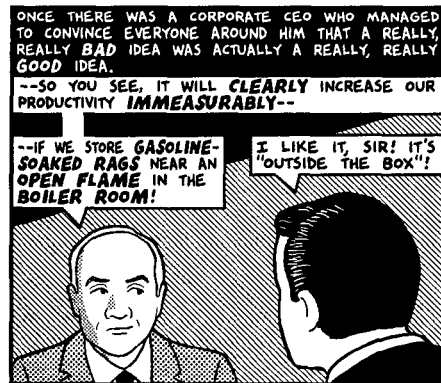
Pro-choice advocates saw Ashcroft's action as part of the Bush administration's renewed focus on an anti-abortion agenda. "I wouldn't have been as surprised [by the brief] if the case was at the Supreme Court," says Janet Crepps, staff attorney for the Center for Reproductive Law and Policy. "Generally, the administrations haven't come in at this level. It signals that the Bush administration is looking for every opportunity to make a stand against abortion rights. It's political grandstanding for Bush's anti-abortion supporters."

Crepps believes the Justice Department's brief was not very persuasive and is "unlikely to persuade the Sixth Circuit court." Still, Ashcroft's strategy may be to provoke legal challenges that would ultimately lead to the highest court in the land.

"This is just a preview," she says. "They would love to see the Supreme Court take this. I don't think they will." ■

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



Hard-liners

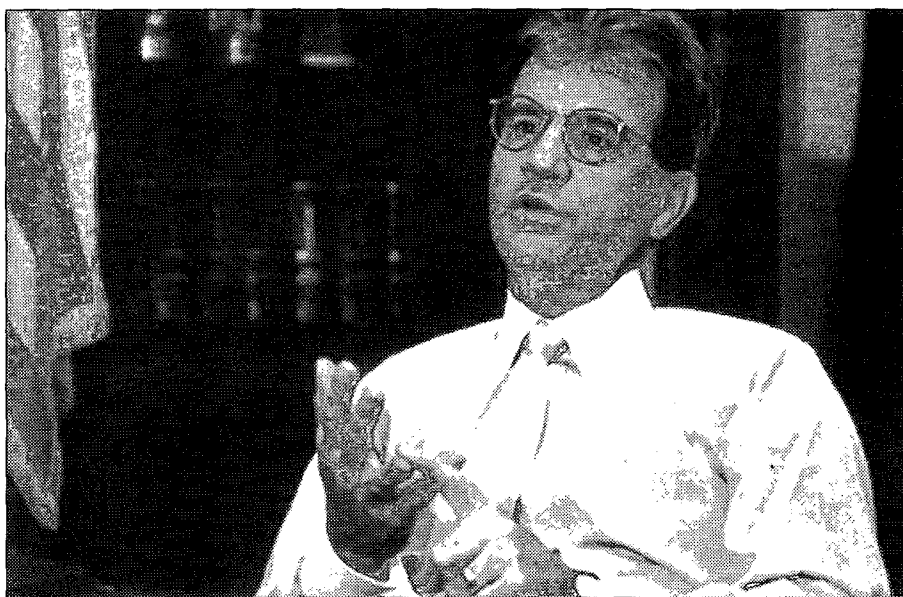
Bush hands AIDS policy to the Christian right

By Doug Ireland

AIDS will surpass the Black Death as the world's worst pandemic ever in the next 10 or 15 years unless access to treatment is improved, according to the Family Health International AIDS Institute. And yet President Bush's latest AIDS-related appointments cap off what has been a dreadful first year on AIDS policy from the administration.

As co-chairmen of the President's Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS, Bush has named former Oklahoma Republican Rep. Tom Coburn and Louis Sullivan, former Health and Human Services Secretary for Bush père.

Coburn has long been the *bête noire* of the AIDS community. As a leading spokesman for the House GOP on health matters, Coburn (a darling of the religious right who is also an M.D.) called for firing the head of the Centers for Disease Control because the CDC recommends condom use to prevent AIDS, wrote and crusaded



Tom Coburn, co-chairman of the president's HIV/AIDS council.

for legislation that would force doctors to report the HIV-infected to the government, and had one of the most homophobic records of any member of Congress. As the *San Francisco Chronicle* editorialized, he "is the sort of hard-line ideologue whose narrow views should disqualify him from any role in designing federal policy."

Sullivan, nearly invisible as HHS secretary, was noted for extending the ban

on entry into the country of those living with HIV and AIDS. When France and many AIDS organizations boycotted the Sixth International Conference on AIDS in San Francisco in 1990 because of the HIV ban (which resulted in foreign delegates being detained at the airport when AIDS medication was discovered in their luggage), Sullivan distinguished himself by making a

Will the Supreme Court Vouch for Vouchers?

On February 20, the Supreme Court will hear oral arguments in a Cleveland case that could decide the future of school voucher programs for the country.

The case, *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*, pits the state of Ohio, parents and religious schools against teachers unions and civil liberties groups. At stake is whether Cleveland's school voucher program, in which more than 99 percent of participating students attend private religious schools, violates the separation of church and state.

The program offers vouchers worth up to \$2,250 to attend one of 51 participating schools, almost all of which are parochial. Of the three existing experimental voucher programs in the country—the other two are in Milwaukee and Florida—none differentiate between the use of funds for parochial and other private schools. In Cleveland, checks are made out to parents and then sent by the state to schools, where parents must endorse them to pay tuition for the year. A lower court has already ruled the program unconstitutional, saying it had the "impermissible effect of promoting sectarian schools."

Supporters say the programs are an alternative to failing public school systems—only a third of Cleveland public school students graduate from high school. But most opponents say the funds sent to religious and private schools should be going to the public school system

instead. "This is a political and legal hot potato," says Barbara Miner, managing editor of *Rethinking Schools*.

The existing voucher programs would be immediately impacted by the Court's decision, which is not expected until June. Also affected would be President Bush's \$50 million plan to provide tax credits for parents with children in failing public schools, included in the proposed federal budget for 2003. The Bush administration has filed an amicus brief in the case defending Cleveland's program.

The Court passed over a similar case several years ago in Milwaukee, where two-thirds of participating students use vouchers to attend religious schools. The Cleveland case may give the Court a chance to rule unequivocally on church-state separation in regard to school vouchers, since almost all government funds allocated to the program go directly to religious schools.

The case is complicated enough that many legal experts refuse to speculate about its outcome. Those who do say the court will probably split 5 to 4—except that it's unclear which side will prevail. "I don't know any lawyer who with any confidence has been able to predict the outcome of this case," Miner says. "The law at this point on church and state is so murky. ... After *Bush v. Gore*, it's impossible to say which way the court will go."

—Kristie Reilly

speech at the conference suggesting gay men and the HIV-positive simply stop having sex. His speech was drowned out by boos from conference delegates and protesters from ACT UP.

In addition, Bush last November chose Patricia Funderburk Ware as the advisory council's executive director. Ware is former director of Americans for a Sound HIV/AIDS Policy (ASAP), a conservative organization with deep ties to the religious right whose principle function was to support abstinence as the only allowable form of sex education.

Only three of the 35 members appointed by Bush are HIV-positive, and none come from the medical research community. Among them: Rashida Jolley, a college student and former Miss District of Columbia who travels with a group of beauty-contest winners promoting sexual abstinence for Project Reality, an anti-safe sex group; Dr. Joe McIlhaney, founder and director of the Medical Institute for Sexual Health in Austin, Texas, which crusades against condom use, and co-author of *The Myth of Safe Sex* with the notorious homophobic James Dobson, president of Focus on the Family, one of the largest religious

right groups; Henry McKinnell, president and CEO of Pfizer Pharmaceuticals; and John F. Galbraith, acting executive director of the Catholic Medical Mission Board, which opposes condom use.

Says ACT UP Philadelphia's Asia Russell, "It's as if [Bush] had declared [people with AIDS] public enemy No. 1, so assiduous has he been in undermining the human rights of people with HIV."

It has taken Bush a year to finally fill vacancies on the council, but he has stacked it with a gaggle of docile Republican political operatives and campaign contributors, people with little or no background in HIV-AIDS issues, Christian-right zealots, and condom-use opponents.

By contrast, Bill Clinton's council proved so obstreperous it publicly condemned Clinton for refusing to support clean needle exchange for IV drug users, a proven way to cut new AIDS infections. Under the Coburn-led Council, there will be no such unwelcome remonstrances. With AIDS at the low end of the priorities list in the middle of a long war, AIDS activists will have little recourse but to take to the streets once again. ■

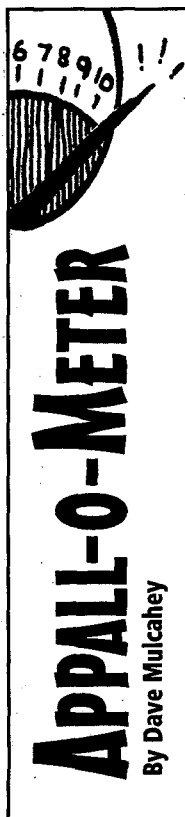
Forgotten Land Chechnya remains mired in misery

By Fred Weir

SLEPTSOVSK, RUSSIA—Zara Bashayeva is a statistic no one in Moscow or Washington wants to hear about. In early January, Bashayeva gathered up her three children and left the family home in Serzhen Yurt, eastern Chechnya, for the relative safety of a muddy and squalid refugee camp just inside the neighboring republic of Ingushetia.

Why did she flee a war the Kremlin has repeatedly declared over? "Life has become impossible in Chechnya," she says. "There is no food, no jobs, no electricity or gas, no schools, no doctors. But all that might be bearable if not for the constant *zachistki*," periodic Russian security sweeps aimed at uncovering arms caches and rebel fighters concealed in civilian areas.

Bashayeva fears mainly for her two sons, ages 13 and 11. "The Russian troops



Second Coming, Going 4.1

There's one born again every minute. When Kaziah Hancock and Cindy Stewart of Utah joined the True and Living Church of Jesus Christ of the Saints of the Last Days, they thought they were getting a pretty good deal. In exchange for the better part of their earthly possessions, they were going to get a chance to meet Jesus right here in the flesh. So Hancock signed over 67 acres of farmland along with water rights, according to The Associated Press, and Stewart dug deep into her retirement account.

As you might have guessed, the Redeemer did not materialize for the ladies. They sued and were awarded \$290,000 for fraud, breach of contract and intentional infliction of emotional distress. The spiritual leader of the True and Living Church would not speak to the press following the judgment, but his wife had this to say: "God's people have always been persecuted, and right now is no different."

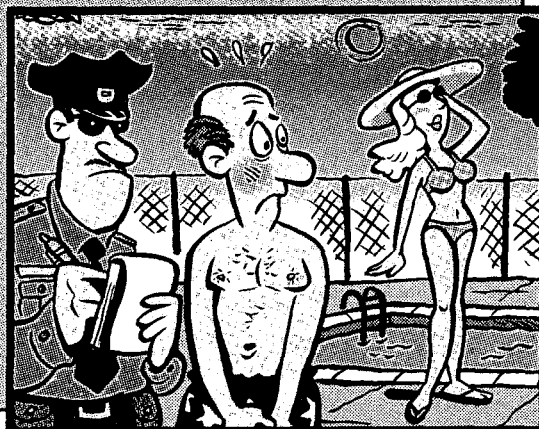
Plague of Locust 3.2

The supervisors of Locust Township, Pennsylvania have decided to crack down on public erections. A new law threatens 90 days in the pokey and/or a \$300 fine for "the showing of covered male genitals in a discernible turgid state." But according to a report in the local *Press Enterprise*, Locust residents haven't exactly been discerning any action, turgid or otherwise, save for in the privacy of their own homes. There are no exotic dancing parlors or burlesque shows in the township.

Township lawyer Todd Kerstetter assured the public that the law "takes a proactive approach" and would not apply to "normal occurrences"—a normal occurrence being an erection to which one does not

draw attention. "We're not going to have a problem with a guy walking down the street and the police chief pulling him over for it," Kerstetter said.

On the other hand, Kerstetter offered by way of example, the cops might invoke the new law to bust a play like the one he saw in college, in which a character poked a piece of wood under a sheet to simulate an erection. So, *commedia dell'arte* troupes, be advised: Steer clear of Locust.



come and seize the men; sometimes they are never heard from again. At least in a refugee camp, my sons will not be taken."

It's hard to independently assess her claims, since the Kremlin and Russian military still severely restrict journalistic access to most parts of Chechnya. But international aid workers and Chechen refugees—many of whom are enduring their third winter living in rough Ingush tent camps and abandoned buildings—say conditions in Chechnya are actually worsening. "Life inside Chechnya has broken down, and there is only a grim hanging on for most people," says Tamara Khaduyeva, a Chechen psychologist working for a Dutch NGO that provides services to war-traumatized children. "In the first war things were tough, but people endured it. Now everything is ruined, the feelings of terror are escalating, and people just want to get out. The idea that Chechen life is normalizing can only be heard from officials who are paid, and protected, by Russian troops."

