

Our Little Secret

THE MEASURE OF A MAN

Bill Clinton has cried at the funeral of Richard Nixon. He has thrown a birthday party for ARCO head Lowdric Cook. The president has invited to the White House the New York Yankees and Chicago Bulls. He cozied up next to Tiger Woods and spent the night with Greg Norman. He congratulated Stephen Spielberg for his movie *Schindler's List*. He has dined with the CEOs of Lockheed Martin, Boeing and Raytheon and has had coffee with international fugitive Roger Tamraz, rightwing Cuban militants and Chinese arms dealers. But when American Jody Williams won the Nobel Peace prize for her uncompromising work on the ban on landmines, he couldn't even give her a contratulatory

phone call. The curvature of the president's penis awaits medical assessment to test the truth of Paula Jones's allegation. About the curvature of the president's backbone there is no doubt.

DARTMOUTH V. THIRD WORLD

In a comic attempt to undercut the October 18 national protest against the use of sweatshop labor by American companies, Nike, the Pantagruel of the sweatshop trade, issued a press release announcing

Nike's self serving report from a "prestigious university" turned out to be trash from young Dartmouth right-wingers.

the conclusions of a self-serving report on wages at its Asian factories that the company had commissioned from a "prestigious university". The university turned out to be Dartmouth and the findings were hailed by Nike as proving it pays its young workers robust wages.

But when *Our Little Secret* called the report's author, Professor Robert Massey, to request a copy of the report, Massey told us that "it wasn't finished or ready for publication". Massey, who chuckled at Nike's pre-emptive strike, admitted that much of the research for the report had been conducted by Dartmouth students. Following in the footsteps of Dartmouth alumna Laura Ingraham, these researchers, eyes no doubt fixed on internships at rightwing think tanks or the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page, determined that the \$90 a month brought in by some Nike workers is much more than a living wage. Indeed, the students concluded that this awesome sum enabled Nike workers to purchase food, shelter, clothes and have money left over for "discretionary spending" and retirement savings. It would take the average Nike worker in Vietnam 120 years of work to pay total tuition costs at Dartmouth.

KNIGHT OF DARKNESS

Back in 1994 we were the first to flash the spotlight on a man now at the heart of the Clinton campaign finance scandal: Peter Knight. Knight is the former Gore staffer and high-priced lobbyist at the firm of Wunder, Diefendorfer, Cannon and Thelan who was picked to head up the Clinton/Gore re-election campaign. *CounterPunch* reported that Knight used his ties to Gore to secure lobbying contracts worth between \$10,000 and \$25,000 a month from some of the nation's most environmentally atrocious companies, including timber giant Kimberly-Clark, waste hauler Browning Ferris Industries, Lockheed Martin (now a major player in radioactive waste), and Waste Conversion Systems. An October 17 story in the *Washington Post* by Bob Woodward details Knight's services for Molten Metals Technologies, a hazardous waste firm. Knight helped the firm win a \$9 million Department of Energy contract, which was awarded on the same day the company donated \$15,000 to the DNC. Knight's remuneration was robust. He received \$80,000 a year in cash and nearly \$100,000 in stock options. According to deposition transcripts quoted in Woodward's story, Knight appears to have committed perjury when he denied soliciting the campaign contribution from Molten Metal, a claim contradicted by Molten Metal executives and DNC records.

But *Our Little Secret* can add much to the Knight story than you'll find in Woodward's opus. For example, there is the relationship between Peter Knight and Thomas Grumbly, and the Fluor Corporation, a CIA-linked construction firm. In the summer of 1996, Fluor was awarded the \$5 billion contract to manage the clean up of the Hanford Nuclear Reservation only a month after the company gave the DNC a check for \$100,000. The Fluor contract was OK'd by then Deputy Secretary of Energy Thomas Grumbly, a former Gore staffer. At the time the contribution was made to the DNC, Fluor's Washington lobbyist was none other than Peter Knight.

Grumbly gave Fluor the contract despite the company's record of dangerously slipshod practices and overbilling at the DoE's Fernald site in Ohio. Indeed, Fluor's handling of the Ohio

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nuclear plant was so unremittingly incompetent that the DOE was finally compelled to fire the company. The company's record at Hanford is even more awful. There have been three major explosions in the last year, one occurring next to the largest stockpile of plutonium in the United States. On four occasions Hanford workers have been exposed to radiation, though the company tried to hide this fact from its employees and federal regulators.

The Fluor saga is only one episode in a much larger scandal, wherein the nation's largest defense companies are now reaping billions in federal contracts for the job of cleaning up the toxic mess left behind during the arms build up of the Cold War. This new largesse comes as a huge gift courtesy of Al Gore's reinventing government initiative, which called for wide-spread privatization of the nation's DOE sites.

