When state legislators passed the State Budget on May 31st, campus workers were optimistic. The University received a 7.16% increase in its overall operating budget and appropriations of $641,354,200 for employees’ wages. In total, the budget promised workers at the University of Illinois a 3% salary increase for 2008/09. Certainly not a cost of living increase, but competitive with other state institutions and much needed by many campus workers.

However, University of Illinois President Joseph White had different ideas about how to use the funds allocated for employees’ much needed salary increases. Instead of giving employees 3 percent, White announced on July 24th that the University could only afford to give raises of 1.5% to 2%. Campus workers ask: “Where has the money gone?”

Campus Workers Unite!

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The Effects Of Different Electoral Systems

By James Kuklinski

Adoption of IRV has been a source of considerable debate and controversy in Urbana. The controversy nicely illustrates the close connection between politics and choice of electoral system. A group of active greens, with the help of some non-Greens, attempted to put a referendum on the November ballot regarding changing from SMDV to IRV. The greens believed, probably correctly, that third parties would have a greater chance to win council seats rather than just play the spoiler role under IRV. The non-Greens who joined them simply felt that the IRV counting system would do better than SMDV at identifying the "true" winner in council elections. When the binding referendum was blocked, an effort was made to place an advisory referendum on the ballot. Almost all who claimed that the incumbent city administration had packed the meeting with its own people, the advisory referendum was blocked by a vote of 43-98.

Cumulative voting has become a hot discussion topic in the United States, especially with respect to local elections. Illinois used CV to elect Illinois House members until 1982. During the 1977-78 biennial legislative session, lawmakers adopted pay raises for a wide array of state officials, including a 40 percent increase for themselves. Coming out of nowhere and at a time when Alfred Kahn, then-president Carter's chairman of the Council on Wage and Price Stability, had established a ceiling of seven percent on salary increases, the increases incensed voters. Populist and current Illinois Lieutenant Governor Patrick Quinn led a drive that put a statewide referendum on the 1980 ballot reducing the size of the legislature and eliminating CV. Only 44 percent of those going to the polls voted in this so-called cutback amendment; but 69 percent of them approved it. The amendment went into effect with the 1982 election cycle. Currently, Illinois uses SMDV to elect both House and Senate members.

CV retains the first-past-the-post part of SMDV, but it is much more complicated and thus difficult for voters to understand. Some critics feel that these systems give minority parties and to racial and ethnic groups. They also complicate the voting task while others simplify it. Some provide greater representation of racial, ethnic, and gender groups than others. Some encourage greater accountability of legislators to constituents than others. Two different electoral systems can produce very different legislative bodies and thus different policies. Some electoral systems foster greater decisiveness in policymaking than others.

Single-member district majority (plurality) voting is the most familiar electoral system. Also known as "first-past-the-post," SMDV is currently used to select representatives to the Illinois House and Senate. All of the candidates appear on the general election ballot—the list is typically winnowed to two, one from each major party—and each voter votes for one of them. The winner is the candidate who receives the most votes, whether or not that candidate's votes are a majority of the total.

SMDV places few demands on voters. Faced with choosing a state legislator, they vote for one (or none) of the two candidates, whose names are clearly displayed on the ballot. SMDV also promotes close ties between legislator and constituents, since the legislative districts are relatively small. Critics quickly note, however, that SMDV wastes all votes cast for the losing candidate(s). It also discoursing voting among constituents whose party candidate stands no chance of winning, denies representation to third parties, and encourages gerrymandering, which in turn reduces political competition. Currently more than half of all state House and Senate incumbents face no competition in either the primary or general election.

A variation of SMDV is instant run-off voting (IRV). Just as in plurality voting, all candidates are listed on the ballot. Instead of voting for only one candidate, voters rank the candidates in order of their preferences ("1" for first choice, "2" for second, and so forth). The counting also differs from SMDV. A computer tabulates the ballots. First, all the "1" preferences are counted. If a candidate receives over 50 percent of the first-choice preferences, he or she is declared the winner. If no candidate receives a majority of the first-place preferences, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated. The ballots of supporters of this candidate are then transferred to whichever of the remaining candidates was marked as the "2" preference. The vote is then recounted to see if any remaining candidate now has a majority of the votes. This process continues until one candidate receives a majority of the votes.

Advocates of IRV point to two advantages over SMDV. First, the winning candidate will have the meaningful support of a majority of the voters, which increases his or her legitimacy. Second, IRV ensures that an independent or a third-party candidate will not play spoiler and throw the election to one of the two major candidates who in fact was not the electorate's overall choice. On the other hand, IRV is administratively complex. Stumping the continuing votes to identify a winning candidate can lead to perverse outcomes when many voters do not identify second and third choices. Finally, IRV encourages candidates whose only purpose is to help another candidate defeat the presumed winner.

