

BCA Dispatch

Newsletter of the
Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy

April
2003

I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test: recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to swaraj [self-rule] for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and your self melting away."

—M K Gandhi, 1947

ALLIANCE NEWS

(Continued on page 8 >>)

Chapter Calendar

Special Meeting Date: Thursday, April 24.

Due to mid-month Passover & Easter holidays, the Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy's next meeting will be on **Thursday, April 24th, from 7:00 to 9:15 p.m. at Cambridge Friends Meeting, 5 Longfellow Park (9 minute walk from Harvard Square T station, west on Brattle St.)**

— Program —

● Forum on National-Local Relations ●

A report-back from Alliance council meeting in Washington, by regional representatives Ruth Weizenbaum & Bill Haff.

Also council participants from North Bridge and BCA..

Plus YOU—affiliated or not!

- * Are New England alliances strong enough on our own?
- * What role should National play in relation to chapters and members? Can it make us stronger?
- * How democratic is the Alliance? Does it matter?

* * *

Bring refreshments — call Brit Eckhart at 617-492-1759

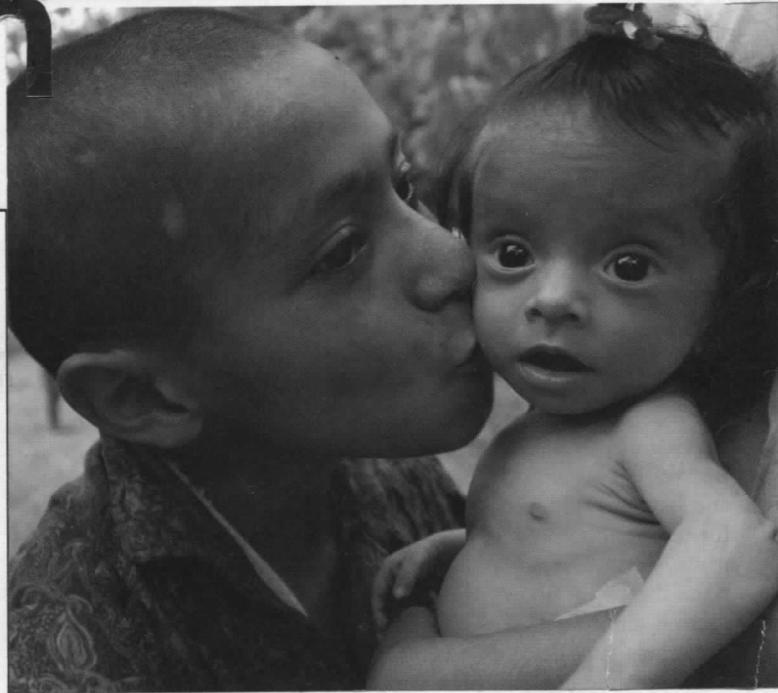
Democracy and the AfD Council

Part 1: The Gathering

by Dave Lewit, AfD ombudsman, Dispatch editor

Cherry and magnolia blossoms. Washington DC was chosen for the Alliance's March 27-30 "in-person" council meeting—one of four each year alternating with monthly teleconferences. The administrative and school annex of the gothic Church of the Pilgrim is set back from DuPont Circle's P Street, an avenue of palatial foreign embassies. The church offered a large, sunny meeting room, a basement kitchen and table area, a seedy-couch-lined den with TV and teen-agers' posters, two or three bunk rooms crowded with double-deck beds (bring your own sleeping bags), and two shower rooms, for \$22 a night per person plus cost of

(Continued, page 5 >>)



WORLD PRESS REVIEW

FAMINE IN ARGENTINA—A boy kisses his infant sister who suffers from malnutrition in impoverished Tucumán province. Argentina produces 8 times the food needed for its 37 million people. But skyrocketing prices have caused widespread famine. In Tucumán alone, at least 12,000 children are undernourished. Why? See Vandana Shiva's article just below.

Neither Prosperity nor Peace Globalization And Its Fallout

by Vandana Shiva, ZNet, 24 March 2003

Globalization was imposed on the world with a promise of peace and prosperity. Instead we are faced with war and economic crisis. Not only has prosperity proved elusive, the minimal economic securities of people and countries are fast disappearing.

Hunger deaths have started to occur in countries such as Argentina where hunger was never a problem, and starvation has returned to countries like India which had driven away famine like the one of 1942 which killed 2 million people under colonial [rule], and had provided food security through public policy shaped by the democratic process of an independent and sovereign country. Even the rich economies of U.S., Europe and Japan are facing a decline. Globalization has clearly failed to improve the well-being of citizens or countries.

It has helped some corporations increase their profits and markets, but many corporations like AOL/Time Warner and Enron whose non-sustainable growth was based on deregulation accompanying globalization have themselves either gone bankrupt or lost their value. Following the globalization path is proving to be a recipe for non-sustainability for the rich and impoverishment and destitution for the poor.

Peace was the other promise of globalization but terrorism and war is what we have inherited. Peace was to be a result of increased global prosperity through globalization. Increased poverty is the unfolding reality. (Continued, page 4 >>)

Germ Warfare Invades UC-Davis Biologists May Drop Humane Research

Nancy Price, AfD co-chair who lives in Davis CA, says the Dept of Homeland Security koshers these grants by washing them thru the Dept of Health & Human Services.

Associated Press, 29 Mar 2003

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) - A Bush administration program to add at least three bioweapons labs is troubling many scientists and arms control experts, who say it can't be good to train more microbiologists in the black art of bioterror. The field is suddenly awash with billions of dollars to combat bioterrorism and much more is promised under President Bush's Project BioShield plan. The money will fund a building boom of at least three new airtight laboratories where scientists in space suits handle the world's deadliest diseases.

