



Nebraska Report

There is no Peace without Justice

APRIL 2006

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Third Anniversary of the Iraq Invasion

Three Years Too Long Tens of Thousands Too Many Hundreds of Billions Too Much

by Terry Werner, Executive Director
Nebraska Chapter of the National
Association of Social Workers

“Are we better off than we were three years ago? Is the Middle East more stable than it was three years ago?” Nebraska Senator Chuck Hagel rhetorically asked a national television viewing audience on the third anniversary of the Iraq invasion.

“Absolutely not. It’s more unstable.”

Three years after the Bush/Cheney Administration launched an illegal and unnecessary war on Iraq, the chickens, as Malcolm X used to say, are coming home to roost...

The U.S. ambassador to Iraq, Bush’s own appointee, recently described the toppling of Saddam Hussein as akin to having opened “Pandora’s Box”...

Ayad Allawi, the man the White House personally handpicked to

serve as the interim Iraqi prime minister and then backed in the January 2005 election, has parted company with the administration to assert that Iraq is already in the midst of a civil war...

And only 29 percent of the U.S. public now believe the war was worth fighting (in contrast to the 70 percent support for the war in April 2003)...

Those falling numbers, Hagel, a decorated Vietnam War veteran, said, are directly related to the fact that so many of the predictions and promises made by the administration about Iraq have proven false. From the WMD threat to Saddam’s ties to Al-Qaida, from our being hailed as liberators to oil revenues paying for the war, “There’s been a credibility erosion for three years,” the senior Nebraska senator said, that continues right up to the present day. He pointedly cited the assertion of fellow Nebraskan, Vice President Dick Cheney, from last May that the insurgency was in its “last throes.”

Three years after the war began, the change in political circumstances couldn’t be more stark.

And you could sense that change in the air on Centennial Mall in Lincoln Saturday, March 18, even as a blizzard was starting to inundate the state. Over 200 people gathered on that cold, snowy morning both to honor the fallen soldiers and Iraqi dead and to protest the continued U.S. occupation of Iraq. Uniting under the theme of “Three Years Too Long; Tens of Thousands Too Many; and Hundreds of Billions Too Much,” the participants listened as speaker after speaker made impassioned pleas to reverse our policy in Iraq.

(Our Lincoln event, I should note, was to be the first of three such commemorations in the state. A similarly structured Omaha gathering, scheduled for the following Sunday after-

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Over 200 people turned out on a snowy cold day March 18 in Lincoln to commemorate the third year of the war.

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Nebraskans for Peace

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Latin America Briefs

compiled by Christy Hargesheimer



Sports Report

Kudos to Cuba! As it turns out, even sports are political. After the U.S. government backed down in their attempt to shut Cuba out of participation in the inaugural World Baseball Classic in March, everyone anticipated a showdown between the U.S. and Cuban teams. But the U.S. lost to Mexico early on, and Cuba beat out favorites such as the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, only to lose to Japan in the final, 10-6.

At a celebration in Havana, Fidel Castro announced that any prize money (supposed to be seven percent of the tournament's net revenue) would be donated to victims of Hurricane Katrina. Interpreting the offer as an affront, the U.S. government snippily replied that prize money wasn't part of the agreement to allow Cuba to play. The whole thing is probably moot, however, as the tournament organizers may not have made enough revenue to give prize money. At the very least, congratulations are in order to the Cuban team for their commendable second-place finish.

Speaking of Cuba, a press officer from the U.S. Department of State was featured on their website shopping in a crafts market in Old Havana with her visiting mother. Current U.S. policy forbids visitors to Cuba to make purchases—in fact, it prohibits most visits. So we ask, how did this person's mother get there when we can't, and did they actually purchase anything, or were they just looking? Meanwhile, U.S. religious leaders have been meeting with officials from the State and Treasury departments to protest new travel restrictions on religious travel to Cuba, and members of Congress are questioning these restrictions. Even when other licenses were denied for travel to Cuba, religious organizations until recently were permitted to travel there for ecumenical and mission work.

Post-Election News

In Costa Rica, former president Oscar Arias was finally declared winner of the February 5 election, by a narrow margin. Unfortunately, he intends to ratify CAFTA (Central American Free Trade Agreement). In Chile, one of the first actions undertaken by President Michelle Bachelet after her March inauguration was to grant free health care to retirees at the age of 60.

Argentina

March 24 marked the 30th anniversary of the coup that ushered in one of the bloodiest military dictatorships in Latin America. More than 30,000 victims of the state terror begun by ex-dictator Jorge Videla in 1976 were honored by 100,000 marchers at a rally led by the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo. Significantly, a spokeswoman for this group was silenced at the rally when someone unplugged her microphone. Argentina is still struggling to overcome the effects of dictatorship's strategy to foster extreme poverty and marginalization.

Colombia

Last year we reported that Congress had approved around \$600 million in aid to Colombian security forces. On March 23, the House approved an additional \$26 million for the Colombian military and police as an amendment to the Iraq supplemental bill. This aid, intended to increase counter-narcotics efforts, will include marine patrol aircraft for the Colombian navy and helicopters for Colombian national police.

This amendment, proposed by Rep. Dan Burton (R-IN), was originally for \$100 million, but Burton reduced it to \$26 million and was able to gain support by taking money from a program to build more prisons in Iraq. Opponents of this amendment pointed out that past coca eradication efforts have not really reduced production. They emphasized that the drug problem is fundamentally one of supply and demand, and that, in order to stop it, money should be put into drug prevention and treatment programs at home to reduce demand, and into alternative development abroad in order to reduce supply.

Congress is expected to request that Plan Colombia continue as it has for the past six years, with 80 percent of the aid going directly to Colombian security forces. Much more preferable would be amendments prioritizing aid for those most negatively affected by Colombia's conflict—including internally displaced persons, Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities, and the rural poor.

All of Nebraska's representatives voted for the amendment.

*Make a tax-deductible contribution
to the Nebraska Peace Foundation*



Former Lincoln City Council member Terry Werner is pictured above next to a mock coffin draped in an American flag at the March 18 commemoration. High school student Adam Brown, pictured at right, played "Taps" in honor of all those, Iraqi and American, who have died.



Iraq War, conclusion

noon, was attenuated by the snowstorm. Even so, 75 people literally braved the elements to hold a vigil at Memorial Park in the driving snow. An anti-war vigil in Grand Island planned for Sunday night had to be canceled outright because of the weather.)

Jeff Heimgartner, a member of the local band Sky 5, performed a set of anti-war songs to set the stage for the speeches. In my opening remarks as the emcee of the event, I simply provided a timeline of the deceptions and the destruction that have brought us to this tragic point. Beginning with president's address to the United Nations on September 12, 2002, in which he said, "The conduct of the Iraqi regime is a threat to the authority of the United Nations, and a threat to peace," I recounted the deceits and cover-ups perpetrated by the Bush/Cheney Administration on up through the January 31, 2006 arrest and removal of Gold Star mother and anti-war activist Cindy Sheehan from the House chamber the night of the State of the Union address. After all the death and destruction, the time for "passive annoyance," I said, is long past. To stop this occupation, we must do more.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Professor Robert Hitchcock, director of the institution's Conflict and Conflict Resolution Program, glumly noted that the Iraq War is now the fifth longest in U.S. history. Having destroyed the country's infrastructure, botched the reconstruction, inflamed religious and ethnic rivalries, exacerbated the terrorist threat and demolished any semblance of security, our invasion has brought to the country to the brink of an all-out civil war. "Three years and counting," he said, and "the civil war is looming." Referencing the no-bid sweetheart contracts for Dick Cheney's former companies, Halliburton and KBR which have a reputation for doing poor work for high prices, Hitchcock warned of dire things to come unless we "put as much money in development as in security."

