While the Bush Administration is waging wars around the world in the name of ‘democracy’, WNPJ members are struggling to save the remnants of a democratic system at home.

Democracy, I learned in school, meant government ‘of the people, for the people, by the people’ but there are those for whom it seems to mean only that there shall be ‘free markets’ open to corporate capitalists, and ‘free elections’ in which the populace elects a government acceptable to U.S. (or corporate capitalist) interests. Seems more like government of all the people of the world, for the corporate world, by the puppets of capitalism.

As citizens of the USA we are not immune from all of this, except that - in what remains of our electoral system - we are the only ones that may have some modicum of impact, however small, on the most powerful nation in the world, and therefore on its exercise of power over everyone else. We should use that modicum with all our might before it disappears. For this we need fair and honest electoral procedures; we need well-informed and engaged citizens, and we need full civil rights for all citizens.

**Fair and honest electoral procedures**

Will we ever be able to vote for candidates who represent our views? As long as the costs of running for election require a huge campaign chest, peace-candidates running for office face enormous obstacles. Talk of campaign finance reform has been with us for a long time, but little sign of real progress. And as long as we are stuck with the antiquated ‘winner takes all’ system, we will be accused of ‘wasting’ our vote when we vote for third party candidates. Getting rid of our electoral college, instant run-off voting and similar methods of counting votes are readily available, if we can get them introduced.

We have many other questions about the electoral process. Will all eligible voters be allowed to vote on election day? Or will voters be prevented from voting by unreasonable registration requirements? Will they be disqualified and intimidated or will their names be eliminated from the rolls? Will others be prevented from voting by long lines and hours of waiting because insufficient ballot boxes have been provided? Will all the votes cast be counted, or will shadow votes be counted as well? Trust in voting-machine technology is low, and the manipulation of results well documented, with some precincts returning more votes than they have voters in several key elections. A ballot paper trail is essential. And here in Wisconsin the contract with Accenture to update our voting machines has run into such trouble that the state is forced to break the law. Just what kind of rule do we have here?

Even before election day, there are a multitude of other issues to worry about, such as truth in campaigning, election oversight, gerrymandering of electoral districts (think Texas). Once, slaves were counted for purposes of representation (as 3/5 of a person) even though...
Wisconsin “Bring Our Troops Home” Movement Organizes Second Round of Ballot Initiatives

by Steve Burns

A fter the success of Wisconsin’s “Bring Our Troops Home” ballot initiatives in the April 4 election, in which 24 Wisconsin communities voted “yes” to the initiatives, Wisconsin peace activists are organizing for a second round of initiatives in time for the November 7 election.

The initiatives are permitted under a 1911 Wisconsin statute, which gives residents of a city or village the right to place a question on their local ballot if they collect valid signatures equal to 15% of the vote for governor in the last gubernatorial election.

Residents in Baraboo, Glendale, Lake Delton, Fox Point, Middleton, Racine, the town of Springdale, South Milwaukee, Viroqua and Wauwatosa have all collected sufficient signatures to place “Troops Home” initiatives on the ballot. And in the village of Pittsville, organizer Robert Hoch collected sufficient signatures for a resolution calling for the impeachment of President Bush and Vice-President Cheney. The Pittsville resolution is the first impeachment resolution in the state, and is being followed by a similar effort in Wisconsin Rapids.

In January, Milwaukee’s city council voted to place a referendum on the November ballot calling for a “humane, orderly, rapid and comprehensive withdrawal” of troops from Iraq. WNPJ member group Peace Action (www.peaceactionwi.org) is coordinating the Milwaukee campaign.

In Wauwatosa, WNPJ member group The Candlelight Coalition coordinated an effort that brought in 3,967 signatures, 800 more than the number required, for a resolution that “The United States should now begin withdrawing troops from Iraq, and continue steady withdrawals until all our troops are home.” Among the many Wauwatosa residents supporting the resolution was Ken Titera, whose cousin was killed in Iraq in May. “Some question the patriotism of those who sign these petitions to have referendums placed on local ballots or wonder how the signers can support the troops and not support the war,” said Titera, who served in the U.S. Army for six years. “My response is that what is unpatriotic is not questioning your elected officials at every level of government about any decisions they make for their constituents.”

In Racine, the Racine Coalition for Peace and Justice, another WNPJ member group, organized more than 40 volunteers in their signature-collecting efforts. According to RCPJ member Ken Yorgan, organizers encountered some feelings of helplessness when making their pitch for volunteers. “Some people said, ‘Anything I do won’t make any difference’ and I replied, that no raindrop creates the river either, but if they all decided to hang around in the clouds, we’d be living in a desert. Every person, every thought, every word makes a little difference’.

