



# Merrimack Valley People For Peace

## Serving the communities of the Merrimack Valley

Merrimack Valley People for Peace, Inc. works for a sustainable future for all life on our planet. Our members commit themselves to the interrelated activities of education for peace and justice, the prevention of war, an end to arms sales, the abolition of nuclear weapons, and protection of the environment.

April -- December 2010

*Merrimack Valley People for Peace joins the United Nations and peacemakers around the world in proclaiming the years 2001-2010 to be the "International Decade for the Culture of Peace."*

## GOOD NEWS



Pat Scanlon and Daniel Ellsberg, December 16 in Washington, DC  
Photo courtesy of Ellen Davidson

**Hundreds of Veterans for Peace and other peace and justice activists gathered in Washington, D.C.** on December 16, in a protest led by Veterans for Peace and endorsed by 40+ coalitions and groups working for peace and social justice. The protesters demanded an end of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and expressed solidarity with the network WikiLeaks and whistle blowers Julian Assange and Bradley Mannings. The event began with a rally in Lafayette Park.

Under the rapidly increasing snowfall, we heard a stellar group of speakers: Daniel Ellsberg of Pentagon Papers fame, probably the best known whistle-blower in modern US history; Mike Ferner, president, Veterans for Peace; Ray McGovern, retired CIA officer and former U.S. Army intelligence officer; Chris Hedges, Pulitzer-prize winning journalist, author and war correspondent; environmental activist Diane Wilson; Medea Benjamin, co-founder of Code Pink; Mike Prysner, Iraq veteran, co-founder of March Forward; Brian Becker, national coordinator, ANSWER coalition; Debra Sweet, director, World Can't Wait; Dr. Margaret Flowers of Physicians for a National Health Pro-

gram and others. MVPP member Pat Scanlon was the stage manager for the rally.

At the end of the speeches, all participants read together a Pledge of Nonviolence. "Taps" was played, then the protesters silently lined up in a single-file procession behind the main banner which read: "PEACE ON EARTH? MR. OBAMA, STOP THESE WARS. NOT TOMORROW. NOT NEXT YEAR. NOW!"

The solemn march proceeded through the snow to the White House in total silence, accented only by the beat of a drum. Over one hundred and thirty people chained themselves or held on to the fence of the White House, singing "We Shall Overcome", "Down by the Riverside" and "We Shall Not Be Moved." It took over three hours for the police to arrest them all, while the rest of the protesters sang, chanted and witnessed across the street. 131 people, most of them veterans, were arrested. Among them were Daniel Ellsberg, Chris Hedges, Ray McGovern, Mike Ferner, Dr. Margaret Flowers, Elliott Adams, 91-years old Frances Crowe, Bruce Gagnon, artist Robert Shetterly, Medea Benjamin, FBI whistle-blower Colleen Rowley, a group of young Iraq veterans and 13 members of the Smedley D. Butler Brigade (the Boston-based Chapter 9 of Veterans for Peace) including MVPP member Pat Scanlon.

It was an event of tremendous moral importance and power, which will remain unforgettable for all who participated in it.

Solidarity events took place in San Francisco and New York, where some of the protesters were also arrested.

**Local Community Radio Act approved by Congress.** On December 18. the Senate approved the Local Community Radio Act, one day after its passage in the House. In response to overwhelming grassroots pressure, Congress has given the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) a mandate to license thousands of new community stations nationwide. Thousands of grassroots advocates and dozens of public interest groups have fought for ten years to secure this victory for local media. The bill repeals legislation that limited most Low Power FM stations to rural areas because large broadcasters claimed interference with their signals.

In a statement, the Prometheus Radio Project welcomed the bill's passage as "the first major legislative success for the grow-

**MVPP Meeting** – March 23, 7:30 PM North Parish Church, Unitarian, N Andover

<http://www.merrimackvalleypeopleforpeace.org/>

You can view newsletters on line (where most links work) at <http://www.merrimackvalleypeopleforpeace.org/oldmins.htm>

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ing movement for a more democratic media system in the United States."

**Inspiring action of 350.org.** On 10/10/10, people got to work on the climate crisis at 7,347 events in 188 countries. They dug community gardens, installed solar panels, planted trees, and more. Organizer Bill McKibben of 350.org said the goal of the day was not to solve the climate crisis one project at a time, but to send a clear political message to our political leaders: "If we can get to work, so can you!"

**Victory for Domestic Workers United in New York State.** In September, New York Governor David Paterson signed into law a measure establishing a landmark set of working standards for housekeepers, nannies and other domestic workers. With the signing of the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights, New York becomes the first state where domestic workers will be guaranteed overtime pay after a forty-hour workweek, at least one day off per week, and at least three days off with full pay per year. The bill went into effect on November 29, 2010.

The passage of the bill comes after a six-year organizing campaign by Domestic Workers United, an organization led by immigrant nannies, housekeepers and elderly caregivers. Labor organizers are now hoping other states will enact similar laws to protect domestic workers who for decades have not been covered by federal labor laws, including the National Labor Relations Act and the Fair Labor Standards Act.

**Shaw's strike victory.** July 8, 2010. Workers at the Shaw's Methuen distribution center ratified a four-year contract that ended a three month strike. The ratification was a day after workers rejected a contract that they say would have resulted in the loss of \$28 per week, or about \$1,456 annually for people on the family health insurance plans.

The workers' union, is the United Food & Commercial Workers Union, Local 791. Some MVPP members supported the strike.

**Agent Orange Cleanup.** Vietnam and the United States aim to start cleaning up contamination from Agent Orange at the Da Nang airport in central Vietnam, a former US wartime base. A memorandum signed by the two countries "confirms the mutual desire of both governments to cooperate in hopes that the cleanup can begin in July 2011 and be completed in October 2013", said a statement from the US embassy released on December 30, 2010.

In preparation for the cleanup, the US awarded a contract late last year for building a secure landfill site to hold contaminated soil and sediment at the airport. US ambassador Michael Michalak told the signing ceremony on Thursday that Washington has set aside almost 17 million dollars this year for the Da Nang dioxin cleanup, which will cost a total of 34 million dollars.

**START Treaty** The Senate ratified the START treaty which had lapsed earlier this year. Though the treaty included an amendment that included keeping the US missiles in Eastern Europe pointed at Russia, the amendment is in a "nonbinding statement that codifies the Senate's understanding of the pact but does not directly affect its language." This New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, should help reduce the threat of nuclear war.

Earlier, on May 28, 2010, the 189 member nations of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty had adopted a detailed plan of small steps down a long road toward nuclear disarmament, including a

sharply debated proposal to move toward banning the doomsday arms from the Middle East. (This is a separate treaty)

## 2010 Events

The walk for a Nuclear Free Future led by the Buddhist monks and nuns from the Peace Pagoda in Leverett stopped here for the vigil at Raytheon and for an event organized by MVPP and open to the public. We spent a great evening together, at which we had an exciting speaker: Bruce Gagnon, co-founder and coordinator of the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space. The walk continued through the North Shore to Boston, on its way to New York for the UN conference on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty May 1&2. <http://peaceandjustice-now.org/wordpress/> Several MVPP members went to New York for the Nuclear Disarmament rally/march on May 2.

MVPP members joined Veterans for Peace, Military Families Speak Out, Gold Star Families for Peace, and American Friends Service Committee for the Third Annual Memorial Day for Peace on Memorial Day. The event was also attended by members of the Iraqi refugee community in Lowell, three of whom were among the speakers. A flower was dropped in the harbor for each Massachusetts soldier killed, and for friends and family members of the Iraqi refugees. Immediately after that, some of us joined a protest against the Israeli attack on the Gaza aid fleet, the news of which had shaken the world earlier in the morning.

At our annual meeting in June, MVPP and a big group of our Iraqi refugee friends honored Mary Todd for her selfless non-stop work with the Iraqi refugee community in Lowell.

