

# THE INDYPENDENT

## TALKING TRASH CITY'S PROPOSED RECYCLING CUTS DON'T SAVE MONEY OR EARTH

By CAROLYN SZCZEPANSKI

They're starting to pile up. Empty wine, water and vitamin bottles are consuming Cathryn Swan's kitchen counter. But each time the trash is collected, the counter clutter and the shopping bags full of empty Poland Springs gallons remain in the house, awaiting a higher use.

It's been a month since the city suspended plastic and glass recycling, but Swan still can't imagine dumping her bottles in the garbage. She isn't alone. Many residents are already showing their dissatisfaction with a measure that is adding to the waste stream and subtracting from the local workforce.

Whether it's slapping a stamp on a plastic bottle and sending it — and a strong message — off to City Hall, or starting a citizen-run recycling program, New Yorkers are coming up with creative and cost-effective ways to keep recyclables out of the trash.

With over 12,000 tons of residential trash produced each day, New York City creates more waste than any other municipality in the U.S. Implemented in 1989, mandatory recycling diverts 21 percent of the city's waste stream from landfills, palling in comparison to cities like Seattle, whose recycling rate exceeds 50 percent. But cutting out plastics and glass, says Timothy Logan, director of the Waste Prevention Coalition, will easily drop the city's recycling rate to about 10 percent, increasing trash collection by as much as 1,200 tons per day.

Faced with a \$4 billion budget gap, Mayor Bloomberg stressed that recycling cuts were motivated by economic need, not environmental neglect. To skirt standards mandated by city and state recycling laws, the administration invoked an economic emergency clause.

But many don't buy Bloomberg's claims that scrapping recycling will save the city's economy.

"The invocation of the emergency clause, saying we're somehow rescuing the economy by eliminating recycling, is obscene and morally reprehensible," Logan says.

Since his original proposal, Bloomberg's intended savings have been shrinking steadily. At the outset, the administration claimed \$51.4 million would be saved if the

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## GLOBAL FOOD FIGHT



JOEL EDWARDS

## SMALL FARMERS UPROOT AGRIBIZ

By A.K. GUPTA

When the average American makes the journey from couch to fridge, she opens a door to the world: apples from New Zealand, coffee from Vietnam, cheese from Europe, chocolate from Africa, bananas from Ecuador, tomatoes from California. Despite this, we may still imagine our food as coming from some midwestern breadbasket, grown by hardworking farmers straight out of American Gothic.

In reality, dinner was probably harvested by a peasant family, children included, being paid starvation wages and in the yoke of a plantation owner feeding products to some global enterprise. Even in this country, when the harvest isn't the work of some giant combine, it's probably being plucked, cut, raked or uprooted by migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean.

But some farmers have a different vision. Nestled in the Taconic Hills in the upstate New York town of Harlemville, Hawthorne Valley Farm has been at the forefront of a trend to make farms a part of their local communities.

Rachel Schneider, who helps to manage the vegetable gardens

at the 400-acre farm, explains that since its founding in 1972, the mission of the non-profit Hawthorne Valley Association, which includes the farm, a 300-student school, and a visiting students' program and camp, is to "integrate agriculture and the arts."

"Our main goal at the farm," explains Schneider, "is to farm sustainably and as ecologically sound as possible." Schneider sees most consumers as "out of touch with farming, because they get their produce from the supermarket. They need to get in touch with how much food costs and how it's produced."

According to government statistics, farmers received 41 cents of every dollar consumers spent on food in 1950; today, they get barely half of that.

To be economically sustainable, says Schneider, Hawthorne Valley "surrounds our farm with value-added and direct-marketed products" like processed vegetables (sauerkraut, pickles), dairy (milk, cheese, yogurt), a stand at the Union Square Greenmarket in Manhattan, community supported agriculture (CSA) and an extensive store.

By filling the role of not just the farmer, says Schneider, but also "the processor, the distributor and the retailer," Hawthorne Valley is able to avoid "being industrial or having a huge farm."

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### What is the IMC?

With autonomous chapters in 100 cities throughout the world, the two-year-old Independent Media Center has become an international network of volunteer media activists.

The IMC's mission is to create a new media ethic by providing progressive, in-depth and accurate coverage of issues. We are a community-based organization using media to facilitate political and cultural self-representation. We seek to illuminate and analyze issues impacting individuals, communities and eco-systems by providing media tools and space to those seeking to communicate.

Unlike corporate media, we espouse open dialogue, and the importance of placing the means of communication and creativity back in the hands of the people, and away from the drive of profit.

The *Independent* is funded by benefits, subscriptions and contributions. All reporting is done by NYC IMC volunteers unless otherwise noted.

### What can I do to get involved?

The IMC has an open door. You can write for the *Independent*, film events and rallies, self-publish articles to the web, take photos, or just help us run the office. As an organization relying entirely on volunteer support, we encourage all forms of participation.

The print team reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity. We welcome your participation in the entire editorial process.

### PRODUCTION:

Chris Anderson, Silvia Arana, Ana Basujno, Mike Burke, Cathy Bussewitz, Miguel Erb, Chris Fleisher, A.K. Gupta, Heather Haddon, Pandi Hopkins, Diana Jarvis, Jen Neumann, Ana Noguiera, Donald Paneth, Mark Pickens, Emily Reinhardt, Jessica Stein, Jeanne Strole, John Tarleton, Anne Venesky, Gabriel Woodhouse

## FROM THE NEWSWIRE

Here's a sampling of recent posts and comments to the NYC and global newswires. Each Independent Media Center website features open publishing software that allows readers to post articles, stories, photographs, audio clips and video footage to our newswire. Viewers can also log comments that appear below articles allowing for open debate. To read more or to post your own article, visit [www.nyc.indymedia.org](http://www.nyc.indymedia.org) or [www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org).

### Justice Denied: The Case of David Wong

By OREAD DAILY

For the last 18 years 37-year-old David Wong has been locked away in the Auburn Correctional Facility in upstate New York serving time for second degree murder. This despite the fact that eye-witnesses say he did not commit the crime. The Asian-American Legal Defense and Education Fund and the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance are now asking the local district attorney to reconsider the case. Wong's lawyers are hoping to file a motion with the court in several weeks to show new evidence that Wong did not commit the murder and to get the conviction reversed.

[http://nyc.indymedia.org/front.php3?article\\_id=28195](http://nyc.indymedia.org/front.php3?article_id=28195)

### Protests in the Philippines

By ESTADO, GOBYERNO

A first-hand, personal account and analysis of the July 22 ACC-Philippines Anti-State Actions:

"Kapit-bisig!" The cry that cut the air of hostility, and awakened spirits of strength and solidarity within us. It means "linking arms." When I shouted these words, my comrades shouted these too. When six traffic enforcers and three cops began pushing us to the sidelines and attempted to de-mask us, we turned our backs on them, pointed our asses towards them and linked arms. It was a spontaneous show of resistance. All seven or eight comrades in Black Bloc guises tried as hard as we could to stand our ground, but police training and the psychology of the gun were too much. We lost strength, and fell....

[http://nyc.indymedia.org/front.php3?article\\_id=28131](http://nyc.indymedia.org/front.php3?article_id=28131)

### 104 Years of American Colonialism in Puerto Rico

By JUAN ANTONIO OCASIO RIVERA

One hundred and four years ago today, General Nelson A. Miles took the Spanish by surprise by attacking the town of Guanica, Puerto Rico — a southern coastal town which was barely defended by the Spanish. Earlier efforts in May of 1898 to attack the capital, San Juan, failed due to the ferocious resistance of Spanish soldiers and Puerto Rican militia-men, not to mention the huge concrete fort known as El Morro.

General Miles, the same General who decimated the native tribes in the Midwest, declared that he had come to extend democracy to Puerto Rico, but in one fell swoop the Americans outlawed Spanish citizenship (without replacing it with another, making Puerto Ricans citizenless), outlawed the Spanish language and outlawed the independence movement, which had been in existence since the early 1800s.

Today, thousands of Puerto Ricans fill the town of Guanica....

[http://nyc.indymedia.org/front.php3?article\\_id=28251](http://nyc.indymedia.org/front.php3?article_id=28251)

### No More Business As Usual

By JOHN J. SWEENEY

We're faced with 21<sup>st</sup> century corporate pirates who took advantage of our transition from an industrial to an information economy to kidnap working families and take us back to the past.

They plundered our companies by replacing long-term prosperity with short-run insincerity.

They polluted our capital markets by pumping up prices instead of producing profits.

Then they perverted our government by purchasing every politician money could buy, creating legal black holes where they can enrich themselves out of public sight.

The most cruel irony of all is that today the corporate criminals not only break our laws, they make the laws.

[http://www.nyc.indymedia.org/front.php3?article\\_id=28638](http://www.nyc.indymedia.org/front.php3?article_id=28638)

### Critical Mass Ride Overpowering Despite One Arrest

By MADHATTER

As we approached the bridge, the police came out and spread themselves across the entrance. So we doubled back around to the grass median that led to the bridge, but about nine police stopped their scooters, dismounted and ran to stop the crowd. They targeted one rider who was on his bike but was stopped. A police officer decided to tackle the idled biker for no reason and brought him to the ground, inviting eight other officers to aid in his handcuffing. The rest of the 200-strong crowd verbally shamed the police for their actions and took on the NYPD by overwhelming them onto the Manhattan Bridge, taking all three lanes.

[http://nyc.indymedia.org/front.php3?article\\_id=28345](http://nyc.indymedia.org/front.php3?article_id=28345)

### Danmar Workers Struggle

By TRABAJADORES EN ACCIÓN

The workers of Danmar Finishing in Brooklyn are continuing their struggle against exploitation and labor abuses, despite the persecution of 15 fellow workers who were forced to leave their job because of the harassment and abuse by the Danmar bosses. The workers' strong resolve and the support they are receiving from Workers in Action is a sign that this struggle will stay strong. And we are ready to fight in the streets and in the courts for workers' rights.

[http://www.nyc.indymedia.org/front.php3?article\\_id=28143](http://www.nyc.indymedia.org/front.php3?article_id=28143)

### A Message From INS Detainees in New Jersey

By NYC IMC

The American justice system is supposed to give any person accused of misbehavior a chance to make their case in court. But since Sept. 11, the net has been cast against people not because of any misbehavior but because of their religion and nationality. These INS detentions discriminate on the basis of religion and race, targeting people from Muslim countries, especially Pakistan, Yemen, Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Lebanon. The conditions here are terrible. The medical care is minimal, and many of us are suffering without necessary medications. Sharing in this misery are many other immigrants from Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and Africa.

[http://www.nyc.indymedia.org/front.php3?article\\_id=27497](http://www.nyc.indymedia.org/front.php3?article_id=27497)

### Eco-Protesters Struggle to Make NY'ers Care About Ecuadorian Pipeline Deal

By COLIN RUDD

Amazon Watch, Activism Center at Wetlands Preserve, and Greenpeace USA demonstrated at lunchtime July 25 outside the New York offices of WestLB, a German bank acting as lead financier for Ecuador's new heavy crude oil pipeline. The 300-mile pipeline would carry oil from the country's rainforest region to the Pacific Coast, where the majority of the oil would be exported to the United States. Amazon Watch opposes the pipeline because it is routed to pass through 11 protected areas of Ecuadorian rainforest, and would put the surrounding ecosystems and communities at significant risk of ecological disaster.

[http://www.nyc.indymedia.org/front.php3?article\\_id=28302](http://www.nyc.indymedia.org/front.php3?article_id=28302)

### EDITORS' NOTE

Following four months of discussion and examination, *The Independent* will begin accepting advertisements in its September issue. The paper will publish ads exclusively from other social justice organizations, artists and independent media producers.

Letters to the Editor may be sent by email to [imc-nyc-print@indymedia.org](mailto:imc-nyc-print@indymedia.org) or be mailed to *The Independent*, 34 E. 29th St. 2nd Floor, NY, NY 10016

## DETAINEE RESISTANCE SUFFERS BACKLASH

BY GABRIEL WOODHOUSE

On July 13, over 100 people gathered outside the Middlesex County Jail in North Brunswick, N.J. to protest the continuing mistreatment of immigrants detained by the INS in the New York-New Jersey area. The action was part of the ongoing resistance to post-Sept. 11 policies that have resulted in the disappearance and deportation of thousands of immigrants of Arab, Muslim and South Asian descent.

Orel Bob, a former detainee who volunteers with Desis Rising Up and Moving, was one of several speakers at the event who commented on the harsh conditions inside the jails.

"They placed us in an environment where officers were very brutal, very disrespectful, where medical assistance didn't even exist. They put slop on a dog tray and shoved it under a fence and said 'here's your dinner,'" said Bob.

Although there were no reports of police harassment at the rally, several groups working closely with the detainees, including the Coalition for the Human Rights of Immigrants and the Stop The Disappearances Campaign, reported that following the rally, FBI and INS agents interrogated and transferred many prisoners to undisclosed facilities around the country in retaliation for publicly speaking out against human rights violations at the jail.

In a public letter released on July 5, the prisoners of H-Pat, the unit where most of the detainees in Middlesex are held, called attention to the inhumane conditions and abuses at the jail, stating "We ask the people of the United States to stand up on the side of justice and equality, and to support the principles of human rights which your government is trying to blackmail."

The allegations of retribution against the Middlesex detainees is part of a larger pattern of retaliatory measures against immigrant prisoners held locally including solitary confinement, relocation to distant facilities in Virginia and Texas and deprivation of basic rights to practice religion.

According to Omar Mohammedi, legal liaison for the Council on American Islamic Relations in New York, these maneuvers by authorities are deliberate attempts to "intimidate and pressure many detainees into signing statements while isolating them from their families and lawyers."

Mohammedi notes that in late June, several detainees at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn called upon the Department of Justice to investigate conditions and allegations of abuse at the facility. In response, many were harshly interrogated and moved to other centers around the country far from their families and supporters.

This phenomenon, identified by some activists as "re-disappearance," often has irreparable psychological and legal



Following this protest, some detainees inside the Middlesex County jail were interrogated and moved to undisclosed locations.

consequences for those in custody.

As Adem Carrol, a family relief coordinator with the New York chapter of the Islamic Circle of North America, explains, "these tactics are very effective in really breaking people down. They are already vulnerable from months of arbitrary detention and then they just vanish to some distant location and we don't hear anything for several weeks about their status. In some cases, we don't hear anything until they have already been deported."

Carroll also observes that the entire issue of the detentions has virtually vanished from the "radar screen" of the mainstream media.

"It's as though many people just want to pretend this whole thing is over with. And meanwhile, many journalists are being directed to focus on Sept. 11-anniversary coverage. But the reality is that the detentions and deportations problem is still very much an issue. We are getting reports every day of more people disappearing into INS custody," said Carroll.

Martha Cameron, of Justice For Detainees, coordinates many of the visitations to immigrants held in detention locally. She emphasizes the critical significance of the issue, especially for the families that are directly affected.

"This entire post-Sept. 11 immigrant backlash by the government is just absolutely outrageous. It's the wholesale smashing of families for no good reason whatsoever. It is accomplishing nothing in terms of national security and yet it continues with very little response from most Americans. It's as though people just have blinders on," Cameron explains.

Perhaps the most alarming aspect of the detentions problem according to many of those addressing the issue is the lack of concrete information about the numbers of people detained or deported.

As Carroll explains, information and numbers are as mysterious as the disappearances themselves.

"It would be really helpful to have real numbers and answers, especially for the families, but ultimately the government has succeeded in creating a total haze. It's the old paradigm of 'the fog of war' manifested in the violations of human and civil rights in America's 'war on terror.'"

One of the most notable "holes" in terms of information, as Mohammedi observes, is the experience of individuals and families when they are shipped back to their original countries, such as Egypt, Jordan and Sudan.

"We have to wonder what will happen to all these people. They have been in America for years — in some cases decades — and they just vanish and we don't know anything about how they will be treated by these other governments. They arrive as criminals, with no clearance or documentation from the FBI or INS."

*Diane Krauthamer and Eliot Rosewater of New Jersey IMC contributed to this report.*

## SINGLE JUROR BLOCKS SCHWARTZ CONVICTION

Former NYPD police officer Charles Schwartz was spared a third conviction of violating Abner Louima's civil rights by a lone juror. In 1997, the Haitian immigrant was held down in a police bathroom and sodomized with a broken stick.

"A single juror in the jury room, for reasons other than to establish innocence or guilt, succeeded in subverting the process," jury foreman Joseph Birnbaum told the *New York Observer*.

Birnbaum said that the staunch hold-out was prone to fits of giggling and inaudible mutterings and rejected the testimony of almost every witness.

"We were, in the end, outmaneuvered by one juror who entered this trial with a mission different from the other 11 of us," Birnbaum added.

Schwartz's two prior convictions were thrown out earlier this year by a federal court. Jury selection for a fourth trial begins September 9.

## ENGINES ARE RED, FIREFIGHTERS ARE WHITE

In a city where African-Americans and Latinos account for more than half of the population, the New York City Fire Department has all the diversity of rural Vermont: 94 percent of the 11,000-person force is white as is 97.6 percent of the city's 329 battalion chiefs.

The FDNY recently announced a new minority recruiting effort, but many question if the \$2.7 million program will do anything to diversify the force.

In an interview with *Newsday*, a representative from the Vulcan Society, an organization of black firefighters, said the police recently spent \$10 million to vary its staff — which is about 68 percent white — while the fire department has budgeted nothing for the drive. A private public relations firm donated \$2.7 million to the effort.

Even in more prosperous times, minority recruitment was not a priority.

"What did they do years ago when the city was fat?" asked Battalion Chief Phil Parr, who will lead the recruitment effort. "Nothing."

## QUEENS BUS STRIKE ROLLS ON

The Queens bus strike may be nearing resolution, but not without weeks of tension and discord. The strike began after the City backed out of health care provisions from a settlement in March.

The Transit Workers Union Local 100 sued to overturn Mayor Michael Bloomberg's emergency declaration permitting van and livery drivers to pick up passengers along affected routes. The mayor maintained that the strike is between private contractors and their employees; he declared that the union had ulterior motives.

The union has raised over \$50,000 to support its strike fund, and over 30 New York City Council members have sponsored a bill supporting the strikers.

Queens Borough President Helen Marshall had proposed a \$2 million loan to the city to the private contractors in order to meet the health care provisions. The "Marshall Plan" sank under waves of acrimony when, on June 14, the strikers demanded for job security for public employees.

### AN OVERVIEW OF RECENT DETAINEE-RELATED NEWS



**Aug. 7:** Hip-hop legend Slick Rick begins his third month in INS detention. His crime? Committing a felony 11 years ago that he already served time for. A legal U.S. resident, but not a citizen, he was arrested in Miami after a June 1 performance.

**July 31:** U.S. federal judge rules British and Australian citizens held in Guantanamo Bay have no legal rights because the U.S. military camp is technically in Cuba.

**July 26:** The *Christian Science Monitor* reports the CIA has begun arranging for suspected terrorists arrested overseas to be sent to Egypt, Syria and Jordan where torture during interrogation is legal.

**July 25:** The U.S. opposes a UN anti-torture treaty because it would allow international human rights observers into its prisons and detention camps.

**July 22:** The founder of the stopamerica.org website, James Ujaama, is detained in Denver, his hometown, as a material witness in an undisclosed case. *The Rocky Mountain News* warns: "If he can be spirited off to an unknown location while the government refuses to confirm his whereabouts, or even his initial detention, that means the rest of us could be treated that way, too."

**July 19:** Peter Kirsanow, of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, suggests the government may set up internment camps: "If there's another terrorist attack and if it's from a certain ethnic community...that the terrorists are from, you can forget about civil rights."

## PATAKI SAYS NO TO ADS

Governor Pataki recently forced the city's two Spanish-language stations to pull two ads critical of his proposals to reform the Rockefeller Drug Laws.

The ads' producers, the Drug Policy Alliance, accused Pataki of "misuse of executive power to stifle criticism."

The local Telemundo and Univision affiliates pulled the ads after Pataki's office claimed they were "blatantly untruthful."

The original ad claimed drug offenders could face 30 years to life instead of the correct figure of 25 years to life for their crimes.

Even without the broadcast of critical ads, Pataki failed to push through his reforms of the drug laws before the Albany legislature recessed.

## DEMOCRACY NOW! CONTRACT ROILS LISTENERS

The interim Pacifica National Board will look into renegotiating a controversial new contract recently signed with Democracy Now!, its most popular show.

The contract, approved at a June 23 board meeting in Berkeley without being read by any of the board's 13 members, calls for Pacifica to assume most of the show's production costs while still paying significant fees, starting at \$488,000 per year. The contract also stipulates that Democracy Now! Productions, Inc. will be able to fundraise on its own behalf, and will have use of the Pacifica subscriber lists for that purpose. It will also retain the Democracy Now! trademark, syndication rights and sole copyright ownership of the archives of both past and future shows.

Amy Goodman, the show's host, and senior producer Kris Abrams agreed to revisit the contract on July 9 following a listener uproar over the terms of the agreement. Pacifica is the nation's only listener-sponsored radio network with stations in five major cities including New York (WBAI-99.5 FM).

## QUEENS ACTIVISTS START NEW LGBT ORGANIZATION

Activists in Queens announced the founding of the Guillermo Vazquez Independent Democratic Club on July 29. The club will support the diverse populations within the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) communities in Queens.

Pauline Park, a club vice-president, said at a press conference that the group will advocate for those who have been marginalized in politics, primarily bisexual and transgendered people of color. She said the club will "especially articulate the needs of new immigrants."

Phil Valez, the group's president, said the club will seek "to energize and motivate individuals to speak out and get involved in the political process."

## KOREA: TROOPS REMAIN 50 YEARS AFTER WAR

On July 31, a group of about 20 activists gathered at the Times Square Army Recruiting Center to show solidarity with the Korean people who oppose U.S. troops in Korea. The protest was sparked by the recent deaths of Shin Hyo Soon and Shim Mi Sun, two 13-year-old girls in South Korea who were walking to a birthday party on June 13, 2002, when a 57-ton U.S. armored vehicle used to clear mines ran them over near the town of Uijongbu.

