

# The Dominion

**dominion**, *n.* 1. Control or the exercise of control. 2. A territory or sphere of influence; a realm. 3. One of the self-governing nations within the British Commonwealth.

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## Media Coverage of Haiti Flawed: Analysts

Recent weeks have seen an increase in violence in Haiti, with armed "rebels" burning down police stations and encouraging looting. Over 50 people have died since fighting began a few weeks ago.

In those same weeks, a number of Haitian activists, journalists and media analysts have cried foul, claiming that the media has presented half-truths and outright lies in their coverage of the situation in Haiti.

### US Support of "Opposition" Ignored

Almost universally missing from media coverage of Haiti, some critics say, is information about US Government support for the "opposition", a collection of political parties extremely hostile to the government of Haitian President Jean Bertrand Aristide. "This opposition was founded and continues to operate with the full, if not always open, support of the United States," writes Jessica Leight of the Council on Hemispheric Affairs. Millions of US taxpayers' dollars have gone to fund the "Convergence Democratique," a coalition of opposition groups that have denied the legitimacy of Aristide's presidency since his election.

"Groups of former Haitian military have received arms, training and shelter within the Dominican Republic with the clear knowledge of US authorities," according to the Haiti



Tens of thousands of Haitians gather for a demonstration in support of President Aristide finishing his five year term. The New York Times described it as a "small but enthusiastic crowd." *Haiti Information Project*

Information Project (HIP), a California-based non-profit. Documentary filmmaker Kevin Pina has noted that paramilitary soldiers have been seen carrying brand new M-16s, while the Dominican Republic (where many of the paramilitaries are coming from) recently received a military aid shipment containing 20,000 US-made M-16s.

### History of "Opposition" Obscured

As early as Aristide's 2001 inauguration as President, the Convergence Democratique was already implementing a "parallel government," says Stan Goff, an American writer who was in Haiti observing the 2001 elections. Aristide won with 92 per cent of the vote, but the opposition presented him with an "offer" to share the Presidency with two members of the Convergence.

"The corporate media has neglected to mention that the 'opposition' to which they refer

and repeatedly give legitimacy to, only represents a meager 8 per cent of registered voters in Haiti, according to a US poll," writes Anthony Fention, a Vancouver-based writer and media analyst. Other sources have placed the opposition's share of popular support at 12 per cent.

Paradoxically, some say, the opposition has more support from the media than Aristide. "Far from being silenced," says HIP, "opposition politicians dominate the media in Haiti; wealthy Haitians who do not support Aristide own most stations and newspapers and Convergence members are often interviewed on government-run Haitian National Television."

### Aristide's Record, Popularity Not Covered

Opposition and paramilitary leaders are often quoted as calling Aristide's government "totalitarian" and willing to use violence to crush the opposition. The Haiti Information

Project argues that the mainstream media systematically ignores the accomplishments of the Aristide-led government in favour of this image of a once-popular president-turned-dictator.

Among Aristide's accomplishments, says HIP, are the disbanding of the military, the building of more schools between 1994 and 2000 than were built in the preceding century, the doubling of the minimum wage, and the creation of new health care programs.

Many analyses have noted that most media accounts perpetuate the image of a "defiant" Aristide who has lost his mandate. The HIP web site features photographs of tens of thousands of people attending a pro-Aristide rally on Jan. 1. Also featured is an excerpt from a New York Times article that describes the same rally as a "small but enthusiastic crowd". Other articles note an inflation of small opposition rallies into "thousands" of apparent demonstrators by the Economist and the Wall Street Journal.

### Background

200 years ago, thousands of Haitian slaves staged a successful armed revolt against a much larger French occupying force, becoming the first and only successful revolution of enslaved people. The United States, which made use of slavery at the time, led a 50 year boycott against the nascent republic.

Having endured a number of US-supported military dictatorships, mass murder of dissi-

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## Farmers Union Wants Commons Debate

An emergency House of Commons debate dealing with the income crisis facing Canadian farm families is needed immediately, says the National Farmers Union (NFU). The realized net income from the markets alone, net of government subsidies, was negative \$5 billion, translating into a \$20,000 loss per Canadian farm in 2003, points out NFU president Stewart Wells.