We had a table at the Lowell Folk Festival and enjoyed much discussion with festival goers.

To commemorate Hiroshima, August 6, we held a special vigil in Andover. Visitors from Japan made it even more meaningful.

Our table at Bread and Roses Festival was busy, and we had front row seats to watch the antics of the Bread and Puppet troupe.

A fund raising concert for MVPP, November 12, featuring Dean Stevens, David Dodson, Mary Kate Small and friends was entertaining and uplifting. Heartfelt thanks to the wonderful singers/songwriters for being so generous with their time, talent and loving presence.

Susan Nicholson spoke at our September meeting about the settlements as she witnessed their effects on Palestinians.

Bruce Gagnon, Founder and Coordinator of the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space, was the speaker at an event in Merrimack College on October 4, cosponsored by Merrimack College, First Universalist Church of Essex, MVPP, North Shore Coalition for Peace and Justice, Amesbury Friends Peace Center, Veterans For Peace and House of Peace. The topic of the speech was: Raytheon and Full Spectrum Dominance

MVPP members Martina Cruz and Boryana Tacconi were among the thousands who went to Washington D.C. for the October 2, 2010 One Nation Working Together rally for peace, jobs, justice and education.

## Weekly Vigils

**Andover:** Sunday, noon-1 pm; Shawsheen Square, Junction of Routes 133 and 28; Lawrence Friends Meeting/ Shawsheen Peace Witness; Allan Sifferlen, [asifferlen@sbra.com](mailto:asifferlen@sbra.com).

**Andover:** Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 7-8 pm; Saturday, 10:45 am-noon (in good weather, 10-noon); Old Town Hall, 20 Main St.; Merrimack Valley People for Peace; Lou Bernieri, [lbernieri@andover.edu](mailto:lbernieri@andover.edu).

**Andover:** Tuesday, 6:30-7:30 am; in front of Raytheon plant near Routes 133 and 93; Raytheon Peacemakers; Arthur Brien, 978-686-4418.

**Gloucester:** Saturday, noon-1 pm; Grant Circle.

**Marblehead:** Tuesday, 6:30-7:19pm in front of the high school and Community Center at the lights at the intersection of Humphrey-Pleasant and Lafayette Sts.; Tom Gale, 781-631-1218.

**Nashua, NH** in front of Nashua City Hall from 11 to Noon every Sat. [www.nashuapeace.org](http://www.nashuapeace.org)

**Newburyport:** Sunday, noon-1 pm; Market Square; Niki Rosen, 978-463-3208.

**Reading:** 2nd Saturday/each month, 11 am-noon; Reading Square; Reading People for Peace; Bob Connor, [bobconnor1@yahoo.com](mailto:bobconnor1@yahoo.com).

**Rockport:** Wednesday, noon-1 pm; First Congregational Church (silent for peace).

**Salem, MA:** Saturday, 11-noon; Riley Plaza (by the Post Office).

Four of us marched with the Veterans for Peace at the Armistice Day event in Boston. The march was followed by a rally with excellent VPF speakers and music by the Leftist Marching Band in front of the Faneuil Hall.

Mary Kate Small and Boryana represented MVPP at the 2010 November vigil to close the School of the Americas at the Fort Benning military base in Columbus, Georgia.

At our annual **Stone Soup gathering** on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, Hattie Nestel spoke about: "Nuclear Power: Pitfalls and Dangers. Transitioning to a nuclear-free and Carbon-free Future." Hattie's deep knowledge about the topic combined with her passionate activism makes her a unique speaker and we felt really privileged to be there for this eye opening talk.

## Mary Kate's Wedding

Many from MVPP attended longtime member and activist Mary Kate Small's wedding in July. David Dodson and Mary Kate organized a wonderful service at St. Robert Bellarmine Church in Andover. Of course we sang and the food (especially the peace sign cake) was fit for the queen and her new king.

## Coming Events

Come to Washington D.C. Saturday, **January 15, 2011** to commemorate the U.S. 20th year of war with Iraq, and rededicate our lives to living out Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream of abolishing war and injustice.

Questions: [january15peacecommittee@post.com](mailto:january15peacecommittee@post.com) or Dorothy Day Catholic Worker (202)882-9649

## Meeting Summaries

### March 23, 2010

The treasurer reported that 16 checks totaling \$1375 were mailed to organizations approved at the February meeting.

Several people reported on the vigils held to mark the 7th anniversary of the invasion of Iraq. MVPP members organized and attended vigils in Andover, Newburyport and Washington, DC.

MVPP will host the Walk for Nuclear Disarmament. The dinner is sponsored both by MVPP and North Parish Church. The walkers will vigil at Raytheon on the 6th at 6:30 AM and MVPP will host them that evening for the pot luck dinner and overnight. The group decided to send \$100 to Bruce Gagnon, organizer of Keep Space for Peace, as an honorarium when he speaks to the group after the pot luck dinner on April 6th. A newspaper article will send it out to the papers, and an abbreviated notice will be sent to local places of worship for their weekly publications. The walkers will be in Newburyport on the following day, Wednesday, April 7th at noon.

The annual meeting was scheduled for May 21st at 6:30. (Note: a concert was re-scheduled at North Parish church on this same date and our annual meeting date will probably need to be rescheduled.)

The group voted to send \$100 to Partners in Health for Haiti relief. It was approved.

### May 25, 2010

Iraqi refugees. Mary reported that CORI status, applied for to care for refugee children, was denied for MVPP. Another family has arrived, making 30 families total. People are still donating and volunteering their time – both people in MVPP and beyond.

Pat Scanlon and Veterans for Peace have their annual Memorial Day for Peace in Boston. Iraqi families have been invited to honor family members and friends who have died or who are missing. One of the Iraqi men will speak at the event.

Deb Drake reported about the diaper drive she conducted at North Parish and gave funds collected for that purpose to Arthur.

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Return to  
P.O. Box 573  
North Andover, MA 01845

MVPP is registered with the IRS as a 501(c)(3) organization. Contributions to MVPP are tax deductible. Last year, approximately one-third of our members joined/renewed at higher than the basic rate. **Check here  if you prefer to receive your newsletter via e-mail.**

Barbara reported that nominations for next year will be ready by the June 13th annual meeting. The pot luck dinner for our annual meeting will be held on Sunday, June 13th at North Parish Church at 6 PM and the group approved a \$50 donation to the church for use of the space. Iraqi partners and volunteers, Veterans for Peace and members of the North Parish congregation will be invited. Mary will contact Iraqi partners and volunteers, Barbara will contact VFP and Deb will contact North Parish.

Dues will stay the same for next year. Barbara will be the coordinator of a committee along with Peter and Arthur, to call people who have not paid dues recently. The annual meeting is the time to renew dues for the coming year. Brian will send a list to the committee of who has paid and who has not for them to make the calls.

Boryana and Mary Kate are going to the People's Music Network. Boryana will contact people for a folk music fund-raiser. There was discussion about asking Iraqi families who wish to provide desserts for sale at the concert.

Summer events: MVPP will have a table at the Lowell Folk Festival on Saturday, July 25. Boryana will follow up for table reservation. It will be good to have an article written up about the Iraqi families living in Lowell for the table. Arthur will do the same for the Bread and Roses Labor day event in Lawrence in September.

Barbara reported that the North Shore Coalition would like to meet with us to bring Bruce Gagnon back and possibly to go to Raytheon in the fall. There was discussion about how to get the right audience. Kathie will get in touch with North Shore Coalition.

MVPP will buy a \$20 ad in the Sea Coast Peace Response event that is honoring one of their members.

Tom Jackson made a film about Gaza and needs funds for the project and for distribution.

Barbara mentioned bringing Susan Nicholson, who is a scholar and good communicator and who has been to Israel and the West Bank several times. She is willing to come to MVPP to make a presentation. Barbara will contact Susan to see when she might be free in September.

