

Wasting Your Vote, Wasting Our Democracy

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Speaking in Santa Cruz, California

August 23, 2000

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you for many things but thank you for waiting this long. You really have stamina. That's what we all have to have is stamina. We're now at a second stage in this campaign. I was here, as you know, in the Spring. We've now campaigned in all fifty states -- including some more than once like California -- and we're campaigning with citizen groups on the ground. This is no photo-opportunity check like George W. Bush with his photos with two little kids trying to show he's the compassionate conservative. I won't what that leaves just ordinary conservatives? When you have to have an adjective you're in trouble as a movement.

Since I spoke here in the spring I have seen a lot of auditoriums. Do you know how important it is to have an auditorium just right with the right ambience and the right architecture? I have to tell you a trivial thing before we get into the heavy material. This is the best, single auditorium I've ever spoken in. And we can thank the architects and we can thank the foresight of people in this city who put such a gathering right in the middle of a public building. This is not the Staples Center.

Another by-product of this campaign, by the way, is that the momentum building up for allowing our farmers to grow industrial hemp is really reaching critical mass. For those of you who aren't familiar with this plant, it is 5,000 years old, it has 50,000 uses and it's been mixed up with the marijuana issue. Industrial hemp is a source of food, fuel, it replaces cutting down trees because it's a great way to make paper. It produces medicines, lubricants, all kinds of products. It's a plant that can be grown almost anywhere in the United States with almost no pesticides or herbicides.

Hemp is the longest, sturdiest fiber plant on earth; and since the late 1930's, it has been prohibited because it was put on the prescribed list. First the paper companies didn't want it for obvious reasons: it was competition. But, it is now still on the DEA prescribed list. We have had a petition with farm groups and state legislators and others trying to liberate it from the DEA prescribed list. But, General McCaffrey has been sitting on it for three years and not responding to the petition.

I went to Hawaii a few weeks ago and the only legalized area for industrial hemp (licensed by the government) as a pilot project was right outside Honolulu. We go out to this area circumscribed by a fence, an area the size of this stage, where this plant is being grown, surrounded by a barbed-wire fence with great klieg lights -- I didn't see any bloodhounds -- but great klieg lights, and there is one scientist there in charge. He took us over and we saw this little green plant growing which didn't seem to exhibit any threat. I asked him, "How are things going?" He has a very wry sense of humor and says, "I have to keep filling out reports to the government about what's going on. Last night, some birds came in over the fence and ate some of the hemp seed." I asked, "Did they go out wobbly?" He said, "No,

they're okay, they got out. But I had to fill out the form, anyway." Imagine the medieval superstition that underlies all this. If General McCaffrey was here, he would say that industrial hemp is a stocking horse for marijuana. I have news for you General McCaffrey, at one one-third of one percent THC, even *you* couldn't get high smoking industrial hemp.

Alright. We have to deal with the biggest obstacle to this campaign which is: the belief by many people that only one of two men can win the presidency -- either, George W. Bush or Albert Gore -- and they have to be realistic and they want to vote for the least of the worst. Lots of people say that they are pretty disgusted with both parties, but they're gonna trundle on to the polls in November and they're going to vote for the least of the worst. They believe that a choice between bad Democrats and worse Republicans, is an adequate one -- for them -- in the land of the free, home of the brave.

So let us address these people and then we'll address the majority of eligible voters in this country who don't vote. Michael Moore wrote a letter a few weeks ago -- he is a big supporter of this campaign -- it's on the Internet if you want to pick it up. He began it this way saying, *Voters of America step aside, I want to address the majority*. So, let's now pick up the argument to all those voters who think that they have to accept a choice between the bad and the worse.

First, let's dispense with the worst, George W. Bush. I don't know what Michael Moore is gonna do with George W. Bush. This is really one of our country's greatest deceptive practices. Here is a man who calls himself a 'compassionate conservative'. He has been a governor for six years in a state that has the highest child hunger level in the United States, that has the most number of children without health insurance in the United States -- he actually went out of his way to block federal funds that were available to all 50 states, including Texas, to increase the coverage of health care for poor children in Texas (the Chip Program). He calls himself a compassionate conservative but he has let the polluters make Texas the most polluted state in the country. And in return, he accepted contributions from these corporate polluters. He says he is a compassionate conservative but he doesn't like the idea of people who are injured or made sick, by corporate misdeeds or corporate crimes, having their full day in court in Texas and sue these perpetrators. But he calls himself a 'compassionate conservative'. I wonder what he would be like if he wasn't a 'compassionate conservative'? George W. Bush really is a giant corporation running for president disguised as a person.

Now we come to the Democrats and Al Gore. It's amazing when you talk about the Green Party and the Green Party challenge and the Democrats are saying, 'No, don't defect, don't vote for the Green Party candidates.' And you say, 'Why? Why not?' And the Democrats say, 'Because we're not as *bad* as the *Republicans*.' Can you imagine *defining* yourself that way? 'We're not as *bad* as the *Republicans* -- we really are different.' Well let's see where they're different. I suppose they are different when you apply a magnifying glass to the two parties. I assume they are different. When you sweep aside the rhetoric, how really different are they?

Well they say, Abortion. This is the way the Democrats try to hook in the Women's groups, among others, in New York City and elsewhere. Abortion. Let's talk about that. Remember Pat Robinson? When he was asked on TV a few weeks ago, "Would you continue to support

George W. Bush, because you were vigorously anti-abortion, if he appoints a Vice President who is pro-choice?" And do you know what Pat Robinson said? He'd still support George W. Bush. Because he knows, even he knows, that the Republican Party would destroy itself if it took away a woman's right to choice. Why are they talking the opposite way? Because they have to throw that rhetoric to their right-wing in order to get their base and not have it defect to Buchanan.

