

engage in is to go to the polls and choose one of the two mediocrities who have already been chosen for us.”⁷ Zinn warns us.

the word “vote” comes from the Latin word for “vow”, a solemn promise.

Yes, we should support one candidate over another for about two minutes, Zinn says, “the amount of time it takes to pull the lever down in the voting booth.” But he advises that the rest of our energy should be spent in “educating, agitating, organizing our fellow citizens in the workplace, in the neighborhood, in the schools” in order to reach a critical mass for changing policy. History records, Zinn concludes, that this is what really makes the difference.

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Notes

1. “The Real Matrix: The Pentagon Invades Your Life,”
http://www.truthout.org/docs_2006/042508M.shtml
“The President's War Request: Local Costs Updated”
<http://www.nationalpriorities.org/costofwar0508>
2. “Clinton Talks About Stepping Up

Effort in Afghanistan,” NY Times, 2/29/08
3. “Question for Barack Obama: Why is Afghanistan the 'Right War'?”

www.counterpunch.org/blackburn03072008.html

4. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hAzBxFai0II>

5. <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/DemocraticDebate/Story?id=4670271&page=3>

6. “On Iran, Iraq, and the Rest of the World”

www.chomsky.info/interviews/20070216.htm

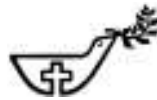
7. “Election Madness”

http://www.truthout.org/docs_2006/022108B.shtml

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MILITARISM AND THE ELECTIONS

Bob Bossie, SCJ, May 12, 2008

This November we will cast our vote for the new Commander in Chief of our militarized society.



- We are in the 18th year of a war against Iraq. These years include the first Gulf war of 1991, 13 years of economic sanctions (which took the lives of over 1 million Iraqis) and the five years of the recent war of aggression which, by any true standard, is a war crime.
- We are in the seventh year of the war against Afghanistan which has claimed the lives of tens of thousands of Afghans for a crime that took the lives of 3000 on

September 11, 2001.

- As the US prepares for yet another war of aggression against Iran, we continue the “War on Terrorism” which reaches into most countries on earth.
- Meanwhile, our society pours trillions of dollars into this enterprise and fills the coffers of the military industrial complex whose tentacles reach into every area of our country and all dimensions of our lives.¹
- All the while, our society reveres the military through film, television, clothing and advertisements.
- Sadly, the vast majority of the peace and faith communities shy away from challenging members of the military about their participation in these war crimes.

Each of the three presidential candidates stress their ability to be the Commander in Chief of our militarized society.

As commander, both “peace” candidates, Clinton and Obama, have committed themselves, not to get out of Iraq as many believe, but to maintain the infrastructure of the US occupation and provide the forces necessary to do so. Experts place that number minimally at 40,000. On his part, John McCain will commit the US to stay in

Iraq as long as it takes to win.

Relative to Afghanistan, Hillary Clinton declared “I will also be a commander in chief who refocuses on winning the war in Afghanistan.”² The Iraq war, Mr. Obama told an audience of supporters in Houston, “distracted us from the fight that needed to be fought in Afghanistan against Al Qaeda. They’re the ones who killed 3,000 Americans.”³ He has said that if elected, he would deploy at least two additional brigades in Afghanistan. Obama failed to mention the tens of thousands of Afghans who have lost their lives from US military actions there.

Regarding Iran, Obama, wants to avoid premature military action, supports sanctions (which, as we learned in Iraq, is war by another name) and said he would seek talks with Iran at the leadership level. McCain, when asked about his position on Iran proceeded to sing “Bomb Iran. Bomb, bomb, bomb,” to the tune of the Beachboys’ tune Barbara Ann.⁴ Clinton was just as bombastic when saying, “We will let the Iranians know, that, yes, an attack on Israel would trigger massive retaliation [a phrase which often means *nuclear* retaliation].”⁵

Well known political commentator Professor Noam Chomsky’s words are

instructive here. He reminds us that US policy toward Iran and Iraq is based upon the *control* of oil resources not, as some believe, access to oil. Even if the US had absolutely no need for oil, says Chomsky, it would still seek control of oil to ensure leverage over oil dependent countries such as China. Control is the primary US policy, he notes. All countries -- even tiny ones with few resources -- must be subservient to the Mafia chief, the US, to prevent them from being an example for others seeking freedom from US control.⁶

OUR VOTE

We must consider these reflections when we come to vote for the commander in chief this November. But even before that, it’s important to consider that the word “vote” comes from the Latin word for “vow”, a solemn promise. Our solemn promise must be, as we say at 8th Day Center, to a world where we live in harmony with one another and with all of creation.

In the context of this solemn promise, noted historian Howard Zinn suggests we not place too much emphasis on the electoral campaign and voting. “[T]he election frenzy..seizes the country every four years because we have all been brought up to believe that voting is crucial in determining our destiny, that the most important act a citizen can