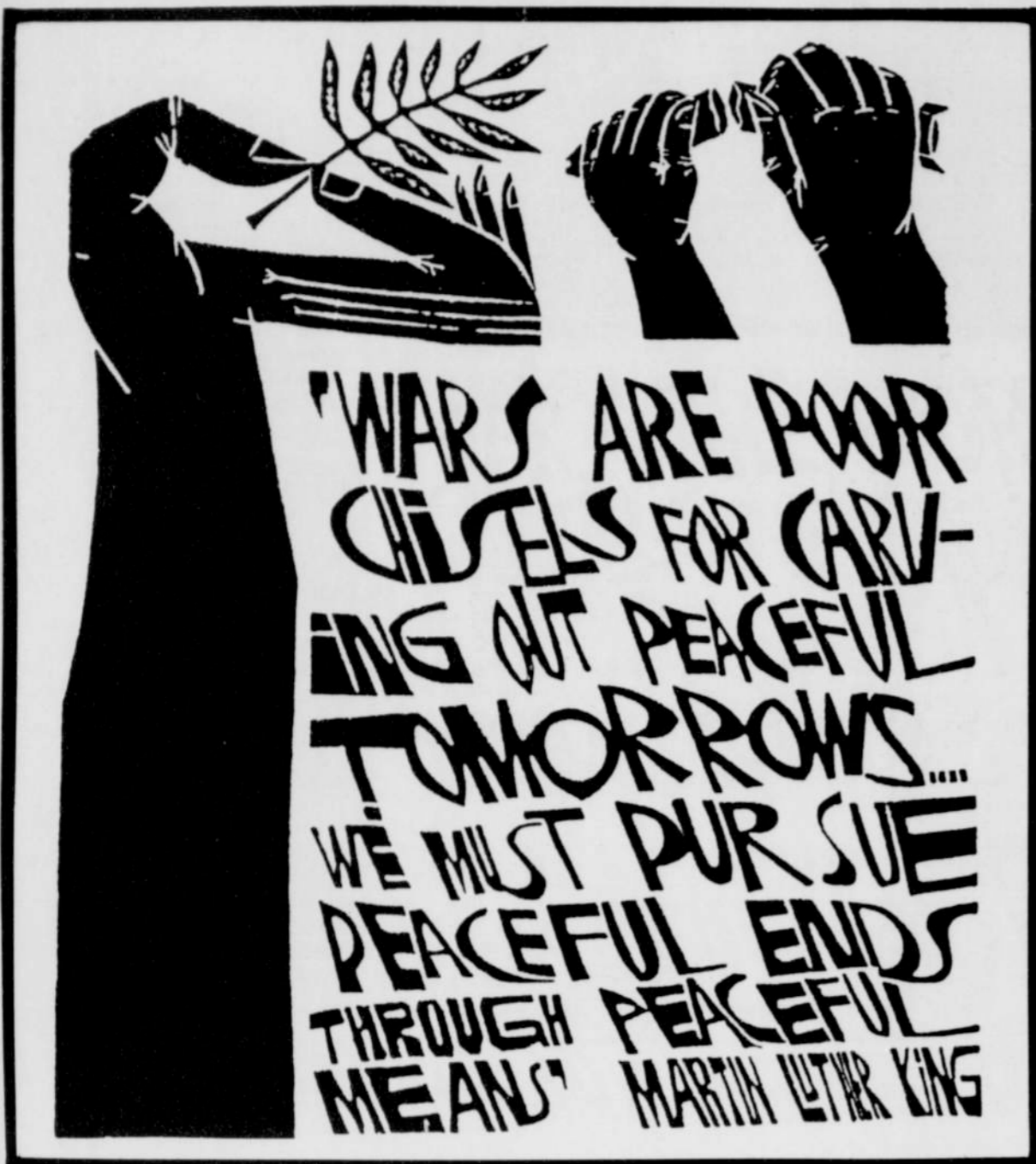


TO WAR OR NOT TO WAR



INTERVIEWS BY MICHAEL McCUSKER

The United States is at a point where the lunge toward invasion of Iraq seems impossible to reverse. Ask people if they want war and nearly everyone will say they are against it — until it starts.

President Bush's insistent demand for invasion of Iraq is that Saddam Hussein is developing "weapons of mass destruction" and that their use against the U.S. in support of terrorism is imminent.

