

# Timeline

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## **How Will the Arab World React?**

**An Editorial by Mac Lawrence**

Who is right? Those who think the war on Iraq has already caused increased suspicion and hatred of America by Arabs around the world, and will cause even more in the

future? Or those who predict the reverse: that an American victory will be seen by the majority of Iraqis and Arabs as a good thing?

The latter view has been widely publicized by the Bush administration. The former view is now being heard more and more widely. For example, Rami G. Khouri, executive editor of the Beirut-based *Daily Star* newspaper, writes: “To Washington and London, the attack against Iraq is part of an historical process to promote Arab peace, liberty, and democracy. To most Arabs, it is a cruel reappearance of demons that have haunted them for centuries.”

Khouri goes on: “For many Arabs [the war on Iraq] revives historical ghosts from 1915-22, when British and French armies brazenly rearranged our region into strange-shaped countries with Euro-made power structures. The Arab view is that this was done mainly to protect Western colonial interests, divide up local spoils, and promote Zionist national goals, largely ignoring indigenous Arab, Kurdish, and other local interests. The consequences have been catastrophic: nearly a century of chronic wars and insurrections, unstable frontiers, under-achieving and distorted economies, and the most persistent modern legacy of political autocracy anywhere on the planet.” Strong stuff.

“‘Liberating’ the Mideast: Why Do We Never Learn?” is an article by Robert Fisk, which appeared in the *Independent*. It begins: “On March 8, 1917, Lt. Gen. Stanley Maude issued a ‘Proclamation to the People of the Wilayat of Baghdad.’ Maude’s Anglo-Indian Army of the Tigres had invaded and occupied Iraq—after storming up the country from Basra—to ‘free’ its people from their dictators. ‘Our armies do not come into your cities and lands as conquerors or enemies, but as liberators,’ the British announced.

“Gen. Maude’s chief political officer, Sir Percy Cox, called on Iraq’s Arab leaders, who were not identified, to participate in the government in collaboration with the British authorities, and spoke of liberation, freedom, past glories, future generations, and expressed the hope that the people of Iraq would find unity. The British commander cabled to London that ‘local conditions do not permit of employing in responsible positions any but British officers competent to deal with people of the country. Before any truly Arab facade can be applied to edifice, it seems essential that foundation of law and order should be well and truly laid.’”

In his article, Fisk quotes historian David Fromkin: “The antipathy of the Sunni and the Shiite of Iraq, and the rivalries of tribes and clans, made it impossible to set up a single unified government that was at the same time representative, effective, and widely supported.” The Kurds also turned out to be a problem since the British could not decide whether they should be absorbed into Iraq or allowed to form an independent Kurdistan. Fisk adds: “The French were originally to have been awarded Mosul in northern Iraq but gave up their claim in return for a major share in the new Turkish Petroleum Company, confiscated by the British and recreated as the Iraq Petroleum Company.”

There is much more to Fisk's extensive recounting of outside powers coming to liberate those in the Middle East by over-throwing tyrants and dictators. In the end, however: "The Crusades were a catastrophe for Christian-Muslim relations. Napoleon left Egypt in humiliation. Britain dropped gas on the recalcitrant Kurds of Iraq before discovering Iraq was ungovernable. Arabs, then Jews, drove the British from Palestine and Jerusalem. The French fought years of insurrection in Syria. In Lebanon, the Americans scuttled away in 1984, along with the French."

Fisk ends his article with a quote from Winston Churchill on the fate of the British in the Middle East: "At first, the steps were wide and shallow, covered with a carpet, but in the end the very stones crumbled under their feet."

Fergal Keane is a BBC Special Correspondent who recently received an award for outstanding commitment to journalistic integrity. In his article in the *Independent*, "Does the West Understand How This Hated War Is Altering the Arab World?" Keane wrote: "I know there are people in London, some of them close friends of mine, who believe that sooner or later Saddam would have developed destructive capability that would have threatened the peace of the region. Yet I wonder if they understand how dramatically this war is altering the human landscape of the Middle East?"

"I have written on this subject for over a year without stating a political point of view on this war. What I try to do here is look at acts and their consequences. So when I say that Arab opinion is enraged by the war, that Arabs regard Mr. Blair and Mr. Bush as the leaders of an invading and occupying force, it is merely to reflect how things are. If there is a silent Arab majority—or even minority—who believes the war is a good thing, I have yet to find it. If it exists it is so miniscule as to be politically irrelevant."

*San Jose Mercury News* reporter Elise Ackerman wrote from Cairo: "For Americans, the faces of war in Iraq were the servicemen and women who had left their tearful families to free a far-off country from an evil leader. For Arabs, the faces of war were children with limbs blown off, lying helpless in hospital beds."

"There was one war, but two stories, and the contradiction tore the world apart.... Eight major daily newspapers published Thursday in Cairo printed only two photographs showing Iraqis interacting positively with coalition troops out of more than 100 war-related pictures focusing on battle scenes, looting, and wounded children."

"In recent years, the American public has grown dangerously out of touch with the way their government policies are perceived overseas, and particularly in the Arab world.... Because of this blind spot, many Americans may find it hard to believe that their country would be mercilessly attacked in the Arab press the day after jubilant Iraqis greeted the

U.S.-led force in Baghdad. But that is what happened. Americans ignore those angry voices at their peril.

