THE NEW ENGLAND SECESSION TRADITION

PART II

By Donald Livingston

This quarter, we present the second installment of Professor Livingston’s three-part series discussing the roots of a New England secession tradition. Readers can find Part I in the Spring 2007 issue of Vermont Commons, or on the web.

From the ratification of the Constitution in 1789 up to 1860, secession was openly considered throughout the Union as an option available to an American state. The first section to mount a serious secession movement was New England, from 1804 to 1814. The public knows little about this movement, and few historians who have written about it have viewed it with some embarrassment as an unpatriotic act.

The reason, of course, is that post-Lincolnian historiography views the Union as “indivisible.” Once a state enters the Union, there is no exit. But leaving aside whether this is true today, it most certainly was not the pre-Lincolnian conception of the Union. The New England secession movement, involving as it did distinguished leaders of the Federalist Party as well as Founding Fathers, is strong evidence that the Union was not thought of as indivisible.

The first work on the Constitution was St. George Tucker’s Blackstone’s Commentaries, With Notes of Reference to the Constitution and Laws of the Federal Government of the United States, published in 1803, less than two decades after the Constitution was ratified. It makes clear that since the states were sovereign prior to forming the Union, and freely entered it, they may, if they chose, freely leave it. The next work on the Constitution was A View of the Constitution (1825) by William Rawle, a friend of George Washington and head of the Pennsylvania bar. Rawle was a Federalist, the same party that presided over the Constitution. Rawle says: “The Constitution was first articulated by Thomas Jefferson in the Kentucky Resolutions (1798, 1799), and by James Madison in the Virginia Resolutions (1798) and the Virginia Report (1799). These came to be known as ‘the principles of 98.’”

The Constitution, Jefferson argued, is a compact between sovereign states to create a central government endowed with only enumerated powers (mainly defense, regulation of commerce, and foreign treaties). To delegate power is not to renounce sovereignty. Consequently a state, being sovereign, can interpose its authority to protect its citizens from an unconstitutional act of the central government by nullifying it. Jefferson, in the 1799 Kentucky Resolutions, was the first to introduce state nullification into Constitutional discourse. Should a state wish to secede or leave the Union, it need only interpose its authority to nullify such an act and implement the will of the people of such state,” and he lays out the legal steps a state must satisfy to secede. Rawle’s book was enthusiastically reviewed by Boston’s prestigious North American Review and declared a “safe guide” to the Constitution. It was used as a text on the Constitution at West Point from 1825 to 1840.

Jeffersonian principles

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Recentlly I read a speech that cuts into the meat of our day, here at the American table: “Now, it should be incandescently clear that no one who has any concern for the integrity and life of America today can ignore the present war... So far we may have killed a million of them, mostly children... What do they think as we test out our latest weapons on them...? We have destroyed their two most cherished institutions: the family and the village. We have destroyed their land and their crops... Now there is little left to build on, save bitterness... We are adding cynicism to the process of death, for they must know... that none of the things we claim to be fighting for are really involved... I speak as one who loves America, to the leaders of our own nation: The great initiative in this war is ours; the initiative to stop it must be ours... If we do not stop our war against [them] immediately, the world will be left with no other alternative than to see this as some horrible, clumsy, and deadly game we have decided to play. The world now demands... we admit that we have been wrong from the beginning of our adventure... I am convinced... we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift... to a person-oriented society... [or] the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.”

That speech was given 40 years ago, on April 4, 1967. Spoken before concerned clergy and laypersons assembled in New York’s Riverside Church, “Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence,” linked fulfillment of the social justice movement to the success of the peace movement and made Martin Luther King an enemy of the state. 

Struck by this inability to change, to learn, to surrender our addiction to fighting brutal wars in countries thousands of miles from our borders, are we not compelled to look in the mirror, and ask ourselves: Who are we? What gives? For those of us content with easy answers, the mirror might reply: It’s the Republicans, taken over by those war-mongering Neo-Cons. Or, it’s this crazy president (whom we nonetheless elected, at least allegedly, twice). Or, it’s the rule of world corporations, the military-industrial-congressional complex and their brand of global capitalism? Or, no, in the end it’s us Americans; we’re just a warlike people; we like to fight wars and win ‘em, always have. We like to convert people to the American Way of Life – and we’re a ‘can-do’ people.

Ask again: None of the above. That is, none of the above is the primary cause for the intransigence of our militarized system, now expending about one trillion dollars annually on national “security.” (In FY 2006 U.S. national security outlays – only slightly more than half of which is in the defense budget, the rest being hidden in several other departments’ budgets – reached $935 billion, “exceeding,” according to Chalmers Johnson, “the combined sum spent by all other nations on military security.”) (My italics.)

What then is the primary cause for our misery, the endless flow of blood of our native sons and daughters, the agony of our un-winnning ways?

In his seminal work, The Breakdown of Nations, Leopold Kohr reminds us that “the danger of aggression arises spontaneously, irrespective of nationality or disposition, the moment the power of a nation becomes so great that, in the estimate of its leaders, it has outgrown the power of its prospective adversaries.” When in December 1991 fifteen republics suddenly sprouted and peacefully seceded from the once-impregnable Soviet empire, the world confronted a great power vacuum. This was the moment to strike an irrevocable blow for secession worldwide, to downsize the other empire (ours), and create a global system of small states, each too weak to wage wars of mass destruction. It did not happen. Instead we got the Project for a New American Century. As Kohr would have predicted, the remaining super-state adopted a grand policy of unilateralism to bend the entire world to its own “peaceful” – “freedom-and-democracy-for-all” – ends. Kohr admonishes that “Nearly all wars have been fought for unification, and unification has always been represented as pacification... [T]hrough union or unification, which enlarges bulk and size and power, nothing can be solved. On the contrary, the possibility of finding solutions recedes in the ratio at which the process of union advances.”

The Lord’s Prayer, written by an ancient king who knew a thing or two about nations and war, pleads: “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” The great, the insuperable temptation of states, their singular and inexorable pathway into evil, is to grow bigger. Period. Tyrants and tyrannical ideologies may flourish at any moment – they always have and always will – but by themselves they cannot wreak widespread havoc if they are saddled with a small state and are surrounded by comparably meager states.

No matter what the circumstances, human beings may be expected to always yield to temptation, including the ever-lustrious temptation of power, whenever it materializes. Therefore the essential objective of all politics must be always to keep power bounded, by whatever conniving methods human ingenuity can devise (the U.S. Constitution, for its first 70 years, was one such masterful effort). But no matter how clever the design and devices of government, if a state grows too large, sooner or later it will yield to temptation, and deliver itself, and its people, unto evil.

That is the tragedy of America. It is, in the end, a tragedy of scale. And it is still not understood by most of us, even the best among us, such as Dr. Martin Luther King.

Five hundred years ago there were perhaps 10,000 “natural countries” in the world, a natural country being a place where “the people have a common language and cultural history, with borders drawn by them and their neighbors,” accord-continued on following page
Letters to the Editor

AN ETHICAL CAUSE

Editor, Vermont Commons:
I am a former resident of Maine (or, as I prefer, a Mainer in exile) who is very supportive of the noble independence campaign to liberate Vermont from the soulless corporate wasteland that has conquered America. I hope that such a movement will take hold in my beloved home state.

It is also pleasing to hear that a varying double-digit percent of Vermonters now favor reclaiming the original intent of the founding constitutional

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ing to Richard Maybury, an astute observer of historical and contemporary affairs. The era of European conquest and expansion “unified” this naturally highly diverse global human political landscape into “about 220” countries, of which 193 are currently UN members.

We must return to a world of 10,000 nations. Until we do, we shall not have the possibility of widespread peace (not total peace, but pervasive peace), nor shall we have a world in which an individual human being may sense about her- or him-self: aloha, I am sovereign and free.

I recently attended a conference at a Tennessee university on the deadly aspects of Depleted Uranium. Various experts (including a military veteran who tested D.U. effects on military vehicles, Major Doug Rokke) explained the hazards and consequences of exposure to D.U. An Afghan citizen and journalist, who is also the son of a general in that nation, produced a heartening photographic journal/book called Afghanistan After “Democracy” (quotations for very germane reasons); the most horrific pictures showed newborn babies whose DNA were so viciously maligned by the D.U. infestation that some had their internal organs on the exterior of their lifeless bodies, some had three eyes, some had massive craniums, and other pictures that made me cry for the first time in quite a while. A vast majority of those children never make it.

The point is - and I fully endorse your efforts here – use such materials and vital information for your advantage. Show the photos, because people must see the crimes committed by this government! Our taxes are utilized by the bureaucracy. I believe it is important to approach both sides tend to agree on one neutral philosophy: ethics.

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Ian Baldwin
Publisher
An Interview with Marion Leonard

Editor’s Note: I have been corresponding with Rochester, Vermont’s Marion Leonard for several years. The 98-year-old citizen activist and educator, who founded an environmental nonprofit called “Save Our World,” is the oldest supporter of Vermont independence anywhere (to our knowledge). When we learned that she was celebrating her 98th birthday this past May, we felt she’d be the perfect candidate for this issue’s “Vermont Vox Populi” column. Happy birthday, Marion, and thanks for sharing your experience and wisdom with us.

Rob Williams, Editor

Rob: When did you first live in Vermont?
Marion: My husband Warren and I worked at the Putney School for 10 years (1936-1956), with a brief stint away during World War II. My husband taught there, and then, after the war, came back and acted as a sort of assistant head. I was sorting books in the library, and not getting paid, incidentally. This was my first time living in Vermont – and I fell in love this state. But, working at the Putney School, you, know, we were living in Vermont, but we weren’t really living in Vermont. And so, after we left Putney in 1957, we vowed we’d come back to Vermont some day.

Rob: And you did!
Marion: Yes, we returned here when we reached our late eighties. Ever since our Putney time, I had always envisioned coming back to a small Vermont town, maybe near Burlington, where we could really be involved in the politics and daily life of a small village. You’ll never believe this now, but I always imagined living in Williston, because during the 1940s, Williston was a relatively small town near the city of Burlington. But, of course, when we came up to Williston, driving up Route 7, in 1997, we couldn’t believe how much Williston had changed.

