

November
2021
Vol. 56 No. 5

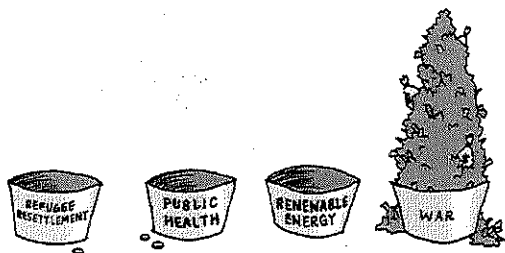


Newsletter of **LEPOCO**
Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern

More on Militarism & the Climate

In the weeks leading up to and during COP26, several environmental and anti-war groups highlighted the significant role that the U.S. military plays in contributing to the climate crisis. In a "Countdown to Glasgow" webinar hosted by CODEPINK and World Beyond War, Jeff Conant from Friends of the Earth put it this way: "The Pentagon is the single biggest climate criminal on planet earth."

On Sept. 21 - the International Day of Peace - I went to NYC to participate in a demonstration organized by CODEPINK on militarism and the climate. The purpose of the demonstration was simple: to call attention to the financial institutions that invest in the war machine, thereby polluting the air, toxifying the water, and displacing thousands from their drought-stricken homelands.



(Graphic from the excellent resource primer, "No Warming, No War: How Militarism Fuels the Climate Crisis - and Vice Versa," by Lorah Steichen & Lindsay Koshgarian, and published by the National Priorities Project at the Institute for Policy Studies.)

Roughly twenty-five people took part in the demonstration, which began in front of the BlackRock headquarters on E. 52nd Street. There we grabbed signs and banners that read, "War Is Not Green" and "Stop Making a Killing on Killing!" and gradually made our way, on foot, to four other financial firms: Blackstone, Bank of America, Wells Fargo, and JPMorgan Chase. We lingered in front of each one to listen to leaders from local activist groups issue words of enlightenment and agitation. Zool Zulkowitz from NYC Rising Together called out Blackstone CEO Stephen Schwarzman, exclaiming, "People in Afghanistan are fleeing and children in Yemen are starving because YOU want economic growth!" Later, Rev. Liz Theoharis from the Poor People's Campaign delivered an inspiring reminder that, "It does not have to be this way. We have the power to come together and declare

"This is an emergency" and build a movement - a moral movement - for all people."

The final days of COP26 provided a faint glimmer of hope as U.S. Climate Envoy John Kerry announced that the United States and China had agreed to work together to lower carbon emissions. However, just months earlier, President Biden identified China and Russia as our new rivals as he announced the end of the war in Afghanistan. You can couple that with the \$778 billion Pentagon budget currently awaiting approval by the Senate, and it's fair to wonder just how serious our elected officials are in combating the climate crisis. As Koohan Paik-Mander wrote in the most recent issue of *Space Alert!* "Don't they get that you can pour resources into war, or you can pour resources into reviving life on Earth - but you can't do both? The activities are mutually exclusive."

- Tom Pietrzak

Holiday Open House



Sat. & Sun., December 4th & 5th

1 - 4 pm (each day)

LEPOCO Peace Center

1705 West Broad Street, Bethlehem (18018)

Fair trade crafts & food
from around the world through SERRV

Snazzy Buttons & Stickers

Beautiful Notecards & Holiday Greetings

2022 Calendars

Carol Baylor's bags with great slogans
made from repurposed materials

Attendees are asked to be vaccinated and wear masks.

(Also, during normal office hours through December.)



Young Peacemakers



Gift Wrapping to Save the Earth

Many families celebrate winter with gift-giving. Everything that comes into our houses during the holidays can change the environment. Look at where gifts come from, (travel costs and exhaust), how each gift is made (chemicals and waste), and how it is packaged (plastic and styrofoam). Even if we make all of our gifts (homemade gifts are the BEST!), we can go nuts worrying about the wear that each gift has on our climate. Let's pick ONE part of all this merriment and see how that affects our climate -- gift-wrapping.

