

BAAM Boston Anti-Authoritarian Movement

A General Anarchist Union in the Boston Area

Welcome to the fifth issue of the BAAM Newsletter. We are a general anarchist union in the Boston area. Our structure reflects our belief that anarchist organizations should not be configured in such a way that conflicts with the ultimate goal of a classless, stateless society. We feel that being class conscious is not enough; we oppose authoritarianism in all its forms, including capitalism, government, and all types of oppression such as racism, sexism, nationalism, xenophobia, homophobia, and environmental devastation.

To learn more about BAAM, come to our monthly meeting: every 1st Tuesday of the Month, 7pm at the Lucy Parsons Center, 549, Columbus Ave, in the South End of Boston, or visit our website: BAAMBoston.org

-And now for the news:

Bah, Christmas.

by Adrienne

I'm sure you're all asking yourselves what the birth of a long-dead Jew from the Roman Empire has to do with energy-hogging lights and gadgets, red-clad Santas branded on everything, and the destruction of forests for temporary display in homes and offices. Or why every December, we're guilted into buying shit for the people in our lives to commemorate JC's birth when the real JC was born in a warmer month. I recall my mom, a Jeezus aficionado, once speaking harshly about Halloween, saying it derived from pagan celebrations. My rebuttal pleased not mom. There's a reason JC's b-day is celebrated so far from its actual occurrence and with such irrelevant revelry.

Check out late December; we've got Winter Solstice, Sol Invictus and, my personal favorite, Saturnalia. Winter Solstice was/is almost universally celebrated by non - major - monotheistic - religion - following people [better known as pagans] in the Northern Hemisphere on the shortest day of the year, known by Germanic folk as Yule.

Interpretations vary across cultures, but the overarching theme is light and/or rebirth. Sol Invictus, the Unconquered Sun, was



Odin with his horse, Sleipnir. Symbols of Germanic pagan holiday, Yule.

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BU Bioterrorism Lab: National Academy Raises More Questions

by Dave

The National Research Council (NRC), the arm of the National Academy of Sciences responsible for studies and advice on scientific issues, released a searing report November 29th criticizing the National Institutes of Health (NIH) assessment of the risks from Boston University's "Anti-Bioterrorism Lab." The National Emerging Infectious Diseases Lab (NEIDL) under construction in Boston's South End is presumably intended to develop defenses against biological weapons. The NIH completed and published its required Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) in December 2005. However, pursuant to a federal court order to address community concerns, the NIH conducted additional reviews in 2006, which were published as the Draft Supplementary Risk Assessments and Site Suitability Analyses for the NEIDL, BU (DSER). The NRC was charged only with reviewing the DSER. While not judging the risks presented by the lab itself, the NRC noted several shortcomings in the DSER: (i) inappropriate worst-case scenarios; (ii) inadequate description of risk assessment methodologies; and (iii) insufficient scope of analysis. The NRC report is as unsettling as it is incisive and further calls into question the rationale for building a bioweapons laboratory in the South End.

Extremely secure facilities are required for biomedical research on exotic, infectious disease agents with no available treatments to prevent their unintentional release. Because of the grave risks from these life-threatening agents, research is conducted in laboratories with the highest level of biological containment possible, referred to as Biosafety Level 4 (BL-4 or BSL-4). Salient features include: (i) remote handling of agents with robots in isolation chambers; (ii) hermetically-sealed personal protective equipment (PPE) for lab workers; (iii) negative air pressure so that agents can't leak out; and (iv) strict sterilization of all items leaving the facility, including the air (but excluding people, of course). BL-4 labs clearly have an important function in the diagnosis,

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a popular Roman celebration that early Christians enjoyed taking part in. Saturnalia was a week long Roman festival that took place around the temple of Saturn. Social norms were inverted as schools shut down and slaves took control of their masters. Gifts were given and the revelry often led to very gay, very public orgies.

