

December
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Newsletter of **LEPOCO**

Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern

Afghanistan

US involvement in Afghanistan since 1979 has been marked by appalling recklessness. Consider first the origin of US involvement there, then the quality of current US strategy-formation.

On 3 July 1979, on the advice of National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter authorized the secret aiding and training of Mujahadeen groups in Afghanistan in their war against the Afghan pro-Soviet regime. It is important to note that Carter's authorization for secret aid to Muslim radicals preceded the Soviet invasion of 24 December by six months.

Brzezinski's plan, for which he has expressed great pride, was to "give the USSR its Vietnam war." In a 1998 interview Brzezinski dismissed the current result of arousing these Islamic terrorists merely as "stirring up some Muslims." Yet the avowed purpose of the 2001 bombing-invasion of Afghanistan was to eliminate the threat of repeated attacks on the United States from the same Islamic fundamentalist terrorists. However, no official mention has been made of the connection between our former aid to fundamentalist Islamic groups, although the horrors of 9-11 can be traced in part to this policy.

Next, consider an observation by Ray McGovern, retired CIA officer, on what is missing from our current Afghanistan policy. McGovern notes the value over the years of reports by the CIA called National Intelligence Estimates for holding back US presidents and other officials from absurd and costly decisions. For example, once during the Vietnam war General Westmoreland assured Congress that, given the comparably meager number of Vietnamese insurgents, the war was going our way and requested, on that basis, 206,000 more US troops. A National Intelligence Estimate, however, had provided to Westmoreland an accurate count of enemy forces, which, since it contradicted the Army's lower estimate, the General had chosen to ignore. Leaked to the press, the NIE sank the escalation plan.

What valuable information, then, has the NIE provided for President Obama concerning Afghanistan? McGovern writes: "Would you believe there is no current National Intelligence Estimate on Afghanistan? Rather, Generals David Petraeus and Stanley McChrystal are running the show, allowing professional intelligence analysts to be mostly straphangers at planning and strategy meetings."

- Addison Bross

(Source: *The Middle East and Islamic World Reader*; "Kipling Haunts Obama's Afghan War," www.commondreams.com, 30 October 2009.)

Afghanistan: Local Action

On December 1st, President Obama announced the latest war surge for Afghanistan, a plan to send 30,000 more U.S. troops. On December 2nd, in the late afternoon, local peace activists gathered in front of Allentown's Federal Building "to give public voice to our opposition to this war." Despite a cold rain, over 40 people came with signs including a banner that read, "Increase the Peace, Decrease the Troops," and one person brought his dog with a neck-held peace sign. *The Express Times* and Channel 69 gave coverage to the event. We sang songs, read poetry, leafleted passersby, and read a litany of 19 reasons why "We Oppose the War" (copies available at LEPOCO). The litany closed with our pledge to "keep opposing this war in every nonviolent way possible."

Two days later President Obama visited the Allentown area. A small group of us stood outside on the cold, but sunny morning to greet him and those attending his talk at Lehigh-Carbon Community College. Our signs questioned the war. There were lots of other people with signs, opposing the President and cheering the President, but we were grateful that our message did break through with some of the local media: we can't afford the jobs and other programs Pres. Obama supports, if we continue spending a million dollars a year for each of the thousands of U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

Thank you to the young people and the older people who made both demonstrations possible.

Some helpful resources regarding the war escalation in Afghanistan:

1) American Friends Service Committee conference call featuring Phyllis Bennis from 12/3/09. Listen at www.afsc.org (Wage Peace Campaign, Afghanistan Resources).

2) Op-ed by Eric Fair, *The Morning Call*, 12/16/09, "Military failure is a burden on those who refuse to see their limitations."

3) "Voices for Pakistan's Poor," by Dan Pearson & Kathy Kelly, in *The Catholic Worker*, 12/09.

4) "President Obama's Afghanistan Escalation Speech," analysis by Phyllis Bennis, 12/2/09, at www.ips-dc.org.

5) "Six Alternatives to a Troop Surge in Afghanistan," posted 12/1/09, at www.madre.org.

