

The
Cowtown Humanist

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 May 2004, Volume 6, Number 2 May 15, 2004 Editors: [Jim Cheatham](#) & [Michael Rivera](#)

MEDIA NOT TO BLAME FOR MORALS, SAYS DR JONES

ACLU'S JIM CORNEHLS TO DISCUSS PATRIOT ACT AT MAY MEETING

RUSSELL WILL TALK ABOUT SMART RECOVERY PROGRAM IN JUNE

ACTOR TELLS APRIL MEETING CENSORSHIP WILL NOT IMPROVE OUR MANNERS AND MORALS

by Jim Cheatham

Every time you get a censor you get a fool, and worse yet, a knave, pretending to be a guardian of morality while acting as a guardian of class greed.

Upton Sinclair

Probably few liberals and libertarians would attribute the current brouhaha about what is seen and heard on the electronic media to class greed. Most would probably see it rather as pandering to ignorance and prudery for political gain. Michael Powell, Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), responding to the outcry of bluenoses at Janet Jackson's partial disrobement during half time at Super Bowl XXXIII, is again wielding the FCC's media



oversight powers. A previously mostly dormant authority to curb nudity and vulgar language has been revitalized. Howard Stern is gone from Clear Channel, CBS has made obeisance for the unseemly exposure of February 1 and NBC has changed a health-care

program to avoid baring too much of an elderly patient's anatomy. What next? If Senator Zech Miller (D-GA) has his way, the current restrictions on what can be shown and said on "family" channels will be extended to all channels, including HBO and other adult entertainment. Shades of the Legion of Decency!

Our speaker, Dr. Edward Jones, says bosh! to all the hue and cry that the media are corrupting American tastes and morals. Brooklyn-born, Jones worked for several years as an actor in New York until, deciding that the stage would never be sufficiently gratifying, he joined the military where he was to spend the next 26 years. Since then, he has developed entrepreneurial talents in the healthcare field. Now in retirement, he occasionally takes a character role on the local stage.

Public entertainments have long borne the stigma of undermining moral fiber. Roman moralists lamented the emperors' employment of bread and circuses (*panem et circenses*) to retain the loyalty of the urban masses. Over time the demands of the mob became rather insatiable: ever more grain and ever more spectacle. What started out as horse races and nonlethal gladiatorial displays at the Colosseum were to degenerate into human/animal fights and human/human death struggles. In Jones' view, it wasn't that the entrepreneurs who were staging these exhibitions were luring customers with ever more cruel displays of violence; rather it was an unruly Roman public that expected as much as the price of its patronage.

According to Jones, people in general have a poor understanding of statistical theory. They take note of instances in which individuals appear to be acting on the examples seen in the movies or on a television program ("Tommy sees program in which son kills father, Tommy shoots Dad") From random INSTANCES such as this people often generalize, invalidly, that the media are to blame for much socially undesirable behavior. (Probably, at best, what is enacted is only the immediate spur to a reprehensible act, not the underlying cause.) People are essentially getting what they willingly pay for. He argues

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FCC Cracks Down on Vulgarity

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that books, television, plays, and other sources of entertainment do not make people any better or any worse.

Jenkins and Le Haye won't change the morals of their readership since they are believers already; war pictures don't make people any the less ready to take up arms; Hester Prynne's "A", publicly displayed, didn't curb the illicit appetites of New England puritans.

Some of the 14 Humanists present demurred at the notion that the relationship is totally one-way: Television, the movies, the press, *etc.* are not just passive instruments serving up what is ordered. They also create demand for their products. Whatever your views on the relationship of media and public, all who could not be with us missed a stimulating discussion by a masterful polymath.

CORNEHLS TO SPEAK ON PATRIOT ACT FOR MAY MEETING

By Michael Rivera

Dr. Jim Cornehl, Professor and Director of the Graduate Certificate Program in Law and Public Policy at the University of Texas at Arlington, will give an update on the USA PATRIOT Act and its relation to censorship. You may recall that Dr. Cornehl was originally slated to speak at the January meeting but, because of his teaching obligations, postponed his talk until the May meeting.

There are some encouraging developments in opposition to the Act, but an equal amount of discouraging developments with regard to its use. In a recent speech, Dr. Cornehl asserted that the PATRIOT Act potentially violates six of the original ten amendments in the Bill of Rights. Don't miss what promises to be an enlightening discussion.