Gold Star mother Becky Henderson, accompanied by her daughter and her sister, movingly described her son's, Marine Cpl. Matthew Henderson's, violent death, when the vehicle in which he was riding struck an improvised explosive device (IED) in al-Anbar province in May 2004. "Matt died in a tragic way, as a lot of other young people have. But not only was his death tragic, the means by which he was over there was even more tragic. It was an invasion based on misinformation... on revenge and retaliation." Saying she can still recall everything that happened the day she was notified of his death, she went on to state that, "I never dreamt I'd be standing on the mall talking about my son." But we must, she says, have the courage to speak out. It is the only way we will end this tragedy.

The Reverend Michelle Reed, minister at Southminster United Methodist Church

in Lincoln, described the range of emotions she experienced, in first marrying Christopher Swisher, and then "two years later when I had to officiate at his funeral" after he was ambushed in Baghdad, October 9, 2003. She described Christopher, whose wife Kristin grew up in her church, as a wonderful man and mourned his loss. "The official position of the United Methodist Church," Rev. Reed said, "is that war, hatred, anger, revenge are wrong. It's not God's way. According to church teaching, there is no place for violence on the earth."

After Rev. Reed finished speaking, she and Becky Henderson went to go stand by a mock coffin draped in an American flag. Aaron Brown, a high school musician and NFP supporter, brought out his trumpet and, in the chill air, played "Taps" in memory of all those who have fallen in this ill-advised and costly war.

As fate would have it, one other speaker

The Iraq War is now the fifth longest in U.S. history.

unexpectedly emerged. NFP supporter Meg King had just returned from Quantico, Virginia, where she had attended her son's Marine graduation ceremony. She tearfully described her distress at the seeing so many of these young people who would soon be deployed to Iraq. "Most of the people I was meeting," she said, "were going to a place where they could die... I looked around the room at all the little children, and thought about how many of them there would have a mom or dad going over to Iraq for this stupid war. I said, 'I just hope your moms and dads get to watch you grow up.'"

The final speaker on the program was renowned community activist and long-time Nebraskans for Peace member, Lela Shanks, who gave a profound and moving talk that started with, "We are the patriots," and ended with, "We are never, ever helpless." Lela's entire speech is reprinted in full on Page 4.

With the crowd still numbering over 200 strong, we then marched the four blocks over to the Federal Building, where we lined 'O' Street and held up our signs promoting our message. Never before in my life have I seen such a positive response from Nebraskans to the call for peace. Three years and counting since the war began, the public mood is clearly moving our way.

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An Open Letter to President Bush

March 10, 2006

George W. Bush, President
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Bush:

I want you to know the anguish in my heart. As I write this, my brother is on his way to Fallujah, Iraq, site of a terrorist attack reported on this morning's news. His name is John Bryant. He is a captain in the Marine Corps.

After the tsunami in the Indian Ocean, my brother probably was the first Marine to go to Sri Lanka to assist in the aftermath. I feel proud that he could serve our country and humanity that way.

However, if he dies in Iraq, or if a hair on his head is harmed, or if he suffers trauma or other psychological injury, I will hold you responsible. To me, it will be as if you had slain him with your own hands.

You are the one who ordered US forces to Iraq despite law, the expressed will of the world's peoples at the UN, the judgment of the Catholic Church and other churches, and your own generals' advice. It is you alone who insists that our forces—soon to include my baby brother—stay there indefinitely.

The present situation in Iraq was 100% preventable, and you were told how to avoid it. You have the power to change the situation. Staying the course is not working and could kill my brother. His life is in your hands.

Sincerely,

Curtis Bryant
1003 North 90 Street, Apartment 2
Omaha, NE 68114

Lela Shanks' March 18 Remarks

Fellow Patriots—Sisters and Brothers—All over our country every day, Americans' hearts are broken and torn apart by each new young American soldier's life that is snuffed out—soldiers like Becky's son Matt; and the tens of thousands that are crippled for life by this 3 year old war on the Iraqi people—a war started for power, a war started for oil—a misplaced war started for revenge.

After 9/11, in our anger and despair, many of us permitted ourselves to be gripped and paralyzed by a state of fear. We surrendered our energies and our inner powers to an atmosphere of utter helplessness. And in so doing, our silence and our inactions have given consent to this horrific violence unleashed on our soldiers and on the Iraqi people. Even as we speak, the Iraqis in Samarra are under siege.

In our silence and helplessness, we have played right in to the hands of what the Bush Administration and the neo-cons wanted us to do. They want us to cower in fear of this administration, they want us to be afraid to speak out in public against this war—they want us to be afraid to sign our name in a letter to the editor or to our congressperson. They want us to believe that we are helpless to make any change.

But OH, my fellow patriots, sisters and brothers, we can and we must be strong people of courage and of faith, and of resolve. I am here today to speak from the experience of a long life and to tell you that we are never, ever helpless to make positive, peaceful change. You better believe that Nelson, Hagel and Fortenberry count every letter, every call and every e-mail they receive against this bloody war.

I call upon you today, to break out of our self-imposed state of fear and despair, for this is the hour for all generations to reclaim our God-given inner powers of courage to make peaceful change; I call upon you to leave here with the resolve to take the

positive, peaceful action of the written word that can bring our soldier children and soldier grandchildren home.

Remember, any time we feel too afraid or too lethargic to write a weekly letter to a different member of Congress calling for an end to this war—we are voluntarily turning our God-given inner powers over to the Bush Administration.

We can always lift our spirits by remembering lessons from the Civil Rights Movement, for fifty years ago, there was nobody in America, north or south, who had less power than the poor black children and their parents who filled the jails and started the Civil Rights Movement.

But those seemingly powerless people changed the face of America. And the world will never be the same again. They did it by faith and they did it by sacrifice; they did it by walking into their fears, and that is what you and I have to do today.

Surely, we with our computers, and cell phones and ipods in the comfort of our nice homes can send a letter or text message or e-mail, if not daily, at least weekly to a new congressperson, calling for our troops to be brought home now. Twenty to fifty years from today, what will you tell your children and grandchildren when they ask, 'Grandma, Grandpa, what did you do to stop the war on the Iraqi people?'

Daily, Whitehouse news reports hint that the Bush Administration is next planning to attack Iran. Now is the time to let Congress know that we, the people of peace, that we, the people who are the government—that we choose negotiation over pre-emptive war.

We owe it to people like Dr. King and Gandhi; Rosa Parks; Medgar Evers and Emmett Till; Chaney,



“After 9/11, in our anger and despair, many of us permitted ourselves to be gripped and paralyzed by a state of fear.”

Schwerner, Goodman and all the others who gave their lives to bring justice and peace to the world. But most of all, we owe it to ourselves if we want our own self-respect.

