

# BCA Dispatch

Newsletter of the **Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy** April 2007

*I never meant to say that the Conservatives are generally stupid. I meant to say that stupid people are generally Conservative.*

—John Stuart Mill

## CHAPTER NEWS (Continued on page 8)

### Chapter Calendar

#### \* \* **Small-Mart Revolution** \* \*

Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy's next meeting will be on **Wednesday, April 18, at 6:45 p.m. at Cambridge Friends Meeting house, 5 Longfellow Park** (10-minute walk from Harvard Square T station, west on Brattle St.), Cambridge.

— Agenda —

**Part I:** See a **video of Michael Shuman** convincing you that small local enterprises are not only the wave of the post-petroleum future; they are already doing well, and are ramping up to displace the hidden costs and boredom of Wal-Mart, network TV, Bank of America, etc. (Local stock exchange, anyone?) 35 minutes, plus 25 minutes discussion.

**Part II:** David Whitty, an Alliance member of Ashland MA and Cambridge, will facilitate continued **discussion of local action** relative to a localization project we can agree on. Several projects are under discussion. There is a role for you.

**Open to All** — Refreshments

## Brave New England

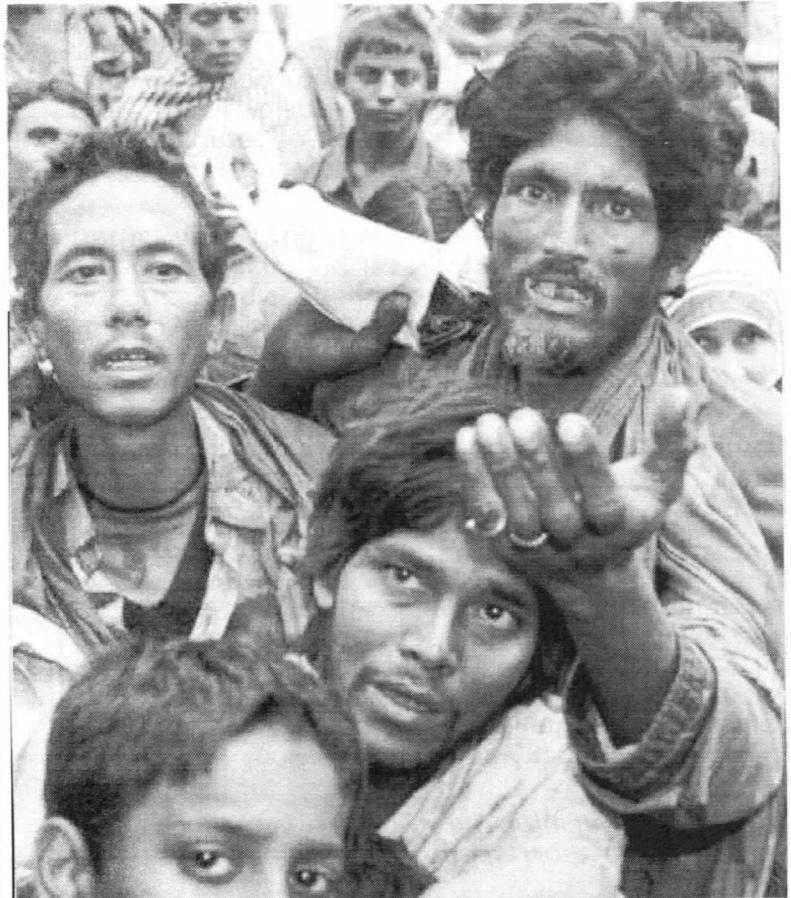
### Part I: Rethinking A Regional Economy

by *Dave Lewit, Alliance for Democracy, 20 March 2007*

**I**N 1907 THE STREETS WERE FULL OF MUD, wagons, horse manure, garbage, and flies. Gas lamps lit side streets. Country girls, children, and Irish immigrants labored long hours in Lowell's mills. Mainly the rich went to college and ran city hall. And yet by 1927 the streets were clean, paved with asphalt and filled with cars, subways and streetlights ran by electricity. The Irish ran Boston. Women smoked and used contraceptives. Radio and movies displaced pulp fiction. A revolution of sorts, in 20 years.

Now we are faced not with worn out farms and hungry European immigrants, but with oligarchs run wild in Dallas, Washington, Colombia and Iraq, world contempt at our fake heroism, hungry immigrants from our Latin American colonies, melting glaciers, and warrior yahoos south and west of our New England. Do we have 20 years to re-do our system and live up to our democratic ideals? Do we have the courage to start right here regardless of legal and political demands from outside? Can we extend open hands to all, even if some would put handcuffs on them? Can 2027 be the year of autonomy? What might our economy look like?

We might start by looking at today's business sectors. But that would tie us to a moribund system. *(Continued, next page >>)*



## India Violence Out of Control

### 'Advanced Capitalism' Comes to Gandhiland

by *Arun dharti Roy, Tehelka (weekly, India), 25 March 2007*  
interviewed by *Shoma Chaudhury*

THERE IS AN ATMOSPHERE OF GROWING VIOLENCE across the country. How do you read the signs? In what context should it be read?

**Y**OU DON'T HAVE TO BE A GENIUS to read the signs. We have a growing middle class, reared on a diet of radical consumerism and aggressive greed. Unlike industrializing Western countries, which had colonies from which to plunder resources and generate slave labor to feed this process, we have to colonize ourselves, our own nether parts. We've begun to eat our own limbs. The greed that is being generated (and marketed as a value interchangeable with nationalism) can only be sated by grabbing land, water and resources from the vulnerable.