Wells says that the government cannot simply blame the crisis on external factors such as the BSE crisis, drought, and a rising Canadian dollar. Rather, he says, the problems are “systemic” in nature, resulting from government policies that have been attacking primary producers.

International trade agreements and domestic deregulation policies have allowed a small number of large companies to squeeze out smaller farms, and government policies are encouraging this to happen, says Wells. “Corporate dominance of the market is the biggest long-term influence depressing farm gate prices,” he explains.

## Child Poverty Commitments Not Met: Advocates

In 1989, Canadian Parliament decided to end child poverty by the year 2000. According to Campaign 2000, a cross-Canada coalition of over 85 national and community organizations, more than one million Canadian children—15.6% of the child population—remained in poverty in 2001. This problem persists even though more than half of these children have parents who are in the paid labour force.

The recent Throne Speech included commitments to



From an exhibition of photographs illustrating child poverty in Canada sponsored by Campaign 2000 and PhotoSensitive. Dick Loek

national child care and there was a recognition of the need for better jobs. Despite these mentions in the speech, advocates are still very concerned that the sole mention of poverty in the speech focused on “local solutions for local problems” with no federal strategy on child and family benefits. Campaign 2000 proposes an enhanced child benefit of \$4,400 for all low, modest, and middle-income families.

“Investments in children cannot wait for brighter days especially when inequality in Canada continues to grow amidst prosperous times. The government’s concern with not passing on any deficits to future generations rings hollow when children are going hungry and with no place to call home” said Greg deGroot Maggetti of Citizens for Public Justice, a national partner of Campaign 2000. (*Citizens for Public Justice, Campaign 2000*)

## Drug Patent Amendments “Critically Flawed”: Doctors

Bill C-56 is a new piece of legislation that will amend the Canadian Patent Act, and its goal is low-cost medicines being made available to devel-

oping countries. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) supports changes to the Act but calls this new legislation “critically flawed,” believing that the changes will ultimately impede the production and delivery of cheap generic medicines to the world’s poor.

MSF offers that there are three main flaws in Bill C-56. First, the “Right of First Refusal” can allow brand-name drug companies to take over contracts originally negotiated between developing countries and generic drug companies. Second, a limited list of generic drugs will be able to be produced. And third, only countries that are members of the World Trade Organization will be able to import the drugs.

MSF believes that if these and other flaws remain unaddressed, the new legislation will be ineffective and a step backwards from Canada’s international commitments. (*Médecins Sans Frontières Canada*)

## FNGA Scrapped, New Aboriginal Legislation Needed

The First Nations Governance Act (FNGA), introduced by former Indian Affairs Minister Robert Nault in 2002 as a

replacement to the 126 year old Indian Act, was seen by many to have simply continued the rift between the government and aboriginal groups. Andy Mitchell recently took over the portfolio, and one of his first actions was to scrap the Act.

Dr. Taiaike Alfred, from University of Victoria’s Indigenous Governance Program, said the Act was not based on sufficient consultation with the aboriginal community, and customs and traditions were not properly respected by it. “The government wants First Nations to be accountable—an accountability that is familiar to people in government and business, not necessarily First Nations people,” said Alfred. “It is another abandonment of what it is to be indigenous in favor of assimilation.”

Dr. Frank Cassidy, a professor in UVic’s public administration and political science departments, says the new Liberal government has the opportunity to effect positive change, but that any new legislation must be enabling to aboriginals, rather than be yet another set of rules. “People are alerted now, so any legislation that goes forward that is cast along the same lines as the FNGA will be the focus of some serious opposition.” (*Martlet*)

# Privatization in South Africa: Starting Over

by Dru Oja Jay

In 1996, post-Apartheid South Africa adopted its remarkably progressive constitution, which granted all citizens the basic right to housing, water, health care, and other essentials. In an equally remarkable about-face, the African National Congress (ANC), the governing party of former president Nelson Mandela, has adopted a program of privatization.

For the poor in South Africa, things are in many ways worse now than under Apartheid. In 2003, South Africa beat out Brazil for the distinction of having the largest income gap between rich and poor of any country in the world.

