



# future news

a newsletter from the *futures* foundation

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## SMILE! ACTIVISTS AT WORK!

**W**hen US financier George Soros gave five million US dollars to MoveOn this week, he was adding his support to an online network of 2,000,000 citizen activists. And when Paris starts jumping to the sounds of a "festive, massive protest" later today, it will be celebrating the work of 60,000 people from around the world who are seeking a better way to manage the affairs of humanity.

The work of these and other citizen organisations, like Ralph Nader's CitizenWorks, is aimed at creating better futures for ordinary people. It may not make the cut in the daily news against the drama of suicide bombings and celebrity scandal, but to some of us the work that they are doing is the biggest drama of all.

And like all good dramas, we don't know how it will end. Have the entrenched institutions of business and politics hijacked the system beyond recovery? Or will the growing wave of resentment mobilise enough citizens to turn the tide, even in the face of questionable electoral processes? Is there time to save the planet? Can we learn to live without wars? Stay tuned....

There are encouraging signs for the proponents of change. The MoveOn network, for example, is this week claiming a win in the fight to roll back new US media rules (allowing a few big outlets to control the media), as it asks for more support from members in the continuing battle ([www.moveon.org](http://www.moveon.org)). The network, founded by Silicon Valley entrepreneurs Joan Blades and Wes Boyd, now includes

the peace campaign of Eli Pariser, who founded "9-11Peace.org" in 2001. In the days following that tragedy, he gathered nearly 500,000 signatures to a petition calling for a peaceful response to break the cycle of violence.

Today, MoveOn is working to bring ordinary people back into politics. "With a system that today revolves around big money and big media, most citizens are left out," it says. "When it becomes clear that our 'representatives' don't represent the public, the foundations of democracy are in peril. MoveOn is a catalyst for a new kind of grassroots involvement, supporting busy but concerned citizens in finding their political voice."

Every member does indeed have a voice in choosing the organisation's direction, with software that allows anyone to propose issue priorities and strategies, and the responses of others determining which ideas are most strongly supported.

In Paris, the European Social Forum has held its discussions in a more traditional way, hosting 270 seminars, 55 conferences and 287 workshops with delegates from 1,500 non-government organisations. Their "five lines of discussion" (see page 2) specifically addressed the topics of war, citizens' and democratic rights, sustainability, merchandising and racism.

The Paris forum, which is the second in Europe, follows the principles of the World Social Forum (WSF) launched in Porto Alegre in Brazil in 2001.

"We consider the ESF a European basis to the

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WSF, and a complement to it," said Laurent Vannini, one of the organizers. The ESF will prepare European civil society participation at the fourth World Social Forum to take place in January 2004 in India.

"We will be discussing WSF subjects on a European basis, and will give peoples and organizations on our continent who cannot attend meetings in far-away places the opportunity to express themselves and to exchange views with other organizations."

The ESF will focus on how to create an alternative model of economic and diplomatic relations based on human development, and not on capitalist profits. It aims to create international networks among civil society organizations, find ways for them to reinforce one another's work, and enrich the common assessment against neo-liberalism. It will seek to promote a Europe that stands for peace, solidarity and human rights.



# The rise and rise of social responsibility?

Are the indicators of social revolution now being observed by futurists and others really indicators of substantial, positive change? Or are we actually living in a new age of predatory capitalism? Of increasing oligarchy, of corporate piracy? Is the long-awaited, golden New Age going to dawn, or are we at the threshold of a new Dark Age?

Perhaps the answer to all these questions is "yes".

But if the world we live in is the one we choose to perceive, then let's keep this a good news issue and choose to observe the positive signs. After all, it must be possible that the violence and tragedy emerging from global politics today are the final thrashings of a dying age, an age in which power could be abused by the mighty few because the rest of us were distracted, contented, uninformed or powerless.

Perhaps the behaviour of world leaders -- from terrorists to presidents and chairmen\* -- is now offending the global peoples enough to galvanise them into an active response.

The growth of activist networks and new community groups does suggest that this is happening. And the rise of stakeholder influence on organisations of all kinds demonstrates a real shift of power from inside organisations to outside them. Indeed, that very shift might be seen as the cause of the corporate scandals of recent years.

