

connections

PRICELESS

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SAVE THE DATES

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Results Are In

Public health plan saves BIG money

Bill Scher

When the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) scored an early draft of the health care bill from the Senate HELP committee as costing \$1 trillion over 10 years but only covering one-third of the uninsured, obstructionists pounced and proclaimed the public plan option dead.

But the CBO had not assessed the cost of the public plan option, nor a mandate on most employers to either provide insurance or contribute to the public plan. Now they have. And as serious reform advocates long claimed, including those two key provisions drops the 10-year cost of reform by nearly \$400 billion, while achieving near universal coverage.

Will the self-proclaimed deficit hawks now embrace the public plan option since it would save money? Or will they come up with fresh excuses, such as fear-mongering that the public plan would decimate the private insurance industry? Let's add one more piece of information to the mix: the underreported report from the Urban Institute, "Is the Public Plan Option a Necessary Part of Health Reform?"

What did they find?

First, a public plan won't kill competition, because competition is currently non-existent—the report states: "...health insurance

markets today, by and large, are simply not competitive. And as such, these markets are not providing the benefits one would expect from competition, including efficient operations and consequent control over health care costs. We believe what has taken place over the past several years has been a significant contributor to this problem. The role of the government plan is to counter the adverse impacts of market concentration and, in doing so, slow the growth in health care costs."

Second, the report predicts private companies would respond to the new competition in a fashion that would allow them to maintain a significant share of the market, taking issue with an earlier report from the Lewin Group that assumed a whopping 119 million would leave private plans.

The report continues: "The Lewin report ... did not assume that there would be a response on the part of private payers. Private insurers would clearly respond to the presence of a public plan competitor by negotiating more aggressively with providers. Providers in turn would most likely find it in their interest to negotiate lower rates with insurers; otherwise, they would risk the exit of private plans and have only the public plan with which to contract. As private

plans bring down their costs, the difference in their premiums from those of the public plan would shrink as well, possibly attracting more enrollees ... [While] any enrollment prediction will require significant assumptions about individual behavior ... We predict that roughly 70 percent of the low-income exchange enrollees (those under 200 percent of the federal poverty level) would choose the public plan, with the likelihood of choosing the public plan falling as income increases ... about 47

million would enroll in coverage through the public plan ... Private plans would continue to serve about 161 million Americans."

If the public plan option saves money, enhances competition and far from prompts the collapse of private insurance (which is the only scenario where public plan option polls badly), then the detractors have literally no leg to stand on.

Source: Campaign for America's Future 7/3/09 <http://ourfuture.org>



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Push the envelope

Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.

—Frederick Douglass

Bruce Giudici

We live in a time when power is concentrated in the hands of a remarkable few. Hoarded money and wealth—the scorekeeper of the day—now dominates our society through media control, political manipulation and economic blackmail. Nothing new here.

We also live in a time when ramifications of decisions made now will be felt for generations to come. Health care is the current battlefield. Now absorbing over 17% of every dollar in our economy, the system has many self-serving beneficiaries who would lose if the way monies are spent were changed in any way. So, we find support among the powerful for insuring everyone (feeding gluttonous insurance

companies with no cost constraint) but less so for a public option (keeping insurance companies "honest") and totally against a single-payer system (cutting out the powerful altogether, with added public cost oversight). The powerful have won this game in the past. They can't this time. If we work on it, the game changer can be Barack Obama, who comes with little experience and baggage, but loaded with smarts and public support. And, as we saw under Bush, the president has enormous power to influence events. Obama needs our support; it's time.

In this year of opportunity, we must make our case clear: decentralized power, dispersed among informed people making common sense choices, will allow us to make necessary changes to ensure our survival. More simply, we need more input to the decisions made in Sacramento and Washington DC, not false choices presented by the self-interested.

Elected through a system controlled by big money, our "representatives" only represent their big money patrons. Town hall and constituent meetings are the lip service required to evidence "consideration of all views." In the end, money buys the politician, the million dollar campaign (which starts the day after the election) and ensures that every "public servant," no matter how poor upon entry, leaves public service a multi-millionaire with prospects for much more in the private sector.

So, what tools do we have at our disposal? First, there are the few representatives who manage to courageously stand up to money—notably the Democratic House members who have stood up for the single payer health care option. Second is the Internet—through which vital information flows and organizing processes happen. And third is you—the optimistic democrat who believes that our system of government

Bruce Giudici,
editor



and interpersonal relations can be changed so that all can count on a better tomorrow.

Taking power from the powerful will not come easily; the powerful few have soothing arguments and a pliant media to bombard us with reasons why we cannot be trusted with making our own decisions. It's the catastrophic failure of the systems created by the powerful now that makes change inevitable. We must ensure that what is set up benefits us all, and not just the same old controlling few. Push the envelope and don't begin at compromise. Now is the time to shoot for the moon—the economic crisis allows it and the future of our planet demands it.

Have a bold summer.

Save the Mokelumne from New Pardee Dam

Katherine Evatt

The East Bay Municipal Utility District is proposing to build a new 400-foot dam on the Mokelumne River as part of its 2040 water plan. The dam will be yet another nail in the coffin of the Delta and our crashing salmon and steelhead fisheries. We need to increase freshwater inflow to the lower Mokelumne River for fish and the Delta, not divert more water upstream. The New Pardee Reservoir contemplated in the plan will also flood about three miles of the upper Mokelumne River, including free-flowing river that is potential restoration habitat for salmon and steelhead. The threatened Middle Bar and Electra reaches are also home to a native rainbow trout fishery.

Since 1929, EBMUD has had its own version of the Peripheral Canal—the twin Mokelumne Aqueducts that bring the East Bay 90 percent of its water from the Upper Mokelumne River, bypassing the lower river and the Delta. We cannot allow EBMUD

to expand those diversions as the Delta and fisheries are on the brink.

We are working with conservation, fish, river and recreation organizations who oppose this misguided dam plan. Our growing list of partners currently includes the Foothill Conservancy, Trout Unlimited, CalTrout, Friends of the River, American Whitewater, and Sierra Club SF Bay and Mother Lode chapters.

ACTION: We need everyone to speak up on behalf of the Mokelumne. And we need volunteers to help with a grassroots campaign in the East Bay. Can you spare a few minutes to help?

1) Come to EBMUD meetings or make calls: If you can come to upcoming EBMUD meetings in Oakland on July 28, or August 11, or make calls to help recruit others to the cause, please contact campaign field organizer Tim Robertson: tim@savethemoke.com or 510-712-8620.

2) Write your EBMUD director:

If you're an EBMUD ratepayer, please write a letter (snail mail) in your own words to your EBMUD director. Don't let them destroy more of the Mokelumne, the Delta and our fisheries in your name. For director names, ward information and mailing address, see EBMUD's https://portal.ebmud.com/about_ebmud/>website.

3) Send an e-mail to EBMUD: At the very least, please take time to send an e-mail to EBMUD expressing your outrage at this proposal and urging them to:

- Drop the Pardee expansion from the 2040 water management plan

- Endorse National Wild and Scenic River designation for the Mokelumne River from Salt Springs to the high pool of the existing Pardee Reservoir. Wild and Scenic River designation would protect the Mokelumne from new dams or diversions.

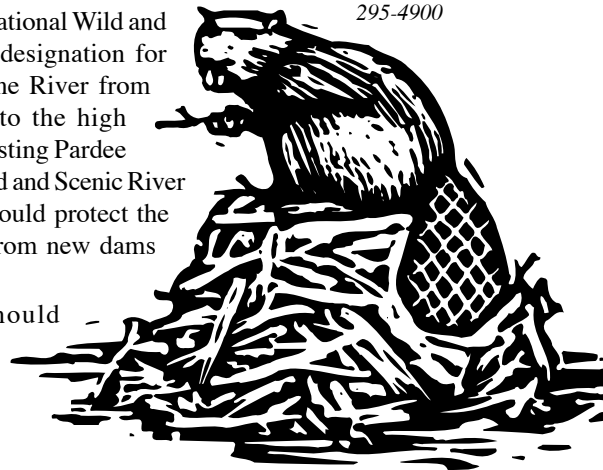
E-mails should be directed to llewis@

ebmud.com, Lynelle Lewis, the EBMUD board clerk.

If mailing a physical letter: President Doug Linney, East Bay Municipal Utility District, 375 11th St., Oakland, CA 94607-4240

For more information, contact Foothill Conservancy <http://www.foothillconservancy.org/>, Friends of the River <http://www.friendsoftheriver.org/> or the California Sportfishing Protection Alliance <http://www.calsport.org>.

Source: Foothill Conservancy, P.O. Box 1255, Pine Grove, CA 95665 www.foothillconservancy.org 209-295-4900



Connections

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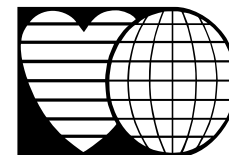
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"The Peace and Justice Network is a nonprofit educational organization committed to the vision of a world in which the equality of all persons is achieved, basic needs are met, conflict is resolved nonviolently, and the earth's resources are shared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

Health care reform—in the House

The House plan, "America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009" builds on the health care system we have now—various private insurance plans offered by employers or purchased individually, some public programs (Medicaid, Medicare, Veterans Administration) and community health clinics. It leaves all these elements in place and improves or expands them, and adds a public health insurance plan to the mix.

What's "new and improved?"

About 85 percent of us in this country have health insurance or are already covered by a public program, and are basically satisfied with our arrangements. Even so, if you bring up the topic of health insurance at a party or potluck, you'll hear many stories of frustrations and anomalies. A 59-year old early retiree is cut off from private insurance because his care is too costly to the company. A son ages out of dependent status, only to find he can't get health care on his own because of a "prior or existing health condition." Out of pocket costs are so high that an employer-provided plan covers barely half of the routine health care costs a family incurs. Loss of a job means loss of insurance. A move to a new employer, or a new town, means loss of insurance. Employers are cutting back coverage because of the high cost of premiums. You've heard the stories, so has Congress. The House bill addresses these frustrations by requiring private insurance plans (and the public plan) to adhere to a set of standards:

- Guaranteed renewal of insurance.
- Guaranteed acceptance, regardless of a person's current health or health history.
- A cap on out-of-pocket costs.
- Affordability credits so that those with (sudden or long-term) lower incomes can afford insurance.
- A nationwide public plan, available wherever you move.
- Competition in the market place and efficiency requirements for private plans to bring the cost of premiums down.

How would the House plan work?

The House bill creates an essential health care plan called a Qualified Health Benefit Plan. This is a plan that follows the rules described above, and offers a standard set of services (hospital and outpatient care, mental health, prevention, well-child care, maternity care, etc.)

Two major things happen with that Qualified Health Benefit Plan. One is, as the program is phased in, employers will have to offer a QHBP to their employees (and dependents.) The other is that insurance companies could not sell a health plan to any individual (outside of a group plan) unless it was a QHBP. So essentially all private insurance would be governed by the rules and minimum standards described in the House bill.

One of the Qualified Health Benefit Plans would be a public insurance plan—an insurance plan underwritten by the federal government that would have to follow all the same rules. This plan is likely to offer some stiff competition in the marketplace for two reasons: (1) economies of scale will allow it to price its premiums lower than the premiums currently charged in the private market, and (2) improvements in information technology (learned through Medicare and Medicaid experience) will allow it to save time, money, and aggravation by paying doctors and providers fairly and quickly.

Does everyone have to have insurance?

The House plan would require everyone in the U.S., either through an employer or as an individual, to be covered by a Qualifying Health Benefit Plan. Without this requirement, the care of uninsured people would continue to drive up the cost of premiums for everyone. Families U.S.A., a national health care advocacy organization, estimates that uninsured care raises health insurance premiums by about \$1,000 per family every year. Spreading out the cost of care among the whole population—for a public good like health care—is a more fair arrangement. Individuals

who choose not to sign up for a Qualifying Health Benefit Plan will be charged an excise tax equal to 2.5 percent of their adjusted gross income. (Exemptions are provided for hardship cases and for people with religious objections.

People who are now covered by an employer-based plan that doesn't meet all the rules of the Qualifying Health Benefit Plan can still keep that plan for several years, during a transition period. No sudden moves are anticipated.

How will people find these Qualifying Health Benefit Plans?

The House bill sets up a national health insurance "Exchange" which would include the public insurance option and private insurance plans that have been certified as Qualifying Health Benefit Plans. At first, the Exchange will be open only to uninsured individuals and very small employers. Later, it will

be opened up to somewhat larger employers. Friends Committee on National Legislation is urging Congress to open up the Exchange (and therefore access to the public plan) to all employers and individuals who would like to sign up. The Exchange will assist individuals and families in comparing and selecting a plan that will work well for them in their area.

I can't afford health care now. How is this going to help me?

First, your employer would be required to pay at least 72.5 percent of the cost of covering your health insurance (or 65 percent for you and your dependents.) That might help. But if your part of the premium would still be beyond reach, you may qualify for an "affordability credit." Affordability credits are available on a sliding scale for people who make too much money

to qualify for Medicaid (133 percent of the poverty line), up to people with incomes at 400 percent of the poverty line. (That's about \$73,000 per year for a family of three). At that level, if your health care premiums cost more than 11 percent of your income (or about \$8,000 a year), you could get an "affordability credit" through the Exchange that would make up the difference. The most you would pay for your premiums would be 11 percent of your income. Lower on the income scale, say 200 percent of poverty (\$36,620 for a family of three), you would only need to pay about 5 percent of your income for health premiums (about \$1,800 per year). In addition, Medicaid would be expanded to everyone in the U.S. living below 133 percent of the federal poverty line, including adults with no children.

