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**Drone Update**

The proposal for a drone facility in Wisconsin has been passed along as a budget item by the State Building Commission at their March meeting. The $8 million facility would cost state tax payers $400,000 in a time of financial austerity. The 2012-13 budget will be voted on by June 30. Contact WNPJ at 250-9240 for details.

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**WAR COSTS COME HOME: VFP RALLIES TO SUPPORT PUBLIC WORKERS’ RIGHTS**

By David Swanson
Associate Member
Charlottesville, VA

(Editor’s Note: David Swanson is the author of *War is a Lie* and *Daybreak: Undoing the Imperial Presidency and Forming a More Perfect Union*. He blogs at davidswanson.org.)

With a name like "Veterans For Peace," it’s a fair question to ask if we should make statements supporting union members battling government offensives in Wisconsin and elsewhere.

The VFP national leadership and, we believe, the overwhelming majority of our members think the answer is yes. We know too well that militarism and empire are central causes of the economic tragedies that have robbed millions of Americans of their livelihoods, health and homes. Those tragedies are now being played out at statehouses across the country.

Domestic pain is linked inextricably with far greater suffering wreaked by war. Empire has snuffed out over a million Iraqi and Afghan lives along with more than 6,000 of our young men and women. The people of this nation have poured over a trillion dollars into those wars and those who profit from them are prepared to spend much more, unless we stop them in their tracks.

"Unless we stop them in their tracks...” A year ago, that sentiment would have been only a rhetorical cry in the wilderness, but the courageous people across northern Africa are showing us what can be done. Like them, however, the first thing we must do is decide when we’ve had enough.

Is it enough to know that since the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, Wisconsin taxpayers alone have paid for those two wars, over 18 billion dollars, compared to an estimated state budget deficit of about two bil-

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**Photo by Paul McMahon**

Madison VFP members John Carey and Bob Irwin rally in support of public workers at a demonstration on February 19.

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Editor’s Musings
By Richard Chamberlin

Over the past few years, in spite of the election of Barack Obama, American politics has moved farther to the right. Tea Party activists have made steady advances at the national and state levels including Wisconsin. In order to get a better handle on right-wing thinking I recently slogged through the classic tome The Conservative Mind: from Burke to Eliot, by Russell Kirk.

Kirk, then a young political science lecturer at Michigan State University, published what was essentially his Ph. D. thesis in 1953. It has since become the bible of conservative thought. “If a conservative order is indeed to return,” he wrote, “we ought to know the tradition which is attached to it, so that we may rebuild society; if it is not to be restored, still we ought to understand conservative ideas so that we may rake from the ashes what scorched fragments of civilization escape the conflagration of unchecked will and appetite.”

Much of the book is a critique of English and American conservative thinkers from the Eighteenth Century philosopher and statesman Edmund Burke who thought that liberty would end in anarchy and equated democracy with mob rule to T.S. Eliot whose poem The Wasteland portrayed a world of hollow men alienated from the ancient edifices of tradition.

Indeed, Kirk revels in the traditions of an idyllic, agrarian English society that was ruled by an enlightened “natural aristocracy” acting for the good of all men and able to divine God’s law. “The people, as a body, cannot deliberate,” writes John Adams, one of Kirk’s heroes.

According to Burke, man’s rights exist only when he obeys God’s laws. “Good will is not enough to safeguard freedom and justice” Kirk writes. “Men’s passions are held in check only by the punishments of divine wrath.”

After Burke’s death in 1797 the country gentleman’s world began to unravel with the advent of the English Industrial Revolution. Great masses of workmen concentrated in factory towns began demanding more rights. Democratic reforms reduced the power of the landed gentry. “Though liberalism imagined itself to be a glorious new flower…” Kirk writes, “it was a parasite upon the decayed trunk of the old order.”

Though the world of country squires is long gone we can
see its legacy in today’s right wing agenda i.e. their attempt to restrict the masses from registering through stringent voter ID requirements and proposals making it harder for college students to vote. We see their religious fundamentalism in the battle over abortion rights to funneling public money into faith based charities.

Yet we see things that even Kirk might abhor. The landed aristocrats or yore morphed into robber barons followed by amoral transnational corporations. Both Republican and Democrats pander to the moneeyed classes for campaign contributions and influence. The big government that traditional conservatives dislike has begun wars they cannot win with money they do not have and citizens suffer the consequences through cuts in social programs.

Today Republicans have tried to dignify the corporate takeover of the state by cobbling together traditional conservative thought with naked power. I have no doubt that when future historians rake through the scorched ashes of Early 21st Century American culture they will discover a graveyard containing the remains of corporate hubris.

