



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.

December 2011 -- May 2012

In Solidarity with the Celebrating Egyptians, Wisconsin resisters, and the Occupy movement!

GOOD NEWS

Connecticut abolishes the death penalty. In the last days of April, Connecticut became the 17th state, and the fifth state in five years, to end the death penalty. Connecticut's move is part of a growing trend across the country, as more states continue to repeal the death penalty and death sentences and executions decline nationwide.

The repeal is a big victory for the Connecticut Network to Abolish the Death Penalty which has been working on the issue since 1986. The legislation was signed by Gov. Malloy in the presence of about 30 family members of murder victims, clergy and anti-death penalty activists.

Gaza's Ark project is underway. The activists of the Canadian Boat to Gaza, a vessel that attempted to deliver aid to the Israeli-blockaded Gaza Strip last fall, are launching a new project to challenge the blockade in cooperation with international initiatives in the US, Australia and other countries.

The new initiative: Gaza's Ark will build a boat in Gaza, using existing resources. It will be constructed in Gaza by Palestinian hands and expertise with international assistance. A crew of internationals and Palestinians will sail it out of Gaza carrying Palestinian products to fulfill trade deals with international buyers.

Gaza's Ark will also provide training to Gaza's sailors in the use of up-to-date electronic sailing equipment and techniques which they have been denied for years as a result of the blockade. It also stands in solidarity with the Palestinian fishery in Gaza whose ability to operate in territorial waters is threatened by the blockade.

The progress of the project can be followed at www.gazaark.org.

"And a little child shall lead them." In our local news, recently a friend of the Iraqi project took a bicycle to the father of a new family in Lowell. The family spoke very little English but the mother was able to communicate that the two children in the family really wanted a bike, too. When the woman bringing the bike went home, she told her two children about the new family and both kids said, "let's share our scooters with them." Imagine the elation of the Iraqi kids, a nine year old boy and a six year old girl, as they raced off on their shiny new scooters! (Thanks to Mary Todd for contributing this heartwarming piece.)

Recent Events

See also Meeting Notes

Pat gave us a link to a video of a speech by Jim Scarborough for the Veterans for Peace at Occupy Boston, 11/27/11.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=bKbz1-Fg_hM

Shut It Down Affinity Group Observes Earth Day at Vermont Yankee

BRATTLEBORO and VERNON, Vermont—Costumed in hazmat suits and toting Geiger counter props, eight members of the Shut It Down Affinity Group with three supporters leafleted with a "*Can Fukushima Happen Here?*" brochure in downtown Brattleboro on Tuesday, April 24. They then appeared in nearby Vernon to block the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant gate by chaining themselves to it and stretching crime scene tape across the driveway.

Shut It Downers designed their presence in keeping with Earth Day; in order to call attention to Vermont Yankee's danger to the land, air, and water, their statement said:

"We were able to breach security at the power plant by getting through the second gate," said Hattie Nestel, 73, of Athol, Massachusetts, one of those arrested. "It was the first time we were able to lock the gate shut from the inside."

We must look to a safe and green future for the earth. We must look to a carbon free, nuclear free future.

MVPP Annual Meeting – Friday, June 22, 2012 6:30 PM, North Parish Church, Unitarian, North Andover

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"Shut it down now."

Tuesday's arrest marks the eighteenth time since 2005 that the Shut It Down Affinity Group has acted to close Vermont Yankee.

The state government has grown more active in opposing nuclear power, but the NRC hasn't.

Teach-in on Iran

(A New War in the Middle East?)

April 28, 2012, held at Suffolk University

-Report by Dee Halzack

Sponsored by United for Justice with Peace
Dorchester People for Peace
Suffolk University Department of Government

Approximately 50 people attended, some students.

The Teach-in consisted of two panel discussions, the first giving background on tensions between the US and Iran, and the second intended to discuss what we can do to fight the drive to war.

Afshin Razani, Professor of Economics and Sociology, Berkeley College, New Jersey, gave a brief history of US-Iran relations. He mentioned 4 processes that affected those relations:

- Rivalries between the British empire and Tsarist Russia, which used Iran as a buffer.
- Discovery of oil in 1901 and that Britain took over 51% the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, which eventually became British Petroleum.
- Russian revolution: This created fear of the increasing influence of communism in the world.
- Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1905-11): Though it ultimately was undone, it created fear in the British that they would lose control of the oil. The British established the Shah's grandfather in power.

