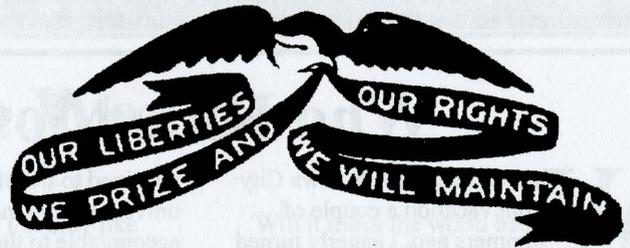


# THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE



July 2007

---

*A NEWSLETTER FOR IOWA'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT*

---

## Paying Attention: Prairie Dog's Summer Reading List

**T**he first duty of every intelligent person is to pay attention to the obvious.

--George Orwell

***Beyond Fear: Thinking Sensibly about Security in an Uncertain World,***  
Bruce Schneier

Do you lie awake in a cold sweat after watching TV reports about terrorist plots, school shootings, bird flu, child kidnappings, or plane crashes? Let a famed cryptologist soothe you to sleep with proof that 'if it's in the news, it's not really news.'

***Crazy in America: The Hidden Tragedy of Our Criminalized Mentally Ill,***  
Mary Beth Pfeiffer (live in Des Moines later this year)

A matter-of-fact explanation of what a terrible idea it is to have a mental illness in a country that offers little care or comfort.

***Palestine Peace Not Apartheid,***  
Jimmy Carter

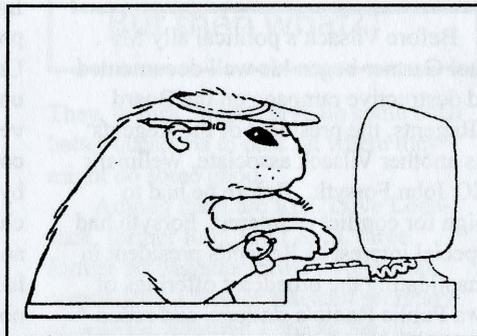
#39 alienates thousands of Americans but succeeds in provoking the dialogue we all need to engage in.

***Four Novels of the 1960s,***  
Phillip K. Dick

One man's prophetic socio-political hallucinations stand the test of time.

***Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq,***  
Stephen Kinzer

A historical thriller that hooks you with the first chapter ('A Hell of a Time up at the Palace') and roars through the entire arc of US military intervention. Dick Cheney has nothing on John Foster Dulles. One of the year's hottest sellers at Prairie Lights.



***Charlie Wilson's War,*** George Crile  
A tragicomic look at the CIA's not-so-covert war-by-proxy against the Red Army in Afghanistan during the Reagan years, funded and run by an alcoholic Texas congressman dedicated to killing Commies and getting laid. At taxpayer expense, he succeeded in both.

***Apex Hides the Hurt,*** Colson Whitehead  
Still wondering why the University of Iowa Community Credit Union tried to change its name to Optiva? Read the best novel ever about corporate brand-

ing, small-town boosterism, and the corruption of language.

***The Custodian of Paradise,***  
Wayne Johnston

A tongue-in-cheek historical novel of Newfoundland that Emily Bronte would have written if she'd had a sense of irony.

***The Little Book of Common Sense Investing,*** John Bogle

A guide for left-wingers who have become closet capitalists. You know who you are. Recommended by Marlene Perrin of Taxes Plus.

***Deer-Hunting with Jesus,*** Joe Bageant  
A small town's lone liberal describes the corporate creation and destruction of working-class Winchester, VA. One step beyond *What's the Matter with Kansas*.

***Brides Behaving Badly,*** Bev West and Jason Bargund

Need a gift for that special wedding couple? Nothing will better express your feelings about the entire institution of marriage.

***Thirst,*** Mary Oliver

The poet from Provincetown again delivers what we want from her: small observations that lead us to larger truths.

*Summer Reading List,  
Continued on Page 5*

---

# Who Killed Iowa Public Radio?

When driving back to Iowa City from vacation a couple of summers ago, I eagerly turned my dial to see if we were in range of my favorite radio station, WSUI. One of the oldest public radio stations in the nation (SUI stands for "State University of Iowa"), it is an oasis in the desert of AM radio, which has been overrun by hateful talk show hosts such as Limbaugh, Hannity, Gallagher and Savage.

