

**LETTING LOOSE THE DOGS OF WAR**

**...AND THE PIGS OF OPPORTUNISM**

where the status of justice and human rights are forsaken as "collateral damage"? It goes without saying that such a cold blooded murder will be the end of human rights and the start of an era of cold blooded murders.

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I submit to you that we are failing in the war of terrorism. Israel is now using the example of our violence as justification for their own violence against the Palestinians. We have sacrificed our opportunity to pursue justice in an international court of law where we could have affirmed support for the very international institutions that we helped to create as an alternative to war. For example, where is the pursuit of justice in Saudi Arabia? Fifteen of the 19 hijackers originated from there and it is a known fact that the wealth of the Saudi rulers helped to finance the Taliban, if not Osama bin Laden himself. The hypocrisy of our foreign policy overflows like oil and even though we have driven the Taliban from Afghanistan and might eventually find and murder Osama bin Laden, we are winning the battle but losing the war.

Witness what is happening to ourselves. Congress passes the American Patriot Act, a 172 page bill redrafted in the night which many legislators complained they did not have time to read. What does this law do? According to ACLU it:

- Allows for the indefinite detention of non-citizens who are not terrorists on minor visa violations if they cannot be deported. Fanning the fires of racial profiling.
  - Minimizes judicial supervision of federal telephone and internet surveillance by law enforcement. Continuing the trend of stripping the judiciary of its power to enforce the Constitution.
  - Expands the ability of government to conduct secret searches.
  - Gives the Attorney General and Secretary of State the power to designate domestic groups as terrorist organizations and deport any non-citizen who belongs to them, as well as extending powers of surveillance to individual financial supporters.
  - Grants the FBI broad access to business records without having to show evidence of a crime.
  - Legalizes large scale investigations of American citizens for "intelligence" purposes.
- If this is what "patriotism" is all about then our earlier patriots must be rolling in their graves — hear their voices speak to us from the past:
- They that give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.*  
 -Benjamin Franklin

*There are more instances of the abridgment of the freedom of the people by the gradual and silent encroachment of those in power, than by violent and sudden usurpation.*  
 -James Madison

*Nothing can destroy a government more quickly than its failure to observe its own laws, or worse, its disregard of the charter of its own existence.*  
 -U.S. Supreme Court Justice Tom C. Clark (Mapp v Ohio)

And from a sympathetic Prime Minister of England following our Revolution against the "Mother Country":  
*Necessity is the plea for every infringement of human freedom. It is the argument of tyrants; it is the creed of slaves.*  
 -William Pitt, 18 Nov. 1783

But it doesn't end with the Patriot Act. New rules have been issued by the Justice Department to allow monitoring of conversations between lawyers and clients suspected of terrorism. Congress is considering national identification cards, the installation of video surveillance systems in airports with face recognition software, and expanding the immunity of customs officials in ways that would make it impossible for a person to seek redress for an unconstitutional search. We are already seeing news of political activists being prevented from boarding planes or crossing the border into Canada.

And what about Corporate patriotism? Listen to the words of journalist Bill Moyers in a recent speech before a gathering of environmental grantmakers:

*Would you like to know the memorial (the wartime opportunists) would offer the (3,000+) people who died in the attacks? Or the legacy they would provide the (thousands of) children who lost a parent in the horror? How do they propose to fight the long and costly war on terrorism America must now undertake?*

*Why, restore the 3-martini lunch; that will surely strike fear in the heart of Osama bin Laden. You think I'm kidding, but bringing back the deductible lunch is one of the proposals on the table (sic) in Washington right now. There are members of Congress who believe you should sacrifice in this time of crisis by paying for lobbyists' long lunches. And cut capital gains for the wealthy, naturally; that's America's patriotic duty, too. While we're at it, don't forget to eliminate the Corporate Alternative Minimum Tax, enacted 15 years ago to prevent corporations from taking so many tax credits and deductions that they owed little if any taxes. But don't just repeal their minimum tax; give those corporations a refund for all the minimum tax they have ever been assessed.*

*You look incredulous. But that's taking place in Washington even as we meet here...this morning. What else can America do to strike at the terrorists? Why, slip in a special tax break for poor General Electric and slip inside the Environmental Protection Agency while everyone's distracted and torpedo the recent order to clean the Hudson River of PCBs. Don't worry about NBC, CNBC or MSNBC reporting it; they're all in the GE family.*

It's time for Churchillian courage, we're told. So how would this crowd assure that future generations will look back and say, "This was their finest hour?" That's easy. Give those coal producers freedom to pollute. And shovel generous tax breaks to those giant energy companies; and open the Alaskan wilderness to drilling — that's something to remember the 11th of September for. And while the red, white & blue wave at half-mast over the land of the free and the home of the brave, why, give the President the power to discard democratic debate and the rule-of-law concerning controversial trade agreements, and set up secret tribunals to run roughshod over local communities trying to protect their environment and health. It's happening as we meet. It's happening right now.

