

DELAWARE COUNTY PLEDGE OF RESISTANCE



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Spring 2004

Can Civil War in Iraq Be Averted?

by Bob Neveln

Despite the relentless death toll of Iraqis killed in bombings, presumably by outsiders for the purpose of instigating civil war, Iraqis have failed to succumb to these terrible provocations. The day before the bombing of the two Shi'ite mosques on the holiest day of the Shi'ite calendar, Sunni clerics issued a *fatwa* against killing other Muslims, a very well-timed measure indeed.

Incitement of strife by the U.S. military between Kurds and Shi'ites, although it has yet to bear fruit in violence, definitely shows more promise. Oblivious to the potential harm to Iraq's stability, the military started right after the war with the re-routing of electricity northwards causing outages in Baghdad and has been rewarding the Kurds for their support during the invasion and punishing Turkey and Syria for their lack of it. Retaliatory ousting of Arabs from homes taken in years past from Kurds is another example, never justified by reference to a "right of return," of course. One wonders whether Kissinger is missed at times like this.

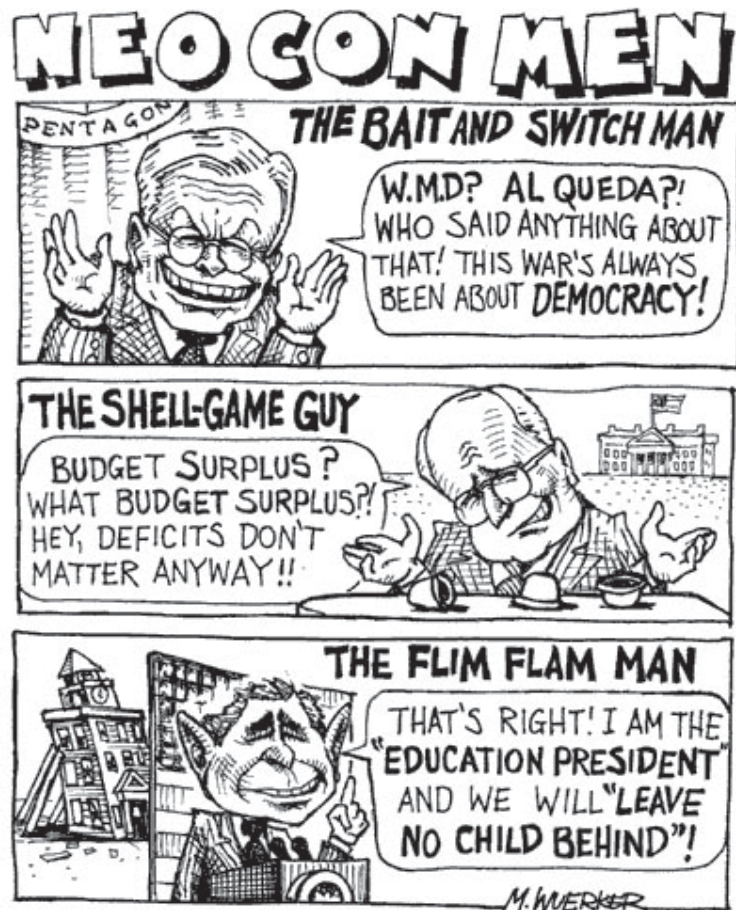
The most obvious sign so far of this tension has been near failure of the provisional constitution due to the Shi'ites balking at provisions very favorable to the Kurds. Incidentally, among the five out of 13 Shi'ites on the governing council who held up the signing for a day was the ever-versatile disinformation profiteer Chalabi! Fortunately for Iraq, the most influential Shi'ite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-

Sistani, has consistently been a force for moderation. Also fortunately, Ambassador L. Paul Bremer III, presidential envoy and chief civilian U.S. official in Iraq, has been consistently conciliatory towards Sistani.

Probably the most optimistic sign is the upturn in the economy, which may help create a situation in which all can be passably content. Oil production is

reaching prewar levels. Oil prices are high. Iraqi government ministers are currently in Amman being trained on the intricacies of World Bank loans. Debt forgiveness by several major creditor nations is under discussion. Unemployment has dropped.

In sum there is reason for hope that civil war will be avoided.



