

# CounterPunch

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## The Bush/Cheney Cabinet

# Meet Gale Norton

Gale Norton, George W. Bush's (and, presumably, co-president-elect Dick Cheney's) pick to head up the Interior Department, was part of the original band of "Colorado crazies" that held the Interior Department hostage during Reagantime.

One of her first jobs was at the Mountain States Legal Center, the anti-environmental think tank based in Denver, Colorado, headed by Watt. The Mountain States Center, founded in 1977, underwritten by mining and energy companies plus that faithful patron of the far right, Joseph Coors. Mountain States became a training ground for the Sagebrush Rebels of the 1970s and 1980s, spawning the likes of Anne Gorsuch and her husband the late Bob Burford. In Reagantime, Gorsuch headed the EPA, ultimately driven from office by scandal). Burford ran the BLM, ladling out huge concessions to the ranching and mining lobby. Then in the 1990s Mountain States helped launch the more militant Wise Use movement.

The Mountain States agenda is straightforward: attack environmental laws, discredit green activists, promote the privatization of public lands. Norton spent four years at Mountain States where she became known as a rabid advocate of property rights. She also threw herself into the "takings" issue, long an obsession of the rape-and-pillage crowd. Norton crafted baroque and somewhat harebrained arguments that the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution requires the government to pay polluters not to violate environmental laws and timber companies not to log off endangered species habitat.

Norton's work in this far-fetched region of the law has borne fruit with a string of rulings in favor of developers from the federal bench, including a rare opinion written

by Clarence Thomas. Norton's forays into property rights has also inspired counties throughout the West to pass so-called "custom and culture" laws, which turn the abuse of public lands into the equivalent of a property right. The result has been predictable; a decade of hostage-taking, where developers, timber companies and miners threaten to destroy valuable wetlands or forests unless they are paid off.

In 1983, Norton followed Watt to Reagan's Interior Department, where she served as deputy solicitor for the department, which oversees the Park Service, BLM and Fish and Wildlife Service. She remained there even after her mentor was booted back to Colorado in disgrace. In the solicitor's office, Norton plotted to undo the Endangered Species Act, open the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge to oil companies, abet strip miners along the Rocky Mountain Front and eviscerate wetlands protection.

In 1988, Norton was elected as attorney general of Colorado, the first woman to hold the position. She quickly made her mark: tough on crime, soft on industry, for the death penalty, and against affirmative action. Norton had no qualms about consorting on intimate terms with the very institutions she was supposed to be regulating. Take her 1991 "insurance fraud campaign" which called on Coloradans to rat on family members and friends suspected of filing false claims. It turned out that the entire campaign was paid for by the insurance industry and although there were more than 2,500 "tips" not a single one resulted in a successful prosecution.

As attorney general, Norton took what seemed to be a keen personal interest in pursuing Measure 2, the anti-gay initiative narrowly passed by Colorado voters in 1992. (Norton continued on page 4)

# Our Little Secrets

## LIMO TALK

A Friend of CounterPunch was recently traveling in a limo from Baltimore to a town in West Virginia and fell into conversation with the driver, who related some of his ferryings to and fro of various bigwigs. One of these was Hillary Clinton. "An ornery woman," the driver commented. "And what a mouth on her!"

The driver went on to describe an occasion on which he was driving the First Lady and a couple of her (female) friends through a poor area of Washington DC. They passed a beggar, and as they did so the First Lady expressed her disgust for the mendicant, adding "He wouldn't be a bum if he had a piece of ass." The driver was able to shed no light on how or why she had arrived at this conclusion, stunned as he was by the coarse nature of her observations. Then they passed two young black women with babies. "There go two welfare cases. They make me sick. They're too lazy to work", said Senator Clinton, champion of mothers and children everywhere.