Brothers and sisters, fellow patriots, now is our time to push the human race forward by choosing peaceful negotiation over revengeful pre-emptive war. As the poet says, “He who does not take when offered shall never find it more.” NEVER give up on peace. Thank you.

“Fearful people are more dependent, more easily manipulated and controlled, more susceptible to deceptively simple, strong, tough measures and hard-line postures. They may accept and even welcome repression if it promises to relieve their insecurities.”

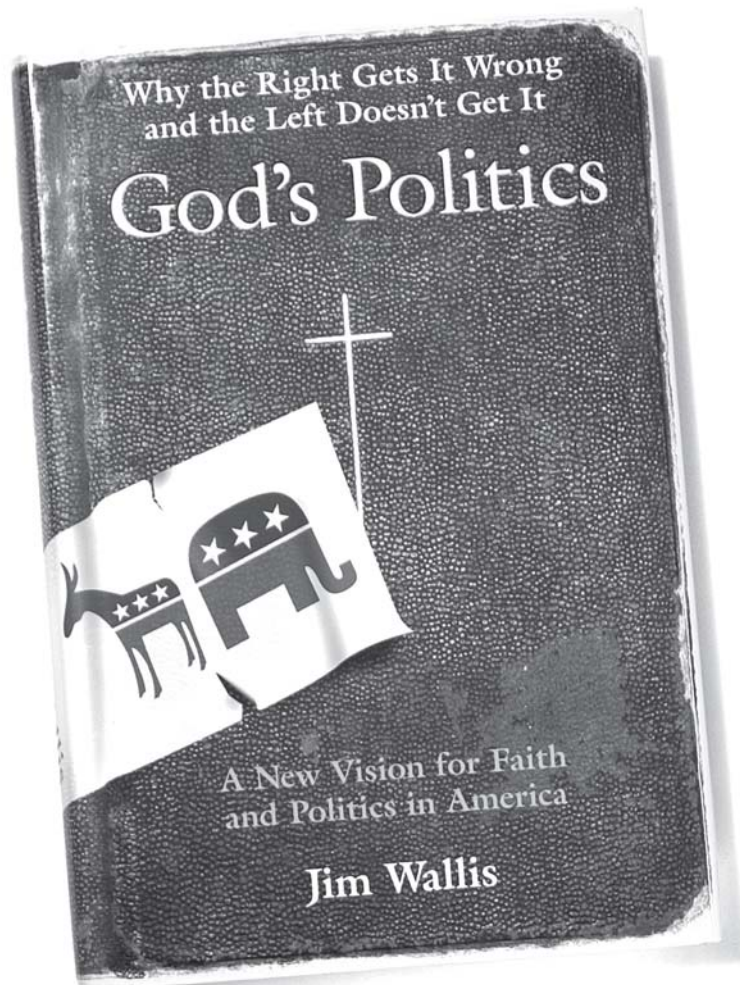
– George Gerbner, Annenberg School for Communication



Nebraskans fearlessly lined 'O' Street in Lincoln March 18 to protest the administration's policy in Iraq.

Jim Wallis in Omaha

Wednesday, April 26



Jim Wallis is a Christian leader for social change. An evangelical, he is the leading figure at the crossroads of religion and politics in America today. Wallis is a public theologian, nationally renowned preacher, international commentator on ethics and public life, faith-based activist, and author of seven books.

He was a founder of Sojourners—Christians for justice and peace—more than 30 years ago and continues to serve as the editor of *Sojourners* magazine, covering faith, politics and culture. In 1995, Wallis was instrumental in forming Call to Renewal, a national federation of churches, denominations, and faith-based organizations from across the theological and political spectrum working to overcome poverty. As an

Institute of Politics Fellow at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, Wallis has taught on faith, politics and society both there and at the Harvard Divinity School. *Time* magazine once named Wallis one of the fifty faces for America's future.

The sponsoring organizations of the *Center for Faith Studies* at Countryside Community Church, Creighton University and Presbytery of the Missouri River Valley, in the desire to increase awareness and understanding of the ancient moral traditions of the Scriptures, and to further independent thinking and public dialogue, are proud to welcome the Reverend Jim Wallis to Omaha on Wednesday, April 26, 2006.

“Dare to Dream: Dare to Make a Difference”

4:30 PM at the Kiewit Fitness Center on
Creighton University Campus – FREE

“God's Politics”

7:30 PM at Countryside Community Church,
8787 Pacific St. - \$10 adult, \$5 student

Advance purchase tickets are required for the evening event.

Please contact Cyndi Kugler at 402.391.0350x121 or cyndik@countrysideucc.org

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The Legal Battle for Whiteclay

by Mark Vasina
President, Nebraskans for Peace

Twenty-one miles south of the tiny reservation border town of Whiteclay, the Sheridan County Commission held a public hearing in Rushville March 6, on the automatic renewal of Whiteclay's three off-sale liquor licenses. The hearing was mandated by state law in response to a written protest filed by three Sheridan County residents. Licenses are automatically renewed each year by the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission unless complaints are forwarded by local governing bodies.

Had County Commissioners Lewis Abold, Dan Kling and Vernon Platt acknowledged merit in any of the arguments presented by the concerned residents of Sheridan County and the Pine Ridge Reservation, they could have forwarded the complaint to the Liquor Control Commission for a hearing in Lincoln. Instead they tabled their decision to their next meeting, when they voted unanimously to approve the automatic renewals.

The Rally

Testimony at the hearing, and at the rally which preceded it, highlighted the devastation visited by alcohol upon the adults and children of the Pine Ridge, and called for the responsible application of Nebraska liquor law to ameliorate the problem. Held on the lawn of the Sheridan County Courthouse, the rally was attended by over a dozen Oglala Lakota from the Pine Ridge and an equal number of Nebraskans from across the state.

Russell Means, of Porcupine, S.D., spoke first. He professed little faith that the Sheridan County Board would act responsibly on this most serious matter affecting Indians on the Pine Ridge, since local leaders were unable and unwilling to take the steps necessary to protect their own communities from economic and social decay. He also spoke of growing talk on the Pine Ridge about a blockade at the border to prevent alcohol from entering the reservation from Whiteclay.

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Chief Oliver Red Cloud, Treaty Chief of the Oglala Lakota Nation, spoke next about the genocidal-like devastation of alcohol on his people. A direct descendant of Chief Red Cloud, the signer of the treaties between the Sioux Nations and the U.S. government, he also spoke of the claims of the Oglala Lakota to the land on which Whiteclay sits. This 50-square mile parcel of land, known as the Whiteclay Extension, was illegally taken by an executive order of President Theodore Roosevelt in 1904 in contravention of an 1889 act of Congress which established the land as part of the Pine Ridge Reservation. (For more information about this, see: "Is Whiteclay in Nebraska or part of the Pine Ridge Reservation?" in the March 2006 *Nebraska Report*.)

Duane Martin, Sr., head of the Strong Heart Civil Rights Movement on the Pine Ridge, called for responsible action by all to curb the illegal transport of alcohol onto the reservation.

The last to speak at the rally was Nebraska Winnebago Tribe Member Frank LaMere. He cautioned listeners that the neglect of responsible social policy surrounding the licensing of alcohol dealers was leaving devastating scars on communities across Nebraska and the nation. Whiteclay,



Nationally known Indian activist Russell Means, who was arrested during the march in July 1999, spoke at the hearing.



