

CHAPTER NEWS

The “Burdens” of Hope and Peace

By Robert M. Gould, MD
President, SF PSR

This article has been edited for space constraints. You can read the full text of the article on our blog at <http://psrblog.wordpress.com/Burdens>.

The astonishing award of the Nobel Prize for Peace to Barack Obama is a welcome global affirmation of our President’s strongly stated commitments for new American leadership dedicated to breaking with the unilateralist and militarist agenda of the Bush-Cheney administration. President Obama’s personal story, and his lofty eloquence in reaching out to diverse global communities towards a true partnership for “saving the planet” have raised universal hopes for substantive changes in U.S. policies that would truly benefit all.

If the Nobel Prize has effectively been given for a renewed sense of hope and peace personified by our President, it behooves us to do our part to make real that promise at this critical time.

We at PSR have been especially struck by Obama’s forthright embrace of the goal of a world without nuclear weapons, the central aim of The International Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) that PSR and our worldwide affiliates within the Nobel Peace Laureate (1985) International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) have been working on steadily for many years. Unique in the annals of modern presidents, Obama’s calls for nuclear abolition in Prague, Russia and most recently at the UN, at the rhetorical level have fundamentally challenged the doctrine of *escalation dominance*—the desire to at all times possess the

overwhelming upper hand of military (nuclear) force at any increasing level of violent confrontation—that has been central to U.S. nuclear strategy since the dawn of the Cold War. Packaged euphemistically for decades as *deterrence*, this doctrine has rationalized nuclear weapons and related modernization programs and budgets now running at approximately \$50 billion a year.

Central to the issue are the current debates within the Administration regarding the strategic vision at the heart of the soon to be released Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), which would update the last one of late 2001, utilized by the Bush Administration to permanently place nuclear weapons at the heart of military strategy. The NPR effectively drives the development of the Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP), still based on a *counterforce* doctrine that informs the targeting of nuclear warheads and missiles against “enemy” weapons and hundreds of millions of innocent civilian populations around the globe. Given that enough nuclear-armed missiles remain on *alert*, “launch on warning” status, the chance of the world ending in a matter of an hour or so remains with us.

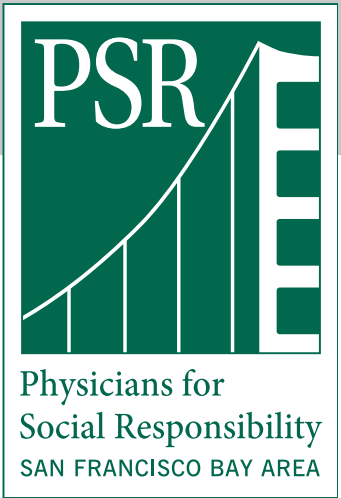
With President Obama raising an alternative vision in his recent speeches, there is an unprecedented and conceivably last real possibility to reverse the inevitable “mutually assured destruction” of a renewed global arms race.

Since being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, President Obama has been characterized by a number of media figures as being “unworthy” given his short tenure and consequent inability to attain the concrete ambitions invoked in his speeches, and that

ultimately, the Prize is a “burden” on him, that he is ultimately set-to-fail, given the present coordinates of American political realities, and the presumed impossibility of being able to effectively plot a new course away from where old habits and worldviews lead.

Now is the time for public opinion to register strongly for new directions on nuclear weapons and to challenge all of the assumptions underlying the militarist paradigm that has driven us to too many wars and fiscal ruin, and if unabated, will simply destroy our ability to cope at all with climate change.

The PSR voice for hope and peace is strengthened by the support and engagement of our membership. As we gear up for more programming in 2010, with less foundation financial support, we need “stretch” gifts from our members to ensure a strong and vital chapter. Please support the San Francisco Bay Area Chapter of PSR (SF PSR) with a gift now.



New Design!

In order to reduce costs and the impact on the environment, SF PSR has gone to a shorter newsletter format.

Please sign up for our free e-news at www.sfbaypsr.org.

Local PSR Leaders Earn National Recognition and Praise

Two SF PSR Steering Committee members, Dr. Bob Gould and Dr. Tom Hall, were honored at the American Public Health Association Annual Meeting & Exposition in Philadelphia November 7-11, 2009. The Sidel-Levy Award for Peace was presented to Robert M. Gould, MD. Bob has served as President of SF PSR since 1989. Tom Hall, MD, DrPH, was awarded the APHA Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Health Section. Tom has served on the board of SF PSR since 1987. To read more about these remarkable leaders, see the "Announcements" section of our blog at <http://psrblog.wordpress.com/>.

Support for Climate Change Letters

SF PSR has been rallying support among our members and supporters to sign on to two letters urging Senators to strengthen the U.S. position on climate change. The Senate is currently considering climate change and energy legislation in preparation for the upcoming UN climate meeting in Copenhagen in December. Its potential impact on the health and wellbeing of the planet cannot be underestimated. If you have already signed on, thank you! If you haven't signed on yet, please do so at <http://www.psr.org/climateletters>. We are specifically looking for health professionals, scientists, and public health professionals, and our goal is to have 150 signators from California.

Balanced Menus Update

A big thank you to our donors who provided important support in August and September to continue and expand the Balanced Menus campaign. SF PSR piloted the Balanced Menus campaign here in the Bay Area with four facilities for most of this year. The success of our early adopters—including UCSF and Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital—allowed us to partner with our longstanding allies at Health Care Without Harm to launch this program nationally on September 23, 2009. SF PSR hosted a webinar training on October 26

which was attended by over thirty individuals, including representatives from ten local hospitals. Participants learned about why this program is an important as part of a hospital's climate mitigation strategy. We are well on the way to enrolling our goal of six more hospitals this year so they can start serving healthier, more sustainably produced meat and vegetables. Your continued support ensures funding for outreach and education to make this goal a reality. For more information contact Lena Brook: lena@sfbaypsr.org.

Big Victories for Public and Environmental Health at the California Medical Association Convention

Aided by efforts of PSR members, numerous policies protective of public and environmental health were adopted at the recent California Medical Association (CMA) 138th Annual Session in Anaheim. This great outcome reflected a strong collaboration of local medical associations, hospital systems such as Kaiser, and professional organizations such as the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the California Thoracic Society. The policies adopted included one resolution focusing on "smart growth" and air pollution reduction which called on CMA to support efforts, including the participation of public health officials, to develop ambitious regional targets for local governments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support land use

and transportation strategies to meet those targets. In addition, SF PSR President Dr. Bob Gould successfully authored a resolution "Ecological Health Footprint for Health Care Facilities" that garnered CMA support for mitigating the impacts of health care system contributions to climate change and toxic pollution through educational efforts among health professionals using resources such as the "Eco-Health Footprint Guide" distributed by the Global Health and Safety Initiative (GHSI). To learn more about the adopted resolutions and read the exact text of the one authored by Dr. Gould, see the Environmental section of our blog at <http://psrblog.wordpress.com/>.

HOLD THE DATE

SF PSR will present "Russia Today: What the future holds for US-Russia Relations" with Sharon Tennison, Founding President of the Center for Citizen Initiatives, on Wednesday, February 10, 2010, in San Francisco. A buffet supper will begin at 6:30pm with the presentation and discussion beginning at 7:30pm. Contact action@sfbaypsr.org for more information or sign-up for our enews at www.sfbaypsr.org to receive information about this event and other important chapter updates.