Since the end of the Korean War in 1953, the U.S. military presence in the country has fomented increasing public outrage. The number of troops now stands at 37,000.

## HAITIAN FAMILY DEMANDS JUSTICE

### D.A. PLEADS IGNORANCE TO POLICE BRUTALITY CHARGES

BY PANDI HOPKINS

Family members and friends of Georgy Louisgene, a Haitian immigrant fatally shot by police six months ago, gathered July 13 outside Brooklyn District Attorney Charles Hynes' office to protest his refusal to call a grand jury to consider indicting the officers. The protestors charged the city with failing to carefully examine the 23-year-old's death.

Louisgene was shot five times by police during an encounter at a Brooklyn housing project on January 16.

Louisgene's family sees the young man as the latest victim of police brutality and police cover-up within the New York City Police Department. They claim that evidence shows Louisgene had just been beaten up by a neighborhood gang and was seeking police assistance when the shooting occurred.

"He was gesturing to the cops and trying to tell them — his jaw may have been broken — to arrest the men who had beaten him," eyewitness Janet McQuillar told the *Haiti Progres*. Another witness (who asked to remain unidentified) said, "He was no threat to them. He was not a threat to anybody. Nobody was around him. They just went and shot, shot, shot."

In contrast, police described Louisgene as a "homeless man" exhibiting "bizarre behavior," alleging that he was armed with a knife and gardening tool and that he refused to put them down after repeatedly being ordered to do so.

Although the shooting occurred at 2:30 p.m.,



Georgy Louisgene

Louisgene's family didn't learn of his death until they read the newspapers later that morning. The police never notified the family.

The National Coalition for Haitian Rights has joined the family in demanding a thorough investigation by the police department and the Brooklyn District Attorney.

"We are troubled by the mysterious circumstances surrounding this terrible incident," said Dana Paul Parks, acting director of the Coalition. "While news reports portraying Louisgene as a nameless deranged man erratically roaming the streets began circulating the evening of the 16<sup>th</sup>, neither the general press nor the police have yet to establish the full facts of the case. This crucial lapse in the handling of the case gives the appearance of indifference in the face of tragedy."

A strong bond has developed among the family members of police brutality victims. And for the Louisgenes, it is tinged with a bitter irony.

Louisgene's sister, Cindy Louisgene, recalled how her family, including Georgy, had attended the funeral of police shooting victim Patrick Dorismond in March of 2000. "Georgy was so sad. Little did we know that we would be attending a similar event for him two years later," she said.

Last February, a joint memorial for Patrick Dorismond and Georgy Louisgene was attended by parents and siblings of other police shooting victims Anthony Baez and Amadou Diallo.

For more info, call the Haitian Coalition for Justice (718) 284-2255 or Georgy Louisgene Justice Committee: (718) 390-6683.

## COUNTRY AND CITY FOLK CONNECT AT GREENMARKETS

BY NÁNDOR SALA

Three times a week, Franca Tantillo loads her truck with flowers, peas, potatoes, squash and strawberries grown on her 29-acre farm. She braces herself with coffee and cola for the two-and-a-half-hour, 130-mile drive from the small town of Cooks Falls, N.Y. to Manhattan. Tantillo is one of several hundred small farmers and food producers who rely on New York City farmers' markets for their livelihood.

During peak season, approximately 200 farmers like Tantillo attend 35 open-air markets at 26 locations throughout the city, which are managed by Greenmarket, a non-profit organization run by the city's Council on the Environment.

"I get 95 percent of my sales from Greenmarket. Without Greenmarket I'd be out of business," says David Graves of Berkshire Berries, a maple syrup, honey, jam and jelly producer.

Chris Luttinger, an employee of Fantasy Farms, likewise notes that all the produce from their 80-acre farm is sold at the markets.

Farmers, in turn, fund the Greenmarket program by renting booths at \$40 to \$72 per space, generating nearly \$1,000,000 annually.

And consumers? They get the pleasure of buying just-picked fruits and vegetables. And since there are no middlemen at the greenmarket, they also get to talk directly with the people who grow their food.

"It's a trust relationship I have with my customers," says Tantillo. "I give my customers what I would want to get."

As the pool of local farmers shrinks and farmers till less acreage, it's becoming harder to attract farmers to the markets, says Green Market Director Tony Manna.

Each week of the peak season, 250,000 people flock to the markets, according to Manna. Many of them are repeat shoppers committed to supporting the farmers.

Amy Rachelle shops weekly at the Tompkins Square market and ventures up to Union Square, the city's largest



Greenmarket, for organic produce. "I shop at Greenmarket because they have the freshest produce," she says. "It's the most vibrant. It is grown with love."

Saturdays are the biggest days for farmers at Union Square, with nearly 100,000 people attending each week. Farm booths fill the square, which is packed with a tight crush of people trying to squeeze past each other towards the delights.

Stewart Borowsky, a wheat grass producer, describes Saturdays as "positively euphoric, nothing but a big ego stroke with people coming and telling you that you are feeding them. You feel rewarded for your effort."

The World Trade Center was also a vibrant hub of Greenmarket activity. Eighty thousand people a day passed through the Tuesday and Thursday markets there. When the towers were destroyed on Sept. 11, the loss of the markets hit farmers hard. Thirty-one farms have lost about \$300,000 in revenue since the attacks.

However, Manna plans to open new Greenmarkets at South Street Seaport, Battery Park and the new Trade Center redevelopment site. More markets may soon give New York City a fresh taste, and urbanites a greater sense of life on the farm.

As Manna notes, "The farmers not only bring the freshest and best produce but they give New Yorkers a chance to escape the city without leaving it."

## "THEY OWE US" Slavery Reparations Sought

BY INDEPENDENT STAFF

If a capitol is meant to reflect the rest of the nation, Washington D.C. reflects more than just pools. The construction of the White House and the Capitol building contained not only Roman designs and impressive rotundas; it was partly built by slave labor. Out of the 650 workers who built the U.S. Capitol, 450 were slaves. These slaves, of course, received nothing for their labor. Their descendants and others are coming to Washington on Aug. 17 to change that.

"Whites are unjustly enriched today as a class," said Richard America, a Georgetown University lecturer. "They have income and wealth that should have gone to blacks and was diverted by force, fraud, manipulation, exploitation and expropriation."

The Millions for Reparations rally, set to coincide with Pan-Africanist Marcus Garvey's 115th birthday, will mark the first national gathering of African descendants demanding reparations, or economic compensation, for the damages caused by the enslavement of Africans in the United States. The rally and preceding mobilization efforts are co-chaired by Conrad Worrill of the Chicago-based National Black United Front and Viola Plummer of the New York-based December 12th Movement. The rally's catch phrase: "They Owe Us."

In the census of 1860, a year before the Civil War, the entire slave population of the United States numbered

3,953,696. A third of Southern families owned human beings. Even though the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery in 1865, a similar system continued for another 100 years.

Reconstruction, the Freedman's Bureau and "40 acres and a mule" sought to give freed slaves a chance to participate equally in society. Instead, a system of de facto bondage developed in which freed slaves were largely denied economic and political rights and were terrorized by their oppressors. Reparations supporters say the advances made during the Civil Rights Era were not enough to make up for the historic injustices of slavery and legalized racism. The amount of forced labor, both before and after 1865, that helped build this country physically and economically remains incalculable.



The reparations movement has grown steadily in the past decade. Over a dozen city councils and the California State Assembly have passed resolutions in support of reparations. A billion-dollar lawsuit that alleges three major corporations profited from slavery is now being pursued in federal court in Brooklyn (see sidebar).

"These are corporations that benefited from stealing people, from stealing labor, from forced breeding, from torture, from committing numerous horrendous acts, and there's no reason why they should be able to hold onto assets they acquired through such horrendous acts," said Deadria Farmer-Paellmann, the lead plaintiff in the lawsuit.

Several other lawsuits could be filed as early as this fall, including a massive suit, involving high profile professors Cornel West and Charles Ogletree and attorneys Johnny Cochran and William Gary, against the U.S. government.

Other reparations cases include last year's 1921 Tulsa Race Riot Reconciliation Act, which created a scholarship fund for 300 descendants and a memorial for survivors. The survivors of the 1923 Rosewood Massacre, in which an all African-American town in Florida was destroyed, were awarded a total of \$2 million in 1994.

Worldwide, there are more legal precedents for reparations. Germany has paid \$61.8 billion to Israel and Holocaust survivors since 1951. In Switzerland, United Bank of Switzerland, the Swiss Bank Corporation and Credit Suisse, have also set up a restitution fund. In 1998, after years of denying it profited from Jewish slave labor, Volkswagen set up its own restitution fund after admitting that 15,000 Jews had labored for them unpaid.

The 2001 United Nations Conference on Racism in Durban, South Africa featured heated debates regarding reparations. Some European nations issued apologies, but refused to accept the idea of paying reparations. The U.S. also rejected reparations after initially threatening to boycott the conference over the issue. Meanwhile, African nations joined the debate, pressing former colonial powers to make financial amends for the damage caused to their continent by the slave trade.

What form the American reparations should take is still controversial. Some want checks; others want programs that would strengthen communities.

"Malcolm [X] had a great quote in which he said it's basic business law: If your father dies with a debt, then you inherit that debt," said David Daniels, spokesperson for Millions for Reparations. "It doesn't just get cancelled."

*Dani McClain, Emily Reinhardt, John Tartleton and Chris Anderson contributed to this report.*

### CINCINNATI POLICE TO TRACK "CITIZEN BRUTALITY"

In April 2001, Timothy Thomas, a 19-year-old unarmed African-American man was shot and killed by Cincinnati police who had stopped him for traffic violations. Thomas' death sparked three days of violent demonstrations in the city's outraged African-American community. Strict curfews were imposed on the city for a week following the slaying.

Since 1995, 15 black men have been killed by Cincinnati police. Civil rights advocates complain little has been done to check pervasive police abuse.

Now, however, police have announced a new system to help officers record the abuse perpetrated against them by citizens. Representatives of Cincinnati's Fraternal Order of Police union say officers have the same right as civilians to complain about abuse. To that end, police will compile the name, age, race, address and phone numbers of citizens who disrespect officers.

"One of the things we have to recognize is that there are things that don't rise to the level of a crime but can still be reported by the police," said Donald Hardin, a police union attorney.

### BLACK FARMERS FIGHT USDA-FORCED LAND LOSS

A five-day sit-in by 350 black farmers in early July and a class action lawsuit against the USDA three years ago have done little to alleviate the debt problems of black farmers. The farmers say that practices have not improved, and compensation claims allowed by the lawsuit are being delayed or unfairly turned down.

The sit-in at the USDA offices in Brownsville, Tennessee ended when the farmers won two concessions from Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman. She agreed to meet with them in Washington, and promised that five Tennessee farmers from nearby Fayette county would be notified about the status of their 2002 planting loans.

The loans never came. The planting season ended in early July, and now farmers face thousands of dollars of debt. Historically, loan rejections to black growers have led to massive foreclosures and loss of farms. In 1920 there were 925,000 black farmers, while today there are about 15,000.

### RAVING MAD: CONGRESS CRACKS DOWN ON PARTIES

Congress may add yet another poisonous ingredient to its alphabet soup of draconian legislation. The RAVE, or Reducing Americans' Vulnerability to Ecstasy Act, broadly expands an existing statute, known as the "crack house statute," which empowers the federal government to fine or imprison business owners if customers or tenants sell, use or manufacture drugs on their premises.

Section 4 of the Senate bill enables prosecutors to charge property owners with fines up to \$250,000.

Individuals could face 20-year sentences for using drugs or throwing parties where drugs are present in private homes.

According to the Drug Policy Alliance, the nation's leading drug policy reform institute, the proposed bills are not only "a dangerous threat to free speech and the right to dance," but "could endanger our nation's youth ... by driving raves and other musical events further underground and away from public health and safety regulations."

*Deadria Farmer-Paellmann, a former New York law student, has recently filed a lawsuit against these businesses for profiting from slave labor:*

#### FLEETBOSTON FINANCIAL CORPORATION

Assets: \$192 billion  
Chartered: 1791



A very different John Brown from the famous abolitionist founded Providence Bank, which FleetBoston later incorporated. Brown also invested in two boats, the Hope and the Delight. The Hope shipped 229 men, women and children from Africa to Cuba; the Delight took its 81 humans to Savannah, Georgia. Fleet has refused comment.

#### AETNA

Assets: \$25.2 billion  
Chartered: 1853



In the 1850s Aetna issued handwritten insurance policies for \$5 to \$10 to many southern farmers, including a Virginia blacksmith named James. These policies were on the lives of the slaves they owned. James owned 16 slaves; his seven still-existing policies on his slaves are a potential smoking gun for Aetna. Aetna has issued an apology.

#### CSX

Assets: \$2 billion  
Incorporated: 1978



Like Fleet, CSX is an agglomeration of many smaller and older companies, companies who built the original railways. One firm, Virginia's Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac, leased slaves for up to \$150 annually to build railways.

# CORPORATE CRIME

## A BRIEF GUIDE TO THE MARKET MELTDOWN

By DIANA JARVIS

Corporate fraud used to be limited to overstating assets: the prime Florida beachfront property is really swampland, our amazing business plan will make billions someday. Today's accounting frauds include a snazzy new feature: expenses can magically vanish off the balance sheet onto a special purpose vehicle into the future. By combining old-fashioned hucksterism and 21<sup>st</sup> century accounting shenanigans, you can both inflate the value of your assets and eliminate your expenses.

This potent combination permits fraud (and bankruptcy) on a scale not previously known to mankind.

In the old days, the price of a stock represented the buyer's estimate of the likelihood that the company would pay dividends. This made it easy to calculate the value of the stock: compare the price of the stock against the dividends it paid, and figure out if you would make money or lose money if you bought it at that price.

That was the theory, anyway. Dividend-paying went the way of the dinosaurs because of income taxes. Dividend income is taxed twice: once when the income is earned by the corporation, and again as it is paid as dividends to individual investors. To avoid this, corporations began to keep their income as "retained earnings." Investors would not be taxed as long as they did not sell stock. When they did sell, taxes on their capital gains would be capped at 20 percent.

Since companies no longer paid dividends, the price/dividend ratio used for calculating the "value" of the stock was replaced by its price/earnings ratio. Of course, once earnings no longer paid out as dividends are retained by the corporation, they appear just as a number on a balance sheet — and, it seems, there's more than one way to manipulate that number.

Here are a few:

**"The Enron":** Officially known as mark-to-market accounting: We don't know how much money we will earn over the next several decades from the contract we just signed, so we'll pick the highest possible number and write it up as real money we really did just

earn, all of it, in the last quarter.

**"The Worldcom":** Consisting of capital gains treatment of operating expenses: We don't want to reveal that our operating expenses were so high that we really made no money, so we'll treat all the money we spend as capital expenses and spread them out over the next several years — and now look... see... once our expenses for this year disappear, our gross sales are all net income.

**"The Cayman Islander" or "The Enron II":** Enron was not lying when they called themselves an innovative company. Officially known as special purpose vehicles: Spin-off a corporate subsidiary, preferably in a jurisdiction with much loyalty to bank secrecy laws, bestow all your debt upon it, bestow some of your stock as well to compensate the limited partners of the special purpose vehicle, most of whom are insiders or friends of insiders, watch the banks snooze because they know you're still liable for the money, watch your stock rise because your sales look to be profits because there's no debt on your balance sheet, watch your friends and insiders sell the stock that you gave them.

**"X Marks the Spot":** Where do you want this money on your balance sheet? This two billion looks better under "assets" than under "liabilities," don't you think? So, post money you borrowed as sales you made (Xerox); swap fiberoptic capacity with your buddies and list it as a cash sale (Global Crossing).

**"Harken To Your Political Instincts":** For this you need to put the President's son on your board. Let Junior face a \$23 million loss for which the SEC might force him to make public. Let him sell, then post the loss, so that the stock price falls only after he's safely out of there. Then give him eight months to file the legally-required record of this insider's sale, a good six months after the stock tumbled in value, so that any curious observer watching the company's filings for insider sales will have long since given up and wandered away. You might lose money on this one, but in exchange you get to be life-long friends of the Bush family.

Is it any wonder that the masses of outsiders are losing faith in the market?

Or in the Bush administration's ability to clean it up?



By A.K. GUPTA

"I'm shocked, shocked," exclaimed Claude Raines' character, Capt. Renault, in *Casablanca*, upon discovering illegal gambling in Rick's Casino. Shocked, shocked, too, is President Bush upon discovering the growing gallery of corporate rogues.

At least Capt. Renault was able to pocket his winnings without skipping a beat, but not the "CEO" administration. Battered almost daily by its corporate chicanery, from Harken to Halliburton to Enron, the White House has had trouble convincing Wall Street of its outrage. The major market indices went into a free-fall after Bush's two malapropistic lashings last month. The Dow Jones, Nasdaq and S&P have all plunged to their lowest levels in over five years. Over \$7 trillion in wealth has evaporated since the bubble popped in March of 2000.

Far from being a few bad apples in the corporate barrel, the Fortune 500 crooks are as American as apple pie. Merrill Lynch recently paid a slap-on-the-shoulder fine of \$100 million after emails surfaced showing its analysts breathlessly pumped up internet stocks to the public even as they were secretly calling them "dogs," "junk" and "crap."

Cable's financial oracle, CNBC, turned analysts like Henry Blodgett into rock stars, helping the brokerage house sharks devour the investing chum. But when it came time to own up, one of CNBC's blow-dried talking heads blamed it on investors who should have known better than to follow advice being dished out on TV.

The business world's gold fever is complemented by politicians' mendacity in our legalized system of campaign bribery. Over \$1 billion, overwhelmingly from corporations and the rich, flowed into campaign coffers during the last election cycle. In return, winning candidates pass legislation of, by and for their benefactors, like the recent consumer bankruptcy bill, which prioritizes credit card payments before childcare and alimony.

While campaign finance reform has shut off the "soft money" spigot, one corporate chieftain has already found an enterprising solution. Software company Siebel System's head honcho, Thomas Siebel, built corporate America's second largest political action committee within weeks by pressuring hundreds of employees late last year to each cough up \$5,000. The new PAC has amassed over \$2 million, making a mockery of the new law.

Cheating is the rule, rather than the exception, in the land of the free. Bush himself came into office by stealing the 2000 election. He got help from his bro' Jeb in Florida with the disqualification of thousands of black voters in an illegal purge of the voting rolls. On election day, many blacks reported being harassed and intimidated at the polls. When the vote deadlocked, his campaign enlisted party brownshirts to terrorize state officials from doing a proper recount. And it all got the seal of approval from a Supreme Court headed by a Chief Justice who bullied black voters in Arizona during the 1964 presidential election.

It's all in keeping with national tradition. America, after all, was stolen from its original inhabitants and then tamed by millions stolen from Africa. One early American historian, Charles Royster, portrays the Founding Fathers as a colonial-era Glengarry Glen Ross. They comprised a land-speculating gentry that used its political connections to build fortunes resting on debts they usually welched on, always hoping to score the ultimate real estate deal that would return untold riches.

Then again, you can't even trust the historians anymore. Several esteemed historians have seen their reputations tarnished of late: WWII chronicler Stephen Ambrose and Pulitzer Prize winner Doris Kearns Goodwin have both been accused of plagiarism, and another Pulitzer winner, Joseph Ellis, admitting to faking a Vietnam War service record.

It's hard to find a bastion of rectitude anywhere. The hallowed Ivy League halls have been stained by revelations that a Princeton official was illegally entering a Yale website to apparently check if students who had applied to both schools had been accepted at Yale. Even the Naval Academy, where honor is what makes "an officer and a gentleman," was rocked in 1992 when 134 seniors — over 10 percent of the



**INDEBTED TO PROFIT:** Funding corporate fraud takes a toll on the national checkbook.



**AFL-CIO PRESIDENT** John Sweeney speaks at a July 30 rally on Wall Street.

# AMERICA'S OTHER NATIONAL TRADITION

class — were implicated in a cheating scandal.

The tolerance for cheating is so high that there's hardly a guarantee you'll be punished, even if you're caught. That's what happened to 28 Kansas students flunked by their teacher, Christine Pelton, after they were caught cheating on a botany project. After some parents complained, however, the school board ordered Pelton to reverse her decision, and she resigned in protest.

America's substitute for education, show business, has been no stranger to cheating, either. The "Quiz Show" scandal of the 1950s shocked a public that still believed in "truth, justice and the American way" malarkey. But few batted an eyelash when Sony Pictures was caught last summer fabricating glowing movie reviews, and using employees and actors posing as moviegoers in TV commercials to praise its flicks.

But the real pros at deceit and duplicity may be in the sports world. From the Olympics' biennial scandals of crooked judges, knee-capping ice skaters and venal officials who select the hosting cities, to rigged boxing matches, fake resumes for college football coaches and doping scandals in soccer, the Tour de France, professional football and virtually every other high-performance sport, fair play seems to be for losers.

Maybe it's because athletes learn young. A little league team in the town of Kearny, N.J. was apparently told to throw a game recently so a playoff-bound rival could bolster its record. One player was said to have asked the coach who proposed the fix what to do if they were pummeling their rival. The coach reportedly said, "Then we'll walk in a couple of runs."

The granddaddy of baseball fixes is the "Black Sox" scandal of 1919 that saw eight Chicago White Sox players, in the pay of bookies, throw that year's World Series. But this summer, the Major League's problems are largely ones spawned by its own questionable practices. Team owners are facing a strike by players who want a bigger slice of the revenue pie. Owners cry poverty, but they

refuse to open their books. That's because they make plenty of money. Baseball is a legal monopoly that receives hundreds of millions of dollars in taxpayer subsidies, while reaping millions from \$7 piss-water beer stands and \$10-a-car parking lots.

The players are hardly the boys of summer anymore, but steroid-popping, ball-bashing mutants. Former MVP Ken Caminiti said earlier this year that at least half of major leaguers downed steroids (though he later retracted the claim).

