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***WWFOR** seeks to replace violence, war, racism and economic injustice with nonviolence, equality, peace and justice. It links and strengthens FOR members and chapters throughout Western Washington in promoting activities consistent with the national FOR statement of purpose. WWFOR helps members and chapters accomplish together what we could not accomplish alone.*

Actually We Can Abolish War

by Thomas Ewell

I have spent the better part of this weekend streaming a [World Without War](#) conference on war abolition being held in Washington, DC. (For those interested, the conference videos are online. Click on “World Without War” above)

We heard speaker after speaker give accounts of the enormous negative impact of war our planet – the suffering of people killed and injured, the hundreds of thousands of refugees created, the economic and environmental cost of preparing for and executing war, the immorality of the arms trade, the failure of the US Congress to audit and control the Pentagon budget, the complete insanity of preparing for a nuclear war, the failure of the US to observe international law like the Geneva conventions and the UN Declaration of Human Rights – the list goes on – but these accounts were balanced by inspiring alternative nonviolent efforts to address conflict and war, a much needed positive appeal of the event.

My interest in this conference and my commitment to war abolition has a very personal beginning, an epiphany, if you will, that has changed my life.

Several years ago I went to the movie *Amazing Grace* about the 20 year struggle to abolish the slave trade in Great Britain. In spite of the horrendous suffering inflicted on the slaves, efforts to abolish slavery were defeated time and again by the combined support of Parliament and the powerful economic interests that depended on slave labor in the American colonies and the Caribbean. Finally in 1807, with the heroic efforts of William Wilberforce and others, the slave trade was finally abolished. At the dramatic conclusion of the film I found myself unexpectedly weeping so hard I couldn’t leave my seat. When I gained my composure I realized that if slavery could be abolished against such heavy odds we could also abolish war. And I came to believe that deeply. From that night on I have made it a priority in my life to work for the abolition of war.

It’s indeed a big jump from abolishing slavery to ending war, but in my mind the inconceivable suffering caused by war is so much more egregious than even the immense suffering of the slave trade. When war is supported by the power of the military-industrial-political forces that so immorally support and profit from it, – as did the collusion of political and economic interests in Great Britain that supported slavery – the abolition of war is obviously a considerable challenge. But I truly believe it is doable, even in my lifetime.

Most would assume that the cause of war abolition is too big to attempt, I know. The strategy means that we not only need to condemn the atrocities and injustice of war, we need to provide alternatives to validate our efforts. Fortunately, increasingly peace studies use the phrase “[peace science](#)” because the research has so conclusively shown the effectiveness of nonviolent

intervention over the violence of war.

I find this profoundly encouraging. Two weeks ago I wrote about the millions and millions of people across the entire globe who went to the streets on the same day of February 15, 2003, to oppose the Iraq war, and then in 2012, when given the opportunity to address the Obama administration’s intention of carrying out a “surgical strike” against Syria, thousands of the American people rallied to say no, and the bombing was called off (with the help of some timely diplomacy).

In spite of the numbed acceptance of the normalization of perpetual war by many Americans, the public is beginning to realize that the lies that were used to justify the Iraq war – and many wars before and since – and their general failure to achieve any lasting positive results – only disaster upon disaster – are all making war increasingly impossible to justify and support. As former Marine [Smedley Butler](#) wrote in 1933, “War is just a racket. A racket is best described, I believe, as something that is not what it seems to the majority of people. Only a small inside group knows what it is about. It is conducted for the benefit of the very few at the expense of the masses.” What a tragic and true assessment of war this is!

War is but one of the considerable threats facing our planet, and solutions are never simple, but we need to address them. Perhaps we need to start the task with the awareness that our impending environmental crisis and war are caused in large part by the harm done over years of rapacious greed and abuse of human life and our natural environment. In the field of restorative justice we ask not what law is broken but what harm has been done, and how are we to heal the harm and restore relationships. The healing process usually includes a sense of acceptance of responsibility, remorse, a willingness to make restitution, and a commitment to not continue the harm.

