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Single-Payer & Interlocking Directorates: The Corporate Ties Between Insurers and Media Companies

Extra! August 2009
By Kate Murphy

How often are employees allowed to work on projects that might put some of the people they work for out of business? That’s the conflict of interest that journalists reporting on the healthcare reform debate are often put in by the boards of media corporations they work for, which frequently include representatives of the insurance industry.

While a recent New York Times/CBS poll (6/20/09) has found yet again that the majority of Americans believe the government would both provide better coverage and keep costs lower than private insurance companies, a single-payer plan as an option for healthcare reform continues to be underrepresented in

the media (Extra!, 6/09). A single-payer plan would allow the delivery of healthcare to remain private, but the government would pay for it out of a single federal health insurance fund. Like Medicare or Canada’s healthcare program, it would cut out the middleman by bypassing private health insurance companies. But such companies are well-represented on the boards of directors of media conglomerates—a factor that may help explain the blackout of such a popular possibility for reform.

When a director from one company sits on the board of directors of another company, that’s known as an interlocking directorate. For example, directors of the New York Times Co. also sit on the boards of several other large companies, including Chevron, Verizon and Ticketmaster. These di-

rectors are expected to act in the best interest of each company they direct; when one of the corporations in question is a media company, this can pose a conflict. Would someone who sits on a media company’s board object to coverage that damages another company that board member directs? Extra! has pointed out this conflict in the past (e.g., 9–10/01), noting that “even if these board members do not attempt to influence coverage of their businesses, their presence likely suffices to make media executives think twice about covering certain stories.”

A recent FAIR study of nine major media corporations and their major outlets, Disney (ABC), General Electric (NBC), CBS, Time Warner (CNN, Time), News Corporation

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New Mexico Main Street “Restoring New Mexico’s Village Plazas and Downtown Economies”

By Rich Williams

For more than twenty-four years New Mexico’s village plazas, town centers and historic neighborhood commercial districts have been served by the New Mexico MainStreet Program. Accredited through the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the program’s focus is empowering communities and providing technical and financial tools to revitalize downtown.

Following the trademarked comprehensive program of the Trust, the MainStreet Four Point Approach™, local volunteers establish a non-profit revitalization organization to work on design, organization, economic positioning, and promotion in downtown. They receive technical support and resources through a cadre of professionals in each of those four points who comprise the state’s New Mexico MainStreet Program. Known as Program Associates, they train, educate and build capacity of the local leadership and community participants.

Albuquerque has two operating MainStreet Districts, The Downtown Action Team is a MainStreet Project focusing in on enhancing the downtown as an Arts and Cultural District to strengthen support to its cultural entrepreneurs.

Nob Hill was one of the first “urban” pilot programs that the National Trust Main Street Center developed more than 20 years ago. Newcomers to the area don’t realize that it was the hard work of entrepreneurs who saw potential in dilapidated and under-utilized buildings and the public/private sector efforts of local residents and business owners through Nob Hill MainStreet which created the current dynamic market for retail, art galleries, boutiques and an incredible array of restaurants, cafes and coffee houses.

MainStreet staff frame their work

around sustainable green communities and work to instill both in ethic and practice those principles. Many of New Mexico’s local districts have adopted “Livability Guidelines,” planning and design principles incorporating smart, sustainable economic investment. Those principles include historic preservation, infill and mixed-use projects, alternative transportation, pedestrian safety, walk-ability, renewable energy and water conservation.

While cities and corporations have paid employees with expertise to fuel commercial growth and expansion, there rarely are dedicated resources to conserve and enhance the existing built environment. MainStreet provides technical assistance to its affiliated local organizations including historic architectural preservation, entrepreneurial development, urban planning, graphic design, non-profit management, grant writing and fund raising, to build a strong network of local volunteers, support business and property owners and re-create the street as public space.

New Mexico currently has active twenty-three local affiliates across New Mexico joining more than 1200 communities nation-wide. They work on façade restorations, streetscape improvements, pedestrian safety, repositioning downtown businesses to stay vital in an ever-changing market and develop downtown promotions and events. “It really is a self-help program, engaging the community, property and business owners to transform and restore their historic commercial cores to economic vibrancy,” said Rich Williams Director of the state Program.

MainStreet is also about partnerships and collaborations. Local programs have worked with the N.M. Growers markets to establish and support downtown farmers markets reconnecting the link between downtown neighborhoods

and local growers. With UNM’s Design Planning Assistance Center (DPAC), it has brought local MainStreet communities and students at UNM in Architecture and Planning together with downtown stakeholders for a semester to address downtown design and planning issues. MainStreet has built long-term financial relationships with Foundations such as Maddox, McCune and Whited to fund local capacity and projects.

Some communities are renovating and rehabilitating their historic movie houses as anchors to nightlife and community activities. In Portales, the historic Yam Theatre received state and federal funding for an adaptive reuse as community center. Clayton MainStreet in partnership with its town purchased the historic Luna Theatre and is renovating the old movie house for film and community events. “We hope to some day renovate the basement ball room under the theatre and revive our afternoon “tea dances,” stated Leroy Wood Clayton MainStreet Manager.

In Silver City there are three historic theatres in the downtown MainStreet district. The downtown is one of the state’s two pilot communities establishing its market niche as an Arts and Cultural District. It has several thriving arts gallery districts, incredible restaurants and cafes and a number of B&Bs to stay in while visiting. At the center of downtown revitalization is the historic Silco theatre.

According to MainStreet Executive Director Frank Milan, the once empty and deteriorating building is the focus of downtown renewal for the community. “It is our dream for the local MainStreet board to purchase the Silco and make it the center of community events, music and plays to serve our surrounding historic neighborhood res-

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Transition Initiative

By V.B. Price

Albuquerque City elections are less than three months away, and once again voters are left wondering what the candidates are thinking about late in the game.

The major media – The Albuquerque Journal and TV news – have left us largely in the dark. If it weren’t for Journal science writer John Fleck and his blog and the New Mexico Independent’s Marjorie Childress, we might have a drastically incomplete picture on where the candidates stand on water, for instance. And water is the crucial issues in this election.

In late July, Childress reported that candidate Richard Romero has taken strong exception to Mayor Marty Chavez’s views on water.

Chavez, who is running for mayor again, is an old fashioned Harry Kinney kind of Mayor, a young man locked into the thinking of the 1950s. He’s pro growth, pro sprawl on the west side, and publicly claims Albuquerque has a secure water future, based on the San Juan-Chama drinking water project implemented late last year. It’s the pride and joy of his administration.

But this isn’t 1950. Albuquerque, New Mexico, and the world are in a era of profound transitions marked by impending scarcities, global economic disruptions, and climate change.

Romero, so far, is closer to reality than Chavez on the water issue. “No Mayor can honestly claim that our water future is secure,” Romero said in a news release. Romero generally opposes sprawl and, unlike Chavez, is factoring into his views the reality of global warming and prolonged drought, and their impact on water in the west. “God forbid that the Colorado River dries up,” Romero said.

The Colorado Basin is in the throes of a nearly ten year drought that doesn’t look to lift anytime soon. Lake Powell and Lake Mead, the two great reservoirs along the river, are below 50 percent capacity.

California and Arizona, which depend on Colorado River water, are also experiencing prolonged droughts.

And the southern reaches of the Rio Grande along the Texas and Mexican border is suffering the worst drought in 50 years.

Researchers at the University of Colorado and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in partnership with the Bureau of Reclamation estimate that the Colorado River reservoirs could go completely dry in anywhere from 11 years to 50 years.

The San Juan-Chama drinking water project depends, of course, on the San Juan river, a tributary of the Colorado. The San Juan’s flow is in the same jeopardy as all the other tributaries to the Colorado are. The Rio Grande, upon

which our aquifer and agriculture depends, comes from basically the same watershed as the San Juan. Both derive from the snows in the San Juan Mountains. The Rio Grande flows from east of the Continental Divide and the San Juan flows from the west.

If the Rio Grande dries up during a multi decade drought, the Bosque dies off, the water table is lowered and damaged perhaps beyond repair, and small farmers and Pueblos lose their agricultural livelihood.

Without San Juan-Chama water, and with a dried up Rio Grande, Albuquerque would be forced to tap its aquifer full bore once again, risking depletion, dangerous subsidence in heavily populated parts of the city, and perhaps irreparable damage to the underground gravels, sands, and clays that hold the water.

Those who promote massive desalinization projects of deep brackish water in the Middle Rio Grande Valley say nothing about the energy costs required to operate huge reverse osmosis equipment, or what they would do with the vast amounts arsenic-laced salt waste.

This is no time to be a boomer touting 1950s style growth. This is a time to begin preparing for a serious shortage of our most vital resource. We could well be at the beginning of a life changing transition in Albuquerque and the Mountain West, one that mirrors similar transitions around the globe.

When you add water scarcity to the approach of peak oil, global warming, and steady curtailment of fossil fuels, the transition could be seen as overwhelming. But it’s not hopeless if you face up to it.

But Albuquerque is in the Dark Ages compared to towns and villages in Great Britain preparing for this transition. We’ve buried our heads in the sand. In the UK something called The Transition Initiative has been growing in popularity since 2006.

Growing from the grassroots in small communities, the transition initiative is helping residents organize to generate the kind of strategies that prepares them for a post-oil, low carbon future. The initiative is looking at not only economies of scale, but also moralities of scale, building a sense of community solidarity to invent ways to thrive with diminished resources.

The transition initiative takes the often glib notion of sustainability to a new pragmatic level, applying it to community conservation, agriculture, and public works, all planned and implemented from the bottom up.

The day we hear that something like that is starting up in Albuquerque is the day we can believe that our city has a half-way decent chance of surviving the coming hardships with optimism, practicality, and the good spirits of neighborly solidarity.

Banner First Year for Media Arts High School

By Marvin H. Gladstone

In the very first of our TB print issues (Vol. 1, No. 1, June '08, p.3) we announced "MEDIA ARTS CHARTER SCHOOL SET TO OPEN". Noting that we felt like "the dog chasing the car. . . [w]hat to do when he catches it?", we reported ourselves to be the sole survivor of ten applicants for the first-ever-to-be-granted state issued charters (as distinguished from those of local school districts); and that we were without money, schoolhouse, faculty, students or media arts curriculum. There was, however, no dearth among us of hope, resolve and ingenuity; and we may now, some two years later and having completed our first year of operation, boast of that which our "sweat equity" was able accomplish!

Electing to limit the first year of our new high school to the 9th and 10th grades (anticipating adding an 11th in the upcoming second, and a 12th in the third years, respectively), we were able to overcome the understandable skepticism of enough adventurous parents to enroll more than a hundred equally-adventurous freshmen and sophomores. Leasing an office building and transforming it into a schoolhouse; finding non-

risk-averse highly-qualified administrators and faculty; perfecting our novel media arts curriculum; begging for money; fighting bureaucracy at every level and overcoming bureaucratic inertia – all of these seemingly impenetrable barriers were scaled (mostly one by one, rarely by leaps and bounds) in time to open our school September 2, 2008.

And what a first year it has been! Our students took five awards in the 505 Youth Film Festival and second (only to the Albuquerque Academy) in the Innovative New Mexico Technology Conference for creative web design. (We should note that the well-established private competitor with juniors and seniors, imposes admission standards; whereas MACCS, a non-tuition public school in its first year with but the two lower grades, accepts all applicants – hardly a level playing field.) Our 10th graders scored a significant average 86 percent and, although lacking funds and facilities for a home-based athletic program, one of ours attained the top honors in the statewide high school men's tennis competition!

Capping these successes Albuquerque Magazine has crowned MAACS one of the ten best high schools in the city (the only public such school, the nine others being pri-

vate and parochial.)

MACCS' charter includes a proposed cyberschool, and its leadership is actively engaged this summer in planning, among its other projected activities, its unique "distance learning" program. Close to completing the purchase of its leased schoolhouse and adjacent expansion property, MACCS is also pioneering as the first charter school whose implementation of the novel "lease purchase" financing option is nearing realization. On the horizon is the possible state-chartering of a media arts middle school - start 'em early - to feed the high school (and, over the farthest horizon, birthing a media arts college, admission to which our soon-to-be graduates may aspire).

MACCS is one of very few (if, indeed, any other there be) public high schools in the country with a truly fully-articulated media arts elective curriculum, a media arts-infused core curriculum, and state charter-authorized media arts cyberschool expectations. Its outstandingly successful first year bodes well for the realization of its ambitious undertakings. S taytuned!

Marvin H. Gladstone
Founder-Trustee

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(Fox), New York Times Co., Washington Post Co. (Newsweek), Tribune Co. (Chicago Tribune, L.A. Times) and Gannett (USA Today) found connections to six different insurance companies. Five out of the nine media corporations studied shared a director with an insurance company; two insurance companies—Chubb and Berkshire Hathaway—were represented by more than one media corporation director.

