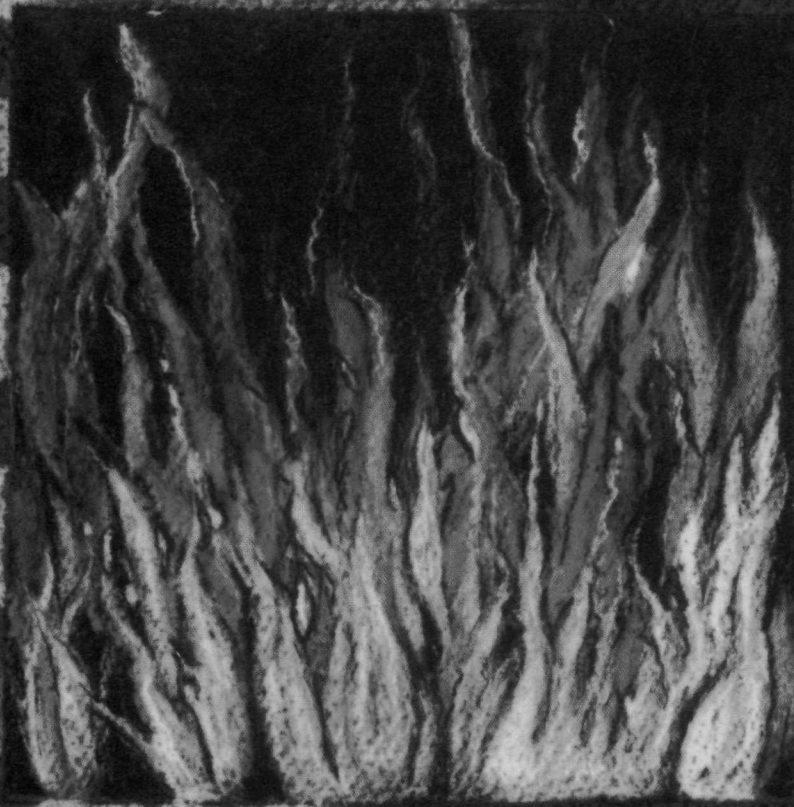


*The Witness*

Volume 78 • Number 11 • November 1995



*The New Party:*  
*Working to restore democracy*

## The media: colonizing minds

CONGRATULATIONS ON THE *SUPERB* latest issue on The media: colonizing minds [9/95]. I'm teaching a course entitled "The Global Search for Justice," a large part of which involves students looking beyond the mainstream U.S. media to get at questions of justice. I'm trying to convince them that names like Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman (names they'll see in "Manufacturing Consent") are names worth knowing. And then you come along with a great issue to back me up!

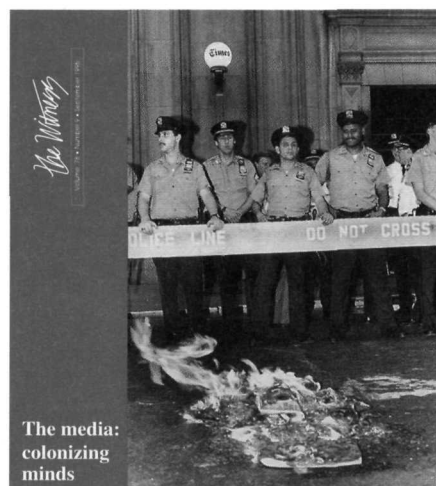
Neil Elliott  
College of St. Catherine  
St. Paul, MN

THE MESSAGE THAT ED HERMAN AND Noam Chomsky are voicing needs to be repeated until it wakes us up to how we are being manipulated by the Powers. If anyone doubts the danger we face through this Orwellian process let them recall how Goebbels was used by the Nazis to establish dominance.

We are witnessing a not-so-sophisticated development of information access by the monied powers. They seek, for example, to force NPR and public television into the commercial bullring while ABC, NBC, and CBS pay nothing for their use of broadcast frequencies, a quasi-subsidy by the government. They seem to be afraid of objective reporting, which they label "bias."

Fortunately, the next generation, unless they be seduced, may yet outsmart the Powers, as Camille Colatosti illustrates. It will be more difficult to control the Internet than NPR and public television.

Of course we each need the silence Nkenge Zo!@ is seeking. But we also need to realize that we are members of an "unbeatable army" and that "there's a moral imperative that we continue to fight." Dick Gillet's perceptive



and constructive statements urging the Church to implement the Gospel imperative are so to the point.

Thanks for a stimulating feast.

C. Mallory Graves  
Lynchburg, VA

SEVERAL THINGS IN THE SEPTEMBER issue of *The Witness* have moved me to write. One is Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann's early experiences as a journalist, where she learned that you can get to the bottom of a story, and you can "reach a conclusion about whose interests are being served and how." She also learned that you may not be able to get it published.

Then Edward Herman talked of the average American income falling 2.3 percent last year — even though this is a time of prosperity for business. He says Noam Chomsky is almost totally marginalized. He talks about big money being unified behind both parties so that there won't be any competition between the parties, and the corruption of the academic system — money going into the intellectual community shapes who will be considered credible authorities.

And William Stringfellow's article, though written in the 1970s, is certainly prophetic. He could just as easily have written his description of Orwellian doublespeak today.

As Herman says, "We have been subject to serious defeats and we're still losing, but you have to keep on fighting. You have to assume that the public will wake up when it is hurting enough and will be more receptive. You have

to believe that institutions can be changed democratically."

It's important to know that there is a way to turn our nation around, there is a way to reverse the ever increasing poverty and hopelessness, the constant fall in income for ordinary people, the rising violence and incarceration particularly among people of color; and even a way to work toward healing and restoring the environment.

Dorothy M. Malcolm  
Sacramento, CA

Ellen Cooke

THE LONG REPORT ON THE ELLEN Cooke affair [6/95] leaves me concerned that nothing seems, at least at this point, to be planned with regard to healing the wounds of the employees who have been damaged by what appears to have been a brutal and devaluing management style, and taking steps to ensure that such destruction of the psyche doesn't take place again in the Episcopal Church.

My concern is formed from my own experience. In England I worked for a well-respected charity whose female director, whom I will call Isle, was without a doubt the most vicious person I have observed in over 20 years of working life. In the year and a half that I worked there, Isle drove out of the organization two valuable employees, one of them my closest workmate. (You can tell from my language that the experience still disturbs me, though she did not directly abuse me.) Many employees shared with me their increasing fear and demoralization, all the more distressing because none of us had any recourse or choice about mitigating or stopping her abusive behavior. We could "vote with our feet," but, in an increasingly economically depressed Britain, that was a dangerous choice if others are dependent on your income. And it did nothing to solve the problems of the organization or of the many dedicated and talented people who remained.

The military style of traditional management, the top-down, me-talk-you-listen — systemic sin at its covert best — facilitated the organizational fascism that Isle instituted and was supported by. I suspect the lack of respect and trust in "subordinates" made Ellen's as-

Letters

tonishing fraud that much easier.

With regard to 815, it seems that steps are being taken to safeguard the money. Are there any plans to safeguard the employees?

In my view, real healing for 815 will not be effected by instituting listening and healing sessions, or raking Ellen Cooke apart in court. There must be fundamental change in the philosophy and operation of organizations. We need to develop effective and respectful ways to manage dissent, anxiety and suspicions, and I don't mean an anonymous suggestion box. At the very least, employees must become an integral part of the process of performance review of their supervisors, including senior echelon staff, who should be officially accountable to the people who carry out their policies and plans. The mental health and professional vigor of employees depend in great part on informed, compassionate oversight — and the success of any enterprise depends on our diligent and talented cooperation.

Mayne Ellis  
Victoria, BC

## Northern Ireland

THE SIDEBAR, "Choosing to support armed resistance" (an interview with Mary Nelis, TW 7-8/95), raised some provocative questions. First, has any international body, such as the UN or the International Court of Justice, considered whether the British presence in Northern Ireland is *per se* illegitimate, or whether the Republic of Ireland has a valid claim to the area? If so, what has been the result?

Second, should Great Britain simply abandon its presence in the Six Counties, or should it hand over governmental authority to the Republic? Or perhaps to the IRA or Sinn Fein?

Third, should a British withdrawal be preceded by a plebiscite? If those voting in the plebiscite clearly reject unification with the Republic, what should then be done? To ensure a favorable result, should Protestants be barred from voting?

I would appreciate feedback on these issues, in your pages.

Lowell J. Satre, Jr.  
St. Paul, MN

[Ed. note: We asked Maria Catalfio of

Irish Northern Aid (which sponsored Nelis' U.S. visit) to respond:

The overriding reality that Lowell Satre's letter ignores is that there currently exists an opening for peace in Ireland — an opening largely created by the political party to which Mary Nelis belongs. The primary obstacle in these delicate peace negotiations has been the unwillingness of the British government to work to bring all the parties together to talk. Even U.S. efforts to encourage its ally to work constructively in this process have fallen on deaf ears.

The creation of the state of Northern Ireland in 1921 was imposed on the Irish when British Prime Minister Lloyd George promised devastating aerial bombing unless the Irish accepted his partition proposal. The greatest use of force in Ireland has always come from British guns, tanks and soldiers.

Satre's question about Britain abandoning its presence in the Six Counties strikes to the core of the problem in Ireland: *Who* would Britain be abandoning? The Loyalist population planted in Ireland by the British beginning in the 17th century has enjoyed considerable privilege at the expense of the native population. The legacy of this imperial strategy has left us with the tragedy of present-day Ireland. British involvement in Ireland should center around the principle that the Irish people as a whole have a right to self-determination. The first step in this process is to get all the Irish parties together, planning their future as one people.]

## Witness praise

NOW THAT I'M BACK at seminary, and after 11 incredible weeks of clinical pastoral education, I realize now more than ever the relevance of your periodical and the issues you address. I commend you for your courage and am inspired to take up that same courage whenever I share the Good News of Jesus Christ with my brothers and sisters. For future priests in the Episcopal Church, *The Witness* should be required reading!

W. Thomas Warne, III  
Sewanee, TN

## Classifieds

### Singing hymns

The Miserable Offenders, who produced an amazing selection of Advent and Christmas music last year, called *Keepin' the Baby Awake*, are releasing their second cassette this month. Titled *God Help Us*, the tape offers a variety of hymns in tight harmonies. To order, call Morehouse Publishing at 1-800-877-0012. Cassettes cost \$10.95, c.d.s are \$14.95.

### Priest wanted

Full time priest for family size parish in historic village of Essex, NY on Lake Champlain. Send resume and CDO to St. John's Episcopal Church, P.O. Box 262, Essex, NY 12936.

### Pilgrimage

A 13-day pilgrimage to the Holy Land, sponsored by the Episcopal Peace and Justice Network, offers an opportunity to meet with political and religious leaders, human rights activists, and residents of settlements, villages and refugee camps. Six trips are scheduled with departure dates in January through March, 1996. Cost from New York City is \$1,925. For more information, contact Jess Gaither, Convener, EPJN, 76 Market St., Salem, NJ 08079; 609-935-1798.

### Sexuality document

*Continuing the Dialogue*, the bishops' pastoral study document on human sexuality, is available from Forward Movement Publications, along with a discussion guide prepared by the Committee for Dialogue on Human Sexuality. Copies are \$2.95 each plus shipping; call 1-800-543-1813 to order. A Spanish translation is available from the Presiding Bishop's office, 815 Second Ave., N.Y., NY 10017.

### Classifieds

*Witness* classifieds cost 75 cents a word or \$30 an inch, whichever is less. Payments must accompany submissions. Deadline is the 15th of the month, two months prior to publication.



## THE WITNESS

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Cover: *New Glory* by Dana Cibulski, an artist in Decatur, Georgia.

Back cover: *President Mandela Voting, 1994* by Masaego Johannes Segogela. Courtesy of Linda Givon.



# Taking electoral politics seriously?

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

I had my first date on election day, 1972. It was lousy and I was home in time to cry during George McGovern's concession speech.

For months I had joined others leafletting, door knocking and visiting the Democratic headquarters. The old guard welcomed us, telling us that soon we would be the leadership.

But, of course, a lot that was good and decent seemed to die that night. Richard Nixon maintained his clutch on power. The Vietnam War continued. Dirty political attacks on artists, movie stars, candidates and activists continued, only to be brought to national consciousness several years later.

Since then most candidates I have voted for have lost. Opinion polls dominate the electoral news and yet there's no substantive reporting to inform people's views. Our national electoral process is as inane as TV sitcoms, while the fallout from our nation's policies is frequently lethal at home, abroad and for the earth.

I've become savvy about corporate influence. On the rare occasions when the corporate powers lose, they are often virulent in their efforts to malign the people who have bested them. Too often the local police and the FBI come to corporations' aid, working to destroy the credibility of their opponents.

For the principalities, elections may simply be the first skirmish. Around the world, when good candidates win, the powers coalesce to force their hands, to initiate compromise, to corrupt or to thwart. The presidency is a vortex of

power that converted Jimmy Carter's campaign commitment to disarmament into an administrative policy that sanctioned the cruise missile, neutron bomb, and Trident submarine.

As Phil Berrigan likes to observe, "If voting meant something, they wouldn't let us do it."



Entertainment at the 1992 Democratic Convention

Where I have found meaning in my political work is in community, in forming a living environment with others whose values are similar and channeling our energy into vocations that affect Detroit — construction, housing, teaching, nursing, social work, law, printing, writing, church work.

On occasion, nonviolent direct action has helped me keep clear about my commitments. It has sometimes felt critical to do something that embodies the urgency I feel — to pray in a driveway at a nuclear missile parts manufacturer, to leaflet at a Strategic Air Command base, to occupy a congressman's office, to blockade the federal building. There is a simplicity and a clarity in these acts that helps me recall what matters. There are consequences that help diminish the cloying confidence

that builds when I feel safely middle class, obedient and protected.

But I felt chilled when my sister-in-law explained last winter that her school district was overrun by the Christian Coalition. Fear was so pervasive that a principal told a kindergarten teacher that she could not read a Berenstain Bears Halloween story because it included the word "witch."

The threat of corporate domination is now coupled with the threat of small-minded people prescribing mores for the entire community.

So this issue is dedicated to the electoral reform efforts of the New Party, a group attempting to change election laws and to run candidates in local elections where voting still has some meaning, while building the party from the ground up.

*The Witness* staff does not suggest that the New Party has all the answers. But it may offer a path that can lead to our votes mattering. Its leaders call on us to be creative and proactive.

"Right now people think, 'There's no way for the economy to work, so let's just build some prisons and throw the keys away,'" observes Daniel Cantor, national organizer for the New Party. "But what would happen if you put something on the ballot that said for every dollar invested in building new prisons, a dollar must be spent on job development? I think that would be quite popular."

Maybe, even though our cynicism is well-founded, engaging in electoral politics at the local level is an appropriate first line of skirmish with the powers. **TV**

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is editor/publisher of *The Witness*.

editor's note

# Beyond the two-party system

by Manning Marable

Speculation about the potential presidential candidacy of General Colin Powell has once again highlighted the inherent weaknesses of our two-party system. In head-to-head competition in public opinion polls, Powell is much more popular than either of the most likely presidential nominees of the two major parties, President Bill Clinton and Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole. Powell is probably "too liberal" to win the Republican nomination through the primaries, although there are strong indications that Dole may select him for the vice presidential nomination. Powell has said privately that any independent campaign like that of billionaire Ross Perot has little likelihood of success.

Rarely have conditions been more favorable to a third party, which would provide a genuine alternative within our political system. There is deep disenchantment with government and the absence of accountability by elected officials.

The two major parties have a stranglehold on the legislative process, utilizing the government to control and reallocate resources to their clients and constituents. This sorry fact of public life is true, regardless of the ideological affiliations of the politicians in both parties. *The Wall Street Journal* recently noted that Congressional Republican leaders, despite their anti-government rhetoric, have become "cozy controlling the levers of power."

For example, Republicans promised

to eliminate or radically restructure the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). But once in power, New York Republican Congressman Rick Lazio, who had just become chairman of the House Banking Subcommittee that supervises HUD, fought a rear-guard action to maintain the federal housing bureaucracy. Lazio recognized that "doing away with HUD could shrink his brand-new congressional fief," the *Journal* noted. Pennsylvania Republican Bud Shuster, chairman of the House Transportation Committee, brags openly about his control of highway construction funds, declaring, "There's no such thing as a Republican or Democrat on bridges."

Two years ago, Republican Senator Larry Pressler of South Dakota was one of the leading critics of corporate and special-interest political action committees (PACs), which flood millions of dollars into the political system. Pressler even introduced an amendment which would have outlawed political action committees.

But when the Republicans seized control of the U.S. Senate, Pressler was catapulted from his obscure status to become chairman of the powerful Senate Commerce Committee. Because this committee controls new legislation on the telecommunications industry, Pressler overnight became the principal recipient of PAC donations from cable television, telephone and broadcasting companies. Within months after assuming leadership of the Senate Commerce Committee, Pressler received thousands of dollars in donations from the corporate PACs of AT&T, NYNEX, US West, Walt Disney Co., Sprint, GTE, and the Home Shopping Network.

Before the November, 1994 election, the Chicago-based Ameritech Corporation gave 56 percent of its PAC funds to Democrats. Since November, the PAC has been overwhelmingly pro-Republican. Pressler alone received \$6,500 from Ameritech's PAC from January through April, 1995. The South Dakota Senator expects to raise \$3 million toward his 1996 reelection campaign. Although Pressler's committee is now considering a comprehensive bill which is described as "strongly favorable" toward the telecommunication industry's interests, the Senator stoutly denies that their PAC contributions have had any influence on this legislation.

