

Dru Oja Jay on Canadian media ownership ¶ Erin Steuter on the Irving media monopoly in New Brunswick ¶ Canada's frontier censorship ¶ Hillary Lindsay on *Fatal Harvest* ¶ Heather Meek returns!

# 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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Argentinian lawmakers vote to turn over the Buenos Aires Brukman factory to its workers.

## Brukman Factory turned over to workers

After a two year battle with police, owners, and the government, workers at the Brukman factory in Buenos Aires celebrated a government decision to turn over the factory to the workers. The Argentinian legislature voted to recognize the workers' control of the factory following the bankruptcy of the Jakob Brukman, the factory's owner.

Following Argentina's economic collapse of 2001, Brukman shut down production. The workers subsequently occupied the factory and restarted production, this time operating as owners of a cooperative. Along with hundreds of similar factory occupations across Argentina, the new collective was able to find enough business to keep the mostly-female workforce employed.

Since then, the Brukman factory was subject to two police blockades and street battles. After a massive solidarity campaign from other factory occupations, workers, and unions,

the turnover is seen as a major symbolic victory for widespread radical workers' movements in Argentina. (*Indymedia*)

## If the US does it, so can we: Putin

Russian President Vladimir Putin reaffirmed his position that it is entitled to launch preventive strikes to maintain national security, after the precedent set by the United States in Iraq. "If the principle of preventive use of force continues to develop in international practice, then Russia reserves the right to act in an analogous manner to defend its national interests."

Preventive strikes differ from *preemptive* in that they refer to a perceived rather than imminent threat. Preemptive strikes are conducted against an enemy that is about to attack. The "principle of preventive use of force," as adopted by the US government in its invasion of Iraq, involve attacking an enemy that may attack in the future.

Putin did not follow the US precedent of developing

"battlefield nukes", maintaining that Russian nuclear weapons would only be used as "a means of political deterrence." "All nuclear powers are improving their nuclear potential and Russia will do the same," he said. (Agence France-Presse)

## US reinstating the draft?

A recent push by the Pentagon to fill vacant draft board seats across the United States has provoked speculation that the draft will be reinstated for the first time since the Vietnam war. The Pentagon insists that there are no plans to draft young men into military service, but many experts have speculated that the US is already running low on troops for its continued occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq.

"We've failed to convince our allies to send troops, we've extended deployments so morale is sinking, and the president is saying we can't cut and run. So what's left?" US Democratic representative Charles Rangel was quoted as saying.

Observers say that it is highly unlikely that a draft will be called before the election, but many others point to the lack of another viable source of soldiers to maintain the costly military occupations. (*Salon*)

## Iraqi Money Missing

British humanitarian group Christian Aid released a report charging that the US-controlled Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) had only accounted for \$1 billion out of \$5 billion of Iraqi oil revenues and funds seized from Saddam Hussein's government. The report quoted one "senior diplomat" as saying: "We have absolutely no idea how the money [from Iraqi oil revenues] has been spent. We know that more than US\$1 billion has already been transferred from the UN escrow Oil-for-Food account and we don't know how this money has been spent, and this is Iraqi money." The report says that \$5 billion have been reported as spent, but "at least \$4 billion are unaccounted for."

L. Paul Bremer III, head of the CPA, brushed off the accusations, and insisted that "we are going to be fully transparent." Christian Aid and other NGOs have called on governments to withhold aid until the Iraqi money has been accounted for.

A recent *Newsweek* report raised numerous issues of accountability concerning the Iraq reconstruction effort itself. A USAID official was quoted as saying, "Saddam had better accountability [in his economic affairs] than the CPA does." (Christian Aid, *Oneworld*) •••

## International News

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International News compiled by Dru Oja Jay, [dru@dominionpaper.ca](mailto:dru@dominionpaper.ca)

## Video Solidarité: Resist, Reuse, Recycle

by Daron Letts

Two Canadian independent filmmakers embarked on separate cross country tours this fall. Sheryle Carlson is an independent filmmaker from Edmonton and Jonathan Culp is cofounder of Satan Macnuggit Popular Arts in Toronto and a cofounder of the Toronto Video Activist Collective. Their road shows overlapped in Fredericton.