Claiming Our Fair Trade Victory

by Paula Bronstein

How long have we been struggling for fair trade, fighting the injustices of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA)? Yet our words and demonstrations have been downplayed and distorted in the media. Now, our victories have been silenced as well. The fact is that the WTO conference in Cancun and the FTAA conference in Miami provided an exhilarating victory for Latin America and a dismal failure for the U.S. government and its greedy corporate empire. The impertinence of the U.S. has provided the impetus for the countries of the south to form a united opposition. And our organized nonviolent resistance has provided southern nations with the solidarity they needed in order to defend themselves. Let us loudly proclaim this victory for Latin America and for solidarity, too!

Lori Wallach, director of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch, speaking on the FTAA conference in Miami, said, "All that was agreed upon was to scale back the FTAA's scope and punt the hard decisions to an undefined future venue so as to not make Miami the Waterloo of FTAA."

"Powerful social movements in Latin America against the FTAA have made it impossible for those governments to agree to a full NAFTA expansion," said Wallach. "Thus the United States chose this week to make the uber concession—to move away from its 'single undertaking' vision of the FTAA to an a la carte approach to ensure that the FTAA lives to stagger on another day. It is hard to overstate what a huge shift this is in the U.S. position."

"But even as the U.S. was forced to retreat in the FTAA negotiations, it announced an intensified strategy of negotiating bilateral and mini-regional agreements containing exactly the same proposals—on intellectual property, investments, and other areas—that it failed to ram through in the FTAA."

"... this strategy has significant limitations from the U.S. corporate perspective. ... The strategy requires too many negotiations with too many countries, and may leave the biggest markets out."

Noting that Chile and Mexico already have free trade deals with the United States, Mark Weisbrot of the Washington D.C.-based Center for Economic Policy Research points out that "70 percent of the remaining Latin American market ... is attributable to Brazil, Argentina, and Venezuela—countries with no interest in signing onto bilateral agreements with the U.S. with NAFTA style provisions."

As a result of this victory, partnerships between countries as well as progressive electoral victories have been taking place all over Latin America:

Uruguay: On December 6, 62 percent of Uruguayans approved a national referendum to overturn a law that would have opened the country's oil market and state owned oil refinery ... to foreign and private investment.

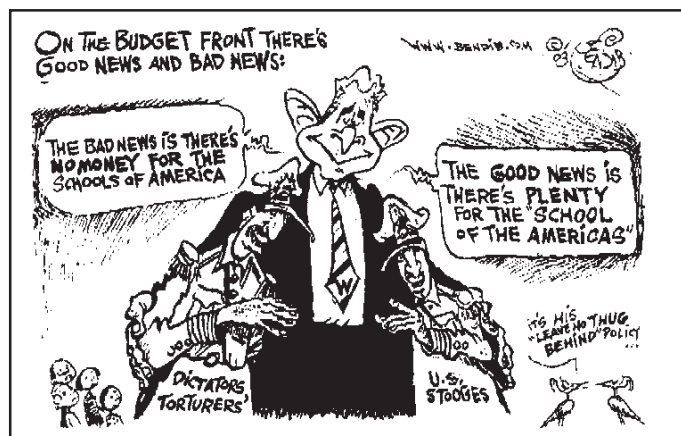
Bolivia: Last October workers and the indigenous protested free market policies and the plans to further privatize the state oil company. ... Soldiers were attacked with firearms and rocks. After overwhelming protests on October 17 of last year, the Bolivian president fled. The new president Mesa has abandoned the drug war's "zero coca" goal and will study "the legal use of coca."

Venezuela: The anti-neoliberal, democratic Bolivian revolution of Hugo Chavez continues. New laws are aimed at redistribution of land, requiring banks to provide micro-credits to the poor, creation of cooperatives, and restructuring the state oil industry.

Brazil: The new leftist president of Brazil has persuaded South Africa, India, and China to join the group of 22 developing nations which weakened the WTO in Cancun, signed a commercial accord with China, urged Peru and Columbia to help build Mercosur (southern common market), in competition with the proposed FTAA, given Venezuela a billion dollar line of credit to buy Brazilian exports, produced with Argentina's new president the "Buenos Aires Consensus" impressed the U.N. General Assembly with a proposal to eradicate hunger worldwide and make the U.N. more democratic, and helped weaken the FTAA in Miami.

Argentina: Argentina's new president, Nestor Kirchner, apparently is struggling between pressures from the IMF and anti-neoliberal grassroots movements. On September 9, he refused to make a \$9 million debt payment and thereby forced the IMF to accept his proposal that Argentina pay only interest on debts for the next three years. The IMF also agreed that they didn't have to compensate banks for losses incurred in peso-dollar conversions, and that private utility companies could not unilaterally raise their rates.

