

HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK NEWS

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“Intelligently” Designing Creationism: Darby School Board Undermines Science Education

In early February, the Darby School Board waded into the debate over creationism when it passed a policy that “encourages” science teachers to challenge evolution and teach students about competing theories. As the U.S. Supreme Court consistently and emphatically strikes down the Christian Right’s attempts to teach creationism in public schools, America’s Religious Right has redesigned its proposals. Its latest effort is “intelligent design.” As with creationism, intelligent design isn’t based on science, but that is beside the point, since its value to conservatives comes from its role in the Christian Right’s political movement. Although the policy adopted by the Darby School Board doesn’t specifically mention it by name, intelligent design was the central focus of people supporting the change.

The Agenda of “Intelligent Design”

Intelligent design holds that living organisms are too complex to be explained by evolution, and, therefore, all life must have been created by an intelligent designer. When speaking publicly, intelligent design (ID) supporters generally try to avoid designating the Christian God as the designer, occasionally even saying that space aliens could be the creators. However, in conservative venues, leaders of the ID movement leave little doubt that they are part of the Christian Right’s attempt to undermine church-state separation.

Based in Seattle, WA, the Discovery Institute leads the ID charge. The Institute’s Phillip Johnson called ID a “wedge” issue that should be used by Christian Right activists to undermine evolution using pseudo-scientific arguments. In front of sympathetic groups, ID proponents expose their fundamentalist Christian emphasis. Johnson once stated that undermining evolution is important so students can learn the “truth of the Bible” and be “introduced to Jesus.” Speaking before the National Religious Broadcasters, the Institute’s William Dembski said evolution had “blocked the growth of Christ [and] the free reign of the Spirit and people accepting the Scripture and Jesus Christ.” He also stated, “It’s important that we understand the world. God has created it.” One of the Institute’s main funders is Howard Ahmanson Jr., a follower of the Christian Reconstruction movement, which desires a theocratic state where civil law mirrors Old Testament biblical law.

Despite its religious motivation, the Discovery Institute peddles the idea of including ID in school curriculum all around the country. The Institute’s spokesmen have degrees from respected universities, adding an air of legitimacy to the Institute’s

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claims. However, the scientific community has soundly rejected the notion, which has moved the battle over ID from the laboratory to the editorial page. The National Academy of Science has called ID “creationism in disguise.” The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), the world’s largest scientific society, passed a resolution in November 2002 urging school policymakers to keep ID out of classrooms, and an organizational spokesperson was quoted in the media as saying that “There is no scientific evidence underlying ID theory.”

AAAS’ viewpoint was repeated during the controversy in Darby by faculty from the University of Montana. Don Christian and Fred Allendorf of the university’s Biological Sciences Department stated that ID has yet to generate any sort of hypothesis that can be tested by science. Allendorf expanded on this, saying, “In science we put forth hypotheses. There are no hypotheses in intelligent design. They simply say the other side is wrong. That’s not science.”

Proposing “Objective Origins”

In Darby, local minister Curtis Brickley spearheaded the ID push. On December 10, 2003, Brickley gave a presentation focused on ID to the Darby School Board and an audience of 200 community members. He wanted the school board to implement an “objective origins” policy that would teach ID alongside evolution in the high school curriculum. Darby School Board Chairwoman Gina Schallenberger said she liked what she heard, while fellow board member Doug Banks stated he fully supported adopting ID. Although Brickley later stated that he was not acting as a spokesperson for ID, he did admit to asking the Discovery Institute for help in

preparing his presentation. Also, attorney David DeWolf, a fellow at the Discovery Institute, presented testimony to the school board supporting Brickley’s policy change and asserted there was little reason to fear litigation over teaching ID.

“Brickley’s multi-media presentation was slick, expensive, replete with free videos, and as convincing as any late night infomercial I have ever seen,” commented John Schneeberger, coordinator for the Bitterroot Human Rights Alliance, a Network affiliate. “Doug Banks and Gina Schallenberger made their enthusiastic support apparent even before the other side was presented. Simple due diligence would have clearly revealed the religious agenda of the ‘objective origins’ proposal.”