Source: FCNL release 7/14/09, 800-630-1330 <http://www.fcnl.org>

What is 'Single Payer' Health Care versus 'Public Option' Health Care?
Answers to many of the questions are 'qualified' and briefly explained

Characteristic	Single Payer • Public financing • Private delivery	Public Option • Individual Financing • Private Delivery
Everyone In	Yes	No Can buy into public plan, keep private insurance or be uninsured.
Guaranteed Coverage for Everyone	Yes Paid automatically through taxes	No Not automatic, people have to 'buy in'. Some will be unable to afford.
Choice of Doctors/providers	Yes	Yes
Choice of paying into system	No Mandatory, required by taxes	Yes Can buy public, private or no plan
Competition between public & private Ins. companies	No	Yes
Risk of destruction of Insurance Industry	Yes Private ins would be used only for supplemental or special needs Retraining and restructuring required	No Insurance industry protected, perhaps even subsidized for premiums of poor. However, fewer customers in private plans means lower profit margins
'Cherry Picking' (Picking only the most healthy folks to insure – meaning the least costly)	No	Yes Ins. companies have option of picking to insure only those 'less sick' - forces sick into public plan.
Risk pool shared by Everyone	Yes Costs distributed across entire population	No Cost shifted to the sickest of those privately insured and public plan picking up sickest populations
Employment Dependent	No Everyone is in the plan.	No People could choose to stay with an employer's plan or 'buy into' the public plan (employers could do the same).
Discrimination against Pre-existing conditions	No	No (qualified) Discrimination still possible (likely) for those buying private insurance
Plan will help negotiate lower health care delivery costs and lower drug costs	Yes Generally more negotiation power for all services. Bulk purchase / negotiation for pharmaceuticals	Yes (qualified) Competition from private plans reduces number of patients in the public plan thus decreasing public bargaining power from an entire population pool.
Current Legislative and Presidential support	No Few Legislators support this. President Obama supported single payer when a senator but now calls it 'too disruptive.'	Yes Support from president and many Democrats. Many Republican still oppose as "increased government involvement." Claims of 'no Choice of doctors' is a false argument.
Reduced influence of Insurance Lobby	Yes	Uncertain Will maintain more influence than with single payer system.
Reducing cost across the entire Health Care System	Yes One holistic system with large pool has greater savings in part due to negotiating power and simplification of administration and paperwork.	No Incremental steps may have other advantages, but nothing specific to create lower costs. More risk of failing to reduce health care costs.

Prepared for League of Women Voters of Arizona by Dr. Barbara Klein (DC; MPS Health Care & Hospital Administration) - 5/09

Why we need a public option

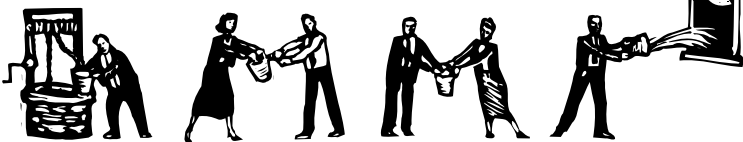
Submitted by Roger Speed

AB 2 (De La Torre) advanced to the Senate Judiciary Committee with six votes. Assemblyman Hector De La Torre's (D) bill was heavily opposed by the health insurance industry, including Blue Shield, Anthem Blue Cross and Health Net, some of the largest health care plans in California. It would prohibit health insurance companies from engaging in the rescission practice, in which a consumer's health care coverage is yanked from them retroactively once major medical expenses become necessary.

Anthem Blue Cross, Blue Shield and other plans received widespread news coverage of hundreds of cases uncovered in 2007 during which patients were dropped and their coverage revoked retroactive to the moment they signed up for health insurance. The measure requires a standardized

questionnaire for asking people's medical history, and for insurers seek approval for any rescission, rather than be "judge and jury" for consumer accused of fraud.

Presently, indications are that the industry signs people up without doing research in advance, only to scour medical histories when patients most need the coverage they believed they had. An insurance company representative objected strongly to the bill, said it would "have a devastating impact on the individual market. If we know we have to meet such a high standard, there will be higher premiums and it could have the impact of restricting the number of individuals we insure." The bill was supported by the California Medical Association and several consumer groups, including Health Access California.



Sickening amounts of healthcare lobbying

The healthcare industry is waging a "record-breaking influence campaign," spending "more than \$1.4 million a day on lobbying," reports the Washington Post. "The Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) doubled its spending to nearly \$7 million in the first quarter of 2009, followed by Pfizer, with more than \$6 million" spent in just three months. Among the lobbyists are many former Congressional staffers and even former members of Congress, including Dick Armev and Richard Gephardt.

The impact is illustrated by a recent meeting in the office of Senate Finance Committee Chair Max Baucus, which "included two former Baucus chiefs of staff: David Castagnetti, whose clients

include PhRMA and America's Health Insurance Plans, and Jeffrey A. Forbes, who represents PhRMA, Amgen, Genentech, Merck and others." The Post "identified more than 350 former government aides, each representing an average of four firms or trade groups." PhRMA leads "the pack in spending and employs 49 former government staff members among its 136 lobbyists." Many of the major lobbyists "remain opposed to the public-insurance option" supported by the Obama administration. PhRMA's head, former Congressman Billy Tauzin, finds the Congress-drug industry revolving door "pretty normal." He asked, "Is it a distortion of baseball to hire coaches who have played baseball?"

Source: Washington Post, July 6, 2009
<http://www.washingtonpost.com>

Effects of a flawed health care system

Alyssa Palomares

I cared about him, despite the fact I barely knew him. On the other hand, he was a friend, a brother, a son and a dog owner. He was a Las Vegas DJ in his late-20s, and even produced and made his own music. He was a graphic designer and an artist. You could describe him as creative and artistic, and he was also considered philosophical. He was a hockey fan and especially loved the Anaheim Ducks.

This is Eric De La Cruz. He was in dire need of a heart transplant for five years, due to his heart being unable to pump blood efficiently from a medical condition called dilated cardiomyopathy (a.k.a. DCM).

Unfortunately, Eric had Nevada Medicaid, which doesn't cover heart transplants. Although Nevada did have heart transplant centers, they weren't certified by CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services), and having a CMS-certified center is how you get Medicaid to cover any costs. In order to get a transplant, Eric had to apply for federal Medicare. His application was rejected twice and his final appeal would not be heard for a year. It wasn't until a judge's ruling that Eric was granted Medicare and the disabled status needed for it. But even after the ruling, administrators at transplant hospitals still required supplemental insurance in addition to his Medicare coverage.

Thankfully, Trent Reznor and his band Nine Inch Nails, famous skateboarder Tony Hawk, rock band Jane's Addiction and their fans raised nearly \$900,000 towards the anticipated medical costs. This, plus donations, resulted in Eric's move to a hospital in California in May 2009, when he was put on a heart transplant list. Eric even named his dog Chance after the second chance at life he was hoping for after receiving the transplant.

I was just one of Eric's many supporters on Twitter, or as we called ourselves, The Eric Army or ETA (Eric's Twitter Army). We all stood alongside each other and with Eric's sister, Veronica (from



CNN), who constantly updated us on how Eric was doing and even took pictures. We all hoped for the best and that he would get a new heart. We prayed for him, sent cards and left him messages. I even baked a cake for him.

During his hospitalization, Eric underwent emergency surgery to have a Ventricular Assist Device (VAD) implanted to keep him going. But it didn't keep him going for long. Despite all our efforts and the VAD, Eric died on July 4, 2009. Eric was only in his late-20s. If he had lived longer, he could have done anything he wanted to and accomplished many things. He could have been a daddy, a husband, an uncle, a grandpa. Eric could have done anything he wanted to.

There's something wrong with this picture. Why did Eric have to go through all of this in order to get on a list for a heart transplant? The fact that he even needed one should be first-priority. If he had gotten on the list years earlier, he would have had a better chance to get the heart transplant. Now he's dead.

This is supposed to be a free country. It's bad enough that not everyone has equal rights. We have

rights in this country; just take a look at the constitution. Although it's not in the constitution, free healthcare (a.k.a. healthcare paid for by taxes) should be a right. It shouldn't be exclusively for the privileged. When Jesus healed him, he didn't give it only to certain people or ask for anything. That's the way our healthcare system should be. Plus, other nations like the United Kingdom and Canada have free healthcare already. If it can be free in other nations, then it can be free here. So, why don't we raise our standards? A great way to start would be with free healthcare. We could prevent someone from suffering the same fate as Eric.

I would like to give credit to the Eric Army/ETA members that gave me information for my article, including Brandon "Bujo" Roberts and those who wish to stay anonymous.

Alyssa Palomares (a.k.a. Lisa Starlynn, which is usually written as "Lisa Lynn" with a star in between) is graduating to 8th grade this year, enjoys reading and music, and recently got a kitten named Joanie. You can find her on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/lisastarlynn>.

Where does our money go?

The prisons we build, the schools we abandon

Submitted by Oscar Cardenas

California's budget has been in a critical meltdown for the last year. We all know the rundown: revenue from current taxes is in freefall along with the economy, there is little support for new taxes, and elected officials are at a deadlock. As criminologists and sociologists, we decided to look at how we allocate funds in our state, and to see what Californians get for our money.

For 2009-10, California has budgeted the same amount of money for corrections and higher education: 13% of the general fund for each, or \$12.3B for prisons, and \$12.3B for public higher education. What do we get for this \$24.6B? When you include the general obligation bonds for prison construction, the cost per prisoner per year in California is between \$47,000 and \$49,000. Our prisons are comprised of roughly 70% people of color, mostly non-violent drug offenders. Currently about 50% of prisoners will be re-incarcerated within two years of being released. Why? Because we don't spend money on programs known to reduce recidivism: job training, mental health programming, drug treatment, anger management, and interpersonal skills workshops. Not to mention that jobs, especially in this economy, are hard to come by upon an ex-con's return to their community. As of April 2009, the unemployment rate for individuals with less than a high school degree was 14.8% whereas the rate for those with a bachelor's degree or higher was 4.4%. Since on average 50% of convicts were unemployed before arrest, there is a clear link between unemployment and incarceration.

In contrast, we spend about \$6,200 per student per year in public higher education (CSU and UC combined). Currently about 60% of students graduate from the CSU system, but sadly this is highly dependant upon a student's race and family

economic background. Students of color along with those from poor backgrounds have a substantially lower retention and graduation rate. In other words, those who fill our prisons are similar to those who are more likely to drop out of college.

Recidivism rates have been stable and deplorable, and clearly show that our crime control policies of the last 30 years are not working. We have not effectively reduced crime, but instead have economically destabilized communities of color by vociferously prosecuting petty drug offenses, a policy that demands copious amounts of money. We are effectively placing people in warehouses at the cost of both the dwindling funds in the state budget as well as the social wealth and stability of communities.

We can do better. Here's how:

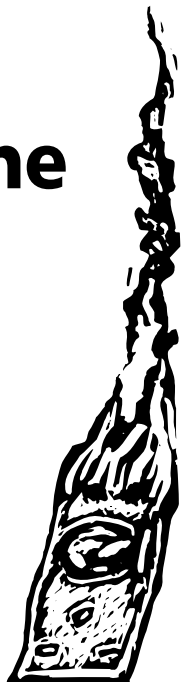
A solution to reducing incarceration rates is through education. Not only are higher levels of education correlated with a reduction in crime, but it is also a sound economic investment: for every \$1.00 invested in the CSU, \$4.41 is returned to California's economy. To balance the state's budget, \$600M has been cut from the CSU system, resulting in the denial of 10,000 students last fall. Graduation rates clearly need improvement, but this can only be accomplished with proper funding. Just as we need to get motivated students to college, we need to graduate them as well.

For those already in prison instead of college, rehabilitation programs are sparse and meagerly funded (about 5% of the corrections budget), and are the first to get cut in a faltering economy. The "tough on crime" policies that Californians have supported such as three strikes and heavily punitive drug laws demand a burgeoning budget that only allows for the warehousing of criminals rather than funding rehabilitation programs that have been proven to reduce recidivism.

These priorities are upside-down: rehabilitation programs are what we need to invest in most to reduce the chance of future crimes. Without careful attention to building such programs we'll be left with more prisoners in more crowded situations, and who are thus more likely to recidivate. By emphasizing human storage rather than rehabilitation, California is effectively allowing for the continuation of crime.

Most of us would agree that we want to prevent crime, which would keep individuals from going to prison in the first place. A myriad of events must occur before this is a full reality, but higher education that is both open and accessible to everyone is a step in the right direction. Most of us would also agree that the best function of prison is not to punish, but to rehabilitate: to reduce recidivism through constructive programs. To make these two things happen, we need to reinvest in higher education and reallocate funds in the criminal justice budget for rehabilitation programs.

Report by Prof. Kevin Wehr and the students of Sociology 255 "Criminology" at California State University Sacramento: Hafiza Arikat, Oscar Cardenas, Samuel Cruz, Jeanine Cunningham, Rachael Ekins, Brandi Fowler, Nicole Ishiura, Anna Keck, Crystal Lopez, Shanat Lopez, Ryan Morimune, Amanda Neasbitt, Andrea Nemeyer, Alondra Perez, Christina Santiago, Leslie Shebley, Michael Small, Cha Vang, Margaret Wade, and Michael Wright.



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Some letters: torture on the front lines

The interrogator

Dear Mr President,

"I came to Iraq with two things, and I'm leaving with both—my father's last name and my integrity." Those were the words of a commander that I served with in Iraq, a military officer who shared my belief that we could accomplish our mission without sacrificing our principles. Together, this elite Army soldier and I, an Air Force interrogator, along with our teammates, captured several high ranking Al Qaeda leaders. We did it by applying our intellect and outsmarting our enemies. As Americans, we have a unique advantage in this conflict against Al Qaeda: our culture. It is a culture we can leverage, based on tolerance, cultural understanding, intellect, and integrity. There is no need for torture and abuse.

Torture and abuse were authorized and encouraged by senior leaders in the previous administration, and senior military officers followed unlawful orders to use these interrogation tactics. Some have argued a military necessity, but no short term military gain will ever outweigh the long term consequences of having used these unlawful and immoral methods. On a pragmatic level, I witnessed with my own eyes, while supervising over a thousand interrogations, a majority of foreign fighters state that the number one reason they came to Iraq to fight was because of our policy that allowed torture and abuse to occur at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay. These foreign fighters killed hundreds, if not thousands, of American soldiers. Torture and abuse did not keep America safe. It cost us lives.

