



# Nebraska Report

*There is no Peace without Justice*

OCTOBER 2005

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## Lessons from New Orleans

by Terry Werner

In November 2001, when the American people were still reeling from the events of 9/11, I spoke out publicly against the war in Afghanistan. I did so because I felt an obligation as a public official. I said then that the war, combined with Bush's "voodoo economics," would have a devastating affect on our local economy.

At a news conference in front of the City/County Building in Lincoln, I stated, "With every passing day, I believe it becomes ever more obvious that we as taxpayers are not getting the political or economic value from the billions of dollars that have been spent on bombing Afghanistan over the past six weeks. As an elected official responsible for protecting the public trust, I am further concerned at how our government is using this national tragedy to promote ill-conceived tax credits, reckless abandonment of our environment, bail-

outs of businesses that are poorly run and wild military spending with little regard for the American worker and small business."

In April 2005, as I was seeking reelection to the Lincoln City Council, I was viciously attacked for my anti-war actions. In a smear campaign based on innuendo and lies that reached into the highest levels of the state Republican Party, I was called "unpatriotic" and accused of opposing our troops. The month-long, non-stop barrage of mass mailings and radio and television ads had the intended effect. After finishing well in the primary, I lost decisively in the general election.

Then, less than four months later, I looked sadly on as Hurricane Katrina struck

Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, destroying New Orleans and leaving thousands dead and hundreds of thousands homeless. And, as I followed the coverage, slowly the story started dribbling out that



*Terry Werner*

everything I'd warned about had come true with a vengeance. To wage the "War on Terror" and underwrite the cost of the Iraq Occupation, domestic needs from infrastructure to emergency services to even the troop strength levels of the Louisiana and Mississippi National Guard had been deliberately and tragically sacrificed. The Category 4 storm winds of Hurricane Katrina exposed to

the world just how much the Bush Administration's warmongering had damaged America's domestic security.

And what makes their conduct all the more culpable is that George Bush and Dick Cheney were well aware of the risks to which they were subjecting our citizens here at home. According to the *New York Times*, "Before 9/11 the Federal Emergency Management Agency listed the three most likely catastrophic disasters facing America: a terrorist attack on New York, a major earthquake in San Francisco and a hurricane strike on New Orleans." ('A Can't-Do Government' 9/2/05)

Despite a myriad of warnings, however, the administration continued to cut funds earmarked for New Orleans flood control. Michael Parker, the former head of the Army Corps of Engineers, resigned in 2002 over disagreements over the Bush budget. Parker, a former Republican member of Congress from Mississippi, argued before the Senate Budget Committee in 2002 "that a White

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## 2005 Annual Peace Conference

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Nebraskans for Peace  
941 'O' St., Ste. 1026  
Lincoln, NE 68508  
Phone: 402-475-4620/Fax: 475-4624  
nfpstate@nebraskansforpeace.org  
www.nebraskansforpeace.org

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*Mark Vasina, Christy Hargesheimer, Bud Narveson, Marsha Fangmeyer*

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## NFP Chapter & Affiliate

### Contact Information

Crete Chapter .....	Pat Wikel .....	402-826-4818
Lincoln Chapter .....	State Office .....	402-475-4620
Omaha Chapter .....	Cary Vigneri .....	402-453-0776
Scottsbluff Chapter .....	Byron Peterson .....	308-783-1412
Southwest Nebraska Chapter .....	Dennis Demmel .....	308-352-4078
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Contact the NFP State Office for information on the UNL, UNO, UNK, Creighton and Nebraska Wesleyan University and Hastings & Doane College Chapters



## Latin America Briefs

compiled by Christy Hargesheimer



## Breaking News: Hugo Chávez Is Still Alive!

We begin this month's Briefs with a quiz. Can you identify the following quotes?

1. "You know, I don't know about this doctrine of assassination, but if he thinks we're trying to assassinate him, I think that we really ought to go ahead and do it. It's a whole lot cheaper than starting a war... We have the ability to take him out, and I think the time has come that we exercise that ability. We don't need another \$200 billion war to get rid of one, you know, strong-arm dictator. It's a whole lot easier to have some of the covert operatives do the job and then get it over with."
2. "It's a huge hypocrisy to maintain this discourse against terrorism and at the same time, in the heart of that country, there are entirely terrorist statements like those... [and such comments] reveal that religious fundamentalism is one of the great problems facing humanity in these times."
3. "I don't even know who he is."
4. "...only God can punish crimes of such magnitude."
5. "Our department doesn't do that kind of thing. It's against the law. He's a private citizen. Private citizens say all kinds of things all the time."

Answers: (1) Presumed Christian Pat Robertson, speaking about Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez to his *700 Club* in August, 2005; (2) Venezuelan Vice President José Vicente Rangel, addressing Robertson's remarks and U.S. policy; (3) Hugo Chávez, about Robertson; (4) Presumed atheist Fidel Castro, about Robertson's remarks; (5) U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, as the U.S. tried to distance itself from Robertson.

\*Note: Even the disaster of Hurricane Katrina and subsequent relief debacle were not enough to momentarily blunt the Bush Administration's hostility toward Venezuela and Cuba. Fidel Castro wanted to send 500 doctors to the afflicted area, and President Chávez offered access to Venezuela's oil. Both offers were declined by the White House.

## Guatemalan Femicides

With the international attention on rampant killings of women in Ciudad Juárez and in Chihuahua, Mexico, now around 420 since 1993, scant attention has been paid to the femicide in Guatemala. Tolerance by the state and societal indifference toward all forms of violence against women are the causes, according to Amnesty International. Guatemalan National Civilian Police have reported 1,903 murders from 2000 through June of 2005. Between 2002 and 2004, the killings of women rose by 57 percent. The government's response, which has consisted of the creation of institutions to promote and protect the rights of women, and the introduction of specific laws and the drafting of policy proposals, has done little to stem the violence. They are nothing but words on paper, and there are no consequences. The high level of impunity means that perpetrators have evaded prosecution. (Ten policemen are prime suspects, but they remain at large.)

Victims tend to be poor women under 40 years of age. Corpses found show unspeakable signs of torture and sexual abuse. The government blames gangs and drug dealers, but gender inequity is also offered as an explanation; domestic violence is rampant because women are considered to be the property of men. After 1,600 murders, only six convictions were obtained, and 68 arrests initiated. According to Guatemalan law, domestic violence and sexual harassment are not crimes, and even President Oscar Berger trivialized the murders of women by saying that "Only eight percent of people murdered are women." The climate of terror during the 36-year-long civil war that ended in 1996 has been perpetuated with these femicides. Former and probably even current security forces are possibly involved in the killings, because after the war many former soldiers could not find jobs and turned to organized crime. The cycle of violence escalated from 60 murders of women in 2000, to 527 in 2004; in the first half of 2005 the number was 313.

And the world doesn't even notice.

*Tired of Paying for War?*

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# Lessons from New Orleans, continued

House proposal to cut just over \$2 billion from the Corp's \$6 billion budget request would have a 'negative impact' on the national interests." In fact, the Corps construction budget for New Orleans went from \$147 million in fiscal 2001 to an administration 2006-proposed budget of \$56 million. ('Ex-Army Corps official say budget cuts imperiled flood mitigation efforts' *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* 9/2/05)

**The crisis we now find ourselves in is not, alas, confined to New Orleans. The thousands needlessly dead, the flawed relief response by FEMA and the short-staffed National Guard, the city turned cesspool, and the lack of funds available for reconstruction not only make a mockery of the administration's notion of "homeland security." They provide a harrowing glimpse of what the future**

The Federal Emergency Management Agency fell victim to a similar fate. Demoted from a cabinet post and placed under the 9/11-inspired Department of Homeland Security, FEMA saw its mission and funding seriously truncated, and its readiness to respond suffer. As one observer noted, aid reached the Asian tsunami victims in developing world faster than the federal government got it to New Orleans. European reaction to the relief debacle was a mixture of "shock and awe." The French daily *Le Monde* editorialized September 5, "Despite its military and economic potential, which it is quick to deploy abroad, the

hyperpower is incapable of dealing with an internal catastrophe of this dimension. Is it reasonable to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to fight in Iraq when America is incapable of protecting its own citizens?" Another French daily, *Liberation*, was even harsher in its assessment, contrasting the scenes of devastation to President Bush's proclaimed image as "the champion of security." Terror mastermind Osama bin Laden, the editorial concluded, "must be dying of laughter."

