

# Bill Gates, Philanthropy, & Social Engineering?

Michael Barker

Like many of the world's richest businessmen, Bill Gates<sup>1</sup> believes in a special form of democracy, otherwise known as plutocracy. That is, socialism for the rich and capitalism for the poor. Following in the footsteps of John D. Rockefeller's and Andrew Carnegie's charitable foundations, Gates, like most capitalists, relies upon the government to protect his business interests from competition, but is less keen on the idea of a government that acts to redistribute wealth to the wider populous. For powerful capitalists such as Gates, the State is merely a tool to be harnessed for profit maximization, and they themselves, having acquired their wealth by exploiting and manipulating the economic system, then take it upon their own shoulders to help relieve global inequality and escalating poverty. As one might expect, their definitions of the appropriate solutions to inequality neglect to seriously challenge the primary driver of global poverty, capitalism. For the most part, the incompatibility of democracy and capitalism remains anathema. Instead, those capitalist philanthropists fund all manner of 'solutions' that help provide a much needed safety valve for rising resistance and dissent, while still enabling business-as-usual, albeit with a band-aid stuck over some of the more glaring inequities.

With huge government-aided financial empires resting in the hands of a small power elite, the ability of the richest individual philanthropists to shape global society is increasing all the time, while the power of society to influence governments is being continuously undermined by many of these powerful philanthropists. This situation is problematic on a number of levels. Democratic governments rely on taxes to stabilise existing structures of governance. Yet, profiting from specifically designed legislation, billionaire capitalists are able to create massive tax-free endowments to satisfy their own particular interests. This process in effect means that vast amounts of money are regularly 'stolen' from the democratic citizenry, whereupon they are redistributed by unaccountable elites, who then cynically use this display of generosity to win over more supporters to the free-market principles that they themselves do their utmost to protect themselves from. Bill Gates' Microsoft Corporation and his associated liberal foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (the largest of its kind in the world), is only one of the more visible displays of capitalism's hypocrisy.

## I – Capitalists cum Philanthropists: the roots of Gates' philanthropy

At this present historical juncture, neoclassical free-market economic doctrines are the favored means of promoting capitalism by business and political elites. In many respects this neoliberal dogma has been adopted by a sizable proportion of the citizenry of the world's most powerful countries, arguably against the citizenry's own best interests. This widespread internalisation, but not necessarily acceptance, by the broader populous of the economic theories that consolidate capitalist hegemony over the global market did not happen naturally, but actually required a massive ongoing propaganda campaign to embed itself in the minds of the masses. The contours of this propaganda offensive have been well described by Alex Carey who fittingly observed that: "The twentieth century has been characterised by three developments of great political importance: the growth of democracy, the growth of corporate

power, and the growth of corporate propaganda as a means of protecting corporate power against democracy."<sup>2</sup>

There are many reasons why corporate giants engage in liberal philanthropic endeavors: one is to have a direct influence on political decisions through what has been termed political philanthropy<sup>3</sup>, but another important reason is that such charitable efforts help cultivate a positive image in the public's mind that serves to deflect criticism while also helping expand their market share. However, although liberal foundations like the Gates Foundation may engage in ostensibly 'progressive' activities, this does not mean that the capitalist enterprises from which their endowments arise (e.g. Microsoft) refrain from engaging in common antidemocratic business practices. So while the Gates Foundation directs some of its resources to progressive grassroots initiatives, its corporate benefactor actually works to create fake grassroots organisations (otherwise known as astroturf groups) to actively lobby through covert means to protect corporate power.

