



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.

January 2013 – April 2014

GOOD NEWS

We helped stop America going to war in Syria.

Though Syria is having a terrible time, we did not feel that an American military power would help. We lobbied and held vigils urging Congress and the president to not attack any one in Syria. The war weary US people of many persuasions were effective in preventing a reckless move. We urge more humanitarian support.

Judge Orders Halt to Force-Feeding of Guantánamo Prisoner. A federal judge has ordered the military to stop force-feeding a hunger-striking prisoner at Guantánamo Bay. Syrian national Abu Wa'el Dhiab is among the dozens of prisoners who have refused to eat in protest of indefinite imprisonment and harsh conditions at Guantánamo. On Friday, District Court Judge Gladys Kessler ordered a halt to the force-feeding and told the military to preserve video footage of the practice until a hearing this week. It is the first time a court has blocked a force-feeding since the Guantánamo hunger strike began more than a year ago.

Global Fast-Food protest marks largest action to date. Thousands of fast-food workers went on strike on May 15 in at least 150 cities across the country, marking the largest action of its kind to date. They demonstrated with demands for increased wages and better treatment from restaurants—dominated by international chains like McDonald's, Burger King, Taco Bell, and others—that make billions in profit.

In more than 30 other countries, workers rallied in solidarity with the call for a \$15-an-hour minimum wage and the right to organize.

Federal wildlife agency withdraws approval of Arizona's Rosemont mine. Amid new concerns about endangered species, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has withdrawn its earlier approval of the proposed open-pit Rosemont copper mine in southern Arizona and now says it will have to reexamine the mine's probable impacts on endangered jaguar, ocelot and several other protected species. The decision is the second serious blow to the controversial project in recent days: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recently announced that the mining company's plan to attempt to mitigate the proposed mine's extensive environmental damage does not do enough to protect springs, streams, and wetlands.

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

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Pope Francis says that humanity's destruction of the planet is a sinful act. Pope Francis made the religious case for tackling climate change on May 21, calling on his fellow Christians to become "Custodians of Creation" and issuing a dire warning about the potentially catastrophic effects of global climate change. Speaking to a massive crowd in Rome, he said that respect for the "beauty of nature and the grandeur of the cosmos" is a Christian value, noting that failure to care for the planet risks apocalyptic consequences. "Safeguard Creation," he said. "Because if we destroy Creation, Creation will destroy us! Never forget this!"

The movement to oppose CCSS tests gathers steam.

As a new barrage of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) tests come online, the opposition to them grows. Parents at Castle Bridge Elementary School in New York City overwhelmingly opted their children out of a standardized test, so it had to be canceled. California placed a yearlong moratorium on the use of Common Core exams to make "accountability" decisions. US Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, then threatened to withhold hundreds of millions of dollars in federal education aid. The St. Paul Federation of Teachers won contract language that reduces classroom time assigned to test prep and testing. The Portland, Oregon, Teachers Union's new contract "bars the use of student performance on standardized tests as a basis for involuntary transfers, layoffs, placement on the salary schedule, and/or disciplinary language." In Chicago, all of the teachers at Maria Saucedo Scholastic Academy voted to boycott the Illinois Standards Achievement Test. Those teachers are backed by the full support of the Chicago Teachers Union..

Other local and grassroots victories

Somerville, the first community in Massachusetts to join the Trust Act movement. The mayor of Somerville, MA has signed an executive order to bar police from detaining people solely due to their immigration status.

Oregon voters approve ban of GE crops. Two counties in Oregon on Tuesday voted to ban the cultivation of genetically engineered (GE) crops. Voters in Jackson County and Josephine County took a stand for measures protecting "seed sovereignty and local control" of food systems.

400,000 signatures delivered as Comcast shareholders meet. Community and media activists rallied on May 21 outside shareholder meeting to oppose the proposed merger of Comcast with its largest competitor, Time Warner Cable. Organized by Media Mobilizing Project, Common Cause, Free Press, Media Action Grassroots Network, and Consumers Union, the demonstrators delivered petition signatures of more than 400,000 people who oppose the merger. Media justice advocates warn the deal would erode choice, increase costs, slash media diversity, and further cut off under-served communities from vital services.

Goodbye Pete Seeger

Friends,
With sadness we have lost one of the most effective political activists ever, and he did it with his voice and banjo.

Pete was my inspiration many years ago when I first took up the banjo. Pete was the musical inspiration for thousands of young people just like me.

I was at Pete's house once with his wife Toshi in Beacon NY. I was organizing a large rally at the Seabrook Nuclear Power Plant and was there to talk to Pete about playing at the rally. We had to wait for Pete to get home because he was out chopping wood, just as he was doing up to ten days prior to his passing

Over the years I would communicate with Pete via letters and postcards. He was big on writing postcards. If I recorded a new song or CD I would send it to Pete. He would respond with a short critique and words of encouragement.

One of my best memories was sitting around a song circle with Pete next to me at a summer gathering of The People's Music Network for Songs of Freedom and Struggle. When it was my turn I sang "No Place to Hide" with everyone singing and doing the choreography including Pete. These were the kinds of

songs Pete loved. At the end of the song Pete asked for the lyrics and music and had it placed in Sing Out Magazine. That was the highest tribute possible, to have Pete ask for one of my songs.