According to an *Associated Press* article in the September 4 *Lincoln Journal Star*, however, European criticism extended beyond the Bush Administration's bungling of the relief effort to its petty-minded views on the environment. The White House's dismissive attitude toward global warming, which "so many Europeans link to the force and frequency of such storms," has long prompted dismay in Europe, the article stated. Favoring ideology over science, the administration has steadfastly refused to heed the advice of scientists and experts on the issue of global warming and support concrete measures like the Kyoto Protocol. With Hurricane Katrina, the article reported, some Europeans said U.S. indifference to global warming was "coming home to roost." An editorial in the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, a Munich-based daily, argued that in the U.S. "what's absent is a debate over the climate, over Kyoto, over the human-caused warming of the earth."

Although it remains to be seen whether Katrina was a direct outcome of global warming, yet another Katrina-related article in *Lincoln Journal Star* on September 2 reported "that major storms spinning in both the Atlantic and the Pacific have increased in duration and intensity by about 50 percent since the 1970s." Quoting from a recently published article by MIT climatologist Kerry Emmanuel in the journal *Nature*, the article stated, "During that period, global average temperatures have risen by about one degree Fahrenheit along with increases in the level of carbon dioxide and other heat trapping pollutants from industry smokestacks, traffic exhaust and other sources."

Findings such as these may not impress the oil men and fossil fuel lobby inside the

conclusion on page 4



## Connecting the Dots

Connect the dots.

A White House full of oil men who scoff at global warming launches a trumped-up war to grab Iraq's oil resources.

The war, in which we were supposed to be hailed as liberators, turns into a quagmire that costs the lives of nearly 1900 U.S. soldiers and billions of dollars to fight the insurgency.

Large numbers of National Guard troops, including 35 percent of the Louisiana National Guard and 40 percent of the Mississippi National Guard, are needed for the Iraq occupation, and spending from domestic programs including FEMA and funding to strengthen New Orleans' levee system is diverted to pay for the war.

A Category 4 hurricane strikes New Orleans, thousands are presumed dead, and hundreds of thousands are without shelter. The city descends into anarchy.

Gas prices, which had been steadily climbing, skyrocket from this latest disruption in supply, hitting a record high of \$3.20 a gallon.

The President and Vice President, ever the oil men, wring their hands and deny any wrongdoing, whether over gas prices, the war or the carnage from Katrina.

If Americans and Nebraskans are to get any leadership over the next three years and four months, it's obvious by now that Congress will have to pick up the slack, until this presidency finally ends.

A version of the above letter by NFP President Mark Vasina was published in the Sunday September 11, 2005 Omaha World-Herald.

# A Local Lesson from New Orleans

by Pat Knapp

*NFP member Pat Knapp is the Senior Staff Attorney at the Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest. In 1998, she was the Democratic nominee for Attorney General.*

One way to begin a post-Katrina dialogue about race in America might be to follow the journey of one small band of evacuees from New Orleans' Ninth Ward to Omaha's north side.

The band is made up of master craftsmen in their late 30s and 40s; they are highly skilled carpenters and bricklayers, painters and mechanics. They are the neighborhood watch guys, in New Orleans the "soul patrol," the backbone of their working class community.

They were among the first on the streets after Katrina passed through to check on the welfare of their neighbors. Of course there was damage, but at least for a while it appeared as if the Ninth Ward had survived another hurricane.

But then later the water came. It went from nothing to their knees to their chests to eight feet deep in 15 minutes. It came too fast and too strong. Too many people couldn't get out. Their community was drowning all around them.

They stayed until they were sure there was no one alive left behind. They spent 12 days "on the water" saving as many as they could by whatever means they could find. They never saw a single government rescue worker in those 12 days, or anyone else with food or water to give. They didn't think much at the time about what they were doing; they just knew they had to keep moving.

They still don't think much about it in the daytime, but they say the nightmares are bad. Sometimes it's a physical sensation that wakes them up—the bed rocking like a boat about to go

over. Sometimes it's an image like a body they left tied to a street sign. Or a little boy's arms disappearing under the water as they couldn't quite reach him in time.

They were among the last to leave New Orleans, a bedraggled group of exhausted homeless heartsick men who had given and lost everything they had.

When they got to Houston they were herded into a group of about 160 people and put on a plane to somewhere. The armed Guardsmen gave them no choice, and no one would tell them where they were being shipped. Even the stewardess claimed not to know where the flight was headed. There were four air marshals on board, protecting what from whom with those guns was not clear. They learned their destination only after they were on the ground in Omaha. None had any connection to this place.

The Red Cross put them up in a hotel out in west Omaha, away from mass transit and within walking distance of nothing they needed. Government officials quarantined them for the first few days, purportedly to protect their privacy. They had to spend precious resources paying for transportation to get to the drug store for critical medication, or using the payphone in front of the convenience store across the street to try to find missing loved ones.

The Omaha hotels charged \$67,000 a week to house the group. The Red Cross told them after a couple of days that Omaha's allocation of money for lodging would be spent by the end of the second week. And when the hotel money was gone, so was the Red Cross. Those who were eligible for HUD housing were sent to Florence and Underwood Towers in north Omaha; those who were ineligible were on their own. A very few with certain skills, for example the Creole gourmet chef, were welcomed into the white community. Government officials

telephoned the black churches in north Omaha to line up "sponsors" for those who weren't so readily adoptable.

Now, one way to continue the dialogue about race in America might be to compare the brothers' experience on and after the water with that of the heroes of 9/11. Or perhaps to compare the benefits showered on the families of the victims of 9/11 with the benefits of being exiled at gunpoint to an empty apartment in high-rise projects in the poorest neighborhood in a strange city 1,800 miles from home. Or perhaps we should examine the underlying assumptions of a government apparatus that sorts the human debris of a national emergency by skin color rather than skills and needs.

But most probably the dialogue needs to begin with a clear-eyed acknowledgment by white people of certain historical truths.

First, white people built this nation on land they took by force from red people.

Second, white people built this nation's new economy on labor they took by force from black people.

Third, this nation's official policies of genocide and slavery evolved very slowly to official policies of segregation and then discrimination, with each change encountering violent resistance from whites.

What New Orleans should have brought most clearly into focus is this: any of us who believed that passage of the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was enough to eliminate over time the dark legacy of our history was dead wrong. In fact, that kind of thinking calls to mind those bureaucratic idiots who stood in front of the TV cameras in the immediate aftermath of Katrina applauding each other while people were dying in the streets: "Whitey, you're doing a heck of a job!" (Applause, applause.)

First truth, and then, only then, may come the possibility of reconciliation.

## Lessons from New Orleans, conclusion

White House, but they've already convinced the insurance industry. The chair of the National Association of Insurance Commissioners' property and casualty committee, Nebraska Insurance Commissioner Tim Wagner, stated at a national news conference September 8 that from industry reports and scientific studies he has seen, "Something is changing in our weather that has resulted in climatic events at unprecedented levels... I don't believe that this is simply a cycle. I think it's a long-term change." And this change, Wagner said, is both a "coastal issue and a heartland issue... rising global temperatures in the coming decades are

likely to cause significant increases in severe weather events, such as hurricanes, floods, hailstorms, wildfires, droughts and heat waves."

The crisis we now find ourselves in is not, alas, confined to New Orleans. The thousands needlessly dead, the flawed relief response by FEMA and the short-staffed National Guard, the city turned cesspool, and the lack of funds available for reconstruction not only make a mockery of the administration's notion of "homeland security." They provide a harrowing glimpse of what the future holds in store.

