

TheReader

COLDTYPE

Writing Worth Reading  Issue 2, October 2005

I've seen Big Brother – and he's Me!

BY ANDREW S. FISCHER

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THE NAME GAME

Okay, we changed our name. Several readers – and my wife – told me they found the title of our first issue, *ColdType/2*, confusing. So we changed it. Welcome to *The ColdType Reader* and this time we're sticking with the title. This issue's contains 10 articles in its 36 pages and is, I think, a great read. I hope you all agree – let me know what you think.

Tony Sutton, editor@coldtype.net

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WRITING WORTH READING FROM AROUND THE WORLD
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“If a client deposits \$1,000 which he states he won by betting \$1,000 on the Super Bowl, and wants to buy his daughter a Treasury bond with that money, I’m obligated by federal law to rat him out.”



ANDREW S. FISCHER

I have seen Big Brother – and he is me!

Having been recently appointed Anti-Money Laundering Officer at my investment firm, I now have the official, government-sanctioned power to scrutinize our clients’ account activity and report almost anything I deem “suspicious activity” to the federal government. Be worried, friends – be very worried – since every bank, every brokerage house, every financial institution in the U.S. is required by the Patriot Act to appoint an AML Officer, enact procedures to combat money-laundering, and file Suspicious Activity Reports on U.S. citizens. (You can view the 4-page SAR-SF form at http://www.fincen.gov/fin101_form_only.pdf)

The Act’s definition of a financial institution is disturbingly broad. It includes dealers in precious metals, stones, or jewels; pawnbrokers; loan or finance companies; insurance companies; travel agencies; telegraph companies; sellers of vehicles, including automobiles, airplanes, and boats. Essentially, it means your financial transac-

tions are subject to investigation if you purchase an engagement ring, insure your home, take a vacation or buy a car.

According to the statute, if I simply should have become aware of suspicious activity and fail to report it, I may have broken the law. So, if I have a head cold one day and miss a \$5,000 wire transfer on a client’s brokerage statement – which is clearly suspicious activity since this client is a 90-year-old widow living on fixed-income investments, who has never made a wire transfer in ten years – I could be in trouble. (Don’t laugh – this applies not just to the AML Officer, but to every employee in a financial organization in a position to view client transactions. So, if you make an unusually large deposit at the bank one day, your teller must report this potential “suspicious activity” to higher ups or face possible sanctions.)

As AML Officer, I am required to report a client’s activity as suspicious if it merely fails to make business sense or appears to

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be without economic purpose. So, if a client transfers \$10,000 into his investment account and breathlessly says “Buy gold stocks!” an hour after Alan Greenspan and Fox News proclaim “Scientists Prove All Gold on Earth is Iron Pyrite,” I have to turn him in.

If a client is a young school teacher and deposits, say, five \$2,000 checks over a period of ten days, she must be questioned about it. Since this might be perfectly normal for a middle-aged, high-income surgeon, however, I wouldn’t have to question her at all – thus lower-income clients will necessarily suffer more intrusions into their privacy than those who earn more. By the way, as AML Officer I’m safe-harbored against violations of privacy laws I may be forced to commit while adhering to the regulations of the Patriot Act.

It gets worse. As I’ve noted, clients are to be questioned – and then reported to the feds on Form SAR-SF if I don’t like their answers – if their transactions indicate suspicious activity. But it does not end there – I’m also required to be on the lookout for potential tax evasion (as well as check fraud, embezzlement, theft, identity theft or mail fraud). So, if a client deposits \$1,000 which he states he won by betting \$1,000 on the Super Bowl, and wants to buy his

daughter a Treasury bond with that money, I’m obligated by federal law to rat him out. Of course, all of this is just the tip of the Patriot Act iceberg; see, e.g., “Outside View: Patriot Act Problems.”

I find this situation repulsive in the extreme. It is Orwell’s 1984, slightly delayed. It will result in a paranoia explosion reminiscent of Nazi-era Germany. What if the Super Bowl bettor in the above example later hears from another person that I will probably file an SAR-SF about his \$1,000 deposit? Will he then, out of fear, report it on his tax return – the government’s secondary desired end? Or will he just phone me and say he made “that betting thing” up? Then what do I do? Will he contact me and beg or threaten me to keep silent? Then what do I do? What if the bettor is my own father? Then what do I do!?

I’m already an unpaid tax collector for the federal government, since I prepare my firm’s payroll, and now, without my consent, I’m also its unpaid law enforcement agent and informant. I can only wonder, fearfully, what comes next.

Andrew S. Fischer is a controller for an investment advisory firm in Pennsylvania. This article originally appeared on the leworkwell.com web site.



“We told our friends that we regarded three-ways the same way Bill Clinton regarded abortion – it’s best when they’re safe, legal, and rare. Really rare – two in ten years?”



DAN SAVAGE

What's wrong with straight people?

*An exclusive excerpt – Chapter 7 (“New”) – from sex columnist Dan Savage’s new book, **The Commitment** (Dutton, Hardcover/ 291 pages/ \$24.95.*

What the hell is wrong with straight people? We were having dinner at the house of some friends, a nice married straight couple, terrific parents to three girls. The kids were tearing around in the yard and the adults were well into our third bottle of wine when the conversation turned to sex. We knew the wife was relatively young and sexually inexperienced when she married – she confided as much in us the first time we’d been over to dinner, almost a year before. She felt as if she’d missed out, she told us. She never really had any sexual adventures; she had never done anything she regretted or looked back on and thought, “Wow! Was that me?!?”

We were the only gay couple she knew, and she had been initiating awkward con-

versations about sex with us ever since we met. She seemed hung up on our gayness, but not in a bad way. What she seemed was jealous. She assumed that, because we were gay, we had both had wild sexual experiences, the kind of adventures she had missed out on, and after two or three glasses of wine she would start demanding the details. Tonight she wanted to talk about infidelity.

“Have you ever cheated on Terry?” she asked me.

I looked at Terry and made my “am I allowed to answer this question truthfully?” face.

He nodded and made his “if you must” face.

“Sure, I’ve cheated on Terry,” I said, after checking to make sure the kids were all out of earshot. “But only in front of him.”

She laughed and looked at Terry, then me, then Terry again. Were we joking? I shrugged my shoulders. It wasn’t a joke, the shrug said. I had “cheated” on Terry-

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but only in front of him, only with his permission, only with someone we both liked and trusted, only when we were in one place and our son was in another. We've had a three-way – actually we've had a couple. While three-ways hardly register on the kink-o-meter anymore, they're considered the absolute height of kink for people like us – for parents, I mean, not for gay people. As parents we're not supposed to be having sex with each other anymore, much less be having sex with other people.

She demanded the details, but I would only give her a basic outline. One was a nice French guy we met on a just-the-two-of-us vacation. He looked a lot like Tom Cruise, which was nice, and was practically a gay virgin, which for safety reasons was even nicer. The other was with an ex-boyfriend of mine, a tech millionaire who spent hundreds of thousands of dollars building a playroom in his basement, a sex toy wonderland. After hearing a friend rave about David's playroom, Terry wanted to see it for himself, so we went over for dinner . . . and one thing led to another . . . and that's as much as I'm willing to reveal.

We told our friends that we regarded three-ways the same way Bill Clinton regarded abortion – it's best when they're safe, legal, and rare. Really rare – two in ten years? We get to vote for a president more often. And with less pleasant outcomes.

When we were done, our neighbor's eyes widened and she leaned in and grabbed my arm.

"That's wonderful," she said, a little too loudly. "I would love to have a three-way. But I wouldn't want my husband to know the details."

She said all of this in front of her husband, who laughed. He thought it was a joke.

A couple of bizarre double standards have been getting a lot of press since those "activist judges" in Vermont, Massachusetts, Hawaii, New York, California, and Washington discovered a "new" right to same-sex marriage in their state constitutions.

The double standard relentlessly promoted by opponents of gay marriage – and attacked just as relentlessly by supporters – is that marriage is about raising children. Since gays and lesbians can't have children, opponents argue, we shouldn't be allowed to marry. It has been almost comically easy to punch holes in this argument. Not all married straight couples can have children. My eldest brother and his girlfriend, Kelly, could marry tomorrow, despite Billy's vasectomy. After Marijo's death, my grandfather Ed married an elderly widow. Both of my parents are currently in childless marriages.

And it's not exactly a secret that thousands of gay and lesbian couples have had children or plan to have children through adoption or artificial insemination. If marriage is about children, how is it that childless straight couples can marry, but same-sex couples with children cannot? By promoting this double standard, social conservatives have unwittingly exposed the shocking truth about straight marriage in America, never mind what us homos will or won't or can't do.