Although most Americans might not know it, most democratic countries have adopted one or another form of proportional representation. PR operates on a simple principle—the number of legislative seats a political party or group secures should be proportional to the electoral support it garners among voters. So, if a political party or group wins 30 percent of the total vote, it should receive about 30 percent of the seats.

Party-list voting is an especially popular form of PR. Under PLV systems, legislators are elected in large, multi-member districts. Each party puts up a list, or slate, of candidates equal to the number of seats in the district. Independents can also run, and are listed separately on the ballot. On the ballot, voters indicate their preferences for particular parties, and the parties then receive seats in proportion to their shares of the vote. So, for example, in a five-member district, if Party X's candidates win 40 percent of the vote, the party is allocated two seats.

PLV itself comes in two basic forms: closed list and open list. Under a closed-list system, the party fixes the order in which the candidates are listed and elected, and voters simply cast a vote for the party as a whole. That is, winning candidates are elected in the order that parties put them on the list. Most European democracies now use the open list form. This form allows voters to express their preferences for specific candidates, who often are listed on the ballot in random order. So, in the same five-member district, if Party X candidates win 40 percent of the vote, and Joe and Mary receive the most Party X votes, they are elected.

PLV and PR tend to be friendlier than other systems to minority parties and to racial and ethnic groups. They also waste fewer votes than SMDV. The district elections tend to be competitive, encouraging turnout. PR and PLV reduce gerrymandering and appear to encourage greater discussion of issues. On the other hand, PR and FSV usually require several legislative parties to build governing coalitions. These coalitions can be difficult to forge and often are unstable. Some critics feel that these systems give minority parties too much power and allow them to make unjustifiable demands. Open lists often become highly complicated and thus difficult for voters to understand.

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Illinois Native Son Richard Wright Turns 100

By Brian Delfino

Richard Wright 1908–1960

The journey made by Richard Wright from son of a Mississippi sharecropper to internationally-known writer is a classic American success story. Born September 4, 1908, Wright would have been 100 this month if he had lived this long. Describing in vivid detail the poverty and racism he endured while growing up on African Americans, Wright's stories are still relevant for those working for social justice and human rights.

Wright was born in Natchez, Mississippi on a former slave plantation. There was a centenary celebration for Wright in Natchez this last February which I attended. In addition to meeting Julia Wright, his daughter who travelled all the way from Paris, France, I got the chance to take a bus tour to the old Rucker plantation. Just across the road from where Wright's family members are buried, a new private prison was being constructed—today's modern plantation.

The crow flew so fast
That he left his hungry caw
Behind in the fields.

Although his family moved out of the Mississippi Delta, memories of the Deep South stayed with Wright for many years. He used this material to write his first short stories like "Down by the Riverside," about the 1927 Mississippi Flood, which includes scenes strikingly similar to Hurricane Katrina. Wright told the complete story of his southern upbringing in his autobiographical Black Boy, a book which every young person today should read.

Native Son, his first novel, is set in Chicago, a city that Wright knew well. The protagonist, Bigger Thomas, is a typical black youth struggling to survive on the streets of Chicago. In a harrowing series of events, he accidentally kills a white woman, is accused of rape, and is chased down by a police-led white mob. After a trial, Bigger is sentenced to death. Ultimately, the novel is an exploration of black oppression and the early call to end the death penalty. Wright himself was a prison activist, appealing to the New Jersey Governor in 1943 for the release of black inmate Clinton Brewer.

Radicalized by the Great Depression, Wright had been a member of the Communist Party in Chicago and was-thumbnail.jpgnuminated by the John Reed Club, a communist writing cell. Also a founding member of the South Side Writers' Group, Wright was part of Chicago's Black Renaissance, along with other important figures like Horace Cayton, Margaret Walker, Katherine Dunham, Ama Bontemps, and Fenton Johnson.

Landmarks of Wright's era still exist on Chicago's South Side. The George Hall Branch Library, which just celebrated its 75th birthday, is at 44th and Michigan. Wright did research there while working on the Federal Writers' Project. The South Side Community Arts Center, founded in 1940 by Margaret Burroughs, is just up the street at 3831 South Michigan. Archives containing this history are available to scholars, students, and the public at the Vivian Harsh Collection (named after the head librarian of the original Hall Branch) at the Carter G. Woodson Regional Library at 95th and Halsted.