MEMORIAL DAY EVENTS

The Memorial Mile  This year we will be erecting over 5,000 tombstone replicas to honor American soldiers killed in the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars along Atwood avenue near Olbrich Park. We will need help from the public setting up Saturday, May 28 at 9 a.m. and taking down on Sunday June 5, at 3 p.m. RSVP at jhfour@gmail.com. Work 3-5 hours to repair 1-2 boxes of tombstones in your own garage or basement. Detailed instructions provided using industrial strength glue. Call 438-7480.

James Madison Park  As in years past we will have a program of music and speakers at the east end of James Madison Park next to the Gates of Heaven Synagogue on Memorial Day, Monday May 30 beginning at 1 p.m. Music will be provided by Old Cool and our speaker this year will be Matt Rothschild, editor of The Progressive. At the end of the program guests can volunteer to read the names of the over 100 Wisconsin soldiers who have died in these wars.
VETERANS YOUNG AND OLD RALLY AGAINST WAR
ON THE 8th ANNIVERSARY OF AFGHAN INVASION

The sound of snare drums set the mood Saturday, March 19 as thousands of people, led by Iraq Veterans against the War, marched up State Street to protest the 8th anniversary of the war in Afghanistan. Veterans for Peace and Vietnam Veterans Against the War lent support to their younger comrades in arms. The rally was also in solidarity with Wisconsin workers on the front lines in the struggle for public employee rights.

Iraq War veteran Derek Griffin, who served in the U.S. Army from 2000-2005, said, “I’m here because I was a public worker. I got paid with public funds just like the teachers, firefighters here and their plight is our plight.”

Aaron Hughes, an IVAW member who served six years in the Illinois National Guard and was deployed to Iraq and Kuwait in 2003 for 15 months explains why he was in Madison. “Rights and democracy are things that our nation says we are fighting for in Iraq and Afghanistan but from my experience in Iraq it was clear that militaries can not fight for these things. Only people standing together can fight for and win these things. So we are mobilizing to Madison to stand with our brothers and sisters in labor and connect the issues.”

Todd Dennis, a Vets for Peace and IVAW member said, “Under the guise of budget crisis, these and other politicians throughout the country are attempting to undo the hard-won union rights of the American people. Yet, these same politicians continue to reach deep into the pockets of working people to finance the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan while sending our sons and daughters, our brothers and sisters, off to fight for them. It is time for us to start connecting the dots between endless war abroad and the erosion of our rights and public goods here at home.”

Vietnam Veteran Stewart Bellant agreed. “This isn’t the kind of government we took an oath to defend,” he said.

IVAW member Scott Kimball from Illinois, dressed in desert fatigues said, “I’m inspired and a lot of people are inspired by the real movement that’s building here in Wisconsin.”

From left to right: IVAW members Christina Taber (Madison), Scott Kimbel (Illinois), Derek Giffin (Chicago) and Todd Dennis (Madison) speak out against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and for public worker’s rights.

Photo by David Giffey
(Continued from page 1)

scholarships for four years for every college-age person in Wisconsin?

Is it enough to know that wars for Empire have forever taken more than 100 young men and women from Wisconsin and left more than 750 wounded?

Forty-four years ago next month, Dr. Martin Luther King spoke in New York’s Riverside Church, giving what many believe was his greatest speech, “Beyond Vietnam.” In it, he called the United States “the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today.” We are learning now that Iraq and Afghanistan are not the only places blighted by empire’s violence. Every working-class neighborhood in our country sinks further into economic serfdom and the violence that is poverty.

In that same speech, Dr. King observed that, “This war is but a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit, and if we ignore this reality we will find ourselves organizing clergy-and-laymen-concerned committees for the next generation….We will be marching…and attending rallies without end unless there is a significant and profound change in American life.”

Members of Veterans For Peace are heartsick that we continue organizing antiwar committees and “attending rallies without end.” We don’t just want our troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan, we want a better life for the many. We want security – the kind of security that can only come when we don’t have to worry about being thrown out of our jobs and our homes. We want the security that comes with health care for everyone. We want education for all. And we want the rest of that better life that we can win only when we can control the appetites of the few.

Veterans For Peace knows we cannot do this by ourselves. The peace movement, even in its mightiest manifestation, cannot by itself end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, much less get America out of the business of empire.

To do that requires that we take the reins of government out of the hands of the few and place them in the hands of the many.

To do that we need each other! We need to be true to our chants in the streets: “NO JUSTICE, NO PEACE!” And we need to organize campaigns like VFP’s “How’s the War Economy Working for You?” to find the allies we need and who need us.

In 1988, who would have thought that within two years, statues of Lenin would start toppling across Russia? Last summer, who would have imagined that within a year, dictators would topple across northern Africa?

We must learn from those historic moments and join together, so that a year from now people will point to Wisconsin and say, “This is where we decided we had enough!”