Additionally, these policies damaged our credibility as a nation that adheres to the law of armed conflict. A dangerous precedent has been established by setting aside the law. My family fought against lawless tyranny in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. As John Locke said, "Where the law ends, tyranny begins."

I agree with your desire to move forward, and based on my experience I believe we can improve our methods of interrogation. However, moving forward and examining the past are not mutually exclusive. In

the military, we complete these tasks nearly simultaneously after every battle, with after-action assessments and subsequent improvements to our tactics.

Our country needs an independent investigation into the past in order to send a strong message to the next generation of American soldiers that torture and abuse are morally wrong and, just as importantly, that members of the military have an obligation not to follow unlawful orders. This is an advancement in human rights that we, as Americans, established at the Nuremberg Trials.

Sir, I have carried the legacy of our forefathers into battle four times—Bosnia, Kosovo, and twice to the war in Iraq—always aware of the sacrifices of the men and women who went before me. I served under the watchful, lofty eyes of a friend and fellow brother-in-arms who gave his life in the service of his country early in our careers. We owe it to our fallen brothers and sisters to serve with honor.

Our tradition of honorable military service has been tarnished by those senior leaders who authorized and permitted torture and abuse. An independent investigation is an opportunity not for retaliation or punishment, but for renewing our expectation that future soldiers will adhere to the rule of law.

—Matthew Alexander, Former senior U.S. interrogator in Iraq

The tortured

Dear President Obama,

On November 2, 1989, I was burned with cigarettes more than 111 times. I was raped over and over again—and this was only the beginning.

During the past few years, I have had ample reason to reflect on the life of an extraordinary man, Jean Amery, an Austrian philosopher who was tortured by the Nazis. I was first introduced to his writings shortly after my own torture in Guatemala. Like many who have survived this unspeakable horror, I emerged from that clandestine prison lost and broken—a body without a soul. Gone was the God to whom I had committed my life. Gone was trust, the very idea of justice betrayed. Gone was all that I had believed in. Everything

that defined me as a human being ceased to exist.

Amery's words, odd as this may seem, brought some comfort: "Anyone who has been tortured remains tortured." "Anyone who has suffered torture never again will be at ease in the world...faith in humanity, already cracked by the first slap in the face, then demolished by torture, is never acquired again."

These words seemed written just for me. Somehow, somewhere on this earth was another person who understood what I had learned at the cruel hands of my torturers. For a moment at least, it gave me peace of mind. It was only years later that I would understand the fundamental meaning of Amery's words: "Anyone who has suffered torture, never again will be at ease in the world." And it was years after this understanding that I would learn that Jean Amery had killed himself.

Mr. President, from anonymous graves, voices still cry out. From clandestine prisons, in the midst of indescribable pain, we, my sisters and brothers, beg you to hear. Will you listen to what we alone know of this crime against humanity—what we know from the inside out?

Please hear us! Torture does not end with the release from some clandestine prison. It is not something we "get over." Simply, "looking forward" is not an option for us. Torture is a permanent invasion of our minds and our souls. Surviving is far worse than the actual physical torture itself. Those wounds heal in time—but the memories cling to us. Psychological torture is time without end. No one fully recovers from torture. The damage can never be undone.

What is our claim to speak with authority on this subject? We have been beaten, hanged by wrists, arms, or legs, burned by electrical devices or cigarettes, bitten by humans and dogs, cut or stabbed with knives or machetes. And this is only a sample of what has been done to us. Each mark, visible or invisible, is a permanent reminder of what was done to us—a reminder that in so many cases fills us with embarrassment and even shame. What a cruel irony that it is the tortured one and

not the torturer who feels shame.

And what an irony it is that today in the United States, the tortured so often are told that what they experienced was not even cruel and unusual, let alone torture. What an irony that those who oppose torture, oppose the violation of U.S. law by acts of non-violent civil resistance can be sent to prison while those who ordered this brutality walk free, receiving the de facto impunity implied in your call to "look forward" and only forward.

Mr. President, there is ample reason to believe that important members of the previous administration may well have violated the law. Is it not your responsibility and that of the Attorney General to investigate that possibility? And if the law was violated, is it not your responsibility to hold perpetrators accountable, no matter how exalted their previous positions?

We who have paid the dreadful price of torture beseech you to determine just what happened to law and morality during the past eight years and to make those findings public. It is only by an independent investigation that we will learn the truth, and, if that investigation warrants, it will be by prosecution that we may hold to account those who violated the law and despoiled our national honor. Getting things right in the future depends on knowing what went wrong in the past. You know this when it comes to the economy. You know this when it comes to a health care system. How can you not know it when it comes to human rights?

Mr. President, on behalf of those who know this cruel subject so well, I ask you to act in service to the truth and to the principle that no matter how high the position held nor how much power accrues to it, its incumbent must be held accountable to the law. As I hope you will agree, sir, to do less is to betray the very idea of justice.

—Sister Dianna Ortiz, U.S. citizen tortured in Guatemala, Founder, Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition International

The advocate

Dear President Obama,

As the Secretary General of Amnesty International, I have

borne painful witness to the ways that torture torments its victims. I have seen the incredible courage it takes for someone who has been tortured to put his or her life back together. I have also witnessed what happens when those who have intentionally inflicted such unconscionable pain on another human being are allowed to go unpunished. Authorizing, condoning or participating in torture is an act of moral depravity. It is also a crime. Under the laws of your nation and the United States' international treaty obligations, the government that you lead has a clear and compelling responsibility to investigate and prosecute acts of torture.

Mr. President, failing to fulfill that obligation will not only haunt your nation; it will provide cover and comfort to perpetrators of torture across the globe. What's more, intentionally or not, it will deepen the plight and add to the anguish of victims of torture in dark and desperate prison cells in every corner of the world. If the United States government can establish a well-documented system of torture and abuse and let those responsible walk away with impunity, the consequences will be felt far and wide. I am writing to you on behalf of global human rights defenders who, in extraordinarily difficult circumstances and at great personal risk, speak out to challenge torture and other serious human rights violations.

Mr. President, I urge you to bring the American system of torture to an end and to bring its perpetrators to justice by ensuring: the creation of an independent commission of inquiry into torture and other human rights violations committed in the name of national security; that all those who broke the law are prosecuted; that victims have access to remedy and redress. You owe it to victims of torture everywhere and to brave individuals who, even as I write these words, are putting their lives on the line to stop torture. On behalf of more than 2 million Amnesty International supporters in over 150 countries, I urge you to recognize that the world is looking to you for leadership—accountable, responsible leadership on human rights.

—Irene Khan
Secretary General, Amnesty Int'l

No action on Bush torturers?

Jeremy Scahill

A spot light is once again being focused on the issue of potential prosecutions stemming from the Bush administration's torture program. In the 48 hours since *Newsweek* published a story asserting that Attorney General Eric Holder is now "leaning toward appointing a prosecutor to investigate the Bush administration's brutal interrogation practices," the internet and Capitol Hill have buzzed with reaction. While Obama has spoken quite strongly against prosecutions, he has made a point of saying that the final decision is Holder's. For months, Republican politicians and their media proxies (and, as noted above, some Obama officials) have lambasted the possible prosecutions as unnecessary, irresponsible and a threat to U.S. national security. Meanwhile, the recent reports on Holder have some anti-torture activists wondering whether Holder will be the new "Anti-Torture Hero."

Disappointment

But, a closer examination of the type of investigation Holder is reportedly considering may come as a disappointment to those pressing for accountability—particularly for prosecuting those at the high levels of power—for the crimes of the Bush administration. As has been noted by the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal* (and most of the elite, connected media), any investigation authorized by the Justice Department is likely to be very narrowly focused on those CIA interrogators who went beyond the torture methods explicitly approved in Justice Department legal memos. "The actions of higher-level Bush policymakers are not under consideration for possible investigation," reports the *Washington Post*. "Holder's potential order would likely be limited in scope, focusing only on any interrogation practices that may have gone beyond the bounds set by Justice Department memos, according to a person familiar with the attorney general's thinking," administration officials told the *Wall Street Journal*. The *New York Times*, meanwhile, reported, "The attorney general would prefer to keep such an inquiry narrowly

focused and assign it to a line prosecutor, if possible, rather than appoint a special prosecutor."

Two of the leading lawyers working on confronting the Bush administration's torture program expressed serious concerns about the reported approach being considered by Holder. "It is utterly limiting and means that the lawyers and the higher-ups—assuming they just had these 'torture rules' on paper—are not going to be implicated, but only some lower-level persons who went beyond what was supposedly 'authorized' by the Office of Legal Counsel, [by] William Haynes [General Counsel of the DoD under Bush], John Rizzo [General Counsel at the CIA] and the [Bush administration] leadership," says Michael Ratner, president of the Center for Constitutional Rights. "So, that's very very limiting because it's in essence accepting the 'golden shield' defense that you can somehow get away with legally authorizing waterboarding." Ratner said waterboarding and some of the other tactics and actions employed under Bush are "so outside of anything that could be a lawful order that anyone who authorized or obeyed it should be prosecuted."

Jameel Jaffer, Director of the ACLU's National Security Program, said the report that Holder may appoint a prosecutor "is very encouraging," but cautioned: "If the prosecutor has a mandate only to look at the actions of interrogators who exceeded their authority, that's a very narrow mandate and its one that's going to result in the misimpression that, as with the Department of Defense, the problem in the CIA was with rogue interrogators. In fact, the problem with the CIA torture program was the program itself, which was authorized at the highest levels and the most senior Justice Department lawyers sought to provide a legal basis for that torture program. That's where the real problem is." Jaffer adds: "We want to make sure that the prosecutor's mandate is broad enough to cover not just the actions of rogue interrogators, but also the actions of senior Bush administration officials who authorized or endorsed or facilitated torture."

Ratner says that if Holder

only allows a narrowly-focused investigation based on adherence to the torture memos, the Obama Administration is "essentially saying that the entire torture program was OK and people have a legal defense to it:"

Enforcing the law a distraction?

Much of the coverage following the original *Newsweek* report of the possible appointment of a prosecutor by Holder has focused on partisan political questions. On Monday, *The New York Times* devoted substantial space to this aspect of the story: It is just the kind of distraction from Mr. Obama's domestic priorities—repairing the economy, revamping the health care system, and addressing the long-term problems of energy and climate—that the White House wanted to avoid. Ratner criticized the recent coverage, saying that it "only discusses the so-called 'political costs.' It doesn't cover one positive thing that could come out of prosecutions. It's really off the wall."

As for the position taken by Republicans and some Democrats, including Obama administration officials, that prosecutions would harm the U.S. reputation globally and threaten national security, Jaffer shoots back: "As damaging as the torture program itself is the perception—the accurate perception—that the United States government has thus far declined to hold anybody accountable for it. And I think that that impunity, or the perception that the United States is endorsing impunity is much more damaging to the standing of the United States abroad than any disclosure or further disclosure about the CIA's torture program could be."

ACTION: Encourage AG Holder to prosecute all those responsible for torture: AG Holder, U.S. Department of Justice, 950 Pennsylvania Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20530-0001 or email AskDOJ@usdoj.gov.

Jeremy Scahill is the author of *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army*. His writing and reporting are available at RebelReports.com <<http://rebelreports.com/>>.

Source: *Rebel Reports* 7/14/09

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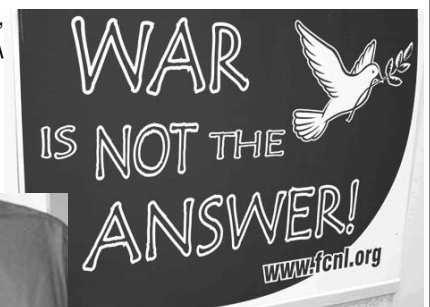
"The rising of the women means the rising of the race."

—from "Bread and Roses," sung by the women of Lawrence Mass. in the textile mill strike of 1912

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

Lawn signs, mugs, T-shirts

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



Boxer on Gitmo

Dear Mr. Giudici:

Thank you for contacting me to express your views regarding President Obama's decision to close the U.S. detention center in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba by 2010. I appreciate hearing from you on this important issue. I believe that Guantánamo serves as a recruiting tool for terrorists, and I support the closure of the facility. I feel it is important to know where all the prisoners will be sent, and the President has begun to put that plan together. Again, thank you for writing to me. Please feel free to contact me again about any issue of importance to you.

Barbara Boxer, US Senator, senator@boxer.senate.gov 7/10/09



Lungren on Gitmo

Dear Mr. Giudici,

Thank you for contacting me regarding the closure of the Guantanamo Bay detention facility in Cuba. I appreciate the opportunity to learn of your views.

As you may know, President Obama signed an executive order on January 22, 2009 to close the detention center at Guantanamo Bay within a year. The executive order also establishes a review process to determine what to do with the detainees currently at Guantanamo Bay. This process will involve consideration by the Attorney General, Secretaries of Defense, State, and Homeland Security, the Director of National Intelligence, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

One of the difficulties the Administration will face relates to the willingness of third party countries to take released detainees. Although Spain and France have indicated they may be willing to consider individual cases there are no firm commitments to do so. Also, there are a number of cases where released prisoners have either returned to the battlefield or terrorist activities. The example of those returned to Saudi Arabia exemplify the difficulties we will likely face. At least two of these individuals were involved in the terrorist plot to overthrow the neighboring government of Yemen.

It is my view that the primary purpose of government is to protect the safety of the American people. Accordingly, it is my intention to scrutinize the release of any of the detainees on that basis. Furthermore, it is my view that the Guantanamo detainees have no legal right to be released within the United States. It is on that basis the new Administration's actions on this matter should be judged.

The President's executive order does not need the approval of Congress. However, you may be interested to know that I am a co-sponsor of the Keep Terrorists Out of America Act (H.R. 2294). This legislation expresses the sense of Congress that those detained at Guantanamo Bay should not be transferred or released into the United States. H.R. 2294 has been referred to the House Committee on Armed Services, of which I am not a member.