For South Africa's poor, privatization has had disastrous results. While advocates of privatization claim that for-profit water systems will increase efficiency, opponents point out that private firms don't bother to repair inadequate infrastructure in poor townships, preferring to focus on areas that yield higher profits. "Whatever one believes," one critic points out, "the poor have no say in the matter."

In 2000, thousands of people who were no longer able to afford newly raised water tariffs turned to other sources for water. Because almost all of South Africa's surface water is unsuitable for consumption without treatment, the result was one of the largest outbreaks of cholera in the nation's history.

Due to rising rates that accompany privatization, electricity has become similarly inaccessible for thousands of families. Due to various calculations, electricity is more expensive in poor townships than it is in rich—and usually white—areas.

Less than a decade after



An anti-privatization activist argues with police guarding the installation of prepaid water meters in Soweto. *Indymedia South Africa*

the end of Apartheid, the tactics of resistance developed over decades of racial oppression have become useful again. The Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee has led a successful campaign called Operation *Khanyisa* (from Zulu, meaning "to turn on the light"). Teams of volunteer electricians rewire homes that have been cut off because families cannot afford the "privatized" rates—which can be five times higher than in the recent past. Hundreds of thousands of homes have been reconnected, as new "electricians" are trained. Similar campaigns have begun to reconnect access to water in poor neighbourhoods.

When private security forces—nicknamed "red ants" for their red overalls—are sent to evict people from homes, large crowds are mobilized in order to physically block the eviction. Evicted families are also moved in by force. Lack of housing and overcrowding are major problems, with thousands of people living in makeshift shacks built in yards.

Other tactics have been traditionally straightforward: a large crowd is mobilized to present a list of demands to politicians, and attempt to shame them into halting privatization plans by referring to the constitution and past promises. When frustration runs high, a more direct approach has been taken: an angry crowd travels to a politician's house and disconnects the power and water.

One such encounter led to one of Johannesburg Mayor Amos Masondo's bodyguards firing on a crowd of angry demonstrators.

In some cases, direct action has had significant results. The Treatment Action Campaign has forced a reticent ANC government to provide treatments to many infected with HIV. Similarly, the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee won the cancellations of debts to the power company and halted power disconnections.

Trevor Ngwane of the Anti-Privatization Forum says that the campaigns are "more or less keeping things where they are" in terms of privatization. "This is having the effect of the social movements beginning to realize their own limitations and starting to look for real and long-lasting solutions."

The problem, according to Ngwane, is a lack of "clear class politics." "The ANC is doing what the old National Party could not do," he explains, "because it can hide behind its struggle credentials and the peoples trust of Nelson Mandela to get away with theft and murder."

Ngwane claims that the problems with the ANC have deep historical roots. The ANC began, he says, in 1912 "as an organisation of 'educated' Africans and enlightened chiefs who wanted equal rights for themselves because they were 'civilised,' unlike the rest of the 'natives.'"

While the ANC adopted the radical rhetoric of the 1960s, with Mandela calling for a "turn to the masses," Ngwane says that the belief that "the interests of the exploiter can be harmonized with that of the exploiter" remained fundamental.

The problem today, Ngwane says, is that there are very few viable political parties that do not support capitalism—even the South African Communist Party stands in support of the ANC. Political parties will make promises to the poor, he says, but the only way these promises are fulfilled is through the ongoing struggles of the people affected by capitalism and the attendant privatization.

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# Paul Martin, Ethics and Democracy

## An interview with Democracy Watch's Duff Conacher

*Duff Conacher is the Coordinator of Democracy Watch, an Ottawa-based group that has advocated for "democratic reform, government accountability and corporate responsibility" for a decade.*

*This interview took place on January 28, 2004. A full transcript of the exchange is available at [dominionpaper.ca](http://dominionpaper.ca).*

**What can we learn from Paul Martin's past record on ethics and democratic reform?**

That Martin has lied about maintaining high ethical standards, that he has broken ethics rules, and that he surrounds himself with corporate lobbyists, all of whom are representing corporations that have specific private interests that are not the public interest. And so he is tied directly to the private interests of several corporations in Canada.