For instance, in 1999 Microsoft helped found a group called Americans for Technology Leadership – a group which describes its role as being "dedicated to limiting government regulation of technology and fostering competitive market solutions to public policy issues affecting the technology industry."<sup>4</sup> In 2001, Joseph Menn and Edmund Sanders alleged that Americans for Technology Leadership orchestrated a "nationwide campaign to create the impression of a surging grass-roots movement"<sup>5</sup> to help defend Microsoft from monopoly charges. The founder of this front group, Jonathan Zuck, also created another libertarian group in 1998 called the Association for Competitive Technology, a group which was part sponsored by Microsoft to fight against the anti-trust actions being pursued against Microsoft in the United States. Such antidemocratic campaigns waged via front groups and astroturf organisations, however, were just one part of Microsoft's democratic manipulations. This is because, as Greg Miller and Leslie Helm demonstrated (in 1998), this was just one part of a programme that Microsoft and PR giant Edelman had been planning as part of a "massive media campaign designed to influence state investigators by creating the appearance of a groundswell of public support for the company."<sup>6</sup> None of this should be surprising as in 1995 it was also revealed how Microsoft were using "consultants to generate computer analyses of reporters' articles, enlist industry sources to critique writers they know and – less frequently – provide investigative peeks into journalists private lives."<sup>7</sup> In the rare spate of critical articles surfacing in the late 1990s, it was also shown that Microsoft had made a \$380,000 contribution to the conservative corporate-funded astroturf group Citizens for a Sound Economy (now known as FreedomWorks).<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, these examples only represent the tip of the iceberg of Microsoft's democracy manipulating activities.

## II – The Gates Foundation: Microsoft's 'Charity'

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has its roots in two of Gates' earlier philanthropic projects: the William H. Gates Foundation and the Gates Library Foundation. Understanding the complete backgrounds of the Gates Foundations' is critical to comprehending the political nature of their work.

Formed in 1994 by Bill Gates and his wife,

Melinda Gates, the William H. Gates Foundation was managed by Bill Gates' father, William H. Gates Sr.<sup>9</sup> Presently acting as the co-chairman of the Gates Foundation, Gates Sr. has had a successful career establishing one of Seattle's leading law firms, Preston Gates and Ellis (which in 2007 became K&L Gates), whose work is closely tied to Bill Gates' corporate/philanthropic network. Gates Sr. is also a director of the food giant Costco where he sits on their board of directors alongside Charles Munger, the former vice chairman of Berkshire Hathaway Inc. In 2003, Gates Sr. co-founded the Initiative for Global Development, which is a national network of business leaders that ostensibly champion "effective solutions to global poverty." The dubious level of commitment this group has to truly solving global poverty can perhaps be best ascertained by the fact that the two co-chairs of the Initiative's leadership council are the two former Secretaries of State, Madeleine Albright and Colin Powell. Albright, Powell, and Gates Sr. also serve as honorary chairs of another arguably misnamed 'democracy'-promoting project called the World Justice Project which happens to obtain financial backing from two key weapons manufacturers, Boeing and General Electric. This project also receives support from Microsoft and the Gates Foundation, amongst others.

In 1995, Gates Sr. invited the longstanding birth control/population activist Suzanne Cluett to help him distribute his foundation's resources. She then remained with the Gates' philanthropies as associate director of global health strategies until her death in 2006. Prior to joining the Gates' philanthropies, Cluett had obtained much experience in population control related programming as she had spent 16 years as administrative vice president for the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH). The Gates Foundation's focus here places it in a direct line with that of the Ford and Rockefeller foundations', which have a long history of promoting population control research around the world in line with U.S. imperial interests.

Describing itself as an "international, nonprofit organization that creates sustainable, culturally relevant solutions, enabling communities worldwide to break longstanding cycles of poor health", PATH had, in 2006, a total income of just over \$130 million, of which 65% was derived from foundations – most of which it obtained from its major funding partner, the Gates Foundation. In 1995, PATH's president, Gordon Perkin, was first approached by Gates Sr. for his advice on family planning issues. This relationship then blossomed over the years and eventually, in late 1999, Perkin stepped down as PATH's president and became the head of the Gates Foundation's new Global Health Program. This was not the first time that Perkins had directly worked on population control issues for liberal foundations, as in 1964 he joined the Planned Parenthood Federation of America as an associate medical director – a group that was well supported by Ford and Rockefeller monies – and just two years later he moved to the Ford Foundation to work on population issues in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Mexico and Brazil, where he stayed until he created PATH in 1977.

Given that the two key policy advisors recruited by the William H. Gates Foundation first worked with the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH), it is interesting to note that another PATH board member, Steve Davis, who formerly practised law with Preston Gates and Ellis, presently serves as a director of Global

Partnerships. Global Partnerships is yet another group that says it is dedicated to “fight[ing] against global poverty,” in this case through microfinance schemes, and has recently begun working closely with the Grameen Foundation, another microfinance group that receives major funding from the Gates Foundation.

