

ECONOMIC CONVERSION: FROM MILITARY ADDICTION TO ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

Charting the course to a new economy for all

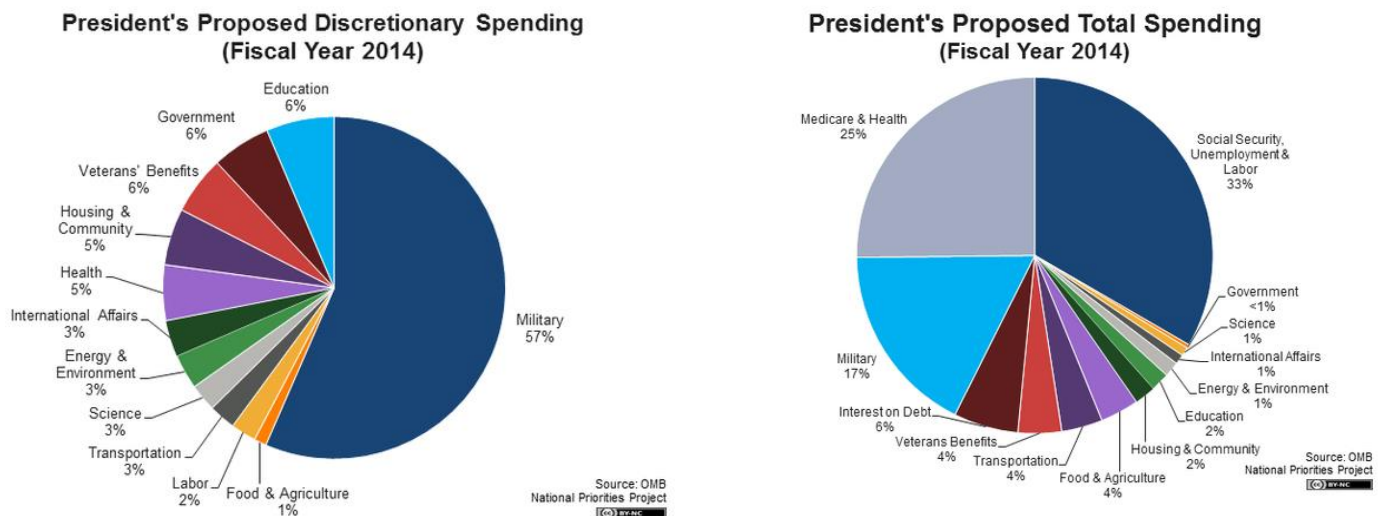
by Michael Eisenscher, National Coordinator, U.S. Labor Against the War (USLAW)

The 2014 National Defense Authorization adopted by Congress at the end of 2013 provides \$552.1 billion for the base military budget (not including the cost of the Afghan War). Even though the deal struck between the Democrats and Republicans increased the amounts allocated to both military and domestic discretionary spending by \$23 billion, this represents a reduction in military spending compared to 2012 and 2013. Spending on the military continues to consume more than half of all discretionary spending, but cuts to military spending are a reality.¹

PART I – THE IMPERATIVE FOR CHANGE

21st Century progressives and peace advocates must go beyond opposition to armed conflicts to address the underlying structural causes and social and economic consequences of militarism. While we continue to call for new budget priorities and moving money from the Pentagon to our communities – as important as those are and will continue to be – *our larger objective must be to demilitarize U.S. foreign policy.* Accomplishing that requires that we demilitarize the economy in whose service that foreign policy operates. The challenge is how to get from our nation's addiction to military spending to a new demilitarized sustainable economy that works for everyone rather than just for those already at the top of the economic ladder.

The domination of our economy by what President Eisenhower appropriately called the military-industrial complex not only drains resources from other urgent human and social needs, it distorts the economy, diverting the creative energies of millions of professional and skilled workers into production for war, thus depriving our economy of their talents and creative potential. As a PERI Institute study has demonstrated, dollar for dollar, spending on the Pentagon



creates fewer jobs than the same funds spent on healthcare, education, clean energy and even tax cuts that fuel consumer spending. And jobs in those other sectors are on average compensated as well as or better than jobs in the military sector.²

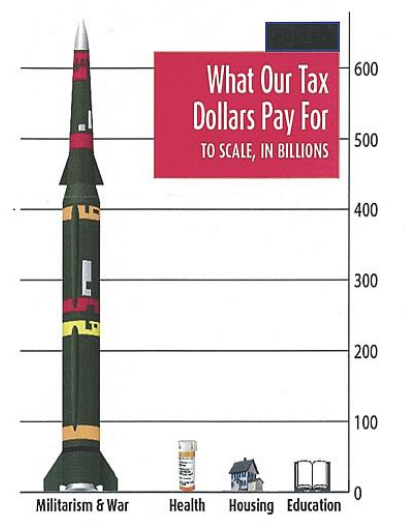
¹ Even if spending remains flat or is adjusted only for inflation, that will represent a reduction from the average 2% real annual increase on which the Pentagon has predicated its procurement and weapons development planning. The consequence will be felt by workers and communities in which military contractors operate. For more, see "[Are the Pentagon budget planners encouraging bad behavior?](#)" by Gordon Adams (Foreign Policy, February 14, 2014).

² See the research by Bob Pollin and Heidi Garrett-Peltier at the Political Economy Research Institute (PERI). The Real News conducted an interview with Pollin ("[Investing in Schools Creates More Than Twice as Many Jobs as Military Spending](#)" (Truth-out.org, June 10, 2013) and his research report, "[The U.S. Employment Effects Of Military And Domestic Spending Priorities: 2011 Update](#)" by Robert Pollin & Heidi Garrett-Peltier (Political Economy Research Institute University of Massachusetts, Amherst

We would have a more dynamic, efficient and productive economy that would create more good jobs if it were freed from the distorting effects of military spending that consume 57% of all discretionary spending (17% of the president's overall budget for 2014).³

But what about the millions of people who today rely for their economic livelihood on jobs in the military-industrial complex? What about the communities that rely on revenue generated by those jobs and the business activities of military contractors that employ those workers? Among the most powerful arguments in support of continued high levels of military spending is that those dollars translate into good jobs that make it possible for millions of working people to have a decent standard of living.

Are these your priorities?



The reality confronting those workers and communities now is that military spending is being cut – and will likely be cut further – in part as a response to the end of the Iraq War and winding down of the Afghan War; but also because the structure of U.S. military forces today is predicated on Cold War realities that no longer hold and the force structure required to address 21st Century realities must be very different. And the present course is simply unsustainable, both economically and environmentally.

