OMNI US DEMOCRACY NEWSLETTER #2, October 28, 2013. Compiled by Dick Bennett for a Culture of Peace and Justice. (#1 April 21, 2013).


My blog:  War Department/Peace Department

http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/

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Index:

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About Dollarocracy

When President Barack Obama was reelected, some pundits argued that, despite unbridled campaign spending, here was proof that big money couldn’t buy elections. The exact opposite was the case. The 2012 election was a quantum leap: it was America’s first $10 billion election campaign. And it solidified the power of a new class in American politics: the fabulously wealthy individuals and corporations who are radically redefining our politics in a way that, failing a dramatic intervention, signals the end of our democracy. It is the world of Dollarocracy.
U.S. elections have never been perfect, but America is now hurtling toward a point where the electoral process itself ceases to function as a means for citizens to effectively control leaders and to guide government policies. In Dollarocracy, two leading media experts—journalist John Nichols and academic Robert McChesney—examine the forces that have sapped elections of their meaning and stolen America’s democratic potential: the pay-to-play billionaires and the politicians who do their bidding, the corporations that have been freed to buy elections and the activist judges who advance their agenda, and the media conglomerates that blow off journalism while raking in billions airing intellectually and morally reprehensible political advertising.

The unprecedented tidal wave of unaccountable money flooding the electoral system makes a mockery of political equality in the voting booth. The determination of media companies to cash in on that mockery, especially by selling ad time at a premium to the campaigns—when they should instead be exposing and opposing it—completes a vicious circle. What has emerged, argue Nichols and McChesney, is a “money-and-media election complex.” This complex is built on a set of commercial and institutional relationships connecting wealthy donors, corporations, lobbyists, politicians, coin-operated “think tanks,” beltway pundits, and now super-PACS. These relationships are not just eviscerating democratic elections, they are benefitting by that evisceration.

With groundbreaking new research and reporting, Dollarocracy concludes that the money-and-media election complex does not just endanger electoral politics; it poses a challenge to the DNA of American democracy itself.

**Excerpt from the Introduction**

In the days and weeks following the 2012 election, the winning side predictably announced that the problem of money in politics was overrated because, after all, this side won. Imagining that all was well because the darkest possible scenarios did not immediately play out, the *Christian Science Monitor* declared, “Despite concerns that huge amounts of money spent by political action committee would skew the results, many candidates backed by large PAC-financed advertising campaigns did not win their races. Money was less influential than expected. Voters thought for themselves.”[1] So there you have it. Or maybe not.

While Republicans and their allied super-PACs did spend billions to defeat President Barack Obama and the Democrats, it is not as if the Democrats failed to return fire with fire. As the *New York Times* concluded, “The president and his allies appear to have matched or exceeded Mr. Romney and his allies in the number of advertisements that aired.” As the dust cleared after the election, it became obvious that the Democrats were very much part of the system, with their own dependence upon big money in countless areas. “The president’s re-election does not presage a repudiation of the deregulated campaign financing unleashed by the Supreme Court’s 2010 Citizens United decision,” political correspondent Nicholas Confessore of the *Times* wrote. “Instead his victory most likely reinforced the practice.”[2] This is the truth of 2012: money beat money.

To believe otherwise is naïve, just as it is naïve in the extreme to imagine that the money-and-media election complex ground to some kind of halt in November 2012. To the contrary, it has
not yet built up to full force. That’s a daunting prospect, but it is also good news. Before it becomes the status quo, we may have an opportunity to intervene. But for that to happen, we must understand how we got to this point, how this system operates, what the consequences are, where it appears to be heading, and what Americans can and must do to get their nation back on the democratic grid. That is the purpose of this book.

The immediate effect of the money-and-media election complex is to encourage election campaigns, like those in 2012, that do not even begin to address the societal pathologies afflicting the people of the United States. The trillion dollars spent annually on militarism and war is off-limits to public review and debate. Likewise, the corporate control of the economy and the corporate domination of government itself get barely a nod. Stagnation, gaping economic inequality, growing poverty, and collapsing infrastructure and social services—major issues all—are accorded nothing more than the market-tested drivel candidates say to get votes. The existential threats posed by climate change and nuclear weaponry are virtually off-limits as campaign-season issues; whole debates that are supposed to go to the heart of domestic and global concerns pass by without mention of them. The drug war, which has created a prison-industrial complex so vast that the United States has a greater percentage of its population imprisoned than any other nation in history, is not to be mentioned—except when obviously engaged and concerned citizens force the issue onto the ballot via the initiative process.

The United States, like much of the world, is in a period of crisis, not unlike the 1930s or the Progressive Era of Teddy Roosevelt and Robert M. La Follette. But now the stakes are higher. Mainstream politics, following elections, seems increasingly irrelevant to addressing these grave, even existential, challenges. As a result, they are untended and grow more severe. Something has to give; this can’t go on forever, or even very much longer. It is in all our interests that these problems be addressed by democratic governance and sooner rather than later. The alternative is an ugly picture, one that is entirely unnecessary.

