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Relighting the Nuclear Fuse
An Editorial by Mac Lawrence

Maybe it's a good thing nuclear weapons are back in the limelight. It brings up for public discussion such subjects as: What countries should have nuclear weapons? How many such weapons should each nuclear country have? How to keep non-nuclear nations from going nuclear? Should nuclear weapons be used in warfare and, if so, what kinds of

nukes and under what conditions? How to keep countries like Pakistan and India from using their nuclear weapons? How to assure that the nuclear missiles and materials in Russia don't get into the hands of terrorists? How to avoid an accidental nuclear war when a flight of geese can look on a radar screen like an enemy missile launch?

It would seem that there are enough problems already with nuclear weapons without adding any more. But that is just what the Bush administration has done. It wants to develop new nuclear weapons, treat nukes as conventional weapons of war, and shorten the time it takes for testing. To rush ahead with a National Missile Defense (NMD) system, the Bush administration has pulled out of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) of 1972, which has served as the essential foundation of nuclear stability and weapons reduction. It is undermining the effectiveness of the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty (NPT), provoking other countries to go nuclear and North Korea to pull out of it.

Arms control folks are appalled at these actions which they view as sending the wrong message to the rest of the world. Why, they ask, does the U.S. need anything more destructive than what it already has? Just look at what the smart bombs did in Iraq.

Nonetheless, the Pentagon wants a low-yield nuke on the order of 1 kiloton that could destroy an underground bunker. But experts like nuclear physicist Sidney Drell note that the deepest a 1 kiloton nuclear weapon could go would be only 50 feet, and the resultant explosion would eject a million cubic feet of radio-active debris into the air from a crater the size of Ground Zero. Bunkers would likely be much deeper than 50 feet, Drell says, requiring a nuclear device of hundreds of kilotons. He also notes that there are other, more effective ways of destroying bunkers.

Commenting on the new U.S. position on nuclear weapons, Peter Scoblic, writing in the *Washington Post*, notes: "Our nuclear policy already balances on the thin edge of hypocrisy—after all, we have thousands of nuclear weapons but we insist that others do not develop them. It's a one-sided arrangement that has held only because of a treaty promise we made to work toward nuclear disarmament. That is a distant goal," he adds, "but moving in the opposite direction is inexcusable and self-defeating."

Columnist Robert Scheer writes: "Faced with the reality that nuclear weapons are useful only for mass international suicide, every U.S. president since World War II has pursued a policy of nuclear arms control. Every president, that is, until this one." Today's approach Scheer believes, "sets the stage for another round of the most dangerous arms race imaginable."

A nation which has nuclear weapons is obviously viewed differently than one which hasn't. It's not hard to imagine an Iran or a North Korea concluding that if they had nuclear weapons, even such a powerhouse as the United States might hesitate to invade them. So, it's hardly surprising when a nation, which has been branded as evil by the

United States, which sees the U.S. invade a non-nuclear Iraq, and which fears a similar fate, seeks to join the nuclear club as rapidly as it can.

What a dilemma for the U.S.! Should it attack Iran now before it goes nuclear? On the other hand, if Iran already has nuclear weapons, what if they're aimed at Israel? And what if Iran is already moving toward modernization and away from the fundamentalist control of the mullahs? If so, would it be better to let Iran have nukes than push them back into more religious fanaticism?

What to do about North Korea? Do they really have the nukes they claim? If so, a U.S. attack could mean destruction raining down on South Korea and the U.S. troops stationed there, or on Japan. If North Korea doesn't have nukes, what about its huge, well-trained army? It is even stronger than the army that gave us fits the last time we took them on. And what about the reaction such an attack would have on countries the U.S. cares about?

What approach to take with India and Pakistan? By validating the use of nuclear weapons in ordinary battle conditions, and showing the value of preemptive war, has the U.S. in effect given these countries the green light to use nukes—even preemptively? The Bush Administration has vowed to punish nations that have given weapons technology or material to nations it deems as evil. It is well known that Pakistan helped North Korea go nuclear. If Pakistan is not punished for that, what message does that say to the rest of the world?

Many people believe the only solution to the nuclear dilemma is to abolish such weapons entirely. One of the groups dedicated to this effort is the Global Security Institute (GSI), founded by the late Senator Alan Cranston. GSI's four-prong program includes a bipartisan effort to educate members of the U.S. Congress; a Middle Powers Initiative which sends delegations to meet with leaders in key governments worldwide; a network linking parliamentarians in some 35 countries; and an effort to encourage added involvement in nuclear weapons elimination among Nobel Peace Laureates, religious leaders, military experts, students, scientists, business leaders, and environmentalists.

The Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction program, initiated by Senators Sam Nunn and Richard Lugar, addresses another threat—that of an accidental nuclear holocaust. A decade after the Cold War, it's a problem we tend to forget about. But as The Center for Defense Information (CDI) notes, "Strewn across Russia, there are tens of thousands of strategic nuclear weapons and components, thousands of small tactical nuclear weapons, and stores of fissile materials." Some of these fissile materials are missing, and there are a number of documented cases of fissile materials trafficking.

Nunn-Lugar provides U.S. money to the Russians to pay for deactivation of nuclear warheads, for tightened security surrounding nuclear facilities, and even for employment

of some Russian nuclear scientists. So far, however, only an estimated 40 percent of Russia's nuclear facilities have been covered. While the Bush administration initially opposed the program, it now supports it, but hardly with adequate funding.