Rob: What do you make of Williston today, with all the box stores?
Marion: I always told my out-of-state friends, Vermonters will never tolerate Wal-Mart. For a long while, Vermonters didn’t. And when we visited Williston in 1997, I stopped in a small store and asked the store owner, “How did this happen?” And he said, “No one wanted it.”

Rob: But somebody must have wanted Wal-Mart.
Marion: Yes, some of them said they thought it would be good for development and progress. That sort of thing. But anyway, we left Williston and drove down Route 100 into the town of Granville, and my husband said, “This is what Vermont was like in the 1940s.” And we kept on driving south, through Hancock, and into Rochester, and that really did us in. We saw the town green, and then we drove slowly through the center of town, and we saw the sign that said “Park House – Shared Housing For The Elderly.” And Warren said, “That’s exactly what we are looking for!” And we walked into the dining room, and two elderly women were playing Scrabble, and pointed us in the direction of the office, and I said, “This is exactly what we envisioned.”

Rob: But...
Marion: But there were no rooms available at Park House, and a bit of a waiting list, so we went home to New York. That was July 1997. And we kept coming back to Rochester that summer to see what was going on. And on one visit, we went into the post office at Rochester – I’ve always loved post offices – and talked about getting a box, and then we went over to the café, and sat down and talked, and I said to Warren, why don’t we rent an apartment for a while? So we called around, and we found a place for $400 a month, which, coming from Long Island, seemed like a steal to us. And by the fall of 1997, we moved up to Vermont, and, as we made plans to come up, we discovered that three rooms had opened up at Park House – first time ever in its history. I think, that three rooms had opened up so quickly. So, by October, we ended up in Rochester at the Park House!

Rob: And what did you do when you got here?
Marion: I re-started “Save Our World” right out of my room, the same organization I had run while living in Long Island. And I started distributing our Earth flags here, with the support of my husband Warren, who has always supported everything I did, and really got into it when he moved to Rochester – he got a big kick out of helping me with “Save Our World” – and we started taking trips we’d never taken before.

Rob: Where did you go?
Marion: We went into Montpelier, to the state capital, which felt like a place you could actually go into and run around in and not get lost, unlike like Albany felt when we were in New York, and we discovered the Capitol Plaza on State Street, and we stayed there so much they finally gave us a special rate. And I wandered around Montpelier, feeling like I owned the place, and I visited a lot of libraries, something I always liked to do, and continued to work to hand out books about our “human-earth” connection, including a collection of books that is still housed here in the Rochester town library 10 years later. And now I’m re-structuring “Save Our World” as a Vermont-based nonprofit with a new mission and bylaws, and an advisory board, and I’ll soon write the last newsletter I’ll ever write, making it all official, hopefully by this summer.

Sometimes I get very discouraged, but I never lose hope. Because you can’t exist, really, if you don’t have hope.

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Marion: I think he meant that Vermont is the country you’d want to live in. The country where everything seems to be working for most everyone, where the earth is well-taken-care of, and people have an understanding that “what you do to the earth, you do to yourself.” And you can find so many groups here in Vermont who are working on projects that take care of the Earth: Rural Vermont, Middlebury College, Save Our Earth, and the list goes on and on. So it is the sort of vision that people have here, I think, that helps explain his comment.

Rob: Is he right, do you think?
Marion: In some ways, yes, and in some ways, no. Many Vermonters don’t always like to be told what they can and cannot do. Especially when it comes to their land. I remember when I was working on the GMO campaign at our Rochester town meeting many years ago, and there was a small but vocal group, including some farmers, that opposed a ban on GMOs. But by the end of the day the GMO ban passed overwhelmingly.

Rob: Are you hopeful about our future?
Marion: I like to say what an old friend of mine used to say. Sometimes I get very discouraged, but I never lose hope. Because you can’t exist, really, if you don’t have hope. It hasn’t been an easy life in the 20th century. I was brought up with a vision of the United States as a wonderful place to live, the best place on the planet, and we had this wonder-

Vermont is, in some ways, no different than anywhere else. But I also think that, as a friend of mine in Mississippi once told me, “Vermont is like another country.”

Rob: What do you think he meant when he said “Vermont is like another country”?
Marion: I think he meant that Vermont is the country you’d want to live in. The country where everything seems to be working for most everyone, where the earth is well-taken-care of, and people have an understanding that “what you do to the earth, you do to yourself.” And you can find so many groups here in Vermont who are working on projects that take care of the Earth: Rural Vermont, Middlebury College, Save Our Earth, and the list goes on and on. So it is the sort of vision that people have here, I think, that helps explain his comment.

Rob: Do you think Vermont will ever secede from the United States and become its own independent republic?
Marion: I think the answer to that question depends on what happens in the next few years. We have to, right now, get the people who are running the federal government out of there, and get people elected who will do what is right, with regard to global warming and the other problems we’re facing. We have a lot of people with so many enlightened ideas out there; we need to figure out ways to get them into positions of leadership.

Rob: Thanks for taking the time to talk with our readers. And happy 98th birthday!
Contemporary polls show the majority of Americans finally agree that the presidency of George W. Bush can be called “the worst in U.S. history.” It is by far the most anti-democratic and, for the individual, the most troubling, disruptive, and dangerous. Its disdain for the rule of law, the constitution, and the nation’s standing in the world is molding a legacy of horrors and complexities that will challenge generations to come.

In 1982, Leonard Peikof claimed in *The Ominous Parallels* that the social philosophy that gave rise to Nazi Germany was similar to that taking hold in the United States. Though the claim was declared arguable and absurd, it was supported by the sudden prominence of the far right in American politics and particularly Christian fundamentalist and theocracy advocate Pat Robertson’s run for the presidency in 1988. Little more than a decade later, the Bush-Cheney administration’s power-seeking and wieldling machinations made undeniable the nation’s vulnerability to totalitarianism.

Sixty-seven years before Bush and Cheney seized control of the White House, a character another majority considered comically Chaplinesque similarly rose to power with only minority support and under controversial conditions. Contemporary citizen and historian Sebastian Haffner, in an opinion held by the educated and otherwise enlightened, classified Hitler and his followers as “morons” and “quadrupeds.” Initially, the country’s political leaders and intelligentsia were confident the man’s well-known radical inclinations would be contained. Protective political systems and structures were in place, including a constitution historian William Shirer described as “the most liberal and democratic document of its kind ... full of ingenious and admirable devices which seemed to guarantee the working of an almost flawless democracy.” At worst he would be a parliamentary nuisance.

Indeed, the parallels in rhetoric and action of Adolf Hitler and George W. Bush are remarkable and startling. Once in office, both men seized opportunities presented by key events to exploit weaknesses in the constitutions they had sworn to uphold. Both exposed the inherent fragility of democratic forms of government.

Certain apparent and real differences between Germany in the 1930s and the United States in the early 21st century, and between Bush and Hitler themselves, are noteworthy. Bush came to power during a period of relative peace and prosperity. Hitler rose out of chaos. Its defeat in World War I and the punitive obligations of the Versailles Treaty generated profound humiliation in Germany. In the grip of a worldwide depression, Germany’s economy lay in ruins. Violent political movements of every sort, especially the Communists’, fostered internal hatreds, fear, and discontent, and intensified the instability. Gun battles between opposing political groups and brutal murders in the streets of Berlin, Munich, and other German cities were commonplace. Peter Drucker wrote in *The End of Economic Man: The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1939) that for average Germans, the older order ceased to have validity and reality, and their world became irrational and demonic. He attributed the cause of Germany’s capitulation to fascism to the void created by the collapse of the Old Order and the absence of a new creed and a new order. Until Hitler, the individual German was disenfranchised and lived in fear and ever-worsening uncertainty.

At first glance, the social turbulence in Hitler’s Germany appears contrary to conditions in the United States in the period leading up to the presidential election of 2000. For the upper strata of American society, they were starkly different. The nation’s prosperity was at historic levels, corporate profits were attaining record highs and Congress was embroiled in debate about the disposition of unprecedented budget surpluses. Reports of newly coined millionaires, millionaires becoming billionaires, and CEOs and company executives awarded mind-numbing bonuses and perks were regularly in the news.

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However, for the vastly larger middle and lowerclasses, including the conservative and far-right sectors of society aggressively courted and mobilized by Bush, life was difficult. Despite the state of the economy, the Bureau of the Census reported that 31.6 million Americans lived in poverty and some 39.8 million lacked health insurance in 2000. For the working class the bursting of the dot.com bubble, the sudden and massive outsourcing of blue- and white-collar jobs under NAFTA and WTO globalization, and competition with waves of both legal and illegal immigrants willing to work for substandard wages for conniving corporations created a growing threat of job uncertainty. Belief in the American Dream and faith in the promises of American democracy showed serious strain.

For the nearly 100 million evangelicals under the spell of Pat Robertson, James Dobson, Jerry Falwell and others of their ilk, these economic uncertainties were exacerbated by those from another realm: the spiritual. Manipulated financially and psychologically by these mean-spirited dogmatists, whose arms include instigating theocratic control of the nation, middle Americans’ confidence in themselves and their personal futures was undermined.

For example, prior to the turn of the century and the 2000 election, Falwell and others attached grim apocalyptic meaning to the wildly overestimated Y2K problem and predicted catastrophic chaos. Deliriously building the aura of gloom and uncertainty, Reverend Timothy LaHaye’s *Left Behind* series of novels described “the Earth’s Last Days” in imminent terms – and sold in the millions. Hundreds of books in Christian bookstores featured terrifying descriptions of the End Times, Armageddon, the Rapture. Many poured venom on the United Nations, the Antichrist’s anticipated seat of power. In sermons, pamphlets, web and blog sites, and television and radio talk shows, the Democratic Party and prominent Democrats – with former President Bill Clinton (and often his wife Hillary) taking much of the abuse – were vilified and blamed for the problems faced by individuals and their families, as well as for the ills of the nation and the world.

The combination of intentionally instilled uncertainty and a relentless condemnation of democracy and its supporters, institutions, laws and ideals generated exactly what Hitler and Goebbels sought in the early 1930s: bitter disdain for the Old Order and the concomitant rendering of the ordinary individual prey to a fascist creed. When Bush declared Jesus his favorite philosopher during the 1999 campaign, he instantly garnered the votes of a huge bloc of evangelicals.

