

# DELAWARE COUNTY PLEDGE OF RESISTANCE



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Winter 2005

## Pledge Strategy Session '05

by Brad Bradlee

"May you live in interesting times." A malediction to your average citizen, Pledgers take this ancient Chinese oath as a call to action. "Interesting times" are what motivate us, and so we met this January ready to address the challenges of 2005. The highlights of the annual Pledge strategy session:

It has been one year since Jean Bertrand Aristide was deposed as president of Haiti. Ron Coburn brought us up to date on the deteriorating conditions on the island, including the prevailing economic chaos, ecological devastation, and state violence against the poor. An emboldened army is demanding new power and back pay. Promised U.S. aid has not been delivered. And, typically, our government favors the wrong elements of civil and official society.

Most people are unaware of the U.S. role in Haiti's problems. We think a forum featuring expert speakers is a first step towards education. We are also interested in joining with others to send delegations to Haiti—our members recall their own fact-finding travel to Haiti and Central America and know the importance of first-hand experience.

Organized resistance to unfair economic policy has been gaining ground through much of Latin America. But as Lynn Biddle pointed out, Guatemala still suffers from a war against labor. Human

rights are under constant attack, and U.S.-backed trade agreements, like CAFTA, are a big part of the problem. This year, Pledge wants to look at what's going on inside Guatemala and discover what we can do to help in the struggle.

We opposed the Iraq war; now how do we address the occupation? To help us meet this challenge, Pledge is fortunate to have the inside perspective of Buthaina Neveln. Buthaina reviewed the conduct of the war against Iraq and the current administration of the country. She describes both as inept and counterproductive. Elections are viewed with skepticism because real power resides in Washington. The occupation has provoked ethnic divisions, and disorder is everywhere, with "every organization working against the other."

As Pledge looks for ways to influence U.S. policy in Iraq, Buthaina suggests we as activists communicate with the Iraqi people through private Arab media sources. She told us Iraqis know little of American opposition to Bush policies. With four more years of this

president and neo-con influence, Pledge intends to keep Iraq on its agenda.

Though Pledge understands the structural nature of politics, we also hold top officials responsible when they direct crimes against humanity. Such is the case with George Bush. Around the world, various groups are pursuing legal action against the president. Pledge will consider joining these initiatives.

Looking for some entertainment? A break to rest up from the duties of citizenship? Pledge suggests a night at the movies. Bob Small will produce "Resistance Cinema," featuring films both subversive *and* entertaining. We'll be screening at Media Providence Friends School—dates will be announced. (See page 5, Film Series.)

Soon Pledge will unveil its new web page. We'll be posting articles, soliciting your written contributions, and offering a forum for your ideas and observations. You'll want to check out all the new features, so keep an eye on the newsletter for an announcement of our address!



*Participants at the Pledge strategy meeting include (L-R), Will Scull, Buthaina Neveln, Bob Neveln, Paula Bronstein, Lynn Biddle, Ron Coburn. Not pictured: Brad Bradlee, Bob Small.*

# Prospects for Universal Health Care in Philadelphia

by Paula Bronstein

In the Philadelphia municipal election of Nov. '03, voters overwhelmingly supported a referendum for universal health care. The referendum mandated that the Philadelphia Department of Health develop a plan to provide adequate health care for all Philadelphians and to present this plan to Philadelphia City Council in one year. The plan was presented to the health commissioner on Jan. 31, 2005. Next, the commissioner will present the plan to the mayor and City Council.

The plan has been developed by a partnership of the city health department and a Princeton graduate research class with input from concerned parties from around the city. Five U.S. cities have already adopted programs to deal with the uninsured—Tampa, San Diego, Boston, Detroit, and Milwaukee. The plan being presented to the City Council recommends the creation of a Creative Health Care Leadership Partnership. The partnership functions are:

- Clinical care management—to coordinate services and infor-

mation for the uninsured.

- Finance—to find ways to finance these programs. Several suggestions were presented.
- Research—to examine all issues concerning the uninsured.
- Advocacy—to lobby to build a better health care system using the research results.

This plan expressly recognizes that the “single payer” system is the best system but concludes that single payer cannot be implemented at the local level. The above briefly described plan is only in draft phase and will probably be changed as it seeks approval of the major players in the city health system and the city government. Copies of the full plan will be available when the final draft is completed. More information on universal and single payer health care and organizing around these issues can be obtained at 267-253-5074 or [www.phillyhealth.org](http://www.phillyhealth.org).

