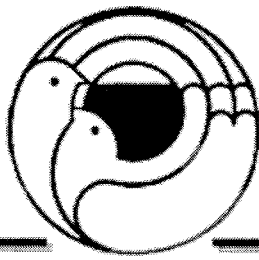


April - May
2008

Vol. 43 No. 3



Newsletter of **LEPOCO** Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern

Art Landis: At It Again —

Of the SOA 11, who were convicted in January of trespassing onto the Ft. Benning military base in Columbus, Georgia, Art Landis was the last to know when and where his jail sentence would commence. Uncertainty is said to be one of the things a human is least apt to adapt to. The wait must have been excruciating. But Mr. Landis isn't one to sit by the phone pining away for a date with the "authorities."

So while waiting for the phone call Art heeded another call, the call of his conscience. It took him to Washington D.C., on March 12th, where he and fellow area activist Tim Chadwick joined eight others in a National Campaign for Nonviolent Resistance - organized action in the U.S. Senate gallery called "Ghosts of the Iraq War." One-by-one the participants wearing black "We Will Not Be Silent" t-shirts stood during a session on military spending and proclaimed through strikingly haunting white-gauze masks, "I am a ghost of the Iraq War. Stop the killing. Stop the funding. Stop the war." The group was promptly shuffled out of the gallery, arrested for "disorderly conduct," and assigned a court date in May.

Undeterred, Art followed up on March 21st with another arrest. This time outside the King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, offices of the world's largest weapons corporation, Lockheed Martin, during the Brandywine Peace Community's annual Good Friday observance. Just days after the 5th anniversary of the war in Iraq, Art and thirteen other individuals (including Tim Chadwick and myself) brought a "trail of mourning and truth" onto the property of one of said war's chief profiteers. For this "fracture of good order" the fourteen were given complimentary rides to the police station where each was handed a citation for "disorderly conduct."

Committing crimes in an attempt to rectify the crimes of others sure does pass the time while waiting to hear where one will do time for prior "crimes."

Finally, Art received notification. He'd begin serving his thirty-day sentence on April 10th inside Lackawanna County Prison. Word came only a week before his day to self-report -- only a week to make final plans, to get things in order; only a week for he and his wife, Hilda, to come to terms with the reality of a month of separation. On the morning of April 10th, en route to prison, a group of twenty-five supporters came out for hugs and handshakes at the Quakertown Park & Ride, before sending Art on his way. The showing was moving and gave the prisoner of conscience a much-appreciated boost before incarceration.

Pulling within sight of the old stone castle prison facade caused a mix of emotions to be played across Arthur Landis's face. He quietly muttered, "It seems a dream." The unreality of it all hits. This, the logical culmination of idealistic and faithful obedience to something higher than human law. The words and spirits of Thoreau, Gandhi, Day, Bonhoeffer, Berrigan, King, and Christ followed through. The much revered myth of E.E. Cummings's Olaf come true. The realization that when one rebels against the corruption and criminality of a renegade government power, that when one refuses to kiss the flag...the likely end is jail.

You can send cards and letters to Art, until May 9th, at: Arthur Landis, Lackawanna County Prison, 1371 N. Washington Ave., Scranton, PA 18509-2840 (no books or over-sized packages will be accepted by the prison).

- robert Daniels II

Editor's note: Footage from the "Ghosts of the Iraq War" and Good Friday actions can be found, along with video of SOA 11 trial events, at LEPOCO's home on YouTube: www.youtube.com/rhubarbdoom.

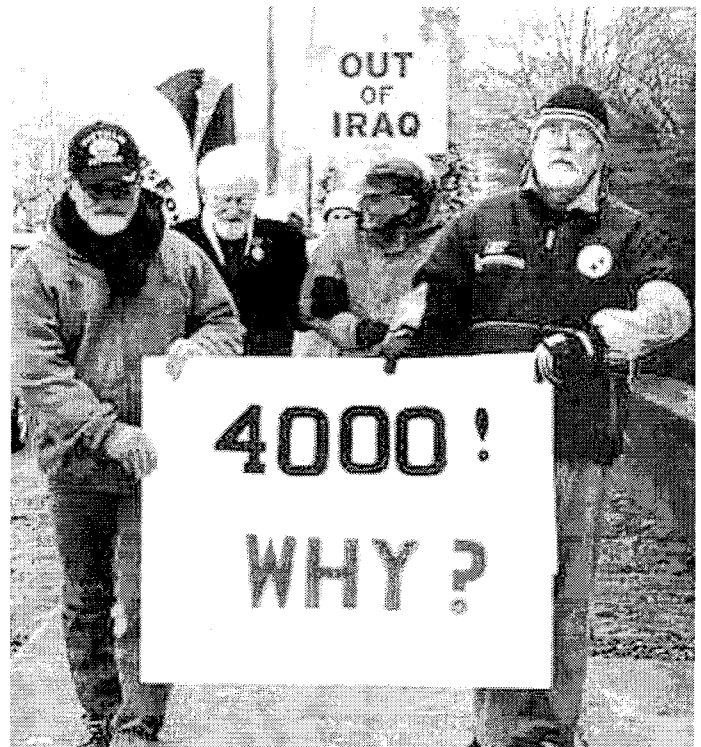


Photo by Susie Ravitz.

Four military veterans lead the march to end the war in Iraq on the sad occasion of the 4000th U.S. soldier having been killed in Iraq. Patrick Roxberry and Bernie Berg carry the lead sign and The Rev. John Clint Fowler and Vince Stravino follow. (See stories on pages 2 and 4.)

4000 U.S. Dead Remembered In Solemn Peace March

On March 23, 2008, four U.S. soldiers in Iraq were killed, and the following day the official death toll for U.S. soldiers was announced: 4000. The Lehigh Valley Peace Coalition, anticipating this important moment, organized a peace gathering in front of the Pennsylvania National Guard Amory in Bethlehem.

At first, 90 people gathered to observe this tragic milestone. Many were holding signs. Some of the messages read, "How many kills per gallon does the U.S. get?" and "1 Victim = Murder; Thousands = Foreign Policy." Another powerful image was an American flag draped across a coffin.

Louise Legun gave a short speech, stating she was furious when she didn't hear "[anything] in the...media about Winter Soldier, and we listened to more lies about the 'surge' working." Despite the lack of media coverage, the anti-war movement is growing: "Longshoreman on the entire west coast...are walking off the job May 1st...[refusing] to load any weapons of war onto ships," said Legun. At the end of her speech, we were all reminded of what Michael Hoffman had said at Muhlenberg College less than a week earlier: once a critical mass is reached, a tipping point will be reached, and the tide will turn.

