

connections

PRICELESS

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SAVE THE DATES

**JUNE 20
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Government-financed health insurance: public plan? single payer?

John Morearty

Premiums balloon, and 40 people die each week in 40 (18,000 to 22,000 a year nationwide) for lack of health insurance. Amid this misery, three very different proposals for "health care reform" are being discussed.

One is, trust the insurance companies to clean up their act, require everyone to buy their policies, and subsidize those who can't afford it. I call this the Taxpayer-to-CEO Pipeline.

The second is, create some kind of optional public insurance plan, financed through the government, to help (as Obama says) "keep the private sector honest." He has recently taken to the stump to support this Public Plan in Congress.

The third is Single Payer, an "Everybody In-Nobody Out" U.S. government-financed insurance plan, a sort of Medicare-for-All, which cuts the insurance companies (and their 31% rake-off) out of the loop. The California legislature approved such a plan (SB840) on the state level in each of the last two sessions, only to see it vetoed by the governor; it will return next year as SB810.

How can a thoughtful person decide?

To help, San Joaquin Grassroots Action (founded by Obama campaign volunteers) recently sponsored a Community Health



Care Forum at Delta College. Eighty people sat for three hours to hear and question two knowledgeable speakers.

Linda Leu, a Master of Public Health with Health Access and HCAN, www.HealthCareForAmericaNow.org, made the case for including a Public Plan Option:

* Government would watchdog private insurance companies so they can't deny coverage or raise rates based on health history, age or gender.

* There would be choice of doctors and hospitals.

* People would have to buy health insurance; they could keep their current private plan, or join a new public health insurance

plan which would be a guaranteed backup, always there to ensure quality, affordable health care coverage no matter what. Free choice, the American way.

Someone asked Leu whether her organization is funded by AARP, the American Association of Retired Persons, which is also a health insurance company. "I... don't know," she answered; "I do know that they are on our board."

In reply to Leu, Rose Roach, a twenty-year union organizer with the California School Employees Association (CSEA), passionately advocated Single Payer Health Care. "When I go into negotiations for our workers," she said, "I don't ask for some compromise have-to-settle-for-it bottom line,

I ask for what's right. And Single Payer is the right way-it is true Doctor-Patient health care, with no insurance company in the middle to say 'No, you're not covered for that.' In Single Payer you choose your HMO or your doctor, and the two of you decide what you need.

"Health insurance premiums are rising several times faster than inflation or workers' earnings," Roach said, "87% over the last five years. The money is there in the American health care system right now, between the premiums we're paying, Medicare, Medicaid and so on. The insurance companies skim about thirty percent. The number of physicians in the U.S. has about doubled since 1970; the number

(continued page 3)

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US economic diagnosis: terminal, if not treated soon

Bruce Giudici

Contrary to media reports, we are still in the midst of a financial Katrina, tearing at the economic foundations of our nation. The coming few months will determine the economic future of the United States and its place in the world. Should the United States fail to make long-term decisions for the good of all, rather than for the profit of a few, countries less committed to individual freedom will overtake our debt-ridden economy, taking the financial lead into the 21st century—leaving our ideals and dreams for a better world behind. Right now, health care is up.

At this moment in time, we are at a crossroads. There will be no second chances. For the past 30 years, we have put off important decisions. Choices in fixing our health care system, financial system, energy system, and defense system must now be made. These systems make up most of the United States economy, and by now, everyone can see that all are failing.

We also know that the choices have always been the same: public benefit versus private interest, non-profit versus capitalist, poor

versus rich. History acknowledges the unending fight for power and the resources on which it depends. Only now, there is a crisis in which the viability of each system is in question. All are unaffordably bloated beyond any historical measure; consequently, the Federal government has been forced to doctor the patient. In such a crisis, the window for public action has opened a crack. In what remains of our democracy, we the people have a voice. It's time to speak up.

In this issue, our local friends in the health care fight are making progress—and they need your help. Monied interests determined to squeeze the last dime from patients are actively working Congress to keep both the public insurance option and a single payer health care system off the agenda. This cannot stand. Clearly, the days of private health insurance are numbered—no where else on earth could a society afford such a system of inhumane inefficiency, incompetence and ineffectiveness. Only now, in the midst of a major recession, can we speak a listened truth to the weakened power of the medical industrial complex. Read, join and push to a more effective and humane health care future.

We can add “criminal” to Mr. Roeder’s resume as he now sits in jail awaiting his punishment.

Of course, Mr. Roeder claims to be a “Christian”, having now successfully demonstrated that, like many of his ilk, at least one of the Ten Commandments is missing from his repertoire. As an “anti-abortionist” Mr. Roeder is no doubt a self-proclaimed “expert on the sanctity of life,” having now reaffirmed his commitment to that lofty principle by punctuating his devotion to that cause with the use of a gun, which of course would lead to the title of “hypocrite.” And Mr. Roeder has failed to acknowledge that the women who came to Dr. Tiller’s clinic were there because they “chose” to be there, requesting a service they felt was in the best interests of their lives. For his blatant disregard

The financial system, in ICU but stable, has growing unemployment (from the housing-bubble recession and the bankruptcy of the car companies) feeding a second helping of lower lending, higher foreclosures and increased credit card debt defaults. While the banks have had their way with the government response thus far (ensuring short-term profitability for their shareholders at taxpayer expense), future bailouts must be approved by a Congress that listens to both money and voters. You're a voter—give your rep a call demanding answers from and accountability for those who profited while destroying our economy.

The energy system is terminal, yet symptoms are being kept under wraps until the oil companies can finish bleeding us dry. Again, the climate change agenda is being set by industry. The market-based cap-and-trade approach to “lowering” pollution, without imposing new regulations (which has been an administration option since a 2007 Supreme Court decision declaring carbon dioxide to be a pollutant under the Clean Air Act), amounts to a voluntary emissions reduction system with numbers included. With the

of women’s feelings, we can bestow the label of “misogynist” to the new “loose cannon” of the pro-life movement. Finally, after his inevitable conviction, Mr. Roeder will no doubt get a centerfold spread, adorned in his new orange jumpsuit, amongst the pages of Operation Rescue or one of their acolytes’ invigorating publications. For this notoriety coming from his future home behind bars, we can assign the tag “convict” to our latest “folk hero.” Scott Roeder: murderer, coward, terrorist, criminal, Christian, anti-abortionist, expert on the sanctity of life, hypocrite, misogynist, loose cannon, convict, folk hero. Have I forgotten anything? Oh yeah. He’s been a registered Republican since 2001.

Dave Waldon

Bruce Giudici,
editor



government initially giving away 85% of the permits, the price of polluting will not be enough to encourage investment in pollution reduction technologies—which is the point of the whole system. At this point in the crisis, we can no longer push the problem off for another 20 years. Fairly applied global regulation, laws, taxes and penalties starting with Obama's EPA will effect more positive change for our climate, and more quickly. There is not a moment to lose.

The defense system is obese, always hungry for more money, blood, bodies—you name it. Choosing to continue both Iraq and Afghan wars, to increase the use of contractors and to make no major structural changes in the armed services ensures a siphoning off of significant dollars into wasteful projects that benefit few but the war profiteers and the congresspeople they have purchased. Throwing away money on any wasteful project is shameful; in defense, it means something else got underfunded that got someone killed or injured. From Mr. Obama, we must demand better—for less.

When a hurricane destroys one's home, a family has the opportunity to re-build a stronger structure that can better withstand future disaster. As we re-build the systems on which our economy is based, we the people must insist that the old blueprints be discarded and that new plans be used. In all of these broken systems, money is flagrantly wasted, spastically flowing to the same cost-plus contractors who bought the last election. As to California, it's time we create a property tax system (changing Prop 13 restrictions) that pays for the education, health and security systems we demand. The opportunity for change at this point is so great—and we have the tools to re-build our future. Call your friends and governmental representatives to share your ideas. If you don't, we all will lose.

Connections

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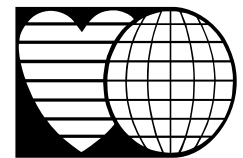
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Feedback

If the Shoe Fits ...

Scott Roeder, the man “allegedly” responsible for the death of Dr. George Tiller, is a man of many faces, a man wearing many hats. He is, to begin with, a “murderer,” having planned, then executed the shooting of an unarmed man in cold blood. For the successful completion of this heinous act, we can apply the label of “coward” to Mr. Roeder. He is also a “terrorist” who claims to have information about future attacks on legal reproductive service providers (based on U.S. soil) being conceived by like minded individuals. These attacks, if they emulate Mr. Roeder’s, may result in the deaths of law abiding Americans. Osama Bin Laden is no doubt a new fan of Mr. Roeder’s.

Big breakthroughs for single-payer health care

Kevin Zeese

Less than a month after 13 single-payer advocates were arrested protesting the exclusion of single payer, it is at the table in both Houses, making progress while the multi-payer pro-insurance reform is faltering. When we started our campaign one month ago to put single-payer national health insurance on the table, we were ignored. When we stood up and demanded that single payer be part of the debate, we were arrested. Today, single payer is breaking through, while the multi-payer pro-health insurance reform is faltering.

Single payer is making advances while the multi-payer pro-insurance industry reform bill is faltering.

There are deep divisions over how to pay for the reform with the very unpopular taxing of health benefits now being considered. This was something President Obama opposed during the 2008 campaign.

Paying for single payer is much easier as the waste, fraud, abuse and bureaucracy of the health insurance industry—totaling \$400 billion annually—would be applied to providing health care. Single payer pays for itself while multi-

Paying for single payer is much easier as the waste, fraud, abuse and bureaucracy of the health insurance industry--totaling \$400 billion annually--would go to providing health care.

payer will add to the deficit.

- Mandating that people buy insurance or face fines, another provision President Obama opposed during the campaign, is gaining popularity among pro-insurance company legislators. And, the mandates would provide subsidies to the poor so they can purchase insurance—of course, this is also a subsidy to the health insurance industry. The working class which cannot afford to purchase insurance will feel the burden of this requirement. Under single payer, people are provided health care without these costs, which is one reason it is the most popular reform among voters.

- The Public Insurance Option is opposed by Republicans and the insurance industry. While several schemes have been reported to make the public choice option ineffective, it is causing deep divisions. Single payer is the most popular health care reform among voters, doctors, nurses and economists because it provides all Americans with a choice of doctors and providers.

- The business community is questioning the pro-insurance reforms because they will include mandates on business requiring them to pay for health insurance. At this critical time, business

needs relief not burdens. Single payer will provide businesses with economic relief by reducing the costs of health care and leveling the playing field among all businesses and allowing them to compete internationally with other countries with single-payer systems.

In an effort to save the faltering pro-insurance reforms, President Obama announced his administration would be getting directly involved in health care negotiations with Congress. And, he announced town hall meetings throughout the US. President Obama will find that at all of these town hall meetings, single payer will be the most popular reform among Americans. He needs to listen to voters. When Obama was in the Illinois Senate he said he supported single payer, but that before Americans got it, they needed to win back the House, Senate and presidency. Well, all three are now in Democratic Party control. It is time for President Obama to advocate for the people and push for single payer and the multi-payer system as the insurance industry is the root cause of the problems in health care.

Kevin Zeese is a former Independent candidate for US



Senate in Maryland. He was one of 13 single-payer health care advocates who stood before a Senate panel chaired by Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus, a Montana Democrat, and demanded that a voice for single-payer health care be allowed to participate in the hearing. Baucus refused, and all 13 who stood demanding to be heard were arrested and removed from the hearing room by Capitol police.

Source: truthout.org Perspective 6/10/09

Government-financed health insurance *(continued from page 1)*

of health care administrators has multiplied twenty five times. Dr. David Himmelstein of Harvard Medical School says 'we do so much useless and even harmful medical care, and we waste so much on bureaucracy. Single Payer would save \$400 billion a year on paperwork alone. We could actually do everything that we know is useful for every American for what we're now spending.'

"Subsidizing people to buy private insurance makes no sense, and it doesn't work," Roach said. "It's been tried in a number of states over the last twenty years, and failed: Massachusetts, Oregon, Tennessee, Vermont, Minnesota, Maine. Insanity is defined as continuing to do the same thing, and expecting different results."

She pointed to deep flaws in Obama's proposed hybrid private-public plan combination. It

continues the blizzard of paperwork for doctors and hospitals, which drives up costs. But worse than that, it's about cherry-picking. "Insurance companies have a financial incentive to provide care to those who can pay the most and need the least, driving up prices and wasting clinical care and resources. Whoever can pay the most gets the care. But those who can't pay or need more care are forced to rely on public programs, or forgo desperately needed care."

Thus the poor and the sick would go into the Public Plan, which would flounder while private insurance companies continued to rack up profits. They would smile and say, "See, we told you so. Public insurance just doesn't work. Buy our plan, pay our premiums...."

The fundamental point, said

Roach, is that Single Payer is an investment model for health care.

* It assumes that healthcare is a public good (like fire or police protection, or schools) and invests in the needed services for the whole population. Everybody is in, nobody out; one big pool to spread the risk.

* It pays for people who are sick now.

* It pools money and pays for health care directly.

* It's an efficient allocation of health care dollars, getting rid of fragmentation and administrative waste. (The overhead in Medicare is below 5%.)

* It's not "socialized medicine"; doctors, hospitals and other providers remain private.

RESOURCES: On the California state level, Single Payer is SB810, and on the federal level H.R. 676.

The fundamental point is that Single Payer assumes that healthcare is a public good.

Both are supported by Single Payer San Joaquin, info cjbhcfasj@hotmail.com or 951-0499.

San Joaquin Grassroots Action can be reached at 476-9458.

Rose Roach can be reached at rroach@csea.com, or at CSEA, 472-2170.

Linda Leu can be reached at lleu@health-access.org.

Bill Moyers' brilliant hour-long program on Single Payer with Drs. David Himmelstein and Sidney Wolfe. Go to PBS.org, Bill Moyers Journal, May 22, 2009. Streaming video and written transcript available free.