Predictably, as president, his divisive and overtly anti-democratic behavior did not trouble this pre-conditioned following, and was sufficiently powerful to carry him into a second term.

In a succinct yet penetrating analysis, Davidson Loehr wrote in *America, Fascism + God: “Our current descent into fascism came about through a kind of ‘perfect storm,’ a confluence of three unrelated but mutually supportive schools of thought.” According to Loehr, the first and major school of thought is “...a condition some have called socialism for the rich, capitalism for the poor, and that others recognize as a reincarnation of Social Darwinism.” The second is: “...the imperialistic dream of the Project for the New American Century” authored by Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, Donald Kagan and other principal players in the Bush administration. These men “saw the fall of Communism as a call for America to become the military ruler of the world, to establish a new worldwide empire.”

Loehr assigned the third school to Pat Robertson, who “openly and passionately argued that ‘America must become a theocracy under the control of Christian Dominionists’ and ‘...democracy..."
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is a terrible form of government unless it is run by (Robertson’s kind of) Christians.” An important catalyst that mobilized conservatives was the Clinton White House sex scandal. This incident, wrote Loehr, “focused the certainties of conservatives on the fact that ‘liberals’ had neither moral compass nor moral concern, and therefore represented a dangerous threat to the moral fiber of America.”

In sum: despite the immense economic and political differences between Hitler’s Germany and Bush’s America, each had at his disposal populations that were socially and spiritually prepared to support fascist solutions to governance.

Providence

Of course, there are myriad personal differences between George W. Bush and Adolf Hitler, perhaps the more obvious being Hitler’s charismatic eloquence and Bush’s comparative incoherence. Such are of secondary concern here. Where the two are nearly identical is in their visceral subscription to the Carl von Clausewitz view of the political usefulness of war and force, and to the fear-based techniques used to gain, hold, and expand control over their respective nations.

Since the end of World War II many emotionally distracted historians have claimed Hitler was anti-Christian, a-religious, atheistic, etcetera, yet even a casual reading of the record shows otherwise. The “Gott mit uns” (“God’s with us”) slogan molded onto Wehrmacht brass belt buckles and worn by every German soldier, the Mutterkreuz and the Frauenkirche badges, each with a swastika centered in the Christian cross, and literally hundreds of other uses of Christian symbols can be found in the detritus of Nazi Germany. Portions of the infamous Nuremberg rallies were patterned after Christian ceremonies. The rally’s yearly closing routine called for the participants to march in review past Hitler as he stood near the Schoener Brunnen—an ornate fountain 19 meters high honoring Christianity’s early philosophers, evangelists and church fathers—in front of Die Frauenkirke, the Church of Our Lady. Whatever his personal beliefs, there is no question that Hitler recognized and exploited the power of religion. His aim—like Pat Robertson’s with religion and Karl Rove’s with politics—was to unify all the churches of Germany into a single, easy-to-control and manipulate Reich Church.

Furthermore, George W. Bush and Adolf Hitler personally harbored the same grandiose explanation for their ascensions to supreme power. Each heard and responded to a command from God the Almighty: “I feel like God wants me to run for President.” George W. Bush

“I would like to thank the Almighty for choosing me of all people to be allowed to wage this battle for Germany.”

Adolf Hitler

replied, “There is a higher father I appeal to.”

The depth of their conviction in themselves as chosen by God is reflected in their intolerance of opposing views, and their willingness to ignore evidence contradictory to their policies. For Bush and Hitler mere questioning was and is anathema. Questioners were reflexively and loudly labeled traitors, traitorous or, more mildly, unpatriotic. Implacable commitment also explains the stubbornness and unhesitant ruthlessness with which such believers pursue their God-assigned missions.

In an interview with Bush at Camp David, which appeared 14 January 2007 on CBS’ “60 Minutes,” at a time when a substantial majority of Americans opposed Bush’s handling of the war in Iraq, reporter Scott Pelley said, “You’re not very popular in the country right now. Does that affect you?” With no hesitation, Bush answered: “Not really.” Bush and Hitler were keenly aware of the power of propaganda. “Propaganda is a means to an end,” declared Josef Goebbels in a speech at the Nazi’s 1934 Nuremberg Rally. “Its purpose is to lead the people to an understanding that will allow [them] to willingly and without internal resistance devote [themselves] to the goals and purposes of a superior leadership.”

This could as easily have been said by our “Educator-in-Chief” or Karl Rove or Dick Cheney. Bush and Hitler also demonstrated their awareness that simple fear can boost the power of propaganda exponentially. Skillful fear mongering worked for Hitler and, 68 years later, it worked as well for Bush. All that was required to put it into play was a highly visible or momentous event. Hitler’s came with the suspiciously set Reichstag fire in Berlin in February 1933; Bush’s came with an attack on New York City’s Twin Towers in September 2001. The strategy each immediately adopted can be summed up by this statement: “... (It is the leaders of the country who determine the policy, and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy or a fascist dictatorship or a Parliament or a Communist dictatorship.... All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same way in any country.)” While it again is easy to envision this having been continued on page 8
said in one of those infamous closed-door meetings in the Bush Cheney White House, in fact, it is a statement made by Nazi Reichsmarshall Herman Goering during an April 1946 interview with U.S. intelligence officer Gustave Gilbert.

The Reichstag fire licensed Hitler to produce the Reichstag Fire Decree and the tactically named Enabling Act; 9/11 licensed Bush to produce the tactically named Patriot Act. Each act put each man in a position to intimidate, silence and deal decisively with his critics. Needless to say, both men – God’s chosen, Adolf Hitler and George W. Bush – exploited their so-acquired power to disastrous effect.

Familiar echoes
Some might believe the U.S.’ political nightmare will end once Bush completes his second term, puff up his chest, gets patted on the back for a job well done, and marches back to Crawford. This is a false assumption, for many reasons. Lurking at the fringe of American society is the secretive and insidiously powerful Council for National Policy (CNP). Established in 1981 by none other than that screwball promoter of belief in one God, a fellow named Ronald Reagan, this largely unknown cabal’s current and former membership list includes such right wing extremists, neo-cons and medieval religious stalwarts as James Dobson, John Ashcroft, Grover Norquist, Pat Robertson, Bob Jones III and several hundred similarly minded others.

At a CNP meeting on Amelia Island in Florida in February 2007, defeated Pennsylvania senator Rick Santorum addressed the gathering, as did endorsement-seeking Republican presidential candidates Sam Brownback of Kansas, Mike Huckabee of Arkansas, and Duncan Hunter of California. Within the born-again crowd, of course, it is well known that George W. Bush appealed to and won the support of the CNP in 2000. Rather than political fascism and a misguided war in the Holy Lands to “protect American liberty and freedoms,” “establish democracy in the Middle East,” “rid the world of a tyrant,” and so forth, are we experiencing something no more complex than medievalist attempts to hasten Christ’s Second Coming? •

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Founder of the John Dewey Award for outstanding contributions to the education of young people in America. Awarded annually at the University of Vermont

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Election Fraud
Climate Change
Global Peak Oil
War on Terror
9/11 Whitewash
Illegal Detentions
USA PATRIOT act
Unitary Executive
Guantanamo Bay
Real I.D. program
Disaster Capitalism
Tapeworm Economy
No Child Left Behind
Bill of Rights violated
Corporate Corruption
Extraordinary Rendition
U.S. Constitution ignored
Warrantless Wiretappings
Habeas Corpus suspended
Abu Ghraib Prison Scandal
Torture of “Terror” Suspects
National Animal Identification System
U.S. Empire’s Full Spectrum Dominance
Afghanistan and Iraq Wars: $500 billion+
Letters continued from page 3

avowed peace and anti-war activists pay to the dis-
graceful foreign and domestic policies of the Mili-
tary/Industrial Complex. No matter how opposed
were to war they are, they are just as liable for the
slaughter of innocent civilians because they still
belong to this corrupt system.

Please Vermont, take the initiative. The cur-
cent empire is going to crumble, and I pray God
that you realize this forthcoming but just downfall.
We are in a post-unity stage, and it is time to revive
the heritage of the American Revolution and Con-
stitutional liberty under peaceful means.

Benjamin R. Holmes
Mocksville, North Carolina
(formerly Portland, Maine)

TAKING BACK OUR MONEY

Editor, Vermont Commons:

Those of us involved in barter, local currency,
time banks (service trading) or any alternatives to
U.S. dollars are money activists, whether acknowl-
edged or not.

Activists at the national level would say that the
fractional reserve system of our private bank-
ing system is what put us in this endless spiral of
debt/inflation, leading to greater divisions of
wealth, and ultimately, an unsustainable world
situation.

One solution offered by the American Monetary
Institute is to have the government be the sole
issuer of (debt-free) money. In other words, put
the power to issue money back in the hands of the
people themselves.

Imagine here in Vermont, local economic agita-
tion growing thus: Time banks, already used in
numerous communities across the U.S., take the
lead from Burlington’s Old North End and sprout
other time banks across Vermont. Trading serv-
ices in this way, people have more disposable
income and save on taxes. They can better support
small businesses rather than having to buy on the
cheap, supporting corporate stores.

Meanwhile, Burlington Currency Project, in
conjunction with a statewide electronic cur-
rency/barter network, begins facilitating non-dol-
lar exchanges at the state level. With interest-free
Vermont-wide currency, people and businesses
have more access to loans. Farming and local food
production thrive due to increased access to capi-
tal. Small businesses thrive due to increased bar-
tering between them and people making more
purchases locally.

Vermonters then extend our earning power and
can better afford what we need. In this mutually
supportive economy, everyone thrives and less
wealth seeps away via corporate stores.

Higher Calling

Editor, Vermont Commons:

I’ve sent this note to ask you, your writers, and
your readers to redouble efforts to secure Ver-
mont’s liberties. Yet in doing so, I also warn that a
just Green Mountain republic will never be
founded by disgruntled subjects of the Empire of
the United States. Suppose the political duplicities
and global transgressions of the United States
would by some miracle be solved overnight.

