



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #151 — JUNE 1, 2012

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'Natural' Will Mean 'Old-Fashioned'

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, June 1, 2012)

I'm sure some of you can't wait to sink your teeth into some of this stuff. :-) *Bon appetite*, indeed!

"The Future of Food: Five Frontiers" by Elizabeth Weingarten, *Slate*

June 1, 2012,

(http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/future_tense/2012/06/vertical_farms_gmo_salmon_lab_grown_meat_and_the_future_of_food_single.html)

(How nanotechnology, vertical farms, and lab-grown meat may change the way you eat. Will lab-grown meat ever taste as good as the real thing?)



(Jupiterimages/Getty Images/Thinkstock.)

Generations of kids have grown up forbidden to taste chocolate cake batter. The rationale for this quasi-torture: fear of salmonella poisoning.

And at the current rate of food technology, the kids of 2040 may be eating healthier cookie dough, too—gooey hunks infused with nano-sized nutrients, with chocolate chips engineered to be less fattening.

But future children may never know what salmonella is: A Dutch company is currently developing a consumer spray to kill the bacteria on contact. Salmelex may sit next to Windex on future kitchen counters.

But most of the latest advancements in food technology go beyond dessert. Rather, scientists are motivated by an impending agricultural crisis: The world population will likely hit 9 billion by 2050, while climate change may render current agricultural systems and seeds inadequate. To stave off an agricultural doomsday, researchers are developing new techniques to transform our unsustainable practices.

For the month of June, Future Tense—a partnership of *Slate*, the New America Foundation, and Arizona State University—will look at the future of food in both the developed and developing world. We'll explore how we grow food, package it, genetically engineer it, and cook it at home.

To kick things off, here are five of the exciting food frontiers, some of which we'll be addressing more thoroughly in the weeks to come. *Bon appetite.*

1. Coding Corn

Some of the first genetically modified commercial crops in the '90s were tweaked to be tolerant to herbicides and resistant to plant diseases caused by viruses. Scientists built these superfoods by introducing certain genes into the plant's DNA.

Today, most genetically modified foods on the market are commodity crops used for animal feed or processed ingredients, like corn, soybeans, and sugar beets. Typically, they aren't manipulated to be more nutritious for human consumers. But that may soon change. A DuPont-owned company is currently marketing a "high oleic" heart-healthier soybean—meaning its oil has 20 percent less saturated fat than normal commodity soybean oil. Monsanto is also developing omega-3 enriched soybeans.

Researchers are working to enhance the nutrients in staple crops like sweet potatoes and cassava, which provide some populations in developing countries with the majority of their daily calories. That's a problem because though sweet potatoes, for example, are nutritious, they alone don't contain all the nutrients necessary for a balanced diet.

And for a couple of years, another corporation has been seeking FDA approval for genetically engineered salmon, dubbed AquAdvantage, that matures to its full size in half the time. But the process has been mired in controversy, particularly over concerns about the environment.

Gregory Jaffe, the director of the Biotechnology Project at the Center for Science in the Public Interest, says that there are other concerns about GM foods in general. For example, genetic modification could introduce a new gene that produces an allergen in a food, posing consumer health risks. Scientists also have to worry about introducing a new gene and, in the process, inadvertently activating an existing gene in the plant that could produce a harmful substance in the edible part.

2. Tiny Titans

Nanoparticles aren't new: The minuscule units appear naturally in some foods. But in the past decade, researchers have begun trying to use the particles to alter the taste and texture of food. Nanotechnology could be particularly useful for concocting diet-friendly foods: The particles can enhance the flavor and consistency of products without adding calories, sugar, or fat.

The Project on Emerging Nanotechnologies' comprehensive database of nano-products in the United States lists only four in the food and beverage category. Canola Active Oil uses nano-particles to inhibit "the

transportation of cholesterol from the digestive system into the bloodstream." Another product, Nanoceuticals' chocolate-flavored SlimShake, promises "enhanced flavor without the need for excess sugar."

But some scientists worry that nanoparticles in food could pose a danger to human health, and that companies are releasing products without adequate safety testing. Todd Kuiken at the Project on Emerging Nanotechnologies, which is affiliated with the nonpartisan Woodrow Wilson Center and advocates for the advancement of nanotechnology, says he hasn't heard of much current research "on actual food products—what happens when [nanoparticles] get into the body, blood stream, and brain." The FDA says it's funding some research into the safety of nanotech. But the paucity of testing means that right now, no one can be certain that ingesting these tiny particles won't come with big health consequences.

3. Lettuce Skyscrapers

Columbia University professor Dickson Despommier says Babylonians, with their hanging gardens, were first to pioneer the idea of vertical farms. But it was Despommier's 2010 book *The Vertical Farm*—and website, launched in 2004—that inspired the modern movement. Despommier defines a vertical farm as a building that's at least two stories with crops growing inside—stacked greenhouses, if you will. Back in 2010, there were none. Today, seven have sprouted around the world in places like South Korea, Japan, the Netherlands and Chicago.

Horizontal farmland can't grow enough food to sustain the swelling population, Despommier says. Not only do vertical farms do more with less land; they also allow food producers to grow crops in cities next to consumers, eliminating transportation costs. Cultivating food indoors with hydroponics (a system of growing plants without soil) uses 60 percent to 70 percent less water than traditional farming, and indoor crops aren't susceptible to drought, pests, diseases or floods.

PlantLab, based in the Netherlands, is a vertical farm that goes beyond Despommier. Rather than sunlight, it uses red, blue, and far-red LED lights to grow plants. But PlantLab isn't a food producer (though the researchers there do sometimes eat the tomatoes they grow). Rather, they glean information from the plants they grow to create growing recipes for food production companies. These formulas specify the temperature, humidity, carbon dioxide, airflow, nutrients, water, and LED light necessary to grow a crop most efficiently. Gertjan Meeuws, the managing partner of PlantLab, told me he's currently developing recipes of more than 40 crops for about 20 companies—most of which have traditional greenhouses. He guesses that in five to 10 years, retail houses like Wal-Mart will be producing their own vegetables and herbs.

But unlike outdoor farmers, vertical cultivators don't get government subsidies or tax breaks. "Indoor farmers aren't looked at as serious yet by the U.S. government -- there are no major incentive programs to make vertical farming part of the landscape," Despommier says, stressing the vast size and influence of the American farm lobby. That means "the U.S. government will not be a big player in establishing vertical farming in the U.S.—but city governments might. If you talk to the mayor of Chicago or Philadelphia, you'll learn that they're passionate about this idea."

4. Lab Burgers

Dutch scientist Willem van Eelen imagined creating animal meat—or muscle tissue—in a laboratory back in the 1940s. Decades later, Mark Post, a stem cell scientist at the Netherlands' Maastricht University, is currently growing meat by capturing stem cells from cow muscles. His goal: to create a hamburger by November. But it's slow work, as he's forming the patty piece by piece. He's produced about 500 slivers of muscle tissue and estimates he needs 3,000. Once he's finished, Post estimates the hamburger will cost about 250,000 euros.

