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When will impeachment be on the table?



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READER MAIL

Gentrification: Deal With It

Barbara Morey's article in your March/April edition of Washington Free Press could easily lead one to believe the sky is falling and the world is doomed to a life of indentured servitude to our evil robot masters of the elite ruling class. [see "Gentrification 101" www.wafreepress.org, issue 91, p5]

As a youth, I lived in a trailer on a piece of rural property in south Skagit County. My grandparents had also worked hard to build a log-cabin resort almost completely by hand on the north side of Guemes Island, where I would frequently visit. Years later, when my grandfather died and my grandmother was too old to maintain it, they sold the resort (with 11 acres of prime, beach-front property) for a little more than \$250,000. 10 years later, that property is worth anywhere from \$7 to \$10 million.

Today, the island is so jam packed with yuppies driving BMW SUVs and Mercedes, they have nearly pushed out all the "hippie element", the artists, the recluses, the island poets, that used to dominate this landscape. They have cleared many lots formerly crowded with trees, called it their own and bought personalized license plates that read "Beautiful Guemes Island". I already know that I will never again be able to afford to live in the place where I grew up, listening to the waves crash on the beach at night. But even more so, I fear one day, it will cease to be rural and the beaches will be so privatized that I can't even visit.

I am telling you this because very few have experienced gentrification in such an up-close and personal way. Yet, I am not fully convinced by many of the solutions drummed up by a few who have read one Noam Chomsky book and think they know everything.

Land rights and the ability to invest in property and be free to sell it at a later date and make a profit at the margin is the basic and most important premise of our capitalist economic system. I consider myself pretty progressive in most regards but I see the solution not in blaming the capitalist system itself (as we learned in George Orwell's Animal Farm, it could be that a new system of government could be just as bad as the old, if not worse) but rather an innovative approach that combines better social regulations with market incentives.

Maybe next time you could instead do some research to see if there are solutions to this problem. New York City has experimented to some degree of success with "grandfather clauses" that cap property taxes at the rate they were when the land was acquired. Another solution could be housing vouchers for low-income families or allowing developers incentives such as being able to build as high as they want so long as they include below-market rate housing, such as the city of Vancouver, B.C. did. Growth itself is not always a bad thing if you can harness its benefits correctly and in a socially-responsible way.

Either way, there is no perfect solution. And someday I would also like to own a piece of land. And when I do, I know the fewer lefties who out there telling me what to do the better.

Editor's reply: It's pleasant to receive a letter with suggested alternative solutions. At the same time, I'd like to remark that I see little or no connection between US land use and zoning regulations and "lefties." It seems to me that "lefties" are just as likely to find such regulations annoying as "righties." And would it possibly even be good to thank the lefties a bit for things like solar tax credits?

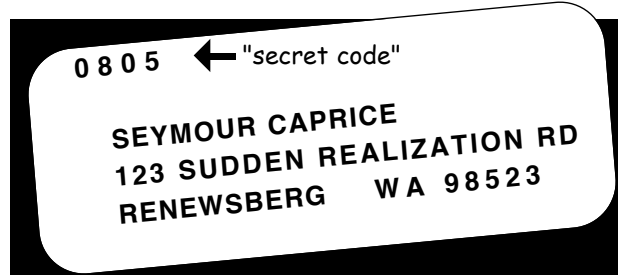
Blindsided by Utility Sale

Imagine a State Legislature and Governor in a nation at war allowing the sale of critical resources to a foreign corporation. That is what is happening in Washington State this year folks! Puget Sound Energy is on the blocks for sale to a foreign corporation to be held privately. This sale entails water, power genera-

tion and natural gas resources. Is our state government unaware that Washington State is a strategic producer of aluminum by water power? How can our Governor, National Guard Commander in Chief, and, custodian of martial law entertain sale of critical resources to a foreign entity at any time much less a time of War? What should we think of a legislature that would support such a move? As for the Public Utilities Commission, I think they should face a trial of their peers for even considering such a sale.

Tom Fouts

Seymour, I think it's time to renew!



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SURPRISING NUMBER OF DEFENSE CONTRACTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

BY MIKE MCCORMICK

The University of Washington takes great pride in the fact that it receives more than \$1 Billion annually in grant and contract research funding. What one doesn't find in their press releases is that about 5% (approximately \$50 Million) of that is from the Department of Defense, according to public information received via a records request.

Individual grants range in value from \$1000 to \$4.2 Million. Agencies include the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), National Security Agency (NSA), Naval Surface Warfare Center, Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program (SERDP), US Army, US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), US Army Research Office (ARO), US Department of Defense (DOD), US Navy, Air Force Academy, Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) and the Office of Naval Research (ONR).

The UW's Applied Physics Lab won hands-down for the most grants from the Office of Naval Research (ONR).

The focus of the grants are wide ranging. Some of the titles include "Using Silicon Electronics to Study the Control of Insect Flight", "Basic Research at the University of Washington to Counter Improvised Explosive Devices", "Undersea Warfare Decision Support System Reconstruction", "An Approach to Large-Scale Knowledge Acquisition", "GPS ANTI-Jamming", "Rhizosphere bacterial degradation of RDX, understanding and enhancement", "Constructing a New Coherent, X-band Real Aperture Radar (CORAR)", "Semantic Tractability on the World Wide Web", and "Menstruation During Deployment: Women's Attitudes Toward Menstrual Suppression".

Whether any of the work is classified or secret is currently unknown.

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Letters to a Young Person



Please do not enlist

BY PAUL R.

The author's name has been anonymized to protect the privacy of his family members.

Never will I forget the words my mother muttered via phone clear across the US: "James has decided to enlist in the Air Force." Left with an ear full of discomfiting silence, I managed to respond back: "You've got to be kidding me. This is the worst possible time to join any branch of the military." I felt like a ballistic missile just shot across the phone line. Knowing my mother has a certain affinity for talk radio and tunes into right wing pundit Rush Limbaugh, I make a quick effort to change the subject. "So... how is the rest of the family doing?" — shifting the topic away from the shock and awe of imagining my nephew being coerced into bombing what little is left of the fragmented country of Iraq.

After entering into the sixth year of the occupation of Iraq, the length of this war has surpassed World War I, II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War, while war-mongers in Washington aim their sights on Iran. Iraq's infrastructure has been completely devastated while millions have been displaced.

I didn't want another youngster to be caught up in the top-down lie, so I sat and wrote a ten page letter addressing all the conscientious, moral, political, reasons why joining the military is the wrong way to go, while providing practical and less ominous alternatives with some good wholesome Uncle compassion.

A simple mission for an Uncle: convince my nephew that the military is not the answer his true needs.

In my letter to James I wrote about the pattern of military lies and the broken promises of sensational signing bonuses, college tuition compensation, and high salaries. I wrote about the limited supplying of equipment needs, a continual ballooning of a billion dollar budget to pervasively increase recruitment through technological techniques such as MySpace, military paraphernalia, war-simulating video games etc. I wrote about the continual pressure at high schools and colleges, and the invasion of privacy of young people around his age through the Joint Advertising Market Research and Studies (JAMRS) data base.

All of these political concerns were worth mentioning in my letter, plus all the alternatives I could possible imagine to replace the possible horror of war.

After all, this is a nephew, who has always been idiosyncratic and compassionately impulsive at times, clearly one quick to make a decision and certainly one for incessant inquiry, with an impeccable gift for gabbing at a young age. I requested in a few of my letters that he never quit running his mouth, especially if he finds himself head to head with the drill sergeant. A person of his character, as many others fall in line, could be hushed into an obedience, to just follow orders. My duty as Uncle then was to at least give him second thoughts about joining the military. In the initial letter I used my gentlest persuasion and a swift bribe to fly him anywhere in the world under one condition, he cancel his departure day to boot camp.

Immediately in the course of our letters he describes his second thoughts and cold feet about joining the military. My nephew James in his words describes some of his anxieties, concerns, and yet attraction to the military, after sending a ten page letter:

"I made the decision of joining the Air Force for all the wrong reasons. It truly is not what I want with my life, it looks like an easy way out. They are offering me a lot of things that I do not have, but would like. Most of all they are offering me a way out of this hell hold that I am living in right now. I really am not satisfied with were my life is right now, and hope to relocate and start something new. I know it may seem like I am running away but there is nothing here for me. My neighborhood is overrun by drugs and violence now.... I want to go some were and do something. I do not want

to be in Philly the rest of my life. I have high expectations of traveling and being something and some of the decisions I make now can be crucial in my life. As of today I am due to depart on February 12, 2008 but second thoughts are definitely playing in my head right now. I am scared of pulling out. My family is behind me on it, most of all my Father made it clear I need to do this or find some were else to go. He thinks it is the best thing for me but I really don't — it is just hard to tell him that."

His response is like that of many kids his age, who share a similar environment of low income, crime, gentrification, substance abuse, and a sense of restlessness and uncertainty about what the future holds. James is not alone. Millions of youth confront similar difficulties, priming them as potential fodder for military programs offering all the milk and cookies (actually meager crumbs) in return for risking injury, mental trauma, or death.

Reassuring James, I let him know I would be there to support him every step of the way, while emphasizing other non-militaristic programs that offer similar travel benefits, living stipends, and perks to attract someone of his age, without the harmful side-effects that come with being in the military. Coming from a two-year background in AmeriCorps, I spoke highly of the two programs I served in and how it could fulfill some of his driving needs to get out of the neighborhood, to meet interesting new people, while taking on an array of experiences in the area of public safety, education, and environmental stewardship.

Along with this option I sent information, links, and other programs such as EarthCorps and JobCorps, which also offer an inviting option for anyone his age. At

one point James wrote and requested that I send him personal information for a referral he needed in order to fill out an AmeriCorps application, and I begin to think my "letter of bribery," as he called it, was starting to succeed.

I sent James what I thought would be a series of simple questions to impose on himself before racking himself up in the Air Force barracks:

"What exactly is driving you to join the military? Will the military enable you to accomplish your goals and provide you a happy, autonomous life? Are you scrapped for cash? Are you looking for a way to pay for college education? Is college really important to you? What are five things that you want to learn about or develop a skill in? What are five places you would like to visit?"

Part of my bribery also included the option of living with me for a period of time, to offer him a peace of mind, while assisting him with seeking out other alternatives. Until, this day I don't know if he took a moment out to consider these questions.

Then one day, I felt triumphant after I heard from

see **Letters on page 4**

Dan McConnell



GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS

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Letters from p3

my nephew that he had decided to “cancel” his departure date. Excited by this I proactively pursue my end of the bribe, agreeing to fly him where he needs to go, requesting the dates he may have considered. But, James’ crucial support began to fall out from under him when his father (my big brother) suspected that he had cancelled his decision. James wrote a letter for some advice to handle the complexity of his scenario:

“Hey there, I need some advice I really do not know how to tell my dad that I have cancelled my date on going into the Air Force. Sounds childish, but he is a hard man to please, and finally making the choice of joining the Air Force has pleased him. But, it’s not too pleasing for me right now, and that is what matters. He is growing suspicious, keeps asking if I am still going, I am sure he is aware that I have cancelled but is not positive yet. Maybe because my damn recruiter won’t stop bothering me, he keeps calling asking why I am canceling. I told him I was not mentally or physically ready to go in at this time, and I needed more time. He told me that not being mentally and physically ready doesn’t cut it, that basic training will take care of the mental and physical part. Bottom line is my pop has told me whether or not I leave on Feb. 12, that on that day I will no longer be able to live in his house.”

At this critical point I recommended that he be clear with his decision to cancel with the recruiter and not to budge an inch, while suggesting the recruiter stop calling. Knowing full well my brother’s rigid machismo in the household and own sensitivities, I requested that James write him an open honest letter about his decision providing his reasoning for canceling boot camp and ideas for alternatives. However, James preferred that the exchange of letters stay between just him and me. But I began to grow weary and concerned.

A few weeks later a letter arrives in the mail marked Texas, Lackland Air Force Base (AFB) and my heart skipped a beat. But, also I was comforted by the sheer fact that he took the time out between his boot camp drills to draft a letter. But the language concerned me ever more:

“I am sure you do not agree with my decision, but it is something I wanted to do. I also needed it. I appreciate your concern; it is nice to know my family is thinking of each other’s well being. I feel the Air Force is the right way for me. I know war is definitely a reality for me, but I am not going to let that stop me. I would never know if this was for me, if I did not try. Let’s face the facts, I was going nowhere back in Philly and the military offered an option that worked for me.”

All my bribery, pleading, persuasion, advice, hope, and concern came to a screeching halt. And so I wrote back:

“Sometimes one has to step inside the belly of the beast, to make the appropriate change from within. I just hope, dear nephew, you packed all your sharp wits and a squadron of angels to look over your shoulder. I don’t believe however anyone is prepared to enter the adversity and harshness of war, and I certainly would not exclude the idea of chatting with those who have the good fortune to return. Unless, you’re in the game of empire or international corporate expansion, while devouring the corner market on what’s left of the earth’s precious natural resources, there is no gain in the war for US. This leaves the majority of people out of the equation and paying the brutal and agonizing price. But I’ll try to get off the soapbox for a moment... Above all else, have some fun, and keep your spirit and soul fastened down tightly and intact. You’ve got great years ahead of you!”

I also invited him to continue writing a sharing his experiences and thoughts, as we work on developing a pen pal sort of exchange. As I feel a real need to support him, in particular in providing a different perspective that he won’t be hearing through the brainwashing seminars and drills at boot camp. After all this is a critical time to directly support each other, despite our distinctions and ambiguities about the war.

Sending personalized anti-recruitment and anti-war letters to young people we love is important, as they are the most susceptible in times of war. Young people have always remained on the Pentagon’s radar for supporting the war cause. Our mission as parents, educators, mentors, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, etc. is to deliver the critical message concerning the war, to create or provide real noble alternatives that enforce a sense of pride and belonging to community.

Let’s not stop talking and writing until young people receive our full support. We can send a clear message against those touting for war, and we can present young people a diversity of real life alternatives.

Climate Change Could Cost WA Billions In Lost Trade and Infrastructure

BY MARK TAYLOR-CANFIELD

What does the future hold for Seattle’s shoreline given current predictions about global climate change? Attempts to answer that question were considered recently by the University of Washington’s Climate Impact Group. In January the panel released a report which predicts the sea level in Puget Sound could be four feet higher by the end of the century.

In the year 2100 Seattle’s Harbor Island will be mostly covered by water at high tide according to the Climate Impact Group. University of Washington scientists say the average temperature will be warmer, and there will be less snow in the Cascade mountain range.

The University of Washington study predicts there could be as much as a two foot rise in sea level by 2050. A separate state funded study identified the area between Tacoma and Olympia as the first community likely to become inundated with water. This report states that water will cover 56 square miles in that area within the next 40 years.

Along with tens of thousands of human refugees who will be forced to leave the flooded areas in Thurston and Pierce counties, coastal plants and animals will also suffer from the rise in water levels. Rare indigenous species of coastal wildlife could be threatened when their environment is destroyed by rising sea levels.

A recent article in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer quotes city officials from the state capitol in Olympia who acknowledge that their city is one most at risk of being covered over by water. Unfortunately, Olympia’s downtown and port facilities are located on a shallow landfill built only a few feet above the current sea level.

Last month, the Climate Impact Group’s findings were supported by the National Research Council. The NRC report found that rising water levels could have an enormous impact on local ports and infrastructure, not just in Seattle, but throughout the Puget Sound area, on the Straits of Juan De Fuca, and along the Pacific coast.