With those words in mind and the slow, ominous beat of a drum, the silent march began. We walked down Second Avenue, and then west on Broad Street to Rep. Charlie Dent's office. On the way there, we were joined by several people bringing the count to over 100 peace activists. As we marched, many cars drove past beeping their horns in support, or shouting, "I agree!" or, "End the War!" out their windows.

Once at the Congressman's office, a letter was read aloud as copies were being signed amongst the crowd: "We call on you...to end the occupation of [Iraq]. The dead soldiers include...20 from your own district. We therefore call on you...to draft and submit legislation to defund this [occupation]." (The signed letter was delivered to Rep. Dent's office the next day by Guy Gray, Bob and Carmen Riggs, and Peter Christine.)

From here, the group went to the Peace Pole in the Bethlehem Rose Garden, and the names of local fallen soldiers were read aloud. For each name read, a memorial gong rang out into the chilly evening air. The peace gathering was a huge success. As people slowly dispersed, the conversations they were sure to have with family and friends would continue to carry the message of peace, and the need for an end to the Iraq war.

- Matt Schaner

Ask your U.S. representative to co-sponsor HR-5056 (introduced by Rep. Barbara Lee on 1/17/08) which would "provide for the appointment of a high-level United States representative or special envoy for Iran for the purpose of easing tensions and normalizing relations between the United States and Iran." The bill is in the House Committee on Foreign Affairs with 13 co-sponsors.

Michele Mecham, Peter Christine and 30 others braved a pouring rain to vigil for peace on March 19th (five years into the Iraq war), outside Allentown's PA National Guard Armory. The vigil was organized by the Lehigh Valley Peace Coalition. The Allentown Armory Activists vigil there every Friday (4-6 pm).

Photos by Susie Ravitz.



Newsletter of LEPOCO

Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern

313 West Fourth Street

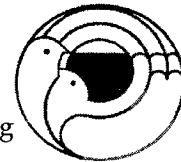
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The *LEPOCO Newsletter* is published 10 times a year by the Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern, a nonviolent, non-profit organization dedicated to peace in all forms.

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Household Membership	\$45
Supporting Member	\$75

Articles/news should be submitted to the address above for consideration for the next issue of the newsletter.

Newsletter Staff: Ellen Buck, Martha Christine, Peter Christine, Peter Crownfield, Fran Dreisbach, Arlene Grow, Mike Lawton, Tom Lloyd, Bob Riggs, Tom Stinnett, Joan Stolz, Joan Stone, Nancy Tate, Marion Thorne, Jeff Vitelli, Hans Wuerth, and Ursula Wuerth.

Thanks to all the people who staple, fold and label the newsletter each month.

LEPOCO Steering Committee: Addison Bross, Peter Christine, robert Daniels II (ex-officio), Julius Iwantsch (co-treasurer), Holly Kent, Mimi Lang (ex-officio), Michelle Mecham, Janet Ney (co-treasurer), Sue Ravitz, Nancy Tate (ex-officio).

Potluck / Popcorn & Politics

Friday, May 2nd, 7 pm: The Ghosts of Abu Ghraib

A First Friday Film projected on the big screen at the LEPOCO Peace Center.

This documentary examines of the prisoner abuse scandal involving U.S. soldiers and detainees at Iraq's infamous Abu Ghraib prison in the fall of 2003. The film questions whether the tragedy occurred due to the aberrant behavior of "a few bad eggs" or because of defined government policy. Directed by Rory Kennedy. 78 minutes. 2008.

Please bring a snack or beverage to share.

Friday, June 6th, 7 pm: Gaza Strip

A First Friday Film projected on the big screen at the LEPOCO Peace Center.

Director James Longley (*Iraq in Fragments*) traveled to the contested Palestinian land and filmed the lives of refugees struggling to make normal lives out of an oppressive situation. Stripped of much of the politics of the conflict this impressionistic documentary reminds us of the humans caught in the midst of the battles between governments. 74 minutes. 2002.

Please bring a snack or beverage to share.

Sunday, June 15, 6 pm: Don MacRae on "Today in Venezuela & Colombia"

Don MacRae visited Venezuela with Witness for Peace (WFP) in late March and will be visiting Colombia in late May with another WFP delegation. On the first delegation they explored the economic polarization in Venezuela, especially in the areas of health and education. On the delegation to Colombia they will be exploring the impact of coal mining in northern Colombia. Don has been spending a lot of time in Latin America over the past ten years, including five trips to Cuba and many visits to Mexico.

Please bring some food to share for the potluck dinner at 6 pm. The presentation and discussion should begin around 6:30 pm.



A LEPOCO Theatre Party

Touchstone Theatre in collaboration with the Lehigh Valley Black African Heritage History Project is presenting, "A River Flows: Stories, Songs, and a Celebration of the Lehigh Valley Black Experience," May 30th through June 14th.

The LEPOCO Fundraising Committee felt this was the perfect occasion for holding another theatre party. We will attend the opening night performance of "A River Flows" in Easton.

The pre-play reception (with refreshments) will be at the home of Art and Susie Ravitz near Easton, at 6 pm. We will travel together to the 8 pm, play at the Third Street Alliance, downtown Easton.

The play, written by Linda Parris-Bailey, is the result of a three-year oral history-gathering project. Mark McKenna directs the play and Dwayne Evans is the musical director. Dr. Ysaye M. Barnwell (formerly of Sweet Honey In the Rock) arranged the music. Among the list of 25 performers you will find the names: Phyllis Alexander, Roberta Meek, Peggy Pettitt, and Grace Spruiell.

A donation of \$20 (\$12 limited income) will cover the reception and the play. You can make a reservation for the theatre party by contacting LEPOCO at 610-691-8730 or lepoco@fast.net; or send a check to LEPOCO, 313 w. 4TH St., Bethlehem, PA 18015.

The play will be performed again in Easton on May 31, in Bethlehem on June 6 and 7, and June 13 and 14 in Allentown. If you cannot attend the Theatre Party, but want to see the play, contact Touchstone Theatre for a reservation.

- Nancy Tate

Peacenik Outdoor Celebration

The Annual Lehigh Valley and Pocono Peacenik Outdoor Celebration Breakfast Extravaganza and Scenic Tour (by bike or foot) of a most beautiful and historic area, all shared with a group of uniformly interesting, idealistic, and somewhat eccentric persons, will be soon upon us. Yes, we are talking about the LEPOCO Annual Bike/Walk-A-Thon which is scheduled for Saturday, June 7th.