When will products from Post be on supermarket shelves? With sufficient funding, Post says, "we can probably make it happen in the order of 10 to 15 years." But, he says, "If the research continues to be funded the way it's funded now, it's never going to happen."

Another obstacle: Right now, cell division outside the body is induced with fetal bovine serum—liquid produced from the fetal blood of a dead cow. Not exactly PETA-friendly. Post tells me he would like to create a solution to replace the fluid. Alternative liquids that induce division in certain cells do exist—but so far, Post hasn't found them to work as well with skeletal muscle cells. Creating a replacement will be tough, he says, since fetal bovine serum contains about 10,000 individual proteins. But it's doable. The bottom line: You won't be chowing down on an in-vitro steak any time soon.

5. Salmonella-Fighting Soldiers

Bacteriophages (also referred to as "phages") are viruses that infect and kill bacteria. At Microcos, a company based in the Netherlands, researchers have created a phage spray to target particular bacteria that cause food-borne illnesses, like listeria and salmonella. (If you're keeping track at home—that's the third food technology incubated in the Netherlands.) The technology arose from research into antibiotic alternatives that began at the National Institute of Health in 1993. Microcos, a spinoff from the NIH project, was the first company to introduce phage spray technology—but others are entering the field, too. Recently, the FDA approved an American company's E. coli spray. Right now, its main customers are large scale food producers. But Microcos plans to release a consumer spray in the next year, CEO Mark Offerhaus told me. The industrial spray costs a penny per pound of meat, and Offerhaus guesses that the consumer spray will run about \$10 per bottle.

Martin Loesser, a professor of food microbiology at the Institute of Food Science and Nutrition at the Federal Institute of Technology Zurich, has been researching the consumer safety effects of phage technology for 25 years. Though early critics of phage treatments worried that since phages contain proteins they could cause allergic reactions, Loesser dismisses this risk. He's confident because he can identify the proteins that comprise each phage through genetic sequencing and then test those proteins against a database of all known allergenic proteins—like those from wheat, soy, peanuts, and milk. He hasn't found a similarity between a phage protein and a known allergen yet. "The amount of protein that's in [these treatments] is still so low that even if that was allergenic, I doubt that this would cause any kind of reaction," he says.

A Nano-Grain of Salt

Pondering the future of food has long captivated the imaginations of science fiction writers and policymakers. But these visionaries are often way off the mark. Take the food pill. Matt Novak, writer of the Paleofuture blog for *Smithsonian* magazine, recently traced the pill's origins, finding that the premise—encapsulating a meal's worth of calories synthetically—harkens back to the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago. As part of an essay project to promote the fair, suffragette Mary Elizabeth Lease predicted that Americans would be eating synthetic food essences by 1993, freeing women from their kitchen shackles.

The food-pill prediction appeared again in various newspapers, magazines, TV shows (like *The Jetsons*) and in the 1933 Chicago World's Fair. We now know that cramming a meal into a pill isn't scientifically possible. Turns out that consuming 2,000 calories—what the average person needs daily—would mean swallowing about half a pound of pills per day.

Lease's prediction now sounds both quaint and sweeping: Cooks of the future, she wrote, "will take, in condensed form from the rich loam of the earth, the life force or germs now found in the heart of the corn, in the kernel of wheat, and in the luscious juices of the fruits. A small phial of this life from the fertile bosom of Mother Earth will furnish men with substance for days. And thus the problems of cooks and cooking will be solved."

Her prose offers an important reminder: Be wary of any scientist who suggests her technology is a food future panacea. Predicting which technology will radically change the food landscape is tough. For now, we'll have to be content with the promise of licking a safer cake batter spoon.

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"Former Justice Predicts Cracks in *Citizens United* Decision" by Pete Williams, NBC

May 30, 2012, (<http://firstread.msnbc.msn.com/news/2012/05/30/11969505-former-justice-predicts-cracks-in-citizens-united-decision?lite>)

Former Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens took a poke at the controversial *Citizens United* decision Wednesday night and said his former colleagues have probably already had second thoughts about it.

The 2010 decision paved the way for the SuperPACs to which wealthy individuals, corporations, and labor unions can give unlimited amounts of money to support or oppose candidates. Stevens was among the justices who dissented in the court's 5-4 ruling.

In remarks prepared for delivery at the University of Arkansas, Stevens predicted that the court will soon be forced to issue rulings that will undermine a key part of the *Citizens United* ruling -- that the First Amendment "prohibits the suppression of political speech based on the speaker's identity," including the fact that the speaker is a corporation.

The court's decision left undecided whether the same free speech right applies to foreign corporations. In due course, Stevens said, the court will be called upon to decide that question, forcing it to craft an exception "that will create a crack in the foundation of the *Citizens United* majority opinion."

"The court must then explain its abandonment of, or at least qualify its reliance upon, the proposition that the identity of the speaker is an impermissible basis for regulating campaign speech. It will be necessary to explain why the First Amendment provides greater protection of some non-voters than to that of other non-voters," he said.

Stevens said a recent Supreme Court action may also undermine *Citizens United*. In January, the justices upheld a lower court ruling that said two non-citizens could not make political contributions to political candidates. It's therefore now settled, Stevens said, "that **the identity of some speakers may provide a legally acceptable basis for restricting speech**" through contributions.

Unlike most retired Supreme Court justices, John Paul Stevens has not been reluctant to criticize the rulings of his former colleagues.

20120531-04	10:29	Pam	Re: "Former Justice Predicts Cracks in <i>Citizens United</i> Decision" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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Finally, some good news.

20120531-02	08:31	MarthaH	"Montana Bucks the Court"
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"Montana Bucks the Court" by George F. Will, *The Washington Post*

May 30, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/montana-attempts-to-buck-the-supreme-court-on-citizens-united/2012/05/30/gJQA4DCi2U_story.html)

Montana uses an interesting argument to justify defiance of a Supreme Court decision: Because the state is particularly prone to political corruption, it should be trusted to constrict First Amendment protections of political speech.

At issue is the court's 2010 *Citizens United* decision, which held, unremarkably, that Americans do not forfeit their First Amendment rights when they come together in corporate entities or labor unions to speak collectively. What do liberals consider the constitutional basis for saying otherwise?

Three Montana corporations sued to bring the state into conformity with *Citizens United* by overturning a 100-year-old state law, passed when copper and other corporations supposedly held sway, that bans all corporate political spending. The state's Supreme Court refused to do this, citing Montana's supposedly unique susceptibility to corporate domination — an idea amusingly discordant with the three corporations' failure even to persuade the state court to acknowledge the supremacy of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Reasons for the Supreme Court to reconsider *Citizens United* are nonexistent. The ruling's primary effect has been to give unions and incorporated nonprofit advocacy groups freedom to spend what they choose on political speech as long as they do not coordinate with candidates or campaigns. Campaign "reformers," who advocate speech

rationing, apparently regard evidence irrelevant to argument, probably because there is no evidence for their assertion that 2012 has been dominated by corporate money unleashed by *Citizens United*. An amicus brief submitted to the Supreme Court by Sen. Mitch McConnell, Congress's staunchest defender of the First Amendment, notes:

Through March 31, the eight leading super PACs supporting Republican presidential candidates received contributions totaling \$96,410,614. Of this, \$83,220,167 (86.32 percent) came from individuals, only \$13,190,447 (13.68 percent) from corporations, and only 0.81 percent from public companies. McConnell says, "Not a single one of the Fortune 100 companies has contributed a cent" to any of the eight super PACS. These facts refute such prophesied nightmares as The Post's fear that corporate money "may now overwhelm" individuals' contributions.

