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By Jeremy Scahill

On September 10, 2001, before most Americans had heard of Al Qaeda or imagined the possibility of a “war on terror,” Donald Rumsfeld stepped to the podium at the Pentagon to deliver one of his first major addresses as Defense Secretary under President George W. Bush. Standing before the former corporate executives he had tapped as his top deputies overseeing the high-stakes business of military contracting — many of them from firms like Enron, General Dynamics and Aerospace Corporation — Rumsfeld issued a declaration of war.

“The topic today is an adversary that poses a threat, a serious threat, to the security of the United States of America,” Rumsfeld thundered. “It disrupts the defense of the United States and places the lives of men and women in uniform at risk.” He told his new staff, “You may think I’m describing one of the last decrepit dictators of the world.... [But] the adversary’s closer to home,” he said. “It’s the Pentagon bureaucracy.” Rumsfeld called for a wholesale shift in the running of the Pentagon, supplanting the old DoD bureaucracy with a new model, one based on the private sector. Announcing this major overhaul, Rumsfeld told his audience, “I have no desire to attack the Pentagon; I want to liberate it. We need to save it from itself.”

The next morning, the Pentagon would be attacked, literally, as a Boeing 757 — American Airlines Flight 77 — smashed into its western wall. Rumsfeld would famously assist rescue workers in pulling bodies from the rubble. But it didn’t take long for Rumsfeld to seize the almost unthinkable opportunity presented by 9/11 to put his personal war — laid out just a day before — on the fast track. The new Pentagon policy would emphasize covert

actions, sophisticated weapons systems and greater reliance on private contractors. It became known as the Rumsfeld Doctrine. “We must promote a more entrepreneurial approach: one that encourages people to be proactive, not reactive, and to behave less like bureaucrats and more like venture capitalists,” Rumsfeld wrote in the summer of 2002 in an article for Foreign Affairs titled “Transforming the Military.”

Although Rumsfeld was later thrown overboard by the Administration in an attempt to placate critics of the Iraq War, his military revolution was here to stay. Bidding farewell to Rumsfeld in November 2006, Bush credited him with overseeing the “most sweeping transformation of America’s global force posture since the end of World War II.” Indeed, Rumsfeld’s trademark “small footprint” approach ushered in one of the most significant developments in modern warfare — the widespread use of private contractors in every aspect of war, including in combat.

The often overlooked subplot of the wars of the post-9/11 period is their unprecedented scale of outsourcing and privatization. From the moment the US troop buildup began in advance of the invasion of Iraq, the Pentagon made private contractors an integral part of the operations. Even as the government gave the public appearance of attempting diplomacy, Halliburton was preparing for a massive operation. When US tanks rolled into Baghdad in March 2003, they brought with them the largest army of private contractors ever deployed in modern war. By the end of Rumsfeld’s tenure in late 2006, there were an estimated 100,000 private contractors on the ground in Iraq — an almost one-to-one ratio with active-duty American soldiers.

To the great satisfaction of the war industry, before Rumsfeld resigned he took the extraordinary step of clas-

sifying private contractors as an official part of the US war machine. In the Pentagon’s 2006 Quadrennial Review, Rumsfeld outlined what he called a “road map for change” at the DoD, which he said had begun to be implemented in 2001. It defined the “Department’s Total Force” as “its active and reserve military components, its civil servants, and its contractors — constitut[ing] its warfighting capability and capacity. Members of the Total Force serve in thousands of locations around the world, performing a vast array of duties to accomplish critical missions.” This formal designation represented a major triumph for war contractors — conferring on them a legitimacy they had never before enjoyed.

Contractors have provided the Bush Administration with political cover, allowing the government to deploy private forces in a war zone free of public scrutiny, with the deaths, injuries and crimes of those forces shrouded in secrecy. The Administration and the GOP-controlled Congress in turn have shielded the contractors from accountability, oversight and legal constraints. Despite the presence of more than 100,000 private contractors on the ground in Iraq, only one has been indicted for crimes or violations. “We have over 200,000 troops in Iraq and half of them aren’t being counted, and the danger is that there’s zero accountability,” says Democrat Dennis Kucinich, one of the leading Congressional critics of war contracting.

The Bush Administration is increasingly dependent on private security forces to do its dirty work, Jeremy Scahill reveals in his new book, Blackwater: The Rise of the World’s Most Powerful Mercenary Army.

This article is adapted from Jeremy Scahill’s new book, Blackwater: The Rise of the World’s Most Powerful Mercenary Army (Nation Books).

Continued on page 8

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The Community Alliance is an independent voice for workers and progressive groups in the Central San Joaquin Valley. The goal of this monthly newspaper is to build a powerful progressive movement that will support social, environmental, & economic justice; immigrant rights; and a living wage for all working people. We seek to expose social and political injustices and to link the diverse network of activists working in our community.

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The Community Alliance newspaper reserves the right to edit all articles for space and clarity.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Once again a California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation (CDCR) staff member, this time at Solano State Prison in Vacaville Ca., has deemed an article I wrote as “Unauthorized Material.” It seems my piece, “The Ongoing Wave of Secrecy, Inside California’s Sub—constitutional Prison System” (Community Alliance Dec. ‘06), has fluffed a few feathers. Peeling the bark off notorious organizations such as the California Correctional Peace Officer’s Association (CCPOA) and exposing its inner workings, doesn’t set well with union members.

Ignoring the fact that the CDCR settled a First Amendment lawsuit with me in the ID9Os, WOODARD v. DUNCAN, CV—4182 ABC, they continue to harass, and attempt to intimidate those who exercise their First Amendment rights.

I filed an appeal in February. My Action Requested is to continue to receive copies of the Community Alliance that contain my observations and opinion. I also requested that no further reprisals be leveled against me for any future journalistic activities. To date, a resolution to this problem has not happened.

The CDCR machine expects complete subjugation after executing their (well—known to prisoners) intimidation tactics. In many cases it bodes well for them, in my cases it will not!

I fully intend to keep submitting my definition of prison life to the Community Alliance.

Boston Woodard
Prisoner, Solano State Prison

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From the Editor

Want to know one of Fresno’s dirtiest little secrets? Take a look at the photo below. This homeless encampment, and there are many like this in Fresno, costs taxpayers a million dollars a year. No, the money is not spent to help the homeless get out of poverty and into a descent home, it is spent on emergency health care services, policing, and fattening the wallets of poverty pimps who run organizations that claim to be helping the homeless.

Research has shown that it costs between \$20,000 - 150,000 a year for society to take care of each homeless person. The expense is so high because instead of going to a doctor and getting preventative health care, they only see a doctor when a health condition becomes an emergency. Often times that means a trip in an ambulance to the emergency room and a stay in the hospital. On average, for about every 20 homeless people you see on the street, taxpayers are spending about \$1 million a year. The money could not be spent in a more foolish way.

We need a plan to end homelessness. What we have instead is the following.

An example of how our tax dollars are mis-spent on “ending homelessness” is the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) program which funnels the funds through a local coalition called the Fresno Madera Continuum of Care (FMCoC). Last month I attended a meeting of the FMCoC with Dee, a homeless woman who asked me “how in the world is it possible for millions of dollars to be coming to Fresno and not one dollar of it reaches us.” I invited Dee to come to the FMCoC with me and find out. The FMCoC’s Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness certainly sounds impressive. But the reality of what Dee and I found was that the group, at the meeting we were at, approved expenditures for three projects. Money was spent to count the homeless, send someone to a conference, and pay a grant writer to work on a grant for HUD money.

The social service groups represented at this meeting are applying for \$4.9 million that will be allocated in this funding cycle. The grant writer was being paid \$5,000 to incorporate the HUD “Housing First” language into the funding requests. One thing that struck me was the presence of representatives from Genesis, a foster care and group home facility, who was at the FMCoC meeting. Genesis wants some of the HUD money. The chief executive officer of Genesis and her sister are currently on trial for embezzlement. The charge is that they used their Genesis corporate credit card to buy personal items, like expensive clothes, fine dining, country club fees, and vacations. They are accused of embezzling over \$500,000 from the agency. Could ½ million been better spent providing a place for homeless people to go during the heat wave last summer? Several homeless people died that summer from the heat while the poverty pimps were basking themselves in the Cancun sun.

Former Fresno City Council member Tom Boyajian gave



This is one of Fresno’s million dollar neighborhoods

me a heads up last year that money intended for homeless people was being siphoned off from Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. CDBG money also comes from the federal government and is allocated by the city during the budget process to the appropriate social service providers. Boyajian told me that Fresno was the laughing stock of the country on this issue because not only do we not spend the CDBG money helping the homeless, we divert it to the police. In an unusually bitter irony, the money intended to help the homeless ended up going to code enforcement (a police department agency), the very group that devised the plan to bulldoze homeless encampments. A lawsuit in federal court has resulted in a preliminary injunction to prevent the city from carrying out that policy. The litigation against the city in this case is ongoing.

Even agencies funded to provide front line services to the homeless in this city are failing them. The story on page 13, of this newspaper, documents how the Rescue Mission is taking and destroying homeless people’s property. People living on public land around the Rescue Mission report that their tents, medicine, clothing, false teeth, and just about everything they own is taken by Rescue Mission staff and thrown away. One group who stood up against this injustice went into the Rescue Mission, jumped into the dumpster, and recovered a homeless person’s property. As they were leaving the group was stopped and questioned by the police. The Rescue Mission steals homeless people’s property, some brave souls recover the property, and Rev Larry Arce, chief executive officer of the Rescue Mission, calls the police. What is wrong with this picture? Shouldn’t the police be on the side of justice and defend the interests of those who have been injured?

While it is true that the City of Fresno has made changes in their homelessness policy (see the story on page 3), they still have a long way to go. Give them credit for stopping the bulldozing of homeless encampments, cleaning up trash at the encampments, and now agreeing to provide portable toilets, trash bins, and services. They have even agreed to provide a “free zone” where homeless people can put up their tents without being threatened with arrest. As important as they are, these changes in city policy will not end homelessness. More is needed.

Starting next month the Community Alliance will begin detailing a fair and achievable plan to end homelessness and bring back dignity and respect to the people living on the hard streets of Fresno. This plan will cost ½ of what taxpayers are currently spending and immediately provide housing for the homeless. Stay tuned.

“What Shining Armor Is Made Of”

By Jeremy Weir Alderson

I know I’m exaggerating, but there seems to be a sentiment in Fresno that the *Homelessness Marathon* rode into town like a knight in shining armor. As the broadcast’s founder, I love this story, but just the same, I’d like to set the record straight, because the real story is better.

In the real story, the *Marathon* staggered into town like a battered fighter barely able to answer the bell. I had always prided myself on two things: First, that even though no one got paid and we worked long hours, the Marathon crew was like family, and second, that by the time we left a town, people loved us. But that had all come to an end in Atlanta.

We had gotten to Atlanta by way of Colorado. We’d meant to originate the broadcast from Denver, but when we arrived on a planning trip, we found, to our horror, that the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless had endorsed anti-panhandling, anti-camping and anti-loitering laws, and that the head of the Colorado Coalition had personally been a one-man wrecking crew to a Denver Tent City Initiative that might otherwise have passed, leaving more than 100 people on the streets who might otherwise have had a place to live.

We fled to Atlanta, where they were fighting such laws, fully intending to denounce the Colorado Coalition and

ready appeared on the Marathon at least twice, giving updates on the Fresno situation. All I asked him was did he think homeless people would turn out if we came to town, but he was so immediately enthusiastic, that he forwarded my query to Rych Withers, the president of KFCF. Rych, too, was enthusiastic, and before long we were committed to a Fresno *Marathon*.

We knew, coming in, that Fresno was mistreating its homeless citizens, but we were surprised by what else we found. Rych, who is a broadcast engineer by trade, volunteered to do our engineering for us, and KFCF agreed to pick up the tab for our phone and electronic data lines, allowing us to stay within our tiny budget. If there is a cockroach in the tent of a Fresno homeless person, I’m sure Mike Rhodes knows it by name, and he became not just an invaluable guide but also the convener of a group of homeless advocates who could not have been more supportive.

Food Not Bombs promised to feed homeless people at the broadcast. A woman who, thus far, has asked to remain anonymous, introduced me to the late Rev. Noe Lopez of the Mexican American Baptist Church, who opened the church’s doors to the broadcast as one of the last things he did before he died. Representatives of the anarchist Coalition for Arts, Freedom and Ecology helped us with transport. Rev. Floyd Harris of the National Action Network, Sarah Hedgepeth-Harris of the Fresno Housing Alliance, Liza Apper of Fresno Catholic Worker, Jean Chipp who runs a sleeping bag project and many others all pitched in to help make the broadcast happen. Some of Mike’s homeless friends pitched in too, helping to spread the word to the people they knew. I

Fresno Takes a Step Forward

Mayor announces city will provide services for the homeless

By Mike Rhodes

Alan Autry, the mayor of Fresno, announced a new policy on April 17, 2007 in how this city will address homelessness. The mayor said portable toilets and trash bins will be installed at a site near a downtown homeless encampment. In addition, the County of Fresno will set up a trailer to provide homeless people with information about needed services like job training, health needs, education, and more. The mayor said the homeless would be able to set up their tents on this property, where they can live with dignity and respect.

The press conference came after the Fresno City Council asked the city manager’s office to install portable toilets and trash bins for the homeless. City manager Andrew Souza said he would not follow the council’s direction, even after a 5-2 vote supported the action. The item was on the agenda the following week, when city council member Jerry Duncan announced that an agreement had been reached with the mayor’s office and that a joint press conference would be held to announce the details.

The plan announced at the press conference goes significantly beyond the scope of the proposal before the city council. While the location for this “free zone” has not been chosen, it is a demand that this city’s homeless have raised repeatedly. The city’s policy has been to sweep the homeless from one spot to another, saying they should move into the Rescue Mission or the Poverello House (two homeless agencies in the downtown Fresno area). With official city documents showing that Fresno has over 8,000 homeless people, the less than 200 beds in those two homeless shelters was thought, by many, to be inadequate.

The mayor said the plan was to have the new homeless facility set up and running within 45-60 days. He challenged those at the press conference to hold him to that time frame. Autry, Duncan, and others that spoke made it clear that they did not see this as a solution to homelessness, but rather a better alternative to what they had been doing. Duncan said it was a step forward.

Fresno County Board of Supervisor president Bob Waterston said a task force would be formed to develop this plan. Autry said the group would be made up of representatives from the city, county, Poverello House, Rescue Mission, and the homeless themselves.

Jim Connell, executive director of the Poverello House, speaking at the press conference, said this project “will provide a somewhat better life for the people that are in the tent city now. But, please remember, this is only step one and part of what the task force is going to do is look for the longer term solutions.”

After the press conference, the issue was brought up again at the city council meeting. Andrew Souza said it was their intent to have the project up and running in 45-60 days and added that they still wanted to work on short term solutions to the health and safety concerns in the homeless encampments. That could mean portable toilets and trash bins will be set up near some downtown homeless encampments.

The day’s events brought the City of Fresno and the County of Fresno together to look at developing a common strategy on homelessness in this community. Almost everyone agrees that no one government entity can solve homelessness on their own. Council member Duncan said he hopes that bringing the city and county together and building a task force on homelessness will lead to this communities ability to bring more resources here to address this issue.

For a list of articles and documents about the struggle for civil liberties for homeless people in Fresno, see: <http://www.fresnoalliance.com/home/homelessness.htm>



The Rev. Floyd Harris, Jeremy Alderson, and Mike Rhodes were on the nationally broadcast Homelessness Marathon. Photo by Howard Watkins.

also the National Coalition for the Homeless for refusing to drop the head of the Colorado Coalition from its board. After all, we only have one job, and that’s to spread the news, but this didn’t sit too well with our new host, the head of the Metro Atlanta Task Force on Homelessness who also sits on the board of the NCH. We eventually reached a compromise in which we left the NCH alone and took aim only at the Colorado Coalition, but even so, the damage had been done.

Relations with our host remained frosty. She did not, exactly, go out of her way to help us, and as tensions rose with her, tensions rose within the Marathon’s five-person crew. Our budget had been depleted by the misfire in Denver, so when, on top of everything else, we had technical problems too, we didn’t have the money to achieve quick solutions.

I called it the “Murphy’s Law Marathon,” because everything that could go wrong did go wrong. Even though the broadcast, itself, came off pretty well, by the time it was over I was barely speaking to the head of the Metro Atlanta Task force, and two members of the Marathon’s inner circle had quit. The cherry on the cake came when, after I filed an honest post-grant report with our primary funders, they pulled back a bit, and we wound up with a grant for the following year that left us with less than half the meager budget we’d had in Atlanta.

That was the shape we were in when I started sending e-mails out, hoping to find a site for the next Marathon. One of those e-mails went to Mike Rhodes, who had al-

wound up calling it the “Goldilocks Marathon,” because everything was “just right.”

There is a moral to this story, and it is a moral very much at the heart of the *Marathon*. People often tell me that they feel powerless to make a difference in this country. On that score, I’m no Pollyanna, but I do like to share something I’ve learned from homeless folks. Many, many times I’ve heard them talk about the pain they’ve been caused by a scornful stare, an offhand remark or a derisive laugh. So I tell people, don’t you think a kind word or a smile could make a difference too? Haven’t we all got at least that much power?

I am sure that Fresnans feel a bit powerless too, or they wouldn’t have been so grateful for whatever we did to catalyze public awareness of the local homeless situation. But I think even the group of very decent and effectual supporters that I met underestimate themselves, just as we all tend to underestimate the good we can do for one another. They brought the *Homelessness Marathon* back to life, just as surely as if they had given it CPR, and I’m glad for this chance to tell the tale.

###

Jeremy Weir Alderson, aka Nobody, turned on, tuned in and dropped out at the height of the Vietnam War, going to work for the War Resisters League and filing for conscientious objector status before happily flunking his draft physical. He published his first article on homelessness in 1988 and broadcast the first Homelessness Marathon in 1998.