An attorney at law, Dr. Cornehl's expertise includes Civil Rights & Urban Minorities, Urban Economics, Environmental Law & Policy, and Political Economy. He currently holds

a professorial position at the University of Texas at Arlington.

CENSORSHIP AND THE MEDIA

Compiled by Jim Cheatham

FCC CRACKS DOWN ON VULGARITY

The Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) recent decision imposing \$495,000 in fines on Clear Channel for broadcasting an episode of the Howard Stern Show focused on a segment containing "repeated flatulence sound effects." Presumably the FCC now regards flatulence jokes as grounds for taking away a broadcast license. Another FCC edict holds that broadcasters can lose their licenses even for "isolated or fleeting" swear words, a doctrine arising from a single gerund uttered at the 2003 Golden Globes. Threatened with the possible loss of licenses, Clear Channel dropped Stern from its six stations. He remains on 35 other stations, but no one can say for how long. The FCC is using his unpopularity as cover to throw out decades of free speech law. The FCC's inclusion of profanity, which it concedes is often synonymous with "blasphemy" means that the most commonplace of divine imprecations such as "Go to Hell" are now actionable. The combination of unknowable rules and draconian penalties is already having a chilling effect. There are reports of radio stations banning classic songs like Lou Reed's "Walk on the Wild Side" and Elton John's "The Bitch is Back." (Editorially, the Times comments: It's all part of a silly, but potentially dangerous election-year crackdown spawned by that famous wardrobe malfunction during the Superbowl broadcast. Congress is considering legislation that would drastically raise fines for broadcasters, as well as for individual performers, for violating vague decency standards. Under one proposed bill a broadcaster would automatically lose its license after three violations. ...Tony Soprano's foul

speech is constitutionally protected.) NYT.

DISNEY BLOCKS DISTRIBUTION OF FILM CRITICIZING BUSH

The Walt Disney Company is blocking its Miramax division from distributing a new documentary by Michael Moore that harshly criticizes President Bush, executives at both Disney and Miramax said on May 4. Disney was heavily criticized by conservatives last May after the disclosure that Miramax had agreed to finance the film when Icon Productions, Mel Gibson's company, backed out. Reportedly, Michael Eisner, Disney's chief executive, is concerned that it would endanger tax breaks Disney receives for its theme parks, hotels and other ventures in Florida, whose governor is Jeb Bush. Disney, on the other hand, claims that it tries not to alienate either Republicans or Democrats. Moore commented: "Should this be happening in a free society where the moneyed interests call the shots regarding the information that the public is allowed to see?" (NYT)

NEW INTERNET SITE SURVEYS RIGHT WING TALK SHOWS

David Brock, the former right-wing journalist famous for trashing Anita Hill but now turned liberal, has started a new Internet site to monitor the conservative media and correct erroneous assertions in real time. The site is designed to combat the overwhelming influence of conservative commentators like Rush Limbaugh and Bill O'Reilly. Brock hopes that it will provide fodder for fledgling liberal radio talk shows, including those of the comedians [Al Franken](#) and [Janeane Garofalo](#). Check it out at www.mediamatters.org. (NYT)

LEGAL ISSUES*Compiled by Jim Cheatham & Michael Rivera***HIGH COURT HEARS HAMD AND PADILLA CASES**

A lawyer challenging the Bush administration's terrorism detentions told a skeptical Supreme Court April 28 that citizens could be "locked up all over the country tomorrow, with no opportunity to be heard," if the Court allows his client to be deprived of due process, which is every American's right. Representing one of two U.S. citizens challenging their imprisonment as enemy combatants, lawyer Frank Dunham said this country has never authorized detentions without providing the "opportunity to be heard, to say, 'Hey, I am an innocent person.'" Deputy Solicitor General Paul Clement, arguing for the government, said the president has near-unchallengeable power to detain enemy combatants, even if they are U.S. citizens. He said that power was affirmed when Congress authorized the president to do everything necessary to win the war on terror and prevent attacks. A majority of the justices expressed some degree of concern over the breadth of the administration's position. Justice O'Connor asked Clements why "a neutral decision maker of some kind" could not be provided to determine whether a detainee is being properly held. "Is that so extreme that it should not be required?" she asked. Despite the justices' evident discomfort, it was far from clear at the end of the day that the court would tell the administration that it had gone too far, either in the case of Yaser Esam Hamdi, an American-born Saudi who was seized in Afghanistan, or Jose Padilla, a Chicagoan taken into custody at O'Hare Airport. (Knight Ridder; NYT)

