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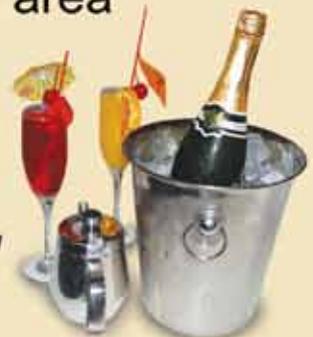
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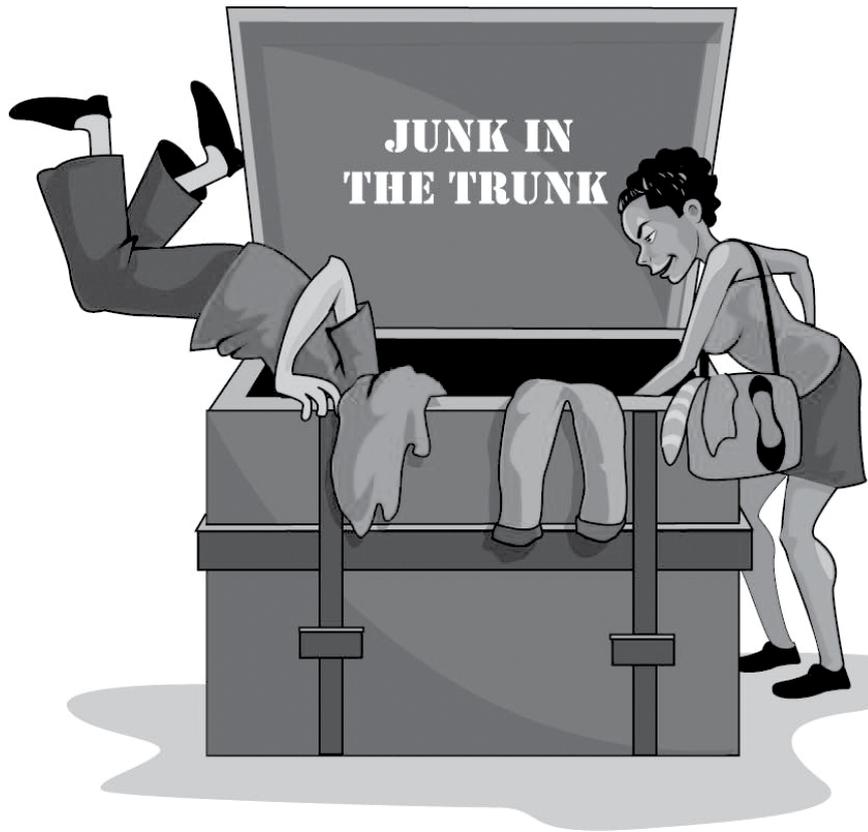


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JOHN O'KANE



“City Plaza Among the Ruins”

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TRUMP'S SUPERMARKET TABLOID ALLIANCE

M A T T G E R T Z

Donald Trump's campaign has a symbiotic relationship with supermarket tabloids, which have been sliming his political foes with stories that are either flatly unbelievable or impossible for any other outlet to confirm. Trump's allies are feeding many of these stories to the outlets, and Trump himself has used his tremendous media megaphone to amplify the sketchy allegations. That's forcing the press to figure out how to deal with tabloid conspiracies when they go mainstream.

Roger Stone, the longtime friend and ally of Trump who was a paid consultant to his campaign in 2015 and now heads a pro-Trump super PAC, is playing a key role in pushing pro-Trump stories to the tabloids. They're frequently quoting him and at times he seems to serve as the source for their anonymously sourced hit pieces. Stone has a decades-long history of political dirty tricks, as well as violent, racist and sexist rhetoric.

Trump has a "very cozy relationship" to the *National Enquirer*, as *The Washington Post's* Callum Borchers has detailed. The presumptive Republican nominee is also reportedly "very close" to the tabloid's chief executive, David Pecker, with whom he has reportedly been "friends for years."

That friendship with Pecker has "paid dividends" for Trump, according to *New York Magazine*. Gabriel Sherman reported in October that while Trump's "scandal-filled personal life would be huge! for the supermarket tabloid," he has been "exclusively celebrated in the *Enquirer's* pages." Trump himself has gotten in on the act, writing op-eds for the tabloid extolling his own virtues. The paper endorsed him in March with an editorial that Borchers writes "read[s] like one of the candidate's stump speeches."

Meanwhile, the tabloid has spent the last nine months savaging Trump's opponents, and Trump's ally Stone has been the source for many of the most sordid accusations. The *Enquirer* cited Stone in multiple pieces: in a report claiming that Jeb Bush used cocaine on the night

his father became president; in a piece claiming that Bill Clinton is addicted to cocaine and Hillary Clinton covered it up; in a story alleging that Chelsea Clinton has received cosmetic surgery so that she does not resemble a friend of the Clintons whom Stone claims is her real father; and in an article claiming that Ted Cruz has had affairs with several women.

Trump's campaign has also been boosted by the *Enquirer's* neighbor on the supermarket check-out line, the *Globe* (both are owned by American Media Inc.). *Globe* headlines have included "Donald Trump Schools the Pope on Vital American Security," and "Donald Trump Exposes Evil Liar Hillary Clinton." In addition to calling Clinton a liar, the tabloid's headlines have termed Clinton "Ruthless and Vicious," a self-confessed "Alcoholic," and "Crook" who is "Gay." Stone has been cited in the *Globe's* pages as well; the tabloid wrote up his allegation that Chelsea Clinton is not Bill Clinton's daughter.

In addition to the on-the-record citations of Stone, Trump's campaign and Stone himself have both been accused of planting unfavorable stories in the tabloids about Trump's Republican rivals. These are plausible allegations given Stone's long history of dirty tricks.

Under other circumstances, Stone's use of the tabloids to bolster his smear jobs would simply be more evidence that he is a despicable character. But the media's fractured environment and Trump's unique willingness to promote those claims is bringing those tabloid conspiracies to the masses.

Earlier this month, Trump highlighted an *Enquirer* story linking Cruz's father to the assassination of

President Kennedy, praising the tabloid's reporting in nationally televised interviews and triggering a maelstrom of coverage. The story had cited anonymous "D.C. insiders" confirming the story; Stone has a long history of promoting conspiracy theories about the assassination, and he claimed on Twitter that the tale was accurate.

This points to a potential media strategy the Trump camp could employ in the months to come. First, Stone uses a combination of non-credible opposition research and outright lies to plant in the tabloids stories that no real, credible, media outlet would take. Then Trump's allies or even Trump himself can push the stories into the mainstream, bringing them up in media appearances. This forces the rest of the press to decide whether and how to cover thinly sourced stories that they can't confirm but that are now being pushed by a major party's presidential candidate.

The latest editions of the *Enquirer* and *Globe* both feature cover stories that smear Clinton with either anonymous claims that closely resemble ones previously pushed by Stone or with direct statements from the Trump ally.

— Matt Gertz

That matters because Stone has pledged that his anti-Clinton smear book, which portrays “Bill as a serial rapist [and] Hillary as an enabler,” will be the Trump team’s playbook during the general election; Trump has already praised the book and cited its conclusions on the campaign trail. While the press criticized Trump’s elevation of the *Enquirer* story about Ted Cruz’s father, Trump’s Stone-based accusations about the Clintons have regularly appeared in reports on his strategy without that level of skepticism.

The latest editions of the *Enquirer* and *Globe* both feature cover stories that smear Clinton with either anonymous claims that closely resemble ones previously pushed by Stone or with direct statements from the Trump ally.

The *Globe*’s “explosive exclusive” claims that Trump “is planning swift vengeance on sleazebag Republican rivals Ted Cruz, John Kasich, co-conspirator Carly Fiorina, AND Hillary Clinton.” The story is based solely on the claims of an anonymous “insider.”

That “insider” claims that Clinton is “under scrutiny for money laundering as a result of donations to the Clinton Global Initiative” because of “talk the cash is being secretly funneled into Hillary’s campaign and into the family’s pockets!” The “insider” concludes that after Trump is elected, “Hillary will face prison.” The anonymous allegations echo Stone’s claim in his book that the Clintons have used “the Clinton Foundation to line their own pockets.”

The insider also alleges to the *Globe*, absent any corroborating evidence, that Kasich “appeared to be living as a couple” with another man for 14 years between his first and second marriages, that the Justice Department under Trump will investigate Cruz’s father for being a “phony

preacher intent on ripping off American taxpayers,” and that Fiorina is a “homewrecker.”

The *Enquirer* cover story purports to detail the results of a “12 Month Investigation” that follows Stone’s thesis precisely and quotes him claiming that Bill Clinton has had affairs with 2,000 women (not a typo) and that Hillary Clinton “bullied and intimidated them in an attempt to cover up her husband’s misdeeds.” The story cites “36 unfortunate women who crossed paths with the predator president;” of them, 18 were mentioned in Stone’s book (seven of those are anonymous); the stories of 19 of the women are cited as coming from anonymous sources or rumor.

Trump has already made clear that sloppy allegations about the Clintons’ personal lives will be at the center of his campaign. His alliance with the tabloids will prove a boon to that effort.

Matt Gertz is a columnist at MediaMatters.org. Excerpted with permission.



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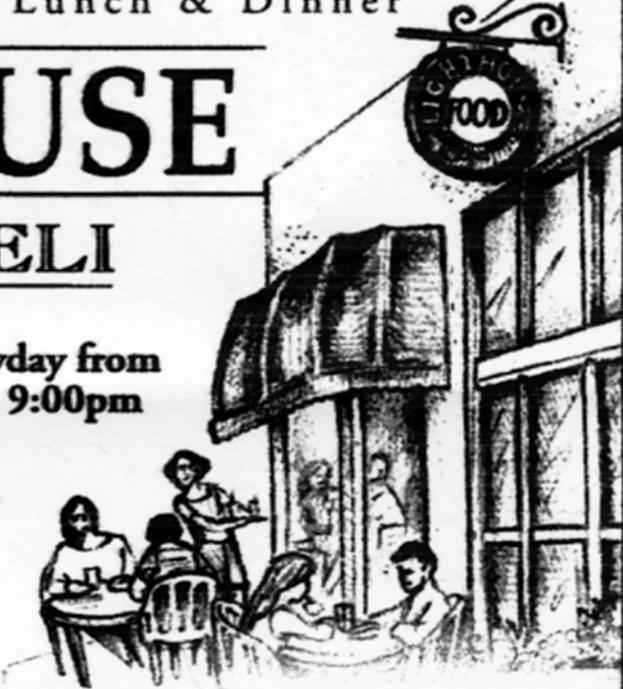
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ANTIBIOTICS THE ANTIBIOTICS DILEMMA

K E R I P H I L L I P S

Some of the most common infectious diseases are caused by bacteria. They range from minor skin infections to meningitis, TB and pneumonia.