The institution of marriage, as straight people currently understand and practice it, is terrifically elastic and hard to define.

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Marriage is whatever two straight people say that it is. Kids? Optional. Honor? Let's hope so. Till death do us part? There's a 50/50 chance of that. Obey? Only if you're a Southern Baptist with two X chromosomes. A modern marriage ceremony can be sacred (church, family, preacher), or profane (Vegas, strangers, Elvis). What makes a straight couple married – in their own eyes, in the eyes of the state – is a license issued by a state and the couple's willingness to commit to each other. They don't have to be in love, they don't have to have children, they don't even have to have sex. Just exactly what a straight couple is committing to when they marry is entirely up to them. It's not up to the state, their reproductive systems, or the church that solemnizes their vows.

This is the reason so many defenders of “traditional marriage” sputtered their way through their appearances on Nightline and the Sunday morning news programs in 2004. Traditional marriage is just one option available to straight couples. A religious straight couple can have a big church wedding and kids and the wife can submit to the husband and they can stay married until death parts them – provided that's what they both want when they marry, and that's what both of them continue to want throughout the marriage. Or a couple of straight secular humanists can get married in a tank full of dolphins and never have kids and treat each other as equals and split up if they decide their marriage isn't working out – again, if that's what they both want. (It should be pointed out, however, that a religious couple is likelier to divorce than a couple who marries in a

tank full of dolphins. Divorce rates in the United States are highest in conservative red states, and lowest in – it's almost too good to be true – true blue Massachusetts, the only state in the union that currently offers full marriage rights to gays and lesbians.) The problem for opponents of gay marriage isn't that gay people are trying to redefine marriage in some new, scary way, but that straight people have redefined marriage to a point that it no longer makes any logical sense to exclude same-sex couples. Gay people can love, gay people can commit. Some of us even have children. So why can't we get married?

But supporters of gay marriage have been peddling a double standard of their own, one that's just as easy to punch holes in.

Gene Robinson, the openly gay Episcopal bishop of New Hampshire, told the Associated Press that “it serves the common good also to support same-gender couples who wish to pledge fidelity, monogamy, and lifelong commitment.” On Larry King Live, Gavin Newsom, the mayor of San Francisco, claimed that he was only “advancing the bond of love and monogamy.” On CNN Newsnight with Aaron Brown, conservative commentator and leading gay marriage advocate Andrew Sullivan described the gay marriage movement as “a very conservative thing. . . . We're arguing for the same conservative values of family and responsibility and monogamy that everybody else is.” In the Washington Times, Democratic consultant Michael Goldman encouraged Democrats to defend civil unions for gays by saying, “[They're] about two things, which I favor

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– monogamy and accountability.”

Excuse me?

Straight couples don't have to be monogamous to be married or married to be monogamous. Monogamy no more defines marriage than the presence of children does. Monogamy isn't compulsory and its absence doesn't invalidate a marriage. There are hundreds of thousands of heterosexual married couples involved in the organized swinging movement – which I explored in my last book, *Skipping Towards Gomorrah* – and God alone knows how many disorganized swingers there are out there. Married straight couples are presumed to be monogamous until proven otherwise, of course, and that assumption serves as a powerful inducement to be (or appear to be) monogamous. Even most swinging couples prefer that their family, friends, and associates see them as monogamous. But as with children, monogamy is optional. As much as it may piss William “The Gambler” Bennett off, each individual married couple gets to decide for themselves if monogamy is a part of their commitment. Or slots, for that matter.

By promoting the erroneous notion that monogamy defines marriage, and that all gay couples who want to marry want to be monogamous, supporters of gay marriage are creating and, in some cases, attempting to enforce a double standard of their own – one that opponents of gay marriage can poke holes in pretty easily. Just as supporters of gay marriage can produce gay and lesbian couples with children, opponents of gay marriage won't have to search for long before they find non-monogamous gay couples among the thousands of same-sex

couples who have wed in Canada and Massachusetts.

Indeed, my own relationship presents a tough case for opponents and supporters of gay marriage alike. My boyfriend and I have a child; we're thinking of adopting another. If children are the gold standard, we should be married. But if monogamy is the gold standard, then the couple of three-ways we admit to having disqualifies us.

All sorts of nightmare scenarios play out in people's minds when a male couple – particularly one with a child – admits to being non-monogamous. (Maybe that's why so few will admit to it.) While married couples are presumed to be sober monogamists until proven otherwise, non-monogamous gay male couples are presumed to be reckless drunken sluts until proven otherwise. “Children will suffer the most [if gay marriage is legalized],” says James Dobson, the conservative Christian leader who unmasked deep-cover homosexual operative SpongeBob SquarePants. “Homosexuals are rarely monogamous,” Dobson has warned, and children, “who by their nature are naturally conservative creatures, will be traumatized by the ever-changing sexual partners of their parents and the instability of home life. Foster care and homelessness among children will rise.

Dobson paints a scary portrait of gay parents, one that's shaped by stereotypes about gay men, monogamy, and promiscuity. In Dobson's world, a gay man is either a one-guy-kind-a-guy (and a one-in-a-zillion rarity), or one-thousand-guy-kind-a-guy, and there's no in between.

Before I argue with Dobson, I would like to agree with him on one point: Dobson is

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absolutely correct when he says that children are naturally conservative creatures—but not in the modern sense of the term “conservative.” I’ve never met a child who took a strong position on tax cuts, and most of the children I know are budding welfare queens. (Allowances, like welfare, can create a troubling culture of dependency.) Children are also instinctively horrified by the death penalty. Children are conservative inasmuch as they require stability in order to feel secure and therefore generally prefer things to stay the same. They need ritual and familiarity. One of the most underrated virtues — one I’d like to see virtuecrats promote to parents everywhere, and a virtue many homos have a problem with — is constancy. Once you’re a parent, you simply have to stop reinventing yourself while your children are young. Parents who burn through a series of religions or change partners every six months or switch genders are, in my opinion, terrorizing their small children. Children not only need their parents to stay together, they need their parents to stay relatively the same. I’ve got your back on that one, Jimmy.

Now, back to those reckless drunken sluts:

Dobson believes that there are two kinds of gay male couples out there: so-rare-they’re-hardly-worth-discussing monogamous gay male couples, and gay male couples whose home lives are characterized by an ever-changing roster of sexual partners. Dobson isn’t alone in assuming that non-monogamous gay men are always and everywhere appallingly promiscuous; other gay people make the same assumption when a gay couple admits to

being non-monogamous. So I feel obligated to paint a more detailed picture of our non-monogamous behavior: My boyfriend and I don’t hang out in sleazy bars at all hours, we don’t have intercourse with men we’ve met on the Internet, and neither of us is willing to take irrational risks for the sake of the next orgasm. Like a huge number of straight couples, however, we have an understanding. We’re allowed to “cheat” under a set of highly unlikely circumstances, and all outside sexual contact has to be very safe — indeed, it has to be hyper-safe, almost comically safe. We’ve never done anything, nor would we ever do anything, that would put our child at risk. (There will be no Kramer vs. Kramer moments, i.e., no strange adults wandering nude through our house in the middle of the night.) For all intents and purposes, the limits we’ve placed on outside sexual contact have resulted in a sort of de facto monogamy. In the ten years we’ve been together, the planets have aligned on only a handful of occasions. We’re more non-monogamous in theory than in practice. If I had to pick one word to describe our approach to non-monogamy it would be “conservative.” Unfortunately, the word “conservative” has been hijacked-and ruined-by sex-obsessed, puritanical ass-wipes like Dobson.

Far from undermining the stable home we’ve built for our child, the controlled way in which we manage our desire for outside sexual contact has made our home more stable, not less. Unlike most couples, we’re not going to break up over an infidelity. We’ve already been there, done that, had a very nice, very safe time, thanks, and might

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want to do it again sometime.

Depending on who you're listening to at any given time, you're either going to hear that marriage will change gay men, making us more monogamous, or that gay men are going to change marriage, making it less monogamous. On NPR's Talk of the Nation, Jonathan Katz, executive coordinator of Larry Kramer Initiative for Lesbian and Gay Studies at Yale, made the case for the latter. "[Monogamy is] one of the pillars of heterosexual marriage and perhaps its key source of trauma," Katz said. "Could it be that the inclusion of lesbian and gay same-sex marriage may, in fact, sort of de-center the notion of monogamy and allow the prospect that marriage need not be an exclusive sexual relationship among people?" In his book *Gay Marriage: Why It Is Good for Gays, Good for Straights, and Good for America*, Jonathan Rauch writes for the former: "... once gay couples are equipped with the entitlements and entanglements of legal marriage, same-sex relationships will continue to move toward both durability and exclusivity."