Or the words of Ralph Nader in a recent speech in San Francisco:

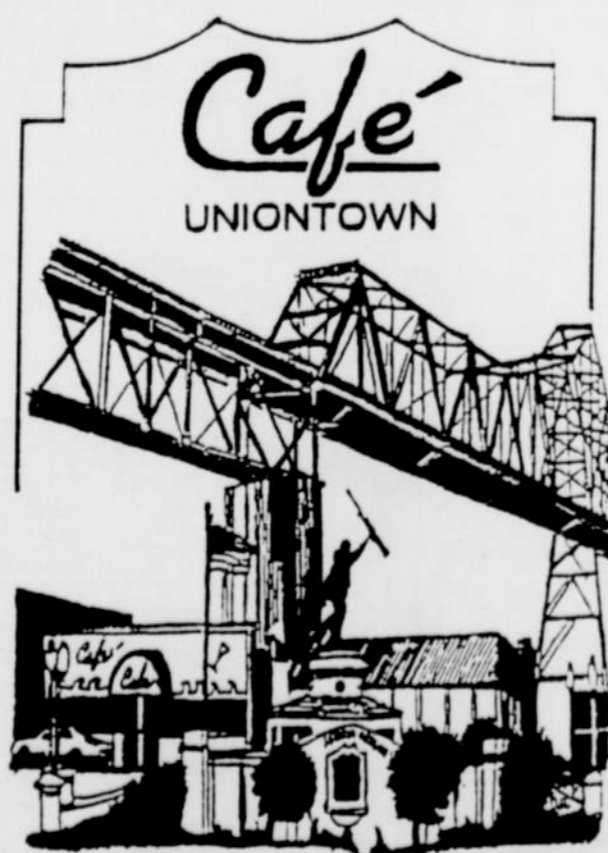
*Now, in the midst of this situation come the big corporations in Washington, D.C. These are corporations who are turning this tragedy into greed and then into a pretext, demanding from Congress and the executive branch subsidies, bailouts, immunities from liability, demanding deregulation. They're going for it big, folks. They're taking advantage of this crisis in order to increase their power over the rights of the people. They're moving to put in a little amendment that will open up the Arctic Refuge, after 26 years of not improving — by law — the fuel efficiency requirements for the motor vehicle industry. They are now moving for a capital gains cut. They are moving to bail out one industry after another. The airlines got theirs after announcing 85,000 workers laid off; they got \$1.5 billion, \$10 billion in loan guarantees and \$5 billion in cash, just like that, stampeding Congress and sending a bill to a willing George W. Bush with nothing in it for the 85,000 workers who are laid off. This is what's going on.*

*Now the hotel industry, the car rental industry, the oil industries, the securities industry are up there, going for the big grab. Suddenly Uncle Sam is a desirable man. Suddenly they all want government to be the ultimate guarantor, the ultimate insurer, the ultimate bail-outer of this kind of corporate capitalism. And isn't that unpatriotic? You know, we never say corporations are unpatriotic, do we? We never say that. Well, they are exploiting this tragedy to a level where they were denounced by the Washington Post itself in the business page, which had a headline something like, "Stop Blaming Everything on bin Laden." They're blaming all their woes going back several years, saying "It's the attackers, we've got to have a bailout. We've got to have a subsidy. You've got to get us an exemption from this law. You've got to deregulate us." And of course, they're getting away with it because our Congress is being stampeded. It's in panic, and we've got to strengthen it and give it the kind of backbone that comes only from people back home.*

Or hear it in the bluntness of Jim Hightower:  
*It's on the home front, however, where we citizens must be forceful in holding Washington accountable. The looters are loose. Not common looters rampaging through the streets, but corporate looters rampaging through the Congress.*

So what are you and I going to do about this. We must Protest, Protest, Protest! We must not allow ourselves to be blindsided by war and the orchestration of war profiteers. Not only must we exercise our right of free speech but we must assert our sovereignty.

We must use the tools that have been provided us. In Oregon and Washington we as citizens have the power to create law. Our ancestors gave us the Initiative and Referendum process because they knew what it was like to have a concentration of wealth in the hands of the few and its stranglehold over government. Our legislatures are never going to adopt campaign finance reform. Why should they? They all know how they got there and to whom they are beholden. We are going to have to do it, and thankfully we can. But there is one condition: Each of us must assert our sovereignty and be willing to set the example for others.