The Vermont independence movement must
ignore dubious 9/11 issues and concerns over the
theory of “Peak Oil.” Let us allow the bloated
United States, its militarists and rapacious dedica-
tion to outmoded technologies collapse of their
own weight. We must turn our backs on the
Empire to serve as the vanguard of a better soci-
ety. Do not try to reform it – let us rise above it!

Our faith that a Vermont Republic, steeped in
social harmony and environmental sustainability
based on a humanistic scale, will thrive within our
natural borders must not be subverted by personal
agendas. Our struggle may last 100 years; let it not
be buffeted by the passions of this hour. Let us
have no better calling than to rewrite Vermont’s place in history.

Marc Awodey
Burlington

Secession Needs Broader Outreach

Editor, Vermont Commons,

I’ve been following the Vermont independence
effort for a couple years now and have been very
excited about the prospect about Vermont as an
independent country. Yet I feel that there has
been a very large portion of the Vermont popula-
tion that has been left out of this conversation.

I see more Vermonters who are in my boat, who
have a hard time getting by and don’t want to leave
the state, rather than who live in quaint farm houses,
log cabins made out of sustainably harvested logs
hand hewn from Palestinian women, or gentrified
farms in Charlotte or the Mad River Valley.

The people I am talking about are the majority
in Vermont: the alcoholic guy who lives in a hole
in the wall in Newport, driving two-plus hours
every day in order to get to his construction job in
Burlington, the family in Alburg struggling to live
off of the job at the Williston Wal-Mart; the
underemployed single mother in Rockingham liv-
ing off government help and her part-time job at
the Brooks Pharmacy in Bellows Falls; the family
from Ira whose favorite thing every year is that
weekend in May when they go to Lake George.

These people are the majority in the state of
Vermont, and I don’t see them represented in the
secession movement. And guess what? They
probably love the idea of the United States, and
will not hear anything about leaving it.

This part of the population had better be with
us. In fact, they had better be the ones to person-
ally hand-deliver the White House our letters of
secession.

If we are to go further with the idea of seces-
ion, we’d better start reaching out to these people
and get them on board along with everyone else.

Andrew Bouchard
Burlington

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Where then would their allegiance be?

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The Second Vermont Republic will only be fash-
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Andrew Bouchard
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In Chelsea, Vermont we have two commons, North and South. Each mixes the old and the new. Our North Common is bounded by the church, Chelsea’s twin stores, and a mix of stately and not-so-stately homes. It also hosts our burgeoning farmer’s market every Wednesday in the summer. Our South Common is home to the county courthouse, another mix of houses, Chelsea’s public school, and the Wellspring Waldorf School, where two of my three kids are enrolled (the third is more of a mascot, at nearly age 3).

The Waldorf educational philosophy, developed by Rudolf Steiner in 1919, is nicely summed up for me in the title of a lecture given to the Chelsea community recently by Eugene Schwartz, a Waldorf teacher and consultant: “No Childhood Left Behind.” Mr. Schwartz’ play on words speaks to the Waldorf belief and concern that children need time to come into the world, to unfold, and that to rush this process deprives children of a necessary process needed to thoroughly master and integrate their “heads, hearts and hands” and enter adulthood fully awake and engaged in life.

One of the practical tenets of this educational philosophy is a very deliberate restriction on exposure to and consumption of television, videos, radio and the Internet. Simply put, Waldorf educators believe that a child’s imagination — her capacity to create something out of nothing — is stunted by premature and/or over-exposure to the media.

Imagination being a fundamental asset of independent, free-thinking individuals, this is no small matter. When our oldest child was in kindergarten, his teacher explained this to us and asked all the parents in his class to eliminate television and video viewing, and to be watchful of audio content as well. This happened to be a few days before September 11, 2001. After being glued to the television non-stop for what started as news but after several days became a macabre self-flagellation (I happened to be on vacation that week, lucky me), my wife and I decided that this would be a good time to stop television.

Now, I’ve never had one of those “Kill Your Television” bumper stickers. In fact, being old enough to remember 13 channels and rabbit ears, there was still novelty for me in endless rapid-fire surfing of the hundreds of channels that satellite TV offered us. And I occasionally found and enjoyed excellent programming. Moreover, I really like movies. My wife and I have always watched lots of movies; it’s one of the things we’ve always loved to do (can’t say whether this is in spite of or because of an imagination deficit disorder). Since we live 45 minutes from most movie theaters, giving up TV and videos posed a dilemma.

My wife and I can’t say we’ve pulled the plug on the TV. What has happened is that we have already experienced a partial cultural secession, of sorts.

Our compromise was videos only, after kids had gone to bed, and with headphones so there’s no sound to listen in on, just in case the kids don’t fall asleep instantaneously. Thank goodness for Netflix and S&L Video in Chelsea. More than five years later, I think I can say that with the possible exception of the Olympics, we don’t miss real-time television. We certainly don’t miss the commercials (though the ones I wind up watching on business trips seem more entertaining than most of what’s supposed to be programming). We certainly don’t miss what’s become of the news. With the exception of the first nine months, we have not seen any of the Bush II presidency on television, including his war. Don’t feel like I’ve missed much.

Since most of the great shows that we read about in the newspaper are available on DVD, we haven’t missed out. We’ve enjoyed the presidency of Josiah Bartlett, have learned management lessons from Tony Soprano, have been sternly reminded never to judge a Cylon by its cover thanks to Battlestar Galactica, and even gotten a feel for the (since reduced) 120-hour work week of the interns on Grey’s Anatomy.

We’re not watching television shows as they’re aired, but we can skim the cream and watch a bunch of episodes in one week. Oh, and since older kids go to bed later, we don’t often have time to watch a movie; 41 minutes of good TV (okay, 82 more often than not) is actually kind of handy.

So, my wife and I certainly can’t say that we’ve pulled the plug (we also occasionally eat white flour, too). What has happened is that we have already experienced a partial cultural secession of sorts. Is this like being half-pregnant? I don’t think so; it feels more like deciding to cook every night – albeit with store-bought ingredients, not home grown veggies – rather than eating out at chain restaurants most of the time.

For our kids, it’s a different story. They have very little concept of television, and for that matter, radio and the Internet. They don’t watch commercials, so they don’t clamor for stuff they see on TV. Their conversations are more about what books they’ve read than what they saw on television.

Are their imaginations more intact? I honestly don’t know, but they seem to be able to entertain themselves pretty well without TV. That seems good. Moreover, our lives have just a little less noise in them. We take time to finish dinner, play games or musical instruments, and read books. We talk about what happened at school, and what our plans are for the evening or the weekend.

We have separated ourselves from something, but I feel a gain, not a loss. I’m still thinking about whether Vermont as its own country is a good idea. But I can say for sure that achieving some cultural independence feels good. And we have time to talk about things like political independence!

Homegrown culture

We’re lucky that many of the folks we hang around with are fellow Waldorf parents. Some are more earnest about media control, some less. It’s a balancing act, but the bottom line is we all seem to be living our lives a little more consciously, with more intent than we had before shackling the tube.

A few weeks ago, the Wellspring students per-
formed their first all-school musical, which I instigated. This is a somewhat rare event in the Waldorf world, where teachers stay with their classes from first through eighth grade, and each class usually performs its own play every year. There’s incredible richness, intimacy and autonomy developed at the class level, but the sense of a total school experience, at least at a younger school (Wellspring is not yet 20 years old) is a challenge to create in this more “federalist” educational structure.

One of the reasons I approached our faculty with this idea was that I wanted to build some good-old-fashioned school spirit. But the thing that really motivated me was to home-grow some culture, and to do it with other people. I didn’t realize it at the very beginning, but our play was to become another Waldorf-inspired act of cultural independence.

At first, while I realized that our Waldorf faculty was not likely to embrace the idea of an off-the-shelf mainstream play, there was a certain practical appeal to having lines, music, and lyrics ready to adapt to our particular aesthetic. As a conversation starter I offered the option to create something from scratch, or maybe borrow from something in the public domain. While our faculty recognized that this approach might be more work, it seemed that we’d have more success involving the full spectrum of our 42 students if we custom-built our musical.

Grimm’s Fairy Tales are a staple of the Waldorf storytelling diet. They are elemental, inspire the imagination, and leave lots of room for interpretation. We decided that perhaps the best way to create something of our own was to challenge an icon. We stuck our heads in the lion’s mouth and ate something of our own was to challenge an interpretation. We decided that perhaps the best way to create something of our own was to challenge an icon. We stuck our heads in the lion’s mouth and ate something of our own was to challenge an icon. We stuck our heads in the lion’s mouth and ate something of our own was to challenge an icon. We stuck our heads in the lion’s mouth and ate something of our own was to challenge an icon. We stuck our heads in the lion’s mouth and ate something of our own was to challenge an icon.

Our first grade teacher and I spent about 30 hours writing a 20-page play in four kinds of verse. It had occurred to me that adapting a fairy tale had never actually seen it. But for the adults producing the play? Can you say “Heigh Ho”? It took some effort to re-imagine the world of “Little Snow White.” It helped that the original Grimm’s tale was nine pages long. There are a lot of key plot points packed into those nine pages, but an awful lot of room for interpretation, too.

Our first grade teacher and I spent about 30 hours writing a 20-page play in four kinds of verse. We even spent a whole day trying to imagine a prologue about how the queen had become so vain and attached to her mirror. We almost hatched “The Queen and the Mirror,” but regained our bearings when we realized that we’d need 40 other parts.

We used iambic tetrameter for royalty, pentameter for Snow White, haiku for the Huntsman, and limericks for the dwarfs. Our students, teachers, and parents penned and arranged themes for each major character that they sang, and our PTO (that’s parent teacher orchestra) of violin, accordion, cello, flute, guitar, mandolin, piano and percussion performed with vigor.

We cobbled together beautiful costumes, simple but beautiful sets, got some great help with lighting, and put on what we think was a completely original re-imagining of “Little Snow White.” It had occurred to me that adapting a fairy tale that already has an iconic interpretation might take on a significance it doesn’t ordinarily have. It might even seem like the ability to say what it’s not going to be becomes a creative driver. But the amazing thing was that the experience was nothing like that. Our students didn’t have to put familiar songs out of their minds. Our teachers wrote, sketched, and composed not out of some impulse to be different, but out of their imaginations and desires to make something beautiful and to retell a classic story in their own voices.