On overcharging by doctors,

"The Cost Conundrum" by Atul Gawande, New Yorker magazine, June 1, 2009.

Physicians for a National Health Program, www.pnhp.org. Daily updates on progress.

Health Access, www.health-access.org, Daily updates on progress.

Other articles in this issue of Connections.

ACTION: Congressman Dennis Cardoza, 946-0361; Congressman Jerry McNerney, 476-8552; Senator Barbara Boxer, 202-224-3553 or 559-497-5109; Senator Dianne Feinstein, 202-224-3841 or 559-485-7430

On single payer health, Pelosi won't listen

Jerry L. Bailey

I wanted to believe that in our American democracy, citizens had the right and, yes, obligation to inform and petition their elected representatives regarding issues being deliberated by our government. Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi and the security guards at the San Francisco Federal Building proved that wrong on May 29, 2009.

A group of senior healthcare advocates were denied admission to the building because they posed a potential threat to the inhabitants of the building. The group of elderly men and women had received permission to gather on the plaza in front of the Van Ness Federal Building for one hour to peacefully chant, sing songs, and carry picket signs advocating for the healthcare bill HB676

and to enter the building in an orderly manner to deliver hand-written postcards. The youngest participant that I could determine was a youthful 63-year-old.

Through e-mail and telephone communications previous to the rally, organizers of the event and Pelosi's office had developed a working plan. The permit allowed six people at a time to enter the Federal Building to proceed to Congresswoman Pelosi's office on the fourteenth floor. This process was given a one-half hour time frame. Each participant in the rally was given directions for the rally, including information on entering the Federal Building.

The rally organizers named five "hall monitors" to assure that rally participants found the correct office and were least intrusive on the business of the building. The

process started in what the elderly rally participants thought was a rational and orderly process. The five hall monitors ascended to the fourteenth floor to wait for the groups of six petitioners. We waited over twenty minutes. No other participant came into the building. One of the hall monitors descended to the front door security station to inquire why no participants were entering the building.

The security guards reported that no other rally participant could enter the building until the five hall monitors left the building. Throughout the negotiations period to allow more petitioners access (approximately 30–40 minutes), about fifteen rally participants were allowed to enter the building. Perhaps another dozen had entered the building

Pelosi's actions appeared to be a blatant and perhaps illegal denial of access to the office of a publicly elected official.

through another door. Many rally participants had never before visited an office of a member of the U.S. Congress and were very disappointed that they were not allowed to do so. All of the elderly participants were frustrated that they as citizens of this democracy were perceived as threats to the personnel and building that represented their country. Some had served in the military. All had

worked in election campaigns to support political candidates.

The receptionist in Pelosi's office defended the process, "We can't override the security. They are Federal agents here to protect the safety of the building." Finally, an event organizer requested that the receptionist send someone down with a box to collect the postcards. The organizer explained that the actions taken against a group of peaceful people denied access to a public official's office did not bode well for the Congresswoman. Frustration with the process would be directed at Pelosi.

The elderly participants wanted to rally at this office because, in the past, Nancy Pelosi has stated that single payer health care is "off the table" in spite of the fact that over 65 congressmembers have endorsed the Conyers bill, HR676. A companion single payer bill has been introduced into the U.S. Senate, which indicates that there is support for the single payer concept for healthcare. The participants in this rally were petitioning their representative in Congress to consider a certain viewpoint on an issue before Congress.

While all those involved (Pelosi staff and two levels of security) in preventing access to a democratic process did so with pleasant smiles, to the elderly participants, it appeared that the friendly façade masked a coordinated and previously planned denial to constituents, passive activists, to have their voices heard in what is our supposed democracy. To the rally participants, it appeared to be a blatant and perhaps illegal denial of access to the office of a publicly elected official.

Jerry L. Bailey is a co-convener of the California Alliance for Retired Americans.

Source: Robert Reich's Blog 6/6/09,

Trigger will kill health reform

Robert Reich

I poked around Washington today, talking with friends on the Hill who confirm the worst: Big Pharma and Big Insurance are gaining ground in their campaign to kill the public option in the emerging health care bill. You know why, of course. They don't want a public option that would compete with private insurers and use its bargaining power to negotiate better rates with drug companies. They argue that would be unfair. Unfair? Unfair to give more people better health care at lower cost? To Pharma and Insurance, "unfair" is anything that undermines their profits.

So they're pulling out all the stops—pushing Democrats and a handful of so-called "moderate" Republicans who say they're in favor of a public option to support legislation that would include it in name only. One of their proposals is to break up the public option into small pieces under multiple regional third-party administrators that would have little or no bargaining leverage. A second is to give the public option to the states where Big Pharma and Big Insurance can easily buy off legislators and officials, as they've been doing for years.

A third is to bind the public plan to the same rules private insurers have already wangled, thereby making it impossible for the public plan to put competitive pressure on the insurers.

Max Baucus, Chair of Senate Finance (now exactly why does the Senate Finance Committee have so much say over health care?) hasn't shown his cards but staffers tell me he's more than happy to sign on to any one of these. But Baucus is waiting for more support from his colleagues, and none of the three proposals has emerged as the leading candidate for those who want to kill the public option without showing they're killing it. Meanwhile, Ted Kennedy and his staff are still pushing for a full public option, but with Kennedy ailing, he might not be able to round up the votes. (Kennedy's health committee released a draft of a bill today, which contains the full public option.)

Enter Olympia Snowe. Her move is important, not because she's Republican (the Senate needs only 51 votes to pass this) but because she's well-respected and considered non-partisan, and therefore offers some cover to Democrats who may need it. Last night Snowe hosted a private

meeting between members and staffers about a new proposal. Pharma and Insurance are floating, and apparently she's already gained the tentative support of several Democrats (including Ron Wyden and Thomas Carper). Under Snowe's proposal, the public option would kick in years from now, but it would be triggered only if insurance companies fail to bring down healthcare costs and expand coverage in the meantime.

What's the catch? First, these conditions are likely to be achieved by other pieces of the emerging legislation; for example, computerized records will bring down costs a tad, and a mandate requiring everyone to have coverage will automatically expand coverage. If it ever comes to it, Pharma and Insurance can argue that their mere participation fulfills their part of the bargain, so no public option will need to be triggered. Second, as Pharma and Insurance well know, "years from now" in legislative terms means never. There will never be a better time than now to enact a public option. If it's not included, in a few years the public's attention will be elsewhere.

Much the same dynamic is occurring in the House. Two

members who had originally supported single payer told me that Pharma and Insurance have launched the same strategy there, and many House members are looking to see what happens in the Senate. Snowe's "trigger" is already buzzing among members.

All this will be decided within days or weeks. And once those who want to kill the public option without their fingerprints on the murder weapon begin to agree on a proposal—Snowe's "trigger" or any other—the public option will be very hard to revive. The White House must now insist on a genuine public option. And you, dear reader, must insist as well.

This is it, folks. The concrete is being mixed and about to be poured. And after it's poured and hardens, universal health care will be with us for years to come in whatever form it now takes. Let your representative and senators know you want a public option without conditions or triggers—one that gives the public insurer bargaining leverage over drug companies, and pushes insurers to do what they've promised to do. Don't wait until the concrete hardens and we've lost this battle.

Single Payer Health

Pressing Wolk, Galgiani and McNerney on health care

Carol Bailey

In the morning, representative members from the rally at large, met in the conference rooms at the offices of Senator Lois Wolk, for a combined meeting with the office of Assemblymember Galgiani and in the afternoon at the office of Representative Jerry McNerney.

Dillon Delvo, Legislative Aide to Senator Wolk, and Darin Forrest Walsh, Sacramento Executive Assistant to Senator Wolk, listened and responded to our six representatives in the meeting. Due to current budget issues, SB 810 (Leno) is in Appropriations Suspense on the Senate side until January, 2010. We believe, however, that it is important to keep the issue of single payer front and foremost; anytime is the "right" time to make the moral decision for constituents and for Senator Wolk and Assemblymember Galgiani to co-author SB 810 (Leno). The reality is that little will be done between now and January 2010. We still need to urge the legislators to co-author SB 810 (Leno).

Both legislative staff appeared knowledgeable about SB 810 (Leno). They did take notes and assured us that the dialogue would provide a complete report for their respective legislators. They had few questions, and indicated an understanding of the issues presented by the constituent group.

We appreciate that Senator Wolk did vote for SB 840 (Kuehl) in the last legislative session, and that she voted "Yes" in both the Senate Health Committee and Senate Appropriations Committee this year. Mr. Delvo is relatively new to Senator Wolk's office. His openness and accommodation to our group was refreshing and a sign of continued collaboration and dialogue. Senator Wolk is new to this area. We are confident that she will be an advocate for those she represents.

Support from Assemblymember Galgiani is of greater concern.

She voted for SB 840 (Kuehl), only after first voting against it on the Assembly floor in the last legislative session. Following her "No" vote, a deluge of phone calls (thanks in large part to the California School Employees Association (CSEA)) convinced Assemblymember Galgiani changed her vote to "Aye".

We view this new legislative session as a new opportunity. We are optimistic that Assemblymember Galgiani recognizes the needs of her community. We believe that there will be continued dialogue regarding the crucial issue of access to health care and for the need of a single payer system for her constituents. We look forward to ongoing dialogue and involvement.

McNerney

Five miles north, however, was a different scenario. It was delightful to arrive at the Grand Canal Blvd. office of Representative Jerry McNerney, where Ms. Ofelia Trevino, Staff Assistant to Representative McNerney, greeted constituents and guests, had sign-in sheets available, accepted letters to Representative McNerney and circulated through the gathering. Sodas and cookies were available. After entertaining Ms. Trevino with some of our CARA Single Payer songs, the constituent committee of six met with Cherie Clausen, Legislative Aide from the Pleasanton Office and Nicole Alioto, District Director, also from the Pleasanton Office. Both legislative staff members expressed an interest in working with our group. Unfortunately, the concerns of our group were not resolved: There is apparent strong support for HR 676 (Conyers) by multiple groups of constituents, but Congressman McNerney is still apparently unwilling to become a single payer health care advocate for his constituency. We do not have a clear picture of his concerns—just that he is not yet ready to co-sponsor HR 676 (Conyers). It is our understanding that he is just going to wait until

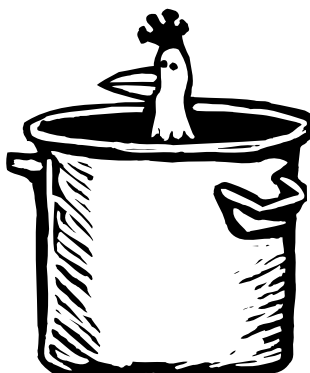
a bill is presented and then take action.

Much of our meeting was spent dealing with, to us, a baffling concern regarding the financing structure of HR 676 (Conyers)—the 10% tax imposed on the top 1% of wage earners. (All wage earners would pay a 4.75% tax on earnings. No premiums, co-pays, or deductibles. The top 1% would pay the additional tax.) Both Ms. Clausen and Ms. Alioto expressed concern that this additional tax would cause the top wage earners to leave the country, thus creating an undue burden on the lower and middle class wage earners.

We were assured that when a bill is presented to the House Floor, we will be able to consider its merits. Waiting for a bill is obviously too late in the process. That dialogue must begin now. Perhaps through ongoing dialogue we can help Congressperson McNerney gain the information and insight he needs to become an advocate and supporter for his constituents.

We left the meeting with the concept that Congressman McNerney knows what it is like to take on a cause that seems defeatable and to win that cause. His constituents also know what it is like to help achieve that win. Single payer must become that cause.

In short, single payer must prevail. The government already pays for 60% of all health care costs. We do not need any small steps or acquiescence to the health insurance industry to go that additional 40% to cover all Americans with universal, comprehensive, affordable access to health care.



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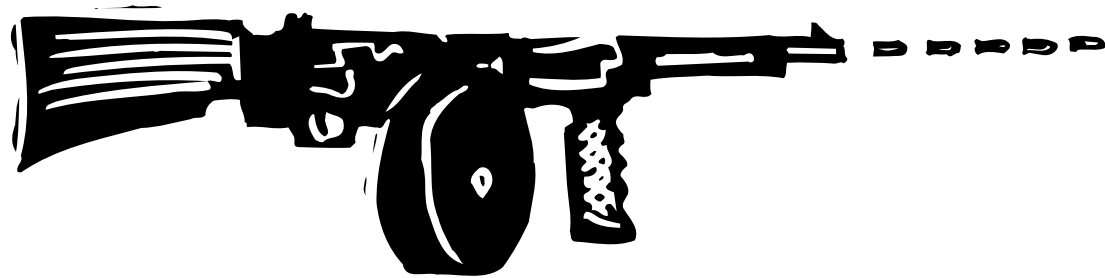
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Global weapons spending hits record levels



Richard Norton-Taylor

US accounts for more than half the total increase to \$1.4 trillion. China is now second biggest spender in world league table. Worldwide spending on weapons has reached record levels amounting to well over \$1tn last year, a leading research organisation reported today. Global military expenditure has risen by 45% over the past decade to \$1.46tn, according to the latest annual Yearbook on Armaments, Disarmament, and International Security published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (Sipri).

Though the US accounts for more than half the total increase, China and Russia nearly tripled their military expenditure over the decade, with China now second only to the US in the military expenditure league table. "China had both the largest absolute and the largest relative increase," says the Sipri report. The increase "has roughly paralleled its economic growth and is also linked to its major power aspirations," it adds. Other regional powers, including India, Brazil and Algeria, also substantially increased their spending on arms, the report says.

"The idea of the 'war on terror' has encouraged many countries to see their problems through a highly militarised lens, using this to justify high military spending," said Dr Sam Perlo-Freeman, head of Sipri's military expenditure project. "Meanwhile, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have cost \$903bn in additional military spending by the USA alone."

