

COMMON FREE PRESS



My friend Brad Will has been shot to death in Oaxaca

BACKGROUND: Oaxaca, Mexico has been at the center of a violent struggle between government forces and separatists. While it began in May 2006 as a teachers' protest for better education funding, it has since escalated into a wide-spread rebellion. For more details on Oaxaca, read "The Insurrection in Oaxaca" on page 3.

by david rovics

brad will was a dear friend, and a true revolutionary. he died the way countless and uncounted numbers of beautiful people have died in recent centuries -- he was shot in the chest by rightwing paramilitaries. he was filming the scene around one of thousands of barricades that have shut down oaxaca city since last june, when the governor there tried to ban public expressions of dissent, thus throwing one more historical spark into one more historical powder keg.

brad embodied the spirit of indymedia. he was not just covering stories that the "mainstream" press ignores, such as the exciting, violent revolutionary moment which has gripped oaxaca for several months now. brad was not risking his life to get a good shot of a confrontation at a barricade because he might get a photo on the cover of a newspaper, get some (perhaps well-deserved) fame and money -- he was posting his communiques on indymedia, for free.

sure, brad was filming in order to cover history. but he was there also to make history. brad knew that a camera is a weapon, or hopefully a shield of some sort, and

sometimes can serve to de-escalate a situation, to protect people from being violated, beaten, killed. and brad knew that if the independent media didn't document history, nobody else would.

brad deeply appreciated the power of music and culture. if he didn't have a camera in his hands, he often had a guitar. during some of his many travels around latin america he wrote emails to me about the musicians he met, with whom he shared my songs and recordings. he particularly liked my song "saint patrick battalion," and reportedly shared his rendition of it with lots of people. he would not live to know just how much his life and death would resemble the san patricios, who died fighting for mexico during the first u.s. invasion of that country in the 1840's.

through all brad did and saw on large swaths of three different continents, he somehow continually brought with him a boundless enthusiasm and obvious love of life, love, a good party, or a good riot. he was my favorite kind of person, my favorite kind of revolutionary -- the sort who is just as comfortable talking about revolutionary theory, current events, music, relation-

ships or smoking a bowl on a manhattan rooftop at sunset. the kind of person who is alive, in mind, body and spirit, in equal proportions.

brad became a radical long before it was briefly fashionable in the u.s. (with the wto protests in seattle), and long since it became unfashionable there (september 11th, 2001). the kinds of tactics and politics that the global justice movement became briefly known for were practiced by people like brad in the squatters' movement in new york city and the radical environmental movement on the west coast in the 1990's. brad was in both places and many more. brad was somewhere near the ground floor of many other more recent anarchist institutions -- food not bombs, critical mass, reclaim the streets, guerrilla gardening, indymedia. he saw the connections, deeply understood the concept of "the commons," and went for it, as an activist, a videojournalist, a musician and a cheerleader.

i never knew brad's last name until he was murdered. for me he was just brad. in my cell phone he was "brad nyc" (to distinguish him from another good friend

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¡Presente! Brad Will’s Ghost at the NYC Mexican Consulate

By RJ Maccani

Brad’s smile beamed over the hundreds of people who had gathered at the Mexican consulate this morning to protest the murder of their friend on Friday. Brad Will was reporting for NYC Indymedia when a police chief and several government officials shot and killed him at a barricade in Oaxaca City—he was one of three killed that day. The call went out straight from the people of Oaxaca: “Bring the barricades to every Mexican embassy and consulate in the world!”

And that’s just what Brad Will’s friends did. You see, Brad’s been around for a while, and his friends aren’t only his colleagues at Indymedia, but also the Lower East Side squatters, radical environmentalists, “Reclaim the Streets” activists and many others with whom he worked for over a decade. Basically, they picked the wrong journalist to fuck with.

Word of Brad’s death got to his friends in New York City quickly. It was Halloween weekend and just hours after his murder, people began pouring into Bluestockings, a radical bookstore and activism center in Manhattan’s Lower East Side, to mourn... and to plan. On Saturday night they held a candlelight vigil outside of the Mexican consulate. They returned to the consulate this morning, not with candles this time, but with the barricades.

From Grief To Anger

Grief turned into anger over the weekend as Brad’s mourners realized that the Mexican government was using Brad’s death to justify sending federal forces into Oaxaca to quell the uprising that has been going on there for five months; the same uprising that Brad was standing with when killed by government forces.

Here in the US, the commercial media claimed Brad as one of their own and repeated the lie that he was killed in “cross-fire” between pro and anti-government forces. The government killed Brad – the killers were photographed as they did it – and since then they’ve been identified. All of this is easily available on-line and it doesn’t take an investigative journalist to figure that out, but apparently it takes an authentic one to report it.

In an echo of the government’s attack on Atenco in early May, federal police descended upon Oaxaca City yesterday, leading to at least one confirmed death and over fifty arrests of civilians and movement activists, while the local government and paramilitary forces who have been murdering members of this nonviolent movement remain free. This was too much for us to bear.

Four Demands

Determined not to let Brad’s death be-

come just a personal interest story for the US media, and a cover for more repression against the people of Oaxaca, we came to the consulate this morning with four demands:

1. All armed forces acting on behalf of the government against the people of Oaxaca be removed immediately;
2. The illegitimate governor Ruiz be removed immediately;
3. The federal government negotiate directly with those people who man the barricades in Oaxaca;
4. Guilty parties on all levels be identified and held accountable for the assassinations of Brad Will and the other civilian victims in Oaxaca.

We began assembling at around 9 am and within half-an-hour the crowd in front of the consulate had swelled to well over 200. Through skillful on-site negotiation with the police we managed to stay on the sidewalk and take over a lane of traffic without the NYPD caging us in with metal barricades... the barricades came later. For now, the mood vacillated between solemn and cheerful. Two large banners, one featuring the four demands and the other a blown-up photo of Brad playing with a child, were held along both sides of the entrance to the consulate and served as altars for the many flowers, candles, and mementos that people brought with them. A “ghost bike” was built for Brad and chained up to the entrance’s fence.

Action!

It started with an old friend of Brad’s, Tim Doody, climbing the lamppost in front of the consulate to station himself there, supporting a giant painting of Brad smiling with the words “One more night at the barricades” written beneath his portrait. A perennial face at actions in the city, Brad’s friends made sure that they would be able to see him on the front lines one more time. Doody was even wearing Brad’s old climbing harness.

A crowd surrounded the lamppost as Doody began to climb, thus ensuring that the police would not be able to take him down. Meanwhile, another activist, Tim Keating, locked himself down to the main gated-entrance of the consulate while two more blockaded a secondary entrance. Now things began to get nasty.

The main entrance to the Mexican consulate in NYC has something like an outdoor foyer. There is a big gate with a single entrance and then a large space the length of the consulate, about ten feet deep, before you get to the actual door of the building. In this outdoor space you will usually find people milling around, consulate workers on smoke breaks and others waiting for services. Protest organizers were afraid that their actions would bring down repression on to Mexican immigrants who had not come to the

consulate to protest. This nearly happened.

As soon as they realized that he was locking himself to the gate, the police rushed Keating and the other protesters who were accompanying him. Caught in this scuffle was a family waiting in the outdoor foyer. As the police rushed the protestors, an organizer who was near the family shouted to them, “Are you OK? We’re gonna do our best to make sure you don’t get hurt!” The mother shouted back, “I’m great!” Even though the gate that Keating chained himself to ended up breaking during the scuffle, he managed to prop it up sideways across the entrance and hold his position. The action not only succeeded in shutting down the consulate in solidarity with the movement in Oaxaca, but also gave a bit of cheer to many who hate the way they are treated when they come to the consulate for services.