And the standing room only audience in Chelsea’s Town Hall – which was loaded, of course, with relatives and friends of the performers – “got” it. They were blown away by the freshness this team had brought to this story.

With their participation and appreciation, we made our own little declaration of cultural independence.

NATURAL PRACTICES FOR HEALTHY HIVES

“Ross Conrad buzzes and brainstorms where other angels have feared to tread. He makes organic apiculture seem not only possible, but necessary.”

—From the foreword by Gary Paul Nabhan, director, Center for Sustainable Environments

“Ross Conrad keeps bees the way bees should be kept . . . his natural approach to caring for these magnificent pollinators makes sure they will continue their tasks so we can continue to rely on them. Natural beekeeping is not only the best way to keep bees, it is the only way we should keep bees.”

—Kim Flottum, Editor, Bee Culture: The Magazine of American Apiculture
Summer in Vermont

Bread & Puppet Theater performing their "Why did the chicken cross the road?" play to celebrate American Flatbread’s June 8, 2007, “Chicken Event II.” Catch Bread & Puppet on tour this summer all over the once and future Green Mountain republic.
‘Of A Quiet and Peaceable Behavior’
The Freeman’s Oath and the Nonviolent Defense of an Independent Vermont Republic

By Carl Watner

“You solemnly swear or affirm that whenever you give your vote or suffrage, touching any matter that concerns the state of Vermont, you will do it so as in your conscience you shall judge will most conduce to the best good of the same, as established by the Constitution, without fear or favor of any person.”

The Vermont Freeman’s Oath

It has become difficult lately for voters truly to abide by the Vermont Freeman’s Oath when election time rolls around, because nowhere on their ballots is a choice offered that they “judge will most conduce to the best good of” their beloved state of Vermont. And it will be thus as long as their ballots are tied to the unwieldy and corrupt political system of the overgrown United States of America.

Some, therefore, seek an alternative: Secession. Independence.

As the Green Mountain independence effort gathers steam, a number of citizens advocating nonviolent secession from the U.S. empire have suggested that Vermont citizens might organize a special statewide convention and request that their Montpelier-based state legislature submit formal articles of secession to representatives of the United States government. Indeed, a new self-organizing effort at www.freevermont.net urges Vermonters to organize in their towns to put such a question to the Legislature through the annual town meeting process.

What the federal behemoth would then do if Vermonters voted for nonviolent secession, no one knows.

But whatever form the federal reaction takes, Vermonters must create a thoughtful plan that details how they might maintain their sovereignty and newly declared independence, as well as explaining how they will defend themselves from whatever moves the federal government might make to block secession.

One option is organized nonviolent citizen resistance to federal authority, a strategy that can be traced to the Vermont Constitution (1777). All Vermont citizens swore a “freeman’s oath,” administered by town governments, that called on Vermonters “of a quiet and peaceable behavior” to follow their conscience as to “what will conduce to the best good of the [state]... without fear or favor of any man.”

The idea behind nonviolent resistance rests on the insight that all governments and institutions depend upon the consent and cooperation of those whom they would rule over. When people refuse their cooperation, withhold their help, and persist in their disobedience and defiance, they are denying their opponent the basic human assistance which any government or hierarchical system requires,” observes Gene Sharp, author of Social Power and Political Freedom. “If they do this in sufficient numbers for long enough, that government or hierarchical system will no longer have power or be able to function.

In short, if an overwhelming number of Vermonters were to “quietly and peaceably” persist on their path of secession by refusing to send their tax money to the Internal Revenue Service, or refusing to acknowledge the legitimacy of federal authority in their state, what could the federal government do to them that might make them recant? Imprison them? Forfeit their property in other states? Withhold their Social Security payments? Militarily occupy their neighborhoods? Impose a trade blockade on the Green Mountains? Hold Vermonters’ out-of-state relatives hostage? And would any of these policies force a committed group of Vermont citizens focused on nonviolent secession to change their attitudes or actions? I hardly think so.

Nonviolent resistance “works” because it rests on a fundamental insight into the nature of political power.

I suspect such actions would not only draw attention to the righteousness of Vermont’s “David vs. Goliath” struggle, but win Vermont many allies and supporters that it otherwise might not garner. This crystallization of global public opinion in favor of Vermont would further strengthen its position and de-legitimize the attempts of the federal government to force Vermont back into the U.S. Empire.

The Strength of Bare Hands and Stubbornness

To many thoughtful citizens, Vermonters or not, who are frustrated with the imperial status quo, the idea that they might defend themselves, their loved ones, and their property nonviolently may seem inconceivable. Nonviolent struggle, however, is rooted in a deep human propensity to be stubborn, to persist in doing what has been forbidden. As any parent knows, this stubborn streak is present in children: they sometimes refuse to eat or do as they are told, or they engage in delaying tactics. Adults, too, can be recalcitrant. The good news here is that human stubbornness can be directed towards admirable goals. We can cooperate with other human beings to resist what we collectively view as persistently corrupt policy-making or immoral behavior. Nonviolent struggle is simply the widespread societal application of this obdurate trait, to accomplish social, economic, or political goals.

Goals like peaceable secession.

Many observers misunderstand the goals and methods of nonviolent resistance. To call nonviolent resistance “passive” or “for sissies,” as some do, is to totally “mis-underestimate” (as the White House’s current occupant might say) its power. As philosopher Hannah Arendt observed, the use of nonviolent resistance is one of the most efficient and effective ways of collective action ever devised by human beings, because it cannot be countered by fighting. Only mass slaughter will assure the violent opponent an ultimate victory, but even then “the victor is defeated, cheated of his prize, since nobody can rule over dead” people.

To be clear, nonviolent citizen resistance demands widespread unity of opinion among the population, and careful research and strategic planning; its adoption must be preceded by widespread preparation and training; and its execution calls for considerable courage and discipline. Could an army be successful if its soldiers had no training? Nonviolent resistance is no different in this regard. It is also helpful to remember that even trained armed forces lose their battles much of the time.

There are many advantages that accompany nonviolent resistance. First, a nonviolent army is not limited only to the physically fit. Children, seniors, people of every age and condition, even the infirm, are capable of refusing to do what they are told to do. Second, even though suffering and death are an inevitable part of any social struggle, nonviolent resistance minimizes both the numbers of casualties and the amount of destruction. A third advantage comes with recognizing that there is no such thing as final defeat, as long as citizens stay focused on maintaining independence of mind and spirit, and refusing to bend to the will of any would-be ruler. Consider Tibet’s example. “After more than forty years the Tibetans continue to resist the Chinese military occupation,” Sharp explains. “If the will to resist is maintained...the defense cannot be defeated.”

The Historical Tradition of Nonviolence

The term “people power” is part of a surprisingly long and robust tradition of bringing about social change by nonviolent means. Probably the first recorded act of civil disobedience in history is the refusal of the Hebrew midwives to obey the Pharaoh’s order to kill male Hebrew babies in 1350 B.C. (Exodus 1:15-19). Those who have studied the history of nonviolent movements have cataloged a surprisingly long list of examples, often beginning with the English colonial boycotts, tax refusal, and acts of civil disobedience that culminated in the violent struggle for secession from the British empire. The most pertinent observation about the American Revolution came from New Englander John Adams, who observed that the real revolution took place in the hearts and minds of the English colonists long “before the [official] war commenced” in April 1775.

continued on page 14
continued from page 13
Nonviolent resistance also played a significant role during 19th- and 20th-century social and political struggles, and its practice can be found in a wide variety of “political, cultural, and geographic conditions,” including in many secessionist struggles. Here are a few explored by Gene Sharp in his book:

- Hungarian passive resistance to Austrian rule, 1850-1867
- Finnish resistance to Russia, 1898-1905
- Nonviolent resistance to the Tsaristdom during the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917
- German general strike and non cooperation to the Kapp Putsch in 1920
- Resistance to the French and Belgian occupation of the Ruhr, 1923-1925
- The Rosenstrasse protest of over 600 German women of mixed marriages, which resulted in the Gestapo release of some 1500 Jewish prisoners in February 1943
- The Indian independence movement led by Gandhi, 1930-1947
- The Muslim Pashtun (Pathan) Movement of the North-West Frontier of India, 1930-1934, led by Badshah Khan
- The resistance of more than 14,000 Norwegian teachers and clergymen to Nazi rule during World War II
- Czechoslovakian resistance to Soviet invasion, 1968-1969
- The Intifada, the Palestinian resistance to the Israeli occupation, beginning in 1987

Much can be learned from these experiences, concludes Sharp. For example, Badshah Khan’s organization of Pathans, known as the Khudai Khidmatgar, destroyed the myth that nonviolence can only be practiced by those who are gentle (the Pathans were known as some of the most violent fighters in the world). These examples also show that “resistance is possible in a wide variety of situations and conflicts, even in extremely difficult and repressive ones.” Nevertheless, Sharp also points out that nearly all of these historical examples of nonviolent resistance suffered from the absence of strategic planning, preparation, and training. Even where they failed, however, none of them invalidated the “proposition that all government, even totalitarian government, is based on the consent and cooperation of the ruled,” and every one of them tended to prove that if the consent of the populace is taken away, then every regime, even the most ruthless, will collapse.

But what of a Hitler or a Stalin? Could such despotic dictators be resisted nonviolently? Does nonviolent resistance work against extremely ruthless opponents?

“Absolutely,” say advocates of nonviolence. Based on the understanding of the theory of nonviolent resistance and an examination of history, they conclude that nonviolent resistance has never failed because it was ruthlessly suppressed. Instead, nonviolent resistance failed because it was never systematically and consistently used. The key question is not how ruthless the opponent, but rather how committed the practitioners of nonviolence are to their strategy. Nonviolent struggles have a greater chance of success if they are strategically planned and systematically implemented. Even lacking this, nonviolent resistance “works” because it rests on a fundamental insight into the nature of political power. As Mohandas Gandhi said, “Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will. No power on earth can make a person do a thing against his will.”

“Endure unto the end, but violence to no man.”

