
**JOHN GEORGE DEMOCRATIC CLUB
NEWSLETTER**

March, 2006

**Candidate
Forum**

**Saturday,
March 25, 2006**

10 AM - 12 Noon

Meet the candidates for the June primary election. Vote for Club endorsements in races including Attorney General, Oakland City Council, State Assembly, and more

**UNIA
(Formerly Jubilee West)
1485-8th Street,
West Oakland**

Note that we are trying to schedule a separate forum for the Oakland Mayor's race

Check out the JGDC Website

Log on to www.jgdc.org and let us know what you think. Send an article or links that you would like us to add. You can email the Club at jgdc@jgc.org.

Clean Money Law Moving Ahead

Historic Campaign Finance Reform Legislation Passes State Assembly

On January 30, AB 583, the California Clean Money and Fair Elections Act, by Assembly-member Loni Hancock was approved by the State Assembly by a 46-24 vote. No Republicans voted for the bill.

AB 583 will establish the "Clean Money" system of public financing of campaigns similar to those in Maine and Arizona. That system allows any candidate who raises a substantial number of small contributions from individuals residing in the district and agrees not to take contributions from any special interest, to receive full public financing of their campaign

Loni Hancock spoke to the Club on February 11 and explained that once an elected official takes business money they are obligated--"the piper calls the tunes." Although the clean money bill has been introduced before, this year the Abramoff and Congressman Cunningham scandals along with the spectacle of huge spending in the governor's special election "changed all that", she told the Club. "This is the infrastructure of democracy," she said, adding that this is the "reform that makes all other reforms possible."

Paul Turner of the Greenlining Institute explained that voters cannot elect representatives they want because candidates are already screened by the "wealth primary." When he is asked how we can afford to finance campaigns, he responds, "How can we afford not to?" The estimated cost of the plan is about \$134 million. This is paltry compared to the \$600 million that Chevron costs taxpayers by their lobbying against an oil severance task alone. It is no coincidence that Maine recently enacted a universal health care

plan, given the inability of the insurance industry to buy votes there.

Following the presentation by Hancock and Turner, the Club passed a resolution supporting AB583 and urging all California elected officials to support its enactment.

A key to passing the Senate is to get our own Senator Don Perata to support the bill. Please call or write to Senator Perata at:

Senate President Pro-Tem Don Perata
State Capitol, Room 205
Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone: 916-651-4009
Fax: 916-327-1997

For more information go to www.CAclean.org
or call Lynn Davidson at (510) 527-4299

Tribute to Maudelle Shirek



Over 200 people gathered in Berkeley on December 10 to celebrate the many contributions of stalwart progressive and John George Democratic Club member, Maudelle Shirek. Mayor Tom Bates applauded Maudelle's 20 years on the City Council (first elected at age 73), her

anti-war work in the 1960s, campaign to free Nelson Mandela, and work for AIDS, labor, coops, peace and justice.

Supervisor Keith Carson described how Maudelle is a key link in the chain from herself to Ron Dellums to Barbara Lee.” He added, “Maudelle has touched everyone.”

Maudelle gave a rousing speech starting with the comment, “The reports of my demise have been greatly exaggerated. . . It’s been a wonderful run, but there’s still more to do. . . Now it’s your turn—Don’t let me down!”

Barbara Lee declared, “I was so glad to hear you speak tonight—you’re 94 years old and you’re still on the case!” She added, “Ron would never have gone to Congress without Maudelle. . . . I would follow Maudelle anywhere!”

Healthcare for All

Andrew McGuire gave an inspiring presentation to the Club on October 1 on the strategy to bring healthcare to everyone in California. Today there are 7 million uninsured people in California and the situation can only get worse, argued McGuire.

This bill will provide insurance, low cost pharmaceuticals, dental, and vision care with no deductibles and no co-pays.

The cure is SB 840 the California Health Insurance Reliability Act. McGuire laid out a creative three step strategy to bring it into law in the next 5 - 10 years.

The first step, getting the bill through the legislature is based on a “365 Campaign” The campaign will stage one event every day for a year in the largest 365 cities in California, starting with #365 (Los Osos) and ending with Los Angeles. The campaign would then stage a massive rally in Sacramento to coincide with a vote in the legislature. The campaign currently has organizing committees in 180 cities, and will launch when all 365 are ready to go, perhaps 1 – 2 years from now.

The second step will be to beat back the inevitable insurance companies’ anti-healthcare initiative.

The third step will be to formalize a consumer watchdog role over the management of the healthcare system.

McGuire acknowledges that the campaign will be long and difficult. He proposes to build a mass membership organization that is easy and cheap to join. The movement can still use a catchy name. (got one?) He noted that Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) succeeded practically based on their name alone. He also explained that the campaign will be coming out with more detailed analysis of funding in 2006.

Women Take Leadership in the World

Women have just been elected leaders of two countries on two continents: Africa (Liberia) and South America (Chile).

CHILE - Socialist Party candidate Michelle Bachelet was elected Chile’s first woman president in January, 2006 in a run-off election between Bachelet and Sebastian Pinera, a billionaire businessman and candidate of the center-right National Renewal Party. Bachelet won the run-off handily with 53.5% of the vote, and will take office on March 11.

Bachelet’s personal and political history mirrors that of her country. Born in 1951 to an anthropologist mother and Air Force General father, she became politically active as a young person in Chile’s Socialist Youth and the Socialist Party. Her father was appointed to head the national Food Distribution Office under Socialist President Salvador Allende as the Chilean economy’s destabilization accelerated (under pressure from outside governments, primarily the US) and food shortages grew.