Chechnya, a mountainous, Muslim republic on Russia's southern flank, declared independence as the former U.S.S.R. was disintegrating a decade ago. Since then, Moscow has invaded twice in an effort to crush the secession movement. The first offensive ended in 1996, when Russian troops were forced to withdraw, and the Kremlin recognized the election of rebel leader Aslan Maskhadov as the republic's president. But Maskhadov failed to build a viable state, Chechnya spiraled into lawlessness, and Moscow—blaming Chechens for a wave of terrorist bombings—invaded again in 1999.

Virtually all of Chechnya is now occupied by Russian troops, who fight against a vicious insurgency campaign led by Maskhadov that continues to kill about a dozen Russian soldiers weekly. "Chechnya has become a chronic problem for us, like Northern Ireland or Palestine, and the Russian elite appear incapable of even understanding this," says Alexander Iskanderyan, director of the Center for Caucasian Studies in Moscow. "The situation is growing harsher and more hopeless with every passing month."

As always, it is civilians who bear the brunt in the continuing conflict. A handful of human rights organizations, including the courageous Russian group Memorial, struggle amid almost impossi-



Chechen refugee Zara Bashayeva at a tent camp in Ingushetia.

ble conditions to investigate allegations against Russian troops by the increasing flow of refugees.

Since September 11, Russia has largely succeeded in convincing the United States that the war in Chechnya is a department of the global battle against Islamic extremism and terrorism, and that has practically driven the issue from Washington's official dialogue with Russia, as well as from the pages of most Western newspapers.

Nevertheless, there seems little evidence to back Kremlin allegations that Chechen rebels are tightly linked with Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda terror network. During the U.S.-led military campaign in Afghanistan, the Western media regularly reported rumors of thousands of "Chechen volunteers" fighting beside the Taliban and al-Qaeda. One Chechen warlord, the Jordanian-born Khattab, who goes by just one name, is a veteran of the anti-Soviet Afghanistan war of the '80s; he is known to have taken money from Saudi Arabia and other sources to promote the austere Wahabbi Islamic fundamentalist

sect in Russia's Caucasus region. Moscow also claims its troops have killed a few Arab "mercenaries" fighting alongside Chechen rebels in the past two years. But it has yet to produce proof of systematic contacts with bin Laden or his organization, and, according to the *New York Times*, no Chechens were among the 3,500 Taliban prisoners being held by U.S. forces and their allies in Afghanistan in early January.

"Every day Russian TV says, as if it were a known fact, that Chechens are allied with Osama bin Laden. But I have never met any Chechen who supports him or has ever had anything to do with his cause," Khaduyeva, the Chechen psychologist, says. "Our people have suffered terribly, and we have only sympathy for victims of terrorism."

After almost three years of savage, grinding counter-insurgency warfare in Chechnya, the promised Russian victory seems as elusive as ever. Yet the Kremlin remains adamant there will be no talks with rebel leaders. For the tiny republic's long-suffering people, that would seem to augur endless war, misery and exile. ■

FRED WEIR

Discrediting the Creditors

By Megan Rowling

LONDON—Ann Pettifor, former coordinator of the international debt cancellation campaign Jubilee 2000, sits down to talk at the south London offices of Jubilee Research @ the New Economics Foundation, where she has been based for the past year.

Settling her dog under the table, she calls her son to dispense with directions for cooking a stir fry. Then, with dinner under control, she turns her attention to the slightly more taxing issue of international economics.

"You know, the anti-corporate left sometimes gets it wrong," she confides. "They focus on what they can see and touch, which is trade. And because the international financial regime isn't visible, it isn't attacked. But in reality, it has a much greater power of determination than trade."

It's not McDonald's or Nike that rule our world, she argues—"at least they make things"—but the international giants of the banking world like J.P. Morgan Chase and Citigroup. "The problem with globalization lies in the liberalization of capital flows, [not] trade flows. Those who own capital operate in a global economy detached from real political, social and environmental relations. And this detachment has not come about accidentally—it is a result of "structural imbalances" that have been deliberately constructed by those in power.

As a kid growing up in a poor gold-mining town in South Africa, Pettifor "realized that apartheid did not happen because people were prejudiced and racist, but [because] it was manufactured, created. I was concerned about imbalances of power that are not there accidentally: employers taking the profits from capitalism while workers get nothing, [or] the inequalities between women and men and blacks and whites."

It's a pattern that is repeated in today's economic relations between the Northern and Southern hemispheres, she says. "It is structural: [it has] to do with the way in which the global economy has been engineered. My mission has been to discover the girders that hold up that structure, [and] to redress the imbalances."

Not an easy mission, but it is one for which Pettifor is well suited. After a couple of years teaching in Tanzania, she became involved in local and national politics in Britain. But it wasn't until 1994 that she began to work on developing-country debt, relocating to Washington as a lobbyist for the Network for Social Change. There she developed her talent for demystifying the impenetrable world of international finance for ordinary people.

This proved key to the success of the movement she co-founded to bring about the cancellation of the unpayable debts of the world's poorest countries. Under her guidance, the Jubilee campaign gathered momentum though the late '90s until, by 2000, more than 24 million people around the world had signed a petition urging leaders to do just that.

The world's poor countries have seen only \$36 billion of debt relief from a potential \$100 billion promised, but Pettifor is upbeat about the movement's achievements to date. While the Jubilee coalition no longer exists in its previous incarnation, activists in both the North and South continue to lobby for total debt cancellation. "We have thrown up a lot of contradictions, and we have raised massive public awareness," she says. "This momentum can't be stopped."

Now Pettifor is working toward changing the process by which debt cancellation is agreed upon, spurred on by the ongoing debt crisis in Argentina, a country "impoverished by international creditors."

The "Jubilee Framework" for international insolvency proposes that when a nation's debts can be repaid only at a cost to the fundamental human rights of the population, it should be able to file for protection from its creditors, rather like Chapter 11 in the United States. An ad hoc court would then negotiate a settlement between the

debtor nation and its creditors. The judge would be a third party nominated by both the debtor and creditor and, crucially, citizens would be entitled to participate in the legal proceedings.

The IMF, it appears, isn't thinking quite as radically. It doesn't support the idea of a third-party judge, for example, and it believes it should retain a central role in any process, despite its creditor status. But Pettifor is encouraged by what she has heard so far. "The top level of management [at the IMF] has been cleared out, and they are now willing to think new thoughts and admit that mistakes have been made."

Pettifor will continue working at a U.N. conference on development finance in Monterrey, Mexico in March, as well as at the IMF and World Bank spring meetings in Washington. Before that, though, she'll head to Ecuador for a meeting with debt activists from around the world with the aim of building a new "coherent and focused global campaign" around the Jubilee Framework. Her mission may not yet be accomplished, but it's certainly looking less and less impossible. ■



Ann Pettifor, executive director of Jubilee Research.

JUBILEE RESEARCH

McCarthyism Redux

By Susan J. Douglas

Remember back in the '70s and '80s, when Victor Navasky's *Naming Names*, Lillian Hellman's *Scoundrel Time* and even the Hollywood weepy *The Way We Were* all made McCarthyism seem like a time-bound, fossilized moment that could never, ever happen again? Well, here we are, as unthinkable as it may seem, living through McCarthyism redux.

Only this version is different: It owes less to purges and pogroms and much more to censorship, public relations and hyperbolic spectacles filled with patriotic excess. This version doesn't require conformity to one ideological line; it simply insists that such conformity, such "unity," has already been achieved. If you aren't in the same ideological space as everyone else, then you must be a crazy outsider who doesn't belong here anymore.

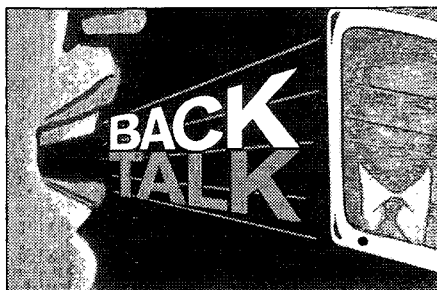
The iconography of the Super Bowl, with its visual overlaying of servicemen and football players, and its spanning of musical generations from Paul McCartney (remember "Revolution"?) to Mariah Carey, was adamant about this supposed new chauvinistic consensus.

As for the opening ceremonies of the Olympics, they kept bringing to mind the Nuremberg rallies. Native peoples in costume did what they do best—danced and played drums—as they joyfully welcomed everyone to Utah. Then we met the real and only heroes of the West, the brave white settlers who brought civilization to the land (while dancing to, you guessed it, "Appalachian Spring"). Not since the Lone Ranger and Tonto has such a reductionist, stereotypical representation of native peoples been offered up for the flattery of white folks. But under the new unity, the new consensus (and the new imperialism) Manifest Destiny is back.

And did anybody see Tom Brokaw's slavish profile of the Bush White House

in his real West Wing documentary? Here we learned that Bush is a workaholic who gets up at 4:30 a.m. and bench presses hundreds of pounds between high-level policy meetings where he's always in charge.

In the years ahead, we can argue about whether this new McCarthyism is more pernicious than its predecessor. Despite



Lynn Cheney and Joe Lieberman's efforts to promulgate a blacklist for academics, most of us with progressive politics have not been fired—not yet, anyway. So far as we know, there are no massive purges in the State Department or blacklists circulating in Hollywood. Congressional hearings are focusing on massive corporate corruption, not on whether some government employee ever participated in a cultural exchange with Muslims.

Instead we're getting exactly what we got during the presidential debates of 2000: an insistence that we are not really seeing and hearing what we think we are seeing and hearing. Let's recall that after the presidential debate on foreign policy, for example, when Bush referred to Nigeria as a continent and said that credibility comes from "resolving your determination," pundits hailed him as the next Disraeli. Many of us thought that what we had actually seen was a total moron, but, no, no, no. We only thought we had seen that.

Similarly, after last month's State of the Union message, media pundits told us we hadn't seen or heard what we

thought we had. The Democrats did clap as loudly and frequently as the Republicans when Bush was fulminating about the war on terrorism. But they sat on their hands when Bush turned to the economy. You saw it right there on the screen—the Republicans clapping like seals for more tax cuts and greater military spending, while the Democrats sat as a block in silence.

But ABC's Claire Shipman told us we saw something different. She gushed over the solid display of bipartisanship throughout the speech. The omnipresent and deeply tiresome William Schneider of CNN lauded Bush's impressive display of character. To those of us who thought the "axis of evil" pronouncement was a major bombshell, and a highly inaccurate and dangerous one to boot, character was not the first word that came to mind.

The next day, the front-page of the *New York Times* announced in a headline that Bush had displayed a "Surer Voice, Wider Vision" as its article praised his forceful 50 minutes of plain speaking and moments of eloquence. Parroting the spin of the right, the article likened Bush to FDR. (As media critic Norman Solomon has already pointed out, there is a special irony in the right claiming the mantle of FDR for Bush, since they have devoted the past 20 years to undoing any vestiges of the New Deal, with only Social Security and unemployment insurance still left standing.)

Surely there are cracks in this ideological edifice—Enron being a rather large fissure. People don't seem to be buying Linda Lay's tearful tales of poverty, or Jeffrey Skilling's assertions that he knew squat about what was going on at his company. Yet with the ongoing hagiography of the president, and these relentless media geysers of coercive, patriotic sludge, it can seem real, real lonely these days sitting on your sofa and watching TV. ■



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EUROPE'S RIGHT TURN



By Doug Ireland

EDMUND STOIBER

SILVIO BERLUSCONI

JÖRG HAIDER

Aspecter is haunting Europe—the specter of the extreme right. George W. Bush's long war has dramatically accelerated the brown-shirted emotions of xenophobia, racism and anti-immigrant hysteria all across the Continent. Undermined by corruption and programatically bankrupt, European social democracy is on the run, and, where still in power, its political leadership is taking the blame for the deepening economic crisis. The “Rose Europe” of the '90s—in which social-democratic governments of the left, or left-center coalitions, held power nearly everywhere in Western Europe—is coming to an end.

The “Third Way” dear to Germany's Gerhard Schröder (and Britain's Tony Blair) represents the “Clintonization” of traditional social democratic politics, and French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin's compromises are pretty weak tea, indeed. But those vying to replace the temporizers of the watered-down European left are much, much worse. The Franco-German *entente* has traditionally dominated Euro-community politics and economics, motoring the drive toward an increasingly federalized Europe. But this year's elections on either side of the Rhine threaten to shift the balance of power sharply to the right.

France's lurch rightward is driven by the fact that it has a larger North African population than any other European country. It imported hundreds of thousands of manual laborers from its former colonies in the postwar growth years of the '50s and '60s. The second- and third-generation youths from these traditionally large immigrant families are trapped in an identity crisis: French-speaking and rarely knowing the language and culture of their parents' origins,

they have never been accepted into French society. Penned in the desolate, stifling, low-income high-rises of the isolated suburban *cités* that ring urban France (and victims of unemployment rates as high as 50 percent) many idle ghetto youths find their only real identity in gangs of petty criminals—and are seen as the cause of rising crime.