Iran thought of Americans as allies in their quest for freedom because of our history of resisting the British. This changed with the 1953 coup that overthrew the democratically elected government of Mossadegh and put the Shah on the throne. In fact, Iran asked for US help against the British and Eisenhower decided it would be a Joint Anglo-US coup to prevent nationalization of the oil. What Mossadegh had asked for was 50-50 share (as had been done with ARAMCO in Saudi Arabia), not nationalization. After the coup, the US was seen as the enemy and the Shah as a lackey of the US (he supported the Vietnam war among other things).

Iranians see The 1979 Islamic revolution as having freed Iran from Western domination.

Elaine Hagopian, Professor Emerita of Sociology at Simmons College spoke on the conflict with Iran as part of the wider Middle East conflict. When Israel gained its independence, it saw three countries as obstacles to its goals in the Middle East--Egypt, Iraq and Syria. All were ruled by Arab nationalists. After the 1979 revolution, they added Iran to that list.

The Iran-Syrian-Hezbollah alliance is seen as an obstruction to US-Israeli goals in the area, giving greater leverage to Iran and Syria. Syria originally backed a different group (called Amad -- "hope") and had differences with Hezbollah because of its hostage-taking and other actions that caused problems

for Syria. The Iranians liked Hezbollah because of the Shiite connection. Iran funded Hezbollah. Syria set up training camps and supply lines, but killed 23 Hezbollah in Lebanon to show who was boss. Syria and Iran both wanted Hussein out of Iraq, but disliked having US power on their doorstep. Prof. Hagopian spoke of interference with the protest movement in Syria by third parties.

Gary Goldstein, Professor of Physics, Tufts University, spoke on "Is Iran's nuclear program a nuclear threat?" and concluded that it isn't, at least not at this time. They do not have nuclear weapons. They are not yet capable of producing nuclear weapons. Six years ago intelligence was saying they were two years away from producing them, but nothing has changed since then.

What is needed to produce nuclear weapons:

- Scientists and engineers: hence the multiple assassinations of Iranian nuclear scientists
- Mines: there are not enough uranium mines in Iran to even support nuclear power; they must buy from other countries
- Chemical plants: they have this
- Centrifuges: they have succeeded in 20% enrichment, but need 90% for bombs
- Testing explosives: warhead small enough to fit on a missile--they don't have this yet
- Delivery systems: Iranians ARE cooperating with the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency)

Andrew Bacevich, Professor of History and International Relations, Boston University, spoke on US policy and Israeli interests with respect to Iran.

The talk of war is a manufactured crisis. Israel has a deeply ingrained sense of insecurity. Israel and the US pose a serious threat to the well-being of Iran. It makes sense that Iran would covet nuclear weapons as a bargaining tool. They are not foolish enough to use them to attack because US nuclear capability would mean they'd be annihilated.

He does not believe there will be a war in the near future (before the next US election) because Israel has to realize it would have a negative impact on the US, which is their main support in the world.

- Military leaders in both US and Israel are against it
- Iran is a rational actor, i.e., can be deterred without war
- There is concern in the US about a bad outcome (a la Iraq and Vietnam)
- However, Israel has been known to take risks when it feels threatened.

Several of the speakers are convinced that the tension and talk of war is not really even about the nukes, but rather about regime change.

In the question and answer period, Professor Razani said that decisions in Iran are increasingly being made behind the scenes by factions within the Iranian Revolutionary Guard who are involved in every aspect of Iranian power (much as the army is in Egypt). Someone asked if there are non-military uses for 20% enriched uranium; Professor Goldstein said that's the level of enrichment used in research facilities, such as the one at MIT.

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.

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.

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

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.

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

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

During the discussion period, most agreed that the talk of trying to avoid war is a smoke screen, that the war has already started, as sanctions are an aggressive act.

The second panel was supposed to help us think of how to stop the whole thing.

Professor Irene Genzier, Political Science, Boston University, spoke on "The Question of Sanctions," She said that there is a lot of information available on past and current US policy but that the public ignores it all. An April 2012 Congressional Research Report said that sanctions are leading to the destruction of the Iranian economy. There are actually three different sanction programs, US, UN, and EU, though they increasingly converge, and the US sanctions are the most sweeping, including banning any dealing with the Central Bank of Iran. She said it's not just about the nukes, that Iran may represent a form of resistance that is intolerable.

However, sanctions can backfire because the destruction they cause can INCREASE the desire for nuclear weapons and the power they bring with them.

There is hope in the recent (April 25) talks in Istanbul, where Iran, Germany, and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council again discussed the possibility of a nuclear weapon free zone in the middle east, while supporting Iran's right to a peaceful nuclear program.