Once upon a time, corporate boards could make their decisions behind closed doors, without concern for the interests of others. Today these decisions are challenged by a growing number of stakeholder groups -- which is why some companies have chosen to take their real decision-making underground, acting secretly in ways they know their host communities would not condone. Big mistake. The truth will out, as we have seen so depressingly often lately.

The same applies in politics. Will the outrageous political lies and scandals we have seen in recent times also, eventually, overcome voter apathy and trigger a new generation of participative democracy?

Those of us who care deeply about better futures might hope so.

- - **Jan Lee Martin**

\*Sorry, guys - but most of them still are! (See p4)

# PARIS:

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- 1** against war, with debates on international law, global disarmament, military globalization. and imperial politics. It proposes new North-South relations based on development and economic cooperation.
- 2** against neo-liberalism, with debates on citizens' and democratic rights in Europe, and an analysis of the draft European Union constitution.
- 3** an examination of "the logic of profit and for an ecologically sustainable society", and
- 4** an examination of "the merchandising processes of democratic information, culture, and education."
- 5** against racism, xenophobia, and exclusion of immigrants in Europe.

Within items 3 and 4, the ESF will examine deregulation and privatisation of public services, especially water. "Several NGOs working on public services will launch a campaign to keep water in public hands," said H  l  ne Ballande of the French section of Friends of the Earth.

"We also want implementation of the international legal framework to ensure that private international corporations are held responsible for their noxious behavior, be it environmental disasters, corruption, or exploitation of human work."

# TIMELESS WISDOM

"The state of valuelessness... has come to its present dangerous point because all the traditional value systems ever offered to mankind have... proved to be failures... Furthermore, wealth and prosperity, technological advance, widespread education, democratic political forms, even honestly good intentions and avowals of good will have, by their failure to produce peace, brotherhood, serenity, and happiness, confronted us even more nakedly and unavoidably with the profundities that mankind has been avoiding by its busy-ness with the superficial. We are reminded here of the 'neurosis of success'. People can struggle on hopefully, and even happily, for false panaceas so long as these are not attained. Once attained, however, they are soon discovered to be false hopes. Collapse and hopelessness ensue and continue until new hopes become possible. We too are in an interregnum between old value systems that have not worked and new ones not yet born, an empty period which could be borne more patiently were it not for the great and unique dangers that beset mankind.... Specieshood is far in the future.

"The cure for this disease is obvious. We need a validated, usable system of human values, values that we can believe in and devote ourselves to because they are true rather than because we are exhorted to 'believe and have faith'."

*Abraham H. Maslow 1956*

"...the moral transformation of man and the man-made universe is the most important item on today's agenda of history. Without moral transformation in altruistic directions, neither new world wars and other catastrophes can be prevented nor a new -- better and nobler -- social order be built in the human universe. Without a notable increase of what we call creative unselfish love in man and in the human universe, all fashionable prescriptions for prevention of wars and for building of a new order cannot achieve their purpose.

"For instance, one such fashionable prescription is a political reconstruction of all nations along the lines of American democracy. Despite the popularity of this belief, it is questionable. Tomorrow, hypothetically, you could have all nations reconstructed politically along the lines of the American brand of democracy; and yet such a reconstruction would neither prevent nor decrease the chances of new world wars or of bloody internal revolutions. Why? Because study of all the wars and important internal disturbances from 600 BC to the present time reveals that democracies are no less belligerent, no less militant, and no more orderly than autocracies. This conclusion is unpleasant. Nevertheless, it is true.

"Another favorite prescription against wars and bloody strife is more education and more schooling. Again, hypothetically, tomorrow you could have all men and women at the age of sixteen and over miraculously transformed into Ph.D.'s and super-Ph.D.'s. And yet, such a miraculous increase of education would not increase the chances of either civil or international wars. Why? Because the prevailing forms of education and the growth of science and technology do not curb or even decrease wars and bloody revolutions. From the tenth century up to the present time, the number of schools, beginning with kindergartens and ending with universities, the percentage of literacy, the number of scientific discoveries and technological inventions, have been continuously increasing, especially during the last two centuries. Despite this... the curve of wars (measured whether by frequency of wars or by the size of armies or by the amount of casualties per million population) has not gone down during these centuries. If anything, with great fluctuations, it has also gone up. The same is true of revolutions and revolts. We are living in the most scientific, most technological, and most schooled century; and the same century happens to be the bloodiest of all the preceding recorded twenty-five centuries."

