



A publication of the Green Party of California

Green Focus

The historian Alex Carey observed that the twentieth century has been largely shaped by three trends: the growth of democracy, the growth of corporate power, and the growth of corporate propaganda as a means of protecting corporate power against democracy. The Bush Administration marks the triumph of this last trend.
—Robert F. Kennedy Jr., "Crimes Against Nature"



California, Spring 2005



Greens and progressives protest two years of war and occupation in Iraq

Rallies a success—but effort must go mainstream!

By Rob Ham

"We are an immoral nation, fighting an immoral war. We must deny violence and become a peace-building nation," Reverend Cecil Williams said to me just before he addressed a crowd of several thousand people at the San Francisco Civic Center on March 19.

It was the second anniversary of the start of the war in Iraq and I had just spent the previous three hours listening to speeches and talking to people. Williams had summed it all up in one thirty-second sound bite.

It's been a lousy two years, full of violence, fear and death. We have been bombarded with images of destruction, carnage, and hate with no end in sight. Over 1500 and counting U.S. soldiers killed and god knows how many Iraqis. Tens of thousands have been maimed and injured. Our economy is reeling, social services have been butchered, and our civil liberties are constantly under attack by our own government, and for what?

Most Iraqis live in constant fear and degradation. There is no electricity, no water, no hospitals, and no consumer goods. Seventy-five percent of Iraqis are unemployed.

Now the stories are starting to filter back. We are starting to hear

of things the "embedded press" isn't telling us. There are reports of widespread abuse of civilians. Many sources report the use of horror weapons such as cluster bombs

The average American is getting a white washed and watered down diet of journalistic fluff.

and napalm that can spread death and agony over huge areas in the blink of an eye. There are also reports of other chemical weapons, although solid evidence is yet to be produced.

All this seems to be escaping the reporting of the "mainstream" media. The average American is getting a white washed and watered down diet of journalistic fluff, nicely sanitized in corporate newsrooms so as not to offend our delicate sensibilities.

Somehow, a few thousand of us marching in San Francisco seems a weak reply to such crimes. It seems that as a people we are not horrified by the carnage in Iraq but terrified by the "Boogie Men" that the evil junta religious zealots—corpo-

rate thieves that govern, along with their media toadies—have created to justify it.

We marched, we few thousand who see the truth. We were a small but vocal cohort that are sickened at the sight of the American eagle reducing itself to a carrion vulture, feeding off the death and misery of other nations.

I felt a lingering sadness there amongst the aging hippies, the idealistic young students, and fiery radicals. I didn't see a cross-section of American society.

There were bright spots, however. When I was about to sign for my media pass to access the speaker area, the woman who was running the sign-in desk took the clipboard away from me and gave it to a CBS camera crew that was trying to enter. As a journalist, I felt rather slighted, but as a citizen, I was glad that at least they were going to take a few pictures for a thirty second spot on a thirty minute newscast.

Another positive was what San Francisco Labor Council Executive President Tim Paulson told me. His organization will continue to be out in the street fighting to stop the war and speaking out on issues that improve the lot of working people. Trent Willis, president of ILWU local 10 (long-shoremen), also said that his union



Photo: Eric Balaire, www.ericbalaire.com

An elderly couple braves the inclement weather on Saturday, March 19, to protest on Hollywood Blvd. in West LA.

would continue their tradition of anti war activities.

This is all wonderful but there is so much more to be done. This war must be observed and discussed on all levels of society, not just at rallies and in classrooms but by shelf stockers at Target. Casual laborers sorting boxes at UPS

should talk about it. It should be a topic of conversation in grocery checkout lines and by the indented servants toiling at Wal-Mart. We should also consider the additional \$82 billion the government is asking for in light of the gutting of every social program that serves the community.

We must continue to march but we also must teach and communicate. The protest must not continue to be the province of a small, left liberal elite. The war is destroying all of us and everybody needs to be involved in stopping it. We must strive to make the protest "mainstream."

Bush sowing confusion on SSI Using 'Cato' strategy, Greens charge

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Green Party leaders accused President Bush of using deceptive and unsupported claims in his campaign to promote his Social Security privatization plan.

"Democrats won't say it, reporters won't say it, so Greens will: President Bush is deceiving the American people to sell his Social Security privatization scheme," said Pat Driscoll, California Green candidate in a special election for Congress (5th Congressional District, near Sacramento).

"The chief criticism of the Democrats has been that the president isn't specific enough about the plan, and most of the media has covered it as a question of whether Bush will succeed in enacting his plan, rather than investigating the plan's background and details," added

Driscoll. "Have none of them learned the lessons of President Bush's 2003 State of the Union, when he sold the American people an invasion of Iraq based on equally false information about WMDs, collusion with al-Qaeda, nuclear weapons materials, and an 'imminent threat' to the U.S.?"

Greens listed several falsehoods and distortions in Bush's promotion of his plan:

- Bush claimed that, under his plan, younger Americans would be able to divert some of their Social Security payments into private accounts "so you can build a nest egg for your own future"—but didn't mention that their Social Security benefit checks would thus be smaller.
- Bush claimed that investments in privatized retirement ac-

counts are guaranteed to increase, promising "your money will grow, over time, at a greater rate than anything the current system can deliver." The stock market is a risk, and Wall Street investments are neither guaranteed to increase nor insured against losses.

- The Bush plan doesn't transfer "ownership" from the U.S. government to private citizens, but to Wall Street—i.e., to whichever brokerage the citizen is investing through, with all the related fees and risks.
- Bush is repeating his baseless claim that the current Social Security system will go broke by 2042. In fact, the Congressional Budget Office predicts that, un-

See "SSI deception" on page 4

Governor attacks state pensions Battle begins over budget, bill, ballot

By Russell Kilday-Hicks

In case you hadn't noticed, Gov. Schwarzenegger has declared war on California's public employees.

Battle lines are being drawn. Daily skirmishes are reported in the media. Ideological weapons are being stockpiled, sharpened, and sent to the frontline troops. And true to form, the first casualty was the truth.