At least six universities and the New York State Department of Health are competing for contracts to build one or two labs, where scientists can infect research monkeys and other animals with such lethal agents as the Ebola, Marburg and Lassa viruses. Those African hemorrhagic diseases are often fatal and always painful, marked by severe bleeding.

They'll also likely create new classes of toxins - including genetically engineered ones - as part of the process of constructing weapons they want to defeat. Developing antidotes or vaccines for those toxins might take years. "It's perversely increasing the risk of exposure," said Richard Ebright, a Rutgers University chemistry professor and bioweapons expert who believes one additional lab is all that is needed.

Ebright and others believe labs managed by universities could prove less secure than government facilities, which have had their own security lapses. Many believe the anthrax attacks that killed five people and briefly paralyzed Capitol Hill in 2001 were launched by a scientist with access to one of the government's high-security facilities - called Biosafety Level 4 labs, or BSL-4 for short. Federal investigators searched a former apartment of one such microbiologist, Steven Hatfill, but never stated publicly that he was a suspect. Hatfill has denied involvement.

In his state of the union speech in January, President Bush called for nearly \$6 billion to make vaccines and treatments against potential bioterror pathogens. The National Institutes of Health bioterrorism budget, meanwhile, has increased 500 percent this year to \$1.3 billion - a large part of which will be used to build at least three labs.

Government officials and leaders of universities vying for the bioterrorism largesse are unapologetic.

NIH officials say that only two of the five U.S. facilities equipped do such work are effectively in use today, and they're overburdened. One is at the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta - the only place in the United States that handles live smallpox. The other full-scale lab is the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases at Maryland's Fort Detrick. The government is already going ahead with additional labs at Fort Detrick and in Hamilton, Mont. ...

One of the byproducts of such endeavors will be the study of emerging diseases like the West Nile virus, which has infected 4,000 people and killed 274...

But mistrust runs deep, especially in the California college town of Davis. Lobbied intensely by vocal residents, the city council voted to oppose the school's application to build a lab. The Davis protests reached a crescendo in February with the escape of a lab monkey, which is still missing. Davis officials said it was disease-free and probably now dead. Still, the school's \$200 million bid for a BSL-4 lab has been jeopardized.

Government officials insist that the labs will be secure and serve only defensive purposes. But the U.S. military has a history of dabbling in biological agent programs that push up against a 30-year-old international treaty banning them. Most recently, it was revealed that researchers at the Dugway Proving Ground in Utah have been developing anthrax for use in testing biological defense systems.

"He Gassed His Own People" Iran Probably Did It—US Army Study

by Stan Goff, from *The Idiot Prince Will Have His War*

Anyone who has followed the news has heard about "Saddam's" gassing of the Kurds. That's how it is portrayed. Nonetheless, few people have bothered to find out what the truth is, or even to investigate this claim.

Stephen Pelletiere was the Central Intelligence Agency's senior political analyst on Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war. He was also a professor at the Army War College from 1988 to 2000. In both roles, he had access to classified material from Washington related to the Persian Gulf. In 1991, he headed an Army investigation into Iraqi military capability. That classified report went into great detail on Halabja. Halabja is the Kurdish town where hundreds of people were apparently poisoned in a chemical weapons attack in March 1988. Few Americans even knew that much. They only have the article of religious faith, "Saddam gassed his own people."

In fact, according to Pelletiere—an ex-CIA analyst, and hardly a raging leftist like yours truly—the gassing occurred in the midst of a battle between Iraqi and Iranian armed forces.

Pelletiere further notes that a "need to know" document that circulated around the US Defense Intelligence Agency indicated that US intelligence doesn't believe it was Iraqi chemical munitions that killed and aimed the Kurdish residents of Halabja. It was Iranian. The condition of the bodies indicated cyanide-based poisoning. The Iraqis were using mustard gas in that battle. The Iranians used cyanide...

Russia Suspects US Plants Chem-Bio Weapons

If there are claims by coalition forces about discovering weapons of mass destruction...only international inspectors can make a conclusive assessment of the origin of these weapons," Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov said today. "No other evaluation and final conclusion can be accepted." In other words, the Russians believe that any chemical, biological or nuclear weapons found in Iraq by American forces will have been planted there through the desperate reaching of the Bush administration.

— Maria Golovnina Reuters 26 Mar 2003

Show The Whole Truth

Answering, Welcoming a Pro-War Vet

by John Cory, TruthOut (online), 3 April 2003

Dear Steve,

I read your letter to Truthout.com and wanted to write to you. I too am a Vietnam Veteran.

You wrote, "Show the whole truth." And I agree. Show the World Trade Center and the Pentagon carnage and let the record reflect that no Iraqi, no Saddam Hussein, was involved in the despicable acts of 9/11. And in showing the whole truth, let us ask again: Why Iraq?

You referred to Truthout as a "tree hugging liberal." As soldiers, surely you and I share the tree hugging experience of dodging shrapnel and RPGs. We know what it is to hug a tree or wrap our ammo belt around a tree just to hold on as our legs floated in the river and the unseen "enemy" tried to do us bodily harm. As I recall in Vietnam, tree huggers were not just liberals.

You and I are veterans. Veterans of military service and veterans of war. But I take exception to veterans who wrap themselves in the flag as a means to judge and bestow freedom, patriotism, and civil liberties on others. As soldiers, we did our duty as required of all soldiers, to uphold the Constitution. That was the oath we took. That oath did not specify that only those who believed as we did were covered by our tours of duty.

