

DELAWARE COUNTY PLEDGE OF RESISTANCE



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Winter 2004

Pledge Strategy Session '04

by Brad Bradlee

What issues are important enough that we as individuals will be willing to dedicate our time to address them? Can we find themes to organize around that excite us all? Do we have ideas for creative actions? And we can't forget the nuts and bolts organizational activities that keep the Pledge functioning. These concerns and others highlighted the ambitious agenda tackled January 10 at our annual Pledge strategy session.

Hosted by Lynn Biddle and ably facilitated by Will Scull, the meeting attempted to define the Pledge for 2004. We discussed a range of issues we felt personally drawn to and identified common areas we all agreed are worth the efforts of the Pledge.

This year we want to continue bringing attention to the lies of the Bush administration, including its policy towards Iraq and the "war on terrorism." Latin American issues have our eye, including the link between militarization and corporate penetration of Latin American economies. Fair trade will continue to be an issue. Finally, the Pledge will focus attention on Haiti as events seem likely to accelerate in that country.

We considered organizing around some of these ideas: an educational issue of the newsletter dedicated to the military/corporate link; a ballot or survey in the news-

letter aimed at collecting our readers' views on free trade issues—the results would be sent to our Congressional representatives; a forum on the situation in Haiti, perhaps in cooperation with the Haiti Interest Group with whom Ron Coburn is associated; a film series, with invited speakers, to spark discussion of issues of the day.

Any ideas for fun and useful events? Send them to us at dcpledge@crafttech.com!

Attending the strategy session were Lynn Biddle (whose travels abroad including Central and Latin

American trouble spots help keep us informed), Brad Bradlee (monthly meeting co-facilitator), Paula Bronstein (who delivered the financial report and will continue as our bookkeeper in 2004), Ron Coburn (our expert on Haiti), Bob Neveln (our expert on Iraq), Will Scull (co-facilitator, author of our annual financial letter and Pledge representative to the Delco Peace Center) and Bob Small (our press secretary). We are delighted that Judy Goodrobb will continue editing the newsletter.

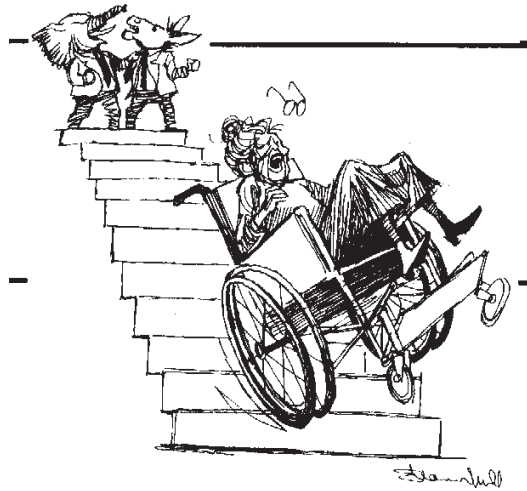


Philly Health Care Victory

by Paula Bronstein

Philadelphia's November 4 referendum on health care won with 75 percent majority vote. Now the Philadelphia Health Department is directed to develop a plan by which adequate healthcare can be provided to all Philadelphians. The Philadelphia Area Committee to Defend Health Care (PACDHC) has worked for four years to achieve this goal. Sylvia Metzler, a nurse practitioner and activist, and Timothy Lachman, a physician, have co-chaired this committee. Walter Tsou, former Philadelphia commissioner of health and a public health specialist, has contributed essential leadership.

Very quickly, the Philadelphia Health Department, has begun discussions with PACDHC and other concerned groups to begin the process of developing a plan to make health care available to all Philadelphians. A severe scarcity of resources is definitely threatening progress, but we are hopeful because the dialogue has now begun. Part



of the goal is to see the dialogue extended to the state level.

