Are you investing in bombs?

“What’s in your wallet?” asks Samuel L. Jackson in the TV ad. Jackson is shilling credit cards for Capital One, but most of us have a variety of things in our wallets—maybe a health insurance card, a driver’s license, an AAA card, a photo of the kids, a library card, a credit card—those are just a few of the things I found in my wallet.

I went looking not because Samuel L. Jackson asked me to, but because Don’t Bank on the Bomb asked. Don’t Bank on the Bomb is an international campaign of PAX, the Netherlands to mobilize opposition to nuclear weapons production by cutting off the financing of the Bomb.

In the US and around the world, nuclear weapons are produced by corporations—Boeing, Bechtel, Lockheed Martin, Honeywell, just to name a few of the US companies who build bombs and rake in profits doing it. Those companies, in turn, are financed by major financial institutions.

Which is why I was unpleasantly surprised to find that I had nuclear weapons in my wallet. There it was, in small letters on the back of my Working Assets credit card—issued by Bank of America.

Bank of America is one of the top ten US financial institutions that invest in the top 18 financial institutions producing companies—from 2017-2019, Bank of America invested just over 52 billion dollars in US companies that are building nuclear weapons.

In total, the top ten US financial institutions invested $748 billion over the same two year period in the same 18 companies.

It can be hard to keep track of who is who in the corporate and finance worlds these days—a company you might think you know, like cookie maker Nabisco, is actually part of a Mondelez International, a global conglomerate operating in 160 countries with an annual revenue stream of $26 billion, number 117 on the Fortune 500 list.

It’s not much different with financial institutions—if you have money in a pension fund or own stocks or even just have a bank account, your money is being invested somewhere, in some company, hoping to make a profit. It would take a lot of digging to track down exactly where that money is.

Don’t Bank on the Bomb has been digging since 2013. They issue a report every year, and this year’s report is called Shorting our Security—Financing the companies that make nuclear weapons.

“Every investment represents a choice,” writes Susi Snyder in the introduction to the report. Snyder points out the global trend by investors to measure their returns in more than simple financial profit; investors want to do well, but they also want to do good. Institutions get it, sometimes. Bank of America announced at the end of June that it would no longer invest in detention centers or private prisons.

The good news is that nearly one hundred financial institutions have ended their relationship with the nuclear weapons industry since 2017. The bad news is the remaining institutions continue to increase their investments.

Still, the success of the Don’t Bank on the Bomb campaign gives us reason to hope—and to take action. With the recent report from PAX, we in the United States can see more clearly not only who is building bombs, but who is buying them.

So, what to do about my credit card? In the wake of the release of the 2019 DBOTB report, I wrote to Working Assets asking them to consider alternatives to Bank of America. I have yet to hear back.

The Alliance for Nuclear Accountability, of which OREPA is a member, banks at Bank of America—a matter of convenience when we set up the account with a bookkeeper in Georgia, staff in Washington, DC, and New Mexico, and a Treasurer in Tennessee. ANA has written a letter the president of Bank of America as a first step—we have not continued...
heard back. Depending on the response (or non-response) we will take further steps. These could involve maintaining a small account in order to practice "shareholder activism," working for change from the inside, and would also likely mean finding another financial institution for most of our banking services.

Snyder writes, “We made Don’t Bank on the Bomb because everyone can do something about the nuclear weapons threat.” She is right. Investor activism has a history of success—think the Nestle boycott, or the California grape boycott, or the South Africa divestment campaign—and Don’t Bank on the Bomb is giving us the primary tool we need—information.

At the OREPA Board retreat in June, we decided that we would devote some of our time, energy and resources to help build the Don’t Bank on the Bomb campaign in the US. We are counting on you to put flesh on that commitment.

Taking action doesn’t have to be a solitory effort—you can download the 2019 DBOTB report from their website and share it with friends, family, your local peace group or social concerns committee at church. Starting the conversation need not be difficult; it can be as easy as asking the question: What’s in your wallet?

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, known as the Ban Treaty, was passed by 120 countries at the United Nations in July 2017. In order to enter into force, the Treaty needs 50 countries to sign and ratify it.

The process differs from country to country. Some countries have a one-step process, but most separate signing and ratification. In the United States, a President can sign a treaty, but the Senate must ratify it before the country is formally committed to the terms of the agreement.

Seventy nations have signed the Treaty. So far, twenty-three nations have ratified the treaty. Kazakhstan is poised to become the 24th; its Senate ratified the treaty and sent it to the President for signature.

In the US House of Representatives, a resolution introduced by Jim McGovern and Earl Blumenauer, H. Res. 302, calls on the President to align US policy with the goals of the United Nations’ Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and make nuclear disarmament the centerpiece of national security policy.