Remember: *Roe v. Wade* was written by Blackman, a Republican nominee. It is still supported by Souter and O'Connor -- they had a chance to overrule it. The Republicans are a very good fingers-to-the-wind party. They are not going to destroy their party in that manner. Besides, do you have any idea how powerful the pro-choice constituency is in this country once it's challenged? It's simply not going happen. There was an old dean of Harvard Law School, many decades ago, who was talking about prohibition in the twenties. He said, There are some things that are beyond the effective limits of legal action. There is no legal action that can stop the right of a woman to choose. There is no government that can force a woman either to have a child or to not have a child in a society that presumes to have *minimal* democratic rights. They can do it in China, and prohibit women from having children, and they can do it in Romania, and force women to have children, under the Communist regime, but not in this country.

Now, let's take a telescope to this situation. Do you think that George W. Bush and Al Gore are going to challenge the military budget in this country? They are both for a larger military budget and now they are quibbling about how much more. George W. Bush says, 'It's not enough, Al. You're going to 320 billion,' -- which is as high as it ever was at the height of the Cold War, when it was directed against the Soviet Union and their bristling missiles. What is the reason for a 320 billion-dollar budget now? I ask, *Who is the enemy? Find one.*

Now, there are Pentagon analysts (inside the Pentagon), there are ex-generals and admirals who are speaking up. They are saying, This is madness. This country needs these tax dollars to abolish child poverty, to rebuild our public works, to repair our schools, expand our community health clinics, and build our public transit system. Where are the two parties on this? They are quibbling whether it should be 320 *billion* or 340 or 350 *billion*.

The missile defense system -- unworkable says the American Society of Physicists, many of whom consult with the Pentagon. It's too easily decoyed. It's a waste of money. It will provoke Russia and China into a new arms race. Who is it aimed against? -- Not Russia and China. They've had missiles for years. We haven't had a missile defense system. We've had a Mutually Assured Destruction strategy, which basically says if they fly those missiles to us, our missiles will go to them and they don't want to commit suicide. Why do we suddenly think that our government has found other countries in the world who are willing to commit suicide? Because when they send missiles, they have a return address.

You know what the real hazard is? Nuclear weapons in suitcases smuggled into the country. You can't have a missile system against that. So, what do we do -- have a 500 billion dollar anti-nuclear-weapons-in-suitcases strategy? Why don't we try waging peace? Why don't we try to preventive diplomacy? Why don't we try putting a semblance of our financial and human resources into anticipating conflict and preventing conflict and making sure that there is more justice in the world -- so that these opportunities do not erupt against us.

If you compare how much we're spending on the military budget, it is more than the combined military budgets of the next largest nine countries' military budget. And if you add our allies' military budget to ours and confront the military budget of China, Russia, and the so-called Rogue states, it's like a yard up against *an inch*, in terms of military resources. What are we doing when we need money here at home to improve conditions in our country? What are we doing spending 70 billion dollars a year to keep our troops in western Europe and east Asia -- 55 years after World War II to defend prosperous allies who are perfectly capable of defending themselves against non-existent enemies?

Do you think George W. Bush and Al Gore are any different on this? They are not any different on this. 'Well,' you may say, 'that's not important enough. Let's move to another subject.' Let's move to the subject of the hundreds of billions of dollars every year -- state, local, and national -- that are funneled in to corporate subsidies, handouts, giveaways and bailouts. Let's talk about that for a moment and think of where this money could be used to improve conditions in this country on behalf of the many. If you are going to have subsidies, by the many, you should have subsidies by the many *for* the many. Not by the many for the few rich and powerful.

Not a chance that you will hear *any critical commentary* on corporate welfare boondoggles from either Al Gore or George W. Bush. George W. Bush has a special problem here because he's the corporate welfare king of all presidential candidates having, with his corporate allies, gotten the city of Arlington, Texas to build a tax-funded stadium for the Texas Rangers which inflated the value of the sports team so much, that George W. Bush turned a \$600,000 investment into a \$14 million profit. So, when he talks about Welfare Reform, you bet he knows what he's talking about, doesn't he? In fact, he was ready to hire Lockheed Martin Corporation, which has a division to implement welfare reform in the states by subcontracting. He was ready to bring in Lockheed Martin-Marietta to interview welfare mothers and decide who gets this and who doesn't get that. I was wondering why he chose Lockheed Martin until I realized that Lockheed Martin is one of the biggest corporate welfare kings in the country. So, I guess he thought it was qualified to deal with a \$300-a-month welfare mothers.

What was significant about this is the level of corruption. We work with citizen groups all the time in Washington -- environmental, consumer, labor -- working to fight exploitation of poor people, horrible consumer exploitation including payday loans (200% interest) and rent-to-own rackets. People don't really understand given the measly income that the poor manage to eke out how much is drained away by these rapacious merchant and corporate criminals. A lot of it is backed by New York investment firms, who fund these predatory lending rackets to begin with and then try to hide behind the merchant.

We go up to members of Congress and Committees and say, 'What about another \$25 million to have the federal trade commission move in on these predatory lenders and these payday and loan rackets? Because the local and state governors don't seem to be doing anything.' 'Oh, we don't have the money.'

We go up to a committee and say, 'What about another \$100 million for safe drinking water systems?' In this country we have *severely* undermined the upgrade of purification systems. Lots and lots of people are drinking water with impermissible levels of lead, for example.

‘Oh, we don’t have the money.’

You go up to another committee and you say, ‘Lots of people are still dying on the highways. We need some more research so we can get tougher motor vehicle safety standards and fuel efficiency standards.’ Which by the way, the Clinton-Gore administration has not upgraded once in eight years -- a total free-ride to the auto companies. And so your motor vehicle fuel efficiency has been *declining* under Clinton-Gore. Even though Clinton-Gore told us in 1992 that by this year, the year 2000, motor vehicles would have an average fuel efficiency of 40 miles per gallon. You know what it is now? It’s 24.5 miles per gallon. Which is, as *low* as it has been since 1980. It’s down to 1980 levels. So you go up there and you say, ‘How about some more money for these missions?’ ‘Oh no, we just don’t have it.’

Then, you go up again and you say, ‘Some kids have died recently from ecoli because of poorly inspected meat and poultry products and contaminated hamburger. We need more meat and poultry inspectors because there aren’t enough of them and they are beleaguered and they are harassed.’ And Congress says, ‘No money for it.’