Conceivably, the final plan will include the establishment of a public hospital as Philadelphia is the only major U.S. city without one. The current attempt by Tenet to close down the "for profit" MCP hospital has drawn much attention. As a result, hope has been raised that a way will be found with help of state and federal funds to achieve this goal or to improve the tenuous sys-

tem of hospitals in Philadelphia. The struggle to improve health care in Pennsylvania is truly a work in progress. PACDHC is determined to persist, no matter how long it takes.

Over the last few years, many said too many powerful interests opposed health care reform. They claimed that Philadelphia was too poor to attain such dreams and that only the national government could handle this issue. Then more and more reports of the complete breakdown of the health care system appeared in the news and other media. Big

business and small businesses began to realize the benefits of a single payer plan for their own profits. Physicians for a National Health Plan grew in membership to over 10,000. And then Philadelphia Council recognized the failure of Congress to adequately handle health care and decided to begin at the grassroots level.

More information is available at www.PhillyHealth.org.

Presidential Campaign Forum

by Bob Small

Democracy Unplugged will present the first of our 2004 presidential campaign forums, Friday, February 20, 7:30 pm, Swarthmore Borough Hall, 121 Park Avenue.

Appearing will be Roger Bolsom, 7th district delegate coordinator for the Kucinich for President Campaign; Raymond Hopkins, Delaware County representative for the Clark for President Campaign; David Jahn, chair, Delaware County Libertarian Committee; Sam Krakow, Green candidate for the 7th district congressional seat; Sherry Neal, eastern director of the Kerry for President Campaign; and Scott Sidler, Dela-

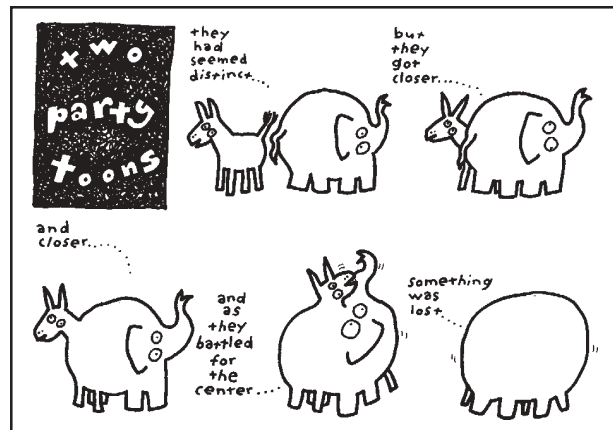
ware County representative for the Dean for President Committee.

Our presentation will begin with opening statements by each forum member. Our student panel will then ask questions, followed by questions from the audience.

Democracy Unplugged has evolved from the Third Party Forum Group that presented annual forums over the past

two years in Delaware County. Our mission is to present forums involving all political parties that use the electoral process.

Democracy Unplugged can be reached at 610-543-8427, or Writ@earthlink.net.



Responsible Consumption

Part 2 in a series

by Lynn Biddle

Our over-consumption has brought us to an environmental crisis. We are in a “war” more serious than the “war on terrorism.” This is a war against the poor, the workers, and the middle class as well—a global war for control of our social, economic, and political lives. Look at the concentration of power in large corporations, at their influence over governments, at free trade agreements and how they favor corporate profits over labor, environmental interests, and even over the sovereignty of nations. This is the corporate-led globalization we talk about. And democracy is in crisis, *now*.

But we must fight, and we can win! Every dollar we spend is, in effect, a vote for the kind of world in which we want to live. We must be *intentional* in our daily lives as in our shopping.

First, we must be explicit about the kind of world we want to live in and what kind we don't. Also, consider and prioritize your most important personal values. A useful resource is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights¹ and one of the alternative development plans² put forth by the several world social forums held in the past few years. They help us understand that people throughout the world share our values. We need only to organize and act effectively—at the global level whenever possible.

If you don't like the way big corporations are increasing in size and power, you can choose, whenever feasible, not to patronize them. Shop at locally-owned small stores. Without your patronage, neighborhood stores will soon disappear thanks to large retailers.

