



Merrimack Valley People For Peace

Serving the communities of the Merrimack Valley

Merrimack Valley People for Peace, Inc. works for a sustainable future for all life on our planet. Our members commit themselves to the interrelated activities of education for peace and justice, the prevention of war, an end to arms sales, the abolition of nuclear weapons, and protection of the environment.

March 2005

Merrimack Valley People for Peace joins the United Nations and peacemakers around the world in proclaiming the years 2001-2010 to be the "International Decade for the Culture of Peace."

GOOD NEWS

Compiled with the help of Boryana Tacconi

Camilo Mejia, the first Iraq War veteran to refuse to return to fight, was released from prison on February 15, after serving a sentence that began last May 21. Staff Sergeant Mejia had spent more than 7 years in the military and 8 months fighting in Iraq. Coming home for a two-week furlough, he refused to return to his unit in Iraq, citing moral reasons, the legality of the war, and the conduct of the US troops towards Iraqi civilians and prisoners. He applied for a Conscientious Objector status and was declared a Prisoner of Conscience by Amnesty International. However, he was convicted of desertion by a US military court and sentenced to the maximum penalty of one year imprisonment. Some letters and essays he wrote in confinement made their way to several web-sites, showing his steadfast determination to listen to the voice of his conscience and to work for peace. We have been following Camilo's story from the day of March 15, 2004, when at a press conference he explained his reasons for not going back to Iraq and then gave himself up to the military (MVPP members Becci Backman and Henry Misserville were present and came back deeply impressed). Some MVPP members wrote to him in prison, where he maintained that with the support of countless supporters he nonetheless *"remained a free man during his incarceration."* We rejoice in his release. We also are uplifted by what he wrote just a few days later: *"To those who are still quiet, to those who continue to betray their conscience, to those who are not calling evil more clearly by its name, to those of us who are still not doing enough to refuse and resist, I say 'come forward.' I say 'free your minds.' Let us, collectively, free our minds, soften our hearts, comfort the wounded, put down our weapons, and reassert ourselves as human beings by putting an end to war."*

The Kyoto Protocol on global warming went into effect on February 16. This global treaty seeks to slow the rate of global warming by limiting the world's carbon emissions. 141 countries have signed it, but several key nations have refused to do so, including the United States, the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases, plus China, India, and Australia. In Kyoto, Kenyan environmentalist and 2004 Nobel Peace Laureate, Wangari Maathai, called on nations who are holding out to sign the agreement. She said, "One of the reasons why some of the countries don't want to support the Kyoto Protocol is exactly because they don't want to reduce their over-consumptive life pattern." While the Bush administration has consistently cast doubt on the scientific community's consensus on climate change, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, a leading ally of the U.S., publicly declared at the end of January that we must become a constructive partner in the search for preventative and protective action on climate change: "If America wants the rest of the world to be part of the agenda it has set, it must be part of their agenda too." Despite all the political controversy surrounding the agreement, its enactment was celebrated by environmentalists around the world as an imperfect, but significant step forward in international cooperation to confront the challenges posed by global warming.

A growing coalition of Democrats and Republicans is lobbying for a national cap on carbon dioxide emissions. Sen. John McCain (R-AZ), co-sponsor with Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-CT) of the Climate Stewardship Act, said, "The issue is not going away and the cost of inaction will continue to rise." Sen. Chuck Nagel (R-Neb.), who once called the Kyoto Protocol "outrageous" and "arbitrary" announced his intent to introduce three global warming bills in February. Sen. Ted Stevens (R-Alaska), once an opponent of the McCain-Lieberman bill, has now convened a subcommittee on global climate change. Momentum, slow as it is, is building.

A new strategy to reduce U.S. dependence on imported oil is gaining legs, thanks to two new technologies, gas-electric hybrid engines and advanced-design wind turbines. As reported recently by Global Exchange in an article by Lester Brown, <http://www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/oil/2806.html>, if we were to convert the fleet of American automobiles to gas-electric hybrids, we could cut our gasoline use in half! Further, the stage is set for lopping another 20% off gasoline consumption through the use of wind-generated electricity to power automobiles, by adding a plug-in capacity linked to wind farms, plus a second battery to increase each car's electricity storage.

MVPP Monthly Meeting – North Parish Church – Tuesday, March 22, 2005, 7:30 PM

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Weekly Vigils

Andover: Sunday, noon-1 pm; Shawsheen Square, Junction of Routes 133 and 28; Lawrence Friends Meeting/ Shawsheen Peace Witness; Allan Sifferlen, asifferlen@sbra.com.

Andover: Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 7-8 pm; Saturday, 10:45 am-noon (in good weather, 10-noon); Old Town Hall, 20 Main St.; Merrimack Valley People for Peace; Lou Bernieri, lbernieri@andover.edu.

Andover: Tuesday, 6:30-7:30 am; in front of Raytheon plant near Routes 133 and 93; Raytheon Peacemakers; Arthur Brien, 978-686-4418.

Gloucester: Saturday, noon-1 pm; Grant Circle.

Gloucester: Tuesday, 7-8 pm; Fisherman's Wives Memorial.

Ipswich: Saturday, 11-noon; at the bottom of Town Hill (Junction of Route 133).

Lawrence: Saturday, noon-1 pm; Broadway and Essex Streets; Lawrence Peace Coalition; Martina Cruz, martina_m_cruz@yahoo.com.

Marblehead: Wednesday, 5-7 pm; at the Peace Pole, Memorial Park (by the YMCA); Tom Gale, 781-631-1218.

Newburyport: Sunday, noon-1 pm; Market Square; Niki Rosen, 978-463-3208.

Reading: 2nd Saturday/each month, 11 am-noon; Reading Square; Reading People for Peace; Bob Connor, bobconnor1@yahoo.com.

Rockport: Wednesday, noon-1 pm; First Congregational Church (silent for peace).

Salem, MA: Saturday, 11-noon; Riley Plaza (by the Post Office).

Salem, NH: Saturday, 12:30-1:30 pm; at corner of Routes 28 and 97; Henry Misserville, 978-470-0663.

You can buy Rainbow Peace Flags, buttons, bumperstickers, etc. at Saturday vigils in Andover.

Three grassroots environmental organizations in Kentucky sued the federal government on January 27 to stop mining companies from dumping mountain tops into valleys.

Mountain top removal is a widespread practice in the quest of coal companies to extract what is left of coal deposits in the mountains of states like Kentucky. The environmental costs, beyond the irreparable damage to the mountain areas themselves, extend to the considerable excess rock and dirt at the end of the process, which are dumped in streams and wetlands. Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, Kentucky Riverkeeper, and Kentucky Waterways Alliance claim in their lawsuit that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the last three years has rubber-stamped more than 50 permits for 191 valley fills, destroying miles and miles of streams. The suit mirrors one that was filed in West Virginia in 2002. In that case, now under appeal, a U.S. District Judge issued an injunction that last July stopped the Corps from issuing such dumping permits.