All this helps explain why the French left lost control of 40 cities in last year's municipal elections, in a harbinger of things to come. The Socialist Party's Jospin is slightly behind or even with conservative incumbent Jacques Chirac in the polls for April's presidential elections. But Jospin's strongest challenge may be from his former minister of the interior, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, a hard-liner on immigrants. Chevènement, a fervent nationalist and Eurosceptic, had quit as minister of defense for a previous Socialist government in 1991 to protest France's support of the Gulf War. He then founded his own party, the Citizen's Movement (or MDC, its French acronym), which until his latest resignation had been a part of Jospin's governing coalition. Posing as a guarantor of order, the man the French press ironically has nicknamed “*le Chè*,” in moving sharply to his right, has stitched together a crazy-quilt coalition of supporters that includes former Communist ministers, leaders of the Radicals of the Left (a small, middle-class party which is neither) and Viscount Phillipe DeVilliers, an ultra-right Catholic politician.

Chevènement's anti-Americanism and pandering to security hysteria is attracting more of Chirac's voters than Jospin's in the polls, making him *le troisième homme* (the third man) in the first round of the two-stage presidential election process. He's doing so well that many perspicacious French political analysts believe

that the runoff could well be between Jospin and *le Chè* rather than a Jospin-Chirac duel.

Chirac himself has been undermined by a continuing scandal over the organized bribery that financed *all* of France's important political parties (with the exception of the Greens). But the Socialists, too, have been hit by the corruption scandals, and ministers from both left and right parties have been imprisoned on a variety of corruption charges. Although Jospin's personal financial integrity has never been questioned, his credibility has been seriously undermined by revelations that he first joined the Socialist Party as a mole for a super-secretive Trotskyite sect known as the *Lambertistes* (after their paranoid, reclusive leader Pierre Lambert). For years Jospin denied rumors of his Trotskyite past—claiming he had been confused with his brother. But an accumulation of public testimonies from his ex-Trotskyite colleagues, showing that Jospin's relationship with the ultrasectarian group continued well into his years as first secretary of the Socialist Party under President Francois Mitterand, finally forced Jospin to admit the truth. This has given ammunition to the right, and snide references to "Comrade Michel" (Jospin's underground code name) dot the discourse of his critics.

Meanwhile, the race-baiting neofascist Jean-Marie Le Pen—a notorious anti-Semite whose National Front had been written off when corruption and mismanagement lost it the three important mayoralties it controlled in last year's municipal elections—is once again getting as much as 13 percent in some presidential opinion polls. (Le Pen, whose ex-wife has said that at home he always called Hitler "Uncle Adolf," is famous for having declared the Nazi concentration camp ovens "a detail of history.") At the same time, two other members of Jospin's "plural left" alliance, the Communists (once France's largest postwar political party) and the Greens, have both sunk to around 5 percent in opinion surveys. If Jospin is defeated for the presidency—in a runoff in which Le Pen and Chevènement hold the balance of power—the left coalition will have serious trouble hanging on to its majority in the legislative elections in June.

Gerhard Schröder is likewise in deep trouble in the forthcoming September elections. Just weeks after Bush declared war on "evil" before Congress, his German Socialist Party (SPD)—with its historical roots as the mother party of European socialism—was swept from power in Hamburg, where it had ruled for 50 years, as a newly created, anti-immigrant Law and Order Party won a stunning quarter of the vote (much of it poached from the SPD's traditional working-class electorate).

The German economy is almost in free fall. Unemployment, the issue that more than any other brought Schröder to power, is nearing 10 percent and growing rapidly. German cities are slashing services and teetering on the edge of bankruptcy because of a business-friendly change in the tax law (pushed through by Schröder) that gutted municipal revenues. And a major scandal has erupted over the falsification and inflation of job-placement figures under Schröder's labor minister.

Another scandal making headlines concerns Schröder's attempts to ban the neo-Nazi German National Party (NPD). Attempting to outlaw any political party in a country with Germany's totalitarian past touches a raw nerve, and making the NPD illegal would turn the neo-Nazis—who have been

making serious inroads in the economically depressed former East Germany—into martyrs. What's more, at least five NPD leaders whose anti-immigrant excesses were cited as reasons for the ban have been revealed as German intelligence agents.

All this has created extraordinarily fertile ground for the candidate of the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU), Edmund Stoiber, a protégé of the late Franz Josef Strauss, the authoritarian strongman of Bavarian politics and notorious coddler of ex-Nazis. A flaming nationalist and Eurosceptic, Stoiber's law-and-order, tough-on-immigrants discourse is highly popular, particularly in East Germany, where unemployment has hit 17 percent. Bavaria under Stoiber has become the high-tech capital of Europe,

thanks to the windfall subsidies Stoiber handed out to business, with an unemployment rate of little more than 5 percent, roughly half that of the country as a whole.

Schröder's chances of hanging on as chancellor against the man posing as the author of the "Bavarian miracle" are further undercut by the fact that this fall, Germany's parliament will find its number of seats decreased by almost 10 percent (when a law passed by the previous conservative government in 1996 goes into effect). According to the influential daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, "If this year's election results were to come out the same as in 1998, the SPD and the Greens' lead of 21 seats would probably shrink to eight as a result of the reforms."

But the traditionally pacifist Greens' support has plummeted in the polls since September 11, despite the pro-war sentiments of their leader Joschka Fischer, Germany's foreign minister. Schröder's only hope of survival likely rests in a future coalition with the PDS, ex-Communists led by Gregor Gysi who are surprisingly strong, and not only in the East. The SPD already has coalition governments with the PDS in several *Länder* (including Berlin—where they supported the election of Mayor Klaus Wowereit, the openly gay SPD leader). While Schröder has denied he'll ever form an alliance with the PDS, a February poll shows that only 38 percent of Germans believe him.

Then there is Italy, where Premier Silvio Berlusconi—elected by his virulently anti-immigrant and racist campaign—governs with the support of the post-fascist National Alliance Party and the xenophobic Northern League of Umberto Bossi. Berlusconi's Forza Italia (Onward Italy!) is unlike any other party in Western Europe. Italy's richest man built it as a business, rather like Amway, handing out prizes in cash and gifts to those who enrolled the most members and corralled the most votes, a practice he continues. As a magnate, he owns 45 percent of Italy's television, and as head of government he now commands 45 percent more (via the three state-run TV networks).

Italy's vice-premier, Gianfranco Fini, the head of the National Alliance, joined its predecessor, the MSI (or Italian Social Movement, founded by ex-Fascists in 1946), at the age of 17 because, he claims, leftist demonstrators had blocked him from going to the movies to see John Wayne's *The Green Berets*. Yet as recently as 1994, he told *La Stampa* that Mussolini was "the greatest statesman in history." Now Berlusconi has thumbed his

This year's elections threaten to shift the balance of power.

nose at the European Union by appointing Fini as Italian representative to the European constitutional convention. Furthermore, Berlusconi's minister of immigration was part of Mussolini's last-ditch Salò Republic, while he chose a former Fascist youth leader to oversee state television. And his culture minister—former TV host of a home-shopping program—has recently denounced contemporary art as “excremental.”

Yet the opposition—the center-left Olive Tree coalition—is in complete disarray, preoccupied with internal power struggles. Its leader, Francesco Rotelli, the former mayor of Rome, is, as the *Guardian* recently put it, “wan and passionless.” Piero Fassino, the gangling leader of the PDS (the Democratic Left Party, ex-Communists) hardly seems to offer a more charismatic alternative. The *cri de coeur* of Nobel laureate Dario Fo on the following pages makes clear the grave threat Berlusconi poses to democracy as, one by one, he puts the institutions of state (like the judiciary) under his thumb.

Elsewhere, fear and hatred of brown- and black-skinned immigrants has even infected historically tolerant and social-democratic Scandinavia: Last October, the Norwegian Labor Party suffered its worst general election result in 90 years, evicted by a conservative coalition led by Kjell Magne Bondevik, a Lutheran priest. The next month, Denmark's social democrats were handed their worst showing in 50 years, los-

ing power to the charismatic young conservative Anders Fogh Rasmussen, who ran on an anti-immigrant, law-and-order platform. Meanwhile, the extreme-right Danish People's Party racked up enough votes to make it the third-largest party in the country (though nowhere in Scandinavia has the immigrant population surpassed 5 percent).

In Spain, the popularity of conservative Premier Jose Maria Aznar has never been higher in the six years since he defeated the corruption-tainted Socialist government of Felipe Gonzalez. And in Belgium, the neo-fascist Flemish nationalists of the Vlaams Blok won 10 percent of the vote two years ago in elections that saw it and other far-right parties gain at the expense of the corruption-plagued Socialist coalition government there. The xenophobic security hysteria magnified by the war has also considerably helped the fortunes of Nazi-loving Austrian demagogue Jörg Haider and his neo-fascist party, the FPÖ, which in late January was polling 25 percent, equal to that of its coalition partner in government.

If Edmund Stoiber becomes the new German chancellor next fall, there is a grave danger that a new Rome-Berlin-Vienna axis of conservative, nationalist, immigrant-baiters would halt the construction of a federal Europe and roll back the European Union's sterling commitment to human rights. With the dark cloud of racism hanging over the Continent, the future of European social democracy looks increasingly bleak. ■

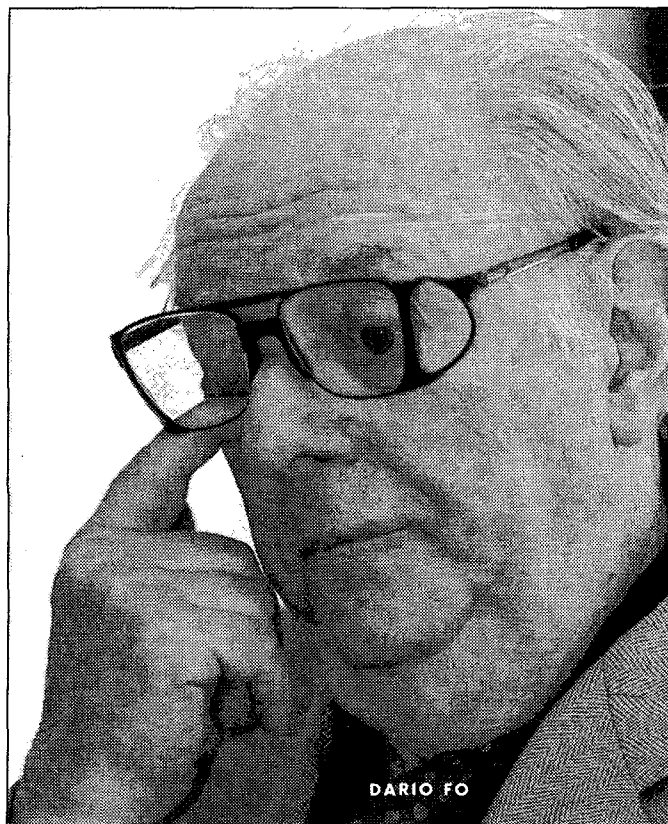
Dario Fo, winner of the 1997 Nobel Prize in literature, is an Italian anarchist playwright and actor. The following text is taken from a speech about the decline of democracy in Italy given on January 12 in Paris.

Mussolini's Ghost

By Dario Fo

We are witnessing in Italy a never-ending series of aberrations and hypocrisies by various political groups that are invoking—almost to the point of reclaiming the same words and gestures—a fascist climate. They use the same repertoire and shout the same slogans: freedom, effort, fatherland, Italy, defense of the race, culture of our civilization, original civilization. ...

Add to that what we call a “conflict of interest.” Mussolini himself did not have the system of political privilege that Silvio Berlusconi, Italy's prime minister, has. On the other side, there's an eerie absence of opposition. It's true. It's a reality that can be felt: Our role has become one of mere dissidents trying to fill the void of political opposition. I attended the convention of the *Democratici di Sinistra* [Democratic Left Party]: They seemed paralyzed. “We must change, or we will die,” they exclaimed. And having said that, they remained on the podium like statues of salt.



When someone like Pier Ferdinando Casini, president of the Parliament and member of the Union of Catholic Democrats, says things that sound like they should come from the left, such as, “Before changing anything at the RAI [Italian State TV], we need to resolve issues involving conflict of

interest," then we are in the midst of madness. This is someone on the right parroting the critical voice of a left that no longer exists, at a time when the right's efforts should be protested with important debates, meetings, demonstrations—in other words, any kind of presence. It's absurd that Casini tells his party members: "Wait, let's not overdo it." Even if this situation ends as a travesty or in nothing at all, the right will still have succeeded in speaking in the place of the opposition.

But one also sees new movements on the rise, especially among students, young workers and the elderly, who, through great and generous participation, seem to restore the waters of the resurrection. And I say, even, in the Catholic sense of the term, the waters of purification. These movements testify to an awe-inspiring resurgence.