When I finally got in range, I discovered to my dismay that "listener sponsored" WSUI now had ads encouraging me to buy my beer at John's Market and my jewelry at Hands Jewelers (or was it Ginsbergs?). Public radio has for many years named on the air the individuals and businesses that were contributors, but this was something new: advertisements for commercial products.

As I looked into this I found that these advertisements were not referred to as advertisements in public radio circles. They were "extended underwriting announcements" or some such gobbledygook. Advertisements they are, though, and the density of the commercials appears to be higher than it is on public radio's major competitor for band width allocated to new stations, Christian radio, which unlike Iowa public radio does not receive any public funds, and makes no claim to be "public".

In adopting "extended underwriting", WSUI was only conforming to national trends in becoming a commercial radio station, but somehow it seemed worse to have local commercials. Until recently there were few places in America with the diversity of non-commercial radio listening as Eastern Iowa. WSUI's sister station KSUI featured classical music, KUNI at the University of Northern Iowa offered folk and blue grass, and KCKK at Kirkwood Community College carried jazz. The commercialization of WSUI, it turned out, was just a sign of even worse to come, i.e. the centralization of Iowa public radio in the hands of the Iowa Board of Regents.

Governor Tom Vilsack was de-

termined to transform our public universities by making them more accountable to the public. He also equated the public good with corporate power. Vilsack's definition of accountability for public universities was (1) eliminate duplication, as if universities were corporations, and (2) make all three Regents institutions serve the interests of corporate power through corporate welfare programs euphemistically called "economic development".

**"The fundamental purpose of government is to maintain institutions that serve the public interest rather than the private interest."**

Before Vilsack's political ally Michael Gartner began his well documented and destructive rampage on the Board of Regents, the president of the Regents was another Vilsack associate, Wellmark CEO John Forsyth. Before he had to resign for conflict of interest, Forsyth had a special interest as Regent's president in consolidating the broadcast offerings of Iowa Public Radio's stations, and reducing their subsidy from the state. The results are obvious to anyone who listens. KUNI programming now sounds almost exactly like that of WSUI. Both are infested with ads, which give the lie to any claim that these are "public stations". We are fortunate that KCKK is associated with a community college, and beyond the reach of corporate centralizers on the Board of Regents.

Behind this deterioration of public service is serious confusion about the proper distinction between public and private. Public institutions are meant to serve the public interest. Private institu-

tions are meant to maximize profits for private investors. The fundamental purpose of government is to maintain institutions that serve the public interest rather than the private interest.

Public radio was founded in order to be public, i.e. to serve the interests of all citizens rather than the interests of the shareholders and advertisers who dominate the commercial media. The model was the British Broadcasting Corporation, which has never had commercial advertising on the grounds that it would undermine its public character. The BBC has been throughout the last three quarters of a century the most reliable and impartial source of information in the entire world.

In the minds of those who instituted "extended underwriting" on WSUI, the word public means something different. It has been displaced by a new phrase, "public-private partnership", to describe how public institutions should be run. An appointee of the Vilsack faction on the Board of Regents, University of Iowa Interim President Gary Fethke, has been promoting this idea by redefining the University of Iowa as a "public assisted" university rather than a "public" university. The University of Iowa has of course been funded since it was founded by sources of money other than taxes, including land grants, tuition, endowments, and private donations. All of those funds have been dedicated to public service, not to private gain. Fethke's ideal for the University of Iowa, like John Forsyth's ideal for Iowa Public Radio, is a public-private hybrid institution that acts like a private corporation, and serves the interests first of all of private investors. What's good for private investors is of course good for Iowa.

What is at stake here is nothing less than integrity of democracy, although it is certainly not a new struggle. The framers of the Iowa constitution understood the danger that democratic institutions might be undermined by the pressure

*Who Killed Public Radio?,  
Continued on Page 3*

---

---

# US and the World

Let's face it. The Iowa caucuses ain't what they used to be. Time was when the boys in the back of the bus peeked over the shoulder of Johnny Apple, the legendary New York Times reporter, who first figured out the rules. He then scooped the world by explaining how George McGovern won by placing third. Four years later, Jimmy Carter, who also watched with interest, blasted off to short-lived glory, carrying his own suit-bag.

Bliss was it in those days to be alive. But to be a campaign consultant could be very heaven. Now and then candidates even said something spontaneous. It was actually fun to be a voter.