A signature-gathering campaign is still active in Wisconsin Rapids. For information about how to get involved, contact the WNPJ office at (608) 250-9240 or go to the WNPJ website, www.wnpj.org.
In November, Wisconsin voters will be asked if they want to end a 153 year tradition of opposition to capital punishment. The State Legislature has voted to place an advisory referendum on the ballot, calling for the death penalty for those convicted of homicide, “if the conviction is supported by DNA evidence”.

Although the referendum is only advisory, pro-death penalty legislators are expected to use a “yes” vote to renew a legislative push to reinstate the death penalty.

In response, the “NO Death Penalty Wisconsin” Coalition is bringing together civil rights and faith groups to campaign for a “no” vote on the referendum. The coalition’s new website is: www.nodeathpenaltywi.org.

There are many reasons to vote NO on the advisory referendum:

- All human life is precious and needs to be protected from unnatural death. Those who abuse this basic tenant of human decency lead all of humanity into a cycle of violence. State sponsored killing such as the death penalty institutionalizes revenge as acceptable public policy.

- Nationwide, in states with the death penalty, minorities and poor people are disproportionately convicted. According to the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, African Americans, who comprise only 12% of the general population, make up 42% of death row inmates. Since 1976, more than 60% of those sentenced to death for childhood offenses have been either Black or Latino, and 2 out of 3 juveniles on death row are persons of color.

- Wrongful convictions could occur even in cases where DNA evidence is used. DNA testing simply is not that precise. While it may place someone at the scene of a crime, it cannot definitively prove that a person committed the crime.

- The death penalty does NOT decrease murder rates. In a study conducted in 1999, no relationship was found between the number of executions and the overall murder rate. In fact, the results of a New York Times survey in 2000 demonstrated that homicide rates in states with the death penalty have been 48 to 101% higher than in those without it.

- The death penalty costs more than life imprisonment. When post-conviction appeals and similar procedures are factored in, a single death penalty case ranges in cost from $1 million to $3 million... sometimes as high as $7 million. By contrast, cases resulting in a sentence of life without parole cost approximately $500,000, including the incarceration costs. These millions of dollars could be used to build better communities and to fund education, health care, public transportation and safety.

WNPJ has endorsed the “NO Death Penalty Wisconsin” campaign, and WNPJ member groups are active in the Coalition, including the Madison-Area Urban Ministry and the Wisconsin Council of Churches. The latter produced an educational packet that can be downloaded from the Council’s website at www.wichurches.org.

Art Thexton, attorney and state treasurer of the Wisconsin Coalition against the Death Penalty, stresses the need to be ready for action. He listed 10 Things you can do:

1. Write a letter to the editor of your local paper.
   (Visit www.nodeathpenaltywi.org for talking points.)
2. Send a donation to No Death Penalty Wisconsin, P.O. Box 44008, Madison, WI 53744.
3. Display bumper stickers, yard signs and buttons.
4. Host speakers, forums with social justice committees and service groups; using the speakers’ bureau now being formed.
5. Join the Wisconsin Coalition Against the Death Penalty.
6. Talk to your friends about the death penalty, and make sure they vote.
7. Ask your sheriff, district attorney, correctional officers and police if they will support the “vote no” campaign.
8. Talk to your legislators, go to a listening session or a rally for candidates and raise the issue of the death penalty.
9. Prepare an “Elevator speech”, a 30-second passionate speech on why you are opposed to the death penalty.
10. Go to www.WCADP.org, and forward the No Death Penalty Wisconsin statement to all your friends.

To get involved in the “NO Death Penalty Wisconsin” Campaign, contact Arthur Thexton at 608-249-2702 or athexton@alum.beloit.edu.
Stories of Hope
Judge Dismisses Charges for Pentagon Protestors

by Janet Parker

WNPJ members Janet Parker and Joy First went on trial in Alexandria, Virginia July 21, after being arrested with 49 others from around the country at a March 20, 2006 Pentagon protest.

The protest brought together a group of 250 people, including Cindy Sheehan and Michael Berg, father of Nick Berg who was kidnapped and killed in Iraq, to march on the Pentagon and demand to speak with Donald Rumsfeld. Protesters carried a coffin representing all the people who have been killed as a result of the war. At the Pentagon, a temporary fence had been erected to stop the peace activists from delivering their message to Rumsfeld. Fifty-one activists were arrested when they climbed over the fence as they continued to press towards the Pentagon to deliver their message. They were charged with “failure to obey a lawful order,” which carries a maximum sentence of six months in prison and/or a $5,000 fine.

