

The Peace Press – April/May 2007

Assessment of the War and of the Democratic Congress

Getting Centered Intentions

by Elizabeth Stinson, Director

Sometimes one has to leave the country in order to obtain a much needed “reality check.”

On a recent trip to Europe, I discovered that there are “states of resistance” that have a far greater possibility of impacting the economy here than we can imagine. If the subculture, which in some ways continues to become mainstreamed, continues to advocate that nations not purchase things that will benefit American corporations as an act of conscience, then we will, eventually, be impacted. In the pubs (where everyone seems to meet) it was explained to me that it does not do any good to boycott American products because we are not perceived as the producers of anything. So one of the goals is to make sure an American corporation is not benefiting from the sale of a product. Yes, even with Blair considered our biggest ally, we are still considered the “thugs.” Blair is commonly referred to as “Bliar” and is considered “corrupted” and on his way out.

As time went on it became more and more necessary to examine our and our “intention.”

According to Wikipedia (online dictionary) a person *intends* a consequence when he or she *foresees* that it will happen if the given series of acts or omissions continue and *desires* it to happen. The most serious level of culpability, justifying the most serious levels of punishment, will be achieved when both these components are actually present. A person who plans and executes a crime is considered, rightly or wrongly, a more serious danger to the public than one who acts spontaneously, whether out of the sudden opportunity to steal, or out of anger to injure another. The reasonable person would have foreseen a probability that people would be exposed to the risk of injury.

For myself, this is where the quandary lies. Is this country being led by reasonable persons? For the last seven years we have been in the hands of a narcissist with homicidal intentions, whether that be Bush or Cheney or a combination of the two of them. Reasonable people did foresee the probability of this fiasco we call a war, which is really an occupation. Reasonable people took to the streets world-wide to object to the invasion and occupation of Iraq. There is no warring army confronting our troops, but a population resisting an occupation.

It is obvious that control of congress by the democrats is not going to result in a speedy withdrawal as long as the “decider” is given billions of dollars to prolong the bloodshed and they vote to give it to him. We need to persevere with the intention that a speedy withdrawal from this occupation become the intention of those who represent us.

The greatest minds – much greater than those in power – should come together internationally to expedite this withdrawal. We need the Jimmy Carters, the Rodrigo Corazzo Odios, the Michale Van Walt Van Praags, the Dennis Kucinichs’ and whomever else could

make up the think tank with the right intention. We need the speedy withdrawal to be the *intention* of our leaders as well as our policies and most of all of our dollars.

This past four months a series of interviews with us by NPR about our work supporting discharges for AWOLS has resulted in a very intensive investigative report by an NPR producer that exposed the gross inaccuracies in the reporting of those who have refused to fight by the Army. By focusing on 2006, we were able to encourage the producer to speak to our contacts at many bases and people within the pentagon. Eventually it was revealed that misinformation had been reported to Congress. The Army is being forced to make what they call a "correction" to their numbers. Ah...peace work...!

The Kucinich 12-Point Plan for Iraq

by Dennis Kucinich

1. The US announces it will end the occupation, close military bases and withdraw. The insurgency has been fueled by the occupation and the prospect of a long-term presence as indicated by the building of permanent bases.
2. US announces that it will use existing funds to bring the troops and necessary equipment home. Congress appropriated \$70 billion in bridge funds on October 1st for the war. Money from this and other DOD accounts can be used to fund the troops in the field over the next few months, and to pay for the cost of the return of the troops.
3. Order return of all US contractors to the United States and turn over all contracting work to the Iraqi government. The contracting process has been rife with corruption. The massive corruption, as it relates to US contractors, should be investigated by congressional committees and federal grand juries. After the first Gulf War, Iraqis reestablished electricity within three months, despite sanctions. Four years into the US occupation there is no water, nor reliable electricity in Baghdad, despite massive funding from the US.
4. Convene a regional conference for the purpose of developing a security and stabilization force for Iraq. The focus should be on a process which solves the problems of Iraq. The end of the US occupation and the closing of military bases are necessary preconditions for such a conference. When the US creates a shift of policy and announces it will focus on the concerns of the people of Iraq, it will provide a powerful incentive for nations to participate.
5. Prepare an international security and peacekeeping force to move in. The UN has an indispensable role to play here, but cannot do it as long as the US is committed to an occupation. The UN is the only international organization with the ability to mobilize and the legitimacy to authorize troops. The US will necessarily have to fund a peacekeeping mission, which, by definition will not require as many troops. Fifty percent of the peacekeeping troops must come from nations with large Muslim populations.
6. Develop and fund a process of national reconciliation. The process of reconciliation must begin with a national conference, organized with the assistance of the UN and with the participation of parties who can create, participate in and affect the process of reconciliation, defined as an airing of all grievances and the creation of pathways toward open, transparent talks producing truth and resolution of grievances. The Iraqi government has indicated a desire for the process of reconciliation to take place around it, and that those who were opposed to the government should give up and join the government. The problem

in Iraq is that every community is living in fear. A reconciliation process which brings people together is the only way to overcome their fears and reconcile their differences.

7. Restart the failed reconstruction program in Iraq. Rebuild roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, and other public facilities, houses, and factories with jobs and job training going to local Iraqis.

8. The US and Great Britain have a moral obligation to enable a peace process by beginning a program of significant reparations to the people of Iraq for the loss of lives, physical and emotional injuries, and damage to property.

9. Put an end to suspicions that the US invasion and occupation was influenced by a desire to gain control of Iraq's oil assets by A) setting aside initiatives to privatize Iraqi oil interests or other national assets, and B) by abandoning efforts to change Iraqi national law to facilitate privatization.

10. Set forth a plan to stabilize Iraq's cost for food and energy, on par to what the prices were before the US invasion and occupation.

11. Work with the world community to restore Iraq's fiscal integrity without structural readjustment measures of the IMF or the World Bank.