In some parts of the country, people are not waiting for Congress or the White House. In May, Physicians for Social Responsibility, backed by thirty-one other organizations, was successful in efforts to make Oregon the third state, after California and New Jersey, to pass a resolution calling on the US Congress to support the Ban Treaty.

Towns and cities are getting in on the action, too. Takoma Park, MD, was the first city to pass a resolution in support of the Ban Treaty. From towns as small as Leverett, MA, to major cities—Washington, DC and Los Angeles, CA—governing bodies have passed resolutions in support of the Ban Treaty.

In June, Santa Barbara, CA, thanks to the efforts of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, became the latest US city to vote to support the Treaty. You can track the Treaty’s progress at icanw.org
“This hell is not a thing of the past…”

Remembering Hiroshima and Nagasaki

“In our town, we had the warmth of family life, the deep human bonds of community, festivals heralding each season, traditional culture and buildings passed down through history, as well as riversides where children played. Please listen to what I say next as if you and your loved ones were there.

“At 8:15 comes a blinding flash. A fireball more than a million degrees Celsius releases intense radiation, heat, and then, a tremendous blast. Below the roiling mushroom cloud, innocent lives are snuffed out as the city is obliterated…”

Those words, from past years’ Peace Declarations by Hiroshima Mayor Matsui Kazumi, summon us to Oak Ridge in the early morning hours of August 6. We will gather at 6:00am across from the main entrance to the Y-12 nuclear weapons complex, where the uranium that fueled the Little Boy bomb was enriched and the atrocity that will live forever in human memory—the destruction of Hiroshima—was born.

Our gathering will be a solemn remembrance of that day, calling forth the names of those who perished, and reading the first-hand witness of some who survived. Our readings, punctuated by a tolling bell, are accompanied by the tying of peace cranes on the fence.

Why join us? In the 2017 Peace Declaration, Mayor Matsui wrote: “This hell is not a thing of the past. As long as nuclear weapons exist and policy-makers threaten their use, their horror could leap into our present at any moment.”

The work of creating nuclear weapons of mass destruction goes on at the Y-12 complex in Oak Ridge, where construction is underway for a new bomb plant, the Uranium Processing Facility.

It is important to bear witness to Hiroshima in this place, where the bomb was born, and to join our voices with the hibakusha who say, “Never again!”

The August 6 Names and Remembrance ceremony will be held from 6:00 – 9:00am. Everyone is welcomed to join and participate.

Three days after Hiroshima came the second bomb, and the city of Nagasaki lay in ruins, tens of thousands immolated in an instant, the stone faces of saints in front of Urakami Church blasted clean of all features.

We remember Nagasaki with our annual Peace Lantern Ceremony on August 9 at the far west end parking lot of Sequoyah Park in Knoxville—follow Cherokee Boulevard nearly to the end, and you’ll find us in the field next to the parking lot at 8:00pm.

The ceremony, which includes a Litany of Hope, Buddhist drumming and chanting, traditional Japanese folk dancing, and shadow puppets, concludes with the launching of peace lanterns into the Tennessee River.

The Peace Lantern ceremony is family-friendly, and everyone is welcome.

A Peace Pilgrimage from the Great Smoky Mountains Peace Pagoda to the gates of Y-12 will take place from July 28 - August 6. If you would like to walk, for an hour or a day or more, contact Denise Laffan at 404-627-8948.

Remember Hiroshima and Nagasaki

Tuesday, August 6, 2019
Names and Remembrance Ceremony
6:00 - 9:00am
Y-12 Nuclear Weapons Complex
Oak Ridge, Tennessee

Friday, August 9, 2019
Peace Lantern Ceremony
8:00pm
Sequoyah Park, Cherokee Blvd, west end
Knoxville, Tennessee

Support the Ban Treaty
OREPA turns 30 with a party

**The 20 Foot Long Timeline** stretching across the back of the room told the story on paper, starting in 1988, of the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance.

But it was the rest of the room, filled with the people who held the vigils, marched in the marches, spoke at the hearings, crossed the line, went to jail and prison, carried puppets and created skits, made presentations, baked bread, led nonviolence workshops, sang, danced and laughed, that told the bigger story—how an effort to hold one demonstration at the Y-12 bomb plant in Oak Ridge became a community of people who would work relentlessly for thirty years, and counting, to stop nuclear weapons.

A TV and a laptop told OREPA’s story in pictures, starting with the first press conference and leading up to the present day. Joseph Rodgers (below) came to talk about the nuclear threat today, and he brought encouraging information about the technologies and efforts being developed to aid in nonproliferation and, eventually, complete disarmament itself.

The Emancipators sang, we ate Barbara Hickey’s cake and enjoyed falafels and more from Yassin’s. We also played games and shared memories and enjoyed being with friends old and new.

