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

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

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

Libraries nationwide open doors to democracy on September 11, 2004

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

The Undergraduate Library at the University of Illinois in conjunction with students taking Social Justice in the Information Professions will host a Community Discussion Forum on September 11, from 2:00-4:00pm, in Room 291 at the Undergraduate Library, 1402 W. Gregory, Urbana, IL 61801. We plan to view two short documentaries (“Life of Liberty” and “We, Too, Sing America: Racist Backlash in the Aftermath of September 11th”) and have a related discussion on the issues raised in the films.

For more information about this event, contact Dana Wright, Diversity Services Librarian, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, voice: (217) 333-3285, e-mail: dawright@uiuc.edu, or Bharat Mehta, PhD Candidate, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, e-mail: b-mehra1@uiuc.edu.

This event is free and open to the public. It is part of The September Project, a local, national, and global effort to create a day of engagement, a day of conversation, a day of democracy. This project is for all people. To learn more about September Project events, visit www.theseptemberproject.org.
The Iraq War and British Anger
News and Views from the UK
by Ricky Baldwin, the Public is UK correspondent

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

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

The Monkey

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

After all, the complete washout of every single justification for war with Iraq has received much more open attention in the UK than in the US. The incessant lies of the "war on terror," the power grabbing, the backroom wheeling and dealing, the nepotistic contracts, all appear in Britain as obviously if harsh facts, not as conspiracy theory. What still puzzles many people in the British Isles, however, is continued American support for the war, even at ever decreasing levels. Why, they asked me, why? What about the fact that there were no weapons of mass destruction, no connections with al-Qaeda, and what about Abu Ghraib?

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

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

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

The Poole

The United Kingdom is by most accounts the United States' closest ally, not counting our client states in Central America where we train the police and choose the presidents. So close in fact is the alliance that a major public debate in Britain at the moment seems to be whether Prime Minister Tony Blair should be called the US "poodle" or whether that designation lets him off the hook for his own homemade chickenhawk foreign policy and his bloodless social policy.

Some of the mainstream press in the UK, where there is no First Amendment but also no pretense of media "neutral-

ity," have made their position clear in the matter: "Blair is a coward," proclaims one headline from last year's Mirror. The article then explains that "blood on his hands" is an expression coined "to describe indecomposable politicians who, at a safe distance, order the mass killing of ordinary people...especially to those modern political leaders who have had no personal experience of war, like George W. Bush, who managed not to serve in Vietnam, and the efete Tony Blair."

This gives some clue as to the opinion of the British public regarding their government's alliance with the US. And many people talked to expressed dismay that the Blair government joined the US war on Iraq in complete disregard to public opinion. "Undemocratic," is the word I heard them use. This may sound strange to American ears. After all, they have a queen. But Britons have fought long and hard for their rights, too - rights they now see evaporating along with ours.

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

port for the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

"There has been little change in opinion about the war in Iraq," found a Pew global attitudes survey conducted in February and March 2004, "except in Great Britain, where sup-

port for the decision to go to war has plummeted from 61% last May to 43% in the current survey."

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

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

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

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

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

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

ginal groups. So Blair could face a steep uphill climb according to almost every observer, perhaps including Blair himself. Early-

er in the year the war broke, Sunblad wrote that he could see no sign of the 'end game' in the war, yet British public opinion was saying simply that it was time to leave Iraq.

THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC

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

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

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

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

(continued on page 6)
America and the Third World

Scott Edwards’ contribution to the Public i of August 2004 V4#6 on the relevance of the 2004 American presidential election and the American human rights situation. This article is not to detract but indeed contribute to the urgent need for American subjects and citizens to negotiate a mutually acceptable image of imperial America. To this end, I am concerned with the way in which an abysmal image of the prison industrial complex makes it difficult to see beyond the obvious.