COMPUTER STUDENT ON TRIAL FOR AID TO MUSLIM WEB SITES

A Saudi graduate student at the University of Idaho is on trial in Moscow, ID, accused of plotting to aid and to maintain Islamic Web sites that

promote jihad. The student helped to maintain Internet sites with links to groups that praised suicide bombings in Chechnya and in Israel. But he himself does not hold those views, his lawyers said. He role was like that of a technical editor, they said, arguing that he could not be held criminally liable for what others wrote. Civil libertarians claim the case poses a landmark test of what people can do or whom they can associate with in the age of terror alerts. It is one of the few times anyone has been prosecuted under language of the USA Patriot Act, which makes it a crime to provide "expert guidance or assistance" to groups deemed terrorist. "Somebody who fixes a fax machine that is owned by a group that may advocate terrorism could be liable," said David Cole, a Georgetown University law professor who argued against the expert guidance part of the law this year in a case where it was struck down by a federal judge. The state's senior senator, Larry Craig, and Representative C.L. Otter, both Republicans, have sponsored bills to amend the act, which they have called a threat to civil liberties. (NYT)

9/11 PANEL CALLS IMMIGRATION PROGRAMS INEFFECTIVE

The Commission investigating the 9/11 terrorist attacks has concluded that immigration policies promoted as essential to keeping the country safe from future attacks have been largely ineffective, producing little, if any, information leading to the identification or apprehension of terrorists. Commission findings also held that the hijackers probably would have postponed their strike if the U.S. government had announced the arrest of suspected terrorist Zacarias Moussaoui in August 2001 or had publicized fears that he intended to hijack jetliners. The report disparaged a program that requires additional screening for visa applications from 26 predominantly Muslim countries: "no terrorists have been uncovered" by the effort. The commission also criticized the Absconder Apprehension Initiative. So far, the report said, "We have not

learned that any of the absconders were deported under a terrorism statute, prosecuted for terrorist-related crimes or linked in any way to terrorism" (NYT)

FBI GOT RECORDS ON AIR TRAVELERS

In the days after 9/11, the nation's largest airlines turned over millions of passenger records to the FBI, airline and law enforcement officials acknowledged April 30. Records typically included names, addresses, travel destinations and credit card numbers. In the past, airlines have routinely provided data, but typically requests concerned the passengers on a single flight, or the travel patterns of an individual passenger. There is no indication that the passenger data produced any significant evidence about the plot or the hijackers, a FBI official said. "It certainly takes the airline privacy issue to a new level, because it's much more material than we've ever seen disclosed," said David Sobel, the general counsel for the Electronic Privacy Information Center, a high-tech policy and advocacy group in Washington. Successful litigation by travelers, however, is probably precluded by the fact that most airline policies include a provision reserving the right to comply with law enforcement requests without violating any privacy provisions.. (NYT)

BUSH SHOULD BE SUPPORTING PATRIOT ACT AMENDMENT

Among the most troubling provisions is Section 215, which allows the FBI to order libraries, hospitals and others with personal records to hand over such information about individuals. People like librarians can be jailed if they refuse, or if they notify the targets. Another authorizes "sneak and peek" searches, in which the government can secretly search people's homes and delay telling them about the intrusions. As troubling as specific provisions like these is the "mission creep" that has inevitably occurred. Mr. Bush's own Justice Department told Congress last fall that the act's loosened restrictions

on government surveillance were regularly being used in non-terrorism cases, like drug trafficking and white-collar crime. (NYT Editorial)

SUPREME COURT REFUSES TO BLOCK SAME-SEX MARRIAGES

The U.S. Supreme Court refused Friday to block the nation's first state-sanctioned gay marriages from taking place in Massachusetts, starting Monday. The justices declined without comment to intervene and block clerks from issuing marriage licenses to gay couples. The state's highest court had ruled in November that the state Constitution allows gay couples to marry, and declared that the process would begin Monday.