The Darby School Board held three meetings to receive public input on the proposed change. Hundreds of people attended and testified at these meetings, with ID proponents using many right-wing catch phrases, including that opponents were “targeting Christianity” and promoting “godless communism.” ID supporters also called evolution the “biggest hoax” in America and stated that the divinity of

The Scientific Method

One of the major criticisms of intelligent design is that it doesn’t follow standard scientific procedures. The scientific method is the process by which scientists attempt to construct an accurate representation of the world. Using a standard procedure, scientists hope to minimize the impact of personal bias or prejudice in developing theories. The scientific method has four steps:

1. Observe and describe a phenomenon.
2. Formulate a hypothesis to explain the phenomenon.
3. Use the hypothesis to predict the existence of other phenomena.
4. Perform experimental tests of the predictions using several independent experimenters and properly performed experiments.

Jesus Christ was a scientific fact.

Opponents to the policy change emphasized that ID is not science, but part of the Christian Right’s religious agenda. A community group formed called Ravalli County Citizens for Science (RCCS). It gave a formal presentation to the school board in early January to counter Brickley’s testimony. Schneeberger, who moderated RCCS’ presentation, stated Brickley and ID supporters were “suggesting that biology students be taught about evolution, and then learn what creationists don’t like about it. They [ID supporters] want to bypass the whole process by which theories are formed and become accepted science.” Rod Miner, a spokesperson for RCCS, told the press “This [ID] is a politically and religiously moti-

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vated action that seeks to place a religious agenda ahead of the interests of students.”

RCCS’ presentation featured paleontologist Allan Gishlick of the National Center for Science Education. Gishlick said ID isn’t a scientific theory, but speculation. “No scientific theory works by negating someone else’s,” he stated. “There is a way that science does things, and ID hasn’t been doing these things.” Gishlick poked holes in some of ID’s critiques of evolution during his presentation.

The Montana School Board Association urged the Darby School Board not to change the curriculum without receiving approval from the state. It told the local school board that implementing the “objective origins” policy without state approval could lead to a lawsuit over the district teaching religious doctrine instead of science and a possible loss of accreditation.

The Ravalli County Attorney’s Office recommended the Darby School Board abide by the School Board Association’s opinion. Deputy Ravalli County Attorney James McCubbin submitted a letter to the school board that also stated that the “Failure to meet state standards for your curriculum could result in loss of accreditation for the Darby Schools” and that the district’s funding could be put in jeopardy.

District Favors Speculation, not Science

As the debate heated up, Brickley downplayed his support of ID, instead saying his focus was on including critiques of evolution in the curriculum. He even stated that he didn’t want creationism taught in schools.

Despite public comment and legal opinions against the policy change, the Darby School Board voted 3-2 to adopt the “objective origins” policy. Board members Schallenberger and Banks, who were both vocal supporters of ID during the proceedings, were joined by Elisabeth Bender in passing the proposal. The policy passed, despite the fact that Darby teachers opposed the change, and RCCS estimated that testimony was evenly split on the issue. The three board members claimed the

policy change was not based on religious intent. Regardless of the intent, curriculum in Darby schools will have to be changed to accommodate the “objective origins” policy.

Following the school board’s vote, Linda McCulloch, Montana’s Superintendent of Public Instruction, criticized the decision. She said ID wasn’t science, and that it was “all about teaching creationism.” She said the Darby School Board might be violating the Montana Constitution and jeopardizing its funding. She also stated, “You won’t find any credible group of scientists or science teachers who advocate these philosophies as science.”

Religious Right Law Firms Back School Board

With the possibility of a lawsuit hanging over the school board’s decision, two Christian Right law firms have offered to represent the school board. Both have connections to Hamilton’s Harris Himes, pastor for the Big Sky Christian Center. Himes is one of the most prominent Christian Right activists in Montana. Along with serving as a board member for the Montana Family Coalition [see related article on page 6], Himes has stated repeatedly that he believes America was founded on biblical principles and that politicians need to “have a bias to stand for God.”

Himes presented a letter to the school board from a group called the Liberty Counsel shortly after the decision. The Liberty Counsel agreed to represent the school board if a lawsuit is filed. In 2001, the Liberty Counsel merged with the ministries of Christian Right icon Jerry Falwell. The Counsel takes many cases regarding religion in schools.

A second law firm, the Alliance Defense Fund, has also offered to represent the school board. Himes has stated that he is active with this organization. This national group was founded by leading Christian Right figures like James Dobson and D. James Kennedy and proclaims it wants to “keep the door open for the spread of Gospel” in America. □

MOM INCREASES PUBLIC ANTI-SEMITISM, RACISM

Anti-Semitism and racism have been part of the Militia of Montana (MOM) since John, David and Randy Trochmann started the group in the early 1990s. Randy Trochmann held Christian Identity services at his home. Identity is based on a racist interpretation of the Christian Bible professing that people of color are subhuman “mud people” and Jews are the literal children of Satan.

