PHOTO ESSAY: AN IMMIGRANT’S TALE

ILL COMMUNICATION

FCC REMOVES TAINT OF MEDIA DIVERSITY

BY F. TIMOTHY MARTIN

On June 2 the Federal Communications Commission held a much-anticipated hearing to decide the fate of broadcast ownership rules.

The outcome of their vote offered little surprise. Split 3-2 along party lines, the FCC voted to loosen longstanding media ownership regulations.

Opponents of media deregulation fear that the relaxation of broadcast rules will lead to further consolidation of media ownership at the expense of local and diverse news coverage.

According to a statement released immediately after the hearing by Democratic commissioner Michael Copps, the rule changes, kept secret from the public until the hearing, will now enable:

- **National concentration:** A national television network will be able to acquire dozens of local broadcaster stations and control up to 90 percent of the national television market.
- **Local concentration:** A single corporation will be able to acquire, in one city, up to four television stations, eight radio stations, the cable TV system, numerous cable TV stations, and the only daily newspaper.
- **Television:** A recent study by *The Economist* found that the five networks and top ten cable channels make up 90 percent of what U.S. viewers watch.
- **Cable:** According to the Foundation for Public Integrity, AOL Time Warner, Viacom (CBS) and Walt Disney (ABC) control 12 of the top 20 cable networks. Since the Telecom Act of 1996 cable rates have jumped 40 percent.
- **Internet:** More than 35 million people log on to the Internet using AOL as their service provider. That’s opposed to 10 million for MSN, its nearest competitor. One recent survey found that 96 percent of internet users continue to use MSN.
- **Radio:** Sixty percent of top radio stations are owned by Clear Channel Communications or one of two other corporations.

Ignoring Public Interest

In late May the Center for Public Integrity published a scathing report that said FCC commissioners received $2.8 million in travel and entertainment gifts from the very industries the agency regulates. In the past eight years commissioners were treated to a total of 2,500 privately funded trips, with Las Vegas and New Orleans being the most popular destinations. Chairman Michael Powell was the biggest recipient of this largesse, racking up 44 trips at an expense of $84,921.

Perhaps as a result, Powell’s FCC has blatantly favored private interests over those of the public. Industry leaders including Rupert Murdoch, CEO of News Corporation – one of the world’s biggest media conglomerates with control over FOX News, numerous cable TV stations, two local radio stations, the cable TV system, and top ten cable channels make up 90 percent of what U.S. viewers watch.

A recent CNN poll said 96 percent of respondents believed there was already too much consolidation in the media.

A recent Senate hearing investigating the radio giant, members of the Senate voiced their concerns.

“When you pump in homogenized programming, isn’t that troubling in terms of localism?” asked Sen. Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.), who keeps an office in the town of Minot where Clear Channel owns all 6 commercial radio stations.

The senator knows that is not only troubling, it can be deadly.

In January, 2002, when a train derailment released poisonous gas into the air of Minot, no one could reach any of the local radio stations to announce the news. The station offices were all locked and empty as they broadcast canned programming from a Clear Channel warehouse. One person died and over 300 were sent to the hospital.

Copps has been vocal about the consequences of eliminating ownership rules for radio. “The consolidation went far beyond what anyone expected,” he said during a speech at Columbia University.

ROAMING FOR PROFIT

Since May 1995, FCC staffers have taken a total of 2,500 industry-sponsored trips to destinations including Paris, Hong Kong and Rio de Janeiro.

- **San Francisco**
- **Anaheim**
- **Orlando**
- **London**
- **New York**
- **New Orleans**
- **Las Vegas**
- **Chicago**
- **Atlanta**
- **Orlando**
- **Minneapolis**
- **N.D.), who keeps an office in the town of Minot where Clear Channel owns all 6 commercial radio stations.**

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continued on page 4
RENTERS FACE EVICTION
PHIPPS PLAZA WEST RESIDENTS FACE SOARING RENTS AS DEVELOPERS BUY OUT HOUSING COMPLEX

"It's a huge scandal, says Neil Fabricant, President of the Independence Plaza Tenants Association in Tribeca, "to have billions of dollars in taxpayer money invested in the most successful public housing program in the history of the country and take that and allow a handful of political hustlers to keep all the money and kick people out of their homes."

BY JOHN TARLETON

Beth Royer lies awake on many nights wondering whether she will lose her $430- a-month studio apartment at Phipps Plaza West on 27th St. and 2nd Ave. Carol LaVerne doesn't know what to do if management succeeds in jacking up her rent up from $768 to $1,700 per month. Sylvia Mendel has a recurring nightmare in which she wakes up in her bed to the sounds of moving men carting away her possessions. She protests, but is invisible to them.

While Phipps Plaza West's roughly 2,500 working- and middle-class residents anxiously wonder what will happen next as investors seek to buy out their Mitchell-Lama development and begin charging full market rates, older women like Royer, LaVerne and Mendel who live alone face an especially uncertain future as New York's housing crisis deepens.

More than 30 percent of the tenants at Phipps Plaza West are over 60 years old, a disproportionate number of them being widows or divorcees who only began earning good money later in life.

"Women in my position are always at risk of homelessness," says Mendel, 73, President of the Phipps Plaza West Tenants Association. "It's a like a small town in the middle of the big city," says one longtime resident who is a television scriptwriter. "It's different than living in a tenement across the street where you're anonymous and there is no community."

Mitchell-Lama rents are calibrated according to income, and residents have the luxury of knowing that temporarily losing their job doesn't also have to mean losing their home. However, many Mitchell-Lama residents (including Fabricant, who once served as counsel to the Tenants Association) say that they were unaware of the buyout clause and its implications.