LEPOCO Peace Singers

at First Night Bethlehem

Thursday, December 31, 2009, 6:00 pm

Unitarian Universalist Church of the Lehigh Valley Sanctuary

424 Center St., Bethlehem

50 Years of Walking the Talk

In early 1959 Bob Euler from Wellsville, Pennsylvania, suggested that the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) help recreate a part of the Christmas story by walking from Nazareth to Bethlehem -- a distance in Pennsylvania of only 10 miles vs. the 60 miles for the Holy Family thousands of years ago - on the day prior to Christmas and bring gifts as a self tax to the Nativity scene in Zinzendorf Park adjacent to Hotel Bethlehem. Friends from the Lehigh Valley and Reading met with Bob to plan the 1959 event and on December 24, Lew and I and our four daughters (ages 6 thru 11) were among the 19 persons in that first Pilgrimage.

Numbers grew... on the 4th Pilgrimage there were 50 including a Lancaster man who happened to be blind and had a companion for the journey. From 1959 through 1963 the total self tax for United Nations and U.S. UNICEF was \$9758!! Changes developed over the years: at first cars were parked at the Friends Meetinghouse and pilgrims were transported to Nazareth; later cars assembled for bus transport beneath the Hill-to-Hill Bridge until Christkindlemart claimed the space in 1993. One year everyone was treated to hot cocoa at Hotel Bethlehem and another time all had cocoa at the Moravian College refectory on Church Street. By 1967 and 1968 hot soup was offered to all at the Meetinghouse after carol singing in Bethlehem.

The early '60s emphasized no placards, no mottoes, just simple dignity and a personal commitment to honor the Advent season in a real, meaningful way. In the very early years there was much denigration, thumbs down, and shouts such as "Get a job!" This changed and householders came out to greet us, to offer us fruit, etc. In the '70s there were many signs held by walkers; the collection of these is a record of an era. In the '80s there were over 16 sponsors including the Greater Bethlehem Council of Churches; since 2005 the Pilgrimage has been affiliated with the Lehigh County Conference of Churches.

What do I get from the Pilgrimage? The Pilgrimage provides meaning and calm to me, a great sense of connection with others from many locations who are also trying to create "peace on earth" year round, and marvelous uplift from the stellar speakers who inspire us.

- Fran Dreisbach

Peace Pilgrimage 2009

The Nazareth-to-Bethlehem Peace Pilgrimage has been completed for its 50th year. As Fran Dreisbach writes above there are many ways to measure the impact of this peace witness that has such consistency through the years. In our next newsletter we hope to have a report on the inspiring address by Rev. James A. Forbes, Jr., to the several hundred people gathered at Christ UCC, Bethlehem, at the close of the Pilgrimage on December 12. Over 250 people walked in the cold, but sunny weather, making the moving witness to all who live on Rt. 191, those who drive past, and those who hear

about the walk in media coverage. For information about next year's walk watch this newsletter or see www.peace walk.org.

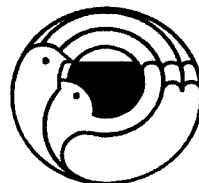
Gaza One Year Later

On December 27, 2008, the three-week assault of Gaza by the Israeli military began. 1400 Palestinians died; 13 Israelis. The humanitarian situation is dire as the blockade of the Gaza Strip remains in place, making difficult all efforts to repair the war damaged civilian infrastructure.

This sad anniversary will be marked around the world. The Gaza Freedom March will bring 1000 international human rights activists to the Gaza Strip, December 27-31, to march side-by-side with Palestinians from Rafah to Erez.

There will be a Gathering to Support Freedom and Justice for Gaza on Sunday, December 27, 3-4 pm, in Doylestown, at Main and East Court Streets., near the Bucks County Courthouse.

Joyce Ravitz of Easton and New York City, was on a humanitarian delegation to Gaza after the assault and has spoken locally on numerous occasions about her observations of conditions there. Her next scheduled talk is Wednesday, March 3, at 7 pm, at the Phillipsburg Public Library.