In America, the freedoms enjoyed by its citizens are inherent. They neither have to be earned or deemed appropriate by anyone else. The American birthright was founded on dissent and freedom of speech long before you and I slogged through rice paddies. Black soldiers who fought in WW II served in a segregated military. Native Americans served despite the fact that many were not allowed to vote. And Japanese-Americans served despite interment camps. All of these men served with honor and heroism, fighting for freedoms that they were denied in that place called America.

You are right to say, "It is usually the coward who has given nothing to the protection of the freedoms you enjoy." But the coward is the silent one who dares not speak or face the ostracism of those who wish to bully and coerce. The coward is the one who knows better but chooses the path of least

resistance in order to conform. The coward is the one who evades his legal obligation to his country and yet demands that others pay the price he was unwilling to pay.

No, my friend, dissent is anything but cowardice. Ask our founding fathers.

I believe the VA Hospitals and the entire VA system has failed its veterans miserably. I remember the horrors of VA hospital stays in the Seventies. I remember that it took national news stories to expose the often abominable conditions in VA hospitals across the country. And those were staffed by good old Americans, not "foreigners."

Support the troops you say. Absolutely. But how? By cheering the deaths of innocent civilians? By building memorial walls to the fallen? We know better, my friend. You and I know what waits for these troops in a war where they cannot delineate between civilian and military combatants. We both know that the media that now howls for more and faster war will turn on the very men who fight today. They will call them baby-killers and murderers and mercenaries.

The modern media will not hold the men who started this war accountable, but instead will be judge and jury of the troops on the battlefield.

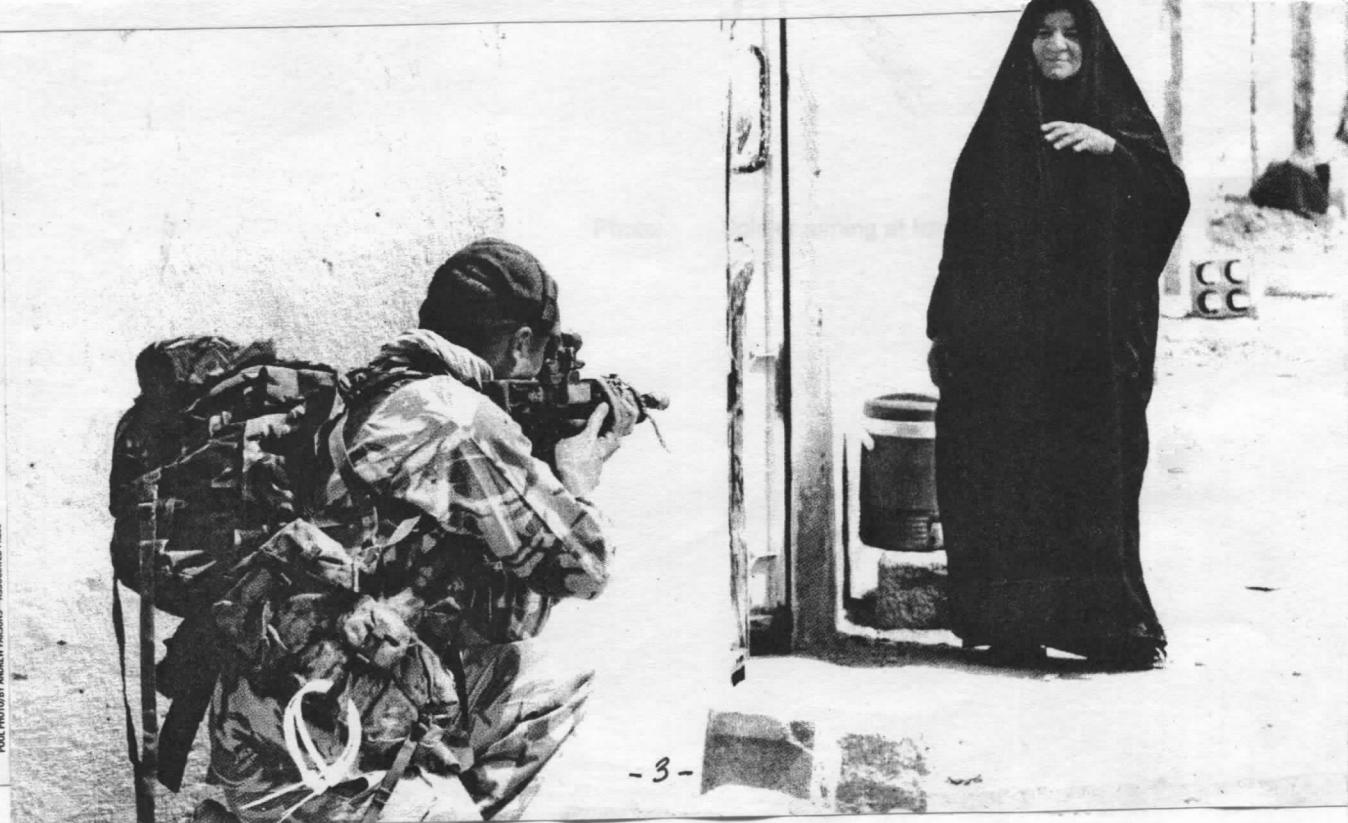
My brother veteran, it is up to you and me to support the troops by ensuring that this government is held accountable. By making every effort possible to maintain our civil liberties and the Constitutional rights set forth in the founding of this country. We can support the troops by not turning a blind eye to the "whole truth."

You and I are veterans. Veterans of the whole sum of war. We have our medals and scars, and have spent more than our fair share of sleepless nights doing the duffle bag rag. We know the long aftermath of war never leaves those who have seen the demon face-to-face. And you and I know that the men who build the altars of war never sacrifice themselves upon it.