Again, thank you for taking the time to share your views with me.

Sincerely,

Daniel E. Lungren, Congressman, www.lungren.house.gov



A modest proposal: Gitmo prisoners to Calaveras Co.

Greetings honorable Board of Supervisors and responsible citizens of Calaveras County, California,

I propose that we contact the U.S. Government and offer to lodge Guantanamo Bay prisoners in Calaveras County. There are patriotic political reasons and definite financial reasons why we should do this. As a political act, it could relieve the United States Government of a problem that now threatens to lock the federal government up in long and costly negotiations at home and abroad. Financially, it would rebound to the benefit of the Calaveras County administration and a substantial number of Calaveras citizens.

If the federal government were to build a prison in Calaveras County, it would create construction jobs in the near term future and create permanent jobs for many more people over the long term. It could serve as the foundation of a permanent "industrial tax base" for the county. In addition, the federal government might be grateful enough for the relief to add a county jail to the prison construction project.

This idea could begin generating income for the county administration in the near future before a prison could or would be built. The Guantanamo inmates could be lodged temporarily in the forested outreaches of Calaveras County in camps similar to the camps that California Department of Forestry now uses for its inmate fire crews.

Two probable objections to this proposal come easily to mind.

- 1.) "Terrorists" might escape and go about terrorizing the citizens of Calaveras County.
- 2.) Terrorists might "contaminate" other prison inmates and convert them to terrorists.

As regards the first count, I don't think it is a major danger. Any escapees would be lost on unfamiliar terrain in a wilderness in a foreign land where they would have no network of family and friends to lend them aid. They would be powerless to combat or

evade a posse of federal marshals, National Guard troops, sheriff's deputies with dogs and a hostile local population. There are no strategic targets in Calaveras County that terrorists could threaten. At worst, a band of escaped terrorists could be a threat to a few individuals. That would be a tragedy, but the probability of it actually happening is low. I believe the risks are tolerable in relation to the potential benefits of this proposal for the whole population of the county, and the state. The state would also benefit from the input of federal funds.

As to the second count, that terrorists might convert the local inmate population to terrorists, I don't think there is any significant danger of that. First off, the "terrorists" that the federal government is seeking to retain in custody are only potential terrorists. Many of them are as much victims of circumstances in their native lands as they are dedicated Jihadists. They could be confined in segregated camp...at federal expense. Even if they were

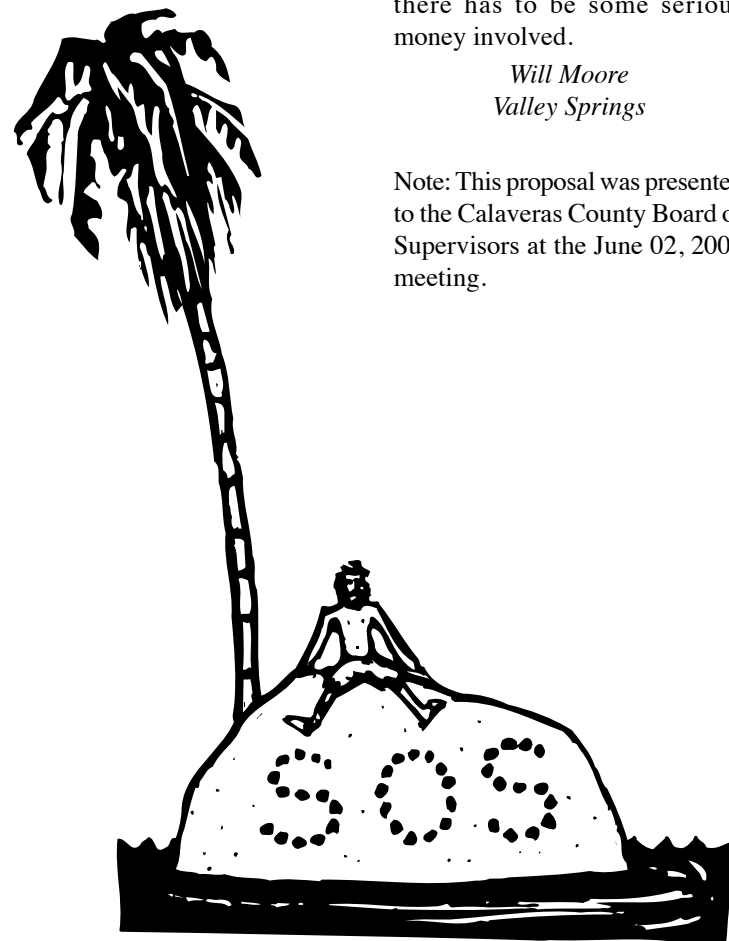
integrated into the traditional CDF camps in small numbers here and there, it is doubtful that the local miscreant population will become Islamist Jihadists and take up arms against the Empire. In fact, some of American culture might rub off on the "terrorists."

Naturally, the initial public reaction to this proposal, and perhaps the Board's response as well, will be the usual Not-in-My-Back-Yard, "NIMBY" response. However, if the matter had an open and thorough public discussion which gave the citizens time to assimilate the idea, and if it was submitted to the voters in a referendum, it might pass. I think the probability of such a proposal passing by referendum is low. However, considering the potential benefits of the plan, I think it is worthwhile having the public discussion.

This is a sincere proposal. I think it is worthy of serious consideration by the Board of Supervisors and the citizens of Calaveras County. If the United States is negotiating with Australia to take these people, there has to be some serious money involved.

Will Moore
Valley Springs

Note: This proposal was presented to the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors at the June 02, 2009 meeting.



Afghan escalation: a scam

Norman Solomon

The president has set a limit on the number of US troops in Afghanistan. For now, that's how escalation works. Ceilings become floors. Gradually.

A few times since last fall, the Obama team has floated rising numbers for how many additional US soldiers will be sent to Afghanistan. Now, deployment of 21,000 more is a done deal, with a new total cap of 68,000 US troops in that country. But "escalation" isn't mere jargon. And it doesn't just refer to what's happening outside the United States.

"Escalation" is a word for a methodical process of acclimating people at home to the idea of more military intervention abroad—nothing too sudden, just a step-by-step process of turning even more war into media wallpaper—nothing too abrupt or jarring, while thousands more soldiers and billions more dollars funnel into what Martin Luther King Jr. called a "demonic suction tube," complete with massive violence, mayhem, terror and killing on a grander scale than ever.

As war policies unfold, the news accounts and dominant media discourse rarely disrupt the trajectory of events. From high places, the authorized extent of

candor is a matter of timing.

Lots of recent spin from Washington has promoted the assumption that President Obama wants to stick with the current limit on deployments to Afghanistan. Soon after pushing supplemental war funds through Congress, he's hardly eager to proclaim that 68,000 American troops in Afghanistan may not be enough after all. But no amount of spin can change the fact that the US military situation in Afghanistan continues to deteriorate. It would be astonishing if plans for add-on deployments weren't already far along at the Pentagon.

Meanwhile, the White House is re-enacting a macabre ritual—a repetition compulsion of the warfare state—carefully timing and titrating each dose of public information to ease the process of escalation. The basic technique is far from new. In the spring and early summer of 1965, President Lyndon Johnson decided to send 100,000 additional US troops to Vietnam, more than doubling the number there. But at a July 28 news conference, he announced that he'd decided to send an additional 50,000 soldiers.

Why did President Johnson say 50,000 instead of 100,000? Because he was heeding the advice from something called a "Special

National Security Estimate"—a secret document, issued days earlier about the already-approved new deployment, urging that "in order to mitigate somewhat the crisis atmosphere that would result from this major US action ... announcements about it be made piecemeal with no more high-level emphasis than necessary."

Forty-four years later, something similar is underway with deployments of US troops to Afghanistan. Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said on Tuesday that no limit has been set. Speaking to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, he sounded an open-ended note: "There is not a ceiling on troop levels in Afghanistan." Mullen's comment was scarcely reported in US media outlets. It has become old news without ever being news in the first place. The war planners in Washington are bound to proceed carefully on the home front. News of further escalation will come "piecemeal"—"with no more high-level emphasis than necessary."

Norman Solomon is the author of many books including "War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death." www.normansolomon.com

Source: *truthout* | Perspective 7/9/09, www.truthout.com

Cost of war tops \$915 billion

Congress has appropriated another \$84.8 billion for wars in Iraq and Afghanistan for the remainder of the 2009 fiscal year ending September 30, 2009. The Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2009, signed into law by President Obama on June 24, 2009, allocates \$45.5 billion for war-related actions in Iraq and \$39.4 billion to Afghanistan. These new appropriations bring total war-related spending for Iraq to \$687 billion and for Afghanistan to \$228 billion, with a total war cost of \$915.1 billion. National Priorities Project (NPP) updated its Cost of War counters to reflect the new totals and to show the local costs of these wars to states and many cities.

President Obama's initial supplemental request (delivered April 2009) included approximately \$77 billion for U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which was approximately 90% of all requested funding. The final supplemental increased war-related spending by nearly \$8 billion, yet total war spending now accounts for about 80% of supplemental spending.

"No matter how we slice the numbers, we must consider that each dollar spent to fight wars in Afghanistan and Iraq is a dollar not spent to further some other endeavor. For example, Massachusetts taxpayers will contribute well over \$2 billion toward the total cost of this supplemental. For the same amount of money, legislators could

provide four years of healthcare for 95,000 people, send 56,000 students to four years of college or cut Massachusetts's state deficit in half," notes Jo Comerford, Executive Director, National Priorities Project. President Obama's FY 2010 budget calls for an additional \$130 billion in war spending, meaning that the U.S. will likely reach the \$1 trillion marker by next spring.

The National Priorities Project (NPP) is a 501(c)(3) research organization that analyzes and clarifies federal data so that people can understand and influence how their tax dollars are spent.

Source: *National Priorities Project release, 7/16/09* www.nationalpriorities.org

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Youth training Q&A

[Editor's note: *Connections* recently met with six young people in the second week of the Youth Advocates Training Program, and asked them four questions: Who am I? How did I get to this Training Program? What have I learned here so far, and What are my intentions? Here are their answers.]

Benny

My name is Benny Beza, seventeen years old, originally from Tracy, now living in Stockton. My hobbies include spending time with my family and definitely watching sports. I'm a proud father of my beautiful four month old son.

When I was eleven, my thirteen year old sister got killed in a car crash. Her services were held in Tracy and her grave is there as well. It was tough, but life is not easy. The passing of my sister affected my parents' marriage; eventually they went their own ways so my twin brother and I went with my mother, but had visits with my father...until recently I found out who my father really was and just zoned him out of the picture.

Through all that darkness comes light. I just recently was blessed with my beautiful son and wouldn't have it any other way. He makes me smile and really enjoy life so much more than I expected. But it's hard to be a young father...you get a lot of bad judgement and it is hard financially in this economy, but the positives are countless.

Well, now I am a youth advocate for the Youth Empowerment Center (YEC), which reaches out to the community; it's made me realize that one of our roles in this world is to be a good citizen. I have learned many skills at this center like social skills and public speaking skills. We really influence others—to respect ourself and our community. We the youth are the future, our time is coming and we make a huge difference in society. That's what the YEC has been teaching us youth advocates...they encourage us and let us know that we need to get involved to help each other out rather than arguing.

Based on all those teachings I

will make those my intentions and make a better person of myself, a better community, and a better world for all of us.

Adam

My name is Adam Aramburo and I'm a youth advocate. I'm a twin and I'm fifteen years old. My hobbies are playing video games, walking around, and sports. I go to Stagg High School, I'm a sophomore. What I do in the YEC is attend meetings, and work on decisions.

Big Fredo

My name is Alfredo Gutierrez, I'm eighteen years old and I was born in French Camp but I am from South part of Stockton where there are a lot of people killed or hurt and robbed. I was using marijuana and drinking alcohol and also I was thinking of getting into a gang that my family was in because they were like a family to me. But then I saw what happened to them and I had to do things I didn't like and didn't want to do, and I felt what it did to me, and I didn't like it.

I was in juvenile hall and jail before, so I can use that experience to show the youth: don't get in there. I'm here to help the youth that have the same problems that I had before, and I want to help the youth to keep out of gangs and from using drugs and also from getting into trouble and going to jail.

My intentions are to be a good role model to the youth in my time and for the future. Also point the youth into a good path and help them to make the right choices so they can be someone and help people that need their help in the same problems they had.

I want to help my community to be good again so we can live in a peaceful environment! So we don't have to be afraid to walk in our own neighborhoods, and our youth can grow up to be something in the world. I'm learning to be a good role model, and to gain skills that I can teach to people that need my skills to help them with their problems. I need to learn to be able to talk about my ideas and to present a project to a group of people.



Meet the youth. Top row: Litha, Ben, Fredo and Adam. Bottom Row: Sammy, Sal, Bubba and Javier.

Sal

My name is Sal Giminez, I'm from the South Side of Stockton, born and raised. I was raised in a family of a lot of people in our house. People did drugs in my family, lots of violence and gangs. I used to smoke and drink alcohol. As a teen growing up, people that I hung around with offered me other kinds of drugs but I said no. I got into fights before because of my friends and the things they did and the problems they started.

I almost got jumped into a gang at the age of twelve. Being young and raised with violence, that was a choice to be in a gang, but I did not.

I am here in society to become successful and be somebody in life. I want to have things like other people and join the Air Force, to become a man. I joined the (YEC) Youth Empowerment Center to become a successful speaker to help other youth with their problems and what they want in life. My intentions here are to make it better for other youth that have it hard and to prevent gangs and racism. I'm learning to become a speaker and a successful person, trying to help the community for youths and the future youth and older adults, to be successful and have a better

life in society. I also learned to communicate with other teens, meet with other teens that I never met before. They are pretty good people and good speakers and have a good life. They know how to communicate and be serious and funny at times.

I learned to give presentations to other people and understand what other people are saying, and what they represent. I learned to help people understand what I have to say. Because teens don't understand what adults tell them, they have to hear it from a youth like myself, because we teens have been through the same thing and know what they feel. We live the same way and make the choices they make.

