



# Common Sense



## Issue III

### News Round-Up

[All summaries are written by Common Sense, links to source material can be found at [Opednews.com](http://Opednews.com)]

#### US Sees Bloodiest Attack of Reconstruction; 15 Americans Dead

A US Chinook helicopter was shot down near Fallujah, killing 15 and wounding dozens more. The attack comes after a weeks-long wave of deadly attacks, including bombings of the International Red Cross and a further attack on the UN. Red Cross workers, as well as workers from other humanitarian agencies have begun to evacuate Iraq, having no means to protect themselves. Attacks on US soldiers are now coming at a rate of 35 per day.  
*See CNN, November 3, 2003*

#### Companies Receiving Contracts in Iraq Gave Bush \$500,000

A study of government contracts in Iraq has revealed that political favoritism went well beyond Halliburton's multi-billion dollar no-bid contract. The study found that virtually all of the companies selected for tax-payer contracts, including 9 of the 10 largest contracts, contributed to Bush's campaign. A great number of them received no-bid contracts, granting them much more leverage in over-charging the US government. Halliburton has already found itself under congressional investigation for allegedly exploiting its contract.  
*See New York Times, October 31, 2003*  
*Edmund L Andrews, Elizabeth Becker*

#### Quest for International Aid Falls Flat

The recent budget request for \$87 billion for Iraq counted on an additional \$36 billion from other nations, but recent administration efforts to get this aid have only produced about one third of that goal. Various estimates have found that it will take at least another \$50 billion to finish the entire reconstruction, and most concede that the burden will be shouldered almost entirely by American tax-payers.  
*See Independent, UK, October 24, 2003*  
*Stephen Castle*

#### Leak Investigation Produces Nothing After 5 Weeks

The Justice Department investigation has found nothing in its search after five weeks. It has been established that Karl Rove, Bush's chief political advisor, told Chris Matthews of NBC that Joseph Wilson's wife was "fair game" just one week after the initial leak of her name to Robert Novak. A number of high-profile, Republican former intelligence officials have gone out of their way to condemn the leak, calling it "vindictive" and "disgraceful". The White House insists that they do not know the identity of the leaker.  
*See Financial Times, October 26, 2003*

#### Bipartisan Senate Inquiry Faults Intelligence on Iraq

Members of the Senate Intelligence Committee concluded after extensive review that the claims about the threat posed by Iraq were greatly overstated. The Republican members of the panel argued that the CIA was at fault for producing the problematic and unsupported intelligence, and administration supporters have hinted that the administration was led into war by the CIA's flawed work. These claims have carried little water however, since the National Intelligence Estimate in question was only produced in response to criticisms from Democrats that the case for war was unsubstantiated, and the decision to invade Iraq was already made. Democrats now argue that the intelligence agencies were intimidated into giving intelligence that suited the administration policy, a claim that has been supported by a number of retired intelligence agents and active intelligence leaks. The *Washington Post* has also reported on the basis of sources inside the US inspection team that the team has concluded internally that there was no active nuclear program since 1991, and that very little effort is even still being made to investigate the claim that Iraq had "reconstituted nuclear weapons".  
*See Washington Post, October 24 / 26, 2003*  
*Dana Priest. A1*

#### Touted Iraq Poll Deliberately Misinterpreted Says Brother of Pollster

A *Zogby International* poll of Iraqis was much touted by the administration as proof that Iraqis were enamored of Americans and supported the American occupation. But James Zogby, the brother of pollster John Zogby, wrote in an in-depth article, since posted on the polling site's webpage, arguing that the administration misrepresented the results of the poll, using a slanted interpretation from the neoconservative think tank the *American Enterprise Institute*.

*For example, while Cheney noted that when asked what kind of government they would like, Iraqis chose "the US... hands down," in fact, the results of the poll are actually quite different. Twenty-three percent of Iraqis say that they would like to model their new government after the US; 17.5 percent would like their model to be Saudi Arabia; 12 percent say Syria, 7 percent say Egypt and 37 percent say "none of the above." That's hardly "winning hands down."*

*See Arab-Newss, October 23, 2003*

#### Many Unemployed Take "Survival Jobs" to Make Ends Meet

*USA Today* reports that 5 million workers have been forced to take part-time work for lack of full-time opportunities. An additional 5 million have given up searching for work altogether. Still more have taken jobs unrelated to their career, for a fraction of their former salaries. The story interviews one worker who has taken a salary of \$25,000 after being laid off from a salary of \$125,000. Even as the economy recovers on Wall Street, another 50,000 jobs were lost this month, which does not include any of the categories above.  
*See USA Today, October 23, 2003*  
*Stephanie Armour*

## Opinion

# Why Labor Matters

### *A Common Sense Editorial*

In 1948, Strom Thurmond, the late Republican Senator from South Carolina, ran for president. Trent Lott recently lost his position as Senate Majority Leader for reminiscing fondly of that campaign, because the platform was explicitly and inflamingly racist. The campaign sought to portray the black man as a sexual monster (think of King Kong), and argued that equal rights would allow the beast to run rampant.