The results of the National Research Council report show that the cities most affected by the rising water would be Aberdeen, Hoquiam, Port Townsend, Port Angeles, Bellingham, Everett, Seattle, Tacoma and Olympia.

According to this study, port facilities at Willapa Bay, Grays Harbor and Seattle’s Elliott Bay will have to be replaced and built again on higher ground or they will be inundated with water and rendered useless for commerce. The economic results could be devastating to communities who rely on shipping and international trade to provide jobs for their residents and tax revenue for their local municipal governments.

The Port of Seattle alone does billions of dollars of business in trade and exports with Pacific Rim countries and the rest of the world. A loss of the port facilities would mean financial ruin for the waterfront industries that have fueled commerce in Seattle since the Yukon gold rush of the late 19th century.

The downtown section of Seattle is currently protected by the Alaskan Way sea wall from water level rises of up to 11 inches.

The 1.4 mile long structure is scheduled to be replaced in 2012 at a cost of \$800 million. With the usual cost overruns associated with most large publicly funded engineering projects, and considering the increasingly devalued US currency, that figure could be pushed well above a billion dollars.

The University of Washington Climate Impact Group’s recommendations to Governor Christine Gregoire include several strategies. They propose revisions to the state’s growth and shoreline management acts, and they suggest changes in the current environmental review process in order to



take into consideration rising water levels. The group specifically warns state officials not to place housing or infrastructure in floodplains or other areas that are at risk of changes in sea level.

Washington State Department of Transportation deputy design engineer Nancy Boyd worries that roads, railways and bridges will also be wiped out by rising water. She says landslides and erosion could add to the destruction of the state’s transportation system.

Although everyone involved in this research admits that the regional response to climate change is in its very beginning stages, there are a few obvious threats that researchers say regional planners will have to address immediately. The Port of Seattle’s environmental managers say they have two strategies: one program works to prevent greenhouse emissions, and a second series of projects are designed to help cities adapt to changing climate conditions.

Climate change experts admit that their dire predictions could prove to be overly pessimistic. They say a number of factors may influence changes in water levels, including carbon dioxide emissions, rising temperatures, increasing storm activity, widespread flooding and melting ice caps.

But one thing remains clear — our ability to adapt to a changing environment will be tested over the next century. Whether we survive that test may depend on how we react today.

As an independent journalist, Mark has filed stories with KBCS in Seattle, as well as with Amy Goodman and Democracy Now!, the Pacifica Radio Network’s Free Speech Radio News, and the International Independent Media Center network. Currently Mark is working with a media literacy organization, the Weapons of Mass Distraction Project. Mark is also an actor and musician.

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BAD DEVELOPMENT: IS YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD NEXT?

And if you're seeking landmark designation, watch out who you talk to

OPINION BY MARJORIE RHODES

Numbered citations appear at the end of this article.

One: trees, historic buildings, single-family neighborhoods, all in the name of population density; but what is the truth behind all this land-use mayhem? And what can neighborhoods do about it?

Though the focus of this story is a northend Seattle district, bad development is a blight afflicting virtually all Seattle neighborhoods and beyond. But I have chosen the Maple Leaf District as an example of the problem because I happen to live here; and because it is a story of remarkable stick-to-it-iveness on the part of a community that has really pulled together, much to the chagrin of developer and city government.

Maple Leaf is halfway between the UW to the south and city limits to the north. The developer involved is Prescott Homes of Kirkland WA, a city where ordinances prevent the wholesale destruction of trees that is still permitted in Seattle.(1)

This is another reason for choosing Maple Leaf to illustrate the problem, because our community is fighting to save a much needed urban forest: over 100 trees, primarily Douglas Firs. The lack of a tree ordinance makes Seattle very appealing to developers. The fact that Seattle has lost well over half of all its trees since 1972 shows the urgent need for such an ordinance here.(2)

With density as the goal, all hell is breaking loose; but do the numbers support this need for Seattle density? Though overpopulation is the underlying cause of many world problems, and governments are failing to address this issue, it does not explain what has been happening here. Look at these numbers:

Seattle population 1960 - 557,087 (Historylink)
Seattle population 2004 - 572,600 (municipal website)

This very modest increase does not explain the wholesale loss of trees, historic buildings and lovely older homes, nor the proliferation of cookie-cutter townhouses intruding on single family neighborhoods. So why all the tearing down and building up?

You guessed it: money! Seattle government is a little too cozy with developers, and developers love money.

We are not the first to face off with Prescott Homes. The Fremont District lost a historic building to Prescott a couple years ago (3619 Albion Place N). More recently, Wallingford residents wanted a grocery store to replace the former Safeway at 40th & Stone Way; but Prescott was discussing more residential units instead of a larger retail space.

In summer 2006, Camp Fire USA put its property up for sale in the heart of Seattle's Maple Leaf neighborhood, at 8511 15th Ave N.E. The organization was eager to cash in on an inflated real estate market. This 1.6 acres was originally the site of the Waldo Osteopathic Hospital, built in 1924 and founded by Dr. William Waldo. It was built just outside city limits (north 85th back then) because osteopathy was labeled as "alternative medicine" and Waldo was not permitted to build his hospital inside city limits at that time.

Then in 1946 the Waldo Hospital block was annexed to Seattle, eight years ahead of city expansion when city limits jumped to 145th north. Dr. Waldo played city against county to dodge ordinances that would have hindered his hospital; and thus it stood in a single family neighborhood. It was purchased by Camp Fire December 31, 1968, and is now being sold to Prescott.

According to David Miller, president of the Maple Leaf Community Council (MLCC), "This L2 [multifamily] zone, according to city code, shouldn't even be here. It's a leftover mistake made by the County during transitions. This is not just our opinion, the earliest documents in the file on this project demonstrate the City knows this as well."

So for 21 months, I and others in our community have been fighting a government mistake that government refuses to correct. The proposed 39 houses, with a density several times the surrounding neighborhood, would not even be on the drawing board were it not for this mistake.

Our community tried for a land-

mark designation (nearly a year of preparation); and we received endorsements from Sierra Club and Seattle Audubon. "In May 2007, the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation chose Waldo Hospital as one of the most endangered historic sites in the state. The organization sent a letter supporting the community's Landmark Nomination and representatives testified in front of the Landmark Board." (www.savewaldo.org)

We also sought an endorsement from Historic Seattle, for which we submitted to them a copy of our landmark application, unaware that one of their board members would later testify against us at the landmark hearing. (The same board member, it turns out, also testified against the Fremont group that sought a designation for the streetcar station mentioned above.) This is not what I expected from Historic Seattle, an organization that has a reputation for helping preserve historical buildings.

On June 20, 2007 the landmark board denied us a designation. Camp Fire's lawyer, former governor Gary Locke, argued that Maple Leaf should not be given the designation. And Camp Fire children, in their red shirts, showed up early to fill the seats, causing our neighborhood side to have to stand through this several-hour hearing. A Queen Anne woman who witnessed this said she had a problem with the children sleeping in the chairs while the adults had to stand.

We had senior citizens there including an elderly couple in their late 80s; but the board did not ask the children to get up and offer the seats to the adults. Of course, the children were put up to this by the Camp Fire leadership. But why did the landmark board allow this?

We received a unanimous nomination from the landmark board during the first part of this two-step process; but some board members were replaced just prior to the June hearing. There are six criteria upon which designation is judged; and only one is required for qualifying. We believe we met more than one; but this is a subjective process left to the interpretation of the board. How much was the board influenced by girls in red shirts, and by Gary Locke?

The community has persevered in spite of this setback, sending hundreds of letters to the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) and collecting 2,000 signatures on a petition. We've held more meetings than you can shake a stick at, and jumped through all the hoops of the DPD process. We've packed the room at official hearings; and have also received strong support from leaders of other communities. The MLCC talked with Mayor Nickels and city council members, urging them to buy the property for a park. No luck.

There is an ongoing effort to save the trees. I'm worried that the developer will cut most of these, and endanger the remaining ones by building into their root zones. Furthermore, building demolition may threaten water safety (the adjacent open reservoir). I think there will be parking and traffic problems as well if this property is developed according to plans.

Camp Fire wants to close the deal with Prescott. Prescott wants the master use permit before closing. The community wants to save the trees and to have some say in a development that will impact our homes, community and quality of life.

Who's winning; who's losing? Are neighborhoods



George Jartos

neighborhoods

helpless against developers and city hall?

A community must pull together to fight unfavorable development. And pay attention to posted land-use signs.

Use the internet. A Wedgwood man set up a city-wide blog for land-use issues (<http://smarterneighbors.com/>). Send him your land-use problems for posting. Embarrass uncooperative developers.

Connect with other neighborhoods that are fighting the same problem or same developer. Go to their hearings. If neighborhoods stand up for each other then city government will get the message. Don't give up. Persevere.

Even if you can't stop a developer, at least require some compromises in his plan. You have to live with the results long after the developer has moved on to extracting profits from someone else's neighborhood.

CITATIONS

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Turn K-12 Schools Into Lifelong Learning Centers

OPINION BY BARBARA E. MOREY

School's out — permanently — for many Seattle public schools, as well as for other districts with similar demographics. With the closing of school buildings because of low enrollment, the community and the school district are often at odds about the best use of these taxpayer-owned facilities.

In the case of the Seattle School Board, its newly revised procedure for closed schools states that one of its general objectives is to "seek to achieve maximum economic benefit from its real property assets." The focus on money ignores the fact that these buildings are owned by the public and are irreplaceable assets for the Commonwealth. However, a second goal is to "support to a limited extent, youth education activities."

With the closing of Seattle school buildings which are no longer needed for public K-12 classes, an alternative to selling them to developers or to private, corporate interests — and a best use for the local area — is to establish a community resource center in the building for the benefit of the immediate neighborhood.

School buildings were intentionally built at the heart of the community. When a facility becomes vacant and is no longer needed for instruction of the K-12 population, its best use is to serve the interests of the community through involvement of citizens, the public school district, social service agencies, churches, community colleges and universities, and social organizations.

Community-based use of public school buildings closed because of low enrollment involves people in each district working together to make life for every person in the neighborhood richer, fuller and happier. The concept focuses as much on "how it happens" as it does on "what happens".

The lifelong learning model establishes a time-tested process that assures that the classes and activities are designed to meet the important and real needs of the people in the community.

Programming efforts could include services such as Adult Basic Education, see Lifelong Learning on page 15

Probing the Depths of the Dollar Crisis

Low Fed rates and eager spenders create a sea of red ink; unfortunately, there's no Moses to part it

BY DOUG COLLINS

Many Americans are occupied with the question of what we should do to "fix" the current economic problems.

The most common explanation of the breakdown of our financial system is that there has been a lack of regulation of the lending industry. First, that consumer loans have been given too easily, along with deceptive marketing practices and tolerance of padded or fraudulent loan applications. Second, that these resulting loans — which shouldn't have been given in the first place — were packaged into investments that were deceptively given high credit ratings.

In this view, the fix for the breakdown is to legislate protections for defaulting homeowners, regulate lending and investment practices, and cut Fed interest rates. These solutions seem mostly designed for two things: on the one hand for politicians to show the public that they care about the plight of the dispossessed, and on the other hand to prevent bank failures by offering sweet low-interest loans from the Federal Reserve Bank to banks that are on the brink.

Although I agree that there have been some problems of deception related to loans and loan investments, I have to say that this common explanation of the current crisis avoids the origin of the problem and ignores the extent of it. And the solutions being pursued now are at best minimally helpful and at worst disastrous.

Just under the surface

If you dive into these troubled economic waters, you'll see that the problem is much larger than just home loans and the investments packaged from them. It's a problem which affects every level of society: personal, institutional, and governmental. The problem is one of "overleverage": the existence of too much debt.

People are overleveraged with home loans, home equity loans, credit cards, "buy now pay later" retail schemes, and who-knows-what other enticements. Institutions, including corporations, are overleveraged with construction loans, business loans, or loans taken out simply for the purposes of putting money into investments. Bear Stearns, for example, had roughly \$30 of leveraged investments for every \$1 of real collateral. (The investments didn't turn out so well. Oops!)

And certainly our federal government is overleveraged by trillions, mired in deficits caused by George W. Bush's spending spree in Iraq and Afghanistan. The only quagmire stickier than our national finances is the War On Terror itself.

The cause of all this overleverage is something that mainstream media and politicians have been rarely mentioning. It's the low Fed interest rates themselves. This may seem very surprising to people that the standard "cure" for a problem is actually the cause. So let me explain a bit about the real estate bubble.

During the recession of the early 2000s, the Dow Jones Industrial Index generally declined for about two and a half years. To stimulate reinvestment in the economy, the Fed under Alan Greenspan undertook an aggressive lowering of Fed rates.

The reason for lowering Fed rates at that time was not to keep banks afloat — the banks were in no special trouble — but to free up cash for other investments, in hopes that investors would revive the stock market. Such a strategy has two aims. First, lower fed interest rates generally depress the interest rates paid on treasury bills, the dependable but boring government bonds that investors gravitate to when the stock market is shaky. When the already modest yields on the treasury bills drop, investors are less likely to see them as an alternative to other investments, so they are more likely to keep or put money into stocks. Second, lower Fed rates also generally depress the interest rates charged on a variety of loan products. This encourages investors and investing institutions to borrow money at a cheap rate and invest it in other things, such as stocks.

The low Fed rates of the early 2000s did succeed somewhat at accomplishing what Greenspan was aiming for. The stock market began moving upward and continued a bull market until 2007. But an unintended side effect of the low Fed rates was that investment in another sector — namely real estate — increased much more dramatically. Low interest rates increased demand for

houses, which in turn increased the prices of houses. Rising house prices made many people feel that if they did not buy a house soon, that prices would become out of reach permanently. This further fed the upward spiral of demand, prices, and indebtedness which became the housing bubble.

The primary cause of this bubble, as you might see now, was the low Fed rates themselves, not fraud and deception in the loan business. Such fraud and deception have always been present, long before any bubble was in the making. The only reason loan fraud is noticed more now is because the overall real estate bubble grew to such a large size before bursting.

The American public should know that current talk of regulating the loan business and credit rating agencies is somewhat of a red herring. Although anti-fraud measures might improve lending, such measures will not come even close to solving the basic problem of overleverage. And recent cuts in Fed rates, again taken in part to stimulate the stock market, are probably simply extending the problem of overleverage.

The effects of overleverage: more bubbles and inflation

The recent Fed rate cuts — and more cuts are widely expected — will likely make it easier for the many banks to hang on. They can borrow cheaply from the government at a time when they are essentially drowning in red ink themselves. It gives them time to try to reform themselves and figure out other revenue streams. One thing is very likely: their dependence on income from home loans will never be as great again, at least not for a few generations.

But since lending and investment are a mainstay of banks, and since banks are now being essentially backed by the government via ultra-low Fed rates, it's possible that banks will begin directing this "cheap" credit to what might seem better investments. The Fed seems to be hoping that the domestic stock market will be the beneficiary. However, confidence in America itself — and in its dollar — is historically very low. The beneficiary of the new cheap credit will more likely be something with brighter prospects: international bonds, emerging market stocks, or even precious metals. Cheap credit could very well create bubbles in these sectors or others. In any case, most of this credit will be wasted in terms of truly benefiting our own country, although smart speculators may benefit.

