



Durl and Jan Kruse, members of the local anti-war group AWARE, hold a banner outside the Republican National Convention in New York City. Of the hundreds of thousands of protesters, nearly 1800 were arrested, including five members of the Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center. For details, visit www.ucimc.org.

Food Not Bombs: Sharing the fruits and vegetables of their labor

A NEW CHAPTER OF AN INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT HAS SPROUTED UP IN C-U

Young community members have united to “fight” hunger and violence with Food Not Bombs, an all-volunteer organization dedicated to nonviolence. Each week, FNB members obtain food donations and recover food that would otherwise be put to waste. Taking what they’ve gathered, a full course vegetarian meal is prepared. Every Sunday at 4:30 p.m. the meal is served in a local park. All hungry people are invited for food and fellowship free of charge. FNB has experimented with several locations including West Side Park, Skelton Park, and Crystal Lake Park. For the month of September, FNB is serving in Scott Park, on the corner of 3rd St. and Springfield Ave. in Champaign. For more information about FNB call the Catholic Worker at 355-9774 or e-mail foodnotbombs@ucimc.org.

Libraries nationwide open doors to democracy on September 11, 2004

On Saturday, September 11, people across the nation will gather in public spaces in nearly every state to exchange ideas about issues that matter. Over 300 libraries nationwide will present creative ways to reflect upon democracy, citizenship, and patriotism.

The Undergraduate Library at the University of Illinois in conjunction with students taking Social Justice in the Information Professions will host a Community Discussion Forum on September 11, from 2.00-4.00pm, in Room 291 at the Undergraduate Library, 1402 W. Gregory, Urbana, IL 61801. We plan to view two short documentaries (“Life of Liberty” and “We, Too, Sing America: Racist Backlash in the Aftermath of September 11th”) and have a related discussion on the issues raised in the films.

For more information about this event, contact Dana Wright, Diversity Services Librarian, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, voice: (217) 333-3285, e-mail: dcwright@uiuc.edu, or Bharat Mehra, PhD Candidate, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, e-mail: b-mehra@uiuc.edu.

This event is free and open to the public. It is part of The September Project, a local, national, and global effort to create a day of engagement, a day of conversation, a day of democracy. This project is for all people. To learn more about September Project events, visit www.theseptemberproject.org.

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You don't need a degree in journalism to be a citizen journalist. We are all experts in something, and we have the ability to share our information and knowledge with others. The *Public i* is always looking for writers and story ideas. We invite you to submit ideas or proposals during our weekly meetings (Thursdays at 5:30pm at the UCIMC), to post a story to the web site (<http://www.ucimc.org>), or to contact one of the editors.

- Become a citizen journalist; write a news story or opinion piece.
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The Iraq War and British Anger News and Views from the UK

September 2004 • V4 #7

by Ricky Baldwin, the Public's UK correspondent



"IT MUST BE A VERY INTERESTING TIME in the States at the moment," remarked our server at dinner, "with November coming up." My wife Catharine and I were enjoying a rare night out without children in her hometown of Wivenhoe, population about 6,000, just outside Colchester in Essex, England. The most frequent subject of conversation with natives during this trip, I had already noticed, had shifted from the small talk of previous visits to the ongoing war in Iraq and the world-famous lunacy of George W. Bush.

Now in this tiny village in the suburban Southeast, the twenty-something waiter who attended the local high school and worked at Gatwick Airport before coming home to Wivenhoe furrowed his brow as we left the restaurant and told me, "I just hope the monkey gets out."

THE MONKEY

There was much snickering when we arrived in Britain over the latest terror alert in the US, based on three and four-year-old evidence. But the press and the public seemed to treat the matter as par for the course rather than a shocking scandal. The phrase "July surprise" is unknown in the UK, but millions seemed to notice the convenient timing of the latest Orange Alert.

After all, the complete washout of every single justification for war with Iraq has received much more open attention in the UK than in the US. The incessant lies of the "war on terror", the power grabbing, the backroom wheeling and dealing, the nepotistic contracts, all appear in Britain as obvious if harsh facts, not as conspiracy theory. What still puzzles many people in the British Isles, however, is continued American support for the war, even at ever decreasing levels.

Why, they kept asking me, but why? What about the fact that there were no weapons of mass destruction, no connections with al-Qaeda, and what about Abu Ghraib?

The UK is certainly no stranger to terrorism. There have been no trashcans in British train station for many years (the IRA used to put bombs in them). The famously unarmed police are now supplemented in the London area by elite squads of Kevlar goons with submachine guns. And fully 80% of crime prevention budgets now go to the ubiquitous (yet apparently ineffective) surveillance cameras. Still there is widespread dismay and disgust even in Britain over America's reaction to a single day of terrorism, albeit a particularly nasty one.

"What's amazing to me," confessed a Brighton resident named Roger over a few pints, "is that Bush and Cheney and Rumsfeld and that lot have managed such a complete turnaround since 11 September." Roger was shaking his head, smiling ruefully. "I mean America had the support or sympathy of every country in the world, even the Arab countries. But in two short years they've managed a complete reversal."

"Now," Roger says, "almost the whole world is against them, and I think, here at least, there's a real sense of being against Bush and company and not against the American people."

THE POODLE

The United Kingdom is by most accounts the United States' closest ally, not counting our client states in Central America where we train the police and choose the presidents. So close in fact is the alliance that a major public debate in Britain at the moment seems to be whether Prime Minister Tony Blair should be called the US "poodle" or whether that

designation lets him off the hook for his own lies, his own chickenhawk foreign policy and his bloodless social policy.

Some of the mainstream press in the UK, where there is no First Amendment but also no pretense of media "neutrality", have made their position clear in the matter: "Blair is a coward," proclaims one headline from last year's *Mirror*.

The article then explains that "blood on his hands" is an expression coined "to describe impeccable politicians who, at a safe distance, order the mass killing of ordinary people... especially to those modern political leaders who have had no personal experience of war, like George W Bush, who managed not to serve in Vietnam, and the effete Tony Blair."

This gives some clue as to the opinion of the British public regarding their government's alliance with the US. And many people I talked to expressed dismay that the Blair government joined the US war on Iraq in complete disregard to public opinion. "Undemocratic" is the word I heard them



A popular British postcard featuring Tony "Uncle Sam" Blair

use. This may sound strange to American ears. After all, they have a queen. But Britons have fought long and hard for their rights, too – rights they now see evaporating along with ours.

In fact most of the people I talked to in England insisted that, although "there may have been some initial support in the States for the invasion of Iraq, in England there never was." Such conversations are by their nature anecdotal, but they are not meaningless. Polls of British opinion dispute the claim as stated, strictly speaking, but they still show little support for the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

"There has been little change in opinion about the war in Iraq," found a Pew global attitudes survey conducted in February and March 2004, "except in Great Britain, where support for the decision to go to war has plummeted from 61% last May to 43% in the current survey."

"In contrast," the Pew report says, "60% of Americans continue to back the war. Among the coalition of the 'unwilling,' large majorities in Germany, France and Russia still believe their countries made the right decision in not taking part in the war. Moreover, there is broad agreement in nearly all of the countries surveyed – the U.S. being a notable exception – that

the war in Iraq hurt, rather than helped, the war on terrorism."