The second of Gate’s initial two foundations was founded in 1997 as the Gates Library Foundation, in the foundations own words, to “bring computers and Internet access to public libraries in low-income communities in the United States and Canada.” In 1999, the foundation then changed its name to the Gates Learning Foundation. Prior to the merger into the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Gates Learning Foundation was headed by Patricia Stonesifer, who is presently the CEO of the Gates Foundation; Stonesifer previously worked for Microsoft Corporation (1988-97), and also ran her own management consulting firm.

Board members of the Gates Learning Foundation also included Gilbert Anderson, who at the time served as a trustee of the Seattle Public Library; Vartan Gregorian, who was, and still is, the president of the Carnegie Corporation; and William H. Gray III, who was the president of the United Negro College Fund from 1991 until 2004, and presently sits on the public advisory committee of the Population Institute, and has been a director of the Rockefellers’ JPMorgan Chase since 1992. Considering the extensive links that exist between Gray’s United Negro College Fund and various liberal philanthropists, it is important to briefly consider the history of the Fund’s work:

Founded in 1944, with critical aid provided by John D. Rockefeller, Jr.,<sup>10</sup> the United Negro College Fund describes itself as the “largest and most successful minority higher education assistance organization” in the U.S., having distributed over \$2.5 billion of grants since its creation. Crucially, the Fund has obtained massive support from liberal foundations and in 1999 alone they received over \$1 billion from the Gates Foundation. In 2000, UNCF received \$1 million from the world’s leading military contractor, Lockheed Martin Corporation. The recently retired chairman of Lockheed Martin, Vance D. Coffman has also served on the board of directors of the Fund.<sup>11</sup>

Returning to the Gates Learning Foundation, their former director of strategy and operations, Christopher Hedrick, formerly managed the national philanthropic programs for Microsoft, and was “responsible for developing the growth of the company’s partnership with the United Negro College Fund”, and also happens to be a former treasurer of the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health. In 1999, Hedrick founded the consulting firm, Intrepid Learning Solutions. Nelson A. Rockefeller Jr. acts as their executive vice president, while their board of directors includes amongst their members Steve Davis, who, as outlined in relation to the population control focus of the William H. Gates Foundation, is also on the board of PATH and a director of Global Partnerships. Finally, in late 1998, the director of finance and administration of the Gates Learning Foundation was Terry Meersman who, amongst his many jobs in philanthropy, formerly served as the Venture Fund Program Officer for the Pew Charitable Trusts – a major funder of environmental projects which has been heavily critiqued by progressive commentators.<sup>12</sup>

#### The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

In 2000, Bill and Melinda Gates established the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation which is based on the stated belief that “every life has equal value,” to “help reduce inequities in the United States and around the world.” The Gates Foundation points out that its 15 guiding principles “reflect the Gates family’s beliefs about the role of philanthropy and the impact they want this foundation to have.” Thus it is important to briefly examine these principles to get an idea of the type of work that the foundation believes it is



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engaged in.

Many of those guiding principles suggest that the foundation respects the role of the community in dealing with social problems, thus they observe that: “We treat our grantees as valued partners, and we treat the ultimate beneficiaries of our work with respect”; “We treat each other as valued colleagues”; “We must be humble and mindful in our actions and words”; and crucially they note that, “Philanthropy plays an important but limited role.” Yet, as one might expect of the world’s largest foundation, there are limits on the respect they have for the beneficiaries of their work, as although they suggest that philanthropy should play a “limited role” this is not borne out by the fact that in 2007 alone the Gates Foundation distributed over \$2 billion. Indeed, other principles that guide the foundation’s work which suggest their acknowledgement of a social engineering role for the foundation include: the foundation will be “driven by the interests and passions of the Gates family”; “We are funders and shapers”; “Our focus is clear”; “We advocate – vigorously but responsibly – in our areas of focus”; and “Meeting our mission... requires great stewardship of the money we have available.” Thus, given the huge amounts of money involved, it is hard to reconcile the foundation’s vision of itself as “funders and shapers” with their final guiding principle, which is: “We leave room for growth and change.” Clearly the Gates Foundation is a powerful force for change, and, judging by the previous historical achievements of the major liberal foundations, it is likely to be a rather antidemocratic and elitist force for change.

