

Commonwealth Forum Transcript

Looking Forward: Leading Commentators on the Future of Massachusetts

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SUMMARY The following is a summary of the main points of the forum. It is not an exact transcript and should not be relied upon. This summary was prepared by State House News Service and is reprinted here with their kind permission.

Who's running for governor in 2006? Is Tom Menino tired of being mayor of Boston? Is the Republican Party in danger of implosion, or mere extinction? Does the public really care about Clean Elections? Why won't people run for political office? Is Boston losing its corporate identity, thereby coming to resemble Toledo?

As part of MassINC's latest Commonwealth Forum, five local media commentators peered into their crystal balls Tuesday and tried to answer those questions, among others concerning the Bay State's near future.

The panelists included WBZ radio talk show host **David Brudnoy**; *Boston Globe* columnist **Joan Vennoch**; *Boston Herald* deputy managing editor for politics **Joe Sciacca**; *Boston Phoenix* media reporter **Dan Kennedy**; and WCVB's *Five on Five* commentator **Hubie Jones**.

The following is an accurate summary of remarks, not a verbatim transcript:

MATT MALONE: My name is Matt Malone. I'm the co-publisher of *CommonWealth* magazine and deputy director of MassINC. I'd like to welcome you to the Omni Parker House for the latest in an ongoing series of discussions based on the award-winning reporting in *CommonWealth* magazine. We're gathered here at the scene of many a political event in Massachusetts. Tonight is actually something more than just another installment in this popular series. It is also the 5th anniversary of *CommonWealth* magazine (applause). Thank you.

We are going to mark that occasion by doing something substantive as we usually do, then adjourning downstairs to celebrate and socialize or hobnob and network. We are extremely fortunate to be here in this historic hotel, through whose generosity we continue to return here each quarter. The Omni Parker House, as a sponsor of MassINC and these forums, has been absolutely extraordinary. It's a wonderful and important corporate citizen and it has been very generous to MassINC in hosting these forums. They have been a partner in this. The Commonwealth forums are sponsored jointly by MassINC and the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities. On the 5th anniversary of *CommonWealth*, I had a conversation with the executive director of the foundation and said David, what are we going to base the forum on, since this last issue was shorter? There wasn't a lot of investigative or in-depth reporting, and it was a little lighter.

We decided we would invite five leading commentators in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, who appear before our audience to talk about the future, primarily in four

areas – the economy and business, politics, culture and the family, and media and technology. We are extremely fortunate to have a very distinguished group. Represented is one of the leading radio stations in the metro area and New England, a leading television station, and three of our most major newspapers. We're going to proceed as we normally do, and Bob Keough is going to be moderating. There will be a question and answer period, but toward the end of the program, Tripp Jones, co-publisher of *CommonWealth* magazine, is going to come up for a couple of minutes and make some remarks about our 5th anniversary. On my far left, your far right, is David Brudnoy, who is a WBZ radio talk host. To his right, is Joe Sciacca, the deputy managing editor for politics at the Boston Herald. Dan Kennedy is the media reporter for the Boston Phoenix. Joan Vennoch is a columnist for the Boston Globe, and Hubie Jones is a commentator for the popular WCVB TV program "Five on Five." Robert Keough is our esteemed editor.

ROBERT KEOUGH: Thank you Matt and thanks to my guests and to all of you for being here. This is a pretty impressive crowd for this event. I'm sure they're anxious to hear your prognostications. We hold these forums once a quarter. We usually explore a topic that's related to the previous issue of *CommonWealth* magazine, but usually tangentially so. This time we shamelessly commandeered the forum for a celebration of our own survival and flourishing. Our 5th anniversary issue was little bit of a departure from our usual fare of feature stories, instead we tried to have some fun with lists of five – five people to watch, five moments of truth. But the real point of that was to take advantage of what people who follow politics, business and civic issues closely already know, so we could look back and draw conclusions and look ahead and speculate about the future. But only one list was about the future – five people to watch, one of whom is sitting right next to me. We realized we really hadn't gotten the speculation part out of our system and we wanted a little more of a fix by inviting the best of Boston.