I think it's possible that Katz and Rauch are both right. If gay marriage is legalized, not all gay married couples will choose to be monogamous, just as not all straight married couples choose to be monogamous now. I expect that married gay male couples will be non-monogamous at higher rates than married straight couples. Gay men are men, first and foremost, and men place a lower value on sexual exclusivity than women do. (Lesbian couples, on other hand, are monogamous at higher rates than straight or gay male couples.) But with marriage comes the assumption of

monogamy and, if a couple has kids, a host of logistical and ethical road blocks to being non-monogamous. Marriage may not transform gay men into models of monogamous behavior, but marriage and family life will nudge us in that direction, moving us toward durability and exclusivity in some cases, decorum and hypocrisy in others. In other words, married gay men will most likely act more like married straight men, i.e., likelier to cheat than married women, but motivated to cover it up. And like most swinging straight couples, non-monogamous gay couples will probably keep their mouths shut.

So why not keep my mouth shut and let people assume Terry and I are strictly monogamous? That's what Terry would have preferred. And it is what most non-monogamous couples do – gay or straight, it's how most couples with understandings handle it. Like most long-term couples, my boyfriend and I don't rub our friends' and neighbors' noses in the details of our private life. But no one gets to be openly gay unless they're willing to be honest about who they are sexually, and that kind of honesty is a hard habit to break. (Plus, I've got a book to write.) Once you've told people that you're gay, telling them that you're non-monogamous seems like pretty small beans. And with so many supporters of gay marriage pointing to gay men with kids to attack the right's double standard, while at the same time promoting a double standard of their own about monogamy, I felt obligated to go on the record. We want equal marriage rights, after all, not the right to be held to a higher standard than straight people hold themselves to,

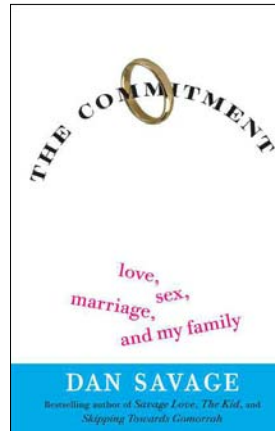
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whether it's in regard to being parents or being strictly monogamous.

I also feel obligated to point out that non-monogamy in marriage, at least for males, is more “traditional” than the expectation of lifelong sexual exclusivity. The idea that married men were bound by monogamous marriage vows is itself a relatively new concept – and its rise seems to correlate with rising divorce rates. Social conservatives describe marriage as an ancient institution, and openly call for a return to traditional gender roles. But in the old days – the really old days – men weren't expected to be monogamous. The Greeks and Romans passed laws punishing female adultery, not male adultery. Jews had the right to several wives and concubines and Greek men to one wife and several concubines. While Roman law allowed a man only one wife or concubine, adultery and prostitution were widespread and not a legal or moral issue. Matters didn't change much until the twentieth century.

Perhaps the Greeks and Romans were wise to value the survival of marriages over sexual exclusivity, although they should lose points for owning slaves, treating women as property, practicing infanticide, and punishing female adultery. But they were on to something, I think. When the demands and pressures of monogamy threaten the survival of a relationship, it's better to toss the baggage of monogamy

overboard than to sacrifice the ship of the relationship itself. But I'm a conservative; what do I know?



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GUN LAW

“Like the company that sells cigarette rolling papers in quantities far outstripping sales of legal tobacco, gun manufacturers have a nod-and-wink understanding of where their products end up.”



GREG PALAST

Put down that lawsuit, and no one gets hurt

There are 200 million guns in civilian hands in the United States. That works out at 200 per lawyer. Wade through the foaming websites of the anti-Semites, weekend militiamen and Republicans, and it becomes clear that many among America’s well-armed citizenry have performed the same calculation. Because if there is any hope of the ceasefire that they fear, it will come from the barrel of a lawsuit.

And that is why a shoot-to-kill coalition in the Senate, led by Wild Bill Frist (R-Tenn) and his simpering sidekick, Scary Harry Reid (D-Nev), recently voted to grant immunity from law suits to gun makers.

First, the score. Gunshot deaths in the US are way down – to only 88 a day. Around 87,000 lucky Americans were treated for bullet wounds last year; 32,436 unlucky ones died, including a dozen policemen by their own weapons. For Americans, America remains more deadly than Iraq. In a typical case, a young man, Steven Fox, described feeling pieces of his brain fly from his skull

after a mugger shot him. He is permanently paralyzed. But, hey, that’s business for you. And what a business it is. Guns, ammo and accessories are a \$6 billion-a-year honey pot for several corporations: Glock, Smith & Wesson, Colt and too many others.

But, the gun-o-philiacs say, what does po’ widdle Smith & Wesson have to do with a mugger who uses its gun in an unsocial manner? This cop-out drives Elisa Barnes crazy. Barnes is the lawyer who brought the groundbreaking lawsuit against handgun manufacturers which, for the first time, were found negligent in abetting a criminal.

It’s lawyers like Barnes – and victims like Fox – that the Senate went gunning for. Barnes thought it was just too convenient for gunmakers to blame the criminal alone. Using investigation and statistical analysis she concluded that sales to criminals are a much-valued – if unpublicized – market segment sought out and provisioned by these upstanding manufacturers.

Her calculations are compelling. Gun com-

panies dumped several million weapons into outlets in states with few curbs on purchases, super-saturating the legal market so that excess would flow up the “Iron Pipeline” to meet black market demand in New York and other big cities.

Like the company that sells cigarette rolling papers in quantities far outstripping sales of legal tobacco, gun manufacturers have a nod-and-wink understanding of where their products end up. Their market models cannot account for half the gun sales in loose-law states such as Georgia.

Nor can industry executives fail to have noticed the 800,000 requests to them from the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms agency to trace guns recovered from crime scenes.

The Fox case jury found a dozen gun makers guilty of negligent distribution. The shooter’s gun was never found. Unable to determine which company made the gun that fired the bullet into Fox’s head, the jury ordered all the makers of .25 caliber weapons in the case to pony up \$5 million for Fox’s care and pain. Fox’s victory burst the dam. Several hundred lawyers – including the Costanza group, the combine of firms that mangled the tobacco industry – filed suits to make sure the gun industry feels our pain. New Orleans was the first of thirty cities in court demanding that gun purveyors pay the cost of gathering the wounded off the streets, and the cost of arming the municipal police force in self-defense. The legal profession might have finally accomplished what a cowering Congress dare not consider: shutting down firearms sales at source.

The NAACP weighed in with a massive

class-action suit on behalf of thousands of the wounded and dead, based on yet another theory: product liability. I spoke to one of their counsel, Mike Hausfeld, just after he returned from beating Hitler in a US courtroom.

Fifty years after WWII, Hausfeld’s firm brought a suit against Mercedes-Benz, Siemens, BASF and others who used slave labor from concentration and prison camps under the Nazi regime. They agreed to create a \$1.2 billion compensation fund. Hausfeld concedes the companies were acting under orders of the Reich, but adds: “Contemporary industrial empires were made from those profits. In 1938 Henry Ford received a medal from the Führer, and his German plants continued to provide Ford income through 1942. Those profits belong to the victims.”

Hitler’s manufacturers finally coughed up their blood money when the defense, “We were only taking orders,” failed to impress US judges. Glock’s profits belong to its victims as well. But as soon as our President signs the new immunity law, “We were only taking orders” (for more guns) will be a Bush-blessed defense. Republican Majority Leader Frist makes a big deal about being a doctor. He must believe the Hippocratic Oath changed from, “First, do no harm,” to “Shoot first, then run for President.” It’s not nice to say, but there’s only one way to stop Doctor Death. In 2008, I hope to see the headline, “Senator Frist Slain in a Hail of Ballots.”

Greg Palast is the author of the New York Times bestseller, The Best Democracy Money Can Buy.



NO TO WAR

“I intend to join those tomorrow night who will vote against military action now. It is for that reason, and for that reason alone, and with a heavy heart, that I resign from the government.”



ROBIN COOK

Why I must resign from this government

Robin Cook, the former British foreign secretary, who resigned from the Labour government in protest over the war in Iraq, died on August 5. This is his resignation speech to the British House of Commons, on 17 March 2003

This is the first time for 20 years that I have addressed the House from the back benches. I must confess that I had forgotten how much better the view is from here.