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has signed a decree setting aside 8 million acres of rain forest to create two massive new reserves. The decree was signed one week after the environmental activist Dorothy Stang, an American-born nun, was murdered in the Amazon where she had worked most of her life to preserve the land.

Over 150,000 participants attended the 5th World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil. The six days of conferences, workshops, and panel discussions were organized around a broad spectrum of issues ranging from environmental conservation to global poverty to the war in Iraq. Brazilian President Luis Ignacio Lula da Silva and Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez joined thousands of activists who attended from around the world. The forum included a panel with Americans who addressed the growing resistance in the U.S. against the Iraq War and the grassroots efforts to educate the American public about the consequences of the war abroad and at home and to build a nationwide movement to Bring Them Home.

Citizen media activists won a major victory in the last days of January when the Bush administration announced it would not seek to overturn a court ruling that has blocked the Federal Communications Commission from implementing regulations allowing greater media consolidation. The FCC attempt to

allow giant media corporations to own as many as 3 TV stations, 8 radio stations, and a newspaper in one single city triggered a massive grassroots organizing effort. The FCC received more than 750,000 comments on the issue, of which 99% opposed the consolidation. Most of the country's major media corporations, of course, had lobbied the FCC to approve the changes. In June 2004 a federal appeals court ruled in favor of blocking the implementation of the FCC rule changes. On January 27, 2005, the federal government announced that it is not going to appeal the court decision.

Wisconsin Senator Russ Feingold has introduced a bill to abolish the federal death penalty. Since the death penalty was reinstated in 1976, at least 117 inmates on death row have been found to be innocent.

The family of conscientious objector, Sgt. Kevin Benderman, has been "overwhelmed" by support they have recently received. On January 19, Sgt. Benderman, a decorated Iraq War veteran with 10 years of service, was charged by his command at Ford Stewart, GA with Desertion and Missing Movement by design. If he is found guilty, he faces seven years in prison. Coming from a family with long-standing military service, Benderman had applied for a discharge as a Conscientious Objector. "War is the greatest form of wrong," he wrote in his seven-page CO application. "I believe that my moral obligation to humanity is to not allow myself to be a part of this destruction." He describes the horror of witnessing what was done to Iraqi civilians and of seeing young US soldiers treat the war like a video game. Benderman is supported in his decision by his wife Monica, an outspoken believer in the immorality of war. Early in the difficult times the Bendermans are now facing, they have been buoyed by "overwhelming" support from both soldiers and civilians: over 3,000 emails, 170 phone calls, and 112 letters. Their website at www.BendermanDefense.org provides contact information. "We feel that it is important to keep the events of this case in a public forum," Monica Benderman states, "not only for Kevin's case, but for others who might be considering a similar path, and for the general public to be aware of the truth in what happens within the military."

The Israeli government has ordered the military to stop demolishing the family homes of Palestinians suicide bombers. According to the Israeli human rights group, B'tselem, the Israeli military had destroyed over 670 homes of suicide bombers over the last four years. The decision was made after the government concluded the demolitions were only fueling resistance to the Israeli occupation. Israel also released 500 Palestinian prisoners on February 21 and announced plans to release 400 more within the next three months.

Vigils after Two Years: "Do you think they do any good?"

by Don Abbott

Does all this vigiling matter? It's the same question, frequently asked of us. But it's dressed in different tones. Sometimes it's skeptical and challenging. Often it's just plain confused or exasperated. Maybe it's curious: what are passersby thinking and saying to you? At other times it's tentative and hopeful. And when we are honest with ourselves, it is our question too.

Under any circumstances, it puts the definition of success up for grabs.

I'm reminded of what Tom Ashbrook said on his evening talk show on WBUR right after we invaded Iraq. I know he was trying to goad responses from callers, but I think he believed it himself: "Don't you think this invasion shows that the whole 'peace movement' was a failure? It had no ground to stand on practically speaking, and so it now should fold up its tent and let things play out." This, just days after the invasion.

Of course, tent folding is not an option, except perhaps for those who invest in the instant gratification promise of our society. So, our flags still fly over the camp we pitched in front of Old Town Hall on March 19, 2003...as do Mary Kate's and Arthur's signs at Raytheon, and those of the Shawsheen vigilers and others in Merrimack Valley, for longer than that.

Reality is kaleidoscopic when viewed through the prism of a vigil. Just when you think you've heard it or seen it all, along comes a new and different visit, comment, or gesture to surprise, hurt, uplift, confound, bemuse, depress, confirm, or confuse you. True, many of the clear responses have been positive from the beginning, and they run close to 90+% every day now. Some just double us over in laughter: "Hey, if it wasn't for Iraq, we wouldn't be there!"

But the negatives can be downright ugly and devastating: "I know what the bottom line is for you. The Jews caused it all. That's about it!" What's even more perplexing are the numbers of people who stare right at you with no discernible expression whatsoever. The ranks of "sleepwalkers through history" may be more numerous than Sen. Robert Byrd could ever imagine.

Yet, so many (more with every month) are not in denial. The children in the back seats aren't. They almost always wave and smile. (Mothers in "Market Basket" tell us their kids ask to get out and join us.) Veterans are awake too. Typical is the one who served 22 years, the son of a Korean vet and nephew of a World War II vet, who said he thought we were dead wrong from the outset, but now he supports us. Why the change? "Abu Ghraib. What we did there. That's not what my father, my uncle, and I stood and fought for!"

Two weeks ago, a stranger parked his car across Main Street and walked slowly over to our curb. "You people are the only ones saying what we need to hear. The media have never told us. But you do. I've seen you when I drive by, and I want to say thanks." It turns out he lives in Beverly, and his sister, an Andover resident unknown to us, had told him about our vigils.

On a recent night, a van pulled up to the dark curbside in front of me. The driver reached over and rolled down the passenger's window, and called out: "I pass by a lot and see you always here. I have something I think you should have. I got it once in an antique store, and I really think it should belong to you and your group." He handed me a wooden figure and quickly drove away. I held up the object to see what it was: a carving of a right hand, about 6" tall, fashioned into the "V" sign of peace.

But stories only hint at what these vigils may mean. Weather of all kinds adds texture--the brutal sub-zero air; a windswept, summer rain; the take-your-breath-away silence of full moons; early, sap-flowing, spring warmth. Extended conversations among ourselves and with strangers intensify and expand our mutual support and awareness. It is common for people to approach us more freely now, linger awhile, and share in a space where it feels safe for them to be. What may have started for us as acts of a relatively silent witness for peace has evolved into mutual choices to risk for new relationships and deeper understandings of ourselves, others, and the world.

But these vigils? Do you think they do any good?

They haven't yet curtailed the imperial U.S. juggernaut, have they? And we will probably never find any meaningful quantifiable measures of their impact. Yes, it is wonderful to hear, as we often do, that somebody we never knew has noticed us and somehow taken heart from what she saw. If we were unaware of that person until now, how many others might be out there like her, sympathetic but silent strangers to us? We'll never know, and it is not worth speculating, because success as American culture promotes it was not our goal in the first place.

