ADDICTED TO WAR

It is tax season, and I have stamped my envelope and sent my check to the state of Oregon, wishing there was a fairer tax structure with increased taxes for those with higher incomes and corporations, that provided much needed revenue for education, social, medical and other services.

But I will not voluntarily give a penny of my federal income tax to the federal government. Taxes of the wealthy and of corporations have been vastly reduced. Military expenditures have vastly increased, as the government invests billions for nuclear weapons in space, stations armed forces around the world, and pays for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Hundreds of U.S. soldiers and thousands of Iraqi people are being slaughtered. The national debt has climbed into more trillions and the entire Social Security "Trust" Fund has been loaned out. Medicare, vital to such a large proportion of our elderly population, is being dismantled. Human services are becoming virtually nonexistent. The U.S. budget is in shambles. The continued viability of the economy, and especially the dignified, stable lifestyles of millions of middle and lower income people, are threatened.

Let's look at our U.S. government in the same way we regard an addicted member of our family. Our government is addicted to war and has lost the abilities, structures, and habits of peace-making, of love. Sometimes, members of a family, and in this case, the general public of the United States, need to surround the addicted family member with love and with firmness, to say "No" to their addictive habits and help them re-learn how to live in a functional way.

My refused federal income tax and federal excise taxes on my telephone bills will be used for life-giving purposes. Retired General Hague once said, "Let them march all they want, if they pay their taxes."

Peg Morton
Eugene

A FEW GOOD COPS

I would like to praise Hanna Olsen's letter (4/1). Coming and saying something like that in Eugene is as bad as admitting you were a communist during the McCarthy trials. The one thing we all seem to forget is what she stated: Police officers are people and not *all* of them are bad as some people would like them to be.

I have much respect for the police officers of both Eugene and Springfield. And they have on more than one occasion either helped me when I was in danger or just helped me. When Kip Kinkle decided to shoot up my high school, the police were quick to respond. The ones I met handled the situation with care. The ones that took down our information were kind and polite. The Eugene police officers that I met and talked to during the Nike Town riot of October in that same year were all kind and respectable.

Am I saying that there are no bad officers? No, I am sure that there are a microscopic and tiny few who are, but this is a very *tiny* section of a larger group of fine, respectable people who day in and out put their lives on the line to save ours.

And by the way, could anyone find me the actual piece of paper or legislation that says there is a separation of church and state? "Freedom of religion," not Freedom *from* religion.

James Ready
Springfield

SHOOTING CANS

Thank you for Tom Lininger's opinion piece (3/25) about the recent Supreme Court decision resulting in obstacles for those prosecuting domestic violence cases. I found it informative and well thought out until Lininger, questioning the justice's opinion, wonders if he "was shooting cans with batterers the night before he issued the decision."

A Coalition to Defeat Bush

Learning from the Germans

It has not fully dawned on progressive, "Green"-oriented voters in this country that the expectedly close election may very well place in their astonished hands not only the power to defeat Bush but also push the Democratic Party in a bolder direction. The numbers from the last election irrefutably reveal that the Nader vote in many states was larger than the margin of difference between Bush and Gore.

Sharply contested elections have been seen elsewhere as golden opportunities to use crucially needed votes as "leverage" to move mainstream parties toward positive changes. In Germany in 2002, there was a very close election between the liberal Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the conservative Christian Democratic Union Party (CDU). The German Green Party recognized a chance to exercise influence and entered into negotiation with the SDP about Green-oriented policies it would be willing to support if a coalition between the two was able to defeat the conservatives. The Green vote indeed made the crucial difference and the coalition was formed.

German Coalition Advances Progressive Cause

A formal "Coalition Agreement" has been signed that includes the following: 1) All nuclear power plants in Germany will be phased out; 2) the principle of sustainable development shall be the "central goal of the government's reform policies, guiding the way government does its business;" 3) consumer protection will be recognized as a "central cross-cutting principle of government action;" 4) "on climate protection, Germany is to propose that the European Union adopt a 30 percent greenhouse gas reduction target and, if EU agrees, itself adopt a 40 percent target;" 5) an agricultural policy will be adopted that is "orientated to nature and people and their health" and which "rewards animal welfare;" and 6) extensive food labeling will be done to provide transparency and respect consumer choice regarding genetically modified foods.

In addition, Greens have been installed in the quite significant cabinet posts of foreign minister, environment minister, and minister of consumer protection, food and agriculture.

In the U.S., it would be quite a stretch to imagine people with Green credentials being appointed to secretary of state or director of the EPA. The "winner take all" system (as opposed to the more democratic system of proportional representation in places like Germany where 8 percent of the vote translates into 8 percent representation in government) does not allow for much influence by smaller political parties. Extremely close elections, however – even in systems like the U.S. – are one of the few exceptions to this general rule.

Strategic Alliance to Defeat Bush

A cooperative alliance could be formed between Sen. Kerry, Gov. Dean, Sen. Edwards, Rep. Kucinich and Nader. Kerry and Nader could negotiate their own form of the German Coalition Agreement. Nader could ask Kerry to use his executive powers to implement progressive changes and also propose and support specific legislation. He could request that Kerry commit to specific appointments. In return, Nader could agree to use his candidacy as a pulpit to promote his views but not seek ballot access in the key swing states.

One of this column's authors, Peter Sorenson, actually presented a proposal in early 2000 to Gore's campaign manager that is similar to what we now describe. He suggested that Gore offer to appoint Nader as attorney general. If this proposal had been accepted and implemented, it is very possible the entire election would have turned out differently.

Nader has agreed to meet with Kerry during April to discuss how they can "collaborate" toward the "common goal" of defeating Bush. Nader is to be commended for taking this step, one he refused four years ago. Even if these discussions do not bear immediate fruit, an all-important line of communication will have been established. Further into the election year, tensions on all sides are bound to increase. As this happens, it will be very fortuitous for Kerry and Nader to have initiated this link.

Many progressives are beginning to catch on to the rare and amazing power that this election may very well give them. Some are actively laying the groundwork for a German-style, strategic coalition between progressive Democrats and Greens called the Green Democratic Alliance. It is receiving its initial impetus right here in Eugene, where the concept was enthusiastically embraced by Kucinich in his recent visit. In order to share this concept nationwide, a website is about to be launched at www.greendemocraticalliance.org

The German Greens have "raised the bar" and challenged progressives worldwide to join them in a profound paradigm shift. Those who advocate for a sustainable way of life must begin to pro-actively direct government policy rather than react against it. If U.S. Greens and Green-sympathizers follow the inspiring path that has been demonstrated in Germany, the result will be such empowerment.

Pete Sorenson is a Democrat, working with the Kerry campaign, and a Lane County Commissioner. Spruce Houser has been involved in many Green-oriented public interest campaigns, including a ballot initiative to assert local democratic