As the subsequent chapters will demonstrate, widespread popular disillusionment with contemporary elections and the political system is anything but irrational. The type of society we have is far better understood as a Dollarocracy than as a democracy. We have a system that is now defined more by one dollar, one vote than by one person, one vote. We live in a society where a small number of fabulously wealthy individuals and giant corporations control most of the dollars—and by extension have most of the political power. They buy election results that give them control over the government, and they hire lobbyists to fine-tune that control so that the distribution of wealth and income continually skews to their advantage. This is not a mystery. Polling shows that more than 60 percent of Americans understand that the nation’s economic structure is “out of balance” and that it favors a “very small portion of the rich” over everyone else.”[3] And they despair that political structures are so skewed and corrupted that nothing will change this circumstance. As political scientist Jeffrey A. Winters characterized American governance circa 2012, “Democracy appears chronically dysfunctional when it comes to policies that impinge on the rich.”[4]

To be clear, elections are not entirely worthless—especially on the handful of issues where the wealthy do not necessarily have a horse in the race. Popular forces can prevail, even against increasing odds, and we admire and respect numerous politicians who enter and occasionally
succeed in the electoral arena. Elections will remain among the main playing fields for politics in the visible future. Our argument is simply that the degree of difficulty that citizens confront when they seek to use the election process to effectively control government policies is vastly higher than it has been in memory. And it will only get worse unless Americans do something about it. A difficult truth lurks not far in the future: if our elections get appreciably more corrupt, extending the trajectory they were already on in 2012, the use of the term “democracy” to describe the United States will be inaccurate in even the weakest sense of the term. The point, then, is not to abandon elections, but to make them viable and credible.


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RESISTING DOLLAROCRACY by Dick Bennett (from Nichols and McChesney).
The Sept. 30, 2013 The Nation includes an essay by Nichols and McChesney entitled “Dollarocracy.” In the October 28 number, a reader applauded (“Stop the Rot”) the authors’ accurate analysis of “the threat to democracy posed by money,” but he now felt “more helpless in the face of monied power. Tell us how to fight for democracy!” The authors do propose a campaign of actions in the final chapter of their book, CHAPTER 9. Here is a summary list of
how we can redistribute power from elites to the mass of people:

“The notion of one person, one vote must become sacrosanct.” How?

Many reforms will be necessary. (I am listing them in the order they appear in chapter 9, 255-) But not “fixes,” since other reforms will be discovered; this must be a movement like the New Deal Era (261).

By establishing “an affirmative right to vote, explicitly defined” in the Constitution.

Ensuring rapid and efficient polling.

Radical changes in financing campaigns. The private system for funding campaigns with private dollars is anti-democratic, legalized bribery, and must end (263-).

Foremost: Complete reversal of Citizens United through constitutional amendment, 28th Amendment: removing big money and special interests entirely (264-).

Even though constitutional amendments are difficult, their attempt, raising millions of supporters, helps create the movement and motivates officials to act for specific reforms within the ultimate goal. E.g., the president could do more with a movement behind him (e.g. sign an Exec. Order requiring government contractors to reveal political spending) and federal agencies could better enforce existing laws (266-).

FCC can (many laws already exist) and should (and the President should require) pursue full and fair coverage of elections campaigns:

- Enforce Section 317 of Fed. Comm. Act requires on-air identification of sponsors of political ads;
- Require broadcast stations to establish the veracity of third-party political ads before they air;
- Reinstitute free airtime requirements to more level the playing field;
- Restrain the 30-second ads that make viewers less capable of casting an informed-vote;
- Increase funding of public and community media;
- New funding initiatives and tax policies to free journalism from the money-media election complex.

Congress and the President should (267):

- Institute strict privacy regulations for the Internet, with citizens controlling data collected from them;
- Seek to make Internet a “central forum for America’s democratic future, as opposed to the Orwellian hellhole” it can become;
- Derail harmful digital practices that emerged in the 2012 campaign.
President, Congress, and the people should in every way possible:

Circumvent the Dollarocracy rulings of the Roberts Supreme Court.

Congress should

Renew the federal Fair Elections Now Act (public financing for campaigns, and more);
Pass the DISCLOSE Act for transparency from donors (formerly a bipartisan proposal but not opposed by GOP in its platform).

And more pp. 268.
We're now 1/3 of the way to amending the Constitution!

Oregon Becomes 16th State to Call for an Amendment to Overturn Citizens United!

Our Comparative Analysis of Amendment Bills in the 113th Congress

Senators Tester and Udall Introduce New Constitutional Amendments to Overturn Citizens United

Across the Aisle: More than 100 Republican officials support an amendment

Congressman McGovern Introduces Two Constitutional Amendments to Overturn Citizens United

Religious Leader Jim Wallis: "People are made in the image of God and corporations are not."

Free Speech For People Submits Testimony for US Senate Hearing on Citizens United

State Resolutions Introduced in Support of Amending the Constitution

Our Blog

- Al Gore: "Corporations are not persons. Money is not speech."

