

connections

PRICELESS

Volume XXVI, Number 3

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April 2008

SAVE THE DATES

APRIL 19
PEACE PARTY (P. 20)

APRIL 20
EARTH DAY FESTIVAL

APRIL 25
**YOUTH ORGANIZING
SUMMIT (P. 20)**

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April 20, Victory Park

Come to our 20th Annual Earth Day Festival

“Live Green” is the theme of this year’s Earth Day Festival on Sunday, April 20th, from 11 am to 5 pm at Victory Park, behind Haggin Museum in Stockton.

This is the premiere environmental event in all of San Joaquin County and, as always, the focus of the day-long festival is to show how to take care of our natural resources—the earth, air and water. With global warming, conservation, and other environmental issues taking a spotlight in the world these days, we expect a crowd hungry and eager to learn how to take care of the only planet we have. It is a fun day for families. Admission is free.

The Festival will have dozens of informative, interactive booths, displays and exhibits, plus there will be plenty of great food and exotic crafts. Local area schools will share ideas on how you can better take care of our earth with a variety of hands-on activities. Environmental organizations will educate on the important issues that impact you. Community agencies will help you live a healthier, more positive life, and green businesses will assist you in making changes to your home and workplace. Over 100 vendors in Victory Park will make this Earth Day Festival the biggest ever.

Come for the entertainment, which will feature Akimbo, a Sacramento area group that plays original world fusion dance and vocal music, combining elements of Latin, Funk, Celtic and Jazz. Ethnic dance groups and local area bands will fill out the full schedule of entertainment for the day. The music is provided courtesy of the UOP Associated Students.

Join the hundreds of cyclists who will bike around the neighborhood as part of the Family Fun Bike Ride and Parade. Costumed children, adults and bikes are encouraged, so wear your wildest environmental look. Kids can strut as their favorite animal in the Endangered Species Parade that will circle the park. Or participate in the Drum Circle that traditionally closes the Festival on a percussive high note.

Companies and organizations are encouraged to sponsor the event. Sponsor donations will be put to good use. Sponsors will be part of promotional efforts and will be recognized for their “Go Green” environmental concern. This year’s event is sponsored by the City of Stockton Solid Waste & Recycling Division and Stormwater Management Program, the Peace &

(continued page 2)

**20TH ANNUAL
EARTH DAY
CELEBRATION**
LIVE GREEN SAN JOAQUIN
SUNDAY 4 ♡ 20 ♡ 08
11 AM- 5PM



INFORMATION ♡ LIVE MUSIC ♡ FOOD & FUN
VICTORY PARK STOCKTON ♡ FREE ADMISSION ♡
FAMILY BIKE PARADE REGISTRATION 10:30 AM
FOR INFORMATION VISIT LIVEGREENSANJOAQUIN.ORG

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of San Joaquin County**
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Time to climb out

Bruce Giudici

The running theme through this issue of *Connections* is one of economics and resources wasted. And the concussions are as inescapable now as they were five years ago when we first discussed them in *Connections*: economically, we cannot afford the Iraq war and Bush's tax cuts for the wealthy. While most have come to accept the non-economic arguments against both these chosen policies, it is important to see the economic consequences.

It is now generally accepted that Vietnam War spending and the OPEC oil crises of 1973 and 1979 caused first the inflation, then the high interest rates, then

the high unemployment rates of the early 1980s. The result of that last recession was a decline in our manufacturing base and decrease in the wages of the American worker.

Today, we face accelerated Iraq War spending and high oil prices which will effect the same results, perhaps in the next year or two. To balance our international trade, either the dollar must remain weak (to bolster our exports, but making oil more expensive) or our interest rates must rise (to attract foreign investment, but increasing the cost of our own debt). The world economy is resilient, but relies on US consumers to thrive. When we stop buying (because interest

rates are too high or the cost of gas keeps us from being able to buy anything else), all production will slow, unemployment will rise, and a world-wide recession becomes possible.

On the fifth anniversary of the Iraq war, the cost of ignoring basic economic principles has caught up with us. It time to change course. This issue provides some description of the problem (page 10 on war costs; page 4 for income inequality) and some solutions (page 17). In an election year, and when policy failure has never been more obvious, demands for real change must be heeded. The time for half measures (which would have been useful in the brief window of opportunity utterly squandered by Bush) is over. The boomers are now retiring, the social security

Bruce Giudici,
editor



trust fund is being tapped, all pensions are oversubscribed and we have no credit left anywhere. Predicted outcomes, all totally ignored by our leaders.

At this point, presidential candidates must begin to understand the depth of our grave. At this point, we must begin to climb out. Tax the rich, spend on productive eco-friendly capacity, and stop war spending for starters—each offending parts of the ruling class. We knew the solutions all along—it just takes a crisis to get them enacted. Happy Spring.

overwhelming majority of public schoolteachers are desperately trying, under increasingly crowded and difficult conditions, to teach their pupils the subjects required of them. Any time left over for moral advice is used to impart the idea that no person should be judged by skin color, gender or sexual orientation. Thomas' column promotes intolerance that leads to hate, persecution and vilification. Perhaps Thomas, an avowed hawk and war monger, is worried about the proliferation of the species; his outlook depends upon generations of righteous, mindless, brainwashed lackeys schooled by the "Good Book," marching to the tune of "Onward Christian Soldiers," fighting in God's army, dying for empire.

Thomas states, "Public schools are shaping children's minds to reflect liberal, humanistic world views" and "the left are using public schools to shape the next generation of Democrats." Honestly, the Republican Party and groups like Exodus Mandate have hijacked religion long enough. God is not spelled "G-O-P."

Dave Waldon

In memoriam

Fran Abbott

Feb. 9, 1940–March 4, 2008

Peace and Justice Network lost a longtime friend with the passing of Fran Abbott. Fran literally kept a roof over our heads almost 20 years ago when PJN had offices at the Anderson Y Center thanks to her generosity as director. She was deeply committed to all the local justice and peace issues. Whether at the Anderson Y, a League of Women Voters gathering, an environmental cleanup, earth day meeting, or some other event she always had gifts to offer: her wisdom, insight, and especially, her laughter and good humor. Fran's life touched this community and thousands of us within it. We are grateful for knowing her and the time she shared with us.

A celebration of Fran's life will be held at 2:00 p.m. on March 29, 2008, at the Brookside Farm, 3122 Brookside Road, in Stockton. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that you consider contributing to an organization that serves youth in your community.



Feedback

Conservatives v. public schools

Editor:

Time for "two minutes hate" inspired by Big Brother and performed by that paragon of Christian morality, columnist Cal Thomas. Mr. Thomas' column in the March 6 Record extolled the virtues of a group called "Exodus Mandate." Thomas fervently agreed with the group's agenda, which is to remove children from California public schools because young minds are being corrupted. This group contends that public schools are engaging in "favorable teaching about homosexuality, bisexuality, gender identity and any and every form of sexual expression for which there is an advocate." Exodus Mandate maintains the position that California educators "are not allowed to say 'Mommy and Daddy'" and that it is "lawful for public schools to indoctrinate children as young as pre-kindergarten to view homosexuality and other deviant lifestyles as normal and morally acceptable."

Reality suggests that the

Earth Day (continued from page 1)

Justice Network, University of the Pacific Associated Students, San Joaquin County Public Works-Stormwater Management and Mayaco Marketing & Internet.

Volunteers are still needed to assist before and on the day of the Festival so call (209) 946-2083 if you would like to be actively involved in San Joaquin County's Earth Day activities. See a list of ways you can help with the event at www.LiveGreenSanJoaquin.org.

All schools, organizations and

individuals doing environmental activities or projects are encouraged to share with the local community at this year's Festival as an exhibitor. Whether you have educational information to share, crafts or food to sell as a vendor or school projects to demonstrate, please join the thousands who will gather on this special day. For more information on how to be a sponsor, exhibitor or vendor, please call (209) 937-8389 or email stocktonearthday@gmail.com.

Connections

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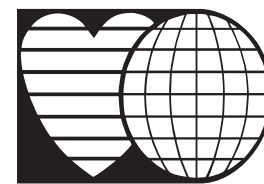
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"The Peace and Justice Network is a nonprofit educational organization committed to the vision of a world in which the equality of all persons is achieved, basic needs are met, conflict is resolved nonviolently, and the earth's resources are shared responsibly for the well-being of all her inhabitants and all future generations."

Scoring the "surge" and what lies beyond

Col. Dan Smith (USA, Ret.)

The March 5th edition of the Wall Street Journal carried a story, demurely buried on page 13, citing the latest public opinion poll from the non-partisan Pew Research Center for the People and the Press on the public's view about the war on terror in general, the Iraq war in particular, and, more specifically, the public's attitude on the success of the 2007 "troop surge."

The opening sentence of the article ought to give pause not just to those who want the U.S. to withdraw military forces from Iraq but also to the Pentagon brass for what is implied for the future security of the country: "The [public's] perception [is] that the U.S. troop surge in Iraq has succeeded." The February poll found that 48 per cent of respondents thought the war in Iraq was "going well" or "fairly well" and 47 percent said that U.S. troops ought to stay in Iraq for now—nearly as many (49 percent) as calling for immediate or rapid withdrawal.

So, is this increased "support" for remaining in Iraq that the poll detected ephemeral or a reflection of a longer-term change in attitude among the population of the United States? Is the public, once again, letting the administration get away with spinning the news? And what of the objectives set out by Bush 13 months ago?

Three objectives not met

In announcing the troop increase thirteen months ago, President Bush told the public that the added numbers of U.S. soldiers would give the Iraqi government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki "political space" in which to debate and enact laws:

- amending earlier statutes that would deny employment in the post-Saddam Iraq to any Iraqi who had been a member of the Ba-athist Party;
- creating new arrangements to develop Iraq's oil fields and for distributing revenues from sales of oil, and
- finalizing arrangements for the election of provincial government officials.

Results

The "re-employment" law as passed throws more people out of

work than it takes in, particularly in the security services where an estimated 20,000 could lose their positions, their income, and all inhibitions to oppose the current government and the coalition forces.

The Iraqi parliament could not resolve disagreements on which level of government, Baghdad or the provinces, controls oil and gas resources and who has the power to conclude contracts for developing the oil fields. Similarly, efforts to legislate the informal arrangements pertaining to the distribution of oil revenues foundered on objections of the Kurdish faction and their demands for the referendum on the future of Kirkuk.

As for the provincial election law, this was passed by the Iraqi parliament but was then vetoed by the presidency council.

Fatalities down, but...

What about the reduction in fatalities reported among U.S. and coalition forces, the Iraqi military, other Iraqi security forces, and Iraqi civilians in the last five months of 2007 and, for the foreign forces, in the first two months of 2008?

The decreases were real, but not for the reason asserted by the White House: i.e., "the surge worked." Contrary to the administration's spin, there was no straight-forward cause-effect relationship in play. The decreases were due to at least three factors unrelated to the "surge:"

- the operational stand down by the Shi'a death squads and others in the Mahdi army ordered by Moqtada al-Sadr in April 2007 and extended last month to the end of 2008;
- the virtual completion of the campaigns to ethnically cleanse the minority religious sect from each of Baghdad's formerly mixed neighborhoods, leaving no "others" to kill; and, most significantly,
- the spread of U.S.-funded Sunni "Awakening Councils"—the informal "neighborhood watch" groups organized by tribal sheiks and paid and armed by U.S. military units.

The Shi'a-dominated central government has opposed the formation of the Awakening Councils, fearing that the Pentagon is creating another armed militia

that will ratchet up violence exponentially in the aftermath of a coalition withdrawal. The math says it all: in a nation of 27 million people, there are approximately 900,000 entitled to carry arms.

Homeland secure?

The first week in March sees the fifth anniversary of the formation of the Department of Homeland Security while the third week of March—the 19th to be precise—marks the fifth anniversary of the start of the Iraq war. These were supposed to keep the American public safe by engaging terrorists "over there."

Has it worked? Hardly. The Department of Homeland Security, by its own admission, has yet to even get inside the ballpark with regard to achieving one of its fundamental missions: controlling the passage of people and goods across U.S. borders. The FBI—again—has admitted improper use of "national security letters" to demand personal records or data on U.S. citizens (as many as 1,000 incidents over the last year) not under suspicion of any wrong-doing. As for the public, many respond that they feel no more secure today than they did last year or the year before.

And it was exactly this psychology of fear that Bush played to when the House of Representatives refused to reauthorize expanded powers for government wiretapping without first getting (or applying for early in the wiretap operation) warrants from the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) courts. The White House mantra was that without the law, the terrorists would have a holiday at the expense of the security of the U.S. public.

Battle fatigue

For the most part, however, Bush would just as soon have the public ignore the war and its effects on those serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. But sometime this month, probably after the Ides of March, the 4,000th U.S. fatality of Operation Iraqi Freedom will be quietly registered by the Pentagon—quietly as Congress will be in recess and the President likely will be in Texas at the ranch.

It is equally possible that few Americans other than those

with family members serving in combat will notice. Even the media seems to be feeling battle fatigue. Whereas at least one major U.S. newspaper always carried a page 1 story on the fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, this is no longer the case. On some occasions—March 6th being the most recent occurrence—even the page 1 summaries of significant stories on the inside pages of the New York Times and the Washington Post made no reference to the fighting. And this was just two days after presidential primary contests in Ohio and Texas addressed the "national security three o'clock-in-the-morning telephone call."