So welcome to Commonwealth's water cooler. As moderator, my goal is to keep our conversation organized one notch above stream of consciousness. But just one notch. I'll pose questions, but that shouldn't stop anybody from chiming in. Digressions are welcome. Rather than holding all questions, I'm going to encourage the audience to join in. Rank speculation is still a game that's open to amateurs. When the panel exhausts themselves, we're going to retire to *CommonWealth's* 5th anniversary reception where over drinks and hors d'oeuvres, we can continue our rantings. That will take place elsewhere in the Parker House. To find out where, you're going to have to wait until the end. So let's warm up our crystal balls. We should get started with a topic everyone is qualified to speculate on. That's politics. In Massachusetts five years from now, 2006, somebody's going to be running for reelection. Who's that going to be? Joe Sciacca, who's that going to be?

JOE SCIACCA: I think it'll be somebody who's been involved in politics for some time, which is a little sad. If you look at candidates today, they're people who've been around the State House culture for some time. I keep hoping some young, vibrant, creative business type will surface from the ivory tower downtown. That hasn't really happened. As a reporter, we have to reflect on why we made the climate so hostile for people to get involved and be willing to submit to the scrutiny. We see this happening to the 9th congressional race right now. Max Kennedy took a lot of scrutiny and got out, and now the spotlight has shifted to Steve Lynch. While scrutiny is important, people don't really have the fire in the belly anymore. There's a sense of indigestion. Politicians don't want

to get involved in a race unless there's surety. They listen to pollsters and try to limit their exposure. I don't know where we'll be in five years, but I hope we can involve people with new ideas.

JOAN VENNOCHI: It's so nice to hear somebody from the Herald be so sensitive. I think in five years, a woman will be running for reelection as governor. It will either be Jane Swift or Shannon O'Brien. I'll just throw that out.

DAN KENNEDY: I'd like to predict that Jane Swift is likely to be a strong candidate in her own right next year, but should she fall short and a Democrat become governor, what's left of the Republican Party may very well implode and you may see some merger of the more liberal elements of the Libertarian Party and the more conservative elements of the Democratic Party. Except for the governor's office, it's remarkable how ineffective the Republican Party has become. We need a two-party system in this state.

DAVID BRUDNOY: We have two parties and I hope the Republicans will join us. The Libertarians are the penguin party because we're flightless waterfowl. If Carla Howell runs for governor, Jane Swift is toast. She may not pull 12 or 15 percent like she did against Ted Kennedy, but it'll be just enough to do her in. The Republican Party hovers between people who cling to the endless bigotry, and the fact that the bulk of the Republican Party is fairly progressive. What is it that singles out the Republican Party as different these days? We Libertarians stand for something and the Democrats do as well. I'm with Dan – I would say unless the Republican Party can hold on to something important, it's going to become the dodo, not the penguin. It's a sad thing, it really is. I'm old enough to remember when we had congressmen Volpe and Ed Brooke. Now the Republicans are evanescing. It's very sad.

SCIACCA: Bill Weld was a Libertarian, was he not?

BRUDNOY: He was also the one who grew the budget by 100 percent.

HUBIE JONES: Since I'm known for going out on a limb, I'll say Jane Swift will not run for reelection for governor, the Republican Party will not let her. They know she's a sure loser, and I think they will use the ruse of her family responsibilities to withdraw her and turn it over to somebody else.

KEOUGH: How are they going to accomplish that, since she is a sitting governor, and who?

SCIACCA: I think she's going to run. We see her talking about issues, but she's going to have to return from this maternity leave at some point and face the scrutiny of a hungry Democratic Party. Shannon O'Brien has already taken some shots. She's going to have to defend her record and Paul Cellucci's.

VENNOCHI: She's been doing that, before and after the birth of the twins.

SCIACCA: It's difficult when you've been a co-governor to just say, oh, that wasn't me.

VENNOCHI: The big thing she'll have to deal with is the tax rollback and what that means to the budget, but isn't she already saying there's a surplus, which would indicate

the dire predictions could be wrong. If that's the case, she'll do just fine. As far as the future of the Republican Party, as long as Tom Finneran is speaker of the House and Democrats control both the House and Senate, the Republicans do have a future.

KENNEDY: You certainly need opposition and I would agree that Jane Swift has been playing very smart outside politics. She'll probably be a strong candidate.

JONES: She'll always be an outsider if she never comes in from the Berkshires.

BRUDNOY: If you watch the year-end tape of *Five on Five*, they do predictions and Hubie is always wrong. I guarantee Governor Swift will be running again.

KEOUGH: Joan, you suggest both Swift and Shannon O'Brien will be in the running. Why is O'Brien going to emerge from this crowd of boys?