Newsletter of LEPOCO

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The *LEPOCO Newsletter* is published 8 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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Regular Member	\$35
Limited Income Member	\$ 5
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: robert Daniels II, Michelle Mecham, Bob Riggs, Tom Stinnett, Nancy Tate, Jeff Vitelli.

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), Ruth Karpinski, Mimi Lang, Michelle Mecham, Janet Ney, Susie Ravitz, Tom Stinnett (co-treasurer), Nancy Tate (ex-officio).

Popcorn/Potluck & Politics

Due to the New Year's Day holiday and our lead projectionist's trip to India, there will be no First Friday P&P film in January.

Sunday, January 31st, 6 pm: Sylvia Metzler

"Honduras: A Human Rights Report on the Coup Controlled Country"

LEPOCO Potluck & Politics at Lehigh Valley Friends Meetinghouse
(on Rt. 512, 1/2 mile north of Rt. 22, just north of the stop light at Wegman's)

Sylvia Metzler was part of a Quest for Peace delegation to Honduras in late November, accompanying supporters of the deposed President Zelaya and learning about the realities on the ground and the Obama Administration's approach to Latin America. She says it felt like the 1980s again. Sylvia Metzler has been involved with justice and peace groups in Philadelphia for many years, including Health Care for All Philadelphia, Grannies for Peace, and the Brandywine Peace Community. She is a family nurse practitioner, co-chairs Medicines for Nicaragua, and serves on the board of the Norris Square Neighborhood Project. She was a volunteer nurse practitioner in Nicaragua from 1990-1992.

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

Friday, February 5th, 7 pm: The Cove

A Popcorn & Politics Film projected on the big screen at the LEPOCO Peace Center.

This thrilling documentary follows the long path of redemption for former dolphin trainer Ric O'Barry, who brings together a team of diving specialists, electronics experts, and adrenaline junkies, to expose horrible crimes committed in a Japanese fishing village.

A superior piece of filmmaking and activism directed by Louie Psihoyos. 92 minutes. 2009.

Please bring a snack or beverage to share.



Sunday, January 17, 2010

3:00 pm

A public reading of
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s
"A Declaration of Independence
from the War in Vietnam" speech.

YMCA Community Room
1225 West Lafayette St., Easton

Please join the Nuclear Abolition Sisters of LEPOCO
for this first Easton reading of the
ever-timely and powerful call for nonviolence and justice
in the season of King Birthday gatherings.

Other M.L. King Birthday Events

There will be numerous local and regional M.L. King Birthday observances. Among them:

1. "Advancing Big Dreams," sponsored by the Bethlehem Branch of the NAACP and the Bethlehem YWCA, Monday, January 18, 2010, at 1 pm, at the Cathedral Church of the Nativity, 3rd & Wyandotte Sts., south Bethlehem.

2. Brandywine Peace Community's "Make War No More" event on Monday, January 18, at Noon, outside Lockheed Martin (the U.S.'s largest military contractor),

Mall & Goddard Blvd, Valley Forge. Contact Brandywine at 610-544-1818, for more information.

Call LEPOCO or watch LEPOCO's weekly e-mail calendar for information on other M.L. King events.

January: A Month of Peace Action in DC

1) Area activists will join Witness Against Torture as they turn attention to the sad business of marking the eighth year of torture, abuse and detention at Guantánamo. Participants will fast and vigil from January 11 (the anniversary of the opening of this notorious prison) to January 22 (the day by which President Obama said Guantánamo would be closed). There will be a day of action on the 21st, when they hope to call the world's attention to both the administrations' record of broken human rights promises and the shattered lives of the men at Guantánamo. For more information contact Frida Berrigan at frida.berrigan@gmail.com.

2) Somewhat concurrently, the Peaceable Assembly Campaign (initiated by Voices for Creative Nonviolence) will gather in D.C., January 25-27 for legal protest, lobbying and civil disobedience action. The Campaign calls for an end to the wars and occupations in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Palestine, and for a redirection of funds away from military spending toward rebuilding these countries and towards providing for the Common Good here at home. For more information see www.vcnv.org. Contact LEPOCO re: rides from the L.V.