As drug usage has cast a pall over the game, suspicions that the league "juiced the ball" to revive fan interest have grown. Mark McGwire and fellow slugger

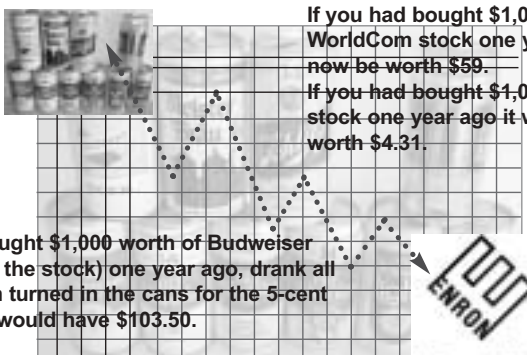
Sammy Sosa brought crowds back to the ballpark during their back-and-forth chase in 1998 to overtake the single season home run record of 61. When the dust settled, both had easily surpassed the record.

But McGwire's record of 70 was passed by Barry Bonds' 73 homers last year. Many of baseball's fandom view these new constantly falling records as legitimate as a Wall Street earnings report.

George W. Bush would know about that. The one "success" our Cheat Executive has had as a businessman was as part-owner of the Texas Rangers. Unable to pony up the dough to buy a stake in the baseball team, Junior got more help in the form of financing arranged by then-baseball commissioner Peter Ueberroth, who said he did it "out of respect for his [Bush Jr.'s] father." When all was said and done, Bush turned his \$600,000 "investment" into a \$15 million profit.

So the prez can express his shock over corporate crooks and cheats, but too many people have noticed him pocketing winnings to take him seriously. Bush may think that with the war on terrorism boosting his approval ratings as high as his ill-gotten profits, the corporate scandals won't amount to a hill of beans. But if his presidency is buried by the growing scandals and a shrinking economy, he may yet have something to regret.

## CHEATING IS AS AMERICAN AS APPLE PIE



Sources: Yahoo Finance; beer prices based on 30-pack @ \$12.99 (plus deposit)

Endless possibilities.™

## UN: CORPORATE MONEY IN POLITICS & PRESS THREATENS U.S. DEMOCRACY

A new United Nations study examining the state of the world's democracies says the growing influence of corporate power in U.S. electoral politics is a "serious concern" and a threat to the nation's "one person, one vote" tradition.

"Where money plays a decisive role in politics, it turns unequal economic power into unequal political advantage," the report determines.

New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who spent a record \$74 million, or \$99 per vote, in last year's election, was the sole U.S. politician mentioned by name.

The study notes that U.S. corporations gave \$1.2 billion in political contributions during the last election cycle, 14 times as much money as labor unions and 16 times as much as other interest groups.

"Recent U.S. debates on campaign finance reform and the financial link between Enron and leading politicians from the country's two major parties show that this is a serious concern in long-standing democracies as well as new ones."

The report also criticized how just six corporations own the majority of the U.S. media outlets.

"To be plural and independent, the media must be free not only from state control but also from corporate and political pressures."

## SENATE OKs FAST TRACK

The Bush Administration was granted sweeping new powers to negotiate international trade agreements Aug. 1 when Fast Track trade legislation cleared its final hurdle in the Senate by a 64-34 vote. The House had narrowly approved Fast Track five days earlier in a dead-of-night decision. The 304-page piece of legislation was quickly denounced.

"Growing popular concern about corporate-led popular concern about corporate-led globalization was shot down in favor of a backroads policy," said Lori Wallach of Global Trade Watch.

Fast Track allows the president to negotiate trade deals that can overturn local, state and national laws that protect workers, consumers, social services and the environment while stripping Congress of its power to amend specific terms of such agreements.

The Bush administration looks for Fast Track to accelerate talks on the Free Trade Area of the Americas, a hemispheric-wide free trade zone, as well as to facilitate new trade agreements at upcoming World Trade Organization negotiations.

## CREDIT CARD COMPANIES HOPE TO REWRITE LAW

Credit card companies must wait until at least Labor Day for Congress to pass a bill overhauling the nation's bankruptcy laws.

The bill, long sought by banks and large financial conglomerates, would make it more difficult for ordinary Americans to escape crushing credit card debt by filing for Chapter 7 bankruptcy. Rather, many more would be forced to file for Chapter 13, a type of bankruptcy that forces consumers to pay back a portion of their debts over time.

"The big guys can file multi-billion-dollar bankruptcies," said Doug Heller, consumer advocate with the Foundation for Taxpayer and Consumer Rights. "The hand of government is striking consumers, while criminal corporations like WorldCom, Enron and Adelphia receive the helping hand of bankruptcy protection."

For days, the legislation appeared to be close to final passage. But a provision in the bill that would have prohibited people who attack abortion clinics from declaring bankruptcy to avoid paying court-ordered fines led to a revolt by anti-abortion Republicans.

## BUSH THREATENS 1000s OF WOMEN'S LIVES TO APPEASE RIGHT-WING

The United States' withdrawal from a United Nations family planning program could result in 80,000 deaths and 800,000 induced abortions, according to UN officials. To appease anti-abortion activists, the Bush Administration announced July 29 that it would renege on its \$34 million pledge to the United Nations Population Fund. The move "will be devastating for women and families in the poorest countries," according to Thoraya A. Obaid, Executive Director of the UN agency. Obaid estimated that \$34 million could have prevented: 2 million unwanted pregnancies; nearly 800,000 induced abortions; 4,700 maternal deaths; nearly 60,000 cases of serious maternal illness; and over 77,000 infant and child deaths.

## RECORDING INDUSTRY CAN HACK. YOU CAN'T.

Just days after the House of Representatives passed a bill to up the maximum sentence for hacking to life in prison, U.S. Rep. Howard Berman (D-CA) introduced a bill to allow the recording industry to hack into private "peer-to-peer" (P2P) networks that are engaged in the sharing of pirated files.

"[The] legislation is an appalling attack on consumer's rights — it is an invitation to online lawlessness," said Ellen A. Stroud, a representative of StreamCast Networks Inc., the Franklin, Tenn., firm behind the Morpheus file sharing program.

The Berman proposal is welcome news for the Recording Industry Association of America, which lobbied in October 2001 for the inclusion of similar provisions in a section of the USA Patriot Act.

## ROBOTIC FLIES, LOBSTERS PREPARE TO GO TO WAR

Researchers at the University of California, Berkeley, are putting final touches on a robotic fly that could be used to spy on terrorists or locate survivors of an attack, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported.

Researchers are preparing the fake bugs for flight through a mechanism that will allow for simultaneous flapping and rotating of their wings at a rate of 150 times per second.

The federal Office of Naval Research wants to use the flies "on the battlefield to detect the presence of hostile forces and materials."

The Pentagon has also funded a project at Northeastern University to create robotic lobsters that would crawl through water to clear mines.

## U.S. MILITARY GAINS ACCESS TO STUDENT RECORDS

The New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA) recently reported that the Marine Corps requested personal information about New York high school students. E-mail addresses, telephone numbers, addresses, extracurricular activities and lists of students' honors and awards are some of the items that have been solicited.

Nearly all public schools receiving federal funding must now hand over personal student information to U.S. military recruiters upon request or risk losing all subsidies.

Rather than allow recruiters more ammunition to make students want to "be all they can be," the NYSSBA has made available the fact that "individual students or their parents can request that the information not be released without prior written parental consent."

The NYSSBA has posted a sample exemption letter at <http://www.nyssba.org>.

# HELP WANTED: GOV'T SEEKS TIPSTERS

By F. TIMOTHY MARTIN

Despite major opposition, the Bush administration appears determined to launch the Terrorist Information and Prevention System, known as Operation TIPS, a program designed to encourage ordinary citizens to become law enforcement's "extra eyes and ears" during the war on terrorism.

The government intends to train and provide "millions of American truckers, letter carriers, train conductors, ship captains, utility employees, and others a formal way to report suspicious terrorist activity." Several groups, including the Teamsters Union, American Trucking Association and the International Longshoreman's Association have already pledged support for the administration's efforts.

But the civilian snitch program has attracted widespread condemnation from Congressional leaders on both sides of the aisle, civil liberties groups, think tanks and the U.S. Postal Service.

In one of the biggest setbacks to the TIPS initiative thus far, House Majority Leader Dick Armey (R-Texas) has inserted a ban on the program into the recent bill creating the Homeland Security Department.

In an unambiguously worded summary of the bill, Armey said, "To ensure that no operation of the department can be construed to promote citizens' spying on one another, this draft will contain language to prohibit programs such as Operation TIPS."

Several Democratic legislators have also been quick to raise objections to the Bush administration plans.

"It appears we are being transformed from an information society to an informant society," said Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio) in a recent interview with investigative reporter Bill Berkowitz. "Do the math. One tip a day per person and within a year the whole country will be turned in, and we can put up a big fence around the country, and we'll all be safe."

"I find it kind of scary," responded Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt) when asked by the Associated Press about Operation TIPS. "We used to laugh at the old Soviet Union idea where everybody reported everybody else," said Leahy. "...We don't need to have it happen here."

Leahy isn't the only one making the comparison to former Soviet bloc citizen surveillance techniques.

Editorials around the nation have drawn comparisons to Cold War-era reporting systems constructed in Eastern bloc societies where average citizens were frequently persuaded to monitor the activities of anyone who might seem suspicious to the state. In East Germany, several hundred thousand informers augmented the Stasi's full-time force of 85,000. Records were kept on 5 million citizens.

In a July 16 statement from the DOJ, Director of Public Affairs Barbara Comstock attempted to counter such fears by stating "Operation TIPS is simply a reporting system — not a membership organization or recruiting activity." Comstock went on to say "our interest in establishing the

Operation TIPS program is to allow American workers to share information they receive in the regular course of their jobs in public places and areas. Once they report the information, they can rest assured that law enforcement officials will be taking any appropriate next steps."

The American Civil Liberties Union and other civil liberties proponents appear skeptical of such assurances.

"The administration apparently wants to implement a program that will turn local cable or gas or electrical technicians into government-sanctioned Peeping Toms," said ACLU legislative counsel Rachel King. "Also worrisome is the potential for the program to adversely affect the fight against terrorism by wasting resources

on useless tips, and the possibility that it would encourage vigilantism and racial profiling."

In a move that may have resulted from growing opposition to Operation TIPS, the Justice Department has announced it would scrap plans to create a centralized database to store the names of the

millions of potential anti-terrorist tipsters.

Attorney General John Ashcroft, however, defended the overall plan in testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Operation TIPS will be "a clearinghouse for people who think they see something" suspicious, said Ashcroft. "You have the ability of people who have a regular perception, who understand what's out of order here, what's different here, and maybe something needs to be looked into." Ashcroft also warned that "the entire United States of America is a target for terrorist activities."

In response to calls for workers to serve as the government's "eyes and ears," labor groups have offered mixed reviews.

Following a June 21 meeting with Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge, James P. Hoffa, general president of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters announced his support.

"On behalf of the Teamsters, I offered the fact that we have 500,000 truck drivers on the road at any one time, and these people can be the eyes and ears of the Homeland Security office," said Hoffa.

The American Trucking Association has also pledged support by announcing an expansion of the Highway Watch program to include reporting on potential terrorist activities in all 50 states.

The U.S. Postal Service, however, has been less compliant. "The Postal Service had been approached by homeland security regarding Operation TIPS; however, it was decided that the Postal Service and its letter carriers would not be participating in the program at this time," the agency said in a statement issued on July 17.

A few days later, the Postal Service announced that they would discuss the Justice Department program, but noted "that it already has long-standing processes in place for employees nationwide to report suspicious activity to the Postal Inspection Service and to local authorities."



THE U.S. POSTAL SERVICE has expressed concerns with Operation TIPS, but the Teamsters, which represents UPS Truckdrivers, plan to join the civilian spy program.



## STATES OF HUNGER

13 Million Face Starvation in Southern Africa

BY DONALD PANETH

A food crisis in seven southern African countries — Angola, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe — is threatening 13 million people with starvation. The crisis is taking place in a world plagued by hunger amidst plenty.

The United Nations World Food Program (WFP) has appealed for \$611 million to provide close to one million tons of African food relief. Contributions, which up to now total about \$128 million, have been slow in coming. Among the donors have been the United States, \$98 million; the United Kingdom, \$28 million; Canada, \$993,000; the Netherlands, \$491,000; Norway, \$398,000.

The crisis in Angola first emerged during a prolonged civil war. The conflict ended in April with a cease-fire agreement between the Angolan government and the rebel forces of UNITA. At least 750,000 people were uprooted during the conflict, and the dislocations did not end with the cease-fire. Others in need of food assistance are the families of UNITA soldiers and returning refugees.

In the six other countries, the crisis developed "following two successive years of poor harvests," the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said. Other, more long-term contributing factors, according to U.N. missions to each country, were economic crises, disruption of farming activities, policy failures and political mismanagement.

Malawi, for example, was driven to sell off its national grain reserves to the hungry. "With abnormally high malnutrition rates among small children and women and extremely high food prices, desperation set in and survival strategies such as skipping meals and eating often poisonous wild foods were widely reported," the FAO said.

The severity of the crisis in southern Africa has been exacerbated by the highest rates of HIV/AIDS infection in the world, the WFP said. Large numbers of people are unable to work.

In a recent survey of development goals, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan warned that "If we do not contain the spread of HIV/AIDS and work on its prevention we will witness a tragic and profound unravelling of social, educational, governance and commercial frameworks all over the world, but most acutely in Africa."

Word comes simultaneously of critical food shortages in Indonesia and Brazil.

On July 1, the WFP launched a \$65 million relief operation to assist 2.1 million internally-displaced and poverty-stricken Indonesians. "We know, for example that in the four major cities where we work, half of the children under five years of age are stunted in growth and 30 percent are underweight," Mohammed Saleheen, WFP country director, said. The poor cannot pay the spiraling costs of food, petrol, and other commodities, he said.

In Brazil, one of the world's big food producers, one third of the population goes hungry, Jan Rocha disclosed in the *Guardian Weekly*. "The governments and corporations that run the world insist that only free markets, the removal of trade barriers and the spread of GM (genetically modified) crops will solve the problem," Rocha wrote. "But so far this sort of globalization has only brought more, not less hunger."

At the World Food Summit in Rome in June, Annan declared that "Every day, more than 800 million people — among them, 300 million children — suffer hunger. As a result, according to some estimates, as many as 24,000 people die every day."

The U.S. refused to sign a final Summit declaration referring to food as a human right. It supported a much narrower world-hunger agenda focused on a greater

### HUNGER: THE NUMBERS

- 13 million people are threatened with starvation in southern Africa.
- 2 million people face hunger and malnutrition in Indonesia.
- One-third of the population goes hungry in Brazil.
- More than 800 million people suffer hunger worldwide; among them are 300 million children.
- 30 million people lack sufficient food in the United States.
- An estimated 24,000 people die of hunger every day.

Sources: United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan; U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization; U.N. World Food Program; *Guardian Weekly*.

role for the private sector, including advancing the interests of biotechnology firms.

Exasperatingly, leading governments and transnational corporations refuse to enact fundamental remedies. They would rather contribute to paltry relief efforts. It is much more profitable to maintain the status quo.

President Bush smiled amiably at the recent G-8 meeting in Canada, but the session failed to address the global imbalances, distortions, injustices that are promoting misery. Annan, FAO, and WFP can't criticize U.S. views and actions without losing further U.S. support.

The problem of world hunger is not a lack of food but a lack of access. Increases in food production during the past 35 years have outstripped the world's unprecedented population growth by about 16 percent, Frances Moore Lappé writes in *World Hunger: 12 Myths* with Joseph Collins and Peter Rosset.

"Mountains of unsold grain on world markets have pushed prices strongly downward over the past three-and-a-half decades," Lappé said.

## AIDING BIG BIZ & POOR

BY MARK PICKENS

Mention food aid and most people imagine ships overstaffed with generous American assistance for hapless, starving countries. But layered beneath the aid is a different story of the U.S. government lining the pockets of multinational agro-companies and undercutting Africa's own farmers.

The U.S. sent developing countries six million metric tons of grain and other food assistance in 2001. Most Americans would be chagrined to learn that just under half of American food aid is not donated but sold to developing countries, making it a major boon for the giant American agro-companies including Cargill (see p. 12). The U.S. government buys surplus American grain to resell at special prices to developing countries.

"The food-aid program represents a free government service designed to help grain-trading companies expand both their current and future sales," according to a study published by the University of Nebraska Press.

A 1997 newsletter of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the government agency in charge of U.S. foreign assistance, acknowledges this. "The principal beneficiary of America's foreign assistance has always been the

United States. . . . Foreign assistance programs have helped the United States by creating major markets for agricultural goods, new markets for industrial exports and hundreds of thousands of jobs for Americans."

When the U.S. isn't selling grain, it's dumping it on poor countries and collapsing local agriculture. Paradoxically, in emergency situations free food can be one of the worst things. The sudden arrival of millions of tons of food aid can undercut the prices of locally produced food and drive local farmers out of business.

Somalia is one case in point. By the time Marines arrived to distribute food in December 1992, the country was already emerging from its famine and had just harvested a full crop. Nonetheless, food aid poured in, driving down the prices received by local farmers for their harvest by a whopping 75 percent. Many Somali farmers, unable to make a living by selling their produce, were forced to abandon their farms and join the lines for handouts of imported food.

2002 WFP/AM OTHMAN



## EMPTY PROMISES

BY DONALD PANETH

The World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa from Aug. 26 to Sept. 4 will examine global needs in five key areas — water, energy, health, agriculture, and ecosystems.

The most contentious issues, however, will relate to globalization, trade, and finance. For example, developing countries are complaining that industrialized nations continue to place high tariffs on goods coming from the South, effectively blocking its economic growth. Debt-relief efforts and increased development assistance also will be on the table.

Negotiators will seek progress towards providing at least 1 billion people with access to clean drinking water and 2 billion people with sanitation facilities; making modern energy sources, including electricity, available to more than 2 billion people; reducing air pollution which kills 3 million people each year; reversing land degradation which affects about two-thirds of the world's farm lands and reversing the processes that are decimating the world's fisheries.

The Summit is a sequel to the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. Some 190 countries will attend, with participants to include heads of State, citizen activists, business, trade union, and scientific figures, and representatives of indigenous groups, women's organizations, and youth.

# EAT, DRINK & BE WARY

## What the FDA Won't Tell You About Genetically Modified Food

BY BRIAN TOKAR

"It is not inconceivable," *The Economist* observed a few years ago, "that in a decade's time people will look back on the current rows about food as a turning point for both globalization and what used to be called the Western alliance." This is a very apt observation. Debates over food, biotechnology and the commodification of life have become flashpoints for the resistance to corporate globalization.

The biotechnology industry tries to paint itself as the very embodiment of human progress and enlightenment. "[Biotechnology] companies have great faith in their technology," *The Economist* added in June 1999. "But given the size of public opposition, proponents of [genetically modified] foods could be risking the fate of a rather different technology that once looked high-tech and futuristic — nuclear power."

Indeed, even the relatively well-defined genetic modifications that have been developed and commercialized to date have introduced a plethora of unanticipated problems. Genetically engineered crops have been shown to harm beneficial insects such as ladybugs (ladybirds), lacewings and monarch butterflies, to cross-pollinate at higher rates than their non-engineered counterparts and to be more susceptible to the effects of environmental stresses. Eating these foods has been associated with unusual allergies, irritations of the digestive tract, the uncontrolled spread of antibiotic resistance and possible distortions in the growth and development of vital organs.

The social and ethical consequences of these technologies may prove to be even more disruptive than their ecological effects. Farmers face an unprecedented concentration of ownership in the seed and agri-chemical industries, a problem that has paralleled the development of genetically modified crop varieties. Some U.S. farmers have been punished with large fines for carrying on the age-old practice of saving seeds for replanting.

One of biotechnology's most significant impacts is its overwhelming drive to turn all of life into commercial products. From microorganisms that lie deep within the boiling hot geysers of Yellowstone National Park — found to be the subject of a secret agreement between the U.S. National Park Service and a San Diego-based company — to millions of human DNA sequences being mapped by both public and private agencies, all of life on earth is being reduced to a set of objects and codes to be bought, sold and patented.

Wherever the patterns of nature are not well suited to continued exploitation, biotechnology offers the promise of redesigning life forms to satisfy the demands of the market. Where plant health is undermined by mono-cropping and chemical fertilizers, biotechnologists make crops tolerant to herbicides so growers can use more noxious chemicals to destroy weeds. Where industrial-scale irrigation lowers the water table and makes the soil saltier, they offer to make food crops more resistant to drought and to salt, instead of addressing the underlying causes of these problems.

Where marketable fish species like salmon have difficulties surviving year round in far northern hatcheries, genetic engineers try to splice in frost resistance from cold-water species such as flounder, and also make them grow dramatically faster. If naturally bred livestock cannot satisfy the demand for ever-increasing profit margins, commercial breeders might instead offer clones of their most productive animals. In each instance, biotechnology helps perpetuate the myth that



the inherent ecological limitations of a thoroughly nature-denying economic and social system can simply be engineered out of existence.

Public reactions to genetic engineering have been stirred by a wide range of health, environmental, ethical and political concerns. Millions of people worldwide see products of genetic engineering as a serious threat to their health and the health of their families. In a 1999 report, the British Medical Association validated the growing concern, urging more comprehensive health studies and a moratorium on the commercial planting of engineered crops, until there is a scientific consensus on the potential long-term effects.

Environmental concerns have also been in the forefront of the public debate over genetically modified organisms. The discovery of the deadly effects of pollen from genetically engineered corn on immature monarch butterflies — with an almost 50 percent mortality rate for larvae that were exposed to the altered pollen — dramatized the environmental consequences. Effects on other beneficial insects, the threat of "super weeds," genetic contamination from engineered trees and fish, and the surprising death of soil microbes exposed to an experimental genetically engineered bacterium in an Oregon laboratory have all contributed to raising the level of environmental concern. Ultimately, no one can predict the full effects of releasing countless millions of new, reproducing, genetically manipulated organisms on the earth's diverse ecosystems.