Sipri's yearbook also lists the top 100 arms producing companies, excluding Chinese ones, for which figures were unavailable. Boeing remained the top arms producer in 2007 — the most recent year for which reliable data is available — with arms sales worth \$30.5bn. All the top 20 companies are American or European. Their aggregate arms sales amounted to \$347bn in 2007, an increase of 5% in real terms over 2006.

Sipri estimates that in total there are about 8,400 operational nuclear warheads in the world, of which almost 2,000 are kept on high alert and capable of being launched in minutes. Counting spare warheads, those in storage and those due to be dismantled, there are 23,300 nuclear weapons in the arsenals of eight states — the US, Russia, China, the UK,

France, India, Pakistan and Israel, according to the yearbook.

The number of people forcibly displaced by conflict has also increased in recent years, with internally displaced persons (IDPs) reaching 26 million, more than twice the number of refugees, says the Sipri report. "For a large share of these people, no sustainable solution is in sight. Mass population displacement is often a result — and even a goal — of violence against civilians."

Top 10 military spenders in 2008 (\$bn)

1 USA	607
2 China	84.9
3 France	65.7
4 UK	65.3
5 Russia	58.6
6 Germany	46.8
7 Japan	46.3
8 Italy	40.6
9 Saudi Arabia	38.2
10 India	30.0

Source: *The Guardian UK* 6/8/09, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jun/08/record-world-weapons-spending/>

250K military contractors, more to come

Jeremy Scahill

A couple of years ago, Blackwater executive Joseph Schmitz seemed to see a silver lining for mercenary companies with the prospect of US forces being withdrawn or reduced in Iraq. "There is a scenario where we could as a government, the United States, could pull back the military footprint," Schmitz said. "And there would then be more of a need for private contractors to go in." When it comes to armed contractors, it seems that Schmitz was right.

According to new statistics released by the Pentagon, with Barack Obama as commander in chief, there has been a 23% increase in the number of "Private Security Contractors" working for the Department of Defense in Iraq in the second quarter of 2009 and a 29% increase in Afghanistan, which "correlates to the build up of forces" in the country. These numbers relate explicitly to DoD security contractors. Companies like Blackwater and its successor Triple Canopy work on State Department contracts and it is unclear if these contractors are included in the over-all statistics. This means, the number of individual "security" contractors could be quite higher, as could the scope of their expansion.

Overall, contractors (armed and unarmed) now make up approximately 50% of the "total force in Centcom AOR [Area of Responsibility]." This means there are a whopping 242,657 contractors working on these two U.S. wars. These statistics

come from two reports just released by Gary J. Motsek, the Assistant Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Program Support): "Contractor Support of U.S. Operations in USCENTCOM AOR, IRAQ, and Afghanistan and "Operational Contract Support, 'State of the Union.'"

"We expect similar dependence on contractors in future contingency operations," according to the contractor "State of the Union." It notes that the deployment size of both military personnel and DoD civilians

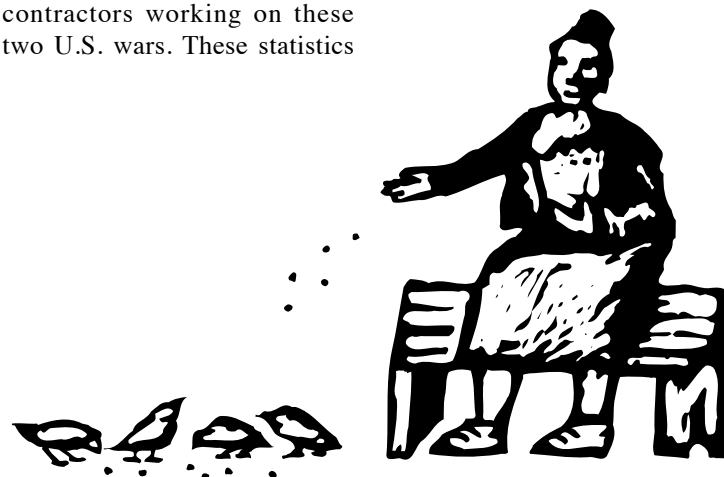
are "fixed by law," but points out that the number of contractors is "size unfixed," meaning there is virtually no limit (other than funds) to the number of contractors that can be deployed in the war zone.

At present there are 132,610 in Iraq and 68,197 in Afghanistan. The report notes that while the deployment of security contractors in Iraq is increasing, there was an 11% decrease in overall contractors in Iraq from the first quarter of 2009 due to the "ongoing efforts to reduce the contractor footprint in Iraq." Both Pentagon reports can be downloaded here <http://www.acq.osd.mil/log/PS/hot_topics.html>.

Jeremy Scahill is the author of Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army.

Source: *Rebel Reports* 6/1/09 <http://rebelreports.com>

Global military expenditure has risen by 45% over the past decade to \$1.46 TRILLION



Pakistan choices

Kathy Kelly

Shortly after arriving in Pakistan, we met a weaver and his extended family, numbering 76 in all, who had been forcibly displaced from their homes in Fathepur, a small village in the Swat Valley. Fighting between the Pakistani military and the Taliban had intensified. Terrified by aerial bombing and anxious to leave before a curfew would make flight impossible, the family packed all the belongings they could carry and fled on foot. It was a harrowing four-day journey over snow-covered hills. Leaving their village, they faced a Taliban checkpoint where a villager trying to leave had been assassinated that same morning. Fortunately, a Taliban guard let them pass. Walking many miles each day, with 45 children and 22 women, they supported one another as best they could. Men took turns carrying a frail grandmother on their shoulders. One woman gave birth to her baby, Hamza, on the road. When they arrived, exhausted, at a rest stop in the outskirts of Islamabad, they had no idea where to go next.

While there, the weaver struck up a conversation with a man whom he'd never met before. He told the man about the family's plight. Hearing that they were homeless, the man invited them to live with him and his family in a large building, which he is renovating. He offered to put the reconstruction on hold so that the family could move into the upper stories of his building.

The weaver was also fortunate to have known, for many years, a family that had sold his art work through a small shop in Islamabad. Women in this family have been working as volunteers to assist refugees who've come to Islamabad. They and their

companions have delivered one thousand "food kits" plus cots, mats and cooking supplies to desperately needy people. Two of the women, Fauzia and Ghazala, invited our small delegation to visit the weaver and his family in Islamabad's Bara Koh neighborhood.

When we arrived, older men and boys were outside, ready to unload a truck delivering mats and flour. The generous building owner invited members of our group into his home on the ground floor where plans were already being made to turn the top floor into a school for the children.

Several tots led me upstairs to meet their grandparents. The elderly couple sat cross-legged on cots. When we entered, the grandmother stood, embraced me and then softly wept for several minutes. Soon, about 20 men, women and children clustered around the cots. All listened attentively while one of the weaver's brothers, Abdullah Shah, spoke with pride about the school in Fathepur where he had been a headmaster. The village had three schools and his school was so successful that even Taliban families sent their children to study there. Now, the Taliban has destroyed all of the schools in Fathepur.

He and his brothers wonder what their future will be. How and when can they return to their village? And how will they start over? The crops are ruined, livestock have died and land mines have been laid. Most of the shops and businesses have been destroyed. Many homes are demolished.

The trauma endured by the refugees is overwhelming. Yet, numerous individuals and groups have swiftly extended hospitality and emergency aid. We visited a Sikh community in Hassan Abdal,

which has taken in hundreds of Sikhs, housing them inside a large and very famous shrine. Nearby, we stayed for several days in Tarbela where families in very simple dwellings have welcomed their relatives. The townspeople quietly took up a collection to support the refugee families. Some of the townspeople accompanied us to Ghazi, just up the road from Tarbela, where 155 people are staying in an abandoned hospital, relying entirely on the generosity of their new neighbors. Doctors from Lahore invited two of us to go with them to villages near Mardan where people from the Swat Valley are still arriving. The doctors were part of a project organized jointly through Rotary Lahore, Pakistan Medical Aid and Jahandan, which has worked with area councils to convert schools into refugee centers. The doctors take turns, several times a week, delivering relief shipments and helping supervise distribution.

Generosity in the face of such massive displacement and suffering is evident everywhere we go. But Pakistan needs help on a much larger scale. The US has pledged 100 million dollars toward relief efforts. Two other disclosures about money budgeted for Pakistan should be considered in light of the unbearable burdens borne by close to two million new refugees. First, is the decision to spend 800 million dollars to renovate and expand the US Embassy in Islamabad and to upgrade security at US consular offices elsewhere in the country. Secondly, the US will spend 400 million dollars in 2009 to teach counterinsurgency tactics to Pakistan's military. The 2010 defense spending budget requests an additional 700 million for counterinsurgency training in Pakistan.

Suppose the US were to declare that helping alleviate the misery of people is a top priority, one that trumps spending money on renovating and expanding the US Embassy.

A policy of peace

What would happen if US officials put plans to expand the US Embassy on hold? Suppose the US were to declare that helping alleviate the misery of people forcibly displaced by Taliban violence and the recent military offensive is a top priority, one that trumps spending money on renovating and expanding the US Embassy.

Suppose that the US were to redirect funds designated to train counterinsurgents and instead make these funds available to help alleviate impoverishment in Pakistan. No one seems to know how the Taliban are funded, but they clearly use large sums of money to build their ranks, giving each new recruit 25,000 rupees, a sum that exceeds what a teacher earns in one year. In villages where people don't have enough resources to feed their children, the Taliban would initially move in with plans to build schools and offer two meals a day, plus clean clothes, to the children. Later, they would exercise increasingly fierce control over villages. But their initial forays into villages were marked by offers to reduce the gaps between "haves and have-nots."

Enormous resources will be spent to "crush" the Taliban, and as always happens in warfare, the bloodshed will fuel acts of revenge and retaliation.

The relationship that began when a stranger took the risk of offering shelter to a weaver holds a lesson worth heeding.

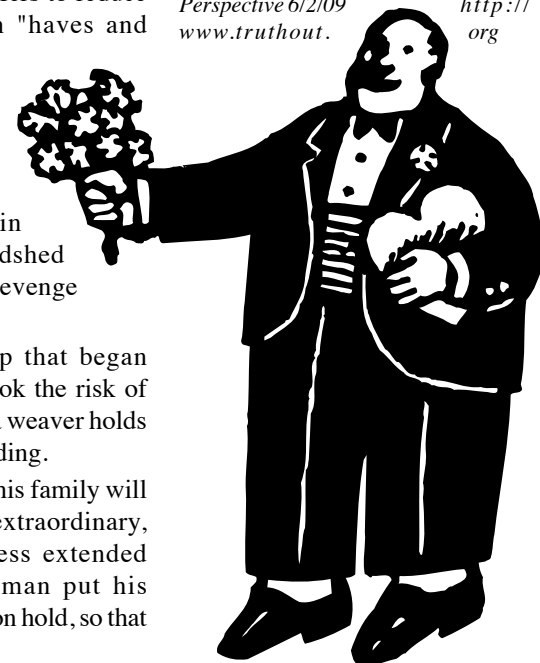
The weaver and his family will never forget the extraordinary, immediate kindness extended to them when a man put his renovation project on hold, so that

he could help them find shelter in his building.

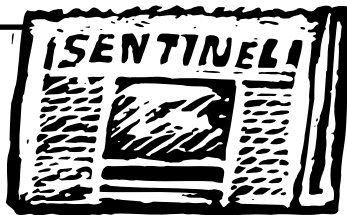
The US could help assure that every Pakistani family displaced by the fighting has enough to eat and the security of at least a temporary home. It would be an unusual but sensible Homeland Security initiative within Pakistan. And it would be a signpost pointing to greater security for the United States. The maxim that guides this idea is simple: to counter terror, build justice. Build justice predicated on the belief that each person has basic human rights, and that we have a collective responsibility to share resources so that those rights are met. This means eliminating the unjust and unfair gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots." It means weaving new relationships that don't rely on guns and bombs for security.

Kathy Kelly <kathy@vcnv.org> co-coordinates Voices for Creative Nonviolence <<http://www.vcnv.org>>. Along with Dan Pearson, Steve Kelly, Gene Stoltzfus and Razia Ahmed, she is visiting cities and villages in Pakistan.

Source: [truthout.org](http://www.truthout.org) Perspective 6/2/09 <http://www.truthout.org>



It means weaving new relationships that don't rely on guns and bombs for security.



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.

KPFA (94.1 FM) provides excellent coverage on many issues. You can listen on the internet at <http://www.kpfa.org>

Democracy Now! on KPFA, 94.1 FM and KVMR, 89.5 FM or on the web at: <http://www.democracynow.org>

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Mother Jones <http://www.motherjones.com/>

In These Times <http://inthesetimes.com/>

Tom Paine.common sense <http://www.tompaine.com/>

The Guardian <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/latest/>

Corporate Watch <http://www.corpwatch.org/home/PHH.jsp>

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>

The T is Not Silent

Stockton's transgender alliance has begun

Elena Kelly

On Friday, May 22, 2009, I had genital reassignment surgery, better known by the acronym GRS, in Trinidad, Colorado. Trinidad is a small town of about 10,000 people situated at the foot of the Rocky Mountains at the Colorado and New Mexico border. They are represented in the Colorado State Legislature by a Republican Senator and a Democratic Representative. Their average commute time is less than ten minutes, and the average worker earns just over \$10,000 per year. They voted 96% for Bush-Cheney in 2004. As a transsexual woman, I would typically steer clear of such places, fearing those who see gay bashing as their God-given right and responsibility.

But Trinidad is one of the most welcoming cities in the world to transgender people. In my ten day stay there I went into nearly every business at least once, some of them practically every day, and I was never put in fear at all, never heard snickers and snide remarks. I was treated with respect and dignity by everyone, young and old alike.

I was told about a transwoman named Michelle who was born in Trinidad and has lived her entire life there. She transitioned from Michael to Michelle well over 10 years ago, but she could never afford the surgery that would make her fully whole as the woman she knew herself to be. She is deeply troubled and has trouble keeping a job. Everyone in town looks after her. They buy her coffee, lunch, and work to help her overcome her addictions. No one, not even the children, have a cross thing to say about her.

