

Springtime for Grassroots Boycotts

Written by Alex Baer

Saturday, 03 March 2012 17:46

A battle over Irish agrarian tenants' rights 132 years ago, in 1880, contributed a valuable concept to the world, adding a noble word into the language, from an ignoble affair: **Boycott**. It would surface again, 90 years later, strongly so, with Cesar Chavez in the 1970s, in nonviolent protests once galvanizing and unifying farm workers.

Chavez's birthday is coming up, by the way, March 31st, and is celebrated and observed in a handful of states. It is one more good and fine day worthy of keeping alive in the hearts of everyday working people. But, as you know, we have no need of more superficial treatments of giants who have walked once in our land, no more special, red-lettered holidays to be fluttered and fizzled about, no more days to be frittered away selling us more *merch*, or more kitsch, without any of us ever knowing why it's *This-or-That Day*.

We can only remind ourselves of profound, full-hearted days worthy of safekeeping, and not leave it to calendar makers and teevees to tell us which days are important, to dictate which ones have value over all the rest. Leave us to decide on our own which days are best.

Toward that thought comes another: There are scant traces in the air -- the thinnest possible vapor trail that something is cooking or been left building and unwatched, something baking, maybe, don't know, about to burn. Just a thin finger of scent, mind you -- not a blast or a gush, not even a real steady or solid whiff, but a lingering *something* that tells you it's been here before, not yet quite moved on, or, just coming in. Something in the drapes, maybe, or just draped on the furniture, or up in our hair: Just a tease, now and then, as we go about, breathing in and out, recycling the air...

A direction finder built to sniff out scent on the trail would have pointed, of late, to the radio, of all confounded places: Rush Limbaugh verbally assaulting a young woman, a law student, for daring to do what she thought her civic duty: testifying in Congress about access to contraceptives. And, as we all know, it takes a really big man to verbally abuse a woman, to horsewhip her with his tongue, lambaste her around, cuff her around with some razor-edged words, try to strip her of all value, try to make her feel like something the cat had dragged in, gutted, and abandoned. This is how Rush gets his jollies, this is how the big man on campus catches a thrill from law students, this is how the big man calves off 4 million bucks a month and more for himself, Inexplicably, we let him pour out his untreated sewage on top of us, across the public airwaves we all own. You want disgusting? **Digest this:** *We lap it all up hungrily, greedily, faster and faster -- can't wait for more!*

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Progress Report: *Maybe not.* Two of Rush's sponsors -- Sleep Train and Sleep Number -- have bailed off the tracks, away from that train wreck of a supposed human being, away from that whole show. They have decided to forego that mess, take a fork in the road, and are to be commended -- doing something late, it could be argued, but, at the least, and in the end, they've left that coal-fired, soot-bellowing, smoke-belching, nonstop lies-and-insults machine.

Did you catch a tickle of that scent, just a trickle of it, going by, just then?

A Nashville mom, meanwhile, has been chucked in the can for defending her daughter against TSA agents grabbing at her daughter's crotch: *To fly in this country, you can get physically groped, mauled, pawed, and assaulted, or you can get imaged and imagined naked, or you can get irradiated like so much import-export bacon or ham.*

Interesting to note, in a story seen in passing, that TSA has never snagged a terrorist or bomb or bomb parts while the show-and-tell, endless kabuki theater plays to packed crowds and captive audiences in airports, coast to coast. Guns and weapons still show up on planes, as we all know, making those TSA shows cheap tranquilizers at best. Now that TSA has taken over the vacated Hare Krishna franchise in airports, you'd think a gift of a *posie* after a thorough, pervasive, and invasive grope would be a nice touch.

At least, the orange-robed ones didn't have the power to toss your ass in the jug if you didn't like the show.

Some flyers are starting to suggest none of us fly, not ever again, until we make TSA and *Dr. FeelGood's Traveling Grope Show* hit the road for good. Just refuse to fly, until these offensive, smarmy theatrics take permanent wing.

See? □ There it is again. Smell that? □ A little like spring...

And, another whiff, here: May Day celebrations are in the works again, everywhere: a day of peace, no work, no consumption, a quick flare touched off into the dark void, a message to be sent -- building on ancient days of celebration, life harmony, an international day for regular working stiffs. Can it be that enough people will reach for an aging, yet still effective, consumer weapon -- be able to wield it with even half as much power and grace as Cesar Chavez once did? Will this tactic of boycott emerge as a prime weapon -- perhaps the only unbroken one left

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-- in the battle of the little people over corporations desperately seeking to be seen as one of the people?

It was once so, it was once done, in ostracizing Captain Charles Cunningham Boycott, as the little people tried to draw his attention to the grievances and incivilities he wrought upon them then. And, you know what? *It worked.* □ *Worked like a champ.*

It is struggling hard to be springtime out our way. About now, the grassroots of boycott are only beginning to stretch after winter, just now starting to grow. Cesar Chavez, Grapes of Wrath anew, grapes and farm workers, righting wrongs, organizing for the good of the regular working people, and boycotts -- all in a time of year for renewal, it all jumbles and tumbles together in all the new growth.

Nature, we have noticed, will usually drop hints, but keep a firm and steady hand, and will keep serving up needed fare, until Her hint finally takes hold and *grows*.