

### Our Institutional versus Constituent Interests

by Paul Kirsch

In July, members of the SB County Council had an interesting debate concerning institutional versus constituent interests. The outcome of the discussion resulted in a change of our by-laws. I thought you, the constituents, should know about it.

The two points of view were as follows: One point of view held that institutional interest is constituent interest— and that it wasn't necessary to make changes in the by laws to address this. That is, the institution, by virtue of its designation as the representative of the constituency, directly serves constituent interest. The other point of view is that institutional interest can become separate from constituent interest. This could be due to bureaucratic complexity, rigid adherence to procedure and/or potential power plays between competing elites within the organization.

I became interested in this issue for a variety of reasons. For one, I saw that the Democrats were spending an enormous amount of money simply to show what was already a fait accompli. Going into the Boston convention, everyone knew Kerry would be elected. And Surprise! He was. Could not the many millions spent putting on the convention show have been better spent directly offering something to the constituency? That is, there is something cold and rigid regarding these megalithic institutions such that elite interest always disenfranchises the constituent masses. As regards the Green Party, I observed not so much that capital was being wasted, but that vast amounts of human energy were being displaced, ostensibly for constituent interest in regards to the election of a candidate. Witness the venom and vitriol of the Nader-Cobb debate. Well, Surprise! A Green was not elected President.

I therefore wanted it in writing that we will do what we can to avoid this mess at the local level. My concerns were that such bureaucratic issues as fine tuning by-laws could cut into time that would be better spent making plans to help the community— that our sole purpose lay in listening to constituent complaints and addressing them. Mind you, the council is indeed pretty efficient and effective; my concerns were more in observing what was happening in the larger social organizations of state and national

Green politics. (Of course this very discussion could itself be considered institutional interest—but this enters a hall of mirrors that I would prefer not to.) The final wording, placed in to the by-laws and agreed to by all: "We will *balance* institutional and constituent interest."

I, for one, am glad this discussion took place.

Haiku

"Foolish Mortals"

Gods above guffaw.  
Below, the worms too laugh at  
59 million fools.

"2004 Melodrama"

Heartless villain  
Steals from sweet lass—Ohio.  
Greens to the rescue!

—Rich Kaplan

Attended by over 800 people, the August 29 peace march in Santa Barbara terminated at the Court House Sunken Gardens with a rally and political speeches.

Since I was the last speaker and only about 25 of the peace marchers were still there when I spoke, I'm taking this opportunity to give my assessment of the causes of the so-called war on terrorism and what is required to end it.

One has to go back in history to the end of World War II to find the genesis of one of the major causes of this reign of terror. Among many others, the Jews in

dictatorial governments of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States because we have a crying need for oil. What is *our* oil doing under *their* sand??

The US attacked Iraq supposedly because Iraq had or was developing weapons of mass destruction, and particularly, nuclear weapons. Why shouldn't Iraq have nuclear weapons? Or, in fact, why shouldn't any country that desires them have nuclear weapons? In the 1950s, a Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was devised and signed by most of the world's coun-

tries, with three exceptions – Israel, India, and Pakistan. Subsequent to the treaty, all three have developed nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them. The first part of the treaty said that the signatories would not develop nuclear weapons. But the second part said that signatory nations would begin the process of eliminating them. Not only did the US and the Soviet Union not start eliminating them, but both developed more sophisticated weapons and the means to deliver them anywhere in the world.

Is it any wonder that we are the most hated country in the world, and that with the exception of Israel, hatred of the US is so pervasive throughout the Middle East that people there are willing for commit suicide to further their goals?