And then you see these well-dressed defense company lobbyists coming up to Capital Hill from General Dynamics and Lockheed Martin and Grumman and Raytheon -- especially Raytheon, they now smell this missile defense system -- and they say, ‘We think there needs to be a \$200 billion allocation for the Joint Strike Fighter.’ Which Pentagon analysts think is non-sense but they can’t speak up. And the Congressperson or Congressional Committee says, ‘O.K. fine.’

Lockheed says to the Pentagon and Congress, ‘We want to merge Martin-Marietta and we want a billion and a half dollars for the wedding.’ And they got a billion and a half of your dollars for the wedding. And in the original package, there was \$30 million allocated for bonuses to six executives of these companies for their creativity in merging these two companies. Fortunately, Bernie Sanders got it knocked out of the budget. But just think, all these little things I just suggested -- motor vehicle, drinking water, food safety, etc. -- roll them all up and they didn’t amount to half of that Pentagon subsidy for the Martin-Marietta merger.

This is what is going on. I’m giving you examples that are very representative. It doesn’t matter whether it’s Bush or Gore. It doesn’t matter whether it’s a Republican or a Democrat. There is a permanent government in Washington, the corporate government, that has taken over our political government and transcended the two parties completely.

Here is another area in which they will not dissent: the need to crackdown on corporate crime, fraud and abuse. Hundreds of billions of dollars fleeced from people. Health and safety hazards unchecked. Who says so? Just read. Read the radical press -- the *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *AP*, *Los Angeles Times*, the *Philadelphia Enquirer*, *60 minutes* -- they all have these page-one stories that are very well done investigating corporate crime, fraud and abuse. The health care area alone, ripping off criminally Medicare -- billions and billions of dollars documented by HHS (Department of Health and Human Services in Washington). Do you think that Bush or Gore would debate about who is tougher on corporate crime? Do you think they will accuse each other of being

soft on corporate crime? Of course not. Because they are beholden to the corporate government in Washington D.C.

To show you the size of this theft, the size of this robbery: the General Accounting Office (GAO), the arm of Congress that investigates waste and corruption in the Executive Branch, says that one out of every ten dollars we spend on health care is drained away by billing fraud and abuse. You've seen these bills right? They are in code. Page after page of computer printouts that no one can understand -- except the crooks. So here they are, they overcharge us and then they make sure we don't even understand that we're being overcharged. In some instances, the third payments take care of it, so we don't feel it. Do you know what that amounts to this year? 110 *billion* dollars. You know how many uninsured Americans that could cover? Maybe 15 million.

And by the way, Clinton-Gore came into office with 35 million Americans uninsured and now they are 45-to-47 million Americans uninsured. So when you hear Al Gore saying, "I promise to move towards universal health care coverage, step by step," does he mean backwards? Or forwards?

Let's take another major area where the Tweedledum, Tweedledee parties do not disagree. This is just a minor one, excuse me, for the diversion. Tens of millions of Americans are obstructed by restrictive labor laws, from forming trade unions, so they can lift up their standard of living, and tell the WalMarts and McDonalds and the Kmart, 'You're not gonna get away with it any more.' 47 million Americans are making a non-living wage working everyday of the week, five days a week. They are making less than \$10 an hour, 10 million of them at minimum wage; the rest, not much more -- six, seven, eight, nine dollars an hour and, that is before you deduct the cost of *getting to work*. Here in California -- the cost of another car, an auto insurance policy, repairs -- just to get to work -- back and forth, back and forth. There is a law that is blocking workers from forming trade unions the way they can in Canada and Western Europe. It's called the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947.^[1]

The Democrats *don't dare mention repeal* and the Republicans love it. The Democrats know they can't win an election without organized labor behind them getting out the vote. And they still are so beholden to corporate interests, that they won't move to repeal Taft-Hartley, in order to expand their own trade union base, which would help them get elected. That is the power of money even with respect to the desire to expand your own constituency. Our campaign is dedicated to highlighting this notorious law that has been on the books for 53 years, and to demand and push for the repeal of the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947.

No difference between the two parties. You couldn't even get Gore to *mention* Taft-Hartley because it is taboo in corporate circles. Last week he said he was going to fight against the oil industry, the drug industry, the HMOs, the insurance companies and the corporate polluters. He said it all in one sentence, almost. I held a press-conference Monday, in front of the Staples Center, and I said to Al Gore, "Who is going to believe you, Al? If you are really going to fight for us against these big corporations, than you and your Democratic National Committee better send back the millions of dollars you've received from them forthwith, immediately. Send it back to the HMOs, and the insurance and the oil and the drug companies."

No. Haven't heard from Al Gore. Do you know that Al Gore cannot pronounce the two words, "Ralph Nader". I am a non-person to dear Al. Although his associates are trying to figure out all kinds of strategies to roll back the growing Green Wave that is heading towards Washington.

Now, let's take another major area of unquestioned similarity between Al Gore and George W. Bush: The WTO and NAFTA. Do you think they will disagree on that? They are both for it. Not only that, they want to extend fasttrack all the way down to Patagonia in South America. They want to envelop the world under an international system of autocratic governance that is mandated to place trade supremacy over the health and safety standards in the workplace environment and marketplace. That's the mandate of GATT, the mandate of NAFTA, our Trade Uber Alles, trade over other considerations that are far more important to the billions of people on earth.

The way it works, for those of you not familiar is as follows. You cannot buy a product in this country made by child labor, because it is illegal. But our country is bound by the GATT trade agreement to allow the importation of all kinds of products into our country made by millions of brutalized child laborers abroad and we can't do anything about it. Because under GATT, you cannot restrict imports based on the way they are produced except for prison labor. Child labor, which is often "prison labor," informally, doesn't qualify for that exemption.