  October 19, 2013

- Why The Corporate Voice Is Louder Than Your Voice

  October 16, 2013

- Blog Action Day 2013: Corporate Rights or Human Rights?

  October 16, 2013

- Powerful Op-ed Against McCutcheon by Small Business Owner

  October 16, 2013

- Obama: Citizens United Helped Pave the Way to Shutdown

  October 9, 2013

- Supreme Court Hears Oral Arguments in McCutcheon v. FEC

  October 8, 2013
America's Most Dynamic (Yet Under-Covered) Movement: Overturning 'Citizens United'

Submitted by Lindsay Van Dyke on Sun, 07/07/2013 - 15:39

Constitutional Amendment

The Nation has featured Free Speech for People's involvement with the movement to overturn *Citizens United* along with our recent *Across the Aisle* report that highlights more than 100 Republican officials who support a constitutional amendment to overturn the Supreme Court's decision.

The article reads:

"The most under-covered political movement in the United States—and there are a lot of under-covered political movements in the United States—is the broad-based national campaign to enact a constitutional amendment to overturn the Supreme Court rulings that ushered in a new era of big-money politics.

On the eve of the nation's Fourth of July celebrations, Oregon became the sixteenth state to formally call for an amendment. With bipartisan support, the state House and Senate requested that Congress take necessary steps to re-establish the basic American premise that "money is property and not speech, and [that] the Congress of the United States, state legislatures and local legislative bodies should have the authority to regulate political contributions and expenditures…"

Oregon is the fifth state to make the call for corporate accountability in three months, making 2013 a banner year for a movement that began with little attention and little in the way of institutional support after the US Supreme Court’s 2010 ruling, in the case of *Citizens United* v. Federal Election Commission, that corporations could spend as freely as they like to buy favorable election results. " [Read the full article by John Nichols here.](http://www.madison.com/wm/news/opinion/columns/take-five/article_1f1d3f9f-f26b-5e9d-95e8-65b6f419772d.html)"
We, the People of the United States of America, reject the U.S. Supreme Court's *Citizens United*ruling and other related cases, and move to amend our Constitution to firmly establish that money is not speech, and that human beings, not corporations, are persons entitled to constitutional rights.
We the People, Not We the Corporations

On January 21, 2010, with its ruling in Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission, the Supreme Court ruled that corporations are persons, entitled by the U.S. Constitution to buy elections and run our government. Human beings are people; corporations are legal fictions.

We, the People of the United States of America, reject the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in Citizens United and other related cases, and move to amend our Constitution to firmly establish that money is not speech, and that human beings, not corporations, are persons entitled to constitutional rights.

The Supreme Court is misguided in principle, and wrong on the law. In a democracy, the people rule.

We Move to Amend.

"... corporations have no consciences, no beliefs, no feelings, no thoughts, no desires. Corporations help structure and facilitate the activities of human beings, to be sure, and their 'personhood' often serves as a useful legal fiction. But they are not themselves members of “We the People” by whom and for whom our Constitution was established."

~Supreme Court Justice Stevens, January 2010

Announcements

**NOVEMBER 10-23: Central California Barnstorming Tour with David Cobb & Margaret Koster**

October 9, 2013

Move to Amend is barnstorming through California and we're coming to a town near you! Catch
a talk in your area, and learn how you can get involved in the campaign to end corporate personhood and demand real democracy!

- Read more about NOVEMBER 10-23: Central California Barnstorming Tour with David Cobb & Margaret Koster

**Citizens United 2.0? Hell No!**

October 8, 2013

In *McCutcheon v. Federal Elections Commission*, the Supreme Court will decide whether or not to uphold a law that says that no one person can contribute over $123,000 directly to federal candidates, parties, and committees (that’s over twice the average American’s income).

We don’t need the Court to do any more damage to our democracy. Shaped by the Court’s past decisions, the current system of campaign finance already allows a tiny percentage of wealthy Americans to dominate our elections and political process.

The solution to this poison is the We the People Amendment. In the face of another Supreme Court ruling aimed at further making democracy not only impossible, but actually illegal, it is time for us to stand up. IT IS TIME FOR US TO RESIST.

Stand Up and Resist...

- Read more about Citizens United 2.0? Hell No!

**Story of Solutions Advocates Changing Rules of the "Game" -- We Agree!**

October 2, 2013

Annie Leonard’s groundbreaking video, The Story of Stuff, awakened millions of people to the repercussions of our consumer culture five years ago. Now she’s taking on an even bigger campaign—transforming our flawed system and calling for a new conversation about how we can create meaningful change. The Story of Solutions, the newest video from Leonard and her Story of Stuff
project, encourages viewers to push for solutions that change the economy’s goal from “more” to “better.”

At Move to Amend, we couldn’t agree more. But it isn't just about changing the rules and goals of our economy -- it is about changing the rules of all our systems: the economy, our legal system, our political system.

- Read moreabout Story of Solutions Advocates Changing Rules of the "Game" -- We Agree!