The Nation in its Sept. 2-9 issue posed nine pertinent questions that it said "the country's elite" should be asking about an invasion of Iraq. Without the more basic moral and legal considerations about launching a unilateral invasion of a sovereign nation without legitimate provocation, these questions are:

1. Why should the U.S. engage in a risky and potentially calamitous invasion of Iraq when the existing strategy of "containment" — entailing no-fly zones, sanctions, technology restraints and the deployment of U.S. forces in surrounding areas — has succeeded in deterring Iraqi adventurism for the past ten years and also weakened its military capabilities?
 2. Why has the Bush administration found so little international support for its proposed policy, and what would be the consequences if the U.S. tried to act unilaterally and without any international legal authority?
 3. Is the U.S. prepared to accept significant losses of American lives — a strong possibility in the projected intense ground fighting around Baghdad and other urban areas?
 4. Is the U.S. prepared to inflict heavy losses on Iraq's civilian population, and wouldn't this make the U.S. a moral pariah in the eyes of much of the world?
 5. Wouldn't an invasion of Iraq aimed at the removal of Saddam Hussein remove any inhibitions he might have regarding the use of chemical and biological (and possibly nuclear) weapons, making their use more rather than less likely?
 6. Are we prepared to cope with the outbreaks of anti-American protest and violence that, in the event of a U.S. attack on Iraq, are sure to erupt through the Muslim world, which would jeopardize pro-U.S. regimes in the region and further inflame the Israeli-Palestinian crisis?
 7. Can the fragile American economy withstand a sharp rise in oil price and other negative economic effects that can be expected from a major war in the Middle East?
 8. Even if the U.S. is successful in toppling Saddam Hussein, who will govern Iraq afterwards?
 9. Is the U.S. willing to deploy 100,000 or more American soldiers in Iraq for ten or twenty years to defend a U.S. imposed government and prevent the break up of the country into unstable Kurdish, Sunni and Shiite mini-states?
- North coast residents not necessarily members of the national elite were asked their opinion of going to war against Iraq.

CEDAR ST. ONGE

I think war with Iraq is wrong. I think they should find another way to resolve it. I think it isn't right because it is hurting people who haven't done anything. That's wrong.
(She is 9 years old and in the 4th grade.)

JERRY FORSYTHE

I'm blown away by that 'Give War A Chance' sign! We've given war a chance for thousands of years and it hasn't worked yet.

I don't think the human condition has progressed past the point that we are able to end war. It really boils down to negotiation — negotiations on different levels; between people, not nations.

A lot of dialogue is opening up and I am impressed that we are negotiating, but we are not negotiating with Iraq. The war has already begun. It's a war of words right now. We haven't started the killing yet.

JESSI DUNKIN

I'm against war in Iraq. In the papers I read it seems Congress and the UN are against it, and most of the American people.

I think Bush is trying to prove something, but I don't know what.
(Jessi is 17 October 21.)

HEIDI MOORE

After spending a year exerting energy beyond what I have to protest the bombing of innocent women and children in Afghanistan, and then Palestine, a third theater (as Rumsfeld put it) is the last thing I want. War with Iraq is an answer to a question that Americans do not have the right to ask, given that the U.S. holds more weapons of mass destruction than every single country in the world combined. Given also that the Bush administration refuses to allow weapons inspectors into U.S. pharmaceutical plants and that Dick Cheney through Haliburton provided Saddam Hussein with all the equipment to rebuild his oil fields after the Gulf War. This list can and does go on and on to demonstrate that an attack on Iraq would be an ethical contradiction and would work against the reputation of the American people for centuries.

What I would like to see is George Bush and friends tried for war crimes they have committed in Afghanistan at the International Criminal Court.

The American people deserve a regime change, just not in Iraq.

MARYANNE MYERS

I'm making phone calls and writing letters like a madwoman because I don't want to feel guilty about doing nothing, even though I feel it's fairly ineffectual.

But I feel compelled to get up in the middle of the night and call the White House — the special number where you register yes or no to war in Iraq. I would say, "I'm completely outraged if not astounded that as a population we would be willing to cash in the most valuable commodity on the planet so easily — and that is our power of the people to affect its government, and I wonder if we are so used to it we have forgotten how rare and precious it is."

CECILIA DAHL

I am totally against war in Iraq. I don't need to see any more people slaughtered on either side.