However, instead of going along with these new movements, supporting them and applauding them, the left runs from them, as if disgusted. These are the same leftists, we should note, who are responsible for selling off our public schools, a plan young people, teachers and democratic-oriented families have made clear with the slogan: "Don't turn our schools into businesses." Before creating a private school system, we should concern ourselves with putting the one that already exists—the public school system—back together.

The same goes for their position on the war. Representatives of the center-left, in order to mitigate their position, plead: "Let's be careful not to upset the people. Let's not turn innocent people into victims." Let's be careful? Is that a joke? By now we know that 90 percent of victims are innocent, as Gino Strada, the author and founder of Emergency, an Italian organization that provides medical aid to war-torn regions, has explained to us. But, of course, we already knew that.

It has been calculated that the past three months of bombings [in Afghanistan] have claimed more than 3,000 civilian victims, equivalent to the victims of the Twin Towers. This does not count the victims of the devastated cities, who live with atrocious hardships, or the invisible victims—"the invisible dead," as Strada once called them—whose numbers are frightening: thousands of orphans, whose parents were blown to bits by bombs and land mines. In this immense war-torn territory, it will take an estimated 200 years to clear the millions of land mines.

And all this for what? For a Pashtun victory that takes opium production back from the Taliban, opium that will still be sent to Pakistan to be refined and transformed into heroin. In the end, this means everything is put back into circulation with great force—the profits of the drug traffic recycled through American and European banks in a vicious circle of terrorist financing. As a journalist asked an official of the American government, "Given the financial trail of money-laundering that Swiss banks are involved in, when do you plan to bomb Switzerland?" The reply: dead silence.

But to return to Italy and to the decline of democracy that manifests itself there daily, I would not want this moment to become similar to what occurred when that other absolutist government was born, the one my father used to tell me about—he who, when very young, was a political refugee in France. I'm struck when I listen to those who witnessed that

era firsthand say that they feel like they are reliving the '20s, the years of the birth of fascism.

Furthermore, we read the newspaper and see that Berlusconi's attorney, when presenting himself to the court for the first time after being charged with corruption, leaves the courtroom shouting: "There's no more justice!" His lawyers are there alongside Berlusconi's lawyers to demand the intervention of the minister of justice, a member of the Northern League, and chosen, conveniently, by Berlusconi's government.

We have before us the most irrational paradoxes, like something out of Alfred Jarry's *King Ubu*, the farce of the impossible: Laws are made expressly for the king, ministers are elected from his court to defend only his own interests, and the public applauds. At most, someone delivers a minor burp of indignation. With a clear conscience, the Cavalier and his men take every power in

hand and enjoy total impunity. It is the logic of, "We will never go to prison."

I heard someone from Berlusconi's government say that they will meet with the center-left. "In one hand," he said, "we'll hold an olive branch and, in the other, a gun." Those were his exact words. It's true. The new fascism is there in their language and in their expressions. Beginning with "Business Italy" and moving to the "Business Party," we are all made into employees of the government, with the Big Boss at the center.

"Losers Beware!" was another fascist slogan. Today, it is enough to see the gestures, words, attitudes and the arrogance of these politicians, who beat their fists on the table, shouting "You're busting my balls" or "Get the hell out of my business" (like the Minister of Communications). We also hear "Arabs get out," "They can build their fleabag mosques somewhere else," and "They should stay in their ghetto." There's a new idea: a ghetto for those who are different, for those who are not willing to conform.

At times I feel anguished by this whole situation, a mute kind of melancholy. I continue to work in the theater, of course, and in parts of our performances we deal with these topics. And the public responds, but of course we're preaching to the converted.

The best thing today is this fantastic breeze and sun—these young people who are organizing themselves across the world. They need our help, information and the truth. But today we have no Jean-Paul Sartre who goes to speak at universities. In 1968 he held a conference on the theater of circumstance—political, popular theater. He opened the conference with a quote from Alberto Savinio: "Oh men, narrate our story."

Today, it is no longer a question of giving a history of the present, a sense of *l'esprit du temps*. Today theater directors and directors of theaters are on the right (some more recent converts than others) and have acquired a flair for flag-waving. Most intellectuals, in the meantime, are sleeping or simply pretending the warning signs don't exist—pretending that they have better things to think about. ■

Translated by William Finley Green.

The new fascism is there in their language and in their expressions.

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Coming Together at the Seams



DARREN MCCOLLESTER / GETTY IMAGES

A protester raises his fist while marching down Lexington Avenue in New York. As many as 20,000 descended on the city the weekend of February 2 to protest the World Economic Forum.

By Naomi Klein

Porto Alegre, Brazil

On the first day of the World Social Forum, the hallways were buzzing with rumors of defections from the North. Top delegates were jumping ship from the World Economic Forum in New York and coming to Porto Alegre instead: a European prime minister, World Bank directors, even corporate executives.

Some never showed up, others did. But debates raged nonetheless about what it all meant. Was it evidence of the World Social Forum's new strength (it attracted some 60,000 participants, after all) or a sign of imminent danger?

The World Social Forum was founded last year as an alternative to the annual gathering of corporations, world leaders and opinion-makers who usually meet in Davos, Switzerland but this year convened in New York City. With these new high-powered arrivals, however, the World Social Forum risked turning from a clear alternative into a messy merger: Teams of photographers trailed politicians; market researchers from PricewaterhouseCoopers trolled hotel lobbies, looking for opportunities to "dialogue"; students threw a cream pie at a French minister.

It was much the same muddle in New York, with NGOs acting like corporations, corporations rebranding themselves as NGOs, and pretty much everyone claiming they were really

there as a Trojan Horse. The tone—if not the times—has certainly changed.

The World Economic Forum used to be a place for the rich to be utterly unapologetic about their wealth, and for the elite to be absolutely defiant about their elitism. But over the course of only three years, Davos has been transformed from a festival of shamelessness to an annual parade of public shaming, a dour capitalist S&M parlor.

Instead of gloating, the ultrarich now attempt to outdo each other with self-flagellating speeches about how their greed is unsustainable, how the poor will rise up and devour them if they don't change their ways. Again and again, delegates willingly strap themselves in for whippings from their critics, from Amnesty International to U2's Bono.

This year, when the conference fell off its alpine perch and landed in the rubble and rabble of New York, the abuse climbed to a peak higher than Davos itself. "The reality is that power and wealth in this world are very, very unequally shared, and that far too many people are condemned to lives of extreme poverty and degradation," said the Chief Davos Dominatrix, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan. "The perception, among many, is that this is the fault of ... the people who attend this gathering."

Ouch! As one protester's sign put it on the streets outside, "Bad Capitalist! No Martini."

So, are these public floggings, from the World Economic Forum to the Enron hearings, a sign of actual progress? What, to borrow a phrase more often directed at those of us who gathered in Porto Alegre, are their alternatives? Do they have clear ideas about how to better distribute wealth? Do they have concrete action plans for ending the AIDS crisis or slowing climate change?

No. The core economic policies governing globalization have only accelerated in the past year—fresh tax cuts, plans for new oil pipelines, deeper privatization programs, weaker labor protections. No wonder so many young people have concluded that it is not the individual policies or politicians that are the problem, but the system of centralized power itself.

For this reason, much of the appeal of the World Social Forum is that its host city, Porto Alegre, has come to represent a possible challenge to this trend. The city is part of a growing political movement in Brazil that is systematically delegating power back down to people at the municipal level. The architect of this decentralization in Brazil has been the Workers Party (or PT, its Portuguese acronym), which is now in power in 200 municipalities and leading in the polls federally.

Many PT cities have adopted the “participatory budget,” a system that allows direct citizen participation in the allocation of scarce city resources. Through a network of neighborhood and issue councils, residents vote directly on which roads will be paved and which health care centers will be built. In Porto Alegre, this devolution of power has brought results that are the mirror opposite of global economic trends. For instance, rather than scaling back on public services for the poor, the city has increased them substantially. And rather than spiraling cynicism and voter dropout, democratic participation increases every year.

The participatory budget is far from perfect, and it was only one “living alternative” on display at the World Social Forum. However, it’s part of a pattern of rejection of what Portuguese political scientist Boaventura dos Santos calls “low-intensity democracy” in favor of higher impact democracies, from independent media activists creating new models of participation to landless farmers occupying and planting on unused land all over Brazil.

Many remain unimpressed, still waiting for a new top-down ideology to chart the course. One reporter attending the forum told me that all the focus on local power represented “a Maoist retreat to countryside.” The *New York Times* declared in one headline, “Brazil Forum More Local Than Worldly.” In fact, with simultaneous mass events in New York and Porto Alegre, this was a truly global moment for this movement.



ANDREW STERN / BRAZIL, INDYMEDIA

A billboard greeting the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

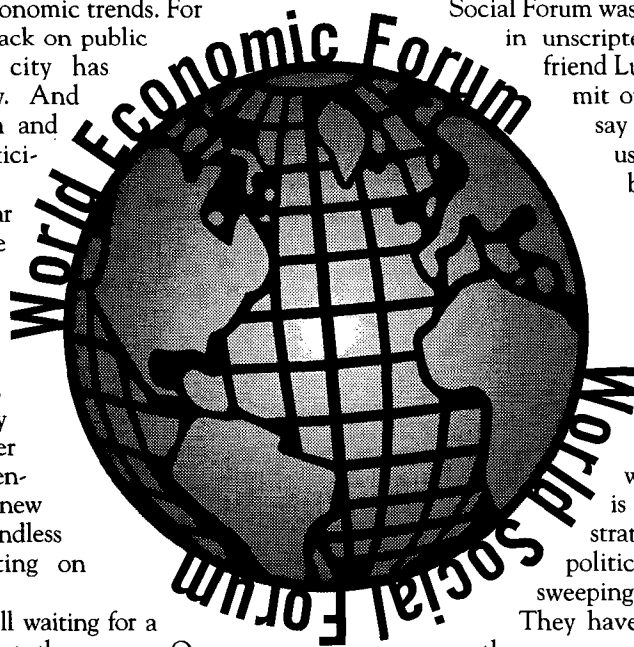
For me, the crystallizing moment came late one night at the youth campsite in Porto Alegre. Around a thousand young people were gathered in front of a loudspeaker. It was broadcasting live news from the street demonstrations in New York outside the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. The news was coming from an Indy Media Center reporter who was on her cell phone in the crowd. Her voice was being streamed live on the Internet. It was picked up by a micro-radio station set up in the camp, where her words were translated into Portuguese and then broadcast. At one point, the U.S. server went down and was immediately replaced by a backup in Italy.

Pretty much everyone agreed that the heart of the World Social Forum wasn’t really in the official events. It was in unscripted moments like when my Italian friend Luca Casarini tried to sum up the summit over dinner. “It’s about—how do you say it in English?—this,” he said. And using the forum’s activist Esperanto of butchered second languages and mime, he tugged at his T-shirt sleeve and showed me the seam.

Right, the seams. Maybe change isn’t really about what is said and done in the centers, it’s about the seams, the in-between spaces with their hidden strength. In Porto Alegre last week, much of the talk was about nearby Buenos Aires, where some say a revolt from the seams is already taking place. Street demonstrators aren’t calling for a changing of the political guard, but have instead adopted the sweeping slogan “Get rid of them all.”

They have concluded that it’s not enough to overthrow one political party and replace it with another. They are instead attempting something infinitely more difficult: to topple an economic orthodoxy so powerful, it can withstand even its strongest advocates whipping and kicking it from the center.

The question is: Can it sustain an attack from the seams? ■



Reinventing Democracy

By David Graeber

New York

The way you usually read about globalization protests in the media—even the progressive media—there are “good” protesters (labor unions or NGOs like Public Citizen and Global Exchange) and then there are “bad” protesters—scary, window-smashing anarchist kids whose senseless “violence” only acts to bring down police repression and undercut the good protesters’ message. This was always a ridiculous dichotomy, but the January protests in New York surrounding the World Economic Forum ought to lay this myth to rest.

The World Economic Forum, essentially a dining club for the world’s ruling class, had been held every year for decades in the resort town of Davos, Switzerland; that is, until a concerted campaign of direct action made things so unpleasant for them that they were, for all practical purposes, driven out.

So after September 11, the World Economic Forum declared, for this year at least, that they were relocating to the Waldorf-Astoria hotel in Midtown Manhattan. It seemed a perfect formula: New York had the largest police force in the entire world, not to mention one already made heroes in the media. A single shard of broken glass would be enough to give the pundits an excuse to frame the global justice movement as another al-Qaeda come to terrorize an already traumatized community.

Certainly, the unions and NGOs were terrified; one by one, they effectively dropped out. All that remained were the anarchists, students and direct action people, who were left with the responsibility of—in a matter of weeks—putting together a nationwide mobilization effort, organizing housing, press conferences and seminars, and even applying for a police permit for a legal march (something none of us had ever done before, but which had to be done if a safe space was to be provided for ordinary citizens who did not wish to risk arrest). This was all done with no funding, no real budget, no professional organizers and no leadership structure.