The study also found crossover between these media corporations and several large pharmaceutical companies, such as Eli Lilly, Merck and Novartis, whose profits would also likely be negatively impacted by a single-payer system. Out of the nine media corporations studied, six had directors who also represented the interests of at least one pharmaceutical company. In fact, save for CBS, every media corporation had board connections to either an insurance or pharmaceutical company.

For example, the board of directors of the Chubb Corporation, whose accident and health division has offered health insurance for over 30 years, shares directors with two major media companies: Gannett and General Electric. A search of the Nexis database from January 1 through June 30, 2009, found just six articles mentioning single-payer in USA Today, Gannett's major out-

let. Out of those, only one (6/12/09) is from an advocate—a reprinted block quote from Sen. Bernie Sanders (Ind.-Vt.) originally published in the Huffington Post (6/8/09). On NBC News, GE's major outlet, single-payer was mentioned on only two occasions in the past six months. Of those two occasions, one was on Meet the Press (6/28/09), in which both Republican strategist Mike Murphy and former Governor Mitt Romney asserted that a public option would lead to a single-payer plan. The other NBC News mention of single-payer was favorable, but very brief—PBS's Tavis Smiley named Obama's move away from the plan as one of his concerns after Obama's first 100 days (4/25/09).

At the Washington Post Co., two directors are on the board of insurance conglomerate Berkshire-Hathaway, whose subsidiary General Re sells health reinsurance. In fact, Washington Post director Warren Buffet not only chairs Berkshire-Hathaway's board, he is the company's CEO. (Berkshire-Hathaway is also one of the 10 biggest U.S. advertisers, along with pharmaceutical company Abbott Labor-atories—Ad Age, 6/22/09.) Another Washington Post director, Thomas Gaynor, is the vice president of insurance company Markel Corporation. In the past six months, the Washington Post has published

hundreds of articles on the subject of healthcare reform, fewer than 25 of which mention single-payer. Fewer than 30 percent of the sources who spoke about single-payer in these articles were advocates of the plan.

In all, though healthcare reform has been mentioned thousands of times in the output of these media corporations' major outlets, single-payer was mentioned in only 164 articles or news segments from January 1 through June 30, 2009; over 70 percent of these mentions did not include the voice of a single-payer advocate. Over 45 percent of the pieces that did include a single-payer advocate were episodes of the Ed Show, an MSNBC program whose host, Ed Shultz, frequently advocates for single-payer healthcare. Without the Ed Show, just 19 percent of articles or news segments that mentioned single-payer would have included an actual advocate of the plan.

While it should go without saying that correlation is not causation—and MSNBC's example proves that interlocking directorates are hardly the only factor in media coverage—this study indicates that, at the very least, corporate media and the insurance and pharmaceutical industries' interests are fundamentally aligned.

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Loco or Local: Growing Albuquerque

By Astrid Webster

The complexities of the complex, military/nuclear, keep on growing, much like the bindweed and bermuda grass in my yard. Deep in the earth, the roots thicken, twist and wind till they find their way to the surface. I keep after the yard weeds with trowel and dandelion digger but their little heads repeatedly pop up as though to say, "You're not paying enough attention" if there is the tiniest drop of rain or shaft of sunlight.

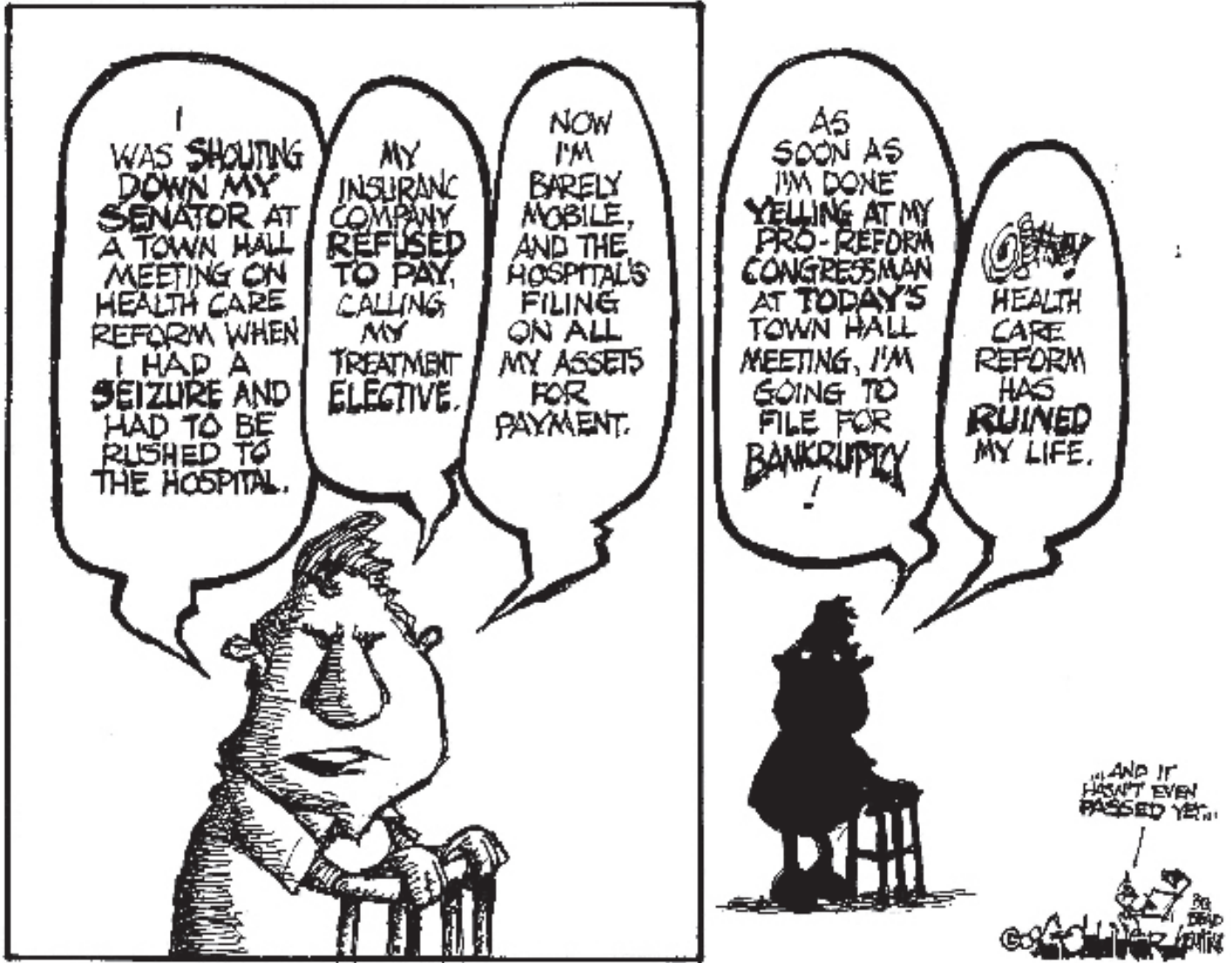
Albuquerque is alive with all kinds of proliferation, including weeds and nuclear, much of it boding ill for our future. Kirtland Air Force Base announced on Friday, June 26, that the Air Force is consolidating its nuclear management work force, moving personnel and functions from the Space and Missile Systems Center in Los Angeles to the Albuquerque base. Albuquerque and Huntsville, Alabama head the nation in escaping the brunt of the economic downturn, largely due to their military and bomb embracing ways. Both have military and nuclear roots lying deep beneath the surface that few officials or citizens appreciate for the magnitude of threat they pose to our collective future. Kirtland's population will grow by 6+%, further strengthening Albuquerque's role in supporting the only threat to humanity's future that can trump our continued dependence on fossil fuels and spewing tons of carbon into our once and sometimes clear skies.

What we don't have enough of is healthy soil and water to feed the hungry hordes that our business as usual, all depends on a growing economy misleaders keep pushing. Our fragile ecosystem and overburdened river and aquafir are no match for the demands of Mayor Chavez' pet arena and mega freeway interchange projects. Sprawl is no more dead than my bindweed, though both should be, seeing how they displace healthy, sustainable, not to mention earth friendly, growth.

Our nation is on the eve of passing yet another energy bill, sponsored by Waxman & Markey, that is frosted with promise while feeding cake to the giant polluters. Wind, solar, and geothermal are still starving while coal is ripping the tops off mountains and dimming the lights over New Mexico as petrochemical industries ramp up prices and extraction. Ford is making a few energy saving concessions plus the Focus, their token contribution to gas economy. GM dabbles in electric plug in cars with never a nod to where the electricity they will need will come from without a massive infusion of funds for photovoltaics.

Meanwhile a few of us gather in backyards admiring the lawns we have converted to vegetable gardens, talk about the waste vegetable oil we have collected from restaurants and are brewing into biodiesel for our cars, discuss the intricacies of trading our flush toilets in for composting models, drain the water from our sinks and bathtubs into our yards and embrace a future in which the Pentagon will have to go begging for funds like the poor now have to scramble for food, medical care and a decent education for their children. Sounds a bit hippy, but it's a serious effort spelled out in Rob Hopkins' Transition Towns concept.

More of us should be fighting for civil rights, preaching love not war, growing organic veggies in our yards and wearing clothing we'd have thrown away when we were teens. The world needs that kind of change: less violent, more thoughtful, driven by heart rather than suspicions, willing to trade temporary bodily security for the sanity of our minds, the sanctity of our hearts and wholeness of our spirits. The future lies not in expanding Kirtland and its nuclear brigade but in local agriculture, clean water that doesn't come in bottles, healthy citizens who grow potatoes rather than act like them, who know the meaning of equality and sustainability and are willing to work for them rather than "reinvigorating the... nuclear enterprise" as the Air Force plans.



COMMENTARY

Harry’s Rant
“Are We Making Any Progress?”

By Harry Willson

One of our favorite magazines is THE PROGRESSIVE, which has now been published for one hundred years. The April issue, celebrating that fact, dedicates one page for every one of those one hundred years. I have read every word on every page, and what struck me most was that the problems we as a nation face today are not really very different from what's been confronting us for a century. It is amazing how the very same language is used, then and now, to describe each problem.

It became clear as I read all that material that the very name of the magazine is full of irony. THE PROGRESSIVE. "Progressives" were a political/philosophical movement, beginning before 1900 -- pro-labor, pro-family-farmer, anti-monopoly business, anti-war. The Progressives hoped to improve the lot of farmers and laborers and their families, through political action, forcing government action. They elected senators, like Bob LaFollette of Wisconsin, founder of the magazine, and they did bring about change, like the passage of laws which prohibit child labor.

"Progressive" contains the word "progress," which implies improvement. Nowadays the word is often used simply to refer to change, often needless change, but the original meaning of "progress" was "betterment." Yet the problems confronted in THE PROGRESSIVE, over the last hundred years, are still with us.

[1] Money in politics. In the first year of publication, 1909, THE PROGRESSIVE stated: "Money Should Not Buy Office. The qualifications of two men being equal, the power of the one with a large amount of money to spend should be no greater, in securing votes, than the one without money." Another article in 1927 made the same point, even more forcefully, "Expenditure of Huge Sums for Seats in Congress Cannot Be Justified." It's still true, and still a problem.

[2] Distribution of Wealth. Senator Borah in 1931 told how our wealth was divided. "Let five apples represent all the wealth in the nation, and let 100 people represent the entire population of the United States. Then 96 people would have one apple, and four very rich people would have one apple apiece!" The numbers now may be slightly different, but there has been no real progress in dealing with this matter.

[3] Wire-tapping. In 1928 Senator LaFollette wrote at length in his magazine, objecting to government wire-tapping and the Supreme Court's approval of admitting evidence secured that way. It seemed so modern, such an up-to-date debate -- ongoing for more than eighty years.

[4] Punish Law-breakers. "Pun-

ish the Real Offenders," says the headline, in 1911. "Is it punishment merely to compel the Standard Oil Company to change its form of organization? What about the men under whose direction these illegal practices were carried on? Are they not to be called to account? [The offenses] were the work of human hands and human brains, and the men responsible for them should be summoned to court." Some of us have wondered about torture, authorization of torture, lying to Congress, illegal wire-tapping, outing CIA agents, and other serious crimes.

[5] War. THE PROGRESSIVE has opposed war in general and specific wars in particular very consistently, from 1909 until today. World War I, World War II even, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and wars against Iraq and Afghanistan. "Take the Profit out of War," cried one headline from 1915. "Back of every big army and navy appropriation bill is the organized power of private interest, pressing for more battleships, more armor plate, more powder, more rifles, more machine guns, a larger standing army, a bigger navy." The following year brought more indignation: "The gentlemen who want war with Mexico are a very powerful lot. They own most of the United States and a good slice of Mexico. They are our Captains of Industry, our Masters of Finance. They own or control our great newspapers." The same indignation could apply to our current wars, and the Pentagon budget now up for debate.

[6] Banks and Bail-outs. The problem that seemed most stunning to me, in the language used to describe it, was an old one as well as our current one -- banks and bailouts. In 1934 the headline reads, "Businessmen, Then and Now." "They strutted up and down the avenue in those bygone days. They were free-born, 100 percent American big businessmen who took back-talk from nobody. Now they take a hand-out wherever they can get it. Billions will be ladled into the mouths of the very individualistic big businessmen who, five years ago, were yelling their heads off about "no government interference with business."