In the first two trials in federal court in Alexandria, Virginia, seventeen of those arrested on March 20 were convicted. The third trial took place July 21 before U.S. Magistrate Theresa Buchanan, known for sentencing protesters to jail terms.

Susan Crane, from Baltimore’s Jonah House, was first to come before the judge, for a protest at the Pentagon on Holy Thursday, April 13, 2006. Judge Buchanan found her guilty of failure to obey a lawful order and sentenced her to 30 days in the Alexandria Detention Center.

Maria Allwine, another defendant, began her defense by detailing the disaster brought on the country of Iraq by the U.S. invasion and occupation. Judge Buchanan interrupted her, urging her to focus on the events of March 20. Allwine continued with her indictment of U.S. policy, reminding the judge of a Nuremberg obligation to take action when a government is involved in criminal behavior. Allwine also described how the First Amendment rights of the defendants were violated by the Pentagon Police. She told the court that the defendants were prepared to provide evidence that the antwar activists were not guilty of failure to obey a lawful order because the order was not lawful.

The prosecution presented only one witness: Major William Stout, who supervises 366 Pentagon officers (there were at least 100 officers present on March 20). Maj. Stout claimed that the protesters requested that their march end in the parking lot just across the bridge from LBJ Grove; that they were informed that a 5’ barricade would prevent them from proceeding any further; and that the purpose of the barricade was to protect the protesters; and that a “free speech zone” was set up to allow the demonstrators an opportunity to exercise their First Amendment rights.

Defendant Michelle Grise argued that the police infringed upon her First Amendment right to petition one of the architects of the quagmire in Iraq because the barricade was too far from the Pentagon for Rumsfeld to see the message of the demonstrators.

Other defendants continued to challenge Maj. Stout’s claim that police were protecting the protesters. When defendant Jean Athey again argued that First Amendment rights were denied by the police, the judge upheld an objection by the prosecution that her argument was irrelevant.

After the prosecution rested, defendant Jean Athey made a motion for judgment of acquittal, and to the surprise of many in the courtroom, judge Buchanan ruled in favor of the motion, saying that the prosecution had failed to identify any of the defendants. Judge Buchanan’s ruling was especially surprising given that she had earlier sentenced defendant Susan Crane to 30 days for actions at an earlier protest.

The defendants speculated about the decision after the end of the trial. Some thought that judge Buchanan had recognized that this group of defendants was prepared to present a very vigorous defense, which would include repeated condemnations of the war. Whatever the reason for the dismissal, the peace movement should celebrate one of our rare courtroom victories.

The defendants urged those opposed to the US war in Iraq to come to Washington on September 26 for the next mass action organized by the National Campaign for Nonviolent Resistance. This action will be part of the Declaration of Peace initiative. For more information about the Declaration of Peace campaign, go to www.declarationofpeace.org, or call Joy First at 608-222-7581.
Opponents of the School of the Americas/WHINSEC showed real progress in a June 9 vote on a congressional amendment to cut funding to the school. The proposal, offered by Rep. James McGovern (D-MA), was defeated by a vote of 218 to 188, but its supporters were not discouraged, noting that the amendment gained the highest-ever “yes” vote for closing the SOA, which is notorious for its role in training death-squad leaders in Central and South America.

Voting “yes” on the McGovern Amendment:

* 14 Democrats and 2 Republicans on the House Armed Services Committee.
* Jane Harman, ranking member of the House Intelligence Committee.
* Democrat Steny Hoyer, House leadership #2, notable because he had never before voted against SOA funding.

Organizers were especially excited about their success in reaching new members of Congress. Of 17 newly-elected Democrats, 10 voted for the amendment, along with 2 newly elected Republicans. And 13 members of Congress who had voted against cutting SOA funding when the issue last came to a vote switched their votes to “yes”. The McGovern amendment now has a total of 58 cosponsors, near the historical record for co-sponsors for a bill, so organizers are optimistic that they can bring the amendment to a vote in the next Congress.

Cindy Buhl, the Legislative Director for Rep. McGovern, remarked on the success of the SOA opponents in educating Congress about the issue: “Ten days before the vote, 90 percent of this House didn’t have a clue about the SOA/WHINSEC, its history, its reality, or how it’s perceived in Latin America. They do today.” Go to www.soaw.org for updates on the continuing struggle against the SOA/WHINSEC.

Stories of Hope
Historic Congressional debate and vote on School of the Americas

from legislative analysis by Pam Bowman, SOAW's Legislative Coordinator

Editor’s note: In the Fall, we again begin to focus on the protest at Ft. Benning’s School of the Americas/WHINSEC. With the article above we are putting the protest back on our agenda. The grass roots of the movement and of democracy are at work throughout the year, not always making the headlines, but gaining steadily nevertheless. They are a source of hope. hd

AN ORCHID TO

WNPJ volunteer Fred Brancel on receiving the “Perry Saito Award – 2006” from the WI United Methodist Federation for Social Action – for social activism and witness for peace and civil disobedience.