12. Establish a policy of truth and reconciliation between the people of the United States and the people of Iraq. This is a moment to take a new direction in Iraq. One with honor and dignity. One which protects our troops and rescues Iraqi civilians. One which repairs our relationship with Iraqis and with the world.

The Plan for Iraq from Dennis Kucinich has been greatly edited for space. To see the full plan, go to <http://Kucinich.us/>

An Open Letter to Congress

by Susan C. Lamont

The Peace & Justice Center of Sonoma County and others like it around the country were founded upon the simple proposition that long-term peace can never be realized through violence. What appears obvious to us is viewed as a bold, yet naïve, statement in a world which believes otherwise. Organizations dedicated to peace exist to lend courage to those whose hearts tell them that violence is not the answer.

The message people receive, not only in the US but around the globe, is that peace can only be achieved through military might. This message confuses people with a strange and distorted definition of peace. Those who profit from war and weaponry, in the form of power and money, have convinced much of the world that there is no other way – that there is no other “peace.”

The people of the world have been raised in many faiths. Those faiths have been misused to separate, rather than unite, us. And yet at their core, all these faiths carry the message of peace. It is a message of peace based upon love and caring community. It is not a message based upon violence as a means to that end. Leaders throughout time have usurped and distorted this peace message. The result has been a dissonance in our lives and hearts. It is a dissonance that can only be silenced by a recommitment to true peace.

World War II is often held up as the “good war,” one we couldn’t avoid fighting and one which brought us peace. But the circumstances that led to that war never had to happen. World War I led to World War II, which led to Vietnam and Iraq. The “realists” gave us the bloodiest century in history. They are now prepared to give us an even bloodier one. War leads to war and never to peace. It’s time to take that lesson to heart. A stance acknowledging the futility of war – all war – is long overdue.

The peace movement has become used to being a marginalized voice, but we believe that, in people’s hearts, support for war is paper-thin. We believe that those who agree with us are more numerous than we can see. We believe that if all those who have come to understand the futility and waste of war were to voice that realization, we could begin to transform our world.

I, as a member of the peace community, ask you, our elected representatives, to look into your own hearts for the message of peace that has been there all along, waiting for you to acknowledge it without the words “yes, but....” It is time to look back at the history of war through time and recognize its futility. It is time to recognize that being a “realist” means acknowledging the reality of war for its victims, not its victors.

I understand the potential political fallout, but I also know that great strides are rarely made without risk. Are the lives sacrificed around the world worth less than your political careers? Could it be that the world has been waiting for your leadership? T.S. Eliot wrote, “Only those who risk going too far can possibly find out how far they can go.” My great-grandmother marched in the streets for women’s suffrage, always with the risk of arrest or physical violence. Therefore, in my life, I refuse to let her down. Who is your inspiration? I ask you to look to those who preceded you. In your hearts, if you look deeply enough, you know that all war is wrong. Follow in the footsteps of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi and courageously proclaim it.

Susan C. Lamont, President, Board of Directors, The Peace & Justice Center of Sonoma County

As Iraq Burns

by Rebel Fagin

As Congress debates, the war continues. Woolsey, Boxer and Thompson have all signed legislation to end the war before 2008, which is in the Democrats best interest. Political considerations aside; the environment, tax payers, soldiers, and mostly the Iraqis can not wait that long. The war must end now. Phased withdrawal means prolonged war. Let’s see what the war looks like for the Iraqis.

Ahmed Ghazi sells toys in Fallujah. His biggest sellers this year were guns and tanks for boys and dolls that cry for girls. Nuha Khalil, a researcher at Baghdad’s Iraqi Institute for Childhood Development, told Inter Press Service (IPS) that young girls express repressed sadness by playing “mother comforting her daughter.” Children imitate the world they see just beyond their window. Nearly half of all Iraqis are under 18 years of age. Hundreds of thousands are traumatized by the war. Children do not go out to play. In Baghdad, the two remaining playgrounds lie deserted and the ten cinemas remain mostly dark. The United Nations estimates that 100,000 Iraqis are fleeing the country each month. 750,000 Iraqis are in Jordan; 1,000,000 in Syria. People are trying to get into Palestine for a better life! Over 1 ½

million of the estimated 3 ½ million refugees have fled the country. This war torn life hits the elderly and the young the hardest. "Children are most affected by the tragic events," Dr. Khalil al-Kubaissi, a psychotherapist in Fallujah told IPS. "Their fragile personalities cannot face the loss of a parent, or the family house along with all the horror that surrounds them. The result is catastrophic and Iraqi children are in serious dangers of lapsing into loneliness or violence. "The war is all they have. Bullets and bodies decorate their school work. Refugee children tend to play rough and not flourish in their new schools. 92% of the children examined were found to have learning handicaps, largely attributed to the current climate of fear and insecurity. What will be the fruit born from these seeds of terror? The adults aren't waiting to see. Many Iraqi nationalists held back on active resistance at first at the bequests of their clerics who wanted to give Bush and Blair a chance to prove their word. Repression breeds resistance. Their patience is gone and the clerics can't contain them anymore. "People have lost hope in the US-led occupation's promises and they are thinking of saving the country from Iranian influence which has been supported, or at least allowed by the Multinational forces," an Iraqi Army officer told IPS on 1/21/07. This is nationalistic resistance to the Balkanization of Iraq as designed by the neo-cons in their Planning Guidance Document. These are Iraqis fighting to save Iraq. Shiite resistance played a significant role in the expelling of British occupation forces back in the 1930's. In 2006 the Shiite drove the 1,200 members of The Queen's Royal Hussars out of southern Iraq. A lesson unlearned from history – all occupiers leave or else they destroy the native population and move in. Students of history know that, sooner or later, the Iraqis will expel the invaders. America's options are to either leave voluntarily or resist until driven out. And the US is once again on the wrong side of history. Will we support life or oil? The choice is up to us. Passive inactivity at times like these are acts of collaboration with the oppressors. Take action to end the war now. We are in a critical period when congress may actually end the war if we push them hard enough. If that fails then America may be lost to fascism and wars without end. This is a critical time and the responsibility for the outcome lies with me and you. Do something. Resist or die!

