

Ramblings

Allan C. Brownfeld

Allan C. Brownfeld is our correspondent covering issues in Washington D.C.

The New Anarchists: Will They Be the Luddites of the Twenty-first Century?

The thousands of protestors who descended upon the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle in December, 1999, at the meeting of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington, D.C. in April, and at the Democratic and Republican national conventions this summer, represent a new phenomenon in political activism. This marks the first time since the Vietnam War that so many Americans, particularly young Americans, are willing to go to jail to make a political point.

The protestors tend to be young, idealistic and concerned about the environment. In addition to an anti-establishment ethos, today's social activists voice deep forebodings about the growing power of global corporations. In an age of growing interdependence, their cause is the world, rather than the civil rights of one country.

Like the 1960s, "These protests are less about self—such as a labor dispute—and more about something global and idealistic," says Alexander Bloom, a professor of American History at Wheaton College. In the 1960s, students started with protests for civil rights. By the end of the decade, it had turned into an antiwar movement. "They were about to become inheritors and part of the establishment, and turned it down—these people are doing the same thing."

While the protestors have individual concerns—ranging from worker rights to protecting the natural resources of developing countries—they are united in their opposition to the globalization that has swept the U.S. and other countries in recent years. Mark Weisbrott of the left-leaning Center for Economic and Policy Research says: "We are opposed to this tremendous concentration of power that is unaccountable and causes enormous destruction around the world."

The world institutions such as the World Trade Organization, the World Bank and the IMF appear to be perfect foils for a whole variety of protestors, says Bloom. "You have people concerned with the environment, labor, the anti-sweat-shop movement and the notion that these institutions represent some kind of invisible corporate power."

There seems to be something new in the air—a mood of radical activism of a kind and, perhaps, scale not seen for years. Dan Seligman, head of the Sierra Club's trade office, defines the new mood as a feeling of "loss of control" in a world of rapid change and global capitalism. He states:

The things people believe in are less secure. Their communities are more fragile. They're more isolated, and it all adds up to a growing sense of

insecurity and powerlessness, despite the improving economy. And people are beginning to connect that to corporate power, media control, and politics stacked against them.

One of the youthful leaders of the protests in Seattle is Juliette Beck, who works for Global Exchange, a human rights organization in San Francisco. She calls the IMF, the World Bank and the W.T.O. “the iron triangle of corporate rule.” In her view, these institutions are moving humanity into a toxic, money-maddened, repressive future.

One element of the current protests has been a revival of anarchism. Black-masked anarchists stoned chain stores in Seattle and protestors with giant A’s pasted on their shirts blocked intersections in Washington, D.C. during the IMF and World Bank meetings. They were in the streets of Philadelphia during the Republican National Convention and in Los Angeles for the Democratic conventions.

Self-described anarchists are few in number. But anarchism is becoming fashionable. This may be seen in the way protestors of diverse loyalties—labor, environmental, and consumer groups among them—have sought to become a mass but leaderless movement, a collection of affinity groups that operate by consensus. Many of those who oppose international capitalism call for a return to local decision making, echoing longtime anarchist objections to the way nationstates usurped the power of cities and towns.

“With the decline of socialism, you have seen anarchism go through a revival as an easy way to opposing global capitalism,” said Paul Avrich, a leading historian of anarchism at Queens College in New York.

Mr. Avrich said anarchist cells all but disappeared by the 1970s in the U.S. as the last of the European immigrants who brought the creed with them died. But anarchist groups are reappearing in every major city, he says.

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon was probably the first person to call himself an anarchist when he wrote “What Is Property” in 1840. His answer: theft. He advocated free bank credit and rejected parliamentary politics as dominated by the elite. Anarchism was popularized by Bakunin, a Russian insurrectionist who helped foment uprisings across Europe in 1848. His motto was: “The urge to destroy is a creative urge.” He described anarchists as people who know what they are fighting against more than what they are fighting for.

Whether the current radicalism will emerge into a coherent movement is uncertain. Analysts argue that too many disparate themes do not make for a coherent protest. This incoherence may well be the one factor that prevents the current outpouring of grievances from ever becoming a true mass movement. Once the U.S. finally got out of Vietnam, many protestors lost their unifying issue, and the activism of that era evaporated amid a disparate array of causes.