In a British study done in 2011, the UK used about 227,000 MILES of wrapping paper over the winter holidays -- enough paper to wrap around the world NINE times. In the US, we average 4 million pounds of wrapping paper a year. All that paper, all those bags, all that ribbon, goes straight into the landfill creating greenhouse gases as it decomposes. Here are some ideas on how to reduce that stress on our earth.

1. Make your own wrappings. Decorate newspaper with drawings or stamps. Use paper grocery bags for gift bags. If you get a package stuffed with paper, reuse it!

2. Save shiny packaging materials (i.e. the foil paper in boxes of teabags) to decorate your gifts.

3. Wrap a gift inside another gift. Use a scarf or a bandanna or a cloth napkin as wrapping.

4. Make cloth gift bags that can be used over and over again. This article shows you how: www.greenchildmagazine.com/diy-fabric-gift-bags/. (Hint: old pillow cases that you decorate work perfectly!)

5. Decorate packages with nature -- pinecones, dried leaves, pine needles -- instead of ribbon. Tie them on with cotton twine or raffia.

For more information on how our actions can change the world, check out these books:

- *31 Ways to Change the World*, 2010, Candlewick Press.
- *Everything Is Connected, Reimagining the World One Postcard at a Time*, Keri Smith, 2013, Penguin Group.
- *Climate Action: What Happened and What We Can Do*, Seymour Simon, 2021.

- Karen Maurer



Check out the LEPOCO website at www.lepoco.org for a Calendar of Events, Newsletter Archive, & More.

Sign up for LEPOCO e-mail weekly updates by calling 610-691-8730, or by writing to lepoco@fast.net.

Follow LEPOCO on Facebook and Twitter. Please "like" and "share," often.

Support LEPOCO!

___ Enclosed is a donation to LEPOCO of \$ _____

___ I would like to support LEPOCO's work with a ___ monthly/ ___ quarterly pledge of \$ _____

___ I'm especially interested in the following issues: _____

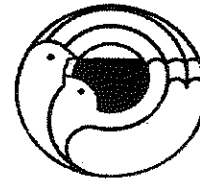
Name _____

Phone # _____ e-mail _____

Address _____

City/Town _____ Zip _____

Send to: LEPOCO Peace Center, 1705 W. Broad St., Bethlehem, PA 18018, or donate through PayPal at www.lepoco.org



Newsletter of LEPOCO
Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern
1705 West Broad Street
Bethlehem, PA 18018
phone: 610-691-8730
fax: 610-691-8904
website: www.lepoco.org
e-mail: lepoco@fast.net

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

Annual dues are:

Regular Member	\$35
Limited Income Member	\$10
Household Membership	\$45
Supporting Member	\$75

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

Newsletter Staff: Tom Stinnett, Nancy Tate, Amanda Zaniesienko, Carol Baylor, Janet Ney, Rick Dow, Jeff Vitelli.

Thanks to all the people who collate and prepare the newsletter for mailing each month.

LEPOCO Steering Committee: Diane Dilendik, Sharlee DiMenichi, Margot Hillman, Julius Iwantsch (co-treasurer), Nancy Johnston, Mary Lang, Monica McAgdon, Janet Ney, Tom Pietrzak, Susie Ravitz, Tom Stinnett (co-treasurer), Nancy Tate (ex-officio), Jeff Vitelli, and Amanda Zaniesienko (ex-officio).

Democracy Under Threat _____

The hopes of many LEPOCO members and friends - that the outcome of the 2020 election would see an end to Trumpism and a return to political "normalcy" - have been dashed. If anything, the times seem as perilous for our democracy as during the chaotic and regressive years of his presidency.

Trump himself, of course, continues to proclaim the Big Lie: the election outcome was rigged, and he "really" won in a landslide. Despite the absence of evidence to support his claims, and the failure of his coup attempt on January 6th, Trump remains poised for a comeback in 2024. More troubling, most Republican officeholders and many million Republican voters remain in thrall to an authoritarian strongman. This means that one of our two major political parties has, in effect, abandoned democracy and joined a growing anti-democratic trend across the globe. Their efforts in various states to suppress the vote, to gerrymander election districts, to "audit" election outcomes they dislike, and to install partisan systems of vote counting are a mounting threat to our democracy.