One self-defeating aspect of the current Fed direction is that it favors the decline of the US dollar, which depresses the attractiveness of US investments. Current Fed chairman Ben Bernanke has vowed to "drop money from helicopters" if that is what is needed to prop up the economy. Bank bailouts such as that of Bears Stearns (and probably others to come), the easy credit of low Fed rates, and even the tax rebates scheduled for this year, point to an increased circulation of dollars, which can cause price inflation.

As yields on treasury bills decline along with Fed rates, treasury bills become less attractive to the Chinese, Japanese, and Korean investors that have been the best customers of them in recent decades. When the Asians sell these bills (they have started to already, but at a slow pace), it further increases the circulation of dollars, causing yet more inflation. If the US becomes strapped and unable to pay out these treasury bills, the electronic equivalent of "printing money" may occur, causing an outright increase in the money supply, which is the precise definition of inflation according to many economists.

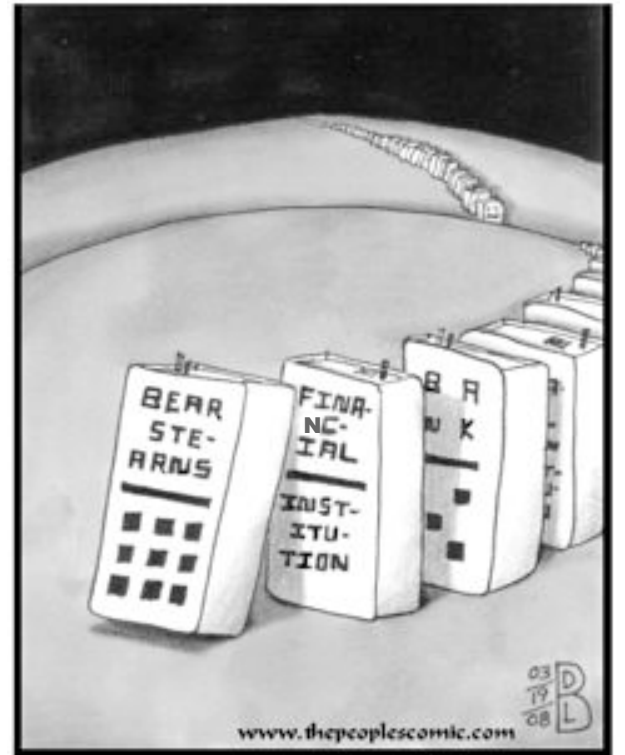
And when the US dollar inflates, it likely declines in value relative to the Asian currencies, so the prices of imports increase in the US. Surprise, more price inflation!

It's important to keep in mind that if one of the Asian economies decides to cash in most of its US treasuries, the others will likely follow suit quickly, as they all realize that whoever does it the fastest will likely have the least loss from a plummeting dollar. This phenomenon could cause massive sudden devaluation of the dollar in relation to other currencies, and massively higher prices on both imports and goods that are typically exported from the US, chiefly commodities. This dollar sell-off scenario is humorously dubbed "the Chinese nuclear option" by economists, but nobody is laughing too hard about it.

A few months ago, the precariousness of the dollar led some OPEC countries to call for switching the currency of oil trade from the US dollar to a "basket" of world currencies. Kuwait, in fact, did switch to a currency bas-

THE PEOPLE'S COMIC

BY DAVID LOGAN



ket. If other oil-producers did likewise, it would further erode the value of the dollar. This possibility has been temporarily avoided, probably by backroom deals that we'll never hear about. But this will likely be a factor again in the future.

Add to this dismal mix the increasing scarcity of fossil fuels and the possibility of a horribly misguided and expensive war with Iran. The inflationary scenarios start seeming like a bad joke. As for funny jokes, the dollar will probably be the butt of many, though when the dollar devalues, other countries will feel a need to devalue their currencies as well, to stabilize trade. The joke will be on everyone.

True, the rate-slashing Bernanke Fed may have kept some banks alive, but it has been at the expense of the dollar, with even more risks to the dollar and the international economy lurking in the coming months. The price inflation that results is simply a stealth tax on the average worker, who has lost buying power even if his/her wage has gone up, and will likely lose much more.

The American public has even been hoodwinked about the real rate of inflation here. During the Clinton years, the calculation methods for the Consumer Price Index (CPI) were altered. And voila!: our official CPI inflation rate as of this writing is just 4%, instead of the 7.3% calculated by the pre-Clinton method. (See www.shadowstats.com.)

Raise taxes or print money

From the perspective of the government, one economic quandary is how to continue to attract money to fund its massive deficit spending. As current yields on treasury bills become small along with Fed cuts, fewer investors may be attracted to them. And to make cash-flow even more strapped, the government also will also have to pay off the older, higher interest on the treasury bills that are now maturing.

(continued next page)

We Need Fishmongers

The WA Free Press is a volunteer publication. We need help from fishmongers, dogcatchers, manicurists and practical jokers to keep the paper alive and out there. Really! We ask that all volunteers also be current subscribers and help with distribution three times a year. There is also great need for proofreading and mailing help, if you live in the Seattle vicinity.

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At some point, the government will be faced with two options to pay off its massive obligations: raise taxes or print money. The modern form of printing more money is called "monetization" and happens electronically via bank accounts, but the effect is the same.

Raising taxes would be the more responsible option. It would also tend to depress consumer spending and thus have a deflationary effect (less consumer demand generally means lower prices), which could help balance out other inflationary factors. But raising taxes could be politically unpopular and would likely also deaden investment.

Monetizing government debts is the other option, and is quite possible because the US dollar, since the 1970s, has been a free-floating "fiat" currency not backed by any external standard such as gold. If Bernanke is true to his word, to "drop money from helicopters," this option seems like it is a possibility.

It's probably a good bet that the government will at some point undertake a combination of both of these options. In any case, the buying power of the average American worker will get dinged again, through higher taxes or yet more inflation.

Why not deflation?

I don't want to be completely down on inflation. The bright side of inflation — and of deflation — is that they both help erase debts.

Inflation allows debtors to easily pay off their old loans. If you take an interest-only loan of \$100,000 at 5% in year X, and if true inflation averages 10% annually over the next ten years, then you're basically getting free money, even a small gain, because ten years later the principle you owe, \$100,000, will be worth only about \$35,000 in year X values.

Inflation at 10% may seem impossible to people who have never experienced it, but situations much more extreme than this have occurred in developed countries in the last hundred years. In fact, the scenario I just mentioned might have been realistic in the 1970s and early 1980s in the US.

Remember that wages generally rise during inflationary periods too. The result is that many people, especially indebted people, welcome inflation, at least at first. The flipside is that savers and retirees, those responsible, conservative individuals who've put their money into bank accounts and bonds, see the value of their life savings erased by the same inflation. Inflation in effect forces people to spend their money as fast as they can, hopefully on things that will hold value.

Another way of erasing overleveraged debt is through deflation, the contraction of the money supply along with a lowering of prices and wages. If it is allowed to run its course, deflation will cause the default of overleveraged people and institutions. The debt disappears through bankruptcy. The winners and losers in this event are generally the opposite of what occurs in inflation. Savers and bondholders enjoy greater buying power with each dollar they've saved. Debt holders and inveterate speculators must start from zero again.

Of course, the last two paragraphs are grossly oversimplified, but hopefully you get my general drift: inflation tends to reward the overleveraged, and deflation tends to punish them. But either way, the debt disappears.

Although it's a bit risky in this era, I'd like to make a value judgement between the two. If you have to have one or the other, deflation is preferable because it better rewards the responsible and punishes the irresponsible. Of course, everyone may get punished to some extent in either scenario if the rate of inflation or deflation snowballs. In such cases, business, labor, and consumption practices become warped and unstable. But in the end, I think deflation teaches people a better lesson, at least at this point in our history.

Despite rather high current levels of inflation, the US economy is also currently experiencing some strong deflation. The value of real estate and of stocks have been generally declining in recent months. Right now, federal policymakers are in fact in a position to steer the economy toward either inflation or deflation. Which direction will they try to go?

I think I can make a good guess. Because raising taxes and raising interest rates would be very unpopular, especially among the moneyed elite who mostly finance their campaigns, American politicians will favor inflation, which amounts to a stealth tax. And because the government itself is in the deepest hock imaginable, it will lean toward inflation as a means to ease its debt burden. This strategy will work until the inflation gets completely ridiculous or until deflation overwhelms it.

In Germany in 1923, the year's inflation rate, as judged by its wholesale price index, was roughly thirty billion percent (see "The Nightmare German Inflation" Scientific Market Analysis, 1970, available on the internet). That's how ridiculous it got there during the democratic Weimar Republic, before people started to forge a working solution. And that's not even the worst instance in modern developed countries. Like the US government today, the German government was saddled with international debt and held interest rates very low despite

advice to the contrary.

On the other hand, I'm sure Fed chair Ben Bernanke is quite aware of the history of German inflation, and does not want to repeat it. But that only makes me feel a little less uneasy. Historically, crises of hyperinflation are as much due to lack of confidence in a currency as they are due to technical money supply. If people the world over lose confidence in the dollar and start selling it at full tilt, a dramatic collapse could happen, complete with retailers automatically increasing prices each day in anticipation of inflation, thereby creating a snowball effect. Central bank planners such as Bernanke have little or no influence over these types of events. And even if our currency collapse were one tenth as bad as Germany's, it would still be disastrous.

A lot of economic analysts instead point to the deflationary slump in Japan as the cautionary tale. Japan experienced a real estate bubble similar to our own in the early 1990s. Since then, the country has been in a prolonged slump. The Japanese stock market index, the Nikkei Average, is still only at about a third of its high value set in 1989. The country experienced historically large unemployment in the latter 1990s, and even slight deflation in recent years. Japanese central bankers have long tried to stimulate the economy via rate cuts, but to no avail. The interest rates there have hovered close to zero for more than a decade. The Japanese government, like ours, has also engaged in massive deficit spending, but little or no lasting stimulus has resulted.

The prolonged Japanese slump is what Bernanke and company seem to be deathly afraid of. This is yet another reason that I think they will try to pilot our economy toward inflation rather than deflation.

But I have to wonder, what is so bad about the Japanese economy? Even after nearly a couple decades of economic doldrums there, homelessness is a small fraction of the problem that it is here. Crime as well. Their personal savings rate is admirable, while ours has been negative in recent years. While it's true that people have not been getting rich off the stock market or real estate there since 1990, for the most part people are quite comfortable. If that is a slump, then what is so terrible about a slump? Perhaps it is just the necessary correction from the over-exuberance of the 1980s in Japan, which produced stock market and real estate bubbles.

But it is important to consider differences between the US and Japan. Because of the high savings rate there, Japan has an ample domestic market for the bonds to fund its deficit spending. We, in contrast, are dependent on foreigners — including Japanese — to buy the treasury bills that keep our spendthrift government afloat. That leaves our country much more vulnerable to international loss of confidence in the dollar or other unpredictable international factors. Another difference is that many Japanese politicians have been critical of Bernanke-type bailouts, which they pejoratively term "helicopter solutions."

Considering these differences, I'd say that the US economy will be more prone to dramatic changes, whether inflationary or deflationary. And because we seem to lack the conservatism of the Japanese, our direction will more likely go the way of inflation. I hope I'm wrong, but I'll judge this to be for worse, not better.

Either way, our economy right now is akin to playing marbles on a small flat spot on top of a mountain ridge. One side of the ridge is inflation, the other side deflation. The marbles might roll either way, but the one certainty is that we're going to lose quite a few marbles!

Who will save us?

As far as I've read, both major Democratic candidates for President seem to support solutions akin to what President Bush has overseen: mild pressure on banks to provide rate relief to homeowners near foreclosure, low Fed rates to prop up banks, perhaps even some bailout action. Republican McCain initially favored a more Libertarian option of doing nothing, an option that has also found voice in former candidate Giuliani and the dark-horse Republican candidate Ron Paul, who has also been fiercely critical of the wars and the Fed rate cuts. I must say that I agree with these Republicans on this issue (though McCain appears to have since adopted a more mainstream bailout platform).

But what is the need to bail out banks and homeowners? If anyone should not get public handouts, it is the banks. Feeling sympathy for distressed homeowners is much easier, but the economic truth is that they will generally be better off if they simply sell their houses, cut their losses, and rent. True, it's nice to have your own home. But when the monthly mortgage interest you pay is more than the typical rent for a same-sized dwelling in your same neighborhood, a lot of your money is going down the drain, not to mention the fact that the value of your home is likely to sink for at least another few years, probably longer.

I'd be in favor of a public program to transition distressed homeowners into rentals (for example, assistance with rental deposits), but any program that made so much sense would certainly be doomed to death in committee. Truth is, most of us Americans are glued to the idea of owning a home at whatever cost, as though we

are not complete persons without a property title in our name. That's a tragic fallacy.

So really the economic problem is largely psychological, and in all of us. For certain, we are so easily hoodwinked into spending too much money for almost everything. It's not just the problem of middle-class Americans maxing themselves out on home loans for houses that are much larger than what we really need or can afford. Many lower-income Americans with no savings are doing things like renting fancy big-screen TVs for \$80 a month when they could instead buy a decent TV at a garage sale for a one-time cost of \$20. Do they have any better notion of living within their means, other than when the bill collector pounces on them?

Currently, when the President and Congress squander the nation's future on a variety of idiotic wars and occupations of foreign real estate, it's understandable that many Americans don't condemn them. After all, the government is just behaving in the same spendthrift way as we do. Besides, the foreign adventures make interesting TV news.

Perhaps we all should just skip buying any TV, since the commercially driven pap on the tube is much of what drives America's unhealthy, outsized acquisitiveness. After decades of ad-packed infotainment, we've forgotten any traditional taboos against excessive debt. Such taboos have historically existed in Catholicism, Islam, and probably other religions. But most modern followers of these religions in the US seem pretty unfamiliar with these admonishments. There were even some mortgage brokers in the early 1990s who still followed the old, ethical rule of thumb that a monthly home mortgage payment should be no greater than a third of one's income. They are long-since retired or unemployed.

Part of the problem of life and economy in America is that what we now feel is a "normal" or "middle class" material standard is actually extravagant, and generally based on lots of debt. More than anything, we need to downsize our material expectations of life, and focus on the basics. If we don't make this scaling-down into an interesting challenge of our own accord, we'll be forced to anyway by the bad economic karma we've accrued.

We've been spending tomorrow's money today, in reckless disregard for the next couple generations. At the same time we've been using up all the world's oil as if there were no tomorrow. I'm reminded of the old British cartoon character Wimpy, a plump, simple-minded, lazy-bones, known for his phrase, "I would gladly pay tomorrow for a hamburger today." Oh, fat and fatuous Wimpy: wake up, settle your debts, and shed some pounds. It'll be good for you and for all of us.

THE PEOPLE'S COMIC BY DAVID LOGAN



Reason #552: Thomas Jefferson guaranteed the Free Press in the Bill of Rights (but he didn't mention the subscription price!)

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Impeachment: The Myth-Buster

It may also be the best chance for the Dems to win in November

ANALYSIS BY RICHARD W. BEHAN

If the Democratic Party persists in stonewalling the impeachment of George Bush and Richard Cheney, it invites their own defeat in the presidential election this fall.

For more than a year, the Democrats have refused to impeach — “It would be too divisive” — in order to assure a Democratic victory in 2008. But now their scheme stands to backfire.