Looking For Alternative Independent Media in Fresno and the Central Valley?

read Indymedia stories online at:

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and

Listen to KFCF 88.1 FM (News at 6 PM)

Fresno Center for Nonviolence Delegation Visits Local War Profiteer

By Phil Erro

It seems everyone wants surveillance cameras. Fast food restaurant managers use them to assure that hamburgers and Freedom fries are prepared and delivered on time to waiting customers. School principals use them to detect and remove people who come into school buildings with concealed weapons. Hospital administrators can show videos of medical procedures in court for malpractice suits to prove that their staffs were not negligent. Casinos can spot black-jack cheaters. Oil companies can find leaks in oil pipelines under the snow in Alaska, using infrared technology. Networks of cameras enable port authorities to identify shipping containers and keep track of them. Cameras in shopping malls help retailers reduce shoplifting. They also help grocery stores curtail theft. A city in China uses cameras to record traffic violations and automatically issue traffic citations. City of Fresno police cars have cameras that read license plate numbers and transmit that information to databanks for pursuit of suspects' cars by other police. Fruit packing shed managers monitor sorting lines to discover bottlenecks and pilferage. Soldiers can see people behind walls and at night using thermal imaging. The demand for surveillance cameras is pervasive not only in the U.S. but around the world. In the U.S. alone, there are over 2 million video surveillance systems operating.

Clovis-based Pelco has responded vigorously to this demand. It combines biometric software with cameras to detect abnormal behavior of people arriving at shopping malls. When people get out of several cars, get together at the entrance to a building, but do not go in to shop, an alarm goes off at the security desk. Pelco's thermal imaging technology is used at power plants to find pinhole steam leaks. Pelco's license plate reading and transmitting technology is used by hundreds of police departments worldwide. Pelco has product support offices in North America, South America, Australia, Africa, Europe, and Asia that provide support 24 hours, seven days a week. Product support staff are encouraged to give "fanatical" support to customers. A quarterly company magazine called the "Pelco Press" is circulated to customers and features their letters that praise Pelco products and service. Pelco customers are part of the "Pelco family".

Customers and their employees can call Pelco Travel's

800 number 365 days a year to arrange business and leisure trips. The Pelco corporate jet can fly police chiefs, mayors, and military personnel free to Pelco's headquarters from anywhere in North America. Just as

they were represented by a union. When they said they weren't, we asked what kind of grievance procedure they had. They didn't really have a grievance procedure. Pelco workers, they intimated, kind of work

things out with their supervisors. When asked whether or not Pelco made scanners that identify people by the iris in their eye, Joshua said that technology sounded "futuristic". And he said Pelco doesn't make a camera that can see under people's clothes to see weapons, when we asked him about that. He seemed ignorant of these technologies and showed no curiosity in them. It



L to R: Joan Poss, Bill Simon, Jean Hays, Pelco Guide Joshua Flick, 911 Memorial, Phil Erro, Pelco employee (name unknown), Diane Marks, and Pelco Guide Sue Okenyi. Not shown is Howard Watkins. Photo by Howard Watkins

Pelco has "family" nation-wide and globally, local collaborators like the City of Clovis and Duncan Polytechnical High School are clearly part of the "Pelco family". The City of Clovis uses Pelco security systems free of charge in exchange for feedback on how new systems can be improved, and Duncan Polytechnical trains its high school seniors how to be video surveillance system technicians.

But the prize in the Pelco family, according to the "Pelco Press", is Pelco's employees. They are displayed in the department news section of the magazine with their pictures and biographical sketches presented in a positive and appealing way. The product support staff gets special treatment in the magazine. Entire pages are devoted to announcing Customer Service Excellence Awards (CSEA) that showcase photos of product support employees and detail their heroic deeds that went far beyond the call of duty to serve customers. There is even a section of the magazine that heralds the sacri-

appeared he never asked his Pelco supervisors challenging questions. We didn't perceive critical thinking in Joshua and Sue.

When we asked them about surveillance cameras creating a 1984 Big Brother aura, they didn't know what we meant. We asked whether there was a policy board on privacy and civil rights that reviewed new surveillance systems before Pelco put them on the market. We were trying to see if moral considerations were weighed prior to introducing intrusive spying equipment. Joshua said the company was privately held and that moral decisions were made from a "business perspective".

For her part, Sue focused entirely on 911, the Pelco memorial to New York City police and fire fighters, and her dialogues with police and firemen who were emotionally scarred by their losses of family and friends that day. She became tearful when she related the stories of first responders, some of whom were tormented by the events of 911, others who were gravely ill because of exposure to the dust at Ground Zero, and still others who were deathly ill and later died. They were heroes. They gave their mental health, their physical health, even their lives to save others from harm. They made enormous sacrifices to rescue good, innocent people from the

evil perpetrated by bad people. She quoted her responder friends saying, "Freedom is not free."

evil perpetrated by bad people. She quoted her responder friends saying, "Freedom is not free."

To protect our people from evil deeds, we must be alert. We must protect our fellow Americans from terrorist attacks. To do that we need cutting edge surveillance systems; we need security systems not yet imagined to keep abreast of the terrorist threat. These systems will be expensive, but buying them must be a priority for our airports, police, and port authorities to match the terrorist threat. We need the best surveillance systems money can buy and well trained security personnel to ferret out terrorists and their evil plots, according to Pelco logic. Pelco logic makes perfect sense to David McDonald, the biggest of six investors who own Pelco. With Pelco's annual sales in the billions, his annual income is almost certainly in the tens of millions, if not over \$100 million. If city coffers and state treasuries across America have to be drained to purchase and update Pelco security systems, that's just the way it is. If surveillance systems become a higher priority than health care and education, that's the fallout of terrorism. That David McDonald makes an immense fortune in our struggle to contain terrorism is simply collateral larceny. After all, "Freedom is not free."

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Phil Erro is a community activist concerned about our civil liberties and quality of life in the San Joaquin Valley. His email address is philperro@sbcglobal.net.

Big Brother is Watching

Budget hearings for the City of Fresno will be held in May and June. The Fresno Police Department will be requesting \$800,000 for more video surveillance equipment. You can attend the budget hearings and/or call your City Council member at (559) 621-8000 to let them know how you feel about this use of your money.

fices and selfless acts of employees who have helped Pelco personnel on other continents. They are given Internal Customer Service Excellence Awards (ICSEA). Lesser but notable heroes get the Recognition of Service That's Above Requirements (STAR) award, also exhibited in the "Pelco Press". Asian, Hispanic, and European-American customer support workers interface with Pelco employees and affiliates in Asia, South America, Europe and Africa, using their knowledge of cultures and languages of those regions to communicate effectively them and Pelco customers in distant lands. Production workers, as well as customer support employees, are ethnically and racially diverse. Production workers are organized into teams, which emphasize working together and paying attention to the quality of their products. Pelco caps, Pelco T-shirts, Pelco pens, and other awards are given to employees to boost team and company-wide spirit. In addition to building team spirit and self-esteem, Pelco pays its employees well and gives them vacation pay, 401 retirement contributions, health insurance, free travel planning, and other benefits. Indeed, Pelco workers seem to be happy, all 2,200 of them at the Clovis campus. They feel they are part of the "Pelco family" and are giving back to the community through Pelco's annual Toys for Tots drive and making communities safer around the world.

Our Fresno Center for Nonviolence (FCNV) delegation consisting of Diane Marks, Jean Hays, Bill Simon, Joan Poss, Howard Watkins, and Phil Erro asked our two tour guides, a twenty something man named Joshua and a forty something woman named Sue, if



The Fresno Police Department will install about 75 video surveillance cameras this year. 15 of those cameras have already been put up around Manchester Center. Other cameras are located in Roeding Park and in the downtown area. The FPD is seeking funding for 100 more cameras in the next fiscal year's budget. Photo by Mike Rhodes

Questions to Ask if you go on a Tour of Pelco

- Ask them about Pelco's cutting edge biometric software. What this does is look for patterns of movement. For example, at most shopping centers, consumers will drive into the parking lot, park their car, go into the mall and shop, come back out, maybe put a bag in the trunk, and leave. Biometric software will detect any deviation in that pattern. For example, if several cars drive into the parking lot and people get out and just stand around, the software would "alert" security that something unusual is going on. Perhaps union members are planning a picket line or a group has just arrived to demonstrate against sweatshop labor. Pelco's biometric software is alert to any activity not related to the business at hand - ie. shopping.
- Ask the Pelco PR person if they are developing infrared cameras. What infrared technology does is it allows the operators to see behind walls. In other words, infrared reads wavelengths that are outside of visible light - like heat. They use this technology extensively in Iraq. They are starting to use the technology in local police departments. Ask the PR person if she feels safer knowing that the police can see

what she and her husband are doing in the privacy of their home.

- A related question is the technology Pelco is developing that allows their cameras to identify you by scanning the iris in your eye. They have already put trial machines at the Fresno airport. Eventually, they will develop the technology to the point where, when you go outside, their cameras will know where you go and what you do at all times. If the police are looking for a person of interest, it won't take long to find them - since they will have thousands of cameras looking all over the city scanning the irises of everyone on the street.

In a Time of deceit telling the truth is a revolutionary act.
- George Orwell

- What else is Pelco developing? How about technology that allows their cameras to see beneath your clothing. The argument will be that they are trying to stop terrorists from carrying guns onto school grounds. But, the minimum wage security guards who will be using the equipment will probably think of other ways to amuse themselves while using the cameras.
- The Fresno Police Department is using a camera and software that scans cars on the road. What it does is

to read the license plate number and runs it through their data base. If the car is stolen or if they are looking for the owner for some reason, they are alerted to the cars whereabouts.

These are just a couple of the things Pelco is involved with. Take a few hours before your tour of Pelco and re-read George Orwell's 1984. That is exactly what Pelco is doing - they are building the infrastructure for the coming police state.

Pelco is also a war profiteer. They are making an obscene amount of money from the fear of the 9-11 attacks. It was Pelco, you may recall, that flew out hundreds of New York police and fire persons to a 9-11 celebration at their facility. They even brought out presidential candidate and ex-New York mayor Rudy Giuliani. They will show you the video of that event while you are on the tour.


Last but not least, Pelco president David McDonald is a BIG supporter of George Bush and all things Republican. McDonald has held huge fundraising events for George Bush. You might also recall that it was McDonald that was the primary force behind measure Z - the initiative that many progressive activists worked to defeat because it was moving to privatize the zoo, turn Roeding Park into a safari world, and financially benefit a few builders who would get contracts on the construction.

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Voices for Creative Non-violence

By David Smith-Ferri and Dan Yaseen

As part of a weeklong northern California tour, internationally loved humanitarian and peace activist, Kathy Kelly, will speak at St. Paul Newman Center in Fresno on Thursday, May 24th. She will report back from her recent, two-month visit to Jordan, where she lived among Iraqi refugees, and met with UN and other international NGO staff, Jordanian nationals, and American ex-pats.

Kathy brings both a wealth of factual and anecdotal knowledge accumulated during over thirty trips since 1996 to Iraq and other Middle Eastern countries, and a dynamic stage presence born of her passion for justice and her love of people. During her visits to the Middle East, Kathy is more than a journalist investigating the consequences of war; she is an ambassador of peace. "From the earliest days of Voices in the Wilderness, person-to-person diplomacy has been central to our efforts," she says. "Every encounter is an opportunity to develop a relationship, to further the creative work of nonviolence." At her presentation in Fresno, she will bring this same desire to connect with local residents.

The twin aspects of Kathy's work have been forceful opposition to unjust foreign policy and relationship-building. During the years of economic sanctions, and in the first years of the current war and occupation, Voices in the Wilderness (now re-named Voices for Creative Nonviolence www.vcnv.org) organized more than seventy-five fact-finding delegations to Iraq, bringing Westerners into direct contact with Iraqis. At the same time, "Voices" sought to resist economic sanctions and war, breaking US federal law time and again by traveling to Iraq with medicine and other humanitarian aid.

Kathy continues this work today. Over the last three months, the Occupation Project, a national effort lead by Voices for Creative Nonviolence, brought activists into the offices of elected federal officials across the country to demand the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq. Kathy was arrested several times during this period



Kathy Kelly with children in Iraq. - Peace activist Kathy Kelly said that she has been to Iraq 28 times in the last 15 years because she feels that action, not just words, are needed to make a difference. "You can't be a vegetarian between meals, and you can't be a pacifist between wars," Ms. Kelly said, quoting American pacifist Ammon Hennacy.

for refusing to leave a Senator's or Congressperson's office. She has now begun a 21-day, public fast for an end to the war.

In her presentation in Fresno, Kathy will bring the Iraqi people she has met into the room with us, sharing not only their pain, but also their strength and decency. She will discuss the consequences of war for displaced Iraqis (in Iraq and in Jordan), for Americans who suffer neglect because of our bloated military budget, and for the planet when we fail to address the major environmental problems which

fellow member of Voices for Creative Nonviolence, David Smith-Ferri, an activist poet living in Mendocino County. David has just had a book of poetry published, *Battlefield without Borders* (www.battlefieldwithoutborders.org), for which Kathy wrote a beautiful Foreword. They are using the book to raise funds for Iraqi families in Jordan, Syria, and Iraq. Kathy and David will announce the Iraq Refugee Assistance Project through which Americans can enter into an ongoing supportive relationship with Iraqi refugees in Jordan, assisting them with a variety of needs (medical, educational, emergency relief, etc.). This is an opportunity to be of great service to specific Iraqi families whose lives have been devastated by war.

In Jordan, a committee of Iraqi NGOs screens applicants and ensures that the neediest people receive help. The Middle East Cultural and Charitable Society, a not-for-profit organization in the US, will receive donations from Americans and transfer them to an international NGO working in Jordan which will oversee and monitor the dispersal of funds, ensuring their timeliness, appropriateness, etc.

This event is sponsored by Peace Fresno, Fresno Center for Nonviolence, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the Saint Paul Newman Center. For more information call 559-487-2515.

**Voices for Creative Nonviolence
Kathy Kelly & David Smith-Ferri
Thursday May 24, 2007
6:30 – 8:30 PM
at
Cardinal Newman Hall, St. Paul
Newman Center
1572 E. Barstow Ave., Fresno**

face us, in part because we are pouring our resources (intellectual as well as financial) into our military adventures. Last, she will invite people into a sustained campaign of resistance.

On this tour, Kathy is accompanied by her friend and

Relax at Peace Camp!

By Ken Schroeder

Peace Camp, held at Camp Peaceful Pines from Friday, June 22 through Sunday, June 24, 2007 offers an opportunity for peace-minded families to gather in a relaxed mountain setting away from the routine and rush of daily life. Workshops, hikes, campfire, singing, talent show, nature activities, sharing in camp chores and eating delicious meals together shape our time. And we leave newly committed to continuing the work for peace and justice.

Peace activist and poet David Smith-Ferri will be our guest presenter. David was in Iraq just prior to the war and recently visited Iraqi refugees in Amman, Jordan.

"David Smith-Ferri's creative intelligence focuses on insidious forces of war, forces that often cause people to shrink in fear. He appeals to our best instincts, urges us to overcome fear and dares to offer trust and friendship as the basis for creating better social structures. In this sense, his poetry is utterly useful and necessary..." (Kathy Kelly, Nobel Peace Prize nominee).

Smith-Ferri, Poet Laureate of Ukiah, CA, is a winner of the Janice Farrell Poetry Prize. His newly released book is *Battlefield Without Borders, Iraq Poems*. His poetry and essays have been published in *Z Magazine*, *Yes! Magazine*, *The Other Side Magazine*, the print edition of *CounterPunch* and numerous online publications. For more information visit <http://www.battlefieldwithoutborders.org/index.html>.

About Camp Peaceful Pines

At the 6,200 foot elevation in the Stanislaus National

Forest on the Clark Fork of the Stanislaus River, Camp Peaceful Pines is located about 25 miles above Pinecrest off Hwy 108. Travel time from Modesto is about 2 -1/2 hours. The camp features kitchen and bathing facilities, rustic cabins and platform tents (unheated) and a cabin for those with special needs.

Camp registration includes meals, snacks, sleeping space, insurance and leadership costs. Partial financial aid and day-rates also available. To keep costs low, campers share in meal preparation, general camp cleanup, program administration, and other work. Campers provide their own bedding. A nurse will be on duty.

The camp opens with supper on Friday, June 22nd. Campers are welcome to arrive any time after 2:00 p.m. on Friday to enjoy unscheduled free time. Camp closes following lunch and cleanup on Sunday, June 24th. No pets, firearms, or firecrackers are permitted, nor are smoking, alcohol or other drugs. Directions to the camp, camp schedule and a medical release for minor children will be mailed to participants shortly before camp.



A group of 2006 Peace Campers rest after a long but exhilarating hike to Iceberg Meadows near Camp Peaceful Pines. Photographer unknown.

Download an application from <http://stanislausconnections.org/2007/PCamp%2007.pdf> or call Richard Harvey, 209-571-3384. Early registration, before June 3rd, entitles registrants to a \$10.00 per person discount.

Peace Camp is organized by the Modesto Peace/Life Center in collaboration with Tuolumne County Citizens for Peace.

What You Can do to Stop the War

Peace Fresno will hold its monthly demonstration at the Peace Corner on Friday, May 4, from 4:30-6:30 pm. Please join us to say "This War Must End Now!"

On Thursday, May 24, 6:30-8:30 pm, Peace Fresno and St Paul Newman Center will host an evening with Kathy Kelly and David Smith-Ferri, members of Voices for Creative Nonviolence. The event will be held in the new Cardinal Newman Hall at the St Paul Newman Center, 1572 E Barstow Ave. The parking entrance is on 9th street.

David Smith-Ferri is the Poet Laureate of Ukiah, CA and will read from his recently released book of poetry *Battlefield Without Borders* with many of the poems written in Iraq and in Amman, Jordan over the last eight years.

Kathy Kelly is a three-time Nobel Peace Prize nominee who has taught in Chicago area High Schools and Community Colleges and been active in the Catholic Worker Movement. In 1996 she formed *Voices in the Wilderness* to support the Iraqi people during the sanctions and orga-

nized 70 delegations to visit Iraq between 1996 and through the beginning of the war. She left Iraq on April 19, 2003 but has returned three times, as recently as May 2006. She has also worked with Iraqi refugees in Amman, Jordan and was there as recently as February of this year.