The true meaning of each vigil is perceived through the prism of the heart. I believe what some blessed soul (Mother Teresa? Dorothy Day?) once said: that we are called to be faithful, not necessarily successful. Vigils don't represent ordinary human behavior. They encourage and permit us to witness publicly to something of value outside of ourselves. They are acts of imagination, affirmations of hope, expressions of resistance to the prevailing temporal powers and historical trends. They tell us to wake up and pay attention. They enable me to stand free and open. They evoke all my relations. They keep me grounded and sane. Sometimes they impel me to risk into a better way, somewhere else in my life. And, who knows where, they just may spark the beginnings of some of these same possibilities for another person.

Paradoxically, at the level of mystery, we do know this. From the heart and through the spirit, transforming work gets done...and carries on. A teacher rarely knows if he or she has had any lasting impact on a student. But as Schweitzer once said, "All work that is worth anything is done in faith."

Revolution, they say, is of the spirit, or not at all.

*If I stood out in the rain night,
my only light this candle;
a million miles away,
would you lay down your fire, as I raise mine?
Would you never kill again?*

--Cindy Kallet

Recent Events

Iraq Veterans Against the War visited U Mass/Lowell on February 2

Reported by Jim Todd

On February 2nd four MVPP members--Peter Cameron, Ralph Galen, Jim Todd, and Mary Todd-- were on hand to hear the witness of Iraq Veterans Against the War at a well-attended gathering at U Mass/Lowell. The event was part of a late January and early February tour through eastern Massachusetts by veterans of the Iraq War, who are courageously speaking out against the war and occupation.

A large turnout listened to Kelly Dougherty share her story about first enlisting in the National Guard to work as a medic for state emergencies and public protection but then being deployed to Iraq in the Military Police to guard Halliburton vehicles from the Iraqis. She raised serious concerns about diverse issues such as rape and the inhalation of depleted uranium, and she spoke of the problems veterans face when they return home where there is a serious lack of medical benefits and other support. She explained that there were fourteen permanent military bases being built by the U. S. in Iraq. She stated it was time to end the occupation, bring the troops home, and provide aid for rebuilding the country.

When asked about "any good being done in Iraq," she expressed frustration that "you could not do the good you wanted to do." Kelly received many thanks for her courage to speak out, although there were also some serious challenges to what she was doing. When asked what individuals here can do, she suggested a.) support Iraq Veterans Against the War and Military Families Against the War, b.) speak out against the \$80 Billion Supplement that President Bush has just requested to continue the war, c.) attend any National Guard hearings to oppose the present system of deployment, and d.) continue to understand and explain to others that most of the problems in Iraq are being caused by the occupying presence of the U.S. military.

She concluded by explaining the "moral epiphany" she had gained through her experience: "The moral contract with the self in me is more important than the moral contract with the government. It is important that our voices be heard to communicate grave concerns about how our country continues to destabilize Iraq."

The 3rd Annual Strategy Conference of United for Justice with Peace took place in Boston on February 7.

Reported by Boryana Tacconi and Becci Backman

Participants from nearly thirty local peace and justice groups met for a day of animated exchange, discussion, and determination to keep working for peace and building a broader peace and justice movement. The participants agreed that ending the war in Iraq will be the primary focus of the next year.

The discussions outlined three main initiatives in the Iraq campaign: 1) opposing and countering military recruitment of youth; 2) launching a statewide campaign to bring the Massachusetts National Guard home; and 3) ending funding for the war by joining the United for Peace and Justice national campaign, and by pressuring the Massachusetts Congressional delegation through working with other constituencies and coordinating within each congressional district. UJP also supports those in the military by urging them to utilize Conscientious Objector status and the Military Rights hotline.

UJP will also continue its ongoing campaigns, relating them where possible to Iraq. The Israel/Palestine Task Force, for instance, will continue its outreach campaign to the peace movement, educating about the realities of the conflict and occupation, participating in a campaign aimed at Caterpillar and home demolitions, and seeking a change in the financial/military aid sent to Israel. Another group, including Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and Mass Peace Action, will work against nuclear proliferation, and coordinate its efforts with related groups worldwide. On the local level, continuing action to prevent construction of the Bio-weapons Lab in South Boston remains a priority, and UJP calls on all member groups to educate and seek the support of our local State Senators and Representatives to halt construction efforts. (See notice of March 6 meeting on p. 8.)

The emerging vision: UJP and the anti-war movement need to expand to become an anti-empire movement. There can be no security and democracy at home with empire as a national goal.

MVPP members Becci Backman, Bobbie Goldman, Niki Rosen and Boryana Tacconi attended the conference. Also present was MVPP's table of buttons, bumper stickers, cards and peace flags, which drew attention from and support by conference participants.

Area peace and justice groups met on February 13th to consider how to combat the militarization of our youth.

Reported by Becci Backman

On February 13th, building on one focus of the UJP Strategy Conference, representatives of ten area peace and justice groups met in Lowell to develop concrete strategies to combat military recruitment efforts among youth. Bobbie Goldman, Mary Todd, and Becci Backman represented MVPP.

Under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA), schools are required to send the names and addresses of senior high school students to military recruiters, unless a written "opt out" letter or post card (signed by a parent or the student) is received by the school in advance of the military recruiter's request. We discussed efforts used last fall by various groups, and in advance of next school year, we will work to develop contacts and access into schools, as well as additional written materials regarding the realities of military service to give to educators and parents/students. We will learn what access is afforded under NCLBA to non-military recruiters, plus our legal rights to distribute information, and we will work to set up easy access to this information for all groups undertaking local campaigns.

The working group acknowledged the different needs of local communities. Each group will work independently within our communities, but pool resources and share development of literature and information to maximize results without having to repeat efforts.

The next meeting is scheduled in Lowell on Sunday, March 13th from 3 pm to 5 pm to continue exchanging results of our local investigations. [Contact Bobbie Goldman for further details: (978) 661-9009.] We'll develop strategies to involve students directly and perhaps expand the target of our campaigns to include area colleges. MVPP believes that our local efforts should include Lawrence and Haverhill and we seek input from members regarding contacts in these and other high schools.

Global Perspectives

AFSC in the Tsunami Disaster Fields:

Sustained long-term reconstruction after the December devastation depends on local ownership and local planning

by Barbara Haack

Editor's note: We reported in the February newsletter that Barbara's brother-in-law had been able to hand-deliver MVVP's \$250 contribution for tsunami relief directly to a local organization in Aceh Province in Sumatra known as SHEEP: Society for Health, Education, Environment, and Peace. What follows is Barbara's report on the work of her sister, Helen, and her brother-in-law, Bob Clarke, with AFSC in Southeast Asia.

I recently had the grand opportunity to visit my sister, Helen, and her husband, Bob Clarke, in Bangkok, Thailand, where they live as Representatives of the Quaker International Affairs Program, Southeast Asia (SEAQIAR). None of the work they do takes place in Thailand; instead, they are frequently in Indonesia and Cambodia and occasionally in the Philippines, Malaysia, and Sri Lanka, where they have established on-going projects, or present NGO conferences and workshops.

