OMNI OBAMA NEWSLETTER #8, January 28, 2013, COMPILED BY DICK BENNETT FOR A CULTURE OF PEACE.  (#4 July 30, 2011; #5 October 3, 2011; #6 March 7, 2012; #7 May 20, 2012)

My blog:  The War Department and Peace Heroes
http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/

Newsletters:
http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/

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Here is the link to all OMNI topical newsletters:

http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/
Confronting climate change is the greatest challenge and opportunity facing President Obama in his second term.

**Add your name** to the open letter calling for climate leadership.

Friends,

I immediately added my name to [this open letter to President Obama calling for bold climate action](#), and I hope you will too.

**President Obama is one piece of the puzzle when it comes to tackling climate change, but he's a very important piece.** This letter lays out exactly the kind of leadership we need from him in the coming 4 years. It calls for a rejection of the Keystone XL pipeline (the first and maybe simplest test of his seriousness on climate), a strong carbon rule that would address pollution from existing coal plants, and a number of other things which will need his attention right away.

The letter was written by our friends at CREDO, and the full text is below. In these early moments of Obama's second term, it's important that we are vocal about our high expectations. The more people who sign on, the louder our message will be.

**Please add add your name here:** [act.350.org/signup/an-open-letter-to-president-obama/](http://act.350.org/signup/an-open-letter-to-president-obama/)

We'll deliver this letter in bulk a few days before our big action in DC on February 17th, and I hope to have your name alongside mine when we do.

Thanks again, Bill

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Dear President Obama,

It was with great relief and gratitude that we welcomed, at long last, a clarion call in your inaugural address to "respond to the threat of climate change" -- the greatest threat, challenge, and opportunity of our time.

**We thank you for these words, because your words are powerful, and necessary for change. But words are not enough. We need action.**
Mr. President, you are the first leader in our history who will be judged by what you do -- or do not do -- to protect your people from the already-begun ravages and disruptions brought about by fossil fuels.

So far, Mr. President, you are failing in the face of our earth heating up, and the damage accelerating.

Just a few months ago, we witnessed New York and New Jersey swallowed up by our still-rising oceans. Our worsening nationwide drought, after the hottest year on record, is clear evidence that our planet is not healing, but is hurtling toward greater climate disruption.

The simple truth is that you will continue failing in the fight against climate change, as long as you continue an energy policy which treats equally the fuels that are hurting us and those that will save us. **To meet your call on climate change, your "all of the above" energy policy must end.**

Your support for fracking and drilling, coal mines and pipelines, continues to obliterate the progress you could be making with your administration's gas mileage rule, or your investments in renewable energy. Even if you finally issue a carbon pollution rule that addresses existing sources of pollution, it **will mean nothing if you are simultaneously lighting the fuses on carbon bombs by approving the Keystone XL pipeline, Arctic drilling, or fossil fuel export projects.**

You must use the power of your office and our federal lands to stop promoting fossil fuel development, and reject these projects outright.

While we recognize that a majority in the House of Representatives are clearly not on the side of science or sanity, you can and must find a way - within Congress or the power of your office - to end fossil fuel subsidies and giveaways, and put a price on all greenhouse gas pollution, so that fossil fuel executives can no longer get rich from the destabilization of our climate, and so fossil-free energy can thrive. **If Congress remains in the way, you must fight to change Congress.**

You must invest significantly in sustainable sources of energy as part of a plan to rapidly transition our nation from fossil fuels. And these efforts should be coupled with resources to help our cities, states and industries prepare for the damage that climate change is already bringing. (The $50 billion Sandy relief package and the drought's impacts on food prices are just two painful reminders that the cost of inaction is enormous, and untenable.)

Confronting climate change also happens to be our best opportunity to create the broad-based economic revitalization that your policies have largely failed to achieve. This is not simply an empty trope of idealistic environmentalists, it is the truth.

**Mr. President, we are urging you to do as our other Illinois president did when confronted with the great moral issue of his time: to take bold, decisive action to end one great societal ill, changing the economy in the process, and usher in a new era of American freedom, security and prosperity.**

This is the moment. We will support you. But you must lead and take action, starting first and
foremost with your rejection of the presidential permit required by the Keystone XL pipeline, which is your decision and yours alone.

Sincerely,

Becky Bond, Political Director, CREDO
Michael Kieschnick, President and CEO, CREDO
Elijah Zarlin, Senior Campaign Manager, CREDO
Bill McKibben, Co-Founder, 350.org

[Your Name Here - Click to Sign On]

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350.org is building a global movement to solve the climate crisis. Connect with us on Facebook and Twitter, and sign up for email alerts. You can help power our work by getting involved locally, sharing your story, and donating here.

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TOM HAYDEN
THE PEACE AND JUSTICE RESOURCE CENTER

“Winning the Peace Vote in November”

Thursday, August 2, 2012 at 2:04PM | Print Article | Email Article |

This op-ed appeared at The Huffington Post on August 3, 2012.

