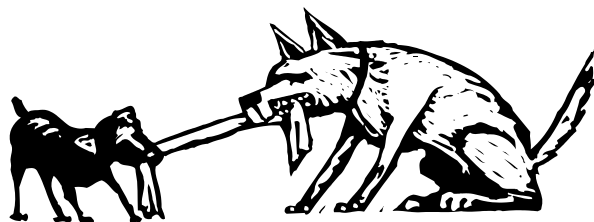




STOCKS ARE DOWN! OBAMA'S UNPOPULAR! WAIT, WHO CARES?!



KAI WRIGHT

Labor Day weekend began with a familiar whimper: The economy created exactly zero jobs in August. There's not much labor to celebrate this year—but then again, that's been the case for at least three years now. And in many black neighborhoods, it's

been the case since the 2001 recession. So here we are. Another monthly jobs report and another round of numbingly dismal forecasts.

Perhaps most maddening, however, is the way in which officialdom — from politicians to the fourth estate — greets this monthly ritual of entirely predictable disappointment.

Consistently, observers ask one of two questions: how has Wall Street reacted and what will it mean for the political fates of the president. And consistently, I imagine everybody else responding with the same question I shout at the radio/TV/website: Who cares?! Aren't we well past the point where the horse race updates of stock trades and political campaigns are the most consequential news about this recession?

No, we're sadly not. And that's the problem. Officialdom continues to think, talk and most importantly act like this is a crisis of theories. What's sound economic policy look like? How can politicians communicate with independent voters? Do investors have confidence in the economy? All of that is, at this point, entirely meaningless.

This crisis is about scraping together rent this month and putting gas in your car this week and feeding your kids tonight — let alone being able to take them to the amusement park or to visit grandma down South on a holiday weekend, so it feels like you're living for something other than the damn grind. For the 14 million people who are out of work and haven't yet given up the ghost, it's about the frantic hustle to find something, anything that will let you avoid walking away from your home and moving your kids to a new school. For the 6 million people who've been out of work for more than six months, it's about keeping a stiff jaw while you endure the humiliation of second and third interviews for a rotten job you'll never get because human resources wisdom now says

you're damaged goods. For a growing number of largely black neighborhoods with Depression level unemployment and mass foreclosures, it's about resignation with the fact that you've been strip mined and left to rot by the investors and politicians who everybody seems to think face the toughest choices in this recession.

The president gave a big speech after the holiday. He's good at that, typically. In any case, the chattering class will no doubt tell us how well or poorly he's done at boosting his approval ratings. The business press will inform us whether he's calmed or heightened the nerves of the precious financial sector — the same industry that created the problem to begin with, of course. And then officialdom will return to fussing over the national debt and the tone in Washington and whether investors are making or losing money this week. Meanwhile, millions of people mired in a daily fight for survival will wonder, What about me? Doesn't anyone care about the fact that I'm about to fall off the cliff? The answer is sadly simple: No.

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Source: ColorLines.com 9/4/11 <http://colorlines.com/archives/2011/09/>

Is the corporate media still censoring stories?



MARK KARLIN

Project Censored <<http://www.projectcensored.org/>> has an illustrious history of drawing attention to stories that the mainstream press overtly censors or ignores through a corporate media culture that dismisses the existence of topics that threaten the status quo. The organization also promotes media literacy by educating the public about strategies that are used to disseminate misinformation and propaganda.

With the forthcoming publication of the newest edition of Project Censored, Truthout interviewed long-time project Director Peter Phillips and current Director Mickey Huff to gain a sense how this project began, and how it intends to continue making an impact in a constantly transforming media landscape.

MARK KARLIN: Some progressive critics have asserted that Project Censored is no longer relevant because of the openness of the Internet. How do you respond to that charge?

PETER PHILLIPS: The Internet is huge with a lot of misinformation and managed news. One of the reasons we started both our Validated News site and News We Trust was that one of the major questions asked over the years has been "whom do you trust?" The big problem still is that well over half the world has never made a phone call, let alone seen the Internet.

MK: Although you didn't found Project Censored in 1976, you oversaw it for the longest period of time. What was the "spark" that caused the founding of Project Censored?

PP: Actually, in 1976 Carl Jensen was trying to explain how Richard Nixon got elected in '72 despite Watergate. He went back in the corporate media and found that they had mostly ignored Watergate until after the election, and he began to ask what else are they (the media) skipping or delaying publishing stories about. So he had his students — in the sociology of media at Sonoma State University — research stories from the alternative independent press that were not covered by the mass media. His list was quickly picked up by the independent alternative media and republished worldwide.

MK: Journalistically, when a story is literally censored, it is known as being "spiked" by an editor or

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Every day is labor day

BRUCE GIUDICI

For a lot of people, labor day is every day. Trouble is, the number of people working – or wanting to work – is fewer by the month. Unemployment continues to distort the daily lives of our relatives, friends, and neighbors. And while the numbers may be easy to quantify, the human impact is felt more deeply. Anecdotes of foreclosures, bankruptcies and broken marriages – children yanked from school, chemical dependencies and lowered expectations are common talk in our communities. Raised as self-reliant Americans, however, we accept these setbacks as evidence of personal failures and not as a flaw in the magical capitalistic economic system.

Having workers take these failures personally is reinforced by the managers of the economy: for with that personal assumption of guilt, workers have demanded no change from the way things are – and have accepted counter-intuitive arguments against job-creating public works programs and for “job-creating tax cuts.”

Currently, the voices arguing for a community

response to creating meaningful work are given short shrift. Constant, however, are reminders of folks milking their unemployment benefits, as well as references to pension excesses, extravagantly paid public workers and wasteful government spending (when it can be laid at a Democrat’s doorstep).

With only the wealthy seen as financially trustworthy, trickle down economics is seen as the only viable policy option. By repeating an economic scheme that benefits their wealthy patrons, corporate politicians (and the media that supports them) have brainwashed American citizens generally uninterested and uneducated in basic economics – the message: government is the problem and only markets work.

Consequently, despite the past 10 years of Bush tax cuts benefitting only the wealthy, when the economy begins to falter, the trickle-down call goes out to give the rich more money: for only they can hire the jobless, who will then spend the money to get the economy moving again. Of course, the government itself can hire the

unemployed, cutting out the middleman – who has time and again proven unreliable as a job creator. But to do so would undercut the myth of job-generating tax cuts – a myth most useful to the rich and their supplicants.

At some point, we must acknowledge the \$2 trillion of corporate cash waiting to be invested, once the economy “turns around” – a turn-around that won’t occur (Catch-22 style) until some of that \$2 trillion is invested in the economy. The Obama jobs plan is a very limited attempt to move some of that private money into our economy, priming the pump for future growth. And it has no chance for passage – for now.

Labeled as a re-election ploy by the GOP opposition, a jobs program re-distributing income from the rich to the worker is counter to the interests of a capitalism that shops for the lowest wage and most lenient environmental rules worldwide. Taking some of that \$2 trillion to hire high-cost Americans, rather than waiting for a more profitable Chinese venture, is anathema to profit-maximization. So we continue to listen to a Tea Party that harkens to an

1890s–world free of labor and environmental rules, that allows capital to do whatever it wants – like the present-day China. And the jobs bill that needs to pass, will not – unless we speak up.

Change for the common good is always put off by those who individually benefit by the current set up. When it comes time to re-finance underwater loans, banks put off even the easy stuff – taking the existing balance and lowering the interest rate to market. If the occupant is making payments at the higher rate, why should the house be re-appraised to provide a reason for denial? And when it comes to foreclosure, the story is that these banks don’t want these houses? Why not receive the gift of an asset that the mortgage holder only paid interest on for the life of the mortgage? If the goal was to not foreclose, then options like rent-to-own are available. Like a tax cut, this would take money from a banker’s bottom line and



put it in a worker’s pocket. Simple – yet resisted.

In our current global economic climate, it’s likewise simple: tax the rich to employ the rest of us so we can spend again – the Obama plan. Only when we’re all homeless, without health care and with unemployment at 20% – only then, there will be some shared sacrifice to get this economy moving again. Until then, the well-off will hang on to their assets, within their gated communities, hoping the recession never reaches their doors. We do have a choice in this democracy – and we should be active in making that choice. Call your representative. And have a great autumn.



Labor Day

Editor,

Bouquets of black roses, the day before Labor Day no less, from the “folks” at the shrinking and increasingly “tony” Stockton Record. September 4th’s headline reads, “Plunge in pity for out of work” with a sub-heading reading “America appears to be losing its patience with unemployed.” Apparently, we can now “officially” erase “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses” from the Statue of Liberty and replace it with “no sympathy.”

As millions of desperate Americans struggle to keep a roof over their heads and food on the table, others more fortunate are tiring of the “whining.” This same group of “patriots,” evidently, are more “comfortable” fawning over celebrities and their seven and eight figure lifestyles; a Pentagon that can’t account for the loss of 1.2 TRILLION dollars over

the last decade; or corporate cretins, who are “sitting” on 1.9 TRILLION dollars as they seek “pennies on the dollar” foreign labor and pay less (if any) taxes themselves than their lowly secretaries, who fire off their rapacious bosses pernicious and nationalistic missives.

The article states the unemployed are “even facing a certain level of demonization.” What’s next America? Or more to the point...who? The sick? The elderly? The disabled? Autistic or mentally challenged children? What remains of our decaying environment? On its Opinion page of July 31, the Record states, “Democrats have steadily refused to accept that Medicare is largely to blame for the fiscal nightmare. The country also needs serious –make that SERIOUS– spending cuts in all areas, including entitlement programs.”

Our job-seeking daughter, a Spring 2011 college graduate with over ten years employment experience, was told by a temporary employment agency that if she hadn’t worked at least six consecutive months out of the last twelve months, they would not consider her for job placement. No consideration was allowed that during the same 12-month window, unable to find permanent employment, she diligently completed her bachelor’s degree.

We’re often treated to “American Exceptionalism” by perfidious politicians. What’s truly “exceptional” is the callous attitude of those whose memory, empathy, or both would have inspired shame, not validation, in the not too distant past.

David and Valerie Waldon



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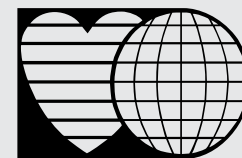
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“The Peace and Justice Network is a nonprofit educational organization committed to the vision of a world in which the equality of all persons is achieved, basic needs are met, conflict is resolved nonviolently, and the earth’s resources are shared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



Good jobs

JAMES P. HOFFA

Labor unions raise workers' wages, give them a voice on the job and protect them from financial and medical insecurity. They help turn a job into a good job. Good jobs create more jobs. Well-paid, secure workers spend money in their communities. They support local businesses, which can then grow and hire more workers.

This Labor Day is an especially good time to remind people of these well-established facts about unions. In the past year, corporate-backed politicians have mounted the most vicious anti-union attacks in memory. Government workers in Wisconsin and Ohio were stripped of their collective bargaining rights. Right-to-work laws to destroy unions are being pushed in New Hampshire, Michigan and Indiana.

The ultimate goal of these extremist politicians is to further concentrate wealth and power in the hands of a few. After all, it's those wealthy few who pay for their political campaigns, court them when they're in office and hire them when they retire from public life. And so giveaways and tax breaks for corporations are being underwritten by cuts to essential services like public education and health care in Michigan, Florida, Ohio and Wisconsin. Already, those states' economies are suffering, with unemployment on the rise.

The same destructive dynamic is at work in Washington, where wildly irresponsible lawmakers threatened to force the US government into default in order to cut spending. Rep. John Mica was willing to partially shut down the Federal Aviation Administration in order to roll back a rule reform that gave airline and railroad workers a fairer process for choosing to join a union. Mica's recklessness resulted in furloughs for 4,000 FAA employees and layoffs for 70,000 construction and transportation workers.

Good government jobs do exactly what good union jobs do – they stimulate the economy. It is nonsense to suggest that they don't. The current willingness to sacrifice government jobs at the state and federal level is, I'm afraid, a failure to learn from the lessons of the past.

President Herbert Hoover's austerity budget strangled our economy during the early days of the Great Depression. It was Franklin D. Roosevelt's massive stimulus that got the economy growing again. Roosevelt made enormous investments in people and infrastructure through programs like the Works Progress Administration.

From 1933 to 1937, the economy grew at the fastest pace in history. But in 1937, an anti-union Ohio Republican, Sen. Bob Taft, led conservatives in persuading Roosevelt to rein in spending.

The result: a fall in Gross Domestic Product. Fortunately, Roosevelt quickly realized his error and changed course. He increased spending, and the economy started growing again.

That government stimulus creates jobs and revitalizes economic growth is accepted as fact by businesspeople, financiers and even Martin Feldstein, Ronald Reagan's chief economist. Feldstein was among the first to call for stimulus spending after the financial crisis of 2008. Recently, Feldstein said Congress should limit tax breaks for corporations and wealthy individuals in order to raise revenue.

There's no doubt now that the initial \$787 billion stimulus was too small. At the time, the Teamsters Union and others argued for a larger stimulus. President Obama's former top economic advisor, Larry Summers, is now admitting that the stimulus was too small to pull the economy out of its doldrums.

Another reason the stimulus didn't do as much as we'd hoped was that the economy was in much worse shape than we originally thought. Recently revised economic figures show that our Gross Domestic Product shrank by a staggering 7.8 percent in the six months following the global financial crisis in 2008.

Once the stimulus money began to flow in the middle of 2009, the US economy began to grow again. Three million jobs were created. But this year stimulus dollars dried up for state and local governments, budgets were cut and jobs were lost. The loss of those government jobs clearly acted as a drag on the economy. For the past year, the private sector added 1.8 million jobs, while cities and towns cut 340,000 jobs.

I don't think anyone is happy with our economy right now. There are those who say the solution is to cut government spending and weaken unions. They couldn't be more wrong.

Source: Reader Supported News 9/5/11 <http://readersupportednews.org/>



Obama jobs speech: a progressive response

Congressional Progressive Caucus co-chairs Reps. Raul M. Grijalva and Keith Ellison today released the following statement on the president's jobs speech:

The President has delivered a good start for putting Americans back to work that includes elements we as progressives have been calling for. Our country will finally make essential repairs to America's roads and bridges. Wall Street and multi-millionaires will start to pay their fair share and support the country that has helped them prosper. The long-term unemployed, who

have been hit hardest by the recession, will have the support they need while they find jobs.

For eight months, the Republicans have successfully paralyzed the national conversation by holding the people's business hostage. They have shown no interest in putting the livelihoods of millions of working families ahead of their own narrow political goals. They have refused to take job creation seriously. As a result, we have seen record numbers of laid-off teachers, returning veterans struggling to find work, and firefighters

and first responders hurting for funding.

The crisis is so severe that we must do more than the president has proposed. That's why next week the Congressional Progressive Caucus will unveil our "Framework to Rebuild the American Dream". It offers a bold, comprehensive progressive vision for America based on what we can do, not the Tea Party vision of what America can't do. As we showed with the People's Budget, we can create millions of jobs and eliminate the deficit within ten years if we choose the

right priorities and make good decisions.

We join the President in calling on Congressional Republicans to put the national interest ahead of partisan stonewalling. We stand ready to move forward and put American families back to work.

Source: Congressional Progressive Caucus 9/9/11 <http://cpc.grijalva.house.gov/>



Mainstream Media = Truth? Check out the Alternatives and Find out 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.

- Firedoglake <http://firedoglake.com>
- Emptywheel <http://emptywheel.firedoglake.com/>
- Calitics <http://www.calitics.com/>
- Eschaton <http://www.eschatonblog.com/>
- Huffington Post <http://www.huffingtonpost.com>
- Hullabaloo <http://digbysblog.blogspot.com>
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- TPM Muckraker <http://www.tpmmuckraker.com/>
- FiveThirtyEight.com <http://www.fivethirtyeight.com/>
- Congress Matters <http://www.congressmatters.com>
- Think Progress <http://thinkprogress.com>
- Down With Tyranny <http://downwithtyranny.blogspot.com/>
- Crooks and Liars <http://www.crooksandliars.com>
- Media Matters <http://mediamatters.org/>
- Common Dreams: <http://www.commondreams.org/>
- Truth Out: <http://www.truthout.org/>
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- The Nation <http://www.thenation.com/>
- Hightower News <http://www.webactive.com/hightower/>
- Mother Jones <http://www.motherjones.com/>
- In These Times <http://inthesetimes.com/>
- The Guardian <http://www.guardian.co.uk/worldlatest/>
- Corporate Watch <http://www.corpwatch.org/home/PHH.jsp>
- 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>



Postal workers: attacking the last union



ALLISON KILKENNY

The recent attacks against the United States Postal Service (USPS) are more than signs of desperate times – a natural sunset moment for a service rendered archaic by FedEx and UPS. Rather, the Postal Service has been under constant, vicious assault for years from the right, who views this as an epic battle with the goal of finally taking down the strongest union in the country, the second largest employer in the United States (second only to Wal-Mart,) and a means to roll the country ever closer toward the abyss of privatization.