A BBC poll around the same time found similar results, and further details in the BBC poll may also shed some light on the meaning of the numbers. Ranking the various partners in the war from 1 to 10 by performance, respondents in the BBC poll gave British military forces the highest mark of the survey: 8.3 – in contrast to an abysmal 4.9 for Blair and 4.3 for Bush. The British populace seems to share with the American a sympathy, or at least a reluctance, not to "support the troops," the everyday grunts who are sent to do the dirty work, however wrong the war itself and however deceitful the politicians who planned it. In the same poll, 42% of British respondents said they trust Blair less now than before the war, while only 4% trust him more. On the so-called "weapons of mass destruction," 22% said Blair lied outright while 40% said he exaggerated, leaving a negligible number who still believe. And 55% said that they believe the war in Iraq has not helped Britain's longterm security.

But what this means for the Blair government's prospects is unclear. The electoral alternative is the Conservative Party, the hated Tories, who under Margaret Thatcher (and, P.S., John Major) plundered the social equity accumulated over generations. Still, Blair and the so-called New Labour – akin to Clinton's rightwing Democratic Leadership Council in the US – can hardly rest on their laurels.

In addition to the high-profile defections of Blair's Cabinet ministers over the last two years, the Labour Party has reportedly lost fully half its membership since the war with Iraq, now down to 190,000 total. Certainly no one has to be a member to vote Labour, but such a precipitous drop speaks strongly to the disaffection and disgust among the party faithful.

The third-party Liberal Democrats are almost certain to take up some of the slack, and local elections have already seen spotty losses for all the major parties in contests against the Independent Working Class Association and other marginal groups.

So Blair could face a steep uphill climb according to almost every observer, perhaps including Blair himself. Earlier in the year Blair reportedly considered stepping down, but his closest aides talked him out of it.

THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC

Last year, in the lead-up to invasion, hundreds of thousands protested in New York, San Francisco and other US cities. In London protesters numbered over one million, out of a national population around only 60 million, apparently including many who had never demonstrated against anything in their lives – not even, though they were old enough and did oppose it, Vietnam.

Pro-war officials in the UK tend to blame the left-leaning media for public opposition to the war. But why the average Brit would give more credence to anti-war journalism than to its pro-war counterparts in *The London Times*, for example, they do not explain. The notion that people might be reacting to the facts presented is apparently unthinkable.

British ire erupted again mid-August when the supposedly quiet town of Basra near Kuwait exploded and a British soldier was killed. One UK forces have lost a handful in Iraq, in contrast to a near-thousand US troops killed. Yet British outrage over each death is palpable. The family of the most recently deceased stalked away from a meeting with Blair's staff blaming the Prime Minister personally for their son's death. And the press covered it.

Around the same time another British soldier, recently back from Iraq, killed himself with automobile exhaust.

(continued on page 6)



America and the Third World

Scott Edwards' contribution to *the Public i* of August 2004 V4#6 on the relevance of the 2004 American presidential election for the humanitarian crises in postcolonial Sudan raises the need to, once again, expose the ahistorical assumptions underlying a persistent American creed for intervening in Third World countries.

To be clear, my aim is not to detract but indeed contribute to the urgent need for American subjects and citizens to negotiate a mutually acceptable image of imperial America. To this end, I am concerned with the way in which an ahistorical image of the Third World is once again creeping back into the debate on imperial America's national purpose and the liberal left's self-assumed global mission to save an assumed undemocratic Third World.

To simplify, the article is premised on the liberal assumption that while Americans are not the global cop on an imperial beat, as the neo-conservatives would have it, they must unite to resume their once glorious role as the global humanitarians, social workers, peace brokers and rescue heroes for the sake of saving a genocidal Sudan. With the retreat of the post 9-11 "they hate our freedoms" rhetoric of the freedom-loving and war-mongering neo-conservatives, it seems that the liberal self-representation of imperial America as the harbinger of economic progress, democracy and human uplift is in ascendance.

To be brief, my point is that from the situated perspective of an Africanist long subjected and opposed to first European colonial and now American imperial power, it is

not the purpose of Third World countries to mirror and help solve the 'identity' and sociopolitical problems of a polarizing, post cold-war and post 9-11 imperial America – be they democracy-loving and guilt-driven neo-liberals or freedom-loving and war-mongering neo-conservatives. The oppressed and exploited people of the Third World need neither neo-liberal nor neo-conservative missionaries. Instead, given imperial America's long and complex political, economic and cultural involvement in the underdevelopment of the Third World, especially after WW2, it is probably more urgent to reflect on what imperial America should not do in the Third World. To be sure, while I am not certain what imperial America can do for the Third World, I am convinced by historical evidence that there are a number of things imperial America has been doing to Third World countries that it should stop doing. Indeed, a recent historical precedent for this proposition, clearly worth reemphasizing, was the seismic shift in domestic reappraisals of America's missionary self-image as the vanguard of modernity after its disastrous 1960s invasion of Vietnam and Indochina policy. In this turbulent phase, a range of subordinate social and cultural counter-movements cogently exposed the hidden side of imperial America as grounded in the violence of racism, sexism, ecocide and genocide and dehumanizing in its basic values. However, as Edwards's essay demonstrates, it is not yet safe to assume that the old optimism and self-confidence of republican America's founding creed and sense of global mission has been disturbed even among a college-educated upper-middle-class. Nevertheless, as evidenced by the

strenuous resistance of a re-conquered Iraqi people, imperial America's continuously shifting sense of a global mission, even under the banner of humanitarian relief and liberal democracy, is not uncontested in the Third World.

So how does America matter for the Third World? To be clear, American experience is very important to the development of Third World societies. However, its salience is not as a liberal lead to follow. Instead, its lessons are best illustrated when considered as the most modernized historical theatre in which the social-political upheavals and contradictions wrought by a neo-liberal capitalist trajectory to modernity has developed furthest. More directly, it's the territory where the social, cultural, political and economic costs and benefits of a colonial and now imperial capitalist transformation to modernity are most visible, to be either embraced, avoided or rejected.

So, by way of a conclusion, the American experience is most significant to the Third World when Americans, as a poly-vocal and asymmetric nation of conquered native peoples, freed slaves, migrant workers and immigrant settler-citizens work out for themselves their many different and often contradictory self-perceptions without the need for a rhetoric of transatlantic rescue missions to postcolonial African countries, often the products of imperial America's foreign policy.

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Local



Pages to Prisoners

by Sarah Lazare



Sarah Lazare is an undergraduate at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, pursuing a double degree in history and philosophy. Her interests and involvements include anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian movements.

WHILE AMERICAN POLITICIANS repeatedly throw around words like 'freedom' and 'liberation' as cornerstones of their policies, approximately 1.4 million inmates sit in U.S. prisons. Why is this? Why does America have so many jails? One might be tempted to respond with a quip that we have all been, to a certain extent, indoctrinated with: "because there are so many criminals". However, in a country where the number of inmates in state and federal prisons has increased more than six fold since 1970, where African Americans and Latinos together represented 63% of all of those incarcerated in 2002, and where 64% of jail inmates in 1996 earned \$1,000 or less per month, the question proves far more complex: what constitutes a criminal in this society? If more jails simply lead to more "criminals", is the prison system working? If it is not working for society, whom is it working for?

PRISONS AND PROFIT

Beginning four decades ago, special interest groups, politicians, and private companies began working the prison system. At a time when the 1950's 'just blame the communists' approach was on the decline, America needed a new enemy. Nixon's tough-on-crime legacy, the Rockefeller drug laws, and Reagan's drug war all pointed to a convenient culprit – the common criminal. The resultant explosion of the prison industrial complex can be com-

pared to boosts in national defense programs, namely in a blurring between the private and the public sectors. The Reagan, Bush, and Clinton administrations welcomed prison privatization with open arms.