#### People and Projects

Since the formal consolidation of the Gates philanthropies in late 1999, the most significant change at the Gates Foundation has been the massive influx of capital that they received from Warren Buffett. Warren Buffett is the CEO of the investment company Berkshire Hathaway Inc. (a position he has held since 1970) and presently serves alongside Melinda Gates on the board of directors of the Washington Post Company.<sup>13</sup> This Gates/Hathaway/media connection is further bolstered by the presence of Thomas Murphy and Donald Keough on Berkshire Hathaway’s board, as until he retired in 1996 Murphy was the CEO of Capital Cities/ABC (which was bought by Disney that year), while Keough presently serves as a director of IAC/InterActiveCorp. Bill Gates also joined the Berkshire Hathaway board of directors in 2004, while former Microsoft employee Charlotte Guyman presently serves on Hathaway’s board as well. Finally, Charles Munger, who has been the vice chair of Berkshire Hathaway since 1978, currently sits alongside William H. Gates Sr. on Costco’s board of directors.

In part, the close working relationship that exists between the Gates family and Warren Buffett helps explain why in 2006 Buffett announced that he was going to leave most of his substantial personal earnings from Berkshire Hathaway – that is, \$31 billion – to the Gates Foundation. To put this donation in perspective, at the time of the announcement the Gates Foundation, which was already the largest liberal foundation in the world, had an endowment that was worth just under \$30 billion. Thus, as one might expect, Buffett now plays an important role in helping direct the work of the Gates Foundation.

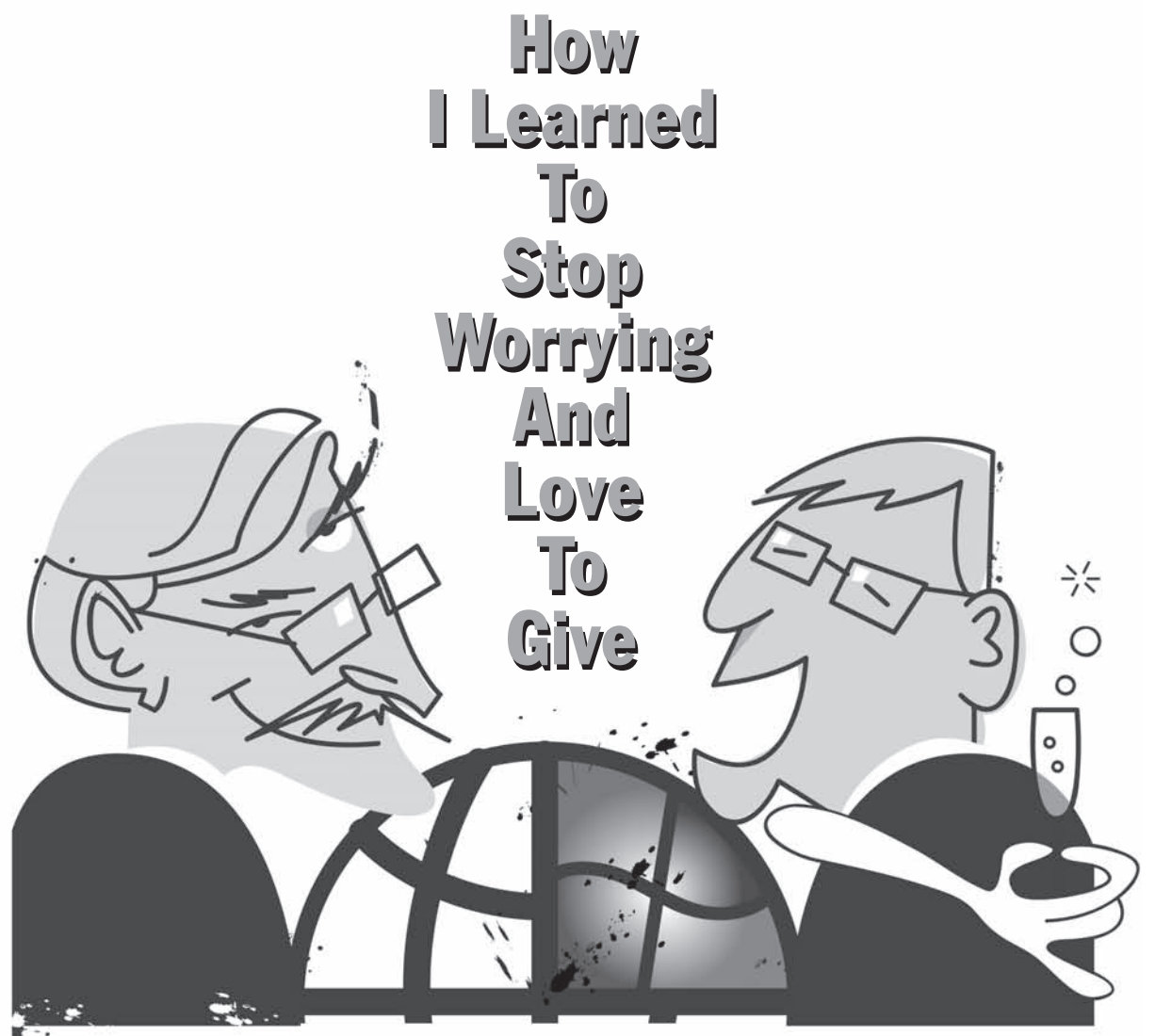
### III – Bill Gates Engineers Another Green Revolution