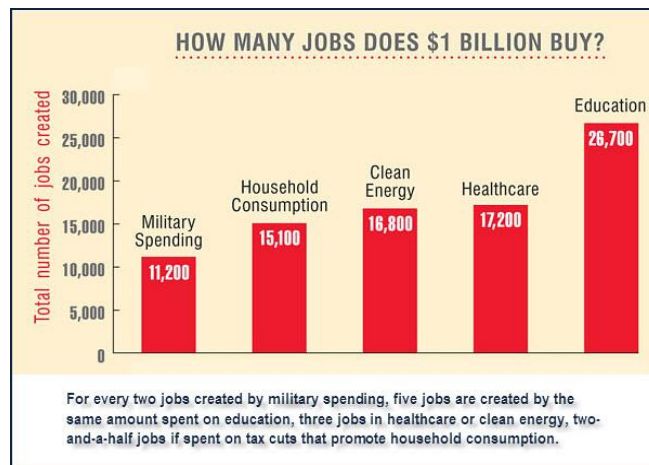
The public has begun to draw the line, making it more difficult to politically justify bloated wasteful Pentagon spending while public services are being cut, public sector jobs are being eliminated, the social safety net is being shredded, and millions are sinking into long term unemployment, economic insecurity and poverty while 95% of 2009-2012 Income gains went to the wealthiest 1%.⁴ Growing economic polarization and social inequality is a prescription for social upheaval.

A Needed Conversation

[U.S. Labor Against the War](#) believes we need to generate a conversation in the labor movement and more broadly among progressive forces about the need to transition from production for the Pentagon to production to meet pressing social needs.

That conversation should include the implications of cuts in military spending for workers in and communities dependent upon the military-industrial-security complex. Failing to do so will doom any effort to make the fundamental changes required to wean our country from its dependence on militarism as its central industrial policy⁵.

In other words, *calling for a smaller military budget brings with it an obligation to address the impact of a reduction in military spending on the workers, their families and communities today dependent on work in that sector. Just as calling for moving from a fossil fueled economy to one that is environmentally sustainable obligates us to address the social and economic*



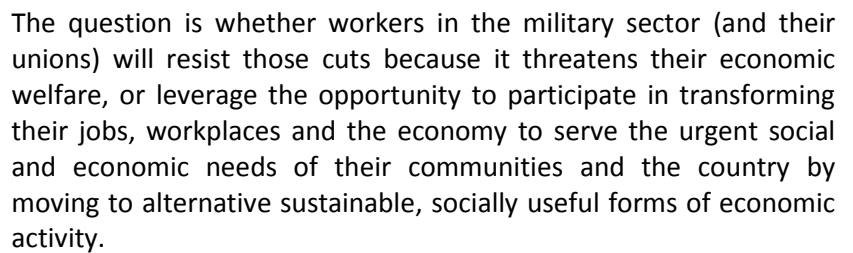
December 2011); also cited in [“Military Spending: A Poor Job Creator”](#) by William Hartung, (Center for International Policy, December 2012)

³ [“The President Proposes 2014 Budget”](#) by the National Priorities Project (which produces many other excellent resources).

⁴ [“Poll: Voters Prefer Military Spending Cuts To Reduce The Deficit”](#) (Think Progress, February 25, 2013) and [“Some 95% of 2009-2012 Income Gains Went to Wealthiest 1%”](#) (Wall St. Journal, September 10, 2013)

⁵ While conservatives reject the idea that the U.S. should have an industrial policy – a government guided strategic effort to encourage the development and growth of the [manufacturing](#) sector of the economy – the fact is that our country has one now that dates back at least to the start of the Cold War. See [“America Has an Industrial Policy – It’s Run by the Military”](#), Real News Network interview of Bob Pollin by Paul Jay, November 13, 2013.

This is an opportunity to engage in a broad national social dialogue about what kind of economy will provide economic security, a decent standard of living, reduce economic inequality, be environmentally and socially sustainable, and reduce the sources of international conflict that lead to militarism and war - for today and for generations to come.



The Challenge: A Just Transition

Just transition, however, calls for more than plans that protect the economic and social interests of military sector workers alone. Those plans should take into account the employment and social needs of the larger community so that those at the bottom of the economic ladder are also provided a path to economic security. *In other words, just transition seeks to raise the standard of living for everyone rather than protecting the standard of living only of those military sector workers whose jobs are impacted by changing national budget priorities.*

During the 2013 AFL-CIO Quadrennial Convention, the labor movement made an important course correction. The convention committed to a process that had already begun in important sectors of the labor movement. Evidence of this shift can be found in the role that the labor movement has played in the struggles for immigrant rights, organization of domestic workers, struggles of fast food workers and Walmart's huge workforce, campaign to raise the minimum wage and for a living wage, struggle for universal affordable healthcare, and efforts to organize port truck drivers and other "independent contractors" who don't fall under the protection of the National Labor Relations Act. To put it simply, the *AFL-CIO declared its intention to speak to and advocate on behalf of the interests not only of union members but of all working people.* To



demonstrate this is more than a rhetorical flourish, for the first time the convention seated representatives of organizations that are not traditional unions on the General Executive Council of the federation.⁷

Consistent with this turn to the entire working class, any movement to promote economic conversion must address not only the economic security of workers in the military sector, whose struggles have earned them relatively decent middle income lifestyles. It must develop strategies for change that speak as well to the economic and social needs of millions of workers who are unemployed, under-employed, working in marginal contingent jobs, without union representation, denied the economic security, social stability and lifestyle benefits achieved by workers in the military sector – whose own standard of living and security is increasingly threatened by layoffs, collective bargaining retreats, and the impact of austerity policies adopted by Congress and imposed by multinational corporations.⁸

