
Bienville House Center for Peace and Justice

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Winter 2014

It takes a Village to Raise a Progressive Radio Station in Baton Rouge

For more than fourteen years the Bienville House Center for Peace and Justice has known of and supported the efforts of another local non-profit, the Baton Rouge Progressive Network (BRPN), to bring radio programming with progressive and social justice messages to the wider Baton Rouge community. BRPN's efforts have paid off and the non-profit organization now operates the low-power Baton Rouge Community Radio station, WHYR – 96.9 FM. The station is kept on the air through the generosity of its all-volunteer staff and donations from community members and supporting organizations such as Bienville House and many others.

Bienville House member Hassan Ghosn and I both serve on the board of directors for the Baton Rouge Progressive Network. Several other members of Bienville House participate as volunteers with the community radio station or give personal donations to help cover station operating expenses. If you haven't tuned in yet to 96.9 FM on your radio dial while driving around Baton Rouge, please check it out. This station has been broadcasting now for a little over two years and has a lot to offer. You can even listen from anywhere in the world by tuning in online at why.org or through your smart phone by looking up WHYR on the TuneIn app.

Getting WHYR on the air didn't come easy or happen overnight. In fact it was a very long process. BRPN was started as a collaboration between LSU student activists and community activists in 1999 and soon incorporated as a non-profit. In 2000, BRPN began the process of

applying to the FCC for a low power radio broadcast license.

BRPN would work for ten years toward receiving a clear construction permit from the FCC, which eventually happened in January 2010. Overcoming several obstacles took a lot of persistence from those involved. Then after receiving the construction permit the real work of actually building the infrastructure for the station began. On June 26, 2011, WHYR finally began broadcasting in Baton Rouge with studios located at 1623 Main Street and transmitter space leased on a pre-existing broadcast tower in Baton Rouge.

WHYR began streaming online in November 2012 thanks to generous listener support. Many volunteers and partners helped BRPN maintain momentum towards creating and operating a station with the goal of making the station an effective tool to inform and unite people to work together on issues that matter to them in their own neighborhoods as well as a venue to teach media skills, highlight local musicians, present contextualized coverage of local news and promote the work of local organizations.

Bienville House supports the operations of WHYR because the station broadcasts information and messages relevant to peace and justice that are otherwise not often heard in Baton Rouge. For example, WHYR broadcasts *Democracy Now!* with Amy Goodman and Juan Gonzalez twice a day, five days a week, during morning and afternoon commuting drive times. WHYR is the only place in Baton Rouge broadcasting

Democracy Now! on the radio. Bienville House is proud to support this kind of broadcasting.

In addition to *Democracy Now!*, WHYR also broadcasts several other syndicated shows that touch on civil and social justice concerns such as *This Way Out: the International Lesbian and Gay Radio Magazine*, a show one listener wrote to BRPN to say, “I never thought I’d hear LGBT-oriented programming on a Baton Rouge radio station and it is music to my ears. ... Baton Rouge is a difficult place to live, but when I tune in [to] this station I no longer feel like I am alone here.”

WHYR broadcasts nationally syndicated alternative radio shows including *Law & Disorder*, a show that gives listeners access to rare legal perspectives on issues concerning civil liberties, privacy, the right to dissent and the horrendous practices of torture exercised by the US government. Other nationally syndicated programs broadcast on WHYR include *Progressive Radio*, *Between the Lines*, *Sprouts*, *Alternative Radio*, *Arts Express*, *Spoiler Alert*, *Dr. Michio Kaku's Explorations in Science*, *Food Sleuth Radio*, and *Planetary Radio*.

While the shows listed above help fill a gap in the local media landscape for alternative and progressive programming, WHYR has another important mission to fill and that is giving local programmers straight out of the Baton Rouge community a platform to create their own community media. Local adults and youth learn new skills in producing their own content and experience the power of telling the stories they think are important to Baton Rouge or cultivating the musical and cultural experiences usually ignored by commercial radio. At this time, all of WHYR’s local show hosts are unpaid volunteers who generally create a half hour to one, two, or three hour show once a week.

