



SEPTEMBER 2013

TRENDEVENTS

Welcome to the September “Back-To-School” issue of **TrendEvents**. Our theme this month is Education (see page 5). If you click on some of the news story titles, they will open up a web browser that will take you to the original story. If you are reading a paper copy, your local librarian may be able to get you the original news story as well.



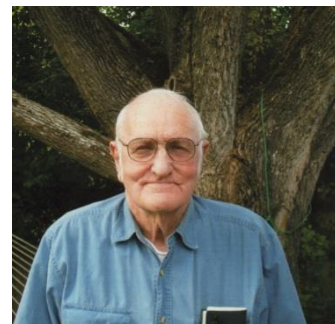
PROTESTORS UNITED—Alternative Solutions
(ISBN: 978-1-4836-5740-0) By **Edmond Dantes Vongehr, Jr.**,
1432 Siskiyou Blvd., Medford, Oregon 97504

Book review by George Wright

Once again, one of our members has written a book that is beyond worthy of member and non-member alike to read. Edmond Dantes Vongehr, Jr., born on September 28, 1925 in Ardmore, Oklahoma, has and remains to this day, a vocal advocate for Technocracy, Inc. His work in this book starts out more of a story of his activities in trying to reach out to members of his local media and then branching out nationally.

From his home now in Medford, Oregon, Mr. Vongehr compiled some of his personal “letters to the editor,” and many submissions from others generally speaking out about our need to finally begin the discussion to change the way we go about living in our communities and throughout North America. As one progresses through the book, Mr. Vongehr reprinted a series of articles written and authored by several gifted writers belonging to this exclusive organization called Technocracy, Inc. He also chose many complimentary articles by very knowledgeable people to give credence to the fact that we are in desperate need-to-know—a need-to-know of how far down a dangerous path our incompetent leadership has taken us.

This book, *Protestors United—Alternative Solutions*, chronicles the personal understandings of many of these authors. In their words, they highlight the concept of



scientific functional governance as defined by the Technical Alliance who gave birth to Technocracy, Inc. as its informational and educational organization. We are fortunate to have members like Mr. Vongehr.

Edmond Vongehr has been a self-employed insurance agent and broker for over 30 years, a global gold miner and flew B-24 Liberator bombers in World War II.

CIVIL RIGHTS ALERT!

NSA

By Ron Miller

In 2008 the U.S. congress passed what has been called the Patriot Act. Part of that was called section 215. It gave the F.B.I. enormously expanded powers to spy on people everywhere. The National Security Agency (NSA) has taken full use of these powers and expanded them substantially. The latest of its installations is scheduled for completion this September (2013). In Utah it is a million square foot facility designed to house a massive computer memory and what will, very likely be, the fastest computer in the world. Another 900,000 square feet are being added for technical support. A fence around the facility is designed to stop a 15,000 pound vehicle traveling at 50 mph. The purpose of the installation is to intercept, decipher, analyze and store information coming from satellites, underground and undersea cables of foreign and domestic communications, including the complete contents of private emails, cell phone calls, Google searches, parking receipts, travel itineraries, bookstore purchases, commuter toll records, and phone conversation directly in real time.

To keep an eye on all of this computerized spying the act also created the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court. In order to search the database the court's permission is required. The court has seldom refused a request and this is one of the problems. The court only hears one side of the issue. It is possible that this is about to be remedied. There have been numerous "mistakes" about which the agency appears reluctant to talk about. While congressional oversight is practiced it is on a very tight chain. Senators are allowed to read some top-secret information but they are not allowed to discuss it with anyone even one another.

Many who have looked at section 215 have stated that it is completely unconstitutional. NSA has seen fit to completely ignore any such information. In many cases they have simply lied to the court. About one third of those who work for NSA are private contractors who just might have their own agendas. There are 4.2 million people with classified security clearance and more than a million with top-secret clearance. How is it possible to control just what everyone is doing all the time everywhere? The "joke" within the agency is that NSA means never say anything. At least one newly retired person from the NSA has described it as about an inch away from being a turnkey totalitarian state. Thus far a midnight knock on the door and the

quiet disappearance of the person living there has not become standard—at least, as far as is known.