What we're witnessing is the most successful secessionist struggle ever waged in independent India—the secession of the middle and upper classes from the rest of the country. It's a vertical secession, not a lateral one. They're fighting for the right to merge with the world's elite somewhere up there in the stratosphere. They've managed to commandeer the resources, the coal, the minerals, the bauxite, the water and electricity. Now they want the land to make more cars, more bombs, more mines—supertoys for the new supercitizens of the new superpower.

So it's outright war, and people on both sides are choosing their weapons. The government and the corporations reach for structural adjustment, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, foreign direct investment, friendly court orders, friendly policy makers, help from the 'friendly' corporate media and a police force that will ram all this down *(Continued on page 6 >>)*

Nor do we want to be mired in theory of capitalism. Instead, let's take a cue from global studies professor Richard Falk and think in terms of our Horizon of Desire—a new system—immediately taken down to earth.

First we need to know our capabilities in New England (NE) for the basics—food, water, housing and heating, sanitation, staying healthy, getting educated, staying informed, staying in touch with others, getting around, having meaningful work, being equipped and supplied for production and use, recreation and culture, relations with nature, and protection from crime, harassment, and invasion. City by city, town by town, and across the region and maybe also upper New York, eastern Quebec and Canada's Atlantic provinces (New England and New France!) we need to assess our human, natural, and built resources. Then we need to use our imaginations and articulate a system of goals helping us be regionally self-reliant, producing as much as possible by and for ourselves, our communities, and our region, and internalizing costs of preventing or correcting social and environmental harms. Here are some visions.

### Some Elements of an Autonomous System

Tourism presently grosses tens of billions of dollars in New England annually. People come to enjoy the sea, mountains, historical sites, conferences, cultural events, their children's dormitories, and maybe some Yankees back in the hollows or the harbors. Maybe we could establish low-cost, one-month residencies for more and more visitors, and reciprocal residencies outside and inside New England for ourselves. This may cut annual air miles, provide extra income for hosts, encourage longer vacations nationwide while accommodating distance workers and distance learners, bring back flivvers and horses for local touring, and build solidarity which will come in handy when New England declares independence.

An autonomous New England—free from various federal fetters—will be declared rebellious and will not only be sued, but possibly occupied by federal troops. This may be precipitated when New Englanders refuse to allow SuperCorridors to be built in the region, or to allow our water resources to be carried away by them, or federal agents to bar immigrants or visitors from Canada or at NE airports or sea ports. So we may establish a New England Guard without firearms but well trained in the use of batons and martial arts. More importantly we may train school children and the whole population in a new version of Civil Defense—nonviolent resistance to invasive or alien military or police forces, much as evidenced in occupied Norway, Poland, South Africa, etc.

We may expand our law schools to develop model constitutions for localities as well as states and the region as a whole, and train graduates for change-oriented, democratic governance. Such constitutions would deal with corporations as well as individual and governmental entities, in terms of rights and responsibilities, ensuring democratic control.

New England would have its own coast guard, especially to protect us from invasive factory fishing vessels and overfishing generally, and to control ocean pollution. We would negotiate fishing agreements with Japan, Spain, and other maritime countries, using "green" tariffs to effectively bar seafoods native to our region. To conserve fuel, and to symbolize both tradition and initiative, we will develop modern, wind-powered sailing vessels for intercoastal shipping, and rebuild our rail network with the latest, e.g., maglev silent, frictionless technology, controlled democratically.

New England, already with international trade missions sponsored by its states, may establish fair trade regimes with

all entities—foreign and domestic. For example, we would bar cell phones containing materials mined under near-slavery conditions in Congo, and would send missions there to encourage unionization and other humane and democratic means for trading the essential mineral coltan. All retail products would have code stickers indicating environmental and social impacts, as well as localities of origin.

Vermont has a law against billboards on their highways, and that may actually provide breathing space for local businesses as well as preserve their beautiful landscape. Prohibiting such ads, and limiting ads and PR of giant corporations might provide relief not only for local businesses all over New England, but encourage citizen initiatives and nonprofits to create and display popular arts of all kinds—not just the salacious stuff that corporations use to attract attention to their products and services. They sponsor walks to raise funds for breast cancer, premature babies, farm animals—whatever. Actually there's more than enough federal grant money around for such research, and these sponsored walks put much of the proceeds into organizers' pockets. Local citizen groups could provide the same fun outings and keep the money in the community.

China has called on American architects and planners to help them design energy-efficient new housing neighborhoods, using passive solar, solar-electric, digesting waste, and so forth. That could be encouraged here in New England for housing, commercial, and industrial construction, especially since we will never be self-sufficient in heating fuel if we also want to preserve our forests, and to extend them for wood to replace metal in many uses. (Smelting, working, and shipping metal requires much energy.) Wind and tidal power can be publicly developed and managed as are conventional power plants in many localities. Current suburban living is doomed for other reasons—e.g., motor fuel decline, which will not be saved by ethanol or hydrogen when their environmental impacts are factored in—so villages and neighborhoods can and must come back, with energy conservation and renewable sources. We have MIT, Worcester Tech, UMass-Lowell, and many other research institutions to help.

Michael Shuman's community-building mantra is "LOIS, not TINA"—"Locally-Owned Import-Substituting", not "There Is No Alternative" to corporate globalization. Import substitution means manufacturing and using in New England as much as possible of what has been imported in recent years from far-away cities. For example, what if we built inter-urban trains instead of nuclear destroyers at Bath (Maine) Iron Works? What if Connecticut's gun factories converted to making machinery for alternative energy generating? What if sweatshop-made clothing were banned throughout New England (as in Maine, for government uniforms)—would clothing factories in Nashua come back, employing local people?