Sources: Iraq Dispatches@ by dahrjamialiraq.com, 12/06 – 2/07. KPFA, January, 2007, George Galloway interview on Flashpoints. Exiting the Iraq Quagmire by Tom Hayden, www.progressivegovernment.org. No relief from the Iraq Study Group by John Catalinotto, www.workers.org, 12/7/06. Rebuilding America's Defenses www.theprojectforanewamericancentury.com. September 2000. KPFA Evening News 2/12/07.

Tourist Photographs from Iraq

by Aaron Hughes

The poem below accompanies the painting on the cover of this issue. More paintings at www.aaronhughes.org/tourist.html. The Tourist Photographs from Iraq are a series of 4'x4' oil self-portraits which attempt to interpret the posture assumed as a soldier/tourist in the surreal space of Iraq.

This is how I wanted to see my self...
This is what I thought we would do in Iraq...
That's what I always thought we were about...
Barefoot, little kids... I remember that one there...
He couldn't have been five years old
Just a damn little kid, you know?

Little, black, cracked, bare...
Dust covered feet. Tiny little kid...
Tough as hell. His brother too.
The sand must've been 150 degrees, fuckin'
hotter than that! Everything was so damn
hot; the heat
Would come up through my boots
like standing on a stove.
The kid had baby toes that were like coarse
callused black elephant leather.
That kid had the craziest rough ass skin
I gave the kid an M.R.E. and some other
food. A bunch of crap I was sick of eating...
Kids would stand on the roads every damn day
asking for that crap.
There was nothing else... bleak dead dust
days, powdered sand-lands of nothing for miles and miles.
There was nothing but an unattainable horizon
and a damn long ass road.
But the fucking little ass kids would come
out of nowhere...
Nothing around! Not a damn thing!
But these damn kids would just appear.
I thought we were going over to help these
damn kids that would come out of nothing
and go back into it.
Feed the hungry, help the oppressed,
give relief from day in day out pain.
That is what I wanted to think I was there for.
Barefoot, all day long
All they wanted was food from us...
Like damn kids on the 4th of July...
we were a spectacle, a parade of crazy floats
passing out food.
But then we hit one you know... That was it!
It all changed
We were told not to stop... Don't stop not in the towns.
Keep the truck moving and don't stop. Forget the kids!
Now, now I can't forget the kids. Damn kid.
I'm not even there.
Hundred thousand miles away
and its still in my fucking head.
Ah fuck 'em they were just a part of the damn landscape anyway.

On January 30, 2003 Aaron Hughes was pulled out of the University of Illinois and called to active duty with the 1244th Transportation Company Army National Guard out of North Riverside, Illinois. On April 17, 2003 his Company was deployed to Kuwait under Operation Iraqi Freedom. There he supported combat operations by transporting supplies from camps and ports in Kuwait to camps in Iraq. After three extensions, totaling one year,

three months and seven days, Aaron's Company was redeployed to home base in North Riverside Illinois on July 24, 2004. Aaron returned to the University of Illinois in the spring of 2005 as a student majoring in painting with the need to express and share his experiences with others.

The Peace Movement Needs to Demand that the Democrats End the War

by Kevin Zeese, Democracy Rising, March 2007

Rep. Chris Van Hollen is the head of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. It is his job to preserve and expand the Democrat's majority in Congress in 2008. When he held a town hall meeting recently, it was quite clear what the Democrats want. They want the peace movement to work for the Democratic Party, rather than the Democratic Party representing the peace movement.

There were signs held in the audience urging "use the power of the purse to end the war", "support vets not war" and "defund the war." When a mother of a vet urged a cut-off of funds, the audience cheered wildly.

But Rep. Van Hollen did not commit to not voting to fund the war. Instead he pointed to the recent non-binding resolution passed by the House opposing the "surge" as a first step. He reminded people that he opposed the war, but he didn't mention how he has voted for all of the \$420 billion in funding for the war. He concluded that, to end the war, we need to build a political movement because we could not stop the war with the current Democratic majorities.

The Democrats seem to think the Iraq War is the "goose that lays the golden votes." They hope that keeping the war going, while showing their opposition through non-binding votes, criticizing Bush, and conducting high profile hearings that point to the mistakes of the commander-in-chief will get them more votes than ending the war. The Democrats can point to the Republicans as the problem and say "elect us."

The Democrats say they must support the supplemental because they need to "support the troops." Instead we need a real discussion of what can be done to support the troops. The Democrats must use the power they were given by the American voters in 2006.

The truth is the Democrats have the power to end the war now. They have a majority in the House. If the House refused to fund the war, that would be the end of it, as President Bush cannot veto a non-appropriation. And only one house of Congress is required to stop the war. If they fail to stop the war, it is no longer Bush's war – it is "the Democrats' Iraq War."

If the Democrats showed the leadership voters want, the debate would be about how to get out of Iraq in a way that is rapid and responsible. Then the Democrats would be representing the views of American voters and fulfilling the mandate of the 2006 election.

The question for the anti-war movement – which includes a majority of the American public, a super majority in the Democratic Party, and has shown its political muscle in 2006 – is, do they work for the Democratic Party? Or do they work for peace? It is likely going to be impossible to do both unless the Democratic Party leadership rapidly changes course.

Kevin Martin, the director of Peace Action, put forward the clear demands of the peace movement: "our message and demands are simple and clear – end the occupation, stop

voting to spend our tax dollars on the war, and support our troops by bringing them home to the warm embrace of their families as soon as possible.”