Originally, AFSC appointed Bob and Helen in 1996 to be the co-field directors of the Cambodia country program (currently, there are country programs in Vietnam and Laos, as well), and for over three years they concentrated on the following work:

- Prosthetics and orthotics - Cambodia is riddled with land mines, making the countryside a dangerous place even today, causing heavy loss of limb and life. The program evolved from a workshop supplying appliances to landmine survivors to a school that trains professionals. It is now self-sustaining and internationally accredited, serving the entire Southeast Asia (SEA) and Indian Ocean area. A Cambodian NGO now runs this program.
- Sustainable livelihoods - a program of community development, community fishery and forestry committees, natural resource management, animal health, integrated farming, small-scale marketing, and literacy. This work continues with an entirely Cambodian staff.
- Community work with disabled people - reaching out to disabled people to re-integrate them into their communities while providing access to health services. This work has been handed over to a British-based NGO.

- Local capacities for nonviolence - the work started with an assessment of violence and vulnerabilities, and a survey of how communities wanted to address violence in their lives. Since becoming a local Cambodian NGO, the work has continued to facilitate villagers' work to reduce violence, including support and training for active nonviolence in the face of large-scale, natural resource expropriation and government inaction.
- Fostering the growth of local organizations, particularly those focused on peace and nonviolence at a time of political instability in Cambodia.

AFSC's Cambodia country program continues today with the sustainable livelihoods program and an investigation of the "hypernationalism" that pits Cambodians against ethnic Vietnamese residents.

In 1999, AFSC asked Helen and Bob to do a survey of the possibilities of re-starting the South East Asia Quaker International Affairs Program (SEAQIAR), and they became the Representatives in 2000. Since then, they have worked on a number of regional programs, including:

- People-to-people in conflict exchanges, bringing community-level peace activists from Indonesia, Cambodia, and Sri Lanka to live in each others' home communities, exchange strategies and search for new approaches to peacebuilding. Staff-to-staff meetings bring together peace workers from partner organizations, e.g. the Society for Health, Education, Environment and Peace (SHEEP), Yogyakarta, Indonesia; Khmer Ahimsa, Phnom Penh, Cambodia; and Peace and Community Action, Colombo, Sri Lanka.
- An internationally acclaimed Thai Muslim spoke on "Islam and Peace" in four Indonesian cities to audiences of widely varying Islamic schools and interfaith groups.
- A conference, "Peace in a Time of Global War," brought together representatives of peace-oriented NGOs and high-level security personnel of four major powers in Southeast Asia.
- Three annual Youth Peace Camps in Indonesia, which have included youth from numerous campuses all over Indonesia, as well as Thailand, the Philippines, and Cambodia. Themes have included democracy and pluralism, tolerance of differences, and nonviolence in "our neighborhood."
- Southeast Asian youth conferences and meetings in cooperation and facilitation with the Asian Muslim Action Network.
- A study of resistance against repression. NGO workers in Ambon, Poso, and Pontianak, all sites of recent inter-community violence in Indonesia, were trained to gather stories by faculty at Gadjah Mada University's Center for Security and Peace Studies. The NGO staff will share the stories between the communities and also at a conference in June bringing together peace activists from the SEA region. A regional conference on racism, preparatory to the global UN conference on Racism and Xenophobia, that brought together representatives from over 85 ethnic groups.

- A course, "Community-based self-reliant peacebuilding," given to staff of peace NGOs in the SEA region, prepared and presented in collaboration with colleagues from the Cambodian NGO, Khmer Ahimsa.

While I was in Thailand in January, Bob flew to Indonesia to meet with staff of AFSC's partner organization, **SHEEP**, which is sending teams of student volunteers and medical personnel to work with survivors of the tsunami in Meulaboh, a small village in Aceh Province of Sumatra. SHEEP was delighted to receive MVPP's \$250 donation and was touched that a small group on the other side of the world would give them money for Aceh relief.

World's children are devastated by poverty, armed conflict, and AIDS

by Don Abbott

With the high rhetoric of President Bush's Second Inaugural and the State of the Union Address fresh in our minds, a recent UNICEF report--The State of the World's Children 2005; Childhood Under Threat (December 2004)--provides a reality check of devastating proportions: Poverty, war, and HIV/AIDS severely jeopardize the healthy development of major populations of children, placing their very survival at huge risk, not to mention the future of whole communities and countries around the world.

Today, more than 1 billion children (half of all children in the world) are severely deprived of one or more of the seven basic necessities essential to childhood. 635 million children suffer from two or more deprivations.

- 640 million children do not have adequate shelter.
- 500 million children have no access to sanitation.
- 400 million children do not have access to safe water.
- 300 million children lack access to information (TV, radio, or newspapers).
- 270 million children have no access to basic health care services.
- 140 million children, the majority of them girls, have never been to school.
- 90 million children are severely food-deprived.

The report makes clear that poverty is not limited to developing countries. Indeed, in 11 of 15 industrialized nations, the proportion of children living in low-income households has risen during the last decade. The child poverty rate in the U.S. is 21.9%.

The impact of war on children is equally disastrous.

- Nearly half of the 3.6 million people killed in war since 1990 have been children.
- In a typical five-year war, the mortality rate of children under five rises by 13 per cent.
- In the 1990s approximately 20 million children were forced by conflict to leave their homes.
- In armed conflicts around the world, children by the hundreds of thousands are recruited or abducted as soldiers, forced to witness violence and killing, and orphaned by vio-

lence. They also are targets of sexual violence and victims of landmines.

The Lancet Study in the fall of 2004 calculated that as many as 100,000 Iraqi civilians have died as a result of the U.S. invasion and occupation of their country. With more than 1/2 of the Iraqi population estimated to be 15 years of age or younger, it is statistically probable that as many as 50,000 Iraqi children have died because of this war.

The impact of HIV/AIDS is brutal and growing.

- With HIV/AIDS now the largest killer of people aged 15-49, the wave of AIDS orphans has grown to 15 million worldwide.
- Children in families affected by HIV/AIDS, especially girls, are forced to drop out of school to become caregivers or to live at risk through hazardous labor or sexual exploitation.
- The protective network for children weakens as other adults, especially teachers and health workers, keep dying.

Summary statistics further define the crisis:

- The annual number of children who die worldwide from causes that could have been prevented is equivalent to all the children under five living in France, Germany, Greece, and Italy.
- Each day 29,158 children under the age of five die. 3,900 of them die daily because they lack access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation.

The U.N. Food and Agriculture Agency reported in December 2004 that each year 5 million children die of malnutrition and that hunger kills one child every 5 seconds. Another U.N. report in November 2004 found that severe malnutrition in Iraqi children had almost doubled since the U.S. invasion--translating to approximately 400,000 Iraqi children who suffer from a condition known as "wasting," chronic diarrhea and dangerous deficiencies of protein.

