

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Agendas All Their Own

The perils of NGOs—non-governmental organizations

KATE O'BEIRNE

In September, Secretary of State Colin Powell's Open Forum played host to "philosopher, philanthropist, financier" George Soros. In his remarks at Foggy Bottom, Soros called on the global community to empower "civil society" when governments don't merit support. Two months later, Soros was giving the *Washington Post* a somewhat more pointed message: that he considered Powell's boss the global community's Enemy Number One. In fact, Soros explained, defeating George W. Bush "is the central focus of my life" and a "matter of life and death"—because "America, under Bush, is a danger to the world."

Soros is a billionaire, and boasts about the estimated \$25 million he has pledged to MoveOn.org and other left-wing groups. But documents recently leaked from one of the global pressure groups he supports—his foundations spend almost \$500 million a year around the world—outline a more covert assault, one based on the conviction that it's representative democracy itself that threatens the international order.

Under the banner of a "civil society" that claims to represent citizens rather than governments, hundreds of groups are aggressively lobbying international organizations and U.N. member states under the misleadingly benign classification of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Many of them are funded by governments, and their private funding is not fully disclosed. Although largely unaccountable to the public, they define their agendas as the public's interest and seek to impose their policies through undemocratic means.

The Center for Reproductive Rights

(CRR), one of the groups backed by Soros, has been revealed as an alarming example of the threat posed by NGOs. In early December, leaked copies of its internal strategy memos landed in the offices of Austin Ruse, president of the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute, which he founded to counter the assault of NGOs that advocate abortion and other liberal social policies. Ruse distinguishes between the hundreds of "service NGOs" that provide direct

humanitarian assistance and the "advocacy NGOs" that prefer "swinging policy rather than swinging bags of rice."

Ruse says the CRR memos "substantiate that what we have always known about [the group's] intentions is true despite their persistent denials." One of the memos admits: "At the heart of [CRR's] international work is a commitment to building a global network for reproductive rights legal advocacy by building the capacity of NGOs to use international human rights laws and mechanisms to advance reproductive rights." Within hours of Ruse's disclosure of the memos' contents, CRR—recognizing that its cover was blown—threatened legal action, claiming "irreparable harm" and demanding that Ruse stop any further dissemination and identify those who had received the "proprietary information."

Within three days, the number of people privy to CRR's tactics and aims had grown exponentially. On December 8, Rep. Chris Smith, New Jersey Republican, submitted CRR's leaked documents to the *Congressional Record*. Smith noted the importance of the public's right to know—and contrasted CRR's frank admission, in one of the memos, about how it prefers to operate. "There is a stealth quality to the work," the memo said. "We are achieving incremental recognition of values without a huge amount of scrutiny from the opposition. These lower-profile victories will gradually put us in a strong position to assert a broad consensus around our assertions."

This stealthiness is central to CRR's strategy. The group eschews democratic

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processes in favor of establishing "international legal norms" through accords and tribunals. "Our goal is to see governments worldwide guarantee women's reproductive rights out of recognition that they are bound to do so," CRR plans to use so-called "soft norms," such as the repetitious use of the phrase "reproductive health" in non-binding U.N. resolutions; to establish a customary international right to abortion. This approach "involves developing a juris-

prudence that pushes the general understanding of existing, broadly accepted human rights laws to encompass reproductive rights." Recalcitrant countries are brought in line when enforcement committees reinterpret intentionally imprecise terms.

And this might have consequences even in the U.S. Ruse reminds us that when the Supreme Court struck down anti-sodomy laws in the *Lawrence* case last year, it cited a decision of the European Court of Human Rights. Ruse believes that with the present Court's reliance on foreign laws and international opinion to interpret the Constitution, CRR's strategy memos "provide a highly specific blueprint to our Constitutional future." Chris Smith says we need a cadre of pro-life lawyers to mount an international counteroffensive—to offer support to NGO-beleaguered foreign officials (like the justice minister from eastern Europe who recently told Smith his country is "under siege" by aggressive NGOs).