John Trochmann participated in events at Idaho’s Aryan Nations, a hate group that also follows Identity doctrine. As the Trochmanns tried to move MOM into the political mainstream, they tried to distance themselves from their racist and anti-Semitic baggage. However, Richard Butler, founder of Aryan Nations, told the media that John Trochmann had visited the hate group’s compound multiple times and participated in Aryan Nations’ bible studies.

Over the years, the media has covered MOM extensively, but it has focused on John Trochmann’s bizarre conspiracy theories and allusions to armed resistance. The issues of race and anti-Semitism continued to exist in MOM, but largely outside the public’s view. Recently, however, MOM is increasingly promoting racist and anti-Semitic ideas openly in its propaganda.

The trend began in 2003 with MOM’s newsletter, *Taking Aim*, featuring a three-part series called the “Israel Lie.” Among other things, MOM stated the Bible condemns Jews as “the synagogue of Satan,” and that Jews control the federal government. In November 2003,



The Militia of Montana's newsletter, Taking Aim, featured a three-part series called "Israel Lie" in 2003. The series referred to Jews as the "synagogue of Satan."

MOM circulated a diatribe written by former Aryan Nations attorney Edgar Steele titled “It Wasn’t Arabs.” His “essay” contained a laundry list of over 80 longtime and more recent anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. Some of the statements included:

“It isn’t Arabs who began and continue to expand militant feminism – it is jews [sic].”

“It isn’t Arabs lying about and guilt tripping us with ‘the holocaust’ – it is jews [sic].”

“It wasn’t Arabs who doctored WWII prison camp photos to appear to be belching smoke from crematoria – it was jews [sic].”

“It isn’t Arabs who regularly phony up ‘hate crimes’ against themselves – it is jews [sic].”

“It wasn’t Arabs who caused the Great Depression – it was jews [sic].”

“It isn’t Arabs bent upon destroying Christianity – it is jews [sic]. And,

lest we forget: It wasn’t Arabs who had Jesus Christ crucified – it was jews [sic].”

Also included in Steele’s list were accusations that Jews had attacked him personally, including stealing his law practice, threatening to kill his children, and stealing stocks from the company he worked for in San Francisco. Steele also defended racists like David Duke and Tom Metzger, both of whom have had problems with authorities over their racist activities.

The “It Wasn’t Arabs” e-mail was hardly the first anti-Semitic Steele missive circulated by MOM. In May 2003, Steele announced he was working on a book that he might title “The Synagogue of Satan” that would “pull out the stops and really pin the tail on the jew [sic].” MOM also distributed the text of a speech Steele gave at a Holocaust denial conference, and a series of Steele essays titled “In Defense of Racism.”

Steele’s diatribes are the most blatant pieces of anti-Semitism promoted by MOM recently, but they’re
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hardly the only ones. MOM has consistently reported on Ernst Zundel, a Holocaust Denier who is currently on trial in Canada. Since the 1970s, Zundel has run Samisdat Publishers, one of the largest distributors of Nazi propaganda and memorabilia in the world. Zundel has a long history in the Canadian courts, dating back to the 1980s when he faced criminal charges related to distributing materials denying the Holocaust. In 2001 he left Canada for the U.S., eventually relocating to Tennessee. In February 2003, U.S. Immigration arrested Zundel for immigration violations. He then petitioned Canada for political refugee status in an attempt to keep from being deported to Germany. If the Canadian courts determine that Zundel is a security risk, he will be deported to Germany, where he faces up to five years in prison for denying the Holocaust.

MOM has also started circulating information attributed to "Stormfront," a website that acts as a clearinghouse for white supremacist information and features a logo stating "White Pride World Wide." Stormfront is the creation of Don Black, a former Klansman, and was one of the first white supremacist sites to appear on the Internet.

Capitalizing on a Trend?

MOM's inclination to distribute blatant anti-Semitic and racist material may be an attempt to capitalize on a current trend. Since the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the level of anti-Semitism has increased in the general population. The radical right wing has tried to capitalize on this as both a recruiting tool and as a way to mainstream its ideas.

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) has conducted surveys to measure anti-Semitism for the last 40 years. In 2002, an ADL survey found an increase in American anti-Semitism. This came after ten years of declining levels of anti-Semitism. The ADL found that 17% of

Americans – or about 35 million adults – held views about Jews that were "unquestionably anti-Semitic."