Even an article in the ABA Journal falsely says: "These multimillion-dollar PACs were made possible by" *Citizens United*. And Justices Stephen Breyer and Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who dissented in that decision, say that the Montana case gives the court an occasion to reconsider it "in light of the huge sums currently deployed to buy candidates' allegiance." Disregard the unsupported smear that candidates are bought, but note this: If these justices believe candidates are corrupted by independent expenditures, presumably they believe that regulating or outlawing them can be justified as combating corruption or the "appearance" thereof. Hence their objection is not to *Citizens United* but to constitutional protection of advocacy-funding practices that are as old as the Republic.

Before *Citizens United* removed restrictions on independent expenditures by for-profit corporations, a majority of states already had no such restrictions. Neither did they have records of distinctively bad behavior.

Indisputably, this year's super PACs have, as McConnell's brief says, "led to more political debate over a lengthier period of time during which more voters had the opportunity to participate in the choice of a presidential candidate." As McConnell notes, the Montana court's ruling is "disdainful" and disobedient regarding the *Citizens United* decision, but this lawlessness is not what bothers many people who think of themselves as defenders of good government. Instead, much of the media and most liberals urge Americans to be scandalized about "too much money" in politics. That three-word trope means (because most political money is spent on the dissemination of political advocacy) that there is more political speech by others than is considered proper by much of the media, which are unrestricted advocates.

This media and liberal anxiety was not conspicuous in 2004, when George Soros spent \$24 million supporting Democratic candidates. Back then, the liberal/media complex embraced this Supreme Court principle enunciated in 1976: "The concept that government may restrict the speech of some elements of our society in order to enhance the relative voice of others is wholly foreign to the First Amendment."

Last year, Procter & Gamble, America's largest advertiser, spent \$2,949,100,000 — more than will be spent by the Obama and Romney campaigns and super PACs supporting them. The fact that more is spent to influence Americans' choice of their detergent than of their president is as interesting as this:

The collapse of liberals' confidence in their ability to persuade is apparent in their concentration on rigging the rules of political persuasion. Their problem is that the First Amendment is the rule.

[20120531-03](#) 09:49 SteveB Re: "Montana Bucks the Court" (reply to MarthaH, above)

Montana leads the nation! They still have a lot of that independent Westerner spirit up there.

We love Montana! "The last best place." Thanks.

[20120531-05](#) 10:52 Pam Re: "Montana Bucks the Court" (reply to MarthaH, above)

Two things: Liberals have not lost "confidence in their ability to persuade [made]... apparent in their concentration on rigging the rules of political persuasion." This is an unsupported assertion, and this liberal doesn't buy it.

I have a question the answer to which may actually help supporters of *Citizens United*. We have the secret ballot, which was not so easy to come by. Voters used to be bought at the very door of the election hall or in the pub next door. The secret ballot was intended to mitigate undue influence. Does not the same logic apply to political donations? Shouldn't people have the right to keep secrets, for whatever reason? That's why some letters to the editor are signed "Anonymous." I think the real crux is in the definition of "person." (Depends on what "is" "is.") [A la Bill Clinton! –SteveB] Individuals have rights. Do groups have rights? Churches have the right to not pay taxes (which I believe they should). Are there others? If we preserve and protect individual rights, that should logically cover groups of these individuals as well, not as a "group" but as a collection of "individuals." Do individuals have the right to secrecy when it comes to political donations? If there's a limit to how much an individual can give, then that person must declare the amount someplace, ergo it's not secret. If individuals can be limited in what they can give, why can't corporations (especially if they're just people, as the right claims) be limited as well? Where is the logic in differentiating between PACs and actual campaigns? Wouldn't separating the two lead to two (four, or more) separate "campaigns," each working toward its own ends? Is that what we really want? Either there is justification for limiting the rights of certain individuals, or there isn't. I say, there isn't. The rights I have should be the same as every other citizen's. A democracy shouldn't cherry-pick who gets these rights and who gets those. So, if individuals must declare, corporations must too, even if you define a corp. as merely a collection of individuals. Did I answer my own question?

20120531-06 11:43 SteveB Re: "Montana Bucks the Court" (reply to Pam, above)

Pam, it's funny I was just thinking about this subject this morning and scribbled into my little carry-all journal instead of getting it into an email, but intended to soon.

I was following the same lines. I don't think it's a problem, except in the short run, that corporations are defined as people. No constitutional amendment is needed to overturn *Citizens United* and all that effort is probably wasted energy that could perhaps be better expended to simply get a few laws changed—just one simple 100 page reform bill.

Ultimately, it's a very good and very appropriate thing that corporations be considered "people" under the law and not above the law, as they have traditionally acted. Being "people" makes them more amenable to regulation, perhaps.

We just need election reform laws that spell out how corporations and individuals have exactly the same restrictions and these should be severe—in the very dear interest of democracy itself!

First, all campaign contributions must be reported on federal and state income tax forms by all taxpaying entities. No person or corporation could contribute more than \$100 (I like) or \$1000 (I might be able to live with) to any one campaign. Period. That's directly or through PACs, eliminating the need for out-of-control PACs, I believe. In fact, a PAC would have to be treated as an individual too (whether incorporated or not, it is a taxable entity) with the same limits imposed. Haha on them!

Now...with the jerks we have in office, getting 'er done? Well... Whatya think?

20120531-07 12:02 SteveG Re: "Montana Bucks the Court" (reply to SteveB, above)

How about all elections being government funded so there are equal amounts per candidate to be spent? In this manner money is out of the picture and the focus would have to be on the content of the campaign.

20120531-08 12:16 Pam Re: "Montana Bucks the Court" (reply to SteveG, above)

I've always thought this was the best idea. A six-week campaign and equal funds for each major candidate. End of story.

[20120531-11](#) 13:36 SteveG Re: "Montana Bucks the Court" (reply to Pam, above)

Oh yeah, corporations can't vote – just people.

[20120531-15](#) 17:20 SteveB Re: "Montana Bucks the Court" (reply to Pam & SteveG, above)

Why can't the corporations vote? All they would need is a drivers license or voter ID with a photo and thumb print.

Ya, publically funded elections work great in many countries, and wouldn't shorter be nice? It seems when we tried public funding before, it got all screwed up. To work, things need to be kept simple, so congressmen will actually read the bill. So something real can be debated.

[20120531-17](#) 17:48 SteveG Re: "Montana Bucks the Court" (reply to SteveB, above)

OH, you expect congress to do something? Do something and not screw it up?

We still have on our federal tax forms if we want some money donated to elections.

I have never given a thumb print. Last time I was fingerprinted, about a year ago, there were major problems – my fingerprints were wearing out and they couldn't get a good read – had to do it twice and still not a good set.

