

IN MY OPINION

Caroline Porter

Rally 'round for peace on Sunday afternoon

On Sunday afternoon, February 9, at 2 o'clock at Carver Center, 235 E. Main St., Galesburg, those of us who oppose war with Iraq can gather together to express our anger and fear. We can sign petitions and pick up window signs so our neighbors will know how we feel. We can listen to speakers who have a particular background or experience to share and then we talk about what we can do to stop the madness in Washington, D.C.

I'll try to be brief. A "Time" magazine quote from Nelson Mandela, former South African President on President Bush's plans for war,

"One power, with a President who has no foresight and cannot think properly, is now wanting to plunge the world into a holocaust."

Even Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, says he has, over the last few months, handed President Bush an ever-growing list of risks to using military action in Iraq, including the possibility that Saddam Hussein would launch gas or germ attacks. The still sickened "Gulf War" veterans would tell you that is nothing new. The CIA predicts that an attack on Iraq will increase the possibility of a biological or germ attack on the United States.

Rumsfeld is concerned about neighboring states being attacked, weapons of mass destruction being used against them and our forces, in or out of Iraq. Rumsfeld can picture Hussein using weapons against his own people and blaming it on the United States. The Iraqi President would blow up his own oil fields, depriving post-war Iraq of revenues needed to rebuild the nation. All of these actions have been done before.

And as Rumsfeld points out, the chances of Saddam's using chemical or biological weapons are far greater than in the 1991 Gulf War because the obvious objective today of a U.S. invasion would be to eliminate him.

There are so many reasons not to proceed with plans for war:

- We were devastated by the September 11, 2001 attacks on our country. Because 3,000 people were killed on our soil, is that a reason for us to do the same thing and kill twenty times that many innocent Iraqis?

- Most agree that Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda were responsible for the September 11th attacks and that terrorism cells are located all over the world, even in the United States. The bombers were mainly from Saudi Arabia. So far, there is no connection of al-Qaeda and Iraq. How is attacking Iraq going to advance the war on terrorism? Answer: it is not.

- The prospect of war is already draining critical funds from the needs of United States' schools, states, cities, health care and unemployment assistance. The word often used to describe our current economy is "paralyzed."

- Have you noticed that veterans and military families are opposed to the war? The veterans know the huge cost of war in terms of human life and military families don't want to lose a spouse, sibling or child for a cause so nebulous and unnecessary. Gulf War commander Norman Swartzkopf says there is not enough evidence to merit an attack, that the United Nations inspections are still viable, that he is deeply concerned about the human and financial cost.

- In terms of fighting terrorism, maybe we should concentrate on reforming our FBI, CIA, and immigration services, who apparently all failed their jobs before the September 11th attacks. Just recently, special agents with fake ID's tested security at various airports at our country's borders and none of them were challenged.

The local bartender, however, easily

distinguished which ID's were fake.

- Why pick on Iraq? Our government regularly consorts with countries with dangerous dictators who have weapons of mass destruction - North Korea, China, Pakistan, Iran, to name a few.

- To quote from the resolution against the war by the Chicago City Council: "Whereas, a pre-emptive and unilateral U.S. military

attack would violate international law and our commitments under the U.N. Charter and further isolate the U.S. from the rest of the world—."

- Charlie's son, Joe was sent to the gulf as an Arab language radio commando. Charlie says, "I certainly don't want Joe to get hurt or hurt someone else because of George Bush's ego or because financial backers

won't allow a reasoned, multilateral approach to Iraq. Also I don't want innocent Iraqi women, children and men to die."

Is anyone listening?

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