- *www.wired.com*, “The NSA Is Building the Country’s Biggest Spy Center” by James Bamford • *Huffington Post*: “Security Clearances” by Hayley Miller • “Reform the Patriot Act”: *www.aclu.org* • “NSA broke privacy rules often, audit finds” by Barton Gellman from *The Washington Post* reprinted in the *Oregonian* • “NSA took info not tied to terror hunt” by Charlie Savage and Scott Shane • New York Times News Service reprinted in the *Oregonian* August 22, 2013

ECONOMICS—Rapid mortgage debt growth in Canada

- **Mortgage Debt Exploded in Past 4 Years, Bank of Canada Data Shows**
(*Huffington Post Canada*, 4 September 2013)

Total mortgage debt held by Canada’s chartered banks about doubled in the past 4 years from \$347 billion in June 2009 to \$879 billion in June 2013. (The Globe and Mail puts mortgage debt at all banks at \$ 1.1 trillion). Although the rate of increase of debt is now slowing, increased interest rates could further escalate mortgage payments. (Also see *Globe and Beagle*, 29 August 2013)

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

- **Baxter the Robot—Putting a Face on Technology**

Baxter is a robot designed to work in small to medium size businesses. The \$22,000 it costs is very minimal for a robot. Baxter is designed to work around people. A Slight touch of a person will bring it to a stop. Programming is not necessary as all a person has to do is show it what one wants it to do and it will continue doing that until told to stop.



Source: *Rethink Robotics*

- **Lab-Grown Meat—Kinder on the Environment and Creatures**
(“Where’s The Beef”, *New Scientist*, August 6, 2013; *theguardian.com*, “Future of Food”, January 2013)

An edible hamburger was grown from meat cell in a lab in the Netherlands. The ability to produce slaughter free meat could provide large environmental benefits. A study

produced by Oxford University two years ago compared environmental costs of producing 1000 kilograms of farmed and lab grown meat. It concluded that cultured meat would require less than 1 percent of the land needed to produce the equivalent amount on the hoof. Lab meat would consume about 4 percent of the water and 4 percent of the greenhouse emissions.

With the help of a “growth gel” cocktail the cells replicate 50 times before they stall. “With usual doubling times of 24 to 30 hours, it takes only around 7 weeks to go from one cell to ten tons” says Post. Much remains to be done but it is obvious that these numbers make it quite certain that this technology will be developed fully. For many in the world protein remains a luxury.

ECONOMICS, ENERGY & RESOURCE DATA DASHBOARD

• Canada, US Trade Deficits Rising

Canada’s trade July deficit doubles to \$931 million from \$460 million in June, dampening hopes for an export-lead recovery. Imports rose, especially for metal ores, other materials, and manufactured products. Exports fell slightly. (*Globe and Mail*, September 4, 2013)

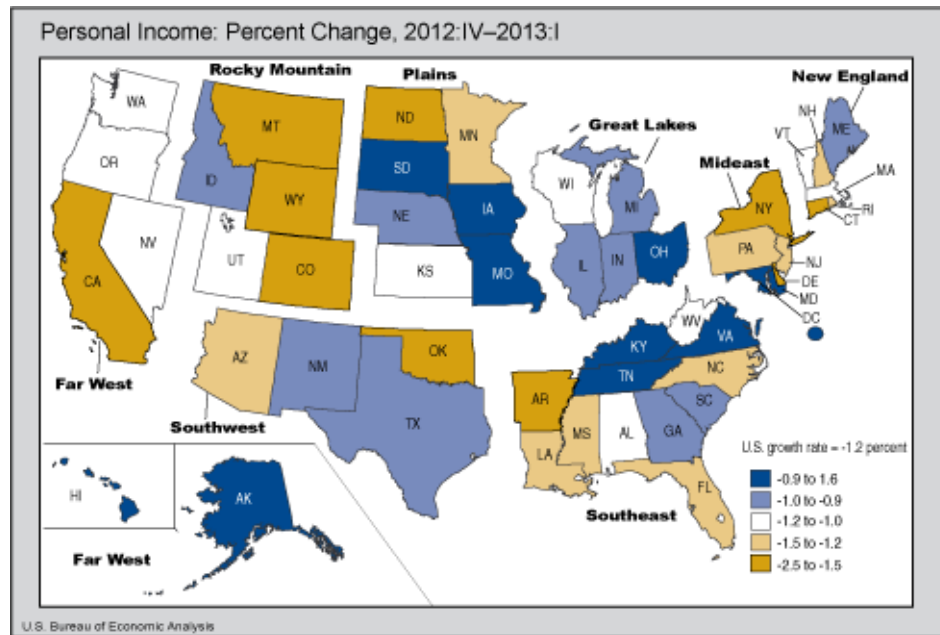
The U.S. monthly international trade deficit increased in July 2013 according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and the U.S. Census Bureau. The deficit increased from \$34.5 billion in June (revised) to \$39.1 billion in July as exports decreased and imports increased. (*U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis blog*, September 4, 2013)