The anti-war movement should demand that the Democratic Party work for us! They would not be the majority party if it were not for the peace voter. Anti-war voters should not give their votes to politicians who fail to end the war.

The only way for voters opposed to the war to get the Democratic Party to work for us is to let them know that the price of our vote is for them to end the war.

The Democracy Rising peace project seeks to bring the troops home and end the occupation of Iraq by empowering activists across the nation.

Open Letter to Congress to End the War

by Representatives of Iraq War Veterans Against the War, Military Families Speak Out, Veterans for Peace

Dear Senate Majority Leader Reid, Speaker Pelosi, and the US Senate and House of Representatives:

We all believe that the US military occupation of Iraq must be brought to an immediate end. The people of the United States voted for a change in Congressional leadership last November, due in large part to the desire to see the disaster in Iraq come to an end. Congress now has the opportunity to end this unjust war and bring our troops home. But as we write this letter, it appears that this is an opportunity you are prepared to squander.

Congress will vote on President Bush's 2007 Supplemental Appropriations request that will, if passed, provide the fund to continue the war in Iraq. Legislative hearings, increased oversight and funding restrictions will not end the war. The President has defied the voice of the American people and made it clear he will not bring our troops home. Congress can and must use its Constitutional "power of the purse" to de-fund the war and bring it to an end.

As leaders in Congress, none of you has advocated for de-funding the Iraq war. We need to know why. Why won't you take the most direct path to bringing this war to an end?

Many of you have said, "We can't de-fund the troops." As military and Gold Star families and as Veterans of the Iraq and other wars, we understand the difference between "de-funding the war" and "de-funding the troops." In fact, voting more funds for this war would be abandoning our troops.

We need to understand from you, here and now, what you think you have to lose by crafting a Supplemental Appropriations bill that cuts off all funds for continuing the war in Iraq. Are you really more worried about losing a vote in Congress or winning the White House in 2008 than you are about losing the lives of our troops? We do not wish to assign motives, but we must ask these questions. Every day that you allow this to go on, an average of three of our loved ones die in Iraq, along with countless Iraqi children, women and men.

We are asking that, as leaders in Congress, you exercise leadership. Tell the American people the truth about President Bush's funding request. This funding continues a war that should never have happened, that is draining our national treasure and cultivating a growing hatred against our nation.

It is not too late for you to do the right thing. We ask you to exercise your leadership, stand up and call for the de-funding of the Iraq War. Stand strong. Let the American people know that de-funding the war will not leave our troops without equipment or supplies and that there are sufficient funds available to bring our troops home quickly and safely.

Stop telling us that you don't have the votes and work with us to secure them. That is what leaders do.

Right now, it seems that you cannot see the political upside of doing what we and the majority of people in this country are calling on you to do. It is important that you understand the political downside of allowing this war to continue. If you provide further funding for the war in Iraq, it will no longer be President Bush's war. You will be co-owners. You will have lost the opportunity to provide leadership when it is sorely needed. You will have given license to more years of a failed policy and countless deaths.

We ask you now: de-fund the war, support our troops, and bring them home now.

Are US Oil Companies Going to "Win" the Iraq War?

by Antonia Juhasz, *The Huffington Post*, March 1st, 2007

"The US invasion of Iraq was not preemption; it was... an avaricious, premeditated, unprovoked war against a foe who posed no immediate threat but whose defeat did offer economic advantages." – Michael Scheuer, the CIA's senior expert on al-Qaeda until he quit in disgust with the Bush administration

Remember oil? That resource we didn't go to war for in Iraq? You'll have a tough time convincing Iraqis of this particular claim if a new oil law becomes the law of the land.

The Bush administration and US oil companies came closer to "winning" the war when the Iraqi Cabinet passed this new national oil law. The law is the smoking gun exposing Bush's war for oil. The law would transform Iraq's oil system from a nationalized model, all-but-closed to US oil companies, to a commercialized model, all-but-fully privatized and opened to US corporate control.

Before the invasion, US oil companies were shut out of Iraq's oil industry. If the law passes, US oil companies will emerge as the front-runners for contracts giving them control over the vast majority of Iraq's oil with the most corporate-friendly terms in the world for twenty to thirty-five years.

The law grants the Iraq National Oil Company oversight over "existing" fields, about one-third of Iraq's oil. Exploration and production contracts for the remaining two-thirds of Iraq's oil will be opened to private foreign investment. The contracts allow for foreign companies to take ownership of Iraq's oil fields without having to get to work for as long as seven years. The companies can take advantage of the incredibly weak negotiating position of the Iraqi government during occupation and civil war, while being able to "ride out" the "instability" in Iraq.

Foreign companies do not have to reinvest any of their earnings in the Iraqi economy, hire Iraqi workers, or partner with Iraqi companies.

If the new law passes, Iraq's oil system would be unique in virtually any oil rich nation. For example, Kuwait, Iran and Saudi Arabia all maintain nationalized oil systems and have outlawed foreign control over oil development.

Iraq does not need foreign oil corporations. Prior to the invasion, Iraq produced 2.5 million barrels of oil a day. Since the invasion, the Iraqis have averaged approximately 2.2 million barrels of oil a day. At its current low rate of production, Iraq is expected to generate more than \$30 billion from its oil this year, more than enough to keep the industry running and the economy stable.

The law was written in a vague manner to help ensure passage. What is clear is that the foreign oil corporations have their rights clearly established. We would expect very little increased stability to follow from a US corporate oil-grab of Iraq. The American who will pay the heaviest price are likely to be US troops on the ground in Iraq.

Most Iraqis, including Iraqi Parliamentarians, have remained in the dark about the law. Iraq's oil workers had to travel to Jordan to learn details. In September, the nation's trade union federations released a statement rejecting "the handing of control over oil to foreign companies, whose aim is to make big profits at the expense of the Iraqi people, and to rob the national wealth, according to long-term, unfair contracts, that undermine the sovereignty of the state and the dignity of the Iraqi people." They demanded a delay in consideration of any law until all Iraqis could be included in the discussion.