Enclosed with this newsletter is a brochure that describes the event, gives the information on the beneficiaries, and also serves as a Pledge Sheet.

This is an opportunity to inform others about the work of LEPOCO and help raise money to keep the work going. It is also an opportunity to come out on a Saturday morning, meet friends, share food, and experience the great outdoors and rich history of the area.

We hope to see you there at 9:00 am. Please call the office if you are interested in helping to staff the event.

- David Rose

Exit Strategy: After 5 Years of War

On March 19th, the 5th anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, a panel of speakers came together at Muhlenberg College to discuss the events of the war, and to propose an exit strategy. The event, sponsored by the Muhlenberg College Democrats, and Campus Progress, featured speakers Brian Mello, Asst. Professor of Political Science at Muhlenberg, David Halperin, from the Center for American Progress, and Michael Hoffman, co-founder of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW).

Hoffman stated the soldiers, stuck in a war with murky objectives, are left wondering who or what they are fighting for. To them, the real enemy has been vaguely defined, obscured through the haze of war, and boundaries between right and wrong have been replaced with survival instincts. According to the speakers, the soldiers' personal mission consists not of vanquishing terrorism or spreading the dream democracy, but of ensuring their own survival and that of their buddies. They have one objective: get home safe.

Michael Hoffman said the vast majority of people in the U.S. want to see an end to this war. He demanded that Democrats stand up for our country, because every bill they pass to "support the troops" financially, ends up extending the war indefinitely.

During the questions, one person asked, "If we leave Iraq, what's going to happen? Are we sacrificing their sovereignty?" Halperin said that "just pulling out the troops, on whatever timetable is not enough. We need more political work, and [fewer] guns." Hoffman said he is opposed to *any* permanent U.S. presence. "The longer we stay there, the bigger the power vacuum will be once we leave. There will be bloodshed regardless of what we do."

The panel disagreed over the real reason for entering this war. Halperin believes the current administration just didn't like Sadaam because he tried to kill Bush I. Mello took a more optimistic view: "I think... there was a deeper constructionist view. Change foreign policy, fix the Middle East, Saddam was an excuse... The U.S. military can topple a regime..., it's the rebuilding no one knows how to do." Hoffman disagreed, saying the war "was all for oil... It's all about who controls the (energy) reserves."

Mike Hoffman also reported from the Winter Soldier: Iraq and Afghanistan conference/hearings sponsored by IVAW outside Washington, DC, March 14-16. He was there with 200 Iraq combat veterans who testified, with courage, about the realities of the war they experienced. He said the gathering received coverage from the BBC, and Japanese and Arab networks, but no major U.S. media attention.

The message of this panel was simple, and powerful: This war has lost meaning, and an exit strategy needs to be formed now. (You can view the panelists'

presentations and the discussion that followed at www.youtube.com/rhubarbdoom.)

- Matt Schaner

Weekly Peace Vigils

Bethlehem: 4-5 pm, Thursdays

3rd & Wyandotte Sts. south Bethlehem

Contact: Vince Stravino 610-216-8103

Allentown: Noon-1 pm, Fridays

Federal Courthouse, 5th & Hamilton Sts

Contact: Rev. John Clint Fowler 610-746-5013

and

4-6 pm, Fridays

PA National Guard Armory, 15th & Allen Sts.

Contact: Allentown Armory Activists

Easton: 10-11 am, Saturdays

Centre Square

Contact: Reggie Regrut, 908-859-5632

Please attend as often as you are able!

Some Good Peace Activist News:

+++ Veterans For Peace (VFP) activists, including John Grant from the Philadelphia area, have established a presence in the Fort Stewart, Georgia, area, distributing free DVDs like "Sir! No Sir!"; handing out GI Rights cards and VFP literature; holding meetings and offering counseling. +++ 10 Grandmothers for Peace, ranging in age from 57 to 80, were arrested March 17th in Atlanta, Georgia, while trying to enlist in the U.S. Army (www.commondreams.org, 3/18/08). +++ Local people held peace signs and passed out "It's the war economy, stupid," flyers at political rallies where Bill Clinton and Barak Obama spoke. +++ Faramarz Farbod, an Iranian-American who has taught political science at Moravian College for many years and has spoken at many local peace events, spoke at Lehigh University on April 10th about "Understanding Iran and the Implications of Another Unjustified War." +++ The Brandywine Peace Community held a Circus for Justice & Peace outside the Democratic National Debate at the Constitution Center in Philadelphia, on April 16, with clowns, minstrels, jugglers, rappers, drummers, puppeteers and demonstrators. +++ The Lehigh Valley Chapter of Veterans for Peace will be taking their message on t-shirts ("Stop the War" and "4000+ Military Deaths") to local malls on Thursday, May 1, to help raise public awareness that there is still a war going on. For more information contact Louise Legun at 610-437-5314. +++ The Allentown Armory Activists are planning an Arts Festival for June 14th at the South Mountain Reservoir Park, Allentown. And, they are having a May Day Peace-Nic at the same park on Saturday, May 3, noon to 6 pm, at which some of the planning for the June 14th event will take place at 3 pm. The park is four blocks south of Emmaus Ave. on 10th St. For more information see www.myspace.com/armoryactivists.

Swords Into Plowshares

Bruce Gagnon, passionately experienced organizer for peace, author of *Come Together Right Now*, and editor of *Space Alert! Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space*, urged us to transform the military-industrial complex into a solar energy economy at the LEPOCO Annual Dinner March 29.

Gagnon said he honed his organizing skills in high school as a Young Republican for Nixon in 1968, but was persuaded by peace and justice vigilers outside Travis Air Force Base during the Vietnam War when he was a GI stationed there. After a time in college he left to organize for the United Farm Workers union in Florida. From 1983-1998, Gagnon and the Florida Coalition for Peace & Justice studied the arms race and promoted alternatives.

Citing sources such as the Rand Corporation, Steve Rosen, Holly Sklar, the Federal Budget, Vision 2020, and Noam Chomsky, Gagnon exposed euphemisms



Bruce Gagnon speaking at LEPOCO's Annual Dinner on March 29th.
Photo by Susie Ravitz.

like "Security Exports" and "Full Spectrum Dominance," and the bad neighbor policies funded by the secret "black budget" of the Pentagon. At Space Command Central, said Gagnon, the USA's lawyers created the phrase "weapon of selective destruction" to circumvent the 1967 Outer Space Treaty which states "no WMDs in outer space." Gagnon outlined the high-level USA policies intent on suppressing people who resist the US hegemony, specifically those in "the non-integrating gaps" of the Middle East, Central Asia, and Africa. Chewing up funds meant for Social Security, Medicare, and what's left of welfare, the Pentagon & Co. spit out weapons and space technology, the #1 export of the USA.