All the folks who give us fresh, local produce in this harvest season; who encourage a new vision of sustainability and care of the earth.

AN ONION TO

Chicago Jobs With Justice, which succeeded in passing a city ordinance requiring a higher minimum wage for big retailers like Wal-Mart.

Fair Wisconsin, for turning out more than 500 volunteers for a statewide door-to-door campaign on the August 23 weekend, to educate the public about the impact of the proposed ban on civil unions and gay marriage, which will appear on November’s ballot.

Wisconsin’s safety net that leaves 84,000 children in deep poverty, an increase of almost 50% since 2000.

The Ozaukee County Board for cutting County funding to the UW-Extension in retaliation for the University’s hiring of lecturer Kevin Barrett.
Calendar

September 2006

9/19 Tues 7 pm Abuse of Power: The Case for Impeachment, presentation by Matt Rothschild of The Progressive - Racine. At the Racine Public Library. Shirley Reynolds 262-632-1329 or Dick Kinch 262-638-0204 or RacinePeace@yahoo.com.

9/20 Wed 12 – 2 pm Brown Bag Lunch with David Giffey - Dodgeville. Masonic Temple, Corner of Main and Chapel (across the street from the Iowa County Courthouse parking lot). A timely, provocative exhibit and conversation of large-scale murals (previously shown at WI Veterans Museum in Madison). Viewing and discussion of murals with David Giffey. Call 623-2109 for info.

9/20 Wed 7 – 8:30 pm “Understanding the Middle East” Academy Evening Series with “Oil Addiction—Jan Kalicki” – Madison. Overture Center, 201 State St., Capitol Theater. Middle East Academy Evening Series, continuing on 9/27, 10/4, & 10/11. Free and open to the public; seating tickets recommended/available after August 1 at the James Watrous Gallery, 3rd Fl. Barbara Sanford, bsanford@wisconsinacademy.org.


9/21 Thurs Candlelight Vigil for Peace – Madison. Time and place to be determined. Plans are being made by members of the National Campaign for Nonviolent Resistance. Janet Parker, janetparker8@yahoo.com or Joy First, 608-222-7581 or jsfirst@charter.net.

9/24 Sun 6:30 – 9 pm Introductory Course on the History of the Palestine Conflict – Madison. Escape Java Joint, 916 Williamson. The primary purpose of this course is to prepare activists to carry-out “peace education outreach”. The main reading will be Middle East British journalist David Hirst’s classic, The Gun and the Olive Branch: The Roots of Violence in the Middle East, published in 1977 and 1984. $10 registration fee. Sponsored by the Peregrine Forum. Other dates are Oct. 8th, Oct. 22nd, Nov. 5th, Nov. 19th, and Dec. 3rd. Contact David Williams at 608-442-8399 or dwdwilliams51@yahoo.com.


9/27 Wed 7 – 8:30 pm “Understanding the Middle East” Academy Evening Series with “The Dilemma of Fundamentalism - Martin Marty” – Madison. Overture Center, 201 State St., Capitol Theater. For more info see 9/20 above.


9/29 – 10/2 Fri – Mon STOPPING THE MERCHANTS OF DEATH: A Strategic Conference for Grassroots Activist – St. Paul, MN. University of St. Thomas. For organizations and individuals working to expose and stop corporate war profiteering! Drawing upon the spirit, the experience and success of the Honeywell campaign, the War Resisters League, in conjunction with Alliant Action, Nukewatch, Veterans for Peace-Twin City Chapter, University of St. Thomas Justice and Peace Studies Dept., and the Des Moines Catholic Worker. Join us the whole weekend and honor Gandhi’s Birthday, with a nonviolent direct action at Alliant Techsystems (makers of depleted uranium weapons). Non-violent Direct Action training provided and strongly recommended. Music*Native Drumming *Comedy*Stories*Strategy*Non-Violent Direct Action*Vision. E-mail Nukewatch@lakeland.ws for more info. Car-pooling from Central Wisconsin available – call Carol Lukens at 715 842 4538.
October 2006

10/4 Wed 7 – 8:30 pm
“Understanding the Middle East”
Academy Evening Series with
“Beyond the US Veil: Women in
the Middle East - Mary Layoun”
– Madison. Overture Center, 201
State St., Promenade Hall. For
more info see 9/20.