But that call might still come on Bush's watch. On December

31st, Moqtada al-Sadr's cease-fire ends. So too does the UN mandate authorizing the presence of foreign military forces in Iraq. Under the Bush "plan," U.S. troops will still be in Iraq—and the costs in lives and treasure may quickly escalate.

Finally, speaking of treasure, one is left with "what might have been"—imagining what \$845 billion—the amount already spent on these wars, let alone the projected "final" cost of at least \$2 trillion—could have done to improve the quality of life for everyone around the globe.

Source: FCNL release 3/7/08. FCNL, 245 Second St NE, Washington, DC 20002 www.fcnl.org



Contact Your Reps

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Sen. Barbara Boxer, 1700 Montgomery St, Ste 240, San Francisco, CA 94111. 415-403-0100; 112 Hart Building, Washington, DC 20510. 202-224-3553, senator@boxer.senate.gov

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, One Post Street, Ste 2450, San Francisco, CA 94104. 415-249-0707; 331 Hart Building, Washington, DC 20510. 202-224-3841, senator@feinstein.senate.gov

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Rep. John Doolittle (R-District 4), 2130 Professional Dr, Ste 190, Roseville, CA 95661. 916-786-5560; 1524 Longworth Bldg, Washington, CA 20515. 202-225-2511

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Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, State Capitol, Sacramento, CA 95814. 916-445-2841

State Sen. Michael Machado (District 5), 31 E Channel St, Room 440, Stockton, CA 95202. 209-948-7930; State Capitol, Rm 4035, Sacramento, CA 95814. 916-445-2407

Assemblyperson Kathleen Galgiani (District 17), 31 E. Channel St., Rm. 306, Stockton CA 95202, 209-948-7479

Income inequality in US cannot continue

Jared Bernstein

Earlier this week, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) updated its authoritative data series on household incomes (1979-2005). The new data—highly regarded as a particularly complete source of information on this important topic—reveal a sharp increase in income inequality over the past few years. In fact, the increase in income inequality (both pre- and post-tax) as measured by the change in the shares of income going to different income classes, was greater from 2003 to 2005 than over any other two-year period covered by the CBO data. Over these years, an amazing \$400 billion in pre-tax dollars was shifted from the bottom 95% of households to those in the top 5% (all income data in this report are inflation adjusted and in 2005 dollars). In other words, had income shares not shifted as they did, the income of each of the 109 million households in the bottom 95% would have been \$3,660 higher in 2005.

Recent inequality developments

In response to the bursting Internet bubble and ensuing loss of capital income, inequality contracted for a few years in the early 2000s, but then reversed course in 2003 and started growing

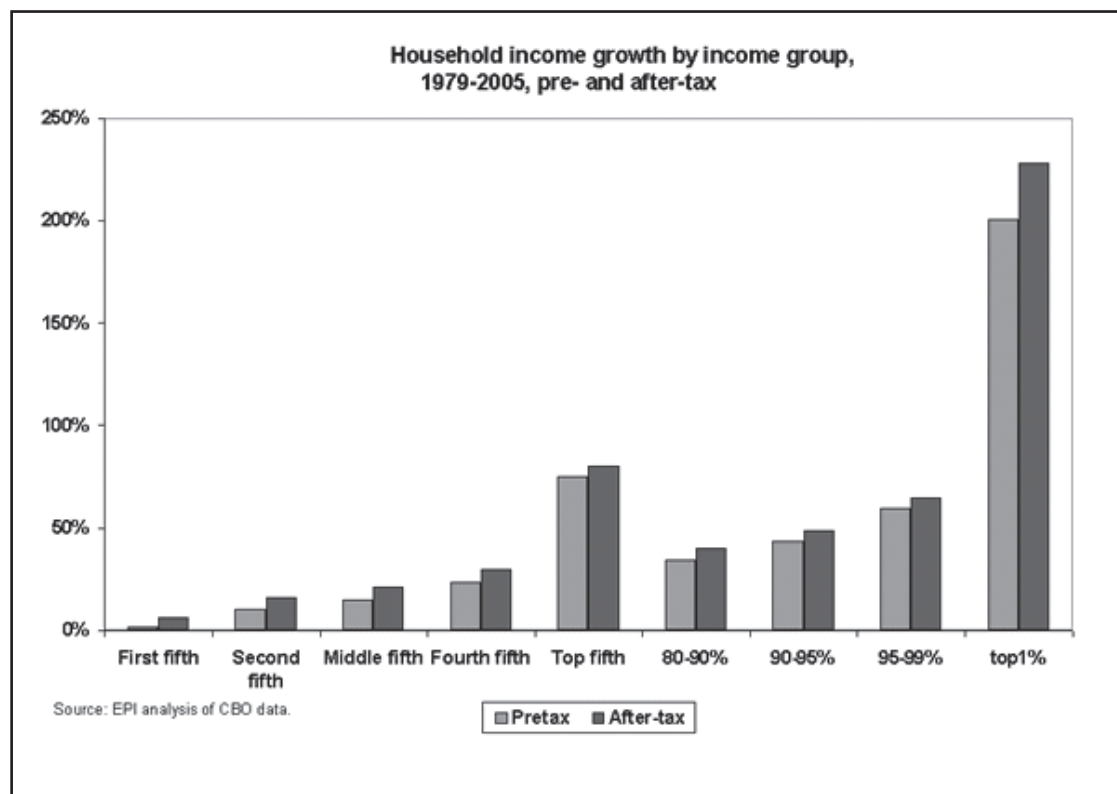
quickly in 2004.

By 2005, the top fifth held a larger share of both pre- and post-tax income than everyone else in the bottom 80%. On a pre-tax basis in 2005, the top 1%, with 18.1% of total income, held a much larger share of income than the bottom 40% of households, which only received 12.5%.

Putting this shift in dollar terms reveals a redistribution of \$400 billion of pre-tax income in the 2003-05 period, an average loss of \$3,660 per household to the bottom 95% of households. Again, these are the largest income shifts on record over a two-year period.

Long-term growth and inequality

The figure shows the long-term growth in real income for each fifth from 1979 to 2005. The 'staircase' pattern of growth is evidence of the increase in unequal income growth over this period. Note also that, while the federal tax system raised the income growth of each group of families, it clearly did not turn back the inequality tide. To the contrary, after-tax income growth was much higher for the top 1% than was pre-tax growth (the decline in effective tax rates' the share of income paid in federal taxes' was largest for households in the top 1%).



Real income growth over this period was minimal to moderate for most households. Income growth for the poorest households grew only 1.3% pre-tax but 6.3% post-tax, thanks largely to the increase in the refundable Earned Income Tax Credit over these years. Middle incomes grew 15% pre-tax and 21% post-tax, or less than 1% per year over this 26 year period. Income for the top fifth grew much more quickly in the 1979-2005 period: 75% pre-tax

and 80% post-tax. But the most dramatic growth occurred at the very top of the income scale: Households in the top 1% saw their income triple over these years, up by 200% pre-tax and 228% post-tax.

These trends led to stark differences in actual income levels by 2005. In that year, the average after-tax income for households in the bottom fifth was \$15,300; for the middle fifth, \$50,200; and for the top 1%, just over \$1 million. These gaps have led to much greater economic distance between income classes over the years. Back in 1979, the post-tax income of the top 1% was eight times higher than that of middle-income families and 23 times higher than the lowest fifth. In 2005, those ratios grew to 21 (top compared to middle) and 70 (top to bottom), a vast increase in the distance between income classes.

Conclusion

The CBO data reveal the severe depth of our inequality problem. Though overall tax reductions during this period have meant slightly faster post-tax income growth for households in each income group, it has made little difference to the overall picture

of inequality and has even exacerbated unequal outcomes over this period.

The problem is particularly stark in recent years. Before the current problems in housing and financial markets developed, the overall economy grew solidly over this recovery, with notably strong productivity growth. As the CBO data reveal, aggregate household income grew \$1.1 trillion in the 2003-05 period (see appendix table). But these gains have failed to flow broadly throughout the income scale, and the extent of their concentration at the top of the income scale is historically unique. Just under two-thirds (63%) of the gain in household income from 2003 to 2005 went to just 5% of the nation's wealthiest households.

Such concentration of income is unsustainable in a democratic society. The distribution mechanisms that have historically worked to ensure much more equitable outcomes appear to be wholly inoperative. Fixing them must be at the heart of any serious economic policy discussion.

Source: Economic Policy Institute Issue Brief #239, <http://www.epi.org>, 12/13/2008

From 2003 to 2005, an amazing \$400 billion in pre-tax dollars was shifted from the bottom 95% of households to those in the top 5%. In other words, had income shares not shifted as they did, the income of each of the 109 million households in the bottom 95% would have been \$3,660 higher in 2005.

Health care reform vital to small business

Roger Speed

There are only two kinds of small businesses that don't offer health care coverage to their employees: those that want to but can't afford it, and those that don't want to. Few fall into the last category, but their voices are heard disproportionately in the health care debate, and it's important our leaders understand this. Those who hold themselves out as representing small businesses but fight against a practical solution that would benefit small businesses aren't actually representing their purported constituents very well.

Overwhelmingly, small business people have their employees' best interests at heart and view providing health care as part of their obligation to their staff. According to a random sample of California businesses, a recent

survey indicated 80% of them felt that way.

The obstacle is affordability and a health care market that severely distorts and limits the rest of our market economy. Over three million small business owners in California—who employ more than 50% of the private sector work force—currently don't have an affordable option. Health insurance costs for small businesses rose 87% between 2000 and 2006, with only 39% of workers at businesses with less than 100 employees even covered by their company's health insurance plan.

The health care crisis severely impedes California's economic progress and hampers the pursuit of the American dream by its citizens. The success or failure of a business should depend

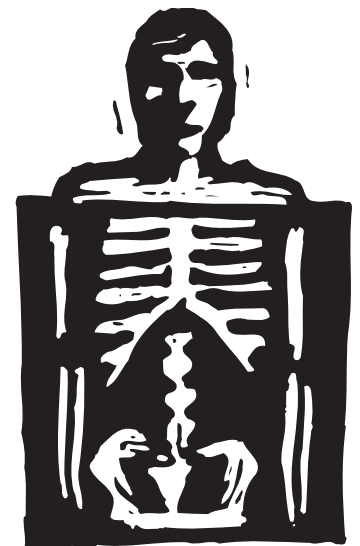
on hard work, not the cost of providing health insurance. Our health care crisis has created an external barrier to free and fair competition that impedes our economic prosperity.

An August 2007 poll indicated that small businesses across California overwhelmingly want to ensure that their employees have health coverage. They believe that health care financing is a shared responsibility among individuals, businesses and government.

Most business owners are pragmatic, not dogmatic. They want to do the right thing by their workers for both practical and

personal reasons.

The above comments by John Arensmeyer (founder and CEO of Small Business Majority, a California based small business political advocacy group) was published in longer form in The Sacramento Bee during the fight over AB X1, which would have made some changes to the current health care mess. While this editor didn't support AB X1, the arguments Mr Arensmeyer makes are just as germane to the efforts to pass a single payer bill such as SB 840 currently in the legislature.



Single payer update—SB840

Carol & Jerry Bailey

It is our understanding that SB 840 will be brought back to the Assembly; last year it passed the Senate. There will be a full vetting, just as there was for AB x 1.1. And the Legislative Analyst's office has been requested to do a full analysis. SB 1014 will also be brought back ... still on the Senate side (both are two-year bills). It will also be fully vetted.

It seems as though Governor Schwarzenegger has said he will veto SB 840, yet again. And SB 1014 requires 2/3 vote, because a tax will be the funding mechanism. There will be transition costs, of course, so these costs will be the focus of much anti-talk. The transition costs are projected to be replaced in the first year of implementation. The State Budget issues are the rationale for the state not letting implementation happen. And the Governor can't let SB 840 go through, unless there is a mandate for change.

So ... unless we can shame the Governor and the Legislature into taking care of CA residents,

we face a tough year. This year, Senator Kuehl is termed out. There are a couple of other legislators willing to take the bill, and then we start all over again—with new Assembly and Senator folks. We must choose them carefully and make sure they support single payer. And, we get ready to go to an initiative. The trouble is that the insurance companies can out-match any monies we garner, and Harry and Louise will be alive and well on our tv screens, and probably computer screens, too.

All of this is somewhat discouraging. However, public opinion is less and less in favor of insurance companies and more and more in favor of a single payer system. We'll have to gather all of our efforts and energy to education, education, education and to continual contact with our legislators.

Meantime at the federal level, HR 676 (Conyers) has more co-authors (88) than any other bill. So the will is there and, again, we need to pick our House and Senate folks with health care in the forefront.

Come &
be a part of
building the
movement
for affordable,
quality health
care for all!



SPECIAL GUESTS
Senator Darrel Steinberg
Sara Rogers, Consultant to
Senator Sheila Kuehl
PRESENTATIONS MADE BY
Deanna Furman, CNA
Libby Sholes, Church Impact
Cindy Young, CSEA
Dan Braunstein, HCA Davis

WHO: Sponsored by Health Care For All Sacramento Valley

WHAT: Speakers Bureau Training

WHEN: Saturday April 5, 2008

TIME: Registration at 9:30 a.m. We will conclude at 3:00 p.m.