As the New Party has argued, instead of focusing on Powell, who has no intention of building a third party, we need to consider what it will take to develop a genuine alternative in American politics. One place to begin is by supporting more liberal election laws, permitting smaller parties to gain access to the ballot. The winner-take-all electoral system must be challenged in the courts and eventually replaced by a more democratic proportional representation process, in which voters could rank candidates according to their order of preference. A proportional representation system allows minorities to concentrate their votes, lowering the threshold for election to below 50 percent in multimember districts. Blacks, Latinos, labor and independent progressive candidates would find it much easier to be elected, giving us a more effective voice in government.

To end the corporate stranglehold on U.S. politics, we need to break up the two-party system. The Congressional Black Caucus may represent a "liberal alternative" within government, but its agenda will never win the acceptance of the mainstream of the Democratic Party. Our next step must be strategies for progressive independent politics. **TW**

---

**Manning Marable** is director of the Institute for African American Studies at Columbia University.

# Hoeing

by Tom Jones

Hot!  
Sweat running down his back.  
He came early,  
wanted to finish by now,  
before it got so hot!  
His eyes  
filled with sweat,  
blurring the corn rows.  
He could  
not see the weeds.  
Chopped a corn plant.  
His wife would sing,  
"An ass, an ass, thinks  
weeds are food and  
corn is candy and eats  
them both!"

He had six more rows.  
Perhaps tomorrow? No!  
He has to finish today.  
Tomorrow  
is the rally for the election.

He watched a Bronco drive by,  
filled with *Blancs*.  
He knew  
they did not work the corn.  
Imagined sitting  
in the soft seat  
of the Bronco.  
He tried to remember  
if he had ever sat  
in a soft seat.  
Imagined  
white people  
in a huge tub of hot water.  
Getting in  
like you get in the river.  
He wondered  
why a person  
would want the water  
hot?

His family was  
better off before. Before  
the *Blancs* and their aid.  
They gave rice away  
free.  
He and his wife  
had a rice field.  
She went to the market on  
Wednesdays and Saturdays,  
to sell their rice.

After the aid  
no one bought their rice.  
They let their field dry up.  
They tried to tell the *Blancs*  
when they came to the village.  
They told them  
not to give away the food.  
That they knew  
how to grow food.

Told them  
they needed water. A  
pipe from the spring,  
and a well. That would  
help them all. They all  
needed water.

A cloud gave him a  
moment of shade. He  
stopped chopping the weeds.  
Thought about the election.  
He knew the candidates.  
They had told lies before.  
Before there were  
elections. Before  
democracy and elections.

Now the candidates were saying,  
water  
was their first priority.  
What could they do? The  
*Blancs* had soft chairs,  
tubs of hot water,  
food to give away.

He leaned on his hoe.  
Thought about his son,  
Gone to Port,  
to work in the *Blancs'* factory.  
Said he would send home money,  
but the factory didn't pay  
any better than the corn.

No money, no son,  
just the corn,  
the weeds, the heat,  
and tomorrow  
the rally.



*Tom Jones, a United Methodist pastor  
and organic farmer in Farwell, Mich., was  
an observer at the recent elections in  
Haiti.*



# Restoring democracy, the New Party's work: an interview with Daniel Cantor

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

**Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann:** Tell us about the New Party. I've got documents going back to 1990. Is that when it began?

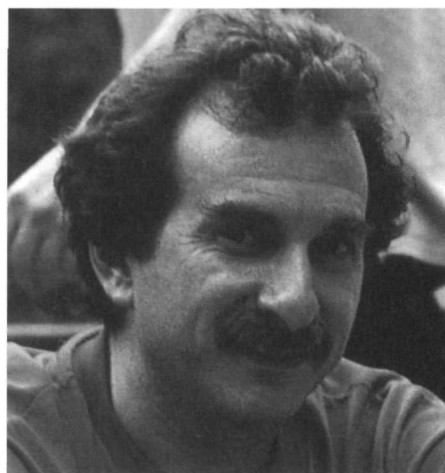
**Daniel Cantor:** The New Party opened its doors in 1992.

We're active in 12 states. We've run 120 people for office and nearly 80 of those have won their elections. It's modest level work: city council, county board, school board, zoning commission. We think that's the right place to start. We'll move up as our confidence and our competence increase.

**J.W-K.:** Why is there a need for the New Party?

**D.C.:** The Democrats are programmatically bankrupt and the Republicans are spiritually and morally bankrupt. Neither of the existing major parties is especially interested in participation and equality and justice. They covet re-election and the exercise of power as its own reward. My view, and it's one that is widely shared, is that we need a different set of values to be made concrete in civic life if we are going to redeem the promise of democracy. Electoral politics in an advanced industrial democracy like ours is one crucial way you can do that.

**J.W-K.:** What makes you think that the New Party might be able to do this when other third parties have risen and fallen so



Daniel Cantor

quickly?

**D.C.:** A "new party" is not a new idea. But there is a desperate need now for a non-corporate-dominated, multi-racial, progressive political party in the U.S. I say this knowing that lots of people have tried and failed in the past. Only the Republican Party has metamorphosed from a minor to a major party.

But even acknowledging the obstacles to building a durable, new political force in America, there's something in the air that's different now. The decom-

position of the major parties is *quite* advanced. Poll data shows that people across the board favor the creation of a new political party that can do some of the heavy lifting that American politics and economics require. So for us, the question is not *do* we need a New Party? It's *can* one be built? Here we're up against a skepticism and cynicism which have been inculcated by the major parties.

**J.W-K.:** How do the candidacies of people like Ross Perot, Jesse Jackson and Colin Powell affect your work at the New Party?

**D.C.:** It proves the opportunity. But we think it also proves the necessity of the New Party's bottom-up strategy. Running an independent — even one so well-heeled as Perot or so well-known as Powell or Jackson — is not the same thing as building a political organization that day-in and day-out does the unglamorous work of talking with people about what kind of society they want to live in.

We need to ask ourselves what kind of schools do we really want to have? What's the social contract between business, labor and communities that *we* would like to see established?

**J.W-K.:** Say a little bit about how the New Party is structured to create conversations about the social contract.

**D.C.:** The Party has chapters. Chapters are formed by a combination of individuals and institutional supporters — community organizations, local environmental groups, trade unions. Chapters

*We want to take advantage of the "electoral moment" in American life, the moment when society pauses and reflects. I realize it doesn't pause very deeply or very long. But it does pause. We have to move our ideas and values in that moment.*

are internally democratic.

**Daniel Cantor** is national organizer of the New Party in N.Y.C. **Eleanor Mill** is an artist in Hartford, Conn.

**J.W-K.:** And multi-ethnic?

**D.C.:** The Party is at the moment nearly half white and half people of color.

**J.W-K.:** Who is included in your membership?

**D.C.:** We have about 6,000 members. The goal is to have 10,000 by the end of this year. If we can get to a critical mass, the thing will begin to self-generate.

People should know the Democratic Party has about 100,000 dues-paying members. The Republicans have 700,000.

**J.W-K.:** Who are your members?

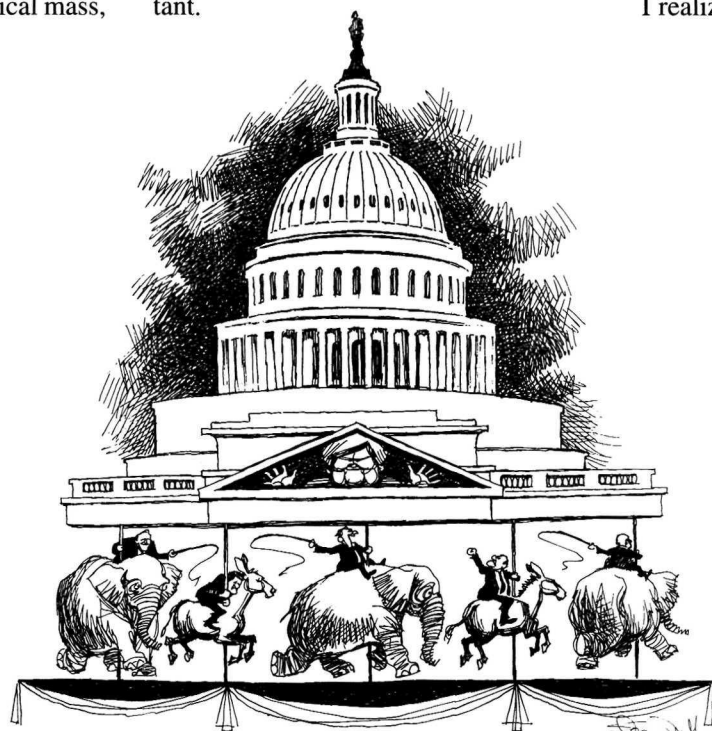
**D.C.:** Our members are regular citizens. Some have ties to community groups, unions, environmental groups, churches, schools. We have some prominent supporters — Noam Chomsky, Cornel West and Barbara Ehrenreich, for example, but what unites our members is a commitment to democracy.

**J.W-K.:** What about church interest in the New Party?

**D.C.:** Some chapters have substantial interest from progressive church folk, most commonly members of African American churches. Some members have ties to the Catholic Worker movement or are progressive Protestants. I personally think that churches and unions are the two most important institutional forces that provide some counter-weight to the market mentality — the market religion — that currently rules American life to a perverse degree. But the New Party is not based in the churches the way the Christian Coalition is. It's based in communities, geographic communities.

**J.W-K.:** Your focus is not so much on a presidential campaign as on local elections?

**D.C.:** It is definitively *NOT* on presidential politics. Our work is on city councils, county boards, state legislatures and school boards. That's where we can be effective. But also with the Republicans' devolving power down, it makes these kinds of offices *more* and not *less* important.



Washington merry-go-round

Eleanor Mill

**J.W-K.:** The elections that you're targeting are the same that are being targeted by folks in the Christian Coalition. Have you had any confrontations with them in elections?

**D.C.:** Absolutely! We've bested them in some cases and lost in others. They have a head start, obviously, and we're nowhere near as powerful. But we'll get there. One advantage we have is that we don't have to hide our views. We don't run stealth candidates who don't disclose their convictions until after the elections. In school board elections, we can be forthright and say we're for *excellent* public education for *all* children.

**J.W-K.:** What is the objective of the New Party?

**D.C.:** Ideologically it's about moral equality.

We want to take advantage of the "electoral moment" in American life, the moment when society pauses and reflects. I realize it doesn't pause very deeply or very long. But it does pause. We have to move our ideas and values in that moment.

Of course, in between elections we have to educate ourselves, hold workshops, retreats and summer schools and get ready for the next battle. It never ends.

**J.W-K.:** You have some creative ideas about how to avoid throwing the elections to the conservatives by splitting the progressive vote. Can you say something about that?

**D.C.:** We do not want to be spoilers. The way to avoid being a spoiler is to revive the old American tactic known as "fusion." It refers to a candidate's ability to appear on the ballot *twice* for two separate parties. A decent Democrat could run as a Democrat and as a New Party

candidate. The advantage is that New Party votes are a *signal* to that candidate that they need to pay attention to our concerns. It allows a minor political group to have its voice heard. In theory we could fuse with a progressive Republican, if there are still any out there.

**J.W-K.:** You say you want to "revive" fusion. Was fusion at one point legal?

**D.C.:** Yes. Fusion was the electoral strategy of all of the third parties of the 19th century in the U.S. — the Greenbackers, the Independents, most prominently the Populists. It was a way for urban, Catholic, immigrant, Democrats who drank, to unite with rural, native-born, dry Protes-

tant Populists. Culturally these two did not fit together. Politically it was the worker-farmer alliance, or the Democratic-Populist alliance of the 19th century.

Fusion was made illegal after the election of 1896 — by some readings the central election in American history. It's the election that marks the beginning of corporate domination of U.S. politics and culture. My favorite quote is from a Minnesota Republican who said, "We don't mind fighting you one at a time — but the combination, we detest."

So they changed the rules of the game. They outlawed fusions. If you change the rules of the game, you change the outcome. We want to change the rules back. There are some other rule changes that

need to be made. Campaign finance reform couldn't be more important, right? Proportional voting ought to be considered, so that minority groups, whether ethnic or political, can be represented.

There are lots of good reforms that can be made. I favor shortened campaign seasons. I'd also really like someone to figure out how to prohibit the publication of opinion polls. All reporting is now about the polls, not about the issues.

**J.W-K.:** Reading the NP's position papers, I've wondered if your spectrum of political causes is too broad. But you mention the 19th century and I understand that was a time when political movements *were* extraordinarily inclusive.

**D.C.:** That's right. We know we can't do *everything* at one time. At the moment,

we have three "signature" concerns: economic reconstruction, democratic reform, and children's needs. If we did just those three things well for the next five years that would be a useful contribution to American life.

A political party has to be broad, but it also has to be deep. I think we've done reasonably well on that score at the local level.

You know, people really do love their kids and they want to leave a better world behind them. They're scared to death about where things are going. If the New Party or some political force emerges, saying, "Here's a different way to think about where we're going as a nation," I believe people will respond.

It's hard to get that message *heard*. The media din is enormous and it's hard for a thoughtful and complex view to get airtime, but it *can* get heard if you have organization.

**J.W-K.:** How has the New Party been funded so far?

**D.C.:** It's a membership-funded organization. The budget in 1995 is about \$300,000. We need to get to \$3,000,000, which I believe we can do over the next couple of years.

We are *ferociously* promoting the idea of sustainers, people paying \$10 or \$50 per month, whatever they can afford, in an automatic contribution — credit card or bank draft. We're very modern in that regard! The point is to have a routine source of income so we can plan and be disciplined.

**J.W-K.:** Do you have any grants from foundations or from unions?

**D.C.:** We get some union support. Foundations are not legally allowed to contribute. Sixty or 70 percent of our money is in small dollar contributions and the last 30 percent is \$250 or above.

We have lots of people who have very little time who *can't* work for the NP, but who *can* help pay for it. People need to

## What is Fusion?

Fusion, or cross-endorsement, allows two or more parties to nominate the same candidate on separate ballot lines. The candidates' votes on each ballot line are added together to determine the winner.

**NEW  
PARTY**

### Case 1 — Two minor parties endorse the same candidate

<input type="checkbox"/>	Mr. Bigbucks Elephant Party	Gets <b>33%</b> of the vote
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mr. Sellout Donkey Party	Gets <b>31%</b> of the vote
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ms. Green New Party	Gets <b>20%</b> of the vote
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ms. Green Green Party	Gets <b>16%</b> of the vote

With a combined **36%**,  
Ms. Green WINS!

### Case 2 — A minor party endorses a major party candidate

<input type="checkbox"/>	Mr. Bigbucks Elephant Party	Gets <b>45%</b> of the vote
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mr. Rainbow Donkey Party	Gets <b>35%</b> of the vote
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mr. Rainbow New Party	Gets <b>20%</b> of the vote

With a combined **55%**,  
Mr. Rainbow WINS!

## Bans to Fusion are Unconstitutional

The New Party is involved in legal challenges to fusion bans in Pennsylvania and Minnesota — two of the 40 states where fusion is illegal. In the few states where it is still legal, such as New York, it has played a central role in local, state, and national politics. Fusion was crucial to the victories of N.Y. governors Fiorello LaGuardia and Mario Cuomo. And both Franklin Delano Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy would have been turned back from the White House without fusion votes from New York.



see that as an essential ingredient.

The Right certainly does. To be a member of the Christian Coalition in Athens, Ga., you've got to pay \$30 a month!

We'll never match the Republicans in dollars, but we can out-organize them, as implausible as that seems in the Age of Gingrich. But if people put aside just the tiniest ounce of their cynicism and help, it will get done.

**J.W-K.:** How do you respond to cynics who feel the electoral process is largely in place to give us the illusion that we have democratic input?

**D.C.:** Is the system rigged? Absolutely. But the great thing about democracy is that it contains within it the seeds of its own redemption, because people can organize.

Might there be some crushing hand that comes down? Well, you know, I suppose so if we threatened to do away with the Federal Reserve ...

**J.W-K.:** You wouldn't have to go to that extent. There have been plenty of social movements in this country that have been crushed long before they had that kind of power. Right?

**D.C.:** Sure. The state is going to be the state and their allies in corporations and the media will first try to ignore us, then try to silence us and so on. But if you believe ahead of time that that's the outcome, then there's literally nothing to do. And of course that plays into their victory even more! Things changed in Eastern Europe and this system can change too.

**J.W-K.:** In your literature you talk about the work of the Left being "episodic." But the Christian Right or the political Right is *relentless*. What factors do you think account for the fact that progressives aren't having the same kind of impact?

**D.C.:** The cruelest irony is that grassroots organizing, which *we* invented, is now more identified with the Right than with

progressives. It makes you want to weep! But I think we got a little complacent. Getting control of the federal government was seen as the be-all and end-all, and it's not! What's important is having people organized, because that's where real power lies in a democracy.



Religious right, GOP, NRA

Eleanor Mill

Another central problem is the relative weakness of the American labor movement. The weakness of labor here is just a crushing problem for us. Having a strong labor movement can help underwrite so much else that goes on.

**J.W-K.:** Does the Right have more time, more money?

**D.C.:** They have more money. They have the institutional base of *some* sections of the fundamentalist and evangelical church movement. And they have some *verve*! They know what they believe in. Our side is quite confused.

The fact that Bill Clinton expended so

much political capital on, for example, *NAFTA* is just a small signal of how confused the Democratic Party is. Do they want to be the party of international business or do they want to be the party of working- and middle-class America? You can't have it both ways!

Republicans are clear. They want to be the party of business. But they're willing to respond to people's anxieties — and people are *right* to feel anxious — by naming a "problem": the government, immigrants, blacks, women changing the roles in the home. You can blame *them*.

Democrats tell people — and this is an unbelievable failure — it's *your* fault! You are to blame! You're not educated enough; you didn't get enough training to compete in the new world market. This approach is morally repugnant, but it's also politically suicidal. The NP says, the problem is the system. Unless we democratize it, it's just going to go from bad to worse.