How do we possibly wrap our hearts and heads around these horrific realities? It is difficult not to collapse under the under the numbing weight of such figures and reports. The odds against the very survival of all humankind become more pronounced with each year.

William Sloane Coffin Jr. reminds us: "The true 'axis of evil' is environmental degradation, pandemic poverty and a world awash in weapons." We know what the problems are. We have the resources and knowledge to address many of these systemic global breakdowns and meltdowns right now. But can we mobilize the political, economic, and moral will to do so?

The Kentucky farmer says, "If we would help if we could, we will help when we can."

"There will be no peace and no security, even for the privileged amongst us, in a world that remains divided between extremes of wealth and poverty, health and disease, knowledge and ignorance, freedom and oppression."

--Kofi Annan

Priorities for Action

Without Vision the People Perish:

Budgets Are Moral Documents!

The administration's proposed \$2.6 trillion budget projects a record deficit of \$427 billion, and it does not include any spending for continuing military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, estimated at another \$80 billion. It raises the defense budget to \$421 billion, while proposing major cuts and changes to discretionary domestic spending in areas that would benefit those living in poverty. It would make permanent the tax cuts of 2001--70% of which benefited the top 20% of U.S. citizens. And it would phase out two relatively unpublicized tax provisions that limit deductions and exemptions for high-income individuals (Economists like Paul Krugman of the New York Times call this "the back-door tax cut," 97% of which would go to people with incomes over \$200,000.)

The budget includes \$20 billion in cuts to over 150 programs, many of them targeted toward low-income people. These proposals come at a time when one out of every eight Americans and one out of every five children live in poverty, when a record 45 million Americans are without health insurance, and when affordable housing is beyond the reach of more and more working people.

Included among the proposed changes are the following:

- \$1 billion cut in food stamps over the next five years.
- The elimination of block grants that aid poor communities.
- Making it more difficult for working poor families with children to be on Medicaid.
- A \$355 million cut to programs that promote safe and drug-free schools.
- An 11% cut to housing and urban development programs.
- The elimination of 48 educational programs.
- The elimination of funding for vocational education, drug-free schools, and literacy programs
- Nearly 1/3 of all programs targeted for elimination are in the Education Department.

Jim Wallis, author of the acclaimed recent publication, God's Politics (see Books of Note on p.10) and editor of Sojourners, issued the following response to the federal budget proposed by President Bush on February 7.

"Budgets are moral documents that reflect the values and priorities of a family, church, organization, city, state, or nation. They tell us what is most important and valued to those making the budget. President Bush says that his 2006 budget "is a budget that sets priorities." Examining those priorities - who will benefit and who will suffer in President Bush's budget - is a moral and religious concern. Just as we have "environmental impact studies" for public policies, it is time for a "poverty impact statement," which would ask the fundamental question of how policy proposals affect low-income people. We could start with this budget and do a "values audit" to determine how its values square with those of the American people. I believe this would reveal unac-

ceptable priorities... We must speak clearly now about a budget lacking moral vision. A budget that scapegoats the poor and fattens the rich, that asks for sacrifice mostly from those who can least afford it, is a moral outrage.

Those who want to encourage members of Congress, before taking a vote, to consider the effect of the administration's budget on our nation's poor may turn to the following website: http://go.sojo.net/campaign/budget_06/wii53bw2157x55d

SAY "NO" TO \$80 BILLION MORE FOR IRAQ WAR No new war spending! Bring the troops home now!

**Contact your members of Congress
202-224-3121 (9:00 am - 5:00 EST)**

President Bush is asking Congress for a supplemental \$80 billion more for the failed Iraq War, on top of the more than \$151 billion already appropriated. Congress is gearing up to pour more money to "stay the course" of the past two tragic years. Every extra day and dollar the U.S. spends on its reckless course in Iraq deepens the suffering in Iraq and at home. Tell your Member of Congress that not one more dollar should go to waging war in Iraq. Instead, the U.S. must end the occupation, bring our troops home, and support Iraqi sovereignty.

As far as we know,

- Not a single Massachusetts congressman has signed onto Rep. Lynn Woolsey's (D-CA) resolution calling on Bush to start withdrawing US troops immediately.
 - No Massachusetts congressman plans to vote against the \$80 billion Iraq request.
-

Abolition Now: Enroll Your Mayor in the "Abolition Now!" Campaign

(reprinted from The Sunflower, January 2005 issue, the monthly newsletter of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation)

The year 2005 marks the 60th anniversary of the beginning of the Nuclear Age and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Plans are underway to mark the occasion with a global effort to create a nuclear-free world. The Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have organized the Mayors for Peace Emergency Campaign to Ban Nuclear Weapons and are enrolling Mayors all over the world to join the call for negotiations to begin in 2005 on a treaty for the total elimination of nuclear weapons by the year 2020.

Abolition 2000, a network in over 90 countries, has launched a global Campaign called "Abolition Now!" to urge people all over the world to enroll their Mayors and petition their Heads of State to come to the Non-Proliferation Treaty Conference (NPT) at the United Nations in May with their plans for nuclear disarmament. On 2 December 2004, the US anti-war coalition United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ) teamed up with Abolition Now! to announce their plans for a massive demonstration in New York's Central Park on 1 May 2005, the day before government officials begin the month-long conference to review the future of the NPT.

To continue to receive this newsletter... **We Invite You to Join /Rejoin Us**

\$20.00 Individual
\$10.00 Student/Senior
\$30.00 Family

Circle One

\$50.00 Supporting
\$75.00 Sustaining
\$100.00 Peacemaker

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ E-Mail _____ Date _____

Return to
P.O. Box 573
North Andover, MA 01845-0573

MVPP is registered with the IRS as a non-profit organization. MVPP Contributions are tax deductible. **“2004” on your mailing label indicates that your membership is paid only through May 31, 2004. 2005 means you are paid till May 2005.** We now have 123, counting family members within a member group. Last year, approximately one third of those members joined/renewed at higher than the basic rate.

“Until there is more than a vague commitment to do the planning necessary to eliminate nuclear weapons, all our efforts at non-proliferation will be seen as simply reinforcing a global double-standard,” said Aaron Tovish, who manages the Mayor's for Peace Campaign. Already, over 600 mayors – including more than 60 from the US – have joined the Campaign, which hopes to enroll 1,000 mayors by May and bring a large delegation of mayors to the NPT conference.

As long as the United States continues to build new nuclear weapons and modernize its lethal arsenal, the world will continue to face increasing nuclear proliferation threats and a state of constant war between the nuclear haves and have-nots. To end nuclear proliferation and the nuclear threat, all countries must plan for nuclear disarmament now!

To join the campaign or to find out how you can urge your mayor to support the call for a safer world free of nuclear weapons, visit the Abolition Now! website at www.AbolitionNow.org

Oppose BU's Research Facility on Biological Weapons

Plans move ahead for Boston University to build in South Boston a highly controversial and potentially dangerous facility for research on biological weapons. UJP and others have placed high priority on opposing the construction of this lab. The Boston Globe (2/23/05) published an important article on this issue, authored by Bernard Lown, 1985 Nobel Peace Laureate, and Prasanna Parthasarathi, associate professor of history at Boston College.

