



Nebraskans for Peace

Nebraska Report

There is no Peace without Justice

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The Case for an Even Bolder Economic Stimulus

Hendrik van den Berg
UNL Professor of Economics

There's no question that the U.S. economy needs a large fiscal stimulus. Official unemployment reached 7.6 percent in January, and labor economists estimate that the true percentage of people who would like a job but don't have one is probably double that—at 14 or 15 percent of the working-age population. And as a whole, the economy continues its downward spiral as more firms announce layoffs and consumer demand continues to shrink. Worst of all, the same thing is happening in every other country of the world (which means that there isn't another large economy to pull us out of recession). The downward spiral will have to be reversed by our own economic policies.

And a fiscal stimulus is, realistically, our only option.

Yes, it's true that, in general, government has three options for dealing with rising unemployment and falling incomes: (1) fiscal stimulus, (2) monetary expansion

(‘easy money’ credit policies), and (3) doing nothing in the hope that the economy eventually fixes itself. Once the economy begins contracting and unemployment rises to high levels, however, the latter course is no longer really viable, as plummeting economies do not reverse themselves very easily. And, monetary expansion is also inadequate in a financial collapse like the one we find ourselves in today. The U.S. Department of the Treasury and the Federal Reserve (not to mention foreign governments in most other countries) have already spent enormous amounts of debt-financed money trying to fix our broken financial sector—so far to no avail.

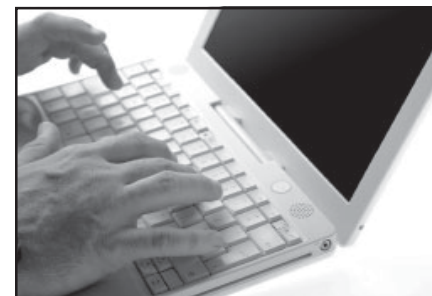
The Financial Origins of the Current Recession

This is not to say that we should not fix the financial sector. After all, that's where the current recession originally started. The first signs of the current economic downturn appeared two years ago,

in early 2007, when falling housing prices set off a massive reevaluation of the profit/loss balance sheets in the financial sector. Most commercial banks, investment banks, insurance companies and hedge funds held a substantial portion of their assets in the form of financial instruments that were based on the value of mortgages issued during the ‘housing bubble’ of the early 2000s. It is now well known that this housing bubble (with its inflated mortgage values) was fueled by the expansionary monetary policy of the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank—allegedly to help the economy recover from the popped ‘stock market bubble’ of 2000 that the Federal Reserve had in turn encouraged with its expansionary monetary policy during the economic boom of the 1990s.

On top of the Federal Reserve's over-expansion of the money supply, the rapid growth of the global market for what's now known as ‘securitized’ and ‘structured’ financial instruments further fueled the housing bubble by letting banks issue

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Nebraska Report

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Nebraskans for Peace

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NFP Legislative Agenda

Bill & Introducer	Committee & Bill Status	Support/Oppose	Testifying
Immigration			
LR9 Fulton	Judiciary Committee Heard 2/18/2009	Oppose	John Krejci
Description: Encourage law enforcement agencies to enter into a memoranda of agreement with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to perform immigration law enforcement functions			
LB34 Ashford	Judiciary Committee Heard 2/18/2009	Oppose	John Krejci
Description: Require employment verification of employees by employers and by contractors who want to be awarded a public contract			
LB229 Fischer	Transportation & Telecommunications Heard 1/26/2009	Oppose	
Description: Adopt federal regulations and change operator's license and state identification card provisions			
LB403 Karpisek	Judiciary Committee Heard 2/18/2009	Oppose	Terry Werner
Description: Require verification of lawful presence in the United States to receive public benefits as prescribed			
Death Penalty			
LB36 Flood	Judiciary Committee Heard 1/31/2009	Oppose	John Krejci
Description: Change method and procedure for inflicting the death penalty			
LB306 Council	Judiciary Committee Heard 1/31/2009	Support	John Krejci
Description: Repeal the death penalty and replace it with life imprisonment without possibility of parole			
Turn off the Violence			
LB64 Howard	Education Committee Heard 2/3/2009	Support	Sarah Schroeder, Paul Olson, Kerry Beldin
Description: Adopt the Lindsay Ann Burke Act and provide duties for the State Department of Education and school districts with respect to dating violence			
Civil & Human Rights			
LB136 Avery	Health & Human Services Heard 2/25/2009	Support	Terry Werner
Description: Change provisions for eligibility for medical assistance			
LB140 Avery	Retirement Systems Committee Heard 3/04/2009	Support	
Description: Provide duties relating to investment of state funds in Sudan-related companies			
LB440 Council	Education Committee Heard 3/02/2009	Support	Nic Swiercek
Description: Change diversity criteria under the Student Diversity Scholarship Program Act			
Environment			
LB14 White	Natural Resources Heard 1/22/2009	Support	
Description: Provide energy conservation standards for certain state buildings			
LB53 Fischer	Natural Resources Heard 1/22/2009	Oppose	
Description: Change provisions relating to formation, territory, and the operating area of public power districts.			
LB436 Haar	Natural Resources Heard 2/11/2009	Support	Jay Schmidt
Description: Provide for net metering of electricity			
LB437 Haar	Natural Resources Heard 2/18/2009	Support	Brittany Crawford
Description: Create the Wind Energy Development Zone Task Force			
LB455 Nordquist	Revenue Heard 3/5/2009	Support	
Description: Provide renewable energy sales and use tax credit and exemption for eligible entities			
LB471 Fulton	Natural Resources Heard 2/19/2009	Support	
Description: Change public power special generation application provisions			
LB491 Haar	Natural Resources Heard 2/4/2009	Support	
Description: Provide for home energy efficiency loans			
LB624 Haar	Natural Resources Committee Heard 2/4/2009	Support	
Description: Provide for energy efficiency loans for public buildings			
LB632 Mello	Revenue Committee Heard 3/05/2009	Support	
Description: Adopt the Nebraska Green Building Advantage Act and authorize a sales tax refund			
LB644 Mello	Natural Resources Heard 3/11/2009	Support	
Description: Adopt the Electronics Recycling Act			
Good Government			
LB66 Rogert	Gov't, Military & Veterans Affairs Heard 1/29/2009	Oppose	Linda Ruchala
Description: Change limits on contributions & gifts under the Nebraska Political Accountability and Disclosure Act			
LB638 Lautenbaugh	Gov't, Military, and Veterans Affairs Heard 3/04/2009	Oppose	
Description: Repeal the Campaign Finance Limitation Act and change reporting requirements under the Nebraska Political Accountability and Disclosure Act			