While the first private prison business contract was signed in 1984 between the Corrections Corporation of America and Hamilton County Tennessee, as of the year 2000, there were 153 privately owned correctional facilities operating in the United States with a capacity of over 119,000. Who are these companies? The third largest U.S. prison company, the U.S. Corrections Corporation, has been accused of forcing unpaid prison labor, and its chairman has plead guilty to money laundering. Corporations like AT&T and Westinghouse also take advantage of prisoners, both to market their products and services, and to provide cheap to free labor. At the same time, as of the year 2000, 81% of those in state prison had been convicted of nonviolent crime, and in 1996, 1 in 4 inmates was in jail for a drug offense, as compared to 1 in 10 in 1983. It would appear as though a growing industrial complex needs a growing market – more prisoners.

THE IDEOLOGY OF INCARCERATION

The prison boom is more than just big business; it is an attitude. It is an unspoken understanding that certain people are useless to society, that they must be locked up, hidden away. It is a claim that the reactionary condemnation of individuals is the only valid way to confront perceived social problems. It is the creation of a fear culture

to keep this system in place, and to keep "problem people" in their places. And it is a reliance on infinite growth, for if imprisonment is the solution to perceived societal problems, then a more effective "solution" means more prisons and more criminals. And who are the people being "othered", shut away, and blamed for America's problems? They are disproportionately African American, Latino, and poor. The logic behind the system is all too clear.

The prison industrial complex believes that it does not need to answer to anyone. Its ideology and industry are self-perpetuating and self-justifying. Yet, this is an industry that deals in a currency of human

lives, and fosters a reactionary ideology based largely on classism and racism.

In order to counter this, anti-prison activism should be empowering and supportive to those behind

bars. The reality of the prison industrial complex is that peoples' lives are being tossed out by a system that depends on such ostracism. Thus, while organized resistance to the prison system occurs on all different levels, it is ultimately geared toward prisoners getting their lives back, and on everyone coming together to develop creative, proactive ways to confront the problems facing our society.

BOOKS FOR PRISONERS

A local collective called Books Through Bars seeks to build such solidarity. This recently formed group uses donated books to fill the book requests of prisoners from all over the state and throughout the Midwest. Books Through Bars also encourages

prisoners to submit their writing and art for publication in 'zines, websites, and other media.

What does involvement in such a collective entail? If you were to walk in to a typical three hour pack-athon, you would find a small group of people gathered at the Independent Media Center, sorting through letters and searching through piles of books, while maybe listening to music or munching on snacks. Beneath the surface of this lies the dedication and organization required to coordinate such get-togethers, to raise funds for postage, raise awareness in the community, and to make contact with prisoners. Apart from the volunteer energy, the resources for the program, including the books themselves and the money for postage, come from the Champaign-Urbana community. Most importantly, however, Books Through Bars rests upon the involvement of the prisoners themselves, upon their willingness to establish lines of communication with the collective.

While Books Through Bars is a local organization, it is a part of a much larger effort. From San Francisco to Philadelphia to Austin, Books to Prisoners organizations are working to raise awareness about the prison industrial complex, and to provide support for its victims. Says local Books Through Bars organizer Adam Davis, "This is not just about sending books to prisoners. This is about building a movement."

If you are interested in getting involved, please contact iwillresist@hellokitty.com or glue83@hotmail.com

The statistics and information for this article can be found at: www.prisonactivist.org
<http://www.prisonsucks.com/factsheets.shtml>
<http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/98dec/prisons.htm>

"This is not just about sending books to prisoners. This is about building a movement."



The Work Americans Won't Do:

How Latinos Bear the Brunt of Local, National, and Global Policy

by Kassie Lamp and Laura Stengrim



Kassie Lamp is working towards a Ph.D. in speech communication where one of her research interests is racist rhetoric. She became interested in migrant labor and corporate responsibility after reading *Fast Food Nation*, living in Texas, and wandering off the beaten path in Mexico.



Laura Stengrim is a regular writer for the *Public i* and a graduate student in the Department of Speech Communication at the U of I. She studies globalization and, having grown up around various farming and manufacturing communities, is interested in issues of fair trade, labor, and agriculture.

"FOOD HARVESTERS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN TREATED THE WORST and paid the least in America," Hugh Phillips, the director of El Centro, located at 4 Buena Vista Court in Urbana, points out.

After slavery ended, unofficial economic slavery began in the form of crop-sharing, chain gangs, and homesteaders who depended on children and hired hands to keep their farms running. Factory workers in the era of emerging industry faced injuries, long hours, inhumane treatment, and little pay. After the Dust Bowl and during the Great Depression, destitute Americans and newly-arrived immigrants from Europe and Asia scrambled to find work and feed their families. And as agribusiness grew throughout the twentieth century and America became the world's economic and cultural powerhouse, millions of Latinos detassled the corn, hoed the potatoes and beets, picked the fruit, and took care of the animals.

The shift into a service-based economy has seen the growth of an urban migrant population that works under harsh and callous conditions of factories, restaurants and hotels. More migrants are working in urban settings, but the problem of exploiting workers in all settings—including agriculture—still exists. Perhaps surprisingly, Illinois has the sixth largest Latino population in the country and relies heavily on that particular population for both urban and agricultural labor.

Champaign-Urbana is surrounded by seed corn, the harvesting of which wholly depends upon migrant workers, many of them Latino-Americans who arrive from south Texas and Mexico to spend eight weeks detassling corn, as Phillips explained in our interview. Combined with the local urban migrant population, our area is in fact temporarily home to some 5,000 migrant laborers from Eastern Europe, Asia, Mexico, and Central and South America. Despite America's dependence on migrant labor, these workers are often denied basic rights including education, medical care, housing, and fair wages by uncaring corporations, malicious business owners, and public ignorance.

EL CENTRO & LOCAL MIGRANTS

When Hugh Phillips came to Champaign-Urbana ten years ago, after working for several decades in California and years with Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers, there were approximately 500 migrants in the area. After Phillips was called to the hospital to translate for a Latino worker suffering from infectious herpes, he established El Centro por los Trabajadores—the center for workers. El Centro was founded in 1994 to help fight for the rights of migrant workers and has for a decade now offered a variety of services to migrant laborers. One of their recent objectives has included identifying all migrant laborers in Champaign County. El Centro then provides the workers with identification cards that allow them to do things such as cash checks in area banks. Other services include aid in finding work, transportation and translation for health care and legal services, as well as various educational services including English as a second language, Spanish literacy, and head start classes. El Centro also works to combat employers that violate the basic rights of migrant laborers.

The organization faces a difficult challenge because it offers help to migrant workers regardless of legal status, which negates the possibility of government funding. The organization instead relies totally on donations from the public and

volunteers to accomplish its goals. El Centro needs a constant stream of donations as well as volunteers, particularly bi-lingual volunteers, to continue improving the lives of migrants in Champaign-Urbana.

According to Phillips, the community offers a tremendous amount of support for the work of El Centro; for example, a recent food and clothing drive yielded 4000 lbs of donations in one week. Despite the community support, Phillips can still cite many instances of racism—including a brutal physical assault he survived. On a national scale, too, despite the fact that nearly half of the American population is non-white, physical and economic violence overwhelmingly affects people of color and their advocates. Thus the local work of El Centro reflects larger social issues of race, economics, labor, and migration.

