

← Back (/search?)

text=A%20pause%20to%20regroup%20in%20antiwar%20activity&date_from=2003&date_to=2003&content_added=&pub%2525252525255B0%2525252525255D=MLCP&pub%2525252525255B0%2525252525255D=MLCP&pub%2525252525255B0%2525252525255D=MLCP&pub%2525252525255B0%2525252525255D=MLCP&pub%2525252525255B0%2525252525255D=MLCP&pub%2525252525255B0%2525252525255D=MLCP&pub%5B0%5D=MLCP)

A pause to regroup in antiwar activity

April 2, 2003 Publication: Lansing City Pulse (MI) Word Count: 1039

DANIEL STURM

Two weeks after bombs began falling on Iraq, Lansing antiwar activists are considering strategies to keep their momentum going. Some are planning to boycott U.S. firms that produce for the military, others are signing petitions to impeach President Bush, and some are encouraging actions of civil disobedience. The Detroit Michigan Emergency Committee is organizing a statewide rally on April 5 at the old Tiger Stadium.

Others feel the best method to stop war is by appealing to mainstream Americans. □It□s possible that civil disobedience has been backfiring on us,□ said peace activist Shrikumar Poddar. The Okemos resident believes civil disobedience only makes sense when it takes place on a large scale, such as Mahatma Gandhi□s massive civil disobedience movement in India, or the example of Martin Luther King Jr. and the American civil rights movement.

During the first Gulf War in 1991 Poddar raised money for Iraqi refugees on behalf of the organization People for Peace in the Middle East. He remembers receiving □bad sentiment□ from area residents, who thought that Iraqi people were to be blamed for the war. □This time Iraqi people are clearly blameless,□ he said, □and what makes it even worse is that this unjustified bombing of Iraq has been going on for 12 years.□ Amnesty International estimates the most recent invasion of Iraq will kill 50,000 civilians, injure 500,000, leave 2 million homeless and put 10 million in need of humanitarian assistance.

Poddar suggested that the Greater Lansing Network Against War in Iraq should continue to put pressure on politicians to protest the Bush administration□s militant course. He said that in February 2003 more than 300,000 Americans lost their jobs, and that it was only a matter of time before mainstream America realized that the crumbling economy was to a large extent the result of an irrational military build-up. □The Bush Administration is totally sold out on this war and to oil business,□ he said.

Poddar says he sees signs that the Bush administration is going to start crumbling from within. On March 14 The Associated Press reported that Sen. John D. Rockefeller (D-W.Va.) asked the FBI to investigate allegedly forged documents presented first by Britain, and then the United States, which showed Iraq attempting to purchase uranium for its weapons program from the African country of Niger. □Of all the glaring falsehoods told by the administration, the fact that these forgeries were noted by a Rockefeller may make them the second-rate Watergate burglary of the 21st century,□ commented Michael Ruppert, editor of □From the Wilderness□ newsletter on March 19.

Some Lansing activists suggest one might win over pro-war colleagues and friends by pointing out that the Bush administration□s war in Iraq is a war on many fronts. In addition to Social Security cuts and tax cuts for high-income brackets, on March 27 the administration proposed the dismissal of a basic cornerstone of 20th century labor

law □ the 40-hour workweek, by eroding current regulations for overtime pay. Republicans proposed changes to the Fair Labor Standards Act, which if passed would affect more than 80 million workers.

On March 27, as reported by The Cornell Daily Sun, Scott Ritter, former United Nations chief weapons inspector, said that the U.S. troops are finding out that the Iraqi people do not want to be liberated. Ritter stressed that the strategy of a □shock and awe,□ which had been designed to illustrate the strength of U.S. military forces, has not proved to be effective.

The public relations of warfare is apparently so tense that major networks such as NBC are self-censoring their coverage. On March 31 NBC News fired Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Peter Arnett after he said on Iraqi television that the American-led coalition□s initial plans for quick invasion had faltered due to Iraqi resistance.

Since the war began, critical views of the Bush administration□s Iraqi policy are □shrinking drastically□ in newspapers, said Norman Solomon, director of the Institute for Public Accuracy. On March 21, Solomon reported that most mainstream dailies are very conscious about reflecting the consensus of U.S. □elites.□ Since few prominent Democrats have spoken out against war, newspapers feel they don□t need to make a statement, either □ regardless of antiwar sentiment in the communities where the newspapers circulate.

Lansing resident Ellie Kennedy, a Gulf War veteran in early retirement, believes appealing to mainstream America through education is the most important thing the antiwar movement could do at this point. She said many people still don□t know about the effects of the first Gulf War. Following military duty in Saudi Arabia in 1990, Kennedy contracted the undiagnosed neurological disorder □Gulf War Syndrome,□ for which she□s still being treated today.

□Right now I□m trying to figure out where I can be the best advocate for the movement based on my experience, while also taking care of myself both physically and emotionally,□ Kennedy said. She pointed out that 10,000 soldiers died in the first Gulf War and over 198,000 Gulf War veterans have filed disability claims. The deaths and disability claims of Gulf War veterans were related to the 320 tons of radioactive uranium dropped on Iraq in the allied bombings. Iraqi pediatricians in the city of Basra found six to 12 times as many incidents of childhood leukemia and cancer, and they report that congenital malformations have doubled.

Kennedy said she believes it would be a good idea to hold forums where both sides get the opportunity to air their feelings, thoughts and views. □The emphasis must be on finding common ground and bringing the community together, versus tearing the community apart. Above all, it should always be peaceful.□

At Okemos High School, the Students for Peace and Justice Club may lead the way to such debates: On March 31 they hosted a debate on the war that attracted more than 50 students. Responding to the claim that Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney only waged war because of their close ties to the oil industry, pro-war representative Lauren Battaglia said: □If it was for the oil, we certainly would have stayed in Iraq in 1991.□ Antiwar speaker Michael Gadaletto, a senior like Battaglia, argued: □We absolutely failed at setting up democracy in Afghanistan. But Americans get bored quickly, so we decided to invade Iraq.□

Care to respond? Send letters to letters@lansingcitypulse.com. View our Letters policy.

Lansing City Pulse (MI)

Date: April 2, 2003

Copyright (c) 2003 Lansing City Pulse. All rights reserved.