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In Oregon we have the following initiatives endorsed by the Pacific Green Party for the 2002 general election:

- Candidate Campaign Finance Reform which bans corporate contributions to candidates, restricts individual contributions, and allows Grassroots Nonprofit Organizations to make contributions as long as 80% of their money comes from individual contributions of \$200 or less.
- Instant Runoff Voting so we can vote our preference rather than choice of evils.
- Health Care For All which establishes a single payer health care system.
- Labeling of Genetically Modified Food.

Each of these proposed laws could also be enacted in Washington State. Not only that, we can pool our resources by helping each other put our initiatives on the ballot. Due to a Supreme Court decision in a case out of Colorado, we can petition in each other's states. We can also financially contribute to each other's campaigns. We can set the example of what it means to be citizens of the earth by lending our creativity to those struggling to bring change. We can make "Stone Soup."

When my daughter was a little girl one of her favorite children's stories was Stone Soup. This story takes place during the Napoleonic Wars at a time in which most villages were devastated by war and peasants were hiding what little food they had left. A very hungry soldier wanders into one of these villages begging for food and finds that no one is willing to feed him. Suddenly he begins to talk about how good it would be to make stone soup. The villagers had never heard of stone soup and in growing curiosity they begin to fetch the ingredients for the wishful recipe this soldier describes. In the end everyone in the village eats a good meal. By making stone soup we pool our creativity to help one another.

Albert Einstein said, "Problems cannot be solved at the same level of awareness that created them." At a time in which we face seeming insurmountable obstacles, I am also reminded of the words of Mahatma Gandhi:

*Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will.*

*Things undreamt of are daily being seen, the impossible is ever becoming possible. We are constantly being astonished these days at the amazing discoveries in the field of violence. But I maintain that far more undreamt of and seemingly impossible discoveries will be made in the field of nonviolence.*

What is more nonviolent than reclaiming democracy by using our initiative process to enact election reform or to enact new energy policies in our communities, like they are doing in San Francisco with PV panels on the roofs of their buildings along with wind generating machines in their yards, so they can free themselves from the terrorists' dream of nuclear power and the reliance on foreign oil. Just think, they didn't have to ask George the Younger's permission. In the eloquent words of Betsy Toll:

*Our addiction to this fuel of ancient sunlight (oil) is heart-breaking. Like any other junkie, crackhead or drunk on the street, we grovel at the feet of our dealers, protect them, defend them, bribe them, seduce them, hate them. As a culture we perform these debasing psychological gymnastics, humiliating ourselves and ruthlessly eliminating any who might come between us and our connection.*

*And of course as individuals, we are not evil: we love our children, help our neighbors, long for peace. Yet all the while, the cultural matrix in which we are entangled is dragging us down and causing untold suffering to others, literally destroying the very systems that support all life. Like junkies, our denial is so entrancing, we are somehow so lost in it, we don't see its true nature, can't bear to look at its inevitable effects.*

*These are extraordinary times, though, and within that there is hope. Many hearts are breaking wide open. Rather than closing our eyes and letting hearts crust back over, our work is to keep them open, fierce and soft, dynamic and melting. Pray that our heartbreak will provide the fertile ground in which new ways of being will begin to grow.*

Finally I leave you with the words of Bill Moyer:  
*I know you see the magnitude of challenge. I know you see what we're up against. I know you get it, the work we must do. It's why you mustn't lose heart. Your adversaries will call you unpatriotic for speaking the truth when conformity reigns. Ideologues will smear you for challenging the official view of reality. Mainstream media will ignore you, and those gasbags on TV and the radio talk shows will ridicule and vilify you. But I urge you to hold onto these words: "In the course of fighting the present fire, we must not abandon our efforts to create fire-resistant structures for the future." Those words were written by my friend Randy Kehler more than ten years ago, as America geared up to fight the Gulf War. They ring as true today. Those fire-resistant structures must include an electoral system that is no longer dominated by big money, where the voices and problems of average people are attended on a fair and equal basis. They must include an energy system that is more sustainable, and less dangerous. And they must include a media that takes its responsibility to inform us as seriously as its interest in entertaining us.*

Lloyd Marbet is usually credited with being the main force behind the shutdown of the Trojan Nuclear Power Plant. He was the Pacific Green Party candidate for Oregon Secretary of State in 2000 and has also run for the U.S. Congress. He is an indefatigable advocate of the Oregon Initiative process. The Dalai Lama personally singled him out for praise during his recent visit to Oregon.