This war pits approximately two million public employees, their families, and those concerned about social justice against powerful anti-government, pro-privatizing ideologists—one of whom happens to sit in the governor's office in Sacramento—who seek to shift state programs like public employee pensions to the private sector. They want to renege on the state's long-standing agreement with public employees who work in the public sector at often lower- than-market compensation in return for a guaranteed retirement benefit until death. They want to put all the risk on the backs of individual employees, adding huge profits to Wall Street coffers while destroying a major critic of profit-at-any-cost in the process.

Opening salvos

The opening salvo came back in December 2004, when California Public Employees Retirement System (CalPERS) President Sean Harrigan, a labor leader who filled the State Personnel Board seat, was removed from the board. Gov. Schwarzenegger denied playing a role in Harrigan's ouster, but the purge had ideological fingerprints all over it.

However, there was no doubt about responsibility for the governor's next move. In February he fired four of his five new appoint-

ments to the California State Teachers Retirement System (CalSTRS) Board because they refused to support his "pension overhaul" scheme (as it is called in the mass media) which would eliminate the current "defined benefit" public employee pension plan and replace it with a riskier 401(k)-type "defined contribution" plan.

Clear shots rang out when State Assemblyman Keith Richman, R-Northridge, introduced Assembly Constitutional Amendment (ACA) 5, which would implement Schwarzenegger's pension scheme for public employees hired after

July 1, 2007. However, like the Bush Administration's Social Security privatization, now floundering for lack of support, Richman's legislation may hit a dead end. With Democrats controlling the majority in both the state senate and assembly, it will most likely never get to the governor's desk let alone out of the committee process.

Unfortunately, this legislation may just be a sideshow to keep Democrats and their constituents busy while the real battle is waged over a ballot initiative proposed by the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association. See "Governor attacks" on page 3

Greens ponder benefits of new Calif. public campaign finance bill

By John Morton and Kenny Mostern

Public campaign financing provides public funds to candidates who agree to run their campaigns without accepting private contributions. It is a substantial step toward real democracy, and would go a long way toward taking corporate money out of politics.

Assemblywoman Loni Hancock recently introduced a new version of her bill for full public financing of state elections to the California legislature. Hancock is working with the California Clean Money Campaign (CCMC, www.caclean.org), who are drafting the bill and gathering support around the state. The new bill, Assembly Bill 583, entitled "The California Clean Money and Fair Elections Act of 2005," is an update of last year's AB 2949. The new bill can be seen in full at: <http://tinyurl.com/6mz4l>.

We cannot ignore a California campaign finance reform bill forever, so the party will soon have to make a decision on AB 583.

Last year's bill

Though the Green Party has always taken a strong stand in favor of public campaign financing, we opposed last year's bill because it discriminated against third parties. The Green Party favors the kind of legislation that currently exists in Arizona, which funds all ballot-qualified candidates equally.

Like Arizona, the California bill required all candidates to collect a large number of \$5 donations in order to show a minimum level of

grassroots support before qualifying for public funding. California's AB 2949, however, also created "Tier 1" and "Tier 2" candidates, based on the percentage of votes their parties received in previous statewide elections—10 percent or more for full funding (Tier 1), and at least three percent for partial (up to 50 percent) funding (Tier 2). Regardless of the number of donations collected, the Green Party would have therefore been at best a Tier 2 party, or else completely out of the running. Furthermore, the previous bill had no way of funding independent candidates.

The CCMC justified adding the two-tier system because of California's seven ballot-qualified parties and large number of independent candidates. They claimed that fully funding all candidates would have been very expensive.

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Commentary

The Calif. GP's chance at bat

A 4-year plan could be grand slam

By Kevin McKeown
A fat slow pitch is headed straight toward the Green Party's home plate.

Our state Coordinating Committee recently discussed a four-year plan, preparing us for the next presidential election cycle. First, though, we must seize the unique opportunity afforded us by Gov. Schwarzenegger's calling a special election this fall.

Green Party electoral challenges have always included gaining early visibility. Corporate party candidates not only have big bucks for media buys, they often enter the general election already well known from competitive primaries.

Consider the advantages we could achieve from the upcoming November 2005 special election, which otherwise will be a grim parade of special interest initiatives. Every rich ideologue with a million dollars to drop on signature gatherers is going to take a shot at this special election ballot.

How can we leverage that for progressive Green issues?

First of all, the Governor's core proposals for November will be redistricting and electoral reform. While the two corporate parties squabble about redistricting, arguing who should determine artificial boundaries to define political fiefdoms, we can step in with a higher commitment to true voter empowerment and a platform full of better ideas. Gerrymandered single-seat districts distort democracy, and no artful redrawing of the lines, no matter who draws them, will solve the problem.

In our current system, we face an insoluble trade-off between creating more competitive districts and allowing better representation for minority communities. In the most competitive possible single-seat district, fully 49 percent of the voters would languish unrepresented when a 51 percent winner squeaked through.

The underlying problem is not district lines but single-seat winner-take-all elections. We need to implement proportional representation, as used in many of the rest of the world's democracies. Let's consolidate our small districts so they represent shared challenges, not narrow political power bases, and elect several winners from each new district.

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GROW is looking for people who are willing to sponsor outreach projects. Please contact Mitch Smith, mjsmith55@aol.com, or Dee Braydee, DBrayDee@aol.com, with your ideas.

www.cagreens.org

Commentary

A call for Green Committee for Democracy and Independence

By Forrest Hill

There is real concern among many Green Party members that decisions made by the national party leadership do not reflect the major view of the membership. In particular, many believe that the voting rules developed by the national Coordinating Committee (CC) led to the nomination of a presidential candidate supported by a small minority of Green Party members. These rules created a voting system that drastically undermined the political power of the majority of registered Greens in the country in order to ensure the party ran a lower profile candidate for president in 2004.

While we support the right of Greens to hold the view that we should not run national candidates whose challenge will hurt the Democratic Party's chances of winning the presidency, we believe this current is a minority view in the party. Unfortunately, due to the fact that the number of representatives on the CC from each state is based on its Electoral College vote and not on the size of its Green membership, those supporting a lesser evil strategy currently hold the majority of power.