A burgeoning federal deficit fueled by

improvident tax cuts for the wealthy...

The costly and disastrous mess we've gotten ourselves into in Iraq...

The environmental upheaval posed by global warming that will be felt for decades to come...

Americans will pay dearly for these mistakes.

Indeed, we here in Nebraska will pay for these mistakes.

Believing that true "homeland security" must start at home and that it depends on the vigilance of our citizens and their willingness to speak up, I took a stand that sunny November day in 2001.

But I stood alone, the only Lincoln public official willing to stand up for the good

of our community. And for daring to warn our citizens how the War on Terror would affect them economically, my patriotism was challenged. A colleague on the City Council, Republican Glen Friendt, personally led the public and behind-the-scenes attacks against me that wound up costing me my political career.

Looking back, it's obvious now that what passed for 'patriotism' was little more than sheer 'partisanship' that places rank political gain over the well-being of our citizens.

And as the people of New Orleans, who watched their government fail them in their hour of need, can personally attest, that's no way to run to a city. Or a country.

Cindy Sheehan...

# “For What Noble Cause?”

by Virginia Walsh

On August 5, 2005, while addressing a conference in Dallas of Military Families Speak Out (MFSO), Gold Star mother Cindy Sheehan suddenly announced she was going to go to Crawford, Texas, and sit outside George W. Bush's “Western White House” until he would come out and tell her why her son Casey Sheehan had been sent to his death in Iraq. On August 6 and thereafter, Cindy sat on a folding chair in the ditch alongside Prairie Chapel Road outside Crawford, near the place where George W's ranch driveway meets Prairie Chapel Road. (Why in the ditch? Because there are no shoulders on these two-lane country roads—the ditches are the only public space between the road and private property.) She declared she would stay there until the President talked to her or until he left on August 31.

Cindy's action provoked a media blitz and a political storm.

She was promptly joined by members of Military Families Speak Out, Gold Star Families for Peace (GSFP), Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) and Veterans For Peace (VFP), who came to the ditch, bringing their tents, pictures, crosses, banners and stories. The media reported what they heard, and people started waking up. New breath was breathed into the peace movement with the addition of these voices of suffering military personnel and their families, giving the lie to the position that one ‘supports’ the troops by supporting the war that kills them.

I met Cindy at “Camp Casey 1” in brutal heat and got a hug—she hugged everyone who came. She is a tall, dignified, suffering woman. And a power house.

Camp Casey was a string of tents in ditches with banners saying, “Military Families Speak Out: Bring Them Home Now,” “Our Troops Are Dying for Your Support” and “Hate Multiplies Hate, Violence Multiplies Violence, Toughness Multiplies Toughness”. One day a morning letter-writing session generated a sheaf of letters from military families and veterans to Laura Bush, telling of their pain. In the afternoon of that day, when Cindy left to go home to California to take care of her mother, about 200 marchers led by Medea Benjamin of Code Pink walked a mile and a half in 95-degree heat to deliver the let-

ters to the gate of the Western White House. In Cindy's absence the voices of all the other military-related personnel who had gathered continued their message of suffering and asked the pivotal question, “For What Noble Cause?”

The next day at noon MFSO held a news conference at Camp Casey 1 I counted four huge satellite media trucks, about 15 camerapersons and about ten big mikes on booms. Lots of other folks scribbling in tablets. Mimi Evans introduced the speakers after saying she had hugged her son goodbye for Iraq that Monday and left for Camp Casey on Tuesday. Juan Torres of Chicago said that years ago he had immigrated from Argentina to the U.S. and struggled to raise his family, and that his son Daniel Torres, so bright that he had graduated from high school at age 15, had been killed this year in Iraq after almost eight years in the military. Charlie Anderson, a Navy veteran of the Iraq war, grieved over the closing of VA hospitals and the denial of mental health care for vets. Gold Star mother Nadia McCaffrey said her son Patrick had written before his death in Iraq, “I don't know why we are here. We are not doing good,” feeling that he had been betrayed by the recruiters. Jeff Key, an ex-marine from Iraq said, “We've caused tens of thousands of [Iraqi] deaths in a country that never did crap to us!” Mediapersons paid attention.

An interfaith prayer service followed this news conference, with speakers from many denominations—several United Methodist ministers including a retired bishop, an Episcopalian pastor, a Jewish rabbi who chanted from Lamentations, and others. The first speaker read the Beatitudes to great effect: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.” A high level of intensity was evident in this activity, and it occurred to me that the call to minister to the bereaved is a traditional component of ministry, so that many clergy might find this emerging military resistance very appealing.

My contribution to Cindy's Crawford action was pretty minimal. I worked, usually at Crawford Peace House, doing whatever volunteer work seemed needed—emptying trash barrels, selling T-shirts, re-filling coolers of water and staffing the sign-in table on the front sidewalk. And I asked people why they were there. Mostly people

from all over said they were grieving over the Iraq Occupation and wanted it stopped. Military people generally want the troops back from Iraq, saying nitty-gritty things like, “You can't win an occupation with a war.” Anti-war activists have a longer-range view, reflected in the poster on the Peace House wall showing a neglected seven-year-old girl: “In the last decade 1.7 million chil-

what noble cause, and what they personally are doing to bring this war to an end? Then on September 21, the busloads converged in Washington D.C. for the September 24 march and rally to end the war in Iraq. In the words of Ann Wright, veteran, ex-diplomat, and one of Cindy's lieutenants, “This government derives its power from the consent of the governed, and we do not



“Camp Casey 1” outside the “Western White House” in Crawford, Texas

dren have been killed in wars, 4 million people disabled and 12 million made homeless.” What Cindy is doing is connecting the two camps, and that has extraordinary potential.

Consider the possibilities: The voice of military families, who have lost loved ones and those with loved ones in harm's way or about to deploy, can be heard by people deaf to us. The voice of veterans, both of this war and of previous wars, will also build the movement to end the war. Together these critical voices can demand that President Bush make the decision now to bring the troops home.

Despite Hurricane Katrina, Cindy launched the “Bring Them Home Now Tour” on August 31, as Camp Casey was moved from George Bush's vacation home to his work home in Washington, D.C. Three buses from Crawford, Texas, each carrying military and Gold Star families, veterans of the Iraq war and veterans of previous wars, traveled different routes across the country, urging military families, veterans and concerned citizens to ask their congressional decision-makers the hard questions: for

consent to this war.”

A word about Katrina. On the one hand, Katrina has literally blown news coverage of Iraq and Cindy off the screen for the moment. But the relationship between Iraq and Katrina is not going unnoticed. Syndicated columnist Paul Krugman has been blunt: “The reason the military wasn't rushed in to help along the Gulf Coast is, I believe, the same reason nothing was done to stop looting after the fall of Baghdad. Flood control was neglected for the same reason our troops in Iraq didn't get adequate armor. At a fundamental level, I'd argue, our current leaders just aren't serious about some of the essential functions of government.” In coming days we can expect further connections between the administration's shortchanging homeland responsibilities in favor of funding a misguided war in Iraq and tax cuts for the wealthy.

Ironically, Katrina may prove to make a valuable contribution to Cindy Sheehan's long-term objective to return the U.S. government to the people: “We will take our country back and it will be a country that we want back.”