In late 2003, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation was strongly criticised by international charities, farmers' groups, and academics<sup>14</sup> as a result of a \$25 million grant it had given to "GM [genetically modified] research to develop vitamin and protein-enriched seeds for the world's poor."<sup>15</sup> This money supported research by the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture, and the International Food Policy Research Institute, two groups which played an integral role in the first Ford and Rockefeller Foundation-funded (so-called) Green Revolution. Both of these organisations are also part of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), a group of global public institutes that is "widely accused of being a creature of its two major funders – the US and the World Bank."<sup>16</sup> However, although linked to the World Bank, CGIAR was formed as a result of a "series of private conferences held at the Rockefeller Foundation's conference center in Bellagio, Italy", and its work has been strongly supported by all manner of liberal foundations. As John Vidal points out, there are also "reasons to believe that the Gates food agenda is now being shaped by US corporate and government interests."<sup>17</sup> This is because in regard to their support for CGIAR the Gates Foundation chose to partner with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and USAID; "two of the most active pro-GM organisations in the world."<sup>18</sup>

Given this corporate influence it is poignant to reflect on the large number of ties that the Gates Foundation's current leadership has to various biotechnology ventures: Melinda Gates has served on the board of directors of drugstore.com; the president of the Gates Foundations global health programs, Tachi Yamada, formerly acted as the chairman of research and development at the global drug company, GlaxoSmithKline (2001-06); the president of the Gates Foundations global development program, Sylvia Burwell, is a director of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa; their chief financial officer, Alexander Friedman, was the founder and president of Accelerated Clinical, a biotechnology services company; the Gates Foundation's managing director of public policy, Geoffrey Lamb, formerly held several senior development positions at the World Bank and is the chair of the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative; while Jack Faris, who formerly served as the Gates Foundation's director of community strategies, has since February 2005 been the president of the corporate lobby group the Washington Biotechnology and Biomedical Association.

In addition, given the key role played by liberal philanthropy (most notably the Rockefeller Foundation) in promoting the initial Green Revolution, it is noteworthy that many important people at the Gates Foundation are directly connected to the Rockefeller philanthropies: Tachi Yamada is also a former trustee of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund; the two chairs for the Gates Foundations advisory panels for their U.S. Program and their Global Development Program, Ann Fudge and Rajat Gupta, respectively, both serve as Rockefeller Foundation trustees; while Henry Cisneros, a former Rockefeller Foundation trustee, sits on the Gates Foundations U.S. Program's advisory panel. Those connections to both the Rockefeller philanthropies and to the biotechnology industry cast an ominous shadow over the Gates Foundation's activities in this area.