Here's the bedrock question: Do you think people — if they're not scared about what's happening to them — are generous or mean-spirited? Progressives believe that *most* people, if they have decent information and they're not scared to death, will make decent decisions. Conservatives believe that they can endlessly

manipulate people even against their own interests. (And the evidence for that is pretty good.)

**J.W-K.:** In the NP literature of 1992, you were optimistic that if Clinton got elected there

would be progress for the New Party. How has Clinton's presidency affected you?

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*We'll never match the  
Republicans in dollars, but  
we can out-organize them  
if people put aside just the  
tiniest ounce of their  
cynicism and help.*

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**D.C.:** The Clinton presidency has been disastrous. It will go down as one of the great missed opportunities of our lifetime. The reason he's failing is not because he's a bad or an incompetent person. He's obviously incredibly bright and skillful. The reason he's failing is that there is no progressive presence in American life, so *all* political debates become a debate between Clinton and everything to his right.

**J.W.-K.:** You note in your literature that people have no *time*. Would you say a little about that?

**D.C.:** People are stretched unbelievably tight between work and home. Many families have two earners and young kids. They've got no time. So you need to find a way for people to express their political values *even* if they can't go to a meeting.

There's that great Oscar Wilde line, "The trouble with socialism is it takes too many evenings." Well, the trouble with democracy is that it takes too many evenings.

We need to find a way for people to express their views *without* requiring that they give their lives over to the building of the local political organization.

We need activists and we have some. But we also need people, who can't make meetings because their kids are home, to register their views. And the best way to do that is to vote.

**J.W.-K.:** It sounds like writing a monthly check to the New Party is also important?

**D.C.:** That's an organizer's dream question. Yes. And we won't waste it either.

**J.W.-K.:** For people who are interested in doing something locally, how can they relate to the NP?

**D.C.:** The best thing is to contact the national office and we'll put you in touch with a chapter if there's one nearby. We can also help guide people in the process of forming a chapter. So the thing to do is to call 1-800-200-1294. We have to get on the offensive. We have to get creative. **TW**

## Who else is out there?

Who is working on the reorganization of American progressives? The answer is both more and less satisfying than one would like. There are many, many organizations and activists — community, religious, labor, environmental, and so on — whose initial shock and despair at the Gingrich Ascension has now been replaced by strategizing and organizing. But fragmentation of these organizations remains a daunting obstacle, and the task of getting to *scale* in countering a very confident Right-wing remains an important challenge.

Some of the more prominent actors on the progressive electoral stage include:

**Public Interest Research Groups (PIRGs)** — Founded by Ralph Nader more than two decades ago, the state-based PIRG chapters are the leading force in the nation for progressive campaign finance reform. Importantly, the PIRGs have constructed an alliance to place a campaign finance measure on the ballot in California next year.

**People for the American Way** — focuses on monitoring, exposing and challenging the activities of the fundamentalist Right in local school board and other elections.

**Northeast Citizen Action Resource Center** — provides issue and technical electoral support to candidates at the state level.

**Californians for Justice** — does community and electoral organizing around issues such as the anti-affirmative action proposal on the ballot for Nov. 1996. Their main strategy is to expand the electorate in California — now 81 percent white, despite a population which is only 53 percent white.

**League of Women Voters** — seeks to increase citizen participation in the democratic process. It is currently working on campaign finance reform and on a "Get Out the Vote" campaign.

**ACORN** — organizes low and moderate income people in 20 states for progressive political action at local, state and federal levels, including ambitious efforts on campaign finance reform.

**Project Vote** — intensive, targeted voter registration work designed to increase minority participation in elections.

**Project '95** — union-based coalition to try to win Congressional seats back to the Democrats next year;

**State/Local Political Coalitions** — From Georgia's Urban-Rural Summit to Minnesota's Alliance for Progressive Action to Los Angeles' Coalition '95, there are promising sub-national efforts to develop political skills, infrastructure and candidates.

**Progressive Caucus** — Based in the House of Representatives, this is the Bernie Sanders, Ron Dellums & Co. effort to provide the Democratic Party with a consistent, progressive voice in national politics, leading over time to a realigned Democratic Party.

**Constituency Based Projects** — Usually geared to one or another self-identified communities of interest (gay and lesbian, Latino, environmental, etc.) groups like the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, or the League of Conservation Voters, or the Southwest Voter Education Project each engage in political education, training and mobilization. There are hundreds of such efforts of varying sophistication and reach. — Daniel Cantor

# Winning elections in Milwaukee

by Steve Watrous

Four years ago, local activists formed Progressive Milwaukee, a New Party chapter, with the intention that a few members would become candidates, but nearly everyone dodged the draft. It could have killed the new party.

Finally Roger Quindel agreed to run for county supervisor in his district on the city's outskirts. He challenged an entrenched, high-spending incumbent and, with the help of over 200 volunteers, won the non-partisan race with 51 percent, 273 votes to spare.

One good election attracted other people to enter successful campaigns for county board, school board and state legislature.

Quindel is a forceful personality and long-time progressive activist who helped initiate Milwaukee Jobs With Peace (JWP) and served as its director for nearly a decade. JWP became a major force in the peace community and also organized around housing and city budget issues.

Previously Quindel had worked in a factory where he was elected union steward. He was disabled in Vietnam and supports vets' struggles. And he helped start Progressive Milwaukee.

Quindel quit his JWP job to run for county supervisor just three months before the primary, focusing all his organizing skills on the campaign.

"I want to include people in the process of changing things," said Quindel, "through this campaign, creating a neighborhood association, and other ways. We can't just order things from on top — we need grass-roots involvement. All county

proposals should be discussed with the workers or community groups affected." He needs both hands to count off his points, grabbing each finger in turn.

Quindel proposes major changes in



County Supervisor Roger Quindel at a New Party conference.

Steve Watrous

many areas. On the crime issue, he recommends a "community service corps" in which youthful offenders would spend weekends cleaning parks and vacant lots. "They have to learn that they are responsible for their behavior immediately," he almost shouts. "We can't wait until the 11th or 12th crime and then finally send them to jail."

Since the election Quindel has successfully organized his neighbors around district issues like airport noise and an irresponsible bar owner. He has persuaded his county board colleagues to support his resistance to bus fare increases and welfare cuts. Quindel, now 49, spends his spare time putting more PM members in office.

As he prepares for the 1996 re-election campaign, Quindel has cautioned PM to select candidates it can count on. He doesn't want to see any more endorsees drawn and quartered by dysfunctional local government. A few more progres-

sive colleagues might just be enough to transform that system.

Because of its advances both in and out of elections, PM has attracted national interest among people wondering whether a third party can succeed in a mid-sized city. PM has become one of the strongest chapters of the national New Party, receiving write-ups in publications as varied as the *L.A. Times*, *The Nation*, the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Amsterdam News*.

PM has backed several candidates in the Milwaukee area for county board, school board and state legislature. Most were first timers but only two have lost, and not by more than 2 percent.

Incumbents pay attention to what PM says and worry about challenges. Because the statewide affiliate, the New Progressive Party of Wisconsin, won enough votes in a state treasurer's race, the Party now has permanent ballot status. Between Milwaukee and Madison, the state party has 24 members in office. "We have become a force in Milwaukee politics," said John Goldstein, a PM leader and president of the bus drivers' union.

State Representative Spencer Cogg, a veteran black member of Wisconsin's legislature first elected in 1982, runs as a Democrat, but views his public service role much more broadly than just voting on legislation. His long-time support for community and union struggles brought him in touch with PM organizers. He's now a Democrat and a member of PM. He's the kind of candidate who could run on both tickets if fusion were allowed.

Milwaukee is a strikingly average place that has been thrust into the national spotlight by politics on both the Right and Left. Moderate voters favored both a Democratic president and a Republican governor in recent elections, but now Milwaukee has become the national testing ground for conservative welfare reform and state funds for religious schools.

Steve Watrous is a freelance writer and member of Progressive Milwaukee.



Pushing these policies is the very rich and very conservative Bradley Foundation.

PM has faced this challenge by making education its most important issue, largely because many leaders of the national school reform magazine, *Rethinking Schools*, have become active in PM. They emphasize major changes within the public system, such as a school they established run by teachers and parents.

PM organized a coalition to promote a major school bond referendum in 1993, but lost. In 1995 PM backed three school board candidates. The issue became school privatization and only one candidate lost, by a narrow margin. Now PM is gearing up for a special election to fill another school board vacancy.

The connection between reform struggles and elections has always existed but, as PM has started winning, many peace, environmental, union, religious and other issue organizers — who used to give elections as much respect as Wisconsin cowpies — have started doing doors and making election eve calls. Over 300 have joined.

Broadening PM to include all of Milwaukee's communities is a constant effort, and the finances are not nearly as green as PM's politics. PM has also agonized over candidates that won and turned out not to be so progressive. Consequently, it has tightened up its "contract" with endorsees. But the victories have brought momentum.

One county supervisor likens PM to Milwaukee's "Sewer Socialists," a party of pragmatic Leftists that controlled this town for decades during the Progressive Era of the 1920s and 1930s by providing superior public services, building the infrastructure, and valuing the average person. That program once had majority support here and, if more community leaders like Roger Quindel and Spencer Cogs join PM, it may again soon. **TW**



Steve Watrous

The executive committee of Progressive Milwaukee in 1994. (L to R and top to bottom) Bruce Colburn, John Goldstein, Bobbi Lipeles, Stephanie Walters and Tammy Johnson.

## Working for change

When Tammy Johnson became Progressive Milwaukee's community organizer in early 1994, the party couldn't handle more than one election campaign at a time, claimed fewer than 100 members and owned a money machine so creaky that opponents would have laughed if they had only known.

Largely due to her work, PM now has over 300 members, has just completed successful house party and banquet fundraisers and will probably support half a dozen candidates in the spring.

"I learned organizing in church," says Johnson. Her family belonged to the St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church and she grew up helping the poor and homeless through clothing drives and soup kitchens. "Church was a great training ground for skills in public

speaking and fundraising." Johnson got involved with election campaigns before she could even vote.

Johnson put these skills to use as president of the Black Student Union, vice president of the student association and president of the United Council for University of Wisconsin Student Governments. Then she pushed PM from limping to sprinting. At 25, she is PM's best link to the next generation.

"My top priority is maintaining basic human rights like housing and health care," says Johnson. "Part of maintaining these rights is maintaining a democracy, which we don't have now. Someone is always left out. PM is revitalizing and redefining democracy, rebuilding the infrastructure of politics so that we can actualize some of these human rights that are being stomped upon now." — S.W.

# Taking a hit from *The Wall Street Journal*

*The Wall Street Journal* recently targeted Sustainable Milwaukee, slamming it for doing anti-corporate work in the milieu of “radical retreads” who share office space at the Peace Action Center.

Sustainable Milwaukee (SM) is a group that often works with New Party members and others against “the loss of unionized manufacturing jobs, racial discrimination and suburban sprawl,” according to Bruce Colburn, secretary/treasurer of the Milwaukee County Labor Council and an executive committee member of SM.

Writers Daniel McGroarty and Cameron Humphries, fellows at the Institute for Contemporary Studies in San Francisco, were, however, not as angry with Sustainable Milwaukee (SM) as they were with local corporations who have made contributions to a project that will be managed by SM.

McGroarty and Humphries report that more than a dozen businesses have promised \$2.6 million to entice the Annie E. Casey Foundation to provide a \$5 million grant.

That corporations would contribute to a program that will be managed by progressives has McGroarty and Humphries apoplectic.

“Like a gullible spinster who loans a Lothario her credit card, the Milwaukee corporations appear to be doing it in order to be loved. So smitten are they with their own civic-mindedness that they haven’t stopped long enough to ask hard questions about the group they’re preparing to fund.”

They mock the Annie E. Casey Foundation folks for failing to see that other tenants in the office building are retrogrades who read Angela Davis and Marx. They suggest that Sustainable Milwaukee has no standing with the state, no incorporation papers, etc.

They also mock SM’s campaign for a “living wage” as inane, saying businesses will simply cross the city line to avoid paying \$7.70 an hour plus health benefits to employees.

McGroarty and Humphries erred repeatedly and perhaps knowingly.

First, before *The Wall Street Journal*’s article was in print, Sustainable Milwaukee had received its 501c3. The writers were aware that SM had applied for it and that the University of Wisconsin was SM’s fiscal sponsor in the meantime.

Secondly, McGroarty and Humphries misrepresented or misunderstood the extent of the business community’s investment in the project. It is true that over the course of eight and a half years, the community would need to provide \$2.6 million, but that money is drawn from agencies, community groups and local businesses. There is no spinster here offering up her credit card.

Lastly, McGroarty and Humphries leave an impression that the \$7.7 million grant is being used to support SM’s other activities because they *never* explain what the money is to be used for.

Bill Dempsey, staff for SM, explains that the grant will be used in a Jobs Initiative Program. The goal is to reform the systems that are supposed to connect people, especially low income people, with jobs. SM will work with business leaders, union members, government officials, service providers and community groups.

In addition to connecting people with existing job opportunities, SM will explore job creation options. Dempsey points to the work of *Esperanza Unido*, which has created several small companies to meet the needs of people in low-income Milwaukee neighborhoods. These businesses offer asbestos removal, day

care, auto repair, welding, food services and a banquet hall. The goal, of course, is to create jobs with incomes adequate to support families.

Despite McGroarty’s and Humphries’ arrogant criticisms, the businesses that contributed to the first phase of the Jobs Initiative may well be participating in the project because it is in their interest to do so. The businesses may benefit directly from the program or simply reap the advantages of operating in a community that grows more stable as people earn incomes that allow them to meet their needs (probably at local stores). In return for investing some portion of \$2.6 million, the businesses will experience an influx of \$7.7 million into their community. Not a bad return for the most intransigent capitalist.

(Representatives of the Annie E. Casey Foundation visited the Sustainable Milwaukee office after the advent of the *Journal*’s critique. They determined that the *WSJ*’s charges were “unfounded.”)

Perhaps what insults McGroarty and Humphries the most is that businesses that are rooted in their communities might prefer to work with progressives than to continue to watch their inner-city-rust-belt communities be destroyed as big corporations move to union-free environments down south or overseas.

Imagine a model of businesses and community activists working together for their mutual gain.

Imagine sustainable capitalism.

Imagine a day when even *The Wall Street Journal* can see the advantage of businesses choosing not to use threats of relocation to win public concessions, choosing instead to improve their home community — even if it means working with people who have the audacity to hope that full-time work might provide people with health care and an income on which they can live.

— J.W-K.

# Watchdogs of democracy

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

**D**etroit's watchdogs of democracy are hobbled by corporate greed at the moment.

Workers in six unions have been on strike since July 13. The strike was precipitated by the Detroit Newspaper Agency, an entity that administers both the *Detroit Free Press* and the *Detroit News* under conditions of a Joint Operating Agreement. Not content with a \$55 million profit in 1994, the DNA provoked the strike through "unfair labor practices," according to an initial ruling by the National Labor Relations Board. This ruling is reassuring to the unions because it means that the more than 2,000 strikers are guaranteed their jobs when the strike ends, but in the meantime many families are trying to subsist on strike pay and some, at this point, are close to losing their homes.

Rumor has it that the DNA was preparing for this strike back in January. They arranged a deal with the Sterling Heights police that they would pay \$400,000 for security at their printing plant in that northern suburb. Not surprisingly, the police were extremely harsh with strikers, engaging in body searches and rough arrests. The Oakland County prosecutor found grounds to investigate the abuses in a case now pending.

*The Witness* staff has become involved in the fray. We have helped to form

Readers United, a group that is presenting the voice of the community in a struggle that had been characterized as a union-versus-management struggle.

Readers United is asking the company to negotiate round-the-clock with the unions. Many of us believe that the DNA's intention is to break the unions. Knight Ridder, which owns the *Detroit Free*



©Daymon J. Hartley, striking photographer

Vance guards open the gate and move into a crowd of picketers at the Clayton distribution center on September 23.

*Press*, has 28 papers of which nine are unionized. Gannett, which owns the *Detroit News*, has 83 papers of which only five are unionized.

Knight Ridder is involved in another labor struggle in Philadelphia where they are attempting to fire 100 people in order to raise their profits from eight percent to 15 percent. In Miami, Knight Ridder has eliminated 70 jobs and intends to fire 300 more people within the next year, according to *New York Times* reports.

The national trend is for corporately

owned papers to decimate their local reporting staff, filling pages with syndicated material, according to David Remnick's recent *New Yorker* article. Remnick adds that most corporate papers now have less content than *USA Today*, which he calls "a sprightly brand of fish wrap."

Readers United is also doing research to expose the security guards hired by the DNA during the strike. Self-identified as "asset protection teams," the Vance guards are the new Pinkertons. They boast in their advertisements that they make

sophisticated use of cameras. And they do. Time and again, Vance guards will sweep into a crowd of picketers outside a DNA printing plant or distribution center. When picketers lift their signs to ward off billy clubs and truncheons, Vance takes pictures that win court injunctions against the "irrational" strikers. Observers insist that on two occasions Vance guards have set vehicles on fire, the flames being confused in news reporting with the militance of the strikers.

The tactic is not new. Vance worked for the Pittston Coal Company during the United Mine Workers strike.

"I lived on the ground in Pittston for 11 months," said Ron Baker of the UMW. "We encountered Vance daily. Their m.o. is to create situations where they can turn to courts for an injunction."

Andrew McThenia, a Washington and Lee law professor and chair of the board that owns *The Witness*, says that Vance guards used to follow him in a jeep when he was involved in supporting UMW strikers.

Readers United has two requests of the unions in Detroit.

**Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann** is editor/publisher of *The Witness*.



We want the unions to bring in the UMW to teach nonviolence to picketers so that they cannot be so easily manipulated by Vance. A disciplined nonviolent protest in Detroit would be an invaluable witness to the community and would certainly correct the public's impression that the strikers are out of control.

We also want a strike paper that can provide community news. Those of us who refuse to read newspapers produced by "permanent replacement employees" brought in from other Knight Ridder and Gannett papers — at least 30,000 people who have canceled their subscriptions — have no adequate source of news about area health concerns, city hall, the police, the schools, local development plans. Local businesses have no viable outlet for their advertising.

We're mindful that in Wilkes-Barre, Penn. a strike paper, *The Citizen's Voice*, created in 1978 is still in existence. Owned by the original strikers, the paper gives the still-dominant corporate paper a run for its money.

It is our hope that a strike paper in Detroit would not only meet the community's current needs and provide an income for striking reporters, photographers, mailers and drivers, but that it might survive as a community-based, unionized paper.

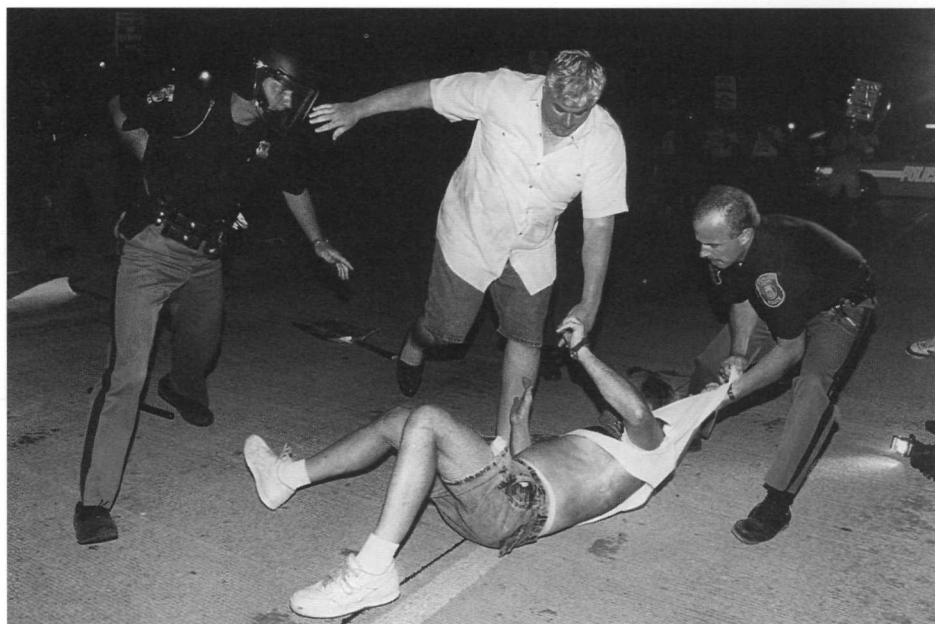
We believe that newspaper publishing companies have a debt to the community. Newspapers owe us responsible journalism — not because they are philanthropic or nobly minded — but because it's in the unwritten contract.

News organizations create a product that is composed of the lives of the people in the community. We are the news. The balance is delicate — so long as a newspaper provides enough accurate news, many of us will subscribe and the papers can charge profitable prices for their advertising space.

The relationship between Detroit and

the daily newspapers has been out of balance for some time. Until now, we have lived with the imbalance. But the Detroit Newspaper Agency has brought this relationship under scrutiny by precipitating the strike and by refusing to

have a right to organize, to bargain, to strike. Yet the DNA has the gall to say they can't negotiate around-the-clock because the issues haven't been narrowed down. How do you narrow them down other than by talking? I'm hunting for



**Off-duty lieutenant Jack Severance kicks striking pressman Frank Brabanec as Sterling Heights police move to clear the driveway at the Detroit Newspaper Agency's printing plant. Picketers had been standing quietly in the driveway with linked arms before the attack.**

©Daymon J. Hartley

deal fairly with its employees.

Detroit is an excellent news town. It has supported two daily papers for years. Detroit is also a premiere labor town. Many people carry union organizing in their memories, some carry physical scars, still others grew up listening to their parents' accounts of the sacrifices and the victories.

Some corporations are too expensive to keep in Detroit. Knight Ridder and Gannett are in that category.

Readers United has been invited by City Council chair Maryann Mahaffey to develop creative ideas that might force the DNA to negotiate. At our demonstration, she observed, "There is a drive on the national level to break the unions. We

ideas that can force management to come to the table. There is a point when we can't continue to spend public money to protect the private property of companies that won't bargain with the unions."

Readers United will research the city tax abatements that have been given to the DNA, the concessions that the unions made at the time of the JOA, and the quality of the current papers. We will make our voice heard, because we believe that whatever else may be said, the function of newspapers is to provide information about the community so that citizens can make intelligent decisions in their private lives, in their collective efforts and in the direction they throw their ballots.

**TW**

# America's radical past

by Paul Buhle

[Ed. note: The New Party makes overtures to citizens with concerns ranging from civil rights to the welfare of whales, from economic justice to public education. It's intriguing to note that 19th-century progressives were just as varied and inclusive.]

It has become more and more important, amidst the current world and domestic crises, to recall what might be called the old "Green Dreams" of America's radicals, and to grasp how much they have in common with the best hopes of today's visionaries. Here and there we recover a little glimpse of this story, mostly through folklore and anecdotes about Johnny Appleseed, Nat Turner, Henry Thoreau, Tom Paine, Tecumseh, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Wendell Phillips, the Shakers or the Abolitionists. The larger story remains unheard, almost untold.

One might look all the way back to the centuries of life in Walpi, the Hopi cliffside community in today's Arizona which is the oldest continuously occupied site in North America, and a place of relatively peaceful, cooperative peoples centuries before the arrival of Europeans. We could also start on the other side of the world: the Europe of popular unrest against royal and religious oppression arising intermittently from the early Middle Ages to the Radical Reformation.

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**Paul Buhle** is author or editor of many books on American radicalism, including *Encyclopedia of the American Left* (University of Illinois), *The American Radical* (Routledge) and a new picture book, *Images of American Radicalism* (Christopher House). He was raised a Congregationalist in Illinois.

In Central Europe, the survivors (and their descendants) of uprisings drowned in blood set their eyes upon a New World.

Religious-communal Germans spread out their little colonies, mostly from colonial Pennsylvania westward, during the 17th and 18th centuries. Often they practiced celibacy and adhered to a vision of equality of men and women. Indians knew them as friends. A handful, like Christian Priber, actually settled with Indian tribes and helped guide resistance against the invaders. English perfectionists, the "Shaking Quakers" or Shakers, immigrated to establish their productive, picturesque communities based upon egalitarian faith, non-wastage of resources and non-cruelty to animals. Like the huts of Walpi, Shaker villages, labyrinths (shrubs arranged to express the mysteries of faith) and remnants of colonies like Ephrata can still be found by the tourist.

Political resistance leading to the American Revolution represented other strains. "Jack Tar" seamen, drawn from races and peoples around the world, had frequently resisted British impressment, and many such sailors residing in Boston provided recruits for angry crowds attacking royal institutions. Tom Paine, a former British corset-maker, issued in 1775 one of the greatest revolutionary pamphlets in American history, *Common Sense*. Radicals of the 1790s managed to

hold off deepening conservative trends after the Revolution. But former colonists who sought to carry through a wider social revolution, like the followers of Daniel Shays in western Massachusetts, were put down in force. So were Indian leaders like Tecumseh, who sought to unite various tribes and carve out spheres of relative freedom. America's establishment power-brokers determined to build their own empire.

Nineteenth-century radicals, then, set themselves against Empire, against expropriation of Indian peoples, against slavery, for equal rights of the sexes and for cooperative economic development. They ranged from Nat Turner, leader of an

unsuccessful slave uprising; to Sojourner Truth, the former slave who rose to popularity as an agitator for black and women's freedom; to Amelia Bloomer, whose "Bloomer" style of pants offered women new freedom of motion; to George Lippard, the first massively

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*Nineteenth-century radicals set themselves against Empire, against expropriation of Indian peoples, against slavery, for equal rights of the sexes and for cooperative economic development.*

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popular socialist novelist, who hailed the dignity of working people and savaged the hypocrisy of the rich.

These radicals nearly all had in common a religious or spiritual vision distant from the justification of race superiority and wealth heard in most white churches. Some were influenced by dissident European strains of Christianity, like John Chapman (Johnny Appleseed) the Swedenborgian, who preached nonviolence as he walked westward planting apple trees. But most worked out their own religious beliefs from an interpretation of Christianity developed within the churches: that Christ was a friend of the

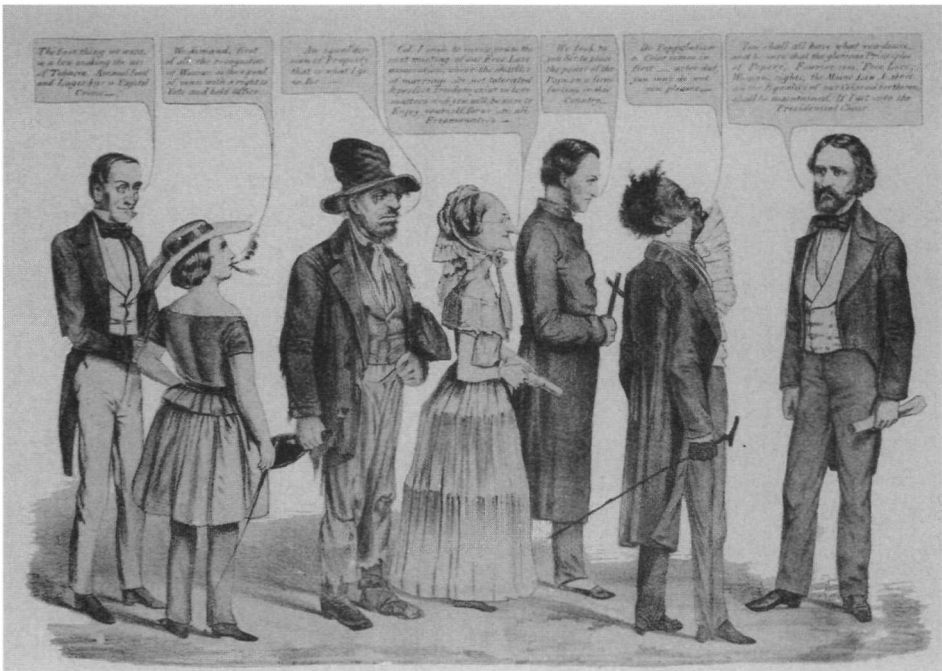
poor and oppressed, and that faith meant not so much personal salvation as a way of bringing egalitarian values into the world.

Sojourner Truth, George Lippard, utopian leader Robert Dale Owen and the first agitator for women’s sexual emancipation, Victoria Woodhull, were all touched by Spiritualism, the strongest organized religious movement of the new faith. Rising to great popularity in the 1850s-60s, Spiritualism portrayed a commonality among all people and all things alive or formerly living. The spirit world, believers insisted, could be reached just on the “other side” of perceptible reality, part of a cosmic consciousness waiting human recognition. Poets like Walt Whitman continued to believe, but Americans en route to industrial and urban society lost interest in Spiritualism by the 1870s-80s.

A small fragment survived, and took on new life, in the utopian dreams of Edward Bellamy’s novel *Looking Backward* (1889), the best-selling novel of the century after the Abolitionist classic, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Followers of Bellamy tried to establish their own little colonies and, in failing, joined up with a Populist movement setting up rural co-operatives and briefly establishing black/white unity in political campaigns of the South.

Meanwhile, a final current entered play in American radicalism. Immigrant socialists from Germany and Bohemia, and later, Russia, Poland, Italy, Finland, Hungary, Lithuania, China, India and elsewhere brought the idea of the working class as the central source of radical transformation. As industrial conflict spread, so did socialist ideas, even when distorted by the press, and cruelly crushed by suppression of socialistic institutions and newspapers after the 1886 Haymarket bombing incident in Chicago.

When socialists from many lands



**The Great Republican Reform Party, Calling on their Candidate** — petitioners request everything from outlawing tobacco, meat and beer to women’s suffrage, an equal division of property, free love, the power of the Pope and the primacy of race issues.

found their symbolic leader in railroad unionist Eugene Victor Debs, the old cause readied for a new century. At once a believer in class unity of working people, an ardent supporter of women’s rights and a Christian mystic, Debs carried the currents within him. For the 1900 presidential campaign, his Terre Haute, Indiana friend James Whitcomb Riley (America’s favorite sentimental poet)

composed a rhyme which might stand for the entire tradition:  
*And there’s Gene Debs, a man who stans’  
And jest holds out in his two hands  
The kindest heart that ever beat  
Between here and the Judgment Seat.*  
Born a thousand years before his time, some said of Debs. But he was just in time to remind Americans of what radicals have to offer, if only they will listen.**TW**

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# Kierkegaard's view on nationalism

by J. Norris Beam

[Ed. note: J. Norris Beam explores ways that Søren Kirkegaard's thoughts challenge Christians who feel drawn to nationalism. While this essay does not offer ways to "redeem democracy," it is included here because Kierkegaard offers several warnings relevant to all of us, but particularly to the Religious Right. Beam considers Kirkegaard's condemnation of nationalism to be a prophetic forewarning of the ascendancy of Naziism.]

*It is obvious that one of the factors in Christ's death was that he repudiated nationalism, wanted to have nothing to do with it. Nowadays the orthodox are the true nationalists; they produce theories about Christian states and Christian people.*  
—Søren Kierkegaard

When Christendom lost sight of the Christian message, it subordinated the category of the "individual" to that of the "public," according to Søren Kirkegaard.

Christendom shifted from personal actualization to external social and utilitarian political goals, thereby abandoning the rigors of following Christ as the "pattern."

In the absence of true Christian loyalty, Kierkegaard envisions a new form of tyranny appearing in the modern period, one which supersedes the older forms of tyranny (emperors, kings, nobility, clergy) in the enslavement of human beings. This new form of tyranny is based

on the "fear of men," but appears in the guise of a strictly rational, utilitarian political defense of equality. Of all the forms of tyranny, this latest form is most dangerous and pernicious, says Kierkegaard, because of its alluring positivity.

Stated religiously, the political ideologies of modern societies offer the public beguiling promises which constitute forms of idolatry wherein *real* equality, freedom and justice are lost to the self-interests of states and political parties.

The origin of such behavior, for Kierkegaard, is contained in the presumption of human self-reliance in assertiveness over against *trust in God*; in the false confidence of humans that through collective endeavors implementing political ideologies humankind can solve its greatest problems without giving heed to the more arduous task of becoming a concrete individual, and ultimately becoming a Christian.

## Replacing God with politics

Kierkegaard explains that the public participates in a phenomenon of prideful projectionism. That is, when the God-relationship of individuals is lost sight of, then people readily participate in an illusory abstraction in which they willingly give up their freedom and even their dignity in obeisance to their government, even enslaving themselves to mediocre rulers who may prove tyrannical.

Why do they do this? Kierkegaard

says: "Because it flatters their arbitrariness that the government they obey is of their own making. It is like a pagan worshipping the god he himself has made — it is about the same as worshipping oneself." Thus Kierkegaard ultimately blames the increasing demoralization of humanity (specifically its pride) for the creation (projection) of a false, idolatrous nationalist ideology, by means of which through these ideological abstractions persons enslave themselves, remain enslaved, and allow themselves to be deceived and live in perpetual delusion.

In their cowardice and self-deception, deluded nominal Christians look to secular political rulers for solutions. In this way power is held by the state and nationalistic goals displace genuine religious interests in promoting social welfare. Deluded clergy and professors lead people to embrace nationalistic ends as the hope for their future, and appeal to their pride (the "Volk" idea in Germany is relevant here) to gain support for idolatrous ideologies. Thus the few truly good individuals (those who, at least, are striving to become persons and Christians) are made to suffer at the hands of evildoers, as did Christ:

"To be specific, when in a certain situation evil has gotten the power and the others keep still, participate in it, and the good is to be expressed, the relationship is turned around in such a way that the good comes to suffer the punishment the others should

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*"It flatters their arbitrariness that the government they obey is of their own making. It is like a pagan worshipping the god he himself has made."* — S. Kierkegaard

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have suffered. The evil world in all probability punishes the good on account of that for which the world itself should be punished."

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## Science and imperialism

Kierkegaard's assessment that human nature without loyalty to the Absolute (God) will necessarily give false obeisance to human authorities — whether right or wrong — is particularly instructive (and agrees with major interpreters like Greenberg and Paul Tillich on the role of idolatry and the loss of an objectivist ethic in Western history).

In the 19th century Kierkegaard was witnessing a transition to science from religion as the conceptual framework from which Europeans viewed their world and human behavior. Humans were reduced to the level of animals, and thus indignified. Science did not consider the one thing Kierkegaard considered most important: to become an individual with dignity and integrity, and ultimately to become a Christian.

Moreover, Kierkegaard specifically associated Danish nationalism with the developing modern tendency to make of science a kind of religion. He saw that the entire world of Europe wanted a "new culture-consciousness," identified as a "Christian consciousness," in which natural science is made into a religion, and is supported by the state (and *vice versa*).

Although Kierkegaard did not reject science *per se*, he did see the dangers of its perverse use by the "public" as an all-encompassing ideology. The ultimate *motivation* of this elevation of science into a worldview or religion is human pride and defiance of God, historically expressed in the Enlightenment's trust in reason. The ultimate *consequence* of this false confidence in human intellectual powers is the development of imperialistic attitudes which result in dehumanization and the creation of a dominating bureaucratic mentality which enforces a rational ordering mode of existence upon human beings. Thus a totalitarian mindset arises out of pride of intellect of humans in their arrogantly rationalistic domination of the world,

a characteristic for which modern Western humanity is noted, and which appears especially in Nazi totalitarianism.