Denise Provost, State Rep. from Somerville, spoke of "the Israel lobby and the push for war in Massachusetts," which has included repeated attempts to pass measures forcing state investment funds to divest from Iranian concerns. For example, when Rep. Salvatore Dimasi was still in office, he invited Israeli politician, Tzipi Livni, to speak to the legislature. Her speech said Iran is dangerous to Israel and the whole Middle East. Fortunately the Iranian divestment bill was killed last time, but it keeps returning. Iran is being put forth, among other things, as a threat to the troops in Afghanistan and a vote for divestment as a test of one's patriotism.

Shahzad Noorbaloochi, and Iranian-American student, recently returned from Iran, spoke on the effect of sanctions; where eggs are no longer affordable by the poorest people, who used them as a substitute for the meat they could not afford, and common food items have tripled in price.

There are 3 generations in Iran with different experiences:

- Adults over 50 experienced the shah's rule and do not trust the US.
- Adults 30-60 lived through the Iran-Iraq war, in which the US helped Iraq, so also have negative feelings toward the US. In spite of this, there is more 'pro-American people' sentiment in Iran than in any other country in the Middle East.
- Adults under 30 are mostly neutral or favorable toward the US, not having had negative experiences. We will lose this generation if sanctions are allowed to continue.

Alex Shams, Graduate Student, Harvard University, Center for Middle East Studies, spoke about Anti-Iran propaganda and building an anti-war movement on campus. He spoke of the need for two simultaneous things to occur:

- Oppose the US war machine
- Solidarity with the Iranian people

It is important not to focus on the cost in US lives, strategic as that may seem; ALL lives matter.

Don't deny the reality of repression in Iran, but opposing the war does not mean supporting repression.

There was much agreement that sanctions actually strengthen the current regime by providing a common enemy, giving the Iranian opposition the feeling that they can't criticize their country in its time of need, and making organizing difficult.

What we can do:

- There was much agreement that Islamophobia and demonization of Iran are the biggest things we need to tackle. That it is important for everyone to call and write letters to TV, radio, and newspapers calling them out on misinformation. Using social media is a great way to do that. [Note from Dee: I remember a while back a social media campaign that called out the New York Times for reporting on the IAEA report on Iran in a way that implied that Iran already had nuclear weapons, when that was not the gist of the report at all; the Times was actually forced to retract their statement.]
- The sanctions need to be questioned, and we need to hold our elected officials responsible
- Talk to people: Shahzad said the Iranian people don't want war and were happy that she would be speaking to Americans, telling them how they feel and counteracting the demonization.

To continue to receive this newsletter... **We Invite You to Join /Rejoin Us**

\$20.00 Individual

\$10.00 Student/Senior

\$30.00 Family

Circle One

\$50.00 Supporting

\$75.00 Sustaining

\$100.00 Peacemaker

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ E-Mail _____ Date _____

Return to MVPP is registered with the IRS as a 501(c)(3) organization. Contributions to MVPP are tax P.O. Box 573 deductible. Last year, approximately one-third of our members joined/renewed at higher than North Andover, MA 01845 the basic rate. **Check here if you prefer to receive your newsletter via e-mail.**

- Fight repression here: We can't stop the war machine if we allow ourselves to continue to be repressed.
- Use art to get the message across; it is less off-putting.
- Link peace issues with economic issues.

Memorial Day for Peace May 28 Christopher Columbus Park, Boston. Veterans for Peace.

About a hundred people gathered to remember veterans and civilians killed in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. After many moving speakers and poets, names of the fallen were read to responses of "Presente," and a flower for each was dropped in the harbor. Veteran Jesse Perrier completed the service with a good modern version of "Taps."

Coming Events

Friday June 22, 2012 6:30 pm. **MVPP Annual Meeting.** Potluck, Election of Officers, and meet former UN official Dr. Naeem Rathore. Originally from Pakistan, he now lives in Concord, MA. He worked for the United Nations for 30 years advising U.N. Secretary Generals and U.N. Ambassadors. He is respected throughout the world as a voice for responsible peace. He is involved as coordinator of the Planning Committee of Pakistan Expatriates in the United Nations System and is an advisor to the Coalition for a Strong United Nations (CSUN).

Tuesday, June 26, 2012 **"Religion in a World of Violence: Virus or Vaccine?"** A Public Address and Book Signing by Dr. M. Thomas Thangaraj at Rolling Ridge Conference and Retreat Center, 660 Great Pond Rd., North Andover. Dr. Thangaraj is from India and wrote *"Religion in a World of Violence: Virus or Vaccine?"* He is described as delightful and wise and will continue with the theme of peace and inter-religious dialogue. MVPP will cosponsor.