The Bush administration and Big Oil are trying to get the best deal and the most oil possible out of a war-ravaged and desperate people. They are holding 25 million Iraqis and 150,000 American troops hostage to their oil agenda.

For more information see <http://www.thebushagenda.net>, <http://www.PriceofOil.org>, and <http://HandsOffIraqiOil.org/>.

Public Dialogue: On the Way to a New Social Contract

Bob Alpern: There's no place in what we've written about the funding of militarism by national budgets. There's a Biblical statement that says: "Where your treasure is, there is your heart." The priorities that under-gird an ever-expanding military need to be more specific, not just theoretical. Our nation's budgets are the underpinning of the military establishment that fuels the military-industrial complex. But in a new social contract we need to say how our priorities are being stated.

Bruce Pardoll: As I see it, the military budget is actually necessary for the stability and the progress of corporate capitalism. That's how they're entwined. A military budget and a war machine is necessary to maintain a corporate capitalist economy.

Bob Briscoe: That's true. But in a social contract, the citizenry is supposed to play a role in the budget process. Where you set priorities, that's the direction were the society goes. Our statement is looking for a new way of approaching the funding of priorities across the board. And the dominant priority in our society for quite a while has been military funding. That is what needs to be looked at in developing a new kind of society. Most people do not participate in the budget-making process, and there are opportunities that that can happen and that need to be lifted up in starting a new social contract.

Dana Bellwether: So we need to change our government from one with the forms of democracy and the substance of hypocrisy to one with both the forms and the substance of democracy. So we need to think about how to do that.

Susan Lamont: When we're talking about education and people not knowing what's really going on in our government, somebody told me he took a "Taxes for Peace" flyer showing the proportion of military spending in the federal budget to bars. You wouldn't believe the conversations he had, that nobody had a clue about this. He found that when people thought this out, they were stunned and really upset. It shows what a little education can do. Of course, you don't know whether this translates into them taking any action. People are so sure that the economy will collapse if we don't spend this on "defense." So part of our education needs to be that you can take this money and spend it on something else, and the economy will run on that. It's just a matter of transferring it. People don't seem to realize that can happen. If you look at the Bush administration, every piece of legislation takes money out of the average citizen's pocket and sends it to somebody richer – whether it's the tax cuts, or arms manufacturing, or no child left behind. This is not the way it has to be. They're always saying there's not enough money – but there's tons of money!

Elaine Holtz: I'm thinking about the Anna Nicole Smith thing. That's how we're being educated today. The budget is not coming across the screen. For a new social contract, people need to have control of the media. CNN does these very interesting polls. People call in and vote on things. Then they do a little analysis. So why can't something like that be written in as part of the media. We have no say about the budget. We elect somebody and they make all these promises to us, and they don't come to fruition. Maybe if there was a process where we're voting, that before budgets are passed there has to be public input. "American Idol" had more votes than any Presidential election in history.

Michael Bridge: To me the main pillar of militarism that's related to this is simply the absence of ongoing public dialogue. Like this. On TV, where all of the necessary viewpoints are being thrown out there in the open so that people have a chance to learn about what's really going on. The coverage is so superficial, we need another vehicle – a real reality TV.

Elaine: Public access is very limited. But Channel 50 just stopped doing news. Why can't we propose to the City Council that we take all of that organization and information and put it under some sort of public format. The religious component of public access detracts an audience. If you don't have support in your community for a program you're doing, you won't get much clout.

Jack Wikse: We're in a very fragmented culture. If you look at the studies of what news people watch, what entertainment they watch, there are these niches that establish very fragmented orientations. People don't learn much from TV news. And it's true for me, too. We seek the news that confirms our views. So there's a subculture that we're all probably part of in which we share common references. In terms of militarism, one of the things I value about the center is, because of Elizabeth's work, we're in close touch with people in the military – but in my life I don't have much contact with military people. Andrew Bachevich proposes (in *The New American Militarism*) to shift budgetary priorities about militarism by breaking down the educational fragmentation between civilian and military cultures, which increasingly don't interact. He proposes that all college education be "non-military," with military academies only for graduate studies. I noticed in the *Press Democrat* that they interview "military families" – this is a separate niche. That's an example of the need to open public discourse, to break out

of our tendency to be insulated within niches of self-confirming assumptions. What passes for dialogue in the media is not really public dialogue.

Remembering Rufina Amaya

I'm very sad to write to you that the world has lost Rufina Amaya, lone survivor of the massacre at El Mozote, El Salvador. She was a human rights activist, mother, grandmother, friend and inspiration.

Rufina Amaya was diabetic and suffered from hypertension. These conditions led to respiratory problems that caused a stroke and multiple heart attacks. She was 64 years old and is survived by her two daughters, Fidelia 42, and Marta, 21. Rufina lost 9 of her 11 children, 4 in the massacre at El Mozote and 5 during the war. I am very thankful that some of you had the chance to spend time with, meet and to get to know this amazing woman. I trust you will all remain committed to being disciples of her truth, and do so with the same passion, conviction and desire to create a better world. – Rosa Anaya

Community Events –

Political Folk Balladeer David Rovics to Play at New College

The Peace & Justice Center and Free Mind Media are sponsoring a concert by David Rovics on Tuesday, April 17, 2007. For those frustrated and angry about the state of our world, political folk balladeer David Rovics represents them. David's topical lyrics address many of the injustices of our age and his driving folk inspires activists and concerned citizens the world over. Find out what Europeans already know: he will make you laugh, he will make you cry, and he will make the revolution irresistible. New College, 99 – 6th St., Santa Rosa, 7:30 p.m. \$10.00 at the door.