Wright left the United States in 1946 because of the persistent racial barriers he faced and the repressive political climate. Moving to France, he said famously that there was "more freedom in one square block of Paris than there is in the entire United States of America!"

Whose town did you leave?
O wild and drowning spring rain
And where do you go?

There was also a centenary celebration for Wright this summer in Paris, where he lived the last years of his life and is buried. It was attended by William Maxwell, professor of African American literature at the University of Illinois, who told me, "The Wright centenary conference in Paris was both inspiring and sobering. Julia Wright welcomed an international group of fans, critics, and scholars. But she also emphasized that the American Embassy, the elegant site of several conference events, was ironically a location where Wright feared to tread. There he was regularly quizzed about his political beliefs when reapplying for his passport."

I am nobody
A red sinking Autumn sun
Took my name away

Blacklisted during the McCarthy era, Wright's books received little attention in the 1950s. Although he was an internationally-known writer, he was shunned by his friends, black cartoonist Ollie Harrington, questioned the circumstances of what he called a "mysterious death."

In the last years of his life, Wright had travelled to West Africa as a guest of independence leader Kwame Nkrumah. He reported in the 1955 Bandung Conference, an historic meeting of oppressed nations in Indonesia. Although he had denounced communism in the 1940s, a decade later he worked to free black Communist Henry Winston whose health had deteriorated while he was held in a federal prison. Throughout his life, Wright was a politically-committed artist who skillfully used his words as weapons.

In the falling snow
A laughing boy holds out his palms
Until they are white.
For Economic Democracy

By Belden Fields

August/September 2008

THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The word “democracy,” comes from the Greek word “demos,” meaning the people. It actually referred to the people who were not slaves. The males among these people worked “freely” in the sense that they were not slaves and were not subject to hierarchical structures like later medieval serfdom or the contemporary corporation. During the period of classical democracy they also exercised considerable political power and actively engaged in political deliberation.

Aristotle, who like Plato opposed democracy and saw it as a form of class domination, preferred a polity based on specified social classes rather than a democracy. He called a “polity” as a form of governance. It was a form in which the poor, who also happened to constitute the majority, ruled. While Aristotle’s ideal preference for a political system was a monarchy ruled by the wise, his more practical side told him that the best one could hope for in real life would be a balance between the wealthier citizens and the poorer ones manifested in a middle class. This he called a “polity.”

Many conservatives, harking back to the Federalists in our national history, view the United States in such terms. They thus refer to the United States as a republic rather than a democracy. They say that it is a republic which has expanded the power of the poor by giving them the vote. So now, as opposed to our early period as a nation, we have realized equality as citizens and free choices as investors who can vote on corporate officers and some corporate decisions if we have the money to invest, as well as free consumers who can vote with their dollars constrained only by how many dollars we have to spend. Isn’t this grand and as democratic, if not fully so, as anyone could reasonably expect? Additionally, many Western development theorists and practitioners from the 1960s on, saw this as the ideal form of government in the South and elsewhere, as the developmentalists’ adequacy strategies inflicted great pain (see Naomi Klein’s The Shock Doctrine) on the poor in the short term. It was argued that they would build up the middle class in the long term and have an economic trickle-down effect on the poor. This was what an international economic order called “Free Trade” with its international institutions like the World Bank (originally created to help European Development after World War II, the IMF, and subsequently, the World Trade Organization) was supposed to do—i.e., lead the world toward Aristotle’s polity and away from populist movements and leaders who were too dangerously democratic.

UNDERLYING VALUES

Let us take a closer look at some of the underlying values of democracy and reflect on how they apply to the specifically economic side of political economy.

1. Power and Empowerment

One rationale for democracy is that it gives people at least a potentially effective say in how their lives are to be governed. This is what I have called in my book on human rights a “co-ordinated self-determination.” In other words, an underlying value of democracy is that people have a right to participate in the determination of what kinds of institutions and processes are going to be ruling their lives. This is nothing other than the right to participate in the exertion of power. This is the supposed basis of universal suffrage. But universal suffrage masks collective interests. It leads us to think only of the perceived interest of the individual. But power in society is collective. Aristotle recognized this by classifying political systems according to economic classes. And many modern political scientists have accepted Aristotle’s argument with its introduction of the economic side also come to dominate the political side of economic-political economy. The only way to redress this is to democratize the economic side by introducing collective ownership and self-governance among people who actually do the work of the society, using this as a base from which to end the present domination of that cooperation and wealth-holders over the political side. Without this democratic use of power, we are condemned to remain within a power structure that will frustrate our democratic aspirations.