The Postal Service, which is older than the Constitution itself, stands at a precipice. If this great institution, which provides one of the oldest, most reliable services in the country, is permitted to fall and Congress kills its great union, then truly no collective bargaining rights, no worker contract, no union will be safe within the United States.

As the USPS spirals toward default, the historically uncontroversial mail service system has suddenly become a hot-button issue. It's an unlikely organization to inspire such hysteria. The Postal Service isn't paid for by taxpayer dollars, but rather fully funded by the sale of stamps. It's easy to forget what a marvel this is – that today, in 2011, one can still mail a letter clear across the country for less than 50 cents. And if the impressiveness of that feat still hasn't sunk in, attempt this brain exercise: consider what else you can buy for \$0.44.

It was only a few years ago that the USPS was considered not only stable, but thriving. The biggest volume in pieces of mail handled by the Postal Service in its 236-year history was in 2006. The second and third busiest years were in 2005 and 2007, respectively. But it was two events: one crafted during the Bush years and another supervised by House Oversight Committee Chairman Darrell Issa, that would cripple this once great institution.

Perhaps it was its booming history that first drew Congress' attention to the Postal Service in 2006 when it passed the Postal Accountability Enhancement Act (PAEA), which mandated that the Postal Service would have to fully fund retiree health benefits for future retirees. That's right. Congress was demanding universal health care coverage. But it even went beyond that. Congress was mandating coverage for future human beings.

"It's almost hard to comprehend what they're talking about, but basically they said that the Postal Service would have to fully fund future retirees' health benefits for the next 75 years and they would have to do it within a ten-year window," says Chuck Zlatkin, political director of the New York Metro Area Postal Union.

It was an impossible order, and strangely, a task unshared by any other government service, agency, corporation or organization within the United States. The act meant that every September 30th, the USPS had to cough up \$5.5 billion to the Treasury for the pre-funding of future retirees' health benefits, meaning the Postal Service pays for employees 75 years into the future. The USPS is funding the retirement packages of people who haven't even been born yet.

The hopeless task was made even more daunting when

Wall Street blew up the world's economies. It was this, and not the invention of email, that became the Postal Service's death knell. Zlatkin finds the whole "blame it on the Internet" excuse amusing. The Internet had already existed for quite a while in 2006, the USPS's busiest year, not to mention that every item purchased on Amazon and eBay – every piece of information addressed to stockholders and bank customers – still needs to be snail mailed, which is enough volume to keep the Postal Service prosperous. "I've yet to figure out a way to mail a shirt through a computer," he chuckles.

When Wall Street's derivatives gamble blew up the country, businesses slowed their operations during the recession and, as such, the Postal Service was no longer handling historically high volumes of mail. The boom was over and the death spiral began.

At the same time, the USPS was bleeding money by overpaying into worker pension funds. An audit done by the Postal Service's Office of Inspector General came up with the figure of \$75 billion in pension overpayments. Then, the Postal Regulatory Commission, an independent agency that actually received more autonomous power under PAEA, commissioned its own independent audit. The commission placed the overpayment at \$50 billion.

Taking these figures into consideration, the projected \$9 billion deficit the USPS now faces seems like chump change that could easily be corrected with some minor accounting tweaks. "You could actually transfer over payment from the pension funds to the healthcare retirement funds," says Zlatkin. "And it wouldn't cost taxpayers a single penny."

H.R. 1351, the United States Postal Service Pension Obligation Recalculation and Restoration Act of 2011, is a piece of legislation sponsored by Massachusetts Congressman Stephen Lynch. The act calls for the Office of Personal Management to do the definitive audit, come up with the actual figure of overpayment and then apply that to the ridiculous system of prepayment funding expenses. The Postal Service would then have that \$5.5 billion a year to use for running its services and improving mail delivery.

This would eliminate the need to terminate Saturday mail delivery service, close down mail processing centers and there would be no need to lay off 120,000 workers (the Postal Service work force has already been reduced through attrition by over 100,000 employees over the last four years).

But there are political opponents that have no desire to see the USPS survive what is, for all intents and purposes, a stupid accounting maneuver. Namely, the GOP and moderate Democrats were the players behind the PAEA, and are now the same forces peddling the narrative that the Postal Service is broke, the union too demanding and the only solution is cuts, cuts and, oh yes, more cuts.

GOP HOUSE TAKES AIM

Zlatkin says the name "Darrell Issa" like he just smelled something seriously foul. He had his first encounter with the Congressman in May soon after the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) and the Postal Service reached a collective bargaining agreement. The agreement, through givebacks

that the union offered, guaranteed the Postal Service over \$4 billion in cost savings on employees over the life of a contract. At the time, Postmaster Patrick Donahoe hailed this as a victory for the Postal Service, its employees and the people they serve.

However, as the union was preparing to vote on the agreement, Issa called a hearing on the contract. The move was completely unprecedented. Here was a Republican chair of the Oversight Committee grilling the postmaster general about an agreement (Issa called the contract too generous) upon which a union was currently voting. "Talk about tampering with elections," says Zlatkin.

For Zlatkin, the only other name that inspires as much contempt is Dennis Ross (R-Florida), another member of the Oversight Committee. "Issa's henchman," as Zlatkin calls him, went after the postmaster for settling on the agreement, demanding to know why he didn't negotiate the contract. "The bigger issue is really the longer-term changes we need to make to the Postal Service in terms of its viability," Ross said to Donahoe. "I hope we can empower you to do more."

Side note: It's interesting to hear the GOP refer to the Postal Service as if it's a business rather than an entity that provides a public service. The Postal Service is not designed to churn profits.

What empower meant was to starve the Postal Service and its union. Since that day, Donahoe has abdicated his responsibility as the postmaster general, according to Zlatkin. The APWU's collective bargaining agreements in the past have included layoff protections, which Donahoe immediately offered up as sacrifice to his Republican masters when he asked to bypass worker protection so he might obliterate 220,000 career positions from the workforce by 2015.

"All he's trying to do is appease that committee. He's violated a contract he's signed. He's violated labor law. From my understanding, by going to Congress and having them change the laws to change our contracts, he's violating the Constitution of the United States."

In fact, Zlatkin says his local union chapter is so disillusioned with the postmaster's behavior that they're putting out a press release to call for his resignation or termination. "He is either a well-meaning incompetent or a duplicitous front man for the people who want to privatize the postal service," says Zlatkin.

Soon after meeting with Donahoe, Issa introduced the Postal Reform Act to Congress, a bill that Zlatkin says would "Wisconsin" the Postal Service. "[The bill would] give them the kinds of powers that the Super Committee is having to just go in there temporarily and do what has to be done: rip into the contracts, close post offices without hearings. It's basically the Postal Service Destruction Act." The bill has one co-sponsor: Dennis Ross. And both men just happen to be in charge of the House Oversight Committee. Between the "Save The Postal Service" H.R. 1351 and the Postal Service Destruction Act, Zlatkin asks rhetorically, "which is gonna come to a vote?"

It makes sense that the Postal Service has become the target of rich, overwhelmingly white politicians. As former Deputy Assistant and Deputy Press Secretary to former President George W. Bush, Tony Fratto so eloquently tweeted: "Over the past 10 yrs I might have visited a post office 10 times, total."

USPS: PEOPLE'S SERVICE

When you can hand off parcels to your assistant who then ships it off at FedEx's higher rates, then yeah, the post office might not be for you. But as Marcy Wheeler explains, there are still tons of people who need the USPS's services: poorer people, people using a post office box, rural people who live outside delivery areas, eBay-type entrepreneurs, immigrants sending care packages to people from their country of origin and nonprofits.

"It's part of the class war and it's against the poor and it's a class war against working people," says Zlatkin. Of the 34 post offices the USPS is considering closing in New York

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



The jobs mirage: how much more work do we really need?

JEFFERY J. SMITH

While honest toil is honorable, a day to honor labor does make it easy to overlook certain realities, such as: Why do both left and right clamor for more jobs? Would those who get to opine for a living be willing to perform the jobs they'd impose upon others? And why jobs? If work is the only way one can be worthy of an income, why not also clamor for self-employment and start-ups? Must the jobless look forward to having a boss their entire lives? And are more jobs needed, or even possible?

Instead of clamor for jobs, why not clamor for a shorter workweek and divide the necessary work among more people? How'd 40 hours a week get to be some sort of magic number? Why aren't automation and globalization whittling that down to 30, 20, 10, going, going, gone? Juliet Schor in her "Overworked American" (1991) calculated that if increases in productivity (more output from less labor input) over the course of a baby boomer's career were applied not to things like fatter CEO salaries, but to shrinking the workweek, it'd now be 6.5 hours. Why isn't it?

It has been drastically shorter in the past. In his "Stone Age Economics" (1974), Marshall Sahlins calculated some aborigines

worked 15 hours per week. In his "Six Centuries of Work and Wages" (1884), James E. Thorold Rogers, member of Parliament, calculated that after a plague, peasants worked 14 hours per week. (Those were the Dark Ages, and now at 40 hours we're the enlightened ones?)



What happened was plagues left fewer people to work prime land so, for a while, surviving aristocrats could not exploit farmers. The key in both instances was access to bountiful land which let humans choose to work as much or as little as they liked. Now days, with

billions of humans on the globe, land is not quite as accessible, but it could be made more affordable. When that happens, jobs sprout and wages climb, as has happened several times: In the 1960s and 1970s, New Zealand's employment rate averaged 99 percent for

ten years. In the late 1950s, Danish workers received the biggest one-time raise in wages in Dansk history. And in the 1920s, New York City spurred the construction of numerous apartment buildings that provided jobs and slashed unemployment to negligible.

What was the one thing those places did in common? Their governments levied land. Whenever landowners must pay a heavier land tax, they eschew speculation and put their parcels to good use. The new construction puts people to work as do the resultant shops, offices and factories, as does the spending of wages by the gratefully employed workers.

Why is such a powerful tool for useful employment at decent wages left on the shelf by jobists? Perhaps because today there's a huge disconnect between labor (which has a voice and its Day) and land (which lacks a voice and needs a Day). At college, economics students still learn Ricardo's Law and how wasting prime sites,

where wages are high and falling back on marginal sites, where wages are low, forces down overall wages, but they're required to forget that by the time they become the practicing economists whose opinions you see in the media.

Forgetting the laws of economics does not make them go away. Idle land still makes idle hands, as the old reformers used to say. Drive around your city's slums; vacant lots – invisible to contemporary urbanites – are still the best indicator of joblessness, poverty and crime. And shifting the property tax off buildings and improvements, onto land and locations, is still the most effective way to harness both prime land and willing labor. A close second must be detaxing wages. If you want jobs so badly, why make them so costly?

This shift of taxes, this powerful reform, awaits implementation even as the left begs for jobs – anything to get money into the pockets of the poor – and the right pays jobs lip service – what better way to keep the poor busily subservient? But given the resultant rush hours, shriveled family time and sterile communities, it's a Faustian bargain at best. J.W. Smith in his "World's Wasted Wealth" (1994) suggested that if all the people now producing illth – everything from war toys to planned obsolescence – were to instead help produce wealth, we could cut the workweek in half.

This Labor Day and beyond, do remember our venerable organizers. But don't forget what generates truly useful jobs organically, the levy on land. It's always worked wherever tried, to the degree tried. Then take the rest of the day off.

JEFFERY J. SMITH EDITS THE PROGRESS REPORT AND THE GEONOMIST, WHICH WON A GREEN-LIGHT AWARD.

Source: *Truthout Op-Ed*, www.truthout.org 9/5/11

Postal workers

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

City, 17 are in the Bronx. The South Bronx district ranks as the poorest Congressional district in America.

"Any time a post office is rumored to be closing, it's devastating to the neighborhood that it's in," says Zlatkin, "what happens when we get involved with elected officials and community people to try and keep a post office open, it's always the same people who turn out: elderly people, disabled people, poor people and small business owners. They're the people who are the ones who that depend on the postal service that they can't really afford or have access to alternatives."

UPS and FedEx aren't required to do what the Postal Service does and that is deliver the mail to every place, even if the recipient is located in hard-to-reach rural terrain, or an inner-city neighborhood deemed too "dangerous" for other services, like taxi cabs, in which to travel. If the USPS falls, it will be another strike in the class war where poor people are yet again cut off from a service that used to belong to

everyone.

So, here we have a service that caters primarily to the economically disadvantaged and employs over 574,000 union members. No wonder it became such a mouth-watering target for the GOP. It would be quite a feather in the cap of Darrell "the liberal hunter" Issa to take out one of the largest unions in the country and simultaneously give the US a nudge in the direction of total privatization by crippling one of the last great public services.

ALLISON KILKENNY CO-HOSTS CITIZEN RADIO, THE ALTERNATIVE POLITICAL RADIO SHOW CALLED "IMPORTANT" AND "VITAL" BY NOAM CHOMSKY. SHE IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO HUFFINGTON POST, ALTERNET, THE NATION AND SHE BLOGS DAILY HERE <[HTTP://ALLISONKILKENNY.COM](http://ALLISONKILKENNY.COM)>.

Source: *Truthout News Analysis* 9/8/11, www.truthout.org



Labor notes

Washington State longshore workers dump scab grain to protect jobs

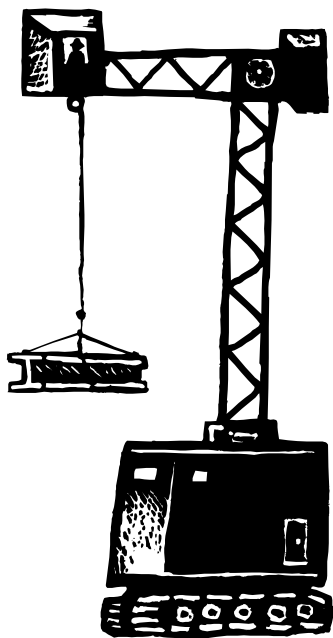
EVAN ROHAR AND JANE SLAUGHTER

Days after Labor Day, the confrontation between West Coast longshore workers and an anti-union exporter exploded as pickets massed on railroad tracks by the hundreds to block grain shipments.

ILWU President Bob McEllrath was detained by police as longshore workers massed on railroad tracks to stop a shipment of grain to a non-ILWU terminal. ILWU spokesman Craig Merrilees said, "When corporations and the government turn their backs on working families, it shouldn't surprise anyone to see people step forward and try to fight back." Police used clubs and pepper spray on protesters in Longview, Washington, as they made 19 arrests.

Early this morning a terminal there was invaded and hoppers holding about 10,000 tons of grain were opened onto railroad tracks. Ports in Washington shut down completely Thursday as hundreds of longshore workers rushed to Longview, in the state's southwestern corner.

Bill Proctor, a Longshore Union (ILWU) retiree, was with fellow retirees and active workers on an early morning picket line at a Seattle grain terminal. He said, "If that



facility is allowed to go non-ILWU, other facilities will be tempted to follow suit. And the grain terminals on the coast are all going into contract bargaining next month."

EGT Development, a consortium of three companies, wants to operate its new \$200 million grain terminal in Longview using non-ILWU labor, despite a contract with the port requiring it to do so. When the ILWU protested, the company signed up with an Operating Engineers local.

Every other major grain terminal on the West Coast is operated by ILWU labor, and the union asserts that

EGT's goal is to go non-union altogether, ending generations of good jobs.

In a series of protests since July, ILWU members and supporters sat down on train tracks and occupied the new terminal, resulting in 100 arrests. As picketing continued, no trains had attempted to bring in grain shipments since July. But last week a federal judge issued a temporary restraining order at the request of the National Labor Relations Board, which said ILWU pickets had harassed EGT workers.

Once the restraining order was in place, the BNSF railroad decided to try once more to ship grain. Justin

Hirsch, a Seattle longshore worker, said grain terminals are major customers for the rail companies, who might move 500 trains a year through a terminal.

Pickets in Vancouver, Washington, 40 miles from Longview, delayed the BNSF train yesterday morning, until police cleared protesters away.

That afternoon, hundreds of port workers stood on railroad tracks at Longview to block the mile-long train. Nineteen were arrested and ILWU national president Bob McEllrath was detained briefly – talk spread up the coast that police had broken McEllrath's arm. Riot police used clubs and pepper spray on some protesters.

Union officers eventually urged the blockaders to let the train through. But while it sat overnight inside the terminal gates, the word went out.