## Politician Contacts

### The White House

Washington, DC 20500  
Comment Line: 202-456-1111  
202-456-1414  
202-456-2993 (FAX)  
president@whitehouse.gov

### Sen. Chuck Hagel

346 Russell Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20510  
202-224-4224  
202-224-5213 (FAX)  
402-476-1400 (Lincoln)  
402-758-8981 (Omaha)  
308-632-6032 (Scottsbluff)  
hagel.senate.gov

### Sen. Ben Nelson

720 Hart Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
202-224-6551  
202-228-0012 (FAX)  
402-391-3411 (Omaha)  
402-441-4600 (Lincoln)  
bennelson.senate.gov

### Rep. Jeff Fortenberry, District 1

1517 Longworth House Office Bldg.  
Washington, D.C. 20515  
202-225-4806  
402-438-1598 (Lincoln)  
<http://www.house.gov/fortenberry>

### Rep. Lee Terry, District 2

1524 Longworth HOB  
Washington, DC 20515  
202-225-4155  
202-226-5452 (FAX)  
402-397-9944 (Omaha)  
[leeterry.house.gov/contact.asp](http://leeterry.house.gov/contact.asp)

### Rep. Tom Osborne, District 3

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Washington, DC 20515  
202-225-6435  
202-226-1385 (FAX)  
308-381-5555 (Grand Island)  
[www.house.gov/writerep/](http://www.house.gov/writerep/)

### Capitol Hill Switchboard

202-224-3121

### State Capitol Switchboard

402-471-2311

### State Senator, District #

State Capitol  
PO Box 94604  
Lincoln, NE 68509-4604

### Governor Dave Heineman

PO Box 94848  
Lincoln, NE 68509-4848  
402-471-2244  
402-471-6031 (FAX)  
<http://gov.nol.org/mail/govmail.html>

# An International Approach: A 'Win-Win' Exit Strategy for Iraq

by John Krejci, President  
*United Nations Association, Chapter 100*

As Americans become more disillusioned with the quagmire that Iraq has become, the cry "Bring the troops home now!" has become louder and more frequent. As much as we would like to see this, "Bring 'em home now" and immediate unilateral withdrawal makes a better bumper sticker than viable foreign policy. This is not to say that the slogan should not be repeated again and again as it clearly was at the national anti-occupation protest in Washington September 24. Slogans can lead to real change, and we need to keep up the pressure. In the meantime, it is incumbent on peacemakers to do more than criticize. We should propose workable solutions. And realistically, they must be ones in which the U.S. can save face. Let's admit it, many of us would like to see Bush fall on his face, be proven wrong and publicly humiliated. But this will not serve the long-term goals of peace in the Middle East. Wish what we might, the insurgents in Iraq are not nice people who will forgive and forget when we leave. Compromise is needed and everyone must get or perceive to get something from the deal.

What the U.S. is presently doing is not working. Fred Kaplan, a former *Boston Globe* correspondent, commented recently, "Leveling towns, bombing every suspicious target in sight, this is not how hearts and minds are won or how persistent insurgencies are defeated." Despite claims to the contrary (including long editorials in the *Omaha World-Herald*), the occupation is not going well. More than two-and-half years after the invasion, it still lacks popular support: partly because of the high number of civilian casualties, certainly in the tens of thousands, perhaps more. Basic services like water, electricity, health care are still inadequate. Unemployment, malnutrition, and child mortality continue to rise. And perhaps most troubling of all, violence in the form of car and roadside bombs, assassinations, kidnappings, and American counter strikes are daily occurrences.

"Staying the course" is the *cause* of the insurgency, not the cure. Even the

most optimistic conservatives and voices in the Bush Administration admit that we will be stuck in Iraq for ten, 12, maybe 50 years. In 2002, James Webb, Assistant Secretary of Defense and Secretary of the Navy in the Reagan Administration, raised a point relevant today: "The issue before us is not simply whether the U.S. should end the regime of Saddam Hussein, but whether we as a nation are prepared to physically occupy territory in the Middle East for the next 30 to 50 years." On June 19 of this year, Condoleezza Rice herself acknowledged that America's involvement in Iraq is indeed a "generational commitment." Perhaps the crudest assessment though came in 2002 from neo-conservative columnist Charles Krauthammer, who said, "We are going to stay... If we win the war, we are in control of Iraq. It is the second-largest source of oil in the world; it's got huge reserves. We will have a bonanza, a financial one at the other end."

The present administration is simply not going to "cut and run," as they like to phrase it. What then? Is it not incumbent on us to suggest a viable exit strategy? Short of openly saying that we should go to the UN and beg the member states to bail us out, it seems advisable to look toward an international solution. Aside from al-Qaida (because the war is so good for recruitment) and some profiteering independent contractors (Halliburton leaps to mind), no one is enamored with the war. We must involve the United Nations in the solution. Where else is there to go?

Granted that the United Nations is currently experiencing hard times, the world body under Kofi Annan has made substantial reforms since 1997. And in his document, "In Larger Freedom," he has proposed further reforms to be debated at the World Summit on nations this month. That is if U.S. Ambassador "Johnny-come-lately" Bolton does not succeed in sabotaging the talks and insisting on a unilateral U.S. model for reform. (He already has submitted 750 amendments to previous UN drafts!) But reformed or not, the UN or some international body of its creation will be indispensable for any solution of the Iraq mess.

Rather than presumptuously spelling out my own model of internationalizing Iraq, I present for your consideration a

model suggested by Princeton University Theology Professor George Hunsinger in the September 8, 2005 *National Catholic Reporter*.

"Although no good options exist, the least bad choice would still be 'internationalization.' A viable exit plan might include the following:

- The United States should cease all offensive military operations, withdraw from population centers and announce that it plans to depart in six months.
- An international conference should be convened under the auspices of the United Nations. Participants should include Russia and China along with the United States, Iraq's current interim government and representatives of the various insurgency groups. An agreement should be hammered out for a cease-fire and a viable plan to hold the country together by creating strong incentives for the various blocs and factions.
- An international peacekeeping force should be established, consisting of UN blue helmets along with forces from the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Conference, until the Iraqis can take over on their own.
- Iraqi security forces should be trained under international auspices, with special attention being paid to respecting human rights.
- Plans for permanent U.S. military bases should be abandoned, and the American embassy (now the world's largest) should be reduced to normal size
- A generous aid package, with no strings attached, should be offered to rebuild what the war has destroyed."

Professor Hunsinger concluded by admitting that this package would be unpalatable to our national pride. Nevertheless, he argued, it would be much more realistic than fighting on indefinitely. Which is precisely what we are now facing.

Few of us would agree with all the aspects of this model for internationalization. Most of us though would agree that what we are doing isn't working. The United Nations may be flawed, but it is what we have and where the dialogue has already begun, at least informally. I would like to think that, at some point in the near future, we can indeed "bring 'em home" without looking like we've "cut and run."

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## A Review of Greg LeRoy’s New Book

*The following review of Greg LeRoy’s new book, The Great American Jobs Scam, was written by nationally syndicated columnist Neal Peirce of the Washington Post Writers Group and is reprinted with permission (c) 2005. Copies of the hardcover edition will be on sale at the Annual Peace Conference for the specially discounted price of \$19.95, and Greg LeRoy will be happy to personally inscribe and sign your volume.*

### End Wasteful Corporate Handouts

by Neal Peirce

Call it, if you will, the crack cocaine of state and local governments’ economic-development practices—their endless flow of tax breaks and outright gifts to private corporations they want to land, or figure they have to pay off to stay put.

Today, the practice runs so deep, pervading such a huge number of corporate location moves, that officials—even those who privately admit it’s an insane, zero-sum system—keep on forking out the cash, no matter how incredibly costly the addiction.

For years, Greg LeRoy has been America’s chief whistle-blower on the subsidies, which he now estimates add up nationally to an eye-popping \$50 billion a year. LeRoy’s just-published book, *The Great American Jobs Scam* (Berrett-Koehler), tells the story in full and colorful detail.

There’s the story of how Raytheon, threatening to move defense operations out of Massachusetts in the ’90s, got the legislature to give it tax breaks of some \$21 million annually—and then proceeded to reduce its Bay State payrolls by 4,100 people, or 21 percent, anyway.

In New York a few years ago, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani

offered \$940 million to keep the New York Stock Exchange and its 1,500 jobs in town—even though many of its member firms had *already* been subsidized to stay in Manhattan.

The payoffs continue. North Carolina, for example, recently offered Dell, one of the nation’s most successful technology companies, \$225 million in tax incentives over 15 years to bring 1,500 jobs into the Piedmont Triad area.