## June 22, 2010 Annual Meeting

The meeting started informally as we looked at many photographs taken by our Iraqi friends and Bobbie of the annual MVPP potluck meeting, which consisted of a celebration and

appreciation of Mary Todd's involvement with the Iraqi refugees now living in Lowell. This happy, wonderful event was a complete surprise to Mary. We estimate that about 130 people came, including most Iraqi families, who showered Mary, their "angel", with praises, poems and skits.

The UU North Andover church, where we hold our meetings, has asked that MVPP fill a request form for any further events, and that from now on, formal training be given to learn kitchen policies. The church reduced its special event fee of \$200 to \$50 for the June annual meeting. Because the event was larger than expected, MVPP voted to send an additional \$50 with a thank you note. Arthur will send the check to Niki and she will send it and the thank you note to the church. Also, it was decided to ask Pat Scanlon to inquire exactly what fee the church wants.

Summer events: MVPP hopes to have a table at the Lowell Folk Festival, Saturday, July 24. Set-up and take down help is needed.

Boryana mentioned that the National Conference to Bring Our Troops Home Now is taking place at the same time as the Lowell Folk Festival.

We discussed inviting Susan Nicholson, NSC member and knowledgeable about Israeli/Palestinian issues to speak at the September 28 MVPP monthly meeting. Deb will also ask if Susan can speak at a church service.

Barbara talked about Ann Wright's informed and thoughtful presentation in Essex MA June 18 of the events leading to the debacle of the flotilla to Gaza - she was on one of the boats. Unfortunately there was a lot of negative response, but Boryana reported that Ann's presentation the next night at the Palestinian Center for Peace, in Allston, was met with respect and enthusiasm.

The North Shore Coalition is hoping to reserve a room at Merrimack College early in October to discuss "Keep Space for Peace" with Bruce Gagnon, plus Raytheon's weapons business. MVPP members expressed interest in joining this conversation. Possible date will be forthcoming.

Kathie urged members who live in John Tourney's district to put pressure on him to investigate U.S. combat practices in the light of international law, and reform them as needed. Tourney heads the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs. See [warandlaw@yahoo.com](mailto:warandlaw@yahoo.com)



## Letter to MVPP 6/22/2010

Dear Mary

In your celebration, and after about one year and a half since we've met... I wish everybody listen to my humble trying to describe and testify what I saw you doing to help the Iraqis in Lowell.

I saw you when welcome every new Iraqi family arrived ... just to make us feel better and reduce our concern about our new life...

I saw you when you did the resumes of many of us ...kind of helping us finding a job

I saw you when you try your best to calculate and bring a lot of stuffs for many Iraqi families ... just to make them satisfy and complete their needs.

I saw your garage was never fit for your car because it was like a store for the stuffs you kept for us... and you always kept your car outside.

I saw you when spending hours cleaning stuffs before give it to any family ...because you would like to give it clean and well shape for them.

I saw you when you use your own car to deliver stuffs to the families with sunny smile in your face ...

I saw you when your car is not enough you borrow your son car or your friends car to do that... just to deliver us what we need.

I saw you when your Tears come silent when I told you about my country suffering ...

I saw you when you looking for the families who needs help everywhere ... I remember when you took me with about an hour driving just to see Iraqi family may need help.

I saw you when you give many Iraqis a ride to Logan Airport, or to the Hospital... or to the Mall .... Or where ever the Iraqis need a ride.

I saw you inviting Iraqi families to your home in Easter or thanks giving or for a lunch or dinner like close friend or like you know them for long time ago ...

I saw you when you advice, listen carefully, and sympathized with our problems, and concerns,.

I saw you when you follow up with any other organization to help us ...

I saw you when you follow up and try to organize any help for the Iraqis with the International Institute of Lowell.

I saw the happiness fill your heart and face when you see any success for any Iraqi family.

I saw you in many nice situations with us, and many nice things you did for us.

But seems unfortunately I want be attend to see how my Iraqi brothers will thank you ... I'm sure they will do that in very nice way, at the same time I believe how nice they are as well as they love you and respect you a lot.

I know you never ask for thanks, nether you or any other member of MVPP or any others who tried a lot to help us ... at the same time I feel the "thank you" is too short for you... but that's all what we have for you ...so will you please let me say.

Angel " as I always call you "

Thank you so much

from deep of our Hearts ...

Please accept my simple gift, I hope you will like it.

by the way, The last time I drew was 1994 ... So another thanks to you to make me draw again

Yours Truly

Bassam Al Qaysi and his family

Special thanks to Ms. Debbera Drake to deliver this to you.

**July 27, 2010**

We agreed to have an accountant look at our books.

We agreed to send a letter at the end of the calendar year about dues. There still are many MVPP members who have yet to pay dues for 2010.

Events:

Lowell Folk Festival. Attendance numbers were down but MVPP was well received, no hecklers for a change, and some actually were interested, including a few young people. Though we didn't have the figures at the meeting, Kathie thought we broke even. Peace cranes were a big hit.

Labor Day Heritage Day, Bread and Roses festival at the Lawrence Commons—everyone is encouraged to attend and help out at the MVPP table.

Hiroshima, Nagasaki. MVPP will have a vigil Saturday, August 7, from 11-12pm. Kathie will send a press release and Boryana

will communicate with Andover that we may have a small table. Please bring relevant posters to the vigil, and if you can make peace cranes, bring them as well. Boryana will make a large peace crane for the event.

Susan Nicholson will be speaking to MVPP about the Israeli/Palestinian problem September 28.

Bruce Gagnon will speak October 4 about nuclear proliferation and Raytheon at a meeting cosponsored by MVPP, NSC and Merrimack College.

Other business:

It was moved and seconded to give Boryana up to \$200 to buy buttons and bumper stickers for the Bread and Roses festival. Also, we will ask Marcia Gagliardi, who is now in Italy, to buy 25 peace flags.

### **August 24, 2010**

The Hiroshima Day Vigil Included an unexpected visit by an elderly couple from Tokyo, with their American daughter-in-law and granddaughter. They had seen the press release in the paper and stopped by. Mary reported on a vigil she had been to where they held a time of silence and rang a handbell from Hiroshima.

Boryana distributed postcards received from Hattie Nestel to be signed and mailed to our representatives in support of a "Nuclear Free Future."

Kathy brought Code Pink's statement (The Iraq Debacle) regarding the withdrawal of troops from Iraq. Mary proposed and it was unanimously agreed that MVPP would sign on. Thanks to Don Abbott for forwarding the information. Mary recruited Lou Bernieri to write a letter to the Tribune covering Code Pink's talking points.

Mary brought forward a proposal regarding Playback Improv theater, who have offered their services for free. It involves having the Iraqis tell their story and then having the theater group act it out. Concerns were expressed about whether the group includes professionals who could deal with adverse reactions and whether there are resources available should the experience open up things that require therapy. Mary agreed to get more information. If we decide to go ahead with the project, we'd need to then talk to the families and assess the interest level and how many families would participate.

Mary told the group that the Lawrence Tribune had asked readers to respond to the question whether the "New York mosque" should be built. She and Jim have written a letter and she encouraged others to write as well.

Jim Todd spoke with Father John Dear (a Jesuit priest peace activist dedicated to non-violence who says he is "following the non-violent Jesus") at the retreat he and Mary attended and the priest is interested in coming to New England. Kathy thought that such a visit might be better organized by a religious organization. We might also ask Art McDonald of the UU church in Essex.

Boryana reported that Iraq Veterans Against War (IVAW) will be commemorating the battle of Fallujah

Susan Nicholson will speak on Israel-Palestine at our September 28 meeting and we are working on publicity to ensure good attendance.

Regarding the October 4 program with Bruce Gagnon, Boryana volunteered to contact the House of Peace.

Mary reported that the Society for Biblical Studies is organizing a 10-day fact-finding pilgrimage to Israel-Palestine similar to one she participated in. Cost is approximately \$3000, with 80% of the time spent in Palestine and 20% in Israel.