A year ago, John McCain’s candidacy languished. Today he is a formidable opponent. And the savage nature of the Obama/Clinton primary contest is polarizing the Democratic party — to Mr. McCain’s considerable benefit.

The Democrats’ refusal to impeach has now become a grave liability for them: it adds enormously to Mr. McCain’s advantage.

Failing to impeach leaves unchallenged and intact the manufactured, distorted “reality” the Bush Administration has imposed on the country — a perilous and fearful world, necessary warfare, and unending militarism. This is the result of seven years of conscious and effective propagandizing by the Administration, to justify the so-called war on terror. But this bizarre “reality” of fear is now the base-datum of political discourse.

The fear-mongering has succeeded. “Keeping America safe in the war on terror” remains a slogan of great power, and it bolsters Mr. McCain’s stature — and his campaign — with political potency.

Some recent polls have shown the general election tilting slightly toward McCain. Can he sustain and widen this advantage, and win in November?

Start with the pall of fear and a decorated war hero, and add a Bush Administration announcement, say two weeks before voting day, of a red-alert terrorist threat; a Democratic victory is far from certain. Add smear tactics, deception, and vote fraud, and a Democratic victory is in greater jeopardy still.

Finally, add the Fox television network, which McCain can depend on. A recent AP story reported the Fox network is now the most popular in the country, averaging two million more viewers per week than its closest rival.

In an election drama staged by the Bush Administration and produced by Fox television, a Democratic success is remote.

If this staging were deconstructed, the way would be clearer for a Democratic victory, and for new trajectories in both foreign and domestic policy, as well.

But the staging is deeply embedded. Not a murmur of protest was registered when President Bush said in his State of the Union speech, “The advance of liberty is opposed by terrorists and extremists — evil men who despise freedom, despise America, and aim to subject millions to their violent rule.”

Following along faithfully, McCain decries the Democratic candidates’ pledge to bring the troops home. “I believe that would have catastrophic consequences,” Mr. McCain said. “I believe al Qaeda would trumpet to the world that they had defeated the United States of America, and I believe that therefore they would try to follow us home.”

By what means of transportation will 18,000 terrorists reach the homeland of 303 million people—who are protected by the mightiest military in history? Also unexplained is how, thereafter, we might be made “subject to their violent rule.” But the imagery and the words are now widely accepted — and rarely scrutinized.

The Congressional Democrats have a unique institutional ability to shatter this myth: impeachment.

An impeachment process would allow truth to emerge that the American media has not widely reported:

- Truth about a standing offer from the Taliban to surrender Osama bin Laden, awaiting President Bush when he took office.

- Truth about the Bush Administration spurning the offer three times before September 11, 2001, and twice thereafter.

- Truth about the Bush Administration meeting repeatedly with the Taliban in early 2001, unsuccessfully negotiating a pipeline route in behalf of the Unocal Corporation.

- Truth about the Administration notifying Pakistan in July of 2001 “...military action against Afghanistan would go

ahead by the middle of October.”

- Truth about the Administration finally telling the Taliban, “Accept our offer of a carpet of gold or we bury you under a carpet of bombs”—five weeks before 9/11.

- Truth about repeated written proposals to invade Iraq, spanning the two Bush Administrations and made by four people who served in both—prominently including Richard Cheney.

- Truth about their triumph when the National Security Council, seven months before 9/11, formalized the commitment to invade Iraq.

- Truth about Richard Cheney’s Energy Task Force studying maps of the Iraqi oil fields in March of 2001.

- Truth about the Administration designing the privatization of Iraq’s nationalized oil industry, fully a year before Congress authorized military action.

- Truth about the Bush Administration rejecting a peaceful regime change in Iraq by denying Saddam Hussein’s offer to leave the country for exile in Egypt or Saudi Arabia.

- Truth about former consultants to the Unocal Corporation serving as the president of Afghanistan and the second US ambassador there; the first ambassador was a Unocal vice president.

- Truth about the Bush Administration’s readiness in 2003 to finance a pipeline across Afghanistan and station troops permanently to defend it.

- Truth about Exxon/Mobil, Conoco/Phillips, Shell, and BP/Amoco poised today to profit immensely from 81% of Iraq’s undeveloped crude.

Congress has begun to confront the Administration’s duplicity. The National Defense Authorization Act of 2008 expressly prohibited the permanence of military bases in Iraq, and denied funds “to exercise United States control of the oil

see Myth-Buster on page 10

THE PROCESS OF IMPEACHMENT

Any of these can initiate an impeachment

- a member of the House introduces an impeachment resolution
- a grand jury submits charges
- an investigating committee submits charges
- a state (or possibly also a city) petitions Congress with a set of charges

The steps of impeachment

1. The House Judiciary Committee conducts the investigation into the crimes.
2. The House Judiciary Committee approves Articles of Impeachment (charges) by a majority vote.
3. The House of Representative debates each article. If at least one passes with a simple majority vote then the individual is “impeached”.
4. The Senate conducts a trial and can convict with a 2/3 majority of those Senators present.
5. If convicted then the person is removed from office.

It is possible to skip steps 1 & 2 if a Representative introduces Articles of Impeachment directly.

Resolutions that call for impeachment, or call for an investigations that suggests impeachment may result, are considered “privileged” and must be addressed before other business.

from the editor

IMPEACHMENT SHOULD NEVER BE OFF THE TABLE

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-San Francisco) has long insisted that impeachment proceedings against President Bush are “off the table.” She is concerned that impeachment would be a “waste of time” and would create support for the Republicans. **By not pursuing impeachment, she says she is “making them [the Republicans] lame ducks.”**

But impeachment is not something that the Speaker of the House controls. Although the impeachment vote for Bill Clinton was largely pushed by Republican party leaders, in the Nixon era — which more resembles today’s political climate — a groundswell of popular opinion and a group of determined junior congresspeople started the process (see “The Nixon Flooding Plan”). A similar groundswell of opinion seems to exist today. Even many Republicans are extremely critical of the current President and Vice-president.

Also, Pelosi’s view that impeachment would weaken the hand of Democrats is called into serious question by some progressives (please read the “Myth-Buster” analysis in this issue).

While it is not the role of this paper to push for or against impeachment of any particular President, it is the paper’s journalistic duty to inform people about the history of and possibilities of impeachment. For some reason, this topic has been somewhat taboo in the mainstream press, and it should not be. Perhaps our mainstream news media have become too “nice” to touch it. In any case, impeachment is a venerable and useful part of our American political legacy, and it should naturally be considered in any case of malfeasance committed by Democrat or Republican, now or in the future.

Doug Collins

John Jonik



Impeachment is mentioned six times in the US Constitution

Article I, Section 2

The House of Representatives shall choose their speaker and other officers; and shall have the sole power of **impeachment**.

Article I, Section 3

The Senate shall have the sole power to try all **impeachments**. When sitting for that purpose, they shall be on oath or affirmation. When the President of the United States is tried, the Chief Justice shall preside: And no person shall be convicted without the concurrence of two thirds of the members present.

Judgment in cases of **impeachment** shall not extend further than to removal from office, and disqualification to hold and enjoy any office of honor, trust or profit under the United States: but the party convicted shall nevertheless be liable and subject to indictment, trial, judgment and punishment, according to law.

Article II, Section 2

The President shall be commander in chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, and of the militia of the several states... and he shall have power to grant reprieves and pardons for offenses against the United States, except in cases of **impeachment**.

Article II, Section 4

The President, Vice President and all civil officers of the United States, shall be removed from office on **impeachment** for, and conviction of, treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors.

Article III, Section 2

The trial of all crimes, except in cases of **impeachment**, shall be by jury....

THERE'S PLENTY OF TIME FOR IMPEACHMENT

BY DAVID SWANSON

There is a widespread myth that an impeachment cannot happen in the space of the nine months Bush and Cheney are scheduled to remain in office. But I'm unable to find any past impeachment that took as long as nine months. It's messy comparing one impeachment to another, as they are complicated and varying processes.

But a few things are clear:

- Most impeachment efforts achieve important results quickly, without actually achieving impeachment (think Elliot Spitzer or Alberto Gonzales).
- It is not uncommon for impeachment efforts to begin later in an administration than where we are now (think Andrew Johnson, Herbert Hoover, Harry Truman).
- While preliminary investigations of the sort that have been done on Bush and Cheney for the past year and a half can be dragged out for months, impeachments tend not to last long.
- While Senate trials can be delayed and dragged out for many months, impeachments in the House tend to be short-lived events.

An impeachment of Bush and/or Cheney for an indisputable offense (refusing subpoenas, refusing to enforce contempt citations, rewriting laws with signing statements, openly violating the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, etc.) could take literally one day. Such a thing would not be unprecedented. President Andrew Johnson was impeached three days after the offense for which he was impeached. Senator William Blount was impeached four days after the offense for which he was impeached.

There is no reason impeachment hearings on Cheney or Bush should be limited to the simplest crimes or rushed through at top speed. Public education might benefit from a slower process. My point is only that it is possible to impeach rapidly.

A senate trial can also serve as an educational forum. Below are some of the dates I've been able to find on how long past impeachments have taken. A better researcher might add to this collection. In several cases, I have dates for the duration of the Senate trial, but not for the House impeachment, the duration of which may in fact have been negligible.

A Senate trial can also be completed quickly, and there is no requirement or precedent for including every obvious impeachable offense. (In fact, there may be no precedent for elected officials being guilty of so many obvious impeachable offenses or for the public being so aware of impeachable offenses prior to an impeachment.) The Senate expelled Blount the day after he was impeached. Judge Halsted Ritter's Senate trial took 11 days. Judge John Pickering's trial took nine days. Judge James Peck's trial took three days. Judge West Humphreys' trial took one day.

Two presidents have been impeached: Andrew Johnson and Bill Clinton.

Johnson was impeached three days after committing the offense for which he was impeached, and prior to drafting articles of impeachment. Within a week, a committee drew up charges, and 11 days after the offense, the House delivered the charges to the Senate. The trial process began the next day, and in under three months it was over.

The House began impeachment procedures for Bill Clinton on October 8, 1998, and impeached him on December 19th. The Senate trial lasted from January 14, 1999, to February 12, 1999. It took four months, less than half the time remaining to Bush and Cheney.

Of the presidential impeachment movements that did not reach impeachment, the most well-known is that against Richard Nixon. The House began impeachment on May 9, 1974, and passed the first of three articles of impeachment on July 27, 1974. Nixon resigned on August 8th. Of course there were lots of preliminary investigations, but those have already been done for Bush and Cheney.

see Plenty of Time on page 10

The Nixon Flooding Plan

NW group launches strategy to oust Bush & Cheney

BY BARBARA G. ELLIS, PH.D.

A strategy for impeachment that has been revived by Northwest activists — known as the Nixon Flooding Plan — is getting plenty of notice and encouragement around the nation's progressive websites (including those based in Seattle, Olympia, Tacoma) and on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. Launched in Portland in late February, it operates under the umbrella of We the People National Coalition for Impeachment

Its three-month aim is to get 44 pro-impeachment House members either to file separate impeachment bills — as was done in 1973 to oust President Richard Nixon and Vice President Spiro Agnew — or to cosponsor others' separate impeachment bills.

The campaign was inspired by the 1973 strategy in the Democratic-controlled Congress when nearly 90 House Democrats forced out Nixon and Agnew by each hopping separate impeachment bills. Nearly 40 were submitted against Nixon in October alone, some with no co-sponsors, some with as many as 24.

Sparked by initial bills of William Fitts Ryan (NY) and John Conyers (now chair of the House Judiciary committee), that "band of brothers" and New York's Bella Abzug were galvanized into action by Nixon's increasing "unitary-executive" deeds violating the US Constitution. They ranged from a 14-month secret war against Cambodia, warrantless wiretapping, setting up a secret police, setting the CIA against the FBI, income tax manipulation, as well as Watergate and refusing to honor its subpoenas.

Even Republicans realized that unless they used the Constitutional Framers' powerful weapon of impeachment, the precedents Nixon was setting would be used by future presidents so they could behave like imperial caesars or medieval kings. (Nixon's deeds, by the way, were studied carefully by a loyal staffer named Richard B. Cheney.)

That Democratic group knew that one bill with 89 co-sponsors would probably die in a subcommittee, especially because leaders were terrified of the power Nixon had accumulated. But 89 separate bills (with or without co-sponsors) could not be ignored.

They started the flood first by forcing Agnew's resignation over a real-estate scandal by threatening him with impeachment investigations. If a mere threat could oust Agnew, they reasoned, it probably would work with Nixon. They flooded the House chamber with a tsunami of separate impeachment bills. Two-thirds were for investigations. For insurance, the remainder were plain-vanilla bills of impeachment.

It worked. That tidal wave of brave Democrats forced the obdurate and fear-ridden Speaker of the House Carl Albert to put impeachment "on the table."

Nixon resigned on August 9 near the end of the hearings. But his high crimes were so alarming (even to Republican committee members) that to wipe out the criminal precedents he had set, they voted unanimously on August 20 to send three articles of impeachment to the House floor, resignation or not. (One article is sufficient.) A House vote to impeach and a Senate trial and guilty verdict would set precedents against those deeds and reaffirm the Constitution's stipulated limits of power for a president and/or his administrative officers.

Albert and Democratic leadership refused to bring the vote to impeach for a House vote. They knew it would

result in an overwhelming vote of impeachment by the House — and the certainty of a Senate trial's guilty verdict and presidential ouster. ("They have the votes," Sen. Barry Goldwater told Nixon and Congressional leaders.) Ouster would have led directly to a criminal trial in Federal court; and evidence uncovered by the investigation assured a long sentence in a Federal prison. To save Nixon that fate, his appointed successor Gerald Ford granted an "unconditional pardon" for any crimes he committed as President.

The people, and the politicians, are rising again

Albert's deed opened the door to today's precedents set by Bush's and Cheney's long list of high crimes against the Constitution. It explains why they and their staffs regard that document as "just a... piece of paper."

Activists have realized that if impeachment is not put back "on the table" by Speaker Pelosi, the presidential precedents set by Nixon and expanded into near-dictatorial powers by Cheney and Bush will be handed over to the 2008 presidential winner and future presidents.

Using the Nixon Flooding Plan as a model, the Portland chapter of We the People National Coalition for Impeachment set about to introduce a plan to 44 pro-impeachment members of Congress. They felt the mood of the country — a President and Congress who ignored constituents' needs, a nation teetering on bankruptcy, and the negative poll ratings of Bush (72%) and Cheney (91%) — made the plan an idea whose time had come.

Also, Democrats have started to stand up to party leaders like House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and anti-impeachment Representatives Rahn Emanuel and Steny Hoyer. Representatives Leonard Boswell (IA) and Pete Stark (CA) signed on as co-sponsors of Kucinich's House Resolution 333/799, an impeachment bill against Cheney that was promptly buried by Pelosi and the House Judiciary Committee chair, who ironically is John Conyers, the same leader who championed impeachment during the Nixon years. Several others signed Representative Robert Wexler's letter to Conyers demanding impeachment hearings be started now.

Portland activist Marcia Meyers joined Michael Greenman (Cleveland, OH) and Carl McCargo (Springfield, MA) in Washington DC from Feb. 24-28 to lobby nearly 35 core members of the House's pro-impeachment group. Among the literature distributed was a White Paper on the 1973 flooding plan emphasizing their efforts toward impeachment. The trio furnished templates for sample impeachment bills. They also visited five members from the 1973 flooding plan, among them Pete Stark (CA) and Conyers. Wexler strongly endorsed this latest strategy.

