



Democracy Breaking out from Cairo to Madison

by Medea Benjamin

Here in Madison, Wisconsin, where protesters have occupied the State Capitol Building to stop the pending bill that would eliminate workers' right to collective bargaining, echoes of Cairo are everywhere. Protesters here were elated by the photo of an Egyptian engineer named Muhammad Saladin Nusair holding a sign in Tahrir Square saying, "Egypt Supports Wisconsin Workers—One World, One Pain."

The signs by protesters in Madison include "Welcome to Wiscairo," "From Egypt to Wisconsin: We Rise Up," and "Governor Walker: Our Mubarak." The banner I brought directly from Tahrir Square saying "Solidarity with Egyptian Workers" has been hanging from the balcony of the Capitol alongside solidarity messages from around the country.

My travels from Cairo to Madison seem like one seamless web. After camping out with the students and workers in the Capitol Building, I gave an early morning seminar on what it was like to be an eyewitness to the Egyptian revolution, and the struggles that are taking place right now in places like Libya, Bahrain and Yemen. Folks told me all day how inspiring it was to hear about the uprisings in the Arab world.

Some took the lessons from Cairo literally. Looking around at the capitol building that was starting to show the wear and tear from housing thousands of protesters, I had mentioned that in Cairo the activists were constantly scrubbing the square, determined to show how much they loved the space they had liberated. A few hours later, in Madison's rotunda, people were on their hands and knees scrubbing the marble floor. "We're quick learners," one of the high school students told me, smiling as she picked at the remains of Oreo cookies sticking to the floor.

I heard echoes of Cairo in the Capitol hearing room where a non-stop line of people had gathered all week to give testimonies. The Democratic Assembly members have been giving folks a chance to voice their concerns about the governor's pending bill. In this endless stream of heartfelt testimonies, people talk about the impact this bill will have on their own families—their take-home

pay, their healthcare, their pensions. They talk about the governor manufacturing the budget crisis to break the unions. They talk about the history of workers' struggles to earn living wages and have decent benefits. And time and again, I heard people say "I saw how the Egyptian people were able to rise up and overthrow a 30-year dictatorship, and that inspired me to rise up and fight this bill."

Solidarity is, indeed, a beautiful thing. It is a way we show our oneness with all of humanity; it is a way to reaffirm our own humanity. CODEPINK sent flowers to the people in Tahrir Square—a gesture that was received with kisses, hugs and

tears from the Egyptians. The campers in Madison erupted in cheers when they heard that an Egyptian had called the local pizza place, Ian's Pizza, and placed a huge order to feed the protesters. "Pizza never tasted so good," a Wisconsin fireman commented when he was told that the garlic pizza he was eating had come from supporters in Cairo.

Egyptian engineer Muhammad Saladin Nusair, the one whose photo supporting Wisconsin workers went viral, now has



Medea Benjamin

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Presidential Ponderings

The purpose of CUSJ is to develop and maintain a vibrant network of Unitarian social action in Canada and elsewhere and to proactively represent Unitarian principles and values in matters of social justice. I resonate to that vision, and particularly to the phrase “a vibrant network.” CUSJ will not be an effective organization for getting our voice heard unless we have active connections right across this vast country.

One way we can do this is through JUSTNews and our Website. (www.cusj.org) Most recently we have posted a resource centre on nuclear power and we have begun building a sharing page on the National Housing Crisis. Are there issues you would like to see developed? Let us know. Help us do the research! While you are on the site, check out the letters we have written and the stands we have taken. Every one started out as a bee in someone’s bonnet, and was shaped and honed by many hands. Twenty-seven people contributed to the letter on the G-20.

Join us. Become a member. Consider creating a CUSJ chapter in your congregation or area. Come to our Annual Meeting in Toronto. There we will talk about the world we want to see and how we can work together to make it real.

So often the issues we care about must be addressed in the political arena. We won’t get a National Housing Policy unless the Federal Government makes it a priority. I hope all of you will be involved – running all candidates meetings, putting your priorities forward into the public dialogue, or working for the candidate of your choice. And don’t forget to vote!

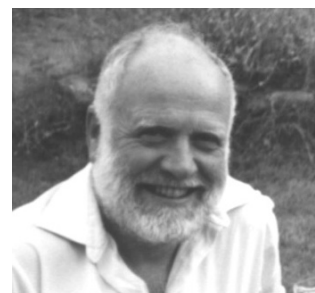
Standing on guard for a vision of democracy and human dignity in Canada.

Rev. Frances Deverell

From the Editor

Every now and then I get a feeling that the situation in Canada is getting sufficiently bad that maybe the average Canadian will wake up and act—and then I’m disappointed again as the crisis passes and Canadians lapse into their usual torpor and complacency. Sometimes I am almost tempted to cheer on the forces of evil so that Canadians will waken earlier to what we are losing, and do something about it before it’s too late—except that such a move would be unethical. There’s enough mischief being done in our country without adding to it.