**Laird Monahan: Rest in Peace**

September 22, 2013

Over the weekend we received a message from Robin Monahan informing us that his brother Laird (Sept 8, 1940 - Sept 19, 2013) has passed away.

Laird was among the first people to reach out to Move to Amend after our coalition formed. He and his brother Robin were outraged by the Citizens United decision and offered to support Move to Amend by walking across the United States to spread the message of the need for an amendment to end corporate constitutional rights and money as free speech.

- Read moreabout Laird Monahan: Rest in Peace

**OCTOBER 28-29: Move to Amend Texas Barnstorming Tour**

September 19, 2013

Move to Amend is barnstorming across the country, and we're coming to a town near you! Catch a talk in your area, and learn how you can get involved in the campaign to end corporate personhood and demand real democracy!

- Read moreabout OCTOBER 28-29: Move to Amend Texas Barnstorming Tour

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Featured Affiliate

November 26, 2012 - Voters in 170 Massachusetts cities and towns fought back against corporate rule by backing a ballot measure that supports a constitutional amendment permitting limits on... More

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- MA - Northampton
- MA - Salem, Massachusetts

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  - Endorsing Organizations
  - Initial Signatories
  - Intern Team
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  - Upcoming Events
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- Get Involved
  - Sign the Petition
  - Endorse MTA
  - MTA Action Campaigns
  - Take Action Toolkit
  - Find a Group Near You
  - Volunteer
  - Internship Program
Move to Amend is a coalition of hundreds of organizations and tens of thousands of individuals committed to social and economic justice, ending corporate rule, and building a vibrant democracy that is genuinely accountable to the people, not corporate interests. We call for an amendment to the US Constitution to unequivocally state that inalienable rights belong to human beings only, and that money is not a form of protected free speech under the First Amendment and can be regulated in political campaigns.

Move to Amend Field Organizing Headquarters
PO Box 610 Eureka, CA 95502
(707) 269-0984
Contact Us

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Oct. 21, 2013
Join the movement to take back democracy!

A movement is sweeping the nation calling for a constitutional amendment to overturn the U.S. Supreme Court's *Citizens United* ruling, take democracy off the chopping block and preserve constitutional rights for people not corporations. Find out what's happening in your area, and get involved.

**A people's movement**

"Until corporate money is removed from our political system, our government will continue to be incapable of moving forward. Repealing *Citizens United* is the first step towards cutting the ties that bind our political system, and we are going to have to fight tooth and nail to do so."

- Stacey, Hapeville, GA

**Sign our petition**

In 2010, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in a case called *Citizens United* v. FEC that corporations have a "right" to spend unlimited money influencing elections. Corporations are not people. Democracy is for people.

**Add your name to our petition for a constitutional amendment to overturn the ruling and reclaim our democracy.**

- I am interested in taking action in my community. Sign Now

[Collect Signatures in Your Community](#)
Supreme Court Considers Further Eliminating Spending Limits

*McCutcheon v. Federal Election Commission (FEC)*, a case whose impact on our political system could be as damaging as *Citizens United*, was heard by the U.S. Supreme Court on Oct. 8, and it could dramatically boost the corrupting influence of the wealthy over candidates in federal elections.

Read More »

16 States Have Called for An Amendment!

In 2013, **Delaware, Illinois, Maine, Oregon** and **West Virginia** joined **11 other states** which had previously constitutional amendment. Help make **Arkansas**, **Iowa, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New York, Texas** or your state the next!

Read More »

Story Box

Meet an activist and get inspired.
Lyle Hyde, Illinois Coalition to Overturn Citizens United

Chicago, Illinois

Lyle Hyde, Jr. played a key role in the Illinois Coalition to Overturn Citizens United. Working with legislators from both parties, the Coalition passed a resolution in the state legislature making Illinois the 14th state to call for a constitutional amendment.

By the Numbers

Support for an amendment is growing.

FACTS ON THE MOVEMENT TO RESTORE DEMOCRACY

Check out our interactive infographic

Running Tally of Victories

People in towns and cities across the country are advancing resolutions through their city and town councils and state legislatures that declare support for a constitutional amendment to overturn Citizens United, challenge corporate power, and eliminate unlimited campaign spending.

Learn More

RELATED ISSUES

- Corporate money in elections
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How to Democratize the US Economy
A long-term plan to renovate the American dream begins at the local level and scales up.

Gar Alperovitz
October 8, 2013 | This article appeared in the October 28, 2013 edition of The Nation. [The title of article in my copy of The Nation is “Renovating the American Dream.” --Dick]
Everyone knows the United States faces enormous challenges: unemployment, poverty, global warming, environmental decay—to say nothing of whole cities that have essentially been thrown away. We know the economic system is dominated by powerful corporate institutions. And we know the political system is dominated by those same institutions. Elections occur and major fiscal debates ensue, but most of the problems are only marginally affected (and often in ways that increase the burdens).

The issue is not simply that our situation is worrisome. It is that the nation’s most pressing problems are built into the structure of the system. They are not unique to the current economic slump or the result of partisan bickering, something passing in the night that will go away when we elect forward-looking leaders and pressure them to move in a different direction.