Remember the Wal-Mart success story: huge size and rigorous cost

cutting so it can undercut its competitors. Countless times, Wal-Mart has opened a store in a small town, driven locally-owned businesses out of business, and changed the town's entire character and way of life. How does it cut costs? Much of its inventory comes from sweatshops; its employees get notoriously poor pay and benefits; and it has been found to be subcontracting the cleaning in at least two of its stores to firms which employ illegal immigrants at below minimum wage. Economies of scale and minimizing costs are the classic strategy used by corporations to maximize profit.

When we must or if we prefer to patronize a large corporation, we can work to change its corporate behavior. Again, we must act *intentionally*. Getting information is the first step. My favorite resource is www.responsible shopper.org. When you look up a company, you get an icon indicating problems with its environmental or social behavior. A discussion of its various good and bad points follows. If you choose, for instance, Procter and Gamble to look up, you will learn that it is making serious efforts to develop alternatives to animal testing, wins awards for its anti-discrimination success, and that its Pringles contains genetically modified corn.

This web site also lists a corporation's brand names and the subsidiaries that it owns. Both lists can be huge, and they can contain surprises. Also, there are links to facilitate writing to appropriate

corporate officials and a link to Co-op America's “Green Pages Online.” Here you can search for smaller businesses by category, i.e., fair trade.

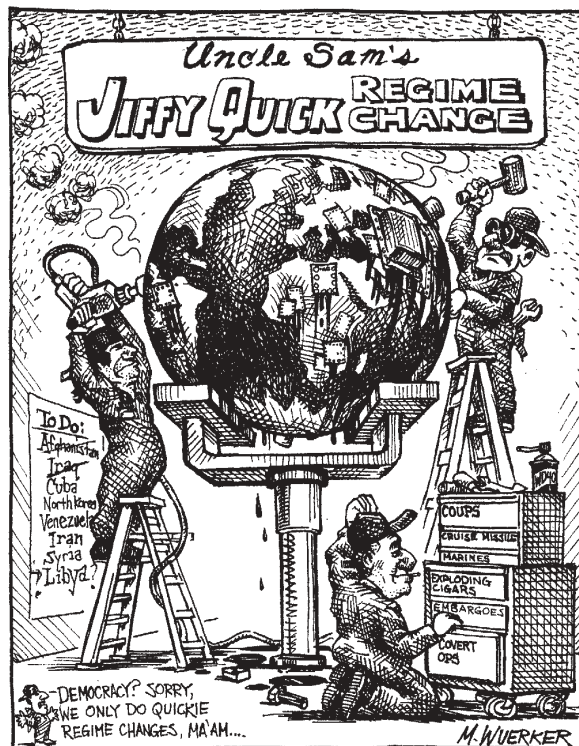
Co-op America also publishes *Green Pages*. Write them at 1612 K Street, NW, Washington, DC, for a copy (and join Co-op America while you're at it).

Equally valuable is a catalog for environmentally friendly products from Seventh Generation. Call 1-877-989-6321 for that catalog.

Let's take our democracy back from large corporations.

Finally, don't forget to vote in the coming elections. Give the lady next door a ride to the polls. Take along five friends. These elections are as important as elections have ever been.

1 At <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>.
2 At www.witnessforpeace.org/tools/tradetools.html, download “Alternatives for the Americas” for a summarized version of these proposals/demands.



Steel Follies

by Brad Bradlee

In the steel tariff battle pitting the World Trade Organization (WTO) against the Bush administration, whom did you find yourself rooting for? Maybe you wanted to see unilateralist George Bush get his comeuppance at the hands of an international organization with teeth. But what about our sovereignty? Did you stand with Dick Gephardt and criticize “W” for giving in to foreign pressure and an non-elected bureaucracy?

You remember the case. After prodding from the steel industry, Bush imposed tariffs on foreign steel in early 2002. Veering from his free market ideology, the president claimed cheap imports threatened the industry and American jobs. Tariffs would give U.S. companies time to become more efficient and better able to compete. Protectionism played well in important steel-producing swing states and carried weight in the administration’s decision.