Anti-war Activist and Retired Army Colonel Ann Wright Spoke at Sonoma State

The Peace & Justice Center and Project Censored sponsored a talk by Ann Wright at Sonoma State on Wednesday, May 2, 2007. Ann Wright is the retired Army colonel who resigned on March 19, 2003 in protest of Bush's invasion of Iraq. She has 29 years with the Army and 16 years in the US Foreign Service. Unlike most people who have held those positions, she has also spent 26 days at Camp Casey with Cindy Sheehan and has been arrested numerous times since then protesting the war.

May 1st National Movement for Workers and Immigrant Rights, March and Rally

Planning for the May Day 2007 National Movement for Workers and Immigrant Rights march and rally has begun. 15,000 immigrants and their supporters took to the streets last year in Santa Rosa. This year's event promises to be even larger with outreach into the labor, peace, civil rights as well as the migrant rights communities.

Local endorsements have already come from the Committee for Immigrant Rights of Sonoma County, the Peace and Justice Center of Sonoma County, Voces Cruzando Fronteras, the Sonoma County Labor Council, the Living War Coalition, the Green Party of Sonoma County, the Petaluma Progressives as well as others.

Organizations and individuals who wish to offer support and participation of any kind should

contact (707) 206-6889. Email: mayday4workers@yahoo.com. For more information, call (707) 568-5403.

New Board Election for Bilingual Public Radio KBBF

In light of a mandated mediation, Voces Cruzando Fronteras/Voces Crossing Borders has achieved a judicially overseen KBBF Board of Directors election scheduled for June 24. Deadline to become a member in order to vote in the election is May 15, 5:00 pm. For membership, call KBBF, (707) 545-8833. For more information, call (707) 568-5403.

Real to Reel
by Niki & Rebel Fagin
Iraq for Sale

Robert Greenwald's film *Iraq for Sale* examines the privatization of the war and the obscene profits made by the companies involved. According to Greenwald, 40% of the money spent on the war goes to these companies. The Iraq Study Group (ISG) claimed that there are over 100,000 contractors in Iraq. Greenwald focuses his film on both the financial and the human costs of the actions these companies take. Their field employees, like the army, are economically drafted into this war.

Black Water Security, a private security force, employed 300 in Iraq when this film was made. They are called contractors, though in more honest times we would have called them mercenaries. In Fallujah, Black Water decided to save money by sending their employees into the city without maps, support personnel or armored vehicles. When four of them were killed and their bodies mutilated, Black Water knew they had a problem. So they hired the PR firm Alexander Strategy Group to fix it. As a member of the PR firm tells the camera, "at times like this a company must look at their image." Screw the families of the fallen, image is everything. In four years they got \$34.8 million for their work in Iraq and \$73 million for shooting up people in New Orleans. That's \$243,000 a day in Louisiana. C.A.C.I. provides private interrogators in Iraq. When the scandal broke in Abu Grade half the interrogators were from C.A.C.I. C.A.C.I.'s four year contract was for \$60,000,000. If contractors kill an Iraqi civilian they are sent home and have to wait a week before coming back to a different unit. If a soldier does the same thing she/he faces criminal charges. When members of Congress wanted to end the privatization of military interrogation, they were voted down by a Republican majority. Throughout this film we see Democrats trying to stop this profit gouging and Republicans defending it.

Titan was awarded a three-year contract of \$2 billion to provide translators. These translators may or may not speak or write English and may or may not be translating. They may be editorializing under the guise of translating. No one knows for sure. Although Titan swore these people were highly trained, passed security clearance and could be trusted, the former employees reported that they took no tests, nor were ever asked about their skill level. Kellogg, Brown & Root/Halliburton provided buildings, food service and laundry service to the tune of \$750 million from 2001-2004. They gouge because they are operating under a cost plus program where the more you spend the more you make. We pay them \$45 for a six-pack of soda that is then given to the troops for free. The laundry they washed cost \$100 a bag. None of their vehicles carry spare parts or oil filters. When they break down they must be destroyed lest the enemy gets them, and new ones ordered at tax payer's expense.

Kellogg, Brown & Root serve food at set times each day with hour long lines. This makes sniper attacks easy. The laundry is dirty when returned because the chlorine that is supposed to clean the water was never used. This goes for the bathing and drinking water as well. Halliburton provides blood borne pathogens for our troops to bring home as a souvenir of their service years.

How do they get away with this? All of these war profiteers have former military and government officials on their boards of directors. They also contribute money to political campaigns to grease the wheels. Living proof that capitalism is not a victimless crime.

As the credits roll we see Greenwald and his staff trying to contact these companies to get their side of the story. After 31 e-mails and countless calls, the four companies all refused to comment.

This war profiteering is framed as a Republican issue. Let's see how the Democrats do now that the ball is in their court.

"Money doesn't talk, it swears." – Bob Dylan

This DVD is available at the Peace & Justice Center.

US Debt, Vulnerability, and Spending for War

by Beth Grimes

We Americans carry a lot of credit card debt. Of course, we're required to pay it back or at least keep the finance charges paid.

The nation's credit card is also over-loaded and it, too, must pay finance charges. Our national debt is in the neighborhood of nine trillion bucks. Will that ever be paid off? Probably not. That's trillion with a "T," folks.

So how did our leaders get us in hock up to our ear lobes? It was easy. The government just spent more money every year than the revenue it received, creating annual deficits. Our debt is the total of those accumulated deficits.

Conservatives, the very people who preached to us about the evil of government over-spending, are the folks who plunged this country into the deepest fiscal holes. From 1981 to 1988, the Reagan administration tripled the national debt from the low \$900 billions to \$2.7 trillion. The elder George Bush pulled it up to \$4.5 trillion. Clinton slowed the growth of the debt, but his successor, George Bush the younger, has run it up to nine trillion. And counting. It'll probably reach ten trillion by January 20, 2009, when he hands it off to the next president. Makes a person dizzy just thinking about it.