An Even Bolder Stimulus, continued



many more mortgages than they ordinarily could have afforded. Banks essentially issued mortgages to whoever walked in the front door, and then had an investment bank bundle them up into a new security that could be sold on to other investors and banks throughout the world. The income from the sale of the security enabled the original banks to turn around and make even more loans to willing home buyers, whose mortgages were again bundled into yet another new security, and so on. Some clever financial manipulation and faulty (read: corrupt) ratings techniques made many of the securitized bundles of mortgages seem safer than they actually were, and banks, pension funds, hedge funds and insurance companies throughout the world naively purchased them—which of course only encouraged mortgage lenders to use the available money and do the whole thing all over again. With every repetition of this cycle, however, the bubble in the housing market grew both larger and more precarious.

This financial expansion came to an end when housing prices began falling from their unsustainable levels in 2006, and the securitized mortgages—often bundled together with other securities—had to be downgraded to reflect their diminished value. Many banks and other financial institutions began scrambling to shore up their balance sheets and to avoid violating banking regulations and regulatory guidelines. The market for securitized bundles of mortgages and other debt quickly dried up, greatly reducing financing for housing and

other loans. Borrowing costs accordingly rose and building and investment activity slowed sharply.

The Recession Began More than a Year Ago

It is now estimated that the current recession actually began at the end of 2007, even though the widespread news reports of the failures of major financial institutions like Bear Stearns, Lehman Brothers and AIG only began to make headlines in mid-2008. The media really missed the story on this one, but looking back, the warning signs of recession were certainly there, beginning with the collapse of the municipal bond market. In 2007, the so-called ‘monolines’ (the insurance firms that traditionally insure such bonds) had their investment ratings downgraded because—for the first time ever—they’d diluted their insurance portfolios of municipal bonds by adding what they assumed were equally-safe mortgage securities. That same year, however, the Treasury Department explicitly ruled out any moves to shore up the municipal bond market. The ensuing collapse of state and local projects contributed directly to the economic slowdown. The only upside to this has been that Lancaster County has not yet been able to float a bond to build its new jail.

By 2008, however, the Treasury Department and the Federal Reserve realized they had a brewing crisis on their hands and they began to assist banks in cleaning up their balance sheets by lending them trea-

sury bonds and bills—using as collateral those very same securitized financial products whose real market values were deteriorating rapidly. The Federal Reserve also began pumping large amounts of money into the banking system in the hope of reversing the sharp decline in lending that was beginning to choke economic activity. On top of the \$2 trillion already provided to the financial industry through these measures, Congress, in the fall of 2008, approved President Bush’s request for \$700 billion in additional funds for the secretary of the Treasury to acquire questionable bank assets so that banks would again begin lending. To date, these measures have had little effect, and unemployment continues to grow.

It’s a Fiscal Expansion, Stupid!

John Maynard Keynes in his 1936 *General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money* explained that—in a deep recession—the economy is caught in a ‘liquidity trap,’ where no amount of available money will make investors want to borrow funds for new projects, or make banks want to lend to borrowers who are unlikely to be able to repay their loans. The recent collapse of the bloated market for securitized

provided the government can actually spend the budgeted money quickly. In either case—taxes cuts or direct government expenditures—the increased expenditures generate income which is then later spent, generating a second increase in demand, which in turn causes further income growth, which is also spent... It’s a tried and true method for spurring the economy into recovery. The effectiveness of a fiscal stimulus in reversing a downward spiral and starting an upward one, however, depends on how fast and how much demand increases from the initial expenditures and—in subsequent rounds—on income receipts and expenditures.