It was not all about the past, though. As we moved through the evening the focus shifted from past to future. Lee Ann Swarm explained the Next Generation Fund, OREPA’s effort to raise $150,000 dedicated to organizing young people to take up the torch of nuclear abolition.

Lee Ann also announced that OREPA has received a commitment from two donors to match all first time Next Generation donations up to $6,000.

And then the Emancipators led the crowd in a rousing performance of a song written just for the occasion—the chorus: “So raise up your glasses and cut loose your cheers! Here’s to OREPA and thirty more years!”

We aren’t waiting until we raise all the money to begin reaching out to young people. Next Generation funds made it possible for OREPA to take two young people to Washington, DC, for DC Days again this year.

The Next Generation campaign is asking people to make a significant investment in the future of OREPA, over and above our regular support. Contributions are tax deductible and can be spread out over two years.

You can request a pledge card from OREPA by email (orep@earthlink.net) or regular old mail: P O Box 5743, Oak Ridge, TN 37831. You can also just make a donation—by mail or on-line if you prefer; OREPA’s web site has a secure donation button—you can use a credit card or paypal. Some donors have set up recurring paypal donations, an almost painless way to provide consistent support for OREPA’s work.

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**Thirty more years!**

Who would have believed back in 1988
That a few determined activists would manage to create
A community of hope to face down our greatest fears
That would still be here and working after all these years

Judith Hallock and Steve Smith met as they returned
From the Nevada Test Site where they both had got sunburned.
Steve said, “We don’t have to go out west to protest nukes, you see,
There’s a bomb plant that’s much closer in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.”

So they hatched a plan to organize though they knew it would be hard
People weren’t inclined to speak of the bomb plant in their back yard
They were nonviolent, but all the same stood strong in their defiance
With Stephen Clements formed the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance

So raise up your glasses and cut loose your cheers
**Here’s to OREPA and thirty more years!**

In that first demonstration, they marched to the blue line
Five people were arrested and that was the first time
But not the last, for hundreds followed, some to prison or to jail
They persevered because they knew that they could not afford to fail

It became a small community of kids and dads and moms
Women, men and children who worked to stop the bombs
They carried puppets in parades created skits and made up songs
When they spoke at public hearings their “No!” was clear and strong

Sunday after Sunday no matter what the weather
They gathered for a vigil; in peace they came together
DOE thought they could stop them and put up another fence
Only to learn that they were powerless against nonviolence

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**So raise up your glasses and cut loose your cheers**
**Here’s to OREPA and thirty more years!**

In 2005 the government declared that it would spend our gold
To build a billion dollar bomb plant ‘cause the old one was, well, old
They said they were determined to build the UPF
But here we are, twenty-nineteen, and they ain’t built it yet

So thirty years have come and gone and we are here to say
We’re determined to keep at it ‘til the nukes have gone away
Together we’ll push on until we reach our destination
Or we’ll pass the torch of peace and light to the Next Generation

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**So raise up your glasses and cut loose your cheers**
**Here’s to OREPA and thirty more years!**
OREPA in DC

Flo Paquet, Eric Sherwood, Ann Myers, Betty Coleman and Ralph Hutchison made up the OREPA delegation to the 31st annual Alliance for Nuclear Accountability’s DC Days in May.

An intensive day of training on Sunday was followed by meetings, walking, more meetings and more walking. More than 70 people from across the country joined us as we made the rounds.

Among the “asks” we delivered to Congress was an end to funding for the UPF bomb plant in Oak Ridge. We also met with the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, the Government Accountability Office, and officials from the Department of Energy.

The photos below capture some of the DC Days spirit. From the top: Don Hancock of the Southwest Research and Information Center leads a training workshop on Waste and Cleanup issues; Ann Myers, Ralph Hutchison, Molly Johnson, Cee' Cee' Anderson and Betty Coleman at the Monday pizza party; and Rick Wayman of the Nuclear Peace Foundation presents a Grassroots Award to Denise Duffield of Los Angeles Physicians for Social Responsibility at the Tuesday evening reception on Capitol Hill.

Tax Day Action report

Would you rather have your tax dollars spent on education, health care, the environment, or the UPF bomb plant?

That was the question of the day on Market Square in downtown Knoxville on April 15—it was another OREPA Tax Day Action.

This year, passersby were invited to participate in a very unscientific poll—to choose where they wanted their tax dollars spent by throwing their $2 million ball (that’s how much is spent every day on the UPF bomb plant in Oak Ridge) into one of the hoops.

For the second year in a row, not one taxpayer chose the bomb plant—votes were evenly divided among the other three priorities.

It was a good day. We had fun and educated people. But don’t take our word for it—check out the photos!