Phipps Plaza West's 65 limited partners announced their intention to buy out in January 2002. The Tenants Association responded with a lawsuit that has delayed but not reversed the buyout. The limited partners meeting the final green light to buy out later this month. Management fixed a May 30 deadline for individual tenants to renew their leases after the development was removed from the Mitchell-Lama program. The Tenants Association's legal team initially urged residents not to renew while the case was being litigated but subsequently reversed itself.

The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has offered Section 8 vouchers to about 600 low-income residents to help cover the rent hike. For Royer, who gets by on a $560-a-month Social Security check, the voucher is little consolation since it can be rescinded at any time in the future. Also, the Section 8 program itself may soon be terminated (see "In Brief," page 3) by the Bush administration. Other residents, like LaVerne, who earns just above the maximum income threshold, will receive no assistance.

Faced with losing their homes, LaVerne, Mendel and Royer are looking to politicians for help. On May 13 they joined a couple thousand tenants rights activists in Albany to lobby the Legislature. They managed to obtain a meeting with an aide to State Senate Majority Leader Joe Bruno (R-Rensselaer) but their concerns were politely dismissed.

"We heard the attitude loud and clear: 'We don't want to do anything to offend the landlords.' It was like, 'You had 20 good years, what is there to complain about?'" With Mitchell-Lama developments gradually being privatized, some of their tenants association presidents have recently begun meeting to plot a common strategy. On June 25, they will hold a protest at City Hall to put pressure on Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who they believe should be making more of an effort to persuade local developers and state leaders in Albany to preserve the Mitchell-Lama program.

"This is a part of a larger issue which is to say housing be left to the market?" Mendel says. "They say the market will correct itself, but what does that mean for people like me?"
DEATH BY A THOUSAND CUTS
SUICIDE HELP LINE VICTIM OF BUDGET CRISIS

BY SASHA NEVSKAYA

“Death is shooting itself in the face with this cut,” Councilwoman Margarita Lopez warned at a May 15 hearing of the city council’s Mental Health Committee. She was referring to plans to axe funding for the Samaritans, New York City’s only nondenominational, around-the-clock volunteer organizations, providing suicide hotline volunteers operate on a principle of “befriending” – a concept of compassionate and comforting listening. They go through five months of intensive training. “There are huge advantages in employing every day people for the hotline – they are proficient in human compassion and [the] ability to bear witness to somebody else’s pain,” says Buser.

The Samaritans receive around 37,000 calls a year, the majority of which come from callers who have already contacted other agencies and are getting professional help. The group occupies a unique niche providing a 24-hour safety net for people in crisis. The Samaritans have received support from several council members in addition to Lopez, who chairs the Mental Health Committee. Lopez and Samaritans volunteers argue that in these times of cutbacks mental health services, cutting funding for what is often the community’s last resort for desperate people would be dangerous. Unfortunately, the suicide hotline may well be struggling for its own life after the city makes its final budget decisions this month.

The author is currently a volunteer at the Samaritans.

NYC DEATHS:

The city will take $1.7 million from the department this year to pay the settlement and provide the services. Dr. Lloyd I. Sederer, Executive Deputy Commissioner of DOHMH, states that this diversion of funds will cause several programs to be shut down along with two children’s mental health clinics – one in Harlem and one in the Bronx.

DOHMH is also planning to save money by scaling back the New York Housing program, which provides housing to the mentally ill. “Probably the most acute need in the sector of mental hygiene is for housing,” says David Bergman of the Coalition of Voluntary Mental Health Agencies. Bergman notes that DOHMH provides few direct mental health services, but rather contracts with other organizations, most of them nonprofit or volunteer agencies such as the Samaritans.

DOHMH is rationalizing its proposed funding cuts by arguing that the suicide hotline calls will be absorbed by mental health professionals at Lifenet, the Project Liberty hotline and referral service that has been widely advertised since 11/1. But Lifenet does not provide the same immediate emotional support services, and in fact refers many calls to the Samaritans.

Subscriptions rate: $27/year (23 issues). Angel rate: $100/year. Make checks payable to the NYC INDEPENDENT at 285 Fifth Avenue, 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10016. Or for even faster service email your address to indy subscriby@yahoo.com and we will begin your subscription right away!
More programming originates hundreds of miles away from listeners and their communities. And, they are 34 percent fewer radio station owners than there were before safeguards were eliminated.

On May 29th of 2003, 29 protesters picketed outside Clear Channel offices to show their disdain for the growing monopoly in the radio industry. Critics point out that Clear Channel stations choose songs from limited play lists, thus stifling independent artists and any semblance of diversity. Clear Channel also heavily employs the use of Voice Tracking, a system where computer-assisted voice segments are used to fool listeners into thinking the program is locally produced.

Giving a reader a possible taste of things to come, the June 2 issue of the New York Times reported on a FOX news affiliate that has only a smattering of Variety programming. The article advises the FCC to monitor FOX's hard-right perspective boosted it immediately afterwards, only two percent of Americans believed Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. But a year of White House bellowing — dutifully relayed to the public as news — had the desired effect. Nowadays, numerous polls trumpet that more than half of Americans think the fallen dictator bears responsibility for the attacks.

Predictably, the same is true of weapons of mass destruction. After months of baseless allegations, a recent University of Maryland poll finds that 41 percent of Americans believe such weapons have been uncovered in Iraq or aren’t sure. Even more astonishing, the poll found that 31 percent of Americans think Iraq used weapons of mass destruction during the war.