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Returning to Protest the SOA

Joe DeRaymond, recently deceased LEPOCO member and champion of Latino human rights, made repeated trips to Fort Benning in Columbus, Georgia, to protest the former School of the Americas, now renamed Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation. During his 2005 trip he was arrested for "crossing the line" and trespassing on military property, civil disobedience for which he spent three months in federal prison.

Joe's friend and partner, Sarah Snider, was with him at Fort Benning when he was arrested. He had hoped to attend the rally again this year. When he realized he would not make it, Sarah promised him she would go one more time. Accompanied by six LEPOCO members, she was present at this year's protest November 20-22. Nancy Tate, Janet Goloub, Tim Chadwick, Naed Smith and Bob and Carmen Riggs were with Sarah when she deposited some of Joe's ashes near the spot where Joe had committed the civil disobedience which resulted in his arrest and imprisonment.

More of Joe's ashes actually made it across the line. Four people were arrested for crossing the line this year. When Sarah met 77-year-old Father Luis Vitale and learned he was planning to cross the line for the third time, she asked him if he would spread some of Joe's ashes on the base and he agreed. Before his arrest he said he expected to spend six months in prison as the result of his repeated civil disobedience.

This year marked the 20th anniversary of the massacre which prompted Father Roy Bourgeois to begin the annual vigil at Fort Benning. Six Jesuit priests, along with their housekeeper and her daughter, were murdered by soldiers in El Salvador. Eighteen of the soldiers were graduates of the School of the Americas. Each year since, Father Bourgeois has led protest marches at the Fort Benning gate. As many as 20,000 protesters have attended past rallies, but this year's numbers were down to 6500, according to police estimates.

At 9:05 am, on Saturday, as protesters gathered at the Fort Benning gate, the gathering learned that Father Bourgeois and the School of Americas Watch organization which he founded had been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Click on the www.commondreams.org for a story published by The Columbus Ledger-Enquirer on 11/23/09, that reports on the SOA Watch event, including tributes to Joe and Sarah..

- Bob Riggs

Storm Clouds Gather

Storm clouds, originating in the north, are again gathering over Latin America. This was the clear message given by human rights activists attending the SOA Watch protest at Ft. Benning, Georgia, in November.

First, there was June's military coup in Honduras followed by the weak and confused response by the U.S. that has mostly given the coup-makers a green light. This while most of the countries in the region have stood firmly on the principle that military coups are never acceptable and that the elected government of Mel Zelaya should be immediately restored. (Please see the announcement of a P&P on Honduras on page 3 of this newsletter.)

Then there is the October 30th agreement that means U.S. troops will be moving onto seven military bases in Colombia. While the agreement is an "empty vessel" because all the plans for what the U.S. will be doing on the bases are not fully developed, human rights activists from Colombia are not reluctant to say they see the plans as a U.S. occupation of their country.

We know Ecuador refused to renew the agreement that allowed the U.S. military to use the Manta base in their country. And, we know U.S. military ties with Colombia have been close as U.S. soldiers are already present as part of the "war on drugs" and 85% of Colombian soldiers are being trained by the U.S. military, but this agreement represents a significant escalation of the U.S. military presence in the region.

One of the most troubling aspects of the agreement is that U.S. soldiers will have immunity from prosecution under Colombian laws. But human rights activists have greater concerns. This signals massive militarization in a region that has taken so many steps away from a dark past of military dictatorship. Many fear the specter of the U.S. using the bases and Colombian troops to destabilize the progressive governments in the region from Brazil, to Bolivia, to Ecuador. Colombia and Venezuela have a history of cross-border disputes and the U.S. eyes Venezuelan oil and has a distaste for their president Hugo Chavez.

According to Pentagon documents the new U.S. air base in Palanquero (one of the seven) will "expand expeditionary warfare capability" and "improve global reach" for "conducting full-spectrum operations." The document describes South America as "a critical sub-region of our hemisphere where security and stability is under constant threat from narcotics funded terrorist insurgencies, anti-U.S. governments, endemic poverty and recurring natural disasters."

The Americas Solidarity Group is working to bring a version of the U.S. bases in Colombia presentation that we saw in Georgia to a P&P program here. Stay tuned.