The handouts, called bailouts even back then in the 1930s, were labeled "socialism" by some. Norman Thomas, that great Socialist, replied to that claim in 1936. "There is no Socialism at all about taking over all the banks which fell in Uncle Sam's lap, putting them back on their feet again, and turning them back to the bankers to see if they can bring them once more to ruin." It feels like what Yogi Berra called, "Deja vu all over again."

Harry Willson writes a Rant of the Month at www.amadorbooks.com -- come see the Library of Old Rants. Email Harry at harry@amador-books.com

It’s Business as Usual on Wall Street

By Jim Hightower

Here's some great economic news, folks: America is back on the financial upswing, and happy days are here again!



What's that you say? Well, yes, unemployment is still rising, wages are stagnant, we see neighbors losing their homes, consumers are mired in credit card debt, health care costs are crushing people and so on and so on. But, hey, Bucko, this isn't about you.

The good news is that Wall Street bankers are on track to grab fat bonuses at the end of the year - bonuses that will rival the giddy greed-fest they were enjoying before the recent crash. Goldman Sachs, for example, just announced that it has already set aside \$11.4 billion this year for banker bonuses, with Goldman's top executives expecting paydays of more than \$20 million each! There,

now doesn't that make you feel better about the American economy?

What this tells us is that the Princes of Wall Street have learned nothing from the mess they made of our economy - and that their culture of executive entitlement is totally intact.

Let's review the situation: one, the avaricious abandon of these elitist bankers brought down America's financial system, causing massive economic pain for millions of families; two, they demanded and got a multitrillion-dollar bailout from us taxpayers to save themselves; three, they promptly returned to the same secretive trading scams they practiced before and are now reinstituting the grab-all-you-can compensation ethic that rewards narcissistic recklessness; and, four, their lobbyists are swarming Washington to kill the financial reforms that We The People have demanded.

Meanwhile, Goldman insists that its hard-working bankers "deserve" such rich rewards, because they've

been out there "blocking and tackling every day." Yeah, blocking reform and tackling taxpayers.

For more information on Jim Hightower's work -- and to subscribe to his award-winning monthly newsletter, The Hightower Lowdown, visit www.jimhightower.com

How Much is a Trillion Dollars?

Mathematician John Allen Paulos puts "million," "billion," and "trillion in context, likening them to the passage of time in order to understand their order of magnitude. relate \$1 million to on million seconds and it adds up to 11 days. Liken \$1 billion to one billion seconds and it adds up to 31 years and six months. Compare \$1 trillion to one trillion seconds and it adds up to more than 315 centuries. Currently the United States' debt amounts to over \$10 trillion.

Local Co-op Receives National Recognition for Support to Local Small Farms

By Elizabeth McIlhaney

The La Montanita Food Co-operative recently won a national award for its Foodshed Project that recognized the local co-op's national leadership with this innovative program, which involves both picking up and distributing local products throughout New Mexico. The Cooperative Consumers Marketing Association (CCMA) awarded the Cooperative Innovation and Achievement Award "mainly for the work we do in the Foodshed Project," said Terry Bowling, La Montanita General Manager, who received the award in June for the co-op at the CCMA's national conference in Pittsburgh, Pa. Approximately 200 food cooperatives from throughout the United States belong to the organization, he said. "We have achieved a standard in this type of work. It is very difficult to do this work and make it financially viable for all parties involved." The Foodshed Project is "designed to support our local farmers and local agriculture within a 300-mile radius of Albuquerque, which includes all of New Mexico and parts of southern Colorado," Bowling said. "For farmers who cannot travel to us to get their crops to market, we distribute those products for them. We go to the farm and get the products and bring them back to our warehouse in Albuquerque.

This design makes it possible to support agriculture throughout the state. It's very important work to help them keep farming. We've been successful in that so far and this is what the award was for."

"Foodshed" is a term that "we use loosely," he said, "same as a watershed. It is a word that was fashioned before I came on board (about 18 months ago), and it is used to describe the area we work within: a 300-mile radius. That is the foodshed we are trying to support.

The foodshed has been in existence about three years. We've always supported local farmers and this is just a way to bring more into the fold when it's too far for them to come to us."

"The cooperative distribution center warehouse has been open for three years and we are trying to do something that other co-ops have tried for the last 30 years. No one

has been successful until now," explained Mark Lane, the store-team leader of the Nob Hill La Montanita. The Foodshed Project warehouse at 3361 Columbia NE in Albuquerque, "is the mechanism that helps us do" all of this. "It's tough, we are going through a lot of pains and challenges even now," Lane said.

La Montanita's administrative offices are also now at that location, freeing up much-needed space in the stores, where the various offices used to be. As Bowling explained, the Foodshed Project is "very difficult to manage because we have no model to look at. It's the hardest thing I've managed in my life, because I have nothing to look back on; it's all seat of the pants. We are creating the model as we go. It's the fun part, but it's very difficult. This is trial and error. Yet it's the most worthwhile thing I've ever been involved with."

With 29 years of experience that includes both multi-store and warehouse management, Bowling is no newcomer to the grocery business. He came to New Mexico to head the coop from Tennessee, where he earned years of experience in the conventional grocery store paradigm. "As a conventional grocer, you didn't get involved with the types of projects" that La Montanita does. "You didn't care. Here, we care about the state, we care about the farmers, we care about the environment. That is why I took this job. The co-op is not just about buying and selling, profit and loss. It is people helping people and the environment and the world. In the world I was in," before coming here, "that didn't exist; the opportunities were not there to do this type of work." Lane, who joined the staff of La Montanita seven years ago, began as customer service manager, and worked his way up to store team leader in 2007.

The Foodshed Project enables the coop to "go get its own products," Lane said. The co-op distributes more than "1,100 products made in New Mexico or close to its borders." The Foodshed Project "saves farmers the expense of the trip to us; we save money on purchasing and we can carry the products at a better price. Farmers can be sure their products will get to market."

La Montanita, which has two

stores in Albuquerque, one in Santa Fe, and one in Gallup, doesn't just pick up and distribute products to its own four stores. In order to help the farmers, the environment and the local economy as well as the co-op, "we take products to Whole Foods, John Brooks, distribute to the Silver City and Las Cruces food co-operatives," and other stores and co-ops throughout New Mexico, such as the Triangle Grocery Store in Cedar Crest. The goal is to "expand and grow local economies even among our local competition," Lane said. "We go almost to the Texas border. For example, we pick up cheese in Tucumcari."

With four store locations, La Montanita is among the top three food co-operatives in the United States, Lane said, in numbers of stores. As for total sales volume, "we are within the top ten nationally." Its 16,000 members also put it in the top ten food co-operatives nationally for number of members. One does not have to be a member to shop at La Montanita, so membership numbers aren't the same as customer numbers.

The percent of local products among total sales is growing, Lane said. In 2003, local products were about ten percent of all sales. By 2005, they were 15%. "In the last year and a half or so, at least 20% of the sales for La Montanita are local products. And that is the single basic piece of information we get from the annual member surveys every year," that people want local products.

"With local products, we hope you are willing to pay a fair dollar value," he said, knowing you are "supporting people with the understanding that it might cost you a few pennies more, even a dollar more, but it is understanding that vendors are getting a fair market value for their efforts.

Because we believe in fair wages and benefits for our staff, that money has to come from somewhere, so our challenge is keeping our prices as low as possible while taking care of staff and paying the patron benefits at the end of the year."

In addition to sales, special prices and discounts based on volunteer work that always are available

See **CO-OP** on page 4



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Rail Transit: Everybody But Us

By JW Madison
Rails Inc.

Transportation in the West just isn't what it used to be. Correction: it's returning to what it used to be. Dallas, Denver and Salt Lake City are adding new routes to their already thriving Light Rail Transit (LRT) network. Phoenix and Houston have started their own LRT. Calgary, Alberta does them one better: their successful and expanding "C Trains" run entirely on wind-generated electricity.

Albuquerque runs an improving bus system and some para-transit vans for the handicapped.

How did all these places ---- some with solid "Conservative" reputations ---- get so far ahead of us? How do we catch up? Why should we care?

Like most of the world, several of Albuquerque's leaders know that economical, durable and earth-friendly transit can not long exist without Rail. Efforts in this direction have been made in the last three years. (see ABQ TRial Balloon #3). These efforts have been modest and thoughtful enough, yet Rail transit is in trouble here. Why?

Reasons for this constipated situation are numerous: A near-sighted attitude toward up-front cost vs. long-term gain. A

brainwash-inspired fear of taxation good or bad. Mayor / Council politics. Vested interest idiocy. But in the opinion of Rails Inc., "our" side made some tactical mistakes of our own.

Misplaced Priorities ?

The pro-Rail leaders of Albuquerque decided several years ago, for sound enough reasons, to begin our modern Rail adventures with a Streetcar line along Central. The latest version of this would be constructed in three initial phases, to run from Atrisco to San Mateo. Not a bad deal (all modern Rail is a good deal), although some advocates, including us, cherish different ideas as to where to start and with what kinds of trains.

We feel, however, that the wrong benefits have been emphasized in promoting local Rail transit. Presentations have focussed on "Sustainability" in general and the rejuvenation of Central and surrounding areas; a process already happening anyhow. Most of our far-flung public (right or wrong) hasn't seen these as good enough reasons to shell out more tax money, especially during a recession. We need to win them and their political leaders over to our side. Here's how:

Let's start spreading the word about the many Good Transportation benefits of Rail transit, such

- as:
- Great fuel / energy economy
- Freedom from traffic congestion
- A smooth and reliable ride, in any kind of weather
- Long system life (100 years is not an exaggeration)
- Low maintenance compared to streets and roads
- Thrifty use of land and materials
- Huge savings in our transportation expenses
- Facilitation of biking, walking and neighborhood transit.

We think that, once our general public and their political stand-ins become aware of just what we're missing and why, Albuquerque may finally join most of the civilized world in making modern Rail the trunk and major limbs of our transit "tree".

For more information, consult:

- www.nmrails.org
- www.lightrailnow.org
- www.ctaa.org
- www.railusers.net.

FACT :

Renovation of the intersection of I-25 and Paseo Del Norte is projected to cost about \$400 million. \$400 million will buy an entire turn-key Light Rail System (10-20 miles), with a useful life longer than most of ours.

Gallup's Independent Radio Station Gains Support

By Elizabeth McIlhaney

Gallup could have its own community radio station within a year and a half. All that is needed is a recreational vehicle. Yes, that's right, an RV, plus about \$11,000 for an antenna, complete with an engineer to build it.

"If someone were willing to donate an RV for us, they could deduct the cost from their income tax," explained Bob Aly, president of Available Media Inc., "and we would have a mobile studio. We could build the console and install all the equipment needed to send a signal to the transmitter location. We've got donations and a pledge for loans for radio station equipment, a transmitter and computers for Gallup."

Available Media Inc. is the non-profit arm of New Mexico Indymedia. With its 501(C)(3) status, all donations, be they in the form of cash or material items, can become tax deductions for the donor.

"For the Gallup radio station, we need to raise about \$11,000 for an antenna and we need to find a place to have a studio," Aly said. "We have two construction permits to build radio stations in Gallup and Grants. Each construction permit is for about three years and I think we are about halfway through the time for the Gallup station, so we have about another year

and and a half to get on the air." If an RV could be obtained to get the Gallup station started, then "when we secured a permanent location in Gallup, we would move that RV to Grants and do the same thing over again.

I'm sure if worse came to worst," he said, "we could find a temporary studio without an RV, but with one, we would only need an antenna."

An engineer willing to donate the time to build the antenna in compliance with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rules is being sought by the organization, Aly said.

In addition to seeking donations, Available Media offers services to the public and the money thus obtained is being used to get the Gallup station started. "We have the capability to shoot and edit video; if anyone needs video work done, we can do that," Aly said. "They can hire us for video taping and video editing and we will use the money for this project.

We've already gotten some work, as we just did a shoot and expect to make \$500 to \$1,000 dollars off of it and that will go into these projects."

Aly may be contacted at 242-5511. Allen Cooper, vice president of Available Media, may be contacted at 304-3144. The email address for Available Media is info@availablemedia.org.

CO-OP from page 3

to members, once a year member-owners receive a check based on a percentage of his or her household's total dollars spent at La Montanita during the previous fiscal year. The percentage varies from one year to the next, depending on the annual profit. Money that isn't needed to run the co-op is given back to the members. The members are the owners, unlike grocery stores and natural foods stores that are either privately owned or publicly traded on the stock market.

The annual member survey also indicates consistently that "people feel they get outstanding customer service at any of our stores," Lane said.

