Edward O. Wilson is an American sociobiologist, researcher, theorist, naturalist, environmental advocate and author whose biological speciality is myrmecology, or the study of ants, on which he is considered to be the world’s leading authority. He is a two time winner of the Pulitzer Prize for General Non-Fiction.

Wilson was led to argue for a sociobiological explanation for all social behavior on the model of the behavior of ants, wasps and other social insects. His claim is that the most successful species on earth are the ones with the greatest degree of social cooperation, such as ants. Wilson once said that Karl Marx was right. Socialism works; it’s just that Marx had the wrong species.

Despite his special interest in entomology, Wilson is a great generalist who is able to combine evidence from the sciences and the humanities to give us a new look at human nature and an understanding of its consequences, both for us and the rest of life on this planet. He believes that, having evolved by both individual selection and group selection, we are torn between selfishness and altruism. These two driving forces make us what we are, for better or for worse. Defined by these opposites, we struggle for a balance between our creativity and our destructivity.

We are simply biological creatures caught in a perpetual conflict between our selfish and altruistic desires, what Wilson refers to as the "human condition." Synthesizing the latest research in anthropology, evolutionary biology and evolutionary psychology, among others, Wilson poses and then attempts to answer for himself, his own questions. His answers are controversial and are unlikely to go without kicking up the normal academic dust storm.

His story, which he admits has many speculative parts, is essentially this: There is (see page two)
only one creative story of mankind. It is the one that science is telling us today. This new story of science that is rapidly gaining consensus among academicians is that it is man’s sociality (like that of ants) that constitutes the critical event in his evolutionary development. It was what Wilson calls eusociality that made it possible for man to navigate the evolutionary maze and survive to become one of the co-inheritors of the earth. Of course there are many people who cannot accept this theory. Imagine how people who will not accept the evolutionary connection between apes and man/woman might feel if they are asked to accept this connection between ants and ourselves. And then there are those who say it is unfair to compare human beings to ants because ants are so much more interesting and superior to human beings. Go figure!

So where am I going with this? What is the UPM connection? Over its 30+ years of existence, UPM has been quite a successful organization, while going through our own evolutionary maze. Nevertheless, during the negotiations for our last contract the District’s chief negotiator was quick to point out what a strong contract we had and the District made no bones about trying to weaken it. In fact, many of us felt that they were trying to bust the union. So far, our experience in reopeners seems to be following a similar pattern, even though the general consensus is that our current college president is doing his best to unite us.

Many of us looked at our previous college president and blamed her for dividing us. She seemed to play one group against the other. This was a great strategy for union busting and the District took advantage of the knowledge that we were divided. However, this strategy was terrible for morale and, as a result, not good for the college and our students. We all do a better job when we feel positively about our work environment, our colleagues and our sense of security as it applies to the health and well-being of our families and ourselves.

What I am hoping for as we, UPM, navigate our own evolutionary maze, is that we can all come together to work as a united community for the greater common good.

So, as a wise old sage has said many times before, stay in touch, stay informed, and stay involved.

“The labor movement was the principal force that transformed misery and despair into hope and progress. Out of its bold struggles, economic and social reform gave birth to unemployment insurance, old-age pensions, government relief for the destitute and, above all, new wage levels that meant not mere survival but a tolerable life.”

Martin Luther King Jr.
EDITORS NOTE

In this month’s Union Newsletter, along with our usual sections, we are introducing several new features.

On page two you will see a funny looking bar code - one that is appearing in many publications. It's called a QR Code, and if you scan it with your Smartphone, it will immediately download a copy of this Newsletter to your Android or iPhone. We intend to use it in the future to help you access important information that arrives too late for publication or that we want to spotlight. It’s an example of our Newsletter becoming more “HI TECH.”

Also, on our “Good of the Order” page, we’ve introduced a crossword puzzle, largely relating to College of Marin issues (solution below). And there is also a satirical piece about the danger of using acronyms. (If you’re offended by four-letter words, please pass it by).

