

The Real Costs of War

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THOUSANDS of fathers and mothers, sons and daughters may soon be killed in a war against Iraq — in the name of an “imminent threat” to the security of America that is grossly exaggerated.

Well, never mind lost lives and military bullying. Let's talk about money. After all, I'm a businessman and money's my game. I'd like to give you an idea an idea of how our government spends our money each year:

- \$40 billion on children's health care;
- \$30 billion on children's education;
- \$15 billion on higher education;
- \$7 billion on job training;
- \$30 billion on affordable housing;
- \$8 billion on environmental protection;
- subtotal: \$130 billion of social spending;*
- \$395 billion on the Pentagon budget — and that does not include the \$200 billion that war with Iraq and the ensuing occupation and nation-building is expected to cost.

America is on the brink of recession. Median household income is down. Poverty and unemployment are up The huge surpluses of the last years have been frittered away on tax breaks. City, state and school budgets across the country are in shock. Retirement and college savings have been decimated.

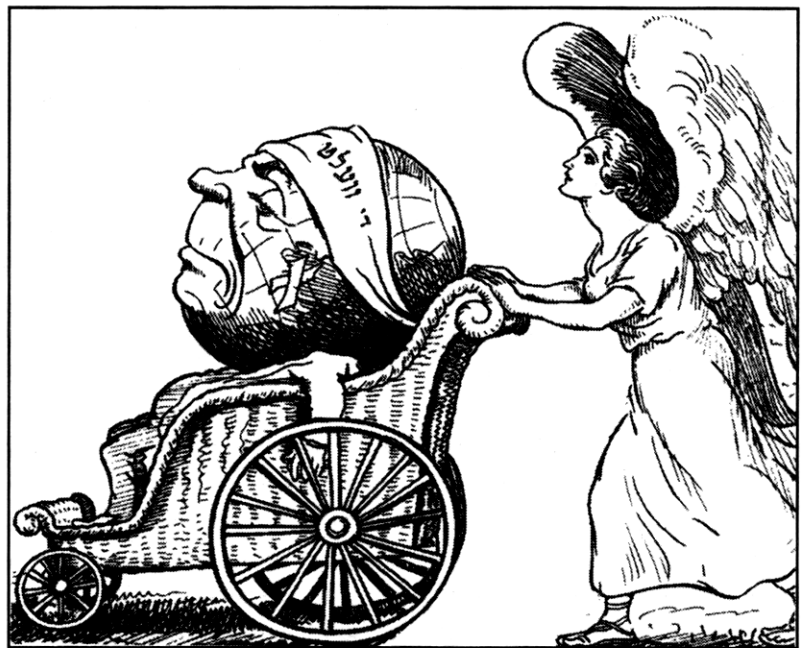
Now the administration wants to add another \$200 billion to that last line on the chart. That's a lot of money. What could we buy with that if we didn't have this war?

- For \$55 billion we could provide all of our public schools with state-of-the-art computer systems for all students.
- For \$11 billion a year, we could reduce class size, kindergarten through 3rd grade, to 15 kids per class.

- For \$6 billion a year, we could provide health insurance for every kid who doesn't have it today.
- For \$2 billion a year we could provide Head Start for the hundreds of thousands of eligible kids who can't get into the program.
- For another \$2 billion a year, we could double funding for clean and renewable energy.
- For \$13 billion a year, we could feed every one of the 30,000 children around the world who die from hunger every day.
- For \$10 billion a year, we could curb if not cure AIDS for the 6,000 people who die from the disease every day in Africa.
- For \$1 billion a year, we could provide complete public financing of all federal elections, allowing us to really, totally and absolutely get money out of politics.

These costs add up to \$100 billion dollars. The war is going to cost twice that. We could have another \$100 billion left over!

The belligerence of our leaders saps our souls, saps our spirit, and saps our strength as a nation. Let us instead re-dedicate ourselves to helping our nation to match its actions with the spirit and soul of our people — in goodness and justice and compassion and love. ■



Cartoon from Di Groyse Kundes, 1919