Shut Down

So there we were, an unruly crowd swelling to three or four hundred people: anarchists and socialists, Mexican activists, radical teachers, pedestrians and, mostly, friends of Brad Will. The banner hang and lock downs were in effect and now people began lying in front of vehicles in the street. The entire block, and the consulate itself, were shut down. As the police came in with wooden barricades to trap us on the sidewalks, people began pouring out into the streets dragging the barricades with them. With chants of “Oaxaca Vive! La Lucha Sigue!” and Brad’s smiling portrait hanging over the crowd, it was indeed “another night” on Oaxaca’s barricades—brought now against Mexican embassies and consulates across the world.

It wasn’t until around 10:30, almost 45 minutes later, that the police finally succeeded in unblocking the consulate entrances and bringing Doody down from the lamppost. But various conflicts in the street led to more arrests. It wasn’t until after 11 that they finally got traffic moving again and then the protest still continued along the sidewalks.

The action attracted a large commercial media presence, especially amongst the Spanish-language press. Those interviewed stressed the four demands mentioned above and that we are angry about all the murders of organizers and civilians in Oaxaca and especially troubled by the Mexican government’s use (with the help of US and Mexican commercial media) of Brad’s death to justify Sunday’s invasion of Oaxaca by federal police.

La Lucha Sigue

At the end of accounts, 12 people were arrested at today’s action including one accredited journalist who had

her camera confiscated. At least three people have been killed in Oaxaca in the past two days and at least fifty have been arrested, even as the people of Oaxaca continue to hold the city center and control various radio stations (the movement’s main form of communication). Spirits are still high in Oaxaca just as they are here in NYC while people continue to support their jailed compañeros.

Word has just come from the Zapatistas that they will begin road blockades in their territories and are calling on all adherents to the Other Campaign to join them throughout Mexico and “on the other side” this Wednesday. They are also calling for a nationwide General Strike in solidarity with Oaxaca on November 20. International adherents to the Sixth Declaration are called upon to join in solidarity actions on both of these days. Brad’s friends and other NYC organizers are considering this call as they continue to plan this week of action, and to continue on in the future.

This consideration is appropriate as Brad was an international adherent to the Sixth Declaration himself and was part of the alternative media within the caravan that followed Delegate Zero on the first leg of his tour through Southern Mexico. I can still remember Brad’s poetic dispatches as he covered Marcos’ meetings in the Yucatan and Quintana Roo. Chillingly, he is the second member of this caravan to be murdered by the Mexican government—the first was Alexis Benhumea who died of injuries he sustained during the early May assault on Atenco.

This morning’s actions were part memorial and part direct activism, an effective and cathartic experience for all of us who knew Brad and could still, out of the corner of our eyes, see his cheshire grin beaming alongside us today. The organizers of today’s protest have committed to continue shifting the focus of their actions to all of the dead and disappeared of Oaxaca, as well as to the Oaxacan peoples’ ongoing struggle to depose their corrupt governor, Ulises Ruiz. After all, that is the story that Brad put his life on the line so he could report it to us all. If the actions here in NYC continue to be as ingenious, loving, and yes, messy, as the one today, then perhaps we will give Brad reason to continue walking with us, as he most certainly was today...

¡Oaxaca Vive! ¡La Lucha Sigue!

(This article originally appeared in The Narco News Bulletin)

Death in Oaxaca

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named brad, who lives in baltimore). i don't remember talking with him much about his past, where he grew up, how he became a revolutionary, though we may have talked about that sort of thing. but generally i saw him in the course of events, whether it was a film showing/concert on a brooklyn rooftop, a land occupation in the bronx, or, just as often, a large demonstration against an evil financial institution somewhere in the world.

i've sung at many such events, and brad has been at most of them -- and he's been present at many which i didn't make it to. they're all such a blur, i don't remember which ones anymore. but the many encounters always start out with a warm smile and a hug, and usually involve some kind of chaos going on, with brad comfortably in the middle of it. sometimes -- all too rarely, i suddenly realize -- the encounters would continue after the chaos subsided, and we could be in a quiet place with a small group of people, chilling and talking about life, my favorite bits.

there have been many debates about whether it is more useful to organize large events or to focus on community organizing locally. whether to focus on recording history or making it. whether to educate or to act. whether to have

Journalist
Brad Will,
2 days before he
was murdered.

a party or have a meeting. brad clearly decided that the correct answer is "all of the above." the reality of this is easy to demonstrate -- talk to anybody in new york city involved with just about any aspect of the progressive movement. it's a city of 8 million people, but if they are serious participants in the more grassroots end of the movement, they know brad. though they may not have known his last name. he's just brad, the tall, thin guy with long hair who is often flashing a warm, gentle smile with a compassionate, intelligent glint in his eye. he's often described with a connector like "brad



photo courtesy indymedia.org

from indymedia" or "brad from more gardens" or "brad the musician."

i haven't seen him in a while. several months at least. but suddenly i miss him so much. i miss hanging out with him in the lower east side, chilling at his place there, swapping stories. i miss the rejuvenating warmth of his presence. i miss the unspoken, mutual admiration. i miss the feeling that i was in the presence of someone who so deeply felt his connection to the world. the feeling that here was someone who would die for me, and me for him, no questions asked. and now, like so many others before him,

he's done just that.

like all of the rest of us, over the generations his memory will fade and eventually disappear. but for those of us alive today who had the honor of being one of brad's large circle of friends, his memory will be with us painfully, deeply, lovingly, until we all join him beneath the ground -- hopefully only after each of us has managed to have the kind of impact on each other, on the movement, and the world that brad surely had in his short 36 years.

The Insurrection in Oaxaca, Mexico

Timeline: May 2006 - November 2, 2007

By Chris Heneghan

For the past six months residents of Oaxaca have struggled to turn their city into an autonomous zone. The movement is being lead by teachers from the National Education Workers Union who began striking last May demanding higher wages, improved working conditions, and an increase in the budget for school meals, uniforms and supplies. The courageous actions of the teachers sparked an uprising which inspired citizens to organize to remove Governor Ulises Ruiz of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) from power. The people accused Ruiz of rigging the 2004 election to win office and hiring bands of thugs to attack dissidents.

In mid June Ruiz ordered 1,000 state police to use force to break up the teachers' protest camp in the center of town. When the tear gas cleared and the cops with clubs retreated, protesters quickly regrouped and continued

to hold their ground in the city center. On August 1, three thousand women from the Popular ssembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca (APPO in Spanish) marched through town and took over the state television and radio station, CORTV.

On August 7, violence erupted as state and federal police along with unidentified gunmen began shooting at protest marches and encampments. Several members of the APPO were arrested on the streets. Protesters remained vigilant under the threat of state sponsored violence and paramilitary attacks of their encampments. Solidarity kept them together in the city center through the last week of October.

On October 27, Mexico's Day of the Dead, members of the APPO and their supporters continued working to shut down the city using blockade tactics. Indy Media Oaxaca reported

that, "groups of PRI [forces] attacked with arms of high power at the barricades." These attacks left 4 dead and 20 wounded. Among the dead was New York journalist Bradley Roland Will.

On October 29, Mexican President Vincent Fox ordered federal police armed with assault rifles and riot shields to enter the city in an attempt to silence the opposition. Protesters used Molotov cocktails, rocks, homemade flame-throwers and fireworks in a last attempt to maintain their hold on the city.

On October 30, federal police regained control the city of Oaxaca. The APPO moved out of the city center and into an encampment on the grounds of Benito Juarez University because Mexican law prohibits the incursion of law enforcement into independent universities. Today, November 2, PFP police riot squadrons approached the university with federal tanks and flew

helicopters overhead in attempt to lay siege to the university. After a six hour standoff the APPO forced their retreat.

Greg Berger of Narco News reported that; "Although it is unclear whether or not the retreat will be followed by a return to the scene tonight, one thing is quite clear at this moment; the APPO has dealt an important blow to the PFP and has proven that they are indeed capable of defeating the invading army." As the APPO and it's supporters continue to struggle under the looming fear of increased civilian casualties from paramilitary attacks, the safety and well being of the Oaxquen people weighs heavy on their minds. APPO members and their supporters remain committed to a "militant but non-violent resistance," to bring revolutionary change with an "absolute minimum of violence."