2. Freedom

In a democracy, all should be free to pursue their self-actualization to the degree that their aspirations, talents, and good fortune permit. While the actual system of political-economy in the United States does not afford workers the kind of freedom in the work place that we are advocating as necessary for a real democracy to arise, I am not advocating that one class or one segment of the society monopolize all power. The Bill of Rights and subsequent amendments to the constitution are extremely important documents, the freedoms, due process, and equal protection guarantees of which are crucial to the underlying values of democracy. But they have been distorted by the interests of wealth in this society as manifested by actions of all branches of our government, even the Supreme Court that is supposed to interpret the Constitution. Thus we have situations in which the corporation is treated as a legal person with the same rights as individuals, while most other collective and social human rights are denied, and attempts to limit the amount of political control over the financial system and the expression of giving further political advantage to wealth. Increasingly, the Supreme Court sides with corporate over worker rights and interests, thus rendering workers less and less free to even litigate abuses within an already extremely constraining work context.

3. Equality

Capitalism is inherently inequalitarian because it leaves everything to the market. It is based upon self-interest and greed, and indeed a number of capitalist writers make the argument that greed is good. Since goods are always scarce when compared with desire, there is bound to be an inequality. And that inequality is legitimate because there is no other social value, such as social solidarity, that can challenge market or exchange outcomes.

We are now seeing the results with remarkable clarity. The freedoms accorded to corporations and financial institutions have resulted in the disastrous situations of high unemployment, wages below a living level, homelessness, massive home foreclosures, inaccessibility to health care and insurance, scarcity of food, and environmental degradation that limit the freedom of most of us while those responsible for this in both political and corporate structures are doing just fine thank you. They escape accountability with bail-outs (“too big to fail”) and huge salaries, bonuses, and severance packages while millions of people are hurting. This undercuts the claim that this corporate-financial-free trading structure is the most efficient system possible and that there is no alternative possible.

The other alternative is a truly self-governing society that recognizes that democracy applies to both the economic and the political sides of the same system of political-economy, that we cannot have democracy in the political system without democracy in the workplace. There is not enough space in a newspaper article to discuss specific structural proposals for redressing this. For some specific alternatives in both theory and practice see Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel’s, Looking Forward, Robin Hahnel’s, Economic Justice and Democracy, Robert A. Dahl’s A Preface to Economic Democracy, Alasdair Clarey’s, The Political Economy of Co-operation and Participation, Edward Greenberg’s Workplace Democracy: The Political Effects of Participation, William Whyte’s Making Mon- dragen: the Growth and Dynamics of the Worker Cooper- ative Complex, and my own Rethinking Human Rights in the New Millennium, Ch. 9.

Continued from previous page
A Brief History of Instant Runoff Voting in Urbana Municipal Elections

Gary Storm, Member, Urbana Citizens for Instant Runoff Voting

In spring 2007, a group of Urbana citizens decided to examine the system of democratic leadership in their community. The health of a democracy can be measured by the number of candidates who run for office, the number of candidates who challenge incumbent office holders, the number of parties that Council appoints a candidate to run and the number of parties officially or issues expressed during campaigns, and the extent of voter participation in elections. On all of these fronts Urbana has experienced significant declines during the last four election cycles 1993–2005. During this period only 18% of primary races and 55.5% of general election races were contested; no third party candidates ran for office; 20.7% of register voters turned out for the 2005 municipal primary race; and voter participation in general city elections steadily declined from 34.4% (1993) to 21.4% (1997) to 18.8% (2001) to 12.5% in 2005.

Gary Storm, Urbana’s member of the Urbana Citizens for Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) has invoked local democracy in Tarkoma Park, Md, Hender- son, NC, and Burlington, VT. Exit polls showed that a very high percentage of first time IRV election participants understood the system 'well or very well' and preferred IRV to the city’s prior system. IRV also tended to encourage more candidates to run for office, reduced the number of uncontested races, and reduced the number of submitting candidates for election, broadened the number of perspectives expressed on campaign issues, and increased voter participation in the electoral process. “This is just what Urbana needed,” they concluded, and formed a grassroots organization called Urbana Citizens for Instant Runoff Voting.

UC-IRV created a brochure and website (www.IRVforUrbana.net). Delegates met with the Mayor and City Council individually to express their concerns about the single plurality voting system used in Urbana municipal elections and the desire to replace it with IRV. They did not ask the civic body to initiate this change but instead opted to circulate a community-wide petition calling for a "binding referendum on IRV to be placed on Urbana’s upcoming general election ballot. The group would have an opportunity to educate citizens about the new elections.