Of course, there was always the inevitable Tuesday morning, when the caravan left for New Hampshire and Iowa went back to being Iowa, leaving 48 other states asking if there weren't a better way to elect the leader of the Free World.

Even today, with reports of the caucuses' death less exaggerated than at any time since 1968, the game might still be worth a farewell candle. One reason is the opportunity to correct an oversight that grad students yet unborn will be writing about well into the next century. The other is a chance to learn something that might still come in handy after the candidates have come and gone.

So return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear, when a certain governor of Texas, who didn't know the name of the Pakistani president, let it be known that the Israeli-Palestinian dust-up was best left to the natives, and told us he favored humility in foreign affairs, went on to win – well, he sure didn't lose – both in January and November. Now remember the Constitutional role of roles that distinguishes US Presidents from school board presidents, county supervisors, even US Senators. Now remember what we forgot to ask any candidate, not just George W. Bush, about barely seven years ago.

So this time we might not only like to ask about foreign policy first - and that means all of it. We might also like to ask the right questions, and not throw whiffle balls. Of course the candidates, even the Republicans, are against the war. But then what?

The good news is that a civic Chautauqua on the very questions we need to ask is just over the horizon, admission free. Between August 27 and November 26, the University of Iowa, Grinnell, Drake, and Iowa Public Radio will offer 12 – count them – chances to listen and talk to people with a few hundred years of professional experience between them.

**“Of course the candidates, even the Republicans, are against the war. But then what?”**

They, in turn, might serve up some even better questions to pass on where they might do some good.

Among them are Rep. Dave Loebsack, former Rep. Jim Leach, three former ambassadors, two foreign correspondent, a former assistant secretary of defense, a retired Foreign Service officer now on the staff of the Senate Intelligence Committee, a few native entrepreneurs who connect Iowa with the global economy, an ex-US naval captain resolved to save the Pacific salmon (beginning in Kamchatka), and the director of Massachusetts's public health lab.

Scheduled as “US and the World” at the Englert Theater in Iowa City between 11 a.m. and 1.20 p.m. Mondays, the visitors will be at Grinnell Monday evening, and resurface Tuesday noon at Drake. As 16A:152, the series can even be enjoyed for UI course credit.

Will it make the world better? No promises. But it certainly can't hurt – especially in Iowa, where the candidates can't face too many good questions between now and the caucuses. Just remember 2000. ✂

—David Schoenbaum lives and teaches in Iowa City.

## *Who Killed Public Radio?, Continued from Page 2*

to turn them into institutions that serve private interests. Article VII, Section 1 says that the credit of the state “shall not, in any manner, be given, or loaned to, or in aid of, any individual, association, or corporation.” In its clumsy way, this section of the constitution was drafted in order to create a firewall between public and private sectors, between institutions that serve the public interest and institutions that serve the interests of private shareholders.

It is that firewall that the Vilsack faction on the Board of Regents and their supporters want to break down with university-funded economic development schemes, and with the full or partial privatization of as many public institutions as possible. With WSUI they have already won. It is true that even as a commercial operation, WSUI remains a better station than the local AM hate radio channels KXIC and KCJJ. WSUI may well deserve our private contributions. It no longer deserves the label public, though. A station that attempts to persuade me to purchase an automobile from Lujack's Northpark Auto Plaza in Davenport has no more claim to taxpayer funding than a listener-supported Christian radio station. ✂

—Jeff Cox

---

# Si Se Puede

**M**y grandfather, Robert O'Callaghan, took a boat from Ireland to the U.S. in 1927. At twenty-one years old, he came with a limited education and injuries from a lifetime of farm labor. Other than speaking English, albeit with a heavy brogue, he did not possess any attributes that would have distinguished him from many other young men from other parts of the world. He was allowed to enter the U.S. "legally" because the National Preference immigration law enacted in 1924 happened to favor immigrants from Ireland and other "northern" European countries. My grandfather was thus able to settle in Cincinnati, Ohio, where he found work and met and married Johanna Rigney. Together they raised four children, including my mother.

My grandfather could just as well have been a Black sharecropper migrating from Mississippi to Cincinnati. He could have been a Mexican crossing the Rio Grande to find seasonal work or to settle. Had my grandfather not made it here, he might have gone to England (in which case, I presumably would not exist

to annoy you with this essay). England's political and economic relationship with Ireland has been similar to that of the U.S. with Mexico or Puerto Rico. In each of these cases, broadly speaking, the formerly colonized or conquered nation has served as a source of surplus labor for the wealthier nation, usually for the lowest paid and most dangerous work.

