

The War Within the Antiwar Movement

Lenni Brenner, CounterPunch 2006-01-10 12:38

Not Dealing with Zionism is Like a King Kong Movie Without the Ape

There is a split in the antiwar movement. On December 12, United For Peace and Justice, a reluctant cosponsor of the September 24 Washington demo, announced that it "has decided not to coordinate work with ANSWER (Act Now to Stop War & End Racism) again on a national level." Their national committee complained that ANSWER reneged on the organizations' plan for structuring the demo. But beyond proclaiming that "the souring of the political atmosphere is largely due to ANSWER, which, in our experience, consistently substitutes labels ('racist,' 'anti-unity') and mischaracterization of others' views for substantive political debate or problem solving," UFPJ gave us nothing substantial re the coalitions' political differences.

Bill Weinberg's "The Question of International ANSWER, on the War Resisters League website, does give us a detailed critique of some of ANSWER's history. As I'm familiar with forces in both camps, I decided to critique Weinberg's essay, evaluating the rivals' politics. He interviewed Leslie Cagan, UFPJ's national coordinator, so I questioned Leslie. I also queried Brian Becker, ANSWER's prime figure. Thanks to both for taking time to deal with my questions. This commentary doesn't discuss UFPJ's charges re the physical running of the 9/24 event or ANSWER's reply. But both are appended below. As I didn't see the events described, I take no stand on UFPJ's charges. As it happens, I'm generally against Washington demos. Too much time & money goes into transporting the crowd. Hooray for simultaneous nationwide local demos!! I'm never shocked at Washington demo glitches. Many folks arrive late. They can't stay too long because they got to go hundreds of miles back, etc. Problems multiply with bad feeling among the organizers. But, if there is will to unite on both sides, future hassles can be overcome, in Washington & elsewhere.

Hi Bill, I've read "The Question Of International ANSWER," on WRL's website. Let me make some comments, starting with a factual clarification re your prime theme, the relationship of the Workers World Party to ANSWER. WWP was central to ANSWER's creation, immediately post 9/11/01. But there was a 5/04 party split. The minority faction is now the Party for Socialism and Liberation. Some PSL members lead ANSWER. WWP has a new separate national antiwar outfit, Troops Out. Much of your critique deals with what you claim is ANSWER'S attitude towards the 1990s Bosnian war, when WWP described reports of Serb atrocities vs. Muslims as "imperialist lies." I share your disgust at WWP's love affair with Slobodan Milosevic. But ANSWER's Brian Becker tells me that it has never taken a position on him since its establishment. What you say certainly applies to PSL's members when they were in WWP. But as they aren't in it anymore, & ANSWER hasn't taken a position on Milosevic, it is confusing, at the very least, to discuss Milosevic, WWP & ANSWER, all in the same breath. You report Muslims as suspicious of ANSWER because of WWP's pro-Milosevic stand. Indeed I've heard Palestinians argue with WWP re Yugoslavia. Yet you acknowledge that many Muslims work with ANSWER on Iraq & Palestine. Proverbially, you can't be more Catholic than the Pope. But when you question ANSWER's present antiwar legitimacy, while Muslims work with it, aren't you more Islamic than the Imam?

You also write that "In 1956, WWP supported the Soviet invasion of Hungary." I supported the Hungarians & remember their wrongheaded policy. But I remind you that, during the Vietnam peace movement, the CIA, working thru Norman Thomas & the Socialist Party, insisted that we could never get Americans to oppose Washington, unless we denounced Hanoi & Moscow, because, among other crimes, Ho Chi Minh backed Moscow in Hungary. We were told not to work with the <CPUSA.The> CP backed Moscow in Hungary. And one of Ho's first actions on coming to power was to murder Vietnam's leading Trotskyist. But I worked with the National Peace Action Coalition, the largest antiwar group, run by Socialist Workers Party Trotskyists in harness with union leaders, 99 per cent Democrats. NPAC insisted on working with the CP, who had its own peace outfit. And we, Trots, Democrats, unions, etc., united with pro-Russian & pro-Chinese Stalinists, pacifists like WRL, Catholic anarchists, Black nationalists, left Zionists, etc., & organized the biggest demonstrations in US history. Most antiwar folks were Democrats, virtual political illiterates, definitely not equipped with self-starting buttons. The CP was crucial in mobilizing the International Longshore & Warehouse Union & other unions elsewhere. Many Black & student lefts were

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Maoists. Yet, without those supporters of dictators doing practical work, pulling in those Democrats, the movement would never have developed the mass base that it did.

ANSWER & UFPJ SIMILARITIES

I have endless criticisms of WWP & ANSWER. In the 50s, I worked for a left printer, when I walked WWP's founders with the 1st issue of their paper. Splitters from the SWP, they had a picture of Trotsky on their editorial masthead, but dropped it decades ago. Their ideologue, Sam Marcy, declared that it was Blacks here & the colonial masses abroad who were making the revolution. As these were under capitalist attack, it wrong to criticize them. Bush invaded Iraq; who are we to denounce Saddam Hussein? In 1989, WWP wouldn't defend Salman Rushdie vs. Iranian Ayatollah Khomeini's death-fatwa because the 'imperialist media' was for Rushdie. I denounced them as Marxist fundamentalists. Nevertheless, I just shared a 1/7 NY Palestine teach-in platform with WWPers & others. I don't apologize for doing so. "Dogs fight, but they unite against the wolf."

You focused on their Yugoslavian stupidities. They've committed domestic grotesqueries as well. WWP supported Black Democrat David Dinkins for Mayor of New York. However NY's 10/17/89 Newsday ran a piece by Jim Zogby of the Arab American Institute, about a Dinkins' campaign meeting: "Arab-Americans were told that they could not develop a support group for the campaign, could not organize a fundraiser that would be attended by Dinkins and could not be visibly associated with the candidate. The reason given was that it might cost Dinkins Jewish votes." Calling for votes for a Tammany ethno-religious panderer, because Dinkins was Black, was witless. But UFPJ national coordinator Leslie Cagan also "worked on his first mayoral campaign." She & WWP were trying to show how pro-Black they are. Now UFPJ self-certifies its anti-racism by inviting Jesse Jackson & Al Sharpton to rallies. They marched on each side of Cindy Sheehan on 9/24.