Members of UC-IRV met with Champaign County Clerk Mark Sheldon who provided them with petitioning process guidelines. He conveyed that the IRV system is easy to understand and that the community could prepare the ballot for IRV, save time and money for the county. Unfortunately, Sheldon misinterpreted the state election code and underestimated the time and effort required to place a binding referendum on the ballot. He told UC-IRV that 766 signatures were required when the true number was just over 1,000. 766 was the number of signatures required for a non-binding or advisory referendum.

Over the following three months, IRV advocates representing a variety of local political parties collected signatures door-to-door and at a variety of community venues. They obtained over 1,000 signatures and filed the petitions in the City Clerk’s office as was required. A day before the petition ‘challenge period’ ended, Al Pacino, member of the local Democratic party, challenged the petitions on three separate grounds: an inadequate number of signatures were collected; the language of the petition was vague and confusing; and a fundamental change in the election system could not be made through a citizen petitioning process. An Electoral Board was constituted to review these challenges; its members were the Mayor (chair), the City Clerk, and a City Council member—all Democrats. The Board ruled in favor of Klein solely on the basis that inadequate signatures had been collected. Refusing to rule on the other challenges, the Board left it unclear whether future petitions could be challenged on one or both of those grounds. Later the same day, Klein told a representative from UC-IRV that they would use “every legal means available” to block such a referendum if it was placed on the ballot.

Do you support Do you support Do you support Do you support Do you support Do you support Do you support Do you support Do you support Do you support...
Giving Democracy the Old College Try
By Brian J. Gaines

The Beauty of the Compact?

One ingenious scheme would establish national plurality elections for the presidency without passing a constitutional amendment. States might be able to pass legislation dictating that electors be awarded to whomever candidate secures the most votes nationwide, contingent on other states doing the same. States are, of course, perfectly free not to award their electors on a winner-take-all basis. Maine and Nebraska are presently the only anomalies, but other states could choose to award electors in some other way. Colorado had a ballot initiative to do so proportionally in 2004, controversial both because it was to be retroactive (i.e., to apply to the 2004 vote) and because the Constitution empowers the “legislature” to determine how electors are appointed. The measure was, in any event, soundly defeated. It is difficult for any state to move unilaterally away from winner-take-all, since proportional allocation makes a state less likely to garner attention from presidential candidates. Contingent legislation cleverly solves that problem. It does not, of course, resolve the difficulty of computing a national-vote sum. Already, Maryland, New Jersey, Hawaii, and Illinois have passed such laws. Legal experts are divided on whether The “Compact Clause” of the Constitution (Art. I, § 10, clause 3), which specifies that “No state, shall, without the consent of Congress...enter into any agreement or compact with another state...”, means Congress would ultimately have to approve such a deal. But the movement steams ahead. Robert Bennett’s Taming the Electoral College (Stanford University Press) provides a thorough discussion of this and other possible EC reforms.

Two Video Documentaries About Abortion Rights:
At the Independent Media Center, 202 S. Broadway, Friday, September 19, 7 pm
The Coat Hanger Project, by Washington DC-based Angie Young focuses on the current state of the US pro-choice/reproductive justice movement 35 years after Roe v. Wade and specifically targets the post-1973 generation. And, Abortion Democracy: Poland/South Africa, by Berlin-based Sarah Pütz explores the differences and similarities between the two countries and argues for a liberalization of abortion laws. The house might have had to choose the winner if a few states had voted differently.

“But Gore won more votes!” It is arbitrary, rather than non-democratic, to employ an electoral system that does not necessarily select the candidate who won the most votes. When both candidates know in advance how the election will be determined, there is nothing undemocratic about not being majoritarian. Gore wasn’t even the only modern VP to be foiled by the EC. Nixon out-polled Kennedy in popular votes while losing the presidency in 1960 (a point obscured by most textbooks, which assign the election to Johnson). Legal experts are divided on whether The “Compact Clause” of the Constitution (Art. I, § 10, clause 3), which specifies that “No state, shall, without the consent of Congress...enter into any agreement or compact with another state...”, means Congress would ultimately have to approve such a deal. But the movement steams ahead. Robert Bennett’s Taming the Electoral College (Stanford University Press) provides a thorough discussion of this and other possible EC reforms.