## A Place for Peace to Grow

by Paula Bronstein

DELCO Pledge is a member of the Peace Center of Delaware County, located in the Springfield Friends Meeting at 1001 Old Sproul Rd. Pledge pays an annual fee, currently \$175. Members share access to common space to hold meetings and events as well as sharing resources, such as a bulk mail permit and a nicely furnished basement with a coffee counter, TV, VCR, and sofas and chairs.

The Peace Center is under the aus-

pices of Chester Quarter and is a project of Springfield Friends Meeting. A steering committee made up of representatives from Chester Quarter, Springfield Friends Meeting, member groups, and at-large invitees serves as the governing body. DELCO Pledge in the past has been ably represented by Will Scull. Will has recently stepped down; thanks for all the sweat and tears you have put in! Paula Bronstein now represents Pledge on the committee. Currently, Robin Lasersohn and Terry Rumsey are the Peace Center coordinators.

The Peace Center is the location for many peace-related activities for the area. In late January, the center held its annual Peace meal. This event is a get-together to celebrate the local Peace community. A Middle Eastern dinner was served, and local activist, Carol Seeley, was honored for her work.

On Saturday, May 14, from noon to 5:00 pm, the annual Peace Festival of Delaware County will be held on the grounds of the Peace Center. This year's festival will celebrate the Underground Railroad and will feature Kim and Reggie Harris with songs of the Underground Railroad. Also, there will be a Makin' Music children's concert and lots of other activities and food. For more information, contact the center at 610-328-2424 or [www.delcopeacecenter.org](http://www.delcopeacecenter.org).





# In Memoriam: Bill Stuart-Whistler, 1926 - 2004

by Bob Smith

There's never been a time over the past 29 years—the entire history of the Brandywine Peace Community—that Bill Whistler wasn't here or, more often than not, there. "There" being General Electric, or the Pentagon, or Lockheed Martin. But now he has left us to join the cloud of witnesses that carry the names of Berrigan, Day, Merton, Bob Simpson, Lynn Currey, Tom O'Rourke, and Paul Washington.

Bill was there right at the beginning of the Brandywine Peace Community and the movement for peace that we have shared with Jonah House and the Atlantic Life Community (still going), Mobilization for Survival (long gone), the Peace Center of Delaware County, and so many others that have come and gone and a few, like Brandywine, that keep going in no small measure due to the likes of Bill.

William Whistler was born 78 years ago on November 10, 1926. He died on November 8, 2004. In between, he lived a life of his and our times. In the 1940s, he served in the U.S. Navy and upon discharge became an electrical engineer at General Electric in Syracuse, N.Y. The Cold War was underway in earnest—H-bomb testing, the space race, and missile race ran rampant, and Bill was there. He actually witnessed an H-bomb test, and it seared his mind with the full weight of the nuclear age and end-of-the-world threatening nuclear weapons.

During the later 60s and early 70s, still at General Electric and living in Syracuse, Bill was active in protests against the Vietnam War. Working during the day at GE on weapons of war, he spent hours after work protesting the war in Vietnam.

In the early 70s, he was transferred to the GE Space Center in Valley Forge believing that he would be doing non-military work in the space program.

More and more, nuclear weapons systems moved in, and Bill was being pulled by conscience to something else. Bill came to early nuclear weapons protests, organized by the fledgling Brandywine Peace Community, just after the end of the Vietnam War. While studying nuclear weapons development and the post-Vietnam "first-strike" nuclear posture, we learned of the Mark 12A, the initial "first-strike" multiple warhead for Minuteman III missiles. We learned that its producer was General Electric. Not really knowing what Bill actually did at GE, we asked Bill. The wall between what he professed for peace and the nature and knowledge of the work he was doing came down. Bill opened up, telling us where the GE weapons plants could be found in the area and what was happening there. This set us on a nonviolent campaign saga that would for nearly 20 years take us repeatedly to GE plants—pouring blood and ashes, blocking entrances, climbing atop test facilities, conducting weekly vigils, public outreach, walks, fasts.

Bill was there throughout it all having (after 27 years of employment) tendered his resignation from GE in the wake of the first actions at GE. He quit just before the Plowshares 8, eight friends with hammers (and, let's just say, Bill's knowledge and Brandywine's organizing support) entered a GE plant in King of Prussia and actually "disarmed" Mark 12A warhead casings.