War is the epitome of harm and the failure of the human enterprise to create alternative means of addressing conflict nonviolently. The challenge we face regarding war is whether we have the courage to face the truth about the unspeakable harm caused by war and the tragedy of our false, socially constructed belief that war and violence are the most effective means to address conflict – what theologian Walter Wink calls the “myth of violent redemption.”

We now know a whole array of alternatives to conflict resolution and the prevention of deadly conflict, both at the international and national level and in our own communities and lives. The excitement during the conference was that we now have the “peace science” about how to deal with conflict and abuse in creative, nonviolent, and life sustaining ways. It is reasonable to believe that war abolition is possible if we can implement those strategies, of course, before it is too late. Momentum is on the side of possible implementation. Because of the growing interest in “peace science” there are now over 600 colleges across the globe with peace studies programs, and many of us know of

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promising young people who are engaged in or who have completed these studies. How can we not find this encouraging?

All of us need to examine our understanding of the role of war in today's world. Is war ever truly justified, particularly nuclear war? What are the alternatives? What are we willing to do to engage in a war abolition movement? Join me in believing the abolition of war is possible and support all those working in so many, many ways to create and implement alternatives to violence and war, in spite of, and in the midst of, this often violent world. We can abolish war. We must abolish war.

In Matters of War and Peace, the Real Work Lies Elsewhere

By Rob Crawford first published, Oct 12, 2016 in **Vashon-Maury Island Beachcomber**

Among the many urgent problems that compete for our attention, the political choice between more war, or the courage to seek peaceful solutions to the many and complex problems of global violence begs for our attention and discernment.

One might have thought, perhaps naively, that an electoral campaign to be president of a nation that has been at war for the past 15 years would provide an opportunity to debate the grave issues of foreign and military policy. The current presidential campaign has failed miserably in this democratic responsibility.

Yet many people yearn for clarity. They want to evaluate claims that more military interventions in the Middle East will achieve stated aims and be less damaging than our recent wars. They wonder about alternatives. Instead what we hear is war talk — the rhetoric of "defeating and destroying," "taking no options off the table," "by force if necessary," "standing up to bullies" and more of the same.

But we can actually learn something from the campaign rhetoric.

From Trump, we can learn that his pledge to keep us out of more wars cannot be trusted — not when he says he has "a secret plan" to quickly "defeat and destroy" ISIS, not when he threatens war crimes such as targeting civilians and bringing back torture, not when he brazenly asserts "to the victor belong the spoils" in reference to taking Iraqi oil and not when he blithely considers using nuclear weapons. People who speculate that Trump is some kind of isolationist are way off track.

From Clinton, we learn that she will vastly expand the air war against ISIS in both Iraq and Syria. We learn that she talks in terms of a "generational war." We learn that she still advocates a no-fly zone in Syria, a move that will mean military confrontations with both Assad's forces and possibly the Russians — and more U.S. forces involved in combat. We also learn that while Clinton touts her coercive diplomacy that prevented Iran from developing nuclear weapons, she also threatens war if there are violations and is confrontational with Iran over its involvement in Syria and Lebanon. Not least, Clinton has opted for just one side of the most enduring conflict in the entire region. Clinton's uncritical, pro-Israel statements are a slap in the face to Palestinians and anyone — within Israel, the U.S. or across the globe — who hopes for a more balanced approach to that conflict.

It is significant that prominent neo-conservatives and most of the national security establishment — people who would normally support a Republican candidate — have moved into the Clinton camp. For those of us who hope for a more peaceful U.S. foreign policy, what is to be done?

I have two suggestions. First, perhaps incredulously after what I have written, vote for Clinton. Other than foreign and military policy (and a some other crucial matters), there is much to be said for her candidacy, not least her recognition that the reality of climate change demands action — another ignored topic in the campaign. Do not waste your vote on a third-party candidate — not in this election.