"Members like this! When people are watching their pennies, giving great service makes the difference in getting them to spend money. Each of our stores has its own identity, its own demographic." Among the 16,000 total members statewide, about 2,500 - 3,000 return the surveys each year, and the results are "very similar at each store. The surveys are indicative of the base that we have." As for what sells the most at the various locations, "organic produce is still our base," he said. "Non-organic is very minimal.

Some of our local stuff is as close to being organic as possible, without being called organic. But we know they don't add anything."

This kind of knowledge and trust comes from working closely over time with the farmers and producers.

If a shopper has concerns or questions about any given product, employees at each location always are readily available to address them knowledgeably.

The integrity of the food and food sources is key to the co-op experience and the staff works hard to maintain that standard.

"A good example of non-organic products is mung bean sprouts," Lanesaid. "You just won't find them organic anywhere. They just aren't available.

We have been trying for years; someone looks around at least once a year" to see if there are any organ-

ic sources."

Thus, mung bean sprouts are the only produce carried regularly that never are organic.

In the national grocery industry, "the only area of growth in about the last 15 years has been natural foods, "with 10-15% growth per year," he said. That number reflects the increase in sales of natural and organic foods nationally throughout the entire industry, including conventional grocery stores as well as those considered natural foods grocery stores.

About 15 years ago, there were close to 500 food co-ops throughout the United States. Now there are less than 300. "It is so hard to compete," Lane explained, when competition moves into the neighborhoods that once relied solely on a local co-op. To help rectify this problem for co-ops, the National Co-operative Grocers Association (NCGA) was formed "to increase the volume buying power of co-ops, by agreeing to minimum orders every month."

For example, Lane said, the NCGA could buy 20 truckloads of sparkling water for its members nationwide and be able to get the same price Whole Foods can get for the same amount.

A single co-op could never do volume buying like that. The NCGA allows food co-operatives to compete with a big chain like Whole Foods.

NCGA membership is about 110 co-ops nationwide and La Montanita is one of them. "With all of us buying together, we can pass those deals on to members and customers."

Through the NCGA, stable co-ops are able to mentor younger organizations and help start new ones. "Los Alamos is pretty close to getting a co-op,"

Lane said. "Our management is sent all over the country through NCGA" to help other co-ops.

Providing the products people want is the obvious key to success with any food store and La Montanita is no exception.

Bananas, which never are a local product, are one of the, if not the,

primary product sold at La Montanita. Banana sales sometimes can total as much as "five to eight percent of the produce sales for the month."

And the produce department consistently remains the biggest-selling department in all the store locations. So getting enough organically grown bananas to meet the co-op needs at all times sometimes is challenging. If all else fails, the co-op staff has been known to drive "over to the competition," Lane said, and get what it needed there to sell at the co-op locations until more could be obtained through the usual distribution methods.

"Bananas are the single biggest item in the produce department. People will walk in the door," Lane said, "and if they don't see bananas, they'll leave. Same thing with milk and eggs and half and half. When people don't find something that they want, in general they are going to shop and get some more things, but if they have to go somewhere else, then they may not buy everything they would have bought from us. So we've always got to make sure we have the staples."

To learn more about the co-op, its history and the many projects and organizations with which it is involved and to find out how one might become a member or get more involved, go online to http://lamontanita.coop, or ask questions at the customer service desk in each store location.

Elizabeth McIlhaney was a La Montanita Co-op board member during the mid-1990s. Her family founded and managed McIlhaney's Dairy for more than 50 years in Albuquerque's North Valley. Decades of careful breeding resulted in healthy Heritage Jersey cows producing high quality milk. Calves were grassfed in Central Texas till old enough to milk, then brought to New Mexico where they were fed locally grown alfalfa hay. During its last decade, the dairy provided milk to the co-op, including raw milk before New Mexico legislation prohibited its distribution.

Her email is: elizabeth_3@q.com.

MAIN from page 1

idental districts.

In a unique effort developed by Governor Richardson and adopted by the New Mexico Legislature, New Mexico launched its first Arts and Cultural District Program. Establishing a firm market niche for those downtowns wishing to strengthen support of local artisans and cultural entrepreneurs, the program establishes the district as part of the creative economy. Resources for these districts includes a full analysis of the economic impact of the creative economy within the district and region, a cultural plan to prioritize programs and financial development for the targeted creative industries for each district, a social network map of artists, artisans and cultural institutions and entrepreneurs in each region for the program to provide support services and resources.

But its not just old movie houses being restored. New Mexico's tourism industry is the third largest economic generator statewide. In rural communities it is often the largest source of external revenue. Cultural and heritage tourists come to New Mexico and its communities to experience authentic culture.

Those tourists want a place to stay and eat. Downtown's historic hotels and motels are often the experience that our visitors want. In Las Vegas the Plaza hotel just completed an extensive expansion and renovation of facilities on the historic old town plaza. In Silver City, the historic deco-period Murray Hotel abandoned for over 30 years is under renovation, and re-opening next year. Just down the block from the Murray is the frontier style Palace hotel.

The historic Clovis hotel, after purchase by the city of Clovis and a partnership with Clovis MainStreet to attract federal and state funding for remediation of asbestos, is now working to attract a developer to renovate and reopen the historic facility. The nine story building is a visual landmark anchoring the location of the downtown. The property, now improved, will be developed

as a mixed use, live-work space for Clovis.

"It's not just about old buildings," said Robyne Beaubien Executive Director of Clovis MainStreet. "These larger facilities are anchors in the downtown that once reopened generate people traffic that spills over to the other businesses in the downtown corridor." And empty buildings don't generate lodgers' tax and gross receipts taxes that pay for other amenities, infrastructure and community programs for the community.

As entrepreneurs rehabilitate these facilities it is not only bringing a building back, a business reopened, but it also restores a piece of the historic and cultural fabric reweaving back together the community's social network.

MainStreet is a comprehensive program with many facets. To learn more about New Mexico's local affiliated programs and to visit these downtown districts you can learn more at their website www.offtheroadnm.com.

You'll find local small business owners working hard to maintain their way of life while welcoming you with a generous helping of warm hospitality. And if you are hankering to do some volunteer work, there is no place like historic downtown to pick up a paint brush or volunteer in the downtown green chile cheese festival or maybe even buy an empty store front, start up a business and settle in to community life on MainStreet.

Rich Williams is the Deputy Division Director of the Community Development Division of the Economic Development Department of the state of New Mexico. He has been the state Director of the New Mexico MainStreet Program for the past six years. He has in the past served as a MainStreet board President, MainStreet Manager, and a state MainStreet Program Associate in Organization. He once owned and restored an historic, old-fashioned Ice Cream Parlor operating it for twelve years. He is also the state coordinator for the New Mexico Arts and Cultural District Program.



Buy Local and Support Local Nonprofits



After publishing for a year on donations, this is our first issue to expand from eight pages to twelve, with the new four pages to include advertising.

We are excited and proud of this development because it offers the potential for our newspaper to not only survive, but also to expand its distribution, and hopefully, in the relatively near future, expand to publishing monthly.

The businesses advertising on these pages have shown their willingness to support our efforts to publish this newspaper and we urge you to support these advertisers, and tell them that you saw their ad in the TRIal Balloon. And when you have a good experience doing business with them be sure to recommend them to your friends. Word-of-mouth is the only thing more powerful than advertising in the ABQ TRIal Balloon.

Always remember that money spent with a local business has a multiplier effect, i.e. the money you spend with that business goes toward its overhead, cost of goods, wages, and profits. Much of the business's spending will be reinvested in the local economy. This is not true with franchises and chain stores, whose profits are funneled back to a corporate office, and often go to huge salaries and bonuses paid to high level executives.

There's also a personal benefit to doing business with locally owned companies. That is, you will be able to meet the business owner, face-to-face, and you'll both have the pleasure of doing business together. Not so with those big chains and franchises! Remember the risk, investment, the myriad skills and long hours that it takes to open and sustain a small business and reward these businesses with your patronage. We can't afford not to.



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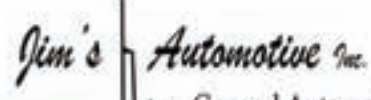
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Sunport Display Offers NM Solar History Lesson

By Janet Bridgers

Albuquerque, August 11, 2009---A group of businesses and nonprofits have mounted a display at the Albuquerque Sunport that provides travelers and their families a quick look at how New Mexico, as a state, has pioneered development of solar energy technology. “Using large format photos and text, the display provides thousands of people each day with a look at more than a thousand years of history,” said Janet Bridgers, founder/president of Earth Alert, one of the sponsoring organizations. Other sponsors include Bridgers & Paxton Consulting Engineers, Albuquerque, one of the country’s leading mechanical engineering firms, the New Mexico Solar Energy Association (NMSEA) and Advent Solar, a solar manufacturing firm located at Mesa del Sol.

The display, located in the passageway from the parking lot into the terminal, includes a first panel with the heading “Since Ancient Times,” that depicts use of passive solar energy in Native New Mexicans’ dwellings at Taos Pueblo and the ruins at Bandelier and Gila National Monuments. The second panel is devoted to solar achievements in New Mexico in the 1950s through the 1970s, including the Bridgers and Paxton Solar Building

at 213 Truman N.E., the world’s first solar-heated office building, built in 1956; the Sandia National Laboratories Solar Tower, built in 1978 and Santa Fe architect Ed Mazria’s publication of the book *Passive Solar Energy* in 1979.

The third panel includes large photos from a number of solar companies with operations in New Mexico including Advent, Schott, Emcore and Sacred Power.

“We’ve had the confluence of thousands of years of use of passive solar energy by Native New Mexicans, along with the science and engineering leadership provided by persons employed and associated with the national laboratories in New Mexico to achieve some of the foundational achievements in solar energy. Many people may not be aware that New Mexico has this long history with these technologies that are finally being implemented worldwide as ways to reduce use of fossil fuels,” Bridgers said.

The display will be up at the Sunport through the third week of September. During that time, more than 120,000 people will pass the display. Plans are being discussed to mount it at the Solar Fiesta and at other locations throughout the state in the upcoming months. For information contact Janet Bridgers, info@earthalert.org.

Solar Thermal at a Realistic Cost

By Linda L. Martin

Imagine having adequate hot water everyday for the entire family's bathing and laundry needs, keeping your home cozy and warm on winter nights and efficiently cooled in the summer, and... your household's fuel and power bills going down! How is it possible?

SOLAR THERMAL

By simply heating water with the sun, we can achieve huge savings in terms of financial costs and our usage of fossil fuels.

Solar thermal systems became popular during the energy crisis of the 1970’s. President Jimmy Carter set the trend by installing solar panels to heat water on the roof of the White House. The Reagan administration, on the other hand, preferred to build coal-fired power plants and purchase fossil fuel from Middle Eastern countries. Carter’s solar thermal panels were yanked off the White House and the plug was pulled on further development of solar in America. For a while.

Over the past two decades, Americans in the Northeast have spurred a resurgent interest in solar. After enduring several large scale black-outs and brown-outs, frustrated New Englanders vowed they would use solar to “get off the grid.” A market for photovoltaic solar systems was born.

THE DOWNSIDE OF PV

Photovoltaic (or PV) is a system of using photocells to collect solar energy to generate electricity. But PV is not without its drawbacks. The efficiency of PV is still very low at 12% to 15%, but the real downside is the cost of the battery and converter systems that store the power and convert it to 120 AC voltage. Another problem encountered by users in desert climates is that our extreme temperature swings between night and day degrade and crack PV panels, decreasing their efficiency over time.

Concerned with fossil fuel shortages, costs and pollution, the UK, Europe and China have focused on developing solar thermal systems to heat hot water that in turn heats their homes and businesses. Daimler in Germany has led the way by developing sleek, high-tech evacuated tube collectors to re-

place bulky, heavy flat-plate collectors. By using a vacuum to insulate each tube of the collector, there is less material to degrade and reduce the efficiency of the system. Since temperature change has little effect on their efficiency, evacuated tube systems are perfect for northern New Mexico’s climate.

Since these tube systems have only been in use for 15 years, manufacturers will only guarantee their efficiency for 15 years, but it is estimated that the systems will last a lifetime.

Since space and water heating accounts for 47% of energy costs in U.S. households, investment in a solar thermal system is a smart idea. Not only does the owner see an immediate saving in his / her heat bills, but the up-front cost of a thermal system is approximately 75% less than that of a PV system. The homeowner will find that the system pays for itself in five to seven years as compared to 25 years with a PV system.

Solar thermal cooling systems for homes are now available. The new cooling systems are similar to refrigerated air conditioning systems in function and price. These systems can be used almost year round at 100% capacity.

GET THE HELP YOU NEED

A solar thermal system is complicated to design, especially if it is to be retrofitted into an existing structure. Consumers should find a trained and experienced mechanical designer who can draw up professional design plans and coordinate the installation with a licensed plumbing contractor. A well-designed solar thermal system will include panels, an electronic control system, special pumps and valves, a heat dump and a tank to store the hot water. A good designer will size the system expressly for the consumer’s needs.

New government programs can provide low cost financing for solar systems for homes and businesses. Additionally, the federal government and the State of New Mexico provide generous tax incentives, and in New Mexico no gross receipts tax is charged on solar system hardware and installation.