I wish you well, my friend. We share the bond of war, and I will always stand proudly beside you because we are brothers of combat—veterans. We will lead the cheers for our returning troops. You and I will spot the empty spaces in the parade and we will share that sadness, because we know that the best use of an army is not to wage war, but to keep the peace.

Welcome home my friend.

—John Cory



GLOBALIZATION FALLOUT Continued from page 1

And economic insecurity and exclusion is creating conditions for the rise of terrorism and fundamentalism..

Economic and political exclusion and the erosion of national economic sovereignty is making many young men turn to terrorism and violence as a way of achieving their goals. The erosion of economic nationalism and the growth of economic insecurity is also providing fertile ground for the rise of right wing fundamentalist politics, with parties using the reality of economic insecurity to fan the flames of cultural insecurity, and filling the vacuum left by the collapse of economic nationalism and economic sovereignty with the pseudo-nationalist agenda of "cultural nationalism".

At the global level, the rhetoric of "clash of civilizations", and the war against Islam performs the same function as the exclusivist political agendas of cultural nationalism and fundamentalist ideology at the national level.

The Convergence of Fundamentalisms

Two forms of fundamentalism seem to be converging and becoming mutually reinforcing and mutually supportive. The first is the market fundamentalism of globalization itself. This fundamentalism redefines life as commodity, society as economy, and the market as the means and end of the human enterprise. The market is being made the organizing principle for the provisioning of food, water, health, education and other basic needs; it is being made the organizing principle for governance; it is being made the measure of our humanity.

Our being human is no longer predicated on the fundamental human rights enshrined in all constitutions and in the U.N. declaration of human rights. It is now conditional on our ability to "buy" our needs on the global marketplace in which the conditions of life – food, water, health, knowledge have become the ultimate commodities controlled by a handful of corporations. In the market fundamentalism of globalization, everything is a commodity, everything is for sale. Nothing is sacred, there are no fundamental rights of citizens and no fundamental duties of governments.

The market fundamentalism of globalization and the economic exclusion inherent to it is giving rise to, and being reinforced and supported by politics of exclusion emerging in the form of political parties based on "religious fundamentalism"/xenophobia/ethnic cleansing and reinforcement of patriarchies and castism. The culture of commodification has increased violence against women, whether it is in the form of rising domestic violence, increasing cases of rape, an epidemic of female foeticide, and increased trafficking in women.

Globalization as a patriarchal project has reinforced patriarchal exclusions. Atrocities against dalits [formerly "untouchables" –Ed.] have also seen an increase as a result of globalization, with higher castes enjoying new power with their integration into the global market place and also wanting to usurp the resources of the poor and marginalized, especially dalits and tribals, for commercial exploitation. Land reform laws which made the land rights of dalits inalienable have been undone. An attempt is under way to undo the constitutional protection of tribal land rights under Schedule V of the [Indian] Constitution.

Women, dalits, tribals, minorities are special victims of the social and economic impact of globalization. New movements of solidarity such as the Indian People's Campaign against W.T.O. are forging new alliances between diverse movements. However, people's movements are being overtaken by the emerging politics of exclusion.

Economic insecurity makes citizens vulnerable to politics based on exclusion. For those in power, or seeking power, a politics of exclusion is becoming politically a necessity. It becomes necessary to fill the vacuum created by the demise of economic sovereignty and the welfare state and to substitute a politics based on economic rights with politics identity. It becomes necessary to deflect public attention away from the negative impact of globalization and to explain the lack of jobs and livelihoods, and the lack of basic needs-satisfaction which result from economic globalization, in terms of competition from "minorities" and "immigrants" for scarce jobs and resources. Fundamentalism and xenophobia emerge as handmaidens of corporate globalization, dividing, diverting and distracting people, and thus providing insularity and immunity to the globalization project.

In India, every vote since 1991 has been a vote against globalization and

trade liberalization which is creating 10 mil- lion new unemployed people every year, is pauperizing the peasantry and disenfranchising the marginalized. This changed in 2002 with the Gujarat elections which followed the massacre of 2000 Muslims and the violent engineering of the electoral agenda away from basic needs to a majority/minority conflict and contest.

The arithmetic guaranteed victory to the party which had created a divide between the majority and minority communities and sown mutual fear and hatred through rapes and killings. This violent and exclusivist agenda is now being developed for all forthcoming elections.

And while the killings were underway, and national concern was focussed on fighting communalism and fundamentalism, the globalization agenda was put on fast forward. Genetically modified organisms were given clearance, patent laws were changed to allow patents on life, a new water policy was introduced based on water privatization, and new policies were introduced to dismantle farmers' livelihood security and people's food security. The 2003 budget has further pushed the globalization agenda, using the diversion of communal and religious divide to dissipate democratic opposition.

In the U.S. and U.K., the war against Iraq has become a convenient diversion from issues of globalization and the rise in unemployment and economic insecurity. A politics of hate is becoming the indirect support for the failed and failing project of globalization.

We need a new politics of solidarity and peace which simultaneously addresses violence and exclusion inherent to globalization, the violence of terrorism and fundamentalism and the violence of war. The different forms of violence and different forms of fundamentalism have common roots, and need a common response. Globalization is intolerant of economic decentralization, economic democracy and economic diversity. Terrorism and fundamentalism are intolerant of cultural diversity. And the war machine is intolerant of the "other" and of peaceful resolution of conflict.

The response to globalization is the protection and defense of our diverse economies at local and national levels. The response to fundamentalism is celebrating our cultural diversities. The response to war is the recognition that the "other" is not a threat but the very precondition of our being.