Jim and Mary Todd were invited to speak at the Lowell Rotary Club, about the Iraq refugees.

Boryana has ordered more supplies, as we gave away a lot at the Lowell Folk Festival. No reply has been received yet on inquiries into buying more peace flags.

Eight members will people the booth at the Bread and Roses Festival. Arthur is the contact regarding weather cancellation.

Boryana asked if anyone else is planning to go to Washington DC for the October demonstrations.

We decided to donate \$200 to the Pakistan Flood Victims. Two organizations recommended were the Islamic Relief Fund (which has a record of 91% of monies collected going to the intended recipients, one of the best records of all charities) and Oxfam.

### **September 28, 2010**

Susan Nicholson spoke prior to the business meeting to 21 people. Much praise for her clear and reasoned presentation. Her focus was the history of the Israeli built wall, and the multitude of problems it has caused for the Palestinian people.

Much gratitude was given to Reading UU church for its \$600 donation to MVPP for the Iraqi refugee fund.

Boryana described how Carter's clothing Co. surreptitiously is packaging "onesies": One of the six outfits in a package for year-old babies was designed in camouflage. Boryana had intended this packet to go to an Iraqi infant from Fallujah receiving medical treatment in this country. Thankfully she opened it beforehand.

### **Coming Events**

- Oct. 2 Peace Pagoda, Ware MA, with James Douglass, author of "JFK and the Unspeakable: Why He Died and Why It Matters"
- Oct. 2 March on Washington: One Nation Working Together
- Oct. 2 Bedford First Parish Church fund-raiser for Iraqi families and dinner prepared by Iraqi women.
- Oct. 4 Bruce Gagnon, founder and director of Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space. At Merrimack College, cosponsored by MVPP, NSC, Merrimack College, and others.
- Oct. 9 Agape Community's Annual St. Francis Day: Women and War, Finding Our
- Voices, Reclaiming our Legacy. See [www.agapecommunity.org](http://www.agapecommunity.org)
- Nov. 13-possible MVPP fund raiser with Dean Stevens. Venue TBA.
- Nov. 19-21 SOA vigil, Fort Benning, Georgia
- Nov. 23 MVPP's annual Thanksgiving stone soup meal. Venue TBA.

## October 26, 2010

We discussed the MVPP fund-raiser, November 12, starring Dean Stevens, David Dodson, Mary Kate, Pat Scanlon and many others. We decided to send emails and make phone calls during the week prior to the concert. Once the flyer has been made it will be sent to MVPP members to place in public venues. Also, tickets bought in advance are just \$10.00

There was no Iraqi Sub-group meeting in October. In Mary's absence, Brian reported:

- All Iraqi families offered free tickets to Aftermath, a play about Iraqi refugees living in Jordan. It received positive reviews in the Boston Globe. It will be Oct. 27-31, at the Paramount Theater, Boston.
- Two single men, a family of five, brother & sister in their twenties arrived
- Three new partner families
- Held partner get-together with several partner families
- Jim and Mary spoke at Rotary in Lowell in September
- Mary met with Lowell Community Health people to understand services better
- Bed bugs are an issue with several families. MVPP Iraqi fund is paying for trial family test kit of mattress/box springs encasement, etc. Bedford church is also helping.
- Still need tutors for adults and/or children
- Need volunteers to do practice driving occasionally

The Peace Abbey needs a new furnace for the main building, and have asked us and other organizations and people to help with loans of \$100. We tabled the issue until the November meeting.

November meeting-Stone Soup and "Fast for a World Harvest", with donations going to Oxfam. It will be November 23 at 6:30. Boryana is contacting Hattie Nestel for details of her presentation to us that night regarding the Vermont Yankee Nuclear power plant. Barbara will contact David Diamond, Seacoast Response, and SAPL, regarding the event.

The Bruce Gagnon Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space event is planned for sometime this April, possibly later. This will be an ambitious event, needing a lot of legwork. We need more details of what is expected from us. We need to be in touch with North Shore Coalition (NSC) group, which will be cosponsoring with us. It may take place at either Merrimack College, Northern Essex Lawrence campus, Phillips Andover. It may include a vigil on a Friday, followed by ten or so plenary sessions. Peter, Boryana and Barbara volunteered to form a subcommittee asking NSC members to work with us.

The "25% Solution" is another time-consuming but important project, and is gaining strength and action in many communities. Barbara will send information to all MVPP members.

## November 23, 2010

Before the business meeting we welcomed Hattie Nestel and Marcia Gagliardi, who joined us in the annual stone soup meal of a delicious vegetable soup and bread. After collecting contributions for Oxfam, we convened to hear Hattie explain in detail the serious problems facing the Vermont Yankee nuclear plant. She also gave a brief but concise history of how nuclear plants are run as well as describing the unfathomable dangers nuclear power poses, starting with the mining of uranium; as long as

there are nuclear power plants, there inexorably will be nuclear weapons. The Obama administration has earmarked 54 billion dollars for nuclear subsidies and loans. We are urged to contact our Congress and President, and not forget the START Treaty. Hattie's talk is available in written form by mailing her at [hattie-shalom@verizon.net](mailto:hattie-shalom@verizon.net).

We added income of \$710.44 from the Benefit Concert. Many thanks to the sponsors of the concert.

We approved the following contributions:

- \$100 as a gift to the Peace Abbey to help with the repair of the furnace.
- \$25 to the annual Lawrence Eagle Tribune Santa Fund

A discussion followed regarding whether or not to have the annual MVPP potluck dinner on the first Friday of January. This led to questioning what should be our future as a group, and in what direction we are heading, especially since the membership has dwindled. Eventually we decided to skip the potluck this year.

Israel/Palestine- we expressed interest in becoming more involved in this situation in the spring.

Conference with John Gagnon—Barbara will ask John Schuchardt what the latest news is and report back to MVPP.

Jane reported, that Stuart Leiderman, who is working with the Haitian League, sent word that the Florida's School Dept. donated 754 portable classrooms to Haiti but funds are needed to send them to Haiti. The classrooms could be used for housing, clinics or education. She will keep us informed as plans progress.

Jane also reported that Leiderman is outraged that of the \$54 million dollars collected for the Clinton/Bush Haiti Relief Fund, only \$4 million has been used or immediate relief. The Fund has changed its goal to giving money to contractors to construct buildings throughout Haiti, not just in the earthquake damaged area.

Boryanna described the trip she took with Mary Kate to the annual SOA event. There were less people this year (partly due to another demonstration that week end) but lots of energy.

Mary and Jim went to New Orleans to volunteer with their church in the building of homes. They reported there is still much to do, that there are parts of the city that remain desolate.

# Recommended Reading

by Peter Cameron

**The Nation, April 20. "Two, Three, Many Afghanistsans."** Obama's Pentagon is preparing for a number counterinsurgencies in the developing world, by Michael T. Klare, professor of Peace and World Security Studies at Hampshire College.

**"Disposable Soldiers, How the Pentagon is Cheating Wounded Vets"** by Joshua Kors. Cover story same issue.

The Atlantic June 2010 "My Country Tis of Me; There's nothing patriotic about the Tea Party Patriots" by Michael Kinslev. The author's last sentences sum it up: "Our new national motto is from the movie 'Network'. 'I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it anymore.' and what is 'this' Ask not."

## Letters

Since it has been 3/4 of a year since our last newsletter, these letters summarize members' responses to many of the issues of 2010.

### 3 responses by Michael Bleiweiss April/16/2010

*Lawrence Eagle-Tribune*

The writers bashing the Shaw's strikers have it backwards. The problem isn't that the strikers are overpaid and greedy, it's that similar non-union workers are underpaid. \$19 per hour is not that much money. It translates to \$36,000 per year -- barely middle class. Similarly, health insurance is essential to quality of life, but unaffordable to an individual policy holder. Would you really deny these hard-working warehouse workers a decent standard of living?