To counter this current in our leadership body, we are calling for the formation of a Green committee for Democracy and Independence ("GDI"). We believe that such a committee is necessary because there exist within our party conflicting views over political orientation and the role we should play in American politics. To maintain our party's unity we must ensure that all viewpoints are respected, all members can participate fully in the institutions of the party, and all decisions truly reflect the will of the Green Party membership. To build a true alternative party for peace, social and economic justice, and the environment, we must institutionalize policies that declare our independence from the two corporate parties. We therefore call on Greens to join us in the formation of the Greens for Democracy and Independence caucus around the four points outlined below.

We must ensure that all viewpoints are respected, all members can participate fully in the institutions of the party.

It is our hope that at the next national conference the Green Party will overwhelmingly vote to democratize our internal policies in order to protect the rights of all our membership and maintain party unity. We ask all Greens to consider our proposals and to declare their support for internal democracy and party independence, regardless of their political views on other issues.

For internal democracy: one person, one vote

The choice of our presidential ticket and our national leadership bodies must be based on the principal of "one person one vote." We must oppose all selection processes that disenfranchise members based on their location, or the registration laws of their state. All Greens must be fully respected with equality. This can only be achieved by implementing policies that assure every member's vote is counted equally.

Delegate selection must respect the vote of the rank-and-file. The election of delegates to our national nominating convention and other national gatherings must reflect the will of the membership. All delegations based on the vote of the membership must be chosen

Greens ponder ...

Continued from page 1

making it harder to win over the many Californians who see public campaign financing as a "give-away" to politicians.

Considering the Greens' displeasure with AB 2949, the CCMC claims to have made their new bill more equitable. They eliminated the three percent vote tier entirely, and moved to a 10 percent vote requirement linked to an intricate "donation-based option," making it technically possible for any candidate to qualify for full funding, under certain conditions.

Trent Lange, vice president of the Board of Directors of CCMC, was instrumental in changing in the new bill's language. "We are taking the non-discrimination demands of the Green Party seriously," Lange said. "While also trying to accommodate the interests of fiscal conservatives who don't want to fund candidates with little public support."

The new AB 583

The new bill, AB583, has been changed in three important ways. First, instead of requiring a party to win 10 percent of the vote statewide to earn funding in any subsequent statewide or district race, full funding would be available to Senate or Assembly candidates whose party previously won 10 percent only in their district race.

Secondly, any independent candidate, or any candidate whose party got less than the 10 percent vote minimum in the last election, can still qualify for partial funding by gathering the same number of \$5 donations as the "party-qualified" candidates. In this case, funding (albeit partial funding) depends on a party's donation-gathering ability, rather than past electoral performance.

The third change is the introduction of an alternative "grassroots" option to qualify for full funding. If a candidate, whose party did not reach the 10 percent vote minimum, can demonstrate a "greater base of support" by gathering twice the number of \$5 donations required for the candidate of a "10 percent party," that candidate is eligible for full funding.

Is AB 583 an improvement over last year's bill? The first change seems to give Greens an opportunity in some legislative districts like San Francisco, Los Angeles, and

through proportional representation. Candidates who receive votes must be able to select their own delegates. Delegates to national conventions cannot be pre-selected. They must be elected for each convention and can only represent candidates they voted for in the primaries or caucuses.

Delegates who oppose a proposal or a particular candidate cannot be allowed to represent that candidate or proposal. Conventions must be sovereign. Delegates who represent the rank and file, the clearest expression of the will of our membership, must be free to determine the rules and procedures, agenda, and policy decisions of each convention.

Proportional representation in leadership bodies

The Green Party should strive for proportional representation of elected officials on the national Coordinating Committee (CC). The number of delegates allocated each state on the CC should reflect the size and strength of its membership in as representative a manner as possible, to ensure the party has the full support and cooperation of its members.

The domination of leadership bodies by one current not reflective of the Party as a whole is divisive and undemocratic. To help assure leadership bodies are inclusive, all candidates for national leadership posts must disclose their views on party issues to the membership. Diversity representation within the Green Party must include political diversity as well as gender, race, and sexual orientation.

On independence

The Green Party must declare its complete independence from the two corporate-dominated political parties. The Green Party must declare as policy that it does not endorse, support, or urge votes for any partisan candidate of either the Democratic or Republican Party. Green Party members as "individuals" or as ad hoc committees may support any candidate from any party they wish, but the Green Party as an independent entity must not.

The Green Party as a party may work with, show respect for, and act together with members or elected officials from the corporate controlled parties on specific issues; however, this support must not include an endorsement of their candidates.

Steering Committee members who represent the Party to the public and the Green Party presidential candidates must pledge not to work for, support, fund raise or call for a vote for candidates of either of the two corporate parties.

The Green Party welcomes collaboration and may involve itself in joint campaigns, or form electoral blocs with non-Greens. Such efforts must be with independent or other non-corporate-sponsored third party candidates whose values reflect key components of the Green Party platform. Subscribe to the GDI list serve at the Web site: <http://tinyurl.com/3pq89> if you want to take part in this debate.

Forrest Hill is an alternate member of the GPUS delegation from the GPCA and a member of several GPCA working groups, including the Campaigns and Candidates Working Group.

other areas where we could conceivably reach the 10 percent threshold. This means that some Green legislative candidates—but by no means all—could get the same funding as their Democrat and Republican opponents.

Of course, full funding would only kick in two years after the 10 percent vote was achieved. The second change eliminates the three percent vote requirement to qualify for partial funding under the previous bill, and replaces it by requiring more \$5 donations than before. This basically shifts the burden for partial funding from past party performance to current party outreach efforts. While this no longer ties a "minor party" candidate to the past, it places greater demand on volunteer outreach, and still offers less money than the Democrats and Republicans get.

The rationale for the new bill's third change is similar to the second, but it offers the weaker parties a full funding option if they can organize a superior grassroots campaign that raises twice the required number of \$5 donations. While this does provide an opening for Greens that was not there in the previous bill, it would require a massive outreach effort from a party that has no corporate money to play with. Even though grassroots organizing is the Green stock-in-trade, getting double the donations in the same period of time as the other parties would be very challenging indeed.

Where do the Greens stand? Everyone agrees that Assembly-

woman Hancock's AB 583 is not a perfect bill for the Greens. But the real question is whether it is "good enough" to support.