The third complaint is more worrisome. It has been 184 years since the House chose a president, but losses of the EC like to highlight the near-misses, elections in which the EC could have failed to pick a winner had a few thousand voters chosen differently. There is little doubt that most Americans would be aghast to see a presidential election resolved by the US House, but it is hard to know how alarming are these counterfactual histories. The elite-level tie-breaking procedure of the EC is not tractable, but non-resolution is possible even in a national plurality election. An exact tie in popular vote is not necessary for deadlock: if a result is close enough for a recount, a battle distinct from the initial contest ensues, over how to deal with the inherent messiness in large-scale elections that is usually safely out-of-sight. Democrats will recall Florida in 2000 with rage, and the US Supreme Court is usually safely out-of-sight. Democrats will recall Florida in 2000 with rage, and the US Supreme Court is out-of-sight. But Gore won more votes! It is arbitrary, rather than non-democratic, to employ an electoral system that does not necessarily select the candidate who won the most votes. When both candidates know in advance how the election will be determined, there is nothing undemocratic about not being majoritarian. Gore wasn’t even the only modern VP to be foiled by the EC. Nixon out-polled Kennedy in popular votes while losing the presidency in 1960 (a point obscured by most textbooks, which assign the election to Johnson). Legal experts are divided on whether The “Compact Clause” of the Constitution (Art. I, § 10, clause 3), which specifies that “No state, shall, without the consent of Congress...enter into any agreement or compact with another state...”, means Congress would ultimately have to approve such a deal. But the movement steams ahead. Robert Bennett’s Taming the Electoral College (Stanford University Press) provides a thorough discussion of this and other possible EC reforms.

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Media Reform: Taming Corporate Media

By Anna Heringer and Patricia DeWitt

NOT SO LONG AGO, mainstream media provided a valuable and reasonable source of news and information. News organizations large and small supported independent journalism and held the public trust to empower citizens with knowledge and protect against government corruption and abuse of power. Over time, rich and powerful corporations partnered with politicians to gain increasing legal and economic influence. Large corporations began to gobble up independent news organizations at an alarming rate, eventually creating the giant, multi-headed media beast that now dominates broadcast and print media. Corporate media controls much of the flow of information, filtering and distorting the news to suit its own purposes, frequently offering mindless infotainment in the place of substantive content, and subverting the role of media watchdog that is essential to a free society.

Distinguished journalist Bill Moyers has said, “Democracy without honest information creates the illusion of popular consent while erasing the power of the state and the privileged interests protected by it. Democracy without accountability creates the illusion of popular control while offering ordinary Americans cheap tickets to the balcony, too far away to see that the public stage is just a reality TV set. This leaves you (the public) with a heavy burden—it’s up to you to fight for the freedom that makes all other freedoms possible.” This summer, 3500 media activists and concerned citizens demonstrated their willingness to take up that burden when they converged on Minneapolis in early June for the 2008 National Conference for Media Reform. People came with a passion for the cause. From the opening plenary to the conference close, a sense of mission for the cause. From the opening plenary to the conference close, a sense of mission for the cause. From the opening plenary to the conference close, a sense of mission for the cause. From the opening plenary to the conference close, a sense of mission for the cause.

Bill Moyers opened day two of the conference with a grand keynote presentation addressing the critical nature of the grassroots media reform movement and its historical and social significance. Workshops of the day covered issues such as the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, Internet freedom, Hip Hop culture, feminist media activism, and many practical workshops on topics such as low budgeting and effective community action. The day closed with a fast-paced gala of multi-media presentations, music, dance and moving speeches by visionaries and leaders such as Van Jones, Mary Frances Byron Dorgan, Aranana Huffington, and FCC Commissioner Michael Copps—a principled public servant who continues to stand courageously against the swell of corporate influence on federal communications policy.

By the evening of the final day, everyone was exhausted, exhilarated, informed, and inspired, but there was still more to come. After morning breakout sessions, the conference closed with messages from Amy Goodman, FCC Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein, and a forceful presentation by visionary and social activist Van Jones, who called upon attendees to carry the passion and the message of the movement into their own communities, leading the charge for media reform and positive social change.

Who else will fight for the freedom that, as Moyers said, makes all other freedoms possible? Who else will dare to tame the beast? There is no one but us, the people—citizens who must protect and preserve the public interest and our right to a free and independent press. If you find your local news station is not accurately reporting the news, file a complaint with the station or with the FCC at: http://www.barrywerner.com/toolkit.pdf

Count My Vote: A Citizen’s Guide to Voting by Steven Rosenfeld, from Alternet

Thomas Young, who was inspired to join the military after watching George W. Bush speak amid the rubble of 9/11, went to Iraq. In less than one week, he was shot and paralyzed. The documentary chronicles Thomas’ return home and the struggles he faces as a paralyzed vet and outspoken critic of the war.

