

UUSJ Newsletter - Fall 2011

Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice

An affiliate of the Chicago Area Unitarian Universalist Council

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Chair's Corner:

I begin this column with a note of remembrance. On June 7th of this year Ron Chew, a long time UUSJ activist and Co-Chair of our Task Force on Economic Justice and Homelessness, passed away at the age of 77. Ron had been an activist for peace, labor, economic justice, and other social justice causes throughout his adult life. A Korean War veteran, Ron had worked as an insurance statistician and teacher as his primary careers. Ron was a member of Third Unitarian Church, where a memorial service to celebrate his life was held the last Wednesday of June. Ron is survived by his wife of 49 years, Karla, who serves as UUSJ's Treasurer, as well as children and grandchildren.

UUs for Social Justice has been an affiliate of the Chicago Area UU Council (CAUUC) since the mid 1990s and receives at least half of its annual funding through a grant from CAUUC. There had been discussion by the last CAUUC Board of Directors of letting that organization fade out of existence, but there was sufficient interest in continuing the organization, expressed by representatives of local UU congregations, that a transitional CAUUC Board of Directors was elected to update the CAUUC Mission Statement, By-Laws, and recruit representatives from at least eight Chicago area U.U. congregations to serve on the next CAUUC Board of Directors. That work continues.

We thank our Environmental Task Force for organizing the program for our Summer Quarter UUSJ meeting, which was held at the UU Church of Elgin on Sunday, August 28. It was titled "Well Grounded: Down to Earth Issues Regarding Community Gardens and Native Landscaping". Our

Peace Task Force is organizing the program for the UUSJ annual meeting, which will be held at the Unitarian Church of Evanston on Sunday afternoon, Dec. 4, beginning at 2 p.m. We again thank our Task Force on Economic Justice and Homelessness, who last winter determined that battles over how to address the federal deficit and debt levels would dominate the current U.S. Congress. Their 1) realistic and 2) idealistic alternatives to the Report of the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, presented at our Spring Quarterly Meeting, help shape our thinking and response to the proposals being battled over at various budget deadlines. The next deadlines will likely be when the Super Committee is scheduled (just before Thanksgiving Day) to make its recommendation on how to trim \$1.5 trillion in additional federal deficit over 10 years, and if it agrees to a recommendation, then Congress will have a December 23 deadline for agreeing to or rejecting the recommendation. If there is no recommendation, or if it is not enacted into law, then there will be \$1.5 trillion in across the board budget cuts, apparently to be phased in over the following 10 years.

UUSJ Annual Meeting

Sunday afternoon, December 4, 2011, beginning at 2:00PM at the Unitarian Church of Evanston, 1330 Ridge Avenue, Evanston, IL. The Peace Task force is organizing a program for us which starts at 2:00. The UUSJ Board meeting starts at 3:00PM.

Those across the board budget cuts, which seem the more likely outcome, exempt Social Security, veterans' benefits, federal retirement and health benefits, and many other benefit programs. Medicare cuts would be triggered, but only to health providers and insurance carriers. Congress is also to vote on a balanced budget Amendment to the Constitution. As the proposed Amendment was drafted by right wingers and does not address the federal deficit in a balanced way, it is hard to imagine it gaining the requisite 2/3 vote of approval in each of the House and Senate. For example, that Amendment (contained in House Joint Resolution 1) would require a 3/5 supermajority of each of the House and Senate to approve an increase the federal debt limit, and a 2/3 vote of approval by each of the House and the Senate would be mandated for any tax increase. I expect we will be having an Action Alert in opposition to this Balanced Budget Amendment later this year.

On a personal note, due to overseeing the rehabbing of a new home, packing, moving, and unpacking and settling in to our new home, I have been on a semi-sabbatical from UUSJ since May 1 of this year, which will end in late October. I have continued in my role as Chair of the Board of Trustees, but have been on sabbatical from my involvement with three of our task forces, plus have not been able to serve as UUSJ's Action Alert Administrator during this period, which has lead to fewer Action Alerts being approved and initiated by other members of our task forces. My new home phone number, which also serves as UUSJ's voice mail number, is listed at the end of this column.

Allan Lindrup, Chair
773-595-4921

Economic Justice and Homelessness Task Force Report

I attended a "Democracy Workshop" in Madison Wisconsin in August which was quite enlightening.

I had been wondering when MOVETOAMEND was going to start the

campaign to amend the constitution to say that "Corporations aren't persons". They are made from charters and they are not mentioned in the Constitution. Yet they get 1st amendment Free Speech; 4th amendment Search and seizure rights; 5th amendment Double Jeopardy and Due Process corporate rights; and 14th amendment Due Process and Equal Protection corporate rights .