## Without love

In Kierkegaard's view, love for God is essential in adequately loving oneself and other persons. When love of God is not evident, a host of psychological maladies sets in; including envy and resentment, and the psychological and spiritual indis-



Brian Palmer/Impact Visuals

## Elephant at the 1992 GOP convention

position of "despair," expressed as a refusal to be oneself, a defiance of self-assertiveness, or a defiance to relate to God as the power constituting one's being. In the absence of neighborly love, a preferential, selective love uses (exploits) other persons as a means to a selfish, dominating end.

Collectively, when societies dismiss the Absolute, they invite social conflict, chaos and disruption. When individuals renounce the task of becoming "spirit" (as a finite entity participating in infinity), they invite servility to external sources of power, force, manipulation and domination, and look solely to politics for self-fulfillment in life. Kierkegaard goes so far as to say that the modern

phenomenon of persons looking to the state as a means of self-fulfillment is demonic, one of two attempts by human ambition to gain an upper hand over God and Christian values. The state has cleverly tried to gain the support of the clergy so as to employ religious sanction in its dominating role over human beings.

Numerous acts of indifference during the Holocaust can be diagnosed in Kierkegaardian terms as the failure of persons to achieve a personal level of development with the capacity to love, specifically to love one's neighbor (the *true* basis of fairness and equality, according to Kierkegaard).

Kierkegaard's insights are confirmed by the striking contrast between official church leadership and those relatively few Christians who *did* help others survive. For instance, the previously persecuted Huguenot community of Le Chambon, France instinctively understood the perils of church-state alliances, and the churchly abuse of power, since they had been victimized by such authoritarian religion. Collectively, this community saved numerous Jews.

Another exception was Dietrich Bonhoeffer who, like the Christians of Le Chambon, had grown up respecting Christian values and independence, those very values so egregiously violated by the Nazis and betrayed by the "Christian" community (on the whole). Bonhoeffer had read Kierkegaard, and like other members of the Confessing Church, swam upstream against the "shoals of herring" which Kierkegaard identifies as the "crowd" or "public" that is demoralized in its mediocrity and superficiality.

Thus the very contrast of the lives of the relatively few dissenting Christians, compared with those of Christendom, confirms the importance of Kierkegaard's exhortation to be a self-developing individual in a world constantly demanding conformity.

TW

# Elections/jazz

by Nkenge Zo!@

Hosting a daytime jazz show some years ago, I took calls on the question, "Should jazz be used in commercials to sell products?" Duke Ellington's music was audio vehicle at the time for a TV campaign marketing Saran Wrap.

After a series of calls, I asked the last caller, "You have something to say about our topic?"

A voice blossomed into air using English seasoned thoroughly with German. His emotion free of ambiguity, he said, "I was — we were *jailed* for our loff of jazz. *Jailed* because we listen to the music on records of the jazz people. It was in da war and *verbotten* to listen. I want to say that music of the Black American jazz people was *liberation!!*"

Learning more appreciation, I developed a taste for the peculiarities of our time, of friends, parents, strangers. I want so to have days for muse.

But for walking through 3 a.m. bus stops, watchnights, new years. Putting best foot forward, best foot forward, best foot forward down Woodward Avenue's miles half-paved, half-exposed. Past Value Village, The Turkey Grill. Watching citizens go about their business to enter a clinic, a wig shop, hat shop, look

for a mail carrier, drive up to Burger King in luxury rides, in hoopties. Fly and be-draggled, neat and dirty citizens. Loud spewing throats, sweet greet lips.

Thinking past words staked by Doles, Gingrichs, Schlafleys, I wonder: Through what metaphysic do beauty, harmony, joy ignite our convergence to the sublime?

It's got to be art.

Politics as a bill of rights, sale, or



Courtesy of MCA and 1993 GRP Records, Inc.

## Ella Fitzgerald: The Early Years

goods cannot be the only *sine qua non*. With so much cogent exploration of negotiation, consensus, prayer, listening, meditation by dedicated and happy delvers, elections must not be the sole *sine qua non*.

When "democracy" is pronounced *The American Way*, I rail. So much is left to be desired. Like how about jazz as template? Select a work and artist of your preferred era. Duke Ellington? Basie? Mary Lou Williams? Miles Davis with Wayne Shorter, Tony Williams, Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter Live at the Plugged Nickel in 1965? Sun Ra any time? Gil Evans, Lester

Young with his boys, Teddy Wilson, Miss Billie Holiday, Don Byron, Charles Christopher Parker, Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughn, Pops, Straight Ahead? Lester Bowie? Venus? The Decoding Society? Regina Carter? John Coltrane, Alice Coltrane, Griot Galaxy, Max Roach — and the thousands who live a jazz life. Jazz presents a metaphysic for community as it existed in community practiced largely by Afrikan Americans. I see it. And it's easy.

The rhythm section. Bass/tuba player. Trap drummer. Piano/Maybe no. Those "holding down the rhythm." Providing support. And the players (significant word for this weary heavy age!) — hold it down and move — swingin'. Responsible. And while those players hold it together, they engender a phenomenon so like "community" — a place wherein the beings involved feel, grow, learn, help.

It's the relationship of human beings in formation and proximity to one another. So whether playing horn, harp, harmonica, drums, bass, piano — support is rendered. And the solo persons are allowed the time to express themselves, do so within the confines of their creativity, sense of style, love, commitment, hearing, knowing full well that the ability to go it alone is learned with others.

And so it is. Those digging for SOCI-ETAL REMEDIES, UNITY and all those capital letter desires? Open to the metaphor. Open to jazz as metaphor for healthy society.

Politics as declaration, politics as electing someone to do for is such a stagnant experience when held as THE best way.

I can't be satisfied with knowing of jazz as *the* metaphor for a way. Cause there were certainly some Nations here before the many, many black folks arrived. And I know their ways are expansive and pointedly grand. Musing might get me to them.

TW

art and society

Nkenge Zo!@ is art and society editor of *The Witness*. She works for WDET public radio in Detroit, Mich.



# News from Beijing

by Claire Woodley-Aitchison

Burma's Aung San Sun Kyi, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, linked the issue of gender equality to peace, human rights, tolerance and economic security in her opening remarks at the Fourth World Conference on Women and Non-Governmental Forum in August. "In practicing tolerance, it is not enough to live and let live. In societies where men are truly confident, women are not merely tolerated, they are highly valued ... Intolerance breeds insecurity, without security there can be no peace." Women from 170 countries, indigenous nations and state governments convened in Beijing and Hairou, China to explore how the world looks "Through the Eyes of a Woman," make plans to remediate the harms they suffer and celebrate the gifts they bring. Their focus was the Beijing Declaration and draft Platform for Action that had been created through the intensive interactive process of lobbying, drafting, debate, compromise, revision and proposal that marks the dialogical process of the U.N.

Both the declaration and final platform document now join the two other great international treaty documents that have emerged from the four-meeting, 20-year history of the international women's conferences, the 1979 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

(CEDAW) and the 1985 Forward Looking Strategies.

The Platform for Action is a "non-binding treaty." The word "non-binding," however, is misleading because assenting governments are under pressure to prove they honor the commitment. "This is the mission of Beijing," said Gertrude Mongella, FWCW Secretary General. "Each government must now set priorities, specify the resources it will contribute and declare what steps it will take to hold itself accountable to the world's women."

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*"We are worried that you Americans are not human. You don't do most of what makes humans human. Do all your people sing? Does your community dance together? Do you incorporate your young into the tribe? Do you have laws of stranger hospitality?" — a Namibian delegate*

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To see the growing global impact of, collectively, the international women's conferences, the women's movement, and feminist analysis of world problems, one need only look at the international Conference on Development and Population in Cairo held earlier this year. There it was made clear that to address population issues effectively, governments must put literacy and education of women and girls at the top of their agendas because educated women have fewer children.

The second half of the analysis reframed economic and energy issues to indicate that there are not "too many people" in developing countries; rather, developed countries consume too much and too many of developing countries' resources.

Every one of the 40,000 women at the Non-Governmental Forum was an expert in her field, with a constituency and power base that she can use to translate the work of the conference into immediate and long-term actions. Each day in Hairou there were literally thousands of opportunities for these women to exchange information and ideas, build strategies and network.

At a panel on the rise of fundamentalism and conservatism, Rebecca Sevilla of Peru presented strategies from a lesbian perspective saying, "We are all so different at this conference ... In order to start solving problems in this world we must begin developing an ethic of diversity within a culture of respect because conservatism is based on fear, on greed, and on divisions between people. Developing an ethic of diversity, especially as a daily practice, is a challenge. But this is a rich culture which will allow us to find new solutions to old problems because we will base them on agreements and peace, not fights."

The International Tribunal, made up of women jurists from four of the five global areas, heard testimony on crimes against women from around the globe. "The world governments cannot simultaneously preach peace and base their economies on military arms sales and acquisition," the tribunal stated.

The link between structural adjustment policies, globalization of the economy, militarization, the exploitation of women's labor, environmental degradation and the exclusion of women from decision-making were made explicit. Winona LaDuke, co-chair of the Indigenous Women's Network, spoke of the

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**Claire Woodley-Aitchison** is interim rector of St. Mary the Virgin Episcopal Church in Chappaqua, New York, and a member of the U.S. Ecumenical Women's Network B2 (Beijing and Beyond). She was part of the film crew documenting the Fourth World Conference. The film will be available from the National Council of Churches' Justice for Women office after January, 1996.

destruction of the earth and indigenous societies by industrial societies. “Decisions at the United Nations are made not by thousand-year-old nations of indigenous peoples, but by the 180 member states who have been in existence for only 200 years. And, in truth, most of those decisions are made by the 47 transnational corporations. The right to make those decisions is not based on human rights, but rights based on wealth and power, which are being made at the cost of millions of lives, species of plants, animals, forests and entire ecosystems and people.”

The Peace tent provided a focus for discussion and strategy for nonviolent means of resolving world issues. Many workshops focused on the necessity for, and the strategies to promote, women in leadership who act, not as tokens speaking for male-identified power structures, but as humans seeking peace. The milestone of recognizing women’s rights as *human* rights will substantially change the international peace and justice dialogue.

In a personal conversation with a woman from Namibia (she asked that I not use her name) we spoke of the basic issues at stake. “We are worried that you Americans are not human,” she said. “You don’t do most of what makes humans human. Do all your people sing together when they work or are happy or are sad? Does your community dance together? Do you incorporate your young into the tribe? Do you have laws of stranger hospitality?” I had to answer “no” to her questions. Then she said, “My people’s identity is in their culture, in our songs and rites and stories. Where is yours? In your things. You become what you love, and your people love things before people. We are afraid, you see, that you will not stay human, but become things.” She ended by saying, “The way you live is killing my children.”

This was the first U.N. conference where religion and spirituality was one of the major themes. At an historic meeting during one of Betty Friedan’s “Conversations With ...” series, Helen Hunt, Ada Maria Issasi Diaz, Chung Hyun Kyung and Rifat Hassan presented a panel on

Kyi’s experience that, “There are no gender barriers that we cannot overcome.” She spoke of her experience in Burma of working with male compatriots with trust and respect.

Around the world, where there is great destabilization — from military, eco-



Participants at the NGO forum in Beijing

courtesy Church Women United

what feminism can look like from a faith base. The recognition that in their spirituality and religious practice faith-based women have power and encouragement to share is beginning to take root and gain positive agenda time. In her address to the NGO conference, Hillary Rodham Clinton spoke of the importance of faith in the work of transforming the world. An interfaith noonday prayer prepared by the U.S. Ecumenical Women’s Network was prayed daily at the NGO and U.N. conferences.

Betty Friedan noted that “identity politics,” arising out of the concept that the personal is political, is a step individuals must make in order to move out of the box of patriarchal structural oppression — and there is life beyond the box, a life being shaped by the concept of community. Many women shared Aung San Sui

Umm, religious and ethnic wars — empowered women, working with men who are confident in who they are as equals, are providing a new stabilizing force. A new paradigm, based on trust, respect and nonviolence is emerging. **TW**

### Perez named to AIDS council

Altagracia Perez, an active member of ABIL, an Episcopal Church women-of-color caucus, has been named to a 23-person presidential advisory council on AIDS. Perez, 33, is rector of the Church of St. Philip the Evangelist in South-Central Los Angeles. She has helped write a national agenda for treating HIV-positive women and has created an anti-AIDS peer advising program for teens.

—based on a *Los Angeles Times* report

# Vetting the Vatican

by Rosemary Radford Ruether

**D**uring the Fourth World Conference on Women, a petition was circulated asking the U.N. to evaluate the observer status of the Holy See. The petition was organized by Catholics for a Free Choice in Washington D.C.

The impetus for this petition came from the experience of women's groups at recent United Nations' conferences on social issues, in Cairo and Copenhagen, as well as at Beijing. In these conferences the Vatican was perceived as exercising undue pressure to promote views on population, reproduction and the gender "nature" of women seen as inimical to women's welfare. For example, in the preparatory document for Beijing, Vatican spokesmen bracketed all references to gender, insisting that this term sanctioned homosexuality.

Underlying this objection was an insistence on a fixed nature of men as active and women as passive, seen as God-given and not as socially constructed. Not only opposition to abortion, but also to family planning that entails contraception have been fixed points of Vatican interventions in U.N. conferences over the years.

Although this role of the Vatican at United Nations conferences sparked the petition, its substance lies in a query concerning the legitimacy of the Holy See, as representative of the papal government of the Roman Catholic Church, to be represented at the U.N. as a state. On what basis is a church represented as a member state in an organization of nation states? How did the Vatican achieve this

anomalous status as a "Non-member State Permanent Observer" in this international body of states which allows it not only voice without vote in regular U.N. meetings, but an equal vote in U.N. special conferences, such as the one at Beijing?

From medieval times until 1870, when the Italian armies under Guiseppe Mazzini abolished the papal states as an independent territory and unified Italy, the popes ruled central Italy as temporal rulers. Pius the Ninth refused to accept this confiscation of the papal states and declared himself a "prisoner of the Vatican," appealing to Catholics to reject the legitimacy of the new state. In 1929 a Concordat between the Pope and the then Italian Premier, Mussolini, settled this conflict, compensating the Vatican for the confiscated territory and giving the 108 acres of Vatican City in Rome titular status as a city state.

Although having only a few hundred residents, mostly clerics, this titular status allows the Vatican certain state roles, such as its own postal and telecommunications services. It was on the basis of its membership in the Universal Postal Union and International Telecommunications Union that the Vatican began to attend meetings of the General Assembly, World Health and Education, Scientific and Cultural Organizations of the U.N. in the 1950s, being named a permanent observer in 1964.

Although the Vatican is present at the U.N. on the basis of the historical city-state status of Vatican City, it has made clear from the beginning of its relation with this international body that it represents, not Vatican City as a temporal entity, but the Holy See, that is the papal government of the world Roman Catho-

lic Church. Here lies the confusion of church and state in the definition of the Vatican status, for while Vatican City is a titular state, the Holy See as the papal government of the World Church is a church, not a state.

This distinction was once more reiterated by Vatican Press Secretary, Joaquin Navarro-Valls at the end of the women's conference in Beijing. When asked whether the Vatican intended to implement the various decisions on equality and justice for women in the final document approved at the conference, he replied that the delegation "did not speak for the 400 citizens of the Vatican, but only for the 900 million Catholics around the world" (*NCR* 9/29/95, p. 14). The question raised by the petition asks whether it is just and appropriate for an organization representing a church to have a status at the United Nations that allows it full voting rights at United Nations' conferences along with nation states. Does this not give inappropriate power to one church and one religious voice, while other churches and religious groups can be present at the United Nations only as Non-Governmental Organizations?

The supporters of the petition are not arguing that the religious voice should not be heard at the United Nations, but rather that it should be heard in its diversity, including the diversity of views found within Roman Catholicism itself.

Moreover, these religious voices should be present as NGOs, not as official representatives of states. Those supporting the petition might not oppose many things the Vatican says, for example, on peace, economic justice and the rights of immigrants. The issue is separation of church and state, and the need to hear many religious voices as NGOs, rather than one church monopolizing the "spiritual" voice, by claiming special status in international relations as a state.

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# Heresy trials and order

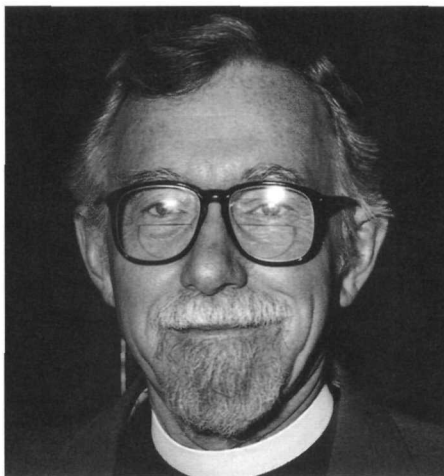
by Harvey H. Guthrie, Jr.

[Ed. note: Whether Walter Righter, the retired bishop of Iowa, was "teaching a doctrine contrary to that held by this church" when he ordained an openly gay man, Barry Stopfel, to the diaconate five years ago will be determined in an upcoming ecclesiastical heresy trial. The Witness will be publishing a round-up of perspectives on the trial in December.]

Walter Righter's presenters rightly see church order and orthodoxy as the basic issue. I believe it is that, but in a deeper and more radical sense than they recognize.

The concepts of order and orthodoxy emerged when early Christians sought to understand and interpret the Gospel in their cultural setting using Greco-Roman ontological philosophy. For that cultural idiom, ultimate reality was a static, stable state. Thus, the One witnessed to by the Bible and present in Jesus was interpreted as that reality, as the unchanging norm against which to test truth and righteousness. But it is important to note that those early Christians were clear that the cultural idiom was secondary to what it was seeking to interpret, to the dynamic, involved-in-history, divine One. The understanding of God as Trinity, quite illogical in that cultural idiom, but faithful to dynamic, narrative biblical witness, is evidence of that.