Not only has the economy been stagnating for a long time, but for the average family, things have been bad for a very long time. Real wages for 80 percent of workers have not gone up more than a trivial amount for at least three decades. At the same time, income for the top 1 percent has jumped from roughly 10 percent of all income to more than 20 percent. A recent estimate is that a mere 400 individuals in the United States own more wealth than the bottom 180 million Americans taken together.
Unfortunately, what we call traditional politics no longer has much capacity to alter most of the negative trends. To be clear: I think projects, organizing, demonstrations and related efforts are important. But deep down, most people sense—rightly, in my view—that unless we develop a more powerful long-term strategy, those efforts aren’t going to make much of a dent.

In 2007, people got excited about federal legislation raising the minimum wage from $5.15 to $7.25 an hour. This was obviously good, but the long-term negative trend continued nonetheless. The minimum wage, adjusted for inflation, was more than $2 higher in 1968. Clearly, when great victories don’t even get us back to where we were more than forty years ago, we need to pay close attention. I support such efforts, but it appears unlikely that strategies aimed at reviving the politics that produced the New Deal and Great Society programs are going to alter the big trends, even if those strategies are intensified by movement building—especially given the decline of labor unions, the power base of traditional progressive politics.

There is, however, a little-noticed twist to this otherwise bleak narrative. Deepening economic and social pain are producing the kinds of conditions from which various new forms of democratization—of ownership, wealth and institutions—are beginning to emerge. The challenge is to develop a broad strategy that not only ends the downward spiral but also gives rise to something different: steadily changing who actually owns the system, beginning at the bottom and working up.

* * *

Consider the evolutionary change developing in that rustiest of Rust Belt states, Ohio. On one unhappy day in September 1977, 5,000 steelworkers lost their jobs, their livelihoods and their futures when Youngstown Sheet and Tube closed down. Such large-scale layoffs were not common in the United States up to that point. The story made the front page of newspapers and led television news across the country. The workers called it Black Monday, and I remember all too well reports of desperate men committing suicide after concluding they could no longer support their families.

A young steelworker named Gerald Dickey had a different idea: Why couldn’t the workers run the facility themselves? Dickey and a group of activist friends teamed up with an ecumenical coalition in Youngstown to demand that the mill be put back to work under worker-community ownership. After a huge organizing effort, they got support from Washington—including the Carter administration, which agreed to allocate $100 million in loan guarantees.

When the administration reneged after the midterm elections of 1978, the plan fell apart. But the story did not end there. And what happened next is of even greater significance.

The inspiring example of the workers and religious leaders—and the sophisticated educational
and political work they did to spread the word—had lasting impact. They knew they were up against some of the most powerful corporate (and union) players in the country. They were fully aware they might lose the battle. They also knew they had discovered an important idea with great promise. Accordingly, they made it their business to educate the public, the press and politicians in the state and around the country about what they were trying to do, and why.

The idea took root in Ohio, and over time the practices and strategies of worker-owned businesses grew more sophisticated and innovative. Today, the state is home to half a million worker-owners, and the support system for building such businesses is one of the most advanced in the nation. The simple idea that workers can and should own their businesses is now conventional in many parts of the state, not only among workers but also businessmen, many of whom (aided by certain tax benefits) sell their businesses to their employees when they retire.

The current goal is not simply worker ownership, but worker ownership linked to a community-building strategy. In Cleveland, a group of worker-owned companies are connected through a community-building nonprofit corporation and a revolving fund designed to help such businesses thrive. Part of the design involves getting hospitals and universities in the area (like the Cleveland Clinic, Case Western Reserve University and University Hospitals) to purchase supplies, goods and services from these companies. Everything in the network is green by design. One of the cooperatives, for example, is an industrial-scale laundry that uses two-thirds less energy and water than conventional ones.

Similar networks are developing in many other cities, and big unions are lending their support as well. Working with the Mondragon Corporation in the Basque region of Spain—an exemplary integrated model involving numerous cooperatives and more than 80,000 people—the United Steelworkers, whose national leadership once opposed the Youngstown effort, has announced a campaign to help build “union co-op” worker-owned companies here. The Service Employees International Union, the Steelworkers and Mondragon are involved with a worker-owned laundry in Pittsburgh. SEIU has also joined in a groundbreaking partnership with the largest worker cooperative in the United States: New York City’s Cooperative Home Care Associates, which provides home services to the elderly, disabled and chronically ill.

October 8, 2013 | This article appeared in the October 28, 2013 edition of The Nation.

About the Author

Gar Alperovitz

Gar Alperovitz is the Lionel R. Bauman Professor of Political Economy at the University of Maryland and co-founder of...
Hey, look it over—public ownership is the most effective way to fix America's economy.

Gar Alperovitz and Thomas M. Hanna

The New-Economy Movement (Activism, Ethical Economics)

A growing group of activists and socially responsible companies are rethinking business as usual.

Gar Alperovitz

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1. **Progressive Democrats of America**
   
   www.pdamerica.org/

   Progressive Democrats of America was founded in 2004 to transform the Democratic Party and our country. We seek to build a party and government contro...

