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Who Rules? Solidarity America By John Funciello BC Columnist

For a while there in California, it looked as if the people were headed for a period of democratic rule, but that was early in the game of see-if-we-can-label-genetically-modified-foods, as the majority of people told pollsters they had wanted.

But that was before the corporate rulers flexed their muscles and poured on the propaganda through advertising and public relations. Proposition 37, which called for the labeling of genetically modified foods and ingredients in the marketplace, went down to defeat on Election Day, but only after an amazing amount of money was spent by the opponents of labeling, a who's who of corporations which have cornered the markets in so many things that Americans buy every day.

It appeared that Corporate America had plans for the campaign, but they took their time. At first, it appeared that the proponents of labeling were going to have a relatively easy time of winning the day. After all, the polls were with them and they had raised enough money to get the word out on the meaning of labeling and the rationale for it. The people seemed to understand the issue.

Then, the corporations likely had their meetings to plan the assault on the proposition and the sponsors and supporters of the labeling law, and they literally dropped the hammer on them. A \$46 million pot of advertising money magically appeared, dwarfing the mere \$8 million that was raised by supporters of labeling, and the result is old news.

That kind of disparity in expenditure is hard to overcome. Although the labeling proposition was defeated, it wasn't by a wide margin, so the truth did hold somewhat, even in the face of an all-out assault on it by the corporations, many of which even masquerade as some of the "good guys." A few of the companies which provided some of the biggest chunks of money even sell organic foods (at the other end of their corporate structure, no doubt). At least *someone* in those outfits must have felt just a little bit conflicted about the whole propaganda thing, since the organic standard does not allow genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

But, it was the decision of the corporations that the people do not need to know that they are eating foods that contain GM ingredients or that the foods themselves are genetically manipulated. And they set out to convince just enough of the supporters of the labeling law that it will be bad for them. One of the ways, the corporations warned, is that the food will cost more if food companies are forced to label GMOs. Their scare tactics worked, as they have done with other laws, such as our infamous "anti-terror" laws.

The corporate mantra has been that "no one has proven GMOs to be harmful to the people who eat GMO food products." Likewise for those who eat beef, pork, chicken and other poultry that have been fed GMO animal feeds. There are enough studies about the negative and toxic effects of GMOs on humans and animals to scare the daylights out of anyone.

But those studies never really reach the mainstream media. Rather, the position of Corporate America on GMOs is like their position on the harmful effects of tobacco (they held that one at bay for decades, saying there was no proof that tobacco caused harm).

The same is true on the issue of the method of drilling for oil and gas called "hydrofracturing," or fracking. This method takes pure drinking water and turns it into a toxic cocktail that may never be able to be used for drinking again. Each well takes good water and pumps under high pressure millions of gallons of it, along with sand and chemicals, deep underground to crack the rock and release the gas or oil. We are assured that the method is safe and that they will be very careful. Their television commercials tell us so.

Again, we are constantly being reassured by governors and the president that no fracking will take place that is not completely safe. The president has said that he will make sure the fracking companies

tell us what chemicals they are injecting into the ground, where they are allowed to drill on public land. The people whose farms and land have already been fracked tell a different story. It's a story about water being trucked in for drinking and household use and it's a story of sickness among family members who were not sick before the fracking. And, it is a story of community life disrupted and of the countryside being cut up into rights of way for pipelines and all the dust and dirty air raised by thousands of trucks and other fracking vehicles. It's a story that says there is virtually no way to frack safely and protect our water supply.

The amount of money spent in the recent presidential election (\$2 billion-plus) shows that the electorate cannot be bought outright, but the results on the issues show that money does make a difference in maintaining many aspects of the status quo, no matter the party in power.

In an economy as large as California's, where huge agribusiness corporations have held sway for generations, it was very difficult to get Prop 37 passed, especially after the flood of corporate money was released. The people will try again there, but they are quickly moving on to the next GMO battle, a year from now in Washington State, where the same question will be on the ballot. This time, though, there is a coalition of farmers and eaters already in place who want to see labeling, so it will be a fierce fight.

On this and many other issues, the people are waking up to their power at the ballot box. People's power only starts at the ballot box. The struggle is against a vast array of powers that are aligned against them. The question of who rules the nation is up in the air. Is it corporations and their politicians at all levels of government? Or is it the people? Bet on an informed and educated people.

BlackCommentator.com Columnist, John Funciello, is a long-time former newspaper reporter and labor organizer, who lives in the Mohawk Valley of New York State. In addition to labor work, he is organizing family farmers as they struggle to stay on the land under enormous pressure from factory food producers and land developers. Click [here](#) to contact Mr. Funciello.