

Looting Our Lives

by Seymour Melman; April 22, 2003

The strong -- perhaps savage -- accusation in the title of this short paper is in response to the post 9-11 marshalling of resources for enlarging the war powers of the U.S. government. All this is in support of a worldwide drive for profit and power, without limit, by the Bush-Cheney state capitalist directorate. A principal "cover story" for these processes is the Guns *and* Butter dogma: the U.S. can afford both without limit.

See for yourself in the following data.

>

TAKEN FROM OUR LIVES Cost of building housing for the 600,000 homeless families in the U.S. [1]	= \$59 billion =	FOR THEIR WARS Army Comanche Helicopter program \$48.1 BN & Navy Joint Standoff Weapon program \$11.2 BN (SAR) [2]
Investment needed to provide 20% of U.S. electricity supply from renewable & clean sources [3]	= \$80 billion =	Navy SSN 774 Virginia Class Submarine program \$71BN & Navy Advanced Amphibious Assault Vehicle program \$8.7BN (SAR) [2]
Annual shortfall to meet federal safe drinking water standards and replace aging facilities [4]	= \$11 billion =	Total cost of the Navy's "Future Surface Combatant" program (SAR) [2]
Additional annual investment needed to improve the condition of U.S. roads and bridges [5]	= \$42 billion =	Navy Trident Sub program \$35 BN & Army Interim Assault Vehicle program \$7 BN (SAR) [2]
"More than twice the net value of the plant and equipment in America's manufacturing industries" [6]	= \$5.3 trillion =	Costs of creating U.S. Nuclear Weapon Overkill Capacity, 1940-96 [7]
Rehabilitation of all unsafe U.S. dams [8]	= \$2 billion =	Tactical Tomahawk Cruise Missile (SAR) [2]
Electrification of 50 miles of main-line railroad [9]	= \$210 million =	One Global Hawk Unmanned Drone (PAC) [2]
Annual cost to provide sanitary water to the 2.4 billion people worldwide [10]	= \$10 billion =	2 Navy CVN6-B Aircraft Carriers (SAR) [2]
3,500 miles of Maglev (magnetic levitation) Train Lines, running at 266 miles per hour [11]	= \$99 billion =	F-22 Raptor Advanced Fighter program, [\$228 million / plane] (SAR) [2]
Research program to develop zero emissions, coal gasification power plants [12]	= \$11 billion =	Amphibious Assault Ship program (SAR) [2]
100 New Natural Gas School Buses to replace high-polluting diesel buses [13]	= \$12.7 million =	One Longbow Apache Helicopter (PAC) [2]

Expand Medicare to everyone in the U.S., saving 18,000 Americans annually from death due to lack of health insurance coverage [14]	= \$41 billion =	C-17A Heavy Airlift Airplane program (SAR) [2]
Portion of "No Child Left Behind Act" left unfunded in 2003 federal budget This program was to help schools in impoverished areas. [15]	= \$ 4 billion =	C-130 Aircraft Avionics Modernization program (SAR) [2]
Annual cost to enroll 1100 Children in Head Start Pre School Programs [16]	= \$7.9 million =	One "Upgraded" Abrams Tank (SAR) [2]
Five years of funding for a global tuberculosis control program [17]	= \$9.1 billion =	E-8C Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System program (SAR) [2]
Fix deteriorating U.S. school buildings [18]	= \$268 billion =	One third of the estimated cost of the Joint Strike Fighter program. [19]
Estimated cost of reopening the 64 general hospitals closed in 2000 [20]	= \$3.1 billion =	CH-47F Cargo Helicopter program cost. (SAR) [2]
Enacted and proposed cuts to New York City Public Libraries, FY 2003 & 2004 [21]	= \$52 - 55 million =	Two MH-60 S Helicopters (PAC) [2]
Cost of salaries for an additional 561,000 nurses, an increase that will be necessary by 2010 [22]	= \$20 billion =	DDG-51 Guided Missile Destroyer program (SAR) [2]

SOURCES

1. AFL-CIO Housing Investment Trust 2002 Annual Report, p2. ;
2. SAR = DoD Selected Acquisition Report Summary Tables September 30, 2002. <http://www.acq.osd.mil/ara/am/sar/2002-SEP-SARSUMTAB.pdf> PAC = DoD Program Acquisition Costs By Weapon System. February 2002. <http://www.dod.mil/comptroller/fy2003budget/fy2003weabook.pdf>
3. "Renewing Where We Live". Union of Concerned Scientists: <http://www.ucsusa.org/publication.cfm?publicationID=349>
4. American Society of Civil Engineers "Report Card for America's Infrastructure", Drinking Water: <http://www.asce.org/reportcard/index.cfm?reaction=factsheet&page=6>
5. Federal Highway Administration "2002 Status of the Nation's Highways, Bridges, and Transit" : <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policy/2002cpr/es8.htm>
6. Seymour Melman, After Capitalism, P 100.
7. Seymour Melman, After Capitalism, P 100.
8. Association Of State Dam Safety Officials, April 16, 2002: <http://www.damsafety.org/layout/subsection.aspx?groupid=15&contentid=85>
9. John E. Ullmann, Engineering estimate.
10. New York Times "Price of Safe Water for All: \$10 Billion and the Will to Provide It" Nov 23, 2000.
11. New York Times, "China Tests German-Made Fast Train; Deal Awarded" January 1, 2003
12. Seymour Melman and Ben Abrams, engineering estimate.
13. Rebecca Sayre, Union Of Concerned Scientists; also http://www.ucsusa.org/clean_vehicles/trucks_and_buses/page.cfm?pageID=244
14. Thomas Bodenheimer, M.D. Physicians for a National Health Program: http://www.pnhp.org/hcinfo/?go=medicare_qa ; Karen Davis, President, The Commonwealth Fund The hidden cost of a fragmented health insurance system: <http://www.pnhp.org/news/archives/001697.php>
15. Office of Congresswoman Tubbs Jones:

http://www.house.gov/apps/list/press/oh11_tubbsjones/pr_030108_education.html

16. Administration for Children & Families, "Head Start Program Fact Sheet", FY 2002:

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/hsb/research/2003.htm>

17. Global Plan to Stop TB Phase 1: 2001 to 2005

http://www.stoptb.org/GPSTB/Introduction_pages_13to22.pdf page 15.

18. NEA estimate: <http://www.modernschools.org/need>

19. George Runner, "California Needs to Compete for Key Military Jet Contract," Los Angeles Times, Nov. 2, 1997.

20. Seymour Melman, engineering estimate; Office of Inspector General, "Hospital Closure 2000"

<http://oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/oei-04-02-00010.pdf>

21. The City Of New York, Summary of Reduction Programs, Fiscal Year 2004 Executive Budget, http://www.nyc.gov/html/omb/pdf/srp4_03.pdf

22. US Dept of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Occupation Projections and Training Data, 2002-3

* Seymour Melman is Professor Emeritus of Industrial Engineering, at Columbia University. His latest book is *After Capitalism: From Managerialism to Workplace Democracy* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2001). A web site offers selected papers by Seymour Melman, including recent, 2002-3, shorter papers on the U.S. war in Iraq. The website includes a complete outline, with bibliography, for a course on War Economy that previously was offered at Columbia University. Research and layout by Benjamin Abrams.