VENNOCHI: I'm assuming one of the two will be governor next time out, and if it's Shannon, she'll be running for reelection. Why will she crowd out the boys? The boys seem to be very much afraid of taking on Acting Gov. Swift. Shannon O'Brien is the only one speaking out on the issues right now. It is summer, and people are playing golf and working on their tan lines, but as long as she's the only one willing to engage Jane Swift on the issues and remind people there's a difference between Democrats and Republicans, and the guys are going to give her an easy ride, Shannon O'Brien gets her name in the lights, gets a track record and wins the election.

SCIACCA: If you're framing this in terms of the progressive energetic woman versus the old boys network – where was Jane Swift in challenging Tom Finneran or Tom Birmingham? Every time they tried to do it they were slapped back.

VENNOCHI: She did challenge Peter Blute.

SCIACCA: Gidget may have been a bigger problem for Peter Blute.

BRUDNOY: Who says primary voters don't like old boys? The assumption that automatically because she's a woman she will be tougher on Swift, I don't think people will say boy, I'm going to nominate Evelyn Murphy.

VENNOCHI: I don't want to make this a whole gender discussion, and I'm not trying to promote Shannon O'Brien –

BRUDNOY: Sounds like it.

VENNOCHI: I'm positing that Shannon is an old boy. I believe that as of now, she is the candidate that is most likely to take on Jane Swift on the issues. The males so far have been more anxious to take on Clean Elections or Finneran than Swift and the issues. If she does that and proves herself to the Democratic insiders, she will be the perfect one – the woman the old boys like. That's paradise.

KEOUGH: Let's assume for the moment that Jane Swift will be a candidate next year. Is Ralph Martin going to be her running mate?

BRUDNOY: He didn't want it under Cellucci. Why would he want it now? What has changed in his mind? Does he necessarily want to be in politics? I don't know Ralph well, but I know his wife very well. She's very happy being a family person. There are people, believe it or not, who can live without being elected.

JONES: There is a possibility that he would be the running mate of the governor.

BRUDNOY: He would be good. But why do we assume automatically. . .

JONES: He is a real talent. If he gets the right support, he could go very far.

SCIACCA: We've been watching Ralph Martin for a long time and waiting for him to take the next step. Every time there needs to be a short list of candidates for anything, Ralph is on it.

KENNEDY: If he wants to stay in politics, he's got to run for something. He's already said he won't run for district attorney again. He strikes me as a very strong candidate for the 9th Congressional District.

SCIACCA: It's hard to get someone to run for lieutenant governor. It doesn't have a lot of clout. It's about ribbon cutting. The Republican track record is Jane Swift will look for somebody who won't overshadow her or harm the ticket. Bill Weld and Paul Cellucci looked for that. During the race against Kerry, Paul Cellucci was an issue – was he prepared to take over as governor? The same questions about readiness will be around Jane Swift and lead her to pick someone who won't challenge her. Martin would not fill that bill.

VENNOCHI: If I were a Republican, I'd beg to run for lieutenant governor, because I'd know I would be governor next. It's the best way to keep the office without having to seek election – quite a good position.

JONES: If Swift runs, she's not going to have to worry about being overshadowed. She'll need someone who can help her get elected. She'd be very lucky to have Ralph Martin run with her.

BRUDNOY: What exactly is Ralph Martin's power base? What does he bring that more seasoned statewide candidates don't? Does he bring that 4.5 percent of black voters who vote overwhelmingly Democratic? No.

JONES: He brings the media.

BRUDNOY: Why?

JONES: He's been a terrific performer.

BRUDNOY: He has? What has he done that made him such a successful district attorney?

JONES: I'm not suggesting people in the Berkshires know Ralph Martin. His base is not there.

BRUDNOY: Where is it?

JONES: Let me talk! I'm not claiming he has a statewide base. He has a base in Suffolk County. He is considered by the media to be a potential political player of substance. He would bring that with him. He needs to run for lieutenant governor so he can get a statewide base. It's in his interest. Her interest is to get somebody who can generate excitement.

VENNOCHI: The only way Ralph Martin wins is if Democrats vote for him. The blunt fact that he's a black Republican makes him attractive.

JONES: No, he's a Democrat in Republican clothing. He switched so he could get a shot at being elected.

VENNOCHI: So's our secretary of state. Colin Powell, that is.