I have heard similar stories from San Francisco and Berkeley, but never here in Stockton. Since coming out one year ago, I have heard from many transgender people. All of them are terrified to live their truth. They are afraid

of losing family and friends, of losing employment, of being harassed by the police, of losing their healthcare and of being left alone with nowhere to turn for support and help. Some of these fears will never happen. For example, California has a non-discrimination in employment law that prohibits employers from firing employees who transition at work.

Living for nearly twenty years in Stockton, and being an out transsexual woman for the last year has taught me something. The people of Stockton are mostly kind and generous people who truly want to make a difference in the world. Most are not prejudiced or bigoted even against those they may not fully understand. Most could not stand by while a transgender person is being attacked without intervening to stop the violence. But the transgender people of Stockton do not know that. There is a disconnect that I need to address.

I have founded a new non-profit organization based in Stockton, but serving all of San Joaquin County, called the Stockton Transgender Alliance. The mission of this group is to bring together citizens and professionals from all walks of life to provide a safe place for transgender and gender questioning youth and adults to meet and be able to talk about their feelings and fears openly. I envision a hotline where crisis calls can be handled 24/7, as well as regular support and social meetings facilitated by people who support authentic gender expression.

Would you help make Stockton a welcoming place for all people regardless of gender identity and expression? Almost twenty years ago I volunteered to help keep the Cuddler program at County Hospital going. We were able to grow it from three volunteers when



I started to over 25 volunteers in two years. I volunteered to work with four others to start a chapter of PFLAG in Stockton, and it continues to serve the families of gay and lesbian people to this day. You never know what results your active participation in such a group can lead to. But I can assure you the rewards in lives changed, and in the case of transgender people, the lives saved, are beyond priceless.

To volunteer to help get the Stockton Transgender Alliance off the ground and running, please email me, Elena Kelly, at stockton.transgender.alliance@comcast.net. I need media people, counselors, ministers, marketing, healthcare, legal, board members, and regular citizens who consider themselves allies of the transgender community. I promise to make your volunteer time very meaningful and productive. No meetings for meetings sake here. Bless you as you reach out to lend a hand to this neglected and fearful community.

Elena Kelly is a Chapter Leader for Marriage Equality USA, San Joaquin Chapter and the founder of the non-profit Stockton Transgender Alliance. She can be reached at elena.kelly@comcast.net.

Investigating the collapse: it was the banks

Dean Baker

Congress may establish a commission to investigate the causes of the economic crisis. This may be a useful exercise in publicly shaming those who are responsible for an enormous amount of unnecessary suffering. That would be a good thing. These people should be held accountable. Those in the financial sector who broke the law should go to jail, or at the least, lose their ill-gotten fortunes. The public officials whose incompetence and/or corruption allowed for this disaster should lose their jobs and never again be given a position of public trust.

These could be positive outcomes from an investigative commission. However, such a commission could have a negative role. It could be part of an ongoing effort to rewrite history and cover up for those who were responsible for this disaster.

The basic point is straightforward. This crisis was simple and easy to see for any competent economist. We had an \$8 trillion housing bubble. This bubble was driving the economy ever since the recession in 2001.

The bubble led to an enormous boom in construction, as builders made enormous profits selling new homes at bubble-inflated prices. It also led to a huge surge in consumption as homeowners spent a large portion of their bubble-generated housing equity.

Bubbles inevitably burst. (That's why they are called "bubbles.") When this bubble burst, it was inevitable that housing construction would collapse and consumption would plummet, throwing the economy into a steep recession. There were no ands, ifs or buts in this story. It was an absolute certainty and totally predictable. The only question was the exact timing.

How could economists have recognized the housing bubble? This also was very simple. We have data covering more than 100 years showing that from 1890 to 1995, nationwide house prices just tracked the overall rate of inflation. Suddenly in the mid-90s, coinciding with the stock bubble,

...let's just save the money
and wait until we get honest
representatives in Congress to
establish such a commission.

house prices began to substantially outpace the rate of inflation. By their peak in 2006, nationwide house prices had outpaced inflation by more than 70 percent.

There was nothing on either the demand or supply side that could explain this huge run-up in house prices. Incomes had grown well in the late 90s, but were actually stagnant in the current decade. Population growth and new household formation had slowed markedly from the pace decades earlier when the baby boomers were forming their own households for the first time.

On the supply side, we were building homes at a near record rate. Obviously, there were no serious supply constraints.

Finally, as a check, we could examine rents, since any major change in fundamentals should have a substantial impact on both the rental and ownership side of the market. Rents slightly outpaced inflation in the late 90s and just tracked inflation in this decade.

All of this should have led any serious economist to be yelling at the top of their lungs about the dangers of a housing bubble. Yet, almost none did. This was inexcusable; people should lose their jobs for this failure.

What about the bad loans, the overleverage and the unregulated derivatives? Yes, these all fed the bubble, and allowed it to grow much larger than otherwise would have been possible. These evils were also the basis for the enormous paychecks for people like Robert Rubin, Henry Paulson, Angelo Mozilo, and the rest.

The political influence of the Wall Street crew was undoubtedly a major factor in the failure to clamp down on the bubble. In other words, it was not just that the economists were incredibly incompetent, although many were. It is also that many were

quite willing to look away from a looming disaster that was further enriching the rich and powerful. Welcome to modern economics.

But it is important to keep the bubble front and center and the finance secondary for two reasons. First, the bubble is the story. If we somehow had an \$8 trillion housing bubble with no bad loans, overleveraged banks or bad derivatives, we would still be pretty much in the same place we are today: a collapsed housing sector, plunging consumption and a severe recession with mass unemployment and record foreclosure rates.

The second reason for keeping finance secondary is that, unlike the bubble, the specifics of finance are complicated. Most people cannot follow the details of collateralized debt obligations or credit default swaps. Focusing on this aspect of the crisis will lead the public to believe that the collapse really was hard to see coming and that people therefore cannot be held accountable. In short, shifting the focus to finance is a victory for the "who could have known?" gang.

So, it would be great if Congress outs the boys and girls at the Fed, the Treasury, the SEC, and the other regulatory institutions which allowed this bubble to grow on their watch as well as the Wall Streeters who profited off the nation's pain. But if this is an effort to cover up responsibility, then let's just save the money and wait until we get honest representatives in Congress to establish such a commission.

Dean Baker <<http://www.cepr.net/content/view/full/80/80/>> is the Co-director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research <<http://www.cepr.net/>>.

Source: *truthout* Perspective 6/1/09
<http://www.truthout.org>

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"Whether civilizations fail or succeed depends on whether rulers and the rich can insulate themselves from the consequences of their short-sighted decisions."

—Jared Diamond, author of *Collapse*

John Morearty's memoir *Walking to Omega: Tales of a Peacenik Carpenter* is available in the Stockton Public Library, online at www.johnmorearty.com, or from the author at 464-3326, john@morearty.com

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.



Goodbye, GM

Michael Moore

I write this on the morning of the end of the once-mighty General Motors. By high noon, the President of the United States will have made it official: General Motors, as we know it, has been totaled.

As I sit here in GM's birthplace, Flint, Michigan, I am surrounded by friends and family who are filled with anxiety about what will happen to them and to the town. Forty percent of the homes and businesses in the city have been abandoned. Imagine what it would be like if you lived in a city where almost every other house is empty. What would be your state of mind?

It is with sad irony that the company which invented "planned obsolescence"—the decision to build cars that would fall apart after a few years so that the customer would then have to buy a new one—has now made itself obsolete. It refused to build automobiles that the public wanted, cars that got great gas mileage, were as safe as they could be, and were exceedingly comfortable to drive. Oh—and that wouldn't start falling apart after two years. GM stubbornly fought environmental and safety regulations. Its executives arrogantly ignored the "inferior" Japanese and German cars, cars which would become the gold standard for automobile buyers. And it was hell-bent on punishing its unionized workforce, lopping off thousands of workers for no good reason other than to "improve" the short-term bottom line of the corporation. Beginning in the 1980s, when GM was posting record profits, it moved countless jobs to Mexico and elsewhere, thus destroying the lives of tens of thousands of hard-working Americans. The glaring stupidity of this policy was that, when they eliminated the income of so many middle class families, who did they think was going to be able to afford to buy their cars? History will record this blunder in the same way it now writes about the French building the Maginot Line or how the Romans cluelessly poisoned their own water system with lethal lead in its pipes.

So here we are at the deathbed of General Motors. The company's

body not yet cold, and I find myself filled with—dare I say it—joy. It is not the joy of revenge against a corporation that ruined my hometown and brought misery, divorce, alcoholism, homelessness, physical and mental debilitation, and drug addiction to the people I grew up with. Nor do I, obviously, claim any joy in knowing that 21,000 more GM workers will be told that they, too, are without a job.

But you and I and the rest of America now own a car company. I know, I know—who on earth wants to run a car company? Who among us wants \$50 billion of our tax dollars thrown down the rat hole of still trying to save GM? Let's be clear about this: The only way to save GM is to kill GM. Saving our precious industrial infrastructure, though, is another matter and must be a top priority. If we allow the shutting down and tearing down of our auto plants, we will sorely wish we still had them when we realize that those factories could have built the alternative energy systems we now desperately need. And when we realize that the best way to transport ourselves is on light rail and bullet trains and cleaner buses, how will we do this if we've allowed our industrial capacity and its skilled workforce to disappear?

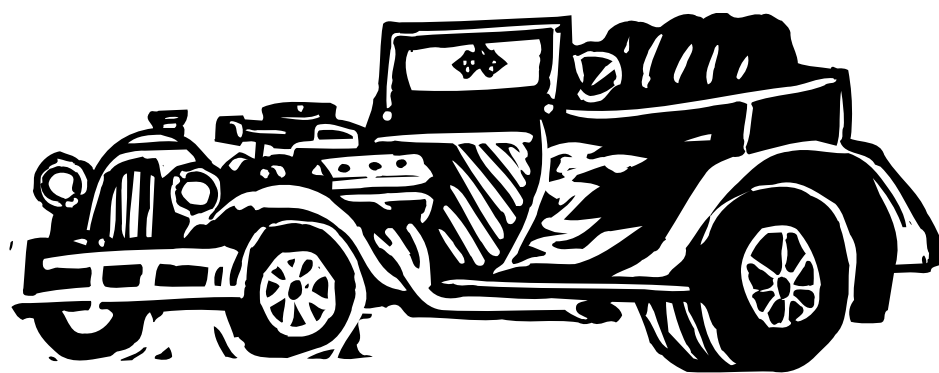
Thus, as GM is "reorganized" by the federal government and the bankruptcy court, here is the plan I am asking President Obama to implement for the good of the workers, the GM communities, and the nation as a whole. Twenty years ago when I made "Roger & Me," I tried to warn people about what was ahead for General Motors. Had the power structure and the punditocracy listened, maybe much of this could have been avoided. Based on my track record, I request an honest and sincere consideration of the following suggestions:

1. Just as President Roosevelt did after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the President must tell the nation that we are at war and we must immediately convert our auto factories to factories that build mass transit vehicles and alternative energy devices. Within months in Flint in 1942, GM halted all car production and immediately

used the assembly lines to build planes, tanks and machine guns. The conversion took no time at all. Everyone pitched in. The fascists were defeated.

We are now in a different kind of war—a war that we have conducted against the ecosystem and that has been conducted by our very own corporate leaders. This current war has two fronts. One is headquartered in Detroit. The products built in the factories of GM, Ford and Chrysler are some of the greatest weapons of mass destruction responsible for global warming and the melting of our polar icecaps. The things we call "cars" may have been fun to drive, but they are like a million daggers into the heart of Mother Nature. To continue to build them would only lead to the ruin of our species and much of the planet.

The other front in this war is being waged by the oil companies against you and me. They are committed to fleecing us whenever they can, and they have been reckless stewards of the finite amount of oil that is located under the surface of the earth. They know they are sucking it bone dry. And like the lumber tycoons of the early 20th century who didn't give a damn about future generations as they tore down every forest they could get their hands on, these oil barons are not telling the public what they know to be true—that there are only a few more decades of useable oil on this planet. And as the end days of oil approach us, get ready for some very desperate people willing to kill and be killed just to get their hands on a gallon can of gasoline.



President Obama, now that he has taken control of GM, needs to convert the factories to new and needed uses immediately.

2. Don't put another \$30 billion into the coffers of GM to build cars. Instead, use that money to keep the current workforce—and most of those who have been laid off—employed so that they can build the new modes of 21st century transportation. Let them start the conversion work now.

3. Announce that we will have bullet trains criss-crossing this country in the next five years. Japan is celebrating the 45th anniversary of its first bullet train this year. Now they have dozens of them. Average speed: 165 mph. Average time a train is late: under 30 seconds. They have had these high speed trains for nearly five decades—and we don't even have one. The fact that the technology already exists for us to go from New York to L.A. in 17 hours by train, and that we haven't used it, is criminal. Let's hire the unemployed to build the new high speed lines all over the country. Chicago to Detroit in less than two hours. Miami to DC in under 7 hours. Denver to Dallas in five and a half. This can be done and done now.

4. Initiate a program to put light rail mass transit lines in all our large and medium-sized cities. Build those trains in the GM factories. And hire local people everywhere to install and run this system.

5. For people in rural areas not served by the train lines, have the GM plants produce energy

efficient clean buses.

6. For the time being, have some factories build hybrid or all-electric cars (and batteries). It will take a few years for people to get used to the new ways to transport ourselves, so if we're going to have automobiles, let's have kinder, gentler ones. We can be building these next month (do not believe anyone who tells you it will take years to retool the factories—that simply isn't true).

7. Transform some of the empty GM factories to facilities that build windmills, solar panels and other means of alternate forms of energy. We need tens of millions of solar panels right now. And there is an eager and skilled workforce who can build them.