In opposition, Republican officeholders seek only to block Democratic initiatives. They have also apparently renounced rationality as well as democracy - by rejecting mask and vaccination mandates, by rejecting basic climate science, by rejecting important truths about our national history, and so on. But the Democrats have their own problems. Democrats, too, seem never to have seen a military budget they could not expand, and their internal disunity makes voting rights legislation unlikely. Many voters apparently turned to Trump out of disappointment at the failures of the Democrats, who are caught between their promises to voters and their corporate donors, and who regularly let the voters down. It's enough to make many citizens feel that voting simply isn't worth it.

But this is no solution. We can begin to save our democracy by making the effort to cast an informed vote and then by holding officeholders to their commitments. We also need to volunteer for political work of any kind that can strengthen our democracy, be it as officeholder, poll watcher or participant in campaigns for fair election districts, for eliminating dark money, or for voter rights.

- Mick Baylor

A Great Day for Walk & Ride _____

As Scott Slingerland of L.V. CAT commented, "It was a great day for a walk or bike-ride that brought together people supporting LEPOCO's work for peace and social justice." An article in *The Bethlehem Press* by Tami Quigley and a short article in the church bulletin (of the congregation where LEPOCO now lives on the lower level) helped publicize our event of October 9th. Even Pastor Jack of Rosemont Lutheran Church biked and obtained pledges. All went off smoothly at 9 am, as volunteers worked to set up,

register participants, provide a light breakfast, conduct warm up exercises, and later offered water and snacks at check points and monitored the registration area until all returned. It could not have taken place without our volunteers.

One of our goals this year was to gain pledges from more supporters outside of our membership. This proved successful with over \$3600 pledged; a good portion of that total was from supporters of LEPOCO, but non-members. Another goal was to hold our event in cooler weather for the comfort and energy of bikers and walkers. Our usual Memorial Day weekend was getting just too hot for most participants. The October date brought a cool overcast day; perfect for walking in lovely older neighborhoods, along the canal towpath and southside Greenway, and for biking a scenic route connecting new pathways to trails without using busy roads. Even the Boston Marathon was held in autumn this year for the first time - we were in good company!!

Gift certificates went to our top fundraisers from Saucon Valley Bikes, Hellertown; Godfrey Daniels, Bethlehem; Aardvark Sports Shop, Bethlehem; and Book & Puppet, Easton. We appreciate the hard work of our volunteers, our riders and walkers, and the people who pledged their support. Thank you so, so much!!

- Diane Dilendik

A Review

Humankind: A Hopeful History

Rutger Bregman,

Erica Moore (Translator), Elizabeth Manton (Translator)

This is an important book - and, if that doesn't make you want to read it, the fact that it is also a very enjoyable read should convince you. The thesis of the book is that the image we have of the sort of creature we are is quite wrong. The author (a Dutchman who wrote in Dutch but has been beautifully translated) argues that, far from being violent and selfish people, as we often suppose, we are cooperative, kind and generous. The vast majority of us at least.

We can all think of things which appear to contradict this thesis. Bregman could think of them too. And he did careful research to show that the idea that we are intrinsically bad is based on falsehoods or on events so exceptional that it is very much the case that humans are indeed naturally good. From groups of hunter gatherers collaborating when they met long ago to soldiers firing over the heads of their "enemies" to avoid killing them in recent times, *Humankind* makes a convincing case that we do indeed collaborate with each other, help each other when we can, and are indeed kind. My view of the world has undergone a major change from reading this book. Please read it.

Humankind was read by members of the LEPOCO book club for discussion at their meeting in November. It is characteristic of the valuable and interesting books that we read at the book club. I hope you will join us.

- Alwyn Eades

Nukes: Curb Your Enthusiasm

Nuclear Power will reduce carbon emissions, but curb your enthusiasm!