There’s plenty of blame to spread around: profit-driven media, a blissfully ignorant public, and a corrupt FCC and Congress.

Media consolidation is another factor. When news is just another commodity, why do investigative or international reporting? Both are expensive with no guaranteed payoff.

Further concentration means fewer perspectives. But so does extremism. There was plenty of “diversity” and “localism” during the McCarthy era, but that didn’t stop the press from egging on the anti-Communist witchhunts.

FOX’s hard-right perspective boosted it into first place in all-news stations during the war and got it favored treatment from the Pentagon. The results haven’t gone unnoticed. MSNBC dumped Phil Donahue because it was afraid of treatment from the Pentagon. The results haven’t gone unnoticed. MSNBC dumped Phil Donahue because it was afraid of the Taliban and Al Qaeda.

A generation earlier, “yellow journalism” became a household phrase during the Spanish-American War. In 1897 publisher Randolph Hearst is said to have telegraphed illustrator Frederick Remington in Cuba, “You furnish the pictures and I’ll furnish the war.”

“Remember the Maine” became the slogan of a rogue media willing to trade in rumor and lies to boost its readership. America’s modern-day Maine is the World Trade Center. The fact that the Spanish had no role in the Maine’s destruction was as irrelevant then as is the overwhelming lack of evidence today that Iraq played any role in Sept. 11.

The decline of journalism stems primarily from public apathy about government and its ability to have a positive impact on people’s lives. Plus, economic uncertainty keeps most people too busy to worry about the corruption, crimes, and outages of the Bush regime. It’s no wonder most Americans prefer the World’s Wildest Police Videos over C-SPAN.

The fall of journalism began in the 1980s with the rise of the fairness doctrine. The FCC had never before enforced the fairness doctrine, which required broadcasters to give equal time to opposing points of view. In 1985, the FCC ruled that allowing a broadcaster to give equal time to opposing viewpoints amounted to favoring one viewpoint over another.

The fairness doctrine was overturned by the Supreme Court in 1988, which ruled that the FCC had overstepped its authority. The court also ruled that the FCC had no authority to regulate the content of broadcast programming.

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The episode concerning a New York Times reporter who carried out an extravagant journalistic deception was of enormous interest to me. It made me laugh; it is hilarious. It is very funny because the reporters, editors and publisher of the Times have long ceased to be professional journalists; they are amateurs.

Any good newspaper person can recognize a liar. That is part of the job. But it isn’t part of the job anymore for those working on the Times. It is no longer interesting after the 1950s.

They long ago traded in their professional status for their $80,000-a-year plus salaries. They really don’t give a damn anymore what they have to do to pick up those paychecks.

The Times now runs and manages the news, misleading and misinforming the public every day. It has become a semi-official organ of the United States government.

That is why it beats the rest of the mass media by at least a day with official announcements. The fellows in Washington give them a break. That is the pay-off the Times gets from its naiveté. The Bush administration dispenses as news and information.

The government-media deception arguably started in 1947 with the passage of the National Security Act, which required loyalty oaths from 2,200,000 executive branch employees. It has become a semi-official organ of the United States government.

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1993-1945
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1950
Amid McCarthy-era communist witch-hunts, Times management buckles under government pressure, pressuring and firing employees who were former communists. New York Times publisher Arthur Hays Sulzberger himself publishes an op-ed that strongly criticizes witnesses’ use of the Fifth Amendment before the House Committee on Un-American Activities.

1954
Allen Dulles, then head of the CIA, persuades Sulzberger to keep staff reporter Walter Duranty from “talking” about Guatemala. The Stalin sympathizer later resigned from the Times.

1982
Times reporter Raymond Bonner is completing a story on the 1981 massacre of 800 civilians in El Mozote, El Salvador by the U.S.-trained Atlacatl Battalion when his publishers remove him from the Central American beat. The Administration subsequently convinces Congress to bankroll a series of Central American wars that killed an estimated 200,000 people during the 1980s.

1993
In order to supplement its relentlessly positive, pro-North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) coverage, the Times solicits advertisers to publish “advertorials” that promote NAFTA-related business.

2001
The New York Times initiates the new discredited investigation of a Russian scientist. The Times sends these pro-NAFTA businesses a letter stating that it does not and cannot publish “advertorials” that promote NAFTA-related business.

2002
In a press conference in the early fall, British Prime Minister Tony Blair and George W. Bush claim that a “new” report from the United Nations’ International Atomic Energy Agency states Iraq is “six months away” from building a nuclear weapon. The next day, New York Times correspondent Judith Miller and Michael Gordon write, “Iraq has stepped up its quest for nuclear weapons and has embarked on a worldwide hunt for materials to make an atomic bomb.” The Bush administration officials said today, “The only problem? No “new” report was ever published by the atom agency.

Donald Paneth is a former reporter for The New York Times and the author of The Encyclopedia of American Journalism and other books.
BUSH DELIVERS EMERGENCY AIDS RELIEF TO CORPORATE AND RELIGIOUS CRONIES

BY JOHN TARLETON

George W. Bush signed a five-year, $15 billion global AIDS relief bill to much fanfare last week in advance of the Group of 8 Summit in Evian, France. Besides giving Bush a PR boost, the measure may turn out to be of more help to U.S. pharmaceutical companies, “faith-based” religious groups and the biotech industry than to the citizens of 14 African and Caribbean countries covered by the initiative.

The measure amounts to more than half of the relief money for treatment. With the Bush administration largely circumventing the multilateral Global AIDS Fund, this is likely to be a thinly disguised giveaway to the Bush companies, which have fought a losing battle to prevent countries in the Global South from manufacturing generic versions of life-saving AIDS medications (see box).

