Autumn of Empire

Mad Sheep
A Vermont Farm Family Challenges National Animal Identification

By Linda Faillace

The National Animal Identification System (NAIS) is the latest in a series of Orwellian schemes developed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to promote corporate agriculture while weakening, if not destroying, small farms across America.

The stated goal of the program is “to establish a system that can identify all premises and animals that have had direct contact with a foreign animal disease or a domestic disease of concern within 48 hours of discovery.” Anyone who owns poultry, deer, elk, horses, goats, sheep, cattle, llamas, alpacas, pigs, and/or fish will be impacted by the proposed program.

Twenty years ago, the United States maintained the treasured reputation of having the safest food supply. Yet today, more and more U.S. agricultural products are banned from export. What happened? Along with destroying the organic standards, the USDA has repeatedly pushed unwanted products are banned from export. What happened? Along with destroying the organic standards, the USDA has repeatedly pushed unwanted standards, the USDA has repeatedly pushed unwanted...
Editorial

Empire’s Fall: Walking Toward A New Vermont

Five years ago this past September, key members of the U.S. intelligence and political elite successfully orchestrated the most powerful "false flag" operation in modern world history. Nineteen Arab "terrorists" – individuals trained, funded, and armed from within the United States empire’s own largely secretive intelligence networks – took the blame for the World Trade Center towers’ collapse and the deaths of more than 3,000 individuals. The subsequent "shock and awe" engendered by the 9/11 attacks has generated a whole host of consequences, including the launching of a "war on terror" with no end and the curtailing of civil liberties here at home, and the militant expansion of the U.S. empire’s policy of "full spectrum dominance" as it wages resource wars and practices "disaster capitalism" throughout the world.

Or so many thoughtful journalists, scientists, theologians and independent investigators claim, in close to one dozen exhaustively researched and carefully sourced books that are routinely ignored by the editors at CNN, The Nation, FOX, and the New York Times.

What could possibly justify U.S.-based imperial elites even contemplating attacking ordinary U.S. citizens? Many motives exist, but perhaps such desperation is best understood by considering the emerging "trifecta" of seemingly intractable problems that threaten U.S. global hegemony: human-induced planetary climate change, global Peak Oil (the increasing scarcity of cheap and abundant fossil fuel energy), and the impending implosion of a corporate economy fueled by Petro-dollars. The many faces of the so-called "war on terror" offer a convenient smoke screen for these "inconvenient truths," ones that we ignore at our own peril.

And to borrow a phrase from Vermonter Eugene Jarecki’s award-winning 2005 documentary “Why We Fight”:

"Nowhere is it written that the U.S. Empire will last forever."

Fall, which is revealed more each day in Vermont’s crisp air and turning leaves, seems an appropriate season for contemplating the fall of the U.S. Empire – and for envisioning peaceable secession from the United States and the creation of an independent Vermont republic.

This past Labor Day weekend, Vermonters by the hundreds did something unprecedented in the history of the modern world.

They walked, in solidarity, on behalf of a cleaner energy future.

Some walked for just a few hours.

Others spent a full five days on the road from Robert Frost’s home in Ripton to Burlington’s Battery Park.

There, at the eastern edge of the country’s sixth-largest body of water, they asked Vermont’s national political candidates – Welch and Rainville, Tarrant and Sanders – to sign a pledge to reduce greenhouse gases.

It was a remarkable, even heroic event, made more so because it was conceived and organized in just four weeks’ time, and received an enthusiastic response from Vermonters who traveled from all over the state simply to participate in what may go down in history as a historic moment, a weekend when Vermont sent a message to the rest of the United States, and the world.

Human-induced global warming is real. Climate change matters.

And we can and must do something to address it. Having had a small hand in organizing the WALC (Walking for Action Locally on Climate Change), I listened from the back of the Battery Park crowd – 1,000 Vermonters of all political persuasions – as, one by one, each candidate made a great show of signing the pledge and then committed their allotted five minutes of political speechifying.

And I suddenly realized that perhaps we were asking the wrong people to sign.

We live in a national society marked by corporate corruption, a bought-out and broken two-party system, massive electoral fraud, rampant militarism, 24/7 media disinformation, and endless war. In such a debased political culture, not surprisingly, most politicians follow, but rarely lead. While our U.S. Congressional candidates here in Vermont have spent more than $15 million on their election campaigns, the most experienced among them – Bernie Sanders – admits in public, over and over again, that the federal government, including the U.S. Congress, is corrupt to the core.

Faced with all of these unpleasant observations, we Vermonters can continue to live in denial, or agree to comply with the rules laid out by the Empire, or convince ourselves that reform of the imperial system is possible.

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Or all of us here in Vermont can, in the face of the U.S. Empire’s fall, sign a new pledge. Call it the “Vermont Independence” pledge. Instead of looking to our political leaders to solve our problems, we can begin walking the walk toward a more independent Vermont right now.

Every time we plant and nurture our own gardens and greenhouses; build and tend our chicken coops and root cellars; co-invest, with our neighbors, in a local CSA (community-supported agriculture) project; or embrace the “localvore” ethic of eating food from within a 100-mile radius of our homes, we increase our capacity for “food sovereignty” and “food security.”

And we move closer to Vermont independence.

Every time we choose to conserve energy, or invest in small-scale wind and solar projects, or help develop local CSE (community-supported energy) initiatives; or walk, run, ski, blade, or bike from one place to the other, we build alternatives to a world gripped by climate change and Peak Oil.

And we move closer to Vermont independence.

Every time we decide to spend our hard-earned money on goods and services from local, regional, and in-state entrepreneurs and businesses, rather than buying from big box store multinationals that immediately export most of our money out of state, we strengthen our local economies and we “incentivize” inventiveness.

And we move closer to Vermont independence.

Every opportunity we take to give of our time and talent to honest local governance, be it the school or select board, the church vestry, the town or city council, or the state legislature, we perpetuate local institutional bonds and strengthen community relationships.

And we move closer to Vermont independence.

Every time we turn off so-called “reality television” or “the news” – consisting mostly of state-sponsored propaganda, imperial disinformation, and corporate commercial hucksterism – and spend time, energy, and money supporting our local low-power FM stations, our community cable television options, our Internet communities, and our independent newspapers, we build our own communications networks.

And we move closer to Vermont independence.

The 21st century world will look little like the 20th.

Empires fall.

Thirteen hundred supporters from 10 countries and 48 of the 50 states have now signed our online petition (see www.vermontrepublic.org) calling for Vermont’s peaceable secession, and 38,000 Vermonters, according to a recent University of Vermont poll, favor the same. Let us begin, right now, to walk together toward a more sustainable and independent future for our Green Mountain communities.

Free Vermont.

ROB WILLIAMS
Editor
Electoral Fraud: 'Critical Condition' for U.S. Democracy

By Joel Bleifuss and Steven F. Freeman

To make matters worse, these fraud-enabling changes are introduced into a system where election referees are often highly partisan and highly conflicted. In Ohio, Kenneth Blackwell, the Republican secretary of state and the Ohio co-chairman of the 2004 Bush/Cheney Campaign, borrowed a chapter from Secretary of State Katharine Harris’s Florida 2000 playbook. Like Harris, he used the power of his office to suppress turnout and thwart voters in heavily Democratic areas. Vote suppression and electoral irregularities in Ohio have been thoroughly documented, first in January 2005 by Democrats on the House Judiciary Committee and then in June 2005 by the Democratic National Committee, which found, in the words of DNC Chair Howard Dean that, “More than a quarter of all Ohio voters reported problems with their voting experience.”

In light of both the GOP electoral track record and the widespread introduction of easily “hackable” voting technologies, a reasonable person would argue that a well-conducted exit poll that confirmed the official count would be about the only reason we would have to believe the results of such an election.

But in 2004 the exit poll results, which for 20 years had been considered too reliable, in that they allowed the press to know who won an election before the results were in, showed results that diverged sharply from official numbers. In key state after key state, official tallies differed significantly from the projections. In every case, the shift favored President George W. Bush. Nationwide, exit polls projected a 51-to-48-percent Kerry victory, the mirror image of Bush’s 51-to-48-percent win. And in the 11 battleground states the discrepancy between the exit polls and the official count was even greater.

Moreover, as we explain in our book, Was the 2004 Presidential Election Stolen? Exit Polls, Election Fraud, and the Official Count, careful analysis of the exit poll data indicates that the results are inconsistent with polling error, but are consistent with findings of a corrupted count.

There are more than a dozen indicators. We’ll mention just two of them.

First, there is no statistical reason why exit polls should be more or less accurate in swing states than in non-swing states. However, swing states do have a share a key political variable: If you are going to steal an election you go after votes most vigorously where they are most needed. The discrepancy between the exit polls and the official count is significantly higher in the 11 swing states than in other states, and significantly higher yet in the three critical battleground states of Ohio, Florida, and Pennsylvania.

Second, in light of the charges that the 2000 election was not legitimate, the Bush/Cheney campaign would have wanted to prevail in the popular vote. If fraud was afoot, it would make sense that the president’s men would also steal votes in their strongholds, where the likelihood of detection is least. Lo and behold, the report indicates that in those precincts that went at least 80 percent for Bush, the average disparity was 10 percentage points. That means that in those Bush strongholds, Kerry, on average, received only about two-thirds of the votes that exit polls predicted. In contrast, in Kerry strongholds, exit polls matched the official count almost exactly. To this day, such anomalies have not been satisfactorily explained.

In January 2005, on the eve of Bush’s inauguration, the two men who conducted the 2004 exit poll, Warren Mitofsky and Joe Lenksi, released their explanation for why their exit polls were so wrong. Most important, their report notes: “The inaccuracies in the exit poll estimates were not due to the sample selection of the polling locations at which the exit polls were conducted.” In other words, the precincts they sampled were representative of the nation, so the discrepancy was not the result of choosing unrepresentative precincts.

The data the pollsters released allow us to correlate voter characteristics (race, age, sex, etc.) with voting preferences, but they did not release the data that identified specific exit poll results with specific precincts. That information remains the property of the media consortium (ABC, NBC, CBS, Fox, CNN, and the AP) that commissioned the polls.

The pollsters’ report indicates that for rural and small-town precincts—the only precincts for which comparable data do exist—the difference between the exit-poll results and the official count is three times greater in precincts where voters used machines than in precincts where voters voted on paper ballots. In precincts that used paper ballots there was no discrepancy between the exit polls and the official count. If we had access to the precinct-level data, which the pollsters have withheld, we would be able to investigate whether the size of the exit-poll discrepancy specifically correlates with the voting technology used in that precinct.