The fact is that unions help all of us have better wages and benefits by setting the standards across the job market. You should be joining them, not knocking them down. Your own wages and benefits could be at stake.

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The opponents of the new health care reform law scream that we are losing our freedom and of the end of democracy. Where were they when Bush was ramming through the Patriot Act and implementing warrantless wiretaps? I guess the repeal of the Bill of Rights is less dangerous than social programs.

They also cite its cost. They weren't upset when the Reagan and Bush tax cuts for the rich created ballooning deficits. Nor did they complain about the trillions of dollars cost of their wasteful weapons programs or the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

They are not really opposed to deficits per se, just to anything Democrats try to do.

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Limit Treatment claims that citizens from foreign countries come here for medical treatment. Does (s)he have any actual statistics to back this up? How do they pay for it? After all, we also have the most expensive medical treatment in the world. I doubt that their national medical system covers it. Perhaps these are the super-wealthy people from those countries.

It should also be pointed out that American insurance companies are encouraging their subscribers to travel to India for major operations. The trip, plus treatment in a boutique hospital there is still cheaper than being treated in an ordinary hospital here.

### Change of party

*Eagle Tribune July 2, 2010*

The calls from the right to impeach President Obama are starting. I wonder where these writers were when George Bush lied to start an illegal war, sanctioned torturing prisoners, violated the Constitution and the law to have warrantless wiretaps, had Justice Department lawyers sacked if their politics wasn't conservative enough, also failed to send guards to our border with Mexico, and proposed an amnesty for illegal immigrants. Most likely, they were calling his critics traitors. What a difference a change of party makes.

Michael Bleiweiss

### Ecological time bombs facing us

*The Daily News, Newburyport July 6, 2010*

To the editor:

I suppose the simplest way to put it is that if the earth dies, we die. If fish stocks are destroyed, there will be nothing for fishermen to catch. If living forests are turned to wasteland, all the countless ways they support life, including providing oxygen to the atmosphere, are lost. If irreparable holes are torn in the infinitely complex living network that sustains us, it is only a matter of time before we disappear.

This is really difficult for most people to grasp. Certainly the shills in Congress who are paid big bucks to value rapacious corporations above the human population don't want to hear it. But neither do car lovers who can't see the downside of oversized gas-guzzling vehicles or who thrill to off-road adventures while tearing up local ecosystems. We are blind to our own environment and take for granted that we are entitled to demolish everything in sight rather than respect and cooperate with nature. Too bad for us in the long run.

Michael Klare has identified four mega time bombs waiting in the wings that could follow the BP undersea gusher currently destroying the Gulf of Mexico. One of these is the Hibernia oil platform off the coast of Newfoundland, the world's largest, apparently sitting in the middle of an iceberg freeway (said traffic increasing with rising global temperatures). Its builders, a consortium of ExxonMobil, Chevron, Murphy Oil, Statoil and the Canadian government, assure us it is safe and can withstand a hit by an iceberg. Of course, we are talking about the icy, storm-ridden North Atlantic, and potential hits by multiple icebergs. (And speaking of icy, what about BP's ongoing effort to drill off the coast of Alaska using miles of connecting undersea pipe? These sites are not surrounded by the balmy waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Stopping the flow of an undersea accident in either place will not be an option). Klare also speaks of the Niger Delta Region in Nigeria, where horrific conditions exist due to the plunder of oil and other resources by corporations foreign to the area. On a map that may seem a small dot far away, but all dots do connect and send waves across the globe. We are facing countless other severe ecological threats as well, but again, few



seem to recognize this or their own involvement in environmental destruction.

Which brings me to my last musing. The above cited situations have been created by giant corporations in criminally heedless, single-minded pursuit of profit and total disregard for the well-being of humans and other forms of life. Few take the time to question where our wealth originates or where it goes (think Wall Street) or what our personal responsibilities are for protecting our home environment. We really need to rethink the way we live.

Diana Philip, Newburyport

## **America and Israel**

*Lawrence Eagle Tribune July 14, 2010*

President Obama and Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu told us that despite some family squabbles, the two basically agree. It is true. In spite of crimes most of the world abhors, the US still gives Israel all the military aid it needs to commit those crimes.

At the same time the two leaders met, Israel indicted some of its soldiers for inhumane acts. These indictments are supposed to make Israel look civilized.

They didn't indict the government who ordered the January 2009 invasion and that used experimental weapons against great numbers of civilians.

Some blame a Jewish lobby, but the American people are more responsible. Many Americans think that Israeli soldiers swooping in from helicopters can claim they were shooting in self defense. When a flotilla of ships tried to bring much needed supplies to Palestinians on the Gaza Strip, Israel sent helicopters. Who paid for those helicopters? If it was the US, shouldn't we taxpayers question it? We sure question other tax expenditures. Or are Americans rooting for their team, without looking for what is just?

There have been crimes on both the Palestinian and Israeli sides, but many more Palestinians have been killed. In the January 2009 fight, approximately 1,300 Palestinians and 13 Israelis were killed. (After publication, I realized this was 100 to 1) Only 235 of the Palestinians were combatants. This 10 to 1 ratio is similar to previous events. American cheerleaders may think the Israelis are more effective, but I think that in its fear Israel is making it worse. What would you do if an innocent family member was killed? Can't Israel's government see that terror inspires more terror? A growing number of Israeli citizens are questioning their government's actions.

Many Americans think these troubles are impossible to fix because they go back forever, but they really only go back sixty years. There was some friction in the 1930s, but the fighting really started after WWII, when Great Britain played both sides against each other and the US would not admit significant numbers to immigrate to the US. With the two biggest western powers crowding European Jews into Palestine, it exploded. America helped cause the mess and has to help fix it, but when the US does question Israel, it still provides military aid with our tax dollars. It has to be fixed, and military aid won't fix it.

Brian Quirk, Lawrence

## **Corporations Are Still Not People**

*Lawrence Eagle Tribune July 14, 2010*

Jerry McConnell criticizes Rep. Shea-Porter for voting to apply restrictions to corporate spending in political campaigns. He employs the standard right-wing epithets and a string of lies and half truths. I am curious where he is getting his "information."

Let's get one thing straight first. Corporations are artificial legal constructs, NOT people. Therefore, they should not have any rights not explicitly granted by statute. A string of rulings by "conservative," pro-corporate Supreme Court justices over the past century declaring them to be people does not make them so. These rulings need to be overturned -- by Constitutional amendment, if necessary. Remember, earlier Courts also ruled in favor of slavery and segregation.

Regarding the Disclose Act, it does the following:

1. Prohibits government contractors from campaign spending. This restrains a clear conflict of interest problem.
2. Restricts foreign nationals from making contributions to the political activities of foreign-controlled companies.
3. Prohibits corporations from coordinating their political activities with candidates.
4. Requires disclosure of political campaign spending by corporations.

Nowhere in the bill could I find any references to exceptions for unions or other non-profit organizations. In addition, no new restrictions are placed on political speech by individual real human American citizens.

The Supreme Court just gave corporations the right to spend billions of dollars to influence political campaigns in their favor (in addition to the army of lobbyists that they already employ to influence legislators). It is only fair that we the people get some tiny crumbs of protection from this onslaught of corporate control.

Sincerely,  
Michael Bleiweiss

## **Where's The Media Outrage Over Global Security Issues?**

*Gloucester Times July 15, 2010*

Through the years, picking up and unfolding the daily paper has been like crossing a bridge into territory that's been talked about or hinted at through the week. With this copy, the reporters' task is to inform us further with facts and analysis. The territory is no longer strange but within our purview and we can act on what we've learned as we see fit. Of course, once in while, there's an event that's emblazoned on page one that's totally unnerving.

"Oh, no!" won't fend off the impact of a local train wreck, the unearthing of a plot by extremists to blow up an important government building on a Sunday afternoon, a suicide pact agreed to by some of our soldiers in Afghanistan. These are events we'd rather not know about but they shock us into recognition of our commonality as so much of the daily paper does-- or did.