MVPP table at the **Lowell Folk Festival** Sat. July 28.

Vigil for **Hiroshima**, Andover Old town Hall around August 6, tbd.

September 3, Labor Day weekend. MVPP will cosponsor and set up our booth at the annual **Bread & Roses Heritage Festival** in Lawrence.

Letters

Responses by Michael Bleiweiss to letters and Sound Offs in the Lawrence Eagle Tribune:

Published November 28, 2011

Matthew May warns of the dangers from China holding a quarter of our national debt and building up its military (November 13). However, he conveniently neglects to mention where they are getting the funds to do this. That money comes from the massive exports they make to us due to "our" large corporations shipping their operations overseas so that they can get away with paying lower wages without benefits or environmental constraints. Remember this the next time you buy some cheap item made there.

Submitted November 23, 2011:

Mark Acciard (November 16) proves the adage that "there are lies, damned lies, and statistics," to blame President Obama for the current economic crisis. He conveniently uses economic figures from 2011 to contrast pre- and post-recession conditions. However, this belies the truth that the crash occurred in 2008, during the Bush administration. The budget deficits were caused by Bush's tax cuts for the rich plus two unnecessary wars, whose escalating effects remain with us. The recession was caused by egregious financial mismanagement and chicanery enabled by three decades of deregulation that took limits off of the risks and fraud that financial institutions could engage in.

Published November 29, 2011:

Once again, in his snarky attempt to discredit the Occupy movement, Taylor Armerding (November 21) twists logic and the facts beyond all recognition. They are not protesting that retirees have more money than young people, nor are they demanding that everyone have the same amount of money. Rather, they see that the older generation had access to long-term job security that allowed them to accumulate a nest egg and be able to afford to retire. In contrast, they see a lack of good-paying jobs and frequent long-term unemployment for those coming up behind them, while the very wealthiest accumulate more and more, abetted by the favorable tax policies that they bought for themselves. That is the inequality that they protest.

Submitted March 05, 2012

The current fight over employers covering women's contraception has little to do with freedom of religion and a lot to do with

the ongoing push by conservative religious leaders (mostly men) to force their archaic strictures and world view of sex as evil and women as second class citizens onto everybody. Not everyone who works at a religiously founded organization, such as a university or charity, is a member of that religion. It is a violation of their rights to force them to adhere to dogma that they do not subscribe to in order to hold a job.

Published May 23, 2012 heavily abridged:

Mark Acciard accuses liberals of living in a world of wishful thinking on social programs. Well, conservatives push a fantasy world where laissez-faire capitalism works. They believe that giving tax breaks to overpaid executives and giant corporations creates jobs when 30 years of voodoo Reagonomics prove otherwise. They just pocketed the extra money while laying off workers to increase their bonuses. They assert that deregulation creates jobs when it actually led to massive shipping of jobs overseas and the crash of 2008 with its taxpayer-funded bailouts. They say that destroying unions creates jobs. Instead, we are experiencing stagnating wages and the largest redistribution of wealth from the middle class to the rich since the Gilded Age.

Submitted May 31, 2012

Once again, two corporate giants have been allowed to merge with only the most cursory review. This time, it's NStar and Northeast Utilities. I don't recall seeing a call for public comments on this. If there had been one I would have said that, in the wake of bailing out "too big to fail" banks, we have no business allowing huge corporations to merge and get too big to regulate. Where is enforcement of the anti-trust laws that were passed 100 years ago to stop such abuses back then. Do we learn nothing from history?

Submitted May 31, 2012

This newspaper's editorial on the failure of 38 Studios misses the main lesson to be learned from the experience. In their race to the bottom to attract business, cities and states offer them large tax breaks and subsidies that always cost more than the value of the jobs created. These companies then show no loyalty and move as soon as they can find a cheaper place to do business, laying off the workers hired and leaving the taxpayers holding the bag. This is known as corporate welfare. Of course, these deals never seem to contain claw back provisions to recoup the giveaways. It's way past time that government leaders learned that giving in to corporate extortion never pays off.

Meeting Notes

November 22, 2011

The meeting started with our Stone Soup, an annual reflection of our daily needs that most often surpass those who do not have enough food. We collected \$217 to be donated to Oxfam. We enjoyed a quiet evening in each other's company.