Followup has been intense, with email and call-in campaigns, and an ad in Capitol Hill's Roll Call magazine.

In the first week of June, House members will be receiving fliers and information about a single impeachable offense. That involves Bush handing over \$29,000,000,000 of taxpayer money to the investment bank JPMorgan/Chase to save another investment bank — Bear Stearns — from bankruptcy over its subprime mortgage loans and sales of high-risk stocks. Not only does that deed open the door to bail out other major banking companies falling on hard times (Wachovia, Washington Mutual, Merrill Lynch, Citibank, etc.), but demonstrates Bush committed bribery by failing to ask for other bids to bail out Bear Stearns and failing to ask Congress to approve giving public money.

The Constitution specifically singles out bribery as cause for impeachment: "The President, Vice President, and all civil officers of the US shall be removed from office on impeachment for, and conviction of, treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors (Art. II, Sec. 4)."

Some say the evidence is already so strong — especially Bush's admission of warrantless wiretapping — that impeachment would be over in a day. Some say two weeks maximum.

One thing is certain: House members who unite in the Nixon Flooding Plan will get a roar of cheers — and votes — from many Americans for obeying their oath of office to support and defend the Constitution and to save democracy.

Barbara Ellis is a principal at Ellis & Associates, LLC of Portland OR, a professional writing company, and author of several books, including "The Moving Appeal", a 2004 Pulitzer Prize nominee. A long-time reporter and copy editor, she was a journalism professor at Oregon State University for six years and Louisiana's McNeese State University for eight years. She's a member of the Portland chapter of We the People National Coalition for Impeachment. For more information on the Nixon Flooding Plan, visit ImpeachBush.tv.



Image by Goettlich, Mindfully.org

Myth-Buster from p8

resources of Iraq.” President Bush nullified both provisions with a signing statement.

McCain and the Fox network accept the Bush Administration’s staging instead. But they cannot escape proof.

It is in the Democrats’ power to provide this proof. Proof can be developed through legally admissible evidence and sworn testimony, and then declared by a jury’s decision.

Impeachment is such a proceeding. There is no other way to show as well or as quickly the “war on terror” to be the Bush Administration’s deceit — and to prove it, with legally admissible evidence and sworn testimony in the House of Representatives and a jury’s declaration in the Senate.

No one has been a more enthusiastic champion for George Bush’s “war on terror” than Senator McCain. If it is displayed as appalling deceit, Democrats will improve their chances in the elections.

But time is short, and the Democratic party is engaged in a civil war with its primary election. With their demonstrated genius for losing elections, McCain might well stroll to the presidency.

If Democrats do not pursue impeachment, they may be humiliated in November.

Plenty of Time from p9

Most impeachments have not been against presidents, but rather judges, cabinet officers, senators. These impeachments seem to take about as long as presidential impeachment do, and offer no support to the myth of long impeachments. In addition, much other business has been accomplished at the same time as these impeachments.

On July 3, 1797, evidence of an offense by Senator William Blount became known. Four days later, the House impeached him and the next day the Senate expelled him.

Evidence of an offense by Judge John Pickering became known on February 4, 1803, and the House voted to impeach him on March 2, 1803. The Senate didn’t try him for another year, but spent 9 days on it when it did so.

Supreme Court justice Samuel Chase was impeached in late 1804 (I don’t know how long the impeachment took) and 30 days later he was tried in the Senate, which completed the trial on March 1, 1805.

Judge James Peck was impeached on April 24, 1830, a month after the Judiciary Committee recommended it. The Senate took up the trial the following January and spent three days on it.

Judge West H. Humphreys was impeached on May 19, 1862. The Senate tried and convicted him in one day on June 26, 1862.

Secretary of War William W. Belknap was impeached on March 2, 1876, and the Senate trial was completed on August 1, 1876.

Judge Charles Swaine was impeached on December 14, 1904, and his trial was over on February 27, 1905.

Judge Robert W. Archbald was impeached on July 13, 1912, and the Senate trial was over on January 13, 1913.

Judge Harold Louderback resigned before his impeachment went to trial.

Judge Halsted L. Ritter was impeached on March 2, 1936, and the 11-day Senate trial ended on April 17th of the same year.

Judge Harry E. Claiborne was impeached on July 22, 1986, and the trial ended on October 9, 1986.

Then Judge and now Florida Congressman Alcee L. Hastings, was impeached on August 3, 1988, and the Senate trial was over on October 20, 1988.

Judge Walter L. Nixon was impeached on May 10, 1989, and the Senate trial was completed on November 3, 1989.

There are nine months remaining to Bush and Cheney. If you think that is a short time, you are not a mother.

David Swanson’s website is at www.davidswanson.org.

IMPEACHMENT-RELATED RESOURCES AND CONTACTS

Whether you are pro-impeachment or anti-impeachment or impeachment-curious, below are some resources to refine your opinion and contacts to voice your opinion, published here in the interest of public participation.

Anti-impeachment websites

It was difficult to find websites dedicated to opposing impeachment. But there are some anti-impeachment-related op-eds and reportage on the internet. In the interest of presenting varied opinion, here is what we could find after considerable searching.

Nancy Pelosi’s “Off The Table” comments are widely reported on the internet. The original 60 Minutes segment appears at www.rawstory.com/news/2006/Pelosi_Impeachment_off_table_1023.html

Danny Westneat (Seattle Times) article http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/local-news/2003592835_danny28.html

Obama Anti-Impeachment Email www.opednews.com/maxwrite/diarypage.php?did=5541

Republican National Committee: “The Real Dem Agenda” <http://www.gop.com/Print/?Guid=3832c296-7324-44c9-90f8-88c777b7870c&pg=news>

Sound politics, a right-leaning blog site in WA <http://soundpolitics.com/archives/009981.html>
<http://soundpolitics.com/archives/008124.html>

Conservative local columnist Michelle Malkin <http://michellemalkin.com/category/impeachment>

Pro-impeachment websites

There are many websites mostly dedicated to impeachment on the internet. Here are some good examples, including some locally based ones.
www.washingtonforimpeachment.org
www.afterdowningstreet.org
www.impeachbush.tv
www.democrats.com (contains a variety of pro-impeachment opinions)
www.thealliancefordemocracy.org
www.sounddemocracy.org
www.backbonecampaign.org
www.nationalpriorities.org

Republican Congressman’s Ron Paul’s Statement Regarding Impeachment of Vice President Cheney <http://www.ronpaullibrary.org/document.php?id=976>

WA State Representatives

Brian Baird (360) 352-9768 brian.baird@mail.house.gov
Norman Dicks (253) 593-6536 norman.dicks@mail.house.gov
Jay Inslee (206) 361-0233 jay.inslee@mail.house.gov
Dave Reichert (206) 275-3438 dave.reichert@mail.house.gov
Rick Larson (800) 562-1385 rick.larson@mail.house.gov
Adam Smith (253) 896-3775 adam.smith@mail.house.gov
Jim McDermott (206) 553-7170 jim.mcdermott@mail.house.gov (he cosigned Articles of impeachment against Cheney)

House Judiciary Committee

Representatives Conyers, Lofgren, Nadler, Delahunt, Lee, Schiff, Meehan, Sherman, Wasserman- Shultz
Contact Judiciary Committee Staff (202) 225-3951
Congressional Switchboard (800) 828-0498 toll-free

Rep. Dennis Kucinich

Prime sponsor of impeachment bill. Call (800) 828-0498.

The Iraq Index

Population of Iraq: 27 million

Population of Texas: 24 million

Iraqi civilian deaths due to violence since the invasion: 208,000

Iraqi children, women, men wounded: over 1,000,000

US military deaths in Iraq as of January 16, 2008: 3,926 [this number exceeded 4,000 in April]

US military wounded in action as of December 2007: 28,773

Number of Iraqi hijackers involved in 9/11/2001: 0

Number of “weapons of mass destruction” found in Iraq: 0

Number of al-Qaida in Iraq prior to invasion: 0

Number of Iraqis internally displaced: 2,400,000

Number of Iraqis who have fled the country: 2,000,000

Average hours of electricity per day in Baghdad before invasion: 20

Average hours of electricity per day in 2007: 8.9

Iraqis who were unemployed in May 2007 (estimated): 1 in 3

Percent of Iraq’s 3.5 million students attending class in April 2007: 30%

Percent of Iraqis in 9/07 who opposed the presence of US forces in Iraq: 79%

Percent of Americans who said in 12/07 the US should leave Iraq within a year: 57%

Percent of US troops who said in 2006 that the US should leave Iraq within a year: 72%

US soldiers returning from Iraq who shows signs of PTSD: 1 in 3

Veterans denied health care in 2007 due to Bush/Cheney enrollment freeze: 242,000

Average number of US veteran suicides per week in 2005: 120

Billions of dollars US spent on military operations in Iraq through FY 2007: \$416.4

Billions of dollars US spent on diplomacy and aid in Iraq through FY 2007: \$30.8

Billions of dollars US spent on Iraq veteran benefits through FY 2007: \$1.5

One time payment to survivors US military death: \$100,000

Bush/Cheney’s initial estimate of the cost of Iraq war: \$50 to \$60 billion

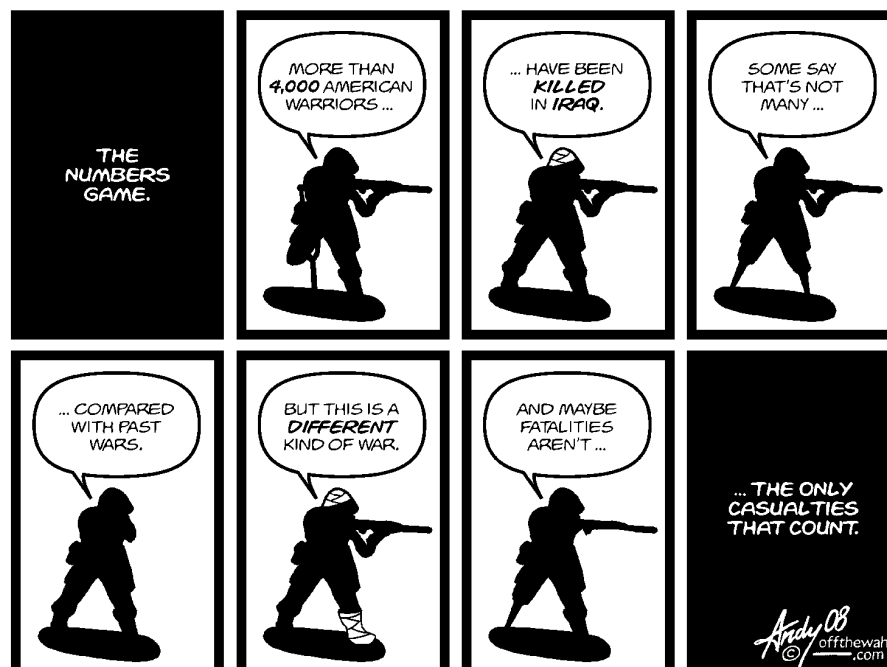
Total appropriations requested by Bush/Cheney through Fiscal Year 2007: \$607 billion

Percentage foreign troops have shrunk in the “Coalition” since the 3/03 invasion: 75%

By summer of 2008: 88%

The above statistics have been gleaned by Richard Borkowski from the website of Syracuse Cultural Workers, <http://syracuseculturalworkers.com/leaflet-poster-us-out-iraq>, which gives sources for each.

Andrew Wahl



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How Not to Leave Iraq

The 'Responsible Plan' isn't the best way to end the war

OPINION BY PAUL RICHMOND

Numbered citations appear at the end of this article.

Many who watched the 2004 Democratic convention were struck by this disconnect — most of the delegates, 90% by some counts, favored withdrawal from Iraq and an end to the war, but were unable to get a candidate who supported these positions. Those who've read the local party platforms notice a similar phenomenon: issues like immediate withdrawal and impeachment are supported resoundingly, yet the representatives we elect fail to take leadership roles on these positions.

Candidate Darcy Burner and others recently released what is being hailed by many as the "Responsible Plan" for exiting Iraq. It's been given prominent play in the Seattle PI, as well as the Nation, Huffington Post and others. While the work is a good synthesis of much current Democratic sponsored legislation, and makes many valid points, the plan does not challenge the fundamental premise that the US needs to dominate other countries. In doing so, it fails to ask the hard question of whether a never-ending "war on terror" (which it supports) can coexist with a free society.

Loss of Constitutional Rights

The Responsible Plan correctly criticizes the loss of civil rights we've encountered. Habeas Corpus and the Fourth Amendment Protection against illegal search and seizures, need to be restored. The use of Presidential Signing statements to alter legislation passed by Congress needs to stop. But in calling for Congressional oversight as an antidote, the plan ignores that Congress has already vetted, and sometimes created laws that have attacked our rights. These include:

- The PATRIOT Act that most infamously attacked our rights.

- The Defense Authorization Act of 2007. With its passage, the military may be used against civilian populations for the first time in 130 years.(1) This Bill passed Congress with a vote of 398 to 23.(2)

- HR-1955, the Homegrown Terrorism Act. This law threatens to make "ideologies" illegal. This bill has passed Congress by a lopsided vote of 404 to 6.(3)

Also worth mentioning are the 1996 Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act and the 1995 Crime Bill, passed under a Democratic president.

Impeachment?

And while rightly laying blame on the current Presidential administration for the abrogation of constitutional rights, the Responsible Plan ignores the existing constitutional remedy, Impeachment, which has been backed now for some time by a majority of the US population.

Humanitarian Crisis

The plan is correct in noting that the "humanitarian crisis caused by Iraq's situation" is bad for the region and damaging US credibility.

But it's not just the errors of one administration, however out of control and in violation of the law this administration had been. We've been devastating Iraq since at least 1991. Nor is it the error of one political party. It was President Clinton's Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright who told the press, the price of 500,000 dead children under that that administration's policy was "worth it."(4)

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Troop Withdrawal

The Responsible Plan authors support withdrawal of our military forces from Iraq. But their plan doesn't set a specific timetable for withdrawal. Instead it relies on the military to come up with this timetable. And their plan also calls for such vague provisions as "containing terrorism" and "prevent[ing] abrupt destabilization." This is Neocon framing. The program for troop draw down without timelines, is in essence the call for phased withdrawal we've been hearing for some years, and the same plan used by the Nixon Administration for its unforgivably bloody exit from Vietnam.

Root Causes

The authors of Responsible Plan ask how to "prevent a repeat of the mistakes that we've made." But they fail to look at what brought us to this place, and will surely bring us here again. If one wants to look at the cause of growth of Bin Laden and the others we label terrorist threats, we ought to look at their funding. Bin Laden and our other mortal enemies were of course funded by our own government. President Reagan even referred to them as "freedom fighters."(5) This funding came from both sides of the aisle.(6)

Driving the authors is their definition of "American interests."(7) The assumption, which is not challenged, is that it is the duty of the United States to lead the rest of the globe. When they call for bringing "war criminals before international bodies, they fail to mention that many in the US have been called war criminals by these same bodies, and that these bodies are routinely ignored by the US.

If this remains our dominant way of interacting with the rest of the world, our country will continue to attempt to control and topple foreign governments, and our civil rights, (as well as our country's physical infrastructure) will continue to deteriorate.