The prison industrial complex can be detrimental to the United States’ foreign policy, the security and the prosperity of the American people, and the security and the prosperity of the world. This article is not to detract but indeed contribute to the urgent need for American subjects and citizens to negotiate a mutually acceptable image of imperial America. To this end, I am concerned with the way in which an abysmal image of the prison industrial complex makes it difficult to see beyond the obvious.

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Volunteering towards a Ph.D. in speech communication where one of her research interests is racist rhetoric. She became interested in migrant labor and corporate responsibility after reading the book "The New Jim Crow" by Critical Race scholar Michelle Alexander. The work addressed the ways in which economic and political systems maintain racial hierarchies and the ways in which migrant laborers are disproportionately affected by these systems. Phillips' research focuses on the intersection of migration, labor, and the cultural politics of race and identity. She is interested in how the experiences of migrant laborers are shaped by their political and economic circumstances, and how these factors influence their sense of belonging and agency.

Phillips' research interests include immigration policy, labor rights, and the cultural politics of race and identity. She has conducted fieldwork in Mexico and the United States, where her research has focused on the experiences of migrant laborers and the ways in which they navigate systems of exploitation and resistance. She is particularly interested in the ways in which migrant laborers are able to organize and resist exploitation, and the role that community-based organizations play in supporting migrant workers.

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

**OPUS DEI AND LIBERATION THEOLOGY**

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

The current Salvadoran Archbishop, Opus Dei's Fernando Filoni, has a friendlier relationship with the Salvadoran government and maintains that liberation theology no longer has any place in his country. In 1997, Sienz Laca, who also serves as military bishop, was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General in the Salvadoran Army. Augusto Pinochet, former dictator of Chile, used an abysmal human rights record, and some Opus Dei members served in his cabinet. This cooperation may reflect the idea that "my enemy's enemy is my friend." Pinche and other Latin American dic- tor were strong opponents of commu- nism, which Opus Dei considered a major threat to the Catholic Church. Juan Luis Cipriani Thorne, Archbishop of Lima, was the first member of Opus Dei to be named a cardinal. A Vatican website praises him for his efforts against the "Maqui" guerrillas, but Cipriani has also come under fire for his relationship with former Peruvian president Fujii- mori's authoritarian regime. These alliances have raised questions about whether Opus Dei members are concerned about human rights abuses. At
Cipriani’s first mass as a cardinal, protesters chanted, “Christ is justice, not complicity.”

**HOLY CASUSTRY**

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

Escrivá defends this “holy coercion” in Cronica, saying, “...If our Lord wanted to force sinners to come to his banquet, how much more will he want to use a holy coercion on those who are your brothers...this most beautiful coercion of charity from far taking away your brother’s freedom, will delicately help him to use it well.” However, some former members disagree, comparing Opus Dei to a cult. Some of the most outspoken critics are Tammy and Diane DiNicola, who run the Opus Dei Awareness Network (http://www.odan.org), which was mentioned in The Da Vinci Code. Some catholic proselytizers, such as Russell Rossie, in his book, “The Handmaid’s Tale, he speculates about a “relatively bloodless conflict” that allowed Christians to “live in states that recognize the natural order of divine Revelation, the right of free practice of religion, and laws on marriage, family, and life that reflect the primacy of our Faith.” (http://www.catholicity.com/mccloskey/arti-
cles/2003.html)

Author and reporter Robert Hutchinson is concerned that messages of fear and intolerance may increase worldwide violence. In his 1997 book Their Kingdom Come, he describes increasingly strained relations between Christianity and Islam. Some of McCloskey’s writing dovetails with Hutchinson’s thesis, and it appears that Islam may be replacing communism as the per-
cussion. Consequently, says the Pope, the Catholic Church. In his 1997 review of “The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order,” McCloskey writes, “Islam has on several occasions in past centuries almost conquered the Chris-
tian West through a combination of aggressive and coercive proselytism and bloody jihadis. John Paul II wants to make sure that it does not happen again. He wants to make sure that the ‘civilization of love and truth’ that he desires and foresees is allowed to develop and flourish without external threat, be it from Islam, the decadent modern West, or China.” In 2002, after the September 11 attacks, McCloskey addressed a graduat-
ing class at St. Thomas Aquinas College, saying, “At the present moment, the world’s only superpower is under attack. We all are living in a country during a time of war with an enemy that has been an enemy of Christen-