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Ну и за дело. После работы они отправились на ужин, чтобы обсудить общие проблемы и наметить планы на следующую неделю. После ужина они вернулись домой и начали готовиться к предстоящей конференции. К счастью, все прошло без проблем, и они все уехали домой уставшие, но счастливые, гордые за то, что они сделали. Другие участники также оценили их работу и выразили признательность за то, что они сделали для предстоящей конференции.
Money going and why isn’t going into the pockets of front line workers? A rally is planned for August 21st at noon on College Court, the street between the dorms Florida Avenue Residence Hall (FAR) and Pennsylvania Avenue Residence Hall (PAR). Come on out if you care about these issues. If you don’t yet care, come on out and find out why you should care. Cause “something is happening here.”

Get Involved with the Public i
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), or to contact one of the editors.

"Something Is Happening Here, What It Is Ain’t Exactly Clear”

Continued from page 7

Since most of us have already discovered Project, and the university spokespeople with two faces, we are going to start by helping people to start asking the questions we all need to ask/have answered. There is a lot of this money going and why isn’t it going...
Journey to the East
By Jelani Saadiq

This summer was special because I was given the opportunity to travel to China. I went with my martial arts school, Song Shan Shao Lin Temple, that made it very famous. When we reached Deng Feng we were taken to the school where we would be staying and train. The name of the school is Song Shan Shaolin Temple. Jet Li made a movie entitled, Shaolin Temple, that made it very famous. When we reached Deng Feng we were taken to the school where we would be staying and train.

One day we went to the Shanghai Bay. There we went out for dinner at a restaurant that President Bill Clinton known for its healing properties) as a gift. Soon after, we went down the street and I was given the chance to try Chinese McDonald’s, which did not taste much different than America’s McDonald’s. In the historic part of Shanghai I really want to thank everyone who has been in my life and not what people wanted me to be. This experience opened my eyes to a different way of life and a different way of looking at things. I am glad this trip helped me be a better person.

By Jelani Saadiq

Different Electoral Systems

Imagine, by way of conclusion, that Illinois suddenly replaced SMDW with PRV to elect its state legislators. In reality, of course, this is not a likely event. Too many political actors hold vested interests in the current electoral system. Nevertheless, what changes would most likely occur? Here are a few possibilities:

1. Parties would have less incentive to form coalitions—this is because there would be fewer seats to be distributed.
2. Legislators would have less incentive to build broad coalitions across demographic lines—this is because there would be fewer seats to be distributed.
3. Legislators would have less incentive to build broad coalitions across partisan lines—this is because there would be fewer seats to be distributed.
4. Legislators would have less incentive to build broad coalitions across ideological lines—this is because there would be fewer seats to be distributed.

How cities, states, and nations elect their public officials matters greatly, perhaps more than any other single institution. Not surprisingly, therefore, rapid societal changes and the accompanying changes in political stakes have brought the discussion of electoral change to the fore. It is a discussion that citizens should take seriously.
Targeting the Innocent
By Cody Bralts

It is often said that Urbana High School, as well as Urbana Middle School, are both quite similar to what some people would call “prison,” because of the tight security measures enforced upon the students. For example, facilitators walk through the halls with large walkie-talkies, various “security stations” are placed in each hallway to check roaming students for passes, and in the middle school, a new addition has been added this year: surveillance cameras.

Students are taking opposing views on the matter. “I believe security cameras are essential in schools, and, possibly, we don’t have them in enough locations,” says Rita Haber, a sophomore at Urbana High School. “For example, I’ve noticed that the second floor hallway at Urbana High School is the hallway with the most fighting and bullying, as well as where the highest level of public display of affection (PDA) occurs. It doesn’t have security cameras or hall monitors so much of this goes by unnoticed.” Another student, Katie Heinricher, says, “I don’t think that cameras in school do that much. No one who really wants to skip school is going to stop and look for a camera before leaving. Also, when fights break out, no one is watching for a camera. It is usually pretty obvious how fights start and camera footage seems unnecessary. With other things such as PDA, what’s the point? The staff isn’t going to go up to a girl and say, ‘We saw you kissing in the hallway on our security camera.’ Cameras are good in theory, but in reality, they don’t help that much.” We must ask ourselves: Do these cameras actually influence a student’s decision, or are they simply a waste of money for the school?

Youth and Surveillance
By Glynn Davis

High-schools often are teeming with young people who, when done with high-school, want to “achieve something big in their lives.” To many, that means joining the armed services. But when should the line be drawn for recruiters who enter our public educational facilities? Reports of recruiters targeting people as young as 14 and 15 years-old at Urbana High School have raised speculation if the military is targeting younger people because they are facing record lows in signups. Military recruiters being given blatant and unrestrained access to students, without notification to parents and without counter-recruitment material available to students, has become the norm at UHS. In the guidance office at UHS, booklets proclaiming the benefits of joining the armed services are seen throughout the office, yet the guidance office still lacks basic counter-recruitment literature, something that should be necessary to create a balanced opinion at the school.