"To fight climate change seriously, nuclear power must be on the table," wrote Jonah Goldberg, in his national column, October 27. Goldberg claims that nuclear power is messy and complicated because politicians pander to NIMBYism and time-consuming regulations.

"Nuclear power is part of the world's decarbonization strategy as formulated by both the right and the left," says *The Atlantic's* climate newsletter.

The recently passed Senate infrastructure bill tags \$8.47 billion for existing nuclear power plants. China will be building over 100 new nuclear reactors. Russia, South Korea, Canada, Ukraine, United Kingdom and Sweden are top nuclear power producers of energy.

France generates 70% of its energy from nuclear power. Germany buys nuclear power from France, and decommissioned their nuclear reactors, which resulted in higher carbon emissions from their coal-burning plants. Germany's solar panels and wind turbines generated insufficient power last year due to many cold, cloudy, windless days. Bill Gates and his TerraPower, and X-energy in Maryland promise unlimited nuclear reactor power for everything electric. Climate scientist Jim Hansen, Stewart Brand's "practical environmentalism," and others claim small modular nuke reactors will be cheaper and more efficient than current nuclear reactors. They claim the public has been misled by fears and outdated notions about nuclear power.

We should curb this enthusiasm for nuclear energy because real dangers, disasters, and deception are also on the table.

Currently, the US has over 90 nuclear reactors in about 30 states. About 90% exist east of the Great Plains states. By 2050, renovations to existing power plants will prove costly.

People grew more aware of disasters after nuclear meltdowns at Three Mile Island, Chernobyl and Fukushima. Taxpayers, not private companies, bear the costly deception about nuclear power plants. South Carolina eventually abandoned construction of two nuclear power plants after delays and cost overruns reached \$9 billion, and three top executives pled guilty to fraud.

What do we do about the radioactive byproducts of nuclear waste? Be like France and Finland, where workers use robots to bury hazardous nuclear waste deep underground, supposedly for thousands of years. Is this impossible to guarantee?

Nuclear power plants are generally built along water ways, many along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. Reactors use massive amounts of water both to convey heat from the core to the steam turbines, and to cool the steam and turn it back into water. What happens when the water is no longer cool, but hot from high climate

temperature? What happens in a hurricane? What happens when the facilities flood?

Workers' health is affected by radioactive uranium, from mining and transportation, to the cleanup at contaminated sites like Hanford in the state of Washington. This continues to be underreported. Proponents of nuclear power are quick to say that nuclear waste is contained, unlike coal which pollutes the air. True, but the dangerously radioactive nuclear waste lives for thousands of years. The US currently stores most nuclear waste in barrels on site at reactors, with one major repository underground in an ancient salt formation near Carlsbad, NM. *Nukewatch Quarterly* reports cave-ins and leaks at this site.

Joe Heath, general counsel of the Onondaga Nation of NY, wrote an insightful article entitled, "The Violence of Nuclear Energy Against Indigenous Peoples, Land, Water and Air." This is environmental racism, nuclear colonialism. The All Pueblo Council of Governors, representing 20 sovereign nations in New Mexico and Texas oppose nuclear reactors and nuclear waste storage sites on their lands. Texas has two nuclear power plants, yet the Texas legislature passed a law banning highly radioactive waste materials from being stored in Texas!

Some people fear nuclear reactors could become targets for nuclear terrorism. In April, 2021, Israel apparently played a role in an explosion at Iran's Natanz uranium enrichment site. Four Iranian nuclear scientists were assassinated with car bombs or shot. Israel denies it all.

We need more health and environmental studies about radioactivity and the toxic byproducts of nuclear fission. Japan plans to pipe millions of gallons of radioactive waste water from the Fukushima Daiichi power plant into the Pacific Ocean over the next ten years. Scientists agree that even low-level radioactivity harms life. The Japanese government was/is evasive about the Fukushima Daiichi meltdown and health dangers. Oceanographer Jacques Costeau opposed nuclear power plants.

