

the Federal government's Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (formerly the Health Care Financing Administration). Scully is close to the Bush family, having worked on Presidential campaigns for both Bush and his father.

The conflict goes deeper with the inclusion of AdvancePCS. David Halbert, CEO of AdvancePCS, the Irving, Texas-based PBM involved in the Bush plan, has known Bush since 1985, when they were in the oil business together. Halbert boasted to the *Texas Star-Telegram* on July 16 that two months ago, Bush, who was one of the original investors in AdvancePCS (he allegedly divested his stock before the Presidential campaign), contacted him about working on his Medicare proposal.

Days after Bush unveiled his proposal, it was found that senior Presidential adviser Karl Rove illegally met in his White House office with drug-firm officials on June 5 to discuss the Bush plan — while he held \$240,000 in shares of two major drug companies, Pfizer Inc. and Johnson & Johnson. Just as Rove had met illegally with energy officials while holding Enron stock, he now discussed the Medicare drug proposal with Alan F. Holmer, president of the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA), which represents the nation's largest drug companies. Only days later did Rove sell his stock. PhRMA was among the biggest contributors to the June Congressional fundraiser "salute" to Bush; it gave or raised \$250,000.

## Drug Monopolists

Others involved in drawing up guidelines for the Bush plan were representatives of PhARMA. This is not inconsequential, given that the pharmaceutical industry is the most profitable of all U.S. industries, with profit margins nearly four times that of the average Fortune 500 company (for the year 2000). Yet, some drug manufacturers, who are the sole producers of critically needed medications for the nation, including everything from treatment for hemophilia, snake-bites, tetanus, influenza, to surgical anaesthesia, antibiotics, and vaccines, are actually causing nationwide shortages of these life-saving drugs to keep up their profit margins. For example, Wyeth-Ayerst decided to stop producing tetanus vaccine and Wydase, a drug used on newborns and surgery patients, because the profits weren't worth the cost of upgrading the company's production facilities. Yet, American Home Products, the parent company of Wyeth Ayerst, pays its CEO \$27,008,927 a year, with \$81,847,567 in unexercised stock options.

The "market" — with George W. Bush leading it — trumps the shareholders' interests over human life. Too bad for the tens of thousands of children with hemophilia; those who are allergic to regular antibiotics and depend on spectinomycin, now no longer produced. And now, apologies to those millions of elderly patients funnelled to these drug manufacturers to have their incomes looted through George W. Bush's bogus "discount" cards.

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## Baltimore

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# Mayor O'Malley's Tunnel Vision

by Lawrence K. Freeman and Michele Steinberg

On July 18, a CSX freight train of 60 cars travelling north-bound at approximately 20 miles per hour through the 1.7-mile-long, 105-year-old Howard Street tunnel in the center of Baltimore, Maryland, was halted by an emergency air brake. A fire ignited; within an hour smoke was billowing out of both ends of the tunnel. Civil defense sirens sounded the alarm to city residents. The two-man crew drove the engines out of the tunnel, and fire crews rushed to the scene. Within hours, sections of the city were flooded when a water main broke, and electricity and communications, including the Internet, were cut off. The fire continued for more than four days.

Ironically, less than three months earlier, on April 24, Baltimore Mayor Martin O'Malley was featured as a "New Democrats" favorite at a meeting of the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) in Washington, D.C. O'Malley, along with his "New Economy" partner, D.C. Mayor Anthony Williams, had been brought in to promote "digital government" and the "virtual economy" at the DLC's "Spring Technology" meeting. The two mayors projected growth of a massive tourism industry, spurred by a successful bid for the 2012 Olympics for the Washington-Baltimore area — even if it means driving every poor person out of the region.

For his part, Williams said that Washington, D.C. has to "catch up" in its use of the Internet. But, he added, he had been successful in *eliminating real services*, by closing D.C. General, the District's only remaining public hospital. Williams nervously referred to the plan to close D.C. General as a "classic New Democrat" project.

O'Malley presented a slide show, which pictured a "block-by-block" computerized map of Baltimore, using a high-tech software system called "Citistat" and "Comstat." O'Malley explained that he could eliminate the problems of potholes, uncollected garbage, abandoned cars, and other environmental unpleasanties. Through the greater "efficiency" of Citistat, boasted O'Malley, every reported pothole could be plotted out on a map, tracked, and repaired within 48 hours. His vision for the future was that every citizen could have a plastic recycling bin from the city delivered to their door, simply by putting in an order on the Internet!

