

As the world spins hopelessly out of control . . .

Jim Fetzer

In a world increasingly dominated by insane policies and violent actions, which no one who could actually do anything about them seems to understand, it may be useful to ask ourselves where we are going and whether we can possibly get there from here. Some days may be rather more illuminating than others. On Tuesday, 26 March 2002, for example, a disturbing set of articles appeared in our own DULUTH NEWS TRIBUNE.

The front page carried a piece on our "shadow government" ("Shadow government not so secret"), reported from "A SECURE UNDISCLOSED LOCATION", that explained residents near these hidden bases know all about them. That news must be very reassuring to the American public. Prospective terrorists should not have too much trouble finding them. "It's simply a matter of connecting the dots", said Steven Aftergood, a member of the Federation of American Scientists. Maybe later he'll be known as Steven Afterglow.

According to the White House, around 150 officials from every cabinet agency work at two sites, staying 24 hours a day until they rotate out. The article says their basic needs are met. According to biologists and anthropologists, food, shelter, and sex are among our basic needs. It is reassuring to know they are being met. I am reminded of Stanley Kubrick's film, "Dr. Strangelove". If you haven't seen it lately, take a look while you can. I used to think the threats it so vividly portrays were artifacts of the past. No longer.

Nothing is said about the legislative branch or the judicial branch. They don't actually figure in this administration's conception of government. Dubya once observed that it would be a whole lot easier to govern the country if he were dictator. They seem to be

doing what they can to bring that about. According to another article, on page 4A, the Pentagon has been instructed to develop a new category of nuclear weapons as devices to hit underground targets, which might even include hydrogen bombs ("Federal labs told to design new nuclear bomb"). That's the administration's plan. Think about it!

The timing is exquisite. After all, the UNDISCLOSED LOCATIONS where Bush is setting up shop are underground. One of the most famous, for example, is located under the Greenbrier Resorts in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia. It was built back in the days of the Cold War, which Bush wants to revive in the guise of a war on terrorism. Today it is controlled by the resort, which offers guided tours to visitors. A year ago, voters defeated a proposal to make the bunker the location of the state's first casino.

What irony! These secret operations were SECURE because there were no weapons that were able to reach them. Our government now instructs the Pentagon to build the very weapons that could destroy them. And if the government wanted to use these facilities--which, after all, already exist!--they confront the problem that their locations are already known. But apparently that's the case for every other location we are using. At least terrorists could lounge at the resort until the bombs are ready.

These new weapons are not supposed to violate existing arms control treaties as long as they are modifications of extant weapons. Arms control experts say that designing and building new weapons "provokes other nations to follow suit at a time when the fear of 'rogue state' nuclear weapons is growing". So, either way, the United States is blazing the trail for other states to follow suit by either modifying their own extant weapons or building new ones that can be used to destroy UNDISCLOSED LOCATIONS.

Of course, they might not have to create new weapons on their own. They might be

able to steal ours. An article on the following page 5A, explains that the security at our nuclear power plants is so lax that they are vulnerable to potentially catastrophic terrorist attacks ("Report details possible negligence in nuclear security"). At least, there are only 103! If terrorists were to fly even a rather small aircraft into one of these structures, it could bring about a nuclear meltdown and widespread radiation contamination. I suppose the answer, if you live near one, is to move to Greenbrier.

Back on page 1A again, we can read about some of the consequences of our President's decision to impose tariffs on imported steel, which is supposed to help our domestic industry ("Europe agrees U.S. steel industry hasn't adapted"). It turns out that many if not most of the American steel producers' incapacity to compete with other nations in the production of steel has resulted from the failure to adopt new technology and cope with genuine free-market competition. U.S. companies prefer government subsidies.

This steel dispute promises to become a major source of economic tension between the United States and Europe. The effects are going to include retaliatory tariffs on many imported goods and an increase in the cost of domestic products that are made of steel.