PAM TILLSON

I'm against war in Iraq.

ROBERT ADAMS

I don't think a majority of Americans are any different from the rest of the world. They don't believe, given the facts as Bush has stated them, that a pre-emptive attack is justified. Deterrence worked with the Soviet Union and presumably it would work with Iraq.

If there is a war it will be because Bush wants a war in order to demonstrate imperial power, to continue the empire.

The price for America could be awful — a smallpox attack for example.

CAROLYN DUNN

I guess my comment about a war in Iraq is that we have not progressed beyond the 8th century England and Beowulf; beyond the Age of Vengeance. We have to hope human nature is such that we can get beyond this. Now is the time to do so.

KERRY HAWLEY

I think a war with Iraq is very immoral. I think the United States should step back and let the United Nations handle the situation. Bush is overstepping his bounds with his aggression. Prime Minister Blair in England is doing the same thing. They are being bullies on the international scene. Saddam Hussein is a threat to the Arab states but the United Nations should handle the situation in a peaceful resolution.

PATRICIA LONGNECKER

By and large there hasn't been a single war since World War 2 that we have been involved in that has accomplished anything positive.

The older I get the more I understand the world would be in better balance without people. Maybe this war isn't a bad idea. We can all go down knowing we have given our lives for the whole. Perhaps the world can survive without the insatiable need for fossil fuel. Greed is by and large a human trait, and I'm sure all remaining life, fauna and flora, will throw a grand wake.

VALERIE LINDHOUT

I feel victimized.
We have fitness tests for various occupations but we don't had fitness tests for our politicians that I know of. Power is an aphrodisiac; how do we know they're not riding their own personal energy power waves?

The uniformity of expression in delivering the party line, that's what I see. It doesn't matter if the opposition is denigrated as unpatriotic. I feel a sense of inner obsession from many of the war talkers.

There is a reasonable way somewhere but we are looking at unreason. Who in their right mind wants war?

I feel victimized primarily because there is not equal representation by women and men in human affairs. And so absolute power has corrupted male nature absolutely.

RON WHITE

The U.S. should surrender.

CYNDY LEE

The U.S. should bomb the demons out of Saddam Hussein then give him psychotherapy.

End game: We make Iraq our 51st state (Walmart & McDonalds), elect Tom Green governor and rename the stinking desert 'My Own Private Ida-ho'. At last! Gas!!!

SUE SKINNER

What happens if they give a war and nobody comes?
My real fear is if a war with Iraq ignites a nuclear war. The gloves are off and our government is talking about provoking a nuclear war. That is the new nuclear posture. That is worrisome.

TOM DUNCAN

War is an inefficient way of solving problems. There is no possible advantage to the United States to go to war with Iraq.

The basic reason to go to war is to gain an advantage. I don't see any advantage.

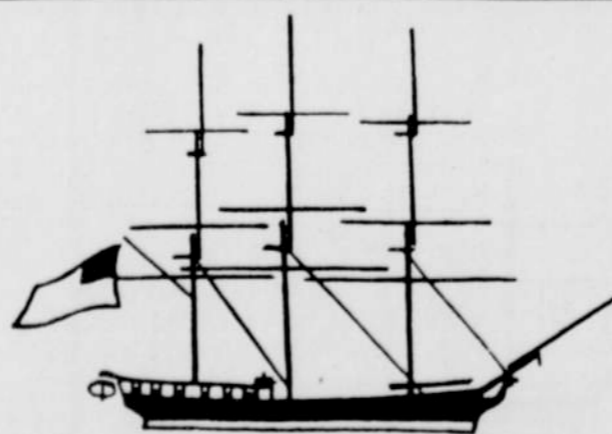
PROFANITIES

Tired and weary
from words of war
conjured by cowards and schoolyard bullies

Caught in the sway
of mass hysteria
Being terrorized by societies
that profess to know better
Dying and killing for God
instead of living

Love becomes a profanity

~PETER MARSHALL



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NO WAR

I am writing to express my distress at the President's actions in promoting a war against Iraq.

I have written Senators Ron Wyden and Tom Daschle urging them to withhold support of these war plans.

I would like to urge everyone to write letters to our senators and anyone else who may be influential, urging them to do all they can to prevent the war now being planned.

I believe that such a war would inflame the whole Muslim world and be a disaster to our country as well.

~Carol B. Moore