Unfortunately for the people of Baltimore, Mayor O'Malley has a bad case of tunnel vision. Less than three months



*Baltimore's Mayor, Gore-Democrat Thomas O'Malley, had just finished telling the Democratic Leadership Council how he had "reinvented" government services, new-economy style, when the old infrastructure caught fire.*

after his slide show on rapid repair of potholes, on July 18, the transportation, water, electricity, and communications systems of Baltimore collapsed like dominoes when the freight train derailed in the Howard Street Tunnel.

The policies espoused by O'Malley, Williams, and the DLC *kill* people, as deliberately as the Nazis planned the elimination of "useless eaters." The DLC policies are a *national disaster*, demonstrated by the fact that a train accident shut down Baltimore for four days and four nights; that the East Coast of the United States is hit with *daily* electricity brown-outs; that critical health-care infrastructure, such as D.C. General Hospital, is being shut down; and that in Houston, Texas, the largest city in the Southwest, four people could die because of a heavy rainstorm.

These events show that fundamental axioms of our thinking — of the population, and of the institutions of leadership — are increasingly insane, especially in our dissociation from the physical-economic reality on which our very lives depend.

The DLC meeting where O'Malley and Williams spoke was as stupid as it was evil. DLC founder Al From *hates* any policies that defend the General Welfare of the population, as shown by his post-election article, "Why Gore Lost . . . and How the Democrats Can Come Back." From wrote, "The New Economy is creating a new electorate that demands a new politics. . . . The New Deal . . . has run its course; the political coalition it spawned has been split. Like Humpty Dumpty, the New Deal coalition cannot be put back together again."

The irony of the DLC's "New Economy" meeting, is that that bubble had *already* burst. But the participants, like the doomed revellers in Edgar Allan Poe's "Masque of the Red Death," refused to admit that their beloved stock portfolios have disappeared. Already, by April 24, some of the hi-tech wonders of the region such as PSINet, Winstar, and Viatel, were on the verge of going, or had already gone, bankrupt. One of the DLC sponsors, Aether Systems, had seen its stock value go from \$185.87 in July 2000 to less than \$10 a share on April 24, 2001, the day of the DLC meeting. Wall Street stock markets had officially announced that more than \$3 trillion in stock value had been wiped out in a year. But, none of the dozen panelists mentioned it! After all, the DLC meeting had been paid for by hi-tech companies such as Aether, AOL

Time Warner, and PSCComm, and it released a study that rated all 50 states and major metropolitan areas on their New Economy "fitness."

## It's the Infrastructure, Stupid!

The lunacy of the DLC's showcasing Baltimore became obvious on July 18. Three hours after the initial train accident, a century-old 40-inch water main burst at Howard and Lombard Streets, because of the Howard Street tunnel fire. The water main flooded downtown Baltimore with 60 million gallons of water, draining several feet of the Druid Hill Reservoir in a few hours. The water main could not be repaired, for fear that the tunnel would cave in.

The water main break caused electricity to fail in more than 1,200 businesses and residences in the downtown area; caused the cancellation of the Orioles' baseball doubleheader, and the shutdown of the section of the city that includes the Convention Center, the Inner Harbor, and the Camden Yards baseball stadium. International Internet communication was slowed, because fiber optic cables run through the tunnel.

The city did not return to "normal" until Sunday afternoon, July 22. Even now, the exact chain of events is not known. It is believed the fire started when train car 52, containing Tripropylene, a flammable, caustic detergent, ruptured, and the leaking chemical ignited, with the fire spreading to other cars containing paper and pulpboard. The firefighters' major concern was the danger that the fire would spread to cars 53 and 54, containing thousands of gallons of hydrochloric acid. The firefighters performed admirably, putting their lives in danger by repeatedly entering the unlit, smoke-filled tunnel, filled with dangerous chemicals, to pull out the burning cars. But, with the rescue over, the insanity of not investing in infrastructure remains.

When the Howard Street Tunnel was completed in 1895, it represented an advance in technology and infrastructure that was a model of engineering. It was the first tunnel to use heavy-duty electrification. In 1961, it became a freight-only tunnel, connecting Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York as the *only* — and thus very heavily used — freight route on the East Coast.

When first built, the Howard Street Tunnel was designed for two tracks. As trains got wider, it became a single-track tunnel. The fact that there is only a single track, in the longest subterranean conduit for East Coast rail freight, is an immense impediment to hauling freight to and from the Port of Baltimore. With the age of the tunnel, its increased use, and its narrow width, this was an accident waiting to happen.

In 1985, a Federal transportation safety official warned about the tunnel's danger, saying, "The problem would be just getting to the fire." And that is exactly what the problem turned out to be.

When will this insanity stop? When will human life again take precedence over a "balanced budget"?