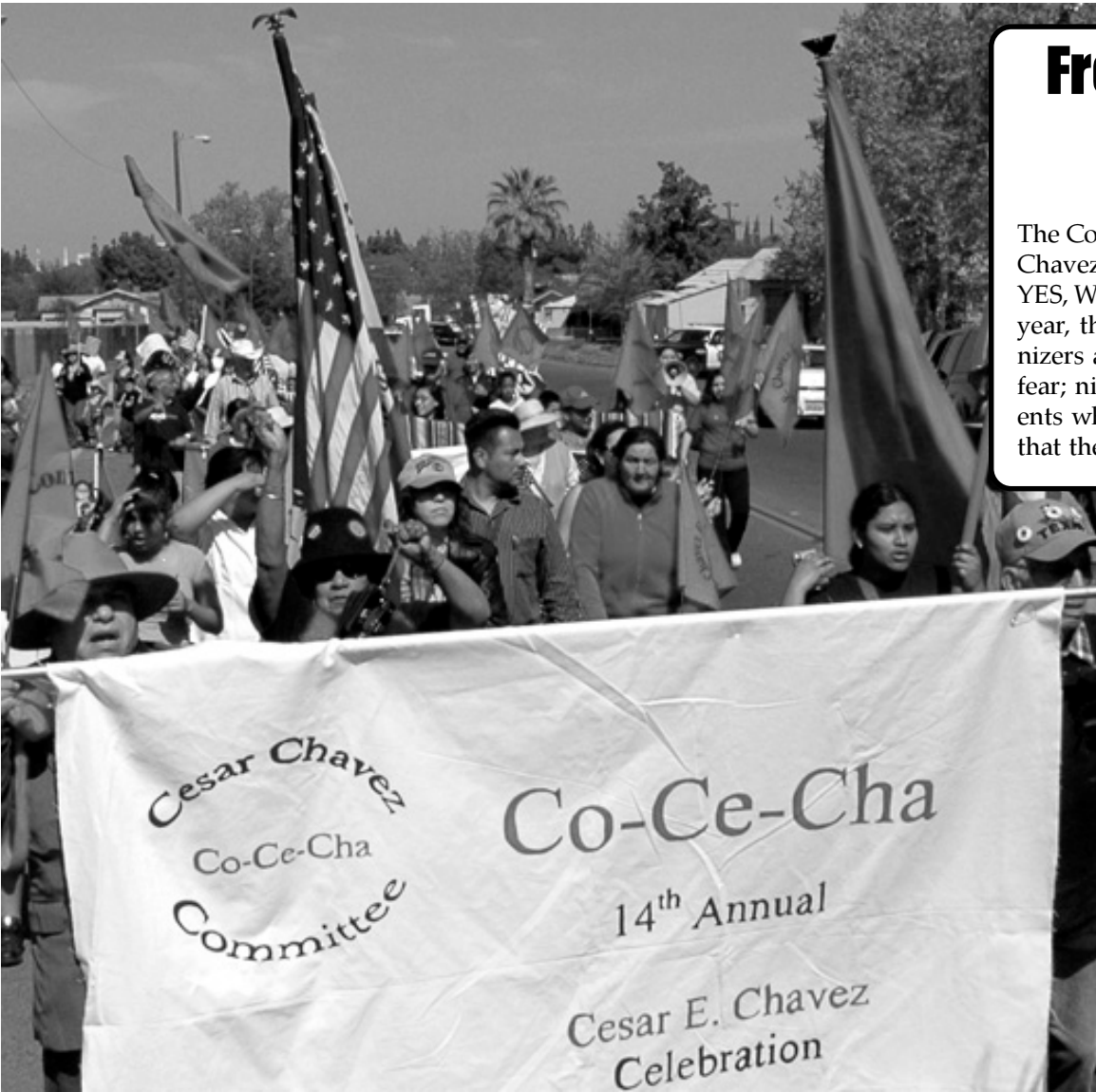
Her group was charged with violating the UN/US sanctions for bringing "medicine and toys" to Iraq. She will speak about her experiences with the Iraqi people.

This is a fundraiser for Iraqi refugees. Donations will be accepted and *Battlefield Without Borders* will be offered for sale with \$12 of the \$14 purchase price going to refugees. For more information see www.battlefieldwithoutborders.org, www.vcnv.org, www.peacefresno.org, or leave a message at 487-2515. This event is also cosponsored by The Fresno Center for Non-violence and W.I.L.P.F.

Bill Simon
President, Peace Fresno



Camille Russell and Genie Baranoff at Peace Fresno rally in January 2007. Photo by Mike Rhodes



Fresno March Honors the Life of Cesar Chavez

The Committee Cesar E. Chavez CO-CE-CHA held the 14th Annual Cesar Chavez Celebration on Saturday, March 31, 2007. Y TODAVIA SE PUEDE / YES, WE STILL CAN continue the fight for justice for all people. This year, the theme of the march was to stop all anti-immigrant raids. Organizers and participants at the march said the inhumane raids are causing fear; nightmares in many children who will be separated from their parents who face the risk of being deported daily. Demonstrators demanded that the inhumane raids stop NOW.



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While the past years of Republican monopoly on government have marked a golden era for the industry, those days appear to be ending. Just a month into the new Congressional term, leading Democrats were announcing investigations of runaway war contractors. Representative John Murtha, chair of the Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Defense, after returning from a trip to Iraq in late January, said, "We're going to have extensive hearings to find out exactly what's going on with contractors. They don't have a clear mission and they're falling all over each other." Two days later, during confirmation hearings for Gen. George Casey as Army chief of staff, Senator Jim Webb declared, "This is a rent-an-army out there." Webb asked Casey, "Wouldn't it be better for this country if those tasks, particularly the quasi-military gunfighting tasks, were being performed by active-duty military soldiers in terms of cost and accountability?" Casey defended the contracting system but said armed contractors "are the ones that we have to watch very carefully." Senator Joe Biden, chair of the Foreign Relations Committee, has also indicated he will hold hearings on contractors. Parallel to the ongoing investigations, there are several bills gaining steam in Congress aimed at contractor oversight.

Occupying the hot seat through these deliberations is the shadowy mercenary company Blackwater USA. Unbeknownst to many Americans and largely off the Congressional radar, Blackwater has secured a position of remarkable power and protection within the US war apparatus. This company's success represents the realization of the life's work of the conservative officials who formed the core of the Bush Administration's war team, for whom radical privatization has long been a cherished ideological mission. Blackwater has repeatedly cited Rumsfeld's statement that contractors are part of the "Total Force" as evidence that it is a legitimate part of the nation's "warfighting capability and capacity." Invoking Rumsfeld's designation, the company has in effect declared its forces above the law — entitled to the immunity from civilian lawsuits enjoyed by the military, but also not bound by the military's court martial system. While the initial inquiries into Blackwater have focused on the complex labyrinth of secretive subcontracts under which it operates in Iraq, a thorough investigation into the company reveals a frightening picture of a politically connected private army that has become the Bush Administration's Praetorian Guard.

Blackwater Rising

Blackwater was founded in 1996 by conservative Christian multimillionaire and ex-Navy SEAL Erik Prince — the scion of a wealthy Michigan family whose generous political donations helped fuel the rise of the religious right and the Republican revolution of 1994. At its founding, the company largely consisted of Prince's private fortune and a vast 5,000-acre plot of land located near the Great Dismal Swamp in Moyock, North Carolina. Its vision was "to fulfill the anticipated demand for government outsourcing of firearms and related security training." In the following years, Prince, his family and his political allies poured money into Republican campaign coffers, supporting the party's takeover of Congress and the ascension of George W. Bush to the presidency.

While Blackwater won government contracts during the Clinton era, which was friendly to privatization, it was not until the "war on terror" that the company's glory moment arrived. Almost overnight, following September 11, the company would become a central player in a global war. "I've been operating in the training business now for four years and was starting to get a little cynical on how seriously people took security," Prince told Fox News host Bill O'Reilly shortly after 9/11. "The phone is ringing off the hook now."

Among those calls was one from the CIA, which contracted Blackwater to work in Afghanistan in the early stages of US operations there. In the ensuing years the company has become one of the greatest beneficiaries of the "war on terror," winning nearly \$1 billion in noncovert government contracts, many of them no-bid arrangements. In just a decade Prince has expanded the

Moyock headquarters to 7,000 acres, making it the world's largest private military base. Blackwater currently has 2,300 personnel deployed in nine countries, with 20,000 other contractors at the ready. It has a fleet of more than twenty aircraft, including helicopter gunships and a private intelligence division, and it is manufacturing surveillance blimps and target systems.

In 2005 after Hurricane Katrina its forces deployed in New Orleans, where it billed the federal government \$950 per man, per day — at one point raking in more than \$240,000 a day. At its peak the company had about 600 contractors deployed from Texas to Mississippi. Since Katrina, it has aggressively pursued domestic contracting, opening a new domestic operations division. Blackwater is marketing its products and services to the Department of Homeland Security, and its representatives have met with California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. The company has applied for operating licenses in all US coastal states. Blackwater is also expanding its physical presence inside US borders, opening facilities in Illinois and California.

Its largest obtainable government contract is with the State Department, for providing security to US diplomats and facilities in Iraq. That contract began in 2003 with the company's \$21 million no-bid deal to protect Iraq proconsul Paul Bremer. Blackwater has guarded the two subsequent US ambassadors, John Negroponte and Zalmay Khalilzad, as well as other diplomats and occupation offices. Its forces have protected more than ninety Congressional delegations in Iraq, including that of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. According to the latest government contract records, since June 2004 Blackwater has been awarded \$750 million in State Department contracts alone. It is currently engaged in an in-

Jeremy Scahill, the author of this article, will be in North Fork on Saturday, May 5 at 6 PM in a benefit for KFCF 88.1 FM. For more information call 559 233-2221 or go to: www.kfcf.org

tensive lobbying campaign to be sent into Darfur as a privatized peacekeeping force. Last October President Bush lifted some sanctions on Christian southern Sudan, paving the way for a potential Blackwater training mission there. In January the Washington, DC, representative for southern Sudan's regional government said he expected Blackwater to begin training the south's security forces soon.

Since 9/11 Blackwater has hired some well-connected officials close to the Bush Administration as senior executives. Among them are J. Cofer Black, former head of counterterrorism at the CIA and the man who led the hunt for Osama bin Laden after 9/11, and Joseph Schmitz, former Pentagon Inspector General, who was responsible for policing contractors like Blackwater during much of the "war on terror" — something he stood accused of not doing effectively. By the end of Schmitz's tenure, powerful Republican Senator Charles Grassley launched a Congressional probe into whether Schmitz had "quashed or redirected two ongoing criminal investigations" of senior Bush Administration officials. Under bipartisan fire, Schmitz resigned and signed up with Blackwater.

Despite its central role, Blackwater had largely operated in the shadows until March 31, 2004, when four of its private soldiers in Iraq were ambushed and killed in Falluja. A mob then burned the bodies and dragged them through the streets, stringing up two from a bridge over the Euphrates. In many ways it was the moment the Iraq War turned. US forces laid siege to Falluja days later, killing hundreds of people and displacing thousands, inflaming the fierce Iraqi resistance that haunts occupation forces to this day. For most Americans, it was the first they had heard of private soldiers. "People began to figure out this is quite a phenomenon," says Representative David Price, a North Carolina Democrat, who said he began monitoring the use of private contractors after Falluja. "I'm probably like most Congress members in kind of coming to this awareness and developing an interest in it" after the incident.

What is not so well-known is that in Washington after

Falluja, Blackwater executives kicked into high gear, capitalizing on the company's newfound recognition. The day after the ambush, it hired the Alexander Strategy Group, a K Street lobbying firm run by former senior staffers of then-majority leader Tom DeLay before the firm's meltdown in the wake of the Jack Abramoff scandal. A week to the day after the ambush, Erik Prince was sitting down with at least four senior members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, including its chair, John Warner. Senator Rick Santorum arranged the meeting, which included Warner and two other key Republican senators — Appropriations Committee chair Ted Stevens of Alaska and George Allen of Virginia. This meeting followed an earlier series of face-to-faces Prince had had with powerful House Republicans who oversaw military contracts. Among them: DeLay; Porter Goss, chair of the House Intelligence Committee (and future CIA director); Duncan Hunter, chair of the House Armed Services Committee; and Representative Bill Young, chair of the House Appropriations Committee. What was discussed at these meetings remains a secret. But Blackwater was clearly positioning itself to make the most of its new fame. Indeed, two months later, Blackwater was handed one of the government's most valuable international security contracts, worth more than \$300 million.

The firm was also eager to stake out a role in crafting the rules that would govern mercenaries under US contract. "Because of the public events of March 31, [Blackwater's] visibility and need to communicate a consistent message has elevated here in Washington," said Blackwater's new lobbyist Chris Bertelli. "There are now several federal regulations that apply to their activities, but they are generally broad in nature. One thing that's lacking is an industry standard. That's something we definitely want to be engaged in." By May Blackwater was leading a lobbying effort by the private military industry to try to block Congressional or Pentagon efforts to place their forces under the military court martial system.

But while Blackwater enjoyed its new status as a hero in the "war on terror" within the Administration and the GOP-controlled Congress, the families of the four men killed at Falluja say they

were being stonewalled by Blackwater as they attempted to understand the circumstances of how their loved ones were killed. After what they allege was months of effort to get straight answers from the company, the families filed a ground-breaking wrongful death lawsuit against Blackwater in January 2005, accusing the company of not providing the men with what they say were contractually guaranteed safeguards. Among the allegations: The company sent them on the Falluja mission that day short two men, with less powerful weapons than they should have had and in Pajero jeeps instead of armored vehicles. This case could have far-reaching reverberations and is being monitored closely by the war-contractor industry — former Halliburton subsidiary KBR has even filed an amicus brief supporting Blackwater. If the lawsuit is successful, it could pave the way for a tobacco litigation-type scenario, where war contractors find themselves besieged by legal claims of workers killed or injured in war zones.

As the case has made its way through the court system, Blackwater has enlisted powerhouse Republican lawyers to defend it, among them Fred Fielding, who was recently named by Bush as White House counsel, replacing Harriet Miers; and Kenneth Starr, former Whitewater prosecutor investigating President Clinton, and the company's current counsel of record. Blackwater has not formally debated the specific allegations in the suit, but what has emerged in its court filings is a series of legal arguments intended to bolster Blackwater's contention that it is essentially above the law. Blackwater claims that if US courts allow the company to be sued for wrongful death, that could threaten the nation's war-fighting capacity: "Nothing could be more destructive of the all-volunteer, Total Force concept underlying U.S. military manpower doctrine than to expose the private components to the tort liability systems of fifty states, transported overseas to foreign battlefields," the company argued in legal papers. In February Blackwater suffered a major defeat when the Supreme Court declined its appeal to hear the Falluja case, paving the way for the state trial — where there would be no cap on damages a jury could award — to proceed.

Congress is beginning to take an interest in this potentially groundbreaking case. On February 7 Representative Henry

Continued on page 9

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Waxman chaired hearings of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee. While the hearings were billed as looking at US reliance on military contractors, they largely focused on Blackwater and the Falluja incident. For the first time, Blackwater was forced to share a venue with the families of the men killed at Falluja. "Private contractors like Blackwater work outside the scope of the military's chain of command and can literally do whatever they please without any liability or accountability from the US government," Katy Helvenston, whose son Scott was one of the Blackwater contractors killed, told the committee. "Therefore, Blackwater can continue accepting hundreds of millions of dollars in taxpayer money from the government without having to answer a single question about its security operators."

Citing the pending litigation, Blackwater's general counsel, Andrew Howell, declined to respond to many of the charges levied against his company by the families and asked several times for the committee to go into closed session. "The men who went on the mission on March 31, each had their weapons and they had sufficient ammunition," Howell told the committee, adding that the men were in "appropriate" vehicles. That was sharply disputed by the men's families, who allege that in order to save \$1.5 million Blackwater did not provide the four with armored vehicles. "Once the men signed on with Blackwater and were flown to the Middle East, Blackwater treated them as fungible commodities," Helvenston told lawmakers in her emotional testimony, delivered on behalf of all four families.

The issue that put this case on Waxman's radar was the labyrinth of subcontracts underpinning the Falluja mission. Since November 2004 Waxman has been trying to pin down who the Blackwater men were ultimately working for the day of the ambush. "For over eighteen months, the Defense Department wouldn't even respond to my inquiry," says Waxman. "When it finally replied last July, it didn't even supply the breakdown I requested. In fact, it denied that private security contractors did any work at all under the [Pentagon's contracting program]. We now know that isn't true." Waxman's struggle to follow the money on this one contract involving powerful war contractors like KBR provides a graphic illustration of the secretive nature of the whole war contracting industry.

What is not in dispute regarding the Falluja incident is that Blackwater was working with a Kuwaiti business called Regency under a contract with the world's largest food services company, Eurest Support Services. ESS is a subcontractor for KBR and another giant war contractor, Fluor, in Iraq under the Pentagon's LOGCAP contracting program. One contract covering Blackwater's Falluja mission indicated the mission was ultimately a subcontract with KBR. Last summer KBR denied this. Then ESS wrote Waxman to say the mission was conducted under Fluor's contract with ESS. Fluor denied that, and the Pentagon told Waxman it didn't know which company the mission was ultimately linked to. Waxman alleged that Blackwater and the other subcontractors were "adding significant markups" to their subcontracts for the same security services that Waxman believes were then charged to US taxpayers. "It's remarkable that the world of contractors and subcontractors is so murky that we can't even get to the bottom of this, let alone calculate how many millions of dollars taxpayers lose in each step of the subcontracting process," says Waxman.

While it appeared for much of the February 7 hearing that the contract's provenance would remain obscure, that changed when, at the end of the hearing, the Pentagon revealed that the original contractor was, in fact, KBR. In violation of military policy against LOGCAP contractors' using private forces for security instead of US troops, KBR had entered into a subcontract with ESS that was protected by Blackwater; those costs were allegedly passed on to US taxpayers to the tune of \$19.6 million. Blackwater said it billed ESS \$2.3 million for its services, meaning a markup of more than \$17 million was ultimately passed on to the government. Three weeks after the hearing, KBR told shareholders it may be forced to repay up to \$400 million to the government as a result of an ongoing Army investigation.

It took more than two years for Waxman to get an answer to a simple question: Whom were US taxpayers paying for services? But, as the Falluja lawsuit shows, it is not just money at issue. It is human life.

