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After Three Years, "Independent Allies" Is Working

By Robert Brischetto

Independent Allies (IA) is not another organization, it is a network of individuals representing a variety of groups in San Antonio, Texas. The network "members" meet and communicate with one another regularly and act in concert with other groups that share their concern with fostering democracy and ending corporate domination.

Independent Allies formed in a meeting in mid-August 1998 with Ronnie Dugger, a founder and first co-chair of the Alliance for Democracy. Since then, IA members have met every two weeks to share a meal, exchange

information on issues, and take action. They have not once failed to meet since their inception almost three years ago.

From an initial list of about 70 provided by the national Alliance for Democracy office, the network has increased to 277 households of individuals who, in turn, belong to 124 different organizations, most of them community-based. There are no dues, and persons may join by simply placing their names on the mailing list. The list of organizations is too long to include here, but is remarkable for its diversity. There are no fewer than six different political parties represented. Labor unions, neighborhood organizations, and environmental groups are strongly evi-

dent in the list.

Meetings began as "potluck" dinners in the homes of members. It very soon became evident that too many were coming for meetings in homes. Now the members meet for dinner on the first and third Thursdays of each month at 7:00 p.m. in a separate room at Estela's restaurant on San Antonio's near West Side, where the Mexican-American population is concentrated. Attendance ranges from 22 to 82 and averages 30.

An agenda for meetings is established by members' suggestions. Each meeting begins with "Noticias" (News), a round Robin during which members introduce

SEE "INDEPENDENT ALLIES" ON P. 31

Penniman Moving On; AfD Seeks New Executive Coordinator

The Alliance announces with regret, and with much appreciation for his achievements during his three years with the Alliance, that Nick Penniman is resigning as National Coordinator as of August 1.

The Council has expressed to Nick its regret at losing his services and its appreciation for the advances he has supervised, most notably the Alliance's leadership in educational

work for campaign finance reform and in the actions of the Democracy Brigades and the development of the Granny D project, which has enabled Doris Haddock to continue her touring around the country on campaign finance reform.

"The past three years here have made for a fantastic ride," Penniman said. "We're stronger, we're more visible, and we're growing. Thank you for all you've done to make it happen. It's been an honor."

Call for an Executive Coordinator

The Alliance for Democracy seeks to hire an Executive Coordinator to head up our Boston-area national office.

The Alliance for Democracy is a progressive-populist membership and chapter-based organization founded in 1996. We seek to end the domination of our politics, our economics, our information, our culture, and the environment by large corporations, and to establish a true political democracy and a just society with a sustainable, equitable economy. We advocate a proactive educational approach centered on projects and national campaigns, and we work together with other organizations that share these goals for systemic change. We seek an individual who is also committed to these goals.

The Alliance is an equal opportunity employer.

The Executive Coordinator works for the national council (our elected board) and reports to the co-chairs and the treasurer. The Coordinator works with members, chapter chairs, and project and national campaign chairs to coordinate programs that carry out our mission.

The Executive Coordinator is responsible for promoting

SEE "EXECUTIVE COORDINATOR" ON P. 2

Report from the Alliance Council

Since its election at the July 2000 Convention in Davis, California, the national Council of the Alliance has met at least once a month by teleconference and has held two in-person meetings, one in Washington, D.C., and one in Waltham, Massachusetts, the national headquarters of the Alliance.

Council members formed and work on several committees, including executive, membership/chapters, publications, and fund-raising/finance. Council members have assisted with the publications, updating and improving the web site, and managing the listservs after Ed Plunkett retired.

Pursuant to a membership vote by

mail ballot, the Council amended the bylaws to state that national conventions shall be held at least once every two years (instead of every 18 months). The Council has begun the planning of the 2002 convention, which will be in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Treasurer Vikki Savee, co-chair Nancy Price, and former co-chair Sue Wheaton have compiled a planning manual. The nominating committee acquired extra duties, assisted in filling Council vacancies, and developed a "primer for those considering serving on the Council."

Members of the Council visited the Waltham office at the first in-person meeting. Vikki Savee, co-chair Lou

Hammann, and vice co-chair Garret Whitney have each spent additional time in the office to learn procedures and observe and assist the staff.

The Council has endorsed the Pro-Democracy convention and the associated Voters' Bill of Rights; reviewed and implemented the 2000 convention resolutions; made Doris (Granny D) Haddock and Democracy Brigade attorney Mark Goldstone of Washington, D.C., honorary members; kept abreast of AfD programs and the four AfD national action campaigns; endorsed Global Exchange's full-page ad on energy: "Mr. Bush, Whose Side Are You On?" in the West Coast *New York Times*; is advancing the process of forming an AfD national advisory board; and sorrowfully accepted Nick Penniman's resignation as national coordinator as of August 1, and has initiated the transition.

On Ruth Caplan's recommendation, the Council voted unanimously to join AfD in the Alliance for Responsible Trade and agreed to form a task force for the Stop Corporate Globalization campaign. Ronnie Dugger informed the Council in July that in his opinion the time is now ripe to go forward to form a national communications network, proposed to be entitled Equal Independent Allies for Communication, Education, and Action, and the Council agreed to focus on this undertaking in August.

At the in-person meeting in Washington, Bill Fletcher, assistant to AFL-CIO president John Sweeney, spoke to the Council to great effect. Paul Cienfuegos presented a workshop there for Council members on the importance of language used in asserting democratic authority over corporations.