As many know, the idea of civil disobedience in the 19th century United States was popularized by transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau, but few realize that nonviolence as applied to the defense of a community was probably first described by a New England abolitionist, Charles King Whipple. His *Evils of the Revolutionary War* booklet was published in 1842 by the Telegraph Print in Brandon, Vermont.

Whipple challenged the assumption that “we could never have freed ourselves from British imperial domination, except by war.” His thesis was that the English colonists could have attained their independence “as effectually, as speedily, as honorably, and under very much more favorable circumstances” if they had not resorted to arms. Instead, Whipple maintained, they should have engaged in a “steady and quiet refusal to comply with unjust requisitions; publicly declar[ed] their grievances, and demands for redress; and patient[ly] endur[ed] whatever violence was used to compel their submission.” Even if the signers of the Declaration of Independence had been executed for treason, even if hundreds or thousands of Americans had been jailed for their refusal to comply with British demands, Whipple believed that ultimately Britain would have tired of dealing with the contumacious colonists. After all, he pointed out, the British Empire was not so much defeated on the battlefield as it was “tired of fighting.”

Whipple was the first of many observers to note that nonviolence might be used as a means of community defense. In the case of Vermont’s peaceful secession, the greatest enemy of secession “and the most powerful weapon in the hands of the [federal] authorities is fear. [Those] who can liberate themselves from fear and who will boldly accept suffering and persecution without fear or bitterness or striking back have managed to achieve the greatest victory of all.”

The citizens of Vermont (and those in all other states) must come to realize that they do have a choice: that they “have the option of refusing to cooperate if they are willing to pay the price.” The central lesson here is that even when threatened by government violence and government weapons, there is still that something that governments cannot seize.

“An army can beat an army, but an army cannot beat a people.”

Thus it becomes possible to understand why nonviolent resistance is not really a matter of repelling violence, but of bringing clarity to misinformed subjects. Citizens must be prepared mentally, spiritually, and physically to resist the demands of the federal government when it opposes Vermont’s peaceful secession. The greatest enemy of secession “and the most powerful weapon in the hands of the [federal] authorities is fear. [Those] who can liberate themselves from fear and who will boldly accept suffering and persecution without fear or bitterness or striking back have managed to achieve the greatest victory of all.”

No government, foreign or domestic, can obtain the voluntary compliance of the citizenry without their collective consent.

Such a stance against a government that has hundreds of thousands of soldiers and billions of dollars invested in the latest technological armaments may seem foolish, even insane. However as Leo Tolstoy noted, those who choose to resist “have only one thing, but that is the most powerful thing in the world – Truth.”
Homestead Security. Join the conversation about how Vermonters might live in a post-Peak Oil world by reviving our local food and energy economies at www.vtcommons.org.

Bill Haulenbeek

 VNRC Executive Director Elizabeth Courtney, left, and Vermont Forum on Sprawl’s Brian Shupe listen to www.CoopPower.com’s Maya Winfrey explain how energy cooperatives might help ease our transition to a post-carbon era. The scene was the May 12 “Mad River Valley: Imagining Our Common Future” conference. Download the conference notes at www.vtcommons.org. Rob Williams

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FROM THE MIDDLEBURY INSTITUTE
From Little Acorns: The American Secession Movement Today

Here’s a simple truth. For those who can’t stand the increasingly ugly and corrupt U.S. empire but don’t want to leave the home and place they love, the only possible solution – we have to face it – is secession. And that’s just what more and more citizens are thinking about these days.

The latest evidence for the appeal of the secessionist alternative comes from a just-released poll taken by the University of Vermont in February of this year that found that 13 per cent of the state’s residents came right out and said “it would be a good idea for Vermont to secede from the United States and become once again an independent republic as it was from 1777 to 1779.” Thirteen percent. That may not seem a lot at first, but it translates to 64,400 people of voting age in the population at large.

Vermont has had a secession movement for the last four years, made up of what is now a think-tank called the Second Vermont Republic, a newspaper called Vermont Commons, and various groups, most recently www.FreeVermont.Net, hoping to put the question of secession on the agenda of the state’s 230 town meetings by the year 2010. But only recently has it begun to get media notice, with articles in the Burlington Free Press, Los Angeles Times, and Philadelphia Enquirer, among others, and interviews on Vermont and New Hampshire public radio.

And another question from the UVM poll indicates that there is more fertile ground for it. The Washington Post in early April carried an op-ed article by Baldwin, publisher of Vermont Commons, and Frank Bryan, a professor at UVM, entitled “The Once and Future Republic of Vermont.” According to an editor there, it was the second-most read piece in the entire Sunday paper (12,000 hits on-line) and garnered more than 200 emails, considered a high rate of response. It was syndicated cross-country and exploded with 21,000 entries on the internet.

A Daily Kos poll on April 2 asked, “Should states be allowed to secede from the union peaceably?” 65 percent answered affirmatively.

When a Daily Kos poll in April asked, “Should states be allowed to secede from the union peaceably?” 65 percent answered affirmatively.

Putting the Vermont vote in perspective, it appears to have one of the largest percentages in favor of secession of all the states that have been measured. As such, it is in a position to lead New England in recapturing its role as the home of American secession – as in the first secession, of 1776, as in its republic of 1777-91, as in the movement in 1804 to oppose the Louisiana Purchase and establish “a new confederacy,” as in 1814-1815 in the Hartford Convention that advocated “some new form of confederacy” among the New England states.

Vermont secessionists would like to start to do to the U.S. Empire, in a nonviolent fashion, what Lexington and Concord started to do to the British. It is not fanciful to think that, 64,000 strong, they just might have a go at it.

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Meet the Greenneck

The Greenneck has solar panels on his roof and a 454 big block in his Chevy. He recognizes the contradiction. He just doesn’t care.

The Greenneck thinks the chainsaw is probably the finest expression of internal combustion on the face of the earth.

The Greenneck considers himself a Bernie supporter. So pugnacious, so pragmatic, such obvious disdain for hair care products. These are qualities the Greenneck can identify with.

But Bernie seems confused of late. So confused, he’s calling for a windfall profits tax on oil and the return of $2 gas. Let’s be clear: The Greenneck feels the pinch of $3 gas, and he feels for his fellow Vermonters, many of whom can afford it even less than he. And he can hardly comprehend the quantity of money that’s falling into Big Oils’ pockets. All those zeros.

The Greenneck is not a big thinker. But if he were, he’d think that a return to $2 gas is the last thing Vermont needs. If he were, he’d think that Bernie is merely pandering to his constituents. And he’d think that if Bernie could muster even a fraction of the courage he’s shown in the past, he’d be calling for higher energy prices and perhaps even a tax on gasoline to encourage conservation. The Greenneck wonders if such a tax could not be offset by cuts to payroll taxes, or by a tax credit based on a carbon consumption cap.

The Greenneck doesn’t drink bottled water. Bottled beer is cheaper.

The Greenneck owns a gun. He bought it two years ago for what he considers to be ethically defendable purposes: Namely, shooting defenseless animals in the head. To date, he’s dispatched half a dozen pigs and two steers with the gun... and a hell of a lot of beer cans.

Shooting critters does not make the Greenneck feel good. Sometimes, it makes him profoundly sad (hey, even a Greenneck has feelings). But he eats meat, he’s going to know what sort of life his dinner led, and be the one to bring that life to its end.

The Greenneck won’t hate you if you listen to reggae. He just won’t talk to you.

The Greenneck knows that a “bike” can have pedals and weigh 20 pounds, or have a throttle and do wheelies in third gear. He holds equal affection for both expressions of the form.

Last month, when Bill McKibben came to speak at a library just down the road, the Greenneck didn’t go.

It’s not just because the Greenneck didn’t think much of McKibben’s latest work, which felt a little hollow and cobbled together, even if the overall message resonated. It’s not because the Greenneck couldn’t spare the time; hell, the dishes were done and the boys drooling onto their pillows by the time McKibben even took the stage.

So why didn’t he go? Maybe it’s because there’s something in Bill McKibben’s style that leaves the Greenneck a little cold. It’s not as if he doesn’t agree with much of what the man says. But there’s something a little too... the Greenneck struggles for the right word... (is it intellectual?)... about Bill McKibben. It’s not the stuffiness of Gore; it’s softer than that. And it’s not sanctimony; McKibben’s too smart to go that route. Perhaps the Greenneck is simply intimidated by McKibben; perhaps he’s just jealous of the man’s commercial success, which has come without selling his morals south.

Or maybe it’s this. Maybe the Greenneck is weary of the same tired scene: An audience of good, virtuous, Subaru-driving, like-minded folk sitting rapt as the enviroapostle of the evening lays it on. These are good people, and the message is usually spot-on. But it’s the same preacher and the same choir and the same sermon – and to the Greenneck, it feels like spinning wheels.

The Greenneck is not sure where the traction is going to come from, but he thinks about it an awful lot.

The Greenneck wishes Axel Rose would come out of hiding.

The Greenneck knows there are other Greensnekks all around him. This gives him hope. But then, the Greenneck’s always been an optimist.

To read more about the Greenneck way, log on to www.wickedoutdoorsy.com
Many Vermonters feel overtaxed, underpaid, overworked or some combination of all three. We have an abundance of physical and human resources but a shortage of money. The money system has failed to balance human needs with available resources. Vermonters need a little relief. We need a new economy.

Vermont Freedom Currency is a single pure silver coin worth $10 Credits. A single coin is worth $10 with the State of Vermont for any service, fee or tax. This assures Credits hold an established value for purposes of barter. These coins would operate as a voluntary barter currency accepted by individuals and businesses that choose to accept them. They are not legal tender and cannot be converted into dollars except by a mutually agreeable private-sector transaction, such as might be done through eBay or Craigslist.

Credits can circulate inside Vermont as an alternative currency to increase needed services to Vermonters, reduce taxes, and provide choice and flexibility in the economy.

How will it work?
A single coin minted of .999 pure silver and identified as “10 Credits” will be sold for $10 to anyone who wishes to purchase it. It will initially be made available through town clerks, state offices, and banking institutions as well as the Vermont government website. The coins also could be marketed through the Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing.