“The devil is really in the details. The G8 and African leaders, goal of eradication malaria has been halved deaths by 2010 will remain a fantasy unless donors are willing to help pay for treatment that works,” says Dr. Bernard Pécoul, director of Doctors Without Borders.

An April 2003 report by the group, “ACT-HIV” shows that major donor agencies are for treatment that works,” says Dr. Bernard Pécoul, director of Doctors Without Borders, Action, a Washington, D.C.-based advocacy group.

An amendment by Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) to guarantee that drugs of assured quality were purchased at the lowest possible price was watered down by the Republican majority. The GOP received $20 million from the pharmaceutical industry in the 2002 election cycle, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.

Another 20 percent of Bush’s relief funding goes to prevention. One-third of the prevention money will go to faith-based programs, even though public health officials widely consider them to be ineffective.

An additional 10 percent of the funding will go to orphan care. Faith-based groups will be eligible for at least half of that money. “It’s just giving an increased role to faith-based organizations that is inappropriate,” Book said.

“Any U.S. program that doesn’t go through the Global AIDS Fund would have to buy U.S. products from U.S. companies and have to pay inflated prices for drugs that will go to fewer people and save fewer lives,” said Sahil Booker of Africa Action, a Washington, D.C.-based advocacy group.

Upon signing the AIDS relief bill, Bush vowed to challenge America’s key allies at the G8 Summit in Evian, France. Besides giving Bush a PR boost, the measure may turn out to be one of soaring budget deficits. The fact that Bush is only asking for $1.7 billion in AIDS relief funding for fiscal year 2004 suggests where his administration’s priorities may lie. A House amendment that would have mandated full funding of Bush’s initiative was decisively rejected.

“The devil is really in the details. Between the tax cuts and all the money being spent on terrorism, there’s little discretionary money left,” PangaGlobal AIDS Foundation policy director Fred Dillon told the San Francisco Chronicle. “It will be extremely difficult.”

The U.S. spends 0.12 percent of its GNP (or about $12 billion) on foreign aid, and to the stingiest any major industrial country. There’s no guarantee how much of the $15 billion in AIDS money will actually be disbursed.

Congress has to reallocate the money each year until 2008 a period that is likely to be one of soaring budget deficits. The fact that Bush is only asking for $1.7 billion in AIDS relief funding for fiscal year 2004 suggests where his administration’s priorities may lie. A House amendment that would have mandated full funding of Bush’s initiative was decisively rejected.

“Donors, especially the United States and the United Kingdom, are objecting to ACT’s higher cost. While older drugs cost around $0.10, an adult dose of ACT currently costs about $1.50, but is expected to drop to $0.50-$0.80 in 2004-2005. Whether the West will decide to eradicate malaria by providing the necessary funding for this new treatment remains to be seen.

THE TOLL: MALARIA AND OTHER DEADLY DISEASES

MALARIA

300-500 million new cases/year, 1-2 million deaths/year, 90 percent in Africa.

AIDS

42 million current cases; 3 million deaths in 2002 worldwide.

CANCER

10 million new cases/year; 6 million deaths in 2000 worldwide.

TUBERCULOSIS

8 million new cases of active TB/year; 2 million deaths/year, mainly in poor countries.

INFLUENA

3-5 million cases/year; 250,000-500,000 deaths/year worldwide.

DONORS ASKED TO PAY FOR MALARIA TREATMENT THAT WORKS

BY VANESSA HRADSKY

In December 2000, G8 members meeting on Okinawa promised to fight infectious diseases, AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. One of the objectives of the G8 established for the year 2010 was a reduction in cases of malaria by fifty percent. Yet, malaria incidence remains the same.

Malaria cases account for 30-50 percent of hospital admissions and a loss of $12 billion per year in Africa. It is the leading cause of death for children under five, and kills an African child every 30 seconds.

“The G8 and African leaders, goal of halving deaths by 2010 will remain a fantasy unless donors are willing to help pay for treatment that works,” says Dr. Bernard Pécoul, director of Doctors Without Borders, Campaign for Access to Essential Medicines.

An April 2003 report by the group, “ACT Now,” shows that major donor agencies are continuing to support cheap but failing malaria treatments in Africa despite a rising death toll. The report states that there were four times as many malaria cases in the 1990s as in the 1970s, and death rates in African hospitals rose two-to-three fold.

The increased treatment failure has been caused primarily by the continuing use of drugs that have become ineffective due to high levels of resistance. The report calls on international donors to support the rapid implementation of artemisinin-based combination therapy (ACT), a proven treatment promoted by the World Health Organization. Chloroquine, the treatment of choice for malaria since 1969, led to falling death rates until the early 1980s, but no longer works in most countries.

Donors, especially the United States and the United Kingdom, are objecting to ACT’s higher cost. While older drugs cost around $0.10, an adult dose of ACT currently costs about $1.50, but is expected to drop to $0.50-$0.80 in 2004-2005.

While tens of thousands of protesters rallied miles away, Bush calmly repeated his AIDS-fighting mantra calling it a “moral duty” to fight the disease. French President Jacques Chirac urged European leaders to match the U.S. initiative and praised Bush saying [He] took a decision in this area that I would not hesitate to call historic.”

If Bush and company truly wish to alleviate Africa’s AIDS crisis, they could begin by canceling the continent’s unpayable foreign debt. IMF and World Bank austerity programs have decimated Africa’s public health systems over the past two decades. The $15 billion-plus per year in interest African nations are currently paying on debts accumulated under various military dictators dwarfs the size of any donations – real or fictitious – that Western countries have bestowed on them.