Before the advent of antibiotics, about one in three citizens died before the age of 30. People routinely died of pneumonia. A skin infection could lead to the amputation of a limb or even death. More people died from bacterial infection than anything else on the planet.

Penicillin, the quintessential antibiotic, was discovered in 1926, and the golden age of antibiotic development followed the end of the Second World War. Dozens of antibiotics were discovered every year from the '50s through to the '70s, and they changed medicine. Common procedures like open-heart surgery, chemotherapy for cancer patients with depressed immune systems, organ transplants, even hip replacements would not be possible without antibiotics.

Professor Matt Cooper, director of the IMB Centre for Superbug Solutions at the University of Queensland, says that although many of the initial serendipitous discoveries were at universities, the vast majority of the compounds came from pharmaceutical companies.

"We all know Pfizer, which famously developed Viagra and Lipitor—blockbuster drugs. But actually Pfizer was an antibiotic company for the first 30 years of its existence," he says. "There were 30 or 40 pharmaceutical companies around then that were actively involved in developing these drugs, because they were quite valued by society and they were used a lot. They really did save millions and millions of lives."

Unintended Consequences in Agriculture

In the '50s, the agriculture industry started to use antibiotics on livestock. "Farmers and people with chickens, eggs, beef, seafood, realized they could get far more productive output from growing animals, particularly when you start to put lots of animals in a closed space," says Cooper. "It makes perfect sense, if you put lots of people in a crowded bus in winter you're more likely to get a cold. If you put lots of fish in the water close together in inten-

sive agriculture, they are more likely to get infection. We started to use antibiotics in agriculture quite aggressively very soon after we started using it in man."

Farmers also discovered that if you give antibiotics to a food stock animal every day, in general the yields are much higher—you will get a slightly heavier chicken or a slightly bigger fish.

Professor John Turnidge, who led an Australian government inquiry into the use of antibiotics in food-producing animals in the late '90s, says that the overuse of antibiotics—so-called growth promoters in agriculture—has had unintended consequences.

"They didn't quite recognize that using antibiotics in low doses over a long period of time is the most perfect storm for driving antibiotic resistance," he says. "Over a long time, in at least a good chunk of my working life, the industries involved have tried to deny that there was any link between that use and use in humans. They forgot a fundamental piece of biology—bacteria are everywhere, they're everywhere, and we all swim in the same gene pool. Genes will go from anywhere to anywhere, provided the bacteria move and have contact. So we can't isolate ourselves any more than the animals can isolate themselves from us."

Given pharmaceutical companies were so successful developing antibiotics during the second half of the 20th century, why haven't they managed to get on top of antibiotic-resistant bacteria?

— Keri Phillips

No New Drugs to Treat Superbugs

Along with the rise in antibiotic use came genetic mutations enabling bacteria to resist antibiotics—so-called superbugs. Turnidge says that means bacteria have evolved mechanisms that make them resistant to many of the most commonly-used antibiotics. And that means there may be only one

or two options left to treat a given strain. "In some cases, we have no options," he says. "Multi-drug resistance is resistance to lots of antibiotics; extreme drug resistance is something that is very, very rare but growing now in the world where we have no options left. When we first started using antibiotics they were seen as miracle drugs, and people really valued them, society valued them, they were precious compounds. We were blessed by our own innovative discoveries because we kept on finding new and better antibiotics every year."

He says antibiotic use exploded around the world between the '70s and '80s, as more antibiotics came to market and became cheaper. But the more times a drug is used, the greater chance there is that the bug becomes a superbug.

"When we give antibiotics inappropriately, when we don't finish the course or we take them when we've

got a virus infection—because antibiotics will not work if you have a virus infection, and many common colds are viruses—we are just encouraging resistance to rise,” he says. “So we’ve now got to the stage where we just treat them as a commodity. We’ve always thought scientists will come up with a new drug; we don’t have to worry about it. That’s not happening anymore. We getting to the stage where there are no new drugs to treat the superbugs.”

A Broken Market

Given pharmaceutical companies were so successful developing antibiotics during the second half of the 20th century, why haven’t they managed to get on top of antibiotic-resistant bacteria? Professor Kevin Outterson, from the Boston University School of Law, says that the global antibiotic market is broken. They’re not like most drugs, which you want to sell as much as possible of as soon as you bring them to market. “If you had a new heart disease medication or something for depression that worked better, we’d want everyone to be using that new drug. For antibiotics it’s almost the opposite,” he says. “When you have a new drug, it’s almost the last thing that the doctor or the hospital wants to use. We want to save that, for really good reasons, for the worst cases. We want to save it for the future and use the generic if we can or the antibiotic that’s currently in use now that’s still effective.”

From the drug companies’ perspective, Outterson says, it’s as if they have been told not to sell their new product: “Imagine that you are Apple and you had to prove that all the iPhone 4s and 5s and 6s were completely worthless before you could sell your new model. It just makes the business really difficult.”

Moreover, unlike drugs for high blood pressure, diabetes or depression, antibiotics are generally taken in short courses. Many of the antibiotic-resistant strains of bacteria infect thousands, rather than millions, of patients, further eroding the business model for new antibiotic development. “For example, in the United States there is an infection called CRE; it’s one of the three superbugs that the US Centers for Disease Control is concerned about,” says Outterson. “It would be wonderful if we had a drug that targeted that condition ...but there are only about 9,000 patients a year who have this infection in US hospitals, and most of those can be treated by another drug. So are you going to make a drug that you might only sell a couple of hundred doses of in a country like the United States per year? It’s difficult to do that unless you know you are going to make an awful lot of money per dose.”

Antibiotic Development Expertise Disappearing

Matt Cooper says there are now few researchers left—less than 1,500, he estimates—who know how to discover and develop antibiotics. “AstraZeneca just downsized from hundreds of people down to 14,” he says. “Cubist was bought out by Merck, a very large pharmaceutical company. They fired all 120 antibiotic researchers. Every year we are seeing hundreds of people leave the field. All that knowledge, all that experience about how to discover and develop these wonderful drugs is disappearing as we speak.”

Cooper says the root of the problem is the market-driven nature of the pharmaceutical industry; companies make more money by making expensive drugs and selling a lot of them. “We can’t force pharma to go into an unprofitable area,” he says. “They are just not going to do it. They are companies that are required to make a profit by their shareholders. “What we can do is think about different models. The societal value of antibiotics is huge. I can talk about lots of examples where a superbug infection in a hospital has shut down a ward or in some cases shut down a hospital. It’s a huge impact on costs and lives and society. So let’s think about an insurance premium. If you develop a new antibiotic that kills these MDR superbugs, you get paid \$100 million a year. It doesn’t mean we have to use the drug, we can keep it for those special cases where we can really save lives, but I think we have to think more creatively about the economics of this development, and we need to do it soon.”

Breaking the Habit of Unnecessary Antibiotic Use

Outterson says we need to be much more aggressive in protecting and conserving the antibiotics we already have by reducing their unnecessary use in medicine and in agriculture. “We also have to be careful about the people around the world right now who are dying because they lack access to antibiotics,” he says. “Right now, according to an article published in the Lancet earlier this year, more than 450,000 children under the age of five die each year from a susceptible bacteria. In other words, they could be saved with amoxicillin, a generic, cheap antibiotic that we know works. We need to do all these things simultaneously: push the drugs out to the people that need them, get them out of the bodies of the people who don’t need them, be sensible about what we are doing in agriculture, and simultaneously create a few new ones for the future.”

Turnidge emphasizes the need to use antibiotics more responsibly. “We’ve become overly dependent on them,” he says. “The data suggests that the amount we consume is at least double the world class standard, which is held by the Netherlands. We use twice as many antibiotics and we are not twice as sick. Antibiotics have become part of our culture, and we’ve got to break that apart and minimize our antibiotic use to the point where we save it for those people who really need it, like those with meningitis or septicemia.”

Keri Phillips is an Australian journalist.



BANK OF NORTH DAKOTA A BLUEPRINT FOR CALIFORNIA?

E L L E N B R O W N

In November 2014, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that the Bank of North Dakota (BND), the nation's only state-owned depository bank, was more profitable even than J.P. Morgan Chase and Goldman Sachs. The author attributed this remarkable performance to the state's oil boom; but the boom has now become an oil bust, yet the BND's profits continue to climb. Its 2015 Annual Report, published on April 20th, boasted its most profitable year ever.

The BND has had record profits for the last 12 years, each year outperforming the last. In 2015 it reported \$130.7 million in earnings, total assets of \$7.4 billion, capital of \$749 million, and a return on investment of a whopping 18.1 percent. Its lending portfolio grew by \$486 million, a 12.7 percent increase, with growth in all four of its areas of concentration: agriculture, business, residential, and student loans.

By increasing its lending into a collapsing economy, the BND has helped prop the economy up. In 2015, it introduced new infrastructure programs to improve access to medical facilities, remodel or construct new schools, and build new road and water infrastructure. The Farm Financial Stability Loan was introduced to assist farmers affected by low commodity prices or below-average crop production. The BND also helped fund 300 new businesses.

Those numbers are particularly impressive considering that North Dakota has a population of only about 750,000, just half the size of Phoenix or Philadelphia. Compare that to California, the largest state by population, which has more than fifty times as many people as North Dakota.

What could California do with its own bank, following North Dakota's lead? Here are some possibilities,

including costs, risks and potential profits.

Forming a Bank Without Cost to the Taxpayers

A bank can be started in California with an initial capitalization of about \$20 million. But let's say the state wants to do something substantial and begins with a capitalization of \$1 billion.

Where to get this money? One option would be the state's own pension funds, which are always seeking good investments. Today state pension funds are looking for a return of about 7% per year (although in practice they are getting less). One billion dollars could be raised more cheaply with a bond issue, but tapping into the state's own funds would avoid increasing state debt levels. At a 10% capital requirement, \$1 billion in capitalization is sufficient to back \$10 billion in new loans, assuming the bank has an equivalent sum in deposits to provide liquidity.

Where to get the deposits? One possibility would be the California Pooled Money Investment Account (PMIA), which contained \$67.7 billion earning a modest 0.47% as of the quarter ending March 31, 2016. This huge pool of rainy day, slush and investment funds is invested 47.01% in US Treasuries, 16.33% in certificates of deposit and bank notes, 8.35% in time deposits, and 8.91% in loans, along with some other smaller investments. A portion of this money could be transferred to the state-owned bank as its deposit base, on which 0.5% could be paid in interest, generating the same average return that the PMIA is getting now.

For our hypothetical purposes, let's say \$11.1 billion is transferred from the PMIA and deposited in the state-owned bank. With a 10% reserve requirement, \$1.1 billion would need to be held as reserves. The other \$10 billion could be lent or invested.

What could be done with this \$10 billion? Here are some possibilities.