Cuba trains more doctors every year than are needed on the island, and exports them to Venezuela, Africa, and other developing or infested areas. New England probably exports large numbers also but—following market forces—they go not to areas of great need, but to areas of great profit from corporations and rich patients. We could expand our already-designed training facilities and recruit low-income medical students, "paying" for their training by working in high need areas for X years, like Peace Corps, within and outside New England. By the way, doctors for the most part are "disease curing workers" rather than preventive "health promoting workers". By creating New England laws going around the American Medical Association, we could train, license, and reward doctors and other specialists for fostering healthy citizens—largely through universal health (not just medical) insurance and public clinics. By exporting

health specialists we might also reduce our "importation" of sick patients to be treated in NE hospitals—making an equal amount of fees outside the region.

New England used to feed itself, but now imports most of its food from elsewhere in the US and abroad. Transportation costs will mount as oil is depleted and quadrupled in price. Quality declines as freshness is more and more simulated. Factory farming out there keeps food prices low, but exacts heavy prices in terms of farm bankruptcies unemployment, wage depression, soil exhaustion, river and air and soil pollution, and so on. In response, New England with its rocky soil could lead the way in urban agriculture—recycling garbage for soil nutrients, rooftop and front-yard gardening, greenhouses for winter produce, and so on. It's not just a matter of laws and incentives, but also novel agricultural methods, and systematizing support. Like other retail goods, we could multiply regional wealth by labeling food as to its location and date of production (rather than commercial date of expiration—"sell by..."). Folks will tend to buy local.

Money for training and financing a million new farmers soon needed in New England, money for industrial conversion, money for building and rebuilding villages, money for fixing schools, money for expanding medical and health training, money for building wi-fi, maglev, windmills, sailing ships, and so on. Creative activities of, by, and for New England. To generate and keep as much money as possible building a new regional economy and recirculating regionally, we need regional currency, and the political autonomy to defend it. A *Bank of New England*, limited to regional investment and currency, could convert your US dollars to New England Dollars worth 10% more in regional goods and services (*viz.* BerkShares). The Bank could insure business owners against serious losses due to currency so as to encourage them to accept New England Dollars, which would accelerate NED coverage while building the regional economy through the "multiplier effect". Meanwhile the region could also establish "green" taxation, with the government collecting not against people making more income, but against amount of pollution, resource depletion, waste, etc., in production, marketing, and recycling.

\* \* \*

Friends, we've said enough for now. We still need to talk about education, information, communication, immigration, use of elders, entertainment, social harmonizing, governance, and many other features of a new society and economy—and the details of inter-locality linkages and regional autonomy. We need to think of a whole new system. And of course, HOW we get from here in 2007 to there in 2027.

## "War On Terror"

### What Would Gandhi Do?

by Mark Juergensmeyer, *Daedalus*, Winter 2007 (conclusion)

\* *Stop a situation of violence in its tracks* [by using the criminal justice system and reducing fear and intimidation]...

\* *Address the issues behind the violence.* Gandhi might have approved the principles of both sides: the desire of many traditional Muslims in the Middle East to be free from American and European domination, and the expectation of those who hold modern social values that all societies should respect peoples of diverse cultures and be democratically governed. Since these goals are not necessarily incompatible, a resolution that accepts them both is conceivable.

Ultimately, tensions might not be fully resolved until there are

significant changes in the political culture of Middle Eastern countries and dramatic reversals of the West's military and economic role in the Middle East. But in the meantime small steps can make a large difference. Any indication that either or both sides accept both sets of principles would be a positive shift toward reconciling the underlying differences and diminishing the support for extremists' positions.

\* *Maintain the moral high ground.* As Gandhi remarked to the Indian activists in London who proposed a violent overthrow of British control of India, violence begets violence. Proclaiming a "war on terrorism," from Gandhi's point of view, is tantamount to sinking to the terrorists' level. The very idea of war suggests an absolutism of conflict, where reason and negotiation have no place and where opponents are enemies. Though violent extremists are indeed difficult opponents, and Gandhi would not expect one to negotiate with them, he would be mindful that the more important struggle is the one for public support. This support could shift either way, and it would be a tragic error—and perhaps a self-fulfilling prophecy—to regard potential supporters as enemies.

Mistreatment of those suspected of being involved in terrorist acts can also lead to a loss of public support. Gandhi urged that the assassin [of a certain British official], Dhingra, be treated with caution but also with respect, as any suspect in a crime would be treated. Torture, from Gandhi's point of view, is ineffective not just because it rarely produces useful information but also because it corrupts the moral character of a society that allows it to be used. This was the point he made in *Hind Swaraj* when he stressed that the means of freeing India from British control should be consistent with the goals a free Indian society would want to achieve.

Many of these guidelines have been part of the public debate in the United States in the years following the September 11 attacks. Thus a nonviolent response to terrorism is already an element of political discourse. It is not a new idea, but rather a strand of public thinking that deserves attention and, Gandhi might argue, respect. As a pragmatic idealist, Gandhi would be pleased to know that nonviolent approaches to terrorism were taken seriously, not only because they invariably were the right thing to do, but also because on more than one occasion they have worked.

*Ed. Note:* *It may be clear that Muslims in the Middle East want to be free from foreign domination, but it may not be clear what US and UK leaders and various others in their realms want. Do Bush and Cheney, or North American fundamentalists, want "all societies [to] respect peoples of diverse cultures and be democratically governed"? Aside from respect, what do they mean by "democratically governed"—Like the US? Oh, my!*

*Apart from "democracy", there is the question of nonviolence. Change researcher Brian Martin has made it clear that nonviolence doesn't work strategically unless there is a critical amount of press. And before there can be any large demonstration/civil-disobedience sufficient numbers of people need to be engaged, committed, and trained. In a view shared with Arundhati Roy (this issue, page 1...) some people are so despairing that they will resort to violent expression. Is there a place for them in satyagraha—in organized resistance to "military-industrial-congressional" domination? I believe we must rethink how to minimize—not scrupulously eliminate—violent expression, through positive nonviolent diversification of expression, and understand how to include temporarily violent people without condoning or advocating violence. Fundamentally, we must understand how people—in the midst of war and other devastation—rebuild and go on to build humane institutions. ##*

## Republic of Vermont?

### Why the Independence Movement Grows

by Ian Baldwin & Frank Bryan, *Washington Post*, 1 April 2007

**T**HE WINDS OF SECESSION are blowing in the Green Mountain State.

Vermont was once an independent republic, and it can be one again. We think the time to make that happen is now. Over the past 50 years, the U.S. government has grown too big, too corrupt and too aggressive toward the world, toward its own citizens and toward local democratic institutions. It has abandoned the democratic vision of its founders and eroded Americans' fundamental freedoms.