Workers in Seattle left their jobs before the shift ended. Proctor reported that members of Local 19 gathered at 2 a.m. to head the two-and-a-half hours to Longview.

"Overnight, people started flooding into Longview," said Hirsch. AP reported that before dawn, 500 people broke down terminal gates, prevented security guards from interfering, and cut the train's

brake lines.

Noting that a train could hold 107 carloads, Hirsch said the mess on the tracks would be "time-consuming to clean up" and noted "somebody's not getting paid."

Proctor said, "This struggle is central to our future because grain work accounts for 20 percent of the financing of our pension and welfare funds."

NOT THE FIRST TIME

Longshore workers have a history of militant action to defend their jobs. In the 1980s a company called Pier Q tried to use non-union labor to move lumber through the small port of Vancouver, Washington. ILWU members organized a rally at the port, drawing longshore workers from as far away as Los Angeles. International President Jimmy Herman spoke to a crowd of 2,000 or 3,000 assembled in a warehouse, recalled Doug Rollins, now a clerk at the Port of Tacoma.

The crowd marched out and surrounded the terminal, and longshore workers with wire cutters ran toward the lumber bundles sitting on the pier. "Every time you cut the bands off the lumber, the bundle would just explode and it would be like toothpicks shooting up in the air and coming down in a big pile," said Rollins.

Ten minutes after the start of the action, millions of board feet of lumber covered the terminal. Rollins reported that a policeman asked Herman who led the action. "I don't know, we don't know," Herman said. The international president was there, but the ranks were in charge, Rollins said. Since there were too many workers to arrest, the police stood by and watched as the thousands dispersed and went home.

WILL IT RESTRAIN?

The restraining order, issued by a federal judge, lasts 10 days. Both sides are back in court today, when the judge will decide if the order should be made permanent. ILWU spokesman Craig Merrilees said, "There is no formal action at either the local or International level, but large numbers of individuals appear to have taken action on their own." He stressed that no arrests were made at this morning's action and called the AP's report of security guards taken hostage "ridiculous." "When corporations and the government turn their backs on working families," Merrilees said, "it shouldn't surprise anyone to see people step forward and try to fight back."

Source: Labor Notes 9/8/11 <http://labornotes.org/2011/09/>

My job is to watch dreams die

JOE WEISENTHAL

What's it like to be the guy that literally has to go into people's houses, and tell them that they've been foreclosed on, and that they need to leave? A commenter gave his first-hand description of his job with the title: "Why My Job Is To Watch Dreams Die." After explaining the (interesting) legal process of initiating a foreclosure, the commenter describes the actual process of the eviction.

Here's a segment:

I open every drawer and cupboard making sure

the house is clean and doesn't have old engines, toxic chemicals or dead dogs lingering anywhere. Sometimes the kids are there, maybe waiting in the car, maybe not. I see the marks on the wall showing how the kids grew over the years. I see the anguished poetry scribbled on the wall by stoned teenagers and the occasional hole punched in the wall. One woman handed me the key to her reinforced bedroom door – during the divorce her now ex-husband was still living in the house and she had to barricade herself in at night. Another

said "right there is where I found my son – he couldn't handle losing the house".

Sometimes they don't want the money and don't want to be evicted so they sign a waiver stating that everything left inside can be disposed of. Hospital beds. Oxygen tanks and wheelchairs. Hundreds of boxes of shoes. A mannequin. A 2nd grader's homework portfolio. A wedding album filled with pictures with one person torn out. Get rich quick "business plans". 40 years worth of drafting documents. To the lenders and the lawyers, these things

don't exist – they close the file and order a trashout. Sometimes I linger as I check the basement for mold and lead. I am the final period on so many significant chapters. To most other people it is just part of the job but in so many other universes this is where I ended up. There is no difference between myself and these people other than the intangible twists of experience.

And so I listen. I feign dispassion but I'm not fooling anybody. Somehow they can tell that I care and thank me even as they admit that it isn't my fault, that it isn't my



responsibility to listen. I've stood inside another's dream for an hour as they spoke, not really to be heard but to say goodbye – to leave the ghosts behind.

They go to the car and return with the openers.

The keys are peeled from a ring.

They thank me. Sometimes they cry.

And they're gone.

I wait for their car to vanish before I put up the sign. To most everybody else it is just another house on just another block in just another city in just another financial catastrophe.

But I was there. I saw the dream end.

Source: Business Insider 9/5/11 <http://www.businessinsider.com/>



Recession puts kids at risk

WILLIAM FISHER

“IF THE TOP EARNERS ARE O.K., THEN THE REST OF US WILL BE O.K.”

That piece of economic sleight of hand has been a central tenet in the Republican catechism since even before Ronald Reagan and long before the Tea Party. The Grand Old Party clings to this totally discredited and never proven economic article of faith despite a mountain of evidence that grows higher with each passing week in recession.

The figures that tell most of this sorry story are these, reported in *Mother Jones*: A huge share of the nation’s economic growth over the past 30 years has gone to the top one-hundredth of one percent, who now make an average of \$27 million per household. The average income for the bottom 90 percent of us? It’s \$31,244.

But there’s another part of the story that’s not usually told. It’s how American children are being affected by the Great Recession. One of the few looks into this largely hidden part of the issue was taken by “60 Minutes” on CBS television a few weeks ago. The show revealed a large cohort of school kids who have been forced to live in motels because their parents lost their jobs and then their homes through foreclosure.

These kids run over to their school to brush their teeth and wash up in the morning. They run out to the nearest fast-food joints, with their parents, at mealtimes. In the mornings, a special school bus picks them up near their motels. The bus is dedicated to that task. And many families who aren’t living in motels, or camping out with friends or relatives, are living in municipal shelters. One father, out of work for more than a year, has taken to sitting on the curb of a busy thoroughfare with an upside-down cap and displaying a sign that reads, “Will Work for Food – Family of Three.”

Now, the Annie E. Casey Foundation gives us a set of hard and very grim data to support “60 Minutes” anecdotal view. That data is very scary, very anger inducing and very heartbreaking. The new numbers on 2009 poverty among US children finds 31 million children living in families that are at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Now, in 2010, they are higher still.

On the PBS “NewsHour,” Judy Woodruff discussed the new statistics with Patrick McCarthy, CEO of the Casey Foundation, which has spent years compiling this kind of data about kids.

The foundation’s new report – “Kids Count (<http://www.kidscount.org/census/>)” – tells us that poverty rates among children rose substantially, not just during the recession, but throughout the last decade. The official child poverty rate rose by nearly 20 percent from 2000 to 2009. And, in 2010, 11 percent of children lived with at least one unemployed parent. That means that 20 percent of all American children are living in poverty. Twenty percent is 31 million kids.

The foundation says that what’s even more troubling in some ways is that the children who are on the edge of living in poverty, those children who live with families that are at 200 percent of the federal poverty level, now comprise 42 percent of all children living at that level. McCarthy describes the children living at or below \$43,500 a year – as surviving “two or three paychecks away from economic catastrophe.”

McCarthy understates the figures as “stunning” – “especially when you consider what the research tells us what happens when children grow up in poverty or when they slip into poverty as a result of recession.” He says: “We know that kids who grow up poor are much more likely to end up being poor themselves. They’re more likely to have children too early with teen pregnancy. They’re more likely to become involved with the criminal justice system as they grow up. They’re less likely to be employed. And they’re less likely to fully use the talents that they’re given.”

McCarthy’s foundation looked at all the past recent recessions. It compared children who slipped into poverty as a result of one of those recessions with a child at the same level of income before the recession. Those kids who fell into poverty, in fact, were less likely to graduate from school, more likely to have school problems, more likely to have educational difficulty. And even health was affected over the

long term as those kids were followed into adulthood.

McCarthy called attention to the effects of the housing crisis, of so many foreclosures, on children. This is also a story that is not often told. Between 2007 and 2009, 5.3 million children were directly affected by the foreclosure crisis, having to leave their homes. We’re talking about four percent of the children in this country being affected by a foreclosure crisis.

McCarthy says that “there’s another hidden fact here, though and that is that the children who live in rental housing, when the owner of that property goes through foreclosure, too often, that rental – that family renting in that property is forced to move.”

And we know a lot about what happens to children when they have to move frequently. Again, their schoolwork suffers. They often have to change schools, which puts them behind. They’re less likely to graduate from school. They’re more likely to have behavioral problems. There’s a whole list of problems that come about as a result of a foreclosure crisis.

McCarthy proposes a two-generation strategy for dealing with these monumental problems. Short term, unemployment insurance is a key protector of kids and families when unemployment is as high as it is. The earned income tax credit, the child tax credit, these kinds of things help to supplement wages and keep kids out of poverty.

“The two-generation strategy means focusing on the parents, but also then investing early in children. We know from research that high-quality prenatal care, high-quality child care and pre-K and especially education in the early years is critical to put children on a path towards opportunity.

“We believe that what you need to focus on is what’s most important, so every dollar is used in the best way, what’s most cost-effective and what can you do now, in 2011, that’s going to shape what this country looks like in 2031, in 2041 and in 2051,” he says.

OVERCOMING RESISTANCE

Acknowledging that these strategies cost money to implement, Woodruff asked McCarthy how he intends to overcome the current strictures on government spending. McCarthy’s response: “You know, the answer to me is that this country is great in part because we have certain core shared values. And I think the most important shared value that we all have, regardless of our perspective on economics or politics, is that this is a country where we care about opportunity. We care that parents can tell their kids that, if they work hard and they use their talents, they’re going to get ahead.

“And if we don’t invest in ensuring that that opportunity is really available for all of our children, we start to come apart as a country and we lose one of our greatest strengths. So, I think this is actually a shared value. I should also point out that investing in children is not what’s driving the deficit or the debt. In fact, children represent a small portion of our overall budget.

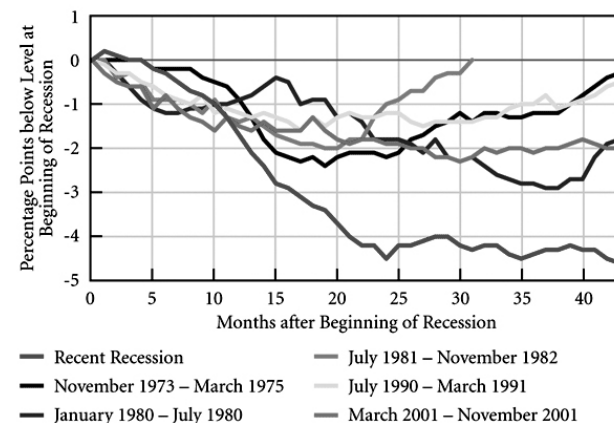
“So, we ought to be investing smart, as well as recognizing we ought to deal with the problem today, but not in a way that’s going to harm us in the future.” One has to admire his optimism in the face of the permanent tone deafness of Tea Party Republicans; and, in fact, the Democrats aren’t doing much heavy lifting on this urgent issue either. Talking is not the same as doing.

It’s time we asked ourselves: What will our country look like a generation from now if we all bleep out the callousness; the cruelty; the uncaring; the herd instinct; the incomprehensible hubris exhibited by lawmakers who continue to disgrace themselves and their country by ignoring, not their own children, but everyone else’s?

WILLIAM FISHER HAS MANAGED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND IN MANY OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD FOR THE US STATE DEPARTMENT AND USAID FOR THE PAST THIRTY YEARS. GO TO THE WORLD ACCORDING TO BILL FISHER <[HTTP://WWW.BILLFISHER.BLOGSPOT.COM/](http://WWW.BILLFISHER.BLOGSPOT.COM/)> FOR MORE.

Source: *Truthout News Analysis 9/10/11*, www.truthout.org

Recession heads off the charts



Sources: St. Louis Federal Reserve Bank, FRED database; authors’ calculations

DIMITRI B. PAPADIMITRIOU

“By 1970, the governments of the wealthy countries began to take it for granted that they had truly discovered the secret of cornucopia. Politicians of left and right alike believed that modern economic policy was able to keep economies expanding very fast – and endlessly. That left only the congenial question of dividing up the new wealth that was being steadily generated.”

Those words, from a Washington Post editorial more than twenty-five years ago, echoed the beliefs not only of politicians and the press, but of mainstream economics professionals resistant to the idea that growth in a market economy would ever stagnate over a protracted period.

And some of the data did fit nicely. Through several recessions and recoveries, inflation-adjusted GDP rose almost in tandem with a line of predicted growth expectations. But in November 2007, something changed. Real GDP dropped down from what was expected by more than 11 percent, and, as this summer’s data has shown, it hasn’t returned to its pre-recession trend.

The unusual slump has provoked a stream of commentary that attempts to define the problem, but it hardly matters whether the downturn is identified as the second dip of a ‘double-dip’ recession, a continuation of the ‘Great Recession’, a fast-moving slowdown, a slow nosedive, a long-term stall-out, or a confirmation that the economy has

entered a Japanese-style ‘lost decade’. Growth during the 21st century is following a different trend line than it did in the 20th, and employment is also responding in new, different ways from earlier post-World War II recessions.

A range of additional data also indicates that what we’re hearing is not the regular breathing of an economy as it contracts and expands. Annual growth rates and quarterly moving averages – when examined starting in the mid 1970s, as Greg Hannsgen and I did at the Levy Economics Institute – show a steady decline beginning in 2000.

And the employment numbers make the case yet again. Look at the graph above, with separate lines for the past six recessions. It traces employment-to-population ratios, beginning with the first month of each recession. These ratios are used to measure, among other things, how well a nation utilizes its workforce – a kind of labor drop-out rate.

You can see at a glance that the bottom line (indicating the current recession) is an outlier in the group. It shows that by the 43rd month of the downturn, the ratio stood at just over 58 percent, meaning that 58 percent of the population was employed. That figure is 4.6 percent less than at the recession’s start, when more than 62 percent were working. And it means that this employment decline is steeper, deeper, and longer than in any of the previous five recessions by a long shot.

Even in the two worst



Jobs plan? End the wars, save 400,000 jobs

ROBERT NAIMAN

President Obama delivered a major address to a joint session of Congress on Thursday, outlining his plans for spending and tax cuts to create jobs.

Here's a plan that would likely save at least 400,000 jobs over the next ten years, without increasing the deficit or raising a dollar of additional revenue: bring the troops home from Iraq and Afghanistan as previously scheduled, and use the savings to reduce the debt in place of proposed cuts to Social Security and Medicare benefits – or other cuts in domestic spending.

The total savings to the federal budget of using the chained Consumer Price Index (CPI) as a measure of inflation (including cuts in Social Security benefits) and raising the Medicare retirement age appear to be on the order of \$200 billion over 2012–2021. This proposal was a key feature of the deal that President Obama and Speaker Boehner agreed to in the debt ceiling negotiations. The deal collapsed, because Speaker Boehner could not deliver the House on the deal, since it also included revenue increases. Judging from press reports, the president and others would like to revive this deal. So – unfortunately, from the point of view of the values and interests of the overwhelming majority of Americans – this proposal appears to still be on the table.

As good fortune would have it, \$200 billion is a conservative estimate of the savings to the federal budget from 2012–2021 of withdrawing all US troops from Iraq this December (as previously agreed) and withdrawing all US troops from Afghanistan after 2014 (as previously announced.) It's a conservative estimate for at least three reasons: because it assumes that the Pentagon's plan is to keep 25,000 troops in Afghanistan after 2014, which is towards the low end of the estimates that have appeared in press reports; because it uses the current average cost of keeping troops in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the average cost is likely to be higher when troop levels are lower; and because it is only based on current appropriations, not future implied costs of current action, like

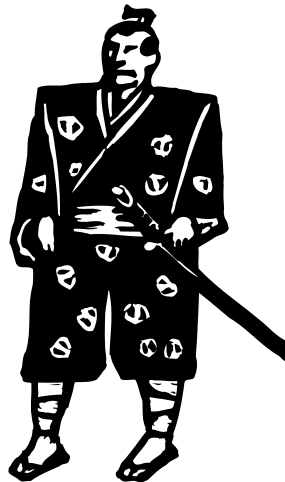
veterans' health care.

In addition to the direct benefit to the overwhelming majority of Americans of protecting Social Security and Medicare benefits from any cuts, taking the money from the military rather than Social Security and Medicare would have the effect of protecting US employment, since spending money in the domestic economy creates more US employment than military spending in general and war spending in particular.

Here is a rough estimate of the effect this proposal would have on saving jobs.

In a 2007 paper, Robert Pollin and Heidi Garrett–Peltier of the University of Massachusetts estimated the impact of an additional billion dollars in military spending on employment compared to other uses, using a standard input–output model of the US economy.