Slashing the Cost of Infrastructure

One option would be to fund critical infrastructure needs. Today California and other states deposit their revenues in Wall Street banks at minimal interest, then finance infrastructure construction and repair by borrowing from the Wall Street bond market at much higher interest. A general rule for government bonds is that they double the cost of projects, once interest is paid. California and other states could save these costs simply by being their

**Today California
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– Ellen Brown

own bankers and borrowing from themselves; and with their own chartered banks, they could do it while getting the same safeguards they are getting today with their Wall Street deposits and investments. The money might actually be safer in their own banks, which would not be subject to the bail-in provisions now imposed by the G-20's Financial Stability Board on giant "systemically risky" banking institutions.

To envision the possibilities, let's say California decided to fund its new bullet train through its state-owned bank. In 2008, Californians approved a bond issue of \$10 billion as the initial outlay for this train, which was to run from Los Angeles to San Francisco. At then-existing interest rates, estimates were that by the time the bonds were paid off, California taxpayers would have paid an additional \$9.5 billion in interest.

So let's assume the \$10 billion in available assets from the state-owned bank were used to repurchase these bonds. The state would have saved \$9.5 billion, less the cost of funds.

It is not clear from the above-cited source what the length of the bond issue was, but assume it was for 20 years, making the interest rate about 3.5%. The cost of one billion dollars in capital for 20 years at 7% would be \$2.87 billion, and the cost of \$11.1 billion in deposits at 0.5% would be \$1.164 billion. So the total cost of funds would be \$4.034 billion. Deducted from \$9.5 billion, that leaves about \$5.5 billion in savings or profit over 20 years. That's \$5.5 billion generated with money the state already has sitting idle, requiring no additional borrowing or taxpayer funds.

What about risk? What if one of the cities or state agencies whose money is held in the investment pool wants to pull that money out? Since it is held in the bank as deposits, it would be immediately liquid and available, as all deposits are. And if the bank then lacked sufficient liquidity to back its assets (in this case the repurchase of its own bonds), it could in the short term do as all banks do – borrow from other banks at the Fed funds rate of about 0.35%, or from the Federal Reserve Discount Window at about 0.75%. Better yet, it could simply liquidate some of the \$56 billion remaining in the PMIA and deposit that money into its state bank, where the funds would continue to earn 0.5% interest as they are doing now.

Assume that from its \$5.5 billion in profits, the bank then repaid the pension funds their \$1 billion initial capital investment. That would leave \$4.5 billion in profit, free and clear – a tidy sum potentially generated by one man sitting in an office shuffling computer entries, without new buildings, tellers, loan officers or other overhead. That capital base would be sufficient to capitalize about \$40 billion in new loans, all generated without cost to the taxpayers.

A California New Deal

The bullet train example is a simple way to illustrate the potential of a state-owned bank, but there are many other possibilities for using its available assets. As the BND did after building up its capital base, the bank

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BANKING

could advance loans at reasonable rates for local businesses, homeowners, students, school districts, and municipalities seeking funds for infrastructure.

These loans would be somewhat riskier than buying back the state's own bonds, and they would involve variable time frames. Like all banks, the state bank could run into liquidity problems from borrowing short to lend long, should the depositors unexpectedly come for their money. But again, that problem could be fixed simply by liquidating some portion of the money remaining in the PMIA and depositing it in the state-owned bank, where it would earn the same 0.5% interest it is earning now.

Here is another intriguing possibility for avoiding liquidity problems. The bank could serve simply as intermediary, generating loans which would then be sold to investors. That is what banks do today when they securitize mortgages and sell them off. Risk of loss is imposed on the investors, who also get the payment stream; but the bank profits as well, by receiving fees for its intermediating functions.

The federally-owned Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) did something similar when it funded a major portion of the New Deal and World War II by selling bonds. This money was then used for loans to build infrastructure of every sort and to finance the war. According to a US Treasury report titled *Final Report of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation* (Government Print-

ing Office, 1959), the RFC loaned or invested more than \$40 billion from 1932 to 1957 (the years of its operation). By some estimates, the sum was about \$50 billion. A small part of this came from its initial capitalization. The rest was borrowed – \$51.3 billion from the US Treasury and \$3.1 billion from the public. The RFC financed roads, bridges, dams, post offices, universities, electrical power, mortgages, farms, and much more, while at the same time making money for the government. On its normal lending functions (omitting such things as extraordinary grants for wartime), it wound up earning a total net income of \$690 million.

North Dakota has led the way in demonstrating how a state can jump-start a flagging economy by keeping its revenues in its own state-owned bank, using them to generate credit for the state and its citizens, bypassing the tourniquet on the free flow of credit imposed by private out-of-state banks. California and other states could do the same. They could create jobs, restore home ownership, rebuild infrastructure and generally stimulate their economies, while generating hefty dividends for the state, without increasing debt levels or risking public funds – and without costing taxpayers a dime.

Ellen Brown is an attorney, founder of the Public Banking Institute, and author of twelve books including the best-selling *Web of Debt*. Her latest book is *The Public Bank Solution*. EllenBrown.com.

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1 barrel sweet crude

1 terrorist (domestic or foreign)
7 ounces fundamentalism
1 special investigating committee
1 ounce insurgency
fashionable platitudes

1. Sauté thawed hearts and set aside.

2. Combine sordid affairs and sweet crude; mix with special investigating committee. Throw in wiki-leaks. Add insurgency and shutdown government. Marinate in unemployment for as long as it takes.

3. Blend terrorist (domestic or foreign) with sweet crude, add fundamentalism and talking heads then beat mercilessly with hype until you achieve a thick, frothy foam. Sweeten with fashionable platitudes. Mix the result with fat lobbyists. Add needlessly partisan hearts and sordid affairs. Bring to brisk boil. Turn down the heat and stew while wounded economy bleeds and the homeless population rises. Make sure tough hearts have softened then remove mixture from stovetop. Allow mess to cool before handling. Arrange cooled hearts on floor of Congress and finish by broiling under public scrutiny until crispy. Season with lies and promises to taste. Garnish with billions of taxpayer dollars.

Remember, Congressional hearts are even more delicious when skewered and cooked over a hot subcommittee grill. Impossible to overcook!

* Cooking time does not include possible filibuster.

– S.A. Griffin, author of *Dreams Gone Mad With Hope*, and editor of *The Outlaw Bible of American Poetry*.

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SPARKY BALDWIN

In the story, *Alice in Wonderland*, the heroine chases an unpunctual rabbit down a hole and encounters a world of smiling cats, evil queens of hearts and a hat maker so touched in the head he is referred to as “mad.” Alice’s adventures, while fantastical and ideal for engaging children’s sense of wonder, may not accomplish much more. In fact, in modern parlance, to chase an idea down a rabbit hole is the equivalent of Don Quixote’s jousting windmills. Little is accomplished toward a specific end. This may be precisely the process and outcome of the Long Beach City Council’s preoccupation with a Proactive Rental Housing Inspection Program (PRHIP).

If you live in or around Long Beach, or have been following reports in this magazine over recent issues, you know the city council has been wrestling with finding a highly visible outcome that appears to pacify renters while not really regulating landlords. In short, the council’s effort seems to seek the perception of swift and equitable governance while performing neither.

For nearly three years, whenever the issue of housing habitability shows up on the council agenda, the meeting chamber sees a noticeable uptick in attendance by those seeking greater rental safeguards and enforcement, and property owners, many of whom see council efforts as nothing more than attempts to grow government at the expense of all landlords, and not the landlords responsible for the problems.

Long Beach is the seventh largest city in California and has never had any form of rent control or local ordinance to protect tenants against uninhabitable housing conditions or landlord retaliation for reporting same to Code Enforcement or Health Department. There are state laws providing these protections, but they are rarely enforced in the city, and usually only after a tenant has had the moxie to take their landlord to court, or to withstand the onslaught of an eviction proceeding. Further, landlords and their lawyers are so practiced in these proceedings, and nowhere held accountable to answer to renter complaints by either the city or local courts, that tenants often

are “legally” removed from their homes in as little as a few weeks, and in many cases it is not for lack of paying rent. In Long Beach, a tenant who reports a collapsing bathroom ceiling to a landlord may be told, “if you don’t like it, move,” and if they persist in complaining be delivered a notice to vacate or face eviction.

This writer has lived throughout the West – Wyoming, Colorado, Arizona, California, Oregon, and Alaska – and has never encountered, as either tenant or journalist, the egregious and uninhabitable conditions routinely found in Long Beach rental housing, or the abject lack of enforcement by municipal actors. As reported in the previous issue of this magazine, more than one-quarter of Long Beach residents live in poverty and more than 50% of residents are renters. So why the seemingly inexhaustible effort by council members to either skirt or indefinitely postpone an issue so vitally important to a majority of their constituents?

At the May 3 meeting of the council, some 15

Long Beach is the seventh largest city in California and has never had any form of rent control or local ordinance to protect tenants against uninhabitable housing conditions or landlord retaliation for reporting same to Code Enforcement or Health Department.

– Sparky Baldwin

Long Beach residents commented on the PRHIP ordinance but not a single council member had any positive comments about it. Further, only one council member, District 1 Councilwoman Lena Gonzalez, even acknowledged residents’, landlords’, property managers’, professors’ and students’ concerns and experiences dealing with the absence of realistic code enforcement by city inspectors, and the punitive effect of an ordinance that treats “good” landlords the same as it does “bad” ones. For the first time in this writer’s experience following this story, there seemed to be a growing consensus between both landlords and tenants that PRHIP benefitted neither, and the only obvious outcome was increased revenue for the city through an increase of staff in the Code Enforcement Department to generate it.

Amy Bodeck, Director of Development Services, reviewed the history of passage and evolution of the PRHIP ordinance and her department’s inability to successfully implement it. Despite increasing staff, and city allocations to the department, Development Services is on a path to inspect roughly one-third of the 67,000 rental units covered by the ordinance this year. Bodeck also admitted the 67,000 unit number excluded duplexes and triplexes, and that if those properties were figured in the department’s obligation would be more than 80,000 unit inspections per year.

Currently, property owners with four or more

units are charged \$26 per unit per year for inspection. Excluding nearly 20,000 units associated with duplexes and triplexes, revenue from the inspection of buildings with four or more units amounts to more than \$1.74 million. If duplexes and triplexes are added, city revenue from annual inspections increases to more than \$2.26 million. Unfortunately, none of this addresses the quality of life issues renters face living in Long Beach.

A Cal State professor who requested his name be withheld, kicked off the public comment, calling PRHIP a “gross waste of money,” at which the chamber echoed with applause. His point was the city should focus on out-of-compliance properties and levy fines when irregularities are not brought up to code, usually required by law within 30 days.

“I paid for rent for 10 months with mice in my home. I paid for rent for 10 months with backed up sinks in my home. And so after 10 months I refused to pay any further. Given the law, the state says I can withhold rent until those things were fixed. What happened instead, they came in, they fixed them, and they evicted me. They took me to court and I beat them,” the professor said.