Chief Oliver Red Cloud, Treaty Chief of the Lakota Nation (seated in the wheelchair) personally addressed the Sheridan County Commissioners at the March 6 public hearing. The Chief made an impassioned plea for ending the alcohol sales in Whiteclay and for returning the land on which Whiteclay illegally sits to the tribe.

he said, has become the poster child for Nebraska's failure to place the well-being of our children above the unchecked proliferation of liquor licenses.

The Legal Challenge

Thirteen of the 21 people who testified at the hearing opposed the license renewals, echoing the arguments presented in the protest letter:

1. Inadequate existing law enforcement has created a lawless environment in Whiteclay where violations of liquor laws by the licensed dealers are routine. Violations include sales to minors and intoxicated persons, sales on credit, and sales to bootleggers, as well as drinking on the licensed premises of off-sale-only establishments.
2. The sale of alcohol in Nebraska on the border of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation (where sale and possession of alcohol is prohibited by tribal law) and within walking distance of the reservation's
3. main population center poses a real and significant threat to public health and safety. The ongoing licensing of alcohol sales in this location is in clear violation of the interests and intent of the people of the Pine Ridge, who, as recently as 2004, have spurned an effort by some to legalize alcohol sales on their reservation.

4. The County Board should acknowledge the defects in the original issuance of the licenses and forward the complaint to the Liquor Control Commission.

Resolution No. 2006-08 of the Sheridan County Board, adopted at the Board's next meeting on March 13, disregarded all protest arguments and testimony, which were deemed irrelevant, and relied solely on the statement of the Nebraska Supreme Court in *Grand Island Latin Club v. Nebraska Liquor Control Commission*, 251 Neb. 61, 554 N.W.2d 778 (1996) to approve the license renewals:

A licensee may renew a liquor license provided: (1) the licensee is then qualified to receive a license; (2) the premises for which such renewal license is sought are the same premises designated in the initial license; and (3) the premises are suitable for the sale of alcoholic beverages in accordance with the initially issued license.

The board concluded that, "due to the protesters' failure to address any of these three issues, the board's sole remaining option is to approve the renewal of the relevant liquor licenses." Commission Chair Dan Kling stated, after the vote, "We just follow the law."

This narrow reading of liquor law may also be embraced by the Liquor Control Commission. Unfortunately, a challenge of this legal status quo by the protesters' arguments is delayed by the County Board's decision. State law provides for no direct appeal to the Liquor Control Commission regarding automatic license renewals when they are approved by a local governing body. The Sheridan County Board approval of the Whiteclay renewals blocks the Liquor Con-



Nebraska Winnebago Tribe Member Frank LaMere speaking at the news conference prior to the public hearing.

trol Commission from hearing the protesters' arguments and supporting evidence in a formal hearing. This protest, however, is merely the first of more to be filed.

Property Rights vs. Public Interest

Racism—in Sheridan County and throughout Nebraska, including public officials—undeniably plays an essential role in

the continuation of the atrocity of alcohol sales in Whiteclay. This ugly thinking must and will be continuously exposed and challenged.

But anyone who attends legislative committee hearings on Whiteclay-related bills will conclude that more than racism is at work here. Lobbyists for the liquor, grocery and petroleum-marketing industries have fought, at one time or another, all leg-



Duane Martin, Sr., head of the Strong Heart Civil Rights Movement on the Pine Ridge Reservation, brought his drumming group to the news conference.

islation aimed at correcting the regulatory failure in Whiteclay. Any legislation which would empower the Liquor Control Commission to deny licenses in the interest of public health or safety is vigorously opposed.

What's at work here? In recent years, Nebraska has witnessed a heady explosion of licenses for new retail outlets for alcohol. This is true for bars, restaurants and package stores. But the proliferation of liquor licenses for grocery stores, drug stores, big box stores, and convenience stores—many attached to gasoline service stations—has led to alcohol sales spanning the city streets and highways of Nebraska; into neighborhoods where alcohol was never historically available for sale. Nebraska can now lay claim to the highest number of liquor licenses per capita among all states in the U.S.

Seen in this light, the dispute over Whiteclay liquor licenses puts much more at risk for numerous industry interests than a few retail licenses in a sparsely populated part of Nebraska far from Omaha and Lincoln. It pits the property interest of existing license-holders against encroachment by the public interest (public health and safety). It threatens the juggernaut of the liquor licensing machine which is viewed as essential for business expansion by corporate operations ranging from gas station franchises to grocery chains and big box stores.

The battle for Whiteclay is in reality a contest between the proponents of unfettered markets and the defenders of responsible regulation. Some clearly view this as a struggle between Business (good) and Regulation (bad). Business interests fear that

Excerpt from the Nebraska Liquor Control Act Governing the Licensing of Retail Alcohol Dealerships

Section 53-132(3) of the [Nebraska Liquor Control] Act states:

In making its determination [to issue a liquor license] pursuant to subsection (2) of this section the [Liquor Control] Commission shall consider:

- (a) The recommendation of the local governing body;
- (b) The existence of a citizens' protest made in accordance with section 53-133;
- (c) The existing population of the city, village, or county and its projected growth;
- (d) The nature of the neighborhood or community of the location of the proposed licensed premises;**
- (e) The existence or absence of other retail licenses or craft brewery licenses with

similar privileges within the neighborhood or community of the location of the proposed licensed premises;

- (f) The existing motor vehicle and pedestrian traffic flow in the vicinity of the proposed licensed premises;
- (g) The adequacy of existing law enforcement;**
- (h) Zoning restrictions;
- (i) The sanitation or sanitary conditions on or about the proposed licensed premises; and
- (j) Whether the type of business or activity proposed to be operated in conjunction with the proposed license is and will be consistent with the public interest.**

if new liquor regulation, however moral or sensible, gains a toehold in Nebraska over the Whiteclay issue, the consequences would reverberate throughout the system which licenses and regulates liquor sales. This would be 'bad' for the liquor industry in Nebraska. But, more importantly, also 'bad' for those businesses which increasingly rely on alcohol sales to maintain or boost profits. Bad for business. Period.

The effort to close the liquor stores will continue on many fronts. Exciting developments are taking shape on the Pine Ridge Reservation (more about this next time). The Sheridan County Board's decision to approve the automatic license renewals, without so much as an acknowledgement of con-

cern for the children whose lives are affected, has attracted attention across Indian Country and across the nation. (Duane Martin, Sr. spent an all-expenses-paid week at Columbus State University in Columbus, Georgia lecturing about Whiteclay after faculty there read about the Sheridan County hearing on the internet.)

Our strategies must become increasingly sophisticated as we learn more about the legal and institutional roadblocks to change. We will find new ways to challenge our elected officials in the executive and legislative branches to develop wise, caring and non-racist public policy that protects the well-being of our friends and neighbors on the Pine Ridge.

Excerpt from the letter sent by Sheridan County residents to the Sheridan County Board Feb. 6, 2006:

The existence of off-sale licenses in Whiteclay necessarily poses a serious threat to public health, safety and welfare of the residents of Sheridan County and the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Three off-sale dealers in this town of 14 residents sell over 12,500 cans of beer daily almost entirely to the Native American residents of the Pine Ridge. The Oglala Sioux Tribe prohibits the sale and possession of alcohol on the Pine Ridge in its constitution, and has sought for many years to control alcohol sales in Whiteclay in the name of public health and safety.