Imagine how different the world would be if it were based on a philosophy of mutual interdependence instead of the current dominant philosophy which is based on "If I have to be, you must be exterminated" – or "Your existence is a threat to my existence".

In the world based on interdependence rather than domination, exclusion, and extermination, Monsanto would not push a TRIPS [trade related intellectual property rights] agreement that treats as "thieves" the farmers whose seeds Monsanto has patented. Monsanto, Syngenta, Ricetec and other biopirates would recognize that their breeding is based on prior breeding by farmers.

If biotech corporations could see that humanity depends on biodiversity, and food security needs pollinators and diverse plant species, they would not deploy genetically engineering BT crops which kill bees and butterflies, they would not create herbicide resistant plants and wipe out plant diversity.

If President Bush could see the Tigris and Euphrates and the Mesopotamian civilization as ancestors and recognize our common roots in a common evolution, he would not be rushing in to wipe out the historical roots with unmanned bombs and weapons of mass destruction.

If those who control capital could see that their wealth embodies nature's creativity and people's labour, they would not be creating rules of trade that destroy nature and livelihoods.

The fundamentalism of the market and the fundamentalism of ideologies of hate and intolerance are rooted in fear -- fear of the other, fear of the capacity and creativity of the other, fear of the sovereignty of the other.

We are witnessing the worst expressions of organized violence of humanity against humanity because we are witnessing the wiping out of philosophies of inclusion, compassion and solidarity. This is the highest cost of globalization—it is destroying our very capacity to be human.

Rediscovering our humanity is the highest imperative to resist and reverse this inhuman project. The debate on globalization is not about the market or the economy. It is about remembering our common humanity. And the danger of forgetting the meaning of being human. ■

AfD COUNCIL

Continued from page 1

member-cooked food. Not bad, even if beyond the range of many Alliance members, considering travel. AfD founder **Ronnie Dugger** and four present and past members of the executive committee commuted daily from secretary **Sue Wheaton's** suburban Maryland home.

What united us all, including me and several other participants who are not council members, was our mission: *To free all people from corporate domination of politics, economics, the environment, culture and information; to establish true democracy; and to create a just society with a sustainable, equitable economy.* But our informal motto, *The issue is not issues; the issue is the system*, taken from Ronnie's formative 1995 *Nation* article and applied to the Alliance as a system, was obscured in the issues of the moment.

Delicious chili and corn chowder cooked by **Pat Hammann** (PA) and Sue. After this Thursday supper we went upstairs and seated ourselves around the 8' x 12' block of folding tables—17 councillors and from time to time 7 AfD visitors. New member **David Eggers** (MA) sat patiently through three days of discussion. Before setting the weekend's agenda, co-chairs **Nancy Price** (CA) and **Ted Dooley** (MN) invited each participant to take two minutes to share what's on his/her mind—hinting at what might be brought up again in the next three days. Mine included a stock of AfD campaign-related projects to engage members and chapters who are adrift without exciting local projects—local globalization impact forums, local projects to "dismantle" an offensive megacorporation, local campaigns to establish paper balloting, campaigns for total health programs, and local media campaigns—all systemic in my view.

Ruth Caplan (DC), **Nancy Price** and I reported on globalization actions. Ruth and Nancy were fresh back from Kyoto and the 3rd World Water Forum—the official (corporate-backed, UN-backed) conference on worldwide water privatization. Supposedly, the privatizing of water supplies, purification, and piping systems will cut thirst, poverty, and water-borne disease 50 per cent by 2015, while provisioning agribusiness and industry. Evidence on outcomes of privatization tell the opposite story. Ruth and Nancy's civil society advocacy group jangled bells attached to a "lie" placard at many points during official speeches, and took over the podium at one point to voice their concerns. Back at the Church of the Pilgrim, reporting on positive alternatives to corporate globalization, I cited a Russian translation, in process, of *A Common Agreement on Investment and Society*, regional water battles (Lawrence MA, Nottingham NH) and plans for starting "local impact of globalization" workshops (see Action Alerts) and participatory city budgeting (possibly in Burlington VT, Amherst MA, Ithaca NY, or Arcata CA).

Council's main topics for discussion and decision centered on **AfD's financial and membership crisis**. Lack of funds forced some desperate cut-backs in the last two months—executive coordinator **Nick Biddle** worked a month without pay, and then office manager **Stephanie Scadding** was laid off. Happily, Stephanie has agreed to return on April 7, with bookkeeper duties added, since the council voted to continue the Waltham national office and pay one full-time employee. The office of executive coordinator will be vacant—its salary diverted to debt and other payments—but Nick will remain active as an Alliance member in New England establishing "water watch councils" to block

privatization of underground, surface, and piped water. Ronnie will continue to have space in the office suite.

Before the meeting Nick circulated by email an austerity proposal advocating the above arrangement with Stephanie, emphasizing the need to support chapters and regional arrangements, and suggesting a "project review board" to distribute surplus funds which may be realized, granting only one employee, from projected income from dues, new memberships, gifts and grants. Apart from the iffyness of these incomes, such a project review board might engage chapters in internecine competition and distract them from finding sustainable sources of expense money. The proposal was not voted upon, nor was a suggestion to pay field organizers to build chapters and membership. A committee was established, however, to find council representatives from regions not now represented on council, who could also start chapters. Nick's calls have identified 42 existing chapters with contact persons, and a total national membership of 1267—down from 1400 in 1996 or 1997. If people are counted who are active in chapters or regions but don't pay dues to national AfD, the number is probably over 3000.