Executive Coordinator Sought

(Continued from page 1)

membership and chapter growth and development and for overall operation of the organization, including office management, staffing, fundraising, and financial oversight. The Coordinator also assists the Editor-in-Chief with regular publications and educational materials, performs media outreach, and serves as a spokesperson for the Alliance.

Familiarity with software programs is essential. The candidate should have strong oral and written communication skills and experience in networking and grassroots organizing.

Compensation is commensurate with experience and includes health benefits and three weeks paid vacation.

We wish to fill this position by September 1. Please send a resume, cover letter, writing samples, and three letters of recommendation solicited by the candidate by email attachment, if possible, to Stefanie Miller, Secretary, jackandstef@earthlink.net, or materials may be mailed to Stefanie at P.O. Box 34133, Indianapolis, IN 46234.

Applicants may contact the Co-Chairs for additional information: in Gettysburg, Pa., Lou Hammann, (717) 334-4488, or in Davis, Calif., Nancy Price, (530) 758-0726.

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—Stefanie Miller, Secretary
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"Little Old Lady" Leads July 4th Rally in Albany, NY

Albany, NY

As thousands of people began drifting into the Empire State Plaza in anticipation of a spectacular Fourth of July fireworks show, they encountered another, somewhat puzzling, spectacle. About fifty people, sometimes more, bearing flags and posters and led by four men in suits and ties, were marching through the plaza. Two of the suits also carried flags—the Adbusters' "Brands 'n Bands" featuring corporate logos instead of stars—while the third one beat on a tin drum and the fourth played "Yankee Doodle" on a recorder (no fife having been available). A person in the group following them carried a poster with the same corporate-America flag and the slogan, "Political Bribery—Just Do It," adorned with a Nike swoosh.

One of the suits kept booming out "Corporations Rule!" (a heckler from the crowd yelled back "I don't care"), while the other three goose-stepped. The ragtag group following the suits held signs saying "End Political Bribery" and "Demand Democracy" posters from the Alliance for Democracy, Brands 'n Bands posters that read "Salute This?" and "Is This YOUR Flag?" standard U.S. flags, a 13-star Revolutionary War flag, and a large yellow "Don't Tread On Me" flag. A little old lady was leading them. Leafleters handed out fliers with the funny corporate logo flag on one side and, on the other, an invitation to hear the little old lady speak at a rally soon on the steps of New York's Capitol.

She was Doris Haddock, better known as Granny D. She had come to town, still energetic at 91 after her 14-month, 3,200-mile walk across the continent at 89, still ready to promote real campaign finance reform and to blast the corporations that have bought out our government. Many people recognized her name and reached out for the yellow "Go, Granny, Go" flaglets that the marchers were carrying and handing

out along with small U.S. flags. A few spectators joined with the marchers as they all paraded past the food concession stands and the large grandstand.

By 6:00 p.m. the parade had returned to the Capitol steps for speeches and music. A Green Party member read the "Declaration of Independence From Corporate Rule," written by Ronnie Dugger, a founder of the Alliance. One of the suits read a "Declaration of Interdependence" that attacked the environmental depredations of the corporate oligarchs, and then did a dignified striptease as he proclaimed the need to cast off the corporate uniform and such phony patriotic symbols as those which decorated his tie. He got down to his shorts, a green t-shirt, and a green tie, and as he re-tied his tie around his head like a bandanna he called for environmentalism to replace false patriotism.

Then Granny D spoke about her trek from Pasadena to Washington, D. C., her later arrest (and harsh treatment by police) for reciting the Declaration of Independence in the Capitol Rotunda, and her lifetime of witnessing the loss of democracy to corporate in-

fluence and control. About the corporate-America flag, Granny D said, "We're going to take this flag and tear it apart. We will not recognize this flag."

TV, radio, and press had turned out in good numbers for a press conference with her before the march. With several other radio and TV interviews during her three-day visit, plus a book-signing at a local independent bookstore and an evening speech on the 5th, Granny D and the Alliance won excellent local coverage for campaign finance reform and taking back government from corporations.

The events were organized by the NY Capital District AfD with the help of Citizen Action of New York and others.

—Bill Peltz, wipeltz@aol.com

An alternative version of "Yankee Doodle" in Albany's Empire State Plaza

Send news of your chapter's activities for the next issue of *Alliance Alerts* to the Waltham office at rdugger123@aol.com or The Alliance for Democracy, 681 Main St., Waltham, MA 02451, (781) 894-1179, by September 3.

Voting Rights, Clean Elections, Nonviolence Discussed at Pro-Democracy Convention

By Sue Wheaton and Ronnie Dugger

Several hundred activists, mostly from Detroit, California, and the East Coast, perhaps a majority of them African-Americans, participated in the Pro-Democracy convention in Philadelphia June 29-July 1. Organized by the New York-based Center for Constitutional Rights and endorsed by 30 organizations, including the Alliance, the convention focused on a ten-point Voters' Bill of Rights, with repeated workshops on them.

The ten points call for strict enforcement and extension of the Voting Rights Act, abolition of the electoral college, Clean Money (publicly funded) elections, instant runoff voting, proportional representation, voting rights for former prisoners, easier and more reliable voting systems, easier ballot access for all electoral candidates, independent and non-partisan election administration bodies, and statehood for the District of Columbia.