President Obama and the Democrats need a new peace initiative to increase turnout and voting by pro-peace voters who will make a critical difference in this November’s election.

The president has already recognized the importance of this constituency. In every speech he points to winding down the Iraq War and the Afghanistan quagmire as among his achievements. The savings, he also notes, are billions of tax dollars that should be invested in his mission of rebuilding America.

Why is a further initiative needed, when everyone agrees that the economy and character issues are the most important in voters’ minds?

Because many pro-peace voters have been disillusioned by the president’s unilateral escalation of drone attacks in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen and elsewhere; the lack of
transparency around those drone attacks; secret military interventions in many countries under the banner of counterterrorism; the assertion of executive control over interventions like Libya; the approval of assassinations and cyber-war measures under the sole approval of the president; and the shrinking of civil liberties and Congressional checks and balances in this new era of warfare. A decision on the US and/or Israel attacking Iran may be imminent but who would know? The War Powers Act does not apply unless there is "sustained fighting" by American "ground troops."

In doing what they believe is necessary to protect US interests, the president and many Democrats have deflated their base among pro-peace and progressive voters. To expect that those voters will return to 2008-levels of enthusiasm, or turn out at 2008 levels of participation, is mistaken.

These voters are not undecided between Obama and Romney. They are undecided about whether to vote at all, or to cast a protest vote for the Greens.

If it is not enough to campaign on claims of winding down two wars, what more is needed?

One possibility is for the president to recognize, without having to backtrack, that his policies have opened a new era of warfare that renders the 1973 War Powers Act all but obsolete. He can be an effective Commander-In-Chief while disavowing a return to an Imperial Presidency.

The proposal need not be a detailed blueprint, partly because the subject is complex. But the president can pledge to start a conversation about how to enhance the democratic rule of law, the constitutional role of Congressional oversight and consent, and a broader, re-invigorated place for the media and civil society in the process of deciding whether, when, and for how long America goes to war.

However much Obama extols his Libyan policy, he should remember how close he came to rejection by a bipartisan coalition in the House, and how he was forced to conceal internal administration memos questioning the legality of that policy. He and his team should remember how difficult it was to maintain that the War Powers Act did not apply to Libya, because, they claimed, there were no American ground troops, no "sustained fighting," no "active" exchange of fire, and so on. More Libyas are on the horizon, or perhaps already in the works.

A future-oriented promise of reconsidering and updating the War Powers Act would make
pro-peace voters see a new hope and new agenda for an Obama second term, thus spurring their turnout. There is no downside to such a pledge. If he needs a rationale, Obama can simply say that his policies have opened a new chapter of warfare that requires an expansion of the law. Romney, the media, and the Pentagon are not likely to advocate for the expansion of executive power, a new McCarthyism or a return to the Nixon era.

Some next steps might include:

- A plank in the Democratic platform, although time is short to include one;
- Consensus support from the Congressional Progressive Caucus, who would hold forums to develop the proposal, and emphasize it in their fall campaigns;
- Convening of a task force of civil libertarians and lawyers working on detention and torture issues, to solicit their recommendations;
- Convening a conversation with mainstream media advocates concerned with the erosion of First Amendment protections;
- Convening clergy to increase input on the moral dimensions of the new warfare.

If enough voices declare that a stronger vision of peace is needed, anything can happen in the course of this election. John F. Kennedy's advisers did not want him to announce the Peace Corp in October 1960, but he did so in response to a student movement. JFK also called Coretta Scott King when her husband Martin was in jail. Looking back, those gestures were history-turning events.

A call by this president to expand the War Powers Act and avert any return to the Imperial Presidency might have the same ripple

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EASY CHAIR — >From the September 2012 issue

Compromising Positions By Thomas Frank

HARPER’S MAGAZINE

ARCHIVE / 2012 / SEPTEMBER HTTP://HARPERS.ORG/ARCHIVE/2012/09/COMPROMISING-POSITIONS/

MicroFiche
Let us review. Barack Obama, who was lifted to the presidency four years ago on a great wave of progressive fantasy, likes to say that the national budget is like a family budget: that when times are tough, government has to tighten its belt. This is a Republican simile of very long standing, and the president is a Democrat. He is in fact the leader of the party that is supposed to believe in deficit spending during hard times. Yet Obama has enthusiastically adopted the belt-tightening trope, and all the terrible ideas that go with it. Another thing the president … http://harpers.org/archive/2012/09/compromising-positions/

“The Changeling: The content of Obama’s character”
By David Samuels  http://harpers.org/archive/2012/09/the-changeling-2/
Download Pdf  ARTICLE — From the September 2012 issue of HARPERS MAGAZINE

MicroFicheWho knows but that, on the lower frequencies, he speaks for me, for you, for all of us? An educated, intelligent man, he is the very model of the roommate that every good liberal parent in Park Slope or Santa Monica prays that their son might bring home from college. He is proof of how it is possible to live the good life in America without ceasing to be a good person. Intimately acquainted with ambivalence, he pulled the trigger on Osama bin Laden while bringing our boys home from the deserts of Iraq. The quasi-accidental father of quasi-universal health … http://harpers.org/archive/2012/09/the-changeling-2/