So we, our nation, all of us, owe a gargantuan sum of money. Our government copes with its deficits and ever-ballooning debt by borrowing money. They do this by issuing US securities: treasury bonds, notes and bills. Promises to pay. Don't you wish you could do that? Of course, the government must pay interest on those securities or no one would buy them.

For many years, United States investors bought most of these securities. After a time, American individuals and institutions could no longer buy enough to finance all that borrowing, and we started selling them to foreign countries. Japan, China and Saudi Arabia,

for example. That makes us vulnerable, because the value of our dollar has been supported by foreign purchases of our treasuries. If those other countries stop buying, the impact on our economy will be severe.

In a good year, fiscally speaking, our leaders might stop spending like drunken sailors and balance income with outgo, thereby somewhat diminishing the money we have to pay for interest on the debt, by just not increasing it. But don't hold your breath waiting for that to happen.

The money to pay that interest debt has to come from – who else? The American taxpayer. And since we're footing the bill for borrowing costs on all this spending, see who's getting the money.

According to the Office of Management and Budget, the Discretionary Spending Request for FY 2007 is \$871 billion. Of that amount, approximately half is for Defense and that proportion rises to more than half if we add Veterans Administration outlays to the Defense budget. And we should. The staggering dollar cost of Defense Department operations in the spending bill does not include most Iraq and Afghanistan military costs.

Do we need to spend this much money fighting a war on terror? We did attack Iraq to fight terror, didn't we? Surely it was not a war for control of a diminishing resource, oil. Or was it?

Money spent from the Discretionary Budget comes from income taxes paid by US individuals and business. The more we give to military contractors the less we have to spend on education, health care for our children, transportation, infrastructure, development of alternative energy and other vital needs.. All these are being crowded out by bloated spending on war and preparation for unending war.

We, the taxpayers, deserve better.

Seeing Through the Smoke: Climate Change and the Iraq Occupation are Symptoms of Corporate Empire

by Daniel Solnit

Al Gore's film "An Inconvenient Truth" has finally made the US public aware of climate change. The film powerfully conveys the seriousness and urgency of the problem, but largely ignores the root causes. To be fair, the film wouldn't have made it into theatres with the larger truth: *climate change, like the Iraq war, is not an isolated problem, but rather a symptom of the world's current economic structure.*

The globalized economy of the last half-century is dominated by transnational corporations whose sole value is profit. The feedback mechanisms which keep natural ecosystems in balance are missing from the global economy, so that the "market" takes no notice of deforestation or species extinction until they impact profits. Breathable air, drinkable water, and a livable climate have no value unless they can be sold to consumers. This system relies on endless growth, which Edward Abbey called the philosophy of the cancer cell. All natural systems have limits; populations that exceed those limits eventually collapse.

Which is where we are now: early stages of system collapse. We've exceeded earth's carrying capacity, consuming natural resources and releasing pollutants (including

greenhouse gases) beyond planetary limits. Empires collapse when they run out of land, water, or energy; controlling the diminishing oil supply is imperative to keep the corporate empire running for a few more decades. The logic of globalization dictates that Iraq's huge oil reserves be opened up to "free trade" regimes for rapid corporate exploitation. The US military serves as a mercenary force for these economic interests, and we pick up the bill.

Responses to climate change are often superficial or ineffective, because we're treating symptoms but failing to understand the root causes.

For example, climate change is not a result of overpopulation; we're not all equally responsible. The US is only 5% of world population, but produces 25% of all greenhouse gases. We Americans cause 2-3 times as much climate change as Europeans, 10 times that of Chinese, and 30 times that of most Africans. We need to reduce our emissions far more than residents of poor nations, probably by 80% or 90%.

That takes more than changing light bulbs. A green lifestyle is important, but it won't change the larger infrastructure problems which cause most climate change. Driving a hybrid won't build clean mass transit; conserving energy won't shift PG&E toward renewable energy. We need a mass movement to redefine public policy and redirect our entire culture toward sustainability. So change your bulbs, but get involved politically too.

There are no techno-fixes. New technologies are essential, but they won't allow us to continue with consumption-as-usual. Sorry, but you can't have a hydrogen-powered SUV or a solar eco-mansion.

Nor will government lead us out of this crisis. The Bush administration operates like a PR firm for Exxon-Mobil. Unfortunately, the Democratic Congress feeds from the same corporate trough, and is unlikely to take meaningful action unless forced by massive public pressure. Ratifying the Kyoto treaty would be a good start, but its reduction levels are not nearly enough to stabilize atmospheric CO₂ below catastrophic levels. It's up to ordinary folks to lead; that's how democracy works.

Global warming is more than an ecological crisis; it's an economic one. Katrina's cost, estimated at \$200-300 billion (about as much as the Iraq war), impacts the entire US economy. At best, we face more storms, floods, fires, droughts, famines, and persistent economic recession; at worst, the combination of climate change, peak oil, and financial instability could bring on a full-scale economic crash, causing far more suffering and social disruption than any hurricane.

Climate change is a direct consequence of our over-consumptive lifestyle and our profit-driven economic system. Folks in affluent nations have been on a spending binge, driven by cheap fossil fuels and delayed environmental consequences, and paid for by the world's poor and future generations.

A sustainable way of life is possible (and ultimately more rewarding), but it requires a complete redesign of our economy and infrastructure along ecological principles, and profound shifts in our cultural values.

Time is short; what we do in the next decade will determine the earth's carrying capacity for centuries to come. Working together, we can grow a local green economy based on simplicity and human needs, and a just, peaceful, and sustainable culture in balance with the earth.

<A2>Daniel Solnit is director of the Institute for Local Economic Democracy, a nonprofit leading the transition to local sustainability. He will speak on climate change and economic relocalization - see calendar for details. Info: 823-4480, www.iled.org.