*Pitirim A. Sorokin,*

# What do we know?

**P**riests and philosophers, psychologists and saints... there's a long list of people who have tried to change the future. Many of them have done it. Some are still trying. So what is the sum of human wisdom? What do we, as a species, really know, even if we manage to avoid knowing that we know?

If, in 1000 years or so, our species has reached true specieshood... if we have learned to live in harmony with each other and with the planet; if we have learned how to be healthy and happy and to bring up our children to be the same, if we have learned how to grow in the most positive way, what would our society look like then? What would be its core values, its principles of governance, its code of behaviour?

The Futures Foundation has been challenged with just this question. As we consider it, we welcome the contributions of members. While it may seem like misguided hubris even to begin the attempt, who better than futurists in Australia to contemplate a successful social protocol for diverse but integrated human societies in the future?

We do have a model. Karl-Henrik Robert created The Natural Step by focussing on agreement instead of conflict. He invited scientists who had different views about how to save the natural environment to work with him to identify the fundamental principles upon which they could agree. He hosted discussions with his fellow-scientists, produced reports, circulated them, made agreed changes, circulated them again and ultimately produced a manifesto for change that is now being introduced around the world. Could we do the same with a social protocol?

Our initial planning focus is on four basic stages:

- 1 scanning global cultures for the recorded wisdom of the past
- 2 using futures methodologies to explore the possibilities of a social protocol that could transcend politics and religion across cultures and generations
- 3 searching for commonalities, distilling the essences
- 4 articulating and sharing the results in a way that is not only accessible to all but that, like The Natural Step, carries its own incentives for adoption.

The steering group of Charles Brass, Sohail Inayatullah, Jan Lee Martin and Julian Crawford will welcome ideas and contributions from members relating to either content or process. Or send to [futurists@futurists.net.au](mailto:futurists@futurists.net.au).

# Employees to help poor corporations?

Coca-Cola chairman David Gonski has urged Australia's workforce to support charities, to make up for dwindling corporate giving, reports *The Australian Financial Review*. Mr Gonski, who is a director of a number of other organisations including John Fairfax Holdings, publisher of *The Australian Financial Review*, told business leaders at a Sydney breakfast that new corporate governance measures could reduce the levels of corporate philanthropy.

"No longer can people give money to charity because the wife of the chairman wants to," he said. And, reported Lisa Allen, money for good works was even shorter because big sporting events, "virtuous as they are", often soaked up corporate sponsorship funds.

"Corporate sponsorship will be very limited going forward, corporate philanthropy will grow from people on the shop floor."

Mr Gonski said workplace giving in Australia could increase by \$200 million a year if 10 per cent of Australia's workforce gave \$2 a week.

He did generously suggest that the corporates might match the charitable giving of employees and predicted that this would assist in employee/employer relationships. And in an afterthought, he even suggested that "If a corporation wanted to encourage its shareholders to be philanthropic, they could perhaps increase slightly the dividend, saying that they are doing it deliberately to give shareholders the opportunity to use that increase to give to charities they like."

# Women at work

Average female participation in management jobs remains at approximately 20 per cent, with women significantly under-represented in senior positions and clustered in industries and occupations that are segregated by gender, reports the Corporate Leadership Council.

Linda Wirth, author of a 1997 International Labour Organisation (ILO) report on women's corporate progress, says: "Almost universally, women have failed to reach leading positions in major corporations...irrespective of their abilities .... Women generally fare best in industries employing large numbers of women, such as health and community services and the hotel and catering industry."

Whilst women have gained increasing representation in middle management ranks, access to the most senior posts is very limited. A UN report in 1997 said that women held only two to three percent of top jobs worldwide.

In increasingly competitive markets, where organisations must fully leverage all their assets in order to create and sustain competitive advantage, firms are now recognising that barriers to women's advancement can be detrimental to corporate effectiveness. Corporate motivations for promoting workforce diversity have evolved from attempts to satisfy legal obligations through the promotion of a positive corporate image to the realisation that solid diversity strategies can be critical to an organisation's bottom-line success, the report said.