Former Rockefeller Foundation president, George Harrar, has been credited as being the "architect of the Foundation's agricultural programs, beginning in Mexico during the 1940s, and was in large part responsible for the so-called Green Revolution".<sup>19</sup> Harrar also played a key role in the founding of the aforementioned Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research. Summing up the problematic ideology of the Green Revolution and Harrar's position, Eric Ross wrote in 1996 that:



"The threat of Malthusian crisis [that population tends to increase faster than food supply] justified the central premise of the Green Revolution, that, if there was not enough land to go around, peasant agriculture could not yield sufficient increases in food. In the process, it side-stepped the important question of whether land was truly scarce or just unequally distributed. It also concealed another agenda. J. George Harrar... observed in 1975 that 'agriculture is... a business and, to be successful, must be managed in a businesslike fashion.' Thus he was acknowledging that the Green Revolution was not just about producing more food, but helping to create a new global food system committed to the costly industrialization of agricultural production. Throughout much of the world, Malthusian logic, hand in hand with the new technologies of the Green Revolution, helped to put land reform on hold."<sup>20</sup>

Indeed, the whole idea of the Green Revolution is problematic because although the "chief public rationale" for it was supposedly humanitarianism, a good case can be made that the logic undergirding this revolution was Malthusian not humanitarianism.<sup>21</sup> As critical scholars like Eric Ross have pointed out, the Green Revolution should be considered to be an "integral part of the constellation of strategies including limited and carefully managed land reform, counterinsurgency, CIA-backed coups, and international birth control programs that aimed to ensure the security of U.S. interests."<sup>22</sup> This little-known critique of the Green Revolution is supported by the work of other writers (e.g. Susan George and Vandana Shiva) who have demonstrated that the so-called revolutionary changes promoted by the Green Revolution actually increased inequality, and in some cases even hunger itself. Ross concludes that support for the 'new' Green Revolution only serves to "accelerate the emergence of a globalized food system" which will ultimately "only enhance a world economy in which the rural poor already have too little voice or power."

Bearing this history in mind, it is consistent, but alarming nevertheless, that the president of the Gates Foundation's global development program, Sylvia Burwell, is a director of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa – an Alliance that was founded in 2006 by the Rockefeller and Gates Foundations. The Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa describes itself as a "dynamic, African-led partnership working across the African

continent to help millions of small-scale farmers and their families lift themselves out of poverty and hunger." Yet in a manner eerily reminiscent of critiques of the initial Green Revolution, in 2006 Food First observed that: "Because this new philanthropic effort ignores, misinterprets, and misrepresents the harsh lessons of the first Green Revolution's multiple failures, it will likely worsen the problem" it is supposedly trying to address.<sup>23</sup>

It is critical to acknowledge that, in large part, the modern day environmental movement grew out of the population control movement in the late 1960s and so environmental organisations are also well enmeshed in this web of philanthropic causes and democracy manipulators.<sup>24</sup> These links are best represented through the person of Walter Falcon. From 1979 until 1983 Falcon chaired the board of trustees of the Agricultural Development Council – a group that was established in 1953 by the influential population control activist John D. Rockefeller 3rd. When this group merged with two other Rockefeller-related agricultural Programs to form what is now known as Winrock International, Falcon continued to serve on their board of trustees.<sup>25</sup> The Falcon-environmental connection, however, comes through his presence on the board of trustees (from 2001 until 2007) of the Centre for International Forestry (CIFOR), a CGIAR member organisation whose mission suggests that they are "committed to conserving forests and improving the livelihoods of people in the tropics." In 2006, this group had a budget of just over \$14 million, of which just over 9% came from the World Bank (their largest single donor), while in the same year the Ford Foundation provided them with just under \$0.4 million in restricted funds.<sup>26</sup>

Since 2006, CIFOR's director general has been Frances Seymour, who is a member of the elite planning group the Council on Foreign Relations, and prior to heading CIFOR had been responsible for providing leadership for the World Resources Institute's engagement with international financial institutions (like the World Bank).<sup>27</sup> Earlier still, Frances had spent five years working in Indonesia with the Ford Foundation, and had also worked on USAID-funded agroforestry projects in the Philippines. Another notable trustee of CIFOR is Eugene Terry, who was formerly the director general of the West Africa Rice Development Association before going on to work at the World Bank. Terry is also chair of another CGIAR member organisation called the World Agroforestry Centre that was founded

in 1978 and obtains funding from the World Bank/Ford/Rockefeller/USAID/World Resources Institute funding consortium. Moreover, Terry is now the implementing director of the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF), a Nairobi-based group that was formed in 2002 with Rockefeller and USAID<sup>28</sup> funding to lobby for greater uptake of GM crops in Africa. Although not advertised on their website, the Foundation receives support from four of the world's largest agricultural companies: Monsanto, Syngenta, Dow AgroSciences, and DuPont.<sup>29</sup>