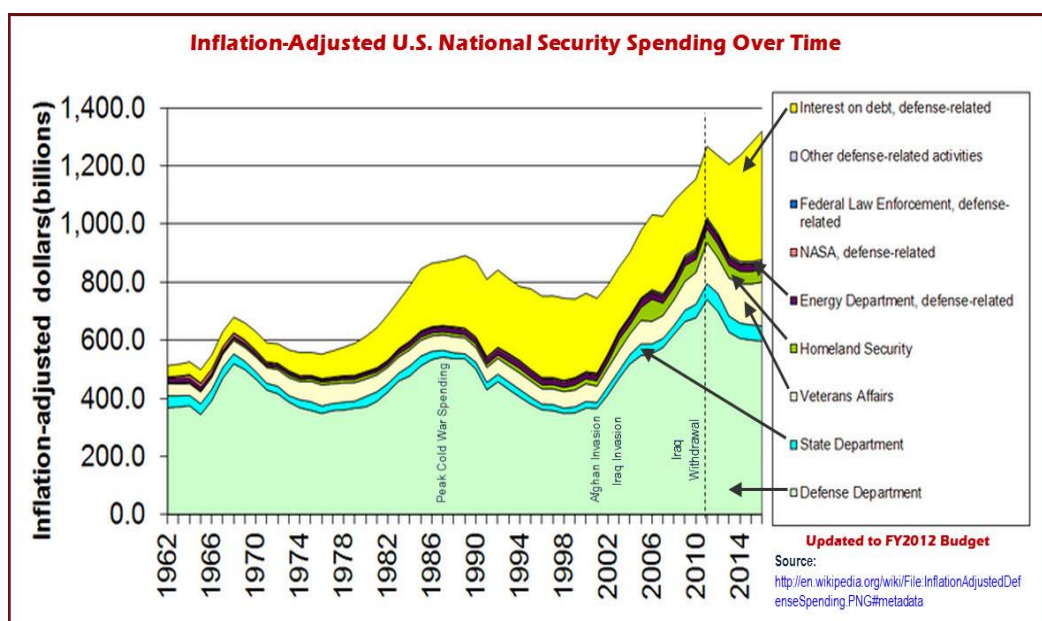
This requires a conversation in the labor movement and in our communities about how we get from a militarized economy to a sustainable new economy in which the skills of military sector workers are refocused on producing other products and services that meet the needs of society rather than the profit objectives of the military-industrial complex, and job opportunities and training for them are also made available to those who have historically been disadvantaged and locked into an intractable state of insecurity, poverty and deprivation.

An Economy for All

This then must be more than a struggle to cut the size of the military budget, while protecting the workers now performing that work. *It must also be a struggle for the creation of a new environmentally sustainable, socially responsible, equitable and just economy – a solidaristic economy that works for all.*

That will require that our country gives up its ambition to be the global hegemon in favor of becoming a reliable global partner, adopting a foreign policy that relies foremost on diplomacy and negotiation rather than military supremacy, and puts a premium on social justice rather than on economic and political subordination and subjugation. This must be a foreign policy in service to the interests of the American people rather than the interests of multinational corporations.

For both union-represented military sector workers and those without representation at the bottom of the economic ladder, the only way to protect and advance their respective interests is by uniting to fight for their common interests. Neither will succeed without the other.



⁷ “[10 Important Initiatives Coming Out of the AFL-CIO National Convention](#)” by Kenneth Quinnell (AFL-CIO Now, September 23, 2013); “[At AFL-CIO Convention, Leaders Ask: What Direction for Labor?](#)” by Mark Vorpahl (Truth-out.org, September 11, 2013); For a more critical perspective, see “[House of Labor Needs Repairs, Not Just New Roommates](#)” by Steve Early (Labor Notes, September 26, 2013).

⁸ People learn social solidarity through engagement and by identifying and reflecting on shared values. The objective is to identify ways to build bridges between those in different social and economic strata – whose interests may at times overlap and at other times collide – to build coalitions between them that transcend narrow interests in pursuit of their common interests. When convinced their common interests take precedence, people will put aside their special or individual interests for the common good.

But military sector workers, though numbering in the millions, represent a distinct minority of all workers, many of whom by virtue of decades of struggle also occupy middle rungs on the economic ladder. These include public sector, skilled and professional workers, many of whom owe their standard of living to their unions and generations of workers whose struggles made that standard of living possible. Today they find themselves the target of austerity measures and relentless political and ideological attacks, and are one or two paychecks away from missed mortgage or rent payments, overdrawn bank accounts, and an increasingly crushing personal debt burden that lead to foreclosure and bankruptcy.

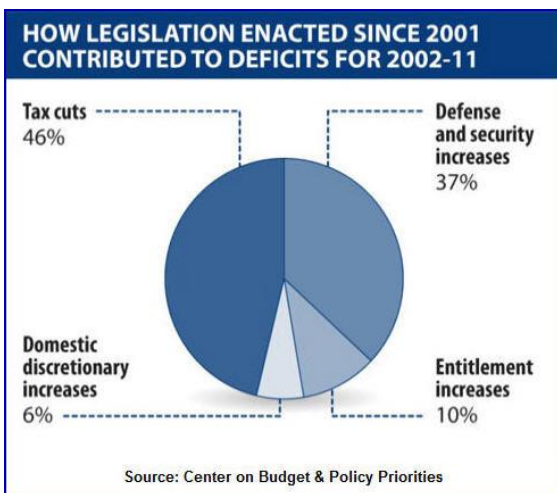
Although they are not directly threatened by Pentagon budget cuts, these workers too have a direct stake in a struggle to achieve a more equitable solidaristic economy. The tax revenue that support public services and the social safety net that keeps people from becoming homeless and destitute will be cut when military sector workers lose their jobs. Personal consumption that contributes to the economic vitality of their communities supports the jobs and incomes of many thousands more than the number of military sector jobs that are directly affected. Their civic participation and voluntary community activities will also suffer in the wake of lost jobs and incomes.

Conversely, a struggle that raises the living standards of those at the bottom, secures the incomes of those in the middle, repairs the social safety net, restores public services, rebuilds public infrastructure and rehabilitates housing will create hundreds of thousands of new jobs, revitalize local economies and increase government revenue.

The struggle for a just transition to a new “solidarity economy” is one that will benefit and can unify many different sectors of society. It is a struggle that cannot be won without all of them becoming involved in its pursuit.

PART II – STEPS ALONG THE PATH TO CHANGE

Just Transition to a New Economy



The aspiration of weaning our economy from its dependence on military production is not new and USLAW is not the only organization thinking along these lines. In [Peace-Action](#) they are having the same conversation. Miriam Pemberton⁹ at the [Institute for Policy Studies](#) has devoted considerable energy to the issue, picking up the baton passed on by [Seymour Melman](#) and [William Winpisinger](#), who advocated for conversion in the 1970s and '80s. [Women's Action for New Directions \(WAND\)](#), [Progressive Democrats of America](#), [American Friends Service Committee](#), [Win Without War](#), and a growing number of organizations operating in the orbit of the [New Priorities Network](#), [Coalition for Human Needs](#) and their allies also share this goal.

In the mid-to-late 1980s, when an end to the Cold War held out the promise of a “peace dividend”, Professor Seymour Melman¹⁰ became the driving intellectual force behind and the most widely recognized

advocate of the concept of economic conversion.

He wrote, “By conversion we mean political, economic and technical measures for ensuring the orderly transformation of labor, machinery and other economic resources now being used for military purposes to alternative civilian uses.”¹¹

⁹ See, for example, [Webinar: Transitioning to a New Economy](#).