Interspersed throughout this issue we’ve introduced some pro-labor quotes and comments from respected public figures and some classic union logos from former days. If you have suggestions for additional features, or comments about what we’ve done, or letters on COM issues that you would like published, please send your submissions to: arthur@unitedprofessorsofmarin.org.

Crossword Solution

"Although only 13% of American workers are in unions, that 13% sets the standard across the board in salaries, benefits and working conditions. If you are making a decent salary in a non-union job, you owe that to the unions.”

Molly Ivins

UPM Newsletter 3 August 2012
EDITORIAL

In a recent example of ‘life imitating art’, a legally blind South Korean archer set a world record at the London Olympics. The “art” that archer Im Dong-hyun was imitating might very well have come from a book written in 1948 by Eugen Herrigel, titled Zen in the Art of Archery.

Herrigel was a German philosophy professor who taught in Japan and studied Kyudo (the art of the Japanese bow) and discovered that the archer need not actually see the target in order to hit the bull’s-eye. In Zen practice, extraneous detail and irrelevant minutiae are not aids to success, but rather are hindrances. What the student needs to do is concentrate on the essence of the task – becoming “one” with the target. When this is achieved, according to Herrigel, visual acuity becomes irrelevant and hitting the target becomes unproblematic.

Whether Mr. Im ever read Professor Herrigel’s book or if he engages in Zen practice to achieve his mastery of the bow, is not known, but many people around the world do use these techniques to help them achieve success.

So I’m thinking that maybe our Board of Trustees could use a little help from Professor Herrigel. Here we have a group of lawyers, accountants, business executives and community leaders who are so concerned with “irrelevant minutiae and inessential details” like LEED certification and geothermal heat-exchange systems, that their arrows are missing the target.

Next time our trustees go on one of their retreats, maybe it would be helpful if they spent less time debating the value of green roofs and spent their time meditating on the “essence” of education.
CONNECTING THE DOTS
News and Opinion
by Arthur Lutz

SOLVING PUZZLES

Prior to the advent of the computer-game joystick and before texting became a method of communicating (especially with younger people); and before the use of electronic calculators, kids used pencils. In children’s magazines like Ranger Rick or Kids there were ‘activity pages’ where only pencils were needed to solve the puzzles. There were cryptograms which revealed secret messages, and there were puzzles where one drew lines between numbered dots until a hidden image was revealed. For children, the ‘connecting the dots’ puzzles were like a Conan Doyle novel, where by adding clue upon clue (dot after dot) the perpetrator was unmasked and the mystery solved. Or perhaps like an investigative journalist who uncovers a conspiracy by establishing linkages between events.

Based on these old dot puzzles, the phrase “Connecting the Dots” became a metaphor for the ability to associate seemingly unconnected ideas in order to reveal a picture that was not previously evident.

I’d like to go back to those old Ranger Rick days and try to connect some dots to solve a puzzle that I find perplexing; namely, why the WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES (WASC), despite its claim that they support public education, seems to be pursuing policies that are inimical to community college education and public education in general.

Specifically, I’d like to know why WASC decided to issue a “show cause” order to a community college (San Francisco City College CCSF), forcing them to plan for shut-down, lose accreditation and lose government funding for needy students – an action that would disenfranchise 90,000 students – an action that did not seem in keeping with a claim of robust commitment to community colleges or public education.

What perplexed me was the timing of this “show cause” order, because it was issued immediately after the Board of Trustees of CCSF, along with the City College Faculty Association and the City College Academic Senate all rejected a draft report issued by the CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENT SUCCESS TASK FORCE, which redefined “success” to mean something entirely different from the mission that CCSF and all California community colleges currently endorse. The TASK FORCE’S recommendations would shift financial support to academically successful students at the expense of those in need - rationing education by taking it away from the poor, people of color, immigrants, older adults, parents and working class citizens.