Local talk shows aimed at informing the community regarding local issues of social concern include *Environmental Update*, a weekly look at local environmental issues and the local aspects of state, national, and global issues hosted by the Baton Rouge Group of the Sierra Club, and *Third Place* a community affairs and news show featuring local voices and discussions of community issues and hosted by local attorney

and longtime BRPN member David Brown. Bienville House member Ma’Moun Sukkar was interviewed on *Third Place* during a two-part special program on the threat of war with Syria in September 2013.

WHYR broadcasts two outstanding locally produced science shows. *The Groks Science Show* is a weekly science radio program hosted by Dr. Charles Lee of the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine. Each week, Dr. Lee takes an in-depth look at recent events in the world of science and technology and features an interview with a leading scientist, researcher, or industrialist discussing stimulating work in their field. Also, *Louisiology* is a radio program produced by LSU Graduate Students in the School of Coast and Environment and the School of Renewable Natural Resources and features the science behind Louisiana’s environmental and coastal issues.

In the mood for some more light-hearted and fun discussion? Local volunteers have created three shows that might fit the bill. Tune in every week to *Flix List* to hear hosts RCL, Chewy, and DJ Clay review films, or listen in on *Me and My Big Mouth* to learn fascinating information about local culture, cuisine, beer, wine and spirits from Jay Ducote and Charles Pierce, or catch local sports news on the *Louisiana All American Sports* show.

But WHYR is not just a talk format station. Music plays a big role too and is often the driving force of passion behind many talented volunteer DJs who produce WHYR’s unique local music shows including: DJ Clay’s *The History of Rock*, Noel Jackson’s *Music Satisfaction*, *Gifts & Messages* from Dr. Jazz, *Music Lagniappe* with Uncle Bob, *Back Down the Bayou* with Bill Boelens, *Urban Flosaurus* and *The Grapevine* with master host Moose Harris, *Juke Joint* and *Deep Wax* by The Professor, *The Clearing* with host Captain Christopher, *Red Medicine* with Tyler, *Cajun Experience* with host Ann Vidrine, *Down the Road* with Bert, *88mph* with DJ Soda Pop, *Subterranean Nation* with Eric Babin, *Future Beats* with Stromile, *Sub 85 Reggae* with DJ DaBlenda, dance and trance music with DJ Morris B on *Pier Pressure*, and *The Score* with Pat Doynen.

As a community service WHYR regularly makes brief on-air Public Service Announcements (PSAs) on behalf of non-profit organizations and community groups in town. Guidelines and submission instructions for PSAs can be found at why.org. Underwriting support from businesses or individuals is deeply appreciated and you can contact WHYR about underwriting at underwriting@why.org or at (225) 343-9927.

Many thanks to all past and present members that started and kept BRPN and its radio dream alive and kicking despite the obstacles and difficulties along the way, and many thanks to the generous volunteers and donors who continue to keep WHYR and its dreams on the air. To ensure the continued success of WHYR, we encourage other Bienville House members to tune in, help out, or give financial support.

WHYR is a remarkable tool for the progressive community in Baton Rouge to have in our hands. But the station is currently operating on a very thin shoestring budget of just \$30,000 a year to cover the unavoidable operating expenses including utilities (it actually takes a lot of electricity to broadcast a radio signal every day), the tower space lease, studio rent, licensing fees, insurance, recording and broadcast equipment, etc.

If you have an interest in helping sustain WHYR or in helping it grow, you can reach the BRPN leadership at info@brprogress.net

You can also check the complete programming schedule, read more about our local show hosts, or signup for a tax deductible sustaining membership online at www.why.org

More Background on BRPN:

When BRPN finally received its broadcast license for WHYR in 2011, the organization shifted gears to heavily focus on creating a functional volunteer community radio station with quality programming and a bright future. While BRPN's most ambitious current project is operating WHYR, members of BRPN want you to know that

BRPN's mission is about more than just running a radio station.

BRPN's founding vision was to form a nonprofit cooperative of individuals dedicated to facilitating communication and education as they pertain to progressive ideals within the Baton Rouge community. And BRPN formulated a vision of Baton Rouge becoming a nationally recognized progressive community that amplified collective action for peace, justice, and dignity for all.