Litha

For starters I am Alitha Howard-Mayberry, I'm 16, and from Stockton. I am a youth advocate for Fathers & Families. Don't exactly know what that is? I didn't either until I actually became one.

I live with my mother and younger sister. I never really had a father figure in my life, all I had was a donor, until Jerry came into our lives. Jerry was my mother's boyfriend for a while, and a person I called dad. He

was probably the best thing that happened to us; we were all going to be a family. Though my mother and Jerry had their differences, he always was there for us.

One day they got separated for real. My mother wouldn't allow us to speak to him. Then the time came, the worst day of my life. Jerry, my dad, died from overdose. Half of a year later, one of my mother's friends needed a place to stay, so he stayed with us. I extremely hated him; he acted like a brother to me, annoying, immature and just down right rude! A few months later I overheard a conversation my mom was having on the phone; she was saying how she is married now and happy. I asked her about it and she told me she had married him. That had to be the second worse day of my life.

After that, I totally went downhill. I hated everyone, started doing drugs, messing up in school, being an instigator. I became an affront and an antagonizing person, and I liked it. I started to influence people, the people who looked up to me and followed my footsteps. I taught them how to steal; I introduced them to drugs; I told them to skip school; I made them tag; and I told them to not

(continued next page)

Official unemployment 9.5%, reality worse

Meteor Blades

Unemployment rose to 9.5% in June, a 26-year high, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. A total of 14.7 million Americans are now officially out of work, and payroll employment has fallen by 6.5 million since the downturn began in December 2007, 19 months ago. The BLS also reported this morning that yet another 467,000 non-farm payroll jobs were lost in June. That was more than 100,000 above what a consensus of economists had estimated. Job losses in May were revised to 322,000 from an earlier estimate of 345,000.

The official count—known as U3 and dutifully reported by most of the media—fails to show the true extent of the wreckage. Left out of most reporting is U6, the BLS calculation that includes involuntarily underemployed people. That is, those who want a full-time job, but can only find

part-time work. Also missing from U3 are discouraged jobless people who haven't looked for work during the past four weeks. The U6 figure rose in June to 16.5%.

The average workweek fell another 0.1 hour to 33 hours, the lowest since 1964 when the BLS began keeping statistics for that factor.

Another set of interconnected gauges of economic misery released today was the number of new claims filed for unemployment benefits, the four-week average of new claims, and the number of continuing claims. There were 614,000 new claims, the four-week average of claims—which levels ups and downs—dropped to 615,250, and continuing claims fell 53,000 to 6.7 million. The continuing claims number, however, may be affected by the fact that a growing number of out-of-work Americans have exhausted their benefits and no

longer show up in these statistics. A little less than 40% of workers are covered by unemployment insurance.

In late May, 74% of economists surveyed by the National Association of Business Economists said the economy would begin expanding this quarter although they expected unemployment to continue rising into 2010 before beginning its recovery. One disturbing trend can be found in how long it took in the four previous recessions before the number of workers with jobs equaled the number employed at the beginning of those recessions. In 1974, the job recovery took 19 months; in 1981, 28 months; in 1991, 32 months; in 2001, 47 months.

Jack Healy of *The New York Times* reports:

"There are going to be massive, massive numbers of people who are out of work for long periods of time," said Andrew Stettner, deputy director for the National Employment Law Project. "It's one of the most important aspects of where the economy is right now."

Although the number of people filing for unemployment insurance has leveled off recently, more workers are falling back on safety nets intended for the most troubled workers. More than 2.7 million people received emergency or extended unemployment benefits in the first week of June—the most recent period for which data was available—compared with 2 million at the beginning of the year.

For some observers, long-term prospects don't look so good in other ways either. For instance, on Wednesday, at the Think Tank at The Big Picture, Barry L. Ritholtz hosted Chief Economist and Strategist David Rosenberg of Canada's Gluskin Sheff. Here's some of what he had to say:

Most pundits who crow about green shoots and about an inventory restocking in the third quarter giving way towards some sustainable economic expansion live in the old paradigm. They don't realize, for whatever reason,



that the deflationary aftershocks that follow a post-bubble credit collapse typically last for 5 to 10 years. Businesses understand better than the typical Wall Street or Bay Street economist and strategist that everything from order books, to output, to staffing have to now be restructured to adequately reflect a permanently lower level of leverage in the economy.

Indeed, by our estimates, there is up to another \$5 trillion of household debt that has to be eliminated in coming years and that process is going to require that consumers go on a semi-permanent spending diet. Companies see this, which is why they are not just downsizing their payroll, but have also cut the workweek to a record low of 33.1 hours. Fewer people are working and those that are still working have seen their hours dramatically cut this cycle.

Companies are finding other ways to save on the aggregate labour cost bill as well, which may be a factor reinforcing the uptrend in the personal savings rate... For example, a rapidly growing number of employers are now suspending contributions to worker 401(k) plans. According to a joint survey by CFO Research Services and Charles Schwab, nearly 25% of U.S. companies have either suspended their plans or are planning to do so (this is up from 2% at the turn of the year). Again, how we end up squeezing inflation out of the system when the labour market is clearly deflating

wages and benefits for the 70% of the economy called the consumer is going to be interesting to watch. ...

It is amazing how many pundits and media types believe we are in a new bull phase and yet the equity market has completely sputtered now for nearly three months above the 900 level on the S&P 500 and 8,400 on the Dow—not to mention the fact that instead of seriously breaking out above the 200-day moving average, the broad market has been struggling at this resistance level for the last few weeks, which is a sign that buying fatigue has likely set in (together with meager trading volumes).

There has been a huge rise in the current recession over past years of workers who have permanently lost their jobs instead of being temporarily laid off. And for every job opening there are now nearly six people queued for it. Digging ourselves out of the hole that 30 years of transferring wealth upward through egregious tax policies, off-shoring jobs, continuing out-of-whack defense spending, and failing to invest adequately in infrastructure and innovation is going to take better tools than we now have available to us. Will the White House and Congress provide them?

Source: *Daily Kos* 7/2/09 <http://www.dailykos.com/>

Youth Q&A (continued from previous page)

listen to their parents. I hurt my mom and I liked it, but not only was I hurting her I was hurting myself.

As soon as I turned 15, I did an overdose and ended up in the hospital. I could have died, but I prayed for another chance, I needed to become right. I changed. I stopped doing drugs, I listened to my mom, I got good grades, I was happy. I signed up for Worknet wanting a job. Then a Youth Advocate job came up. I didn't know what that was, but I got the job and found out it was a job to help people. I wanted to do this.

My intentions are to influence people to do right. I'm glad I have this job; this is a great experience.

Nathan

Hello, my name is Nathan Gardea. I'm a Youth Advocate with Fathers & Families of San Joaquin. I'm 17 years old, born and raised in Stockton. I have been moving from place to place. The way I got into this program is through my uncle Javier Gardea.

I'm very glad he did, because now I get to meet new people around my age and older, also explore the community in ways I have never before. A Youth Advocate is someone who helps someone in need. Our mission is to improve our community, hopefully the world, and inspire many youth to join us or help us in this mission.

We are the leaders of the group, not just one of us. We want our voice to be heard, not hidden behind our parents or adults. We have a say in this community as much as any of our supervisors do. Our group has ideas that the supervisors have possibly never thought of. You find unexpected things from unexpected places or people. Some view us as immature or stupid teens, but even a gang member, a person that's handicapped, or in a Special Ed has ideas; they may not always work, but hey, at least they are trying. So let us help you, help us. We don't like to be voiceless and unsupported, or in better words—we simply hate it.

What's really draining state money?

Sam Pizzigati

On July 1, in state capitals across the United States, a new fiscal year began—amid nearly unprecedented fiscal chaos. In California, officials closed summer schools and made plans to pay bills with IOUs. In Arizona, state parks shut down for a day. In Illinois, drug treatment programs, facing a 72 percent funding cutback, were warning they may have to stop accepting new clients.

Overall, so far this year, 23 states have slashed programs for the elderly and disabled, 24 have axed aid to public schools, and 41 have sliced state worker jobs and benefits. And tens of billions in red ink still remain.

California income distribution

How could state budgets possibly spin so wildly out of kilter?

The current state budget crisis reflects, of course, the current recession. With economic activity down sharply, state tax revenues have fallen sharply, too. The already jobless aren't paying state income tax. People worried about losing jobs are spending less. That's lowering state sales tax collections.

But the back story to the current state budget crisis, the worst since the 1930s, goes deeper than the still deepening Great Recession. The recession has indeed shoved states over the fiscal edge. But the recession didn't bring states to that edge. Inequality did. The states with the biggest budget gaps just happen to be, for the most part, the states with the widest gaps between the rich and everybody else.

Why should that be the case? Why should inequality inevitably end up generating chronic budget shortfalls that eventually devastate the programs that average

America's states will all eventually "solve" their current fiscal shortfalls, mostly with still more cuts in public services. To become less unstable, states are going to have to first become less unequal

families value? To get at the answer, we need to go back to a time—the mid 20th century—when states were launching, not cutting, programs to help average families.

Back then, in the 1950s and 1960s, states from New York to California were energetically investing in the infrastructure of modern middle class life. They were building schools for baby boomers, opening brand-new campuses for public colleges and universities, expanding state park systems, widening old roads, and broadening library access.

The vast majority of Americans, back in the mid 20th century, relished these new and expanded public services. The United States, at mid century, had become a solidly middle class nation, and middle class people—and poor people who aspire to middle class status—need and value public services.

This dominating middle class presence in American life would, unfortunately, prove not particularly enduring. The United States would become, over the 20th century's last quarter, increasingly unequal as income and wealth began concentrating up ever higher on the economic ladder.

That would be bad news for public services. Rich people, generally speaking, don't need—and don't especially value—these services. The wealthy

don't send their kids to public schools. They don't take books out of public libraries. They don't use public transportation. They don't spend time at public parks. Over time, not surprisingly, these wealthy tend to resent paying taxes to support the public services they don't use.

Back in the mid 20th century, this resentment didn't politically matter. In the considerably more equal United States that existed back then, the rich amounted to a marginal slice of the population pie, and the wealth at their disposal didn't amount to all that much. The rich of the 1950s and 1960s simply didn't have the resources necessary to dominate and distort the nation's politics.

That would change. Over recent decades, with more and more income and wealth concentrating at the top, those uninterested in public services have had the resources to do more than grumble about taxes. They've been able to bankroll campaign after campaign, in state after state, to roll taxes back.

Growing inequality has helped these campaigns succeed. With the economy's rewards flowing to the top, and essentially the top alone, Americans in the middle have found their wages and salaries stagnating, even sinking. Tax cuts, for many in the middle, have come to seem the only way to make ends meet. These tax cuts, once in place, start states on a nasty downward cycle. Tax cuts mean less state revenue. The

lower the revenue, the fewer the dollars available for maintaining quality public services. The lower the quality, the greater the number of people who find themselves actively considering private service alternatives.

Soon the modestly affluent, not just the rich, feel better off going life on their own nickel—better off joining a private country club, better off sending their kids to private school, better off living in a privately guarded gated development. The greater the number of affluent people who forsake public services, the more inevitable still more service cutbacks become—even in “good” economic times, as the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities and the Economic Policy Institute noted last year in Pulling Apart, a detailed look at growing state-level inequality. “Wealthy families that can afford private schools for their children can lose sight of the need to support public schools,” that study observed. “As a result, support for the taxes necessary to finance government programs declines, even as the nation's overall ability to pay taxes rises.”

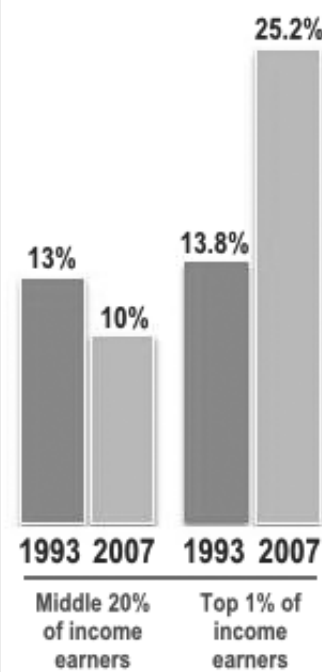
In not one state, the Pulling Apart study found, has inequality meaningfully declined since the 1980s. In 36 states, the study notes, “the income gap between the average middle-income family and the average family in the richest fifth has widened significantly.” And the gains this top fifth has registered, the study stresses, have been “especially rapid at the very top of the income scale.” Taxing this “very top,” the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities noted this past April in a follow-up report, could help states close their budget gaps. Even the tiniest of tax increases on the rich could have a sizeable impact.

“Nationwide,” the Center observes, “some \$8 billion could be raised if every state with a personal income tax enacted a 1 percent rate increase on households making more than \$500,000 a year.” Some states have moved in that direction. Lawmakers in other states, incredibly enough, are still trying to go the opposite way. In Arizona, legislators last week pressed the governor to accept

Some Context for California's Crisis

In the United States today, no state is facing a budget meltdown as brutal as California's. And no state, over recent years, has been growing unequal more rapidly. In 2007, data released late last month show, California's top 1 percent -- households making over \$494,803 -- averaged 50.7 times the state's \$36,115 middle income average, over double the gap back in the mid 1990s.

Share of California personal income



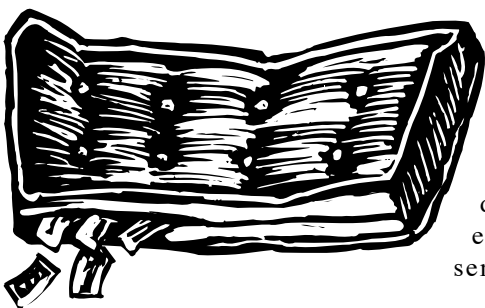
Source: California Budget Project

a “flat tax” that would actually lower the top state income tax rate on the wealthy, from 4.5 to 2.8 percent.