A Killing on Christmas Eve

While much of the publicity Blackwater has received stems from Falluja, another, more recent incident is attracting new scrutiny. On Christmas Eve inside Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone, an American Blackwater contractor allegedly shot and killed an Iraqi bodyguard protecting a senior Iraqi official. For weeks after the shooting, unconfirmed reports circulated around the Internet that alcohol may have been involved and that the Iraqi was shot ten times in the chest. The story then went that the contractor was spirited out of Iraq before he could be prosecuted. Media inquiries got nowhere — the US Embassy refused to confirm that it was a Blackwater contractor, and the company refused to comment.

Then the incident came up at the February 7 Congressional hearing. As the session was drawing to a close, Representative Kucinich raced back into the room with what he said was a final question. He entered a news report on the incident into the record and asked Blackwater counsel Howell if Blackwater had flown the contractor out of Iraq after the alleged shooting. "That gentleman, on the day the incident occurred, he was off duty," Howell said, in what was the first official confirmation of the incident from Blackwater. "Blackwater did bring him back to the United States."

"Is he going to be extradited back to Iraq for murder, and if not, why not?" Kucinich asked.

"Sir, I am not law enforcement. All I can say is that there's currently an investigation," Howell replied. "We are fully cooperating and supporting that investigation."

Kucinich then said, "I just want to point out that there's a question that could actually make [Blackwater's] corporate officers accessories here in helping to create a flight from justice for someone who's committed a murder." The War on the Hill

Several bills are now making their way through Congress aimed at oversight and transparency of the private forces that have emerged as major players in the wars of the post-9/11 period. In mid-February Senators Byron Dorgan, Patrick Leahy and John Kerry introduced legislation aimed at cracking down on no-bid contracts and cronyism, providing for penalties of up to twenty years in prison and fines of up to \$1 million for what they called

Contractors have provided the Bush Administration with political cover, allowing the government to deploy private forces in a war zone free of public scrutiny, with the deaths, injuries and crimes of those forces shrouded in secrecy.

"war profiteering." It is part of what Democrats describe as a multi-pronged approach. "I think there's a critical mass of us now who are working on it," says Congressman Price, who represents Blackwater's home state. In January Price introduced legislation that would expand the Military Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act of 2000 (MEJA) to include all contractors in a war zone, not just those working for or alongside the armed forces. Most of Blackwater's work in Iraq, for instance, is contracted by the State Department. Price indicated that the alleged Christmas Eve shooting could be a test case of sorts under his legislation. "I will be following this and I'll be calling for a full investigation," he said.

But there's at least one reason to be wary of this approach: Price's office consulted with the private military lobby as it crafted the legislation, which has the industry's strong endorsement. Perhaps that's because MEJA has been for the most part unenforced. "Even in situations when US civilian law could potentially have been applied to contractor crimes, it wasn't," observed P.W. Singer, a leading scholar on contractors. American prosecutors are already strapped for resources in their home districts — how could they be expected to conduct complex investigations in Iraq? Who will protect the investigators and prosecutors? How will they interview Iraqi vic-

tims? How could they effectively oversee 100,000 individuals spread across a dangerous war zone? "It's a good question," concedes Price. "I'm not saying that it would be a simple matter." He argues his legislation is an attempt to "put the whole contracting enterprise on a new accountable footing."

This past fall, taking a different tack — much to the dismay of the industry — Republican Senator Lindsey Graham, an Air Force reserve lawyer and former reserve judge, quietly inserted language into the 2007 Defense Authorization, which Bush signed into law, that places contractors under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), commonly known as the court martial system. Graham implemented the change with no public debate and with almost no awareness among the broader Congress, but war contractors immediately questioned its constitutionality. Indeed, this could be a rare moment when mercenaries and civil libertarians are on the same side. Many contractors are not armed combatants; they work in food, laundry and other support services. While the argument could be made that armed contractors like those working for Blackwater should be placed under the UCMJ, Graham's change could result in a dishwasher from Nepal working for KBR being prosecuted like a US soldier. On top of all this, the military has enough trouble policing its own massive force and could scarcely be expected to monitor an additional 100,000 private personnel. Besides, many contractors in Iraq are there under the auspices of the State Department and other civilian agencies, not the military.

In an attempt to clarify these matters, Senator Barack Obama introduced comprehensive new legislation in February. It requires clear rules of engagement for armed contractors, expands MEJA and provides for the DoD to "arrest and detain" contractors suspected of crimes and then turn them over to civilian authorities for prosecution. It also requires the Justice Department to submit a comprehensive report on current investigations of contractor abuses, the number of complaints received about contractors and criminal cases opened. In a statement to The Nation, Obama said contractors are "operating with unclear lines of authority, out-of-control costs and virtually no oversight by Congress. This black hole of accountability increases the danger to our troops and American civilians serving as contractors." He said his legislation would "re-establish control over these companies," while "bringing contractors under the rule of law."


Democratic Representative Jan Schakowsky, a member of the House intelligence committee, has been a leading critic of the war contracting system. Her Iraq and Afghanistan Contractor Sunshine Act, introduced in February, which bolsters Obama's, boils down to what Schakowsky sees as a long overdue fact-finding mission through the secretive contracting bureaucracy. Among other provisions, it requires the government to determine and make public the number of contractors and subcontractors (at any tier) that are employed in Iraq and Afghanistan; any host country's, international or US laws that have been

broken by contractors; disciplinary actions taken against contractors; and the total number of dead and wounded contractors. Schakowsky says she has tried repeatedly over the past several years to get this information and has been stonewalled or ignored. "We're talking about billions and billions of dollars — some have estimated forty cents of every dollar [spent on the occupation] goes to these contractors, and we couldn't get any information on casualties, on deaths," says Schakowsky. "It has been virtually impossible to shine the light on this aspect of the war and so when we discuss the war, its scope, its costs, its risks, they have not been part of this whatsoever. This whole shadow force that's been operating in Iraq, we know almost nothing about. I think it keeps at arm's length from the American people what this war is all about."

While not by any means a comprehensive total of the number of contractor casualties, 770 contractor deaths and 7,761 injured in Iraq as of December 31, 2006, were confirmed by the Labor Department. But that only counts those contractors whose families applied for benefits under the government's Defense Base Act insurance. Independent analysts say the number is likely much higher. Blackwater alone has lost at least twenty-seven men in

Continued on page 10

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Iraq. And then there's the financial cost: Almost \$4 billion in taxpayer funds have been paid for private security forces in Iraq, according to Waxman. Yet even with all these additional forces, the military is struggling to meet the demands of a White House bent on military adventurism.

A week after Donald Rumsfeld's rule at the Pentagon ended, US forces had been stretched so thin by the "war on terror" that former Secretary of State Colin Powell declared "the active Army is about broken." Rather than rethinking its foreign policies, the Administration forged ahead with plans for a troop "surge" in Iraq, and Bush floated a plan to supplement the military with a Civilian Reserve Corps in his January State of the Union address. "Such a corps would function much like our military Reserve. It would ease the burden on the armed forces by allowing us to hire civilians with critical skills to serve on missions abroad when America needs them," Bush said. The President, it seemed, was just giving a fancy new title to something the Administration has already done with its "revolution" in military affairs and unprecedented reliance on contractors. Yet while Bush's proposed surge has sparked a fierce debate in Congress and among the public, the Administration's increasing reliance on private military contractors has gone largely undebated and underreported.

"The increasing use of contractors, private forces or as some would say 'mercenaries' makes wars easier to begin and to fight — it just takes money and not the citizenry," says Michael Ratner, president of the Center for Constitutional Rights, which has sued contractors for alleged abuses in Iraq. "To the extent a population is called upon to go to war, there is resistance, a necessary resistance to prevent wars of self-aggrandizement, foolish wars and in the case of the United States, hegemonic imperialist wars. Private forces are almost a necessity for a United States bent on retaining its declining empire."

With talk of a Civilian Reserve Corps and Blackwater promoting the idea of a privatized "contractor brigade" to work with the military, war critics in Congress are homing in on what they see as a sustained, undeclared escalation through the use of private forces. "'Surge' implies a bump that has a beginning and an end," says Schakowsky. "Having a third or a quarter of [the forces] present on the ground not even part of the debate is a very dangerous thing in our democracy, because war is the most critical thing that we do."

Indeed, contractor deaths are not counted in the total US death count, and their crimes and violations go undocumented and unpunished, further masking the true costs of the war. "When you're bringing in contractors whom the law doesn't apply to, the Geneva Conventions, common notions of morality, everything's thrown out the window," says Kucinich. "And what it means is that these private contractors are really an arm of the Administration and its policies."

Kucinich says he plans to investigate the potential involvement of private forces in so-called "black bag," "false flag" or covert operations in Iraq. "What's the difference between covert activities and so-called overt activities which you have no information about? There's no difference," he says. Kucinich also says the problems with contractors are not simply limited to oversight and transparency. "It's the privatization of war," he says. The Administration is "linking private war contractor profits with warmaking. So we're giving incentives for the contractors to lobby the Administration and the Congress to create more opportunities for profits, and those opportunities are more war. And that's why the role of private contractors should be sharply limited by Congress."

Digg!

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Jeremy Scahill, an independent journalist who reports frequently for the national radio and TV program Democracy Now!, has spent extensive time reporting from Iraq and Yugoslavia. He is currently a Puffin Writing Fellow at The Nation Institute.

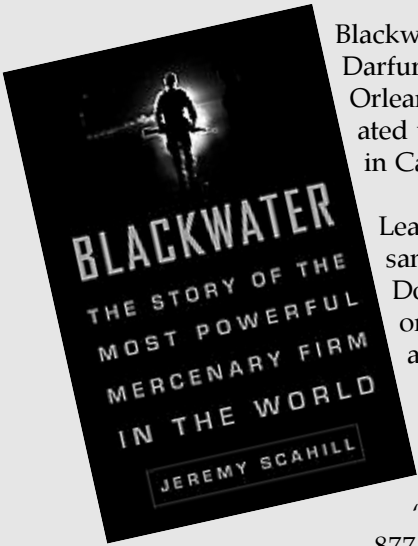
This article first appeared in April 2, 2007 edition of The Nation magazine. For more information about The Nation, see: www.thenation.com

Jeremy Scahill in Benefit for KFCF 88.1 FM

Jeremy Scahill, part of the Democracy Now team who's just authored "Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army" will be in North Fork in a benefit for KFCF 88.1 FM.

It's time for the 4th Annual North Fork Town Hall event to raise funds for KFCF and the Fresno Free College Foundation. This year, we're honored to welcome Jeremy Scahill, part of the Democracy Now team who's just authored "Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army."

Recently interviewed on both Democracy Now and Flashpoints, Scahill has produced an in-depth expose of one of the greatest financial beneficiaries of the "global war on terror," a private company with close ties to the White House, military and intelligence agencies and the right-wing conservative movement. It currently has over 2,300 private soldiers in nine countries through contracts it has received from the Bush administration, with many of the troops hired from the ranks of former military officers in countries with terrible human rights records.



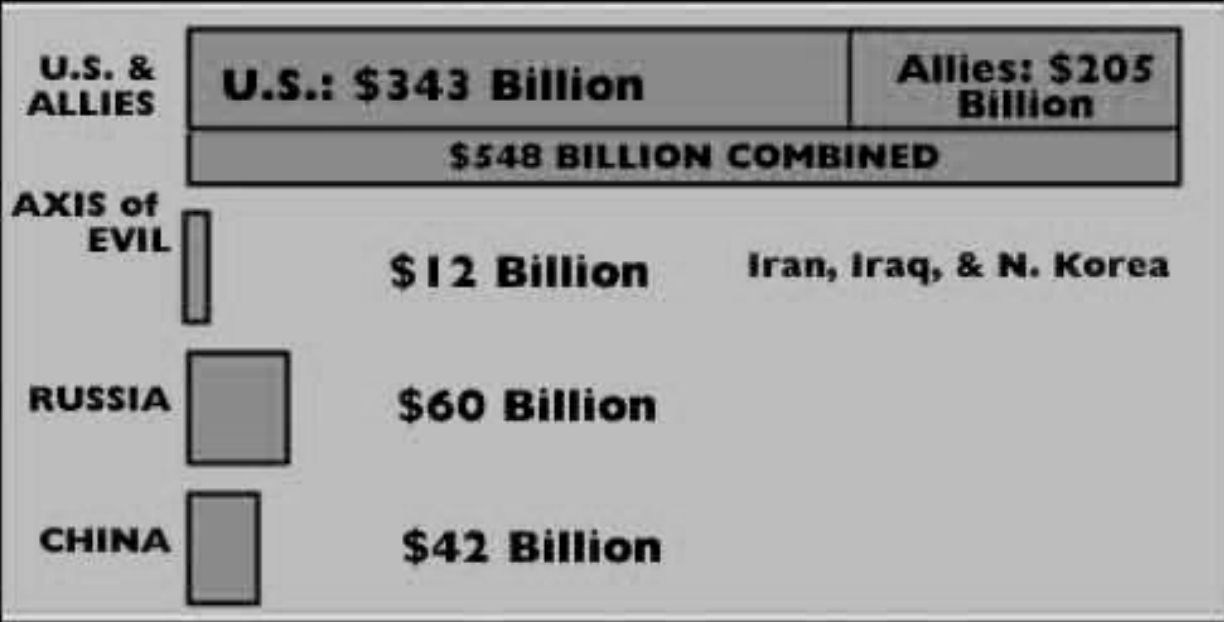
Blackwater is currently lobbying to secure a contract to deploy troops in the Darfur region of the Sudan, and it was one of the first forces deployed to New Orleans after Katrina hit, sent in to "stop looters." Blackwater recently negotiated with Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to respond to natural disasters in California.

Learn more about this war profiteer and help keep KFCF on the air at the same time. The event is Saturday, May 5th, 2007 at North Fork Town Hall. Doors open at 6 p.m. We'll also be serving a home-made soup dinner, and one of our own local bands will be providing music. Tickets for the event are \$8 in advance, \$10 at the door, plus an additional \$5 for the dinner.

You can help by coming to the event yourself and by telling others about it (a flyer is enclosed which can be copied and put up in your local communities). Tickets are available through the KFCF office at 233-2221, at "The Movies" in the Tower District, or by calling Sue Kern in North Fork at 877-5800.

KFCF also needs volunteers the day of the event to help prepare and serve the dinner, to make desserts, and to help with setting up the hall. If you can volunteer, call Sue or Hansel at 877-5800.

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The History of May Day (2 of 2)

By Paul Jackson

Last month’s Alliance presented the concept of May Day as a day to build community alliance. This article focuses on May Day as a day specifically about the labor movement and its ongoing struggles for justice.

Because employment is the means by which most people participate within the economic system—whether partaking in a fair share of its fruits or suffering injustice at the hands of the few who control it—the spirit of May Day focuses on the needs of workers and is concerned with their working conditions. For that reason, 400 labor representatives who, at a meeting held in France in 1889, saw in May Day an opportunity, not merely to reach large audiences of picnickers, but to live out the highest hopes of the day through the labor movement. Since the large May Day marches of the early 20th century, the labor movement has, of course, been most closely associated with the day.

The First International—composed mostly of anarchists or left-libertarians meeting in France in 1889—declared May Day to be a holiday for workers throughout the world. To these radicals, May Day was a model of the general strike, the prelude to social revolution. To them, the day would serve as an opportunity to empower the working class to wage a struggle for a radically free society—free of the roles of boss, employer, manager, or private property owner.

At a different meeting held in 1904, known as the Second International, labor representatives set an agenda for May Day, an agenda that was more concrete but also envisioning class struggle: Gaining control of the workplace, fully establishing the eight-hour workday, and achieving peace in the world. The Second International urged workers to take the day off, specifically to demonstrate their support for these demands. Although this May Day platform has always had the same three planks, it is best known for the eight-hour day. Pointing to the possible success of May Day actions, historians have noted that during the late 19th century, the average workday began a trend of shortened from 10 or more hours to 8 hours.

Then, in the early 20th century, some of the notable events on May Day were as follows:

* In California’s Central Valley, the struggle for the rights of unskilled labor began in 1910, as the I.W.W. waged the historic Fresno Free Speech Fight (at or near I and Mariposa Streets, next to which a public stage has since been built on Fulton Mall). Thus, the very organization that had claimed May Day for the labor movement waged its first free speech fight in California here in Fresno. The I.W.W. did so as the first-ever attempt, by anyone, to organize the Valley’s unskilled labor, which in those years was also agricultural labor performed by immigrant workers. The I.W.W. struggled and won the right to speak on the public streets of Fresno the following year. (For further info, please visit the Alliance’s web site, <http://www.fresnoalliance.com/iww/>

* Later that same year, on May Day, at least 60,000 people marched through the streets of New York City. As the A.F.L. had already abandoned May Day in favor of the September Labor Day, this huge march was organized by socialists, many of them inspired by Eugene Debs.

* In 1916, workers in the Central Valley, though not so populous as N.Y.C., did hold their own. On May Day of that year, 60 miners in Porterville successfully struck for a pay raise of 50 cents per day.

Throughout history, whenever war has been declared, it has involved large groups of people, bringing death and destruction to many. Wars politicize people, including workers—who, after both world wars, became more deeply involved in the labor movement. Thus, on May Day 1917—in a truly historic move—bakers in Chicago struck for higher wages, shorter working hours, and the right to approve the selection of their foremen.

American workers struck in several other major cities in the years following WWI, eventually curbed or crushed by President Woodrow Wilson’s “Red Scare,” just as the anti-“communist” drive by Joseph McCarthy followed some years WWII. In both cases, the post-WWI “Red Scare” and the post-WWII McCarthyism, work-

ers were red-baited or accused, usually without justification, of participating in Marxism-Leninism or another such offensive, violent worldwide revolutionary movement. Nowadays, hints of similar tactics appear to be taking shape as some of those who struggle for social justice are baited as “terrorists.”

May Day, at least through the first half of the 20th century, May Day proved to be a powerful tool in the hands of the working class. But, to anyone who has due regard for historical facts, the day can represent no real threat by any armed or offensive movement or any foreign power. The true character of May Day is international in scope but, by no means, Marxist-Leninist. Although red baited and much maligned as a custom of leftist dictatorship, May Day took root in China in 1919—long before the violent dictator Mao came to power.