Unfortunately, they pull things out of the same Democratic trick bag as Dinkins. Jackson has stopped running for President. But he is still a party wheeler-dealer. But that couldn't happen if Zionist Democrats only remembered his lie about using "Hymietown" to describe NYC. So he showed up in 1992 at the World Jewish Congress: "Zionism by its soundest definition [is] a liberation movement whose object is to secure a state for its people. It must be seen as that, and not with negative connotations attached to it." (Newsday, 7/8/92) Jewish women can't get divorces in Israel. Reformed rabbis can't perform legal marriages in the officially Orthodox state. So much for his verbiage re Zionism liberating Jews, much less Palestinians.

In 2001, Al Sharpton & Israel's NY consulate put together families of Tel Aviv suicide bomb victims & Blacks who lost family in the WTC. NY's 11/30 Forward reported that "Sharpton is expected next month to visit with Jonathan Pollard in his North Carolina prison. Mr. Pollard's wife... said the visit would be sponsored by the Israeli consulate." Zionists want an American Jew, an Israeli spy, let out ASAP. After all guys, he was spying for an ally. The Pentagon insists that he do every second of his sentence. Did Sharpton think that he could help Pollard? Or was he pandering to the US Jewish establishment? I'll do for you. Do for me. He didn't ask the Black community if its for springing Pollard. Ambition motivates both Democrats. Blacks vote <Democrat.However> most don't give penny one to politicians. Jews are ca. 2 per cent of America. But a 1985 American Jewish Congress pamphlet, "The Political Future of American Jews," declared that "While there have been few reliable statistics on the subject_and some reluctance to gather any_the journalistic and anecdotal evidence is overwhelming that more than a majority of Democratic funds on a national level... have come from Jewish sources... Financial contributions are a much more certain and bankable political item than Jewish voting margins in most cases; and Jewish political effectiveness has been less closely tied to voting margins than to the access which has been gained by Jewish contributors to campaigns." Demagogues use prevailing fanaticisms. Jackson & Sharpton meet that dictionary definition. Their party's leaders would swim across oceans of snot, stark naked, chasing after Zionist money. They adapt to it. Black congressional Democratic panderers vote for US weapons to Israel. It legally discriminates vs. Palestinians, automatically generating resistance. Those boomsticks get used. Hustling domestic Zionists for campaign money, by Blacks, Whites or Martians, is a war crime.

EVADING REALITY ISN'T A WINNING STRATEGY

UFPJ'S leaders certainly had no idea of Jackson & Sharpton's cons. But, after hey read this, they must, as all great philosophers say, piss or get off the pot: Do they continue inviting a black who endorsed apartheid's bosom buddies? Do they

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want to march behind anyone whose causes include freeing Israeli spies? What would future invites tell Blacks & Arabs about the sincerity of UFPJ's call for justice for Palestinians? UFPJ takes no electoral positions. Some member organizations are non-profits barred from endorsements. And this avoids fights over candidates. But do we agree that most UFPJ marchers past the 2004 Republican con voted for Kerry? He declared his intention to get out of Iraq by 2008, AKA committing 4 more years of murder. And the Democratic opera star never stopped singing about his political love for Ariel Sharon. When UFPJ didn't denounce Kerry, it didn't fulfill its 1st duty: Peace movements must expose candidates allied to war criminals. UFPJ's 1st unity statement insisted that "U.S. political, economic, and military aid is fueling Israel's rise as an unchallengeable regional military power and sustains Israel's illegal occupation." An 8/23/05 "Summary of UFPJ's Work on Palestine to Date" says that it looks at the "regional context in which the occupation of Iraq is linked to the other major <U.S.-backed> occupation in the region, the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories." It maintains that its strategy is to "focus on ending all forms of U.S. aid_military, political, and economic_that sustain Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories and its denial of equal rights to Palestinians."

But is this true? For decades, Congress appropriates ca. \$3 billion/year in 'aid' to Israel. Democrats overwhelmingly vote to send it to Israel. UFPJ isn't telling people not to vote for those ethno-religious panderers. Gracious no! That would be <partisan.You> correctly say that UFPJ's "hedging on linking the struggles in Palestine and Iraq has served ANSWER well. In the prelude to the March 2004 rally in New York, ANSWER insisted on making an end to the occupation of Palestine a central demand of the demonstration. UFPJ balked, stating that while they agreed it was important to address Palestine, the main purpose of the march was to express broad opposition to the war in Iraq." You point out that "UFPJ's member groups have 'agreed to disagree' on how to achieve peace in the Middle East." Indeed it says that "Member organizations of the Palestine/Israel Just Peace Working Group have differing interpretations of what a just and lasting peace should look like. Therefore, the Palestine/Israel Just Peace Working Group will not endorse a particular solution, such as two states, one state, the Geneva Initiative, the Road Map, etc., at this time, though member groups are free to advocate for their preferred solution." Crucially, UFPJ takes no stand on Palestinian refugees' right to return to pre-1967 Israel, promised by the UN's 1948 Resolution 194. Israel's admission to the organization that authorized its creation was conditioned by its commitment to carry out obligations under UN resolutions, obviously including 194. You write that "some have perceived UFPJ's 'agree-to disagree' position as an equivocation that has rendered the coalition vulnerable on this 'wedge issue.'"

Roll UFPJ's positions together. What do we see? It confines itself to denouncing US tax money going towards the occupation. Tax money going to pre-1967 Israel, which just happens to dominate the West Bank? Silence. That's because it doesn't challenge the existence of a 'Jewish' state in its pre-1967 borders. Except that Zionism legally discriminates against all Jewish women, all non-Orthodox Jews, & all Palestinians within those borders. All the above is illegal in the US, with civil rights laws & separation of religion & state. But the Democratic Party funds Israel & UFPJ doesn't condemn it, much less organize a party opposed to subsidizing all bigot states. UFPJ constantly comes up with excuses for not prioritizing Israel/Palestine. 'We must focus on Iraq,' is the current mantra. But I rise to its defense. They aren't kidding the public. They are only fooling themselves. It is IMPOSSIBLE to deal with Iraq without refining your attitude towards Zionism. Every faction there, pro or anti-US, is against it. Al-Qaada denounces the Crusader-Zionist alliance. In turn, Israel proclaims its support for Bush's wars. Here, Kerry joined Bush in hailing Sharon. Every journal debates the influence of Zionist neo-cons on Bush's policies towards Iraq, Syria & Iran. Zionist Allan Dershowitz, is our foremost torture advocate. Israel partners with Pat Robertson in setting up a Christian "Heritage Center" on the Sea of Galilee, & even Zionists say that the Jewish establishment is, at best, half heartedly resisting the domestic assault on church/state separation. Not dealing forthrightly with Zionism in today's world is like producing a King Kong movie without an ape.