Ruth Weizenbaum (MA), along with **Bill Haff** (MA), is northeast regional representative on the Alliance council. As spokesperson for the burgeoning membership committee, she reported on progress and urged other council members to participate. Greater numbers and kinds of members are the very essence of a populist movement, and AfD aspires to lead that movement. Even though the AfD bylaws say merely that the council, for its part, shall be responsible "for directing the operations and activities of AfD", councillors know that the Alliance counts for little without the chapters and numbers of members. They know that the chapters constitutionally are autonomous, having merely to sign onto the AfD mission statement, but free to create their own programs—and fund them! Councillors have long agreed that the main task of the executive coordinator, whom they direct, is not to direct the chapters, but to support and coordinate chapter activity.

So Ruth and **Peter Mott** (NY) and the rest of the membership committee want council to encourage membership growth by suggesting and supporting projects which will engage prospective members, and by encouraging the interaction of chapters and of chapter-unaffiliated AfD members in regions. She and especially Bill are stirring up public interest in the Alliance through a **Northeast regional media project**, getting members to commit community access cable TV stations to broadcast Alliance-related taped interviews. This may burgeon into live forums and other cinematic broadcasts. Community access cable, like the Alliance, professes to serve all social groups, so our collaboration should be mutually energizing.

Ruth endorses expansion of the *BCA Dispatch* into a New England regional newsletter, and the development of a New England Alliance web site (see page 8). With reminders from **Garret Whitney** (MA) and **Kati Winchell** (MA), the council is inclined to work with more compact regions, as suggested years ago by **Albert Krebs** (WA), such that NY would be reclassified as "East" along with NJ and PA, while the remainder of the present Northeast would stand as "New England". (And why not the Albany area as part of New England?) The membership committee thus favors synergy—the energy that comes of

members and similar-thinking folks interacting on joint projects. This is a big step toward underlining "democracy" in The Alliance for Democracy. (Continue to Part 2) 

Democracy and the AfD Council

Part 2: The Fulfillment

by Dave Lewit, AfD ombudsman, Dispatch editor

Some folks crow at the mention, in newspapers of national standing, of Alliance persons and events such as the Democracy Brigade voicing clean election demands under the Capitol dome, or our globalization activists contributing to protests against the World Trade Organization. Others are happy just to have the Alliance survive for seven years while other social change organizations have gone under. We have a strong and unique mission—to end corporatism and foster "true democracy". Ronnie's rhetoric in the early days foresaw a million members by now. We must survive—yes, flourish! What impacts have we had? We must make a difference!

Why has the Alliance for Democracy stagnated for years when it comes to the number of active chapters and members nationally? Of course there are *external* forces such as waning incomes, despair over the Gingrich congress still in power, and now the whole US government and the war. But one can argue that these very developments have spurred many people to activism—for example, to join mass demonstrations for the first time. And there have also been favorable external conditions, like the expansion of the internet which has given us access to thousands of organizations and millions of people. And the advent of Google, the magical search engine enabling us in a split second to research—free—anything even in the deep recesses of the web, vaster and more current than the greatest libraries on earth.

It's only the *internal* conditions that we can immediately do something about. Let's consider a current case—call it the Ombudsman Case—to illustrate internal contradictions which may say much about Alliance stagnation.

Six years ago a committee crafted and a year later the AfD convention adopted a **constitution and by-laws which set up a curiously contradictory organizational structure**—a set of autonomous chapters with a central council to somehow "direct" them or "the activities and affairs of AfD". The members rule through (self-selected) "delegates" to annual (now usually biennial) conventions, and the convention selects council members. (Regional representatives on council are selected by regional caucus at conventions, or by mail vote of regional membership if the caucus prefers.) In the rare case of two people contesting an office, unless one is dropped for failing to get 20 per cent of the convention vote, the membership elects one by mail. This is what happened after the last convention in June, 2002.

Readers of the October Dispatch know that member complaints about flaws in the election process prompted the ombudsmen (one of whom is the writer of this article) to act quickly to stop the balloting, correct the flaws, and proceed with a fresh round. Several council members, including one of the candidates, were deeply offended by the ombudsmen's recommendations, which the council later asked the bylaws &

elections (B&E) committee to consider. The balloting was allowed to continue to the deadline and its results were certified by council. In that same meeting the council directed the (mostly offended) B&E committee to recommend changes in rules which would obviate the flaws cited by the ombudsmen.

The flap continued into last month's council meeting in Washington when one offended council member vehemently refused to accept my being "privately admonished" not as ombudsman but as the editor/reporter who failed to place a disclaimer in the Dispatch news article to warn the reader of my dual role and possible bias. A council co-chair had recognized that the council had no authority to "reprimand" or even "admonish" since the office of ombudsman is constitutionally independent of council. The B&E committee did not submit recommended rules changes, but nevertheless did submit a set of seven regulations to restrict and direct the activities of the ombudsmen (see sidebar) in accordance with the bylaw direction to "mediate"—not a conventional function of ombudsmen.

The council argued these proposed regulations for 2½ hours. The very different regulations submitted by the ombudsmen (see additional sidebar) were acknowledged but not coherently argued. Ronnie, who is an at-large member of council, argued that the B&E regulations be adopted for the coming year up to the next AfD convention. The motion failed in a tie vote. Supporters of the motion were indignant, and its opponents were frustrated by having wasted so much time. The ombudsmen later considered these proceedings and decided to take the matter to the AfD membership through the national newsletter *Alliance Alerts*, now under the editorship of Jim Tarbell (rtp@mcn.org). Contrary to their express wishes Ronnie, the former editor, had printed nothing.