Only a labor and social justice conversion to a solar centered economy will do, concluded Gagnon, who likened his job to a spider that does not intel-

lectualize about spinning a web, "My job is making sure my son has a future and I'm never going to quit."

Comments from the audience about the upcoming presidential election elicited doubts that candidates will remove themselves from the industrial-military complex. But Gagnon gave hope, alluded to Frederick Douglas and Eugene Debs, and said his own vote was for Cynthia McKinney, for she had always been interested in his work for the Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space.

- Monica McAgnon

Editor's Note: Bruce Gagnon's speech at the dinner can be viewed at www.youtube.com/rhubarbdoom and is available on loan as a DVD or as a cassette tape from LEPOCO. The text of the speech is posted at www.lepoco.org. Thank you to Guy Grey & Robert Daniels II for the recordings and to Matt Schaner & Nancy Tate for the transcription.



THANK
YOU
MIKE!

Photo by Susie Ravitz.

Mike Lawton received a standing ovation at the dinner in appreciation for his seven years of dedicated work for peace at LEPOCO. His expression in this photograph conveys his surprise at and appreciation for the heartfelt support of the audience. Mike, as Janet Ney shared in announcing his decision to leave the staff position at LEPOCO, has called most LEPOCO members on the phone many times asking them to help with newsletter collating, to staff a LEPOCO festival table, or to write an article for the newsletter. And, he was often the calm voice that answered LEPOCO's phone. Some of Mike's special contributions to local peace work were his persistent search for annual dinner speakers, many colorful and professionally lettered signs, the holiday-light peace signs, a colorful wooden peace sign and new LEPOCO banner for the office's front window, and creative shelving to make good use of the office's limited space. Whatever his new pursuits, we wish him well and hope he will still have some time to write a few of his insightful reports for this newsletter and to join Bethlehem peace vigils and other local events. Mike, many thanks from all your LEPOCO friends.

LEPOCO Art Raffle 2008

Thanks to all who donated beautiful items to the LEPOCO Art Raffle and to those who bought tickets. This is a very important part of the fund-raising of the Annual Dinner, and this year was a success, bringing in over \$500.

The 2008 artwork pieces, along with the names of those who won them are as follows.

Monica and Ray Sommerville donated a coffee/ tea set of handmade pottery from Sommerville Studios in New York. That was won by Brian Kraft.

Donna Hartmann donated a Peace "Snuglet", stuffed animal she made, which was won by William Berry.

Mary Jo Hill won Lee Buck's hand-turned wooden bowl.

Maura Jones of Emmaus is the proud new owner of a neo-primitive mixed media construction by Frank Sabatino.

"The War" is a construction made by the late Morris Berman and donated by his daughter, Ilona Marmer. Donna Morris won "The War."

Carla Mannix of Reading claimed the watercolor print of Bethlehem done by Gene Mater.

Amy Frey took home the lovely flannel rag-edged quilt made by Maria Weick.

Rosemary Towne will be able to take a guest to Godfrey Daniels Coffeehouse in Bethlehem, having won two tickets for a concert there.

Janet Glassman won a crystal and glass necklace and earring set made by Marcie Lightwood.

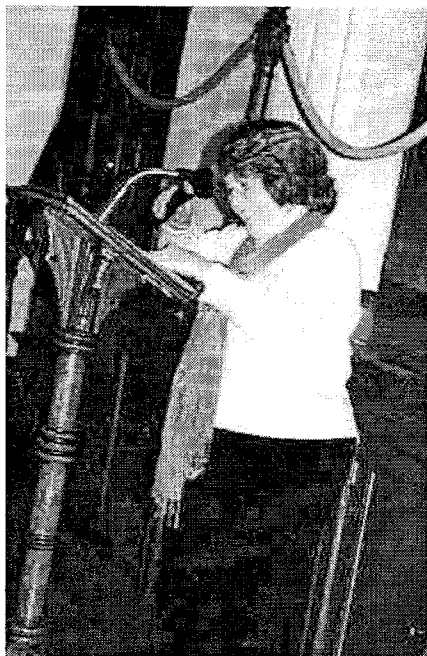
Thanks again for the participation of so many generous people.

- Marcie Lightwood

Editor's Note: And thank you to Marcie Lightwood for organizing this year's Art Raffle!

Marcie Lightwood enjoys announcing the Art Raffle drawing at the Annual Dinner.

Photo by Susie Ravitz



Home...Home...Home

While this little piggy went to market
And this little piggy stayed Home
And this little piggy went
Wee, wee, wee, all the way Home
Where it was ever so humble
There's no place like Home*
And people came Home again, Home again Jiggity-jig
Where we kept the Home fires burning
For Home is the sailor
Home from the sea**
And the Ladybug, Ladybug
Flies away Home.

Home...Home...Home

A place for:

Comfort

Security

A necessary sanctuary:

For nourishment

And community.

For the peace makers of the Lehigh Valley,
LEPOCO is Home.

We are grateful to:

Fran and Susie and Arty and Peter,

Al and Edith and Glen

Who had the insight in 1965

To begin to build

A home for peace.

So today we have...

A sanctuary...

A community...

A place where we are nourished...

A place where we find companions

To join us in mourning:

5 years of War,

Untold numbers of Iraqis dead and displaced,

4000 U.S. soldiers killed in Iraq.

Home...Home...Home

Where we love is home

Home that our feet may leave

But not our hearts***

A band of angels coming after me

Coming for to carry me home...

Keep the Home fires burning

While your hearts are yearning

Though your lads (and lasses) are far away

They dream of Home.

Let's bring them

Home...Home...Home.

- Mimi Lang

LEPOCO Annual Dinner 3/29/08

*John Payne, "Clari, the Maid of Milan"

** Robert Louis Stevenson, "Underwoods, Requiem"

***Oliver Wendell Holmes, "Homesick in Heaven"

Bright Morning Star Rocked Our Spirits

In 1978, after an enlightening discussion on the disastrous effects of nuclear bombs with a friend, Tom Hill, I too, joined LEPOCO. Within a month I drove Interstate 80 to the University of Chicago to attend the first convention for the Mobilization for Survival (a national network that worked against nuclear weapons and nuclear power for over a decade). I met many people, famous for their commitment to the peace movement, who staffed literature tables, made speeches, and urged resolutions.