Pete was the most humble, non assuming, down to earth, famous person you will ever meet. Throughout all his years his fame never went to his head. He was always ready to support a cause and lend his immense talent in helping people see the light through song.

Pete will be missed but as he sang, "We Shall Overcome Some Day", someday we will, today I sing, "Where Have All the Flowers Gone" and "If I Had a Hammer"

Pete Seeger - Presente
-Pat Scanlon

In Memoriam: Ernest Goldman

(December 2, 1913 – January 14, 2014)

Ernest Goldman, a great human being and musician, left this world six weeks after having celebrated his 100th Birthday with a big and joyful party. He was the father of MVPP member and long term President Bobbie Goldman. Holocaust survivor, physicist, concert pianist, loving father, grandfather and friend, he touched many lives during his long and eventful life and truly made this world a better place through his music and his wise and gentle presence. We thankfully remember his support and his fundraising concerts for MVPP and feel deeply grateful for having known him.

Events 2013

January

At our **Annual January Potluck** at, January 11 we watched part of the dvd "A Force More Powerful," about Danish peaceful resistance in WWII.

February

Several of us watched together the full series of the video, "A Force More Powerful." Several of us met at Jane Cadarette's house to watch the series of videos, for some a repeat performance. We may offer the films again, as they are very moving and powerful. We found that watching the series together helped to reinforce the message.

Walk For a New Spring. Some of us joined the Buddhist monks for the Andover and the Amesbury-Ipswich parts of their larger walk.

Boryana, Barbara and Brian walked and attended the evening meeting at the Friends Peace Center in Amesbury. From Charmaine Whiteface, we learned of the damage to lands in South Dakota from nuclear mining. Charmaine Whiteface, an Oglala Tetuwan from the Great Sioux Nation presented some new material regarding dangerous radioactivity levels in South Dakota and neighboring states due to mining the mineral without environmental concerns. She is known for her work in support of Native American rights, in particular as coordinator of the Defenders of the Black Hills, a volunteer organization centered around efforts to encourage the United States government to honor the Fort Laramie Treaties of 1851 and 1868. Charmaine has been invited to speak at many locations as the walkers head to Washington D.C.

March

Wednesday, March 6, **Tommy and Fionan Sands**, presented songs and stories at Ipswich High School. Boryana set up our table and Brian piped.

3/17, The **Veterans for Peace St. Patrick's Day Parade**, behind the "official" parade was very well attended and received, despite cold weather.

Six of us attended the **Good Friday vigil** in Reading, opposing Capital Punishment.

Beginning in March, Mary Kate periodically, fasted in solidarity with the prisoners **fasting in Guantanamo**. (See letters to the president, and one of those fasting at Guantanamo in this newsletters: October 28 and November 19.)

Richard Hudack's donation-based **yoga class** at Sangha Yoga Collective in Lowell had ten participants and collected \$84 for the Iraqi Family Fund.

MVPP was **asked to loan our 501(c)(3) status** until the Tigris-Euphrates Forum can get its own. The Forum has big plans for helping the community and would like to apply for a grant, but needs to have non-profit status before they can apply. The application must be submitted soon. Since the Forum did not yet have non-profit status, they would need a larger nonprofit to act as their fiscal agent.

We discussed whether we could help the Forum but realized that it is not part of our by-laws and that we have no one who is able to serve as fiscal agent. We therefore voted against loaning our 505(c)3 status. We did however agree that when Mary replied to the request she would tell them we would be willing to attach a letter of support for their grant application.

April

Carlos Arredondo, who we have often met at demonstrations, was one of the first responders when the Boston Marathon was bombed. He was nearby as one of the certified medics.

May

Dee attended the **Mothers' Day Walk for Peace**, in Boston. The walk encourages people to live together peacefully in their communities. The Arredondos were there. Dee recommended that we support the Walk in the future, since peace in the city is much a part of our mission as peace internationally

Veterans For Peace Memorial Day: On a sunny day in Boston, there were many good speeches and much intellectual stimulation. Nancy Lessing from Military Families Speak Out, was compelling in the absence of her late husband, Charlie Richardson.

Barbara reported on hearing Ray McGovern's inspiring presentation in Portsmouth. He urged peace activists to be more adventurous and not be afraid to be "out there" with the message.

June

Our **annual meeting** was graced by many singers and great food.

July

At our table set up at the **Lowell Folk Festival** we met many interested in our literature, buttons and bumper stickers.

We updated the **Why We Vigil** flier. See it at the end of this newsletter.

August

Our commemoration of the bombing of Hiroshima was a vigil of about fifteen people.

Barbara reported on the **Gloucester showing of Dirty Wars** on Jeremy Scahill's investigation of JASOC (videographer Rick Rowley). Scahill is national Security Correspondent for The Nation magazine and is a Puffin Foundation Writing Fellow at The Nation Institute. The movie shows Scahill in Afghanistan, Somalia and Yemen as he chases down the hidden truths behind America's expanding covert wars.

Barbara highly recommended that we make the video available to view locally. We discussed showing it in Andover, asking Richard to show it at U Mass Lowell, supplying it to Lowell, Lawrence, and Chelmsford Cable TV. We realized that before we can make plans for local viewing, we need to investigate rights/permissions (including fees), format. Gloucester charged \$10 per person, which was necessary to fulfill rights/permissions requirement. Meanwhile, we should at least view it ourselves. We did a few weeks later.