What adds to the possibility of accidental nuclear incineration is that both Russia and the U.S. still distrust each other (the war on Iraq has not helped) and remain in a nuclear standoff. A report by CDI titled "Hair-Trigger Missiles Risk Catastrophic Nuclear Terrorism" notes: "War planners in both the United States and Russia remain, believe it or not, preoccupied with preparing to fight a large-scale nuclear war with each other on short notice. Both sides keep thousands of weapons aimed at each other and poised for immediate launch. We still fly spy planes around Russia's border looking for holes in air defenses through which U.S. heavy bombers and cruise missiles could fly to drop nuclear bombs on Russia in wartime. Our attack submarines still trail Russian missile submarines when-ever they go on patrol…. Russia, for its part, maintains a similar hair-trigger posture aimed at the United States."

Another action that worries the rest of the world is the U.S. missile defense system which the Bush administration plans to deploy—even though it hasn't been fully tested. The NMD is seen as the first step in the U.S. goal of dominating space. This goal is stated clearly by the United States Space Command, headquartered at Colorado's Peterson Air Force Base: "Dominating the space dimension of military operations to protect U.S. interests and investment. Integrating Space Forces into warfighting capabilities across the full spectrum of conflict." The Space Command speaks of "space-based global precision strike capability" and the "critical need to control the space medium to ensure U.S. dominance in future battlefields." Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld has stated that the U.S. must "have the means to exert force in, through, and from space," and he has directed major programs to develop laser and kinetic kill weapons systems on battle stations in space.

Dr. Bruce Blair, CDI's president and a Minuteman missile launch officer during the 1970s, notes that today, Russia and China are not the only targets for our nuclear missiles. "Strategic Command in Omaha is having a field day planning nuclear strikes against those and a dozen other upstart countries, most of which are non-nuclear. I hope and trust that [we will be able to] get out of this rut before we dig ourselves deeper into it. We seem to be headed down the wrong path, moving farther and farther away from former defense secretary Les Aspin's wise dictum that U.S. security would be far stronger in a nuclear-free world even if that meant giving up all of our own nuclear weapons.

"I think the Bush team has drawn the wrong lessons from our tragedy of 9/11 if it means we are going to develop a nuclear bunker buster, increase our readiness to resume underground nuclear testing, build a new factory to produce the nuclear cores for as many

as 200 bombs per year, and craft war-fighting options for using nuclear weapons preemptively against non-nuclear states.

"Getting out of this rut will require more than criticism of the existing Bush administration policy. We need new ideas and strategies for preventing proliferation that draw on U.S. and our allies' 'soft power'—diplomatic, economic, human rights, and democratic values. We need a 'soft power' strategy to replace military power as the dominant approach to fighting proliferation, and terrorism."

In working to rid the world of these monstrous weapons, I hope we don't neglect to face the most troubling issue of all: How could we even think about raining such destruction on other people? What in us makes it possible to fear and hate so much, to so devalue the lives of others?

Finding answers to these questions will go far beyond solving the nuclear dilemma, to the very future of the human experiment.

Preparing to Launch
A Personal Perspective by Dr. Bruce Blair

Earlier this year, Dr. Bruce Blair, president of the Center for Defense Information, recalled his experiences preparing for nuclear warfare. Here are excerpts from his recollections.

As a Minuteman missile launch officer during the 1970s, I "fought" about 100 nuclear wars in mock underground launch centers in California and Montana. The consoles before us rang bells, spit out printouts, and sent voice and print messages from the mock chain of command. We waited for the opening computer move with apprehension. Only the testers, themselves seasoned launch officers, knew the sequence of events that would unfold before us. It was the ultimate beat-the-clock pop quiz.

Our confidence surged knowing we were having a "good ride" in the simulator, or collapsed when we felt hopelessly confused or knew we made a major mistake. It's nerve-wracking because it's easy to make a critical mistake. If we decoded a message incorrectly and dialed a single wrong digit into the computer that targeted our missiles, we might attack and destroy cities instead of rural missile silos in Russia. We could have easily killed millions of civilians by mistake.

We were usually still processing check-lists when a warble tone signifying an incoming missile attack would be heard on our loudspeaker. We would hurriedly, sometimes frantically, strap into our chairs. In the real world, we would expect a violent shaking of

our capsule mounted on giant shock absorbers. But in the mock run we were blasé and continued to race through the checklists.

We knew there was a system to the madness. The drill led us inexorably up the ladder of escalation, from a minor fire or incident to a full-blown order to unleash all 50 missiles. It was classic conditioned reflexes with absolute psychological certainty that it would all end in a hypothetical all-out nuclear war.

There was no feeling of dread or guilt as we decoded the launch order and marched through the two-minute launch drill. We checked the top secret codes in the message using sealed-envelope codes kept in our lunchbox-sized safe. In the simulator, they almost always matched. We retrieved the two launch keys from the same safe and inserted them into the special switches next to our consoles. The launch order reveals the war plan and a couple of key-strokes would send our missiles the proper target coordinates. The computers onboard the missiles have files of wartime coordinates and automatically switch targets in a fraction of a second.

No more than two minutes elapsed between the time of the launch order's arrival and our final key-turn. This is not an exercise of rational thought or leadership. It is nuclear war by rote, by checklists and robotic human action, albeit robots feeling butterflies and stress to do the job well. But no feelings whatsoever existed for the consequences at the other end of the missiles' trajectories. Fifty missiles could easily kill many tens of millions of Russians—or Chinese or any other nationality in our cross-hairs.