Since the beginning of human existence, people have migrated, both within and across borders. Our immigration laws have never provided a fair or orderly "line" where potential immigrants can apply and wait their turn to come to the U.S. They operate more like a labyrinth full of dark corridors, dead ends, and trap doors. As a general rule, in order to both enter the U.S. and obtain permission to work here, you must have a close family member or employer sponsor you. The law also allows in some recognized refugees and asylum seekers. Even then, the visa backlog and bureaucratic procedures result in most applicants waiting many years before they might obtain some kind of "regular" status. Most people simply

have no "legal" way to enter or work in the U.S. As a result, decent people risk violence and death just to provide for or reunite with their families in the U.S. or in their home country. We need to reform our immigration laws to account for the human and economic realities that push people to move back and forth across borders.

The only legitimate concern about the presence of undocumented workers in the U.S. is the extent to which they can be exploited to work outside of the protections of our labor laws. (For an excellent account of one immigrant's struggle, I recommend *The Short Sweet Dream* of Eduardo Gutiérrez by Jimmy Breslin.) Their poor treatment also weakens the protection of these laws for other U.S. workers. But the solution to this problem does not lie in deportation. Deporting immigrants will not add labor protections to the free trade agreements and will not stop the outsourcing of manufacturing to China. The best way out of the global race towards the bottom of wages and working conditions is to focus on organizing and protecting workers in all nations, no matter where they live or where they originally came from.

Most of the other ills laid at the feet of immigrants consist of an updated rehash of the same racial and eugenicist arguments that led to the adoption of immigration laws based on national origin in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As the nativist Patrick Buchanan wrote in 1984 about his opposition to immigration, this issue has "almost nothing to do with economics, almost everything to do with race and ethnicity. If British subjects, fleeing a depression, were pouring into this country through Canada, there would be few alarms. The central objection to the present flood of illegals is they are not English-speaking people from Western Europe; they are Spanish-speaking brown and black people from Mexico, Latin America and the Caribbean."

I implore those who look at "illegal" immigrants with anger to please look again, and perhaps then you will see in their faces those of your own grandparents. ❧

—Peter Small grew up in Iowa City.

## No we can't

**O**nce again "comprehensive immigration reform" is being debated. The current form of the bill should be rejected, again.

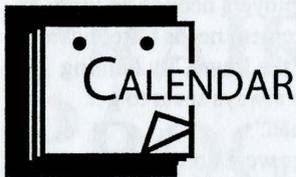
Many of those in favor of the bill say those opposed are "anti-immigrant" and usually racist. I am neither anti-immigrant nor anti-immigration. I AM an immigrant. I filled out the required papers, applied, waited, interviewed, and waited again. If those here illegally are granted amnesty, it seems to say that if you get into the country, however it is, at some point you will be allowed to stay and given legal status. When amnesty was granted in 1986, there were 2 million illegal immigrants made eligible for citizenship. Now there are at least 12 million illegal immigrants. Those numbers alone should tell us that this is a poor solution to a difficult problem. To

grant amnesty in this manner, and let's call it what it is, is to insult all of us who jumped through the required hoops for legal immigration and, of course, waited.

To call us racists is also the last and poorest defense. While there may be some among us, as there are among all Americans, the majority of those opposed to the bill want a principled application of the law. Could it be that any of those employers who want the bill and an abundance of cheap labor are racist? We don't hear that being said of them. What about the labor leaders who see a potential member pool?

It has been disappointing to find so many Democrats in favor of the proposed legislation. Countless studies have

*No we can't,  
Continued on Page 6*



July 13-14

Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement Convention, Des Moines

July 28

Americans with Disabilities Anniversary Celebration, Iowa City Civic Center, 10 AM - Noon

July 29-August 2

Midwest School for Women Workers, Iowa Memorial Union, Iowa City

August 9, 1977

Elvis Presley died at age 42 in Memphis, TN

August 15-17

Iowa Federation of Labor Annual COPE Convention, Waterloo

August 23, 1927

Sacco and Vanzetti, immigrant labor agitators, executed in MA

August 27

'US and the World' foreign policy chautauqua begins, Englert Theatre, Iowa City

September 3, 2002

Anti-gay ballot initiative defeated in Miami/Dade County, FL

September 5

University of Iowa Energy Expo, Iowa City

September 8-9

I-RENEW Energy Expo, Solon High School

September 14

Physicians for Social Responsibility Conference, Hotel Vetro, Iowa City

September 16, 1952

Richard Nixon delivered 'Checkers' speech on television, declaring he will not return his daughter's cocker spaniel