   PDA National Team - Mission - PDA Advisory Board - PDA History

2. **Progressive Democrats of America** - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
   
   en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Progressive_Democrats_of_America

   The Progressive Democrats of America (PDA) is a progressive political organization and grassroots political action committee operating inside the United States ...

   History - Priorities - Views on Israeli Blockade of Gaza - Advisory board

3. **Progressive Democrats of America** - Grand Rapids, MI - Political ...
   
   https://www.facebook.com/PDAmerica

   Progressive Democrats of America, Grand Rapids, MI. 22401 likes · 874 talking about this · 134 were here. PDA Issue Organizing Teams (IOTs) are virtual ...

4. **Progressive Democrats of America** - KeyWiki
   
   keywiki.org/index.php/Progressive_Democrats_of_America

   May 2, 2013 - Progressive Democrats of America operates as an activist network inside the Democratic Party. It has been described as the political arm of the ...
5. **PDA Community**
www.pdacommunity.org/

- **Progressive Democrats, progressives**, liberals, global warming, transparent elections, economic and social justice.

6. **Progressive Democrats of America Meetup Groups - Progressive ...**
pdamerica.meetup.com/

- Helps groups of people with shared interests plan meetings and form offline clubs in local communities around the world about **Progressive Democrats of ...**

7. **Get Active | Progressive Democrats of America - Capwiz**
capwiz.com/pdamerica/home/

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8. **Daily Kos: NJ-Sen: Blue America & Progressive Democrats of ...**
www.dailykos.com/.../-NJ-Sen-Blue-America-Progressive-Democrats-of-...

Aug 1, 2013 - Last April, just three months before he passed away, the ailing liberal lion Senator Frank Lautenberg issued a strong statement in opposition to ...

9. **Progressive Democrats Sonoma County | Stand Up! Take Action! Vote!**
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10. **Progressive Democrats of America - Illinois | Illinois**
www.pdaillinois.org/

We seek to build a party and government controlled by citizens, not corporate elites -- with policies that serve the broad public interest, not just private interests.

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From: **Regnat Populus** <info@rparkansas.org>
Date: Sat, Oct 19, 2013 at 2:35 PM
Subject: The Stamp Stampede is coming to Little Rock!

Regnat Populus is excited to announce it's first celebrity endorsement! Ben Cohen of "Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream" will be in Little Rock on Tuesday, October 22nd to speak at the Clinton Center and afterwards will be teaming up with Paul Spencer, David Couch and Rev. Marie Mainard O'Connell of Regnat Populus in the Rivermarket at St. Vincent's Plaza near Bosco’s Restaurant.

Ben has an initiative called "The Stamp Stampede" [http://www.stampstampede.org/?sid=6dc60352d3b34ed49f1e846d565e6b99](http://www.stampstampede.org/?sid=6dc60352d3b34ed49f1e846d565e6b99)

which is a nationwide effort to bring awareness to the problem of Big Money in American Politics by stamping cash with messages such as "Not to be used for Bribing Politicians" and "Amend the Constitution, Get Money out of Politics".

From 2:30 to 4:00pm, Ben will be stamping your cash and Paul and Marie will be handing out Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream to the first 120 people there. Paul will speak around 3:15 to update the group on the **Regnat Populus Ballot Initiative for 2014**. The initiative would allow Arkansas to control corporate money in its own elections and be the first Southern state to call for a Constitutional Amendment to mitigate the effects of the infamous Citizens United ruling.

Follow us on Facebook [https://www.facebook.com/rparkansas](https://www.facebook.com/rparkansas)
or our website [http://rparkansas.org/](http://rparkansas.org/)

Join the Stamp Stampede event at [https://www.facebook.com/events/1427148910845942/?context=create&ref_dashboard_filter=upcoming](https://www.facebook.com/events/1427148910845942/?context=create&ref_dashboard_filter=upcoming)

Come join us! Stamp your cash, eat ice cream, help fight Big Money taking over our political system!

**FOCUS | Jimmy Carter: US "Has No Functioning Democracy"**

RSN, July 19, 2013
Alberto Riva, International Business Times
Riva reports: "Former U.S. president Jimmy Carter is so concerned about the NSA spying scandal that he thinks it has essentially resulted in a suspension of American democracy."