The opening plenary was exceedingly rich in U.S. voting history. The U.S. Constitution separated citizenship from the right to vote, leaving governance of the franchise to the states in order to get them to ratify the founding document. Duke professor of history Alex Keyssar (soon to be at Harvard), whose book *The Right to Vote*, a history of voting in the U.S., came out two months after the 2000 election, quoted Benjamin Franklin's criticism of voting inequities in the late 1700s: "Today, a man owns a jackass and therefore is entitled to vote; the jackass dies; by the next election, the man knows more but he cannot vote because he no longer owns the jackass. To whom does the right to franchise belong? The man or the jackass?"

During the first half of the nineteenth century, the requirement to own property was dropped, mainly to draw in western settlers and to raise an army, Keyssar explained. The franchise contracted,

however, from the mid-nineteenth century through World War I. The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments gave African-Americans the right to vote, but, with literacy tests immediately imposed by northern as well as southern states, the Fifteenth Amendment lasted "about ten minutes." The Fifteenth and Nineteenth Amendments, he noted, are phrased as negatives: they prohibit the states from discriminating against blacks and women, but they do not affirmatively give them the right to vote. There were of course profound expansions of the right to vote during the civil rights era from 1955 through 1972, with the Supreme Court ruling in 1966 that financial requirements could not be used to limit voting.

Eleanor Smeal, former chair of the National Organization of Women, reviewed women's struggle for the vote from 1848 until 1920. Alcohol and major industrial interests opposed them, expecting that women would oppose alco-

that Gore carried, Bush would have won but for the votes of white women. The gap is the largest between educated, well-off women and their male counterparts.

In Smeal's opinion, new prohibitions against discrimination on the basis of gender and class must be put into the Voting Rights Act. On average, 22 percent of state legislators are women, in some states as few as 6 percent. Forty percent of adult women live in households without an adult male, and since their housing is poorer, some of the poorest precincts have 60 percent women voters; in redistricting these women are drastically underrepresented. The Senate, Smeal proposed, should be comprised of two men and two women senators from each state, and the number of seats in the House should also be increased.

Manning Marable, head of the Black Radical Congress and a professor of African-American Studies at Columbia University, asked how, with the fundamental problem of structural racism in the United States and with people of color and the working class poor, democracy can be anything more than an ideal. A multicultural democracy can be achieved within the U.S., he answered, only if we can build a democratic culture from below.

The current period marks the end of the second reconstruction after the civil rights movement and a return to restrictions on voting, Marable continued. The incarceration of nonviolent black offenders is having a huge impact on the franchise. In New York, three out of four Republican House seats are held in prison districts, where the prison populations are counted for legislative redistricting purposes but the prisoners cannot vote. (Authors' note: a throwback to the counting of three-fifths of non-voting slaves for the number of House seats assigned to the states.) Although warning about

Ready for Democracy?

Are your state and county democracy-ready?

To find out, you may use a set of questions developed by the Alliance for Democracy and the Center for Voting and Democracy of Takoma Park, Md., to survey the campaign and election rules and procedures in your county and state. An Alliance chapter could join with other pro-democracy groups, such as a local NAACP or League of Women Voters chapter, to consult with local and state election officials and advocate changes where they are needed to ensure full voting rights for all.

For a copy of the survey see the Alliance's website or e-mail, write, or call Sue Wheaton: sue.wheaton@juno.com; 7211 Spruce Ave., Takoma Park, MD 20912; (301) 270-9038.

hol and war and favor programs to help the poor, and would be too honest to go along with backroom political deals. Once women got the vote, Smeal said, they were largely ignored by candidates until the 1960s because it was assumed they would "vote their husbands' pocketbook."

Now, however, Smeal said, there is a significant gender gap. In every state

the dangers of corporatizing prisons and insisting that racism is central, Marable said that a yet larger fight must be fought to defend the public realm against the private.

David Gespass of the National Lawyers Guild discussed international election norms. Elections, he said, are not an event, they are a process, from campaigns through the elected officials' terms of office. For elections to be democratic, all parties must have equal access; voters must be informed and registered; registration lists must be accurate and complete; voting must be easy; election commissions must be trained in how to help people; all voters in line when the polls close must be allowed to vote; and the transporting and counting of votes must be transparent. All stages of the process must be handled by trained professionals and open to scrutiny.

From the floor, Matt Hirschberg, a political science professor at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand, described how meaningful expansion of New Zealand's democracy occurred. People called for more choices after they had voted out the Labor Party, which had dismantled the welfare state in the 1980s, and voted in the alternative right-wing party. A commission concluded that proportional representation was needed, but this was not popular with the two parties. The people voted on the issue, and despite the opposition

of big money, proportional representation won by 51 percent. Today there are six parties, including the Greens, and a Rastafarian representative in Parliament. Hirschberg's conclusion: crises such as the 2000 election in the United States can lead to "interesting things" if there's a movement to make them happen.

Perhaps the liveliest of the ten workshops were those on Instant Runoff Voting and Clean Elections. The latter emphasized public funding of public elections as a civil rights issue. Stephanie Wilson of the Fannie Lou Hamer Project set the tone by quoting Gwen Patton, a veteran civil rights leader: "We have fought and died for the right to vote, but what good is it if we don't have candidates to vote for? Getting private money out of the political process is the unfinished business of the civil rights movement." Patton pointed out that poor people don't make big campaign contributions and most people of color are poor.