Prof. Parthasarathi will be our guest at an important meeting about the BU “Bio-weapons Lab” on Sunday, March 6 at 1:30 pm at the First United Methodist Church, North Andover. This will be an excellent opportunity for us to become more educated on this critical matter. For details, call Jim Todd at (978) 687-7864.

“If freedom means anything it is the freedom to tell others things they don't want to hear!”
--George Orwell

Letters

Enough! Enough!

Lawrence Eagle-Tribune; published February 8, 2005

I do not have a son or daughter or a husband or a brother or sister who is in Iraq. I am not an Iraqi woman whose husband or child has been killed or injured in this war. I am not the mother or sister of an insurgent in Iraq. I cannot imagine the pain and anguish of women who are left to weep when fighters die in this conflict, or when their loved ones are damaged in mind, spirit and body.

We get such a sanitized view of this war. Our government does not want us to see what is really happening. As a woman, I have a hard time imagining trying to pick up the pieces of my life after my town has been destroyed by another country, and I have no house, no market, no library, no place of worship. And where is my husband, my son, my daughter? Why? Why?

Or the women in our country whose sons and daughters, husbands, brothers and sisters have died, or who are broken mentally and physically. I weep for them. I weep with them. And I cry . . . Why? Why? Why?

And the mother or the wife of an insurgent? From my place of privilege and distance, I don't understand fully how desperate it must be!

In war, the women carry much of the pain. This war was not necessary and this war is not just. When will we decide that enough is enough? Enough killing. Enough bombing. Enough arrogance and enough telling other people what is good for them. Enough consuming more than our share of the world's resources. Enough of this war and the pain, utter devastation and anguish to women, men and children in the United States. Enough of this war and the pain, utter devastation and anguish to women, men and children in Iraq.

Enough. Enough.

Mary Todd, Lawrence

U.S. Aid to Palestinians:

just another vehicle to funnel more money to Israel

Lawrence Eagle-Tribune; submitted February 17, 2005

Israel is reportedly requesting up to \$180 million in U.S. aid to help construct new “state of the art” checkpoints along the Separation Wall. The modernization is being deceptively labeled a “humanitarian” project for improving the Palestinian quality of life and ease of communication. The faster passage through Israeli checkpoints is presumed to be a help to the Palestinian economy. Employing this “humanitarian” disguise, the White House plans to take the requested amount out of the \$350 million that Bush promised in his State of the Union address to “support Palestinian political, economic, and security reforms” and give it to Israel for these checkpoints.

This deception must not be allowed to pass. The modernization of Israeli checkpoints is not “humanitarian” as it only further consolidates the Israeli occupation. The checkpoints are mostly located on the Palestinian land illegally enclosed by the construction of the Separation Wall. The proposed permanent gates controlling the Palestinian population in their own land are a giant step toward annexing that land and depriving Palestinians a viable state.

This project will divert funds badly needed for Palestinian reconstruction to Israel, which already receives billions of tax dollars in U.S. free grants every year. Supporting this project will provide U.S. taxpayers’ dollars to support the continued illegal Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. It will also negate the stated U.S. policy calling for a viable Palestinian state.

Israel should not be given more funds to consolidate her occupation of the West Bank and Gaza; Israel should be encouraged to end her illegal occupation instead.

Masood A. Sheikh, North Andover

Upcoming Events

Compiled with the help of Sue Imhoff

Dean Stevens in Performance at Coffee House, Saturday, March 5 at Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 6 Locke St., Andover; 8:00 pm (doors open 7:30 pm). Promises to be another special evening with the gifted songwriter/singer/activist who was featured artist at the MVPP Benefit Concert last September. \$10 suggested donation. Reservations and information: (978) 475-4454.

Workshop on Race and Class: Intersections & Empowerment, Saturday, March 5 (9:00 am to 9:00 pm) and Sunday, March 6 (9 am to 5 pm) at Walker Center, Newton. Led by Jenny Ladd, Ed.D. and Christopher McMullen, M.B.A. and Felice Yeskel, Ed.D. An experiential workshop to understand the intersections of our experiences of privilege and disempowerment, to break the societal taboo about talking about money and class, and to reflect on how our class experiences are shaped by race and ethnicity. Explore paths to empowerment in our own lives and to becoming agents in transforming our society. Registration required. For more information, contact Class Action at (413) 585 9709 or email at info@classactionnet.org.

Meeting about Boston University’s plan to build a “bio-weapons lab” in South Boston, Sunday, March 6, 1:30 pm; at First United Methodist Church, North Andover. Arranged by MVPP. Guest expert: Prasannan Parthasarathi, associate professor of history at Boston College. An excellent opportunity to get up-to-speed on an issue of high priority for the Boston region. Contact: Jim Todd at (978) 687-7864.

Pot Luck Hospitality for Buddhist Monks with “Walk for a New Spring,” Tuesday, March 8 at Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 6 Locke Street, Andover; 6:00 pm. Welcome our spiritual friends as they walk through Merrimack Valley on their annual sojourn for peace. Contact Brenda McCarthy at (978) 689-9052 or Boryana Tacconi at (978) 470-1362.

Celebrate International Women's Day - Never Turning

Back! Tuesday, March 8 at Simmons College, Conference Center, 300 The Fenway; 7:30 pm to 9:30 pm. This gathering will focus on “Affirming the Platform for Action” which came into being 10 years ago at the UN Beijing Conference on Women. Panelists: Rev. Irene Monroe, Public Theologian and Journalist; Rev. Cheng Imm Tan, Director of the Mayor’s Office of New Bostonians; Susan Roosevelt Weld, Co-founder of Mass Action for Women. Moderator: Laura Roskos, Coordinator of Mass CEDAW Project (Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women). RSVP to Olga Reisman at (617) 566-8106. Directions at www.simmons.edu/visit. Suggested donation: \$5.00 at the door. For more information, email at oreisman@siroonian.com.

“From Religion to Nation: The Evolution of Modern Jewish Identity,” a course held on five Tuesdays--March 8, 15, 22, 26, and April 5 at The Workmen’s Circle, 1762 Beacon St., Brookline; 7:30 pm to 9 pm. Instructor: Paul Saba. How did Jews go from seeing themselves as a religious community to seeing themselves as a people/nation? How and why did Zionism become the dominant political movement among Jews internationally? What roles have nationalism and religion played in the creation and subsequent development of the state of Israel? The cost is \$75 for WC members, \$95 for non-members. For more information: (617) 566-6281 or email at circle@workmen-circleboston.org.

An Evening with Noam Chomsky and Mirna Perla about El Salvador, “Out of the Headlines, Still in the Struggle,” Thursday, March 10 at Hope Church, 20 Seaverns Avenue, Jamaica Plains; 7:30 pm to 9:30 pm. A commemoration of the 25th Anniversary of the martyrdom of Archbishop Oscar Romero and a celebration of 20 years of working for peace with CRISPAZ, Christians for Peace in El Salvador. Admission \$10 (advance ticket purchase strongly recommended). Call (617) 445-5115 or e-mail info@crispaz.org.