*Adapted from Redesigning Life? The Worldwide Challenge to Genetic Engineering, edited by Brian Tokar (London: Zed Books, 2001).*

## ACTIVISTS & ACTORS FIGHT GE FOODS

BY GABRIEL WOODHOUSE

A young mother with a cartful of groceries approaches a grocery store manager. "What is this hydrolyzed vegetable protein and citric acid in my soup?" she asks anxiously. "Where does it come from? How do I know it's safe?" The manager tries his best to diffuse a potentially unsavory situation, but a crowd of customers has already gathered around them.

This is just one scene from a recent "invisible theatre" direct action by members of The Liberty Cabbage Theatre Revival at Manhattan's 68th St. Food Emporium. Outside the store, volunteers dressed as "killer corn" and "terminator tomatoes" handed out leaflets highlighting the potential hazards and pervasiveness of genetically engineered (GE) products in cereal, infant formula, pancake mix and veggie burgers.

The action was a small part of a wide-ranging campaign by many coalitions to educate consumers, agitate store owners and pressure legislators to face the reality of the dangers posed by genetic engineering.

"The campaign itself is as vast as the sky because the issue of GE foods cuts across so many different concerns — ranging from health hazards to corporate control of seed supplies and ultimately the whole suicidal economy of industrial culture," explains Howard Brandstein, director of Manhattan's Sixth Street Community Center.

Brandstein says the key to fighting GE foods is raising public consciousness about the facts and pressuring policy makers and corporations to acknowledge public concern.

Craig Winters, the executive director of Seattle-

based Campaign to Label GE Foods, emphasizes the need for progressives across the country to get more involved. "Unfortunately, the GE controversy is not on the radar screen of many activists who fight so hard for other important causes."

Winters says that the Campaign is distributing 500,000 "take action" packets to health food stores and grassroots organizations nationwide. "Our focus is on educating consumers about the need to take action, especially by writing letters to congressional representatives in support of the GE food labeling bill (HR4814), which could very realistically be passed in next year's [Congress] if enough citizens demand their right to know about the food they consume."

Beka Economopolous of Save Organic Standards, or SOS Food, a NYC group formed in 1997, points out the different approaches used by various organizations.

"We are using market-focused strategies to put pressure on the stores to respond to consumer demands, a model that has proven successful with stores like Trader Joe's and Whole Foods, which have pledged to stop carrying GE products on their shelves," she explains. This strategy is known as "viral campaign messaging" where consumers influence retail stores that can ultimately influence food manufacturers and producers, creating an industry-wide domino effect.

The new tactics reflect the need to enlighten consumers and create an increasing momentum against "Frankenfoods."

The Associated Press reported in August 2001 that although bioengineered products have been in the food supply for years, "many consumers aren't aware how



The Liberty Cabbage Theatre Revival

prevalent they are. An estimated 60 percent to 70 percent of all processed foods already may contain biotech corn or soy, according to the Grocery Manufacturers of America."

At the same time, Andy Zimmerman of the New York Biotech Action Network explains, "All of these [anti-GE] coalitions are seeking to generate a fever pitch like that reached in Europe, where the demands of the consumers ultimately defeated the multi-million dollar PR campaigns by the biotech industry."

Zimmerman points to policies in the European Union, Japan, New Zealand and Zimbabwe that prohibit or restrict the use of GE products as models the U.S. should follow.

Similarly, Brandstein frames the GE issue in the larger context of globalization and corporate imperialism: "We really need to respond to this issue as part of a larger critique of the way profit-motivated systems work so that we can organize most effectively and build stronger communities."

To find out more: [www.thecampaign.org](http://www.thecampaign.org)

# SELF-HELP FOR THE PLANET

BY ANNIE VENESKY

Thirty years after Frances Moore Lappé published her ground-breaking *Diet For a Small Planet*, a new McDonald's opens every five hours worldwide; the creators of Agent Orange legally pour potentially carcinogenic milk down the American gullet every day; and Pepsi paints its logo on trees in India.

So I could understand, as the somewhat maudlin title of Lappé and daughter Anna's new book, *Hope's Edge*, suggested to me, if she had taken a respite from food politics to become a self-help guru or pop psychologist.

Blocked feelings, the inner child — it's all good. The follies of giant agribusiness certainly would have pushed me over the edge.

But — rest easy, Deepak Chopra — Lappé has done nothing of that sort, lucky for us.

With *Hope's Edge: The Next Diet for a Small Planet*, the Lappés build on the in-depth empirical work of *Diet* and *Food First*, while also making a dramatic departure into an exploration of personal transformation which the Lappés feel can't be separated from social change.

The maverick pair take us into over 20 communities in nine countries where dynamic pioneers of sustainable living and agriculture are bucking the destructive system of chemically-powered agribusiness.

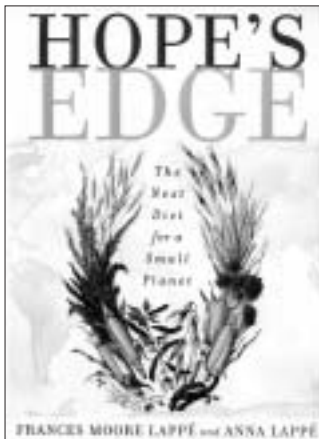
We meet Kenyan village women who have planted over 20 million trees since 1977 to fight the disastrous shrinking of their country's forests; the founders of Bangladesh's Grameen Bank, a democratically-run microlending institution exclusively for women; Indian farmers who have resisted chemical seed varieties and begun to restore native seed diversity; members of Brazil's Landless Workers' Movement (MST), which has settled over 250,000 landless families onto their own land despite the harsh and often bloody resistance of a virulent land aristocracy; members of the Fair Trade Coffee movement; the creator of an organic gardening program for San Francisco prison inmates; and the irascible McDonald's marauder, José Bové, among others.

Food, however, is not the sole end of these narratives, which the Lappés skillfully weave together in a matrix of their own voices, reflections, socio-economic context — and recipes! Food is an "entry point," they tell us, into "living democracy." By this, the Lappés argue that people must overcome five "thought traps," or false assumptions that have helped ensure the control of large-scale chemical agriculture over food production and supply:

- The scarcity scare: Only increased production will feed the world's growing population.
- To survive as a species, we must be self-centered and competitive.
- Market fundamentalism and reliance on the "experts" to make decisions for us.
- Solve by dissection: A mechanistic worldview prompts us to use reason as a scalpel, preventing us from discerning the relations between things, and ultimately, the "big picture."
- It's the end of history: Socialism is dead. Global corporate capitalism is the best of all possible worlds.

Through courage, common sense and by considering environmental and social consequences in making their own economic choices, the innovators introduced to us by the Lappés express what they call five "liberating ideas" that defy these myths:

- Scrap the scarcity scare: Potential abundance is all around us; growing food in sustainable ways is productive and can slow population growth.
- Laugh at the caricature of ourselves as selfish materialists; listen to our real selves.
- Technology and the market can be positive tools when informed by values which respect nature, culture and people.
- Solve for pattern; find the interrelatedness in diverse problems; build on nature's genius for better solutions.
- Break free from



Join *Hope's Edge* co-author Anna Lappé at a benefit for *The Independent* on Saturday, July 24. See p. 13 for more information.

the "isms," ideologies with an unchanging endpoint; create the path through walking — global corporate capitalism is not the best we can do.

Remarkably, most of the movements highlighted in the book are led by women, many in extremely gender oppressive countries, such as Bangladesh, where half of all murders are committed by husbands killing their wives; and India, where 62 out of 1,000 girls are aborted or killed at birth. In this context, the book's leitmotiv of hope is not something sappy that privileged women talk about on Oprah, but a proactive political stance.

The Lappés are good at putting things into perspective in this way, and they don't present us with uncritical, pie-in-the-sky pictures of the various social movements they explore. Ironically, however, because they sometimes over-rely on the book's conceptual framework of thought traps and mental maps, the Lappés do suffer what appear to be brief spasms of naiveté.

The mass media, for example, fails to confront the dominant paradigm of universal corporate capitalism with alternative visions because of limitations in its mental map, say the Lappés. It's that the media cannot see what we are showing you, not that they won't. As an IMCista, I can't buy this one.

It is through a similar failure in the book's conceptual framework that the Lappés describe these sustainable living enterprises as the "creative evolution of capitalism." (What would Marx say about that?) True, the individuals and groups we meet are working creatively within the capitalist system and supporting fair trade. But the Lappés imply, then, that the market is synonymous with capitalism, and that changes in our use of the market are necessarily advancements in capitalism. The plea gives short shrift to the socialistic principles underlying these innovations in sustainability.

But the Lappés are finding their way, too. These flaws are small in comparison to the important contribution the book makes to food politics as well as to the larger anti-corporate movement.

With *Hope's Edge*, the Lappés take us on an uplifting journey that even jaded, long-time activists won't thumb their noses at — and provided self-help for the planet along the way.

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## FROM TURTLE SOUP TO WHALE MEAT SUSHI, ENDANGERED SPECIES REMAIN ON THE MENU

BY DON OGDEN

It's enough to give you indigestion. In spite of all the educational efforts, all the international and national laws against trafficking in endangered species, folks still go way out of their way to eat animals that are on the brink of extinction.

The alleged delicacies include bear paw soup, whale meat sushi, cobra casserole, turtle soup and crocodile croquettes — all from species that may soon disappear from the planet, just to satisfy out-moded tastes, snob appeal or perhaps the perceived virility of some homo sapiens.

A small portion of such consumption may be used on a survival level — I recall having a plate of endangered sea turtle handed to me by my not-so-wealthy host on a small Caribbean island some years back — but that's the exception.

Today, much of the demand stems from appetites and old cultural baggage that needs re-examination. Growing wealth in China, for instance, has increased the demand for traditional foods and medicines derived from endangered bears, tigers or rhinoceros. There are perfectly acceptable alternatives for most of these products, but old habits die hard.

The rate of extinction may exceed 50,000 species each year, according to eminent biologist Edward O. Wilson. Many biologists concur, saying that this could be the greatest extinction spasm since the dinosaurs were wiped out at the end of the Mesozoic era 65 million years ago. Except this time, we're the culprit — and not a giant asteroid.

Like the lucrative trade in endangered species for sartorial or medicinal use, the promoters also create the market. The trafficking of endangered species is considered to be the third-largest illegal trade in the world, after drugs and weapons, and is estimated to generate \$10 billion per year.

For example, on December 11, 2001, 10,000 live turtles, estimated to be worth over \$3.2 million, were



seized by authorities at a cargo area in Hong Kong. Another example is the use of endangered whale meat in Japan. That nation's "scientific

whaling" program seems to extend all the way to sushi bars offering expensive morsels of the great pelagic beasts. And, of course, there's always caviar. U.S. Caviar & Caviar, Ltd., a major supplier of the high-priced culinary delicacy, was fined \$10.4 million, and the company's former owner was sentenced to serve 41 months in jail last year in connection with a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service investigation of the illegal caviar trade that threatens endangered sturgeon and paddlefish.

Unfortunately, not enough of these guys are getting busted. With the rise of corporate globalization, the process of shipping animals and plants becomes simple and fosters trade of species listed under the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. Yet another reason to oppose corporate globalization, I'd say.

# MAJOR PLAYERS IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY

BY CATHY BUSSEWITZ AND MARK PICKENS

*Food is big business. It's more than a trillion dollar a year industry in the U.S. and second only to pharmaceuticals in profitability. Here are some of the major players, their vast holdings, brands and other significant information. An expanded report, covering more than 30 of the most important food companies, is available as a center column feature on our website at [www.nyc.indymedia.org](http://www.nyc.indymedia.org).*



**BAYER CROPSCIENCE**  
(\$6.28 BILLION, 2001)

*Industries:* pesticides and genetically modified (GM) seeds.

*Food for thought:* Bayer CropScience is the world's number two supplier of farm chemicals and seeds. The company made *Multinational Monitor's* Ten Worst Corporations of 2000 when corn from its GM StarLink seed illegally found its way into Taco Bell brand taco shells, causing allergic reactions in 44 consumers.

## CARGILL (\$49.4 BILLION, 2001)

*Industries:* grain, cotton, sugar, salt, animal feed, fertilizer, food processing, petroleum trading, financial trading, steel.

*Food for thought:* As the U.S.'s largest privately-owned corporation, Cargill controls 45 percent of the global grain market, and is one of the world's largest producers of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. Farmers' groups around the world claim they are being put out of business because such agribusiness conglomerates now control the markets for both farming essentials and products.

## COCA-COLA (\$20.1 BILLION, 2001)

*Brands:* Barq's, Coke, Dasani water, Dr. Pepper, Fruitopia, Minute Maid, Powerade, Sprite.

*Food for thought:* Coca-Cola commands about 50 percent of the global soft-drink market. The company made *Multinational Monitor's* Ten Worst Corporations list twice in the past five years — once in 1998 for its rabid marketing of sugary drinks to children, and again in 2001 for a 30-year record of human rights abuses in its overseas operations. Most recently, Coke managers in Columbia hired right-wing paramilitaries to intimidate, torture and murder union leaders organizing for better wages and working conditions.



## CONAGRA FOODS (\$27.19 BILLION, 2001)

*Industries:* processed food, dairy, oils, feed ingredients, packaging, meat and poultry, agricultural products

*Brands:* Butterball, Chef Boyardee, HealthyChoice, Hebrew National, Hunt's Snack Pack, La Choy, Lightlife, Parkay, Reddi-wip, Slim Jims, SmartDogs.

*Food for thought:* ConAgra is the largest food supplier in North America, leading the way in meat packing, french fry production and distribution of agricultural chemicals. More than 30 of its brands top \$100 million in sales. Twenty million pounds of beef were sold to American schools by a ConAgra subsidiary, which from 1997-98 was cited for 171 "critical" food safety violations. In 1995 ConAgra paid \$13.6 million to settle a lawsuit involving price fixing in the catfish industry, and in 1989 was caught under-weighing over 45,000 truckloads of chicken.



## DEAN FOODS (\$6.23 BILLION, 2001)

*Industries:* Dairy, syrup, soy beverages, pickles, peppers

*Brands:* Borden, Creamland, Land O'Lakes, Sun Soy, and Tucsan.

*Food for thought:* Not only is Dean Foods the leading U.S. producer of fluid milk and dairy products, it has

also recently become the largest soymilk manufacturer.

## DOLE FOOD (\$4.49 BILLION, 2001)

*Industries:* fresh fruit, vegetables, cut flowers, packaged foods.

*Food for thought:* The world's largest producer of fresh fruit and vegetables with active interests in 90 countries. Dole agreed in mid-July to pay up to \$24 million to 3,000 Honduran banana workers exposed to sterility- and cancer-causing pesticides used on company plantations over a 30-year period.



## DOW CHEMICAL (\$27.8 BILLION, 2001)

*Industries:* pesticides, fertilizers.

*Food for thought:* The largest chemical company in America. A major spill of 47,000 gallons of concentrated Dursban insecticide in 1997 led to a major fish-kill and contamination of water supplies in four Alabama counties, causing nausea, diarrhea and dizziness among citizens. Dursban is the top selling pesticide in the world. Dow recently purchased Union Carbide, but is refusing to honor the company's liabilities from the 1984 Bhopal disaster in which 8,000 Indians were killed after poison gas leaked from a pesticide factory.



## INTERNATIONAL FLAVORS & FRAGRANCES (\$1.84 BILLION, 2001)

*Industries:* Chemical compounds used to flavor food and produce scents in bathroom, household and pharmaceutical products.

*Food for thought:* The world's largest flavor company, IFF flavors many brands and is not required to list ingredients. The line between artificial and natural flavor has grown increasingly thin as companies replicate the chemical structure of natural ingredients, calling chemical concoctions "natural flavoring."



## KRAFT FOODS (\$33.8 BILLION, 2001)

*Brands:* Altoids, Jell-O, Kraft, Maxwell House, Minute Rice, Miracle Whip, Nabisco, Oreo, Oscar Meyer, Philadelphia cream cheese, Post, Ritz, Stove Top stuffing, Velveeta.

*Food for thought:* Kraft Foods owner Philip Morris didn't need witchcraft to create a monster food company. It just needed to know which companies to gobble up and house under the Kraft umbrella. Kraft is the number one food company in North America, holding the top market share in 17 of its 20 top product categories. In March 2002 Kraft Foods was part of a \$9 million settlement of a federal lawsuit regarding the use of Bayer's genetically modified StarLink corn in its taco shells.

## KROGER (\$50.1 BILLION, 2001)

*Brands:* Fred Meyer supercenters, Kroger's supermarkets, Kwik Stop and Quik Stop convenience stores, Ralph's Grocery, Smith's Food and Drug Centers, Winn-Dixie supermarkets.

*Food for thought:* The leading U.S. grocer with 3,600 stores coast-to-coast, less than 15 percent of Kroger sales come from stores bearing the company name. Thanks to acquisitions, Kroger sells groceries under the banner of some two dozen different store names. Kroger also manufactures a wide variety of its own store brand foods. In a move designed to take advantage of the \$7.8 billion market for organic foods, Kroger will add "natural foods" sections to its stores in 2003.

## MONSANTO (\$5.46 BILLION, 2001)

*Industries:* herbicides, genetically modified seeds and food substitutes.

*Food for thought:* The world's third largest agricultural company, Monsanto is developing a hammer-

lock on farmers by leveraging its top-selling Roundup herbicide and Roundup Ready GM seeds. Farmers that purchase Monsanto's seeds find they must also purchase the herbicide to protect them. Such practices have prompted farmers' groups in India to burn Monsanto test fields in protest, and earned Monsanto's chief executive officer a vegan tofu cream pie in the face. One Monsanto officer said, "Monsanto should not have to vouchsafe the safety of biotech foods. Our interest is in selling as much of it as possible. Assuring its safety is the Federal Drug Administration's job." Monsanto also produces the sugar substitute marketed as NutraSweet and Equal.

## NESTLE (\$50.2 BILLION, 2001)

*Brands:* Alpo, Coffee Mate, Dairy Farm ice cream, Friskies, Haagen-Dazs, L'Oreal, Lean Cuisine, Mighty Dog, Nescáfe, Nestle's Quik, Perrier, Poland Spring, Purina, Skillet Sensations, Stouffer's.

*Food for thought:* The Swiss-headquartered Nestle is the world's largest food production company with 495 factories and 230,000 employees around the world. It has a mind-boggling array of over 8,000 brands in its global larder. One of its best-selling brands is Nescáfe instant coffee, 3,000 cups of which are consumed worldwide every second.



## SARA LEE (\$17.7 BILLION, 2001)

*Brands:* Ball Park Franks, Best Koshers, Bryan, Chock Full o'Nuts, Endust furniture polish, Hanes, Hillshire Farms, Jimmy Dean, Kiwi shoe polish, Leggs, Pickwick teas, Playtex, Sunbeam, Wonderbra.

*Food for thought:* Mention Sara Lee and everyone thinks cheesecake, but the corporation is all about packaged meat and underwear, serving up a full plate of sausage, hot dogs and lunch meats, bras, panties and pantyhose. In 2001, Sara Lee cut a deal with federal prosecutors as sweet as one of its famous cheesecakes: plea bargaining to two misdemeanors and a \$200,000 fine in exchange for dropping all other charges to 21 deaths and 100 injuries caused by bacteria-contaminated Ball Park Franks hotdogs.



## SYNGENTA (\$6.32 BILLION, 2001)

*Industries:* agri-chemicals and genetically modified seeds.

*Food for thought:* Drug giants Novartis and AstraZeneca merged in 2001 to form the world's largest agri-chemical and seed company. Syngenta now controls more than 40 percent of the world's patents on genetically modified technologies, including what the company calls "Terminator Technology," or the ability to render seeds sterile and force farmers to buy new stock each year. Worldwide, 1.4 billion people rely on saved seed to plant the next year's crop.

## TYSON FOODS (\$10.79 BILLION, 2001)

*Industries:* chicken, beef, pork processing, animal feeds, prepared foods.

*Companies owned:* Iowa Beef Processors, Hudson Foods.

*Food for thought:* Tyson's recent acquisition of IBP makes it the largest meat processing company in the world, with more than a fifth of the U.S. market. Tyson's recall of 35 million pounds of beef in 1997, the largest food recall in history, was hidden from the public for three weeks, allowing 25 million pounds to be consumed. Meat packing is now the most dangerous job in the nation, with an injury rate three times higher than a typical American factory. Tyson successfully lobbied the state of Missouri into halting welfare benefits for people who refused their jobs.



# LIMITED OPTIONS STARVING MANY

BY EMILY REINHARDT

The offerings of many bodegas on 125<sup>th</sup> St. bear more resemblance to a frat boy's dorm room than to a food provider. There are potato chips, pork rinds and an army's supply of 40-oz. bottles of malt liquor. There are some bruised bananas and apples in crates, and a few loaves of whole wheat bread among mountains of Wonder Bread.

The type of supermarkets and grocery stores in poor neighborhoods often limits residents' access to nutritious food. For instance, lower-quality grocery stores like Met Foods with sad-looking produce abound in Astoria, Queens while greengrocers and stores like Gourmet Garage saturate upscale neighborhoods like SoHo.

"[Lower-income food choice is] a huge issue of access," says Bryant Terry of B-Healthy, a group promoting nutrition, youth leadership and youth activism. "Even if you change the people's perceptions, it's an issue of access. The food selection is horrible."

Malnutrition, a major problem plaguing low-income communities, is not synonymous with hunger. Hunger stems from a lack of food; malnutrition is caused by a lack of nutrients. Over 20 percent of Americans are clinically malnourished, whereas eight percent are hungry. In fact, many Americans are both malnourished and obese.

"Food insecurity" — meaning a lack of regular access to healthy foods — is a large contributor to malnutrition in poor communities, affecting some 33 million Americans nationwide. Though not technically "hungry," these people often consume diets that lack many essential vitamins and minerals. It is often the "food insecure" who dine on macaroni and cheese by necessity, rather than by choice.