That is certainly a big vision and BRPN believes it could happen if progressive individuals and organizations in Baton Rouge worked together and supported each other. BRPN aimed to construct itself as a big concept organization made up of groups, organizations and individuals who promote various progressive causes in our community. That networking goal and work is ongoing. BRPN partners have included but are not limited to Bienville House, the Louisiana Environmental Action Network, the Baton Rouge Animal Advocacy Group, the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge, and the Lambda Group. BRPN welcomes any organization working on progressive causes in Baton Rouge to contact us about partnering with us.

In years past, BRPN has hosted film screenings and discussions on a range of community issues including collective bargaining in EBR schools, citizen lobbying, community media and organizing, and even a candidate forum at LSU for candidates running in the U.S. District 6 Primary Race for the U.S. House of Representatives in 2008. Today, BRPN hosts an online calendar of progressive community events and sends out a weekly email newsletter. You can learn more about BRPN, the organization that operates WHYR, check the events calendar or subscribe to the weekly email newsletter at www.brprogress.net.

Stacy Sauce

Bienville House – 2014 Holiday Party & Silent Auction

In December, Bienville House members and friends gathered at Irvin Peckham's home for our annual holiday party and silent auction. As always, the food was delicious and the auction bidding was spirited. This year's auction raised a total of \$457.

Not everything is what it seems in international politics

Not everything is what it seems in international politics. The name of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) implies a mission to help poor countries to develop economically. The State Department document titled “Executive Budget Summary FUNCTION 150 & OTHER INTERNATIONAL

PROGRAMS” reveals another role. USAID spent \$6.312 billion during fiscal year 2013 on “Foreign Military Financing” (FMF). This sum is included within nearly \$10.5 billion classified as “Security Assistance” from a total budget of ~ \$50 billion.

Israel is the top recipient of FMF (over \$3 billion for FY 2012) followed by Egypt (\$1.3 billion). Jordan ranks third (\$300 million). Military aid to Egypt and Jordan is explained as a reward for maintaining peaceful relations with Israel. When fighting broke out along the border between Gaza and Israel in November 2012, however, then Egyptian President Mohamed Morsy, played a mediating role rather than threatening military action against Israel, though Morsy belongs to the Muslim Brotherhood, allied with the Hamas government in Gaza. It is difficult to imagine a future Egyptian government, whether receiving USAID or not, initiating confrontation with Israel.

The form in which the assistance is granted to Egypt suggests another motive. Egypt receives vouchers that must be spent on contracts with US-based suppliers. This article <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/americas/united-states/130816/top-10-american-corporations-egypt-military-us-aid> lists the top 10 recipients of military contracts paid for by USAID vouchers provided to Egypt during the period 2009-2011, according to the Institute for Southern Studies.

The political volatility of revolutionary and post-revolutionary Egypt presents the US with a

dilemma. USAID is not popular in Egypt. The average Egyptian does not perceive a benefit, perhaps because of the ratio of military to economic (\$250 million) assistance. Moreover, Aid is perceived to purchase influence, putting NGOs and other organizations which receive US (or any foreign) funds under suspicion. Yet in a poor country many organizations are forced to compete for foreign funding. This conundrum leads Egyptians to “bite that hand that feeds”, loudly denouncing the US as a cover for their dependence.

Historically, this “biting” behavior is not new. In 1979, rumors of covert US support for the Islamist supporters of Ayatollah Khomeini as a counter to Leftist influence damaged Iranian Islamists. They chose to counter this image problem by backing the US embassy seizure. Left-liberals, such as AbulHassan Bani-Sadr, the first elected President following the revolution, were outflanked. Bani-Sadr fled Iran shortly after US staff were released. The Revolution entered its bloodiest phase-similar to the terror that followed the toppling of constitutionally elected Presidents during the French and Russian Revolutions.

Continuation of USAID to Egypt will appear as an endorsement of the current pro-military regime. Opponents, including supporters of the deposed President Morsy and Revolutionary Youth movements, will be angered. Pro-military forces may search for a means of publicly baiting the US to compensate for political damage. On the other hand, a reduction will be presented as support for opponents, thus angering the pro military faction. Opposition forces will not be (overtly) satisfied.

Such is the legacy of past policies, driven by corporate profit needs, that the US cannot be neutral in Egypt today.