ANTIWAR IDEOLOGIES FROM VIETNAM TO IRAQ

Bill, step back & look at the antiwar movement. Its a spectrum running from Milosevic-fans thru to Pollard's pal, without too much in the way of smarts between them. The real question is what do we do about this, not just what do we do about <ANSWER.Our> range is similar to the layout in the Vietnam era. We went from A to Z, from anarchists to antiwar Zionists. But most were Democrats who stopped marching during the election season so that they could waste time & money electing murderers. Lyndon Johnson was the 1964 'lesser evil.' In 1968 they got "cleanfor Gene" McCarthy, or backed Bobby

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Kennedy. Unknown to them, Bobby wiretapped Martin Luther King. When McCarthy lost in the primaries & Kennedy was assassinated, they raced to the November polls to vote for Hubert Humphrey, Johnson's murderous VP. (McCarthy endorsed him & evolved into a 'Reagan Democrat.')

These awesome minds fell for George McGovern In 1972 . After years of war he wasn't for immediate withdrawal. He would end the war within 90 days of taking office. But until then he would vote for war money so he couldn't be accused of betraying the boys in Vietnam. The peace candidate put ads in Jewish community weeklies calling for more US ships in the Mediterranean. And of course the passionate feminist did what all Democratic presidential candidates do. He sought photo op endorsements by Orthodox rabbis in synagogues that wouldn't even allow women on the same floor as men.

The SWP made antiwar work their top priority. It had only 400 members at the war's start. It realized that they didn't have the forces to convert the huge movement to revolution. Instead, NPAC called for "immediate withdrawal," stayed in the streets in election seasons & endorsed no one. I was a member of their youth group, 1961-1962. I accepted their strategy after I parted with them. But as years went by, I realized that rank & file protesters didn't learn anything about why America went to war. I proposed an educational program, but got nowhere with it. The SWP had become so committed to confining denunciations of Democrats to their party paper, which few read, while working Democratic union hacks in NPAC, that it couldn't shift gears. Sure enough, when Nixon pulled all US troops out, mass demos ended, even tho the US-armed South Vietnamese army continued murdering until Ho finally crushed Washington's puppet.

After Vietnam, ending US patronage for the Shah of Iran was the peace movement's 70s priority. But the SWP couldn't get Democratic anti-Vietnam war union leaders to involve themselves. In the 80s, Socialist Action, a Trotskyist group, became prime demo organizers in the San Francisco Bay area. They got unions to support anti-apartheid parades. But they successfully fought efforts to denounce Israel even after Defense Minister Sharon went with an invading apartheid army into Namibia & reported that "South Africa needed more modern weapons if it is to fight successfully against Soviet-Supplied troops." (NYT 12/14/81) SF's labor council head, their link to the unions, was a Christian fanatic with a passion for Israel as the holy land. Yet, during that struggle, I spoke many times about apartheid's Zionist ally before NY Black forums. Elombe Brath's Patrice Lumumba Coalition made a point of focusing Israel. "I have files on every African country. Israel appeared in all of them. Beyond South Africa, Israel provided Black dictators with military and police trainers." The PLC reached the people. Nationally, 15 per cent of Blacks thought Washington wrongly supported Israel, but 35 per cent of Black New Yorkers felt that way & that sentiment is still out there. These coastal contrasts demonstrate that if systematic education accompanies street demos, we can build a broad movement with serious understanding of politics. That is required to not only end the Iraq war but put US imperialism out of business, worldwide.

Veteran Black activists are a huge hunk of those who you say "have perceived UFPJ's 'agree-to disagree' position on the Palestinian right of return as an equivocation." They correctly insist that apartheid's Zionist ally, a Jewish state excluding gentiles it expelled via massacres, has no more right to exist than apartheid. They are for the Palestinian right of return & a democratic secular state replacing Israel. That is why anti-Zionist ANSWER has more of a Black following than UFPJ. There is an honorable history of Black anti-Zionism. Malcolm X, the Black Panthers, the SWP & Stokely Carmichael took up the banner In the 60s. I worked with Stokely, later known as Kwame Ture, from 1985 to his death in 1998. The great liberator of America's Blacks was a passionate pro-Zionist youth. But by the 60s he realized that Zionism was an avowedly colonialist movement, patronized by British & then American imperialism. Fighting it became a major focus of his anti-imperial politics. He had encyclopedic knowledge of Zionism. Yet he always distinguished between Zionism & Judaism & worked with anti-Zionists Jews, religious or atheist. There are many Black activists like him. They want to work with UFPJ. But until it denounces Israel's crimes like the prophets of old_loudly_they will never trust it.

Now Louis Farrakhan, the Black Democrats & anti-Zionist lefts are loosely united in the Millions More Movement. Farrakhan is friendly to the Neturei Karta, anti-Zionist Orthodox rabbis. Zionism's pit bull, the Anti-Defamation League, denounced the recent MMM rally, because of him. But Bill Clinton endorsed the rally. Jackson & Sharpton posed with Farrakhan. UFPJ wants black respect: Let it propose to ANSWER that they invite Farrakhan to speak, with others of course, against the Iraq war at a united rally. Jackson & Sharpton don't draw blacks to antiwar events. But Farrakhan would bring his Nation of Islam into the peace camp. And UFPJ's Democrats couldn't complain. Their party hugged the MMM. Why can't

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UFPJ put its arms around Farrakhan & ANSWER?

DOES THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT HAVE A DOG IN THIS FIGHT?