Bill would be arrested repeatedly and go to jail. He actually met his second wife, Scotty Stuart, at a demonstration at GE. Direct action would lead to the GE boycott, and GE would eventually sell its aerospace division that would lead to Lockheed Martin. Those of us who go back to the early days of



*Bill Stuart-Whistler picketing with other members of Delco Pledge at the Federal Building in Philadelphia against the U.S. policies aimed against Haitians, 1992.*

the GE resistance know that it all started with civil disobedience at the GE plant located at 32nd & Chestnut Street in Philadelphia, where the Mark 12A was developed. We remember Bill standing at GE in Philadelphia, King of Prussia, and Moorestown, N.J. and speaking about his passion for disarmament and a nuclear-free future for our children. The GE sites in Valley Forge/King of Prussia and in Moorestown are now part of Lockheed Martin, the world's largest weapons corporation.

Our truest memorial to Bill Stuart-Whistler is to continue our campaign of nonviolent resistance to Lockheed Martin. On the ground where Bill once worked for war, and then resigned in order to speak and act with such passion for peace, we will continue to resist Lockheed Martin and its weapons for "endless war."

Scotty Stuart-Whistler, Bill's beloved wife, tells us that, waking from a long sleep and before slipping into death, Bill spoke his last words: "In a town far away, a crowd of holy people wait for me."

# The Debt Threat Complicates Tsunami Disaster

Excerpted from *MediaChannel.org*,  
January 8, 2005

After days of indecision, the G7, the world's leading industrialized nations, announced today that all Tsunami afflicted countries would be eligible to have their debt repayments halted. Thank goodness. How obscene it would have been to witness the aid that is now flowing into Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and Thailand flow immediately out again to the coffers of the same donors.

How unjust it would have been if these countries were thwarted from regaining their footing, tending their casualties, and burying their dead, because their scarce resources were being diverted into rich countries bank accounts.

Such a development would be shocking but not surprising. Because for most of the world's poorest coun-

tries, that is the situation they find themselves in each and every day. While 155,000 people died in the tragic events of Christmas Day, over 15,000 children die every single day in sub-Saharan Africa from poverty related diseases. Their governments are unable to do anything meaningful to treat them because they are paying out \$30 million dollars each and every day to the World Bank, the IMF, and rich world creditor nations. For every one dollar that is given to that region in aid, one and a half dollars goes out to cover debt repayments.

## WHAT'S GOOD FOR THAILAND MUST BE GOOD FOR TANZANIA

An African death must be weighted as highly as an Asian one. The principle that countries in need should not

have to service their debts must be applied evenly.

And this is the moment to add this call to the debt moratorium now being applied in Asia. With the G7's finance ministers meeting in early February, and debt relief on their agenda, this is the time to demand a principled and more universal approach to the issue. An approach that recognizes explicitly that countries must not have to prioritize debt service repayments over their ability to meet their citizens most basic needs. No country in need, wherever it is.

## MORE DEBT RELIEF NEEDED FOR POOR COUNTRIES

But let's not stop there. Let's seize this moment when debt cancellation is on the global political agenda and call for more: for the cancellation of debts, not only when a country cannot afford to repay them, but also when it shouldn't have to. Again, a situation where we have a recent precedent to fall back on.

The United States led the call for the cancellation of Iraq's debts last month, basically because the loans the Iraqi people were having to service had been racked up by a tyrannical and corrupt dictator. But we don't have to look hard to find despots with similar profiles: Marcos of the Philippines, Abacha of Nigeria, Mobutu of Zaire, the military junta of Argentina, and the apartheid regime of South Africa were all lent tens of billions of dollars which generations in the countries they once ruled over have to pay for now.

If the Iraqi people no longer have to pay for the knives that Saddam used to slaughter them, then neither should the Congolese, the Nigerians, the Argentineans, the Filipinos, nor the South Africans have to pay for monies borrowed by their former dictators.

## DECOUPLING DEBT

And let's also take this rare moment when the world is united in grief



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*Continued next page: Debt*



# Pledge Resumes Film Series

by Bob Small

Delco Pledge of Resistance will resume our Cinema Resistance Series on Saturday, March 5, at 7:30 pm. The venue will be Media-Providence Friends School, 125 West Third St., Media, located behind Media Court House. In celebration of Women's History Month, the feature film will be the Irish film, *Some Mother's Son* (1996), starring Helen Mirren. There will be a short introduction prior to the film and a discussion and refreshments afterwards.