Fareed Aboul-Ela

In 2013, Bienville House made donations to the following organizations that work for peace and justice in our community and beyond: The Battered Women’s Program, B. R. Community Radio, the Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless, and SOA Watch.

Do you know a Louisiana High School student engaged in helping the community?

The Reich-Henderson Writing Competition, sponsored by the Bienville House Center for Peace & Justice, is a great opportunity for students to think and write about their experience in community service and receive public recognition. The competition is open to all high school students in Louisiana and asks students to submit an essay describing an activity they did that helped people in need including what motivated them and how they felt about their experience.

The Reich-Henderson Writing Competition is named after and honors the lifelong dedication of Dr. Robert "Doc" Reich and Ms. Paula Henderson to promote peace and social justice. Doc was a founding member of the University United

Methodist Church in Baton Rouge and a committed teacher at Louisiana State University. Paula was an educator, social activist and dedicated member of the Unitarian Church. Both were tireless advocates for the disenfranchised members of our community.

Cash prizes are awarded for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place and the winning student writer will be honored at the Wade Mackie awards banquet this summer in Baton Rouge. The deadline for this essay competition is February 28, 2014. Please share the enclosed flyer/registration form with an eligible student you know or post it at your church, community center or other place where eligible students may see it.

Mr. Scalise goes to Samaria Or, recent foreign policy adventures among Louisiana's congressional delegation

Those of us in Louisiana concerned with international peace and justice are used to being outraged with our state's congressional delegation. It's not so much for what they do - their disengagement with foreign affairs means they tend to only ratify, not author, the carnage. No, in their committees, votes, and statements, our state's delegation normally concentrates their efforts on inflicting the same sorts of colonialist, exploitative policies we condemn abroad on us here at home. 2013 was exceptional for two deviations from this pattern of malign neglect of foreign affairs by our [corporations'] representatives, one a surprise for the better for mostly the wrong reasons, the other another drumbeat for the worse serving that all-too-familiar cause, a rising politician's opportunist ambitions.

While it's true Syria continues apace to bleed to death before the world's eyes, we can take some small comfort in the American and British people's revolt against their governments' bid to attack Syria last September. The opposition of

90%+ of the public from all political persuasions stopped the next American war in the Mideast before it started. Sure, Kerry, Rice, and Power's lukewarm pitches couldn't hold a candle to the propaganda onslaught that fooled the country into invading Iraq in 2003. This round the war lobby seems to have forgotten Andrew Card's advice that 'you don't introduce new products in August.' Further, as Seymour Hersh suggested in the *London Review of Books* recently, it's possible Obama realized his intelligence on who did the August 21st chemical weapons attack outside Damascus had such major flaws and ambiguities that he quietly shelved the war plan in favor of the face-saving compromise handed to him by the Russians.

That's not what's extraordinary about what happened last September, though. It's what occurred outside Washington and London, and just not in Berkeley or Boston but in Boutte and Bossier City. The calls and messages the Congress was getting from the voters from reddest red to

bluest blue America were so universally against this war that the legislative branch actually did its job instead of heeling before the imperial presidency. I was at Rep. Bill Cassidy's public meeting outside Houma in early September, and if I hadn't heard what the attendees had to say on domestic affairs, I might have entertained the possibility that the Republican activists of Louisiana had been converted *en masse* into anti-imperialist militants.

Upon further reflection, while I'm certainly glad our country didn't further escalate the Syrian civil war through a bombing campaign, the mass opposition to the war in Louisiana shows our weakness more than our strength. No doubt part of the rejection of this war was the creeping realization the public has been seduced by continuous lying from the highest levels of government into multiple military interventions across the greater Mideast at fantastic cost and without any end point. But considering how slow that realization has been in coming and how little the peace and justice community has shifted the needle of public opinion compared to the thousands of dead and wounded coming home, I don't think we have anything to celebrate.

There's another factor in the Syria war scare, much in evidence here in Louisiana, that also gives me pause. A lot of the traction the public's opposition got among Louisiana's congressional delegation was not because the politicians listened to their constituents or because they opposed this war on principle. It was because the president calling for war was from another political party. Had the call come from a president of their party, more congress people would have disregarded the flood of calls and emails and backed the air strikes or else abstained from taking a position.