Discussing antiwar camp postures towards Israel raises an automatic question. What is its strategy towards the movement? We see it in "The Wrong Answer," a 9/2/05 editorial in NY's Jewish Week: "Whether you support the war in Iraq or see in it disturbing echoes of Vietnam, one thing should be apparent: it is not being fought to serve Israel's interests.... But that hasn't stopped groups on the far left and the far right... from coming together around a canard... it's all Israel's fault.... ANSWER, an antiwar group that once had close ties to the Workers World Party, will stage another planned mass demonstration against the war.... But ANSWER isn't just protesting the war in Iraq.... The slogan for the march: 'End Colonial Occupation from Iraq to Palestine to Haiti.' That dangerous linkage represents a cynical and potentially dangerous effort to exploit legitimate concerns about the war to serve the group's broader and more radical agenda, which includes the demand for an unlimited right of return of Palestinians to Israel, as well as opposition to U.S. 'aggression' against North Korea. There's nothing wrong with expressing strong opposition to the war, but International ANSWER is hijacking those legitimate concerns.... Responsible anti-war groups should shun ANSWER-sponsored events."

Israel can't stop Yanks from opposing America's wars. But it must protect itself from blowback generated by its support for those wars, whether the US wins or loses. Jerusalem wants the split to <widen.Zionism> has a long history of intervention into American progressive causes. In the 60s, when it first encountered serious opposition from Black & left activists, the Zionist establishment set up a puppet peace movement. Slogan: Hiss, boo Vietnam war, but don't talk about Israel. It was a transparent front, mechanically defending Israel. It got nowhere. Since then Israel relies on a more subtle ploy. For many years the Palestinian cause was in harness with the Soviet Union. So the Zionist 'left,' Israel's Mapam party, often in ruling Jerusalem cabinets, took on the task of getting anti-Stalinist lefts like Democratic Socialists of America to protect Israel. In 1981, the late Jack Newfield, Village Voice journalist & DSA star, denounced Alex Cockburn for being "anti-West, which leads him to despise America's ally, Israel." I introduced myself to Alex & got him to challenge Newfield to join him in a march to the Israeli, Soviet & other consulates: Writers against injustice everywhere. I contacted Jack. He thought it a great idea. But then he talked to Mapam's Jo-Ann Mort, head of DSA's Jewish Committee. She laid down the law. "Brenner is for a democratic secular state replacing Israel. We never work with people opposed to the continued existence of the Jewish state." He killed the march.

Looks & sounds familiar? Let me be clear. Leslie is dedicated to peace. But if she is to retain her reputation, she must be able to justify UFPJ's position, now, when she knows that the Israeli ambassador is happy because it refuses to work with ANSWER.

WE CAN'T TELL PEOPLE WHAT WE DON'T KNOW. SO LET'S LEARN.

I've asked Leslie if UFPJ has a position on US money & weapons to Saudi Arabia: "Perhaps we need to develop one?" ANSWER also doesn't say much about Saudia. Now high oil prices, awareness that it was Al-Qaada's breeding ground, & total subjugation of women, make it the most unpopular US ally. Muslims bow 5 times a day in the direction of Mecca. But Wall Street bows once a second towards Saudi Arabia. The antiwar movement should get those wonderful April photos of Bush & Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah holding hands at the Texas ranch & put them up everywhere. The 3 classic goals for progressives are get the people mobilized, organized & educated. Wars, exploitation, oppression make folks begin to think & we can mobilize some in the streets. But the antiwar split proves that we haven't gotten our act together organizationally. The reason? Precisely because neither UFPJ or ANSWER is into serious education.

Liberal & left media get into fist fights over explains as to why Bush invaded Iraq. For some the magic word is oil. Others blame Zionist neo-cons. But when we listen to UFPJ rally orators, we don't get in-depth knowledge of oil or Zionism. It can't explain either to the public it wants to recruit, even as America opens to explanations. People come from all over the world to the WTC site. But are there UFPJ or ANSWER or Troops Out literature tables there? No, no, no.

Everyone agrees that oil is at least a super consideration in Washington's Middle East calculations. Gather up some scholars on the topic, video tape them. & we are in the oil education business.

One democratic secular binational Palestine/Israel vs. the 2 state solution divides the movement. Gather up some scholars, let them debate, & we are in the justice & peace education trade. Sophisticated people like debates. Take the

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dispute to the public. What do the different Zionist & Palestinian factions say about this? They will feel that they are twice as likely to get a rounded picture of the situation in a debate than by listening to one side alone. Once Americans come to think that the best place to find a critical history of both Zionism & the Palestinians is in the antiwar movement, the bipartisan Crusaders, Zionism & Muslim reaction are on their way to defeat.

Historically, American peace movements tend to sin in two opposite directions. They either rant, rave, scream & shout ultra-left slogans, or they make-nice to the Democrats as the lesser of the two imperialist evils. But how many UFPJ rank & filers know the history of Democratic & Republican administrations Middle Eastern policies? How many know howmuch money the parties get from the oil or Zionist lobbies?

Lectures? Debates? It's all education. It's absolutely required. UFPJ should challenge ANSWER to debate their differences instead of walking off in a huff, It was inevitably blamed for splitting us in the face of the enemy, & forced by left opinion to unite with ANSWER on 9/24. ANSWER should organize lectures & debates on Iraqi history & politics, instead of cheering leading for a saintly but faceless 'resistance,' when the public is asking 'whose this guy, what's that party?' So Bill, it comes to this. You have written elsewhere that many activists don't trust you because you attack unity with ANSWER. If you want to be listened to, reverse yourself. Call for unity. Throw more stones at UFPJ. Then, when you criticize ANSWER, folks will be more likely to listen, & they sure need critical evaluations. Most Americans are like unto the people of Nineveh who, as the Great Ham-hater in the Sky told Jonah, when the prophet tried to overthrow that regime, politically "cannot discern between their right hand and their left."

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Ending the War in Iraq, Building a Broad Movement for Peace and Justice, And Our Experience with A.N.S.W.E.R. From the Steering Committee, United for Peace and Justice December 12, 2005

United for Peace and Justice aims to build the broadest, most diverse movement for an immediate and complete end to the U.S. occupation of Iraq. We see this as our immediate priority in the long-term effort to build a durable peace and justice movement that connects domestic and international issues. We are committed to working in a way that makes it possible for the widest array of people to come together around common aims, including communities of color, military families, Iraq war veterans and other veterans, the labor movement, youth, religious community, the women's and lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender movements, professional organizations and community groups. As our coalition moves forward, we try to evaluate our experiences in order to strengthen our efforts and overcome our shortcomings. In recent months, a difficult and controversial aspect of our work has been our engagement with International A.N.S.W.E.R. in co-sponsoring the September 24, 2005 Washington, D.C. Rally and March. Following this experience, and after thorough discussion, the national steering committee of United for Peace and Justice has decided not to coordinate work with ANSWER again on a national level. Here we want to share with all UFPJ member groups our summary of this experience and the decisions we have made as a result.