Some Greens point out that last year's bill, even though it funded us at lower levels than the Democrats and Republicans, provided much more money than we can normally raise on our own. As a result, they claim, it was an improvement over the present system, in which we get nothing from the state to run our campaigns. They cite Green Party support of business-sponsored health care Proposition 72, which, while not an ideal single-payer universal health care plan, was an incremental step in the right direction. Why not support AB 583 on the same grounds?

Jeanne Rosenmeier, co-coordinator of the Electoral Reform Working Group (ERWG), acknowledges the controversy over AB 583. "Most people want to hold out for total fairness, but I think this is about as good as we are going to get, and we can make it work for us. Of course I would rather have a bill with a single standard for all parties, but I believe that the Democrats will be surprised how often we qualify for full funding."

But other Greens complain that the new bill is worse than the old one. Eliminating the fallback funding for parties that earn three percent of the vote, they say, is typical of the anti-Green attitude taken by some Democrat Party operatives. Still others, like Kevin McKeown, Green city councilmember, Santa

Monica, say that any funding based on past voting results is inherently unfair: "A fair clean money system is one that shares public campaign funding based on demonstrated grassroots support for candidates, not on partisan affiliation or party performance in prior elections."

Change is still possible. Because Assembly bills are usually modified many times during committee hearings, there will be opportunities for further negotiations with the CCMC. Susan Lerner, CCMC's executive director, says that she considers the Greens "an important ally of ours in the clean money campaign." If the CCMC really wants Green Party support, and if the Greens are willing to compromise, we should be able to get more favorable provisions in the bill.

Chances of the new bill becoming law in the 2005-06 legislature are remote, though, according to most observers. If the bill fails, says the CCMC, their next move will probably be a public financing ballot measure in the 2008 or 2010 election.

Currently, the ERWG is advising Greens to take a wait-and-see attitude, pending the new bill's progress. Nevertheless, it is clear that we cannot ignore a California campaign finance reform bill forever, so the party will soon have to make a decision on AB 583.

Send comments to the ERWG listserv: gpc-erwg@cagreens.org. To become a member of the ERWG listserv, go to: <http://tinyurl.com/6mz4>.



L.A. Greens push cure for post-election blues

Green local marches in Pasadena Doo Dah dissing Bush Administration

Linda Piera-Avila and Lisa Taylor

Outrageous costumes, irreverent themes, wacky floats, and the Green Party—add up to the Doo Dah Parade! This 28th annual parade is a Southern California happening, a parody of the staid, traditional Pasadena Tournament of Roses Parade.

This was our third consecutive year marching. Previous themes were "Give Pizza a Chance" in 2002, and "Fellowship of the Greens," a take-off of *Lord of the Rings*, in 2003. Los Angeles Greens delighted most of the over 50,000 onlookers on Nov. 21 with our en-

trypic "Post Partisan Depression."

We chose a light but pointed theme to acknowledge the heavy post-election mood and make an emotional connection with the crowd. Our "Post Partisan Depression" unit started with a woman on a gurney playing the role of ex-

pectant mother, and an attendant nurse in scrubs. Banners ushered in a contingent of strollers, buggies and a huge bassinet "float" of dolls with masked faces of the administration. Many sported much-needed pacifiers, including Bush, Cheney, Rice, Rumsfeld, Kerry, and First Lady Laura.

With over twenty-five Greens and a couple megaphones, we rallied the audience to join in a loud: "Wail to the Chief." Parade goes gladly jumped up to share our woe! A few thousand flyers were passed out stating that a cure for post-election blues is to join the Greens. After a year registering voters, walking picket lines, protesting the war and the dispiriting presidential campaign season—the parade was a lift for our spirits as well.

Humorous outreach works. The Doo Dah Parade offers great party visibility and an opportunity to reach a new, wide-ranging audience. It attracts national and international press attention. Find big annual events so your members look forward to the planning (brainstorming and art party) as well as participating. At our group's post-parade meal, we were already discussing plans for next year's theme.

Check out more Doo Dah parade photos at the Los Angeles Greens' Web site located on a page at: www.losangelesgreens.org.

The parade is held annually the Sunday before Thanksgiving in Pasadena. We welcome Greens from across the state to join us next year. Do the Doo Dah with L.A. Greens!



LA Greens made elaborate props for the parade, which included these "celebrity" masks of George and Laura Bush, and Dick Cheney.



Clean voter roles will help eliminate voter fraud and promote voter participation

By Rob Richie and Stephen Hill

Our country's strength flows from its willingness to innovate and improve upon the American experiment in democracy. Recent presidential elections underscore the importance of re-vamping the way we register citizens to vote.

Currently, there are two widespread failures. First, our voter rolls are not clean and lead to uncertainty about voter fraud, such as people voting in two states and some places like Alaska having more registered voters than adults. Second, our voter rolls are not complete, with nearly a third of eligible voters—about 60 million Americans—not registered to vote. It's time to establish clean and complete voter rolls to preserve the integrity of elections and keep close elections in the hands of voters rather than judges.

Having so many unregistered citizens hurts voter turnout and causes great problems in elections. Under current laws, we naturally see major voter registration drives during election years. The result is a surge of registrations right before an election, leading to long lines at polling places, voters not receiving information about where to vote and turmoil over provisional and absentee ballots.

It all too easily leads to potential partisan fraud such as a Republican-linked voter registration firm in Nevada allegedly throwing out forms collected from voters registering as Democrats, and accusations of Democratic urban machines registering dead people to vote in cities like Milwaukee and Chicago. The inevitable result is judges getting involved in deciding close elections.

Pointing fingers and name calling won't help fix the problem. The way forward is to set a goal of 100 percent voter registration by establishing registration as a mutual responsibility of citizens and their government. It's the best way to bring together conservatives concerned about fraud in elections and liberals concerned about low voter registration. We need a coherent system that ensures all of us can vote, but none of us can vote more than once.

The United States in fact is one of the few democracies where the government does not take responsibility for registering its voters, which is why Iraq already has a higher share of its adult citizens registered to vote than the United States. The international norm is an orderly process of automatic voter registration of every citizen who reaches voting age. Because governments take a proactive, ongoing role, registration occurs on a steady, rolling basis instead of in spurts tied to any specific election. Voters receive a unique identifier that ensures they don't vote more than once.