**Is there any reason to believe that he's going to do things differently now that he is Prime Minister?**

He hasn't really promised to do anything different in the area of ethical behaviour except to pass a bill that Chrétien introduced last year that will—if it is passed—create a *more* independent—not fully independent, but more independent—ethics watchdog system to enforce federal ethics rules. All of the other promises that Martin has made are simply to empower Liberal MPs.

The reason he has tried to define the democratic deficit in Canada as only involving the powers of MPs, is because he knows that he can increase the powers of Liberal MPs, but that they will not use those powers. They will all toe the line, wanting to move up the hierarchy of

the Liberal Party, and get into cabinet. They know that the only way you get to do that is if you're loyal to Martin.

**You've said that Martin failed to deliver on similar promises addressing the Democratic deficit that were made back in 1993 by the Chrétien government. Is there anything different about the promises that he's making now?**

No. He's making the same promises that were made in '93. One could say 'well, he wasn't Prime Minister from that time—1993 to 2003—and so it's not his fault that those promises weren't kept.' But he kept his mouth shut, and didn't say anything about those promises being broken in the eight and a half years that he sat around the Cabinet table.

If he was principled at all and believed that these things should be done, he would have spoken out. If these are improvements that Canadians support, it would have been helpful for Martin to say something at that time. He didn't say a word.

So that shows that he really lacks any principled basis to how he acts as a politician. And then he's gone on from that to say—in May of 2002—that he's always practiced full transparency in politics and that Canadians deserve full transparency. At that time, he was hiding hundreds of thousands of dollars in contributions that had been made by corporations to his leadership campaign, and refusing to disclose them.

So he lied. He hasn't always practiced full transparency. He was hiding donations and keep-



**Duff Conacher: Martin has broken rules, lied, and surrounded himself with corporate lobbyists.** *Tooker Gomberg/PaulMartinTime.ca*

ing them secret.

When there has been pressure put on him on ethical issues concerning the shipping company that he owned, and that he's now transferred—we don't know how cleanly and completely—but transferred somewhat to his sons... when those allegations first came up in the spring of 2003, who did Martin turn to? He turned to the ethics counsellor lapdog Howard Wilson, who is completely controlled by the Liberal cabinet, and asked Wilson to clear him of any conflicts to do with shipping. And Howard Wilson did it.

**You have also talked about how Martin voted against 24 out of 27 private members' bills in Parliament. What is the significance of that?**

One of the promises that was made back in '93 in the Red Book was to allow more private members' bills to come to the House of Commons for full debate and voting, and to not have them stopped by a Liberal committee that's controlled by

the Cabinet.

But again, if you look at his record, with 27 private members' bills that affected the finance department, Paul Martin voted against 24 of them. Again, it shows his record that he doesn't like private members' bills. That record also contradicts his pledge to have more free votes and his promise that most things will be free votes in the House of Commons in the future.

But if you as a minister are rejecting all sorts of private members' bills put through, and participated in insuring that those bills were rejected by other Liberal MPs... it just doesn't add up to a principled record where he's shown that he actually *believes* that MPs should be able to freely vote.

**So does this go back to the loyalty aspect you mentioned before—are you saying that if Paul Martin consistently votes against private members' bills, then other MPs who want to move up in the party will**

**see the writing on the wall and also vote against those bills?**

Very much so. Between 1997 and 2000—between those two elections—the Liberals only had a six-seat majority. Not even six Liberals would stand up to the Prime Minister in that three and a half year period and say “we’ve broken all sorts of promises we made in ‘93, fundamental promises such as having an independent ethics watchdog,

**“We may be a country of 30 million, but we have a relatively small elite establishment, and they do protect each other.”**

and we’re going to cross the floor and force you to call an election unless you introduce bills that keep these promises and pass them.”

Martin watched that. At the time, there were 155 Liberal MPs, and not even six of them would stand up to the Prime Minister. Why not? Because they were all hoping to get into Cabinet. So Martin knows that they’ll line up behind him, and behind the other Cabinet ministers as things move forward. They know: if you stick your neck out, the Cabinet will chop it off, and you will not move up into the Cabinet hierarchy or even the committee hierarchy at all... unless you are loyal to what the Cabinet wants to do.