A Criminal In Office

by tara kurland

Just in time for elections, David Lindorff, co-author of “The Case For Impeachment”, came to speak at the Uconn Coop about the illegal and destructive acts of the Bush administration, as well as the need to get our President and the Republican party out of office. Lindorff is a native of the Storrs area, and has visited his hometown to share his knowledge with Uconn students and faculty. He is an investigative journalist who has written for many prestigious magazines such as “Businessweek”, “The Nation”, and “Rolling Stone”. He has also written other political books, such as, “This Can’t be Happening! Resisting the Disintegration of American Democracy”.

When asked about the illegal acts of the Bush administration, Lindorff overwhelmed by the question, looks

at the audience trying to decide where to start. “There’s too many” he says, “they keep adding up”. Lindorff thinks it over, and finally decides on a few important ones to share. Bush has initiated a war with a country that was no threat to us. He lied to the Americans, and the world, as well as to the UN, to get public support for the war. He has violated U.S. and international law by approving illegal detainment, kidnapping, and torture of innocent people. American citizens have been stripped of their rights, especially those which guarantee every citizen a right to a lawyer and a public hearing with a jury. Naturalized citizens have been deported back to their countries for no reason, and from which they had been granted amnesty. The government has been spying on American citizens without a warrant, violating

the first and fourth amendments and the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. The government has committed treason by obstructing the efforts of an investigation on the 9/11 attack, as well as directly lying to investigators. Finally Bush has abused his power as President by ignoring the desires of Congress. The three branches are supposed to share power, yet Bush has refused to administer over 750 acts that have been passed by Congress.

The government has also committed criminal negligence in a number of ways. It failed to respond adequately to Hurricane Katrina and did not provide its soldiers with enough armor during the war. It did not plan out what to do with Iraq once it won the war, and most importantly, the President has failed to acknowledge the problem of global warming. He has not only deliberately neglected to help reduce the effects of it but has contributed to the acceleration of the process. Lindorff considers this to be far greater of a threat to our national security than any terrorist act because it will lead to mass starvation and war all over the world.

Lindorff feels that the administration is creating fear in the public to get them to relinquish their rights to the government in return for “protection”. In reality, we are making ourselves more vulnerable by giving the government more power and control over our lives. Lindorff feels that we ought to be more scared of our own administration than of the terrorists.

Although Lindorff is not a Democrat and does not think the Democrats make for ideal candidates, he does feel that in this election everyone ought to vote Democrat, even if they themselves aren’t Democrat and don’t believe in the Democrat ideals. He feels that they are the only chance that we’ve got to slow down the process. If the Democrats get 15 more votes in the

house, then there will be a Democrat majority, and they will begin to have more power in the government. He says that we should vote for even the worst of Democrats, just to get those numbers. Once they are voted in, he urges people to focus their energy on changing the Democrats into a strong opposition group.

Besides the election process, Lindorff had some other innovative ideas of how to create change. He recommends that people picket the mainstream media to let them know that the public isn’t happy that they aren’t doing their jobs. He also feels that change can happen at a local level. People tend to be so disconnected from even their neighbors. If people got to know those who live around them, and engage in more political discussion, information would become more widespread.

Another point that Lindorff brought up is that most of the poll monitors are Republicans. Anyone can be a poll monitor, but Republicans tend to be more active than Democrats. If only Republicans are there when the poll booth closes, corruption is bound to emerge. Democrats need to be playing an active role in politics too. Anyone who wants to volunteer at the polls can go to their town hall and sign up for that. In addition more progressive individuals should try to get elected to their town committees so that they can create change at the local level.

Lindorff’s most important suggestion is to stay hopeful. He feels that “negativity is a self-fulfilling prophecy”. We need a positive outlook to be able to believe that change is possible, and to have the strength and energy to make it happen. Lindorff does not feel that getting Bush out of office will solve all of our nation’s or world’s problems, as so many of them are rooted in our institutions, but it is a good start towards progress.

If It Bleeds, It Leads

by Katy Laguzza

If it bleeds, it leads: the motto for today’s photojournalists. It is interesting, then, that for their founding fathers—the original photojournalists—photographs of the dying or the dead were unthinkable. The first newspapers to display printed photographs were released in 1880, and the first photographs were either of landscapes or bored soldiers. Of course, photographers then had to ensure that their subjects would stand still long enough for the photograph to be taken. Today’s photographers are not bound by such limitations. Today, if someone is shot in the forehead, the moment can be captured on film—just like that.

Photojournalism became immensely popular during the 1940s—WWII presented countless opportunities for disturbing photography. The common idea of the time was that if a photograph is shocking enough, everyone will finally understand how senseless war is. Everyone will be inspired to realize that war is a product of insanity and barbarism, and will act to end it immediately. This theory, obviously, is not exactly applicable to the real world. Disturbing and vivid photographs are common place today, and the prospect of a human-populated planet Earth without war is unthinkable. Why, then, do photographers continue to shock their audiences?

There is the issue of prurience—deriving sexual pleasure from looking at or thinking about someone else’s body. And, as Goethe says: “Thinking is more interesting than knowing, but less interesting than looking.”

The human body is beautiful. All forms of art will demonstrate how lovely the human body is to look at,

to draw, to sculpt. Human beings seem to have an instinct for distinguishing such beauty and presenting it through art. Human beings also, however, seem to have a similar instinct for cruelty. Are these two instincts related? Classical art focuses on the perfection of the human body, yet it simultaneously, in some cases, focuses on the destruction of such perfection. Even modern religious art blends the human body with beauty and suffering. The many portrayals of Jesus on the cross, for example, show a pain that leads to divine sacrifice and exaltation.

Suffering of the human body is portrayed in art as a spectacle; the body is typically surrounded by people who are either participating, watching, or indifferent to the torture being inflicted, as if the torture were a force that can not or should not be stopped. The person viewing the artwork is caught in a voyeuristic dilemma: yes, mutilation of the human body is bad, but here it is portrayed in art, and it is surprisingly captivating, even nauseatingly beautiful.

Photographs, voyeuristic by nature, are also known for their presentation of human suffering. Could this desire for the pleasure of watching the human body, in all its beauty, become mutilated and abused, be a motivating force behind humanitarian photojournalism? This raises some very disturbing moral questions...certainly something to keep in mind the next time you open up the newspaper or turn on the television.

SOURCES:

The Fear of Looking or Scopophilic-Exhibitionistic Conflicts by David Allen
Regarding the Pain of Others by Susan Sontag

Political Cartoon



MARRIED TO THE SEA. by Drew and Natalie Dee. marriedtothesea.com

Hypocrisy is not an Issue

by Alexander Kobulnicky

The main issue, this campaign season is hypocrisy, whether you like it or not. You might have hoped it was the war in Iraq, or the budget deficit or something but no, it had to be hypocrisy. It's not very surprising. Iraq is a huge complicated issue, with no good solutions, and getting worse all the time. Anybody who tries to talk about Iraq in more than the stupidest terms opens himself up to all kinds of attacks. The same is true of terrorism, abortion, taxes, and anything that

might matter.

Hypocrisy is a really easy charge to bring. Here's how to do it: Go through a politician's record, and find an instance where he said X. Then look for something he did that seems to contradict X. Then all you need is the money for political ads, and you're done. You can do 5 months of campaigning in 5 minutes. And nobody can fault you. After all, your opponent really did betray his principles. It's all there in black and white.

This is not an uplifting way to run a campaign. The most obvious shortcoming is that it works against everyone. Politicians are busy people. They have to go to lots of events and make lots of speeches, and speak off-the-cuff all the time. And because it is a politician's job to agree with 50% of the electorate, a lot of weird political positions are going to get jumbled together. If a politician supports the war in Iraq, and at the same time supports the government of Saudi Arabia, some

people will want to say he's a hypocrite. "You can't oppose dictators in one place and prop them up elsewhere," they'll say.