¹⁰ Seymour Melman was a professor emeritus of industrial engineering at Columbia University, co-chair of the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE), and founder and chair of the National Commission for Economic Conversion and Disarmament. A collection of articles, books, videos and other materials by and about him can be found at <http://globalmakeover.com/SeymourMelman>. See, for example, *The Permanent War Economy* (Simon & Schuster, 1974) or an article that summarizes its major themes, “[In the Grip of a Permanent War Economy](#)”.

¹¹ “[Planning for Economic Conversion](#)” by Seymour Melman and Lloyd J. Dumas in *A Peace Reader: Essential Readings on War, Justice, Non-violence, and World ...*, Pp. 51-60, edited by Joseph Fahey, Richard Armstrong (Paulist Press, 1992).

He documented how the country's heavy reliance on military production distorted the economy, sapping it of its economic dynamism and efficiency, resulting in a pronounced decline in U.S. economic competitiveness, loss of technological innovation, failure to invest in public infrastructure, dismantling and export of the country's manufacturing base, and a huge infusion of public and private debt.

William Winpisinger¹², mentioned earlier, was the International President of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers from 1977 until his retirement in 1989. His union represents many of the production workers employed in the military-industrial sector.

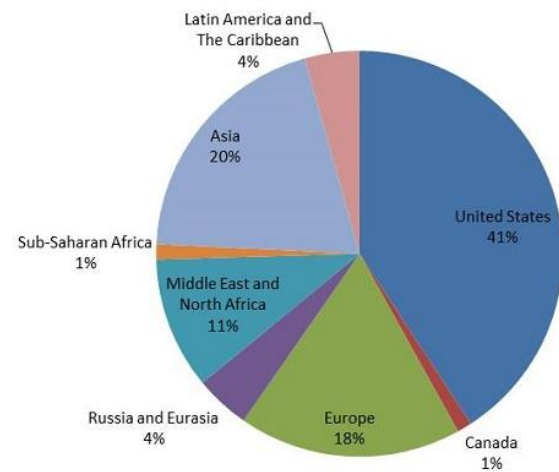
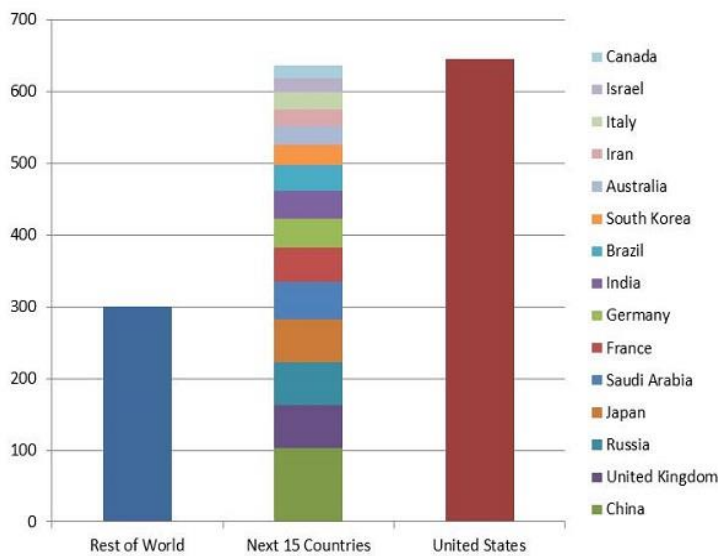
He was not afraid to plow new ground. When he addressed the International Conversion Conference in 1984, he concluded by saying,

"(Economic conversion) permits us to pursue peace and prosperity in both qualitative and quantitative human terms. When and wherever we achieve it, it will bring us that much closer to ending our bondage to the warfare state. We are the hostages and we shall free ourselves." (emphasis in original)¹³

Bill Allwell, then Vice President of United Food and Commercial Workers, followed Winpisinger, emphatically stating,

"The problem is jobs. And my friends, if we ignore the real issue, we risk the continued frustration of this movement to the end the arms race."

Global Military Spending - 2012



["U.S. Defense Spending vs. Global Defense Spending"](#)
by Lacie Heeley (Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation)

In 1992, Lane Kirkland was president of the AFL-CIO. Even though the Cold War defined the international outlook of the federation, the AFL-CIO Executive Council adopted a statement on economic conversion¹⁴ that is just as relevant today as it was then. The council called for conversion planning that provides for:

1. A national commission in which labor, industry and government together plan and coordinate conversion-related activities.
2. Community committees in defense-dependent areas, where labor, management and local leaders can work together to develop conversion plans.

¹² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_W._Winpisinger

¹³ ["Economic Conversion Now"](#) (video), Ernest Urvater, Producer (JTJ Films, 1985). This documentary includes extensive excerpts from a the first International Conference on Economic Conversion, Suzanne Gordon, Director, held at Boston College in 1984.

¹⁴ February 18, 1992, Bal Harbour, Florida, posted at <http://uslaboragainstawar.org/downloads/AFL-CIO%201992%20Resolution%20on%20Economic%20Conversion%20.pdf>

3. In-plant Alternative Use Committees to engage labor and management in joint exploration of civilian market possibilities.
4. Sufficient advance notice of defense procurement cancellations and cutbacks to allow time to develop alternative use plans.
5. Appropriate funds to facilitate the planning process.

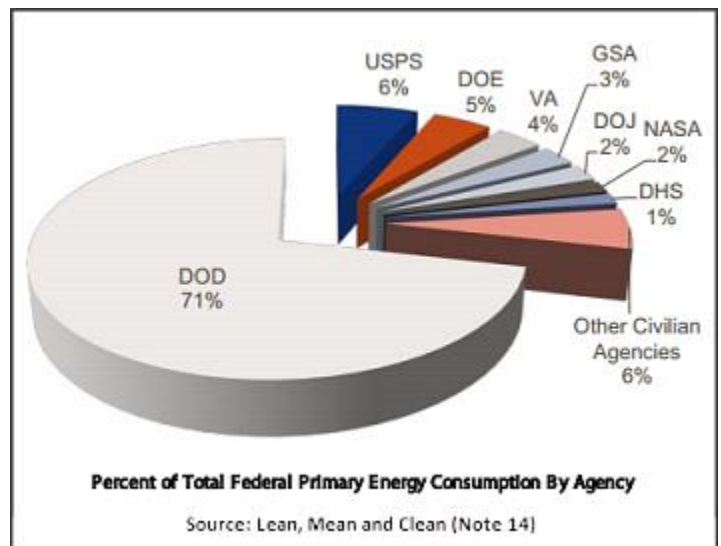
It laid out proposals for business development and assistance to workers. It called for federal funds to affected communities to offset the loss of tax base, and federal impact aid when necessary to hard hit communities. The statement closed with this:

“The AFL-CIO calls upon Congress to enact legislation that provides adequate planning at the national and local level for economic conversion, effective support for business and labor to develop alternative uses of the defense-oriented facilities, and appropriate assistance for workers adversely affected by cuts in military spending. We urge Congress to allocate a significant share of federal budget savings from defense cutbacks for use in economic conversion planning and assistance.”¹⁵

That conference took place in the context of the Cold War. Today we no longer live in a world with two super-powers competing for global hegemony. Our world is more complex. Our economy, if anything, is more deeply embedded in and dependent upon military production, global arms sales and serial wars.