Vermont did not join the Union to become part of an empire. Some of us therefore seek permission to leave.

A decade before the War of Independence, Vermont became New England's first frontier, settled by pioneers escaping colonial bondage who hewed settlements across a lush region whose spine is the Green Mountains. These independent folk brought with them what Henry David Thoreau called the "true American Congress"—the New England town meeting, which is still the legislature for nearly all of Vermont's 237 towns. Here every citizen is a legislator who helps fashion the rules that govern the locality.

Today, however, Vermont no longer controls even its own National Guard, a domestic emergency force that is now employed in an imperial war 6,000 miles away. The 9/11 commission report says that "the American homeland is the planet." To defend this "homeland," the United States spends six times as much on its military as China, the next highest-spending nation, funding more than 730 military bases in more than 130 countries, abetted by more than 100 military space satellites and more than 100,000 seaborne battle-ready forces. This is the greatest military colossus ever forged.

Few heed George Washington's Farewell Address, which warned against the danger of a permanent large standing army that "can be regarded as particularly hostile to republican liberty." Or that of a later general-become-president: "We must never let the weight of [the military-industrial complex] endanger our liberties or democratic processes." *(Continued on Page 5 >>)* Dwight D. Eisenhower pointedly included the word "congressional" after "military-industrial" but allowed his advisers to excise it. That word completes a true description of the hidden threat to democracy in the United States.

The two of us are typical of the diversity of Vermont's secessionist movement: one descended from old Vermonter stock, the other a more recent arrival—a "flatlander" from down country. Our Vermont homeland remains economically conservative and socially liberal. And the love of freedom runs deep in its psyche.

Vermont seceded from the British Empire in 1777 and stood free for 14 years, until 1791. Its constitution—which preceded the U.S. Constitution by more than a decade—was the first to prohibit slavery in the New World and to guarantee universal manhood suffrage. Vermont issued its own currency, ran its own postal service, developed its own foreign relations, grew its own food, made its own roads and paid for its own militia. No other state, not even Texas, governed itself more thoroughly or longer before giving up its nationhood and joining the Union.

But the seeds of disunion have been growing since the beginning. Vermont more or less sat out the War of 1812, and its governor ordered troops fighting the British to disengage and come home. Vermont fought the Civil War primarily to end slavery; Abraham Lincoln did so primarily to save the Union.

Vermont's record on the slavery issue was so strong that Georgia's legislature resolved that a ditch be dug around the "pestiferous" state and it be floated out to sea.

After the Great Flood of 1927, the worst natural disaster in the state's history, President Calvin Coolidge (a Vermonter) offered help. Vermont's governor replied, "Vermont will take care of its own." In 1936, town meetings rejected a huge federal highway referendum that would have blacktopped the Green Mountain crest line from Massachusetts to Canada.

Nor did Vermont sign on when imperial Washington demanded that the state raise its drinking age from 18 to 21 in 1985. The federal government thereupon resorted to its favored tactic, blackmail. Raise your drinking age, said Ronald Reagan, or we'll take away the money you need to keep the interstates paved. Vermont took its case for state control to the Supreme Court—and lost. It's quite simple. The United States has destroyed the 10th Amendment, which says that "powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people."

The present movement for secession has been gathering steam for a decade and a half. In preparation for Vermont's bicentennial in 1991, public debates—moderated by then-Lt. Gov. Howard Dean—were held in seven towns before crowds that averaged 230 citizens. At the end of each, Dean asked all those in favor of Vermont's seceding from the Union to stand and be counted. In town after town, solid majorities stood. The final count: 999 (62 percent) for secession and 608 opposed.

In early 2003, transplanted Southerner and retired Duke University economics professor Thomas Naylor gave a speech at Johnson State College opposing the Iraq war. When he pitched the idea of secession to the crowd, he saw many eyes "light up," he said. Later that year, he and several others started a loosely organized movement (now a think tank) called the Second Vermont Republic, which has an independent quarterly journal, Vermont Commons, and a Web site.

In October 2005, about 300 Vermonters attended a statewide convention on the question of secession. Six months later, the annual Vermont Poll of the University of Vermont's Center for Rural Studies found that about 8 percent of respondents replied "yes" to peaceful secession, arguably making Vermont foremost among the many states with secessionist movements (including Alaska, California, Hawaii, New Hampshire, South Carolina and Texas).

We secessionists believe that the 350-year swing of history's pendulum toward large, centralized imperial states is once again reversing itself.

Why? First, the cost of oil and gas. According to urban planner James Howard Kunstler, "Anything organized on a gigantic scale . . . will probably falter in the energy-scarce future." Second, third-wave technology is as inherently democratic and decentralist as second-wave technology was authoritarian and centralist. Gov. Jim Douglas wants Vermont to be the first "e-state," making broadband Internet access available to every household and business in the state by 2010. Vermont will soon be fully wired into the global social commons.

Against this backdrop, secessionists from all over the state will gather in June to plan a grass-roots campaign to get at least 200 towns to vote by 2012 on independence. We believe that one outcome of this meeting will be dialogues among different communities of Vermonters committed to achieving local economic vitality, be they farmers, entrepreneurs, bankers, merchants, lawyers, independent media providers, construction workers, manufacturers, artists, entertainers or anyone else with a stake in Vermont's future—anyone for whom freedom is not just a slogan.