In any case, the world seems slowly to be inching towards a crisis that may urge even Canadians into action. After all, the issue of nuclear reactors has been raised by the horrors in Japan, and the situation in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya seems finally to have spurred American serfdom into action, as reported in the lead article of this issue. If such unease should eventually work its way north to Canada, we progressive activists must be ready to protest effectively (“If you’re going to protest, do it right,” p. 10) and be prepared to counter the forces that will be mounted against us (“Astroturfing” and “Fox News,” pp. 7-8). Because we are, indeed, “living in interesting times.”



Letters to the Editor

Status an impediment to equalizing wealth

Richard Wilkinson, a British author and epidemiologist, is concerned that a growth in social and economic inequality produces among other things weaker health, increased mental illness, violence, and a higher percentage of the population in prison and higher drug use (JUSTnews Vol. 14, No. 1, Spring 2010). One would think that with Wilkinson’s evidence at hand, churches, social agencies, and reform-minded political groups would be aggressive-

ly active on this front. Press comment continues, but opposition to increased inequality is relatively weak. Why?

One obvious reason is that the middle class in industrialized countries has vested interests in seeing that they and their offspring at least maintain the family status or move up the social ladder. This is especially true in imperial countries where managing the empire provides employment with recognized titles such as “Sir” and “Lady” or “ambassador.” Some Canadians venerate imperial societies and may even move to Britain or the United States to get the benefit of such titles.

Ken Morrison, Lakehead Congregation

Betty Pellier (1916-2011)

Betty Pellier was born in Manchester, England on November 15, 1916, in the middle of the First World War. She was the youngest of four children born to a Dutch mother and a father born in eastern Poland, then part of Russia. It is this diverse background that may have helped nurture her compassion for all living things, along with freedom of expression and justice for all.

Betty's family moved to London before the outbreak of the Second World War. During the war, the British government put out a call to women to free up men working in essential services, to enter the armed forces. Wanting to contribute, Betty signed up to be an ambulance driver for the London County Council. To her, it meant helping transporting sick or hurt people to places of healing. Little did she know the reality of ambulance driving.

The ambulance she was taught to drive was essentially an old-fashioned box on wheels, with crash gears and outside gear shifters. Betty had some hair-raising experiences during the London Blitz, especially at night since all headlights were severely masked.

After the war, seeking greater opportunity, Betty, her husband Bruno and their children emigrated to Toronto.

When their children reached school age, Betty and Bruno felt they would benefit from joining a religious institution. After a long search, during which they rejected the orthodox religions, they became Unitarians, initially at First Church Toronto, and subsequently at South Peel. They soon joined the Social Action Committee, giving Betty a forum for activism.

At the time, abolition of capital punishment was the hot topic. Betty wrote to Warren Allmand, then Minister of Justice, requesting an interview, which he granted. Betty and Bruno travelled to Ottawa, where they met the Minister for lunch in the Members' restaurant. They also met a number of other MPs and discussed the issue in depth. When capital punishment was

abolished, Betty felt she had contributed, in a small measure, to its demise.

Betty then began writing letters on matters that concerned her: child poverty, sensationalism in the press, animal rights, saving the Mimico train station, which she used to commute to her job, and the slow handling of refugee claims. She had lengthy correspondence with Alan Borovoy, head of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and eventually brought him as a speaker to South Peel.

Betty wrote many letters to the federal government about the innocence of Steven Truscott. At First Church, she had the opportunity to meet Isabel LeBourdais, author of a book about the Truscott case that eventually led to his freedom after 23 years in jail. She also became involved with the James Bay hydroelectric project and the mistreatment of the Cree Nation, as the size of the project caused displacement of the Cree habitat and hunting grounds.

The case of Robert Latimer, who ended his severely handicapped daughter's life to prevent her further suffering, caught Betty's attention. Again, she sent letters to the authorities urging early parole, as well as relocating him nearer to home.

More recently, she wrote letters to the federal government urging the repeal of Section 43 of the Criminal Code, which deals with corporal punishment of children, to which she was firmly opposed.

Betty's last cause celebre was the treatment of Kimberley Glassco, a principal dancer with the National Ballet of Canada. The Artistic Director, James Kudelka, would not renew her contract, saying her age prevented her from performing some of the more strenuous roles in the ballet repertoire. Betty sent strong letters of support for Glassco to the National Ballet. Glassco subsequently sued for wrongful dismissal, and finally won when the court awarded her 1.6 million dollars, plus legal costs.

She was a co-founder of the CUSJ, and in 2006, on her 90th birthday, was awarded the CUC Social Action Recognition Award.