They found that an additional billion dollars in military spending would create 8,555 jobs. In contrast, an additional billion in tax cuts for personal consumption would create 10,779 jobs. Other categories of federal spending examined – education, health, mass transit – created more jobs than tax cuts for personal consumption.



Health care debate shown through a GOP lens

MARK KARLIN

That's a narrative that President Obama should have used when battling for health care reform. His absence of doing so is indicative of his inability – even while giving stirring speeches, as he did on jobs – to instill a larger vision and narrative into his presidency.

The reality is that the current health care system for those with insurance – many of whom opposed the White House's health care reform package – increasingly means that they are paying more and getting less in coverage. This is resulting from escalating deductibles, co-payments, out-of-pocket limits and higher premium co-pays. Ask any American, except for the wealthiest, and this is most likely a growing financial challenge that they are experiencing.

Ezra Klein of The Washington Post wrote

a column entitled, "How Health Costs Wiped Out a Full Decade of Income Increases." Klein notes, "All evidence points to American voters not really caring about rising health care costs. But here's one pretty compelling reason they should: The escalating cost of health care has wiped out nearly all income gains made by the average American family in the past decade...."

So, instead of emphasizing the larger narrative of rising personal medical insurance costs that threatens most Americans, Obama emphasized the uninsured. The Republicans turned this to their advantage through code words and fear – but mostly through the usual wink and nod that this was some scheme to benefit minorities and dead beats.

Obama lost the battle over this narrative, even though it was his to win, because he all too often is

afraid of speaking in terms that reflect the contextual reality of public policy options in plain, homespun terms. Instead, he accepts the debate "frame" of the likes of right-wing think tanks funded by the heavy-hitting Koch brothers' crowd.

The choice was never between "Obamacare" and a system that works. It was between a health care delivery system that is eating away at the wages of all but the wealthiest Americans and a paradigm shift in providing medical care in the US.

Obama avoided the paradigm shift and created a system that will enrich insurance companies that are themselves a key cause of rising health care costs, while managing to provide the Republicans a cudgel with which to hit him over the head.

Without a vision, without resetting the terms of the debate, without bringing

the truth to bear down upon the important public policy issues of the day, Obama is a trapped man trying to punch his way out of an alternative universe narrative created by three decades of right-wing propaganda and bullying.

What about that average \$1,500 in payroll tax deduction that the president proposed in his new jobs bill? Most of us will be spending it on increased health insurance premiums, deductibles and paying for non-covered services. President Obama needs to spell out the real narrative of America, not to de facto accept the one forced down our gullets by Fox News.

Source: Buzzflash 9/9/11 <http://www.buzzflash.com>

Thus, the net effect of moving one billion dollars from the domestic economy to military spending would be to destroy at least 2,224 jobs; moving \$200 billion from the domestic economy to military spending would destroy at least 444,800 jobs. Conversely, saving \$200 billion by ending the wars as previously scheduled, rather than saving it from the federal budget by using the chained CPI and raising the Medicare retirement age, would save more than 400,000 jobs.

What does saving 444,800 jobs mean in the context of the US economy? The US labor force is about 150 million people, so 400,000 jobs represents about 0.3 percent of the labor force. If those jobs were added to the economy today, the measured unemployment rate, instead of being 9.1 percent, would be 8.8 percent. Not at all where we want to be, obviously, but still a significant improvement – for hundreds of thousands of people – from where we are now.

Of course, there are much more savings to be had by cutting the military budget. We could draw troops down in Afghanistan between now and 2015 faster than the Pentagon wants. Every year we have 25,000 fewer troops in Afghanistan, we save more than \$17 billion. As David Ignatius notes in The Washington Post, according to the analysts of the CIA, we're currently spending \$100 billion a year in Afghanistan for "stalemate."

And then there is the question of cutting the "base," nonwar, Pentagon budget. Under the automatic trigger, currently projected Pentagon spending would be cut by roughly \$600 billion over ten years, in addition to the \$350 billion reduction that the administration and press reports say was implied by the previous debt reduction agreement. Pentagon chief Leon Panetta has said this additional reduction in projected Pentagon spending would be unacceptable and the money should come from "entitlements" – the Social Security and Medicare benefits we have already paid for through our payroll taxes – instead.

But if taking \$200 billion out of the military instead of domestic spending would save 444,800 jobs, then taking \$600 billion out of the military instead of domestic spending would save 1,334,400 jobs. If you added 1,334,400 jobs to the economy today, the unemployment rate would be 8.2 percent, rather than 9.1 percent. If we end the wars as scheduled and cut projected Pentagon spending by an additional \$600 billion, instead of taking money out of the domestic economy, that would save 1,779,200 jobs, an effect akin to reducing the unemployment rate today from 9.1 percent to 7.9 percent.

Ending the wars and cutting the base military budget by \$600 billion will not by itself solve our unemployment problem. But failing to end the wars and failing to cut the base military budget and cutting domestic spending instead, will, so long as we have an unemployment problem, make our unemployment problem significantly worse; and ending the wars and cutting the base Pentagon budget will have the effect of significantly lowering unemployment relative to taking cuts from the domestic economy.

Here's another way of looking at the stimulus effects of moving money from the military to the domestic budget. If you find a billion dollars lying on the sidewalk, you can use that to create 10,779 jobs through tax cuts for personal consumption, the least efficient means of creating jobs besides military spending. If you move a billion dollars from military spending to domestic spending, you create 2,224 jobs. Thus, every time you move a billion dollars from the military budget to domestic spending it's as if you found \$206 million lying on the sidewalk to use for economic stimulus. If you move \$800 billion to the domestic economy by ending the wars and cutting projected Pentagon spending it's as if you found \$165 billion lying on the sidewalk to use for economic stimulus.

You can urge Congress to end the wars as part of the deal to reduce the nation's debt here <<http://www.justforeignpolicy.org/act/endwarsontime>>

ROBERT NAIMAN IS POLICY DIRECTOR AT JUST FOREIGN POLICY <[HTTP://WWW.JUSTFOREIGNPOLICY.ORG/](http://WWW.JUSTFOREIGNPOLICY.ORG/)> AND PRESIDENT OF TRUTHOUT'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

Source: Truthout News Analysis 9/8/11, www.truthout.org



Time to repeal the authorization to use military force

DAVID SWANSON

Congresswoman Barbara Lee, like Jeanette Rankin before her, bravely stood alone in Congress against a vote for war, the vote in 2001 for the so-called Authorization to Use Military Force, a Constitutionally dubious passing of the war decision buck to President Bush and his successors. A majority of Americans now believes that the Afghanistan War that followed that authorization never should have been begun and should, in fact, be ended. So, the Congresswoman, along with initial cosponsors Jones, Woolsey, Grijalva, Conyers, and Honda, is offering us a second chance, a chance to get our response to 9-11 right, to restore war powers to the Congress, and to impose the will of the people on that body.

Congresswoman Lee has sent her colleagues this letter, which we should each send them ourselves by email, fax, phone, carrier pigeon, and by nailing it to their cathedral doors:

Dear Colleague:

Please join me as an original cosponsor of the 'Repeal of the Authorization for Use of Military Force Act of 2011.' This legislation repeals the joint resolution providing overly-broad authorization to the President to use all necessary and appropriate force against those involved in attacking our nation and to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the United States.

This broad authorization of force has had far-reaching implications which shake the very foundations of our great nation and democracy. It has been used to justify warrantless surveillance and wiretapping activities, indefinite detention practices that fly in the face of our constitutional values, extrajudicial targeted-killing operations, and an ever-growing and indefinite pursuit of an ill-defined enemy abroad.

We must repeal this authorization for use of military force, end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and re-focus our energy and efforts into those actions which truly improve our national security, including developing emerging economies and diplomatic efforts. Please join me as an original cosponsor of this legislation to remove this overly-broad blank check for war anytime, anywhere.

For more information or to cosponsor this measure, please contact Teddy Miller in my office at teddy.miller@mail.house.gov <mailto:teddy.miller@mail.house.gov> or 5.2661.

Sincerely,
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

THE LAW

The legislation itself is shorter than the above letter, powerful in its simplicity, approaching in fact the populist wisdom of the long-forgotten Kellogg-Briand Pact, and offering far more than a technical readjustment within a government rotten to its core. At the risk of revitalizing the utterly discredited and poisonous notions of hope and change, I would suggest that this bill offers the nearest possible approximation of the time-altering repeal, not of a law, but of the past decade of collective insanity and self-righteous mass-murder. Read this carefully:

To repeal Public Law 107 - 40.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Ms. LEE of California introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To repeal Public Law 107-40.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.



This Act may be cited as the "Repeal of the Authorization for Use of Military Force".

SEC. 2. CONGRESSIONAL FINDING.

Congress finds that the Authorization for Use of Military Force (Public Law 107-40; 50 U.S.C. 1541 note), signed into law on September 18, 2001, has been used to justify a broad and open-ended authorization for the use of military force and such an interpretation is inconsistent with the authority of Congress to declare war and make all laws for executing powers vested by the Constitution in the Government of the United States.

SEC. 3. REPEAL OF PUBLIC LAW 107-40.

Effective 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Authorization for Use of Military Force (Public Law 107-40; 50 U.S.C. 1541 note) is hereby repealed.

The AUMF is to be repealed here for two reasons: because Congress is Constitutionally bound to decide matters of war and cannot legally hand off that responsibility to its executive, and because Congresswoman Lee's tearful predictions when she stood alone against this madness a decade ago, and was subsequently obliged to hire security protection, have been proved right; the Authorization has been used and abused to an ever greater extent as an aggrandizement of executive power and a justification for the erosion of our civil liberties. This proposal comes on the heels of a successful public push by RootsAction.org, the ACLU, and others to strip out of the 2012 Defense Authorization Act language that would have radically expanded, rather than repealed, the 2001 AUMF.

Of course, the sponsorship of this proposal by a handful of Congress Members, any number of them capable of losing their spine at the command of their parties' leaders, does not suggest the likelihood of quick passage. But it does give a somewhat floundering peace movement a point around which to rally, educate, organize, and pressure. Rather than joining Congressional progressives in lobbying the 12-member Super Congress, even for top priorities like ending the wars and moving the money to human needs, rather than focusing purely on appealing to an all-powerful president to end particular wars (important as that is), we have an opportunity here to shift the country away from both the idea of presidential war making and the idea, recognized now even by the /Washington Post/, of war without end, war as normality, with peace having become the state of affairs requiring particular justification.

As popular movements begin to bring nonviolent resistance to Washington, D.C., including this October (<http://october2011.org>), perhaps one appropriate measure would be the shutting down of the congressional offices of each member who has not yet joined the good Congresswoman from Oakland on this bill - a step I'm sure she would never recommend to us and which it is not her role to recommend to us, but a step which morality requires of us as clearly as the blood of our innocent victims is crying out from continents day after day.

DAVID SWANSON IS THE AUTHOR OF WAR IS A LIE AND DAYBREAK: UNDOING THE IMPERIAL PRESIDENCY AND FORMING A MORE PERFECT UNION. HE BLOGS AT DAVIDSWANSON.ORG AND WARISACRIME.ORG.

Source: War Is A Crime release 9/8/11 <http://warisacrime.org>



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Why Is President Obama So Anxious to Cut Social Security?

DEAN BAKER

On his tour of the Midwest last month, President Obama again indicated his interest in cutting Social Security. He repeated a proposal that his administration first put forward in the debt ceiling negotiations: he wants to cut the annual cost of living adjustment by 0.3 percentage points.

This cut may sound small, but it adds up over time. A person in their 70s who had been getting benefits for ten years would see a reduction of 3 percent. By the time they were in their 80s, the cut would be 6 percent. And if they lived into their 90s, their benefit would be more than 9 percent lower as a result of President Obama's proposal.



For an average retiree who can expect to get benefits for 20 years, President Obama's plan would cut their lifetime Social Security benefits by roughly 3 percent. By comparison, his much feared tax increases on the rich would reduce the after-tax income of someone earning \$300,000 a year by just 0.5 percent. In this case, a beneficiary who will be mostly dependent on their Social Security income in retirement will take about six times as large a hit relative to their income under President Obama's plan to cut Social Security than a couple earning \$300,000 would from his plan to raise their taxes.

This cut to Social Security seems especially inappropriate since the near retirees who would feel the full impact of this cut have just seen most of their wealth destroyed by the collapse of the housing bubble and the plunge in the stock market. The typical near retiree (ages 55–64) has just \$170,000 in net wealth, including the equity in their home.

This means that if they used every last penny in their 401(k) and other savings, they would have just about enough money to pay off the mortgage on a typical home. This would leave them 100 percent dependent on Social Security for their income. And of course, half of near retirees have less than this amount, meaning that they will not even be able to pay off the mortgage on a typical home. But apparently President Obama feels that these people need to make greater sacrifices.

The determination to cut Social Security is especially strange given the finances of the program. Under the law, Social Security is financed by the designated Social Security tax. It does not contribute to the deficit, since the law prohibits payments from being made if there is not money in the Social Security trust fund. That means that if the trust fund were drained, rather than contributing to the deficit, full benefits would not be paid.

And the date where this could be an issue is still relatively distant. The Congressional Budget Office just released new projections showing that the Social Security trust fund is fully solvent through the year 2038. Even after that date, the program would have enough money to pay 81 percent of scheduled benefits for the rest of the century. The folks who say that there will be nothing there for our children or grandchildren are just making it up or repeating the nonsense

promulgated by some political hack.

Furthermore, this gap is not hard to close. Currently, the tax on the wages subject to the tax is capped at \$107,000. The upward redistribution of income over the last three decades has caused a large share of wage income to escape taxation, as more money ends up in the pocket of CEOs and Wall Street types than ordinary workers. If all wage income were subject to the tax (see Sanders article below), then it would leave Social Security fully solvent for its 75-year planning period.

We could also go the route of increasing the tax on ordinary workers to cover the shortfall. After all, part of the story is that people are enjoying longer retirements, even if the wealthy have benefited much more from the increase in longevity than the typical worker. By 2040, average wages are projected to be 45 percent higher than today, adjusting for the impact of inflation. If just 5 percent of the projected wage growth over this period was used to finance Social Security, the program would be fully solvent for the rest of the century.

Most people would be surprised to know that 5 percent of the wage growth projected over the next three decades would be sufficient to keep Social Security solvent. After all, there is a well-funded and well-connected industry of people spreading disaster stories about Social Security and its massive deficit.

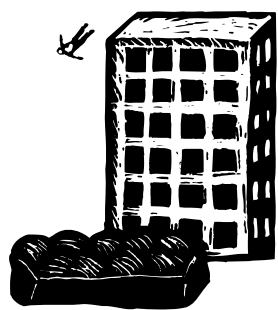
Many people will be taken aback by the idea of "projected wage growth," after all most workers' wages have been stagnant or falling in recent years. This is true. The projections refer to average wages, which had been rising, at least until the recession.

This brings up the fundamental point. The country has been and is getting richer. The reason that most people do not feel better off is that most of the money has gone to those at the top. Part of the reason is that they have been distracted by nonsense about the crushing burden of Social Security, so they have not paid attention to the policies that put more money in the pockets of the rich. Unfortunately, at the moment, President Obama seems to be working with the distracters.

DEAN BAKER IS A MACROECONOMIST AND CO-DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR ECONOMIC AND POLICY RESEARCH <[HTTP://WWW.CEPR.NET/](http://www.cepr.net/)> IN WASHINGTON, DC.

Source: Truthout News Analysis 8/22/11 www.truthout.org/

Sanders bill: ensures full Social Security funding for 75 years



ZAID JILANI

Last week, Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) was a featured speaker at the United Steel Workers 2011 conference in Las Vegas. Sanders focused much of his speech on the Social Security system, blasting suggestions by Democrats and Republicans alike that, for example,

we should adjust the cost of living adjustment to cut Social Security payments to working class Americans or raise the retirement age. "When [Social Security] was developed, 50 percent of seniors lived in poverty. Today, poverty among seniors is too high, but that number is ten percent. Social Security has done exactly what it was designed to do!" he thundered, defending the program.

Late August, Sanders announced that he will introduce legislation that would strengthen Social Security without cutting benefits to any of its beneficiaries. Sanders' legislation would eliminate the income cap that currently

exists in the payroll tax that does not tax income above \$106,800.

To keep Social Security strong for another 75 years, Sanders' legislation would apply the same payroll tax already paid by more than nine out of 10 Americans to those with incomes over \$250,000 a year. Under Sanders' legislation, Social Security benefits would be untouched. The system would be fully funded by making the wealthiest Americans pay the same payroll tax already assessed on those with incomes up to \$106,800 a year.

