

PM: Greed

By Polly Mann

The enormous 2011 military budget of \$733 billion is not helping the U.S. prosper or even maintain well. Look at the facts provided in one of the informative cards of the Inter-Faith Peacemakers of Edina. Here is how the U.S. ranks in the industrialized world: 25th in infant mortality, 37th in overall health care, and 17th in life expectancy. It has the highest rate of childhood poverty and is the only industrialized country without universal health care. The \$170 billion for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan could have provided, for one year: 2.6 million elementary school teachers or 22.3 million Head Start slots for children or three million firefighters.

At the present time there is no country in the world that can seriously threaten the United States militarily. But there is growing enmity against our country for its interference in the internal affairs of other countries. Interference may take the form of military force or, when countries experience natural or man-made disasters, it may take the form of aid. If they receive aid a country's leaders find that there will be a price of some kind to pay—it may be the establishment of a U.S. military base, or it may be a trade or other policy that will have a detrimental effect on their country's economy and independence.

The corporations that determine U.S. policy to a great extent are especially interested in obtaining resources. Those resources could be oil, natural gas, lumber, minerals, and/or cheap labor unhampered by U.S. minimum wage standards and trade unions. They also want markets for U.S. products. At one time in the Philippines it was cheaper to buy chicken imported from the U.S. than raised locally. Countries that had been growing beans and corn for their own local markets are instead now growing flowers or soybeans for corporate interests in the U.S. and elsewhere.



Schwimme, wer schwimmen kann, und wer zu schwach ist, gehe unter

“Whoever can swim does. Who-ever can’t goes under.” Drawing by German artist George Grosz. Published by Der Malik, Berlin, 1923, when the middle class was disappearing and the gulf between rich and poor grew increasingly wide.



Für die Reichen ist die Beute —
Für das Volk die Not der Kriege

“For the rich, the booty. For the people, the misery of war.” Drawing by German artist George Grosz. Published by Der Malik, Berlin, 1923, when people suffered the results of war while profiteers flourished.

These kinds of changes in economies caused huge numbers of people in other countries to leave their homes in search of employment. The North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), signed by President Clinton in 1993, brought devastation to many Mexicans, who for years became immigrants hoping to find work in the United States—the country whose policies contributed to their own country’s economic downfall. In the struggle to survive, so many of these immigrants were forced to become underpaid, unprotected, and exploited workers. However, this July 5, many years later, the New York Times reported that a growing body of evidence suggests Mexicans are staying in Mexico due to a mix of developments, including expanding economic and educational opportunities there and a slowdown here in the United States as our economic situation declines.

But U.S. corporations continue their predatory quests around the world. There are approximately 268 U.S. embassies and consulates worldwide. Many of them have commercial attachés who promote the economic interests of U.S. corporations with little consideration as to their effect upon local economies or on workers in the U.S. The irony is that as the corporations, and the military that protects them, expand beyond the U.S., our ability to live with material comfort and even a sustainable infrastructure is increasingly threatened. Unemployment rates increase and purchasing power declines.

If the United States could envision its role as that of sharing its technology and know-how instead of acting as a wealthy predator feeding on the resources, cheap labor, and land of other nations, I believe it could greatly reduce its military presence and enjoy genuine friendship from the peoples of the world. Instead of creating justifiable anger and resentment, we could share our knowledge and wealth and learn to be a good neighbor.

New 2011 Military Spending Postcards, illustrating the vast disparity between military spending and spending on growing domestic needs, are available from Inter-Faith Peacemakers of Edina in quantities for distribution. Contact Tom White: e-mail tdwhite62@earthlink.net or phone: 952-922-3401. Also, the Minnesota Arms Spending Alternative Project, draws on the National Priorities Project to reveal what Minnesota taxpayers pay for the wars on Iraq and Afghanistan and presents alternative actions that can be taken on a grassroots level. See mnasap.org

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