The fact is that the protestors, while many are well-meaning and some of the concerns they address are real enough, are actually advocating policies which would hurt the very people they seek to help.

Advocates of free trade believe that anything that is radically new creates fear; in this case the new is globalization. Professor Lester Thurow, an economist at M.I.T., declares that,

In the rest of the world, globalization is often seen as a dangerous invasion of traditional American culture and business practices. It isn't. It is the creating of a new set of global practices, much of it made in the United States, but just as strange and alienating to many Americans as it is to many of those outside the U.S. That is why . . . those Americans who protested . . . in Seattle and in Washington are so upset. Decisions that directly affect their lives are being made outside of the U.S. without reference to what they would like. Their traditional practices are being uprooted just as much as those in France, which is home to the most vocal objectors to the exportation of those "American practices."

Dr. Thurow notes that,

Globalization is similar to what happened a century ago when electricity and the things that went with it (the telegraph, the telephone, the radio) replaced the local-regional economies that had existed in America with a new national economy. The difference then, of course, is that we already had a democratically elected national government standing by to regulate this new national economy. Today, there is no democratically elected global government ready to regulate this new global economy. . . . But some regulation is necessary. Global capitalism requires rules about property rights (intellectual and otherwise), the enforcement of contracts, equal access to markets and a host of other issues. Concerns about the environment, human rights and labor standards are so intertwined with global economic rules and regulations that no one can separate them The fears and anxieties of many Americans aren't imaginary. Yet, while the demonstrators talk about democracy or lack of democracy in the decision making at the W.T.O., the IMF or the World Bank, they don't really believe in global democracy. The U.S. has less than 0.3 billion of the 6 billion people in world. A global democracy would not be an American-dominated democracy. Instead, Americans would be a small minority. What they want is "stop the world, I want to get off"—but that is the one thing they cannot have. The tide of globalization is rolling in. Whatever the fears of drowning in the deluge, everyone has to learn to cope with it.

Commentator Thomas Friedman says of the critics that,

. . . they can't point to a single country that has flourished, or upgraded its living or worker standards, without free trade and integration. And they offer the third world no coherent plan for how to develop and preserve the environment. Their only plan is that developing countries stop developing. This coalition is supported by U.S. unions that have launched a protectionist jihad against more free trade with the developing world, for fear of competition. . . . There's nothing wrong with unions or owners protecting their interests—it's just when they do it in the name of helping the poor that's contemptible.

While the antiglobalization protestors invoke the tactics of the 1960s, the better analogy may be to the early struggles over the burgeoning capitalism of the early nineteenth century—and the Luddites who tried to smash the new machines.

Times of change always produce such responses. While we may sympathize with the yearnings for an older, simpler time the fact is that the future has claims of its own—which must be met.

Soviet-Era Biological Weapons Remain a Serious Potential Threat

Despite a \$100 million U.S. program to defuse the Soviet biological weapons threat and engage former germ scientists in peaceful pursuits, little progress seems to have been made.

Senior Russian officials complain that much of the American money earmarked for retraining former weapons scientists has been wasted on administrative expenses. The bitterness felt by former Soviet bioweapons makers could pose a significant new proliferation threat, experts say. If the weapons makers conclude that the U.S. has nothing further to offer them, they could be tempted to sell their knowledge to countries such as Iran which, according to the Pentagon, has been attempting to recruit Russian scientists to assist with its own clandestine biological weapons program.

U.S. officials point out that they have spent \$4 million on “redirection projects” at the former anthrax production plant in Stepnogorsk, Kazakhstan, including the creation of an environmental monitoring center that employs several dozen scientists, in addition to \$5 million on dismantling the anthrax plant. At the same time, they concede that converting Soviet weapons facilities to civilian use has proved much more difficult than expected. A \$5.8 million plan to use part of the Stepnogorsk factory for civilian pharmaceutical production ended in failure in 1997, touching off recrimination between the American and Kazakh partners.

Andrew Weber, the Pentagon official in charge of the Stepnogorsk project, insists that the U.S. will not abandon the two hundred or so scientists with proliferation knowledge who remained at the plant after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. “We have to deal with their frustration and continue to work with them,” he said. “We want these former bioweaponeers working with us, and not with those who would exploit their knowledge for evil.”