In a survey carried out during the early 1990s, several attitudinal and organisational barriers to women's corporate advancement were identified by CEOs and HR professionals:

- Stereotypes and preconceptions concerning women's abilities and suitability for careers in the corporate environment.
- Lack of access to line positions, where women can demonstrate their abilities in positions with

clear bottom-line impact.

- Lack of careful career planning and planned job assignments to ensure that women are equipped with broad experience that lends the credibility necessary for senior positions.
  - Exclusion of women from informal channels of communication and learning about the operations of the company and opportunities for promotion.
  - Behaviour of male co-workers.
- Companies worldwide have implemented a huge range of programmes and initiatives aimed at overcoming these and similar barriers.

Catalyst, the US-based study group focusing on women's corporate advancement, identifies nine factors as crucial to successful promotion of gender diversity within organisations (top-level support is highlighted as the key prerequisite for pursuing management diversity).

- Demonstrate top-level commitment to diversity
- Identify and track HIPO women
- Ensure that women have mentors
- Rotate women across functions and ensure they have experience of line assignments
- Take risks with women and offer them visible 'stretch' roles
- Implement succession planning with a focus on women
- Help employees balance work and personal responsibilities
- Hold managers accountable for women's advancement
- Create a comprehensive, sustained initiative

Two other important tactics include targeted recruiting and the formation of explicit networks for women.

Case studies of these tactics at organisations renowned for success in increasing women's representation in senior management are presented in the full report, to be found at [www.corporateleadershipcouncil.com](http://www.corporateleadershipcouncil.com).



# THE POLITICS OF POWER

A whole library of new books, from the academic to the activist, has been stimulated by the growing visibility of power shifts in political and corporate power of recent years.

Michael Marien, editor of the World Future Society's Future Survey, notes that there seems to be an era of Republican dominance ahead for the USA: "The GOP seems poised to move clearly beyond the Democrats. Their huge financial lead is growing, they are building new grassroots and campus operations, they now control "K Street" lobbyists, and they represent the majority of state legislators and Congress. The Democrats lack money, a strong focus, and a killer instinct." (See any local relevance here?)

He also reviews two very different books -- "one restrained and academic, the other angry populist" -- which describe growing corporate influence in American politics.

*Silent Theft : The Private Plunder of our*

*Common Wealth*, by David Bollier, exposes the growing pace of market exploitation of the commons -- the resources we own collectively. "In ways that are variously egregious, subtle, clever and obscure, business interests are gaining ownership and control over dozens of valuable resources that the American people collectively own," he writes. (See *Future News* story on the ownership of water, September 2003.)

*Pigs at the Trough: How Corporate Greed and Political Corruption are Undermining America*, by Arianna Huffington, details the "corporate crime wave" and laments the lack of opposition to corporate takeover. This book takes aim at the lobbying business (there are 38 lobbyists for each member of Congress) and close relatives of key Congress members who work as lobbyists. It also notes that the pharmaceutical industry has more lobbyists than members of Congress, by 623 to 535.

Perhaps the most disturbing of the many

## OVER-RULING DEMOCRACY: The Supreme Court vs. the American People

The current conservative majority on the US Supreme Court has failed to live up to both its neutrality obligations under *passive* justice and its defense-of-political democracy obligations under the theory of *active* justice, argues Jamin B. Raskin, Professor of Constitutional Law at the American University.

"The December 2000 decision in *Bush v. Gore* was no fluke, but a trademark judicial intervention against popular democracy: deeply partisan, racially inflected, and wholly unmoored from well-established legal doctrine," he wrote. "This debacle marked the convergence of several long-running counter-democratic tendencies in the Court's jurisprudence."

Marien notes that seeing the conservative Justices as judicial activists may be disorienting for many, since the hot rhetoric of 'judicial activism' has been the signature rallying cry of conservatives for 50 years. Yet Raskin describes "how these judicial tendencies have been undermining the possibilities of democratic self-government."

## CYBERACTIVISM: Online Activism in Theory and Practice

Activists have not only incorporated the internet into their repertoire, but have also changed substantially what counts as activism, and what counts as community, collective identity, democratic space and political strategy, according to editors Martha McCaughey and Michael D. Ayers.

