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| EVENT: NEWS CONFERENCE Jobs Not Wars! Veterans and Labor Rights Advocates Speak Out as Portland Counts Down to Rally and March Marking Eight Years of US War in Iraq. | CONTACT 1: William Seaman <i>Portland Peaceful Response Coalition</i> (503) 888-7455 wills@pdxjustice.org |
| DATE: Wednesday, March 16, 2011 | |
| TIME: 10:00 AM | CONTACT 2: Curt Bell <i>Economic Justice Action Group of the First Unitarian Church</i> (503) 227-0016 (503) 621-6790 (cell) mckimbells@comcast.net |
| PLACE: Eliot Chapel (Salmon Street Sanctuary), First Unitarian Church, SW 12 th Avenue & Salmon Street, downtown Portland | |

For Immediate Release

NEWS CONFERENCE
JOBS NOT WARS! – Veterans and Labor Rights Advocates
Speak Out as Portland Counts Down to Rally and March
Marking Eight Years of US War in Iraq.

As Portland gears up for a rally and march for peace on March 19th, veterans and labor rights advocates will gather for a news conference this Wednesday, March 16th, at 10:00AM in the Eliot Chapel of the First Unitarian Church at SW 12th Avenue & Salmon Street in downtown Portland. The news conference includes an extended question and answer session after opening statements by the following persons:

Joe Dunn, secretary, *Iraq Veterans Against the War* of Portland

Margaret Butler, executive director of *Portland Jobs with Justice*

Grant Remington, president, *Veterans for Peace*, Chapter 72

Robin Hahnel, Professor Emeritus from *American University* in Washington D.C. and currently Visiting Professor of Economics at *Portland State University*, co-creator of an alternative economic system known as "Participatory Economics."

Peter Parks, retired longshoreman (ILWU Local 8), labor right advocate with *Portland Jobs with Justice* and the *VOZ Workers' Rights Education Project*.

This news conference will address key themes of a peace rally and march set for this coming Saturday. “It seems my whole life we have been interfering with, bombing, invading or otherwise forcing our so-called ‘values’ on other countries,” explains Grant Remington, president of the local chapter of *Veterans for Peace*. “As James Madison stated in 1795, ‘No nation could preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare.’”

March 19th is the eighth anniversary of the US invasion and occupation of Iraq. To mark this anniversary, over sixty community organizations are co-sponsoring and endorsing a rally and march for peace, calling for an end to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and for the return of all US troops from these countries. While the current budget debates rage on Capitol Hill, and union collective bargaining rights are under attack in several states, there has been very little public discussion of the costs of the US wars. For 2010, the military budget and the costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan exceeded \$1Trillion. Both in human terms and the vast expense of these wars, the impact on the peoples of the United States, Iraq and Afghanistan has been an historic tragedy.

The speakers at the Wednesday news conference – veterans, advocates for working class families, and a progressive economist – hope to provide a critical perspective on the current budget debate and the significance of the March 19th anniversary.

“A huge benefit for the war capitalists comes from the austerity demanded at home to pay for the wars, payments that go directly to the wealthy class at the expense of the working class,” explained Peter Parks, a retired longshoreman. “The austerity demands are actually increasing attacks on workers, unions, immigrants and women.” While school teachers and other public sector working people have become budget deficit scapegoats, the vast war profiteering from these misguided and immoral wars continues without notice, and the numbers of those killed and grievously injured continue to rise. It was reported recently that 455 American soldiers died last year in combat and that a minimum of 407 committed suicide (*Harper’s*, April 2011).

For more information on the news conference, please call 503-888-7455. For more information about the March 19th peace mobilization, please visit the *Peace and Justice Works* website at www.pjw.info or the *Portland Peaceful Response Coalition* website at www.pprc-news.org.

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