In the meantime we can contact our Senator Bob Casey, who sits on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and urge him to oppose the bases, but also to exercise oversight to ensure that they are never used to commit abuses against Colombians, to evade justice for crimes that U.S. soldiers may commit, to attack other nations, or to destabilize already tense relations between Colombia and its Andean neighbors.

- Nancy Tate

The Struggle Shared

*Willing to go ahead when others were afraid,
remembered for the questions that they raised
some dead, some in prison for the things that they believed
they were links in the chain...*

- by Kate Wolf and sung by Anne Hills and Tom Paxton,
on *Under American Skies*

DUMPING CHRIN - Ever since the opening of the I-78 corridor the Lehigh Valley has been blighted with development projects that appear like stigmata on the land around highway interchanges. Plans are moving ahead for the building of the Chrin Commerce Center at the Rt. 33 interchange in Tatamy by one of the most notorious developers in our region.

At a public hearing on the project in September, attended by members of the Green Valley Coalition, representatives for Chrin Brothers Inc., were evasive about the specifics of their plans. Their website presents a mixed-use plan, including light industrial, retail, office, loft apartments, all in an urban design incorporating open space, pedestrian friendly streets, and buildings that blend with historic structures in nearby Tatamy.

Nice on paper. But why should the Lehigh Valley trust the Chrin Brothers ?

Despite their current claims to "philanthropic development," Chrin's history in the Lehigh Valley should give us pause. That history begins as far back as 1961 with the opening of the Chrin Landfill in Williams Township. At the height of operations in the late 1970s they were receiving illegal hazardous chemical wastes, as much as 2.5 million pounds in a single year, according to an article by Joe DeRaymond. The dump eventually was declared a superfund site, and remedial action was taken, but, as recently as last spring, the Chrin Landfill was served with 12 citations for violations by Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection, and residents of the township continue to complain about odor.

Residents of Williams Township are clearly distrusting of Chrin. In the recent November election George Washburn won a seat on the Township's board of supervisors running as a write-in candidate opposed to the proposed expansion of the Chrin

landfill. Members of the Committee to Save Williams Township spoke out at a December 1st hearing questioning Chrin's application for a 10-year extension of their operating permit that expires on January 6, 2010.

With respect to the Commerce Center though, a recent news item in *The Morning Call* highlighted an appellate court decision upholding the ruling of Judge Kimberly McFadden that Lower Nazareth Township Supervisors were permitted to block a development project on environmental grounds. The project, an enormous automobile parts warehouse, has relocated to the proposed Chrin Commerce Center.

Can this development be stopped before it's too late?

GREEN BRONX - The following report is from Anna Maria Caldara:

"Building pathways out of corridors' is the stated purpose of Sustainable South Bronx (SSB), founded by Majora Carter in 2001. This simple motto has inspired enormous achievements despite poverty and pollution on a grand scale.

"On October 30th I boarded a bus leaving Lafayette College for the Hunts Point neighborhood. The environmental justice tour, coordinated by Assistant Director of Intercultural Development, Amina deBurst, featured sustainability projects transforming the poorest neighborhood in New York City.

"With 27% unemployment and one-in-four people afflicted with asthma, Hunts Point residents struggle to survive. No buffer exists between their homes and 15 trash transfer stations, a sewage sludge incinerator, four power plants, and oil refineries. Sixteen thousand trucks rumble through the neighborhood daily, transporting almost half of the city's waste into the Black/Hispanic sector. Four jails, including Riker's Island, claim jobless, drug-addicted youths.

"With another \$625 million jail proposal pending, SSB is urging the city to re-direct the money into green-collar job training: landscaping, tree planting, asbestos and lead removal, energy efficient housing retrofits, and backlot gardens. Teaching skills for a green-based economy, SSB is installing green walls (wall-climbing vegetation) and roof gardens to absorb rainwater and alleviate global warming.

"We visited parks that were former industrial sites on the East and Bronx Rivers. Families walk and bike along the water, offsetting obesity and diabetes. Pete Seeger donated trees from his property for the "Rocking the Boat" program at Riverside Park. Teens carve their own canoes, learning how to protect the local ecology as they paddle downstream.