America's states, in the weeks ahead, will all eventually “solve” their current fiscal shortfalls, mostly with still more cuts in public services. But the underlying state fiscal squeeze will remain. The end of the recession, whenever that comes, won't end this squeeze. To become less unstable, states are going to have to first become less unequal.

Sam Pizzigati is the editor of the online weekly *Too Much*, and an associate fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies.

Source: *Too Much: A Commentary on Excess and Inequality* 7/8/09 <http://www.cipa-apex.org/toomuch/>



Climate change bill done wrong

Dennis Kucinich

Rep. Dennis Kucinich explains why he voted against the climate bill that narrowly passed the House Friday: "It sets targets that are too weak, especially in the short term, and sets about meeting those targets through Enron-style accounting methods. It gives new life to one of the primary sources of the problem that should be on its way out—coal—by giving it record subsidies."

Statement from Rep. Dennis Kucinich:

"I oppose H.R. 2454, the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009. The reason is simple. It won't address the problem. In fact, it might make the problem worse.

"It sets targets that are too weak, especially in the short term, and sets about meeting those targets through Enron-style accounting methods.

"It gives new life to one of the primary sources of the problem that should be on its way out—coal—by giving it record subsidies.

"And it is rounded out with massive corporate giveaways at taxpayer expense. There is \$60 billion for a single technology which may or may not work, but which enables coal power plants to keep warming the planet at least another 20 years.

Worse, the bill locks us into a framework that will fail. Science tells us that immediately is not soon enough to begin repairing the planet. Waiting another decade or more will virtually guarantee catastrophic levels of warming. But the bill does not require any greenhouse gas reductions beyond current levels until 2030.

"Today's bill is a fragile compromise, which leads some to claim that we cannot do better. I respectfully submit that not only can we do better; we have no choice but to do better. Indeed, if we pass a bill that only creates the illusion of addressing the problem, we walk away with only an illusion. The price for that illusion is the opportunity to take substantive action.

"There are several aspects of the bill that are problematic.

1. Overall targets are too weak. The bill is predicated on a target atmospheric concentration of 450 parts per million, a target that is arguably justified in the latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, but which is already out of date. Recent science suggests 350 parts per million is necessary to help us avoid the worst effects of global warming.

2. The offsets undercut the emission reductions. Offsets allow polluters to keep polluting; they are rife with fraudulent claims of emissions reduction; they create environmental, social, and economic unintended adverse consequences; and they codify and endorse the idea that polluters do not have to make sacrifices to solve the problem.

3. It kicks the can down the road. By requiring the bulk of the emissions to be carried out in the long term and requiring few reductions in the short term, we are not only failing to take the action when it is needed to address rapid global warming, but we are assuming the long term targets will remain intact.

4. EPA's authority to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the short- to medium-term is rescinded. It is our best defense against a new generation of coal power plants. There is no room for coal as a major energy source in a future with a stable climate.

5. Nuclear power is given a lifeline instead of phasing it out. Nuclear power is far more expensive, has major safety issues including a near release in my own home state in 2002, and there is still no resolution to the waste problem. A recent study by Dr. Mark Cooper showed that it would cost \$1.9 trillion to \$4.1 trillion more over the life of 100 new nuclear reactors than to generate the same amount of electricity from energy efficiency and renewables.

6. Dirty Coal is given a lifeline instead of phasing it out. Coal-based energy destroys entire mountains, kills and injures workers at higher rates than most other occupations, decimates ecologically sensitive wetlands and streams, creates ponds of ash

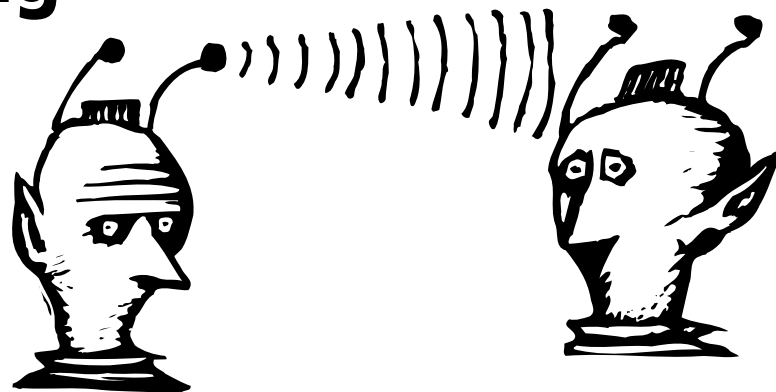
that are so toxic the Department of Homeland Security will not disclose their locations for fear of their potential to become a terrorist weapon, and fouls the air and water with sulfur oxides, nitrogen oxides, particulates, mercury, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, and thousands of other toxic compounds that cause asthma, birth defects, learning disabilities, and pulmonary and cardiac problems for starters. In contrast, several times more jobs are yielded by renewable energy investments than comparable coal investments.

7. The \$60 billion allocated for Carbon Capture and Sequestration (CCS) is triple the amount of money for basic research and development in the bill. We should be pressuring China, India and Russia to slow and stop their power plants now instead of enabling their perpetuation. We cannot create that pressure while spending unprecedented amounts on a single technology that may or may not work. If it does not work on the necessary scale, we have then spent 10-20 years emitting more CO₂, which we cannot afford to do. In addition, those who will profit from the technology will not be viable or able to stem any leaks from CCS facilities that may occur 50, 100, or 1000 years from now.

8. Carbon markets can and will be manipulated using the same Wall Street sleights of hand that brought us the financial crisis.

9. It is regressive. Free allocations doled out with the intent of blunting the effects on those of modest means will pale in comparison to the allocations that go to polluters and special interests. The financial benefits of offsets and unlimited banking also tend to accrue to large corporations. And of course, the trillion dollar carbon derivatives market will help Wall Street investors. Much of the benefits designed to assist consumers are passed through coal companies and other large corporations, on whom we will rely to pass on the savings.

10. The Renewable Electricity Standard (RES) is not an improvement. The 15% RES



standard would be achieved even if we failed to act.

11. Dirty energy options qualify as "renewable": The bill allows polluting industries to qualify as "renewable energy." Trash incinerators not only emit greenhouse gases, but also emit highly toxic substances. These plants disproportionately expose communities of color and low-income to the toxics. Biomass burners that allow the use of trees as a fuel source are also defined as "renewable." Under the bill, neither source of greenhouse gas emissions is counted as contributing to global warming.

12. It undermines our bargaining position in international negotiations in Copenhagen and beyond. As the biggest per capita polluter, we have a responsibility to take action that is disproportionately stronger than the actions of other countries. It is, in fact, the best way to preserve credibility in the international context.

13. International assistance is much less than demanded by developing countries. Given the level of climate change that is already in the pipeline, we are going to need to devote major resources toward adaptation. Developing countries will need it the most, which is why they are calling for much more resources for adaptation and technology transfer than is allocated in this bill. This will also undercut our position in Copenhagen.

"I offered eight amendments and cosponsored two more that collectively would have turned the bill into an acceptable starting point. All amendments were not allowed to be offered to the full House. Three amendments endeavored to minimize the damage that will be done by

offsets, a method of achieving greenhouse gas reductions that has already racked up a history of failure to reduce emissions—increasing emissions in some cases—while displacing people in developing countries who rely on the land for their well being.

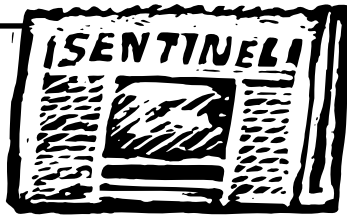
"Three other amendments would have made the federal government a force for change by requiring all federal energy to eventually come from renewable resources, by requiring the federal government to transition to electric and plug-in hybrid cars, and by requiring the installation of solar panels on government rooftops and parking lots. These provisions would accelerate the transition to a green economy.

"Another amendment would have moved up the year by which reductions of greenhouse gas emissions were required from 2030 to 2025. It would have encouraged the efficient use of allowances and would have reduced opportunities for speculation by reducing the emission value of an allowance by a third each year.

"The last amendment would have removed trash incineration from the definition of renewable energy. Trash incineration is one of the primary sources of environmental injustice in the country. It is a primary source of compounds in the air known to cause cancer, asthma, and other chronic diseases. These facilities are disproportionately sited in communities of color and communities of low income. Furthermore, incinerators emit more carbon dioxide per unit of electricity produced than coal-fired power plants.

"Passing a weak bill today gives us weak environmental policy tomorrow," said Kucinich.

Source: Truthdig 7/19/09 <http://www.truthdig.com/>



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

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

Daily Kos <http://www.dailykos.com>

Emptywheel <http://emptywheel.firedoglake.com/>

Firedoglake <http://firedoglake.com>

Congress Matters <http://www.congressmatters.com>

Calitics <http://www.calitics.com/>

Think Progress <http://thinkprogress.com>

Huffington Post <http://www.huffingtonpost.com>

Eschaton <http://www.eschatonblog.com/>

Hullabaloo <http://digbysblog.blogspot.com>

Talking Points Memo <http://www.talkingpointsmemo.com>

TPM Muckraker <http://www.tpmuckraker.com/>

FiveThirtyEight.com <http://www.fivethirtyeight.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/>

Raw Story <http://www.rawstory.com>

Open Left <http://www.openleft.com/>

Independent Media Center <http://www.indymedia.org>

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/>

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

We're on the web too!

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

<http://www.pjnsjc.org>

Honduras's coup regime: a need for trade sanctions

Robert Naiman

According to press reports, so far the mediation of Costa Rican President Oscar Arias, encouraged by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, has not produced any change in the refusal of the coup regime in Honduras to allow Honduras's democratically elected President Manuel Zelaya to resume his office. That's not surprising: the strategy of the de facto regime seems to be to try to run out the clock on Zelaya's term as long as they can.

That's why it makes sense for the US, working together with the governments in the region, to continue to ratchet up pressure on the coup regime.

On the eve of Thursday's talks, the US Embassy in Tegucigalpa said Washington had suspended \$16.5 million in military assistance programs to Honduras, and added an additional \$180 million in US aid could also be at risk.

One lever that the US government has not publicly discussed using is trade sanctions. Simply beginning the discussion would increase pressure on the coup regime to stand down.

Trade agreements to which the US and Honduras are signatory are unlikely to present any obstacle, because the coup regime in Honduras has no standing to

press any claims on behalf of Honduras in any international body. No government in the world, including the United States, recognizes the coup regime as the legitimate government of Honduras. If anyone in Honduras wanted to press a claim, the approval of President Zelaya would be needed.

Indeed, there is a powerful and recent precedent for ignoring any attempt by the coup regime to represent Honduras in any international body: that's what members of the Organization of American States—including the US—did last Saturday, when the coup regime tried to withdraw Honduras from the OAS.

The OAS had given the coup regime a Saturday deadline for allowing the reinstatement of President Zelaya, or the OAS would suspend Honduras from membership. The coup regime tried to pre-empt the suspension by announcing Honduras's withdrawal from the OAS. The announcement was ignored, and the OAS suspended Honduras.

So, if the US imposed trade sanctions on the coup regime, and the coup regime tried to complain, the US could simply ignore it, as it ignored the coup regime's complaint on Saturday. No government or international body in the world would take the

coup regime's side; no government recognizes the coup regime as the legitimate government of Honduras.

Of course, the actual use of trade sanctions would raise justified concerns about who they will hurt, and the Obama administration can—and I'm sure they would—take this into account when deploying this lever. The choices aren't "no trade sanctions" or "embargo." The Obama administration could target imports or exports that would send a strong signal to the coup regime and its supporters in Honduras's economic elite that they will pay an increasing price for intransigence, while avoiding imports and exports that would significantly affect poor Hondurans.

Merely starting the discussion will increase pressure on the coup regime—so let the discussion begin. If the Obama administration would simply announce that it is studying the possibility of trade sanctions, that would be a big step forward.

Robert Naiman is senior policy analyst at Just Foreign Policy <<http://www.justforeignpolicy.org>>.

Source: [truthout.org](http://www.truthout.org) | Perspective 7/14/09, www.truthout.com

US press falsely claims Honduran plurality for coup

Robert Naiman

Did a CID-Gallup poll last week indicate that a plurality of Hondurans support the military coup against democratically elected President Zelaya? Yes, according to the *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Christian Science Monitor*, and Reuters, which all reported that the poll showed 41 percent in favor of the coup, with only 28 percent opposed. But in fact the poll showed that 46 percent—a plurality—were opposed to the

coup, according to The New York Times, The Associated Press—and the president of CID-Gallup, in an interview with Voice of America on July 9. As of this writing—Sunday evening, 5:30 pm Eastern time—none of the outlets which reported the poll incorrectly had corrected their earlier, inaccurate, reports.

In reporting the poll incorrectly, the Post, the Journal, the Monitor and Reuters gave the impression that more Hondurans supported the coup than opposed it,

suggesting that this meant trouble for the international coalition pressing for the restoration of President Zelaya—which includes Costa Rican President Arias and Organization of American States Secretary-General Insulza, as well as the Obama administration.

Of course, even if a poll had showed a plurality in favor of the coup, that would not legitimize the coup. But the opinion of the population, even if difficult to discern in the repression following

(continued next page)

Honduran update

Corita Warner

We have been living under a curfew since the coup. At first the curfew was from 9 pm to 6 am; then it extended to 10 pm to 5 am. On Sunday, we went out for some sightseeing with a German exchange student who is staying in our home for a few days. Afterwards, we stopped by a supermarket in a city about an hour and 15 minutes away from home. As we were leaving the supermarket (at 6:10) we discovered that the supermarket was closing due to a new curfew time of 7 pm!!! How was I to get home on time?! Well, we tried and got to town about 7:20, but the military (there are from 6 to 10 heavily armed military dressed in combat gear at every major intersection) let us through. I guess they realized it was hard for people to be at home on-time on such short notice. I decided not to question anything and just get home like a good girl.