Advancing years and illness forced Betty to bed. Although physically impaired, she retained a sharp mind, read books and daily papers and continued her letter and email-writing via dictation. Betty died peacefully at home, as she wanted, on January 23, 2011, at the age of 94. It was just a few weeks short of her and Bruno's 70th wedding anniversary.



A fitting tribute to her life is a quote by the late Robert F. Kennedy: “Each time someone stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, they send forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centres of energy and daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.” (Wording changed slightly to reflect Betty’s philosophy of gender equality.)

Who would we be without Communities?

By John Inder

Recently, I returned to our principles with a fresh eye. After seeing the reaction to John Rawls’ (1971) liberal theory of justice, I dared ask myself if I was a liberal. Ours is, after all, a liberal faith. In fact, in upholding principles 1 to 6, we cover all the core themes of liberalism. The question is, then, do our principles adequately support our social actions and reflect our values?

Liberalism & principles emphasize individuals

Liberal ideas have fostered developments in human rights (based on individual worth and dignity), democracy, justice and tolerance. These concerns are also reflected in the U.S. constitution with its many Unitarian signatories. The discourse about rights that began in the late 18th century in the U.S. and then in France was about protecting the individual from abuse and gross inequity—and we can never be grateful enough for the gains that were made. Yet the limitation of both liberalism and our principles is that they consider individuals as if they were isolated, without a past or an identity that mattered. Even on the 100th anniversary of the French Revolution in 1889, Durkheim bemoaned this limited conception.

The truth is, we are not isolated but are in one or more communities. We have identities that were formed by early experiences in our families—families that were embedded in culture and community. By avoiding identity issues, our principles overlook who we really are. As an organization, we reinforce identity with infant naming ceremonies and weddings, but we do not refer to identity issues in our principles. We refer to justice, dignity, equity and compassion, but these look past our specific identities to universal qualities.

Of course we must continue to uphold human rights, basic equities, and security issues in our social justice actions. But our work for social justice may address other issues as well. After WWII, our country intensified work on national identity. There

was also an increasing number of smaller struggles for recognition referred to as “identity politics.” This continues today. For example, my congregation has said that allowing everyone equal treatment is not good enough; GBLT people must also be recognized and celebrated as such because their minority sexual orientations are an important part of their identities.

Social justice concerned with communities

In our social justice work, if we champion the unique concerns of native Canadians, we are recognizing a culture. The multicultural policies of Canada are an attempt to recognize cultural identities. Cultures and communities may have values and versions of the good life that raise difficult questions. Responding to claims for recognition of various cultural identities is complex, and also beyond what small “I” liberalism as an ideological stance aims to do.

Community, and our endeavours to create it, are spoken of frequently where I attend. The one reference to world community in our principles does not address cultural issues; it looks past culture and *particular* communities toward shared values of peace and cooperation. After community, I often hear reference to the interdependent web of existence. This is yet another principle that I am all in favour of. However, it applies to anonymous individuals in an ecosystem, not in communities.

We often see communities come together in difficult times. The notion of care follows easily from our sense of community. Feminist critique of liberalism has spoken of care. But this care is not just equal treatment and tolerance. This is the messy heartwarming, heartbreaking, and very particular world of care. Awareness of care would impact one’s view of human rights. Onora O’Neill puts more emphasis than other (male) philosophers on the obligations that must accompany human rights. Talk of rights rings hollow if no one is ready to *uphold* those rights when others are in need.

Our principles should address culture & communities

Our principles prompt us to social action and challenge us in many ways. But they do not provide a guiding framework for some important elements of our social action. Nor do they reflect all of our deeply held values. Feminism, gay rights, visible minorities, community development, the obligations associated with the human rights we proclaim—none of these sorts of issues find support in our principles. When the CUC first spoke about revisiting the UUA principles for Canada, I resisted. Now I am ready to bring Canadian Unitarian principles into the current century by appending principles that address identity issues and the value of culture and communities.

¹Fournier, Marcel, 2007. *Émile Durkheim (1858-1917)*

John Inder is a member of the Unitarian Church of Montreal.

History of Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice

Editor's note: Parts I and II of this History, published in JUSTnews Vol. 14 Nos. 1 and 2, 2010, respectively, described how Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice was born out of a low level of activism among Unitarians in the late 1990s. CUSJ was organized, and began writing letters to politicians decrying the levels of poverty and homelessness, particularly in Ontario. Part III takes up the story from there.

Part III CUSJ goes national—and changes home

By Norman A. McLeod

Becoming a nation-wide organisation

From the beginning the original committee wanted to develop CUSJ as a national organisation rather than a Toronto or Ontario one. We needed a newsletter that could reflect thoughts and opinions from across the country. Fortunately we had in our midst a man with abundant skills in this direction, namely Mel Johnston of Toronto First Unitarian Church.