Each coin is underwritten by the State of Vermont to be worth $10 toward any state service, fee or tax. It also will be accepted by transportation authorities for bus passes, state colleges for tuition, and state-funded community health centers. Since we all know the coins have value with the state we will have faith in them as Vermonters.

The value of the credits to the state could be significant benefit) to the community treasury.

The state can regulate the quantity of coins in circulation, their redemption value for state services, and which programs and nonprofits participate, to prevent inflation and maximize the positive impacts on taxes, the Vermont economy, and the quality of life for Vermonters.

The value of the credits to the state could be changed by legislation, providing that a sufficient period of prior notification has been provided to the people.

Orders for the coins could be placed through state agencies and via the state web site prior to the initial release of coins. Collectors from around the world and Vermonters who want to support this alternative currency could empower Vermont Freedom Currency without any initial monetary investment by the state. The $10 the state receives from selling a Vermont Credit coin would enable it to purchase to newly minted coins and, by selling those, put them into circulation – further spreading this alternative currency at no real cost (and significant benefit) to the community treasury.

What good are Credits?

Community Credit currency can be used for any financial transaction connected with any state agency which requires the payment of a fee for a service or by selected state-funded nonprofit organizations which charge fees for services. This might include health care centers, bus passes, campground fees at state parks, hunting and fishing licenses, driver’s licenses, professional certifications, car registrations, as well as all fines or taxes.

For example, if you had a bill with the state for $55 you could pay $50 of it with five Credit coins and $5 with U.S. dollars.

Some coins would come back to the state in ways which do not actually cost the state the $10 of value per coin. Someone might choose to go camping because they have the coins. It they had to pay with dollars they would skip it. The cost to the state is much less than the redemption value since the cost of operating the campground has only increased a modest amount.

This also applies to bus passes, health care services, and tuition for state-supported schools and colleges. The cost of providing bus service to a community is not directly related to how many people purchase bus passes. The majority of the cost is in having the bus run its route for even one rider. Adding more riders does not increase the cost very much.

The majority of the cost of running community health centers and colleges is for infrastructure and employees. Providing more health care services or teaching more students does not necessarily increase the cost significantly. More value can be given to Vermonters for less cost per service delivered. More with less.

Marketing, promotion and Issuance

Coins could be packaged with a brochure explaining how they work and the history of money in Vermont. This package could include a directory of businesses that accept coins for purchases. This packaged coin would be profitable for both the state and Vermont businesses.

Special coins could be made with additional words placed onto them for events like the Arts Festival, Reggae Festival, Jazz Festival and county fairs. These coins could be sold as commemorative coins as well as currency for the event.

Adding a ring of text around the center of the coin does not require a new dye for each custom coin. The state could choose to sell the coins to specific event sponsors at the minting cost prior to the event, and collect the remainder after the event.

This would make it attractive to event sponsors since the coins could be used to finance the event to some extent. It would be an “interest-free loan” to the sponsor from the state to help increase tourism and economic activity. Every coin that leaves the state generates revenue for the state.

The coins could be re-used many times during the course of an event, each time generating revenue for the event sponsors and tax revenue for the state.

Ski resorts might choose to maintain a storefront of coins to sell to their patrons. They could accept the coins for payment toward lift passes and other services. Restaurants could offer a free coin to guests who spend a specific amount of money. This would be equivalent to offering a coupon, except that the State of Vermont will receive the benefit, particularly if their guests are from out-of-state and keep the coin as a souvenir.

Grants offered by the state could be denominated in some portion of U.S. dollars and some portion of Vermont Credits.

Differences between money and credits

The Constitution of the United States gives Congress the power to “coin money and regulate the value thereof.” However, Credit coins are not legal tender, nor intended to be. They are voluntary currency and cannot be converted into U.S. dollars except by private sale at a mutually agreeable price. No one is required to accept them as payment for a debt. Thus, conflict with the federal government is avoided.

The state can regulate the quantity of coins in circulation, their redemption value for state services, and which programs and nonprofits participate, to prevent inflation and maximize the positive impacts on taxes, the Vermont economy, and the quality of life for Vermonters.

Credit coins are voluntary currency and cannot be converted into U.S. dollars except by private sale at a mutually agreeable price. No one is required to accept them as payment for a debt. Thus, conflict with the federal government is avoided.

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Business contracts with state agencies that require a bidding process could allow bidders to indicate what portion of the bid amount would be acceptable in Credits. Businesses that choose to accept the coins for goods and services could receive a free web page on a Vermont web site for the currency, and a listing in the directory that is distributed with the tourist package.

Specific budget programs or initiatives could be partially or wholly funded with Credits. Citizens could propose projects to the state or their local municipality that would be funded by Credits allocated by the state. These projects would not require additional tax monies, providing that the coins had already been purchased and returned to the state.

Tax Relief
It’s easy to see how increasing state revenues by selling these coins to visitors and collectors can provide some modest revenue increase and therefore a potential tax reduction. The more events that are held in Vermont, the more revenue is raised through the sales tax.

Some state-sponsored activities and programs could be partially funded with Credits, reducing the amount of taxes needed for these services. Examples include:

- Public libraries
- Tutoring students
- Day care centers
- Hospitals and community health centers
- Senior centers
- Hospice home care
- Transportation services
- Cleaning up roads and public parks
- Landscaping of public properties

The state could sell Credit coins in lieu of bonds. Since there is no usury on Credits the amount due in the future would be less than bonds.

Why should you support this?
Money needs competition. Tyranny can be defined as “no other choice.” The old adage “don’t put all your eggs in one basket” is a prudent advisory for us to seek a diverse collection of economic solutions. Total dependence on U.S. government money is foolish. Independence only exists when there is a choice.

The economy is political by its nature. Governments create money and regulate its use. Our federal government is taking us in the wrong direction—toward increasing debt, endless aggressive wars to maintain global economic hegemony, and dependence on the federal government and federal “debt money.”

Vermont can set an example for other states for how an alternative state-based system can take us in the right direction—toward increasing economic freedom and independence, lower taxes, and locally sustainable economies based on credit with the state rather than debt to impersonal corporations and unknown foreign investors.

The Vermont State motto is “Freedom and Unity.” Two currencies can be better than one, especially when one is based on credit with the state. The Vermont government could decide in the future to issue credits in another form, perhaps electronically, to expand their utility. Someday we might all have our own electronic currencies on the Internet, once appropriate standards are developed.

This proposal gives Vermonters added flexibility in their economic lives. It can reduce taxes and provide more services to Vermonters. It is a “more with less” proposal.

The adage “don’t put all your eggs in one basket” is a prudent advisory. Total dependence on U.S. government money is foolish. Independence only exists when there is a choice.
Jefferson and Madison administrations. were perceived to be the tyrannical policies of the "Revolution of 1800" in the first, most sustained, and thoughtful consideration of federalism. And it is a great irony that New Englanders would use the Jeffersonian "principles of nullification" to defend state sovereignty that could be enforced by state nullification as corporate entities, had original rights (including the theory of the people of the several states, the United States entered it as a pre-existing sovereign state. This was understood at the time of ratification, and New England would lose its rightful place in the Union. Nor did this have to happen, since many held, quite plausibly, that the Louisiana Purchase was unconstitutional. The Constitution makes no provision for acquiring new territory (other than the entrance of Canada). New territory could be justly acquired only through a constitutional amendment. Failure to meet this constitutional requirement was grounds for secession. To the charge that these demands exhibited an unpatriotic and a selfish sectional attitude on the part of New Englanders, three things need to be said:

1. There was no "nation-state" about which one could be unpatriotic. The nation-state first appeared with the French Revolution. America at this time was an inchoate federation of states, each of which had its own "nationality." Tocqueville could write in the 1830s that in forming a Union, the states "have not forsook their nationality, nor have they been reduced to the condition of one and the same people. If one of the states chooses to withdraw from the compact, it would be difficult to dispove its right of doing so" (my italics).

2. New England, at this time, was nearly two centuries old, and had developed a strong national identity, as a contemporary Federalist philosopher James wrote: "Of all colonies that ever were founded, the largest, the most assimilated, and to use the modern jargon, nationalized is New England." (My italics.) New England formed a federation as early as 1643, and coined its own money. A contemporary poem well expresses the nationalist sentiment: "Amy Kittredge is my name / Salem is my dwelling place/ New England is my nashun [sic]! And Christ is my salvation."

3. New Englanders were not so much interested in dissolving the Union over the Louisiana Purchase as they were in opposing the Union’s expansion. Governor Strong of Massachusetts in 1813 gave a speech to the Legislature against expansion. And Harrison Otis, chair of the House committee responding on its behalf, agreed with the governor, insisting that "the extension of territorial limits was never contemplated by the framers of the Constitution."

The acquisition of the vast Louisiana Territory, without allowing the people of the several states to vote on a constitutional amendment, endangered the decentralist republican experiment of the Revolution, and opened the path to a consolidated empire. The only check to this imperial ambition seemed to be secession. As Timothy Pickering put it in 1810: "I cannot think ... that a separation at this time would be an evil; on the contrary, I believe an immediate separation would be a real blessing to the 'good old thirteen states,' as John Randolph once called them."

Republicanism required a smaller scale and cultural homogeneity. As James Lowell Jr. explained it, republican self-government requires that "the people should be less extended, and more enlightened, and that there should be a similarity in their manners, habits, and pursuits." In this vision, the continent would be divided into a number of federations, each with its own distinct way of life, roughly in the way that South America would develop.

Instead, America became the consolidated empire Lowell and other New Englanders warned against. A centralized empire stretching to the Pacific was by no means inevitable, and many at the time did not think it was desirable. It is often said against secession that it is disruptive because it suddenly creates new majorities and new minorities. But exactly the same is true of expansion. The addition of Louisiana and Florida threatened powerful and legitimate interests, and upset the balance of power in the Senate. Moreover, like the Louisiana Purchase, these new states were brought in by a mere majority vote in Congress, without a constitutional amendment, provoking the bitter denunciation of Josiah Quincy of Massachusetts in a speech to the House of Representatives in 1811. The creation of the State of Louisiana without a constitutional amendment, he said, "is virtually a dissolution of this Union; that it continued on following page
Livingston continued from previous page

will free the States from their moral obligation; and, as it will be the right of all, so it will be the
duty of some, definitely to prepare for a separa-
tion: amicably if they can, violently if they must.”

