

Noted.

TARGETING WIKILEAKS: Instead of responding to the revelations contained in the US diplomatic cables made public recently by **WikiLeaks**, at least one member of Congress wants to shoot the messenger—perhaps literally. New York Congressman **Peter King**, an influential Republican who is in line to chair the Homeland Security Committee in the House, demanded that the WikiLeaks website be declared a “terrorist organization” so that the government can “go after anyone who provides them with any help or contributions or assistance whatsoever.” Senator **Joseph Lieberman** called on the United States to do “everything we can to take down their website.” Top Democrats weren’t much more cautious. Secretary of State **Hillary Clinton** called the leaks an “attack” that “threatens our national security.”

There appear to be few defenders of the American principle that the people have not just a right but a need to know what is being done in their name and with their tax dollars. Thankfully, a courageous few are defending whistleblowers and WikiLeaks. It’s not a blind defense—even supporters of transparency may quibble with some steps taken by the WikiLeaks crew. But Pentagon Papers whistleblower **Daniel Ellsberg** notes that the leaks are more embarrassing than threatening and argues that those involved have performed a public service so that “the American people can begin to get some grip on our incoherent policy and enforce a more humane and productive thrust to it.” This response recalls the values celebrated by President **John F. Kennedy** when he declared fifty years ago, “The very word ‘secrecy’ is repugnant in a free and open society.” JOHN NICHOLS

HAITI ELECTION SURPRISE: All around Port-au-Prince, on the November 28 presidential election day and afterward, an amazing number of Haitians grinned at one another hopefully and repeated simply, “*Tèt Kale*.” The Kreyol words mean “peeled head.” The expression is the campaign slogan of 49-year-old **Michel Martelly**, whose shaven pate was on purple election posters everywhere and whose last-minute surge shocked the government and its handpicked candi-

date. The results won’t be officially released until at least December 7, but as we go to press, early reports suggest that Martelly has enough support to head into a runoff with former First Lady **Mirlande Manigat**, while President **René Préal**’s anointed successor, **Jude Celestin**, trails.

Martelly, or “Sweet Micky,” has long been one of Haiti’s most popular musicians, but until recently no one would have given him a chance in politics. His swift rise is another sign that nearly one year after a killer earthquake, Haitians are fed up with their government’s inept, corrupt response and also with the agonizing, unconscionable delays in promised international aid. Martelly’s views are vaguely populist, and he appeals to voters disgusted with traditional politicians.

About 1.5 million Haitians still live in tents, and a cholera epidemic is slicing through their country. If Préal’s unpopular government tries to block Martelly from advancing to the January 16 runoff vote, Haitians, who have shown Job-like patience until now, will certainly take to the streets.

JAMES NORTH

THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT: Of all the cuts and privatizing measures announced by the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition, the radical restructuring of Britain’s higher education system has hit the deepest nerve. Students, schoolchildren, parents and lecturers have joined to oppose cuts to university funding and a tripling of tuition fees, which will apply market principles to teaching and scholarship and keep students from poorer families from going to university. The three days of action held so far have brought thousands onto the streets, and occupations have been organized on more than thirty campuses. Young teenagers, who will be worst hit by the cuts, have walked out of school in droves. In London many were penned in by police and held for hours in freezing temperatures in late November.

The protests are especially embarrassing for **Nick Clegg**’s Liberal Democrats, whose support for civil liberties and pledge to vote against any increase in tuition fees won them many student votes in May’s election. The party is bitterly divided on the issue; 104 former Lib Dem parliamentary candidates have signed a petition asking Clegg to stand

by his promises. If the Lib Dems abstain or vote against the measures, we could see the first serious split in the coalition.

MARIA MARGARONIS

REVIVING THE ‘DEATH TAX’: For ten years, a passel of ultrawealthy families have been trying to wangle a multitrillion-dollar tax break by repealing the federal estate tax, *aka* “the death tax.” While opponents of the tax have repeatedly put forward small business owners and farmers as their poster children, according to the Responsible Wealth project of **United for a Fair Economy** (which I direct), only about a quarter of 1 percent of estates will owe any tax, and each year only about a dozen estates with significant business or farm assets have trouble finding liquid assets to pay the tax.

Because of a quirk in the law, the estate tax was eliminated for 2010, but now Congress is debating what to do about it. A proposal by Senators Jon Kyl and Blanche Lincoln would set the exemption at \$5 million and lower the rate to 35 percent, costing the government \$130 billion more over ten years than 2009’s estate tax rate. The Sanders-Harkin-White House proposal would return the exemption to \$3.5 million and the base rate to 45 percent, which would raise \$61 billion more over ten years than with the 2009 rate. Repeal of the estate tax would cost \$698 billion, about the same as extending the Bush tax cuts for the top 2 percent. MIKE LAPHAM

WFP FOR THE WIN: The **Working Families Party** has for a decade been a key player in New York State politics, where this fall it attracted roughly 140,000 votes and provided the margin of victory for progressive Democrat **Tom DiNapoli** in the race for comptroller. But the labor-allied party, which is expanding into other states that allow fusion voting, proved to be an even more significant player in Connecticut. There, Democratic gubernatorial candidate **Dan Malloy**’s narrow victory was secured with WFP votes. Malloy beat Republican **Tom Foley** by 6,399 votes out of more than 1.1 million cast. Twenty thousand more votes were cast on the Republican ballot line for governor than on the Democratic line. But the 26,308 WFP votes put Malloy over the top. JOHN NICHOLS

Copyright of Nation is the property of Nation Company, L. P. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.