September

Despite rain, the **Bread and Roses Festival** brought many to our table.

To **oppose US war in Syria**, we wrote letters, visited congress people, and held vigils in Newburyport, Andover, and Lowell. With opposition from many sides, the US did reduce its plans to invade, for now.

9/27 George Carpaccio appeared as story teller at Chelmsford Center for the Arts Open Mic. His 'stories of peace,' fables from various cultures, were energizing.

October

A number of us attended the Thursday, October 10, 7-8am **vigil at Raytheon/** Andover, coordinated with the Space for Peace week and the Drone Peace Walk. The Raytheon vigil takes place every Thursday and members are urged to attend when they can.

Space for Peace Week October 4-12 and Maine Drone Peace Walk Oct 10-19. Mary Kate Small and Bobbie Goldman were active in the walk. There was good press coverage.

November

Some of us marched with the Veterans for Peace in Boston on **Armistice Day**.

At our **Stone Soup Supper**, Cole Harrison outlined the activities of Mass. Peace Action and Budget For All. We took up a collection for Oxfam.

Boryana attended a filming of Ross Caputi's film, "**Fear Not the Path of Truth**, a veteran's journey after Fallujah". It is now available on line at <http://vimeo.com/80051615>

December

Nelson Mandela's passing made many discuss issues of social justice.

Events 2014

January

At our annual potluck, we sang to rouse our spirits.

We voted to donate \$100 (plus a private gift) to sponsor the book about Frances Crowe, the 95 year old activist against the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Plant, and often arrested for peace causes.

February 2014

On February 8, Boryana and Pat attended **Mass Peace Action's annual meeting**. The theme was "Towards a Just and Cooperative Foreign Policy." Boryana shared our table of pins, stickers and literature

BU Professor Andrew Bacevich, pessimistic, said we need a new paradigm. Barney Frank said we need to work through legislation.

There were a number of interesting workshops:

Kathy Kelly, Voices for Creative Nonviolence and Rachel Williams, Massachusetts Peace Action and Helping Women Heal, gave "Reflections on Continued War in Afghanistan and Pakistan"

Dr. Shahin Tabatabaie, Iranian-born doctor and professor at Harvard Medical school, and Jeff Klein, Mass Peace Action, spoke on "Organizing to Stop a War with Iran"

Mike Prokosch and Carol Coakley of 350 Massachusetts spoke on "Transitioning Towards a Peace Economy"

Hilary Rantisi, Director of the Middle East Initiative at the Harvard Kennedy School, spoke on "Seeking Peace and Justice in Palestine/Israel"

Duncan McFarland, United for Justice with Peace and John Ratliff, Massachusetts Peace Action, economic justice coordinator facilitated a workshop on "US Strategic Pivot to Asia/Pacific and the Trans Pacific Partnership"

2/11/14 Kathy Kelly in Salem

Brian, Jane and Boryana attended Kathy Kelly's presentation February 11 in Salem, MA, "Afghanistan Present and Near Future, Will the U.S. Really Leave?" She spoke about the Youth Peace Group, in which youth from three different ethnicities are working together. She also spoke about the women's cooperatives where people from different ethnic groups work together. She describe the effects of drones.

Walk for a New Spring 2/21/14 – 4/8/14

Though two major people were missing due to illness. There was good turnout in Cambridge, Amesbury, Ipswich and Lawrence.

March 2014

St. Patrick's Day parade for Peace

Member Pat Scanlon was an organizer of the alternate Saint Patricks day parade. This parade has marched behind the 'official Saint Patrick's Day parade in Boston (they would not allow them in their parade). MVPP joined a letter writing campaign to include the Veterans for Peace, Gay groups, and Labor groups in the main parade. This year the new mayor of Boston sided with us too. But we marched behind as in other years. Later, Pat said we me may be included soon. It was good to see friends and supporters on the blustery day.

April 2014

In early April MVPP signed a letter opposed to Boston University's BSL4 laboratory in the South end of Boston. This lab, "like those established in the immediate years following the 2001 anthrax scare, aims to fulfill a biodefense, not a public health mission. Excessive concern with bioterrorism led to the proliferation of high containment labs which has come at the expense of much needed funding for public health research."

"The NEIDL laboratory (National Emerging Infectious Disease Lab) on Albany Street in Roxbury/South End

is located in a designated environmental justice neighborhood which already suffers from an excess of environmental hazards."

Good Friday Vigil

Barbara reported that the group was smaller than last year and that responses were both positive and negative. Bad weather may have reduced numbers. The news about the marathon bomber, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, being subject to Federal capital punishment makes the idea of opposing capital punishment timely.

May, 2014

"Building a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence Conference" Sponsored by NH Peace Action, May 10, Manchester, NH -Summary by Jane Cadarette
MVPP members Boryana Tacconi, Mary and Jim Todd, and Jane Cadarette attended

The morning was spent with John Dear, Catholic priest, peace activist, and lecturer, imprisoned 75 times for civil resistance and nominated by Archbishop Desmond Tutu for the Nobel Peace Prize. Dear is on the staff of the Franciscan peace program: Pace e Bene. He's traveling the country promoting Pace e Bene's "CAMPAIGN NONVIOLENCE" as well as promoting his latest book: THE NONVIOLENT LIFE. The campaign (<http://paceebene.org/campaign-nonviolence>) is - connecting the dots of war, poverty and the environment - calling everyone, individuals as well as organizations, to join in activities, locally and nationally, the week of Sept. 21-27. Dear urges anyone who says "I'm for peace" to realize that if that is what they claim and they are not working with others for peace, they are actually cooperating with the evils that are being perpetrated.