But even for the rest of Americans who have proper access to nutritious foodstuffs, malnutrition may be no stranger. According to an article on HealthWorld Online ([www.healthy.net](http://www.healthy.net)), by Dr. Patrick Quillin, "At least 20 percent of Americans are clinically malnourished, with 70 percent being sub-clinically malnourished (less obvious)."

Though food insecurity exists in both urban and rural America, certain problems are inherent to the urban poor. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), urbanites spend 30 percent more money on food than other communities, but consume

fewer calories. Fresh produce is less accessible in cities due to transportation and distribution issues. Fast food consumption in the cities is also high. (One-third of America's "eating out" is done at fast food establishments.)

Urban, lower-income households also tend to buy less at the supermarket. They buy more from stores with fewer offerings, such as bodegas, even though supermarkets sometimes undercharge the smaller stores by as much as 10 percent. Supermarket prices are four percent higher in urban and rural areas than in the suburbs, but the suburbs contain the lowest

\$5,000-\$9,000. In contrast, a household making \$70,000 spends 8.7 percent.

According to the USDA's Economic Research Service report "Expenditures for food require a large share of income when income is relatively low...the figure [average household spending on food] has sometimes been misused to prove that food is a bargain."

There is also a tendency to buy starchy and fatty foods that fill the stomach but starve the body. This offers little nutritional variety in daily and weekly meals.

Kuo Huang, an agricultural economist for the USDA, writes that fluctuating food prices can also weaken the nutrition that poorer households receive. "If the price of beef goes up, while the price of chicken remains the same, consumers will likely buy less beef and more chicken." This not only affects chicken and beef but the foods that would be bought in conjunction, like cheese for cheeseburgers. Food consumption based on price and not nutritional value can make for a much less-balanced diet.

An additional barrier faced by many communities of color is the perception that "eating healthy is a white bourgeois thing," Terry says. The food activist links this attitude to food production and in the perceived high cost of eating healthily.

Though many immigrant families may cook up nutritious meals, Terry says many immigrant youth just want to be "Americanized." McDonald's and pizza symbolize America to these young people, who are often more enthusiastic about these foods than their own food heritage. Mexican-Americans now have the highest obesity rates of any ethnic group in America.

Over half of all Americans meet worldwide standards for being overweight, while 23 percent of Americans are obese.

The U.S. Surgeon General's 2001 report on obesity claims, "overweight and obesity are particularly common among minority groups and those with a lower family income." This is especially true for women. Lower-income women are 50 percent more likely to be obese than those with higher incomes. African-American women suffer particularly, with 69 percent considered "obese."

"There needs to be a demand [for nutritious food in lower-income areas], a demand needs to be created," says Terry. "Having fresh produce is meaningless if there's no one around to buy it."



SARA BIZARRIO sarabizario@yahoo.com

amount of poor households. In a perverse twist, the richest people pay the least for their groceries. And because the poor have far less money, they also spend a far greater percentage of their disposable income on food than the rich or middle class.

Back in 1970, when a cup of coffee was 25 cents, the average household spent less than 15 percent of its disposable income on food. By 2000, that number had dropped to 10.6 percent. But this statistic does not mean that food is a bargain for lower-class communities. The percentage of after-tax income households spend on food is 34.2 percent, for incomes between

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## PASTEURIZED OR IRRADIATED? ONLY CONGRESS KNOWS

The fat subsidies for agro-businesses contained in Congress' recent farm bill have raised the ire of Capitol Hill watchers, but a provision permitting food manufacturers to avoid labeling irradiated food has attracted limited publicity.

The provision, buried deep in the bill, allows companies to label food treated with radiation as "pasteurized." Food safety groups registered strong protest over the twist of words that hides the nature of what consumers are eating.

Irradiation, or the use of X-rays to kill pathogens and insects contaminating food, is a distinct process from pasteurization, the 150-year-old technique of sterilizing liquids through rapid heating and cooling. Recent research indicates that irradiation degrades the molecular structure of food and may also destroy nutrients and produce potentially carcinogenic and cell-damaging chemicals.

## SUPERMARKETS HIT THE SWEET SPOT OF PRODUCT PLACEMENT

Product placement is becoming the leading profit-getter for supermarkets, outpacing the actual sale of food. According to a recent University of Missouri report, up to 75 percent of supermarket chain profits now come from fees paid by food manufacturers to gain prime shelf locations and eye-catching displays for their products. The *Tampa Tribune* reports that \$50,000 will place one jar of specially pickles in the best shelf spots of the four major grocery chains in Tampa, Florida. Supermarkets see this as a win-win, deriving profits from both consumers and manufacturers.

## GM CROPS BLITZ ON U.S. FARMS

For the first time, over 70 percent of the soybeans and cotton grown in the U.S. are genetically modified, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Since their controversial introduction in 1996, genetically modified crops have quickly spread across the nation's farmland. In 2001, 34 percent of corn, 72.9 percent of soybeans and 71 percent of cotton was genetically modified.

Officially 28 percent of all U.S. crops are genetically modified, but the true percentage is likely higher. The USDA does not collect data on all crops.

## U.S. FARM BILL SLAMS THIRD-WORLD FARMERS

It's bad enough that the newly-passed 2002 U.S. Farm Bill will funnel \$190 billion in subsidies over the next decade from U.S. taxpayers' pockets to large farmers and agribusinesses with an average income of \$135,000. But what often goes unnoticed is the harm that largesse given to U.S. farmers will have on agriculture in developing countries, particularly the global south.

Concern on the part of developing-world leaders, farmers and activists is that by encouraging overproduction — particularly of soybeans, wheat and corn, products critical to the economies of some developing countries — the farm support will depress already low commodity prices and threaten the very livelihood of farmers in the developing world who cannot compete with cheap subsidized agricultural produce from the North.

Africa could be particularly hard hit, given that agriculture is the lifeblood of many of the continent's economies — accounting for more than half the gross domestic product in some — and that some of their major products, like cotton, are precisely those that are the beneficiaries of the U.S. Farm Bill.

According to World Bank data, cotton exporters in West and Central Africa would stand to reap an additional \$250 million a year if the U.S. stopped subsidizing domestic production.

# GROWING CONNECTIONS

## Community Supported Agriculture Shares the Wealth

BY JESSICA STEIN

"How do you build community around your farm?" asks Peter Brady of Phillis Bridge Farm in New Paltz, New York. "I think that's what small farms should be about."

Phillis Bridge is part of a recent movement to connect farms with their surrounding communities: the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) movement.

In the CSA system, local residents buy a "share" of a farmer's expected produce in advance of the growing season, and receive weekly amounts of produce when the harvest begins. A typical season usually runs from late May through Thanksgiving, though some farms have shorter seasons or offer additional winter shares.

Full shares in the New York City area cost between \$300 and \$400 per season, though half or split shares are often available at a lower cost. Some farms outside the city offer work exchanges for a reduced share price. Phillis Bridge, for example, offers a working share for \$400, as compared to \$500 for a non-working annual share.

Advocates of CSA say that the arrangement lowers the farmer's economic risk, supports local agriculture and economy and gives families access to local and fresh produce.

Most CSA farms are also entirely organic or striving for the lowest possible use of pesticides and genetic tinkering.

"We could spray for them, but we don't," says Kate Khosla of the leaf hoppers infesting her potato crop. Khosla and husband Ron run Hugenot Street Farm, another New Paltz CSA.

Because they expect half the yield, the Khosla plant twice as many potatoes as a conventional farmer who sprays. Many of the potatoes are also smaller than conventionally grown potatoes — "but they're clean potatoes," Khosla says proudly.

CSAs were developed in Japan in the mid-1960s by a group of women concerned with the rise of pesticide use, the increased use of imported and processed foods, and the difficulty of maintaining a small, traditional farm. The Japanese term for the arrangement is *teikei*, which translates loosely to "putting the farmers' face on food."

The practice spread to Europe and was then brought to North America in 1984 by Jan Vander Tuin of Switzerland. Robyn Van En, a Western Massachusetts farmer, is credited with popularizing the idea in the States.

There are currently over 1,000 CSA farms in North America.

In New York City, CSA exists in over 20 different locations in all five boroughs, from Riverdale to Bushwick. (See accompanying chart.) Farmers from a variety of upstate New York and nearby New Jersey towns bring the weekly shares to local distribution sites for pickup. Many New York City CSA farmers serve more than one location, such as Kinderhook's Roxbury Farm which brings produce to CSA outposts in both Central Harlem and the Upper West Side.



**THE JAPANESE TERM** for community supporting agriculture is *teikei*, which translates loosely to "putting the farmers' face on food."

Though it may sound similar to greenmarkets or farmers' markets, CSA is different in that it establishes a consistent, reliable relationship between farmer and consumer, ending the farmer's guessing game around both buyers and profits.

Once these associations are established, CSA farms are often willing to modify what they offer in order to please their shareholders. "We're offering local berries this year," says Ron Khosla of Hugenot Street. "They're not our berries, but they're local, and people were asking for fruit."

Even with guaranteed community support, however, many farmers are struggling. "We get up at 5 a.m. and at 10 p.m. we're still out there with headlamps on," says Khosla.

The Khoslas planted about 12 of their 77 acres this year, providing share members with over 240 different varieties of vegetables, herbs and flowers, a diversity not often found in supermarkets. Phillis Bridge, which brings in a smaller percentage of its revenue from CSA, planted five of its 65 acres with 30 varieties of vegetables and herbs.

Both farms draw their shareholders from New Paltz and the surrounding area, though the farmers spoke confidently about the future of the movement as a whole.

"The foods we're growing—are they really feeding you, or are they just filling you?" asks Brady. "I think people are instinctively starting to know that we need CSA."

## CSAs IN THE CITY

### MANHATTAN

Inwood: Isham Park, (212) 353-6842.  
Upper West Side: Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, 164-168 West 100th St. (at Amsterdam), (212) 946-6336.  
Central Harlem: 6 Edgecombe Ave., (917) 617-3404.  
Upper East Side: Church of the Heavenly Rest, 90th Street & 5th Avenue, (212) 502-8562.  
Chelsea: Hudson Guild, 441 West 26th St., (212) 760-9800.  
Midtown: Prince George, 14 East 28th Street, (212) 471-0858.  
East Village: 6th St. Community Center, 638 E. 6th St. (between Avenues B & C), (212) 677-1863.

### QUEENS

Astoria: Arrow Community Garden, 35-38 35th St., (718) 380-7247.  
Forest Hills: Forest Hills Community House, 108-25 62nd Dr., (718) 592-5757.

### THE BRONX

Riverdale: Mt. St. Vincent, 6301 Riverdale Ave., (718) 543-6627.  
Norwood: Moshulu Montefiore Community Center, 3450 DeKalb Ave., (718) 882-4000 x365.  
Morrisania: Citizens Advice Bureau, 1130 Grand Concourse, (718) 393-0727.

### BROOKLYN

Bushwick: Make the Road by Walking, 201 Grove St., (718) 418-7690.  
Flatbush: Seventh Day Adventist Church, 924 Rogers Ave., (718) 856-5558.  
Clinton Hill: P.S. 56, 170 Gates Ave., (718) 907-0616.  
Cobble Hill: Corner of Congress & Court Streets, (718) 802-1061.  
Park Slope: Garden of Union, Union Street between 4th and 5th Streets, (718) 707-1023.

Source: [www.justfood.org/html/csa\\_home.html](http://www.justfood.org/html/csa_home.html)

# FIRST PERSON

## IOWA FARMER PLANTS SEED OF HOPE

AFTER 27 YEARS, SHE SEES GROWING MOVEMENT FOR HEALTHY FOOD

BY DENISE O'BRIEN

As the hot July wind blows through the genetically modified cornfields that surround my small farm in Iowa, I try to put into perspective the situation that exists today throughout the rural countryside.

In the mid-seventies, my husband Larry and I started organically farming the land that he grew up on. We were young, idealistic and optimistic that we could live our lives in a healthy, clean environment and that we would show our neighbors and our community how to "live the good life."

That was 27 years ago. Although there was a tremendous amount of financial pain and we haven't overcome corporate agribusiness, we have survived and thrived. To this day we fight factory farms, genetically modified crops, corporate domination and people's ignorance. Though factory farming retains its stranglehold on life in Iowa, I remain idealistic and optimistic. There remains a monumental amount of work to do, but I see more and more people joining in the effort.

When we began working to change agriculture all those many years ago, it was a lonely task. There was no support and much risk of being the brunt of jokes about "organic hippies." But our long-term commitment is now beginning to see results.

Organizing in a scattered rural population presents many problems. It is also difficult to organize around the seasons. People rarely come out to meetings and protests during the spring, summer and fall, when farming is its most intensive. Winter, the slowest time on a farm, is the best season for meetings, rallies and gatherings, though it can also be a hazardous time to be out in the elements.

Factory farming is the method by which corporate agribusiness has determined food will be raised in the United States and with the help of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the world. Chickens and hogs are raised in Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs).

Hundreds of thousands of these animals never see the light of day for their entire lives. They live in cages that barely allow them room to move, and are fed hundreds of pounds of antibiotics to prevent disease, putting human lives at risk as bugs become resistant to the antibiotics. The inhabitants of these factories spew out millions of tons of manure in very short order.

Factory farms stink, make people sick and pollute our air and water. According to Iowa Agricultural Statistics, the state has 15.2 million hogs and 2.7 million people. The overabundance of manure causes air quality problems as ammonia, carbon dioxide, methane and hydrogen sulfide waft through the air and contaminate the countryside. Factory farms also threaten democracy. In Iowa, the legislature has decided that county governments are not capable of making the decision about whether or not they want a factory farm in their county.

Factory farms create conditions where low-paid work-

ers become the keepers of confined animals inside huge buildings where air quality creates lung problems. The image of an independent farmer caring for land and animals has been transformed into one of a low-paid corporate lackey. In corporate agribusiness, there is no freedom to make independent decisions. The life of a hog is determined from beginning to end in corporate boardrooms.

By making a sacrifice area of this huge empty space in the middle of our country, agribusiness has provided the people of this country with "cheap food." By using growing methods that pollute the air, water and soil, corporations are producing food that is making people fat, causing heart disease, diabetes and cancer—to name just a few of the current threats to human health.

Growing up I learned that Iowa was the breadbasket of the world. Farmers took pride in the knowledge that they were "feeding the world." As agribusiness sunk its talons into our flesh, farmers didn't stop to question whether or not this business approach to agriculture was good for the environment, the community, the animals, ourselves or our democracy. Nor are these hundreds of thousands of acres of corn and soybeans being used to feed a hungry world. While this overproduction takes place, the world's 800 million malnourished and starving people still lack sufficient food.

Our dependence on fossil fuels to raise crops only adds to the fragility of the earth. Our dependence on Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) threatens biodiversity. Contamination from pollen drifting from GMO fields threatens to ruin the businesses of organic farmers, making it almost impossible for organic corn crops to remain GMO-free. Pharmaceutical companies and agribusiness companies patent genes in order to gain more profit. Their propaganda literature calls upon a moral foundation to feed the world. That is bunk, and people are beginning to figure it out.

This picture of a system of agriculture is gloomy and downright scary. It could be so overwhelming that one may want to run for the woods, never to emerge again.

But I have been farming organically for nearly 27 years and still retain my idealism and my optimism. In all of these years of farming I have never witnessed such monumental growth of the movement towards organic and sustainable agriculture as I have seen in the past five years.

Consumers are becoming more aware of the harmful effects that the overuse of chemicals and antibiotics to grow food and raise animals is having on their health. Environmentalists understand more clearly that a family farm structure of agriculture may do more to help the environment than to harm it. And many of us are becoming aware of the benefits of eating locally-raised food — benefits to consumers and farmers as well as to the local economy.

The most hopeful and important change is that people are beginning to question whether or not the current food system is just and fair. People are questioning why the corporate profits have to be so high at the expense of Mother Earth and her inhabitants. People are beginning to resist corporate domination.

**"To this day we fight factory farms, genetically modified crops, corporate domination and people's ignorance."**

In Iowa, for example, people have been organizing to stop hog and chicken factories. They have been holding town meetings, petitioning legislators and showing up at the capitol to protest

bad laws and work on good ones. In defiance of state legislation, there are several county governments that have issued a moratorium on the building of any more factories. For Iowa, this is outright rebellion.

People are beginning to take control over where their food comes from by participating in the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) movement. This movement is comprised of farmers and consumers who support each other. The consumer supports the farmer by buying a membership or share in the farmer's CSA and the farmer supports the consumer by providing good, healthy fresh food. This arrangement has provided people with an opportunity to participate in the growing of their food. Many times a consumer may purchase a working share where part of the membership cost is paid for with their labor. We need to account for the costs that agriculture has on the environment, our communities and the farmer in order to have a fair, equitable food system in the world.

The organic and sustainable agriculture movement is comprised of farmers that work in partnership with nature as opposed to domination over nature. Women are playing a major role as farmers to change the current male-dominated, patriarchal system of agriculture into a system of fairness and justice.

The bottom line is that everyone has a right to food. Even though the United States will not endorse the idea that food is a human right, we need to fight for that right for all. Healthy, fresh food nourishes our brains and our bodies and makes us whole people.

*Denise O'Brien is coordinator for Women, Food and Agriculture Network, an organization that links and amplifies women's voices on issues of food systems, sustainable communities and environmental integrity.*

**"The life of a hog is determined from beginning to end in corporate boardrooms."**



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# GLOBALIZING THE WILD BLUEBERRY

BY JOHN TARLETON

Wild blueberries. They are everywhere these days — in breakfast cereals, jams, muffins, pancakes, pop tarts and sold alone. They flourish in the highly acidic soil of northern Maine, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia and are harvested in August by hundreds of migrants including this reporter. It's back-breaking work that attracts a diverse collection of people. At once idyllic and brutal, this unique harvest may soon be a thing of the past.

Historically, the wild blueberry's journey to your breakfast table has begun in a rake, the 18-inch-wide, metal-tined scooping device used to comb the low-lying blueberry vines. Mexicans, Mic Mac (Mi'Kmaq) Indians from eastern Canada, crusty gutter punks and free-floating hippies take to the fields at dawn's first light. Bent over in the blazing sun, the rakers slowly vacuum the blue carpet that covers the fields.

The sun's slow-arcing trajectory traces the course of the day. You are keenly alert to every cloud, shadow and gentle late afternoon breeze. Paid by production, rakers can choose when to eat or rest, hop in a nearby stream or just hang out with friends. It's not uncommon to see people sitting in a circle in the middle of the field sharing a big fat spliff, sometimes with the crew boss. Yet, most of the time, people rake with a desperate intensity. Fired by various dreams, they seek to make the most of their time in what is still, potentially, one of the most lucrative migrant gigs around. The trick is in the wielding of the rake — a special pushing and twisting motion of the wrists that teases the ripe berries from the grasp of the



PHOTOS BY DAVID BROOKS STRESS

**A BLUEBERRY RAKER** returns to his row with empty buckets. (Above)

**A RAKER DIGS** into bushes full of Maine's favorite fruit. (Right)

vine without crushing the fruit. A strong back comes in handy, too.

I stretch and meditate for an hour before work and try to cruise along at 1,200-1,500 lbs. per day, earning roughly 10 cents per lb. Crews of as many as 100 people work side-by-side in long 20-foot-wide rows marked off by thin white twine. Raking can be highly competitive. Eventually, though, you realize it's a waste of time to compare yourself to others. Someone will always be faster. At day's end, there's a sublime satisfaction to coming off the field totally spent knowing you've done the best you can. Back at camp, sleep comes easily though blueberries have a way of popping up in your dreams.

The harvest can also be a nightmare, though. Many people don't find as much "blue gold" as they hope for.



As with most farm work, injury rates are disproportionately high. Pesticide usage is widespread. Maine's Washington County, the self-proclaimed "Blueberry Capital of the World," is the poorest county in a poor state, with 34,000 inhabitants scattered over a heavily-wooded area larger than Delaware and Rhode Island combined.

Maine's annual wild blueberry production has more than tripled from 24 million to 75 million lbs. per year over the past two decades, and in that time, a small, locally-controlled industry has been increasingly assimilated into the global economy.

Last year, independent growers received the same price (31 cents) they received in 1976. The box price for rakers has also remained stagnant or declined.

Charryfield Foods, a subsidiary of a

Canadian frozen foods conglomerate, is now the largest blueberry grower in Maine, owning or managing over 12,000 acres of land. It once hired 800-1,200 rakers per season. It now makes do with 250. Mechanical harvesters are more cost-effective even though they are prone to tearing plants from their roots and recover as little as 60 percent of the berries that a hand raker gets. Such is progress in the era of globalization.

## Food Options: How to... ... Dumpster Dive ... Start Your Own Garden

BY DED BOLT

Dumpster diving is a liberating act. You can find all the necessities of life in the trash. When poking around in the waste of our consumer society, I'm likely to find fresh organic coconuts, roasted garlic hummus, bagels, soy ice cream (partially melted) and many other tasty goodies. A tip for finding the best dumpsters is to check the phone book and keep and eye out for wholesale distributors. Many grocers will discard more than enough nightly to feed the average family.

In most of the world, things are discarded because they are no longer useful or edible. In this country, goods are discarded when they are no longer profitable, no matter that many people struggle to feed themselves. Some foods are cooked or baked for same-day sale. Grocery stores discard produce with minor blemishes, and in many cases fruits are discarded just as they begin to ripen. Food is usually trashed once it has reached its expiration or sell-by date, which is often arbitrary. Foods damaged during shipping or stocking are often fresher than what remains on the shelves.

The Environmental Protection Agency has rated dumpster diving (or source reduction and reuse) as the best environmental strategy for dealing with municipal solid waste. Yet in 1999, the U.S. wasted more than 25 million tons of food, approximately .5 pounds of food per person per day, compared to .3 pounds in 1960.