Ironically, even though the media ignored the exit-poll discrepancy in the United States, a contemporaneous and equivalent exit-poll discrepancy halfway around the world in Ukraine made front page headlines here and was deemed sufficient to overturn that election result.

Heeding the alarm

Despite this documented threat to American democracy, there is some good news.

First, the country is beginning to wake up; despite the dearth of reporting, the public is clearly concerned. One month after the election, a Zogby poll found that 28 percent of Americans thought there was a “very valid” reason to question the official count, and another 14 percent thought that such concerns were “somewhat valid.” Simply put, 42 percent of all Americans had immediate concerns about what had really happened on November 2, 2004. A Zogby poll this August found that 80 percent of those surveyed
Walking the WALC: Street Heat for a Clean Energy Future

By Bill McKibben

A five-day walk across Vermont to demand action on global warming was, in retrospect, a bit of a hare-brained idea, especially given that we had less than a month to pull it off. If I’d really stopped to think about, say, traffic safety, the economics of portable toilets, and the actual number of hours it takes a column of people to walk 50 miles, I’d probably never have suggested it. But since it worked remarkably well despite all that, it may provide a few hints for how to think about political action in this state.

One, of course, is to know the right people. A small and dedicated corps of planners made everything work smoothly – Will Bates, Becca Sobel, Johanna Miller, Rob Williams, Connie Leach, Steve Maier, John Elder, Jon Isham, and the people at Greenpeace’s Project HotSeat were all instrumental.

But organizers can only work if they have people to organize, and in this case that turned out not to be a problem. From the first day in remote Bipton, when almost 300 showed up to start walking, to the end on Battery Park in Burlington when more than 1,000 gathered for the largest political event in Vermont in a number of years, there was something about this event that captured people’s attention. Part of it, I think, was that it was more than a rally; people made the real sacrifice of time and shoe leather, courted blisters and sore calves, gave up part or all of their Labor Day weekend. On this most important of issues – and perhaps on other issues as well – Vermonters showed that they were eager to act if someone gave them a forum.

Climate change seems like the most disempowering question of all, and the environmental movement hasn’t helped. Its main message has been to leave things to the experts – and indeed we have wonderful experts. There are scientists who have outlined the problem in exquisite detail, and engineers and economists who have come up with an impressive list of possible solutions. All the movement has been missing is… the movement, the involvement of the great bulk of us who want to do something but don’t know what. Given a suggestion – walk 50 miles – an enormous number were more than happy to do so.

It helped, too, that the form of this event – a long walk – helped shape its feel. We were a moving community, where people had plenty of time to talk with each other. Everyone who walked commented on how nice it was not to “cut to the chase” or “give the short version” of what they were thinking. Forming a community, even a temporary one, seems crucial in a society where we’ve allowed ourselves to become as hyperindividualistic as this one. It comes as a relief to almost all of us to join with others on such a project; in fact, people were so absorbed in talk that some of the usual accoutrements of a march, like shouting slogans, rarely got going.

People from a wide variety of backgrounds seemed happy to be going along. We had young folks (though not as many as we might have; we purposely scheduled the walk before students got back to school, reasoning that it was time older folks (though not as many as we might have; we purposely scheduled the walk before students got back to school, reasoning that it was time older people took some responsibility for the climatic mess we’ve spent a lifetime creating) farmers, college professors, artists, and businesspeople. One of the real highlights was stopping for a morning worship service at the Charlotte Congregational Church, where plenty of people had their first communion in many years (or ever) and where the regular congregants were as gracious in receiving a sweaty mob of newcomers as it was possible to be.

And from that diversity, and those numbers, and the dedication implicit in turning out to walk, we built a very strong base from which to make our political demands. The final meeting in Battery Park was highly interesting. We ran it as a town meeting – a real town meeting, not one of those fakey ones that national politicians engage in now where they basically give a speech and listen to planted questions. In this one, we acted as the moderators, and our politicians responded to our agenda, which was a very new feeling for many of us. We were powerful, and we used the power responsibly, making our candidates stretch farther than some of them wanted to, but not beyond the bounds of reason.

What we wanted them to endorse, after all, was the legislation that our independent Senator Jim Jeffords had introduced earlier in the summer. It calls for deep cuts in greenhouse gas emissions; if enacted, it would simply return the U.S. to the ranks of nations taking action on this most desperate of issues.

It’s hard to know if similar actions would work elsewhere, or if there’s something special about Vermont. If there is, it’s almost certainly our scale, which made the organization possible and the results noticeable. That scale breeds a certain kind of political hopefulness; we’re less cynical here than people elsewhere. And those who stood in that park and listened to Bernie Sanders and Rich Tarrant and Peter Welch and Martha Rainville and Scudder Parker pledge to take strong action are less cynical still as a result. They responded to their constituents, and that is all one can ask in a democracy.

In Washington, of course, it’s quite possible that the power of Exxon and the coal industry will simply overwhelm the people power represented by efforts like ours. If so, it’s a serious indictment of our federal government. The best argument for the existence of large nations in the modern world is their potential ability to take forceful action in precisely the kind of global emergency that climate change presents. We shall be watching to see if the good efforts of our Congressional delegation are simply swallowed up inside the lobbyist-ridden Beltway, or if our democracy remains alive enough that the efforts of its citizenry can still have real effect.

Read Bill McKibben’s entire day-by-day “Walking for Action Locally on Climate Change” (WALC) journal at www.vtcommons.org.

PHOTO BY ROB WILLIAMS

Global Warning: WALC co-organizer Bill McKibben addresses more than 1,000 Vermonuters at Burlington’s Battery Park over Labor Day weekend.
Who here loves Vermont? Who thinks Vermont is a special place? How many of you are residents of Vermont? How many of you were born here? How many of you have ancestors who go back several generations? My heritage runs deep in this place, this city, this building.

I walked past here every day of my high school career, passing more often than not to admire Ceres on top of the golden dome. My ancestor, Dwight Dwinell, carved that very lovely statue, the symbol of our agricultural richness.

And my great-grandfather sat in these chambers, elected by the men who knew him well in Randolph in 1904. Farmer and Grange leader, he was respected enough by the men in town that they nominated him in mid-August, he was elected in September, and came to Montpelier weekly on the train – in between getting in the last of the hay and digging the potatoes – to serve in the legislative session that ran from October to the first part of December. He then served on the Board of Agriculture.

His wife, Emma, said this in a letter to her daughter, Mary (my grandmother), on December 6, 1904:

“This has been a pleasant day. It snowed a little last night, but not enough for sleighing. Have been to both morning and afternoon [legislative] sessions today. In the House they had a spirited debate on Woman Suffrage and will tomorrow vote on it. I presume they will kill it.”

How right she was. As progressive and forward-thinking as we Vermonters are known to be, Women’s Suffrage was just too much for the legislature in 1904.

Today we bring forward a new and forward-thinking idea. Secession.

Funny thing is that I’ve been thinking about this for years.

When I learned in grade school that Vermont had once been an independent republic, I thought, Well, why not again? Why do we have to be a state? We could do perfectly well as our own country. Whenever I have traveled and have told people where I lived, it was Vermont, and never the United States. My heart has leapt a beat every time I have come home – whether from Moscow, or Boston, or Montreal, or London or Los Angeles. Vermont is home. Vermont is where my heart lies.

Okay, so I’m not a constitutional expert, nor a political scientist, nor any other kind of academic. I do have a perfectly legitimate bachelor’s degree in history from the University of Vermont. But what I do have is experience, and a life lived well here on this hallowed ground.

I have been a registered nurse, trained at UVM, working in three of our hospitals and helping to care for my father as he died in a fourth. I have been a small business owner, and a small diversified farmer, and chaplain to the bereaved and the sick and dying, and a pastor to a small rural congregation. I have been a parent, and a homeowner, and a voter, and an activist. I have lived in five of our 14 counties.

And what do I think?

I think there are smart, capable, creative folks here in Vermont and that we could do better to serve the people who live here, and that land that we live, work, learn, and walk upon.

We need health care for everyone. We need an educational system that works for our children, and that is not imposed by people who do not know what is best for us. We need a public transportation system that is accessible and affordable for all. We need an energy policy that helps us stay warm through these long winters. We need help for our small business owners and our family farmers.

And I don’t see any of this coming anytime soon from the federal government.

I’m a strong believer in self-sufficiency and self-reliance. I think we could do better for ourselves. I think that by cutting the apron strings to Washington, Vermont could provide better for our citizens, and our land.

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My ancestors came here seven generations ago – my father’s side to Calais and my mother’s side to Braintree. Those brave people wanted a new life, a better life. They wanted room to move, and a place to create a home, and a living. They were also looking for community, and a new way to be in relation to their neighbors.

What has changed in 230 years?

Those intrepid people who founded the first Vermont Republic wanted this – and so do we. We seek community, and a responsible and reliable living. We want clean air and water and food for our families. We want to have a voice in our civic affairs. We want to care for our elders, and our sick, and our dying. We want community and a reason to be.

We are Vermonters, and for me, that’s enough. Some people may fuss about currency, and Social Security, and, and the U.N., and terminology, what would we do about… you name it, x, y, or z.

You know, I don’t know what we’d do about any of it, because it’s not for me to say alone. We are in this together.

What I do know is that there are many small, successful countries around the world today – Switzerland, Iceland, the Netherlands, Denmark, just to name a few – who have figured this all out, and I trust that we can, too.

Vermonters are creative. Vermonters are reliable. Vermonters care about our land, and our people. We don’t know what the future will bring us; no one can know.

The best we can do is to work for the kind of future that we want. We can be the change we want to see. We can create new ways that work for all.

We can secede. And we can succeed.

We are Vermonters after all – smart, creative, caring and reliable.

What more do we need? •
Most Likely To Secede?

Debating Independence in Vermont Classrooms

By Sydney Copp

Why debate secession in Vermont classrooms? In this past year, my first as a middle school social studies teacher, I decided to attend a conference. As I perused the titles of the many workshops offered at the annual conference of the Vermont Alliance for the Social Studies (VASS), one in particular caught my eye: “Vermont: Most Likely to Secede.”

Funny, and also quite true, I thought to myself. I decided it was worth missing the other workshops I had been contemplating. I doubt either the workshop on cemeteries or the one on geography would have had my blood pumping quite the way it did as I sat in on Rob Williams’ presentation on the prospect of Vermont secession.

I was excited, intrigued, and I started to feel passionate about the kind of debate Vermont secession sparks.

I was not familiar with Vermont Commons or the Second Vermont Republic at the time, so much of what was presented to me was new information. I sat in the workshop and listened to Williams’ argument in favor of secession, as well as in the words of people such as Thomas Naylor in the “Independence Trilogy” video we screened.