But my heart and soul were changed forever by the stage presence, the music, the lyrics, and the antics of two performers, Charlie King and Court Dorsey. Charlie and Court would later team with Marcia Taylor, Ken Giles, George Fulginiti-Shakar, and Cheryl Fox, to create the politically accurate and, at times, necessarily irreverent, cabaret/musical act known as Bright Morning Star.

I was blessed and re-energized when Bright Morning Star performed in Bethlehem on March 16. It was great to see them still passionate and relevantly playing to the issues of today as part of their reunion tour.

We must never forget their great musical contributions to the peace and justice movement. Emma Goldman said, "If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution." To this I add, "If I can't sing, or sing along." Thank you Bright Morning Star for helping us carry it on.

- Reggie Regrut

Editor's Note: Thank you also to the 100+ people who generously supported the Bright Morning Star concert, to Wesley United Methodist Church for the beautiful concert setting, and to all who helped host these lively musicians.

Boycotting War Taxes

Eight war tax resisters gathered outside the IRS building in Bethlehem on April 4th, the 40th anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination. An excerpt from Dr. King's "Declaration of Independence from the War in Vietnam" framed our pledge to sign the 2008 War Tax Boycott: "A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death. America, the richest and most powerful nation in the world, can well lead the way in this revolution of values. There is nothing, except a tragic death wish, to prevent us from re-ordering our priorities, so that the pursuit of peace will take precedence over the pursuit of war."

The 2008 War Tax Boycott is described by its sponsor, the National War Tax Coordinating Committee, as a "people's campaign to defund the war." Federal income taxes are a primary source of funding for the Iraq war, which currently costs Americans \$12 billion monthly. The Boycott urges resisters to withhold some or all of

their taxes, and re-direct that money to social justice programs.

Eloquent statements were read at the demonstration. Some excerpts follow:

"My conscience is violated every time a substantial part of my taxes are devoted to funding President Bush's war." (Bob Riggs)

"A few years ago I realized that my government in my name had killed or was integral in the deaths of millions of innocent people in places like Iran, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Haiti, Palestine, and now Iraq and Afghanistan. I do this tax resistant action...to cleanse my complicity to this past immorality, and show my resistance to future support of our militaristic dominant actions throughout the world." (Tim Chadwick)

"It is unconscionable that the federal government continues to neglect the social needs of the people of the United States in its efforts to dominate other countries. The money I refuse to give to the IRS will be used to support a local food bank in its effort to support the nutritional needs of people who cannot afford adequate food in the richest country in the world." (Mimi Lang)

Our public witness concluded with the signing of the 2008 War Tax Boycott by Maria Weick, Mimi Lang, Tim Chadwick, Nancy Tate, Bob Riggs, Clarke and Ardis Chapman, and Anna Maria Caldara. Gladys Carter attended in support.

A segment highlighting the demonstration aired that evening on Channel 69, WFMZ-TV. For more information on the national campaign, see www.wartaxboycott.org.

- Anna Maria Caldara

Rebates For Peace

We are told that we will get a "rebate" after we have paid our federal income tax. Now April 15th is past and we are anxiously waiting for that \$300 (or more). The question is - what do we spend it on?

Here is an idea that you knew was coming. Give some of it to LEPOCO. Since I am on the Fundraising Committee I know that LEPOCO is hurting a bit financially. So keep this idea in mind. Many thanks!

- Tom Lloyd

Tax Day 2008

On April 15th, 25 local peace activists helped distribute almost 2000 copies of the "Where Your Income Tax Money Really Goes" flyer at local post offices. Produced by the War Resisters League, the flyer features a large red and black pie chart showing that for FY 2009 54% of the U.S. Federal Budget will go to the military (current and past). People who have just mailed their tax returns are pretty receptive to taking this flyer. Indeed, at the Lehigh Valley Post Office early that evening several people went out of their way to thank us for giving them the flyer. Thank you leafletters! If you would like a copy visit LEPOCO or see www.warresisters.org.

Death Penalty Conference —

Susquehanna University (Selinsgrove, PA) held a conference on the death penalty March, 26-27. The conference featured many different speakers including the following.

Mary Achilles who has helped murder victims' family members deal with the process of going to court. She stressed the needs of the victim and stated that victims who are against the death penalty are often left out of the prosecution process.

Exoneree Jay C. Smith spoke about his experience of being cleared and released from death row after a detective's notebooks were made available to his defense. His story is one of many that needs to be shared more widely in order to expose the injustices in the death penalty system.

Deborah Fleischaker presented research from the ABA showing how inadequate the system is to deal with capital punishment. The research looked at eight states that have capital punishment (including Pennsylvania) and evaluated 97 criteria that should be part of a fairly functioning process. As it turns out Pennsylvania is only in accordance with 7 of the 97 criteria.

The question of the morality of the death penalty was presented by two religious scholars, often using the same texts to either justify or question the death penalty.

The conference presented many of the arguments about the death penalty that have been presented before, but unfortunately this barbaric practice has not yet been abolished.

- Christina Stegura

Local Anti-Death Penalty Activism in April

Thank you to Christina Stegura and Calvin Smiley, Lehigh University students who did an excellent job interning this semester with the Lehigh Valley Committee Against State Killing (L.V.-CASK), promoting activism against the death penalty. One of their accomplishments was organizing a debate on capital punishment between death penalty advocate, Pennsylvania State Representative Douglas Reichley and Jim Moreno, a public defender in the federal courts for

SUPPORT LEPOCO!

Enclosed are my yearly LEPOCO dues of \$_____.
(\$35 individual; \$45 household; \$5 limited income; \$75 supporting)

I am also enclosing an extra donation of \$_____.

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_____ monthly/_____ quarterly pledge of \$_____.

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Return to: LEPOCO, 313 W. 4TH St., Bethlehem, PA 18015.

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those on death row. The debate was held on April 13th at Lehigh, sponsored by several student groups and attended by students and community members.

Earlier in the month, the "Voices of Hope, Agents of Change" tour brought two anti-death penalty speakers to three local venues on April 1st. Juan Melendez spoke with power and deep feeling about his experience of spending 18 years of his life on death row for a crime he did not commit; and, the Rev. Walter Everett told the moving story of his difficult path to forgiveness after he lost his son to murder. Walter Everett and Juan Melendez spoke at Northampton County Community College, Moravian College and Wesley United Methodist Church. Thank you to Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, the ACLU of PA, and the Pennsylvania Moratorium Coalition for organizing their visit to the Lehigh Valley as part of a tour that included visits to communities all across our state.