But the portrayal of Strom Thurmond's campaign in the media at the time of Lott's slip vastly oversimplified the issues. The South was a land of desperate poverty. Blacks were exploited at every turn, including being convicted of fictional crimes and being sent to privatized prison workcamps by the thousands. But most whites were little better off. Over 70% lived in poverty, and many worked tirelessly year-round only to end up in debt to the handful of rich whites that owned the land.

It was these rich whites which founded and ran on the Dixiecrat platform. The South had been dominated by the Democrats, including Strom Thurmond and the Dixiecrats, and their campaigns were run as a protest against the gradual commitment of the national Democratic Party to civil rights. When Thurmond and the Dixiecrats split and joined the Republican party after their failed presidential campaign, the GOP as we know it was born.

What has been missed in popular conception of the Dixiecrats, though, is that they were not moved to action simply because they could not cope with desegregated schools. These rich land-owners were moved by the possibility that their brutal grip on labor might soon be coming to an end.

Whites were beginning to realize that their wages and employment were being drastically undercut by the exploitation of blacks. Why hire a white man at a reasonable wage when you could have a captive black worker for virtually free, who could literally be worked to death because another one could quickly be arrested on bogus charges to replace him? White workers were beginning to realize that their only hope of escaping poverty was to unite labor, and this meant uniting across color

lines. Multi-racial unions were becoming more common, and were increasingly capable of standing up to the vicious landowners. The Dixiecrats were terrified.

And so they adopted a textbook strategy of divide and conquer. They portrayed the black man as a predator, and invoked the idea of white pride to turn white workers on black workers, thus disbanding the unions that were forming. The Dixiecrats even convinced poor whites to vote for poll taxes to keep blacks away from the voting booths, even though most whites could not afford the poll taxes themselves. Only rich white men were left to vote, and it would take decades for poor workers to make up the ground.

Today American workers face a parallel plight. But instead of the exploitation of captive black labor, it is the exploitation of third-world labor that is devastating the wages and employment of American workers. The question for the corporate class has now become, Why pay an American worker a reasonable wage when I can get workers in China for pennies a day?

The "Free Market" chorus tries to convince us that if other countries just allow open markets, their wages will gradually get better as a matter of course, and gradually the wages of the rest of the world will catch up with our own. Just look at what it did for America, they say.

But this take does an incredible disservice to those who gave their blood, sweat, and tears to the American labor movement, which deserves at least as much credit for America's success as does the "free market". The free market brought the horror that was the industrial revolution, the labor movement took us from there.

Why? Because as Henry Ford said, you have to pay your workers enough to buy your products. This is an indispensable fact of a functional economy, and the free market does not account for it at all. Workers will never make enough to buy the products they make unless there is a labor movement.

But workers overseas are finding that virtually impossible. Often, as is the case in China, workers' organizations are forbidden. And if a smaller country attempts to begin a labor movement, or grant their citizens labor rights, corporations are agile enough to just pick up and exploit another country.

Of course this is what is happening to American workers. Under Bush alone, millions of jobs have been lost to sweatshops overseas, and economists

predict that they will never return. The only way to stop this bleeding of jobs is to establish decent wages and working conditions for other countries. And the only power that has the ability to promote and sustain such standards in the US government. No third-world nation can raise wages on its own, or corporate investment will simply go elsewhere. But if the American government is willing to require workers' rights in our trade agreements, the "race to the bottom" might be turned around into a progress for mankind, including American workers. If this could be accomplished it would undercut terrorism much more efficiently than wars which play into terrorist propaganda.

But make no mistake, under this administration that will *never* happen. It should be clear that the interests of employers and employees are very often divergent, just as this issue of labor rights proves. And there should also be no doubt as to which side this administration is on, as evidenced by their recent attempt to cut overtime wages for millions of American workers. Could any governmental action more clearly favor corporate America over working America than a bill that provides "longer hours for less pay", as Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa put it?

The abuse of foreign labor goes something like this: a country is granted aid on the condition that it "open its markets", meaning that American corporations can come in, buy up the land, and put local entrepreneurs out of business. Locals then have no choice but to work for American corporations no matter how little they pay. American workers are then forced to compete with these obscenely low wages, and find their jobs "outsourced" overseas. Everybody loses... except the corporations.

For the first time, major presidential candidates are speaking up about this problem. Led by Dick Gephardt and Howard Dean, the Democrats have won solid support from the unions, who see the current administration as the most powerful enemy of workers both here and around the world (this is also how the rest of the world sees it, by the way). These Democrats have risked a great deal of money from special interests and corporations in taking this position, and they deserve our support on this issue. If we are to support President Bush as our leader, he too must address this issue with more than lip-service. We at *Common Sense* are not holding our breath.

*For further information on the Dixiecrats,  
see [The Dixiecrat Revolt](#), Kari Frederickson  
and [Worse Than Slavery](#), David Oshinsky*