8. Provide tax incentives for those who travel by hybrid car or bus or train. Also, credits for those who convert their home to alternative energy.

9. To help pay for this, impose a two-dollar tax on every gallon of gasoline. This will get people to switch to more energy saving cars or to use the new rail lines and rail cars the former autoworkers have built for them.

Well, that's a start. Please, please, please don't save GM so that a smaller version of it will simply do nothing more than build Chevys or Cadillacs. This is not a long-term solution. Don't throw bad money into a company whose tailpipe is malfunctioning, causing a strange odor to fill the car. 60% of GM is ours. I think we can do a better job.

Source: MichaelMoore.com 6/1/09
<http://www.michaelmoore.com>

**If we shut down our auto plants, we will
sorely wish we still had them...those
factories could have built the alternative
energy systems we now desperately need.**

Grand theft auto: on bankrupting GM

Greg Palast

Screw the autoworkers. They may be crying about General Motors' bankruptcy today. But dumping 40,000 of the last 60,000 union jobs into a mass grave won't spoil Jamie Dimon's day.

Dimon is the CEO of JP Morgan Chase bank. While GM workers are losing their retirement health benefits, their jobs, their life savings; while shareholders are getting zilch and many creditors getting hosed, a few privileged GM lenders—led by Morgan and Citibank—expect to get back 100% of their loans to GM, a stunning \$6 billion. The way these banks are getting their \$6 billion bonanza is stone cold illegal.

I smell a rat. Stevie the Rat, to be precise. Steven Rattner, Barack Obama's "Car Czar"—the man who essentially ordered GM into bankruptcy this morning. When a company goes bankrupt, everyone takes a hit: fair or not, workers lose some contract wages, stockholders get wiped out and creditors get fragments of what's left. That's the law. What workers don't lose are their pensions (including old-age health funds) already taken from their wages and held in their name.

But not this time. Stevie the Rat has a different plan for GM: grab the pension funds to pay off Morgan and Citi. Here's the scheme: Rattner is demanding the bankruptcy court simply wipe away the money GM owes workers for their retirement health insurance. Cash in the insurance fund would be replaced by GM stock. The percentage may be 17% of GM's stock—or 25%. Whatever, 17% or 25% is worth, well ... just try paying for your dialysis with 50 shares of bankrupt auto stock. Yet Citibank and Morgan, says Rattner, should get their whole enchilada—\$6 billion right now and in cash—from a company that can't pay for auto parts or worker eye exams.

Preventive detention for pensions

So what's wrong with seizing workers' pension fund money in a bankruptcy? The answer, Mr. Obama, Mr. Law Professor, is that it's illegal.

In 1974, after a series of scandalous take-downs of pension

and retirement funds during the Nixon era, Congress passed the Employee Retirement Income Security Act. ERISA says you can't seize workers' pension funds (whether monthly payments or health insurance) any more than you can seize their private bank accounts. And that's because they are the same thing: workers give up wages in return for retirement benefits.

The law is darn explicit that grabbing pension money is a no-no. Company executives must hold these retirement funds as "fiduciaries." Here's the law, Professor Obama, as described on the government's own web site under the heading, "Health Plans and Benefits."

"The primary responsibility of fiduciaries is to run the plan solely in the interest of participants and beneficiaries and for the exclusive purpose of providing benefits."

Every business in America that runs short of cash would love to dip into retirement kitties, but it's not their money any more than a banker can seize your account when the bank's a little short. A plan's assets are for the plan's members only, not for Mr. Dimon nor Mr. Rubin. Yet, in effect, the Obama Administration is demanding that money for an elderly auto worker's spleen should be siphoned off to feed the TARP babies. Workers go without lung transplants so Dimon and Rubin can pimp out their ride. This is another "Guantanamo" moment for the Obama Administration—channeling Nixon to endorse the preventive detention of retiree health insurance.

Filching GM's pension assets doesn't become legal because the cash due the fund is replaced with GM stock. Congress saw through that switch-a-roo by requiring that companies, as fiduciaries, must

"... act prudently and must diversify the plan's investments in order to minimize the risk of large losses."

By "diversify" for safety, the law does not mean put 100% of worker funds into a single busted company's stock. This is dangerous business: The Rattner plan opens the floodgate to every politically-connected or down-on-their-luck company seeking to drain health care retirement funds.

House of Rubin

Pensions are wiped away and two connected banks don't even get a haircut? How come Citi and Morgan aren't asked, like workers and other creditors, to take stock in GM? As Butch said to Sundance, who ARE these guys? You remember Morgan and Citi. These are the corporate Welfare Queens who've already sucked up over a third of a trillion dollars in aid from the US Treasury and Federal Reserve. Not coincidentally, Citi, the big winner, has paid over \$100 million to Robert Rubin, the former US Treasury Secretary. Rubin was Obama's point-man in winning banks' endorsement and campaign donations (by far, his largest source of his corporate funding). With GM's last dying dime about to fall into one pocket, and the Obama Treasury in his other pocket, Morgan's Jamie Dimon is correct in saying that the last twelve months will prove to be the bank's "finest year ever."

Which leaves us to ask the question: is the forced bankruptcy of GM, the elimination of tens of thousands of jobs, just a collection action for favored financiers? And it's been a good year for Senor Rattner. While the Obama Administration made a big deal out of Rattner's youth spent working for the Steelworkers Union, they tried to sweep under the chassis that Rattner was one of the privileged, select group of investors in Cerberus Capital, the owners of Chrysler. "Owning" is a loose term. Cerberus "owned" Chrysler the way a cannibal "hosts" you for dinner. Cerberus paid nothing for Chrysler—indeed, they were paid billions by Germany's Daimler Corporation to haul it away. Cerberus kept the cash, then dumped Chrysler's bankrupt corpse on the US taxpayer.

While Stevie the Rat sold his interest in Cerberus when he became Car Czar, he never relinquished his post at the shop of vultures called Quadrangle Hedge Fund. Rattner's personal net worth stands at roughly half a billion dollars. This is Obama's working class hero. If you ran a business and played fast and loose with your workers' funds, you could land in prison. Stevie the Rat's plan is nothing less than Grand Theft Auto Pension. It doesn't make it any less of a crime if the President drives

the getaway car.

Economist and journalist Greg Palast, a former trade union contract negotiator, is author of the New York Times bestsellers "The Best Democracy Money Can Buy" and "Armed Madhouse." He is a GM bondholder and



card-carrying member of United Automobile Workers Local 1981.

Source: GregPalast.com 6/1/09 <http://www.gregpalast.com>

GM bailout makes most of bad situation

Dean Baker

In the current economic climate, sitting back and allowing GM to be liquidated was not a serious option. This would have wiped out a whole network of suppliers and ancillary businesses.

The federal government would have been forced to step in with large-scale aid, in this case, just to prevent mass destitution. The state and local governments would have lacked the resources just to maintain basic services like schools, hospitals and sanitation facilities. Of course, the plan is not perfect, and it can be argued that one or another of the parties got too much or too little.

The oft-told story that the United Auto Workers made out like bandits is nonsense. Workers are making substantial concessions, and many will be losing retiree health care benefits for which they already worked decades. The bondholders are great whiners, but none of them have said that they wanted the company liquidated. They know they would get less if the federal government had not intervened. They whine because they know the media are always sympathetic to investors, so their whines will be presented to the public as serious arguments.

It is remarkable how much anger has been generated over the government lending money to GM. This is an effort to save jobs and save the economy of the Midwest. In exchange, the government is getting a substantial ownership stake in GM.

The GM investment is an important contrast to the \$12.9 billion that the government handed to Goldman Sachs through American International Group. That money was paid out to honor derivative contracts that Goldman had with AIG. The government had no legal or moral obligation to honor these

contracts. Goldman had used bad business judgment in signing contracts with a counterparty that was not able to make good on its commitments. In a market economy, companies are supposed to suffer the consequences of their bad judgment.

Instead, the government simply handed over the money that AIG was unable to pay. It got nothing in return for this—no stocks, no bonds; there is no pretense that this money will ever be paid back. And the only jobs we saved were probably the jobs of Goldman's lobbyists, who want to make sure that we don't regulate the derivatives that helped bring on this disaster.

Somehow, this gift to Goldman aroused nowhere near as much anger as the bailout of General Motors. This is especially ironic, since the proximate cause of the crisis at GM and Chrysler is the crisis brought on by the irresponsible behavior of the Wall Street banks.

The Big Three have made many mistakes over the years, and they have suffered as a result. However, the reason that GM and Chrysler were suddenly pushed into bankruptcy was the economic collapse that followed the crash of the housing bubble. All the major auto manufacturers have seen a huge falloff in demand. Even Toyota and Honda, the superstars of the world auto industry, have seen sales decline by more than 30 percent. The difference is that they were in a strong enough position to withstand this falloff, unlike GM and Chrysler.

Under the circumstances, it hardly seems unreasonable to offer a lifeline to keep GM and Chrysler afloat. Given recent events, Detroit offers us a much better future than Wall Street—or at least a more honest one.

Source: Politico 6/2/09 <http://www.politico.com>

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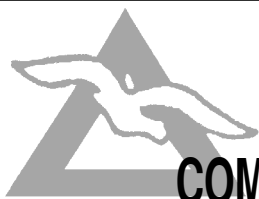
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Want better oversight of genetically engineered crops?

In the waning months of the Bush Administration, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) released a proposal to completely overhaul its regulation of genetically engineered crops, significantly weakening its oversight. The proposed rules would virtually ensure that contamination of organic and conventional crops will become even more frequent, and even excuses the Agency from taking any action to remedy such contamination. The rules would continue to allow the dangerous practice of producing drugs and industrial chemicals in food crops grown in the open environment, and in many cases even allow the biotechnology industry to decide whether their GE crops are regulated at all.

Over four years ago, USDA promised stricter oversight of genetically engineered crops;

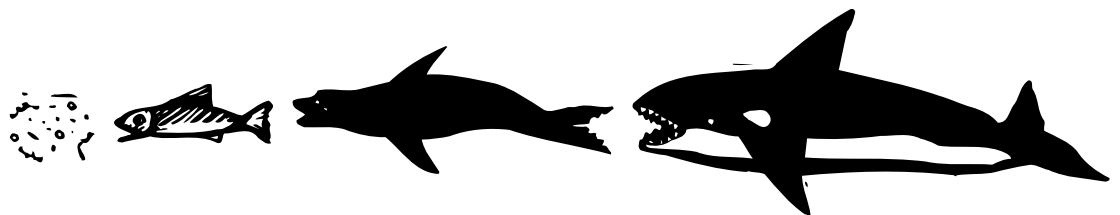
unfortunately, improvements considered early on have vanished and the regulations have instead become weaker. The proposed rule now has even more gaping holes than the regulations it is replacing, and creates a few new ones as well, resulting in more public exposure to untested and unlabeled genetically engineered foods. Instead of tightening controls to protect the public and the environment from contamination and harm, what USDA has offered further endangers your right to choose the foods you and your family eat and farmers' right to their chosen livelihoods.

To make matters worse, USDA published the rules before publishing the full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), as required by law, and in the absence of public review of the data needed to make regulatory

recommendations. Clearly, there is something wrong with this picture.

ACTION: We are calling on the Obama Administration to reject the irresponsible Bush "anything goes" biotech policy, and to put in place rules that will create real change in the regulation and oversight of GE crops. And we are requesting a moratorium on commercial planting of any new GE crops until such comprehensive regulations are in place. The comment period has been extended to June 29, 2009. Please send your comment to USDA today—the Agency is listening, let's demand better oversight of GE crops to protect citizens, farmers, wildlife, and the environment. Take action now at: <http://ga3.org/campaign/Aphis3>

Source: National Organic Coalition release 6/9/09, www.NationalOrganicCoalition.com



Tell Obama to ratify the Law of the Sea

The Senate could soon decide whether the United States should sign on to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, also known simply as the Law of the Sea treaty. The treaty will help expand protections for our planet's oceans, and becoming a party to the treaty would help the United States influence major upcoming international debates concerning ocean activities.

The treaty's environmental provisions cover all aspects of the marine environment, including fishing, pollution, offshore mining and oil and gas exploration; such activities can have major impacts and often require international management. For example, with rapidly accelerating summer melting of Arctic sea ice, new

proposals for shipping, oil and gas exploration and other harmful activities are multiplying. Ratifying the Law of the Sea treaty would give the United States a seat at the table in discussions surrounding the future of the Arctic and protection of its marine and coastal wildlife.

One hundred fifty-seven nations have already ratified the Law of the Sea, including every major industrialized nation other than the United States. These countries are making decisions that affect ocean health and key economic and national security interests; the United States should be a full participant in these decisions.

A few vocal groups who are fundamentally opposed to U.S.

involvement in international collaborations have used false arguments to pressure senators to reject the Law of the Sea, and have turned what should be an easy decision into a contentious one. President Obama can help counter and overcome this opposition by reiterating that the treaty is crucial to maintaining healthy oceans and protecting economic and security interests, and by advocating for swift Senate approval.

ACTION: Send a message urging President Obama to declare his support for swift Senate action to ratify the Law of the Sea treaty.

Source: NRDC Activist Alert 6/8/09, Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), 40 West 20th St, NY, NY 10011 <http://www.nrdc.org>

Obama's Guantánamo appeasement plan

Marjorie Cohn

Two days after his inauguration, President Obama pledged to close Guantánamo within one year. The Republicans, led by Senators John McCain, Mitch McConnell and Pat Roberts, immediately launched a concerted campaign to assail the new president. They claimed his plan would release dangerous terrorists into US communities and allow released terrorists to resume fighting against our troops. Fox News agitator Sean Hannity and Bush team players like torture-memo lawyer John Yoo filled the airwaves and print media with paranoia.