It was interesting these past weeks to listen to pundits and Republican partisans complaining that the fiscal stimulus plan had deteriorated into nothing more than a program of tax breaks and more government spending. Well, duh! It’s a fiscal stimulus plan. That’s what it’s designed to do. Of course, everyone really knew this. That was just the usual political jockeying... But the carping does serve to drive home the point that the nature, the scale and the duration of the Obama Administration’s fiscal stimulus strategy will ultimately come down to politics.

Stimulative fiscal policy consists of some combination of tax cuts and government expenditures, both intended to increase demand for goods and services and, thus, raise employment and income.

products and the still-shaky balance sheets of most financial institutions make the current liquidity trap even harder to work out of. Hence, expansion of the money supply has little or no real effect, and we are left with only fiscal policy (an economic stimulus) to resuscitate the economy.

Stimulative fiscal policy consists of some combination of tax cuts and government expenditures, both intended to increase demand for goods and services and, thus, raise employment and income. Tax cuts work by leaving people or businesses with more money in their hands, which they then hopefully spend. Increased government expenditures have a more direct effect on demand for goods and services—

The Politics of Fiscal Stimulus

A fiscal stimulus plan affects the future size of government. Those who want to limit the role of government in the economy tend to favor tax cuts. Proponents of an enhanced role for government favor new government programs and expenditures. Also, there will be further political arguments about which taxes to cut or which government expenditures to make. In short, any final package of fiscal measures to expand demand for the economy’s goods and services will inevitably be a mixture of tax cuts and a wide variety of new government expenditures that no one is happy with. Bipartisanship, such as we so

conclusion on page 4

Stimulus, conclusion

often see arise when it comes to voting on going to war, is nearly impossible to achieve when it comes to a fiscal stimulus bill.

President Obama tried to appeal to nationalism and patriotism when he stumped for the stimulus bill—reaching across the political aisle for needed Republican support. But the normally patriotic Republicans refused to budge, because they saw the sharp increases in government expenditures as running counter to their economic philosophy of privatization, low taxes and reduced social spending. F.D.R., by contrast, was able to shift government policy as much as he did without catering to the Republicans because he enjoyed huge majorities in both houses of Congress.

What about the Financial Bailout?

It is a fact of life that a modern economy cannot function without a healthy financial sector. We thus have no choice but to restore our banks, insurance companies and financial markets to a healthy state. However, this does not mean we need to spend the massive amounts of money currently being proposed, since those sums are based on the assumption that we will return to a system similar to what we had. The failure of that system and its direct role in fueling excessive expenditures and debt

over the past 25 years (including the questionable and likely fraudulent activities that caused the recent stock market and housing bubbles) argues that we in fact should not go back to the financial system that we had. Given the cozy relationship the financial industry has with so many of our politicians, it's entirely possible of course that we'll wind up doing exactly that. Hopefully saner minds will eventually prevail, however, and take us back to a simpler, more transparent, and better-regulated financial system—one that serves the interests of the real economy, instead of the present arrangement in which the real economy serves the interests of the financial system. Even under the best of circumstances, however, fixing the financial system is going to be a lengthy process. And in the meantime, we will need an expansionary fiscal policy if we are to have any chance of avoiding a prolonged and costly period of high unemployment.

We Will Need More Fiscal Stimulus

Given the huge demand deficit the global economy currently faces, we will probably need further fiscal stimuli beyond what the recent fiscal stimulus package offers. Never afraid to rewrite history, many con-



The Pentagon: headquarters of the U.S. Defense Department

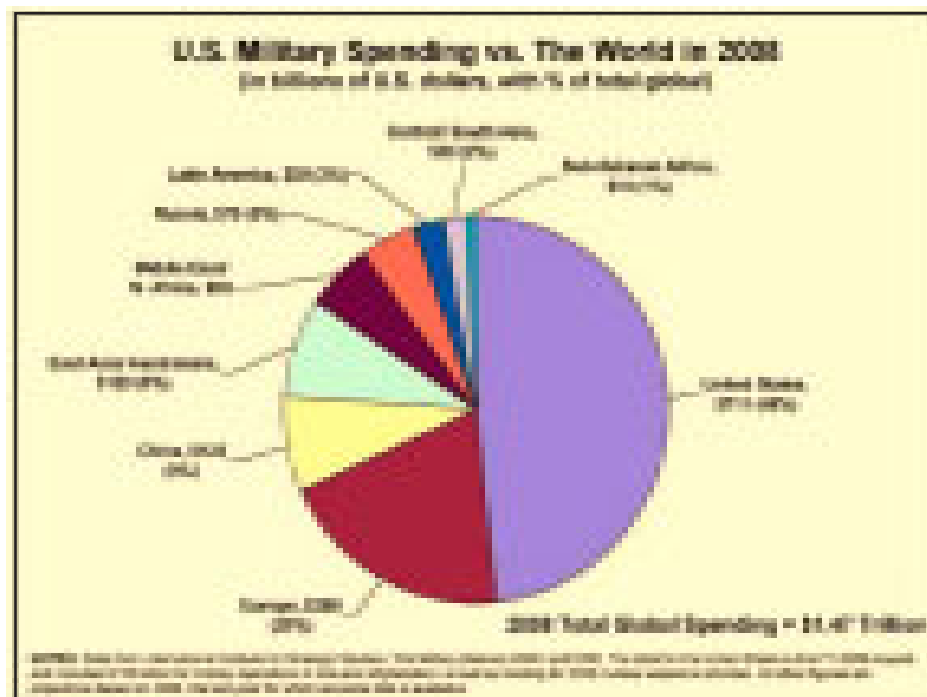
servatives argue that fiscal expansion did not work during the Great Depression, as evidenced by the persistence of the Depression throughout the 1930s. In point of fact, however, the problem was not that F.D.R. was too bold—but that his efforts to stimulate the economy were too timid. After his initial expansion of government expenditures in 1933, F.D.R. raised taxes and cut expenditures in 1936 in response to claims by bankers and fiscal conservatives that government debt was becoming too great a burden. The economy immediately collapsed again in 1937, just as the Keynesian economic model predicts would happen. It was not until that enormous fiscal stimulus known as World War II that the U.S. economy was able to recover from the Great Depression. The U.S. economy, it turns out, was able to handle government debt greater than 100 percent of annual GDP (we're only at 70 percent now). The debt was gradually worked off during the 1950s and 1960s, the period when the U.S. economy achieved rates of income growth that, since then, no amount of privatization, tax cuts and reduced government have been able to achieve.