LOCAL WORKERS & GLOBAL ECONOMICS

NAFTA, for example, has devastated Mexicans, sending them into pollution-spewing, worker-exploiting, American-owned maquiladora factories and forcing many to pay coyotes to help them across the border for the dream of supporting their families back home. Remittances are second only to oil in the Mexican economy and are the highest source of income for Cuba, which America continues to embargo. Latinos from Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, and South America come to the United States thinking they will earn better wages, sometimes only to find that free trade has gutted manufacturing and certain agricultural industries. Indeed, almost half of the workers in the U.S. manufacturing industry whose jobs have been lost because of NAFTA are Latino-American.

The issue of global trade is a complex one that would be better suited to address elsewhere; however, it is important to note that economic unrest in the U.S. and throughout the Americas is related to trade pacts including CAFTA (the proposed Central American Free Trade Agreement) and FTAA (the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas). Additionally, changes in economic and political conditions such as the failed recall vote in Venezuela, the popular support for the president of Brazil, and the influence of Cuba as a political player in hemispheric politics all have implications that range from the local to the global.

While El Centro has received local news coverage and periodic influxes of donations and volunteerism, the long-term structural questions surrounding economics and immigration in a post-9/11 world are second to the immediacy of food, clothing, and day-to-day existence for both workers and advocates. Furthermore, the impact of NAFTA and other trade agreements is largely industry-specific. Whereas the conditions for migrant laborers in Illinois who detassle corn have deteriorated because large-scale seed companies can increase exports and profit margins, for example, conditions for grape pickers in certain areas of Mexico have improved because they can finally compete with Californian wineries.

To contextualize the needs of local migrants and immigrants in terms of national and global economic and social conditions, then, requires a grasp on concepts of international trade and domestic policy that are beyond the scope of this article. But it is safe to say that the basic human rights of Latinos who, whether immigrants, migrant workers, or permanent U.S. residents, are at risk. Policies such as the 2002 Bush Doctrine, NAFTA, CAFTA, and the FTAA, or harsh immigration enforcement, affect Latinos to the degree that they are dying on our borders, are permanently injured in our factories, and our toiling for minimal wages in our fields.

POST-9/11 CRACKDOWNS & SLUMPING ECONOMICS

Since 9/11 the U.S. economy has become complicated and unpredictable, and the effects of free trade are being felt on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. According to Phillips, Americans who are scrambling for work are once again becoming interested in jobs that before were left to migrant workers. Whereas a few years ago major companies, restaurants and farms would often call asking if El Centro knew of migrant laborers looking for work, the calls have all but stopped in recent years. Moreover, because of the slumping national economy and USA Patriot Act, Latino immigrants



Footage from the National Farmworkers Movement in California, where the founder of Urbana's El Centro began his involvement in labor activism.

and migrants are facing stricter rules for deportation and often harassment, as law enforcement is increasingly working hand-in-hand with immigration officers.

Sen. Kennedy (D-MA) and Rep. Luis Gutierrez (D-IL) have sought to address the pressing issue of migrant labor with "The Safe, Orderly Legal Visas and Enforcement Act" (SOLVE Act) which has been referred to the Subcommittee on Immigration, Border Security, and Claims. The SOLVE Act would be applicable to undocumented aliens and their wives and children who have lived and worked in the United States for at least five years. The bill would grant amnesty and allow migrants to work towards citizenship, adjust social security records, offer a grievance procedure to get paybacks from unfair employment practices, and grant visas to immigrants not eligible for citizenship.

Kennedy argues the SOLVE Act would "create a genuine earned legalization program for undocumented workers and revised temporary worker program with protection for both U.S. and foreign workers." Kennedy added that the bill would improve both wages and working conditions, reunite families, and benefit national security.

Both Sen. Kennedy and Rep. Gutierrez have criticized President Bush's approach to immigrants, citing the recent Republican block vote that defeated the farm worker reform bill in the Senate. Rep. Gutierrez has openly criticized Bush's plan, which would only grant a three year reprieve for undocumented aliens before sending them back to their native countries. Phillips supports the SOLVE Act, adding that it would allow migrant workers support from labor unions. Unions, in turn, could begin to help these workers by pressuring their employers to adopt livable wages, better working conditions, fair compensation for overtime hours, health services, and access to social programs. Kennedy has stated forcefully that it is time to update immigrant legislation to recognize that "immigrants have an essential role in the nation's life, contributing immeasurably to the strength of our country."

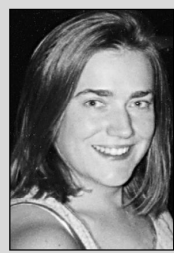
RESOURCES

El Centro's web site is available at <http://welcome.to/el-centro>; see also Senator Kennedy's web site for information on the SOLVE Act at www.kennedy.senate.gov and for Representative Gutierrez's web site see www.luisguterrez.house.gov; for poignant and damning creative accounts of border issues, see the work of filmmaker Alex Rivera at www.alexrivera.com



Opus Dei: Doing "The Work" in Urbana

By Wendy Edwards



Wendy Edwards is a graduate student in Library and Information Science at UIUC. She is involved in the community wireless networking initiative and the U-C Independent Media Center.

DAN BROWN'S RECENT BESTSELLER, *The Da Vinci Code*, propelled a controversial religious organization called Opus Dei into the public eye. One character in the novel, Silas, is an Opus Dei "monk" who wears a robe and kills people who appear to threaten his mission. Even people who are not supporters of Opus Dei have heavily criticized *The Da Vinci Code* for its factual errors. Andrew Greeley, an author and a priest, says, "I am hardly a defender of Opus Dei, but I cannot imagine them setting a killer loose in a struggle against a group it considers dangerous." Opus Dei doesn't have monks either, and its members wear ordinary clothing. In Urbana, there's an Opus Dei center, Lincoln Green Foundation, which houses male professionals and students.

What is Opus Dei? In short, it's an organization within the Catholic Church that "encourages Christians of all social classes to live consistently with their faith, in the middle of the ordinary circumstances of their lives, especially through the sanctification of their work." (Opus Dei website) John Gueguen, a retired professor who lives at Lincoln Green, writes, "Soon-to-be-Saint Josemaria realized what he and his followers were up against in carrying out the apostolate of Opus Dei. That work consists of nothing other than getting through to men and women, both single and married, living and working in the normal circumstances of life in this world, that they will miss the whole point of their Christian faith if they don't devote themselves to the pursuit of heroic sanctity right where they are by making full use of their work and family life." (http://www.cdop.org/catholic_post/post_10_6_02/wisi.cfm) Opus Dei is a personal prelature of the Catholic Church, in other words, a special jurisdiction in the Church not linked to a territory. The current prelate of Opus Dei is Bishop Javier Echevarría.

John Allen, National Catholic Reporter's Vatican correspondent, says, "My observation is that the people of Opus Dei are generally well meaning, amiable conservatives, often very competent at what they do, who harbor a rather traditionalist vision of the church and the culture. It's not my cup of tea, but there is certainly room for it under the Catholic big tent." When I visited Lincoln Green Foundation and met with Gueguen and another Opus Dei member, I was inclined to agree with Allen. Both men seemed to be sincere and likeable individuals. Opus Dei consists of members categorized as numeraries, numerary associates, supernumeraries, and numerary auxiliaries (formerly known as numerary servants). Numeraries are educated professionals who commit themselves to celibacy, poverty, and obedience and usually live in an Opus Dei

center and turn over their salaries to the group. Numerary associates are similar to numeraries, except that they are not able to live in the residences. Supernumeraries are married and unmarried members with a lower level of availability, and numerary auxiliaries are women, usually less educated, whose professional work is cleaning the centers. There are also cooperators, who are not members, but provide support to Opus Dei. One of the best-known Opus Dei cooperators in the U.S. is Anton Scalia, a Supreme Court justice.