Nuclear Nugget

Round 2 of Nuclear Loan Guarantee Battle

In December 2007 Congress voted to authorize \$18.5 billion in taxpayer-backed loan guarantees for the construction of new atomic reactors. That authorization is only good through FY 2009, so now DOE is pushing to extend its authority to issue loan guarantees through FY 2011. The House and Senate Appropriation Subcommittees on Energy and Water are already discussing the issue. Take action today. Tell your senators and representatives that you do not support nuclear power as a solution to global warming! Demand that the authorization period for nuclear loan guarantees not be extended.

TALKING POINTS: *The climate crisis requires that we use the fastest, safest, cleanest methods of generating electricity. Nuclear power fails in comparison to renewables and energy efficiency on all these criteria.

*We can achieve a carbon-free, nuclear-free energy future, which will benefit everyone, but we need to start moving in that direction now. Demand policy that supports energy conservation and renewable energy technology.

*Nuclear power is already the most subsidized form of electricity generation. Demand that government give subsidy priority to renewable energy.

A Related Nuclear Note: LEPOCO recently endorsed statements issued by NIRS (Nuclear Information and Resource Service) opposing the construction of new nuclear reactors as a means of addressing the climate crisis. The statements affirm that, "Available renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies are faster, cheaper, safer and cleaner strategies for reducing greenhouse emissions than nuclear power."

Individuals are also invited to sign the statement on-line at www.nirs.org.

The Struggle Shared

... whereas formerly it was enough to wish for peace in one's own land, or even just in one's neighborhood, today we speak of world peace. This is only appropriate. The fact of human interdependence is so explicit now: The only peace it is meaningful to speak of is world peace.

- The Dalai Lama
On Peace and Disarmament
from *Ethics For the New Millennium*

ELLSBERGS TO LEAD RETREAT AT KIRKRIDGE

- Immersed as we are in the day-to-day struggle for peace and justice, we all have need to replenish our spirits from time to time in meaningful retreat. We in LEPOCO are fortunate to have in our proximity, the bucolic mountain setting of Kirkridge, which runs an ongoing agenda of peace justice programs. LEPOCO and Kirkridge have long shared winding trails along the path to peace. The late John Oliver Nelson, one of LEPOCO's founding members, was the founder of Kirkridge. LEPOCO's first meeting was held at Kirkridge, and over the years LEPOCO has held many of our own retreats in Kirkridge's beautifully accommodating lodges.

Upcoming at Kirkridge is a momentous weekend, May 16-18, when Daniel and Robert Ellsberg will lead a retreat on "Experiments in Truth and Conscience." Daniel Ellsberg, who released the Pentagon Papers, germinating some of the mass opposition to the Vietnam war; and his son, Robert Ellsberg, publisher of Orbis Books, and former editor of the Catholic Worker newspaper, will share stories of witnessing for peace, and reflections on facing the moral challenges of yesterday and today.

Daniel was quoted in the program for our recent Annual Dinner, comparing the Iraq war to My Lai, the village in Vietnam where a massacre took place that is remembered as so representative of that war: "The Iraq war is My Lai writ large: on a scale of a thousand..." said Ellsberg before he participated in a die-in in San Francisco on March 19, 2008, the fifth anniversary of the beginning of the Iraq war and occupation. (March 16th was the 40th anni-

versary of the massacre of My Lai.) "By lying here - obstructing for moments or hours, business as usual - fifty of us, a hundred, a thousand across the country, do not have the power to end this war. But we are trying to show that we as a people - if we have the will and determination - do have that power: the power to change ourselves and history. As a people we have the power to end this war. And that is what we must do."

For further inspiration, join the Ellsburgs at Kirkridge on the 16th of May. Cost for the program is \$200, room and board \$175. Contact Kirkridge at 610-588-1793 or see www.kirkridge.org.

CONFERENCE ON PEACE IN SPACE - Readers who attended the LEPOCO Annual Dinner are now alerted to the role that space-based military technology is playing in the current war in Iraq. Our speaker, Bruce Gagnon, of Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space, spoke in horrifying detail about the links between surveillance satellites in the stratosphere, and humvees on the ground. Unfortunately, most of the world, including much of the peace movement, is not aware of the dangers of space-based warfare and the role it plays in the race to protect U.S. corporate empire domination of the planet and its resources.

For many years, the U.S. Strategic Command (StratCom) has been the site from which a nuclear war would be staged. Since 9/11, however, StratCom's mission has expanded to include oversight of any global "First Strikes," the National Security Agency's warrantless wiretaps in the "War on Terror," and Ballistic Missile Defenses. Global

Network suggests that StratCom, at Offutt Air Force Base, near Omaha, Nebraska, is the most dangerous place on the face of the earth.

Accordingly, Global Network held an organizing conference in Omaha, April 11-13, to shine a light on just what StratCom has become. For more information see www.space4peace.org or www.nebraskansforpeace.org.

CELEBRATE RALPH DIGIA'S LIFE

- Ralph DiGia, World War II conscientious objector, lifelong pacifist and social justice activist, and staffer for 52 years at the War Resisters League (WRL), died on February 1. He was 93.

DiGia was "without pretensions, one who wore his radicalism in his life, not on his sleeve," said his long-time WRL colleague David McReynolds. DiGia's activism took him through countless arrests and a stretch in federal prison, thousands of meetings and hundreds of demonstrations, hunger strikes, a bicycle ride across Europe, relief work in Bosnia, and not a few New York Mets baseball games, where he remained seated - on principle - during the national anthem.

The amazing span of Ralph DiGia's peace and justice work is shown by this sampling: born in the Bronx, he attended a 1927 rally for Italian anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti; he was arrested more than once for taking shelter during "civil defense" drills in the early 1960s and, he was arrested in Albany, Georgia, in 1964, for participating in a racially integrated parade as part of the Quebec to Washington to Guantanamo Peace Walk; he was arrested on the White House lawn, demanding nuclear disarmament in 1978. Having retired as a paid staffer in 1994, Ralph continued to volunteer at the WRL office through his 93rd birthday in December 2007.

A "Celebration of Ralph DiGia's Life" will be held at the Theater for the New City, 155 First Ave. (between 9th & 10th Sts.), New York City, on Saturday, May 10, 2-5 pm.

- Jeff Vitelli

Bits & Pieces

Ⓔ "Body of War," the new documentary about antiwar hero, Tomas Young, a 26-year-old veteran who was shot and paralyzed after serving five days in Iraq, opens Fri., May 2nd, at the Ritz at the Bourse, 4th St. (between Chestnut & Walnut), Philadelphia.