“Americans have experienced the past 200-plus years as an almost-unbroken series of victories. The Arab story is one of defeat. Centuries of subjugation by non-Arab rulers and decades of economic, military, and social decline have produced an overarching narrative of loss and humiliation.

“The long-term problem for the United States is that while it can subdue a military enemy, it can’t undo three weeks of damaging coverage—and, more important, it can’t defeat the historical mindset of an entire people.”

Historical mindsets are tough to deal with. I remember years ago sitting in on a week-long seminar with a group of high-level Israelis and Palestinians who were there to work out a mutually agreed-upon plan to end their conflict. Though a plan eventually emerged, a huge amount of time was spent recounting past indignities and arguing over who had wronged the other more grievously. Much emotion, little compassion. We all have the same experience in everyday encounters, watching the Lehrer NewsHour on PBS, listening to radio talk shows. It’s very human: Everyone wants to be understood and appreciated.

If Americans and the non-Muslim world listened more and tried to understand the Iraqis and the Arab world, perhaps ways could be found that would help defuse tensions and improve relationships.

For the Arab world, the choice is either deepening their hatred toward Americans and the non-Muslim world, and responding with hostility—or accepting the reality of the situation they are in and responding creatively.

Both sides would do well to heed the words of the Cambodian monk Maha Ghosananda: “Hatred itself will kill you. There is no need for another enemy. Hatred will kill you.”

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## **Sending Youths Abroad to Kill is Heartbreaking**

### **An Editorial by Loretta Green**

If you ever want to see how insane war is, look into the eyes of our young soldiers. You will surely conclude that we have gone mad.

Eighteen, 20, 25—they are children lugging in their backpacks the ponderous baggage of their elders’ failed diplomacy.

Some are so young that you are tempted to take your crying towel and dry behind their ears.

It breaks my heart.

There is no acceptable answer for why we do this to our young—why decade after decade, century after century the world has gone to war.

Each day the portraits of this war are the brave, young, helmeted men and women, having to stiffen their chins in the face of a death that is premature and surely preventable.

What enormous transitions they have been forced to make. One day a high school graduate merrily kicking a soccer ball and thinking about a job in the local auto-body shop or a seat in a distant college classroom.

And then the sudden transition from mamas' comfortable kitchens to a place where people are trying to kill them.

One day the transition from dropping off a tiny daughter at her gentle kindergarten to a violent place where they must aim artillery. A place where, without meaning to, they mangle an innocent girl just like their own.

In the name of liberation for an oppressed people, they make the odd transition from nurturing to killing.

True, this is a volunteer military team that speaks of proudly serving our country, but most of them signed up for the defense. Being assigned to the offense was a trick play—a reverse—an audible by their commander-in-chief.

Their great-grandfathers have done it before them and their sons and daughters will do it after them, but it is a lot for a young spirit to reconcile.

After all, killing is at the top of a horrible deed list. Killing is in a territory of its own—roped off from their personal guidelines of good and evil, acceptable and taboo, possible and unthinkable.

So war squares and hardens the round faces of the young who become its components and its casualties.

They are there because somewhere the youthless heads of states and the old generals sputter, threaten, challenge and dare across the seas.

With stiffening arms, they pull their rusting swords from their scabbards. They throw down a gauntlet and incite their progeny to carry it into battles not of youths' making and often not of their understanding.

And for a time in the smoke of battle and choking desert storms, soccer balls, Old Navy fashions, and Hootie & the Blowfish seem childish and frivolous. Oh, to return to frivolity.

Because somewhere a military officer arrives at a home and locks eyes with the fearful, knowing parents of a downed Marine. Afterward, everyone speaks of his courage and sacrifice.

Could he have been the one with the round, boyish eyes who looked as if he were wearing his father's helmet?

Somewhere an unknown private becomes an extraordinary hero because she gets wounded and taken prisoner. When in reality, as her very ordinary father puts it, all his little girl wanted to do was come back home "to school-teach."

This is not how we wanted to make our girls women.

This is not how we wanted to make our boys men.

It's enough to break your heart.

Loretta Green writes for the *San Jose Mercury News*, where this editorial appeared.

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## **Salute to an American Hero** **by Mac Lawrence**

*"The world is poorer for the treasure we have lost with the passing of Admiral Carroll. He was the conscience of CDI and will live on in the hearts and memories of his friends and colleagues at CDI and throughout the world*  
*— Center for Defense Information*

Rear Admiral Eugene J. Carroll, who died earlier this year at age 79, was a rare breed. He was a military man who understood that America's security was threatened by an over-reliance on military might.

In speeches and articles in his post-retirement years, Carroll advocated abolishing all nuclear weapons. He vigorously criticized high military budgets (which he called uncontrollable), new armaments, and missile defense systems (which he called counter-productive).

Carroll was equally alarmed by America's increasing drift toward hegemony. Noting that never in the history of the world has one nation exercised the preeminent influence on world affairs as does America, Carroll asked: "Could this great power slip away, be thrown away, and the 21st century become the anti-American Century?" His answer: "It depends on whether we attempt to perpetuate an American global hegemony as the world's only military superpower—or if we seek to exercise constructive leadership as a cooperative member in a peaceful world community governed under the rule of law."