No little lights of conscience flickered in our minds. Launch officers in their early twenties, like myself, rarely struggled with the moral question of following orders that potentially could kill so many innocent civilians. It was all rationalized in the name of "deterrence."

This has not changed over the many decades of nuclear vigil maintained in launch centers. I have returned on occasion, most recently last year, to the great plains of the country to discuss launch duties with freshly minted crew members. I am always struck by their attitudes and rationalizations for preparing to fight a nuclear war. They could have been me decades ago. The Cold War has reportedly ended since I served, but nothing much has changed in the sterile nuclear netherland. New crew members go to war using computers in a "Windows"-like manner instead of fumbling with grease pencils, but still many thousands of targets remain in their nuclear cross-hairs. Emotionally, it's exactly the same. The strongest emotion was, and still is, the feeling of satisfaction and crew camaraderie for having pushed the right buttons at the right time in a simulated nuclear war.

Perhaps more profound questions would weigh on the hearts and minds of the young men and women manning the consoles if the fateful order some-day comes. But in any case,

we have only ourselves to blame for putting them in such a morally untenable position. The thought that my son, or daughter even, might someday be expected to stand ready to fire nuclear missiles fills me with moral revulsion at our failed leadership in the world. It would not be his or her fault that we, as a nation, having suspended our morality during the Cold War, lacked the vision and sensibility to stand down now that it's over.

Dumbing Down What Children Learn in School
Book Review by Mac Lawrence

Did you ever try to please everybody? Say nothing that could possibly bother anyone?

That's just what the writers of America's textbooks are asked to do, claims author Diane Ravitch in her new book *The Language Police: How Pressure Groups Restrict What Students Learn.* For fear that state censors will reject their textbooks, publishers minimize references to violence, religion, crime, slavery, or any of dozens of other subjects history is filled with.

Textbooks can be rejected if they use words like brotherhood, coed, cult, disabled, fairy, fanatic, fellowship, fisherman, handyman, snowman (or any words ending with the letters m-a-n), jungle, lady, maid, Middle East, heroine, paraplegic, regatta, senior citizen, tribe, yacht. The term Navajo is to be avoided (use Diné instead), as are the words Sioux and papoose.

What's going on here? That was what Diane Ravitch determined to find out. She is an historian, author of seven books on education, and former assistant secretary in charge of research in the U.S. Department of Education under the first president Bush. Ravitch also served on the National Assessment Governing Board under President Clinton. Currently, she is Research Professor of Education at New York University.

"Almost by accident," Ravitch says,"I stumbled upon an elaborate, well-established protocol of beneficent censorship, quietly endorsed and broadly implemented by textbook publishers, testing agencies, professional associations, states, and the federal government…. Like others who are involved in education, be they parents or teachers or administrators or journalists or scholars, I had always assumed that textbooks were based on careful research and designed to help children learn something valuable….What I did not realize was that educational materials are now governed by an intricate set of rules to screen out language and topics that might be considered controversial or offensive. Some of this censorship is trivial, some is ludicrous, and some is breathtaking in its power to dumb down what children learn in school."

Ravitch notes that these practices started out with positive intentions. With society's increasing concern about political correctness, why not get biases out of schoolbooks?

Why include anything that would distract students enough to lower their test scores? And so, censors from all areas appeared, headed by the religious right and the left. The right objected to anything referring to abortion, magic, religion, evolution (don't mention dinosaurs). Children should not be shown behaving badly since that could influence children to behave badly. Everyone should be shown as happy, or at least no one should be shown as unhappy.

Ravitch observes that whereas the aim of the religious right is "restoring the world to an idealized vision of the past," censors from the left "believe in an idealized vision of the future, a utopia in which egalitarianism prevails in all social relations." There must be "representational fairness"—equal numbers of males and females, ethnic groups, ages, socioeconomic backgrounds, community settings, people with physical disabilities. Nothing on tests should be outside the student's life experience (can't include references to snow). Care must be taken to avoid elitist bias and biases against people with disabilities.

Stereotypes are particularly to be avoided, Ravitch emphasizes. Women should not be shown as homemakers, wives, or mothers. ("Since men cannot be portrayed as wives and mothers," Ravitch notes, "no one may fairly be presented in those roles.") It is OK to show men as weepy and emotional, but not OK to show women as such. It is OK to show women as strong and brave, but not OK to show men as such. It is not OK to show older people as feeble, or children as "bundles of energy." Avoid portraying African Americans as athletes, or Asian Americans as academics. Owls are taboo with the Navajo culture. Mount Rushmore is a forbidden topic with the Lakota tribe.

Under pressure from so many advocacy groups, educational publishers formed "bias and sensitivity review boards" which issued directives to their writers, editors, and artists as to what could or could not be said. Though essentially all publishers have these guidelines, they are not available to the public. It took some time for Ravitch to obtain the key ones, to which she refers extensively in her book.

What she found in the guidelines horrified her: "What's left after the language police and the thought police from the left and the right have done their work? The result of all this relentless purging is dishonesty, a purposeful shielding of children from anything challenging, controversial, or just plain interesting. It is a process that drains literature of its life and blood, converts it into dreary reading materials, and grinds reading materials into pablum…It is a major intellectual scandal…political correctness run amok, far from the public view."