Leanna Noble, a homeowner, and not a landlord, expressed concern about quality of life in her community because of the disruption and upheaval in renter’s lives around her. Noble lives in downtown Long Beach, near Pine Avenue, the major downtown thoroughfare. She said, “I’m here as a homeowner because what you do or do not do as our elected officials impacts my neighbors, who are tenants, and that impacts me.”

Bill Hooley, an advocate for Los Angeles landlords, cautioned that the council programs such as PRHIP open the door for lawsuits by both landlords and tenants due to their intrusive nature. Hooley argued such programs cause property owners to sell to developers and in Los Angeles that has resulted in the loss of more than 200,000 rental units. He further argued this chain of events resulted in a greater homeless population due to the loss of affordable housing. He attributed this problem to over-regulation and cited efforts in Minnesota where property owners and tenants got together to contest enforced inspections and such inspection methods were declared illegal, resulting in large municipal pay-outs to settle lawsuits.

Hooley added that “predatory law firms” were descending on Minnesota and alleging tenants’ and landlords’ rights to privacy were being violated and this result-

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ed in lawsuits against cities. "Imagine if a few thousand of your citizens began suing the city for these actions," Hooley said. "And who doesn't like free money?" He ultimately referred to PRHIP as government out of control.

David Hensler, a property manager, who has held real estate since 1992, and takes "being a property owner

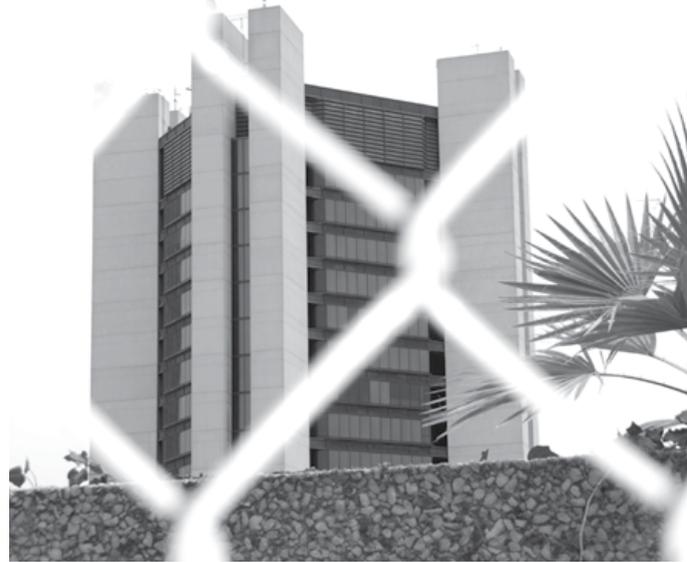


Photo by John O'Kane

seriously," said he hasn't experienced a complaint to Code Enforcement over this course of time. "Whatever decisions you make on this matter are going to affect people like me who are conscientious, and I represent the ma-

jority of property owners in the city of Long Beach and everywhere else," he said.

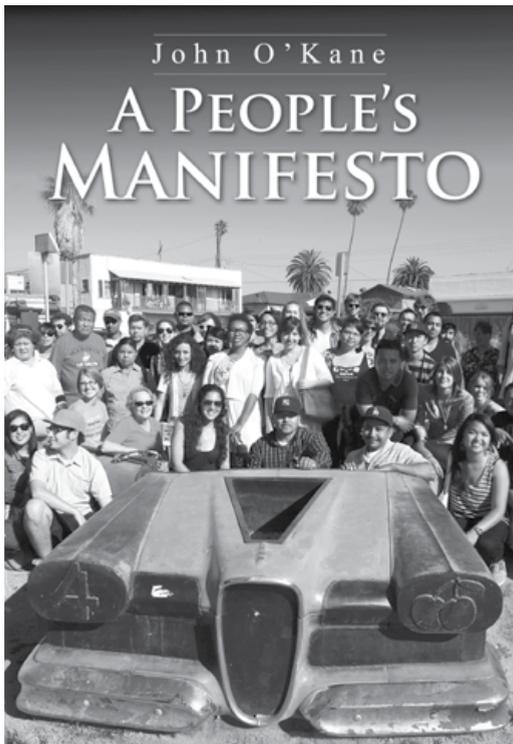
"So I agree you should be going after the number of people that are consistently violating code, that are constantly getting things like that, but you might consider for a moment people like myself, and the majority of other people in my position, that maybe if there's an inspection and there's no violation, and there's no people calling, that maybe we get an inspection every three or five years," Hensler said. "That will save the city money and I can take the money that you would have put into inspecting my building to maintaining it the way you would like to have the property maintained in the city of Long Beach."

Linda Montgomery, a property owner, "landlady," and realtor added, "we're going to have a problem here with investors, if we have to let them know a property they purchase is going to be inspected annually. "I agree with [David Hensler] if a property is inspected and there's no problem with the property, why would you do it every year other than to collect fees?" she asked.

Montgomery also argued that evictions were difficult in Long Beach. "Anyone that thinks you can just snap your fingers and evict, good luck with that," she said.

However, Councilwoman Gonzalez countered her argument, saying people are being evicted and rather quickly, so evictions must not be as costly and bothersome as landlords say.

Montgomery further argued that ordinances such as PRHIP were moving the city closer to rent control policies, and "nothing is going to hurt the city more than



Publisher of *AMASS* Magazine Releases *A People's Manifesto*

2015-05-13 www.everythinglongbeach.com/publisher-of-amass-magazine-releases-a-peoples-manifesto/

A People's Manifesto, by John O'Kane, editor and publisher of *AMASS* Magazine, is a new book just published by SPD Books. It focuses on the opinions and perspectives of the people, ordinary citizens, non-experts, outsiders, those without influence, about the state of American society over the past several years, especially since the Great Recession of 2008. More specifically, the author engages in a series of conversations with a diverse number of people from varying backgrounds on the issues: the economy and jobs, political polarization, campaign reform, the elite domination of political life, the Tea Party phenomenon, inequality, immigration, austerity and the ongoing budget crises, and foreclosures, among others.

The book is 200 pages long, and priced at \$24.95. It can be purchased at all fine bookstores, as well as online at Amazon and other sites.



Photo by John O’Kane

rent control,” given that Long Beach is “the last haven” for uncontrolled rent and beneficial rental practices.

Yolanda Channel, a college student, Middle East veteran, and victim of post traumatic stress syndrome, related her experiences over several months living in a rental property with inadequate plumbing or the ability to cook due to a gas leak. After spending her own money to repair the plumbing and being refused reimbursement by her landlord, she received a notice to vacate. “Originally, I thought she had rescinded it, but I found out when I paid my rent this month, like I always do, never been late, never been short, that she already had rented my apartment to someone else,” Channel said. “How can she do that while I’m still living there?”

Channel said the situation came about because “I asked her to fix the sink. She sent someone to fix it, but two days later it was clogged up again. So I paid for it.”



Photo by John O’Kane

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JOHN O'KANE

“**T**hey let you otta the house?” Charlie spouts from the doorway at Armand as he exits his rusted out ‘58 Ford Fairlane at the curb. “Thought you were grounded for getting in after curfew.”

“I was but they let me out for a few hours. It’s graduation after all.”

“I hear ya. I wouldn’t be here either...my parents still haven’t forgiven me for ditching classes to play pool at Antonio’s last week.”

They cross the threshold to Brian Wilson’s trebly twang, his latest off-world liniment for transitioning souls.

Girls, girls, girls from everywhere you want to be, haloing the room that’s filling with the kin and spawn of every strain of farmer, this-world bodies alien to imaginary bikinis.

“California girls,” says Armand, “must be so much cooler than ours!”

“But the ones here in God’s country are supposed to make us feel. Think it’s cuz they go to church more often?” Charlie manages a furtive pan of God’s creatures draped in the colors of Midwestern spring and delivers his not quite post-pubescent grin that has the effect of diminishing his imposing Nordic frame.

“Cuz they get fed better on the farm and have more to cuddle us with?” jests Armand.

“How would you know?” queries Charlie. “That girl you were going steady with was a beanpole. How far did you get with...”

“...that don’t count... her parents wanted her to date some rich kid from the next county who’s goin to college.”

“You never even got to test it out?”

“Sure I...we went on that hayrack ride and...”

“...caught a cold!”

“Yeah...well...it’d be nice to be in California...wish all girls could be California girls.”

“Let’s go!” says Charlie. “Why do we need...”

“...Pop would kill me...send out a search party. Gotta start drivin a truck next month...make deliveries out in the boonies.” Armand flashes on a barnyard framed by a propane tank on one side, a rusted plow on the other, and

a row of palm trees above, a scatter of cheeping chickens welcoming his arrival. His nose wiggles slightly as if straining to fill his nostrils with the imaginary fumes of saltwater, but a bouquet of humid fertilizer wafts through the open window instead, triggering a near sneeze.

“What’s wrong, got a touch of hay fever?” asks Father Henry who appears suddenly. Armand cups his nose and turns toward the voice, glimpsing Mary’s uniformless figure on the way, his greeting to his Eminence suffused with her decision to attend the convent in the fall.

“Ya...oh, Father...how are...I do have a touch...that time a year I guess. Glad you stopped by. Glad to get Charlie otta study hall?”

“Both of you! Hope you devote as much attention to the Lord and leading a good Christian life now as you did avoiding school work.” His words appear to

form as vibrations from deep inside his tumescent neck and linger there for a split second, as if trying to free themselves from the folds of insulation, spurtling to echoes of familiar words before misting into a monotone that appears directed to someone or something above and astride Armand’s shoulder. Armand rolls his eyes toward this imagined point and quickly rolls them back as Father’s neck torques to meet them, sealing the convergence with a smile puppeted from some musty sector of his sub-conscious. The effect fails to brighten his face, as if the light rays emanating from his ivories reach a force field that converts the effort to caricature.

“We’ll...try, Father,” Armand says soberly, as if this conversion constricts his energy. He wonders what a Christian life would be like, and if the Lord would be interested in him.

Father strains for the words while trying to revive his smile but the lingering force field stymies his efforts and he inadvertently broadcasts an apology, turning in reaction to the room full of teens. A piercing high note from Brian Wilson sends his recovery into a tailspin and he grimaces at the gyrating sartorials. Armand cranes to find Mary undulating free from a cluster of her sisters, a lapse in her familiar body language that gives him an erotic rush as he pictures her in a habit. Father perks up as he sees Sister Francine enter the front door.

“You and Sister have a date, Father?” Charlie

**At a slight lull in
Dylan’s bluesy warble a
French string bikini
passes through the
side door like an
apparition,
spreading waves
among the crowd that
draw out a few
wallflowers while
creating a few new ones.**

— John O’Kane

blurts, noticing the impact her appearance seems to have and secure in the feeling his rib won't be taken seriously. But in the diminishing din following her entrance the words amplify through the gathering and others gaze at them, suppressing his sketchy grin.

