

About this War Business....

Address to US OUT OF IRAQ March and Rally,
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By Stacy Chappel

Today we are witness to the results of a war that was justified with trumped up evidence, false documents and blatant propaganda, fought against a country crippled by a decade of inhumane sanctions, and resulting in a "reconstruction process" that is described by pundits as bringing freedom to Iraq, but in fact is merely bringing billion dollar contracts to US corporations.

It has been a long time coming, and a lot of effort and money spent, but the US government and its corporate cronies have finally muscled their way in to a position of control in Iraq. While the US and UK used false evidence in their hype to promote this war, we can today look at the facts of their actions and assess the real motivation behind the war--the motivation we suspected all along: *greed*.

Even in the sight of the illegality and injustice of the war, it is tempting to believe that the reconstruction process being proposed is necessary, and that we must hold our noses and support it. It is certainly true that Iraq has been devastated. By sanctions, by despotic leaders, by ten years of bombings and two rounds of all out attacks by the most powerful military force in the world. But the reconstruction proposed is not one to aid the Iraqi people, or even Iraqi business. What is on the table today is aid for the bottom lines on the financial statements of a small number of prominent, primarily US based, multinationals.

War, as we have seen countless times before, is marching to the beat of a profit motive.

The initial contracts for reconstruction in Iraq were telling.

Bechtel--San Francisco Engineering company--awarded the contract to rebuild Iraq's infrastructure \$680 million USD. Bechtel is notable for selling chemical weapons to Saddam Hussein back in the 1980s.

Halliburton's KBR, infamously a company recently headed by Dick Cheney (he's still receiving back pay), gets to control Iraq's oilfields, the second largest in the world. To date they have taken in 1.5 billion US\$.

The Pentagon handed the \$45 million USD contract for a wireless network to **MCI**, while **Motorola** will be profiting from sales of mobile telecommunications in Iraq.

DynCorp won a \$50 million contract to organize Iraq's law enforcement.

Bush has said, "By replacing corruption and self-dealing with free markets and fair laws, the people of the Middle East will grow in prosperity and freedom." Which I suppose is why Halliburton won their lucrative contract without any competitive bidding, completely through "self-dealing", and why every initial reconstruction contract was awarded to US companies through a blatant policy of "To the Victor Go the Spoils".

By now most of you have seen on the news that there has been \$ 37 billion raised in a meeting in Madrid for the reconstruction of Iraq. What is less often reported is that the vast majority of that money is a loan, much of it from the IMF or WB, which require rigorous restructuring to suit IMF WB economic ideology. Even the US has converted much of its promised fund for Iraq into a loan. Iraq, already saddled with \$120 billion in debt, is being forced to take a loan from their attackers, and once they have rebuilt what was destroyed by those attackers, will have to pay this money back to the people who destroyed it all in the first place.

Before the nation states gathered in Madrid, some other key players were gathering in London at a conference organized by the US-Iraq Business Alliance, which has ties to the Pentagon as well as big US business, called "Doing Business in Iraq: Kickstarting the Private Sector". 100 private companies gathered to discuss opportunities for investment in Iraq. Among them were, ExxonMobil, Delta Airlines, American Hospital Group, and McDonald's all eager to investigate "investment opportunities" well before the real issues like clean water and food are dealt with.

As Herbert Docena aptly noted in an article on ZNet, "...the people who will be paying for the occupation will not be the same people who will be profiting it." Certainly, donor countries in Madrid have something to gain. Up until now, the lucrative contracts for Iraq rebuilding have strictly been a US affair. Even the UK was out in the cold.

Now we have Iraq being offered to the multinational corporations like raw meat to rabid dogs. All the corporations have to do is convince their home governments to ante up for the US's "Iraq reconstruction" funds and they can have a piece of the pie. And what a pie it is. The complete wholesale privatization of a country in one go. Including water, electricity and hospitals. 100% foreign ownership of all assets other than oil and real estate suddenly possible for the first time--poof--just like that. It is such a fast conversion that even hard core capitalists and supporters of the war are expressing concern.

The link between corporate globalization and war could hardly be made more clear. As Billy Bragg sings in his more accurate update of the song *War*, "War What is if Good For? It's good for business."

The movement for peace has been huge. The largest in world history. Which serves to underscore the blatant undemocratic nature of this entire bloody war. The world was dragged into the war kicking and screaming. And we will keep on kicking and screaming for economic justice in Iraq. For a lasting real peace based on international law and humanitarian standards. We will keep on kicking and screaming until the US, with their bloody hands, is not in control of the treasury of Iraq, nor of any other country. We are demanding that the US and the British governments pay for all the damage they have caused in Iraq as required by the Geneva conventions. And we insist that in Canada, our own government contribute the aid they have committed to Iraq through neutral funds that have no ties with the occupying armed forces. Peace activists are on the move around the world. Despite the millions invested in public relations propaganda to convince us to support the war and the occupation, we respond with 10s of thousands of US citizens in Washinton DC this morning, including many parents of the US soldiers who are in Iraq right now. Despite the imprisonment of people without charge, access to lawyers or to evidence from Guantanamo Bay to Toronto, we are responding with visible and vocal opposition. We are an Australian MP being evicted from the floor of the Australian parliament for heckling George Bush about Guantanamo Bay during his visit this week. We are climbing to the top of the Sydney opera house and painting No To War on that famous roof to greet Bush as he arrives. We are thousands of Filippino peasants and peace activists lining the streets to protest Bush's motorcade in Manila last week, while more than 100,000 people were in the streets throughout the Philippines. We are George Galloway, British MP, being kicked out of the labour party for expressing the radical opinion that the Geneva Convention was more than a piece of paper and refusing to backtrack on his anti-war stance. And we are the British activists who are planning demonstrations to meet Bush when he arrives in the UK this November. Humanity will not be intimidated. But George Bush and Tony Blair are intimidated by our resolve. We cannot be bought. We are not afraid. But George and Tony live in fear that this movement will last because they can neither control nor understand it. The movement for peace and justice will last as long as human beings have hearts and a conscience. Today we show the world that we cannot be duped by easy platitudes about peace and democracy, that we have our own vision of peace that has not been fed to us by CNN, and it is not something created by arms contractors and corporations bidding to sell BigMacs in Bagdhad. Peace is something we are creating ourselves, in our communitites and in solidarity with the people of the world. Peace is created today in this action, in Victoria, and in every action to end injustice around the world. Thank you for being here today.

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