As for the trappings of the current Christmas celebrations, Yule logs and Christmas trees date back to Germanic veneration of trees, a tribute to Thor. On the matter of Santa, that beloved commercial figure, many of his current myths are directly traceable to the bearded Norse god Odin who led hunting parties across the sky during Yule with his eight-legged leaping, flying horse Sleipnir. Children would leave out their boots filled with horse-food for Sleipnir, and Odin, in appreciation, would replace the horse-food with gifts and sweetmeats. In fact, one of Santa's reindeer is named Donner, which means Thunder, something under the control of Mr. Thor. Ancient attempts by church and state leaders to get the whole world to practice Christianity involved taking non-Christian customs, celebrations, or other familiar aspects of life and convincing the masses that they had been doing it for JC all along. Odin? He's kinda like St. Nicholas. Gift-giving? That's kinda like how the astrologers brought baby Jeezus gold, frankincense and myrrh.

For me, I'll take no gods, no masters, and no kitschy religio-cultural celebrations, plzthx.

**The Northeast Anarchist Network
Launches Anti-Election Campaign**

by Jake Carman

This election season, members of the Northeast Anarchist Network (NEAN) will launch a campaign across the region aiming to discredit representative democracy and to promote truly democratic alternatives. Like most people in this country, we are tired of the same political game: two parties, and no good choices. For 2004's presidential election, the rallying call was "The lesser of two evils," and even though Bush clearly stole that election, nobody cared enough to do anything about it because Kerry only sucked a little bit less. Now the wingnuts are coming out of the woodworks again, kissing babies, debating the hot topics and making election promises that no one expects them to keep.

More and more, US voters are realizing that there is really only one party—the corporate party—which makes sense as candidates need millions of dollars in campaign contributions and airtime on corporate media to even have a fighting shot. We may have a female candidate, we may have an African-American candidate, hell we even have a Mormon, but you will never see a poor or working-class candidate. Even if you did, it wouldn't matter because for you to have ever heard their name or seen their face, they would have to have sold out to the rich.

Why do we let the greedy capitalists bastards trick us into thinking we're using democracy, and then pick our candidates for us? In a real democracy, we would vote on everything: whether our communities should have more schools or jails, whether companies should lessen their environmental impact or continue to destroy the earth, whether we should send soldiers to die for corporate greed or not, whether our cities should let developers bulldoze our homes, etc. There is a reason we DON'T get to vote on these topics: the rich know they'd lose! We know how the politicians vote on these issues, for they vote with their wallets and not with their hearts. The good news is that in a real democracy, we don't need politicians!

I kid you not, my friends, another world is possible. Throughout much of human history, people have lived in well-

organized societies without politicians or government. Anarchists have worked to build such societies for centuries, writing thousands of books and essays, projects, organizing communities and experimental societies, and launching countless revolts and revolutions. Even today, thousands of people throughout the world practice true democracy—including some in our neighbor to the South (See Mexico's Zapatistas and the Popular Assemblies of the People of Oaxaca). They don't need politicians to make decisions for them, and neither do we! So this election season, vote or don't vote, it won't make a lick of difference either way. Dedicate your thought, time and energy into building stronger communities in your neighborhood, at your job, in your school. Find cracks in the political machine, the places where true democracy can grow, and fill those cracks: encourage your friends and peers to work together to make your own decisions. Strive to build a movement for popular democracy, so that 4 years from now, when they once again try to trick us into thinking we are using democracy, we will laugh at them and run the politicians out of office. For a true democracy, Viva La Anarquia, Muera Toda Autoridad!

Love Democracy, but Hate Politicians?



**Try Anarchy. It's democracy,
only without politicians.**

<http://neanarchist.net/?q=antielect08/about>

**Two Jars of Peanut Butter, Quarts of Squash
Soup, and a Paper Bag of Sunflower Seeds**

by Anonymous

One day not long ago I found myself in a food pantry. A deep depression had left me unable to work for several weeks, I was broke, and I was hungry. Massachusetts has hundreds of food banks, usually run by volunteers, frequently in churches. Most of them have residency requirements. I live in Malden, and the food bank that serves our community is run by the Salvation Army. The Salvation Army requires an interview before they will give you food. The next interviews were in two weeks. If I satisfied their requirements, I would be able to visit their food bank the week after that.