Wind, solar, geothermal and storage capacities for distribution account for about 10% of electricity production around the globe. Pew Research reveals 43% of Americans favor building more nuclear plants, compared to 90% who favor expanding solar and 83% who favor increasing wind energy. The resources for research and improvement of renewable energy must not be gobbled up by the nuclear energy industry.

What more can we do? Educate, and urge municipal leaders to invest in renewable energy. Urge Congress to fund energy efficiency and alternative energy sources, not fossil fuels and dangerous nuclear energy. Put people and planet over profit. Support the rights of indigenous people, and Nature. Read copies of *Nukewatch Quarterly* available at LEPOCO. Go to BeyondNuclear.org

- Monica McAgdon

Greetings Peace Pilgrims



The Christmas Peace Pilgrimage is back. The 62nd Annual Nazareth-to-Bethlehem Christmas Peace Pilgrimage will take place Saturday, December 11, 2021.

The Pilgrimage Planning Committee has decided to go ahead with a modified witness this year because of the Covid pandemic. We think that the most important part of the event is the walking witness along Route 191 from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

In order to minimize the risk factors from the ongoing pandemic, we have decided not to have the supper at the end of the walk. This means participants should bring a lunch and plenty of additional beverages and snacks. At this point we still plan for a short closing gathering at Christ Church UCC on Market St., around 5:30 pm. The walking route will have slight modifications near the end in the city of Bethlehem.

We are requiring facemasks and we will check proof of vaccination for the bus and the indoor parts of the walk.

The walk will begin at 12:15 pm, at Nazareth Moravian Church in the Center Square. The buses will leave from the Bethlehem parking site at 10:45 am.

PLEASE REGISTER (at www.peacewalk.org) SO THAT WE CAN GET A SENSE OF HOW MANY BUSES WE WILL NEED.

We will put updates on the Peace Pilgrimage website and facebook page.

- Rick Dow

Support Drone Whistleblower Daniel Hale

The last two issues of the Newsletter, June and September, carried articles about the drone whistleblower, Daniel Hale: June 2021 in "The Struggle Shared" and September on page 5. The following information is about actions of support that we can take now that he has been assigned to a prison for his 45-month sentence.

♦ Daniel Hale is currently within the general population at USP Marion, but was placed in the Communications Management Unit (CMU) within that facility. This is an improvement in internal living conditions from his previous facilities, but CMUs limit and monitor communications.

If you choose to write to him, please use this address and follow letter-writing guidelines below:

Daniel Everette Hale 26069-075
USP Marion
P.O. Box 1000
Marion, Illinois 62959

Use plain white paper, no cards, with black or blue ink, handwritten or printed. Use standard size envelopes, no packages. You can send up to three pages, single-sided.

Please use a physical address as the return address, not a P.O. Box. Also, be aware that Daniel can't respond to group or organizational letters, only to individual persons.

Daniel can receive photos (in color) in the mail, fun memes, transcripts (such as of interesting podcasts) and printouts of news articles. He is hoping for articles you found compelling, work out routines to help pass the time, and words of affirmation! Hand drawings are allowed, and we encourage them.

Paper-back books, magazines, and newspapers can be sent directly from the publisher (or from Amazon).

♦ You can sign CodePink's online petition to President Biden to Pardon Whistleblower Daniel Hale who exposed drone warfare and told the United States public the truth! See: codepink.org/danielhale.

♦ You can learn more about developments in Daniel's case at: standwithDanielHale.org. There you will find information about making donations to Daniel's legal defense fund and to a support fund for him as he faces a long prison sentence and has experienced a long prosecution. (As further evidence of the kind heart of this young man, he asks that people only contribute if you are financially able to do so.)

- Monica McAgghon

New Connections / Old Connections

• In early October LEPOCO received a package from Greta Browne containing a copy of her book, "Walking for the Climate: The Story of My Walk from New Orleans to the Canadian Border." Greta now lives in Brazil, but in 2009 she undertook her walk of 2000 miles along Route 11. Her book dedication includes Greta Thunberg. Greta Browne notes that the younger Greta was just six years old when Greta, the senior, began walking for the climate. The book is available to read on loan from LEPOCO.