My personal victory is the deep satisfaction I gain as I watch the countries of Latin America gather wisdom, strength, and solidarity as they dance in the shadow of the U.S. menace.



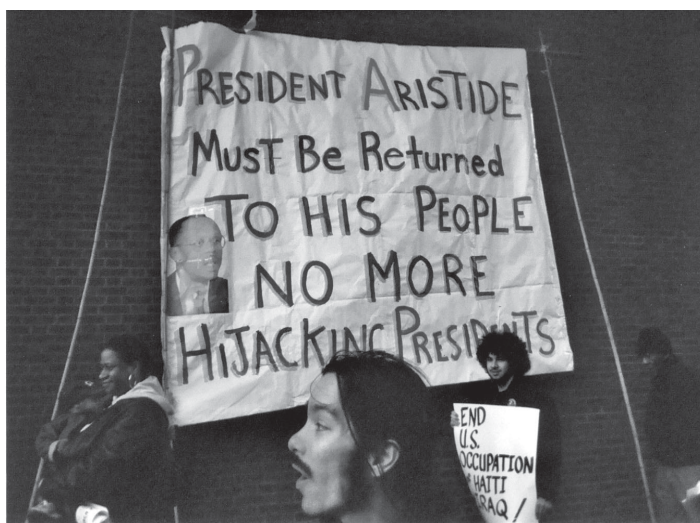
Oh, Haiti!!

by Ronald Coburn

This could be a time to celebrate. It is the 200th anniversary of the Haitian slave revolt against their masters. Instead we are now mourning both the loss of the democratically elected Haitian president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was forced from his position, and the hope of the poor of Haiti. And it is even sadder that our country was involved in this coup d'état.

I have memories of my first trip to Haiti just after the 1991 military coup that removed President Aristide from office and from Haiti. I was told that a first exposure to life in Haiti would bring tears, and this was correct. During this trip, Amnesty International people took depositions that revealed all the horrible things that people can do to other people. The poor live in indescribable poverty. If you don't work one day, your family doesn't eat the next day. The situation seems similar now. I can remember the hope of the Haitian people and those interested in helping Haiti, when President Aristide returned to Haiti in 1994 with some support of the U.S. government and the U.S. Marines. There were promises of generous economic aid that would help make governing and development of democratic institutions possible. I can remember meeting Aristide when he visited in Philadelphia, a mild mannered, likeable man who had the persona of a caring priest. He seemed, at that time, driven to help the poor in Haiti. Haitian people believed this, and they elected him president twice, in legal U.N. monitored elections, each time with over 90 percent of the vote.

What happened? You certainly won't find out from reading most of the U.S. press that seems to be written by people not familiar with Haitian history or politicians who have a political agenda. For a truer understanding, I recommend two books: *Rainy Season* by Amy Wilentz (Simon and Shuster) and *Pathologies of Power* by Paul Farmer (Univ. of California Press), and any op-ed pieces written by Tracy Kidder.



Some 50 protesters gathered outside the Federal Building in Philadelphia on March 15 to denounce U.S. complicity in the overthrow of Jean-Bertrand Aristide. They called for the Haitian president's return. The Ad Hoc Coalition against the Coup in Haiti organized the rally and encourages interested people to learn more about Haitian solidarity efforts at haitireborn.org.

There was trouble almost immediately after Aristide returned to Haiti. The World Bank-International Monetary Fund demanded privatization of the airport and postal service; Aristide refused. When the U.S. Marines occupied Haiti, they seized thousands of pages of documents that incriminated Haitians involved in the 1991 military coup as well as human rights violations. For unknown reasons, the U.S. State Department refused to release these documents to the Aristide government. Aristide had abolished the army, but U.S. soldiers did not, or could not, help disarm Haitians involved in the coup. A police force was formed, but as time went on, there was no money to support it.

Looking back, it is obvious that Aristide had most of the cards stacked against him. He was committed to social programs aimed at the poor. His speech on land reform triggered the first coup. Haitian citizens are polarized in that approximately 1 percent of their people, the "elite," live in walled-in communities, speak French (often not Creole), have access to medical and educational institutions in Miami and the U.S., and are comfortable with U.S. officials and corporation people. Of course, most

of the elite opposed President Aristide, and the current coup can be viewed as a chapter in their class war. President Aristide, trained as a Catholic priest, adopted liberation theology and was defrocked by the Catholic Church. So the church in this most Christian of countries did not support him. Finally the U.S. government has not been supportive of President Aristide, as has often been the case with other democratically elected leaders in our hemisphere.