Mel set to work to produce the first newsletter, a modest paper, to which some of the original committee contributed. The first issue was distributed to UU congregations and to each member. It was well received and it seemed we were on our way to solving the problem of social action coverage in the denomination.

The newsletter has gone from strength to strength. Mel, with the backing of an editorial committee, continued to put out a high quality newsletter. It is now a professional publication of which we are justly proud and has become a key factor in CUSJ's effectiveness. We regard it as critically important and at one low point in our fortunes we decided that if we could achieve nothing else, publication of the newsletter would be reason enough for our existence. Fortunately it has not come to that.

The above-mentioned low point occurred in the winter of 98/99. The original Toronto steering committee ran out of steam after losing a few members and it became increasingly administration-oriented. In the meantime the Victoria B.C. church, having had for some time a very strong and active social action committee, was showing great interest in CUSJ. When they signed up a new player in the form of our newsletter editor, who had taken early retirement to that city, the means of revitalisation seemed at hand.

CUSJ in Victoria

The Toronto steering committee decided to ask Victoria to take over the steering committee role. They accepted the invitation thus helping CUSJ take a large step towards fulfilling its dream of becoming a national organisation. The takeover took place early in 1999 subject to approval of the 1999 AGM.

At the watershed AGM in 1999, a number of important decisions were made:

1. The transfer of the steering committee to Victoria was approved;
2. Bob VanAlstyne of Victoria was confirmed as president;
3. A Board of directors, drawn from across Canada, was elected;
4. A new constitution was approved; this was prepared by the Victoria committee, which included a retired law professor, Keith Jobson (Kim Turner, a CUC board member, later CUC president and CUSJ member helped with this);

The decision was taken to apply for associate membership with CUC (this was subsequently granted so we now have official status).

From 1999-2006 the organisation was run very effectively from Victoria. Membership numbers were 235 (in 210 households), from 36 of 53 congregations. The annual Budget was \$4,300 (the newsletter required \$1000 per issue for 1600 copies). Directors come from nine cities from Nova Scotia to B.C.

Running a countrywide organisation in a country like ours poses unique communications challenges. These challenges were met in four ways:

1. The distribution of the newsletter 3 or 4 times a year.
2. The distribution of fact sheets, on current items of social justice concern, at intervals between newsletters (these were discontinued after 2000). These sheets provided members with the facts they needed to lobby MPs with letters, email, visits, etc.
3. The establishment of an email list serve, which could broadcast messages over the internet, to provide instant communications with all members who signed on to the list. This proved valuable in coordinating national effort and in providing information on numerous CUSJ topics.
4. The use of inexpensive, do-it-yourself teleconferencing. CUSJ Board meetings regularly hook up 10 people coast to coast for a two-hour conference call. This technique has the fortuitous and welcome result of inhibiting normal Unitarian verbosity. Participants apparently shrink from grabbing more than their fair share of airtime, as

they're inclined to do at face-to-face meetings. This is a system to be highly recommended.

CUSJ continued to be run from Victoria for seven years, two under the presidency of Bob Van Alstyne, one year without a president, and four years under Philip Symons. Then, at the AGM in May, 2007, the CUSJ Executive moved to Ottawa with Bob Stevenson as president.

Part IV, CUSJ in Ottawa, will complete the history to May, 2011.

Democracy... continued from page 1.

thousands of new American Facebook friends. He wrote in his blog that many of his new friends were surprised by his gesture of solidarity, but he was taught that "we live in ONE world and under the same sky."

"If a human being doesn't feel the pain of his fellow human beings, then everything we've created and established since the very beginning of existence is in great danger," Muhammad wrote. "We shouldn't let borders and differences separate us. We were made different to complete each other, to integrate and live together. One world, one pain, one humanity, one hope."

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CUSJ Writes

Editor's note: Your CUSJ Board of Directors, and primarily your hard-working president, have written numerous letters over the past year. Below are listed six letters and a press release written since July, 2010. The full list and complete letters are on the website, www.cusj.org.

Democracy

Letter to the Prime Minister, Feb. 25, 2011, calling on him to protect the integrity of parliament and of his office by firing Minister Bev Oda.

Letter to several federal ministers July 12, 2010, regarding the denial of funding to Kairos, CCIC and other NGOs.

Human Rights

Letter to all Senators, Feb. 17, 2011, asking them to expedite the passage of Bill C-389 and add gender identity and expression as prohibited grounds for discrimination under the law.

Letter to the prime minister Feb. 14, 2011, outlining CUSJ objections to the proposed limitations of refugee rights in Bill C-49.

Letter to the prime minister Feb. 14, 2011, urging action to make AIDS drugs more available by supporting Bill C-393 and a one-license solution.

