

## **Rally for Peace and an End to the Killing**

talk by Greg Coleridge

Soldier's and Sailor's Monument, March 15, 2007

Sponsored by March 15 Coalition to End the War and Occupation of Iraq

Thank you for coming out today.

The demands for the rally for today are:

**BRING THE TROOPS HOME NOW!**

**END ALL FUNDING FOR THE OCCUPATION, EXCEPT THE MONEY NEEDED TO BRING THE TROOPS HOME SAFELY!**

**MONEY FOR HEALTH CARE, EDUCATION, HOUSING, VETERANS' PROGRAMS, JOBS AND HUMAN NEEDS NOT FOR WARS AND OCCUPATIONS!**

People like us and gatherings like this are taking place all over the country over the next few days – calling for an end to the occupation and an end to the funding. Actions of all types -- vigils, rallies, marches, occupations of congressional offices, prayer services. Both actions of protest and actions of resistance. Here in Cleveland, Akron and Kent but also in DC and every other state across the country.

We gather at this location here today in the shadows of this memorial to the fallen soldiers and sailors of a past war and near the location of a continuous 8 day, around the clock vigil for the war dead... the dead of all sides.

Today is the first day of what is known as March Madness – when people all over the country scramble to keep up with games from coast to coast in the world of college basketball.

But there is a different form of March Madness taking place as we speak – congressional debate over how many more tens of billions of dollars to flush down the rathole known as the continued illegal foreign military occupation of Iraq.

Nearly 4 years ago, also in March, this whole madness began. Congress willingly ceded their constitutional power to declare war to George Bush. The US military invasion and war began – based on outright deceit and lies. The bombing, shooting, killing, maiming...not to mention the torturing...the spying...the profiling...and of course...the spending, the spending and the spending. Spending asked for by the President and voted for every single time by Congress.

655,000 Iraqi deaths later

2 million Iraqi external refugees and 1.8 million internally displaced Iraqis later

3100 US troop deaths later

156 Ohio troop deaths and 1100 Ohio troop injuries later

400 billion plus US taxdollars and 14.2 Ohio tax dollars later

Thousands of people in this country, maybe many more, hurt, maimed, injured, if not dead, due to resources for food, housing, and health care that were not spent as dollars went for weapons of warfare and occupation later

Is this country more secure? Do you feel more secure? Has the reputation of this country been enhanced as a promoter of liberty, freedom and democracy? Who in their right mind believes more troops, more money, more weapons and more occupation will improve conditions? Yet, the House of Representatives, now controlled by the supposed “people’s” party, the Democrats, are set to vote for more than \$100 billion more.

It is all madness. It was mad then. It was mad now.

But not quite.

There is a eerie rationality to it all. A solid logic. A cold reality to everything that has gone on. Never mind trying to establish democracy. Or destroying the village in order to save it. Or in winning hearts and minds. Or in removing “insurgents.” They’re all smokescreens. They always have been.

The logic to the unending funding and the perpetual occupation, including the permanent presence of military bases, addresses the real reasons for the invasion and war to begin with. Oil. Money. Profit. Power. Control.

While we all snickered to see George II on the aircraft carrier declaring Mission Accomplished, it very soon may well be.

The Iraqi hydrocarbon law calls for 'production-sharing agreements' (PSAs) allowing major Western energy companies like ExxonMobil, Shell, ChevronTexaco, and BP to sign up to 30 year deals to extract Iraq's oil. It was drafted with the help of BearingPoint, a U.S. consulting firm. Legal ownership of Iraqi oil will remain with Iraq, but the PSAs guarantee major profits for non-Iraqi companies that invest in infrastructure and operation of the wells, pipelines and refineries. Under this scheme, no other Middle Eastern oil producing nation will have its oil under as much foreign control as Iraq. The hydrocarbon law will result not in oil being a resource that benefits Iraqis but as a resource that flows out of the nation with the main beneficiaries being transnational oil corporations.

The drafting process of this law was secretive. Few Iraqi were allowed to read the text, until it was leaked over the Internet. The law was approved by the Iraqi cabinet on February 26 and now heads to the Iraqi Parliament. The US is placing enormous pressure to pass it.

Such a law, if passed, will also ensure that oil will remain pegged to the dollar and not switched to the Euro, a threat Saddam made to the US before the invasion.

So you see, my friends, it is not all madness. “A few benefiting while the many pay” is a reality that is as old as the republic itself.

Yes, the costs of the war are immense. But the costs are being borne disproportionately by low- and moderate-income people while a few people of considerable wealth with ties to oil or Iraqi reconstruction profit...or soon will.

Unlike the March Madness that many will be following over the next few weeks, this is no game.

Opposition to the madness and the cold reality has to come from us. We can't depend on Congress, Republicans or Democrats, to take leadership. Most represent the Corporate Party anyway. Nor can we depend on the major media, or think tanks.

Opposition and resistance must come from us. It already is. It's growing. It's including questioning not just this war but all US military actions – questioning the legitimacy of continuing the US military Empire itself. It's coming from not only traditional peace and justice groups but from labor, from the religious community, from outside this country, from within the military, even from other people of wealth who question the greed and narrow mindedness of those who profit from war and its spoils.

Let us continue to protest. Let us look for ways to more effectively resist. And let us do it together.