Ravitch also has a problem with what the textbooks are trying to do. "Parents might suppose that the most important aspect of schooling is…its effectiveness in teaching English, mathematics, science, history, and a foreign language." The goal, however, seems to be "to advance multiculturalism. The literature curriculum, for example, must

focus on the racial and ethnic identity of the author….In mathematics, what matters most is not whether the textbooks effectively teach mathematics, but whether they incorporate multicultural themes and biographies into the math curriculum."

In her chapter on "Censorship from the Right," Ravitch details the fundamentalists' emphasis on banning books from a moralistic standpoint. She lists the 30 books most frequently attacked from 1965 to the early 1980s, which included Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, Pearl Buck's *The Good Earth*, Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, and Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl*. By 2000, she notes, most of the classics had fallen off the ban lists, to be replaced by Harry Potter and other books written specifically for adolescents.

It is not only the religious right that wants to ban books, Ravitch notes. In the chapter "Censorship from the Left," she writes about the different reasons people have used over the years to criticize Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, "a book which has unsettled people ever since it was published in 1885." She discusses the Council on Interracial Books for Children, a group that worked closely with the National Organization of Women. Among the books CIBC attacked are *Mary Poppins, Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.*

In the chapter, "The Mad, Mad, Mad World of Textbook Adoptions," Ravitch explains why California and Texas play a huge role in national textbook sales: They are the largest of the nearly two dozen states that approve textbooks for the entire state. For Texas, publishers have to please the right wing; for California, which alone has 11 percent of the national textbook market, the hurdle is multi-culturalism. The two states have such power that by the 1990s, "textbooks in every subject area incorporated what California and Texas demanded."

Not only has the text suffered from censorship, but the books have other failings, Ravitch says. Commenting on textbooks in the fields of history and literature, she decries the glitzy graphics which make the text "almost painful to read because of their visual clutter and sensory overload"; illustrations that emphasize food that is low in fat, salt, sugar, and high in fiber (one publisher was asked to remove an illustration of a birthday cake—not good nutrition); a "readability formula" that assures there are not too many difficult words or long sentences; and the fact that no one wants a history textbook that is five years old.

In her closing chapter, "The Language Police: Can We Stop Them?" Ravitch describes the two worlds young people live in. At home, they watch TV and see terrorism, hijackings, massacres, famines, and political upheavals. In movies, they enter a world of fantasy, romance, passion, excitement, and action. They listen to rap music and access essentially anything on their computer. At night, they gossip with their friends by e-mail.

Then, on Monday through Friday, they open a textbook and encounter a sanitized world. They don't care if the book was written by a woman or a man. They skip over what Ravitch calls "the pedagogical junk about critical thinking," and look for something interesting. They don't find it. They are bored. Obviously, schools cannot beat the entertainment industry at its own game, notes Ravitch. What schools can and should be offering to students "is the chance for intellectual freedom, the power to think for themselves rather than gorge themselves on the media's steady diet of junk food."

What can be done to stop the language police? Ravitch has three suggestions.

"The first and most important step is to eliminate the state textbook adoption process….States should publish their standards for different academic subjects and then let schools and teachers decide how to spend their funds for materials….It would empower teachers, rather than state officials, to make these decisions, which is the way college textbooks are chosen." Bad textbooks would die out, she believes, and good books would have a chance to flourish.

Her second strategy is to open up the process and let the sunshine in. "The strongest protection for censorship is public ignorance….We have a right to know what the authorities are censoring and to force them to bring their decisions into the open for public scrutiny." Ravitch would like to see every textbook publisher and every state publish their bias guidelines on their Web sites, along with the names of the members of their bias-and-sensitivity review panels, and the curricula vitae. She would like to see textbooks reviewed by respected critics and scholars to judge their accuracy, the soundness of their interpretations, and their clarity and coherence.

Ravitch's third strategy is better-educated teachers. "In every subject area, we need teachers who are masters of what they teach. We need science teachers who would refuse to buy textbooks that are laden with errors and politicization. We need teachers of English who have read widely and know just the piece of literature—the fable, myth, legend, short story, novel, poem, or play—that will arouse young minds." Those who are masters of their subject need to rely less on textbooks, she adds.

At the end of her book, Ravitch includes a sampler of classic literature for home and school for grades 3–10, along with a passionate plea that every student be exposed to great literature. "It is both amusing and disheartening," she says, "to meet adults who express regret that they never read (or heard) works like *Aesop's Fables* or *Heidi*; to hear a recent high school graduate complain that she spent nearly four years in English class without reading a classic English novel; or to hear of a library that discards *Little Women* because it is too hard for children to read."

Everywhere one hears that today's educational system is in crisis. If, as Ravitch believes, textbooks are part of the problem, then improving them is part of the solution. She has done society a favor by shining a high-wattage light on the language police.

The Language Police: *How Pressure Groups Restrict What Students Learn* by Diane Ravitch. Alfred A. Knopf, New York. 2003. $24.00.

A Diplomat Speaks Out

A Letter from John Brady Kiesling

Until February 27, 2003, John Brady Kiesling was a relatively unknown, mid-level career diplomat who had served in U.S. embassies from Tel Aviv to Casablanca to Yerevan. That all changed when Kiesling sent his letter of resignation to Secretary of State Colin Powell. Within days, the letter had flooded the Internet in multiple languages and appeared in newspapers around the world.