When Los Angeles was hit by aerospace-defense cutbacks and civil disturbances in the early ’90s, economic development officials in a dozen Western states, like sharks sensing blood in the water, mounted aggressive job-piracy efforts to capture L.A. industries with public subsidies.

As for Wal-Mart, the world’s biggest corporation, LeRoy has totaled up more than \$1 billion it has received from municipalities in brick-and-mortar subsidies for its stores and warehouses—which end up throwing Main Street merchants out of business and feeding the sprawl machine that befouls our air and drives up government costs.

A good chunk of the payoffs to Wal-Mart, Home Depot, Target, et al., LeRoy reports, are based on enterprise zone and “tax increment” district financing that were originally designed for lagging older cities, but are now turned into subsidy machines to eviscerate historic communities even further.

So what’s to be done? First, says LeRoy, “disclosure-disclosure-disclosure”; when the public is informed, the jobs blackmail diminishes. Then set up ‘clawback’ recapture provisions when a subsidized firm doesn’t fulfill its job-producing promises. Stop all subsidies for retail deals, except in truly depressed inner-city neighborhoods.

But the really fresh ground LeRoy plows is a big reminder to us that the scramble for jobs that ignited the sub-

sidy wars will soon be pointless—and simply unaffordable.

With baby boomers headed toward retirement, we’re likely to face an enormous shortage of skilled workers. From 1980 to 2000, the pool of prime-age (25-to-54-year-old) workers increased by 35 million; from 2000 to 2020, the expansion will be just 3 million. Teachers, nurses, expert workers of all sorts will be in desperately short supply. Huge new efforts (and spending) for work-force development will be critical to stop a slide in the United States’ standard of living.

At the same time, America’s physical plant is suffering from serious disinvestment and deterioration. Traffic congestion is costing our economy \$67.5 billion a year; thousands of bridges need replacement; wastewater systems are in bad shape; more than 3,500 dams are now deemed unsafe; transit spending is far below what’s needed to maintain even the inadequate systems we now have. The American Society of Civil Engineers totals the repair bill at \$1.6 trillion. Discount that 50 percent and the pending bills are still staggering.

The bottom line, says LeRoy: “We need reinvestment, not disinvestment.” It’s time to take a ‘fine-tooth comb’ to the \$50 billion states and cities are now spending for corporate promises of jobs. Any subsidy that doesn’t serve compelling public need by creating more skilled labor, or doesn’t provide a ‘carrot’ for companies to invest in new skills development, should go on a list for likely elimination.

It’s time, LeRoy concludes, for sweeping reform of the subsidy policies and to recognize them for what they are: “wasteful handouts we can no longer afford.”

He’s right: When will we ever learn?

# Whiteclay Deputization Agreement Signed

by Mark Vasina, President  
Nebraskans for Peace

On August 30 in the Nebraska State Capitol Rotunda, Nebraska Attorney General Jon Bruning, Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman and Oglala Sioux Tribal President Cecilia Fire Thunder signed an historic Deputization Agreement between the State of Nebraska and the Oglala Sioux Tribe. This agreement, hailed as a “landmark” by the *Lincoln Journal Star* in a September 3 editorial, authorizes OST Police to enforce Nebraska law, including state liquor laws, in and around Whiteclay.

Whiteclay—as readers of the *Nebraska Report* know—is the tiny unincorporated Nebraska village on the border of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation whose three off-sale beer stores supply much of the alcohol consumed on the Pine Ridge, where the sale and possession of alcoholic beverages is prohibited. The growing sobriety movement on the Pine Ridge and a long tradition of statements and actions by tribal elders and other leaders attest to the commitment of the Oglala Lakota people to maintain the prohibition of alcohol which is enshrined in their tribal constitution.

The State of Nebraska’s sanction of the sale of alcohol in Whiteclay through the continual licensing of off-sale beer dealers there is an affront to the legitimate concerns of the Oglala Lakota for their safety and well-being.

But the legally sanctioned sale of alcohol is not all that goes on in this remote border town which lies within walking distance of the population center of the reservation. Rampant lawlessness accompanies the beer sales in Whiteclay. Sales to minors and intoxicated persons, credit sales to alcoholics short on cash, illegal fencing of federal surplus commodities supplied to residents of the Pine Ridge in exchange for alcohol, solicitation of sexual favors in exchange for alcohol, consumption of alcohol in public as well as on off-sale dealer premises (a serious *dealer* license violation), and bootlegging large quantities of beer onto the Pine Ridge with the knowledge and assistance of the Whiteclay dealers—all these activities are easily discovered by any who visit Whiteclay and care enough to observe and ask questions.

Whiteclay is also the site of a number of murders of Oglala Lakota people. These include the still unsolved slayings in June 1999 of Wilson Black Elk, Jr. and Ronald Hard Heart and the violent death of 21-year-old John Apple, Jr., whose body was found at the White Clay Reservoir in August 2005.

This lawlessness has been permitted—in fact, condoned—by elected officials in Nebraska. *Close the liquor dealerships in Whiteclay, the reasoning goes, and the evils confined to that town will just move down the road. Better to keep the damage bottled up in Whiteclay than see it spread to other Nebraska communities.* This acceptance by Nebraska authorities of an environment of inadequate law enforcement in Whiteclay is nothing less than criminal negligence, reflecting a profound disregard for critical principles of public health, safety and equality under the law.

The Deputization Agreement signed in August will au-



*Oglala Sioux Tribal President Cecilia Fire Thunder pictured with Nebraska Attorney General Jon Bruning at the signing of the Deputization Agreement. Bruning profusely thanked Nebraskans for Peace and Frank LaMere for keeping this issue before the public eye.*

thorize the Oglala Sioux Tribal Police, with the formalized cooperation of Nebraska law enforcement agencies, to enforce Nebraska law in Whiteclay. For perhaps the first time since 1904—when 49 miles of the 50-square-mile parcel of land known as the White Clay Extension was removed from the Pine Ridge Reservation and given to the State of Nebraska by presidential decree—the village of Whiteclay has the potential to be something other than a Wild West skid row.

But it is also because the Deputization Agreement signed in August signals a tangible shift in the intentions and actions of at least some Nebraska elected officials that it must be acknowledged as a landmark in the battle for justice in Whiteclay.

Two officials deserve to be singled out for their responsibility for making the Deputization Agreement happen—Nebraska Attorney General Jon Bruning and Congressman Tom Osborne, representing Nebraska’s Third District.

Before his first visit to Whiteclay in June 2003, Jon Bruning had already paved the way for the Deputization Agreement with his legal opinion that Nebraska did not need new legislation in order to enter into such an agreement with the Pine Ridge Reservation, which lies almost entirely in South Dakota. The AG’s office concluded that the one-square-mile remnant of the White Clay Extension which remained within the Nebraska border after 1904 was sufficient to regard the Pine Ridge as an Indian reservation located in Nebraska and to permit Nebraska to enter into agreements with the Pine Ridge authorities.

Over the next two years, Jon Bruning and his staff worked to build the cooperation among Nebraska and Pine Ridge authorities which made the agreement possible.

One of the principle hurdles was funding for the additional on-duty time required of the OST Police to patrol Whiteclay. While OST police officers have informally pa-

trolled Whiteclay for years, regular patrols and enforcement actions in Whiteclay require considerably greater resources than currently employed. To fund these new policing duties internally, if even possible, would only aggravate the severe hardships facing the OST, which is in the midst of a financial crisis. OST Police enforcement in Whiteclay is, after all, intended to assist Nebraska in its duty and responsibility to provide adequate law enforcement in Whiteclay.

However, despite receiving \$344,959 in sales and excise taxes from the sale of alcohol in Whiteclay last year alone, the State of Nebraska refuses to compensate the OST for any law enforcement work to be carried out in Whiteclay. Since tribal authorities felt they could not take on the additional financial burden, the agreement was in jeopardy.

