

Seacoast Peace Response Joins in Statewide Action for End of Iraq War

On Wednesday, May 31, over fifty activists from Seacoast Peace Response joined members of New Hampshire Peace Action at all day demonstrations at congressional offices calling for an exit strategy from the war in Iraq. They were at Senator Gregg's office in Newington at 11 a.m., at Senator Sununu's office in Portsmouth at 11:45 a.m., and at Congressman Bradley's office in Dover from around 1 pm to 5 pm.

The action included a civil disobedience sit-in at Congressman Bradley's office in Dover, as six of the protesters stayed in the office after closing time, indicating that they would remain in his office until the congressman indicated to them that he would work for withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq. The six people who stayed were arrested and charged with Criminal Trespass, a Class A Misdemeanor.

The six protesters who were arrested were:

Macy E. Morse, 85, Portsmouth
Lee N. Roberts, 70, Portsmouth
Randall A. Kezar, 69, Kingston
Nina Capra Jordan, 67, Lee
William R. Woodward, 61, Durham
Aaron John Carine, 39, Dover

Five of them were released in their own recognizance and will be arraigned in Dover District Court on Friday, June 23, at 8:30 a.m. One protester, Aaron Carine, refused bail and was taken to the Strafford Co. House of Correction. He will have video arraignment tomorrow (Thursday, June 1) at 10:45 a.m. Carine had planned this action in advance, requesting not to be bailed out. He explained that he wanted to repeat the experience of Henry David Thoreau, who spent the night in the Concord, MA, jail as a war protest and wrote about it in his essay "On Civil Disobedience."

These actions were part of a state-wide action sponsored by New Hampshire Peace Action, in which around 200 people participated. Anne Miller, Director of NH Peace Action, indicated that there were demonstrations ("read-ins") at all fourteen New Hampshire congressional offices of Senators Sununu and Gregg, and Representatives Bass and Bradley on Wednesday, May 31.

The message, statewide, was: "Not one more death, not one more dollar." While at each of the congressional offices, people delivered a letter from NH Peace Action to the office calling for a clear exit strategy from Iraq and open debate on the floor of the House about the Iraq war. Those letters are included as addendums #1 and #2 to this document.

Also read in each office was the poem, "Why?" written by Conrad Jordan, the son of Nina Jordan, one of the protesters who participated in the civil disobedience. The poem was written from the point of view of an Iraqi waiting to die. It is included as addendum #3

At Senator Gregg's office, David Diamond, who had participated in the "Newington 5" demonstration in that very same Newington office on October 8, 2002, just before the Iraq war had been approved by a vote in the Senate, presented a copy of the list of questions about that war that that group had presented at that time. Diamond stated that many of the questions were still relevant and have not yet been answered by Senator Gregg. Those questions are included as addendum #4.

At Congressman Bradley's office the protesters read an additional letter from Seacoast Response. That letter ended with the statement, "On May 31 some of us will remain in your office until you indicate that you will work for withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq, either immediately or at least by the end of this calendar year." That letter is included as addendum #5.

Participants read the names of the 2,463 U.S. soldiers who have died in Iraq, as well as some of the Iraqis who have been killed since 2003. The slips of paper with those names were ceremoniously placed in a glass bowl that was left in each office. The names of the fourteen New Hampshire troops who died in Iraq were read with more detailed information, including their ages, home towns and how and where in Iraq they died.

The activists were joined at the congressional offices by a "pig-mobile," whimsically demonstrating the disparity between federal money going to war and the military in relation to other human needs in the federal budget. The pig-mobile is a project of the NH Priorities Project, based in Concord, and founded by Ben Cohen of Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream fame.

Addendum 1: Letter from NH Peace Action delivered to Congressman Bradley:

May 31, 2006

Dear Congressman Bradley:

We sit here in your office today, reading the names of the U.S. servicemen and servicewomen and Iraqi civilians killed in Iraq since 2003, because we cannot in good conscience let this war continue without doing everything in our power to stop it. In the past five weeks, four New Hampshire soldiers have been killed in Iraq. The Iraq war has taken the lives of more than 2,465 U.S. soldiers and more than 100,000

Iraqis. Tens of thousands of people have been wounded – and continue to be wounded and to die every day. **All of our troops must come home now.**

We, your New Hampshire constituents, say **not one more death, not one more dollar.**

According to an ABC/Washington Post poll conducted in mid-May, sixty-six percent of Americans disapprove of the President's handling of the situation in Iraq. **We must change course.** The U.S. government has both a moral and legal responsibility to help reconstruct Iraq. But continuing military occupation prevents - rather than helps - fulfill this obligation.

The longer the U.S. occupies Iraq, the more resentment builds against the U.S. The more resentment builds, the more the danger of terrorism on U.S. soil increases.