Sources: World Health Organization, Medecins Sans Frontieres.
BACK TO BUSINESS:
TEAR GAS AND HOT AIR ENVELOP G8 SUMMIT

BY CHRIS ANDERSON

Once again, mainstream media reports about the meeting of the Group of 8 (G8) in Evian, France, tended to settle in one of two camps: stilted regurgitations of the official pronouncements from the world's most powerful white men; or histrionic tales of "rioting anarchists," "violent protesters" and "the end of the anti-globalization movement." As usual the reality of the events was squashed in the middle.

Two years after massive demonstrations against the G8 in Genoa, Italy, saw the death of one protester, and two months since the end of the American-led invasion of Iraq, the first relatively accessible economic summit since September 11, 2001, opened amid a host of questions. How much wind remained in the sails of the global justice movement following the massive but ultimately unsuccessful attempt to stop the war following the massive but ultimately unsuccessful anti-war movement may be less encouraging. Much, however, remains to be seen. From June 20-25, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and representatives from more than 180 countries will meet in Sacramento, California. And this fall, the WTO meets in Cancun for what some are calling "the most important WTO meeting ever."

G8 BACKGROUND

WHERE THE ELITE MEET TO CARVE UP THE PLANET

NOTE: This article has been adapted from "A Seed Europe" at www.aseed.net.

Created in 1975, the Group of 8 has consistently pushed for a model of economic globalization that benefits large multinational corporations. Although G8 meetings are supposedly informal, the outcome of many meetings is enforced by international institutions like the IMF, WB and WTO. The G8 can be seen as a kind of world government, as its discussions and decisions influence the economies and the daily lives of people all over the world.

MONETARY POLICY

The G8 (originally seven countries – U.S., U.K., France, Italy, Germany, Canada and Japan – Russia joined in recent years) was created in the transitional period between the Bretton Woods era, also known as the "Keynesian order" and today's "neo-liberal order." Before this time, global trade was limited, and countries had far greater freedom to pursue their own monetary policies and to protect their national currency and economy. Beginning in the 1970s, exchange rates (and the dollar especially) began to fluctuate unpredictably. Soaring inflation and rising interest rates also caused concern. The necessity of imposing more international coordination led to the creation of what became known as "the G8." Discussions mainly focused on monetary stability and macro-economic agreements to prevent some countries from devaluing their currency or adopting protectionist measures at the expense of other wealthy nations.

GEOPOLITICS

In recent years, discussions at G8 meetings have been primarily about geopolitical issues like hunger, debt and security. The war in Iraq and mud-slinging between France, Germany and the U.S. weighed heavily on G8 discussions this year. G8 leaders usually do their utmost to present the G8 as a "charity summit," and this year's meetings were no exception. However, pronouncements that promise a few cheap medicines here, a few million Euro worth of debt relief there, have historically amounted to very little.

GROWING OPPOSITION

Protests against G8 policies first garnered public attention in 1998, as over 70,000 people demanding Third World debt relief formed a "human protest chain" at a G8 meeting in Birmingham, England. Similar protests followed in 1999 at the G8 meetings in Cologne, Germany, from June 18-20. The 1999 meetings were significant due to both the G8 "international solidarity protests" that occurred in dozens of cities, as well as the violence that marred London protests on June 18. The largest anti-G8 protests to date occurred in Genoa, Italy, in July 2001. Hundreds of thousands of people protested the summit; police provocateurs and a small group of thugs incited violent street riots; a young Italian anarchist was shot and killed by police, and an Indymedia center was attacked by cops. In 2002, the G8 fled to the largely inaccessible mountains of Kananaskis, Canada.
AFGHANISTAN’S HIDDEN KILLER

Afghans from Nangarhar province suffer from uranium contamination at levels 100 to 400 times that of 1953 Gulf War veterans, according to a recent study released by the Uranium Medical Research Center in Washington. Nangarhar was at the receiving end of new “cave-busting” and seismic shock warheads. Although scientists found no traceable health effects or symptoms exhibited by hundreds of civilians closely mirror that of Gulf War Syndrome which has been acknowledged by the U.S. military. The report concludes that if Nangarhar’s levels are corroborated throughout Afghanistan, the country will face a severe public health risk.

BASQUES GAIN IN SPAIN

Spain’s main Basque political party, Batasuna, received ten percent of the ballot in Madrid’s regional election, sending Basque nationalists to the Regional Assembly. Despite being banned by the Spanish Supreme Court in early March, Basque separatists who claim their war for independence is still raging, remained undeterred.

N. IRELAND ELECTIONS CANCELED

May 29 – Led by Sinn Fein President, Gerry Adams, thousands protested in Northern Ireland against Tony Blair’s unilateral cancellation of Assembly elections. While Blair claims the cancellation was necessary because of the IRA’s failure to declare an end to all violence, the referendum was rejected by over 70% of voters, leading to a government crisis.

ASHCROFT FIGHTS THE LAW

Attorney General John Ashcroft has launched a sweeping attack against a 214-year-old law that has helped provide justice to Nazi Holocaust victims and peasants from Latin America and Asia.

ASHCROFT WANTS TO LOCK ‘EM UP NOW TO USE LATER

By Ann M. Schneider

FOR THE NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD

What’s Latin good for? Isn’t it a dead language? Not when your lawyer’s knowledge.

WASHINGTON POST


The Progressive quotes Dean as saying, “It’s a pathetic thing that I’m the most progressive candidate,” among those considered to have a serious shot at the nomination.