"While the religious right and other conservative political organizations have also colonized cyberspace to achieve their goals, we chose topics that focus on social-change efforts that could loosely be called progressive or anti-establishment," they said.

Marien noted also a major milestone of internet activism: the informal June 24-25 Democratic primary sponsored by MoveOn (see p1), which registered more votes than expected in the 2004 Iowa caucuses and New Hampshire Democratic primary.

books on the growing entrenchment of establishment power is William Greider's. Called *The Right's Grand Ambition: Rolling Back the 20th Century*, it details the three waves of the right's long-running assault on the governing order created by 20th century liberalism. He says its objectives may sound reactionary and destructive, "but hard-right conservatives see themselves as liberating reformers, who are rescuing old American virtues of self-reliance and individual autonomy from the clutches of collective action and 'statist' left-wingers."

# Signals in the noise

## Second White Paper on CSR for EC

A second White Paper on Corporate Social Responsibility is to be issued by the European Commission in November 2004. The EC has decided to take this next step after it has received the final report of the EU multi-stakeholder forum on CSR in the summer of 2004, a forum set up by the first White Paper. *www.ethical;performance.com* 10 11 03 1168

## Here comes the sun

Scenario planners at Shell have calculated that renewable energy holds the potential to power a future world of 10 billion people with ease. Solar energy dominates the mix, and small wonder, says Jeremy Leggett, because over at BP experts have calculated that even in the cloudy, electricity-profligate UK, covering all suitable roofs with solar PV of existing efficiency would provide more electricity than the country presently uses.

*New Scientist* 06 09 03 1169

## Dreamers and idiots

Britain and the US did everything to avoid a peaceful solution in Iraq and Afghanistan, writes British philosopher George Monbiot. "...those of us who called for peace before the wars with Iraq and Afghanistan were mocked as effeminate dreamers.... we were 'indulging... in a cosmic whine', had become 'Osama bin Laden's useful idiots'. Had the options been as limited as the western warlords and their bards suggested, this might have been true. But, as many of us suspected at the time, we were lied to."

*Guardian/UK* 11 11 03 1170

## A fundamental shift of power

The Government's proposals for joint sittings of House of Representatives and Senate represent a fundamental shift in Australian democracy, writes Katharine Murphy. It would swing the balance of power firmly to the House of Representatives and the government of the day, and undermine the traditional 'house of review' function of the Senate.

*Australian Financial Review* 09 10 03 1171

## Changing role of companies

What happens inside companies can have more impact on us than our family, our church or our state. While critics complain of a 'silent takeover' by this powerful entity, others say it is now on the run. What is the future for the company? And what will it mean for us?

*AFR BOSS* October 2003 1172

## US crackdown on bioterror is backfiring

A respected authority on bubonic plague, Thomas Butler probably thought he was doing his civic duty when he reported that 30 vials of plague bacillus had gone missing from his lab. Instead he unleashed a nightmare that started with a police interrogation and later brought him to a courtroom in handcuffs. Events suggest there is more than a whiff of McCarthyism about: Butler is no terrorist, he is a scientist. Other scientists are being warned not to comment.

*New Scientist* 08 11 03 1173

## The post-loyalty enterprise

Employees are quick to change jobs these days -- so how can companies keep staff? Andrew Heathcote notes that loyalty to the company is being dissipated at all levels, and asks what will hold enterprises together? In businesses with low levels of loyalty, the focus tends to shift to the most basic transactions; there is little incentive to think of the big picture.

*BRW* 30 10 03 1174

## No business like show business

Ask any Aussie what they're doing on the weekend and they'll probably answer 'watching the footy'. Right? Wrong, says Peter Switzer. It seems Aussies "are more of an arty-farty bunch than most would think, and the big bucks generated by the arts and their related businesses leaves the sporting -- and other industries -- for dead."

*CA Charter* November 2003 1175

## E-voting under attack

US author Michael Moore has lambasted electronic voting machines being used in some states, claiming the technology is inherently open to misuse. Moore attacked one of the main US voting machine manufacturers, Diebold, for its links to the Bush administration. The company's chief executive is a major fundraiser for the Republican Party.

*ZDNet UK* 10 11 03 1176