[20120531-18](#) 17:51 Art Re: "Montana Bucks the Court" (reply to all, above)

You know, our whole system begs corruption. Why would companies be willing to spend tens of millions of dollars and more to have one person elected over another, if they didn't expect substantial rewards. Clearly, they expect a return on their investment, making the elected official pretty much bought and paid for before he/she ever enters office. As long as we are ruminating, we need to start with the core of the problem.

[20120531-24](#) 22:41 SteveG Re: "Montana Bucks the Court" (reply to Art, above)

Once you are elected it is pretty well mandated that you raise a stipulated amount of dollars each year, not only for your own election but for the party – if you don't do it the party support you receive decreases.

[20120531-09](#) 13:07 SteveB From the Right: "GOP Whistling Past the End of America" [Wisconsin Gov. Walker Recall Election]

"GOP Whistling Past the End of America" by Ann Coulter, *Human Events*

May 30, 2012 (<http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=51840>)

An election almost as important as the presidential election will be held next Tuesday, and conservatives aren't making a big deal of it, just as they didn't make a fuss over the 2008 Minnesota Senate election as Al Franken stole it from under their noses. (Gov. Tim Pawlenty: "Minnesota has a reputation for clean and fair and good elections. We've got 4,100 precincts run by volunteers. They do a good job, and we thank them.")

The public sector unions are trying to oust Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker from office for impinging on their princely, taxpayer-supported lifestyles. If Walker goes down, no governor will ever again suggest that snowplow operators work when it snows. No governor will dare try to deprive public school teachers of their Viagra. Forget about ever firing self-paced, self-evaluated, unnecessary government employees.

Always leading the nation, California has already been bankrupted by the public sector unions. That's the country's future if Walker doesn't win, and it's not going to matter who's in the Oval Office.

Democrats know what's at stake. They're treating this election like the Normandy invasion. Meanwhile, Republicans are sitting back, complacently citing polls that show Walker with a slight lead.

Polls don't register passion.

Public employee unions have vast organizing abilities, millions of dollars in union dues at their disposal, and millions of voters who are either union members themselves or relatives of union members. And it's their lifestyles being voted on.

The public sector unions will turn out 99.9 percent of their people. Even if they are only 15 percent of the electorate, that could be enough. Union members will have every distant relative, every neighbor, every person they can drag to the polls, voting to recall Walker next Tuesday.

Ordinary people answering polls may agree with Walker, but they'll have to decide: "Do I really want to get out of bed early and drive to the polls, just so they don't recall the governor?"

News reports blare with the information that the Walker campaign has spent more money than the opposition. This is absurd. Every union member in the country is working to defeat Walker.

Union political operatives aren't volunteers: They're getting salaries from the unions. But those expenditures don't get counted as money spent on a campaign -- a little detail of campaign finance laws Republicans have been screaming about for 20 years.

One measure of the unions' disproportionate passion is how difficult it is to obtain non-union information about the Wisconsin fight. Try running a few Google searches on Scott Walker and the public sector unions, and you'll get 20 pages of union propaganda under names such as "Common Dreams," "All Voices," "United Wisconsin," "Veterans News Now," "Struggles for Justice," "One Wisconsin Now," "Defending Wisconsin" and "Republic Report."

From the hysteria, you wouldn't know Walker's reforms have nothing to do with government employees' salaries. He eliminated collective bargaining only for all other aspects of government employees' contracts. OK, you can have two guys on a snowplow, but you can't have a snowplow watcher.

One of the most egregious union scams Walker dispensed with was the requirement -- won in collective bargaining -- that all school districts purchase health insurance from the same provider. The monopolist insurer was WEA Trust, which happens to be affiliated with the teachers union.

Simply by eliminating this union boondoggle, Walker has already saved individual school districts millions of dollars per year, which could easily rise to hundreds of millions of dollars. (Most districts still get their health insurance from WEA Trust, but the mere threat of competition forced it to lower its price.)

Amazingly, Walker actually had to eliminate "overtime" for snowplow operators who work outside of their 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m. shifts. Isn't the whole idea of snowplowers to have them work when it snows and not during specific, pre-set hours of the day?

The teachers unions wail, "It's all about the kids!" -- and then we find out the Milwaukee teachers union sued the school district because their health insurance didn't cover Viagra. Yes, it's all about the kids.

Loads of Milwaukee bus drivers are using sick days and overtime to take home more than \$100,000 a year.

Public sector employees seem to think they should be exempted from belt-tightening everyone else is subject to under the Obama economy. (Obama thinks so, too. Most of the stimulus money went to shore up public sector employees' salaries and perks.)

Half the country is unemployed, but these special people are indignant that Walker asked them to start contributing a tiny amount of their salaries to their own pensions -- 5.8 percent, up from zero percent -- and a little bit more for their own health insurance, from a measly 6.2 percent to 12.4 percent of their salaries.

Of course, it's extremely difficult to locate this information with the unions filling the Internet and the airwaves with their "Common Dreams" nonsense.

Fox News has barely mentioned this election, while on MSNBC they're doing non-stop campaigning on behalf of the unions. Apparently, James Madison will be rolling over in his grave if government unions aren't allowed to dictate how many employees are required to move a copy machine.

20120531-14	17:01	Art	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Dale, FotM Newsletter #147)
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Hi Dale, I didn't want to leave this too long. The decision will soon be made. Looking over the below and the other data list and checking some of the references the phrase "liars figure and figures lie comes to mind." Without exhaustive research it is hard to tell who is right and clearly both sides are cherry picking data that serves their purpose.

I think for me listening to that audio recording when Walker thought he was talking to one of the Koch's is almost impossible to overcome. He sounded very much a craven puppet to these people and his true allegiance seems to be more toward the Koch brothers and their corporate entities than to the people of Wisconsin. Maybe the Koch brothers are right and a corporate run state that worships business and profit would be a good thing, Romney certainly seems to think so, but if you model a state government on American big business today, it is all about greed and the acquisition of funds at the senior level. Screw everything else. Not sure that is a good way to run a government.

Some wag, maybe it was Lloyd George, once said "War is too important to be left to Generals". I think the same is maybe true for government. It is too important to be left to businessmen.

Did catch part of the debate and again thought Barrett made some telling points. Big one to me is the same issue and scolding President Obama gave the Republican nominees when some folks in the crowd at a debate loudly booed a apparently gay serving American soldier in Iraq. Not one Republican nominee had the moral courage to admonish the crowd that they were attacking a serving soldier who bled just like everyone else. As President Obama put it and Barrett during the debate, when you're President or Governor, you are President or Governor of all the people, not just the ones who are white and right.

Know we just won't agree on this one, but it is telling the apparently over 1 million people in Wisconsin felt Walker should be recalled. Tells you something.