That's what we saw here in Louisiana and nationwide among some Democratic lawmakers who waffled endlessly or sided with the administration against their constituents on Syria. Senator Landrieu and Representative Richmond dribbled out the clock with a lot of non-committal un-positions, like 'the use of chemical weapons requires a robust response', 'urging a diplomatic solution', and 'expressing grave concerns about the use of force', none of which said anything

interpretable as 'Yes' or 'No.' They, like centrist Democrats and the leadership of the party nationwide, ignored the loud, nearly unanimous "NO" voters were telling them. Their ambivalence gave the administration and the war hawks like McCain and Graham more time and space to try, unsuccessfully this time, to sell another war to the public.

For their part, the majority of the state's congressional Republicans actually took a definable position in line with the overwhelming majority of their constituents, and further distinguished themselves by (momentarily) demonstrating critical thinking skills they apparently forgot as soon as the crisis passed. Representatives Fleming, Scalise, and Boustany and Senator Vitter came out against authorizing U.S. military action in Syria over the first ten days of September, with Alexander and Cassidy expressing opposition but not saying how they would vote. Senator Vitter said "U.S. military action could spark a broader war and/or entangle us in Syria's protracted civil war in which elements of the opposition are even worse than the Assad regime..." Representative Boustany was quoted as saying "...the proposed use of military action alone in Syria, in the absence of a broader diplomatic strategy, will fail to achieve the objective of arriving at a political settlement." One wonders where these critical insights disappear to when our representatives vote again and again to fund the overt and covert U.S. wars in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen, etc. etc., policies suffering from the very same self-defeating, threat-expanding short sightedness.

Senator Vitter, in pointing out the perils of unilateral military adventurism in Syria, correctly identified the unintended and uncontrollable consequences that would likely spiral out of an attack, but then said: "I am extremely concerned that getting involved in Syria, after Iraq and Afghanistan, would make mustering our resolve to stop a nuclear Iran impossible." So U.S. attacks on Syria might blow up in our face, undermining public support for – wait for it – U.S. attacks on Iran, which will *surely* blow up in our face. If we get in trouble playing with firecrackers, Vitter is saying, mom surely isn't going to let us buy the

M-80s we really want that might send us to the hospital.

Iran was the foil for the other big foreign policy move in Louisiana's congressional delegation in 2013. It came late in the year from Congressman Steve Scalise, representing the First Congressional District and president of the Republican Study Committee (RSC), the caucus of House conservatives. Scalise moved unexpectedly into the 'Everyone wants to go to Baghdad, real men want to go to Tehran' camp with his visit to Israel last November 3-10. The trip, taken by Scalise and his wife as part of a congressional delegation, was funded by the U.S. Israel Education Foundation at \$23,352. Since November, Scalise has become a vocal defender of Israel's leadership and critic of Iran, from the day after his meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu calling on the Obama administration to tighten sanctions on Iran, to getting the RSC to take the same stance a week later, to denouncing the administration's nuclear deal with Iran, to introducing a House resolution on Iran sanctions in December, even taking a stance on the recent academic boycott of Israel by the American Studies Association. Before late last year, Scalise had a conventional Louisiana politician's paid-for-by-the-oil-industry profile, taking the money and doing the bidding of the shipyards, service companies, trade associations and international majors that kept his nose squarely on the grindstone of energy, drilling, and loosening whatever regulations industry balked at. Looking back before his Israel trip, Scalise didn't have a Mideast policy pedigree to speak of. He only got \$2,500 in campaign contributions from pro-Israel PACs out of \$400,000+ in total PAC donations in 2013; a profile of Scalise's rising star published in September 2013 was long on the Affordable Care Act, Scalise's role in budget negotiations, and his fundraising and candidate promoting activities, but not a word on foreign policy. So what prompted Scalise's abrupt entry into the Israel-Iran confrontation? A December 14 article argued that gaining broader policy experience would help the ambitious Scalise's move up the rungs of the Republican party hierarchy, which seems

plausible, and a complementary \$23,000 weeklong trip for you and your wife ain't bad either.