A continued military occupation of Iraq is not the answer. It is time for you to show courage and leadership in calling for the immediate withdrawal of American troops from Iraq, the end of all attempts by the United States to control the future of Iraq, and the provision of massive assistance to repair the devastation we have wrought on Iraq's economy, society, physical infrastructures, and environment.

If you are unable to show this kind of leadership, the very least you can do is support an exit strategy and open debate on the floor of the House. We urge you to sign Rep. Jim McGovern's legislation HR 4232, which would stop the funding of the war in Iraq, and designate Defense Department funds to be used only for the safe and orderly withdrawal of all troops and consultations with other governments. We also urge you to sign on to the discharge petition number 6 for H.J. Res 55 (now HRES 543 IH), which would authorize seventeen hours of open debate about the Iraq war on the floor of the House. You and your colleagues owe it to the American people to openly discuss the war - something you have not yet done since the war began in 2003. The people of New Hampshire deserve more accountability from you.

For over three years we have experienced the mounting costs of this war. To date, the war in Iraq has cost New Hampshire taxpayers more than \$1.3 billion dollars (over \$300 billion total), while our social services in the state continue to decline and tax breaks for the wealthy continue to increase. **You must take leadership and actively support an exit strategy from Iraq.**

Addendum 2: Letter from NH Peace Action delivered to Senators Gregg and Sununu:

May 31, 2006

Dear Senator Gregg:

We sit here in your office today, reading the names of the U.S. servicemen and servicewomen and Iraqi civilians killed in Iraq since 2003, because we cannot in good conscience let this war continue without doing everything in our power to stop it. In the past five weeks, four New Hampshire soldiers have been killed in Iraq. The Iraq war has taken the lives of more than 2,465 U.S. soldiers and more than 100,000 Iraqis. Tens of thousands of people have been wounded – and continue to be wounded and to die every day. **All of our troops must come home now.**

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If you are unable to show this kind of leadership, the very least you can do is to support one of three legislative proposals currently circulating in the Senate. Senator Harkin's resolution (CON. RES 93) calls for the redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq no later than December 31, 2006; Senator Russ Feingold's amendment No. 3680 requires the redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq by December 31, 2006; and Senator John Kerry's amendment (S.J. RES 36) calls for the withdrawal of U.S. forces at the earliest practicable date and a summit "for the purpose of reaching a comprehensive political agreement for Iraq that addresses fundamental issues including federalism, oil revenues, the militias, security guarantees, reconstruction, economic assistance, and border security."

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Addendum 3: The poem "Why?" by Conrad Jordan:

Why?

Maybe I'll be pouring wine in a glass
Maybe I'll be running home from a class
Maybe I'll be working so my family is fed
Maybe I'll be tucking my child in bed

I'm an Iraqi waiting to die
I don't know when and I don't know why

I hear my death will have something to do
With a terror attack that was brought against you
By men who did not come from Iraq
Yours was a country we never attacked

But you said we had weapons that made you afraid
You said they might do you harm someday
You said these weapons Saddam might sell
To Osama, who calls him an infidel

A secular tyrant who trusts no one
Giving a radical rival a gun
I guess that remote possibility
Was worth losing tens of thousands like me

Now that you found no WMD
You say I'll die for democracy
Be part of a great experiment
To change our form of government

But if the bombs are justified
Why no toll of Iraqis who've died?
If this is a noble war
Are you ready to start many more?

You say I'll die for the war on terror
To me this seems a tragic error
Until you smashed our society
Terrorists here were a scarcity
Now they stream into our land
Is this what you, or they, have planned?

I'm an Iraqi waiting to die
You can't tell me when, can you please tell me why?

(copyright, Conrad Jordan, New York City, 2005) Conrad.Jordan@verizon.net

Addendum 4: Seacoast Peace Response / Iraq War Resolution: We Demand
Answers 10-8-02:

Seacoast Peace Response

Iraqi War Resolution: We Demands Answers

Senator Judd Gregg's Portsmouth, NH District Office, October 8, 2002

- We, members of Seacoast Peace Response, demand that Senator Judd Gregg review and respond before the end of the day to our questions.
- We demand that Senator Judd Gregg either convince us of the need for a war with Iraq or that he speak on the Senate floor against any Iraqi war resolution.
- We will remain in Senator Judd Gregg's Portsmouth office until these demands are met.

Questions to be answered by Senator Judd Gregg

1. Why is Iraq seen as more dangerous now than it was five years ago? What is the evidence that Saddam has weapons of mass destruction, and that he will use them?
2. Would you consider a quarter of a million Iraqi civilian deaths acceptable in this war?
3. Why is it worth a daily American casualty rate of a battalion a day, as estimated by the former commander in the Middle East, General Joseph Hoar, to get Saddam?
4. What would be the impact of this war on the Oil for Food Program, upon which the majority of Iraqis civilians critically depend?
5. To what extent is this war about controlling the second largest oil reserve in the world?
6. What justification is there for violating international law with a preemptive war against Iraq? Why would a United States preemptive war not be illegal when the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal in 1945 stated, "to initiate a war of aggression... is not only an international crime, it is the supreme international crime."
7. Why are you not concerned that if Saddam is cornered he would launch weapons of mass destruction against our troops, against Israel, against Saudi Arabian oil facilities, and would distribute weapons of mass destruction to terrorist groups?
8. What are the exit plans for this proposed preemptive war?
9. The estimated costs for this war are \$100B and the estimated costs for reconstructing Iraq are \$100B. What do you expect would be the effect of these costs on our

floundering economy and the already inadequate funding for education, health, housing, and our infrastructure?