Press release Nov. 11, 2010, regarding the Hassam Diab Support Committee.

Letter to the Canadian Council of Refugees November 11, 2010, supporting the call for MPs to defeat Bill C-49 regarding smuggling and refugees.

CUSJ Annual General Meeting in Toronto – May 20, 2011

Making the Desired Future Real. We have a dynamic program planned with great speakers. Mike Nickerson, Mairy Beam and Judy Velland will help us explore what we can do to make real the future we all want: living sustainably with the planet. For the full program check out <http://cusj.org/annual-general-meeting/>

There is a CUSJ workshop at the Canadian Unitarian Council Annual Meeting. We have great speakers there too: Dr. Peter Victor from York University will discuss changes needed in our economic approach, and Ann Emmett will talk about where we need to go with our banking system.

<http://cusj.org/annual-general-meeting/cusi-workshop-at-acm-saturday-session-c/>

The AGM will be held at Church of the Holy Trinity, 10 Trinity Square, Toronto, ON, across Bay St. from Nathan Phillips Square. Please sign up (www.cusj.org) if you plan to attend to give us an idea of numbers.



Astroturfing Grassroots Organizations

By George Monbiot

Corporations create fake grassroots organizations

Every month more evidence piles up, suggesting that online comment threads and forums are being hijacked by people who aren't what they seem to be. The anonymity of the web gives companies and governments golden opportunities to run astroturf operations: fake grassroots campaigns, which create the impression that large numbers of people are demanding or opposing particular policies. This deception is most likely to occur where the interests of companies or governments come into conflict with the interests of the public. For example, there's a long history of tobacco companies creating astroturf groups to fight attempts to regulate them.

After I last wrote about online astroturfing, in December, I was contacted by a whistleblower. He was part of a commercial team employed to infest internet forums and comment threads on behalf of corporate clients, promoting their causes and arguing with anyone who opposed them. Like the other members of the team, he posed as a disinterested member of the public. Or, to be more accurate, as a crowd of disinterested members of the public: he used 70 personas, both to avoid detection and to create the impression that there was widespread support for his pro-corporate arguments. I'll reveal more about what he told me when I've finished the investigation I'm working on.

Technology used to drown out voices of people

But it now seems that these operations are more widespread, more sophisticated and more automated than most of us had guessed. Emails obtained by political hackers from a U.S. cybersecurity firm called HB Gary Federal suggest that a remarkable technological armoury is being deployed to drown out the voices of real people.

As the Daily Kos has reported, the emails show that:

- Companies now use "persona management software," which multiplies the efforts of the

astroturfers working for them, creating the impression that there's major support for what a corporation or government is trying to do.

- This software creates all the online furniture a real person would possess: a name, email accounts, web pages and social media. In other words, it automatically generates what look like authentic profiles, making it hard to tell the difference between a virtual robot and a real commentator.

- Fake accounts can be kept updated by automatically re-posting or linking to content generated elsewhere, reinforcing the impression that the account holders are real and active.

- Human astroturfers can then be assigned these "pre-aged" accounts to create a back story, suggesting that they've been busy linking and re-tweeting for months. No one would suspect that they came onto the scene for the first time a moment ago, for the sole purpose of attacking an article on climate science or arguing against new controls on salt in junk food.

- With some clever use of social media, astroturfers can, in the security firm's words, "make it appear as if a persona was actually at a conference and introduce himself/herself to key individuals as part of the exercise ... There are a variety of social media tricks we can use to add a level of realness to all fictitious personas."

U.S. Airforce inventing personas

But perhaps the most disturbing revelation is this. The **U.S. Air Force** has been tendering for companies to supply it with persona management software, which will perform the following tasks:

- a. Create "10 personas per user, replete with background, history, supporting details, and cyber presences that are technically, culturally and geographically consistent. ... Personas must be able to appear to originate in nearly any part of the world and can interact through conventional online services and social media platforms."

- b. Automatically provide its astroturfers with "randomly selected IP addresses through which they can access the internet." [An IP address is the number which identifies someone's computer]. These are to be changed every day, "hiding the existence of the operation." The



George Monbiot

software should also mix up the astroturfers' web traffic with "traffic from multitudes of users from outside the organization. This traffic blending provides excellent cover and powerful deniability."

c. Create "static IP addresses" for each persona, enabling different astroturfers "to look like the same person over time." It should also allow "organizations that frequent same site/service often to easily switch IP addresses to look like ordinary users as opposed to one organization."

What should we do to fight these tactics?