### *The War for Oil and Drug Money*

Reaching audiences in eight cities across five provinces, Carlson's tour featured screenings of her first major production, *The War For Oil and Drug Money*—a sixty minute documentary shot on Digital Hi 8 and peppered with bursts of recycled-video collage. The documentary showcases lectures by Michael Rupert (former LA cop turned investigative journalist) and Michel Chossudovsky (editor of *Global Outlook* and economics professor at the University of Ottawa).

Diverse audiences in community centres, campus theatres and in a Saint John park responded positively to the medium and the message.

At the end of the month-long tour, *The Dominion* spoke with Carlson by cell phone, somewhere on the Trans Canada Highway between Thunder Bay and Edmonton.

A self-labeled media activist, Carlson developed her "extroverted" blend of activism and independent video journalism in earnest following September 11, 2001.

In recent years, she covered scrums at the Alberta legislature, documented local anti-war protests and prepared video shorts on global warming for posting on independent news websites—her response to the "huge need for viable information by real journalists and



**Bush gets the boot in *Plasticman and the Justice League*, by Jonathan Culp.** *Jonathan Culp*

real news providers."

Footage used in the *War for Oil and Drug Money* was recorded during a press conference at the G6B People's Summit in Calgary (the counter conference to the 2002 G8 Summit).

"We had all this footage that we really didn't know what to do with—so we focused on one particular press conference and worked with it," she said, referring to her collaborators, Barb Allard and Rick Gustavsen.

In addition to raising awareness about deeper analyses of September 11 and its preamble and aftermath, Carlson used the self-funded tour to develop a network of independent media contacts across the country.

Her next documentary will research alternative economic models in Canada. Currently, she is working on a short on urban sprawl and a TV series on envirofitting the home. She plans to fine tune her first documentary before distributing public copies in November.

### *Recycled Cinema*

The 3rd Satan Macnuggit Video Road Show, titled *Recycled Cinema*, is approaching the end of a 40-city Canadian tour

that reached from the Yukon to Newfoundland (4 screenings remain on the schedule).

Assisted by a dissemination grant from the Canada Council, *Recycled Cinema* features shorts by 18 filmmakers, including Allyson Mitchell and Lex Vaughn, Will Munro, Marc Adornato and Meesoo Lee. Culp and his partner at Satan Macnuggit Popular Arts, Siue Moffat, also contributed works to the program.

The tour is a means to circumvent the limits of conventional distribution, such as film festival screenings and the occasional windows into the corporate media system. Although the current tour received grant funding, Culp and his colleagues funded the first two tours through admission fees.

*The Dominion* reached Culp by phone in St. John's.

He said that challenging media conventions requires an interpretation and understanding of the social context that film has, including the rituals of movie going.

"If we're interested in making different kinds of movies, not just on different subjects but in different forms, then we also have to be con-

scious and creative about where and how we get that stuff seen," he said. "Rather than working in our little world until we get some sort of recognition from the broader film industry and somehow get our foot in the door and work within the rules, it would be much nicer if we could create a space for people to do this sort of work autonomously with more support and on a more permanent basis. It's just applying the usual activist values to this particular realm of work."

Audience response indicates to Culp that there is a solid interest in do-it-yourself video production across the country.

"There is a real desire for this sort of programming, especially in smaller communities with smaller or non-existent arts scenes locally," he said. "The smaller towns have been the places where people have really picked up on it."

The content is accessible to a broad audience with most shorts being narrative based and with no experimental abstract content. Many of the selections are recorded on Super 8 film with old and found equipment. A majority address activist themes. The average budget for the 18 shorts was \$100.

Like Carlson, Culp is gathering contacts throughout the country, in hopes that increased communication among communities of independent film makers will help to develop a decentralized infrastructure through which to produce, distribute and expand independent film.

Following the tour, which wraps on November 22, Culp will work on an upcoming feature. That project will likely form the basis for Satan Macnuggit's fourth Video Road Show, he said. •••

# Journalists Question Media Ownership in Canada

by Dru Oja Jay

“Media concentration is worse in Canada than in other industrialized countries; in New Brunswick, way worse.” Spoken by American media economics expert Robert Picard, this statement set the tone for a day-long discussion on media ownership. Organized by the Acadian Association of Journalists and held in Moncton, New Brunswick, “Media concentration in the 21st century: an international, national and provincial phenomenon” was the occasion for a diverse dialogue between journalists, politicians, editors, producers and academics.