Conclusion

Author Matt Taibbi recently published an article titled "The Chicken Doves" (Rolling Stone, 2/21/08: www.rollingstone.com/politics/story/18349197/the_chicken_doves)

The article describes how many of the Democrats give lip service to peace, mainly in order to turn anti-war activism into electing more Democrats.

It is hoped the authors of the Responsible Plan and those who have joined in its support will move toward amore mature and complete solution. Short term benefits based on partisan loyalty are insufficient to put aside the protections of the Bill of Rights and the Geneva Convention.

CITATIONS

(1) See www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h109-5122#votes, and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/H.R._5122_%282006%29

(2) www.govtrack.us/congress/vote.xpd?vote=h2006-510&page-com

(3) See also Rule of Fear or Rule of Law? By Lewis Seiler and former Congressman Dan Hamburg, SF Chronicle 2.04.08 www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/02/04/ED5OUPQJ7.DTL

(4) "60 Minutes" on May 12, 1996

(5) See for example, Proclamation 5034, May 21, 1983, www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45/278.html

(6) Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001

(7) "Responsible Plan" page 5

Paul Richmond is the author of the report Waging War on Dissent and a consultant on the documentary Urban Warrior. He is challenging Congressman Norm Dicks as a Democrat in the 6th District. He opposed the US invasions in Iraq of 2003 and 1991, as well as the Clinton Sanctions which resulted in the deaths of 500,000 children and disagrees with Clinton Secretary of State Madelyn Albright that the price was "worth it." His website is richmond4congress.com.



NPR NEWS: NATIONAL PENTAGON RADIO?

Media Beat

BY NORMAN SOLOMON

While the Iraqi government continued its large-scale military assault in Basra, the NPR reporter's voice from Iraq was unequivocal on the morning of March 27: "There is no doubt that this operation needed to happen."

Such flat-out statements, uttered with journalistic tones and without attribution, are routine for the US media establishment. In the "War Made Easy" documentary film, I put it this way: "If you're pro-war, you're objective. But if you're anti-war, you're biased. And often, a news anchor will get no flak at all for making statements that are supportive of a war and wouldn't dream of making a statement that's against a war."

So it goes at NPR News, where — on "Morning Edition" as well as the evening program "All Things Considered" — the sense and sensibilities tend to be neatly aligned with the outlooks of official Washington. The critical aspects of reporting largely amount to complaints about policy shortcomings that are tactical; the underlying and shared assumptions are imperial. Washington's prerogatives are evident when the media window on the world is tinted red-white-and-blue.

Earlier in the week — a few days into the sixth year of the Iraq war — "All Things Considered" aired a discussion with a familiar guest.

"To talk about the state of the war and how the US military changes tactics to deal with it," said longtime anchor Robert Siegel, "we turn now to retired Gen. Robert Scates, who's talked with us many times over the course of the conflict."

This is the sort of introduction that elevates a guest to truly expert status — conveying to the listeners that expertise and wisdom, not just opinions, are being sought.

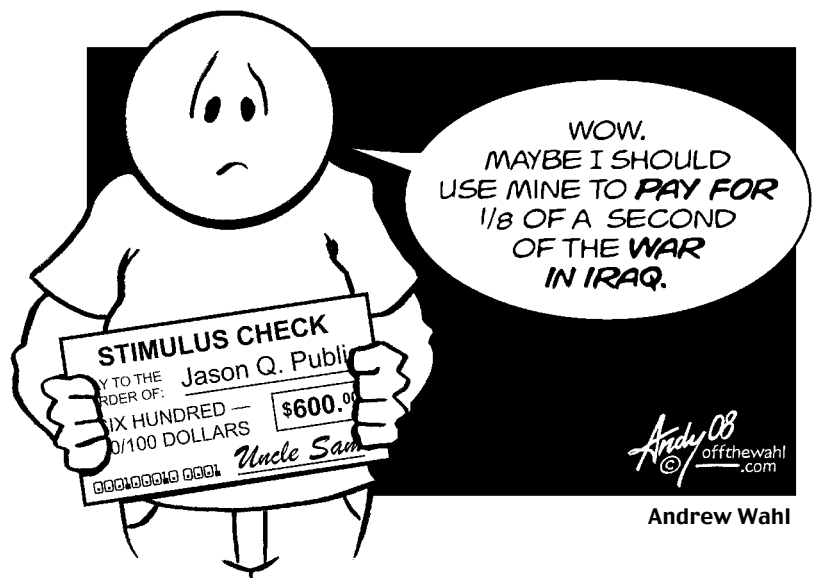
Siegel asked about the progression of assaults on US troops over the years: "How have the attacks and the countermeasures to them evolved?"

Naturally, Gen. Scates responded with the language of a military man. "The enemy has built ever-larger explosives," he said. "They've found clever ways to hide their IEDs, their roadside bombs, and even more diabolical means for detonating these devices."

We'd expect a retired American general to speak in such categorical terms — referring to "the enemy" and declaring in a matter-of-fact tone that attacks on US troops became even more "diabolical." But what about an American journalist?

Well, if the American journalist is careful to function with independence instead of deference to the

see NPR News on page 15

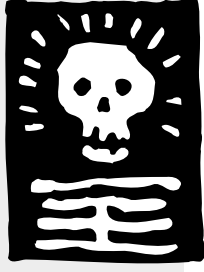


Andrew Wahli

DO SOMETHING!

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ACTIVIST CALENDAR

The calendar entries below have mostly been chosen from Jean Buskin's email Peace and Justice Calendar. To post activism events on her email/web version, send event notices to Jean Buskin at bb369@scn.org. To receive updates of the complete calendar, have Ms Buskin add you to her email list by contacting her at the same address, or view her full calendar anytime at www.scn.org/activism/calendar.

OTHER NW REGIONAL PROGRESSIVE WEB CALENDARS

SEATTLE www.seattleactivism.org/ and www.snowCoalition.org, **TACOMA** www.tacomapjh.org, **OLYMPIA** <http://olynetwork.com> and www.OlyFOR.org, **PUGET SOUND**, Women in Black Vigils (various cities) www.scn.org/womeninblack, **BELLINGHAM** www.bellinghampeace.org or www.revolutionz.org, **EUGENE** Oregon www.planeteugene.com/peace-events, **MONTANA** www.montanapeaceseekers.org, **TRI-CITIES** www.tcfm.org/wcp, Lots of **NEIGHBORHOOD PEACE GROUPS**, see below and www.snowCoalition.org/contact.php

MAY 15 - 18, at The Evergreen State College, **Olympia**; IMMIGRATION & BORDER DIALOGUES CONFERENCE. info bridgesnotwalls@riseup.net or www.oly-wa.us/Bridges/ or 360-280-6480 English or 360 539-4825 Bilingual (Spanish/English)

THURS MAY 15, in downtown **Seattle**; Region 10 EPA will conduct the one day version of the 'FUNDAMENTALS OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE' workshop. No cost. Among the topics introduced in the workshop are Comparative Definitions of Environmental Justice, Historical Context of Environmental Justice Acts, Authorities and the Executive Order Case Studies, Environmental Justice Analysis, Meaningful Involvement. Register with Grass.Running@epamail.epa.gov

SAT MAY 17, 4 p.m., at Northwest Film Forum, 1515 12th Ave at Pike, **Seattle**; second annual NORTHWEST INDIGENOUS FILM FESTIVAL. The festival will screen a diverse group of new and experimental short and feature films either created by or made about indigenous peoples. Tickets: \$5-8.50 (\$3 for students)

SUN MAY 18, in **Snoqualmie Valley**; Crop Hunger Walk. Local church members and others will walk to FIGHT HUNGER AND POVERTY here at home and around the world. info Church World Service Office 206-988-1622 or www.churchworldservice.org

SUN MAY 18, 10 am, starting at the Hing-Hay Park, 423 Maynard Avenue S in the International District / Chinatown, **Seattle**; The HUMAN RIGHTS TORCH Relay (HRTR) a global grassroots campaign to raise awareness of, and stop, the CHINESE COMMUNIST REGIME'S HUMAN RIGHTS CRIMES prior to the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Walk to an 11:30 am rally/ concert at Westlake Park, 4th & Pine Street. info <http://humanrightstorch.org>

SUN MAY 18, 2 pm, in Kane Hall, University of Washington, **Seattle**; "The Long Journey Home: Honoring the UW Nikkei Students of 1941-1942." This event will honor and recognize all JAPANESE AMERICAN STUDENTS who were forced to leave campus in May, 1942 to report to INTERNMENT CAMPS

SUN MAY 18, 5 pm potluck, 6 pm announcements, 6:30 - 8 pm program, at Woodland Park Presbyterian Church, 225 N 70th, **Seattle**; Seattle Chapter FELLOWSHIP OF RECONCILIATION program with Rod Palmquist of United STUDENTS AGAINST SWEATSHOPS on "Promoting Workers' Rights in the Globalized Collegiate Apparel Industry". Free, collection will be taken. info 206-789-5565

MON MAY 19, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m., at the Shoreline Conference Center, 18560 First Avenue N.E., **Shoreline**; Town Hall Meeting of the full King County Council on PUBLIC CAMPAIGN FINANCING. Public campaign financing will be the topic under discussion with ample opportunity for public testimony. info www.washclean.org or Town Hall host Councilmember Bob Ferguson bob.ferguson@kingcounty.gov or 206-296-1001

MON MAY 19, and MON JUNE 23, 7 - 8:30 pm, at REI Seattle, 222 Yale Av N., **Seattle**; Sierra Club's COOL STATE FORUM. CLIMATE CHANGE is the greatest environmental challenge of our time. A New GREEN ECONOMY: Where are the opportunities and benefits? Free, info 206-378-0114 Ext 308

TUES MAY 20, 7:30 pm, at Town Hall **Seattle**, 1119 8th Avenue, Seattle; William Calvin, University of Washington professor emeritus and author of fourteen popular books on science, sets out the current state of global warming and the disastrous possibilities ahead should we continue on our current path. Tickets \$5 at the door only. info www.townhallseattle.org

WEDS MAY 21, 9 am - 4 pm, at CCS Randolph Carter Center, 100 23rd Ave. S., **Seattle**; The King

County NON-PROFIT STAFF DEVELOPMENT Coalition (NPSDC) in collaboration with New Futures - ReachOut, presents "Exploring PRIVILEGE & OPPRESSION and its impact on workplace effectiveness". This interactive workshop provides participants with the opportunity to deepen their understanding of critical aspects of privilege and oppression. info and registration www.learningconnections.org/Coalition/workshops/2008/May21/index.htm, info Anna McCain 206-870-5908 or amccain@highline.edu

THURS MAY 22, 7 pm, at Woodland Park Presbyterian Church, N. 70th St. & Greenwood Ave. N., **Seattle**; Phinney Neighbors For Peace & Justice's eleventh series of community forums, Start Making Sense. PALESTINE AND ISRAEL: What Each Needs to Make Peace. info Lou Truskoff 206-783-0990

FRI MAY 23, - June 1 **Portland, OR**, The City Repair Project presents the 8th Annual Village Building Convergence! The Village Building Convergence 2008 (VBC8) is a 10-day event in which neighborhoods activate to build shared public places that they have envisioned, designed, funded, and will maintain for themselves. VBC8 will include hands-on education in permaculture design and construction, ecological building, and public art. Everyone is invited to attend evening events at a central location, to participate in workshops or listen to visionaries speak about various aspects of sustainable culture. Info www.cityrepair.org/vbc

FRI MAY 23, 7 pm, at Kings Books, 218 St. Helens Ave, **Tacoma**; A debate on WHETHER THE UNITED STATES SHOULD LEAVE IRAQ IMMEDIATELY, or if it is the responsibility of the United States to remain in Iraq indefinitely, will be held. info 253-222-4594 or 253-535-7219 or www.ufppc.org.

SAT MAY 24, 9 am to 5 pm, at Evergreen State College-Tacoma Campus, 1210 6th Ave, **Tacoma**; TACOMA WOBBLIFYEST 2008: A Poor and Working People's Gathering. A Public Gathering of Education and Music. Complimentary lunch and dinner. info TaciWWW@iwww.org or <http://tacoma.iwww.org/>

SUN MAY 25, MISSING CHILDRENS DAY. P.E.A.C.E of Mind and Washington Communities Against Predators are working with the Take 25 program at The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) to increase awareness and empowerment of our children and communities, in the hopes of stemming the tide of violence against children. info www.take25.org or www.pomwa.org

SUN MAY 25, 2 - 6 pm, at Fort Lawton, **Seattle**; The National Association for Black Veterans, Inc., will host a National Day of Honor for WRONGLY CHARGED AND CONVICTED BLACK SOLDIERS. In 1944, info Gabriel Brooks or Ray Miller at 206-220-6299

SAT MAY 31, at Town Hall, 8th & Seneca, **Seattle**; IRAQ VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR is organizing Winter Soldier Northwest; following this event we will fill the streets in a march. info www.IVAW.org or Michael William, IVAW NW Regional Coordinator, humility@gmail.com or 206-962-0426

SUN JUNE 1, and subsequent 1st Sundays, 4 - 5 p.m., at the intersection of Park St. & North Bend Blvd. next to the Snoqualmie Valley Historical Museum and the Visitor's Center in **North Bend**; SNOQUALMIE/NORTH BEND CITIZENS FOR CHANGE will hold a PEACE VIGIL to honor our troops in Iraq and to encourage their safe return home. info rubin51@comcast.net

JUNE 4 - 7, at The University of Colorado, **Colorado Springs**; The Summer 2008 Knapsack Institute: Transforming The Curriculum supports faculty across the nation as they create or revise courses to integrate RACE/ ETHNICITY, GENDER, SEXUALITY, CLASS AND OTHER FORMS OF SOCIAL INEQUALITY. info www.uccs.edu/~lases/knapsack.htm

WEDS JUNE 4, and subsequent 1st Wednesdays, 6 pm, at Whatcom Peace & Justice Center's offices in the Anything Grows building, 100 E. Maple Street, **Bellingham**; NONVIOLENT DIRECT DEMOCRACY OPEN DISCUSSION GROUP info 360-734-0217

WEDS JUNE 4, and subsequent 1st Wednesdays, 7 p.m., at Burien Library, 14700 8th Ave. SW, **Burien**; SOUTHBEND NEIGHBORS FOR PEACE & JUSTICE presents the Wednesday Night at the MEANINGFUL MOVIES. Sponsored by Southend Neighbors for Peace & Justice, info rdare2@yahoo.com

SAT JUNE 7, 2 - 4 p.m., at Wallingford Playfield, 4219 Wallingford Ave N., **Seattle**; Spokespeople Ride - Wallingford Playfield to destination to be announced. Help link people through neighborhoods along SECURE BIKE ROUTES! info www.spokespeople.us

or info@spokespeople.us or 206-547-9569

JUNE 6 - 8, **Vancouver, British Columbia**; at Simon Fraser University Harbour Center in downtown The 40th Annual Pacific NORTHWEST LABOUR HISTORY Conference with theme "INDIGENOUS, IMMIGRANT, MIGRANT LABOUR & GLOBALIZATION." Co-sponsoring organization, Labor and Working Class History Association (LAWCHA). info Pacific Northwest Labor History Association www.pnlha.org