Software like this has the potential to destroy the internet as a forum for constructive debate. It makes a mockery of online democracy. Comment threads on issues with major commercial implications are already being wrecked by what look like armies of organised trolls—as you can often see on the Guardian's sites. The internet is a wonderful gift, but it's also a bonanza for corporate lobbyists, viral marketers and government spin doctors, who can operate in cyberspace without regulation, accountability or fear of detection. So let me repeat the question I've put in previous articles, and which has yet to be satisfactorily answered: **what should we do to fight these tactics?**

Published in the Guardian 23rd February 2011
www.monbiot.com

Canada's Poorest Kids Fall Further Behind

Canadian children suffer greater income inequality than those in most other developed nations, according to the latest UNICEF report, which for the first time ranks 24 countries in the OECD in terms of equality in children's health, education, and material well-being.

Canada ranks ninth (just average) in children's health, and an impressive third in children's education, but scores a dismal 17th place in the areas of children's material well-being, which includes family income and housing.

"The level of family income is a major influence on all aspects of child well-being," said Marv Bernstein, chief advisor on advocacy for UNICEF Canada.

The countries ranked among the highest in children's material well-being include Switzerland, The Netherlands, Iceland, Denmark, France, Finland, Austria, Norway and Sweden.

From The CCPA Monitor, February 2011.

Fox News' Lies Kept Out of Canada

By Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

As America's middle class battles for its survival on the Wisconsin barricades—against various Koch Oil surrogates and the corporate toadies at Fox News—fans of enlightenment, democracy and justice can take comfort from a significant victory north of the Wisconsin border. Fox News will not be moving into Canada after all! The reason: Canadian regulators announced last week [Feb. 21-25, 2011] they would reject efforts by Canada's right-wing Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, to repeal a law that forbids lying on broadcast news.

Canada's Radio Act requires that "a licensor may not broadcast ... any false or misleading news." The provision has kept Fox News and right-wing talk radio out of Canada and helped make Canada a model for liberal democracy and freedom.¹

As a result of that law, Canadians enjoy high quality news coverage, including the kind of foreign affairs and investigative journalism that flourished in this country [the U.S.] before Ronald Reagan abolished the "Fairness Doctrine" in 1987. Political dialogue in Canada is marked by civility, modesty, honesty, collegiality, and idealism that have pretty much disappeared on the U.S. airwaves.

When Stephen Harper moved to abolish the anti-lying provision of the Radio Act, Canadians rose up to oppose him fearing that their tradition of honest non-partisan news would be replaced by the toxic, overtly partisan, biased and dishonest news coverage familiar to American citizens who listen to Fox News and talk radio. Harper's proposal was timed to facilitate the launch of a new right-wing network, "Sun TV News," which Canadians call "Fox News North."

Harper, often referred to as "George W. Bush's Mini Me," is known for having mounted a Bush-like war on government scientists, data collectors, transparency, and enlightenment in general. In the United States, Fox News and talk radio have become the masters of propaganda and distortion on the public airwaves. Fox News's notoriously biased and dishonest coverage of the Wisconsin's protests [see this issue of JUSTnews, p. 1] is a prime example of the brand of news coverage Canada [until now] has smartly avoided.

Reader Supported News, 1 March, 2011

<http://readersupportednews.org/opinion2/276-74/5123-fox-news-lies-keep-them-out-of-canada>.

¹ Robert Kennedy may have a rather rose-tinted view of Canadian democracy in view of Sun TV News arrival on the scene. Ed.

Book Review: *Dead Aid*, by Dambisa Moyo.

Reviewed by Jim Hackler

Moyo grew up in Zambia and studied Chemistry at their only university. She studied in the U.S. on a scholarship, spent 2 years at the World Bank in Washington, D.C., did an MA at Harvard, and a doctorate in economics at Oxford.

Foreign Aid an Unmitigated Disaster

She argues that foreign aid has been, and continues to be, an unmitigated political, economic, and humanitarian disaster for Africa. It is the disease that pretends to be the cure.

Thirty years ago, Malawi, Burundi, and Burkina Faso were economically ahead of China on a per capita income basis. How has China increased the economic well-being of its people while the poverty rate has actually increased in Africa?

Imagine a mosquito net maker in Africa who manufactures 500 nets a week. He employs 10 people, who support 15 relatives. In the West, a Hollywood movie star rallies the masses and goads Western governments to send 100,000 mosquito nets to the region, at a cost of a million dollars. The nets arrive and are distributed. A 'good' deed is done.

But the mosquito net maker is put out of business. His ten workers can no longer support their 150 dependants. They become beggars. In five years the majority of the imported nets are torn, damaged and of no further use. But no one produces mosquito nets in the region.

Aid can unintentionally undermine whatever fragile chance for sustainable development may already be in play.

Moyo argues that aid provides an incentive for greedy men to take over governments. There is money to be stolen. Several researchers (Alesina, Weder, Svenson, and others) conclude that the aid actually fosters corruption and reduces public expenditure on those things that would benefit others, such as a lamppost or a public well.