The Stepnogorsk plant, which is capable of producing two tons of anthrax a day, enough to wipe out an entire city, is the most visible evidence of a vast biological weapons program that was a key part of the Soviet Union’s strategic arsenal. Although the U.S. suspected Moscow was developing bioweapons in violation of the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention, the scale of the effort became apparent only after 1991, with the emergence of fifteen new independent countries, including Kazakhstan.

Even now, less is known about the Soviet biological weapons program than the nuclear weapons program. While the Kazakh government has been cooperating with the U.S. on the dismantling of places like Stepnogorsk, Russian officials continue to conceal the full extent of their Cold War bioweapons program.

The \$100 million earmarked for bioweapons counterproliferation programs—some of which has been spent on cleaning up a former testing ground at Vozrozhdeniya Island in the Aral Sea—is miniscule compared with the \$2.4 billion spent since 1991 on locking up loose nuclear weapons and providing work for Soviet nuclear scientists.

In July, the Pentagon organized a conference in Stepnogorsk and encouraged American private investment in Kazakhstan. None of the U.S. businessmen invited to attend the conference came and there has been little private sector investment. To the embarrassment of U.S. officials, the meeting turned into a forum for airing the grievances of the Kazakh and Russian participants.

“We need real assistance, not just lessons in marketing,” said Yuri Rufov, head of an enterprise called Biomedpreparat that was hoping to produce medicines under a Pentagon-sponsored joint venture. “We gave up everything we had before, and we haven’t got anything in return.”

Determined to prevent rogue states or terrorists from gaining access to the facility at Stepnogorsk, the Pentagon launched in 1996 what became known as the “Stepnogorsk initiative” in cooperation with Kazakh authorities. The U.S. would assist in retraining of former Soviet weapons scientists in return for the total dismantling of Kazakhstan’s offensive bioweapons capability. The conversion side of the strategy, however, soon ran into difficulties. The Washington entrepreneur chosen by the Pentagon to run the American side of the joint venture to manufacture pharmaceuticals had good political connections but little practical experience. In the end, the venture failed.

In October, a leading specialist on biological weapons reported that Russia’s biological weapons sites, which pose a far greater threat than do its nuclear weapons, may have been dismantled and hidden for future use.

Christopher Davis, a member of the first Western team to visit biological warfare facilities of the former Soviet Union, states that,

The capability of the old Russian Ministry of Defense sites remains uninvestigated and largely unknown. The suspicion is that, at the very least, the basic know-how, expertise, equipment and stock of seed cultures have been retained somewhere within the Ministry of Defense system . . . Biological agents, if of the transmissible variety, are capable of causing causalities far in excess of those caused by nuclear weapons.

Robert Gallucci, dean of Georgetown University’s School of Foreign Service, notes that although some advance has been made in gaining access to former Soviet biological warfare facilities, those under the Ministry of Defense remain closed to visitors. He said,

There is concern, therefore, that there remains a very large production capacity, and possibly even research and stockpiles that have not been destroyed as required by the Biological Weapons Convention.

H. R. Shephard, chairman of the Albert B. Sabin Vaccine Institute, and Peter J. Hotez, chairman of the Department of Microbiology and Tropical Diseases at George Washington University Medical Center, point out that,

Since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, many of its military secrets have been divulged. One disturbing revelation is that a Soviet biological warfare program produced millions of infectious doses of smallpox virus that still exist today. Intelligence officials and world health experts are convinced that, through black markets, the virus is in the hands of terrorist and rebel groups and possibly even lone individuals. It would be a simple exercise for any of these to mount a devastating terrorist attack with smallpox.

The consequences of an attack with the smallpox virus are illustrated in a new book by bioterrorism expert Michael T. Osterholm titled *Living Terrors*. Without an explosion or any sound, a terrorist attack using smallpox would go unnoticed by either security personnel or its victims. Only eight to sixteen days later when victims show up in hospital emergency rooms would the magnitude of the attack become apparent.

By then, it would be too late. Highly contagious, the smallpox virus from a single assault could strike hundreds of thousands of people. More than thirty percent would die. Survivors would suffer a permanent and disfiguring rash on the face.