Allies and Partners

But we also have potential partners in today’s environmental movement, seeking to end reliance on fossil fuels and polluting technologies, and to make the transition to sustainable alternatives. *The challenges of demilitarization and breaking our addiction to fossil fuels are remarkably similar and indeed are inextricably intertwined.* On a superficial level alone, the Pentagon is the largest consumer of fossil fuels on the planet, and its single largest polluter.¹⁶

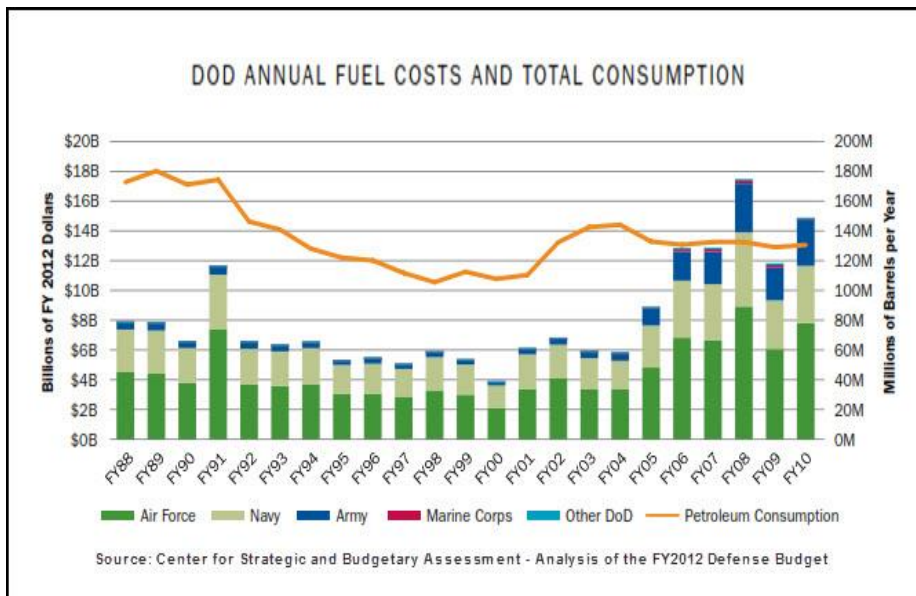


¹⁵ [Statement of the AFL-CIO General Executive Council on Economic Conversion](#), February 18, 1992

¹⁶ The U.S. Department of Defense is the world’s single largest consumer of energy, using more energy in the course of its daily operations than any other private or public organization, as well as more than 100 nations. [Fueling the “Balance”: A Defense Energy Strategy Primer](#) (Brookings Institution, 2009). See also [Lean, Mean and Clean: Energy Innovation and the Department of Defense](#) (Information Technology & Innovation Foundation, 2011).

The Department of Defense has been the country’s single largest consumer of fuel, using about 4.6 billion gallons of fuel each year (12.6 million gallons/day). Military vehicles consume petroleum-based fuels at an extremely high rate: an M-1 Abrams tank can get just over a half mile on a gallon of fuel and uses about 300 gallons during eight hours of operation.] Bradley Fighting Vehicles consume about 1 gallon per mile driven. (<http://costsofwar.org/article/environmental-costs>) The biggest gas-hogs in the Pentagon’s arsenal are the Navy’s non-nuclear aircraft carriers that burn 134 barrels per hour and battleships which consume 68 barrels per hour. At it top speed of 25 knots, the USS Independence consumes 150,000 gallons of fuel a day. At peak thrust, F-15 fighters burn 25 gallons per minute. An F-16 jet on a training mission ignites more fuel in a single hour than the average car owner consumes in two years. [How Fuel Efficient Is the Pentagon: Military’s Oil Addiction](#) (Environmentalists Against War, 2003)

While official accounts put US military usage at 320,000 barrels of oil a day, that does not include fuel consumed by contractors, in leased or private facilities, or in the production of weapons. The US military is a major contributor of carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas that most scientists believe is to blame for climate change. Steve Kretzmann, director of Oil Change International, reports, “The Iraq war was responsible for at least 141 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MMTCO2e) from March 2003 through December 2007. . . . That war emits 60 percent more than that of all countries. . . . <http://www.projectcensored.org/2-us-department-of-defense-is-the-worst-polluter-on-the-planet/>



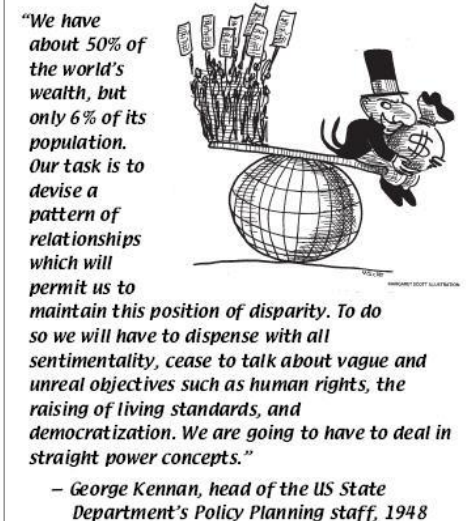
which, if unabated, will not only threaten the security of the U.S. but also the viability of most of the species on the planet.

On the basis of a simple environmental calculus alone, the course our country is on is simply not sustainable. Thus the environmental movement is a natural ally for any effort to curb military spending and find alternative economic activities that are environmentally sustainable and socially responsible.