Carroll joined the Navy in 1945, and flew Skyraider dive bombers from an aircraft carrier during the Korean War, eventually commanding two Skyraider attack squadrons. In the Vietnam War, he commanded an amphibious assault ship and the aircraft carrier Midway. Later, he was the first naval officer to serve as director of American military forces in Europe, where he was responsible for 7,000 nuclear weapons. It was here that he became troubled by the possibility of their use.

In an article, "The Case for Nuclear Abolition," Admiral Carroll wrote: "During the horrible confrontation with the Soviet Union we called the Cold War, I frequently stood nuclear alert watch on aircraft carriers. For a period of time, my assigned target was an industrial complex and transportation hub in a major city in Eastern Europe. Although the destruction of that target would have done little to defeat the Soviet Union, it was only one of dozens of comparable targets to be attacked by aircraft from two carriers in the U.S. Sixth Fleet. My bomb alone would have resulted in the death of an estimated 600,000 human beings.

"Multiply that 40 or 50 times and you can understand what the two carriers alone would have done, and that was only a fraction of the planned destruction to be wreaked by hundreds of aircraft and missiles from NATO bases in Europe. Despite the obvious fact that those weapons would never defend Europe, only destroy everything there, the U.S. was then urging NATO to add neutron bombs, Pershing II missiles, and Ground Launched Cruise Missiles to the European arsenal.

"From these up-close personal experiences I came to understand that nuclear weapons are truly unusable, worthless for any rational military purpose. Fought with nuclear weapons, the war destroys whatever the objective might have been. There is no evil greater than the barbaric, indiscriminate destruction which the weapons would inflict on the earth and all who inhabit it."

Carroll was appalled at the current U.S. posture toward nuclear weapons, including the continued hair-trigger alert status in which we keep nuclear forces; the continued production of new tritium supplies for our arsenal of 12,000 nuclear weapons; and most recently the rejection by the Bush administration of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, an action Carroll saw as “threatening the spread of nuclear weapons into new hands. American leaders have declared that nuclear weapons will remain the cornerstone of U.S. national security indefinitely. In truth, as the world’s only remaining superpower, nuclear weapons are the sole military source of our national *insecurity*. We have been presented with a challenge of the highest possible historic importance: the creation of a nuclear weapons-free world. The end of the Cold War makes it possible—the dangers of proliferation, terrorism, and a new nuclear arms race render it necessary.”

After his retirement, Admiral Carroll served for many years as deputy director of the Center for Defense Information (CDI), a group headed by retired admirals and generals, and dedicated to promoting optimum ways to assure a secure America. In *Timeline* July/August, 2001, we published an article by Admiral Carroll titled, “Confrontation or Cooperation?” In it, he decried the U.S. failure to be part of many important international agreements.

Carroll noted that the U.S. and Somalia were the only two countries who refused to sign the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. He labeled “contentious” Congress’ refusal to appropriate the money needed to implement the inspections required by the Chemical Weapons Convention, which outlaws the manufacture, possession, or use of chemical weapons.

He noted as “a stark example of America’s growing isolation,” the U.S. Senate’s blocking ratification of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, “which took 24 years to come to fruition and which accommodated every U.S. demand. As a result, we have lost all rights to participate in the development of a body of international law which covers 70 percent of the Earth’s surface and protects freedom of navigation, fisheries, the oceanic environment, and the wealth of the global seabed. It is difficult to conceive of a more foolish, shortsighted failure to advance the rule of law in the world order, nor one more certain to generate unnecessary confrontations with other nations in the future.”

Carroll called the U.S. position on the International Criminal Court “sadly ironic.” Early on, the U.S. was a leading proponent of a permanent international tribunal which would have jurisdiction over war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. However, the U.S. insisted on its right to veto any action of the court, a position voted down 120 to 7 by the other nations involved. In the end, the U.S. actively sought to torpedo the formation of the court itself, and has made individual agreements with 22 nations not to turn Americans over to the ICC. Further, Congress passed a law giving the president free reign to use any means to free an American held by the court.

The abolition of land mines was another issue Admiral Carroll felt strongly about. The week before his death, the *Christian Science Monitor* ran an editorial he co-wrote titled, “Another War, Another Round of Land Mines?” which noted that the U.S., which is one of only a few nations not to have signed the Ottawa Anti-Personnel Land Mine Treaty, had not renounced their use in Iraq, and was reportedly transferring U.S. land mines to Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Diego Garcia, and elsewhere in the region.

As for the future of America if it keeps on its militaristic, threat-oriented course, Carroll noted: “One truth stands out in history—every nation or empire which would subjugate others will ultimately fail if they attempt to base their domination on military force. There are two reasons for this. First, the people of the hegemon will finally refuse to make the sacrifices in blood and treasury necessary to maintain military control over others. Second, the subjugated will ultimately rise in opposition to reject the sovereign. Nevertheless, in the face of both history and common sense, the U.S. Congress and the Executive seem determined that they can deny both by making military power the primary instrument of U.S. foreign policy.