Linda L. Martin

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213 Truman St. N.E., Albuquerque, World’s First Solar-heated Office Building, Dedicated August 1956



Stirling Engine, an evolving solar technology installation at Sandia Labs

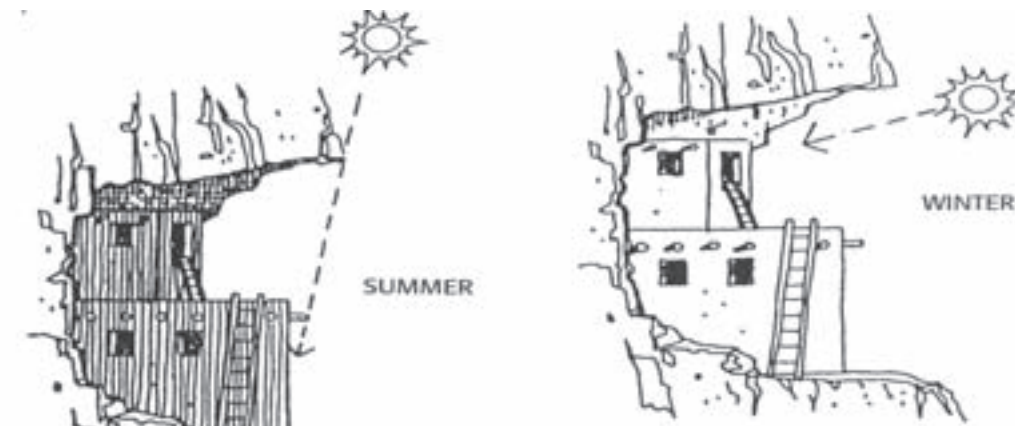
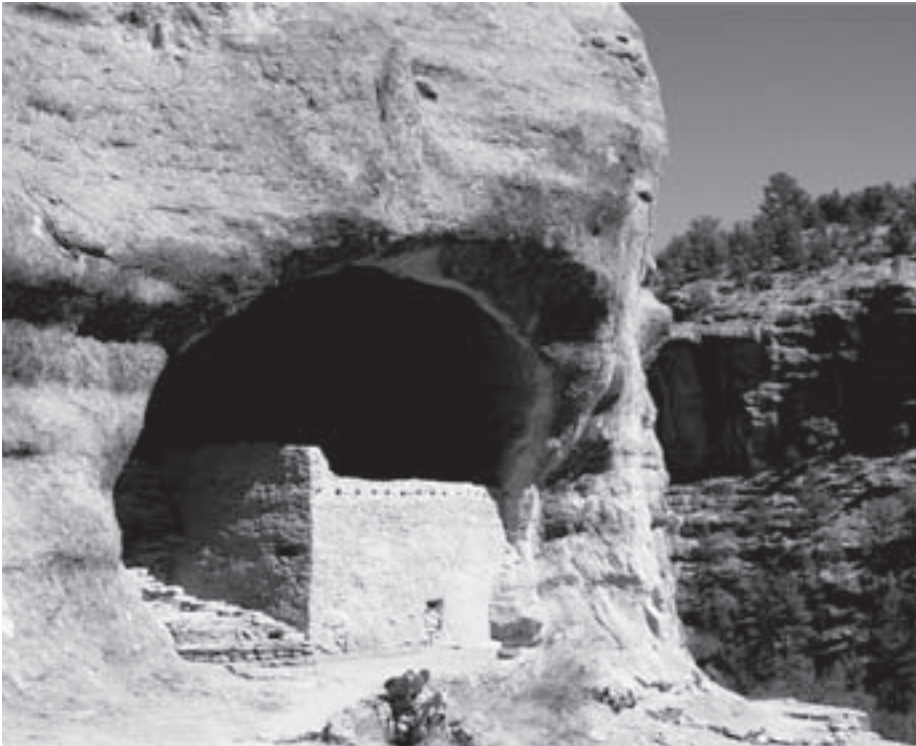
An Albuquerque office building is heated entirely by the sun

An odd-looking new office building in Albuquerque, N. Mex. has one wall sheathed in glass and tilted to face the sun. The glass wall is a solar heating unit and the building, designed by engineers to house their offices, is the first commercial structure in the country to be heated entirely by the sun.

The building uses water in its heating system. Its glass wall is backed by hollow metal panels through which water circulates. The sun's rays pierce the glass, strike the panels and warm the water, which flows through a conventional heating system. The glass traps the heat. An insulated storage tank of sun-heated water tiles the building through sunless days, when a special device extracts the last bit of heat from the circulating water. The designers believe the sun will keep their office at 72° even in the chilliest winter weather.

SOLAR DESIGNERS, consulting engineers Frank H. Bridgers (left), Donald Paxton, study plans in new \$52,000 quarters.

Article from 12-17-57 edition of LIFE Magazine.



Native New Mexicans used passive solar energy to heat caves and south-facing adobe and stone buildings.



Veggiegrower Gardens



Just down the street from the Nob Hill coop is a little shop that produces little gardens. But there is nothing little about quantity of food that these little gardens can produce!

Veggiegrower Gardens range in size from 2' x 2' up to 8' x 4' with the smallest garden capable of providing fresh greens for an individual and the big garden can provide

produce for 5-6 adults year round. The advantages of Veggiegrower Gardens over in ground gardening are many, but the protective covers, built in drainage/aeration system and raised bed design, make these gardens especially productive.

The gardens all come with two protective covers: one for warmer weather that block the wind, keeps bugs off the vegetables and

cuts down on evaporation. The cold weather cover turns the garden into a mini greenhouse that allows food production to continue down to single digit temperatures.

Veggiegrower Gardens are perfect for food production in a variety of settings including apartments, homes, schools, hospitals, restaurants, trailer parks, etc. Thier small size and large production capacity makes them

perfect for urban settings and their ease of use and low maintenance requirements makes them perfect for veggie lovers and gardeners of all ages and capabilities.

Please visit the Veggiegrower Garden shop at 3211 Silver Ave. SE Albuquerque. See their website at www.veggiegrower.net, or call owner Chuck O'Herron-Alex at 505 217-5110 for more information.



Solar Fiesta Advocates Power Shift

“Power Shift!” is the theme of the 2009 Solar Fiesta, New Mexico’s premier educational fair for energy conservation, renewable energy, and sustainable living. The event, presented by the New Mexico Solar Energy Association (NMSEA), takes place September 26 & 27, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at Albuquerque’s Highland High School. It offers a wide array of classes for adults, activities for children, and exhibits of products and services to save money on energy, generate renewable energy, and conserve natural resources.

“Because of climate change, the economy, and the emphasis on green jobs and renewable energy in the Obama Administration’s economic recovery plan, we’re finally seeing a ‘power shift’ in the U.S.” said NMSEA’s Executive Director Mary McArthur. “Solar Fiesta offers the opportunity for anyone to join this shift, whether from ignorance to knowledge, waste to conservation, global warming to global greening, inability to capability, powerless to empowered, inaction to action, or exhaustibles to renewables.”

Both days begin with free workshops at 9:30 a.m. offering easy, inexpensive ways to save on home energy costs. The “Energy 101” theme will continue with additional low-cost workshops covering

- conducting home energy audits and creating energy reduction plans;
- basics of solar thermal and solar electric systems; and
- federal and state incentives.

There will be a Green Jobs workshop track on Saturday. Other workshops cover green building, water conservation, alternative fu-



els, and more. Technical workshops are provided for energy and related business professionals on Sunday.

A Tesla Roadster (owned by an Albuquerquean) will be on display from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Saturday (9/26). There will be a Solar Bread Bake-off on Sunday afternoon (9/27). Girls Gone Green, an environmental club of 5th and 6th Grade girls, will be giving out compact fluorescent lightbulbs both days.

For kids, there will be various make-your-own activities such as Pizza Box Solar Ov-

ens, a wind propeller project, and parabolic water heaters. Organizations such as Energy On-the-Move from Cleveland Middle School, ABQ Biovan, and Hawks Aloft will attend and present both days. On Saturday, Zoo-To-You and Talking Talons Youth Leadership will present. On Sunday, the Albuquerque Astronomical Society will feature several telescopes with special lenses and filters to allow kids to look right at the sun. There will be solar car races, scavenger hunts and solar-oven-baked cookies both days.

Solar Fiesta’s exhibits showcase the latest renewable energy, energy conservation and green building products, and enable attendees to find qualified installers and ask questions of related professionals.

Admission to the exhibit grounds is \$5 for adults, \$4 for seniors, \$3 for students with ID, and free for NMSEA members, PNM employees, children under 12 and teachers. Workshop costs are \$10 per workshop, \$30 for an all-day pass, and \$50 for a weekend pass, with discounts for NMSEA members and people who bring a Solar Fiesta discount coupon from their PNM bill or one of our display ads (see elsewhere in this paper).

Sponsors of the 2009 Solar Fiesta include PNM, State of New Mexico’s Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD), the City of Albuquerque’s Facilities and Energy Management Department, and Unirac, Inc..

Founded in 1972, NMSEA is one of the country’s oldest solar education nonprofits. For more information, visit www.nmsea.org, email info@nmsea.org, telephone 1-888-886-6765 or in Albuquerque, 246-0400.

Power Shift!

September 26-27
Highland High School, ABQ

Solar Fiesta!

Entry: Adults-\$5, Seniors-\$4, Students-\$3
NMSEA members, children under 12,
and teachers-free w/ID

Workshops: \$10 each
All-day passes including exhibits-\$30
All-weekend including exhibits-\$50

\$1 Off Exhibit Entry (\$4 and Up)

\$5 Off All-day/All-weekend Passes

www.nmsea.org

We may now care for each Earthian individual at a sustainable billionaire's level of affluence while living exclusively on less than 1 percent of our planet's daily energy income from our cosmically designed nuclear reactor, the Sun, optimally located 92 million safe miles away from us.

Buckminster Fuller

Sub-Arctic Timebomb: Warming Speeds CO2 Release from Soil

PARIS (AFP) – Climate change is speeding up the release of carbon dioxide from frigid peatlands in the sub-Arctic, fuelling a vicious circle of global warming, according to a study to be published Thursday.

An increase of just 1.0 degree Celsius (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit) over current average temperatures would more than double the CO2 escaping from the peatlands.

Northern peatlands contain one-third of the planet's soil-bound organic carbon, the equivalent of half of all the CO2 in the atmosphere.

Peat is an accumulation of partially decayed vegetation found in wetlands or peatlands, which cover between two and three percent of the global land mass. While present in all climate zones, the vast majority of peatlands are found in sub-Arctic regions.

A team of European researchers led by Ellen Dorrepaal of the University of Amsterdam artificially warmed natural peatlands in Abisko, in northern Sweden, by 1.0 C over a period of eight years.

The experimental plots exhaled and extra 60 percent of CO2 in Spring and 52 percent in Summer over the entire period, reported the study published in the British journal Nature.

"Climate warming therefore accelerates respiration of the extensive, subsurface carbon reservoir in peatlands to a much larger extent than previously thought," the authors conclude.

The findings highlight the extreme sensitivity of northern peatland carbon reservoirs to climate change, and the danger of a self-reinforcing "positive feedback" in

which the CO2 released adds to global warming.

And unlike the boreal forests in Canada, Russia and Northern Europe, very little of the extra carbon was absorbed by additional vegetation spurred by the warmer temperatures.

The researchers warn that annual surplus CO2 released by peatlands with a 1.0 C increase -- between 38 and 100 million tonnes -- could cancel out the European Union objective of slashing greenhouse gas emissions by 92 million tonnes per year.

In another study released last month, the Global Carbon Project based in Australia found that the amount of carbon stored in the Arctic and boreal regions of the world is some 1.5 trillion tonnes, more than double previous estimates.

The Missing Link In Renewable Energy Production

By JW Madison, BHA, NFE

Renewably-generated energy---solar, wind, geothermal, bio-fuels and the ocean tides----is finally gaining acceptance and market share in America. Put all this together with a similar revolution in the storage and steady delivery of this energy and just maybe some of us will live to see the relegation of the expensive killers Coal and Nuclear (Fission) to their places in history alongside other once-useful artifacts like the buggy whip and the carbide lamp.

There's no denying that our lives are much easier and safer (and probably more fun) after over a century of reliable fossil-fueled electricity. But, as Olive Oyl once said to Popeye, "Too much is enough!". We've got cleaner choices now. Renewables have proven themselves. Which is why writing the following makes me feel a little like the Ebenezer Scrooge of renewable energy.

Having fooled around with wind generators in the early '70's, and having long tried to promote "green" building (and re-building) as an old-house contractor, I'm naturally delighted with the rise of renewables. But; as with most great issue discussions, sizable gaps reveal themselves. With regard to renewable energy production, most of the everyday buzz centers on two extremes of generating capability: small installations serving one household and great big ones serving widespread millions.

These extremes are but two legs of what should be a three-legged energy production stool. Let's gaze at these legs.