And it worked. In that sense, at least, it was a magnificent success. This is what the direct action movement is ultimately about: reinventing democracy. Far from lacking an ideology, those new forms of radically decentralized direct democracy *are* its ideology. If nothing else, the “bad” protesters have managed to prove that they can do anything the (hierarchical) NGOs or unions can, probably much better.

The “hardest of the hard core” showed up—everyone from the notorious Eugene anarchists to the “Urban Guerrilla Division” of the Earth Liberation Front, to groups like the Divas for Democracy and the Tute Neri (Black Overalls). Not only did they respect the mood of the city, they filled it with samba bands, tango dancers, giant puppets of the Statue of Liberty and Ken Lay, and chorus lines of Radical Rockettes.

If anything, they were victims of their own success: When something like 20,000 people magically appeared for the start of the march, the organizers hardly knew what to do with them. But alas, we were not only victims of success. We were also victims of the very logic of our compromise with power—and many of us will not forget this.

Anarchy and direct action are not about transgressing laws simply for the sake of it, but ultimately about creating spaces that can stand outside of power, autonomous zones in which one can

begin experimenting with things like direct democracy. It’s about a vision for what a truly free society might look like. But in order to do this, one must transgress the law. At least, this is what we discovered as soon as anyone applied for a permit. The moment you start submitting to the logic of the state, everything changes.

Organizers ended up submitting themselves entirely to the whims of the police, who predictably broke every agreement they’d made and began arbitrarily stopping, randomly attacking, delaying and generally harassing the marchers. By the time they reached the depressing, barricaded “protest pens” two blocks from the Waldorf, 20,000 people had dwindled to 2,000, and CNN could dutifully report “2,000 protest in front of Waldorf” without even broaching the question of why 90 percent of the marchers had dropped out before they even got there—or, in fact, that the 90 percent had been there at all.

Nightline had taped an elaborate segment which, for once, actually would have discussed the central issues of the globalization movement. But producers cancelled the show because of the lack of “violence” in the news—even after police preemptively swept up 150 activists the next day for the crime of walking down the street. The prisoners were held for days, and as they emerged from jail, nursing broken fingers and black eyes, almost all had exactly the same reaction: We tried being nice. Now we know where that gets us. ■

David Graeber, an assistant professor of anthropology at Yale, is active with the Direct Action Network and Ya Basta!.

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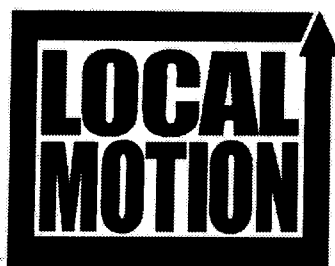
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SOCIAL INVESTMENTS



Social change often has its origins in political initiatives that begin at the local level. With this issue, **In These Times** inaugurates "Local Motion," an occasional series of articles that explore how progressives in diverse locales, from big cities to rural counties, have found solutions to the challenges facing their communities. These success stories, it is hoped, will provide models and inspiration for activists across the country. The series begins with the story of how Oak Park, Illinois has become one of the most integrated towns in America. —Joel Bleifuss

Not Just Black and White

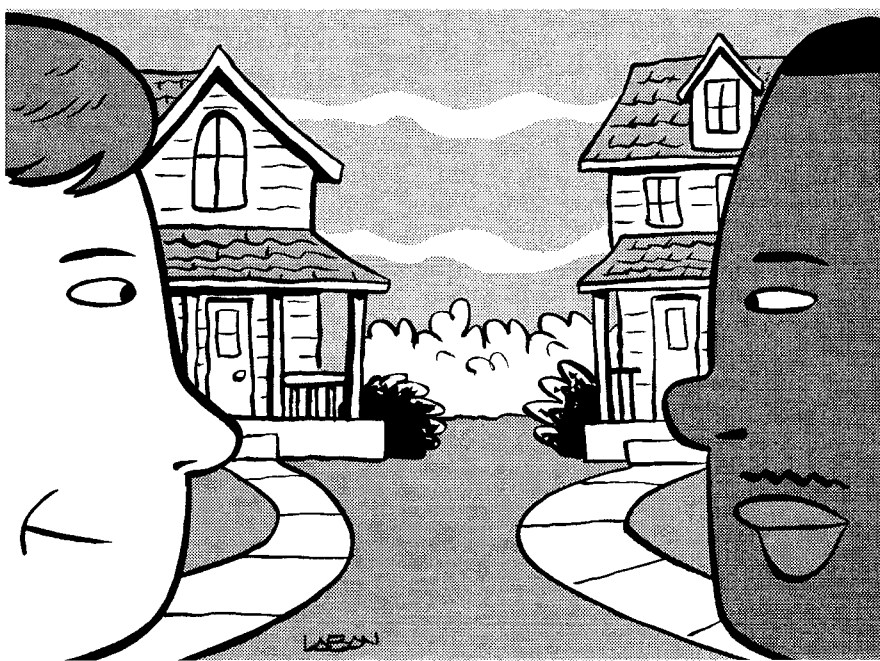
Oak Park, Illinois grapples with questions of diversity

By Darryl Cater

Being liberal in Oak Park, Illinois is not quite the same job it was 30 years ago. Not that this progressive, middle-class suburb is any more conservative now than it was in the '70s, when the town became nationally famous for its success in stopping the tide of white flight. In fact, until 1988 Oak Parkers were still voting Republican in presidential elections by comfortable margins.

For most of the 20th century, Oak Park was seen as literate but not necessarily liberal. The town was known for a pair of hometown boys whose alternative lifestyles didn't fit the conservative mold: Ernest Hemingway (who found the village, a town of "broad lawns and narrow minds," a bit too stuffy for his taste) and Frank Lloyd Wright (who left behind his studio—and the largest collection of Wright homes anywhere—when his private life became too scandalous for his upright neighbors).

Nowadays Oak Park is a firmly liberal town. Seventy-two percent of Oak Parkers voted for Al Gore in the 2000 presidential election. The village board boasts the only openly lesbian elected official in the state, Joanne Trapani, who was promoted last year from village trustee to village president. Virtually no one said a word about her sexual orientation, except to marvel that no one was saying a word about her sexual orientation. On the same election night, the elementary school board gained its first gay member. Meanwhile, soccer moms in Oak Park's PTOs received national TV attention last year when they voiced objec-



tions to the anti-gay hiring policy of the Boy Scouts of America. (The scouts responded by refusing to renew the charter of local troops.)

Some real-estate peddlers even employ Oak Park's lefty-college-town-without-a-college reputation as a marketing niche. And while quite a few Republicans still send brave letters to the local newspapers beseeching liberal neighbors to extend their self-touted tolerance to the conservative minority, right-wingers seem resigned to living in an enemy camp.

This liberal camp, however, has spent the past year arguing over the very issues that defined the town as a lefty haven in the first place: the government programs that helped turn the

village into one of the nation's thoroughly integrated communities and made Oak Park a darling of urban scholars.

The village government and the elementary school district will soon decide what to make of reports from a citizen task force appointed to re-evaluate some of the town's famous diversity policies. The commission was surprisingly divided about how best to regulate the racial balance in elementary schools. These conflicts reflect a seemingly growing resistance to the very word "integration"—a term that was excised in 1999 from the village's 26-year-old official diversity statement by a group of minority-sensitive "political correctors."

The small fraction of the town's 52,000 residents who avidly follow these issues tend to hold complex and nuanced views on this subject. They are often ambivalent and obstinately resistant to pigeonholing. But the arguments, if not the players, generally fall into one of two categories. In one corner: the "progressive" view, as advocates have described it, that some of the integration programs are (at best) no longer necessary and (at worst) racist. Ironically, these "progressives," many of whom are African-American, take as a point of liberal pride the traditionally conservative call for less intrusive government. In the other corner: the "old-school" liberal view, as it is sometimes derisively called, held by those who feel the threat of racial resegregation is still around and getting more ominous.

The progressive argument, using the trendy language of multiculturalism, seems to have gained ground as old racial prejudices have melted and morphed. Meanwhile, as local home values soared at the outset of the new millennium, the old fears that segregation would lead to disinvestment seems a distant nightmare from a bygone time.

The objections to the policies are nothing new. Similar arguments have been tossed around since 1968, when town liberals triumphantly rallied for the passage of a local Fair Housing Ordinance (in advance of the national version) and began actively courting black citizens. Three years later, Chicago's Austin neighborhood, which sits across the street from Oak Park's eastern border, had turned from all *blanc* to all black.

Oak Parkers adopted an arsenal of tools to keep their village from following in Austin's footsteps: banning "For Sale" signs to keep whites from panicking when neighbors moved; offering equity insurance packages for homeowners convinced their property values would plummet as neighborhoods changed (though fewer than 200 residents took the village up on the offer); counseling both blacks and whites to think about moving into neighborhoods they might not ordinarily consider; redrawing school boundaries when racial balance in any one of the elementary schools started looking less like the community as a whole.

Other more draconian proposals were rejected. Village officials in the mid-'70s voted down the idea of a literal quota on the number of black people in certain neighborhoods. While the event is largely forgotten, this long-dead notion still looms large in the emotions of some who suspect old-school integrationists are secretly seeking to cap the black population somewhere around 30 percent of the village total.

No one, however, seriously argues that the policies have failed. The 2000 Census shows that 66 percent of Oak Park's residents are white; 22 percent are black. While the number of white residents has steadily dropped since the '60s as the number of black residents has continued to rise, 22 percent is a strikingly low figure considering the predictions of sociologists in the '70s that Oak Park would be virtually all black by now.

More striking, however, is the distribution of the two populations: Eighty-nine percent of the blocks in this village have both white and black residents living on them. The elementary school district divides the four-and-a-half-square-mile rectangle that is Oak Park into eight roughly rectangular neighborhoods: Of those, none are more than 34 percent African-American. Some people talk about Oak Park as

though it were a segregated town (the east side is viewed as the black neighborhood, the west as white) but Census numbers show such talk makes cartoon caricatures of relatively minor trends. (By contrast, the Austin neighborhood remains 90 percent black—which would not be alarming were

the area not also gang-infested and economically blighted.)

However, Oak Parkers have begun debating whether local neighborhoods may be in danger of re-segregating. For the first time ever, three elementary schools are teetering on the brink of "majority minority" status, with enrollments close to 50 percent black. One school in the northwest corner of the village is nearly 80 percent white.

Objections to Oak Park's integration policies have come from several corners recently. Some of the very African-Americans to whom the village opened its doors in the '60s now say they are tired of being "counted," "managed" and shuffled about by village leadership like pawns in a paternalistic chess game. Many blacks are ambivalent. They know the policies made it possible for them to live in Oak Park without sacrificing the characteristics that made Oak Park an attractive place to live in the first place.

Others want Oak Park's famous focus on "racial diversity" to expand to "multiculturalism." Census numbers show this is still pretty much a two-race town. Around its borders, other suburbs have exploded with Hispanics and Asians. But the percentage of Oak Park's population that is Hispanic or Asian still hovers in the low single digits. Some feel the timeworn arguments about blacks and whites in Oak Park have simply started to mildew.

A handful of the town's most influential homosexuals particularly like this emphasis on multiculturalism, which makes sense. Oak Park was less preoccupied in the '90s by racial diversity than by gay-rights issues. The decade began with fiery fights at the local high school over the addition of "sexual orientation" to the list of categories protected by discrimination. By 1998, Oak Park had established a groundbreaking "domestic partnership registry" for married gay couples. The village is now known as a sort of evolving capital for gay fam-

The integrationists worried: How can we be sure white homeshoppers aren't going to start steering their Dodge Caravans to other suburbs?

ilies in Chicagoland, as gay couples with children move out of Chicago's swinging "Boy's Town" neighborhood and settle down in alternafamily-friendly Oak Park. One percent of local households are headed by "unmarried same-sex partners" as classified by the Census bureau—among the top populations of gay couples in the state.

At the same time, influential whites are eager to be sensitive to the concerns of blacks in a town where African-Americans have bafflingly little governmental involvement. In April's local elections, one (white) village board candidate, attorney John Troelstrup, called for a "less managed" town where the leadership stops "talking about black people as though they're problems." His supporters included a black incumbent elementary school board candidate, Ade Onayemi, who complained, "When you start telling me that you've got to keep [the number of black residents] at 30 percent or 20 percent, I get very upset."

In his losing campaign, Troelstrup renewed familiar complaints about some policies of the Oak Park Regional Housing Center, a semi-governmental apartment-finding service that encourages users to consider housing in neighborhoods where they might be in the minority. Troelstrup's complaint: Only blacks receive lists of apartments outside of Oak Park. The program is designed to suggest housing opportunities in all-white suburbs to blacks, who the center's supporters say are often discouraged from buying homes close to their jobs because of lingering institutional racism. (The center has never been sued on fair-housing grounds, probably because they provide all clients with a notice explaining their mission. All clients are reminded that in the end they can choose to live wherever they want.)