“Our attitude seems to be at the very root of America’s rejection of cooperative efforts to make the world a safer place under the rule of law. Chauvinistic jingoes claim to see a threat to U.S. sovereignty in every agreement which subjects Americans to international norms. Our leaders seem to believe that as the world’s most powerful nation we alone are empowered to proclaim and enforce American standards and judgments anywhere in the world. We refuse to accept any international rules adopted by global consensus which could in any way infringe upon or limit U.S. freedom to act independently in our own interests as we define them. [But] no nation is wealthy enough to sustain the burden indefinitely of being the super-power on guard everywhere around the globe.

“Our security, and the solutions to such problems in the future, will be promoted far more effectively through wise U.S. foreign policies that lead away from confrontation and make America the leader in a more peaceful, cooperative world order in the 21st Century.”

Words from a warrior for peace who will be sorely missed.

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## **The United Nations Can Help Build a Better Iraq— Because It Has**

**A Report by Walt Hays**

From the outset of war in Iraq, the U.S. media generally portrayed its population as primitive and fanatical, and the UN and its sister agencies as contentious and ineffective. However, the story of a major humanitarian effort just prior to the war presents a different picture—one that offers more hope for the future.

The oppressive regime of Saddam Hussein, coupled with the bombing of the 1991 Gulf War and twelve years of sanctions, had left Iraqi children with one of the worst mortality rates in the world. One in eight died before age five, one third were malnourished, and one quarter were without safe drinking water.

Despite these severe conditions, in a concentrated five-day campaign starting February 23, 2003, some 14,000 volunteers from 880 health clinics in Iraq, with the help of the World Health Organization, UNICEF, and the Red Crescent, swept through the country to deliver polio vaccine to 98 percent of its four million children under five. Despite tension and dread over the impending war, the campaign went off smoothly, as a result of precise planning and execution. As summarized by the manager of the program, Dr. Mohamid Al-Ani, “It was something for Iraq to achieve eradication of polio under the conditions we face.”

Iraq had been running twice-yearly polio immunization campaigns since 1995. While they achieved high coverage, 77 children contracted polio in 1999, showing that too many had been left unvaccinated. “At that point,” said Dr. Al-Ani, “we sat down with UNICEF and WHO and took a hard look at what we were doing. We might have held on to the excuse that sanctions simply made polio eradication too difficult, but this was not acceptable. We were determined to show the world and ourselves that Iraq had the skill and will to get rid of polio, no matter what.”

UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy emphasized the need to complete eradication, not just in Iraq but in the whole region. “To eliminate polio,” she said, “you have to shut it down everywhere. This is a disease that crosses borders easily, so it is essential that we complete this year’s immunization and reach every child.”

Earlier campaigns had been managed from Baghdad. The new strategy called for much greater responsibility to be placed at the district level, and involved more investment in equipment, increased numbers of vaccinators, delivery of vaccine to individual homes, and a much more aggressive communication effort. The European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) also stepped in with critical funding—more than \$2 million since 2000.

### **A Close-up of the Campaign**

The Alawi Qasim Primary Health Care Centre serves a poor mobile population clinging to the outskirts of Basra. Some families here look toward the city for their incomes; others rely on the surrounding farmland. The land is dry and dusty. The buildings, mostly constructed from cement, are almost indistinguishable from the monotone landscape. Dr. Liqaa Jaffer, a dynamic woman, serves as director at the Alawi Qasim Health Centre. When the new polio strategy was introduced, Jaffer became a member of the local Basra

campaign team and attended a training course on “micro-planning” that was supported by UNICEF. For Jaffer it was an eye-opener.

“We learned the mechanics of planning and managing the campaign,” she says. “I became responsible for recruiting and training vaccinators and for enlisting the support of community leaders. One month before every campaign, we surveyed every house in the community to identify all the children under five.”

The list was used to ensure accurate forecasting of the right number of vaccines, but its value to Jaffer went much further. “For the first time we knew how many children there were in our community, where they were, whether they had come to the clinic before.”

The district team was responsible for ensuring that vaccines were delivered in the right quantities to the right locations, for reporting broken refrigeration equipment, and for ensuring that sufficient ice packs and cold boxes were available for the vaccination teams. With the new door-to-door strategy, the number of teams nationwide expanded to 7,000, each including one vaccinator and one registrar.

Before 2000, the vaccinators were paid only 50 cents a day. “It was not enough,” said Dr. Al-Ani. “Some of the vaccinators had to give up a day’s work to join the vaccination teams. They needed a decent wage.” With support from ECHO, vaccinator pay was raised to \$2 per day. Funding from ECHO also helped to supply kerosene refrigerators, thermometers, generators, cool boxes, vaccine carriers, ice packs, and deep freezers. These resources helped UNICEF directly supply 10 million doses of polio vaccine, despite delays in procurement through the UN Sanctions Committee.

As the campaign was launched, announcements were emblazoned on banners strung across the busiest streets. The call to vaccinate went out from mosques, community organizations, schools, and women’s groups. Television spots ran every half-hour, reminding parents to vaccinate their children. Organizations such as the Federation of Iraqi Women supported the campaign, calling on their members throughout the country to volunteer.