“Swing, Sing, Sway, and Speak for Peace,” Saturday, March 12 at First United Methodist Church, Rtes. 114 & 133, North Andover; 7 pm to 10 pm. Sponsored by MVPP, an evening of fun to boogie, play, sing, and speak for peace. Call Jim Todd (978) 687-7864 or e-mail jimtodd@mdc.net.

Strategy Meeting on Opposing Further Militarization of Youth, Sunday, March 13 in Lowell; 3 pm to 5 pm. For details, contact: Bobbie Goldman at (978) 661-9009.

Global Day of Protest to End the Occupation of Iraq, Saturday, March 19 in Central Park, NYC.

Global Day of Protest to End the Occupation of Iraq: No Mandate for War, Sunday, March 20, Rally in Boston Common at 1:00 pm. In solidarity with anti-war groups all over the world, gather to show opposition to the U.S. invasion and ongoing occupation of Iraq. MVPP is a co-sponsor of this major regional initiative mounted especially by United for Justice with Peace and Boston Mobilization. The messages: *Bring the Troops Home Now, \$80 Billion, Not for War, but for Jobs, Education, Housing, and Healthcare, Military Recruiters Out of Our Schools, End "Stoploss," and No Draft.* **Now is the moment for Boston and Northern New England to Mobilize.** For more details, call Bobbie Goldman at (978) 661-9009.

Conference on Globalization, Privatization, and H2O, Saturday, March 26 at Clark University, Worcester. With the issue of who will control water quickly coming to the forefront for activists of all backgrounds, Massachusetts Global Action announces a one-day event to help educate and motivate statewide activists in their campaigns to stop corporations from controlling the precious resource of water. For registration, contact Mass Global Action at (617) 338-9966. For more information, visit <http://www.massglobalaction.org>.

Arts For Peace and Justice, Friday, April 1, 2005 at Follen Unitarian Church, 755 Massachusetts Avenue, Lexington. A joint invitation from Lexington Justice and Peace Committee and Arlington United for Justice with Peace to exhibit your visual artwork during a special evening of songs, spoken words, and visual arts. If interested in participating, please forward a digital image of your work with details by March 4th to bernsteint@rcn.com or Marni@marnita.com. Further information at church office: (781) 862-3805.

"US Imperialism from a Native Perspective," Tuesday, April 5 at South Church (UU), 292 State St., Portsmouth, NH; 7:00 pm. The speaker will be Chris Charlebois of Portsmouth. Sponsored by Seacoast Peace Response. For further information contact Amy Antonucci at amyla44@juno.com or Cal Ewing at cal_ewing@yahoo.com.

AFSC Peace and Justice Conference, "Hope & Hard Work: Another America Is Possible," Friday, April 8 (6:00 pm to 9:30 pm) and Saturday, April 9 (8:30 am to 6:00 pm) at Building 34, MIT, Vassar Street, Cambridge. A major, New England-wide conference to analyse, strategize, and organize the political and social resistance now called for. Features a keynote presentation by Phyllis Bennis, Fellow of the Institute of Policy Studies; panel presentations by Ken Oye, Professor of Political Science and Engineering Systems at MIT, and Nancy Murray, Director of Bill of Rights Education Project of Massachusetts ACLU, and Robert Borosage, Director of Campaign for America's Future, and Jessica Walker-Beaumont, AFSC Trade and Debt Specialist; plus a diverse array of workshops and strategy sessions. Contact Joseph Gerson at (617) 661-6130 or at JGerson@afsc.org.

The Music for Peace Project 2005, April 8 through 10 at Stony Brook University (NY) and worldwide. An unprecedented effort, this project calls for 500 simultaneous concerts for peace by musicians worldwide over a three-day weekend. For more information, or to register your planned performance, visit

<http://www.m4p.org>. Send e-mail to info@m4p.org for additional information.

Death & Taxes Resistance Festival, Saturday, April 9, 12 noon at the IRS Building, Rte. 133, Andover. Resist government and corporate control over our tax dollars. Rally and dance from the IRS to Raytheon. Call (617) 338-9966 or e-mail administrative@massglobalaction.org.

National Disarmament Demonstration in Support of "Mayors for Peace Emergency Campaign to Ban Nuclear Weapons," Sunday, May 1, in New York. A major march and rally preceding a month-long meeting at the United Nations to discuss the fate of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. See <http://www.abolitionnow.org>. Also see related article on [page 7](#).

"Exception to the Rulers," featuring Amy Goodman of Democracy Now! Tuesday, May 3 at South Church (UU), 292 State Street, Portsmouth, NH; 7:00 pm. Sponsored by Seacoast Peace Response, WSCA & Left Out. For more information: David Diamond at (603) 749-9159 or email at ddiam@tlc.net.

Global Exchange Delegation to Afghanistan, Sunday, July 10, to Tuesday, July 19. Tom Jackson will be leading a delegation to Afghanistan for Global Exchange. Global Exchange did logistics for Megan Bartlett (Ground Zero for Peace: First Responders Against War) when she went to Afghanistan in May 2004. Tom went along to film, and from that experience came "Worlds Apart". For more information, contact Tom at joepublicfilms@yahoo.com. For a basic description of this delegation visit www.globalexchange.org. Spaces are already filling up for this trip, so make contact soon.

Books of Note:

Recommended Reads, compiled by Don Abbott

The Power of Nonviolence, Writing by Advocates of Peace, introduction by Howard Zinn, Beacon Press, 2002. Arranged chronologically and including some of the most original pacifist thinkers and writers--Buddha, William Penn, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Jane Addams, Scott Nearing, Mohandas Gandhi, Dorothy Day, Simone Weil, Albert Camus, Henry Wallace, A. J. Muste, Erich Fromm, Thomas Merton, Rajendra Prasad, Martin Luther King Jr., Howard Zinn, Daniel Berrigan, Thich Nhat Hanh, Jonathan Schell, Daisaku Ikeda, Linus Pauling, Arundhati Roy, and Tim Wise--this is the first anthology of alternatives to war with a historical perspective. Zinn's introductory essay about the U.S. response to 9/11/01, entitled "Retaliation," epitomizes the salient and persuasive arguments for peace assembled in this tight and accessible volume.

State of the World 2005: Redefining Global Security, Worldwatch Institute, 2004. The 22nd edition of the annual Worldwatch report and the first to focus on global security. Reports that since 9/11/01, there has been a substantial reduction in worldwide attention to many of the principal underlying causes of insecurity--witness serious underfunding in aid to poorest countries and in international commitments to combat HIV/AIDS and global warming. The report further documents a range of instabilities that could lead the world into a dangerous and growing downward spiral. The publication is dedicated to

reversing that spiral and to building the international cooperation that is essential to achieve a more secure world.

