

It's time to get some backbone

In October, a *Newsweek* poll showed 51 percent of the U.S. public believes impeachment should be a top priority for the new Congress.

John Dean, the former White House counsel to Richard Nixon, wrote a best-selling book *Worse Than Watergate: The Secret Presidency of George W. Bush*. Two other books — one by John Nichols and the other by Dave Lindorff — have also sold tens of thousands of copies.

With all of this, it's clear that the issue of impeachment is one that the U.S. public has not taken off the table. So, why are elected officials in Washington and Montpelier so dismissive?

In Washington, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-CA, declared impeachment “off the table” before even one hearing. Instead, she wants the Democratic-led Congress to focus on “changing course.”

In Vermont, where the impeachment movement has inspired countless communities throughout the country, key state leaders dismiss the grassroots effort as a distraction. Last week, House Speaker Gaye Symington, D-Jericho, said, “The Legislature has a short amount of time and needs to focus its work on the issues most affecting Vermonters.”

During the Watergate investigations, the Democratic majority was able to pass major legislation such as the Endangered Species Act. Certainly, our elected officials should be able to uphold the Constitution and chew gum at the same time.

While any impeachment effort in the U.S. House would likely receive a lukewarm reception in the Senate, where Democrats have a one-vote majority, that should not deter the House from empaneling the kinds of hearings necessary to hold the Bush administration accountable for its actions, and to investigate claims of war profiteering and manipulation of pre-war intelligence.

To not conduct these investigations would force Congress to continue the abdication of its constitutional role to the executive and judicial branches of government. Voters in November wanted an end to the rubber-stamp, stay-the-course approach in Washington and expect Democrats to do better.

Will investigations lead to impeachment? Who knows and who cares. The bottom line is that Congress needs to hold this administration accountable. It's time to stop beating around the bush.

Company you keep

Vermont's blogosphere has been active recently, focusing on the Second Vermont Republic, the nascent organization that has been arguing for peaceful secession from the United States.

Bloggers are raising questions about the advisors SVR has partnered with and their connection to Southern white supremacist groups.

While guilt by association is often a slippery slope, in this case what is equally as disturbing as intelligent, well-meaning Vermonters relying on racists to think about ways to secede is the response from SVR supporters when these disturbing facts are brought to light.

To them, it is ludicrous to think of the SVR, and those at the like-minded publication *Vermont Commons*, to be racist. They claim to be nothing but inclusive and honorable. OK, that's a defense.

But, they are quick to dismiss the racist beliefs of these “advisors” who have links to documented hate groups in the South.

The *Vermont Guardian* has long been of the mind that the concept of secession has merits because it raises key issues that every democracy should struggle with from time to time.

But, we believe that is in the best interest of SVR and the *Vermont Commons* to disassociate themselves from people connected with secession as a way to prove a Christian identity or racial purity through organizations such as the League of the South.

Nothing could be further from the core of Vermont's own record as a nation-state: We were the first to outlaw slavery in a constitution, and sent thousands of soldiers to die during the Civil War in our desire to abolish slavery.

We have set strong examples for how a civil society debates issues and solves complex problems, and if it truly believes in the Vermont way, then SVR should set its own terms for secession, rather than borrowing from the racist elements that have pushed the issue in other parts of the country.

This nation has a long way to go to overcome its institutional racism, and we need to be all focusing on ways to make this nation more, not less, inclusive.



letters • • • • •

Burlington, what a place to live

A really nice thing to see shortly after 8 a.m. on a recent Sunday morning in Battery Park was a city employee hard at work with a special machine to make ready the small ice skating rink near the police station so kids and others could enjoy Sunday winter wonderland recreation. It is that kind of attention to detail that makes this city a great place to live.

Dennis McMahon
Burlington

Can we wait any longer?

It is heartwarming for me to enter this 98th year of living on Earth knowing that most of the choices I made for how to live and what to work for were the “right” causes.

Because I understood as a child some connection to Earth, I had a vision of the role my country and I could play in creating the paradise this planet could become. I've spent my life making unpopular choices. I've supported all kinds of initiatives which would have given all life a better world but were never given a chance — solar power, a single payer health care system,

no nuclear technology, several types of non-polluting transportation, preserving the family farm in the late 1940s, and other attempts to keep business small and life simple.

I was always politically active because I have been given a vision of our country's potential. We were working to become a democracy — governing of the people, by the people, and for the people. With our example, other countries would be able to envision such a future. There were always groups with this vision to support.

As Earth consciousness surfaced in the 20th century, there were more and more “positive futures” groups — some started, got discouraged, and gave up; others continued to enlighten and change thinking. Now many understand an Earth-human connection; what we do to Earth, we do to ourselves; we are the global brain. We have proof of this connection with what we have done to our bioregions and ecosystems. A global warming.

We could witness the great awakening. A group of humans from all over the planet have been able to formulate “The Earth Charter: Values and principles for a sustainable future.” We need to ratify this and use it. In 2003, millions of humans

rejected war as a way of solving human problems. We are one human family that shouldn't fight.

I've been waiting a long time. I like to think I may live to see it happen.

Marion Leonard
Rochester

Communities need more protection

Over the past couple of years, St. Albans Town, St. Albans City, and the surrounding communities have struggled with how to fairly and accurately evaluate the potential impacts of big box development on local economies and infrastructure. Because oversized, out-of-place development can harm communities, local officials need as much accurate, objective information as possible to make the most informed decisions on whether, where, and under what terms to permit large-scale retail stores.

St. Albans' story — whereby the Act 250 District Commission sent Wal-Mart's economic consultant back to the drawing board because of “flaws” and “omissions” in its economic analysis — provides the most striking example of why the Legislature should pass the Community Impact Study Bill.