Dear Mr. Secretary*:*

I am writing you to submit my resignation from the Foreign Service of the United States and from my position as political counselor in U.S. Embassy Athens, effective March 7. I do so with a heavy heart. The baggage of my upbringing included a felt obligation to give something back to my country. Service as a U.S. diplomat was a dream job. I was paid to understand foreign languages and cultures, to seek out diplomats, politicians, scholars and journalists, and to persuade them that U.S. interests and theirs fundamentally coincided. My faith in my country and its values was the most powerful weapon in my diplomatic arsenal.

It is inevitable that during 20 years with the State Department I would become more sophisticated and cynical about the narrow and selfish bureaucratic motives that sometimes shaped our policies. Human nature is what it is, and I was rewarded and promoted for understanding human nature. But until this administration it had been possible to believe that by upholding the policies of my president I was also upholding the interests of the American people and the world. I believe it no longer.

The policies we are now asked to advance are incompatible not only with American values but also with American interests. Our fervent pursuit of war with Iraq is driving us to squander the international legitimacy that has been America's most potent weapon of both offense and defense since the days of Woodrow Wilson. We have begun to dismantle the largest and most effective web of international relationships the world has ever known. Our current course will bring instability and danger, not security.

The sacrifice of global interests to domestic politics and to bureaucratic self-interest is nothing new, and it is certainly not a uniquely American problem. Still, we have not seen such systematic distortion of intelligence, such systematic manipulation of American opinion, since the war in Vietnam. The September 11 tragedy left us stronger than before, rallying around us a vast international coalition to cooperate for the first time in a systematic way against the threat of terrorism. But rather than take credit for those successes and build on them, this administration has chosen to make terrorism a domestic political tool, enlisting a scattered and largely defeated al-Qaeda as its bureaucratic ally. We spread disproportionate terror and confusion in the public mind, arbitrarily linking the unrelated problems of terrorism and Iraq. The result, and perhaps the motive, is to justify a vast misallocation of shrinking public wealth to the military and to weaken the safeguards that protect American citizens from the heavy hand of government.

We should ask ourselves why we have failed to persuade more of the world that a war with Iraq is necessary. We have over the past two years done too much to assert to our world partners that narrow and mercenary U.S. interests override the cherished values of our partners. Even where our aims were not in question, our consistency is at issue. The model of Afghanistan is little comfort to allies wondering on what basis we plan to rebuild the Middle East, and in whose image and interests. Have we indeed become blind, as Russia is blind in Chechnya, as Israel is blind in the Occupied Territories, to our own advice, that overwhelming military power is not the answer to terrorism? After the shambles of post-war Iraq joins the shambles in Grozny and Ramallah, it will be a brave foreigner who forms ranks with Micronesia to follow where we lead.

We have a coalition still, a good one. The loyalty of many of our friends is impressive, a tribute to American moral capital built up over a century. But our closest allies are persuaded less that war is justified than that it would be perilous to allow the U.S. to drift into complete solipsism. Loyalty should be reciprocal. Why does our President condone the swaggering and contemptuous approach to our friends and allies this Administration is fostering, including among its most senior officials?

I urge you to listen to America's friends around the world. Even here in Greece, the purported hotbed of European anti-Americanism, we have more and closer friends than the American newspaper reader can possibly imagine. Even when they complain about American arrogance, Greeks know that the world is a difficult and dangerous place, and they want a strong international system, with the United States and European Union in close partnership. When our friends are afraid of us rather than for us, it is time to worry. And now they are afraid. Who will tell them convincingly that the United States is as it was, a beacon of liberty, security, and justice for the planet?

Mr. Secretary, I have enormous respect for your character and ability. You have preserved more international credibility for us than our policy deserves, and salvaged

something positive from the excesses of an ideological and self-serving administration. But your loyalty to the president goes too far. We are straining beyond its limits an international system we built with such toil and treasure, a web of laws, treaties, organizations and shared values that sets limits on our foes far more effectively than it ever constrained America's ability to defend its interests.

I am resigning because I have tried and failed to reconcile my conscience with my ability to represent the current U.S. administration. I have confidence that our democratic process is ultimately self-correcting, and hope that in a small way I can contribute from outside to shaping policies that better serve the security and prosperity of the American people and the world we share.

John Brady Kiesling

Terry Gross Interviews Kiesling

After the U.S./British invasion of Iraq, Kiesling appeared on Terry Gross' Fresh Air *radio program. In the interview, Kiesling made it clear that he thinks the war was a mistake, that it was a political not a military problem, and that the political problem is now as bad as, or worse than, he had expected. After outlining the difficulties he sees with the Kurds, the Shiites, religious fundamentalists, the inherent hostility towards and suspicion of the United States, and many others, the interview turned toward the reasons for Kiesling's resignation. Here are excerpts:*

I saw that over time, starting with the new Bush administration, the traditional role of the State Department was getting much less appetizing. The policies that we were being called to represent were policies that were basically ugly. We were telling the world that America is too weak, too vulnerable, to accept any kind of international law, like the International Criminal Court. In the past we had believed the ICC was something that the world needed so the United States would not have to try war criminals; rather the ICC would be a legitimate international body that would do the dirty work. We knew this was in our best interests. Then suddenly we lost our nerve and said, Oh my God, they'll drag Henry Kissinger away and throw him in jail. This was nonsense. But for populist reasons the U.S. Congress passed the American Serviceman's Protective Act which said that no American person will ever be subject to the ICC.