MI5 TARGETS VICTORIA BRITTAIN

Try to find out what's going on almost anywhere in Africa in the mainstream press and you won't find much outside the work of Victoria Brittain, who's been a reporter and editor for many years at the (London) Guardian, of which she is now deputy foreign editor. She's been consistent, well-informed and politically principled. For all of these reasons she's now under savage assault by Britain's national security establishment, whose MI5 branch has spent over \$1 million in surveillance operations against her, including a scheme to burgle Brittain's house which involved the FBI arresting her daughter in New York on trumped up charges.

The story begins in Ghana in the mid-1980s, a time when the CIA was making repeated attempts to topple the government of Jerry Rawlings. His intelligence chief was Kojo Tsikata, a revolutionary associate of Patrice Lumumba, who had later fought with the MPLA in Angola. Tsikata managed to expose the whole of the CIA network of agents in Ghana, all of whom had to be flown hurriedly out of the country by the Agency and relocated in the US at a cost of \$12 million.

In 1982 three of Ghana's high court judges were assassinated, along with a military officer. Amartey Kwei, ring-leader of the attack, tried to divert sus-

picion to Tsikata. The night before his execution Kwei called for a Catholic confessor and a government official and retracted the allegation. The Ghanaian opposition, some say with the connivance of the CIA and British Secret Intelligence Service, tried to sustain the story of Tsikata's implication. Reviewing all the evidence Ghana's attorney general fully exonerated Tsikata.

A decade later, in June of 1992, the (London) Independent ran an attack on Rawlings that resuscitated the charges against Tsikata, who had by now retired. Tsikata decided to sue the newspaper and began amassing from sympathetic African leaders the very considerable

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financial war chest — more than \$500,000 — required.

At this time Tsikata was chief negotiator in efforts to end the Liberian civil war and contacted Brittain, an old friend, who referred him to a well-known solicitor, Geoffrey Bindman. Bindman said Tsikata would be required to lodge a large sum with the British courts and also a substantial deposit for lawyers' fees. Since Tsikata had no bank account in England Brittain agreed that he could remit the necessary sums to her account at Abbey National building society and she would pass them on to Bindman.

MI5 now enters the story. Alerted that large sums were passing through Brittain's account, MI5 mounted a huge operation. According to David Shayler, a retired agent who published a sensational account of the surveillance in the Mail on Sunday newspaper on September 25 of this year, "the old guard in MI5 became highly excited at the prospect of investigating a journalist from The Guardian. The director of the branch called it, in my presence, 'the most exciting thing to happen in the last 10 years.'"

Brittain's phone was tapped. She was continually followed. In 1995 there was a plan to burgle her London home and

plant a bug. According to Shayler the idea was to wait till Brittain was out of the country and, as an additional precaution to prevent her daughter from a chance visit, have the FBI arrest this daughter and hold her "on a trumped up charge". Eventually MI5 concluded the risks of being caught were too high. Of particular interest to MI5 was that it determined some of the money passing through Brittain's account to Bindman came from Libyan sources. Shayler wrote that in the end MI5 concluded that the Libyans were attempting to curry favor with the Ghanians by paying Tsikata's legal bills and that "MI5 concluded its suspicions had been entirely groundless".

Brittain insists, and Abbey National backs her up, that beyond noting Tsikata's money passing through the account, she had no way of knowing its precise origins. After an inquiry, the Guardian's editor, Alan Rusbridger, fully exonerated Brittain of any imputation that she might have been doing anything more than helping an old friend transfer money for his court case. But both The Guardian and Brittain and of course Tsikata have serious enemies.

The Guardian played a major role in exposing corruption in the twilight days of John Major's Conservative government. The Aitken affair (reported here a few months ago) and Sleazegate were Guardian stories that put the final nails in the Tory coffin. The British security services, which helped smear another good Guardian journalist, Richard Gott, still regard Brittain as a prime target. MI5 is now leaking phone-tap transcripts to Stephen Glover, a former Independent executive who been attacking Brittain in The Spectator, the conservative weekly which first smeared Gott.

Under pressure from The Guardian's board of trustees, Russbridger has summoned an independent ombudsman to review all the charges against Brittain, with the entire climate increasingly resembling a witchhunt. Meanwhile Tsikata is pursuing his libel action. Amidst all this furor the additional revelation that MI5 has been tapping the phone of Peter Mandelson, close advisor to prime minister Tony Blair and government minister without portfolio has attracted relatively little attention. ■

How Conservatives Dress for Success Undercover at the Leadership Institute

Helen Blackwell dwells at length on the subject of how to devour a T-bone steak correctly: "Use the fork to hold in place the piece of meat, while cutting off one small piece of meat with the knife. Then, lay the knife on the right side of the plate, shift the fork to your right hand, and eat that piece of meat. Repeat for EACH piece of meat. DO NOT cut up several pieces of meat at once. I realize the entire system sounds as if it were designed by a vegetarian; but rest assured, using any other method will arouse suspicions that you were brought up to be someone other than a person of refinement."