"I...we always..."

"...we never see each other away from school!" she snaps, like she's splicing a comma on the blackboard for a roomful of cherubs. "They send us to different places...don't allow us to date. But this is graduation." The last letter lolls from her tongue as a slip of humor that she anxiously tries to reabsorb into her stony expression, but it spurts out as a demonic giddiness. Armand looks at Sister and sees a young girl winking at him through epidermal folds and imagines what Mary will look like as an aging nun, a picture that titillates him. Sister, becoming self-conscious, breaks away from his mesmerizing stare into Father's flickering orbs.

Armand shuffles toward the cluster of familiar bodies in the next room, Mary among them. Charlie follows closely behind and reaches for his arm en route.

"Let's go out to my car and have a few pulls on the cherry vodka. Got it at the liquor store on the corner...they never even checked my ID. You pussywhipped over some girl that's gonna go into the convent?"

"I ain't...just wanna be friendly and wish everyone a happy graduation," Armand says out of the corner of his mouth as he continues into the room before stopping and turning around to face Charlie. "You don't wanna risk bringing it in here? Too early?"

"Na, this scene's too...like still being in school...church. Ain't nothin gonna happen with chaperones around."

"It's early...gonna be a wild time later. Yeah, I'll be out in a few minutes." Armand looks over his shoulder at Mary as she flits to the other side of the room and another cluster of mates weaving and gyrating below a large portrait of Pope Pius XII. He cranes to face Charlie who's awaiting his next move as the music changes to Dylan's "Subterranean Homesick Blues." As if the abrupt cut from high-pitched electronic sonority to folksy cacophony jerks his gaze back in the other direction to the wall speaker, he catches the Pope's gaze riveted directly on him.

At a slight lull in Dylan's bluesy warble a French string bikini passes through the side door like an apparition, spreading waves among the crowd that draw out a few wallflowers while creating a few new ones. The cascading silence releases the song's words from the background noise and they deliver a different aura, one more amenable to unknown eruptions from below ground. They await her explanation with whispers of incredulity.

"Is this a graduation party or a wake?" she asks Charlie, who was about to head through the same side door to his car. She sets a jug of Ripple on the table near the door and adjusts the rosary dangling from her neck, which had shifted to one side. The mirror-embossed cross now cleaves to the vanishing point of her furrowed masses. Conversations resume in patches and a girl blurts from the corner that she thinks she knows her.

"It's just gettin goin," he answers. "You musta got the wrong class."

"Isn't this the class of '65?"

"Yeah, sure is," says Armand. "But this is for St. Augustine's, the Catholic high school. You got your address wrong. Central High must be having theirs this weekend too."

"I'm a fish eater too!" she retorts, grabbing the jug and taking a long pull. "I used to go to mass every day and even thought about going into the convent. Or at least my parents made me think about it every day." Armand perks up as the surrounding conversations return mostly to normal. A couple of girls wander over and ask who she is as Father fixes his bulbous eyes on the shimmering beads. He makes a snail's-line toward them, staring at her cross as he approaches. But he seems to have a hard time focusing. His eyes begin to blink irregularly and then slightly water.

"My name's Joy," she says to one of the girls. "But that's...not my real name. I had to...it's a long story." She catches a glimpse of Sister out of the corner of her eye and turns to stare. As Sister suddenly slips into the kitchen she turns back and sees Father still staring at the cross, but now he reaches for it. She pulls away, then begins vibrating with suppressed giggles. "You guys havin some kind of ritual here or something...a black mass?"

Father withdraws his hand as if he's received a shock, but goaded by the snickering response to her



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remarks from the gallery he reaches for the cross again with renewed vigor. She jerks to her left and he just misses it. His hand graces the beads but they slip from his grasp as she flits away from him.

“You don’t look like you need a priest!” shouts someone from the rear as she continues to evade his reach with her limber moves. His complexion reddens.

“You can’t wear that! It’s a sacrilege...a sin!” He corners her in front of a mass-produced painting of Jesus at Gethsemane, the hushing gallery ready for the consumption. He stretches for the cross while it shimmies with her movements, her eyes reflectors of his frenzy. The light streams from above and the lamp on the nearby table strike the moving mirror and convert it to a mobile sculpture. There’s no dying Christ on this crucifix. Only body parts in motion, a kinetic crucifixion of flesh. He can’t break it free and stares, slipping into an apparent trance.

“Go find a confessional, Father!” she yawps, while lifting the rosary over her head and lassoing his. She grabs a super-sized bible from the stand to her right and pushes it in front of his face with both hands, as if repelling a force. The music changes to “What’s New Pussycat?” and she vanishes through the side door as quickly as she arrived.

“Where ya goin so fast?” shouts Armand, sprinting down the sidewalk to catch up with her, Charlie following not far behind. “Father don’t mean no harm...he just takes his job a little too seriously sometimes.”

“I had enough of priests at the school my parents sent me to back in New York.”

“Thought you said you went to St. Augustine’s...aren’t you in our class?” Charlie spurts, catching his breath from the jog.

“I did, but can’t graduate until I finish summer school cuz I lost some credits in transfer. Been back and forth from that school and...”

“...I don’t remember seeing you before,” says Armand. “What’s your name?”

“Joy. Well, I kept a kinda low...hey, I gotta get otta here. Not my scene and not really graduatin anyway! You guys seem perty cool...maybe you should get otta here and live a little before...”

“...we’re gonna do some partyin soon and...goin up to the lake next week to get away,” interjects Charlie.

“Lake O’Weegee?”

“Yeah, that’s the only one around!”

“My...aunt lives up there. If my parents give me any more trouble I’m splittin there. If I can...can ya give me a ride?”

“Sure! How do we reach you?” asks Armand.

“I...I’ll reach you...my number’s bein changed and gotta cool it on visitors for a bit,” she bellows as she begins to trot down the street.”

“I’m at 327 28th Street...let us know,” Armand shouts, repeating it again for good measure...

“Think we’ll make...it there in this...car?” Joy sputters, groggy from dozing off in the back seat.

“No worries...it never breaks down,” Armand

says. “Looks aren’t everything.”

“Lotsa the time anyway,” she says, absorbed with the reflection in her compact mirror like she’s not sure if she recognizes it, squinting as she angles the mirror to capture the light that changes with each tilt of her head. A wan smile forms on her lips as she finds a match, which seems to perk her up.

“My parents thought you were real nice and wondered why they never saw you before at school activities.”

“Ah, well...like I was sayin, been away and...keepin a low profile.” Her upper lip curls slightly, exposing a sassy gleam of ivory before straightening into a magazine smile that nicely garnishes her heartland teen wraps. Then the smile vanishes, leaving a mannequin ready to be sepia-toned for the display case at a prep or-pre-convent school.

“You wasn’t very low profile at the graduation party,” Charlie says, noticing her look from his periphery.

“What da you guys do for fun?” she asks in a cutesy sing-song voice as she opens up her large travel bag and spreads its contents on the seat. This change startles them, like suddenly there’s someone else in the car. The inflection of her voice seems incongruous with the context as if she’s mimicking her own speech. But at the same time it does seem sincere as if she’s speaking in tongues, doing the bidding of an influential benefactor.

“You aren’t gonna change clothes are ya?” Armand says, peeking at the items on the back seat and glancing at Charlie.

“Gotta get otta this...uniform. It’s like a corset that they made women wear back...got used to changin when I was back at school in Chappaqua near New York. I snuck out with this other girl and we hitched up to Millbrook. Heard there were some cool things goin on there.” She’s now speaking in prepschoolese.

“Was that a convent?” asks Armand.

“No, no...but was actually worse. Most of the girls there were supposed to be gettin ready to go to one. They used to torture us. Put a couple of us in this cellar with nothin to eat for a day, and it was cold and...they said we had to learn how to get bad thoughts out of our heads. We broke out and did some exploring and found all kinds of relics in the building, plus some real old chastity belts. Know what those are?”

“Not...keep up your...”

“Prevent girls from...you know. They’re like padlocks for pussies. These are what got us goin! They messed up our minds and bodies...we had to get otta there after that and find out what was so bad and had them so worried that they had to lock us up. I kept one for a souvenir. Every once in a while I put it on and shock people.”

“You mean...that’s...that’s all you...” says Armand, giving Charlie another look as she lassos his neck with a large, heavy-duty rosary and starts to pull it tight like she’s going to strangle him but stops and stares at Armand, causing him to swerve across the divider while she giggles uncontrollably. It’s the cutesy singsong voice phasing through a series of sonorous variations on a theme. She falls back on the seat and can’t stop giggling, leaving

Armand and Charlie speechless and afraid to turn around. After several minutes of quiet Charlie glances back and sees she has apparently drifted off.

“What’d we get into?” whispers Armand. “Never met anyone like...what do we say to her?”

“Could be a wild time,” Charlie muses in a barely perceptible voice. “Once we get her to the lake and her aunt’s place she’ll probably be a different person. Maybe she’s been cooped up too long and needs to get away. Maybe it’s her way of saying she likes us.”

“Hope we survive to find out!” Armand blurts in a slightly louder-than-normal tone, forgetting himself, turning Charlie’s glance to the back seat. She rustles.

“Look at all that stuff she brought!” Charlie whispers. “Thought her bag was perty big. Look at those crosses and rosaries...those little white caterpillars!”

Several minutes later she wakes into a flustered stupor, grabs the mirror and starts testing her image all over again. They remain hushed, waiting out the process. She perks up, finding the right match. Her lips are constant and symmetrical; her freshened eyes are fixated on the plastic Jesus hanging from the rear view mirror.

“He’s everywhere...protectin us from...evil and...I like to be around good Catholics!” She’s speaking now with a matronly inflection. “How much farther we gotta go?”

“About fifteen miles...or so...” stutters Armand. “You gonna be okay til...”

“...I usta love goin to that big house,” she continues, starting to change clothes. “Don’t look back now you guys! We went up there every chance we had to escape from our cells. These people and the parties and...we watched em from the hill around the pool and runnin round the hills and fields and...the strange music. They caught us watching and brought us to the house, put us in a room and asked us if we was the kids of anybody there and...then let us come out to the pool and hang out and...everybody jumped in and made a big splash and started screaming and I...wanted to pray to Jesus and get otta there but...was a strange smell there and people’s eyes were funny lookin and everybody was naked and we just couldn’t move and...we woke and there was a movie showing with this cool actress doin some crazy things with people...but she was so cool. I wanted to change my name to hers. Viva! Next thing I remember was wakin up in this room with a priest and two nuns from the school staring at us. They took us back and we had ta have lots and lots of tests and baths all the time for a week and...they called our parents but we never heard from em.”

“Did...you go back...after that?” asks Charlie.