Well, yes you can. Politicians are under no obligation to be intellectually consistent. They are mouthpieces of their party, and you can't get 50 million people to adopt one set of principles. If the Republican base wants war with Iraq and also cozy relations with the Saudis, who is Sen. Jack Nobody (R-Nowhere) to defy them? At the same time, Rep. Jane Somebody (D-Big City) has to vote for legal abortion and go to Catholic church, no matter how many contortions that requires. What else can they do? Bucking your party works for guys like Ron Paul or Joe Lieberman, but the country can only stand so many mavericks.

The hypocrisy party is at its worst during sex scandals, and the Foley scandal is no different. Just like "it's not the sex, it's the lying" of the 1990's, all the furor this time is about how a gay pederast like Foley could belong to the Republican party. Fundamentalists and liberals alike are upset that Republicans claim to be the party of God, but are actually sexually harassing pages.

This misses the point entirely. Would the religious conservatives be relieved if Foley had run, and won, on a platform of lewd instant messages? If you're bothered by his social conservatism, would you be pleased to find out that Foley was pure and innocent all along, while the real harassing was done by Rep. John Libertine (D-CA)? The consequences would be the same, but the addition of hypocrisy seems to make it extra sour for some people.

Hypocrisy, even in normal people, is annoying at worst. It is possible for people to have consistent principles, although harder than you might think, and when they go against them, we tend to think they have let us down somehow. It's not obvious to me exactly how it's bad when people disobey their own moral rules (especially if those rules are themselves wrong), but lots of people put "no hypocrites" on their list of qualities to look for in a friend, so it must be bad.

But the rules we apply to our friends just don't apply to public servants. You can't trust politicians, because they're just not like you and me. We are free agents, but they are, professionally at least, just creatures of their constituents. So go ahead. Demand that politicians stop being mealy-mouthed, stop disguising their true natures, and act like they say. Either these political saints will go down to hilarious defeats, or we'll start electing morons who really do believe that Iraq had WMDs. What is it you really want here?

For more delightful commentary from Alexander, see his blog apk01004.blogspot.com



Fashion in the land of make-believe

by Dora Wilkenfeld

I'm late, I'm late! To write a review of London fashion week, that is. It's already all over and croissant crumbs and satin scraps are flying hither and thither from Paris, but we must press on--and back--to the misty memories of yesterweek. Won't you come with me?

Many of the London designers built on New York's idea of the perfect spring trend: blossom. Both delicate apple-blossoms in April, and Blossom, portrayed by Mayim Bialik were paraded down the runway. I hope you all remember that bastion of floppy early-90s fashion, because we are about to go screaming down the paths she so generously laid for us. Richard Nicoll, take us away!

In case you've managed to put 1993 completely out of your mind sometime during the intervening years, Mr. Nicoll's pleated grisaille trousers and egg-shaped polka-dot suits, billowing out at the hips and nipped in at the ankles, serve as the perfect memory-refreshers of that amply unflattering time.

Even local labels like Beckerman seized on the Blossom references for spring. Did the English even have Blossom? Actually, thinking about it, I can see that not bearing witness to the original show is probably the only valid reason to resurrect its titular character on the runway.

But wait! What's that tiny door I spy? Press your dripping-wet eyeball to the keyhole, and you'll see Allegra

Hicks', Emma Cook's, and Roksandra Lincic's living flowers, all dressed in whitework and exploded tulle. These pale blooms make perfect foils for Giles Deacon's furry borogove dress, and even moreso for Gareth Pugh's wearable sculpture, molded of PVC and highly reminiscent of an S&M-tinged jabberwock.

What if you're not particularly suited to either blossom- or Blossom-dressing? Why, simply allow Ms Cook's girl detective to scout out some other highfalutin duds for you. Her neat little plaid suit of swing jacket and bermuda shorts, complete with a highly Sherlockian hat rakishly tilted over her forehead, needs only an over-size magnifying glass to complete the ensemble.

I myself aspire to wear Tata Naka's circus dresses. I want them immediately. Maybe not the yellow harlequin jester costume, but the vintage print of manly Victorian bicyclists, applied to a tented dress, will suit my big top admirably.

Tata Naka's peach chiffon chemise would be perfectly suited for stunt riding bareback on silver stallions...

And their white dress painstakingly embroidered with dancing acrobats and brawny strongmen is a perfect gown for the ringmaster's wife.

Meanwhile, matchy-matchy legging outfits hearken back (again) to the bloodthirsty reign of Queen Bialik, Blossom I. Matching your stretch-pants to your oversized T-shirt—noth-

ing says you've regressed to a moment of early-nineties idiocy quite like it. Not only are the C-Neon iterations matchy-matchy, they also tell a story: perhaps you love the sound of key-tars so much, you must advertise the fact upon your leggings? C-Neon has you covered for spring.

Basso & Brooke get into the act as well, with their jumbled-jungle prints resembling nothing so much as the illustrations for the book Jumanji. Mix and match to your heart's content, and be secure knowing that while you might stand out in the concrete jungle, you'd fit right in at Sore-Thumb National Park.

Personally, if I had Girl Sherlock on the case, she would no doubt bring me Jeremy Scott's Mount Rushmore dress. The iconic busts of American democracy's most mythic figureheads, formed magically out of tightly pleated chiffon, rest directly above the wearer's bust, and seem to say, "Our eyes are up here."

So, as we step back through the London looking glass, what can we honestly say we've learned?

Well, love is always in season, as Giles Deacon and Gareth Pugh in their custom t-shirts, each advertising and praising the other, show us. So whether you're prancing around in whitework florals or a slick layer of frightening PVC next spring, don't forget eternally fuchsia-haired freak-fashion doyenne Zandra Rhodes' parting words to her adoring crowd:

THIS SPACE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK.

CAPITALISTS ON PATROL



Boy Scouts of America Face Fascist MPAA Plot

by Damon Yakovleff

Fascism (sometimes known as corporatism) is essentially an ideology which promotes a fusion between different spheres of society to form a unified whole. This involves substantial integration of business, religion, social groups and government – that is, economic with social with political. In addition, it involves substantial persecution of those who resist unification. In our society of increasing privatization the “glue” that holds together the disparate spheres is often found in non-governmental organizations.

One such organization is the Boy Scouts of America, who take significant responsibility in education of our male youth into the neo-fascist new-world-corporate-order. The Boy Scouts of America form a nexus between We the People and the corporate military-industrial complex. The BSA more than almost any other organization fuses traditional religion, para-military training, and pro-corporate capitalist values with pro-statist ideology to create a sub-culture dangerously reminiscent of fascist youth cults of the World War II era.

The latest note of fascist indoctrination comes about as a result of the insidious Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA). According to the Los Angeles Times, the Los Angeles chapter of the Boy Scouts of America has introduced a new patch called

“The Respect Copyrights Activity Patch”. With the help of the MPAA, the LA chapter has drafted requirements which include “participate in several activities including creating a video public-service announcement and visiting a video-sharing website to identify which materials are copyrighted. They may also watch a movie and discuss how people behind the scenes would be harmed if the film were pirated.”

While this new badge is a dangerous reminder of the power corporations have in our society there are several points I can make in the BSA’s favor. First of all, they are to be commended for not including in the new badge requirements assignments to police the internet including going to file-sharing websites and reporting violations to the authorities – as the Hong Kong Scouting organization has done. Second of all, the LA Times is mistaken in calling this a new badge a “Merit Badge”. Merit Badge’s must be approved by the national scouting organization, and cannot only apply to one district. Hopefully, this badge will never see life as an actual merit badge but will go into the dustbin of obscure badges that clutter local Boy Scout chapters. If there’s anything that can sink this fascist MPAA ploy, it is the conservative nature of the BSA itself.