This clientele has virtually no *legal* place to drink the beer they purchase—not on dealer premises, not on the streets of Whiteclay, not in their cars, not on the roads and highways, and not on the reservation. By permitting the sale of alcohol to this clientele, **the [Nebraska Liquor Control] Commission cannot fail to acknowledge that within a very short time after leaving the licensees' premises with their beverages most purchasers must inevitably break either Nebraska or Oglala Sioux Tribal laws.**

Faithful Security

The National Religious Partnership on the Nuclear Weapons Danger

by Jessica Wilbanks
Network Coordinator

Four months ago, Rev. William Sloane Coffin convened a group of religious leaders, disarmament advocates and grassroots organizers and asked them to imagine what would happen if religious communities all over the country placed the elimination of nuclear weapons at the top of their agenda:

Religious leaders would speak out eloquently and passionately in condemnation of nuclear weapons. Churches, temples and mosques would break their silence and begin leading the effort to eliminate these Weapons of Mass Destruction...

Their voices would create a groundswell of new energy and enthusiasm for abolition, which would spread to the 66 percent of the American public who already believe that no country should have nuclear weapons...

Faced with no alternative to the mounting public pressure, legislators would begin

to create a realistic plan to eliminate nuclear weapons...

Other countries would follow the example of the U.S., and those plans would gradually become a reality.

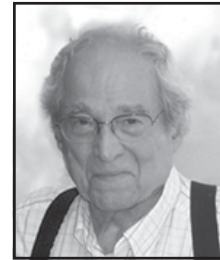
We've done it before. Religious communities have been a part of nearly every major social movement in the history of this country—anti-slavery, banning child labor, women's suffrage and the Civil Rights movement. Religious bodies already have a history of influencing nuclear weapons policy. In 1983, the Catholic Bishops' pastoral letter opposing the use of nuclear weapons contributed to a sea-change in the political climate.

The faith community is already with us—the majority of religious bodies have position papers that oppose nuclear weapons and favor abolition. But despite these positions, eliminating nuclear weapons is not the top of the agenda of the average church, mosque or temple.

Many religious Americans have a vague feeling that nuclear weapons are evil, but they aren't sure of what their holy books have to say about the use of such weapons.

Worst of all, many religious Americans see no way in which they can make a difference.

They leave solutions up to experts, and often, they view an increasingly violent, chaotic, and militarized world as inevitable. After all, this is what they hear in the news. The



Rev. William
Sloane Coffin Jr.

Bush/Cheney Administration is requesting funding for new nuclear weapons, terrorists are on the hunt for unsecured weapons in Russia and several countries are hurrying to expand their arsenals. With the combina-

tion of all these threats, military officials are saying that there's a 50 percent chance of a nuclear strike on an American target within the next ten years.

Like many Americans, religious people have learned to live in what Robert Jay Lifton called "nuclear numbness." This numbness is not only brought on by terror and anxiety about the future, but also by a feeling of extraordinary helplessness.

It is up to us, as people of faith, to give hope to the hopeless. That's our calling today. Faithful Security has been formed as a vehicle to coordinate the disarmament efforts within the religious community, educate and mobilize that community and create a plan to eliminate nuclear weapons.

To get a copy of the new resource guide "Breaking Faith with Nuclear Weapons" and to find out how you can get involved, go to www.faithfulsecurity.org. And you can join our join our mailing list by e-mailing us at info@faithfulsecurity.org.

Spotlight on Nebraska

Here in Nebraska, Faithful Security has partnered with the Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska to alert religious communities to an urgent threat: the danger of nuclear terrorism. In April and May, Faithful Security is holding two large events in Omaha and Lincoln. Sign up for more information on these events by sending an e-mail to info@faithfulsecurity.org.

During the 2004 Presidential elections, President Bush and Senator Kerry found common ground. They both agreed that the greatest security threat facing the world today is nuclear terrorism.

As people of faith, Faithful Security applauds the efforts of the U.S. and Russian governments to work together to reduce the number of deadly nuclear weapons left over from a time of mutual distrust. Yet, as we work to hasten the day of increased peace and security, we are also carefully monitoring the ways in which our own government reacts to clear and present dangers. The 9/11 Commission has recently given the Administration a failing grade for its inaction in the face of this imminent threat of nuclear terrorism.

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Consider the facts:

- *The 9/11 Commission reported that Al-Qaida has been trying to acquire nuclear weapons for ten years. Osama bin Laden has called it a "religious duty" and has sought and received a religious ruling (fatwa) from an extreme Saudi cleric authorizing the use of weapons of mass destruction to kill American civilians.*
- *The hardest step in the nuclear terror plot is acquiring weapons-grade material. Yet, this very moment, there is unsecured nuclear weapons material in more than 100 facilities in 40 countries around the world. Some are secured by nothing more than an underpaid guard and a chain link fence. A senior-level official in the Bush/Cheney Administration recently stated that one-third of the world's 130 civilian research reactors lacked proper security.*

The United States must expand global threat-reduction efforts both by leading the international effort to prevent access to this material and by de-emphasizing, de-valuing and reducing its own reliance on nuclear weapons.

Three Ways to Be a Prophetic Voice

1 Raise awareness about the urgent need to lock down nuclear weapons. Share the new docudrama *Last Best Chance* with your neighbors, family members and faith community. *Last Best Chance* was produced by the Nuclear Threat Initiative, a non-partisan organization dedicated to reducing the nuclear danger. In the 45-minute docudrama, the threat of nuclear terrorism is highlighted in an action-packed narrative. At the end of the film, former Senator Sam Nunn and Senator Richard Lugar share their reasons for getting involved in the race to lock down nuclear weapons.

Consider hosting a screening in your home, in your congregation or at a local library or community center. Be sure to

invite the people in your community who are most directly invested in keeping your community safe—first responders, members of your city or town council and other community leaders. Contact Faithful Security at info@faithfulsecurity.org to sign up to show a screening and request your free copy of the DVD, as well as a discussion guide for people of faith.

2 Contact your elected officials and ask them to place 'human security' at the top of their agenda by dramatically accelerating work to secure nuclear weapons and material around the world.

3 Write a letter to the editor or an op-ed about the need to lock down nuclear weapons.



LASTBESTCHANCE

Seymour Hersh at Hastings College on...

'The Just Application of Power'

by Charles Richardson

Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative journalist Seymour Hersh, who broke the story on the My Lai massacre in the Vietnam War and the Abu Ghraib prison scandal in the current one, spoke at Hastings College March 14. In a speech entitled, "The Just Application of Power," Hersh spent the next two hours graphically documenting for the 400 people present just how far the current administration in Washington has strayed from a principled use of its authority.

He opened his talk with a tale told by comedian Richard Pryor about a woman who caught her husband 'in the act' in bed with another woman. Accusations and denials fly back and forth between the two, with the husband at last indignantly demanding, "Are you going to believe me or your lying eyes?"

Since 9/11 in particular, the *New Yorker* columnist said, both the Bush/Cheney Administration and a goodly portion of the American public have consistently refused to face the facts. He described the president as a "revolutionary detached from reality," a true believer with a direct line to God. As such, Hersh said, he is capable of incredibly stupid decisions with little awareness of facts, processes and consequences. And he appears not to learn from experience.