So it’s safe for him to make a bunch of promises about empowering Liberal MPs, because he knows that Liberal MPs will not use those powers.

**You have said that Martin’s ethics and democratic deficit proposals are basically just vague rhetoric. What will be the effect of the action that he has taken?**

If you add it all up, it doesn’t even empower MPs that much. But empowering MPs does not

empower citizens. For example, in free votes, even if a Liberal member did vote how they wanted on a particular bill, is that what we want? Or do we want them to vote how the people who voted them into power want?

So having an MP allowed to vote according to their whim on an issue does not in any way empower the voters that put that MP into office. What Martin should be doing, if he was serious, is requiring MPs to prove that the will of their constituents is in a certain direction—either for a bill or against a bill—and then to vote according to the will of the voters who put the MP in power.

**So how would he do that?**

Well, he would have to give them resources to do in-depth polling on each issue, and ensure that the polling is done in an ethical and sound way, so that the actual will of the voters in every riding could be determined. And then the MPs would be bound to vote the way that the people who put them in office want them to vote. He won’t go that far. He doesn’t want *that much* democracy in the House of Commons. He wants the Cabinet to be able to continue to control things and to essentially force the MPs to vote the way that Cabinet wants them to vote.

So you look at that, and then also in terms of lobbyists—he’s been surrounded by corporate lobbyists through his whole campaign; they’ve been advising him, they’ve been donating millions of dollars to his campaign—you add it all up, and you see that Martin is corporate-driven, not citizen-driven.

He believes it’s completely ethical to take hundreds of thousands of dollars from corporations that lobby the federal government, and to have all of his advisors representing corporate interests—they were working for him on his leadership campaign while also working for these corporations.

**You mentioned that Martin’s campaign team is made up of a lot of corporate lobbyists and that a lot of corporate types are in his inner circle. What effect does that have on his policies; are there any other groups that have similar kinds of access? Is there any way we can evaluate that, or is it largely behind closed doors?**

It is largely behind closed doors. Martin is very strategically smart—somewhat; he’s made some huge errors by having so much corporate money flow into his campaign. The Liberals, for their leadership campaign, had a spending limit of \$4.5 million, and Martin raised over \$12 million—I mean, just a *grotesque* amount, most of it from large corporations.

But he’s strategically smart in that he will *meet* with everyone who is concerned about an

**“He’s been surrounded by corporate lobbyists through his whole campaign; they’ve been advising him, they’ve been donating millions of dollars to his campaign... Martin is corporate-driven, not citizen-driven.”**

issue, and I’m sure he’s going to tell other ministers to do this as well. Then he can always say “well, I *have* met with everyone and listened to everyone’s point of view before I made my decision.” It becomes a bit more difficult to criticize his decision, because he has met with everybody.

In the past, ministers we’ve dealt with only met with industry—when making a decision on banking law, for example. It was pretty easy to criticize their decisions, because their decisions didn’t do anything for consumers, and their record of who they had met with was all

industry people.

What happens when you have these corporate lobbyists on the inside, as they have been on Martin’s campaign, and with corporate money—all of these lobbyists are legally required by their contracts to advance and advocate the interests of their clients, which are large corporations. Martin, as a politician, is legally required to uphold the public interest.

When you tie the two together, the public interest will always suffer and be ignored, because the private interests have the inside line. If you gain access to a politician, you automatically gain influence over that politician. Especially when you’re doing favours for that politician, which all of these corporate lobbyists have been doing. They’ve been volunteering on his campaign, helping him raise money.

**It recently came out—or at least it recently gained mainstream attention—that Canada Steamship Lines was able to exploit a loophole left open by the government to pay less than two per cent in corporate income taxes. What kind of ethical system needs to be in place before politicians will not be able to implement this kind of blatant exceptionalism in their own interests and in the interests of their friends?**

In the US, politicians and members of the administration appointed by the President—they have to divest the interests that they have in any companies. In the US, Paul Martin would not have been able to be Finance Minister while still owning Canada Steamship Lines. That would not be allowed.