Sanders points out that President Obama himself endorsed this idea on the campaign trail in 2008. "What

we need to do is to raise the cap on the payroll tax so that wealthy individuals are paying a little bit more into the system. Right now, somebody like Warren Buffet pays a fraction of 1 percent of his income in payroll tax, whereas the majority pays payroll tax on 100 percent of their income. I've said that was not fair," said Obama during the campaign.

The Social Security system is currently fully funded until 2037. Lifting the payroll tax cap would virtually eliminate funding shortfalls the program would experience over the next 75 years.

Source: ThinkProgress 8/26/11 <http://thinkprogress.org/economy>

Recession heads off the charts

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

recoveries during the past forty years, this ratio never before declined by more than three percent. By the time the five recessions were this far along, employment had returned either to pre-recession levels, or to a distance from the recession's start that was, at worst, two percent, compared to the current more than four percent.

Together, this data makes the case that we're in a prolonged slump that's highly unusual, and requires action that's far more aggressive

than the usual responses. Job creation should be the government's urgent, first priority. The nation needs to recognize just how perilous the employment disaster is – and what a marked departure this recession is from any we've seen in the modern era.

DIMITRI PAPADIMITRIOU IS PRESIDENT OF THE LEVY ECONOMICS INSTITUTE OF BARD COLLEGE <[HTTP://WWW.LEVYINSTITUTE.ORG/](http://www.levyinstitute.org/)>.

Source: New Geography News Analysis 9/9/11 <http://www.newgeography.com/>

More for them, less for you

CARL GIBSON

What would you say to a family financial adviser who suggested your wisest investment would be to liquidate your own retirement account and empty out your kids' college fund to buy your wealthy cousin a new Bentley? Would you go ahead and gamble with your life savings in hopes that your cousin would send you a big thank-you check, or would you hire a new financial adviser?

The current crop of Republicans vying for the presidential nomination are all champions of a reverse-Robin Hood methodology that calls for soaking the poor to give more lavish tax breaks to the rich, and calling it "job creation." Former Utah Governor Jon Huntsman, known as the most liberal of the GOP contenders, recently unveiled an economic plan that calls for cutting the top tax rate to 23%, cutting the US corporate tax rate to 25%, and completely eliminating capital gains and dividends taxes – which would exclusively benefit obscenely rich investors like Warren Buffett. To pay for it, Huntsman's plan would raise taxes on seniors, veterans

and working families with children. Rather than being dismissed as radical and/or cruel, this plan has been endorsed by the Wall Street Journal.

Not to be outdone, Michele Bachmann is toying with the idea of not just cutting the corporate tax rate, but eliminating corporate taxes altogether. Rick Perry says a 0% corporate tax rate will "get the economy working again." Sarah Palin is also jumping on the end-corporate-taxes bus. Mitt Romney insists corporations are people. All of President Obama's potential challengers are falling all over themselves to proclaim the biggest obstacles faced by America's private sector "job creators" are America's corporate income tax rate and federal regulations.

If that's the case, America's "job creators" aren't doing their job. While our marginal corporate tax rate of 35% is constantly criticized as one of the world's highest, corporate income taxes barely count for 1 percent of GDP, thanks to all the corporate gimmicks and loopholes in the US tax code. Corporations continue to hoard \$800 billion in cash while jobs continue their



flight out of the country. And instead of trickling down, all of the wealth has collected at the top. Since 2009, 88% of income growth went toward corporate profits, not more jobs and higher wages.

President Obama's highly-anticipated jobs plan comes just after a jobs report that showed every private-sector job created was offset with lost public-sector jobs. America's small business owners, the real job creators, say taxes and regulations have nothing to do with the slump in hiring – rather, the continued loss of public-

sector jobs is taking money out of consumers' pockets, meaning less demand for small business owners who need customers before they can hire.

It shouldn't surprise American voters that the same presidential candidates chomping at the bit to deregulate corporations and cut taxes for the super-rich are super-rich, or that leading GOP presidential hopefuls are also financed by billionaires who fight regulations tooth and nail. Their "jobs" agenda has

nothing to do with creating jobs, but is rather intended to make them more attractive to wealthy donors who will be flooding the GOP field with cash this election season.

And while Obama's challengers continue to bemoan the burdensome environment for the private sector, those employers are actually growing jobs in line with normal expectations during a recovery. The real drag on hiring has been in the public sector, largely due to job-killing budget cuts handed down by largely Republican administrations. Demand creates jobs, not tax cuts. Republican governors naming a job-killing spending plan a "jobs budget" won't change the fact that their budgets will inevitably kill jobs.

Even in 1785, Thomas Jefferson knew a progressive tax was the most fair when he wrote, "Another means of silently lessening the inequality of property is to exempt all from taxation below a certain point, and to tax the higher portions of property in geometrical progression as they rise." And today, lifetime registered Republican, corporate CEO and tax guru Henry Bloch of H&R Block says the idea

of lowering taxes to create jobs is "baloney." Rather, a common-sense solution to pay for any jobs plan is taxing the same Wall Street bankers who created this mess. Taxing the trading of abstract financial instruments like derivatives and credit default swaps could generate \$1.5 trillion in a decade. Though because such a proposal is likely to draw ire from the big banks, it seems unlikely any of the current candidates will talk up the idea.

In these dire economic times, Americans must not choose feeble-minded leaders who boast such a stupefying lack of knowledge on economic issues. The next time we go to the polls, let's pick financial advisers who actually want to see us do well, not sell our livelihoods and futures to the highest bidder.

CARL GIBSON, 24, OF LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY, IS A SPOKESMAN AND ORGANIZER FOR US UNCUT <HTTP://USUNCUT.ORG/>, A NONVIOLENT, CREATIVE DIRECT-ACTION MOVEMENT TO STOP BUDGET CUTS BY GETTING CORPORATIONS TO PAY THEIR FAIR SHARE OF TAXES.

Source: Reader Supported News Perspective 9/6/11 <http://readersupportednews.org>

Cuts: only Fed budget choices?

DONNA COOPER AND SETH HANLON

The compromise reached between Congress and President Obama last month requires \$1 trillion in cuts from federal budget discretionary programs and an agreement to identify another \$1.5 trillion in deficit reduction by Thanksgiving. But there is no agreement yet on closing tax breaks for the highest income Americans or ending tax subsidies that pad the bottom line of the most profitable companies – special tax breaks that were declared off the table by Republicans in the recent round of negotiations.

The agreement struck between Congress and President Obama to raise the debt ceiling requires a two-step deficit reduction process. First Congress imposes caps on discretionary spending programs that amount to combined cuts of \$1 trillion

over the next 10 years. These cuts are likely to affect areas such as housing, job training, and education programs.

Then, by November 23, three Democrats and three Republicans from each chamber – the so-called Super Committee – are charged with finding \$1.5 trillion in additional deficit reduction. In theory, everything is on the table, including defense spending; entitlements such as Medicaid, Medicare, and Social Security; and revenues. If the Super Committee can agree on a deficit reduction package, then the full Congress would have until December 1 to approve them, or else a "sequester" would go into effect, cutting defense and reimbursements to Medicare providers.

House Republicans continue to stonewall on revenues. But some Senate Republicans have signaled a willingness to cut special tax

breaks and subsidies. And poll after poll has shown that vast majorities of Americans' in fact strong majorities of Republicans – support a balanced approach that includes cuts to spending programs and special tax breaks. It remains to be seen whether our political system will be able to produce the balanced result the American people clearly want.

Source: Center for American Progress 8/13/11 <http://www.americanprogress.org/>



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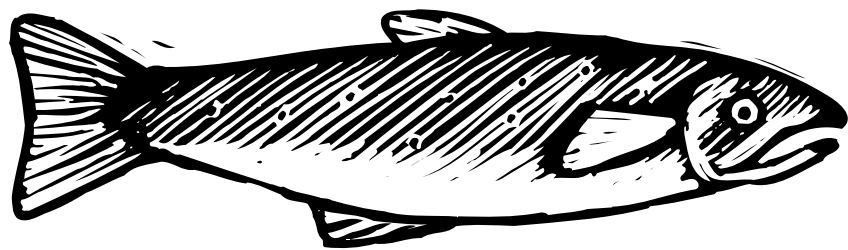
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Marine scientists call for ban on deep sea fishing



Fishing restrictions near the coast lines have been in place for many years, of which many local fishermen are well aware. These restrictions are understood to be vital in maintaining a stable population of wild fish for harvesting. In recent years, due to these restrictions, many industrial fishing vessels have ventured deeper into the open ocean which is unregulated. Their massive nets literally destroy benthic ecosystems and annihilate fish populations. According to the UN, the harvesting of deep sea fish has increased sevenfold between 1960 and 2004. In an article published in the journal, *Marine Policy*, scientists in the field of marine conservation have called for an outright ban on industrial deep sea fishing.

Unlike the coastlines which teem with sea life, the open ocean is akin to an open desert with only patches of wildlife. Modern technology has made it possible to locate and catch fish in this area. In this way, industrial fishing has become more like mining. According to Elliot Norse, president of the Marine Conservation Institute and the paper's lead

author, "We're now fishing in the worst places to fish. These things don't come back." Industrial fishing companies have turned to deep sea fishing "out of desperation" without realizing their impact on fish stocks.

Creatures which live in the deep sea can live for many years and take many years to mature and produce offspring. Deep sea corals can live as long as 4,000 years, but are being destroyed in an instant. Some fish species live more than a century. The Orange roughly, a fish in the South Pacific, takes 30 years to reach sexual maturity and can live up to 149 years.

The average mean depth of fishing has more than tripled since the 1950s as companies go deeper to "mine" their fish. It has gone from 492 feet to 1,706 feet in 2004 according to one of the paper's authors, Telmo Morato, marine biologist at the University of the Azores in Portugal. High-seas trawlers also receive about \$162 million per year in government subsidies according to another author, Rashid Sumaila of the University of British Columbia Fisheries Centre.

This amounts to a quarter of the value of the fleet's catch, and is essentially keeping them in business.

The issue of deep sea fishing has political implications, so a comprehensive ban is not such an easy task. For example, the EU commissioner for maritime affairs and fisheries, Maria Damanaki, has said she would like to cut the subsidies for the trawlers. However, individual European nations such as France, Denmark, Portugal, and Spain are likely to resist. These nations have long maritime traditions and the fishing industry is a powerful force in their economies.

According to author Daniel Pauly, of the University of British Columbia, the costs of deep sea fishing far outweigh the benefits. "It's a waste of resources, it's a waste of biodiversity, it's a waste of everything. In the end, there is nothing left."

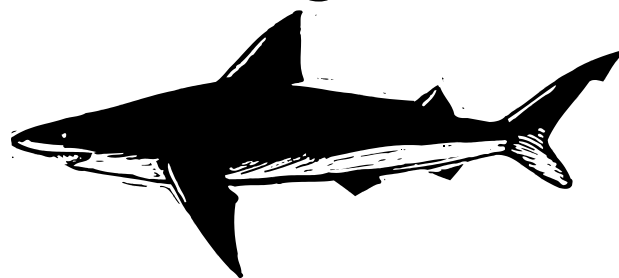
Source: ENN: Environmental News Network 9/9/11 <http://www.ennmagazine.com>

Gov. Brown: sign shark fin ban

Governor Brown,

As someone who cares about marine wildlife, I strongly urge you to sign Assembly Bill 376, legislation that would ban the possession, sale, trade and distribution of shark fins. After overwhelming passage in both houses of the state legislature, it's time to sign this bill into law.

Shark finning is a gruesome practice. It often involves catching sharks, cutting off their fins and tails usually while they are still



alive, and throwing them back in the water. Unable to swim, the shark bleeds to death or drowns. By just harvesting the fins, which take up less space on a boat than the rest of the low-value shark carcass, fishermen are

able to stay out much longer and pull in many more sharks.

Overfishing of sharks continues today at unsustainable levels. Mighty hammerheads, and many other types of sharks, have

WikiLeaks: US diplomats promote genetically engineered crops worldwide

MIKE LUDWIG

Dozens of United States diplomatic cables released in the latest WikiLeaks dump on Wednesday reveal new details of the US effort to push foreign governments to approve genetically engineered (GE) crops and promote the worldwide interests of agribusiness giants like Monsanto and DuPont.

The cables further confirm previous Truthout reports on the diplomatic pressure the US has put on Spain and France, two countries with powerful anti-GE crop movements, to speed up their biotech approval process and quell anti-GE sentiment within the European Union (EU).

Several cables describe "biotechnology outreach programs" in countries across the globe, including African, Asian and South American countries where Western biotech agriculture had yet to gain a foothold. In some cables US diplomats ask the State Department for funds to send US biotech experts and trade industry representatives to target countries for discussions with high-profile politicians and agricultural officials.

Truthout recently reported on front groups supported by the US government, philanthropic

foundations and companies like Monsanto that are working to introduce pro-biotechnology policy initiatives and GE crops in developing African countries, and several cables released this week confirm that American diplomats have promoted biotech agriculture to countries like Tunisia, South Africa and Mozambique.

Cables detail US efforts to influence the biotech policies of developed countries such as Egypt and Turkey, but France continues to stand out as a high-profile target.

In a 2007 cable, the US embassy in Paris reported on a meeting among US diplomats and representatives from Monsanto, DuPont and Dow-Agro-sciences. The companies were concerned about a movement of French farmers, who were vandalizing GE crop farms at the time, and suggested diplomatic angles for speeding up EU approvals of GE Crops.

In 2008 cable describing a "rancorous" debate within the French Parliament over proposed biotech legislation, Craig Stapleton, the former US ambassador to France under the Bush administration, included an update on MON-810, a Monsanto corn variety banned in France.

Stapleton wrote that French officials "expect retaliation via the World Trade Organization" for upholding the ban on MON-810 and stalling the French GE crop approval process. "There is nothing to be gained in France from delaying retaliation," Stapleton wrote.

Tough regulations and bans on GE crops can deal hefty blows to US exports. About 94 percent of soybeans, 72 percent of corn and 73 percent of the cotton grown in the US now use GE-tolerant herbicides like Monsanto's Roundup, according to the US Agriculture Department.

A 2007 cable, for example, reports that the French ban on MON-810 could cost the US \$30 million to \$50 million in exports.

In a 2007 cable obtained by Truthout in January, Stapleton threatened "moving to retaliate" against France for banning MON-810. Several other European countries, including Germany, Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria, have also placed bans on MON-810 in recent years. MON-810 is engineered to excrete the Bt toxin, which kills some insect pests.

MIKE LUDWIG IS A TRUTHOUT REPORTER.

Source: Truthout Report 8/25/11 www.truthout.org

and The Pew Environment Group reports that the U.S. ranks as one of the top 10 shark catchers in the world. Finning is illegal here, but enforcement is practically impossible.

Worse, the demand for shark fin soup continues to drive the fin market, particularly in states like California. Fins are processed in and imported from Asia, making it impossible to track where the fins originated or whether they came from a protected species.

For all of these reasons, I strongly urge you to sign Assembly Bill 376 and help curb the demand for shark fins and the awful practice of finning to satisfy the demand for shark fin soup here in California. Thank you for considering my comments. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,
You yourself

Source: Defenders of Wildlife release 9/1/11 www.den.org



Controversial CEQA reforms approved by the legislature

The Planning & Conservation League, joining with a coalition including Sierra Club California, Coalition for Clean Air, Clean Water Action, and a host of environmental justice and community groups from the Los Angeles area and throughout California, tried valiantly to stave off three bills that will weaken protections of The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Unfortunately, SB 226 (Simitian), SB 292 (Padilla) and AB 900 (Buchanan), all either introduced or dramatically amended in the last 36 hours of the legislative session, passed the Legislature on its final day of session. SB 226 will, if signed into law by the Governor, exempt from CEQA certain urban projects deemed 'green', with inadequate definitions of for what defines 'urban' and 'green'. It could, therefore, allow sprawl or other impactful projects without adequate environmental review. AB 900, while not

perhaps well-intentioned, were ill-conceived. They attack important protections of CEQA that have given communities a voice in the development process for more than four decades, with a great deal of uncertainty as to whether these measures were needed to, or will in fact, create more jobs in California.

Moreover, the measures themselves were hastily crafted and poorly thought-out. Some legislators, such as Senator Sam Blakeslee (R, 15th District), did complain about the hastily crafted nature of AB 900 before voting against the bill. That legislation's shortcomings were seemingly acknowledged by Senate Pro

tem Darrell Steinberg, (D, 6th District), who agreed that 'clean-up' legislation will have to be introduced next year to address the problems with AB 900. In addition to depriving legislators with final bill language before they voted, the rushed process also deprived the public from having meaningful input into the process.