The General Accounting Office has concluded that U.S. support for Russian-American biological cooperation could inadvertently help Russian scientists and former weapons labs make germ weapons.

In a recent report, the G.A.O. said that despite the administration's efforts to reduce the risks of such misuse or diversion, there is no way to prevent Russian scientists from

. . . potentially using their skills or research outputs to later work on offensive weapons activities at any of the Russian military institutes that remain closed to the U.S.

The report says that such concerns have been intensified by Russia's unwillingness to open four vital military labs to inspection or visits by foreign scientists. It chides Moscow for retaining in senior posts the "cold war leadership" of the germ-weapons complex, like General Yuri T. Kalinin, who heads Biopreparat, an organization that directed the Soviet germ warfare program.

The G.A.O. report has fueled a long-simmering debate over whether Russia is still making germ weapons or conducting illegal research and development as the Soviet Union did after signing a treaty that banned germ weapons. Former President Boris Yeltsin declared in 1992 that Russia had ended its germ warfare program and told Washington he would dismiss General Kalinin, a former intelligence officer. But Biopreparat, which has been reborn as a state-owned drug company, still controls many Russian institutes and is still headed by General

Kalinin. Russian officials and the general have denied that Russia is making germ weapons or conducting illegal research.

Rep. Floyd Spence (R-SC), chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, says that the G.A.O. report

. . . reinforces my concern that the administration's plans to increase assistance to Russia could exacerbate the risk of a renewed Russian offensive biological weapons efforts.

The future remains less than clear since Moscow has thus far done little to convert germ-warfare facilities to peaceful use or provide long-term employment of hundreds of highly skilled scientists. While some in the administration hope for the best and express optimism, we would do well to make preparations for the worst as well.

In the Name of Multiculturalism, Schools Are Endangering the Transmission of the Best in Western Civilization

A campaign is now under way in many of our schools to replace the classic works of American literature—books such as Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*—and of Western civilization with books written by authors of the same race or ethnic group as many of today's students, particularly in areas with large immigrant populations.

In the case of a long-time staple of high school reading lists, *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger, educators have removed the book in many areas because it fails to reflect multiculturalism. "In other words, Holden Caulfield is a white, privileged male," said Michael Moore, director of the literature commission for the National Council of Teachers of English. "In our diverse schools, the drive to incorporate very multicultural reading is here to stay."

The crusade to replace the teaching of our traditional culture and literature and the attack upon the work of "dead white males" which is implicit in this assault on the so-called "Eurocentric" curriculum overlooks one important fact. That is that the U.S. already has a culture of its own, and it is this culture which has attracted men and women of every race and nationality. They came to our shores for something we had and they did not. Few have been disappointed.

Historian Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. says that

Multiculturalists would have our educational system reinforce, promote and perpetuate separate ethnic communities and do so at the expense of a common culture and a common national identity.

In his recently published autobiography, *A Life in the 20th Century*, Schlesinger discusses the case of *Huckleberry Finn*

What a marvel *Huck Finn* remains for every age! No book evokes more vividly the terrors and joys of childhood, or has a more exact sense of the

rhythms of the American language, or uses more effectively an artless vernacular to convey the subtlest perceptions, or covers a wider range of American emotion and experience. The scene that sticks forever in memory comes when Huck, obedient to conventional morality, decides that the “plain hand of Providence,” requires him to write a letter telling Miss Watson where she can find her runaway slave, Nigger Jim. Huck feels suddenly virtuous, “all washed clean of sin.” He trembles to imagine how close he had come to “being lost and going to hell.” Then he begins to think of Jim and the rush of the surging river and the storytelling and the singing and the companionship. He takes up the letter of betrayal, holds it in his hand “I was a-trembling because I’d got to decide, forever betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself, ‘All right, then, I’ll go to hell’—and tore it up.” What an affirmation of humanity against the absolutes! Perhaps this scene is why Louisa May Alcott, who ironically had her own dark side, said “If Mr. Clemens cannot think of anything better to tell our pure-minded lads and lasses, he had best stop writing for them.” The Concord Public Library banned the book—an action imitated in our own day by the New Trier High School Board of Education in Illinois and by other multicultural busybodies across the land.