It is allowed in Canada. And not only that, but he had a venetian blind management agreement (as Joe Clark put it), where he was getting updates about the company while he was

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# Citigroup Comes Clean

## World's Largest Bank Adopts Landmark Environmental Policy

by Ted Rutland

In a surprise announcement on January 22nd, Citigroup signaled its intention to adopt a comprehensive environmental policy that even the company's staunchest critics are calling "the most significant environmental commitment to date in the financial services sector."

Citigroup, the world's largest financial services company, has been criticized in recent years for providing financial backing to a long list of ecologically and socially destructive projects around the world. The company's involvement with the Three Gorges Dam in China and the monolithic Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline in Africa, in particular, have drawn the ire of several significant Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

The new environmental policy, announced at a press conference at the headquarters of Rainforest Action Network (RAN), commits Citigroup to deny funding for any and all logging operations in tropical rainforests—a first in the financial services sector. Citigroup must also apply stringent prohibitions to guard against investment in illegal logging operations, and place strict restrictions on involvement with other extractive industries operating in sensitive ecosystems around the world. The policy covers all future lending and financing, but will not be applied retroactively to current Citigroup investments.

To combat climate change, the policy calls for Citigroup to curtail its emissions of greenhouse gases and strive to reduce the emissions of its lending portfolio by helping clients finance energy efficient technologies and renewable energy projects. In its annual Corporate Citizenship report, the company will report the green-

house gas emissions from the power sector projects in its lending portfolio using methodologies that are peer reviewed with experts and NGOs. This is the first time that a private bank has offered such data.

"We aspire to operate according to the highest standards in every arena in which we do business, and the environment is no exception," said Charles Prince, Chief Executive Officer of Citigroup. "We believe we can make a difference by holding ourselves accountable for our own impact on the environment, by embedding our commitment to environmental responsibility in our lending practices, by embracing sustainable business opportunities, and by engaging in the public domain on these issues to help foster solutions to often very thorny questions."

The new policy is a response to an impressive three-year campaign by Rainforest Action Network and a broad coalition of environmentalists, human rights activists, and socially responsible investment groups. The campaign included television advertisements with Susan Sarandon and Daryl Hannah calling on customers to cut up their Citi credit cards, and print ads that ask, "It's 10:00 p.m. Do you know where your money is?" below photos of the ecological and social destruction caused by Citi-backed projects.

The coalition focused, from start to finish, on attaching a financial cost to the company's harmful activities by inspiring consumer boycotts and urging shareholders to sell off their Citigroup shares. "We saw vulnerability in Citigroup's desire to be the best-known consumer bank in the world," says RAN's Erick Brownstein. Symbolic of RAN's focus on the financial



Rainforest Action Network activists hang a banner outside of Citibank Headquarters in New York City.

*Rainforest Action Network*

implications of malfeasance, the campaign was launched at Citigroup's annual shareholders meeting in the spring of 2001.

Following the money, from damaging projects to their source, has become the mantra of the global justice movement in recent years. Rather than shaming particular governments or singling-out every objectionable corporation, many NGOs and activists now concentrate on cutting off the money supply to projects deemed harmful—no matter who carries them out—by urging financial institutions to adopt ecologically and socially sensitive policies around lending and other types of project financing.

Government-affiliated financial institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) were the early targets of this strategy because of their role in imposing neo-liberal, or "free market", economic policies upon poor countries and financing an endless string of misguided

resource-extraction, energy, and transportation mega-projects. But private financial institutions have since overtaken, by far, the World Bank and IMF as the leading financiers of Third World development.

In the 1980s, roughly 80% of the money flowing to Third World countries came from governments and government-affiliated institutions. Today, it is corporations, not governments, which account for 80% of money flows to the Third World, and financial services companies regularly fund projects that even the World Bank deplors. As Michelle Chan-Fishel of Friends of the Earth puts it: "It's increasingly clear that the driver of development is no longer the World Bank."