While disappointed at the outcome, PCL will continue to work with its environmental partners, the Legislature, and local communities to ensure that projects developed with these streamlined processes will still protect our environment and public welfare, while we continue to advocate for CEQA to remain a strong environmental bill of rights for all Californians.

Action: Contact Governor Brown and urge vetoes.

Source: PCL INSIDER: News from the Capitol 9/10/11, The Planning and Conservation League, 1107 9th Street, Suite 901, Sacramento, CA 95814 (916) 822-5631 www.pcl.org



Obama hits new low by abandoning smog—reduction plan

After intense lobbying from polluting industries, President Barack Obama last Friday abandoned badly needed plans to reduce smog and improve public health around the country. In a statement this morning, the president told the Environmental Protection Agency to withdraw its draft Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards, which had been in the works for years.

"This is a new low for President Obama," said Kieran Suckling, executive director of the Center for Biological Diversity, which works to curb air

pollution and global warming. "He sold out public health and environmental protection to appease polluters. Mr. Obama's shortsighted political decision will have long-term health

consequences for millions of Americans."

The EPA was proposing to tighten ozone standards set during the Bush era in 2008. The Bush standards had ignored the advice of EPA's own scientists and were set at a level too high to protect public health. The Obama administration announced its intent to bring the standards more closely in line with science in early 2010, specifically recognizing that children were especially at risk from the higher standard. Friday's decision reaffirms the Bush administration's standard and delays action to protect children and others from the serious health risks of ozone pollution until at least 2013.

The National Association of Clean Air Agencies says that EPA's own

data shows that Friday's delay will result in more than 8,500 premature deaths, more than 45,000 cases of aggravated asthma, at least 1.5 million missed work or school days, and more than 5 million cases where citizens will need to restrict their activities.

"Americans deserve clean air and a White House

that takes public health seriously," Suckling said. "Instead, President Obama caved to the demands of big polluters and walked away from his obligation to protect the people."

Source: Center for Biological Diversity release 9/6/11 <http://www.biologicaldiversity.org>



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Actions that work

Letter from young people at the White House Tar Sands Action

REED STEBERGER, CORNELL UNIVERSITY, ITHACA, NY

Today we sit to demand justice. Tomorrow, we're getting back up to organize in our communities to ensure justice. And we're calling on you to join us. A growing movement of young people has been organizing to build a more clean and just economy that works for all of us, addresses the climate crisis and creates jobs for those who need them. Together, we will build an economy steered by communities, not corporations.

We've been successful in leading change in our communities; more than 700 college campuses have made commitments to adopt renewable energy and become carbon neutral. And we're following up on these commitments by forcing campuses to move beyond coal and other forms of dirty energy.

But it's not an easy road, and we have major challenges ahead. Big corporations are using their financial influence to corrupt our democracy and deepen their pockets at the expense of Americans. And it's not just related to energy and the environment; they are threatening the very foundations of our democracy, working to disenfranchise voters, attack workers' rights and the middle class.

In an act of civil disobedience, we stand together today and risk arrest in front of the White House to demand that President Obama stand up to these big corporate interests, reject the Keystone XL Pipeline permit, and put an end to this corporate-dominated madness. The Keystone XL tar sands pipeline would further open up disastrous mining on indigenous lands in Alberta, Canada. The pipeline would then take this toxic and corrosive crude across the country down to the Gulf Coast, threatening communities with spills and health impacts all along the way. It would release enormous amounts of global warming pollution, further fueling the climate crisis. Bottom-line: it threatens our future and we can't let it happen.

We're crossing the line to demonstrate the severity of the issue, and our commitment to take bold action to ensure that President Obama does the right thing.

But we can't and won't stop here. We've been deeply inspired by Tim DeChristopher, who only two months ago was sentenced to a two-year prison term for an heroic act. Tim blocked an illegitimate public lands auction, thereby preventing oil mining on public lands. His sentencing was intended to intimidate others from taking bold action. Instead, it's done just the opposite; it's emboldened us. In the great tradition of movements before us, we are determined to continue to organize and confront injustice until it no longer stands. As demonstrated by the lunch counter sit-ins of the civil rights movements, and the marches of the suffragettes, we must be willing to continue until we persevere.

Last April, 10,000 young people from all over the country came together in Washington, DC for Power Shift 2011 to re-launch a movement that would lead from the grassroots and demand our elected officials follow our lead and support a 100% clean and safe energy economy. Under pressure, President Obama invited 11 young leaders into the White House to hear our concerns. The take-away from this historic interaction? The Obama Administration re-established its commitment to stand up to big polluter attacks on the Clean Air Act and for weeks after, President Obama led a wave of calls to end big oil subsidies. But our job is not done yet, and thus President Obama's parting words in that meeting are perhaps the most important take-away of all: "... it's your job to push me." And so, that's exactly what we intend to do. Since Power Shift 2011, our organizations and networks have been working hard to launch local, state and regional campaigns to challenge the dirty energy industry and bring in the clean energy economy. We must continue these fights, and call on elected officials to follow our lead.

The Keystone XL decision is a significant test of President Obama's commitment to our generation, but it's not the only one. In the coming months, the Obama Administration's EPA will decide on key rulings on clean air that would force the oldest and dirtiest coal plants to clean up, or more likely retire. And President Obama's Army Corps of Engineers holds the key vote this September on whether hydraulic fracturing will happen in the Delaware River Basin, the source of drinking water for over 15 million people in New York City, Philadelphia, New Jersey and Delaware. Above all, President Obama must decide to stand up to corporate interests that threaten the American public, our environment, and our democracy; we have to do everything within our means to band together, and lead the way so that President Obama has no excuse but to act.

In the coming weeks, we are re-launching and re-committing ourselves to campaigns that confront dirty energy in our own backyards and bring in a 100% clean and just energy economy. We will take these demands to our college campuses and communities, and together build a groundswell of movement against dirty energy and reckless corporations. We can demonstrate that once again the youth generation will lead us into the future by moving our campuses beyond coal, and demanding that it be replaced with 100% clean energy. We're taking the fight to the grassroots with regional Power Shift convergences across the country and we will continue to come together to exercise our collective power to take direct action.

From the Tar Sands Action we have begun the journey down the path of justice, but we cannot stop here. We hope you'll join us. Commit to join us in taking bold action this fall, and step up the fight against dirty energy on your campus and in your community. Join us in another wave of direct action at regional Power Shift conferences this fall – they are sweeping the nation: Albany, NY, Asheville, NC, Blacksburg, Virginia, Cleveland, OH, and Eugene, OR.

With Joy and Resolve,

The undersigned:

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Source: *We Are Power Shift* release 9/1/11 <http://www.wearepowershift.org/>

Tar sands oil will not be used in US



STEPHEN LEAHY

With four times as many oil rigs pumping domestic oil today than eight years ago and declining domestic demand, the United States is awash in oil.

The country's oil industry is primarily interested in who will pay the most on the global marketplace. They call that "energy security" when it suits, but in reality it is "oil company security" through maximising profits, say energy experts like Steve Kretzman of Oil Change International <<http://priceofoil.org/>>, an NGO that researches the links between oil, gas and coal companies and governments.

The only reason US citizens may be forced to endure a risky, Canadian-owned oil pipeline called Keystone XL is so oil companies with billion-dollar profits can get the dirty oil from Canada's tar sands down to the Gulf of Mexico to export to Europe, Latin America or Asia, according to a new report by Oil Change International released Wednesday.

"Keystone XL will not lessen US dependence on foreign oil, but rather transport Canadian oil to American refineries for export to overseas markets," concludes the report, titled "Exporting Energy Security".

Little of the 700,000 to 800,000 barrels of tar sands oil pumped through the 2,400-kilometre, seven-billion-dollar Keystone XL will end up in US gas tanks because the refineries on the Gulf Coast are all about expanding export markets. One huge refinery operator called Valero has been touting the potential export revenues of tar sands oil to investors, the report found.

Because Keystone XL crosses national borders,

President Barack Obama has to issue a permit declaring the pipeline serves the "national interest" in order to be approved.

"The only way Keystone XL could be considered in the national interest is if you equate that with profits for the oil industry," said Kretzman, who wrote the report.

Canada's huge tar sands deposits, located mainly in the far north of the province of Alberta, are the world's second largest oil reserves, but they are landlocked. It's the industry's biggest worry and also Alberta Energy Minister Ron Lieper's biggest concern.

Lieper recently said that without new pipelines "our greatest risk in Alberta is that by 2020 we will be landlocked in bitumen". Bitumen is thick tarry oil from the tar sands that needs lots of high-energy and chemical processing to be useable – one reason it's widely considered the world's dirtiest oil.

The shortest route to the big Asian markets is through the Rocky Mountains to Canada's west coast via the proposed Northern Gateway pipeline. However, Canadian native people live on some of the land and are staunchly opposed, so the industry thought it would be easier to put an export pipeline right through the US heartland, said Kretzman.

"The oil industry would have done the Northern Gateway first but gambled that resistance to the pipeline would be far weaker in the mid-west," he told IPS. They were wrong.

Thousands of people, including landowners and religious leaders, have gone to Washington DC in the past two weeks to tell President Obama to reject Keystone. Nearly 850 people have been arrested for standing on the

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

The price of 9/11

The September 11, 2001, terror attacks by Al Qaeda were meant to harm the United States, and they did, but in ways that Osama bin Laden probably never imagined. President George W. Bush's response to the attacks compromised America's basic principles, undermined its economy, and weakened its security.

The attack on Afghanistan that followed the 9/11 attacks was understandable, but the subsequent invasion of Iraq was entirely unconnected to Al Qaeda – as much as Bush tried to establish a link. That war of choice quickly became very expensive – orders of magnitude beyond the \$60 billion claimed at the beginning – as colossal incompetence met dishonest misrepresentation.

Indeed, when Linda Bilmes and I calculated America's war costs three years ago, the conservative tally was \$3–5 trillion. Since then, the costs have mounted further. With almost 50% of returning troops eligible to receive some level of disability payment, and more than 600,000 treated so far in veterans' medical facilities, we now estimate that future disability payments and health-care costs will total \$600–900 billion. But the social costs, reflected in veteran suicides (which have topped 18 per day in recent years) and family breakups, are incalculable.

Even if Bush could be forgiven for taking America, and much of the rest of the world, to war on false pretenses, and for misrepresenting the cost of the venture, there is no excuse for how he chose to finance it. His was the first war in history paid for entirely on credit. As America went into battle, with deficits already soaring from his 2001 tax cut, Bush decided to plunge ahead with yet another round of tax "relief" for the wealthy.

Today, America is focused on unemployment and the deficit. Both threats to America's future can, in no small measure, be traced to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Increased defense spending, together with the Bush tax cuts, is a key reason why America went from a fiscal surplus of 2% of GDP when Bush was elected, to its parlous deficit and debt position today. Direct government spending on those wars so far amounts to roughly \$2 trillion – \$17,000 for every US household – with bills yet to be received increasing this amount by more than 50%.

Moreover, as Bilmes and I argued in our book *The Three Trillion Dollar War*, the wars contributed to America's macroeconomic weaknesses, which exacerbated its deficits and debt burden. Then, as now, disruption in the Middle East led to higher oil prices, forcing Americans to spend money on oil imports that they otherwise could have spent buying goods produced in the US.

But then the US Federal Reserve hid these weaknesses by engineering a housing bubble that led to a consumption boom. It will take years to overcome the excessive indebtedness and real-estate overhang that resulted.

Tar sands oil

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

sidewalk in front of the White House in what protesters call the largest civil disobedience in the history of the US climate movement.

"It's remarkable, a very dignified and moving protest much like the civil rights demonstrations in the 1960s," said Maude Barlow, chairperson of the Council of Canadians, a large environmental NGO.

"This is about the rights of the environment and future generations. It is the blossoming of a new movement," Barlow told IPS

from Washington.

Other massive pipelines are being planned, including ones bringing tar sands crude to New England and the Great Lakes, she said. "Keystone is just the beginning. Once these are built they will have to put something in them."

Infrastructure dictates policy, she stressed. Once pipelines, refineries or power plants are built, it is nearly impossible for governments to shut them down.

Last year, scientists writing in the journal *Science* concluded there is already enough fossil fuel burning capacity to raise global

temperatures by 1.5 degrees C by 2060. Any additional power plants, vehicles, or other fossil fuel burning equipment built from 2011 onward puts humanity at ever greater risk of catastrophic climate change.

"We conclude that sources of the most threatening emissions have yet to be built," the scientists wrote.

The Obama administration knows this but the powerful oil lobby can use its unlimited funds to attack Democratic officials during the next election cycle if they don't approve the

pipeline, says Kretzman. Changes to US law in 2010 allow corporations to spend as much as they want on elections, and there is no sector with more money than the oil industry.

"That scares the hell out of the Obama administration," he said. It's never been clearer that corporations wield the real power in the United States and Canada, activists say. "This is the beginning of a very big fight for the future," Barlow told IPS.

JOSEPH E. STIGLITZ IS UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, A NOBEL LAUREATE IN ECONOMICS, AND THE AUTHOR OF *FREEFALL: FREE MARKETS AND THE SINKING OF THE GLOBAL ECONOMY*.

Copyright: Source: Project Syndicate 9/1/11 www.project-syndicate.org

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Source: *Inter Press Service* 9/5/11 <http://ipsnews.net/>

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The T is not silent

Letters from home

ELENA KELLY

With schools opening up for the new school year, my work as the Director of the Stockton Transgender Alliance has taken a different turn. Fully 20% of the Alliance's clients are the parents of gender non-conforming children.

As school gets underway, the parents dread the possibility that their children will be picked on, harassed and bullied by other students and even faculty and staff in Stockton and Lodi schools.

Several of the parents have turned to me to help make life easier for their children. So we sit together and draft a letter. Sometimes it is sent to school teachers and administration. Other times it is sent to the parents of classmates.

Here is an example of what has been used to help prepare for a safe new school year. All names and places are pseudonyms.

Hello Parents,

I'm Susan Smith, mother of Alex Smith, who is the youngest of our four children and is in the preschool program this year. My husband, Jim Smith and I have been Johnson Elementary parents for seven years with two older kids who've graduated and a son currently in middle school.

When Alex was born, we sent out the normal birth announcement, celebrating the data on hand-length, weight, gender. We celebrated Alex's arrival—our new baby boy! But gender is complex. It takes shape in the brain and can't be defined simply by body parts. What truly matters is how a person feels on the inside. And, as it turns out, Alex is actually a girl on the inside. We noticed Alex's girl-preferences at the age when gender first starts to assert itself—around one-and-a-half or two—and although we expected this to be a phase, it wasn't. Alex's gender identity has been consistent and clear—girl. As you can imagine, we've done loads of research on the topic, have talked to specialists, and are invested in the most current literature.

Culturally, we talk a good game about the importance of what's on the inside, living with authenticity, and being true to who we are. Jim and I have decided that we should probably try to live by those words. This summer, Alex expressed the desire to be called "she." We are honoring that request and have received great support from the teachers and administration at Johnson school. Alex will be just another girl in the class.

We know that this might bring up questions at home. We put it this way: to saying that Alex was born a boy but is now an affirmed girl who prefers to be called "she." We try to keep it pretty simple. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to email one of us. (We know this can be a touchy subject and that some of you may hold political, cultural, or religious beliefs that oppose what we're doing. We respect that and hope that respect is mutual.)

I recently read the work of a young transgender author who wrote, "I wish people hadn't told me how hard my life was going to be, but instead how rich." The thing is, Alex is a great kid—funny, kind, inquisitive, a real joy machine. She is the real gift and our lives are richer because we're lucky enough to have her with us.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

All my best,
Susan Smith

REV. SR. ELENA KELLY, OSH IS A MINISTER TO THE PEOPLE OF STOCKTON AND THE CENTRAL VALLEY, AND IS THE DIRECTOR OF THE STOCKTON TRANSGENDER ALLIANCE. SHE CAN BE REACHED AT ELENA.KELLY@COMCAST.NET.

Jesus: from each, to each



REV. HOWARD BESS

According to Luke's gospel, the beginning of the ministry of Jesus as a reputational rabbi was marked by his public reading of a passage from the Isaiah scroll. His declaration was that a year special to God had arrived, a Jubilee Year that would redistribute wealth and end the economic persecution of the poor.

A key part of the understanding of Jesus involves his understanding of this Year of Jubilee. According to Levitical Law, all land was owned by God. So, the people who controlled the land and farmed it were stewards/servants, but according to Leviticus, they never really owned the land.

Land could be bought and sold but only for a limited time. Plus, the holders of land were under some strict rules. Every seventh year the land could not be farmed, meaning the land had a Sabbath year when it rested.