10/6 - 7 Fri-Sat Gospel of
Nonviolent Love, workshop led
by Fr Emmanuel Charles
McCarthy - Racine. Sienna Center.
Sr Rita Lui, 262-639-4100.

10/7 – 10/10 Sat – TUES EcoHealth
ONE - An International
Conference – Madison. Bringing
together the latest research in the
ecological and health sciences.
Location to be determined. Contact
Alfred Meyer for details
mail@psrmadison.org or see
www.ecohealth.net.

10/7 Sat 9 am – 3 pm Nonviolence
Training: The Personal/
Interpersonal issues with Jacob
and Jeanne Merceberger – West
Bend. 5th Ave UM Church, 323 S.
5th Ave. Part of a series of
nonviolence workshops sponsored
by the WI Conference United
Methodist Church Board of
Church and Society. Register by
Sept 23. $10 suggested donation,
includes lunch. Contact
Marianne@Wisconsinumc.org or call
608-655-3932 for details. Send
registration and payment for each
session to Karen Lamoree, POBox
620, Sun Prairie, WI 53590.

10/9 Mon 7 – 8:30pm Forgiveness,
Revenge, Reconciliation: No Easy
Matter – Racine. At the Racine
Dominican Retreat Program,
located at Siena Center, 5635 Erie
Street. An eye for an eye…a life for
a life? Rather, justice is best defined
as right relationships. In this two-
part series (next mtg is 10/16) we
will look at justice through the lens
of revenge, reconciliation and
forgiveness – of self and others.
Presented by Lois Aceto, OP. Cost:
$20 total. Arch of Milw. Contact Sr.
Rita Lui at 262.639.4100 x1230.

10/10 Tues 7pm Movies Twice a
Month! This week “Narrrated slide
show of Viet Nam by a Global
Volunteer. Also, Loose Change” –
Seeley. At the Sawmill. Free. Peace

10/11 Wed 7 – 8:30 pm
“Understanding the Middle East”
Academy Evening Series with
“Paths to Peace - Nadav Shelef
and Ali Abootalebi” – Madison.
Overture Center, 201 State St.,
Overture Lobby. For more
information see 9/20.

10/14 Sat 8:30 am – 5 pm 16th
Annual Fall Assembly of the
Wisconsin Network for Peace
and Justice - LaCrosse. Peace for
All Ages! Featured Speaker:
Kathleen Sullivan, Educators for
Social Responsibility. See insert
for details and registration info. To
volunteer, contact Mary Beth
Schlagheck, mbspeace1@charter.net.

10/15 Sun 11 am – 1 pm Brunch
and Presentation of WWN’s
Stateswoman of the Year –
Madison. Monona Terrace. WI
Rep. Terese L Berceau is the
recipient of the Wisconsin Women’s
Network annual award. If you
would like to sponsor or attend the
event, contact WWN at
wivwomen@execpc.com or 608-255-
9809.

10/16 Mon 7 – 8:30pm
Forgiveness, Revenge,
Reconciliation: No Easy Matter –
Racine. At the Racine Dominican
Retreat Program, located at Siena
Center, 5635 Erie Street. See 10/9.

10/20 Fri 5:30pm Annual Dinner
of Wisconsin United Methodist
Federation for Social Action –
Milwaukee. Kenwood United
Methodist Church, 2319 E.
Kenwood Blvd. Dinner before the
Kairos CoMotion Conference.
Details from dsteffe@charter.net.

10/20-21 Fri – Sat Kairos
CoMotion 2006 – Milwaukee.
Kenwood United Methodist
Church, 2319 E. Kenwood Blvd.”Homosexuality” presentation
by Theodore W. Jennings –
Professor of Biblical and
Constructive Theology of the
Chicago Theological Seminary. Cost
is $60. Register by 10/2. See

10/21-22 Sat - Sun Central WI
Peace Conference - Welcoming as
Peacemaking – Marshfield.
Sponsored by First Presbyterian
Church, 200 S. Lincoln. Rev. John
Fife is the Keynote Speaker.
Contact information: 715-384-2484,
fpcm@verizon.net. John Fife is with
Humane Borders, a non-profit
group that seeks to provide medical
and humanitarian aid to migrants
crossing the desert in Arizona. For
more information, contact:
Wisconsin Council of Churches
608-837-3108, or Ken Pennings
kpennings@wichurches.org.
they had no vote, a device which allowed southern states additional representation. Today, prisoners, who are not allowed to vote, are counted (as a whole person) for electoral representation in the area in which they are imprisoned rather than in their home location, a device which allows many rural areas to gain representation while reducing that of many urban areas.

