

## METROWEST

### RIFT

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peace movement said that the main sponsor of the Sept. 24 rally; United for Peace and Justice, agreed to keep ANSWER off the sponsors' list, but changed its mind four weeks ago.

"The Shalom Center had been urging Jewish support for the anti-war weekend," wrote Waskow, "and we and many other progressives felt betrayed and outraged by the change."

The ANSWER Web site lists

among its positions "support of the Palestinian People's Right of Return," a position considered anathema among pro-Israel activists on the left and right.

To Surovell, whose grassroots group in the Oranges has been focusing on peace efforts in Israel as well as Iraq, the "right of return" is "another way of saying to dissolve the state of Israel as it currently exists. As such, I regard that as a call for war, not a call for peace. To call for the dismantlement of Israel is a threat."

ANSWER's advocacy of Palestinians regaining lands lost after Israel's independence in 1948 "is totally antithetical to a two-state solution, which is what we are working for, and I resent having to march under that banner," Surovell said.

Nevertheless, he and his group will march on Saturday.

"On the war issue, we are essentially united, and that will be our main purpose for going to Washington," he said. "We will be joining with everybody else who is against the war. But at the same time, because...a group is going to be proclaiming another demand and we are all going to be assembled as that demand is being raised from the podium, we feel it is necessary to speak out against it."

"I don't have a problem with somebody coming to the rally and holding up a banner supporting the right of return," said Surovell. "You cannot control what people are going to say, because it's a public event and people can say whatever they want. What I'm protesting is that this is an official demand of one of the organizers of the event."

But others in New Jersey's peace movement disagree with Surovell's plans to highlight ANSWER's positions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Maplewood activist Amy Higer, a member of the South Orange-Maplewood Committee to Stop the War, acknowledged that ANSWER's stance on the conflict troubled Israel's supporters. "But I don't think that's a reason not to participate and to get as many people down there as possible to make the statement against the war in Iraq," she said. "I think you have to let some things go if you want to have a broad-based movement."



Paul Surovell, a Maplewood resident who chairs South Mountain Peace Action, delivers a stack of antiwar petitions to Lisa Plevin, Sen. Frank Lautenberg's (D-NJ) deputy director in New Jersey.

Photo courtesy South Mountain Peace Action

IN PURSUIT of its double-billed objectives of promoting peaceful solutions in Israel and Iraq, South Mountain Peace Action has scheduled two events in Maplewood in upcoming weeks.

On Monday, Oct. 17, former United Nations weapons inspector Scott Ritter will discuss his new book, *Iraq Confidential*, at 7 p.m. at the Woman's Club of Maplewood, 60 Woodland Rd. Admission is free.

And on Monday, Nov. 7, Mark Rosenblum, founder and political director of Americans for Peace Now, and Rafi Dajani, executive director of the American Task Force on Palestine, will discuss their common advocacy of a two-state solution. The event will also take place at 7 p.m. at the Women's Club of Maplewood.

SMPA was careful to disassociate itself from another event, since canceled, whose main speaker advocates a binational state of Palestinians and Israelis. The speaker, New York University professor Tony Judt, was to appear locally in a speech sponsored by several local peace groups. "South Mountain Peace Action is NOT a co-sponsor," SPMA chair Paul Surovell wrote in an e-mail to supporters. "We pointedly DECLINED an invitation to co-sponsor the event, citing professor Judt's rejection of a two-state solution in Israel and Palestine and his advocacy instead of a secular, unitary state that would involve the dismantlement of Israel as a Jewish state and the denial of an independent Palestinian state...on the West Bank and Gaza."

"This is a position antithetical to that of South Mountain Peace Action."

— ROBERT WIENER

with" some of ANSWER's positions.

But, she said, her group is single-issue oriented, unlike the SMPA, which is concentrating some of its efforts on supporting a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine. (See related story.) The Committee to Stop the War was formed last winter and has "about 20 core members and about 60 on our e-mail lists," she said.

"Theirs is more broad-based," she said of the South Mountain group. "We wanted to focus just on the war in Iraq and on stopping this war."

Higer said her organization "has no position whatsoever on the dispute between Israel and the Palestinians," and "we don't even have a unified position on the war in Iraq. Some of us think the U.S. should pull out immediately, and some of us think that would be a mistake. Our focus is we need to think about the best course of action to stop the killing and stop the people dying

just complicates it. People have an emotional attachment to Israel, and I understand that and I support Israel, but it is hard to have a conversation with some groups when you bring in the Palestinian-Israeli issue."

### Against Israel's interest

Surovell told *NJ Jewish News* he found very few Jews who support the war.

"Based on my intuitive response, the overwhelming majority of Jews whom I've spoken to about Iraq are against our being there," he said. "They feel it's really against the interest of Israel because it is encouraging and becoming a source of recruitment and finance for terrorists, many of whom will probably be directing their terrorism at Israel."

Higer, who said her group has "a lot of Jewish people...and a lot of non-Jews," agrees. "We all feel similarly on the issue. This war was wrong. It was illegal. It was immoral.