The role of our government in Haiti in the past, and at the present time, is a source of shame for U.S. citizens. Paul Farmer notes that monetary aid flowed freely in the days of the Duvalier-U.S.-friendly-dictators period and ceased entirely when Aristide was elected president in 1991. Aid resumed days after the coup, then ceased after President Aristide was reinstated as president. The promised economic aid never materialized. Instead, our government organized an international aid embargo. As a result, the Aristide administration simply did not have the money to effectively govern Haiti.

First we heard that money transfers were held up due to the rejection of

Continued on page 6.

Mourning Death in Iraq

by Bob Smith
Brandywine Peace Community

The fact of the war in Iraq remains death, an occasion of mourning. The fact is that the war and the ensuing occupation were the result of lies.

The Dover-DC Trail of Mourning and Truth ended on March 15 at the White House where the deaths being mourned, the war being protested, and the lies on which the deaths and the war rested, all began.

The idea was to travel to Washington, D.C. and to the White House in recognition of the unacknowledged toll of this war and military occupation. Hundreds of U.S. troops have died, as have thousands of Iraqis. But where do the bodies come home—at least the U.S. bodies—in their “transfer tubes”?

The Dover Air Force Base is located 50 miles south of Philadelphia just outside of Dover, Del. It is where all U.S. troops killed in action are returned in anonymity. Since the end of the Vietnam war, the press has been banned from the base. Families of the dead, also barred from the base, must wait on the military delivery plan of their loved ones.

Since the Vietnam war, military veterans have spoken out about U.S. war policies in increasing numbers. Veterans for Peace is now a vital part of the peace movement landscape. But since last spring’s invasion of Iraq, families of troops in Iraq, including those who have lost loved ones, are also speaking out against the war and military occupation. A wonderful association of support called Military Families Speak Out (MFSO) provided the moral authority to begin the Trail of Mourning and Truth at the Dover Air Force Base.

At noon on March 14, people began arriving at the Camden, Delaware Friends Meeting for the procession. A Muslim imam and a Native American elder dedicated the opening procession with prayers for the dead and for peace, and several hundred people began the 3.5 mile walk to Dover Air Force Base surrounded by reporters, cameras, and TV crews.

At the gates to the base, a service lead by Nancy Lessin of MFSO and myself began with Jane Bright speaking of her son killed in Iraq. Bagpipes played, and one by one mothers and fathers read the names of their sons and daughters and of Iraqis killed in Iraq. Fernando Suarez, who was in Iraq as part of a peace delegation last winter, read the first names: “Bush lied and who died? My son, Jesus!”

Charles Rangel, representative from New York and chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, was joined by a number of speakers that included Michael Hoffman from Bucks County and a Marine veteran of last spring’s invasion. The service concluded with a litany and a response of “We mourn, speaking truth to lies, for the sake of peace.”

Day two of the trail began with an early morning drive from Baltimore to the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. where many of the U.S. troops wounded in Iraq are treated. Speakers included Bob McIlvaine, from 9/11 Families for Peaceful Tomorrows who lost his son in the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center; Ellen Barfield and John Grant of Veterans for

Peace, both of whom have made trips to Iraq before and after last spring’s invasion; and Pat Gunn, a U.S. Navy veteran from Lansdowne, Pa., a USO volunteer at the Philadelphia International Airport, and the mother of a son seriously wounded in Iraq.

A litany of healing and peace was offered by Rev. Frederick Boyle of Titusville, N.J., who was part of a Christian peacemaking team in Iraq a month before last spring’s bombardment. Then the Trail of Mourning & Truth took to foot, walking 6 miles to LaFayette Park across from the White House which, with security construction surrounding it, looks more like a fortress than “the people’s house” described by Thomas Jefferson.

From LaFayette Park, the names of U.S. and Iraqi war dead were broadcast and placed in a coffin to be delivered to the White House. The hundreds of people gathered in LaFayette Park fell in behind the coffin as we began to negotiate our way out of the park, no easy feat with numerous TV crews and photographers surrounding the coffin. Chanting “Mourn the Dead, End the War,” we arrived at the one narrow and heavily guarded sidewalk from which one can approach the White House. There, we were met by uniformed secret service police who announced that only those with ID passes could proceed any farther.