That is just one example of how any time we want to improve health and safety standards legislatively or by regulation in this country, from Santa Cruz to California level to Washington level, we will come up against the State Department and the U.S. Trade Representative that will tell us, 'Don't bother, it's GATT illegal.' So it isn't just suppressing existing safety standards. It is suppressing our ability as a nation to be first in the world in auto safety and pollution control and pesticide control and other forms of environmental, consumer and work place standards. That is not only the mandate GATT, but it is done through secret tribunals and secret harmonization committees where our Freedom of Information law doesn't have any affect. Where our courts are irrelevant and where our open administrative dockets are not applicable.

Thus if a country under the influence of a corporation says to someone in Santa Cruz's Municipal Government, 'The ordinance you passed controlling a chemical here (because you couldn't wait for an indentured EPA to do it for you) is restrictive of trade and violative of GATT.' Then the U.S. Government can be hauled before a court in Geneva under the World Trade Organization that are kangaroo courts. They operate completely antagonistic to our judicial processes:

1. They're closed to all human beings, except the trade judges and the representatives of the two conflicting countries. No press. No citizens.
2. There is no public transcript.
3. There is no independent appeal.
4. The trade judge sitting there judging environmental, consumer and other issues does

not have to meet enforceable conflicts-of-interest so they could be moonlighting for corporations on the side.

That is what GATT is. That is what Clinton and Gore brought us. That is what Gore defended against Ross Perot. And that is what George W. Bush wants to endorse, as well. No difference. "Tweedledumb, Tweedledumber" as Jim Hightower put it.

Let's take an area where the rhetoric is different: Campaign Finance Reform. How many times have you heard Slick Willie and Al Gore talk about Campaign Finance Reform? They don't miss a day, as they have their hands out in front of these corporate slush funds; as they fly Airforce One and Airforce Two to all these fat cat salons and corporate hideaways in order to raise millions of dollars. They talk "campaign finance reform." Every State of the Union Address of Clinton to Congress, "campaign finance reform." And guess what? Although it had a war room of lobbying for China Permanent Trade Relations for GATT/NAFTA, they never assigned one person in the White House full-time to getting campaign finance reform through Congress.

It's a fraud and a farce. They are not going to take the lead. Because when you really press the Democrats to set an example by refusing to take soft money or by refusing to take PAC money, they all have the same refrain: 'We're for campaign finance reform but we don't want to unilaterally disarm *vis-a-vis* the Republicans.' Well, isn't that a stand of vigorous leadership? Isn't that political courage: That you will allow our democracy to be hijacked and our government to be corrupted against the interests of the American people because you don't want to take the first step and set a moral and political example for the corrupt Republican Party.

Let's take another area: Agriculture and rural America and the small farmer. In distress, not able to sell their soybeans and their corn and their cotton even for the price they got in 1996 -- it is sometimes 20-30% lower because of the giant buyers like ADM (you see those on the McLaughlin Show -- they call themselves supermarket for the world -- a few years ago we called ADM the supermarket for Bob Dole, they were so close to one another). These prices are prices where the farmers can't make a living. They work from dawn to dusk and they can't make a living. They have to have a part-time job or their spouse is working and they're going out of business. Because IBP, the beef giant, and the pork-buying giants and the cargo grain-buying giants are *squeezing* the price so they can get more profit. They are not passing the savings on to you in terms of supermarket prices.

And to top it off we have millions of migrant workers and farm laborers who don't come under the Federal Fair Labor Standards Law. They got exempted because the growers had a lot of power early on in Congress. And so they're not working for minimum wage, they don't have benefits, they don't have safety protection. They are really exploited. Isn't it a badge of shame on our society and on the way these corporations run our political economy, that the workers who harvest our food -- *our food* -- are paid the least, treated the worst, and damaged in their health the most. We have to put an end to that. We have to put an end to that.

You won't find a sliver of difference between Gore and Bush on that score. Nor will you find a sliver of difference on the burgeoning out-of-control biotechnology industry and the

GMO food juggernaut that is moving ahead without having scientific answers to discipline their profit-seeking technology. The Democrats are not saying anything about it.

Here is the most transforming technology in the history of the world. You can't find another that is going to change the world as significantly as the biotech industry will unless it is controlled and regulated and held accountable within a legal and ethical framework. This is the industry that is going to control and bioengineer the seeds of life. That is going to change the nature of nature. That is going to put a 20-year monopoly right on your gene sequences and on the genetic inheritance of floral and fauna. Imagine, years and years ago, businesses had slaves for laborers. They were called cotton plantations. That was finally done away with.

And here come these corporations again. *They want to own our genes.* And they don't have any opponents among the Democrat and Republican Parties to speak of. They have no regulation in Washington -- just guidelines that they write for the government and bureaucrats themselves. Do you think there is any difference between Gore and Bush on doing something about an industry that is changing the nature of nature and converting what should be the commonwealth of human kind into their 20-year monopoly patents? There is no difference at all. It is time that we pointed that out.

Universal health insurance, public financing of public campaigns, labor union rights, enforcement of the civil rights law -- Oh! That's probably where you say the Democrats are different than the Republicans -- at least in the area of civil rights, in protecting minorities from being discriminated against. I just had a talk recently with a lawyer from the Justice Department Civil Rights Division, and here's what he told me. The Democrats record in the area of litigation enforcement against police brutality and affirmative action was worse than that of the Reagan-Bush Justice Department. The only place where it was better was Housing Discrimination lawsuits. What a shame. The one area that the Democrats of yesteryear could lay to bold and proud claim of uniqueness against the Republican Party and now they have forfeited even that. Although their rhetoric is red-hot pro-Civil Rights, isn't it?

Now, let's say "Civil Liberties." There has to be one area left. Let's say civil liberties. Isn't there a difference between Bush and Clinton-Gore? Read forty columns by Anthony Lewis on the op-ed page of the *New York Times* over the last four years and see what the record of the Clinton Administration has been on civil liberties. See how immigrants are treated in this country. See how they are deported based on secret evidence. See how they are not given any due process of law. See how people have been here for 8-9 years and suddenly some minor infraction is discovered in their background and they are carted off to some foreign country on the basis of secret evidence that they cannot address. That they cannot challenge. That they cannot rebut. And that is only part of the Clinton record in civil liberties. Consider the restrictions on the right of *habeas corpus*. Consider one area after another that Anthony Lewis has pointed out when he calls the Clinton Administration the worst administration in modern times on civil liberties. So much for that distinction.