The Small Leg

A power plant on every roof! How feel-good and self-sufficiently All-American can you get? But, like hybrid cars and political term limits, this attractive notion reveals signif-

icant flaws upon further reflection. These flaws, in my opinion, include lack of efficiency in labor, materials and invested energy per kilowatt realized; including the energy it takes to make, ship and deliver each set of components. There are other problems with this model:

---- These home-size systems cost more than most of us can afford, even with generous tax breaks;

---- They encourage rural sprawl;

---- Sooner or later (probably later), each and every householder will have to face significant repair and replacement of system parts----a kind of energy balloon payment.

The Big Leg:

---- The bigger and more wide-serving any piece of infrastructure is, the more disruption and damage can be inflicted on its dependents by a single natural disaster or act of war;

---- Long-distance transmission of electricity is very expensive in materials and land (aluminum and easement acreage), subject to sabotage and theft (aluminum again) and easily interrupted by storms;

---- High-tension lines are being linked to radiation hazards;

---- A lot of power is lost in transmission, "falls off the wires", as it were. This loss of course increases with distance from the generator.

A Third Leg

There is a third way that gets less attention amid all the trendy buzz; the middle of the scale or third leg: energy production at the town or community level. I consider the old power stations at Ratón and Algodones to be excellent size examples. Use that model, only feed them renewables.

Besides optimizing the expenditure of money, materials, labor, transportation and acreage per kilowatt of delivered energy, there are other advantages to this mid-sized approach:

Environmental justice

Dirty but supposedly essential industries are disproportionately located in poor and non-white neighborhoods, and the resulting outcry is rightfully growing. But what if a necessary industry is clean and non-polluting, like a modest-sized solar or wind power plant?

I believe that far from being an environmental justice problem, these things would be a desirable asset to most neighborhoods; especially the mixed-use, live-work communities now coming into their own again. Ugly? Hell, they look a lot prettier than most necessary structures we put up with all around us.

There's also a neighborly aspect to this kind of distribution model; an aspect which promotes a sense of community and simplifies business transactions like billing problems and service calls. That billing manager or pole climber might be in your PTA or hang out at your favorite bar.

And to further turn "Not In My Back Yard" upside down, maybe our utility rates could be adjusted for distance from the plant, not unlike transit fare zones, and for analogous reasons. The further the power is sent, the more it should cost; subject of course to hardship, non-profit and essential-service exceptions.

I leave it to the many engineers in this field to study and compare these various size-scale alternatives with respect to factors such as cost in labor and materials per kilowatt realized, efficient transmission, long-term maintenance and reliability, etc; and I hope somebody takes me up on this. I am no engineer, but my contractor's gut tells me that by adding this mid-sized mindset to the others, we can avoid many of the dangers and expenses of operating primarily Real Big or Real Small.

Ontario Suspends Nuclear Power Plans

By Karen Howlett

Announcement marks a huge shift in policy for the McGuinty government, which had planned to spend \$26-billion expanding and refurbishing its fleet of reactors.

Toronto — Globe and Mail Update

The Ontario government is suspending its plans to build the province's first new nuclear reactors in a generation, citing concerns about cost overruns and uncertainty surrounding the future of Crown-owned Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd.

George Smitherman, Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, announced today that the competitive bidding process has not provided the province with a "suitable" option that would allow it to proceed with the project. However, he stressed the decision does not mean the province is abandoning its commitment to nuclear energy.

"Emission-free nuclear power remains a crucial aspect of Ontario's supply mix," Mr. Smitherman said.

The move marks a huge shift in policy for Premier Dalton McGuinty's government, which had been planning to spend \$26-billion expanding and refurbishing its fleet of nuclear reactors to meet the province's electricity needs over the next two decades.

AECL was competing against two global players to build the reactors: France's Areva SA and

Westinghouse Electric Co. Mr. Smitherman today said AECL was the only company that submitted a bid that complied with the terms and objectives set out by the government.

"However, concern about pricing and uncertainty regarding the company's future prevented Ontario from continuing with the procurement at this time," he said.

The Globe and Mail reported last month that the government had selected AECL as the leading bidder to build the reactors but it wanted assurances that Ottawa would share the risks on the multibillion-dollar project.

A key issue for the province was how much risk the federal government would assume for any cost overruns. Ontario had wanted a company to design and build reactors on a so-called turnkey, fixed-price basis in the hopes of avoiding the mistakes associated with previous projects, which saddled Ontarians with billions in debts.

Just last year, the government said it would have two new reactors up and running by July, 2018 at its Darlington nuclear station in Clarington, a fast-growing community about 80 kilometres east of Toronto. Darlington is home to four nuclear reactors operated by Crown-owned Ontario Power Generation.

Nuclear power accounts for about 50 per cent of Ontario's electricity needs.

French Radioactive Waste to Double by 2030

Date: 01-Jul-09
Country: FRANCE
Author: Mathilde Cru, Reuters

PARIS - France's highly radioactive waste will more than double by 2030 mainly as spent fuel derived from nuclear reactors mounts up, the French national radioactive waste management agency (Andra) said on Tuesday.

Andra draws up every three years an inventory of sites polluted with radioactivity and details quantities per waste category as well as volume forecasts.

In 2007, high level waste, the most dangerous category, accounted for 95 percent of French waste radioactivity but only 0.2 percent in volume, it said in the inventory report. A complicated scale lists a wide range of different intensities of radioactive waste.

High level waste will rise by 120 percent to 5,060 cubic meters by 2030 out of a total of 2.2 mil-

lion cubic meters, the Andra report said. The 2.2 million cubic meters itself is twice the 2007 level.

"The agency is taking this figure into account for the design and management of its storage centers," Andra said in a statement.

It takes hundreds of thousands of years for spent nuclear fuel to become non-radioactive and its storage is becoming a crucial issue as new nuclear reactors are due to come online in coming years.

France has not found permanent underground storage with the capacity to hold the nuclear energy waste already generated and the waste it will generate in the future.

The highly radioactive waste generated so far is stored in above ground facilities at nuclear reactor supplier Areva's fuel reprocessing plant in La Hague on the north-western coast of Normandy.

Under French law, Areva, will have to bury the waste in a permanent repository by 2025.

“New Mexico's Role In Moving To A Post-Imperial World”: A PANEL DISCUSSION WITH FIVE INTERNATIONALLY KNOWN PEACE ACTIVISTS

Albuquerque Veterans for Peace will sponser a panel discussion on US Foreign Policy on Sunday, October 11th, 2009, at Smith-Brasher Hall, Coal and University SE, at 7:00 PM. Panel Members will be: Ray McGovern, former CIA Analyst; Col. Ann Wright (ret) former US Diplomat; David Swanson, author and journalist, founder of Voters for Peace; Cindy Sheehan, author of “For What Noble Cause” did my son die?; and Elliot Adams, immediate past President of National Veterans For Peace.

Beginning at 6:00 PM, a potluck before the panel will provide an opportunity to meet the speakers.

For additional information contact Sally-Alice Thompson, (505)268-5073, or thompson5186@comcast.net

We may now care for each Earthian individual at a sustainable billionaire's level of affluence while living exclusively on less than 1 percent of our planet's daily energy income from our cosmically designed nuclear reactor, the Sun, optimally located 92 million safe miles away from us.

Buckminster Fuller

Hudson River Contaminates Go to Texas

In 2007, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) looked into the geology of the Andrews hazardous waste site when the landowner, Waste Control Specialists (WCS), applied for a permit to build a radioactive waste dump. The technical staff of the commission unanimously opposed granting WCS the permit. Overruling his staff, then-TCEQ Executive Director Glenn Shankle approved the permit. Shankle today works as a lobbyist for WCS. <http://www.indypendent.org/2009/06/05/hudson-contaminates/>

By Mike Burke

DIRTY WATER: General Electric is finally dredging up PCB soil contamination in the Hudson River after decades of releasing manufacturing by-products into the river. The toxic soil will be dried and shipped to a Texas landfill by rail. Peggy Pryor has never seen the Hudson River. For the past 56 years she has lived 2,000 miles away in the west Texas town of Andrews, on the New Mexico border. Soon, however, part of the Hudson River will be arriving in her town in

the form of PCB-contaminated soil dredged by General Electric from the riverbed.

In the coming weeks, an 81-car train filled with dried PCB-contaminated sediment is expected to leave New York bound for a hazardous waste dump in Andrews. The route has not been released by GE. Trains filled with waste will continue to arrive in Andrews for the next six years as GE undertakes one of the nation’s largest environmental cleanup projects. Between 1947 and 1977, GE discharged an estimated 1.3 million pounds of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) into the river.

The Hudson River cleanup plan, which took years to develop and has been approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), has alarmed Pryor and several environmental groups in Texas.

“If you got a problem, solve it in your own town,” Pryor said. “Don’t create another one by bringing it here. It is crazy. You are just contaminating another place. We have enough oil contamination down here.” Neil Carman, a chemist with the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club, has questioned the EPA’s plan and the safety of shipping the

waste to Texas by rail.

“Obviously this material needs to be removed from the Hudson River, but the alternative treatment technologies are very effective today and there is no reason in the world that General Electric should be transporting all of this material 2,000 miles,” Carman said. “They should be treating it up there.”

The EPA considered such alternative treatment technologies, but in 2002 the agency opted for the plan to dispose of the contaminated waste at a landfill in part because of the projected costs.

“Treatment technologies such as thermal desorption were technically feasible, but would cost substantially more than off-site disposal,” said Kristen Skopeck, EPA public affairs specialist in Hudson Falls, N.Y.

New York environmentalists have been campaigning since the 1970s to force GE to clean up the Hudson, especially around Hudson Falls and Fort Edward, N.Y., the site of two large GE manufacturing plants. In 1984 the EPA declared a 200-mile stretch of the river to be a Superfund site — a designation given to the nation’s most toxic sites. Due to years of challenges and delays, dredging did not begin until May 15.

Manna Jo Greene, environmen-

tal director for Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, said she shares many of the concerns raised by the Sierra Club in Texas. In 2001, Clearwater organization, in its official public comment on the cleanup urged the EPA to consider options besides sending the waste to a landfill.

Clearwater, however, views the start of the dredging of the Hudson as a major victory over General Electric. “It is essential the PCBs be taken out of the river system and be contained,” Greene said.

But Pryor and Carman are concerned that, once in Texas, the PCBs may end up in another body of water: the Ogallala aquifer, the largest aquifer in North America.

In 2007, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) looked into the geology of the Andrews hazardous waste site when the landowner, Waste Control Specialists (WCS), applied for a permit to build a radioactive waste dump. The technical staff of the commission unanimously opposed granting WCS the permit. Overruling his staff, then-TCEQ Executive Director Glenn Shankle approved the permit. Shankle today works as a lobbyist for WCS.

“The site was unsuitable as a radioactive waste disposal facility pri-

marily because of the poor geology,” said Glen Lewis, who was one of three members of the TCEQ to resign in protest after Shankle issued the permit. “This proposed site is where one edge of the Ogallala pinches out. It is at the edge of the aquifer, but geologically considered to be over the aquifer.”

Neil Carman at the Sierra Club says radioactive or PCB contamination of the aquifer could have disastrous consequences.

General Electric defended the Andrews site when contacted by The Independent, noting that the EPA, U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers already use the facility.

As for Peggy Pryor, she feels the residents of Andrews are being taken advantage of. “I just don’t think citizens here are aware of what PCBs are,” Pryor said. “If they can resolve this there at GE, why aren’t they doing it? Why bring it here? The people there know what they are doing, it is the reason they want to bring it here.”

CLEARING THE WATER: The Hudson River Sloop Clearwater is one of the local environmental groups that fought for decades to force General Electric to clean up the Hudson River.

No Us. No Them

By Rob Raucci

I recently attended the Governor’s 6th annual conference on the link between animal abuse and human violence. It was the second time I attended this conference and I endeavored to act as though I was attending it for the first time - with new eyes and possibly a small amount of naiveté. For the first few minutes of the conference I maintained that fresh approach. But then reality set in and the underbelly of animal abuse was revealed to me in startling detail.

What was new for me was the level of recommitment I saw there. The reenergizing, if you will, of the attendees of the conference. The animal control officers, social workers, case workers, veterinarians, psychologists, lawyers, police officers – those on the front line – they

were there to recommit themselves to stop the cruelty and endeavor to find the root cause of the problem. Not an easy task nor an easy fix for a culture that ignores root causes and treats only symptoms, popping a pill every time they have a headache, toothache, tummy ache or heartache.

Not all was doom and gloom there. I saw smiles and heard humor too. When I attended a workshop on Forensic Veterinary Science, the vet was able to share a joke when just minutes before she told us of an abused kitten that in her words even made her gag.

I don’t have heroes, I have ideals and these peaceful warriors are my ideals. I can’t even begin to imagine what these folks go through on a daily basis. I myself have been privy to animal abuse, having rescued a dog or cat or two in my life.

In my life mind you. Not every day. If ever there was an example of the dualistic nature of humans these unsung crusaders are that example. To be witness to the cruelty of humans and yet be able to still show tenderness to those who know none is a gift indeed.