Not only does such an orderly process provide nearly 100 percent voter registration, but it leads to much cleaner voter rolls and less voter fraud. With comprehensive databases and full registration, there is no longer a question about who is or is not registered. Everyone is registered.

By 2006, each state is supposed to have its federally-mandated statewide voter registration database in place, which, if merged with each state's Census database, would take us a giant step toward universal registration. The most comprehensive way, however, would be to establish a national database and federal standards for assuring 100 percent registration of eligible voters.

But in the short term there are immediate easier steps states and localities can take. We can focus on the population that typically has the lowest rates of registration: young people. A state or county could have high schools preregister to vote all their students as they enter their junior year. Alternatively, a state's Department of Motor Vehicles could preregister all those under 18 as they obtain their learner's permits.

Once these pre-registrants turn 18, their registrations automatically would become active. They would receive a letter alerting them about their eligibility to vote, the date of the next election and their responsibilities when changing addresses.

Such changes would register far more young people in an orderly way and generate more understanding of the value of voting. It would provide a means to introduce more young people to the importance of civic engagement because a natural complement to this policy would be "voter's ed" curriculum for high schoolers, just as many have "driver's ed" now. Over time, as all 18-year-olds were registered to vote, the United States would move far closer to 100 percent voter registration.

Legislators in states like Illinois and Rhode Island are preparing legislation for such pre-registration. As we promise to export democracy abroad, let's take care of business at home. Policymakers should establish a clear goal: clean and complete voter rolls by the next presidential election in 2008.

Rob Richie is executive director of FairVote: The Center for Voting and Democracy. www.fairvote.org.

Stephen Hill is an Irvine Senior Fellow with the New America Foundation and author of "Fixing Elections: The Failure of America's Winner Take All Politics," which can be seen at: www.FixingElections.com. Readers may write to them at: info@fairvote.org or mail to: FairVote Center for Voting and Democracy, 6930 Carroll Ave., #610, Takoma Park, MD 20912.

Governor attacks state pensions ...

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Schwarzenegger is leading the effort to collect the qualifying signatures. He plans to hold a special state election this November, at a special cost of an estimated \$50-70 million to California taxpayers, to bring the "pension overhaul" to "the people," along with other measures the governor can't squeeze through the legislative process.

Ironically, the "people" don't agree. A recent Field Poll said voters initially approved of the special election by 51 percent to 45 percent but strongly opposed it by 67 percent to 30 percent when informed of the cost. So the governor's challenge is twofold: not only does he have to sell the idea of privatizing the pension system, he has to convince the public that it is worth up to \$70 million to hold the election to do it.

What started this war? In his budget address in January 2004, Schwarzenegger supported the current public employee pension system. "State employees will continue to be secure in the knowledge that a volatile investment market will not affect retirement benefits because they will continue to be covered by a defined benefit retirement plan; this is in stark contrast to the concerns of many private sector employees," he said.

Today, the governor calls these pensions "platinum-plated," and has even opened up a third front in this struggle.

CaPERS Boardmember George Diehr said at San Francisco State University on March 9, that believing the governor when he says this so-called reform won't affect current employees may not be true for long. Proposed budget language changes the state's contribution to be 50/50 with the employee contribution. In CaPERS the state currently pays 17 percent, the employee five out of the 22 percent needed in the fund (the rest is covered by projected investment returns). Diehr explained that current employees could see a six percent increase in their deductions this July if this budget language becomes law.

With the proposed legislation and ballot measure, the governor wants to replace a guaranteed pension with 401(k)-type program (whose details are not currently in the bill but will "be worked out later," according to bill sponsor Richman) that would shift risk from a pool maintained by state investment experts to individual accounts maintained by private investment firms (thus increasing management fees and risks while reducing dividends). Why would the governor want to spend extra dollars the state supposedly doesn't have to dismantle the current pension system?

It is the money—and it isn't

The old saying applies here: Follow the money, but with a new twist. Money isn't exchanging hands in back room deals; although Arnold's fund-raising is making former Gov. Davis' look positively bush league (not to mention his well-broken campaign promise on not taking money from "special interests"). No, this money trail is about the investment policies and corporate oversight of CalSTRS and its more famous counterpart, CalPERS. Despite recent corporate outrages like Enron and WorldCom, this kind of pro-public, anti-corporate "activism" by the two boards has become a lightning rod for right-wing criticism.

In 2003, the CalPERS board pushed for the removal of Dick Grasso, the head of the New York Stock Exchange, after Grasso's excessive \$139 million-a-year pay package became known, and advocated the removal of Disney Board Chair Michael Eisner. According to a Feb. 28, 2005, report in *The Nation* magazine, CalPERS "dumped tobacco stocks, blacklisting ten 'emerging markets' that ignore international labor standards, redeployed capital to neglected sectors like inner-city redevelopment and innovative environmental technologies, and above all, peppered scores of corporations, banks, brokerages, financial markets, and federal regulators with critiques and demands for change."

In this context, because of the fear instilled in the cold hearts of corporate CEOs by the power of \$2.7 trillion in combined assets in state pension funds nationwide—and the influence that CalPERS and CalSTRS have on pension managers in other states—this war on the California public pension systems by right-wing ideologues and corporate apologists makes perfect sense.

State Treasurer Phil Angelides, who sits on both the CalPERS and CalSTRS boards and recently announced his intention to challenge Schwarzenegger for California's governorship next year, said in *The Nation* that it makes good business sense to invest in companies that promote healthy communities over short-term gains made from social

destruction. "The old holders of capital are very nervous about this discussion of capital and the larger context of what's good for the economy," Angelides said. "They don't want these questions asked. They want to control capital and they want to control it to their benefit, not to the larger economy's."

That's why CalPERS has been attacked by the Business Roundtable, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the American Enterprise Institute, the *Wall Street Journal*, and *Forbes* for "abusing the public trust" to "strong-arm changes in targeted companies," according to *The Nation*.

Enter our governor. If there was any doubt as to who or what he really represents, hear what he has to say on the subject. "There's an old saying, so goes California, so goes the rest of the nation," Schwarzenegger told the *Orange County Register* in January. "That's exactly what they're worried about. You talk about pensions. What do you think: it's just about California? No. If California's pension system goes, now it will go like an avalanche."