I do not bring up World War II's fiscal stimulus in order to suggest that we should resort to war to solve our economic problems. To the contrary, we peace activists must be prepared to challenge and thwart the inevitable attempts to use the current recession to justify more war and increased military expenditures. The just-enacted stimulus package is largely free of new military expenditures—but recent lobbying by the military-industrial complex suggests that the economic recession will be actively

used to justify bloating this year's military appropriations with unnecessary programs. Proponents of questionable arms programs, like the F-22 fighter slated for extinction by the Obama Administration, are already railing about the job losses cutbacks in these programs will bring.

Critics of the just-passed fiscal stimulus package often claimed that the proposed expenditures were 'wasteful.' Such claims were largely a diversionary tactic, of course. Proposed expenditures on condoms to avoid unwanted births and the spread of AIDS (which were taken out of the bill) are clearly much more economically stimulative and productive than tax breaks for the upper middle class (which were included in the bill). Nevertheless, for the future, there will be a continued need to focus on the long-term benefits of increased government expenditures for productive, non-military projects and programs.

With the U.S. already accounting for half of the world's military expenditures, nothing more clearly fits the definition of 'wasteful' than additional military spending. There are enough needs for peaceful and effective expenditures on education, basic infrastructure, alternative energy, repairing government services, improving the social safety net, and providing universal healthcare to fit whatever amount of fiscal stimulus our economic decline requires. Over the next two years in particular, members of Nebraskans for Peace will need to be vigilant about opposing any attempts in Congress to use the economic crisis to promote military spending and further our already overblown capacity to wage war.



With the U.S. already accounting for half of the world's military expenditures, nothing more clearly fits the definition of 'wasteful' than additional military spending.

The OFFENSIVE Side of 'Missile Defense'

by Mike Moore

Mike Moore is Research Fellow at The Independent Institute, former editor of The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, and author of the book, *Twilight War: The Folly of U.S. Space Dominance*. He spoke in Omaha last October as a guest of Nebraskans for Peace during our annual protest at the "Strategic Space and Defense Conference."

William Lynn, President Barack Obama's nominee for Deputy Secretary of Defense, vowed to make the Pentagon's missile defense system 'cost-effective' during his confirmation hearing last January before the Senate Armed Services Committee. Indeed, missile defense strikes a lot of national security analysts as a frightful waste of money.

**"Missile defense isn't really
meant to protect America.
It's a tool for global dominance."**

— Neoconservative author Lawrence F. Kaplan, *The New Republic*, March 12, 2001

Money is not the central issue, though. The pros and cons of missile defense are endlessly complex, and men and women in the national security community understand these subtleties. Some are pro-missile defense; some are not; others say the current system won't work, but another kind would. Still others question the assumption that a rogue nation would ever send a nuclear-armed missile our way—with its return address effectively written all over it—knowing that U.S. retaliation would be swift and devastating. Vans or trucks would be a more likely means of delivery, with weapons components smuggled in and assembled in garages.

Such subtleties are missing from the manner in which missile defense advocates market their cause. Case in point:

the teaser for the Heritage Foundation's forthcoming documentary film, "33 Minutes," part of a new and extensive pro-missile defense campaign. The teaser features Arabic music, missile launches, and nuclear explosions. At one point we watch a teeming-with-vitality montage of New York City street life. "Less than 33 minutes away," intones Dr. Edwin Feulner, president of Heritage, "their whole city, their whole life could be annihilated."

Scare tactics have long been used to persuade the American people to side with missile defense. During the 1980s, it was the Soviet Union that was threatening nuclear Armageddon; now it is rogue nations and even terrorists. China, which for years has supported the U.S. economy by helping to 'cover' our annual budget deficits through the purchase of

hundreds of billions of dollars of U.S. Treasury notes, is depicted as a Missile Menace. The Middle Kingdom, says Frank Gaffney, a hugely influential missile defense advocate, "is inexorably building up ever-larger numbers of missiles. Increasingly, these are capable not only of intimidating Taiwan but also of attacking the United States."

