

EDITORIAL

Portland can set a new pace for recovery

You can feel the tension in the air. The quiet panic that has been building with many local small businesses, non-profits and other community groups is only building. Once bustling cash flow projections are now turning into forecasts of red. Corporations are downsizing and small businesses closing their doors. Non-profits are next.

A distant echo of relief from beyond the horizon continues to build within the Beltway. Is it real? Politicians say yes. Experts say possibly. The people have their doubts.

In Portland we have a chance to set a different pace for the rest of the country. According Portland's Jobs with Justice more than 800 people crowded into Portland, Oregon's First Unitarian Church on Saturday January 31st for a town hall on the economic crisis. Like many organizations working on the front lines of poverty, Street Roots believes that the economic crisis presents an opportunity to organize a broad base of Portlanders.

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And Jobs with Justice has been spot on with it's organizing and analysis that the economic stimulus proposals aimed at getting the country back to a pre-meltdown state are inadequate — in part because inequality had left large numbers of American families struggling to survive even before the financial collapse.

The time has come to pull together and push institutions beyond their tired rhetoric on issues important to all of us, including homelessness, immigration, environment, free trade, and foreign policy.

Since 9/11, the anti-globalization movement that had once brought together a broad base of single-issue movements has been nonexistent. Seven years of the Bush administration and two major wars later we find ourselves at a tipping point economically.

We can't forget that less than a decade ago that same anti-globalization movement made the World Trade Organization a household name through organizing efforts in Portland and Seattle. The idea of free trade verses fair trade and what that means for poor and working people was debated in living rooms and campsites around the world. Much of that can be contributed to activists in Oregon and throughout the Pacific Northwest.

In England, France, and other European countries, trade unions and poverty activists have joined hands and are once again questioning the effectiveness of free trade. Street Roots believes we have the same opportunity in Portland.

We want to tip our hat to Portland's Jobs with Justice for creating a vehicle to bring all of these organizations and individuals together under one tent. We would also like to remind readers that things are moving right now.

A document recording fee for affordable housing is winding it's way through the Oregon State Legislature. Health care campaigns by Oregon Action and labor organizations are gaining momentum under a sympathetic administration. Homeless advocacy organizations continue to fight for the civil rights of people experiencing homelessness. Groups are mobilizing around racial profiling and immigrant rights. Environmental and energy groups are seizing the moment to create effective policy and new strategies for green jobs. There's no shortage of things to get involved in right now. There never was. Street Roots just believes that now more than ever it is time to remain united and make some noise that leads to a better planet and a better future for working and poor people in the Pacific Northwest and around the world. It's up to you to join in and make that happen.

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by Gimel

LETTER

We are missing the point of economics

BY WILLIAM DANIELS

Are we going to do the same tired routine of patching and fixing a financial system that keeps going through endless cycles of growth, recession, depression, bubbles and frauds, etc.? There are proposals to bail out the banks, builders and homeowners, make loans to the car companies, make more jobs, cut taxes, raise taxes, rebuild infrastructure, and give another taxpayer rebate. We don't know what will work because we don't recognize basic facts or how to properly measure economic activity.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Street Roots encourages readers to submit letters and columns for publication. Letters to the editor may be submitted to the Street Roots office, 211 NW Davis St., Portland, OR 97209, faxed to 503-227-3117 or e-mailed to streetroots@email.com. Please address your submissions as letters to the editor.

We get training to do a job to make money to buy health insurance to pay for health care. What we really want, and can actually provide if we so choose, is to simply have health care available when needed.

perform repetitive functions.

The purpose of these machines is to increase the standard of living and to enable people to spend less time doing it. However, the standard of living is being

reduced almost everywhere, now. The time that people spend working is not going down in many places, but in fact is rising. In his book "Critical Path" Buckminster Fuller states: "... 60 percent of all the jobs in the U.S.A. are not

producing any real wealth — i.e., real life support." If this is true, then it is quite clear that "putting people back to work" is not a truly feasible solution.

In the United States we get training to do a job to make money to buy health insurance to pay for health care. What we really want, and can actually provide if we so choose, is to simply have health care available when needed. The complex, wasteful and dehumanizing systems that we currently use are not the only ways in which we can produce and deliver real wealth.

We have a financial and economic crisis in large part because we don't understand the actual problem. The actual problem in this new paradigm is: How do we produce and distribute the highest standard of life support to every human being, quickly?

We are in the midst of an unprecedented opportunity for human beings and this planet. The technical hard part is complete. The stage we are now in is a matter of education and choice, both individually and collectively.