The Republican attacks were bogus. A 2008 McClatchy investigation revealed that the overwhelming majority of Guantanamo detainees taken into custody in 2001 and 2002 in Afghanistan and Pakistan were innocent of wrongdoing or bit players with little intelligence value. A substantial number of those prisoners were literally sold to US officials in exchange for bounty payments offered by the US military. A Seton Hall Law Center report has debunked Pentagon claims that many released detainees have "returned to the fight." And no one has ever escaped from one of the US super-max prisons, which house hundreds of people convicted of terrorist offenses.

The Republicans have continued to oppose the effort to close Guantánamo. In an attempt to

burnish his image and forestall war crimes charges, Dick Cheney now leads the charge, making ubiquitous attacks on Mr. Obama. Keeping Guantánamo open is "important," Cheney declares. He claims that closing Guantánamo would endanger Americans, and warns that if detainees are brought to the United States, they would "acquire all kinds of legal rights." Mr. Obama is also taking heat from the intelligence community. Those officials, like Cheney, seek to justify what they did under the Bush regime.

And now even the Democrats are piling on the bandwagon. Reacting defensively to the Republican attack campaign, the Senate voted 90 to 6 to deny Mr. Obama funds to close Guantánamo until he comes up with a "plan" for relocating the detainees there. "We spent hundreds of millions of dollars building an appropriate facility with all security precautions on Guantánamo to try these cases," said Democratic Sen. Jim Webb on ABC News. "I do not believe they should be tried in the United States," he added.

The pressure has caused Mr. Obama to buckle. Timed to coincide with a Cheney speech to the right-wing American Enterprise Institute, Mr. Obama announced an appeasement plan to deal with the 240 remaining Guantánamo detainees. Parts of his plan would threaten the very foundation of our legal system—that no one should be held in custody if he has committed no crime. These

are Mr. Obama's five categories for disposition of detainees once Guantánamo is closed:

1) Those who violated the laws of war will be tried in military commissions.

Mr. Obama's plan would backtrack on an early promise to shut down the military commissions. Mr. Obama now claims that such commissions can be fair because they will no longer permit the use of evidence obtained by cruel, inhuman or degrading interrogation methods. He fails to mention, however, that the Pentagon is using "clean teams" to re-interrogate people who were previously interrogated using the prohibited methods. When they once again give the same information, it miraculously becomes untainted. Mr. Obama also fails to acknowledge that those tried in the military commissions are forbidden from seeing all the evidence against them, a violation of the bedrock principle that the accused must have an opportunity to confront his accusers. Even the US Supreme Court has disagreed with this part of Mr. Obama's proposed plan of action. In *Ex parte Milligan*, the Supreme Court declared military trials of civilians to be unconstitutional if civil courts are available. Prisoners falling in this category should be tried in the courts of the United States, because the laws of war are actually part of US law. The Supremacy Clause of the Constitution says that treaties shall be the supreme law of the land. The Geneva Conventions and the Hague Convention, which the United States has ratified, contain the laws of war.

2) Those who have been ordered released from Guantánamo will remain in custody.

Seventeen Uighurs from China were ordered released after they were found not to be enemy combatants. But they continue to languish in custody because they would be imperiled if returned to China, which considers them enemies of the state. Suggestions that they be brought to the United States have been met with paranoid NIMBY (not in my backyard!)

protestations. So, under Mr. Obama's plan, they will remain incarcerated in a state of legal limbo. (Since this writing, Uighurs have been offered relocation to Palau; others with no place to go remain).

3) Those who cannot be prosecuted yet "pose a clear danger to the American people" will remain in custody with no right to legal process of any kind.

These are people who have never been charged with a crime. Mr. Obama did not say why they cannot be prosecuted. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates claims as many as 100 people may fall into this category. Included in this group are those who have "expressed their allegiance to Osama bin Laden." They will suffer "prolonged detention." Mr. Obama's plan for "prolonged detention" is nothing more than a newly-coined phrase for "preventive detention," a policy that harks back to the bad old days of the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 and the internment of people of Japanese extraction in the 1940s. If Mr. Obama succeeds in convincing Congress to legalize "prolonged detention," the United States will continue to be a pariah state among justice-loving nations. The US Congress, still rendered catatonic by post-9/11 rhetoric, will probably capitulate along with Mr. Obama. Michael Ratner, president of the Center for Constitutional Rights, noted that Mr. Obama's new system of preventive detention will just "move Guantánamo to a new location and give it a new name."

4) Those who can be safely transferred to other countries will be transferred.

Mr. Obama noted that 50 men fall into this category. It is unclear what will happen to them when they reach their destinations.

5) Those who violated US criminal laws will be tried in federal courts.

Mr. Obama cited the examples of Ramzi Yousef, who tried to

blow up the World Trade Center, and Zacarias Moussaoui, who was identified as the twentieth 9/11 hijacker. Both were tried and convicted in US courts and both are serving life sentences. This is the only clearly acceptable part of Mr. Obama's plan. All detainees slated to remain in custody should be placed into this category. The federal courts provide due process as required by the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution, which does not limit due process rights to US citizens: "No person ... shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law." The federal courts are well suited to deal with accused terrorists. Indeed, federal judges who have presided over such cases say that the Classified Information Procedures Act can effectively protect classified intelligence in federal court trials.

If Mr. Obama proceeds with the plan he announced this week he will empower those who point to US hypocrisy on human rights as a justification to do us harm. Mr. Obama's capitulation to the intelligence gurus and the right-wing attack dogs will not only imperil the rule of law; it will actually make us more vulnerable to future acts of terrorism.

Marjorie Cohn is a professor at Thomas Jefferson School of Law and president of the National Lawyers Guild.

Source: *truthout* | Perspective 5/27/09 www.truthout.org



The Republican attacks were bogus. A 2008 McClatchy investigation revealed the overwhelming majority of Guantanamo detainees taken in 2001-2002 in Afghanistan and Pakistan were innocent of wrongdoing or bit players with little intelligence value.

Doing the impossible, daily

Paul Hawken

When I was invited to give this speech, I was asked if I could give a simple short talk that was "direct, naked, taut, honest, passionate, lean, shivering, startling, and graceful." Boy, no pressure there.

But let's begin with the startling part. Hey, Class of 2009: you are going to have to figure out what it means to be a human being on earth at a time when every living system is declining, and the rate of decline is accelerating. Kind of a mind-boggling situation—but not one peer-reviewed paper published in the last thirty years can refute that statement.

Basically, the earth needs a new operating system, you are the programmers, and we need it within a few decades.

This planet came with a set of operating instructions, but we seem to have misplaced them. Important rules like don't poison the water, soil, or air, and don't let the earth get overcrowded, and don't touch the thermostat have been broken. Buckminster Fuller said that spaceship earth was so ingeniously designed that no one has a clue that we are on one, flying through the universe at a million miles per hour, with no need for seatbelts, lots of room in coach, and really good food—but all that is changing.

There is invisible writing on the back of the diploma you will receive, and in case you didn't bring lemon juice to decode it, I can tell you what it says: **YOU ARE BRILLIANT, AND THE EARTH IS HIRING.** The earth couldn't afford to send any recruiters or limos to your school. It sent you rain, sunsets, ripe cherries, night blooming jasmine, and that unbelievably cute person you are dating. Take the hint. And here's the deal: Forget that this task of planet-saving is not possible in the time required. Don't be put off by people who know what is not possible. Do what needs to be done, and check to see if it was impossible only after you are done.

When asked if I am pessimistic or optimistic about the future, my answer is always the same: If you look at the science about what

is happening on earth and aren't pessimistic, you don't understand data. But if you meet the people who are working to restore this earth and the lives of the poor, and you aren't optimistic, you haven't got a pulse. What I see everywhere in the world are ordinary people willing to confront despair, power, and incalculable odds in order to restore some semblance of grace, justice, and beauty to this world. The poet Adrienne Rich wrote, "So much has been destroyed I have cast my lot with those who, age after age, perversely, with no extraordinary power, reconstitute the world." There could be no better description. Humanity is coalescing. It is reconstituting the world, and the action is taking place in schoolrooms, farms, jungles, villages, campuses, companies, refuge camps, deserts, fisheries, and slums.

You join a multitude of caring people. No one knows how many groups and organizations are working on the most salient issues of our day: climate change, poverty, deforestation, peace, water, hunger, conservation, human rights, and more. This is the largest movement the world has ever seen.

Rather than control, it seeks connection. Rather than dominance, it strives to disperse concentrations of power. Like Mercy Corps, it works behind the scenes and gets the job done. Large as it is, no one knows the true size of this movement. It provides hope, support, and meaning to billions of people in the world. Its clout resides in idea, not in force. It is made up of teachers, children, peasants, businesspeople, rappers, organic farmers, nuns, artists, government workers, fisherfolk, engineers, students, incorrigible writers, weeping Muslims, concerned mothers, poets, doctors without borders, grieving Christians, street musicians, the President of the United States of America, and as the writer David James Duncan would say, the Creator, the One who loves us all in such a huge way.

There is a rabbinical teaching that says if the world is ending and the Messiah arrives, first plant a tree, and then see if the

story is true. Inspiration is not garnered from the litanies of what may befall us; it resides in humanity's willingness to restore, redress, reform, rebuild, recover, reimagine, and reconsider. "One day you finally knew what you had to do, and began, though the voices around you kept shouting their bad advice," is Mary Oliver's description of moving away from the profane toward a deep sense of connectedness to the living world.

Ending slavery

Millions of people are working on behalf of strangers, even if the evening news is usually about the death of strangers. This kindness of strangers has religious, even mythic origins, and very specific eighteenth-century roots. Abolitionists were the first people to create a national and global movement to defend the rights of those they did not know. Until that time, no group had filed a grievance except on behalf of itself. The founders of this movement were largely unknown—Granville Clark, Thomas Clarkson, Josiah Wedgwood—and their goal was ridiculous on the face of it: at that time three out of four people in the world were enslaved. Enslaving each other was what human beings had done for ages. And the abolitionist movement was greeted with incredulity. Conservative spokesmen ridiculed the abolitionists as liberals, progressives, do-gooders, meddlers, and activists. They were told they would ruin the economy and drive England into poverty. But for the first time in history a group of people organized themselves to help people they would never know, from whom they would never receive direct or indirect benefit. And today tens of millions of people do this every day. It is called the world of non-profits, civil society, schools, social entrepreneurship, and non-governmental organizations, of companies who place social and environmental justice at the top of their strategic goals. The scope and scale of this effort is unparalleled in history.

The living world is not "out there" somewhere, but in your heart. What do we know about

life? In the words of biologist Janine Benyus, life creates the conditions that are conducive to life. I can think of no better motto for a future economy. We have tens of thousands of abandoned homes without people and tens of thousands of abandoned people without homes. We have failed bankers advising failed regulators on how to save failed assets. Think about this: we are the only species on this planet without full employment. Brilliant. We have an economy that tells us that it is cheaper to destroy earth in real time than to renew, restore, and sustain it. You can print money to bail out a bank but you can't print life to bail out a planet. At present we are stealing the future, selling it in the present, and calling it gross domestic product. We can just as easily have an economy that is based on healing the future instead of stealing it. We can either create assets for the future or take the assets of the future. One is called restoration and the other exploitation. And whenever we exploit the earth we exploit people and cause untold suffering. Working for the earth is not a way to get rich, it is a way to be rich.

The first living cell came into being nearly 40 million centuries ago, and its direct descendants are in all of our bloodstreams. Literally you are breathing molecules this very second that were inhaled by Moses, Mother Teresa, and Bono. We are vastly interconnected. Our fates are inseparable. We are here because the dream of every cell is to become two cells. In each of you are one quadrillion cells, 90 percent of which are not human cells. Your body is a community, and without those other microorganisms you would perish in hours. Each human cell has 400 billion molecules conducting millions of processes between trillions of atoms. The total cellular activity in one human body is staggering: one septillion actions at any one moment, a one with twenty-four zeros after it. In a millisecond, our body has undergone ten times more processes than there are stars in the universe—exactly what Charles Darwin foretold when he said science would discover that each living creature

was a "little universe, formed of a host of self-propagating organisms, inconceivably minute and as numerous as the stars of heaven."

So I have two questions for you all: First, can you feel your body? Stop for a moment. Feel your body. One septillion activities going on simultaneously, and your body does this so well you are free to ignore it, and wonder instead when this speech will end. Second question: who is in charge of your body? Who is managing those molecules? Hopefully not a political party. Life is creating the conditions that are conducive to life inside you, just as in all of nature. What I want you to imagine is that collectively humanity is evincing a deep innate wisdom in coming together to heal the wounds and insults of the past.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once asked what we would do if the stars only came out once every thousand years. No one would sleep that night, of course. The world would become religious overnight. We would be ecstatic, delirious, made rapturous by the glory of God. Instead the stars come out every night, and we watch television.

This extraordinary time when we are globally aware of each other and the multiple dangers that threaten civilization has never happened, not in a thousand years, not in ten thousand years. Each of us is as complex and beautiful as all the stars in the universe. We have done great things and we have gone way off course in terms of honoring creation. You are graduating to the most amazing, challenging, stupefying challenge ever bequeathed to any generation. The generations before you failed. They didn't stay up all night. They got distracted and lost sight of the fact that life is a miracle every moment of your existence. Nature beckons you to be on her side. You couldn't ask for a better boss. The most unrealistic person in the world is the cynic, not the dreamer. Hopefulness only makes sense when it doesn't make sense to be hopeful. This is your century. Take it and run as if your life depends on it.

Source: Commencement Address to the Class of 2009, University of Portland, 3/3/09

Feedback

An open letter to Congressman McNeerney

The U.S. has a dysfunctional health care system that is by far the worst of all the First-world nations — by every measure. Financial costs to society have been escalating out-of-control for decades. The system causes premature deaths by the tens of thousands annually and is responsible for personal bankruptcies of nearly a million a year and the bankruptcies of several dozen emergency rooms in California alone in the last dozen years. The richest nation on Earth has an infant mortality rate that ranks with Cuba's. These are the symptoms of our broken system. The data documenting these assertions is voluminous.