None of those 20 years were more enjoyable or more rewarding than the past two, in which I have had the immense privilege of serving this House as Leader of the House, which were made all the more enjoyable, Mr Speaker, by the opportunity of working closely with you.

It was frequently the necessity for me as Leader of the House to talk my way out of accusations that a statement had been preceded by a press interview.

On this occasion I can say with complete

confidence that no press interview has been given before this statement.

I have chosen to address the House first on why I cannot support a war without international agreement or domestic support.

Backing Blair – The present Prime Minister is the most successful leader of the Labour party in my lifetime.

I hope that he will continue to be the leader of our party, and I hope that he will continue to be successful. I have no sympathy with, and I will give no comfort to, those who want to use this crisis to displace him.

I applaud the heroic efforts that the prime minister has made in trying to secure a second resolution.

I do not think that anybody could have done better than the foreign secretary in working to get support for a second resolution within the Security Council.

But the very intensity of those attempts

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underlines how important it was to succeed. Now that those attempts have failed, we cannot pretend that getting a second resolution was of no importance.

French intransigence? – France has been at the receiving end of bucket loads of commentary in recent days.

It is not France alone that wants more time for inspections. Germany wants more time for inspections; Russia wants more time for inspections; indeed, at no time have we signed up even the minimum necessary to carry a second resolution.

We delude ourselves if we think that the degree of international hostility is all the result of President Chirac.

The reality is that Britain is being asked to embark on a war without agreement in any of the international bodies of which we are a leading partner – not NATO, not the European Union and, now, not the Security Council.

To end up in such diplomatic weakness is a serious reverse.

Only a year ago, we and the United States were part of a coalition against terrorism that was wider and more diverse than I would ever have imagined possible.

'Heavy price' – History will be astonished at the diplomatic miscalculations that led so quickly to the disintegration of that powerful coalition.

The US can afford to go it alone, but Britain is not a superpower.

Our interests are best protected not by unilateral action but by multilateral agreement and a world order governed by rules.

Yet tonight the international partner-

ships most important to us are weakened: the European Union is divided; the Security Council is in stalemate.

Those are heavy casualties of a war in which a shot has yet to be fired.

I have heard some parallels between military action in these circumstances and the military action that we took in Kosovo. There was no doubt about the multilateral support that we had for the action that we took in Kosovo.

It was supported by NATO; it was supported by the European Union; it was supported by every single one of the seven neighbours in the region. France and Germany were our active allies.

It is precisely because we have none of that support in this case that it was all the more important to get agreement in the Security Council as the last hope of demonstrating international agreement.

Public doubts – The legal basis for our action in Kosovo was the need to respond to an urgent and compelling humanitarian crisis.

Our difficulty in getting support this time is that neither the international community nor the British public is persuaded that there is an urgent and compelling reason for this military action in Iraq.

The threshold for war should always be high.

None of us can predict the death toll of civilians from the forthcoming bombardment of Iraq, but the US warning of a bombing campaign that will “shock and awe” makes it likely that casualties will be numbered at least in the thousands.

I am confident that British servicemen

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and women will acquit themselves with professionalism and with courage. I hope that they all come back.

I hope that Saddam, even now, will quit Baghdad and avert war, but it is false to argue that only those who support war support our troops.

It is entirely legitimate to support our troops while seeking an alternative to the conflict that will put those troops at risk.

Nor is it fair to accuse those of us who want longer for inspections of not having an alternative strategy.

For four years as foreign secretary I was partly responsible for the western strategy of containment.

Over the past decade that strategy destroyed more weapons than in the Gulf war, dismantled Iraq's nuclear weapons programme and halted Saddam's medium and long-range missiles programmes.

Iraq's military strength is now less than half its size than at the time of the last Gulf war.

Threat questioned – Ironically, it is only because Iraq's military forces are so weak that we can even contemplate its invasion. Some advocates of conflict claim that Saddam's forces are so weak, so demoralised and so badly equipped that the war will be over in a few days.

We cannot base our military strategy on the assumption that Saddam is weak and at the same time justify pre-emptive action on the claim that he is a threat.

Iraq probably has no weapons of mass destruction in the commonly understood sense of the term – namely a credible device capable of being delivered against a

strategic city target.

It probably still has biological toxins and battlefield chemical munitions, but it has had them since the 1980s when US companies sold Saddam anthrax agents and the then British Government approved chemical and munitions factories.

Why is it now so urgent that we should take military action to disarm a military capacity that has been there for 20 years, and which we helped to create?

Why is it necessary to resort to war this week, while Saddam's ambition to complete his weapons programme is blocked by the presence of UN inspectors?

Israeli breaches – Only a couple of weeks ago, Hans Blix told the Security Council that the key remaining disarmament tasks could be completed within months.

I have heard it said that Iraq has had not months but 12 years in which to complete disarmament, and that our patience is exhausted.

Yet it is more than 30 years since resolution 242 called on Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories.

We do not express the same impatience with the persistent refusal of Israel to comply.

I welcome the strong personal commitment that the prime minister has given to middle east peace, but Britain's positive role in the middle east does not redress the strong sense of injustice throughout the Muslim world at what it sees as one rule for the allies of the US and another rule for the rest.

Nor is our credibility helped by the appearance that our partners in Washing-

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ton are less interested in disarmament than they are in regime change in Iraq.

That explains why any evidence that inspections may be showing progress is greeted in Washington not with satisfaction but with consternation: it reduces the case for war.

Presidential differences – What has come to trouble me most over past weeks is the suspicion that if the hanging chads in Florida had gone the other way and Al Gore had been elected, we would not now be about to commit British troops.

The longer that I have served in this place, the greater the respect I have for the good sense and collective wisdom of the British people.

On Iraq, I believe that the prevailing mood of the British people is sound. They do not doubt that Saddam is a brutal dictator, but they are not persuaded that he is a clear and present danger to Britain.

They want inspections to be given a chance, and they suspect that they are being pushed too quickly into conflict by a

US Administration with an agenda of its own. Above all, they are uneasy at Britain going out on a limb on a military adventure without a broader international coalition and against the hostility of many of our traditional allies.

From the start of the present crisis, I have insisted, as Leader of the House, on the right of this place to vote on whether Britain should go to war.

It has been a favourite theme of commentators that this House no longer occupies a central role in British politics.

Nothing could better demonstrate that they are wrong than for this House to stop the commitment of troops in a war that has neither international agreement nor domestic support.

I intend to join those tomorrow night who will vote against military action now. It is for that reason, and for that reason alone, and with a heavy heart, that I resign from the government.

Prime Minister Blair did not attend the funeral for Mr Cook.



POWER PLAY

“Let’s give these 12 twits what they didn’t give Phyllis: the benefit of the doubt. Perhaps they’re decent folks with functioning brains driven temporarily insane by the fierce July heat.”



BECKY AKERS

Getting Grandma

As Leviathan’s fist tightens, it has begun beating up girls old enough to be grandmothers. It recently ambushed two harmless women, pretended they committed crimes, and punished them as though they are predators instead of prey. Nor has it blushed at such barbarity.

First, there’s 64-year-old Martha Stewart. The government’s had this poor woman in its crosshairs for years. And for what? Milling her own flour before she bakes a cake? Surely the state has tormented her enough by now to satisfy even the most sadistic of its myrmidons. But no. Though she was released from prison five months ago, the crusade against her continued. She was placed under house arrest when the Feds apparently confused her with bureaucrats and politicians as a threat to the community. Her neighbors must have been grateful for this protection: no telling when Martha might drop by with a batch of Chocolate Chip-Cherry Cookies to

distract them while she ran a white-gloved finger over their coffee tables.

“House arrest” is Leviathan’s term for treating grown adults as though they are teens, and the rules imposed on those so grounded are as ridiculous as the premise. The government permits its victim to leave her house – her actual dwelling, not her property – for a grand total of 48 hours each week. Even then, she may go only to work, church, the doctor’s, or the grocery store. Very prudent of Leviathan: were she to have the run of the town, our domestic desperado might try showing shopkeepers how to arrange their wares more tastefully. At any rate, Martha flouted Our Masters’ rules by driving about her estate. I feel menaced; how about you? She also celebrated her birthday by attending a yoga class, with her daughter, no less, and then shopping for books. Think of the risk to us law-abiding citizens.