JUNE 8 - 10, in **Washington, DC**; ACLU 2008 MEMBERSHIP CONFERENCE "Stand Up for Freedom." Register at www.aclu.org/conference, info 212-284-7300 or conference@aclu.org

JUNE 12 - 15, at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in **Washington, DC**; The AMERICAN-ARAB ANTI-DISCRIMINATION COMMITTEE (ADC) 2008 Annual National Convention "Securing the Principles of Liberty". info www.adc.org/Conv08/home.html or 202-244-2990, registration www.adc.org/PDF/2008registration.pdf

JUNE 13 - 15, in **Victoria, British Columbia, Canada**; ASIAN STUDIES ON THE PACIFIC COAST welcomes you to the 2008 Annual Conference "Crossing Boundaries in the Asia-Pacific: Regional and Disciplinary Intersections". Hosted by the Centre for Asia-Pacific Initiatives, University of Victoria. info www.aspac.info

SUN JUNE 15, at the **Blaine** border crossing; IFCO/ PASTORS FOR PEACE CARAVAN TO CUBA and End the Blockade. info www.pastorsforpeace.org or cucaravan@jgc.org or 212-926-5757 or Tom Warner 206-523-1720 or warner@scn.org or www.seattlecuba.net

JUNE 15 - JULY 13, in **Palestine**; PALESTINIAN SUMMER CELEBRATION. Come and celebrate Palestine, learn Arabic, study history, know the people and their culture, share some time with local families and volunteer with a local community organization. info www.sirajcenter.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=16&Itemid=1

MON JUNE 16, at El Centro de la Raza, **Seattle**; IFCO/ PASTORS FOR PEACE CARAVAN TO CUBA and End the Blockade. Help to load the donated material aid onto the Friendship Bus in conjunction with a potluck and send-off party for the bus and the people who are going with it to Cuba. info www.pastorsforpeace.org or cucaravan@jgc.org or 212-926-5757 or Tom Warner, 206-523-1720 or warner@scn.org or www.seattlecuba.net

JUNE 17 - 20, at Ecole des Hautes Etudes Commerciales, University of Montreal, **Quebec, Canada**; The Eighth International Conference on DIVERSITY IN ORGANISATIONS, COMMUNITIES AND NATIONS. The Diversity Conference has a history of bringing together scholarly, government and practice-based participants with an interest in the issues of diversity and community. info www.Diversity-Conference.com

FRI - SUN JUNE 20, 21, & 22, at Pratt Park in **Seattle**; The Seattle Central Area Chamber of Commerce proudly announces the 2008 JUNE-TEENTH FESTIVAL for the 35th Year. Entertainment from 12:30 to 8:30 pm all three days. Friday: Hip Hop - Rap - Spoken Word. Saturday: R&B to Jazz. Sunday: Gospel. info 206-325-2864 or www.scacc2108.org

JUNE 22 - 24, at US Holocaust Memorial Museum, **Washington DC**; Arthur and Rochelle Belfer Conference for teachers and with less than 5 years experience TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST. Workshop is free of charge. Travel scholarships available to teachers at qualifying schools. Participants receive stipend to the USHMM bookshop and materials. info Ilana Kennedy ikennedy@wsherc.org

SEPT 25 - 26, at Holiday Inn Chicago-Mart Plaza, **Chicago, IL**; 2008 National REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT CONFERENCE: Issues and Innovations. The Conference offers groups and individuals assisting refugee and immigrant children and their families an opportunity to network and learn about issues affecting refugee and immigrant children and their families, schools, health, and health care, along with the challenges of cultural adjustment. Info www.thecenterweb.org/alrc/refugee.html or Lynn Osheff losheff@thecenterweb.org

NOV 12 - 15, at Wenatchee Convention Center, **Wenatchee**; The 18th Annual EEAW ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION of Washington Conference. Learn about new research and initiatives in Environmental and Sustainability Education (ESE). info conference@eeaw.org or www.eeaw.org/conference or 360-943-6643

The May Day Protest That Wasn't

BY JOEL HANSON

The following was written on International Labor Day, May 1, 2008.

This morning, I get my first personal glimpse of what a totalitarian state might look like. The Turkish police, arrayed in soldierly formations on every major street leading to Taksim Square, are prepared for a war. I've never seen so many men outfitted in riot gear — plastic shields, gas masks, helmets, batons, tear gas launchers — lounging about as human road-blocks in the rising heat, realizing that they may not fight the battle everyone predicted would be held against the labor demonstrators blocked off from Taksim Square.

In Istanbul, a former AP correspondent reminds me, demonstrations are theoretically legal, depending on what ethnic or political group one belongs to and provided one has obtained a permit. The exception is May 1 when the government has expressly forbidden anyone from demonstrating in Taksim Square and the Turkish State feels it necessary to ostentatiously display its power to the general populace.

I walk on Cumhuriyet Caddesi (Republic Road) from my neighborhood of Haribye, one of the major arteries into Taksim. Less than an hour later, the road will be completely blocked by the police and the air filled with tear gas — a pre-emptive strike to prevent any spontaneous demonstrations from moving into the area.

For the moment, though, there's a conspicuous absence of tension in the air. Simit (Turkish bagel) sellers, undaunted by the potential danger, wander about peddling their rings of bread as though the people around them are watching a football match instead of a political protest. The loitering crowds hold cameras instead of signs. To my biased eye, they seem disconnected from the purpose of the demonstrations and are merely hoping to witness a violent spectacle.

I'm curious, too, but I'm also looking for an outdoor cafe to enjoy my one-day respite from work. My journal, my camera, an undeveloped roll of film from my recent trip to Greece, and a borrowed novel: Louis de Bernieres' *Birds Without Wings* are sitting in my backpack, ready to satisfy any creative whim in the event I find an appropriate place to linger.

When I reach Taksim Square, I'm greeted with an alien sight: an armored vehicle behind tall, fence-like barricades arranged around the square, and police four rows deep in front of them. I follow lines of other people around the crowds of police onto an unblocked side street that leads to Istiklal Caddesi, the most popular walking street in Istanbul.

Many of the major businesses on Istiklal, including Starbucks, are closed for the day, their storefronts covered by rolled-up metal doors. The day before, the State Department issued a formal warning to American citizens to avoid Taksim Square, but curious foreigners — and locals — are abundant. Many of them have professional-grade cameras — even a few gas masks. They talk to each other or window-shop while they wait for something to happen.

Back in 1977, a Labor Day demonstration in Taksim organized by the Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions of Turkey (DISK) turned into a "massacre" when snipers (hired by the police?) fired shots, according to Wikipedia, at protesters from two different locations: 1) what is now the Marmara Hotel and 2) a water company building called Sular I' darsi.

On the ground, the police doused the panicked protesters with pressurized water and more people were killed in the ensuing stampede and police beatings that followed. Another person was crushed by an armored vehicle. Total casualties, depending on what source you cite, vary from 34-42 people with 126 injured. A show trial years later yielded no convictions, lending weight to

the theory that the government and police force were involved in the shootings.

There's no chance of that happening today. The army of police — numbering well into the thousands and carted in from surrounding cities — is an intentional case of overkill and at what cost? To smash through these formidable defenses, it would take 50,000 organized protesters willing to risk bodily injury or death. Labor sympathizers are easy to find and many of them remember what happened in 1977. Pushing into Taksim Square would be a major — if largely symbolic and fleeting — victory for the labor movement. Unfortunately, these groups are scattered around Taksim and are therefore reduced to defiant nuisances for the police.

I proceed to Hayri Usta, my favorite restaurant, for lunch. It's a beautiful, cloudless day, so I position myself at a shaded table outside, pull out my borrowed novel and begin to read, intending to linger in the almost empty restaurant while savoring my chicken sandwich. The waiter has other ideas. He motions me indoors. When it's obvious I don't understand him, he nervously points to the street behind me, makes a motion with his hand as though beating someone in the head, and I nod with sudden comprehension.

Police — or protesters — are moving into the area. The waiter picks up my placemat and sandwich and carries it indoors. Minutes later, a gaggle of protesters run past the restaurant. They carry no signs, united by noth-



Turkish police at Istanbul's Taksim Square prepare to counter May Day protestors. Photo by Brendan Ray.

ing more than the incomprehensible words they shout as they pass. Are these people part of labor groups trying to ignite a larger protest or are they just thugs merely taking advantage of the momentary chaos? My limited Turkish prevents me from asking anyone around me. But my first moment of fear is induced by the realization that these spontaneous protests in side streets near the square could draw a police crackdown that I might inadvertently walk into as I make my way back to my apartment.

I pay the bill and decide to head back to Istiklal. On the way, before I reach Cumhuriyet Caddesi and realize that the police have now cut off all direct routes to my apartment in Harbiye, I witness the following things:

1) On Istiklal near the Institute Francais, I deliberate whether to photograph a tank-like riot vehicle, police barricades, and rows of police before turning around to see another squadron of police marching toward me from the other direction four blocks away. After a strident warning from some officers, I run down a side street with some Turkish locals.

2) After the immediate danger passes, I notice a row of identical May Day posters peeling from a cement wall. Each blood red poster depicts a chessboard with a large hand, wrapped in an American flag, moving pieces about on the board. I can't decipher the Turkish, but the message is obvious. I pause to take a photo, my only physical memento of the day, before retreating away from the shouts-and the crowds.

3) On the other side of Tarlabasi Boulevard, I spot the totally bewildered faces of an elderly Japanese couple and their daughter standing in front of a bank. They're gazing at the barricade of soldiers across the street in Taksim Square, simultaneously realizing A) they're surrounded by police and B) they picked a bad day to visit the city.

4) After crossing Tarlabasi Boulevard, I turn around to see perhaps 50 people, wide-eyed and fearful, running down a side street away from Istiklal just before a canister of tear gas bounces on the pavement after them.

I experience another pang of fear when the police stop us a block from Cumhuriyet Caddesi and I realize for the first time that I might be trapped in this neighborhood for the rest of the day, surrounded by police and

activism

spontaneous demonstrations that now appear to be metastasizing everywhere. My eyes begin to water from tear gas fired from nearby locations and lingering in the air. Then, I realize that Tarlabasi Boulevard is still open. I decide to walk down it with the hope of making a wide arc around the unstable area and back to my apartment. It takes me an hour to find a path through the labyrinth of streets in the dilapidated neighborhood of Dolapdere.

Most people in this poor, and purportedly dangerous, neighborhood are sitting outside, sipping tea in the early afternoon sun, only partially aware of what's happening around them. Laundry dries on lines strung between buildings three storeys above the street. I'm forced to make detours whenever I spot imposing groups of police or curious civilians, their mouths covered with white handkerchiefs, running from the police and invisible clouds of tear gas. Three blocks from my apartment, after another group of black-uniformed police (I almost wrote stormtroopers) runs off to crush another unthreatening uprising, I meet a Turkish man in his mid-20s who is clearly surprised to see a foreigner on the streets on this most inauspicious day.

"What do you think of all this?" he asks me. I share a few quick descriptions of bystanders running from canisters of tear gas, wondering how I should answer his question. Should I ask him what he's doing here? Should I ask his opinions about why the police won't let people demonstrate in Taksim Square? Should we discuss the savage tactics the police use in southeastern Turkey to squash Kurdish demonstrations: videotaping protests, carefully reviewing them, and going door to door afterward to round up and torture the perpetrators? Should I express my belief that the tactics of the labor movement seem useless against the size of the police force carefully deployed to stop them and that demonstrating in Taksim a day before — or after May 1 — would have been a far more effective strategy?

But I settle on something far more prosaic: "Of course, I support the workers." He smiles and extends his hand. I shake it warmly. Then he adds: "But it's easy to support the workers because the police are fascists." That's my impression, too, at least of the people who ordered the police onto the streets in such massive numbers.

Undoubtedly, it would have been much cheaper to place a few hundred police around Taksim Square and let the workers peacefully air their grievances. However, that would be viewed as acquiescing to the protesters, the most distasteful of outcomes. Did the police make things worse by this unnecessary show of strength? Will the workers try to make their voices heard at a later date or is this foiled Labor Day protest merely a ceremonial release of frustration over the decimated state of organized labor that will be forgotten for the rest of the year? These are questions I'll debate with my co-workers tomorrow when we share our individual experiences of the day.

As I write this in my apartment, I feel the same sense of confinement I experienced when I was momentarily trapped in Taksim. My roommate Sally closed the windows to blot out the noise of overhead helicopters and to prevent the tear gas blowing through the neighborhood from entering the apartment.

I immediately think of the Palestinians in Gaza who live in appalling prison-like conditions every day of their lives. I think of the people of Iraq victimized by the American occupation and the mass exodus of refugees risking their lives to flee the country. And then I think of my countrymen in the US who seem too distracted, disorganized, and demoralized to challenge the country's slide toward dictatorship. My claustrophobia gives way to frustration.

The power for societal change still resides in the indolent populace. This lesson is obvious whether one is in Istanbul or New York. If those of us in American are still interested in reclaiming our lost civil rights, of restoring power to labor's feeble voice, of stopping imperialist wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, of challenging the savage injustices of global capitalism and preventing our oil-addicted societies from irrevocably destroying our planet, we've got a lot of organizing to do before we can even dream of making those things happen.

Joel Hanson is a longtime contributor to the WA Free Press and a sometime resident of Seattle. In recent years he has lived and taught English language in many countries, including Morocco, Syria, Japan, China, Romania, India, and most recently Turkey.

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THIRTY FIVE CENTS

A motorcyclist suffers near-instant karma for evading a toll over Lake Washington

BY JOHN MERRIAM

The below article and photos were originally published in 1977 in a newsletter for the Association of Bikers Against Totalitarian Enactments. They have been dusted off — I mean, resurrected — for your historical pleasure.

The Colonel waited on an overpass above the highway. He sat astride his Norton and surveyed the flow of traffic headed to the toll bridge over Lake Washington to Seattle. It was Sunday morning, April 1st. That was the date selected for his breach of the toll plaza without paying toll. The Colonel waited until there was a two-mile gap in traffic, the length of the Evergreen Point Floating Bridge spanning the lake. He kicked over the English motorcycle and left the overpass to ride out onto the highway.

The Colonel was not really a colonel. He had been given the moniker “Colonel Okie” by the Muskogee Motorcycle Club — so named because of the rag-tag assortment of two-wheeled machines ridden by its members, of which he was one.



The Colonel

Willie had previously announced that since he had “discovered” the island — which barely stuck above the surface — he was entitled to be its governor. Watching Willie’s failure to establish a beachhead on his new estate, the Colonel promptly entitled it the Isle of Disappointment.

Even though the Admiral’s tool kit typically consisted of little more than a hammer, vicegrips and electrical tape, the riders of the



Another member of that motley crew, Willie, had been dubbed The Admiral. Willie had earned that name the day he used his old motorcycle, a Triumph, for an unsuccessful assault on an island from the banks of Keechelus Lake.

The Admiral’s motorcycle did well on its amphibious mission until the water rose to the air intake for the carburetor, at which point the ragged riders of the Muskogee had to dismount and perform a rescue at sea.

Muskogee were able to dismantle the carburetor to drain water out. The Admiral, getting both cylinders firing again, thereupon felt required to demonstrate his prowess by riding up to the summit of “Snowplow Mountain” — a forty-foot mound of snow piled on the side of Interstate 90 to keep Snoqualmie Pass clear for traffic. It was then Willie was dubbed The Admiral, while yelling about his dominance —



The Admiral attempts a maritime landing

finally proving he could be victorious on water, at least in its solid form.