The rising levels of anti-Semitism also coincide with the political discussion of America's close relationship to Israel. The ADL survey found that anti-Israel feelings tended to turn into anti-Semitism. Over 51% of the survey's respondents thought that America supported Israel too much. Also, Americans with strong anti-Semitic beliefs were four times more likely to think that Jewish leaders had too much influence on American politics.

The radical right has attempted to reframe its anti-Semitism to fit with themes such as the ones displayed in the ADL survey. Individual groups have had varied levels of success, including trying to attach their activists and messages onto the non-racist, anti-war movement.

Organizational Problems

MOM as an organization has been in disarray since its co-founder, Randy Trochmann, left in 2000. Randy Trochmann took care of daily operational tasks, such as moderating MOM's e-mail list and editing its newsletter, *Taking Aim*. He left because he could no longer support his family with income from MOM. Since Randy's departure, *Taking Aim* rarely features original articles and generally reprints material from other sources. The group's e-mail list began charging a subscription fee in 2001, but, like the newsletter, relies on recycling old material.

In early 2004, MOM announced another possible cutback in its services. Carolyn Trochmann, John Trochmann's wife, announced MOM would no longer charge a \$15 fee to be on the group's e-mail list. She said MOM would continue providing the list "as long as possible." MOM blamed its problems on new federal laws and computer viruses coming "from government sources including Fort Hood" in Texas. MOM's announcement coincided with a plea for money. □



The logo for Stormfront

CONFUSION REIGNS OVER NAME CHANGE: MILLAM STATES FAMILY COALITION STILL ALIVE

Switching names and affiliations is a common practice in the Christian Right Movement. Over the past three years, the Christian Coalition of Montana transformed into the Montana Family Coalition. Currently, depending on the source, it appears that the Montana Family Coalition has been reborn as the Montana Family Foundation. The latest change has even confused Family Coalition Director Julie Millam, who insists her organization is still alive. In any case, the names of the organizations may change, but the activists and the ideology remain the same.

The Man with the Plan

The person who has been involved in each mutation is Helena Dr. Tom Rasmussen, a former state senator. He was a founding board member of the Christian Coalition of Montana, and he has been a fixture of Montana's Christian Right scene ever since. In 2001 when the Christian Coalition of Montana announced it was changing its name to the Montana Family Coalition, Rasmussen was on its board of directors. In fact, he wrote most of the fundraising appeals for the group, generally identifying himself as president of the Coalition.

During his affiliation with the Family Coalition, Rasmussen helped form the "Montana Pro-Family Forum" to lobby during the 2003 Montana Legislature. The Forum comprised a laundry list of Christian Right groups including: the Family Coalition, Citizens Network, Montana Right to Life, and Montana Eagle Forum. Under the banner of "defending the Family," these organizations lobbied against equal protection under the law for gays and lesbians and for the termination of a woman's right to reproductive choice. Rasmussen also serves on Montana's State Abstinence Education Advisory Council, which advocates abstinence-only sex education, a favorite issue of the Christian Right

Trouble in Paradise

At the end of December 2003, Rasmussen issued a letter to supporters saying that the Montana Family Coa-

lition "will become inactive" as of December 31. His letter stated that the issues faced by the Christian Right Movement were too complex to be handled by the Montana Family Coalition. Instead, he said the group would "join forces" with the Montana Family Foundation.

The Montana Family Foundation appears to be what Rasmussen was working towards all along. In 2002, he announced he was not going to seek office again, because he wanted to help start a group that would be affiliated with the national Focus on the Family. When the Christian Coalition of Montana changed its name to the Montana Family Coalition, it appeared Rasmussen's task was complete. However, no formal affiliation with a national group was ever announced. In August 2003, Focus on the Family announced it was partnering with a new group in Montana, the Montana Family Foundation. The Family Foundation became one of Focus on the Family's state policy councils that push fundamentalist Christian policy and ideology at the state level. When this announcement was made, Rasmussen was listed as the Family Foundation's vice-president and the other officers were longtime Christian Coalition of Montana activists. For about four months, the Family Foundation and the Family Coalition seemed to be operating as separate entities, at least as separate as two groups can be that share the same board members and activists.

Rasmussen's December 2003 letter seemed to end this separation. Writing as the president of the Family Coalition, Rasmussen announced that the Coalition's executive director Julie Millam would move into an "advisory role" with the Family Foundation. He also gave a preview of the Family Foundation's proposed agenda: combating "activist judges" who rule against Christians, promoting fatherhood, and addressing family concerns through a daily radio program.