There is a vein of paranoia in American politics. It's a dangerous vein. It's usually kept under control. But this time I saw that vein of paranoia had risen to the fore. We had a president who was too weak and too uninformed to serve as a meaningful check, so we were drifting into a really unnecessarily bad foreign policy. This made me angry. The State Department people—who are much more effective than I am at balancing their ideals with practical politics—were being cut out by totally ideological people, and the trend was getting worse. I saw an American president who was willing to stand up and

tell half-truths that were then interpreted by others into lies. For example, the role of Saddam with al-Queda in September 11. There was no role. We knew there was no role, but for political reasons it helped win the mid-term elections.

I had loyally defended American policy on Iraq. I had made all of the arguments why the only way that we could disarm Saddam was by being ready to go to war if he did not disarm. It's a powerful argument. I loyally called up old Greek friends who said stupid things about American policy, and I chewed them out and I said, look, our policy on Iraq is about the security of the United States and the security of the world, and we're not going to do any of these bad things that you're saying. We have a reasonable policy.

I did that over and over again. I could not persuade anyone in Greece. We (the U.S.) could not persuade anyone in Europe. World opinion was overwhelmingly convinced that we were lying, which is a very bad thing to do. You can get away with lying to the world occasionally, but if you do it as a matter of practice you have no credibility, no legitimacy. Everything you try to do afterwards costs you much more and becomes more difficult and dangerous.

I came to the conclusion, as I saw what happened in the United Nations, that in fact the decision for war had been made months ago. I felt I had been used. I felt the system was so badly under-cutting America's long-term interests that I couldn't be part of it, that diplomacy had been marginalized, that we'd been asked to do things that were essentially impossible.

I spent a lot of time in September drafting something which is called a Dissent Channel Message, laying out my views that our coming war would really hurt our interests. I never sent it because the State Department was not the decision-maker in this. We had already been rolled by the Defense Department and some of the ideologues in the White House. Secretary Powell was not the problem. He unfortunately could not be part of the solution, either.

The State Department, to its credit, took the high road. They said, We regret that Mr. Kiesling chose this. We regret that he resigned. We don't agree with his views, but we respect his right to make those views public. A lot of my colleagues came up to me and expressed their full agreement with my letter, expressed their dismay at the way the policy was going. Many were ambivalent about the war but knew that we were unnecessarily harming our interests by damaging the NATO alliance, by weakening the United Nations, by alienating European and Middle Eastern and Asian public opinion, and by generally telling the world that international law doesn't apply to us. So I had a lot of support, a lot of friendly e-mails. I heard from people I hadn't heard from in years. There was a huge amount of respect at least for my moral courage in doing what I did. That felt good; it was a real help to me.

This letter came out of me much faster and more easily than I expected. I wrote it one night. I came back the next day because I realized I had written something that was really cold and foreign-policy oriented. I needed to put myself into this to say, Here is an American who believes in America, who thinks that America has ideals, who believes that America's ideals are fantastic, who thinks America is the greatest country in the world, who suddenly sees himself, and his colleagues, and his country being asked to behave as if we're a bunch of frightened, defensive, surly bullies in the international world when we have such a position of strength and dominance that we don't have to behave badly. We have the luxury of behaving well, and behaving well serves our interests. But no.

This was for me a source of anger and anguish that we have a choice to do good. We, the United States, have power, we have money, we have leisure. We even have good intentions. There is no limit to the good that we can do in the world if we try, if we believe in ourselves, if we live up to our own ideals. And we're not.

The message I've gotten from the rest of the world outside the United States is, Thank God: We were losing faith in America. We had always seen America as a place that actually believed in things even if they didn't always behave well. You've confirmed that there still is this good America, this America of vision and idealism. In a way, it's pretty frightening when I personally am elevated to this pedestal of being someone speaking for the good America. Obviously there are tens and hundreds of millions of good Americans who, offered a chance, would speak for the good America. Unfortunately not many of them are visible publicly right now.

Until last year, attitudes towards the United States in Europe were, say, 70 percent positive, 30 percent negative. In a year, they have crashed down to 70-80 percent negative, 5 percent positive. This is terrible. We and the Europeans share so much. All of our values are held in common. If they think we've sort of gone off the reservation, it's sad and it's unnecessary.

There used to be an alliance of realism and idealism in foreign policy. We have to go back to that. I would like to help the traditional foreign policy players reestablish some control of the game and take it away from the ideologues.

Bioneers Walking Their Talk
By Mac Lawrence

One way to feel that at least something is going right in the world is to check in with the Bioneers. These "biological pioneers" from all over the world gather each Autumn at a sold-out conference in northern California to talk about their latest work.

The Bioneers realize that, for us humans to survive over the long haul, we must learn to live within the limits of the natural world. A key to achieving this balance, they believe, is studying how nature works and applying this knowledge to the problems and challenges society faces. The solutions they look for are those that can be replicated and spread around the globe.

The Bioneers Conference abounds with presentations on community-sponsored agriculture; organic farms that make a profit; mushrooms that render deadly bacteria harmless; prairie land restored to pristine condition; Superfund sites cleaned up by organisms in the soil itself with no need for chemicals or incineration. Not only are these nature-based projects successful, the bioneers say they can save money over typical high-tech methods, and are frugal in their use of Earth's resources.