KENNEDY: Whew! I thought you we're talking about Bill Galvin!

JONES: The point is, Republicans have to get an enormous Democratic and independent base.

BRUDNOY: If his power base is in the county with the fewest Republicans, and other Republicans want it, then a more Republican Republican is likely to get the nomination than a Republican whose only strength is in a county with no Republicans.

KENNEDY: This brings us back to the dilemma of the Republican Party. Who is going to bump off Ralph Martin?

BRUDNOY: Dan Grabauskas.

KENNEDY: Ralph Martin is about as good as it gets. The Republicans don't have anybody left.

SCIACCA: The key is to appeal to the growing number of people who refuse to be aligned with either party. They don't like either party. It's really going after those unenrolled voters. I don't think having Martin on the ticket would necessarily help Jane Swift. I don't think he would get involved in something like that. He wants to run his own show. That's why I think mayor is more appropriate for him. But Jane Swift has to appeal to the unenrolled voters. So far she hasn't shown them why they should keep the corner office.

KEOUGH: You bring up the office of the mayor of Boston.

SCIACCA: I predict Tom Menino's going to be reelected.

KEOUGH: Thanks for going out on the limb, Joe. But what about in 2005? Will Menino run for reelection again, and will he win?

SCIACCA: Unfortunately with mayors of Boston, there's third term-itis that sets in, a sort of malaise. It's a very powerful mayor form of government. At some point, people start to look for some changes. He starts to wear mistakes from the past. It's very difficult for him to hang on for much more than one more term. Then it'll be a freefall like 1983 when Kevin White stepped aside and Ray Flynn emerged from the pack. I think we'll have everyone from Ralph Martin to Tom Finneran to the city councilors.

VENNOCHI: Don't forget Paul Grogan. He certainly looks like a candidate.

KEOUGH: Do you see the Boston Foundation as being a platform for him?

VENNOCHI: I think he does.

JONES: The Boston Foundation hands out \$53 million a year. It helps set the city's social agenda. Strategically used, he could build a lot of political capital.

BRUDNOY: If you went downstairs and stood on the sidewalk in front of the Parker House, and asked for the rest of the year who had heard of Paul Grogan, you would have to wait until Christmas. It doesn't matter if you've done good things and are in business. You've got to be a political insider. Chris Gabrieli a few years ago – it doesn't work. We're not going to get a candidacy from Paul Grogan. Let's be real.

VENNOCHI: I think you're absolutely wrong. You might not know who he is, but every CEO for every downtown company knows who he is. He'd have as good, if not better, a chance of establishing a network of contributors that would make him viable and credible in the media. You also have to realize who votes in Boston.

BRUDNOY: It's the people in South Boston and Hyde Park.

VENNOCHI: That's the old Boston. There's a new Boston.

BRUDNOY: Who are they?

VENNOCHI: The Back Bay.

BRUDNOY: No, they don't. I live there. Have they taken away your database? They don't vote, and Paul Grogan ain't going to be elected anything.

VENNOCHI: You're talking about old Boston. I'm talking about the new.

JONES: Any solid person wanting to run for political office will have connections as Joan just talked about, and will be well managed. You can position someone like that to prevail.

BRUDNOY: The notion that somehow you can have money and power, but not have a political power base – that's the kiss of death.

SCIACCA: Ray Flynn didn't just emerge from a cloud. He was a veteran of those gritty campaigns. The mayor reflects the personality of the city. Kevin White was an imperial mayor, but he was a downtown mayor. The pendulum swung the other way when Ray Flynn went into the neighborhoods. Tom Menino is in the middle. The question is – what will people be in the mood for in the next election?

BRUDNOY: Look at Maura Hennigan and Scapicchio, who represent parts of Boston that vote heavily. They're the types of people who will succeed Tom Menino. Unless your name is Kennedy, you don't get elected to anything the first time. Menino is healthy as an ox. Why wouldn't he run again?

VENNOCHI: You talk about the Kennedys – Max didn't get in because he was afraid he would lose. That's what I'm talking about.

BRUDNOY: I think Max wasn't sure he could find the district.

VENNOCHI: His last name was Kennedy, he couldn't find the district and times have changed so much that he thought, this isn't a race I want to get into.

BRUDNOY: Name a person elected in the last 20 years to a significant office who hadn't run before. John Kerry. Jane Swift. Paul Cellucci. Bill Weld. Capuano. I don't find people coming out of nowhere. This state likes people who pay their dues. Not that other people aren't worthy, but a newcomer doesn't have a chance.