Free market economies can spend on a socialist agenda

Can a government raise money in a free market way and spend it on a socialist agenda? Yes. The Scandinavians do. But more importantly, Moyo claims, it must. It must still rely on some market-based financing tools in order to successfully achieve its economic goals. Those of us who are critical of

some corporate activities must acknowledge that open markets are important. Of course, governments must be on watch for harmful patterns. However, Moyo points out that protectionist practices in the Western world hurt Africa, which needs to export cotton and sugar and other agricultural products.

China has been investing in Africa and building infrastructure. Naturally, the reason is to gain access to resources, but the Africans have clearly benefited. Criticisms about China's human rights record abound, notably from those who currently rule the roost in determining Africa's destiny. In a paternalistic way Westerners feel it is their responsibility to look after Africa. China has a poor record on human rights. But they are improving the economic level of the Africans.

India, Russia, Japan, Turkey, and the Middle East are also investing in Africa. In short, Moyo believes that investment, not aid, helps. Democracy and good government will not become a reality until there is economic security.

Surveys in 2007 show that Africans think more highly of China than they do of the U.S. Western eyebrows were raised when the Chinese premier visited Mugabe in 2005. But both the U.S. and the U.K. have maintained diplomatic ties with Zimbabwe throughout Mugabe's regime and in 2006 international donors gave him \$300 million.

Microcredit can help

In addition to buying African products and investing, what does Moyo recommend? She likes the idea of microcredit and also points to the need for banks to protect the savings of small individuals.

What would happen if aid were cut off in 5 years? Would more die from poverty? Probably not, because the poverty stricken are not helped by aid. Would there be more wars? More despots? Probably not. Without aid, the incentives for crooks to control government is less.

Moyo's thinking is compatible with some of the questions we should be asking about our other charitable activities. As we deal with First Nations people, the homeless, drug addicts, etc. are we providing the sort of help that helps people help themselves?

Dead Aid, by Dambisa Moyo.
Farrar, New York: Straus, and Giroux, 2009

Jim Hackler is a member of First Unitarian Church of Victoria and former Director of CUSJ.



Dr Dambisa Moyo



If You're Going to Protest, Do It Right

By Jody Paterson

I find myself thinking about protest a lot these days, mostly because of the ill-considered social cuts going on in B.C. right now.

It's really the only form of democratic action we have in between elections, and a proven tool, though less so when it alienates potential supporters.

Clayquot Sound protests exemplary

The environmental movement has had remarkable success with protest. The Clayquot protests of the early 1990s stand as great case studies of effective action for anyone wondering how it's done.

The point of conflict at that time was a provincial plan to log the old growth forests of Clayquot Sound, B.C., on Vancouver Island's west coast. We'd been logging coast forests flat in B.C. for decades by that point, but a new environmental consciousness had started questioning the prevailing wisdom that every B.C. tree was there for us to log.

The line in the sand turned out to be Clayquot Sound. One summer day in 1993, more than 800 average British Columbians turned up on a logging road in the middle of nowhere, and stood down the logging trucks.

They got arrested by the dozens and went to jail—regular people, looking earnest in their Gore-Tex jackets and Tilly hats as police led them away. Average folks, including grandmas and office-workers, went to jail for the love of a forest that a lot of them probably hadn't even heard of a year or two earlier.

And wouldn't you know it, B.C. forest policy started to change. It wasn't all love and flowers from that point on or anything like that, but the Clayquot protests did indeed change the course of B.C. history.

So I flash back to Clayquot whenever I need a reminder about how you go about getting the government's complete attention.



Jody Paterson

Timing and awareness all-important

First—and this is a big one—the Clayquot protest had timing. British Columbians didn't have much of an interest in environmental issues until the late 1980s, but we'd come a long way by the time Clayquot was an issue.

We knew enough to have an informed opinion on the subject, and to resist government's usual attempts to pat us on the head while doing whatever it felt like doing.

Lesson No. 1, then: make sure there's sufficient public awareness out there of what you're protesting about. Government responds only when they sense a major groundswell of opposition to their plans. If your issue isn't yet well-known enough to elicit that groundswell, then doing something about that is your first task.

Charismatic and well-informed leadership

Lesson No. 2: the Clayquot protest also had a charismatic leader in Tseporah Berman and other [young] home-grown environmentalists, and celebrity support from the likes of Robert F. Kennedy Jr. [and naturalist-artist Robert Bateman].

Lesson 3: It had smooth-talking well-informed spokespeople to disseminate its messages, but also slightly crazy protesters on the front line doing dangerous things like chaining themselves to logging trucks—

guaranteed to draw the news crews.