One presenter who never fails to inspire is John Todd. Todd has a doctorate in fisheries and oceanography from the University of Michigan, cofounded (with his wife, Nancy Jack Todd) the New Alchemy Institute to test out his ecological concepts, and heads his own company, Living Technologies. At the 2002 Bioneers Conference, Todd told of his latest work with a variety of living systems which, "with the help of hundreds or thousands of species of organisms…can be used to generate fuels, to grow foods, to transform waste into clean and usable products, to regulate climate in buildings, and even to restore degraded environments."

Some of Todd's most dramatic successes have been using living systems to restore heavily polluted lakes. One early project was restoring a small, dead lake into which flowed thirty million gallons of toxic material a year. His system of windmills to pump the water up from the bottom and expose it to air and sun wasn't quite enough to do the job. So Todd designed a floating platform containing nine "cells" filled with living organisms and plants. Using wind and sun power, water is pumped up from the bottom of the lake and passes through each cell where bottom sediments are digested and carcinogenic materials broken apart. The system works all year long to handle the incoming toxic flow.

For a larger lake, Lake Champlain, which receives raw sewage from the city of South Burlington, Vermont, Todd built a greenhouse-like structure that contains "a rather magnificent garden." In a little over two days' time, he says, the hundreds of species of plants and other forms of life that make up the garden transform the sewage into pure water. "Some of the plants help grow and feed bacteria, others break down carcinogens and other hazardous chemicals, others sequester metals." Powered by sunlight, the system operates year round, even in Vermont's climate.

A bigger challenge was a lagoon which led directly into Chesapeake Bay and which receives 1.3 million gallons a day of high-strength waste from a nearby facility that slaughters a million chickens a week. For this, Todd created an under-water kelp forest

and a surface garden of 25,000 plants (you have to have just the right ones, he emphasizes). He estimates this technology uses 74 percent less energy than conventional waste treatment methods.

Todd is constantly searching for what he calls "allies in nature," each of which is expert in doing a specific job. In addition to a large variety of plants, he has found tiny snails that help keep the systems clean, and many species of fish which eat the dead and dying bacteria to prevent the formation of noxious sludge (to Todd, the production of sludge is "a symptom of incomplete design").

One of the beauties of using living systems is that they can, in Todd's words, "convert waste and sewage into wealth." The plants he uses do their clean-up work in water for a year or so, then are sold on the horticultural market to purify air. The fish grow in less than a year from being worth about a dollar to close to ten dollars.

Nature can help take things few people value and transform them into things people do value, Todd points out. In one such process, waste from a brewery is blended with manure from a poultry farm and injected with mushroom spawn. The result, over several years, is a cascade of useful products, starting with gourmet mushrooms and material high in amino acids that is highly prized for animal feed, to a soil medium for growing greens in the winter, to rich, worm-composted soil, then back again to repeat the cycle.

Todd's work carries him around the world. One project is restoring a polluted canal in the city of Fuzhou in China. Eighty percent of the city's waste flows into the canal, says Todd, "so you can imagine what it looks and smells like." Though the project was not completed at the time of the Bioneers meeting, Todd noted that preliminary work had begun to clear up the water and has eliminated the smell. He has a similar project in a river in Brazil, and has started a global Water Steward's Network, made up of people doing the same kind of work.

Another of Todd's passions is ecological architecture. When students step inside the Wind River school in Canada, they see a sculpture with marshes, ponds, mosses ("extraordinary water purifiers") and tall tanks. It's a living system, which—right before the students' eyes—is treating the school's sewage and cleaning the school's air. The system gets its energy from the sun and wind, captures the water it uses from the sky, and gets its heating and cooling from the people who are present.

Todd describes a "green and growing" building at Oberlin College which is made from sources that cause no harm to the environment. The building itself is recyclable, uses photovoltaics, and purifies its own wastes.

"Perhaps the most important aspect of our work," Todd says, "involves making new connections, building new economies by connecting entities that are normally separate."

For example, in a typical industrial park, the buildings have little in common. Todd envisions agricultural eco-industrial parks instead, and is using Burlington, Vermont as a test case. In the center of Burlington is an area called The Intervale where people who want to become urban farmers are offered land to use. Todd hopes to integrate these growers into a larger ecosystem to form the country's first economic/agricultural/industrial ecosystem.

Todd believes there is enough interest in the field of eco-design, and enough accumulated knowledge today, "to shrink the human footprint of this planet by 90 percent. I don't know," he says, "if we can rapidly overcome the inertia that the dominant culture has, but, at the very least, we have to hope we are like the small mammals in the late dinosaur age scurrying around the doomed behemoths, creating a new world without their ever noticing it."

The 2003 Bioneers Conference will be held October 17-19 at the Marin Center, San Rafael, CA. www.bioneers.org: 877-246-6337

Is There Anything Left That Matters?
A Personal Perspective by Joan Chittistor, OSB

The following was published on May 29, 2003 by the National Catholic Reporter. *It has appeared on a number of websites and e-mails. We reprint it here for those who may not have seen it, or would like to read it again.*

This is what I don't understand: All of a sudden nothing seems to matter.

First, they said they wanted bin Laden "dead or alive." But they didn't get him. So now they tell us that it doesn't matter. Our mission is greater than one man.

Then they said they wanted Saddam Hussein, "dead or alive." He's apparently alive but we haven't got him yet, either. However, President Bush told reporters recently, "It doesn't matter. Our mission is greater than one man."

Finally, they told us that we were invading Iraq to destroy their weapons of mass destruction. Now they say those weapons probably don't exist. Maybe never existed. Apparently that doesn't matter either.