Here is there plan: To get people all over the US to petition to get a resolution on the ballot in their cities, and towns that states: Then just insert your city town or village

Resolved, the City of Madison, Wisconsin, calls for reclaiming democracy from the corruption effects of undue corporate influence by amending the United States Constitution to establish that:

- 1. Only human beings, not corporations, are endowed with constitutional rights, and**
- 2. Money is not speech, and therefore regulating political contributions and spending is not equivalent to limiting political speech.**

The reason to start with towns and to do the petitioning, rather than just going to the village boards is that we want people to learn about how money from corporations and Superpacs are corrupting our government with lobbying and contributions to campaigns. Some of the latest deeds from the right wing superpacs was contributing 40 million dollars to recall campaigns in Wisconsin state senate races 8 million in Milwaukee suburbs . They do not even have to identify their contributors as long as their campaigns are not "coordinated" with those of the candidates.

Another interesting item about the corporations:

The Economic Policy Institute researched the 100 U.S. corporations that shelled out the most last year in CEO compensation. At 25 of these corporate giants, we found, the bill for chief executive

compensation actually ran higher than the company's entire federal corporate income tax bill.

This contrast shows up starkly in the 2010 ratio between average worker and average CEO compensation. In 2009, we calculate, major corporate CEOs took home 263 times the pay of America's average workers. Last year, this gap leaped to 325-to-1.

Among the nation's top firms, the S&P 500, CEO pay last year averaged \$10,762,304, up 27.8 percent over 2009. Average worker pay in 2010? That finished up at \$33,121, up just 3.3 percent over the year before.

It would be good to legislate that Corporations cannot deduct executive compensation from the taxable income if it is exorbitant. Then the company would have to pay taxes on it. But we could never get the legislatures to pass that because of intense lobbying. Karla Chew, Co-Chair, 708-524-9695 or karlachew@aol.com

UUSJ Environmental Task Force Report

Action Alert: The ETF issued one action alerts opposing the Keystone tar sands pipeline proposed to run from Alberta across an aquifer to the Gulf of Mexico. This would greatly increase the CO2 emissions leading to more extreme weather – tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, droughts, and wildfires – as well as more global warming, sea level rising, and air pollution.

Educational Inserts: (1) We mailed an update of “Getting Rid of Anything” (2) We’re about to mail Mary Alice Masonick’s identifying produce with the highest and lowest pesticide levels and (3) Allan Lindrup suggested Electric Vehicles

Environmental progress Here are reports of many UU churches:

- *Second Unitarian Church* – The church continues work with the Lakeview

Action Coalition environmental committee. They are hoping for positive changes in the city's recycling program.

- *Beverly Unitarian Church* – The IT and hazardous waste recycling went well. The Green Sanctuary Group had a net profit of about \$800. They hosted a used bike collection on September 17th, donating the bikes to Blackstone Bikes, a non-profit in Hyde Park that trains young people to repair bikes for resale and earn their own bike by this work.
- *Unitarian Church of Evanston* – The Green Sanctuary Committee is maintaining a rain garden and a fund for major green projects. Both are in memory of Marjorie Fisher who founded the GS Committee
- *Elgin* – Environmental efforts, include the UUA’s 40/40 effort on water justice issues. The church continues its support of wind energy via electricity bills. They continue to collect IT and electronic items for recycling.

Next meeting is Sunday, October 23, 2011 from 2:30 to 4:30 PM at the Unity Temple, 875 Lake Street, Oak Park. All are welcome. Andrew T. Fisher – Chair 847-492-1832 or fisher.a@sbcglobal.net

UUSJ Peace Task Force Report

The Peace Task Force is planning a program for the UUSJ Annual Meeting. The topic will be either The Cost of War or Nonviolent Communication. We have approved and are sending out an Action Alert urging the USA Secretary of State to set up a special section devoted to peace in the State Department.

Several of our members attended a major peace march in Chicago 10-8-11, but the Task Force did not endorse the march and the members did not carry the UUSJ banner. We agreed that endorsement of an event like a peace march should be done in advance by an overwhelming vote of the Task Force to avoid controversy. The next meeting of the Task Force is

scheduled for: 1-21-12, Saturday, 2 PM at Third Unitarian Church in Chicago. All CAUUC church members and friends are invited to attend . Gene Horcher Chair 773-561-5296 or Horcher@att.net .

UUSJ Immigration Justice Task Force Report

The Immigration Justice Task Force would like to extend an invitation to an interfaith celebration of those congregations who have formally decided to be part of the Immigrant Welcoming Congregation initiative, developed by the Chicago New Sanctuary Coalition. Through this initiative, congregations covenant to:

- Be a welcoming congregation: a public, prophetic voice in support of fair treatment and hospitality toward our immigrant sisters and brothers

- Challenge ourselves to listen deeply and learn continually from all who are affected by the current crisis
- Build relationships of solidarity and mutuality through direct service, action, advocacy, and accompaniment.

While no members of the Task Force are at the point of declaring themselves an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation, several will be working towards that goal through this church year. The interfaith service will be held at Resurrection Covenant Church, 3901 N. Marshfield Ave, Chicago IL (near the corner of Irving Park Rd. and Ashland Ave. Street Parking Available. Public Transportation: near Irving Park brown line, bus #9 and #80) on Sunday, October 23rd from 3 to 5 PM. For more information contact Jenny Dale at jdale@chicagosanctuary.org , 773-293-3680 Janet Holden Co-Chair 708-386-7179 or janetholden@sbcglobal.net .

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