The causes are two-fold: (1) Uncle Sam (that's our elected officials) has turned his back on the American people and has saddled American business and the American people with an employer-based system. That's irrational. (2) It funds the system through a poorly-regulated, for-profit health insurance industry, fueled by a discredited "free-market" mentality. Health care is viewed as a "commodity (like buying a house or a new car) rather than a public good.

The cure is public financing (single-payer) — and private delivery — for the nation's health care system. Examples abound for spending the Common Wealth (taxes) for the Common Good: America's national defense, our interstate commerce, our national infrastructure (roads, bridges, dams, levees); public schools at the state level; police and fire protection in our cities. The proposed legislation in Congress is H. R. 676 (Conyers, D-MI) and S 703 (Sanders, I-VT). In California, it's SB 810.

The health insurance industry, with cartloads of cash in its coffers, has corrupted Congress and hijacked America's health care system. The nation desperately needs Congressmen and Senators with integrity and spine and armed with the Truth to solve the problem. It is scandalous when an intelligent Democrat legislator takes the position of a right-wing Republican ideologue.

Several studies have persuasively

shown the massive savings that public financing would bring, including the Lewin report that provided the rationale for California Senator Sheila Kuehl's SB 840, a study by the California Nurses Association, and a study conducted by Harvard.

By contrast, the health insurance industry has a black box like Bernie Madoff's. Bernie's "secret recipe," as it turns out, was a Ponzi scheme. He ripped off investors to the tune of \$65 billion. The health insurance industry, with its own "black box," is primarily responsible for the level of the outrageous health insurance premiums. In 1992 health care soaked up 13% of a \$6 trillion GDP. In 2008 it was 16% of a \$14 trillion GDP — a gross rate of increase of 20% per annum. Listen to the people. Vote to bring quality health care at an affordable cost for all.

Stanley G. Thomas

A letter home

Dear Stockton,

I would like to take this opportunity offered by Connections and the E.S.P.I.N.O. Coalition to reintroduce myself to you. You, Stockton, may or may not remember me, but I am one of your sons. I left you at 18 to attend the university, and now I am writing to you finally, after an 8 year absence.... Before I begin I would like to tell you about me...I grew up in the Southeast where I attended Monroe Elementary, Hamilton Middle School, and Franklin High School. I attended church services at St. Linus Catholic Church on "B" Street and I played baseball at Montezuma Little League....

The other day I came across an old photo of me as a boy. The photo triggered fond memories of you and me... That picture took me back to a place I thought I knew too well to discover anything new. It took me back to my childhood.... You did a good job in raising me. When people meet me they say that I remind them so much of you. I guess I just wear my Stockton colors very proudly. You will be very proud to know of what I have done since I left. Recently, I joined the E.S.P.I.N.O. Coalition with two goals in mind, the first is to become part of the community once again and second, to help with the coalition's efforts in supporting the youth of Stockton. So, I will end this letter with a high



hope of re-engaging in the dialog that began in the winter of 1982, the year you and I first met at the county hospital.

Jesús Andrade

Jesús Andrade is currently working for the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) in Los Angeles on immigration, healthcare, and education reform. Jesús graduated from Franklin High School in 2001 and received his B.A. in Philosophy from the CSU at Sacramento. Recently, he worked as a field organizer for the Obama Campaign, and now has joined the E.S.P.I.N.O Coalition as a writer. Contact him at jandrade@nclr.org or (213) 422-6494.

Welcome from ESPINO

Jesús Andrade

Escuelas Si! Pintas No! Youth Organizing for Equal Justice and Education (ESPINO) was founded in 2003 with the principal aim of addressing the schools to jails pipeline that many underrepresented youth face and to promote access to education as well as alternatives to incarceration. ESPINO is currently in the planning stages of creating student-led groups that will mobilize and organize students at Franklin, Edison, Stagg, and Cesar Chavez High Schools.

ESPINO's mission is to enhance and support a Central Valley-wide youth organizing movement, which promotes community health, while strengthening and mobilizing the human and collective potential of under-represented communities of the Central Valley.

Jesús Andrade is National Field Organizer, National Council of La Raza (NCLR).

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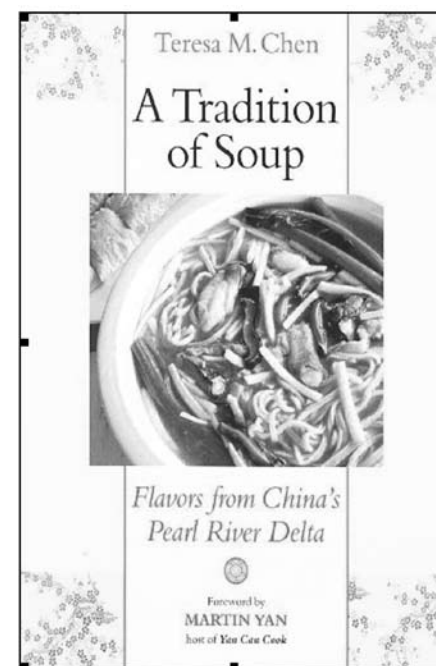
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21st Century Girl

Notes from seventh grade

Alyssa Palomares

I feel like an adult trapped in a 12 year old's body. Or maybe it's because I'm in my own little bubble, compared to the other kids.

Firstly, my taste in music is different. I like stuff like Rolling Stones, AC/DC, KISS, Sex Pistols, The Clash, Aerosmith, David Bowie, Queen, New York Dolls, Alice Cooper.... I even follow the tradition of music fans way before me and visit (and support) the record stores, which have a catalogue of music deeper than what's at Best Buy, Target and even iTunes. I've also named my two guitars Ziggy (full name: Ziggy Stardust Starlynn) and CC (full name: CC Deville Jr.), which are music references that not many kids would pick up on (CC being named after a musician, Ziggy being mostly named after a David Bowie song).

Secondly, I love reading. Well, the other kids do too, but it seems like mostly the Twilight series for them. I prefer classics like 1984, which I recently read for a book report and was a totally new concept for me. I was really enjoying it at first, especially the rebelliousness of the two main characters, Winston and Julia. Suddenly, the book took a left turn and went down a dark, terrifying, depressing road, unlike anything I've ever read before. After finishing the book, I still didn't get it. I thought about it for a while. Then, it hit me: 1984 is what happens when you allow governments to get drunk on power. That scared me to the point where I was too afraid to do my book report. So, I talked about my experience with my English teacher, who said I didn't need to go in depth if it scared me too much. However, I was still afraid and it took me a while to gain the strength to do that book report (which, in the end, got posted on the "Exemplary Work" board for everyone to see and read).

Another thing about 1984 is that it reminds me of the world. Firstly, these days, the

government can wiretap into many things, including phone calls and private chats. In other words, they're invading our privacy, just like Big Brother and those telescreens. Secondly, in 1984, they mass-produce music, like Disney's Hannah Montana and Jonas Brothers (which you see everywhere). Lastly, the Thought Police in 1984 would come out of nowhere, arrest if you committed thoughtcrime, or thought something against the government. After arresting you, they'd whisk you off to who-knows-where and evidence that you ever existed was erased. That reminds me of how people like JFK, Martin Luther King Jr. and John Lennon were assassinated out of nowhere. The resemblances between the modern world and 1984's world are pretty eerie.

Lastly, I don't really have that much of an interest in TV. Some teens like to watch TV and can spend hours on end in front of the tube, whereas I don't really pay attention unless VH1 Classic or Food Network is on, or if I'm tuning into a satellite radio station. One thing I don't like about TV is all the commercials. They get annoying and some of

them are just plain dumb and creepy, like the ones promoting male enhancement pills. Then there's those dumb reality shows, like Rock of Love (I can't believe I used to love that show.). I think the concept of finding love by pairing a guy with a bunch of girls (or vice versa), sticking them in a mansion and eliminating them one-by-one each episode is stupid. It's such an unnatural way to find love.

I feel like an adult trapped in a 12 year old's body, but my mom thinks I'm 50.

*Alyssa Palomares is turning 13 on July 18. She will be entering 8th grade this year at a Christian school in Stockton, and plans to attend Middle College High School afterwards. She's also thought about a career as a doctor, but she's unsure due to her fear of worms. Her stage name is Lisa Starlynn (usually written as "Lisa*Lynn" with a star instead of an asterisk), and she aspires to become a rockstar. She's also addicted to Twitter, where she supports Eric De La Cruz, who is in dire need of a heart transplant. You can find her at <http://twitter.com/lisastarlynn>.*



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Congresswoman Barbara Lee—a rebel inside the House

Emily Wilson

Now in her sixth full term in the House of Representatives, the congresswoman holds to her radical roots, explaining in her new book just how mainstream those revolutionary programs have become. Currently chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, she spoke to author Emily Wilson of her need to define herself.

Barbara Lee, the Democratic congresswoman who represents California's 9th district, which includes Oakland and Berkeley, gained national attention when she cast the only opposing vote to a resolution authorizing then-President Bush to use "all necessary and appropriate force" against anyone associated with the terrorist attacks of September 11. This vote won her both praise and death threats.

In her new book, "Renegade for Peace and Justice: Congresswoman Barbara Lee Speaks For Me," Lee writes about that vote and how many of her friends, including current Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, tried to talk her out of it. But the book doesn't just focus on her political life. She tells the story of growing up in segregated El Paso, moving to California, fighting to be the first African American cheerleader at San Fernando High School, her secret marriage after getting pregnant as a teenager, her miscarriage, an abortion in Mexico, and an abusive husband.

Many of these, particularly the abortion, were not easy to write about, Lee says. But she says she wanted to inspire others who are going through hard times, as well as to present her side after that controversial vote. "One of the reasons to write this book is to define myself because I didn't know who the Rush Limbaughs of the world were talking about—they called me a traitor, unpatriotic, all kinds of horrible things."

Lee writes in her book that she knew nothing about sex growing up and she now champions comprehensive sex education because she wants teenagers to be more informed than she was.

"We have to get rid of this

abstinence only policy," Lee says. "The Bush administration implemented a policy that said federal funds would not be allowed in our schools unless they were to teach abstinence only and we've seen that it just hasn't worked."

Lee has also pushed for legislation to help women who have been abused by their husbands and boyfriends. In her book she writes about the cycle of abuse in her own family, where her mother and grandmother were battered wives. Children who grow up seeing women beaten grow comfortable with it, Lee says. Her second husband was a violent man whose abuse took bizarre forms such as forcing her to take LSD.

Lee writes fondly about Mills College, a women's college in Oakland where she met her mentor Shirley Chisholm and worked on Chisholm's 1972 presidential campaign. Lee attended Mills after leaving her abusive husband, when she was on public assistance and taking care of her two little boys from her first marriage. Lee thinks Mills gave her much more than an excellent academic education.

"They provided the support I needed to be able to raise my kids," Lee says. "Sometimes I had to bring them to class with me. They should know statistics better than myself because they took the whole statistics course with me. A women's college understood that. They knew I was struggling."

While she was at Mills, Lee became very involved with the Black Panther Party, though she never became a member. She became friends with both founders of the party, Bobby Seale and Huey Newton, and she writes about playing cards all night with Seale and talking about classical music with Newton. Both of them also worked on Chisholm's presidential campaign. The Panthers' commitment to social justice was what drew her to them, she says.

"That's where free breakfast programs started and now it's a national law," she says. "There was nothing in our country with regards to sickle cell anemia and testing for African Americans. The Black



Panther party with the George Jackson Clinic began that."

Lee studied to be a social worker at Mills and accomplished a goal of opening a mental health clinic in Oakland called CHANGE. Working with people at the clinic is part of what led her to a political life.

"I saw many patients who were depressed, schizophrenic, paranoid, there were serious mental issues," she says. "A lot of those issues had to do with economics. They had to do with policies. A lot of the women didn't have day care. A lot of people didn't have jobs."

Now the chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, Lee says she is still focusing on economic issues among poor people.

"We're looking at how the black community has the highest percentage of poverty rates, and we're trying to close some of these what I call moral gaps," she says. "It's unethical and horrible that we have so many young African American males dropping out of school. It's immoral that we have a prison system that incarcerates more African American men than [served by] an education system that lifts them up and provides the best education so they can stay out of jail and move forward with their lives."

Source: *The Women's Media Center* 6/1/09 <http://womensmediacenter.com>

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Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, 2201 C St, NW Washington, DC 20520

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

State Sen. Lois Wolk (District 5), 31 E Channel St, Room 440, Stockton, CA 95202. 209-948-7930; State Capitol, Rm 4032, Sacramento, CA 95814. 916-651-4005

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

Livermore Lab caught conducting illegal restricted bio-experiments

Tri-Valley CAREs recently received documents that the group had long been seeking under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) regarding Livermore Lab's biological agent programs.

The records we received show that Livermore Lab violated federal regulations by conducting "restricted experiments" without the proper approval. These illegal experiments were discovered during an inspection by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in August 2005. However, the information was not made public until now.

"The Department of Energy

and Livermore Lab withheld these documents until Tri-Valley CAREs filed federal litigation under FOIA to obtain them," explained Marylia Kelley, the group's Executive Director. "This is a stunning example of the government covering up unclassified information because it is embarrassing. As a result, the public is denied knowledge to which it is entitled, and community health and safety are degraded."

Restricted experiments are experiments utilizing recombinant DNA that involve the deliberate transfer of a drug resistance trait to select agents that are not known

to acquire the trait naturally. Select agents, which include anthrax and plague, are biological agents and toxins having the potential to pose a severe threat to public health and safety.

Because of the dangers involved in transferring drug resistance to select agents,



restricted experiments require approval from the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. Livermore Lab did not have that approval, but ran the experiments anyway.