• Also, in early October, LEPOCO received a surprise visit from Dr. Miguel Antonio Bernal and his son, Miguel Bernal-Castillero. They were on a short tour visiting places where they had lived in the U.S. during their period of exile from the military rule of Manuel Noriega in the late 1980s. Dr. Bernal was teaching at Lehigh University while they were lived here. He gave several talks at LEPOCO. These 30 years later he still teaches and has a radio program. Miguel, the younger, has many international connections from his present home base in Canada. Miguel, the senior, left a copy of a book about his life, "El Agitador de Conciencias," published in 2019. It is available on loan to anyone who reads Spanish.

• Multiple copies of another book were given to LEPOCO recently, "Inspirational Insights: A Collection of Articles, Essays, & Letters on Various Contemporary

(continued on page 6)

Bits & Pieces

Ⓢ In late September it was announced that the **PennEast pipeline** is abandoning its plan to build a natural gas transmission line that would have cut through the heart of the Lehigh Valley and many other areas of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Some are continuing legal action to make sure this "nightmare project" never returns. You can **support this effort** with donations to Save Carbon County, 6495 Pohopoco Dr., Lehigh, PA 18235. If you would like further details on this plan, contact LEPOCO to receive a complete copy of the appeal.

Ⓢ The **Annual Dinner Planning Committee** is starting the process of deciding what to do for the March 2022 annual gathering – in-person or not, food or not, etc. If you would like to be part of the process or have suggestions please contact the LEPOCO office at 610-691-8730.

Ⓢ If you did not see the op-ed written by Nancy Tate in early October, you can read it at www.lepoco.org. "**Recalling a Post-9/11 Plea for Peace in the Bethlehem Rose Garden**," was published in The Express Times on October 8.

Ⓢ While retailers warn of empty store shelves this holiday season due to global supply chain issues, members of the Church of Stop Shopping (CSS) gathered in Red Hook, NY, in October to hail the **SHOPOCOLYPSE!** What some are describing as a potential catastrophe, CSS celebrates as a divine revelation, a sign that humankind must stop over-consuming if there is any hope to save a warming planet. Church members sang and prayed, hoping to change the way we think about what we put under the Christmas tree this year.

Ⓢ **Cuba** has begun reopening and vaccination rates are high in the country, so the Witness for Peace Solidarity Collective team in Cuba will start bringing delegations to Cuba in December. There is one delegation scheduled in December and two in

February 2022. You can learn more about these delegations at www.solidaritycollective.org.

Recently the team in Cuba wrote about their concerns: "The mixture of emotions in Cuba...is palpable. There is anxiety about the planned demonstrations and hopes that they remain without incident. ... the Biden Administration has given us much reason to worry. Weeks ago the State Department made threats of additional sanctions when what is needed is the exact opposite. The U.S. Blockade is... intended to cause hardship, destabilization, and violence, and its removal is the best way to respect the self-determination of the Cuban people."

New/Old Connections

(continued from page 5)

Topics," by **Mohammed Khaku**. Mohammed Khaku also recently set a record in fund-raising in LEPOCO's Bike/Walk-A-Thon. In a year when we had several participants raising over \$100, and three people raised over \$500, Mohammed was at the top of them all. Copies of his book are available at LEPOCO.

▪ Finally, several LEPOCO folks attended the webinar on November 14, "Sewing Resistance to Militarism: Arpilleras & Other Transnational Textiles." The program featured Roberta Bacic leading a virtual tour of some of the Conflict Textiles collection that started with arpilleras from Chile, is now based in Northern Ireland, and includes conflict textile works from many countries. The program in mid-November focused on ten textiles from the much larger collection, giving their origin stories that reveal the power of this creative nonviolent witness in the face of violence and war – helping to heal the personal pain of the creators and inspiring others to help stop the violence.

Roberta Bacic's connection to LEPOCO and WRL began in 1988 when Nancy Tate, Chris Ney and Matt Meyer were led by Roberta through the reality of Chile coming out from under years of military dictatorship.