Dumpstering is not an option for everyone. Nor is it any more a revolutionary act than dropping out and living in the wilderness or eating a vegan diet. It neither supports the system of hierarchy and oppression nor threatens it. However, for many dumpstering is a small part of an environmentally conscious lifestyle. Practiced in conjunction with squatting, it makes possible a life free of work and money. The more we liberate ourselves, the more we are able to help others.

*Mr. Bolt is an anarchist who's been active in Food Not Bombs, The Mutual Support Network and More Gardens Coalition. He's explored dumpsters throughout North America and has appeared on PBS's Life 360 and National Public Radio on the subject.*

BY CATHY BUSSEWITZ AND ARESH JAVADI

Tired of eating genetically engineered food? Ready to grow your own peaches? The community garden in your neighborhood may be the answer to your salad dreams. If your garden is filled for the season, reserve a space for next spring.

But if that's too long to wait for your organic big apple bites, now is the time to dirty your hands and plant your own food revolution. Follow the steps below...your stomach will be happy you did.

First, find your future garden. Once you've chosen a slice of land, find out who owns it by calling the New York Public Interest Group, or visit [www.oasisnyc.net](http://www.oasisnyc.net) for maps. Check on development plans with your local community board ([www.nyc.gov/html/cau/html/cblist.html](http://www.nyc.gov/html/cau/html/cblist.html)).

If you want to play by the rules, talk to the city's housing department or GreenThumb. However, rather than talking to these agencies right away, you could try the following program.

(1) Free the land. Buy bolt-cutters at the local hardware store and open the garden gates. Replace the lock, and make extra copies of the key for your future fellow gardeners.

(2) Plant the seeds in your community. After sharing your plan with neighbors, throw a party to clean out trash and weeds from your new land. Invite community groups and post fliers to attract as many people as possible.

(3) Beautify. Organizations like Bronx Green-up and Brooklyn Botanical Garden can hook you up with free trees. GreenThumb pro-

vides free plants when you register the garden, but you must do some planting in order to register. Mail-order nurseries often offer nice discounts, but don't shy away from hitting up local nurseries for donations.

(4) Start the feeding frenzy. When planting fruits and vegetables, remember: city soil is toxic. If you want to test your soil to find out how bad it is, contact the Environmental Protection Agency or GreenThumb. Using bricks, stones, 2x8 planks or your favorite found objects, build your large planter. Fill it with clean soil, and plant your yummys. April is a good time to plant long-growing varieties like squash, beans, herbs, watermelon and corn. In the fall, plant onion and garlic before the first frost. Learn about seed-saving at [www.seedtrust.com](http://www.seedtrust.com). You're on your way to better dinners!

(5) Sustain. Post signs telling others when the garden will be open; invite members to get involved. Host cook-outs, invite schools to teach lessons in your garden, donate vegetables to soup kitchens and grow mullein and echinacea to alleviate asthma. Invite everyone to sign a petition to make the garden permanent. Take photos to document the beauty your garden brings.

(6) Make it legal. Contact your community board; get on the agenda for their next meeting. Bring your portfolio, petition, and member lists to GreenThumb or the Trust for Public Land, and apply for permanent status. Contact More Gardens! Coalition ([www.moregardens.org](http://www.moregardens.org)) for its *How to Make Your Garden Permanent* book.

Enjoy your home-grown garden paradise!



## Farming CONT. FROM P. 1

A walk around the farm bears that out. This is what a farm should look — and smell — like. The odors of wet hay, manure and motor oil mingle near the garage bearing fire-engine-red tractors. Sparrows careen about after a cooling summer downpour, ignoring a lone chicken scratching the moist earth by a moldy, dull-silver silo.

Next to the 50-foot-tall silo, bright-eyed calves with clean, almost shiny, fur lounge under an open-air metal and wood shed, three to a pen. Piglets snuffle in the back half of the shed as a monstrous mama pig digs into the cooling mud. Hundreds of yards in the distance, the backs of roaming cows bob above the brush as they forage by the waterside. Turnip, another calf, seems oblivious to it all. She's only interested in gnawing on a shirtsleeve.

Turnip will one day join Hawthorne Valley's herd of 60 dairy cows. Because it doesn't use industrial methods, like penicillin injections or bovine growth hormones, Hawthorne Valley "produces half the amount of milk of a conventional dairy farmer," says Schneider. "One cow produces on average 18 to 20,000 pounds of milk on a conventional dairy farm. Our average is 10 to 11,000." But while "conventional milk sells for \$10-\$13 per hundredweight," explains Schneider, "organic milk sells for \$20-\$22 per hundredweight."

Schneider says, "We've determined with our 250 acres we can support 60 cows. They produce milk, but more importantly, from a biological point of view, they produce manure that we compost for the crop lands, pasture land and vegetable gardens."

The use of manure on fields that grow hay for the cows, which produce more manure for the vegetable gardens, scraps from which feed the pigs, underlies the concept of "biodynamic farming." Hawthorne Valley Farm is one of dozens of biodynamic farms scattered across the country.

The role of manure and composting is critical to biodynamic farming, explains Aaron Hulme of the Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association. In biodynamic farming, says Hulme, "all of the inputs are supposed to come from one's farm. The farm is a self-contained unit."

"Biodynamic farming," says Hulme, "came from a series of eight lectures given by Austrian Rudolf Steiner to a circle of farmers in 1924. They worried that the mechanization of the other aspects of human life would obliterate farming."

Peter Brady, the head farmer at Phillie's Bridge Farm in the Hudson Valley town of New Paltz, says biodynamic farming "is an attempt to make the farm more inclusive, with less inputs, less fertilizer and more diversity."

Phillie's Bridge, says Brady, practices organic farming and "plans to go biodynamic eventually," in part by bringing in cows, goats and expanding its flock of 33 chickens.

Like Hawthorne Valley, Phillie's Bridge is a non-profit, has

an educational aspect and runs a CSA. The Phillie's Bridge CSA currently has 75 local members, at \$500 for a full share. Hawthorne Valley has 220 shares and distributes its produce to members in the local area, Long Island and the Bronx.

What's especially impressive is the small amount of land used to feed so many people. Hawthorne Valley has 12 acres of vegetable gardens, while Phillie's Bridge has five. Both make weekly deliveries to their members from June to November. Brady says Phillie's Bridge "can grow more per acre than conventional, large-scale farmers, partly because we aren't growing 3,000 acres."



PHOTOS BY A.K. GUPTA

**CONSUMER IGNORANCE AND APATHY** are problem factors in non-industrial farming. One farmer noted how some kids "don't know the difference between a horse and a cow."



Yet these two farms raise a nagging question: How viable are they as models? Both of them are non-profit, unusual among farms, which gives them tax advantages. Brady says for Phillie's Bridge, "agriculture brings in 75 percent of the revenue and education 25 percent."

Brady admits, "We're a non-profit. We're competing with other CSAs. We get Americorp volunteers. Other farmers feel it may not be a level playing field."

Hawthorne Valley expects to generate \$3 million in revenue this year, two-thirds of that from its bountiful store. But Schneider says it nets only at most \$20,000 a year in profits — not even one percent.

One expert in New Paltz, Ron and Kate Khosla, are trying to go the commercial route while maintaining high agricultural standards. Dominated by the Shawanagunk Mountains, the 77-acre Huguenot farm was purchased by the Khoslas almost four years ago.

Ron says, "Farming is a lot of gambling. For instance, if you put out your crops by May 19, you're 90 percent assured they won't die from frost. This year, though, a lot of people lost crops" due to an unusual cold snap in late May. "We lost \$20,000 worth of organic strawberries, and we'll never make it up," he notes.

Because of the economic pressures, the Khoslas live

in decidedly Spartan conditions. "We've been camping out for four years. The first year, we lived in the greenhouse. We don't even have indoor plumbing."

Their hard work is paying off, slowly. They're now in the process of building a house after turning a profit of \$18,000 last year, explains Ron. But "we made less than \$3 an hour."

The couple says their farming goes beyond organic, in large part because of federal guidelines that have watered down what organic means. Organic food is no longer the work of some idealistic back-to-the-landers, but a \$6 billion a year business that is becoming dominated by agribusinesses. And they have an interest in making "organic" compatible with their industrial scale.

While the U.S. Department of Agriculture backed off guidelines two years ago that would have allowed genetic engineering, sewage sludge and radioactive waste used in the production of "organic" food, it still allows controversial practices. It allows manure and waste from conventional factory farms to be used on organic farms; it essentially allows factory farm crowding for organic livestock; and it has imposed an inspection system that is often cost-prohibitive for the small, organic farmers.

"Organic is not the same as it used to be," says Ron. "The process is so time-consuming, so expensive, that the small farmers, the ones who've been doing it since the 1970s, can't call themselves organic anymore."

What gets Ron particularly incensed is the waste issue. "You can use chicken carcasses, diseased parts, and waste" from conventional factory farms. As a result, "there are measurable levels of herbicides, steroids, hormones, antibiotics and pesticides in the soil" of farms that are ostensibly organic.

In response, the Khoslas have started to use the term "Certified Naturally Grown (CNG)" and are trying to establish a new trend. "We just went public at the beginning of July. We already have 50 applicants from all over the country," says Ron.

"Organic is now being administered by people who don't know anything about organic. With CNG, it's farmers inspecting farmers," he explains.

All the farmers interviewed agree that some of the biggest problems facing non-industrial farming is consumer ignorance and apathy. Peter Brady says he gets kids at Phillie's Bridge who "don't know the difference between a horse and a cow."

Ron Khosla says, "As much as I want to complain about subsidies, the biggest problem is consumer apathy. All they want is cheap vegetables."

## Recycling CONT. FROM P. 1

cling program was cut. But, with the retention of metal and paper collection, that estimate dropped to just under \$40 million — a mere one percent of the budget deficit.

But financial savings don't come without ethical implications, says Lynn Landes of Zero Waste America in Philadelphia. New York City dumps much of its waste in Pennsylvania landfills, many of which, Landes says, tower over 200 feet high and leak toxic substances into soils and rivers.

"Landfills are blossoming all around us," Landes says sarcastically. "New York City is just shifting their problem to someone else, taking advantage of neighboring states."

Taking advantage of Pennsylvania, however, just got more expensive. Shortly after Bloomberg's budget passed, Pennsylvania raised its disposal fee by \$7.50 a ton. The fee may not be enough to stop New York City, Landes says, but it's certainly enough to continue chipping away out of the city's already small savings.

Bloomberg's recycling cuts are also costing local union laborers their jobs, said Vincente "Panama" Alba, delegate for Laborers Local 108. Already three recycling facilities have been shut down and 202 people in his local union alone have lost their jobs.

"It's been devastating," Alba said. "When the dust settles we expect about 1,000 people will be displaced."

While others are demoralized, Carl Hultberg, director of the Village Green Recycling Team, says he's re-energized and ready to launch a citizen-run recycling program that will provide a model for the city. With a multi-compartment truck and customers willing to sort their materials and spend \$1-\$5 for his weekly service, he hopes to show that recycling, done the right way, is profitable.

"I think it will blow people's mind," Hultberg says. "We should be able to really give the city a lesson in recycling that will not soon be forgotten."

A non-profit organization called We Can collects redeemable bottles and cans from businesses and apartment buildings and donates all proceeds to the homeless.

And Recycle This!, a waste reduction and recycling advocacy group, hopes to raise awareness by launching a



JEN NEUMANN

A "RECYCLE IN" PROTEST will be held on Aug. 20 at City Hall to appose Mayor Bloomberg's cuts in recycling.

campaign of creative protest and artistic activism. Their upcoming "Recycle In" protest on Aug. 20 at City Hall will feature the creation of a public art piece from the plastic and glass bottles of passersby. Swan, an organizer for the group, plans to finally make meaningful use of the mountains of "garbage" accumulating in her apartment.

Recycle This! member Kate Crane expects strong support for the participatory protest, suspecting much of the public is just as frustrated as she is.

"When they cut recycling, I felt fury and grief," Crane said. "So many people are angry about this and just need a bullhorn to voice their dissatisfaction."

For more on how to get involved with alternative recycling efforts, contact: Village Green Recycling Team (212) 473-4227; Recycle This! (212) 592-4184, RecycleThisNYC@yahoo.com; New York City Waste Prevention Coalition (212) 239-8882, own@nyceja.org; We Can (212) 262-2222.

# GLOBAL

## ELITES MEET AND GREET IN JOHANNESBURG

BY PATRICK BOND

Flying in to Africa's main commercial complex of Johannesburg, delegates to the upcoming United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) will break through a thick brown cloud of particulates. The cold dry season and temperature inversions are the natural reasons Johannesburg's 5000-foot elevation and brisk winter winds still don't provide clean air in August.

Viewed from the air, smudges of human fingerprints are everywhere: concentrated industrial pollution over the east-west strip of factories and power plants; gold-mine dumps to the south, perpetually blowing sand and dust over the city; periodic bush fires; and the ongoing use of coal and wood for cooking and heating in black townships like Soweto and Alexandra.

From the air, summit goers will be protected from the re-emergence of tuberculosis and other rampant respiratory infections that further threaten the lives of South Africa's 5 million-plus HIV-infected people.

### STINGY POLICIES, LESS SERVICES

Just before landing, delegates may notice the silvery glint of thousands of tiny metal-roofed shacks in the bright sun, like cauterized wounds on the yellowish skin of a wintry Africa. The township slums stretch to the horizon, and house the majority of Gauteng Province's 10 million inhabitants. But because Nelson Mandela's fledgling administration implemented a stingy policy in 1994 based on World Bank advice, Johannesburg's post-apartheid squatter camps and meager new formal residential areas



for low-income black residents are actually further away from job opportunities and have even less community amenities, schools and clinics than apartheid-era ghettos.

Looking down, eyes are soon drawn to the bright green of well-watered English gardens and thick alien trees that shade traditionally white — now slightly desegregated — suburbs complete with sky-blue swimming pools.

To achieve the striking effect, Johannesburg abuses water. Waste occurs not only in the better-off neighborhoods sprawling north and east of the city center, but also in the southern mining belt and the corporate-dominated farms on the city's outskirts.

Compounding this scarcity, water is used for cooling coal-burning electricity generators. South Africa brags about supplying the world's cheapest energy for industrial use because it doesn't price in environmental damage, including the world's worst greenhouse gas emissions adjusted for population size and income. Across the country, however, electricity privatization has darkened more than a million households that cannot afford price increases.

Gold was discovered here in 1886, immediately drawing thousands of fortune hunters and proletarians. Johannesburg, named for Johannes Rissik, the 19th century surveyor of the colonized land, soon became the planet's largest metropolis with no substantial natural water source. Sixty miles to the south, the Vaal River is pumped uphill to Johannesburg, but by the 1980s it became apparent that usage would outstrip water supply in the 21st century.

### ENGINEERING DISASTER

Apartheid-era engineers and World Bank project officers tried to solve the looming shortages with a dam and tunnel scheme that draws water hundreds of miles across a mountain range atop the small and perpetually impoverished nation of Lesotho. Africa's largest infrastructure

project, costing an estimated \$8 billion if all six dams are built, the project is now less than half finished but has already displaced tens of thousands of Basotho peasants, inundated sacred land and threatened the Orange River's downstream ecosystem.

Who pays the bills? Johannesburg water prices went up by 35 percent during the late 1990s, but township residents, who use the least water, found themselves paying 55 percent more because of the cost of the Lesotho dams, which Pretoria wanted to finance during the mid-1980s so as to break apartheid-era financial sanctions. The World Bank set up a secret London account to facilitate matters, overriding objections from the black liberation movement, including its then representative in Ireland, Kader Asmal.

As South Africa's water minister from 1994-99, Asmal chaired the 1998-2000 World Commission on Dams. He refused to let the Commission study the Lesotho dam and angrily rejected grassroots

demands that mines, factories and mansions pay the dam's bills and conserve water so as to prevent future dam construction. Such "demand-side management" would also have included repair of perpetual leaks in the apartheid-era township infrastructure, where half of Soweto's water is lost.

Bankers were anxious to continue financing, and construction companies are ready to keep building the multi-billion-dollar dams.

### MEET THE NEW BOSS

As is true across the world, Johannesburg's worsening environmental mess is mainly due to the logic of capital accumulation. South Africa's traditionally racist and pollution-intensive companies have been embraced by a grateful black elite, including sleazy politicians and the neoliberal officials who control many arms of the government. The onset of free-market economic policies based on an export-orientation fetish preceded Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) government by a few years. But a small clique of "new guard" ANC officials today work closely with the leftover "old guard" bureaucrats who are prospering while building class apartheid.

Together, the ruling party and its new-found Afrikaner conspirators have allowed the vast bulk of rich white people's loot to escape through relaxing already porous exchange controls; let the largest firms relocate their financial headquarters to London, hence sucking out profit and dividend flows forever; cut corporate tax rates from 48 percent in 1994 to 30 percent five years later in search of new investment that never materialized; watched aimlessly as business fired a fifth of all formal-sector workers; allowed industries like clothing, footwear and appliances to collapse under international competition; incessantly privatized once-formidable public assets; provided pollution permits to some

of the world's most irresponsible companies; and now aim to dump vast taxpayer funds into bizarre projects like the "Gautrain" rail system linking the airport to the new business district of Sandton, central Johannesburg and Pretoria for what are unselfconsciously termed "elite" passengers.

The ANC's "Igoli 2002" privatization plan, drafted alongside World Bank consultants, was renamed by critics "E.coli 2002." Excrement from pit latrines in Johannesburg's slums — which are still not supplied by the French water privatizer Suez, beneficiary of the world's largest water commercialization contract — despoiled Sandton's borehole water supplies in February 2001. As cholera devastated the countryside and spread to Alexandra at the same time, internationally televised apartheid-style forced removals were the answer.

The Johannesburg landscape is also being defaced by other greed-driven processes, including bank "redlining" (denial of loan access) in many townships and inner-city sites of racial desegregation such as cosmopolitan but poverty-stricken Hillbrow, Berea and Yeoville.

In addition, the old Central Business District was virtually emptied of professionals in the 1990s, with more than two-thirds of office space vacant at one point and Africa's largest prestige building — the Carlton Centre — sold in 2000 at five percent of its 1974 construction costs.

### CAPITAL FLIGHT

Where, then, aside from London and "EsCapeTown," did the smart money flee? Ten miles northeast of the old business district, the edge-city of Sandton attracted billions of dollars worth of 1990s commercial property investment, as well as world-class traffic jams, nouveau-riche conspicuous consumption and discordant postmodern architecture.

The environmental destruction, malgovernance, political repression, social hypocrisy and parasitical financial activity together are causing a backlash. What was by all accounts the world's most impressive urban social movements, the South African "civics," were systematically demobilized during the mid-1990s but have arisen again in several Johannesburg townships through the Anti-Privatization Forum network. Municipal workers and other public sector unions often demonstrate against grievances. Mass anti-privatization marches of workers and residents are not uncommon.

Repeated attacks by Johannesburg's elite on both ecology and the poor will likely lead to a genuine "Social Forum" process, as in the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre, though the major political players—the trade unions, churches and the more independent social movements — remain fragmented.

And like the corporate-controlled summit itself, Johannesburg will continue to undermine the very idea of "sustainable development" — until grassroots, workplace, women, youth, church and environmental comrades get their acts together and take power away from those old and new rulers who have made such a mess of Africa's wealthiest city.

Patrick Bond's recent and forthcoming books on South Africa include *Cities of Gold*, *Townships of Coal*; *Elite Transition*; *Against Global Apartheid*; *Fanon's Warning*; and *Unsustainable South Africa*.



THE WORLD SUSTAINABILITY CONFERENCE will be held in August in Johannesburg (left). The city is Africa's wealthiest, but dire poverty remains (above).

# NO NET GAIN

## GLOBALIZATION THREATENS CAMBODIAN FISHING

BY JOSHUA BREITBART

On June 30, a group of six local fishermen from the small southern Cambodian village of Phnom Sralao confronted an illegal commercial fishing vessel that had been using large nets that destroy locals' gear.

Armed guards on the trawler shot and killed two of the men and wounded a third. When the police went to the village the next day to investigate, they weren't interested in gathering information about the killers, but instead accused the local men of trying to rob the larger boat.

"They did not come to investigate but they came to ask for money and threaten to arrest if we did not pay them," said Phin Sour, the wife of one of those killed.

The mother of Dem Yon, who was not killed, paid B 3500 to the police to protect her son from prosecution. "I sold my land for 2800 baht (\$66) and my boat for 800 baht (\$19) to pay them," she said.

The conflict is the result of tensions caused by the privatization of Cambodia's once communal fishing areas. The transformation of the industry is part of a package of reforms the Cambodian government is carrying out as it prepares for its 2005 accession to the World Trade Organization, which requires developing countries to promote foreign trade and eliminate domestic protections. But rapid changes to this fragile economy are threatening the country's stability.

Shootings, arsons, seizures and arrests in the fisheries, as well as conflict, indebtedness, migration and malnutrition are increasing among the 90 percent of Cambodians who live in rural areas. Millions here rely on fishing for their protein and livelihood, but it is becoming harder for them to do so.

The village of Anlong Raing consists of a few dozen floating houses on the edge of the Great Tonle Sap Lake, the largest lake in Southeast Asia. Fishers here used to catch enough fish to eat, plus some to trade for rice. But, because of commercial competition and the degradation of the lake itself, the fish they now catch are too small to sell, and must be kept in cages until they are big enough to market.

"We cannot make enough money to buy rice...There are fewer fish now that big fishermen come and fish this area, and we cannot do anything about them," said Veng Thy Viet, a mother of five.



The commercial fishermen are supported by Cambodia's fishing ministry and other authorities, said Mao Vanna, head of the Anlong Raing community fishery. "The ministry and police are involved in illegal fishing; they take a cut of the profits."

The commercial vessels use illegal methods: electrocution, poisons, explosives, water pumping, scoops, nets and fences. These practices overfish the lake, destroy aquatic life and wreck locals' gear.

In defiance of a law that guarantees family fishers open access to communal areas within the commercial fishing lots, lot owners frequently post guards and charge fees.