After discovering the illegal restricted experiments, the CDC required Livermore Lab to destroy the research samples. Otherwise, the Lab may have lost CDC's authorization for its select agent program

These experiments were conducted around the time of an anthrax release caused by Livermore Lab in August-September 2005. The anthrax incident led to the exposure of five individuals and resulted in a \$450,000 fine against the Lab. The anthrax release also laid bare a variety of errors and deficiencies within the Livermore Lab's select agent program, including in the Lab's response to the mishap.

It is notable that the relevant details of the 2005 anthrax accident were kept from the public at the time, just as happened with the illegal experiments that are coming to light today. In both instances, Tri-Valley CAREs used FOIA to uncover information that the public had a right to know all along.

"Taken together, the illegal restricted experiments and the anthrax release demonstrate that

there are serious problems with Livermore Lab's select agent program," Kelley stated.

At the time of the violations, the Lab was only operating a Biosafety Level 2 research laboratory. Since then, the Lab has opened a Biosafety Level 3 facility, which allows researchers to work with additional types of select agents that may cause serious or potentially lethal diseases, and in greater quantities (up to 50 liters).

The Lab's planned BSL-3 activities include aerosolizing (spraying) pathogens such as plague, tularemia and Q fever, in addition to anthrax. Moreover, government documents disclose that planned experiments in the BSL-3 include genetic modification and potentially novel manipulation of viruses, prions and other agents.

According to Kelley, Livermore Lab's expanding biological warfare research program is a legitimate community concern. She asks, "If the Lab broke the law in the past and did not tell the public the truth, what is protecting the public today?"

Source: Marylia Kelley, Tri-Valley CAREs, (925) 443-7148 <http://trivalleycares.org>, Tri-Valley CAREs, 2582 Old First St, Livermore, CA 94551 (925) 443-7148

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July Calendar

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

Apr 15—Aug 16

Randy Sparks in the Park concert and dinner, fundraiser for San Joaquin County Historical Society and the Micke Grove Zoological Society. 6 pm. San Joaquin County Historical Museum, Micke Grove Regional Park, 11793 N. Micke Grove Rd, Wed-Sun. \$70 953-3460.

Apr 26—July 19

Art of Africa exhibition, Haggin Museum, 1201 N Pershing Ave, Stockton. Wed-Sun 1:30—5 pm, 1st & 3rd Thurs until 9 pm. \$5 adult, \$2.50 or 65, 10-17, students; free under 10. 1st Sat free. 940-6312.

June 2—July 3

"Disturbing" exhibit, featuring John Nagle, photographer. M-F 10-5, Tidewater Gallery, 223 E. Weber Ave, Stockton. 463-4033

Thu, Jun 18

Peace Tales Circle, telling our peacemaker stories. Free at Peace and Justice Center, 231 Bedford, 7 PM. Info: John Morearty, 464-3326.

Sat, June 20

FatherFest 2009, 11 am—5 pm. Caldwell Park, Pacific & Alpine St, Stockton. Free admission. 444-5511. (see p 20)

Sun, June 21

Music at the Museum featuring the Delta Kids College students, 3 pm. Haggin Museum, 1201 N Pershing Ave, Stockton. \$5 adult, \$2.50 youth/senior, under 10 free. 940-6315.

Mon, June 22

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

June 24—Jul 19

Annie Get Your Gun, Thu 7:30 pm, Fri-Sat 8 pm, Sun 2:30 pm. Stockton Civic Theatre, 2312 Rose Marie Lane, Stockton \$12—\$23. 473-2424.

Sat, June 27

Stargazing Party at Oak Grove Regional Park, 8:00—11:00, hosted by the Stockton Astronomical Society. Free admission, parking \$5 per vehicle. 953-8814.

Thu, July 2

Peace & Justice Network board meeting, Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 6 pm. All welcome. 467-4455

Fri, July 3

All-American Downtown Stockton Pub Crawl, \$30 wristband buys trolley transport, drinks, appetizers, free cover to 10 bars, discounted room at Lexington Plaza and ticket to Ports game. 5 pm. 464-5246.

Sat-Sun, July 4—5

Taste of San Joaquin, all day. Weber Point Events Center, Downtown Stockton. Free admission, sampling starts at \$1. Proceeds benefit local charities. 464-5246.

July 7—31

San Joaquin Potters Guild juried show. M-F 10-5, Tidewater Gallery, 223 E. Weber Ave, Stockton. Reception July 10, 5-8 pm. 463-4033

Wed, July 8

Adult Summer Reading series, "The Essence of Creativity" presented by Dr. Jane Dominik. 6 pm, Chavez Central Library, 605 N El Dorado St, Stockton. 937-8221.

Thu, July 9

Artist demonstration, Carolyn Lord, landscape and still-life painter. 7—9 pm. Stockton Art League, 1902 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Free. 466-6604.

Tue, July 14

Adult Summer Reading series, Sopoan Sorn discusses films and the creation of the SJC International Film Festival. 6:30 pm, Troke Branch Library, 502 W Ben Holt Dr, Stockton. 937-8221.

Mon, July 13

Adult Summer Reading series, "Artistry on the Classical Guitar" presented by Jesse Hendricks. 5:30 pm, Maya Angelou Branch Library, 2324 Pock Lane, Stockton. 937-8221.

Thu, July 16

Adult Summer Reading series, Richard Rios speaking on art, poetry and acoustic guitar. 5 pm, Thornton Branch Library, 26341 N Thornton Rd, Thornton. 937-8221.

Sat, July 18

Black Country one act play, fundraiser for African American Arts and Cultural Community Center Girls and Boys Drill Team. 1:30 pm. \$10 adult, \$5 children. 470-5554.

August 1

2nd Annual Tuolumne County Farm and Ranch Tour-See where your food comes from. Five farms will be open for tours, tastes and information about farming in Tuolumne County. Wagon rides, petting zoo, arts and crafts, feeding animals, train rides, demonstrations, farm tours and much more. \$10 adults, children under 18, free. 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. For more information: 209-533-5695

Second Tuesdays

Slam-Or-Stage Open Mic poetry, music, acting. 6:30 pm. Espresso Coffeehouse, 1825 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Free admission.

Second Wednesdays

Marriage Equality USA San Joaquin Chapter Meeting, 6:30 pm—7:30 pm. Peace Center, 231 Bedford Road, Stockton (209)518-9102

Second Fridays

Poetry as a Life open mic and workshop. 3:30—5:30 pm. Admin conference room, Chavez Library, 605 N El Dorado St, Stockton. 209-405-4041.

Thursdays

Peace demonstration, 5-6:60 pm, at the edge of Delta campus along Pacific Avenue just north of bus stop/light at Yokuts. Free parking at Sherwood Mall. Signs provided, or bring your own! 464-3326

Fridays

Downtown Stockton Certified Farmers' Market, Main Street in front of the Fox Theatre, Stockton. 9 am—2 pm. Free. 464-5246.

Saturdays

Crosstown Freeway Farmers Market, under the freeway between El Dorado & San Joaquin, Stockton. 7—11, or when sold out. 943-1830

Come to FatherFEST 2009

Fathers & Families FatherFEST 2009 is an event honoring dads and those special men who fulfill the father role for children, food and activities that include educational games, bounce house, "Dunk-Your-Dad" tank, relay races, arts and crafts, resource fair, music and community building dialogue. You will hear dynamic speakers on the importance of fatherhood, and the role of fathers in rearing healthy kids and healthier communities. The event will be held in Stockton, California at Caldwell Park located by S-Mart Shopping center on the Miracle Mile/Pacific Ave., on Saturday, June 20, 2009 from 11 am—4 PM. The day is planned as a non-alcoholic, fun day in the sun for the entire family.

The Celebration serves to:

1. Increase awareness of a healthy lifestyle and encourage early detection & treatment of various diseases among men & boys.

2. Educate men and their families about the importance of positive health attitudes and preventative health practices.

3. Strengthen overall family wellness by promoting healthy behaviors among fathers.

4. Create awareness of the importance of father involvement in supporting children's growth and development.

5. Celebrate and provide a tribute to Responsible Fatherhood and showcase the existing and developing programs, initiatives and services for men and their families in our community.

Join us as we forge a new future around community building, creative solutions to neighborhood problems and focusing attention on the importance of fatherhood and positive youth development. Admission is free. Call Sammy Nunez at (209) 444-5511 to express interest and get more information.

Raft the Mokelumne River to benefit the Foothill Conservancy

On Sunday, June 28, you'll have the rare opportunity to raft the Mokelumne River with OARS of Angels Camp. OARS will run three special raft trips on the Mokelumne's six-mile Electra-Middle Bar run to benefit the Foothill Conservancy and support its work to protect and restore the Mokelumne River.

This is a rare opportunity to float the Mokelumne and experience its beauty from river level with knowledgeable guides and professional equipment. Commercial rafting is not allowed on the Mokelumne, so these trips are being allowed under a special permit.

The trip is a fun, Class II-III trip suitable for families and seniors. No prior rafting experience required. There's plenty of time to relax and enjoy the scenery as well as fun, Class II-III rapids: the Chute, S-Turn, and Devil's Toilet Bowl. Below the Highway 49 bridge, rafters may see ducks,

geese and other wildlife along the river. The entire trip, including transportation to and from the site, should take less than four hours. Cost is \$70 per person and space is limited. Advance reservations are required. Participants must be at least age 7. Youth under 18 must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

The trips will be guided and equipped by OARS of Angels Camp, one of the finest whitewater rafting companies in the country. They have fun, knowledgeable guides and well-equipped and maintained rafts.

To reserve your spot, call Randy at Foothill Conservancy, 209-295-4900 or e-mail him at randy@foothillconservancy.org For more on OARS, see its website, www.oars.com For more on Foothill Conservancy's efforts to protect and restore the Mokelumne, and photos of the river, see its website, www.foothillconservancy.org

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.

Thank you!

Christie Kelley, Board Chair

You have done it again. Thank you, Thank you! The response to our Spring/Summer fundraising letter has been overwhelmingly generous—\$6,310 as of June 13th. And there may be more coming in. Along with the checks and \$5.00 bills, we received notes of encouragement and advice:

“Spend it wisely”

We will...and you can help by becoming a member of our Board and take part in making the decisions each 1st Thursday of the month, 6:00 p.m.–8:00 p.m. at 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton.

“Keep up the good work”

Connections newspaper, Talking It Through and The Reality Show, the Peaceful Holiday Faire, Earth Day, speakers, movies, tabling at events, marches and demonstrations—together with our community we will keep it up.

“It is clear to me from my reading of *Connections* that the issues you promote and the arguments you offer to back them up are absolutely on the right track.”

We believe this and will continue to provide the valley community with thoughtful, educational and informative information; locally and internationally. We are happy to accept your articles regarding work you are doing related to peace, justice and/or the environment.

“Please send me a tax form.”

Don't forget your donations ARE tax deductible. If we seem to take quite a bit of time to follow up on your requests it is because we operate solely with volunteers. We always need more volunteers—to respond to our community, deliver papers, write for the paper, help with the office work...

Leave your name and number and what you would like to do on our office phone (209) 467-4455. We will get back to you as soon as we can! And...thank you for being a part of the progressive growth in this area...\$ 6,310!

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

California voters set the Democrats free: will they act?

George Lakoff

The outrageous propositions 1 A-E have been crushed by voters who just can't take any more. California voters have rejected the nonfunctional minority-rule government that has bankrupted the state, along with the governor who led the state into bankruptcy. The voters want a functional democracy, and that means majority rule. No more blackmail by a 1/3 plus 1 Republican minority. In short, the voters have given the Democrats a new freedom—if they will only take it.

The Democratic leadership should listen to its grassroots. They should immediately stop negotiating with the governor and other Republicans on how to destroy even more of what makes our state human. The Democrats, as a whole body, not just the leadership, should assert their majority, decide for themselves how they want to deal with the shortfall, and then invite the defeated Republicans publicly to join them and take their proposals to the public, first organizing serious grassroots support.

What is the point of doing this if the Democrats still don't have

No more blackmail by a 1/3 plus 1 Republican minority. In short, the voters have given the Democrats a new freedom--if they will only take it.

the 2/3 votes to pass a budget bill? The point is drama. Most Californians are not aware of the minority rule situation. This could dramatize it and place the blame where it belongs. Drama matters. There might still be a later compromise. But the drama would set the stage for a 2010 ballot initiative.

The Democratic leadership should immediately take the initiative on a 2010 ballot measure, a supremely simple one-sentence measure. It would go something like this:

All budgetary and revenue issues shall be decided by a majority vote in both houses of the legislature.

One sentence. Simple. Straightforward. Understandable. And democratic. It should be called the California Democracy Act. From grade school on, we associate democracy with majority rule. It will make sense to voters—at last. The term "revenue" would cover taxes without waving a red flag. Up to now, Democrats have been acting like sheep being herded by the Republican minority. They need to show courage and stand up for what they believe. That's what the voters are waiting for.

On the 2010 ballot initiative: Get rid of the 55% proposals. People understand that majority rule means democracy. 55% means nothing. Even if you don't address taxes and just address the budget process, the Republicans

will still say you're going to raise taxes. You may as well go for real democracy.

And finally, get a unified message that can be supported by the grassroots. Do grassroots organizing for 2010, starting now. Organize spokespeople to get that message out. Organize bookers to book your spokespeople in the media. You Democrats are a majority. Act like it. The public will respect you for it. For example, if the Republicans claim that this vote showed a tax rebellion, point out that only Prop 1a was about taxes. The other propositions failed. And the voters rejected a spending cap. What are you waiting for, you Democrats. You have been set free.

If it is claimed that the vote was meaningless because so few people went to the polls, reply that the refusal to vote on these propositions was itself a vote against having such an election and such a lame way of running the state. The voters have spoken. You Democratic office-holders have chance to come out on the side of the voters. Take it.

*George Lakoff is the author of *The Political Mind*, just out in paperback. He is Goldman Distinguished Professor of Cognitive Science and Linguistics at the University of California at Berkeley.*

Source: Daily Kos 5/20/09 <http://george-lakoff.dailykos.com>