Ellen Barfield from Veterans for Peace and I then proceeded to speak with the secret service police, who were shortly reinforced by district police with night sticks drawn. We demanded that we be allowed to pass and deliver the names of the war dead to the White House. When asked if we had passes to proceed, I said: “The names of the war dead—U.S. and Iraqi—are our passes.” But we could not pass, so we waited and waited. After an hour, sitting before the police, with TV cameras and sound microphones overhead, we announced that the voice of democracy, along with the fact of the war, had been barred from the White House just as democracy was sacrificed daily for the sake of Bush’s war. We returned to LaFayette Park, carrying the coffin with the names of the war dead inside.

Pledge Movie Night

April 30, 7:30 pm

At Peace Center of Delaware Cty.

In our spirit of democratic participation, the audience will decide by majority vote which film we run, followed by a discussion. Coordinated by Bob Small.

Duck Soup—the Marx Brothers present their brand of Marxism and politics

Dr. Strangelove—the 1960s anti-nuclear comedy

The Day the Earth Stood Still—1950s Washington, alien friends or invaders?

Call 610-543-8427 or Writ@earthlink.net.

Musings on Web News

Second in a series on mass media communications

by Bob Small

The Internet is still the hardest to censor of all media outlets. Any media where both the American Nazi Party and the RCP can coexist is probably too much free speech for some people, but I find it exhilarating, even if some of the opinions are disgusting.

For mainstream (read center-right) news, I became addicted to MSNBC, and I still find that while they try to give the best face to Bush—not an easy task—they generally get the facts more correct than CNN or others.

I started perusing *The New York Times* once Rush Limbaugh ranted that it was “A Leftist journal.” Their top 25 stories are worth keeping as a favorite. He’s mistaken again, of course, but both Maureen Dowd and Thomas Friedman are wonderful writers, both going to bed at night praying that Dennis Kucinich does not, somehow, become the Dems candidate, as they might then have to make a very tough decision in ’04.

Locally, we have a mixed bag. *The Philadelphia Daily News* and *Inquirer* websites are difficult to navigate. Since both the *Philadelphia City Paper* and *Philadelphia Weekly* are free, highly available, and open to a variety of opinions, they’re probably the best bet. I don’t know of any local TV web that’s not mainstream. The same can be said for our local radio webbies.

One publication I haunt weekly is *New York Press* (www.newyorkpress.com) because the writing is uniformly fascinating. Whether it’s right-wing Russ Smith ranting or left-winger James Tabbi on Bush, the writing is barely short of inflammatory. Recently, they’ve added Paul Krassner, formerly of *The Realist*, to add some of that old Left Wing religion. Lastly, there’s Jim Knipfel, late of the late *Welcomat* (before it became the more refined *Philadelphia Weekly*) who writes perhaps the most consistently erratic column. Philly’s own

Marilyn Lois Polak writes for www.wnd.com every Wednesday.

Our local IMC website (www.Philly.IMC.org) can be good; they have a variety of links including Protest.Net (listing planned protests worldwide). The main IMC website NYC.Indymedia.org is the place to go for IMC listings throughout the country and the world. *Democracy Now*, banned from Temple Radio’s WRTI years ago, can now be found on democracynow.org.

My choice for best British paper is the London *Independent*, www.indymedia.org, and not just for Robert Fisk. It’s interesting to see how Blair is regarded in some circles. Another English paper worth reading or skimming, is *The Guardian*, www.Guardian.co.uk.

For Middle East news, there is English.aljazeera.net for Al-Jazeera. It’s called the CNN of the Arab world though I think it is slightly more objective than CNN. There is also *The Palestine Chronicle* at palestinechronicle.com. For opinions on another side, there is *The Jerusalem Post*, www.jpost.com, and *Ha’aretz* at www.haaretzdaily.com, one of the few places where the doves