So, why would they change the curfew time all of a sudden like that?! Well, I'm guessing they were afraid. On Sunday, the ousted President Zelaya flew back into the country. Some internet news reports claim that there were 400,000 people at the airport to receive him. My sister-in-law, who was there, saw about 100,000, but I don't think she

had an aerial view. Either way, it was a lot of people! The military blocked the landing strip with tanks and troops and had troops all around the airport to keep the people away. They tear-gassed the bystanders and in some places fired on the civilians. One was killed and others were injured. I guess they wanted everyone quietly at home so as not to take to the streets over the events of the day.

Oh, but you should hear the reporting on it. Our housekeeping help thought that President Zelaya had not come as anticipated. She also heard that the man was killed when there was a dispute among the military itself and a civilian was accidentally shot...collateral damage, I guess. Another friend heard a report that it was impossible to determine the caliber of the bullet, so therefore the military could not be blamed. A few days ago, on one radio station, the manager of a local television station called in to complain that their tv station had been controlled by the military since the coup and they could not go on the air. I don't know what happened after that because I never heard further coverage of the story. So, essentially, we are at the mercy of the media coverage which is quite subjective and untrustworthy.

We thought there was going to be some difficulty getting staple goods, since a lot of our foodstuffs comes from Guatemala and El Salvador, both of which had put trade embargos on Honduras. The business sector of those countries put pressure on their governments to reopen trade, since they were losing major money. So, we don't have any rationing or shortages yet. In the same vein, there are lots of projects underway here with international funding. For example, there is a huge highway project underway throughout the country, widening the connection between the two major cities from a two-lane to a four-lane road. In addition to being great for the country, the number of jobs created by this project has had a positive impact on the nation's economy. Those funds are from the U.S., which are threatened right now. There are lots of other projects such as that one that have questionable futures.

In education, private schools are still functioning around the nation. In Tegucigalpa they were closed for several days due to the instability and high-tension, but they are up and running again. Public education is another matter. All the public schools have been shut down since the coup. The teachers' unions are pro-President Zelaya, and are on strike until his return. So far the students have lost 8 days of class. Other unions supporting President Zelaya include the government workers' union, peasant farmers' unions, etc.

Tomorrow should be interesting. Ousted President Zelaya and current "President" Micheletti are meeting in Costa Rica with mediation from Nobel Peace Prize winner President Oscar Arias. Both are very stubborn, so we'll see what Arias can do with them. As a Nobel winner, I have some hope, but the hope is in Arias not the two stubborn Honduran leaders. Maybe you'll get some coverage on that meeting.

July 8, 2009

Corita Warner is Academic Coordinator, Primary and Secondary, Southwest School, Aldea Pinares, Intibucá, Honduras

which misreport Honduran public opinion as being much more similar than it is to the opinions of Honduran elites.

Source: *truthout* Perspective 7/14/09, www.truthout.com

Honduran coup *(continued from previous page)*

the coup, is without question a key fact in understanding the situation. To misreport such a key fact is to substantially misinform. To fail to correct such a mistake compounds the error.

The incorrect report of the poll appears to have originated in the Honduran La Prensa. But the US press should have checked before simply repeating what was in La Prensa, particularly on such an important fact, particularly because the result was counterintuitive.

But perhaps the result was not counterintuitive for these press outlets, and that may suggest a deeper problem—the US press is out of touch with the majority of the population in Honduras, and therefore credulous to results



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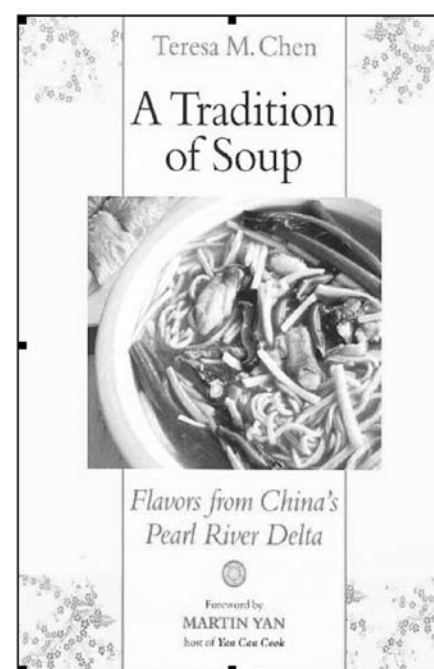
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The T is Not Silent

To form a more perfect union

Elena Kelly

I am no hero. For that matter I am no role model either. What I am is a liar. I am very possibly a pathological liar. There has not been one day in almost fifty years that I have not lied. And I'm not talking about who left the empty orange juice bottle in the fridge. I have lived a lie day in and day out, year after year, allowing those who loved me and cared for me to believe the lie was true. I was born a girl but I allowed the world to believe I was a boy. If it's not pathological, it is certainly chronic.

It is truly sobering to realize that virtually my whole existence on this planet has been a fantasy, a pseudo-existence that was all make believe. As a Sagittarius born on the Winter Solstice, I supposedly value honesty above all, often saying what I am thinking without considering how it might be taken by others. I am gregarious to a fault, being introduced one time by a woman who said I "would walk up and shake hands with a telephone pole." How could I be such a liar and claim to treasure honesty? "...to form a more perfect union..."

The San Francisco Pride celebration this year took a few words from the Preamble to the Constitution as its theme; "To Form a More Perfect Union." The framers of the Constitution recognized that this new democracy was not perfect yet, but their hope was that it could be made "more perfect." Is there anything devised by humans that cannot be made more perfect?

On the first of the three days of SF Pride there was the Trans March. It was the first year I was able to march in it and it was awesome to see over five hundred transgender people taking to the streets chanting "Hey Hey, Ho Ho, Transphobia's Got to Go!" and singing songs like "Who Let the Trans Out? Who, who who who?" The crowds loved us.

On Saturday is the Dyke March. I told some of my transgender friends that I wanted to march with my lesbian sisters. Several



people warned me not to go, citing an incident that occurred last year. Apparently a lesbian-identified transwoman showed up to march and was shouted at and told she had no business there. She refused to leave and was beaten by one of the lesbian women attendees. Don't we in the LGBT community get enough discrimination from the general public? Do we have to discriminate against each other as well? My heart broke for that girl and for those lesbians who cannot accept women that may not be just like them. "...to form a more perfect union..."

In the Pride Parade on Sunday, I decided to march with the Marriage Equality USA contingent. I had received no less than seven invitations from groups who invited me to march with them, but ME-USA is very dear to my heart because it is an all volunteer organization and is one of the top two groups really making a difference for equality here in California and around the country.

There were some in our rather large contingent that carried signs and wore shirts that simply read, "Second Class Citizen." I'm sure they refer to the oft quoted saying of Martin Luther King, Jr. who said, "If America is ever to be a first class nation, it cannot have second class citizens." And as long as there is a privileged class who have access to all the legal benefits of marriage, and an underprivileged class who do not, then in my view, America is not a land of true equality. "...to form a more perfect union..."

Eight years ago I lied in order to get married. I lied to the woman I loved, I lied to the minister who officiated, and I lied to the State of California at the County Clerk's

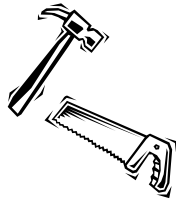
office when I told them that we were eligible to be married because I am a man. Marriage, in the eyes of the State, is a contract, and I'm no lawyer, but everyone knows that when a contract is entered into by a party who deliberately asserts a falsehood, that contract is null and void, and the deceiver is subject to prosecution for fraud. "...to form a more perfect union..."

On this Independence Day I am reflecting on a life lived in the fog of lies and deceptions, of fifty years of allowing my friends and family to believe my deception, and now seeing their hurt as they cannot accept "the true me."

Like my country, I am not perfect. I wasn't born perfect and I will certainly go to my grave still less than perfect. One thing I know is that all my life I did the best I could with what I had at the time. I believe the same can be said of every human being on this planet. We are all doing the best we can with what we have. "...to form a more perfect union..."

I marched with a group of lesbian and gay veterans in the Fourth of July Parade in Stockton this year. I am so honored to be able to do this. Stockton is quite conservative, and there has never been an LGBT veterans group in our Independence Day parade before. There were a few who made some ugly comments. But we marched as proud gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender veterans, not because we believe our country is perfect, but to do our part to help form a more perfect union.

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



Sawznhammers

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

Breakthroughs

John Morearty

One: Iran: Muslim scholars condemn their government

On Saturday July 4, the most important group of religious leaders in Iran, the Association of Researchers and Teachers of Qum, called the disputed presidential election fraudulent and the new government illegitimate. They also deplored the murder by soldiers and police of more than twenty nonviolent demonstrators who were protesting the stealing of the election by the government.

The statement by religious leaders is an act of defiance against the country's supreme leader and the most public sign of a major split in the country's clerical establishment. For comparison, just imagine the U.S. Catholic bishops in 2000 or 2004 condemning the stealing of the presidency by George W. Bush....

Two: Israel and Palestine: "Two-state Condominialism"

A radical new proposal for a just and workable solution to the Israel/Palestine puzzle is being floated by an American scholar, Russell Nieli, who teaches politics at Princeton University. He calls it "two-state condominialism-Two States in a Single, Binational Settlement Community." Here is a rough outline:

* The new state of Palestine has only Palestinian/Arab citizens. Its boundaries are the boundaries of pre-1967: Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem.

* The new state of Israel has only Jewish citizens. Its boundaries are all the rest of the pre-1947 Mandate.

* All citizens of both states have the absolute treaty right to live, travel, work, build homes or own businesses anywhere within the territories of either state. All citizens of both states would have total unrestricted access everywhere; the Wall and all checkpoints would come down, all sacred sites would be open to all.

* Israeli Arabs may continue living in Israel, and Israel continues to have its present obligations of welfare etc. to them (which might eventually be bought out), but they are no longer citizens of Israel, they are citizens of Palestine. With that exception,

* Each state is obliged to care for its own citizens-schools, roads, hospitals, etc.

* Israeli Jews living in the present settlements within Palestinian territory could continue living where they are, and should be granted some kind of local autonomy-police, municipal utilities etc.

* The Palestinian state could not possess a military capable of attacking Israel; Israel would have the right to defend itself, for example by military overflights of Palestine or manning border outposts on the Jordan.

* Jews worldwide would still have the right to immigrate to Israel. Palestinian exiles would have the right of return, anywhere in the territories of the two states, but the Israeli state would have no obligations to them. (In surveys, only about one in ten say they might exercise that right-but they want it on the books.)

Is this the creative thinking we've been waiting for? Check out ten pages of details at http://www.tikkun.org/article.php/jul_09_nieli

Three: The Council of Grandmothers in Liberia "Pray the Devil Back to Hell"

On June 19, Bill Moyers journal <http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/06192009/profile.html> did an astonishing interview with two women: Leymah Gbowee, who led her fellow countrywomen to win peace in war-torn Liberia, and Abigail Disney, who produced the documentary of their nonviolent struggle and triumph in the award-winning film *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*.

Leymah Gbowee had a dream: Market woman, single mother

of five, God told her to end the hideous civil war in her country. "Who, me? I'm a sinner." She had read Gandhi and King-and the ancient Greek play *Lysistrata*. She formed a nonviolent movement of thousands of women-Lutheran, Catholic, Muslim-who sat around the presidential palace; and they told the warriors, "Stop the fighting! No peace, no sex!" They brought the crazed president of Liberia Charles Taylor to the peace table with the warlords who were fighting him; these men were putting Kalashnikovs in the hands of twelve year olds to kill each other.

Hundreds of women followed Taylor and the warlords to the peace talks, and sat down in the corridor outside. The guards said "Leave, you are disturbing the peace." "No, you are the ones disturbing the peace, we will sit right here."

The guards said, "The talks are over for today, you must leave or we will arrest you."

"Fine, arrest us," said the women. "We are your grandmothers! If you arrest us, we will strip naked right here in this hallway!"

Taylor fled the country, and Liberia has a democratic woman president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who is respected throughout Africa.

Leymah Gbowee and Abigail Disney have been showing the film to groups of women all over the world-Bosnia, the Andes, Israel, Palestine, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe. It will be released in general circulation in the US in 2010.

My wife Ria and I watched the Moyers program, hearts pounding. Ria is the grandmother of ten. She said,

"The world has been waiting for this! Remember the Iroquois Confederacy? It served as the model of the federal system in the U.S. Constitution. But who were the final authority among the Iroquois, when the chiefs could not agree?"

"The Council of Grandmothers."

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

Time to deliver: democracy

Mario D'Angeli

"The most powerful grassroots organization of the peace movement Move On remains silent as the American wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan simmer or escalate." These are the critical words of Tom Hayden in "The Nation", May 26, 2009. What is my response as a leader of the Move On organization in San Joaquin County? I agree! We need to do more and better. I resonate with his desire to see a grassroots surge within Move On and other organizations seeking peace and justice. I agree with him that more vigorous action is also

needed to achieve our domestic goals in healthcare, the economy, public education, green energy, civil liberties and ending poverty in the richest nation in the world.

The past several months since the election in November have been one of the most chaotic periods in American history. There has been enormous human suffering here and around the world. The forces available to improve the situation are responding based on what they know regarding the causes of the problem and what cures will have the greatest results. We all need to understand the basic causes and participate in lasting cures. As

we participate, many of us will be learning more about the causes and remedies.

In this spirit, we must all become more active and more effective activists. Then we will reinvigorate our respective organizations such as Move On, Sam Joaquin Grassroots, the Democratic Party, Organizing for America, C.A.R.A., Peace and Justice Network, Concerned Citizens, and Single Payer Healthcare, thereby beginning to change America. We can be forerunners of lasting democracy. But first we need to know the underlying cause of current problems. Essentially

we have formal democracy but for many years it has been more apparent than real.

How does a country that experienced the largest economic boom in world history in the 1990's also continue to have squalid slums and dangerous neighborhoods in most of its cities-places where no stranger would dare to walk at night?

We could call ourselves a democracy if we had these problems years ago and after each decade we could report evidence of democratic process if we observed over the years proposals presented, debated and then community, state and nation action taken. However, that is not the case. The underlying theme has been: "If the market can't solve it-it can't be solved!" and the same problems persist decade after decade.