To pursue his aims, Schwarzenegger broke his 2004 promise made to leaders in labor, police, and the firefighters that he would leave their pensions alone in order to get his budget passed. Of course Schwarzenegger breaking promises should come as no surprise. According to nationally syndicated columnist Arianna Huffington, the governor recently called the state legislature "the source" of "all evil" plaguing the state." Huffington published a laun-

dry list of broken promises, including cutting up the state's credit card (state borrowing debt has risen 68 percent since Gray Davis was removed).

Sadly, some 40 percent of the union vote in California supported Schwarzenegger in the 2003 recall election. Hard to believe today that this pro-worker vote supported a man whose vetoes included a 50-cent minimum wage raise, health care coverage for the uninsured, a bill requiring employers to tell employees when their e-mail is being read, and even legislation that would penalize employers for locking workplace safety exits. According to a UC Davis study, Schwarzenegger also cut workers' compensation insurance benefits by 70 percent without the promised reduction in the cost of insurance. And this year he is even trying to take away mandated lunchtimes.

In a February Salon.com article, Assemblyman Mark Leno, D-San Francisco, says Schwarzenegger is blaming the cost of government on the working people of the state. Leno said the governor's attacks are not about saving money but are "mean-spirited."

What about the budget crisis?

Much of the disinformation spread by Schwarzenegger supporters in the coming months will be focused on our state's budget crisis. **Fact:** California is in economic trouble. **Fiction:** The governor's plan on privatizing pensions will solve that problem. **Reality:** The Schwarzenegger plan will not have any impact on the current budget **See "Public terminator," page 4**

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Coming to a polling place near you this November!

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"Taking money out of the private sector is a no-no because we don't want to feed the monster. We want to feed the private sector, and we want to starve the public sector."

—Gov. Schwarzenegger
Sacramento Bee, Jan. 19, 2005

Public Terminator 2005

Rated PR for public rip-off

My agenda:

- Privatize public employee pensions: PERS & STRS
- Stop socially responsible investment practices
- Confuse & cheat the public by playing the hero role
- Subvert the political process with big "special interest" corporate money
- Ban state employees from lobbying lawmakers
- Terminate national Social Security Insurance
- Storm U.S. Senate in Hummer
- Sit in the Oval Office, flick cigar ashes on the rug

Starring Arnie as a mad, out-of-control California governor • Featuring State Assemblyman Keith Richman (R) • Also starring the "girlie-men" • Scripting & national screenplay by Grover Norquist • Financed by corporate "special interests" (not "evil" interests like teachers, nurses & unions)

*Arnold's pet term for state legislators who dare to disagree Brought to you by GetActive Productions, CSUEU/SEU 2579

Social Security confusion and deception ...

Continued from page 1

less the economy tanks, the current system will be able to pay 73 percent of benefits in 2042 and remain solvent until 2052. Social Security actuaries forecast that, without any changes, the system will remain in the black and providing full benefits through 2042. After 2042, its liabilities will amount to less than one percent of nationwide income.

Many Greens believe that the Bush Administration's intention is neither to fix nor save Social Security but to destroy it. The plan is motivated by ideology and by the greed of Wall Street firms who will make billions off privatization. These lobbies, allied with think tanks with enormous influence in the Bush White House, especially the Heritage Foundation, Cato Institute, and American Enterprise Institute, have made no secret of their desire to dismantle Social Security.

In 1983, Cato published an article (see "Achieving a Leninist Strategy," <http://tinyurl.com/5tmrk>) urging destruction of Social Security, but, since it enjoyed both solvency and popularity, this would require telling the American people that the program would soon break down and that the only solution is privatization. The article emphasizes how this scheme will benefit financial corporations.

The same longtime goal was acknowledged in a Jan. 5, 2005, memo from White House political aide Peter Wehner, who wrote, "For the first time in six decades, the social security battle is one we can win." The administration, said Wehner, must "establish an important premise: the current system is heading toward an iceberg. We need to establish in the public mind a key fiscal fact: right now we are on an unsustainable course." Wehner claimed that private accounts would act as a wedge for future benefit cuts (see *The Guardian*, Jan. 20, 2005, <http://tinyurl.com/4sydp>). President Bush is adhering to the Cato plan in order to promote his plan," said Peggy Lewis, co-chair of

the Green Party of the United States. "His rhetoric about an 'ownership society' means ownership, control, and profits for corporations, and an assault on the security and democratic power of working people."

According to the GAO projections, American taxpayers face a financial deficit of close to \$43 trillion over the next 75 years, including \$3.7 trillion from Social Security and \$27 trillion from Medicare. Greens urge a more vigorous public debate about solutions to these shortfalls such as:

- Lifting the current cap on Social Security, which right now only taxes the first \$90,000 of wages.
- Means testing, one of the least examined solutions, according to which those who have a retirement income above a certain level would not be eligible for Social Security. Lowering payments to the rich, say Greens, is consistent with Social Security's role as insurance for people in need.
- Ending the federal government's removal of cash from the Social Security fund and replacing it with treasury notes, which will force the next generation to cover the cost when the notes become due.

See "Show Me the Money" by Mark Weisbrot (AlterNet, in the Feb. 19, 2005, edition <http://tinyurl.com/6oo3e>) on the fine-print expenses of President Bush's Social Security privatization plan.

Public terminator ...

Continued from page 3

crisis, since it won't even take effect until 2007. Furthermore, it will cost the state and municipalities billions of dollars in start-up costs.

One estimate for transition costs to move from one plan to another is \$7.6 billion just for teachers and state employees, with additional costs for counties, cities, and other municipalities. According to a CalPERS report, under this "pension overhaul" plan, estimated

Greenpeace: How a group of ecologists, journalists, and visionaries changed the world

A must read for Green organizers

Written by Rex Weyler, Rodale Press, 2004; Reviewed by Lisa Taylor

Greenpeace journalist and photographer, Rex Weyler, has written a fascinating tale of the coming of age of Greenpeace during the 1970s. An early member, he chronicles the group's transformation from rag tag hecklers into an organized global cultural phenomenon, going up against corporations and governments with the support of ordinary folks, writers, musicians, celebrities, and visionaries.