Many questions ran through my mind: What about federal money for the state’s infrastructure? How would other states react? What about military defense if the federal government or other states see secession as a threat? How would this affect international relations? How would the economy survive?

I wanted to ask some of these questions, but others beat me to it, and many of my concerns evaporated as I heard Williams’ thoughtful and researched argument. The idea started to sound more reasonable and even possible, yet people kept asking the skeptical questions. It occurred to me that it was so easy to ask these kinds of questions – to doubt that secession ever could or would happen.

Finally, I raised my hand. Regardless of my own opinion on whether Vermont secession is a good idea, I was tired of hearing the majority of the vocal group attacking the idea as something that could never happen. When I had the chance to share my opinions with the group, I expressed my concern that people are too quick to brush the idea aside as ‘something that will never happen’ because there’s too much to consider, too much about the idea that is uncertain. I told the group that while I have the same kinds of concerns and questions, there is an opportunity here for us as educators if we decide to look at many sides of the debate. Yes, there are many arguments against secession, but refusing to go further and look at the idea from another perspective is simply closed-minded. As a group of educators who are attending a conference to gather new ideas in order to enrich our own classrooms, I believe it is our duty not to be egocentric; it is our duty to consider (and respect) the perspectives of others and to teach our students to do the same.

The idea was particularly exciting to me as a teacher, more so than as a citizen of the United States or a resident of Vermont, because I saw secession as an opportunity for student engagement in the topics of civics and government. While I have my own strong opinions on political subjects, as a teacher I try to remain objective so that my students form their own opinions, regardless of whether or not I agree. For this reason, I try to teach as though my own opinion is irrelevant in the classroom. When I agree with an opinion raised by a student, I will play the devil’s advocate to try to get them thinking about other perspectives and possibilities. When I disagree, I will argue based on belief, but try to keep them guessing whether I am acting or truly arguing the point. What matters is that I bring my passion for debate and discussion, regardless of the topic or my beliefs. As a teacher, I warried, living a happy little Vermont college life, seemingly safe in the bubble, I was affected. Things didn’t seem to be working as they ought to in a republic. How can the United States truly be a representative democracy if the majority vote for one person and the other guy wins anyway? It doesn’t seem fair. Finally, politics started to matter to me, because the system seemed to be malfunctioning and that fact alone was unsettling.

How do we get students to debate Vermont secession?

The idea of Vermont seceding may seem, at first consideration, like something that could or should never happen. That is the immediate response I have gotten the majority of the time when I have casually mentioned the topic among friends or colleagues. Some of my students remarked that their parents thought debating secession was stupid. Although I do not doubt this was true, I never received a phone call from any parent on the topic. It is not my intent to persuade others that Vermont secession is a good idea because I don’t know if it really is the best option for Vermonters. But, if the idea is ignored, then we could be wasting a valuable opportunity for student engagement and involvement in government and politics. Whether you agree that Vermont should secede or not, it is a topic that has personal relevance to all Vermonters.

When students have a general knowledge of debate, persuasive writing and speaking, types of governments, and how the state and federal governments in the United States function, they are ready to start considering and debating Vermont secession. Government quickly becomes personally relevant to students when you say, “What if you could create your own government? And guess what? There are many people who are seriously considering the idea of Vermont becoming its own independent republic again. This could affect you, as Vermonters! What do you think?”

I have outlined the process of debating secession as I taught it in my middle school (grades 6-8) social studies classes this past year, but I think high school would be an ideal level at which to go through this process with students. After brainstorming ideas of what we need to consider if Vermont were to secede, we decided to focus on three main topics: Economy, Laws & Enforcement, and Defense. Other teachers might decide with their classes to use other topics to focus student research and arguments. My advice is to stick to the issues that students find personally relevant (immigration, for example, was also high on the list of things to consider).

I found the entire process rewarding and worthwhile. When I turned on the camera to capture their arguments on the day of the debate, students took the idea seriously, and were engaged in a piece of the political process, whether they agreed with Vermont secession or not.
Five Years Later: A 9/11 Review

By Jim Hogue

PART ONE: FACTS AND THEORIES

Five years later, as the United States and the world reflects on the motives behind and meaning of the September 11, 2001 attacks, it is important to clear up the difference between a theory and a fact.

Here are some examples.

It is a fact that the clocks stopped in the Pentagon due to explosions at +/− 9:32 a.m., and that the thing that hit the Pentagon arrived (by all government and press reports) at 9:37 a.m. at the earliest. (This was researched by Barbara Honegger, a Senior Military Affairs journalist with the Department of the Navy, with testimony from those in the building.) The government has not explained why the clocks all stopped five minutes before the attack.

It is a theory that traitors within our government orchestrated a missile attack.

It is a fact that evidence of thermite and thermate reactions was found in the debris of the World Trade Center (WTC) buildings 1, 2, and 7.

It is a theory that the buildings collapsed due to controlled demolitions by order of the U.S. government. It is also a theory that the floors pancaked one on top of the other and still managed to reach the ground at free-fall speed.

It is a fact that the History Channel and the NORAD tapes report that a 737 hit the towers, and that photos of the attack show a 737, and that NORAD tapes report that a 737 hit the towers, (The NORAD tapes indicate that these drills so confused U.S. air defenses that they were unable to identify and keep track of hijacked planes.)

Conflicting theories explain the drills as diversions to prevent Standard Operating Procedures on the one hand, and coincidence on the other hand.

It is a fact that, by order of New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, the debris from the WTC collapse was cleared away before an investigation could be carried out. It is a fact that destruction of evidence is a crime.

It is a theory that the debris was removed to destroy evidence.

There are more, but you get the point.

PART TWO: NEW YORK CITY

Engineers and physicists have recounted the lies and omissions in the report by NIST (National Institute of Standards and Technology) regarding the very structure of the World Trade Center towers.

The Lies:

• that temperatures from burning fuel and, subsequently, from the combustible material in the building reached a point that could have softened or affected the strength of the steel columns and beams, and caused reactions that pulverized concrete and neatly sectioned the beams, especially since the fuel burned itself up shortly after impact.

• that the towers could have fallen at free fall (unimpeded) speed as a result of a collapse by fire.

• that whole sections of the external matrix weighing more than 20,000 pounds could have been blown laterally when the metal, intact, without more energy than that which was available from fire. (Note that the projection of debris of all sizes came at the moment of the explosions, and not during, or as a result of the fall.)

• that the collapse of the World Trade Center is a mysterious event, especially given the order to evacuate the area at about 4 p.m. because it was going to come down. (If someone knew an hour and a half before the event and that this 47-story building, which had suffered little damage, was going to defy the laws of physics and collapse in its own footprint, why not just ask him how he knew?)

The Omissions:

• that Underwriters Labs had conducted tests and confirmed the original design claims: crashes and fire, and that these tests, along with the NIST tests, contradicted the NIST final report.

• that temperatures did indeed reach the boiling point of steel and remained there for weeks, (such temperatures are far beyond anything remotely possible from fuel and office materials) that sulfur residue was found on the beams — indicating a "thermate reaction." (Dr. Stephen Jones, in unanimous agreement with his colleagues at Brigham Young University).

• that the molten iron is proof that the reaction was thermite; it is the sulfur residue that indicates that it was specifically thermite. Thermit is an incendiary mixture of fine aluminum powder with a metallic oxide, which when ignited yields intense heat.

• seismic data corresponding to explosions independent of the collapse.

• testimonies from eye-witnesses from the FDNY and NYPD re: multiple explosions below the impact of the planes and in the basement, including reports that the fires at impact were already out that Gene Corley and Charles Thornton both contributed to the two NIST reports that contradicted each other: first the pancake theory of floors giving way, and then the theory of the structural failure of the columns. They were behind every official government report concerning the building collapses of 9/11. (It is supposed that the second theory, though absurd, was proposed to help Silverstein, the owner, collect on his recently purchased double indemnity insurance policy).

• that Thornton’s partner in Thornton-Tomasetti, Richard Tomasetti “cleared” the Giuliani decision to recycle the steel debris from NYC, and that Corley and Thornton were appointees of the Bush administration.

The most critical lie told by the final NIST report was that the towers were sufficiently weakened by the force of the blows. Kevin Ryan states, “in order for fireproofing to have been ‘widely dislodged’ as NIST states, a great deal more energy is needed than was actually there. The kinetic energy from the impact of the one airliner provided only enough energy to inflict the damage reported (as calculated by MIT professor Wierzbicki). Fireproofing loss would then require 1 MJ/m2 according to NIST, and that energy would be comparable to the kinetic energy provided by two or more additional airliner impacts.” The towers, structurally speaking, suffered minor damage. For one tower to have collapsed defies physics. For both to have collapsed in exactly the same manner, both bearing all 10 characteristics of controlled demolitions (and having been struck differently), is physically and mathematically impossible. Then add in continued on following page
products and technologies on the public, everything from irradiation and bovine growth hormone treatments to GMOs. Not only are these forced on U.S. consumers, but the USDA uses them worldwide as political weapons.

When Europe experienced outbreaks of various animal diseases (bovine spongiform encephalopathy – mad cow disease – and foot and mouth disease) and a variety of food safety scares (tainted soft drinks and dioxin in pork), European governments worked hard to restore consumer confidence in the food supply. The first thing that improved was communication. Committees composed of government officials, university scientists, industry researchers, farmers, and producers were created to review current research and help develop government policy which would increase animal health and ensure the safety of food products.

In response to the “mad cow” scare, Europe established an EU animal identification program that is able to trace an animal throughout its life, a surveillance program to monitor animals on farms for signs of the disease, and an extensive testing program (any bovine over 60 months of age is tested for BSE before being approved for human or animal consumption). As a result of these actions, consumer confidence increased, as did sales of meat products.

So why would this system not work in the United States? As Thomas Jefferson said, “When the government fears the people there is liberty; when the people fear their government there is tyranny.” The United States government has lost the trust of consumers worldwide in its ability to provide a safe, nutritious food supply. This is a direct result of Washington’s “revolving door” policy. Lawyers, advocates, and lobbyists for large corporations or special interest groups leave their positions to work for the U.S. lobbyists for large corporations or special interest “revolving door” policy. Lawyers, advocates, and supply. This is a direct result of Washington’s tyranny.” The United States government has lost the trust of consumers worldwide in its ability to provide a safe, nutritious food supply.

When the people fear their government there is liberty; when the government fears the people there is liberty, as Thomas Jefferson said, “When the government fears the people there is liberty; when the people fear their government there is tyranny.”