Worse, she laughed at Leviathan. The New York Post reported that “officials

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were...troubled by a recent Stewart interview where she mimicked the voice of her probation office [and] bragged of knowing how to remove her electronic monitoring anklet..." The state has retaliated by clubbing her with another three weeks of house arrest.

That gives the government more chances to shame her. And no humiliation is too petty: Our Masters want their vengeance to chafe, literally. The electronic anklet irritates her skin, but, as she told fans, "I am not allowed to take it off at any time, and I am not allowed, while in my home, to have any padding under the strap." Lord knows where a criminal of Martha's stature might limp if Leviathan weren't dogging each sore footstep – perhaps to Whole Foods for some sun-dried tomatoes.

Thanks to an entrepreneurial genius that saw dollars in donuts, darning, and dusting, Martha is – or was, before the state set out to ruin her – a wealthy woman. But Leviathan does not discriminate when devouring citizens: its maw gapes insatiably. The other lady it chewed up and spit out this month is a 62-year-old retired schoolteacher named Phyllis Dintenfass.

Phyllis had the guts to do what so many of us have so often longed to: when an airport screener got frisky, Phyllis groped her in turn and demanded, "How would you like it if I did that to you?"

The retiree's criminal career began last September, when she was pulled aside for "secondary screening" at a regional airport in Wisconsin. Terrorists have, of course, tried to take out many skyscrapers and cows in the upper Midwest, and they flood through the regional airports there at the

rate of nine or ten per day. So the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) was ready when Phyllis triggered the metal detectors. A female supervisor led her to a private area and conducted what the TSA euphemizes as a "limited pat-down procedure."

Phyllis called it something else: "She was feeling me up." She testified at her trial last week that she "felt violated." She told her attacker, "I don't like you feeling me up.' [The screener] said, 'I'm not feeling you up.' I told her, 'My husband's been feeling me up for 40 years. I know what that feels like...'"

Phyllis then returned the favor. Not surprisingly, the screener objected when what she'd done unto others was done unto her. So much, in fact, that she called the cops on Phyllis. And so this older lady whom friends characterize as mild-mannered, whose interests run not to murder and mayhem but to "art, textiles and education issues," was dragged into a Wisconsin courtroom. There the government tried her for "assaulting" its minion. The jury actually deliberated about whether we serfs may defend ourselves from Our Masters' sexual abuse. Stunningly, they decided we may not.

Let's give these twelve twits what they didn't give Phyllis, the benefit of the doubt. Perhaps they're decent folks with functioning brains driven temporarily insane by the fierce July heat. Or perhaps they're androids programmed to kiss Leviathan's hindquarters. Maybe it's a combination of the two. At any rate, Phyllis now faces a year in prison and \$100,000 in fines when she's sentenced in November.

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The prosecutor, U.S. Attorney Steven Biskupic, is young enough to be Phyllis' son. His take on the case, according to the Associated Press, is that "TSA officers perform a vital service and are entitled to protection from assault." Really, Steve? Would you call it a "vital service" had your mother been groped? Should she be arrested and tried for defending herself? Would you prosecute her, knowing she could be imprisoned and bankrupted because she fought back?

The only "crime" of which Martha and Phyllis are guilty is defying the state, and

that under extreme provocation. Meanwhile, Leviathan has shown itself once again for a cowardly, craven cuss. Even the slightest effort at self-defense on the part of its victims unleashes all its force and fury. We'd be fools to expect justice or fair play from the government, let alone decency, civility, or chivalry.

But still...

Becky Akers writes primarily about the American Revolution. This article was originally published on the lewrockwell.com web site.



“If the British ambassador to Washington is briefed that his job is to “get up the arse of the White House and stay there”, then it is small surprise that nuances of difference get overlooked.”



ANDREW MURRAY

Cause and consequence

Tony Blair appears to be on the brink of a Brechtian moment, in which he will need to dissolve the people who have lost his confidence and elect another.

Certainly, if he claims that anyone who believes there is a connection between the government’s foreign policy – above all, Iraq – and the July 7 massacre in London is a “fellow traveller of terrorism”, then he has his work cut out. Fully 85% of the public do, according to a Daily Mirror/GMTV poll.

The government’s refusal to associate cause and consequence, which would be child-like were it not so obviously self-serving, is sustained only by hysterical warnings against the new evil of “root-causism” from the residual pro-empire liberals.

This attempt to close down debate as to why Britain – London above all – is now fighting the misbegotten “war on terror” on its own streets, is doubly dangerous. Not only does it block the necessary re-evalua-

tion of foreign policy, it also places the onus for preventing any repetition of July 7 on the “Muslim community”, which – in a form of collective responsibility – is accused of breeding an “evil ideology” in its midst.

This approach risks reaping a different whirlwind in anti-Muslim attacks, physical and verbal. It also creates the climate in which Brazilians allegedly wearing coats on a hot day can become targets for a shoot-to-kill policy imported from Israel.

“Iraq” is shorthand for describing the problem. As well as the occupation of Iraq, it encompasses the faltering occupation of Afghanistan, the misery of the Palestinians, Guantánamo Bay and the carefully photographed torture at Abu Ghraib and Camp Breadbasket.

The British government bears less responsibility for some of these policies than for others. But if the British ambassador to Washington is briefed by Downing Street that his job is to “get up the arse of the White House and stay there”, as has

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been reported, then it is small surprise that nuances of difference get overlooked.

Of course, al-Qaida and its reactionary ideologists may have broader objectives than ending the occupation of Iraq. But no one is going to bomb Britain because of Chechnya. All roads lead back to the government's uncritical identification with the US neoconservative agenda. The first step in a realignment must be ending the occupation of Iraq. This is not "appeasing terrorism": that would only be the case if the occupation had been wildly popular, and producing results before July 7, and a U-turn was urged as a result of the carnage in London.

In fact, the occupation was wrong, and failing, before July 7 and it is wrong afterwards. It was opposed by most of the people before it began, and by most people most of the time to this day.

The main argument for ending it is not what has happened, or is threatened, in London but what is happening in Iraq daily. Every day is July 7 in occupied Iraq, where Britain has, along with the US, arbitrarily, violently and unlawfully constituted itself the de facto authority.

Whether one talks of 25,000 violent deaths, as claimed by Iraq Occupation Focus, the 39,000 counted by the Swiss-based Graduate Institute of International Studies, or the 100,000 "excess civilian deaths", including nonviolent casualties of occupation, identified by the Lancet, this is a massacre of innocent people that the gov-

ernment apparently believes is a price worth ignoring for its Iraq policy.

Whether these killings are directly attributable to the occupying force, or caused by the terrorism that has flourished on the occupiers' watch along with economic and social chaos, they are the best reason for bringing the troops home. It should be done for the Iraqis, not just for ourselves. This demand has near-unanimous support among Britain's trade unions. It is the Liberal Democrats' policy. Bringing the troops home no later than Christmas would surely command overwhelming public backing.

Such a move would not necessarily end the threat of terrorism overnight – but it would be right. It would send a signal, not to al-Qaida but to the British people, that a disastrous foreign policy can be changed by means of democratic pressure.

Two million people, including a vast number of British Muslims, took to the streets against the invasion of Iraq. Blair preferred the warmth of the White House's embrace. Ignore the marchers and you risk igniting the murderers. If the alternative to terrorism is democracy, then it is time the people of Britain and Iraq alike were listened to and the occupation ended.

Andrew Murray is chair of the Stop the War Coalition and co-author of Stop the War: the story of Britain's biggest mass movement This article originally appeared in London's Guardian newspaper.



“So concerned about such condemnations of US foreign policy is Secretary of War Donald Rumsfeld that he was moved to write an op-ed in the Financial Times of London after the attacks in that city.”



WILLIAM BLUM

The Al-Dubya training manual

“It is important to note that al Qaeda training manuals emphasize the tactic of making false abuse allegations.”

This is now the official and frequent response of White House, Pentagon, and State Department spokespersons when confronted with charges of American “abuse” (read: torture) of prisoners, and is being repeated by many supporters of the war scattered around the Internet. It can thus be noted that White House, Pentagon, and State Department training manuals emphasize the tactic of saying “It is important to note that al Qaeda training manuals emphasize the tactic of making false abuse allegations,” when confronted with charges of American torture of prisoners for which the spokespersons have no other defense.