In Majora Carter's words, 'greening the ghetto' is reclaiming lives!"

FOOD NOT BOMBS - This fall four interns with the Rodale Institute and the Quiet Creek Community Supported Agriculture prepared hot meals and served them to homeless and hungry residents in Center City Allentown. Every Sunday they would meet at the home of one of the volunteers, cook whatever produce they had collected from local groceries and farms, transport it all to 7th & Hamilton, and serve it to whomever showed up.

Concerned about issues of food security, the group wanted to make the connection between the amount of food that goes to waste at farms and markets because it is unsellable, and the ever-increasing numbers of people who do not get enough to eat. They visited a Food Not Bombs collective in Philadelphia to learn about this international movement.

Standing in solidarity with the disenfranchised people who came to eat their food, they chose not to meet unrealistic permit requirements. But, the Allentown Police never stopped them from serving. About 20 people ate meals each week. Ultimately, they could not find a serviceable kitchen in which to prepare meals. For this and other reasons the Food Not Bombs meals in Allentown have stopped. Anyone interested in picking up the ball, can contact Ellen Mickle at ellenmickle@yahoo.com.

- Jeff Vitelli

Bits & Pieces

Ⓐ There will probably be some form of public peace presence when **Glen Beck** appears at The State Theatre in Easton on Sat., Jan. 9, but as this is being prepared we have not been able to learn those plans from the organizers. Please call LEPOCO or read the LEPOCO weekly e-mail calendar update for more info.

Ⓐ Carolyn Heggen will lead the Winter Peace Retreat of the Franconia Mennonite Conference & Eastern District Conference Peace & Justice Committee on the theme of "**Compassionate Peace-making: Extending Hope and Healing To Those With Soul Wounds.**" The program will be held at the Spruce Lake Retreat, Feb. 12-14, 2010. Cost is \$155 for each adult. There will also be a children's program led by Maria & Pat Pietrak. For more inf. see www.efpj.org.

Ⓐ **Footprints for Peace** invites others to join them in a journey of walking in solidarity for a nuclear-free future. From Feb. 11 to May 1, 2010, they will walk from the Y-12 Nuclear Weapons Facility in Tennessee to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review meeting at the United Nations in New York City. They write, "We aim to raise awareness about alternative energy and sustainable lifestyles while exposing the deadly effects of the nuclear industry." For more information see www.footprintsforpeace.net or call 513-843-1205.

Ⓐ Keystone Progress will hold the **Pennsylvania Progressive Summit**, Jan. 29-30 in Hershey, PA. Workshops, speakers, films and networking will fit in with two debates among gubernatorial candidates on Friday night and U.S. Senate candidates on

Saturday night. For more info. call 610-568-0937.

Ⓐ On Nov. 9th www.commondreams.org published an article by **Holly Sklar**, titled "Change Wall Street Can Believe In." It read in part, *Wall Street is doing to America (sic) what private equity firms did to Simmons Bedding and many other productive companies. Taking control with borrowed money, stripping assets, slashing jobs and cashing out.*

Taxpayer bailouts saved Wall Street from choking on its own greed. Now, as the Wall Street Journal reports, "Major U.S. banks and securities firms are on pace to pay their employees about \$140 billion this year - a record high."

\$140 billion is more than the combined budgets of the U.S. Departments of Commerce, Education, Energy, Housing and Urban Development, the National Science Foundation and the Environment Protection Agency.

Typical workers, meanwhile, make less today adjusting for inflation than they did in the 1970s. Wall Street rewarded CEOs who cut employee wages and benefits and offshored manufacturing services, and research and development; feasted on Bush's tax cuts; turned mortgages into loan sharking; and vacuumed up home equity, college funds, retirement funds and other private and public investment into their rigged casino...

The Great Depression gave way to the New Deal. The Great Recession has become the Great Ripoff...

Ⓐ **The National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty** will hold their Annual Conference in Louisville, Kentucky, Jan. 14-17, 2010. The theme will be "Training for the Long Run - Building Bridges to Wider Audiences," and featured speakers will include Sister Helen Prejean, Barry W. Lynn and Professor Howard Zehr. For more inf. see www.ncadp.org.