Most of these problems are termed hard core, static and intractable. When the leadership of the richest country in the world with the highest quality of life for some and the most advanced science, technology and medical care throws up its hands and says, "That's all we can do-live with it," can we call it a democracy?

Since a democracy by definition has no reason to cause troubles for other countries or to start wars, why are so many people in other nations angry at the United States? We have had embassies all over the world for years. What have they been doing? Have they been representing the best of America? Have they been representing the "national interest?" Are we clear as to what really is the national interest? Or have they represented those forces that have gotten us stuck here in trouble domestically? If so, they also added to the problems confronting people in other nations. We had better take a closer look at this.

Polyarchy

If we are not yet what we say we are, then what are we? We are a polyarchy. A polyarchy is a society with apparent democratic government and institutions, yet is highly influenced, if not controlled, by semi-hidden forces. These forces are brilliantly disguised by fraud, public relations and a massive lack of awareness by the general public. They have the power to impede change which would improve the country but hurt themselves—or to bring about change which would help themselves, but hurt the country.

Evidence of polyarchy appears daily in our media but the dots are not connected. These forces are not secret. That is, any educated person who knows where and how to look can discover them. Many, when told that to question the polyarchic status quo is unpatriotic, determine that a waving of the flag is sufficient to discourage further questions. And the show goes on—to the detriment of the nation and with ever increasing danger to most in the world. Here are some specific examples of polyarchy in action:

1) For decades we have had the problem of forty seven million Americans without health insurance and millions more with such inadequate insurance that many go bankrupt or die when illnesses are not treated or covered. This hurts the country but benefits the structure of polyarchy.

2) Also for decades we have seen the gap between the average worker's income and that of the top executives grow larger. At one time, CEO's income was eight times higher than the average worker. Now it is more like 120 times higher. As income lagged for workers, the use of credit cards at high interest to maintain a semblance of middle class life became the financially deadly norm. Another victory for polyarchy.

(continued on page 20)

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Aug/Sept Calendar

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

Through Aug 16

Sing me your story, Dance me home: Art and Poetry from Native California multi-media exhibit. SJC Historical Museum, Micke Grove Park, 11793 N Micke Grove Rd, Lodi. \$2-\$5, members free. 953-3460.

July 7—31

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

Sat, July 25

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

Mon, July 27

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.

July 29—Aug 2

Beauty and the Beast, Wed-Sat 7 pm, Sat-Sun 2:30 pm. Stockton Civic Theatre, 2312 Rose Marie Lane, Stockton \$10. 473-2424.

Wed, June 29

Foster Parent Orientation by Aspirant serving San Joaquin, Calaveras and Amador Co. 6-7 pm. 555 W Ben Holt Dr, #400, Stockton. Free. 478-9862.

Sat-Sun, Aug 1-2

Bon Odori and Cultural Bazaar, 11 am—9 pm. 2820 Shimizu Dr, Stockton. Free. 466-6701.

Sun, Aug 2

Dickinson Poetry Festival, 2 pm. First Unitarian Church, 2737 Pacific Ave, Stockton. \$10 donation. 466-7743.

Mon, Aug 3

Campaign for Common Ground meeting, 7 pm, David Harzoff, Director of Stockton Revitalization speaks on Downtown Redevelopment. Towers Building, 509 W Weber Ave, Stockton. cgmemb@gmail.com

Aug 4—Sept 4

Marilyn Pellouchoud large painting exhibit, M-F 10-5, Tidewater Gallery, 223 E. Weber Ave, Stockton. Reception Aug 14, 5-8 pm. 463-4033

Thu, Aug 6

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

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

Sat, Aug 8

Kay Owen watercolors. Stockton Art League, 1902 Pacific Ave, Stockton. 4—7 pm. Free. 466-6604.

Aug 20—Sept 17

Edge of Uncertainty sculpture by Eileen Doktorski, T 11am-4pm, W-Th 11am-6:30 pm, F 11am-1pm. LH Horton Jr Gallery, SJ Delta Collage, 5151 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Free. 954-5507.

Sat, Aug 22

Miracle Mile Night features live music, arts, crafts, kids activities and a classic car show. Empire Theatre, 1825 Pacific Ave, Stockton. 5-10pm. www.miraclemilenights.com

Mon, Aug 24

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.

Thu, Sept 3

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

Fri-Mon, Sept 4—7

Stockton Community Annual Pow Wow, 7am 9/4—7pm 9/7. Dancing, arts, crafts. UOP, 3601 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Free. 933-7425 x 8069.

Fri, Sept 11

32nd annual Stockton Arts Commission Arts Awards celebration, wine tasting, food and entertainment. 6:30 pm. Lexington Plaza Hotel, 110 W Fremont St, Stockton. \$35. 937-7488.

First Mondays

Marriage Equality USA San Joaquin Chapter Meeting, 6:30 pm—7:30 pm. Peace Center, 231 Bedford Road, Stockton (209) 609-9102

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

Second Tuesdays

Single Payer San Joaquin meeting, 6:30 pm, Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. cjbhcfasj@hotmail.com

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

Third Thursdays

Victory Park clean up, make a difference by volunteering. 6 pm. victoryparkwatch@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.

Thursdays

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

Fridays

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

Second Fridays

Downtown Stockton Art Walk, 5—8 pm. From Janet Leigh Plaza to the Fox Theatre. Stockton. August features Tattoo Art, September the STAR awards. Free. 464-5246.

Saturdays

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

Hiroshima/Nagasaki Commemoration

Thursday, August 6 at the gates of Livermore Lab 7:30 AM, near Vasco Rd. & Patterson Pass Rd. (925) 443-7148 for details

All are invited to join us in marking the first use of an atomic bomb in war. The U.S. atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Japan on August 6 was followed three days later by a second nuclear bomb that devastated Nagasaki. By commemorating the occasion each year, we stand in solidarity with the Hibakusha (survivors) in saying "never again" and demanding the global elimination of nuclear weapons. Publicly marking this day ensures that the people of the U.S. and the world do not forget the horror of nuclear weapons and war. Further, by holding a commemoration at the gates of Livermore Lab, we call on the U.S. government to abandon further development of nuclear weapons at this location where bombs are designed. Join us for this important event.

Source: Tri-Valley CAREs www.trivalleycares.org

Sex ed for teens

OWL (Our Whole Lives) is a sexuality education curriculum produced by United Church of Christ and the Unitarian Universalist Association. The next class will be for 10th–12th graders only and will meet on Wednesday nights from September 2–December 9. There is a required parent orientation: Wednesday July 29 or August 19 (choose one) from 7–9 pm. Parents can enroll their youth at the orientation sessions. The class is \$10 per student. Orientations and classes will be held at First Unitarian Universalist Church of Stockton, 2737 Pacific Avenue. Please call the church office for more information and to sign up for the parent orientation: 209-466-7743.

Got three acres?

PUNENTES, a budding nonprofit in Stockton, is looking for a donation of three acres in Stockton, to be used as a community supported garden where 30 families can grow food to support themselves. Donations will be tax-deductible. For more information contact Rosemary Atkinson, 478-4380, John Morearty, 464-3326, or Jeremy Terhune, 922-8215.

Talking It Through

Talking It Through is now two half-hour shows.

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

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

SJTV: Stockton, Lodi and Manteca cable channel 26

EDUCATION • ENVIRONMENT • POLITICS • CULTURE

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

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Not with a bang, but a whimper

Robert Cruickshank

And so the budget drama is over. Democrats have caved and given Arnold Schwarzenegger what he wanted - a cuts-only budget that does massive and lasting damage to the state of California, to the people who live here, and to our collective future. It's taken 31 years, but Howard Jarvis is finally going to get the wholesale destruction of public services he always wanted. Besides spending cuts, the budget proposal includes capturing more than \$4 billion from cities, counties and special districts. It also relies on accounting tricks, such as increasing income tax withholding schedules by 10 percent to shift money from 2010-11 to 2009-10, as well as delaying state worker paychecks next June 30 to July 1.

In the coming days we will hear Democratic legislators claiming this is some sort of victory - that Cal-WORKS wasn't eliminated, that California can again pay its bills. These are hollow, pyrrhic victories. The raid on local government funds will ensure dozens of cities go bankrupt and will lead to reckless public safety cuts, especially to firefighters. Schools are going to get another hit without any firm guarantee that they will be repaid - we haven't seen details of the "agreement" to repay the \$9.5 billion schools are owed, but Arnold seems to have won the battle to prevent repayment from becoming a constitutional mandate, meaning that repayment shouldn't be counted on until the

checks are actually cut.

Still unclear is the fate of health care, IHSS, state parks, and other proposed cuts. But at this point it's not clear that their exact fate matters much. Democrats have signaled that they will abandon their half-hearted efforts to demand new revenues, to close corporate tax loopholes, and to have a more fairly balanced budget. When the next mid-year budget adjustment has to be done in 6 to 9 months from now, or in the battle over the 2010-11 budget a year from now, Arnold will have little incentive to listen to Democratic proposals, since he has proved once and for all that he can get Democrats to do his bidding by holding firm and demanding massive cuts.

For their part, Democratic legislators likely believe that they are merely living to fight another day, especially on Election Day in November 2010 when they hope to elect a 2/3 majority in both houses. It seems highly unlikely they will get that result. Democrats have given Californians no good reason to vote for them in state legislative races, as they refused to stand up for Californians and the services they need to survive. They refused to make a strong push for tax fairness. And they refused to plan for economic recovery.

This is the way California ends. Not with a bang, but a whimper. With a failure of leadership so complete, so total, as to leave the state bereft of hope for its future.

Source: <http://www.calitics.com> 7/19/09

This is the way California ends. Not with a bang, but a whimper. With a failure of leadership so complete, so total, as to leave the state bereft of hope for its future.

Life, Liberty, Happiness (continued from page 18)

3) The war in Iraq is a massive waste of lives, money, and a humiliating squandering of the good name and reputation of the USA as a democracy but it was a decision that has brought vast rewards to a few; we need only to follow the money.

4) In 1948, the United Nations issued the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The effort within the UN was led by the widow of the late president, Franklin Roosevelt. It was a proud achievement welcomed by the democratic countries, the democratizing countries and the ex-colonial world. All 30 clauses of the Declaration have been signed by a US president and ratified by the US Congress. The Declaration is therefore the law of the land. But the polyarchy did not like or want it. And hardly anybody knows about it and in spite of the fact that, we celebrate Universal Human Rights Day every December 10 without fail. Countries that have implemented the Universal Declaration have a guaranteed three weeks vacation with pay for all workers, the right to employment for all (or government takes financial responsibility), the right to medical care for all, and other rights expected to be met by citizens in a democracy. In other words, when people have rights to minimal security that all should have in a modern society, others assume the necessary obligations. This is the way of civilization unless polyarchy rules.

The governor of California is functioning in classic polyarchic tradition as he deals with the long-running state budget crisis. He had the choice of resolving the 24 billion dollar short-fall in one of two ways: by calling for an added crisis tax on the several hundred thousand Californians whose income is over \$200,000 per year, which would have a marginal and insignificant effect on their lives. Or cut state services drastically for millions of poor families, the aged, children, students, the mentally ill and other vulnerable persons. Of course, he chose the latter alternative and seeks our empathy as he says "I had no choice."

Steps toward democracy

We need to influence existing organizations in our local communities and nationwide to adopt and develop central projects that de-polyarchize our nation. We must influence coordination of these projects on an inter-organizational basis so they become institutionalized. Profound campaign finance reform is essential, including the public financing of election campaigns. In addition, we must recapture the public airwaves and move to a free use of radio and television time for political campaigns and electioneering.

The Internet has become a major communications tool and antidote to the media oligopolies. The "MoveOn" organization has paved the way toward political-social fundraising that can effectively bypass the corporate "fat cat" control of US political life. Imagine that a good message, framed appropriately, that reaches enough people at the right time, could persuade one million Americans to give one hundred dollars each and raise one hundred million dollars overnight. This would be the beginning of the end of polyarchy.

We must move our country toward win/win democracy, domestically, by using and modeling democratic process. We must also ensure that in relations with other countries, Americans apply the same win/win transparent, ethical methods to which we pledge ourselves at home.

We must discover new ways to reach and influence the vast numbers of well-intentioned people whose life experience and culture have, in our respective countries, kept them from understanding the sources and causes of the needlessly dangerous, threatening times in which we all live today. We must help them to learn that terrorists are not attacking us because they are "evil" but because they are frightened and angry, and that we can allay their fears and reduce their anger nonviolently; and that most of our insecurity is manmade and can be reduced considerably; and that there is no absolute need for anyone to starve in this world; and that it

is now scientifically possible for almost all of us to die of old age if we so desire; and "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" is an international human right.

We must go global. The institution of private business has started and profited from globalization; now it is our responsibility to finish it our way: the way of democratic humanity.

A Congressional investigation of polyarchy in the United State and its role in the causation of 9/11, should be an early crucial political demand of the reform forces. This can be seen as an immediate goal, that can lead to long term fundamental change. In the 1930's, President Franklin Roosevelt called for an investigation of concentrated wealth in the country and the U.S. Congress authorized and performed the investigation. It is available (37 volumes and 43 monographs) in the national archives in Washington D.C. The conservative mass media at that time was able to bury the findings as the focus on World War II withdrew public attention. We can learn from this experience and need not make the same error twice. President Roosevelt's remarks calling for the investigation are as relevant today as they were in the 1930's:

"To the Congress of the United States: Unhappy events abroad have retaught us two simple truths about the liberty of a democratic people. The first truth is that the liberty of a democracy is not safe if the people tolerate the growth of private power to a point where it becomes stronger than their democratic state itself. That, in its essence is fascism—ownership of government by an individual, by a group, or by any other controlling private power..."

For more information read:

Ginger, Ann, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights Is The Law*. Meikljohn Civil Liberties Institute, Berkely 510 848 6008.

Robinson, William, *Promoting Polyarchy*, Cambridge University Press. 1996

Greenhouse, Steve, *The Bid Squeeze—Tough Times For The American Worker*, Anchor Books, 2008