JONES: It's a different political environment. There's a new demographic reality in terms of people of color.

BRUDNOY: Who vote so very well.

JONES: Wait a minute, wait a minute. They're now a serious numerical presence. They're going to have to get their act together, get registered to vote, and become a major part of the political process. I think it's going to happen. Eighteen percent more voters in the black wards voted this last time. It's going to get stronger. Believe me in 5 or 10 years, that's going to be a force in the city, whether you like it or not, or believe it or not.

BRUDNOY: They're going to vote for people like Felix Arroyo and Dianne Wilkerson. My assumption is not that there won't be black candidates, but they're not going to be outsiders. The same thing is true of whites. There aren't going to be saviors from the business community. Maybe we should change the topic.

KEOUGH: Before we shut down the political stove leaks, I want to go to the phones.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: What do you think is going to happen with Clean Elections and the state Legislature?

JONES: The public has made it clear they want Clean Elections, and the legislators have decided not to do it. It is not going away. The public is going to keep at this and keep at it until the Legislature gives them Clean Elections. The problem is you can't take

on incumbents because they have a base of money. If we could have some public financing, we would have a more level playing field and we might have a different deal about whether you have to run three or four times before getting elected.

BRUDNOY: People like Clean Elections the way they like peace on earth. When you use a cliché like Clean Elections, what does it mean? It's such propaganda.

JONES: You underestimate the intelligence of the electorate.

BRUDNOY: On the contrary, I think the public knows perfectly well what it means. When Finneran pulled his routine, we asked questions and found that people don't care. They realize it's just a political thing.

JONES: If we had another referendum, they would pass it overwhelmingly.

KENNEDY: Not if you tell them they're funding some state rep's campaign who they don't like.

SCIACCA: I hate to defend Finneran, but I think he's right on. Generating interest is what campaigns are all about. The special interests are here to stay. The same lobbyists will be out there in their Gucci loafers. We should be aiming for real accountability and full disclosure about who is giving what to whom. We have an Office of Campaign and Political Finance where they allow Joan Menard to rent a Mercedes and call it a campaign vehicle. OCPF does not do a good enough job. The accountability is not there.

KENNEDY: We've seen referendum after referendum pass over the years. It's treated as sacrosanct. All of a sudden, we have something that's a threat to the political establishment and they think they can stomp all over it. We're going to see a very interesting confrontation this summer. The Senate has passed a version that gets at what the voters wanted. The House has tried to quash it completely. A few years ago, Tom Finneran prevailed over Tom Birmingham. I think it may be the complete opposite this time.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: You suggested on a statewide level, you need to deal with the people who hate both Democrats and Republicans. Does that mean you need them to vote for you, or just get them to vote?

SCIACCA: I think they vote now. The numbers speak for themselves. What's important is for candidates to break away from the party structure a little and talk about what's important for the future of the state, not the Democrats or Republicans. If you look at the small cities, everyone talks about how we need strong vibrant cities, yet the government is hostile to the cities. There's welfare reform. There's MCAS. There's a budget crisis, and you want to cut special ed. Maybe it's time for Democrats and Republicans to look at what makes sense for making their rhetoric match their deeds.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: I was a Libertarian candidate for state Senate.

BRUDNOY: You were the one.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: As I was walking the district and talking to people, I find a tremendous amount of disaffection and disempowerment and real dissatisfaction with the status quo. Do you agree this is an observation which is valid around the state, and if so, where do you think it's going over the next five years?

VENNOCHI: That gets to the section about the media. People really feel dissatisfied with both parties and their candidates. But the way we cover things is to give the traditional parties the credibility and give credibility to someone who shows the right network in the business community. Those are the people we cover, whose name recognition goes up and who therefore win. Until that dynamic changes, the Libertarian candidate can't get elected.

KEOUGH: In 1990, the public was angry. But right now, I don't see that at all. Interest in politics is not really high. If there's dissatisfaction, it's really on a level that people aren't paying much attention to politics and government. Where do you get a groundswell of action?