Abdullah Yagoob was one of the 14,000 vaccinators. Each day of the campaign, Yagoob was out of his house at dawn and into the poor neighborhoods that lie on the outskirts of Basra. Going from door to door, he laughed with mothers in their doorways, played with kids on the street, tickled babies’ chins, dropped the polio drops into open mouths, and left a mark of his passing on gates and walls, showing that all children in the household five and under had been vaccinated.

UNICEF Director Carol Bellamy described the intensified effort as “an act of hope and faith in the future—and a major achievement for a country that has been devastated by two major wars and 12 years of sanctions.”

## **The Iraqi Effort Was Part of a Larger Campaign**

The vaccination effort in Iraq was part of an international campaign to eradicate polio that was launched in 1985 by Rotary International, a U.S.-based service organization with 1.2 million members in 30,000 clubs in 163 countries. Working with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and health ministries in host countries, as well as WHO and UNICEF, Rotary set the goal of eradicating polio worldwide by 2005, the 100th anniversary of the organization's founding. When the campaign started in 1985, there were 350,000 cases of polio reported, and the disease was endemic in 125 countries. Since then Rotary has raised over \$500 million, lobbied governments to contribute \$1.5 billion (the U.S. increased its budget from \$9.8 million in 1995 to \$130 million in 2001), and organized 10 million volunteers for National Immunization Days. As a result of the combined efforts of the participating agencies and governments, only 480 cases were reported in 2001, and the disease had been eliminated in all but seven countries—such as Iraq— where conditions like extreme poverty, civil conflict, and political oppression have hindered efforts. Now it is hopefully eradicated in Iraq as well.

*Walt Hays is a local chairman for the final phase of Rotary's Polio Eradication Campaign. He compiled the material on Iraq's campaign from press releases by UNICEF.*

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## **Three Mottos to Help with Discouragement and Reactionaries** **An Article by Donella Meadows**

Because so many people are feeling stressed out by much of what is happening today, we are re-running an article the late Donella Meadows wrote in the spring of 1995. Long-time Timeline readers will recall that we ran a piece by her in every issue, and remember well her wisdom and the elegance and personal nature of her writing.

“Last month I got upset enough to ski 2.5 miles out of this remote cabin to send a letter to my congressional delegates,” writes a reader in Palmer, Alaska. “But my letters here and there (particularly compared to the fax armies of the organized special interests) seem woefully inadequate. It helps to keep doing good work, to keep tuned to what's real and important, to keep away from TV and newspaper hype, to stay close to the land and friends. But still, there is this dark cloud. So please tell me, what keeps you going?”

Letters like that keep me going. The thought of someone caring enough to ski 5 miles in Alaska in December to send a letter to Congress will keep me going for days. I am constantly buoyed by letters from concerned, compassionate folks, who are refusing to fall into the current mean, me-first national mood. You wouldn't believe how many of you there are out there!

But that isn't a full enough answer to the questioner from Alaska and the other disheartened people who write to me. The only honest answer I can give is a personal one—one that doesn't presume to tell anyone what to do, but that shares, for whatever help it might be, what I do.

I get discouraged, too, of course. It's impossible to pay attention to the world and not get discouraged. And angry. And (this is my most frequent reaction) profoundly sad.

I try not to carry these “downer” emotions into the public in this column or any other work I do. I don't always succeed, you may have noticed. When I fail, it's because I've tried to stuff discouragement down instead of facing it. Stuffed-down emotions seep back out sooner or later, often at inappropriate times. It's better, I've learned, to let them out, preferably in private. Sometimes I even indulge them. OK, for the next hour, go ahead and be discouraged. Pull out all the black thoughts you can. Wallow in them. Feel very small against huge, evil powers. Weep for the tragedies of the planet. Rage. Kick big rocks, throw small ones. Give up completely.

I don't know about you, but I can't keep a tantrum like that going for more than an hour. The further I let myself slide into despair, the sooner a small voice whispers in my ear: “You know, giving up is the only sure way to let the forces of evil win. Even writing to your blockhead congressman would be more constructive than kicking rocks. You could try this, join that, speak to him, form a partnership with her.”

And I turn around and head back into the fray.

I don't get discouraged as much as I used to, since I decided to seek out good news and hang out with good folk. That doesn't mean denying the dark side, it just means not dwelling there. It means, as my Alaska friend said, avoiding media that deliver nothing but blood, bias, and conflict. (I get news from public radio and the few newspapers that admit a range of opinion.)

When I actively look for good news and good folks, I find them everywhere. They take up all my time now, they constitute my world, no matter where I go in the world. I spent last weekend with 30 top executives who are wrestling with the question of how to make their multinational corporation an active force for the sustainable end of hunger. The weekend before, I was talking with the energy minister of a developing country about radical electricity efficiency. Mostly, I work close to home, with people who do organic farming, or consumer co-ops, or local land trusts. Wherever I look, at whatever level, I find plenty of discouraging stuff, and I also find great people to work with and good projects worth joining. Then it's easy to keep going!

I have a motto: Don't waste your time with reactionaries. I learned that lesson the hard way. I used to lock horns with the most negative heckler in my vicinity and never noticed the many folks who just wanted to talk, listen, and move ahead. There are so many people whose minds are open, why bother, except occasionally for your own education, with minds that are closed!