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**THe FUTURE**

Opus Dei appears to be a group of committed, ideal-

ardiac people who sincerely believe that right is on their side. Many organizations could also be described this way— for example, radical activists (e.g., Weather Underground), and many others. Although the ideals may be different, these groups also have some things in common. Each is comprised of individuals who interact in ways that may or may not be healthy. There is some risk of groupthink, defined by psychologist Irving Janis as “a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members’ strivings for unanimity override their motivat-

**IG Show**

Wasted Workforce
The Opportunists
TBA

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

A rock show to out-do all the other rock shows –

**IMC Show**

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**WPFW Meetings**

WPFW is an IMC project to build and operate a low-power radio to serve our community. With 168 hours available every week to fill with YOUR public affairs, music, and arts shows, WPFW is seeking volunteers to self-organize program-

**“World of Science” lecture series**

FROM KITES TO JETS: THE PHYSICS OF FLIGHT
Caribs Shoal, Parkland College, Dept. of Natural Sciences

October 1

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

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

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

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

**ANNUAL MEETINGS**

**Storytelling takes center stage at Stakerel Planeterum**

Storytelling, multiculturalism, and science will be combined in a one-hour event offered at the William M. Starker Planetarium on Sunday, October 7 from 7 to 8 p.m. in the planetarium dome. “Backyard Astronomy” will give the novice skywatcher the basic knowledge to further enjoy the night sky. The workshop will cover how to read a star chart, where to locate constellations and planets, why the moon changes phases, meteor showers, the magnitude sys-

**Local**

September 2004

www.ucnc.org /wwwpublic.ucnc.org

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I had what I believe to be the worst job in the world. I'm not squeamish about work, and am happy doing most any work, whether manual or otherwise. But after I graduated with a B.A. from Florida State University, I found myself in a world personal chaos. The year was 2000, and I was employed by the Florida Democratic Party during the coordinating effort to elect Al Gore President of the United States. My job: convince young people to vote for Gore.

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

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

Nearly all the organizations I was involved with planned to help, either directly or covertly. Ralph Nader garnered votes in the election in Florida. My job with the party was to travel throughout the state and convince these people to vote. To become, in essence, the enemy to the people loved. I was a philosophy/political science double major as an undergraduate (which is probably why I had so much time to be active). Required courses for philosophy majors almost always included a course on ethics. Of course, the public forums I had participated in had to take a course on electoral behavior and U.S. institutions. These courses allowed me to work for the Democratic Party in the 2000 election without significant internal moral crises.

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

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

The biggest issue I attended for my job was a community meeting with a Green and Republican representative, and me. It was an auditorium with a few hundred people. My arguments were stark. "If I made the choice, Ralph Nader would be my President!" I opened with. That got everyone's attention. "But I don't have that choice." Hisses and boos. It was clear there were lots of Greens in the house. Good. That's whom I was there to speak to. The forum quickly broke down because of poor facilitation, and there was roughly an hour of exchanges between audience members and myself. The Republican representative left a half-hour in. I was left with the same line of reasoning, over and over, about the potential large-scale electoral effects of a strong Green showing in Florida. There was nothing else I could say to these people, many of whom, I thought, viewed me with greater disdain than they did the Republican. I left more than a few of the public forums I had participated in with wet eyes because of my treachery.

Vote your conscience? What's that? We knew from the polling that it was going to be a close race. The number of undecided voters was relatively low, and the Greens were our best hope of establishing a safe margin. "This isn't local government. This isn't even Congress we're talking about," I'd say. I had, under Nader started polling well, been volunteering for the Green Party to help with local elections. Conversations I had about the Presidential campaign made me unwell by some. "Local elections are different," I tried convincing them. They didn't understand what I was so afraid of.