BRUDNOY: Should we take a closer look at 1990? The Republicans won three offices – governor, lieutenant governor and treasurer. Joe Malone ran against a guy regarded as the Prince of Darkness. Bill Weld narrowly won. If John Silber had had laryngitis the last week, he would be governor. Mike Dukakis was running a terrible candidate for president. He was regarded as the residue of the presidential race. His last two years were sad. Not bad, but sad. I think people were saying, let's throw out the Dukakoids and move on. You say people threw out the bums – I give you exactly three offices. It was not a huge year in which Republicans won. They won three or four Senate seats and immediately lost them.

VENNOCHI: I'm learning the fallacy of arguing with you but I'll try. It had something to do with Dukakis' failed presidential bid. We don't like failures. But it had more to do with the fiscal crisis in the state and the election being framed as the Democrats had misused the money and we needed Republican leadership to set us on the straight and narrow. It was throw the spenders out.

JONES: The current public mood, there are contradictory things going on. There's deep cynicism generated by the legislative behavior we've seen. People get turned off. Yet on the other side, you have people using the referendum process to try to prevail. We're about to have government by referendum. People believe they can't get anything done through the Legislature, so they say let's take this precious initiative petition process and try to make our voices heard.

KENNEDY: There isn't even that much enthusiasm about the referendum process anymore. We're at a point historically, maybe because the economy's been so good, where people don't see politics as being central to their lives. While you have disaffection, you don't have anger. The next time you see a big economic downturn, you're going to see the anger ignited again. The anger is aimed directly at the political system, but indirectly at the media. You have this confluence of elite politicians and elite media, looking at this as an insider game and leaving the public out of it.

KEOUGH: That gets us into the economy. We're in a peculiar situation where we have doldrums that we don't know what to call it. Is it a downturn? Is it a soft landing? Is it a

recession? Do you get the sense the business community sees real rough sledding ahead?

KENNEDY: Things look bad on this side of the table. The media have been disproportionately hit.

BRUDNOY: Nobody can predict six months ahead, but what is the basic structure of the Massachusetts economy? We've lost people as a percentage of the population, but we've gained in the industry of the brain. That is the future. The notion that Massachusetts is going to collapse into something like California without light bulbs, that is not going to happen. We're not based on fisheries and shoemaking. We're based on the brain industry, and whatever happens with the economy, we will be right at the top. We're no longer Taxachusetts, or a joke, or a place people flee from. We're doing very nicely. We have creative and talented new people coming. I think the dyspepsia about our economy is ill-founded. The sun will come up tomorrow, bet your bottom dollar.

SCIACCA: I don't think people should rely on what reporters say about the economy. We have trouble balancing our own checkbooks. The dot-coms created their own separate pie, and when that collapsed, there was a feeling everything would collapse. I wonder if a lot of companies are using this impression to cut back on some duplication in their operations. Maybe they grew too big during the economic boom. I'm sure the *Globe* will survive with a few fewer reporters and columnists.

VENNOCHI: Every time I saw the mayor in the last month he said, are you going to take the buyout?

SCIACCA: There's a lot of hysteria around the economy. As a casual observer, I don't really see the panic.

VENNOCHI: I won't talk about the economy. I'd feel silly about that, considering that I was wrong about Joe Kennedy. Five years from now, it will be interesting to see what's left of the downtown. Probably not much. FleetBoston could be owned by another banking entity.

BRUDNOY: Could it be any worse than under Fleet?

VENNOCHI: They're headquartered in Boston. They have the guise of some corporate care about the community. They could be owned by somebody else. Hancock and all the insurance companies could be owned by somebody else. I talked to somebody who said in five years Boston will be like Toledo.

BRUDNOY: Toledo? What does that mean?

VENNOCHI: Little by little, we're losing our corporate identity. *The Boston Globe* is a good example. We're owned by a New York company.

BRUDNOY: The *Herald* and CNC will have to take over.

VENNOCHI: The *Herald* won't be owned by Pat Purcell in five years. I predict the big media players will all be owned by other entities. It doesn't mean jobs. It's psychological.

JONES: It means, will our corporate players be invested in our civic life? We already have a problem with contributions in one of the wealthiest communities in the country. We're 49th in philanthropic giving. It's a travesty. That could get worse when the folks who own the companies, their attention and commitment is not on Boston.

KENNEDY: There's been a sea change, especially with the *Globe*. It was sold to the *New York Times* Company in 1993, but there was this sense nothing changed for five years because of the hands off policy. This new era really only began on July 1999, when Ben Taylor, the last of the Taylors, was relieved of his duties. What we've clearly seen in the last couple of years is that the bottom line is now the bottom line. The *Times* Company is cutting positions not because of an economic crisis but because the *Times* Company is a large company traded on Wall Street and they have to keep their profit margin above 20 percent.