Though Citigroup now has a strong environmental policy, few other financial institutions have taken such a step. Financing for destructive projects, in other words, is unlikely to dry up anytime soon. Fortunately, Rainforest Action Network seems intent on changing the entire financial services industry. After a successful end to its Citigroup campaign, RAN is now challenging "The Liquidators"—top US financial services companies lacking environmental standards—to "meet or beat" the terms of Citi's environmental policy.

Citigroup's policy is significant, not because of the small changes it will affect today, but because of the larger changes it could bring about later on. Its importance lies in the message it sends to the financial services industry. "Citigroup's new environmental initiatives signal the beginning of an ecological u-turn in the global marketplace," says Michael Brune, executive director of Rainforest Action Network. "This is a wake up call to Wall Street as well as Washington." ...

## Brief Notes on Death and Writing

I recently had the misfortune to watch a man die on the street.

One result of this experience is that I started thinking about Ernest Hemingway. In the early pages of *Death in the Afternoon*, his famous journalistic account of the bullfights in Spain, Hemingway explains why he wrote it: "I was trying to learn to write, commencing with the simplest things, and one of the simplest things of all, and the most fundamental, is violent death." I am also a young man, trying to learn to write, and it seems arrogant of me to refute the advice of one of the greatest writers of the 20th Century.

And yet refute it I must; I am culturally too far from Hemingway. I cannot agree with a man who calls death "one of the subjects a man may write of," nor do I find the death I witnessed - though violent - to be simple or fundamental. I saw it standing at the bus station in Kaunas, Lithuania, while traveling through the Baltics with friends and trying to work on my writing. Hemingway would request a simple and detached factual précis of what I saw, reminding me to be sure not to close my physical or mental eyes at the moment of death. I find, however, that I have a great deal of trouble believing in facts; my two friends and I, all standing in the same spot watching the same man die, each came away

with different ideas about what had happened. Furthermore, I worry that writing about this man would be exploitation, usury, a reduction of him and his country to a sensational anecdote designed to get me a publishing credit.

The obvious alternative would be not to write about it at all, to stay silent. I cannot choose this; I find silence to be equally if not more despicable than exploitation and misrepresentation. Another choice would be to fictionalize the event: I could internalize my experience, alter it slightly, and produce a new story told in a stylized version of my own voice, not claiming truth or accuracy.

What stops me from this course is a biography of Sylvia Plath I recently read by Anne Stevenson.

Sylvia Plath wrote frequently about death, but the story I am particularly interested in is called *The Fifty-ninth Bear*. The story is about a young couple counting bears on a camping trip, and the fifty-ninth bear, which attacks their car and kills the husband when he tries to defend their belongings. What makes the story more interesting is that Plath had herself been on such a trip with her husband, had counted bears, and their car had been

attacked. Only the death was fictional.

This story produced quite a reaction: her husband's "family and friends were shocked when it appeared," and the biographer seems to share their indictment when she says that Plath's "ambition to produce a publishable story or poem seemed to cancel any normal regard for people's sensibilities."

While not wishing to explicitly defend Sylvia Plath, I find myself guilty of the same crime. Some years ago my brother was in a car accident from which he was extremely lucky to have walked away unharmed. Partly as a way of coping, and partly from "ambition to produce a publishable story," I wrote a fiction piece about an elder sibling coping with the death of a younger brother killed in a car crash. Plath and I both used thinly veiled fiction to cope with a very real fear - the death of a loved one.

That writing fiction can help to process feelings and fears about the reality of death - even imagined death - does not seem a revolutionary concept. But reactions to Plath's story belie the fact that the reading public often views fiction to be secretly true, fact in code. The biography of an author trumps their words and carefully constructed fictions.

Interestingly enough, both writers are suicides - Hemingway shot himself and Plath asphyxiated in a gas oven. Suicide, I think, always qualifies as violent death. Because of my age, I have experienced the lives and the death of these writers only through the words of other authors, who are in turn trying to tell the "real" story, deepening the *mise-en-abime*. What then, is the true relationship between writing and death?

One simple answer may be this: since before Aristotle all stories required endings. As human beings - writers and readers both - we have trouble seeing any story about a person as 'over' until that person is dead. Endings without death, in fiction or in our own lives, are difficult.