20120531-16	17:46	Pam	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to all)
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My response to this Walker debate is going to be rather general, as I don't have facts and figures, just observations from where I stand. I spent my career in education, and I certainly see plenty wrong with it. Politicians love to gain points with voters by demanding "standards," "accountability," and "assessment." As with most abstractions, these terms sound much more profound than they actually are, and they obfuscate what is really going on in classrooms across the country. Here is my answer to troubled schools: getting the right people into the right positions, whether that be administration or actual teaching. There are all kinds of ways to teach well, and a single rubric cannot begin to allow for the creativity and imagination of a really strong teacher. Too often, applying

standards means clipping the wings of teachers and students alike. I wish we could hold doctors accountable the way we do teachers. Every time someone died, there'd be a cry of, "Failure!!" Just as doctors who practice in hospitals that care for the very ill are expected to lose a greater proportion of their patients, teachers who teach in underfunded, inner city schools are bound to have more students fall short. Some teachers are no good. There are a few rotten apples in every basket. But I truly believe that the vast majority of teachers teach because, despite the hardships, the rewards are great. No one goes into education for the money, and the job is too hard unless you do it for love.

I do not find Walker's figures on cuts to his education budget encouraging. I've never seen a school yet that performed better with LESS money. Cutting property taxes and starving education is self-defeating.

Concentrating on STEM courses, while eliminating or curtailing programs in music and art, is not necessarily a solution either. There are plenty of examples where under-performing students were brought up to speed by immersion in music study. And I know one young man, a Fulbright winner when I was the Scholarship Advisor at UNCG, who came from a Pittsburgh slum and a family of a dozen or so children. Many of his brothers and cousins were in jail. When he was in middle school, he discovered art--not at his school, but at an after-school program--and it quite literally saved his life. He is now an art professor at a university with two graduate degrees. Schools need to educate the whole person, and that includes their aesthetic sensibility as well as their critical thinking. These things do not function in isolation.

What I see in Gov. Walker is just another politician who thinks that by rattling sabres at teachers and blaming underfunded schools for "failing," he can get voters to buy into his blame game. It's not simply credentials that assure a good teacher, it's character as much as anything. My grandson goes to a neighborhood school that serves a lot of immigrant children, and it was, frankly, not doing so well. The neighborhood was split in two, with half the kids going to one school, the other half to a different one, so local support was diminished. The lines were redrawn to include all the neighborhood kids; parents jumped on the bandwagon and began sending their kids to "our" school, rather than putting them in private schools, which is common around here; and a great young principal was hired to "turn things around." Boy, did she. She was a ball of fire; she loved the kids and spent time with them; she praised them to the skies when they did something well, and gave some of the children their first taste of success. Everyone loved her. We have a new principal now, who seems very good too, because there was a school that needed rescuing and our old principal was called in to work her magic once again. We hated to lose her, but we understand that she needs to go where she can do the most good. Her success was based on education, preparation, experience--and her own inimitable personality.

Politicians too often don't take intangibles into account. Budgets, bottom lines, assessment, yadda, yadda, yadda--it all sounds good--to outsiders maybe. The sad thing? The best teachers often get promoted to administration, when they should be given incentives to stay in the classroom, and the mediocre often get into administration too, because you can get away with being a boring principal easier than a boring teacher. The Dean of UNCG's Dept. of Education was dull as ditch water. He was a pedestrian man with a pedestrian mind, though I hate to say it. He's a nice guy.

I'm getting up on my soap box here, and I'm probably boring you who have read this far into insensibility, so -- that's all (for now), folks.

20120531-22	19:37 SteveB	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Pam, above)
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No, not boring at all, Pam, I'm enjoying what you have to say, You re so, so right about the honorable Gov. Walker and about education.

I think we have to find and explore new ways of organizing education and capitalism.

I was thinking...that if a corporation is a person, then who really is that person? Surely more than the corporate charter, by-laws, and minutes. Is it just the owners? The management? What about the workers? The customers? The government? The community? The nation? All have a stake in the success of that personhood, surely. The

costs, the responsibilities, the work, and the gain must be shared fairly somehow. I think owner-operated businesses often accomplish this, even when they sometimes get very large. Maybe other ways can be found to defeat greed without losing sight of fairness.

20120531-19	18:04 Art	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Pam, above)
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Pam, one question on the unions. We, of course, didn't have them in the military and I did not join any as a civil servant, so I have no feel as to where they play in things. Many, Walker for instance, think they are the spawn of demons and the reason this great country is failing in so many aspects. Clearly they must be destroyed, if we are to return to our days of greatness. I did however read a lot of history and recall they may well have served a purpose at one point.

I just don't know. I do know that a union represents a lot of people while a boss/manager/CEO just represents him/herself. If the CEO of EXXON hopes to add another \$10 Million or so to his annual salary, he's certainly not going to look favorably on a \$10 dollar annual raise for his employees, if that will jeopardize his pay raise. Seems a little unfair.

I'm wandering. Schools better off with or without unions? We don't have them in the uniformed services and get along pretty well. Well maybe in the Air Force, I'm not sure.

I added Martha since she has direct experience.

20120531-20	18:07 Pam	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Art, above)
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Yes, I want to know what Martha has to say as well.

20120531-21	19:23 SteveB	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to Pam and Art, above)
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I worked in and closely with the teachers and steel workers unions in NW Indiana for years. Started out in the Musicians' local at age 16. Don't know if that's still allowed. Unions are so incredibly important, or else you need good worker-oriented laws, something that almost does not exist in the U.S. Those part-time, minimum wage Walmart, etc., jobs are slavery, in reality. In Bolivia., a job must be full time, with benefits. Everybody gains. That happened way before the socialists came.

But you don't see Republicans fighting for laws to replace the unions they seek to destroy, do you? They want the consciences of their CEO's to replace unions, like in the old pre-middle-class days. LOL! (Except I'm crying!)

Collective bargaining has been very difficult for teachers to achieve and maintain in Indiana, also. I taught in Cedar Lake for a short while, where, two years before, every single teacher (I believe) had been fired for striking. They just fired them all and replaced them en masses. Need I say, morale was still not too high, though collective bargaining was occurring. The interesting story below illustrates a little happier result.

from Jim, Oct. 8, 2011, in the FotM online archive, http://www.friendsofthemiddle.org/Political_Inbox_2007-2011.pdf:

Just wanted to share something from my own experience forty years ago. I was president of the Mishawaka Education Association in 1971 which was the first year state law was going to make school boards bargain with teachers' unions.

We had been bargaining before the law for salaries and some fringe benefits like group insurance but had no standing to bargain any other conditions of work. And after "discussions" the Board really was free to do whatever they wanted to do.

They did not have to sign any kind of a master contract with the teachers representatives. Each individual teacher was given a contract and in some corporations they did not use a uniform salary schedule and township trustees bargained with each teacher to pay what would keep them there or encourage them to look for another job.

The administration and board were used to arguing money. They knew we would ask for more than our final number and they would come back with less than theirs and we would meet somewhere in between.

In trying to bargain about working conditions and classroom conditions it was a different story. It took a long time to get them to figure out how to do it. We would start out by saying we had a problem and we were offering a change that we thought would solve the problem for us.

They would just say "no" After many sessions and a few years they got to the point where they could say "yes, we see the problem exists, but we have a problem with your solution. Here is what we think we could do to solve the problem." Then we would look at their plan and try to modify it to work better. We got pretty good at working together later. The first year I had to lead a strike to break the ice.