Funding arrived by way of the federal government, thanks to Rep. Tom Osborne, who has long demonstrated a commitment to responsible public policies seeking to mitigate the abuse of alcohol and other drugs. Last November he secured \$100,000 in the House Appropriations Bill earmarked for OST law enforcement activities in Whiteclay during fiscal year 2005-06. He and Jon Bruning then traveled to the Pine Ridge where they successfully urged the Tribal Council to approve the Deputization Agreement.

Some now speak as though the Deputization Agreement will solve the Whiteclay problem. The *Lincoln Journal Star* editorial correctly recognizes that the patrols are only part of the solution. The real work of providing not merely adequate but *effective* law enforcement in Whiteclay is only beginning.

Moreover, federal funding to support this law enforcement covers one year only, and may not be sufficient for the task. The Nebraska State Patrol estimated two years ago that full-time law enforcement in Whiteclay would cost the State of Nebraska \$250,000 per year. The task ahead of the OST Police is daunting. State law enforcement officials complain repeatedly that the element of surprise needed for dealer violation enforcement is difficult to come by in a town like Whiteclay. Whether this complaint reflects a lack of staff or a lack of will remains to be tested.

The hope fostered by the recent signing of the Deputization Agreement is that the pervasive lawlessness in Whiteclay can be ended. If dealer violations are brought to the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission through diligent police work, licenses can be terminated and, one by one, the beer suppliers in Whiteclay can be forced to close. The residents of the Pine Ridge who wish to purchase alcoholic beverages will be forced to do so in other communities with higher standards of law enforcement. The national shame of Whiteclay can be put to an end.

But a solution which relies on law enforcement alone—even if successful—fails to address larger concerns raised by Nebraska’s shameful conduct in Whiteclay. Responsible public policy regarding alcohol sales must be reflected in laws which prevent the licensing of alcohol sales in environments where no greater public good is served by the sale of alcohol, or, as is clearly the case in Whiteclay, where obvious public harm is the result of those sales. Requiring law enforcement officials to play catch-up in a law enforcement nightmare generated by the sale of alcohol is not tolerated in most other communities in Nebraska. It should not be tolerated in Whiteclay. We must continue to ask: Why?

# PRAIRIE PEACE PARK

## THE PHOENIX WILL RISE AGAIN

by Don Tilley, Director  
Prairie Peace Park

Thank you for the 12 years of light and peace that so many of you made possible through your interest, contributions, and encouragement to the Prairie Peace Park. You made it happen!

After an extraordinary run, however, dating back to its founding in 1993, the Prairie Peace Park has now been sold. Waning



Don & Gwen Tilley

attendance, insufficient supervision and labor to upkeep the exhibits and grounds, and a lack of funds to pay obligations and substantively develop the Park obliged us to sell the land to Global Country for World Peace from Fairfield, Iowa. The new owners have agreed to maintain the spirit of Peace we've fostered while upgrading the Park in style. Their planned "Peace Palace" will enable people to find strength and community and to deeply experience inner peace—a giant step forward toward world peace.

The Prairie Peace Park will remain intact as an organization. But the exhibits except for the World Peace Mural and Dance of the Children sculpture are already gone, and the 27 acres on which the park stood have become prairie once again.

Philosophically and pedagogically, the Prairie Peace Park had a sharp focus we can have peace. All the exhibits and programs highlighted that idea. It seemed, though, that most people simply did not believe this idea. I myself have always viewed 'peace' not so much as a goal, but as an indicator, a by-product of a harmonious functioning society that operates with love, equity, generos-

ity, justice, and fairness to all.

Why was such an idea so controversial?

Most people, I'm now convinced, just don't believe that peace is possible. It's seen as unrealistic, a fantasy. Many view humans as too warped, evil, untrustworthy.

Go to your public schools and look at the curriculum guide. In nearly every field of study, you'll find that almost all of it is about 'what has been' or 'what is,' as compared to the proportion of the curriculum that's about 'what could be.' Our students are not being led into examining what a better world could look like or guided to create the world they'd like to see. They're not being challenged to explore ways to bring that world about or shown the techniques for transformation necessary to realize it.

Our schools, unwittingly, are instilling a mindset that thwarts the creation of the very elements necessary for a peaceful world.

Go to your church and look. If it is a fundamentalist, "Bible-believing" church, it is likely to be 'disbelieve' that the Spirit of Jesus Christ is attempting to transform the institutions of the world, or that the Spirit of Christ is far greater than what is in the Bible. They are likely to resist breaking the box in which Christ has been held captive. And, if a mainline church, how much emphasis is actually placed on applying the Sermon on the Mount to government and corporations? Are the churches (and other faith groups) ready to seize on this Christian command to create a humane, caring community and preach this message, or, so as not to offend the powers that be, watch silently as 'Christians' pursue ambitions of empire-building by means of force? Wherever you look, our Christian churches do not seem to be making the creation of a peaceful future a priority.

Go to science. See how scientists, in their focus and reliance on what is strictly observable and measurable, oftentimes operate with such a narrowly defined perspective that they show little regard for the broader social, economic and spiritual implications of their work. Consequently, at StratCom in Omaha, we are now poised not only to destroy the earth many times over with nuclear weapons, but to wage conventional war anywhere on the planet within half an hour. Such a perverse use of science produces a psychological and spiritual harm beyond what the cruise missiles and ICBMs

are capable of doing.

Go to large corporations that are guided by avarice, economic shortsightedness and an ideology of infinite growth. If, as Calvin Coolidge is alleged to have said, "The business of America is business," world peace would be beneficial for these companies. But so, unfortunately, is the profiteering that comes from warmongering.

Thus, the idea that "we can have a peaceful world" is not a believed vision. It is either viewed as a fairy tale, set aside for other pre-occupations or actually perceived as threatening.

Over the course of the past 12 years, the Prairie Peace Park used art, history and science to teach concepts of cooperation and coexistence, warn of dangers from human foolishness and, in short, elevate the essence of life. We were not able to gain the large funding to graphically simulate how the world (starting with families) could operate peaceably. Nevertheless, our exhibits pushed the observer beyond the limits of current thinking, and related to the theme that "We could create a peaceful world."

The displays, for example, depicted the greatness of humans and the coming transformations... How we can extend our success in overcoming 13 violent practices to

eliminate war and poverty... How a woman U.S. President, acting from a life-giving capacity that's inherent in the universe, could change the world... How one child can bring transformation to society... How a new concept of human rights can redefine who we are and can become... How we can find and follow the design of the Earth's ecosystem in both the systems of the human body and the prairie eco-system... How we could set in motion seven evolutionary drivers that could provide the impetus for world transformation... How our school and faith groups must shift their approaches, if we are to overcome the negative belief system that gives rise to corporate exploitation and government-sanctioned violence... How the Sermon on the Mount should go beyond personal piety and be applied to government and social institutions... How, in fact, we can exchange our beliefs and commitment to militarism for higher, life-sustaining values.

The many visions of the Prairie Peace Park will continue. They will infiltrate, for they are held in the depths of our being and cannot be shunned, denied or stopped. As a species, we are evolving. We are growing, maturing. Virtually every field of knowledge

*conclusion on page 11*

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# NFP Year in Review



by Tim Rinne

This month marks the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Nebraskans for Peace and, on a personal level, my twelfth year as state coordinator. I am not only the longest-serving state coordinator the organization has ever had, I've now held this position for more than third of NFP's history. And NFP, as we never tire of reminding people, is the **oldest statewide** Peace & Justice organization the entire country.

I mention these historical and personal milestones because, in reviewing NFP's activities this past year, I'm struck by how closely our experiences hew to some time-honored adages about how social change actually occurs. Two proverbs in particular come to mind:

First. Power concedes nothing without a struggle.

And second. Over the course of that struggle, you'll find that initially they'll ignore you; next, they'll condemn you; and lastly, they'll try to co-opt you.

