

## MoveOn.org Party

December 2003

My husband, daughter and I and a few straggling guests surveyed the kitchen. Counters were cluttered with empty cups and plates and wine bottles. The table was covered with dirty dishes and platters – casseroles, chips and salsa, cheese and crackers, vegetables and dip, cookies and cake. "Who brought the peach cobbler?" my daughter asked. "One of the bald guys," I wearily replied without thinking, then quickly looked around to make sure I hadn't offended anyone. A gentleman with receding hairline remained in the kitchen, but hadn't noticed, and the cobbler-bearer was gone.

We went about cleaning up the mess left behind by the Moveon.org party we'd hosted. Ours was the largest of several such gatherings in the South Florida area – 43 guests, mostly unknown to us, had signed up to attend via the internet. Ours was one of more than 2,600 parties held across the country to launch the film, "Uncovered: The Whole Truth About the Iraq War."

Directed by Robert Greenwald, the film presents government insiders detailing the deception that took place behind the flag of patriotism. Those interviewed include former Ambassador Joe Wilson, weapons inspectors Scott Ritter and David Albright, and former CIA analyst Ray McGovern. The film will soon be available for viewing at various community locations.

This is not information made available to the public by the mainstream media, perhaps because most media outlets are now owned by – or have become – huge conglomerates, just the ones that gain the most from the policies pushed forth by the Bush Administration. Lower taxes for corporations, decreased liability laws, blind eyes to corporate theft, government subsidies to industry, weakened environmental regulations and protection. War in Iraq.

These policies benefit wealthy corporations and the fat cats at the top, but shift burdens onto the public, who must work harder for less benefit. Yet the people are told, through a powerful marketing campaign supported by the media partners who present the lies, that the administration's policies are best for our country and our people.

That we must attack Iraq because its leader, Saddam Hussein, is tied to Osama bin Laden and plans to destroy the world with weapons of mass destruction. In fact, 15 of the 9-11 hijackers were from Saudi Arabia, a country with close ties to the Bush family, and not subject to our attack. We're in Iraq for its oil, and for the lucrative Halliburton contract for reconstruction.

The founders of Moveon.org are leading the way with the only media left for free speech, using the internet to reach millions of citizens and to help organize those willing to speak out against the Bush administration. This is the medium of the future and it may be the only way to get the truth out and mobilize the people. Although the Bush administration has the winning cards of money and power, they do not represent the majority. Only one thing can overcome money and power, and that is the sheer numbers of people who oppose their policies.

Of course, this administration is trying to silence the people, knowing we are their greatest threat. As former vice-president Al Gore made clear in his speech at Constitution Hall Nov. 9, Attorney General John Ashcroft's Patriot Act is more about citizen surveillance than international terrorism. Mr. Gore pointed out that the federal government can monitor websites, telephone, bank, credit and other records, even read emails without any probable cause. He said that the Patriot Act allows federal agents to "sneak and peek" into our homes, without permission and without informing us after the fact that they were there. Libraries are required to provide users' reading lists when requested by the FBI.

"I want to challenge the Bush administration's implicit assumption that we have to give up many of our traditional freedoms in order to be safe from terrorists," Mr Gore said. "It makes no more sense to launch an assault on our civil liberties as the best way to get at terrorists than it did to launch an invasion of Iraq as the best way to get at Osama Bin Laden."

Mr. Gore noted the parallels between the Bush administration's America and George Orwell's *Big Brother* in 1984: "And they have done it primarily by heightening and exploiting public anxieties and apprehensions. Rather than leading with a call to courage, this Administration has chosen to lead us by inciting fear."

The New York Times reported on Nov. 23 that the "F.B.I. Scrutinizes Antiwar Rallies," alerting us that local law enforcement officials have been advised to be on the lookout for subversive activities and behaviors. "It's pure intimidation tactics," my husband wisely surmised. The Miami New Times, documenting police aggression at the recent FTAA talks, calls it "squelching free speech." (<http://www.miaminewtimes.com/issues/2003-12-04/korten.html/1/index.html>)

On the day of our party, I awoke wondering what jail would be like. I'll admit to being uneasy about taking a public stance in support of toppling this government that uses our sons as pawns on their battlefield of money. I am a mother, an ordinary citizen, not a radical activist. I don't want to make a spectacle of myself or be martyred or harassed. I don't want to be called unpatriotic. I am an America citizen, and I love our country. I want to raise my children in peace, with prosperity, our energies focused on love, learning and making the most of our lives, not scraping to get by as servants of the wealthy. I want to be proud of our country when we travel abroad, not embarrassed or reviled. I want a world of truth, not lies.

If we concerned citizens don't work to forge connections so we can overcome this money and power gone awry, who will? We cannot let their chief tactic – fear – keep us from organizing to rescue our country. There is too much at stake and we must act before it's too late. The Moveon.org team is making it possible for citizens to take back America.

Many people thanked us for opening our home to the working professional citizens like us who filled the living room to watch the film.

And I was only a little unnerved the next day, when I received another email: "I wanted to thank you guys again for hosting the house party. I really enjoyed it. Signed, the bald guy with the peach cobbler."

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