Another member of the motorcycle club, Bob, worked as a warehouseman. Bob had dreams of breaking out of his dead-end job to make a living as a photographer. He had already received some encouragement. The magazine “Easy Rider”, oriented toward owners of Harley Davidsons, had published one of Bob’s photographs taken during a Muskogee trip. The Colonel assumed he would be doing Bob an excellent service were Bob to be poised in the bushes with his camera during the Colonel’s observance of April Fool’s. The Colonel thought that giving the finger to the occupant of the booth, as he accelerated through the toll plaza, would definitely be a gesture worthy of publication in “Easy Rider”. The Colonel told Bob about the photo opportunity he proposed. All Bob could say was, “You’re nuts!” The Colonel was crushed but went on with his planning for April Fool’s anyway.

The Colonel had originally targeted the toll road — officially called the A. D. Rossellini Bridge after a former governor of Washington — because he viewed the imposition of tolls on highway travel anywhere west of the Mississippi River as somewhat unAmerican or, at least, unWestern. Even at a charge of 35 cents, the toll was an affront to his driving dignity.

The Colonel’s planning had been extensive. From numerous reconnaissance sorties, he knew that the lightest traffic flow during daytime hours was on Sunday mornings. In case he was pursued across the two-mile bridge, the Colonel had rehearsed an elaborate escape route through the University of Washington Arboretum, such that his Norton could slip through roadblocks and travel where no police car

could follow. (He already knew from drag races on the street that full-dress Harley Davidsons, like those used by the State Patrol, were no match for his Norton.)

Only a mile of the Evergreen Point Bridge actually floated — on concrete pontoons. The other half of its expanse inclined to the water from either shore. From the toll plaza on the eastern side of Lake Washington to trails through the Arboretum in Seattle, the Colonel had measured a total distance of three miles in which he would need to engage in a high-speed getaway.

The Colonel rode west on the highway, State Route 520, and nonchalantly pulled to a stop at the toll booth. The clerk at the plaza stuck out his hand, pregnant with the anticipation of 35 cents. Without Bob and his camera to record the gesture, the Colonel saw little reason to give the finger to the poor toll-taker. Instead, he stared solemnly straight ahead, eased out the clutch handle with his left hand, and gave the throttle a mighty twist with his right.

The motorcycle roared away from the toll plaza. Rapidly shifting through all four gears, the Colonel soon achieved the Norton’s top speed of 115 mph.

It was no coincidence that the Colonel had waited until there was a two-mile gap in traffic. Traveling at more than double the posted speed limit, the Norton and the Colonel would have been knocked into Lake Washington should a car in front make even a casual lane change. The Colonel had no desire to compete for the Admiral’s title in such a fashion.

At 115 mph, the Colonel had calculated he could



transit the bridge in slightly more than 60 seconds. He knew, however, that police cars were capable of faster top speeds than his motorcycle. There was intense wind pressure on the face shield of the Colonel's helmet. He hunched down, thrusting his chin forward past the handlebars and over the headlight, to mini-



Ascending Snowplow Mountain

mize the resistance from the velocity at which he was traveling. His knuckles were white from a death-grip on the handlebars.

To this day the Colonel does not know if he was pursued across the floating bridge. He couldn't look behind. The rearview mirror was useless because he poked his face in front of it. To turn his head to look behind would have been certain suicide; at the speed he was traveling, a turning of his head — with helmet and face shield attached — would mean being torn off of the motorcycle by sheer pressure.

The Colonel's timing worked. No cars were on the floating bridge during his high-speed traverse of the lake. No roadblocks or barricades had been erected at the exit. Assuming there was a host of demonic law enforcement vehicles in pursuit, he carried on with his escape plan.

The Norton entered the Arboretum at 50-60 mph and decelerated rapidly thereafter. The Colonel steered for footpaths, in accordance with his pre-planned route. Various strollers and joggers were appalled at the approach of a motorcycle violating all the rules on a calm Sunday morning. They promptly yielded the right-of-way when hearing the roar from defective mufflers and seeing the crazed look in the Colonel's eyes. The Colonel traveled the length of the Arboretum and scrambled his motorcycle up a hillside out onto Lake Washington Boulevard. He was close to home.

The Colonel drove the Norton into his basement and hid it. He began to realize that he was probably never even pursued. 'What toll taker gives a damn about 35 cents anyway,' he wondered

The next time the Colonel kicked over the Norton he noticed smoke issuing from the exhaust pipes. A compression check revealed that he had burned all four of the motorcycle's valves by exceeding the red line for R.P.M.s during his field trip across the floating bridge. Not having the tools for a valve grind, he had to pay a motorcycle shop to do it. For the valve job the shop charged over 200 times what the Colonel had saved by not paying toll on the floating bridge.

John Merriam is a Seattle lawyer specializing in maritime labor law. Unconfirmed rumors indicate that he may have actually been the Colonel.

etc.

John Jonik



right
brain

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Free Press on page 3.

Lifelong Learning from p5

tutoring, Head Start, after-school recreation, art, music, scouting, Junior Achievement, VA outreach services, union apprenticeship programs, chemical dependency and adolescent mental health services, community band, chorus, theater, senior center and meal site, internet café, referral services and employment programs, book/clothing/toy exchange, adolescent probation and parole, DSHS, Dept. of Licensing, community meeting rooms, etc.

This concept is modeled after nationally recognized community education efforts which have been in existence since the 1980s. It is built on the following research-based principles.

- **Lifelong Learning:** Education is viewed as a birth-to-death process and everyone in the community — individuals, businesses, public and private agencies — shares in the responsibility of educating all members of the community. Education occurs through participation in a variety of life experiences in "real world" encounters and programs.

- **Needs Assessment and Planning:** Conducting a needs and a resource assessment helps citizens determine what the needs are, how they should be responded to, and how current programs can be made more responsive. A King county needs assessment of services for children, youth, and families titled SOAR was conducted in 2006. Goals were set and strategies identified to impact the issues. This study can be refined by local groups and neighborhoods and coordinated efforts could provide a framework to address neighborhood concerns.

- **Citizen Involvement:** Citizen involvement strengthens solutions by bringing a variety of perspectives to each issue. People who know the most about the problem should be the ones coming up with the solutions.

- **Leadership:** For the model to flourish and for its desired results to occur, solid leadership and a method of accountability is required. It takes effective public leadership to sustain a community based partnership. Agencies and organizations need to step forward and provide individuals who can direct programs.

- **Institutional Responsiveness:** Public institutions exist to serve the public and are obligated to develop programs and services that address continuously changing needs and interests of the local community.

- **Integrated Delivery of Services:** Organizations and agencies that operate for the public good can meet their own goals and better serve the community by collaborating with associations that have similar goals. Services delivered through interagency cooperation are more efficient than those that result from fragmented efforts.

- **Decentralization:** Services, programs, and other community involvement opportunities that are closest to people's homes have the greatest potential for high levels of public participation. Whenever possible, these activities should be available in locations with easy public access.

With the cooperation of the Seattle Public Schools and community leadership, the Little Red Schoolhouse could have lights on from early morning until late at night. The shouts of laughter and excitement will come from children, youth, families, and seniors joining in truly cooperative efforts to make their small corner of the world just a little more friendly and a little more of a real village.

Pleas, and Pleas Heard?

BY BOB MARKEY

Slithery Billary
get outta' my face.

Slithery Billary
get outta' the race.

It's time to climb
outta' the slime
and
fearlessly seize
(tearlessly please)
the moment!

Slithery Billary
got outta' my face.

Slithery Billary
got outta' the race.

'Twas time to climb
outta' the slime
and
fearlessly seize
(while on their knees)
the moment!

Streaming Thoughts

BY JESSE LANCASTER

The Lady Destiny

Agony to anguish, love to pain, please tell me why it all feels the same. Bonds are broken as our eyes see lies. Yet why is it so wrong to sincerely cry?

Condemned to care, like a sentence of pain, speechless we sit on in the same. Eloquent to the eye, elusive to the touch. Would one embrace ever be enough?

Flirting with destiny, a flutter of the heart. It feels so delightful and it's just the start. Determined from beginning, we see it the same. But the Lady Destiny always gets her way.

NPR News from p11

Pentagon, then the journalist's assumptions will sound different than the outlooks of a high-ranking US military officer.

In this case, an independent reporter might even be willing to ask a pointed question along these lines: You just used the word "diabolical" to describe attacks on the US military by Iraqis, but would that ever be an appropriate adjective to use to describe attacks on Iraqis by the US military?

In sharp contrast, what happened during the "All Things Considered" discussion on March 24 was a conversation of shared sensibilities. The retired US Army general discussed the war effort in terms notably similar to those of the ostensibly independent journalist — who, along the way, made the phrase "the enemy" his own in a followup question.

It wouldn't be fair to judge an entire news program on the basis of a couple of segments. But I'm a frequent listener to "All Things Considered" and "Morning Edition." Such cozy proximity of world views, blanketing the war maker and the war reporter, is symptomatic of what ails NPR's war coverage — especially from Washington.

Of course there are exceptions. Occasional news reports stray from the narrow baseline. But the essence of the propaganda function is repetition, and the exceptional does not undermine that function.

To add insult to injury, NPR calls itself public radio. It's supposed to be willing to go where commercial networks fear to tread. But overall, when it comes to politics and war, the range of perspectives on National Public Radio isn't any wider than what we encounter on the avowedly commercial networks.

The documentary film "War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death," based on Norman Solomon's book of the same name, is now available on home video and DVD at major outlets. For more information, go to: www.WarMadeEasyTheMovie.org.

The Rise of Corporate Power

Instead of a new deal, we need a completely new game

BY DAVE ZINK

*"Corporation: An ingenious device for obtaining individual profit without individual responsibility."
Ambrose Bierce, American journalist, 1842 - 1914*

Feel like you're losing control over your life, like you're working more but just can't seem to get ahead? That you have no say in what happens these days? Tired of spending more & more of your time stuck in traffic jams?

Every which way you turn, you can see the effects of corporate power battering America. Poorly planned urban sprawl is paving over meadows and forests, and gobbling up our best farmland. Productivity of labor is up, while poverty is growing. Billions of tax dollars go to military contractors, while schools and social programs go begging.

Big Business has stolen our flag, cynically prostituting patriotism while hiding behind Old Glory — making her a hated symbol to too many people around the world. The corporate-dominated government lies to us to rally public backing for Big Oil's grab to control Iraqi supplies. Thousands of America's young people are sent to fight and die on the altar of corporate greed.

Why are so many people quiet in the face of all this? A major reason is that TV, radio, and newspaper ownership is concentrating into fewer corporate hands that dominate and regulate the flow of information and the marketplace of ideas. What we are allowed to learn and think is increasingly filtered.

Also, the high cost of campaign advertising on the corporate media makes politicians increasingly dependent on corporate donors, and "he who pays the piper, calls the tune". This undermines the democratic foundations of the republic.

It wasn't always like this.

The War of Independence was a revolution for freedom from imperial British corporations. Throughout our history, patriots warned us about the dangers that corporate power posed to democracy. While honoring those leaders, these issues are edited out of most of the history textbooks chosen for use in public schools.

"I hope we shall crush in its birth the aristocracy of our monied corporations which dare already to challenge our government to a trial by strength, and bid defiance to the laws of our country."

Thomas Jefferson, 12 November 1816, Letter to George Logan

"I see in the near future a crisis approaching that unnerves me and causes me to tremble for the safety of my country. Corporations have been enthroned and an era of corruption in high places will follow, and the money power of the country will endeavor to prolong its reign by working upon the prejudices of the people until all wealth is aggregated in a few hands and the Republic is destroyed."

Abraham Lincoln, 21 November 1864, Letter to Col. William F. Elkins

last word

Over the years, step by step, corporations grew in power. After their attorneys conned the Supreme Court into defining them as "legal persons" under the Constitution in 1886, they went on to accumulate more wealth and power.

By the beginning of the 20th Century, the "Robber Barons" had nearly succeeded in turning the USA into a feudal fiefdom. Disgusted at the flagrant arrogance and abuse, people started to rebel against the corporate Iron Heel. An array of progressive movements grew to levels alarming to the wealthy.

Teddy Roosevelt was elected president, and enacted reforms to break up the giant Trusts. His "Square Deal" defused dissent and bought some time for the corporate system.

In the 1930s, the US found itself in the depths of the Great Depression — a crisis of overproduction brought on by the corporate system. In the wealthiest country in the world, with rich farmland, people were starving amid plenty. With lines of unemployed on one side of the street, and idle factories on the other, an array of popular challenges to corporate power arose again. The Flint, Michigan sit-down strikes, and the Minneapolis Teamsters strike were two examples.

Instead of just holding rallies and demonstrations out on the streets, the workers actually went into their workplaces and occupied and controlled them.

In the face of a developing revolutionary situation, Franklin Delano Roosevelt warned the elite that if they didn't give the poorest of the poor something, more than a few crumbs from the table, the wealthiest would soon face a predicament in which they would risk losing the whole game. Elected president, FDR championed a set of reforms known as the "New Deal".

Both the Square and the New Deals borrowed heavily from the progressive movements and instituted reforms that gave working people a piece of the action — gains like collective bargaining and Social Security. But both did it from the angle of securing the corporate power structure. Neither went to the roots of the tragic problems that are recurrent in this system to make fundamental change.

"In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The total influence — economic, political, even spiritual — is felt in every city, every statehouse, every office of the federal government. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes."

Dwight D. Eisenhower, Farewell Address to the Nation, 17 January 1961

Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, in response to the growing civil rights and peace movements, sought to



image by Brian Dively w/ Aleta Debee

reform America with their Great Society programs. Once more, the root problem — the corporate system itself — was left intact.

Today, we again face a new generation of robber barons. Same gang, different faces. Many previous gains like social security, the right to privacy, and environmental advances, are threatened. Popular discontent is rising against the system's inability to provide necessities as basic as jobs, affordable homes, and decent healthcare, and against a toxic stew of militarism, pollution, alienation, violence, and poverty.

It doesn't have to be like this!

What can we learn from all this? First, periodic crises aren't flukes. It is the normal operation of corporate power that undermines democracy and the economy. Second, by leaving the power structure in corporate hands, we sow the seeds of future trouble.

When they feel their power and wealth are threatened, the corporate elite historically respond in one of two ways:

a. Reform - give up a little something. Divert attention away from, and defuse the surging popular movements. Then finagle a way to take it back later, or

b. Fascism - has been called "capitalism with the gloves off". When there is no perceived realistic possibility for reform, create a false threat, by setting up some "other" group (such as an ethnic or sexual minority), blame them for problems, while disrupting citizen's organizations like unions, cooperatives, and grassroots movements.

Will we take a lesson from history, or will we just repeat this process again? How many will die next time?

All citizens of good will — Republican, Democrat, and Independent — are needed in the struggle to take back America. It is time to stand together to save our freedoms and save our democracy. There are alternatives to the corporate system — we need to be discussing these options, up, down, and across the country.

The deck is stacked and the dice are loaded. Is it time for another "deal"? Maybe it's time for a whole new game, with better, more common-sense, democratic, cooperative, and sustainable rules.

The author is affiliated with the Alliance for Democracy, which is working to educate and organize citizens about this struggle. You can learn more or get involved at www.thealliancefordemocracy.org.

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