Except that it does matter.

I know we're not supposed to say that. I know it's called "unpatriotic." But it's also called honesty. And dishonesty matters. It matters that the infrastructure of a foreign

nation that couldn't defend itself against us has been destroyed on the grounds that it was a military threat to the world.

It matters that it was destroyed by us under a new doctrine of "preemptive war" when there was apparently nothing worth preempting.

It surely matters to the families here whose sons went to war to make the world safe from weapons of mass destruction and will never come home.

It matters to families in the United States whose life-support programs were ended, whose medical insurance ran out, whose food stamps were cut off, whose day care programs were eliminated so we could spend the money on sending an army to do what did not need to be done.

It matters to the Iraqi girl whose face was burned by a lamp that toppled over as a result of a U.S. bombing run.

It matters to Ali, the Iraqi boy who lost his family—and both his arms—in a U.S. air attack.

It matters to the people in Baghdad whose water supply is now fetid, whose electricity is gone, whose streets are unsafe, whose 158 government ministries' buildings and all their records have been destroyed, whose cultural heritage and social system has been looted and whose cities teem with anti-American protests.

It matters that the people we say we "liberated" do not feel liberated in the midst of the lawlessness, destruction, and wholesale social suffering that so-called liberation created. It matters to the United Nations whose integrity was impugned, whose authority was denied, whose inspection teams are even now still being overlooked in the process of technical evaluation and disarmament.

It matters to the reputation of the United States in the eyes of the world, both now and for decades to come, perhaps.

And surely it matters to the integrity of this nation whether or not its intelligence gathering agencies have any real intelligence or not before we launch a military armada on its say-so.

And it should matter whether or not our government is either incompetent and didn't know what they were doing or were dishonest and refused to say. The unspoken truth is that either as a people we were misled, or we were lied to, about the real reason for this war. Either we made a huge—and unforgivable—mistake, an arrogant or ignorant

mistake, or we are swaggering around the world like a blind giant, flailing in all directions while the rest of the world watches in horror or in ridicule.

If Bill Clinton's definition of "is" matters, surely this matters. If a president's sex life matters, surely a president's use of global force against some of the weakest people in the world matters. If a president's word in a court of law about a private indiscretion matters, surely a president's word to the community of nations and the security of millions of people matters.

And if not, why not? If not, surely there is something as wrong with us as citizens, as thinkers, as Christians as there must be with some facet of the government. If wars that the public says are wrong yesterday—as over 70 percent of U.S. citizens did before the attack on Iraq—suddenly become "right" the minute the first bombs drop, what kind of national morality is that? Of what are we really capable as a nation if the considered judgment of politicians and people around the world means nothing to us as a people?

What is the depth of the American soul if we can allow destruction to be done in our name and the name of "liberation" and never even demand an accounting of its costs, both personal and public, when it is over?

We like to take comfort in the notion that people make a distinction between our government and ourselves. We like to say that the people of the world love Americans, they simply mistrust our government. But excoriating a distant and anonymous "government" for wreaking rubble on a nation in pretense of good requires very little of either character or intelligence.

What may count most, however, is that we may well be the ones Proverbs warns when it reminds us: "Kings take pleasure in honest lips; they value the one who speaks the truth." The point is clear: If the people speak and the king doesn't listen, there is something wrong with the king. If the king acts precipitously and the people say nothing, something is wrong with the people.

It may be time for us to realize that in a country that prides itself on being democratic, we are our government. And the rest of the world is figuring that out very quickly.

From where I stand, that matters.

A Benedictine Sister of Erie, Sister Joan is a best-selling author and well-known international lecturer. She is founder and executive director of Benetvision: A Resource and Research Center for Contemporary Spirituality, and past president of the Conference of American Benedictine Prioresses and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. Sister Joan has been recognized by universities and national organizations for her work

for justice, peace and equality for women in the Church and society. She is an active member of the International Peace Council.

What To Do With an Old Cell Phone

One in five people in the world now owns a cell phone. Last year, mobile phones outnunbered fixed-line subscribers for the first time. Africa is leading the mobile phone revolution, where mobiles now outnumber fixed lines in 30 counties. Source: New Scientist, *24 may 2003*

The average mobile cell phone sold in the United States is "retired" after only 18 months. Many sit on shelves gathering dust; worse yet, many end up in the garbage dump where they add to environmental problems.

There are solutions. Several programs to recycle units are available:

• Collective Good (www.collectivegood.com) is an independent program that pays nonprofits for each mobile phone collected, recycles unusable gear, and sells working phones to Latin American carriers. Donors can choose among 150 nonprofits listed on the web site, many of which cover cost of shipping.

• Donate a Phone (www.donateaphone.com) has a family of programs—some for individuals, others for organizations and carriers—managed by CTIA Wireless Foundation, an arm of the cellular industry's trade association. Their "Call To Protect" program donates limited-function phones to victims of domestic violence.

• Sprint Project Connect (www.sprintpcs.com/projectconnect) is a program run by Wireless Foundation that collects phones at Sprint PCS stores, recycles some and sells others, and donates 35 percent of resale value to Easter Seals and the National Organization on Disability.

• Verizon Wireless Hopeline (www.verizonwireless.com/hopeline) is a company-run, mail-in collection program that recycles or sells phones and uses the proceeds to purchase phones and donate airtime to victims of domestic violence through human-services and law-enforcement agencies.

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Palo Alto, California
August, 2002