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Here's a country that doesn't even pay its dues to the United Nations. When most of the

money is spent in this country out of New York to begin with. Here's a country now has demanded that the United Nations continue ten years of economic sanctions against Iraq. We're not talking about the military embargo -- that's not in debate. The economic sanctions against Iraq are such that they are keeping needed medicines, needed medical equipment and food from the Iraqi people who are innocent adults and children who had nothing to do with the war and the repression and the dictatorship other than to suffer from it.

When Leslie Stahl of CBS *60 Minutes* did that anguished piece on the hospitals and dying babies in Baghdad in 1996 (or thereabouts), she interviewed Madeline Allbright and she basically laid out the horror in front of Madeline Allbright and asked our Secretary of State, "What do you think of that?" And Madeline Allbright said, 'It is worth the price.' And the question is, What is the price? The price allegedly is that apart from the military embargo, the economic embargo would destabilize the dictator of Iraq. When did she learn her strategy? The way you help a dictator be more repressive to is give the dictator every opportunity to charge foreign devils with killing innocent children in the dictator's country. It doesn't work. It's brutal. It should be criminally indictable under any international law. And it must be stopped.

In the area of energy policy, what is the difference between Bush and Gore? True, Bush is marinated in oil. But look at Clinton-Gore. They promise renewable energy efficiency initiatives. They've done a little bit in the Department of Energy but nothing like their support of billions of dollars in subsidies to oil, gas, coal and nuclear power companies. And look at the record. We are importing more oil now than we did when Clinton-Gore took office. We are more reliant on imported oil than when Clinton-Gore took office. We have not transformed the policy of Energy in Washington D.C. under Clinton-Gore toward a full-fledged conversion into solar energy, the greatest, most benign, most efficient and most lasting form of energy in the World.

They are the same. It's disgusting to read Al Gore's 1992 book and to see that he has broken promises on page after page of that book because he was put in charge by Clinton of the Environmental Portfolio and EPA. You can't say, 'Well, he was only Vice President and if he would only become President, than the *real* Al Gore would immerge. You have seen the *real* Al Gore. You have endured the *real* Al Gore. We've had enough of the *real* Al Gore. Let's send him back to Tennessee.

Although there are many others, there is one more area where Gore and Bush and the Democrat/Republican Parties are the same. They want to keep me out of the presidential debates. That is where they are the same. They want to exclude competitive, significant third-party candidates from getting on the presidential debates where 50 to 90 million Americans will be watching. They are not really thinking about how many millions of those Americans are going to be falling asleep in front of the television set watching the drab debate the dreary.

We hope that there will be building pressure to get four-way debates.^[2] Sixty-four percent of the American people now want a four-way debate and more newspapers are editorializing for a four-way debate. What are they afraid of? What are George W. and Al afraid of? Are they afraid that I would show how similar they are? How indentured to corporate interest they are? How cowardly they are? How their rhetoric belies their record? How they don't deserve

to lead this country into any century, much less the 21st century.

There is indeed another major area that the two major candidates won't touch and that is the big media. It is the mass media concentrated in six media conglomerates: Disney, General Electric, Time-Warner, the Murdoch chain, etc., which Professor Ben Bagdikian, over there at Berkeley, says now control the bulk of the audiences and the circulation of newspapers, magazines, radio stations, and TV. Well, it was William Jefferson Clinton who signed the Telecommunications Act of 1996,^[3] which allowed corporations to buy up more and more TV and radio stations.

Before 1996, no company could own more than 12 radio stations. Now, one company owns 800 radio stations. They are laying off reporters. They are not covering local news. They're giving you homogenized syndicated pap like Dr. Laura and Rush Limbaugh. Indeed, Gore and Bush will *never raise this* in the campaign. They are afraid of the big media. They are afraid that they might unleash a storm of challenge among the American people who would become aware that they, as a commonwealth legal right, *own the public airwaves*. They are the *landlords!*

It's not Bush and Gore who are going to say to the American people that if they become President, they will make sure that some of those public airwaves will be transformed into your own TV and radio stations and cable channels, funded by a fee imposed on the broadcasters who for 65 years have gotten our property, free of charge, without paying any rent to we, the people, who are the landlords.

For those of you who still may need more evidence to persuade the tens of thousands of people in the greater Santa Cruz area to come out and vote for the Green Party candidacies -- for Medea Benjamin for U.S. Senate and for our candidacy with Winona LaDuke as Vice President and me as President -- get a chart of the government departments and agencies in Washington and check off which department or agency would be any different whether Gore or Bush won the presidency: Department of Defense, Treasury, State Department, Federal Reserve, Auto Safety Agency, Department of Interior, Department of Agriculture, Department of Commerce, Department of Labor; keep going, you may find one or two where there is just a *little bit* of difference.

That is a very good test of the permanent corporate government in Washington that gets its own executives into high government official positions for a little on-the-job training before they go back to higher paid emoluments in the corporations from whence they came; the permanent government. The wealth inequities in this country are enough to condemn the inaction of the two major parties. How they can sit back and revere the memories and sayings of Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln and Teddy Roosevelt and Justice Louis Brandeis. All of whom were warning us about too much concentration of power and wealth in too few hands.

When you have one percent of the richest people in this country having financial wealth equal to the combined wealth of the bottom ninety-five percent, something is wrong. Do you really think that the top one percent worked so hard as to deserve that amount, equal to the bottom ninety-five percent? 140 million Americans -- this one stunned me when I first heard about it over a year ago from the chief specialist at NYU, Professor Wolf, on wealth

concentration. The bottom 140 million Americans combined net wealth is equal to that of Bill Gates. That means millions of people who work every day, month after month and year after year and decade after decade, are essentially broke, when you subtract their liabilities from their assets. They have nothing to show for a lifetime of work other than social security which the Republicans do want to take away and give to Wall Street to invest in. If it wasn't for the organized power of the elderly vote, Al Gore wouldn't be very strong on social security either because Clinton has wavered on that in terms of slicing off billions of dollars and allowing it to go into the social *insecurity* of the stock market, in order to give all the fees to the brokerage houses and the investment houses.