10. What would Israel do if attacked, and how would we prevent them from over-reacting?
11. Isn't a war going to fuel more anti-American sentiment and increase the recruitment of terrorists?
12. Does it concern you that this preemptive war would set precedents for future world conflicts?
13. What would be the impact of this war on the oil markets and the world economy?
14. We understand that congressional mail is running overwhelmingly against attacking Iraq. Why isn't congress listening to its citizens?
15. **Will you ask these questions on the Senate floor?**

Addendum 5: Letter from Seacoast Peace Response to Congressman Bradley:

Seacoast Peace Response
P.O. Box 863
Portsmouth, NH 03802
May 31, 2006

Congressman Jeb Bradley
104 Washington St.
Dover, N.H. 03820
603-743-5956 FAX

Dear Congressman Bradley:

We have met with you twice to discuss the war in Iraq. New Hampshire voters find the human and financial costs of this war unacceptable, and they find your support of this war unacceptable. We are writing to demand that you act in Congress to terminate this war by the end of this year.

We remind you of this war's human costs: more than 2400 U. S. soldiers killed, more than 17,000 soldiers seriously wounded, and an estimated 100,000 Iraqi civilians killed. Numbers range from an official documented count of 42,000 to estimates of 320,000 Iraqi lives lost (sources: www.iraqbodycount.com, Lancet, Dahr Jamail on 5/10/06 in truthout.org, Helen Caldicott). The loss of our nation's prestige in the world community is incalculable.

On May 31 we will visit your Dover office to honor these lives.

The cost of this war is now estimated to be one trillion dollars (www.harvardmagazine.com/on-line/0506_82.html)

We urge you to vote against the next spending bill on this unbearably expensive war. We want you to reject budget requests for the war and to reject further increases in the debt ceiling. We urge you to sign Rep. Jim McGovern's legislation HR 4232 to stop funding the war and pay for safe withdrawal of troops. We also urge you to sign on to the discharge petition number 6 for H.J. Res 55 (now HRES 543 IH), which would authorize seventeen hours of open debate about the Iraq war on the floor of the House.

We further request that you make a more serious effort to stop the killing by removing a key reason for the violence. Please support a schedule for the exit of occupying troops and renouncement of permanent military bases there (*HR 4939 - SEC. 1205. None of the funds made available by title I of this Act may be made available to establish permanent military bases in Iraq or to exercise control over the oil infrastructure or oil resources of Iraq*). The latter has already been passed by Congress. Will you support legislation to close all bases?

Four separate polls (ABC, NBC, CBS, Newsweek) conducted in early May showed Americans disapprove of Bush's handling of the war by about a 2 to 1 margin now. Sixty percent of Americans think the United States should set a time-table for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq (CBS News/New York Times Poll, May 4-8, 2006). In another national poll this month, 54% of U.S. adults thought we should decrease our troops in Iraq (ABC News/Washington Post Poll, May 11-15, 2006, www.pollingreport.com/iraq.htm). Sixty-seven percent of NH citizens also disapprove of the way the President is handling Iraq and 68% disapprove of the way he is managing foreign affairs (Granite State Poll, May 1, 2006). A majority of NH residents with an opinion on the matter are opposed to the war (UNH poll, May 1, 2006).

To further support our demand, we direct your attention to the New York Times editorial on May 28: "Mr. Bush's premise that American troops should simply stay on the ground until Iraq gets things right and defeats all insurgent forces and terrorist groups, however long it takes, is flat wrong. The United States presence is dangerous — to the soldiers themselves, to American standing in the world, and most tellingly to large numbers of innocent Iraqi."

You were elected to represent the people of NH. We represent the majority who reject President Bush and his agenda in Iraq. Your job is to represent us.

We strongly urge you to change your position, to follow your electorate and not our discredited President. Will you speak to these issues from the floor of the House? Please let us know what steps you are taking. On May 31 some of us will remain in your office until you indicate to us that you will work for withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq, either immediately or at least by the end of this calendar year.

Sincerely,

SEACOAST PEACE RESPONSE

Doug Bogen, Betsy Burton, Aaron Carine, David Diamond, Pat Galloway, Randy Kezar, Nina Capra Jordan, Macy Morse, Carmen Buford Paige, Lee Roberts, Jim Sconyers, Jamilla El-Shafei, William Woodward

END