Now forty years later there is a joint administration-teacher committee that meets monthly and solves a lot of problems without waiting for contract renewal.

In Congress now there do not seem to be any Republicans who can say anything but NO and they are not interested in solving any problems that people are interested in like jobs or protecting the environment just in getting rid of Obama and ordinary people.

Will these people ever grow up or do we just have to take them out of government since they cannot govern this way?

20120531-23	20:56	Dale	Re: "18 Reasons Why the People of Wisconsin Should Vote Against Scott Walker in the Recall Election" (reply to all, above) & "Wisconsin Unions See Ranks Drop Ahead of Recall Vote"
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You can have any opinion you want, but when workers are given the choice, "Do I want to join a union or not?" what do they choose? When they are not being told what they "should" or "must" do, when the government doesn't artificially subsidize the cost of unions, when wage earners individually weigh the advantages and disadvantages what do they decide?

"Wisconsin Unions See Ranks Drop Ahead of Recall Vote" by Douglas Belkin and Kris Maher, *Wisconsin State Journal/AP/Wall Street Journal*

May 30, 2012 (<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304821304577436462413999718.html>)

Public-employee unions in Wisconsin have experienced a dramatic drop in membership—by more than half for the second-biggest union—since a law championed by Republican Gov. Scott Walker sharply curtailed their ability to bargain over wages and working conditions.

Now with Mr. Walker facing a recall vote Tuesday, voters will decide whether his policies in the centrist state should continue—or whether they have gone too far.

The election could mark a pivot point for organized labor.

Mr. Walker's ouster would derail the political career of a rising Republican star and send a warning to other elected officials who are battling unions. But a victory for the governor, who has been leading his Democratic opponent in recent polls, would amount to an endorsement of an effort to curtail public-sector unions, which have been a pillar of strength for organized labor while private-sector membership has dwindled.

That could mean the sharp losses that some Wisconsin public-worker unions have experienced is a harbinger of similar unions' future nationwide, union leaders fear. Failure to oust Mr. Walker and overturn the Wisconsin law "spells doom," said Bryan Kennedy, the American Federation of Teachers' Wisconsin president.

Wisconsin membership in the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees—the state's second-largest public-sector union after the National Education Association, which represents teachers—fell to 28,745 in February from 62,818 in March 2011, according to a person who has viewed Afsfme's figures. A spokesman for Afsfme declined to comment.

Much of that decline came from Afsfme Council 24, which represents Wisconsin state workers, whose membership plunged by two-thirds to 7,100 from 22,300 last year.

A provision of the Walker law that eliminated automatic dues collection hurt union membership. When a public-sector contract expires the state now stops collecting dues from the affected workers' paychecks unless they say they want the dues taken out, said Peter Davis, general counsel of the Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission.

In many cases, Afsfme dropped members from its rolls after it failed to get them to affirm they want dues collected, said a labor official familiar with Afsfme's figures. In a smaller number of cases, membership losses were due to worker layoffs.

Tina Pocernich, a researcher at Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College, was a dues-paying union member for 15 years. But after the Walker law went into effect she told the American Federation of Teachers she wanted out.

"It was a hard decision for me to make," said Ms. Pocernich, a 44-year-old mother of five, who left the union in March. "But there's nothing the union can do anymore."

But economic factors also played a role. Mr. Walker required public-sector employees to shoulder a greater share of pension and health-care costs, which ate up an added \$300 of Ms. Pocernich's monthly salary of less than \$3,100. She and her husband, a floor supervisor at a machine shop, cut back on their satellite-TV package and stopped going to weekly dinners at Applebee's.

Meanwhile, she said, she paid the AFT \$18.50 out of her biweekly paycheck and was now getting nothing in return. Her college eliminated one small-but-treasured perk, the ability to punch out an hour early during summer months—and the union was powerless to stop it.

In the nearly 15 months since Mr. Walker signed the law, 6,000 of the AFT's Wisconsin 17,000 members quit, the union said. It blamed the drop on the law.

A Walker victory would have other reverberations. It could put Wisconsin—which President Barack Obama won by nearly 14 percentage points in 2008—into play in this November's presidential contest, requiring his campaign to devote valuable resources to defending it. Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney has strongly backed Mr. Walker's efforts.

Mr. Walker, 44, has likened his policies to Ronald Reagan's breaking of the air-traffic-controllers union in 1981. He says unions make it difficult to balance budgets while maintaining government services without raising taxes. Backers have poured more than \$30 million into his campaign since last year, compared with \$3.9 million raised by his opponent, Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, who entered the race in late March.

A victory by Mr. Walker "will be a dramatic signal to local and state politicians they can, in the name of fiscal responsibility, tell unions...to come into parity with private-sector workers, especially on benefits," said Michael

Lotito, a San Francisco attorney who represents management in labor disputes and has testified on labor issues before Congress.

The Walker law sharply curbed collective bargaining for nearly all the state's public-employee unions except those for police and firefighters. Unions no longer can represent members in negotiations for better working conditions or for pay raises beyond the increase in inflation.

Unions have spent millions of dollars on TV ads campaigning against Mr. Walker. "Unions are putting a lot on the line and if they win, they win big, but if they lose, they lose even bigger," said Gary Chaison, a professor of industrial relations at Clark University. A loss "will be interpreted as a sign of weakness and a lack of public sympathy."

Organized labor's strength has been declining for 60 years, as unions failed to keep pace with globalization, an increasingly service-oriented economy and more aggressive opposition from employers. Today, just one in eight American workers is a union member compared with more than one in three in the mid-1950s.

But that decline has come almost entirely in the private sector, where only 7% of workers today are union members. Public-sector union membership rates have held steady at around 37% since 1979, and the number of members has increased, thanks to growth in government employment. In 2009, for the first time, there were more union members in government than in companies.

The Labor Department estimates Wisconsin had 187,000 public-worker union members last year, but it hasn't updated the data for this year. The Wisconsin affiliate of the National Education Association declined to comment on any membership change.

Public-employee unions are under pressure elsewhere, too, as state and local officials cut spending in the wake of the recession, although the unions have won some fights. Ohio voters last year overturned a Republican law that went even further than Wisconsin's in limiting bargaining rights for public-sector unions by including police and firefighters.

But Republican governors Mitch Daniels of Indiana and Chris Christie of New Jersey have seen their popularity rise after taking on unions, and even some Democratic mayors in big cities—such as Chicago's Rahm Emanuel—have been pressing unions to accept concessions to help balance budgets.

Membership declines could be self-perpetuating, said Mr. Chaison of Clark University. With diminished dues, unions deliver fewer services, making membership less appealing and hampering recruiting.

The fight in Wisconsin has spawned bitter rancor across a state whose divergent progressive and conservative political traditions were long balanced by a culture of political compromise.

After Mr. Walker proposed the law, hundreds of thousands of union members and other labor supporters shut down the state capital for weeks, and Democratic lawmakers fled to Illinois to try to prevent the quorum the bill needed to pass. Union organizers helped gather more than 900,000 signatures to force the recall election.