He offered three dimensions of nonviolence: practice nonviolence toward ourselves; practice nonviolence toward all others, all creatures and creation; and practice active nonviolence by joining the global grassroots movement of nonviolence. He also stated that working for peace is the highest level of conscious living.

Following lunch, the afternoon program began with a one woman play: "MY NAME IS RACHEL". Actor Ashley Malloy gave an outstanding portrayal of the American activist Rachel Corrie from age 12 to the day before she died. Corrie was a peace activist and member of the International Solidarity Organization. She was killed March 16, 2003 at age 23 by an Israeli driven bulldozer, while trying to protect a Palestinian home from being demolished.

The conference program then offered numerous workshops. Each person chose two. The categories were relevant to the serious issues facing the world today.

Coming Events

3rd Sunday of every month, Quaker vigil at Textron at Wilmington, MA on Rt 129, 11:00 AM --12.

June 20, MVPP's **30th Anniversary** annual meeting!

July 21 summer peace conference at Rolling Ridge with Dr **Andrew Bacevich** "Where do we go from here? Looking for hope in the new Middle East."

July 26, Sat. MVPP table at the Lowell Folk Festival.

August 6 commemoration of Hiroshima.

September 1, table at the **Bread and Roses** Festival.

Iraqis

The gift cards, fundraising in late 2012 was successful. We were considering a fundraising event in the spring but postponed it. Mary finally heeded the advice of doctors family and friends to retire from her efforts to help the refugees. We were not able to replace her, but the Iraqis themselves are taking on many responsibilities. Also, the buddy systems Mary started and some of the distribution of furnishing computers and bicycles have continued.

It has been heart warming to see some of the Iraqis speaking at events and celebrating achievements.

After knee surgery, Mary visited and updated us. As of April 2014, there are now 110 families. The owner of the Babylon restaurant is the new president of the Iraqi community organization and they now have a center, located in the old International Institute of Lowell building. They held their annual flag raising (once an ethnic community is assigned a flag-raising date, Lowell holds a flag-raising for them every year; the Iraqi date is around April 14.) There are no longer any Iraqis working for the International Institute.

Letters

Markey Endorsement

Gloucester Times January 15, 2013

To the Editor:

No More Fukushimas! proudly endorses Congressman Edward Markey for the US Senate from Massachusetts. For decades, Congressman Markey has “had the back” of area families in regard to safety at the Seabrook nuclear power plant. He has fought for nuclear safety, although the people who would be most affected by a radiological emergency at the plant do not live in his district. As he runs for the Senate, it is our turn to have his back.

Ed Markey has not rested on his laurels. During the Seabrook plant relicensing struggle, Markey has continued to fight by (1) constantly questioning the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) about concrete degradation at the Seabrook plant, degradation that could weaken critical plant safety structures and result in a catastrophe, (2) insisting that the NRC convene public meetings in this area about the ongoing concrete degradation problem, and (3) co-sponsoring with Congressman Tierney the “Nuclear Reactor Safety First Act” (HR 6554), which would prevent the NRC from relicensing plants -- including Seabrook -- prior to 10 years before their license expires.

In contrast, Scott Brown—a likely senatorial opponent—has done absolutely nothing on behalf of public safety at the Seabrook or Pilgrim nuclear plants during the relicensing struggle. Brown is so committed to nuclear plant owners that he refuses to do anything that may upset them— even if it jeopardizes the safety of his own constituents.

Ed Markey has fought the NRC numerous times on behalf of people in Massachusetts and across the nation who face risks from nuclear power plants, and he has urged the NRC to consider the lessons learned from the Fukushima disaster in nuclear power plant oversight. Please join us in supporting Ed Markey for the US Senate because of his unrivaled leadership in supporting the safety of families, rather than the financial security of nuclear plant investors.

Bruce Skud and Joanna Hammond

Co-founders, No More Fukushimas!

Congratulations on Your Recent Votes and Actions

July 30, 2013

Dear Congressman Tierney:

The North Shore Coalition for Peace and Justice was very pleased to find your signature among those of the 131 representatives signing the Dent-Price letter of July 19 to President Obama. In light of the recent election of a more moderate Iranian president, Hassan Rouhani, we believe such a strong endorsement of renewed diplomacy is just what is needed at this time. We are aware that a number of our members had contacted you regarding this measure and appreciate your responsiveness.

Similarly, we are pleased to note that you have so far declined to co-sponsor H.B. 850, “The Nuclear Iran Prevention Act of 2013”, which would unwisely impose punishing new sanctions before the new president even enters office. The Boston Globe editorialized earlier this month that “Congress should delay the passage of the bill until US negotiators say the bill is needed.” As stated by the expert speaker at the July 25 Hill briefing held by the National Iranian American Council, passage at this time could significantly damage opportunities for progress by sending the message that “Washington does not care about the elections, Washington does not care about the more moderate outlook of the next government and it would enforce those people who say forget the Americans,” they cannot be trusted. We thank you for not adding your support to this bill at this time, and urge you to maintain this position. We ask that you do all you can, as you have in the past, to foster meaningful interaction with Iran in a manner that has the potential to improve the situation and not further punish the Iranian people.