The USDA has lost the trust of consumers worldwide in its ability to provide a safe, nutritious food supply. This is a direct result of Washington’s “revolving door” policy. Lawyers, advocates, and lobbyists for large corporations or special interest groups leave their positions to work for the U.S. government where they are able to push through legislation for issues they worked on, and then return to their positions, perhaps to do another round at a later date. The doors have been revolving for many decades, but with the Bush Administration it practically came off its hinges. More than 100 top officials in the Bush Administration are now swinging through the doors.

As noted in Philip Mattera’s report, “How has Agribusiness Hijacked Regulatory Policy at the U.S. Department of Agriculture”:

“In its early days, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) was dubbed the “People’s Department” by President Lincoln, in recognition of its role in helping the large portion of the population that worked the land. Some 140 years later, USDA has been transformed into something very different. Today it is, in effect, the “Agribusiness Industry’s Department,” since its policies on issues such as food safety and fair market competition have been shaped to serve the interests of the giant corporations that now dominate food production, processing, and distribution. We call it USDA Inc.”

According to Carol Tucker Foreman, former USDA assistant secretary under President Carter, “Whether it’s intentional or not, the USDA gives the impression of being a wholly owned subsidiary of America’s cattlemen. Their interests rather than the public interests predominate USDA policy.”

Our family’s battle with the USDA was a prime example of this bureaucracy doing the bidding of those they were supposed to be overseeing.

My husband, Dr. Larry Faillace, and I worked with the USDA for years to import purebred European dairy and meat sheep. When the animals arrived in Vermont in 1996, they were the first to be enrolled in USDA’s “Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program (VSFCP).” Scrapie is a disease of sheep from the same family of diseases as BSE; it has been documented for more than 200 years, and is endemic in the United States. Once animals had been monitored for five years without any signs of the disease, a flock was certified “free” of scrapie.

However, when we completed all the requirements, instead of giving us our certification, the USDA put our farm under quarantine, machinated false test data in an attempt to justify seizing our animals, stole our entire flock 17 days before our scheduled Second Circuit Court hearing, killed every single animal, and then illegally quarantined our farm for five years—for a disease which does not exist.

The United States lags woefully behind the rest of the world in testing cattle for BSE. By seizing our sheep, the USDA thought they would be perceived as aggressively preventing BSE from occurring in the United States, and because of our enrollment in the scrapie program, we were an easy target. But even Jon Stewart of “The Daily Show” pointed out the fact that the USDA in its zeal to keep mad cow disease out of the country went after sheep—not cows.

When BSE was finally discovered in American cows, the USDA was suddenly whistling a different tune. All the animals on the cattle farms did not have to be destroyed, the farms did not have to be quarantined, and business continued as usual.

But globally, business did not go on as usual. Japan, the United State’s largest export market for beef ($4 billion), quickly shut the doors on American beef. Since Japan tests every single animal sent to slaughter, it wanted the USDA to guarantee that any animal destined for the Japanese market was also tested. The USDA refused. In fact, when Japan finally succumbed to political pressure and re-opened the export market to the United States, the USDA announced the following day that testing of American cattle for BSE would be reduced by 90 percent. Now, less than .001 percent of all cattle slaughtered in the United States are tested for BSE.

USDA arrogance

Just as the scrapie program began as a voluntary program and a few years later became mandatory, continued on following page...
Faillace continued from page 9
the NAIS is being touted as voluntary, but the USDA said it may “move toward a requirement for mandatory premises and animal identification for all species included in the system. If the USDA does decide to make all or parts of the NAIS mandatory, we will follow the normal rulemaking process. The public will have the opportunity to comment upon any proposed regulations.”

Yet when the USDA first allowed public input for NAIS, the period lasted a mere eight weeks, from July 14, 2004, to September 13, 2004 (note that it was at a time when farmers are at their busiest).

And how seriously does USDA take public input? In July 2000, USDA officials claimed in our court hearing that “the farmers have no rights. No right to be heard before the court, no right to independent testing, and no right to question the USDA.”

The arrogance of the agency has only grown. During a press briefing on April 27, 2004, regarding NAIS, Jim Phillips of Progressive Farmer Magazine asked Bill Hawks, the USDA Undersecretary for Marketing and Regulating Programs, “Does the USDA currently have authority to establish a mandatory system in the animal ID, or must you wait for one of the bills that are currently proposed in Congress to be passed for that mandatory authority?”

Secretary Hawks responded, “Yeah. If you weren’t such a good person I’d answer you real curtly and say, yes, we do. But since you’re such a great guy I’m going to go ahead and tell you why. The Animal Health Protection Act gives us broad authority to take measures that will address animal health issues and a very easy read of that is we do have the authority to address the animal ID system in a mandatory fashion if we so chose.”

It is critical that this program, and ultimately the agency, be stopped. U.S. government officials have mastered using fear as a weapon – urging us to trust them to protect us – and few issues are more important than the safety of our food supply. Buying local and supporting our neighbor farmers is one step, but identifying elected officials who will work toward the goal of supporting a local food system is imperative. The NAIS is a nonpartisan issue. With elections just around the corner, ask all the candidates for their stand on the NAIS and vote for those who are opposed to it.

Heinberg continued from page 1
whether resulting high oil prices will simply encourage conservation and the development of alternatives, resulting in a gentle and painless transition to a different energy regime, or instead cause worldwide economic chaos.

I have been studying the matter closely for seven years, and have concluded that a near-term peak is far more likely than a later one, and that a smooth transition is extremely unlikely because price signals will arrive at least a decade too late to be of any use. Most of the available strategies to spur conservation and to develop alternative energy sources will require heavy investment and a lead time of 10 to 20 years. I think the Hirsch Report – “Peaking of World Oil Production: Impacts, Mitigation and Risk Management” – which was prepared for the U.S. Department of Energy this year, gets it just right when it says that this is a problem that is unprecedented in scope and one that will pose an enormous challenge for modern industrial societies.

(Download the Hirsch Report at www.projectcensored.org/newsflash/the_hirsch_report.pdf)

Some suggest that far from being a reality, Peak Oil is simply a manipulative global elitist corporate conspiracy to drive fossil fuel energy prices up through creating “artificial scarcity,” while others such as Thomas Gold (via his book Deep Hot Biosphere) suggest that oil is created abiotically, meaning we’ve got a lot more oil in the ground than we realize. Others, like Counterpunch/The Nation’s Alexander Cockburn, suggest both theories are linked. What’s your take on these two theories?

I spent a month researching abiotic theory and wrote an essay about it (MuseLetter #150, www.museletter.com). Briefly, there is intriguing evidence that some hydrocarbons may indeed be formed in the mantle of the Earth. But the relevance of that possibility for the nations of the world as they struggle to deal with the problem of Peak Oil is nil. The global oil industry didn’t pursue exploration on the basis of biotic theory; they started out looking just about everywhere and they found oil almost exclusively in sedimentary basins – exactly where biotic theory says it should be. I can’t really discuss all of the evidence and arguments here; even my 4,000-word essay is just a very brief overview. Suffice it to say that if Peak Oil were a conspiracy, it would have to involve countries that don’t like even to talk to one another (like the U.S., Iran, Venezuela, China, Russia, and on and on); untold numbers of retired and independent petroleum engineers, geologists, and analysts, as well as ones currently employed by government and industry; and people from all segments of the political spectrum. Data would have to be fabricated and agreed upon by parties that have no apparent interests in common. I don’t think so.

Assuming that global Peak Oil is an unfortunate reality, how best might individuals and communities take concrete steps to prepare for the inevitable dwindling of our oil and natural gas supplies?

First, communities need to quickly study where and how they are vulnerable to energy shortages, and what opportunities they have to re-localize their economies and develop alternatives. Food and water systems have to be assessed first. This continued on following page
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requires involvement from local government, businesses, and citizens. Then a step-by-step plan can be drawn up and implemented. Towns and cities should take this very seriously: we are likely facing a challenge much more severe than the Depression of the 1930s. High unemployment and civil unrest are very likely.

Can you provide us with any success stories – communities within the United States or globally – which have figured out how to “power down,” as you suggest in your book?

A number of communities have begun the process. Kinsale, Ireland, has been studying the problem longest; Willits, California, has been at it for over a year now; and Sebastopol, California, and Denver, Colorado, are just getting started. But these are only studies. Some communities, like Portland, Oregon, have already done some good things like building more mass transit and encouraging walk-able neighborhoods. Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, and Japan are working hard on renewable energy.

But Cuba has done more than any other nation, and that as a result of an energy famine that gripped the country throughout the 1990s. The Cubans really deserve some study, because they managed to avoid full-scale collapse even though the energy to fuel their economy declined substantially in a short time. In brief, they encouraged organic and urban food production, began using oxen again, and improvised methods of cheap public transportation.

How do you feel about some Vermonters’ notion that peaceful secession from the United States Empire is a viable policy option to be seriously considered?

I think that for the time being this is a fringe idea. However, once we’re past the global oil peak it may be an idea whose time has come. With much less energy available for transportation, economic re-localization will be necessary for survival, and political devolution will naturally follow.

Are you hopeful about our future?

We humans are amazingly resourceful and adaptive. The coming century will be by far the most challenging that any generation has ever had to live through. But if we make good choices now, the long-range future could actually be quite bright.

Vermonters have long harnessed the power of wind for industrial and agricultural purposes, like this lonely wind tower in western Vermont. Today, large- and small-scale, modern wind turbines could be one response to Peak Oil. PHOTO BY BILL HAULBEEK

TO THE FIRST NORTH AMERICAN SECESSIONIST CONVENTION

The Middlebury Institute herewith issues a call for representatives of active organizations and groups in North America concerned with secession and separatism to attend a convention in Burlington, Vermont, this coming November.

We are seeking to provide a forum where people with a serious interest in secession from the United States, Canada, and Mexico can present information on what each organization is doing, learn the policies and tactics of other organizations, trade ideas on organizing, strategizing, and politicking, assess the strength of the secession movement, and figure out ways to make it stronger and more successful.

It is understood from the beginning that there are many varied groups with secession as the core of their strategy, and it is unlikely that there will be any full consensus on platforms or goals. But if we can assemble articulate and active representatives from serious, ongoing groups that are working in their various ways to push the idea of secession at a regional, state, or multi-state level, we are convinced that we can advance the cause of secession throughout the continent and pave the way for some genuine successes.

The Middlebury Institute is willing to underwrite the travel costs for some of those representatives, especially from the western reaches of the continent, who are unable to pay their own way. We are unable to absorb the two-night hotel room fees, but we will provide a conference room for a Saturday meeting and a banquet on Saturday night.