Perhaps the second-greatest event in the history of May Day occurred among British coal miners in 1926, five years after an unsuccessful strike. On what became known as “Black Friday,” they had been locked out and forced to accept terrible working conditions. Then, on May Day 1926, the British miners who remembered that lockout, now one million strong, caused a virtu-



ally total shutdown of coal production and transportation throughout the U.K. Serving as an annual reminder of their past struggles, May Day was wielded effectively by those British miners, who possessed a long-term perspective on their struggles for justice in the workplace. In 1927, India began recognizing May Day, beginning with celebrations in Madras, Calcutta, and Bombay. References to either Marx or Lenin, both atheists, have been hard to find in that profoundly spiritual country. Indeed, Marxism-Leninism is foreign to the true spirit of May Day, which spread to Brazil, Ireland, and, yes, even Russia as early as 1891!

Perhaps the greatest event in the history of May Day occurred in 1935 when automobile workers struck General Motors, thereby gaining significant advances in the pursuit of the rights of American industrial workers. G.M. workers are often blamed nowadays for the untoward consequences of these advances (as if G.M. managers signed contracts under duress); but their historic 1935 strike stands out as the greatest May Day event yet.

Meanwhile, in two ways, the labor movement in California’s Central Valley, as any rural area, was out of synch with industrial workers. First, the day is inconvenient for farm workers, who pick and pack when Mother Nature and the farmer decide it is necessary to do so. Those who organized what is the greatest agricultural strike up to that point in U.S. history, the Central Valley’s 1933 cotton strike. They did so by passing a resolution to strike on May Day, although the strike was to take place at the peak of the harvest.

Second and far more importantly, farm workers were largely overlooked in the New Deal legislation, which treated them as non-workers. Not before another generation passed and the U.F.W. began its long struggles,

under the inspiring leadership of Chavez, would farm workers eventually win either unemployment insurance or workers’ compensation.

Still, non-agricultural workers in the Central Valley continued recognizing May Day as the true labor day, in concert with workers throughout the world, at least until the crush of McCarthyism in the 1950s. The writers know of two examples of such recognition: In the first, occurring on May Day 1937, the Fresno Cooks and Waiters successfully struck for a pay raise of 50 cents per day pay. In the second, 1,200 gold miners in Grass Valley struck on May Day 1941, demanding a five-day week for the same pay that they were receiving for six days’ work.

Attempts by certain groups in our society either to upstage May Day (“Raisin Day”) or transform the day into something “conservative,” whether patriotic or pious, have only generated confusion. These attempts, however, have not altered the day’s significance in the minds of those who sympathize with labor and who understand U.S. labor history. The awful memory of the Haymarket massacre influenced the New York Knights of Labor and the state legislature to declare a “Labor Day” in September instead of May. Arguably, this legislative move, backed by the New York Knights of Labor, may have doubled the annual recognition given to labor in this country. However, it has often distracted attention away from the U.S. labor movement, whose “official” day is out of step with the rest of the world.

In 1955, Eisenhower declared May Day as “Loyalty Day”; and in 1960, the American Bar Association declared it as “Law Day.” Unlike U.S. Labor Day, these were no mishaps but direct assaults on May Day as Labor Day—assault for which the broad-based, “liberal” movement known as McCarthyism was responsible. For, since the formation of the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.) in 1905, May Day has no longer been supported by the American Federation of Labor. Efforts to celebrate May Day have fallen on the shoulders of the I.W.W. and other left organizations. Considering the persecution under the Alien Sedition Act, followed by President Wilson’s Red Scare, and finally McCarthyism, it is a wonder that May Day has survived as a tradition in this country as well as it has.

Both “Loyalty Day” and “Law Day” imply that May Day was somehow mistakenly named Labor Day, and that it therefore needed a new name. Both of these new names imply a need exists to be more loyal or more lawful instead of advancing the concerns and interests of labor. Both also imply that labor’s concerns and interests cannot or should not be advanced in the usual May Day fashion; and that to do so would be disloyal or unlawful. Casting such suspicion on May Day, the official designations are obvious attempts to undermine the labor movement, which should look with pride to the historic May Day strikes, successfully advancing the eight-hour day. The designations are also intended to obliterate May Day, leaving only U.S. Labor Day in September and U.S. labor out of step with labor in other countries throughout the world.

In recent years, a few religious organizations have styled May Day as a “National Day of Prayer.” Whether one believes in the power of prayer or not, this name for May Day, like the others, imposes a limitation on the true significance of the day, which is a day devoted to the cause of justice for workers throughout the world. Perhaps, if this name were intended to refer to the prayers for social justice said by César Chavez, Martin Luther King, Jr., or Malcolm X, it would be more fitting for the day. However—while the friends and family of striking workers may, if religiously inclined, want to pray for their well-being during the strike—a “National Day of Prayer” would appear to be based on a vision lacking any potential labor action and, therefore, quite misplaced.

For, as the First International declared, May Day is an international holiday for all workers—of all ethnic groups, genders, orientations, beliefs, and whether religiously inclined or not!

###

Paul Jackson, the author of this series on May Day, dedicates the articles to Keith Jackson (who is not related to Paul). Keith is a union worker in the heavy construction industry and a regular volunteer for Fresno Food Not Bombs.

Paul Jackson is a freelance writer and volunteer for Fresno Food Not Bombs. He can be reached at pjackson32@hotmail.com

Word on the Street

by Wendy Russell

Fresno has over 8,000 homeless people. How do the homeless affect you? What do you think should be done to reduce or eliminate the number of homeless people on the streets - if anything?

Carrying a cup of coffee, my laptop and a few magazines I walked through our gardens to a flower-surrounded bench. “The perfect place to write!” I said out loud to the two schnauzers and one cat that attended me. I stepped and the animals jumped over the bright orange electrical extension cord snaking from our back door, running along the low wall up into the apricot tree and across to the fence where it connected to its mate stretching a few hundred feet from the neighboring house to ours.

This month’s Question lands right in my nourished neighborhood. Ever since the city began harassing and shoving out the homeless from downtown encampments scattered under freeway overpasses and empty lots, some of these displaced persons have moved into other neighborhoods. One friend told me she can’t open her front window curtains anymore because a homeless man has taken to sleeping between the hedge and a fence in front of her Clovis home. Right now I have a grocery cart out in the street next to my mailbox while its owners visit the house that we electrify. The occupants are not bad people, but through circumstances of life they just don’t function like others. They will hurry over to help me unload a pick-up truck full of lumber or rake up leaves for the old couple across the street but they can’t keep appointments, save money or hold jobs. My neighbors lovingly cared for their elderly ‘grampa’ until he died, but can’t take care of business like paying bills so once he was gone everything fell apart for that household.

A huge percentage of the homeless are Viet Nam veterans fallen through the cracks of our healthcare system and into the streets of hopelessness. Another large chunk are mentally ill pushed out of care facilities shut down for lack of funding (as our military budget grew bigger and bigger), beginning back in the Reagan years. Many are drug addicts and alcoholics controlled by the search for, and the acquiring of, their particular drug of choice which numbs their various mental and physical pains. Some are folks like you and me - but one hardship too many lost them their place in normal society - a reminder that many among us are only separated from those homeless by one or two paychecks, random happenstance or a few poor choices. And lot of the homeless are just a different type of free soul wanting to live unencumbered by all the stuff that most of us just can’t live without. You might even remember that prominent head of a local hospital who - after an illustrious career and family life - next tumbled into life on the streets chronicled in the Fresno Bee years ago - despite loved ones trying to help him make different choices.



My friend JENNA BONET dropped by before I left for River Park. I asked Jenna our Question because I remembered an experience of hers. She was surprised she had told me because she doesn’t talk about this to many people:

“One sunset about three years ago I drove to a place by the tracks, just north of the Rescue Mission in the last crimson glow of Christmas Eve. As I pulled up, a group of people came towards me and I asked the first two women, “You want a jacket? I got some stuff here. I have baby stuff too.” The word spread quickly and suddenly there were about 45 homeless people around my car reaching in and grabbing. I had one hundred dollars worth of coloring books, donuts, juices and milks - it was the last of my Christmas money - and lots of donated and gleaned stuff like blankets, scarves and about 40 coats for people of all sizes. I also had some colorful stuff, like a bright purple hooded jacket, hot pink sweat pants that a tall man grabbed, exclaiming, ‘I look GOOD in these!’ - plus some big hooded t-shirts from resorts; ‘I just caught the biggest fish in Cabo!’ or ‘I just got back from Paris!’ emblazoned on the fronts so that as everyone tried stuff on they all looked like tourists. Just then, a city police cruiser pulled up right beside me, blocking my car so that I couldn’t leave, saying, ‘You all move on now’ to the homeless crowd - even calling some by name - just as I ran out of stuff. Then he said to me, ‘This is really dangerous, you shouldn’t have done that. There are some people here who would have taken advantage of you; taken your keys, grabbed your purse or - you!’ He continued, ‘There’s already been two other cars here today that dropped off stuff for them.’ Shocked, I said to him, ‘Only two other people thought to do this? It’s Christmas Eve.’ I was astounded at that. We all have way too much to share, *not* to (share)! And I am so grateful for Poverello House, the Rescue Mission, Marjorie Mason Center, the Evangel Home and others, who daily contribute to the welfare of the community.” Jenna laughed, “It made a quick party and I enjoyed what I saw in my rear view mirror as I drove away. And I have never been in danger doing that. I have done it before: I love to fill up my car and then to give it all away - I feel like a rolling piñata - you don’t have to hit me though!” Jenna laughed again, then became serious, “I do have some great concerns about the vets returning home, remembering what happened to my generation; we really want to embrace and support them, both physically and emotionally. My latest favorite bumper sticker is “Humankind - Be Both.” It’s about creating hope. We need mentoring and social services. We need jobs for everyone, where each person can shine and be the most they can be. That’s one military term I do like; ‘Be all you can be.’”

I stopped next at Whitie’s Pet Shop to buy worms for my ornate box turtles, where LINDA R. was purchasing feeder fish for her 20” Gar and I ended up asking her this month’s Question:



Fresno has over 8,000 homeless people. How do the homeless affect you? What do you think should be done to reduce or eliminate the number of homeless people on the streets - if anything?

“No, I am not affected by the homeless and yes, I think something should be done about it. They deserve a place to live as well. Some of these vacant buildings downtown could be remodeled and the homeless could live in them.”

In another part of the store the owner, John Schaffer, also a drummer, hesitantly told me how he had donated lots of energy bars that went into the pockets of many warm coats collected by bassist Kevin Hill, before Kevin distributed them to the homeless on Christ-

mas Day near the Rescue Mission. He told me not to mention his small part in it - but I am.

The next morning I headed towards River Park with a small detour to Ambiance, a clothing shop - where I got an answer to our Question from the young saleswoman, MICAH WUHL:



“They annoy and bug me. I can not be sure of their agenda - are they really homeless, or people that want to get money to feed drug habits? I don’t really know the real reason they are on the streets. Not that they should be arrested but maybe they could find another place to live. You could live in one of the best neighborhoods and homeless people are right around the corner making the community not as appealing to newcomers that might invest here. I’m not sure I want my tax money to be used to build shelters. When you see homeless you want to give them money but you don’t want to feel sorry for them - however they ended up like that, it’s their problem.”

Out at River Park, where he was waiting for the movie, Shooter, to start, I asked MIKE O’NEIL our Question:

Fresno has over 8,000 homeless people. How do the homeless affect you? What do you think should be done to reduce or eliminate the number of homeless people on the streets - if anything?



“The obvious is that I am grateful that I’m not homeless! A lot of it is blind luck - in a lot of cases it’s not choices, it’s, well - shit happens. You never know what is around the corner. Some situations are results of decisions made, but I do not want to say because I am not walking in those shoes - yet.” Mike paused a moment, then mumbled something about how his friends that saw this would question him bringing up God, but he strongly felt we should remember that, “There - but for the grace of God - go I.”

I drove home thinking about that. About Jenna giving

away carloads of goodies every Christmas Eve - even using her last hundred dollars to do so. I know her - she is not financially secure and yet she gives what she has - which led my mind to Jesus -would he be called a homeless person? I chuckled to myself as I parked and walked up the path to a neighbor’s house. If you know me, then you know I go on vibes not logic sometimes. I call this my Feminine Intuition and I obey that Inner Voice when I hear it, which is what led me to this house around the block, where I asked FRED this month’s Question:

Fresno has over 8,000 homeless people. How do the homeless affect you? What do you think should be done to reduce or eliminate the number of homeless people on the streets - if anything?

“I know a lot of people are homeless through no fault of their own. Nevertheless, I am not as generous hearted as I used to be, after providing a home to someone who desperately needed one for two months. I met him pushing a shopping cart of his belongings, going door to door looking for yard work, so I offered him some. He had a very badly abscessed arm. He said he could get it taken care of but had no place to recuperate so I allowed him to stay here. During the course of the next two months he managed to steal quite a lot, including most of my power tools, my lawn mower, any loose piles of change around the house and -” Here I interrupted him to ask how he lasted two months? Didn’t you notice sooner? But Fred answered me, “He was a



Fred

very good talker. He said he was lending them to his father to use. He’d been picked up for drug possession several times and went through the whole sequence of meetings but then he went back to the drugs. Finally I

Holy War Against the Homeless

By Mike Rhodes

Homeless people living near the Rescue Mission in downtown Fresno say the chief executive officer of that organization, Larry Arce, is directing his staff to destroy their property. Lori, a homeless woman told me “we were at the doctor’s office over at the Poverello House when someone came in and said the “disciples” from the Rescue Mission were throwing our stuff away.” She said her husband immediately went to the Mission to ask Arce for his property back. Included in the property taken was Lori’s husband’s heart medicine. “Arce told my husband ‘oh well, the city told me to do that’ and that there was nothing we could do about it,” Lori said.

In another incident that happened last summer, Rescue Mission disciples directed by Rev. Arce, targeted an area known as The Hill, which is a homeless encampment just south of the Rescue Mission. It is public property. Using a fork lift and dumpster, Rescue Mission crews moved through the area throwing away everything in their path. Bryan Apper, who works with the Saint Benedict Catholic Worker, said he tried later that day, to recover one homeless woman’s property. Apper said “we were concerned for Peggy because they had taken her new red tent that a church group had just given her. Peggy is schizophrenic, she is barred from staying at Naomi House (a nearby homeless shelter for women) and would literally have no place to sleep that night.”

Apper, his wife Liza from the Catholic Worker, and Ashley from Food Not Bombs decided to go and retrieve Peggy’s property from the Rescue Mission dumpster. They found the tent and Peggy’s other property in the dumpster. As they were driving away they were stopped by the police. Rev. Arce had called the police to complain that they were trespassing on his property and stealing items from the Mission dumpster.



Rev. Larry Arce and Captain Garner telling a homeless man that he has to “move on.”

The Rescue Mission “clean up” crews struck again earlier this year. Big Sue, who lives on The Hill, said the homeless people in that encampment had set up Christmas ornaments over the holidays. The Fresno Bee even ran a nice feel good story with a photo about how the homeless had set up the display. Big Sue said that Rescue Mission disciples came out a couple of days after Christmas and stole the display. Big Sue said “after that I put up a sign of a big heart on the fence and the words ‘love each other’ and ‘forgive’ but they came out and stole those too.” She said the big heart symbolized how her heart had been broken when they stole the ornaments.

Rev. Arce repeatedly tells anyone who questions his actions that he has an agreement with the police and the City of Fresno to keep G street clean. Curious about this agreement, I submitted a California Public Records Act request to the City of Fresno and the police department asking for a copy of the document authorizing the Rescue Mission to take and destroy homeless peoples property. City officials tell me, after a thorough search of their records, that no such document exist. The City of Fresno Public Information Office asked Arce if such a

had to force him out of the house, to leave or I’d call the police. We need very sophisticated social workers that can identify those that will benefit from getting help, and the others - I wished I knew.”

In the Fresno Bee there was an article about two restrooms and a trash dumpster that our City Council had planned to add to the homeless encampment downtown near H Street and the Monterrey overpass but it was vetoed by the Mayor’s office, hoping to avoid any decision that looked like acceptance of that ‘illegal’ homeless camp. First, I thought of the huge-elephant-in-the-room joke. Then I remembered a time back in San Jose, California, on a busy main thoroughfare split by city transit tracks, where my husband and I were visiting a businessman in his office. As we sat at his desk, over us hung television screens showing two views of his parking lot, located under the building at ground level. Sitting there, we watched as a homeless man came into the darkened area between the wall and our friend’s car, dropped his tattered pants, squatted and had a bowel movement right before our eyes. Our friend said it happened all the time. The man then stood up and urinated, at the same time turning to talk to buddies out of sight behind the car, which caused him to - well, you get the picture.

Are two toilets even enough?

document existed. Patti Miller, Public Affairs Administrator, wrote in an email - “Rev. Arce assured me as well that to his knowledge, no such document exists.”

The City of Fresno is under a court order to stop taking and immediately destroying homeless people’s property. During the hearing in federal court, Rev Arce gave testimony on the City of Fresno’s behalf. He supported the city policy of bulldozing homeless encampments and said that he directs Rescue Mission staff to destroy homeless people’s property if it is left on the sidewalk, on G street, or nearby the Mission. In sworn testimony in federal court, when asked if he has thrown away shopping carts with homeless peoples property in them, he



Big Sue lives in the homeless encampment known as The Hill. She has had her property taken by Rescue Mission staff.

answered “yes, sir.” When asked if he has gone up and down G street doing that, Arce answered “yes, sir.”

With friends like these. . .



Rescue Mission Disciples are seen here taking property from a homeless encampment called The Hill.



If you are homeless and leave anything of value on the public sidewalk, on G street, or nearby the Rescue Mission, the Rev. Arce says he will throw it away.



QUEER EYE

Model Drug Treatment Program Destroyed at Fresno State

by Dan Waterhouse

When former Fresno State team doctor William Kennedy wrote former men's basketball player Terry Pettis on July 11, 2006, he said, "I want to thank you for revealing the inappropriate behavior of your coach, AD (athletic director) and University President. They did you no good by allowing your addiction to go untreated. You are a victim in this and I feel very sad for you as well as your teammates," he indirectly revealed how badly the Student Athlete Assistance Program was failing.

The letter came to light during discovery in former women's basketball coach Stacy Johnson-Klein's lawsuit against Fresno State. Johnson-Klein is suing the university for unlawful termination and harassment. The court case also revealed Fresno State chose to destroy a program that had worked well for 20 years for the sake of public relations.