So, I wondered whether there was some linkage (connexion?) between WASC and the STUDENT SUCCESS TASK FORCE that might account for WASC issuing their order to CCSF. And, I discovered that indeed there appears to be a linkage. Both WASC and the TASK FORCE are funded by the LUMINA FOUNDATION, a billion dollar private education funder who also funds and supports the AMERICAN LEGISLATIVE EXCHANGE COUNCIL (ALEC) the secretive pro-corporate anti-union, anti public-education advocacy organization. WASC received $1.5 million from LUMINA. LUMINA is a financial sponsor of ALEC. LUMINA and ALEC have correspondent “free-market” ideologies. Nine of the twelve board members of LUMINA were associated with the private student loan industry, (an industry that is no friend of government student loans or public education). Given these linkages between WASC, LUMINA, the TASK FORCE and ALEC, are the dots coalescing into a clearer picture? If so, then next time WASC comes around and tries to hassle us with demands that will impact our programs, maybe we ought to get out our pencils and start connecting some dots.
As we reported in the July *Union Press*, UPM has begun meeting with the District to negotiate “reopeners.” Please see the July newsletter for more details. Essentially, the District team has proposed take backs and has offered no solutions or incentives. It wants to increase Department Chair workload, take away health benefits from dependents of part-timers and increase counselors’ work week—all for no further compensation.

UPM has proposed just the opposite: Give retirement incentives to those considering retirement, increase EVERYONE’S salary, increase District contribution to the CRA Trust and raise Department Chair compensation.

Clear enough—these are opening positions, and there’s always room for give and take. We would hope, at least. That’s how bargaining goes, isn’t it?

The District, however, does not appear to be very interested in “give and take.” The Bargaining teams have already met twice and the District has yet to produce a full proposal. The District told us that it wants to make changes to Article 7 (Evaluations) and include Department Chairs in the evaluations of part-timers, but it has yet to give us a detailed offer in writing. Nor has the District responded to our proposal for retirement incentive for eligible unit members, a proposal that will in all likelihood save it money.

At the latest bargaining meeting, VP Al Harrison laughed at us when we talked about raises and pointed out that the Marin County’s Assessor’s Office recently announced that with a near billion dollar increase this year, the County’s assessed valuation has hit a record high. “This is the highest assessment role we’ve ever had in Marin County,” Assessor Rich Benson announced” (*Marin IJ* 7/5/12). Wouldn’t that mean an increase also for College of Marin, a Basic Aid district? Not according to Mr. Harrison, and never mind that in his recent Budget presentation, $1.7 Million is listed as going to contract services (i.e., consultants). As VP Harrison will have us understand, we’re broke. One can’t help but call to mind the recent disclosure that the State Parks system “found” over $50 million dollars it “didn’t know it had,” all the while planning to close State Parks.

On 8/8/12, President Coon requested that we postpone our third scheduled meeting due to the absence of former HR Director Linda Beam and the need to bring her replacement up to bargaining speed. We can only hope that we will have more success with the next HR director.

Time will tell, but the District’s lackadaisical “Take All, Give Nothing” approach to reopeners contrasts sharply with its previously stated wish to conclude reopeners quickly and agreeably. It also gives the impression that the District has no real intention to bargain in good faith or to reward is faculty.
Happiness has become a popular topic. In April of this year, the United Nations convened the first International Conference on Happiness and Well-Being. The UN also sponsored the publication of the first World Happiness Report, whose conclusions were that incomes were correlated somewhat with happiness in the world as a whole, but that this correlation was weak to non-existent in much of the “richer” world. In other words, money can help (especially if you are starving or desperately need health care), but it cannot be equated with happiness.

What else makes people happy? Studies have shown that people who feel that they have choices and some ability to affect their future tend to be happier than those who feel powerless to affect their destiny.

Theoretically, a democratic society gives all people a voice in choosing their future. However, we know that this ideal is not often realized. Here at COM, instead of ushering in an era of peace and contentment, the new millennium has brought much unease and frustration. Rather than feeling free to choose our futures, many of us have felt that we were trapped in bad situations.

However, we have a special power to influence our future, because at COM we have the ability to help elect our bosses. Our bosses are the College of Marin Board of Trustees, and they are chosen every two years by the voters of Marin County.