The U.S. Supreme Court's decision, in an emergency appeal filed Friday by gay marriage opponents, does not address the merits of the argument that the state Supreme Judicial Court overstepped its bounds with the landmark decision. (FWST)

CHURCH & STATE

Compiled by Jim Cheatham

AMERICANS SUPPORT SEPARATION, OPPOSE CLERGY POLITICKING

A majority of Americans believe it is important that the nation maintain the separation of church and state, a new poll indicates. Fifty-nine percent of Americans said maintaining separation of church and state is important. Another 19 percent said it is of medium importance. Only 18 percent said it is not important. The poll, conducted by Zogby International for The Interfaith Alliance, also showed that a large majority of Americans oppose pulpit-based politicking. Asked if religious leaders should endorse candidates from the pulpit or in their official capacities as clergy, 76 percent said no. Eighteen percent supported church-based politicking. (C&S)

I cannot imagine a God who rewards and punishes the objects of his creation, whose purposes are modeled after our own—a God, in short, who is but a reflection of human frailty. Neither can I believe that the individual survives the death of his body, although feeble souls harbor such thoughts through fear or ridiculous egotism. It is enough for me to contemplate the mystery of conscious life perpetuating itself through all eternity, to reflect up the marvelous structure of the universe which we can dimly perceive, and to try humbly to comprehend even an infinitesimal part of the intelligence manifested in nature.

Albert Einstein, Column for the *New York Times*, 11/9/30

SALVATION ARMY SUED FOR RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION

Current and former employees of the Salvation Army in New York are suing the organization, charging that the group took tax funds and imposed religious qualifications on its workers. The 18 plaintiffs say they were forced to give the Salvation Army information about their personal religious beliefs and provide information about other employees' sexual orientations and church affiliations. Their case is being sponsored by the New York Civil Liberties Union. The Salvation Army receives millions in tax dollars every year to provide social services of various kinds. (C&S)

'COMMANDMENTS JUDGE' PUSHES COURT-STRIPPING BILL

Former Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore is seeking congressional help to overturn federal court decisions that ban government-sponsored display of the Ten Commandments and other official acknowledgments of religion. His proposed "Constitution Restoration Act," which has the support of several senators, would amend U.S. law to strip the Supreme Court's power to hear cases involving government acknowledgement of God as the sovereign source of law, liberty, or government." The measure, which would apply to both past and future cases, also forbids lower federal courts from hearing such disputes. There are also at least three other bills in the Congress that seek to limit the authority of federal courts to decide

cases involving religion and government. (C&S)

SOUTH CAROLINA PERMITS AFFIRMATIONS

The South Carolina Supreme Court ruled on March 15 that state citizens do not have to swear a mandatory oath to God in order to serve on a jury. Circuit Judge Marc Westbrook was wrong to dismiss a Lee County juror who would not agree to say "so help me God" when taking the oath, the court ruled. Robert Woodham, who is not religious, challenged the law. (Freethought Today)

HIGH COURT REJECTS MEALTIME PRAYER CASE

The Supreme Court refused on April 27 to consider an appeal by the state of Virginia to permit the state-sponsored Virginia Military Institute to return to the practice of dinner-hour prayers. Two lower federal courts had declared the cadet-led prayers unconstitutional. Scalia and Rehnquist were the only two justices favoring a hearing of the appeal. (NYT)

FLORIDA JUDGE STRIKES DOWN 'TERRI LAW'

Circuit Judge Douglas Baird has ruled that 'Terri's Law', pushed through the legislature by Gov. Jeb Bush to keep brain-damaged Terri Schiavo on life-support systems, is unconstitutional because it violates the disabled woman's right to privacy and delegates legislative power to the governor. The judge said that Bush did not spell out

any compelling state interest that would be adequate to override Schiavo's rights. Both sides said the case could go before the Florida Supreme Court. (AP)

FDA BLOCKS SALE OF MORNING-AFTER PILLS

The Food and Drug Administration [rejected over-the-counter sales](#) of morning-after birth control pills May 6 citing concern about teen-agers' use of the pills. But regulators left open the possibility that they will reconsider. Easier access to emergency contraception, it is claimed, could halve the nation's three million unintended pregnancies each year. The FDA's move will "have a negative impact on public health," said Dr. Alastair Wood of Vanderbilt University, one of the FDA advisers who voted for over-the-counter sales. (AP)