This case may reveal much of the dysfunction of the council, and of the national Alliance. Despite concordance on corporatism and democracy, the **council is deeply split on critical issues**. You might call it conservatives (supporting the centrality of council, rule-boundedness, and paradoxically the founder's privilege) and liberals (member-and-chapter-centered, procedurally ad hoc, independent). If you take "democracy" (rule of the people) literally, you might more cynically call it oligarchy and democracy. All of us are "pro-democracy" but we have not publicly deliberated the concept. We are "non-violent" but have not deliberated political "coercion" or "seduction". Many of us support radical ideas (e.g., Ronnie's idea of electing Supreme Court justices to 8-year terms), but we have not deliberated what is "systemic".

More practically, we have not self-consciously demonstrated "brother/sisterhood" and "love", but have instead acceded to the old-time political model of majority voting, Roberts' Rules, competition and exclusion, executive sessions, and so on. Because of such power concerns, councillors' own perceived top needs (Internal Dynamics report, 1999) to *empower members, to reform leadership, and to attend to the whole organization* have been neglected. Paying staff rather than honoring member initiative has been a frustrating preoccupation.

Sociologically, like most middle-class organizations, we have failed to diversify. We have been strict about non-sexism when there is no need to be. On the other hand, we have done little about racial inclusion, youth and householder inclusion, and

inclusion of low-income folks. We hear little about the successful methods of the Industrial Areas Foundation in organizing the oppressed, for example, in the south of Texas or in the Boston area. Our "conservatives" push for legal reforms, while our "liberals" are only now embracing regionalism rather than centralism or charisma, for social and political change in our visible spheres of influence.

Above all, the council needs to be in touch with and listen to the members out there. Canceling one in-person meeting would **release 24 hours of telephone calling time**—multiplied by 20 council members, would provide feedback and involvement with over 500 members, perhaps the entire active membership of the Alliance. What do they know of the Alliance? What are their chapters like? What do they want? Do they want to speak? To serve? Where? How? Will you let them? Will you help?

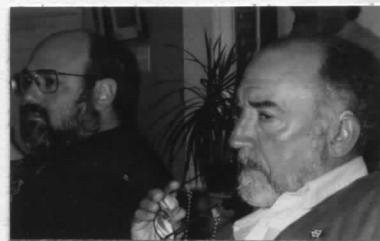
Will you trust these Many to point directions not agreed by the self-selected Few who attend AfD conventions, or the fewer who serve on key committees, or the council? Are you up to balancing or supporting the many views of the present, and visions of the future? Can you find a place to advance your own convictions and actions without ignoring or condemning the others? Are you up to visiting with these folks? Can you enact democracy?



Proposed Ombudsman Role and Responsibilities (by Bylaws & Elections Committee)

The ombudspersons shall mediate disputes within the Alliance in an impartial manner. Their responsibilities are to:

1. Receive concerns and complaints made by any member of the Alliance, protecting the confidentiality of those bringing concerns, if the latter wish for the initial discussion to be confidential.
2. Review all applicable AfD policies and procedures.
3. Contact all parties involved in the dispute to hear all sides of the matter.
4. Determine if Alliance policies and procedures pertaining to the concerns and complaints have been followed.
5. Inform complainants and any one against whom a concern is brought of the outcome of the initial investigation and any recommendations the ombudspersons intend to make.
6. If the matter cannot be resolved through discussion and explanation of applicable policies and procedures, assist the complainant(s) to develop a formal complaint in which their identities must be revealed and the nature and details of their concerns provided to those against whom the complaint is made. If the ombudspersons deem it wise to do so, make a written report to the Council containing the facts and positions of all parties concerned, recommendations regarding application of the policies and procedures, recommendations for any changes or additions they think are needed in policies and procedures, and any other recommendations for appropriate redress of valid grievances.
7. At the time any presentation or report (written or verbal) is made to the Council or officers of the Council, provide the same presentation or report to those against whom complaints have been made and formally notify them of their own right to respond directly to the Council.



From left: Councillors Bill Haff (MA), Vikki Savee (CA), Dolly Arond (CA), Steve Cheifetz (DC), Ted Dooley (MN).

Recommended Job Description for Ombudsmen (by AfD Ombudsmen)

1. The ombudsmen are chosen by the Membership of the Alliance and responsible to the Membership.
2. The ombudsmen observe the effects of policies, procedures, and interactions within the Alliance and raise a red flag when these policies, procedures or interactions seem to keep the system from working fairly or from living up to its democratic ideals.
3. The ombudsmen aim to clarify formal and informal standards of fairness and other ethical standards. They aim to promote helping and inclusion, and to discourage competition among members.
4. The ombudsmen respond to concerns and complaints from members, and may raise issues on their own initiative.
5. Time allowing, the ombudsmen may assist complainants to research policies and foster good practices which may obviate complaints.
6. They will maintain confidentiality as requested by members.
7. They will make recommendations regarding the application of policies and procedures, or for making needed policy or procedural changes, and any other redress of grievances.
8. They will work in the spirit of democratic governance, amplifying the voices of members to ensure that they are heard by Council.
9. They will act neither as adversaries nor spokesmen for Council, but will attempt to ensure that a democratic conversation is on-going within the organization.
10. The ombudsmen are neither lawyers nor mediators, and may advise parties to certain conflicts of such specialized services.
11. They will report their deliberations and views to membership in AfD's official newsletter and listserve, and may comment on fairness issues more generally to the public, e.g., on the Alliance web site. Off the record, the ombudsmen may suggest to members involved in complaints how they may effectively deal with related matters until system changes come about.



From left: Councillors Sue Wheaton (MD), Ronnie Dugger (MA), Ruth Weizenbaum (MA), Nancy Price (CA), Jack VanderVen (OH).

Chapter/Regional News

Plans for our nearly-born web site are to expand it to serve all members and chapters in New England. **Malaika Thorne** will be our webmaster and co-editor with Dave Lewit, with an all-New England editorial board—pending your agreement.