PLEASE DO NOT DEFILE THIS NICE CLEAN
PAPER WITH YOUR DIRTY FINGERTIPS

NO LOITERING.

BISON BISON BISON

by John Schreiber

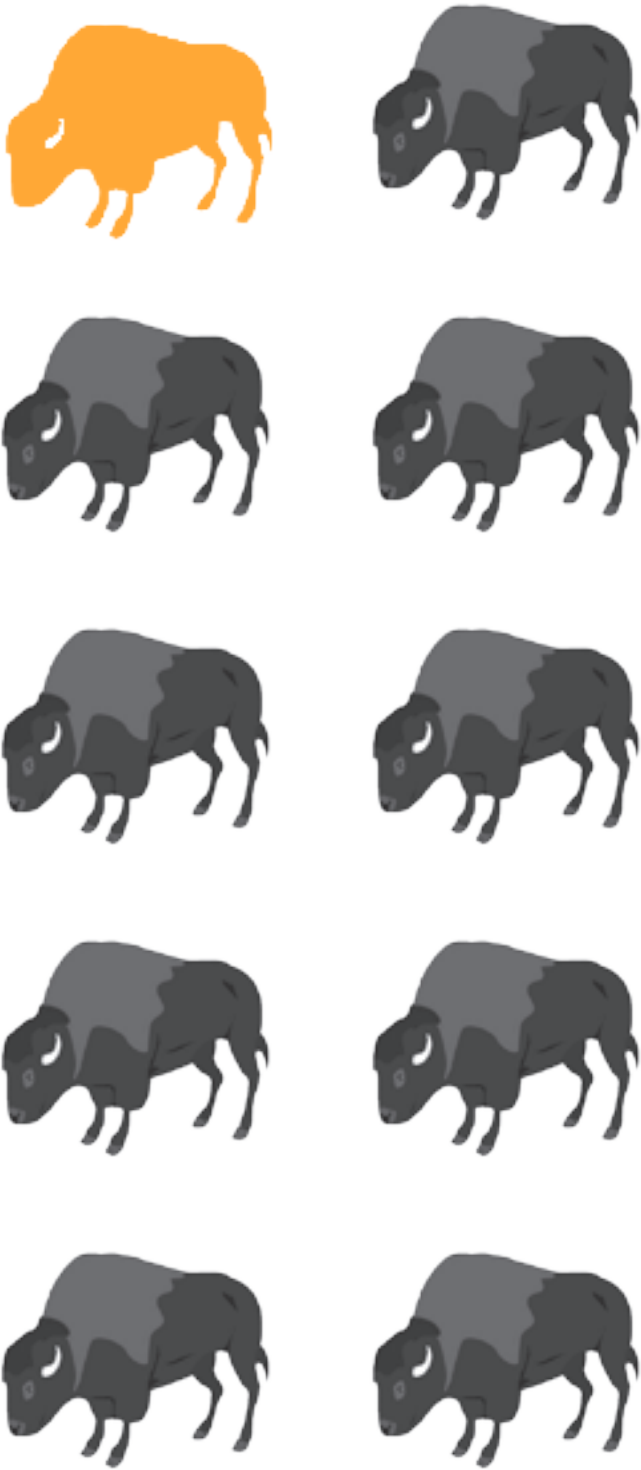
The American Bison. The world’s 3rd largest wild cattle species, the largest terrestrial land animal in north America. At one point, the American Bison was the most numerous large terrestrial animal. This Noble beast, present in two subspecies, the Wood Bison(Bison bison athabascaae), the larger of the two, and the smaller, more repetitive Plains Bison (Bison bison bison), is also a key element of the English language’s coolest sentence.

Buffalo buffalo buffalo Buffalo buffalo buffalo buffalo. Wow, you ask, is that even a sentence? Dear reader, I assure you it is. First, we need to define Buffalo. According to WordNet 2.1, from the Princeton Cognitive Science laboratory, buffalo means, “(n) American bison, American buffalo, buffalo, Bison bison (large shaggy-haired brown bison of North American plains)” as well as, “(n) Buffalo (a city on Lake Erie in western New York (near Niagara Falls))” and, perhaps most importantly, “(v) buffalo (intimidate or overawe)”. Now we have three seperate means for the word buffalo, all three of which are present in this sentence. The first, is Buffalo, as in Buffalo, New York. The second, buffalo, a shaggy bovine from the great plains, third, a verb meaing intimidate. Now, to make sense of this sentence, lets make some substitutions. First thing, we will replace Buffalo, mean-

ing the third cleanest city in America, according to reader’s digest, with its Canadian neighbor, Hamilton. This gives us the sentence Hamilton buffalo buffalo Hamilton buffalo buffalo buffalo. Does this make more sense? Most likely, no. Lets make the final substitution, replacing the verb buffalo with intimidate. Hamilton buffalo intimidate Hamilton buffalo intimidate Buffalo. Does that make more sense? Maybe a little. Lets reorder the words, and maybe add some to make more sense. Buffalo from Hamilton intimidate buffalo from Hamilton who themselves intimidate other buffalo. Is that any better? I hope so. Now, you may begin to see that this sort of silliness could go on forever. It very well could. It turns out that any sentence, composed entirely of buffalo, is a valid sentence.

Next time, the Use-Mention distinction

References
Wikipedia
The Language Log
WordNet 2.1



STOP. DO NOT TURN THIS PAGE UNTIL INSTRUCTED BY YOUR TEACHER.

Beyond Sympathy

by Katy Laguzza

When a person opens up a letter from a humanitarian relief agency and reads about such terrible suffering across the world, there is usually only one response: sympathy. We feel bad for the poor person who doesn't have enough money for food, and we hope that our dollar donation helps him with his troubles. Or perhaps we will travel one summer to the person's country, and establish a relief agency, and help him and his family in that way.

It does not matter how one wants to express sympathy: the problem is that sympathy is not the appropriate response.

How, though, can this be? Without sympathy, people would never help other people at all! What is our sympathy really, though, that it should be satisfied by donating a dollar or building a relief agency? Could it be, perhaps, an artificial feeling to replace an even more personal, disturbing one?

The average human being feels sympathy automatically, yet when continuously exposed to the same disturbing images and statistics that once aroused his sympathy, he will lose his sympathetic tendencies and become "normal" again. He will argue that "it's just another thing" and that cruelty is "human nature." He will say: "How does the privilege of my seeing their fear and torture make the world a better place?"

Simple: It does not make the world a better place, and the common belief that one can donate out of sympathy yet still continue to live a "normal" life afterward because the world is now "a better place" is a false one that is often encouraged by humanitarian groups and news agencies. Why? Because they need the money. Humanitarian groups need donations in order to function; they will advertise for money and aid however they can. What they tend to neglect in their documentaries or pamphlets, however, is that human rights issues are not natural disasters, nor should they be treated as such.

There is no humanitarian crisis that appears without warning. The geno-

cide in Sudan did not arise overnight. The previous civil wars and the history of the country are not mere historical facts "of interest." The humanitarian groups that rush into the middle of high conflict to bring food and water are not the heroes, nor are the corrupt government officials who are ordering the destruction of towns the villains. Human rights issues are extremely complicated—yet it is rare that a humanitarian group will be caught saying this.

People will not donate money if they realize how deep and complicated the crisis is. People will not donate money if they realize how global the crisis is. And, certainly, people will not donate

money if they realize how responsible they themselves are in prolonging the crisis. People must be pushed to realize and accept their responsibility in the world. Only then will the actual problems begin to be solved.

How to get to this point? Step One: we need to stop pretending that sympathy is enough.

SOURCES:
"Knowing Enough Not to Feel too Much" by Stanley Cohen
"Exhibiting Terror." by Lindsay French
"Emergency Response as Morality Play" by John Hammock
Regarding the Pain of Others by Susan Sontag



DOOM by Vadim Gershman

Democratizing Education Network Launches National Campaign for Free Higher Education

by D.E.N.