Impeachment Campaign

by Dan Monte, Congressional District Impeachment Committee

“The Declaration of Independence, revered as a document, but ignored as a guide to action, needs to be read from pulpits and podiums, on street corners and community radio stations throughout the nation. Its words, forgotten for over two centuries, need to become a call to action for the first time since it was read aloud to crowds in the early excited days of the American Revolution: *Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it and institute new government...* The time is right, then, for a national campaign calling for the impeachment of President Bush and Vice President Cheney... Simply raising the issue in hundreds of communities and Congressional districts would have a healthy effect, and would be a sign that democracy, despite all attempts to destroy it in this era of war, is still alive.” – Howard Zinn

The Peace & Justice Center has an ongoing postcard campaign to encourage our lawmakers to begin an impeachment investigation. Please contact the Center for postcards and addresses.

The Progressive Democrats of America have formed a Congressional District Impeachment Committee, headed locally by Dan Monte. To work with the Center and Dan on impeachment, please contact us at 575-8902. Dan’s request for help on this project follows:

I really think we, the impeachment community, have to plan some very public events to bring the critical issue of impeachment to the consciousness of the people in Sonoma County. Enough so that they act. We can have a demonstration in downtown Santa Rosa, where we can focus on having people go home and call their legislators and their friends and media – a walk around 4th St., the *Press Democrat*, then a rally at Courthouse Square. I think the message should be the urgency of four intertwined issues: impeachment, protection of the Constitution, ending the occupation of Iraq, and preventing a war on Iran. I am open to any ideas for bringing more public awareness to this issue.”

Speech for Martin Luther King Day

by Maggie Shillington

Ladies and gentlemen, I am standing before you today in hopes that I may leave you with a new approach to your perspective on prejudice. There have been some distinguished defenders of civil rights who have given their lives to see that there has been a change in thought among the citizens of our nation. One of which is the incomparable Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. King once said, “I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed.” But I want you to ask yourself now, even though we have made a revolutionary modification to the meaning of unity, has our nation risen up to live out Dr. King’s dream? The dream of righteousness, equality, and harmony? Today we are more aware than ever of the destruction caused by bias and prejudice. Prejudice against sexual orientation, against the color of one’s skin, against anyone who comes from a different socio-political or socio-economic background. Our judgments seem never ending! Our world will

never be free of judgment, bias, or predisposition. But wouldn't it be better if we could keep those insidious beliefs from taking root?

Our own Declaration of Independence states that "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." We are all given the right to personal expression in this country. But it seems impossible not to judge people when they are different from what is considered the standard.

I have been judged for the way I dress and recently for the color of my hair. Just a few weeks ago my hair was an array of different colors ranging from red to blue and maybe a little bit of green. I was prohibited from attending a junior dance class for the color of my hair. The class has a strict dress code that does not permit certain hair pigment. I thought it was whimsical and outspoken however, the head instructor did not see it the same way. I was singled out by this gentleman who, on a microphone, nonchalantly pronounced in front of all 300 participants, that the dance class didn't want any "rainbow-headed weirdoes" to participate. Some of my peers and even their parents were outraged at his unjust treatment towards me, but I do not blame the instructor for his actions. I instead chose to take this as a lesson. I learned more about empathy from this experience - empathy for people who have been judged. Especially for victims of mistreatment caused by prejudice. Victims who have dealt with issues of injustice at the hands of people who cannot recognize their own bias and misuse of power. As James Baldwin once said, "it demands [a] great[er] spiritual resilience not to hate the hater whose foot is on your neck, and an even greater miracle of perception and charity not to teach your child to hate." I do not hate this man but I wish he could reflect on his prejudice and see ME; see me as more than just a rainbow-headed weirdo. Dr. King demonstrated this very concept when he stated that he hoped one day his four little children would live in a nation where they would not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. He was not put off by those who judged him by his color; he simply challenged their beliefs and encouraged them to rethink their principles.

I know very well that we will probably never reach a time where there is no prejudice, but I simply want us all to remember that no one has "the highest truth." When we believe our truth is the highest truth above all the rest; that separates and divides. Unity becomes impossible. When we believe our truth is the ultimate truth, we can not truly empathize with others because we can't see through the wall of our judgment to the content of their character. And without empathy and understanding, there can be no justice. We need to be vigilant in examining our personal truth and remember there is NO ONE RIGHT VIEW. I too have a dream, a dream that we recognize our prejudice, our bias and rise above it. And not return judgment for judgment but instead remember that justice, unity and love are born from empathy and understanding.

Sir! No Sir! Project

by David Zeiger, Displaced Films

"I just wanted to say thank you for this film, for raising my awareness, I never even knew some of these things happened. I think this probably is one of the most important documentaries made about war resistance. The movie was such a driving force for me I had my own screening here in Ramadi, Iraq and got at least 10 service members to sign the Appeal for Redress (a petition to congress, signed by over 1,200 soldiers, demanding an end

to war) with me... My whole word this deployment (my second) has been awareness and I thank you for giving me yet another tool to spread that awareness." Thank you again, Sgt. Spencer Batchelder.

Since *Sir! No Sir!* opened in theaters last April, many activists and friends of the film have argued that it should be made available to everyone for free. I couldn't agree more. In the world I want to live in *all* art would be free to everyone. In that world, films would not cost hundreds of thousands or even millions of dollars to make. In that world, artists could survive and continue making the films people need.

That's not the world we live in. In *this* world, we need your direct support.

The best way to support and spread *Sir! No Sir!* is to buy and help distribute the DVD, especially the new "Director's Edition" that includes 1 1/2 hours of new stories from GI Movement both then and now. The DVD is available at www.sirnosir.com. Buy several to hand out and play an important role in getting this long-suppressed story into everyone's hands.

To purchase 10 or more DVDs, contact the producers directly at jadefox@sirnosir.com to arrange a discount. Get them into the hands of active duty GI's and young people considering military enlistment. Refer them to Iraq Veterans Against the War at <http://ivaw.org>.