“Later, a coupla times...we were grounded for a while. Had to find new ways to sneak out.”

“What kinds a stuff did you do there?” asks Armand.

“What ya think? Like it?”

“Armand...look!” spouts Charlie after getting the first glance.

“What...what you trying to...”

“...I love the feel of it...it tingles. Makes me wan-

na do something exciting!” They both gape, Armand fleetingly through the adjusted rear-view mirror and Charlie directly.

She’s dressed in nun’s clothing, except she hasn’t put on the habit. Her medium-length blonde hair is pulled back but several wisps riot from the effort, awaiting their fate under the habit. Her bleached-out Anglo face, bereft of makeup, suggests a shrink-wrapping of instincts. The lines of her lips are straight and narrow, revealing no whiteness. Her eyes are at peace, like she’s meditating or absorbed in prayer.

“What’re you...what do you feel like doing?” Charlie asks.

Her face is a palimpsest yet to register a specific emotion or expression, but begins to glow, her lip lines quivering apart, the left side showing more teeth than the right. “What ya got in mind?” The skin wrap relaxes and flushes with a roseate hue as she attaches the habit and proceeds to apply her makeup.

“What’s your aunt gonna say when she sees you like...” Armand manages, seeing an unctious cherubic oval materializing in the mirror. What’s she doing with her mouth? What’s that shiny substance on her face? He tries to snatch more angles in the mirror but is disoriented from the image reversal and shakiness. He turns quickly around and the car swerves off the road onto the shoulder, coming to a rest just before a bridge. The lake is off in the distance. They both contemplate the strange beauty before them who’s tweaking the final product, apparently

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undaunted by the car's fate.

"Just gettin ready for the day. My aunt...she probably won't mind. She moved a while ago anyway last..."

"...she what?" blurts Charlie. "But you said...you wanted a ride to get away and see her!"

"I...well I guess...I got the town and the lake mixed up."

Charlie's immediate feeling of anger at being lied to transforms into awe at the spectacle before him. He stares her up and down, groping for a sensible explanation. His anxiety in the face of the unknown passes to bewilderment tinged with sensual miasma. Not an unappealing feeling, but it's draining energy from his body. His heart begins to palpitate in anxious defense and the result somehow gets transferred to his head, leaving polluted soft spots. He gazes at Armand.

"I ain't good in geography," she smirks, looking as if nothing is out of the ordinary. "My parents said that..."

"...where you gonna go then?" asks Armand, who's absorbed in the scene but having a hard time processing details. She's just too much. It's too much. There's too much from different places, the extremities. He can't factor the equation. That face shouldn't be there. But it is and somehow it's...inviting but in a way he can't say. He can't go there. It skews his narrative about what should be, where his future lies and why. This whole way of looking at the world seems to make no sense. It seems like the end. Something's dying that has yet to get full birth. Her face suddenly whitens, and her lips close and tighten as she

withdraws into herself and appears to be meditating again. The unctious cherub returns to life as a lubricated doll, an unguent angel.

"Should we leave her here to hitchhike to where she wants to go?" asks Charlie.

Joy opens her eyes slightly and her lips loosen. She reaches for a small tube on the seat and spreads the substance from it on her face as the color returns. "Where we gonna stay?"

"Hey, she's...real interesting and all but...did you pick her up at some costume party back home or something?" whispers Joe in the doorway to his cabin. "What am I sposed to do with her?" He looks at Armand's and Charlie's imploring faces, peeking between and around them at Joy who contemplates the surroundings habit-less, thankful for the paucity of light and activity at this twilight hour. He seems fascinated and repulsed by a nun who's keen on cosmetics. "My parents will...maybe you can drop her off at the local parish. It's only a few blocks away. They can sign her up and..."

"...very funny!" says Armand. "We need your help...we can't just abandon her here...all the crazies wanderin around the beach."

"She might be perty cool...show us a good time," says Charlie. Playing to the male gallery alleviates anxiety.

"But if my neighbors see her," says Joe, "I'm...grounded. Parents won't let me come up here for..."

"...she's got other...clothes," says Armand. "It'll only be until we can sort this out." Joy seems unfazed by

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the discussion, absorbed in the scenery and tangy wisps of breeze off the lake.

"I only got one bedroom...and the place is really small. You guys are welcome with your sleeping bags but..."

"...put her in the bedroom tonight and we'll bag it out here," says Armand. "You can have the couch. What's the big deal?"

"Yeah...maybe she's a new kind of saint...sent down from heaven to test our faith!" Charlie adds in a guardedly flippant tone. "Like that Joan somebody in theology class."

"That crazy one who said she had visions?!" comments Joe. "They didn't put up with her...executed her...was only a teen!"

Joy seems to have gotten her fill of nature and meanders toward the group in a temperately rapturous state of mind that suggests she hasn't been listening to their conversation. Charlie and Armand turn toward her, but Joe gazes off into the distance like he hopes everyone will just leave.

She flashes a salacious slit of ivory as she slides past the befuddled trio. "What you guys chatterin about? Can I freshen up inside while you finish?"

"Guess you've been outvoted, Joe!" proclaims Charlie, striking a victory pose as they follow her into the cabin.

Joe was understating the case for its size. The whole space is no larger than a very small one-bedroom apartment. It's sparsely furnished with a couch, two chairs, one wall lamp, a large oval rag-weave rug, two floor plants and a television that rests on a bookshelf which also holds a few piles of magazines. The only book evident is a bible. On one wall is a large crucifix, on another a 1950s panoramic shot of Rome with the Vatican in the background. The front windows offer an unobstructed though partial view of the lake.

"So what do we do?" asks Joe in a defeatist tone.

"Help locate her aunt?"

"Don't let me mess up your plans," Joy interrupts, passing into the room like an apparition. "Pretend like I'm not here." They're thinking how impossible this will be. She's fully dressed now with habit on and the makeup off. Her lip lines are flat and she appears to have resumed her meditative mindset.

"We got...we're just gonna hang out and do a little partyin'," Armand says, staring at her face as she reclines in the corner of the couch, trying to conjure some semblance of meaning that will explain the emotions welling up inside him. "You won't bother us."

"You won't bother me, will you?" she peeps. "I just wanna catch up with my prayers." She peruses the room. "Can I borrow that bible?"

"Sure!" asserts Joe. "My parents want it to be

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read.” He watches as she walks over, grabs the bible, and returns to the couch. “You can use the bedroom if you want. Be sure to let us know if you need anything.”

She starts to get up but the concentration of stares freezes her movements. The ensuing silence seems to scream as the stares become potent petitions for release from their limbo, their imaginary flagellations. The silence compounds. “Why are you guys looking at me like that?” Their restive, bulging eyes crisscross in a comedy of angles that suggests they’re uneasy about the “that,” or oblivious to it.

“Do you want to pray with me?”

“Does your aunt or...anyone else know you’re here?” asks Charlie.

“I’m in touch with everybody who...knows...do you guys have a phone?”

“No,” say Joe. “There’s none...no one around here has one.”

“I need to leave tomorrow...I have to...”

“...you don’t...need to leave that...soon,” says Armand, his feeble tone ripped with arousal.

Joy rises from the couch before he finishes, reconfiguring the crisscross, and glides toward the bedroom. “Come in if you want to pray with me.”

She tiptoes between the bodies toward the front door, careful not to disturb their contrite, slightly-smirched seraphic repose, driven to the first full presence of light and warmth, the beach, where pulverized particles from

the ageless earth cling to skin that can be licitly exposed but only to a point that’s recalibrated with every successful transgression. Others straggle to the sand, clusters of beach boys and sun goddesses from the heartland tempting the peekaboos of convention. She finds a semi-isolated cove abutting the water and stretches out on her towel to feel the full force of Mother Nature, rosary in hand, but dozes off to the hypnotic splashes of water and light. She awakens to a semi-circle of blurry faces mooning her French string bikini and habit and rosary draped over her right hand, no welcoming salutations or compliments on fashion choice, only fiendish gawks of uncanny possession.

“Hi, I’m Joy! I’m stayin up...”

She grabs her things and jumps up, her dilating eyes unable to register the ethereal faces, but curls a flash of ivory while baby-stepping away from the water through a pair of groping arms. Trotting toward the cabin, she stops suddenly and pulls a crucifix from her bag, flashing it at her pursuers. They disperse into a gaggle of cringing spectators and fall further back as she makes it to the cabin and rushes inside. The guys stir from their slumbers and spring onto their haunches to meet the surprise visitor. Joy’s frightened face, framed by the habit and supported by mesmerizing masses of taut white flesh, defers the danger signal and regresses them momentarily to the cusp of their dreams.

“I need help...those people out there!” She rips off the habit and places it atop her bag, then raises the

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crucifix for them to see. "This'll keep 'em away."

"Who...what's happening?" asks Joe, as a crowd effervesces outside the front door. Armand goes to the window, the others in tow, and immediately locks it.

"We gonna be lynched?" Joe asks.

"Looks like a barbecue startin up out on the beach," Charlie declares. "We better hide the kindling."

Fear trumps levity as the noise level rises outside, and knocks pepper the door. They gape at her body laid bare like the answer to the crowd lies in what they do with her.

"Stay away from me!" she shouts, thrusting the crucifix in their faces. They flinch slightly, look to the door and then step toward her, oblivious to the crucifix, as approaching sirens re-master the crowd noise into a symphony of discordant screeches. Armand shuffles to the window and sees three squad cars pull up, each with two officers inside. There's a woman in the back-seat of the first one. Two officers move quickly to settle the crowd. The other four approach the cabin with weapons drawn. The woman stays in the background.

"Maybe you should get dressed," Armand says to Joy as the officers pound the door and identify themselves, demanding that they open up. They look at each other in frightful disbelief while they let them in. Joy continues to flash the crucifix in their faces.

"What is this?...what'd we do?" pleads Armand, as the cops cuff all three.

"Harboring an underage girl...against her will," the lead officer says, nodding toward the crucifix. "Grab your things miss. Your mother's outside."

"This is crazy!" Charlie screams. "We just gave

her a ride to her aunt's place and..."

"They brought her here...I had nothing to do with it," Joe shouts as they're filed out the door. Armand remains silent, goggling the throng of bodies outside as he exits the cabin.

As the three are escorted into the back of a car, the mother appears alongside and rubbernecks their faces with a look of loathing and turns to face Joy who's being cared for by one of the officers.

"Let me know if you need any help, miss," he says, his eyes mated to his floundering hands.

"My baby!" cries the mother, reaching to embrace Joy. "What have they done to you?" Joy meets her eyes with a muted blush--and turns abruptly away, gazing into the dispersing crowd for a few seconds--before turning back to confidently face her.

"When will you learn?" the mother says, her manner now suggesting she's come straight from her bridge club and is irritated by the interruption. "She's locked in her Mary Magdalene stage, officers. We sent her to the best God-fearing schools to get healthy but nothing seems to work. Teenagers these days! Maybe you officers have them too. What are we to do?"