Phil Donahue, who co-directed the film, will be at the 7:30 pm, showing on May 2, for a Q&A session. For information and reservations call 215-925-4535. It may only be at the theater for a week, unless there is unusual public interest. Will any Lehigh Valley theater show this important film?

Ⓔ If you are a mom, or know a mom, one soon-to-be mom is asking others to join her in using the occasion of Mothers Day to call on United States senators to support science-based solutions to the **climate crisis**. Upon watching the collapse of the ice shelf seven times the size of Manhattan recently, this mother, Diana Dascalu-Joffe, wondered what kind of world will be greeting her new child in August. She decided to take action by asking mothers (and others) to draw the outline of their child's hands on paper and send the drawing along with a message urging action on climate change to their U.S. senator. You can find talking points and more information at www.1sky.org.

Ⓔ Over 25 people greeted presidential candidate, John McCain, outside the Lehigh Valley Hospital in Allentown, when he came to speak there about **health care**, on April 30th. Most signs carried messages like "Health Care is a Right Not a Privilege," but at least one large sign also said "Bring Our Troops Home Now."

Ⓔ On March 29th, Monica Willard, United Religions Initiative representative to the United Nations, and Jackie Tice, founder of the All Nations Peace concert programs, hosted a program to observe the closing of the **Season of Nonviolence**, a 64-day campaign to promote the peaceful, nonviolent practices of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The Season of Nonviolence runs from Jan. 30 to April 4, each year, to

transform the anniversaries of the assassinations of Gandhi and King into a period of constructive service and advocacy of their work.

Ⓔ It was sad to see that Rep. Charlie Dent was the only one of the six local representatives listed in *The Morning Call's* "How Area Lawmakers Voted in U.S. House," to oppose the **Global Debt Relief** bill. The bill had been approved 285-132, on April 16th in the H.ouse. The Jubilee Act, as the bill is also called, is a first step toward qualifying up to 25 countries for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative run by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The freed-up funds must be used for improving living conditions, democratizing governments and combating terrorism. When people in Haiti are eating dried mud cookies (*The Morning Call*, 1/29/08) and rioting over high food prices (*The Express-Times*, 4/10/08), it is deeply troubling that Rep. Dent failed to support this "least-we-can-do" legislation.

Ⓔ Joe DeRaymond is recovering at home from recent surgery that followed quickly after his return from two months of **solidarity peace work in El Salvador**. Just prior to his return a very insightful piece he wrote about El Salvador's upcoming 2009 elections appeared at www.dissentvoice.org on March 28th. It is a very helpful piece for learning more about current conditions in El Salvador.



Ⓔ The **Hungry for Justice! Close the SOA Fast**, was held April 23-26. This coordinated national action to Close the SOA/WHINSEC, was joined locally by Tim Chadwick, who fasted, and by over 10 others who vigiled outside the U.S. Federal Building, Allentown, on April 25, 4-5:30 pm. Participants in the Fast, organized by SOA Watch, were demanding a dramatic shift in U.S. foreign policy and the closure of the controversial U.S. Army School of the Americas, renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation.

The local action was undertaken in solidarity with Art Landis of Perkasio (currently serving 30 days in Lackawanna County Prison, Scranton, for "crossing the line" at the SOA in November 2007), former "prisoner of conscience," Joe DeRaymond of Freemansburg (who served 90 days in

2006 for "crossing the line" at the SOA in 2005), and the people of Latin America who have been affected and oppressed by those trained at the SOA. For more information see www.soaw.org.

Ⓔ Sam Smith, a student at Nazareth High School, was one of several local young people discussed in a front page story in *The Morning Call* on April 25th, about the harassment of gay students and what they are doing to claim their right to safety and respect. Sam Smith had organized a vigil in Nazareth's Center Square for April 25th, as part of the national observance of the **Day of Silence**. The Day of Silence, now in its 12th year of observance, is meant to call attention to the harassment that gay, lesbian and transgendered students face in their schools.

Ⓔ An exhibit of **photographs by John Isaac** will be on display at the Banana Factory in Bethlehem through June 29th. Isaac was chief of the U.N.'s Photo Unit from 1978 to 1998 and this display of his work includes photographs from Afghanistan, from the famine in Ethiopia, from the Pol Pot killing fields of Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, from the Rwanda genocide, from the war in Bosnia and from Kuwait during the Gulf War. John Isaac will lecture about the exhibit at 4 pm, on Thurs., May 17th. Call 610-332-1300 for more info.

Ⓔ **Kirkridge**, where LEPOCO was founded in 1965, is planning a homecoming event to celebrate its peace-making legacy June 13-14. Under the theme, "Witnessing for Peace," the Rev. Jo Clare Hartsig, Cindy Crouner and Janet Chisholm will share their stories and reflections from the different eras of Kirkridge history. The program will run from 4 pm, Friday through Saturday lunch. You can RSVP to Jean Richardson at 610-599-4604 by May 31st.

Ⓔ The 2nd Annual **Mothers Day Walk and Talk for Peace** will take place in Doylestown, Sat., May 10th. The group, Mothers and Others for Peace and Justice Education is taking seriously the original intent of Mothers Day - the observance of a day to celebrate peace. The public is invited to gather at the Bucks County Courthouse, N. Main & Court Sts. to begin the walk at 1:30 pm. The walk, accompanied by a bagpiper, will proceed to the Mount Carmel Peace Garden where there will be a drum circle and a talk by peace educator, Christa Tinari. For more info. call 215-822-3561.

Bits & Pieces

☪ If you want to have a rerun of any of the dishes served at LEPOCO's Annual Dinner in March, please contact the Peace Center and we'll be glad to send you a copy of the **favored recipe**.

☪ The LEPOCO **Steering Committee** is in transition. We welcome the newest member, Mimi Lang. robert Daniels II recently moved from an elected position to an ex officio position on the Committee. Susie Ravitz has agreed to continue serving temporarily (she had wanted to retire at the end of her latest two-year term). And, while Holly Kent is still listed as a member of the Committee, her work and her research keeps her from participating very often. She is hopeful we will find a replacement for her. So, there are two positions on the Committee that need to be filled. Contact LEPOCO if you or anyone you know would be interested in serving in this important capacity.

☪ Scranton FOR (Fellowship of Reconciliation) held a **Forum for the Common Good** on April 17, described as an evening of sharing and exchange about ideas for a vision of government that stands for the interest of all its people.