Above left: Marcia Free and Betty Coleman hold the sign inviting people to play April Madness. Above, right: Mary Dennis Lentsch explains the scheme to a man on his way to lunch. Right, he promptly shoots over Lamar Alexander, choosing to invest in education, only to be shocked when the Senator claims the ball is “still alive!” before he takes it and deposits it into his UPF Bomb Plant basket. Nearly four dozen people played the game. Afterward, we headed to the Senator’s office (below), where we read him the results of our “poll,” and called on him to redirect taxpayer dollars from the bomb plant to more beneficial purposes. We then went inside to deliver the statement to the Senator’s staff.
Wait — another bomb plant? Not one, but two!

NNSA PLANS TO MAKE PLUTONIUM PITS IN NEW MEXICO & SOUTH CAROLINA

Don’t look now, but the National Nuclear Security Administration wants to build another bomb plant or two—this time to make plutonium pits for new nuclear weapons.

In early June, under pressure from grassroots groups across the country, NNSA announced that it would prepare the legally required environmental reviews for its plans. Almost.

The story of how we got here could easily fill a book. In fact, it has. More than one. Google The Ambushed Grand Jury and/or Full Body Burden. We have only one page, so here’s the short version.

Some years ago, Congress decided, even though we are not producing new design nuclear weapons, and even though we have 20,000 pits in storage at Pantex in Amarillo, TX, that the US needs to have the capacity to make 80 new plutonium pits per year.

Currently, the only place the US can make plutonium pits is Los Alamos National Lab, and it has made a few dozen pits since the Rocky Flats plant closed in 1989 after an FBI investigation and raid. But there are two problems with making pits at LANL—one is they don’t have the capacity to make more than twenty or so a year, and two is the lab is constantly plagued by safety and performance problems.

Nevertheless, the NNSA has declared that it will meet its required capacity by making 30 pits a year at Los Alamos and, in a monumental homage to government efficiency, it will build an entire new pit facility at the Savannah River Site to produce 50 pits per year.

These plans were announced, and hundreds of millions of dollars were written into the budget, when our colleagues in South Carolina, New Mexico and California challenged the NNSA in mid-May on its failure to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement. They got results.

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

On June 10th, NNSA announced it would prepare an EIS for the new facility at Savannah River, with the first public scoping meeting to be held June 27, in the middle of a 30 day comment period.

NNSA also announced it would prepare a Supplement Analysis—a document that looks at the 1996 Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement that selected Los Alamos as the site for pit production and placed a limit of 20 on the number of pits that could safely be made there.

On June 26, NNSA announced the Supplement Analysis was completed and a draft would be released for public comment.

Why the mad dash all of a sudden to get these bomb plants started? The answer to that is political—with a Republican president and Senate, weaponeers are anxious to get as much money in the pipeline to their pet nuclear bomb projects as they possibly can.

The last time NNSA proposed expanding pit production the public outcry forced them to back down—that and a report from the JASON that undermined their contention that old pits were unreliable; the JASON found the pits would last at least 40 more years, and likely longer.

IT’S UP TO US

So—most readers of the OREPA newsletter know how this works because we went to hearings and submitted comments on the UPF bomb plant. It’s time, once again, for us to be heard on the question of nuclear weapons.

Your message can be simple:
- There is no need to make more plutonium pits when we have 20,000 in storage.
- The US needs to have a plutonium bomb plant exactly like an eight-year-old needs a pony.
- There is no way to safely make pits anywhere.
- It is especially crazy (and wasteful) to build duplicate facilities in two places.
- What NNSA must do is reopen the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement and justify its statement of need and its plans for production at two sites. That’s the cart. Then it must conduct thorough site-specific EISes at each site. That’s the horse. The way it is now, NNSA is producing an EIS for Savannah River when it has not even made a programmatic decision to build pits there.

The first step in the Savannah River EIS process is called scoping, when the agency tries to identify all the issues it must consider. Scoping includes the public.

WHEN AND WHERE TO WRITE

You have until July 25 to send scoping comments on the Savannah River Site proposed bomb plant to Jennifer Nelson, NNSA NEPA Document Manager, P O Box A, Aiken, SC 29802 or you can email them to her at NEPA-SRS@srs.gov.

The Draft Supplement Analysis on the entire program is available on line at: https://www.energy.gov/nepa/downloads/eis-0236-s4-sa-02-draft-supplement-analysis. (sorry, that’s just what it is…) Comments on the draft SA should be sent to the same Jennifer Nelson, at the same address, by August 12, 2019.

The Alliance for Nuclear Accountability will be preparing additional talking points for people wanting to participate in this NEPA process; when they are completed, they will be posted at ananuclear.org.