## JEB THE CREEP

From a senior member of the Bush clan, via two trusted intermediaries, comes

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this vital intelligence. As kids Jeb, now the Florida governor, was the snitch and goody good. George W. was the manly little tyke who would take the fall, as in, "It was I, Papa, who cut down the cherry tree", even though the true culprit was Neal.

Most undignified move of the transition was undoubtedly Christy Todd Whitman's gift of a Scotty to the impending First Couple, even though they already have a dog. The hairy little bribe landed Whitman the top job at EPA. If she'd given the Bushes a Great Pyrenees she'd probably have been in contention with Rumsfeld for the Defense Department.

## JESSE TAKES A DIVE

Noting that Jesse Jackson took a powder on any counter-Inaugural activities as soon as the Wall Street backers for Jackson's Rainbow/PUSH operation, "The Project" told him to cool it, the Village Voice asked, "Is Jesse For Sale?" Of course he is. What does the VV deem the function of Operation PUSH to be? CounterPunchers may recall our description here some years ago of how black GM dealers sued the auto giant on grounds of discrimination. Jackson made a well publicized entry into the case, proclaiming that he would seek justice for the dealers. What actually happened was that Jackson colluded with GM in attempting to push through a settlement that left many of the dealers seething with fury at what they saw as Jackson's betrayal.

Jackson pulled a similar routine with Nike. First he went to Jakarta and paraded up and down outside a Nike factory, holding a prayer vigil in front of CNN's cameras. Just weeks later, the Reverend fell silent. Then Nike began making contributions to Operation PUSH. More recently Jackson's Rainbow Sports organization gave an award to Nike's chief flack, Vada Manager. Jesse Jackson Jr also showed up about a year ago at the opening of a Nike basketball museum in Chicago.

After the Wall Street arm-twisting reported by the VV's Peter Noel, Jackson swiftly sold out his disenfranchised brothers and sisters in Florida, phoning Bush on December 14 with the usual claptrap about healing and reconciliation.

With Jackson's defection, the organ-

izers of the counter-inaugural have been showering Arianna Huffington with requests to preside as Mistress of Ceremonies. Thus far their efforts have been rebuffed, with no answer from Huff HQ in Los Angeles. Come on, Arianna! What's your problem. Is it not logical to progress from counter-convention, to counter-inaugural?

## JEB'S PAL

Among those loyally cheering Bush's coronation will no doubt be Florida's electors, among them the Cuban American National Foundation's treasurer, Feliciano M. Foyo, who happens to be a good friend of Florida Governor Jeb Bush. As Jane Franklin reminds us in a useful piece in December 22 issue of the Cuban newspaper Granma, Foyo has another friend named Luis Posada Carriles, one of the most notorious terrorists among Cuban expatriates. In an autobiography published in Honduras in 1994, Posada names Feliciano Foyo as one of his financial backers.

Franklin asks, "What does it mean to be one of Posada's financiers?" and gives us some of Posada's bloodstained resume, which most recently features his detention by Panamanian authorities, along with three other well-known terrorists, on November 17 for an alleged plan to assassinate President Fidel Castro while the Cuban leader addressed thousands of students at the University of Panama. According to Franklin, "If the plastic explosive discovered in Panama had been used, hundreds of people could have been killed or injured."

This is not the first time Posada tried to kill Castro, with previous efforts occurring in Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador and Peru. A sales representative for Firestone Tire and Rubber in Cuba, Posada started working for the CIA at least by 1960. In June 1976, while George H. W. Bush (the elder) was head of the CIA, a CIA operative, Cuban expatriate Orlando Bosch, founded and led the Commanders of United Revolutionary Organizations (CORU). Posada was one of those "commanders." Franklin cites FBI and CIA documents, showing CORU was involved in more than 50 bombings and, quite likely, political assassinations. This reign of terror culminated in October 1976 when a Cubana passenger plane was blown up after it took off from Barbados headed for Cuba, killing all 73 people aboard, including 57 Cubans.

Posada and Bosch were imprisoned in