It is equally important to note that these sundry spokespersons never actually offer a precise quotation from any terrorist training manuals, of al Qaeda or not. The one instance

I’ve been able to find of US government officials referring to a specific terrorist training manual in the context of torture, is a referral to the so-called “Manchester Manual”, a manual found on the computer of a suspected terrorist in Manchester, England in 2000.^{1} In the references to torture, in the portions of the manual that have been made public, there is certainly no clear, unambiguous directive for making false allegations of abuse, much less an emphasis on such. The manual, apparently written in the 1980s, says the following about torture: “Each brother who is subjected to interrogation and torture, should state all that he agreed upon with the commander and not deviate from it.” ... “Security personnel in our countries arrest brothers and obtain the needed information through interrogation and torture.”

In Lesson 18, explicitly cited by the US government officials, we find: “1. At the beginning of the trial, once more the brothers must insist on proving that torture was inflicted on them by State Security [investigators] before the

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judge. 2. Complain [to the court] of mistreatment while in prison. 3. Make arrangements for the brother's defense with the attorney, whether he was retained by the brother's family or court-appointed. 4. The brother has to do his best to know the names of the state security officers, who participated in his torture and mention their names to the judge. [These names may be obtained from brothers who had to deal with those officers in previous cases.]

All words in brackets were bracketed in the original; some may be translator's comments.

Inasmuch as only selected portions of the manual have been made public by the Bush and Blair administrations it can not be determined in what way the deleted sections might put the White House/Pentagon/State mantra into question. For example, in lesson 18, part 1, what does "once more" refer to? Some previous relevant passage which is being withheld from the public? And how does "proving that torture was inflicted on them" square with "the tactic of making false abuse allegations"? Part 2 could be taken to mean something made up, but it doesn't mention torture and probably doesn't refer to it because part 1 would seem to cover that particular complaint.

In any event, the question is largely academic. We have the numerous statements of American prison guards, other military personnel, and Pentagon officials, all admitting to dozens of kinds of "abuse" in US prisons in Guantanamo, Iraq, and Afghanistan; so many ugly stories. We have as well the Abu Ghraib photos. And we have the well-documented phenomenon of CIA "rendition", flying kidnapped individuals to many countries known for their routine use of torture. None of this comes from al Qaeda training manuals.

We're winning, sort of

Their policies have not changed yet, but they're becoming more and more defensive with each passing day. After numerous, unflinching refusals to announce a date of departure from Iraq – in the face of a rising demand in and out of Congress – several administration officials, both civilian and military, have recently been giving estimated dates, albeit what they say is total rubbish, no more than an attempt to tell the critics to shut up.

They're also circling the wagons in the face of mounting charges that terrorism, particularly of the anti-US and anti-UK type, is the logical consequence of US and UK foreign policy. Former State Department spokesman James Rubin and New York Times foreign-affairs correspondent Thomas Friedman recently declared that we need to spotlight the "excuse makers." "After every major terrorist incident, the excuse makers come out to tell us why imperialism, Zionism, colonialism or Iraq explains why the terrorists acted. These excuse makers are just one notch less despicable than the terrorists and also deserve to be exposed." {2} (I wonder, if the terrorists get life in prison, whether Rubin and Friedman would be willing to settle for as little as 20 years for us excuse makers, or would they fear being accused of being "soft on excuse makers"?)

Friedman and Rubin do not actually dispute the idea that the human catastrophe known as Iraq lies behind certain terrorist acts, and most Americans and British make that association as well, which I chalk up as another point for the anti-war movement. Tony Blair sounds positively frantic in his denials that the bombers were motivated in any way by British support of the American wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. He and Bush

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simply cannot admit any cause and effect between their war-crime adventures and terrorism. To do so would mean having to change their policies.

But reality keeps intruding. Here's one of the would-be London bombers, Osman Hus-sain (also known as Isaac Hamdi), whose bomb failed to fully detonate on July 21, speaking in Rome after his capture there: Osman spoke of "how the suspects watched hours of TV footage showing grief-stricken Iraqi widows and children alongside images of civilians killed in the conflict. He is alleged to have told prosecutors that after watching the footage: 'There was a feeling of hatred and a conviction that it was necessary to give a signal - to do something.' ... Osman allegedly said: 'More than praying we discussed work, politics, the war in Iraq ... we always had new films of the war in Iraq ... more than anything else those in which you could see Iraqi women and children who had been killed by US and UK soldiers.'" {3} "The bombs of July 7 in London?" said Hamdi, "That happens every day in Iraq." {4}

So concerned about such condemnations of US foreign policy is Secretary of War Donald Rumsfeld that he was moved to write an op-ed in the Financial Times of London after the attacks in that city. He first treated his readers to a message that could have been pasted together from words cut out of a magazine: "Coalition forces operate in Afghanistan and Iraq at the request of democratically elected governments." Hmmm, I see, nothing to do with massive bombing, invasion or occupation; it was all a spontaneous invitation with flowers and kisses; as if Rumsfeld thinks no one knows any recent history at all. And then, as if he thinks no one knows any prior history

either, he declared:

"Some seem to believe that accommodating extremists' demands – including retreating from Afghanistan and Iraq – might put an end to their grievances, and, with them, future attacks. But consider that when terrorists struck America on September 11 2001, a radical Islamist government ruled Afghanistan and harboured al-Qaeda leaders, virtually undisturbed by the international community. And Saddam Hussein tightly clung to power in Iraq, and appeared to be winning support for his efforts to end United Nations sanctions." {5}

But prior to September 11 there was already a long list of grievances against American actions, enough to fuel a dozen al Qaedas:

- the shooting down of two Libyan planes in 1981
- the bombardment of Beirut in 1983 and 1984
- the bombing of Libya in 1986
- the bombing and sinking of an Iranian ship in 1987
- the shooting down of an Iranian passenger plane in 1988
- the shooting down of two more Libyan planes in 1989
- the massive bombing of the Iraqi people in 1991
- the continuing bombings and terrible sanctions against Iraq for the next 12 years
- the bombing of Afghanistan and Sudan in 1998
- the habitual support of Israel despite the routine devastation and torture it inflicts upon the Palestinian people
- the habitual condemnation of Palestinian resistance to this
- the large military and hi-tech presence in

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Islam's holiest land, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere in the Persian Gulf region

- the long-term support of undemocratic, authoritarian Middle Eastern governments, from the Shah of Iran to the Saudis

The newest charming chapter of the War on Terror

The cold-blooded murder of the 27-year-old Brazilian, Jean Charles de Menezes, by London police may become a symbol for the War on Terror along with others like the hooded and wired man of Abu Ghraib. It appears now that the police lied about Menezes wearing a bulky jacket, running from them, jumping over the subway turnstile, and being "directly linked" to the bomb investigation. But even if all of that were true, what would be the justification for his execution? That he might have been a suicide bomber just about to explode himself in a crowded subway station? But if that were true, why – when the police were getting closer to him, then closer, then on top of him – why didn't he set the explosives off? Should not the absence of any explosion have instantly told the police that they were dreadfully mistaken?

Collateral damage

On July 13, more than 40 Iraqi children were killed or wounded by a suicide car bomber targeting an American soldier who was handing out sweets to the children. This awful event understandably led to numerous condemnations of the insurgency, with no extenuating circumstances allowed into the discussion. Yet, on many occasions in recent years, in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Yugoslavia, when US bombing has killed a number of innocent civilians, American officials have said that "the bad

guys" were at least partly to blame because they had set themselves up close to civilians despite knowing that they might well be the targets of US attacks. Can not the same reasoning apply to the incident of July 13? Did not the American soldier know that standing in an Iraqi street made him a probable target of the insurgents? Why did he allow himself to be so close to so many children?

The sanctity of elections

In July it was reported that the US Navy secretly spent \$1.6 million to influence the vote in Vieques, Puerto Rico in a 2001 referendum on the question of continued Navy use of the area as a bombing range. Opponents had contended that the bombing harmed the environment and the health of Vieques' 9,100 residents.{6}

That same month we learned that Washington also poured money into the much vaunted Iraqi elections of January, giving financial support to the slate controlled by Iyad Allawi, the acting Prime Minister, who was a staunch American ally.{7}

We thus have two more additions to the list of elections around the world which the United States has seriously interfered in. By my conservative tabulation, since 1950 it comes to about 35 elections in 30 different countries, not counting presidential elections in the United States.{8}

"Mr. Castro, once, just once, show that you're unafraid of a real election." – George W. Bush, 2002{9}

Che Clinton?