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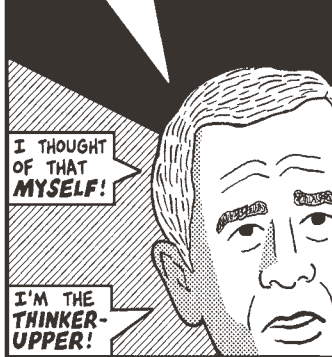
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THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

IN EARLY 2007, PRESIDENT BUSH UNVEILED HIS DECISIVE NEW STRATEGY FOR VICTORY!
 WE MUST COMMIT TO WINNING RATHER THAN LOSING!



I THOUGHT OF THAT MYSELF!

I'M THE THINKER-UPPER!

AND IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE ALL THE INSURGENTS AND TERRORISTS JUST GAVE UP!
 WE SURRENDER! YOUR NEWFOUND COMMITMENT TO WINNING--




--HAS LEFT US COMPLETELY DISEMBOLDENED!

THE DEATH SQUADS STOPPED MURDERING CIVILIANS--AND STARTED PAINTING SCHOOLS!
 OUR ONLY PROBLEM IS FINDING SCHOOLS THAT NEED PAINTING!



OUR FRIENDS THE AMERICANS WERE VERY DILIGENT!

IRAN'S PRESIDENT COULDN'T BACK DOWN QUICKLY ENOUGH!
 IT WAS ALL A SILLY MISUNDERSTANDING! YOU SEE, IN FARSI, THE PHRASE FOR "NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM" IS PHONETICALLY VERY SIMILAR TO THE PHRASE FOR "DELICIOUS PASTRY TREATS"!



WE CERTAINLY WEREN'T GOING TO GIVE THOSE UP!

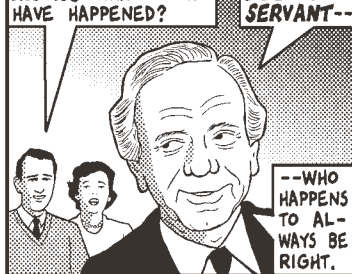
WHY, EVEN THE TRAITOROUS LIBERAL MEDIA FINALLY TOSSED IN THE TOWEL!
 IT'S TRUE--WE DID GO OUT OF OUR WAY TO EMPHASIZE THE BAD NEWS FROM IRAQ!



WE'VE COLLECTIVELY DECIDED TO RESIGN IN SHAME.

YOU HAVE FOX NEWS--WHY DO YOU NEED US?

AND JOE LIEBERMAN LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER.
 WE'RE SO SORRY WE VOTED AGAINST YOU IN THE PRIMARY!



IF NOT FOR YOUR UNWAVERING SUPPORT FOR THE WAR--WHO KNOWS WHAT MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED?

PLEASE! I'M JUST A HUMBLE PUBLIC SERVANT--

--WHO HAPPENS TO ALWAYS BE RIGHT.

TOM TOMORROW © 2007... www.thismodernworld.com

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The bill, now under consideration by the Senate Economic Development Housing and General Affairs Committee, would:

- Ensure that a community and regional impact study is undertaken which analyzes the proposed costs and benefits associated with any large-scale retail project, upon which the host community, neighboring towns, district environmental commissions, and other interested parties can make the most informed decisions; and,

- Allow the community to choose an unbiased, independent consultant to conduct the study, but require the developer to fund it.

A solid foundation of unbiased and fully-informed planning is essential to the viability of our communities in the 21st century. This bill will help avoid the costly, timely, and cumbersome process that St. Albans went through. It will give communities a tool — not just the developers — to ask for a full picture of the potential impacts' best-case scenario. Since that level of understanding is vital to ensuring the long-term health and prosperity of Vermont communities, I hope the Legislature passes this important bill.

Sue Prent
 St. Albans

Stopping the race to the bottom

Most working people in Vermont are faced with economic insecurity on a daily basis. Fewer and fewer workers enjoy health care coverage, real retirement security, or even a livable wage. Too many workers are forced to work two to three jobs, taking a toll on families and communities. And we are seemingly always caught between the rock of rising regressive taxes (such as the property tax, sales tax, and user fees) and the hard place of cutting public education and public services — illustrated no more clearly than in our Vermont town meeting debates over school budgets every year.

Some people, especially the few who are benefiting from the situation, would like us to believe that economic insecurity for the many is simply a byproduct of uncontrollable forces of the economy, and that there is no other option to the status quo. However, the reality is that economic insecurity is a result of specific policies promoted by large corporations, the wealthy, and their far-right allies. Federal trade policy has promoted outsourcing, off-shoring, and plant clos-

ings that have devastated many communities. Health insurance and pharmaceutical companies have poured millions of dollars into defeating any kind of health care reform. Billions of dollars have been wasted on an unnecessary and unjust war in Iraq. These policies add up to a "race to the bottom" for workers, and a race to the bottom is one that no one wins.

Throughout history, whenever economic elites have defended the status quo with the argument that there is no other option, working people have stood up for an alternative vision, a vision of an economy that works for everyone.

We can see that happening locally with the Verizon workers who are standing up to stop a sale that could not only destroy good jobs but frustrate Vermont's aspirations for quality broadband, in the fight that Specialty Filaments workers made for a just severance when their factory closed, in the struggles of nurses at Fletcher Allen for quality care and COTS workers for a voice at work, and of school support staff for livable wages.

On Monday, Feb. 19, the Vermont Workers' Center, the Vermont Livable Wage Campaign, and dozens of other local spon-

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