Please consider contributing to Madison Veterans for Peace.

We are a 501 (c)(3) tax deductible non-profit organization. Send contributions to the address below.

CAPITOL PERSPECTIVES:

Photograph taken February 19 in the Men’s Restroom at The State Capitol-Madison, WI During Protests

Photo by Richard Chamberlin
Scholarships plus contact equal hope for peace

By David Giffey

Veterans for Peace Chapter 25 continues to expand its effort to offer scholarships to graduating high school seniors based on essays they write on the topic: “Why I believe war is not the answer.” This spring we will provide scholarships to students from Madison West, River Valley (Spring Green), Dodgeville, Richland Center, and Boscobel high schools.

Hopefully—depending on donations from our supporters—the program will expand in 2012 and each year thereafter.

Why does this scholarship program matter?

The answer begins with the need to study history and the willingness to take action as citizens.

The outpouring of protest in Wisconsin in recent weeks has been encouraging because huge numbers of people of all ages are expressing themselves publicly for the very first time. In taking communal action, people learn to trust each other while they discover the importance of activism in general.

While the protests are a positive indication that many people can and will come together on behalf of peace and justice, it is also undeniable that many people have been inactive for too long.

Young people will continue to be victimized by the militaristic tradition if they fail to take action against it…

Had such fervor been sustained between the peace and civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and the anti-war movement in 1991, and the opposition to the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, it is logical to believe that the need to so angrily protest in 2011 might have been erased. Perhaps the power structure would have hesitated and listened more carefully if we had been visibly present on the streets even during times of presumed peace and prosperity.

That’s a premise behind offering high school scholarships. We ask the students to learn something about protest and the peace movement in general. In doing so, they may ignite in themselves a spark of unity with the historic movements for peace and justice, which depend entirely on human beings, nothing more.

While economic power with its piles of cash provides the momentum for waging war and suppressing human rights, it doesn’t cost a dime to stop a war or to be free. But it takes a lot of effort, spirit, and conviction.

We’re approaching the season when a number of students will submit their heartfelt essays in applying for Veterans for Peace scholarships. After we choose the winners, we have an opportunity to present the scholarships during award ceremonies in the presence of hundreds of students and their families. That gives us a brief chance to describe Veterans for Peace to a new audience. We also give certificates and other recognition to all the students who participated.

By way of comparison, the military recruiters also attend the award ceremonies, but they
give medals and certificates, no actual monetary scholarships.

The VFP scholarship program is coupled with counter recruiting. During the school year, our contact with school administrators and guidance counselors includes arranging for the scholarships and scheduling lunch hour visits to the schools to provide information about alternatives to the military. Generally the schools are more willing to invite us if we offer scholarships.

I visited Boscobel High School March 16 for the second time this school year. The students and I are getting to know each other. Some of them returned for extended conversations and to ask for another VFP button. I was accompanied by Annie Waitzman and Judy Jellies, active members of Code Pink in the Boscobel area. They are very able peace advocates.

While most of the students I met were wholly supportive of the peace movement, a young man whom I talked to last year returned. He enlisted as a junior in high school and took basic training last summer. He was very distressed because he hadn’t been informed about what will happen regarding his enlistment after he graduates in June.

It was quite obvious to me that he feels both uncertain and trapped by his premature decision to join the National Guard.

I think he trusts me, and I gave him my contact information hoping that he might decide to step back, even though he feels it is too late. His anxiety reminded me of myself many years ago.

Young people will continue to be victimized by the militaristic tradition if they fail to take action against it, and if they don’t receive any support from families, teachers, elders, and acquaintances. That’s where Veterans for Peace can help.

The high school students I meet through the scholarship program and Veterans for Peace counter recruiting are part of our peace movement family and deserve our total support. We might be their sole source of information about peace.

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**Walker Cuts Funds for Veterans**

Before Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs secretary Kenneth Black resigned on April 1 he urged Governor Scott Walker to reverse cuts in service to veterans. He opposed cuts in the 2011-2013 budget for many of the state’s 417,000 veterans because he said they do not adequately address the needs of many with low incomes.

Among the proposed cuts is a 19% reduction in a program which provides hearing aids, dentures and eye glasses to the neediest of veterans and a 53% cut in the Veterans Assistance Program which helps homeless veterans obtain rehabilitation services.

It is estimated by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDAV) that 1,000 veterans from World War II die every day and Korean War veterans are being lost in similar numbers. Vietnam era veterans are aging and confronting employment and mental health issues in unprecedented numbers. The veterans returning from the Persian Gulf face limited employment opportunities and unique health issues from their service. Claims with the USDAV are at the highest levels since the end of the Vietnam conflict.

Veterans and their families are urged to contact their state representatives and ask them to work reject the cuts.
Veterans for Peace

P.O. Box 1811