If Hillary Clinton is indeed eyeing the White House, we can expect a lot more of the kind of silliness of the intellect found in Edward

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Klein's new book, "The Truth About Hillary". Critics pan the book for its sleaziness. I pan it for its striking inability to distinguish among different points on the political spectrum. Clinton, in Klein's world, is a "leftist", not the centrist she and her husband have plainly proven themselves to be. Klein sees her not as simply a liberal, but a "leftist"; in fact, not simply a leftist, but a "radical" leftist. Yes, that's the word he uses. He's speaking about a woman who supported the Contras in Nicaragua in the 1980s, while her husband was in the Arkansas governor's mansion. The Contras, in case you've forgotten, were the army employed by Ronald Reagan in his all-out war to destroy the progressive social and economic programs of the Nicaraguan government. They went around burning down schools and medical clinics, raping, torturing, mining harbors, bombing and strafing. These were the charming gentlemen Reagan liked to call "freedom fighters".

Roger Morris, in his excellent study of the Clintons, "Partners in Power", recounts Hillary Clinton aiding Contra fund-raising and her lobbying against people or programs hostile to the Contras or to the Reagan-CIA policies in general. "As late as 1987-88," Morris writes, "amid some of the worst of the Iran-Contra revelations, colleagues heard her still opposing church groups and others devoted to social reform in Nicaragua and El Salvador." {10}

Are Clinton's views on Iraq or US imperialism in general any more progressive than this? If she is a radical leftist what would Edward

Klein – who makes no mention at all of the Contras – call Noam Chomsky? What would he call Fidel Castro? Or Vladimir Lenin? This kind of ideological dumbness just permeates the American media and plays no small part in the voters losing their bearings.

NOTES

- {1} Federal News Service, July 21, 2005, State Department briefing. The manual is at www.usdoj.gov/ag/trainingmanual.htm
- {2} New York Times, July 22, 2005
- {3} The Observer (London), July 31, 2005
- {4} Agence France Presse, July 31, 2005
- {5} Financial Times (London), August 1, 2005
- {6} Associated Press, July 22, 2005
- {7} Seymour Hersh, New Yorker, July 25, 2005
- {8} The latest listing can be found in the updated edition of William Blum's book, "Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower", chapter 18, which will be out around October.
- {9} Los Angeles Times, May 21, 2002
- {10} Roger Morris, "Partners in Power" (1996), p.415

William Blum is the author of:
Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War 2; Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower; West-Bloc Dissident: A Cold War Memoir; Freeing the World to Death: Essays on the American Empire.
His column, The Anti-Empire report, is published regularly on the web site www.killinghope.org



KILLING THE STORY

“The founders of this nation understood the importance of an informed public, but given what has just happened, one is tempted to ask: Does the term ‘free press’ apply only to those who can afford to own one?”



DAVE LINDORFF

Still hiding the Bush bulge

This story is close to my heart – I redesigned the Pasadena Star-News a decade or so ago when the newspaper was one of the flagships of the Thomson Newspapers empire and I was the company’s corporate design consultant. I thought Thomson’s was pretty much the bottom of the barrel when it came to quality of journalism, but Singleton’s MediaNews Group which bought many of Thomson’s papers when they pulled out of the business, makes my old bosses look like angels. Almost. – Editor

Pasadena residents didn’t get to read about the exploits of local celebrity Dr. Robert Nelson, who, besides being a Jet Propulsion Lab photo analyst who helped present those dramatic photos of Saturn’s rings and moons, also gave the lie to White House claims that the bulge seen on Bush’s back during the presidential debates was “just a wrinkle.”

They didn’t get to read Nelson’s account of how his photo analysis of Bush’s jacket – a story that would have increased speculation that the president was wearing a hearing device during the debates – almost made it into the New York Times before being killed by top editor Bill Keller (Extra!, 1–2/05).

They didn’t read all this in their local daily, the Pasadena Star-News, because senior editors at that paper killed the story on Saturday, April 30, right before publication in the Sunday edition – apparently for political, not journalistic, reasons.

The Star-News is the oldest holding of MediaNews Group, a newspaper and television station chain owned and run by William Dean Singleton, one of the U.S.’s more conservative media moguls. Singleton was singled out by Editor & Publisher (1/26/04) as one of several newspaper chain owners who contributed money to the Bush/Cheney re-election campaign last year. MediaNews Group also owns the

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Denver Post and the L.A. Daily News.

What role, if any, Singleton and his politics had in the killing of Star-News reporter Gary Scott's story on Nelson and the Bush bulge is unclear. What is known is that the story was filed, edited and set to run, that a photographer had been assigned and had taken pictures of Nelson at home with his photo analysis equipment, and that it was killed at the last minute.

Several sources confirm that the story was axed – and immediately wiped from the paper's computer system – on orders of Star-News executive editor Talmadge Campbell, who oversees the operations of the Star-News and two other papers, the San Gabriel Valley Tribune and the Whittier Daily News, from an office in San Gabriel. Sources say that Campbell, a former Texan and outspoken Bush supporter, does not normally get involved in day-to-day decisions like what features run – or don't run – in the Pasadena paper.

Star-News editor Larry Wilson described Scott as a "fantastic" reporter. Asked if it was true that Scott's story was killed for political reasons by Campbell, Wilson did not offer a denial, saying only that the Star-News, "like most good newspapers, will not

discuss stories that had been in production unless they appear in the paper."

Executive editor Campbell confirmed that he killed Scott's Nelson story, but he declined to give an explanation for what he conceded was a rare interference in the paper's daily operation. "It's entirely an internal matter. It doesn't involve anyone in New York, Mother Jones or you especially," he told Extra!.

Said an obviously frustrated Nelson, "The scientific community last November produced very credible evidence suggesting the president may have been cheating in the debates. Responsible reporters at the New York Times and the Star-News have attempted to report this news to their readers but their efforts were quashed by upper management.

"The founders of this nation understood the importance of an informed public, but given what has just happened, one is tempted to ask: Does the term 'free press' apply only to those who can afford to own one?"

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MAKING DISASTER PAY

“Taking advantage of a national tragedy to get rid of a protection for workers the corporate backers of the White House have long wanted to remove is nothing less than profiteering.”



BILL BERKOWITZ

Katrina unleashes corporate vultures

*“Private entrepreneurial activity and vision, not bureaucratic government, must be the engine to rebuild.” From *Tragedy to Triumph: Principled Solutions for Rebuilding Lives and Communities* by Ed Meese, Stuart Butler, and Kim Holmes, The Heritage Foundation, September 12, 2005.*

As the toxic waters inundating New Orleans receded into Lake Pontchartrain, headed for the Gulf of Mexico, huge corporations circled the devastated Gulf Coast like vultures. Kellogg Brown & Root (KBR), a subsidiary of the Houston, Texas-based Halliburton – the company formerly run by Vice President Dick Cheney, which has made hundreds of millions of dollars off the War in Iraq – inked a \$16.6 million Navy contract to repair Gulf Coast military facilities. The Shaw Group, a Baton Rouge, La.-based \$3 billion-a-year construction and engineering firm, announced, “that it had received two contracts of up to \$100 million

each, one from FEMA, the other from The Corps of Engineers, to work on levees, pump water out of New Orleans and provide assistance with housing,” the New York Times recently reported.

Both KBR and The Shaw Group have at least one thing in common; they are clients of Joseph M. Allbaugh, the former head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Allbaugh is the man principally responsible for bringing “Brownie” – Michael Brown, the woefully unprepared head of FEMA who recently resigned from the agency – on board. Allbaugh also spearheaded the Bush Administration’s efforts to downsize the agency.

In early September, Allbaugh came to Baton Rouge hunting up business for The Allbaugh Co., the Washington, DC-based lobbying outfit he and his wife Diane established after he left FEMA in 2003. The Allbaugh Co. specializes in advising companies how to get in on lucrative disaster relief projects.

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In a related development, on Thursday, September 8, in a stroke of the pen that must have sent hearts fluttering at the conservative Heritage Foundation, President George W. Bush signed a proclamation voiding Section 3142(a) of title 40, of the US Code of Federal Regulations. That's the section which provides that "every contract in excess of \$2,000, to which the Federal Government or the District of Columbia is a party ... shall contain a provision stating the minimum wages to be paid various classes or laborers and mechanics."

"The move," wrote Kate Randall in a piece posted at the World Socialist Web Site, "will affect the thousands of workers who will be employed in the massive reconstruction operation in the wake of the hurricane disaster. With the suspension of the 1931 Davis-Bacon Act, companies will not be obligated to match the wages in these areas, which are already lower than in most parts of the country. In the New Orleans area, for example, the prevailing wage for an electrician is \$14.30 and for a construction worker or a truck driver working on a levee it is about \$9."