On the upside, Hersh reported, there are only 1,041 days till Bush and Cheney leave office, and the lies, he said, are becoming harder and harder to swallow with every passing week. Ultimately, he predicted, "Bush will end up like Pinochet," the Chilean dictator who is now being prosecuted for crimes he committed while in office though in Bush's case, Hersh said, we're not likely to get the whole package. In view of his crimes against humanity, however, Bush, Jr., he said, may find it prudent not to travel abroad.

On the downside, Hersh noted however, Iraq is in chaos and civilian deaths are mounting, "87 bodies today, 62 bodies yesterday." Our own Congress failed to provide adequate oversight over the executive branch and is "guilty of a dereliction of duty." And the Taliban, which served as the catalyst for the entire War on Terror, is likely on its way to getting back in power.

The abuse and torture at the Abu Ghraib prison, which began in April 2003, is indicative of the administration's morally skewed use of power, Hersh stated. In the wake of the attacks of 9/11, the Bush Team set the tone for this new worldview with the declaration of War on Terrorism. From that point

forward, either you were with us or against us. The old rules no longer applied and the standards were loosened with respect to detention, interrogation, rendition, and psychological and physical torture.

Abu Ghraib had for many decades been the principal torture and execution facility in Iraq and a terrible symbol to the Iraqis. By the beginning of the occupation, it had been abandoned and looted. The occupation forces, Hersh said, made an early and grave error when they, instead of destroying it, rebuilt it and used it.

Based on his extensive contacts with the Pentagon's leadership,

Hersh is convinced that an air assault against Iran's nuclear program is imminent. Such an attack, he warns, will not only alienate the remaining 75 percent of the Muslim world that, to this point, has refused to embrace the radical Islamic view of the U.S. In Iran itself, it is likely to provoke such an anti-American backlash that the Iranian government will be emboldened to actually suspend oil exports to the West. World petroleum prices will spike to \$200 a barrel, he predicted, throwing the U.S. economy into chaos and plunging our nation into all-out war.

The administration, from the outset, had expected an easy time in Iraq, he stated. When Army Chief of Staff General Eric Shinseki suggested the operation would require 200,000 to 300,000 troops, the neocons in power were astonished. The issue at hand had nothing to do with the facts of the matter. The issue was: didn't he get it? He'd been to the meetings, heard the program, and should accordingly have known the drill. But here was Shinseki persisting in talking about facts of the matter, wanting to face reality in cold, hard light of day. It was a fatal mistake he was eased out of the processes.

A month before the invasion, when asked about probable duration of war, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said, "Six days, maybe six weeks, I doubt six months." The plan included rapid occupation of the major cities, especially Baghdad. To that end, the invading forces by-passed pockets of resistance. The pockets, with their weapons, faded away and occupation of Baghdad was formally proclaimed around April 10.

The administration's plan of war, Hersh said, began unraveling quickly. Already by

April 6, random and organized looting had begun. This included treasures from the National Archives and Museums. Looting of government ministries, except the Oil Ministry, was extensive, with systematic destruction of files and records. The insurgency's intent was clear: cripple reconstruction, damage the capacities to get the public facilities operating again. By the 7th of April, 6,000-7,000 people were just gone, faded away, Hersh reported. Organized resistance was already forming, first with small-scale attacks.

erally passed along and, in time, photos of the abuse were soon making the rounds at the prison. By early in 2004, the photographs had come to the attention of the military chain of command, leading to the Taguba investigation and report.

As even the novice student of Islam knows, nudity and sexual humiliation are profound insults to Muslim men. In the words of a knowledgeable friend of Hersh, "There will be revenge from them and their families and friends of families. You have done the single stupidest thing without any

Over the succeeding months, the attacks increased in frequency and sophistication. Insurgents would 'pre-target' a location, cripple a tank or vehicle then launch major assaults on the backup and rescue teams. They became increasingly skillful with improvised explosive devices. The Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad was blown up in the summer of 2003, followed by the U.N. headquarters. In the fall, water treatment facilities were blown up.

By September, he said, things were distinctly not going well. The decision came down from the top: turn up the heat, get more and better intelligence. Soon thereafter, the head honcho and interrogation expert at Guantanamo was assigned to serve as a consultant Abu Ghraib. Hersh described the pressures on the guards at Iraqi facility. They were expected to 'soften up' the prisoners for interrogation using sleep deprivation, painful positions, beatings, fear and humiliation. They did not, of course, figure out these 'softening up' methods by themselves, he stresses. The methods were gen-

idea of what you are doing." Hersh assured the audience that there are photos far worse than those shown on "60 Minutes" on May 7, 2004. [Newer photos of the torture at Abu Ghraib can be found at www.thememoryhole.org/war/iraqis_tortured/index.htm.] Hersh cited estimates that as many as 70 percent of the detainees at Abu Ghraib had nothing to do with the insurgency and that there was no basis for detaining and interrogating them.

The soldiers who served at Abu Ghraib, Hersh said, are also victims, and he drew a connection between what's happened to them and what happened to Paul Meadlo, a soldier who more than 35 years ago got drawn into the massacre of hundreds of villagers in My Lai. Soon after the massacre had taken place, he recounted, Meadlo stepped on a landmine, losing part of his leg. According to Hersh, Meadlo called out to Lt. Calley, the officer who ordered the killings, that "God has punished me and he will punish you." Meadlo's mother, Hersh said,

conclusion on page 10

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Why I Re-registered as a Republican

A Personal Testimonial by Tim Rinne

I worked for the Democratic Party in Nebraska for almost ten years. I had a direct hand, at one point, in getting five registered Democrats elected to the seven-member Lincoln City Council. I supported Jesse Jackson for president (twice), and in 1992 served as the state director for Sen. Tom Harkin's presidential campaign in the South Dakota Democratic Primary. In 2000, I co-chaired the effort to place Green Party presidential candidate Ralph Nader on the Nebraska ballot. Two years ago, I supported Rep. Dennis Kucinich for president because he opposed the War on Iraq, hates Free Trade agreements like NAFTA and advocates the creation of a Department of Peace. And I've personally (and I'm proudest of this) led the call here in Nebraska to have our native son, Vice President Dick Cheney, impeached for criminal conduct.

So what's a dyed-in-the-wool liberal like me doing re-registering as a Republican?

Easy. I live in Nebraska, the *reddest* of "red states."

Nebraska holds the record as the most Republican state in presidential elections of any in the country for better than half a century. It's been 42 years (LBJ in '64) since a Democrat last carried the state and won Nebraska's electoral vote. Nationally, because of the mess in Iraq, the Katrina debacle, the warrantless wiretaps, expensive gas, the shaky economy, Bush's approval ratings have dropped like a rock. But here in Nebraska he still just tops 50 percent, thanks in part to the Republicans' whopping 179,000-voter advantage in party registration (basically the population of Lincoln, minus Memorial Stadium on game day).

In a Republican bastion like Nebraska, the only way a liberal like me is going to have any say in who becomes the next governor of this state is to be registered as a Republican, so that I can vote in the May 9 Republican Primary when Tom Osborne and Dave Heineman square off. Because that's where the governor's race is going to be decided.