Finally, we strongly commend your most recent votes against the defense appropriations bill, and in favor of the Amash amendment to stop blanket NSA surveillance of citizens. In view of the narrow margin by which the Amash amendment was defeated (205-217) on July 25, we trust there will be other opportunities for you to uphold the constitution against unreasonable invasions of privacy.

Thank you for all that you do. We are most appreciative of your continued efforts on these matters.

The North Shore Coalition for Peace and Justice
The House of Peace

A government against the people?

Newburyport Daily News August 29, 2013

To the editor:

Has the government of, by and for the people become the government against the people? The past three decades have wrought changes we may never overcome. From wars conducted by subterfuge that decimated millions of lives and tore holes in the Constitution and Bill of Rights while scrapping the Nuremberg precedents, to the top-heavy incomes of the 1 percent and the downward economic spiral suffered by the rest, the posture of the government increasingly appears hostile toward its population. The expansion of the police state is especially ominous.

A government primarily owned by bankers and corporations shows no concern for the well-being of its citizenry, except in terms of how they can be exploited to conduct endlessly manufactured wars or squeezed financially for maximum profit. The yearly \$1 billion-plus military aid package to Egypt paid for by U.S. taxpayers returns to American arms corporations, giving the Egyptian military its power and American arms manufacturers big profits.

Fed by constant propaganda, the threat of terrorism itself is big business [see the Salon/Alternet article, “5 companies that make money by keeping Americans scared,” www.salon.com/2013/08/19/].

Private contractors thrive surveilling our every move. Anyone who dares to dissent or criticize the government risks being tagged as “subversive.” Who knows how private contractors use the information they glean. To whom are they accountable?

And what happens to genuine patriots who struggle to inform their fellow Americans of the egregious government crimes being committed against them and against others? We know very well the government’s penchant for persecuting whistle blowers. Bradley Manning, Edward Snowden, William Binney, Thomas Drake, John Kiriakou and others who have risked

everything and sacrificed so much to try to bring the truth before the American public, to try to save a democracy with freedom and justice for all, are hunted down and imprisoned. It seems that profiteering trumps all such efforts to alert the public.

On the bright side, we can always think about global warming.

D. Philip, Newburyport

Don't bomb or invade Syria

Sent to President Obama and to *The Eagle Tribune*
Wednesday August 28, printed Ag 29.

Though we are concerned that using chemical weapons raised the level of violence in Syria, we don't believe that American military intervention, especially aerial bombing, will fix anything. It is more important to expand diplomatic efforts and UN forces to stop the inflow of arms and to take care of the many civilian refugees already affected.

It would cost the US taxpayers and soldiers less, financially and morally, to do the right thing, to avoid war.

There have been atrocities by both the government and the rebels. There is not conclusive proof that it was the government, and not the rebels, that used chemical weapons. Besides, government use of chemical weapons would be a flimsy reason to use war methods that would harm many many more civilians.

As in Viet Nam and Iraq, you the president, are threatening to attack a country without declaring war, which would require Congress to approve. Doing this again would be a repeated abuse of the Constitution which was written to prevent such a rash action.

Using military force might satisfy the urge to help the people of Syria, but in reality it would harm them more. Do try to help them, but not with military force.

Merrimack Valley People For Peace
(president Brian Quirk)

Military action in Syria is the worst of all options

The Lowell Sun September 5, 2013

Concerned that my country is once again being led into an unnecessary war, I urge us all to bear in mind the following:

While the use of chemical weapons in Syria is appalling, it is still unclear who is responsible for their use -- a recent report from a BBC reporter indicates that a rebel group claims they accidentally set off chemical weapons supplied to them by Saudi Arabia. Certainly, an attack on Syria will hurt far more innocent civilians than it will do damage to government forces -- if the government forces are proved to have even been responsible.

And there are other options besides a military one. Most of us may not hear that report because, as with Iraq, once the government has seemingly made its decision, no contradictory evidence gets reported in our mainstream news media.

Appalling as it is, according to a recent report on NPR, the use of chemical weapons within a country is not against international law; it's only their use in war against other countries that is banned.

I really think we should have learned from Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan that it is never wise to insert oneself into the midst of civil war.

Before we start policing the rest of the world yet again, at considerable expense, we ought to attend to our own troubles: ailing infrastructure, lack of good-paying jobs, far too many people going hungry and homeless.

Any military action is an act of war. There is no such thing as a "limited" war. No one can predict the consequences once military action is launched. There were those who predicted that the Iraq war would be a "piece of cake" and that the Iraqi people would thank us for getting rid of Saddam Hussein. And that it wouldn't cost us much at all.

If Iraq turned out to be a bad surprise on that score, Syria will be worse. They are better armed and better supported than Iraq was, as well as uncrippled by years of sanctions and a previous war.

The biggest argument against attacking Syria is that it seems that the situation is being used as a tool to induce war with Iran. Iran is an ally of Syria. They would be bound to defend Syria if it is attacked. The efforts to provoke war with Iran have been increasing ever since a new, seemingly more reasonable president was elected there. Almost as if there are those in our country who want a war with Iran no matter what and are desperate to prevent any possible attempts at a more peaceful relationship with them.