The idea of multicultural education—different books for different groups based on the race or ethnicity of author not the quality of the work—is the opposite of the traditional goal of civil rights leaders who wanted only to open our American education to all students, regardless of race. The distinguished black leader in the early years of this century, W. E. B. DuBois, disputed the multiculturalists of his own day. He said

I sit with Shakespeare and he winces not. Across the color line I move arm in arm with Balzac and Dumas . . . I summon Aristotle and Aurelius and what soul I will, and they come all graciously with no scorn nor condescension. So, wed with Truth, I dwell above the veil.

To him, the timeless wisdom of the classical works of Western civilization spoke to all people and races, not just to whites of European ancestry.

Ironically, those who have turned against the study of Western Civilization have chosen a rather unusual time to advance their claims. “We happen to be living in one of the triumphant hours of Western ideas and ideals,” writes *Washington Post* columnist Edwin M. Yoder, Jr.

. . . the fact that much of the world, now unshackled, seems to be clamoring for the intellectual, political and material benefits of the West might suggest even to the guilt-ridden among us that we, even we have something to learn from and about it.

In his Wriston lecture on “Universal Civilization,” V. S. Naipaul, the son of immigrant Indian laborers who grew up in post-colonial Trinidad and was educated in England, contrasts some of the static, inward looking, insular, backsliding “non-Western” cultures, with that spreading “universal civilization” that he finds based, above all, on Jefferson’s idea of the pursuit of happiness. Discussing the essence of Western Civilization—which sets it apart from others—Naipaul characterizes it in these terms:

The ideal of the individual, responsibility, choice, the life of the intellect, the idea of vocation and perfectibility and achievement. It is an immense human idea. It cannot be reduced to a fixed system nor generate fanaticism. But it is known to exist, and because of that, other more rigid systems in the end blow away.

It is a contemporary illusion that particular works of art, literature or music are somehow, the possession of only those who can trace their lineage to the creators of such culture. Shall only Jews read the Old Testament? Only Greeks read Plato and Aristotle? Only those of English descent read Shakespeare, and only Italians appreciate Dante or Leonardo da Vinci?

Western culture is relevant to men and women of all races and backgrounds, particularly those living in the midst of our Western society.

In an address several years ago to the freshman class at Yale, Professor Donald Kagan declared:

The assault on the character of Western civilization badly distorts history. The West’s flaws are real enough, but they are common to almost all the civilizations known on any continent at any time in human history. What is remarkable about the Western heritage, and what makes it essential, are the important ways in which it has departed from the common experience. More than any other it has asserted the claims of the individual against those of the state, limiting the state’s power and creating a realm of privacy into which it cannot penetrate. . . . Western Civilization is the champion of representative democracy as the normal way for human beings to govern themselves, in place of the different varieties of monarchy, oligarchy and tyranny that have ruled most of the human race throughout history and rule most of the world today. It has produced the theory and practice of separation of church and state, thereby protecting each from the other and creating a free and safe place for individual conscience. At its core is a tolerance and respect for diversity unknown in most cultures. One of its most telling characteristics is its encouragement of itself and its way. Only in the West can one imagine a movement to neglect the culture’s own heritage in favor of some other.

Our unity as a nation is threatened, Dr. Kagan argues, by those who replace the teaching of our history and culture with some other, “multicultural” curriculum:

. . . American culture derives chiefly from the experience of Western civilization, and especially from England, whose language and institutions are the most copious springs from which it draws its life. I say this without embarrassment, as an immigrant who arrived here as an infant from Lithuania. . . . Our students will be handicapped in their lives . . . if they do not have a broad and deep knowledge of the culture in which they live and the roots from which they come. . . . As our land becomes ever more diverse, the danger of separation and segregation by ethnic group . . . increases and with it the danger to national unity which, ironically, is essential to the qualities that attracted its many peoples to this county.

We do no favor to those immigrants who have chosen to live in our country if we deprive them of our history and culture. By coming to the U.S. they have voted with their feet for our system and way of life. We should help them to assimilate into our society—by sharing with them the best of our culture—not recreate here the very systems they have escaped at such high cost. Ω