Not only is Trump a bellicose wild card in foreign and military policy — a candidate who appeals to the hyper-nationalist, xenophobic, "whatever it takes" sector of the electorate — his entire candidacy is a call to war: a war against the truth of climate change, a war against Muslim immigrants, a war on undocumented migrants through building a wall and mass deportation, a war on minorities in their struggles against police shootings with his thinly veiled calls for "law and order," a war on women and a war on anyone who becomes an enemy through his encouragement of violence. Trump's pledge to create a fortress America is a formula for an America at war with itself.

Second, if your goal is a more peaceful world, don't get stuck on this election. There will be no deliverance at the presidential level. The challenge of creating a culture and a government that is less militaristic — less reliant on military solutions that most always have adverse and often have devastating consequences — is a "generational struggle" to which we should commit ourselves. We must begin again the hard work of building a culture of peace-making and a political movement to end war.

America Needs a New Kind of Labor Movement

by John M Repp

a review of Thomas Geoghegan. [Only One Thing Can Save Us: Why America Needs a New Kind of Labor Movement](#). New York: The New Press. 2014

This book is full of ideas that could change America's political and economic landscape. Thomas Geoghegan (pronounced gay-gen) is a veteran labor lawyer and author. He has written this book in conversational style and published it at a time when the labor movement is weaker than at any time since 1937. 1937 was when the sit-down strikes forced General Motors to negotiate with the UAW (United Auto Workers). The Wagner Act of 1935 made collective bargaining legal, but did not make it mandatory. The sit-down strikes pushed many of the big corporations to sit down at the table and negotiate contracts with their workers. Today not only are unions weaker, but too many workers are just "temps", so individual workers are weaker too.

Currently wage levels are not high enough to create the aggregate demand, buying power, needed to keep the economy at full employment. Debt in one form or another is necessary to keep the economy functioning. Debt increases aggregate demand in the short run, but decreases it in the long run, and therefore is not sustainable. He writes that higher wage levels would also increase the role of manufacturing and decrease the size of the financial

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sector in our economy.

Geoghegan's proposals were new to me. He writes that we need to make belonging to a labor union a civil right. He proposes that companies be banned from discriminating against union members in the same way they cannot discriminate against workers on the basis of their race, color, gender, age or disability. That would drastically change the legal power available to individual workers.

He also proposes changes in corporate law. He wants employees to be empowered to join a worker's council on the shop floor and he wants half the members of the boards of directors to be workers. With more control over the workplace, the morale of the workers would improve. This would create more democracy in the workplace. Democracy is a value we cherish but inside corporate facilities operating inside the U.S., hierarchy and control dominate.

Geoghegan is willing to let go of the U.S. model of the union bargaining for all workers in a bargaining unit and use the European model of members-only bargaining. This would undercut the strongest argument of the right wing that people are forced to join a union and pay dues. The new unions would be voluntary. However, the unions would be where workers would be educated to participate on the workers council and boards of directors.

We have been told that our jobs have been exported because our wages were too high. However a look at Germany should correct that idea. German auto workers average \$66 dollars an hour compared to American auto worker's wage of \$33 an hour. German auto companies produce 5.1 million cars per year; American companies produce 2.9 million cars a year. (pp. 20-21). So the German model is very competitive globally despite higher wages for their workers. 24 percent of the German work force participates in manufacturing compared to 9% in the U.S. Manufacturing is 25% of Gross Domestic Product in Germany but just 12% in USA. (pp.98-99) The important point: German workers make up half the boards of directors by law and there are workers councils on the shop floor where workers share power with the managers.

How does Geoghegan propose to bring about the reforms he puts forward? Since currently, organized labor is weak and cannot generally win big strikes, he thinks the tactic should be hit-and-run strikes of short duration, creating a sense that the country is in chaos. This tactic cannot be used where unions have a contract, but, current labor law allows two or more employees to strike for grievances and keep their jobs if they return before the company has hired someone new. The strategy is to force the Democratic Party leaders to support the reforms outlined above that would strengthen workers. Some reviewers of the book have written that the tactics and strategy Geoghegan proposes is a weakness of the book. But Geoghegan says the situation is dire and asks what else can we do?