"Come on, Buffums...let's go home."

"But mom, how am I going to learn how to act if I can't see how the story ends?"

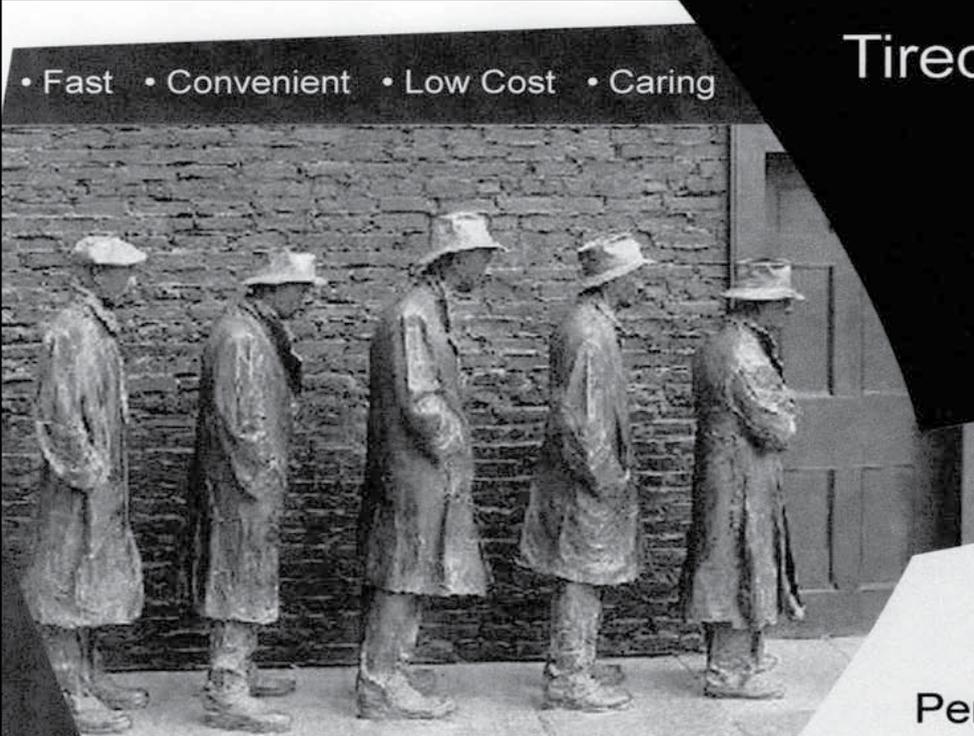
"And give me that crucifix!"

As the squad car gears away from the cabin, the guys glare bug-eyed through the rear window.

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LESSER OF TWO EVILS VOTE

CARMEN YARRUSSO

There's probably never been a US presidential election where both likely nominees are more despised by more people. Millions on both sides plan to vote for the least despicable candidate. Do you need more proof our political system is corrupt to the core? If you're a Hillary Clinton supporter and plan to vote for her, that's fine. But Bernie Sanders supporters are being pressured and shamed into voting for Clinton. This "pragmatic" *lesser of two evils* tactic may work for the short term, but it will just embolden establishment politics and undermine future chances for real progressive change.

Even if your vote helps defeat Trump you're clearly telling Democratic Party elites they can confidently betray your concerns as long as they offer you someone marginally better than the Republican alternative. Where will it end? The Democratic Party will just continue to betray progressive causes with impunity. Progressives should say enough is enough and put moral principles above short-term political expediency.

The Democratic Party elites are going out of their way with all manner of dirty tricks to stack the deck for Clinton. They're counting on Sanders supporters to "feel the guilt" if they dare to not vote for their chosen one. But if Trump wins, it won't be the fault of Sanders supporters voting their conscience. It will be the fault of party elites trying to force an establishment faux progressive down the throats of true progressives knowing

full well their choice will alienate millions of progressive Democrats and independents while bringing Trump supporters out in droves.

Like Clinton supporters, Sanders supporters have every right to vote *for* someone based on their moral principles. Sanders supporters shouldn't be coerced to compromise their moral principles and merely vote *against* someone. Democratic Party elites are blackmailing them

cratic Party to promote someone who is worthy of your vote. The party elites shouldn't expect to be exonerated for second-rate judgment by getting Sanders supporters to violate their moral principles and vote for the lesser of two evils.

Logical Fallacy

Voting for the lesser of two evils is not like choosing to switch a runaway train to another track so it kills one person instead of five if you do nothing. In this hypothetical case, there are only two choices. But when faced with two repulsive candidates for office, there are other choices – abstain from voting, vote for a third party candidate, or write someone in. If you aren't fooled by the Democratic Party's propaganda, you'll see the real lesser of two evils choice here is voting for the lesser of two evils versus refusing to vote for the lesser of two evils. Which choice is really the lesser evil?

A Trump Win May Stimulate Progressive Change

Trump may be a loose-cannon, or an unpredictable evil. But then, based on her long track record, Clinton is a very predictable evil. In fact, Trump is left of Clinton on such things as legal marijuana, NATO aggression, and trade policy. His crazy proposals (e.g. Mexican wall, banning Muslims) are just bluster with zero chance of becoming reality. If Congress can stop

Obama, it can stop Trump. But Clinton has a predictable pro-war track record (Iraq, Libya, Syria) and a predictable track record of changing positions for political expediency (e.g. Iraq war, NAFTA, Bankruptcy Reform Act of 2000, immigration, gun control, the Keystone XL pipeline, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, same-sex marriage). How can you be sure she won't conveniently change her

Voting for the lesser of two evils is not like choosing to switch a runaway train to another track so it kills one person instead of five if you do nothing.

– Carmen Yarrusso

by claiming, "if you don't vote for our chosen one, it's your fault if Trump wins." No, it's the fault of the Democratic Party for ignoring and marginalizing progressives. If it were really about beating Trump, party elites would change their allegiance to Sanders who would beat Trump more handily than Clinton according to multiple polls.

The onus is on the Demo-

current progressive positions as president? A Trump presidency just might force Democratic Party elites to start seriously addressing the populist concerns they now arrogantly ignore.

If you vote for Clinton as the lesser of two evils, you're compromising your moral values, you're

condoning the Democratic Party's shoddy treatment of millions of progressives, and you're sabotaging future real change. You're virtually guaranteeing the Democratic Party elites will put you in this position again and again. If you refuse to vote for the lesser of two evils, *maybe* you'll help elect Trump (or maybe

your write-in or third party choice will win).

But you'll *certainly* send a very clear message to Democratic Party elites that you'll no longer tolerate being ignored, marginalized, or shamed with false lesser-of-two-evil choices.

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ELECTORAL COLLEGE COULD MAKE PAUL RYAN PRESIDENT

BOB FITRAKIS AND HARVEY WASSERMAN

Just when you thought you'd heard everything about this year's chaotic race for the presidency, you might want to go back and look at the 12th Amendment. It could, among other things, make Paul Ryan president. Here's how.

Except in 1876, which was initially a tie, we've never had an election where no candidate received a majority of the Electoral College. John Quincy Adams did initially fail in 1824, but he cut a deal with Henry Clay of Kentucky and took the White House. The real victor in the popular vote (by about 150,000 to 100,000) was Andrew Jackson. The infuriated Tennessee slaveholder then built a new Democratic Party in large part on slavery, race, and the slaughter of Indians. He took the White House in 1828.

When the Democrats split in 1860, Abraham Lincoln won the Electoral College while carrying less than 40% of the popular vote. Rutherford B. Hayes, Benjamin Harrison, and George W. Bush all lost the popular vote but won the White House through the Electoral College.

Through various means of corruption, the Republican Hayes actually tied the Democrat Samuel Tilden in 1876. (Yes, there is an even number of votes in the Electoral College, and yes we could have another tie; it almost happened in 2004.) Hayes agreed to end Reconstruction in the South, the Democrats threw him their votes, and after a five-month

standoff, Hayes became president in 1877.

Grover Cleveland defeated Benjamin Harrison in the popular vote in 1884, 1888, and 1892. But Harrison won the Electoral College in 1888, making Cleveland our only president to serve non-consecutive terms.

In 2000, the Republicans (among other things) stripped more than 90,000 mostly Black and Hispanic citizens from the voter rolls, and flipped about 20,000 electronic ballots in Volusia County. The flip was later corrected, but served the purpose of getting all four major media networks

vote count was flipped between 12:20 and 2:00 a.m. election night. A very dubious official count showed Bush the popular vote winner nationwide. But for the first time in US history, an entire Electoral College delegation was challenged in Congress. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and Cleveland Congresswoman Stephanie Tubbs-Jones (since deceased) formally argued that the Ohio delegation was not legitimate. Had they won their challenge, John Kerry would've become president.

In the chaotic case of 2016, many things are possible. One of them has to do with the 12th Amendment, ratified June 15, 1804, whose relevant section reads:

The person having the greatest number of votes for President, shall be the President, if such number be a majority of the whole number of Electors appointed; and if no person have such majority, then from the persons having the highest numbers not exceeding three on the list of those voted for as President, the House of Representatives shall choose immediately, by ballot, the President. But in choosing the President, the votes shall be taken by states, the representation from each state having one vote; a quorum for this purpose shall consist of a member or members from two-thirds of the states, and a majority of all the states shall be necessary to a choice... The person having the greatest number

If there are three or more candidates for president, and none of them gets a clear majority in the Electoral College, the House of Representatives will make one of the top three Electoral vote-getters the new president.

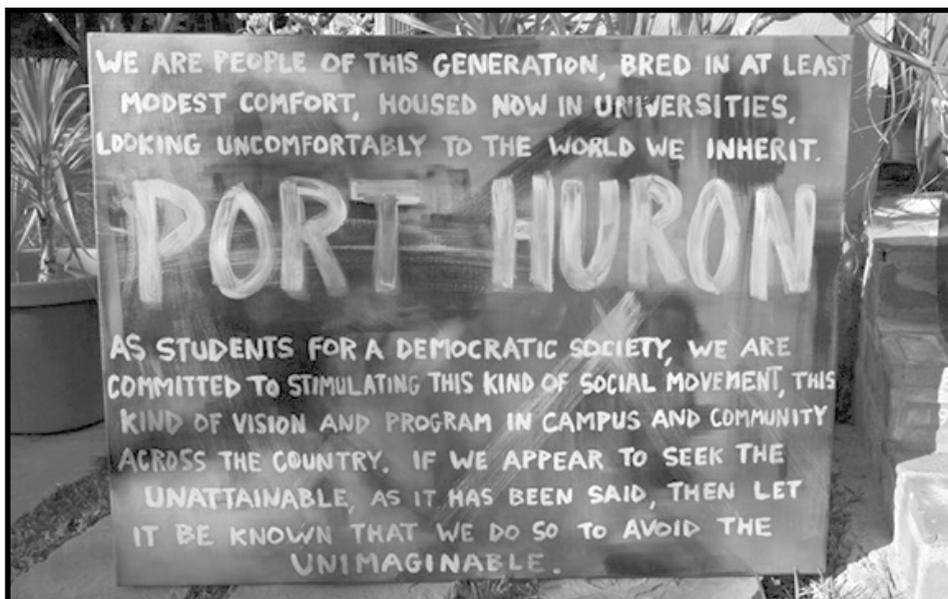
— Bob Fittrakis and Harvey Wasserman

to declare Bush the winner. George W. Bush's official margin of victory was 537 votes, though later recounts showed he actually lost. He lost the official popular vote nationwide by more than five hundred thousand votes. Nonetheless, Florida's votes in the Electoral College made him president.