Not next November in the general election.

In May, in the Republican Primary.

Oh, I'm well aware of the Democrats' phenomenal success at finding a political newcomer (Jim Exon, Bob Kerrey, Ben Nelson) who captures the Statehouse and then parlays that popularity into a Senate career. All three of those candidates though ran against an unpopular Republican incumbent (Norbert Tieman, Charlie Thone, Kay Orr). Dave Heineman hasn't been in office long enough to really screw up, and his competition is one of the most idolized people in the state.

The likelihood that an upstart Democrat, who's starting late, is going to slip in and steal this election from either of these Republicans, given their party's registration advantage, is the stuff of science fiction. Sure, lightning could strike; Osborne or Heineman could get struck down jaywalking. But I doubt even Vegas would give any odds on Dave Hahn pulling an upset in November.

I've never met Dave Hahn. But I've heard some good things about him. Although his chances of becoming governor are slim to none, I might just vote for him anyway in the general election if he's speaking intelligently and forthrightly about the issues. And I'll be able to, because in

general elections you can cross over and vote for the candidate of your choice.

But in the partisan primaries in Nebraska, only people registered in that party get to vote. And in the 2006 governor's race, all the action is in the Republican Primary. That's where the only competitive races are taking place for both the Statehouse and the U.S. Senate. (All of the Democratic candidates for federal and state office will automatically advance to the general election). And if a liberal like me doesn't want the Don Stenberg wing of the Republican Party deciding who the next governor of the State of Nebraska is going to be for the next four and conceivably the next eight years, I need to have an 'R' behind my name so I can have a say the 9th of May.

Primary elections attract roughly half of the voter turnout you'll see in November. In this tight governor's race between Osborne and Heineman and spoiler Dave Naby, the votes of liberals just like me could play a decisive role in the outcome.

I confess, it's not easy to know I'm a member of the same party as Dick Cheney. But if I want to do more than look on in horror as Don Stenberg and his fundamentalist cohorts pick who our governor will be possibly through the year 2014, I'll bite the bullet and be a member of the GOP.

A version of this article appeared in the February 27 edition of the Lincoln Journal Star. The opinions expressed do not represent the official policy of the Nebraskans for Peace State Board. Tim Rinne will again be re-registering as a 'Democrat' May 10, the day after the Primary.

Seymour Hersh at Hastings College, conclusion

later told him, "I gave them a good boy and they sent me back a murderer." That same phenomenon, the journalist said, is already being seen among veterans assigned to Abu Ghraib. A veteran who'd served at the facility came home from Iraq in March 2004, he reported, a 'changed person.' She was despondent, left her husband, moved, and got a different job. The soldier's mother subsequently found Abu Ghraib pictures on the woman's computer, and discovered that she was getting many large black tattoos. It was "as if she wanted to change her skin," the mother said.

Hersh said he'd been astonished to learn that the president had known about the torture at Abu Ghraib in January 2004, but had done nothing until the story broke in May on CBS's "60 Minutes." When queried about the delay to act, the official explanation had been that the issue was slowly working its way up the chain of command.

As a tool of war, Hersh said, torture

doesn't work. Tactically speaking, the military itself recognizes that, if we torture, there is more likelihood that our captured soldiers will be tortured. But even in terms of extracting information, he noted, most people will confess to whatever is wanted from them, irrespective of accuracy, just to end the pain. Torture is also illegal. It is forbidden under international agreements to which the United States is signatory, and is prohibited under Article VI of the Constitution. It is morally wrong, but he warns, it is seductive, and once begun, cannot be contained or regulated.

Hersh concluded his talk by touching on the influence of the neoconservatives in the administration, whom, he says, constitute a "cult." The Project for the New American Century (PNAC), to which Vice President Dick Cheney was party prior to the 2000 election, argued for an aggressive imperialism across the globe in the interest of our

national security. With 70 percent of the world's oil resources controlled by Muslims, developing a reliable source of oil in the Middle East was central to PNAC's national security vision. Deposing Saddam Hussein to gain control of Iraqi oil supplies was, accordingly, predestined.

To 'sell' such a scheme to a reluctant public, Hersh explained, the "cult" turned to yet another influential neoconservative thinker, Leo Strauss, for counsel. Strauss's solution, he stated, was simply to lie. In the neocon worldview, deceit and the spinning of 'noble lies' are absolutely justified if it serves their conception of the country's best interest. Given his apocalyptic Christian beliefs about being an instrument of God's will, it isn't clear, Hersh said, how well President Bush in particular can distinguish between truth and lies. But certainly the other seven or so members of the neocon cult, including Cheney, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, and Rice, are clearly able to do so, and to achieve their ends, Hersh said, they are prepared to exer-

cise power wherever they deem necessary, in whatever manner they deem fit. And right now, he announced, they are training their sights on Iran.

Based on his extensive contacts with the Pentagon's leadership, Hersh is convinced that an air assault against Iran's nuclear program is imminent. Such an attack, he warns, will not only alienate the remaining 75 percent of the Muslim world that, to this point, has refused to embrace the radical Islamic view of the U.S. In Iran itself, it is likely to provoke such an anti-American backlash that the Iranian government will be emboldened to actually suspend oil exports to the West. World petroleum prices will spike to \$200 a barrel, he predicted, throwing the U.S. economy into chaos and plunging our nation into all-out war.

Seymour Hersh's most recent book is Chain of Command: The Road to Abu Ghraib. His talk "We've Been Taken Over By a Cult" can be found at www.counterpunch.org/hersh01272005.html.

THE ANCIENT ART OF WAR PROPOGANDA

GREEK HISTORIAN POLYBIUS RIPS ROMAN SPIN DOCTORS

by Tom Winter, UNL Associate Professor of Classics

I've known forever that there had to be a popular course where we would just read the Greek and Roman historians in English. As course title, though, "The Greek Historians" lacked something. Clever boy, I finally titled it "Ancient Warfare." (Forgive me, but 'old war' has sex appeal.) Ancient Warfare has been filling rather large classrooms, and, I hope, leaving students wiser than when they came in. (Still naive after all these years...!)

All the Greek historians were generals. They had been, and they had led, 'boots on the ground.' And what sort of history did they write? Wars. But Polybius, more than others, thought about it. Also he thought about writing about it. He spent most of his adult life as a hostage in Rome, hobnobbing with Rome's elite in politics and war. He knew war, he knew Rome, he knew politics. Greek eyes on Rome made interesting observations. ("You can observe a lot by watching"—Berra.)

Fabius, the Roman historian, had written that Hannibal started the Second Punic War (WWII for Rome) when he

captured Saguntum, a Roman Ally in Spain. This means, of course, for the Roman view of history, Hannibal started it.

It is at that point that Polybius explains patiently that you must distinguish three things about a war: The Cause, The Pretext, and the Beginning. Curiously, the "beginning" is the last of the three!

Study the preceding events and people's reactions, and with Polybius, you conclude that the "Cause" of the Second Punic War was the insulting, 'poison pill' terms that Rome had imposed on Carthage at the end of the First Punic War (WWI for Rome). Now as any student of history knows, it is impossible—or nearly so—for a regime to lose a war and stay in power. One consequence of losing WWI for Carthage was a bitter civil war. And Rome piled on. (Late hit, dead-ball foul, as we say in Nebraskan.) With Carthage re-weakened, Rome added on more indemnities, and also took Corsica.