NEW YORK TIMES  Sunday Book Review
A Confederacy of Lunches
‘This Town,’ by Mark Leibovich
By CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY
Published: July 25, 2013

Not to ruin it for you, but: if you already hate Washington, you’re going to hate it a whole lot more after reading Mark Leibovich’s takedown of the creatures who infest our nation’s capital and rule our destinies. And in case you are deluded enough as to think they care, you’ll learn that they already hate you. He quotes his former Washington Post colleague Henry Allen: “Washington feels like a conspiracy we’re all in together, and nobody else in America quite understands, even though they pay for it.”
Two Parties and a Funeral — Plus Plenty of Valet Parking! — in America’s Gilded Capital
By Mark Leibovich
386 pp. Blue Rider Press. $27.95.
Contrary to the subtitle, there are actually two funerals, which constitute the high — and low — points of the book: the farewells for Tim Russert, longtime host of NBC’s “Meet the Press,” and Richard Holbrooke, late of the State Department. These chapters are mini-masterpieces of politico-anthropological sociology. Leibovich does for Russert’s memorial service at the Kennedy Center what Tom Wolfe’s “Radical Chic” did for Lenny and Felicia Bernstein’s party for the Black Panthers. Holbrooke’s valedictory, also held at the Ken Cen, First Secular Megachurch of Self-Regard, reads like the funeral scene in “The Godfather,” transplanted to the banks of the Potomac. Both occasions were (yes, of course) sad, both men having been cut down in their prime (or near prime). But in Leibovich’s rendering, they are gorgeous pageants of Human Comedy, large-C and small-c.

No one, Leibovich notes, would have enjoyed it more than Russert, a greatly beloved figure — “mayor of This Town.” He “would have loved the outpouring from the power mourners. And he also would have understood better than everyone that all of the speeches and tributes and telegenic choke-ups were never, not for a second, about him. They were about people left behind to scrape their way up the pecking order in his absence.” If it were a movie, and pray may it become one, it could be called “Netwaking Tim Russert.”

Holbrooke’s memorial service, in turn, featured 15 eulogists. “The stories were told in the spirit of ‘You can’t help but love the guy;’” Leibovich writes, “even if some people very much could.” His account takes on a Shakespearean flavor as various eulogists turn it into a not-even-thinly-veiled smack-down of the conspicuous captive mourner sitting onstage — President Obama. As a personality, Holbrooke was your proverbial larger-than-life dynamo. But dynamos are exhausting, and Obama had reached his exhaustion point early on, after which he seemed to take perverse enjoyment in undercutting and humiliating his special envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Enter (trumpets, fanfare) former President Clinton, who uses his eulogy slot to plunge a stealth dagger into the man who defeated his wife in 2008. This makes for spectator sport of the very highest order, and the craftiest bit of eulogy jujitsu since Mark Antony took to the rostrum in 44 B.C. to praise Brutus and the rest.

Bonus details: Obama apparently hates having to sit through other people’s speeches, even when they aren’t sneak attacks on him. Also: Henry Kissinger telling Holbrooke’s widow that Obama is, as Nixon was, a loner, with this rather piquant difference: “Nixon liked to have big personalities...
around him. Obama does not.” This is a telling observation, coming from the man who has known all the personalities of his time.

In one sense, these episodes simply affirm, as do the two parties of the book’s subtitle, an old, familiar theme: Vanity Fair, peacock egos, lust for power, greed, betrayal and broken hearts. We’re shocked — shocked — that human nature is taking place in the nation’s capital! Pass the salt, would you?

Anyone who’s lived in Washington for any length of time, listening to the latest candidate for the nation’s highest office thump the lectern and proclaim he is going to change the way we do business in Washington . . . will yawn. We heard rather a lot about all that in 2008. So, has Washington changed? Or as Sarah Palin would put it, “How’s that hopey-changey thing workin’ out for ya?”

The answer, according to Leibovich, the chief national correspondent for The New York Times Magazine, is: yes, actually, it has, but not in ways that benefit the Republic that the founders bequeathed us and that we squander so promiscuously.

He adduces four serious — I’m trying to avoid saying “tectonic” — shifts that have taken place over the last 40 years. Combined, they make “This Town” read like the endgame chapters of Gibbon’s “Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.” In addition to his reporting talents, Leibovich is a writer of excellent zest. At times, this book is laugh-out-loud (as well as weep-out-loud). He is an exuberant writer, even as his reporting leaves one reaching for the Xanax. As for those four big changes:

**Lobbying.** President Obama’s first year in office was the best year ever for the special interests industry, which earned $3.47 billion lobbying the federal government. Ka-ching — your change, sir. There’s a phrase in journalism-speak called “burying the lede,” which Leibovich appears to do by waiting until Page 330 to cite this arresting figure (previously reported by The Atlantic): in 1974, 3 percent of retiring members of Congress became lobbyists. “Now 50 percent of senators and 42 percent of congressmen do.” No one goes home anymore. Cincinnatus, call your office. There are a number of sanctimonious standout “formers” in Leibovich’s Congressional hall of shame, but just to name a few exemplars who gleefully inhabit ethical no-worry zones and execute brisk 180-degree switcheroos on any issue, including the Armenian genocide, so long as it pays: Dick Gephardt, Evan Bayh and Tim Pawlenty. (Christopher Dodd, late of Connecticut, is another beauty. Disclosure: he beat my uncle out of a Senate seat, but judge for yourself if he isn’t loathsome for other reasons.) My own modest proposal is that the media stop referring to these scoundrels as “strategic consultants” or their other camouflage titles and call them what they are: influence peddlers. I know — good luck with that.
The other major change took place *pari passu* with lobbying: the **arrival of big money in Washington.** “Over the last dozen years,” Leibovich writes, “corporate America (much of it Wall Street) has tripled the amount of money it has spent on lobbying and public affairs consulting in D.C.” Alongside this money comes the tsunami of dollars from presidential campaigns. He reports that during the 2012 contest, the so-called super PACs and megadonors pumped “upwards of $2 billion . . . into the empty-calorie economy of two men destroying each other.” He refers to a datum courtesy of The Huffington Post, which reported in the spring of 2012 that, so far, “the top 150 consulting companies had . . . grossed more than $465 million” during the campaign.