Monday, October 23, was the official start date for a new campaign launched by the Democratizing Education Network, a national coalition of students, faculty, staff, and community members fed up with rising tuition costs and education cuts.

"This week we're targeting corporate officials to insist that they start supporting higher education as a fundamental right and social good," says Lindsey McCluskey, an undergraduate at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. "This week is only a beginning."

Public funding and access to higher education are dropping off at a staggering rate. A generation ago, the public shouldered more than twice the burden for funding higher education than it does today. Meanwhile, tuition has increased at rates three-to-six times inflation, and student loans and debt have replaced the grant system of the 1970s.

"These education cuts and tuition hikes are very painful to young people and they are costing America,"

says Ben Manski, a Liberty Tree Fellow specializing in higher education policy, "And the saddest thing about this situation is that the public didn't ask for it; the only voices at the state and national capitols speaking up for education cuts are those belonging to the corporate sector."

Most recently, in its 2007 budget, the Bush administration called for cutting spending for most financial aid and other college programs to their 2006 levels, holding back the maximum Pell Grant at \$4,050 for the fifth year in a row, and keeping spending flat on the Work Study and Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants Programs, among others. Similar cuts are expected at the state level across the country.

During the week of October 23-27, [blank] hundred high school, college and graduate students, faculty, staff, and community members joined in a 'Virtual March on Corporate Lobbyists' to reverse the current education cut trend.

"We're at a crisis point. We demand

full public funding for higher education." said Professor Todd Price of the National Louis University system.

Critics like Price argue that when public funding is cut, administrators raise tuition and decrease financial aid, making higher education inaccessible to low- and middle-income people and increasing the debt burden on college graduates. Furthermore, administrators respond to funding cuts by relying more and more on low-wage and contingent labor, decreasing the quality of teaching and learning. And administrators also seek funding from for-profit corporations whose interests and financial influence often contradict the public purposes of higher education.

Katie Gregory, an undergraduate at the University of Connecticut, says she helped organize the week of action because, "I can't sit by while political and educational leaders mortgage our future. I am calling on the corporate lobby to stop pushing education cuts and corporate tax breaks, and I'm calling on politicians to stand up to the

lobbyists."

The virtual marchers aren't merely against further cuts in higher education funding. They are promoting an alternative. In 2001, it cost 32 billion US to pay for the full cost of tuition and fees for all students enrolled in 2 and 4-year degree-granting institutions of public higher education. The Democratizing Education Network (DEN) supports, among other things, eliminating tuition at public institutions by fully supporting them with public financing. Funding for quality free higher education is available, DEN activists say, pointing to the 2 billion US poured weekly into the occupation of Iraq, as well as to the declining share of taxes shouldered by corporations and the wealthy.

To find out more about the Virtual March on Corporate Lobbyists and for more information please visit the Democratizing Education Network's website: <http://www.DemocratizingEducation.org>

The Security-Industrial-Congressional Complex

by Robert Higgs

Bringing our fellow Americans to a greater understanding of the evils of a government-dominated society and the virtues of a free society has always been difficult and frustrating work. It's no wonder that Albert Jay Nock likened it to Isaiah's job. People are easily misled by promises of government salvation, especially when they are consumed by fear for their physical safety or their economic security. Making matters even more difficult is the state's co-optation of a large number of people who have discovered that in the United States the rise of Big Brother offers enormous opportunities for personal enrichment – fascism's greatest advantage over socialism.

The potential for making off with such loot has long been appreciated in connection with the military-industrial-congressional complex (MICC), and recent years have witnessed another great bonanza there. Between the fiscal years 2001 and 2006, Department of Defense (DoD) outlays, excluding payments to military personnel, increased from \$217 billion to \$366 billion, or by 69 percent (49 percent after the DoD's generous allowance for inflation). Nearly all of this money finds its way into the pockets of the owners, employees, and suppliers of military-contracting companies. We are not likely to win many converts to the cause of liberty in this crowd.

Alongside this entrenched predatory monstrosity, the government has built during the past five years a completely new and even more menacing apparatus, which I call the security-industrial-congressional complex (SICC). According to Paul Harris's September 10, 2006, report in the *Guardian*: "Seven years ago there were nine companies with federal homeland security contracts. By 2003 it was 3,512. Now there are 33,890. The money is huge. Since 2000, \$130 billion of contracts have been dished out." Harris adds: "With so much money on offer and such riches being made, there is a powerful economic incentive to exploit the threat to America. The homeland security industry has an army of lobbyists working for its interests in Washington. It grows bigger each year and they want to keep the money flowing. America is in the grip of a business based on fear."

I tracked one of Harris's sources to the informative Web site of the Center for Public Integrity. If you want to become truly discouraged about the prospects for liberty, spend some time perusing the center's voluminous data on the lobbyists, their clients, the



amounts of money being spent, and so forth. According to these data, the number of companies and other organizations registered as lobbying the federal government with regard to homeland security increased from 3 in 2001 to 671 in 2004 (the latest year for which the center has compiled such data). Small wonder that Alex Knott, manager of the center's Lobby Watch project, declares: "All this money in the industry is just up for grabs. It's like a gold rush."

No gold rush, however, ever involved the massive amounts of money now on tap in the SICC. To gain an appreciation of the contours of this piratical apparatus, visit the Web site of Government Security News (GSN), an online publication that bills itself "the newspaper of record for government security." In only the few issues I examined, I discovered enough material to throw any sane person into a funk of despair for the cause of liberty. In an August 2006 issue (vol. 4, issue 12), for example, one finds a beautiful advertisement in full color with the headline, "Looking for Billions in Upcoming Government Contracts?" Underneath a pie chart depicting the dimensions of the various categories of loot up for grabs, the text continues: "Knowing where to look is half the challenge. Federal, State and Local Government IT Spending Will

Exceed \$70B in 2007. What are you waiting for?" After which the reader is directed to a Web site "to learn more about System Integration contracts and who's winning." You can be sure that the winners do not include the taxpayers in general or the citizens whose rights are being suffocated by the fear-exploiting opportunists who are rushing to get rich by supplying goods and services to the Surveillance State.

Among the many fascinating features in GSN are "Around the Country," which describes contracts placed in various states (extensive geographical spreading of government contracts, long an attribute of the MICC, is a telltale sign of congressional intervention), "Contracts," which gives the details of recent awards, and "Business Opportunities," which describes "recent and upcoming government solicitations." In the August 2006 issues, GSN features an eye-popping list of leading SICC companies, which range from obscure firms such as 4D Security Solutions, Alutiq, and Cernium to familiar names such as Boeing, Diebold, Northrop Grumman, and Lucent Technologies. Come one, come all. The only losers are the citizens' wallets and their liberties.

As in any other dynamic industry, the SICC firms are being brought together in trade shows to display and

tout their new wares. (If you've never checked out the trade publications and shows in the MICC, you don't really know the meaning of gruesome, slick yet disgusting advertising.) Thus, the GSN for August 2006 contains an ad for a massive trade show to be held at the Jacob Javits Convention Center in New York on October 24–25. There you can "source new products and solutions, make new contacts and gain critical industry knowledge." The participants will include "9,100 industry professionals" and "more than 400 leading exhibiting companies," including Bosch, Brinks, Honeywell Security, Panasonic, Tyco, and many others.

GSN also makes available a job placement service, where employers and employees can find one another. Among the nearly two thousand jobs listed, those for systems and software engineers, IT managers, and other techie types loom largest, but other sorts of jobs are available for you and me – well, truth be known, probably not for me, but surely many takers will come forth to occupy these well-paid positions.

