

• Whole Foods pays excellent wages, better than any natural food store in town, has a better health plan, and those shareholders you constantly refer to are the employees. Every employee gets shares as part of their benefits.

• The person who started Whole Foods is still the CEO and he does not give his money to the Republican campaign.

• Whole Foods would bring money into this town not only by employing more people with decent jobs, who need housing, clothing, and other goods (i.e. money spent in the Eugene community), but by getting people who are traveling on 1-5 to drop in and spend some money. Kiva and Sundance are not going to do that since you can drive on to Portland and get a much better selection.

• Whole Foods has also done more for organics than probably any company in the country.

It's probably fun to make Whole Foods a monster and hold our own local natural foods stores up as model stores, but it is not true.

Both the above-mentioned stores have not been updated since the '80s, have very little selection of foods (since they keep kicking out anyone who is not local) and are destined to keep going downhill unless they wake up and smell the coffee.

Yona Riel
Eugene

THE WATER CRISIS

A U.N. report warns that 17 percent of the planet's population (1.1 billion people) lack access to safe drinking water and 40 percent (2.6 billion) lack basic sanitation. This accounts for the loss of 1.6 million lives annually.

Essential to life itself, water is also a key resource of agriculture and manufacturing industries. Serious conflicts over shared water supplies have arisen between neighboring countries. It won't be long before water replaces oil as a root cause of international conflict and terrorism.

Between 70-80 percent of all available water is used to grow animal feedcrops and to

process animal carcasses. Most of America's surface waterways are used as sewers for runoff from feed crops and animal factories.

Concerns for world peace and protection of aquatic habitats are rapidly joining traditional concerns for consumer health and animal welfare as compelling reasons for kicking the meat habit in favor of vegetables, fruits and grains.

Elijah Hennison
Eugene

BUSH'S BOYS

Sometimes all you can do is write a letter to the editor.

Wake up, middle America! He's the boy who cried wolf. Why on earth should we believe him now?

"I'm an uniter, not a divider." The first big lie. He's lied about almost everything. Do you feel safer and secure? Do you understand your Medicare and Medicaid benefits? All of the lies about why we needed to invade Iraq. Mission accomplished, a lie. "But things are getting bet-

ter, trust me." Yeah right! And now he wants to invade Iran because for sure they're making weapons of mass destruction. The same ones Iraq had? We won't invade, we'll just send in our henchman, Israel, to bomb Iran's WMD using our fighter jets and our bunker-busting bombs. Swell. Way to make friends in the Middle East. Who else can we get to hate us in that region? And what will happen to Israel when she no longer serves our purpose?

Does anyone remember how we forced Russia to keep up their military spending until they were broke? They were in Afghanistan also. And now they're broke, no longer a power. Does anyone see a similarity? We borrow from China to stay afloat. He has bankrupt our country, sold us out to the highest bidder, Halliburton. Bush's boys make billions while our boys die by the thousands. We won't be out of Iraq until Halliburton turns a profit and not a minute before. I could go on, but

Philip L. Dietz
Springfield

viewpoint BY PEG MORTON

Report from Colombia

Hope for peace amidst brutality and inequality

I was fortunate to be able to participate in a Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR)/ Global Exchange human rights delegation to Colombia in February of this year. Swooping into Bogotá from the sky, we stayed in a charming small hotel in a middle class neighborhood. Seven thousand feet high and surrounded by mountains, it has the feel of a vibrant, bustling European city.

We were exposed to intensive orientation, and then visited desperately poor, crowded *barrios* high in the mountains above Bogotá and Medellín (the second largest city). We traveled long distances down barely passable dirt roads to isolated villages of small farmers, and we visited various human rights groups. Thus we learned the realities that lie under the surface of this geographically beautiful country, so rich in resources.

We learned of vast inequalities – a small controlling wealthy elite and masses living in abject poverty, of small farmers on fertile land struggling to maintain dignified sustainable lives. They are caught in the middle of the violent struggles between armed groups – the army, the police, the paramilitary (private illegal armed groups reputedly with ties to the military) and a powerful insurgency. And the U.S. is inserting billions of dollars into this mix, mostly to aid the military and the police. Ostensibly, our government is aiding in the "war on drugs" and in the war against the insurgency, but we were told that there is no reduction in coca crops – only their relocation – nor of the insurgency. We were told that both the paramilitary and the insurgency are involved in massive growing of coca and drug-trafficking.

We learned of U.S.-supported wide fumigation of coca and of other crops and people, of food blockades, and of widespread brutal assassinations and massacres, reportedly mainly by the army and the paramilitary. And we were told of what seems to be almost total impunity. Over three million Colombians have been internally displaced. Provided with virtually no services, they live in wretched *barrios* around the cities, forced to beg in the streets and seek jobs as day laborers. And we learned of economic plans for depopulated areas: oil production, mining, a proposed canal just south of Panama, African palm, teak, banana and other plantations ...

We learned too of the much-publicized demobilization of the paramilitary. Men from illiterate, marginalized backgrounds, trained in brutality, are being reinserted into their communities with no re-training. The paramilitary infrastructure, leadership and economic base remain.

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It seems as if there is a rising up of "peace communities," and of human rights groups that support them, committed to neutrality and nonviolence. All the villages and groups we met with expressed this commitment. Each community we visited was organized to work cooperatively for their economic and political rights. Leaders of these organized communities are targeted as guerrillas and under constant threat of assassination. They live with fear and yet they courageously continue.

We participated in a municipal gathering where townspeople courageously confronted the army colonel with their stories of assassinations. We traveled with members of human rights groups who regularly visit and support these communities, where mutual love is evident. We were energized by a movement of young adults in Medellín that studies nonviolent philosophy, supports conscientious objectors, and facilitates creative programs for young people in poor *barrios*, teaching them their rights. We crossed paths with international accompaniers, and more of them are desperately needed. There is

much less violence when international people are present.

We spent three days in La Union, a cluster of homes and farmland in the Peace Community of San José de Apartado. The FOR has been providing international accompaniment there for several years, two young adults at a time, living with them through a brutal machete massacre reportedly by the army a year ago, assassinations, kidnapping of boys into the insurgency, and even threats to their own lives. And also, playing with children in a swimming hole, listening to the quiet strumming of a guitar as the bright stars come out, helping farm baby bananas, eating ripe mangos ... the making of loving friendships. We saw and felt all this.

After a mass that commemorated the massacre a year ago, with a Jesuit priest who gives these peace communities ongoing spiritual support, we met with some of the leaders. We asked them, "How do you keep going, in the face of threats, assassinations and massacres?" One of them answered:

Because the attacks continue, we cannot stop resisting. It would be as if we were forgetting those who have died. We cannot let them be forgotten. We must teach our children as well. We have learned how to make a community, and that helps keep us strong. You don't just think of yourself, but of your neighbors. In the moment when we are not united, when they attack, we will be defeated. Solidarity is not just what we speak about but what we feel, including with those who have gone but are with us in a different way. But yes, four years ago we were much stronger. Now it is very difficult. Without the presence of the FOR, an international presence, we could not continue the resistance.

These people are on the cutting edge of our movement for peace and justice. Let's not forget them. Let's draw them into our weaving.

Peg Morton is a Quaker, a member of the Eugene Friends Meeting, and long-time member of CISCAP, the Committee in Solidarity with the Central American People.