Barry Lopez: Resistance, Knopf, Borzoi Books, 2004. Stunning narratives by a luminous writer, nine fictional testimonies to the power of both memory and imagination, by contemporary men and women who have resisted the mainstream and are now suddenly “parties of interest” to their government. The first story alone, “Apocalypse,” makes the book worth reading; the others too are passionate, original responses to some of the dominant forces in society today.

David McKee: The Conquerors, Handprint Books, 2004. Simply written and attractively illustrated by one called a “master of the modern fable,” a reminder to us and our children of a force more powerful and a gentle reminder that peaceful persuasion can indeed overcome aggression.

Jim Wallis: God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It, HarperSanFrancisco, 2005. A clarion call by the editor of Sojourners to both religious communities and government leaders to heed the key values of the prophetic religious tradition exemplified by the life and work of people like Martin Luther King, Jr., Dorothy Day, and Desmond Tutu. Wallis inspires us to hold our political leaders and policies accountable by integrating our deepest moral convictions into our nation's public life. Major religious teachings say much more about poverty, economics, and war than they do about the political Right's “wedge issues” of abortion and gay marriage. Already a bestseller on many lists.

Summary of Monthly Meeting, February 22, 2005

(See our web site for the postings of full minutes:
<http://www.merrimackvalleypeopleforpeace.org/Minsfeb05.pdf>)
Don Abbott, Clerk

Bobbie announced that we had received and accepted with regret the resignation of Tom Gale as a board member, because of his several ongoing commitments to peace and justice efforts regionally and far afield. A motion, approved and seconded, was unanimously passed to elect Sue Imhoff to fill this vacancy.

Treasurer's Report: Peter reported that our current bank balance stands at \$5,123.66.

Membership and Sales: Becci reported that recent renewals have brought our paid membership to a total of 90 individuals. Sales continue to go well. We are about to purchase six cases of Palestinian olive oil distributed by the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees, a non-profit organization that develops and markets Palestinian agricultural products. The first shipment of olive oil proved very popular; one of the new cases is already called for. We voted to sell this excellent product at \$12/bottle.

Action Updates: Bobbie reported and led informed discussion on several important current actions. 1.) The UJP strategic priorities--a.) to block the administration's supplemental request for \$80 billion to fund the ongoing war and occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan; b.) to support bringing the National Guard home; c.) to develop unified approaches to stop the recruitment

of youth for war. 2.) Opposition to the development of the BU Bioweapons Lab, a.k.a. “Bio Safety” Lab, in South Boston. There will be an important meeting on this issue at 1:30 pm on Sunday, March 6 at First United Methodist Church in North Andover, hosted by Jim and Mary Todd. Our guest expert will be Prasanna Parthasarathi, associate professor of history at Boston College. 3.) Tom Gale's request that we ask our congressmen to support and cosponsor HR 1673, which would establish a Department of Peace--members signed separate petitions to Reps. Tierney and Meehan. 4.) Postcards to our congressmen asking them to oppose the \$80 billion supplemental request to continue the Iraq War and to support Rep. Lynn Woolsey's (D-CA) congressional resolution calling for immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq. 5.) Letters of support for Drew Plummer, military resister.

Finance Matters: Jane announced that Peace Vision Project was withdrawing its request that MVPP accept donations on behalf of its work. A motion was duly made and seconded that we rescind the vote taken previously at our last monthly meeting on January 25, 2005, regarding accepting donations on behalf of Peace Vision Project. The motion passed unanimously. We then voted unanimously to authorize the Finance Committee to decide the most appropriate way in which to handle any gifts earmarked for Peace Vision Project that we may receive in the near future. The sense of the meeting reflected the group's ongoing respect, admiration, and support for the mission of Peace Vision Project. On a separate matter, we voted to spend up to \$500 to purchase a 10x10 tent, with logo if possible, for our outdoor, public tabling activities.

Palestinian Olive Oil

MVPP has purchased several cases of distinctive, flavorful Palestinian olive oil and will sell bottles for \$12 each. This is our second purchase of olive oil, because it proved to be quite popular. The olive oil is distributed by the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees (P.A.R.C - www.pal-arc.org), a non-profit organization that develops and markets Palestinian agricultural products. This shipment comes from small farmer cooperatives in the Salfit and Ramallah area. While not yet certified as such, the oil is in every sense organic. Our purchase helps Palestinian farmers whose income has been devastated by Israeli policies of repression and war.

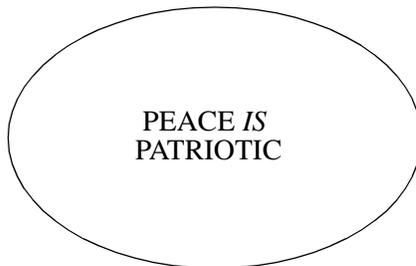
The shipment is expected in March. If you are interested, please contact Becci Backman at raback@ix.netcom.com or (978) 475-5679.

*“When someone asks what there is to do,
light the candle in their hand. Like this.”*

--Rumi

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North Andover, MA 01845-0573

<http://www.merrimackvalleypeopleforpeace.org/>



The MVPP Newsletter is printed monthly and has a current mailing of 120. We are grateful for suggestions, comments, and help with publication. (2004 on your mailing label indicates that your 2003-2004 dues have been paid up to May 31, 2004)
MVPP President: Bobbie Goldman Vice President: Katherine Robinson. Newsletter Editor: Don Abbott. Newsletter contributors: Becci Backman, Bobbie Goldman, Barbara Haack, Sue Imhoff, Brian Quirk, Masood Sheikh, Boryana Tacconi, Jim and Mary Todd.

CALL AND WRITE YOUR REPRESENTATIVES & SENATORS TO MAKE YOUR VIEWS KNOWN

Every legislator knows one letter is worth a thousand votes.

President George W. Bush

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500
White House Comment Desk: 202 456-1111
E-mail: president@whitehouse.gov

Senator Edward M. Kennedy

304 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
202 224-4543 fax: 202 224-2417
2400 JFK Building, Boston MA 02203
617 565-3170 fax: 617 565-3183
Form: <http://kenedy.senate.gov/contact.html>

Senator John F. Kerry

304 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
202 224-2742 fax: 202 224-8525
One Bowdoin Sq., Boston, MA 02114
617 565-8519 fax: 617 248-3870
Form: <http://kerry.senate.gov/text/contact/email.html>

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E-mail: martin.meehan@mail.house.gov

Representative John Tierney (District 6)

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17 Peabody Sq, Peabody, MA 01960
978 531-1669 fax: 978 531-1996
E-mail: <http://www.house.gov/tierney/email.htm>

A link to all in US legislature:

<http://thomas.loc.gov/home/legbranch/legbranch.html>

How Senators and Representatives voted:

Senate: http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/legislative/a_three_sections_with_teasers/votes.htm
House: <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2004/index.asp>

State Voting Information: Look up who you vote for at
<http://www.wheredoivotema.com/bal/myelectioninfo.php>