

# The Diggers' Post

OR

A Declaration of the Ordinary People of Massachusetts.

FEATURING

Dig a Tunnel from Boston to Baghdad.

On July 10, 2006, 38-year-old Milena Del Valle's life ended. Four sections of tunnel ceiling tile, each weighing three tons, fell on her car, crushing her instantly. A substandard epoxy glue gave way. In 1998, the State Inspector General warned that this glue and the bolts used in the project would not hold the weight. The construction firm ignored the report.

Milena Del Valle's death occurred just a few months after the Big Dig had been completed. The price tag for the project is \$14.6 billion (in 1985, the government estimated that it would cost \$2.5 billion). The highway cost \$1.8 billion per mile, making it the planet's most expensive highway.

Delays and cost overruns characterized the entire project. Some of the problems would be comical if the consequences weren't so tragic. The firm that designed the project forgot about the Fleet Center (the four acre stadium, home to the Celtics). They caught the error in 1997. To compensate for this omission, the price tag for the project immediately rose by \$1.1 billion.

That firm is Bechtel, the massive private global corporation based in San Francisco, CA. In 2004, Bechtel claimed \$18 billion in revenue, a piece of it from government-based contracts. Bechtel is on a Pentagon welfare program. In 2005 it won \$1.48 billion in Pentagon contracts, many of them unfulfilled.

Bechtel's Pentagon contracts include its boondoggle in Iraq. Just as the troops rolled down the Basra-Baghdad highway in April 2003, Bechtel won its first contract. Since then, the jobs came steadily. In early 2006, matters began to unravel when government inspectors found a pattern of incompetence and fraud. In July, the U. S. government's Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR) reported that Bechtel failed in its commitments to build a children's hospital in Basra. The firm misreported its progress and over-billed the U. S. government by \$90 million. As a result of this finding, the investigators wrote, "SIGIR plans to conduct a review of USAID's overall Bechtel contract." In October, SIGIR's report on reconstruction shows that Bechtel took its money but gave nothing in return. Bechtel claims that it rebuilt "war damaged bridges on key highways," but the report notes, "No bridge or expressway projects have been completed." Bechtel claims that it could not do its work because of "security concerns," but both the Iraqi government and the SIGIR refutes this excuse.

SIGIR's heat led Bechtel to pull-out of Iraq in Nov. 2006, after bilking the U. S. taxpayers' money and the Iraqi people's services, and generating a \$2.4 billion for Bechtel's coffers.

Massachusetts needs a Special Inspector General (SIG) to go after Bechtel in Boston. On May 8, gubernatorial candidate Deval Patrick pledged to create a SIG with broad authority and powers. The Big Dig SIG would not just have oversight over the project, he promised, but would also investigate it. Patrick pledged to give the SIG "power to uncover and document Big Dig cost overruns, shoddy work and failure to perform, and vigorously pursue cost recovery efforts for the same." But more, the campaign promised to give the SIG "statutory authority to bring civil claims and criminal actions as warranted against companies and persons that have harmed Massachusetts taxpayers with fraudulent claims, shoddy work, and/or failure to perform."

THE SIG, WHEN CONSTITUTED, NEEDS TO PUT BECHTEL IN THE DOCK RIGHT OFF THE BAT.

WE, THE PEOPLE OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS, gave Patrick a strong mandate.  
84% of Amherst voters supported him, and gave him his best town result in the state.

NOW IT IS TIME TO ASK DEVAL PATRICK TO HONOR HIS COMMITMENT:  
we need a Special Inspector General as quickly as possible to begin a  
comprehensive investigation of Bechtel's role in the Big Dig.

AND WE, THE DIGGERS' POST,  
will continue to follow the dots between its thefts in Boston and its thefts in Iraq.

Be a digger, get to work: contact the Deval Patrick transition team at 56 Roland Street, Suite 100D, Boston 02129. 617-367-2006. email to: [info@patrickmurraytransition.org](mailto:info@patrickmurraytransition.org)

THE FIRST ISSUE OF THE DIGGERS' POST WILL APPEAR IN MARCH.

KEEP YOUR EYES PEELED.

The Diggers' Post is a movement periodical that offers an analysis of contemporary events, spotlights strategies and considers how we work to remain active against injustice. It is a quarterly publication published in Western Massachusetts.

The Diggers' Post is named for the Diggers of the County of Northamptonshire, England, who rose up in the 17th Century to retain their rights to "dig up manure and sow Corn upon the Common," who wanted, in essence, to live commonly, with dignity and justice. Between 1966-68, a group of actors in San Francisco revived the Diggers. Their Free Bread and Free Stores taught their world what it meant to live free of the dominion of money. There was once a Digger group in Florence, MA. We are the Newest Diggers, and this is our broadsheet. Post it up, read it, tell the world about it.

THE COLLECTIVE OF THE DIGGERS' POST INCLUDES

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We used to publish the Valley War Bulletin (2003-2006), may it continue to create nightmares for the powerful.



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