If Vermonters succeed in once again inventing vibrant local economies, these in turn may reinvigorate the small-scale democratic town meeting tradition, the true American Congress, and re-create the rudiments of a republic once again able to make its own way in the world. The once and future republic of Vermont.

*Ian Baldwin is publisher of Vermont Commons. Frank Bryan, a political science professor at the University of Vermont, is author of "Real Democracy: The New England Town Meeting and How It Works." [ianb@sover.net](mailto:ianb@sover.net). [frank.bryan@uvm.edu](mailto:frank.bryan@uvm.edu)*

## Bush May Go For Illegal 3<sup>rd</sup> Term Cheney Advises Soldiers; Press Shunned

by Philip McCrack, *New York Times*, 1 April 2007

**J**ACKSONVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA. April 1—Vice President Cheney delivered a speech early Sunday morning before a formation of soldiers at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina. The speech was not publicized and the prepared remarks were intended to boost troop morale. The comments were fairly unremarkable except for one short comment near the end of the speech in which Mr. Cheney suggested that the Bush Administration may seek to challenge the 22nd amendment in the 2008 presidential election in an effort to ensure that the war in Iraq is successful.

Mr. Cheney again cited the war in Iraq as a key component in the effort to combat terrorism, saying "The war in Iraq is such a crucial part of the greater war on terror that we currently have our legal advisers looking into the possibility that the 22nd Amendment may not apply in 2008."

Because the speech was not publicized and was held on a secure military base, very few journalists were present, and none were able to ask questions about what the Vice President's comments might mean. Repeated efforts to contact the Vice President's Office to clarify the comment were unsuccessful.

The 22nd Amendment to the Constitution prohibits U.S. Presidents from running for a third term, stating "No person shall be elected to the office of the President more than twice...". The 22nd Amendment was passed in 1951 after President Franklin Roosevelt broke a tradition that dated back to George Washington, in which Presidents voluntarily refused to run for a third term.

Political pundits and Constitutional experts are split on what the Vice President's comments could mean. Some see the comments as an effort to extend the Administration's "war powers" due to the fact that the country is at war. They argue that there is a tenuous case to be made that the 22nd Amendment doesn't apply during war time since the Congress waited until after WW II to introduce such an Amendment. Others say that the mere fact that the country had just ended the war in 1951, when the Amendment was passed, suggests that the Congress would have put such an exception into the language of the Amendment if they had intended it not apply during times of war.

Others say that the Bush Administration will argue that the 2000 race was not actually decided by an election and that the Bush administration has technically only been "elected" once since the Supreme Court's Decision in *Bush v. Gore* effectively nullified the popular vote. Anonymous sources inside the White House have corroborated that this may indeed be the Administration's plan.

Arguing that it was not actually elected would be a very interesting approach for the administration to say the least, but most experts agree that it is certainly possible given the Bush administration's history of creative interpretation of the law with regard

to such cases as:

- \* the assertion that The Geneva Conventions do not apply to U.S. detainees captured on the battlefield,
- \* suggestions that the legal definition of "torture" only includes activities that cause death or organ failure,
- \* the argument that U.S. Citizens do not have a right to "due process" if declared "enemy combatants", which was recently rejected by the Supreme Court,
- \* Attorney General Alberto Gonzales's testimony before Congress that the Constitution doesn't guarantee U.S. Citizens a right to Habeas Corpus,
- \* The Administration's claim that the FISA law does not apply to their warrantless wire taps of Americans.

Critics of the Administration argue that these cases are all the proof needed to believe that The Bush Administration would try to argue that its own victory in 2000 demonstrates that it could run for a third term in 2008.

## Desperately Seeking Fuel If Petroleum Gets Dear, then Go for Dearer

by "biodiversivist", *gristmill.grist.org*, 29 March 2007 (excerpt)

**A**lready we know that biofuel is worse for the planet than petroleum. The UN has just published a report suggesting that 98 percent of the natural rainforest in Indonesia will be degraded or gone by 2022. Just five years ago, the same agencies predicted that this wouldn't happen until 2032. But they reckoned without the planting of palm oil to turn into biodiesel for the European market. This is now the main cause of deforestation there and it is likely soon to become responsible for the extinction of the orangutan in the wild.

But it gets worse. As the forests are burned, both the trees and the peat they sit on are turned into carbon dioxide. A report by the Dutch consultancy Delft Hydraulics shows that every tonne of palm oil results in 33 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions, or 10 times as much as petroleum produces. I feel I need to say that again. Biodiesel from palm oil causes 10 times as much climate change as ordinary diesel.

There are similar impacts all over the world. Sugarcane producers are moving into rare scrubland habitats (the cerrado) in Brazil, and soya farmers are ripping up the Amazon rainforests. As President Bush has just signed a biofuel agreement with President Lula, it's likely to become a lot worse. Indigenous people in South America, Asia and Africa are starting to complain about incursions onto their land by fuel planters. A petition launched by a group called biofuelwatch, begging western governments to stop, has been signed by campaigners from 250 groups.

It promises that one day there will be a "second generation" of biofuels, made from straw or grass or wood. But there are still major technical obstacles. By the time the new fuels are ready, the damage will have been done.

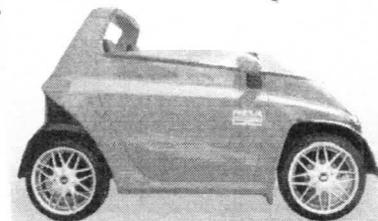
Poll-----

Would a boycott of food-based biofuels get the attention of politicians?

Hell yeah

Not a chance

India's  
answer.