Gaffney, president of the Center for Security Policy, and the Heritage Foundation are not alone in championing ballistic missile defense: hardline think tanks favor it, as do many editorial writers, columnists, TV talking heads, and—for that matter—ordinary people. And why not? How could anything labeled 'defense' be anything but a Good Thing?

In the real world, though, labels and

promotional materials are often misleading. Missile defense is widely perceived elsewhere in the world, even by U.S. friends and allies, as dangerously provocative. The infrastructure for a ballistic missile defense system is, in large measure, the same as that needed for an offensive anti-satellite system.

Meanwhile, the United States is the only nation that says it intends to develop the means to militarily dominate space—according to international law the "province of all mankind." Given that, U.S. missile-defense systems capable of offense look a little sinister, particularly in the light that the United States has vetoed, since 1981, any serious attempt to negotiate a treaty designed to prevent a space-related arms race.

What is the world's hyperpower really up to? The cover of the March 12, 2001, issue of *The New Republic* said it best: "Missile defense isn't really meant to protect America. It's a tool for global dominance. And that's why we need it."

If missile defense systems can be made reliable, goes the argument, America's ability to militarily intervene anywhere at any time will be greatly enhanced. War games have demonstrated time and again that the United States can be deterred from military intervention if the target state has the ability to retaliate with nuclear weapons. A workable missile defense system would cure that defect. As Lawrence F. Kaplan, the brilliant neoconservative author of *The New Republic* story, said: missile defense is mainly about the ability to 'project' military force globally.

That is not an idiosyncratic observation. The link between missile defense and military intervention is part of the intellectual mix when national security experts get together behind closed doors. That insight needs to be part of the public discussion, too. Our propensity for military intervention—as in, for instance, Iraq—touches upon the very meaning of America.

Can anyone spell 'global hegemony'?

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What's HOT in Global Warming?

by Professor Bruce E. Johansen

Warmer Times on the Coldest Continent

With an average temperature of minus 58 degrees F., who but a climate contrarian would wish a colder climate on Antarctica? In an apparent contradiction of temperature trends across most of the world, some areas of interior Antarctica have cooled steadily for more than two decades while areas on the fringes of the continent have warmed rapidly.

Data assembled by Peter Doran, an associate professor of earth and environmental sciences at the University of Illinois at Chicago, found that temperatures in the McMurdo Dry Valleys of East Antarctica have declined. Similar trends have been observed across other parts of the continent's interior since 1978. Doran and other members of the National Science Foundation's "Long-term Ecological Research Team" assembled temperature data in the Dry Valleys near McMurdo Sound—a snow-free mountainous desert of chill arid soils, bleak bedrock outcroppings and ice-covered lakes which is home to many microscopic invertebrates, mostly nematodes.

The apparent cooling of inland Antarctica has been used by climate contrarians to refute global warming as an idea, much to the consternation of scientists involved in the research. Doran stressed that although scientists could not explain the falling temperatures, his research does not change the fact that the Earth has warmed on the whole. The findings simply point out that Antarctica is not responding as expected. Doran also warned that "You don't want to overstate the effects" of the cooling trend, because any rise in sea level caused by global warming this century is expected to result mostly from thermal expansion of existing oceans—and not from any theoretical melting of the southern ice cap.

Antarctic Inland Cooling in Global Context

Doran emphasized: "Our paper does not change the global [temperature] average in any significant way... Although we have said that more area of the continent is cooling than warming, one just has to look at the paper itself... to see that it is a close call. Our analysis suggests that about two-

The apparent cooling of inland Antarctica has been used by climate contrarians to refute global warming as an idea, much to the consternation of scientists involved in the research.

thirds of the main continent has been cooling in the last 35 years," Doran said. "But there is one-third of the continent that has been warming if you remove the [Antarctic] Peninsula. And with the Peninsula included, it shrinks to 58 percent cooling." Doran bluntly advised the public: "If you want the facts, you have to go to the original scientific peer-reviewed literature, and avoid the broken-telephone effect of the popular press."

Doran said his data did find that 58 percent of Antarctica cooled from 1966 to 2000. During that period, however, the rest of the continent was warming. Climate models created after Doran's study was released "have suggested a link between the lack of significant warming in Antarctica and the

ozone hole over that continent. These models, conspicuously missing from the 'warming-skeptic' literature, suggest that as the ozone hole heals—thanks to worldwide bans on ozone-destroying chemicals—all of Antarctica is likely to warm with the rest of the planet. An inconvenient truth?" Doran said.

General Warming in Antarctica

By 2009, however, a detailed analysis of Antarctic temperature records for half a century indicated that cooling there has been limited. This study maintains that assertions of inland warming have been "substantially incomplete owing to the sparseness and short duration of the observations." Instead, Eric J. Steig and colleagues, writing in *Nature*, found that "Significant warming extends well beyond the Antarctic Peninsula to cover most of West Antarctica, an area of warming much larger than previously reported. West Antarctic warming exceeds 0.1 °C per decade over the past 50 years, and is strongest in winter and spring."