**Harvey H. Guthrie, Jr.**, was dean of EDS from 1969 until 1985 and rector of St. Andrew's, Ann Arbor, Mich., from 1985 until 1995. He and his wife Doris are now retired and living in Fillmore, Calif.



Harvey H. Guthrie, Jr.

In more recent centuries modern science, critical historical research, sociology, and psychology have increasingly displaced Greco-Roman ontological philosophy as the idiom through which our culture understands and interprets reality. That is the reason for the often noted dearth of work in systematics, dogmatics and traditional moral theology in this century, and for the emergence of things like process theologies and situation ethics. Absolute, unchangeable norms are absent from our culture's experience and assumptions. Significant attempts to understand and interpret the Gospel in our contemporary cultural idiom have arisen.

At the same time, those who were on the outer edges of the theological enterprise have, in Harvey Cox's metaphor, been moving to the center: third-world folk, women, people of color, gay and lesbian people. That movement has revealed the extent

to which "absolute norm" orthodoxy and order assumed European, male humanity and its tradition to be normative. As the movement of cultural history undermined the presuppositions of inherited theology and ethics, sociological history has been undermining European/male assumptions about the nature and functioning of institutions. Thus the contemporary "culture wars" which are reflected in the church in connection with the ordination of women and the unions and ordination of lesbian and gay people.

Also at the same time, biblical studies over the past century, mostly independent of what I have been describing, have led to the realization that the "theology" implied in the Bible is not what came out of the Greco-Roman, ontological-philosophical cultural idiom. "Process" may turn out to serve better as an interpretational principle for the Gospel than "stability."

Faithfulness to the Gospel may have to be defined in terms of intrinsic adequacy in specifically given moments rather than adherence to an external, absolute norm. Prophetic revelation demands datelines, incarnation demands the particularity of narrative, rather than validation on the basis of abstract formularies. Indeed, it could be that the character of the One, to whom the biblical narrative witnesses, radically undermines understandings of "stability" and "process" as opposites.

I believe we, the church, are now going through a time analogous to those early Christian centuries in which we struggled to understand ourselves as church in Greco-Roman cultural terms. We, the contemporary church, are seeking to understand ourselves as church in post-

ontological/philosophical cultural terms. I believe Bishop Righter's presenters and those who have given consent to the presentment are seeking to resolve all this — or to deny all this

*Walter Righter's presenters rightly see church order and orthodoxy as the basic issue. I believe it is that, but in a deeper and more radical sense than they recognize.*

*Vital Signs*

## A statement made by certain bishops in the face of the impending trial of Bishop Righter

We the undersigned recognize the witness of the Rt. Rev. Walter C. Righter to the Christ who lived, died and rose for the salvation of all. Walter Righter's trial is a trial of the Gospel, a trial of justice, a trial of fairness, and a trial of the Church. We stand with Bishop Righter. We feel charged as Bishop Righter is charged. We feel on trial as Bishop Righter is on trial. Should he be found guilty, we are guilty. Should Bishop Righter be sentenced, we will accept his sentence as our own.

Allen L. Bartlett, Jr., Pennsylvania  
George S. Bates, Utah  
William Burrill, Rochester  
Steve Charleston, Alaska  
Jane Holmes Dixon, Suff. of Washington  
Ronald H. Haines, Washington  
Sanford Z.K. Hampton, Suff. of Minn.  
Barbara C. Harris, Suff. of Mass.  
George N. Hunt, Acting Bishop of Hawaii  
James L. Jelinek, Minnesota  
M. Thomas Shaw, Massachusetts  
Richard L. Shimpfky, El Camino Real  
John S. Spong, Newark  
Orris G. Walker, Long Island  
R. Stewart Wood, Jr., Michigan  
Roger Blancahard, Ret. of Southern Ohio  
John M. Burgess, Ret. of Massachusetts

John Harris Burt, Ret. of Ohio  
George C. Cadigan, Ret. of Missouri  
Otis Charles, Ret. of Utah  
David R. Cochran, Ret. of Arkansas  
Robert DeWitt, Ret. of Pennsylvania  
A. Theodore Eastman, Ret. of Maryland  
John E. Hines, Ret. Presiding Bishop  
John Krumm, Ret. of Southern Ohio  
H. Coleman McGehee, Jr., Ret. of Mich.  
William Marmion, Ret. of SW Virginia  
Paul Moore, Jr., Ret. of New York  
Quintin E. Primo, Ret. Suff. of Chicago  
George E. Rath, Ret. of Newark  
Francisco Reus-Froylen, Ret. of P.R.  
Robert R. Spears, Jr., Ret. of Rochester  
Richard M. Trelease, Ret. of Rio Grande  
Frederick B. Wolf, Ret. of Maine

— by appealing dramatically to a static norm, a norm which may fit well with the conscious cultural location of most of them, but not well with either the actual cultural location of the church today or the Gospel.

When the General Convention of 1979 sought to deal with the vocations of homosexual people in a resolution assuming a static norm, 20 bishops and a significant number of deputies with responsibility for decisions about ordination stated for the record that they would not be bound by such a resolution in evaluating vocations. That statement stands as part of the official record of our church. Many bishops, standing committees, commissions on ministry, vestries and seminary faculties have acted on it over the past 16 years, Bishop Righter (actually acting for the bishop and standing committee of the

Diocese of Newark) not being the first. Whether or not they theorized along my lines, they were acting faithfully in terms of loyalty to the Gospel in the church's present cultural location.

That the lack of presentments and trials of bishops leave the present court without precedents to follow is probably witness to the church's unconscious recognition for a long time of what I have tried to describe. It is certainly in line with Anglican pastoral, pragmatic, common law tradition. The presentment — with its appeal to an absolute, external, static norm — is not only out of line with that tradition, but also hampers faithful struggling with the issue it claims as its concern. The court for the trial of a bishop might best be faithful by ruling that, along the lines of the 1979 statement, the presentment is without justification.

## Eschewing triumphalism

The leadership of the Episcopal Women's Caucus (EWC) had originally chosen Fort Worth, Tex., as the site of the group's late-September 1995 annual meeting to show the group's solidarity with those still fighting for women's ordination to the priesthood — Fort Worth is one of four dioceses where the bishop and diocesan leadership have steadfastly continued to categorically oppose women priests.

But following a "mind of the house" resolution passed by the Episcopal Church's bishops on Sept. 27 in which, by a vote of 122 to 17 with 18 abstentions, they firmly declared that the 18-year-old church canon permitting women access to the priesthood and episcopate is mandatory and not permissive, the purpose of the EWC meeting shifted — to embrace the question of how to move forward into "a new chapter in the church's life" without succumbing to triumphalism.

"Some people fear that now that the bishops have taken this stand that the oppressed will become the oppressors," observed EWC past president Sally Bucklee. "But I don't know any man or woman in the EWC who wants to do unto others as has been done unto us."

The group resolved "to assist in any way it can in the implementation" of the ordination canon while also "extending its hand in love and friendship to all in our church" and praying for reconciliation.

Church historian Pamela W. Darling noted that it is "not an accident that the mind of the house resolution [on the ordination canon] occurs as the bishops face a heresy trial [on the question of whether non-celibate homosexual persons should be ordained]."

Darling elaborated in her keynote address: "The traditionalists are right. It is all connected — women, ordination, language, sex, authority, Scripture. Patriarchy rests on their interlocking foundation. If you change one piece, all the rest will be destabilized."

Sixteen of the 17 bishops who opposed the bishops' ordination resolution also endorsed the Walter Righter trial.

— Julie A. Wortman

# Clergy background checks:

## a conversation with Sue Hiatt and Gene Robinson

*Over the past several months, a debate has developed over the clergy background checks required by the Church Insurance Company (CIC) for purchasers of its sexual misconduct liability insurance. The seven dioceses in New England's Province I have collaborated on a detailed "screening questionnaire" for this and other purposes. Some clergy in Massachusetts and elsewhere are protesting this approach to weeding out perpetrators. Gene Robinson, a priest who is Canon to the Ordinary in the Diocese of New Hampshire and Executive Secretary of Province I, served on the committee that developed the questionnaire. Sue Hiatt, a priest who teaches pastoral theology and canon law at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass., is one of those opposing use of the questionnaire. Witness managing editor, Julie A. Wortman, moderated their conversation.*

**Julie Wortman:** Gene, some people say that in comparison with CIC's requirements, Province I has gone overboard, delving into church workers' backgrounds and infringing on their privacy. What's your response?

**Gene Robinson:** I think there's no doubt that CIC is the group that got the church to pay attention to these issues, although many women and organizations have tried to raise these issues with the church before. But our goal here in Province I was not just to meet and satisfy CIC's requirements. Our goal has been to make our churches safer places. In fact one of our largest dioceses, Connecticut, is not even insured by CIC, yet they have been a full participant in this process. I think this has been an appropriate effort to select, train, supervise, evaluate and discipline our clergy.

I also want to point out that this questionnaire is for use with clergy, not with all church workers. Clergy are people under authority. At our ordinations we



**Sue Hiatt**

sign an oath of conformity and submit ourselves to the church's authority. That's not true for church secretaries, sextons or other lay workers doing various kinds of ministry. We have on our agenda to develop an appropriate background check for lay church workers, but it will probably look nothing like this one.

**J.W.:** How would it differ?

**G.R.:** I think there will be many fewer and much simpler questions. The screening questionnaire was developed to meet a number of needs relating to the ordination process, the deployment process and to the ongoing supervision of clergy. We all know some horror stories about clergy who have been passed along from one bishop to another, from one diocese to another, without some relevant — and in some cases disturbing — information being communicated. This is an effort to fill in some of those gaps and to be more responsible and accountable for the people we introduce into our congregations.

**J.W.:** Sue, you've been among those raising questions about the Province I screening questionnaire. What are some of the difficulties you see?

**Sue Hiatt:** I don't agree with Gene about the efficacy of these questionnaires

in terms of the stated goals. I don't see how these questionnaires are going to make parishes safer places because the clergy need to feel safe, too. What I hear repeatedly from the 76 Massachusetts clergy who signed a letter of concern and from others is that we don't feel safe if we feel our bishop is suspicious of us.

The clergy in Massachusetts are very fond of their present bishop, but they don't like the idea of that office being someone of whom they have to be wary. The tradition is that the bishop protects the clergy as much as he or she can — although not if they are out of line. But a lot of clergy see these kinds of questions as a breach of trust between them and their bishop — and they are quite alarmed about the invasion of their rights as citizens. This all ties in with the amended Title IV [clergy disciplinary canon]. A lot of clergy have memories of McCarthyism and see that in these invasive questions, which they feel violate their rights to privacy, against self incrimination, various things like that.

I'm concerned about that, too. Not in terms so much of personally losing my rights, although I am concerned about that, but when you start to erode the rights of leaders in the society there's a kind of creeping disempowerment of people who have been in leadership positions. If you start hinting around that clergy are really a very dishonest bunch and you have to investigate them and find out about their pasts, that has a very chilling effect on how we do counseling and on how we remain "soul" friends. It is similar to current efforts by some politicians to discredit the American Association of Retired Persons in order to dilute that organization's championing of Medicare.

**G.R.:** I have no doubt that this process is somewhat shocking to clergy. Clearly, we are being scrutinized by society, by our parishioners and by our own leaders in ways that were heretofore unknown to us. And I think that some of my colleagues' feelings about this have to do with the loss of privilege, prestige, and esteem in the society at large. But I would say that it is not the background check that is causing



that change, but the misconduct of some of our clergy. I feel victimized, too — not in the same way, of course, as those who are sexually victimized, but clergy who violate the pastoral relationship damage my credibility, both in the world and in the church and thereby lessen my ability to function as a priest. So in a sense the background check is for my benefit because it is at least one attempt to police ourselves in a way that protects my credibility as a priest.

**S.H.:** It is very hard to see how abridging one group's rights protects the rights of another group. I think something must be done about sexual misconduct, but I don't think this is it. This just exacerbates the problem rather than solving it.

**G.R.:** What strategies would you employ, in addition to training and education — which I think we both agree is very important and is going quite well in the province's seven dioceses?

**S.H.:** Training is important because the content does get at the sexual misconduct problem, which I don't think the background check does. I don't know if we need to do any more than what the pastoral relationship between a bishop and priest — and the canonical requirements as written before the Title IV changes — require. The problem is that those things haven't been being done. You don't fix that by coming up with another procedure that appears to be wide of the mark. You fix that by doing what you should have been doing in the first place. That's been my main problem with this in terms of sexual exploitation — I don't see how this stops it. You might uncover a few people with notorious histories, but that's not going to get at the attitudinal problem that is behind this — which is, I suspect, a disrespect for women.

It also seems to me that to treat sexual abuse as a crime that needs to be ferreted out and punished is retrogressive. We don't think that about alcoholism anymore, we don't think that about various other forms of addiction. I think there are all kinds of indications that sexual abuse is a form of addictive illness and should be treated that way. But because there are

victims we have been very quick to say, "No, just get the bastards out of there and stop it." But it doesn't seem to me that this background check does anything about



Gene Robinson

that. As you point out, sexual predators have gotten around safeguards before.

**G.R.:** I see a huge difference between how the church responds to clergy who abuse alcohol and to clergy who sexually abuse children or exploit vulnerable parishioners. But I would agree that the background check alone will not solve the problem of sexual abuse in the church or anywhere else. It's meant to be one part of a larger strategy which we would also agree needs to focus on education, training, discussion and raising these issues in the church. Where we disagree is that I think that this is a helpful strategy to employ along with the other ones.

We are moving into a different time than when the so-called "good old boy network" existed. Bishops now know, because they have been held accountable, that their failure to pass along pertinent, disturbing information renders them accountable and liable. I think we are going to see the passing along of information in an unprecedented way. I think that's a good thing.

**S.H.:** I'm not sure I understand why that is so, but I also have a difficulty with this particular questionnaire and with Oxford Document Management Company, which is apparently an offshoot

of an accounting firm, formed especially to look into the backgrounds of Episcopal clergy.

**G.R.:** What allegations are you making about that?

**S.H.:** Well, that if investigatory procedures are going to be gone into, let's get some expertise involved. An area of dis-ease for some of us is the sort of vague answers you get about who is going to have access to the information and for how long.

**G.R.:** The information is given to the bishop — it's not given to search committees, it's not given out willy nilly. In our larger dioceses, there is a small number of people assisting the bishop in this and that's why the form talks about the bishop or the bishop's "designated agents." In New Hampshire, for instance, the bishop is the *only* person looking at the information coming back. The only other person who has access to that information is the clergy person.

Oxford Document Management Company, Inc., is a subsidiary of an accounting firm. In effect, they are providing nothing but secretarial services for us. That is, they are licking the envelopes, licking stamps, sending out mail on our behalf. But they are making no decisions, no judgments whatsoever, on information that is obtained. When that information comes in, whether from a clergy person or a reference, if it contains anything but a "no" answer to those questions, anything at all, the entire form is sent to the bishop. Usually, what gets written in the comments section of the form are very positive comments, indicating that "Fr. Smith is a wonderful person and we'd love to have him back." But if anything is written, positive or negative, it goes to the bishop.

In addition, nothing is recorded or put on computer with respect to the content. The only thing that is on computer at Oxford Document is the clergy person's name, the references that that clergy person listed, and a record of when the letter went out to the reference and when it was received back. They do not enter any of the information that comes back on

those forms into a data base. They retain copies of the forms for five years and at the end of five years everything is either sent to the bishop or the bishop may renegotiate for a longer storage period.

**S.H.:** We probably have a basic disagreement here. I don't want a lot of written material about me to be in anybody's files — even the bishop's, but certainly not a subsidiary of a CPA in Minneapolis. Also, there just are not the guarantees that these materials won't be shown to whoever comes down the pike — the FBI, the CIA or whoever it is. We have the experience in this church of the FBI running rampant with church files and people serving time in jail because of that and that I find very scary. [Former Presiding Bishop Jack Allin gave the FBI permission to look through files at the National Church office. Church staffers went to jail for refusing to testify about Puerto Rican revolutionary activity before a grand jury.]

**G.R.:** You raise a good point. I wish that there had been some kind of decision made at the national level about how to go about this process. It is sheer lunacy for there not to be a coordinated effort amongst all of our dioceses so that we are all doing the same thing, everyone is experiencing the same thing and so that the information is transferable from diocese to diocese. It makes no sense to have as many processes as there are dioceses. We here in New England were trying to bring some kind of order out of all the chaos, at least for our seven dioceses.

**S.H.:** But until the safeguards are there, I just can't afford to participate, knowing the history of what happens in this country. Protecting one's rights is a very important thing. It is not a matter of convenience, it's a matter of basic ways of being and operating in this society. If I am fighting for the rights of minorities and gays I certainly can't sign away my own.

**J.W.:** Can we spend a little time talking about this rights question? There are people who have different things to say about what rights clergy have and what rights they don't have.

**S.H.:** Gene mentioned the oath of

conformity which clergy take at ordination. That oath certainly says nothing about giving up one's rights as citizens and I think this, "Well, you gave your rights up as citizens when you were ordained," sort of thing is disturbing. I did no such thing. If someone thinks we did do that or we do do that, let's get it out in the open, because I'm not willing to do that or to say I did so 24 years ago when I was ordained.

**G.R.:** I come down on the side of those people like Sally Johnson, the chancellor of Minnesota, who would contend that the First Amendment wall separating church

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— Sue Hiatt

and state is operative here and that that wall permits the church the freedom to rule itself with little interference from the government. The church is free to select, supervise, deploy and oversee its own clergy by its own rules. It's a question of what we give up by being under authority and what we do not. There are a lot of misconceptions about that.

