

Remarks for "Stop Wars for Oil Rally", Missoula
Jan 18, 2003 - Anita Doyle, Jeannette Rankin Peace Center

Friends, we are here today because what is unfolding and threatening to unfold in the world compels us to be here. We watch, alternately dumbfounded and horrified at what our president and his advisors appear determined to unleash: nothing less than a catastrophe of misery and terror with implications for national and global security that we could be dealing with for generations to come.

Disregarding international law and subverting democratic discourse, this Administration pushes toward first strike and invasion of Iraq, offering a host of constantly shifting rationales — each transparently *irrational*. The absence of immanent threat makes what we are planning a crime of the highest magnitude.

That is why we are here today. That is why we know cannot sit idly by. The UN predicts as many as 500,000 Iraqi civilian casualties if the U.S. applies the overwhelming force it is readying. How will this make us safer? How many new Al-Qaeda recruits will spring up in neighboring Middle Eastern countries from such a bloodbath?

So, it's clearly not about curbing terrorism, and the discrepancy between how we are dealing with Iraq and how we are dealing with North Korea makes it clear that it's not about weapons for mass destruction. What *is* it about?

One very big thing it's about is that it's about oil. The oil lobby in America has been so successful at buying influence that it not only has almost completely stonewalled Congressional funding for alternative energy for the past 30 years, but it has now positioned its people in the very highest offices of government. The current President and Vice-President of the United States, the National Security Advisor and the White House Chief of Staff are all former oil industry executives.

Unlike North Korea, Iraq has the misfortune of sitting atop one of the world's largest reservoirs of black crude. As Mr. Ron Planting, who heads up the American Petroleum Institute put it: "US military intervention against Iraq would permit the United States to reduce its dependency on foreign oil." Get that? If we intervene against Iraq, their oil is no longer "foreign oil." It's ours.

But that is all background to what I really want to speak about today. What I really want to say is that it would be a mistake to regard what is happening as an external crisis only. This is far more deeply and importantly a crisis in the heart and soul of humanity, and it is playing itself out in each and everyone of us - especially us Americans.

Will we sleepwalk through life making thousands of seemingly inconsequential choices that all add up to more and more drain on the world's resources, making violence in our name all but inevitable? Or will we wake up and step up to the plate and into our power to make a difference?

There are surprising and amazing alliances being forged as we meet the threats that our own government is posing. A remarkable one that appeared just this week on page 5 of the Wall St. Journal is full page ad titled REPUBLICANS IN DISSENT. It was paid for by a couple dozen wealthy contributors to Pres. Bush's campaign, and it said, among other things: "We feel betrayed. We want our money back. We want our country back... A billion bitter enemies will arise out of this war. .. You cannot keep proclaiming peace while preparing for war."

Groups as seemingly disparate as the National Council of Churches and the AFL-CIO are speaking out forcefully and with united voices against this war. In New York recently, 100 members of the clergy and the business community were arrested for engaging in passive, non-violent civil disobedience in front of US headquarters at the UN. In England, workers refused to transport munitions headed for the Gulf, and a member of Parliament called for mass acts of civil disobedience. MoveOn.org, an internet peace action group, when it set out to raise \$58,000 for a full page NY Times ad, ending up raising \$400,000 in 48 hours, in mostly \$30 contributions. As a result it has been able to air radio and TV ad against the war, as well.

A number of U.S. city councils, including Chicago's, have passed resolutions opposing an attack on Iraq. Hundreds of Americans and Europeans are actively planning to go Iraq to act as human shields for the populace, and it is hoped that many more are considering this. Mobilizations for peace are occurring everywhere in the world. Today, hundreds of thousands are gathering like this - there are peace demonstrations going on this week in at least 32 different countries.

Friends, this is completely unprecedented: that such large numbers of human beings in nearly every corner of the globe, in response to the same crisis, should feel impelled to stand up for a vision of the world in which might does not make right, to stand up for alternatives to violence, to stand up and work for peace.

These extraordinary expressions of our shared humanity are more meaningful than it is possible to express or even fully understand. Even if the bombs begin to fall next week, we have not failed. The old way is clearly in its death throes, of this there can be no doubt. That it will continue to wreak havoc as it flails wildly against its end, is also very likely. Probably this will go on for sometime to come.

But, despite the incongruity in the midst of this reactionary darkness, never doubt the power of the faith, the courage and the love that is emerging with such inner force in response to this crisis. It is coming into the world through your hearts and hands. Let us make it our primary work to feed it in everything that we do. Let us nourish it as though the life of this planet depends upon it. Because it does. Now is the time for bold collaborations and courageous experiments in the power of non-violence. Our keen longing for a peaceful and sustainable future requires no less.