While citizen groups in the US are putting unprecedented pressure on Congress to reinstate cross-ownership regulations that the Federal Communications Commission recently attempted to roll back, those concerned about concentration of ownership are realizing that in Canada, the final step of deregulation is a *fait accompli*. Says Picard, “Canada backed itself into a corner—[the government] didn’t act to stop concentration when it could.” The government is now left with two choices. It can split up the existing media monopolies, or it can open up the market to foreign competition. The first choice is “messy” and will involve a major political battle, while allowing foreign ownership could mean domination by American media companies.

“The soap box in the town square is easily drowned out by high powered, corporate-owned amplification,” said Enn Raudsepp, head of Concordia University’s journalism program. According to Raudsepp, 84% of Canadian media is owned by the five largest media companies, resulting in “increasingly homogenous perspectives.” CanWest Global, the largest Canadian media company, controls over 30 per cent



Canadian Journalists hope to avoid the fate of Italy, where Prime Minister Berlusconi controls the largest newspapers and broadcasters.

of the Canadian media market, including 14 metropolitan daily newspapers and hundreds of community papers.

Speakers at the conference pointed to a number of problems with concentrated media ownership, almost all of which referred to a threat to democracy. Jens Cavallin, a philosopher from Sweden, compared media empires to feudal states, with “kings and princes.” Raudsepp said that information is the “oxygen of democracy.” Jean Pelletier of Radio Canada hinted at the danger that concentration of power in the media could hold during an election.

Former CanWest Global head Asper was well known for his staunch support of Jean Chrétien, his intolerance of criticism of Israel, and for the institution of “national editorials,” which would appear in many of the hundreds of papers he controlled. Many recalled Silvio Berlusconi, Italy’s egomaniacal Prime Minister who controls a vast empire of newspapers, TV, radio and construction companies, and is the richest person in Italy. Berlusconi’s company owns the three largest TV stations, the country’s leading daily, and dozens of other outlets.

Beyond the potential for abuse of vast political power, many expressed serious concern about the *quality* of information. Raudsepp cited a study

that found that 75% of news items in Canadian papers were not initiated by reporters, but came from a “canned event,” such as a press conference or PR campaign. Erin Steuter, a Sociology professor at Mount Allison University, said that journalists are “under siege,” having faced massive layoffs since corporations like CanWest Global, Thompson, and Hollinger began acquiring newspapers and other media outlets. “Before, journalists would only post several stories a week, and now they’re being asked to post several stories per day, which means that they stories are coming right off the newswires, with possibly an interview or an attempt to clarify or confirm something, but with none of the investigative journalism you would have seen before.”

Solutions were proposed, including the creation of a government fund to subsidize independent newspapers, stronger limitations on ownership, and various other regulation schemes. Almost everyone agreed, however, that these solutions are either incomplete or unrealistic. Unrealistic, because the public is both unaware of media concentration, and not actively interested in the issue.

The fact that most of the media chains in Canada are owned by people politically in line with the ruling Liberal party

makes sources of political will for addressing media concentration scarce at best. The Acadian Association of Journalists plans to lobby the government to stop media concentration, but sees its work—especially as the business-friendly Paul Martin takes power—as a damage control campaign. President Phillippe Ricard said that the association will argue for an end to CBC budget cuts and regulation of further concentration of the media in Canada.

Kim Keirans, who is director of the King’s College journalism school, said that the government could not be counted on to stop concentration. “It’s not going to stop,” she said, arguing that the only relief from media concentration will come from the efforts of communities and independent journalists. •••

*The Dominion* is a not for profit free newspaper covering topics of interest to Canadians. We aim to provide a counterpoint to the mainstream papers, direct attention to independent journalism, and establish a venue where alternative forms of journalism can be practiced.

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# Freedom of the Press is for Those Who Own One

## The Irving Media Monopoly in New Brunswick

*Living in New Brunswick where all of the English language daily papers are owned by one company means that there is very little variety in the type of news that is available to New Brunswick readers. We face classic problems of monopoly media ownership in which homogeneity and a narrow range of opinion are common features of the news media.* » by **Erin Steuter**

For example: last month all three New Brunswick daily papers ran editorials within several days of each other critiquing the government's appointment of unsuccessful provincial conservative candidates to government posts. While this editorial position may well be justified, and reflect the views of a majority of New Brunswickers, the audience nevertheless lost out on the ability to hear any another perspective on this issue.