In spring 2005, based on previous experiences, UFPJ did not believe it would be productive to make coordination with ANSWER a centerpiece of our September 24 efforts. (See memo dated May 23rd, click here: www.unitedforpeace.org/article.php?id=2853. We had a particular vision for this specific action: (1) its central demands would hone in on ending the war in Iraq, thus sending a focused message to the U.S. public and providing an entryway into the antiwar movement for the expanding number of people prepared to turn out for a protest demonstration; and (2) the connections between the Iraq war and Washington's overall empire building, the U.S. support of the illegal occupation of Palestinian land, racist repression and injustice at home would be articulated in accessible and creative ways, not only via rally speakers, but also at an interactive two day peace and justice festival, and throughout a 12 hour concert.

We did not believe ANSWER shared this perspective on the September 24 activities. Therefore we decided that working with them would hinder rather than help in maximizing the breadth and impact of such a demonstration at an urgent political moment. As September 24 came closer and some circumstances changed, we changed our perspective. Regarding the

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weekend in general, the spotlight Hurricane Katrina's aftermath put on racism and class inequities led us to highlight the demand for Funding Full and Just Recovery in the Gulf Coast. Regarding our relations with ANSWER, our concerns grew about the potential confusion of having two totally separate demonstrations in the same city on the same day. We seriously considered the thoughtful concerns expressed by some antiwar groups and activists that an agreement for a joint UFPJ-ANSWER action needed to be worked out.

As a result, after much reflection and without unanimity among us, we reversed our earlier decision. With the help of mediation by U.S. Labor Against the War, we worked out an agreement with ANSWER for joint sponsorship of the September 24 Rally and March (but not other weekend activities). (See the text of the agreement, click here: www.unitedforpeace.org/article.php?id=3161).

There were two positive results of this agreement. First, we avoided the problem of two completely separate demonstrations in Washington, DC on September 24. Second, the rancorous public dispute over the whos, hows and whys of September 24 was largely ended for the important period immediately preceding the action. But there were many negative results as well. First, ANSWER violated the terms of our agreement in ways that substantially and negatively impacted September 24's message and impact:

(1) ANSWER did not honor the agreed-upon time limits for its sections of the pre-march Rally, going more than an hour over in one section. The time was to be evenly divided in 30 minute segments alternating between the two coalitions. Besides the impact in terms of disrespect to other speakers and the attendees in Washington, DC, this meant that the C-SPAN broadcast of the rally presented a one-sided picture of the antiwar movement to the U.S. public. In the extended ANSWER section broadcast on C-SPAN, there was in fact very little focus on, or explanation of, the central demand motivating hundreds of thousands of people to attend the demonstration: U.S. Out of Iraq Now.

(2) ANSWER delayed the start of the March for an hour past the agreed upon time. We learned that morning that while our agreement with ANSWER was to begin the march at 12:30, the permit ANSWER had negotiated with the police had the march starting at 1:30. This led to confusion, which in turn prevented the agreed-upon lead contingent carrying the agreed-upon lead banner ("End the War in Iraq, Bring the Troops Home Now, Justice for Hurricane Victims") from actually leading the March. This diluted the March's message's especially in terms of media images of the March's front rank. It also jeopardized relationships between UFPJ and the representatives of several organizations whom we asked be part of the lead contingent of the March. An antiwar movement still not as strong as we need to be when compared to the tasks before us, in which developing relationships of mutual trust and accountability is of vital importance, can ill afford such short-sighted and narrow-minded practice.

(3) ANSWER did not turn out many volunteers to provide for fundraising, security and media operations for the March and Rally. UFPJ was also short of volunteers, but the much smaller numbers from ANSWER meant that many of the practical burdens of attending to the needs of the crowd fell on UFPJ, while ANSWER concentrated its attention on extending the time their speakers were on the stage. In our view, it was because we had insisted (against ANSWER's objections) that the terms of our agreement be made public; and through the costly expenditure of time and energy to deal with one issue after another in the weeks just before September 24, that additional problems were avoided. However, the interactions required to accomplish this were tremendously difficult and stressful, taking a major human toll on the UFPJ representatives participating in meetings with ANSWER. UFPJ has made our share of mistakes and no doubt some of us may have made intemperate and inappropriate remarks in the heat of political difficulty. We also see that while our agreement with ANSWER did not require us to do so, the fact that we did not inform them about the plans to include speakers during the late afternoon/evening concert might have contributed to the tension. But the souring of the political atmosphere is largely due to ANSWER, which, in our experience, consistently substitutes labels ("racist, "anti-unity") and mischaracterization of others' views for substantive political debate or problem solving, both in written polemics and direct face-to-face interactions.

Beyond all this, the priority given to negotiating and then trying to carry out an agreement with ANSWER hurt rather than helped galvanize the participation of many other groups and individuals in the September 24 activities. In part this is simply a question of where time and resources were directed. But it also stems from the bridges ANSWER has burned over the years with other broader forces in the progressive movement. Many longtime antiwar and social movement activists, and many

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groups only recently embracing mass action against the war -- have had the same kind of negative experiences with ANSWER that we did in the run-up to, and on September 24. Some people, and some UFPJ member groups, believe this stems from ANSWER's political and strategic perspectives. Others attribute the problems to what is often called style of work, or to issues about democracy, decision making and control. Whatever the case on this level, co-sponsorship with ANSWER on September 24 was welcomed by some in the antiwar movement but limited or prevented completely the participation of others. This is not surprising: "unity in the movement" doesn't happen in the abstract. Especially when up-close coordination is involved, unity takes place between specific groups and individuals, and choices to work in close cooperation with certain groups with certain approaches simultaneously means choosing not to work in the same fashion with other groups.