‘The yoke of Bonaparte’

Talk of secession over the Louisiana Purchase and
what it intimated was largely the province of polit-
ical elites, and did not generate a mass movement.
However, the Embargo Act of 1808 and the War of
1812 did spark a mass movement for state nullifi-
cation and secession.

The Embargo forbade foreign trade and allowed
seizure of goods on mere suspicion if intended for
export, and authorized use of army and naval
power to enforce it. Massachusetts owned more
than a third of U.S. tonnage, and controlled most
shipbuilding and cod fishing. Its highly profitable
carrying trade was devastated, and the farmers in
the western part of New England sat on a glut of
produce that could not be shipped out. Workers
and sailors were unemployed. Invoking the Jeffer-
sonian and Madisonian “principles of ’98,” the
Massachusetts Legislature flatly nullified the
Embargo, declaring it “unjust, oppressive, and
unconstitutional, and not legally binding on the
people.” The town of Newburyport, Massachusetts,
may be taken as an instance. The Constitution, the
town said, is forming the compact theory of the Constitu-
tion. Thomas Jefferson wrote: “Come out therefore
other four would be free to continue under the
American Constitution.”

Elijah Parish of Newburyport urged New England
to “proclaim an honourable neutrality, let
the southern Heroes fight their own battles... Break
those chains, under which you have sullenly mur-
mured... and once more breathe that free, com-
mercial air of New England which your fathers
always enjoyed... Protest? Did I say, protest? Forbid
this war to proceed in New England.” John Sylvester
Gardiner, a major Boston Episcopal cleric,
declared: either “cut the connexion with the
South or amend the Constitution; “This portion of
this war to proceed in New England.” John Sylvester
Gardiner, a major Boston Episcopal cleric,
declared: either “cut the connexion with the
South or amend the Constitution; “This portion of
the disunited states should take care of itself... The
time has come when common prudence is pusilla-
minority, and moderation has ceased to be a virtue.”

Thomas Dawes wrote to Noah Webster praying
that God would “save us from the yoke of Bona-
parte and Virginia.” A letter published in a number
of newspapers acknowledged “Athat a separation
has been suggested in the northern states is too
true. The northern and eastern states must have
the privilege of navigation, OR PERISH... The
New England people... wish for peace, and court
to give the commercial states their fair and just
consideration in the government of the union.”

Encouraged by the government, the people
openly flouted the embargo. John Quincy Adams
reported more than 40 cases in which juries would
not convict. The New England towns sent remon-
strances to Congress and, receiving no reply, openly
called for secession. They used the same
language Jefferson and Madison had employed in
formulating the compact theory of the Constitu-
tion. Newburyport, Massachusetts, may be taken
as an instance. The Constitution, the town said, is
a compact between the states: “Whenever its pro-
visions are violated, or its original principles
departed from by a majority of the states or of
their people, it is no longer an effective instru-
ment, but that any state is at liberty by the spirit of
the contract to withdraw from the union.”

A region estranged

The war and the Draconian Embargo Act of 1813,
which prevented the coasting trade (and made
smuggling more difficult) was the last straw. The
Middlesex County Federalist declared: “Instead of
wishing to withdraw from the union, we fear that
the Government has withdrawn from us.” And the
Essex County Federalists thought their people
“more injured, oppressed and endangered by the
doings of our own National Government, than
they were when in 1775 we took arms to protect
and defend ourselves against the measures of the
government of Great Britain.” Senator Blake of
Worcester gave a speech praising Great Britain in
its struggle with Revolutionary France, and said
that if the U.S. Constitution permitted embargoes,
he preferred the British Constitution “monarchy
and all.” New Englanders refused to send troops
to support the war with Britain and demanded
that a portion of the revenue sent to Washington
be remitted to provide for their own defense.

State nullification and secession had been the
talk of elites in 1804, but from 1808 to 1814 it had
become the subject of New England Town meet-
ings. This popular movement forced the Federalist
leaders to call for a Convention of New England
states to meet at Hartford, Connecticut, on the
model of the Philadelphia Convention, namely to
reconsider the relation of the states to the Union.

It should be remembered that the Philadelphia
Convention proposed a dissolution of the Union,
writing in Article VII of the proposed Constitu-
tion that only nine states were necessary to form a
new Union of states. Should only nine ratify, the
other four would be free to continue under the
Articles of Confederation or to form whatever
association they saw fit.

President Thomas Jefferson would later
acknowledge, “and with some respect and admira-
tion” point out, that this Constitutional crisis was
brought on by the people themselves, and not by
their political elites: “I felt the foundation of
the government shaken under my feet by the New
England townships.”

What course would this new Constitutional
Convention at Hartford take? And what is its
legacy and salience for us today?

To be continued in the third and final part in the Fall 2007
issue.
A winter 2007 statewide survey conducted by the Center for Rural Studies at the University of Vermont found that the percentage of eligible voters who favor Vermont seceding from the Union and becoming an independent republic, as it was between 1777 and 1791, increased from 8 percent in 2006 to 13 percent in 2007. The 2007 Vermonter Poll was based on a random sample of 599 eligible voters conducted in February.

If one extrapolated from the survey to the population of the entire State of Vermont, there could be as many as 63,700 Vermonters who are favorably inclined toward secession. To put this 13-percent figure in historical perspective, it is important to realize that when the thirteen English colonies successfully seceded from the British Empire, only 25 percent of the population actually supported secession. Furthermore, 13 percent may arguably represent the highest percentage favoring secession of any of the 35 states with secession movements. (For a complete registry of all of these secession movements compiled by the Middlebury Institute visit www.MiddleburyInstitute.org.)

These results are hardly surprising when you consider the response of Vermont voters to a second question, namely, “Has the United States government lost its moral authority?” An astonishing 74.3 percent responded affirmatively. Many Vermonters believe that this loss of moral authority stems from the fact that our government is owned, operated, and controlled by Corporate America. National elections are bought and sold to the highest bidder. It was the loss of moral authority that brought down the apartheid government of South Africa, the communist regimes in six Eastern European countries, and the moribund Soviet Union.

Of those Vermonters who favor secession, 83.6 percent would like to see the question put before the 237 town meetings in the state. Ninety-three percent would then like to see the issue considered by the state Legislature, with 95.9 percent favoring a two-thirds majority of both houses for adoption.

Another year and a half of a convoluted war on terrorism, a foreign policy based on full-spectrum dominance, unconditional support for the apartheid government of Israel, the suppression of civil liberties, citizen surveillance, corporate greed, and a culture of deceit, combined with skyrocketing gasoline prices and a precipitous decline in the dollar could easily double the percentage of Vermont voters favoring secession.

Long live the second Vermont republic.

For additional information, contact Second Vermont Republic chairman Thomas H. Naylor at 802-425-4133.
Designs for Bart Merle-Smith’s Hot Tub Emporium 2 in Burlington Vermont. This space ship in an enormous warehouse has private hot tub spa compartments in each car that are designed to transport one to another world, such as “Krypton, Superman’s birth planet”.

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New DVD!
Here’s what you find out about the rest of the world by reading the papers:

Despite attempts by the Labour Party to sabotage the vote, the separatist Scottish National Party won a stunning victory in the elections to the Scottish parliament on May 3, ending 50 years of Labour dominance and moving the country closer to independence. The SNP has vowed to put the question of separation from England to a referendum by 2010, and polls indicate that it would win by a large majority. As SNP champion Sean Connery says, "There’s never been a better opportunity than now" for independence.

"The Belgian identity crisis hit new heights last year when a spoof news program by the national broadcaster RTBF announced that Flanders had seceded from Belgium. The broadcaster’s switchboard received 2,000 frantic calls, and Belgium’s embassies around the world contacted the authorities back home to ask whether the country’s federal system had indeed collapsed.” (New York Times, April 9, 2007) The reason it seemed so reasonable is that even though Belgium was cobbled together in 1815 to keep it out of France’s control, there is great antipathy between the Dutch-speaking Flemish and the French-speaking Walloons, and a strong secessionist party called Vlaams Belang has called for an independent Flanders. According to the Times, it “has been gaining ground.”

The Polisario Front in Morocco has agreed to hold direct talks with the Moroccan government over control of Western Sahara. Morocco would give the resource-rich region autonomy, with its own regional government, but the secessionist Polisario Front wants independence for the region and insists on holding a referendum for the 260,000 residents that would offer a choice between autonomy and independence.

On April 23, separatist rebels stormed a Chinese-run oil field in eastern Ethiopia, killing more than 70 people. The Chinese have been exploiting for several years the Ogaden National Liberation Front, which has been fighting for years for the independence of eastern Ethiopia, a Muslim region that resents the heavy-handed control of the Christian Ethiopian government – and the government’s recent destruction of an Ogaden village, which the ONLF promised to respond to “swiftly and decisively.” Ethiopia wants to hang on to the region because it has proven to have rich oil fields that the Chinese have been exploiting for several years.

A Western Australia Secession Association (PO Box 203, Yokine, WA. 6060) was formed five years ago to revive a secessionist movement that had gone moribund after winning a secession referendum in 1933 by two-to-one but failing to act on it. The new organization has issued a series of pamphlets stating its case, including one showing that the economy of “Westralia” could “hold its own in the wider world.”

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That Andorra had the world’s lowest unemployment rate (zero) and no income tax, making it a haven for many rich foreigners. In fact the nation of 75,000 people is one of the richest in the world, has the world’s longest life expectancy rate at 83.5 years, and has neither an army nor a navy to support. But then, it hasn’t been at war since siding formally with the Allies in World War II without sending a single soldier to a battlefield.

Despite attempts by the Labour Party to sabotage the vote, the separatist Scottish National Party won a stunning victory in the elections to the Scottish parliament on May 3, ending 50 years of Labour dominance and moving the country closer to independence. The SNP has vowed to put the question of separation from England to a referendum by 2010, and polls indicate that it would win by a large majority. As SNP champion Sean Connery says, "There’s never been a better opportunity than now" for independence.

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Andorra, was in New York to attend the UN General Assembly last fall, he made sure to announce