At the end of the seventh seven-year cycle (i.e. 49 years), the Levitical Law required that all the people start over. Land was to be completely redistributed. This 50th year was called the Year of Jubilee.

Other important things took place. All slaves were set free and all debts were canceled. The Levitical Law envisioned a new day for everyone.

Over the years the Israelites found ways of reinterpreting the law and avoided the keeping of the Year of Jubilee. People who had gained control of large land holdings were closely allied with the priests who ran the Jerusalem Temple.

The prophet Isaiah (who lived in the Eighth Century

BC) despised the rich and the powerful. A recurring theme in Isaiah is a call to celebrate the Year of Jubilee honestly. Many today would call him the ultimate socialist. As far as anyone can tell, the Year of Jubilee has never been celebrated.

Jesus lived at a time of a concentration of wealth when working farmers had completely lost control of their land, which was owned by very wealthy men who lived in large cities some miles away. Under the prevailing economic system, the farmers became poorer and poorer.

Often, the farmers had to leave the farm and became day-laborers who worked at the mercy of absentee owners and their local enforcers. The greed of absentee land owners and the plight of poverty-stricken farmers form the backdrop of the entire ministry of Jesus.

When Jesus – at the beginning of his public ministry as a reputational rabbi – read the particular passage from Isaiah, his entire audience understood what he was saying. He was calling for the celebration of the Year of Jubilee.

Jesus made his statement in a minor village to a group of people who had become powerless under the economic onslaught of the rich. Jesus was declaring that the new day had arrived. At last justice would be established.

It was a brash statement partly because Jesus was not a trained rabbi. His position as rabbi would not have been accepted outside of a small area in northern Palestine. According to the passage, he made his statement in the town (Nazareth) in which he grew up.

Jesus had spent his early manhood attending the local synagogue meetings as an active participant. A small village such as Nazareth had too few people to merit a trained rabbi, so the regular Sabbath meetings were led by lay people.

At Sabbath meetings, the Scriptures (Old Testament) were read, discussed and argued. Jesus was the leader that emerged from the group. His reputation grew as he became their "reputational"

rabbi.

Jesus embraced the Isaiah writings, and the Isaiah perspective had become the eyes with which he read and understood the Law and will of God.

(This understanding of Jesus's radical message – challenging the power structure on behalf of the poor – puts into context his fateful decision to take his protests to Jerusalem where the scriptures describe him riding in on a humble donkey and confronting the money changers at the Temple. It also helps explain the determination of the religious and political elites of Jerusalem to have him crucified.)

THE REV. HOWARD BESS IS AN AMERICAN BAPTIST MINISTER, WHO LIVES IN RETIREMENT IN PALMER, ALASKA. HIS EMAIL ADDRESS IS HDBSS@MTAONLINE.NET.

Source: Consortium News 9/4/11
<http://consortiumnews.com/>

Linking overpopulation to species extinction

As the world population nears 7 billion people, the Center for Biological Diversity today launched a new national campaign highlighting the close connection between human overpopulation and the global species extinction crisis.

"This planet has never been as crowded as it is today, and that's having devastating effects," said Amy Harwood, the Center's human population campaign organizer. "There's no better time to talk about the overpopulation crisis than right now, as we close in on 7 billion people."

The world's population has doubled since 1968, and the United Nation predicts it will hit 7 billion on Oct. 31, 2011, topping 10 billion by the end of this century. Meanwhile, dozens of species go extinct every day.

There are several practical, real-world solutions to begin addressing overpopulation, including empowerment of women, education for all people and universal access to birth control. All of these steps would play an important role in curbing population growth and ensuring that a great diversity of species can continue to live and thrive on Earth.

"Overpopulation and overconsumption of resources are central forces behind environmental destruction," Harwood said. "The only way to start addressing the population crisis is to get people thinking and talking about that – and finally acting."

Source: Center for Biological Diversity release 9/8/11 <http://www.biologicaldiversity.org>



Inequality has wrecked the economy



ROBERT REICH

The 5 percent of Americans with the highest incomes now account for 37 percent of all consumer purchases, according to the latest research from Moody's Analytics. That should come as no surprise. Our society has become more and more unequal.

When so much income goes to the top, the middle class doesn't have enough purchasing power to keep the economy going without sinking ever more deeply into debt – which, as we've seen, ends badly. An economy so dependent on the spending of a few is also prone to great booms and busts. The rich splurge and speculate when their savings are doing well. But when the values of their assets tumble, they pull back. That can lead to wild gyrations. Sound familiar?

The economy won't really bounce back until America's surge toward inequality is reversed. Even if by some miracle President Obama gets support for a second big stimulus while Ben S. Bernanke's Fed keeps interest rates near zero, neither will do the trick without a middle class capable of spending. Pump-priming works only when a well contains enough water.

PATTERNS

Look back over the last hundred years and you'll see the pattern. During periods when the very rich took home a much smaller proportion of total income – as in the Great Prosperity between 1947 and 1977 – the nation as a whole grew faster and median wages surged. We created a virtuous cycle in which an ever growing middle class had the ability to consume more goods and services, which created more and better jobs, thereby stoking demand. The rising tide did in fact lift all boats.

During periods when the very rich took home a larger proportion – as between 1918 and 1933, and in the Great Regression from 1981 to the present day – growth slowed, median wages stagnated and we suffered giant downturns. It's no mere coincidence that over the last century the top earners' share of the nation's total income peaked in 1928 and 2007 – the two years just preceding the biggest downturns.

Starting in the late 1970s, the middle class began to weaken. Although productivity continued to grow and the economy continued to expand, wages began flattening in the 1970s because new technologies – container ships, satellite communications, eventually computers and the Internet – started to undermine any American job that could be automated or done more cheaply abroad. The same technologies bestowed ever larger rewards on people who could use them to innovate and solve problems. Some were product entrepreneurs; a growing number were financial entrepreneurs. The pay of graduates of prestigious colleges and M.B.A. programs – the “talent” who reached the pinnacles of power in executive suites and on Wall Street – soared.

The middle class nonetheless continued to spend, at first enabled by the flow of women into the work force. (In the 1960s only 12 percent of married women with young children

were working for pay; by the late 1990s, 55 percent were.) When that way of life stopped generating enough income, Americans went deeper into debt. From the late 1990s to 2007, the typical household debt grew by a third. As long as housing values continued to rise it seemed a painless way to get additional money.

Eventually, of course, the bubble burst. That ended the middle class's remarkable ability to keep spending in the face of near stagnant wages. The puzzle is why so little has been done in the last 40 years to help deal with the subversion of the economic power of the middle class. With the continued gains from economic growth, the nation could have enabled more people to become problem solvers and innovators – through early childhood education, better public schools, expanded access to higher education and more efficient public transportation.

We might have enlarged safety nets – by having unemployment insurance cover part-time work, by giving transition assistance to move to new jobs in new locations, by creating insurance for communities that lost a major employer. And we could have made Medicare available to anyone.

Big companies could have been required to pay severance to American workers they let go and train them for new jobs. The minimum wage could have been pegged at half the median wage, and we could have insisted that the foreign nations we trade with do the same, so that all citizens could share in gains from trade. We could have raised taxes on the rich and cut them for poorer Americans.

WRONG DIRECTION

But starting in the late 1970s, and with increasing fervor over the next three decades, government did just the opposite. It deregulated and privatized. It cut spending on infrastructure as a percentage of the national economy and shifted more of the costs of public higher education to families. It shredded safety nets. (Only 27 percent of the unemployed are covered by unemployment insurance.) And it allowed companies to bust unions and threaten employees who tried to organize. Fewer than 8 percent of private-sector workers are unionized.

More generally, it stood by as big American companies became global companies with no more loyalty to the United States than a GPS satellite. Meanwhile, the top income tax rate was halved to 35 percent and many of the nation's richest were allowed to treat their income as capital gains subject to no more than 15 percent tax. Inheritance taxes that affected only the topmost 1.5 percent of earners were sliced. Yet at the same time sales and payroll taxes – both taking a bigger chunk out of modest paychecks – were increased.

Most telling of all, Washington deregulated Wall Street while insuring it against major losses. In so doing, it allowed finance – which until then had been the servant of American industry – to become its master, demanding short-term profits over long-term growth and raking in an ever larger portion of the nation's profits. By 2007, financial companies accounted for over 40 percent of American corporate profits and almost as great a percentage of pay, up from 10 percent

during the Great Prosperity.

Some say the regressive lurch occurred because Americans lost confidence in government. But this argument has cause and effect backward. The tax revolts that thundered across America starting in the late 1970s were not so much ideological revolts against government – Americans still wanted all the government services they had before, and then some – as against paying more taxes on incomes that had stagnated. Inevitably, government services deteriorated and government deficits exploded, confirming the public's growing cynicism about government's doing anything right.

OTHER NATIONS' PATHS

Some say we couldn't have reversed the consequences of globalization and technological change. Yet the experiences of other nations, like Germany, suggest otherwise. Germany has grown faster than the United States for the last 15 years, and the gains have been more widely spread. While Americans' average hourly pay has risen only 6 percent since 1985, adjusted for inflation, German workers' pay has risen almost 30 percent. At the same time, the top 1 percent of German households now take home about 11 percent of all income – about the same as in 1970. And although in the last months Germany has been hit by the debt crisis of its neighbors, its unemployment is still below where it was when the financial crisis started in 2007. How has Germany done it? Mainly by focusing like a laser on education (German math scores continue to extend their lead over American), and by maintaining strong labor unions.

THE real reason for America's Great Regression was political. As income and wealth became more concentrated in fewer hands, American politics reverted to what Marriner S. Eccles, a former chairman of the Federal Reserve, described in the 1920s, when people “with great economic power had an undue influence in making the rules of the economic game.” With hefty campaign contributions and platoons of lobbyists and public relations spinners, America's executive class has gained lower tax rates while resisting reforms that would spread the gains from growth.

Yet the rich are now being bitten by their own success. Those at the top would be better off with a smaller share of a rapidly growing economy than a large share of one that's almost dead in the water. The economy cannot possibly get out of its current doldrums without a strategy to revive the purchasing power of America's vast middle class. The spending of the richest 5 percent alone will not lead to a virtuous cycle of more jobs and higher living standards. Nor can we rely on exports to fill the gap. It is impossible for every large economy, including the United States, to become a net exporter.

Reviving the middle class requires that we reverse the nation's decades-long trend toward widening inequality. This is possible notwithstanding the political power of the executive class. So many people are now being hit by job losses, sagging incomes and declining home values that Americans could be mobilized.

Moreover, an economy is not a zero-sum game. Even the executive class has an enlightened self-interest in reversing the trend; just as a rising tide lifts all boats, the ebbing tide is now threatening to beach many of the yachts. The question is whether, and when, we will summon the political will. We have summoned it before in even bleaker times.

As the historian James Truslow Adams defined the American Dream when he coined the term at the depths of the Great Depression, what we seek is “a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone.” That dream is still within our grasp.

ROBERT REICH IS CHANCELLOR'S PROFESSOR OF PUBLIC POLICY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT BERKELEY. HE HAS WRITTEN THIRTEEN BOOKS, INCLUDING “THE WORK OF NATIONS,” “LOCKED IN THE CABINET,” “SUPERCAPITALISM” AND HIS LATEST BOOK, “AFTERSHOCK: THE NEXT ECONOMY AND AMERICA'S FUTURE.”

Source: Robert Reich's Blog 9/5/11 <http://robertreich.org/post/9789891366>



Oct 1

Come, enjoy Astronomy Day



Please join the Stockton Exhibits and Activities Astronomical Society as they present Astronomy Day at Oak Grove Regional Park on October the 1st 2011. This is our annual event which will be held at Oak Grove Regional Park; 4520 W. Eight Mile Road Stockton. The festivities will begin at 3:00 pm with Solar observing and in the evening activities will start at 6:00 pm and run until 11:00 pm with Star Labs from the County of Education, stocktonastro.org.

Oct 20

Peacemaker event coming!

The Mediation Center of San Joaquin and the UOP School of International Studies invite you to join the Peacemakers Celebration Thursday, October 20, 2011 at 6:00 PM at the DeRosa University Center Ballroom on the University of the Pacific campus. Featured will be guest speaker Michael Collopy, an inspirational photographer known for his remarkable photography, including Mother Teresa's work in Calcutta and Mikhail Gorbachev's Nobel Peace summit in Italy. A raffle, dinner and socializing will round out a fine evening. Capping the evening will be a celebration of our newest Peacemakers:

Gloria Allen, long-time community activist and Stockton Unified school board member;

Ralph Womack, organizer and mentor for programs serving at-risk youth; and

Carole Zeiter, an advocate and board member of several Stockton charities.

Every day individuals in the San Joaquin Community consciously choose to make a difference; to excel at bringing peace to our community. With your attendance and support, we will celebrate the efforts of those awarded as Peacemaker. Guests at the event will have an opportunity to network with other attendees positively impacting the community. Let's not allow these good deeds to go unnoticed! Tickets for the event are \$45. For more info, call 209-474-8794 www.mediatorsrus.org

PAST PEACEMAKERS

Tino Adame
Joshua Andai
Robert L Bivens
Jaime Constantino
Joan Darrah
Peig Fairbrook
Bruce Giudici
Paul Gutierrez
Barbara Kronlund
David Love
Marcie Massei
Jeannie Millsaps
Hellen Perez
Dr. Joseph Serra
Judge Richard Vlavianos
John Whittock
Susana Wood

Sandy Affonso
Mary Claire Attebery
Ann Bonner
Alan Cook
Kim DeLaCruz
Paula LeVeck
Becky Gould
Annette Kirby
Paula LeVeck
Luis Magana
Linda Meyer
Sylvia Mundt
Larry Pippin
Pat Sharrock
Peggy Wagner
Linda Whittock

Dr. Ray Amundson
Thel Atterbury
Jamie Clayton
Clemmie Cooper
Margee Ensign
Walt Friesen
Judge Richard Guiliani
Jane Knowles
Laurie Litman
Pastor Bob Margaron
Patricia Miller-Battiste
Judge William Murray
John Reynolds
Bernice Turoff
Tony White
Douglass Willholt

Friday, Oct 28th

Tree talk: A Street Tree Symposium

University Neighborhood Renaissance Committee

6pm, Thursday, 27 October 2011

Central Methodist Church

3700 Pacific Avenue

Stockton, CA 95204

A public forum focusing on the health and maintenance of our neighborhood's urban forest is planned for October 28th at Central Methodist Church. The forum is sponsored by the University Neighborhood Renaissance Committee and will include presentations by representatives from the City of Stockton Department of Public Works, the Stockton Tree Foundation, and Stockton Beautiful, as well as your neighbors with a special interest in the health of our urban forest. Topics will include:

- Current city policy regarding street tree maintenance, pruning and removal;
- mistletoe control in our neighborhood;
- local street tree planting initiatives;
- utility pruning;
- strategies for funding street tree maintenance; and
- the state of our urban forest.

The evening will include brief but insightful presentations on these and other topics and will conclude with opportunities for attendees to address the presenters one on one.

THE UNIVERSITY NEIGHBORHOOD

The University Neighborhood is Stockton's first formally designated district in the Neighborhood Renaissance Program. Centrally located, the University Neighborhood covers an area of 1,210 acres, approximately 1 1/2 miles from Downtown. It is without question one of the most desirable places to live in all of Stockton.

UNIVERSITY NEIGHBORHOOD RENAISSANCE COMMITTEE

The Committee is made up of neighbors elected by neighbors to lead the planning and implementation of community improvements, maintaining common goals

to improve our quality of life, and engaging city officials about the priorities of our neighborhood. Elected Committee Members attend City Council and Planning Commission meetings to ensure our voice is heard on all the critical issues.

BECAUSE YOU CARE

Get involved with the University Neighborhood Renaissance Committee! It's easy to join, and we need you to help keep City Hall focused on our neighborhood priorities. The Committee meets on the Fourth Thursday of every month to address neighborhood issues and confer with city officials. Meetings begin at 6 pm and are held at Central United Methodist Church. 3700 Pacific Avenue, Stockton. Contact www.UNRC.org or (209) 910-4867.

Third Thurs, Manteca

New Local Progressive Democratic Club formed

The Central Valley Wellstone Progressive Democratic Club brings together Central Valley people to join forces with grassroots movements emerging nationwide to create an organized progressive center to help shift the terms of the national debate, inspire our nation to change course, and contribute to a national political realignment led by the Democratic Party. We are committed to the renewal of America's social contract for a nation that works for all: a nation that protects liberty, adheres to international law, cherishes peace in the world and works towards a sustainable future for the entire planet.