I can’t say I agreed with all that I heard at the conference. The language some of the speakers used still suggests that dogs and cats are second-class citizens or lower creatures with less than the life force within a human being, an indulgence or novelty whose place in this world is only measured by the amount of pet food and pet toy sales each year.

We say we love animals. We love our dogs and cats, but at dinner time parts of a dead chicken or cow fill our plates. How can we love one and eat the other? And while at the conference I heard the word “pet” used to describe our companion animals. In September of 2004 scien-

tists at Amerhsham Hospital, Buckinghamshire, England, performed the first controlled experiments in training dogs to detect bladder cancer in humans. In 22 of 54 attempts the dogs correctly sniffed out the bladder cancer urine. The word “pet” can hardly begin to describe these four-legged creatures that co-existed with man long before most religions. When will we recognize an animal’s innate wisdom?

But the good news is that progress is being made on the animal rights front, albeit slowly. It comes from the awareness that there is no separation between us and them. It comes from our love for our beloved companion animals. There is no us and them. Slowly the chains of anthropocentrism are being dissolved link by link. The conference I attended bears witness to that. And to those men, women and young people who put the animals first, my heart goes out to you and I am grateful for your dedication.

INTERNATIONAL

KEEP SPACE FOR PEACE WEEK

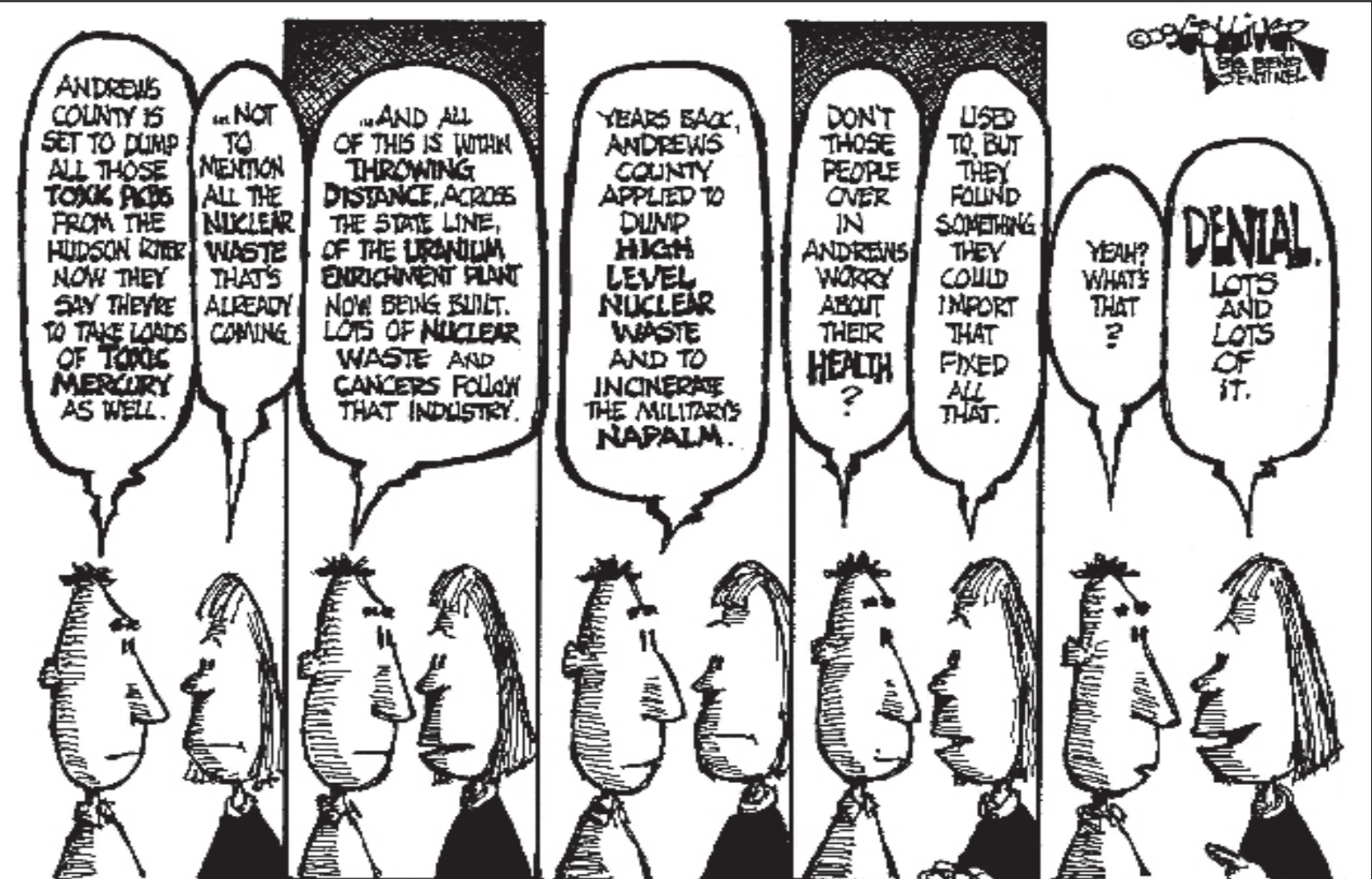
OCTOBER 3-10, 2009

On Saturday, Oct. 3, 2009 a protest will take place at Kirtland AFB about opposing the militarization of space. This week is also the 8th anniversary of the U.S. Attack on Afghanistan, leading to a war that is costing many thousands of lives as the U.S. pursues a strategy of empire building in the oil rich regions of the middle east.

The wars in Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Palestine and against Iran would not be possible without the use of a space weapon system which consists of a constellation of satellites to facilitate communications, intelligence gathering and target recognition to kill people on the ground with drones and other aircraft. Kirtland AFB has played an historic role in the development of the drones, satellite systems and today plays an active part in the global battlefield.

The protest is to oppose the wars of empire and to shut down the role this local war base carries out. The protest will take place from 11 am to 1 pm at the Truman St. gate on Gibson Blvd, just west of San Mateo, near the Veterans Administration Hospital.

For more information contact stopthewarmachine@comcast.net or call 505-858-0882. Current information will be on the web site: www.stopthewarmachine.org.



“Where is the Humanity?” America’s Use of Excessive Force Over There

By Donald Gutierrez
(Amnesty International Member)

"That is really not a matter I am terribly interested in."
Colin Powell (on being questioned in 1991 about Iraqi casualties)

Though this essay was originally written in 2004 in response to the Bush Administration's assaults on Afghanistan and Iraq and President Bush Sr's Gulf-War attack, the piece seems tragically relevant to what is now being called President Obama's "War on Terrorism" in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It's high time then to present a side of America's wars in the Middle East that receives brief mention in the mass media and scarcely any ethical evaluation: Washington's "collateral damage" bombing of the Middle East.

Afghan and Iraqi civilian casualties are given little critical scrutiny in our media. Such "collateral damage" is, our military leaders inform us, inevitable in war. The Pentagon claims it does all it can to avoid collateral damage and that it mainly practices surgical bombing. Such bombing, however, is impossible, judging by evidence that our country has dropped cluster bombs, napalm bombs and FAEs in Iraq, Yugoslavia and Afghanistan, a practice condemned by human-rights groups as "indiscriminate weapons of mass destruction".

International covenants state that the commanders of opposing warring forces are responsible for achieving their military goals with as little harm to the enemy forces as possible, and that the military leaders of the victorious side should be concerned about casualties on both sides. This last position contrasts sharply with Colin Powell's statement in the epigraph above, not to mention General Schwarzkopf's far more overtly brutal sentiments about the 1991 enemy. Public attitudes towards war ethics are generally shaped by a nation's leaders and the mass media. If these two forces can whip up enough fear and hatred in the country towards the foe, such conditioning will make it fairly easy for our government to commit such war crimes as former Attorney General Ramsey Clark indicate occurred in the Gulf War: "killing tens of thousands of essentially defenseless /Iraqi/ soldiers, soldiers withdrawing without weapons; burying soldiers alive... disrespect for the dead and many others..."

The United States is obviously not the only major violator of ethical international agreements such as the Geneva Convention and Protocols concerning humane treatment of the other side in wartime. But our country from the late 1940s on has been extraordinarily violent and destructive towards both the military and civilian sectors abroad. Further, the American use of weaponry like cluster bombs and the carpet bombing and depleted-uranium shelling of Iraq and Yugoslavia constitute even more evidence of extreme force amounting to the status of war crimes, in part because of large civilian casualties in these engagements.

Journalist Martha Gellhorn once said "I thought it would be fine if the ones who ordered the bombing and the ones who did the bombing would walk on the ground sometime and see what it is like." Indeed, one would love to take American presidents, Pentagon brass and Congress for a compulsory walk to look close up at what American bombing has actually been doing in its "Shock and Awe" impact from the Gulf War through the 2003 Iraq War and the current drone-missile civilian massacres in AfPak to provide that closer look at the "collateral damage" caused by American ordnance.

Back in 2002, a family in the village of Madoo (Afghanistan) states that fifteen houses were bombed. A deeply embittered young man named Paira Gul said: "Most of the dead are children". The village of Charyhari was bombed by an American B-52. The villagers claim thirty people died. One man, Muhibullah, had his daughter killed and son injured by cluster bombs, not to mention six of his cows and the loss through burning of all his rice and wheat, all this representing a catastrophic loss. Bombs began dropping around 7 p.m. near Torai village, killing 20 villagers: "I saw the body of one of my brothers-in-law being pulled from the debris," Maroof said. "The lower part of his body had been blown away. Some of the other bodies were unrecognizable. There were heads missing and arms blown off! Next we

hear of a sobbing middle aged man "cradling the head of his baby, the rest of the baby's body lying beside the bodies of three other children" According to the journalist Alexander Cockburn, "the U S bombardment of Bala Boluk /in 2009/...yielded 140 dead villagers torn apart by high explosive, including 93 children." The Pentagon argument that these villages concealed Taliban, true or false, implicitly assumes the right in attacking the enemy to murder a lot of civilians, including children. Even trees are not spared. "Our trees," says Muhammed Tahir, "are our only shelter from the cold and wind. The trees have been bombed. Our waterfall, our only source of water they bombed it. Where is the humanity?" Where, one might add, is the surgical-bombing accuracy?

Clearly, in modern wars, it is mainly civilians who get blown to bits by bombs. The civilian (usually non-White) "foes" obliterated are as human and as vulnerable to pain, terror and grief as we are. It is a strong possibility that more September Elevens can be avoided if America truly joined the "comity of nations" by not placing its geopolitical "National Interests" abroad above everything else and if we citizens rein in the massive violence abroad committed in our name by the Pentagon, the White House and our timorous Congress.

Call your Senators and House Representatives to cosponsor Senate 416 and HR 981, Cluster Munitions Civilian Protection Act.

How about this for a New Rule: Not everything in America has to make a profit. It used to be that there were some services and institutions so vital to our nation that they were exempt from market pressures.

Some things we just didn't do for money. The United States always defined capitalism, but it didn't used to define us. But now it's becoming all that we are.

Did you know, for example, that there was a time when being called a "war profiteer" was a bad thing? But now our war zones are dominated by private contractors and mercenaries who work for corporations. There are more private contractors in Iraq than American troops, and we pay them generous salaries to do jobs the troops used to do for themselves -- like laundry. War is not supposed to turn a profit, but our wars have become boondoggles for weapons manufacturers and connected civilian contractors.

Prisons used to be a non-profit business, too. And for good reason -- who the hell wants to own a prison? By definition you're going to have trouble with the tenants. But now prisons are big business. A company called the Corrections Corporation of America is on the New York Stock Exchange, which is convenient since that's where all the real crime is happening anyway.

The CCA and similar corporations actually lobby Congress for stiffer sentencing laws so they can lock more people up and make more money. That's why America has the world's largest prison population -- because actually rehabilitating people would have a negative impact on the bottom line.

Television news is another area that used to be roped off from the profit motive. When Walter Cronkite died last week, it was odd to see news anchor after news anchor talking about how much better the news coverage was back in Cronkite's day. I thought, "Gee, if only you were in a position to do something about it."

But maybe they aren't. Because unlike in Cronkite's day, today's news has to make a profit like all the other divisions in a media conglomerate. That's why it wasn't surprising to see the CBS Evening News broadcast

live from the Staples Center for two nights this month, just in case Michael Jackson came back to life and sold Iran nuclear weapons. In Uncle Walter's time, the news division was a loss leader. Making money was the job of The Beverly Hillbillies. And now that we have reporters moving to Alaska to hang out with the Palin family, the news is The Beverly Hillbillies.

And finally, there's health care. It wasn't that long ago that when a kid broke his leg playing stickball, his parents took him to the local Catholic hospital, the nun put a thermometer in his mouth, the doctor slapped some plaster on his ankle and you were done. The bill was \$1.50, plus you got to keep the thermometer.