Contrary to what the warmongers would have us believe, Iran is not our enemy, but would in fact like to have a better relationship with us. (I urge those who want more information to read the well-annotated *Going to Tehran* by former diplomats Flynt Leverett and Hilary Mann Leverett.)

Regardless of whether others agree with my opinion of Iran, I don't think we should be going to war with them, undebated, through the back-door trick of starting a war with their ally.

As we should have learned from Iraq, there are serious consequences to creating a power vacuum by removing a strongman from a country, and we cannot always control those consequences in our favor. People are still dying in Iraq as a result of the turmoil we created, and we did not gain much positive from the effort.

I think we need to do everything we can to avoid creating that turmoil first, instead of reaching yet again for guns.

Dee Halzack
Lowell

To: President Obama 10/28/2013

Dear Sir,
On Saturday I fasted once again in solidarity with those in Guantanamo Bay who continue their hunger strike. I write you again to beg that you fulfill your promise as soon as possible to shut down that terrible place. I understand there are 84 men who have been cleared for release that await your action.

I am concerned about the expanding hunger strike and I appreciate General Kelly's (Southcom Commander) acknowledgement before Congress of the

“devastating” situation at Guantanamo. I am concerned over the costs associated, both financial and American image-wise, and concerned about the repercussions for our troops and what it means to ask young people to force feed those whom we admit are innocent. I ask that, in the face of the failure of our elected officials to close Guantanamo, our Military will refuse to participate in force feedings.

Thank you for bringing the Gitmo issue to the forefront once again a while back. It gave me hope. Each month those of us who fast from Witness Against Torture write letters to the detainees. When I wrote one of the men last month it occurred to me that were he my nephew, I would be out on your lawn every day with a sign and petition pleading for his release.

As a Christian I have been taught that all are my brothers and sisters in the eyes of God. You and I are both parents. You know that if it were your child being wrongly detained by the most powerful government in the world that you would work day and night to bring an end to the injustice.

Please act soon, Mr. President. We're counting on you to do the right thing.
Peace, blessings, Mary Kate Small

To: President Obama 11/21/2013

Dear Mr. President and all concerned:
I wrote the following letter a couple of days ago to Waleed Bin Attash, a prisoner at Guantanamo. Please do what you can as soon as you can, PREFERABLY TODAY, to free the 86 prisoners cleared for release from that terrible place. Then, shut it down!

I invite you to read the letter I wrote. It tells about what we the people have been doing to try to help make good changes to this sorry situation.

Thank you, sir.

Mary Kate

November 19, 2013

Dear Waleed,

My name is Mary Kate. I am writing to you now as I sit in front of a fire in our home, the first fire of the season. It is freezing outside here where we live in the northeastern part of the United States. We generally get a lot of snow when the winter comes.

I wonder if it is always warm where you come from. I guess the temperature in Guantanamo is warm, but I

don't imagine you are very comfortable there. I am so sorry for your imprisonment. I write to let you know that there are many of us, so many, who are working to free those bound unjustly in that notorious place, as best we can. Petitions have been signed; complaints to our president and representatives have been lodged. We have tried to reach out to others through the media and by personal appeals. Some of us have gone without food in solidarity with those at Guantanamo who have refused to eat. Today I ate nothing. I have done that once a month since May. In April, just before our Easter holy day, I did not eat for six days. I want you and your brothers to know that we are sincere in our concern for you and pray that justice will be done.

My husband David has been cooking a lot yesterday and today. I look forward to eating with him tomorrow. I hope the day will come soon when you can share good food with kind people in a peaceful place that is warm and welcoming.

I taught English for many years and once had a student named Waleed who was from Kuwait. I pray for you, Waleed, and for all those with you, every day. Keep the faith. Take care.

Lovingly, in peace,
Mary Kate Small

Backing the President's Iran diplomacy and opposing new sanctions

To: The Honorable Senator Edward J. Markey
December 16, 2013

Dear Senator Markey,

In the matter of US policy to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran, we think it urgent that you speak out decisively. Please voice support for the negotiating process that the international community and the US administration are currently pursuing.

New sanctions – however qualified or deferred – will dangerously unbalance those diplomatic efforts. And while it is one thing not to trust the Iranian government, are we not to trust our own leaders, when they counsel forbearance and dialogue?

We cannot imagine that you would support any legislation, binding or otherwise, that risks the undoing of all the progress made by the P5+1 to date. We trust that you understand how such a measure would alienate all our negotiating partners, lead rapidly to defections from the current international sanctions regime, and how this would in turn unleash pressure for a unilateral, military “solution.” No responsible lawmaker could look forward to a vote so fateful and terrible as an authorization for another war in the Persian Gulf.

Show us that you see through the dubious logic of confrontationists in the US whose disdain for peaceful engagement mirrors the attitude of Iranian “hardliners.”

Your colleagues who urge ever-harsher, unilateral US sanctions may be well-intentioned, but their short-sightedness is making for a dangerous moment in US foreign relations. They should know, and we would like to be assured, that in this instance you defer to the authority and sound reasoning of our President. A public declaration to this effect is, frankly, overdue.