Other than via Eugene Terry, the Centre for International Forestry can be connected to agribusiness giant Syngenta through CIFOR trustee Andrew Bennett who is the former executive director (now just board member) of the Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture. Terry joins Bennett on the Syngenta Foundation board of directors. Another notable director of the Syngenta Foundation is the president and CEO of the Novartis Foundation for Sustainable Development, Klaus Leisinger. The Novartis Foundation joins the Gates Foundation and World Bank/Ford/USAID types in funding the work of a key population control group, the Population Reference Bureau. This US-based group was founded in 1929, a period in history that fully embraced the necessity of eugenics, and is now headed by William Butz, who had previously served as a senior economist at the imperial think tank, the RAND Corporation.

Last but not least, Syngenta and their Syngenta Foundation, along with USAID, Dupont, and the Gates and Rockefeller Foundations, support a global project called the Global Crop Diversity Trust which aims to "ensure the conservation and availability of crop diversity for food security worldwide." The aims of this project are somewhat contradictory, because the attempts of the aforementioned groups to foist a GM monoculture upon the world are already working to endanger the regular supply of adequate food resources into the future, and are threatening the livelihoods of the majority world's farming communities. Thus it is clear that the main reason why this project aims to safeguard genetic diversity – by safeguarding seeds in an underground vault buried beneath a mountain on the island of Svalbard (Norway) – is first and foremost to protect the profits of the agribusinesses that are forcing GM crops upon the world.

The person who currently chairs the Global Crop Diversity Trust's board of directors is none other than the former president of the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations' Population Council, Margaret Catley-Carlson<sup>30</sup>; other directors include Lewis Coleman, who since 2001 has been a director of one of the world's largest military contractors, Northrop Grumman, and is vice-chair of the controversial GM-linked environmental group Conservation International; Ambassador Jorio Dauster, who is the board chairman of Brasil Ecodiesel; Adel El-Beltagy, who serves on the executive council of CGIAR; and Mangala Rai, who is a trustee of the International Rice Research Institute, a former member of CGIAR's executive council, and a former trustee of the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center; while the Global Crop Diversity Trust's executive director, Cary Fowler, is also a former board member of the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center.

The International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center is yet another key group that pushed along the last Green Revolution as it was established in the 1940s in co-operation with the Mexican government by the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations. One of the main proponents of the Green Revolution, Norman Borlaug, was director of this Center's International Wheat Improvement Program, and, in reward for his 'revolutionary' work, Borlaug received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970.<sup>31</sup> Borlaug has also long been connected to the population lobby, as from 1971 onwards he served as the Director of the U.S.'s Population Crisis Committee (now known as Population Action International)<sup>32</sup>, and he presently serves

on the international advisory committee of the Population Institute.

## Conclusion

Social engineering by elite philanthropists of any hue is not a phenomenon that is compatible with democracy. In fact, the ongoing, and escalating, philanthropic colonisation of civil society by philanthropists poses a clear and present danger to the sustainability of democratic forms of governance. The Gates Foundation only represents the tip of the iceberg of the world of liberal philanthropy, and thousands of other foundations pursue similar agendas across the globe, albeit on a smaller scale. For example in 2006, in the U.S. alone, there were over 71,000 grant making foundations which together distributed just under \$41 billion. This massive figure also represents the greatest amount of money ever distributed by foundations, a figure that has been rising steadily over the years, and had just ten year earlier only amounted to some \$14 billion.

Consequently, given the longstanding influence that all manner of philanthropic foundations have had on global politics, it is concerning that most political scientists have downplayed their importance in shaping the global polity, while others sometimes admit to the power they exert but simply consider it to be a good thing. By examining the backgrounds of many of the people involved with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and by demonstrating the Foundation's involvement in promoting the new Green Revolution, the world's most powerful liberal foundation, while professing to promote solutions to global poverty, can be seen to pursue an agenda that will aggravate such systemic problems.