Nick Nyhart, head of Public Campaign, stressed his organization's state-level emphasis in campaigns for Clean Elections in 40 states. He said about 50 House members and six members of the Senate have signed on to the equivalent public-funding bill that has been introduced in Congress. Doris Haddock (Granny D), speaking briefly at one of the workshops, urged citizens to call their House members for enactment of the

Senate reform bill basically without amendments. Ronnie Dugger of the Alliance, speaking at the same workshop, suggested that the strategy for public funding should shift, once the 2001 fight in the Congress is settled one way or another, to a three-year educational fight, possibly culminating in a federal law for public funding in 2005.

Speaking at a second plenary session, Dugger advocated that the people's movement should declare publicly that we are opposed to violence against persons, that we will not enter into coalition with organizations or persons that refuse to assert this position with us, and that we will not coordinate plans, actions, or demonstrations with anyone who will not agree not to commit violence of any kind.

"Gandhi had to stand apart from those in India who used violence. So did Martin Luther King. So must we, here and now and tomorrow," he said.

Ron Daniels, executive director of the New York-based Center for Constitutional Rights, which sponsored the Pro-Democracy Conference, responded to Dugger's remarks that those wanting to emulate Gandhi on this issue should brace for being locked up in solitary confinement and otherwise dealt with harshly. He added that if police repression continues as it has been going, people might become "ungovernable."

First Prize in the Mendocino, California, 4th of July Parade went to the Mendocino Coast Alliance for Democracy float on the theme of Big Money in politics. An editorial in the *Mendocino Beacon* called the spirited parade entry "right on target" and praised the Mendocino chapter for "breath[ing] life into the democratic process" through a series of powerful public forums and dynamic guest speakers. See the Mendocino chapter report on page 32.

Granny D Takes Broom to Beacon Hill

Jim Ace, AFD's Clean Elections Coordinator, speaks at the Boston State House Rally on June 20

By Jim Ace and Kati Winchell

Granny D and about 115 other supporters of Clean Elections reform rallied in front of the Boston State House at noon on June 20. The Alliance sponsored the rally to encourage members of a House-Senate conference committee to provide full funding of the Massachusetts Clean Elections Law in the final version of the state's budget.

"The funding of this law is not merely a Massachusetts issue," said Granny D. "It is a national moment. The states are the laboratories for overhauling our rotten system of campaign financing. They have led the way, and they must continue to."

Sixty-seven percent of Massachusetts voters passed the Clean Elections law by ballot initiative in 1998. Although it has yet to take effect, the law would allow candidates for

state office to receive public money for their campaigns if they abide by strict spending and fund-raising limits. The law, designed to attract challengers to run for election, would help cut the tie between big-money donors and candidates.

Legislators have made repeated attempts to derail the new law ever since its passage. In the most recent attack, the House voted in May to cut funding for Clean Elections from the annual state budget. Funding would come instead from a voluntary tax check-off, which most agree would not generate enough funding for the costs of the new system. The funding question then went to the Senate, however, which approved a full-funding mechanism that would annually divert the necessary funds into a restricted account. Republican Governor Jane Swift has expressed strong support for the Clean Elections law.

"The voters want clean elections. The Senate does. The gover-

nor does. But the House doesn't seem to get it," said Nick Penniman, director of the Alliance. Among other speakers were Ken White, executive director of Massachusetts Common Cause, John Bonifaz, executive director of the National Voting Rights Institute, State Representative Jay Kaufman (D-Lexington), a strong supporter of Clean Elections funding, and potential gubernatorial candidate Warren Tolman, who has filed a lawsuit in federal court challenging legislative obstruction of the law.

**SHOW SOME DEFIANCE
JOIN THE ALLIANCE!**

**Please visit our website at www.TheAllianceForDemocracy.org,
or send in the membership
blank on page 24 of
Deep Democracy, this issue.**

Independent Allies is Working

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themselves and tell about actions or prospective actions that are being initiated by their respective organizations. Members or guests are often invited to present information on current issues of common concern. Most of the issues relate to corporate domination. As needed, subgroups are formed to study subjects or issues and report back to the full membership. The meetings average two hours in length.

The local Maverick Alliance chapter was the original sponsor of Independent Allies. Alliance members meet less often, once a month, just prior to the IA network meeting. The local Alliance chapter provides a link to the national Alliance and informs the network about activities of Alliance chapters in other parts of the country.

A testament to the strength of the network locally was a forum for mayoral candidates two days before recent city council elections. The top three mayoral candidates agreed to attend and address questions raised by IA network members in a town hall format. Questions were submitted via email to the coordinator up to the day before the event. Additional questions were taken from the audience at Estela's Restaurant, where 75 persons came to engage two of the three top candidates in a Q&A session on the issues. The session was taped, and each candidate agreed to come back if he won. An invitation has been sent to the winner to return to resume conversation with IA members. Since the forum, one of the losing candidates has attended network meetings regularly.

IA members maintain their autonomy as a loose confederation of independent groups and individuals who act together when necessary and when they so choose. There are no "officers" of IA, but some individuals have come forward to fulfill certain functions needed to make the network function well. These include:

A coordinator, who sets the agenda with input from members and serves as moderator at the meetings;

A database manager, who keeps the mailing list current;

A bulletin-board manager, who sends notices of meetings, agendas and educational materials via the Internet;

Callers, who notify members of actions and meetings by phoning within a day or two of an event or action; and

A treasurer who keeps track of funds raised through member donations for treating speakers to dinner and sponsoring workshops.