While tabling to promote the Green Party, we often hear passersby exclaim, "I love Greenpeace." Pleased by their enthusiasm, we wonder though if they know the difference between Greenpeace and the Green Party. Of course, we're happy for the goodwill spillover from the worldwide green movement!

While reading *Greenpeace*, I began to apply the perspective of a thirty-five year old movement to our Green Party organizing. I was impressed by the early awareness and savvy of Greenpeace in media relations. These are important lessons for third parties, considering the barriers we face in the electoral system and subsequent challenges in developing effective marketing and public-relations strategies.

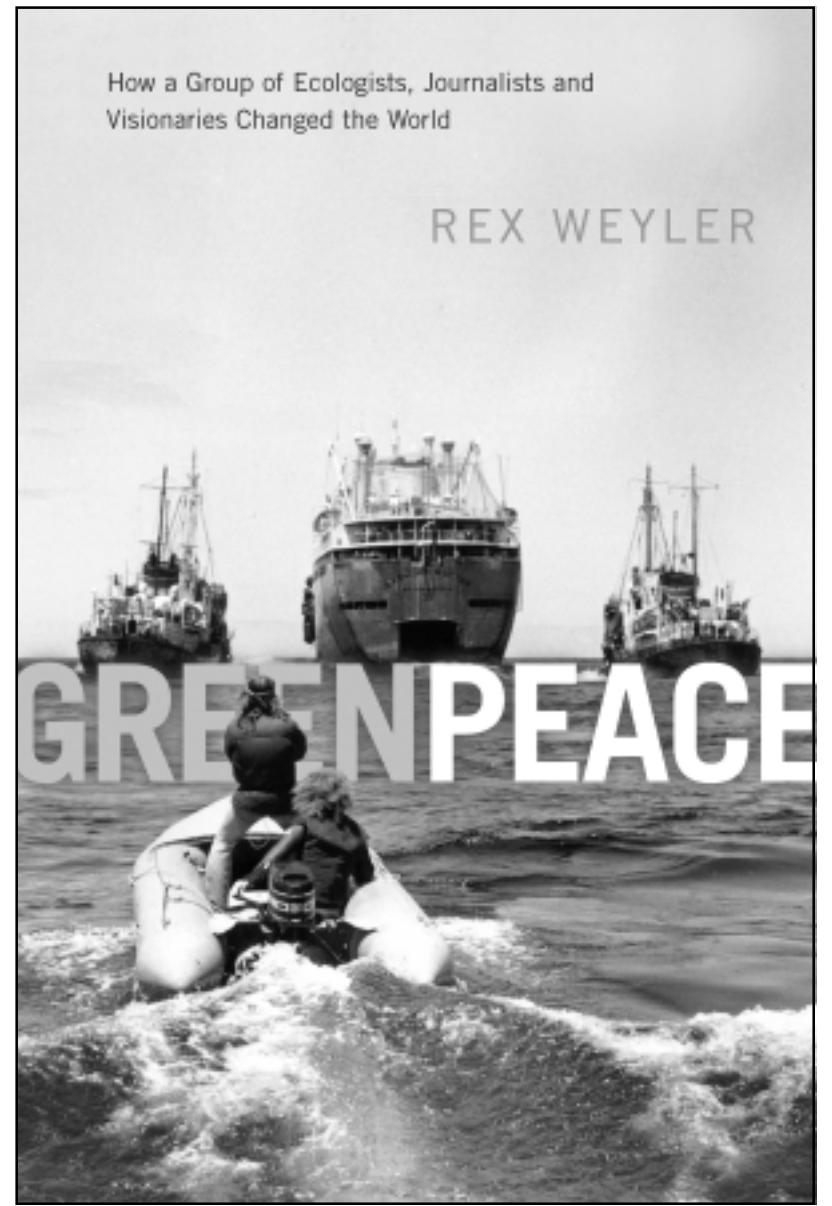
A mantra of Greenpeace was, "Money follows energy." Green Party members might find it surprising and somewhat consoling that Greenpeace was perpetually "broke" throughout their famous risky missions to save whales and stop nuclear testing. Broke, that is, until they got a buzz going for the next campaign.

Weyler's uncompromising examination of the internal struggles and growth of an activist organization is very useful. Green Party activists will identify with the factions that developed in Greenpeace: the street wise radicals, the entrepreneurs, the fragile mosaic of grassroots activists and leadership attempts to keep them all together!

At over six hundred pages, you might not read the entire book straight through (though I did and it kept me absorbed). At the very least, keep it on your shelf as an activist reference. *Greenpeace* is an engrossing story of high-seas activism, unlawful searches and seizures, espionage, false arrests, a few miracles, media manipulation, and a snapshot of mid-twentieth century politics.

And, of course, the issues still resonate today. As one Greenpeace member points out, "The sooner we get on with it, the better."

Lisa Taylor is the Volunteer Coordinator of the Los Angeles Greens.



"savings" don't show up for 20 years using the most conservative assumptions.

Here's another thing the governor and his allies don't mention: From 1998 to 2001, state and local government employers made little or no payments toward employee pensions because pension fund stock market investments were doing well. California State Employees Association (CSEA) President J.J. Jelincic estimates the savings to the state alone during that time was more than \$6 billion dollars.

Schwarzenegger conveniently compares that period—when government employers paid only about \$160 million for employee pensions—with the current payment of approximately \$2.6 billion to show that pensions are "out of control." But the fact is that what state and local governments are paying today is normal if you look at the overall numbers for the past 20 years.

Public employees have not been insensitive to the state fiscal crisis and have been doing our part to keep California moving. There are countless examples of deferred raises; accepting unpaid days off, undergoing layoffs and hiring freezes (which disrupts career development and family life); and continuing to work increased workloads. In 2004, a large number of state employees gave back five percent of their salaries and agreed to pay more for health insurance.

As the nation, so California?

The push to shift market risk onto retirees and retirees-to-be in California comes on the heels of a push within corporate America to do the same. For all their talk about an "ownership society" and the wonders of a market-driven economy, corporate America and "conservative" politicians refuse to take market risks, which undermines their own arguments. CSEA President Jelincic said in February, "I don't know of a single CEO with a 401(k) plan. They all have defined benefit plans."