Living in New Brunswick where all of the English language daily papers are owned by a single large capitalist enterprise means that the voice of the corporate world speaks loudly and the coverage of labour focuses on confrontational and controversial events such as strikes in which labour is scapegoated. For example: this month all three papers ran editorials within several days of each other critical of the community college and prison custodians who were walking the picket line as part of a Canadian Union of Public Employees' strike. Terms such as *irrational*, *unreasonable*, *ludicrous* and *greedy* were peppered throughout the editorials revealing a pattern of Irving coverage of labour issues that typically portrays labour as the active and disruptive party.

Yet living in New Brunswick where all of the English

language daily papers are owned by the most powerful economic entity in the province means something else entirely. The Irving empire—which includes over 300 companies, has an estimated net worth of approximately 4 billion dollars, and which employs 8% of the New Brunswick labour force in operations that span forestry, transportation, and construction—is not exposed to investigative journalistic inquiry in the province's daily papers. Instead critical observers of the media can easily identify the self-serving nature of the Irvings' media coverage on any issue that concerns themselves. For example: In October all three Irving papers ran similar news headlines that defended their bosses from accusations of undue influence when it was revealed that they had given government ministers free plane trips and fishing junkets.

When the national media reported on the case of the current federal Industry minister Allan Rock, who made highly favourable policy decisions affecting the Irving empire after he went on a fishing trip hosted by the Irvings, the national newspapers' headlines read: "Rock faces new conflict-of-interest questions"—*Globe and Mail* October 14,

2003, "Rock disregarded ethics ruling to advance Irvings' cause"—*National Post* October 20, 2003, "New questions arise over Rock, Irvings"—*Toronto Star* October 14, 2003. Yet a review of headlines from the New Brunswick papers reads: "Rock defends Irving trip"—*Fredericton Daily Gleaner* October 11, 2003 pA3, "Audit of Irving deal shows no evidence of conflict"—*Saint John Telegraph-Journal* October 18, 2003, pA1/A11, "No Conflict in Fishing Trip"—*Moncton Times and Transcript* October 11, 2003, pC3. Similarly, when it became apparent that local MP Claudette Bradshaw had also benefited from Irving trips the Irving papers covered the story with the headline: "Bradshaw

free flight scandal overblown"—*Moncton Times and Transcript* October 23, 2003.

The adage that you don't bite the hand that feeds you, means that the readers of the New Brunswick papers are being given a very different spin on news than readers in the rest of the country. In this case, the story attracted enough national media attention that local people had access to alternative perspectives by examining the national papers. However due to the for-profit orientation of the media industry which emphasizes wire-service filler over investigative local news coverage, it is increasingly common for New Brunswick news issues to be neglected by the national media. When



A corporate empire spanning oil speculation, refining and shipping, gas stations, food products, massive land holdings, forestry, pulp and paper, and employing one in eight New Brunswickers, the Irving group owns the province's three English-language daily newspapers, as well as at least seven of twelve community weeklies. *Dru Oja Jay*

our own provincial papers are owned by the local mega corporation, it leaves us with limited options to gain another perspective.

Another example from October was coverage of a strike at the Irving-owned sawmill in Chipman, New Brunswick. The CBC news coverage headline was "Irving loggers protest wage cut", the story revealed the fact that the management had proposed a thirty percent wage cut and was expecting higher productivity from the

*"The adage that you don't bite the hand that feeds you, means that the readers of the New Brunswick papers are being given a very different spin on news than readers in the rest of the country."*

workers, and the story included quotes from the workers saying that they couldn't see how they could survive on less money or produce more. Said one saw mill worker, "We're grabbing trees as quick as we can. We can't grab them any quicker" (NB CBC June 3, 2002). The CBC journalist also provided the viewer with the accurate background information that "Irving companies are well known for their tough battles with striking unions."

However, readers of the Irving papers in Saint John and Fredericton didn't get any coverage of the strike at all and those in Fredericton read the headline "Mill Workers Walk Out", learned that the workers earn up to \$16.35 an hour, and were told that the issue of contention was "stalled contract negotiations." The coverage of the issue in the Irving papers failed to identify any of the context for the labour dispute and

didn't reveal the proposed 30% wage cut at all.