This is to pick who controls the daily operations of the federal government. Think of the environmental destruction, death, and suffering that will occur if this oil tycoon is elected to the Presidency. My words were eerily prophetic, though I'd happily give a limb for them to have been overruled. What is an "ethical" vote? If you are a Progressive, is it ethical to vote for a 3rd party candidate for the Presidential election in a swing state? One is also taught in civics courses (although it's fairly obvious) that change in the U.S. through federal government happens in incremental steps. The U.S. government was designed by the Founders to be slow enough to stymie radical change (which sounds bad now, but recall late 1920s Germany). As a function of this characteristic of American government, after 4 years of Bush, activists will be spending decades undoing the damage, on all fronts, from the courtroom to the streets. How long will it take to get back to where we were in 2000? I won't mention the possibility of 8 years of Bush. So the "progressive" action of voting for Nader in Florida in 2000 perhaps helped us take "x" steps back, and to the right? The Green hope was the Democratic Party would "wake up" and return to their roots. We've seen some candidates in the primary that exemplified this. But at what cost?

Knowing what we now know, I wonder, how many of my old Florida Green friends would find their vote ethical? Forsaking every- thing else, this President has had a very direct hand in the deaths of tens of thousands of innocent human beings, and hundreds of thousands more indirectly through his policies. As a philosophy major, and a quasi-utilitarian, ethically, I tried making the case in 2000 that the potential for mass injustice—should Bush be elected—outweighed the Green's ethical obligation to "vote their conscience." I was rebuffed time and time again: the injustice will exist under either candidate, so why not make a statement? I was nearly swapped to quit my job about a half dozen times. Now, of course, I am saturated with guilt that I had not worked harder.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Contrast the US media's treatment (or non-treatment) of the Peaceful Tomorrows group of family members of those killed in the September 11 terrorist attack. When family members marched between Washington DC and New York City, opposing war, carrying signs that read, "Not in our name," The New York Times reported simply that they were "mourning" and cropped their protest signs out of the accompanying photos. "Why is the American media so conservative?" asked Maggie, a neighbor of my in-laws, in an impromptu curbside chat. "Is it because of the corporate ownership?"

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

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

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

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

By Bob Ilyes

The Bush administration entered into a “war on terrorism” that seemed to have little regard for the facts at hand and consequently little concern for justice. Compendia of the “facts” that led to the occupation of Iraq are now commonplace. It is easy to cynically conclude that American foreign policy is fully under the control of war profiteers. The neo-conservatives see it quite differently, however, and consider the administration to be acting out of patriotic motives and in the best interest of the United States. The documentary “Hijacking Catastrophe: 9/11, Fear & the Selling of American Empire” explores neo-conservative influences on American policy.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union was seen as a unique opportunity by a small group of neo-conservatives who are now a part of the Bush administration. In 1992, a member of this group named Paul Wolfowitz wrote that the United States should take advantage of its position as an unopposed superpower to preemptively secure “access to vital materials, particularly Persian Gulf oil.” An opponent of the ideas in this internal Department of Defense document leaked it to the New York Times, sparking considerable debate. The use of preemptive military force, which is now known as the Wolfowitz doctrine, was not acceptable to most Americans at the time, and the neo-conservatives knew that it would take an event like Pearl Harbor to allow them to attempt to justify such aggression. The attacks of 9/11 provided exactly such an event.

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

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

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

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

BECOME A MEMBER OF THE UCIMC

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

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

Membership is annual and the dues are sliding scale donation of $25-$50 per year. However, no person will be refused membership because of an inability to pay. Anyone may request that the UCIMC waive all or part of the IMC membership donation by talking to any working group of the UCIMC. You can also choose to become a Sustaining Funder and donate $100-$1000 monthly to the UCIMC.

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

• check out equipment-making equipment
• use the editing equipment in the production room
• check out books, magazines, videos, audio
• casettes, and tapes from the UCIMC library
• rent the UCIMC space at a reduced rate

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

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