Reports:

Iraqi friends group. Mary reported that two new families had arrived, one family had received a Thanksgiving meal invitation. The Boston Globe will be reporting on the two Iraqi restaurants in Lowell, and will be interviewing one of the restaurant owner families. There are now a total of 42 Iraqi families. The Bedford

UU group and Mary and her group are slowing down their assistance to families that have been here for more than a year.

Occupy Boston. Boryana reported that there is a need for warm clothes, especially socks. Food is always welcome, especially cookies, dry soups, and vitamins. Also, sleeping bags, hand-warmers, inflatable mattresses, and foil space blankets. Donated solar panels are keeping computers going.

Henry and some students convened outside the old Andover Town Hall to discuss ways to help with Occupy Boston. There will be an Occupy Wall St. in Andover the Saturday after Thanksgiving, from 10-12pm.

Another ship tried to deliver aid to **Palestine**. 70 miles outside of Gaza, Israel arrested many.

Egypt. Conditions in Egypt were deteriorating -Note: observed before the November 29 elections.

Nuclear Plants: Niki attended a C-10 meeting in Newburyport, disputing the reasons for relicensing the Seabrook Nuclear Plant. Barbara attended another meeting the next evening in Newburyport to hear Hattie Nestel present a program on the dangers of nuclear power, particularly regarding the Seabrook nuclear power plant.

We didn't have a December meeting.

January 24, 2012

Reports:

Michael reported on **Occupy the Courts** in Boston. Three speakers addressed approximately 150 people (a big number considering very cold weather). There was a two part workshop on corporate personhood and corporate power. The AP sent a reporter to cover it and the Globe had a three column article.

December 4. Sunday, Some members attended the Merrimack Valley Project (**MVP**) **Convention:** Fair Mortgages Campaign. MVP collaborated with Boston Community Capital (BCC), a non profit bank to help homeowners facing foreclosure. One home in Lawrence has been saved and they hope to add thirty to that number. MVP also works with tenants and organizes groups in Lawrence and Lowell.

The MVP foreclosure demonstration became a non-event as the bank postponed action and cancelled the scheduled foreclosure. [Unfortunately, months later, the homeowners gave up the fight and lost their home.]

Nikki Tsongas has been working to appoint advocates for women who have been sexually assaulted.

Committee reports

Iraqis in Lowell

Babylon restaurant has had a lot of support, and the support has received national news coverage after someone threw a rock through their window. But the owners are confused and not happy with the way the police have handled the case. They need an advocate to help them understand the legal system and how their case is being handled.

An article on a refugee who is a TV reporter will appear in the Globe soon

Lou Bernieri and a teacher in Jordan are discussing the possibility of a pen pal program.

There is another family arriving this week

Two journalists want to start a half-hour Arabic-language radio program

Dispensing with **Committees**

We decided to change from committees to having a list of Themes/Issues that all could address as needed, at meetings. These include:

- 25% Solution
- Iraqi Families
- DU
- Palestine/Israel
- End the War
- Education for Peace and Justice
- Counter Recruitment (the account for this has been exhausted, so there are no outstanding funds to deal with)
- Events coordination
- Membership & Outreach

February 28, 2012

Reports

Iraqi Friends Group:

Mary reported that there has not been much activity and recommended that there was no longer a need to meet a half hour before the MVPP meeting. The Baghdad Night was successful (included a belly dancer and auction). Arabic lessons by several of the Iraqi women have started for kids at the International Institute. An Iraqi woman has passed her TOEFL (test of English as a Foreign language) tests and is now hoping to get into graduate school for certification. One young man wants to join the military.

Videos:

A number of members attended Tom Jackson's movie, "*Eye Witness: Gaza*," sponsored by the Lawrence/Andover Quaker group. It was proposed that it be shown on local TV. Jane will take it, and also Hattie's video on nuclear power plants, to Merrimack College. Mary suggested that MVPP buy four copies of Tom's movie to be available for local communities to see. (We did.)

People's Music Network was a big success. Over 120 participated, and there were good local musical contributions. Boryana found housing for 57.

Planning:

Non Violence Training. JoAnn Sheehan, the cook for the People's Music Network, is a trainer, available for a workshop.

March 26, 2012

Correspondence

The latest issue of the Nuclear Resister was passed around for people to read, as well as information about the Albert Einstein Institute, headed by Gene Sharp, advocate of and trainer for nonviolent action to defend democracy and reduce political violence.

MVPP received a letter from Ann Marie Buxton, president of the Merrimack Valley Project. She had spoken at our January meeting about foreclosures. Ms. Buxton included a copy of a very frank, outspoken letter written by her father to President Lyndon Johnson during the 60's.