These 'solutions', however, do exist, and the social engineering of elites is not always all pervasive. Indeed, one important way in which concerned citizens may begin to counter the insidious influence of liberal elites over civil society is to work to dissociate their progressive activism from liberal foundations. At the same time it is critical that they also work to create sustainable democratic revenue streams to enable their work to continue. This of course will be the hardest part for progressive activists who have long relied upon the largess of liberal philanthropists, but it is a necessary step if they are to contribute towards an emancipatory project that is separated from, and opposed to, the corrosive social engineering of liberal elites.

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The original version of this article was presented as a refereed paper at the 2008 Australasian Political Science Association conference, and, with much greater detail on the connections and roles of individuals, corporations and philanthropic organisations, can be accessed in full on Zmag:

<http://www.zmag.org/znet/viewArticle/18198>

## Notes

- For further details and individuals and organisations throughout this article see e.g. [www.sourcewatch.org](http://www.sourcewatch.org)
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- Sims estimated that the "corporate outlay on political philanthropy in the 2000 election cycle in the U.S. was... a minimum of \$1-2 billion. This compares to roughly \$200 million on PAC contributions and \$400 million on soft money contributions" (pp.167-8). Gretchen Sims 2003, 'Rethinking the political power of American business: the role of corporate social responsibility', Unpublished PhD Thesis: Stanford University.
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- M. Moss, 'Reverse Gotcha: Companies are paying big fees to get news about beat reporters', *Wall Street Journal*, 10/11/95, <http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/ozt53a00> (Accessed April 2009.)

- Microsoft representative, Thomas Hartocollis, serves on the board of directors of the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship – a group that is funded by various conservative foundations and to teach children about the benefits of capitalism.
- In 1999, the William H. Gates Foundation was renamed the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the foundation moved from offices located in Bill Gates Sr.'s basement to a site in Seattle (Washington).
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- John Vidal, see above.
- John Vidal, see above.
- John Vidal, see above; for a critical overview of the U.S. involvements in GM developments, see Brian Tokar, *Gene Traders: Biotechnology, World Trade, and the Globalization of Hunger*, Burlington VT: Toward Freedom, 2004.
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- Food First Policy Brief No.12 Posted 10/10/06, <http://www.foodfirst.org/node/1527> (Accessed April 2009.)
- Michael Barker, 2008, 'The Liberal Foundations of Environmentalism: Revisiting the Rockefeller-Ford Connection', *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 19, 2, pp15-42.
- From 1991 until 1998, Falcon directed Stanford University's Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, and although he only presently serves on their executive committee, the Institute's current deputy director, Michael McFaul, is presently involved with two well known democracy manipulating organizations, Freedom House (where he is a trustee), and the National Endowment for Democracy's International Forum for Democratic Studies (where is a board member).
- See CIFOR Annual Report 2006: Building on success. CIFOR Annual Report. 60p. CIFOR, Bogor, Indonesia. ISBN: 978-979-14-1216-2, <http://www.cifor.cgiar.org/Publications/Corporate/AnnualReports/> (Accessed April 2009.)
- The World Resources Institute is a corporate-styled environmental group, whose founders included Jessica Tuchman Mathews who served as their vice president from 1982 through to 1993, and is now the president of the misnamed Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and is a member of both the Council on Foreign Relations and the Trilateral Commission. Jessica also served on the editorial board of *The Washington Post* in the early 1980s.
- USAID states that U.S. foreign aid helps in "furthering America's foreign policy interests in expanding democracy and free markets while improving the lives of the citizens of the developing world." Mukoma Ngugi, 'African Democracies for Sale,' 7/2/07, <http://www.zmag.org/znet/viewArticle/2109> (Accessed April 2009.)
- See Justin Gillis, 'To Feed Hungry Africans, Firms Plant Seeds of Science,' *Washington Post*, 11/3/03, <http://www.grain.org/bio-ipr/?id=303> (Accessed April 2009.)
- For details about the Population Council's elitist work, see Michael Barker, 'The Liberal Foundations of Environmentalism'.
- Norman Borlaug is connected to various other groups including the International Food Policy Research Institute (where he served as a trustee between 1976 and 1982), Winrock International (where he is a trustee between 1982 and 1990), and Population Communications International (where is he was the director between 1984 and 1994).
- Norman Borlaug presently serves on the Population Action International's council alongside Robert McNamara, an individual who in 1968, while serving as a Ford Foundation trustee Robert S. McNamara "emphasized the central importance of curbing population growth" in his inaugural speech as the World Bank's new president.