And CRR is just one of the stealth pressure groups. Advocacy NGOs, working in well-coordinated networks, monitor and advise international organizations and tribunals with the goal of establishing controlling international authority on issues ranging from family law to disarmament, the environment, and labor law. Some NGOs, including Human Rights Watch and the International Red Cross, are currently determined to undermine American wartime policy on the handling of enemy combatants.

In the past, the activities of these NGOs were naively dismissed as the work of international busybodies who

were inexplicably willing to spend huge amounts of time in the company of windy international bureaucrats at seemingly pointless international conferences. But their power is growing too obvious to be ignored. The Federalist Society and the American Enterprise Institute are collaborating on a project called NGOWATCH.org to track the activities of advocacy NGOs that enjoy such power without appropriate transparency and accountability. At an AEI conference in June, Gary Johns of Australia's Institute of Public Affairs explained that many essentially illiberal advocacy NGOs operate like civil-society regulators, with negative consequences for representative democracy. He notes that their claims to represent public opinion are difficult to test and they don't face democracy's demand for trade-offs in establishing policy, yet they enjoy significant clout with the EU and at the U.N., where electorates have little control over them.

In its role as a conservative watchdog of the philanthropic community, the Capital Research Center of Washington, D.C., has detailed the clout of advocacy NGOs at international meetings. In 2002, the U.N. hosted its World Summit on

Sustainable Development in Johannesburg to further the goals of a 1992 declaration that called for central economic planning and wealth transfers to the developing world. There were 2,300 delegates from 163 U.N. member states in attendance; their numbers were dwarfed by 8,096 representatives from 925 NGOs. At the U.N.'s 2001 "World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance," there were, again, 2,300 delegates from member states—but a stadium-sized crowd of 17,000 representatives from 3,400 NGOs.

When it comes to U.N. policymaking, these organizations have a seat at the table—and offer a concrete example of the "global governance" they seek. The Capital Research Center argues that with this power should come more transparency about who funds and directs the work of NGOs: There should be full disclosure of all government and private funding, and laws governing nonprofits ought to make clear distinctions between charitable and political activity.

Today, it's impossible to get a precise accounting of U.S. funding to advocacy NGOs. USAID provides over \$3 billion a year to NGOs, including some that harshly criticize the Bush administration. Taxpayers, in essence, are funding the lobbying of their own government. Billions more in the foreign-aid budget are passed through to NGOs by foreign countries and international organizations. The Labor Department provides the International Labor Organization with over \$300 million a year, which in turn funds the NGOs dedicated to changing American employment policies. In a recent speech, Labor Secretary Elaine Chao warned that "an increasing number of multilateral organizations are engaged in the business of globalized standard setting that affects democratic, developed nations." The recent workplace proposals being considered in international organizations include the recognition of stress as a major occupational hazard.

And when George Soros spoke at the State Department, his billing should have included "grantee": His Open Society Institute receives about \$6 million a year from U.S. government agencies. NR

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Pew Casts Itself in Fresh Role as a Public Lobby

By DAVID BANK

The Pew Charitable Trusts, one of the nation's largest charitable foundations, is changing its legal and tax status to enable it to take a more direct role in public-policy advocacy and lobbying on issues such as climate change, genetically modified food and the death penalty.

The Philadelphia-based foundation, with assets of approximately \$4 billion, will become a public charity, like most universities, think tanks and other non-profit organizations. That will give it the ability to raise money from other sources and to run its projects on its own, rather than through its grant recipients. The changes are to take effect Jan. 1, said Rebecca Rimel, the foundation's president.

The change frees Pew of some restrictions under federal tax law, including one that bars foundations from lobbying legislators. As a public charity, Pew will be able to spend as much as 20% of its annual budget of approximately \$200 million on lobbying.

"It makes it easier for Pew to do a lot of things without running afoul of restrictions on advocacy," said Joel Fleishman, a professor of public policy at Duke University and head of Duke's foundation-research program.