The European Union (EU) brought the issue before the WTO who ruled the tariffs illegal, freeing the Europeans to impose retaliatory tariffs. In a savvy move, the EU took economic aim at states Bush would need to carry in the coming presidential election. Disingenuously proclaiming victory in his stand for steel, the president dropped the tariffs in December, over a year ahead of schedule.

The steel tariffs were not a success. Yes, domestic steel prices went up but at a cost to steel-consuming industries. Job losses slowed. (Employment fell nearly 10 percent in the 20 months after the tariffs were erected compared to about 21 percent in the 20 months before.) But in comparison to the overall economy, employment shrinkage actually went from a rate 20 times that in overall employment to over 32 times as great.¹ And though the tariffs bought some time for steel companies to consolidate, management took the opportunity to dump pension and retiree healthcare costs. Arguably, Bush’s



“anti-global” policy helped protect profits but not workers.²

Sometimes globalization can be an ambiguous enemy. Some say, depending on how it’s defined, not the true enemy at all. In a recent *Nation* (12/1/03) essay, Doug Henwood points out that while many think of it as a new development, globalization was significant to the age of exploration, the European colonial period, and post-WWII Western economic dominance. In short, globalism has always been part of capitalism.

There’s no doubt that relocations or the threat of relocations can reduce workers’ domestic earnings and bargaining power. But Henwood cites statistics showing trade as an explanation for only a portion of declining wages throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Much of the blame—75 to 80 percent—is to be found domestically. In part look to a large service sector, deregulation, federal anti-unionism, tuition increases at public universities, and affirmative action rollbacks. Ultimately the demand for higher profits represents the strongest threat to labor.

Henwood continues to make his case, stating that on the whole, more globalized countries tend to be less unequal than less globalized countries. Western

Europe—more globalized than the U.S. but less unequal. Ditto Mexico compared to Brazil. It’s not that globalization brings about equality, but neither can we state flatly it’s the cause of inequality. “Income distribution depends more on domestic institutions like unions and welfare states than on internationalization.”

So again, where are our rooting interests in this complicated contest? With protectionist big steel (and its associated unions who agreed to lay-offs and give-backs)? With business free-traders ready to embrace an internationalist regime (unless their own industry needs shielding)? With populist politicians who warn against foreign threats to U.S. sovereignty (but have little regard for the self-determination of others)?

Wealth and poverty are always side-by-side under capitalism, a system partly defined by its global reach. To fight against inequality the most effective activists will target the drive for profit, global and domestic, while embracing the progressive aspects of internationalism.

1 Henwood, *The Nation*, 12/29/03.

2 Sustar, *Socialist Worker*, 11/21/03.

Miami and the FTAA

by Lynn Biddle

The Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) meeting in Miami, November 19-21, changed both the anti-corporate-led globalization movement and the Bush administration's plans for free trade.

Protesters hoped that Miami would be the last nail in the coffin of big multilateral trade agreements designed to benefit corporations over every other interest. The Bush administration clearly didn't want a repeat of Cancun where Brazil had been one of the ringleaders of the Group of 21 that had given less developed countries the courage to stand up to the powerful and wealthy ones.

An extensive list of large public interest organizations formed a coalition to plan and organize protests in Miami. "Advance people" went to Miami weeks before the meetings to negotiate with the city for adequate camping and public meeting spaces. They rented a large building for puppet making, nonviolence training, and meetings.

They organized legal advisors and observers; they established medical stations and medics to staff them. The anti-FTAA coalition planned two full days of educational events before the meeting even began. Websites carried background materials on free trade and nonviolent civil disobedience.

The School of the Americas Watch (SOAW) coordinated its annual November demonstration in Georgia so that protesters could move seamlessly from Miami to Fort Bragg, arriving just in time for protests there. SOAW made the connection between free trade and the SOA explicit: military force is used to impose unjust economic systems on the poor—a fact that most people in the US are only beginning to understand. Thousands of protesters converged on Miami. The largest single group was from organized labor although over a 1,000 retirees came, as did thousands

of other anti-FTAA activists.