Geoghegan likes what he sees of the new activists coming into labor. He also expresses dislike for much of the "old-boy network". At a dinner party he met a young organizer and he asked her how she convinced the mostly low wage Latino women to join up. She said: "You have to get them to stop thinking,

'Maybe I'll win the lottery' Or 'Maybe something will come along.' You have to make them see: 'No, that's not going to happen. But here's this other thing, the union. Maybe right now it can only get you another dollar or two an hour. But even that could make a difference in your life.... for you and your child.'"

A new kind of labor movement can jolt our political debate out of magical thinking. The political elites are in denial about the fault lines in our country. They do not understand that the structure of the current economy is unsustainable. A strong labor movement is the only way to hold the country together. At one point, Geoghegan writes: "But for these two programs (Social Security and Medicare), what else is holding our federal union together?" (p. 241) If we think about the fact that the goal of one of the two main political parties in our country is to abolish those programs, the urgency of Geoghegan's message makes sense.

To answer my friend, Steve, no this is not a revolutionary program. It is reformist. But if the changes Geoghegan proposes can be implemented, then we can take the next step and democratize the ownership of corporations, making them cooperatives. And, then.... Reforms like those proposed do not rule out more reforms that cumulatively can change the economic and political system.

An Open Letter to the City of Seattle November 16, 2016

On November 4, 2016, Seattle City Council member Kshama Sawant proposed legislation to allow socially responsible credit unions and community banks to manage the deposits of the city, deposits that are currently managed by Wells Fargo. Wells Fargo has been caught defrauding customers and has fired 5,300 of its lowest paid workers, many who opposed the policies, while giving bonuses to the executives who ordered the fraud to be committed. Seattle can end its contract with Wells Fargo in 2018. <http://kuow.org/post/lawmaker-wants-seattle-say-goodbye-wells-fargo>

Then on November 7, 2016 Sawant and 5 other Seattle City Council members proposed selling bonds to finance affordable housing in Seattle. <http://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/bonds-pitched-as-a-way-to-create-affordable-housing-in-seattle/> Selling bonds means borrowing money from Wall Street banks and paying back the principal and interest to these same banks over the next 30 years. Why is Seattle depositing our tax money in Wall Street Banks, then paying them to borrow it back?

We propose that the City of Seattle charter its own bank, a public bank, which can not only manage the city's deposits, but can expand the money available for locally needed projects like affordable housing through its loan portfolio. The Seattle Public Bank would be a banker's bank and would partner with local credit unions and community banks, guaranteeing their loans for the needed projects or buying their loans so they can make more loans.

The concept of public banking is a proven concept. World-wide 40% of banking is done through public banks. There has been a nation-wide effort to create public banks at the state, county, and city level since the financial crash of 2008-2009. However, locally

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the concept has been challenged on legal grounds by Washington's Attorney General (AG) as well as Seattle's Office of City Attorney (CA). It must be said that the legal arguments put forward are very weak.

The AG answered the request for a legal opinion from Representative Jake Fey on April 6, 2016 by writing: "state law probably does not authorize a charter city to create a bank because cities are not among the entities allowed to create banks under state law". State law RCW 30A.08.020 does not prohibit a charter city from creating a bank. It simply says "persons" or "natural persons" may create a bank. In addition, the banking law could be easily amended by the state legislature to allow a chartered city to create a bank.

The CA wrote a confidential memo to the Seattle city council members and then released another memo to the public on December 4, 2015. He wrote: "The financial health of a municipal bank could be seriously impaired by any legal challenge to the ability of the City to establish a bank in the first instance..." The City would be the only depositor in a municipal public bank, and The City would not withdraw its funds out of fear the bank would collapse as might be expected from individual depositors. We have always expected legal challenges from private banking interests. In addition, the loan portfolio of a Seattle public bank dedicated to local projects would not be affected by a legal challenge. The borrowers would still be under contract to pay back their loans.