With every issue we've worked on in 2005, both of these adages have been at work. It's an argument for why, on a practical level, it's so critical we hang in there for the long haul, whatever the obstacles. And, on a more philosophical plane, it's a healthy reminder that, when you get right down to the act of doing this work, there really is very little that's 'new under the sun.'

The tasks set before us, the dynamics under which we operate, are essentially the same ones faced by the abolitionists opposing slavery, the feminists seeking suffrage, the union workers fighting for the minimum wage and the anti-war movement of the '60s. In every single instance, power conceded nothing without a struggle, and all of these struggles experienced the same three stages of denial, condemnation and co-optation.

Our work on Whiteclay is classic example. Over the course of the last seven years, NFP has gone from seeing our members arrested for protesting the alcohol sales there to being publicly commended by the state Attorney General in the Capitol Rotunda for keeping this issue before the public eye. 'Stinks' had to be raised, laws had to be broken (albeit nonviolently, through civil disobedience), and public officials had to be called on the carpet to muster the political will to finally start addressing the lawlessness in Whiteclay. NFP President Mark Vasina's article on page 8—on the

"deputization agreement" signed between the between the State of Nebraska and the Oglala Sioux Tribe August 30—discusses in detail the significance of this groundbreaking pact. And as everyone present at the signing freely admitted, the pact only constituted a "first step" toward addressing the alcohol problems in Whiteclay. But the importance of this proactive move cannot be underestimated. Nor can the fact that, had Winnebago Tribe member Frank LaMere and Nebraskans for Peace not persevered all these years, **Whiteclay**

LB 775 signaled to the senators that, at a minimum, they needed to address the program's egregious lack of public disclosure. The secrecy about the program that the Legislature had so blithely tolerated since its creation 18 years ago would no longer be politically permissible. And so, when the Unicameral (at the corporate lobby's urging) revamped the program this past session into the "Nebraska Advantage Act" (LB 312), authentic disclosure features were, for the first time, built into the bill and, compared to previous years, with relatively little

money, and begin to evaluate whether the investment is worth the cost. More disclosure is perhaps small consolation, given the financial damage LB 775 wreaked on the rest of the state budget (particularly K-12 education, higher ed and social services spending) during the 2001-2004 fiscal crisis. That said, though, these disclosure features would never have been included in the new package had NFP not raised such a protracted and public fuss. This issue too, precisely because of its compromised outcome, serves as a telling parable for how change occurs in the real world.

The final three issues NFP devoted significant time to this past year: the anti-bullying legislation in the Nebraska Legislature, the UNO Afghan Center's collaborative work with the mujahadeen Islamic fundamentalists in Afghanistan, and of course the War in Iraq, are clearly 'works in progress' yet. But, in every case, we can emphasize the 'progress' part. We're seeing movement, because we're still in there struggling, confronting power and forcing concessions.

In the case of our anti-bullying activities, 'power' is defined less as an iron-willed White House prosecuting a wrong-headed war (such as the Bush Administration's conduct in Iraq) than as 'simple inertia' and an unwillingness to change. But unless that inertia is physically and intellectually confronted and challenged to change, the negative repercussions will be felt up and down all of society. As UNL Professor and NFP member Paul Olson noted in his article on bullying in last month's *Nebraska Report*, the bullying behavior learned on the school grounds today reproduces itself in the workplaces and the Oval Offices of tomorrow.

Building on the efforts of our Turn Off the Violence campaign over the past four years—specifically our legislative initiatives—NFP will again be promoting passage of an anti-bullying bill in the coming Unicameral session. No one is immune from bullying. But nobody, we now know, is victimized by bullying more than gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered children. Homophobia should not be permitted to be a pretext for failing to adopt human rights protections.

Our work with the University of Nebraska Board of Regents regarding the development of a policy governing the activities of its centers and departments continues apace as well. Although the specific conduct of the UNO Center for Afghan Studies served as the impetus for our involvement in this matter, NFP has made it



would continue to have languished in oblivion.

The same holds true for LB 775. Although the history books will never mention it, our initiative petition campaign to repeal Nebraska's oldest and most expensive Big Business tax incentive program left a profound stamp on the 2005 Legislative Session. Months of negative publicity about

complaint.

On the down side, LB 312's price tag for business tax incentives will be even greater than LB 775's (as much as \$60 million more a year for a total annual cost of \$200 million), and the rest of the state budget has been 'mortgaged' and put up as collateral to ensure that these corporate tax reimbursements will be paid on time. But starting this year, the public will be able to factually track what they're getting for their

clear from the outset that we are out only to prevent a repetition of the types of inappropriate activities to which CAS lent its name and support, not abolition of the center itself. We continue to believe strongly however, that it was a violation of the mission of a first-tier academic institution to be supplying Afghan textbooks with religious content, that exhorted mujahadeen militants and children to violence and relegated women to second-class citizenship. As we have previously stressed, it was this same group of insurgents who later, under the Taliban government, provided aid and harbor to Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaida terrorist network. This, for sure, is not the kind of endeavor we ever want the name of our tax-supported university ever linked to again.

And finally, as our name implies, peace will always form the heart of our mission, just as it has since our founding 35 years ago. We will pair the work for peace with our work for justice, because as the great abolitionist and Quaker Lucretia Mott noted over 150 years ago, "There is no peace without justice." But when there is a war—particularly one as unconscionably and illegally waged as this one—Nebraskans for Peace can always be counted on to take the lead in opposing the administration's policy. And not simply as it plays itself out over in Iraq. But also here in our own backyard, where StratCom, in the wake of 9/11, has now been charged with offensively waging the "War on Terror" anywhere on earth under its new mission of "Global Strike."

In the four years since President Bush launched the War on Terror—9/11, the war in Afghanistan, the threat of Saddam Hussein's WMD and the war on Iraq—have provided a steady diet for public hysteria regarding our national security. But with the rising casualty toll from the Iraqi Occupation, and now the devastation of Hurricane

Katrina, the public mood is at last starting to shift. Our well-publicized events on the second anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, and our vigils in support of Cindy Sheehan at "Camp Casey 1" outside the president's Crawford ranch, garnered the most positive feedback we've seen in the state to date. And believe me, after all the abuse we've taken since 9/11 for our opposition to the White House's foreign and military policies, we're in a position to judge.

Even the *Omaha World-Herald* grudgingly concedes, as it did in a lead editorial September 12, that, "Americans are fully entitled to oppose U.S. involvement in Iraq if they wish. The campaign against Iraq was an extraordinary move involving high stakes, and it should hardly come as a surprise that many Americans express weariness or even anger at the deaths and injuries that U.S. forces continue to sustain. In short, to express deep reservations about the Iraq operation by no means qualifies one as a political radical. Or worse, as some people seem to believe."

This new mood, however, is not just the result of Hurricane Katrina and the botched relief effort in New Orleans. The new mood could never have taken root had not groups and organizations like NFP steadily and determinedly struggled to point out the pitfalls, the shortcomings and the out and out failures of the administration's policy in Iraq. Power in this instance, from the White House right on down, has conceded nothing without a long, hard struggle. And we will not achieve our stated goal of "U.S. OUT. U.N. IN" without still more struggle.

They have ceased to ignore us. In some quarters, they have even ceased to condemn us. Now we must be wary as they seek to co-opt us. And bet on it. Just as the old adage warns, they will.