Recent events:

Walk for New Spring and issues about the Seabrook nuclear plant. Barbara described the success of the Walk for New Spring and the energizing discussions at each of the rest places (Amesbury Peace Center, UU church in Newburyport, the House of Peace in Ipswich) on the way from Seabrook to Plymouth and then on to Vermont Yankee, where MVPP and NSC members joined a multitude of activists who are working to close the plant.

West Newbury citizens petitioned their Selectmen to write a letter to the head of the **Seabrook** plant, demanding that the plant not be given a renewable license until the degraded concrete foundation is corrected and the groundwater infiltration is stopped.

St. Patrick's Day Parade with the Veterans for Peace. This parade followed the main parade (whose organizers refuse to let veterans and others in it). It was four blocks long, and had a good reception even though it was delayed by two hours. Pat Scanlon was interviewed by NPR, Brian and two others played bagpipes, and the Boston Globe wrote an article.

Iraqi community news:

The Iraqi-American Community will be joining with the Somerville group for a day sometime in the near future.

Bassam and his family moved to Cambridge MA. to be closer to his job with Whole Foods.

A fire in Lowell displaced an Iraqi family, now resettled in another apartment.

Mary also mentioned that two or three Iraqi families will be arriving soon. And, one teenager graduated from high school!

Planning:

MVPP will cosponsor the annual Bread & Roses Parade in Lawrence and urge the organizers to prepare more publicity for the event.

MVPP will cosponsor this year's program at Rolling Ridge: Tuesday, June 26, 2012 "Religion in a World of Violence: Virus or Vaccine?"

Tom Jackson's **video:** Eye Witness Gaza. Arthur will buy five copies for distribution to colleges and cable stations.

Move to Amend - Michael discussed the response to the Supreme Court's 2010 Citizens United vs. FEC. Citizens are trying to pass a constitutional amendment that will declare that corporations are not people and money is not speech. Citizens in MA are asking state elected officials to support Senate Bill 772, demanding that the federal legislature pass such an amendment. Kathie, Peter and Brian will assist Michael in spreading the news of this amendment in the MVPP area.

Barbara will write Global Network to find out if it is a 501c3 outfit and ask how MVPP can help regarding **JeJu Island** in Korea.

The date for the annual MVPP meeting will be decided at the April meeting.

April 24, 2012

Recent Events:

April 14. Iraqi flag ceremony in Lowell. From now on, April 14 will be designated Iraqi Day, a significant date recognizing the Iraqi community in Lowell. Mary, Jim, Pat, and Dee were present as well as the Lowell Mayor and City Council member Rita Mercier. Food was generously donated by the Abu Nawas restaurant.

April 14. Occupy Movement non-violent resistance training, Methuen. Dee, Kathie, and Michael participated in the 99% Spring training. Dee also attended the Lowell training. Networking was good in both places, and people are working on projects and willing to share. However, Dee, Kathie and Michael thought there is need for more in-depth training. Kathie recommends we see the video now available online and Dee provided a web address. training.the99spring.com/training/99spring/?rc=RTD Niki also attended an occupy non-violent training in Newburyport.

Planning:

Concerning non violence, the MVPP members who attended the Occupy meetings felt there is a **need for non violence training** for our own MVPP group and it was suggested that Joanne Sheehan be our trainer. Boryana and Mary Kate will ask her if and when she can come.

Hattie Nestel sent Jane a brochure "Can Fukushima Happen Here?" After deliberation we decided to **order 100 brochures**, making them available for Lowell Folk Festival and Lawrence Bread & Roses weekend. A petition is also circulating which we are encouraged to sign.

"Eye Witness Gaza" **DVDs arrived**. MVPP members will distribute five copies of this CD.

Nominations committee, comprised of Bobbie, Arthur and Barbara will meet soon to present a slate for officers 2012-2013.

There will be **no June regular meeting**, but people are encouraged to attend the event that night at Rolling Ridge (See Coming Events). Our annual meeting is June 22.

May 22, 2012

Recent Events:

April 27. A successful **concert** with Si Kahn, Charlie King and Karen Brandow, with lots of attendees, followed by an all day academic symposium related to the 100th anniversary of the Great Textile Strike of 1912. Lawrence Cable Access Television filmed the two events.