The keys for an effective network are communication followed by action. Independent Allies members keep in touch with one another almost daily via email and every two weeks by phone and in person. The Internet provides a vehicle for maintaining a calendar of events that any member may add to, virtually uncensored, at any time. A member simply emails a message to the bulletin board manager, who makes necessary edits and emails it to all members. The bulletin-board manager is the key to getting out information on a wide variety of actions in a timely manner.

Since about a third of the members lack Internet access, email is backed up with phone calling and personal meetings. Through repeated contacts, relationships are established, information is exchanged among persons with similar concerns, and concerted action often follows.

The principles are simple: identify issues of concern to members; provide and receive education on issues of common concern; meet to discuss and participate collectively in actions, never rebuking or putting down anyone or any group that chooses for whatever reasons not to take part in a given action.

Although IA does not take positions on particular issues as a group, its members have acted in concert on a variety of issues since the group's inception. Here is a partial list of actions in which members participated over the past three years:

A hearing on the cleanup of toxic

wastes with the closing of Kelly Air Force Base.

A press conference on the building of a new arena for the San Antonio Spurs with Tax Increment Financing (TIF).

Protests surrounding the closing of Victoria Courts, a public housing project in downtown San Antonio.

A proposal for a city council resolution on a state moratorium on executions.

A campaign to sanction state legislators for illegally lobbying city hall.

Adoption of a local clean elections campaign finance reform ordinance.

An examination of the use of vouchers and their effects on local education.

Water conservation and use issues, especially the Aluminum Company of America (Alcoa) water project.

A tour of toxic waste sites in San Antonio.

Hearings on mass transit alternatives.

The better jobs initiative of COPS/Metro Alliance before the legislature.

The City Public Service coal-fired power plant and its effects on the environment.

Many other issues have been featured and discussed at network meetings, among them:

Environmental justice issues;

Water supply and aquifer protection;

Support for national campaign finance reform;

Alternative voting systems;

Sustainable productivity: good jobs, a living wage;

Free Trade for the Americas fast track;

Local tree ordinance and park land set asides;

Tax abatements and corporate accountability;

Growth limits and redirecting city growth;

Socially responsible investment;

Neighborhood involvement in setting of capital investment priorities;

Immigrant rights;

The First Amendment implications of

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Mendocino: The Truth in Action

The Mendocino Coast Alliance for Democracy float won the top prize in the Fourth of July parade in Mendocino (see photo on page 29). The float featured an oft-repeated humorous half-minute skit wherein Uncle Sam and Ms. Liberty, surrounded by American flags and bunting, were assaulted and subdued by corporate CEOs waving "Big Money," who in turn were overwhelmed and banished by sign-waving citizen activists.

The "Big Money" with which the cigar-puffing corporadoes subdued democracy was printed on the back with data on the corrupting effects of today's election funding, and this was distributed liberally to the thousands of people lining the parade route.

The two dozen Alliance members who made and acted on the float will hold the traveling trophy for a year, and are pleased that the float's message—that democracy, under corporate attack, can be liberated by people's activism—was received by thousands of fellow citizens.

Three days after the float won at Mendocino, it was presented in a parade in nearby Port Arena and won first place there, too.

Our Coast chapter has done much to educate and mobilize local people to roll back corporate domination and strengthen real democracy. Most evident are our regular Fort Bragg Town Hall meetings, many televised, with such speakers as David Barsamian, Kevin Danaher, and Alexander Cockburn, and our twice-monthly KZYX radio show, "Corporations & Democracy," which has included live interviews with Helen Caldicott, Michael Parenti, Howard Zinn, and many others. We've also held several all-day workshops to deepen people's understanding of corporate dominance and ways to end it, and we have mobilized locals to leaflet about

genetically modified foods and to protest the WTO in Seattle and the increasingly corporate-controlled Democratic Party in Los Angeles.

Now we seem busier than ever, having just conducted a Town Hall meeting with Medea Benjamin of Global Exchange on forming our own municipal utility district. We are leading workshops and tabling at the ActiFest this month in Boonville, we'll feature affordable housing solutions at our September Town Hall meeting, and we will conduct an in-depth, ten-week course on Corporations & Democracy this fall. Both our chapter and the national Alliance organization are doing incredible work to wake up and educate Americans about the corporate war on people, the planet, and democracy.

—Tom Wodetzski
two@mcn.org

Maine Chapter to Grow

The Alliance chapter for Maine, a small group that usually meets in Augusta, will grow in September with Ronnie Dugger's trip to join speakers during a state fair at the Field of Dreams near Unity, Maine, at the first of Jim Hightower's planned Chautauqua gatherings. The general theme at this three-day event, Sept. 21-23, is ending corporate domination. The opening Friday-night speakers will be Hightower, Richard Grossman of the Program on Law, Corporations, and Democracy, and Dugger.

Our chapter works with bigger Maine groups: with the Maine Global Action Network to defeat fast track and educate Mainers on FTAA; with Maine People's Alliance on how to make single-payer health care a reality in the state; with Peace in Central America to try to pass legislation to study the impact of global trade agreements (along the lines of the legislation initiated by the Boston/Cambridge

chapter); with a group named Big Medicine that wants to rescind corporate personhood in Maine.