RELIGION IN THE NEWS

Compiled by Jim Cheatham & Michael Rivera

SOME CATHOLICS QUESTION NARROW FOCUS OF CHURCH

Some Catholics are questioning the narrow focus of their bishops on the issue of abortion, threatening to deny communion to Catholic politicians such as John Kerry who support the "right to choose." Catholic publications, educators and elected officials are also warning that church leaders may appear hypocritical or partisan if they condemn Kerry because he favors abortion rights while they say nothing about Catholic governors who allow executions, Catholic members of Congress who support the Iraq war or Catholic officials at all levels who ignore the church's teachings on social justice. (WP)

'VISIONS' BEHIND THE PASSION

Those interested in the sources of Mel Gibson's *Passion* will want to take a look at Joe Nickell's article in the May/June issue of *Skeptical Inquirer*. While it is scarcely any secret that much of the storyline came from some place other than the Gospels, there has been relatively little commentary on sources for his portrayal of Caiaphas and Pilate. In fact, much of his information came from a book published in 1833 relating the visions of a German nun, Anne Catherine Emmerich (1774-1824). Gibson reportedly was surprised at the enthusiasm of Protestant evangelicals for his film. Perhaps they have forgotten why Luther and Calvin took leave of Rome.

FAITH-BASED GROUP AT COURTHOUSE STIRS CONCERN

In the Civil Courts Building downtown Fort Worth, volunteer chaplains of NewDay Services offer prayers, support and a listening ear to families going through divorce, child custody battles and other legal traumas. It's a marriage of faith-based assistance and secular services, of public property and private beliefs. "We made it clear to them it was not supposed to be faith-based," said Randy Catterton, one of six family court judges who signed a 1/15/97 letter asking the court to grant space for New Day. County Administrator G.K. Maenius said he will meet with NewDay officials to clarify the agency's role and activities in the courthouse. "They are prohibited from engaging in religious practices in a public building. If there are religious activities going on, we are going to ask them not to do that. Prayer is obviously a religious activity." (FWST)

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR CLERGY SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN PROVES DIFFICULT

When the Boston Globe finally spotlighted the issue of sexual abuse of children by clergy, everyone agreed something had to be done. But sadly, the solutions have so far have been neither far-reaching nor effective.

What happened? The story dropped from the headlines. And the solutions often got lost in the machinations of the legislatures and the powers that be. It takes incredible doggedness to keep political institutions focused on an issue, especially when the media's attentions have shifted elsewhere. The record to date for legislatures and prosecutors dealing with clergy abuse is mixed, at best. (Findlaw Commentary)

TOP OF THE NEWS

Compiled by Jim Cheatham & Michael Rivera

MORE CHARGES ADMINISTRATION MANIPULATING SCIENCE

Last month's Newsletter reported charges made by the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) that the Bush administration had manipulated scientific research and information and appointments to scientific advisory committees to the government. Reportedly, there is a widespread feeling among scientists that Bush is ignoring scientific results and opinions he does not like in other fields than the medical and environmental areas. In August 2003 the House of Representatives Committee on Government Reform made claims similar to those of the UCS report. But it also observed widespread scientific unease about the feasibility of the missile defense systems proposed by the administration, as has the American Physical Society (APS), a

professional organization for physicists in America. The APS report concluded that boost-phase missile defense, one element of the system planned by the Bush administration, would be ineffective. "America's current military prowess has been achieved, in large part, because the country has listened to and lauded its physicists and engineers. Spending billions on technology that most of them believe will not work is, at the least, a dubious approach. Politicians can cheat nature no more effectively than scientists can." (The Economist)

MASSACHUSETTS TO BRING BACK DEATH PENALTY?

A commission appointed by Gov. Mitt Romney has come up with what it considers the first virtually foolproof system for carrying out the death penalty and Romney is expected to use it to bring back capital punishment to the state, where it was abolished two decades ago. The bar for imposing the death penalty would be raised from "beyond a reasonable doubt" to a finding of "no doubt about the defendant's guilt." The commission has also proposed that a defendant in a capital case be given the option of facing two separate juries: one for trial and, if convicted, a second for sentencing. The plan embraces ten proposals to assure against wrongful guilt findings. One expert claimed that the recommendations ran the risk of making the criteria so narrow that "no one is going to be executed under this law." Some death penalty opponents have acknowledged that the plan would reduce the possibility of wrongful death sentences and racial disparities in sentencing. A November University of Massachusetts poll found that 54 percent wanted the death penalty reinstated. (NYT)