Notice, when you have that kind of wealth inequality, what does it do to people? They don't have to be given these figures. They go to work every day in a corporation making 75 or 100 dollars a day. Do you know what the boss is making? Do you know what the *average daily* income of the bosses of the top 300 corporations in our country? \$50,000 a day. \$50,000 a day.

A few years ago I was up there in Congress fighting a bill, promoted in the House which would have restricted brain-damaged infants or any other victims of medical malpractice to a cap of \$250,000 for a lifetime of pain and suffering. In California now you have something called the Micro Bill which unfortunately Jerry Brown signed and later regretted.

If you are the victim of medical malpractice, say you are rendered a paraplegic or your infant is brain-damaged because of medical malpractice in the hospital. You take the case to court against the hospital or the doctor's office and the jury comes in with the medical expense verdict (and there is no wage loss for an infant). You have to care for that infant for the life expectancy which could be 60, 70, 80 years for a brain-damaged infant. And the jury comes in with a \$5 million verdict. No big deal when you spread it over 60 years and take into account inflation. And the judge approves it. But when the jury leaves, the judge has to cut it back to \$250,000 here in California.

So the legislative in the House wanted to do it nation-wide. We were fighting it, and I was trying to figure out how I can make a comparison in order to defeat it? So I checked the income of the CEO of one of the insurance companies that was lobbying, and he was making \$250,000 *a week* without any pain and suffering, week after week. Doesn't that tend to raise your indignation level? Doesn't that tell you that *it is time for a fundamental change of direction in our country?*

Many of you are here because you are veterans of social justice activism. You know what this situation is. You have either experienced it, you have fought against it, you have studied it, you have felt it and have empathy with it. The key to a massive outpouring of votes in this area in California is right here in this room. Imagine, if just in your circle, who in this room does not have among relatives, neighbors, friends, co-workers and acquaintances, one hundred people, before whom, you are permanently credible?

It is time to start political talk in this country. We all know what small talk is: 'Hi Jackie. How are things?' 'Well, it may rain and I don't have my raincoat. But didn't the weatherman say that it wasn't going to rain today? That it was going to divert toward the cascades?' Political talk.

The greatest movements in our history involved vigorous political talk and discussion. The abolition movement and the women's rights movement and the trade union movement and the farmer popular progressive movement and the civil rights movement and the gay/lesbian rights movement and the rights of minority people to have a fair shake. *All of this* involved political talk and discussion. Let us not be reluctant. We have a culture of restraint. 'I don't want to talk politics.' You sit around in the cafeteria with five people who agree with you and you talk vigorously and you rationalize your futility and you don't go to the other tables.

We have to stop rationalizing our futility, which seems to be an occupational characteristic of progressives around the country. They give you the most brilliant diagnosis of wrong-doing and injustice, and it's so brilliant it exhausts them. Then they rationalize their futility because 'How can you change it?' Oh-me-oh-my, we've just analyzed the formidable forces arrayed against us. So how can we do anything about it?

We know how to turn that around. That is a self-indulgence that that we certainly can do without. That is a kind of civic vanity that we can do without. In this country there are all kinds of ways to facilitate people banding together: if they had their own media, if they had inserts in their utility bills and bank statements and insurance statements and HMO statements, inviting people to join in statewide consumer action groups with full-time consumer advocates taking on the big guys before all three branches of government and in the councils of public opinion, and using their own radio and TV stations and cable channels. This is what we have to fight for -- strengthening the roots of democracy, *permanently*, in the minds and hearts of the American people.^[4]

A few months ago, I'm reading one of the trade magazines I have to plow through every week. It was *Advertising Age* and they were probably announcing that there are 120 cable channels available to us and they want to give us 500. I don't know how many home shopping channels we can afford and tolerate and movie rerun and sports rerun and rerun of sports highlights and playboy channels and cartoon channels; I thought I had heard it all until I read *Advertising Age*. They said some entrepreneurs are now going to establish a chimpanzee channel. And that is where I drew the line.

We citizens don't have our own cable channels 24-hours-a-day to inform us about civic activity all over the country. So we can learn from one another and e-mail one another and not have to re-invent the wheel if something in Santa Cruz works that people in Seattle want to learn about. We don't have *one cable channel* -- although we give the cable companies a monopoly license we haven't even demanded anything in return. What is this lack of bargaining power?

Well when I heard about the chimpanzee channel, and they were going to dress the chimps up in human clothes and they are giving the chimps their own channel. This turns evolution on its head. It is enough to make you rise up and protest. Let's turn protest to power. The way they play us like a fiddle. The way these banks and insurance companies, after they rip us off, and we come roaring back to complain, they give us an 800 number. We dial the 800 number and what do we get? Our time is valuable too. 'Your business is important to us. Please wait on the line and if you want to pursue your enquiry you can press one for this and press two for that and press three' -- and you press two and you get another tier of 'You can press one and you can press two and you can press three'. And you're doing the work for

them for free. Who said involuntary servitude no longer prevails in this country? They don't want to hire workers to respond. It gets so bad that sometimes when I'm working late at night and I want to listen to classical music, I dial the United Airlines.

They are wasting our time, billions of hours of wasted time and frustration. We need our own action groups to put an end to this. When I dial Federal Express -- two rings and a human being answers. If you dial Southwest Airlines -- two rings, maybe one, a real human being answers. Dial their competitors, robots answer. Voices are deep and consoling and reassuring and respectful. We've had enough of this. People's time is precious. We commute without public transit systems thanks to GM and their criminal conspiracy for which they paid \$5,000 in federal district court in 1949 because of ripping up trolley systems like southern California. We waste time commuting back and forth. We waste time on the phone. These companies are ripping us off and then challenging us to get through to them on the phone.