The decline in investigative reporting of local and regional issues by the country's national papers has also resulted in a situation where the Irvings can at times act as agenda setters for the rest of the media. In these cases the Irvings' version of certain events are reproduced uncritically in the national media without reference to the vested interests that the Irvings have on a particular issue.

For example, when the twenty-seven month strike at Irving Oil concluded in 1996 with a humiliating defeat for the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers union, the company required a process of ideological re-education which was essentially a means for the company to control the hearts and minds of its now broken labour force. Refinery workers spent two weeks at a local hotel with facilitators from an American consulting firm where they were required to go through a reorientation agenda which included "venting emotions", "problem people" and a participation in a "public declaration". Successful completion of the first week of this program was a prerequisite to being "invited" to week two, which involved "team building" exercises for union members and their former colleagues who crossed the picket lines as well as replacement workers who had been kept on. Week two in turn was followed by a practical test at the refinery lasting up to four weeks. Workers were assessed every day and did not get full pay until they passed the entire program.

Returning workers at the refinery said that in reality, the reorientation program was a combination "bitterness test" and "attitude alteration" exercise. Workers were told that they were misled by their local union and to doubt the credibility of the executives of their national union. Labour observers noted at the time that the Irvings were blacklisting the striking workers and the back to

work protocol was identified as a 'brainwashing' exercise.

Not surprisingly, the words 'brainwashing' and 'blacklisting' of strikers never appeared in the Irving papers' coverage of the strike. In contrast, the New Brunswick papers published the names of the 37 striking workers who were fired by the company under the headline "Not welcome at the Refinery". The re-orientation was described as a "back-to-work program" that was a "tough transition" for the men who "failed" and were

*"When the national news media fall into line with the Irvings' account of their own controversies, no one is provided with the range of opinion and perspective that is the heart of informative and independent journalism in a democratic society."*

"told to go home".

But it is interesting to note that the Irvings' coverage of the issue was paralleled in the only national newspaper at the time, the Globe and Mail. The Globe and Mail allowed the Irvings to set the agenda on the tone and coverage of the strike and its unorthodox back to work protocol and presented virtually identical coverage to the national audience. It is also interesting to note that the Globe and Mail even avoided covering traditionally newsworthy elements to the story when they followed the Irvings' lead and avoided covering New Brunswick New Democratic Party leader Elizabeth Weir's attention-getting press conference in which she suggested that the N.B. government should call in the Irving Companies' loans if they did not agree to

settle the strike. Thus when the national news media fall into line with the Irvings' account of their own controversies, no one is provided with the range of opinion and perspective that is the heart of informative and independent journalism in a democratic society.

Research on the Irvings' media coverage of their own companies also reveals that the papers routinely publish their own press releases as news stories. For example this month's Saint John *Telegraph Journal* contains an article entitled "Refinery Hires 1,000 for Maintenance Project" which is almost identical to the Irving Oil press release on that topic entitled "1,000 Tradespeople 'Turnaround' Saint John Refinery".

The owners of the Irving papers have also been known to actively interfere in the papers' editorial policy. The history of the Irvings' ownership of the media is peppered with stories of journalists forbidden to name the Irvings as the ones responsible for oil spills, of Irving executives forbidden to speak to the press, and a case where the editor of the Saint John paper was denied permission to report that an Irving-owned tugboat had run aground for fear it would result in an insurance hike for the company. When Neil Reynolds left the *Telegraph-Journal* in 1995 after a stormy reign as editor he told reporters that the paper's owner, J.K. Irving, called him every day, telling him what he liked and did not like in the paper.

An incident during the 1997 federal election revealed some insight into the consequences of unsanctioned editorial action at an Irving-owned paper. In the weeks before the June 1997 federal election, the federal Liberal Party in New Brunswick was in electoral trouble. The province, like the region, was turning against the Chrétien Liberals. A few days before the vote the *Telegraph-*