One must ask the question if Urbana High School is deliberately ignoring counter recruitment material offered by anti-war groups, such as the Anti-War Anti-Racism Effort (AWARE), or is the administration simply lacking the basic principle of giving students the adequate resources to make their own decisions? This past school year, students eating in the lunchrooms at UHS were exposed to recruiters giving out free prizes and other incentives to interest freshman and sophomores. Glynn Davis remembers last year when they were in the lunchroom. Kruse then talked with Dr. Laura Taylor, principal of UHS, about the issue. Dr. Taylor told him that he had no idea it was ever occurring and would put an end to it. But, stories by students of aggressive recruiting further lay out the issue of accountability. The school board has failed to recognize the questionable misconduct that has taken place at UHS.

It is becoming increasingly known that military recruiters use outlandish statements to entice students into joining. Using a free ride through college as leverage to get young people to join, and the promise of getting a job thereafter, are the biggest talking points used by recruiters. But the growing homeless rate of veterans has only constrained that promise. The legality of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan also brings up the issue of whether recruiters are forthcoming about the premise of going to war in the first place. Another major issue is stop-loss, which has recently become widely known as the “backdoor draft.” Stop-loss allows the military to involuntarily keep a soldier in service longer than they originally signed up for. Along with the threat of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), and other mental problems that have become common as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq progress, the military fails to let young and often innocent students know about these significant issues. Due to the No Child Left Behind Act, the government, and subsequently the military, are given contact information for every student attending public high school.

The premise of the public educational system is to provide an unbiased haven where young people can go to learn techers and from each other. The presence of military recruiters only debunks that idea. As a 16-year-old, I not only find it appalling, but saddening that the military is resorting to targeting young minors, who, like me, often lack the judgment and the experience to make life changing and, to be frank, extremely dangerous decisions. Students should be allowed to find their path on their own terms while in school, to find where their passions lie, and not be preyed upon by United States Military.
This year’s 4th of July Parade was not what I expected. I remember that in the past the parade was for kids. It was mostly about marching bands, community groups, guys in the little cars throwing out candy and stuff like that. This year’s parade seemed more like a recruitment tool for the military. There were at least 200 or 300 soldiers marching in uniform. Most of the floats were promoting war in some way, and the crowd helped make the parade even more militaristic by standing and cheering each time a soldier came by.

My dad and I were the only people on the Michigan to Pennsylvania block that stood up when the Iraq Veterans Against the War came by, and a lot of people gave us mean looks when we did. At least there was an anti-war float, even if it was the only one. However, there were at least 20 pro-war floats. Many of the kids were age 6 or younger, and at that age they are very impressionable. So, the message the parade was giving them is that ‘war was good.’ In 12 years these kids will be old enough to make decisions, and if they are surrounded by the message that war is good then they will promote war too, when they are older.

Many of the floats were really ridiculous, and scary. There was an anti-abortion float. It compared how many American babies weren’t born because of abortions to the casualties of every war from World War II to the current Gulf War. They left out the Central American wars of the 80s, and they also left out how many foreign people died in each war. For example, in the Vietnam War, they said that around 80,000 people died. In reality, more than a million people died, if you include the Vietnamese.

When the “Guns Save Lives” float came by with the Statue of Liberty holding an illegal assault rifle, I was really mad. The Statue of Liberty is a welcoming symbol of freedom, and normally people don’t welcome each other with a deadly weapon. In front of it was a mounted machine gun on an army Jeep™ that they shot blanks off of over and over again.

This year’s parade was mostly celebrating the military, war, guns, and nationalism. It seemed to me like the military was showing off its stupid gun collection, and trying to impress and brainwash young children like Adolf Hitler did. I’m not saying the army is using Hitler’s plan, but it had that same feeling. They also shot off every other gun like crazy. Overall, it seems like the army went to an all time low by showing off their guns to little kids, and basically trying to start recruiting them now, to get them to join up when they turn 18. This “parade” wasn’t like a celebration, it was more like propaganda.

PTSD: Our Troops, Our Community

Sunday, Sept. 7, 2:00-4:00pm at the Urbana Free Library auditorium.

What is post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and how does it affect soldiers and veterans, their families and our community? How widespread is it? How can it be treated, and what services are available? How do veterans with post-traumatic stress re-integrate into our community?

Please come hear our panel address questions like these and questions you bring.