These are the little irritations that build up and sometimes people take it out on their kids or their spouse. We can't overestimate the importance of people getting enough time for the important things in their life. Instead of this frantic back-and-forth trying to eke out a measly standard of living and falling deeper and deeper into debt while the corporations and the executives are raking off the massive gains of the economic growth of the last ten years. That's what politics has to address itself to.

Let me suggest some practical considerations. You bring in 100 votes on the average each; you can make it a little competition with your friends. You can call it your epicenter of influence. You go around and meet people, 'Hi, how is your epicenter doing today?' 'I'm up to 70 votes, 80 votes.' About how many people are here, over 2,000? Do you know 100 votes each? You've got time until November. *200,000 votes* can come out of this auditorium. And you have a lot of fun doing it. Awful lot of fun -- you get all kinds of reactions, all kinds of responses. Some of them will be people who never intended to vote. And you'll feel better. We all feel better when we help mobilize our fellow human beings for a good cause. The politicians in the two parties and the pundits are looking at this campaign and here is their prediction:

We've seen third party campaigns before. They go up a little in the polls. Three or four weeks ago, the polls were 9% in New York, 11% in Connecticut, 9% in California, 8% in Michigan, 6% in Arizona. And the attitude is basically, 'Don't worry. The history of third party challenges is that it all begins to fade as people face election day and they say they want their vote to count and they don't want to waste their vote.'

Do you know what our answer is? Do you want to waste your vote? You can waste your vote by voting for two political parties that are wasting our democracy and the great opportunities of our country. If you want to waste your vote -- if you don't like the two party politics and their being beholden to corporate power, which has resulted in a sovereignty of corporations over the sovereignty of people in this country -- and you go to the polling booths and vote for either a Republican or a Democrat, you are basically saying, 'We don't like where you going, but we're going to vote for you anyway.' What do you think they are going to say to you, implicitly? They are going to say, 'You're a sucker.' They are going to say, 'You have

got no where to go. We're taking you for granted.' And therefore, *you're taken*.

How can you legitimize something that you don't believe in because you think that the bad isn't quite as bad as the worst? What a choice! Spread the word -- a robust argument. Get into arguments with people. Shake their complacency. Bring them down to an empirical level. Someone will say, 'I don't like that Nader fellow. He's for *regulation*.' And you say, 'You don't like regulation?' 'I don't like regulation. I don't like bureaucrats.' So you say, 'You have an SUV I see down the lane there. I think it's got some ATX Firestone tires. You go ahead and travel. Watch that tread separate and as you careen off the highway, you can say, "I don't like regulation, it requires a recall of those tires." Next time you take a sip of water, and there may be a high level of lead in it, you can say, "That's fine -- lead -- I don't feel that. I don't feel that at all. I don't like government regulation." When you go to the store to get a prescription drug and you might want to make sure that it's not harmful to you, just test it yourself. Why have the regulators do it? Next time you want to breathe clean air and you see dirty air coming into your lungs, the heck with the regulators, just don't inhale. Next time you make the mistake of going into McDonalds for a hamburger, and you don't want any regulation, maybe you can genetically engineer your tongue that detects *ecoli*, before it gets into your body.'

It is so much fun to talk to these people. It's so much fun to engage in civic dialogue and robust political and enthusiastic initiatives. That's what we have to convey. Justice is really essential to the pursuit of happiness. When something is essential to the pursuit of happiness, it itself is the pursuit of happiness. And the pursuit of justice is itself the pursuit of happiness. When I see the results of my efforts on the auto industry, back in the sixties, where the auto companies were keeping out of your cars simple life-saving devices that were developed before World War I! Devices like seat belts, padded dash panels, stronger door latches, collapsible steering columns (so that the steering column collapses in a left-front collision rather than your chest -- that was patented in *1914*). Simple zero expenses, essentially, once they amortize them. But even if they did cost a few dollars, look at the lives, look at the wage loss preventions, look at the tragedies, look at the health costs, look at the disability costs, etc. Not even worth mentioning in terms of the ounce of prevention instead a pound of cure. If indeed you can cure those tragedies.

When I started out I used to hitch-hike a lot to school because I was bored taking buses, I like the adventure. You would always learn something. A truck carrying bricks would pick you up and you'd learn all about bricks. A tree surgeon would pick you up and you would talk about trees and learn a lot. It was a captive audience -- what was the driver going to do. That was before cell phones.

Once I was hitch-hiking to Boston and truck driver picked me up. We came upon a deadly multiple collision. One of these rear-end collisions like you see in the fog on California highways. We were on the scene and it was unbelievable grisly bloodshed, moaning, groaning, people lying still, and a little child that was almost decapitated by the guillotine-edge of a glove-compartment door that had dropped down. That started me thinking.

Later on the truck driver was driving along and there was a clothes hook, as many trucks had it, right by his head. He was bouncing like this. I said 'Don't you think that hook is going to

hit you one of these days?' He turned towards me -- and his eye was three inches from it -- and he said 'Gee I never thought of that.' So that got me thinking.

In law school I wrote a paper on the unsafe design of automobiles and criticized the industry and turned it into the book *Unsafe At Any Speed*. In 1965 when that book came out (I don't usually like to brag about these things, but there is an important lesson here) -- and General Motors hired detective firms to trail me and went down to the Center office building, they got caught, and they had a big Congressional hearing where they had to come and apologize which propelled the motor vehicle safety laws through, signed by Lyndon Johnson (he invited me to the White House, gave me the pen, etc.) -- the death toll on American highways was 5.6 fatalities for every hundred million vehicle miles traveled. Do you know what the death toll was last year? 1.6 fatalities per hundred million vehicle miles traveled.

That not only shows that regulation works for health and safety and life-saving. It is important if it is allowed to work and not be diluted or blocked by corporate lobbyists. But it also shows that we've got a lot of solutions in this country. *Lots* of good ideas. Lots of pilot projects -- inner city schools; organic farming; giving elderly people a life (other than out-of-sight out-of-mind) to apply their wisdom and initiative to carry the country forward and to connect with the younger generation; we've got ways to build elevated public transit that would make mass transit almost personalized; we've got solar energy that is already on the ground that can transform the society; we've got ways where children can learn how to be civically-skilled citizens to practice democracy -- not just to memorize, regurgitate and vegetate in elementary school and high school -- to learn more about their community and their neighborhood and their town than they now know about the Three Stooges and the cartoons and the violent programming and the addictive industries that are hooking into them.