But then I have another motto that sounds contradictory: Don't assume that anyone's mind is closed. No matter what political button or official hat a person is wearing, I try to be straight and open. I assume a reasonable human is hidden in there somewhere. I don't weaken my own position, I don't play games. I speak with respect. If I don't get respect back, I walk away. (Don't waste your time with reactionaries.) Later I try again. There's a book that says, "Underneath anger is always fear, and underneath fear is always longing." The longing in everyone is to reach out and connect with others and make a wonderful world.

Just to be thoroughly contradictory, I have a third motto, when I can't get myself to be saintly enough to follow the previous two: Every now and then, when someone is acting like a real jerk, blow up. Over the long term that's probably a counter-productive thing to do. But in the short term, when it's done for a good cause and in a controlled way, it feels so good. Sometimes it's just what I need to keep going.

And now, if you'll excuse me, it's time to send another letter to my congressman, who has the ever-restored opportunity, as every new moment is born, not to be a blockhead.

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## **The Divine Right of Capital**

### **A Book Review by Joe Kresse**

I found this book to be an important discussion of the assumptions underlying our economic system. Marjorie Kelly, the cofounder and publisher of *Business Ethics*, a national publication on corporate social responsibility, starts it with a question: "Stockholders fund major public corporations—true or false?" And the surprising answer? "False. Or, actually, a tiny bit true—but for the most part, massively false. According to figures from the Federal Reserve, in recent years about one in one hundred dollars trading on public markets has reached corporations." The rest are speculative, where existing shares simply change hands and are not "investments" at all. Yet, for this small amount of real investment, stockholders are treated as if they *are* the corporation, with rights to all profits while performing almost no governance functions and being insulated from legal risks.

This book examines the philosophy underlying our capitalist system, and how it has evolved over the past three centuries to today, where 51 of the world's 100 largest economies are corporations. Kelly refers often to values that emerged in the

Enlightenment, as well as quoting from such philosophers as John Locke, Thomas Paine, and Adam Smith, so that we can see how far we've moved from their original intent. In addition, she looks back at property rights as they developed in English common law.

In Part I of the book, *Economic Aristocracy*, Kelly traces how corporations have achieved their status as a result of property rights being embedded in common law above many other rights. Throughout, she describes the court cases, legislation, and other social changes that moved the rest of the society towards more democracy and equality, while leaving corporations in a more feudal state—it's an excellent economics history lesson. She devotes a chapter to each of the principles that she believes underpin the current situation:

**“Worldview:** In the worldview of corporate financial statements, the aim is to pay stockholders as much as possible, and employees as little as possible.” Kelly points out that our conventional view of a corporate income statement is to subtract expenses from revenues to get net income. The net income is allocated to the stockholders and the corporation's goal is to maximize it. Since wages are a cost, they are to be minimized. But employees give their lives to the corporation, creating its income, and risk losing their livelihoods if the corporation fails. Why should they only be thought of as a cost to be minimized? We could just as easily count the cost of raising capital from stockholders as an expense to be minimized, and allocate net income to the employees instead. Or, net income could be allocated to *both* employees and stockholders. All of these possibilities simply reflect different mental constructs. Nowhere is it written in the laws of the Universe that the first example, the one we're so used to, is better than the others!

**“Privilege:** Stockholders claim wealth they do little to create, much as nobles claimed privilege they did not earn.” The leading court case on this issue was the 1919 Michigan Supreme Court decision in *Dodge v. Ford Motor Co.*, which held that “a business operation is organized and carried on primarily for the profit of the stockholders. The powers of the board of directors are to be employed for that end.”

**“Property:** Like a feudal estate, a corporation is considered a piece of property—not a human community—so it can be owned and sold by the propertied class.”

**“Governance:** Corporations function with an aristocratic governance structure, where members of the propertied class alone may vote.” Kelly (somewhat tongue-in-cheek) says that having stockholders elect the board of directors without any say from the employees is like having the British elect the leaders of the United States without any say from citizens of the U.S.!

**“Liberty:** Corporate capitalism embraces a predemocratic concept of liberty reserved for property holders, which thrives by restricting the liberty of employees and the community.”

**“Sovereignty:** Corporations assert that they are private and the free market will self-regulate, much as feudal barons asserted a sovereignty independent of the Crown.” This right was bolstered by the 1886 U.S. Supreme Court case of *Santa Clara v. Southern Pacific Railroad*, in which the Court simply and without debate presumed at the outset of the case that a corporation is a “person,” with all the rights and privileges accorded real people under the Bill of Rights.

In Part II, Economic Democracy, Kelly posits principles that would allow us “to reclaim our economic sovereignty—which means remembering that corporations are creations of the law, that they exist only because we the people allow them to exist, and that we create the parameters of their existence.” Again, each principle merits a chapter, filling in details and proposing some possible ways to fulfill it:

**“Enlightenment:** Because all persons are created equal, the economic rights of employees and the community are equal to those of capital owners.” Here, Kelly suggests corporate reports that are aimed not only at stockholders but at other stakeholders as well. This movement, so-called “triple bottom line” reporting, in which corporations report on their social and environmental effects as well as their financial results, has started already.