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

Monday, December 1, 2 pm: Meeting of the Stop the Wars Committee, LEPOCO office, downstairs at Rosemont Lutheran Church, 1705 West Broad St., Bethlehem. Call 610-691-8730 for more information.

Thursdays, December 9, 2021 & January 13, 2022, 4-5 pm: Monthly Peace Vigils, on the corners at Third & Wyandotte Sts., south Bethlehem (see page 8).

Mondays, December 13, 2021 & January 10, 2022, 7 pm: LEPOCO Monthly Action Meetings, in the LEPOCO office, downstairs at Rosemont Lutheran Church, 1705 West Broad St., Bethlehem. (All Steering Committee members have been vaccinated and will wear masks.) Call 610-691-8730 for more information. All members & friends are welcome at this monthly business meeting where the organization's activities are discussed & planned. These meetings are on the second Monday of the month.

Tuesdays, December 7, 2021 & February 8, 2022, 6 pm: First Tuesday LEPOCO Book Group Meetings. In December the group will discuss, "Know My Name: A Memoir," by Chanel Miller, and will meet at the LEPOCO Peace Center. The group will not meet in January, and the books for 2022 have yet to be announced. Contact LEPOCO 610-691-8730 for more information. The group welcomes new members.

Please join in the meetings and work of these groups as you are able. If you want more information about these meetings or the meetings of the Annual Dinner Planning Committee, Newsletter Planning Group, Peace Camp Planning Committee, or any other committees, please call LEPOCO at 610-691-8730. For a regularly updated calendar of events, see www.lepoco.org. Please note: for all meetings at the LEPOCO office, masks are worn and participants are vaccinated, until the pandemic subsides.

The Struggle Shared

*... Taxes takin' my whole damn check
The junkies make me a nervous wreck
The price of food is goin' up
And as if all that crap wasn't enough,*

*A rat done bit my sister Nell
With Whitey on the moon,
Her face and arms began to swell
And Whitey's on the moon...*

- Gil Scott-Heron, 1970 release, "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised"

BILLIONAULTS SHOULD PAY - One of the tickets for Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin's first space flight back in July, for a tourist to accompany Bezos, the richest man on earth, was sold at auction for \$28 million -- for a 15-minute whirl to the edge of space. Bezos has announced that his company has sold \$100 million in tickets for future flights.

His competitor, billionaire Richard Branson, net worth \$5 billion, who also ventured into space in July, has reopened ticket sales for his Virgin Galactic Spacecraft at \$450,000, for a shot into space. And Elon Musk's SpaceX is selling tickets through Axiom Space, to private citizens who wish to travel to the International Space Station in 2022 for \$55 million apiece.

Public Citizen has proposed that if billionaires want to hurl themselves into space, upon return they pay a Billionaire Astronaut Reentry Fee (BARF) equal to 10% of their net worth. For Bezos, with a net worth of \$202 billion (estimated by Forbes "Real Time Billionaire List"), that would be \$20.2 billion. We can all imagine all the good that \$20.2 billion could produce in the world starting with vaccinating people around the globe to help end the COVID-19 pandemic.

MORE ABOUT BITCOIN - In June, El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele pushed through a law which allows Salvadorans to use Bitcoin as the country's legal tender, making it the first and only nation to adopt cryptocurrency as legal tender.

El Salvador's economy was dollarized in 2001, when the *colón* was mothballed, and the regime since

2001 has been good for El Salvador's economy, stimulating an average annual inflation rate of 2.03 %, the lowest in Latin America. GDP per capita growth, and export growth have also outpaced those of most of Latin America. The new Bitcoin law is unpopular. 95% of Salvadorans don't want to use Bitcoin for financial transactions.