The man I saw presents me with an ending but no beginning or middle, no context, no facts. I will leave the descriptions of gore to Hemingway, and fictional speculations (this time) to Plath. All I can comfortably write is this:

*Mourn, if you will, an anonymous man I saw die on the street, an experience which moved and disturbed me. I brought flowers to the site the next day, as did my friends. As far as I know we were the only ones who did, and they were gone the next morning.*

**Matthew Trafford**



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“Haiti” from page 1 »

dents by the military, and a crushing foreign debt, Haiti is today the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.

Re-elected for a second five-year term in 2001, President Aristide has struggled to balance violent opposition groups, poverty, and demands from the International Monetary Fund to cut spending. Faced with a 70 per cent unemployment rate and a dependence on foreign aid, Haiti suffered from a US-imposed embargo on foreign aid money in 2000.

A 1996 report by the US National Labour Committee revealed that Haitian workers were producing “Mickey Mouse” and “Pocahontas” pajamas for less than 12 cents an hour (USD). Despite “active pressure” from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), to not increase wages, Aristide’s government has since doubled the minimum wage to about 4 US dollars per day.



“Interview with Duff Conacher,” continued from page 5 »

Finance Minister. And that’s because we have a lapdog ethics counselor who would bend over backwards to insure that no Liberal is ever found guilty of breaking the ethics rule. So [Howard Wilson] approved all this, and didn’t require Martin in any way to step aside from any decision-making process that affected his company. In the US, you have to cut your ties completely with your company.

We believe the [Federal] rules [in Canada] say that quite clearly, and we’re challenging the Ethics Counselor in court, because he just ignores the rules when he makes decisions.

There is a rule in the Lobbyists Code, which applies to all organizations and people registered as lobbyists, that says that a lobbyist can’t put a politician in a conflict of interest. The federal Ethics Counselor has interpreted that rule, saying that in order to break that rule, they would have to interfere with the decision of a politician, and *overpower the free will of the politician* and force them to do something that they wouldn’t do if they had a free will.

In other words [to place a politician in a conflict of interest], the lobbyist has to *enslave* the politician. That standard

has never been articulated anywhere in the world, even in the most corrupt countries in the world. No one who is an ethics watchdog has ever said “oh, the only way a lobbyist could put a politician in a conflict of interest is to enslave them.” But that’s the standard that currently exists at the federal level, and that’s the standard that we are challenging in court.

So things are so lax at the federal level that politicians can own companies and vote on things that affect those companies. That’s how bad it is.

**What about the case of Paul Martin’s sons, who now own CSL—is it not a conflict of interest to vote on things or make decisions on things that affect the interests of immediate family members or “close personal friends” (as Martin has characterized several corporate CEOs)?**

We believe it is.

**And what kind of ethics rules would have to be in place in order for that to be the case?**

That selling to your sons is not

enough, and that you have to divest fully—outside the family. Now, when you say ‘friends,’ you can’t prevent someone from having friends. But that’s where we all have to be...

**But can’t you prevent them from voting on issues that affect their close personal friends?**

Yes, you could have that as a rule. Usually those friends will be registered to lobby the federal government, and that’s where you would be able to get at that situation. But that’s where we all need to be much more vigilant and watching much more closely, and the media as well has to be investigating much more, and ensuring that when a decision is made, all of the factors that might have gone into the decision are exposed. This way, we can track whether there are any ethical violations; or if there aren’t, at least we’ll know the why of the decision, and all the details of it.

It’s difficult, because there are so many obscure decisions that the federal government makes. But everyone should remember that the elite establishment in Canada is a relatively small group of people. We may be a country of 30 million, but we have a relatively small elite establishment, and they do protect each other. And they have politicians that are friends.

What the politicians do is often affected by these friendships and relationships that go back decades. These people can get access to politicians and say “you know, if you just change this regulation—these few words—it would save us \$10 million; can you do it?” And the politicians do it. Because it’s very obscure and nobody is watching closely enough to discover these little tiny changes that are made all the time by government.

That’s a very dangerous situation when you have a small elite establishment like we have in Canada.