Another possibility is Scalise's other 2013 claim to fame, his expelling from RSC meetings Heritage Action, one of those outside money groups empowered by the Citizens United decision and bankrolling the Tea Party insurgency that's challenging the RSC for power among House Republicans. With his firing of the RSC's director in December for leaking information to outside groups, Scalise furthered his identification with the party leadership against the Tea Party in this civil war among House Republicans. It may not be coincidental that Scalise's sudden conversion to full-throated Israeli advocate comes amidst his purge of the RSC and its consequences for his fundraising and ability to defeat primary challengers from the right. He's likely to need new political allies on Capitol Hill and in his district if he's taking on the insurgent wing of the Republican Party.

All that, though, is Louisiana politics and the internecine intrigues of the Congress, not the politics of Israel and its neighbors into which Scalise has inserted himself. What did Scalise know about the region, anyway, when he took on this new role, and what does he know now? Given his inexperience with the region and the kinds of Israeli leaders he was shuttled to on his November trip, I fear his role will be one of the most hostile in the Congress toward the Palestinian people and one of the most inflammatory toward a military confrontation with Iran in the coming months and years.

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's confrontational stance with Iran is well known, and from his statements since November it appears Scalise and others like him in the Congress will doggedly promote Netanyahu's line for tighter Iran sanctions until Obama vetoes their bill and they back down, or they succeed and Iran either says uncle or revokes its nuclear deal with the P5+1, and/or war begins. It would be nice to think that the Democratic members of the Louisiana Congressional delegation would be a voice of moderation here, but no luck. Senator Landrieu was an original cosponsor of the Nuclear

Weapon Free Iran Act and did so one day before even David Vitter did.

The dangers of sabotaging negotiations with Iran are clear enough, given Iran's potential to help or harm U.S. interests in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon and the limited window of time for negotiations to work before the Iranian hardliners move to displace or sideline Iranian President Rouhani's policies if they only yield tighter sanctions in exchange for Iranian concessions. There are those in the U.S. Congress like Rep. Scalise and Sen. Landrieu, plus their equivalents in the Israeli Knesset and the Iranian Majlis, who prefer ratcheting up the confrontation, and I think we need to challenge them, but the mainstream consensus of U.S. and Israeli policy on Iran is bad enough. I think a more fundamental political and moral critique is called for here.

Rhetoric aside, the U.S. is not really that far from Netanyahu on Iran; it's a question of how tight to tighten the sanctions noose and under what conditions to make good on the threat of use of force. The Iranians are, in my opinion, foolish for digging in their heels so deep on nationalist grounds to preserve their nuclear program, but the Iranians aren't building anything the U.S. and Israel haven't got already, and if the Islamic Republic has demonstrated anything since 1979 it's a determination to hold onto power. The Israeli and American nuclear deterrent guarantees they can't use any nuclear weapons they produce and survive. Behind the spat between Obama and Netanyahu over Iran, nobody in either party in Congress says anything about Israel's right to enrich or how many centrifuges they have at their underground facility in Dimona. Questioning America's right to not just enrichment, or plutonium reactors, or 'breakout capability,' but a massive nuclear weapons arsenal, given that our country incinerated 200,000 Japanese with them and threatened to drop more nukes on numerous non-nuclear countries throughout the Cold War, is almost unthinkable in polite society. Nobody in Jerusalem or Washington will even whisper about collective nuclear security and reciprocal arms control, a Nuclear-Free Zone for the Mideast, because Israel and the U.S. agree on their exclusive monopoly to possess and threaten the

use of weapons of mass destruction in the region. Israel's refusal to join the Non-Proliferation Treaty, its undeclared nuclear weapons and production infrastructure, and its advanced missile and submarine delivery systems, plus the U.S.' oft-stated 'all options are on the table' inferred nuclear threat are never discussed. The slow drip of explicit threats of nuclear attack against Iran in recent months, from Sherman Adelson, major campaign donor to pro-Israeli causes to House Armed Services Committee member Duncan Hunter, show the 'crazies' are not just on the other side of the table.