WHERE: The Hart Senior Center, 915 27th Street, Sacramento 95817

WHY: To become a better advocate and speaker for SB 840!

SPECIFIC GOALS:

- Increase in skills content for SB 840
- To better understand the financing structure of SB 840
- Learn how to handle the "hard questions" when making presentations on SB 840
- Learn how to pass resolutions in support of SB 840.

A registration fee of \$15 is requested. Please cut off the bottom of the flyer, and send your check made payable to: **HCA Sacramento Valley**. Send the completed registration form and your check to **Carolyn Negrete, 5634 Delcliff Circle, Sacramento, CA 95822**. If you have any questions, please contact Carolyn at (916) 424-5316.

Please cut off the form below and return to the address above.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Which organization you are representing _____

Temps march on Machado for equity

John Morearty

"Justice Can't be Temporary," read the purple T-shirts of forty-five SEIU union members and supporters, marching up El Dorado Street, across the end of the channel. Signs on sticks read "Justice for Temporary Workers," "A.B. 1496, Moving California forward" and "Machado! say yes on 1496." Two guys accosted me with my camera. "Those people get paid too much already. If they can take off work on a Tuesday afternoon, they can't be doing too bad."

The marchers rallied briefly at De Carli Plaza. A man with two young boys said, "I've been working at the county hospital for four years, as a 'temporary' worker. When I get up to the hours limit for temps they lay me off, and then hire me again. I need to support my family." The boys laughed and hugged their dad.

According to Alicia Brite, an organizer for SEIU, forty-nine percent of the workers at San Joaquin County Hospital are so-called "temporaries," constantly fired and then hired again. They get no benefits at all.

Assembly Bill 1496 would clarify the use of temporary workers in California cities and counties, and close loopholes permitting hiring of temps for jobs that could be performed by permanent employees. The bill's sponsor, Assembly member Sandré Swanson (D-Alameda), Chair of the Labor and Employment Committee, says "It's an issue of fairness. If a worker is doing a job long term, a job that is for all intents and purposes permanent, that worker ought to be classified as a permanent employee and have all the rights and benefits that go along with that. Classifying workers as temporary for years and

years to avoid paying benefits is unfair."

A new survey of 1,000 California temp workers reveals that temporary workers are disproportionately women (75%) and people of color (76%). One third has been "temporary" for 5 years or longer and 57% have no health insurance.

After rallying, the purple-shirted picketers crossed to the state building where Machado has his office. They marched in a circle, chanting "Hey hey! Ho ho! Machado's No has got to go!"

Color psychologists say, purple is the color of transformation. Those chanters were calling for a transformation of the system towards justice.

Senator Machado's office did not return Connections' phone call for this article. His office numbers are (209) 948-7930 and (916) 651-4005.



Warfare and health care

Norman Solomon

It's kind of logical. In a pathological way.

A country that devotes a vast array of resources to killing capabilities will steadily undermine its potential for healing. For social justice. For health care as a human right.

Martin Luther King Jr. described the horrific trendline four decades ago: "A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death."

If a society keeps approaching spiritual death, it's apt to arrive. Here's an indicator: Nearly one in six Americans has no health insurance, and tens of millions of others are badly underinsured. Here's another: The United States, the world's preeminent warfare state, now spends about \$2 billion per day on military pursuits.

Gaining health care for all will require overcoming the priorities of the warfare state. That's the genuine logic behind the new "Healthcare NOT Warfare" campaign.

I remember the ferocious media debate over the proper government role in health care—43 years ago. As the spring of 1965 got underway, the bombast was splattering across front pages and flying through airwaves. Many commentators warned that a proposal for a vast new program would bring "socialism" and destroy the sanctity of the free-enterprise system. The new federal program was called Medicare.

These days, when speaking on campuses, I bring up current proposals for a "single payer" system—in effect, Medicare for Americans of all ages. Most students seem to think it's a good idea. But once in a while, someone vocally objects that such an arrangement would be "socialism." The objection takes me back to the media uproar of early 1965.

Today, we're left with the unfulfilled potential of Medicare for all. It could make health care



real as a human right. And it could spare our society a massive amount of money now going to administrative costs and corporate gouging. At last count, annual insurance-industry profits reached \$57.5 billion in 2006.

On Capitol Hill, lobbyists for the corporate profiteers are determined to block H.R. 676, the bill to create a universal single-payer system to implement health care as a human right.

In the current presidential campaign, none of the major candidates can be heard raising the possibility of ejecting the gargantuan insurance industry from the nation's health care system. Instead, there's plenty of nattering about whether "mandates" are a good idea. Hillary Clinton even has the audacity (not of hope but of duplicity) to equate proposed health care "mandates" with the must-pay-in requirements that sustain Social Security and Medicare.

For Clinton's analogy to make sense, we'd have to accept the idea that requiring everyone to pay taxes to the government for a common-good program is akin to requiring everyone to pay premiums to private insurance companies for personal medical coverage.

A recent New York Times story was authoritative as it plied the conventional media wisdom. The lead sentence declared that an "immediate challenge that will confront the next administration" is the matter of "how to tame the soaring costs of Medicare and

Medicaid." And the news article pointedly noted that current federal spending for those health-related programs adds up to \$627 billion.

I've been waiting for a New York Times news story to declare that an immediate challenge for the next administration will be the matter of how to tame the soaring costs of the Pentagon. After all, the government's annual military spending—when you factor in the supplemental bills for warfare in Afghanistan and Iraq—is well above the \$627 billion for Medicare and Medicaid that can cause such alarm in the upper reaches of the nation's media establishment.

Assessing the current presidential race, the Times reported: "The Democrats do not say, in any detail, how they would slow the growth of Medicare and Medicaid or what they think about the main policy options: rationing care, raising taxes, cutting payments to providers or requiring beneficiaries to pay more."

There are other "policy options"—including drastic cuts in the Pentagon budget. And health care for all.

Norman Solomon, the author of "War Made Easy," is on the advisory board of *Progressive Democrats of America*. PDA's new nationwide petition for *Healthcare NOT Warfare* is online <<https://www.thedatabank.com/dpg/309/personal2.asp?formid=healthpet>>.

Source: <http://www.truthout.org/3/12/2008>



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Top Iraq contractor skirts US taxes offshore

Kellogg Brown and Root (KBR) is the largest war contractor in Iraq, with an estimated \$16 billion in contracts, eight times the work of its nearest competitor. It received a no-bid contract in 2002 to rebuild Iraq's oil infrastructure, and a multibillion-dollar contract to provide support services to troops. Back in Vietnam days, as Lyndon Johnson's pet corporation, KBR made a fortune building roads and ports. Later it became part of Halliburton, of which Dick Cheney was CEO, but last year they split with Halliburton. Both are headquartered in Dubai, on the Arabian peninsula.

But KBR's 21,000 workers in Iraq, including about 10,500 Americans, don't work for KBR. In a copyrighted story in the Boston Globe (March 6), Farah Stockman reports that KBR "has avoided paying hundreds of millions of dollars in federal Medicare and Social Security taxes by hiring workers through shell companies based in the Cayman Islands."

Neither of the two companies—Service Employers International and Overseas Administrative Services—has an office or a phone number in the Caymans, says Stockman; there's just "a computer file with the employees' names on the fourth floor of a building on a palm-studded boulevard in the Caribbean."

The bargain for KBR: they don't pay Social Security or Medicare for their employees, and thus can under-bid their competitors. Stockman points out that "Social Security and Medicare taxes amount to 15.3 percent of each employees' salary, split evenly between the worker and the employer. While KBR's use of the shell companies saves workers their half of the taxes, it deprives them of future retirement benefits."

"In addition, the practice enables KBR to avoid paying unemployment taxes in Texas, where the company is registered, amounting to between \$20 and \$559 per American employee per year, depending on the company's rate of turnover. As a result, the workers cannot receive



unemployment assistance should they lose their jobs."

But when shell company workers claimed they got sick from cancer-causing chemicals at an Iraqi water treatment plant and tried to sue, KBR claimed they were actually working for KBR and the military, which were immune from such lawsuits. Michael Doyle, the men's lawyer, says "You don't get to take both positions."

The scheme saves Defense dollars, asserts KBR. But Stockman argues that "the use of the loophole results in a significantly greater loss of revenue to the government as a whole, particularly to the Social Security and Medicare trust funds.... A Boston Globe survey found that the practice is unusual enough that only one other major contractor in Iraq said it does something similar."

She quotes Senator John Kerry: "Failing to contribute to Social Security and Medicare thousands of times over isn't shielding the taxpayers they claim to protect, it's costing our citizens in the name of short-term corporate greed."

Other taxpayers get to make up the shortfall, Stockman argues. "The argument that by not paying taxes they are saving the government money is just absurd,"

says Robert McIntyre, director of Citizens for Tax Justice.

Will the "shell company game" to avoid payroll taxes on far-flung workers in the American empire become illegal? Stockman ends her report with two more interviews.

Eric Toder, a former director of the office of research for the IRS, said the IRS could crack down. "It obviously looks unseemly where you have a situation where, if you did it in a straightforward way, they would pay payroll taxes. If this becomes the norm, and other companies do that as well, it could further erode the tax base."

And Peter Singer of the Brookings Institution said the practice will probably attract more scrutiny in the future, as the military expands its outsourcing and as workplaces become increasingly global.

"It is fascinating and troubling at the same time. If you are an executive in a company, you are thinking: 'Wow. Cash savings and a potential loophole from certain domestic laws, lawsuits, and taxes. It's win-win.' But if you are a US taxpayer, it is not a positive synergy."

In other words, a good deal for war wheelers and dealers, a bad deal for workers and citizens.

"Failing to contribute to Social Security and Medicare...is costing our citizens in the name of short-term corporate greed."

President vetoes anti-torture legislation

US President George W. Bush defied Congress, vetoing legislation that outlaws waterboarding and other abusive interrogation techniques early March.

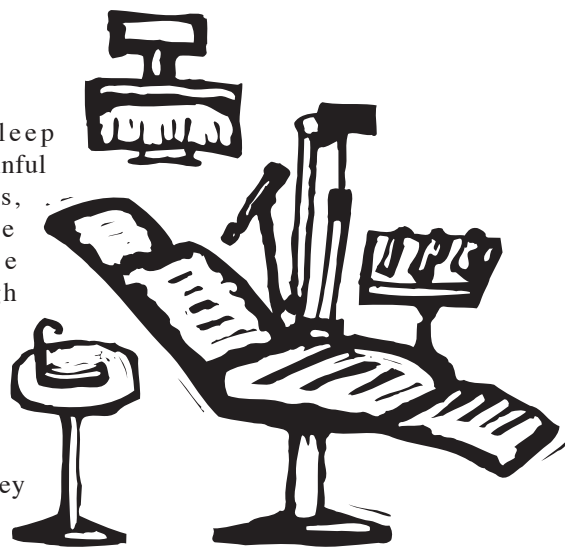
"President Bush will go down in history as the torture president," said Jennifer Daskal, senior counterterrorism counsel at Human Rights Watch. "He has now defied a majority of Congress to allow the use of interrogation techniques that any reasonable observer would call torture."

The legislation would have required all interrogators to abide by the same no-torture rules currently in place for the military. But the Bush administration continues to insist that CIA and other non-military interrogators are not bound by the military rules, and has reportedly given CIA interrogators the green light to use a range of so-called "enhanced" interrogation techniques, including

prolonged sleep deprivation, painful stress positions, and exposure to extreme cold. Although waterboarding is not currently approved for use by the CIA, Attorney General Michael Mukasey has refused to take it off the table for the future.

"Having separate rules for military and civilian interrogators increases the likelihood of misunderstanding and abuse," said Daskal.

The legislation, which was included in the Intelligence Authorization Act of 2008, passed the House of Representatives in December 2007 and the Senate in



February 2008.

"Congress has tried to take America out of the torture business, but the Bush administration continues to resist," Daskal said. "Interrogators should think twice before using abusive interrogation techniques that Congress clearly says should be banned."

Source: Human Rights Watch release 3/7/08 www.hrw.org

UN faults US on racism

The United States should immediately adopt UN recommendations to alleviate the widespread racial bias it found in the criminal justice system, Human Rights Watch said early March. The United Nations' Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination harshly criticized the US record on race after considering oral and written testimony submitted by the US government. In its conclusions issued today, the committee urged the US to rectify the "stark racial disparities" in criminal justice systems throughout the country.

"The UN is telling the US that it needs to deal with an ugly aspect of its criminal justice system," said Alison Parker, deputy director of the US Program at Human Rights Watch. "The committee outright rejected the government's claim that more black kids get life without parole sentences because they commit more crimes."

The UN committee condemned what it found to be racial disparities in the death penalty and in the sentencing of youth to life without

parole for crimes committed when they were under 18, a practice the committee wants stopped. Further, the committee called on authorities to take steps, including a moratorium on the death penalty, to root out racial bias.

The committee also dismissed claims by the US government that it did not have the power to examine the detention of non-citizens at Guantanamo. It urged the US to guarantee "enemy combatants" judicial review of the lawfulness and conditions of their detention.