The results are going to cost American consumers far more than they save the industry. Since Bush campaigned as a free-trader, which is supposed to be a bed-rock Republican principle, members of his own party think he has done a terrible thing. But that really should come as no surprise. This guy also campaigned as a compassionate conservative.

His compassion does not appear to extend to ordinary working men and women. Even after the ENRON scandal, Bush has opposed strong measures that appear to be required to make sure these things will not happen again. On page 9A ("Enron gridlock looms in D.C."), Thomas Oliphant explains that, after all of the outrage over this financial fiasco,

which has permanently damaged the quality of life of the corporation's employees, if not of its executives, precisely what is going to be done about it still remains to be seen.

The Democratic Senate proposes a mixture of reforms that empower workers, promote informed choices, and protect 401(k) retirement plans. The administration, however, has responded with a decided lack of enthusiasm over whether anything needs to be done at all. This may be at least in part because Bush has found ENRON accounting techniques, such as telescoping future profits as though they were current assets, so useful to his own programs, such as promoting those massive tax cuts for the rich.

Whether or not the man has any principles at all other than promoting the interests of corporations remains to be seen. His latest exhibition of leadership has been related to the "war on terrorism". On page 5A ("U.S. courts allies, Sharon for help with accord"), we learn that the United States has tried to convince Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to allow Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader, to attend an Arab summit and participate in the discussion of a promising new peace plan advanced by Saudi Arabia.

Sharon, for whom the only good Palestinian is a dead Palestinian, balked. As of today, Saturday, 30 March 2002, after another round of suicide bombings, Israeli forces have surrounded Arafat's home with tanks and invaded his offices with soldiers. According to Sharon, the government has no intention of killing him. But, under circumstances of this volatile kind, he could easily be bumped off by accident. Stranger things have been known to happen, which would coincidentally coincide with Sharon's innermost desires.

The United Nations passed a resolution demanding Israel withdraw. But when Bush was interviewed today as Israeli troops threatened to take Arafat captive, he praised

it for resisting terrorist actions, saying he holds Arafat personally responsible. The current uprising, however, was precipitated by Ariel Sharon's grotesque appearance on Temple Mount with 1,500 armed men, and has been fought with American tanks, Apache helicopters, and F-16s. Bush wholly ignores the suppression of the Palestinian population by Israel's stronger military and its excessive use of force against civilians.

The Bush stance, which echos Sharon's spokesmen, has to be among the most blatant absurdities of recent history. For eighteen months, Israeli attacks on the Palestinian Authority have made Arafat's precarious influence weaker and weaker. He has now been reduced to house arrest, occupying at most three rooms. Simultaneously, Sharon and Bush demand more and more of him, as though he had control over small groups of Palestinians who form cells to take action against an occupying army. Bush looks like a stooge of Sharon and corrupts what meager moral standing we may still possess.

The policies of Sharon could not possibly be worse if peace were truly the goal. What Israel should have done--is this any secret?--is to have built up Arafat's stature and increased his influence among his people. No one else in Palestine has the history and the moral authority to speak for the Palestinian people. Removing Arafat from the process cannot promote peace and killing him would be a colossal blunder. There would remain only small groups and individuals whom Israel cannot possibly control.

I predict that, if Arafat is killed, there will be 100,000 new suicide bombers, who are willing to sacrifice their miserable lives for the cause of freedom and democracy for their people. There are 3 and 1/2 million Palestinians, who are not going to forgive and forget the atrocities being committed against them. We should not be aiding and abetting a corrupt regime that, the United Nations has found, has repeatedly employed

disproportionate force against a civilian population armed only with rifles and rocks.

We ought to be supporting the Palestinians, not aiding and abetting their destruction.

Jim Fetzer, a professor of philosophy at UMD, believes that Israel has squandered its moral standing and that the United States, by parroting the Israeli line, runs the risk of reducing itself to pitiful irrelevance. Our failure to oppose Israeli aggression will surely be held against us in the eyes of the world. 9/11 may be only the beginning.