Other potential allies that in the past have not spoken out about military spending have begun to do so out of recognition that essential public services, protection of the most vulnerable populations, indeed protection of the planet itself, can not be properly funded so long as 57 cents of every discretionary federal tax dollar is siphoned off by the military.¹⁸

Our economy's fossil fuel addiction is a driving force behind our militarized foreign policy. Keeping a large standing army, a global naval fleet, air combat and missile superiority, a massive nuclear arsenal, and more than 1000 overseas military bases is driven by the preoccupation with maintaining control (and keeping others from gaining control) of the sources of oil and gas and the pipelines and sea lanes required to deliver it.¹⁷

In the name of national security, the U.S. military contributes disproportionately to the acceleration of climate change



Energy consumed per active duty military and civilian personal is 35 percent higher than the U.S. energy consumption per capita, which is amongst the highest in the world. While consuming that amount of energy, DoD emitted 73 million metric tons of CO₂, corresponding to over 4 percent of the total emissions in USA. While the average American is paying \$3 per gallon of gasoline, the price can soar to \$42 a gallon for military grade jet fuel delivered through aerial refueling. ([Daily Energy Report](#), January 3, 2011) The [Wall St. Journal reports](#) that fuel drops into Afghanistan can cost as much as \$400/gallon. (by Nathan Hodge, December 6, 2011)

[Source for chart](#): Col. Gregory J. Lengyel, USAF, Department of Defense Energy Strategy: Teaching an Old Dog New Tricks. 21st Century Defense Initiative. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, August, 2007, p. 10.

¹⁷ *Empires of Oil: Corporate Oil in Barbarian Worlds* by Duncan Clarke (Profile Books Ltd., UK, 2007); *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money & Power* by Daniel Yergin (Free Press, December 2008); "American energy independence: the great shake-up" by Thanassis Cambanis (Boston Globe, May 26, 2013); "[The End of the World as You Know It and the Rise of the New Energy World Order](#)" by Michael T. Klare (TomDispatch.com, April 15, 2008); [Fuel on the Fire: Oil and Politics in Occupied Iraq](#) by Greg Muttitt (New Press, 2012).

¹⁸ For example, the [Coalition for Human Needs](#), a coalition of more than 100 major social service and social justice organizations, has for the first time taken a strong stand for cutting the military budget and using those resources to fully fund social programs that have been dramatically cut as a consequence of sequestration and the austerity regime adopted by Congress. ([Coalition for Human Needs Letter to Congress on the Budget](#)) Deborah Weinstein, CHN's Executive Director said, "Replacing the automatic "sequestration" cuts is needed, but more savings should have been sought from the Pentagon, made responsibly and gradually over the next decade." ([Media release: 4/10/13](#))

Futures Commission

The concept of economic conversion has already found a sympathetic audience in Connecticut, a state whose economy is heavily reliant on military contracts, and in the International Association of Machinists, which represents large numbers of military sector members.

On May Day last year, Connecticut State Senator Toni Nathaniel Harp announced the adoption of Public Act 13-19/SB619, a measure that creates a “Futures Commission” of the sort called for by the AFL-CIO in 1992. She said,

“(It) will set up a framework that allows us to convert many of our military related jobs and infrastructure into non-military industries. If we want to take advantage of the green economy that the Obama administration is pushing,” she said, “we need to have the infrastructure and trained workers in our state to do so.”¹⁹

The commission will include members from economic development agencies,

Military Contracts by State Per Capita

state and local governments, the labor movement, educational, science and engineering institutions, business and industry, and peace, social justice, and environmental organizations. Among those appointed to it are Henry Lowendorf from the Greater New Haven Peace Council, a prime mover of the legislation, and Todd Berch, Legislative and Political Coordinator of the CT AFL-CIO, who serves in an ex officio capacity. The commission is to produce a report by December 1, 2014.

Efforts to move similar legislation are underway in other states.

In 2012, seven local IAM lodges submitted a resolution to the IAM convention on economic conversion, calling for the creation of a working committee, with a member from each territory, to examine and consider various proposals for a national Economic Conversion Program, including plans previously put forward by the union. It called on the union to incorporate the recommendations of the committee into the political program and work of the union.

A Democratizing Force

In 1984, Suzanne Gordon, Director of the International Economic Conversion Conference, observed:

“The moment you say convert you have to say convert to what and that immediately begins a democratic conversation about what we should be producing in this society...whose interests that production should serve. Should it serve people in need, the majority of people in society? Or should it serve to advance the profit-margins of multinational corporations. It’s a strategy about empowering people because it gives workers in a factory and community residents and people in need a say, not only in what is produced but how it is produced, what’s the technology, where it’s produced and so-forth. So conversion really is a very critical concept about democracy. Its central core is democracy.”²⁰

Imagine if workers, unions, community organizations, local government and local business leaders collaborated in a community needs assessment as part of the process of developing a plan for economic conversion. What creative energy might that unleash? What ideas might emerge for the development of new products and services, new businesses, rehabilitation

State	Contracts FY13	Population 2012	Per Capita
DC	2400000000	632,323	3795.52855
Virginia	21800000000	8,185,867	2663.12658
Connecticut	8700000000	3,590,347	2423.16411
Maryland	7700000000	5,884,563	1308.50838
Arizona	7800000000	6,553,255	1190.2482
Mississippi	3500000000	2,984,926	1172.55838
Alabama	5600000000	4,822,023	1161.3383
Massachusetts	7600000000	6,646,144	1143.52021
Maine	1500000000	1,329,192	1128.50514
Missouri	6700000000	6,021,988	1,113
Kentucky	4600000000	4,380,415	1050.12881
Alaska	754100000	731,449	1030.9673
Colorado	4300000000	5,187,582	828.90256
Texas	20900000000	26,059,203	802.019924
New Hampshire	1000000000	1,320,718	757.163906
Pennsylvania	7800000000	12,763,536	611.115916
California	22800000000	38,041,430	599.346555
Washington	4000000000	6,897,012	579.961293
Hawaii	785300000	1,392,313	564.025474
Nevada	1500000000	2,758,931	543.688842
Rhode Island	449300000	1,050,292	427.785797
New Jersey	3400000000	8,864,590	383.548478
Georgia	3700000000	9,919,945	372.985939
New Mexico	732900000	2,085,538	351.420113
Florida	6600000000	19,317,568	341.657915
Utah	936500000	2,855,287	327.988045
Kansas	885200000	2,885,905	306.732204
Wisconsin	1700000000	5,726,398	296.870738
South Carolina	1400000000	4,723,723	296.376396
South Dakota	246000000	833,354	295.192679
Ohio	3200000000	11,544,225	277.194874
Minnesota	1400000000	5,379,139	260.2647
Oklahoma	971900000	3,814,820	254.769557
Louisiana	1100000000	4,601,893	239.032068
Vermont	146700000	626,011	234.34093
New York	4500000000	19,570,261	229.940725
Nebraska	418900000	1,855,525	225.758209
Indiana	1400000000	6,537,334	214.154577
Iowa	619000000	3,074,186	201.354115
Michigan	1900000000	9,883,360	192.242314
North Dakota	115200000	699,628	164.658933
Illinois	2100000000	12,875,255	163.103566
North Carolina	1500000000	9,752,073	153.813451
Delaware	116300000	917,092	126.813886
Tennessee	815900000	6,456,243	126.373806
Montana	109200000	1,005,141	108.641474
Wyoming	61700000	576,412	107.041491
Idaho	160200000	1,595,728	100.393049
Oregon	341900000	3,899,353	87.6812128
Arkansas	232200000	2,949,131	78.7350579
West Virginia	104100000	1,855,413	56.1061068