Ⓐ Some local people are planning to join a **delegation to El Salvador**, March 19-27, the 30th Anniversary Monseñor Romero, to honor Joe DeRaymond who died Oct.1st. The

delegation will be hosted by CIS (Center for the Exchange of Solidarity), the organization with whom Joe worked on his many visits to El Salvador. If you would like to speak with some of the people planning to join this delegation or if you would like a registration form, please contact LEPOCO. You can also contact delegaciones_cis@yahoo.com for more info.

Ⓐ In this year of local long-distance walkers, congratulations are due to Janet Goloub, long time LEPOCO member, who has now completed her several year, segmented hike of the entire Appalachian Trail.

Ⓐ Amy Goodman reported on *Democracy Now!* on Dec. 17th that, "a new study from a progressive British think tank says low-income workers, such as hospital cleaners, have a far higher economic value to society than bankers. The New Economics Foundation says bankers take away seven British pounds for every one pound they earn. By contrast, hospital cleaners create ten pounds of economic value for every pound they earn. The study's authors say the findings suggest pay structures should reward jobs that create societal benefit, not profit.



Support LEPOCO!

- Enclosed are my yearly LEPOCO dues of \$_____. (\$35 individual; \$45 hh; \$75 supporter; \$5 lim. income)
- I am also enclosing an extra donation of \$_____.
- I would like to support LEPOCO's work with a ___monthly/___quarterly pledge of \$_____.
- I'm most interested in working on the following issues:

Name _____

Phone # _____ e-mail _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

Return to: LEPOCO Peace Center, 313 W. 4th St., Bethlehem, PA 18015.

Events at Kirkridge

Retreat & Study Center, near Bangor:

February 12-15: "Creating a Culture of Peace Basic Training" with Janet Chisholm.

For more information see www.kirkridge.org or call 610-588-1793.

Bits & Pieces

☮ On Wed., Jan. 20, at 7 pm, **Wendell Potter**, insurance industry whistleblower, will speak for the Kutztown Democratic Club -- location to be announced. A former vice president of corporate communications for CIGNA, he left the company when he came to the realization that our healthcare system is failing badly. He has testified for Congress and been interviewed on *Bill Moyers Journal* and many news programs

☮ On Dec. 16th, Dominick Buscemi packed six people in his car, for a quick trip to Harrisburg to support the first hearing on the SB-400, the **Family and Business Health Security Act**. The testimony of those supporting the bill was well received. If you would like to read an analysis of the hearing, call LEPOCO or see www.health4allpa.org.

On Dec. 19th, *The Morning Call* carried an excellent op-ed by Dominick titled, "Health Care 'Middlemen' Must Be Replaced with Single Payer System. If you cannot locate it on-line, contact LEPOCO.

☮ The LEPOCO Peace Center's dvd collection has grown recently due to donations by Maria Weick and Robert Daniels II. Over 100 films are now available to members in good standing. From documentaries such as *Shoah*, *Berkeley in the Sixties*, and *The Fog of War*, to fictional films with a social justice message like *Maria Full of Grace*, *The Return of the Secaucus 7*, and *Milk*, to speeches from Annual Dinner speakers like Noam Chomsky, Jennifer Harbury, and Bruce Gagnon, and past Popcorn and Politics features like *Gaza Strip*, *Body of War*, and *The Milagro Beanfield War*, there's bound to be something for everyone with a dvd player and a passion for peace and justice. Come peruse the selection at LEPOCO anytime during normal business hours (Mon., Wed., Fri. 10-5; Tues., Thurs. noon-6). A donation of \$1 per dvd per week is kindly requested. A listing of the dvds is available at www.lepoco.org/media.html.

☮ Given what a prominent role "Terrorism" plays in our political discourse, it's striking how little attention is paid to American (sic) actions which have the most significant impact on that problem. In addition to our occupation of Iraq, war escalation in Afghanistan, and secret bombings in Pakistan, President Obama late last week ordered cruise missile attacks on two locations in Yemen, which "U.S. officials" say were "suspected Al Qaeda hideouts." The main target of the attacks, Al Qaeda member Qasim al Rim, was not among those killed, but "a local Yemeni official said on Sunday that 49 civilians, among them 23 children and 17 women, were killed in air strikes against Al Qaeda, which he said were carried out 'indiscriminately.'"