I finally found a food pantry in Cambridge that has no residency requirements, and distributes food three times a week. I arrived early, nearly half an hour before the doors opened, and there was already a crowd waiting in the cold. When we entered, we signed in with the volunteer and were informed we could visit once a month. We were given a number, and then sat and waited for our number to be called. I had number 32.

A little about myself: I am 42, male, white, a college graduate, a product of the academic middle class. I have collected unemployment, after I was laid-off by IBM. I was evicted for not paying my rent, and I have been broke many times, but essentially I am a child of privilege. I am ashamed to be waiting for free food, and I am waiting to be spotted for the fraud that I imagine I am:

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(Biolab Study Questioned, continued from P. 1)

treatment, and prevention of dread diseases. However, diversion of these technologies toward military goals is troubling. The agents in question—bacteria, single-celled organisms like anthrax and *E. coli*, or viruses, non-cellular genetic entities that replicate within host cells like HIV or influenza virus—each have pros and cons as bioweapons. While bacteria can generally survive outside a host, they usually respond to antibiotic treatment. On the other hand, viruses require a host for survival, but antiviral antidotes are not uniformly available and can be toxic. Moreover, the small viral genomes (maybe 1% that of bacteria) make genetic engineering much easier. The BU Anti-Bioterrorism Lab is one of 3 that the Bush administration sought to open in the wake of the 9/11. Another was constructed at the Rocky Mountain Lab, Montana and a third is under construction at the University of Texas, Galveston. These labs are funded by the NIH budget, a disconcerting deviation from health research toward military ends. More disturbing is the secrecy shrouding the labs and the real potential for bioweapons development under the guise of national security.

The NRC was asked to answer three questions: (i) Was the



Klare Allen of Safety Net - <http://stopthebiolab.org/> - A community group against the lab, photo by George Rizer

DSER sound and credible? (ii) Were worst-case scenarios explored? (iii) Were the relative risks vs. alternative locations adequately considered? The answer was a resounding “No” to each. While the many technical details are beyond the scope of this article, the logic behind the NRC conclusions is quite compelling. Furthermore, the NRC questioned why the DSER literally ignored how the social and economic conditions of the South End could worsen an outbreak.

To the first question, the NRC held that the DSER conclusions were not adequately supported by the analyses. This category is rather technical and deals with risk assessment methodologies for infectious agent commonly accepted by the scientific community. The NRC committee, several members of which have expertise in communicable diseases, noted that the DSER utilized non-standard methodologies without justification and disregarded well-established principles. While many of these concerns are esoteric and difficult to describe simply, a couple straightforward examples will provide a flavor. One example is the reliance on agents with low transmissibility, such as for Rift Valley Fever (RVFV), a mosquito-borne virus infecting both humans and cattle. While dangerous, the NIH simulation of an RVFV outbreak did not lead to an epidemic, even in a crowded urban population, due to its low rate of transmission from person to person. The NRC warned that failure to consider more readily transmissible agents thus totally underestimated potential dangers. Another example was an arbitrary reduction in the transmissibility of monkey pox. About 1 in 12

people infected with monkey pox pass it on to another person. The NIH inexplicably downscaled this transmission rate to 1 in 3,000, thus projecting to a very limited number of cases instead of a widespread outbreak. Needless to say, one is left with a sense that the NIH analysis was intentionally misleading, incompetent, or both.