In closing, we call to your attention to the fact that broad-based economic sanctions already being imposed on Iran are having lethal consequences. No amount of “fine-tuning” can spare a civilian population from the devastating hardships inflicted by an economy at the point of collapse.

The fates of Iranian families who cannot now afford to feed themselves, patients who cannot obtain medical treatment, a middle class decimated by pervasive, growing unemployment are casualties that have gone wholly unremarked upon by US leaders who speak of sanctions as though they were instruments that operated only on a recalcitrant leadership. This is, of course, a fiction.

We therefore hope that the modest relief contemplated in the current six-month agreement will receive your public endorsement.

Sincerely,
Charlotte Andrews, Ph.D., Gloucester, Jane Pulkkinen, Gloucester, Jeanne Gallo, Ph.D., Gloucester M. Sunny Robinson, R.N., Gloucester, Barbara Haack, West Newbury Niki Rosen, Newburyport, Lysa Leland, Essex Carrie and John Schuchardt, Ipswich Susan Nicholson, Esq., Gloucester David Zackon, Wakefield

on behalf of **The North Shore Coalition for Peace and Justice**

2014

Debate about NSA is not enough

Newburyport Daily News, January 24, 2014

To the editor:

My question is, who does the NSA work for? I’ve been troubled by this for some time, especially now that it has been made clear that each and every one of us is tracked daily and the information gathered stored in huge data bases.

And the answer given to Sen. Bernie Sanders’ inquiry asking if the NSA spies on members of Congress leaves us to believe that, yes, all citizens of the United States, and all others worldwide, are targeted for surveillance.

So who are the people that run the NSA? Who profits from the surveillance mania, other than those who draw hefty paychecks from common taxpayers in prosecution of the agenda? Who writes the agenda? Who has access to this mega-info and what do they do with it?

How much industrial and economic espionage is bolstered by information gleaned through the NSA? Since our jobs, healthcare, education, safety nets and infrastructure are going down the tubes, I don’t get the feeling that the well-being of the general public is of any concern to whomever calls the shots at the NSA.

Since the quest for world dominance creates hostility and blowback around the globe, I don’t buy the idea that the NSA acts solely to protect us. If that were the case, our foreign policy would be changed radically and we would be shown much more respect. Who are the elite few holding all the secrets, viewing all the classified information, making all the decisions about which we — the people — are not allowed to know?

The following is quoted from an article by Tom Englehardt at TomDispatch.com, dated Jan. 5, entitled “A Ripley’s Believe It or Not National Security State”

“... the government has grown ... a national security state that is remarkably unchecked and unbalanced. In recent times, that labyrinthine structure of intelligence agencies morphing into war-fighting outfits, the U.S. military (with its own secret military, the special operations forces, gestating inside it), and the Department of Homeland Security, a monster conglomeration of agencies that is an actual “defense department,” as well as a vast contingent of weapons makers, contractors, and profiteers bolstered by an army of lobbyists, has never stopped growing. It has won the undying fealty of Congress, embraced the power of the presidency, made itself into a jobs program for the American people, and been largely free to do as it pleased with almost unlimited taxpayer dollars.

The expansion of Washington’s national security state — let’s call it the NSS — to gargantuan proportions has historically met little opposition. In the wake of the Edward Snowden revelations, however, some resistance has arisen, especially when it comes to the “right” of one part of the NSS to turn the world into a listening post and gather, in particular, American communications of every sort.

The debate about this — invariably framed within the boundaries of whether we should have more security or more privacy and how exactly to balance the two — has been reasonably vigorous.

The problem is: It doesn’t begin to get at the real nature of the NSS or the problems it poses.”

D. Philip, Newburyport

Pipelines crisscrossing US a concern

Newburyport Daily News February 6, 2014

To the editor:

The aging nuclear plant looming to the north of us, with its deteriorating cement and nuclear waste piling up, is more than we need for problems. Intense efforts to establish renewable energy sources to replace the Seabrook plant should be underway now, although there is little evidence of such efforts.

Unfortunately, Massachusetts now faces an additional threat. In an article appearing on TomDispatch.com Jan. 30, the author, Ellen Canterow, outlines the work

she has done on the consequences of fracking, “— high volume hydraulic fracturing which extracts oil and methane from deep shale.” Her investigative reporting took her to Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and New York state and now her home state, Massachusetts. The concern here is the pipeline system crisscrossing the country.

“There are more than 350,000 miles of gas pipelines in the U.S. ... for the transmission of gas from region to region” and “...more than two million miles of distribution and service pipelines, which run through thousands of cities and towns with new branches under constant construction.” This complex system of distribution risks the emission of carcinogens and neurotoxins, the spread of radioactive wastes, explosions, fires, spills and leaks.

Canterow writes that Carl Weimer of Pipeline Safety Trust says that, on average, there is “a significant incident — somewhere — about every other day. And someone ends up in the hospital or dead about every nine or ten days.” In addition, waterways and wetlands are at risk and environmental degradation inescapable.

Spectra Energy’s Algonquin pipeline runs from Texas to Boston. The company plans to expand the pipeline to “ ... carry unconventional gas — gas extracted from deep rock formations like shale — into Massachusetts.” Gas fracked from shale formations is mainly methane. “Methane is a far more powerful greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide (Co2) and an ecological nightmare due to its potential for dangerous leaks.”