But the unions also have made mistakes. They spent \$4 million backing Kathleen Falk, a labor-friendly former official in Madison, who was crushed in the May 8 Democratic primary by Mr. Barrett.

Meanwhile, collective-bargaining rights for public employees has receded as an issue, with far more people saying in recent polls that job creation is their top priority.

20120531-10	13:25	SteveB	"Night Falls, Power Rises, in Montreal"
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A very inspirational piece to me...

"Night Falls, Power Rises, in Montreal" by Cindy Milstein, NationofChange

May 31, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/night-falls-power-rises-montreal-1338468426>)

("Then we looked at each other and marveled how, just a mere week ago, there were four lone pots beating out a tune of solidarity & disobedience & freedom in his neighborhood, and now, so few days later, young children are teaching themselves rebellion, and as another friend said to me on the street, we anarchists are struggling to catch up to what the tens of thousands of people are doing here in Montreal.")

A week ago last Sunday night, I was sitting around a table at a friend's house with two other friends in the Plateau East neighborhood of Montreal, having a quiet & delicious dinner after the Anarchist Bookfair weekend, when at 8 pm, we heard the singular noise of someone banging on a pot in the nearby distance, then two, and maybe three or four. My friend got up to peak around the corner, to see which of his neighbors was making the noise, telling us that there was a Facebook call to bang pots & pans in solidarity with the student strike (as it turns out, it was a professor's idea, and he did indeed post a FB page for it).

Last night, May 27, that same friend and I met up with other friends at the "usual" corner on Mont-Royal near St-Denis on the Plateau West side of this Montreal neighborhood. At first a handful came, right at 8 pm, like us, and then dozens, growing quickly to hundreds. It was my second night at this intersection, near to the home of another friend, and already I recognized most of the faces, and people nodded at each other, and more of them talked to each other (and my two friends and others are busily organizing toward their first neighborhood popular assembly this coming Saturday).

As we moved from crossing with the light, to crossing at the traffic light, to finally taking the intersection, a group of young children—barely teens—among the many young children on the streets with us, decided to lead a breakaway march, skirting past the police car that had now arrived to "help" us manage the traffic. We adults quickly ran after them, laughing, as our children at the front lead us for some 15 minutes away from that cop car again and again, turning a corner at the last minute to allude the police, and when we got to a big road, the kids took over the other side too, at one point nearly encircling a second police car to ensure we could all get ahead of the police! And soon we turned a corner and that, voile, was another band of casseroles, and soon we ran across another, and then our big casserole met another huge casserole at a main intersection, and everyone raised their pots & pans in unison to joyfully greet each other. The police couldn't keep up with us, neither children or adults, or bikes or dogs, wheelchairs or skateboards.

Hours later, after marching with thousands and thousands of people who never stopped banging on the sundry metal noisemakers as we snaked our way for miles through Montreal, past tiny stickers of red or with words on street signs and lampposts, or big swathes of radical graffiti slogans, it was hard to tell whether our legs or ears hurt more—or as my Plateau East friend said, Emma Goldman may have wanted a revolution to dance to, but this "walking" revolution is hard on the feet! Then we looked at each other and marveled how, just a mere week ago, there were four lone pots beating out a tune of solidarity & disobedience & freedom in his neighborhood, and now, so few days later, young children are teaching themselves rebellion, and as another friend said to me on the street, we anarchists are struggling to catch up to what the tens of thousands of people are doing here in Montreal. He too marveled: "And to think I was thinking of moving away from Montreal a year ago. This has been the best year of my life already!"

Of course, much as the police and politicians have, for the time being, lost control of this city, they struggle each night to figure out new ways to police and control their out-of-their-control uprising. Last night, that involved this unusually tall and lengthy, sparkling-white oversize van—nearly a truck—with few windows, and those windows blackened so we couldn't see it. This truck-van appeared out of nowhere behind us, swerved toward a building wall, and equally oversize riot-type police jumped out, pushing someone against the wall, grabbing him, throwing him in the van, and whisking away. Some cops next to us on horses (we were, at that point, at the back of the thousands-of-people casseroles-march) said something about a new "Intervention" unit, and then "helpfully" told us to move in front of him, so he could "protect us" in case of "an explosion."

Some 20 minutes or so later, as the demonstration was nearing a point that would signal the end for many of us—near a Metro, for some, and near our still-long-walk home, for us—that van-truck appeared again. I tried to capture

a photo of it, but my cell phone isn't the best of cameras, especially as the van-truck started speeding toward us, flying past another new police vehicle labeled "technical." We conjectured about whether they were gathering "intelligence" on us, listening in to cell phones, tracking people via their cell phone GPS, or putting out incorrect info.

For instance, the SPVM police maintain a "friendly" lie-filled Twitter, with the supposedly calming slogan "Always closer," and they used it last night to deny nearly beating a man to death, also just over a week ago, when people took control of a stretch of St.-Denis to build barricades and fend off the cops. Counter reports from witnesses and those involved in this uprising are that this man is still in a hospital, in a coma, potentially paralyzed and brain damaged. People used this Twitter access to the police to last night ask them again and again about this beating, and the police again and again assured people everything was OK. But there are video images of the man being beaten, first to the ground by one cop, and then again, by another, after he's on the ground. And an eyewitness mentioned she saw the second cop use his bike as a weapon in the beating. Indeed, last week, when we were on the street during the St.-Denis uprising on that evening, a woman came up to us to say a man had died; that she herself had seen him lying on the ground, not moving, for 20 minutes. We were skeptical, thinking the street takeover would have turned into an outright riot, if someone had died. Now, a mere week later, it seems the police have potentially destroyed yet another life.

All to say, the joy of watching preteens defy the authority of the state, so adroitly and swiftly, with such confidence, under the approving eye of thousands of us adults, has to be balanced by the presence of that same authority, even if cowed for the moment, lurking in vans and shadows, strategizing somewhere in bureaucratic offices, trying to figure out how to win this cat-and-mouse (or cat-and-anarchopanda) game of communizing Montreal, whether they end up using brute force or carrot-and-stick for the students—or both.

It's 7 pm, an hour before this evening's casseroles slowly but surely but noisily begins again, at the "usual" corner of Mont-Royal, where tonight my friend will hand out flyers about the popular assembly to be held in a neighborly neighborhood park this weekend (for the parks here are still far less "privatized," and much more anarchic and community oriented, than many in the United States). Tomorrow, another friend, the one who is glad he didn't move away, is helping to initiate "Nos-Casseroles for justice for low-wage immigrant and placement-agency (day-laborer) workers" in another neighborhood, and a day or two ago, the Rosemont neighborhood held its first assembly—150 people, who broke into four working groups.

Last night, a friend mentioned how it was important that we go to these street manifestations, night after night, because they evidence the determination and anger, and hopefully the dreams too, of this movement that currently has power-together in its grasp. I realized, as I walked for another five hours last night, how cynical I've grown about marches in the United States. We scream in front of banks, chant as we walk, proudly hold banners and signs, make noise and reclaim the streets and sidewalks temporarily—but the contrast here is: there's really social power behind those same acts now, and everyone knows it. The question, which everyone also seems to know, is what to do with that power—hence the move to kick off neighborhood assemblies and put out calls for people to come greet, meet, and disrupt the impending, lucrative Gran Prix in early June. Meanwhile, the power seems to just keep growing.