Soon to be printed is our revised "local food" directory, patterned after the Kansas Food Circle, one local alternative to corporate globalization. Frequently we testify, write letters, and attend rallies for or against relevant state legislation—for GMO labeling, for state ethical ("clean clothes") purchasing, for a living wage (in reality, a barely higher minimum wage), and in successful opposition, for example, to bills against citizen referendum rights. We helped fight Walmart in two communities, with one win, one loss.

—Mabel Dennison
207-778-2513, mhd@ime.net

Fighting a Scam in St. Louis

The owners of the St. Louis Cardinals baseball team want more than \$260 million in subsidies to build a new \$360 million stadium so they will get more revenue from leased luxury boxes and high-priced seats. The St. Louis chapter of AfD is involved in a city initiative petition campaign asking the board of aldermen to require public hearings and a formal vote before the city could appropriate any tax funds for building any professional sports facility. This requires getting 20,000 signatures by a date certain.

Those supporting the drive for city subsidies are the same group of billionaires who made George W. Bush a multimillionaire for helping convince the public in Houston to pass taxes for a new stadium there before he became governor of Texas. They couldn't cash their way through the Missouri legislature this spring, but recently they made a secret subsidy deal with the governor and city and county executives that would lay almost half a billion dollars in

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obligations on taxpayers to pay for two-thirds of the stadium, but would not commit the team honchos to do anything except build and control the new "publicly owned" and maintained stadium.

In the past decade St. Louis has already been bullied by local corporate powers into subsidizing both a domed football stadium and a hockey arena. The citizens are being fed the usual false promises of economic development, tax revenues, and jobs.

A statewide coalition for campaign finance reform is being reorganized in Missouri, where a Clean Elections ballot initiative lost in 2000. Alliance people are expected to have leadership roles in the coalition.

—Rick LaMonica
rickjlmafd@earthlink.net

locally salient issues were also identified as corporate abuses of citizens and of the environment.

Patricia Hammann, one of the Council's two mid-Atlantic representatives, spent several weeks telephoning people on the AfD database to encourage their participation in this new chapter. The chapter leaders, including John Withrow, formerly an activist in the Birmingham chapter who is now in Lynchburg, have drawn friends and neighbors into the cause. Given the leadership, the nice combination of AfD veterans and local activists, and the level of commitment of the members, this should prove to be a strong addition to the active AfD chapters, advancing the Alliance mission in central Virginia.

against a zoning change in favor of Dry-Clean Depot," the two-organization coalition stated:

"These community-based institutions are often the principal means for attaining a middle-class standard of living for many immigrant families. . . . It may take these recent immigrants to remind the rest of us that democracy is about more—much more—than paying the lowest price for a product or service. . . . As everyone now knows, when the large-volume, low-cost warehouse approach to commerce settles in, small businesses are driven out and monopoly power takes hold. . . . In the long run, there will be much less dry-cleaning service available to ordinary people in Fairfax County if the Dry Clean Depot zoning request is approved, especially for those who can now walk to their neighborhood dry-cleaners, rather than be forced to take a car (which they may not have) out of their neighborhood or catch a bus to traverse Northern Virginia's congested streets to reach the high-volume discounter's factory-of-a-store."

—Sue Wheaton
D.C.-Area Alliance for Democracy
Paul Hughes
Fairfax Coalition for Smarter Growth

New Chapter in Virginia

The Alliance's first Virginia chapter has been formed in Lynchburg.

On June 29, at the new chapter's third meeting, Lou Hammann, AfD national co-chair, spoke briefly to the group about his experience of the personal relationships that are one "reward" for the work involved in AfD membership. He focused on the challenges that may face the local chapter. The members were invited to identify local situations and opportunities for study and action that would be consistent with the Alliance's goals and mission.

On the national level, he said, there is commitment to the next phase of campaign finance reform, ratcheting up the call for public funding of public elections, and a concerted effort to head off legislation that would give the president "fast-track" authority to push through pro-corporate trade treaties with no amendments permitted. Other, more

D.C. Chapter Defends Korean Merchants

The Washington, D.C., area chapter and another organization, the Fairfax Coalition for Smart Growth, of which one of our members, Paul Hughes, is president, are opposing Dry Clean Depot's proposed move into northern Virginia, a move that would take small neighborhood dry-cleaning businesses "to the cleaners" economically.

In letters to relevant officials, AfD and the allied group argued that "Big Box" stores "run small and family-operated and neighborhood-friendly establishments out of business. . . . Local businesses are generally much more involved in the community both as businesses and as individuals and family members, as well. . . . Unlike a larger store chain or franchise (with local businesses) a greater share of the economic multiplier effect from each dollar spent remains within the community."

In a letter to officials "in support of the Korean dry-cleaning owners and

Valley Chapter Raises \$2,300

Jo and Nick Seidita of Northridge, California, in the San Fernando Valley, hosted about 50 people at a potluck dinner at their home to raise funds for the Alliance. Ronnie Dugger, who spoke with determination and eloquence to the group assembled in the Seiditas' back yard, inspired contributions of almost \$2,300, which will be matched by Harold Stokes of Redford, Mich., who is matching all contributions and new-member dues up to \$10,000 through

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August 31. The chapter also had a table at the "Wake Up Democrats" event in downtown Los Angeles, where more than 80 people signed up in support of a California Clean Money initiative contemplated for 2004. Supporters signed enthusiastically and looked forward to the time when the corrupting influence of money would be curbed. California AfD chapters are in the midst of organizing for this venture at chapter levels and are reaching out to like-minded groups to form coalitions for Clean Money.