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney said that issued a perfunctory statement criticizing Bush's action. "Taking advantage of a national tragedy to get rid of a protection for workers the corporate backers of the White House have long wanted to remove is nothing less than profiteering," Sweeney wrote. He concluded with a toothless appeal to Congress to reverse "this shortsighted decision."

Randall also reported that changes in federal contracting rules will allow contractors "to spend up to \$250,000 on hurricane-

related contracts and expenses without seeking competitive bids." In addition, "Restrictions have also been eased that favored the contracting of small and minority-owned businesses. Previously only purchases up to \$2,500 in normal circumstances, or \$15,000 in emergencies, were exempt. Republicans have sought a change in these regulations for years."

"Private contractors, guided by two former directors of the Federal Emergency Management Agency [Allbaugh and James Lee Witt, the agency head under President Clinton] and other well-connected lobbyists and consultants, are rushing to cash in on the unprecedented sums to be spent on Hurricane Katrina relief and reconstruction," the New York Times reported on Saturday, September 10.

In what may likely be the "largest domestic rebuilding effort," corporations large and small – but mostly large – are poised to "reap a windfall of business."

With "normal federal contracting rules" already suspended and "hundreds of millions of dollars in no-bid contracts" already signed and billions at stake, the possibility for widespread "contract abuse, cronyism and waste that numerous investigations have uncovered in post-war Iraq, is likely to manifest itself, the Times pointed out.

In an op-ed piece in the Boston Globe, Robert Kuttner, co-editor of *The American Prospect*, described the Bush Administration's carefully calibrated spin on its response to Hurricane Katrina: "The message: There's no point in playing a 'blame game,' ... The New Orleans disaster just proves the unreliability of government in general rather than this feckless president

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in particular. We should be looking forward to rebuilding – with the private sector taking the lead.”

Ultimately, “Katrina could even be a political windfall, [for the administration] promoting the campaign to cripple government, permanently displacing some reliable Democratic voters from the swing state of Louisiana, causing the faithful to rally ‘round their beleaguered president, and knocking even more unpleasant news off the front pages and network TV.”

It appears that those that will reap the

greatest benefits from the clean up and rebuilding efforts are corporations, particularly those receiving no bid contracts, and conservatives, whose reduce-government-at-all-cost agenda is coming to fruition

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WorkingForChange.com, and the 2005 winner of the American Book Awards for journalism presented by the Before Columbus Foundation.



“Cooper’s crying and Williams’ whining aside, what you really saw on your television screens was simply the media’s true bias peeking through – not liberal, not conservative, but commercial and careerist.”



RORY O'CONNOR

Media hurricane is so much hot air

Before all the media mavens break their arms patting their peers and themselves on the back, let's call them on their latest lie – the one claiming some great journalistic “silver lining” is emerging from behind Hurricane Katrina’s dark clouds.

So quick, someone stop all the analysts and pundits and commentators – be they mainstream, alternative, corporate, independent, right or left wing – from proclaiming that the Katrina coverage was somehow the press’s finest hour, that when suddenly face-to-face (where have they been all these years?) with the overwhelming reality of “America’s Third World,” our previously chained, complacent and largely muted news media cast off their self-imposed shackles, inexplicably returned to comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable, and (as New York magazine’s particularly puffy profile of CNN’s Anderson Cooper put it) “pushed right up to the line between tough questioning and con-

frontational advocacy journalism.”

Although the on-air breakdown of “anti-anchorperson” Cooper (as CNN/U.S president Jonathan Klein ludicrously dubbed him) may well have been “an honest expression of his complicated personality,” it hardly qualifies as “a breakthrough for the future of television news.” Nor does NBC’s new-kid-on-the-anchor-block Brian Williams deserve the accolades he’s been given for actually being a reporter instead of just playing one on TV. The Associated Press, for example, reported that while “Hundreds of reporters, in all media, did heroic work on the Gulf Coast in the deadly storm’s aftermath, none arguably was as financially and symbolically important to his company as the job turned in by Williams. It could solidify his spot as network news’ top anchor.”

But after all, weren’t Cooper and Anderson – along with Tim Russert, Ted Koppel and Shepard Smith and other “Reporters Gone Wild” famously featured in video

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clips on Salon's Web site asking angry questions of Bush administration officials – only doing their jobs?

Echoing the new common wisdom, Williams told the AP that Katrina's lasting legacy for journalists may signal the end of an unusual (sic) four-year period of deference to people in power, and that the mute button seemingly in place since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks has been turned off.

"By dint of the fact that our country was hit we've offered a preponderance of the benefit of the doubt over the past couple of years," the "Nightly News" anchorman said. "Perhaps we've taken something off our fastball and perhaps this is the story that brings a healthy amount of cynicism back to a news media known for it."

This is the savior of NBC News speaking? "Perhaps we've taken something off our fastball?" Give me a break! Cooper's crying and Williams' whining aside, what you really saw on your television screens last week was simply the media's true bias peeking through – not liberal, not conservative, but commercial and careerist. In other words, there was a helluva good story – and blood in the water, both literally (the residents') and figuratively (the President's). As Tom Friedman phrased it in the New York Times, "Hell hath no fury like journalists with a compelling TV story where they get to be the heroes and the government the fools."

Hence, NBC "Nightly News" viewership jumped 2.5 million the week after the storm, according to Nielsen Media Research. And a Williams-anchored "Date-line NBC" special about Katrina was the most-watched program all week. Williams

greatly increased his own stature within NBC News by aggressively seizing his opportunity, as Jeff Alan, author of "Anchoring America: The Changing Face of Network News," told the AP.

"Brian handled this as professionally as any of the reporters down there and maybe more so," Alan said. "Brian knew how much was at stake here. Brian took his anchor hat off and put his human being hat on in a lot of the broadcasts that I saw."

CNN's ratings also skyrocketed – Anderson Cooper's "360" program saw its ratings increase 400% in the first week of Katrina coverage, causing his promo-crazed boss to gush further: "He is the anchorperson of the future," Klein told the New York Times. "He's all human. He's not putting it on."

Wow – even anti-anchorpersons wearing their human being hats! What will the network bigs think of next?

Faced with radical change moving at the speed of light throughout the industry, the Jonathan Kleins of the world continue to grasp at anything in their unending quest to boost ratings.

For apparatchiks like Klein, it's all the same. One week it's that cable-car-wreck Nancy Grace boosting ratings by convicting people without benefit of a trial on CNN Headline News; the next it's a real "headline news" story like Katrina. One day Brian Williams is the next coming of Tom Brokaw; the next, he's a blogger like the rest of us, albeit one who delivers his best insights and tidbits off air rather than before his nightly news audience of millions!

(On Labor Day, for example, Williams wrote about food and water being dropped

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to survivors: “There was water, there was food, and there were choppers to drop both. Why no one was able to combine them in an airdrop is a cruel and criminal mystery of this dark chapter in our recent history. The words ‘failure of imagination’ come to mind.” Yet such pointed criticism of the government response somehow failed to make air on NBC.)

Finally, it’s important to note that where once the media was in bed with the military, now they’re embedded with the poverty-stricken people of New Orleans – with predictable results. As noted by Tim Harper of the Toronto Star during an interview on Democracy Now, “There’s a possibility that this is changing some views, because when you’re embedded with people – and in fact when I say embedded, I mean it doesn’t matter how much money

you have in your pocket in New Orleans, everybody was the same. There was nothing to buy. The playing field was leveled. When you are embedded with people suffering like that, you tend to be sympathetic to their point of view. You tend to wonder where is the help? You tend to wonder why these people have been left behind, and you identify with them.”

In sum, a combination of the Stockholm Syndrome coupled with career advancement and commercial considerations, rather than self-congratulatory kudos and encomia, best explain why our formerly muzzled media have finally begun letting their fastballs fly.

This and other articles by Rory O’Connor are available on his blog at www.roryoconnor.com



coldtype.net

WRITING WORTH READING
FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Directed by Stephen Daldry. With Kate Winslet, Ralph Fiennes, Bruno Ganz, Jeanette Hain. Post-WWII Germany: Nearly a decade after his affair with an older woman came to a mysterious end, law student Michael Berg re-encounters his former lover as she defends herself in a war-crime trial. *The Reader* is a 2008 German-American romantic drama film directed by Stephen Daldry and written by David Hare, based on the 1995 German novel of the same name by Bernhard Schlink. Ralph Fiennes and Kate Winslet star along with the young actor David Kross. It was the last film for producers Anthony Minghella and Sydney Pollack, both of whom died prior to its release. Production began in Germany in September 2007, and the film opened in limited release on December 10, 2008.