After all, the U.S. government is sparing no expense ostensibly to protect all Americans from every known form of threat and from many threats yet undreamt of, too. Americans expect nothing less from their government, which constantly presents itself as their savior of first resort. Strange to say, however, no one seems especially distressed by the bogus quality of most of the goods and services being procured under the rubric of "homeland security," a nebulous objective that now elicits – not by accident, but by design – little more than a gigantic exchange of political pork for items that merely purport to protect Volk und Vaterland.

For present purposes, however, the bad news is that the owners and employees of the SICC firms are not likely to have any interest in joining a movement to restore our lost liberties. On the contrary, these people are literally Big Brother's little brothers and sisters. However unwittingly, these private-sector facilitators and handmaidens of the government's pervasive invasion of everyone's privacy have formed a new bulwark against those who seek to divert the American people from their headlong rush into tyranny.

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The Voting Ritual

by Butler Shaffer

What is the ballot? It is neither more nor less than a paper representative of the bayonet, the billy, and the bullet. It is a labor-saving device for ascertaining on which side force lies and bowing to the inevitable. The voice of the majority saves bloodshed, but it is no less the arbitrament of force than is the decree of the most absolute of despots backed by the most powerful of armies.

~ Benjamin R. Tucker

November 7th – like any other date in history – has born witness to birth dates and events with both positive and negative connotations. On the affirmative side, it is the birthday of Albert Camus and Konrad Lorenz. On the other side of the ledger, it is also the birthday of Heinrich Himmler, the date of FDR’s election to a fourth term as president, and the date on which Anne Hutchinson was banished from the Massachusetts Bay Colony as a “heretic.”

This November 7th will also be the date of the forty-second anniversary of my non-participation in the voting process. I can assert that I have been “clean” from the politicoholic addiction for over four decades. I have no intentions of ever again sneaking into an enclosed booth – that serves the same purpose of hiding one’s embarrassing habits as those found in an adult bookstore – to conspire with a multitude of others to despoil you of your liberties or property.

I shall, of course, continue to be asked by some of my colleagues and students why I am not wearing one of those little stickers – reminiscent of bird-droppings – that reads “I voted.” Mark Foley will have to endure far less opprobrium for his actions than do those of us for whom it has become known that we are, as a matter of principle, opposed to the practice of voting. “Are you apathetic?”, or “did you just forget to register?”, or “are you making a protest against the quality of candidates?”, is the usual litany of responses I get to my non-voting stance. “Apathy is not something I care about one way or the other,” I reply, as my inquisitor heads off fearful of contemplating the unthinkable: that someone may be philosophically opposed to the democratic process!

As others go forth to participate in this silliest of all rituals – designed to convince members of the boobeoisie that they are really running the political zoo – I shall be engaged in more productive pursuits, such as picking the lint out of my navel.

The media priesthood has already begun the chant: if there is something wrong with the political system, we need to go to the polls to fix the problem. One of the media stalwarts has his own solution: “go to the polls and vote out every incumbent.” Don’t dare

consider, of course, that there may be something fundamentally dysfunctional about the system itself. If drinking a quart of Scotch each day has given you cirrhosis of the liver, don’t bother with changing your habits, just change to another brand of Scotch!

We need to remind ourselves of Albert Einstein’s admonition: “we can’t solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.” Trying to reform the political process makes no more sense than trying to reform the carnivorous appetites of jungle beasts. If it is your desire to put an end to the violent, destructive, corrupt, and dysfunctional nature of government, stop wasting your time by focusing on the current management of the system. Rather than dutifully going to the polls to select from a narrow list of options provided you by political interests that you neither know nor control, you might want to inquire into who is providing the cast of characters – and writing the script – for a performance you are expected not only to attend, but to cheer.

To create a system which, by definition, enjoys a legal monopoly on the use of force, and then allow that system to become the judge of its own authority, is an error of such enormity that one can only wonder why grown men and women would be surprised to discover such powers being “abused.” Creating the system is the abuse. Directing our criticism to members of the present cast while overlooking the backers of the play – who have substitute performers waiting in the wings – exceeds the bounds of innocence. It is like placing a bowlful of candy in front of a number of small children, and expecting the candy not to be touched in your absence.

The media guru who advocates voting out all incumbents has doubtless picked up on a widespread mood of despair within the American public. From my conversations with students and co-workers, numerous e-mails I receive, as well as seeing television interviews of people, I sense an attitude that has been expressed to me in so many words: “I know what you say is true, but what can we do about it?” There is no expectation that another candidate or political party can remedy the problems such people see. Knowing that there is nothing within the “system” that can produce a reversal of what politics has become, they have given up.

It is easy to understand this sense of frustration on the part of people who may be on the verge of discovering that politics – not the candidates – is the problem to be overcome. They have endured decades of “throw the rascals out!” that only provided them another gang of rascals to evict from office in the next election. The fraudulent Ronald Reagan – with his prom-



ise to “get the government off your backs!” – generated massive increases in the size, power, and expense of the state. Newt Gingrich’s “contract with America” quickly revealed itself as but another “contract on America,” and so has the sleight-of-hand show continued up to today. One need only listen to the unfocused gurgling of “Make-No-Waves” Nancy Pelosi – the Democratic Party’s current leading figurine – to discover how irrelevant the outcome of this election portends for the rest of us.

As the Republican Party – with its control over the White House and Congress – reveals its deceitful, corrupt, and destructive foundations, turning to the Democratic Party as an alternative is now seen by most Americans as utterly futile. Increasing millions of people now see the two-party system for what it has always been: two choices of rule offered by a political establishment that doesn’t care one bit which gang prevails at the polls. This is why recent elections have come down to such inane non-issues as Willie Horton’s parole, the pledge of allegiance, John Kerry’s war record, and – presumably – the content of Mark Foley’s e-mails.

The media continues to prattle about the big “revolution” that will take place this November 7th. In order to encourage our participation in this biennial charade, we are being told that the American people have had enough of the duplicity; special-interest corruption; lying; and engorged appetites for police-state surveillance, secret trials, and torture. These same Americans will march to the polls, we are further advised, to vote the Republicans out of power and replace them with Democrats.

But when a Tweedledum Republican is opposed on the ballot by a Tweedledummer Democrat, even a handful of the Faux-News faithful may recognize the fungible nature of the various Republicrats. I have, in recent years, discovered only one member of Congress who is an exception to this, namely, Ron Paul from Texas. It is instructive that Paul – a philosophically principled Republican – has long been vigorously opposed by both the Republican and Democratic chieftains, a

phenomenon that ought to be a tip-off to the identity of the real interests in any election.

I suspect that, like myself, those who have lost their innocence about politics will also be staying home on November 7th. After years of playing the carnival shell-game and losing their egg-money to clever sharpies, many Americans have finally experienced the working definition of “insanity,” namely, “doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.”

But that ever-dwindling minority of Americans who do continue to vote will express their faith in and commitment to the system that is destroying both themselves and their children. They will stagger into voting booths, cast their ballots, and have their Pavlovian conditioning reinforced with the reward of an “I voted” sticker with which to let others know of their devotion to the faith.

But as the decision making of those who do vote will continue to reflect the same confusion and unprincipled base that always accompanies trips to the polls, I suspect that the results will show no substantial change in the current makeup of Congress; that the Republicans will continue to be in control of all aspects of the federal state. The GOP may even gain seats.

For the same reason that Major League Baseball is benefited by the World Series whether the Cardinals or the Tigers win it, the political establishment is served by the outcome of the elections it runs, no matter who the candidate is. We recognize and accept baseball as a game and, since we are generally not required to support it, there is no problem with it. But we have been too well-conditioned in the political mindset to be willing to look at this system and see it for the vicious and involuntary game that it has always been; a game over which we delude ourselves into believing we control with our ballots. After all, as Emma Goldman reminded us, “if voting changed anything, they’d make it illegal.”

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The Trap of History- We've Fallen and We Can't Get Up

by John Bailey

On the afternoon of October 11, in Arjona 339- the "Stern Lounge"- there were not nearly enough chairs.