The nuclear issue is not the only Middle East crisis deeply engaging the U.S. and Israel, nor the only one Representative Scalise heard about on his junket. The Israeli/Palestinian conflict, now subject of a new negotiating initiative by Secretary of State Kerry, was also on the agenda when Scalise met with Prime Minister Netanyahu and four other Israeli officials during his November trip. Who the delegation met with says much about what we can expect from Scalise on the Israeli/Palestinian issue. They were, to a person, well to the right of Netanyahu on the Palestinian issue. Leader of the Jewish Home party and current Minister of Economy and Commerce Naftali Bennett was among Scalise's visits in Israel. Bennett is author of the 'tranquilizing' or Partial Annexation plan which would annex Area C (60%+ of the West Bank) to Israel, including all the settlements, not just the major blocks, and the access roads that break up the Palestinian areas into small disconnected cantons. Bennett's plan would also deny Palestinians statehood forever, maintaining Israeli security control over the Palestinian population centers and refusing any Palestinian right of return not only to Israel, but to the West Bank as well. Jewish Home is now threatening to split from Likud because they think Netanyahu's negotiating stance with the Palestinians is giving away too much. So when Scalise publishes statements like "Prime Minister Netanyahu has proven his commitment to the peace process, and I'm proud to stand by Israel as they manage the delicate balance between protecting their homeland and working toward a two-state solution with the Palestinians," what

two-state solution is Scalise talking about? How can he say he's for a two-state solution when the most moderate person he visits with is Benjamin Netanyahu? The folks he visited in Israel like Bennett are explicitly against a two-state solution; they're for Israeli annexation of most of Palestine.

According to their published press release, Scalise and the delegation also met with Gilad Erdan, Israeli Minister of Home Front Defense, Silvan Shalom, Minister of Energy and Water and Minister for the Development of the Negev and Galilee, and the mayor of Ariel in the occupied West Bank, Eli Shaviro. There's no record they met with any Palestinians, any Israeli Arabs, or anyone from the Israeli left. In the Israeli Knesset Erdan supported policies to revoke the citizenship of people deemed 'disloyal to the state' and told one Israeli Arab Knesset member 'Why don't you just go back to Syria?' for questioning such policies. Shalom's portfolio includes the Development of the Negev and Galilee, the parts of 1949 Israel where large numbers of Arabs still live and where concerted Israeli efforts have focused on tilting the demographic balance towards Jewish Israelis and stifling the development of towns and villages occupied by Arab citizens of Israel, activities that led to the Land Day demonstrations in the Galilee since 1976 and the defeat of the Prawer-Begin Plan to relocate tens of thousands of Arab Bedouin in the Negev last year. Ari Shaviro is the mayor of Ariel, one of the largest Israeli cities in the West Bank, or as the settler movement and Rep. Scalise apparently prefers, 'Judea and Samaria,' code words for asserting an Israeli right to these lands going back to the Old Testament.

Again I have to ask, does Scalise know what he's doing? Where's that Palestinian state Scalise says

he's all for going to be founded if Samaria/the West Bank is annexed to Israel? Bucktown? And which is worse, that he's just playing along for campaign contributions or that he's become a true believer? How can he say he 'stands with Israel' when the only Israelis he meets with are the hardcore pro-settler community that represent no more than 10-20% of Israelis? And anyway, when did Scalise ask how folks feel about this in Hammond or Chalmette or Golden Meadow? I for one, being a Cajun from lower Terrebonne parish in the 1st district, see a lot of parallels between what the Palestinians are living through and what my people had to. We're a diasporic people too, violently dispossessed from our lands and homes and scattered around the world, a common experience for Jews and Palestinians alike. I appreciate Israelis' desire to have a secure national homeland, as the Cajuns and Acadians eventually found in Louisiana and Atlantic Canada, but I can't accept a double standard that doesn't recognize the Palestinians' right to have a state of their own, the right of their diaspora to return to their homeland, and their right to defend themselves. That's nothing more than we would want and nothing more than Israelis have. Scalise, in the company he keeps with opponents of a two-state solution and his vague platitudes in place of an actual position on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict he's thrown himself firmly onto one side of, is being a friend to neither Israel nor Palestine nor Louisiana. He's serving his personal ambitions in Congress. In so doing, he's helping the most expansionist and supremacist Israelis deepen Israel's international isolation and accelerate its descent into the apartheid state its apologists are so quick to defend against.

Brian Marks

The Bienville House Center for Peace and Justice is online!

Check out our website:

<http://www.bienvillehousecenter.org>

And find us on Facebook:

www.facebook.com/BienvilleHouseCenter

*The work of Bienville House is totally membership supported.
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