In 2004, voter rolls were stripped in Ohio, and the electronic

of votes as Vice-President, shall be the Vice-President, if such number be a majority of the whole number of Electors appointed, and if no person have a majority, then from the two highest numbers on the list, the Senate shall choose the Vice-President; a quorum for the purpose shall consist of two-thirds of the whole number of Senators, and a majority of the whole number shall be necessary to a choice.

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These Long Wars require a long peace movement of effective organizers, without which the promise of the Obama administration will fade under pressure from the Pentagon, Wall Street, and the Republican right.

Public opinion has shifted strongly against the wars, but the public interest remains to be effectively advocated and promoted in the face of powerful interest groups lobbying for an escalation to a 10-12 year war in Afghanistan alone.

History shows that public opposition opinion was a significant factor in influencing policymakers in 2006 and 2008. Since those times, however, organized anti-war pressure has fallen off, derailed by concerns over the Wall Street meltdown, the health care debate, and a lingering public expectation that the Obama presidency means an era of peace.

Immediate attention is required for building and increasing the pressure for an exit strategy and troop withdrawal. This cannot be done by email blasts alone, or by the natural evolution of public opinion. It means a struggle to reframe the national debate around an exit strategy including troop withdrawals, rational criticism of the national security experts favoring escalation, and building a groundswell of public concern on constituent and community levels where all politics begins.

The PJRC collaborates with Progressive Democrats for America, Brave New Foundation, Just Foreign Policy, and the networks of United For Peace & Justice, CODEPINK, Peace Action, and Stop Funding Torture.com.

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ELECTORAL COLLEGE

In plainer English, it means this: if there are three or more candidates for president, and none of them gets a clear majority in the Electoral College, the House of Representatives will make one of the top three Electoral Vote-getters the new president. But the tally is scored with each state delegation getting a single, unified vote. The vice president is chosen in the Senate among the top two candidates, with each Senator getting an individual vote.

At this point, the state delegations in the House shake out with just 14 controlled by Democrats: Washington, Oregon, California, New Mexico, Minnesota, Illinois, New York, Ver-

mont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Maryland, Delaware and Hawaii. Maine, New Hampshire and New Jersey are evenly split. The rest are controlled by the Republicans.

SO ... in the long-shot but legally possible world of 2016, should Hillary Clinton get the Democratic nomination, and Bernie Sanders run as an Independent (or vice-versa), and should no candidate get a clear majority of electoral votes, the practical question might be whether enough of the GOP Congressional delegations would throw their votes to Hillary Clinton rather than Donald Trump.

BUT ... if Donald Trump gets the

Republican nomination, and Paul Ryan or some other "establishment Republican" runs as an Independent, and carries enough states to throw the outcome into the House, the smart money might well be on that Independent candidate.

It's all a long shot. And there are plenty of other scenarios to consider. But this is the law of the land. And in 2016 ...

Bob Fittrakis and Harvey Wasserman's *The Strip & Flip Selection of 2016: Five Jim Crows & Electronic Election Theft* is now available at www.freepress.org and www.solartopia.org. Harvey's *America at the Brink of Rebirth: The Organic Spiral of US History* is coming soon at www.solartopia.org

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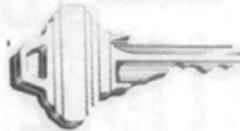
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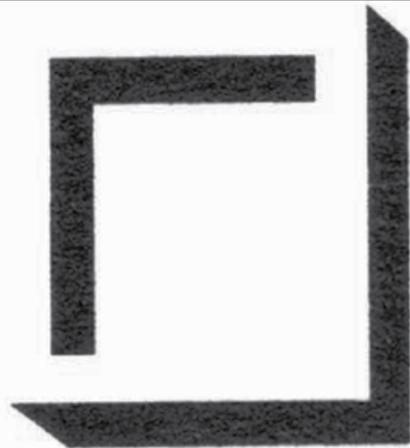
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TAXES TO FIGHT HOMELESSNESS**ELIZABETH MARCELLINO**

The Board of Supervisors delayed a decision recently on whether to press for a change to state law that would allow the county to put a “millionaire’s tax” on the November ballot to fund the fight against homelessness. Supervisors Mark Ridley-Thomas and Sheila Kuehl proposed the legislative push.

“One-time commitments will not address the crisis of homelessness in Los Angeles,” Ridley-Thomas said. County Chief Executive Officer Sachi Hamai said the county needed to raise about \$500 million in ongoing revenue to effectively address the problem.

Kuehl recalled a recent trip to Washington, D.C., with other members of the board. “Everywhere we went, in every office, homelessness was the issue that was raised again and again and again,” Kuehl said. “And the question, ‘What are you going to do?’”

Hamai said a vote in favor would “give the county an option,” and the board would decide later whether to pursue a ballot measure.

In order to have a shot at that option, the county must submit a proposal for a budget trailer bill by June

15, to be approved and signed by Gov. Jerry Brown by June 30. Despite the short deadline, Supervisors Don Knabe and Hilda Solis successfully pushed to postpone the decision.

Knabe warned about the unintended consequences of a legislative change, which he said would set a precedent for the state to refuse to fund other county needs. In the future, state

tion of revenues. She said the data was provided at the last minute and taking more time to analyze it would allow the board to make a stronger case to state legislators.

The board ultimately voted 2-2-1, with Knabe and Supervisor Michael Antonovich dissenting and Solis abstaining. The board will reconsider the matter in a few weeks.

The board has the ability to raise local sales taxes on its own, but needs the state to give it the authority to place the so-called “millionaire’s tax” on the ballot. A half-percent increase in county sales taxes was one of several other options county staffers and pollsters considered as a means of raising money to combat homelessness. A parcel tax, redirection of Measure B revenues -- designed to support trauma centers -- and a marijuana tax were other possibilities.

The idea of a half-percent tax on personal income in excess of \$1 million garnered the highest support from voters polled, with 76 percent in favor. Support for a sales tax increase polled at 69 percent -- within the margin of error of the two-thirds of voters needed to pass any such measure.

Antonovich expressed skepticism about polls showing broad support for the tax given all the other taxes that may be on the November ballot.

Elizabeth Marcellino is a free lance writer in Los Angeles.

A half-percent increase in county sales taxes was one of several other options county staffers and pollsters considered as a means of raising money to combat homelessness.

– Elizabeth Marcellino

officials might tell the county, “Whatever you need, you tax your residents,” Knabe said.

Solis raised concerns about an analysis of homelessness in her district and how it would affect the alloca-



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RETAILERS ON WHEELS AND CONTAMINATION

DAN FLYNN

Chef Roy Choi eight years ago moved on to the mean streets of Los Angeles looking for customers in his Kogi Korean BBQ truck. In his rear window came a never-ending parade of food trucks that would revolutionize street food, seemingly overnight.

By 2008 when Kogi Korean BBQ set the new standard, street vending of simple items like hot dogs and burritos had been around for about 100 years. Panel vans selling food and beverage at construction sites had been long accepted. But street food usually operated in the shadows. Their units were often called “roach coaches” because food safety was far from guaranteed.

Would chefs in food trucks costing \$100,000 or more with menu offerings to attract foodies as customers do any better with food safety? Did mobile mean unsafe? Worries were high, but now, as every major city seems to have 800 to 1,000 food trucks, those concerns seem to have evaporated. How quickly did this all occur?

Four years ago, economic forecasters at Intuit Inc. made the bold forecast that by 2017 the food truck industry will be generating annual revenue of \$2.7 billion. Within a decade, many an American community has seen food trucks go from being a troublesome series of issues that included food safety to an economic contributor that’s even worth celebrating. Food truck festivals in the next weeks are occurring in Fort Collins, CO, and Lawrence, KS. Others will follow, mostly over the spring and summer.

While food trucks are now part of trendy landscapes from Austin

to Boston, and Los Angeles to Miami, some places still have food truck issues. But food safety does not seem to be among them.

The City Council for Knoxville, TN, earlier this month approved a “mobile vending” ordinance that, among other things, set application, permit, fee and insurance requirements for food trucks. And while food safety

to support local food truck industries, but owners say they can also be too restrictive. Caps on the number of permits and licenses, bans on parking in public spaces, and arbitrary setbacks from brick and mortar restaurants are among the restrictions food truck owners are most likely to contest with local lawmakers or in court.

While the zoning issues may never really go away, food trucks have for the most part accepted food safety as part of their business model. Experts have told Food Safety News that food trucks present a little more of a challenge than brick and mortar restaurants when it comes to food safety, but research shows their violations are roughly on par.

Food trucks also seem to have embraced mobile regulation when it comes to food safety. It’s not uncommon for food trucks to accept GPS tracking so health officers can find them for inspections. The public can use the systems to find out where to go for lunch.

Vendor applications are often made online, and in Portland the “Chefs Connection” is done especially for food truck owners to help them keep up on sanitation.

Improving its reputation for food safety may also be a sign of a maturing food truck industry. Dr. Dick Carpenter, author of *Upwardly Mobile: Street Vending and the American Dream*, surveyed 763 licensed vendors in the 50 largest U.S. cities. He found 96 percent own their own businesses and 39 percent employ full or part-time workers, most for 11-12 hour days. And, his study found, the typical food truck is turning about \$35,000 in profits. He says all cities need to do to “unleash” the economic power of food trucks is to eliminate outdated and anti-competitive regulations.

Dan Flynn is a columnist for Food Safety News.

Local ordinances can provide structure to support local food truck industries, but owners say they can also be too restrictive.

– Dan Flynn

and health inspections are routinely included in the Knoxville law, the City Council spent close to two hours debating how far food trucks with meat smokers should stay back from residential areas.

Knoxville food truck owners agreed they could deal with the 100 foot setback as long as it only applied to those smoking meat. Setbacks are typical of the zoning restrictions cities impose on food trucks.

Cities and towns never seem to cease telling food trucks where they can park. Aztec, NM, might open its public parks to food trucks this summer after nearby Farmington opened up its places to the commercial activity. Local ordinances can provide structure

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