STEM-CELL RESEARCH RE-EMERGES AS POLITICAL ISSUE

The debate over embryonic stem-cell research is re-emerging as an election issue as advocates for patients,

including Nancy Reagan, press the president to loosen the limits on federal financing. The Juvenile Diabetes Foundation, for one, says the Bush policy of not allowing embryos to be destroyed with federal dollars is impeding research on cures for diabetes. Despite some congressional Republican support for a less inflexible policy, a White House spokesman said on May 5 that the president would stick to his guns on this issue. (NYT)

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH JOINS TACO BELL BOYCOTT

The United Methodist Church recently became the largest U.S. church body to join a [boycott against Taco Bell](#), urging the fast-food giant to improve working conditions for migrant tomato-pickers of Immokalee, Fl. ([FWST](#))

HoFW NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

OFFICERS ELECTED AT MAY MEETING

Officers for the next twelve months will be elected at our May meeting. If you are interested in serving, make that fact known at our pre-speaker session 7:00 p.m. May 18. Please remember to bring a can of food for the needy.

Please also join us at **China Jade**, 5274 S Hulen St, for dinner prior to the meeting, 5:30pm.

Board Meeting Minutes

The meeting was called to order by Chair, Russell Elleven at Westside UU Church after the monthly meeting.

Present : Dolores Ruhs, Reed Bilz, Jim Cheatham, Mike Rivera, and Russell Elleven

Minutes: The minutes of the January 20, 2004 board meeting were approved as distributed.

Treasurer: The balance in the treasury is \$768.59

Memberships: We currently have 22 paid memberships.

Meetings: We will hold elections at the May meeting before the speaker gives his presentation. The slate of officers is Don Ruhs, Chair; Jim Cheatham, Vice-Chair; Reed Bilz, Secretary; Dolores Ruhs, Treasurer; Michael Rivera, Newsletter; and Jeff Rodriguez and Russell Elleven, Programs. Russell will continue to serve as Webmaster.

Russell will be our speaker on June 15. He will tell us about the SMART Recovery program and an opportunity for HoFW to participate.

The picnic will be July 18 at Trinity Park, 1-6 p.m. Dolores will reserve a space/pavilion at a cost not to exceed \$100.

***Editor's Note:** Dolores was as good as her word. She not only reserved the Trinity Park Art Pavilion July 18th from 1-6 PM, she did it for much less than the maximum allotted. A big thanks to Dolores!*

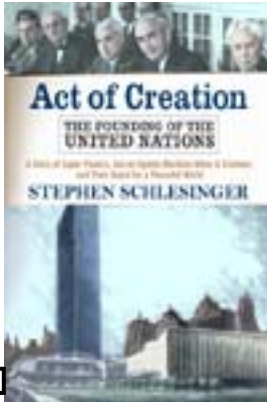
We discussed possible speakers: Don Ruhs, Ingersoll; Reed Bilz, Mother Goose and Politics; FWPD Community Officer; Rita Cotterly, Sex Education. Other suggestions should be given to Jeff Rodriguez.

Board meeting minutes will be published in the newsletter.

Reed K. Bilz, Secretary

BOOK CORNER

by Jim Cheatham



Act of Creation: The Founding of the United Nations, by Stephen C. Schlesinger. (2003)

A year ago, a number of pundits of neo-conservative persuasion were wondering whether the United Nations had any future. It seemed to no longer serve U.S. policy interests; a vigorous president and his White House and Pentagon teams were establishing U.S. hegemony. The rest of the world would have to learn to like it or stuff it. What a difference a couple of months can make in politics! The Iraqi *intifada* has demonstrated once again, if nothing else, that a people will not necessarily obligingly suffer foreign domination however benevolent the avowed intentions of the invader. In his first press conference of the year, Bush told a national audience that he was counting on Kofi Annan's envoy Lakdhar Brahimi to find a government to which Paul Bremer can turn over "sovereignty" on June 30. As Newsweek's Eleanor Cliff predicted several months ago, the Bush administration would become a lot more pliable as U.S. casualties mounted and the presidential election neared.

Now is not a bad time to take a look at how the United Nations came into being. Probably much of the American public would be surprised, especially given all the opprobrium heaped on it by U.S. government and Congress and by much of the media in recent years, that the United Nations is largely an American creation. And it wasn't something imposed by a suspect Roosevelt administration on an unwilling nation. In fact, polls at the

time indicated overwhelming public support for a new "League of Nations" and the Senate vote RATIFYING the agreement was 89-2.