Pew-funded projects such as the Pew Center on Global Climate Change and the Pew Initiative on Food and Biotechnology already attract the ire of political conservatives; for example, the Cap-

ital Research Center in Washington gives Pew a rating of one, or "radical left," on its five-point scale.

Ms. Rimel, a nurse who has headed the Pew trusts since 1994, said she expected the suspicion of Pew's critics to increase. "If people are concerned or question the policy agenda, they'll question it more; there's no doubt about that," she said in an interview. She said the new structure would also allow Pew

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to create subsidiaries and then provide services, such as information technology and accounting; conflict-of-interest rules bar foundations from such arrangements.

In recent years, many foundations and private donors have become more active policy advocates, but Pew is going further in revamping its legal structure to enable it to engage in lobbying efforts as well. The move does not appear to presage a trend, however, because it takes advantage of a quirk in Pew's history that isn't shared by other foundations.

Pew comprises seven trusts estab-

lished by the children of Joseph N. Pew, the founder of Sun Oil Co. Several years ago, the Internal Revenue Service ruled that each trust should be considered a separate foundation. That now enables Pew, unlike most foundations, to demonstrate that it has multiple donors, a requirement for the establishment of a public charity.

Under another unusual arrangement, the Pew Trusts had been a division of Glenmede Trust Co., created by the Pew family in 1956 to manage its philanthropic assets. Under the new structure, Pew will no longer be a division of the bank, though GTC will remain the sole trustee of the seven Pew trusts.

The income from the trusts will be dedicated in perpetuity to the new non-profit organization. In a statement, J. Howard Pew II said Pew's board is enthusiastic about the "expanded opportunities" of the new structure.

Ms. Rimel said Pew is also revamping its organizational structure to "build a wall" between its informational activities, such as the Pew Research Center for People and the Press and the Pew Global Attitudes Project, and its advocacy efforts. The polling efforts and other informational services, she said, will stick to "just the facts" and not share staff with the policy advocacy efforts.

"We're going to be even clearer in the future that we value both, but they are separate," she said.



Local 1199 of the the Service Employees International Union picketed the Guilderland Center Nursing Home late in 2002.

Aggressive union comes to Albany

BY ERIC DURR
THE BUSINESS REVIEW

2003 was the year the country's fastest growing, most aggressive health care union came to the Capital Region.

Local 1199 of the Service Employees International Union, which has 220,000 members, and whose president, Dennis Rivera, has become a key player during state Capitol budget talks, launched its effort to unionize area nursing homes with a 77-day strike against **Highgate LTC Management LLC**.

Union members walked out at Rosewood Gardens Nursing Home in East Greenbush and Guilderland Center Nursing Home on March 5 after talks broke down between 1199 and Highgate, owned by Eugene Nachamkin and Dianna Koehler.

Hand-in-hand with the walkout Local 1199 SEIU spent more than \$50,000 on radio advertisements designed to drum up public support for the union. The union also encouraged local political leaders to line up behind its organizing efforts and call on the company to make concessions. At the same time it filed charges against the nursing home with the National Labor Relations Board.

When it was over, both sides proclaimed victory, and 1199 SEIU went on to target Adventist Nursing Home in Livingston, Co-

lumbia County. The union has also organized nurses at Columbia Memorial Hospital and won a contract there in July.

"We plan to organize the health care industry in Albany and Columbia County," said union rep Mindy Berman.

These are all standard SEIU tactics, according to Ivan Osario, editor of *Labor Watch*, a publication of the Capital Research Center, a Washington, D.C., advocacy group.

Not only does the union attempt to attack a company economically through a strike, but it tries to smear its reputation in the community, Osario told *The Business Review*.

SEIU's organizing efforts have been helped by a state law approved in 2002 that prevents health care entities from using state money. Since hospitals and nursing homes are dependent on Medicaid dollars, this undercuts their ability to counter union propaganda, management officials said.

The constitutionality of the law is being challenged in court by the Healthcare Association of New York State.

1199 hasn't won every fight. In the fall of 2002 the union backed away from an effort to unionize Albany Medical Center employees when key NLRB ruling didn't break its way.