The scientists included satellite measurements to estimate temperatures in the vast areas between Antarctic weather stations. "We now see warming is taking place on all seven of the earth's continents in accord with what models predict as a response to greenhouse gases," said Steig, a professor of earth and space sciences at the University of Washington in Seattle. What cooling has been recorded in parts of Antarctica cannot be traced directly to increases in the strength of the westerlies in the upper atmosphere, this study said. "Instead, regional changes in atmospheric circulation and associated changes in sea surface temperature and sea ice are required to explain the enhanced warming in West Antarctica."

Even as some of the skeptics crow about a colder Antarctic, ice shelves along

the continent's edge are collapsing. After February 2008, when a large section of the Wilkins Ice Shelf on the western side of the Antarctic Peninsula fell apart, what was left was being held in place by a thin ice bridge connecting Charcot Island on the north to Latady Island on the south. Initially, the ice bridge was about 6 kilometers wide, but within five months, during Antarctic fall and winter, the bridge's width ebbed by half. As the summer of 2008-2009 arrived, in November, 2008, the European Space Agency's Advanced Synthetic Aperture Radar detected new cracks on the ice shelf's seaward edge.

SOURCES:

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Bruce E. Johansen is the Frederick W. Kayser Professor of Communication at the University of Nebraska-Omaha and author of The Global Warming Combat Manual (Greenwood Press, 2008).

Immigration Part III

It's Time for a New Policy

Hendrik van den Berg
UNL Professor of Economics

Last month, I reviewed U.S. immigration policy over the past 200 years. We left our story with “The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986” (IRCA). IRCA was based on the comprehensive recommendations of the 1979 “Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy” (SCIRP) as well as President Reagan’s 1981 task force on immigration. By the 1980s, illegal immigration had become a major issue politically. At that time, over 5 million foreigners were believed to be living and working in the U.S. without legal documents. After several years of debate, IRCA was finally passed and signed into law in 1986. IRCA mandated:

1. increased controls on the border patrols,
2. the establishment of a system of system for employers to verify the legal status of employees,
3. responsibility of employers to check employees’ legal status, and
4. one-time amnesty for illegal immigrants who had been in the country for a long time.

The latter provision was satisfied, and about 2.7 million unauthorized aliens already living in the United States gained legal residence status under the IRCA provisions. Congress failed to adequately fund the border and employer enforcement measures, however. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the inflow of subsidized U.S. grains decimated small Mexican farms, and the 1994 financial crisis further hurt the Mexican economy. Soon, with no enforcement of immigration, millions more foreigners entered the U.S. illegally. Today, there are an estimated 10-12 million illegal immigrants in the U.S. Immigration, accordingly, has again become a ‘hot button’ issue, with renewed demands for legislation to address the matter.

Opposing Political Pressures

Some groups now seek another amnesty to reduce

the number of people living precarious illegal lives. Even organized labor has come out in favor of some form of legalization, recognizing the oppression that employers exercise over unauthorized workers who lack legal status to organize or seek legal recourse. Other groups, however, actively seek harsh measures to find, punish and deport illegal immigrants. These sharp differences in opinions have prevented any comprehensive immigration legislation like the 1986 IRCA from passing. Responding to the anti-immigrant rhetoric, Congress did pass legislation in 2004 that authorized increased border controls, including high fences for hundreds of miles of the U.S.- Mexico border. Also

families or legal counsel. Despite protests by the American Immigration Lawyers Association, the workers faced the judges without the usual counseling, and each worker ended up pleading guilty to poorly understood charges and accepting sentences of five months in federal prison, to be followed by deportation (or what the U.S. government now simply calls ‘removal’).

In 2009, ICE reported it maintained 33,400 prison beds for detaining illegal immigrants in either its own or contracted private prisons throughout the U.S. Many thousands more prison spaces are provided by county, state and federal facilities. It is safe to assume that, under current rules and procedures, Lancaster County’s costly and controversial new jail will end up serving, in part, as a detention center for illegal immigrants.

Another recent change in U.S. immigration policy has been a groundswell in local and state efforts to aggressively deal with illegal immigration. In some case, local law enforcement officers have taken matters into their own hands and begun arresting and harassing immigrants who lack proper documentation. Here in Nebraska, the Unicameral is debating various state laws aimed at increasing local enforcement of immigration laws. Needless to say, such ad hoc local and state measures will create many incon-

sistencies and injustices. We will end up with immigrant havens in some locations and active oppression of immigrants in other locations.

Are Immigrants Criminals?

Even though the authorities are increasingly treating illegal immigrants as criminals, charging them with identity theft, fraud and other felonies and imprisoning them for many months before ‘removing’ them, it’s not at all clear that they are in fact criminals. Yes, the border was crossed without the proper authorization. But that same border has been crossed without authorization for over a hundred years. And once in the

It’s not at all clear that illegal immigrants are criminals. Yes, the border was crossed without the proper authorization. But that same border has been crossed without authorization for over a hundred years. And once in the country, illegal immigrants were welcomed with jobs, apartments to rent, cars to buy, churches to attend, Wal-Marts to shop in and openings to most other corners of American life. Why is the immigrant any more guilty than the employer, the landlord, the car dealer or the minister anxious for another member?

authorized were up to 40,000 prison beds for detaining illegal immigrants.