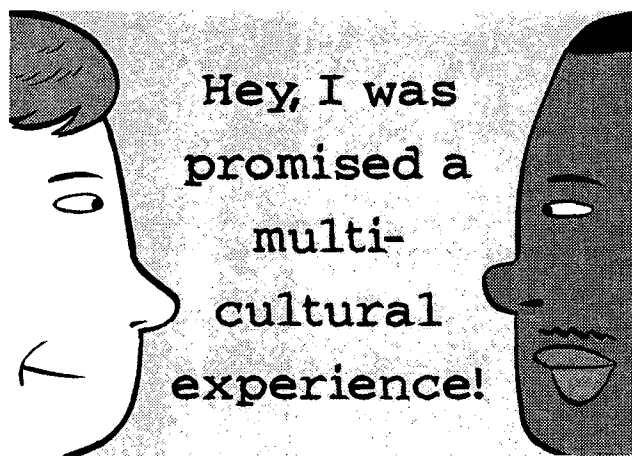
In the summer of 2000, Oak Park commissioned a group of volunteers called "the Commitment to Diversity Task Force" to determine whether neighborhoods were resegregating and advise the school board on its decades-old policy of changing school boundaries when racial enrollment ratios slip out of balance at individual schools.

The report was commissioned after calls for immediate action from urban scholars like Evan McKenzie of the University of Illinois-Chicago (who is writing a book on the subject) and Gary Orfield of Harvard University (who helped get Oak Park started on the road to integration years ago). Schools, the social scientists said, historically have been bellwethers of neighborhood change. The integrationists worried: even if Oak Park parents can be trusted not to flee from rising black enrollments (and, thanks to the persistent racial achievement gap, the concomitant drop in test scores), how can we be sure white homeshoppers aren't going to start steering their Dodge Caravans to other suburbs?

While no one seriously advocated forcibly busing students to other schools, these arguments sounded unnecessarily shrill to some villagers. The "town hall meetings" called by

the task force generally drew no more than 40 people. Neighborhood meetings on controversial economic development projects, meanwhile, have been known to draw more than a hundred. An all-day rally to save a local hot dog stand from a condo developer's wrecking ball drew more than a thousand. Indeed, as the real-estate market has sent home values soaring and the village government has begun to attract major national and regional retailers to a town that had struggled to attract investment for years, many of the Oak Parkers of 2002 seem less afraid of an influx of poor black people than the immigration of too many rich people.

In addition, Supreme Court rulings have strained the political and legal will to reinforce integration efforts. In recent weeks, Cambridge, Massachusetts joined a small handful of communities experimenting with progressively venturesome efforts to integrate schools by income level. To date Oak Park, where school enrollments range from 1 percent to 20 percent "low income," has conducted its discussion almost entirely in terms of race.



In February 2001, the task force's education subcommittee, which was entrusted with the most controversial issues, decided there is no immediate need for the shifting of school racial balances. They

emphasized less controversial efforts to shrink the gap between the grades of white and black students, banking that the measures will improve the attractiveness of all schools to both races. And they advised the school district, which had been reluctant to tinker with racial balance any time soon, to keep watching the numbers and consider redrawing school boundaries if necessary.

The language of the final report reveals the soul-searching that took place in board rooms, e-mails and conversations over the past year. The committee even took issue with the term "racial balance," which had been used to guide school-boundary decisions since 1976. "First there was the troubling question about how far away from the district-wide racial ratios a school had to be in order to be 'racially unbalanced,'" the education subcommittee's report concluded. "Second there was the troubling suggestion built into the concept of 'racial balance' that it was the increase in the number of black students in certain schools that was driving the concern and the quest, by some, for 'remedies.'"

Members of the task force finally reached what in Oak Park once seemed like a relatively self-evident conclusion: Racially diverse schools are good and the community likes them. That conclusion came after hearing complaints from parents of students at Oak Park's 80 percent white school: Hey, I was promised a multicultural experience! Where are all the black kids? That unusual perspective helped grease the wheels for a consensus. ■

Darryl Cater writes for Wednesday Journal of Oak Park and River Forest.

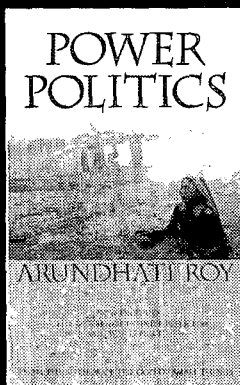
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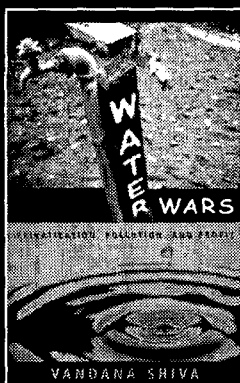
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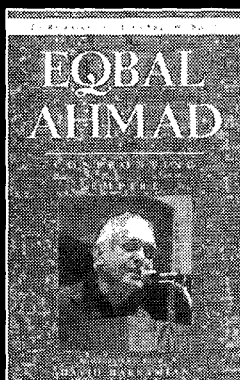
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Party Animals

By Doug Ireland

When the Socialist Party was in its heyday under Eugene Victor Debs in the early 20th century, it had dozens of its own daily newspapers to spread its message. In today's America, the mainstream press

Spoiling for a Fight: Third-Party Politics in America

By Micah L. Sifry
Routledge
365 pages, \$27.50

corps gives scant, if any, attention to attempts to create alternatives to the two major parties, even as the differences between them have become blurred—and often erased—in a political culture dominated by money and greed.

For a number of years Micah Sifry has worked the other side of the street, as it were, reporting on those who are “rebellious against the rotten and dysfunctional two-party duopoly.” And in *Spoiling for a Fight: Third Party Politics in America*, he has given us a sterling piece of contemporary political history that examines several of the most recent efforts to create alternatives. He also delivers a tough-minded critical analysis—based on detailed, first-hand observation—that can serve as a manual of dos-and-don'ts for citizens striving for a new kind of electoral politics.

First, Sifry takes up the explosion of discontent with traditional party politics that gave rise to the Ross Perot phenomenon and, eventually, the Reform Party. “How,” he asks, “does a movement that garnered 19 million votes in 1992 and spawned a mass membership organization of 1.5 million people end up a mere eight years later with less than a half-million votes for its presidential candidate, Pat Buchanan, with its one popularly elected official, Jesse Ventura, deserting it, and with an almost non-existent degree of local organization?”

Sifry traces this movement's origins back to the man he calls the “Patient Zero of the Perot epidemic”—Jack Gargan, the self-described “retired working stiff” who invested his life's savings in a series of full-page newspaper ads to create THRO Inc. (for “Throw the Hypocritical Rascals Out”), demanding that every incumbent senator and congressman be voted out of office. Gargan's ads caught on like wildfire, brought in money for more ads, and created a sizable roster of disaffected voters, most of whom had never been actively engaged in electoral politics before.

Gargan's project became the basis for his Draft Perot effort and the nucleus of United We Stand America, the Perot-funded organization that was later transmogrified into the Reform Party. Sifry shows how “the Perot movement was both a victim of its own success—the major parties co-opted the deficit issue—and destroyed by its own leader's authoritarianism. Perot exterminated democracy in

the very organization supposedly designed to increase it in the nation, hiring rafts of ex-military men who would blindly carry out his orders as the movement's state directors.

Good Terkelian that Sifry is, like the noble Studs he lets us hear throughout the book the voices of the footsoldiers who did what old Socialists used to call the “Jimmy Higgins work,” the nuts-and-bolts grassroots organizing that is the life blood of any meaningful social movement. The story of the valiant struggles of the freshly minted centrist activists for control of UWSA and the Reform Party against the “Perotbots” is often quite moving, as once bright hopes for a new political beginning were dashed by disaffection, disillusionment and burnout.

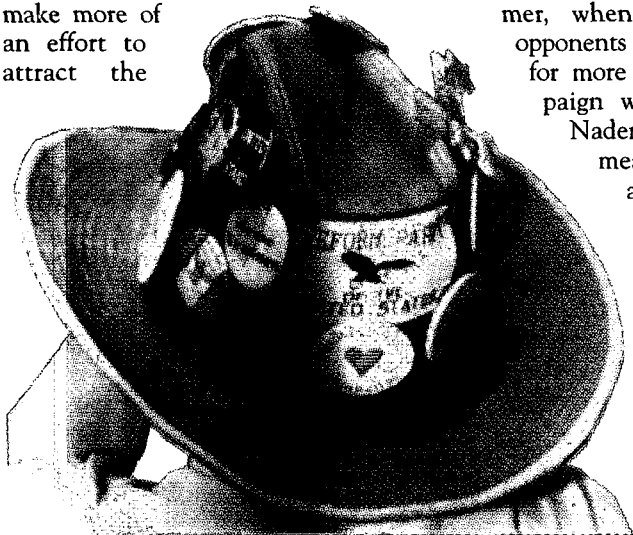
By the time the Reform Party was officially founded four years after Perot's first presidential campaign, the movement had already substantially evaporated. And when the nativist Buchanan took over the party (with the aid of Lenora Fulani and Fred Newman's cult-racket, the New Alliance Party) at a raucous brawl in Nashville in 2000, there was little left except a ballot line in a third of the states and \$12.6 million in federal matching funds.

Sifry also devotes a lengthy chapter to Reform's Minnesota affiliate, the Independence Party, and the stunning election of Gov. Jesse Ventura, catapulted into office in 1998 by working-class and younger voters, many of them brought to the polls for the very first time by Ventura's unorthodox populist style. Why and how Ventura succeeded by targeting “unlikely voters” even as the national movement was collapsing makes for a fascinating read.

Sifry calls the Perot and Ventura constituencies the “angry middle” (as opposed to the “radical middle,” the term adopted by much of the mainstream press) because “the actual footsoldiers I talked to who were at the core of the movement seemed more motivated by a gut-level anger and sense of betrayal than a truly radical questioning of American society. ... [But they] saw all existing political institutions (the two parties, the business establishment, the mainstream media, and the established left and right) as part of the problem.”



In Sifry's view, one of the major reasons Ralph Nader's 2000 presidential campaign failed to win even its minimal goal of 5 percent of the national vote (which would have qualified the Green Party for federal campaign financing in 2004) was Nader's failure—in both tone and strategy—to make more of an effort to attract the



Perot and Ventura courted the "angry middle" of citizens disgusted by the system, but Nader would not.

angry middle, a natural constituency for Nader's crusade for democratic empowerment. "The Nader campaign tended to focus its energies more at students, young people and progressives than at political independents," Sifry writes. "Despite the opportunity created by Buchanan's hijacking of the Reform Party, Nader never made a concerted bid for former Perot voters."

But that's hardly the only fault Sifry finds with the Nader campaign. Sifry is anything but a Nader-hater; indeed, it was his December 1999 cover story in *The Nation*, "Public Citizen No. 1," that first sparked enormous interest in a Nader candidacy among many on the committed left and Democrats disgusted by the downright boodling of the Clinton years. But Nader shot himself in the foot by Hamlet-like dawdling, waiting nearly until March to formally declare his candidacy. This left the

Green Party—already somewhat distrustful of him after his prima donna behavior in 1996, when he refused to campaign or accept contributions after they'd made him their candidate—anxiously waiting for Nader to drop the other shoe. His campaign didn't really begin in earnest until late in the summer, when his two major-party opponents had been on the stump for more than a year. The campaign was further crippled by Nader's selection of a well-meaning but completely amateurish campaign staff, and by the difficulty in many places of merging the 150,000 new Nader volunteers with what Sifry calls the "granola culture" of the Greens, too many of whom had only the slimmest interest in serious electoral politics.

Nader's only success was in driving Al Gore into populist rhetorical mode. As Sifry shows, that's when Gore's poll numbers began to rise, bringing home disaffected Dems who had been considering a vote for Nader. But accompanying that verbal

shift by the notoriously bland and cautious Gore was the blitzkrieg of assaults on Nader by liberals that the Gore campaign organized. On this point, Sifry effectively demolishes the arguments of those who blame Nader for Dubya's victory, noting that, for example, Buchanan "cost" Bush more states than Nader "cost" Gore.

Sifry also devotes an important chapter to the New Party, founded by organizer Daniel Cantor and academic Joel Rogers, whose build-from-the-bottom-up strategy was based on the notion of "fusion"—that is, cross-endorsements of major party candidates (or the withholding of same) serving as both carrot and stick. But just as the New Party was showing signs of successes—racking up an impressive number of local victories, and becoming the first third party ever invited to make a presentation to the

AFL-CIO's executive committee, labor's inner sanctum—its strategy was undone by the Supreme Court's iniquitous 1997 decision in *Timmons v. Twin Cities Area New Party*, which upheld Minnesota's ban on cross-endorsements. Thus undercut, the New Party turned its attention to New York, one of the few states that still permits cross-endorsements, and helped spark the creation there of the Working Families Party, whose executive director is now Cantor.