At one time, we relied on certain columnists, radio and TV commentators to keep us fully and accurately informed about any number of important, possibly life-changing circumstances.

Among others, Woodward and Bernstein, Walter Cronkite, David Brinkley and Chet Huntley, Peter Jennings, Dan Rather and Edward R. Murrow did their jobs in ways that enlarged our understanding of the use and misuse of government, the direction and misdirection of our culture and our own part in the overall drama.

In recent years, I had to turn to British papers online to learn just what was really going on in Iraq. The Downing St. memo gave me far more straightforward, truthful information than The New York Times and I knew our engaging in a "shock and awe" attack on that country was more than ill-advised. Millions of dead and displaced Iraqis are an enormous reproach to us. The mainstream media seem to have been diverted by the likes of Glenn Beck and Rush Limbaugh while those reliable columnists we could depend on are disappearing.

Attempts to compensate for the loss of information and the immediacy with which it's presented are apparent in Consortium News that features publications that are thought to be somewhat marginal like The Nation and Mother Jones. They don't include the larger audience that needs to be informed about events so they can be responded to, hopefully, in probing, measured ways.

Where, for example, is the widespread outrage over the information unearthed by Congressman John Tierney who is chair of the House Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs? Titled "Warlords, Inc.", he spoke of the Pentagon's paying warlords in Afghanistan to assure that the roads are safe for our

troops and trucks. The warlords, in turn, are paying the Taliban to assist them. How can that be? Why aren't we hearing about it on the front pages of our papers?

On June 18th, a U.S. naval carrier group, reportedly accompanied by at least one Israeli vessel, passed through the Suez Canal and into the Red Sea and went on toward the Persian Gulf. One of the carriers with 4,000 Marines aboard joins and serves to augment the U.S. armada now opposite Iran supposedly at the ready with a total, all told, of 10,000 combat personnel.

Where is this reported in our press with warnings that an attack on Iran would be a catastrophe, especially in that part of the Middle East? Israel has nuclear weapons along with Pakistan and India. A tinderbox mentality is at work. We need to know what could be in the offing. What we don't know (because we aren't being told), could bring grievous harm our way.

Bring back the mainstream press and instruct it to do the job it was intended for. After all, Ronald Reagan said, "Trust but verify". The general population needs to be in a position to do so

Cynthia Fisk, Gloucester

### **Victory for all of us**

*Lawrence Eagle Tribune, July 16, 2010*

Against the odds and unrelenting criticism of the anti-labor forces on the right, the Shaw's strikers finally won a fair contract from the giant corporation that sought to push them down. This is a victory for all of us who work for a living. It is thanks to the ongoing efforts of the unions that any of us have jobs that pay living wages and give decent benefits.

Michael Bleiweiss

### **A chance to see the truth at last**

*Newburyport Daily News, August 10, 2010*

To the editor:

Politicians lie to us. Wall Street lies to us. The Pentagon lies to us. The oil industry lies to us. Lying seems endemic in upper levels of power.

Wikileaks has presented us with the unvarnished truth, a rare and precious commodity in this nation. Wikileaks will save thousands of lives if Americans face the truth revealed in the released documents and act to end the savage and pointless wars that consume us.

Our civilization is unraveling due to the avarice and heedless aggression of those who wage war for profit. In the past 60 years America's covert and overt wars have killed millions of people of all ages all around the globe. We have become a raging war machine abroad while conditions at home continue to deteriorate. Any claim that our military actions make us safer is a bad joke. How long can this insane policy of endless wars that corrupt, pollute and destroy continue before collapse becomes inevitable?

Those who risk everything to bring truth to light deserve our utmost respect and support.

D. Philip  
Newburyport

### **Sound Off**

*Lawrence Eagle Tribune, July 29, 2010*

The recent incident with Shirley Sherrod at the Department of Agriculture demonstrates much of what is wrong with American politics. First, right-wing ideologues issue lies, half-truths, and deceptions to advance their agenda. Second, the right-wing press runs with it. Third, the main-stream press picks it up without checking any facts first. Finally, the spineless Democrats immediately capitulate without doing their own checking or push-back.

This is the tactic that the right employs repeatedly to great effect. It was the same pattern that trashed ACORN and got us into Iraq. It behooves all of us to look under the hood before accepting any assertion as fact.

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Once again, the Republicans have remained faithful to their corporate masters by filibustering the Disclose Act that would have required political ads to reveal which corporations contributed to them. The bill might have been imperfect, but could have been amended. Instead, they chose to stick to their obstructionist strategy by blocking all attempts to protect us from total corporate domination of the political process.

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"Bad English" is in such a hurry to condemn immigrants that he forgot the most likely reason that the receptionists speak broken English with foreign accents -- he has been transferred to another country. It is well-known that big corporations outsource customer service to low wage countries like India, the Philippines, and Mexico. This is because they are more inter-

ested in saving a few dollars than in employing Americans or providing good service.

Sincerely,  
Michael Bleiweiss

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Diana Philip

### **Islamic Cultural Center in NYC**

*Lawrence Eagle Tribune* August 19, 2010

We read and listen, with sadness, to arguments about whether or not an Islamic community center should be located in downtown New York City. Many within the Muslim religious community are contributing members to our society like you are and like we are. Iman Feisal Raul, who is connected with the proposed Islamic Center, is a respected member of an interfaith dialogue group that has been together in New York City for a long time.

Too many of us don't know much about Muslims or the religion of Islam. Like most of us, some are conservative politically and religiously; some are liberal, politically and religiously; and some are moderate, both politically and religiously. Each of us needs to examine how political and religious people of all faiths are really alike in so many ways. All major religions have the message of peace. Are we able to create peace in our own hearts and look for the presence of peace in the hearts of others as we discuss this issue?

Women and men alike, as citizens of the U.S. are proud to say we stand for democracy, for freedom and for tolerance. Many Muslims citizens, hold those same values. However, far too many people, including some who hold responsible positions, are speaking out with opposing views. Let us not lose sight of those values in our society that guarantees rights to all people regardless of color, culture, and creed.

Let us not foster religious persecution or create a hostile atmosphere around this issue and the decisions being made. There are strong feelings on both sides of this issue, but anguish, fear, or stereotypes should not be used as a yardstick to judge how decisions should or should not be made. Our country does not, or should not, make decisions based on emotions. Some Muslims, here in Massachusetts, especially women who wear a head scarf, do not feel safe walking down streets to do their laundry or grocery shopping. Are we guilty of creating "monster images" and stereotypes where a few radical Muslim fundamentalists make every Muslim a radical fundamentalist? Are we guilty in what we say and how we act?

Some are advocating building no more mosques anywhere, and some voices seem to be echoing George Wallace who, in 1963 'drew a line in the dust' and said: "segregation now, segregation tomorrow and segregation forever." Is that what you want? That's not what we want.

We do not know Muslims living in Manhattan, but they must have suffered like other families suffered on September 11th. Hundreds of Muslims died that day, both in the Towers and in trying to rescue trapped people.

As Christians, we are reminded that Jesus calls us to love our neighbor, even those who are perceived as "the enemy." It is clear to us that "everyone" is our neighbor. Jesus treated everyone with respect. Gandhi said "Jesus lived and died in vain if he did not teach us to regulate the whole of life by the eternal law of love."

People of the Islamic faith are not our enemy. We hope we can use this opportunity to find occasions to talk with each other and learn from each other and in the process create bridges that lead to understanding, peace and justice.

Jim and Mary Todd  
Lawrence, MA

### **Hot Topic letter**

where the newspaper solicits opinions on a specified topic.  
*Lawrence Eagle Tribune*, September 12, 2010

The Bush tax cuts should be allowed to expire. When the Republican Congress rammed through these tax cuts mostly benefiting the wealthy, the government immediately, and predictably, went from surpluses to the largest deficits in history. They put in a 5-year sunset provision to limit the damage and make it more palatable to the doubters.