Result? Military leaders from Carthage hated Rome with a burning white-heat hate. In modern terms, Polybius would have us understand that the "Beginning" of WWII (for Rome) was the inverse "Marshall Plan" it imposed upon the

defeated Empire of Carthage.

But with Hannibal, Polybius does not have a good illustration of the "Pretext." For an example of pretext, Polybius uses the war of Antiochus against Rome. There, too, his Cause is hatred/anger at Rome, but the Pretext (Antiochus had one) was the Liberation of Greece. All of the Inheritors of Alexander the Great, when warring on each other or on Rome for glory, honor and empire, used this 'liberation' pretext. Even in the time of Polybius, liberation was OLD.

Okay, skip the obvious Polybian view of our last war, and go straight to the present one. Yes, there is going to be a quiz.

Pick one from A-Cause, B-Pretext, or C- Beginning:

- ___ to avenge 9/11.
- ___ to remove the WMDs.
- ___ to plant Democracy in the Middle East.
- ___ to defeat Terrorism.
- ___ to focus Terrorism all in one spot.
- ___ to Liberate Afghanistan and Iraq.


Yes, you can use the same answer more than once.

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

April 13 Democracy Now! fundraiser at Duggan's Pub in Lincoln, 6 to 9 pm featuring readings from Amy Goodman and music by the Coopers (they play till midnight); \$5 cover charge—half of proceeds to benefit Democracy Now!, remainder to help pay for the cost to air the show.

Apr. 21 Last Day to Register to Vote or Change Party Registration by Mail

Apr. 21 Earth Day Celebration in Lincoln at the UNL Student Union from 10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m. Friday

Apr. 22 Earth Day Celebration in Omaha at Elmwood Park West Pavilion from 12:00–6:00 p.m. Saturday

Apr. 26 Author Jim Wallis speaks in Omaha (see page 5 for details)

May 1 Last Day to Register to Vote or Change Party Registration in Person

May 5 Cinco de Mayo

May 9 Primary Election

To list an event, submit in writing by the tenth of the month preceding the event to: NFP, 941 'O' Street, #1026, Lincoln, NE 68508, or email: NeReport@neb.rr.com.



Speaking Our Peace

My people have been farmers since before they had writing. At the time my grandfather, Andrew Olson, fled to America in the 1870s, my Swedish ancestors were members of the *torpare* class—the rural poor made poorer by land reforms that had carved big farms out of the countryside. Grandpa's family had a potato patch and no more. As a child, he stole bread from the manor house dogs to feed his family and, as a youth, had been involuntarily conscripted to serve in the Swedish military. Looking only to get free, he did not know that the land he settled on near Logan Creek, and later near Wausa, had been stolen from the Omaha Indians by the U.S. Army. What he knew was that he had clear water, good cattle and hogs, good corn, and a good family. As my Dad said, "We didn't have much then, but we always ate good."

Grandpa and his children continued to own the Wausa farm until the 1990s when my Aunt Mabel, then in her 90s, moved to town and fully retired from farming. They were the realization of the Jeffersonian dream of yeoman farmers—self-sufficient, self-educated, moral, hardworking stewards of the land. Though Jefferson was a slave-owning hypocrite, his vision was good.

For a time, our nation actively promoted Jefferson's ideal through the Homestead Act and other acts that brought farmers to the Great Plains. It was that same spirit that infused the Populist Party, one of the most serious reform movements in American history. In the 1890s, the Custer County Populist Party in Nebraska was on record supporting equal rights for women and African-Americans, direct

election of senators, public ownership of essential public services, and the use of monetary policy to regulate the economy.

That democratic ideal, though, has been effectively killed. In 1930, 30 percent of the American public lived on farms. Today, two percent of the population now lives there. It wasn't market forces alone that forced those 28 percent off the farm and out of rural areas. Government policies had a hand through subsidies that favored the big farmer; cheap food and development policies that favored the cities; water policies that favored agribusiness; fossil fuel policies that substituted machines for people; corporate tax advantages; and food sanitation regulations that allowed poisoning by pesticides and herbicides. Soon we will all get our food from Sam Walton's children at Wal-Mart or from KFC's colonel. We will eat tasteless swill.

Recently, Federal Judge Laurie Smith-Camp struck down Initiative 300—Nebraska's corporate farming ban. Judge Smith-Camp, who was appointed by President Bush, was already notorious for having failed to protect several endangered species. That record now extends to the human family and the family farm. She decided, without trying the case or hearing evidence, that I-300 discriminates against out-of-state corporations.

It does not. It simply says that companies, in state or out of state (save for family FARM corporations), cannot own farmland in Nebraska. As one of the original authors of the initiative, Chuck Hassebrook of the Center for Rural Affairs, points out, an out-of-state family FARM corporation can "have its cattle fed in Ne-

braska custom feedlots just like Nebraska ranchers."

Regulating economic activity within the state to benefit activities located in the state is neither illegal nor unconstitutional. If it were, corporate tax break programs like LB 775 and its successor, the Nebraska Advantage Act would be just as guilty. And I'm guessing Judge Smith-Camp isn't planning on going after those.

Before being struck down by the bench, I-300 was supported by:

- 57 percent of Nebraska voters in 1982;
- 65 percent of Nebraska farmers and ranchers in a 1994 poll;
- Implicitly, by the 89 percent of farmers and ranchers polled who wanted a "no non-family farm corporate farm policy;"
- and, Nebraska's rise, since the law's passage, in ranking in corn, soybeans and red meat production.

Judge Smith-Camp's decision comes after I-300 had withstood 20 years of suits and efforts to create softening legislation; a \$300,000 Texas study commissioned by former Governor Mike Johanns that labeled it bad for business; and watering-down legislation backed by Johanns. Her decision also comes, however, on the heels of a federal ruling that says that the government can use eminent domain powers to take over private property for corporations in the name of economic development.

And there, as they say, goes the farm.

Little now legally protects the family farmer, the organic farmer, the farmer's market producer, the Nebraska free-range livestock movement, or local craftspeople producing the healthiest, best-tasting food

possible. The large producers who have killed the local environment, local initiative and small towns from California to North Carolina are poised to rule the roost. And they will, unless...

- We are successful in appealing Judge Smith-Camp's decision. While the appeal is pending, I-300 is still the law of the land. And if family farm organizations, working in partnership with the Nebraska Attorney General Office mount a successful challenge, we can preserve both I-300 and our agricultural way of life;
- Farmers and small towns have got to start voting their economic self-interest—we can't be forever bashing Big Government and expect a meaningful Farm Bill;
- City people start to care about farms and food policy. Generations of Americans (and Nebraskans) have grown up now thinking milk comes from a carton, rather than a cow; and
- We all have to fight for the little guy and the environment with anti-corporate zoning laws that guarantee local control.

In 1996, I lectured on agriculture in Moldova. It had large government, fossil-fuel-intensive farms that had made the country an ecological desert. Local initiative was gone and local responsibility lost. Ten years later, Moldova is endeavoring to rebuild with family farms and organic agriculture. There may be a lesson there for those of us interested in Jefferson's vision and Andrew Olson's hope.

Saving I-300

by Paul Olson, UNL Professor Emeritus