We have *plenty* of these ideas and many, many more. But *only* if we strengthen the roots of our democracy by our mind, our spirit, and our resolve never to allow a brief, euphoric moment of civic enthusiasm to wither away. But to fuel a steadfast sense of determination, day-after-day, week-after-week, until we not only have a higher estimate of our own significance but until we say to future generations, 'We are the generation that did not refuse to carry the cudgels and to assume the responsibility to bequeath to you a society that you can be proud of and one that uplifts the rest of the world.'

I want to conclude on this note. I didn't talk much about the rest of the world. We are witnessing some enormously tragic trends in the world. Global infectious diseases; starvation; enormous devastation to the environment like land erosion, ozone depletion, depletion of the oceans, and the cutting of equatorial forests. Undermining the very sustenance of poor people around the world. This is where environmental devastation really comes home to people.

Global corporations like tobacco companies, spreading cancer around the world trying to hook millions of youngsters in Asia, Africa and South America the way they did in this country now that they have to back off a little here. Their ferociousness is spreading around the world.

Drug companies that have the wherewithal to research vaccines and drugs against

tuberculosis, malaria, AIDS, and others, saying 'There's not much money in it. We'd rather conduct research for lifestyle drugs like anti-balding drugs, or viagra drugs, etc.'

Dictatorships in name, dictatorships in reality if not in form. Corporations selling weapons to dictatorships and oligarchies who use it against their own people. Our corporations -- with \$6 billion a year of your tax subsidies -- selling napalm, landmines and jet planes to these authoritarian regimes.

Companies that are depleting the ozone and feeding global warming. The fossil fuel companies lobby against solar energy start-ups and try to turn government policy away from solar energy.

There are a lot of the problems we are witnessing that our corporations are deeply involved in. We have to create a very different foreign policy. It is now 10 years after the Soviet Union has ended -- where there is not even a shred of a pretext for continuing our government and your tax dollar support of dictatorship and oligarchies abroad. We have to have a foreign policy, with all the creative ideas that we can muster, that wholeheartedly sides with and supports the workers and peasants of the world.

I hope you leave this wonderful convocation with a renewed sense of fighting the defeatism that is confronting a new third party. To tell these doubters that Jesse Ventura had 8% before he got on to the debates, and he got on to the debates, and he is governor of Minnesota. I went to see him a few weeks ago and we had a press conference. I asked him, 'What is it that caused you to win?' He said number one: the debates, number two: state public financing, and number three: same-day voter registration. And pretty soon we'll put a number four up there very visible: proportional representation.^[5]

I suggest that when the doubters and the defeatists and the least-of-the-two-evil enthusiasts confront you with their arguments, that you tell them, "How could nature ever regenerate itself if it squelched seeds and made them unable to sprout? How can the business marketplace ever regenerate itself if it stifled innovators and entrepreneurs? Why do you think that the two party duopoly, this corporate party with two heads wearing different make-up, could possibly regenerate itself as long as it continues to squelch -- through all kinds of legal barriers and other obstacles -- new political parties?' It can't and it won't. We are going to start this new movement from the grassroots all over the country and show in November that the pundits were way off and that we are going to surprise people in many, many other ways.

Thank you. Thank you very much.

1. For more on The Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 see:

- Taft-Hartley Act from USA, 1840-1960, Trade Unionism, Spartacus Internet Encyclopedia
- The impact of the Taft-Hartley Act on the balance of power in industrial relations, *American Business Law Journal*, Spring 1996. Quoting the fourth paragraph of this lengthy article:

In order to estimate the effect of any amendment to U.S. labor laws on the balance of power in Industry Relations (IR), it would be helpful to have an estimate of the effect of a previous amendment to those laws. This article is an attempt to quantify the impact of the Taft-Hartley Act on the balance of power in IR by investigating the change in stock prices (profits) associated with the Act's passage.[8] The hypothesis is that the Act increased the power of management relative to unions; empirically, that increase will be reflected by a sample of firms likely to have benefited from the Act by having higher stock prices given the law's passage than they would have had absent the law. The relationship between the effect of the Taft-Hartley Act on stock prices (profits) and the impact of the Act on the balance of power in labor relations is the following: The reduction in profits due to unionism and events associated with unions is greatest when the power of unions is greatest. It is the unions' power that is the source of their ability to induce the events that have been shown to reduce firm profits.[9] If, as is hypothesized, the Taft-Hartley Act decreased unions' ability to reduce firm profits, that is essentially the same as saying that it decreased union power while increasing management power. This decrease in union power and increase in management power would be reflected by an increase in the stock prices (profits) of firms affected by unions at the time the Act was passed.

- Taft-Hartley Act - Britannica.com

2. For more on the debates see:

- Sign the Petition to let Ralph Nader debate.
- Read more about Getting Nader into the Debates.
- See Reclaim Democracy!'s section on Stop the Incorporated Debates!

3. For more on The Telecommunications Act of 1996 see:

- The Telecommunications Act of 1996: A Commentary on What Is Really Going on Here, by Warren J. Sirota, Editor, *News & Views*, WATPA
- The Telecommunications Act of 1996 Two Years Later: A Cause for Concern, by Mark Lloyd, Executive Director, Civil Rights Forum on Communications Policy
- Telecommunications Act of 1996 Impact on Broadcast by Peter Gutmann, Attorney
- A Guide to The 1996 Telecommunications Act, by Michael Meyerson, Professor of Law
- The Cultural Environment Movement's The Telecom Act of 1996 Protest Site

4. See Ralph Nader: The Concord Principles, An Agenda For A New Initiatory Democracy, 2/92

5. For more on voting systems see: Voting Methods from The Center for Voting and Democracy:

- Proportional Representation
- Cumulative Voting
- Instant Runoff Voting
- Limited Voting

And if you are not, register to vote online at BeAVoter.org