In addition, they did not create the touted jobs or save small businesses. However, it did accelerate widening the already obscene disparity in wealth between the richest 2% and everyone else. It was little more than a trickle-down boondoggle.

Now, our priority should be reducing the deficit rather than allowing the wealthy to keep more money.

Sincerely,  
Michael Bleiweiss

### **Tax cuts**

*Lawrence Eagle Tribune*, September 26

With the impending expiration of the Bush tax cuts, Republicans are screaming to extend them and the spineless Democrats are

beginning to cave in to them as usual. However, this would be a big mistake.

In a masterful exercise of double-think, the "trickle-down" ideologues claimed that tax cuts for the wealthy would increase government revenues from all of the jobs they would create. The predictable reality was that deficits soared and few jobs were created at home (although plenty were created in China and India).

The fact is that tax rates on the wealthy have virtually no effect on jobs. Their excess money is just either parked in the secondary stock market (which does not provide capital for job creation) or used to buy luxury items that involve few jobs.

The disparity in wealth has soared since the tax cuts passed. The richest 1% of the population now controls 34% of the nation's wealth. The bottom 50%, which includes most working people, only possess 2.5%. An example of why this is happening is the ballooning compensation of corporate CEOs, which increased by 18% since 2001, while production worker's pay actually decreased. This actually drains money that companies could have used to create jobs. I see no reason why they should keep more of it.

Similarly, 60% of the benefits of a lower capital gains tax rate go to the richest 1%. The bottom 50% get only 0.5% of the benefit. Most capital gains income comes from trading on the secondary markets, which produce no income for companies to use for growth. Again, so much for helping working people get jobs.

Finally, the measly tax savings that working people get will create few jobs either. With most people insecure about their jobs, they will be reluctant to spend it and will tend to save for a rainy day. The unemployed don't have enough income for their break to even register.

For proof of my analysis, we already have the tax cuts now and we're not creating jobs. Therefore, we might as well focus on reducing the deficit, which will free up money to be invested in new businesses and jobs instead.

-Michael Bleiweiss

### **What will happen when oil runs out?**

*The Daily News of Newburyport* October 01, 2010

To the editor:

This month a study by a branch of the German military was made public, in which it was estimated that peak oil will likely be reached by 2010 (New York Times, Sept. 9). A U.S. Joint Operating Environment report from the U.S. Joint Forces Command predicted that "By 2012 surplus oil production capacity could entirely disappear, and as early as 2015, the shortfall in output could reach nearly 10 million barrels per day" (guardian.co.uk, April 11). For those unfamiliar with peak oil, the phrase refers to the point at which oil supplies begin to diminish and the cost of extraction becomes too great to be carried out.

Ours is a civilization totally dependent on oil, for heat, transportation, industrial production and in countless other areas. It's hard to imagine the changes that will be required when fossil fuel is no longer available. For endless millennia humankind lived without fossil fuel, but after a century of oil dependency, a vanished supply will cripple us.

Idealizing the age of oil, however, is to be untruthful. Brutal covert and overt wars continue to be fought to gain control of oil supplies wherever they exist, regardless of the human populations sacrificed in the rush for oil profits. Countries such as Ecuador in South America and Nigeria in Africa to Iraq in the Middle East have been plundered and devastated in the "interest" of securing oil. (I have wondered why the plunder has always been one-sided, why equitable business arrangements that would benefit all parties were seemingly impossible.) The conflict with Iran originated when BP (you've heard of that oil company) conspired with the CIA in 1953 to overthrow a democratically elected government and install a puppet shah in order to control Iranian oil supplies. All this for a resource that is running out.

The lust for oil (or the profits thereof) has also succeeded in wreaking inestimable environmental damage worldwide, in ways we have only begun to examine and comprehend, a toxic saturation of air and water and earth that puts us all at risk. That is without even considering the effects of global warming. People can deny all they wish, but coming soon, to your neighborhood ...

Michael Ruppert has spent a lifetime trying to alert people to the advent of peak oil, as shown in the movie "Collapse." There are numerous films available documenting various crises brought about by oil industry operations, including "Crude; the Real Price of Oil." Almost everyone is aware of the BP oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico, the Exxon Valdez event in Alaska and the recent Michigan Oil Spill caused by Enbridge that has contaminated waterways and water supplies. When it's all over, we won't miss those kinds of tragedies. Hopefully, we will halt the potentially enormous threats inherent in the practice of fracking for natural gas.

What happens next? I don't know, but perhaps we should be looking ahead. The age of oil hasn't been all that great.

Diana Philip

### **Open Minds are Key to Finding Answers**

*Gloucester Times*, October 11, 2010

Our beliefs are akin to mindsets. They are firmly in place and precious to us, especially if they're spiritual in nature. They are seen as providing a protective shield to close out what doesn't fit with our views, our early training, our ideals about the future. Often they can be shared and sometimes they are uniquely ours, arrived at through trial and error, good and bad experiences, our sifting through cultural requirements.

Statements about our beliefs are right out there in the public square. "My religious path is the only one that leads to salvation" can be met in seconds with "No matter what a person believes, the Constitution is the law of the land." Others crowd in. "Our realistic platform of lower taxes and smaller government is a guarantee of prosperity." From another arena, "Life is meant to be enjoyed. Ignore anyone who says it can be too demanding."

The stronger the advocacy, the greater the effect. In the present political realm, "Just say 'No'," repeated over and over in ringing tones seems to implant this idea as a directive to follow. "Muslims are violent," has become a mindset for many people and they didn't object to the idea of a pastor in Florida with congregants numbering fifty who planned to burn the Koran pub-

licly on the anniversary of 9/11. Didn't he realize that 11 Muslims died inside the buildings in the attack? Does he know that Islam was founded with peace as its principle touchstone? Doesn't this demonstrate that religious bigotry has interfered markedly with interfaith outreach?

In this country, there is a strong adherence to the idea that war will keep us safe. There have been 8 wars since WW11. How safe do we feel? The military-industrial-congressional complex fuels our economy despite Pres. Eisenhower's warnings about the trap that can be. The rule of money and the influence of countless lobbyists have eroded our democratic ideals to say nothing about the imbalance in incomes between the rich and the shrinking middle class.

It's been said that minds are like parachutes. They work best when they are open. They don't work to our benefit or the benefit of the world when they're closed. We need to bring our eyes, our minds, our hearts to the fore with a willingness to cooperate, to share, to be fully and generously who we really are.

Cynthia Fisk

### **Carters baby clothing**

Dear Staff Members of Carters, October 17, 2010

A friend bought a pkg. of Carters onesies for newborns. She was going to give it as a gift and so she opened it to look at each item. She was rather surprised and more than disappointed to see that one of the items was made of a fabric with a camouflage pattern. She removed that item before wrapping the gift. Upset as she is by war, my friend was sickened to think that she almost sent off the gift without knowing the camouflage onesie was present among the otherwise innocuous items - especially since the gift was for a newborn baby of an Iraqi refugee family. [see their site](#)

These days in a time of endless war, it is important for us to realize how militarized our country has become. Tonight while reading an article by Tom Engelhardt about the near completeness of the militarization, the reality of it hit hard. [www.tomdispatch.com/post/175308/tom-gram:engelhardt\\_american\\_warscapes/](http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/175308/tom-gram:engelhardt_american_warscapes/)

And I thought of the simple onesie.

In the overall scheme of things, a camouflage onesie many not seem too important but it is disturbing to think that your company is contributing to a child's early recognition pattern of camouflage and its unconscious acceptance of it. Granted camouflage is connected with hunting as well as war however, it is far more related to war.

My children have long outgrown the wonderful Carter's clothing they wore as have my grandchildren. Soon there will be great grandchildren. Sad to think that I'll have to open pkgs.to make sure that there isn't a camouflaged outfit inside.

I'd love to hear that won't be necessary.