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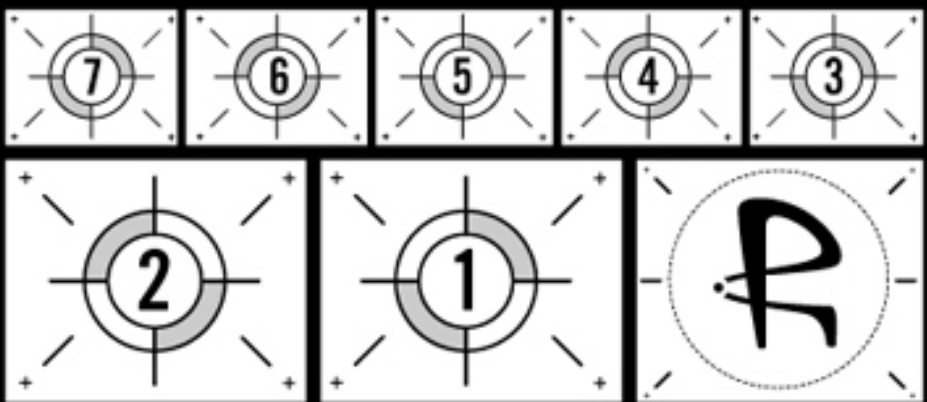
## PRAIRIE, conclusion

is breaking loose from old obsolete thinking. The convergence and worldwide shift in mindset will be an exciting thing to behold. The Phoenix will indeed rise again.

Our exhibits are being disbursed to various organizations. For example, the Children's Maze is headed for Camp Christy (Presbyterian). The peace poles are now at Church of the Brethren in Lincoln and Trinity Methodist in Grand Island (where Central Nebraska Peaceworkers meet). The Lincoln Indian Center received the large Indian octagon with power animals. The new Catholic Worker House in Omaha took the cranes imprinted with Braille that hang from the crafted wooden wheel. The Esperanto gazebo will encourage refugees at the garden area of Church of the Brethren in Lincoln. Orchard Hill Neighborhood Association Green Space and City Sprouts located at 40<sup>th</sup> and Franklin in Omaha received the three flying missiles into flower pots, the Prairie Peace Path (lessons from the prairie about living together on the planet), the "Samantha" show, and the Friendship Path. Dozens of the signs about consequences of

war and solutions to war are being used by the Des Moines Catholic Worker House. The 16 Children's Sculptures inspired by Sadako are at Sacred Heart in Omaha. Farmers Union state office in Lincoln will probably take the Family Farm Crises Sculptures. U.S. Viet Nam veterans in Superior, Nebraska received the signs with statements of suffering by veterans. The Lincoln Interfaith Ministries will house the six Mandalas and Nebraskans for Peace will house the metal Human Rights Sculptures for check-out to groups. The U.S. Grass Map Maze, Amber Waves of Grain (depicting nuclear weapons), Human Body systems model for the planet's functioning, and Path of Hope will be stored until suitable sites can be found. Let either Gwen or myself know if you are interested in any of these (402-466-6622).

The path of the Prairie Peace Park over the past decade and a half has been a deeply rewarding experience from which we have learned much. We wouldn't, either of us, have missed for the world. But, yes, now that this phase is over, we're grieving.



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The Urgency  
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2006  
Wall Calendar



**2006 Calendars Have Arrived!**  
(See Page 9 for ordering information)

## BULLETIN BOARD

*NFP State Office Hours in Lincoln, 941 'O' Street, Ste. 1026: are 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon weekdays.*

- Oct. 2\* "The Big Picture: Life Behind Bars in Nebraska"
- Oct. 9\* "Women and Nebraska Justice in Nebraska's Courts"
- Oct. 14 Nebraskans Against the Death Penalty Annual Dinner
- Oct. 15 2005 Annual Peace Conference in Lincoln
- Oct. 16\* "Race and Equal Justice in Nebraska's Courts"
- Oct. 23\* "Expert Viewpoints on Nebraska's Criminal Justice System"
- Oct. 23 "No Excuses—Nowhere—No How: The Abuse of Women's Human Rights in Africa," a statewide forum sponsored by Amnesty International USA at Union College in Lincoln from 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Contact Ron Bowlin or Suzy Prenger 402-483-1697 for more information.
- Oct. 30\* "Moving Forward: Community-centered Alternatives"

\* Doing Time: A Look at Nebraska's Prison System. A five-part series featuring a diverse group of panelists, former inmates, judges advocates, lawmakers. Series are held each Sunday in October, from 7-8:30 p.m. at the Unitarian Church, 6300 A Street in Lincoln. For more information call 499-6672 or email mark@welldelton.com.

# See New Orleans as a Parable

After days of fruitless phone calls—all circuits busy—I finally spoke to my brother in Baton Rouge on the 17<sup>th</sup> day after Hurricane Katrina breeched and broke the levees and flooded New Orleans. His transport terminal is FEMA-certified for delivery anywhere in the disaster area, and he has been into the city almost daily for two weeks.

There's a lot the country isn't seeing on television. The smell starts to register about 30 miles outside town. The body count is artificially low, in part because many bodies are still hanging in the trees. Now the water is lowered, it's getting easier to search house to house. Recovering bodies from trees is more complicated.

The fires have mostly been set by the gangs, those sons of permanent poverty. Civil society has always told them to go to hell. That's where they are now, thanks very much, and in hell, they live like kings. They have no interest in the return of civil society.

The tide turned against the gangs, though, the day five snipers fired on workers repairing a canal. Happened, some National



Guard folks were in shouting distance. They returned fire, killed two and wounded a third. The killings provoked next to no public reaction. Now, the curfew is working, backed by deadly force. The Guard—or an element of the Guard—is clearly shooting to kill. According to my student who is newly returned from Iraq, U.S. troops in that country must fire a warning shot first.

I am not faulting our National Guard; they are there to help and to protect. But I am still horrified that the aftermath of Katrina has come to the killing of U.S. citizens on U.S. soil by U.S. troops. It strikes me as a colossal bottom line of failure—of government at many levels, of Bush Administration policies, and of our nation's direction—by anybody's standards.

This failure lies stinking in the delta sunshine for the whole world to see, like the two feet of toxic silt which covers everything. It is the biggest mess, plain and simple, in the history of the civilized world. Nobody knows how to clean it up.

I find the President's plan to reinvent the Gulf Coast extremely disturbing. As I understand it, he wants to drive wages in the rebuilding effort down, he wants to roll back environmental protections, and he wants to privatize some little things—like the public school system. The Paradox President, Bush praises his most in-

competent and failed employees and wants to fix what ails the Big Easy with the hair of the dog.

The rollback of Clinton-era environmental protections for wetlands is widely credited by serious scientists with speeding development of (that is, draining) the brackish wetlands that buffered New Orleans. Bush Administration stonewalling has also meant five years lost in the effort to counter global warming, which is likewise widely credited by serious scientists for increased frequency of ocean storms and higher surges.

Bush's plan to relax wage supports for federal contractors is completely in character, and not by chance features some of the very same characters as his adventure in Iraq. Yes, Halliburton has secured no-bid contracts there already. As others have pointed out, this is not your grandpa's New Deal, so do not expect meaningful economic redevelopment. This president is more likely to build something more like a maquiladora—a NAFTA free trade neighborhood, where U.S. corporations ship U.S. jobs and create zones of squalor, just south of the U.S. border with Mexico—at a polite distance from some sort of French Quarter theme park and the band of restored mansions along St. Charles Avenue.

The far right is of course seizing on

this moment to try to dismantle the New Orleans public school system, through their long-sought system of vouchers. This makes about as much sense as the medieval practice of bleeding patients. New Orleans cannot rebuild its school system, not indeed its whole infrastructure, without major federal funding, and bleeding away the base—in dollars or in students—will permanently weaken the system and will cure nothing.

President Bush doesn't get it, or doesn't want to. It's time for Congress to step in and act like adults. Bad public policy helped hang those bodies like strange fruit in the beautiful broken old trees of New Orleans. The public policies which give free reign to predatory businesses, that destroy wetlands and create a permanent underclass of working poor, these policies helped turn Katrina from a near-miss into a mass lynching, and the whole world knows it, including African-American citizens around the country, according to recent polls.

I am beyond horrified to think that Congress will permit this president, so unwise, so unequal to this or any real crisis, to use the Katrina disaster opportunistically. Any program founded on further environmental degradation and lowering wages only works for the interests of polluters and profiteers.

**From the Bottom by Sally Herrin**  
The real political spectrum isn't right to left... it's top to bottom.