"Once again, the Bush administration has been told by a major human rights body that it is not above the law when it comes to the war on terrorism," Parker said. "The US should reverse its decision to deny judicial review to non-citizen enemy combatant detainees."

The committee criticized US practices in numerous other areas, including:

- The Bush administration's view that its human rights treaty obligations do not apply to laws or practices that are race-neutral

on their face but discriminatory in effect;

- Racial segregation in housing and in public schools;
- Systemic inadequacies in indigent criminal defense, which have a disproportionate impact on racial minorities;
- The disenfranchisement of millions of US citizens because they have been convicted of a felony, even though they have fully served their sentences or have been released on parole.

The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is the UN body of experts responsible for monitoring countries' compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, a human rights treaty ratified by the United States in 1994. The committee's comments and responses to state party reports are authoritative interpretations of states' obligations under the treaty.

Source: Human rights watch release 3/7/08 www.hrw.org



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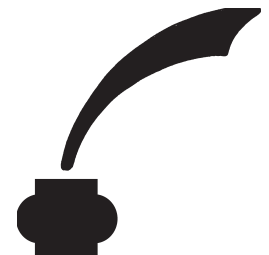
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War is hell, one week costs \$3.5 billion

William D. Hartung

War is hell—deadly, dangerous, and expensive. But just how expensive is it?

In a recent interview, Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz asserted that the costs of the Iraq war—budgetary, economic, and societal—could reach \$5 trillion.

That's a hard number to comprehend. Figuring out how many times \$5 trillion would circle the globe (if we took it all in one dollar bills) doesn't really help matters much, nor does estimating how many times we could paper over every square inch of Rhode Island with it. The fact that total war costs could buy six trillion donuts for volunteers to the Clinton, Obama, McCain, and Huckabee campaigns—assuming a bulk discount—is impressive in its own way, but not all that meaningful either. In fact, the Bush administration's war costs have already moved beyond the human scale of comprehension.

But what if we were to try another tack? How about breaking those soaring trillions down into smaller pieces, into mere millions and billions? How much, for instance, does one week of George Bush's wars cost?

Glad you asked. If we consider the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan together—which we might as well do, since we and our children and grandchildren will be paying for them together into the distant future—a conservative single-week estimate comes to \$3.5 billion. Remember, that's per week.

By contrast, the whole international community spends less than \$400 million per year on the International Atomic Energy Agency, the primary institution for monitoring and preventing the spread of nuclear weapons; that's less than one day's worth of war costs. The U.S. government spends just \$1 billion per year securing and destroying loose nuclear weapons and bomb-making materials, or less than two days' worth of war costs; and Washington spends a total of just \$7 billion per year on combating global warming, or a whopping two weeks' worth of war costs.

So, perhaps you're wondering, what does that \$3.5 billion per week actually pay for? And how would we even know? The Bush administration submits a supplemental request—over and above the more than \$500 billion per year the Pentagon is now receiving in its official budget—to pay for the purported costs of the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and for the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). If you can stay awake long enough to read the whole 159-page document for 2008, it has some fascinating revelations.

For example, to hear the howling of the white-collar warriors in Washington every time anyone suggests knocking a nickel off administration war-spending requests, you would think that the weekly \$3.5 billion outlay is all "for the troops." In fact, only 10% of it, or under \$350 million per week, goes to pay and benefits for uniformed military personnel. That's less than a quarter of the weekly \$1.4 billion that goes to war contractors to pay for everything from bullets to bombers. As a slogan, insisting that we need to keep the current flood of military outlays flowing "for Boeing and Lockheed Martin" just doesn't quite have the same ring to it.

You could argue, of course, that all these contracting dollars represent the most efficient way to get our troops the equipment they need to operate safely and effectively in a war zone—but you would be wrong. Much of that money is being wasted every week on the wrong kinds of equipment at exorbitant prices. And even when it is the right kind of equipment, there are often startling delays in getting it to the battlefield, as was the case with advanced armored vehicles for the Marine Corps.

But before we get to equipment costs, let's take a look at a week's worth of another kind of support. The Pentagon and the State Department don't make a big point—or really any kind of point—out of telling us how much we're spending on gun-toting private-contract employees from companies like Blackwater and Triple Canopy, our "shadow army" in Iraq, but we can make an educated guess. For example, at the high end of the scale, individual

employees of private military firms make up to 10 times what many U.S. enlisted personnel make, or as much as \$7,500 per week. If even one-tenth of the 5,000 to 6,000 armed contract employees in Iraq make that much, we're talking about at least \$40 million per week. If the rest make \$1,000 a week—an extremely conservative estimate—then we have nearly \$100 million per week going just to the armed cohort of private-contract employees operating there.

Now, let's add into that figure the whole private crew of non-government employees operating in Iraq, including all the cooks, weapons technicians, translators, interrogators, and other private-contract support personnel. That combined cost probably comes closer to \$300 million per week, or almost as much as is spent on uniformed personnel by the Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marines.

By one reliable estimate, there are more contract employees in Iraq alone—about 180,000—than there are U.S. troops. There are thousands more in Afghanistan. But since many of these non-military employees are poorly paid subcontract workers involved in cooking meals, doing laundry, and cleaning latrines, the total costs for the services of all private-contractor employees in Iraq probably runs somewhat less than the costs of the uniformed military. Hence our estimate.

So, if \$650 million or so a week is spent on people, where does the other nearly \$3 billion go? It goes for goods and services, from tanks and fighter planes to fuel and food. Most of this money ends up in the hands of private companies like Boeing, Lockheed Martin, and the former Halliburton subsidiary, Kellogg, Brown and Root.

The list of weapons and accessories paid for from our \$3.5 billion is long and daunting:

- \$1.5 million for M-4 carbines (about 900 guns per week);
- \$2.3 million for machine guns (about 170 per week);
- \$4.3 million for Hellfire missiles (about 50 missiles per week);
- \$6.9 million for night vision devices (about 2,100 per week);
- \$10.8 million for fuel per week;

* \$5 million to store and transport that fuel per week;

* \$14.8 million for F-18E/F fighter planes per week (one every four weeks);

* \$23.4 million for ammunition per week;

* \$30.7 million for Bradley fighting vehicles (10 per week).

And that's only a very partial list. What about the more mundane items?

"Laundries, showers, and latrines" cost more than \$110,000 per week; "Parachutes and aerial delivery systems" cost \$950,000 per week; "Runway snow removal and cleaning" costs \$132,000 per week; Flares cost \$50,000 per week.

Some of these figures, of course, may cover worldwide military operations for the U.S. armed forces. After all, by sticking the acronym GWOT in the title of any supplemental war-spending request, you can cram almost anything into it.

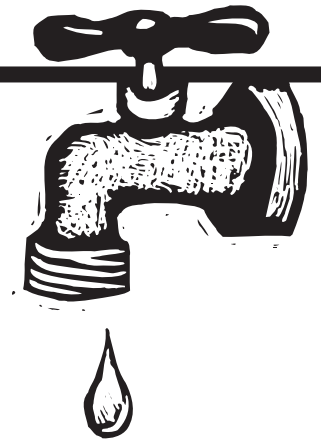
Then there are the sobering figures like: \$2.4 million per week for "death gratuities" (payments to families of troops killed in action) and \$10.6 million per week in "extra hazard pay."

And don't forget that all the death and destruction lurking behind these weekly numbers makes it that much harder to get people to join the military. But not to worry, \$1 million per week is factored into that supplemental funding request for "advertising and recruitment"—not enough perhaps to fill the ranks, but at least they're trying.

Keep in mind that this only gives us a sense of what we do know from the public Pentagon request; there's plenty more that we don't know. As a start, the Pentagon's breakdown of the money in its "emergency" supplemental budget leaves huge gaps.

Even your own congressman doesn't know for sure what is really in the U.S. war budget. What we do know is that the Pentagon and the military services have been stuffing more and more projects that have nothing to do with the fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, or even the war on terror, into those war supplementals.

Layered in are requests for new



equipment that will take years, or even decades, to build and may never be used in combat—unless the Iraq war really does go on for another century, as John McCain recently suggested. These "non-war" items include high-tech armored vehicles and communications devices for the Army as well as new combat aircraft for the Air Force.

Even though these systems may never be used on our current battlefields, they are war costs nonetheless. If they weren't inserted into the supplemental requests for Iraq and Afghanistan, they might never have been funded. After all, who wants to vote against a bill that is allegedly all "for the troops," even if it includes weapons those troops will never get?

These add-ons are not small change. They probably cost in the area of \$500 million per week.

Given all of this, it may sound like we have a fair amount of detail about the costs of a week of war. No such luck. Until the "supplemental" costs of war are subjected to the same scrutiny as the regular Pentagon budget, there will continue to be hundreds of millions of dollars unaccounted for each and every week that the wars go on. And there will be all sorts of money for pet projects that have nothing to do with fighting current conflicts. So don't just think of that \$3.5 billion per week figure as a given. Think of it as \$3.5 billion ... and counting.

Doesn't that make you feel safer?

*William D. Hartung is director of the Arms and Security Initiative at the New America Foundation <http://www.newamerica.net>. He is author of *And Weapons for All* (Harper Collins, 1994) and *How Much Are You Making on the War, Daddy? A Quick and Dirty Guide to War Profiteering in the Bush Administration* (Nation Books, 2004).*

Source: TomDispatch.com 3/4/2008 <http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/174902>

Iran: a dangerous turn

Robert Parry

Two seemingly disconnected events have created a suddenly dangerous turn regarding the future of US wars in the Middle East.

One was the abrupt resignation of the person who has been the biggest obstacle to a U.S. military strike against Iran, Admiral William Fallon, the chief of Central Command which oversees U.S. military operations in the volatile region.

The second is the ugly direction that the Democratic presidential competition has taken, with Hillary Clinton's campaign intensifying its harsh rhetoric against Barack Obama, reducing the likelihood that he can win the presidency—and thus raising the odds that the next president will be either John McCain or Sen. Clinton, both hawks on Iran.

Throughout the campaign, Clinton has mocked Obama as inexperienced for his desire to engage in presidential-level diplomacy with Iran and other adversarial states. And she recently judged him as unqualified to serve as Commander in Chief, while declaring that both she and Sen. McCain have crossed that "threshold."

The cumulative effect of Clinton's attacks on Obama's qualifications—combined with her campaign's efforts to turn many white voters against him as the "black candidate"—has buoyed Republican hopes for November.

By simultaneously marginalizing and dirtying up Obama, the Clinton campaign also has tamped down the excitement of many Democrats, especially the young, for a candidate that they see as offering a refreshing message of hope and change.

Replacing Obama's message of reform and reconciliation is a Clinton message of resentment and victimization, as voiced by former Rep. Geraldine Ferraro who claimed that Clinton confronts "sexist media" bias as a woman while Obama gets an easy ride because he's black.

"If Obama was a white man, he would not be in this position," Ferraro, the former Democratic vice presidential candidate, told *The Daily Breeze* of California. "And if he was a woman (of any

color) he would not be in this position. He happens to be very lucky to be who he is."

The idea that a black man in America, who was raised by a single mother and who bears an exotic foreign-sounding name, would be deemed "very lucky" struck many Americans as a bizarre choice of words. But it fits with a key sub rosa theme of the Clinton campaign, that an unqualified black man was cutting line in front of a better qualified white woman.

Clinton gingerly distanced herself from Ferraro's comments and Ferraro resigned from Clinton's finance committee. But even political analysts who are fond of Clinton found the larger picture of her campaign's strategic demeaning of Obama offensive.

MSNBC's Keith Olbermann said he decided reluctantly that he must speak out against the Clinton campaign's behavior.

"As it has reached its apex in their tone-deaf, arrogant and insensitive reaction to the remarks of Geraldine Ferraro, your own advisers are slowly killing your chances to become president," Olbermann said in a "Special Comment" on March 12: "Senator, their words, and your own, are now slowly killing the chances for any Democrat to become president.... You are now campaigning as if Barack Obama were the Democrat and you were the Republican. As Shakespeare wrote, Senator, that way madness lies."

Into the abyss

If followed to its logical—yet crazed—conclusion, the madness also might be leading the United States into the ever deepening abyss of Middle East wars.

After all, both McCain and Clinton were staunch supporters of the Iraq War, now nearing its fifth anniversary with no end in sight.

McCain remains an Iraq War advocate, even he says if the U.S. occupation must last a century or more. Clinton only reversed herself on the war as she prepared to run for the Democratic nomination, realigning herself with the anti-war views of most Democrats, but she refused to admit that her 2002 war-authorization vote was a mistake.

Both McCain and Clinton also favor a hard line toward Iran.

During a South Carolina campaign stop in April 2007, as the Bush administration was pounding the war drums with Iran, McCain veered off into a musical rendition, changing the lyrics of an old Beach Boys song to "Bomb, bomb, bomb, bomb, bomb Iran."

In September 2007, Clinton supported a Senate resolution co-sponsored by neoconservative Sen. Joe Lieberman that sought to have Iran's Revolutionary Guard designated a "global terrorist organization," a move that Sen. James Webb, D-Virginia, warned could be tantamount to a declaration of war.