Director Terry George is currently being lauded for his latest feature *Hotel Runda*. *Some Mother's Son* was his directorial debut, and he also wrote the screenplay for *In the Name of the Father* (1993), which he also produced. He has also directed *A Bright Shining Lie* and has written numerous screenplays.

For further information, contact Robert Small at 610-543-8427.

## Debt

and mourning to call for a decoupling of debt relief from harmful economic conditions.

Currently, even if a country is eligible to get some of its debts cancelled, this won't actually take effect unless they agree to follow the World Bank and IMF's strict rules. Rules such as demands to slash public expenditure. This means that when a country is poor, in practice, fewer children can be sent to school, less families have access to health care, women have to trudge 10 miles to collect water because no monies are spent on water delivery, and where no monies are invested in sanitation, girls have to pee in the bushes at night, in the process taking their chances that they will not be attacked or raped.

If debt relief is to become truly a mechanism for alleviating the lots of the most vulnerable and poor, such eco-

conomic conditions cannot be the price attached to it.

Out of the devastation wrought by the tsunami we can clear a path to a better world. Not only for those pum-

meled by forces of nature, though, but also for those who have suffered because of the wrong decisions of other people. There must be a relationship between charity and change.

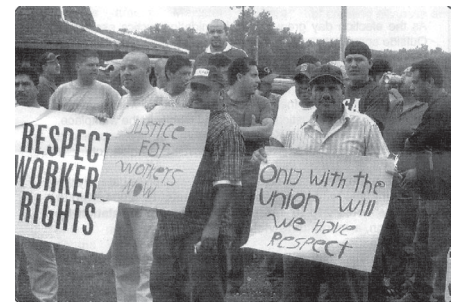


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## Kaolin Workers Score Success

The Kaolin Workers Union achieved a major victory when, this June, they won their union election, again, nearly 10 years after their first election. Prior to negotiating a second contract with the union, the company attempted to decertify the union. The Pennsylvania Labor Relations Board granted the company a new election without proof or cause for a new one. The workers remained united and overwhelmingly won their election, 210 to 145.

A second contract was signed with the company on September 1, 2004, which included better health benefits and holiday and vacation leave policies.



More than 100 workers gathered to speak with the press about Kaolin's campaign to decertify the union.

For more information, contact CATA, Farmworker Support Committee, at 856-881-2507 or visit [www.cata-farmworkers.org](http://www.cata-farmworkers.org).

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## CAFTA's Threat to Health

Currently, there is no formal representation for health care and public health in any U.S. trade negotiations. It is no surprise, therefore, that a number of provisions in the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) would lock in threats to public health and health care. Certain provisions could reduce affordable access to vital human services including health care, water supply, education, and energy as well as preempt the authority of public officials to protect health standards, environmental and occupational health, alcohol and tobacco protections, privacy rules, and patients' rights.

In other trade agreements similar to CAFTA, measures that protect health have been successfully challenged under something called the investors' rights provisions. For example, the US Metalclad Company successfully sued Mexico for \$16 million under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), when Mexico refused to reopen a toxic waste dump that would contaminate people and the environment.

CAFTA rules also preempt the authority of public officials to protect

health standards. Under NAFTA, for instance, a private Canadian corporation is challenging an executive order by the State of California to remove the additive MTBE from gasoline. MTBE is known to leak into ground water and act as a carcinogen. In a similar manner, under CAFTA's investment provisions, tobacco companies would be granted the ability to directly challenge national and state tobacco control laws.

Additionally, CAFTA can reduce access to vital services. By covering health care and other services under trade rules, CAFTA would facilitate privatization of these services, making them less affordable, especially for vulnerable populations.

CAFTA and similar trade agreements grant multinational corporations the intellectual property rights to plants and seeds that the majority of the world's poor depend on, undermining sustainable, biologically diverse agriculture. CAFTA also has provisions that cover intellectual property as it relates to medicines and could reduce access to affordable medicines.

Under CAFTA, government actions to favor local companies or ser-

vice suppliers, or to impose technical specifications, could also be challenged as barriers to trade. Currently, local, state, and national governments can specify that contractors meet standards for a variety of important issues including: medical and financial privacy, quality and performance, local sustainable economic development, environmental protection, public health and safety, gender and racial equity, labor practices, and human rights. But CAFTA could make such protections illegal.

Many of these areas are already matters of controversy within the World Trade Organization (WTO). These provisions should not be approved in CAFTA and should not stand as precedents for future trade agreements. Furthermore, public health must have a voice in trade negotiations, which increasingly affect health and health care.

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