And then there is the matter of balance of powers and executive authority. Through the line item veto the Wisconsin Governor has the power “to create laws the legislature did not consider, let alone enact” according to a Wisconsin judge. And George Bush has a nasty habit of swearing disclaimers under his breath - signing statements they are officially called - to get his own way rather than support laws passed by Congress.

Fair elections seem like a mirage of the past or an illusory prospect. But have no fear, WNPJ members are alert. WNPJ member group the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign tracks the money in state politics and advocates for campaign finance reform, media reform and election reform. Wisconsin Citizen Action works to help elect progressive candidates to all local, state, and federal levels. Many individual members, too, are involved in political campaigns and advocacy and working on these electoral issues.

In recognition that there are WNPJ members who reject the democratic process as it stands, a word on elections from a leading nineteenth century anarchist, Benjamin Tucker:

“What is the ballot? It is neither more nor less than a paper representative of the bayonet, the bully, and the bullet. It is a labor saving device for ascertaining on which side force lies and bowing to the inevitable.”

But whatever your stand on bullets and ballots, we hope you will be informed and engaged citizens.

Well-informed and engaged citizens

There are those who argue that democracy is impossible without a well-informed citizenry. But with the echo chamber of mainstream news continually attacked for being too liberal - a charge that makes many of us weep - misinformation abounds. Is there any chance that voters will be well informed about the issues, and all points of view have a chance to be heard? Media reformers are working to make this happen. We are lucky here in Wisconsin to have a statewide public radio network, several local community radio stations, as well as some of our own voices on Air America. Then there are WNPJ members such as Driftless Community Radio; Madison Campaign for Free Speech Radio and TV, and the Rainbow Bookstore, all dedicated to providing information from outside the mainstream.

For those of us who still like to talk face-to-face about social and political issues, there are forums provided by a number of member groups, for example, Coulee Progressives, Progressive Forum of Washington Island, Dell County Progressive Voices; The Madison Institute, Wisconsin Citizen Action; Peregrine Forum; Progressive Voices and Watertown Peace and Democracy Coalition. For another level of political engagement, citizens join political parties: the Democratic Socialists, the Socialist Party of Wisconsin and its South Central local chapter, and the Wisconsin Green Party are all WNPJ members.

Full civil rights for all

The democratic society we envision is not just about elections, or free and informative media. It is also about living in a society in which everyone enjoys the benefits and privileges of an egalitarian society and can participate in daily life without harassment and fear. Civil rights for all is still a far cry from reality, and our member groups are working on this in various arenas.

GSASS (formerly GLSEN), Action Wisconsin, Center Advocates, and YWCA/Galaxy, are working to reduce prejudice based on sexual orientation – and this year are fighting a proposed constitutional amendment which would ban civil unions and gay marriage. The Habiba Foundation works to reduce ill-informed prejudice against Arabs and Arab-Americans. And labor unions Service Employees International Union (SEIU) District 1199W/UP and the South Central Federation of Labor, and the UW-Madison -United Faculty & Academic Staff, AFT district #223, struggle as always for decent working conditions and fair representation of workers in the workforce. The rights and wellbeing of those returning to society from prison is the special concern of Madison-area Urban Ministry and of Waukesha Catholic Worker community, while St. Norbert Abbey Justice and Peace Committee has a particular concern for immigrants in the Green Bay area. Many other of the social justice groups have mandates and activities that encompass support for such groups too.

Overview: Use them or lose them

We need to make full use of democratic procedures available to us as long as we have them. WNPJ members are deeply involved in three referendum campaigns which involve WNPJ members and supporters this fall: Fair Wisconsin, working to defeat a ban on civil unions and gay marriage; Bring Our Troops Home Coalition is organizing a second round of ballot initiatives in 12 Wisconsin cities; and the Wisconsin Council of Churches, leading the effort to prevent the reintroduction of the death penalty in Wisconsin. You can get involved in these campaigns via the WNPJ website: www.wnpj.org.

END-NOTE: One of our goals in carrying out the ‘peace planks platform’ exercise is that we can all more readily acknowledge and support the work of other groups within our broad coalition. I hope this brief account helps us to do that, or at least to draw attention to the large number of issues and people engaged in this part of our combined work. If there omissions – and I’m sure there are - please write in and share with us.
**Bits & Peaces**

**Victory for Wisconsin’s Environment and Citizen Activists** - The EPA has ruled against an Army proposal to conduct open burning of PCB wastes found in old buildings owned by the military. The landmark decision comes after a prolonged grassroots campaign by WNPJ member group Citizens for Safe Water Around Badger (www.cswab.org) and would block the planned burning of hundreds of buildings at closing bases across the country including Wisconsin’s Badger Army Ammunition Plant and the Ravenna Arsenal in Ohio.