Paul Brailsford's memorial service at the North Shore Unitarian Church in Danvers on May 12. Poet and trailblazer for peace and justice, and founder of the Samantha Smith Chapter 45 of Veterans for Peace, Paul was remembered by many regarding his extraordinarily active 96 years. Speakers included John and Carrie Schuchardt. Pat Scanlon and Boryana Tacconi and numerous others worked behind the scenes, preparing food for the reception.

May 12. **Andover Bread Loaf's 26th writing conference** for youth and adults at Movement City/Lawrence Communityworks was organized and run by students. The conference focused on confronting prejudice in the community. MVPP's Lou Bernieri, ABL Director, stated that these youth are learning how to teach from middle school up and are part of "a silent educational revolution by kids from Lawrence."

May 16. MVPP members Mary Kate Small, Mary and Jim Todd went to an assisted living center in Methuen to visit with **103 year old Salvatore (Sully) Savinelli**, the last surviving person who was at the Bread & Roses strike. He was one of the children of mill workers who was sent out of Lawrence to Barre, Vermont during the strike to be cared for by strangers. Sarah Pirtle, a member of the People's Music Network, interviewed him for Lawrence Cable Access. She and Mary Todd organized the singing of the newly created (at the January gathering) song, "*Bread and Roses Revisited*." In 1912, Mr. Savinelli's family welcomed the strike leaders Ettor and Giavinitti. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn also came to their home at the time of the Strike. In the years that followed, their home continued to be a gathering place.

May 18. Middlesex Community College and Lowell High School held a conference, **Voices of Refugee Youth**, showcasing students from Iraq, Burma, Congo and Nepal. They produced a film, "*Hard Truth, Levity, and Hope*" that follows six refugee teens that attend Lowell High School. The participating kids responded enthusiastically and three Iraqi boys liked working the microphone!

Jane Cadarette talked about a book on Fukushima: "*Devil's Tango. How I learned the Fukushima Step by Step*," by Cecile Pineda, Wings Press, 2012. Recommended reading; it will keep you up all night.

Planning

July 24. MVPP will meet to discuss plans for the July 28 Lowell **Folk Festival and Hiroshima Day**. Boryana will obtain a permit form for MVPP's participation at the folk festival.

Secure Communities. MVPP signed on to a letter sponsored by the American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts and American Friends Service committee, Northeast Regional Office, to Massachusetts police chiefs, opposing the Secure Communities program. Among our complaints: sharing all fingerprints taken at booking with Immigration and Customs and Enforcement, not just the FBI's criminal databases, thus eroding basic civil liberties of all Americans. The program is particularly destructive to the lives of non-citizens living in or traveling in Massachusetts.

Non-violence training. Jeanne Sheehan, author of "*Handbook for Nonviolent Campaigns*," published by War Resisters International is available to lead us in nonviolent training in September or October. We decided we wanted her to give us a general training workshop, e.g: how to de-escalate a problem now, how not to get "setup" or entrapped etc. The timing should be on a Saturday for about 4-5 hours. We will ask NSC, Amesbury Friends Peace Center, Veterans For Peace, etc. if they are interested.

Budget for All referendum on the ballot this November -state wide-. Volunteers are needed to obtain signatures in each town this June. Please go to www.budget4allmass.org or call Paul Shannon at American Friends Service Committee 617-661-6130 ext. 123. MVPP members will help.

Remembering



Briefly, the referendum states:

1. Prevent cuts to Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and Veterans benefits, and housing, food and unemployment assistance;
2. Create and protect jobs by investing in manufacturing, schools, housing, renewable energy, transportation and other public services;
3. Provide new revenues for these purposes and to reduce the long-term federal deficit by closing corporate tax loopholes, ending offshore tax havens, and raising taxes on incomes over \$250,000;
4. Redirect military spending to these domestic needs by reducing the military budget, ending the Afghanistan war and bringing U.S. troops home safely now.

Citizens United referendum. MVPP members continue to collect signatures for this equally important issue to be placed in the November ballot.

George Capaccio of Arlington, asked for financial support for an Iraqi family in Baghdad with whom he has been in touch since our war with Iraq began. After some discussion we moved to donate \$50.00 to the Family Relief Fund.

Media Watch

by Peter Cameron

In keeping with MVPP's goal of preventing war, recent op-eds in the *Boston Globe* are encouraging:

Nicholas Burns, professor of the practice of diplomacy at the Kennedy School wrote in a January 20, 2012 column, "What to do about Iran / Instead of rushing to war, US should continue on the path of strategic patience."

He wrote that as the Bush administration's undersecretary of state, he did not encounter a single official who disagreed that Iran's enrichment efforts are designed for one purpose - to achieve a nuclear weapons capacity. In opposing a military strike on Iran being pushed in certain quarters, he favors newly approved bipartisan sanctions.