Each night here, I see the differences, even if subtle, from people walking by on the streets at 5 pm with pots and pans clearly in their backpacks; stores putting red squares on their merchandise on display in the windows; indeed, more and more red squares, large and small, hanging off more and more balconies; restaurant workers and others stuck in dreary low-paid jobs come out of those jobs to bang pots for a few minutes as the big casseroles marches pass by; and last night, we saw people in an expensive hotel in downtown Montreal holding big red squares in the windows high above us, raising their arms in silent cheer to our noisy answer from the street below.

The Right's gotta love this poster! I wonder if that's Nita or Shaunna?

from Ultra Violet:

The Paycheck Fairness Act is coming up for a vote next week--and the vote is going to be really close.

The Paycheck Fairness Act would help bring an end to pay discrimination by closing a set of loopholes in current labor laws that make it near impossible to enforce fair pay laws. It would ban employer retaliation against workers who seek to expose wage discrimination, make it easier for workers to join together in class action suits to fight it and give victims of pay discrimination full compensation and back pay.

But it might not pass because most people don't know how big the problem is--that on average, women will lose \$431,000 over the course of their lifetimes because of pay discrimination. Or that for the amount women lose each year, they could cover a whole year's worth of rent or childcare costs.

So we put together a neat info-graphic that lays out the facts. Can you check it out and then share it with your friends? You can also help spread the word on Facebook and Twitter too.

Click here to check the graphic out on Facebook and start sharing with your friends. Just scroll to the bottom and click the "share" button:

<http://act.weareultraviolet.org/signup/paygapshare/?akid=103.359331.z6oHfV&rd=1&t=3>.

Thanks for helping get the truth out!
--Nita and Shaunna, UltraViolet



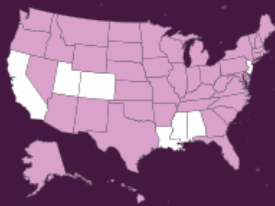
WAGE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN IN AMERICA

HOW THE PAYCHECK FAIRNESS ACT CAN FIX IT

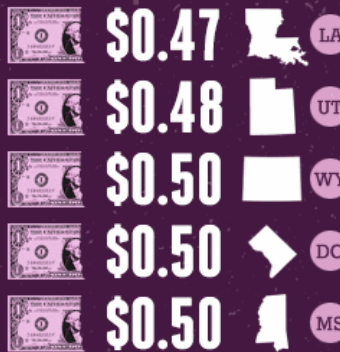
Women are losing \$431,000 over the course of their careers because wage discrimination continues to be a huge problem in our country. Worse, women can be fired for trying to fight it and get fair pay. The Paycheck Fairness Act would help bring an end to pay discrimination by closing a set of loopholes in current labor laws that make it near impossible for workers to expose and fix pay discrimination.

TODAY IN AMERICA, WOMEN ONLY MAKE **\$0.77** FOR EVERY DOLLAR A MAN MAKES

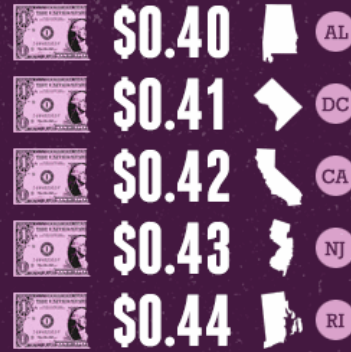
The gap is wider for African-American and Hispanic women compared to white, non-Hispanic men.



BOTTOM 5 STATES WITH THE WIDEST WAGE GAP FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN



BOTTOM 5 STATES WITH THE WIDEST WAGE GAP FOR HISPANIC WOMEN



BREADWINNERS OF AMERICA

Mothers make up 40% of the primary breadwinners in this country and therefore it's not just women who are affected by this discrimination, it's entire families.



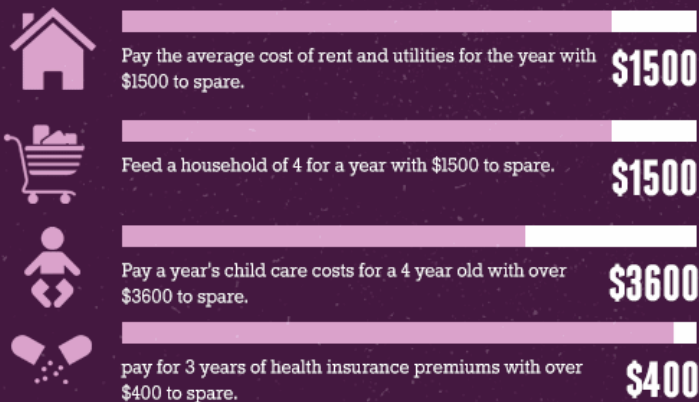
ultraviolet

Equality at a Higher Frequency

CLOSING THE GAP

WOMEN WOULD RECEIVE \$10,622 PER YEAR IF THE GAP WERE CLOSED

From rent to health insurance, women could better support themselves and their families each year and begin saving their earnings.





from MoveOn:

We just launched 99airlines, our program to fly airplane banners over high-profile Mitt Romney events with messages from the 99%.

And what's the coolest part? You get to decide what the banners say! If you could fly a message over Mitt Romney's head, what would it be?

Will you suggest a short, pithy, memorable phrase for a 99airlines banner? Or check out and rate other people's ideas?

Click here to submit or vote for a 99airlines banner:

<http://99airlines.org/?source=mo-email1>.

Imagine if Mitt Romney and his Super PAC friends had to deal with the sights and sounds of airplanes following them everywhere, reminding Americans how Romney stands for corporations and the 1%. Reporters at the events will film and write about the banners—it'll drive Romney and his corporate backers crazy.

That's why we're taking it to Romney, exposing him as Mr. 1%. Here's the banner we flew over a Romney fundraiser in Boston last week.

We're ready to fly a whole lot more over his high-profile appearances this summer, including fundraisers and a major event with Latino political leaders.

We need you to submit your ideas today. And the highest-rated, most shared, and most timely messages from the 99% will get flown over Romney's head. So get your ideas online today!

MoveOn members stepped up and funded 99airlines as a way to combat the Super PAC ads and corporate money that will flood into this year's election. We're transforming Mitt Romney's 1% fundraising tour into an airborne progressive message machine that will be seen by the people at the events and the media covering them.

They've got millions of dollars, but we've got more people and more creativity than they can muster. If you submit your ideas—and make sure as many people as possible rate and contribute ideas—99airlines can define Mitt Romney and the people he represents in a visible, memorable way.

Thanks for all you do.

—Garlin, Elena, Emily, Victoria, and the rest of the team

<http://www.cornpalace.org/>



—Friends of the Middle,
Steven W. Baker (SteveB), Editor/Moderator

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Welcome to all our new members who may be here for the first time. We want to hear from YOU! To submit your comment, you can use the form on our website or blog, or reply to this email with your two cents worth. Be sure to sign with your desired user name.

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