A month later, however, President George W. Bush opted for a less extreme position than the one Sen. Clinton favored. He designated only the Quds Force, a special operations branch of the Revolutionary Guard, as a "global terrorist" group.

Now, however, the abrupt resignation of Admiral Fallon,

who had publicly challenged the saber-rattling toward Iran coming from the White House, removed one of the chief obstacles to the use of military force against Iran over its nuclear program.

Intelligence sources have told me that President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney were eyeing possible air strikes against Iranian targets in 2007 before they encountered Fallon's stiff opposition.

The White House hardliners also met resistance from the U.S. intelligence community, which released a National Intelligence Estimate reporting that Iran had shut down a key element of its nuclear weapons program.

Since Fallon's sudden resignation, intelligence sources have said they do not foresee an imminent U.S. assault on Iran, although one source said Fallon quit, in part, over a new White House demand for an updated attack plan.

More likely, the sources say, the issue of how to deal with Iran will pass to the next president. In that regard, McCain and Clinton promise more tough talk and belligerence, while Obama vows to speak directly with Iran's leaders over how to reduce tensions.

Yet, the combined events of the past several days—the sudden ouster of the chief military opponent of an expanded war in the Middle East and the apparent decline in the political fortunes of the most dovish candidate—suggest that the Bush-Cheney belligerent strategies may well outlast their terms of office.

Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s. His latest book, Neck Deep: The Disastrous Presidency of George W. Bush, was written with his sons Sam and Nat, and can be ordered at <http://www.neckdeepbook.com>.

Source: Consortium News 3/14/2008 <<http://www.consortiumnews.com/2008/031408.html>>

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Book recommendation

The War on Bugs

Will Allen

"*The War on Bugs* is must reading for organic consumers and every concerned citizen. Will Allen tells us the incredible story, in clear but rousing language, of how corporations, out-of-control scientists, and indentured government have carried out a literal 100 Year War against organic and sustainable agriculture and family farms, and provides inspiration for the organic food and farming revolution which is already underway." Ronnie Cummins, National Director, Organic Consumers Association

Will Allen is an organic farming visionary. A true activist, entrepreneur, and expert, he understands the complexities of farming first hand and the impact that commercialization has had.

In the early nineteenth century as the American population grew rapidly, demands on crop output increased. Seeing an opportunity to play upon fears from market demand, chemical companies declared war on the vile, profitsucking, output-wreaking,

arch-nemesis of the average American farmer—bugs. With precision, pesticide manufacturers delivered a "shock and awe" media campaign, that can only be paralleled to the current blitzkrieg from today's pharmaceutical companies. Bugs were the threat to the American dream—and there was a cure available to every farmer available in spray, granule, dust, or systemic form that could be applied to your crops.

Will Allen's *War on Bugs* reveals how advertisers, editors, scientists, large scale farmers, government agencies, and even Dr. Seuss, colluded to convince farmers to use deadly chemicals, hormones, and genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in an effort to pad their wallets and control the American farm enterprise.

Utilizing dozens of original advertisements and promotions to illustrate the story, Allen details how consumers and activists have struggled against toxic food. Echoing the warnings of seminal works on the topic like, *The*

Jungle by Upton Sinclair, *100,000 Guinea Pigs* by Arthur Kallet and F.J. Schlink, and *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson, *The War on Bugs* shouts that the time to stop poisoning our food, water, air, and ourselves is now.

About the Author

Will Allen grew up on a small farm in southern California. He received a PhD in Anthropology (focused on Peruvian tropical forest agriculture) and taught at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and the University of California, Santa Barbara, before being fired and sentenced to a year in jail for civil rights and antiwar activism. He returned to farming and farm labor fulltime in 1972 and has been farming organically ever since in Oregon, California, and Vermont, where he now co-manages Cedar Circle Farm <http://www.cedarcirclefarm.org/>. He is currently a co-chair of Farms Not Arms, is a policy advisory board member of the Organic Consumers Association, and serves on the board of Rural Vermont.



Oil price hits all-time record

It finally happened this week. The price of oil passed the all-time inflation-adjusted peak of \$103.76 that was set in April 1980—and is now three times what it was just four years ago.

What's going on? This is a record that virtually none of the world's oil experts predicted, particularly at a time when the world economy is slumping and the demand for gasoline is now dropping in the United States. Some of the blame may go to speculation and the decline of the dollar. But the roots of the problem run deeper.

World crude oil production has actually fallen from 73.8 million barrels per day in 2005 to 73.2 million barrels per day in the first ten months of 2007, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. This makes 2005 the peak year for world oil

production so far, though it is too early to know if this will turn out to be the all-time high.

In 2007, crude oil production declined in some of the world's largest oil-producing countries—including Indonesia, Mexico, Norway, Nigeria, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela—due to a combination of geological and political factors.

The fact that the world is having a hard time expanding oil supply fast enough to keep up with even modest demand growth is beginning to be accepted in some corners of the oil industry. The CEO of Royal Dutch Shell and the U.S. industry-dominated National Petroleum Council have both stated that supply constraints are likely to put continued pressure on world oil markets in the years ahead.

Although the dreaded phrase "peak oil" is still used mainly by oil industry mavericks like Matthew Simmons and T. Boone Pickens, their views—if not their language—do appear to be spreading to the mainstream. Last week, oil analysts at Deutsche Bank concluded that steep decline rates of some of the world's largest oil fields will limit future growth in oil production and could push oil prices to hit \$150 as early as 2010.

It's high time for governments around the world to wake up to the new oil era we have now entered. There are lots of ways to reduce dependence on oil, starting with more efficient cars. But it won't happen without political leadership.

Source: *Worldwatch Institute 3/6/07*, <http://www.worldwatch.org>

Teens "Address the Stress" at Mayor's Conference

Stockton teens are welcome to spend the day finding out how to lower their stress levels at the 2008 Mayor's Teen Conference Saturday, April 12 from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Podesto IMPACT Teen Center, 725 N. El Dorado (one block north of the Cesar Chavez Library).

Host Mayor Ed Chavez will be joined by several guests at this free event themed "Address the Stress." Tony Washington, Public Relations Manager at the Family Resource and Referral Center and Apollo Night producer, will motivate teens with a session called "Serving your community: being young, talented and a leader."

Workshop sessions focusing on academic, emotional and physical stress will be facilitated by guidance counselors, instructors from Delta College, Point Break and Peacekeepers, fitness experts and personal trainers. Teen participants will talk out the physical, academic and emotional stressors that they face and work with facilitators to identify some solutions that can help Stockton teens in everyday life. During lunch, teens can sign up for Apollo Night auditions and visit vendor booths from local colleges and technical schools.

The conference is free; lunch will be provided and the day ends with an optional dance from

4 to 7 p.m. Many teachers may give extra credit for conference attendance. Check at individual school sites. Registration forms are available at city community centers, library and local schools. Registration forms may also be downloaded at www.stocktongov.com/teens. Sign up in advance or register on-site.

For more information, or to request a registration form for the Mayor's Teen Conference, call 937-8285. This 8th annual Mayor's Teen Conference is being produced by the City of Stockton's Youth Education Action Team (YEAT) and Youth Advisory Commission.

Celebrate conservation at Pixie Woods in April

Children will learn how to practice environmental kindness at Pixie Woods Saturday, April 5 from 2 to 4 p.m. during "Our Earth: Create and Conserve"

Participants will plant flowers and create art projects from recycled materials—guitars from shoe boxes, pom poms made of newspaper, binoculars from

cardboard tubing and more. Special guest Sharene Gonzales, Stormwater Outreach Coordinator, will provide information about water conservation and children will also learn about the importance of respecting property and picking up litter.

Throughout the day, Pixie Woods visitors can enjoy a variety of play areas, including the musical Mossmoe the Dragon area, Frontier Town's wagons and peek-a-boo buildings and the soft lily pads in the Miner's Cove play area and more.

Spring hours at the children's playland are from 12 noon to 5 p.m. on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays. Admission is \$3.75 for ages 13 and up and \$3 for younger children. Rides on the Pixie Express train, Pixie Queen paddlewheel steamer and the vintage merry-go-round are \$1.75 each or three rides for \$4.25. Unlimited daily ride passes are \$6.50 per person. Families may also purchase a season pass for \$50.

School tours and birthday parties are available at Pixie Woods. For more information, contact the Parks and Recreation Department at 937-8220.

Labs don't have to report 'frankenfish' escapes

Canada's rules for genetically modified fish are so lax that labs don't have to report escapes into the wild, says an audit released today. That means bigger, more adaptable fish engineered in labs could put the natural variety at a disadvantage when they compete against each other for food and territory, the audit by Canada's environment commissioner has found. And because scientists don't have to disclose what they create in their labs, it says, it's not known what sort of so-called 'Frankenfish' might someday swim Canada's water systems. "The result of these weaknesses is that the extent of research under way in Canada and any accidental release of (genetically engineered) fish may not be fully

known," the audit says...

Research on genetically modified fish began in the early 1980s. Canada doesn't have its own commercial farms for genetically modified fish, but a U.S. company has had a Canadian subsidiary on Prince Edward Island since 1994. The company asked the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in 2006 to allow it to sell its fish as food. Canadian government officials say it's reasonable to expect a similar request to sell the fish in Canada, the audit says.

Source: Organic Consumers Association—6771 South Silver Hill Drive, Finland MN 55603 via The Canadian Press, 3/6/08, <http://www.thestar.com/News/Canada/article/310135>



MSM = truth? Check out the alternatives & decide for yourself

If you tap in to some of the alternative media, you will get a very different perspective on events. Especially now, when the mainstream media often acts as a cheerleader for whatever the administration does, it's necessary to go a little further to get your news. An internet connection is helpful.

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We're on the web too!

The Peace & Justice Network of San Joaquin County (pjnsjc) website has information, calendar, media links, and more. Under construction and growing. Share your ideas on how the website should evolve.

<http://www.pjnsjc.org>

Spitzer and \$200 billion bank bail-out linked

Greg Palast

While New York Governor Eliot Spitzer was paying an 'escort' \$4,300 in a hotel room in Washington, just down the road, George Bush's new Federal Reserve Board Chairman, Ben Bernanke, was secretly handing over \$200 billion in a tryst with mortgage bank industry speculators.

Both acts were wanton, wicked and lewd. But there's a big difference. The Governor was using his own checkbook. Bush's man Bernanke was using ours.

This week, Bernanke's Fed, for the first time in its history, loaned a selected coterie of banks one-fifth of a trillion dollars to guarantee these banks' mortgage-backed junk bonds. The deluge of public loot was an eye-popping windfall to the very banking predators who have brought two million families to the brink of foreclosure.

Up until Wednesday, there was one single, lonely politician who stood in the way of this creepy little assignation at the bankers' bordello: Eliot Spitzer.

Who are they kidding? Spitzer's lynching and the bankers' enriching are intimately tied. How? Follow the money.

Sub prime profits

The press has swallowed Wall Street's line that millions of US families are about to lose their homes because they bought homes they couldn't afford or took loans too big for their wallets. Ba-loney. That's blaming the victim.

Here's what happened. Since the Bush regime came to power, a new species of loan became the norm, the 'sub-prime' mortgage and its variants including loans with teeny "introductory" interest rates. From out of nowhere, a company called 'Countrywide' became America's top mortgage lender, accounting for one in five home loans, a large chunk of these 'sub-prime.'

Here's how it worked: The Grinning Family, with US average household income, gets a \$200,000 mortgage at 4% for two years. Their \$955 a month payment is 25% of their income. No problem. Their banker promises them a new mortgage, again at the cheap rate,

in two years. But in two years, the promise ain't worth a can of spam and the Grinnings are told to scam - because their house is now worth less than the mortgage. Now, the mortgage hits 9% or \$1,609 plus fees to recover the "discount" they had for two years. Suddenly, payments equal 42% to 50% of pre-tax income. Grinnings move into their Toyota.

Now, what kind of American is 'sub-prime.' Guess. No peeking. Here's a hint: 73% of high income Black and Hispanic borrowers were given sub-prime loans versus 17% of similar-income Whites. Dark-skinned borrowers aren't stupid—they had no choice. They were 'steered' as it's called in the mortgage sharking business.

'Steering,' sub-prime loans with usurious kickers, fake inducements to over-borrow, called 'fraudulent conveyance' or 'predatory lending' under US law, were almost completely forbidden in the olden days (Clinton Administration and earlier) by federal regulators and state laws as nothing more than fancy loan-sharking. But when the Bush regime took over, Countrywide and its banking brethren were told to party hearty—it was OK now to steer'm, fake'm, charge'm and take'm.

But there was this annoying party-pooper. The Attorney General of New York, Eliot Spitzer, who sued these guys to a fare-thee-well. Or tried to.

Instead of regulating the banks that had run amok, Bush's regulators went on the warpath against Spitzer and states attempting to stop predatory practices. Making an unprecedented use of the legal power of "federal pre-emption," Bush-bots ordered the states to not enforce their consumer protection laws.

Indeed, the feds actually filed a lawsuit to block Spitzer's investigation of ugly racial mortgage steering. Bush's banking buddies were especially steamed that Spitzer hammered bank practices across the nation using New York State laws.