Glenn Greenwald: Oppose assassination and secrecy for unaccountable power
JustForeignPolicy, 7-12-12.  The notion that we should trust the President with secret and unaccountable power to kill runs completely contrary to the spirit of the Constitution.  
http://www.salon.com/2012/07/12/excuses_for_assassination_secrecy/

The Lethal Presidency of Barack Obama
Tom Junod, Esquire Magazine, RSN, July 14, 2012
Junod writes: "Sure, we as a nation have always killed people. A lot of people. [Dick: See books by William Blum and OMNI’s many related Newsletters.] But no president has ever waged war by killing enemies one by one, targeting them individually for execution, wherever they are. The Obama administration has taken pains to tell us, over and over again, that they are careful, scrupulous of our laws, and determined to avoid the loss of collateral, innocent lives. They're careful because when it comes to waging war on individuals, the distinction between war and murder becomes a fine one."

READ MORE

The Book of Obama: From Hope and Change to the Age of Revolt  By Ted Rall

Published by: Seven Stories Press

ABOUT THE BOOK

Synopsis

How did a charismatic young president elected in an atmosphere of optimism and expectation lead the United States to the brink of revolution? From a chance encounter in the early 1980s to the Democratic primaries of 2007-08, syndicated columnist and political cartoonist Ted Rall was one of the first to size up Barack Obama as we know him now: conservative, risk-averse and tonedeaf. In The Book of Obama Rall revisits the rapid rise and dizzying fall of Obama--and the emergence of the Tea Party and Occupy movements--and draws a startling conclusion: We the People weren't lied to. We lied to ourselves, both about Obama and the two-party system. We voted when
The Obama Syndrome: Surrender at Home, War Abroad
by Tariq Ali

A prescient dissection of Obama’s overseas escalation and domestic retreat, fully updated. Written early in 2010 and initially published in September 2010, The Obama Syndrome predicted the Obama administration’s historic midterm defeat. But unlike myriad commentators who have since pinned responsibility for that Democratic Party collapse on the “reform” president’s lack of firm resolve, Ali’s critique located the problem in Obama’s notion of reform itself. Barack Obama campaigned for the presidency by promising to escalate the war in Afghanistan, and his economic team brought the architects of the financial crisis into the White House. Small wonder then that the “War on Terror”—torture in Bagram, occupation in Iraq, appeasement in Israel, and escalation in Pakistan—continues. And that Wall Street and the country’s biggest corporations have all profited at the expense of America’s working class and poor.

Now a thoroughly updated paperback continues the story through the midterms, including a trenchant analysis of the Tea Party, and Obama’s decision to continue with his predecessor’s tax cuts for the rich. Ali asks whether—in the absence of a progressive upheaval from below—US politics is permanently mired in moderate Republicanism. Already called “a comprehensive account” of the problems with Obama (The Huffington Post), this new edition is sure to provide a more “powerful boost to Obama dissenters on the left” (Pittsburgh

Chris Hedges, Criminalizing Dissent

Truthdig, August 13, 2012, RSN

Hedges writes: "Barack Obama's administration has appealed Judge Forrest's temporary injunction and would certainly appeal a permanent injunction. It is a stunning admission by this president that he will do nothing to protect our constitutional rights."

READ  http://readersupportednews.org/opinion2/304-justice/12916-focus-criminalizing-dissent
OBAMA AND ROMNEY: 15 SIMILARITIES
From: John Cutler [mailto:jcutler@windstream.net]
Sent: Sunday, September 02, 2012 6:13 PM

All -- Recently I commented on the fact that I was voting Green this November. And that people keep telling me I'm "wasting" my vote; that I should pick the 'least-awful' major party and just VOTE! Voting for either major party is far WORSE than just "wasting" my vote. http://truth-out.org/opinion/item/11289-closer-than-you-think-top-15-things-romney-and-obama-agree-on

OBAMA WAR CRIMINAL

Also from Cutler. Obama, in addition to trashing parts of the Constitution, is basically an un-indicted war criminal only because the US Gov has excused itself from being bound by international law (treaties that the US helped write). http://truth-out.org/opinion/item/11264-john-cusack-and-jonathan-turley-on-obamas-constitution

What It Means to Be a Democrat, by George McGovern
A call to arms by the former presidential candidate that combines personal anecdotes and cultural critiques to remind liberals of their ideological compass and restore confidence.

George McGovern has been a leading figure of the Democratic Party for more than fifty years. From this true liberal comes a thoughtful examination of what being a Democrat really means. McGovern admonishes current Democratic politicians for losing sight of their ideals as they subscribe to an increasingly centrist policy agenda. Applying his wide-ranging knowledge and expertise on issues ranging from military spending to same-sex marriage to educational reform, he stresses the importance of creating policies we can be proud of. Finally, with 2012 looming, McGovern's *What It Means to Be a Democrat* offers a vision of the Party's future in which ideological coherence