THE FATHER

Why the controversy then? To understand the organization and its critics, it helps to know a little about the Opus Dei's background. Opus Dei was founded around the time of the Spanish Civil War in Madrid by a priest named Jose Maria (later Josemaria) Escrivá. At the time Escrivá decided to enter the priesthood, this was a reasonable career path for a bright, ambitious young man. He decided that he did not want to be an ordinary diocesan priest, and in 1928, he got the idea (which he believed came from God) to begin what is now known as Opus Dei. During the war, some Catholic clergy were persecuted and killed. Escrivá and his followers went into hiding. These early experiences reinforced the fundamental idea that the Church was under assault from enemies and needed to be defended. In *The Forge*, Escrivá writes, "Nowadays our Mother the Church is being attacked in the social field and by the governments of nations. That is why God is sending his children — is sending you! — to struggle, and to spread the truth in those areas."

Escrivá was declared a saint by the Catholic Church in 2002 and is revered by Opus Dei members, who often refer to him as the "Father." Escrivá himself was a complex and occasionally paradoxical man. For example, his stance on women seems contradictory. In an interview, he said, "All the baptized, men and women alike, share equally in the dignity, freedom and responsibility of the children of God." Yet, he encourages academic pursuits by saying, "There is no excuse for those who could be scholars and are not," but later notes, "...women needn't be scholars: it's enough for them to be prudent." Addressing an audience in Sao Paulo, he advised women, "Do yourself up, look pretty and, as the years go by, decorate the façade even more, as they do with old buildings. He'll be so grateful to you."

Maria del Carmen Tapia, a former Opus Dei member, found Escrivá less than charming. After spending eighteen years as a numerary, she was forced out and later wrote a book about her experiences: *Beyond the Threshold*. Escrivá apparently had some difficulty with anger management, and according to Carmen's account, he accused her of sexual misconduct, saying, "You are a wicked woman! A lost woman! Mary Magdalen was a sinner, but you? You are a seductress with all your immorality and indecency! You are a seductress! I know everything. EVERYTHING! EVEN

ABOUT THE VENEZUELAN NEGRO! You are abominable. YOU HAVE A WEAKNESS FOR BLACKS! First with one and then with the other. LEAVE MY PRIESTS ALONE! DO YOU HEAR? LEAVE THEM ALONE! In peace. Don't meddle with them! You're wicked! Wicked! Indecent! Come on, look at the business of the Negro! And don't ask me for my blessing because I don't intend to give it to you!"

Opus Dei claims to be a purely religious organization, but sociologist Joan Estruch disputes this in his book *Saints and Schemers*: "No religious institution is ever 'purely religious': from the moment it becomes an institution and has to begin to address the question of transmitting its content, every institution becomes a playing field for various forces and interests (social, economic, and political)." Money and expansion were major concerns in Opus Dei's early days and members became interested in business and government. At the end of the war, Escrivá had established a working relationship with Francisco Franco, Spain's caudillo, and Opus Dei members served in Franco's government. During this time, Opus Dei expanded into other countries, including Chile and Argentina.

The approach to religion is highly orthodox. Masses are in Latin, and members regularly meet with a spiritual director and confess sins to a priest. Many American Catholics refer to this sacrament as "reconciliation," but Opus Dei seems to prefer the term "penance." One of the most controversial practices is "corporal mortification," a religious tradition practiced in the past by Catholic religious orders and numerous saints. Corporal mortification generally takes the form of small sacrifices like giving up dessert at a meal. However, numeraries use a cilice, a small barbed chain worn around the leg, and a discipline, a small rope whip. According to the members I interviewed, Silas's grotesque self-flagellation in *The Da Vinci Code* does not represent reality. Although Escrivá was known for whipping himself until the bathroom walls were spattered with blood, numeraries are discouraged from breaking the skin. Members believe that the practice purifies the soul and reminds them of Jesus' suffering and death. Vladimir Felzmann, a former numerary, disagrees. In an interview with *City of Secrets* author John Follain, he says, "...creating suffering for yourself artificially is pointless. It doesn't achieve spirituality; it's a form of arrogance."

OPUS DEI AND LIBERATION THEOLOGY

In Latin America, Opus Dei's orthodoxy conflicts with Liberation Theology, a controversial approach to Catholic theology that focuses on Jesus as a bringer of



The Lincoln Green Foundation (the Opus Dei house) at 715 W. Michigan in Urbana.

justice and believes that the Gospels demand a preferential option for the poor. One of the best-known proponents of Liberation Theology was Oscar Romero, a Salvadoran archbishop who said in 1978, "When the Church hears the cry of the oppressed it cannot but denounce the social structures that give rise to and perpetuate the misery from which the cry arises." In 1980, Salvadoran police intelligence agents shot Romero through the heart as he said mass. (Declassified US documents later revealed that Salvadoran Army Major Roberto D'Aubuisson, a graduate of the US School of the Americas, had ordered the assassination.) Romero, like Escrivá, believed that his relationship with his followers transcended death. However, Romero was keenly interested in social justice, whereas Escrivá was more concerned with personal sanctity. Romero said, "And if they kill me, I will rise again in the Salvadoran people." Escrivá wrote to his followers: "I will pass away, and those who come afterwards will look at you with envy as if you were a relic." (*Cronica*, 1971)

The current Salvadoran Archbishop, Opus Dei's Fernando Sáenz Lacalle, has a friendlier relationship with the Salvadoran government and maintains that liberation theology no longer has any place in his country. In 1997, Sáenz Lacalle, who also serves as military bishop, was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General in the Salvadoran Army. Augusto Pinochet, former dictator of Chile had an abysmal human rights record, and some Opus Dei members served in his cabinet. This cooperation may reflect the idea that "my enemy's enemy is my friend." Pinochet and other Latin American dictators were strong opponents of communism, which Opus Dei considered a major threat to the Catholic Church. Juan Luis Cipriani Thorne, Archbishop of Lima, was the first member of Opus Dei to be named a cardinal. A Vatican website praises him for his efforts against the "Maoist" guerillas, but Cipriani has also come under fire for his relationship with former Peruvian president Fujimori's authoritarian regime. These alliances have raised questions about whether Opus Dei members are concerned about human rights abuses. At



Cipriani's first mass as a cardinal, protesters chanted, "Christ is justice, not complicity."

HOLY CASUISTRY

In the United States, much of the controversy surrounding Opus Dei centers on its approach to recruiting. Opus Dei creates nonprofit foundations, often with names related to the location, and establishes centers near top universities. For example, Opus Dei operates as the "Lincoln Green Foundation" in Urbana and as "Menlough Study Center" in Menlo Park, CA. Members may be involved in Catholic or secular student organizations which provide opportunities for interaction with potential recruits. For example, Opus Dei members in Urbana have been involved in the Graduate Discussion Group, a registered student organization at the university. Opus Dei has a "trickle down" pastoral approach and is concerned with reaching future leaders. It also operates secondary schools, an all-women's college of hospitality, and supplementary education programs in inner-city areas. Proselytizing is heavily emphasized; numerary John Gueguen says, "No member of Opus Dei will be welcome in heaven unless he is well-accompanied!" Recruitment is based on an "apostolate of friendship," described by Escrivá as "friendship with a divine meaning." Escrivá claims that God's standard of holiness consists of three points: "holy intransigence, holy coercion, and holy shamelessness." Some of the group's critics find this alarming.