**“Equality:** Under market principles, wealth does not legitimately belong only to stockholders. Corporate wealth belongs to those who create it, and community wealth belongs to all.” Several ideas, such as employee stock ownership plans, are presented as ways to expand employee participation in the profits generated by their efforts.

**“Public good:** As semipublic governments, public corporations are more than pieces of private property or private contracts. They have a responsibility to the public good.”

**“Democracy:** The corporation is a human community, and like the larger community of which it is a part, it is best governed democratically.” Kelly suggests ways employees can participate more fully in corporate governance, such as in several European countries where employees have a certain percentage of seats on corporate boards of directors.

**“Justice:** In keeping with equal treatment of persons before the law, the wealthy may not claim greater rights than others, and corporations may not claim the rights of persons.”

**“(r)Evolution:** As it is the right of the people to alter or abolish government, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish the corporations that now govern the world.” Kelly notes that there are efforts going on in several states to bring back the power to revoke

corporate charters for failing to operate for the common good. (See the following article for examples of state actions.) When the vehicle of the corporation was first created, it was for a limited time, for a limited purpose, and that purpose in some way had to further the common good. How far we've moved from that today!

Since corporations are the most powerful entities on Earth, the task of revisioning their role will not be easy and will certainly be resisted by today's corporate chieftains. But the mere existence of Kelly's book, and the numerous current reform efforts she discusses, give me hope.

**The Divine Right of Capital:** Dethroning the Corporate Aristocracy *by Marjorie Kelly Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., San Francisco. 2001. \$24.95.*

*Joe Kresse coordinates the Business and Sustainability Team at the Foundation. He is a retired partner of an international accounting firm.*

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## **Despairing Globally, Hoping Locally: *The promise of state-level action as an avenue for corporate reform***

### **An Article by Marjorie Kelly**

Despair is a word like a wound, so tender one hesitates to touch it. It's a feeling one might hesitate to invoke, were it not so palpable today in even the most casual conversations. There are many reasons for despair: the inability to prevent war on Iraq despite massive protests; the long drought in the economy; the seeming impossibility of genuine corporate reform, even after the cataclysm of Enron. Lately it's the war on people's minds. But it's despair I wish to speak to: that feeling that our situation will never change, that our actions have no effect. What I see is fresh reason for hope.

Beneath the radar of mainstream awareness, something remarkable is arising. It's a promising new path for systemic corporate reform, not at the federal or international level, but at the state level. This may be the last place we think to look for corporate reform. But it should be the first, since it is states that charter corporations have the power to redefine the terms of their existence.

This power of definition is one we rarely think to pick up. Much reform energy recently has focused internationally, with protests against the World Trade Organization and the World Bank. But those financial bodies rebuff popular input the way a duck's back repels water.

In other cases, reform has focused on individual companies, urging McDonald's and Burger King to treat animals more humanely, for example. But there are countless

policies at thousands of companies. Changing one policy at a time is like shoveling a snow-bound driveway with a teaspoon.

Picture a simpler scenario: activists meeting in a church basement in St. Paul—not needing a cast of thousands but numbering only 30. Rather than being tear-gassed and jailed, they drive to quiet meetings with state legislators. Beneath their mild manner, these activists are relentlessly, calmly, effectively working to change the corporate form itself, at the level of DNA. Instead of taking a teaspoon to corporate policy, they’re redefining the framework that gives rise to all policies. In a single elegant gesture, they aim to protect the public good in multiple ways for generations to come.

The state legislation they propose would change the nature of the corporation itself, by redefining its purpose. Instead of chasing myriad bad corporate outcomes like a million annoying flies, corporate purpose legislation goes to the source, tackling social problems where they arise. It sweeps out the larvae before they hatch, so to speak.

The vehicle for changing corporate purpose is directors’ duties. And the idea of working at this leverage point is catching on. No bill has been introduced yet in Minnesota, but a group of legislators, led by Rep. Bill Hilty (DFL-Finlayson), is meeting to strategize around several possible bills, including the Code for Corporate Responsibility drafted by attorney Robert Hinkley. Activists are at the table. That’s the beauty of state-level work: ordinary citizens have voice.

Fundamental change may be coming within reach. In California, corporate purpose legislation was introduced Feb. 21 by Senate Majority Whip Richard Alarcon (D-San Fernando Valley). While current law says directors must maximize profits for shareholders, Alarcon’s Good Corporate Citizen bill (SB 917) says companies may not do so at the expense of the environment, human rights, the public health, the community, or the dignity of employees. The attorney general could bring civil action against violators. Under certain conditions, directors would be personally liable.

It’s hard to overstate how profoundly this could change corporate behavior. Instead of rubberstamping whatever actions fatten the bottom line—keeping a dirty power plant open, or laying off 10,000—directors would be asking about impact on employees and the public good. They’d be trying to avoid social harm, because their own pocketbooks would be at risk.

Alarcon says his bill may not pass in a single session. “Most significant changes in American law take some time,” he said. “But the discussion is as important as the end product.”