Sincerely,  
Jane Cadarette

### **We Can Make Choices**

*Gloucester Times*, November 5, 2010

To the editor:

We can make choices. Here they are:

1. Back a government mired in gridlock or government-sponsored agreements.
2. Sink or stay afloat while helping each other.
3. Be despairing or cheer yourself up by reaching out to receptive people.
4. Stay angry or get pleasure from cooperation and solution-centered creativity.
5. Go through revolving doors or regular doors. Remember revolving doors are for lobbyists who step down from government jobs to those offered by corporations which control the economy and are capable of wrecking it while making off with huge onuses.
6. Settle for whatever is offered or emphasize what can turn out best for everyone.

Groucho Marx just appeared on the internet saying, " Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly, and applying the wrong remedies."

After we make our choices, can we possibly agree with him?

Cynthia Fisk

### **The Quest For Mutually Fulfilling Goals**

*Gloucester Daily Times* November 20, 2010

To the Editor

Thomas Jefferson, one of our founding fathers, wrote, "The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only object of good government."

With those words in mind, how can such a clarion call become a reality in this complicated world? Well, immediate solutions to its many problems are out of reach. Expectations put on a leader like the president can extend even to its being his "fault" if an oil rig blows up in the Gulf of Mexico.

Placing blame as a way out of attempting to chronicle details leading up to a cataclysmic event may seem easy but it leads to subterfuge. Instead of submitting to the many flavors of truth, distortions, cover-ups, outright lies can follow.

The choice of truth will sting or even be something to savor depending on what it reveals. In the long run, it is life-serving. Having as many facts as possible on hand before taking action is essential. Resisting any cherry picking of facts that can lead to preconceptions which alter the baseline isn't easy but it can be done. Look before leaping is a wise adage.

How to get at the facts could involve walking in another person's shoes. Approach someone who holds different or opposite views from yours. His needs are in play and it's important to know what they are.

Drawing on Marshall Rosenberg's "Non-violent Communication", needs are viewed as physical and psychological. The latter include a yearning for acknowledgement, respect, meaningful

connectedness, fulfilling work and play among others. When these are present or absent, you're in a position to understand him or her better and be ready to listen and really hear what's being said or what a facial expression means. Being closed off to one another, leads to social or even political gridlock with its feelings of helplessness and vulnerability or the stirrings of anger. Nothing gets done then Witness the upcoming U.S. Congress to see whether this is borne out.

Goals that are mutually fulfilling will be set when people open to one another. The Golden Rule won't be an unobtainable dream then. Its opposite will be discarded as a ghoulish nightmare and good government will be there for all of us.

Cynthia Fisk

### **Sound Off**

*Lawrence Eagle Tribune, December 2010*

"Tax Cuts" misinterprets my previous comment. I ("Serving the Rich") was opposing continuing the reduction in personal taxes for the rich. These do not create jobs since they already make more money than they can reasonably spend.

That said, cutting corporate taxes does not either. This is because taxes are assessed on profits after all expenses are deducted. These include salaries and benefits, materials, capital equipment, and whatever compensation top executives drain from the company. Taxes are paid on the money left over after running the company. More employees just means less taxable profits.

However, this does not mean that corporations don't hold jobs hostage to demanded tax cuts.

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"Negative Ads" presses to pass laws to prevent criticism of Scott Brown if it is not true. Neglecting for a moment that this violates the First Amendment, will he also advocate for outlawing the constant stream lies put out by the right-wing commentators on Fox News and Republican party operatives against Democrats? Somehow, I think not.

-----  
The results are in. The fact-checking web site PolitiFact.com has released its list of the biggest political lies for 2010. The number one, pants on fire lie, repeated endlessly by the Republicans, right-wing pundits, and writers to this newspaper is that the new health care plan is "a government take-over of health care."

For that outrageous statement to be true, the law would have to create a government-run single-payer system like they have in England or Canada. We most certainly do NOT have that. We still have our same old, broken, private insurance based system with a few small changes around the edges.

### **Military Budget Could be Better Spent Elsewhere**

*Lawrence Eagle Tribune, December 27, 2010*

To the editor:

I recently read a 2007 study published by "The Political Economy Research Institute," at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Its focus was "on the employment effects of military spending versus channeling some significant part of the military budget into alternative purposes."

The study highlights the number of jobs created when a \$1 billion is spent on the military versus a similar amount spent on each of the five alternative areas of employment: health care, education, mass transit, personal consumption, and construction targeted to home weatherization and infrastructure.

One conclusion of the study is that all five alternative areas of employment created more U.S. jobs with their \$1 billion than did the military. Although jobs associated with the military are well-paying jobs, the study shows that monies spent in education produced over twice as many well-paying jobs that also showed a higher average pay than the military. The other four categories did create more jobs, but at an average pay less than the military. The study also spoke of large benefits in terms of encouraging new technologies and raising average living standards in the U.S. when military dollars are converted to non-military use.

So, I feel, in these hard economic times, the federal government should take a good hard look at the military budget of the U.S.

Here are some questions I have concerning our federal military budget: Does it need to be half of the discretionary budget? Why is it so large as to be one half of the world's total spending on the military? Do we need 800 military bases around the world? Are what I consider, immoral interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan making us safer from terrorism? Why do we subsidize rich nations' militaries? How do nuclear subs, weapons, etc., prevent terrorism? Why do we keep building them? I thought that we were supposed to be trying to rid the world of nukes? Do we need F-22 fighter jets?

My conscience tells me that the huge U.S. military budget is both immoral and harmful to us and the rest of the world, since it robs much needed funds to create many desperately needed jobs in our country!

May God bless America!

J. Arthur Brien  
Lawrence

## **At the Curb (and after)**

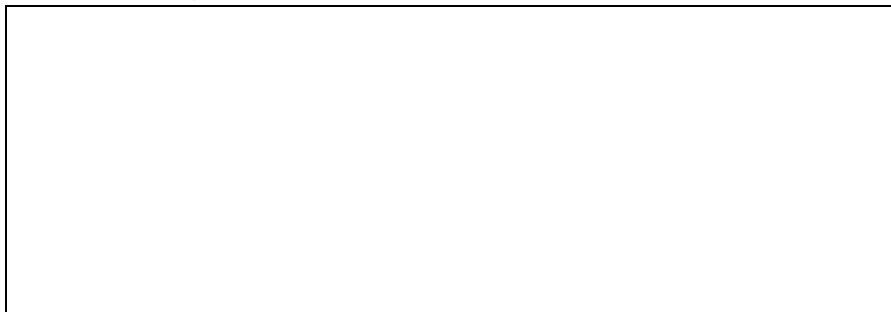
A woman comes up to me in the CVS: "You are the Peace Lady, aren't you? I always wave to you when I drive by and you folks are standing there with the flags!" She feels very strongly about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and about warfare in general. While we are talking, I mention that I'm shopping for The House of Hope (a shelter for victims of domestic violence in Lawrence.) She reaches in her purse and gives me \$20: "You know what? Get those kids something from me too!" She cheerfully waves aside my offer of a receipt or, if she would give me her address, of a thank-you letter: "No need, honey, I trust you - just get those kids something from me!" - gives me a hug and rushes off to her next chore.

Boryana Tacconi

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## **CALL AND WRITE YOUR REPRESENTATIVES & SENATORS TO MAKE YOUR VIEWS KNOWN**

*Every legislator knows one letter is worth a thousand votes.*

### **President Barack Obama**

The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20500  
White House Comment Desk: 202 456-1111  
Contact: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/>

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### **A link to all in US legislature:**

<http://thomas.loc.gov/home/legbranch/legbranch.html>

### **How Senators and Representatives voted:**

Senate: [http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/legislative/a\\_three\\_sections\\_with\\_teasers/votes.htm](http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/legislative/a_three_sections_with_teasers/votes.htm)  
House: <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2004/index.asp>

**State Voting Information:** Look up who you vote for at  
<http://www.wheredoivotema.com/bal/myelectioninfo.php>