Spitzer not only took on Countrywide, he took on



their predatory enablers in the investment banking community. Behind Countrywide was the Mother Shark, its funder and now owner, Bank of America. Others joined the sharkfest: Goldman Sachs, Merrill Lynch and Citigroup's Citibank made mortgage usury their major profit centers. They did this through a bit of financial legerdemain called "securitization."

What that means is that they took a bunch of junk mortgages, like the Grinnings, loans about to go down the toilet and repackaged them into "tranches" of bonds which were stamped "AAA" - top grade - by bond rating agencies. These were then sold as sparkling safe investments to US school district pension funds and town governments in Finland (really).

When the housing bubble burst, investors were left with the garbage and the bankers were left with bonuses. Countrywide's top man, Angelo Mozilo, will 'earn' a \$77 million buy-out bonus this year on top of the \$656 million over half a billion dollars—he pulled in from 1998 through 2007.

But there were rumblings that the party would soon be over. Angry regulators, burned investors and the weight of millions of homes about to be boarded up were causing the sharks to sink. Countrywide's stock was down 50%, and Citigroup was off 38%, not pleasing to the Gulf sheiks who now control its biggest share blocks.

Then, in the first week of March, the unthinkable happened. Carlyle Capital went bankrupt. Who? That's Carlyle as in Carlyle Group. James Baker, Senior Counsel. Notable partners, former and past: George Bush, the Bin Laden family and more dictators, potentates, pirates and presidents

than you can count.

The Fed had to act. Bernanke opened the vault and dumped \$200 billion on the poor little suffering bankers. They got the public treasure—and got to keep the Grinning's house. There was no 'quid' of a foreclosure moratorium for the 'pro quo' of public bail-out. Not one family was saved—but not one banker was left behind.

Every mortgage sharking operation shot up in value. Mozilo's Countrywide stock rose 17% in one day. The Citi sheiks saw their company's stock rise \$10 billion in an afternoon. And that very same day the bail-out was decided, the man called, 'The Sheriff of Wall Street' was cuffed. Spitzer was silenced.

Do I believe the banks called Justice and said, "Take him down today!" Naw, that's not how the system works. But the big players knew that unless Spitzer was taken out, he would create enough ruckus to spoil the party. Headlines in the financial press—one was "Wall Street Declares War on Spitzer"—made clear to Bush's enforcers at Justice who their number one target should be. And it wasn't Bin Laden.

It was the night of February 13 when Spitzer made the bone-headed choice to order take-out in his Washington Hotel room. He had just finished signing these words for the Washington Post about predatory loans: "Not only did the Bush administration do nothing to protect consumers, it embarked on an aggressive and unprecedented campaign to prevent states from protecting their residents from the very problems to which he federal government was turning a blind eye."

Bush, said Spitzer right in the headline, was the "Predator Lenders' Partner in Crime." The

President, said Spitzer, was a fugitive from justice. And Spitzer was in Washington to launch a campaign to take on the Bush regime and the biggest financial powers on the planet.

Spitzer wrote, "When history tells the story of the subprime lending crisis and recounts its devastating effects on the lives of so many innocent homeowners the Bush administration will not be judged favorably." But now, the Administration can rest assured that this love story—of Bush and his bankers—will not be told by history at all—now that the Sheriff of Wall Street has fallen on his own gun.

A note on "Prosecutorial Indiscretion."

Not all crimes lead to federal bust or even public exposure. It's up to something called "prosecutorial discretion."

Funny thing, this 'discretion.' For example, Senator David Vitter, Republican of Louisiana, paid Washington DC prostitutes to put him diapers, yet the Senator was not exposed by the US prosecutors busting the pimp-ring that pampered him. Naming and shaming and ruining Spitzer—rarely done in these cases—was made at the 'discretion' of Bush's Justice Department. Or maybe we should say, 'indiscretion.'

Greg Palast, former investigator of financial fraud, is the author of the New York Times bestsellers *Armed Madhouse* and *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy*.



Gaza suffering ignored by candidates/Congress

Ralph Nader

The world's largest prison—Gaza prison with 1.5 million inmates, many of them starving, sick and penniless—is receiving more sympathy and protest by Israeli citizens, of widely impressive backgrounds, than is reported in the U.S. press.

In contrast, the humanitarian crisis brought about by Israeli government blockades that prevent food, medicine, fuel and other necessities from coming into this tiny enclave through international relief organizations is received with predictable silence or callousness by members of Congress, including John McCain, Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. The contrast invites more public attention and discussion.

Israel has militarily occupied Gaza for forty years. It pulled out its colonials in 2005 but maintained an iron grip on the area controlling all access, including its airspace and territorial waters. Its F-16s and helicopter gunships regularly shred more and more of the areas' public works and neighborhoods, and inflict collective punishment on civilians in violation of Article 55 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. As the International Red Cross declares, citing treaties establishing international humanitarian law, "Neither the civilian population as a whole nor individual civilians may be attacked."

According to The Nation magazine, the great Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem, reports that the primitive rockets from Gaza, have taken thirteen Israeli lives in the past four years, while Israeli forces have killed more than 1,000 Palestinians in the occupied territories in the past two years alone. Almost half of them were civilians, including some 200 children.

The Israeli government is barring most of the trucks from entering Gaza to feed the nearly one million Palestinians depending on international relief, from groups such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). The loss of life from crumbling health care facilities, disastrous electricity

cutoffs, gross malnutrition and contaminated drinking water from broken public water systems does not get totaled. These are the children and their civilian adult relatives who expire in a silent violence of suffering that 98 percent of Congress avoids mentioning while extending billions of taxpayer dollars to Israel annually. UNRWA says "we are seeing evidence of the stunting of children, their growth is slowing." Cancer patients are deprived of their chemotherapy, kidney patients are cut off from dialysis treatments and premature babies cannot receive blood-clotting medications.

The misery, mortality and morbidity worsens day by day. Here is how the commissioner-general of UNRWA sums it up, "Gaza is on the threshold of becoming the first territory to be intentionally reduced to a state of abject destitution, with the knowledge, acquiescence and—some would say -encouragement of the international community."

Amidst the swirl of hard-liners on both sides and in both Democratic and Republican parties, consider the latest poll (February 27, 2008) of Israelis in the highly respected newspaper Haaretz: "Sixty-four percent of Israelis say the government must hold direct talks with the Hamas government in Gaza toward a cease-fire and the release of captive soldier Gilad Shalit. Less than one-third (28 percent) still opposes such talks. An increasing number of public figures, including senior officers in the Israeli Defense Forces' reserves have expressed similar positions on talks with Hamas."

Hamas, which was created with the support of Israel and the U.S. government years ago to counter the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), has repeatedly offered cease-fire proposals. The Israeli prime minister rejected them, notwithstanding "a growing number of politicians and security offices who are calling for Israel to accept a cease-fire," according to Middle East specialist, professor Steve Niva.

There is a similar contrast



between the hardline Bush regime, the comparably hardline Democrats in Congress, and a recent survey by the American Jewish Committee (itself often hawkish on Israeli actions toward the Palestinians) of American Jewry.

If Democrats and Republicans were serious about peace in the Middle East, they would showcase the broad joint Israeli and Palestinian peace movements. These efforts now include the over 500 courageous Israeli and Palestinian families who have lost a loved one to the conflict and who have joined forces to form the Parents Circle—Bereaved Families Forum. Together, these families are expanding a non-violent initiative to push for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Even though some of the families have visited the United States, their efforts are almost unknown even to U.S. observers of that area's turmoil.


A new DVD documentary titled Encounter Point (see www.encounterpoint.com <<http://www.encounterpoint.com/>>) recounts the activities and passion of these Palestinian and Israeli families steeped in the peace philosophies of Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela.

Do you think members of Congress will give them a public hearing? A meeting? It would be worth asking your members of Congress to do so.

Ralph Nader is running for the White House as an independent candidate.

Source: Counterpunch 3/9/08, <http://www.counterpunch.org/>

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God Bless the Kennedys

There are thunderstorms in New England, yacht club birgies blowing in another year of excess, Wall Street acceding complicit in another apparent trend of margins The afternoon wears the tanned face of a trip to the shore. You wonder where it will all end but then you return to your crossword puzzle and summer novel even though you know they would all leave you in a minute penniless and alone in New York's dark-lit canyons at the same time you are acutely aware of the bowlines, sheets and genoas that are so much a part of the lexicon of strenuous leisure. You remember of course, as nearly everyone does, the touch football of the last century and the croquet and badminton that are still played on the well kept lawns of family gatherings. To the south, across the soft lit eastern haze, your honeymoon restaurant on Nantucket is still "The White Elephant" with its sand and beach grass atmosphere of seersucker white and pale blue grays in yellow Bermuda shorts swinging slowly in a hammock as the "Tiger Tunes" sing in an icy crystal cut glass harmony and suddenly you also know that you will never ever forget that article that referred to the way the President had been turned into a throw rug by Lee Harvey Oswald's sniper rifle.

—David Humphreys

The Last Great Killing

(His clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, and its wheels were burning fire.) Judgment of the Ancient One, Book of Daniel, 9

The last century watched newsreels of horrendous conflagrations and atrocities beyond description in safe American movie theaters. What brought this about and who has never read "Flanders Fields" or "Death of the Ball Turret Gunner"? Who will remember now as another approaching storm swirls bleached with skulls stacked in catacombs beside blood stained fields green with forgetfulness, nuclear winter long with dark eternity?

What sweet child will bring us flowers
 to fill with laughter warm afternoon hours?

—David Humphreys

My Father's Economics

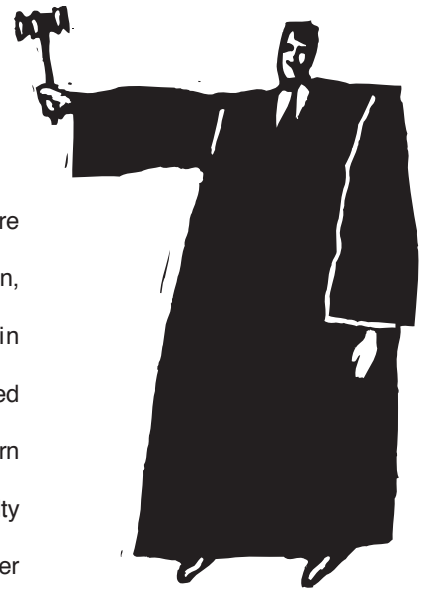
He said that the reason we were in Vietnam was primarily due to the cost of tin, so essential for electrical connections, in circuitry or anything really. This he said as I watched shot down Huey helicopters drop out of the Southern Hemisphere sky of Time magazine's casualty calculations. Do not assume that anything is ever final or decided. I will suggest however, that we are currently experiencing a collusion of exploitations. Who, properly invested of course, in their comfortably cushioned suites enveloped, would not benefit immensely from tremors of shuddering terror in a volatile dynamic marketplace?

—David Humphreys

Justice in the Village Square

He has just seen eight ads in the New York Times on pages 2 and 3, top left a pair of Chanel earrings, middle of the page a Cartier watch to a lower left Guccii of a woman's shoe. Next to this, same page, a Coach hand bag and a Clifford Michael ad for a midwinter sale on mink furs. On the opposite page Tiffany & Co. up top, Saks Fifth Avenue and Bloomingdales below. When he first left school he worked at a Conoco station for \$5 an hour and then later worked as a carpenter. Now, he watches the homeless pushing grocery carts around town, aluminum cans in black plastic garbage bags as they dream the quite real dreams of nothing in particular and he begins to build guillotines in the splash and gathering red pool of a distant collective memory and torch lit imagination.

—David Humphreys



Questions of War

Does the babe crying in the dark
 As his mother's breast grows cold
 And her eyes glaze in death
 Understand she died because
 Her people call God by the wrong name?

Can the grandmother
 Freezing in a make-shift tent
 Taking only weak tea
 That the children might eat
 Know she suffers for a political expedient?

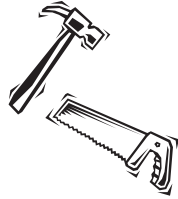
Will the twelve year old boy
 Kidnapped from an African street
 Forced to carry an ancient gun
 Know he dies for a line
 Carelessly drawn on a map?

War is personal to those who suffer
 Politicians may speak smooth words
 And proclaim noble causes
 But death and suffering in war are
 always sordid and obscene
 No matter how exalted the cause

Children playing as they walk to school
 Were never meant for target practice
 The blood flowing in the street
 Is always scarlet red
 No matter what the color of the flags
 That drape the coffins

Peace has no shape, no pattern,
 no color
 Yet it is more beautiful
 Than all the banners that fly
 Over the councils of war

—Gail Lee White



Sawznhammers

"Saw": a tool for analysis, taking things apart; a proverb, often trite
"Hammer": a tool for synthesis, putting things together; to pound away

Sacred Economics (What's That?)

John Morearty

Point one: In the beginning was divine Light, says Jewish mystical teaching, Kabbalah, but the light fragmented and splintered. Sparks are now among us, in every person and the whole world, and the human task is "tikkun," gathering the sparks together. Heal what is broken.

Buddhists say something similar. I once asked a Buddhist monk in a peace demonstration at McClellan Air Base how he could so calmly accept the base workers cursing at him. "My teacher taught us," he said, "to bow to the Buddha (the awakened one) in every being." Christians say, we are all children of a loving God, and Muslims say Allah made people different, so we could come to know and appreciate each other.