CalPERS Boardmember Diehr said the public systems have "allowed government agencies to attract and retain quality employees even in the face of soaring housing costs and modest or zero salary increases." Taking them away may have "unintended and undesirable consequences" for California, he concluded.

Even UC Regent Gerald Parsky, a strong supporter of President Bush, questions the likely effects of watering down pensions. Parsky pointed out the increased difficulty of hiring the best of the best professors with a lesser package of benefits.

How about those greedy geezers?

A major disinformation tool being used by Schwarzenegger and his friends is the myth of greedy retirees breaking state and county budgets by retiring at age 50 with lavish \$100,000-a-year pensions. While there may be a handful of retirees who are that fortunate, the

average pension paid by CalPERS is \$20,000 a year for someone with nearly 20 years of service.

Retired state employee Linda Roberts, employed by the state for 17 years, says her disability pension is \$11,400 a year, not anywhere near \$100K. But even disability benefits may end with the passage of the Richman bill or ballot measure (remember, details to be worked out later).

Under the proposed "reform" as it is currently written, if a police officer were killed in his or her first year of duty, there would be no pension to a surviving family.

Switching to a defined contribution plan would likely eliminate cost of living increases (Colas) for the currently or soon to be retired as the defined benefit funds in CalPERS and CalSTRS begin shrinking. As the investment pool shrinks, so does the return. At the same time, the costs of investment management go up, eating up more potential benefits. With no one new paying in, it's just about guaranteed that benefits will have to shrink as the years go by.

Jelincic points out that privatizing pensions would be especially harmful to the female public employee because she is more likely to outlive a defined contribution plan. Women live longer than men. Women generally get paid less for comparable work. Women also are more likely to take unpaid career breaks to tend children or other family members, thus missing out on years of investment opportunity. After retirement funds dry up, these elderly women will be the state's responsibility.

A common refrain for state employees throughout the last few lean years of state budget shortfalls has been "at least we have our pensions." But now even those are in danger.

Arnold goes to "the people"

The governor and his alleged front group, Citizens to Save California, are pushing their so-called pension reform this year, instead of waiting until the regularly scheduled governor's race next year, in order to avoid new campaign-finance restrictions. These rules restrict candidates' fund-raising on ballot initiatives. So in order to hold his lavish \$100,000 fund-raisers around the country, the governor has to bring it before "the people" this year, sticking them with the \$50-70 million bill.

Perhaps the governor believes that the Democratically controlled legislature will be willing to strike a deal and is using his three radical proposals to force some sort of compromise.

But unless the petition drive fails,

this fight will be decided at the ballot box, rather than in the legislature. California is one battlefield in a much larger war. "Corporations wish to do away with any influence on how they behave," CSUEU President Pat Gantt. "They want to be free to invest to maximize their profits. But we're fighting for freedom too, freedom to earn a decent wage and to expect a safe and secure retirement after years of service to the state."

Get active. Hold the line.

For further information, check out CSEA's Pension Attack News at www.calcsea.org/president/pension-index.asp. Russell Kilday-Hicks <rkilhick@sfsu.edu> works at SFSU and is a labor and Green Party activist. Hylah Jacques and Steve Melhman helped with this article.

Ten Key Values of the Greens

- Grassroots Democracy**—Develop participatory ways to control the decisions which affect our lives.
- Social Justice**—Create a system which promotes equality and dignity for all.
- Nonviolence**—Develop alternatives to current patterns of violence at all levels.
- Ecological Wisdom**—Operate our human society knowing we are a part of nature, and learn to live within the ecological and resource limits of the planet.
- Decentralization**—Move power and responsibility away from larger and more distant institutions toward individuals and communities, with the goal of a decentralized, democratic society.
- Community-Based Economics**—Redesign work to encourage employee ownership and workplace democracy, and establish basic security for all and a fair distribution of wealth and income.
- Feminism**—Replace the ethic of dominance and control with cooperative ways of relating to each other.
- Respect for Diversity**—Honor cultural, ethnic, racial, sexual, religious and spiritual diversity, reclaiming our country's shared ideals—the dignity of the individual, democratic participation and liberty and justice for all.
- Personal and Global Responsibility**—Learn from and be of genuine assistance to grassroots groups in all parts of the world.
- Sustainability**—Act not for the short range narrow interest of one country or group of people, but for the collective future of the entire planet.

Los Diez Valores Fundamentales del Partido Verde

- Sabiduría Ecológica**—Debemos actuar en la sociedad humana con el entendimiento de que somos parte de la naturaleza, y aprender a vivir dentro de los límites económicos y de los recursos del planeta.
- Democracia de Bases**—Elaboración de sistemas participatorios que nos alienten a controlar las decisiones que nos afectan la vida.
- Justicia Social**—Creación de un sistema que promueva la igualdad y la dignidad de todas las personas.
- No Violencia**—Encontrar alternativas para erradicar los patrones actuales de violencia a todo nivel, y al mismo tiempo eliminar la injusticia y sentido de impotencia que conducen a la misma.
- Descentralización**—Transferir el poder y la responsabilidad de instituciones grandes y lejanas a los individuos y comunidades, siendo la meta eventual una sociedad democrática y descentralizada.
- Economía Basada en la Comunidad**—Rediseño de las estructuras de trabajo para fomentar la propiedad para los empleados y la democracia en el trabajo, al mismo tiempo que se establece una seguridad básica para todos y una distribución justa de la riqueza y los ingresos.
- Feminismo**—Sustituir la ética de dominación y control por la de relaciones de cooperación.
- Respeto por la Diversidad**—Respeto a la diversidad cultural, étnica, racial, sexual, religiosa y espiritual, volviendo a los ideales compartidos de nuestro país: la dignidad de cada persona, la participación democrática, y libertad y justicia para todos.
- Responsabilidad Personal y Global**—Debemos aprender de los grupos de base del resto del mundo y ser de verdadera ayuda para ellos.
- Sostenibilidad**—Pensar en términos del futuro colectivo del planeta entero, no en los estrechos intereses de corto plazo de un país o grupo de personas.



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