Of course we all dream of a situation where everyone gets together as one cooperative movement family. But we still must deal with politics as they are, not as we wish them to be. Sometimes it is necessary for groups with extremely bitter relations to cooperate for a common aim. But there are many circumstances when effective movement building and the long-range process of developing unity is better served by different groups pursuing different courses, until conditions change or the groups themselves evolve and transform. In terms of UFPJ's relationship with ANSWER, our national steering committee has concluded that the latter path is best for the foreseeable future. We did not have consensus. But by a more than two-thirds supermajority we voted on December 4 not to coordinate work with ANSWER again on a national level. We simultaneously recognized that other settings and situations may be different. We make no recommendations or mandates on this issue to UFPJ member groups in local or constituency-based areas, who will continue to decide whether and/or how much to coordinate efforts with ANSWER based on their own experiences, conditions and judgments. The tasks in front of the anti-Iraq war movement and all of us who are struggling for peace and justice are immense. Yet this is a moment of great opportunity, as popular anger at Bush's wars against people abroad and at home grows, and as an expanding number of organizations, many with massive constituencies among poor, working and oppressed peoples, are willing to consider taking up aggressive protest mobilizations. United for Peace and Justice will redouble our efforts to push forward the antiwar movement and to bring the broadest and most diverse array of people and groups into the struggle for peace and justice.

A.N.S.W.E.R. RESPONDS TO UFPJ: OUR POSITION ON UNITY IN THE ANTIWAR MOVEMENT Friday, December 16, 2005

From A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition Steering Committee Ten weeks after the September 24 demonstration brought more than 300,000 people to Washington, DC in a massive show of strength by a united antiwar movement, the leadership of the United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ) has publicly announced its unilateral intention to effect a long-term split in the antiwar movement. This is the second time in seven months that UFPJ has publicly proclaimed its intention to split the movement, coupled with a false and ugly attack on the A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition. In May 2005, they announced that they would hold a second and separate demonstration in Washington, DC on September 24 rather than work in a united front with A.N.S.W.E.R. Fortunately, the progressive movement overcame that splitting effort, which would have seriously weakened the movement at a critical moment.

It is important to understand the political and organizational motivation behind UFPJ's decision to split the antiwar movement now, as we are becoming increasingly successful. Public opinion has shifted dramatically against the war. More than 100,000 Iraqis have died, thousands upon thousands of U.S. soldiers have either been killed or horribly wounded, and nearly one half trillion dollars has been appropriated for this criminal endeavor. Why then, under these circumstances, would UFPJ's leadership issue a public declaration that it is determined to split the movement? The justifications cited in their December 12 split declaration are embarrassingly petty and astonishingly trivial for a U.S.-based antiwar movement, especially given the gravity of the war itself and the monumental human suffering in the Middle East. They are also an unfortunate collection of half-truths and outright distortions of facts. UFPJ's justification for this split serves really to obfuscate rather than clarify the real motivations of UFPJ's shamefully sectarian decision. This response comes in three parts. First we present our view of the political motives behind these continuous attacks, second is A.N.S.W.E.R.'s perspective on unity and then we follow with a factual rebuttal of the petty and inaccurate charges put forth by UFPJ.

BACKGROUND TO UFPJ'S DECISION

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The UFPJ leadership, from its inception, has been on a relentless path of splitting the movement. In spite of this, there have been three mass united front protests sponsored by A.N.S.W.E.R. and UFPJ: (1) The October 25, 2003 march of 100,000 in Washington; (2) The March 20, 2004 march of 100,000 in New York City and; (3) The September 24 demonstration of more than 300,000 in Washington, DC. In each instance the united front was proposed by A.N.S.W.E.R., initially rejected by UFPJ's leadership and then accepted later by UFPJ's leadership either because of pressure from the movement or because UFPJ's leadership recognized the demonstration would be massive with or without their participation. UFPJ has never once proposed a united front with A.N.S.W.E.R. A.N.S.W.E.R. has also fully mobilized and supported the major demonstrations that UFPJ has called in New York, organizing A.N.S.W.E.R. supporters and people around the country to attend in large numbers.

Seven months ago, UFPJ's leadership announced a similar decision to split the movement. On May 11, A.N.S.W.E.R. issued the call for a September 24 antiwar march on Washington and on the same day, invited UFPJ to form a united front and hold a joint action. On May 23, 2005, in response to A.N.S.W.E.R.'s invitation, UFPJ sent out a sudden and public letter announcing that they were canceling their planned demonstration in New York City and were calling for a separate demonstration on September 24 in Washington, DC, across the street from the White House's Ellipse, where A.N.S.W.E.R. called for protest. It was only under significant pressure from the Arab-American and Muslim community, and people throughout the antiwar movement_including key sectors in labor_that UFPJ's sectarian split scenario was defeated and a hugely successful joint demonstration took place. We encourage all to review the joint position of the National Council of Arab Americans (NCA) and the Muslim American Society Freedom Foundation (MAS): http://www.arab-american.net/Contact/About_Us___/Statements /MAS_NCA/body_mas_nca.html

The NCA and MAS were partners with A.N.S.W.E.R. and other prominent organizations in the September 24 National Coalition, which was the partner with UFPJ for that day. The foundational political issue in the controversy between the two coalitions was over the inclusion of Palestine, the centrality of the Arab-American and Muslim community in the leadership of the movement and the occupation of Haiti. At its essence, the issue was one of an anti-imperialist perspective.

Another underlying and related issue, usually in the background but very vital to strategic perspective, is UFPJ's increasing orientation toward and flirtation with the Democratic Party. In the core of UFPJ's leadership are political parties and organizations that worked tirelessly for John Kerry and the election of Democrats. Their vision of "left-center unity" means to support the Democratic Party. The Democratic Party leadership and almost all of the politicians in Congress cannot possibly embrace an antiwar movement that openly supports the Palestinian people and their right to return to their homeland. The Democratic and Republican party leadership are both fervently committed to Israel and its ongoing suppression of the Palestinians. According to this orientation, working with A.N.S.W.E.R. means it will be impossible to get the Democratic Party or members of Congress "on board."

For our part, the A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition considers it harmful to try to tailor the message of the progressive movement to please the long-awaited but fictional support from the politicians. During the Vietnam war, Congress only cut funding for the war in 1974 -- a year after the last U.S. soldiers left Vietnam. The leadership of the Democratic Party and the Republic Party are unflinching supporters of the war machine and they share the strategic designs for U.S. global domination through the agencies of the Pentagon, IMF, World Bank and other auxiliary instruments like the WTO, the FTAA, and NAFTA.