Source: <http://docbea.files.wordpress.com/2013/09/sept4.png>

• Despite Recovery, US Personal Income Is Still Falling

State personal income declined an average 1.2 % in the first quarter of 2013 after growing 2.7 % in the fourth quarter of 2012, according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. Only a few states experienced average income increases (up to 1.6%). Personal income declines ranged from 0.1 % in Iowa to 2.5 % in Wyoming.



Source: http://www.bea.gov/newsreleases/regional/spi/2013/_images/spi0613.gif

FOCUS ON EDUCATION

HIGHER EDUCATION MONEY CHASE & YOU'RE ON THE HOOK!

As students go back to school, we see an education system squeezed and distorted by the Price System. Private schools raise tuitions far beyond the rate of inflation. Budget cuts for public education have resulted in large tuition increases there as well, reducing access to the non-wealthy. Many employers demand a college education, so students have undertaken over a trillion dollars in debt to get that education. Income increases are not matching debt increases often making repayment impossible, while U.S. taxpayers are on the hook for defaults. Student loan debt is said to be the next “bubble”. Unsurprisingly, one finds that many of the rapidly-growing for-profit schools are substantially owned by investment banks.

- **College Costs Surge 500% in U.S. Since 1985** (*Bloomberg News*, August 26, 2013) Tuition expenses have increased 538 percent in the 28-year period since 1985 compared to a 121 percent gain in the consumer price index.

College Costs Keep Rising Faster Than Inflation (*CS Monitor*, August 13, 2013) At private four-year schools, tuition and fees were \$29,056 last year at the most costly colleges, while room and board ran to an additional \$10,462, for a total of

\$39,518 per year. Even at the last remaining vestige of affordable education, public community colleges, tuition and fees are up 24 percent beyond overall inflation over the past five years.

(*NBC News, U. of Penn Wharton*) **Undergraduate tuition can top \$60,000** per year and tuition for professional programs, such as MBAs, can run over \$85,000 per year.

- **The Student Debt Problem** (*New Hampshire Magazine*, September 2013); **A Debt Sentence: Students face challenges with rising college tuition, repayment of loans** (*Shreveport Times*) “Around \$1 trillion of student loan debt is part of the American economy today. In 2012, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York confirmed that the figure had surpassed the amount of both credit card debt (about \$700 billion) and auto loan debt (about \$730 billion), two former leaders.”
- **Could Student Loan Debt Be the Next Bubble?** (*Community Voice*, September 6, 2013) “According to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, as of 2011, there were approximately 37 million student loan borrowers with outstanding loans. And from 2004 through 2012, the number of student loan borrowers increased by 70 percent.” Trouble is already on the horizon. According to the Federal Reserve, “as of 2012, 17 percent of the 37 million student loan borrowers with outstanding balances had loans at least 90 days past due, the official definition of ‘delinquent.’”
- **To Cut College Loan Default Costs, Reform For-profit School’s Taxpayers Subsidies?** “While accreditors praised the for-profits’ innovations in delivery, they went a little soft on educational outcome assessment.” Alas, “only about 20 percent graduate within six years compared with 55 percent at public and 65 percent at private non-profit universities.” Nevertheless, “for-profits attract 25 percent of taxpayer-funded tuition subsidies, but account for over 40 percent of all student defaults.”