Escrivá defends this "holy coercion" in *Cronica*, saying, "...If our Lord wanted to force strangers to come to his banquet, how much more will he want you to use a holy coercion with those who are your brothers...this most beautiful coercion of charity far from taking away your brother's freedom, will delicately help him to use it well." However, some former members disagree, comparing Opus Dei to a cult. Some of the most outspoken critics are Tammy and Dianne DiNicola, who run the Opus Dei Awareness Network (<http://www.odan.org>), which was mentioned in *The Da Vinci Code*. Some campus priests have also become concerned. Russell Roide, S.J., the director of Stanford's campus ministry from 1984 – 1992, eventually banned the group from campus, calling it "deceptive." When I contacted Fr. Roide, he referred me to the ODAN website. At Princeton, the chaplain dismissed Opus Dei priest C. John McCloskey after students circulated petitions and wrote letters about upsetting experiences with him. The Opus Dei members I talked with in Urbana seemed more reasonable than the embattled Fr. McCloskey, and stated that members were never pressured to join and were free to

leave at any time.

PRAISE THE LORD AND PASS THE AMMUNITION

After leaving Princeton, Fr. McCloskey became the director of the Catholic Information Center in Washington, DC. His ministry appears to have a special concern for the spiritual needs of the wealthy. In an essay, he writes, "But the rich, powerful, and influential have a special responsibility to try to struggle with these particular challenges, since they run a greater risk of the loss of their souls, in light of the gifts that have been bestowed upon them for God's glory and service to others. Rodney Stark...points out that—contrary to conventional wisdom and historical analysis—in the first several centuries of Christianity, the Gospel was most successfully preached not to the poor and the outcasts, but rather to the prosperous middle classes and educated upper classes in the cities." (<http://us.catholic.net/rcc/Periodicals/Igpress/2001-01/essay.html>) McCloskey made news headlines for converting several high profile people to Catholicism, including Kansas Senator Sam Brownback and former Tyco lawyer Mark Belnick. McCloskey is also a prolific author whose writings are featured on his website <http://www.fr-mc-closkey.com>. In his essay "2030: Looking Backwards," a piece that brings to mind Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, he speculates about a "relatively bloodless conflict" that allowed Christians to "live in states that recognize the natural law and divine Revelation, the right of free practice of religion, and laws on marriage, family, and life that reflect the primacy of our Faith." (<http://www.catholicity.com/mccloskey/articles/2030.html>)

Author and reporter Robert Hutchison is concerned that messages of fear and intolerance may increase worldwide violence. In his 1997 book *Their Kingdom Come*, he describes increasingly strained relations between Christianity and Islam. Some of McCloskey's writing dovetails with Hutchison's thesis, and it appears that Islam may be replacing communism as the perceived enemy of the Catholic Church. In his 1997 review of "The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order," McCloskey writes, "Islam has on several occasions in past centuries almost conquered the Christian West through a combination of aggressive and coercive proselytism and bloody jihads. John Paul II wants to make sure that it does not happen again. He wants to make sure that the 'civilization of love and truth' that he desires and foresees is allowed to develop and flourish without external threat, be it from Islam, the decadent modern West, or China." In 2002, after the

September 11 attacks, McCloskey addressed a graduating class at St. Thomas Aquinas College, saying, "At the present moment, the world's only superpower is under attack. We all are living in a country during a time of war with an enemy that has been an enemy of Christendom for centuries. At the same time, we are under attack from within, from moral decay, from a mistaken notion of man, and from a slide into a high-tech barbarism, which attempts to manipulate the very origins of life." (<http://www.thomasaquinas.edu/news/newsletter/2002/summer/mccloskey.htm>)

THE FUTURE

Opus Dei appears to be a group of committed, idealistic people who sincerely believe that right is on their side. Many organizations could also be described this way – for example, radical activists (e.g., Weather Underground), and many others. Although the ideals may be different, these groups also have some things in common. Each is comprised of individuals who interact in ways that may or may not be healthy. There is some risk of groupthink, defined by psychologist Irving Janis as "a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action." Such groups are also capable of great good, since members are willing to sacrifice and work hard to bring about the social change that they believe is needed. Opus Dei has existed for less than a century, and its members have done both admirable and worrisome things. Like other religious organizations, Opus Dei continues to evolve. However, it is impossible to predict what exactly it will become.

IMC Show

Wasteoid Workforce The Opportunists TBA

Oct. 1 @ 9 PM
Red Herring, 1209 W. Oregon, Urbana
\$5, all-ages

A rock show to out-do all the other rock shows – come see some of C-U's finest new rock bands, and find out just how much louder 2 drumsets can be. And don't miss everyone's favorite, TBA.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Planetarium to feature backyard astronomy workshop

The William M. Staerkel Planetarium at Parkland College will again offer a five-week workshop on stargazing in September. "Backyard Astronomy" will be offered for five Wednesdays beginning September 15, from 7 to 8:30 p.m., in the planetarium dome.

"Backyard Astronomy" will give the novice skywatcher the basic knowledge to further enjoy the night sky. The workshop will cover how to read a star chart, where to locate constellations and planets, why the moon changes phase, meteor showers, the magnitude system, finding deep sky objects, and telescope buying. No prior knowledge is needed.

The cost is \$15 per person and preregistration is required. Interested persons may register through the Admissions office by using the form in the fall "Live & Learn" guide to non-credit programs or by picking up a registration form at the planetarium office. Deadline for registration is September 8. For information, contact Dave Leake at 217/351-2567 or email dleake@parkland.edu.

Storytelling takes center stage at Staerkel Planetarium

Storytelling, multiculturalism, and science will be combined in a one-hour event offered to the public at the William M. Staerkel Planetarium on Friday, September 10 at 7 p.m. Viewing the wonders of the fall sky, participants will hear stories from other lands by professional storytellers, including Kim Sheahan, assistant education coordinator at the Spurlock Museum, Kim Petzing, environmental education coordinator at Allerton Park, and Dave Leake, planetarium coordinator.

No reservations are needed. Tickets are \$4 for adults and \$3 for students, seniors, and children under 12. Tickets are available in the planetarium lobby just prior to the program. For information, contact Dave Leake at 217/351-2567 or email dleake@parkland.edu.

Museums workshop for teachers

The Museums at the Crossroads Consortium invites interested primary and secondary school teachers to a "Museums Information Night" workshop on Monday, September 27 from 7 to 9 p.m. at the William M. Staerkel Planetarium at Parkland College. Teachers can pick up information on programs, outreach, and field trips, plus see short presentations by each of the eight Champaign County museums in one place. Refreshments will be served. The event is free, but interested teachers are asked to register in advance by calling Dave Leake at 217/351-2567 or by emailing dleake@parkland.edu.

WRFU Meetings

WRFU is an IMC project to build and operate a low-power radio to serve our community. With 168 hours available every week to fill with YOUR public affairs, music, and arts shows, WRFU is seeking volunteers to self-organize programming groups and perform other functions of the station. We will be on the air by June 2005 or sooner. WRFU meetings are held the first and third Tuesdays of the month at 8pm at the IMC, 218 W. Main in Urbana. This month's WRFU meetings are Sept. 7 and Sept. 21.