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people's throats. Those who want to resist this process have, until now, reached for dharnas [fasting], hunger strikes, satyagraha [nonviolent truth-force strategy], the courts and what they thought was friendly media. But now more and more are reaching for guns.

Will the violence grow? If the 'growth rate' and the Sensex [stock index] are going to be the only barometers the government uses to measure progress and the well-being of people, then of course it will. How do I read the signs? It isn't hard to read sky-writing. What it says up there, in big letters, is this: The shit has hit the fan, folks.

*You once remarked that though you may not resort to violence yourself, you think it has become immoral to condemn it, given the circumstances in the country. Can you elaborate?*

I'd be a liability as a guerrilla! I doubt I used the word 'immoral'—morality is an elusive business, as changeable as the weather. What I feel is this: Non-violent movements have knocked at the door of every democratic institution in this country for decades, and have been spurned and humiliated. Look at the Bhopal gas victims, the Narmada Bachao Andolan [Save Narmada River Valley Movement]. The NBA had a lot going for it—high-profile leadership, media coverage, more resources than any other mass movement. What went wrong?



Arundhati Roy

People are bound to want to rethink strategy. When [Congress Party leader] Sonia Gandhi begins to promote satyagraha at the World Economic Forum in Davos, it's time for us to sit up and think. For example, is mass civil disobedience possible within the structure of a democratic nation state? Is it possible in the age of disinformation and corporate-controlled mass media? Are hunger strikes umbilically linked to celebrity politics? Would anybody care if the people of Nangla Machhi or Bhatti mines went on a hunger strike? Irom Sharmila has been on a hunger strike for six years. That should be a lesson to many of us. I've always felt that it's ironic that hunger strikes are used as a political weapon in a land where most people go hungry anyway.

We are in a different time and place now. Up against a different, more complex adversary. We've entered the era of NGOs [non-governmental organizations]—or should I say the era of *paltu shers*—in which mass action can be a treacherous business. We have demonstrations which are funded, we have sponsored dharnas and social forums which make militant postures but never follow up on what they preach. We have all kinds of 'virtual' resistance.

Meetings against SEZs [Special Economic Zones] sponsored by the biggest promoters of SEZs. Awards and grants for environmental activism and community action given by corporations responsible for devastating whole ecosystems. Vedanta, a company mining bauxite in the forests of Orissa, wants to start a university. The Tatas have two charitable trusts that directly and indirectly fund activists and mass movements across the country. Could that be why Singur [land grab there] has drawn so much less flak than Nandigram [massacre by police there]?

Of course the Tatas and Birlas funded Gandhi too—maybe he was our first NGO. But now we have NGOs who make a lot of noise, write a lot of reports, but whom the sarkar [Godfather] is more than comfortable with. How do we make sense of all this? The place is crawling with professional diffusers of real political action. 'Virtual' resistance has become something of a liability.

There was a time when mass movements looked to the courts for justice. The courts have rained down a series of judgments that are so unjust, so insulting to the poor in the language they use, they take your breath away. A recent Supreme Court judgment, allowing the Vasant Kunj Mall to resume construction though it didn't have the requisite clearances, said in so many words that the questions of corporations indulging in malpractice does not arise! In the era of corporate globalization, corporate land-grab, in the era of Enron and Monsanto, Halliburton and Bechtel, that's a loaded thing to say. It exposes the ideological heart of the most powerful institution in this country. The judiciary, along with the corporate press, is now seen as the lynchpin of the neo-liberal project.

In a climate like this, when people feel that they are being worn down, exhausted by these interminable 'democratic' processes, only to be eventually humiliated, what are they supposed to do? Of course it isn't as though the only options are binary—violence versus non-violence. There are political parties that believe in armed struggle but only as one part of their overall political strategy. Political workers in these struggles have been



Moneyed Indians

dealt with brutally, killed, beaten, imprisoned under false charges. People are fully aware that to take to arms is to call down upon yourself the myriad forms of the violence of the Indian State. The minute armed struggle becomes a strategy, your whole world shrinks and the colors fade to

black and white.

But when people decide to take that step because every other option has ended in despair, should we condemn them? Does anyone believe that if the people of Nandigram had held a dharna and sung songs, the West Bengal government would have backed down? We are living in times when to be ineffective is to support the status quo (which no doubt suits some of us). And being effective comes at a terrible price. I find it hard to condemn people who are prepared to pay that price.

*You have been traveling a lot on the ground—can you give us a sense of the trouble spots you have been to? Can you outline a few of the combat lines in these places?*

Huge question—what can I say? The military occupation of Kashmir, neo-fascism in Gujarat, civil war in Chhattisgarh, multinational corporations raping Orissa, the submergence of hundreds of villages in the Narmada Valley, people living on the edge of absolute starvation, the devastation of forest land, the Bhopal victims living to see the West Bengal government re-wooling Union Carbide—now calling itself Dow Chemicals—in Nandigram. I haven't been recently to Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, but we know about the almost hundred thousand farmers who have killed themselves [because of bio-corporate ruination of their livelihood]. We know about the fake encounters and the terrible repression in Andhra Pradesh.

Each of these places has its own particular history, economy, ecology. None is amenable to easy analysis. And yet there is connecting tissue, there are huge international cultural and economic pressures being brought to bear on them. How can I not mention the Hindutva [ethnic-cleansing nationalist party] project, spreading its poison sub-cutaneously, waiting to erupt once again? I'd say the biggest indictment of all is that we are still a country, a culture, a society which continues to nurture and practice the notion of untouchability. While our economists number-

crunch and boast about the growth rate, a million people—human scavengers—earn their living carrying several kilos of other people's shit on their heads every day. And if they didn't carry shit on their heads they would starve to death. Some fucking superpower this.