During the first Iraq war of 1990-1991, some of the same leadership forces now in UFPJ chose to create a second antiwar coalition and insisted on marching under the banner "Economic Sanctions Not War" while some of those who are today in the leadership of A.N.S.W.E.R. argued that economic sanctions were war_and a weapon of mass destruction at that. We contended that economic sanctions against Iraq would result in a form of genocide against the Iraqi people and that the only correct position for the U.S. antiwar movement was to demand, "no war against Iraq." Many of the current UFPJ leaders argued then that if the movement refused to call for economic sanctions, it would be smeared as an objective apologist for Saddam Hussein's government. Likewise, a large contingent of representatives in Congress voted in favor of economic sanctions rather than war. Ultimately, Congress voted for war and sanctions that deprived people of clean drinking water, food, and access to medicine. The economic sanctions ultimately took the lives of more than one million Iraqis, most of them children under the age of five, according to the UN's own statistics. Much later, witnessing the destructiveness of the

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sanctions they had publicly advocated, these same organizations and leaders now with UFPJ switched, and began to take a position against sanctions.

The question for the antiwar movement is this: are we building a movement that comprehensively challenges imperialism or are we opposed only to certain tactics employed by imperialism such as overt, unilateral military invasion? And, are people and communities most affected by imperial wars mere objects for this movement, or are they real partners in it? What is the message we are bringing to the people of the United States? This is critical in our opinion because we believe that the people alone are the source of change and transformation. The politicians are in the back pocket of Corporate America and the Military-Industrial Complex. Building genuine solidarity with Iraqi, Palestinian and Arab people—the central targets of the current war for Empire—is not simply an exercise for the already radicalized community. It is rather a life and death need of the movement to win the population away from the xenophobia, national chauvinism and racism that is promoted by the government. These are the central methods they employ to rally support for their war for empire—or as it's commonly known, "the war on terrorism." Inside the UFPJ leadership and in its publications there is great excitement about John Murtha's disaffection with the war. We too welcome it as a sign that there is a small but increasing division in the camp of the war makers. Murtha is part of the camp that believes the armed insurgency cannot be militarily conquered. The split, however, is over tactics and not over the strategic goal of U.S. domination over the Middle East and its peoples. UFPJ's leadership sent out a sample letter to the antiwar movement that calls on people to write a letter to Congress that reads: "Instead of scorn, Murtha deserves praise and support for his courageous leadership. Isn't that what we want from our elected officials?"

Remember this for a man who stated "I supported Reagan all through the Central American thing" at his press conference announcing his call for "redeployment" from Iraq. Two hundred thousand Guatemalans, 40,000 Nicaraguans and 70,000 Salvadorans died during Reagan's "Central America thing." So what is Murtha actually proposing as he breaks ranks with Bush over the war that he previously supported? Murtha wants to "redeploy U.S. troops," "create a quick reaction force in the region," and "an over-the-horizon presence of Marines." (*) Murtha has not adopted an antiwar position. He wants to redeploy militarily to strengthen the hand of U.S. imperialism in the Middle East because the current path is not working. Fewer U.S. soldiers will be in harm's way, which of course is a welcome development, but Murtha and the other disaffected elements in the Pentagon's high command want to continue to strategically station air power and the Marines for rapid strikes in the Arab world. If the slogan "Bring the Troops Home" ends up meaning redeployment and more surgical losses its antiwar meaning entirely. Murtha's redeployment call is on par with Ariel Sharon's removal of troops and settlers from Gaza. It is fundamentally a military action to strengthen the military and political position of the occupiers, in response to the pressures of the resistance. Why is it that UFPJ's leadership can build a gushing "united front" with imperialist politicians but not the A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition, which has organized hundreds of thousands of people to promote genuine peace and self-determination for all peoples in the Arab world and the Middle East?

We believe that the destructive if the progressive forces delete its own anti-imperialist or anti-racist politics so that the movement becomes "acceptable" to imperialist decision-makers.

A.N.S.W.E.R.'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE STRUGGLE FOR UNITY

The A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition regards the united front that was formed at its initiative to have been remarkably successful. It was a powerful showing of a growing movement. The success of the day is not measured by the inconvenience or unpleasantness of having to work with those who do not share the same political views or particularities of personality. The success of the day is based on the ability to do what is necessary to bring together the largest and most inclusive showing possible of antiwar sentiment on a principled basis. There are many significant, and many less than significant, controversies in the movement. That is natural and inevitable. There are also weaknesses and mistakes. Open discussion, evaluation and criticism (even sharp criticism) are necessary to overcome our weaknesses and learn from our mistakes. A.N.S.W.E.R., like all other forces, has its share of shortcomings in addition to its strengths and its accomplishments. We are also aware that the A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition is routinely singled out for attack from right-wingers in the media, as well as an insignificant and small coterie of liberal literati who sit comfortably on the sidelines slinging mud and defaming A.N.S.W.E.R. as hundreds and thousands of real activists go out every day passing out leaflets, posturing, meeting with new people and conducting all the other unseen tasks that are necessary for the functioning of a truly mass movement. Those with access to media outlets and

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significant funds raise this same chorus of inconsolable attack with every major action that A.N.S.W.E.R. organizes or helps organize. It is a predictable pattern. If we organize an event of 100,000 or more the chorus starts to sing simultaneously, with great excitement, from exactly the same worn out hymnal. Conservative and liberal self-appointed elites use the same old, tired, factually inaccurate red-baiting caricatures to slander the movement we have all been working day and night to build during the past four years. We do not normally respond to those routine attacks because it is a diversion from building the real movement. Besides, it is a cottage industry that feeds off itself. It is a source of embarrassment for the A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition that the antiwar movement in the most privileged country, led by a government whose actions have created so much suffering and consequent anger from people around the world, is unable to come together to shoulder the responsibility placed on us. Splitting the peace movement on an unprincipled and sectarian basis in the U.S. is an act that will enter history shrouded with the indignation of the victims of empire and war.

Abrogating our responsibility to unity is an option the A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition will not take. We will never abandon those struggling against the bombs and jet fighters made here in the United States. It is unfortunate that we have had to divert energies to respond to this effort to split the movement, but we are also confident that the many hundreds of thousands of antiwar activists in the country will choose the path of unity—to stand together regardless of whether a small leadership grouping directs people to be divided. There will be Spring demonstrations against war and racism including the March 18-20 days of action (www.pephost.org/march18-20). We still believe that unity is the best way to proceed and that the most important work is to bring as many forces as possible together based on the inclusion, not exclusion, of targeted communities.