The Family Foundation's director is state Rep. Jeff Laszloffy (R-Laurel). Laszloffy has announced he will not seek re-election when his term expires in early 2005, so he can concentrate on his new position with the Foundation. During Laszloffy's tenure in the Montana Legislature, he consistently opposed reproductive freedom for women and equal protection under the law for gays and lesbians.

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Millam Missed the Memo

Although Rasmussen's letter appeared to make the transition cut and dried, the Family Coalition's Julie Millam told reporters that the Montana Family Coalition is still in existence. She said her group did lose board members to the Family Foundation. She also said she will remain the Family Coalition's director, but she may also serve as an advisor to the Family Foundation. She characterized the Family Foundation as the "mother ship" to Montana's Christian Right. The Family Coalition no longer has offices, and Millam has been running the group out of her home since late 2003.

**Names Change,
 Message the Same**

It is very common for Christian Right activists to change their affiliation with groups or change the groups' names. Sometimes these changes are made in an effort to leave behind negative political baggage. Overall, the transformation from the Christian Coalition of Montana to the Montana Family Foundation means one thing—that Montana's most prominent Christian Right group is now affiliated with Focus on the Family instead of the Christian Coalition. This switch is part of an effort to appear more mainstream.

Since running for the Republican presidential nomination in 1988, Pat Robertson, who founded the national Christian Coalition, has marginalized himself through his public comments and actions. In 1992, his book *The New World Order* was published and quickly attacked for

citing anti-Semitic materials to justify Robertson's conspiracy theories.

Following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, Robertson and fellow theocrat Jerry Falwell blamed the attacks on gays, feminists, the absence of school prayer, etc. Because of the progressive movement, Robertson concluded that "God Almighty is lifting his protection from us [America]."

The year 2003 found Robertson stating on his television show *The 700 Club* that the Justice Department should be blown up with a nuclear device, saying, "We need a very small nuke thrown off on Foggy Bottom [the neighborhood where the State Department is located] to shake things up." More recently, Robertson told *700 Club* viewers that God had endorsed President George W. Bush in the upcoming presidential election.

With Robertson making radical comments more often, it isn't surprising that Montana Christian Right groups would want to hitch their wagon to another national figure. When the Montana Family Foundation became one of Focus on the Family's state policy councils, it affiliated with an organization that is viewed by the public in a much more positive light. James Dobson and Focus on the Family are normally associated with Dobson's radio show and books that deal with maintaining families. However, the perception of being more mainstream is inaccurate.

Like the Christian Coalition, Focus on the Family is anti-gay and anti-choice. Dobson has called gays and lesbians "the greatest danger to our moral perspective and to the family and indeed to the nation." Focus runs an "ex-gay movement" ministry that claims gays and lesbians can change

their sexual orientation by converting to fundamentalist Christianity. Dobson and Focus have also been very outspoken against both the U.S. Supreme Court decision ruling anti-gay sodomy laws unconstitutional and the Massachusetts Supreme Court granting same-sex couples the right to marry. As for choice, Dobson opposes abortion even in cases of rape and incest, concluding that "What is right and moral for the unborn child is ultimately best for the mother and father, too."

Focus on the Family has also taken a lead role in supporting Alabama Judge Roy Moore. Moore has become the poster child for the Religious Right after he illegally placed a monument of the Ten Commandments in Alabama's judicial building. Federal judges ruled that the monument violated the First Amendment and ordered it removed. Dobson was one of many right-wing activists that journeyed to Montgomery to protest the removal. Moore lost his judgeship after refusing to abide by a district court's ruling to remove the monument. At the invitation of Jonathan Martin and the Constitution Party of Montana, Moore is scheduled to speak in Great Falls at the end of February. His speech has been promoted by the Militia of Montana and the Montana Shooting Sports Association.

Changing from the Montana Family Coalition to the Montana Family Foundation is just that – a change in name. New organizations may be created, but the activists and ideology stay the same. No matter what organization is the "mother ship" for Montana's Christian Right, it will always be anti-gay, anti-choice, and against the separation of church and state. □

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NEWS FROM AROUND

Bitterroot Human Rights Alliance

About 60 friends and supporters of BHRA attended its 9th annual Martin Luther King Day Celebration and potluck dinner in January. The keynote speaker was Noorjahan Parwana, who gave a moving and informative presentation on the conflict in Afghanistan and U.S. foreign policy. Joan Perry, longtime BHRA board member and activist, was awarded the Iman-Evan Bitterroot Humanitarian award for her stalwart service to human rights in the Bitterroot.