Sources:

<http://www.usaspending.gov>

<http://www.governing.com>

¹⁹ [Media Release, May 1, 2013](#)

²⁰ [“Economic Conversion Now”](#) cited previously in Note 8.

of our cities, programs to train the unemployed and retrain workers whose jobs will be transformed to serve social need rather than the insatiable profit-drive of military contractors. This is not wishful thinking or dreaming the impossible dream.²¹

The military budget is being cut and more cuts are called for under the budget deal reached by Congress.²² This will continue to be contested terrain with all the uncertainties that implies for the future of military spending. There is growing recognition that the course our country has been on is unsustainable and is increasingly destructive not only to the public welfare and the environment, but also to the vitality of the capitalist system. This creates new opportunities for moving this discussion into the center of public discourse. It also suggests that unions that represent military sector members and the communities affected need to have a “Plan B” and cannot assume their jobs will continue to be secure.

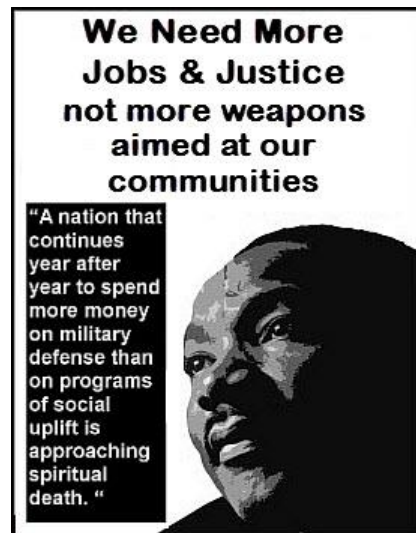
It Takes a Village to Raise a Child, and a Movement to Change an Economy

Economic transformation required to meet society’s social needs is not something that can be accomplished without a movement demanding it. That movement, if it is to be successful, must include workers and unions in the military sector along with other segments of the labor movement in coalition with people and organizations in the peace movement, environmental movement, faith communities, and economic and other social justice struggles. It must be diverse and inclusive.

Operating on their own, these constituencies are unlikely to develop sufficient political power to achieve their own objectives. However, by identifying common interests and working together they can build a movement for change that has the potential to do so.

The first challenge is to open the conversation about the need for and possibility of economic transformation and just transition throughout progressive movements, and identify those who see the need for it and are willing to invest their time and energy in the struggle to accomplish it. This kind of base- and coalition-building will necessarily be an ongoing process over the course of many years. Economic transformation of the sort contemplated here is not something that can be achieved in a few years. It is likely to require a decades-long struggle.

We see this as just the beginning of a conversation. This effort takes the struggle for new priorities to a new level – to a struggle for a demilitarized economy and foreign policy – a struggle for a new, more just, equitable and democratic economy and society. In the process, we will help to redefine the meaning of “national security” – as determined not only by the security of our borders, the size of our military or the power of its arsenal, but also by whether people have real economic and social security – food security, health security, housing security, employment security and security in their old age – and a decent standard of living for all, not just the privileged few.



²¹ [“A real green deal”](#) relates the story of efforts by workers at Lucas Aerospace in the UK to promote alternatives to military production, which was on the decline, through economic conversion. Interviews with some of the shop stewards who led that effort are featured in the video [“Economic Conversion Now”](#) (Note 8). See also, [“Economic Conversation: Conversion & the Labor Movement”](#) by Lance Compa (Labor Research Review, Volume 1, No. 7, 1985, Cornell University Industrial Relations Research School)

²² Of course, there are powerful interests that will not accept those cuts. Military contractors, Pentagon brass, Department of Defense officials, and federal, state and local politicians have launched a full court press to restore the cuts and win further increases in military spending. Trade papers that cover the military-industrial complex make clear that even the modest reductions that have already or are slated to take place have set off alarm bells. Here is a sampling of articles: [“Deals Drop as Pentagon Contractors Bear Cruellest Month”](#); [“Going for Broke: The Budgetary Consequences of Current US Defense Strategy”](#); [“Are the Pentagon budget planners encouraging bad behavior?”](#); [“Acquisition Reform More Important as Program Cuts Expected to Continue Into FY ’15”](#); [“Contractors adjust to belt-tightening at the Pentagon”](#); [“Security Insiders: High Time for Congress to Cave on Closing Military Bases”](#); [“Congress Must Make ‘Unimaginable’ Defense Budget Choices: HASC’s Adam Smith”](#); [“A Cut From 11 to 10 Carriers Would Impact Industrial Base”](#);

Our definition of national security must be aligned with and defined by our values, not by our fears.

This journey, like all others, begins with first steps. Our success or failure will have consequences, not only in the immediate term and near future. It will help to define what our society and world look like for generations to come. It will determine what kind of world we bequeath to our children, grandchildren and generations beyond.

Michael Eisenscher
National Coordinator
U.S. Labor Against the War (USLAW)
nationalcoordinator@uslaboragainstawar.org

<http://uslaboragainstawar.org>
1718 M Street, NW #153, Washington DC 20036
Phone: (510) 263-5303

PART III – NEXT STEPS

Immediate Considerations

Here are some issues to consider in preparing to take the new economy road:

- What is the state of the conversation on economic conversion in your community, constituency or organization?
- Who is engaged in the conversation? Why?
- Who is not yet engaged who should be at the table?
- Who are actual or potential allies in moving this conversation?
- What is the level of dependency of your community, constituency and organization on the military-industrial complex?
- How many workers are involved? What kind of work do they perform?
- Are they represented by a union? Who are its leaders?
- Is their workplace located in or very close to the community where most reside or do they commute from many different communities distant from the workplace?
- What are prospects for moving resolutions calling for just transition to a new sustainable economy in your organization, other organizations, and in local/regional governments?
- What are prospects for state legislation creating a “futures commission” like that in CT that will develop a plan for moving from the state’s/community’s dependence on military contracts for jobs and tax revenue.
- Are there academics, scholars, economists, regional planners or others with special skills willing to support and assist?
- What are the agencies and institutions that have responsibility for economic development in your community/area? What level and form of public input do they encourage/permit?
- What job training/retraining resources are available? What resources are needed? What role can local community colleges and public school adult education programs play in training/retraining for new kinds of work that could be made available as a result of a transition plan?
- What would be needed to encourage affected workers, unions and local business people to be supportive and participate?
- How might a plan for economic development be established that both addresses the economic security concerns of military sector workers and the economic opportunity needs of the broader community of working people, the unemployed and the poor?
- Who are potential allies in the business community?
- Are there existing worker-owned and cooperative businesses in the area? What role might that business form play in an economic development-just transition plan?
- What are next steps?