But like everything else that's good and noble in life, some Wall Street wizard decided that hospitals could be big business, so now they're run by some bean counters in a corporate plaza in Charlotte. In the U.S. today, three giant for-profit conglomerates own close to 600 hospitals and other health care facilities. They're not hospitals anymore; they're Jiffy Lubes with bedpans. America's largest hospital chain, HCA, was founded by the family of Bill Frist, who perfectly represents the Republican attitude toward health care: it's not a right, it's a racket. The more people who get sick and need medicine, the higher their profit margins. Which is why they're always pushing the Jell-O.

Because medicine is now for-profit we have things like "recision," where insurance companies hire people to figure out ways to deny you coverage when you get sick, even though you've been paying into your plan for years.

When did the profit motive become the only reason to do anything? When did that become the new patriotism? Ask not what you could do for your country, ask what's in it for Blue Cross/Blue Shield.

If conservatives get to call universal health care "socialized medicine," I get to call private health care "soulless vampires making money off human pain."

The problem with President Obama's health care plan isn't socialism, it's capitalism.

And if medicine is for profit, and war, and the news, and the penal system, my question is: what's wrong with firemen? Why don't they charge? They must be commies. Oh my God! That explains the red trucks!

How to Track Bills in Congress The easiest way I've found

By Ted Cloak

Go to www.govtrack.us
You can find out whether your senator or representative has signed on as a co-sponsor. Then you can look him/her up and either thank him/her or ask him/her to sign on. Every little bit helps.. Give it a try!

June 30, 2009

The Honorable Senator Bingaman:

I want to express my disappointment in hearing of your vote on the issue of the Israeli attack on Gaza. The common explanation of your position is confronting the Hamas terrorists.

Hamas is labeled "terrorist" for doing what they feebly can do to protect their people. Meantime the history of extreme violence on the part of the Israeli military is studiously ignored. Not only Palestinians and Lebanese, but also many Americans have been their victims.

In 1967 the Israeli Air Force bombed and strafed the USS Liberty in international waters, killing 34 American sailors and wounding 174, and damaging the ship beyond repair.

Brian Avery, an Albuquerque resident, had his face blown away by an Israeli. Rachel Corrie was run over and killed by a soldier in a caterpillar tractor.

Last fall a ship carrying humanitarian aid and a number of Americans, again in international waters was rammed by an Israeli naval vessel, threatening the lives of all aboard.

Tristan Anderson had the side of his head blown off, and is now in critical condition. In June of this year a Greek ship, the Spirit of Humanity, carrying people of various nationalities, was surrounded by Israeli naval vessels in international waters. The ship was boarded, its navigation equipment disabled, and its passengers kidnapped and taken to Israel. When the passengers refused to sign papers they could not read because of their being in Hebrew, they were deported. Among the passengers were American former Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney and Irish Nobel Peace laureate Mairead Corrigan Maguire.

These are Israeli terrorist attacks of which I am aware; there may be others that I don't know about.

I have never heard of a Palestinian attack on an American, even though it is common knowledge that much of the ammunition used against them and the tractors that are used to demolish their homes are American products.

So who are the terrorists that we should be afraid of? Who are we providing with enormous loans and grants? The answer to both questions is the same. Is this rational? Think about it.

Sally-Alice Thompson

BOOK REVIEW

Tear Down This Myth:
How the Reagan Legacy
Has Distorted Our Poli-
tics and Haunts Our Fu-
ture

By Will Bunch

Free Press, New York, 2009
Reviewed by Jack Pickering

The Republican Camelot was the Presidency of Ronald Reagan, 1980-88. Following is a summary of Reaganite myths as explored by reporter Bunch.

Myth 1: "On the Cold War, most historians believe that the Soviet Union and the Iron Curtain collapsed more from their own dead weight than from any pressure applied by the United States."
Myth 2: On gaining prosperity through tax cuts, as in the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981: "In fact, the economy dropped back into a recession a month after the bill was passed.. and unemployment finally passed 10 percent...."

Myth 3: On balancing the federal budget after reluctant tax hikes: "Even with the tax hikes, the federal debt skyrocketed...from \$700 billion to 3 trillion."
Myth 4: On ending the oil shortage blamed on Carter: Reagan profited from "the failure of the OPEC oil cartel to remain united," meanwhile cutting "global warming research to the end of his 2nd term."
Myth 5: On fairness to all Americans: "even after Reagan's landslide in 1984...only 35 percent of Americans favored Reagan-backed cuts in social programs."
Myth 6: On his popularity: after the Iran-Contra scandal, his approval rating dropped from 64 to 40 percent. His overall average was 52 percent, considerably below that of FDR, Ike, and JFK. Indeed, even Bush Sr, as well as LBJ and Clinton, had slightly higher averages. Reagan's popularity rose before his sad death, though less than FDR's. The danger in these myths is that they support the worst aspects of the GOP. Reagan's streak of humane pragmatism is lost.

MUSIC REVIEW

K'naan Interview,
Somali-Canadian
Hip-Hop Artist

Reviewed By Bob Anderson

If you did not hear the Democracy Now interview with Somali Hip-Hop artist K'naan you need to hear him. In my opinion he is the true Dylan, the Dylan of a new global resistance movement rising to oppose the U.S. Empire everywhere troops are deployed. It was inevitable this would come out of the massive struggle going on around the globe, and from Africa too. Now K'naan presents us with music and sound of what awaits the U.S. attempt to colonize

the world. K'naan has absorbed the resistance struggles of all that has gone before us from the jungles of Vietnam to the dusty roads of South Africa to the concrete of Hells Kitchen and the Casaba in the urban struggles. His songs give spirit to our day-to-day struggles around the globe as we build toward victory.

Here is his web site:
<http://knaanmusic.ning.com/>
I suggest you listen to the song "Wavin Flag" for the voice of the global oppressed who are rising up.
Here is the interview with him on Democracy Now, Aug. 6, 2009.
http://www.democracynow.org/2009/8/6/somali_canadian_rapper_knaan_on_journey

From the FOAT Board

With this issue the Friends of the Albuquerque Tribune complete a year of non profit publishing a bi-monthly print edition of theABQ TRIal Balloon. This issue also launches an advertising service, at affordable rates, to locally owned businesses and non profits. We continue to print 10,000 copies distributed by "network". We keep copies available at Page 1 Bookstore, Montgomery and JuanTabo NE, at Newsland Bookstore 2112 Central SE, and La Montanita Co-op, 2400 Rio Grande. In addition, we keep copies at most Albuquerque city libraries. We are free, but must have donations to pay our wonderful printer, Vanguard Printing and for the creative lay out and design from Envision Graphics, both locally owned.

We want to change our name now. We have proven that readers want more than one newspaper in our city. We want to continue to grow beyond "ordinary citizens creating random acts of journalism", and we also know we are a long way from replacing the cherished eighty-six year old Albuquerque Tribune. We want the paper to continue to be community owned but with a well paid professional staff and online presence.

Your support is crucial if we are to continue to grow. If you support this idea, participate in choosing a new name by sending a suggestion to ABQ TRIal Balloon, PO 35058, Albuquerque, NM 87176-5058. If possible, send a donation to FOAT. If it is over 50 dollars it can be tax-deductible by writing it to QUOTE .. UNQUOTE, INC with FOAT in the lower left line.

"To be truly radical is to make hope possible, rather than despair convincing."
-Raymond Williams, Welsh academic, novelist, and media critic.

Thanks for your continued support
Friends of the Albuquerque Tribune Board

Jack Hirschman, the People’s
Laureate—of America and the World

By Bill Nevins



In early 2006, when Mayor Gavin Newsom appointed Jack Hirschman as Poet Laureate of San Francisco, an audible cheer heard around the world—or so it seemed to those of us who have followed comrade Jack Hirschman’s extraordinary career and have taken pleasure and inspiration from his poetry. Coming during the dark days of the Cheney-Bush torture regime, this mainstream establishment recognition of Hirschman’s deeply significant social role came as a flash of light amidst the gloom.
Not that Jack Hirschman changed in any way, or stopped doing what he so gloriously does—speaking out, writing poetry, standing up for the disempowered, disenfranchised and silenced. Mayor Newsom, to his undying credit, could not have chosen a more appropriate People’s Tribune for his lovely City by the Bay. Indeed, Hirschman’s eloquence, honesty and unrivaled international acclaim would well qualify him as Poet Laureate of the United States, now that his three year San Francisco Laureate tenure has ended (and the very worthy poet Diane di Prima has been appointed his successor).
President Obama would do well to give Jack Hirschman serious consideration when the US Poet Laureate job again becomes vacant—it would be another wise appointment by a national administration that, despite its own limitations, has made a series of wise appointments during Obama’s few months in office.
It’s fitting that Chris and Fran Furey’s full length film documentary about Jack Hirschman’s life and work, RED POET has just been completed, and is being screened at film festivals, including the upcoming WORD! International Poets & Songwriters Movie Program this November 9, 10, 11, 2009 at The Guild Cinema, Albuquerque, New Mexico. (Visit www.guildcinema.com for details.) It is hoped that Jack Hirschman himself will visit New Mexico and grace us with a reading of his poetry sometime later this year. I would be very happy to hear from anyone interested in helping to make that happen. I can be reached at bill_nevins@yahoo.com
In a January 11, 2006 story, reporter Rachel Gordon wrote in The San Francisco Chronicle:
"I want that position to be more audacious, more exciting, to shake things up," Newsom told The Chronicle. 'I want someone who will challenge the status quo.'
"Hirschman's reaction: "That's excellent. I like statements like that."
"Hirschman, a North Beach neighborhood resident who embodies the bohemian lifestyle that made that San Franciscoc neighborhood famous, is prolific. Emerging as a poet during the Beat Generation, he has written more than 70 books -- his first was published in 1953. He has translated dozens more from Spanish, German, Greek, French, Hebrew, Russian and tongues not so common, such as Haitian Creole and Albanian. His work, as an editor and a poet, has been published in literary journals, magazines and newspapers.
"Jack is someone who lives for poetry," said Nancy Peters, who co-owns the venerable City Lights bookstore in North Beach with legendary poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti. "He has a wonderful ability to combine social justice with a lyric voice."
"Hirschman believes the greatest poets are those who are provocative and prophetic and who, as Newsom says of him, challenge the status quo, he said.
"Hirschman called his being selected San Francisco poet laureate an honor for him personally "and I think a very small victory for the people's movement, which has had very few victories recently in this chaotic world.""
Jack Hirschman’s master work, a large volume of politically and emotionally fiery poems entitled The Arcanes, was published in 2008 in a limited edition which has already become a treasured collector’s item. Shorter collections of some of his many powerful poems, Front Lines and All That’s Left, are also published by City Lights Books, where Hirschman often reads. He also engages in good humored di-

alectic nearby at Caffee Trietste and other poets’ gathering places in San Francisco. A convinced and convincing self described Marxist-Leninist, Hirschman goes far beyond any trendy “out-law” persona and speaks with a very sincere voice about a shared, realizable dream: positive social liberation and equality through revolution.
Fired in 1972 for leading anti-Vietnam War demonstrations by University of California at Los Angeles despite his Ph.D., many publications and acclaim as an effective teacher, Jack Hirschman has never returned to regular college teaching despite his overwhelming qualifications. He has instead made a socially engaged career out of community organizing, progressive political agitation on behalf of the homeless and others oppressed by the malfunctioning US imperial economic system, and translating poetry from many languages, including many works by Pablo Neruda and other dissident bards. Of course, his own poetry writing and his work as a contributing editor for Left Curve magazine also keep Hirschman more than busy. At age 75, he seems, if anything, to be gaining in energy, both social and literary. His works are hugely admired in Europe and he often visits Italy to write and perform. His in- person readings are dramatic and utterly audience-engaging—he often sings his poems in a rich baritone.
Jack Hirschman is the people’s laureate, recognized and applauded by thousands.
Here is a sample of Jack Hirschman’s poetry:

ALL THAT’S LEFT

All that’s Left
in the world
—whether in Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia
as well as China, Japan, the United States,
Europe, the Middle East, Africa—
all of them cannot,
despite the resistance,
despite the refusal,stop this march on death
because they,
as well as all that’s Right in the world,
despite their refusal,
despite their resistance,
already are counted among those
in this last parade.
Communists and progressives,
nazis, fascists and reactionaries,
Zionists and anarchists of every stripe—
None are excluded, none can evade the march.

This one’s not coming
with hammer and sickles or swastikas
or flags of any land.

This one’s the march
all wars surrender to.

But when?! Comes the unanimous cry.
When will it really happen?
If death is peace,
when can I truly die?

You will never know, and yet you do,
because you may already have,
and this life is your way
of paying homage to the power
that loves you enough
to have taken your life away
and left you with the taste
of immortality on your lips.

Nothing mystical: no Christ,
Allah, Jahweh or Buddha in the wings.
Even lying on your back you’re marching.

This is not a cynical or pessimist
or nihilist poem. Join death
to your life and you will live
as if there were no drum to march to.

There is no march at all.
You’re there. All will be well for all.