Individuals from real, active, serious, and ongoing secessionist and separatist organizations — please, no individual secessionists or the like — are urged to contact the Director@Middleburyinstitute.net if they wish to take part in the First North American Secessionist Convention.
T he U.S. monetary system has been a scandal for a long time; whether it can continue much longer without intolerable social, political, and ecological consequences is an open question. Yet most Americans don’t have a clue about it.

“It is well enough that people of the nation do not understand our banking and monetary system,” Henry Ford said, “for if they did, I believe there would be a revolution before tomorrow morning.”

Our current monetary system, to be blunt, is an unjustified monopoly granted to private interests to create public money for their private profit. For this they charge the public usurious (exorbitant) rates of interest, creating an economic system which unnecessarily transfers wealth from debtors to creditors as it forces often needless and wasteful economic “growth.”

The idea that a national currency should be a debt incurred by governments (and therefore taxpayers) to private interests for their profit was first institutionalized with the Bank of England at the end of the 17th century, and subsequently developed in the United States by Alexander Hamilton and his successors. Under this scheme, the power to ‘create’ money is granted as a monopoly to a central bank, like the Federal Reserve, which then lends the money so created back to the government at interest in return for government bonds. These bonds are then sold to commercial banks, where they form the collateral for loans to the public, at additional rates of interest.

As the agent of the major private banks, the Federal Reserve not only regulates the economy by raising and lowering interest rates to control the money supply and to protect creditors, but also guarantees the private banks’ monopoly over the further creation of money through fractional reserve lending. This system, now triumphant worldwide under the rubric of “globalization,” with the dollar as the world’s reserve currency, has made possible, perhaps more than any other factor, the relentless concentration of wealth into fewer and fewer hands. Yet this money system is mostly ignored by social critics.

Crucial to this system is the power given to the central banks and the banking system in general to vary interest rates freely and without limit. Interest charged beyond administrative and risk-insurance costs is usurious. Such usurious interest constitutes the income of the banking system, the profit from which goes to the private investors in that system, not to the public. This institutionalization of usury allows the banking system to skim off what is essentially a private tax in return for providing what should be a free public service. It creates a system in which money is scarce and available only at a steep price.

Most Americans believe the Federal Reserve is accountable to the public interest, but nothing could be further from the truth. Although the governors of the Federal Reserve are presidential appointees confirmed by Congress, when we consider their long, 14-year terms, the Byzantine and secretive traditions of the Fed, its lack of any other public accountability (apart from the chairman’s reports to Congress), and the strong Fed role played by commercial banks (who sit both on the Federal Open Market Committee, which sets interest rates, and on the boards of regional Fed branches), it is hardly surprising that the Fed has been able to enjoy a gloss of public accountability while evading public control.

Economic inequality is rooted in a maldistribution of capital. The only access to capital today for those without is to borrow money at interest. Anyone with a mortgage, a car loan, a student loan, or a credit card, is paying a hefty private tax to the banking and financial system for the right to use capital, which, as a public resource, should be freely and fairly available to the public. Being forced to borrow money at interest, individuals and businesses must pay off significant interest charges as well as the principal before they can see any of the fruits of their use of that money.

Why should the banking system be allowed the monopolistic privilege not only of creating money, but of charging excessive interest for the right to do so? Should not the creation of money, essential to the public welfare, be a proper matter for government, assuming democratic, publicly accountable governments (which we currently do not have)?

This burden of usurious interest is the real engine behind economic “growth.” Since borrowers must repay interest on top of principal before realizing any benefit from a loan, they are forced to additional labor and production. Money borrowed at 6 percent, compounded annually, will accumulate interest equal to the principal in only 12 years. This is insignificant at small amounts, but if I borrow $100,000 at 6 percent, it means I must pay my creditor a total of $200,000 within 12 years, which amounts to $16,666 a year. By contrast, at a nominal 1 percent interest rate, it would take 70 years before the interest burden equaled the principal, and it would cost only $2,857 a year over that period to repay the $100,000 loan.

There is no reason that interest must be charged for the creation of money. There is no need to ‘rent’ money from private bankers when we could just as easily create it ourselves at nominal cost. To do so would constitute a political revolution of the first magnitude. Traditional attempts to meet the challenges of social and ecological exploitation (socialism, communism, environmentalism) have failed so far as they have not understood the underlying usurious monetary system which drives “growth.” By contrast, non-usurious monetary policies in the hands of democratically accountable governments serving the public interest would be able, for the first time, to correlate the use of money with social needs.

The challenge is clear. The Federal Reserve is ensnared at the core of the national government, beyond any effective control. The Constitution prohibits the states not only from coining money, but from emitting Bills of Credit or making “any thing but gold and silver Coin a Tender in Payment of Debts” (Article I, Sec. 10). Given the failure of federal monetary policy, its ruinous effects in exploiting persons and nature, and its key role in creating great relative wealth for a few and great relative poverty for many, it is incumbent to insist upon a devolution of monetary policy to the local level, whether this occur through reform of federal monetary policy, through constitutional amendment returning monetary policy to the various states, or through the secession of various states from the Union.

It is essential to this end to understand how a non-usurious, publicly accountable currency might work. The most thorough-going and ingenious system of such a currency was thought out before the Civil War by Edward Kellogg (1790-1858), and is perhaps stated best in his posthumous work, A New Monetary System (1861, reprint 1970).

Kellogg was a forerunner of free bankers and populists who mostly missed, however, his central idea of a decentralized non- (or nominal) interest currency. He proposed to establish local public credit banks, one in each county. These banks, federally mandated but locally run, would offer nominal (1 percent) interest loans to resident citizens. Kellogg envisioned land as collateral, but credit worthiness could be based, as it is today, on one’s potential earning power. Once lent out, Kellogg’s public credit dollars would flow into circulation, providing the basis of a new currency, backed by the productive labor power of individual borrowers. Individuals and private banks would be free to re-loan public credit money at higher rates of interest, but the availability of nominal one percent loans would undercut their ability to charge usurious rates.

The beauty of Kellogg’s system is its decentralized self-regulating nature. Instead of credit issued on a top-down basis from a central bank to national banks, and then to regional and local banks, all charging usurious rates of interest for the privilege of borrowing money they create without effort, credit would be issued by local banks directly to local citizens without interest on the basis of the economic prospects of those citizens.

These prospects would vary considerably from place to place, with some areas needing and creating more currency than others. But whatever currency is created would be equivalent to any other. The solvency of local public credit banks would be guaranteed by adequate reserve requirements, and the money supply would be stabilized by repayment of loans as they came due. The interchangeability of public credit bank notes would ensure a wide circulation for the new money. Kellogg’s public credit banks are a form of free banking, but done as an interest-free public service rather than as a private for-profit enterprise.

Capital would become cheaply and widely available

Money and Liberty

By Adrian Kuzminski
Local Currency: A Revolution That Sounds Like a Whisper

By Amy M. Kirschner

“When the French and Russian revolutions overthrew the established orders in their countries (in 1786 and 1917, respectively), they changed just about everything, but not their monetary systems.”

Bernard A. Lietaer, Of Human Wealth

Local Currency

Vermont has a long history of challenging the status quo and being fiercely politically independent. As we look to the future, especially as the global economy forces new dependence, it is imperative that we strive for an economic independence that matches our political independence.

While all can see that our governmental systems reflect our values for freedom and equality, few realize that our economic system inherently requires competition and expansion. The need for an expanding competitive marketplace necessitates never-ending growth and environmental harm, constant fear of economic loss, and the sad reality that many are left with nothing. Fewer still are the people who see that we can change our economic system to reflect higher values: cooperation, stewardship of the environment, and an equal voice for all.

Revolutions happen when a group of people decide that the system they operate within no longer shares the same values they do and no longer reflects who they are or want to be. If what we seek is independence, we must move away from systems that do not foster it.

There have been a great many political and cultural revolutions worldwide, but other than the failed attempt at state-run communism, there have been no serious attempts at an economic revolution that deeply alters the underlying values of the system.

What does a revolution sound like? The United States revolution, as captured in the National Anthem, sounded like “bombs bursting in air.” What we propose is one closer to what folk singer Tracy Chapman referred to as a revolution that “sounds like a whisper.”

The most powerful revolutions have always been because of an idea whose time has come. A revolution can happen everyday and everywhere without gunshots, a new political regime, or central movement. The quietest revolutions have taken place in the hearts of people through small, decentralized actions. Ultimately, political revolutions occur when people feel powerless and when those with power are unconcerned with their fellow citizens. Economic inequities are often at the core of such frustration. By changing the parameters of our monetary system so that our medium of exchange itself breeds economic equality, political revolutions may not be necessary.

What would an economic revolution look like? It is imperative that we begin with how money works because that is a basis of what determines our economy. Greatly simplified, the creation of money occurs when banks issue loans to borrowers; the bank is not loaning money that others have deposited, as many people think, but is actually writing a check for money that did not previously exist.

Since banks can loan more money than they actually have, needing only “fractional reserves,” each loan is actually creating money. When banks issue loans, they charge interest. At current rates, for every $100 that is created, $106 is owed.

Globalization and national currencies have tipped the balance in favor of large corporations and centralized distribution without accountability. By contrast, a local currency re-empowers a community to issue credit to local businesses, institutions, farmers, and individuals.

Because of the economic system we have, at every moment of time more money is owed than is in current circulation. This means there will always be economic losers, and that in order for most people and businesses to meet their debts the economy must continue to grow. The never-ending fear of failure to meet obligations naturally leads to competition and the belief that environmental stewardship and social equity are secondary to economic growth.

Another facet of our economic system is that money is global and can travel quickly worldwide. But with the advent of the global marketplace where dollars consistently seek out the highest rates of return, there are many projects that are in the community’s best interest which are not funded because they are not profitable in the short term. Examples of these projects are investments in local food production, renewable energy, affordable housing, durable clothing, education and school infrastructure, and caring for the needy.

We have the ability to create a new system with new values inherent in it. A network of local and complementary currencies, whose money is created interest-free, would dramatically alter our national behavior and culture. A wealth of dormant and disenfranchised capacity would be unleashed as citizens became engaged maximizing creative utilization of existing local resources. This is not a dream; it has happened thousands of times in the past, and today there are more than 4,000 local currencies now strengthening local economies around the world.

Imagine the local pride and feeling of empowerment that would be created if communities recovering from natural disasters could start the recovery by simply facilitating the exchange of needed goods and services through a new locally based monetary system, thus harnessing contributions and abilities of their local citizens. Or imagine the
I began not filing and not paying federal taxes in 2001. I believe that if I contribute to paying the salaries of blatant criminals, I make myself complicit in the crimes being committed. I believe, with every fiber in my body, that 9/11 was an inside-job.

The Offense Department (let’s call a spade a spade) and its “Long War” are utterly abhorrent to me.