In the weeks and months ahead, the A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition, working with allies in oppressed and targeted communities, with young people in the high schools and universities and in the workplace, and with all those who are fighting for peace and justice, will seek to build the broadest, most militant mass movement to stop the war in Iraq and the war against working class communities at home. Different groups may have different slogans on their banners, but they should try to overcome the forces of division so as to march shoulder to shoulder against the real enemy.

RESPONDING TO FALSE ALLEGATIONS

For the record, we must also tell the truth in answer to the shameful distortions presented by UFPJ about what actually happened before and during September 24. These issues, as outlined in UFPJ's public letter of December 12, are petty on their face, but the presentation is also disingenuous and false. It is noteworthy that the December 12 letter about the "problems" on September 24 never mentions that more than 300,000 people came together, surrounded the White House in a show of united protest, and confronted the war makers with the largest explicitly antiwar protest since the start of the criminal imperialist adventure. People from all communities marched together, rather than be separated, in a magnificent demonstration of human solidarity and opposition to the war in Iraq. One would think from the UFPJ letter that September 24 was a dismal event, and that the question of organizational problems was most important for the movement. Given the massive success of the antiwar movement, we are embarrassed to even have to address these false and petty issues.

Since the UFPJ's allegations consist of half-truths and distortions, we are obliged to respond with the facts. There are three main points: 1) UFPJ claims that A.N.S.W.E.R. went over its time limit at the joint rally. In violation of the assurances given at negotiations prior to the signing of a united front agreement for one single, joint rally at the White House/Ellipse, UFPJ turned the Washington Monument musical concert into a "second rally." In the weeks leading up to September 24, UFPJ sought to divert attention from the joint rally to the second rally, announcing speakers at the second rally and making virtually no mention of the joint rally. UFPJ had the stage first at the joint rally. They went over their time. They advised A.N.S.W.E.R. to take an equal time. UFPJ then retook the stage and began telling the crowd to march, even though A.N.S.W.E.R. still had its second segment left. UFPJ announced they were moving their speakers to a second rally, urged people to march, and directed people out of the joint rally area at the White House draining it for the remainder of A.N.S.W.E.R.'s segment. Because of the number of people still streaming towards the White House's Ellipse as busses were still arriving, this directive to march caused a logjam of people coming towards the rally and leaving the rally, bringing 15th St. to a standstill.

2) UFPJ claims that A.N.S.W.E.R. delayed the start of the march and thereby disrupted the front of the march and prevented the lead contingent and agreed-upon banner. The story about the front of the march is also a fabrication. There

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was an agreement that both groups would designate people to be at the front. UFPJ had a certain number of "VIPs" that they wanted on the front banner. A.N.S.W.E.R.'s speakers included George Galloway, Jessica Lange, Delores Huerta, Ralph Nader, Michael Berg, Michel Shehadeh, Lynne Stewart, Mahdi Bray, Mounzer Sleiman, Ramsey Clark and many others. There were so many people, perhaps over 100,000 people who were still coming towards the rally site from the east and north (the whole western side of the Ellipse was frozen by the Secret Service because of the IMF/WB meetings) so that the front of the march, as it attempted to gather at 15th and Constitution was basically stuck in a human gridlock. This situation was worsened by UFPJ's entreaties from the stage to march when the crowd was still streaming in. The "front" of the march could not march northward against the river of protesters that was still flowing in the opposite direction. 15th street became completely full and did not move. At some point the crowd took off. Both A.N.S.W.E.R. and UFPJ leaders negotiated on the spot with the police to get the front formed up through an alternate route and we worked with the UFPJ VIPs to get them on the front banner which was unfurled in the middle of the march to create a second "front." When UFPJ wanted to bring the march to a halt so that the press corps could be brought to this second "front" and take pictures of the UFPJ VIPs on the front banner and the UFPJ leadership at the front of the march, we did not object as it was evident that this was very important to them. The broad collection of leaders and organizations designated by A.N.S.W.E.R. to be at the front were unable to make it there because of the huge concentration of people. While this is unfortunate, it is certainly a better problem than having a smaller number of people present. It is unfortunate that UFPJ's relationships with others were "jeopardized" when their VIPs were unable to easily access the front banner. The logistical problems, however, affected both coalitions. Indeed some of our speakers never got to speak and others for whom we have great respect spoke at the end after UFPJ had drained the joint rally area telling people to march.

The original agreement was to have people holding the banner at the front of the march and to have 500 people (250 from each side) behind the front banner with other signs and slogans independently chosen by each coalition. Because of the human gridlock, that contingent did not happen, which, while it may have been a disappointment, should certainly be understood as a very minor event, particularly since it affected equally all partners of the demonstration, and since the real story of the day was not who was in the front but the fact that so many came out into the street in unity.

3) UFPJ claims that A.N.S.W.E.R. did not turn out many volunteers to provide for fundraising, security and media operations for the March and Rally. This is a particularly offensive falsehood as it discounts and seeks to eliminate the hundreds of A.N.S.W.E.R. volunteers and their hard work. A.N.S.W.E.R. volunteers did all of the set up and take down for the joint rally including UFPJ's own banner on the stage. A.N.S.W.E.R. volunteers served as fundraisers and security, and handled media along with UFPJ volunteers. From 6 am on Friday, September 23 until 10 PM on Saturday, September 24, only A.N.S.W.E.R. had volunteers working at the joint rally site. For these 40 continuous hours, which included security shifts through the entire night, organizing logistics, and the physical labor of set-up and take-down, UFPJ provided not one volunteer. The claim is also astounding considering that A.N.S.W.E.R. paid the full cost for the stage, sound, porta-Johns, back-stage set-up and other expenses for the joint rally. UFPJ did not pay one cent. Yet, while A.N.S.W.E.R. paid all the expenses for the joint rally, the fundraising collection at the joint rally was evenly divided between the two coalitions. The money raised from the collection did not cover A.N.S.W.E.R.'s expenses associated with the joint rally.

We do agree that many more volunteers from all sides were and are needed but that is a function of the further growth of the movement. The presentation about the facts here is merely to set the record straight. A.N.S.W.E.R. and UFPJ volunteers both worked hard on September 24 and the entire movement owes them our gratitude.

<http://nyc.indymedia.orgen/2006/01/63126.shtml>