(*Huffington Post*, “... Reform For-profit Schools Taxpayer Subsidies”, September 6, 2013) “The real scandal is the fact that many of the largest for-profit schools allocate almost as much, if not more, of their tuition dollars on high-pressure telemarketing and advertising campaigns (not unlike our friends at Countrywide and Washington Mutual), marketing rather than educational—up to 25-30 percent in recent cases. Taxpayer-funded tuition dollars aren't just paying for teaching; they're paying—in full—the costs of attracting the gravy-train pipeline of student borrowers!”

A RETIRED TEACHER QUESTIONS WHY JOHNNY CAN'T YET READ

By Pam Gill

Now that I am a retired teacher rather than a working teacher, I say, “I am glad to be retired,” fairly often as I read various articles on education and the contentious nature of the discourse. Some days I think, well, it was always so. I was 7 years old when Rudolf Flesch published his book **WHY JOHNNY CAN'T READ** in 1951, and 26 years later came **WHY JOHNNY STILL CAN'T READ**. Today I am tutoring a

woman in her 30's who is the single parent of 2 children; she is basically illiterate though English is her native tongue and she went to school the requisite years in the US. The Project Read Program I work with tells us that 20% of Californians are illiterate. They aren't all in jail, but they do constitute way more than their representational share of the incarcerated. (*Udu-cyberpg.com*). Sadly, this comes as no surprise.

Many students might not find prison unfamiliar, as huge amounts of school money is being spent on surveillance and non-educational tools such as metal detectors and high security technology (apparently even on guns in some schools now). That was not true in the 1950's. (WUSA-TV Washington (9/4/13)).

Standardized testing is another expense which doesn't purport to teach the students but simply to find out if they have learned certain things. Still, teaching students to take tests is a multi-billion dollar industry which belabors such subjects as "whether, when, and why or why not to simply guess. . ." The financial outlays are humongous and often leave districts scrambling to pay for some component that wasn't covered, such as a recent problem in L.A. where 1 billion dollars went into iPads, but they forgot to budget 38 million plus for the keyboards (largely needed in order to take the tests on the iPads). (LA Times, 9/3/13 Blume).

Meanwhile, some school districts, including Philadelphia's, are asking teachers to accept pay cuts.(Philadelphia Inquirer (8/29/13, Synder)). Arnie Duncan, our Secretary of Education, is pushing for \$500,000 to fund what he calls "formative assessments" of kids as young as four. Popular education blogger and expert, Diane Ravitch, on the other hand, says these "valued added assessments" are nothing but "junk science." (Sebring (FL) News-Sun (9/4/13, Stanford)).

The fighting can get ugly. Some schools have cheated on the tests. Where the cheating is extensive enough, some have been caught and prosecuted. (Houston Chronicle (9/3/13, Mellon)). No Child Left Behind has required all kinds of waivers for states who just can't do the impossible. (AP (8/30/13) Elliott). Then further negotiations ensue. It gets very political. I saw a funny poster, "Those who can, Teach, Those who cannot, pass laws about teaching." The more laws get passed, the more tricky compliance becomes, and the more devious the compliers are tempted to become. Often evidence of compliance ends up amounting to something entirely unrelated to the problem which the laws were ostensibly meant to address. Not wanting to excuse breaking the law, I can see why some people cheat when they have lost respect for the hoops they are expected to jump through.

We are spinning our wheels in a system with no end of flaws to point out and no end of theories about what will "turn the situation around." We need to make the education of each student a priority. If enough adults and resources are available, we can figure out which direction to steer given students, what their talents are, how to expose them to mentoring and resources. We can get the support they need to grapple with

difficulties whether they are physical, psychological, or academic. We can all learn how to live and enjoy life better, of which the joys of teaching and learning are a huge part. The endorphins which learning supplies could, I venture a wild guess here, supplant a lot of the drug and alcohol use many young people suffer from today.