Abu Ghraib? Well… don’t even get me started! Earlier this year, however, some internal voice seemed to be urging me to clean up my “tax mess.” At the time, there was an unopened letter from X on my kitchen counter demanding that I file returns for 2001-2004 by April 30, 2006, or “enforcement actions up to and including the seizure and sale of real estate owned by you in Putney, Vt., will be initiated to collect the outstanding liability.” (I was aware, though, that a lien had been placed against my home for $421,346, for taxes that I supposedly owed on a ridiculous amount of income I had supposedly earned in 2001 and 2002.)

In the letter that sat unopened, X had pulled a “Lewis Libby” by informing me that, if I had any problems with the proposed actions, I could call or write to X’s boss—who was named in the letter.

Trust me, the I.R.S. does Enron accounting. Their assessment was absolutely ludicrous! I documented my financial life in 2001 and 2002 for three different I.R.S. agents. I never heard back from two of them and, in the end, X refused to consider the information I provided—which would seem to run counter to Section 3421 of Public Law 105-206 (Approval Process for Liens, Levies, and Seizures). In any case, to this I can conceive of and develop a better system. X replied: “It’s actually a pretty good system. It works pretty well.”

At one point, I proposed to X: “My experience with the I.R.S. over the last several years is a metaphor for the way the whole federal government works right now, isn’t it?” X replied: “Yes.” And then we both spontaneously burst out laughing, and laughed together heartily for at least 30 seconds! (After you’ve sat and had a good laugh with an I.R.S. agent, everything sort of shifts.)

I asked X what would have happened if I’d ignored X’s last communication to me (regarding the possible seizure of my home). X replied that I had been correct in my last communication (before that internal voice kicked in). The I.R.S. cannot seize a principal residence without the consent of a district court judge—and I would’ve been invited to that proceeding. (See Sections 3444 and 3445 of Public Law 105-206.) I asked: “Given the position I’ve repeatedly put forth and the amount of research I’ve done into what’s going on and the fact that I no longer want anything to do with this fraudulent political construct called the United States of America, what do you think would’ve happened?” X replied: “I don’t know, but it would’ve been interesting… But you didn’t want it to go that far.”

X added interest and penalties to the $424 amounts for 2001 and 2002, bumping them up to $774 and $689 respectively. I wrote checks for those amounts in full. X then assured me that the lien would be discharged in 30 days and that I would be notified of that event.

I had not filed Vermont tax forms for 2001 and 2002, bumping them up to $774 and $689 respectively. I wrote checks for those amounts in full. X then assured me that the lien would be discharged in 30 days and that I would be notified of that event.

And then something automatic kicked in in the I.R.S.’s pretty good computer system: They seized most of the rest of the money I thought would be coming back to me from Vermont. I left a very angry message on X’s answering machine. X called me back and practically yelled: “I didn’t do that! That action didn’t originate in my office! But I’ll look into it for you.”

Very quickly, I received notice that my filings for 2003-2004 had been processed. Enclosed was a bill for interest and penalties. I left another message on X’s answering machine, asking him why 2001 and 2002 hadn’t been processed first, so that the lien could be removed from my house. I suggested that X call his buddies at the Ogden, Utah, Service Center and get them to do their jobs.

I think X may have made that call, because, shortly thereafter, I received a letter from the Ogden Service Center, saying, basically: “We don’t have the manpower to process your 2001 and 2002 filings. We’ll let you know if anything changes in the next 90 days.”

Dueling middle fingers! I told X, “Nice of your buddies to leave you twisting in the wind. Your name is on the lien. It’s your responsibility to get it removed.” I’d been assured earlier by X that X desired nothing more. Now, it was clear that that is not actually within X’s powers.

And so it stands at summer’s end, as I write this. By the way, I like and respect X. X is just doing a job, supporting a family. (Although I couldn’t write a job description for X. X has admitted to no expertise in “tax law.”) Anyway, when I ranted on about the Bush-cabal during one of our meetings, X tried hard to play the nasty I.R.S. agent.

In the end, though, X responded very quietly: “You’re preaching to the choir.”

Oh, and one more thing: DO NOT reply with correspondence to the Cincinnati, Ohio, office. Apparently, English is not their language. They only process checks. They will send you a form letter, telling you to resend your correspondence to the Holtsville, NY, office. And good luck with them! That’s the office from which I received the most stupid form letter I have EVER received in my life! I think there’s nothing more there than a poorly programmed computer—hence, the National Security issue. They don’t want you to know that.

My encouragement to all. Play the game well!

http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=105_cong_public_laws&docid=fpub105.105

Public Law 105-206; 105th Congress
An Act To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to restructure and reform the Internal Revenue Service, and for other purposes.
July 22, 1998 - [H.R. 2676]
Bleiluss & Freeman continued from page 4
’said they want votes to be counted in front of observers representing the public, and that elec-
tions officials should not rely solely on the propri-
etary software that operates electronic voting machines that are presently being installed all over the United States.”

Second, careful investigation has been forth-
members of the House Judiciary Committee have
produced compelling reports documenting fraud
and malfeasance. Several books, including ours,
produced compelling reports documenting fraud
members of the House Judiciary Committee have
exposed the subject. Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.,
whose article in Rolling Stone this past June moved
the issue of a stolen election to center stage, has
filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Florida,
asserting that Diebold and other electronic voting
machine companies fraudulently represented to
state election boards and the federal government
that their products were “unhackable.” Kennedy
says he has witnesses “centrally located, deep
within the corporations,” who will confirm that
corporate officials withheld their knowledge of
problems with accuracy, reliability, and security of
electronic voting machines in order to procure
government contracts. As Kennedy wrote in his
Rolling Stone article, “The single greatest threat to
our democracy is the insecurity of our voting sys-
tem. Whoever controls the voting machines can
control who wins the votes.”

Third, legislative efforts are underway. Legisla-
tion sponsored by Rep. Rush Holt (D-N.J.) would
require the use of voter-verified paper records in
audits and recounts and make the paper ballot the
ballot of record in the case of inconsistencies with
electronic totals. The act would also prohibit the
use of undisclosed software and wireless commu-
ication devices in voting systems. Under the lead-
ership of Verified Voting.org, voting-rights activists
cross the country are working to ensure that
there is a paper record of every vote and that vot-
ers are able to verify the accuracy of their votes.
So far, 27 states have established regulations that
require a “voter-verfied paper record” (VVPR). But
23 states as of yet have no such requirement,
including Pennsylvania, Texas and Florida.

Fourth, verification initiatives are under way.
Bever Harris of Blackbox voting has produced a
series of machine verification initiatives. And in
2006, Steven Freeman, one of the present authors,
and exit pollster Ken Warren hope to conduct the
nation’s first election verification exit poll, a fully
transparent project to put exit election survey data
in the public domain. This will begin as a pilot proj-
et in scattered test precincts, with the aim of con-
ducting a full-scale national exit poll in 2008.

But much more must be done.

The media need to begin taking this issue seri-
ously. Both Project Censored and Mark Crispin
Miller in his book Fool Again: How the Right Stole
the 2004 Election & Why They’ll Steal the Next One
(Unless We Stop Them) have documented the
dearth of meaningful reporting of electoral short-
comings in the United States. And, with the excep-
tion of In These Times, few independent media out-
lets have given the subject the attention it
deserves.

Voting machines must be audited and official
counts must be verified. The Holt bill, while
clearly an improvement over current practice, is
insufficient. Precinct hand counts must be used to
systematically verify official counts. Machines and
their tabulations must be systematically audited.
Even if paper trails cannot be made available in
upcoming elections, administrators can audit
machines under Election Day conditions to test
whether machines are, in fact, counting votes as
they have been cast.

Another critical verification measure is inde-
pedent exit polls. In Germany, the minute the polls
close, television stations publish exit-poll projections conducted by independent firms.

Kuzminski continued from page 12
able at local public-credit banks to anyone mini-
mally credit-worthy. Students, for instance, could
take out public-credit loans instead of student
loans. Public-credit banks could offer no-interest
credit cards. Homebuyers could take out public-
credit loans instead of mortgages. Small business
(sole proprietorships and partnerships) could take
out public-credit loans instead of borrowing
money from commercial banks. Corporations,
however, would not be able to borrow from pub-
lic-credit banks, whose purpose is to serve the
interest of flesh-and-blood citizens, not corporate
entities. The latter would have to borrow on the
secondary debt markets, at necessarily higher but
still reasonable interest rates.

No public-credit currency would be issued at
any other than the local level. National standards
would determine uniform rules of credit-worthi-
ness, minimum reserve requirements, local public
management, and a fixed nominal (1-percent) rate
of interest. A local public-credit bank issuing too
many bad loans, or refusing loans to otherwise
credit-worthy citizens, would be subject to legal
penalties, including closure and reorganization.

Notice the profound implications of Kellogg’s
money system. There would be NO controlling
central bank, no centrally controlled issuance of
currency. The banking system would be set on its
head. A bottom-up system of capital creation
would be possible on the merits of the situa-
tion. This is a market solution that will not be
successful unless its citizens personally
speak out against this country’s ongoing attempt
to undertake a variety of related verification meas-
ures.

We are too complacent when we place the
blame only on the media and our national over-
sight bodies. A nation depends also on its profes-
sional and educated elite to speak out against
abuse of power. But few so many professionals
and academics, who sit comfortably atop the sta-
tus quo, have been willing to take responsibility as

Joel Bleiluss and Steven F. Freeman are the authors of Was the 2004 Presidential Election Stolen? Exit Polls, Election Fraud, and the Official Count (Seven Stories Press, 2006).
Republicanism and Size
By Donald W. Livingston

Until the late 18th century, the republican tradition taught that self-government required small states. Classical Greek civilization, pre-imperial Rome, the Italian Renaissance, were the work of hundreds of small city states, averaging a few thousand people, and rarely numbering beyond 100 thousand. Late medieval civilization was composed of literally thousands of independent and quasi-independent political units. By the 17th century, however, monarchs had succeeded in crushing hundreds of these smaller political societies into larger and fewer states.

In order to rule these vast domains, the monarchs gradually built a centralized system of control. This system was the king’s property and was known as “absolute monarchy.” A doctrine developed of the “two bodies of the king,” expressed in the declaration upon a monarch’s death: “The king is dead, long live the king.” The immortal body of the king was the centralized system of control. In time, the abstract system of coercion acquired a life of its own and, with the French Revolution, threw the king out as the chief executive officer of the corporation. The first “body of the king” was murdered, but the second body remained. It was merely renamed as the body of a republic or nation, and its powers of coercion vastly expanded.