It's all part of a "crash course in courtesy" at the Leadership Institute, the nation's premier training ground for conservative political leaders, located in Arlington, Virginia. During the introduction period, held in a long lecture hall flanked by TV screens, I am surrounded by roughly 100 members of the species *Homo reaganus*. The crowd is overwhelmingly male: There are clean-cut college lads, tanned men in golfing polos, and Texans in cowboy boots.

First to present his credentials is a man running for state representative in New Jersey. His prime qualification is that he married his high school homecoming queen. Next is a would-be senate candidate who promises to help reclaim America from the "liberals who have hijacked it". Now comes one of about half-a-dozen women in attendance — young, blonde and hailing from Texas A&M. "Well, I don't want to run for office myself or learn to be a good candidate", she begins with a giggle. "I'm really just here because someday I want to be a good candidate's wife". At this the audience erupts, baying in approval at this fine display of female subservience and family values.

As a *CounterPunch* agent seeking to gain admittance to the Leadership Institute, I had paid \$150 to enroll in the top-rate Candidate Development School. I posed as an up-and-coming right-winger hoping to make a future run for high office. For four days I was indoctrinated in conservative thought by

speakers from many outfits, including the National Review, the Heritage Foundation and the Republican Victory Specialists. I observed as my companions traded budget slashing secrets, planned church services for members of Congress and, in the case of the men, crooned at attractive Institute interns. I heard from Rep. John Cooksey of Louisiana, one of our instructors, that women make good campaign staffers because they "are more detail-oriented than men". I learned that the easiest way to make conservatives feel comfortable is to utter the

The easiest way to make conservatives comfortable is to utter the hilarious word "homosexual".

hilarious word "homosexual" (which if said with a slight lisp was certain to make the audience tweet and twitter).

Perhaps the most important tool I received was a 500-page resource book that offered tutoring in key conservative issues (taxes, gun control, abortion), pointers on public speaking, a primer in campaign finance law, advice on fundraising and even tips on "how to parade". When it comes to the latter, the Leadership Institute recommends that candidates wear jeans or similar common man clothing, avoid riding in cars and make sure to mingle with the plebes on the parade route, have candy to pass out to kids and trickets such as bumperstickers and brochures to hand to older folk. Also included in the resource book was a statement of philosophy that contained a refreshingly direct summation of the cornerstone of conservative belief: "The conviction that civilized society requires orders and classes against the notion of a classless society."

The Leadership Institute was founded in 1977 by Morton Blackwell, a rabid right-winger who went on to serve in the Reagan

White House. Blackwell, who currently serves as the organization's president, established the Institute to identify, train and elect Republican candidates. The Institute claims to have graduated almost 15,000 ambitious right-wingers and its Alumni Hall is bedecked with portraits of conservative icons such as Ralph Reed of the Christian Coalition, Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky and Grover Norquist, the superstar of tax reform and intimate of House Speaker Newt Gingrich.

The Institute's instructors and supporters include Rep. Helen Chenoweth, the Boadicea of Idaho, columnist Robert Novak and the revered Senator Jesse Helms. The latter sits on the Institute's 70-member Congressional Advisory Board, which provides Blackwell & Co. with spiritual advice and guidance.

Students at the Institute can take seminars on everything from starting up conservative campus publications to right-wing use of the Internet. It also offers semester-long internships for college students, who are urged to return to their universities and "fight the Left". One fervent Institute graduate, we were told, has sued the University of Wisconsin for its "immoral policy" of allocating student funds to gay campus organizations. Post-university graduates receive help from the Institute's Employment Placement Service, with alumni going on to work as staff assistants to members of Congress, editors of right-wing magazines and denizens of beltway think-tanks.

The Candidate Development School prepares students to run for public office and promises graduates a "ready-made network of powerful new friends". I tried to blend in with my classmates — a mix of campus activists and 30-something conservatives preparing an inaugural run for public office — by occasionally muttering about the need to ban abortion and cheering speakers' calls for gutting government agencies. There were but five non-Anglo students and the Institute's only foray into minority outreach came in the form of a talk by the director of BAMPAC, the Black American Political Action Committee.

While well fed and watered, students were subjected to a grueling schedule of lectures and presentations from grand poobahs of the conservative cause.