# Harvest Goon

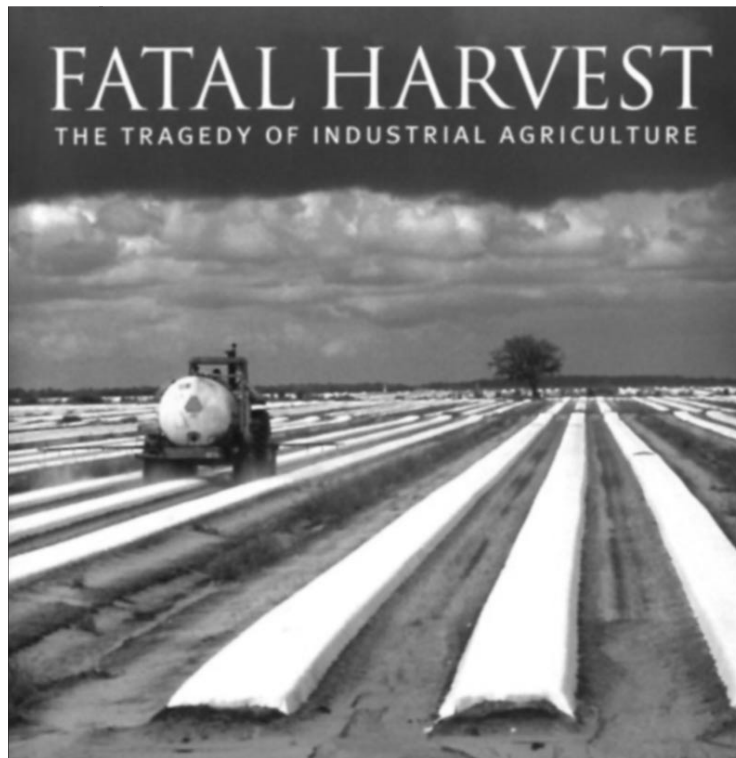
## *Fatal Harvest: The Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture: Review*

by Hillary Lindsay

Our connection to the environment is perhaps most apparent when we sit down at the dinner table to eat a meal. That “we eat our daily bread without being conscious of the massive loss of topsoil, diversity and farm communities involved in its production” testifies to North America’s disconnection from the land that sustains us. It is this disconnection that is allowing corporations to hide the very real and terrible impacts of the industrialization of our food supply, and it is this disconnection that *Fatal Harvest: The Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture* addresses.

Far from being the wholesome, harmless industry that the media makes it out to be, the authors of *Fatal Harvest* demonstrate that modern agriculture is perhaps the biggest threat to water, soil, biodiversity, cultures and communities around the globe. With over 250 striking photos and 40 essays from leading thinkers, farmers and activists such as Wendell Berry, Helena Norberg-Hodge, Vandana Shiva and Wes Jackson, *Fatal Harvest* calls on citizens to become “paradigm warriors” in the fight against the industrial worldview and the destruction that is resulting.

The book is divided up into seven sections. The first, entitled “Farming As If Nature Mattered” questions the principles of industrial agriculture and proposes an alternative agrarian paradigm. The industrial worldview, *Fatal Harvest* argues, holds profit as its first priority, viewing nature as a set of limits on productivity and efficiency which can be overcome by science. The agrarian alternative considers humans’



“A must-read for anyone who eats in the 21st century.”

connection to the land (which exists, whether or not we are conscious of it) and takes community, sustainable land use and biological diversity as its priorities. These opposing modes of thought are visually contrasted in Part Three. Here, striking side-by-side photo layouts compare agrarian and industrial landscapes for everything from apples, to cotton, to wheat. With these photos readers are guided “...past the deceptive facade of modern farms, which make them appear as healthy, thriving, lush and productive into a visual understanding of the destructive and deadly ‘monocultured’ reality of current food production.”

According to the creators of the book, this ‘deceptive facade’ has been maintained with millions of corporate advertising dollars dedicated to the message that farming today

is not only better than ever, but an absolute necessity in today’s world. The second section of the book is therefore devoted to debunking the myths which promote and defend industrial agriculture. Among the 10 myths “debunked” in this section are that industrial agriculture will feed the world, and the idea that industrial agriculture is cheap. According to the editor of *Fatal Harvest* “...hunger is not created by lack of food but by poverty and landlessness, which deny people access to food.” and “if you added the real cost of industrial food—its health, environmental, and social costs—to the current supermarket priced, not even our wealthiest citizens could afford it.” When all costs are calculated, *Fatal Harvest* argues, small-scale intensive farms are more efficient than industrial ones. The next three

sections fill out this argument with essays on the environmental and social costs of the new technologies, farming methods, and globalization, associated with industrial agriculture.