The prime minister attempted to resolve the growing conflict in late 2000 by restoring more than half of the privatized fishing lots to the communities. But without Department of Fisheries officials monitoring the field and without maps demarking the newly-drawn bound-

PHOTOS BY JOSHUA BREITBART



aries publicly available, the situation became chaotic. Confrontations between family and commercial fishers increased.

In a country still shaped by the murderous Khmer Rouge era and ensuing years of uncertainty, there are few community organizations to connect local fishers, leaving them weak. Thanks to grassroots organizing and the support of non-governmental organizations, notably Oxfam USA and the Fisheries Action Coalition Team, circumstances for small fishers in Anlong Raing have begun to improve. In some areas, a decline in illegal fishing has mitigated local conflict.

But that has led to a large influx of people from areas where things have been getting worse.

In 1990, there were 43 families in the village; now there are 90. Population pressure combined with a declining catch rate for locals threatens the structure of this community.

Related environmental dangers resulting from liberalization reforms are also becoming a menace. The booming timber industry — another newfound export for Cambodia — is resulting in deforestation and soil erosion around the Tonle Sap, silting up the lake. Hoping to export rice, the Cambodian government has promoted more intensive agriculture that requires pesticides and fertilizers that seep into the freshwater system.

But if the Sre Ambel killers are not pursued, the main problem for Cambodia's small fishers will be that commercial fishers will assume they can act with impunity. And the violence will escalate.

# ZAPATISTA-INSPIRED FARMERS WIN

## MASSIVE PROTESTS FORCE MEXICO TO HALT AIRPORT PLANS

BY RAMOR RYAN

Last Oct. 2, when the Mexican government announced the expropriation of 5,000 hectares of farmland around San Salvador Atenco, 20 miles outside Mexico City, they presumed everyone was on board for their big airport plans. Addressing the campesinos who were about to lose their land, President Vicente Fox gushed how they had in effect "won the lottery..."

Ten months later, the campesinos have indeed won, not the lottery but the rights to their own land. On Aug. 1, in a shocking decision, the government abandoned its airport plans following massive protests and the death of Jose Espinosa. A farmer and activist from Atenco, Espinosa died in the hospital July 24 from injuries received at the hands of the federal police at an anti-airport demonstration.

The \$2 billion airport project was a key element, alongside the Plan Puebla-Panama, of Fox's plan to modernize the country and to make the economy more competitive within the NAFTA and proposed FTAA trade zones.

The issue of the officially decreed expropriation of the land was not expected to be a hurdle — the campesinos were offered just seven pesos per square meter (only pennies per square foot) and promised employment at the airport as "janitors or security guards."

"Even if they offered us millions for our land we would not accept it," said one Atenco campesino. In November, thousands of them descended on the capital, many on horseback, masked like Zapatistas and wielding machetes. Fierce clashes with the police ensued.

Under the government decree, 4,375 families would have been forced to abandon their land — *ejido* (communal) land held by Indigenous Nahau communities since the Mexican revolution of 1910.



CAMPESINOS of San Salvador Atenco protest in defense of their communal land and livelihoods.

"We've said it before, and we'll say it again," declared a third generation *ejidatario*. "We will defend our land with our lives. They are killing our people, our families."

In their almost-daily demonstrations, the campesinos marched behind a banner proclaiming "We represent rebel dignity." Rebel dignity, the phrase oft-quoted by the Zapatistas. The Chiapas insurrectionaries have been quiet of late, reeling under the pressure of insidious counter-insurgency strategies set to divide their support base.

The government may have been able to temporarily curtail the Zapatistas, but other points of resistance continually sprout up. Like the massive and ongoing campaign in the southern coastal towns that refuse to pay increased electricity rates. Or the year-long student upheaval in the national university two years ago. Or before that, the uprising in the town of Tepotzlan near Mexico City, in a land conflict similar to Atenco, contested militantly by the locals, and won.

And so in the Atenco conflict, the shadow of the Zapatistas loomed over the Fox administration. Indeed Zapatista inspiration was everywhere in the Atenco rebellion. Not only in the slogans, the masks, the strategies of struggle, but also the forms of organization. Police and government officials were ejected from the region. The residents began to govern themselves autonomously through Popular Assemblies (similar to the Community Assemblies in Argentina). In a gesture of homage, they declared themselves an 'Autonomous Municipality in Rebellion' on Dec. 31, 2001, marking the eighth anniversary of the Zapatista Uprising.

Events took a dramatic turn on July 11. A hundred campesinos went to demonstrate in a nearby town where the state governor was preparing a speech. The federal police ambushed the delegation, seriously injuring several and hauling 11 off to the state jail, including two 'leaders.'

In response, the campesinos in Atenco rose up, fought pitch battles armed with molotov cocktails and machetes, burnt police vehicles and took 19 government officials and police hostage in exchange for the prisoners. A siege developed as 3,000 police and soldiers surrounded the town.

For three days, the standoff continued, riveting the nation. Solidarity came in the form of the formation of a 'Peace Cordon' with volunteers from a wide range of local civil society organizations, campesino groups, trade unions, human rights activists and students. Other communities in the region blockaded roads in wildcat actions.

On July 15, the government made a tactical retreat and Fox offered the rebels a better financial deal.

David Pajaro, spokesperson for the Atenco delegation spelled out their total rejection: "Not for 7 pesos a square meter, nor for 700 pesos..."

The victory in Atenco has the prospect of kickstarting an even greater wave of anti-globalization protest across the nation. As one masked rebel at the barricades said, "What is happening in Atenco is like the effect of 'one, two, many Chiapases.'"

## U.S. BUILDS CASE FOR IRAQI WAR ON THIN PROOF

Top U.S. military advisers, international leaders, economists, and former United Nations weapons inspectors have criticized the Bush administration's plan to topple Saddam Hussein's regime by sending upwards of 250,000 troops into Iraq.

Without widespread support, Bush has been desperately seeking a connection between Iraq and Al Qaeda or Sept. 11. A full-scale war could then be waged without Congressional or United Nations approval. And the U.S. would never have to prove that Iraq has biological, chemical or nuclear weapons.

"The U.S. Department of Defense and the CIA know perfectly well that today's Iraq poses no threat to anyone in the region, let alone in the United States. To argue otherwise is dishonest" says Hans von Sponeck, former UN humanitarian aid coordinator for Iraq.

The *Washington Post* reported recently that the U.S. has not identified a "single factory or lab known to be actively producing [weapons of mass destruction]."

But former CIA Director James Woolsey warned CBS News that Saddam Hussein "poses the same kind of threat to the United States that Hitler posed in Germany in the mid-1930s."

Economists are also concerned. *The New York Times* estimates that a rerun of the Gulf War would cost the U.S. \$80 billion, roughly six times the \$13 billion the U.S. spent on the Gulf War when Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Japan picked up most of the \$60 billion tab. And if Hussein is overthrown, the Pentagon estimates 25,000 to 50,000 troops may be needed for a decade or more to maintain stability.

## SHARON, BUSH, U.S COMPANIES SUED FOR ATROCITIES IN ISRAEL USING U.S. AID

Solidarity International for Human Rights, a Palestinian-American organization, has filed a lawsuit against Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, President George Bush, Secretary of State Colin Powell and United States defense contractors.

The suit, invoking the Arms Export Control Act of 1976, demands that the President and Secretary of State "cease providing military assistance to Israel until they have reported to Congress the misuse of American military assistance by Israel."

Attorney Stanley Cohen who filed the brief on behalf of 21 Palestinian-Americans, said the plaintiffs claims arise out of torture, killing, and destruction of property by and with the support of the Israeli and United States governments.

## "DUH, IT'S HOT:" GLOBAL TEMPERATURES SET RECORD HIGHS

The first six months of the year were the second warmest ever and average global temperatures in 2002 could be the highest recorded in 150 years, according to the British Meteorological Office.

Global temperatures were 1.03 Fahrenheit higher than the long-term average of about 59 Fahrenheit in the period from January to June. In the nearly 150 years since recording began, only in 1998 has the difference been higher, 1.08 Fahrenheit, and that was caused by the influence of the El Niño weather phenomenon.

The figures also showed that the northern hemisphere had its warmest-ever half year, with temperatures 1.31 Fahrenheit above the long-term average.

# ISRAEL'S ALCATRAZ

## GAZA STRIP WALLED OFF FROM THE WORLD

BY TANYA REINHART

The Gaza Strip is a perfect realization of the Israeli vision of "separation." Sealed off from the outside world with electric fences and army posts, Gaza has become a huge prison. About one-third of its land was confiscated for the 7,000 Israeli settlers living there (and their defense array), while over a million Palestinians are crowded in the remaining areas. With no work or sources of income, about 80 percent of its residents depend on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), or contributions from Arab states and charity organizations.

Now Israel is considering exiling relatives of suicide bombers from the West Bank to Gaza.

As a senior Israeli analyst stated, Gaza can now serve as "the penal colony" of Israel, its "devils island, Alcatraz."

This is the Sharon government's plan for the West Bank as well. While the external fence is presently being built, Israel's current military operation is set to be the final step in the implementation the IDF plans for re-establishing full military rule. Though Israel describes everything it does as a spontaneous reaction to terror, the plan was fully spelled out in the Israeli media back in March 2001, soon after Sharon entered office.

Alex Fishman, military and strategic analyst of Yediot Aharonot, explained at the time that, since Oslo, "the IDF regarded the occupied territories as if they were one territorial cell." This placed some constraints on the IDF and enabled a certain amount of freedom for the PA and the Palestinian population. The new plan is a return to the concept of the military administration during the pre-Oslo years: the Occupied Territories will be divided into tens of isolated "territorial cells," each of which will be assigned a special military force, "and the local commander will have freedom to use his discretion" as to when and whom to shoot.

The first stage of this plan — the destruction of the institutions of the Palestinian Authority — was completed in the previous "Operation Defensive Shield" in April of this year. From that time on, the West Bank has been almost completely locked down. Even exit by foot, which was possible up to that point, became blocked, and movement between the "territorial cells" now requires formal permits from the Israeli military authorities. Soldiers and snipers prevent any "unauthorized" walking to agricultural fields, to places of work and study, or for medical treatment.

However, the army makes it clear that there is no intention to once again administer the basic daily needs of the two million Palestinians, such as food supplies, health services, garbage and sewage. For these tasks, some form of a Palestinian Authority will be maintained, though in practice it will not be allowed to function.

As a "military source" told *Ha'aretz* in its June 23 issue, "the civil branches of the Palestinian Authority [have] reached an unprecedented nadir, mainly due to the destruction the IDF operation left behind in Ramallah (including the systematic destruction of computers and databases)... Combined with the severe restrictions on movement, the Palestinian population is becoming, as the military source defined it, 'poor, dependent, unemployed, rather hungry, and extreme'... The financial reserves of the Palestinian authority are reaching the bot-

tom... In a future not far off, the majority of Palestinians will only be able to maintain a reasonable life through the help of international aid." Thus, the West Bank is being driven to the level of poverty of the Gaza strip.

Nevertheless, at the same time that Israel deprives the Palestinians of their means of income, it also tries to

diminish or block international aid, under the pretext that the aid is used to support terrorists or their families. At the outset of its new "operation," Israel "decided to stop the flow of food aid and medicine from Iran and Iraq to Palestinians in the territories."

And now, Israel has launched a more ambitious campaign: The EU, the largest PA donor, is under constant pressure from Israel to cut its aid, which is used,



**"THE SOUTH AFRICAN APARTHEID REGIME never engaged in the sort of repression Israel is inflicting on the Palestinians," says Ronnie Kasrils, South Africa's Minister of Water Affairs.**

inter alia, to pay the salaries of teachers and health workers. The tactics are always the same: Israel provides some documents presumably linking the PA to terror. Any aid to the PA is, by Israel's definition, aid to terror.

UNRWA's aid is the next target. The Relief Agency has become a major source of food for Palestinians — not only in the refugee camps, but also in towns and villages. The amount of food UNRWA supplies has increased four-fold in two years. Recently, "Israel has begun a campaign in the United States and the United Nations to urge a reconsideration of the way the U.N. Relief and Works Agency, which runs the Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza, operates."

Israel charges that UNRWA workers simply ignored the fact that Palestinian organizations were turning the camps into terrorist bases and it is demanding the agency start reporting all military or terrorist actions within the camps to the U.N.... Meanwhile, Jewish and pro-Israeli lobbyists in the U.S. are waging a parallel campaign... American Jewish lobbyists are basing their efforts on the fact that the U.S. currently contributes some 30 percent of UNRWA's \$400 million a year budget, and is therefore in a position to influence the agency: A congressional refusal to approve UNRWA's funding could seriously disrupt its operations," (*Ha'aretz* June 29, 2002, Nathan Guttman).

The new stage of Israel's "separation" can no longer be compared to the Apartheid of South Africa. As Ronnie Kasrils, South Africa's Minister of Water Affairs, said in an interview in March with *Al Ahrum Weekly*, "the South African apartheid regime never engaged in the sort of repression Israel is inflicting on the Palestinians."

We are witnessing the daily invisible killing of the sick and wounded being deprived of medical care, the weak who cannot survive in the new poverty conditions, and those who are bound to reach starvation.

The Palestinian people are fighting for their freedom. The crimes of Palestinian terror do not remove our culpability for our own crimes.

Before Oslo, as well, there was a wave of horrible terror attacks. But at that time, after each such attack, the call was heard: Get out of the territories! Then it was still understood that, when you leave people no hope, there is no way to stop the madness of suicide bombing. It is not too late to get out of the territories.

A version of this article appeared in *Yediot Aharonot*, June 30, 2002.

# HEIR JORDAN DITCHES DEMOCRACY

## KING ABDALLAH II ENDS BRIEF EXPERIMENT IN FREEDOM

By JILLIAN SCHWEDLER

On June 26, Jordan's King Abdallah II issued a royal decree pardoning former parliamentarian Toujan Faisal, who had been sentenced on May 16 to 18 months in jail for "seditious libel" and "spreading information deemed harmful to the reputation of the state."

Faisal was detained in March after accusing Prime Minister Ali Abu Ragheb, in an open letter, of "benefiting personally" from a government decision to double car insurance premiums, in one of a series of temporary laws called "essential" to the country's security. Wasn't it curious, she asked, that Abu Ragheb's family dominates the car insurance industry in Jordan?

It took the arrest of the outspoken Faisal, who is Jordan's only elected female deputy (1993-1997), to attract international attention to the dramatically deteriorating civil and political liberties in Jordan. The kingdom remains one of Washington's favorite Arab nations: a moderate, mostly Muslim country whose ruler is more fluent in English than in Arabic.

It has democratized "enough," legalizing political parties and holding elections, but manipulating the electoral system to prevent opposition voices from gaining any real power and quashing anti-American and anti-Israeli demonstrations. Jordan is eager to support the U.S. in its wide-ranging and ill-defined "war on terrorism" in exchange for more foreign aid. Yet as Washington calls for democracy in the Middle East, it's turning a blind eye toward the deterioration of political freedoms in what should be a model for a moderate, democratic Arab nation.

### BRIEF LIBERAL EXPERIMENT

Jordan's most recent experiment with democratization began under the late King Hussein in 1989, after an International Monetary Fund-led structural adjustment program sparked a series of riots. The regime opted for limited political liberalization as a means of channeling and deflating the dissent.

Although the initial openings were quite promising, the retreat began in 1994, when Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel. Since then, civil and political rights outlined in the constitution and the National Charter have been steadily revoked. "Free and fair" elections are manipulated through changes in the elections law. Civil society organizations are pressured to avoid dealing with "sensitive" issues such as human rights, sanctions against Iraq, press freedoms and tensions between Jordan's majority Palestinian population, many of whom live in refugee camps, and the East Bank tribes that make up the regime's support base.

With King Hussein's death in early 1999 and Abdallah II's subsequent ascent to the throne, the retreat from democratization accelerated. To solidify his own regime, the young king has relied on tribal support and the secret police, alienating not only Palestinians but also many long-time supporters and former government officials committed to democratic reform.

With the outbreak of the second intifada in September 2000, the government began to violently repress hundreds of demonstrations throughout the country in support of the besieged Palestinians. Dozens were arrested and hundreds detained, while at least two protesters were killed in clashes with security forces. In June 2001, the parliament was dissolved in preparation for the elections in November.

### PRE-SEPT. 11 SHACKLES

Long before the Sept. 11 attacks, it was clear that Jordan's government did not intend to hold the elections

on schedule. The government was anxious that the intifada was reverberating in Jordan, particularly among the Palestinians. Combined with the potential for a U.S. attack on Iraq, the regime remains concerned that holding elections in such a climate will not return the desired pro-government assembly.

Previously, Washington punished Jordan for its neutrality by cutting off aid during the 1990-91 Gulf War. King Abdallah II will not make the same mistake, but neither does he want to face the thousands of Jordanians who will protest another U.S. assault on Baghdad.

In August 2001, the government began to effectively shackle the few remaining democratic practices. Press freedoms were harshly restricted, newspapers were

closed and editors arrested for defying restrictions on content. A new public gatherings law requires that organizers of public events obtain a permit three days in advance. Most requests are denied.

Organizers are now held liable for any property

### TEMPORARY LAWS AND "STATE SECURITY"

The resort to these scores of temporary laws further entrenches the traditional elite — a move clearly intended by King Abdallah II to consolidate his authority, which is far less grounded in popular support than his father's. As a result, all activities that contradict the views of the state are restricted or suppressed. The constitution allows for temporary laws only in urgent situations to protect the security of the state, when it would be dangerous to wait for Parliament to reconvene. Was this the case in the decision to ease restrictions on the foreign purchase of land in Jordan? Did internal security require a temporary law that prevented civil servants from signing petitions that might "potentially harm the integrity of the state?"

Above all, the regime has sought to quash all political dissent — in newspapers, through political parties, in demonstrations and rallies, or through legal civil society organizations. Perhaps the last remaining outlet is to vote with the pocketbook by boycotting American products in protest of U.S. policies. This has frustrated the government, because it cannot force consumers to purchase certain products or retailers to sell them.

Most troubling, violations of a wide range of laws are now referred to the State Security Court. Any activity that potentially threatens the integrity of the state — a vague notion — is prosecutable under the harsh penal code. Acts that threaten state security now include outspoken journalism, illegal public gatherings (of six or more people) and any criticism of the royal family, the government, its allies and "friendly" countries. Moreover, a 2001 temporary amendment to the State Security Court Law denied citizens convicted of misdemeanors under the penal code the right to appeal.

### HOPE FOR DEMOCRACY?

Toujan Faisal's lawyers sought to contest precisely this temporary law, which prevented her right to appeal to the Higher Court of Justice. More than 150 prominent politicians and political activists signed a letter to the king calling for her immediate release. Just one day prior to the royal pardon, Faisal's lawyers lost their challenge to the constitutionality of the temporary law. Yet while the pardon released Faisal

from her penalty, her conviction stands.

Within this context, it is both fortunate and unfortunate that Faisal was let go. Her case drew international attention to the deterioration of civil and political freedoms in Jordan, as numerous international human rights activists circulated petitions calling for her release. Faisal's conviction in State Security Court on flimsy grounds was an embarrassment to the regime. While her supporters are relieved that she has been released, amendments to the penal code and the scores of temporary laws maintain a stranglehold on political freedoms in Jordan. In this sense, Faisal's release might lessen international attention to Jordan's retreat from democratization.

As with government critic and pro-democracy advocate Saad Eddin Ibrahim's arrest and conviction in Egypt in 2000, Toujan Faisal's case highlighted the severe restrictions on political expression and civil rights.

If democracy in the Arab world is really on the State Department agenda, Jordan stands as a test case. But Jordan more closely embodies how the Bush administration talks about promoting democracy, and then declines to criticize its "moderate" Arab allies' failure to democratize in practice.

Reprinted with permission of *Middle East Report and Information Project (MERIP)*. For the full article, go to [www.merip.org](http://www.merip.org). Jillian Schwedler, chair of MERIP's board of directors, teaches politics at the University of Maryland.



KING ABDALLAH II and Queen Rania ascended to the Jordanian throne in February 1999. (above) Palestinians make up 70 percent of Jordan's population. (right)



damage deemed by the state to be linked to the event. Despite these restrictions, political parties, professional associations and other civil society organizations continue to organize demonstrations. As recently as April, thousands of Jordanians rallied in opposition to Israel's reoccupation of Palestinian lands.

### JORDAN POST-SEPT. 11

Sept. 11 provided Jordan with a Washington-friendly justification for increased political repression. Since parliament was dissolved a year ago, more than 100 temporary laws have been passed. The next parliament is supposed to review each law and may accept or reject them. But elections are still on hold, and changes in the electoral law give greater representation to traditional pro-regime regions of the country. Even so, the appointed upper house, still controlled by the conservative former prime minister Zayd Rif'ai, can veto decisions taken by the elected lower house.

Political parties have been frustrated with these changes, and argue that the reforms were made through unconstitutional procedures. Repeatedly, the Opposition Parties Higher Command Council saw its challenges to the elections law rejected by the High Court of Justice without even being heard. Most recently, the High Court rejected a lawsuit brought by a number of political parties against the elections law. The Court stated that for a case to stand trial, the plaintiff(s) must be directly affected; political parties, in the justices' view, are not directly affected by the elections law.

## 35 YEARS OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES? U.S. SAYS OK

The US is moving to reinstate ties with Indonesia's armed forces, drawing sharp condemnation from human rights groups who challenge that the armed forces are still committing atrocities. Existing U.S. law cuts aid to the Indonesia military for its role in the devastation of East Timor, following its vote for independence in 1999.

Visiting Indonesia on August 2, Secretary of State Colin Powell announced that the administration would seek \$50 million from Congress to "strengthen Indonesia's capacity to deal with terrorism." This follows on the heels of a July vote by the Senate appropriations committee to remove the ban on military training.

"This is a very dangerous move," said Munir, the founder of Kontras, Indonesia's most prominent human rights organization. Munir points to the army's support for the brutal 32-year dictatorship of former President Suharto and the 1999 abuses in East Timor as evidence. Activists also denounce the security forces for resuming a bloody crackdown against separatists in Aceh province this year that has left hundreds of civilians dead.