—Tobi Dragert
all4dem@cs.com

Heads-Up in Oregon

The AfD-Portland chapter, in alliance with other progressive forces in Oregon, has achieved passage of a joint memorial resolution, first in the Senate (26-1) and then in the House (51-0), urging our federal representatives to "study proposed and recently approved international trade agreements to determine the extent to which provisions in these agreements conflict with state lawmaking powers." The Oregon legislature declares, in this resolution, that meetings to discuss these conflicts should be held throughout the United States.

This was achieved only by the dedicated efforts of Alliance activists Dolores Hurtado and others. At the outset of the campaign, the Oregon legislators were simply not knowledgeable about the dangers to their ability to govern posed by international "free" trade agreements such as WTO, NAFTA, and the proposed FTAA.

We continue to seek to educate both our government officials and members of the public on this matter. We have made presentations at various labor and environmental meetings and at neighborhood associations in Portland.

We are meeting with our congressional delegation.

—Delk Thomas
DelkThomas@aol.com

Boston AfD-Backed Bill Advances

The Massachusetts Globalization Impact bill, which proposes to involve the legislature in identifying and responding to impingements on state and local sovereignty in global trade treaties, has been favorably reported out of the state legislature's commerce and labor committee. The bill originated in the Boston/Cambridge AfD chapter (BCA).

One of our partners in this endeavor, the statewide Citizens for Participation in Political Action, provides experienced staff time for this campaign. Another, United for a Fair Economy, provided additional staff assistance for a successful public forum on the topic.

"Localization" is the opposite of "globalization." Boston/Cambridge plans to complement its current work on the state bill and on the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS) with a local strategy for building a "local system organization" as outlined in the Common Agreement on Investment and Society (CAIS) that has been drafted by an AfD working group. We are also focusing on local media (for example, low-power radio) and on empowering citizens to use the Internet at public libraries. BCA once had a web page, and we hope to set up a more sophisticated site to supplement chapter meetings and extend our reach.

BCA has been showing a series of six videos on strategic nonviolent action, "A Force More Powerful." BCA Dispatch, our newsletter, now has a monthly circulation of 240 and has helped dues-paying membership to

reach 40. We encourage other AfD chapters to subscribe and link with us.

—David Lewit
dlewit@igc.org, 617-266-8689

From Mass Bay South

"A Statement of Opposition to NMD Star Wars," based on the Sonoma County chapter's statement, was passed at a recent meeting and circulated, along with a request to send out seven copies, with recipients' addresses, and thus pass it on. Ask us for a copy, adapt, and adopt. The Boston/Cambridge chapter did.

The Star Wars video is available for \$39 from CDI but is available on loan from our chapter, not from CDI, as stated in the last *Alliance Alerts*.

—Jean Maryborn
maryborn@earthlink.net, 781-826-2482

Two Meetings in Massachusetts—One Invents a New Way to Meet

Two meetings were held in June that may lead to two new Alliance chapters in that state.

The first, arranged by AfD member Bob Stubbs for June 19 in Framingham at the First Parish Church, was attended by about 40 people. The second, arranged by AfD member Michael Bleiweiss and attended by about 35 people, occurred June 28 at North Parish Church in North Andover. Several other organizations co-sponsored these meetings with the Alliance. Those present at both meetings agreed on follow-up meetings in July.

Doris Haddock (Granny D) addressed the meeting in North Andover,

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and both groups heard Ronnie Dugger on the subject, "What's Happening to Our Country and What Can We Do About It?" Each talk was followed by open discussion.

At Andover Ms. Haddock emphasized that we need "an unhurried society" with time for citizenship, and that "we must be an educated people." Reviewing her work for campaign finance reform, she said that Common Cause, her original major sponsor, "didn't believe in action," and when the Alliance approached her about joining some of our members in the Democracy Brigade actions at the Capitol, she chose to do so. Subsequently, she explained, AfD "asked me to join our Alliance and we will take care of you physically and financially, and that is why I can go about the country talking about campaign finance reform."

"This system we have now is wrong," she said. "We now are choosing for office the person who can raise the most money. That's not a democracy. A poor man has to sell his soul to run for office."

Ms. Haddock, who began a walk and fast at the U.S. Capitol on July 10 to urge the House to enact the Senate's McCain-Feingold bill without amendments (which would require a probably fatal House-Senate conference committee on a final bill), said in North Andover that while the McCain-Feingold bill is not a cure-all, and specifically does not provide for public financing of elections, "I feel it's a turn of the corner."

Also at the North Andover meeting, Dugger and the others present experimented with a means to democratize meetings addressed by speakers. At the outset of his talk Dugger proposed to those present that, first, the rule that speakers are not to be interrupted be done away with for the evening, and that then, when anyone present wanted to speak, that person would raise their hand until Dugger acknowledged the signal and completed his thought,

whereupon the signaler would speak. Once the signaling member of the audience had finished, Dugger would resume his line of thought. The group agreed to try this, and it seemed to work very well, with persons entering into a more democratic dialogue after Dugger had been speaking without interruption for about 15 minutes.