Kennedy told the attorneys that the original priorities of the assistance program were to help chemically impaired student athletes while at the same time "protecting the integrity of the athletic program." He said the program, once a national model according to him, was initially designed to first educate, then get troubled

student athletes into treatment. He said priorities shifted in the early 2000s to "being competitive and solving financial issues."

Kennedy explained the university moved away from the medical model to a punitive program. He added that it was shifted from an internal committee to the coaches to enforce. "Coaches aren't in a position to know how to deal with it," Kennedy explained. "And, they know they have the power and they have to use it, and they're so conflicted because they've got to win, they've got to produce, they've got to move forward, that it's really unfair to the coach to do that. You're either going to get a coach who says 'boys will be boys' or another coach who wants to throw them off the team."

In the case of Pettis, now-disgraced former head coach Ray Lopes allegedly took the "boys will be boys" path until Pettis' behavior became too publicly embarrassing. Pettis told attorneys during a deposition late last summer that he failed at least 10 drug tests while he was a Bulldog that the university knew about. According to Pettis, "my freshman year, we were winning. At that time that's all that mattered." Because "winning" was all that mattered to the Athletic Department, just

about anything went, Pettis said. He told the lawyers under oath that men's basketball coaches knew players were using a masking agent. Pettis claimed a member of the coaching staff provided the masking agent.

The committee was disbanded sometime after 2002, according to Kennedy, after it "appeared that either Scott Johnson (then-athletic director) or the university president, were allowing student athletes to participate when the rules clearly stated they couldn't...And that information became available to a source that I don't know that was informing the Fresno Bee. There was a leak in essence. And, so they felt that too many people knew about this, and so they disbanded a committee that had been in force for—since 1984, that comprised coaches and administrators, doctors and therapists. They felt that somebody on the committee was leaking it."

Kennedy explained, "the function of the committee was to sort of keep everyone honest and to try to work through issues as a collaborative effort, and that was disbanded. And, they moved more toward dealing with it on an individual basis, more of a disciplinary type of thing. Although—and it depended on the sport. If you were a wrestler, you were punished. If you were a basketball player, you weren't, that sort of thing."

In August 2004, Kennedy wrote to a university staffer: "I will not participate in drug testing if the test results can be used to enforce team/coach rules. It is obvious that coaches have so much personal issues at stake; the well-being of the athlete will be secondary to that of the coaches (sic) desire to be competitive....If the university and athletic department want to allow coaches to impose there (sic) own rules, then I feel it would be unethical for me to be part of a program that is not directed to 'student assistance'."



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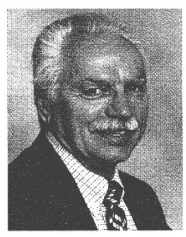
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FCNV Page Editor: Brandon Hill

The Stone Report

By Richard Stone

Channel 24 News called us, soon after the Virginia Tech shootings, for a comment about gun control. The reporter arrived in a rush, politely explaining he still had to go crosstown to interview a gun shop owner. I asked why they bother with this futile exchange of opposing viewpoints, saying I'd be glad to accompany him and talk WITH the owner. He declined the offer, but did stop for a second to reflect, agreeing that might be more interesting.

But back to reality. In the thirty seconds of the interview they aired, they did include two important points: 1) that no private citizen needs attack weapons; 2) that the discussion of "gun control" is a small piece of the broader issue of our national propensity for violence to attain goals and settle disputes.

They didn't include other equally important points we made. That "gun advocates" speak within a context of making a profit more than securing legitimate safety goals. That media contribute to the problem, magnifying isolated and unrelated incidents of violence while not reporting regularly on the circumstances that allow much larger numbers of casualties: poverty in the inner city; the insistence on the right (of might) to occupy other countries (e.g. U.S. in Iraq, Israel in Palestine); lack of minimal health care to billions of people worldwide; etc.

Also we questioned allowing guns to people without having them pass tests comparable to driving tests, without comparable record-keeping of ownership, without sufficient background checks. And Jean Hays, who happened by our office during the interview, later added the question: "Why the emphasis on 2nd Amendment rights, when all the others are being taken away?"

Later in the day, a different response came to mind. If these strict-constructionist conservatives want to uphold the original intent of the framers, they are empowered only to insist on the right for citizens to own muskets. I might agree to that.

Save the Date!

FCNV 15th Anniversary

Saturday, June 23, 2007

First Congregational Church

2131 N Van Ness

Doors Open 5:30, Dinner 6:00,

Speaker-7:00

Tickets \$25, Speaker Only -\$10

Join us as we celebrate our 15th Anniversary with a rousing talk by Medea Benjamin entitled, Stop the Next War Now!

Our 15th anniversary celebration will also include our Fine Art Raffle featuring the work of local artists; Polly Victor, Dick Haas, Avigdar Adams, and Saul Eskin (Raffle tickets \$20), Way of Peace Awards, music by Jemmy Bluestein, as well as a delicious buffet prepared by Food Not Bombs.

Tickets available at the FCNV, The Movies(233-8346), and Patrick's Music(222-4244).

For More information call 23-PEACE

The FCNV is a Host Organization

to many non-profit groups in the Fresno community.
We provide a safe meeting place and media resources
to the groups using our facility, including:

- Youth Link
- Rondalla
- Project: Male
- Central California Institute
- CVPPAC
- Peace Fresno
- WILPF
- FACTS
- CCCJC
- Community Alliance

Stir it Up

with host Richard Stone; Wednesday, May 9th- 3 p.m. - KFCF 88.1 FM. Guest - TBA, Topic - "Get on the Bus" program which enables children to see imprisoned parents.

Second Wednesday Film Series

THE IRON WALL

This documentary warns that a contiguous and viable Palestinian state is becoming no longer possible, and that the chances for a peaceful resolution of the conflict are slipping away. *The Iron Wall* features interviews with prominent Israeli and Palestinian peace activists and political analysts, including Jeff Halper, Akiva Eldar, Hind Khoury, and others. Also included are eye-opening interviews with Israeli settlers and soldiers, and Palestinian farmers.

"The best description of the barrier, its routing and impact is shown in the film *The Iron Wall*."

- President Jimmy Carter

Wednesday, May 9th

Noon & 7 pm @ the FCNV

Potluck @ 6:30 / Discussion to follow evening showing

For more information call: 237-3223



WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM

WILPF Fresno, PO Box 5114, Fresno, CA 93755

Witney Grandi, Guest Editor, <wgrandi@csufresno.edu>

Graphic by Lincoln Cushing

On Saturday April 14, 2007 at Fresno States Satellite Student Union the Peace Runway Show took place. The event was held to bring awareness to the campus community, and the local community about the militarization of the fashion industry and society as a whole. Along with the Runway show, tabling from various community organizations took place, along with an art exhibit. WILPF was asked to table at this event and model in the fashion show. Many WILPF members became involved in the Runway show representing Women in Black, CODE Pink, costume creation, and others read poetry. I became apart of the Peace Runway project as the WILPF intern because of my interest in the merging of these two very distinct worlds.

This Runway show was like no other but the goal being to test your values and beliefs and our hope being that you walk away questioning what you believe. With images of war, destruction, displacement, and military fashion flashing on a big screen, our hope was to bring new light to the war and how the military has affected our society in all aspects. The beginning of the show was all about the Runway with models walking to fast paced Runway music and showing fashion that everyday people are wearing but all was camouflage and military attire. As children took the runway playing with toy guns and images of toy solders flashing in the background, the realization of militarization became more real. Models wore budget skirts that showed how much of our money goes to the support of the military and war. This was a creative way to capture the audience's attention and show where our tax dollars are going. Throughout the show the "Terror Alert" levels went up staring at green and ending in red, the highest level. As the alert went up so did the skirts on the models, starting with a conservative long skirt and outfit and ending in a red very short and revealing outfit. CODE Pink took the stage demanding attention not just from the audience but from Mr. George Bush; his look alike. The WILPF intern took the stage in a pink slip to give Mr. George Bush the "pink slip" as the CODE pink women yelled "you're fired George!"

As the show winded down and the poetry was read, songs were sung, and models exited the runway, out came Women in Black to demonstrate a silent vigil. For five minutes, we asked for silence. The silence was one of the most profound moments in the runway as women stood there with signs dressed in all black protesting. Images of Women in Black flashed on the screen in the back of women all over the world uniting in a silent vigil. All in all this entire event was a success for all

involved and all who attended. The feedback showed overwhelming support and success. Our success was not measured in how many people attended or how many participated but if we affected one life that night, then all the hard work and planning was worth every minute of the time spent. Thank you to everyone who gave their precious time, modeled, attended, tabled, read poetry, hair, make-up, gave their art, and all those who truly supported this project; together we made a difference and will forever continue affecting people's lives. In the word of Margaret Mead "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Final Farewell

Jennie Pisor said goodbye to the world February 15. She was 96 years old and had been a music teacher and community volunteer in the Fowler area a good part of her life. Her daughter, Jacqui Pilar was president of Fresno WILPF around 1981, and Jennie joined WILPF at that time, attended meetings and took part in events. She was a woman of peace and good will, and we were happy to have her with us.

Ellie Bluestein
ellieb28@sbcglobal.net



Women in Black participate in the Peace Runway Project. Photo by Mike Rhodes

Poetry Corner

By Richard Stone

A belated thanks to poet and artist Dixie Salazar for this submission, which has sat in my folder for several months. (Go visit Dixie and fellow artist Richard Silva at their studio near Van Ness/Inyo, especially on an art hop evening.)

ALTAR WITH WAD OF GUM, DEAD ROACH, BENT KEY CARD AND BROKEN CHOPSTICK SPATTERED WITH COBALT PAINT

Behold the pageants that unfold
behind the studios nightly
the trek over and around
asphalt bubbles, a constellation
of crushed glass, the paltry battles
and invisible feasts.
Behold the abandoned file cabinets,
the holy swivel of chairs—
the panoramic view of one-way alleys
where the forty-hour weeks have collapsed
into a soiled cup of small change.
a red neon cross winks boldly
above the Radisson, vibrates
with the aphrodisiac radiance

of martinis and unobtainable key cards.
Soft Vermeerish light spills
down the peachy comfort of rooms
well sound-proofed against
the rattle of squeaky shopping carts.
Between the Corridor 21 and the Fig Tree
Gallery
a dark lump curls around a smaller lump
sleeping off the side effects of the moon.
A Chinese take-out carton yawns
and sinks into dreams of lost
concubines and profit margins,
the stangled stringy theory of bubblegum.
Lost tribes of yellow eyes
blink in the darkness that beats
wild and smooth and fills
with the slobber of neon,
the sleepy spell of well-tuned antennae,
the nocturnal grind of survival.
When the crime copters stop chopping
the air to bits, the parking meters
and faceless clocks run down—dregs of chow
mein, Ripple
and mock orange perfume the night.
Behold the banquet of faceless guests
how the night serves up endless courses
of battered dream, how it expands
to hold whatever still trembles—
still breathes.

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CLOVIS DEMOCRATIC CONNECTION

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Democratic Visibility”**

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7 - 9 PM

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The State of Cycling in Fresno, 2007

By David Lighthall

May is Bike Month! The Fresno County Bicycle Coalition is currently gearing up, along with a number of bike clubs and our allies. So check out the Community Calendar for the specifics and make plans to attend at least one of the events. As Chair of the Coalition, I would also like to give everyone a short update as to the current state of cycling in Fresno, along with a bit of editorializing.

In practice, the Coalition is the political arm of the larger Fresno County cycling community. Leadership in the Coalition is embodied in our Council, and I will highlight some of their accomplishments. Personified by over a decade of dedicated advocacy by Nick Paladino, we are actively pushing governments within the county to expand the network of bike lanes in roadways. A recent accomplishment, spearheaded brilliantly by Mark Stout and Nick, was a major increase in funds devoted to bike lanes by the new Measure C.

Now for the bad news: Cycling in Fresno County can be a deadly endeavor due to a lack of bike lanes, clueless to outright hostile drivers, and inadequately trained and protected cyclists. I know of at least three fatalities in the past 12 months, two of which involved young cyclists in Clovis. The Coalition has been frustrated with the lack of details about these accidents forthcoming from local law enforcement agencies. We need to push them harder and work with law enforcement more closely. To that end, Lori Cherry is currently working with the Clovis Police Dept. to inten-

When I see an adult on a bicycle, I do not despair for the future of the human race.

~H.G. Well

sify bike safety education among the youth of Clovis. The Dept. has recently stepped up and started ticketing helmetless youth. Another at-risk population is the low-income residents of Fresno for whom bicycles provide an affordable means to get around. Very few use helmets and rear flashers—most probably cannot afford them. Bottom line on safety: Being properly equipped and educated about where to ride and which roads to avoid, cycling in Fresno County is just as safe as being behind the wheel of your car, if not safer. I'd be happy to answer related questions at drighthall@yahoo.com.

In case you are not already there, think about how cycling might enrich your life. I recently encountered a cyclist at the Millerton Store. He had this beautiful carbon fiber Bianchi but what really struck me was the fact that he had lost 60 lbs. in one year of cycling. He put it simply: "I don't want to die at 50." Road cycling too scary? Consider joining our great local mountain bike clubs, Central California Off-Road Cyclists and the local chapter of Luna Chixs.

Back to Bike Month: Most of the events are held during Bike Week (May 13—19), culminating with the Fresno Cycling Festival at Woodward Park. Thursday the 17th is Bike to Work Day—check out our website for details. And finally, consider joining the Coalition, we would love to have you. The Coalition meets at 6:30 pm, third Thursday of the month at the Sequoia Brewery on Olive.

Related Links:

<http://www.fresnocyclingfestival.com/index.htm>
<http://www.fresnobike.org/>
<http://www.lunabar.com/community/lunachix.cfm?documentid=387&location=3,3>
<http://www.ccorc.com/06/>



Members of Fresno State's Team Bulldog won first place in the medium-sized teams category during the inaugural Bike to Work Day Corporate Challenge. Photo by Randy Vaughn-Dotta

Bike Month in Fresno

May 5

CBC Winery Ride to Engelmann and Nonini Wineries. Meet at Java Wava coffee shop on Van Ness at 10:30am, bring your lunch.

May 13 Sunday before Bike to Work Week

Free bike safety check ups at participating local bike shops.

May 17 Bike to Work Day Corporate Challenge

Fresno County bike commuters are set to compete as teams representing local employer-based organizations -various times all over Fresno County! Free rides for bike commuters on FAX and Clovis Transit!

May 17 Bike to Work Day Downtown Coffee Commute

8am Manchester Mall (Sears parking lot) to Kern St. Coffee - Edison High School students, downtown commuters, elected officials and civic leaders, with Bicycle Police escort.

May 19 Bicycle Festival Woodward Park

<http://www.fresnocyclingfestival.com/>



Central Valley Cycling Charitable Association

presents

The 2007 Fresno Cycling Festival

Please join us on May 19, 2007 as we transform the northern most section of Woodward Park into the Fresno Cycling Festival. This event will host several different road rides including the Washboard 100. For the off-road inclined there will be mountain bike races and a BMX track. Enjoy various vendors from the world of cycling, information booths, demo bikes, clinics, as well as food, drink, and a little entertainment!

Please email your questions or comments to info@fresnocyclingfestival.com.

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PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Monday April 30 and Tuesday, May 1 7 PM

Branching Out: Hettie Jones on Beat Poets at the Woodward Park Regional Library, 488-3856

Poet Hettie Jones will share readings of her work. Jones' writing reflects the genre known as Beat poetry, which evolved during the 1940s by a group of writers interested in changing consciousness and defying conventional writing. Among this group were such notable writers as Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, Frank O'Hara, Joel Oppenheimer, and Charles Olson, many of whom were also great friends of Jones. The evening of poetry will start with a jazz prelude by musicians Randy Morris and Jacinda Potikian at 6:30 pm. This is a free event.

Tuesday, May 1

International Workers Day

For more information see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_Day

Tuesday, May 1 3 - 8 PM

The Central California Coalition for Immigrants' Rights (CCCIR) is calling for a rally in the free speech area for the city of Fresno (in Fulton Mall), from 3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., for the purpose of keeping alive a dialog about the situation of immigrants in this country and, in particular, in the Central Valley.

Barely one year ago, on May 1, 2006, Fresno experienced an unforgettable day when more than 20,000 people joined together peacefully outside City Hall to request legalization of the close to 10 million undocumented immigrants who live and work in the United States.

To the shouts of "Today we march, tomorrow we vote" and "No human being is illegal," among others, immigrants and their families, joined by others from all walks of life, appeared on streets throughout the country in different marches and events to express their commitment to continue their productive and peaceful life in this country, as well as their wish to become fully integrated members in its social life.

Since then, a proposed House bill-HR4437-has disappeared, and Congress has a new majority. Nonetheless, a hostile climate toward immigrants continues to prevail, in Congress a comprehensive bill remains to be seen, and raids and deportations have increased, causing families to be torn apart and generating fear and distrust.

This May 1 we want to raise our voices again to express, as we did last year, our commitment to becoming full-fledged citizens of this society to which we contribute, pay taxes, and respect. For more information see: <http://pazylibertad.org:80/>

Tuesday, May 1 6:30 PM (doors open) 7 PM (program begins) 7:30 PM (movie)

May Day event - the movie *Bread and Roses* will be shown. \$10.-cover (but nobody will be turned away for lack of funds), 620 F St. Downtown Fresno 559-264-6323. www.fullcirclebrewing.com . This event is a benefit for the Community Alliance newspaper. For more information email AllianceEditor@Comcast.net or call (559) 978-4502.

Wednesday, May 2 5:30 PM

U.S. Green Building Council Central California Chapter Celebration at the Downing Planetarium at CSU-Fresno (corner of Maple and San Ramon just off of Barstow). This event will be an opportunity to meet green building professionals who are doing business in the Central Valley. For more information contact: Jeremy Hofer 559 228-6156 / jhofer@pesc.com

Thursday, May 3 4 - 6 PM

Mobilize the Immigrant Vote (MIV). What do the 2008 Elections mean for immigrant and working class communities? Is it ever too early to start developing your electoral program? What does it take to make an impact on the electoral arena? MIV has developed an approach to electoral organizing that emphasizes elections work as one component of a larger movement for full participation, rights and justice. This movement-building approach to elections focuses on building leadership and capacity within low-income and immigrant communities and their organizations.

We know that the time to build capacity for 2008 is NOW! The overwhelming feedback we have received from community partners, like you, is that resources and capacity-building support of staff and grassroots leaders is needed in 2007 in order develop their 2008 electoral and civic participation plans.

