

Subject: Draft for rolling thunder

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From: Dennis Burke <burke@fastq.com>

To: Doris Haddock <grannyd@monad.net>, Jim Haddock <gofish12@excite.com>

Thank you.

Well here we all are again, some of us together for the first time but many of us now getting to know each other rather well. This has been a special time in the history of our nation. Through our anger and our pain we also find great joy. It is the joy of making our lives mean something—it is the joy of connecting with deep values and worthy dreams.

And in the past few months I have come to understand that human values and truth are winning, as they sometimes do. They are lighting up the dark and challenging the politics of fear and lies with the politics of love and truth.

We don't know how many times we will be able to meet together—life is short—so we should savor these moments. We should take a moment to recognize what has been done by a small group of these friends here present.

One of my favorite moments in this hard time was when, in a District of Columbia courtroom, as I stood accused of reading the Declaration of Independence aloud in the Capitol Rotunda, and for which I and many of my friends had been arrested and jailed--we were there to push for campaign finance reform and to ask Congress to declare its independence from special interest money--the judge passed judgment on us. He could have kept us in jail for some time, of course. What dear old Judge Hamilton said was exactly this--it is from the court record: "As you know, the strength of our great country lies in its Constitution and her laws and in her courts. But

more fundamentally, the strength of our great country lies in the resolve of her citizens to stand up for what is right when the masses are silent. And, unfortunately, sometimes it becomes the lot of the few, sometimes like yourselves, to stand up for what's right when the masses are silent."

Well, he wasn't just speaking to me and to my friends in that room. He was speaking to you--you brave souls who dared be Americans when that meant speaking out for the soul of your nation, against a torrent tide of madness. It became the lot of the few to speak out even when the greatest newspapers and news broadcasters were silent, and when our very Congress was spineless and complicit. You stood in small groups on street corners with signs. You wrote letters and you protested and you emailed, emailed, emailed and shared what you could find out. You suffered name calling and abuse and many of you went to jail. Our founding fathers led a revolution with bravery, but they were a strong brotherhood of great men acting together, and sometimes it was just you, and just him, and just her, and I want to say how proud I am of all of you, for the tide has turned and you have turned it.

Don't applaud—I have better use for your hands. Put them on your brother and sister's shoulder, friends, for we happy few have done something.

And sure, we have a long way to go, and the suffering is only beginning, and the forces of fear are still in their ascendancy, though we now see their mortal arc. We know now that a sleeping nation has awakened and our dear neighbors and our Congressmen and newsmen and who were so long asleep or so bent under their anchor desks in fear have begun to remember who they are and what there jobs are.

And who was it who held the torch while they were away but you, and you, and you--ye band of sisters and brothers?

Can we see forward to a time when the American government represents, all over the world, the best and happiest instincts of the American people? Can we see a time when we, each of us, can live in responsible balance with nature and all other people? Can we evolve to our better selves as a nation, whose people are at the reins of our own government and whose harsh past, harsh from its very beginning, can move into the light? What better thing have we got to do?

Indeed, we have waited for the last minute, for the glaciers of our beautiful old planet are melting and the people we have injured and oppressed are no longer impossibly far away. We have come to a century of come-uppance, and we can, I believe in my heart, come up to it. We have no choice, nor would we want any other choice but to do our honorable best in the broad world and here at home.

And now we have our election coming.

Well, we all have jobs to do in the next months. Many of you will work for candidates. I think you must do that, and spare the fighting among yourselves in favor of moving the message out to those who have given up on voting. We need those votes, friends, and they do not come toward negative campaigning.

For myself, I intend to do one thing in this election.

Let me tell you that, for many long years, I worked in a shoe factory in Manchester, New Hampshire. I know what it means to be a working woman. It is hard in this culture, for there are many demands placed upon you. There is little time for anything but for life's

essentials.

In this election, voting has become one of life's essentials.

I want to help as many working women as possible by bringing them what they need to register to vote and to see that they have the time off to vote, the rides to the polls or the reminders they need to do this important thing for themselves, their retirement, their families, and for their America and its freedoms and its justice.

I love my little house in the woods of New Hampshire. I am comfortable there, next to a bright stream. But I will be happy to run an errand, and I will do it very soon. I will travel to work sites where women work to bring them what they need to vote. I will walk through many towns to do this, finding as many workplaces as I can, and I am going to buy a little red wagon for my voter supplies. I will be happy to hitch a ride between towns so that I can cover the ground more quickly than when I walked the nation. My friends have helped me map it out. We will cover 36 states and, with the help of my friends, we will visit 100,000 workplaces. There is only one thing that could possibly keep me from getting back home in time to vote, and either way I shall be happy.

I do expect to be around for several more elections, but you never know. If this is my last wish tour, then my last wish is that America's women, who worked so hard amid great violence for the right to vote, take that now as a sacred duty in 2004. It is not particularly easy to travel at my age, but I hope they will take my little sacrifice as a nudge to inconvenience themselves and vote.

I will need your help. Go to GrannyD.com and sign up to help me along the way. And if there is something I can do along the way to help you in your own mission, just ask.

Our friends and neighbors are full of common sense, and that is what a democracy requires. If they have good information from awakened news people and from candidates who will please, God, spare us the platitudes and spend their millions on useful information so that a great nation might make an informed choice, then we have good reason to let our hearts fill with hope. We must all talk-up the election. We must all share information with our neighbors. We must speak in calm tones and respect the dignity of our opponents even when it is clear they are scoundrels. And then we must vote and take our neighbors to vote and call from lists that we must make to see that this is a turnout like no other. And then our democracy will be safe enough to begin its larger awakening, and God help us to see that day, for the world and all nature awaits that joy.

Thank you, friends.