FDR had decided even before U.S. entry into World War II that a new, much revised international organization would be needed to keep the peace in a post-war era. He was, however, to find little enthusiasm in his Big Three counterparts for a follow-up organization to the defunct League of Nations. Stalin was presumably still irked by the League's dumping the USSR following the 1939 invasion of Finland and Churchill was worried, knowing FDR's coolness to colonialism, about the erosion of the British Empire by a supranational institution with a politically idealistic agenda. FDR had his way at Yalta in February 1945; the groundwork for the United Nations was laid; and a conference of 45 nations meeting in San Francisco on April 25 was called. FDR was to die 18 days before the beginning of that meeting and a month before the end of hostilities in Europe. The burden of maintaining the momentum was to fall on Harry Truman who had scarcely been briefed about what had occurred at Yalta or much of anything else not also available to everyone else in the political establishment.

Stephen Schlesinger has written a workman-like account of the events leading up to and at the San Francisco meeting and given a vivid portrait of the chief personalities implementing the UN's founding. It is noteworthy that the U.S. delegation to the meeting consisting of several strong personalities was not of one mind about the UN charter. Guarding against a failure of U.S. endorsement a la Wilson, FDR had been careful to get prominent Republicans on board, notably Senator Vandenberg of Michigan, the ranking Republican on

It's quite nice when you've been generally dissed about your irrelevancy and then suddenly have people coming on bended knee and saying we need you to come back.

Edward Mortimer, senior aide to Kofi Annan

the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, and Harold Stassen, then ex-Gov. of Minnesota, and a strong proponent of international institutions. His Secretary of State, Edward Stettinius, was a Republican as was the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, Nelson Rockefeller. (Latin America was particularly important since that region was to have initially almost half of the votes in the General Assembly.) John Foster Dulles was there to give legal counsel. Among the Democrats were Adlai Stevenson, eventually to become the U.S. press spokesman, and Averell Harriman, our Ambassador to Moscow. San Francisco being in California a dull affair was scarcely to be anticipated. Several of the movie industry, among them Lana Turner, showed up as well as Hollywood gossip columnists. Notable among the press corps was 27-year old John F. Kennedy reporting for a Hearst newspaper.

There was a lot of back and forth with the Russians over the admission of a communist-dominated Polish government and of a fascist Argentine regime (very important to mostly politically conservative Latin America). The fact that the U.S. was paying most of the bills presumably didn't lessen U.S. influence with many of the participants and the fact that the U.S. was reading everyone's diplomatic traffic, except that of the USSR and UK, must have made it somewhat easier to find a modus operandi on contentious issues. Among them were the Security Council veto powers of the Big Five, the admission of the Ukraine and Belarus (to offset the UK's dominion votes and the US's Latin American votes) and the role of regional institutions. The conference lasted more than twice as long as anticipated; diplomacy, however, eventually prevailed. Perhaps of those present the comments of John F. Kennedy best sum up on what had been achieved: "Things can't be forced

from the top...you must measure its accomplishments against its possibilities...it made war more difficult." (At least war among the major powers.)

A must read for foreign policy wonks, Act of Creation should be of interest to anyone believing the United Nations must have a larger role in world governance.

HoFW Events

May Meeting

The next regular HoFW meeting will be May 18 at 7:00 pm at West Side UU

Church. Dr. Jim Cornehl, Professor and Director of the Graduate Certificate Program in Law and Public Policy at the University of Texas at Arlington, will give an update on the USA PATRIOT Act and its relation to censorship. Mark the occasion down in big red letters on your calendar.

June Meeting

The regular HoFW meeting will be Tuesday, June 15 at West Side Unitarian Church. Our own Russell Elleven will speak about the [SMART recovery program](#) and HoFW's opportunity to participate.

Adopt-A-Street Trash Pick-up

Our next Adopt-a-Street pick-up will be Saturday, June 12, 2004 at 10 a.m. Kimberly and Michael Rivera will coordinate this effort. Those of you who would like to beat the heat and start earlier can simply leave your full bags at the roadside where the coordinators will pick them up. Usual meeting place is at the Osteopathic Family Medicine Clinic parking lot on the corner of Granbury Road and South University Drive. The address is 3750 S University Dr, Fort Worth.

HUMANISTS OF FORT WORTH

% Michael J. Rivera

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