Friday, May 4 7 PM

Native American Music Award Winner Carlos Reynosa (Nammys 1999 & 2000 Nominated 2003, 2005 & 2006) will be coming to the Valley (Fresno Ca.) with special guest the central valley's own Lance "Fluteman" Canales. This event will happen at Grandma's All Natural Market & Nursery 403 W. Olive Ave Fresno Ca, (One Block East of Fruit) (559) 495-1141. Cost: \$5.00

Saturday, May 5 6 PM

Jeremy Scahill, part of the Democracy Now team who's just authored "Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army" will be in North Fork in a benefit for KFCF 88.1 FM. See page 10 for more information.

Sunday, May 6 1 - 4 PM

La Querencia Fresno Cohousing presents "A Celebration of Community" to mark the Groundbreaking for construction of its environmentally-friendly, 28-household, 2.8 acre intentional neighborhood on Alluvial Avenue between Chestnut and Willow in Fresno. The event is free and there will be complimentary refreshments, music, games, a bounce house for the kids, and a presentation on sustainable neighborhoods by Chuck Durrett and Katie McCamant, the pioneers of cohousing in the U.S. and co-authors of the book *Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves*. The Neighborhood is accepting new members! Contact: 1-866-246-7717 or info@fresnocohousing.org .

Wednesday, May 9 12 Noon and 7:00 PM

"The Iron Wall" shows in detail how, following Israel's 1967 occupation, settlements were strategically placed as part of a plan to maintain control and eventually incorporate the majority of historic Pal-

estine into present day Israel. Filmmaker Alatar said Israel takes 62 percent of the water from the West Bank, and only uses two percent for agriculture. "They don't use all of it," he said, "just make sure the rest doesn't go to the Palestinians." The film makes it clear that the Wall has "nothing to do with security . . . it is a tool to permanently secure more land from the Palestinians." When the Wall is completed, it will be 420 miles long. (59 minutes) . Monthly Video Series. At the Center, 1584 N. Van Ness. All are welcome - FREE

There will be a potluck at 6:30, prior to the evening showing, and a discussion afterward. For info call 237-3223

Friday, May 11

The annual Get On The Bus project, where children are taken to visit their imprisoned mothers in all four women's prisons in CA, will take place. 40 buses filled with more than 600 children will travel from California cities and towns to all five women's prisons in the state to enable the children to celebrate Mother's Day with their incarcerated moms. Sponsored and supported by literally dozens of churches of all faiths, as well as civic and religious organizations and foundations, GOTB has grown exponentially since its first adventure, when one lone bus traveled from southern California to Valley State Prison for Women (VSPW) carrying a total of 17 children from nine families, along with their caregivers. For additional information, call Maria Telesco at 559-255-9492, or contact www.getonthebus.us or info@getonthebus.us

Friday, May 11 5 PM and 8 PM

Fresno Filmworks presents "La última mirada" ("The Last Gaze") at the Tower Theatre. This romantic drama from Mexican writer-director Patricia Arriaga-Jordán



Immigrant Rights rally in downtown Fresno May 1, 2006. Photo by Mike Rhodes

This "Open House" is a great opportunity to meet other MIV groups, share our 2006 experiences and learn about MIV's NEW plans for 07 & 08! This event will be held at Comité Pro Uno/Centro de Accesoría Popular, 453 N. Fresno St. Fresno, CA 93701. For more information, contact Alicia Lepe at (626) 224-8189. Contact them if you need childcare and translation, so they can plan ahead.

Friday, May 4 5:15 PM

Latino Legacy (digital films from & about the latino/a community made by high school students at Roosevelt HS— storytellers and high school students will make up the panel). Center for Multicultural Cooperation.

Cineculture continues to be a film series provided as a service to the Fresno State campus students, faculty, and staff at no charge. However, anyone interested in taking Cineculture for academic credit for the Fall semester, please sign up through Continuing and Global Education: tel. 278-0333. For further info., contact Dr. Denise Blum dblum@csufresno.edu . This film will be shown in McLane 121 on the CSUF campus.

Friday, May 4 6:30 - 8:30 PM

The Reedley Peace Center presents Speaker: Steve Penner. Topic: The Democratic Republic of Congo.

Light potluck at 6:30. Program begins at 7 pm. This event is sponsored by the Reedley Peace Center and will be held at the Fellowship Hall of First Mennonite Church, on 'L' street between 12th and 13th streets in Reedley. Admission is free. Contact Don Friesen by email at dfriesen0@gmail.com

PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

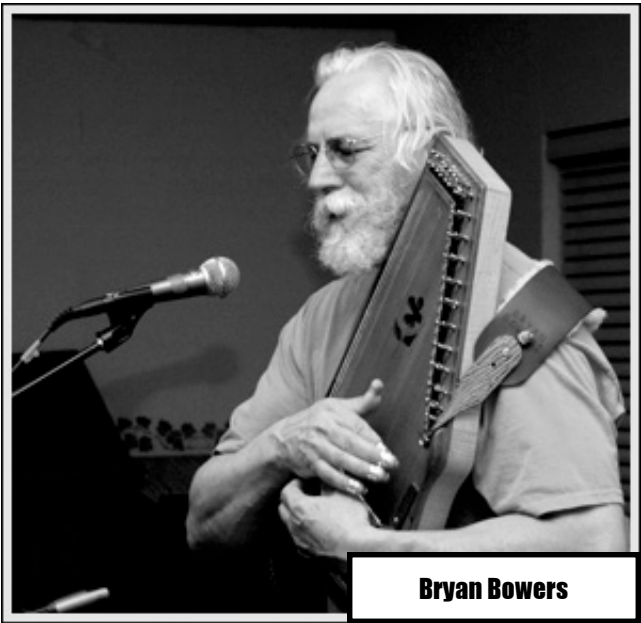
took the Audience Award at last year's Guadalajara Film Festival and the FIPRESCI Prize for Best Film at the Cairo International Film Festival. In Spanish, with English subtitles. Tickets can be purchased at the Tower Theatre Box Office, 815 E. Olive Ave., The Movies, 1435 N. Van Ness Ave., WineStyles in Fig Garden Village, and at the door, for \$10; \$8, for students and seniors. For more information call the FFW info line, 221-0755, or go to www.fresnofilmworks.org

Friday, May 11

6:30 - 8:30 PM

The Reedley Peace Center presents: Students for Peace report on their counter-recruitment campaign at Reedley High School.

Light potluck at 6:30. Program begins at 7 pm. This event is sponsored by the Reedley Peace Center and will be held at the Fellowship Hall of First Mennonite Church, on 'L' street between 12th and 13th streets in Reedley. Admission is free. Contact Don Friesen by email at dfriesen0@gmail.com



Bryan Bowers

Friday, May 11

7:30 PM

The Fresno Folklore Society presents Joe Craven and Bryan Bowers. Tickets: \$20 advance & FFS & FAM members; \$25 at door Fresno Art Museum - Bonner Auditorium, 2233 N 1st St., Fresno CA 93703. For information call: (559) 431-3653

Bryan Bowers has been called the Earl Scruggs of the Autoharp. www.BryanBowers.com

Like the five-string banjo legend, Bryan found a new way of playing a humble folk instrument and caught the attention of every other player of that instrument as well as launched a generation of new players. If masterful playing weren't enough, Bryan is also a fine showman, and a clever, dynamic solo artist who pulls his audiences into his performances. His towering six foot four inch frame can be wild and zany on stage while playing a song like Dixie and five minutes later he can have the same audience singing. Will the Circle Be Unbroken in quiet reverence. His persona is enough to get anyone to want to play the autoharp! Bryan is stopping over in Fresno on his way to perform at the California Autoharp Gathering www.calautoharp.com



Joe Craven

Joe Craven, multi-instrumentalist, wears many hats and plays many things. He's a madman with anything that has strings attached, including hospital bed pans, gas cans, cookie tins, roasting pots, fiddles, mandolins, tenor guitars, saz, cuatro and a world of percussion instruments including animal bones, latex squeeze toys, cake pans, waste cans, umbrella stands, martini shakers and...Himself. His stage setup more often resembles a yard sale. But there's more to Craven than meets the ear. Visual artist, former museum curator, educator, motivational speaker, storyteller and festival emcee, Joe's work is born out of respect and reverence and seeks to honor the creative energy in everyone. An advocate of the folk arts, Joe's educational mission is to empower individuals to take possession of their own music and tell their stories by demystifying art through self-expression as a daily ritual. Website: www.joeocraven.com

Tickets available ONLINE; at Patrick's Music, National Hardware, The Movies Video Store, Fresno Art Museum Gift Shoppe or phone 431-3653.

Thursday, May 17

Bike to Work Day is being organized by the Fresno County Bicycle Coalition. For more information see: <http://www.fresnobike.org/>

Friday, May 18

5:00-6:15 Protest Against Iraq War at the corner of Reed and Manning Avenue
6:30-8:30 Documentary: Who Killed the Electric Car

Light potluck at 6:30. Movie begins at 7 pm. This event is sponsored by the Reedley Peace Center and will be held at the Fellowship Hall of First Mennonite Church, on 'L' street between 12th and 13th streets in Reedley. Admission is free. Contact Don Friesen by email at dfriesen0@gmail.com

Saturday, May 19

3:30 PM

The Central Valley Progressive PAC meets at the Center for Non Violence, 1584 N. Van Ness at Mc Kinley. The CVPPAC will be discussing the development of a progressive strategy for the local 2008 elections. For more information, see: www.cvppac.org

Thursday, May 24

6:30 - 8:30 PM

We are beginning to read that the next big crisis is the 2 million Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan and the additional 2 million displaced Iraqis still in Iraq. Kathy Kelly, Nobel Peace Prize Nominee, and David Smith-Ferri, Poet Laureate of Ukiah, CA, of Voices for Creative Non-violence and, perhaps, more familiar with the problems of the Iraqi people than anyone else, will speak in the new Cardinal Newman Hall at the St. Paul Newman Center, 1572 E Barstow Ave in Fresno. Parking entrance is on Ninth St.

David will read his poetry about Iraq and Kathy will talk about their work with the Iraqi people and refugees before and during the war. Kathy Kelly began Voices in the Wilderness in 1996 and spent much of her time from then through the beginning of the war in Iraq. She has returned to Iraq three times since the beginning of the war and has also worked with Iraqi refugees since then. She and David returned from working with Iraqi refugees in Amman, Jordan in February. This is a fundraiser for Iraqi refugees. Donations will be accepted and David's book of poems about the Iraqi people will be sold with \$12 of the \$14 purchase price going to refugees.

For more information, see page 6. The event is sponsored by the Newman Center, Peace Fresno, the Fresno Center for Nonviolence, and WILPF.

Friday, May 25

6:30 - 8:30 PM

The Reedley Peace Center presents speaker: Ken Friesen speaking about energy issues.

Light potluck at 6:30. Program begins at 7 pm. This event is sponsored by the Reedley Peace Center and will be held at the Fellowship Hall of First Mennonite Church, on 'L' street between 12th and 13th streets in Reedley. Admission is free. Contact Don Friesen by email at dfriesen0@gmail.com



This year's GLBT parade and festival will be held on June 2. Photo by Mike Rhodes

Saturday, June 2

The 17th annual Fresno & the Central Valley GLBT Pride Parade and Festival. The theme is: Pride: Power, respect, integrity, dignity, equality. For more information see www.fresnorainbowpride.com or call (559) 486-3464.

Sunday, June 3

5:30 PM

The Rev. Dr. Ronald L. Claassen, a life-long community advocate for peace making and peaceful conflict resolution, has been named as the third honoree as California Central Valley's "Outstanding Advocate for the Common Good." Claassen, director of Fresno Pacific University's Center for Peacemaking, will receive the award during a dinner program to be held at Hope Lutheran Church, which is located at the NW corner of Fresno and Barstow.

Fresno Metro Ministry, the Interfaith Alliance of Central California, and the Fresno Ministerial Association sponsor this event. The award is named for Carl and Esther Robinson, central valley champions for social justice programs for more than 40 years.

Saturday, June 23

5:30 PM

The Fresno Center for Nonviolence will be celebrating its 15th anniversary at the 1st Congregational Church on Van Ness Boulevard. There will be a dinner provided by Food Not Bombs and the keynote speaker, Medea Benjamin, will be talking about "Stop the Next War Now".

You can receive the Peace and Social Justice calendar, updated weekly, by email. To get on the calendar listserv, go to: <http://www.mailermailer.com/x?oid=32254t> and follow the (brief) instructions

What Role will Local Progressives Play in the 2008 Elections?

By Mike Rhodes and Howard Watkins

In 2008 voters will elect a new Fresno mayor, city council members, FUSD school board members and more. Some of the possible candidates for mayor are (former mayor) Jim Patterson, Jerry Duncan, Mike Dages, and Larry Westerlund. They are all conservative. If any progressive candidates for mayor are out there, they are keeping it to themselves. If you think this could be a problem, read on.

Members of the Central Valley Progressive Political Action Committee (CVPPAC) will be discussing the role of the progressive community in local electoral politics at a meeting on Saturday, May 19, at 3:30 PM. This meeting will be held at the Center for Non Violence, 1584 N. Van Ness at McKinley.

In the last election cycle the CVPPAC interviewed

candidates, held candidate and issue forums, endorsed and financially supported candidates, and participated in several door to door campaigns. While this strategy resulted in some success, CVPPAC members want to move local politics to more progressive action by electing stronger progressives to local offices .

The successes many CVPPAC members have identified in the 2006 elections were the sweep of school board candidates supported by the CVPPAC, the election of a Democratic woman as sheriff, and the passage of Measure C - the transportation tax.

The CVPPAC is looking at several options for the 2008 elections. These options, which will be discussed at the May 5 meeting, include:

- Developing viable progressive candidates to run in local elections.
- Organizing forums to ask candidates questions of interest to the progressive community.
- Meet with prospective candidates for one-on-one interviews.
- Restart the progressive roundtable to bring like minded groups together.

- Financially contributing to progressive political candidates.
- Building an alliance with other progressive groups to leverage support for a single progressive candidate (in appropriate races).
- Participate in voter registration and get out the vote campaigns.

If you are interested in electoral politics and think progressives should have a voice in local government, come to the May 19 CVPPAC meeting, bring a friend, and help develop a strategy for victory in 2008. For more information, visit the CVPPAC website at: www.cvppac.org

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Long time local political activist Ben Benavidez reads the Community Alliance at the March 31, 2007 march and celebration honoring the life of United Farm Worker founder Cesar Chavez.



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Pulling the Plug on Nuclear Power in Sacramento (and Fresno)

by Ed Smeloff & Peter Asmus

[Editor’s note: This article is part 2 of the serialization of chapter two from the book: *Reinventing Electric Utilities: Competition, Citizen Action, and Clean Power* by Ed Smeloff & Peter Asmus, Copyright 1997, Island Press. This is the second installment in what will be a four part series. We at the Community Alliance think our readers should know why the Rancho Seco nuclear power plant in Sacramento was shut down. This chapter is reprinted with the authors permission.]

Fallout from Three Mile Island and Chernobyl

In 1979, the nuclear accident at Three Mile Island (TMI) near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, created anxious times for the citizens of Sacramento. Rancho Seco was a clone of the TMI reactor. Both were designed by Babcock and Wilcox (B&W), one of four U.S. reactor manufacturers. The NRC ordered the shutdown of all B&W reactors until they could determine what went wrong at TMI. The nuclear accident also marked the first large-scale involvement of the public in SMUD’s decision making. Hundreds of people attended several SMUD board meetings, asking questions about the safety of Rancho Seco. Two SMUD board members requested that the NRC hold public hearings in Sacramento. Thirteen protesters were arrested for trespassing after jumping the gate at the entrance to Rancho Seco. Their trial ended in a hung jury.

One of the issues that surfaced at the trial was that radioactive iodine had been found in milk supplied to a local dairy from cows that grazed in pastures next to the plant. A high-level Rancho Seco manager stated that the contamination was a result of Chinese nuclear bomb tests that had occurred three years earlier. A local physics professor, Homer Ibser, calculated that the probability that atmospheric weapons tests had caused the radiation was less than one in a trillion, since the half-life of iodine-131 is only eight days.

Ibser, who was involved with the Manhattan Project in 1942 and taught a class entitled “Living with Nuclear Energy” at the local university, was distressed that a utility executive would deliberately mislead the public about this important health issue.

Among those attending the SMUD board meetings in 1979 was Martha Ann Blackman, a 35-year-old mother and poet. She had linked up with a group of local anti-nuclear activists who became known as Sacramentans for Safe Energy or SAFE. In her soft-spoken manner, Blackman was to remain thorn in SMUD’s side for a decade to come. She and other members of SAFE would attend every SMUD board meeting and routinely ask questions about Rancho Seco during a period set aside from public comments. At the time, SMUD management saw Blackman and the safe-energy activists as nothing more than a minor inconvenience. The group had only a small following and attracted little attention from the press once the TMI accident faded from memory.

Although the performance of Rancho Seco began to deteriorate by 1982 it was assumed that the facility would continue to be SMUD’s principal source of power well into the 21st century. However, in 1986 the nuclear power industry suffered a major blow to its credibility. On April 26, a major clear catastrophe occurred at one of the four Chernobyl reactors located just north of Kiev in the Ukraine. The extent of the radioactive contamination from Chernobyl was frightening, and people in Northern California began to buy iodine tablets as a precaution to protect themselves from thyroid cancer. The Chernobyl story was to dominate the news throughout the world for weeks. Anxiety about the safety of

nuclear power increased in communities that were located near atomic reactors.

After Chernobyl, SAFE decided it would try to qualify a ballot initiative in Sacramento to close Rancho Seco. The first problem that the safe-energy activists faced was to figure out how to draft language that would stand up in court. Mike Remy, a local attorney who helped write California’s Environmental Quality Act, began to sort through this thorny issue. Though he didn’t consider himself to be against nuclear power, Remy had been concerned about the generation of large volumes of nuclear waste “without knowing what to do with it.” Before Chernobyl, Remy had hoped for a reasonable dialog between those for and against nuclear power. He observed, “The two sides were not intellectually hooking into each other. They were trying to shock each other.”