PCB’s (poly-chlorinated biphenols) are one of the most potent cancer-causing chemicals in existence and the Army’s proposed burning of buildings at Badger Ammunition plant would have released PCB’s in the buildings into the atmosphere. Some buildings at Badger have tested as high as 22,000 parts per million of PCB’s, more than 400 times the EPA’s regulatory threshold for PCB’s, which is 50 ppm.

CSWAB Organizer Laura Olah said the ruling came after “thousands of emails, letters and postcards” were sent by opponents of the Amy’s plan, and encouraged others to join CSWAB’s efforts to “continue building a world free from military toxins.”

**The Corporate Campaign Against Justice** - The U.S. Chamber of Commerce claims “lawsuit abuse” is a real cause for concern. But is it?

A multi-million dollar campaign by the Chamber of Commerce and various other front groups promotes “Lawsuit abuse” in order to convince the public that corporations that dump poisonous chemicals into our water supply, hide the deadly side effects of prescription drugs they manufacture, keep dangerous products on the market or engage in other irresponsible behavior, should not be held accountable for their actions.

Corporate America has enormous influence among our elected officials, and is attempting to use that influence to rig our court system at the expense of the health and safety of all Americans. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has already overrun our legislatures with money and lobbyists. Don’t let them run off with our courts!

To learn more about this issue and get involved in fighting corporate abuses, go to www.citizenactionwi.org and click on the People Over Profits icon.

**Unelected Sunset Commissions to Cut Programs** - A House and Senate proposal suggests setting up “sunset commissions” that would determine the fate of all federal programs, putting ALL federal programs at risk. Commission members would be unelected and would operate without public input or Congressional oversight and expertise. Congress would have only an up or down vote on recommendations from the commissions.

Sunset commissions increase the chance of growing inequality, because there would be less chance for people to pressure their legislators to save government services such as student loans or Headstart programs. United for a Fair Economy, www.faireconomy.org.

**SOA Watch Target of FBI** - The American Civil Liberties Union and the ACLU of Georgia released new evidence that the Federal Bureau of Investigation is conducting counterterrorism investigations into School of the Americas Watch. In the released documents, the FBI noted that “the [SOA Watch November vigil] has grown dramatically over the past several years.” The FBI elevated its concern to “priority” level and subjected SOA Watch to “counterterrorism” surveillance. The Bureau monitored the media attention that the annual November vigil and the trials of people arrested for nonviolent civil disobedience received, and agents noted which court tactics had chilling effects on people’s decisions to participate in civil disobedience. www.soawatch.org.

**WNPJ And FAIR Expose Smear On Peace Movement** - New York Times has issued a correction of a false claim, printed on its June 12 Op-Ed page, that antiwar protesters had engaged in a protest at the funeral of a soldier killed in Iraq. The correction was the result of research done by the Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice (www.wnpj.org) and an internet action campaign by Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (www.fair.org).

The correction was issued after the author of the Op-Ed piece, Karen Spears Zacharais, admitted that the witness she had relied on “was not sure of the affiliation” of the funeral protesters, and that other witnesses she had interviewed identified funeral protesters as members of the anti-gay Westboro Baptist Church.

Westboro Baptist, based in Topeka Kansas, has conducted protests at hundreds of funerals of soldiers killed in Iraq, based on their belief that the Iraq war represents God’s punishment for America’s tolerance of gays and lesbians. Westboro Baptist’s protests have been mistaken for antiwar protests on other occasions, and the Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice is pursuing similar corrections from several newspapers, including the Washington Post, the Boston Globe, the New Orleans Times-Picayune and the Tulsa World.
WNPJ Makes the Connection Between Peace and Renewable Energy

by Judy Miner, staff at WNPJ info@wnpj.org

Peace activists and environmentalists came together the weekend of June 23 – 25 at the Midwest Renewable Energy Association’s Energy Fair to celebrate renewable energy, recognizing that clean and renewable energy sources here at home mean no need for wars abroad.

For the first time, WNPJ had a booth at the fair, and WNPJ volunteers at our booth met many fair-goers who understood the connection between peace and renewable energy and supported our work. WNPJ member groups at the Fair included: People for Peace, Citizens Energy Co-op, Concerned Citizens of Newport, the Wisconsin Green Party, and of course, the MREA itself.

Nearly 20 volunteers arrived early Sunday morning to help set up for the first-ever WNPJ Pancake Fundraiser. Bonni Miller of Chez Marche Café in Waupaca provided the pancake batter, Mike Miles and Janet Parker flipped the french toast, and Kathy and Ron Dakter kept the juice and coffee running. Tom Pease, Bruce O’Brien and Baba Ghanooj provided music during the event. Cham Nusz and Connie Kanitz of WNPJ were the organizers of the event, which fed more than 300 hungry fair-goers.