**S.H.:** Under whose authority? Just "people under authority" is something we could debate until doomsday. But the constitution and canons of the Episcopal

Church do not give bishops absolute authority over clergy. In our polity clergy and laity have a part in making the rules.

**G.R.:** I would agree when you use the word "absolute," but Title III Canon 24 Section 4b is the canon that does give the bishop the right to examine the life and ministry of clergy and congregations.

**S.H.:** Yes, but the assumption is, within the bounds of English common law. Also, "examine" does not mean "dictate."

**G.R.:** Can you point to a couple of examples in the questionnaire that violate your civil rights?

**S.H.:** Yes. The right against self-incrimination. It asks if you have been accused of or involved in various things. The right to privacy I think is pretty clear.

**G.R.:** That is not clear. We quite specifically eliminated anything that was self-incriminating. We had a long discussion about this with the bishops, chancellors, administrators and the committee. So, for instance, it does not say, in general terms, "Have you ever misbehaved?" It asks for factual information — "Have there been formal charges brought?" That's a fact, not self-incrimination.

**S.H.:** I don't agree with that. My recourse is to resist and not fill out the questionnaire. And my bishop's recourse is to bring charges against me for disobeying a godly admonition should he give me one.

**G.R.:** That's not his only recourse in the case of clergy who refuse to comply. Yes, the bishop could issue a godly admonition or direction to fill this out and then if she or he did not comply, that would be grounds for a presentment. But I don't hear a single one of our bishops remotely favoring such a course of action.

**S.H.:** That would be disastrous, but it could happen.

**G.R.:** A second approach, which is the one I hear them taking, is the pastoral approach which is based on a relationship between themselves and their priests. I think the way most of the bishops will handle this is that if, over time, the person still cannot fill out the questionnaire, then the priest is to understand that should any

kind of allegations be made against that priest for misconduct, their refusal to participate in the process will obviously be discoverable evidence by any prosecuting attorney. That's a fact and the priest and the priest's vestry or employer should know that.

**J.W.:** I've heard people — especially women concerned about sexual misconduct in the church — raise suspicions that people who are opposed to the background checks have something to hide or are refusing to be accountable.

**G.R.:** I don't hear anyone saying that, certainly not the people I have worked with on this form. That is impugning the integrity of people who are questioning this process — which I don't do and don't hear being done by people who agree with this process.

**S.H.:** I have heard that said, indeed some clergy have told me they are complying primarily because they are afraid people will suspect them of misconduct if they don't.

That brings me to the whole question of whether this way of going about things really catches perpetrators. I'm quite clear in my mind that it does not, that the "old boy" way of doing things knows how to get around background checks. You write down the people you know who are going to give you a good reference and we protect our own. The people who get caught in this are the new kids on the block — women, gays, the people who in some way deviate from the standard Episcopal clergyman pattern. They are not protected by this informal network of back-patting and winking.

I have no objection to my bishop knowing everything there is to know about me — that is part of the relationship which comes with ordination. My objection is to having it on file, having it written down where all sorts of folk, you know not who, can get hold of it.

**G.R.:** Would you feel comfortable, then, with something similar to this questionnaire if there were some way of safeguarding that it is only for the bishop's and the clergy person's eyes? Or are you saying there is no way to ensure that?

**S.H.:** I find it hard to believe that there is a way. I don't like this information being on computer databases.

**G.R.:** You did hear my point that it is not being entered on a computer anywhere?

**S.H.:** I simply don't believe that. I think you believe that, but I don't, because my experience is that once you've got something written down it has a way of perpetuating itself.

**J.W.:** I've heard there has been considerable objection to the last question on the reference questionnaire which

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clergy. — Gene Robinson*

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asks, "Is there any other information that you think the bishop should know? Please explain at the end of this form or on a separate sheet of paper."

**G.R.:** Let me point out that that is one of the most widely asked questions in the church. Every day, deployment officers and bishops and others talk with one another about candidates in the deployment process and in probably 99 percent of those conversations that question is asked. What's horrifying to me is that I have no way of knowing what my bishop or my deployment officer is saying

about me. Because in this form those questions are asked and the responses are in writing and I have access to the forms, I have a way of knowing what is being said about me and by whom.

**S.H.:** But the practice of off-the-record comments is not going to stop because of the use of these forms. And I don't see how having this information written down protects anybody, especially when you've signed a waiver that you won't sue the person who says these kinds of things.

**G.R.:** The chancellors of the province have said that the waiver that the clergy person signs only waives their right to sue someone for telling the truth about them but does not waive their right to sue for libel or defamation when something untrue is said about them. But I understand that Sue has checked with lawyers who disagree with that interpretation and feel that the waiver is for *any* legal recourse.

**S.H.:** Yes. Whose lawyer are you going to listen to? In an adversarial proceeding the chancellors are the bishops' lawyers, not the clergyperson's.

**J.W.:** Much of this was set into motion by CIC as a condition of liability coverage. Do you feel the church has allowed the CIC to dictate too much or that because we're being driven by that kind of requirement we've forgotten to do some original thinking about how to respond to abuse in the church?

**S.H.:** I certainly feel that way. My brother is a physician and I have watched the way insurance requirements have dictated medical practice in the last 10 or 15 years. An insurance man said to him at one point, "You want to practice Cadillac medicine but we're only going to pay for Chevrolet medicine." That concerns me as a professional. We're allowing insurance companies who really don't know much about it dictate medical practice and now they want to control ministerial practice. I object strongly to that.

**G.R.:** I don't think that CIC has dictated too much. From time to time it has felt a bit like the tail wagging the dog, but I keep holding on to the fact that these are issues that we should have been paying attention to for a very long time now and I'm not



sure, frankly, that if we hadn't had CIC bringing it to our attention as a result of some lawsuits that we would be any closer to dealing with these issues than we were five years ago.

**S.H.:** But this investigative approach seems to me to have a chilling effect on relationships between clergy and parishioners. You increasingly get the feeling, "Don't put your arms around that person because they'll sue you." And what does that do to the healing power of relationships and warmth? Do we have to avoid intimacy entirely and go back to a very cold kind of practice of ministry? I consider that a sea change.

**G.R.:** I think that's a red herring. That's an overreaction. We teach small children good touch and bad touch — if they can understand the difference, surely clergy can. And I would be appalled at anyone suggesting that clergy no longer touch parishioners. It is important that we understand that being touched by another human being is not experienced the same way by everyone. I had an amazing conversation with a woman priest from a neighboring diocese who was the victim of abuse as a child who described to me the kind of terror that still comes over her at the passing of the peace. She described to me what it felt like to her to have a man, especially, approach her with arms outstretched for a big bear hug and what that did to her insides — believing fully in the liturgical action of the passing of the peace, but being conflicted by all of these feelings. And so I have been educated about being sensitive to how my "warm" embrace might be received by someone else. I wouldn't call that a chilling effect. I've become much more sensitive to how my actions might affect someone else. I would not want a priest to hold back from doing the appropriate kinds of touching that are part of our history and tradition. After all, we use the laying on of hands for lots of actions in this church and I would not want us to pull back from that at all. And I don't think appropriate education would suggest it.

**S.H.:** No, but I think the background check does, because what it is saying to

people is that you have to be very careful because somebody is going to sue you.

**G.R.:** You don't think that's already in the culture?

**S.H.:** It may be, but if you're talking about making churches safe places they've got to be safe for the clergy, too. What this background check says is that it is not safe to do anything like this.

**G.R.:** What do you mean, "It's not safe to do anything like this"?

**S.H.:** It's not safe for you to touch people.

**G.R.:** Where do you find that in the questionnaire? It talks about harassment, it talks about child abuse, it talks about pornography.

**S.H.:** A priest I know has been sued in civil court for touching someone inappropriately. An unstable person charged him with assault and battery in passing the peace in the liturgy. The judge threw it out of court, but he went through legal proceedings, meanwhile, with no support from the diocese. He felt battered by the experience, not to mention financially drained by it. So he's going to be wary of touching people in the future. And he doesn't feel safe or supported by his church.

**G.R.:** But it was thrown out of court. However, something you raise which causes me great concern is that the liability policy is for the church, the parish or for the diocese. CIC will defend the church or the diocese, but the clergy person is on his or her own to mount his or her own defense. I think that is horrifying. I pushed CIC on this point and asked, "Do you mean if I am falsely accused and I spend every dime I have to defend myself and am acquitted CIC will have no part to play in that?" And they said, "That is correct." That is a fact that is not widely known and is something we have got to deal with as a church.

**S.H.:** Yes. I think people have gone along with this background check because they thought it would protect them, but in fact it doesn't. I recently talked with a clergyman who said he asked his insurance agent about getting his own insurance for this and was told the

premiums would be prohibitive. So that is scary stuff.

**G.R.:** It has always been true, but we just haven't been aware of it.

**J.W.:** Sue, what comes next with your protest of the background checks?

**S.H.:** We have a resolution before Massachusetts' diocesan convention to suspend this background check and to have the bishop appoint a committee to look at alternative ways of looking at this. I have heard that the Diocese of New York and other dioceses have voted to do exactly that and are in that process.

**J.W.:** What alternatives might you have in mind that a committee would explore?

**S.H.:** I would like a committee to look at all these issues. What is the business of insurance and what is the business of ministry? What is the Christian position on confession, absolution and amendment of life, which I think is a theological issue involved here. There are all kinds of exciting theological issues that are potentially raised by this. I would like a process that does not violate my rights as an American citizen because I think whether the church is allowed to do that under separation of church and state or not, I am not willing to waive those rights.

When I raise questions of rights and responsibility and trust and so forth, the response I get is, "We have to catch these perpetrators." I don't know how we get anywhere with that conversation because we are not talking about the same thing. I've heard what Gene has to say, but I am not convinced.

**G.R.:** I agree that this has a lot to do with trust between clergy and their bishops, between clergy and their congregations. For the lay people I have worked with, clergy sexual misconduct is a real issue — and they are proud that the Episcopal Church, as their faith community and/or employer, is naming and dealing with this issue. The pendulum has swung to one particular side now and we may end up in a more centrist place in the future. But I'm willing to be in this place right now so we can come back to the center because we paid too little attention to these issues for so long.



# Dueling ideologies and evangelism

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

When ECUSA's evangelism officer, Linda Strohmier, began her report to the recent international evangelism conference called by the Anglican primates, jeering broke out and one man was observed pretending to vomit before walking out.

The uproar was symptomatic of a split amongst the 200 American "observers" who attended the conference and pulled 120 delegates from 60 countries into the fray with them.

The number of official U.S. delegates was limited to three, which could have kept the U.S. role more proportionate than it has been at Lambeth where American bishops easily afford the trip and thus hugely outnumber others. But hundreds of U.S. observers were invited to help subsidize the conference held at Kanuga, N.C. September 5-9.

As usual, many participants from overseas felt the Americans, by virtue of their numbers and their brazen manner, placed their concerns too high on the agenda.

The character of those concerns was dictated in large measure by Kanuga's decision to invite its own evangelism mailing list which is composed of folks in Episcopalians United, Pews Action, Daughters of the King and Faith Alive. A minority of folks represented the church's gay/lesbian, feminist, rural and ethnic constituencies.

During plenary sessions, the American conservatives sat dead center, while the progressives sat in the back. The location of the applause indicated whether the speaker's comments were directed toward personal piety and denunciations of homosexuality or toward a corporate understanding of sin and economic injustice.

"You would have to have been

insensate not to know that there was real fractiousness in the American church," noted Strohmier.

She added that she felt sympathy for the international participants.

"They were still recovering from jet lag.



Linda Strohmier and Kaveinga Vaka, a youth from Tonga.

Most of these folks travelled alone and were the only representative from their country. And many were operating in their third or fourth language when speaking English," Strohmier said. There were no translators, which was roundly criticized.

## Homosexuality

Louie Crew, founder of Integrity, the church's gay/lesbian justice ministry, says the conference was the most painful he has attended. As an out gay man, he caught a lot of fury and patronizing attempts to "convert" him from both right-wing Americans and from Africans. [Zimbabwe's Council of Churches recently condemned homosexuality. See p. 37.]

George Piwang of Uganda told the gathering that he didn't want North Americans exporting "the homosexual agenda through resources and people. Homosexual imperialism is just as bad as the missionary imperialism we rejected in the past. This conference has been an eye opener about how agendas from America can become agendas through

the communion. This is a travesty for me."

## Fundamentalism

When George Carey, archbishop of Canterbury, spoke about the Anglican Church as a place for "slow conversion," for "intelligent faith," and for a mid-point "between fundamentalism and extreme liberalism," many criticisms were raised. Again right-wing American Christians were buttressed by participants from overseas.

"Bishop Ben Kwashi of Nigeria complained that talk of fundamentalism is a luxury for Christians in the West," according to Doug LeBlanc writing in *The United Voice*, the newspaper of the conservative group, Episcopalians United. "Kwashi spoke of converts who do not have any theological training but who believe and obey Scriptures.

"I'd rather have those people than those who are asleep or dead," Kwashi said to loud cheers and applause."

Archbishop Carey, on the defensive said, "We've had 200 years of critical scholarship, and we have nothing to be afraid of in that scholarship. I have found many resources in that scholarship and I still say the Creed with full conviction."

## Tolerance

John L. Peterson, secretary general of the Anglican Communion, spoke to the hazards of unrestrained fundamentalism in those committed to Islam, but also in Christians. His comments were directed to the experiences of Christians in Africa and South America who are trying to maintain the faith in the face of the energetic and bank-rolled preaching of Americans who suggest that the poor are poor because they've sinned and who preach unbridled capitalism [See *TW*, 6/95, p. 15]. In fact, representatives from the South Pacific testified to the renewal that has occurred in their churches as they combat the influence of pentecostal sects.

"I hold my head in shame to hear Jesus' name being affiliated with political

movements that isolate, inhibit and breed hate and discontentment between human beings," Peterson said. "Might we be a church where people know that they are loved no matter what their race or color, no matter what their sexual orientation, no matter what their tribe? A church that is not inclusive is not a church of Christ."

Some considered Peterson's observations an attack on simplicity and faithfulness.

Chinedu Nebo, of Nigeria, told the conference that the dioceses of West Africa have experienced phenomenal growth while insisting on repentance.

"When the heathens and the pagans come to Christ, we do not tell them that since serving countless worthless idols has been their lifestyle for generations, they may continue to serve other gods. We tell them to repent and serve only Christ," Nebo said.

"When prostitutes come seeking Christ, we don't tell them that since prostitution is their chosen lifestyle they could serve God unblamably while remaining in the sinful lifestyle. We teach them that Jesus said, 'Go and sin no more.'"

#### Church growth

Many participants, both domestic and foreign, defined evangelism in terms of church growth. Bishop Yong Ping Chung from China outlined his plan to double church membership in the next three years.

Samir Kafity, bishop of Jerusalem, took a hit from an American traditionalist who chastised him for not converting Jews and Muslims.

But others were offended.

Jane Bass, ordained in England, commented during the conference, "I am quite dismayed by much of what I have heard. When will we stop hyping up the success stories of thousands of people coming to Christ and focus on our call to share the Gospel with the marginalized and the very poor?"

Observer Steve Kelsey's observations were similar.

"Evangelism is not about recruiting new members to fill our pews. That would be an agenda of the maintenance of the

Church as institution, rather than the new course of mission.

"Evangelism is a compelling proclamation to a world yearning for life abundant, for justice and for peace," Kelsey noted. "Bishop Jubal Nevas of Southwestern Brazil said that the church must 'prepare people not only to be transformed but to transform the society, to proclaim not only personal salvation but also transformation of society.'"

#### Public repentance

Carey affirmed Christian leaders who have publicly repented for institutional sins: Anglicans in Japan have apologized for Japan's imperialism; Michael Peers, archbishop of Canada, has apologized for the church's oppression of Indian communities under the guise of evangelism; and Carey himself apologized to Ireland for the role of Protestants in hostilities there.

*"Ninety-five percent of the people in the church don't know or care if there is an evangelism officer. They are not involved in the politics. What they're doing is trying to live like Christians."*

— Linda Strohmer

#### Linda Strohmer

Meanwhile, much of the tension at the conference revolved around ECUSA's evangelism officer Linda Strohmer.

Strohmer has become a target for the conservatives who single her out as the fourth indication of the presiding bishop's errant leadership in their booklet *A Catalog of Concerns*, recently released from Mobile, Ala., by An Association of Concerned Episcopalians to Inform and Awaken Our Church.

The booklet presents quotes that indicate that Strohmer is critical of evangelism if it is exclusive, focussed on

money-raising, or unthinking, "only about sharing personal Christian stories." They also fault her for referring to the Holy Spirit at "she" and for endorsing same-sex blessings.

Asked what she makes of the jeering, Strohmer said, "My vision of myself is as a grandmother, someone who cares benevolently about everyone that she's involved with. It's hard to have people you care about reject your caring. It feels awful."

Asked how she takes care of herself in the face of such opposition, Strohmer answered that she visits local churches. "Ninety-five percent of the people in the church don't know or care if there is an evangelism officer. They wouldn't know Walter Righter if they met him. They are not involved in the politics. What they're doing is trying to live like Christians. That's what the grandmother cares about. Living in this kind of conflict, I ask constantly, 'What would Jesus do?'"

#### After the furor

When the observers left and the delegates had several days alone together, the tension dropped markedly.

"I regretted that the predominant number of observers seemed to be in agreement with negative commentary toward the American church," observed delegate LaDonna Wind, evangelism and congregational development coordinator for the Diocese of Kentucky.

"The negativity was focussed primarily on our presiding bishop's call that there be no outcasts, that we be a church of inclusivity."