As the issues drift further from the war in Iraq, expect Dean’s campaign to drift further among the middle. His stich is not the war in Iraq or even representing “the Democratic wing of the Democratic Party.” He is a socially liberal, fiscally conservative, policies bear comparison to Bill Clinton, another small-state governor who followed the middle of the road all the way to the White House.

HOWARD DEAN:

“YANKEE DOODLE BLANDY”

By Chris Fleisher

“I’m Howard Dean, and I’m here to represent the Democratic wing of the Democratic Party.” If this phrase seems familiar, it’s because the late Minnesota Senator Paul Wellstone employed these same words in his re-election bid shortly before his death last year. While Wellstone, Dean seems to believe what he is saying. But unlike Wellstone, Dean’s record is far from consistently liberal. Though he is no longer unique among Democratic candidates, we should remember the “so on the war in Iraq, many liberals remain attached to Dean as their candidate for 2004. Rob Reiner has endorsed Dean, and his anti-war speeches have been met with enthusiastic applause. But what about important liberal issues consonant with Dean’s record? For example, gun control and the environment?

On the environment, Dean is ambigious. He opposes Bush for his rejection of the Kyoto Protocol, yet says “we have to make practical trade-offs for ‘houses, jobs and opportunities for growth.’ ” Vermont Senator Madelyne Cohen has accused Dean of taking a “laissez faire task over his record, accusing him of paving the way for business interests at the expense of environmental protection.

“Dean’s attempt to run for president as an environmentalist is nothing but a fraud,” said Annette Smith, the director of Vermonters for a Clean Environment, in an interview with Wild Matters. “He’s destroyed the Agency of Natural Resources, he’s refused to meet with environmentalists while constantly meeting with the development community, and he’s made the permitting process one big, dysfunctional joke.”

In addition, Dean has turned to healthcare and, as a former physician, Dean would appear to have the inside track. Though he prescribes national health care such as those found in Canada and France, he has taken note of what happened to Hillary Clinton years ago and is being careful not to present a plan that appears too radical.

Under Dean’s plan, states would be required to guarantee coverage for all children under age 23 while the federal government would assume responsibility for drug and acute medical care for Americans ages 65. For those between the ages 23 and 65, insurance from the private sector would be the first line of defense, with federal subsidies covering low and moderate income groups. Dean has made no lack in effect, requires for providers will change while leaving the exact protection.

Despite these moderate positions, Dean’s antiterror speeches have the press crowning him as the great liberal hope for 2004. Here are some recent headlines:

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SOCIALISM LIVES! (IN IRAQ)

BY BARBARA EHRENREICH

With Washington fixated on the looming policy war between the Departments of State and Defense, almost no one has noticed an even stranger development within the Bush administration – its sudden, and apparently wholehearted, embrace of socialismo.

Echoing sentiments expressed in an earlier era by Eugene V. Debs and Woody Guthrie, Colin Powell declared recently, “Iraq’s oil belongs to the Iraqi people.” Some have been quick to dismiss this as yet another example of the Bush administration’s shifting and often contradictory policies, and there is no shortage of examples. But Powell’s statement is notable for its lack of any kind of qualification.

In fact, the conservative press is filled with ideas for how to distribute the wealth to the people and keep it out of the hands of “Iraqi elites.”

In addition to spreading the oil wealth around, the Bush administration has committed itself to generous public services – though only, so far, in Iraq. Schools will be repaired, damaged infrastructure rebuilt and education made available even to the poorest. There will be quality health care for all. Imagine: A comprehensive health care system for all Americans!

Did I say socialism? Make that democratic socialism, verging on utopian anarchism. In President Bush’s vision of the ideal state, there will be perfect democracy combined with a swiftly forgiving attitude toward wrongdoers. Already, Iraqis are free to demonstrate by the thousands, shouting, “Americans get out!” and even worse.

Commenting on the looting that swept Baghdad in the first days of that city’s invasion by U.S. troops, Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld stated (defense lawyers please take note): “It’s untidy. And freedom’s untidy. And free people are free to make mistakes and commit crimes and do bad things.”

That’s not, I suspect, what Rumsfeld was saying after the rioting that followed the Rodney King decision.

What came over the Bush administration, which has in this country engaged in a relentless campaign to limit civil liberties and eliminate the last shreds of the welfare state? Is it possible that military triumph – no matter how inevitable given the weakness of the enemy – has melted their hard little hearts? Those who study domestic violence say that a wife abuser is likely to display uncommon warmth and affection just after administering a hearty beating. So too, perhaps, our leaders who, having briefly sated their aggressions in Iraq, are now filled with the milk of human kindness.

Actually, someone has noticed the administration’s swerve to the left: the sharp- eyed Maxine Waters. A Los Angeles Times column reports: “Much to her surprise, the federal government is promising to do everything Los Angeles Congresswoman Maxine Waters has spent years fighting for [she] just never figured the beneficiaries would be residents of Iraq.”

In an age of armed conflict, there has never been an outcome quite like this, where the victors coddle the defeated enemy while visiting misery on their own people.

As for the troops we were all vigorously enjoined to “support” with our flags and yellow ribbons – they will come home to find that their veterans’ benefits, cut by an estimated $15 billion over the next 10 years. American veterans’ hospitals, which already resemble the looted hospitals of downtown Baghdad, will soon have fewer amenities to offer than mosques.

There is a solution, and I do not mean the “brave, exasperating work of building a mass movement for social justice in the homeland. No, it’s far simpler than that: The solution is mass emigration to Iraq.