☪ Congratulations to IFCO (the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization) as they celebrate 40 years of work assisting the poor and giving a voice to the voiceless. Locally, people have supported and participated in the Pastors for Peace humanitarian aid caravans organized by IFCO, many of the caravans traveled to Cuba. They have also sent such caravans to Chiapas, Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, to the Lubicon Lake Indians in Alberta, Canada, and to New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. The Rev. Lucius Walker, IFCO's executive director, spoke for LEPOCO's Annual Dinner in 1997. They still need our support: IFCO, 412 W. 145th St., NYC 10031 or see www.ifconews.org.

☪ LEPOCO's Peace Singers had the privilege of singing for Moravian College's **Rally for a Hate-Free America**, on April 17th. The program involved faculty, students who wrote essays on the theme of how to build a

hate-free country, a drumming circle, and a former hate group member who is now working to end such groups. Thank you to Sharon Brown who has organized many important programs at Moravian to address the pressing issues of justice.

☪ **Bethlehem's Peace Pole** in the Rose Garden Park at Union Blvd., and 8th Ave., needs an attentive person or two to weed the perennials that live at the foot of the pole. Any such person (if they like) could also add a few other flowers to grace this constant peace witness that is often a focus of public peace gatherings.

☪ On May 11, the **Brandywine Peace Community** will hold their monthly Potluck Supper & Program at University Lutheran Church, 3637 Chestnut St., Philadelphia. They will celebrate the Catonsville 9, who on May 17, 1968, burned draft files in protest of the Vietnam War. They will show "Investigation of a Flame," share readings from Daniel Berrigan's "The Trial of the Catonsville 9" and discuss "Resistance, Then & Now." Please bring a main dish, salad or dessert to share. Call 610-544-1818 or see www.brandywinepeace.com for more info.

☪ As protests occur around the world due to high food prices, we can remember the **Mexican protesters** who

blocked the bridge linking Ciudad Juarez and El Paso, Texas, on January 1, of this year. They were protesting the opening of Mexico's market to U.S. corn and sugar as part of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Farmers and their supporters held protests all across Mexico that day, arguing that Mexico was not doing enough to protect them from cheaper U.S. commodities. Of course, those cheaper commodities will drive more Mexican farmers from their land and decrease the production of locally grown food. The lifting of tariffs protecting sugar, corn, milk and beans had been delayed for 15 years under NAFTA and the farmers believe that protection should continue. (Source: *The Morning Call*, 1/2/08)



Check out the LEPOCO Website at www.lepoco.org. There is a great calendar maintained by robert Daniels II with information on upcoming events.

MEETINGS... MEETINGS... MEETINGS... MEETINGS... ETC.

Mon., May 5, 1 pm: Work Day for **Peace Camp Mailings** at the Peace Center. Help welcomed. Call for more information.

Mondays, May 5 & June 2, 7 pm: LEPOCO **Steering Committee** meeting at the Peace Center.

Tues., May 6, 7 pm: **Americas Solidarity Group** meeting at the LEPOCO Peace Center.
Thursdays, May 8 & June 12, 7 pm: **Veterans for Peace** meetings at the LEPOCO Peace Center.

Mondays, May 12 & June 9, 7 pm: **LEPOCO Monthly Action Meeting** at the Peace Center. All members and friends welcome at this monthly business meeting where the activities of all committees and working groups are reviewed.

Tues., May 13, 8:30 am: **Lehigh Valley Committee Against State Killing** meeting at LEPOCO Peace Center.

Wed., May 14, 7 pm: **Lehigh Valley Peace Coalition** meeting at LEPOCO Peace Center.

Sat., May 17, 1 pm: **Association of Students Advocating Peace (ASAP)** meeting at Déjà Brew coffeehouse. Contact Peter Christine at oldcdogs@yahoo.com for more info.

Sun., May 18, 6 pm: **Bike/Walkathon Planning Committee** meeting and calling night to help recruit riders, walkers and staff for the June 7th event. Call 610-691-8730 if you can help that evening.

Sun., May 18, 7 pm: **Peace Singers** rehearse at home of Bob & Carmen Riggs, 1113 Prospect Ave., Bethlehem.

Wed., May 21, 6 pm: **Nuclear Abolition Sisters** meeting at the Olive Branch restaurant, Bethlehem.

Thurs., May 22, 5 pm: LEPOCO **Fundraising Committee** meeting at the Peace Center.

Fri., May 23, 1 pm: **Peace Camp Planning Committee** meeting at the Peace Center.

Please join in the meetings and work of these groups as you are able. If you want more information about any of these meetings or want to know the next meeting for the War Tax Resisters Support Group, please call the Peace Center at 610-691-8730.



LEPOCO

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Who's Really Weary of War?

The following are excerpts from a two-page piece by Kathy Kelly, who spoke for LEPOCO's Annual Dinner in March 2007, that appeared on www.commondreams.org on April 17, "Weary of War? Don't Collaborate."

... Today available statistics about the consequences of the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq speak of misery and chaos nearly unimaginable to most U.S. people. One out of six Iraqis has been displaced from their homes. A March 2007 report from Save the Children, a U.S.-based NGO, stated that 122,000 Iraqi children didn't reach their fifth birthdays in the year 2005 alone. UNAMI, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq, in its most recently issued report on humanitarian conditions in Iraq, stated that 54% of Iraqis live on less than \$1 per day, including 15% who are forced to live on less than fifty cents per day. 70% of Iraq's people lack access to potable water. 43% of Iraqi children under age five suffer a form of malnourishment, with 23% suffering from chronic malnourishment and 8% suffering acute malnourishment. 40% of Iraq's population are children under 15 years of age. Should these children be deprived of food and clean water so that their country is instead forced to pay U.S. forces to drop bombs on them, shoot at them, and exacerbate any or all of the three civil wars which analyst Juan Cole says are now well underway in Iraq?

In the past year, U.S. aerial bombardments of Iraqi neighborhoods increased five fold while the number of Iraqis incarcerated in U.S. prisons in Iraq has doubled. (Some 24,000 Iraqis are now imprisoned by U.S. forces, approximately 650 of whom are juveniles). If a foreign country were bombing U.S. cities and imprisoning U.S. civilians, would we ever agree to pay the invaders' military expenses? Would we agree that the aggressor nation had no fiscal responsibilities to pay for reparations?

Annual LEPOCO

Bike/Walkathon

Saturday, June 7, 2008

See Page 3

Pledge Sheet Enclosed

YOUNG PEOPLE MAKING PEACE
SUMMER DAY CAMP

JULY 21-25, 2008

SEE VOLUNTEER FORM &
REGISTRATION FORM ENCLOSED