It was in this way – as a legitimating fiction – that the idea of a “republic” of vast size first appeared in history. The Revolution paid no regard to the essential feature of the republican tradition, namely propriety of size and human scale. Notions such as self-government, community, equality, and citizenship, which made sense in the traditional republican size of 100,000 people or fewer, became meaningless when suddenly mapped onto France, a country of some 20 million – just as a charming country chapel would be a monstrosity if scaled to the size of a cathedral. Nonetheless, every large “republic” since would follow the French model.

It was Tocqueville’s brilliant insight that the French Revolution had fundamentally changed nothing. What Tocqueville and others found objectionable in monarchy was the centralization of power. That power – the king’s second body – survived and was expanded beyond the dreams even of Louis XIV. As had as they were, monarchs were never able to extract more than 5 percent to 60 percent. However, it might be said that this exploitation by the state has been authorized by the people themselves, since in a republic the people are sovereign.

This of course is the idea, but what is the reality? In the last days of monarchy, the second body of the king (the temporary managers of the system of coercion) ruled in the name of the king’s person, though in reality the king’s role was becoming ceremonial. Today they rule in the name of the sovereign people. But the people’s role, like that of the king, has become largely ceremonial, and consists mainly in the ceremony of voting, which usually means choosing between two candidates selected by private parties over which there is no genuine public control. The people in vast modern “republics” are sovereign in the same way that the Queen of Great Britain is sovereign or that the last emperor of China was sovereign.

We might recast Tocqueville’s insight to say that a large modern “republic” is an 18th century absolute monarchy (the second body of the king) without the monarch (the first body). And, moreover, that it has all the disadvantages of monarchy (centralization of power), but none of the advantages (state power suffered more checks from independent social authorities under monarchy than under modern “republics”).

Classical republican expressions such as “self government,” “sovereignty of the people,” “civic virtue,” “equality,” “community,” “nation,” even “citizenship,” are meaningless on the scale of the U.S. empire, and serve only to hide our true condition from ourselves.

The first philosopher to argue for a large republic was David Hume in Idea of a Perfect Common-wealth (1752). He begins, however, with the presumption that republics, if possible, should be small. “A small commonwealth is the happiest government in the world within itself... But it may be subdu’d by great force from without.” He thought one could enjoy the advantages of large scale, in respect to defense and free trade, while preserving the virtues of small scale – if the republic were properly divided. In what follows I would like to compare Hume’s extensive republic with the current U.S. regime to show how far removed the latter is from anything that could responsibly be called a republic.

Hume presents Great Britain or France as the model size of a large republic. He divides the polity into 100 provincial republics, and each of these into 100 parishes. Citizens, meeting a property qualification, assemble in the parish church annually to elect a representative to their respective provincial republic. This yields 100 representatives who assemble in the provincial capital and elect, from themselves, one senator and 10 provincial magistrates. The senators meet in the national capital of the commonwealth and have the executive power and supreme judicial power of the commonwealth. The senators choose among themselves a president to represent the commonwealth and to preside over the senate and six councils of state which frame policies regarding religion, learning, war, law, trade, and treasury.

The 10 magistrates of each provincial republic exercise the executive and judicial power within the province. The supreme legislative power of the whole commonwealth is held jointly by the provincial representatives (100 to a republic with 100 republics) – the total number being 10,000 representatives. Laws begin in the senate, and are sent to the provincial representatives for ratification. A law passes when a majority of the provincial republics ratify it, each republic having one vote. In case of a tie, the senate casts the deciding vote. To prevent having to assemble the entire body of representatives for every trivial law, the senate may choose to send a proposed law to the provincial magistrates. But if only five (out of 100) representatives demand a vote of the provincial republic’s court of representatives, the magistrates must grant it.

Compare Hume’s radical innovation of a large republic with the United States. The U.S. House of Representatives has 435 representatives; whereas Hume’s representative body numbers 10,000! The number of senators is the same, but Hume has 100 republics, the U.S. only 50.

Even more important, Hume’s representatives meet in their provincial capitals. Only the senators meet in the national capital. This division of power by territory strengthens the ability of the provincial republics to protect their distinct ways of life and interests, and makes it difficult to form a “second body of the king” in the national capital, as would surely happen if all legislative power were concentrated in one place and in the hands of a few hundred people. Senators and representatives in Washington today seldom go home after leaving office, but remain at the center to continue their career – but in a new form – of brokering and lobbying the resources of the federal government.

Or to view the matter in a different light: There are 435 representatives for some 300 million Americans, one for every 690,000 – an utterly meaningless ratio of representation to population. In Hume’s reform, there would be 10,000 representatives – one for every 29,000, almost the same ratio that obtained in 1789 when the U.S. Constitution was ratified: one for every 30,000.

In Hume’s system, it is difficult for the government to form a special interest over that of the public. For one thing, each office is open to annual election, both in the senate and among the representatives. Offices may be retained indefinitely, but they must be reaffirmed each year, beginning at the provincial level.

The senate has few offices to dispose of; most are in the hands of the provincial magistrates under the jealous eye of the parishes and their provincial representatives. Any 20 provincial republics (of 100) can, by a vote of their magistrates, elect a president to represent the commonwealth in the national capital.
A Narrative of national republics. A continued from previous page
government. A law to the senate. And if voted down, any five provincial republics may order the law submitted to the provincial magistrates or representatives for a vote. Imagine the chilling discipline these checks would impose today on Congress, the “imperial presidency” and on the Supreme Court, which has usurped legislative power to such an extent that it is now the most important social policy-making body in the empire. No one who is honest and understands the republican tradition could describe a regime in which 300 million people are ruled by 435 representatives, 100 senators, one president, and nine unelected justices as a republic without breaking out into laughter.

“For Certain Purposes”
I have imagined applying Hume’s reform to the post-Lincolnian tradition that conceives of the U.S. not as a federation but as a French Revolutionary unitary state—a “nation, one and indivisible.” Hume’s reform serves to show how embarrassingly unrepresentative the post-Lincolnian regime is. But the embarrassment is even greater if we consider Hume’s reform in light of the pre-Lincolnian— that is, the Jeffersonian—understanding of the American polity. In this conception the United States is not a republic at all, but a federation of republics. A federation of republics is not itself a republic, so the limit on size appropriate for a republic (whether a traditionally small one or Hume’s extensive one) does not apply to a federation.

Nor was the United States founded as a “nation.” Rather, the states, in ratifying the Constitution, artificially created, as Jefferson put it, “a nation for certain purposes” (mainly foreign treaties, defense, and regulation of interstate commerce). To speak of the national government, then, was not to speak of a mystical nation-person in the manner of 19th century European (and Lincolnian) nationalism, but to speak merely of certain enumerated powers the states had delegated to a public service corporation called the United States.

Viewed in this Jeffersonian way, Hume’s reform is applicable only to each American republic. So each American state, being an extensive Humean republic, would be composed of 100 provincial republics (each divided into 100 parishes). Each is an extensive state in need of the sort of reform Hume designed for just such states. For it is said that a union of decentralized, extensive, Humean republics would be too unwieldy if projected onto the scale of the current U.S. regime as it surely would be. Then we should consider making topical again what Hume called being “an American in my principles,” and allow states that wish to do so to secede and govern themselves.

places—were pro-government and viewed secession as anarchic and treason. To this Hume replied: “I am an American in my Principles, and wish we would let them alone to govern or misgovern themselves as they think proper. The affair is of no Consequence, or of little Consequence to us.”

And in another place he argued that Britain would preserve the greater part of its current trade even if the colonies were independent states: “Let us, therefore, lay aside all Anger; shake hands, and part Friends.” A noble and humane gesture then and now.

Although Hume broke with republican tradition in theorizing a large republic, he was careful to reconcile the demands of the large with the republican tradition’s insistence on the small. From it we may learn two things. First, those who wish to continue the adventure of a post-Lincolnian unitary state must, if they are honest, abandon all talk of the United States being a “republic,” or even a federation of republics. Classical republican expressions such as “self government,” “sovereignty of the people,” “civic virtue,” “equality,” “community,” “nation,” even “citizenship,” are meaningless on the scale of the U.S. empire, and serve only to hide our true condition from ourselves.

Second, those whose souls are attuned to a Jeffersonian vision must recognize that the once sovereign American states have submitted to post-Lincolnian centralization for so long that most of them have entirely lost their republican character. Each is an extensive state in need of the sort of reform Hume designed for just such states. And if it is said that a union of decentralized, extensive, Humean republics would be too unwieldy if projected onto the scale of the current U.S. regime as it surely would be then we should consider making topical again what Hume called being “an American in my principles,” and allow states that wish to do so to secede and govern themselves.

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SECESSION FEVER

Secession fever is spreading across America just as it did back in 1776 and 1861. More than 40 states now have active political independence movements committed to the peaceful withdrawal of their respective states from the Union. As a result, the United States may never be the same. Indeed, in the not-too-distant future, it may cease to exist, just like its former nemesis, the U.S.S.R.

How can this be? The United States government has lost its moral authority. It has become a cross between an oligarchy and an autocracy disguised as a democracy—just like the former Soviet Union. The U.S. is no longer sustainable economically, politically, militarily, socially, culturally, or environmentally. Because of its size, it is ungovernable and, therefore, unfixable.

Not unlike every other empire throughout history, the U.S. Empire is going down, and it is going down at a much faster rate than most Americans realize. Although the historical origins of America's death spiral can be traced back several decades, it was President George W. Bush's response to September 11, 2001, that has provided the impetus for our final demise. When we look back over time, it is the war on terrorism that will have proved to have been our death knell with all of its economic, legal, social, and geopolitical implications. Technofascism, the cheap oil endgame, unconditional support for Israel, full-spectrum dominance, imperial overstretch, and unbridled American habits are all part of the drill.

The prospects of $100-per-barrel crude oil, $4-per-gallon gasoline, and $1,0000-per-ounce gold, as well as the rapidly escalating conflict in the Middle East, are causing an increasing number of Americans to reconsider secession as a viable option. Not since the end of the Civil War has there been this much interest in political independence by the states. A recent statewide survey conducted by the University of Vermont found that more than 8 percent of Vermont's eligible voters now favor secession. There are few third-party movements in the United States that ever achieve this level of political support—and it's growing. Every time George Bush opens his mouth the price of gold goes up, and Vermont's independence movement, the Second Vermont Republic, recruits more members. The two are not unrelated.

Alaska and Hawaii have the oldest and best-known secession movements. The independence-minded League of the South, founded in 1994, has a presence—state chapters and/or League members—in as many as 27 states. When asked why the League of the South has experienced such rapid growth, League President Dr. Michael Hill explained that an increasing number of Americans want to "free themselves from the web in which the Empire has entangled them." The Second Vermont Republic now has members in 24 states and five countries. California has more SVR members than any state other than Vermont.