Wind attributed the drop in tension both to the departure of the American delegates and to the time pressure on the delegates to complete reports in the remaining day and a half. Weary, but buoyed by the relationships developed within their small groups, delegates turned their attention to listing priorities for accomplishing evangelism. They were surprised by the commonality of their vision.

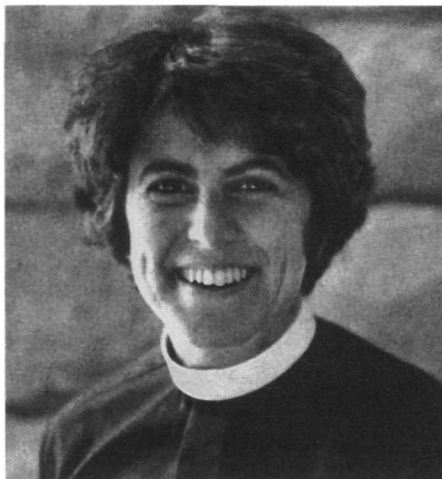
[This report is drawn from telephone interviews, reports from ENS, Episcopalians United and from the Internet.]

## Geralyn Wolf elected bishop of R.I.

On September 30 the Episcopal Diocese of Rhode Island elected Geralyn Wolf its 12th bishop. Currently dean of Christ Church Cathedral in Louisville, Ky., Wolf, 48, is the second woman to be elected head of a diocese in the U.S. church and the fifth woman elected bishop.

In comparison with her predecessor, George Hunt, Wolf does not consider herself a "social activist" who can be expected to be seen "marching in the streets" on behalf of progressive causes. "I'm just a different type of person. I have tried to live my commitments as a Christian in my daily life," she said, noting a six-year stint as vicar of an inner-city Philadelphia neighborhood mission that preceded her current work in urban Louisville.

Impatient with *The Witness*' questions about her views on a variety of social justice issues currently under debate in the church, she asked, "Why haven't you asked me anything about faith? I believe the essential question for the church today is whether we are willing to root our lives in the Gospel of Jesus Christ."



**Geralyn Wolf**

In Rhode Island she'll be pushing for an affirmative answer to that query by focussing on the spiritual and theological needs of that particular diocesan community — and by challenging church members to walk their theological talk.

"We'll be doing more retreats and we'll also be looking at the theological basis for everything we do," she says, "from the budget to mission and ministry. Tithing, for example, is to me not a question of choice but of justice. A person might find

it possible to write their congressperson every day on political issues of concern but find it impossible to tithe," a stance she finds problematic for committed Christians.

But while Wolf considers herself a "centrist," walking a line, she says, between contemplative spirituality and the radical positions of her *alma mater*, the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass., she is no reactionary. For example, after determining that a candidate for ordination is acting on his/her sexuality in a responsible way, she believes "the church should get out of the bedroom."

News of Wolf's bishop-elect status came as the Episcopal Women's Caucus was holding its annual meeting in Fort Worth, Tex. Coming on the heels of the Episcopal Church's bishops' meeting in Portland, Ore., where the bishops passed a "mind of the House" resolution affirming that the canon providing for women's ordination is "mandatory in all dioceses," the Rhode Island election was greeted in Fort Worth as serendipitous icing on the women's ordination cake.

— Julie A. Wortman

## Fifty years is enough: Anglicans take on the IMF and World Bank

The Anglican UN Office is developing a Round Table Policy Forum to work on a response to the burden of international debt carried by many third world nations.

The Forum will bring together prominent government, economic, academic and religious leaders to consider practical policy alternatives.

The Anglican UN Office has expressed basic support for the "50 Years is Enough" campaign, which is pressing for major reform of the World Bank and IMF. Information/action packets can be obtained by writing 1025 Vermont Ave., NW, Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20005;

or phoning 202-IMF-BANK.

An educational video, *Who Runs the World?*, is available from Christian Aid, P.O. Box 100, London SE1 7RT, England; phone 011-44-171-620-4444.

## Anglican indigenous peoples angle for self-determination

Native Hawaiians, First Nation Peoples of Canada and the U.S. mainland, along with aboriginals from Australia, New Zealand and the Torres Strait islands meeting in Alaska in September called for a non-geographic province with its own bishops for indigenous people in North America and an "indigenous training center" to preserve and nurture North American indigenous culture. In large part, the model for such a province is the non-

geographic bishopric of Aotearoa in New Zealand, which has jurisdiction over Anglican Maori. — Owanah Anderson

## Women bishops in S. Africa?

In a landslide vote Sept. 26, the Province of Southern Africa — which approved women's ordination to the priesthood in 1992 — agreed that women can become bishops.

Dean Colin Jones of Cape Town said: "I am desperately afraid that in a few years' time we'll have women who will look like our current bishops who are, without wanting to cause offense, tired old men, heavily overworked. I hope that if we do ordain women to the episcopate that we will be open to the special leadership they can give." — ANS



## Congressional Black Caucus

The Republican-dominated Congress made it virtually impossible for members of the Congressional Black Caucus to participate in their 25th anniversary forum in late September, according to Detroit City Councilwoman Sheila Cockrel.

In a move that Cockrel described as "mean-spirited and vindictive," the Republican majority denied the Caucus space in the Capitol and scheduled major social welfare debates during the days of the forum.

"Before the Gingrich gang took over, many of the brain trusts and issue forums were held right on the hill so members of the black caucus could easily participate and still vote when they needed to," Cockrel explained.

Held at the Washington Convention Center September 20-23, the forum was "an excellent opportunity for a white elected official to gain a deeper appreciation of the experiences and perspectives of African-Americans in a profoundly racist country," Cockrel said.

"The Caucus' office and staff were decimated by the Republican majority earlier this year," Cockrel added.

"The entire organization has had to retrench to deal with the attack from the Right and to maintain itself as an organization — no small feat."

## Troubling news on the Net

Miami (AP) A Wal-Mart store pulled a popular T-shirt proclaiming "Someday a

said that Sharon Higginbotham, a buyer for women's clothes at Wal-Mart's national office in Bentonville, Ark. told her that the store would not carry the shirt nationwide because the message "goes against Wal-Mart's family values."

[By the end of September, Wal-Mart had apologized, calling the decision "a mistake."]

## Zimbabwe's churches condemn homosexuality

(ENI) Homosexuality is "totally new and out of step with the Zimbabwean tradition and culture" according to a statement issued by the Zimbabwean Council of Churches (ZCC), which has 20 Protestant churches as members, following an increasingly strident campaign directed against gays and lesbians by Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe.

The ZCC's president, Bishop Jonathan Siyachitema, and the organization's general secretary, Murombedzi Chikanga Kuchera, said that Zimbabweans "should not be coerced into a practice which is totally alien to them."

Mugabe's campaign has aroused concern in international church circles

because the next assembly of the World Council of Churches is to take place in 1998 in the Zimbabwean capital of Harare.

## Ancient rage

Mary Lee Wile, whose imaginative portrait of the rage Elizabeth may have felt after John's and Jesus' deaths ran in *The Witness* in November, 1993, has recently had a book by the same name published (Larson Publications, 1995)! It has been well received with reviews in *Publishers Weekly* and the *Library Journal*.

# Do You Know

— THAT —

Women Vote in  
Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Idaho,  
Washington and California?

## Why Not In Michigan?

Do you know that women vote in Norway, in-  
land, Australia and New Zealand,  
and have partial suffrage in other countries?

Do you know that women can now vote in China?

### WHO CAN'T VOTE!

Children, Insane, Idiots, Aliens, Criminals and Women

IS THAT A SQUARE DEAL FOR WOMEN?

Voto for Woman's Suffrage next November

Suffragist flyer circulated in Michigan. The nation celebrates the 75th anniversary of women's enfranchisement this year.

woman will be president" off its shelves, saying it was offensive to some shoppers.

A Wal-Mart spokeswoman said the company stopped selling the shirts at the only store that had them after one customer complained. The store sold about two-thirds of its 204 shirts.

The shirt is emblazoned with the child character Margaret from the cartoon strip Dennis the Menace, smiling with her arms spread wide, making the proclamation.

Ann Moliver Ruben, 70, the psychologist who designed the shirts ...

*short takes*



# Pursuing electoral reforms

by Rob Richie

**Real Choices, New Voices**, by Doug Amy; Columbia University Press, 1993.

**A**s a committed political reformer, I have a confession to make. Not many years ago I looked with disdain on elections. Seeing them as a shallow exercise in “lesser-of-two nit-wits” logic, I plunged myself into the *real* work of social change with community and public interest organizations.

A persuasive friend argued that fighting for political power was too important to neglect. Her campaigns showed that good people can be elected and that, in the process, you can move public opinion, both in legislatures and at the local bowling alley. I ended up working to elect one of the most progressive members of Congress in a tight race, yet still felt frustrated with the system’s limitations.

Douglas Amy’s *Real Choices, New Voices; The Case for Proportional Representation Elections in the United States* is for both those who avoid electoral politics and those who try to make it work. Amy gets at the core of why we so often give up on politics and why we so often are left with a bitter taste when we don’t.

Amy argues that the fundamental problem with electoral politics in the United States is a “winner-take-all” voting system that is “unfair, outmoded and undemocratic.” He makes a clear, strong

case for adoption of systems of proportional representation: ones in which self-defined groups of voters can win seats in a legislative assembly in proportion to their share of the vote. With proportional representation, 10 percent of the vote for a certain political force earns its supporters one out of ten seats.

In simple terms, this means that the United States would become a multi-party democracy, one in which voters had a range of choices and the ability to help elect the ones they liked best. There are several forms of proportional representation, some based on voting for political parties, some based on voting for candidates. All could be adopted in the United States for all levels of election without constitutional amendments. All have been well tried in the majority of democracies around the world that use proportional representation voting.

Amy succinctly explains the different forms of proportional representation, provides an excellent chapter debunking objections to proportional representation and lays out the key advantages. Reciting them risks accusations of Pollyanna optimism, but the evidence is overwhelming that proportional representation indeed would:

- Encourage higher voter turnout: The fact that voters have more choices at the same time that their top choice is more likely to be elected is an obvious spur to voter participation.

- Elect more women: In countries like

Germany and Australia that have both winner-take-all elections and proportional representation, it is not uncommon to find that women are three times more likely to be elected in proportional representation than winner-take-all.

- Elect more people of color: We have only one African American or Latino in the U.S. Senate in large part because all states are majority white; as Lani Guinier argues, proportional representation systems would allow more candidates of color to win by allowing all voters to have a better chance to win the representation they want.

- Break the two-party monopoly: Our winner-take-all is the single most important reason that we have a system limiting us to two choices (if we’re lucky — over a third of state legislative elections in 1994 were uncontested). The need to win 50% of the vote suppresses political dissent and new parties.

When Amy first wrote *Real Choices, New Voices* in 1993, the early glimmerings of a movement for proportional representation

did not prevent it from seeming a theoretical exercise. No more. Now Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney is advocating proportional representation in Congress, most new political parties put

it high on their agenda and cities like San Francisco and Eugene may vote to adopt proportional representation.

TW

**Rob Richie** directs the Center for Voting and Democracy which promotes proportional representation through national and local projects. For information on CVD and its Nov. 11-12 national conference in Boston, contact them at 695 Fifth St. NW #200; Washington, D.C. 20012; 202-828-3062.

*book review*

Harriet Barlow leafs through her in-basket, the stack of papers that need to be dealt with by day's end. "I'm helping some people think through how they can help restore postwar civil society in Bosnia by such means as mediation work with women's groups," she says. "I'm helping to plan a conference in February about the problems of concentration of the media in few hands, and here's something for a meeting I'm working on about biotechnology and its impacts. This letter is from a network I'm working with on campaign finance reform, this is a book I need to write a blurb for, and this is a recipe for tapioca with sauteed nectarines."

It's hard to describe Barlow's job with any precision. She runs a progressive artists' colony and conference center in New York's Adirondack mountains, she administers a foundation, she serves on the boards of dozens of non-profits (at one time or another everything from the Family Farm Coalition to Libraries for the Future), she's trying to help midwife the nascent New Party into an electoral force. In short she does *everything* — she's a flesh and blood Internet, an unelectronic bulletin board, a classic *organizer* who began working in the civil rights and anti-war movement and somehow just never stopped.

"There's no one else I know in the United States who is so intelligently

*It's a matter of  
balancing our  
very human  
desires with  
generosity, love,  
and a sense  
of the future.*



Harriet Barlow

## 'Balancing our very human desires'

by Bill McKibben

knowledgeable and caring about a wide range of issues," says Adam Hochschild, cofounder of *Mother Jones* and a writer who's worked with Barlow for 15 years. "She'll often say to me, 'So and so is important to "the work."'" I like the phrase and the feeling behind it — the idea that there's some set of larger moral purposes which progressive people share."

When she slows down from time to time — to swim the clear Adirondack lake by her home or to play with her grandchildren — she can articulate what those overarching purposes are. "The simple way to express it," she says, "is that my work is aimed at helping to build the community of commitment and practice in which a just and loving society is possible." In three decades of social justice activism, she says, "the consistent benefit of my work has been in discovering that virtually every human being chooses to act on behalf of his neighbor as

himself if given the conditions and opportunities to do so."

The key, then, is creating those conditions. Church, she says, is one of the forums where neighborliness can rear its lovely head. Civic institutions are equally crucial — public schools and parks, and especially the public libraries that Barlow has worked hard in recent years to preserve from funding cuts.

And so, she insists in this political season, is a new political party, "one based in communities of experience, that's a ground-up, people-centered proposition." The New Party, which she helped to found, is studiously ignoring the glamorous presidential and senatorial races, and focusing instead on the kind of contests that the Christian Right has long targeted: local school boards, county commissioners, aldermen. "We've had over a hundred races and we've won three-quarters of them," she said.

**Bill McKibben** is author of *The End of Nature* and *Hope: Human and Wild*, a contributor to *The New Yorker* and Sunday school superintendent of Johnsbury United Methodist Church in N.Y.

"I'm not abandoning the principles of the Democratic Party that brought me to it originally," she says. "I am abandoning hope that the structure that calls itself the Democratic Party can be reformed from the top, which is where all its resources and energy are now."

She's never worked from the top — some of her earliest political experience came from working with a Quaker direct action group. "I remember getting arrested reading the names of the Vietnam dead on the Capitol steps, and realizing right then that the simplest acts of witness have consequence," she said. "A lot of the faith-based work in which I've participated has been work in which I've witnessed to the consequences and then people have had to make choices. Starting a food co-op, for instance, and witnessing to the positive consequences of working together, eating healthy food, using that co-op as a community center."

Her search, then, is for a way of taking the countless scattered acts of witness across the nation and distilling from them some transforming political force. Twenty years ago, she says, in the lingering wake of the 1960s, "I believed that a just society could be accomplished in my lifetime — sweetly naive, yes? I no longer dream that dream, but I believe we can build together some of the institutions that can provide the basis for what younger people will accomplish in the next generation."

The rapid gains of the right in recent years have sobered but not deterred her, she insists.

"I think they've won a battle of rhetoric, not of hearts and minds," she says. "I think they have successfully distorted our sense of what government is, so we no longer understand that government is us, that the public sector is our sector. I think it's all happened very fast, and that it's been more about confusion and anxiety than about the conversion of people — and I think there are going to be some

more big shifts in the next few years."

At some level, anyone's view of political possibility stems from their view of human nature. Barlow says she's unconvinced that the current emphasis on

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*I am abandoning hope that  
the Democratic Party can be  
reformed from the top.*

---

self-interest will necessarily triumph. "I think of what Ralph Carmichael, the Episcopal priest in my small town, would talk about with me. The human animal has always been tempted and diverted by short-term temptations and gain. The Christian faith is about balancing those with the more far-reaching needs of one's neighbor, and of the future. It's a matter of balancing our very human desires, of which we shouldn't be ashamed, with generosity, love, and a sense of the future. So that we can pass something on to our children with some satisfaction instead of fear."

And so she turns back to her desk, and

to her telephone. There's a conversation to organize about the Federal Reserve Bank and the impact of its policies on the environment. There's money to be raised so that the National Organizer's Alliance can keep publishing its newsletter. "I'm a circuit-rider at heart," she laughs. "One can be just as effective a faith-based activist in one's neighborhood as working nationally or internationally. It just happens that my experience has positioned me to do more macro work."

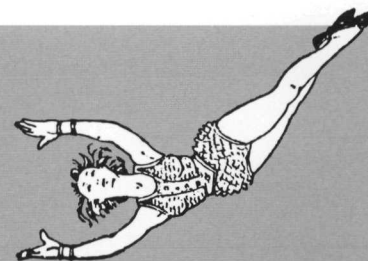
The most crucial thing on Barlow's calendar this day, however, is a memorial service for Carmichael, which will be held in the tiny Chapel of the Transfiguration, perched on the edge of Blue Mountain Lake, where he preached for 38 years. "He was one of my most important teachers. He articulated something I'd seen in my life — never to confuse charity with justice, or tolerance with love. The feeling of justice, which comes to us from the Old Testament prophets, is a precondition for being able to live the golden rule. He gave analytic form to my intuition that a just society wouldn't *guarantee* the human capacity for love, but it would help to make it possible." **TV**

## **Christmas offer!**

To encourage readers to give *The Witness* as a Christmas gift, we will send donors a custom-made, rubber-stamped Advent calendar for each gift subscription.

Designed by managing editor Julie A. Wortman, the calendars are ironic and faithful. This year's theme is the circus, which William Stringfellow calls "an eschatological parable and social parody."

(Wortman's 1993 and 1994 Advent calendars won awards from



the Episcopal Communicators. Copies of them are available for \$6.)

Order a \$25 Christmas gift subscription now — we'll send a card announcing the gift in December and start the subscription in January, 1996. And we'll make sure your Advent calendar is in hand by December 1!





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