There’s plenty of available housing in Iraq, though mostly of the “handyman’s special” variety, thanks to the unfortunate side effects of the American liberation.

It’s still a challenge to get a visa, of course, because of the defunct condition of the Iraqi Embassy, but a nice letter to Jarret, Garner or his new boss, L. Paul Bremer III, may do the trick.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AIR GRIEVANCES AT UNITED NATIONS

BY JENNIFER TIERNEY

There is something to be said for perseverance. Eventually, it pays off.

To Marcos Terena, a chief of the Terena tribe in Brazil, “eventually” stretches into perseverance. Eventually, it pays off.

Echoing sentiments expressed in an earlier era by Eugene V. Debs and Woody Guthrie, Colin Powell declared recently, “Iraq’s oil belongs to the Iraqi people.”

In President Bush’s vision of the new century, will be created with a snap of the fingers: a perfect democracy, free of corruption; a comprehensive health care system for all; a comprehensive education system; a comprehensive system of public services – though only, so far, in Iraq.

The U.N. created the Forum in 2000, six years into what it declared the “Decade of Indigenous People.”

The U.N. bureaucracy, he added. “If we use indigenous people, and then we’ll see.”

As for the troops we were all vigorously enjoined to “support” with our flags and yellow ribbons – they will come home to find that their veterans’ benefits, cut by an estimated $15 billion over the next 10 years. American veterans’ hospitals, which already resemble the looted hospitals of downtown Baghdad, will soon have fewer amenities to offer than mosques.

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Azelene Kigang wants Brazil to recognize native land rights.
After two years working 12 hour shifts at $6 an hour for Superflex Limited, a hose factory in Sunset Park (Brooklyn), Antonio López, an undocumented immigrant, woke up one morning soaked in blood. Hospitalized for 15 days, he was diagnosed with severe kidney deficiency, a result of chemical poisoning of his blood. “We weren’t given gloves, masks, nothing. I’m not surprised I was poisoned” says Lopez. “We couldn’t even take a break. They made us have lunch right next to the machines with the chemicals.”

That was October 2000. Since then López has been unable to work. Three times a week he attends a hospital several miles away where his blood is cleansed by a dialysis machine that does the work of his destroyed kidneys. Each session takes up to three hours and he has permanent tubes placed under the skin of his right arm.

López lives alone in Bushwick, in the basement of a building owned by a friend. On treatment days he has to take the subway at 4:30 a.m. to the Nephrology Foundation on Coney Island where Medicaid will cover the cost of his treatment and prescription charges. At least for the moment.

Three years on, the case against Superflex Limited has still not gone to court due to the constant appeals made by company lawyers. López’s legal representation is Make the Road By Walking, a non-profit organization in Bushwick that campaigns against labor injustices encountered by immigrants.

“When I returned to the factory after two kidney operations, my boss told me he was firing me because he didn’t want workers with health problems. The first few months were tough because I didn’t know who to turn to. Then a priest at my local church told me about Make the Road By Walking where I was able to share my experience with other workers. In only 15 days their lawyers had prepared my case and filed suit.”

Make the Road By Walking is now a vital part of López’s life. “I call round whenever I feel up to it. I’m now on the team responsible for the Labor Justice project. I do a bit of everything from administrative tasks and organization to making dinner. It’s a way of feeling useful.”

To get more information: about Make The Road By Walking or Antonio López, visit www.maketheroad.org or call (718) 418-7690.

AN IMMIGRANT’S TALE
EN LOS BRAZOS DE EE.UU.

STORY + PHOTOS: LOURDES DELGADO
Tras trabajar dos años fabricando mangueras, en turnos de doce horas, para Superflex Limited en Sunset Park (Brooklyn), Antonio López, un inmigrante indocumentado, despertó el 14 de octubre del 2000 bañado en sangre. Después de quince días en el hospital fue diagnosticado con una grave deficiencia renal por intoxicación de la sangre con sustancias químicas.

“No nos permitían tomar ni un descanso; incluso nos hacían comer al lado de las máquinas”, explica Antonio López, quien por ese empleo ganaba sólo $6 la hora. “Como no nos daban ni guantes, ni mascarillas, ni nada, no es extraño que me envenenara”.

Desde entonces se encuentra incapacitado para trabajar y necesita diálisis tres veces por semana. En este tratamiento, una máquina hace las veces de riñón, aspirando la sangre mediante unos tubos permanentes colocados bajo la piel de su brazo derecho, elimina los residuos y la devuelve limpia al organismo. Cada sesión dura más de tres horas y es extenuante.

Antonio López vive solo en Bushwick, en el sótano del edificio de un amigo. Los días de tratamiento, a las 4:30 de la mañana, debe tomar el tren subterráneo hacia la Fundación Nefrológica de Coney Island, donde un Medicaid temporal le cubre los gastos de la diálisis y de los medicamentos. Al menos por el momento.

Aunque han pasado casi tres años, el juicio contra Superflex Limited sigue pendiente debido a las apelaciones de los abogados de la compañía. A Antonio López lo representa “Se Hace Camino al Andar”, una organización sin fines de lucro de Bushwick, que se ha destacado por su lucha contra las injusticias laborales a las que se ven sometidos muchos inmigrantes.

“Cuando regresé a la fábrica después de dos operaciones de riñón, mi jefe me dijo que me despedia porque no querían enfermos. Los primeros meses fueron muy duros porque no sabía a quién recurrir. Hasta que el sacerdote de mi parroquia me habló de “Se Hace Camino al Andar”. Allí pude compartir mi experiencia con otros trabajadores, y en sólo quince días, sus abogados presentaron la denuncia”.