BHRA staff has been very busy opposing the "Objective Origins" proposal for Darby Schools that was pushed through by creationists and local Religious Right activists [see related story on page 1]. With BHRA help, there was strong local opposition to this assault on church-state separation and science standards. The events in Darby are coming on the heels of other efforts by the Christian Right, including the unsuccessful campaign to ban a Maya Angelou book at Hamilton High School, and a successful effort to place "In God We Trust" framed posters in public schools and county buildings.

In addition to the overt skirmishes in the so-called "culture war," BHRA helped the Safe Schools Coalition get an anti-harassment and bul-

lying training for teachers in Hamilton and hopes to expand to other area schools. BHRA also continues its campaign to address the problem of low wages and other social justice issues, working with human service groups, welfare rights organizations, and labor unions.

Flathead Valley Human Rights Network

The group's annual Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration was held at Christ Church Episcopal in Kalispell. It began with an inspiring medley of songs performed by the Glacier Chorale and Flathead High School Choir, which was followed by a keynote speech by Noorjahan Parwana. Parwana, who lives in Butte but was born in Afghanistan, described her recent 10-week visit to Afghanistan. She described how the United States supported warlords and recruited people from other countries to fight against Soviet occupation of the country, which resulted in the creation of the Taliban. Parwana suggested that instead of spending \$1 million per month on military operations, the American government should prioritize spending for the rebuilding of infrastructure and for providing food, health care, and education.

Shawn Sorenson of Whitefish organized the group's Martin Luther King Art and Essay contest this year. More than 300 students participated in the contest set up for students in

grades K-12. The entries were displayed in six Whitefish businesses.

Great Falls

Over 150 people turned out for the Network's "A Dinner for Martin Luther King Day" at the First Congregational Church in January. After a catered sit-down dinner, participants heard remarks from Pat Williams, a former member of the U.S. House of Representatives, on the importance of working for human rights at the local level. The evening ended with a performance by the Mount Olive Choir. The Network plans to make this an annual event. If you are interested in helping out with the planning process or want to get involved with other social justice activists in Great Falls, call the Network at 442-5506 or e-mail us at: network@mhrn.org.

Helena Human Rights Task Force

The Task Force held its annual Martin Luther King Celebration at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in January. With City Commissioner Sandy Oitzinger acting as the master of ceremonies, the event featured the winners of the annual poster and essay contest, which followed the theme of "Bridging Generations." The event also featured a keynote speech by Rev. George Harper, who gave a personal account of life in the South
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(News, continued from page 8) during segregation. Rich Aastad from the Montana Historical Society gave an account of diversity and the Lewis and Clark Journey, while the Magpie Singers and Quincy Bjornberg added a Native American flair to the event.

The Task Force also teamed up with Helena's Big Sky Unitarian Universalist Fellowship to sponsor a couple of speakers. In January, Mary Caferro of Working for Equality and Economic Liberation gave a presentation on social justice. In February, Network Board President George Waring gave a presentation titled "The Hidden Desert Storm."

The Task Force continues to have a presence on Carroll College Radio. At 8:00 p.m. every Friday, "The Jim Cottingham Show" will feature discussions of social justice issues, along with announcing upcoming Task Force and human rights events. Carroll College radio can be found at 88.5 FM.

Flathead Reservation Human Rights Coalition

The Coalition sponsored its annual art and essay contest commemorating Dr. Martin Luther King

Jr. The theme of this year's contest was "Do the Right Thing." Participants were asked to design an art project or compose an essay reflecting how Dr. King set an example by acting on his conscience to do the right thing. The Coalition will hold a public reception and exhibition for the MLK contest at Ronan Middle School on Wednesday, March 3, 2004, at 7:00 p.m. Winners will be announced and prizes awarded. Hors d'oeuvres, music and poetry will also be part of the festivities. Call 676-8444 for more information.

In December 2003, the Coalition held its 12th Annual Culture Fair. Special features included singing the national anthem in the Navajo (Dineh) language, folk dancers, music, crafts, and cultural displays.

Gallatin Valley Human Rights Task Force

In January, the Task Force held a "Martin Luther King Day Coffee House" to celebrate the King Holiday. About 30 people attended the event, which featured songs and stories about the civil rights movement and current tales about the struggle for human rights. The event also featured two local singers and com-

ments from Mike Clark.