But someone was spreading fliers around Miami with warnings about anarchists planning violence. The people of Miami were afraid. Cruise ships pulled out of the harbor; some government buildings and stores in downtown Miami were shuttered. Miami police chief John Timoney was ready.

Timoney, the former chief of the Phila-



delphia police during the 2000 Republican National Convention, thought he knew what to expect. He arranged for some 3000 policemen from 40 different Florida police departments and federal agencies, dressed in full riot gear. He had them out on the streets practicing maneuvers at night, presumably so that they wouldn't block traffic.

But the planned two-day negotiations ended after one day. The US's draft agreement went into the trash, and the only thing which negotiators could agree on was to have a trade agreement in which individual countries could opt in or out of the various provisions as they saw fit. Difficult decisions were deferred, but no timetable was set or parameters agreed to. Many commentators have said that the FTAA was effectively dead.

Apologists are now saying that the Miami negotiations failed because Bush is no longer interested in vast trade agreements and wants to concentrate on form-

ing bilateral and smaller regional agreements (such as the CAFTA).

In the end, the bigger media story was violence by the police against protesters. There were mass arrests, beatings in the streets and in the jails, and, reportedly, two prisoners were raped. In at least two instances, protesters were told by police to leave an area, then blocked from doing so and arrested. Journalists from smaller media outlets and Indy media were routinely targeted after they refused to "embed" with the police.

Some felt that the organizers had brought the police brutality down on them by exaggerating the expected size of the protests. Many felt that the protests had failed because they'd been unable to breach the security fence around the perimeter of the meeting area. In fact, they had been blocked from doing almost any direct action at all.

Some faulted the consensus-based organizational structure in which affinity groups were all but autonomous and the focus of protests wasn't always crystal clear. Others faulted the strategy and tactics that had been chosen:

if demonstrators hadn't all met at one place at a certain time, the police wouldn't have been able to sweep them up so easily. There were others who felt that local activist groups should have been allowed to take charge and spoke of the "arrogance" of out-of-towners arriving to tell them how to organize in their own community.

In the end, a largely apolitical public saw peaceful protesters trying to exercise their constitutional rights of assembly and free speech and being brutally attacked by thousands of police in full riot gear, in a city closed off to its citizens and totally militarized. "The violent nature of the state" was experienced by many for the first time. Police brutality brought down a wave of criticism, lawsuits, and investigations. The movement's very failure may have been its greatest success, winning sympathy for its voices and a new openness to its opinions.

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Address correction requested

Walking in the Spirit of Martin Luther King, 2004

by Bob Small

On the same day that Martin Luther King III chastised President George Bush for his betrayal of Dr. King's legacy, around fifty of us met in front of Lockheed Martin to protest the company's involvements in prisons, the welfare system, weapons systems, and other forms of death. This is one of the annual events organized by Brandywine Peace Community.

There were seven speakers and three poets in the noon-time program. Though the wind-chill was half-past Siberia, we were there because our spirit had moved us to this spot; from 18-year-old poet Shayna Israel to 80-something civil disobedient Annie Gears. Among the speakers were Shafiq El-Amin, director of the Minority Experience Network; Michael Hoffman, Veterans for Peace member and veteran

of the recent Iraqi invasion; and Elizabeth Terry, executive director of The Other Side, Inc. The other

two poets were Dasette Cameron and myself.

At the end of this program, we members of frostbite nation walked up the hill and performed the King Day litany. As we watched 10 activists get arrested (and aren't the true Patriots the ones getting arrested?), we supported them in song and chant and spirit. We remembered that Dr. King also committed civil disobedience as his faith demanded and as he so eloquently said from the pulpit of Riverside Church on April 4, 1967, "We are called to speak for the victims of our nation, for those it calls 'enemy,' for no document of human hands can make these humans any less our brothers and sisters."

The next Brandywine potluck is Sunday, February 8, 4:30, University Lutheran Church, 3637 Chestnut St. Phila.