After breakfast, 50 Walkers for Peace gathered for the three-mile Walk out onto Highway 10, with drum, signs and a giant peace dove. There were many new faces among the Walkers, and some known to WNPJ. Marc Becker was participating for the 5th straight year as a Walker for Peace. Join us next year at the Fair!

Books

- **Taxes are a Woman’s Issue: Reframing the Debate**, by the National Council for Research on Women.

We all pay taxes and receive tax funded benefits, but are there particular ways that women are affected by tax policy? In their new book, Authors Mimi Abramovitz and Sandra Morgan walk us through the history of taxation, the basics of how taxes work, and identify the particular issues that women need to pay attention to. For example, women have a special need to defend and expand the Child Tax Credit and the Earned Income Tax Credit which helps low-income mothers who truly need this after-tax income. The authors also argue that, because women have less wealth than men, they should oppose tax cuts on income from wealth.

- **Overthrow: America’s Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq** by Stephen Kinzer. “The book is a journalistic treatment that gathers the data of deep reporting and research and assembles an unvarnished portrait of the United States’ fascination with overthrowing governments.” (Tom Roberts in NCR)

- **Original Zinn: Conversations on History and Politics** by Howard Zinn with David Barsamian. In this collection of questions and answers, Zinn is at his most irrepressible and inspiring giving insights on the Iraq war, the importance of history and the System. Harper Perennial, paperback.

Website

- **Find Out How Your Members of Congress Voted.** “Have you ever wondered how your members of Congress voted? Enter your zip code in the box at the top of the page to find out how your members voted on key issues identified by the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL). www.capwiz.com/fconl/keyvotes.xc/.
Ilana’s Back in the Office

Ilana Caplan is returning to the WNPJ office for the fall, working 10 hours a week as a temporary office coordinator. She is working on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons and can be reached at ilana@wnpj.org or 608-250-9240. Ilana worked as office manager for WNPJ before Judy Miner and has remained active with WNPJ projects, including designing layout for the Newsletter since that time.

Ilana will fill in for Judy Miner, as Judy takes a temporary leave of absence from WNPJ office duties, traveling to Kyiv, Ukraine from August 20 to December 26, accompanying her husband, David Nordstrom, who will be teaching public health on a Fulbright Grant. Judy will take her laptop and continue to work as a volunteer for WNPJ, and will check e-mail addressed to info@wnpj.org.

Other staff at WNPJ this fall includes Steve Burns, WNPJ Program Coordinator, outreach@wnpj.org, and UW-Madison work-study student, Ben Ratcliffe, intern@wnpj.org.

New Dues Levels for 2007

Back in 1992, when a gallon of gas cost $1.50 and the median price of a home in Madison was around $100,000, WNPJ set the annual dues for an individual member at $25. And today, fourteen years later, a WNPJ individual membership is still $25 a year.

Recognizing the long period that WNPJ had not increased its dues, while our level of activity (and costs) have increased greatly, the WNPJ Executive Committee voted on August 19 to increase dues effective January 1, 2007.

WNPJ Chair Alfred Meyer noted that, if WNPJ had raised dues by an annual rate of 3% since it’s founding in 1991, individual dues would now be nearly $40. EC member Cham Nusz also noted that the new dues levels would be more in line with dues at many other nonprofit organizations. EC members also recognized the need to retain a low-income level for those who cannot afford the $35 membership level.

On January 1, the new Dues levels will be:
- $15 Low Income/Tax Resister
- $35 Individual Member
- $45 Family Membership
- $50 Organization without paid staff
- $75 Organization with paid staff

Delaying the new levels until 2007 means WNPJ members will have four months to renew at the old levels.

THANK YOU to WNPJ Volunteers!

Volunteers make WNPJ work, and our thanks goes out to all those who helped on various projects this summer. Edgar Friloux, Caroline Greenwald, Judy Leurquin, Dennis Coyier, Jackson Tiffany, and Karin Sandvik helped get our fundraising letter out. Barb Boehme, Russel Novkov, and Sheila Spear helped with “tabling” at the Juneteenth Events in Madison. And Cham Nusz and Connie Kanitz helped coordinate the Energy Fair Walk and Pancake Breakfast, with so many helping: Mike, Barb, Janet, Kathy, Ron, People for Peace in Waupaca, Louise, Bonni, David, Steve, and many more. If you would like to volunteer and share your time and talents with WNPJ, contact Steve at outreach@wnpj.org or 608-250-9240.

NEWS OF THE NETWORK

by Judy Miner, Office Coordinator