Hilty agrees. He says the aim is to educate the public about the corporate form as the source of social ills. “It is at the bottom of virtually every major problem we deal with,”

Hilty emphasized. This is an issue to which he's dedicating himself. And he hopes to coordinate bills with Wisconsin, Iowa, and North Dakota, through the Mid-west Progressive Elected Officials Network. Alarcon has a similar commitment. "I will make this part of my fundamental mission," he said.

Something big may be stirring. Redefining corporate purpose would be a significant step toward a more humane economy. As the Minnesota activists remind us, at the state level democracy can still work. And in this season of national and international despair, that's reason for hope.

*From the spring 2003 issue of Business Ethics [www.business-ethics.com](http://www.business-ethics.com)  
For more information on the Minnesota Code for Corporate Responsibility, see [www.c4cr.org](http://www.c4cr.org)*

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## **Why aren't they using their words?**

### **An Editorial by Beth Sawin**

They sent an article home from my daughter's school, titled "Talking with Children about War." In it, a seven-year-old asked her mother, "Why aren't they using their words?" She was talking about the U.S. bombing of Iraq.

The little girl's question is a good one. But I didn't find the answer in "Talking with Children about War," which focused on parent-child communication. "Why aren't they using their words?" is a different kind of question, one of morals and ethics.

Children are disturbed by rules that change from one situation to another. You know this if you have ever tried to explain to a child why she must buckle up in the car but not on a bus or why she must eat all her vegetables at Grandma's Sunday dinner even though she gets to skip the peas and beets at home.

When children see inconsistencies they look for explanations. That's what that seven-year-old in the article is doing. Her question really is whether violence is ever an acceptable tool for solving problems.

Imagine that our seven-year-old sees Nathan hitting Emily on the playground. "Why aren't they using their words?" she might ask. At any school I've been around, at any school any parent would tolerate, the answer would be: "It doesn't matter why he's doing it, hitting is never OK; Nathan and Emily need to work this out with words."

And now imagine that same playground, with the same teacher answering not out of the ethics we teach our children, but out of the doctrine of "preemptive security" that gives

rise to our current international policy. “Stop making a fuss,” that teacher would say, “Nathan thought Emily might hit him tomorrow, so, of course, he hit her first.”

When you see it from this vantage point, the gap between our personal ethics and our national ethics is a giant chasm. This chasm exists not just in our ethics about war and violence, but also in our environmental ethics.

The first week of school my daughter and her classmates decorated the hallway outside their classroom with painted butterflies labeled with each child’s wish for the future. There were butterflies wishing for an end to pollution, butterflies for clean drinking water, and butterflies for endangered animals. These ordinary children of an ordinary town have a deep environmental ethic, and they’ve learned it from the adults around them.

We teach them that the earth matters. We plant trees with them on Earth Day and recycle with them. We pick up litter. We show them our treasured wild spots where we picnic or feed the ducks or paddle a canoe. But, at the same time that we are teaching our ethics, species are going extinct, toxic chemicals are accumulating, fisheries are collapsing, and the glaciers are melting.

Are we a nation of hypocrites, teaching our children one thing and acting out another as a society? Maybe that’s part of it. People who have been so hurt by life that they can only identify with a narrow community may hold one set of hopes for their loved ones and a different set for the people of a distant place.

Are all of us just flat-out flawed? Are we destined to continue our battles with the environment and other nations until one or the other battle destroys us?

I don’t buy that. I think that what we teach our children gives a better indication of what we are—of what we *could* be—than our national policy does. What we teach children comes straight from our hearts and right out of our life experiences. If you want to see our real beliefs and aspirations, look at what we teach. Be kind and share. Treat all lives as sacred. Respect yourself, others, and the earth. Taken together these seem like a decent roadmap to a peaceful, sustainable future.

But we affect the world not only as individuals. We are also citizens of a powerful nation. Until our basic values are expressed in the laws, policies, budgets, and actions of our nation, we will continue to add to the suffering in the world. Our ethics gap will haunt us in the bloody faces of children struck by shrapnel, in the hungry faces of the poor, in landscapes altered by climate change, in forests stripped of biodiversity, and in hundreds of other places.

The only alternative I see starts by recognizing that our ethics, though personal, are also widely shared. Individually, we can try harder than ever to live by them. And collectively, we can organize around them. We can use the ethics we teach our children as the base from which we speak, write, protest, and vote until we have a government that is ready to act out of the basic ethics held by its citizens. Be kind and share. Treat all life as sacred. Respect the earth.

Imagine a United States government like that. We could have it, but only if we accept that our duty as transmitters of ethics does not end with our children. We have a government to educate as well.

*Beth Sawin is a mother, biologist, and systems analyst who lives in Hartland, Vermont, and works at Sustainability Institute <[www.sustainer.org](http://www.sustainer.org)>. Contact her at [bethsawin@vermontel.net](mailto:bethsawin@vermontel.net) to receive a monthly column on systems and sustainability.*

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## Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)

*“Every ambitious would-be empire clarions it abroad  
that she is conquering the world to bring it peace, security and freedom,  
and it is sacrificing her sons only for the most noble and humanitarian purposes  
That is a lie; and it is an ancient lie,  
yet generations still rise and believe it.”*

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