San Antonio Express-News

Study: Charity views differ with age

By Rachel L. Toalson
San Antonio Express-News

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Volunteering had shifted her focus and changed her life. It had made her a better person. So Katie Swain resolved to teach her 12-year-old daughter the value of giving her time to others.

"Growing up, my family had volunteer times together," the 38-year-old Girl Scouts co-leader said. "And you've got to start it at home because it's got to have a meaning. This doesn't necessarily come naturally, but our children do learn from us.

"It's a part of who we are, a part of our duty."

Swain's philosophy could help explain why a recent study released by Thrivent Financial for Lutherans found 58 percent of Americans ages 18 to 34 say giving their time is their most important gift to a charitable cause, while only 28 percent of seniors 65 and older agree.



(Billy Calzada/Express-News)

JP Morgan Chase employees contribute to the community by volunteering at the San Antonio Food Bank.

In spite of their differing views, the study reported young adults and seniors volunteered at about the same level in 2003.

The survey was conducted by phone between Nov. 20 and Dec. 4, using a nationwide sample of 1,000 American adults 18 and older. It had a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

The survey results make sense, said Robert Huberty, executive vice president at Capital Research Center in Washington.

Each group values what it has the most of, Huberty said.

"The young say time and the old say money," he said. "That says something about their outlooks. When you're older, you don't have that much time left, but you do have resources. When you're young the prospects of making money and having money are all dreams, but you do know that what you have is time. You have a lifetime of time."

Florence Macdaniel, executive director of the Nonprofit Resource Center of Texas in San Antonio, said the results didn't surprise her, either. After all, today's givers have a different philosophy.

"The old giving trend was, 'Here's my check, don't bother me,'" she said. "The philosophy of the new generation is 'Here's my check, keep bothering me.' They say, 'If I'm giving money, then I'm going to roll up my sleeves and make sure I'm making an impact.' They aren't satisfied with just writing a check."

The difference appears to be not just a product of a shift in family values, but also of older generations having lived a different story.

Gloria Adams, 54, said her family was just too busy to volunteer together, as was the case with her friends' families.

"Our parents were too busy working to take care of us and move us into college," she said. "People had their own families and more or less kept to themselves. There was that 'I don't want to get involved' mentality.

"But there was a major shift for us. We started volunteering as young adults and got our own families involved."

Though she didn't have the resources to help those in need monetarily, Adams said, she knew she could give her time, and she turned it into a family legacy.

"My son was raised doing volunteer work for as many years as he can remember," she said. "My two grandchildren are there at every event where they can volunteer, too."

Parents aren't the only ones encouraging the younger generations to give time. Several area college professors recognize the benefits of volunteering and require a minimum number of volunteer hours before a student passes a class.

St. Mary's University, the University of Texas at San Antonio, San Antonio College, Palo Alto College, Northwest Vista College and the University of the Incarnate Word call it "service learning."

The study results also might indicate differences in what's important to each generation in lieu of a changing economy, Swain said.

"They want to make a difference in the community, but the economy tells them to volunteer instead of giving their money," she said. "Most people who are younger have not established themselves, and they have more time than they have money."

Administrators from Big Brothers Big Sisters, United Way and the city's Department of Community Initiatives agreed that the difference in priorities, which they've also observed, hasn't resulted in seniors volunteering less than younger workers.

Volunteering and donating work hand in hand, said Nancy Roth-Roffy, communications director at the United Way. Studies conducted by the United Way have shown that volunteering has consistently made a volunteer a donor.

"When people see the product, when they see the faces of lives being changed, they are more given to contribution," she said.

And donating money is just as important as volunteering time, even for a volunteer-driven organization, said Beth Myers, president and CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters.

"We need volunteers, but we cannot process them without the financial," she said. "My hope would be that all ages start to understand the importance of both volunteering time and giving financial contributions.

"Too many people think that giving a financial contribution means it has to be a certain amount. But if every San Antonio resident gave \$1 we could serve three times, four times the number of kids."