Michelle Bachelet

Following the military coup by Augusto Pinochet in 1973, her father was imprisoned and tortured and ultimately died in prison. Like thousands of other Chilean progressives, both Bachelet and her mother also were imprisoned and tortured and finally exiled, first to Australia and then to East Germany. She returned to Chile in 1979 and completed medical school to become a pediatrician and public health specialist. While practicing medicine she also worked with organizations helping children of people who disappeared or were tortured under Pinochet. Following the restoration of democracy in Chile in 1990 Bachelet worked in the national Ministry of Health and other health agencies.

In 1996, in an unusual move for a woman and Socialist, she began studying military strategy at Chile's National Academy of Political and Strategic Studies, at the Inter-American Defense College in Washington, DC, and at the Chilean Army's War Academy. She served as Chile's Health Minister (2000) and later Defense Minister (2002), becoming the first woman to hold this post in a Latin American country and one of the few in the world.

Bachelet's election is unusual in a number of ways: She is a single mother of three children and openly describes herself as an agnostic in a country of often conservative family values. She is Chile's first elected woman president and the first woman to be elected to the presidency in a Latin American nation who was not the wife of a previous head of state or political leader. And following her election she kept her campaign promise to appoint women to half her cabinet positions. Her cabinet also represents all four parties in the Coalition as well as independents.

Bachelet joins Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, Evo Morales in Bolivia, and Lula in Brazil as leaders pushing Latin America in a progressive direction.

MONROVIA, Liberia - Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was sworn in Monday, January as war-battered Liberia's new president, making history as Africa's first elected female head of state and pledging a "fundamental break" with the West African nation's violent past. Harvard-educated Sirleaf was finance minister during the time of the prior government in the Taylor Administration. Sirleaf will serve a six-year term as head of Africa's oldest republic, founded by freed American slaves in 1847.

Rich in diamonds, iron ore and timber, Liberia was relatively prosperous and peaceful until a 1980 coup saw "illiterate" Master Sgt. Samuel Doe seize power and order Cabinet ministers tied to poles in their underwear and executed. During this reign Sirleaf was twice imprisoned in the 1980s by Doe's junta, Sirleaf fled into exile.

The country has known little but war, however, since a rebel group led by Charles Taylor plunged the country into chaos, invading from neighboring Ivory Coast in 1989. When Taylor launched his rebel invasion in 1989, Sirleaf briefly supported him — a move that still draws criticism today. The war saw children as young as 10 take up arms. Fighting uprooted half the country's three million people and killed 200,000.

A truce paved the way for presidential elections in 1997 that Sirleaf lost to Taylor. The brazen bid earned her the nickname "Iron Lady."

After another rebel war forced Taylor from power in 2003, Sirleaf ran for president again, this time winning a heated November run-off buoyed by a resume that included senior jobs at Citibank, the U.N. and the World Bank. Her soccer star rival, George Weah, was backed by ex-rebel leaders and many ex-combatants.

Sirleaf now inherits a nation in tatters. The capital has no running water or electricity, and unemployment is an astounding 80 percent.

Reflecting how slowly economic wheels are turning, the annual budget is a mere \$80 million. Annual donor aid is three-and-a-half times that.

Sirleaf says her top priorities include stamping out corruption, getting electricity in the capital and assuring a future for 100,000 ex-combatants who laid down arms last year, many of whom are prowling the streets, unemployed.

(This article was formatted by Alona Clifton; It is re-arranged, cut and pasted from a Google search that produced an AP article dated January 16, 2006)



From the Oakland Tribune, 2/2/06

Blood and Oil—

The Dangers and Consequences of Americas Growing Petroleum Dependency

by Michael Klare (book review)

This book, published in 2004, makes it clear that the war in Iraq is about oil. All the arguments about weapons of mass destruction, democracy, and terrorism pale in comparison to the USA's insatiable thirst for oil. The U.S. imported about 10% of its oil in the 1950s, but U.S. oil production has been declining since the 1970s, and imports have grown to over 50%-- that's 10 million barrels of oil per day. By 2025, Klare projects that 68% of U.S. oil will be imported.

This isn't just about George Bush, although his support for the oil industry is particularly blatant. The Carter Doctrine in 1980 declared that the U.S. would use military force to defend its national interests in the Persian Gulf region. The U.S. strategy is "maximum petroleum extraction" from the region, and this explains why the U.S. "cannot remove our forces from the Gulf" argues Klare.

Klare calls the 2001 energy plan of continued reliance on oil "dangerous and deluded." Klare, along with John Kerry, supports the Apollo Alliance (www.apolloalliance.org), which has a 10 point program for creating jobs and energy independence. The program includes hybrid cars, energy conservation, and promotion of renewable energy sources. In contrast, the White House threatened to veto last summer's Energy Bill if it included a provision to reduce oil consumption by 1 million barrels per day over 10 years. The provision was dropped.

Klare points out the consequences of continuing down the oil dependency path. These include entanglement with human rights abusers; competition (i.e.—potential war) with China, Russia, . . .; anger from oppressed nationalities about the theft of their resources and abuse of their environment; global warming—rising seas, stronger storms, spreading diseases

This is a vital issue where we can offer a clear alternative to the Republicans. Klare's book helps to map out such a path that will provide jobs and avoid military and environmental disaster.

Reviewed by Jack Lucero Fleck

John George Democratic Club

**P.O. Box 18802
Oakland, CA 94619**

**MEMBERSHIP
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Address _____

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Email: _____

Enclosed are my dues for:

_____ \$30 (Reg).

_____ \$10 (Low Income)

_____ \$50 (Sustaining)

**Please make checks payable to John
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18802 Oakland, 94619
For Information call 846-2837.**

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