To the second, the NRC stated that the pathogens examined in the DSER do not likely encompass worst cases for the South End. The community had listed several possible scenarios, including accidental release (laboratory escape, transportation of an infectious agent or infected patient), infection by a mislabeled sample, release of specific agents (Ebola virus, a poxvirus), and infection of school children. To their credit, the NIH incorporated these scenarios and added 2 more agents for simulation. However, the NRC criticized them for stopping there and not considering breaches more likely than an infected worker or other more highly infectious agents. For example, the NIH overlooked probable release modes such as equipment failure, an inside job, or terrorist actions. These safety breaches occur more often than infections of BL-4 lab workers, so the NIH only examined the “least worrisome” possibility. Another example is that bubonic plague, for which endemic South End rodents would provide a ready reservoir, would have been much more realistic than RVFV. Furthermore, the NIH failed to consider accidental release of a natural or engineered agent with “novel” or poorly characterized pathogenesis. All in all, these lapses by the NIH add to a massive underestimation of the lab’s risks.

The third “No” was to the conclusion that a South End lab presented no more risk than alternative locations. The NIH considered only two, suburban Tyngsborough and rural Peterborough, NH. While providing some contrast to the South End, both were judged equally “safe” to the Boston site. The real rationale for choosing these was that BU owns the land in both communities, not any inherent contrast with the South End. Moreover, one could not expect the minimalist models used by the NIH, all of which led to low projected risk, to reveal any real differences for any site comparisons. The NRC judged these limitations as far too restricting for the analyses to provide credible evidence in justifying the South End as a “safer” location for the lab than elsewhere. Needless to say, the current location suits BU’s agenda rather well as they try to compete for hegemony in real estate with Harvard and in military research with MIT.

Finally, the NRC condemned the DSER for ignoring justice issues. Several characteristics of the South End would aggravate consequences of an accidental release. The prevalence of asthma, immunosuppressive diseases (such as AIDS), and poor nutrition increase the probability of infection and transmission as well as the severity of illnesses. These consequences would be exacerbated by public health responses that are clearly less robust than in well-to-do areas (Did someone say “Katrina”?). While not mentioned in the NRC report, building another high-tech operation can only accelerate gentrification by inexorably increasing rents and property values from the professional influx. Mayor Menino has been salivating over the power of the BU Anti-Bioterrorism lab to attract yet bio-tech companies to the area.

In closing, NEIDL is typical of the capitalist mentality. Bioterrorism, if actually a credible threat, is created by unjust accumulation of wealth and power. Building BL-4 labs enriches capitalists, intensifies secrecy, provokes fear, and stands to produce yet more weapons of mass destruction rather than addressing the inequities that foster anger. As a friend of mine noted, it’s time for us to shift our focus from national security to human security.

What is Anarchism?

Anarchism is the theory and practice of a human society organizing without hierarchy, authority and oppression. This means that all people have equal access to the decision-making process and to the products of their collective labor. Anarchy can be described as true, direct democracy. It is horizontal: i.e. workers working together without bosses, neighbors organizing housing and neighborhoods without landlords, and people making decisions without politicians. There are many different ideas on how to get there and what exactly it will look like. We can talk all we want, but only a truly free and revolutionary people will be able to decide what their revolution will look like. So comrades, let's get to work!

Brian Morris A Most Excellent Anarchist Writer by James Herod

This is just an alert. There is no space here for a proper introduction. I merely want to call your attention to one of the most brilliant anarchists writing today. He's British. He has written a number of outstanding books which USAmerican anarchists could greatly benefit from studying, considering how our culture is so completely riddled with fanatic individualism, which affects almost everyone, even social anarchists. He's an anthropologist and an ecologist, but his studies have taken him far and wide, into the history of philosophy and religion.

One of his big books is *Western Conceptions of the Individual* (1991, 505 pages). This text can almost serve as an introduction to modern social thought, as seen through the eyes of an anarchist. He covers all major schools of anarchist thought: mechanistic philosophy, empiricism, marxism, sociological theory, pragmatism, critical theory, psychoanalysis, phenomenology, structuralism, and so forth. His brief sections on Hegel are among the most lucid I've ever read. Morris has a thorough understanding of humans as intersubjective beings. There is a companion volume, *Anthropology of the Self: The Individual in Cultural Perspective* (1994). He examines concepts of the person in Greek philosophy, Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, African philosophy, Oceania, and feminist philosophy.