VENNOCHI: How is that different from any other company?

KENNEDY: Precisely. It's not different. But it is for Boston.

BRUDNOY: People will continue to work for whatever entity they work for. Hubie is right about charitable giving. The poorest parts of the country give the most money. The wealthiest areas are the stingiest. I think companies buying other companies is irrelevant to the basic stingy nature of the Northeast. We have 281 million people who will continue to be employed, no matter who owns the *Globe* or the *Herald*. We'll even have people coming to a convention center even if it's called Menino's folly.

VENNOCHI: In five years there won't be a new convention center.

BRUDNOY: There'll still be conventions at the Hynes. People love to come to Boston. We'll become like Williamsburg. We'll all wear little wigs and say hear ye, hear ye.

SCIACCA: The nature of the media is changing. As much as I love the *Herald* newsboy out there hawking papers, that's not where we're going. Pat Purcell is smart enough to realize you've got to grow or die. You can't live in a vacuum. People want news quickly. They want to interact. They want specialty news. The Internet and 24-hour cable have shown people want something different from the media. So maybe you own not just a paper, but a TV station and an Internet site.

VENNOCHI: I didn't say he wouldn't be here. I just said he'd be part of the larger media conglomerate.

JONES: This kind of conglomeration is going on nationwide but it doesn't mean that's a good thing. We ought to have a critique about business organization. This lean and mean stuff has social consequences. A business organization is not just about the bottom line. They also have a social responsibility to the community and environment in which they operate.

BRUDNOY: I think Bob's question was, where will we be in five years in terms of the economy, not about absentee ownership.

KEOUGH: I want the audience to have one more chance to put you on the spot.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: Could you talk about housing prices and the middle class in Boston?

BRUDNOY: The problem in Boston is it's someplace where only wealthy people or people on welfare can live. I don't know the answer. We know rent control isn't the answer. Like you, I think the middle class is the endangered class in this town. South Boston and Roxbury are places where people are buying in and jacking up the prices. This is bad socially. Hubie and I have disagreed here for 25 years, but we agree on this. How does one sustain its strength, which is the middle class?

JONES: Housing prices in Boston are incredible. I went to Silicon Valley and saw the future of Boston if we don't do something. It's absolutely outrageous and they don't have a clue. I hope we don't get into that situation where we can make up great analyses about the problem, and not have a clue about solving it. If we don't solve it now, we're going to look like San Francisco and Silicon Valley, and that's frightening.

BRUDNOY: Join the city.

JONES: I'd love to but my wife won't let me.

VENNOCHI: The answer is affordable housing and quality schools. I don't know how you get there.

BRUDNOY: Do any of you live in the city besides me? (all panelists shook their heads)

VENNOCHI: I have children who need to go to school.

BRUDNOY: This is the picture of the problem. These four people should be living in Boston, but they won't because they have families to raise and our schools suck.

KENNEDY: The borders of the city are small. I think we need to think of the city as being inside 128.

JONES: You'll be glad to know, David, I'm coming your way on public schools. I'll support any social intervention that will get one child out of the educational wilderness. I'm now moving toward charter schools.

BRUDNOY: Heaven be praised.

JONES: I'm even willing to entertain vouchers. I'm totally fed up.

SCIACCA: I have a hard time defining the middle class. Is it Andover or Braintree or Methuen? I have a problem with framing it as city versus everyone else. The people in the suburbs think they don't have to worry about Lawrence or Brockton. We have to look

at these things in a broader perspective and understand that the health of the cities affects everything else.

BRUDNOY: It's about regionalization. You don't want to pass laws making people do this, but you want to have the intellectual boundaries of the cities be broader. That is harder to do. William Lloyd Garrison said, "My country is the world. My countrymen are all mankind." It's very hard to do this. You have to get rid of the parochialism.

VENNOCHI: You just promoted that feeling by asking us who lived in Boston.

BRUDNOY: No, I asked it so people would understand why you don't live here. I don't have children. I bought early in the Back Bay. You guys can't afford to do that.

VENNOCHI: What Joe is saying is we need to think more broadly and geographically and collectively.