Dr. Michael Wolffsohn, Professor of History and International Relations at the German Bundeswehrhochschule (University of the Armed Forces), was at UConn to give the lecture "Germany and the Jewish World- History as a Trap", and clearly somebody underestimated the turnout. Students filled the chairs, crowded around the couches and peered in from the hallway, joined by the forces of academia; I spotted my own Hebrew Studies professor, Dr. Stuart Miller, trying to get a good view of the proceedings. Chances are good, of course, that this mighty wave of interest was bolstered by the closeness of the Stern Lounge to the Arjona lecture hall which ten minutes earlier held Dr. Jeremy Pressman's Pol Sci 132 class, which incidentally requires students to attend three speakers related to international relations over the course of the semester. Still, there was plenty of genuine interest in the somewhat cramped room, and for the most part that interest was not disappointed.

After an brief introduction by Dr. Wolfgang Vorwerk, Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany, Dr. Wolffsohn took the podium. One particular point he emphasized early on was that, while he worked at a government organization, he was not himself a government official and would not be speaking as such. His opinions, he said, had often provoked his superiors, but German Grundgesetz, or basic law, prevented them from firing him. "It's proof of how waterproof academic freedom is in Germany," said Wolffsohn. Dr. Vorwerk, who is a government official, noted during his introduction that they often disagree on policy issues, but that isn't stopping anyone from talking about them like civilized people.

Patriotism is a particularly hot buzzword for most Americans, regardless of which side of the fence you happen to trip over. The Germany that Wolffsohn described, however, has a

somewhat more nuanced stance on the matter. After the war, said Wolffsohn, Germany suffered from what he called "Auschwitz Syndrome"- the fact of the matter was that the concept of "Germany" meant fascism, repression, and the Holocaust to many. Even today, our perceptions haven't entirely cleared up. To us, Germany symbolizes power and aggression. They converse by screaming in bizarre words with twelve syllables. They are all beefy guys named Hans, even the women. No small wonder, then, that the majority of Germans since the war have downplayed the flag-waving.

When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, the flags came out purely as a gesture of unity, of the newer, cosmopolitan Germany. Standing up every morning and reciting a 'pledge' while saluting the flag, by contrast, would seem bizarre to most modern Germans. Wolffsohn described himself as a patriot, but only in the sense of being a concerned German citizen. Deification of a nation-state, he argued, is a crime not only against others but also against your own people. He added, with a smile, "Slogans are stupid everywhere."

The patriotism of Israelis, however, is a somewhat different issue. As a people, the Jews have a long history of being stepped on and over, shoved around, and many other colloquialisms for being oppressed. In the most well-known instance of oppression aside from the Holocaust, the ancient Egyptians kept the Jews in unjust slavery for generations. They twice witnessed the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, the material focus of their religious life. Medieval Christianity portrayed Jews as allied with the devil- they've got little horns! Jews in Spain were killed or forced to convert to Christianity and eventually expelled en masse in 1492. It is an equally unsurprising idea, then, that the modern state of Israel often seems over-aggressive towards its neighbors. This is not necessarily a justification for what has been seen as expansionist behavior, but it is perhaps a helpful

explanation in studying the whys of the past and the hows of the future. "Never again", say the Israeli people, and with good reason. Their fear, said Wolffsohn- who is a Jew as well as a German- is that they will again be victimized because they are unable to use their power. Germans, interestingly enough, have the same saying with a diametrically opposite meaning- never again will they be the perpetrators of such horrendous crimes because of their power. Wolffsohn's emphasis on this dichotomy was that although both peoples have learned the proper lessons of history, they still are unable to see eye to eye. This problem is what Wolffsohn described as "the trap of history". In an amusing illustration, Wolffsohn stretched his hands out in front of his chest, saying "After the war, the Germans and the Jews were here. Now," he says, "they are here-" and he moves his hands towards each other, almost coming together but instead they go floating on past, so that they are now no closer and are in fact facing the wrong way.

It makes sense to learn from our mistakes. You might even say it's an elemental component of humanity- we can't avoid learning. Fortunately for us, learning is awesome! It allows us to calculate large numbers and smash atoms. We can cure diseases that we didn't even know about a hundred years ago. I think we can all agree that learning is a Good Thing when done properly. And in this situation, it seems, everyone has learned themselves good. Germany has consistently had "a waterproof pro-Israeli policy" since 1945, said Wolffsohn, going so far as to give them military aid in the form of submarines in 1991. Germany has learned its lesson regarding how it must behave towards the Israeli people.

At the same time, though, Israel is often perceived as a threat. Wolffsohn cited a 2003 European Union poll in which Israel was found to be considered the "biggest international risk" by member nations, and another poll of

the German people which found Israel to be near the bottom of the popularity scale in Germany. Internationally, Israel's behavior is viewed by many as expansionist and over-aggressive, especially in light of recent events. In another poll cited by Wolffsohn, 75% percent of Germans surveyed consider Israel's retaliation against Hezbollah to be a crime. Conversely, 75% of Jews surveyed claim that there was no other option for Israel to take (Wolffsohn did not specify which segment of international Jewry was surveyed). Given the pasts of the nations, both positions are justifiable: Germany is trying to prevent the aggression of a powerful nation, and Israel is defending itself against foreign aggressors. The lessons have been learned and yet everyone is scratching their heads, wondering why the bombs are still being dropped.

Where can Germany and Israel go from here? They have learned their lessons, so what more can they do? Well, for one thing, they can keep learning. Over thousands of years, the great thinkers of Jewish philosophy have proven that the religion is a fecund ground for intellectual and social advancement. German international behavior has come a long way from the hyper-national power politics of the first half of the century. The steps taken by Germany with regard to Israel have been the right ones, and Israel's defense has been, in theory, justified. In order to get back to a level playing field, though, where both sides can really look each other in the face they need to do more than learn history's lessons. The Israelis must defend themselves without encroaching on their neighbors, for without a move towards conciliatory action the international perception of Israel will not change. History has shown the Jewish people that when they give an inch, they will end up losing a mile. The context has changed, though. Germany's policies have signaled its willingness to cooperate, even as the German people have signaled their disdain for Israel's aggression. Often in history, it has been the case that nobody will look out for you but yourself. This will only change if peoples begin to force the change themselves- by trusting. Other nations need to trust that Israel will use its power responsibly, and Israel needs to trust that its neighbors will respect its right to exist.

The next lesson is on the horizon, but until it heaves, gasping, into full view, stability in Middle Eastern- not just Israeli- international relations can never be more than fragile. The lessons of history are themselves the trap. These lessons need to be more than learned; they need, in fact, to be built off of and even discarded when they become obsolete.

Never again, hopefully, will we fall into the trap of history.



MUSICAL ATTACK by Eric Drooker. drooker.com

UConn Free Press

UConn Free Press is an alternative student-run newspaper. We are an anti-profit weekly publication serving the university and local community. We are dedicated to carrying out the tradition of participatory democracy through staff consensus in all matters concerning the paper. Open meetings take place tuesdays, at 6pm in the Student Union, room 324.

We welcome article and art submissions via www.uconnfreepress.org or uconnfreepress@gmail.com. Consider, criticize, and debate.

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- sammy

events

Mondays	8:30-9:30 pm	Between Women - for women who love women.	Women’s Center
Mondays	7pm	Movie Mondays	Rainbow Center
Nov 15	6 - 9 pm	HIV Testing	Rainbow Center
Nov 15	8 - 9 pm	Among Men Group	Student Union Rm 221
Nov 16	4 - 5:30 pm	Internal or Epidermal: Passing and the “Meaning” of Race in Culture and History	TBA, check iaas.uconn.edu/events
Nov 29	8 - 9 pm	Among Men Group	Student Union Rm 221
Dec 2	9am-6:30pm	IMPAACT Conference: “Identifying the Missing Power of Asian Americans in Connecticut”	Student Union

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