*How does one view the recent State and police violence in Bengal?*

No different from police and State violence anywhere else—including the issue of hypocrisy and doublespeak so perfected by all political parties including the mainstream Left. Are Communist bullets different from capitalist ones? Odd things are happening. It snowed in Saudi Arabia. Owls are out in broad daylight. The Chinese government tabled a bill sanctioning the right to private property. I don't know if all of this has to do with climate change.

The Chinese Communists are turning out to be the biggest capitalists of the 21st century. Why should we expect our own parliamentary Left to be any different? Nandigram and Singur are clear signals. It makes you wonder—is the last stop of every revolution advanced capitalism? Think about it—the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, the Chinese Revolution, the Vietnam War, the anti-apartheid struggle, the supposedly Gandhian freedom struggle in India... what's the last station they all pull in at? Is this the end of imagination?

*The Maoist attack in Bijapur—the death of 55 policemen. Are the rebels only the flip side of the State?*

How can the rebels be the flip side of the State? Would anybody say that those who fought against apartheid—however brutal their methods—were the flip side of the State? What about those who fought the French in Algeria? Or those who fought the Nazis? Or those who fought colonial regimes? Or those who are fighting the US occupation of Iraq? Are they the flip side of the State?

This facile new report-driven 'human rights' discourse, this meaningless condemnation game that we are all forced to play, makes politicians of us all and leaches the real politics out of everything. However pristine we would like to be, however hard we polish our halos, the tragedy is that we have run out of pristine choices. There is a civil war in Chhattisgarh [state carved out of southeastern Madhya Pradesh, central India, in 2000] sponsored, created by the Chhattisgarh government, which is publicly pursuing the Bush doctrine: If you're not with us, you are with the terrorists.

The lynchpin of this war, apart from the formal security forces, is the Salva Judum—a government-backed militia of ordinary people forced to take up arms, forced to become SPOs (special police officers). The Indian State has tried this in Kashmir, in Manipur, in Nagaland. Tens of thousands have been killed, hundreds of thousands tortured, thousands have disappeared. Any banana republic would be proud of this record. Now the government wants to import these failed strategies into the heartland. Thousands of adivasis [tribal people] have been forcibly moved off their mineral-rich lands into police camps. Hundreds of villages have been forcibly evacuated. Those lands, rich in iron-ore, are being eyed by corporations like the Tatas and Essar.

MOUs [memoranda of understanding] have been signed, but no one knows what they say. Land acquisition has begun. This kind of thing happened in countries like Colombia—one of the most devastated countries in the world. While everybody's eyes are fixed on the spiraling violence between government-backed militias and guerrilla squads, multinational corporations quietly make off with the mineral wealth. That's the little piece of theater being scripted for us in Chhattisgarh.

Of course it's horrible that 55 policemen were killed. But they're as much the victims of government policy as anybody else. For the government and the corporations they're just cannon fodder—there's plenty more where they came from. Crocodile tears will be shed, prim TV anchors will hector us for a while and then more supplies of fodder will be arranged. For the Maoist guerrillas, the police and Special Police Officers they killed were the armed personnel of the Indian State—the main, hands-on perpetrators of repression, torture, custodial killings, false encounters. They're not innocent civilians—if such a thing exists—by any stretch of imagination.

I have no doubt that the Maoists can be agents of terror and coercion too. I have no doubt they have committed unspeakable atrocities. I have no doubt they cannot lay claim to undisputed support from local people—but who can? Still, no guerrilla army can survive without local support. That's a logistical impossibility. And the support for Maoists is growing, not diminishing. That says something. People have no choice but to align themselves on the side of whoever they think is less worse.

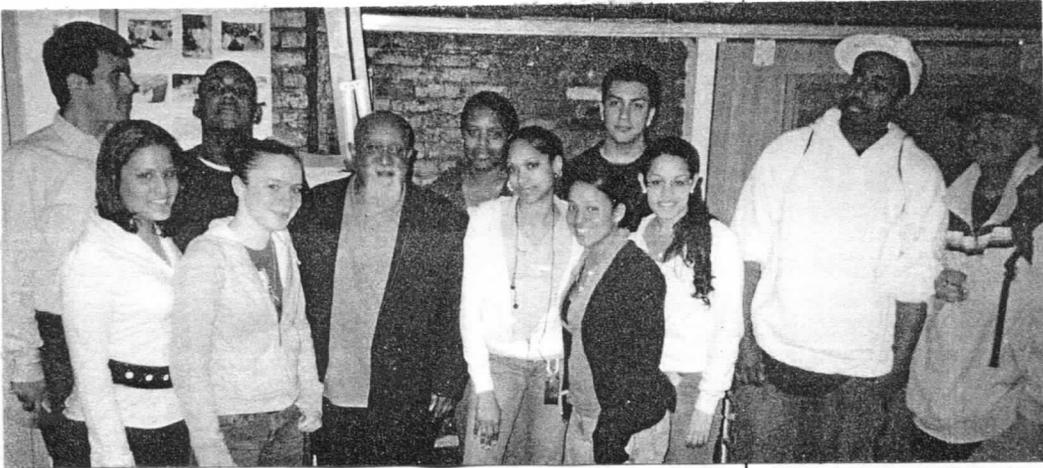
But to equate a resistance movement fighting against enormous injustice with the government which enforces that injustice is absurd. The government has slammed the door in the face of every attempt at non-violent resistance. When people take to arms, there is going to be all kinds of violence—revolutionary, lumpen and outright criminal. The government is responsible for the monstrous situations it creates....