Point two: "Economics" comes from the Greek word for "household," and even Wall Street wizards are figuring out that the economy, the American household, is broken. Struggling working people in households (or homeless) across the land already knew that. Indeed, the whole earth household (poet Gary Snyder's phrase) is in deep trouble, as Rachel Carson, Al Gore and a thousand tree huggers and sober scientists have warned.

Question: So what exactly is wrong with the economy? and what could be done, to heal and gather the sparks?

Well, I've been reading economic wisdom literature (not an oxymoron). Tikkun magazine (from the Kabbalah tradition, part of the Network of Spiritual Progressives) gathered three brilliant pieces on its website, <http://www.tikkun.org/>, called "Current thinking: Understanding America's economic collapse." First of all, there's that vicious old American tradition, racism. In The Nation magazine, Jesse Jackson points to the racism of sub-prime mortgages: in 2005-

2006, over 50% of all loans made to African-Americans, and over 40% to Latinos, were sub-prime-compared to only 19% of white borrowers. Nation editor Katrina Vanden Heuvel says, "The New York Times has reported on two neighborhoods in the Detroit area-one 97 percent white with a median income of \$51,000, another 97 percent African-American with a median income of \$49,000. In 2006, 17 percent of the loans made in the white neighborhood were subprime, compared to 70 percent of the loans in the predominately African-American neighborhood." Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan said, "it is all because of the fact that the brokers and the lenders were receiving incentives, in large part because there was just this demand on Wall Street for these mortgage-backed securities."

Vanden Heuvel writes, "The unleashed Unbridled Greed that the nation has been experiencing since the Greed-Addicts stole power is having dire consequences. It can't be expected that all these scams and frauds were going to be sustainable. Like Street Corner dope sellers, these people are leading their victims into an abyss." The latest victims, says New York Times columnist Paul Krugman, are student loans. "The financial contagion is still spreading. What market is next?"

The longest and deepest article in Tikkun is by scholar Chalmers Johnson (who used to support the cold war): "The economic disaster of our Permanent War Economy-Why the US has really gone broke. Global confidence in the US economy has reached zero, as was proved by last month's stock market meltdown. But there is an enormous anomaly in the US economy above and beyond the subprime mortgage crisis, the housing bubble and the prospect of recession: 60 years of misallocation of resources, and borrowings, to establish and

maintain a military-industrial complex as the basis of the nation's economic life."

The chilling details deserve meditative reading.

Here's Professor Johnson's conclusion: "Today we are no longer the world's leading lending country. In fact we are now the world's biggest debtor country, and we are continuing to wield influence on the basis of military prowess alone. Some of the damage can never be rectified. There are, however, some steps that the US urgently needs to take. These include reversing Bush's 2001 and 2003 tax cuts for the wealthy, beginning to liquidate our global empire of over 800 military bases, cutting from the defense budget all projects that bear no relationship to national security and ceasing to use the defense budget as a jobs program. If we do these things we have a chance of squeaking by. If we don't, we face probable national insolvency and a long depression."

So the household is in deep trouble. What can be done, to heal and gather the sparks? What should be America's jobs program? Is there work to be done?

Oh, yes. Millions are hungry for real work, including our young who now face despair and prison. Another beacon of economic wisdom literature is Lester Brown's new book Plan B 3.0: Mobilizing to Save Civilization. Stop the onrushing disasters of global warming, cut carbon emissions by 80% by 2020, build wind and solar energy, create a new automotive fuel economy, reforest the earth, shift from red meat toward plant foods, lower income taxes and start taxing carbon emissions, and do all this with a sense of wartime emergency.... Brown says, "We know how to do all this. What we need now is to mobilize the political will."

But my favorite book lately is Greg Mortenson's bestseller,

Three Cups of Tea. Mortenson is the son of Minnesota Lutheran missionaries in Africa, a former football player, trauma nurse and mountaineer who has built more than fifty-eight schools for Muslims in the mountains of Pakistan and Afghanistan, mostly for girls. He says on his website,

"If you look at 9/11 hijackers, certainly they were educated, some even had university degrees, but nobody really checked their mothers, who were nearly all illiterate. The international community, the Pakistan and Afghan governments and the U.S. really failed to go to the next level and provide education to the children. My work has been enthusiastically supported by the Supreme Council of Ayatollahs in Iran, but conservative mullahs and imams are antagonistic towards girls going to schools because they



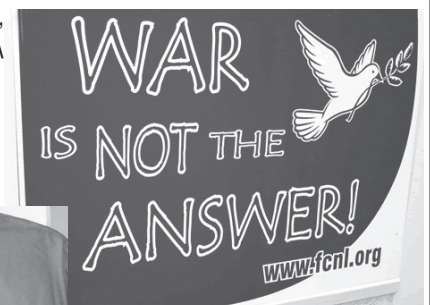
do know if the girls have an education, they pretty much have lost their power. If we put one percent of the money that we put in the war on terror into education, it could have a profound difference."

He tells of talking with a group of girls in Afghanistan, studying in an outdoor school with a single blackboard. American Cobra helicopters roared fifty feet overhead, and their propwash shattered the blackboard on rocks.

The crisis of our American and global household is in fact a profound opportunity, to build a better world. As Dennis Kucinich has been saying for years, Strength through Peace. Roll up our sleeves, invest in our common future; heal, gather the sparks of humanity together, and let our light shine.

Lawn signs, mugs, T-shirts

"War is NOT the answer" lawn signs come from the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL). We are requesting a \$5 donation to cover costs (sorry, we can't ship lawn signs). We also have elegant pins made of pewter in the shape of the peace symbol for \$10. Also, handsome PJN T-shirts in many colors, and more. Come by the P&J Center to see these items, plus buttons and bumperstickers galore, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton CA 95204. Call 467-4455.



Longest mile wildflower hike

Here is a rare chance for you to see this magnificent portion of the Mokelumne Coast to Crest Trail (MCCT) without hiking 17 miles round trip from the Campo Seco Staging Area. We will carpool/caravan from the Campo Seco Staging Area to Paloma and then two miles down Gwin Mine then turn onto a dirt road, go about one-half mile and park. Then we will take the "ankle express" (walk) from the Log Boom west to Patti's Point and perhaps beyond on one of the most beautiful and challenging segments of the MCCT on EBMUD watershed, the "Longest Mile."

Trailbuster/archeologist Philomene Smith will be sharing information on Chinese miners that once inhabited James Bar. Karen Orso and Les Gould from the California Native Plant Society will be sharing their knowledge of the wildflowers we see along the hike.

The California Conservation Corps, the Mokelumne Trailbusters and the California Youth Authority wards worked 10 years on this remote one-mile segment of the MCCT between Patti's Point and the Log Boom. The route between Spanish Gulch and Patti's Point is very rugged and steep because of property boundaries and topography. The elevation change in this half mile is 550 feet. Stone stairs, landings, and retaining walls have been

constructed to mitigate these steep grades.

Advance registration is required as parking at the Lower Log Boom is limited. Contact Steve Diers beginning March 4, 2008 at sdiers@ebmud.com (209) 772-8260 for information and registration. There is no charge for this event. No pets or alcoholic beverages.

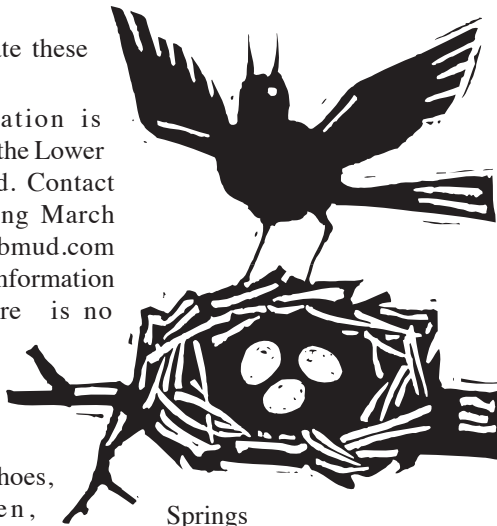
Bring a bag lunch, comfortable hiking shoes, backpack, canteen, sunscreen, insect repellent, binoculars and camera. Round trip is about 2-3 miles and much of the route is a difficult grade but we will stop and smell the roses.

Youth: Not recommended for youth under age 7½ years of age. Participants under the age of 18 must have written permission from a parent or guardian and those under 16 must be accompanied by an adult.

Ticks: This is a good time of the year to collect ticks. There are 48 species of ticks in California and 9 species that can carry disease. I recommend spraying one pair of pants with a repellent containing Permethrin (2 hours before use) and putting an identifying mark on the inside.

Directions to the Campo Seco Staging Area:

- From Highway 12 in Valley



Springs

- Go north 1 block at the four-way stop.
- Turn right on Daphne Street (Daphne Street becomes Paloma Road). Go 2.5 miles.
- Turn left on Campo Seco Road and go 0.7 miles.
- The Campo Seco Staging Area will be on the right.

Field Guides: If you choose to bring along a field guide, one of these beautifully illustrated guides are all you'll need to locate and identify hundreds of native plants that grow in California's Gold Country and both are available in Sutter Creek at Bubble Gum Book Store:

- Wildflower Walks and Roads of the Sierra Gold Country by Toni Fauver
- Peterson Field Guide to Pacific States Wildflowers by Nichaus/Ripper.

Bowl for Pets fundraiser

Animal Friends Connection Humane Society is hosting our sixth annual "Bowl for Pets" fundraiser at Westlane Bowl on Saturday, March 29th 2008. For fun, food, great prizes and free bowling, all you need is to collect \$50.00 or more worth of Pledges. Brochures for this pledge driven event are available now in Stockton (at West Lane Bowl, Petco, Bogianno's, Foot Solutions, Dante's Pizza, Carters Pet Mart); in Lodi (at Weigums Nursery or the Animal Friends Connection office), or by logging on to the AFCHS website at www.animalfriendsconnect.org. Bowling times are 1:00, 2:30 or 4:00 pm. You must be pre-registered to bowl. Bowl for Pets bowlers are people like you, who want to give back to the community, especially to pets. Come out to help the animals, have fun and enjoy listening to music. For more information call (209) 365-0535.

Stanford woodwind quintet comes to UOP

Friends of Chamber Music will close its current season April 6 with the Stanford Woodwind Quintet, one of America's most revered ensembles, at University of the Pacific in Stockton. Audience members are invited to join the five musicians at a celebratory reception in Buck Hall following the 2:30 p.m. performance in the Faye Spanos Concert Hall, Pacific Avenue at Dave Brubeck Way.

The quintet unites virtuoso wind musicians, each renowned as soloists and chamber collaborators. All are principals from the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and Opera San Jose as well as Stanford University faculty members. For their return engagement in Stockton, they will be heard in the Divertimento No. 1 in B flat by Franz Joseph Haydn, Quintet (Op. 43) by Carl Nielsen, a Scherzo by Eugene Bozza, 17th Century Hungarian Dances by Ferenc Farkas, Trois Pieces Breves by Jacques Ibert, and the Quartet for flute, oboe, clarinet and bassoon by Jean Francaix.

Single tickets at \$25 will be available at the door. Students of any age are admitted free, as are children ages five and above accompanied by an adult. For more information call 209-946-0540, 954-0421 or visit www.chambermusicfriends.org.

Elijah

Elijah, an oratorio, was written by Felix Mendelssohn in 1846 when he was 37 years old and is one of his final works. The Stockton Chorale, Master Chorale, Youth Chorale, Soloists and a 30 piece chamber orchestra will perform Elijah on April 17th and 20th. The soloists include Michael Sokol as Elijah; Jessica Sienna, soprano; Lisa Van Der Ploeg, alto and Daniel Ebbers, tenor.

This piece encapsulates several key points of Elijah's life, including the bringing of rain to quench the dry land of Israel through his prayers, the resurrection of youth back to life, and the ascension of Elijah to heaven on a chariot of fire. Perhaps the most legendary scene is Elijah's competition against the priests of Baal to see whose god will come when called upon: Jehovah or Baal.

This double performance will be held 7:30 pm on Thursday, April 17, 2008 at the Temple Israel, 5105 North El Dorado Avenue, Stockton and on Sunday April 20, 2008, 3:00 pm at Hutchins Street Square, 125 South Hutchins Street, Lodi. Single concert tickets are \$20 for adults, and \$10 for students age 17 yrs. and younger. Tickets may be purchased by phoning the Stockton Chorale office at (209) 951-6494, contacting Chorale members, or at the door.

Jailbird priest to speak at UOP

In brown robe and sandals, white-bearded Louie Vitale looks a bit like the founder of his order, St. Francis of Assisi. He speaks softly and smiles a lot; one almost expects songbirds on his shoulders, or a big tame wolf by his side.

In fact, Father Louie has been trying to tame a ferocious wolf-the U.S. military torture establishment. He just completed five months in federal prison for trying to deliver a letter against torture to the commander of Fort Huachuca in southern Arizona, where military

interrogators are trained and the official interrogation manual is compiled. He and Jesuit priest Jerry Zawada were stopped as they walked onto the base, arrested, tried and sentenced to five months in Imperial County jail.