Prize-Winning North Bridge Chapter

Over the past few months the North Bridge Alliance has worked on several issues: the Massachusetts Clean Elections Law, the proposed FTAA, electoral reform, and genetically engineered food.

Our efforts to keep the Mass Clean Elections law intact have included a letter-to-the-editor campaign spanning ten towns that resulted in the publication of over a dozen letters; a call-in day to targeted legislators once a week; briefing citizens at meetings and in mailings on the law's status and actions they could take; showing up in force at a Clean Elections rally in Concord to protest Rep. Cory Atkins's vote against funding the Clean Elections law (which we believe contributed to her unexpected reversal on the issue), and taking part in the June 20 rally at the State House reported elsewhere this issue.

To educate ourselves about the potential impact of the proposed FTAA, we invited presenters from United for a Fair Economy to hold a workshop for us in early April. Six members of our North Bridge chapter and three friends joined the protests against the FTAA in April in Quebec City. To circulate information about the FTAA we held a public forum on May 2 (following the tumult in Quebec) with speakers William Barnes, professor emeritus at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Elaine Bernard, director of Harvard Trade Union Program, and Ellen Frank,

professor of economics at Emmanuel College. The forum included a brief slide show of the protests one of us had compiled and fresh-from-the-scene reports. (See our report on page 1 of the May/June issue of *Alliance Alerts*.)

Outraged by Election 2000, a number of us attended the inaugural protests in January in Washington on Jan. 19-20. Propelled by the same kinds of responses that generated the Pro-Democracy Convention in Philadelphia and the Democracy Summer 2001 in Florida a few weeks ago, North Bridge chapter members have gradually been planning a conference focused on strengthening democracy through electoral reform. Scheduled for the first week of November, it will cover many aspects of the subject, building on the recent conference in Philadelphia. North Bridge member Ruth Weizenbaum spoke about our plans as an invited panelist in June at Roxbury Community College at a meeting called "What Color Is Your Chad?"

Another North Bridge member, Dorian Brooks, single-handedly organized an informative evening workshop in nearby Arlington on the science and politics of genetically engineered food, featuring speaker Linda Setchell from the Safe Foods Campaign. Most recently we pulled off an impromptu float in the Fourth of July parade in Lincoln. The chapter has had a float there for the last four years, working our way up in the awards from "the wordiest" to "the most thought-provoking" to "the float with the most cutting-edge ideas." This year our float, focusing on Clean Elections, replete with gold-painted brooms, elicited a blue ribbon for "Best Use of a Household Item."

—Kati Winchell
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Bequests Help AfD Carry On

Bequests to the Alliance for Democracy are lasting gifts to future generations of social-structure activists for economic and political democracy. The AfD is forming an endowment escrow account and will deposit all bequests into it.

Attorneys who prepare members' or supporters' wills can draft the form of bequest best suited to carrying out a particular person's wishes. Some forms may be more complicated than others. A bequest could be left as a sum in dollars; a number of shares

of stock, or bonds; a share in a residuary estate, or a remainder interest if certain people predecease the donor; an interest in copyrights; or a portion of income from a trust. There are other possibilities.

Bequests to the Alliance for Democracy are tax exempt, AfD being a 501(c)(3) organization. If you have questions about making a bequest, please telephone Stephanie Scadding at the Alliance national office, but your own lawyer should advise you on the best way to make a bequest.

"INDEPENDENT ALLIES" FROM P. 31

the case of Esperanza, Van, and the Lesbian and Gay Media Project vs. the City of Antonio.

Almost all of the issues addressed by IA in their meetings and actions have a local hook. With state, national, or global issues, an effort is made to look for the local connection, especially how neighborhoods and the local community are affected. For example, when fast track for FTAA was discussed, the context was a local organization that works on labor issues in maquilas along the border.

The challenge for the future of Independent Allies is to expand its membership to include members of additional effective community organizations representing a variety of racial, ethnic, gender, and age groups. Thirty percent of the current mailing list is comprised of persons with Spanish surnames, and Latinos make up 45 percent of those in attendance at meetings. About half of those in attendance are women. An outreach committee has been established to increase organizational representation.

Dr. Robert Brischetto is a sociologist and owner of Social Research Services in Lakehills, Texas. He attended the founding convention of the Alliance for Democracy, was a founding member of the Maverick Alliance, which he now serves as interim chair, and served on the national Alliance Council. He is coordinator of Independent Allies in San Antonio.

Six Quick & Painless Ways to Help Support the Alliance for Democracy

1. Buy some guest memberships for your friends and family who never quite got around to joining.
2. Cash in those jars of change that are sitting around, add up those double coupon savings, or sell your old books to a half-price store, and send the money to AfD.
3. Have a birthday (or "unbirthday") party and ask friends to make your gifts a donation to AfD.
4. Pass the hat at your chapter meeting or another friendly organization and send the proceeds to AfD.
5. Pledge \$20 a month and challenge someone else to do the same.
6. Donate all or a portion of your tax rebate. Our treasurer, Vikki Savee of Sacramento, has pledged hers, and challenges others to join her!

REMEMBER, until August 31 all these donations (but not unpaid pledges) will be matched—up to a total of \$10,000—by the generous challenge of Harold Stokes of Redford, Michigan.

—The Alliance Fundraising Committee