**W**e cannot condemn the occupation of Iraq, Palestine and Kashmir while we remain silent about Tibet and Chechnya. I would imagine that for the Maoists, the Naxalites [violent communists], as well as the mainstream Left, being honest about the past is important to strengthen people's faith in the future. One hopes the past will not be repeated, but denying that it ever happened doesn't help inspire confidence... Nevertheless, the Maoists in Nepal have waged a brave and successful struggle against the monarchy. Right now, in India, the Maoists and the various Marxist-Leninist groups are leading the fight against immense injustice here. They are fighting not just the State, but feudal landlords and their armed militias. They are the only people who are making a dent. And I admire that.

It may well be that when they come to power, they will, as you say, be brutal, unjust and autocratic, or even worse than the present government. Maybe, but I'm not prepared to assume that in advance. If they are, we'll have to fight them too. And most likely someone like myself will be the first person they'll string up from the nearest tree—but right now, it is important to acknowledge that they are bearing the brunt of being at the forefront of resistance.

Many of us are in a position where we are beginning to align ourselves on the side of those whom we know have no place for us in their religious or ideological imagination. It's true that everybody changes radically when they come to power—look at Mandela's ANC [African National Congress]. Corrupt, capitalist, bowing to the International Monetary Fund, driving the poor out of their homes—honoring [Indonesia's former dictator] Suharto, the killer of hundreds of thousands of Indonesian Communists, with South Africa's highest civilian award. Who would have thought it could happen?

But does this mean South Africans should have backed away from the struggle against apartheid? Or that they should regret it now? Does it mean Algeria should have remained a French colony, that Kashmiris, Iraqis and Palestinians should accept military occupation? That people whose dignity is being assaulted should give up the fight because they can't find saints to lead them into battle? ##



Students from various Boston high schools working on **new civics**. At left: **Jesús Gerena**, Director of Community Development & Organizing, Hyde Square Task Force. Fourth from left: **Gabi Leyton-Nolan** of Boston Latin High, who with the group drafted an Order for a public Hearing on new civics to be held at Boston City Council, probably in October 2007. Fifth from left: Boston City Councillor **Chuck Turner**, with whom BCA is working. Chuck made suggestions for "tightening up" the draft. We all discussed the purpose and scope of the hearing, to encourage empowering and creative new civics in all Boston high schools.

## ACTION ALERTS

Sun 15 Apr. 2pm. Boston. **Cynthia Foster** (nee **Wilder**, m, **Anthonsen**) memorial service. Artist and friend, she died at 99 after a lifetime of devotion to community, peace and courageous withholding of taxes which would have paid for war. Community Church of Boston, 565 Boylston St., at Copley Square. All are welcome. Info: 617-266-0449.

Mon 16 Apr. 7pm. Boston. **Amy Goodman** (Democracy Now! radio and TV) & **Howard Zinn** (*People's History* fame) talk up their new books on people power. Faneuil Hall. \$10. Call for tickets at 888-999-3877, X2.

Thu 19 Apr. 12-2pm. Boston. Change the unfair criminal records system (**CORI**) which perpetuates un- and under-employment, denial of loans/education, racism, etc., affecting 2.3 million Massachusetts citizens. **Speak-Out** on Boston Common at noon; **open press conference** in State House (grand staircase) at 1:30. Start with march from Roxbury Crossing T-station at 10:45am. Info: cori.reform@gmail.com or 617-427-8108.

Thu 19 Apr. 7pm. Cambridge. **Gar Alperovitz** (*America Beyond Capitalism*) & **David Schweickart** (Dem. Socialists of America.) **Toward a Post-Capitalist World.** MIT, Building 4, Rm 149 (follow signs at MIT main entrance, Mass. Ave.).

Fri-Sun 18-20 May. Voluntown CT (near RI border). **Strategic Nonviolence Pow-wow.** Develop NE regional network or org, to hold off corporate/military power as we build peaceful local/regional institutions. Food + lodging: \$45 total. Info: Joanne Sheehan, 860-887-6869, wrlne@peoplepc.com, or Cathy Hoffman, Cambridge Peace Commission, 617-349-4694. Ask or offer ride: Dave Lewit 617-266-8687.

## CORRECTION

In our introduction to Jennifer Allen Simons' remarks concerning "I am become Death, the Shatterer of Worlds" (*Dispatch*, March 2007, page 2a), **J. Robert Oppenheimer** should not be "Admiral" but "Dr."—the physicist who directed the US Government program to develop the atomic bomb.

## COLOPHON

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Visit the Alliance web site: [www.TheAllianceForDemocracy.org](http://www.TheAllianceForDemocracy.org)

Visit our new regional web site: [www.NewEnglandAlliance.org](http://www.NewEnglandAlliance.org)

Web builder: Sergio Reyes. Webmaster: Stan Robinson

## CHAPTER NEWS

This photo shows the students with whom we are working to bring empowering **new civics** to Boston high school juniors and seniors. This will reverse the disempowering, retrogressive trend initiated in the 1970s when civics was dropped from our schools, and later when the rigid testing program (MCAS) was instituted at various levels—and still is in force thru the sophomore year. MCAS forces teachers and students to focus on prescribed math, science, and English which are on the test, at the expense of local initiative and complex, flexible, cooperative learning. Right now, civics is taught in Boston only in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

Cambridge school committee member **Luc Schuster** reports that they will hire a full-time civics consultant to work with teachers of all subjects to enrich the high school curriculum and practice. Boston students may interview Cambridge students and campaign to adapt their neighbors' experience in new civics.

Meanwhile, BCA has been meeting bi-weekly to rethink our mission and develop effective ways to implement it. **Localization/regionalization** is the consensus so far as the way to overcome corporate-military-congressional limitation of our community and regional lives, with strategy and organization under discussion. One of these days we will try to develop consensus on the meaning of "democracy" and "nonviolence". To get on our "active" e-mail list, contact **Joanna Herlihy** at joanna\_herlihy@yahoo.com or 617-864-0506.

## 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 or copy this form and send it to Dave Lewit, 271 Dartmouth St., 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"

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