Enforcement of immigration laws was passed to the new Department of Homeland Security after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, and the department’s Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency has greatly stepped up detention and ‘removal’ of immigrants. Immigrants are now often charged as criminals in hastily arranged and poorly understood legal processes. In early 2008, for example, 270 Guatemalan immigrants in Iowa were arrested in a raid on a meatpacking plant, subjected to an assembly-line legal procedure in temporary courts set up at a local fairground, and kept from contacting their

A Different Perspective on Whiteclay

Nebraska's Skid-row on the Prairie

by Ed Howard, Nebraska
StatePaper.com

There is a scene in Mark Vasina's film *The Battle for Whiteclay* that provides what is likely the single best civics lesson to be found on film.

Any film.

Whiteclay is the notorious northwest Nebraska widspot in the road where four outlets sell 4 million or so cans of beer every year, mostly to the Oglala Sioux who live on the reservation that is literally just a hop, skip and falling-down stupor away.

Tribal leaders and other activists have railed for decades that the State of Nebraska should find a way to do away with the beer stores. The state's position comes down to: The people with licenses are selling a legal product, and unless there is evidence to revoke those licenses ... that's that.

The Battle for Whiteclay is being screened at the Mary Riepma Ross Media Arts Center at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln through Feb. 5.

About the civics lesson.

It was shortly before 6 a.m. Friday and I was ready to call it a long day and put off watching the remainder of the film. Besides, the scene at hand had to do with an open-and-shut case before the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission, wherein an employee of one of the beer venues had sold a can of suds to a pair of Indians who were stumbling, stammering loaded when they walked into the place.

Anyone who sells alcohol to an intoxicated person is in violation of Nebraska law. Next case.

My eyelids and my Apple were only seconds from being closed when a member of the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission, circa 2005, spoke from the screen: "I guess I can't tell from the evidence (pause) I would have to vote no."

Her voice was followed by my own, spewing epithets as I fumbled to make the DVD rewind.

The commissioner, Rhonda R. Flower, had effectively voted not to sanction the store.

Rewind.

The scene replayed. There was Flower, looking like a canary-fed cat, casting her "no" vote.

A few seconds later, another commissioner, R.L. Coyne, said he personally thought the employee in question was guilty, then added, "but I don't think the evidence was clear enough to convict them. So, I'd have to vote not guilty."

And then, I half smiled. It was one of those spontaneous half-smiles that's first-cousin to a snarl, and all I could say to myself was: Son-of-a-bitch! It never changes. Never!

With no sacrilege or sarcasm intended: The next thing that flashed in my mind was the massacre at Sand Creek in Colorado. That was the one where the leader of a peaceful clan of Indians, upon realizing his people were being attacked by the militia, raised an American flag over his lodge. He thought the oncoming murderers might realize they'd made a mistake. And, in any event, if his people gathered around him under and near the flag, they surely would be safe.

They were massacred with a bloodlust that Custer would have admired. Envied, probably.

To my mind, the message contained in the massacre was no different, not one damnable bit different, than the message the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission telegraphed to Native Americans that day: Unless it's promising to take something from you, the government's word and the government's laws aren't worth the paper that will later be torn up in your face.

The evidence that Flower and Coyne didn't find sufficiently clear consisted of a videotape in which a state trooper watches two Oglala tribe members go into the store empty handed and come out carrying a can of malt liquor. He goes in and asks the guy behind the counter if he had just sold them a can of beer. The

employee says he did. The audio is very, very clear. No garble. No guessing about this word or that one. The tape also shows the trooper giving the two Indians a field sobriety test. They flunked reaaal big.

You might wonder how two sane, sober commissioners could look at that video and not conclude that a violation occurred. Me, too.

And with that scene, Vasina brought the sorry, shameful story of Whiteclay into perfect focus.

The Battle for Whiteclay is not a "Red man, good; white man, bad" film.

This is the place where, most likely, some readers are letting go with: "Oh, for gawd's sake. Those Indians are disgusting. All they do is get drunk. They're filthy most of the time. They sell their government commissary to get money to drink. They get everything free ..." If I missed anything on your favorite list, be assured that I've heard it, one time or another.

Let me respond by saying that there is no question, no legitimate question, that tribal leadership has not been sufficiently effective. Period.

Now, let's talk law and order.

It is illegal to have beer on the rez.

It is illegal to drink beer on the premises of the off-sale venue.

It is illegal to drink beer on the sidewalk and/or on the road.

So, where can someone who buys a beer in Whiteclay drink it, legally? It isn't logical to say they could drive home to some nearby town. If they lived in a nearby town, why would they drive to a rathole like Whiteclay to buy beer?

Such being the case, is a place that sells beer in Whiteclay a public convenience, or a public nuisance?

Vasina's documentary also addresses a common rejoinder to those—including myself—who have said: If the Indians couldn't buy beer in Whiteclay, they'd find a way to other towns, most likely via motor vehicle, to get beer. There would be just as much drinking, but more carnage on the road.

Indian activist Frank LaMere of the Winnebago tribe pointed to a special sort of racism in that argument, partly by raising a question.