However, after the Chernobyl accident Remy decided that it would be necessary to confront the nuclear power industry head-on with a citizen’s initiative. As a public power agency, in a state that permits citizen initiatives, SMUD provided an excellent setting for a debate about nuclear power. Remy and Blackman and the other safe-energy activists were motivated by a concern for nuclear safety. However, the SAFE initiative, as the anti-Rancho Seco ballot

owned by the McClatchy family, long-time Sacramento residents. The McClatchy family had been strong supporters of public power and sided with SMUD in all its disputes with PG&E. The paper had also strongly supported SMUD’s early involvement in nuclear power. But by 1986 the paper’s editor, C. K. McClatchy, was beginning to have doubts about Rancho Seco. The Chernobyl accident increased the scrutiny *The Bee* gave to Rancho Seco.

In May 1986, *The Bee* ran a massive five-part series on Rancho Seco, entitled “Neglected Past/Uncertain Future.” It portrayed a plant mired in trouble that had been shielded from the public eye for years. The articles pointed out that SMUD was run by a publicly elected board of directors, but the utility had been run “more like a private club than a public utility.”

In fact, until 1976 no incumbent on the board had lost an election. Typically, a member would resign in mid-term. The SMUD board would then install a new member who would be the incumbent in the next election. Not only was the board an “old boys club”, but it routinely approved items presented to it by the utility’s management. Few questioned this arrangement during times when electric rates were declining and there were no controversial issues. But the problems at Rancho Seco ended the days that

decisions could be made without public involvement. As the media spotlighted who was on the SMUD board, the public began to realize they had a say in their utility’s future.

The *Bee* noted that Rancho Seco had experienced three rapid cool downs that could threaten the reactor’s integrity. The paper ran a vivid graphic portraying a reactor meltdown. It showed a blob of radioactive material that had eaten through the plant’s concrete foundation and was burrowing into the earth where it would remain highly radioactive for millennia.

The attention the media placed on problems at the nuclear plant prodded the NRC to look into past practices at Rancho Seco. Rancho Seco is unusual among U.S. nuclear reactors in that it is not located near a large body of water. It gets cooling water through a canal that links the plant to the Folsom Reservoir on the American River. Only a tiny creek drains out of the plant. It provides water for cattle on several ranches downstream before it empties into the Sacramento Delta. When the plant was built, a Rancho Seco manager told the local community that there would be zero releases of water contaminated by radioactive isotopes.

But as leaks developed in the plant’s steam generators, SMUD was forced to break that promise. The NRC allowed SMUD to dump radioactive water into tiny Clay Creek, but the radioactive dosage could not exceed prescribed levels. In reports filed with the NRC, SMUD appeared never to exceed those limits. The NRC, however, suspected that SMUD had manipulated its radioactive sampling methods so it could discharge contaminated water that was overloading on-site storage. The NRC accused SMUD personnel of intentionally altering sampling methods. News of this alleged falsification of data triggered a \$1 billion class action lawsuit against SMUD by ranchers and farmers downstream from the plant.

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Part 3 of this article will be printed in the June Community Alliance newspaper. To read the entire chapter now, go to www.fresnoalliance.com/home/seco



Mayor Alan Autry and a group of businessmen want to build a nuclear power plant in Fresno. Find out about the risks of nuclear energy by reading this series in the Community Alliance newspaper.

measure was called, focused on economics. Federal law preempted state or local governments from dosing a nuclear power plant because’ of safety concerns. However, since the voters of Sacramento owned Rancho Seco, they could close the reactor for financial reasons. Although SAFE had not conducted an economic analysis of the consequences of shutting down Rancho Seco, they had the intuition that it might not be too costly. Their belief was founded principally on the plant’s poor record of operations. By the time SAFE started circulating petitions to close the plant permanently, Rancho Seco had been out of operation for 11 months and SMUD had raised rates twice to pay for repairs.

The Role of the Local Media

The press played an important role in the debate over Rancho Seco. Both Sacramento newspapers, *The Sacramento Bee* and the *Sacramento Union*, assigned full-time reporters to the SMUD beat from 1985 through the two elections that included votes on Rancho Seco. In addition, Sacramento’s major television station, KCRA (Channel 3), had a reporter who covered Rancho Seco issues for over a decade and had numerous contacts at the power plant. The major news radio station in Sacramento also assigned a reporter who covered SMUD for three years. It was not unusual for all four local television stations to send news crews to SMUD board meetings to cover controversies at the utility. Nonetheless, the most important part of the media for SMUD was *The Sacramento Bee*.

Since its inception, SMUD had always been able to count on the support of *The Sacramento Bee*, which is

What should schools be about?

By Scott Key

Last month, I wrote a piece exploring the Comer model for school reform and how Fresno Unified School District (FUSD) could utilize this approach.

If you recall, I placed this discussion in the context of high stakes testing, where the federal and state governments are threatening loss of funds or take over to push schools to change what happens in schools. FUSD is caught up in this drive for higher test scores. It has implemented a number of curricular and instructional changes with elementary schools moving towards using the same materials, in the same way, on the same day and high schools offering special CAHSEE (California High School Exit Exam) classes in order to help students pass the tests. This obsession with test scores is yielding modest gains at best. The combination of low test scores, high drop-out rates, high student migration rates, and conflict between board members and administrators leads one to conclude that FUSD is a district in crisis.

Comer's approach calls for schools to create a new kind of school environment that supports child and adolescent development. This development involves growth in *the six developmental pathways*—physical, social-interactive, psychological-emotional, ethical, linguistic, and cognitive-intellectual—but most schools focus only on the linguistic and cognitive pathways. Schools need to stop seeing children as *the sum of their parts* and focus on *the whole child*. FUSD needs to stop tinkering and create school environments that help all children develop fully and gain the skills needed in school and life.

While implementing Comer's approach could be one solution, does Comer go far enough?

The answer depends on what you believe the purpose of public schools is. During the early years of our republic, children went to private school, had a private tutor or learned at home. These approaches worked because the population was fairly homogenous—

mostly from the British Isles—with a common language and set of values. However, increased immigration changed this and led many to conclude there was a need for an institution to *Americanize* children. In the 1830s, Horace Mann started public schools to help assimilate children into mainstream society. These *common schools* promoted a common set of values through the use a common language to teach a common curriculum—basic skills and American history. The structure, rules and expectations of the school also conveyed these values. Success in school was dependent on children learning both hidden and taught curriculum.

The purpose of schools has changed very little over the past 170 years. Children from diverse backgrounds come together in the giant melting pot called public schools that still convey mainstream values through expectations, rules, structure and curriculum. It isn't enough for students to graduate with basic and advanced skills. Society expects students to be committed to capitalism and democracy, to hard work and honesty, to the American Dream. High school dropouts have more difficulty finding work and once employed earn substantively less. They are more likely to have health problems, engage in criminal activities and need public assistance than high school graduates. Public schools are supposed to prepare students to become productive citizens capable of participating and contributing to the maintenance of American society. Public education is the key.

Comer does not challenge this purpose. Instead, he has created a program that helps assimilate more children into mainstream society. Not only do students need to develop competence with basic and advanced skills, they need to "identify and internalize the values of school," which mirror the values of mainstream society. Conformity is the rule. Students need to fit in or are left behind. Schools need to provide the necessary support to help children outside the mainstream to assimilate into the mainstream. As Comer said, "all children need protection and sustained support to develop and prepare for successful participation in the life of their societies."

Does Comer go far enough?

No. Comer's approach follows in the footsteps of the

Booker T. Washington, who believed that African-Americans needed to demonstrate their worth through their competence. Change comes slowly. As competence is demonstrated, each succeeding generation will become a more integrated part of mainstream society. This integration will lead to mainstream society becoming more just. While competence is vital, change has seldom come from within the mainstream. The abolition of slavery, women's rights, civil rights were gained through the efforts of outsiders working with allies within mainstream society. Competent people critiqued the society of their day and worked for change. The struggles were difficult. Women and men needed advanced skills, an understanding of the dominant culture and the capability to critique and act. Thus, Comer's idea of helping all students to develop the competencies necessary for entry into the middle class mainstream should be merely the starting point.

Helping students develop competence is vital. It can serve as a solid foundation, but the goal of public education should not be the assimilation of more children into the middle class mainstream. Assimilation yields adults who simply accept instead of question things. Rather, the goal should be to help children develop into agents of change.

Our communities and nation face many challenges such as discrimination, health care and pollution. Our world faces challenges like poverty and war. Our planet faces challenges like deforestation and global warming. New challenges will emerge. We need young people to meet these challenges and offer ways to move us towards a more just society and global community. We need to demand Fresno Unified, Clovis Unified, Central Unified and all school districts take the necessary steps to help all students develop skills-based competencies, an understanding of the dominant culture and critical thinking skills that enable students to become agents of change. Comer is a good place to start not finish.

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Got Democracy?

By Ruth Gadebusch

Our democracy is endangered. And, it is not from some outside force, such as the often ballyhooed terrorists portrayed by the current president and his minions. That is not to write off the threat of terrorists, but to recognize the threat from inside may be even more serious..



In the name of fighting the terrorists, this administration has seized power like none before. Presidents have often had the inclination to think of themselves as sovereigns, but this one has been able to push it to a higher level than previously. With a compliant Congress and a bent for secrecy the administration has taken advantage of the fallout from 9/11 to infringe on our personal rights like no other.

Many of us, apparently naively, had thought that the election last fall would change direction but it is much more difficult to undo than to do, and worse yet, when party loyalty seems to take precedent over nation. It isn't just the fighting in Iraq but what is happening here at home. At this writing the president, who has only vetoed one measure in his 6 years, has announced that he will veto any measure that contains a withdrawal date from the debacle in Iraq. Never mind that it contains the funding demanded, and needed, for the troops. With the Democrats slim majority and few Republicans willing to look at the big picture, we have a problem: How long can we sustain this war? What kind of toll is it taking on us as a nation? What is going to be the end result for Iraq?

Deplorable as the situation in Iraq is, we need to keep our eyes on the dismantling of democracy at home. It is not too much of a stretch to note that many of the world's worst dictators assumed office in an election, fraudulent as it may have been. Few achieved power through the coming of the army in the dead of night. It is the creeping breach of constitutional rights that should concern us.

Aside from the counting of the votes that put this president into office, it is the electoral college that is less than democratic — giving far more power to the lesser populated rural states than to the big urban ones. Recognizing the difficulty (impossibility?) of changing the constitution some states are considering measures to direct their electoral college votes to the holder of the nationwide majority vote. It may be a poor way to accomplish reform, but it would assure the majority vote holder assuming office, provided enough states move to this proposal.

It is ironic that a president put into office without a majority (and reelected with another questionable vote count) continues to wield so much power despite his low rating and a change in the Congress. He has consistently issued statements that he did not intend to enforce legislation that he signed rather than veto. In the wake of 9/11, he was able to get what amounted to a free hand to invade a nation that had done us no harm, and insists that once given this authority, the Congress has only the power of the purse for any control.

In haste and fear, the Patriot Act was passed with all its infringement of what previously had been considered constitutionally inviolate. The changes made in its renewal did little to alleviate the situation. To be fair, here the responsibility must be shared by both political parties.

To get the funding bill passed (yet to be reconciled between the Senate and House) all sorts of pork had to be added. It seems like bribery to me; though one of our senators said that the measure benefiting our

area was attached to a must pass legislation because it was so needed. It seems to me that both pieces should be able to stand on their own; if —and it appears to be a big if — the Congress members were truly interested in the overall good of the country.

Now we find that even the FBI has stepped over the line. This was an organization once thought to be completely above board. Violations of warrants has become the *modus operandi*, just as it has in other governmental departments.

We add this to the nation's disregard of the Geneva Conventions and other transgressions of human rights in how we have treated those picked up, whenever and wherever it suited us, and we have another strike against our former reputation for honor. The list is long for sliding down the slippery path, or put another way, borrowing from Shakespeare, of placing stepping stones on the road to Hades. These examples are just a beginning.

If ever there was a time for political activism, it is now. We can still save our tripartite form of government but it is later than we think. Aside from the morality of the war in Iraq, it ill behooves us to go around the planet supposedly exporting democracy when we are in such sad shape here at home. This is hardly the example needed to get others to embrace the idea of democracy. What we do speaks so loud, they can't hear what we say. We can do better and we must.

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Ruth Gadebusch was born and raised on a Georgia farm. In 1977 she was elected to the Board of Education of Fresno Unified School District and served for thirteen and a half years. She continues to be active in the community while serving as Vice-President of the Center for Civic Education (promoting responsible citizenship and democratic principles internationally) and writing for the Liberal Opinion, a weekly national newspaper.

Credo

By Richard Stone

Polly began our interview by stating, “You know, I don’t believe in anything.” That quickly, I was reminded of Polly’s well-known role as questioner of dogma and “positions”, and her Quaker-bred trust in the doing itself to show you the way.

But her Quaker affiliation was not inherited. As she relates, she was raised in a conventional Protestant household outside of Philadelphia. Fortuitously that city is the American home of The Friends, so exposure was readily available. Early on, she had been struck by the Quaker “look” — the architecture of a nearby church and graveyard, for instance—and by the publicly displayed sentiments of William Penn. But the next step in her growing connection with The Friends was very oblique.

Looking for a way to escape for a summer the uncomfortable family situation she lived in, Polly heard about a Friends Service Committee work camp. When she applied, it turned out they were full; but looking in that direction led her to discover an International Student Camp that changed her life.

There it was she met Ralph Victor, a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany who courted and won her. “Ralph opened a new world for me, a sheltered and spoiled young woman with no awareness of politics or other religions. In fact some of my family was deeply anti-Semitic, and our engagement created a stir.”

An amazing aspect of the Victors’ story is that Ralph’s Jewish ancestry—rather than bringing the deep rifts and pains that might be expected in that era—turned to their advantage. It was Ralph’s lack of opportunity in pre-war Germany that led him to emigrate (before he might have been caught in the horrors that followed) to a more congenial U.S. It was the solidity of his traditionally-religious family that gave Polly insight into what a “functional” family might be (“I entered a world of depth, thoughtfulness and decency.”) It provided the chance—seized on—for her maternal grandfather to embrace the couple and host their wedding, in the face of her father’s rejection, that led to a gradual erosion of her family’s prejudices. “It was as if we lived in a bubble of protection,” Polly reflects.

Later on in their marriage, as the Victors looked for a spiritual base that allowed for their mutual movement away from their respective origins, and was grounded in their core values, they encountered Quaker meetings. This affiliation, with its lack of dogma and its commitment to practical, humane action to make the world a little better, became a constant in their lives.

Having met Polly in her later years, in the time of Ralph’s disability and then death, I’ve thought of her as someone of independence and initiative. I’ve seen the exhibits of her metal sculpture (and been awed at the thought of a frail-seeming 80 year-old woman welding away). I’ve had calls from her saying with authority she’d appreciate help from the Center for Nonviolence in raising funds to send a delegate to a conference in Africa. I’ve known that she and Ralph were sponsors of a scholarship program for young students in India, and had founded a factory in Fresno specifically to provide employment for Southeast Asian refugees.

But when I painted this picture for Polly, she seemed surprised. “I don’t see myself that way at all. You must remember, growing up in the dominating influence of my father and in an age that taught women to subordinate themselves to their family, I saw myself primarily as a wife and mother. Ralph always treated me with respect and as an intellectual equal, but I moved always within the sphere of the marriage. Our activities and relocations were guided by his career considerations. The scholarship program and the factory were fully discussed with me, but originated with Ralph. Only as

Every man’s foremost task is the actualization of his unique, unprecedented and never-recurring potentialities, and not the repetition of something that another, and be it even the greatest, has already achieved.
---from *The Way of Man* by Martin Buber

a visual artist did I really feel independent.”

Even now she calls herself one who elaborates on or questions the initiatives of others rather than as a “prime mover.” And, in the fashion of a Quaker, she questions her motives: “It seems in part I like to involve myself in public affairs for the ego-satisfaction, without committing myself to a lot of the work involved.”

Polly is also critical of the seriousness and effectiveness of work being done to prevent the destruction of the eco-system. “This is incredibly urgent...even more dangerous than the political threat of Hitler and fascism in the World War II era. We



Polly Victor

are now looking at a global threat to all life, and along with that we see an appalling degree of human indecency to others.”

Asked about teachers and influences in her life, Polly says that, besides Ralph, two important models have been Martin Buber and Eleanor Roosevelt. Buber introduced her to the vision of everyday life imbued with significance (especially in his writing about Jewish Chassidism). Roosevelt exemplified a woman breaking through the restraints of her social position (her homeliness and awkward manner, her charismatic husband, the role expectation for a politician’s wife) to be a full agent of her innate intelligence and compassion. “I’m so inspired by her part in creating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—her perseverance, her wisdom, her ability (even as a woman) to shepherd a group of strong-headed men to agreement. But,” Polly adds, “I’m now also very much instructed by the skill of my two daughters in how they manage their lives and raise their children.”

In no small measure, Polly embodies the qualities of those she admires. So despite her own reservations, I quote the old saw, “Where there’s smoke, there’s fire.” It’s not by accident that Polly Victor is widely looked to, in our Fresno community, as a voice of conscience, an initiator of “right actions”, a generous reliable supporter of so much work aimed at achieving peace and justice. Judged by her own pragmatic Quaker standards, she has at least given others something to believe in.



Runway Peace Project

On April 14, 2007 the California State University Fresno Feminist Activism class and P.O.W.E.R. presented the Runway Peace Project, an anti-militarism fashion show. The event was free and featured music, poetry, art, information tables, and more. The purpose of the Runway Peace Project was to deconstruct the militaristic doctrine that has infiltrated our culture and lead us into war, and to ultimately challenge its supposed normalcy by presenting thought provoking images, fashion and information. The presentation provided statistics and analysis with regard to war as well as opportunities to get involved with activism in our community. For more photos from the show, see: <http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2007/04/14/18398495.php>. For more information about the project, contact: runwaypeaceproject@yahoo.com or www.myspace.com/runwaypeaceproject.



Celebrate International Workers Day Tuesday, May 1

6:30 PM (doors open) 7 PM (program begins) 7:30 PM (movie)

The Community Alliance newspaper presents the film **Bread and Roses** at the Full Circle Brewery, 620 F Street in Downtown Fresno.

\$10.-cover (nobody will be turned away for lack of funds). For more information email AllianceEditor@Comcast.net or call (559) 978-4502