John Miller, spokesman for the New York-based East Timor Action Network says the move to restore military aid to Indonesia "effectively gives U.S. backing to continued gross violations of human rights."

## NIGERIAN WOMEN ROCK CHEVRON TEXACO

Hundreds of unarmed Nigerian women lifted a siege of four key oil flow stations July 26 when ChevronTexaco agreed to provide more jobs, business loans, schools and hospitals for their communities. It marked the second time in less than two weeks that the world's fourth largest oil company had bowed to the demands of local activists in the Niger Delta.

The peaceful, all-woman protests were a departure for the oil-rich Niger Delta, where armed men frequently use kidnapping and sabotage against oil multinational companies.

"History has been made," Esther Tolar told the Associated Press. "Our culture is a patriarchal society. For women to come out like this and achieve what we have is out of the ordinary."

## BERENSON TRIAL GOES TO INTERNATIONAL COURT

The Peruvian government has decided that an Organization of American States' court will decide the case of New Yorker Lori Berenson, according to Reuters. Berenson was arrested in 1995 under ousted President Alberto Fujimori's anti-terrorism laws and jailed in 1996 for her alleged association with the Marxist rebel group, the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement.

The court, whose decision would be legally binding on member state Peru, could order her freed or retried in Peru. The government, however, says it has appointed lawyers "to defend the Peruvian state with the aim of ... obtaining a resolution favorable to the interests of Peru."

"For this government to spend money to defend the illegal Fujimori laws is preposterous...Lori should be released immediately," said Berenson's mother, Rhoda.

# Russian Youth Protest Nuclear Future

BY CHARLES DIGGES

NEAR BERY-OZOVKO, CENTRAL SIBERIA — Under the surveillance of some 50 uniformed and plain-clothes police, an equal number of environmentalists pitched a camp to protest nuclear waste imports to Russia, whose final destination would be the RT-2 plant, 36 kilometers from this village.

The pitching of the protest camp falls on the eve of a hearing by the Krasnoyarsk Regional Court. It will hear appeals from environmental groups on whether to honor some 40,000 signatures collected by Krasnoyarsk Region residents hoping to force a referendum on the plan to import some 20 tons of spent nuclear fuel to this region. Last February, the Krasnoyarsk electoral commission disqualified 31,700 signatures and threw out the referendum.

Shortly after the protestors began putting up the first of the tents and hanging a banner that said "A new Chernobyl? No Thanks," the camp — which is in a glade a quarter-mile from the road to the closed nuclear city of Zheleznogorsk — was visited by Col. Alexander Bychkunov of the Krasnoyarsk Regional Police. Flanked by three lieutenants, Bychkunov asked to meet with protest leaders and spoke for some minutes with Ecodefence! co-chairman Vladimir Sliviyak.

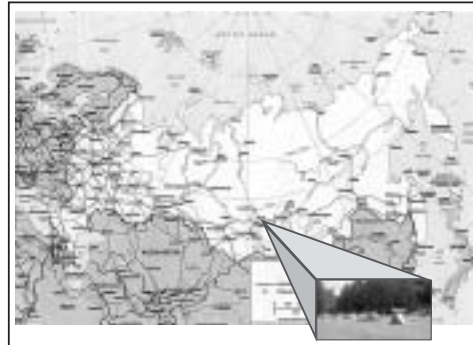
Sliviyak characterized Bychkunov's familiar manner as "intimidating."

"It was obvious that he knew much more about me than he could have from a few phone calls [we had]," said Sliviyak. "It was evident that he had looked deep into whatever file he has on me."

After Bychkunov left, a patrol of some 40 officers was brought by bus and posted across the highway from the campsite. Another 10 officers were posted in vehicles on the other side of the campsite and some even patrolled the woods surrounding it. Later the same day, a busload of police officers entered the camp and copied down each protester's passport information.

It was difficult for many of the younger campers — many of whom are new to Russia's environmental movement — to understand why the police would take such an interest.

Trying to assuage the group's fears, Sliviyak said, "We have to understand that, by standing up against imports of nuclear waste to Russia, we are to some degree taking



**ENVIRONMENTALISTS GATHER** in a tent city in the village of Beryozovka in central Siberia. They have been closely monitored by Russian security forces who associate green politics with treason.

a stand against the state and its laws, that's why they are scared of us."

Olga Podasenova, a veteran protector of Yekaterinburg's Ecological Union was not surprised by the police presence.

"I think many see greens as being handed by the West. The secret services and the police are not against us because we oppose nuclear power plants, but because they think we are in the pocket of the West — many

of my own friends call me a spy," she said.

Among the protestors holed up in tents were the Dubinina sisters, Darya, 18, and Olga, 16, who had grown up in the closed city of Seversk, home to two of Russia's last remaining three plutonium reactors — the other one at Zheleznogorsk. They became involved with the environmental movement when the bottom fell out of their hometown.

"We saw the depression of the people and of the environment settle in our city and we wanted to find out more," said Darya.

"Our parents used to work in the nuclear industry [in Seversk] and when they lost their jobs, not only was there no money, but we found out the cheaper pleasures like swimming were off limits because the water was too polluted from the nuclear reactors."

"It's as if," her sister Olga rejoined, "everything became known at once — there's no money to pay your parents — who used to be respected in this society — and the land and the water are polluted, so you can't even enjoy that."

To the people of Beryozovka, down the road from Zheleznogorsk, the ravages caused to the environment, and particularly the central Siberian Yenisey River, are an open secret.

"Swimming in the Yenisey?" said one villager who identified himself only as Vladimir, "Forget it — unless you know of the two or three places you can go around here."

But worse, said Vladimir is the fishing.

"I drove in a 2000-kilometre circle trying to find a place on the Yenisey or one of its tributaries to fish, places my father and I once caught pike, salmon," he said.

"I got nothing on this trip — guppies mostly — and worn tires."

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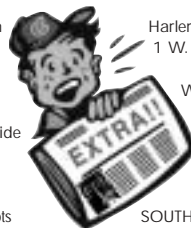
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# EL INDEPENDIENTE

## AMERICA LATINA CONVULSIONADA

POR SILVIA ARANA

Dice el economista chileno Patricio Malatrassi, que el gobierno de su país "ha elegido gobernar para los empresarios y construir una democracia con una cáscara griega, es decir sin ninguna de sus grandezas, pero con esclavos". Esto se aplica a la mayoría de los gobiernos latinoamericanos cuyas "democracias" entregan los patrimonios nacionales al capital extranjero, enriqueciendo a las clases altas y hambreado a sus pueblos. Algunos ejemplos y una propuesta alternativa.

### URUGUAY

Los últimos arreglos pactados entre el gobierno y el FMI, que aumentaron considerablemente la deuda externa, tuvieron como fin financiar la iliquidez de los bancos causada por la fuga de capitales al exterior. Para salvar a los bancos privados y extranjeros, el Estado los ha intervenido, concentrado un 70% de la actividad bancaria. El salvataje de la banca privada le ha costado al pueblo uruguayo más de 600 millones de dólares. El FMI ha dado los préstamos con la condición de que los bancos sean devueltos al sector privado en menos de seis meses. El Estado ha entrado en una cesación de pagos a ministerios, administración y otros organismos, y también en el pago a los acreedores. El fantasma de la suspensión del pago de salarios y jubilaciones es cada vez más real. Esta situación favorece a los organismos financieros internacionales y EE.UU. Si Uruguay no puede pagar los intereses de la deuda, éstos le exigirán que pague con las empresas del Estado. El gobierno parece dispuesto a privatizar a pesar de la oposición de las fuerzas populares.

### CHILE

El precio del dólar ha subido, la entrada de capitales extranjeros ha sido negativa durante los cuatro primeros meses del año y el valor de las empresas más importantes disminuyó en tres mil millones de dólares en el mes de junio. Hasta ese año la totalidad del déficit en cuenta corriente era financiado por inversión extranjera, la que poco a poco se sustituyó por préstamos que incrementaron la deuda externa a 39 mil millones de dólares. El índice de desempleo es del 14% y no es mayor porque trabajadores que cobran 300 mil pesos (equivalentes a 429 dólares) por mes, hoy aceptan la mitad. Los "logros" del modelo neoliberal en Chile, se consiguieron con nueve millones de pobres y cientos de miles de desocupados. Y con la venta del patrimonio público, como la desnacionalización del 70% del cobre, la principal riqueza del país.

### BRASIL

El país más poderoso de la región padece uno de los sistemas económicos más desiguales del mundo: el 10% más rico del país, es 30 veces más rico que el 40% de la población, que vive bajo los límites de pobreza. Hay un 20% de desocupados. Desde hace un mes y medio, el Banco Central Brasileño ha detectado la salida de

grandes cantidades de dólares, el real ha sido devaluado y la Bolsa está en baja. Las encuestas sobre las elecciones presidenciales de octubre dan como candidato favorito a Lula, trabajador metalúrgico y candidato del Partido de los Trabajadores. Ante esta posibilidad, la consultora Moody's bajó el estatus de Brasil, de país estable a negativo. Y Goldman & Sachs (entidad financiera estadounidense) ha lanzado una campaña de sabotaje disfrazada como una "medición de los riesgos económicos": si Lula gana las elecciones presidenciales, el real perderá valor frente al dólar de manera considerable y Brasil suspenderá el pago de la deuda externa.

### ARGENTINA

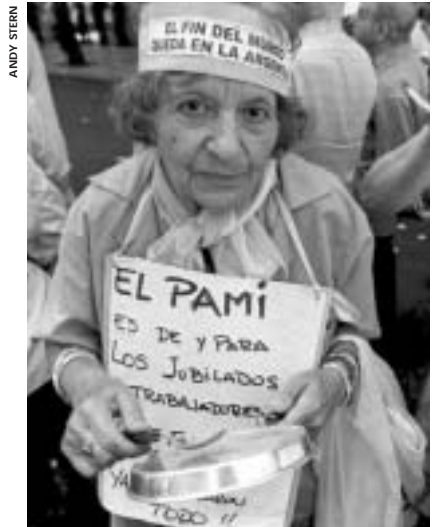
Los lineamientos económicos iniciados por la dictadura militar argentina y continuada por los gobiernos democráticos consistieron en crear una enorme deuda externa y al mismo tiempo destruir la industria nacional y privatizar las empresas estatales. Hoy, la mitad de la población vive en pobreza y es uno de los 15 países con peor distribución de la riqueza en el mundo. Hay un 25 por ciento de la población desempleada y un 25 por ciento subempleada (un total de seis millones de argentinos con problemas de empleo). Desde la crisis del 30 no se ha visto una catástrofe semejante en ningún país sin guerras, ni cataclismos naturales.

### PROPUESTA ALTERNATIVA

"Sin cesar el pago de la deuda y romper toda negociación con el FMI no hay reconstrucción económica posible a favor de los trabajadores. Proponemos cesar el pago de la deuda y romper con el FMI. Se debe impulsar una campaña a escala mundial en el ámbito del denominado "movimiento antiglobalización" para avanzar en la formación de frentes regionales y mundiales contra el pago de las deudas externas. La sublevación popular ha conmocionado al mundo, creando temores al "contagio político del ejemplo argentino" entre los acreedores. Estas condiciones favorecen la batalla por la inmediata decisión soberana de no pagar y romper con el FMI.

Nuestra propuesta propicia, a mediano plazo, la expropiación del conjunto de las empresas privatizadas, sin ningún tipo de indemnización, para remodelar por completo su funcionamiento poniéndolo al servicio del pueblo, abaratando las tarifas, asegurando la inversión y reciclando las ganancias y la renta dentro del circuito productivo nacional.

Un plan productivo con un programa de inversiones públicas decidido socialmente y orientado hacia la reabsorción de la fuerza de trabajo desocupada. Debería desarrollarse un plan de recuperación de las economías regionales sacudidas por la decadencia productiva y la situación generalizada de endeudamiento y asfixia impositiva e implementarse una política de recolonización de tierras y de reforma agraria.



UNA CACEROLERA pide para su jubilación.

Los destinatarios de un plan de reindustrialización deben ser los desempleados, trabajadores, agricultores, comerciantes y cooperativistas, pero nunca los grandes empresarios. Los trabajadores son los principales artífices de un plan viable de reconstrucción económica y en su lucha por prohibir los despidos, reabrir las empresas y distribuir las horas de trabajo ya han desarrollado importantes experiencias de gestión directa.

Nuestro programa rechaza el ALCA y propone otro Mercosur que apunte a priorizar la conquista de las reivindicaciones sociales de la población a través de la coordinación horizontal con los movimientos de lucha de los países vecinos. Y debemos concebir esta integración popular de la región como una plataforma para estrechar nuestros vínculos con todos los pueblos, trabajadores y oprimidos del mundo.

La terrible degradación del país no es un resultado exclusivo del "modelo neoliberal", ni tampoco es solamente el producto de la asfixia creada por el pago de la deuda y la dependencia comercial o tecnológica. La crisis que atraviesa la Argentina es un producto del régimen económico-social imperante, es decir del capitalismo, cuyos patrones de beneficio, concurrencia y explotación permiten el enriquecimiento de una pequeña minoría a costa del sufrimiento del grueso de la población."

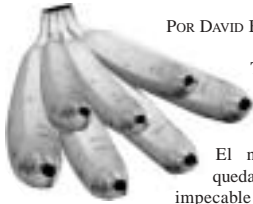
Texto completo: página web Economistas de izquierda, Argentina

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# EL INDEPENDIENTE



## BANANAS CON SANGRE



POR DAVID BACON

TRADUCCIÓN PARA LA  
INSIGNIA: EDUARDO  
STANLEY

El nombre "Bonita" le queda bien a esta fruta casi impecable expuesta en los anaqueles de Costco y de otras tiendas y supermercados del país. La marca Bonita pertenece a Álvaro Noboa, el principal exportador de plátanos de Ecuador, quien envía más plátanos a Estados Unidos que a cualquier otro país. Pero Bonita no es la palabra que usan cientos de trabajadores para describir su experiencia cultivando, cosechando y empacando esa fruta perfecta.

El pasado mes de abril, 1.400 de esos trabajadores organizaron un sindicato en siete plantaciones de Noboa en la Hacienda Los Álamos. Pedían lo que en muchos casos es requerido legalmente a los empleadores. Pidieron aumento de sueldo: el promedio de sus sueldos es inferior al mínimo establecido por ley. Y querían reconocimiento legal para su sindicato, un derecho reconocido en las leyes de Ecuador.

Casi ninguno de los 150.000 trabajadores bananeros de Ecuador, la mayor fuerza laboral en esta industria en América Latina, está sindicalizado, y la reacción de la empresa fue inmediata. Unos 124 trabajadores fueron despedidos de inmediato. A otros de carácter temporal les fue comunicado que ya no había trabajo para ellos. Esfuerzos para negociar con la empresa no dieron resultados y después de que otros tres activistas sindicales fueran despedidos, los trabajadores iniciaron una huelga el 6 de mayo. Nueve días después, en la noche del 15 de mayo, 400 hombres enmascarados y armados con rifles llegaron a una de las plantaciones en huelga en camiones de la empresa Noboa. Invadieron las casas de los huelguistas y robaron pertenencias de muchos de los trabajadores. Jan Nimmo, una observadora escocesa de BananaLink (organización internacional de apoyo a los trabajadores de la industria) dijo que los huelguistas le contaron lo siguiente: "abrieron las puertas a culatazos, sacaron a los trabajadores de sus camas, arrastrándolos y golpeándolos. Semidesnudos... los llevaron en camiones a la radio donde fueron obligados a colocarse boca abajo con las manos en la espalda..." Cuando los huelguistas quisieron resistir fueron baleados. A la noche siguiente, estos hombres dispararon sobre los huelguistas otra vez, hiriendo a varios de ellos. Un fuerte contingente policial arribó al lugar recién al día siguiente, pero los huelguistas que vivían en las casas de la compañía ya habían sido desalojados y rompueruelgas ya habían sido contratados para reiniciar la producción.

El nombre Noboa significa poder en Ecuador. Álvaro Noboa es candidato presidencial en las elecciones para reemplazar al actual presidente. Los trabajadores de la Hacienda Los Álamos afirman que se les exigió, bajo amenaza de despido, de registrarse en el partido político de su patrón, el PRIAN.

En la Hacienda Julia de Noboa, 500 trabajadores se fueron a la huelga el 1º de abril. A fines de ese mes, trabajadores bananeros de la plantación Río Culebra, propiedad de una empresa danesa, también iniciaron una huelga.

Uno de cuatro plátanos cosechados en Ecuador es vendido en supermercados de Estados Unidos o a escuelas u otras instituciones, lo que hace de ese país el mayor

proveedor para los consumidores norteamericanos. Noboa es el mayor productor, seguido por un consorcio llamado La Favorita, luego sigue la empresa norteamericana Chiquita (United Brands), Dole Farming Company y Del Monte. Juntas, estas empresas controlan el mercado mundial del plátano. En la última década, mudaron gran parte de su producción a Ecuador, país que es hoy el principal exportador mundial. Los siguientes cuatro son Colombia, Panamá, Guatemala y Costa Rica.

El mayor atractivo de Ecuador es la falta de sindicatos. Más del 90 por ciento de los trabajadores de Colombia y Panamá están sindicalizados, y 40 por ciento en Guatemala. Solamente Costa Rica, con el seis por ciento de los trabajadores bananeros sindicalizados se acerca al minúsculo uno por ciento de trabajadores ecuatorianos que están organizados (1650 personas). El éxito de la huelga actual en Ecuador contribuirá más que a duplicar el número de trabajadores sindicalizados. También le quitará a los empleadores la ventaja del trabajo de bajo salarios. Además, los sindicatos desafiarán



**BANANEROS EN ECUADOR:** uno por ciento están sindicalizados.

el actual sistema de trabajo por contrato, que casi no existe en otros países productores. O sea que mientras todos los trabajadores del plátano en diferentes países se beneficiarán si FENACLE gana la huelga, los productores buscan evitar dicho triunfo, no solamente Álvaro Noboa.

En esta huelga de Noboa, lo que más está en juego es el porvenir de los hijos de los huelguistas. De acuerdo a un reciente reporte de Human Rights Watch sobre trabajo infantil en las plantaciones bananeras de Ecuador, el salario promedio de un trabajador es de 5,44 dólares. Esto es 41 centavos por debajo del mínimo salarial establecido por la ley. El Ministerio del Trabajo dice que mantener a una familia requiere 288 dólares al mes, o 11,07 dólares por día en una semana de seis días laborables. El trabajo combinado de dos adultos por familia apenas cubre las necesidades básicas.

"Habitaciones de dos metros cuadrados con dos camas regulares donde duermen unas ocho personas es algo normal", dice Jan Nimmo. "No tienen colchones, los trabajadores deben improvisarlos con cartones de las cajas de bananas 'Bonita' al igual que los muebles".

Las leyes ecuatorianas permiten a los niños entre 14 y 17 años trabajar con el permiso de los padres, y a los de 12 a 14 años se les requiere una autorización de la corte. Ninguno de los niños entrevistados tenía esa autorización. Aunque la ley también prohíbe emplear menores en trabajos peligrosos, el trabajo en las plantaciones bananeras los expone a pesticidas cuyo uso está

prohibido en Estados Unidos. Dos de estos, Diazinon y Chlorpyrifos, son rociados sobre los plásticos que los trabajadores usan para envolver los cachos de banana. La agencia EPA advierte que son particularmente peligrosos para los niños, aún en pequeñas dosis. Ambos fueron usados como gases nerviosos durante la II Guerra Mundial.

Diego Rosales, de 14 años de edad, declaró a Human Rights Watch, "cuando pasa el avión, continúan trabajando, cuando el líquido cae sobre tí lo sientes en la piel. Y continúan trabajando." Habitualmente, cuando los niños se sienten enfermos por los químicos, se van a sus casas y regresan al trabajo uno o dos días más tarde.

Representantes de diversos sindicatos norteamericanos (entre ellos el presidente de la AFL-CIO, John Sweeney) protestaron por el maltrato que reciben los huelguistas. Sin embargo, la palabra final vendrá de los consumidores estadounidenses, quienes podrían tomar frente a Bonita la misma actitud de rechazo que tuvieron hace dos décadas con las uvas, por la misma razón.

## ¿COMIDA EN MAL ESTADO?

POR NOEMÍ MORELL

¿El pescado que compró estaba pasado? Es el derecho de cualquier consumidor de exigir que el alimento que compre esté en buen estado. Pero en varias ocasiones, los productos no son precisamente de la calidad esperada.

El Departamento de Sanidad de la ciudad de Nueva York ofrece dos teléfonos para presentar quejas. Si la queja va dirigida contra supermercados, bodegas o comercios, se debe llamar al 718.7222876. Si es contra delis o restaurantes, al 212.6761600. Simplemente se les pregunta su nombre y el del comercio donde les vendieron el producto/comida de mala calidad. El Departamento manda a un inspector para que verifique la calidad y las condiciones sanitarias. En caso de no ser correctas, se procede por vía administrativa a sancionar al comercio en cuestión.

Otra de las opciones que existen es la vía legal. Se trata del procedimiento de Small Claims Court (Corte para reclamos menores). En Nueva York, el límite para reclamar mediante este sistema es de 2000 dólares. La clave de este proceso es su simpleza al tratarse esencialmente de un juicio oral en el que una mera descripción escrita de los hechos basta para iniciar el proceso, incluso existen formularios. La contestación a esta demanda es oral y bastará con que el demandado comparezca ante el tribunal. En el estado existe la posibilidad de llegar a un acuerdo utilizando a un mediador. Un problema de cierta gravedad se presenta cuando el obligado no cumple con el pago de la suma ordenada por el tribunal, ya que algunos tribunales consideran que la ejecución de la sentencia escapa a su competencia, requiriendo para ello la iniciación de un procedimiento civil ordinario, con el consecuente costo y demora que ello acarrea. La duración del proceso, en teoría no suele ser de más de una semana, aunque en la práctica suele demorarse más.