"World of Science" lecture series

FROM KITES TO JETS: THE PHYSICS OF FLIGHT
Curtis Shoaf, Parkland College, Dept. of Natural Sciences
October 1

Airplanes are heavier than air, so how do they fly? Learn about the basic principles that allow everything from gliders to supersonic jets get off the ground.

7 p.m. in the planetarium, and admission is only \$1 at the door.

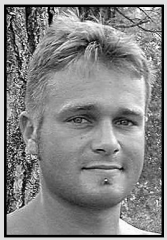
The lecture/presenter list is also available on the Web:

www.parkland.edu/coned/pla/lecture.html.

GOVERNMENT

Vote Your Conscience

by Scott Edwards



Scott is a Grad student at the U of I, where he is researching the management of the human consequences of violent conflict, including refugee issues and, currently, the trafficking and exploitation of women in Africa and Asia.

"While our hand carries the good intent to what seems to be its consummation, the fruit of evil grows from the seeds of noble thought."
— Hans Morgenthau

I HAD WHAT I BELIEVE TO BE THE WORST JOB in the world. I'm not squeamish about work, and am happy doing most any work, whether manual or otherwise. But after I graduated with a B.A. from Florida State University, I found myself in a world personal chaos. The year was 2000, and I was employed by the Florida Democratic Party during the coordinated campaign with the DNC to elect Al Gore President of the United States. My job: convince young people to vote for Gore.

SELL-OUT

Let me step back for a minute. I have always in my adult life dedicated my personal and professional efforts to worthy social and political causes. Causes for peace, for justice, and for equality; causes for a progressive world.

Grassroots movements thrive among the networks of interconnected individuals with many organizational associations. I was one of those individuals in Tallahassee and Florida at large. I was in countless organizations, associating with countless friends with whom work and play melded together as our tireless efforts wore on. I loved these friends as much as I did the good work we were doing.

Nearly all the organizations I was involved with planned to help, either directly or covertly, Ralph Nader garner votes in the election in Florida. My job with the party was to travel throughout the state and convince these people they were wrong. To become, in essence, the enemy to the people I loved.

I was a philosophy/political science double

major as an undergraduate (which is probably why I had so much time to be active). Required courses for philosophy majors almost always included a course on ethics. Of course, poli sci undergrads had to take a course on electoral behavior and U.S. institutions. These courses allowed me to work for the Democratic Party in the 2000 election without significant internal moral crises.

PREACHING TO THE PROGRESSIVES

The progressives I worked with that I now had to rally to supporting a center candidate were not stupid. They would not buy any lines about Al Gore being for "economic justice" or "individual liberty." I had to be honest, both with them and with myself, about the stakes at hand.

In political science, one of the first things you learn is that the two-party system in the U.S. is a function of individuals not "wanting to throw their votes away" by voting for anyone else but one of the top two most likely winners. Many of us don't like this, since we end up with two candidates at the top, fighting for the support of the median voter in the electorate (who, incidentally, is likely fairly conservative). So what do we, as progressives, do? We vote our "conscience." We rail against the system in the most democratic way possible: our vote. But what does that mean? "Vote your conscience?"

The biggest forum I attended for my job was a community meeting with a Green and Republican representative, and me. It was an auditorium with a few hundred people. My arguments were stark. "If I made the choice, Ralph Nader would be my President." I opened with. That got everyone's attention. "But I don't have that choice." Hisses and boos. It was clear there were lots of Greens in the house. Good. That's whom I was there to speak to. The forum quickly broke down because of poor facilitation, and there was roughly an hour of exchanges between audience members and myself. The Republican representative left a half-hour in.

I could only repeat the same line of reasoning, over and over, about the potential large-scale electoral effects of a strong Green

showing in Florida. There was nothing else I could say to these people, many of whom, I thought, viewed me with greater disdain than they did the Republican. I left more than a few of the public forums I had participated in with wet eyes because of my treachery.

VOTE YOUR CONSCIENCE? WHAT'S THAT?

We knew from the polling that it was going to be a close race. The number of undecided voters was relatively low, and the Greens were our best hope of establishing a safe margin. "This isn't local government. This isn't even Congress we're talking about," I'd say.

I had, until Nader started polling well, been volunteering for the Green Party to help with local elections. Conversations I had about the Presidential campaign made me unwelcome by some. "Local elections are different," I tried convincing them. They didn't understand what I was so afraid of.

"This is to pick who controls the daily operations of the federal government. Think of the environmental destruction, death, and suffering that will occur if this oil tycoon is elected to the Presidency." My words were eerily prophetic, though I'd happily give a limb for them to have been overstated.

What is an "ethical" vote? If you are a Progressive, is it ethical to vote for a 3rd party candidate for the Presidential election in a swing state? One is also taught in civics courses (although it's fairly obvious) that change in the U.S. through federal government happens in incremental steps. The U.S. government was designed by the founders to be slow enough to stymie radical change (which sounds bad now, but recall late 1920s Germany).

As a function of this characteristic of American government, after 4 years of Bush, activists will be spending decades undoing the damage, on all fronts, from the courtrooms to the streets. How long will it take to get back to where we were in 2000? I won't mention the possibility of 8 years of Bush. So the "progressive" action of voting for Nader in Florida in 2000 perhaps helped us take 'x' steps back, and to the right. The Green hope was the Democratic Party would "wake up" and return to their roots. We've seen some candidates in the pri-

mary that exemplified this. But at what cost?

Knowing what we know now, I wonder, how many of my old Florida Green friends would find their vote ethical? Forsaking everything else, this President has had a very direct hand in the deaths of tens of thousands of innocent human beings, and hundreds of thousands more indirectly through his policies.

As a philosophy major, and a quasi-utilitarianist, ethically, I tried making the case in 2000 that the potential for mass injustice—should Bush be elected—outweighed the Green's ethical obligation to "vote their conscience." I was rebuffed time and time again: the injustice will exist under either candidate, so why not make a statement? I was nearly swayed to quit my job about a half dozen times. Now, of course, I am saturated with guilt that I had not worked harder.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Gore and Bush weren't starkly different enough in the 2000 campaign for me to have the effect I needed. But the Presidency is an office of contingency. Something happens, and s/he must react. There is no way to campaign on that. I tried making that case. "We don't know what will happen in the next 4 years."

I thought my friends' repeated claims that Bush and Gore were indistinguishable were disingenuous. At very least, the worlds they would rule over would've looked different. One better than the other. Not great, but better. They, in turn, saw me as I saw myself on occasion: as a sell-out; a cog in the party machines that were warping American democracy.

What if? What if I had gotten 600 more Greens to change their minds? Demanded more money from the Party for my activities? I'd still be a sell-out, but I'd be so in a better world, I think. Of course, Gore lost the election and Bush stole it, but I did have a very real opportunity to make a difference, and it passed me by.

It weighed heavily on my conscience every morning I got the news of what Bush had done the day before. What a terrible job I had had.

So I decided to move to a non-swing state until after the 2004 election. Don't forget to vote your conscience.

The Iraq War and British Anger (continued from page 1)

Major newspaper reports detailed the soldier's opposition to the war in Iraq, the changes in his personality that seemed to result from his time in Iraq, and his family's belief that the war was to blame. Some headlines even passed along their demand: Was his death a final act of protest?

Contrast the US media's treatment (or non-treatment) of the Peaceful Tomorrows group of family members of those killed in the September 11 terrorist attack. When family members marched between Washington DC and New York City, opposing war, carrying signs that read, "Not in our name," The New York Times reported simply that they were "mourning" and cropped their protest signs out of the accompanying photo.