Suggested Actions

Use responses to the discussion questions above as a guide to develop a plan of action and division of labor. Here are some suggested steps that could be taken:

1. Contact potential organizational allies about their interest, including especially environmental groups and community organizations that are also wrestling with sustainability and employment issues.
2. Identify and reach out to unions whose members are likely to be directly or indirectly impacted to explore their interest and identify their concerns, and where possible, take this conversation to their members.
3. Meet with leaders of area labor councils to secure their support, then with that support approach the State Labor Federation to enlist the leadership's involvement.
4. Network with organizations in other communities pursuing similar objectives.
5. Organize a showing of "[Economic Conversion Now](#)". Discuss what remains relevant today from this 1985 documentary and how changed conditions require new strategies. Show the webinar "[Transitioning to a New Economy](#)" developed by Miriam Pemberton of the Institute of Policy Studies and Judith Leblanc of Peace Action, in collaboration with [Women's Action for New Directions \(WAND\)](#) and the [Women's Legislative Lobby \(WiLL\)](#).
6. Perform a *military sector workplace census*: Set up a task force to begin identifying all the places of employment where work is performed under military contract, i.d. the number and types of jobs they provide, whether there is a union, the type of venue (factory, office, service center or whatever), whether a prime or sub-contractor, etc.
7. Research what forms and the amount of direct and indirect taxpayer subsidies these businesses have received and what conditions and obligations, if any, were attached to those subsidies. If possible, determine how much in tax revenue the work performed under military contract contributes to the local government revenues.
8. Design a community needs assessment/survey: Identify infrastructure in need of rehabilitation or replacement, social and municipal services that are underfunded/understaffed, housing in need of rehabilitation, and other needs identified by community members, public agencies, elected officials, NGOs, faith leaders, social and economic justice organizations and others. Invite organizations concerned with these issues to participate.
9. Meet with staff of your Congressional delegation to find out what help they can provide, and their willingness to support and collaborate to move this work forward.
10. Identify all of the current job training programs, what they offer and who they serve; determine how they are funded.
11. Identify all economic development programs, agencies and organizations, and the names and contact information of their executives and key staff. Find out what their development plans, priorities and projects currently are.
12. Learn about the economic development plans and priorities of state and local government, whether they receive any federal grants related to military sector development or its alternatives, whether there are any studies that have already been done. Learn who the key players are.
13. Explore with supportive elected officials the prospects for applying for a Department of Defense [Office of Economic Adjustment](#) planning grant to underwrite research, professional and technical support, and other costs of developing a transition plan.
14. Consider the advisability of pursuing a "[Futures Commission](#)" like that [in CT](#) and one being developed [in MD](#); meet with state legislators and city/county political leaders to get buy-in and identify potential sponsors for legislation.



15. If not already affiliated with the [New Priorities Network](#), [Jobs-Not-Wars Campaign](#), and [U.S. Labor Against the War \(USLAW\)](#), learn more about them and consider affiliation. Each has websites with substantial resources relevant to any conversion initiative.
16. With respect to all of this work, consult frequently with the [New Priorities Network](#), review resources available on its website, and invite a representative to participate in exploratory discussions. Contact Mike Prokosch, National Coordinator <mikeprokosch@verizon.net>
17. Develop contact with sympathetic students and student organizations, and faculty and staff at nearby colleges and universities and determine whether they can assist with research. Explore whether internships might be created and whether there might be funding for them through those institutions, other funders, or under the terms of an OEA planning grant.

Organizations & Networks Involved in New Economy/Just Transition Work

[American Friends Service Committee](#)

Contact: [Mary Zerkel](#)

[Center for International Policy](#)

Contact: [Bill Hartung](#)

[Institute for Policy Studies](#) (IPS)

Contact: [Miriam Pemberton](#)

[National Priorities Project](#)

Contact: [Jo Comerford](#)

[Peace Action](#)

Contact: [Judith LeBlanc](#)

[U.S. Labor Against the War](#) (USLAW)

Contact: [Michael Eisenscher](#)

[WAND/WILL](#)

Contact: [Susan Shaer](#)

[New Priorities Network](#)

Contact: [Mike Prokosch](#)

[Jobs-Not-Wars Campaign](#)

Contact: [Mary Hladky](#)

Allies

[Coalition on Human Needs](#)

Contact: [Debbie Weinstein](#)

[USAction](#)

Contact: [Jeff Blum](#)

[Win Without War](#)

Contact: [Stephen Miles](#)

Introductory Exercise

Annually over the course of six years, I taught a course in political economy in the Labor Studies Program at Laney College in Oakland. This community college serves thousands of students who are working adults who return to school to upgrade their skills, earn certification in a number of vocational specialties, obtain a degree that will enable them to enroll in a B.A. degree program at a university or four-year college, or simply to enrich their intellectual and cultural lives for the sheer joy of learning.

The course I taught fulfilled general education requirements, so the students were usually a mixture of union members pursuing a Labor Studies Certificate and students with no union background seeking credits toward their two-year community college degree. Students ranged in age from early twenties to as old as late seventies and were racially, ethnically, gender and culturally diverse.

In the first class of each term I conducted this exercise. I asked students to say what they considered was required for a “good economy” – what they believed a good economy would provide. As you might expect, students said secure jobs at wages sufficient to support a family, good schools, healthcare without regard to income or employment, retirement security, affordable housing, a clean environment . . . and more. As they called out each characteristic of a good economy, I wrote them on the board.

When they could think of nothing more (and the board was usually full), I asked why no one said a good economy requires a bigger military, more police and more prisons. (In six years, not a single student ever mentioned any of these.)

We then would discuss why there is such a disconnect between the economy we have and what they consider to be necessary for a good economy.

Try this exercise with fellow union members, coworkers, classmates, neighbors, family, friends, members of community, civic and social justice organizations.

It’s a good way to generate a conversation about what values people consider important and share, and what constitutes a just, equitable and sustainable economy – the new Solidarity Economy they want to create.