PROPOSED WEB PLAN:

HOME. Welcoming statement, briefly outlining our regional purpose. Navigation buttons on left margin. Perhaps some hot news or event announcements on the right margin, with "more info" links. Also **QUESTION OF THE MONTH**, with last month's answers (esp. from members). For logo perhaps the Paul Revere rider, trimmed to an oval. Perhaps some low-saturation (fuzzy) color images as background, suggesting the prosocial ways we would replace corporate domination.

CHAPTERS. Subcategories right there on home page, one for each active chapter in the region. Another subcategory for sister chapters outside the region, with links (or email forms if they have no web site). Chapters control their own content.

PROJECTS. Save Our Groundwater (mostly NH). Hands Off Our Water (Lawrence MA). Globalization Impact Forums. Anti-War. Election Reform. Media Utilization. Future projects: Responsible Business; Participatory City/County Budgeting; Labor Linkage. **NOTE:** Site visitors should be able to contact any project, to offer volunteer service or ideas.

WORKING GROUPS. Each active working group (including planning and launching) has a niche (internal link) which group members can access with password, and post messages for fellow group members. Instructions to get access. Brief description and update for casual visitor.

ABOUT US. Alliance mission statement, New England regional structure and membership. Contact information. History and aims for development. Link to our three versions of a new Declaration of Independence (from corporate rule, and for renewal of democracy).

NATIONAL ALLIANCE. One paragraph on relations with the national Alliance for Democracy, spelling out our chapter autonomy and national support. Link to AfD web site.

NEWSLETTERS. Current issue of *Dispatch*. Link to current issue of *Alliance Alerts* (national) inside AfD website, and to AA editor outside. Info on other Alliance newsletters regionally and nationally.

ALLIED GROUPS / RESOURCES. Lists of sister organizations, with links. Active collaborations highlighted and described, with links to project. Possible new allies. Links to COMMONDREAMS.ORG and other news and research sites.

ARCHIVE. Back numbers of *BCA Dispatch*. Selected notes from other chapters. Position papers and documents from all chapters and AfD members in this region.

MESSAGE BOARD. All Alliance members and friends in New England, whether or not they belong to or attend chapter meetings, can post messages and announce their events. Offensive messages will be discouraged, and removed at discretion of web editor. Challenging messages are OK.

IDEAS. Statements by members and friends. Recommendations welcome. (Overlap with Archive??) Occasional member surveys and results.

JOIN. Same info as on "join" coupon on back of *Dispatch*, adapted to NE region.

COLOPHON. Board and personnel of website and (regional) *Dispatch*. How to contact. Letters and submissions welcome.

MEMBER LOG-IN. For working group interaction. #

ACTION ALERTS

* **Sat. 19 April.** 10-11:30 am. Lawrence MA.. **Protect the city's water system from takeover by United Water Corp.** In a few days they will give their contract to the city council. Come to this meeting to negotiate a May/June role for yourself and your friends to energize Lawrence residents to pressure their councillors to reject the contract. **Where:** Visitor Center at Lawrence Heritage State Park, 1 Jackson St (N. side of canal), Lawrence. Info: Rose Gonzalez, Jonathan Leavitt at 978-975-2421 or 978-683-3967 or e-mail <info@stopcorporatecontrol.org> **For rides or regrets,** call Cynthia Ritsher, Lynn Gargill, or Dave Lewit at 781-259-8104, 781-259-1173, 617-266-8687.

* **Sat. 10 May.** 8:30 am - 6 pm. Boston. **People Over Profit: Interfaith conference on fair trade & global economy.**

Speakers: Ruy Costa, Mike Prokosch. Workshop leaders: Dave Lewit & Boston City Councillor Felix Arroyo, Mark Smith, Arnie Alpert, Randall Forsberg, Simon Billenness, and 5 others, on Impact of Trade Policy on: local government; agriculture; democratic access; immigration; local economy; labor. Also militarism, IMF, FTAA, consuming, rights, "green" investing. **Where:** McGuinn Hall Auditorium, Boston College, between Beacon & Comm Avs, at Newton city line. Ride to end of Green Line "B" train, or walk from Reservoir/Cleveland Circle stops of Green Line "D" or "C" trains. Info and registration: www.BostonGlobalAction.net; <May10trade@aol.com> 617-876-5038.

JOIN THE BCA

YOU DON'T HAVE TO LIVE IN BOSTON TO LOVE BCA

Please help us as we fight to make a better future for ourselves and our children — **Join the Boston/Cambridge Alliance for Democracy.** (Cut out this form and send it to Dave Lewit, 271 Dartmouth St. #2H, Boston, MA 02116.)

BOSTON-CAMBRIDGE ALLIANCE for DEMOCRACY PLEDGE

\$26/Year - "Count me in!"

\$52/Year - "Contributor" (We need to average this amount.)

\$104/Year - "Sustainer" (Helping us thrive.)

\$208/Year - "Community Steward"

\$500/Year - "Realize the vision"

What's fair for YOU? \$ _____

Name : _____ Date: _____

Street, No./Box/Apt: _____

Town and Zip: _____

Phone: Day _____ Night: _____

E-mail: _____

COLOPHON

Dave Lewit Editor 617-266-8687	Bill King Ed. Consultant 617-244-3557	Brit Eckhart Ed. Consultant 617-492-1759
271 Dartmouth St. #2H, Boston MA 02116. dlewit@igc.org		
—We need more editorial board members and reporters!— Or try editing the Indy Page (submit page or contact editor).		
Visit the Alliance web site: www.TheAllianceForDemocracy.org		