He wrote from jail, "It is here in the 'Imperial' jail that I find the stabilities to awaken to Emmanuel, the presence and source of Love of all creation. I experience the freedom to dedicate myself totally to that 'Love,' that 'Reality' that is the reign of God in our midst and

to know that we are on the way to the New Creation. This is the way to Liberation."

Now in his mid-seventies, Father Louie is on the road, speaking to whoever will listen about the shame of our government's torture policy.

On Thursday, April 10 from noon to one, he will speak in George Wilson Hall, School of International Studies, at the University of Pacific. The room seats less than 50; arrive early.

March Calendar

Editor's note: if your event isn't listed, let us know. Send copy to: bgiudici@caltel.com by the 7th of the month.

Apr 7 - May 3

Lampwork Beads by Susan Winton. M-F 10-5, Sat 11-3 Tidewater Gallery, 223 E. Weber Ave, Stockton. 463-4033

Mar 29 - Apr 27

77th annual Robert T. McKee Student Art Contest and Exhibition. Haggin Museum, 1201 N Pershing Ave, Stockton. Hundreds of art works by SJ County students from K-12. Wed-Sun 1:30 - 5 pm. 1st and 3rd Thurs 1:30 - 9 pm. \$5 adult 18 & older, student/senior/youth age 10-17 \$2.50. Under 10 free. 940-6300 info@hagginmuseum.org

Apr 10 - 20

"Into the Woods" Sondheim musical presented by St Mary's High School Theatre. Empire Theatre, 1825 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Thurs 7 pm, Fri/Sat 8 pm, Sun 2 pm. \$15 adult, \$10 children/student/senior. 957-3340 x250.

Sun, Mar 23

Portugal the Man, Foxy Shazam, Wild Orchid Children and Hey Mana!, presented by Beat Happy! Music & UOP Music Management. Raymond Great Hall, UOP, 3601 Pacific Ave, Stockton. 6 pm. \$13. 981-2311

Mon, Mar 24

Delta-Sierra Club meeting, 7 pm, Central United Methodist Church, Fireside Room, 3700 Pacific Ave, Stockton, 7pm program with social time following, All Welcome.

The Times of Dave Brubeck, Chavez Central Library, 605 N El Dorado St, Stockton. 6 pm. Free. 937-7778.

Digital Lov/The Mystechs at the Blackwater Cafe, 912 N Yosemite St, Stockton. 6 pm. \$5. 981-2311

Tues, Mar 25

Family movie night, Chavez Central Library, 605 N El Dorado St, Stockton. 6 pm. Free. 937-7778.

Candlelight prayer vigil for peace, Annunciation Cathedral, Lincoln/Rose in Stockton. We pray to become people of peace, so wars will end. All are welcome. 7 PM sharp. Info: Ria deGroot, 462-3340.

Thur, Mar 27

Come celebrate Cesar Chavez with Richard Rios through music, art and discussion. Cesar Chavez Central Library, 605 N El Dorado St, Stockton. 6 pm. Free. 937-7778

San Joaquin Film Festival Preview, a community conference to announce films and planning. Bechtel Int'l Center, UOP, Stockton. 6-7 pm. Free with ticket. To reserve, call 209-298-0827. Info: www.sjccm.org.

The Higher, My Darling Mayday plus special guest, Blackwater Cafe, 912 N Yosemite St, Stockton. 6 pm. \$12. 981-2311.

Sat, Mar 29

Bowl for Pets, benefitting Animal Friends Connection. West Lane Bowl, 3900 N West Lane, Stockton. 1 - 5:30. \$50 in pledges. To register, call 365-0535.

Sun, Mar 30

Jazz @ Central. A Sunday Jazz brunch featuring a combo of jazz majors from UOP, to benefit low-income housing. Central United Methodist Church, 3700 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Noon - 2 pm. \$20 adult, \$15 under 12. 466-5046.

Tues, Apr 1

"Seeking Peace and Pursuing Justice: Mission, Education & Advocacy for Israel and Palestine" presented by Emeriti Professors Margaret Langer and Doug Smith. 12:00 - 12:50 pm, George Wilson Hall, UOP, Stockton

Wed, Apr 2

Writing All Over the Place: A Writers Reading. Published writers read their works. SJDC's Horton Art Gallery, 5151 Pacific Ave, Stockton. 1-2:30 pm, 5-6:30 pm. Free. 954-5434

Thu, Apr 3

Peace and Justice Network meeting. 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 6pm Board, 7 pm program - Earth Day 2008. All welcome.

Sat, Apr 5

Walk on the WILD Side Walk-a-Thon benefitting youth self image & fighting eating disorders through the Kristen Watt Foundation. UOP campus. 8 am. \$25 adult, \$15 student. 462-3889.

Community Band Festival featuring bands from around the county, Atherton Auditorium, SJDC, 5151 Pacific Ave, Stockton. 9 am - 2 pm. Free. 954-5110.

Stockton Concert Band Concert, Atherton Auditorium, SJDC, 5151 Pacific Ave, Stockton. 3 pm. \$8 adult, \$5 student/senior. 954-5110.

Sun, Apr 6

Stanford Woodwind Quintet Chamber Music concert, Faye Spanos Concert Hall, UOP, Stockton. 2:30 pm. \$25, students/children free. 946-0540

Thur, Apr 10

Fr. Louie Vitale, recently released from jail for protesting torture by U.S. military, speaks at George Wilson Hall, School of International Studies, UOP, noon till one PM. Info 946-2650.

Artist demonstration by Sharon Galligan, 7 - 9 pm. Stockton Art League, 1902 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Free. 466-6604 Gallery hours Tue-Fri 11-5, Sat 10-4.

Sat, Apr 12

Mayor's Teen Conference addressing youth stress and empowerment, the day ends with a dance. Podesto Impact Teen Center, 725 N El Dorado St, Stockton. 9 am - 6 pm. Free. 937-8285.

Artist of the month Egnalya Aznaran reception, 4 - 7 pm. Stockton Art League, 1902 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Free. 466-6604 Gallery hours Tue-Fri 11-5, Sat 10-4.

Youth Health Fair, sponsored by the San Joaquin AIDS Foundation for youth age 13 - 22. 4330 N Pershing Ave, Stockton. 9 am - 3 pm. Free. 476-8533

Child Abuse Prevention Council 30th Anniversary Carnival, live music, clowns and carnival games. University Park, California and Magnolia, Stockton. 11 am - 3 pm. Free. 644-5312.

Sun, Apr 13

Delta Dash Regatta boat races, Weber Point, downtown Stockton. 8 am - 3 pm. Free. www.deltablades.org. 518-5051.



Thur, Apr 17

Child Abuse Prevention Council 30th Anniversary Celebration, The River Mill, 1672 Bowman Rd, French Camp. 5 - 8 pm. Hors d'oeuvres & wine. \$35. 644-5313.

Mendelssohn's Elijah by the Stockton Chorale, Temple Israel, Stockton. 7:30 pm. Adult \$20, under 18 \$10. 951-6494.

Sat, Apr 19

Stockton Peace Fair, Downtown Stockton. Music, food, fun. Free.

Sun, Apr 20

20th annual Earth Day Festival, Victory Park, Stockton. Over 100 booths, great local music, veggie food, family bike ride (see p 1). A highlight of every year. 11 am - 5 pm. Free. 937-8389.

Mendelssohn's Elijah by the Stockton Chorale, Hutchins Street Square, Lodi. 3 pm. Adult \$20, under 18 \$10. 951-6494.

Mondays

Groovenators w/Shad Harris west coast blues, Chivita's Bar & Grill, 445 W Weber Ave, Stockton. 7 - 11 pm. \$3 cover.

Thursdays

Peace demonstrations continue at NEW TIME: 5 till 6:30 PM rain or shine, grassy edge of Delta campus along Pacific Avenue, north of light

and bus stop at Yokuts, across from Sherwood. Free mall parking. Signs provided, or bring your own. Info John Morearty, 464-3326.

Infinite Harmony & Reiki Healing Network. Come and receive a Reiki mini session to heal Body, Mind and Spirit. Spiritual Truth Center, 4545 Georgetown Pl, Stockton, 95207. 7:30-9 pm. \$10 donation. 983-9633

Fridays

Downtown farmers market, Hunter Square & E Main, Stockton. 9 am - 2 pm. 464-5246

First Sundays

Vegan potluck, Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 5:30 pm \$2 donation bringing food, \$9 without. Info: sjvegans@hotmail.com.

First Thursdays

Experimental & improv music, 8 pm Blackwater Cafe, 914 N Yosemite, Stockton. \$3. 943-6938.

Third Thursdays

Hispanics for Political Action - HPA meets 6 pm at 2080 E 4th St, Stockton. Info, call Louis Gonzales 464-9205

Fourth Saturdays

Greater Lodi Area Democrats (GLAD) meets 8:30 a.m., Dee Dee's Restaurant, 1170 S. Cherokee Ln, Lodi. All welcome, including recovering Republicans. 339-1599.

Talking It Through

Talking It Through is now two half-hour shows.

The Real Show hosted by Margee Ensign is on Monday at 6pm

Talking It Through is hosted by Adrian Nichols and Sammy Nunez every Monday evening at 6:30pm

SJTV: Stockton, Lodi and Manteca cable channel 26

EDUCATION • ENVIRONMENT • POLITICS • CULTURE

Sponsored by the Peace & Justice Network, InterFaith Council of San Joaquin County, Pacific Complementary Medicine Center

Check the TV page of Wednesday's Record for latest info.

Studio volunteers wanted! All ages...we'll train. Call 467-4455.

Looking for organic veggies?

Silveira Farms, a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) from Merced, will deliver weekly vegetables to Stockton if 20 people sign up.

Pay monthly or quarterly

Monthly: 1/2 share \$80; full share \$80

Quarterly: 1/2 share \$188; full share \$247

More info: Peig Fairbrook, peigfairbrook@inreach.com; Nancy Marsh, marwo99@yahoo.com

2008 Central Valley Youth Organizing Summit

"No Child Left Behind...Bars"

On April 25th, young people and youth organizers from throughout the Central Valley will gather at the 2008 Central Valley Youth Organizing Summit at San Joaquin Delta College, Stockton. We hope you can attend!

The California Fund for Youth Organizing (CFYO), in collaboration with the Central Valley Partnership: Escuelas Si Pintas No! Youth Organizing for Equal Justice and Education, invite you to this timely and important event.

The purpose of the summit is to help build a stronger multicultural youth movement in the Central Valley focusing on these goals:

- Discover the power of young people when working together
- Create a space for youth to strategize
- Explore new ways of looking at youth justice and education
- Teach and reflect on the skills and theories of organizing, use of action research, how to use media, artistic expression and popular education as tools for youth organizing
- Present tools and resources to help build networks and identify current ongoing efforts
- Link grassroots struggle to changing systems and policies

At the summit youth will participate in presentations, trainings/skill-building activities, roundtable discussions, and knowledge building on issues that they face throughout the area. That evening, there will be a culture jam that will highlight regional youth talent in the form of MC battles, Spoken Word, and Dance. We would like all to participate by sharing your skills...so come with it and get down! .

The 2008 Summit is created for youth, adult youth advocates and the youth organizers from your organization. Registration is open to 300 people on a first come first serve basis, so please send in your registration forms ASAP.

For more information or a registration form please contact James Walsh at (209) 981-0544 or jwprod1956@clearwire.net.

Social Justice Art Show



The Reynolds Gallery on the UOP campus will sponsor a Social Justice Art Show, opening 5 pm April 11, with the gallery open the following Saturday, April 12. Photos, paintings, sculpture and other media will be on view and for sale; poetry, live art and music are also possibilities. A main goal of the show is to allow for the expression of different interpretations and manifestations of social justice. Attend and support the creative images of what is and can be.

connections

Would you like Connections delivered to your home? It's FREE!

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Email _____

Mail to: Peace & Justice Network, Box 4123,
Stockton, CA 95204 (209) 467-4455

Peace & Justice Network does not sell or donate our mailing list. Connections is supported by donations and advertisers.



Peace Party 2008!

Saturday, April 19th from 11:30am-2pm
DeCarli Waterfront Square

Peace Party 2008 update

Zing Nafzinger

To celebrate Stockton's 2008 Year of Spirituality, Healing, and Peace, the Way of Compassion Community is sponsoring a Peace Party downtown in DeCarli Square on Saturday, April 19th, 11:30 am - 2 pm.

Bands will offer music and lyrics for peace. Poets will speak peace in rhythm and rhyme. Children will find a space for arts, activities, and play for peace. Adults will be invited to write their own

words to cultural leaders and thank those now living for peace. A Great Wall for Peace will hold everyone's individual voices for living a Culture of Peace.

Booths will offer information on living a Culture of Peace spiritually, holistically, and peacefully, with teeshirts and bumperstickers and artwork to mark the occasion. Massage therapists will be available to pamper bodies. Food will be available to keep you moving as you're grooving.

Make April 19-20 your Weekend for Peace: Cultural Peace in DeCarli Square on Saturday and Environmental Peace in Victory Park on Sunday.

If you are a band or soloist who would like to provide music for the Peace Party, contact Daniel Beseda ASAP at (209) 639-1798. Lyrical content for 20-minute max sets must be about peace, society, and the environment, with no vulgarity. Submit your CD or website for approval.