**Summer Reading List,**  
*Continued from Page 1*

**The Girls,** Lori Lansens

Twins joined at the head, born in the nowhere of Canada, are raised by the nurse who delivered them after Mom runs off in horror. "I have never looked into my sister's eyes....but oh, how I've been loved." Best new paperback of the summer.

**Paper Trails: True Stories of Confusion, Mindless Violence, and Forbidden Desires, a Surprising Number of Which Are Not About Marriage,** Pete Dexter  
Winner of Prairie Dog's Best Title of 2007 Award.

**The Quotable Atheist: Ammunition for Nonbelievers, Political Junkies, Gadflies, and Those Generally Hell-Bound,** Jack Huberman  
Runner-up for best title of the year.

**Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy,** Barbara Ehrenreich

**South of the Pumphouse,** Les Claypool  
(live at Prairie Lights July 19)

**Prime Green: Remembering the Sixties,** Robert Stone

**Artobiography,** Don Seiden

"To pay attention, this is our endless and proper work."  
—Mary Oliver

Thanks to Paul 'Prairie Mouse' Ingram for his contributions. ✂  
—Prairie Dog

**THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE** is funded entirely by subscriptions from our readers. Please help expand our readership by giving a gift subscription. Editors for this issue: Jeff Cox and Dave Leshtz.

- o \$12 1-year subscription
- o \$\_\_\_\_\_ 2007 sustaining fund gift
- o \$10 1-year gift subscription

\_\_\_\_\_  
Your Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Gift Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Your Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Gift Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, State Zip

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, State Zip

Please return to: The Prairie Progressive, P.O. Box 1945, Iowa City, IA 52244

*No we can't,*  
*Continued from Page 4*

shown that those most disadvantaged by illegal immigration are low-wage, unskilled workers who drive down wages for all. The bill under discussion would create a permanent low-wage pool of workers through the temporary worker visas. The granting of permanent status to 12 million, most of who fall in the unskilled category, would flood the market and do nothing to help low-wage working Americans or legal immigrants. Democrats should oppose this as inconsistent with our values.

There is also the total impracticality of the whole idea of somehow registering 12 million people. My husband has been waiting 4 months to renew his passport! It boggles the mind to believe that adequate background checks could be completed on such a large influx into the system. It is constantly said that this will bring illegal immigrants "out of the shadows." Well, it would certainly bring

some out – those with enough patience to go through a system that they earlier rejected when coming to the country. Surely, it would not bring out anyone without the required money, or anything else they might have in their background that would make them ineligible or questionable.

Another element of the bill that causes laughter, however bitter, among opponents is that dealing with gang members. The gang member has only to say that he or she now rejects gang membership in order to be eligible for legalization. Oh, and don't forget, we legal folks will pick up the legal bills for "alleged felons" among the illegal immigrants.

What we need to do right now is to start enforcing the laws that we already have. We have many laws regarding border security. Let's try actually doing it. Then there needs to be active pursuit of employers that hire illegal immigrants. This was part of the 1986 law but has never been done. Are Democrats afraid

to offend corporate contributors? The fines for such employers need to be very severe and enforcement needs to replicate that of the IRS or the Iowa City Parking Attendants. They always seem to get their man or woman.

If these things were done and Americans see them being done, we can then turn to the task of dealing with the 12 million. I believe then we would have more confidence in our leaders and feel more kindly disposed toward at least some of those who wish to become citizens. If we need to increase the number of immigrants that are allowed into the country each year, let's assess our needs and do it. But let us reject this bill that Rudy Guiliani, in all his eloquence, called "a mess." He was right. The solution does not lie in this complex, convoluted bill. Let's have a simpler bill or bills that have border security, employer sanctions, and increased visas. Democrats and all Americans could support this. ✕

—Charlotte Fallon immigrated from  
Canada to Iowa City.

## THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE

Box 1945

Iowa City, IA 52244



"It is possible to read the history of this country as one long struggle to extend the liberties established in our Constitution to everyone in America"

-- Molly Ivins, 1944-2007