Full disclosure obliges me to say that Sifry and I have been friends and colleagues ever since his long stint as an editor at *The Nation*; but that doesn't prevent us from having some differences. Sifry tends to see the glass as half-full, while in my pessimism I often see it as half-empty. In his final pages, Sifry offers the WFP as a potential model for others to follow, while I have reservations about whether the party can be the broad labor-community coalition it hopes to be, given the imposition of unmerited endorsements on certain candidates by the labor leaders who pay the party's bills. The Vermont Progressive Party, co-chaired by two trade unionists and also recommended as a model by Sifry, is more congenial—but its successes would have been impossible without that state's law providing public financing of campaigns, even for third parties.

But in the end, even Sifry admits that, since September 11 and the country's lurch to the right, he is "pessimistic" about the short-term prospects for third parties. Perhaps one should remember the old Jewish folktale from which the late Irving Howe drew the title of one of his books. A mendicant came to the mythical village of Chelm seeking work, and was offered a job sitting outside the town's gates to watch for the coming of the Messiah. "How much does the job pay?" the mendicant asked. "Ah," said the village elder, "It doesn't pay anything—but the work is steady."

The steady work of building alternatives to the duopoly will be long and hard—or, as Cantor likes to say, "there are no short cuts." If Nader runs again for president in 2004—and he almost certainly will—one can only hope that he attentively reads this book. ■

Spreading the Word

By Alex P. Kellogg

Perhaps no other insult can be spoken with more malice, or received with more outrage, than the word "nigger." By the same token, there may be no other word in the history of the English language that has been so bril-

Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word

By Randall Kennedy

Pantheon

224 pages, \$22

liantly adopted and subverted by the oppressed and aggrieved.

Nigger, by Randall Kennedy, a Harvard law professor, takes a long, hard look at the N-word, as it is often politely denoted, attempting, as he puts it, to "put a tracer on nigger, report on its use, and assess the controversies to which it gives rise."

For Kennedy, the word seems in some ways an odd choice of subject matter. An advocate of a colorblind society and an outspoken critic of racial solidarity, I once heard him ask Cornel West in a debate what value blacks could find in identifying with each other. After a brief pause, West replied: "We can share our nigger stories." The response, which rendered Kennedy temporarily speechless, elicited uproarious applause from the audience.

Certainly Kennedy has a fair share of his own "nigger stories," though they don't make it into his latest work. Still, despite his aversion to racial ties, Kennedy is not blind to the history of white supremacy, in which "nigger" plays such a central part. Nor is he aiming to make money off the N-word, or stir unwarranted controversy, though the title of his book cannot help but furrow a few brows: How are bookstore patrons to ask for the volume

by name? "Is Kennedy's *Nigger* in stock by any chance?"

According to Kennedy, "nigger" is derived from the Latin term for the color black, *niger*. When exactly the word transformed from racial moniker to racial slur is unknown, but by the early 19th century "nigger" was a familiar insult. By 1871, the term had made its first recorded appearance in a court of law. Since then, as Kennedy illustrates, nigger "has seeped into practically every aspect of American culture, from literature to political debates, from cartoons to songs." "Nigger" is all over the place, from well-known nursery rhymes such as "Eeny-meeny-miney-mo! / Catch a nigger by the toe!" (I grew up thinking it had always been "tiger") to prominent

landmarks previously known as Nigger Lake, Niggerhead Hill or Old Nigger Creek. And from the more recent manifestations of "nigger" in Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* to virtually any hip-hop song made in the past five years, Kennedy points out that the word's meaning varies by content and context, depending largely on the individual circumstances in which it is used.

But Kennedy is largely interested in a careful examination of the legal history of "nigger." For "like every other significant feature of American life—including cigarettes, guns, pornography, drugs, stock trading, sex, religion, and money," he argues, "nigger is thoroughly enmeshed in litigation." He notes that while a Lexis-Nexis search of state and federal cases pulls up 84 instances of "kike," 50 of "wetback," 90 of "gook" and 286 of "honky," "nigger" appears in the text of 4,219 decisions.

In one instance, a black man attempting to return merchandise at a store was forced to sign a return slip on which a sales clerk had written "arrogant nigger refused exchange" in order to obtain his refund. Courts in Illinois ruled in 1977 that the notation, however rude, was not harmful enough to warrant a lawsuit. In another case, one James H. Spriggs quit his job at an auto glass company in Maryland in the early '90s and sued after being subjected to what he described as years of listening to his supervisor refer to black customers and employees as "monkeys and niggers." Spriggs won his case on appeal.

Although he carefully explores the legal intricacies the use of "nigger" has given rise to, Kennedy has little patience for the arguments of p.c.-minded advocates of banning so-called hate speech, or those who merely attempt to limit or confine the uses of the word. He argues that even the best-intentioned hate speech law cannot accomplish



its goal—while such laws ultimately undermine fundamental rights. Thankfully, as Kennedy notes, the hate speech debate is largely dead in the water, though the issues it raised about the boundaries of contemporary dialogue remain relevant. The debate's very defeat, in his view, is a measure of progress, and a sign of the health of our democracy.

Another sign of progress, to Kennedy, is that more blacks are using the term openly, regardless of the confusion or haphazard mimicry it elicits among some whites, or even the backlash from some blacks. He's happy too that many whites and other non-blacks are starting to use the word to refer to each other, in both the positive and negative senses, shedding much of the term's racial specificity. In a sense, he points out, as the meanings and uses of "nigger" (and its variants) have become more variable, its prominence in the American dialect has been revitalized.

Given these facts, Kennedy argues, for "bad and for good, nigger is thus destined to remain with us for many years to come—a reminder of the ironies and dilemmas, the tragedies and glories, of the American experience."

Few could argue that point, and for those unaware of just how pervasive the use of the word was and is, *Nigger* will provide a jarringly educational wake-up call. (Even as an African-American, I was shocked by many of the examples Kennedy lists.) While readers will certainly appreciate the lucidity with which Kennedy presents complicated legal issues, and the sheer breadth and depth of his overall analysis, some may still prickle at the idea that we should all accept "nigger" as here to stay.

Such detractors could probably never be satisfied, and the linguistic tide they stand against will all but certainly swallow them whole. Still, even those on Kennedy's side may feel a tad cheated by

Nigger for different reasons. Though it couldn't be more thoroughly researched or meticulously argued, the book tells us surprisingly little about the power of language or the language of power. One is left wondering how the word has remained at once so scathing an insult and so treasured a term of endearment, and from whence comes its power both to oppress and to liberate. The growing paradox of the word in the modern context is what makes it so alluring a subject, and so perplexing a puzzle. Yet Kennedy does not manage to fully flesh out the implications of nigger's simultaneous ability to empower and humiliate.

That said, *Nigger* tells us more—about our country and ourselves—than most books do in volumes. Given this one word's horrible, often neglected past and its complicated, conflicted future, that is an important contribution. ■

Alex P. Kellogg is a reporting fellow for The Chronicle of Higher Education.

Welsh for Zen

By Joshua Klein

Has there ever been a band as immediately identified with a specific place as the Velvet Underground? The New York group, among the most influential musical acts of

what the rest of the country might have thought about the obscure quartet.

The band never played Peoria, but it did occasionally find its way outside the bounds of New York. The previously released 1969 *Velvet Underground Live* set gives a glimpse of the band at its musical peak, touring through Texas and San Francisco. The performances capture several otherwise unreleased songs and definitive arrangements of album tracks (like the slow "Sweet Jane"). In a sense, the Velvet were ambassadors venturing out into a great wild world, where the rivalry between squares and the counterculture didn't leave much room for oddballs like them.

More recordings of New York's finest, out of their element, can be found in the essential *Bootleg Series Volume 1: The Quine Tapes*, a recently released three-disc set. Recorded mostly in 1969 on the band's West Coast leg of the tour, where their shockingly fresh minimalist sound must have unsettled the less confrontational and more psychedelic counterculture there, these discs offer

further testament to the skill of the Velvets as a live act. Rather than flaunt abrasive edges and avant-garde pedigree, *The Quine Tapes* find the band in complete control of its twin tendencies toward noise and quiet.

Part of the Velvets' power stemmed from founding member John Cale, easily their most versatile player and no stranger to balancing light and dark. Lou Reed still gets the lion's share of credit, but the band's early output underscores Cale's invaluable contribution. Reed may have provided New York swagger, but it was Welshman Cale who brought to the band its "out" cred and, possibly, its gentler inclinations as well.

The tracks on *The Quine Tapes* feature Cale's replacement Doug Yule, whose workman-like playing makes for a fine Cale proxy, and perhaps provided some additional stability. (Cale's own copious drug use rivaled only Reed's.) Whether speeding through "Foggy Notion" or taking their time with a nearly 12-minute "Waiting for the Man," the Velvets sound in a weird way like the classic pop act the perverse Reed always wished for. At least, they do until you hit any of the three versions of "Sister Ray" included herein, ranging from 24

Bootleg Series Volume 1: The Quine Tapes

The Velvet Underground
Universal/Polydor

Rings around the World
Super Furry Animals
Epic/XL Recordings

How I Long To Feel that Summer
in My Heart
Gorky's Zygotic Mynci
Mantra/Beggar's Banquet

the past 30 years, perfectly epitomized the local squalid sex-and-drugs scene, setting the stage for the rise of punk and setting the standard for grungy verisimilitude in song. But so much has been made of the Velvet Underground's role as Andy Warhol's house band that one wonders

to 38 minutes in length. The lascivious goof-off of a song may represent Cale's most apparent contribution, and even though by this point he's long gone, the band revels in sheets of distorted and droning sound.

Cale first arrived in New York to study classical piano and viola, which he had begun to master back in Wales. But once in New York, Cale quickly fell in with Tony Conrad and La Monte Young, players in the nascent minimalism school, whose compositions were sometimes little more than hours and hours of multi-layered drones; the qualities lay more in nuance than in melody. Cale's pre-Velvet years were documented in *New York in the 1960s*, a collection of lo-fi recordings made with the likes of Conrad, Young and Angus Maclise. Here one gets the wall-of-noise blueprint for songs such as "Sister Ray" and "Venus in Furs," both boasting Cale's tearing, distorted viola playing.

After his departure from the Velvet Underground, Cale continued to explore the world of edgy rock, but he eventually returned to his classical and Welsh roots. In Wales, Cale found his calming center, a quiet corollary to New York's volume and certainly the antithesis of the reckless spirit he brought to the Velvets. Reading his candid autobiography *What's Welsh for Zen*, it becomes clear that Cale's upbringing played a big part in fostering the dual extremes of his personality and his music. Wales instilled in him the contradictory spirit that would bring a quiet schoolboy who practiced organ at the local church all the way to New York to hang out with the wild things and make a bigger racket.

In recent years, Wales has again become something of a center for new and adventurous rock bands. Cale himself appears on the new album by the Super Furry Animals, whose manic and unpredictable structures owe as much to classic psychedelia as they do to the Velvets' more disturbing take on drug music. *Rings around the World* is also more dramatic and conventionally melodic, but the disc does display a certain familiar dedication to chaos and compositional anarchy.



Clockwise from top left: the Velvet Underground, Gorky's Zygotic Mynci, Super Furry Animals.

Veering radically from sweet soul ("Juxtapozed with U") to noisy pop ("[Drawing] Rings around the World") to electronica ("[A] Touch Sensitive"), the album refuses to settle down at some compromised sonic center. The disc is pure id unleashed, as if the Beatles developed with the same ear for abrasive mischief as the Velvets. The disc does bear at least a sideways semblance to a good deal of Cale's solo work in the mid-'70s, a period when he teamed up with Brian Eno for a trio of ambitious and weird rock albums.

More mellow is the latest from Gorky's Zygotic Mynci, *How I Long To Feel that Summer in My Heart*, a gentle album that has more in common with the Velvet Underground's softer, post-Cale music. The group is the yin to the Super Furry Animals' yang, though in its younger years Gorky's mined a similarly unpredictable rock sound. *How I Long* continues in the acoustic vein of their preceding EP, *The Blue Trees*; "Honeymoon with You," "Stood on Gold" and "Let Those Blue Skies" are pure bliss and heartache. The band does get slightly wilder and weirder with "Her Hair Hangs Long" and "Hodgeston's Hallelujah," respectively, but Gorky's never go as far out as the Super Furry Animals.

Yet both bands have found a way to incorporate their national heritage into their music; both have recorded in Welsh, and often return to the language as a badge of pride as well as willful display of stubborn eccentricity and obscurantism. In a sense, the music they make is as much a part of their particular location as the Velvet Underground were to their own. The isolation of Wales mirrors the isolation of New York's outsider scene of the late '60s, enabling artists to gleefully make music free from the constraints of expectation. Whether in his writing or in his music (like the Dylan Thomas tribute *Words for the Dying*), Cale regularly returns to Wales as a source of energy and inspiration. There must be, as the saying goes, something in the water.