We can have a big impact on these Board elections. We can help recruit worthy candidates to run for the Board and we can contribute money to help with their campaigns. The UPM Political Action Committee (UPMPAC) is the entity that receives these funds to help support our preferred candidates. Given the current sad state of elections in our society, money has a big influence on who gets elected; however, in these local elections, “small money” is still effective. The current calculation is that if every UPM member donates ten dollars a month to UPMPAC, we will be in position to select our next bosses at COM and choose the future we want. So if you have not turned in your payroll deduction form (below), please do so today. You will be happier if you do!
“FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER”
A SAMPLING OF MYTH, MIRTH AND MISCELLANY FOR THE UNION FAITHFUL

At a community college not unlike our own, faculty received the following memo from their president (acronyms included):

In order to assure the highest level of teaching and productivity from faculty, it will be our policy to require all instructors to go through a new program called SPECIAL HIGH INTENSITY TEACHING (SHIT). We are trying to make sure that our faculty will receive more SHIT than at any other college.

After completing this course, if you feel you did not receive enough SHIT, please notify your Dean and he/she will immediately place you at the top of the SHIT list and will see to it that you get all the SHIT you can handle.

Instructors who do not enroll in this offering will be placed in DEPARTMENTAL EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION PROGRAMS (DEEP SHIT).

Since all our Deans knew SHIT before they were hired and are already full of SHIT they are uniquely qualified to administer this program.

After completing this course, you also should be full of SHIT and qualified to teach others. If you are interested in teaching we can add your name to the BASIC UNDERSTANDING LECTURE LIST (BULL SHIT).

If you have any questions, please contact Vice-President R.M. Simmons, HEAD OF TEACHING, SPECIAL HIGH INTENSITY TRAINING (HOT SHIT).

“With all their faults, trade unions have done more for humanity than any other organization that ever existed. They have done more for decency, for honesty, for education, for the betterment of the race, for the developing of character in men and women than any other association.”

Clarence Darrow

“GOOD OF THE ORDER” CROSSWORD

ACROSS
4 DISAPPEARING EATERY
5 COM’s POETIC KAY
8 COM LEGACY BUILDING
10 WORKER HOLIDAY
11 IWW LABOR HERO
14 COM KIDDY CLASS
16 1950’S BADGUY
17 CAMPUS MISHMASH
19 COM DECIDER

DOWN
1 COM BUDGET MAVEN
2 MIDDLETON FLIMFLAM
3 FACULTY FRIEND
6 VALLEY GIRL
7 GOLD STANDARD?
8 SOLIDARITY
9 NAC PRECURSOR
12 OBSOLETE BEAMER?
13 COM MOUNTAIN MAN
15 BENO’S MEANOS
18 1610

(Solution on page 3)
“MORE GOOD”

PUTTING THE “LABOR” BACK IN LABOR DAY

I n 1894 President Grover Cleveland designated the first Monday in September as “Labor Day” and declared it to be a federal holiday. This year Labor Day falls on Monday, September 3rd.

The day was designated in an attempt to defuse worker anger and union militancy after President Cleveland intervened in a Pullman Strike led by Eugene V. Debs, resulting in the imprisonment of union organizers on rigged charges and the firing on, and killing of striking workers and bystanders by 12,000 federal troops.

So Labor Day has its origin in union struggles for decent wages and working conditions. It is a day that should be celebrated to honor labor and the economic and social contributions of workers.

Today however, the holiday is hardly regarded as a day to honor workers. It has come to be celebrated by most Americans as the symbolic end of summer – a day of rest and picnics. In “high society” Labor Day is celebrated as the last day of the year when it is fashionable to wear white or seersucker. Speeches or political demonstrations honoring labor or the origins of the holiday are low key or non-existent, the exception being in an election year when political candidates make their obligatory “friend of labor” speech (before they proceed to vote to outsource American jobs).

Given the severity of today’s economic problems, many working people will be suffering this Labor Day. So let’s not forget them and the origin and significance of the day. Perhaps a little more union consciousness might be appropriate as the more fortunate among us enjoy this Labor Day holiday.

A.L
“Every advance in this half-century: Social Security, civil rights, Medicare, aid to education… one after another – came with the support and leadership of American Labor.”

Jimmy Carter

“JOIN THE UNION GIRLS, AND TOGETHER SAY EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK”

Susan B. Anthony