

Too high a cost

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I had the privilege to march in Akron's annual Welcome Santa Parade on Nov. 24 with the American Friends Service Committee.

There were 14 of us, five carrying large banners and the rest holding small signs that said: "Support the troops. End the war now."

The banners stated that *one day's cost* of the war could pay for any one of the following:

One year's health care for 163,525 adults or 423,529 children.

Eighty-four elementary schools.

An additional 12,478 elementary-school teachers.

Head Start spots for 93,364 children.

School lunches for 1,153,846 children for a year.

Four-year scholarships for 34,904 college students.

Homes for 6,482 families.

Renewable electricity for 1,274,336 homes.

How can anyone think the occupation of Iraq is a good use of our troops and national treasure?

As we passed the reviewing stand, announcers mentioned that AFSC had won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947. (Go to <http://www.afsc.org> for information on this wonderful organization and the figures quoted above.)

I was surprised by how many people cheered as we went by. Many people yelled their thanks to us for coming out. One group chanted, "Bring them home! Bring them home!" Our members who gave out fliers with information on the war's cost said people along the route actually asked for them. After the parade, as we were packing up, lots of people walking by thanked us again.

In his Nov. 29 letter headlined "Raining on the parade," Thomas L. Dye wrote, "American troops in Iraq want the support of the AFSC about as much as they would have liked to have had Saddam Hussein's support." I don't know what he was trying to imply about American troops, but it certainly doesn't sound supportive.

From the response we got from the crowd, it seemed people felt enlightened rather than rained upon.

Thank you for your support, Akron. It was a gratifying experience.

Mickey Stefanik
Akron