Secession politics is a form of radical politics, cutting to the core of the 21st century problems that plague us. It stands in stark contrast to traditional, politically correct, electoral politics, which is dead in the water—particularly at the national level. Secession represents a peaceful call for rebellion against the state driven by a positive vision of the future. It is confrontational, aggressive, and very hard-nosed. Its message is, "Enough is enough!" Secession politics has its own set of rules and a playbook that is different from conventional electoral politics. It is not for the faint of heart.

On November 3-4, 2006, secession leaders from across the continent will gather in Burlington, Vermont to attend the first North American Secession Convention, sponsored by the Middlebury Institute. Kirkpatrick Sale is the convention leader. Delegates are expected from Alaska, California, Hawaii, Texas, North Carolina, New Hampshire, Vermont, Quebec, and throughout North America.

The Middlebury Institute is a national think tank devoted to promoting political independence and secession worldwide. For additional information contact the director@Middleburyinstitute.net.
Yawn Signs - Might Vermont move beyond a teetering U.S. empire to genuine independence? PHOTO BY ROB WILLIAMS

Globalization and national currencies have tipped the balance in favor of large corporations and centralized distribution without accountability. By contrast, a local currency re-empowers a community to issue credit to local businesses, institutions, farmers and individuals to undertake projects that enhance local quality of life, reflect community values, and build long-term community wealth and well-being. Local currencies also bring back the competitive edge that favors local businesses, local decisions, and local identity.

The Burlington Currency Project, a Vermont non-profit which created Burlington’s local currency in 1998, has been legally and openly managing a “complementary” currency and does not promote the abandonment of the national dollar. Local markets cannot always be 100-percent self-sufficient. It does not meet common sense for each locality to produce its own computers or automobiles, and dollars will always be necessary to buy U.S. postage stamps. We have gone too far in assuming that one currency and type of monetary system can fulfill ALL the needs of our community. We need multiple levels of currency for our multiple needs. We need local currencies, like Burlington Bread, to increase local transactions at the retail and individual level and to create a new cooperative economy where communities can become more self-reliant by providing for basic needs like food, energy, health care, and personal services. We need a national currency to purchase items that cannot be produced here.

The Burlington Currency Project (BCP) envisions a network of local currencies throughout Vermont connected through an electronic ‘mutual credit clearing system’ where businesses in Rutland or Montpelier or Brattleboro could accept their own local currency from their customers, deposit it in the electronic system, and then use that electronic system to order goods from their suppliers from other parts of the state. We envision a system to encourage informal care services which tracks hours of volunteerism (called “Time Dollars”, currently operating in hundreds of communities in 22 countries) so that a high school student who “deposits” an hour mowing a neighbor’s lawn over the summer can “withdraw” an hour’s worth of tutoring at exam time. We envision the community frequently issuing the currency to create interest-free loans in order to fund projects and entrepreneurial ventures, and making the repayment easier than bank loans in dollars which charge high rates of interest.

We believe that in order to have a significant impact on the community, we need to dream big. We will not believe that we have arrived until 10 percent of all Vermont’s economic transactions are conducted with local currencies and all businesses use it, until city governments accept a portion of their property tax payments in local currencies and pay a portion of their employees’ wages with it, and until it has become so ingrained in the local culture that citizens don’t think twice about it and tourists come to experience it.

There is nothing and no one to fight against in this movement. There is simply self-examination, education, discussion, and ultimately choice. It is a quiet and peaceful revolution, one exchange at a time. It is people taking back control of their own destinies.

We are building the electronic system and strengthening the Burlington currency now. The revolution has begun. Rise up! •
DISPERSIONS

By Kirkpatrick Sale

The First North American Secessionist Convention

The Middlebury Institute, in keeping with its mission of “the study of separatism, secession, and self-determination,” is holding the first North American Secessionist Convention this fall in Burlington, Vermont with a dual purpose: to assess the secessionist movement on the continent at this time, and to bring together those with an interest in the movement for a discussion of strategies and policies to make it stronger.

There is a great deal of talk about secession in various quarters, picking up as the U.S. empire continues with its illegal, ineffective, intrusive, and immoral actions here and abroad, and more and more people are thinking that, extreme as it may at first seem, it really is the most sensible of the various options for serious political action. As did the participants at the 2004 Middlebury conference that issued the Middlebury Declaration, they are finding do-nothingism intolerable, and revolution useless and self-defeating. So if you want to lead a better life, with some democratic control over your affairs, without participa-
tion, they are finding do-nothingism intolerable, and revolution useless and self-defeating. So if you want to lead a better life, with some demo-
cratic control over your affairs, without partici-
pat

tion, they are finding do-nothingism intolerable, and revolution useless and self-defeating. So if you want to lead a better life, with some demo-
cratic control over your affairs, without partici-
-pating in the corrupt and dangerous system pro-
vided by this increasingly imperialistic failed state called the United States, secession seems to provide an answer.

As of this writing, more than 30 people have signed up—most of them genuine representa-
tives of state separatist movements, plus a few expert observers. They represent movements in Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and Alaska (the three oldest movements), the League of the South, Southern National Congress Committee, Southern Cau-
cus, Christian Exodus, New State Movement, State of Jefferson, and groups in Texas, Califor-
nia, Michigan, South Carolina, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Washington city, Maine, and of course Vermont. It seems clear evidence, as Ver-
mont’s Thomas Naylor says, that “not since the end of the Civil War has there been this much interest in political independence by the states.” (“I’ll have to remind him that it was not a civil war but a war of secession, quite a different thing.”)

The League of the South looks to be one of the strongest groups, with chapters in 16 states and members in all others. It was formed in 1994, it has a national office in Arkansas, a bimonthly newspaper, a national conference, a website (Dix-
ienet.org), and an associated LOS Institute for the study of Southern culture. Its primary goal is establishing “a free and independent Southern republic . . .” by 1) de-legitimizing the American Empire at every opportunity; 2) proving our willingness to be servant-leaders to the South-
ern people; and 3) making The League of the South a strong, viable organization that will lead us to Southern independence.” It argues that “legally speaking,” the old Confederacy still exists because it never formally surrendered, and its strategy is to get “an educated and willing public” to realize this and create “a climate con-
ductive to Southern independence.” As Michael Hill, the LOS president, has put it: “Let us gain the confidence and support of our people by becoming their worthy servants. Then let us re-
assert our independence and nationhood on the firm foundational principles of 1776 and 1861.” He adds, “Though the South is presently a na-

tion by right, this will mean nothing until the South starts acting like a nation in fact. To bring Dixie to that point is the League’s goal.”

Alabama’s movement, the Alabama Independence Party, has been in business since 1984 and regu-
larly runs candidates for statewide offices. It bills itself the largest third party of any state, pulling in between 10,000 and 20,000 voters and 3 per-
cent to 4 percent of the vote—one even elect-
ing a governor, Walter Hickel, who then tuned his back on the party and acted as an ordinary Republican in office. It has a website (akkip.org) with a great many interesting links, an annual conference, and occasional press releases, but it has been somewhat quiet in recent years—it
drew only 14,000 voters at last fall’s election, at 3.03 per cent. Its chief aim is to have a revote on the question of statehood, which was put on the ballot as a yes-or-no proposition in 1958, instead of a choice between statehood, remaining a ter-
ritory, becoming a commonwealth, like Puerto Rico, or becoming an independent nation—and it’s that last one that AIP favors. Some sense of its politics can be seen in its website response to the question of whether an Alaskan would lose U.S. citizenship if the state seceded: “Depending on the form of independence, several forms of citizenship would be possible, including the retention of U.S. citizenship or dual citizenship. However, considering the moral, educational, and economic decay of the U.S., Alaskans who hold themselves to a higher standard might very well decide to at least maintain an arm’s length distance from a country in decline.”

The movement in Hawai’i is a bit of a mix, and some there even argue that secession is irre-
ev..ant since they regard Hawai’i as a sovereign state that has simply been conquered illegally by the United States and doesn’t need to secede from anything. But since a removal of the con-
queror and an act of secession would have the same effect, there are groups willing to put their struggle in that light. Among them are the Hawai’i Nation, Kingdom of Hawai’i, Free Hawai’i, Huaka’i I Na ‘Aina Mauna, and Sover-
eign Hawai’i Government, and I have no way of knowing from this distance why there are so many different groups, since they seem to be working for the same thing. The general take would seem to have been well expressed in a

1994 proclamation by a General Council of native Hawai’ians stating that “we are the origi-
nal inhabitants and occupants of these islands [and] have always been in possession of our land and are entitled to re-establish our Independent and Sovereign Nation.” It concluded that the “General Council Assembled . . . solemnly pub-
lish, declare and proclaim that the Independent and Sovereign Nation of Hawai’i is free and has been somewhat quiet in recent years—it

The November convention will be the barometer of just how strong and

purposive this movement is.

Two other active groups that are not strictly secessionist, but with a strong interest in the convention because to fulfill their aims would probably come down to secession, are the Chris-
tian Exodus and the Free State Project. The first of these, begun in 2003 “in response to the moral degeneration of our nation” and the failure of regular political parties to halt it, has a scheme to settle large numbers of its adherents in South Carolina, which it deems to be the most conservative and Christian state in the Union. Once a critical mass is present there, they would begin to take over local and county insti-
tutions and eventually the state government, creating a constitution that would guarantee “the protection of human life at conception, the Ten Commandments as the foundation of law, the prohibition of any redefinition of marriage, and a strong reserve clause” of undelegated powers to local government. “If this cannot be achieved within the United States,” they say, “then we believe a peaceful withdrawal from the union to be the last available remedy.”

The Free State Project similarly intends to move people in to take over a state—in this case New Hampshire, because it has the smallest tax burden of any state and is small enough to be influenced by a small number of immigrants—and create a strongly libertarian government. The project was begun by Jason Sorens, then a Yale graduate student in political science, in 2001, who determined that 20,000 active people would be sufficient to wield influence over the state gov-
ernment—and as of June this year 7,166 had signed on. The aim is to create a government that would “support policies such as abolition of all income taxes, elimination of regulatory bureau-
cracies, repeal of most gun control laws, repeal of most drug prohibition laws, complete free trade, decentralization of government, and widespread privatization.” It is explicitly against secession, it says, but its literature recognizes that such a move might have to be taken if its program was resisted by federal forces—as would seem to be likely.

It may be too much to say, as Thomas Naylor has said recently, that “once again secession fever is spreading across America just as it did back in 1776 and 1861.” But there is no doubt that something is in the air, and the November convention will be the barometer of just how strong and purposive this movement is.”