Another important book is *Kropotkin: The Politics of Community* (2004, 314 pages). This text can serve as an introduction to radical social thought, because in the process of explicating Kropotkin's ideas, he bounces them against most major critics and alternative theories. It's well worth studying. He also has another, shorter book on *Kropotkin, The Anarchist Geographer: An Introduction to the Life of Peter Kropotkin* (2007, 120 pages). His book *Bakunin: The Philosophy of Freedom* (1993) will forever change your understanding of this founder of anarchism (assuming you are suffering from the prevailing misinterpretation). His collection of essays, 1978 to 1995, is a truly amazing book. Morris has an uncanny ability to size up thinkers and locate them in relation to anarchism. It's called *Ecology and Anarchism: Essays and Reviews on Contemporary Thought* (1996). He covers Lao Tzu, Gandhi, Erich Fromm, Thomas Spence, Chomsky, Tolstoy, Bookchin, Flores Magon, Ayn Rand, and many others. He has a book on Religion and Anthropology. Recently, he has been excavating the founding of ecology, with two books, one on Ernest Thompson Seton, and one on Richard Jefferies. I urge you to study the writings of this anarchist thinker.

(Food Pantry, continued from P. 2)

I am not the poor. Depressed? So what?

W.E.B. Du Bois called it the American Assumption: With enough hard work and thrift every American can be a success. This Assumption infects me, and I will hazard a guess that it infects you too. I encourage you to be a trouble tourist for a little experiment, and find a church in your neighborhood that has a food bank. About half an hour before it opens there will be a line outside, and I'd like you to look at each man and woman in that line and take an honest inventory of your reactions. Are you dividing the crowd into people who belong there and people who don't?

The people at this pantry are more female than male, more old than young, about evenly split between black and white. There are only two single men here, myself and a black man about my age. He sits across from me, carrying a similar software-company shoulder bag, relics of our former prosperity, and we studiously avoid making eye contact.

I received: Two jars of peanut butter, two quarts of squash soup, 4 cans of sweet potatoes, two cans of peaches, one bag of Trader Joe's biscotti, some cans of fruit juice concentrate, and a paper bag containing about a pound of unsalted sunflower seeds. There had been bread and jam, but it ran out by the time my number was called. In a month I can go back for more.

This time of year it gets dark around four o'clock. My room is cold, it's been dark for hours, and I'm spreading generic peanut butter on yuppie biscotti while soup heats in my kettle. The click of the kettle's thermostat and the soft bubbling of the soup are the only sounds in my room. In a day or two, the food will be gone, and I'll have a week of fasting until I am paid. Eating warms me, insulating me against the cold and the winter dark.



Boycott Burger King: the Coalition of Immokalee Workers needs your help. by Sublett

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers is a tomato-pickers union in Immokalee, Florida that has been fighting for farm workers' rights since 1993. About two-thirds of the tomatoes sold in the U.S. are grown in Florida. Currently, pickers are paid 40 - 45 cents per 32 pounds of tomatoes for a maximum of about 14,000 per year. This is when they get paid at all. The CIW has uncovered several cases of outright slavery, including one in November in which three workers escaped from a locked U-Haul truck through the air vent.

Even workers who are not technically slaves face appalling working conditions. Violence, intense heat, sub-standard living conditions and threats of deportation are some of the hazards they encounter. The work is intermittent, and there is no overtime pay. The CIW has had success in improving workers' lives. In addition to breaking up slave operations, they organized a boycott of Taco Bell in 2001. Four years later Taco Bell caved and agreed to pay a penny-per-pound surcharge for tomatoes, amounting to a 75% pay increase. In April 2007 McDonald's followed suit.

So what's the problem, Burger King? In a stunning display of corporate greed, Burger King has not only refused to pay a surcharge, but has pressured the Florida Tomato Growers Exchange into withholding the surcharges paid by Taco Bell and McDonald's. (...continued on pg 6)