

## THE ALL-IMPORTANT SWING VOTER

LABAN © ITT 04

“This is not just about winning an election. It’s about preserving the principles on which this very nation was founded.”

THE REV. AL SHARPTON, ADDRESSING THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION, JULY 28



# Editorial

## Silence of the Dems By Joel Bleifuss

The words from the podium were inspiring. Ron Reagan urged voters to chose “between reason and ignorance, between true compassion

and mere ideology.” Teresa Heinz Kerry asked Americans to summon “the better angels of our nature.”

Democratic Convention speakers gave voice to the historic choice that is before us in November, but not a word was said about the biggest obstacle standing in the way of our aspiration “to build one America”: multinational corporations that owe allegiance only to the bottom line. Even John Edwards, who made a career of battling corporate lawyers, did not use the word “corporation” once in his speech.

The Democratic National Committee issued a prohibition against Bush-bashing. No such edict is needed when it comes to corporations. You don’t bite the hand that fills your wallet.

A 34-year-old Bill Clinton, the populist governor of Arkansas who battled Arkansas Power and Light Co. and other corporate interests, learned that lesson. In 1980 he lost his reelection bid to Frank White, an investment banker backed by Arkansas’ corporate establishment and a then-impressive \$400,000 war chest. Michael Kelly noted in the *New York Times Magazine* that the message Clinton gleaned was clear: “To be successful, a politician had to appear hugely concerned with bettering the lives of ordinary citizens

but had to be careful to avoid acting on those concerns so aggressively that they threatened the interests of the business elite.”

Indeed, according to the Center for Responsive Politics, in this current election cycle corporate interests have contributed \$356 million, or 70 percent, of the \$511 million in campaign donations Democrats have collected so far.

That money bought silence. Imagine what might have been said at the podium if the Democrats did not have to worry about their masters’ whips. Perhaps some prime-time speaker might have called for much-needed reform of the campaign finance system.

Corporations are the dominant form of economic organization in our world. That is not going to change. However, their basest excesses can be corralled through legislation and trade agreements.

Captains of industry created corporations, in part, to shield themselves from financial liability. And in the mid-1800s, U.S. corporations gained human powers through a judicial system that imbued these bloodless entities with the constitutional rights of flesh-and-blood individuals.

But we allow corporations to do things that we would never allow a person to do. *The Corporation*, a documentary now in

theaters, examines corporations as legal “persons.” Applying the standard diagnostic criteria of psychologists, the filmmakers conclude that corporations are psychopathic personalities.

The documentary makes the case that the corporation’s operating principles give it a highly anti-social “personality”: It is self-interested, inherently amoral, callous and deceitful; it breaches social and legal standards to get its way; it does not suffer from guilt. In other words, it is evil.

The corporation is not a “person” that you want wielding the gross power it currently holds over you and your community. From the dangers to the earth’s future posed by global warming, to a healthcare system that denies coverage to those who can’t afford it, to an economic system that encourages CEOs to shift production to countries with no labor laws—the list of social ills that result from undue corporate influence on the political process is endless.

Yes, the Constitution guarantees freedom of speech, but that freedom is curtailed when the power of money silences our political leaders from speaking out. And no, we can’t look to the corporate media to provide the needed critique.

We the people, especially those of us in independent media, need to work to change the paradigm, to challenge the hegemony of corporations.

Listen to the rallying cry from Boston, but hear the silence surrounding it—the evil that dare not say its name. ■

# Letters



## Simple Formulae

In reply to two letters in your July 19 issue, it shocks me that there are still people calling themselves “progressive” who insist that the way to reform politics is to target the two-party system (“All for One” and “One Stupid White Man”). How could anyone be that blind after living through these last three and a half years?

Progressives everywhere need to put down their political theory tracts and think about some simple formulae:

- 1) Votes that are not for Kerry = votes for Bush;
- 2) Votes for Bush = conservative Supreme Court for next 10 to 20 years;
- 3) Conservative Supreme Court for next 10 to 20 years

= Death of progressive politics in America.

If you like the idea of a newly appointed Chief Justice Antonin Scalia running roughshod over the Constitution, by all means vote for Ralph Nader. Hopefully you’re not black or gay or female, so can sit in your ivory tower somewhere while the rest of us suffer the devastating loss of civil rights that your irresponsible ignorance will bring.

Mary Clark  
New York, N.Y.

## GOP SOBs

I just read Annette Fuentes’ thoughtful article on patriotism and nationalism post 9/11, and I was struck by her

comments on the war on the middle class being waged by the GOP (Greedy Old Plutocrats) and the comparisons to Germany in the early 1930s before the rise of Hitler (“Whose Homeland is This?” July 19). In order for democracy to succeed we must have a strong middle class. The anti-democratic bent of the Republican Party has been obvious to me for years, and I am pleased to see others are noticing it too. We must stop these anti-America SOBs (Stodgy Old Businessmen). The canonizing of that evil actor Ronald Reagan was typical. Under him, the war against the middle class was stratified and intensified, and I picture that geezer in hell with demons torturing him while speaking in Spanish to honor those Latin American citizens murdered with U.S. weapons and ammunition supplied by him and Bush I. Keep up the excellent work. I only hope enough people will hear and learn the truth before it is too late.

Thomas R. Arnold  
Richlandtown, Penn.

## One Veteran’s Voice

Our troops have been made indentured servants to the Bush administration’s election efforts.

Our troops are our children, grandchildren, even great-grandchildren, our shipmates,

many dead, many permanently handicapped by an administration treating them with contempt. The Supreme Court-appointed triumvirate of Cheney, Rove and Bush, zealously augmented by corporate chickenhawks, have put us into an unending war, alienated the rest of the world, created an ever-increasing, and justified, terrorist opposition. We the people have learned that they are untrustworthy, lacking in common sense, lying, exaggerating and endlessly propagandizing. They tell us with incredible chutzpah that we must stay the course, not changing horses in midstream, when they put us in the stream to begin with.

WAIT! There’s more. They are deliberately and willfully acting to destroy Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, public education, citizen’s privacy and rights. They have spent hundreds of billions of dollars on empire conquest, much of it coming from Social Security tax money intended for the trust fund, and the national debt is now estimated to be in excess of \$31,000 per American family. If they remain in control, our children and grandchildren will have no Social Security, no medical care or hope to rise to the middle class, indeed even to remain in it. Now we urgently need jobs, healthcare, schools and aid to higher education to stem the loss of American jobs going to better-educated foreign nationals; improvements to our roads, bridges, tunnels, indeed our entire infrastructure. Instead of doing these things, this administration destroys other countries and then spends our billions to rebuild them,

[www.inthesetimes.com](http://www.inthesetimes.com)

## DISCUSSION

Screw protests! They are a waste of time and energy that could be used in REAL opposition efforts. All that gets accomplished is a big picnic with a bunch of bad hand-painted signs that no one can even read. It’s a pep rally with no game. Protests don’t effect political action. They just make the protesters feel better about themselves.

*“Mister president! We have a serious situation! A bunch of idiots are out in the August sun with effigies of you painted on their underwear! They’ve succeeded in memorizing a slogan, and they’re CHANTING it!”*

*“We may as well admit defeat, Dick. HOW can we possibly execute our diabolical schemes now? It’s been nice working with you.”*

While you’re rehearsing your little follies or painting your underwear, electronic voting machines are being installed to take you out of the equation altogether. Then you can burn to a crisp in the August sun and sing “We Shall Overcome” until you’re blue in the face. The tanks and the toxins and the tax cuts for the rich will be rolling along smoothly.

Join the online debate at “Protesting Too Little.”