The final section, “Organic and Beyond,” looks to the future of farming. The editor warns the reader against the temptation of seeing “simply organic” as enough, by allowing large corporations to cash in on the growing popularity of chemical free food: “If organic production ends up mimicking conventional agribusiness (huge, faraway operations minus the chemicals, with centralized distribution and processing) what becomes of the independent, regionally—and quality-oriented, stewardship-minded farmer?” The essays in this section not only stress the importance of innovative alternatives to industrial farming (from urban gardens, to farming with the wild), but also stress the urgency of replacing a system that gives so much power to corporations willing to sacrifice all other values for increased short term profit.

*Fatal Harvest* is not simply a book about food, but also a book about *life*. By honouring the relationships between food, family, money, community, power, health and war, *Fatal Harvest* reminds us that many things start at the breakfast table. *Fatal Harvest* is a must read for anyone who eats in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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*Fatal Harvest: The Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture* is edited by Andrew Kimbrell and published by Island Press with a listed cost of \$45.00. If you have the cash, it’s worth every penny; otherwise, try the library! •••

## A Serious Lack

### American Visual Artists and Imperialism

by Max Liboiron

I have to admit that the abundance of American flags bothered me when I first came to New York a few months ago. And the bumpers stickers saying 'God Bless Our Soldiers' didn't ease my mind much, either. But I breathed a sigh of relief whilst walking past the offices of the faculty of my fine arts program; on almost every door was an anti-war poster from the internet. Relieved, I set out to find what the American professional visual arts community was saying about the war. Things went downhill from there.

My search began in the hundred or so galleries in New York City's Chelsea district. No mention of the war anywhere. So I emailed four of the city's galleries known for more 'alternative' shows. No luck there. Was I frustrated? Not yet; almost all of the artists and art educators that I had come into contact with since moving to New York are very critical of Bush's foreign policy. I was sure that some Americans were making art about what was so passionately on their minds. Isn't that what art is?

I came across an outdated call for submissions from The Justice Project, "a nonpartisan organization dedicated to fighting injustice and to creating a more humane and just world" (<http://justice.policy.net/artistscall/gallery/>).

The website's gallery features the young winners in video, animation, and graphic design medias. Featured are a pro-life animation clip, a lot of anti-gun and anti-nuclear graphics, clips that request the



None of the "Justice Project" finalists dealt with Bush's conception of justice.

abolishment of the death penalty next to clips demanding that murderers are not let out of jail... And a graphic lamenting the lost American soldiers in the two recent (and continuing) wars. Whether or not there were entries that were critical of Bush's idea of 'justice' is impossible to know; if there were, they were not chosen as finalists by the Justice Project's jury.

My last hope resided in the recent Whitney Museum of American Art's show "The American Effect." The catalogue's forward by Maxwell Anderson was promising: "How those who question our policies and values perceive us is the most urgent question we face in a nation in search for security, and in this exhibition we look at artists to teach us something about ourselves that we cannot learn from isolated introspection." If the New York professional art world was silent on the war issue, at least one can depend on the international artistic community to speak

out! Out of forty-seven artists from thirty countries, not one had a direct reference to the war in Afghanistan or Iraq. The gallery tour guide defended this lack by saying that the pieces were chosen before the war on Iraq started. But the situation remains ludicrous: a 'contemporary' exhibit claiming to represent the world's view of America fails utterly to represent the world's most current view of America.

I left feeling enraged at the apparent lack of concern, awareness, and critical thought on the war by American visual artists.

When blatant opportunities arouse for commentary, the main issue was left out entirely. I ran to my studio to do something about that.

To be fair, not all American visual artists are skirting the issue; Susan Sontag spoke out against the war in Afghanistan the minute Bush proposed it. She was nearly stripped of her citizenship. There are surely artists in their backroom studios all around the world making art about the wars; the work just isn't easily accessible. And one can never forget the anti-war spoof posters on every faculty member's door; the internet is ultra-public and accessible. As far as the New York professional art world goes, I'll be the first to admit that it is more a business than a Art World, and the fear of losing one's job seems to be a greater issue than real justice projects or looking 'to artists to teach us something about ourselves.' •••