"Why is the American media so conservative?" asked Maggie, a neighbor of my in-laws, in an impromptu curbside chat. "Is it because of the corporate ownership?"

Her husband Dave chimed in: "We have Rupert Murdoch, but we know where he's coming from."

"Yes," admitted Maggie, "here you can read The Guardian or The Independent, even The Times, and, OK, you might not agree with them, and, yes, it's biased, but you know where you stand with them, and at least there's some real facts there, and you can argue."

"But the American press, from our perspective here," Dave added, "seems so glitzy and - sorry, but, superficial!"

Here, then, is another unthinkable question: What would happen if the US media were less superficial and reported more facts, dropped the pretense of neutrality and openly disagreed on current issues? The answer is left to the reader's imagination with one historical note; that is, the irony that what the Founding Fathers envisioned for American democracy, with all its flaws, is perhaps now more closely approximated in the UK.

CHANNEL

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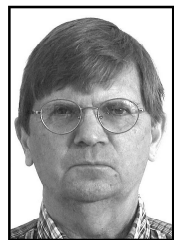
Hail to the Hijacker





Hijacking Catastrophe

By Bob Illyes



AFTER THE ATTACKS of 9/11, the Bush administration entered into a “war on terrorism” that seemed to have little regard for the facts at hand and consequently little concern for justice.

Compendia of the “lies” that led to the occupation of Iraq are now commonplace. It is easy to cynically conclude that American foreign policy is fully under the control of war profiteers. The neo-conservatives see it quite differently, however, and consider the administration to be acting out of patriotic motives and in the best interest of the United States. The documentary “Hijacking Catastrophe: 9/11, Fear & the Selling of American Empire” explores neo-conservative influences on American policy.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union was seen as a unique opportunity by a small group of neo-conservatives who are now a part of the Bush administration. In 1992, a member of this group named Paul Wolfowitz wrote that the United States should take advantage of its position as an unopposed superpower to preemptively secure “access to vital materials, particularly Persian Gulf oil.” An opponent of the ideas in this internal Department of Defense document leaked it to the New York Times, sparking considerable debate. The use of preemptive military force, which is now known as the Wolfowitz doctrine, was not accept-

able to most Americans at the time, and the neo-conservatives knew that it would take an event like Pearl Harbor to allow them to attempt to justify such aggression. The attacks of 9/11 provided exactly such an event.

The Wolfowitz doctrine was effectively made policy by the National Security Strategy issued by the Bush administration in 2002. This document argued for preemptive war against Iraq based on Iraq’s intent to use weapons of mass destruction against the United States. However, it is now evident that Iraq represented no threat to the security of the United States. There was no reliable evidence before the invasion that weapons of mass destruction would be found, and none were found. What is perhaps not evident is that the neo-conservative agenda for Iraq is being carried out to completion. It is this diversion from fighting terrorism to promoting neo-conservative aims that is referred to as a

hijacking.

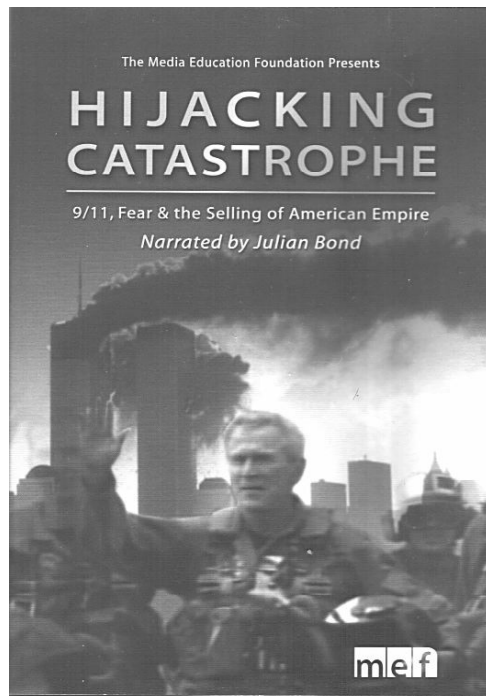
The “Hijacking Catastrophe” DVD contains a number of interviews in addition to the documentary, including one of Shadia Drury discussing Leo Strauss. After fleeing Nazi Germany, Strauss spent much time trying to understand why the Weimar Republic was powerless to prevent the rise of the Nazis. He concluded that ordinary people were not adequately capable of voting in their own best interest, and that democracy itself caused the rise of the Nazis. Over 200 years of democracy in the United States argues otherwise, and Strauss’s surprising conclusion would be of little interest were it not for the fact that the neo-conservatives in the Bush administration are heavily influenced by

Straussian ideas. Strauss was, in fact, one of Paul Wolfowitz’s teachers at the University of Chicago.

Borrowing from Plato, Strauss taught that government policy was best determined by the wisest members of society,

and that noble lies were sometimes necessary in cases where ordinary people could not understand their best interests. Was the claim that Iraq threatened the United States with weapons of mass destruction an honest mistake, or was it seen as such a noble lie? Is the noble lie acceptable in American democracy, or does it destroy democracy? Is the control of Persian Gulf oil by preemptive military action really in the self-interest of ordinary Americans? Although the United States currently has a fairly free hand in the use of military force, it is not free to escape the consequences of doing the wrong thing. This documentary makes an important contribution to the ongoing debate of these issues.

“Hijacking Catastrophe” is available from the Media Education Foundation at www.mediaed.org. The 2002 National Security Strategy is available at www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf (or [nss.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html)). Shadia Drury is the author of two books on Leo Strauss: “The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss” and “Leo Strauss and the American Right”. Additional information on the neo-conservatives may be found in the July 2003 Vanity Fair article “Bush’s Brain Trust.” In it, Wolfowitz states that the linking of Strauss’s ideas to American policy in Iraq is “a product of fevered minds”. Drury makes a strong case to the contrary, while being careful to point out that there is much to admire in Strauss’s work beyond the few ideas of interest to the neo-conservatives.



BECOME A MEMBER OF THE UCIMC

The UCIMC membership is the UCIMC. Although some people are able to volunteer more time than others, every member is equally important when it comes to deciding the direction for Indymedia in Urbana-Champaign. From the beginning, our IMC was founded on this idea of equality – no single group, managers or representatives are in charge. The decisions that affect the UCIMC the most are made by the members at the membership meeting, which is twice yearly, on the first Saturday of April and the first Thursday of October.

UCIMC membership dues are the bulk of the funding that makes the UCIMC possible. Without the financial support of our membership the UCIMC simply would not exist.

Membership is annual and the dues are sliding scale donation of \$25-\$50 per year. However, no person will be refuse membership because of an inability to pay. Anyone may request that the UCIMC waive all or part of the IMC membership donation by talking to any working group of the UCIMC. You can also choose to become a Sustaining Funder and donate \$10-100 monthly to the UCIMC.

In addition to keeping Indymedia alive and vibrant in Urbana-Champaign, membership in the UCIMC comes with benefits. Members can:

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- use the editing equipment in the production room
- check out books, magazines, videos, audio
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- rent the UCIMC space at a reduced rate

These are just small ways in which we can thank you for your support. But realize that you are a part of the UCIMC in more ways than just through your checkbook. Your voice can be heard through our interactive news website <http://www.ucimc.org>, through the *Public i*, through the IMC Radio News, Mondays at 5:30 PM on WEFT 90.1 FM, and through participation at UCIMC meetings.

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