Missoula Advocates for Human Rights

The Advocates' annual Martin Luther King Celebration was bigger than ever. Over 150 people attended the rally in Caras Park where George Price and Emily Sandal spoke. Local folk singer Amy Martin led the crowd in a rousing sing along. University of Montana Music Professor Steve Kalm led the march from Caras Park to St. Paul's Lutheran Church, where Ami Thurber, executive director of the National Coalition Building Institute, delivered the keynote address to an audience of more than 200. The Missoula Community Choir sang several songs and were followed by students reading their prize-winning essays on what Dr. King's dream meant to them.

The Advocates have continued to work with Indian People's Action on a campaign to combat discrimination by the hotel industry in Missoula towards minorities.

The Advocates also have been helping spread the word about the Network's new report *Shooting for Respectability*, which analyzes Montana's gun rights movement. □

ATTEND THE "SHOUT YOUTH SUMMIT"

The Network is sponsoring the "ShOUT Youth Summit" on May 7-9 in Helena. The summit is FREE with housing and meals provided. LGBTQI youth and their youth allies, ages 14-20, are welcome to attend. The summit will cover topics like dealing with stress, networking with other youth, ending harassment at school, and more. For more information and registration packets, contact Betty at (406) 442-5506 or via e-mail at betty@mhrn.org.

REVIEWING *THE SOUL OF CAPITALISM*: GREIDER'S BOOK LOOKS AT CREATING A MORAL ECONOMY

By
Ralph Stone,
MHRN Board Member

William Greider has written several highly acclaimed books on American economic and political institutions. His most recent work looks at contemporary capitalism from the perspective of a sharp critic who nonetheless believes the system can be fundamentally changed.

Greider leaves no doubt that far-reaching changes are necessary. Gross inequalities in income, as represented by CEOs "earning" over 500 times what the average worker takes home (the ratio was only 14 to 1 in 1940), make a mockery of our belief in fairness.

Corruption of the political process by big money is an open wound. Single-minded pursuit of profit, no matter the harm to displaced workers, wrecked communities, and the environment, seems tragically short sighted.

Apologists for capitalism point to its unparalleled efficiency and productivity. Greider acknowledges its considerable strengths, but notes that collateral damages are seldom factored into the balance sheet. When we the people and our descendants end up paying for toxic land fills and industrially-caused disease, it looks like less of a bargain. Hasn't capital simply socialized its costs after hav-

ing privatized its profits?

For a democratic society to be worthy of the name, there must exist a considerable measure of economic equality, including participation in and responsibility for the decisions that shape our lives. Yet corporate capitalism is organized hierarchically, its employees told "what to do and what not to say," and its benefits accruing disproportionately to the insiders. Greider approvingly cites David Ellerman, a former staff

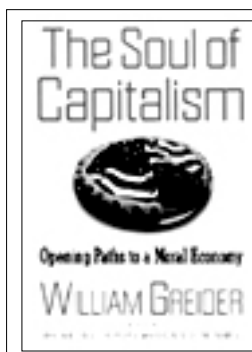
very, but are "rented" to employers—obviously a great improvement—this does not negate the unequal nature of the relationship. Like slave owners, the capitalist "pretends the worker is an instrument" of production, and on that basis makes the claim that he is entitled to the wealth generated by *both* labor and capital. Workers collect "rent" for their time and effort, but do not commonly share in the surplus wealth—profits—their contributions produced.

Given the current climate of opinion in which free-market economics seems a matter of natural law, what makes Greider think significant changes in the system are forthcoming? Oddly enough, it is partly because capitalism has succeeded in creating sufficient wealth to end the centuries-old prob-

lem of scarcity: there's enough to go around. The task henceforth will be not only to distribute these riches so that everyone enjoys the basic necessities, but also to restructure the corporation in ways that promote widespread ownership and control.

Greider's defense of "self-ownership" is threefold: (1) it is far more equitable than the existing master-servant relationship, (2) it helps stabilize the economy by spreading out the returns from capital, and (3) it's better business; companies that have greater employee ownership outperform similar firms that lack employee owners.

(Greider, continued on page 11)



*The Soul of Capitalism:
Opening Paths to a Moral Economy*
by William Greider

Pages: 366

Publisher: Simon and Schuster

Price: \$28.00

economist at the World Bank, who argues that the power relationships within existing capitalism are essentially illegitimate because they are based on the "legalized fraud" that workers can be treated as just another production input, along with capital, machines, and raw materials, to be manipulated to enhance the bottom line. Unlike the other units of production, however, human beings are able to deliberate and choose and be held accountable for their choices, a quality they cannot surrender without losing the very essence that defines the self.