ISSUES WE WORK ON (TO NAME A FEW)

- Peace
- Health care for all
- Jobs with livable wages and benefits
- Protection of our social safety net programs i.e., Social Security, Medicare/Medicaid
- Worker's Rights
- Environmental protection, including clean energy — "no new nukes"
- Quality, fully funded PUBLIC education

We meet every third Thursday, Perko's Cafe, Yosemite Ave. and Rte. 99, Manteca, 6:00 pm. For more information on upcoming actions and meetings, contact club President Rose Roach at roach.rose@yahoo.com or 209-474-8496.

"From Migrant Farm Worker to Brain Surgeon"

Dr. Alfredo Quiñones-Hinojosa

Internationally Recognized Brain Surgeon-Johns Hopkins University

Coming to Delta College



Saturday, October 8, 2011

Atherton Auditorium

Delta College

Presentation

3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Book Signing

4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

FREE ADMISSION

In his new powerful book, "*Becoming Dr. Q: My Journey from Migrant Farm Worker to Brain Surgeon*," Dr. Quiñones tells his story of an illegal immigrant from Mexico. After years of work as a farm worker, he saved up enough money to eventually become a US citizen, and decided to attend San Joaquin Delta College.

Today, he is known as Dr. Q, an internationally renowned neurosurgeon and neuroscientist who leads cutting-edge research to cure brain cancer and performs 250 brain tumor surgeries a year at Johns Hopkins University. But not too long ago, he was Freddy, a nineteen-year-old undocumented migrant worker toiling in the tomato fields of Central California. Dr. Q will share his amazing life story – from his impoverished childhood in the tiny village of Palaco, Mexico, to his harrowing border crossing and his transformation from illegal immigrant to American citizen and gifted student at the University of California at Berkeley and at Harvard Medical School. Packed with adventure and adversity, including a few terrifying brushes with death, **this story is a testament to persistence, hard work, the power of hope and imagination, and the pursuit of excellence. It is also a story about the importance of family, of mentors, of giving people a chance, and how education can change lives.**

Copies of Dr. Quiñones-Hinojosa's book will be available to purchase at the event



For additional information contact
Diana Slawson at 209-954-5027

San Joaquin Delta College, 5151 Pacific Avenue, Stockton, CA 95207

OCTOBER CALENDAR

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

WED—SUN

SEPT 7 — OCT 2

Forever Plaid. Thu 7:30 pm, Fri—Sat 8 pm, Sun 2:30 pm. Stockton Civic Theatre, 2312 Rosemarie Lane, Stockton \$15 — \$25. 473—2424. www.sctlivetheatre.com

TUE, SEPT 13

89.5 Valley Community Radio meeting, 7 — 9 pm, Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. All welcome. 467—4455

THURS, SEPT 22

Stockton Symphony #1 featuring Marina Filjak, 8 pm. Atherton Auditorium, 5151 Pacific Ave, Stockton. 954—5110.

SAT, SEPT 24

Stockton Symphony #1 featuring Marina Filjak, 6 pm. Atherton Auditorium, 5151 Pacific Ave, Stockton. 954—5110.

MON, SEPT 26

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.

THURS, SEPT 29

Latino Heritage Month keynote speaker Carlos Munoz. 7 pm. Raymond Great Hall, UOP, Stockton. Free. 946—7705.

SAT, OCT 1

Bluegrass and Wine to "Raise the Barn" fundraiser. 2—6 pm. Enjoy bluegrass bands, taste local wines. SJC Historical Museum, 11793 N Micke Grove Rd. \$35. 953—3460.

Astronomy Day in the Park, 3 — 11 pm. Telescopes provided by the Stockton Astronomical Society. Guest speaker Rick Mielbrecht. Oak Grove Regional Park, 4520 W Eight Mile Rd, Stockton. \$5 parking.

953—8814.

WED, OCT 5

FALL FESTIVAL OF CHOIRS, "MUSIC TO REMEMBER," 6 PM. ATHERTON AUDITORIUM, 5151 PACIFIC AVE, STOCKTON. \$8. 954—5110.

THU, OCT 6

Peace & Justice Network board meeting, Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 6:30 pm. All welcome. 467—4455

SAT, OCT 8

Dr. Alfredo Quinones—Hinojosa — From Migrant Farm worker to Brain Surgeon. 3 — 4 pm presentation. (see p 18) SJ Delta College. 954—5027.

Columbia College Big Band featuring Paul Kontos sax/flute and Scott Englebright trumpet. Dogwood auditorium, Columbia College Campus, Columbia. \$15. jazzseries@sbcglobal.net

TUE, OCT 11

LoCash Cowboys, combine soul, rock, funk and more in contemporary country. 7:30 pm. Stockton Empire Theatre, 1825 Pacific Ave, Stockton. \$20. 594—1669. A QProductions Co show.

THURS, OCT 13

Stockton Symphony #2 featuring Yi—Sa Susanne Hou, 8 pm. Atherton Auditorium, 5151 Pacific Ave, Stockton. 954—5110.

SAT, OCT 15

Stockton Symphony #2 featuring Yi—Sa Susanne Hou, 6 pm. Atherton Auditorium, 5151 Pacific Ave, Stockton. 954—5110.

THURS, OCT 20

Peacemaker of the Year celebration, 6 pm. (see p 18). DeRosa Ballroom, UOP. 474—8794.

FIRST MONDAYS

Campaign for Common Ground meeting, 7 pm, Towers Building, 509 W Weber Ave, Stockton. ccgmemb@gmail.com

FOURTH MONDAYS

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.

SECOND TUESDAYS

89.5 Valley Community Radio meeting, 7 — 9 pm, Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 467—4455.

SECOND THURSDAYS

Single Payer San Joaquin meeting, 6:30 pm, Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. bailey_hcasj@sbcglobal.net

THIRD THURSDAYS

Central Valley Wellstone Progressive Democratic Club, 6 pm, Perko's Cafe, 1703 E. Yosemite Ave., Manteca, Info: Rose Roach, 209—474—8496

FOURTH SATURDAYS

Greater Lodi Area Democrats (GLAD) breakfast meeting, 8:30 am, Dee Dee's Family Dining, 1170 S. Cherokee Ln, Lodi. 209—663—3717

MONDAYS

Jazz at the Blackwater 8:30 — 11 pm. Mike Rocha, Rick Russell, Giulio Cetto, Michael Klooster and more. Acacia & Yosemite, Stockton.

THURSDAYS

Peace demonstration, 5—6 PM, edge of Delta campus across from Elephant Bar. Park at Sherwood Mall. Signs provided, or bring your own! Info: Patrick Wall, 954—5438. Dinner and a show, 6:30 —

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THE MYSTICAL ARTS OF TIBET

Sacred Music *Sacred Dance*
for world healing

"...Fascinating and entertaining..."
Chicago Tribune

"Remarkable...
The music and dance
invoke sacred ecstasy..."
The New York Times

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 7:00 PM
TICKETS START AT \$10
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GALLO CENTER FOR THE ARTS
1000 I STREET, DOWNTOWN MODESTO

Come see the famed multiphonic singers of Drepung Loseling Monastery perform transcendent temple music and dances that delight the senses and nourish the spirit

9:30. Blackwater Cafe, Acacia & Yosemite, Stockton.

SATURDAYS

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

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO DISTRIBUTE CONNECTIONS TO WELL-ESTABLISHED ROUTES. ABOUT TWO HOURS PER MONTH. EASY AND FUN! CALL DEAN OR MARCIA SAVAGE, 209—339—1599.



25th Annual Peaceful Holiday Faire promotes socially responsible gift giving

Times: Friday, December 2 4—9 pm
Saturday, December 3 10 am—2 pm
Location: Central United Methodist Church, 3700 Pacific Avenue, Stockton CA 95204
Admission: FREE

The Peace & Justice Network of San Joaquin County will present its 25th annual Peaceful Holiday Faire on Friday and Saturday, December 2 and December 3. This is a warm and friendly holiday event designed to encourage thoughtful holiday gift giving that reflects positive values and that benefits people rather than corporations.

This alternative gift fair will have unique, nonviolent items for sale by local small businesses and nonprofit organizations. Vendors include local artists and craftspeople, artisans, local organizations, and international service organizations such as Concern. We'll be offering a variety of hand woven goods, artistic gems and jewelry, items for children/infants, and Celtic imports.

The Peaceful Holiday Faire is a joyous event—an opportunity to meet friends, partake of refreshments, listen to live music performances, and purchase gifts that are nonviolent and environmentally friendly. Please come and join us at Central United Methodist Church, 3700 Pacific Avenue, Stockton. You may contact 462—3489 for more information or if you want to volunteer to help at the faire, call 943—0539.

Talking It Through

EDUCATION • ENVIRONMENT • POLITICS • CULTURE

Peace & Justice Network Sponsors two Half-Hour Shows:

"Lets Talk" documentaries of important community meetings and events. **Mondays, 6pm.**

"Talking It Through" hosted by Sammy Nuñez features live discussions of important community issues, especially with your people. **Mondays, 6:30pm.**

Both shows are produced by Peace & Justice volunteer Vince Kotecki on SJTV: Stockton, Lodi and Manteca cable channel 26.

For up to the minute listings of current shows, see our website www.pjnsjc.org, click on Talking it Through.

Is the corporate media still censoring stories?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

publisher. How are subjects censored in the modern-day corporate press due to the current “culture of mass media” as compared to actually being “spiked”?

PP: Stories are still deliberately spiked! We call this managed news. And it is quite widespread. On October 25, 2005 the American Civil Liberties (ACLU) posted to their website forty-four autopsy reports, acquired from American military sources, covering the deaths of civilians who died while in US military prisons in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2002–2004. The autopsy reports provided proof of widespread torture by US forces. Twenty-three of the reports said the cause of death was homicide. The balance of the reports mostly indicated that the cause of death was heart failure. The conditions of the bodies indicated clearly that these people were tortured to death. A press release by the ACLU announcing the deaths was immediately picked up by Associated Press (AP) wire service making the story available to US corporate media nationwide. A thorough check of Nexis–Lexis and Proquest library data bases showed that at least ninety-nine percent of the daily papers in the US did not pick up the story, nor did AP ever conduct follow up coverage on the issue.

In a January 2008 report, the British polling group Opinion Research Business (ORB) reported that, “survey work confirms our earlier estimate that over 1,000,000 Iraqi citizens have died as a result of the conflict which started in 2003. ORB interviewed 2,400 randomly selected families in 15 of 18 provinces in Iraq, asking the question has anyone in your family died from war violence. The data resulted in a report that stated, “We now estimate that the death toll between March 2003 and August 2007 is likely to have been of the order of 1,033,000.”

The ORB report comes on the heels of two earlier studies conducted by Johns Hopkins University published in the Lancet medical journal that confirmed the continuing numbers of mass deaths in Iraq. A study done by Dr. Les Roberts from January 1, 2002 to March 18, 2003 put the civilian deaths at that time at over 100,000. A second study published in the Lancet in October 2006 documented over 650,000 civilian deaths in Iraq since the start of the US invasion. The 2006 study confirms that US aerial bombing in civilian neighborhoods caused over a third of these deaths and that over half the deaths are directly attributable to US forces.

The Associated Press, which reaches over one billion people in the world, released three times in 2009 the story claiming only 87,000 Iraqis had died as a result of US invasion and occupation. The story was originally published April 23, 2009; updated July 25 and October 14.

MK: Have you seen Project Censored having an impact on news coverage over the years?

PP: It is hard to tell but over 1/3 of our stories go on to receive some corporate coverage.

MK: Given your long experience with Project Censored, how do you regard the emergence of WikiLeaks?

PP: Outstanding!

MK: Mickey, can you explain briefly how this year’s book is structured? It’s a lot more than the 25 “censored” stories that are recognized.

MICKEY HUFF: Each year since 1993, when the first full length Project Censored book was published (prior to that there were smaller publications dating to 1976), we have researched, vetted, and voted on the most important censored (or under reported) stories of the year. Indeed, it is what the Project is known for, the Top 25, or the Top 10 censored stories. This is certainly important, and this year, we have organized our analysis of the top stories in what we call censored news clusters, to highlight the overall architecture of censorship along topical lines in the corporate media.

Year after year, and now more than ever, the book itself contains more sections, chapters, and investigative reports and scholarly studies on not only what is wrong with mass media in the US and the failures of the free press, but on what can be done about it, and what is being done in terms of solutions to achieve the concept in practice of a truly free press – how the founders philosophically intended (think theory, not practice). A journalism that keeps the public informed on crucial matters of the day so that they may participate meaningfully in the maintenance of democracy, in order to attain a state of relevant and representative self-governance.

MK: Project Censored is somewhat unusual in that students at Sonoma State University (California), as Peter mentioned, do much of the work on identifying the top 25 articles. How has this worked out over the years??

MH: In the past few years, Project Censored has grown and now includes student and faculty researchers at over 30 colleges and universities across the US, and we have participants in over half a dozen countries. We are a student centered, media literacy education organization at heart, but there are many more facets to the project as evidenced in our coverage of what we call junk food news and news abuse (looking at the increased tabloidization of news coverage); signs of hope and health (showcasing the many positive community building stories); media democracy in action (highlighting activists for media freedom); the truth emergency section of the book on propaganda studies; and the Project Censored International section that looks at media democracy issues in the US and around the globe. So, we are ever expanding and are seeking participants in educational fields, we are looking to hear from teachers, students, concerned citizens of the world who understand the importance of fighting for the right to be informed about the world in which we live.

MK: On the Project Censored web site, you refer to section two of the book focusing on “the truth emergency.” Can you explain the relationship between a “truth emergency” and propaganda?

MH: This truth emergency we face is a result of the lack of factual reporting by the so-called mainstream media over the past decade. This truth emergency is the result of a lack of source transparency and factual substance in news transmission. Americans are subjected to mass amounts of propaganda, from misinformation to

disinformation, on a daily basis, about some of the most significant issues of the day. Whether this involves the post–9/11 wars in the Middle East, the health care reform fiascos, election fraud, or economic collapse and bailouts, most Americans are unaware of all the facts of how we got where we now are as a society. It is the duty of the constitutionally protected free press to report factually to the public on these matters. However, as shown by Project Censored’s work dating back to 1976, that is not happening.

One way of combating this truth emergency is by understanding the nature of propaganda. This year, our truth emergency section is a primer on propaganda studies, which includes a brief history, theory, application, and case studies all presented to enhance media literacy among the general public.

MK: Getting back to the “truth emergency,” to what extent is US government propaganda about many issues in congruence with corporate media propaganda?

MH: Often times they are one in the same, from the view in government and corporate media on WikiLeaks and transparency to the current NATO actions in Libya, the two have a similar view because there is so much overlap of interest in both involved parties (which in and of themselves have great overlap – from the corporate world to government posts or lobbyists and back again).

Both the US government and the corporate media essentially have a duopoly on manipulating the public mind for political or commercial gain. Leading the public to one view or another is the name of the game, rather than reporting all the facts and letting the chips fall where they may.

This clearly represents a crisis for democracy; the truth of major issues remains illusive to the public. The antidote lies not only in exposing the charlatans of the establishment order as propagandists, but also in providing a broader understanding of how propaganda works, what it looks like and how to detect it, and what the public can do about it. Namely, the solution is to create an independent free press, one not beholden to moneyed interests, but rather one that tells people the truth about all matters, regardless of which powerful parties may be exposed.

MK: If you look at Berlusconi’s ownership of media in Italy and Rupert Murdoch’s de facto influence on the government in the UK, aren’t we facing a worldwide problem of the media representing the ruling elite?

MH: Yes, we are. And that has been a growing trend that seems to be unabated, save for the recent actions in the US to investigate and possibly block the latest AT&T merger. But overall, that is a rare action by the US government. The trend over the later 20th century has been in support of consolidation of ownership and a shutting out of public participation, oversight, and inclusion of views from everyday people. In fact, the FCC just recently drove another nail in the coffin of the Fairness Doctrine, which was mostly dismantled under the Reagan years.

Despite many well-intentioned people in the so-called media reform movement, reform measures via government agencies have rarely worked at the federal level. This is why we must all be the media, we must create and share our own transparently sourced, fact-based news, and we must support independent voices that are doing the same. We cannot depend on those that have created the problems of the news media, contributed to problems of the news media, and benefited from those conditions to take heed and go about fixing said problems in the public interest. That has not, and likely will not happen.

MARK KARLIN IS THE EDITOR OF BUZZFLASH AT TRUTHOUT. HE SERVED AS EDITOR AND PUBLISHER OF BUZZFLASH FOR TEN YEARS BEFORE JOINING TRUTHOUT IN 2010. BUZZFLASH HAS WON FOUR PROJECT CENSORED AWARDS.

Source: Truthout Interview 9/9/11, www.truthout.org

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