All of which has given rise to another unlovely development: **political consultants** and their concomitant celebrity. This breed has, Leibovich says, essentially replaced the old-style political bosses. One might ask: is it a bad thing that we now have the omnipresent James Carville and Mary Matalin and their ilk? Aren’t we better off for this “celebrity-industrial complex” instead of the smoke-filled rooms of yore? Over to you, but at least the boys in the smoke-filled rooms didn’t yap at us on TV on the Sabbath and endorse Maker’s Mark bourbon. (Honestly, James and Mary. They’re also doing the safety briefing voice-over for Independence Air. Is this a great country or what? Meanwhile, on “Good Morning America” tomorrow, George Stephanopoulos’s guests are . . . .)

**Bringing us to the fourth change: Pandora’s (cable TV) box.** The rise of cable television and the 24/7 news cycle, as well as Facebook, Twitter and the rest of social media, have provided all these people with heretofore unimaginable influence. “Suddenly,” Leibovich writes, “anyone without facial warts could call themselves a ‘strategist’ and get on TV. Or start an e-mail newsletter, Web site or, later, blog, Facebook page or Twitter following — in other words, become Famous for Washington.”

It has also enabled journalists to turn themselves into pundits, with all the glittery and greasy emoluments of that lower trade. **“Punditry,”** he writes, “has replaced reporting as journalism’s highest calling, accompanied by a mad dash of ‘self-branding,’ to borrow a term that had now fully infested the city: everyone now hellbent on branding themselves in the marketplace, like Cheetos (Russer was the local Coca-Cola). They gather, all the brands, at . . . self-reverential festivals, like the April White House Correspondents’ Association dinner, whose buffet of ‘pre-parties’ and ‘after-parties’ now numbers more than two dozen — because a single banquet, it is clear, cannot properly celebrate the full achievements of the People Who Run Your Country.” Tom Brokaw, current wearer of the mantles of Walter Cronkite and Tim Russert, has now publicly declared he’s over and out and done with the damn thing, which has become a grotesque, narcissistic self-parody.

The proliferation of “formers” and pundits has resulted in “a high-profile blur of People on TV
whose brands overtook their professional identities. They were not journalists or strategists or pols per se, but citizens of the greenroom.”


By the end, one is left thinking that our country would be so much better off if, after putting in their years of “public service,” all these people would just go home. Or just away. But then what would we do for entertainment, being left with a mere Parliament of Bores?


US BULLY VS. US DEMOCRACY By Dick Bennett

Does democracy weaken men, diminish real men? Do our constitution, our rights, our legalities play into the hands of our enemies—from Cold War communists to today’s hot war terrorists? And our only recourse, in order to defeat our enemies, to defend our rights, is to suspend the Constitution? Communists then, terrorists now are vicious, so we must be vicious? Listen to President Bush shortly after 9/11: “…there is an image of America out there. . .that when struck, we wouldn’t fight back.” We are sissies. We won’t bomb, burn, torture. So let’s get at it. As President Bush declared to Congress a few days after 9/11: They “hate our freedoms.” They “hate us for who we are, not what we do.” So bomb, burn, torture. Forward noble troops: defend our way of life.

But are there two truths here, or two lies? Did Osama bin Laden instigate the 9/11 bombings because he hated freedoms and loved the middle Eastern dictatorships? Can we best defeat our enemies by mass retaliatory killings and frenzied Patriot Acts? Or did and do the bin Ladens believe us not wimps but bullies who disguise our violence and deceive our own troops and populace with slogans of freedom? They are not surprised by our endless bombings, assassinations, and torture because they perceived that monstrous part of our heart long ago. And they foresaw their victory through the US violence. Like Ho Chi Minh proved, two resisters—Hydra-like--spring up for every one murdered or tortured. The Ho Chi Minhs/bin Ladens’ leadership, their power arise from and depend upon the Great Satan’s missiles, tanks, drones, and carrier battle groups engaged in illegal interventions, invasions, occupations, and relentless threatening.

They hate what we do—to scourge the earth illegally and win, if victory is defined as slaughter. This is the merciless US identity feared and despised around the world, motivating attacks on our troops, our convoys, our embassies, even our marathons and at nightclubs.

They don’t hate our democracy and its Bill of Rights. Democracy has not made us soft and weak. They hate our foreign aggressions. Militarism and empire have made us tough and hard, and we will win, until we eventually break but long after our principles were lost.
Reference

END US DEMOCRACY NEWSLETTER #2

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Dick Bennett

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