While today's workers are no longer bought and sold, as under sla-

(Greider, continued from page 10)

While proposing "self ownership" may seem wildly utopian at this time, Greider sees encouraging signs of change. There are now, for example, 10 million Americans who are members of 11,000 Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOPs), with total assets over \$400 billion. In addition, there are thousands of cooperative businesses and several hundred companies wholly owned by workers.

Another promising development is the movement toward socially-responsible investing in the mutual fund industry. As with employee-owned businesses, those fund managers using a social screen to include or exclude companies have been able to achieve returns comparable to their counterparts who have scoffed at such a "do-good" investing strategy.

Pension funds holding trillions of dollars have enormous potential for democratizing the economy. In most cases they are managed passively, roughly indexing the market. But opportunities exist for influencing these funds to be more socially-minded, especially through public-employee funds (holding \$2.6 trillion) and union-managed funds (\$400 billion).

Greider thinks reform of the economic system won't

start in Washington. Both major political parties are too beholden to corporate largesse. Change must come from below. Indeed, there are many initiatives already underway which Greider catalogues. The "pioneers" who are leading these movements at the local and state levels understand that capitalism doesn't have to result in obscene inequalities, perversion of our politics, and devastation of the natural world which is our true inheritance.

Anyone wishing to advance human rights in the economic arena would do well to read this book. □

(Maatta, continued from page 12)

sive lawyers looking for high-profile lawsuits that further their agenda. Maatta, just months away from retirement, seems to be begging for a fight. His situation may offer an ideal suit for the Rutherford Institute if he is willing to continue pushing the limits of the MSU Extension Service.

MSU has remained firm that extension news should be kept completely separate from Maatta's personal opinions, and that the extension service should provide only researched-based information to the public. Community residents are still alarmed at the rhetoric in the "Whittlings" column and are speaking out. □

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EXTENSION AGENT OR RIGHT-WING CRUSADER: SOMETIMES IT'S HARD TO TELL

Last fall, Liberty County extension agent, John Maatta, urged gardeners to stop watering vegetables well before the first frost and to express their opposition to gay marriage to Congress. That's right, in his weekly column under the banner of the MSU Extension Service, Maatta spent more space warning his readers about the dangers of gay marriage and the need for a constitutional amendment banning it, than he did imparting gardening tips.

Concerned readers contacted the Network. "The community is being served the rhetoric of intolerance on a platter of legitimacy... provided by Mr. Maatta's public employment," wrote Network co-director Christine Kaufmann in a letter to the MSU Extension Service and the Liberty County Commission. "A steady diet of this inflammatory rhetoric causes some citizens to live in fear, and others to consider bigoted violence against their neighbors."

MSU informed the Network that they had been dealing with Maatta

for some time. He had been directed to stick to extension topics in his column and to submit them to his supervisor for approval before they were printed. Maatta responded by convincing the editor of the *Liberty County Times* to continue with the column under a new banner called "Whittlings: Let the Chips Fall Where They May." Although no longer identified as the local extension agent, Maatta said he intended to continue to share his perspective on the social issues of the day, along with updates from Extension on "agricultural and horticultural items of interest, as in the past."

In her letter, Kaufmann pointed out that Maatta is well-known in the community as the extension agent and to simply change the title of the column did not "relieve the public institutions from responsibility to ensure their services are not entangled with one-sided political and religious agendas." MSU apparently agreed and sent a letter of apology to the community. The letter stated:

"John has inappropriately included his own personal opinions in his news columns, which may have given the impression that those were the views of MSU Extension. They are not, and we have asked John to discontinue that practice and...not to include MSU extension items in his new personal column."

According to some Chester residents, Maatta admitted that he has been receiving information from the Rutherford Institute, a national Christian Right legal group that promotes its agenda through the courts. Its founders, John Whitehead and Frank Schaeffer, are adherents of Christian Reconstruction, which holds that every aspect of society should be based on their strict interpretation of the Bible, including the imposition of the death penalty for homosexuals. The Institute, right in step with the Reconstructionist view, states that "all of civil affairs and government, including law, should be based upon principles found in the Bible."

The Rutherford Institute has a large budget and a team of aggress-
(Maatta, continued on page 11)

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