There isn't going to be a Utopia because we are not perfect and never will be. If people's basic needs are met through a much more even distribution of resources than we have today, and if we take resources away from the pursuit of war and hegemony, we could have a "much better" socio-economic system. Instead of cutting back, we could be opening up opportunities. Life isn't all about working for corporations. . . . which is painfully obvious from their inability to employ a substantial percent of our population. Also obvious from how unhappy many of those jobs make the people who do them.

It was never the work of teaching which made me unhappy. It was the overcrowding, the unaddressed problems, the socio-economic breakdown, the overwork, the insecurity, and the lack of recognition, which makes me say, "I am glad I am retired." Is it any wonder why some people can't yet read?

IDEAS ON EDUCATION, by Ron Miller

Education currently is largely focused on what job one is preparing to do afterward. Without the straight jacket of money, education becomes mostly about learning. People would be free to go where their aptitudes, interests and intelligence wanted to lead them. The educational system would be governed by educators and students. Currently politicians with, often economic or ideological agendas, are in positions to dictate their desires to the educational system. One of the principle ways of doing this is by withholding financial support to those of whom they do not approve.

It would be possible to conduct classes where engineering projects are under construction permitting students to see the results as they come together plus listening to how engineers have had to solve difficult problems. The same sort of thing could take place for many other areas of human endeavor.

The principle thrust would be for teachers to make learning as exciting and as interesting as possible motivating students to pursue knowledge for its own sake. Education would become the focal point of an exciting and fascinating life.

EDUCATION - THE WAY IT SHOULD BE

(Excerpts from Technocracy Digest, 3rd quarter 1996, No. 321)

Technocracy's whole program is educational, but because it does not follow the orthodox pattern, its Organization is restricted to only those means of education that it can provide through its own facilities for publication and other methods of dissemination. But, though these are limited, yet it is presenting a program of positive education that can be found nowhere else.

Technocracy is presenting to the people of North America a program which will achieve not only a much higher standard of health and general welfare, but also an educational standard that will allow every child born on this Continent to have all the formal education they can absorb, plus every conceivable opportunity to develop themselves physically, artistically, and mentally, to their utmost capacity. Furthermore, when the Technate is achieved, every citizen will have full opportunity to make use of, and enjoy, the education they have acquired, since they will not be obliged continually to keep their `noses to the grindstone' just in order to live.

In the Technate, schooling will not be a matter of merely sitting in classrooms and acquiring knowledge, second-hand, from textbooks. Students will be introduced to fine arts and music, and their talents encouraged along this line. They will have sports training, if this is their inclination. It will be a vital, living process of learning through seeing and experiencing, as well as reading about the facts of life.

In their own local areas, they will become acquainted, not only with the geography, but also with the various fundamental processes of production and distribution of the products they use in their everyday living.

As they grow older, they will go further afield, until, by the time they are old enough to choose their line of work, they will have first-hand knowledge of all the various elements entering into the production and distribution of goods and services throughout the entire Continent. From then on, their training will be specialized to fit them for their chosen fields, and when they have reached the age of twenty-five, they will be prepared to step into the function for which they are trained. If they still want further education it will be available, and there will be plenty of time for it, and there will be an opportunity to live `the good life' which such conditions will, for the first time, make available to the entire population.

A GLIMPSE INTO THE FUTURE: MOOCS

•Massive online open courses” (MOOCs) provide many students with free access to course materials, but are no substitute for the invaluable personal mentoring from human instructors. “Professors from elite schools, including Stanford, Harvard ..., have **registered more than 2 million students from all around the world in so-called Massive Open Online Courses (“MOOCs”)** ... delivered by new entities such as Coursera, edX, Udacity, and Udemy.” However, “in MIT’s first online course, for example, fewer than half of the 154,000 students who registered even looked at the first problem set and **less than 4% passed the final exam.**” (*Quartz*, November 3, 2012; see also *MIT* 2012) Free materials: *Khan Academy* and *Saylor*.

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