Economic implications

Lesson 4: it also had economic power, which perhaps more than anything explains why social protest has not been able to get off the ground in B.C. despite more than 10 years of ruinous policy. When the logging trucks didn't roll, somebody somewhere didn't get paid. That made all the difference to getting government's attention.

We who toil for causes where the economic impact isn't as instantly apparent need to figure that one out. History tells us that economic disruption matters much more than "heart" in changing the course of social policy. Protest works when it hits government and the private sector in the pocketbook.

Whatever your issue might be, learn from Clayquot and do it right.

Jody Paterson writes a regular Friday column for the Times Colonist newspaper of Victoria, B.C., in which this article appeared on November 6th, 2009.

Too Much Democracy?

When Prime Minister Jim Hacker decided to bring in legislation to make government more democratic, he was inspired by the reform proposals of Professor Marriott. But he wasn't aware of their implications, so Cabinet Secretary Sir Humphrey Appleby (who wanted to scuttle the legislation) arranged for Hacker to meet the professor. The outcome of the meeting is recorded in the following extract from Hacker's diary.

NOVEMBER 14—A meeting was scheduled this morning with Professor Marriott, but I didn't know why Humphrey had arranged it. I suppose he felt that, if I was adopting the professor's scheme, it would help to talk to him.

After we shook hands and exchanged pleasantries, Marriott assured me his reforms would have great benefits for Parliament, as well as for local councils.

"Under my proposed system," he enthused, "each borough would have its 500 street representatives, and the local MP would be able to talk with them all."

"So that they'd really be able to get to know one another," added Humphrey helpfully.

"Exactly," said Marriott. "And they'd be able to tell the people in their street all about him. Personal word of mouth recommendations for the MP."

"Where would the constituency party come in?" I asked.

Marriott beamed. "That's the marvellous thing, you see. The party organizations would be completely bypassed. MPs would become genuinely independent."

I was aghast.

"You see," the professor continued, "if they were personally known to their constituents, then whether MPs could get re-elected or not would have nothing to do with whether or not the party backed them. It would depend on whether the constituents felt the MP was doing his job."

Humphrey smiled at me. "So if MP's weren't dependent on the party machine, they could vote against their own government party and get away with it," he explained.

"So how would the government get its legislation through if it couldn't twist the backbenchers' arms? How would it command a majority?"
Marriott's answer was all too clear. "That's the whole point. It couldn't! A government couldn't command a majority! It would have to deserve it!"

I couldn't imagine how such a system could possibly work. "So how would the government get its legislation through if it couldn't twist the backbenchers' arms? How would it command a majority?"

Marriott's answer was all too clear. "That's the whole point. It couldn't! A government couldn't command a majority! It would have to deserve it!"

I couldn't believe my ears. Who in his right mind could possibly come to the Prime Minister with such a dangerous proposal? Only some damn-fool academic.

"Thank you so much," I said with finality. "Absolutely fascinating." And I stood up and shook hands.

After Bernard had whisked him out of the room, Humphrey smiled at me. "Isn't that splendid, Prime Minister? Real democracy!" He clapped his hands together and rubbed them with glee.

"But," I protested, as if he didn't know, "the whole system depends on our MPs voting the way I tell them. This scheme is a complete non-starter!"

Humphrey nodded. "The old system does have its good points, you know. It works things out in its own time."

I sat back, relaxed. "Yes, it does, doesn't it? I don't think the nation is ready yet for total democracy."

"Yes, Prime Minister," said Humphrey quite content.

From "Yes Prime Minister, BBC, edited by Jonathan Lynn and Anthony Jay, and reprinted from The CCPA Monitor Vol. 17 No. 7, December 2010/January 2011.

Music

I can't listen to too much Wagner. I start to get the urge to conquer Poland.

Woody Allen

The piano is a parlour utensil for subduing the impenitent visitor. It is operated by depressing the keys and the spirits of the audience.

Ambrose Bierce

Classic music is the kind we keep hoping will turn into a tune.

Frank McKinney Hubbard

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The CUSJ purposes are:

- to develop and maintain a vibrant network of Unitarian social action in Canada and elsewhere and to proactively represent Unitarian principles and values in matters of social justice and in particular
- to provide opportunities, including through publication of newsletters, for Unitarians and friends to apply their religious, humanistic and spiritual values to social action aimed at the relief of (1) poverty and economic injustice, (2) discrimination based on religious, racial or other grounds, (3) abuses of human rights whether of individuals or peoples, (4) abuses of democratic process, and
- to promote peace and security, environmental protection, education, and literacy in keeping with the spirit of Unitarian values.

These purposes are an integral part of the Constitution of CUSJ, adopted at the CUSJ Annual Meeting in Mississauga, ON, May 19, 1999, and amended at the 2003 AGM.

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