.....
James Carroll, a regular *Globe* columnist, on February 13, 2012 wrote:

"Bad option on the table / Saber rattling on Iran may be popular but the results may be dire..."

"Yet the West has drawn its red line and President Obama is standing on it. He must simultaneously inhibit Iran, deter Israel, rally international support, avoid exacerbating tensions with Moscow and Beijing, and, always, keep the Republicans at bay."

Recommended reading:

The Nation March 19 issue: "The New Fossil Fuel Fever" by Michael T. Klare, the *Nation's* defense correspondent.

"Costly new technologies have opened up new sources -- but they oppose immense dangers."

Dear, dear friends of our dear Capt. Paul Brailsford,

Paul "crossed over the bar" and set out to sea tonight, Saturday, April 28th, at 7:48pm, calmly and peacefully, with a noble look of calm and confidence.

His only son, Brian Brailsford had come down from Maine and was with him for his great farewell.

Paul was admitted to Beverly Hospital Thursday April 19th, was released to Seacoast Nursing in Gloucester on Wednesday the 25th, readmitted to Beverly yesterday, and was in Critical Care Unit this afternoon, until he left us.

Throughout this period he was entirely clear mentally and without fear; he did not experience any pain throughout, and passed as a result of his heart slowing further and further, until he breathed his last breath.

Carrie and I joined Brian about 10 minutes later, with Carrie singing Irish lullabies to Paul to help him on his way.

Pat Scanlon kept Paul company for many hours during the day and was joined in the afternoon by David Wise.

Paul left written instructions for cremation. There will be no wake. I will help Brian make plans for a memorial service at North Shore Unitarian Church, where Paul was a long-time active member.

Paul displayed a remarkable self-possession throughout all of the days and hours since his hospitalization. It was self-evident to all who cared for him that here was a man of great courage, inner strength, and deep convictions in his core beliefs.

Sail on, Paul. Continue to help us sail on, "shipshape and Bristol fashion."

With gratitude to all Paul's friends,
John Schuchardt

See also obituaries in the *Boston Globe* and *Salem News*

http://articles.boston.com/2012-05-07/obituaries/31598001_1_peace-activist-veterans-day-parade-merchant-marine

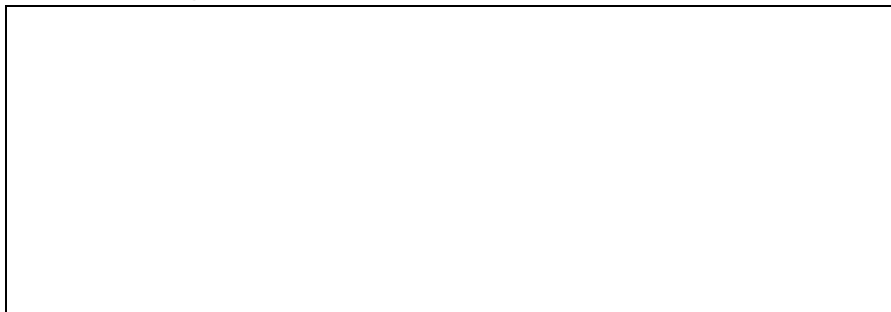
<http://www.salemnews.com/obituaries/x1378305746/Paul-Stuart-Brailsford-96>

Merrimack Valley People For Peace
P.O. Box 573
North Andover, MA 01845-0573

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

**Annual Meeting June 22, 2012 6:30 pm
at North Parish Church**

PEACE IS
PATRIOTIC



The MVPP Newsletter is printed periodically and has a current distribution of 100. We are grateful for suggestions, comments, and help with publication. (Unless **2011** appears on your label, your dues have expired. Please remember to renew.)

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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/>

Senator Scott P. Brown

317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510 (202) 224-4543
Form: scottbrown.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/emailscottbrown
2400 JFK Federal Building, Boston MA 02203
617 565-3170 fax 617 565-3183

Senator John F. Kerry

304 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
202 224-2742 fax 202 224-8525
One Bowdoin Sq., Boston, MA 02114
617 565-8519 fax 617 248-3870
Form: <http://kerry.senate.gov/text/contact/email.html>

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Washington, DC 20515 305 Essex Street
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120 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515 17 Peabody Sq
202 225-8020 Peabody, MA 01960
fax 202 225-5915 978 531-1669 fax 978 531-1996
Form: <http://www.house.gov/tierney/email.htm>

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
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>