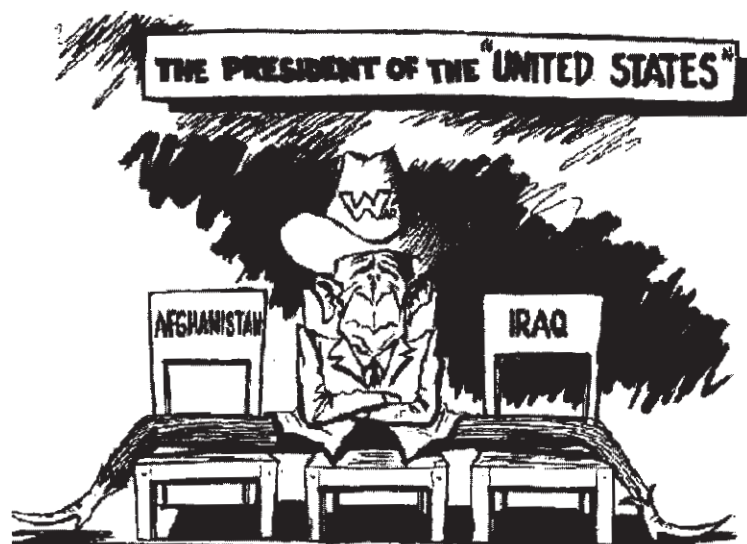
of Israel are allowed to fly.

Buzzflash.com is a clearinghouse for information on the progressive movement that has the most links I’ve ever seen on a website. Worthwhile websites recommended to me are antiwar.org, AUG.Com.org, and oped.com.

The World Socialist website is at www.wsws.org. I personally enjoy *Workers World*, www.workers.org, because I occasionally find news I don’t hear about other places. They’re literate and have a sense of history, even if they do occasionally get into PC Left rants. *The Militant* can also be rantful but again has news you can use at www.militant.com. Almost every Left political party worth it’s Marxist salt has a website, and many have their own version of the news.

Lastly, two political party websites, www.politics1.com and www/politicalresources.net are accessible through Netscape. There you will find The Confederate Party of America along with The Pot Party next to The Prohibition Party and The Puritan Party. These are the two most complete listings I have found for what is called alternative political parties, which is what the Republicans were in 1856.

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Nasir/Pakistan Observer/Islamabad, Pakistan

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Haiti, continued

the privatization demand and the demand for structural readjustment, later because of political instability. Finally, there were accusations of manipulations in the May 2000 parliament elections. About \$500 million in transfers were blocked, including loans that required interest payments and non-interest grants directed to improve medical care, including an AIDS program, and for education. Certainly, economic sanctions and embargoes have been used by the U.S. government in the past to achieve political and corporate ambitions. Farmer has movingly described the effect of the economic sanctions on the Haitian people where the medical and educational programs and law enforcement could not operate. Haiti's fragile economy collapsed which engendered political chaos, starvation, and health crises.

In addition to this, ominously, it became clear that the U.S. was supporting a political party, the Democratic Convergence, which opposed President Aristide and his base of support, the Lavalas Party. It is public knowledge that U.S. funds flowed to the Democratic Convergence Party, reputedly made up, in part, of FRAPH people, the Ton Ton Macoutes who were loyal to the Duvalier dictators, and former soldiers,

all of whom were involved in the 1991 military coup. Now we are hearing allegations, still unproven, that the U.S. supplied arms and training via the Dominican Republic that supported the coup makers.

Over the past years there have been political murders. The disputed election led to the dissolution of the parliament. The failure of law enforcement led to anarchy, and, finally, both pro- and anti-Aristide bands roamed, pillaged, and terrorized. Officials of the Organization of American States tried to mediate with both sides and recommended that the embargo be lifted. The U.S. House of Representative's black caucus introduced legislation that would have ended

the embargo. But our Republican-dominated Congress never allowed these bills to get out of committee.

Finally, there is evidence of recent direct U.S. actions aimed at overthrowing the Aristide government. Secretary of State Powell said, "Frankly there is no enthusiasm for sending in military or police forces to put down the violence," tacitly giving permission for the continuation of the insurrection. Our leaders then announced that President Aristide must resign. Then our troops intervened, resulting in the direct removal of President Aristide from the National Palace and from Haiti.

Kite Ayiti viv (Let Haiti Live) has been AMBU.S.HED.

***FORUM-TEACH-A-THON ON
RECENT EVENTS IN HAITI***

WHEN: Friday May 21, 2004, 7:30 pm

WHERE: The Peace Center in Springfield, Pa.

SPEAKERS:

Franz Latour, columnist, *NYC Progressive Newsletter*,
Philadelphia Haiti Community Center

Lynn Biddle, Witness for Peace, Delco Pledge

Ronald Coburn, Delco Pledge, Quaker Haiti Interest Group

For info, call 610-543-8427