- Glenn Greenwald, www.commondreams.org, 12/21/09

☮ The LEPOCO Book Group had a successful first meeting on Dec. 2nd, when they discussed *The Lemon Tree* by Sandy Tolan. They will meet again on Wed., Jan. 13, at 6 pm, to discuss *Jayber Crow* by Wendell Berry. The group meets at Panera Bread (café), 3301 Bath Pike/Center St., Bethlehem. The following month they will discuss David McCullough's *Truman* on the Wed., Feb. 3. For more info. call LEPOCO or Susie Ravitz at 610-253-2522.

☮ The response to LEPOCO's fund appeal letter of late October and the Phonathon calling has been encouraging. We plan to continue the calling in January. We are very grateful for all your donations.

☮ As the U.S. takes harmful and dangerous actions in at least three countries, it is disturbing to realize we have yet to clean-up the horrendous mess we left in Vietnam. A Dec. 13th article in *The Morning Call*, "**Agent Orange's Grisly Legacy**" describes a part of our failure, "Since the war ended nearly 35 years ago, Congress has set aside just \$6 million to assist Vietnam with herbicide-related issues, despite evidence that large numbers of civilians in the south - people in whose name the war was fought - were exposed to defoliants that have since been outlawed in the U.S."

Weekly Peace Vigils

Our wars continue. Can you join the much-needed witnessing for peace?

Bethlehem:

4-5 pm, Second 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 C. Fowler 746-5013

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

Tues., Jan. 5, 11 am: Newsletter Planning Committee meeting at the LEPOCO Peace Center.

Tues., Jan. 5, 6 pm: Nuclear Abolition Sisters meeting at the Olive Branch Restaurant, 355 Broadway, south Bethlehem.

Monday, Jan. 11, 7 pm: LEPOCO Monthly Action Meeting at the LEPOCO Peace Center. All members and friends are welcome at this monthly business meeting where the organization's activities are reviewed.

Tues., Jan. 12, 7 pm: America as Solidarity Group meeting at the LEPOCO Peace Center.

Thurs., Jan. 14, 7 pm: Lehigh Valley Chapter of Veterans for Peace meeting at the LEPOCO Peace Center.

Tues., Jan. 19, 2 pm: Fundraising Committee meeting at the LEPOCO Peace Center.

Wed., Jan. 20, 10 am: Bike-Walk-a-thon Planning Committee meeting at the LEPOCO Peace Center.

Tues., Jan. 26, 10 am: Lehigh Valley Committee Against State Killing meeting at the LEPOCO 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 if you want to know the next meeting of the LEPOCO Peace Singers, the Ad Hoc Committee on the Economic Crisis, the Lehigh Valley Peace Coalition, the Youth & Militarism/Truth in Recruiting Committee, or the Association of Students Advocating Peace: please call the Peace Center at 610-691-8730. For a regularly updated calendar of events and a schedule of meetings please see www.lepoco.org.



LEPOCO

Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern

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610-691-8730 lepoco@fast.net
Fax: 610-691-8904 www.lepoco.org

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Save the Date

LEPOCO'S Annual Dinner
Saturday
March 6, 2010

Featured Speakers:

The Rev. Billy
& Savitri D.
spiritual leaders of the
Church of Life After Shopping

Sunday, January 17, 3 pm

A public reading of
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s
"A Declaration of Independence
from the War in Vietnam" speech.

YMCA Community Room
1225 West Lafayette, Easton

Please join the Nuclear Abolition Sisters of
LEPOCO for this first Easton reading of
the ever-timely and powerful call for
nonviolence and justice
in the season of King Birthday gatherings.

LEPOCO Peace Singers at First Night Bethlehem

Thursday, December 31, 2009, 6:00 pm

Unitarian Universalist Church of the Lehigh Valley Sanctuary
424 Center St., Bethlehem