En poco tiempo, esta organización se ha convertido en una parte muy importante de su vida.

“Voy siempre que me siento bien. Ahora soy uno de los responsables del proyecto Justicia Laboral. Hago de todo: desde tareas administrativas y de organización del grupo, a ayudar a preparar la cena con la que terminamos nuestras reuniones. Es una forma de sentirme útil”.

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ASESINADO POR RECORDER FRESAS

Sí, es así, no hay un error en el título. Fue asesinado.

El 18 de mayo de este año, el campesino Mauricio Cruz recogió unas fresas que estaban todavía verdes en la Finca Zepeda, condado de Santa Cruz, California. Por el “crimen en la fruta” muchos trabajadores agrícolas han muerto en Estados Unidos.

Uno de los asesinos en serie más notorios del país, Juan Flores, el dueño de la finca, empuñó un revólver y empezó a disparar a los pies de los campesinos. Luego lo obligó a sentarse y disparó alrededor de él, tan cerca que una de las balas traspasó la nariz de Camarillo. No lo mató de una sola bala, y lo vivió como el accidente de un pequeño buril para la seguridad de la finca y del dueño. Después de un mes de prisión, Flores logró escapar y permanece fugitivo, hasta la fecha.

Sobre el hecho de que un malentendido en la cosecha de fresas podría ser el causa del crimen, el municipio de Santa Cruz, donde las industrias agrícolas son muy importantes, niega todo. El crimen es un trágico error que no se puede permitir.

PERÚ AL ROJO VIVO

El presidente Toledo decretó el martes 27 de mayo el estado de emergencia en Perú, tras una serie de huelgas y protestas que convulsionan el país.

Reporte de Klmt, Centro de Media Independiente, Perú/Barcelona: Los docentes, organizados en el sindicato Sutep, llevaban en huelga dos semanas antes de la declaración del estado de excepción, exigían un aumento salarial de 60% para resolver problemas por vía del diálogo; se está recurriendo a métodos que son propios de los dictadores. Agregó que los maestros aglutina a unos 280 mil docentes declaró: “Hay una indignación generalizada frente a la inseguridad e incapacitación de este gobierno para resolver problemas por vía del diálogo; se está recurriendo a métodos que son propios de dictaduras”. Agregó que los maestros evaluarán el fin de semana en asamblea general el levantar o no las medidas tomar.

La Jornada, 31 de mayo: Jorge Sánchez, vocero del sindicato del magisterio, que en junio el gobierno ha enviado a más de 18 personas internadas por balas de plomo, hay movimientos extrañados en la represión en Puno, el gobierno está ocultando la cifra real de muertos. Asimismo leyó los nombres de 8 personas desaparecidas.

Por otro lado, en la misma radio dirigentes estudiantiles denunciaron que los asesinados en la represión en Puno son 4, según los relatos que los llegan de los compañeros que estuvieron en el lugar del hecho. Según Canal N, además del estudiante fallecido que reconoce el gobierno –Eddie Jonhy Quilca Cruz, de 23 años–, también fallecidos Omar Saravia Quispe mientras era sometido a una intervención quirúrgica en el hospital regional Manuel Núñez Butrón de Puno. Por la tarde un funcionario había reconocido que los muertos eran 3 debido a la misma reprimenda. El gobierno niega todo y sólo reconoce la muerte de Quilca Cruz, mientras amenaza con más represión. Por los medios se justifica la represión en Puno diciendo que la vida de los campesinos tiene un precio muy bajo. Los desapariciones y abusos constantes no son noticia. Con la excepción de un par de artículos breves en periódicos locales, los casos no han sido cubiertos en la prensa.

El objetivo del estado de excepción es limitar la libertad individual. El ejército tiene poderes para suspender o limitar el derecho de reunión. Estos, de facto, son poderes dictatoriales. También resulta interesante que el presidente convocara a los empresarios y propietarios de los medios de comunicación (periódicos y canales de televisión) para discutir el estado de excepción y qué medidas tomar.

La represión en Puno son 4, según los relatos que los llegan de los compañeros que estuvieron en el lugar del hecho. Según Canal N, además del estudiante fallecido que reconoce el gobierno –Eddie Jonhy Quilca Cruz, de 23 años–, también fallecidos Omar Saravia Quispe mientras era sometido a una intervención quirúrgica en el hospital regional Manuel Núñez Butrón de Puno. Por la tarde un funcionario había reconocido que los muertos eran 3 debido a la misma represión. El gobierno niega todo y sólo reconoce la muerte de Quilca Cruz, mientras amenaza con más represión. Por los medios se justifica la represión en Puno diciendo que la vida de los campesinos tiene un precio muy bajo. Los desapariciones y abusos constantes no son noticia. Con la excepción de un par de artículos breves en periódicos locales, los casos no han sido cubiertos en la prensa.

En el mismo reporte, se reportó que Toledo autorizó el ingreso en el país de 56 marines de Estados Unidos para participar en ejercicios militares conjuntos con fuerzas peruanas en la frontera con Colombia, acorde con una autorización previa del Congreso peruano.

La semana pasada, el ministro de Interior, Manuel Sánchez, denunció que hay 42 estudiantes desaparecidos en Puno desde el jueves. Reportó que el legislador izquierdista Javier Díez Canseco denunció que hay 42 estudiantes desaparecidos en Puno desde el jueves. A pesar de las protestas y el estado de excepción en Puno, el gobierno ha insistido en que los desaparecidos son estudiantes que han desaparecido por su propia voluntad.

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Las investigaciones para poder determinar su paradero.

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