In her conclusion Canterow writes, “Fracking isn’t just about drilling and wells and extracting a difficult energy source at a painful cost to the environment. Corporations like Spectra have designs on spreading their pipelines through state after state, through thousands of backyards and farm fields and forests and watersheds. That means thousands of miles of pipe that may leave ravaged landscapes, produce methane leaks and even, perhaps, lead to catastrophic explosions — and odds are those pipelines are coming to a town near you.”

To read the entire article, go to TomDispatch.com.

D. Philip, Newburyport

Recommended reading and viewing:

Washington Rules: America's Path to Permanent War (Macmillan, USA, 2010) ISBN 0-8050-9141-6
by Andrew Bacevich.

The Many Sides of Peace. By Brayton Shanley. A handbook for changes in daily living.

Finding My Radical Soul, a Memoir, by Frances Crowe to be published later this year.

Atomic States of America, on nuclear reactor communities is on interlibrary loan. **Review.** available on-line: <http://www.amazon.com/Atomic-States-America-Kelly-McMasters/dp/B00B15N9YC>

Ruth Canonico reported on the film. It shows people who have been directly affected by radiation leaks, on Long Island and in Pennsylvania, and other places. Ruth highly recommended the film

Why we Vigil

Flyer was updated July 2013

We believe that these times of unprecedented global insecurity - environmental, economic, social, and political - call for imaginative and dramatically new ways to promote peace and justice.

We condemn all forms of terrorism. Further, we believe that war and oppression are acts of terror because they victimize innocent civilians in overwhelming numbers. The best way to fight terrorism, therefore, is not to participate in it by waging war but, instead, to respect global human rights and work to reduce the economic and social conditions that cause poverty and injustice in the world.

We believe that it is imperative to use non-violence and non-military actions - through grassroots activities, diplomacy, and international law - to settle local, regional, and global differences.

We call for the end of all US military engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan, including all permanent bases.

We believe that military actions by recent US administrations have caused the destruction of international law, weakened the peacekeeping and humanitarian roles of

the United Nations, and made Americans less secure at home and abroad.

We believe that our country does not have the right to global military supremacy, the right to preemptively attack any sovereign nation assumed to be a potential threat, or the right to first use of nuclear weapons.

We are alarmed about the use of drones to kill people in other sovereign countries and anywhere.

We believe that the explosive Israeli/Palestinian conflict remains a major barrier to peace in the Middle East and that the US must support and work for peace, dignity, and justice for all parties. We denounce US support for Israel's occupation of Palestine and its oppression of the Palestinian people.

We believe that the US must explore responsible peaceful solutions made visible by the Arab Spring.

We denounce US practice of being the world's largest supplier of weapons at home and abroad, often to undemocratic regimes and gross abusers of human rights.

We denounce the manufacture and use of depleted uranium weapons. Their use in Iraq in the Gulf Wars I & II, Kuwait, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan has brought untold harm to people (all troops, including our own, innocent civilians, and the unborn) and caused extensive damage to the environment now and into the future.

We demand that our government act responsibly and clean up the soils and waters radiated by depleted uranium, in other countries and in the United States We oppose any use of nuclear weapons and call for global nuclear disarmament.

We condemn the reckless waste of our country's human and economic resources by the military-industrial complex.

We believe that these billions of our tax dollars should be invested in sustainable energy, education, health care, jobs, housing, and support for global human rights.

We support major increases in veterans' benefits, especially programs that treat war-related medical and mental health problems of veterans and their families

We believe that the leaders of our government, past and present, should be held accountable for violations of the US Constitution and international law.

We support the establishment of a cabinet level Department of Peace.

We call on all citizens to reclaim our democracy - to honor dissent, vote regularly and responsibly, demand a free press, oppose abusive corporate power, and protect every individual's right to privacy.

We stand and work for peace and justice. There is much work to do. Active peacemaking is everyone's responsibility!

Membership

To continue to receive this newsletter... We Invite You to Join /Rejoin Us
.(Unless 2014 appears on your label, your dues have expired. Please remember to renew.)

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MVPP is registered with the IRS as a 501(c)(3) organization. Contributions to MVPP are tax deductible.

Check here if you prefer to receive your newsletter via e-mail.

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: 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).

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

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

PEACE IS
PATRIOTIC

Celebrate MVPP's 30th Birthday!

COME TO OUR ANNUAL MEETING
June 20, 2014 6:30 PM at North Parish Church



The MVPP Newsletter is printed periodically and has a current distribution of 100. We are grateful for suggestions, comments, and help with publication

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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 (202) 456-1111

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Contact: www.whitehouse.gov/contact/

Senator Elizabeth Warren (202) 224-4543

317 Hart Senate Office Building Washington DC 20510

Form: www.warren.senate.gov/?p=email_senator

Senator Edward J. Markey (202) 224-2742

218 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Form: www.markey.senate.gov/contact.cfmd%20votes.

Representative John Tierney (District 6)

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Form: www.house.gov/tierney/email.htm

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A link to all in US legislature:

thomas.loc.gov/home/legbranch/legbranch.html

How Senators and Representatives voted:

Senate: www.senate.gov/pagelayout/legislative/a_three_sections_with_teasers/votes.htm

House: clerk.house.gov/evs/2004/index.asp

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