JONES: Most of the problems in this state can only be solved on a regional basis. Ground zero is regional planning. We're trying to solve an airport problem with a runway when it's a regional problem. And we know a runway is a short-term fix. It's about what happens in Worcester and Rhode Island and Bedford, God forbid.

KEOUGH: I think I'm going to have to call a halt to this water cooler conversation. David's got to get back to work. I'm going to turn this over to Tripp Jones, who will tell you all where to go for the reception

BRUDNOY: Let me give you back your microphone. I want to get away from Hubie before he beats me up.

KEOUGH: We're lucky to have David tonight. We thought we were going to lose him because he was supposed to interview Henry Kissinger. But Kissinger bagged out. We knew ahead of time that David would have to leave early. Now let's turn it over to Tripp Jones.

TRIPP JONES: The good news is this will be the last bit of listening we ask you to do tonight. We appreciate you hanging around. What a spectacular panel! Absolutely spectacular. I don't think you could go to any community around this country and find the kind of talent we've got. We're very grateful to all of you for taking the time. I just want to take a couple of minutes to thank people and reflect on what's happened these last five years. We're going to send everybody down to the mezzanine level. We're very grateful to our friends at the Parker House. We're going to have about 500 people here tonight, so they're going to open up most of the mezzanine level and allow people to have some food and drink – unfortunately people have to pay for drinks – and some cake to celebrate our five-year anniversary.

MassINC's biggest challenge is to get our work into the hands of more people. We're going to do everything we can to expand our visibility and the network of people we reach over the next year. Too many people still think MassINC is an intellectual idea. We need to continue to get your help and support. We will coordinate all our activity to assist with this marketing and outreach challenge. Our efforts will culminate in a spectacular fundraising gala next spring. Before we begin asking for more help, MassINC staff and

our board wanted to throw a party to simply say thank you to as many of our friends and supporters as possible. Tonight we celebrate the success of our flagship publication, *CommonWealth*, our award-winning magazine. I cannot believe it's been five years. When I started to tell people we were going to publish a magazine, a lot of people thought I had gone out of my mind. I can think of no finer tribute to the remarkable members of the *CommonWealth* team and the MassINC staff than the fact that all of you are here tonight. What a wonderful collection of our community's' most active citizens. I'm reminded of a statement by a Jesuit scholar on the difference between a civilized society and a barbarous society. John Courtney Murray said a civilized place is where people are locked together in argument in pursuit of their shared goals. That quote encapsulates perfectly the mission of what we've been trying to do at *CommonWealth* magazine, and the nonpartisan spirit with which MassINC conducts all its work.

I want to start by thanking each and every one of you for all your special support. I could go all the way through the room. I promise I won't. In recognizing a very small group of individuals, something that's always dangerous in a gathering like this, I want to start with the magazine staff, starting with our spectacular editor Bob Keough. I'd also like to thank our associate editors, our outreach director and deputy publisher, our editorial advisers, our art director and our many, many contributing writers and photographers. I also want to thank our very special sponsors. I also want to thank our very special citizen circle members, and the more than 1,000 individuals who have become friends of MassINC.

Our goal from day one was to have a sufficiently diverse base of support that would make it impossible for anyone to suggest we were in the pocket of any constituency. I still love the fact that our first two sponsors were then BankBoston and the carpenters' union, which was picketing the bank at the time.

I want to single out three people who have helped MassINC become what it is, three of Massachusetts' finest civic and political leaders. First of all, my initial partner in getting this whole thing underway, Mitchell Kertzman, who is not here tonight. Secondly, Gloria Larson. She has done as much as anyone to make sure MassINC's nonpartisan approach and substantive work would turn out the way it did. Gloria and I didn't know each other when we started. Everything I've said, she's taken at face value. That's so rare. Finally, I want to single out my good buddy Chris Gabrieli. MassINC would not be here if not for Chris stepping up, helping us during challenges. His intellectual leadership, standing shoulder to shoulder with us as a staff, and his willingness to help us with his generosity – I am glad to have the opportunity, my friend, to single you out and say thank you. I could not be prouder of what all those people have done. MassINC is extremely grateful to have Chris and Gloria chairing our board. They have agreed to co-chair our anniversary celebration over the next year. I want to thank you again for taking the time to join us. I promise you if we do what we're intending to do in the coming months and year, when we celebrate our tenth anniversary, you're going to get free drinks. I want to encourage everybody to start heading for the elevators. Thank you again.

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