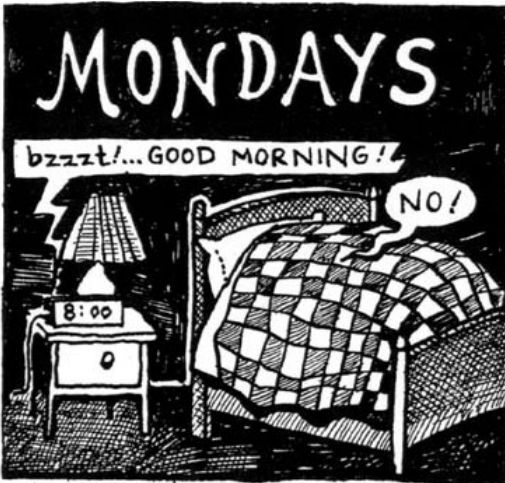
## Can'tLit

Books Recently Seized or Detained by Canada Customs

"The past 20 years have shown Canadian censorship to be legal, durable, and popular. Canadian censors—whether government officials or common citizens—have shown little confidence of the abilities of other people to think or behave responsibly after reading 'objectionable' books and magazines."

—F. Carter, Editors' Assoc. of Canada

- Adams, Carol: *The Sexual Politics of Meat: a feminist-vegetarian critical theory.*
- Bataille, George: *Blue of Noon and Story of the Eye.*
- Carter, ed.: *Outrage: Australian Gay and Lesbian short story anthology.*
- Delany, Samuel R: *The Madman.*
- *The Evil Empire: Globalization's Darker Side*, by Paul Hellyer
- Fleming, Mickey: *About Courage.*
- Genet, Jean: *Querelle and Prisoner of Love.*
- hooks, bell: *Black Looks: race and representation.*
- Irving, John: *The Hotel New Hampshire.*
- Kulaszka, Barbara: *The Hate Crimes Law in Canada, 1970-1994: Effects and Operation.*
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“Irving Media Monopoly,” continued from page 5 »

*Journal* took an editorial position in favour of Jean Charest’s Progressive Conservatives. J. K. Irving, the eldest of the three Irving brothers responded by writing a letter, published on the front page on election day, repudiating the editorial, and arguing instead that Canada needed a majority government and that the Liberals had done a good job and deserved another term. (The Irvings, starting with their father, K. C., tended to support the Liberals, and J. K.’s son-in-law, Paul Zed [M.P.-Fundy Royal] was one of the Liberal incumbents who would go down to defeat later that day, despite J.K.’s efforts.) This case shows that when the

paper’s editors took a position in opposition to that of their employers they were publicly dressed-down.

The papers routinely present the view that what’s good for the company is good for the province. When Irving Oil maintained high production levels while replacement workers and management ran the plant during the 1994 refinery strike, the Irving-owned media heralded their accomplishment with laudatory headlines about this boon for New Brunswick’s fiscal health. Yet when strikers threaten to initiate a boycott of Irving products, this was proclaimed as a dire threat to the health of the provincial

economy.

Finally, the Irvings’ coverage of their own empire is particularly marked by a strategy of defeatism where those who oppose the company are routinely portrayed as naive, foolish and irrational in their futile effort to challenge the Irvings. Last month’s coverage of the closure of the Irving-owned Saint John shipyard and the decertification of five unions reveals examples of this classic response. The Saint John *Telegraph Journal’s* news coverage and editorial on the story was filled with phrases such as ‘end of an era’, ‘stalemate’, ‘spin their wheels’ and ‘going nowhere fast’. The media stated that the

Irving’s compensation package to the union ‘isn’t going to get any better’ and ‘like it or not, we believe they hold all the cards.’

A consequence of this discourse of defeatism is that the public “may begin to feel increasingly alienated and disconnected from the civic life of their communities. They may develop a sense that they are without relevant, actionable information and, therefore, powerless to control the course of their own lives.”

In conclusion, monopoly media in New Brunswick has resulted in a situation where we are left with generic news content in which contextualized and critical discussions of important social and economic issues that affect the lives and livelihoods of neighbours and families are addressed in a skewed and self-serving manner. The Irvings control all of the English-language daily papers in the province and now have incursions into the community papers as well, and this gives the giant corporation an unparalleled venue to promote its own interests as well as insulate itself from inquiries and criticism. It would appear that the consolidation and convergence within the monopoly media has undermined our society’s formation of a free and independent press and brought us full circle back to a system where freedom of the press is for those who own one.

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