One assumes that the Super Furry Animals and Gorky's Zygotic Mynci find their homeland as magical as Cale does. Paired together, the two groups represent the same extreme dualities that Cale brought to the Velvet Underground, teamed to create something fresh and exciting. Both bands wield the element of surprise like an instrument, and while it's doubtful we'll be listening to archival live sets from either outfit in 30 years, there's no question that they make for an invigorating now. ■

Joshua Klein is a freelance critic in Chicago.

Technical Foul

By Joshua Rothkopf

Life, for all its mysteries and riches, was somehow found lacking. Here, then, is a remake of *Rollerball*, MGM having no other choice but to provide and, in so doing, maybe heal. I did not enjoy this motion picture. I was not healed. But somewhere a board meeting

Rollerball

Directed by John McTiernan

must be convening, of jubilant men convinced that an aching need has, by them, been filled. Not for cynical sports futurism (this version winks with right-around-the-corner nowness) or amplified violence—as you may have heard whispered, all gratuities have been digitally erased. At last: a *Rollerball* for babysitters.

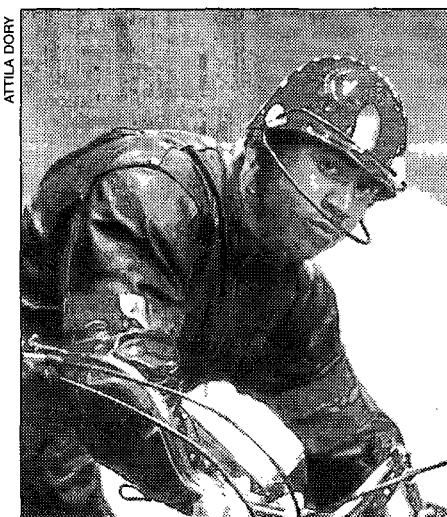
Why should we be caught rubbernecking? Only because *Rollerball* is, conclusively, the Watergate of studio disasters, a coverup you won't discover in theaters (hurry, you have but minutes) or on the balance sheet. The smoking gun lies in the 1975 original—pop it in. Do I hear a chuckle at that first line, a sports announcer welcoming us to Houston, “the Energy City”? Here they come now, in their football pads and skates. The team forms a line and removes its helmets. The crowd rises for the Corporate Anthem. There is silence, rectitude.

None of this makes the cut for the remake; you just might get weepy over the passing of '70s sci-fi earnestness. *Rollerball* was the ripest: a future world of mighty conglomerates presided over by the executive class which, having done away with wars, nations and poverty, serenely administers a brutal outlet to the under-consumers. (Memo to tomorrow's CEOs: This does not actually work.) Fully baked or not, *Rollerball* still commands any self-respecting anti-globalization slumber party. White-walled living quarters and permawaves—par for the genre—take on an aptness; dreams are murmured about wearing a gray suit and making decisions.

John McTiernan and his team of screenwriters have seen fit to chuck out this context, and the error is fatal, like doing *Jaws* without the shark. The game is

now set in rampantly capitalist pockets of the former Soviet Union, with lucrative cable deals the goal of its ex-KGB entrepreneur, Petrovich (Jean Reno, all but twirling his mustache). Hasn't he heard of the World Wrestling Federation? No matter, we have, and lacking the corporate stranglehold of the original, his “entertainment startup” has all the appeal of a bargain-basement Cirque du Soleil, worth about a second of channel-surfing.

The shift wreaks worse damage on what the Greeks, though not the inventors of rollerball, might have once termed the Central Drama. In the rapidly improving first version, Jonathan, the hero player, threatened the synergistic



Don't call it a comeback.

state with his growing celebrity. (James Caan, dimly unable to grasp the retirement forced on him, must have required director's notes of the strongest proof.) But this new Jonathan has no discovery other than—wait a minute!—the game is rigged for maximum carnage. While actor Chris Klein cannot fairly be faulted for this, his agent should be flung in the penalty box for making his client's pitch-perfect doofus in *Election* seem artless.

So on we go to Plan B, thrills and spills. McTiernan may not have a functioning script, but he can claim to have once made *Die Hard*, as well-tooled as the scrap heap ever gets. He has plenty

to work with here: some pretty flesh, a good eye and the whirling, sadistic contest itself. Can't these elements occasionally cohere into cinematic rock candy? Bad for you, sure, but irresistible on certain trips to the carnival? Hopes rise early on, when a gaggle of hyperactive TV commercials scurry by; tastebuds are whetted for, say, a sticky gob of *Starship Troopers*.

But now like a vengeful ghost, the corporate spirit of the original swoops down on McTiernan with a fierceness that seems oddly appropriate. (At least by Hollywood metaphysics.) Poor screen tests and noxious word of mouth led to a rethink on the part of the studio, forcing him to sanitize his picture to a PG-13. Thus McTiernan has the dubious honor of releasing a satire on extreme bloodlust that's tamer than its 27-year-old inspiration. A collective grimace develops in the cast, responding to horrors rarely seen. Could they be reacting to their own predicament, trapped in hiccuping rhythms like *Hot Wheels* stuck on a similar figure-eight track?

Rollerball is an unbelievable bomb, but one of the most educational—revealing corporate desperation at its vulgar low. Before that gets interpreted as praise, allow me to reveal what would have been its secret weapon: breasts. The league is now co-ed (hubba hubba), but sneak into their discretely decent locker room and you'll see there's good money in computer-generated towels. After the game, it's a romp over to the local strip club where the boys like to ogle some nice, uh, dresses. Even the cars have bras on.

Women were the plastic “rewards” in the original too; here they're intended as morsels still in their wrappers. Clearly, today's teens don't even rate a dirty treat. And while Petrovich might be the resident baddie, thereby allowing Jonathan to wrest an absurd triumph from the moral muck, the film points its gloved finger outward to the real culprits: us, with our global ratings that spur them on. But if we're so bad, can't *Rollerball* at least let us earn it? This, finally, is the one thing both versions get wrong. Audiences would never be treated so discourteously by any smart company. Rebellion would be instantly packaged and resold to us. This movie is a defect broken in transit. ■

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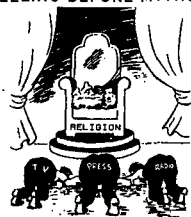


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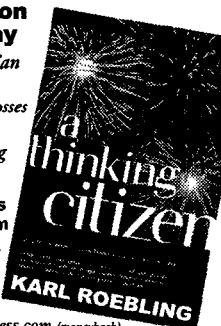
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SYLVIA



By Nicole Hollander

Continued from back page

The only thing that surprises me more than all the Enron henchmen who ended up in your cabinet and administration is how our lazy media just rolled over and didn't report it. The list of Enron people on your payroll is impressive. Lawrence Lindsey, your chief economic adviser? A former adviser at Enron. Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill? Former CEO of Alcoa, whose lobbying firm, Vinson and Elkins, was the No. 3 contributor to your campaign. Who is Vinson and Elkins? The law firm representing Enron. Who is Alcoa? The top polluter in Texas. Thomas White, the secretary of the Army? A former vice-chair of Enron Energy. Robert Zoellick, your federal trade representative? A former adviser at Enron. Karl Rove, your main man at the White House? He owned a quarter-million dollars' worth of Enron stock.

Then there's the Enron lawyer you have nominated to be a federal judge in Texas, the Enron lobbyist who is chairman of the Republican Party, the two Enron officials who now work for House Majority Leader Tom DeLay of Texas, and the wife of Texas Sen. Phil Gramm who sits on Enron's board. And there's the aforementioned Mr. Pitt, whose job it is now as SEC head to oversee the stock markets. George, it never stops! My fingers are getting tired typing all this up—and there's lots more.

Don't get me wrong, George—I do not think you're an evil man, and you don't need any crap from people like me—heck, you got mother-in-law problems! Now, I have a very good relationship with my mother-in-law, but then, I never told her to put \$8,000 of her money into a company my administration knew was going belly-up.

You say you didn't know? Your bag man—Don Evans, the guy who squeezed all that money for you from Enron as your campaign finance chairman (and is now collecting his reward as your commerce secretary)—has admitted that he got calls from Enron begging for help last year because they were going under. Didn't he tell you this?

Then Paul O'Neill admitted that Enron and Kenny Boy called him, too, for some special favors to save Enron. Didn't he mention this to you? They claim to have called your chief of staff, Andrew Card, and he said he didn't bother to inform you. What does your mother-in-law think about these boys her daughter's husband consorts with?

Enron and Kenny Boy bought your silence and the silence of your cabinet members. You didn't have to actually raid the 401(k) accounts of those poor people in Houston (many of whom probably voted for you every time your name was on a ballot). All you had to do was remain silent, change the government regulations that let them get away with it, and install their hand-picked cronies to sit on the "oversight" boards that were supposed to be keeping an eye on them.

The saddest part of this whole affair was the day the scandal was revealed—and you denied that you even knew your good friend, Kenneth Lay. "Ken who?" you said. Oh, he's just some businessman from Texas. "Heck, he backed my opponent for governor, Ann Richards!" was your way of trying to deflect the truth that was hitting you like a Mack truck. You knew that he, in fact, endorsed you and gave you three times the money Ann Richards ever saw from him.

I hardly ever talk to the guy, you said. You were like Peter outside the walls of Herod after they grabbed J.C. from the Garden of Gethsemane. Three times he denied he knew Jesus, and three times the cock crowed. But Peter, unlike you, felt shame and wept, and then ran away.

What shame do you feel tonight, George, for the lies you have told? What shame do you feel using the dead of 9/11 as a cover for your actions, hoping that our sorrow for those lost souls and our fear of being killed by terrorists would distract us from what your boys and Kenny Boy were up to during those horrific weeks in September and October?

It was during those very days, while the rest of us were in shock and sadness, that the executives at Enron were selling off their stock and shifting assets to their 900 phony partnerships overseas. Did they notice the remains of the dead being pulled from the rubble while they were downloading their millions, or were their eyes glued only to the bottom third of the TV screen as the stock ticker with the rigged Enron price crawled across the images of firemen desperate to find their fallen brothers?

The country was behind you when you said you were fighting the evildoers who did this. In fact, all the while, the real fight your friends at Enron were conducting was the fight against the clock, to see how fast they could transfer all the loot to their personal accounts and run away. Those were the evildoers, George, and you knew it. And because you, by design or negligence, allowed this to happen, it is time for you to resign. The cock has crowed for the last time.

At the very least, your mother-in-law deserves better.

Yours,

Michael

**A version of this letter first appeared on
www.michaelmoore.com.*

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An Open Letter to George W. Bush

from Michael Moore

Dear George,

When it's all over in a couple months, and you're packing up your pretzels and Spot and heading back to Texas, what will be your biggest regret? Not getting out more often and seeing the sights around Rock Creek Park? Never once visiting the newly renovated Ikea in Woodbridge, Virginia? Or buying your way to the White House with money from a company that committed the biggest corporate swindle in American history? You should have known that there was no way you would ever finish your term by hopping into bed with Kenneth Lay.

It's kind of sad when you think about it. Here you were—the most popular president ever!—the recipient of so much good will from your fellow Americans after September 11, and then you had to go and blow it. You just couldn't stay away from your old cowpoke friend from Texas.

Kenny had always been there for you. You needed a way to fly around to all the primaries and campaign stops in the 2000 election—so Kenny gave you his corporate jet. Did you tell the voters when you arrived in each city that the bird you flew in on was from a billionaire who was secretly conspiring to give the bird to all his employees and investors? He flew you around America on the Enron company jet, and for that favor you touched down on tarmac after tarmac to tell your fellow citizens that you were “going to restore dignity to the White House, the people's house.” You said this standing in front of an Enron jet!

Man, you loved Lay so much, you not only affectionately referred to him as “Kenny Boy,” but you interrupted an important campaign trip in April 2000 to fly back to Houston for the Astros opening day at the new Enron

Field—just so you could watch Kenny Boy throw out the first pitch. How sentimental!

I mean, you loved this man so intensely that, when you were awarded a set of keys the Supreme Court had made for you so you could live in the White House, you invited Kenny boy to set up shop—at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue!



He interviewed those who would hold high-level Energy Department positions in your administration.

You not only let Kenny Boy decide who would head the regulatory agency that oversaw Enron, you let him hand-pick the new chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission, Harvey Pitt—a former lawyer for his accountant, Arthur Andersen!

Kenny and the boys at Andersen also worked to make sure that accounting firms would be exempt from numerous regulations and would not be held liable for any “funny bookkeeping.” (Don't you wish you were this forward-thinking?)

The rest of Kenny Boy's time was spent next door with his old buddy, Dick Cheney (Enron and Halliburton, as you'll recall, got the big contracts from your dad to “rebuild” Kuwait after the Gulf War). Kenny and Dick formed an “energy task force” (Operation Enduring Graft) which put together the country's new “energy policy.” This policy then went on to shut down every light bulb and juicer in the state of California. And guess who made out like bandits while “trading” the energy California was in desperate need of? Kenny Boy and Enron! No wonder Big Dick doesn't want to turn over the files about those special meetings with Lay!

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