

Photonics In Rochester, A Question of Values

Guest post by George Payne of Gandhi Earth Keepers, International. George follows local and global issues, and has a radio show on Rochester Free Radio called The Broken Spear.

The \$600 million photonics hub promises to create manufacturing jobs and spur innovation in the science of light, robotics and medical imagery. Senator Charles Schumer has stated:

By combining the academic and research resources of the University of Rochester, Rochester Institute of Technology, and SUNY Polytechnic Institute together with the hundreds of New York photonics companies in Rochester and beyond, Rochester will be able to lead the way in this cutting-edge industry with some of the finest minds in the world.

I agree that photonics research in Rochester is important. But do we need more improvements in the areas of drone, cyber and terrestrial warfare? Do we need more money spent on missiles, lasers, radars, and countless other gadgets and systems which maintain the global business of war? Should we not be concerned about the merger between private industry, research universities and the military?

Last week the world observed the 70 year anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. 66,000 people were horrifically killed at Hiroshima out of a population of 255,000. The bomb was a result of weapons research using public tax money, university scientists and laboratories, commercial manufacturing, and guidance from the Department of Defense. Without the genius of J. Robert Oppenheimer of the University of California Berkeley, the study of weapon detonation by professor John H.

Manley, Robert Serber of the University of Illinois, who examined the problems of neutron diffusion, and several theoretical physicists from the University of Chicago, the bomb would not have been possible.

We have a moral obligation to challenge the military industrial complex. War will never come to an end as long as communities like Rochester succumb to the insane policy of killing lives in order to save lives. As much as I want to support this venture, as a community of conscience we should not tread cavalierly into this alliance. In the words of Gandhi, "The means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree; and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree."

Why should we design lasers that heal disease on the same campuses where similar technologies are being developed to terrorize populations in other countries? Moreover, why should we recruit brilliant minds to design faster computers with the same grant money used to feed a world wide addiction to war that has the power to make communication between people impossible? These are important questions that all of us should be asking before hopping on the photonics bandwagon