The second type of legal challenge we can expect would be based on the Washington State Constitution. In 2011, the Washington State Treasurer said a public bank at the state level would violate the state constitution. There are three clauses that say the credit of the state cannot be given to (private) individuals, companies, or corporations. (Article VII Section 5, Article VIII Section 7, and Article XII Section 9) All these clauses if interpreted **literally** seem to preclude public banking. But the real intent of the clauses is "to prevent state funds from being used to benefit private interests where the public interest is not primarily served" (quoting *Japan Line, Ltd. v. McCaffree*, 88 Wn.2d 93, 98, 558 P.2d 211 (1977)) Former Supreme Court Justice Phil Talmadge has expressed the same idea. With a public bank, "the state would get a full return on its asset". It would receive back both the principal and interest on the loans it makes. That by itself should make clear that the public interest is being primarily served. Furthermore, the state and the city have long been lending money to small business for economic development, a practice considered constitutional.

In addition to the "profits" a public bank makes, its loan portfolio will create many good jobs. It must be repeated that a public bank works with local credit unions and community banks. The local financial institutions, which know best their local communities, will do the work of finding and evaluating the borrowing business. The public bank will then partner with the credit unions and community banks by buying the loans or issuing a letter of credit to insure the loans. After the crash of 2008-2009 community banks have faced new regulations which forced many to sell to larger Wall Street banks. For a time, this resulted in a credit shortage for small business. And we know small

business creates most of the new jobs in our communities. Public banking is a jobs program.

Opponents of public banking would rather argue their case on legal grounds because the economic case for public banking is so strong. The economic benefits of a Seattle Public Bank to our city and its citizens will be huge, and the more of our city's capital that can be invested in such a bank, the more the benefits will flow. To compare the risk of public banking to the risk of the current Wall Street model is like comparing blocks of granite to soap bubbles, especially if a Trump Administration deregulates Wall Street like we are hearing it might.

Because the interest on a loan, for example to build affordable housing, comes back to the public bank rather than to a private Wall Street bank, the cost to the citizens of Seattle for affordable housing would be cut, maybe in half over 30 years. In other words, with the public banking model, twice as many affordable housing units could be built in our city. A public bank can also make loans during the down time of a business cycle, an advantage of a public bank over a private bank. Public banking is countercyclical.

Currently, the city of Seattle, in addition to the money it deposits in Wells Fargo in a checking account, puts its "savings" into Treasury bills and CD's. This money would be the source of the capital to start a public bank. That public bank would be able to create new credit and invest it locally for real projects, again, like affordable housing. The current method just adds to the pool of money that feeds the financial bubbles and global market speculation. A public bank can put new money back into our local economy and create new jobs. This is not a utopian idea. The Bank of North Dakota is an example of a public bank that has a very high return on capital, over 18.5% in 2014. The current average return on T-bills and CDs in Seattle's "savings accounts" is less than 1%.

Public banking officers will be civil servants on a civil service salary. The mission of the bank will be to strengthen the economy of Seattle, not to maximize the profits of private stockholders. The officers of the bank will evaluate the loans it makes based on the business model of the borrower. They will not be receiving massive bonuses and will not be on commission. They will not be incentivized to break the law as was the case with the officers of Wells Fargo and other Wall Street banks.

In conclusion, while we applaud the proposal of Councilmember Sawant to end the city's contract with Wells Fargo and the understanding of the six Seattle City Council members that Seattle needs more affordable housing, we think a creating a Seattle Public Bank is the best way to accomplish those policies.

<http://www.seattlepublicbanking.org/>

Sincerely,

Cindy A. Cole and John M. Repp

**THOSE WHO DO NOT MOVE,
 DO NOT NOTICE THEIR CHAINS**

Rosa Luxemburg