Bukele's Bitcoin Law is one more piece of his overall scheme to establish himself as the autocratic head of a totalitarian regime. (See "The Struggle Shared," November 2020.) While Bukele is boasting about how profitable his Bitcoin fantasy will be, and how he plans to use the profits to build schools and hospitals, the reality is much more grim. With the implementation of a Bitcoin Law, El Salvador is in position to be in violation of 27 of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) virtual asset regulations. FATF is the international money-laundering and terrorist financing policeman. Once El Salvador is flagged it will face sanctions by FATF's 39 member nations, and over 200 affiliated nations. What will that do to the economy?

And returning to the Lehigh Valley, Talen Energy Corporation continues to tout the proposed Nautilus Cryptomine (close to the Susquehanna nuclear plant) as a clean (zero-carbon) energy source with "one of the lowest electricity costs" among publicly-traded bitcoin peers in the U.S. Talen's promotion of Nautilus completely ignores the dangers of nuclear power. (See article on Page 4 of this newsletter.) And besides, the inordinate energy consumption of a digital infrastructure is wasteful by design.

Calling for a crackdown on environmentally wasteful cryptocurrencies last June, Senator Elizabeth Warren said, "There are computer systems all over the world spitting out random numbers around the clock, in a competition to try to solve a useless puzzle and win the bitcoin reward -- ...a disaster for our planet."

In Pennsylvania, PennFuture is speaking out in opposition to Bitcoin development. You can read more at pennfuture.org/blog.

SUPPORT STRIKETOBER - The month of October has seen such a rise in U.S. workers organizing and going on strike, that the AFL-CIO has dubbed it Striketober. While many corporations, and the billionaire class have made record profits, working people have kept the country running during the pandemic, and are being told that they have to give things up.

The pandemic laid bare the inequities of our system. Working people want safe jobs, with good health care, flexibility, and sick leave -- where they feel respected and valued. Working people feel a new sense of power and leverage. They're looking at work in a different way.

The thousands of strikers include production line workers at several John Deere factories, workers at Kellogg plants across the country, nurses and other front line healthcare workers, teachers, miners, and 75 musicians of the San Antonio Symphony Orchestra. The closest strikes to the Lehigh Valley, that we know about, are 800 teachers in Scranton, members of Local 1147 of the American Federation of Teachers, and 1400 production workers at the Kellogg plant in Lancaster. The AFL-CIO's new president Liz Schuler said, "The strikes are sending a signal, no doubt about it, that employers ignore workers at their peril. I think this wave of strikes is actually going to inspire more workers to stand up and speak out."

Look for a picket line near you, and step up to show your support.

- Jeff Vitelli



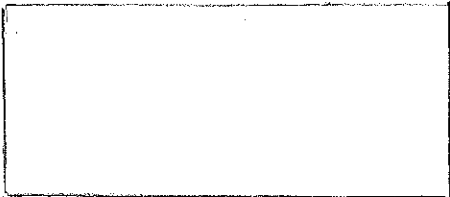
LEPOCO

Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern

1705 W. Broad St., Bethlehem, PA 18018
610-691-8730 lepoco@fast.net
Fax: 610-691-8904 www.lepoco.org

Address Service Requested

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Permit No. 617
Lehigh Valley, PA



See Inside:

Page 1

- Militarism & Climate
- Holiday Open House

Page 2

- Young Peacemakers

Page 3

- Democracy Threat
- Great Walk/Ride

Page 4

- Nukes: Curb Your Enthusiasm

Page 5

- Peace Pilgrimage
- Daniel Hale
- New Connections/
Old Connections

Page 6

- Bits & Pieces

Page 7

- The Struggle Shared



Monthly Peace Vigil

(Second Thursdays)

December 9, 2021 &
January 13, 2022
4-5 pm

*End the preparations for war.
Help witness for peace.*

3rd & Wyandotte Sts.,
(south) Bethlehem

Call LEPOCO, 610-691-8730, for more info.



Join

62nd Annual
Nazareth to Bethlehem
Christmas Peace
Pilgrimage

Saturday, December 11, 2021

(See page 5 for more details.)

Holiday Open House

Saturday & Sunday, December 4th & 5th, 1-4 pm (each day)

LEPOCO Peace Center

(See page 1 for more information.)