Can you imagine a comparable situation being ignored in suburban Omaha or Lincoln because putting an end to it would just mean that the problem would relocate?

No.

Whiteclay is a disgraceful problem.

Unfortunately for the Oglala, it is more a problem for Indians than it is for white people.

DVD copies of

The Battle for Whiteclay

are available from
NFP for a suggested
donation of \$10.
Paypal and credit
card payments
accepted.

Call 402-475-4620.

"Chronicles a painful odyssey that should give pause to the caring, the oblivious, and those who don't give a damn." Frank LaMere, Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska
Chair, Native Caucus, Democratic National Committee

THE BATTLE FOR
WHITECLAY



Send written requests to:

Whiteclay DVD, c/o Nebraskans for Peace
941 'O' Street, Suite 1026, Lincoln, NE 68508

Mike Lux's Progressive Revolution

Mike Lux hardly fits the stereotype of a Washington 'insider.' The Lincoln native and homegrown activist (he once served as the 'summer coordinator' for Nebraskans for Peace) has spent his entire career advocating for the disenfranchised—first as a grassroots organizer, then as a state labor union official and finally as a national political consultant. Now president of "Progressive Strategies" (a Washington-based political consulting firm) and a regular columnist for the Huffington Post, he understands the political realities (and possibilities) better than almost anyone. That hard-won wisdom—gleaned from a lifetime of working for progressive causes—is now available in his first published book, *The Progressive Revolution*.

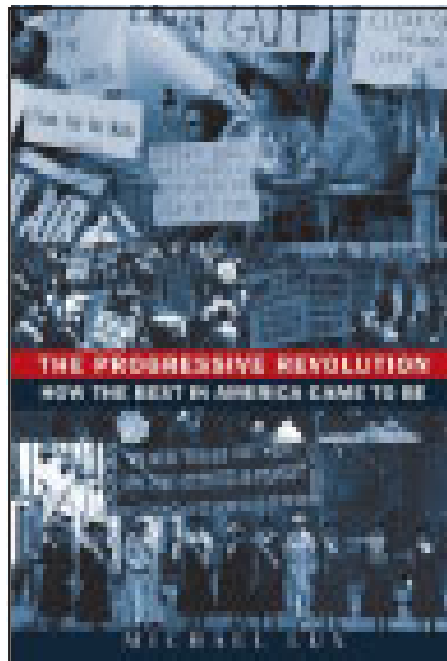
The idea for the book, Mike explained at the book's release in January 2009, grew out of his favorite pastime of reading history. "I kept noticing that the political debates in every historical era sounded remarkably like the ones I was involved in today: the same fights over equality, democracy, voting rights, and trickle-down vs. bottom-up economics have played out over and over again. The Progressive Revolution tells the story of the American political debate between progressive and conservative thinkers, and how when progressives have broken through to create big changes, the country has moved forward and made us proud."

To place an order for the book, visit www.theprogressiverevolution.com/buy.

Book Synopsis

The next time you hear a conservative accusing progressives (a.k.a. liberals) of being unpatriotic and anti-American, tell them this: "Progressives invented the American ideal and inspired the American Revolution. Conservatives, then known as Tories, opposed it. Since then, every major advancement in American freedom, democracy, social justice, and economic opportunity has been fostered, fought for, and won by progressives against conservative resistance. Now who's anti-American?"

In *The Progressive Revolution*, author Michael Lux gives new life to the chapters of American history that conservatives want everyone to forget. He demonstrates clearly that progressives and the progres-



sive movement created American ideals and forged the kind of country in which we want to live, while conservatives, in William F. Buckley's famous phrase, stood "athwart history yelling 'Stop'."

Lux begins by restoring Tom Paine to his rightful place as the inspiration for the American Revolution and reclaiming the Declaration of Independence as a clarion call for progressive democracy that has echoed around the world and through the ages. He goes on to recount the big change

moments in American history, from the Bill of Rights through the ending of slavery to the great twentieth-century accomplishments of the Progressive Era, the New Deal, and the civil rights movement. He also documents the conservative backlash that strove to prevent and then reverse each of these expansions of freedom.

This clear and accessible account does more than set the record straight on such great progressive achievements as women's suffrage, national parks, Social Security, civil rights legislation, and restoring the environment. It builds a platform from which to argue that progressives today continue the centuries-old struggle to improve America and advance the cause of freedom, in contrast to how conservatives have always worked to defend the interests of elites and instill fear of big changes.

Whether you're a political junkie, an impassioned progressive, a history buff, or a conservative seeking insights on how the other side thinks, *The Progressive Revolution* will challenge your preconceptions, expand your understanding of American history, and give you plenty of food for thought.

Advance praise for *The Progressive Revolution*

"Using history as his canvas, Mike Lux illustrates how the progressive movement has made America a far better place, and how the conservatives who have opposed progressive change

every step of the way have set our country back time and time again. Passionate and personal, *The Progressive Revolution* is as inspiring as it is informative."

—Arianna Huffington, founder, HuffingtonPost.com, and bestselling author

"If you're a progressive like me, you'll love Mike Lux's book. He combines a historian's sweep with a blogger's punch. His book is essential reading for all of us who believe in progressive change."

—Paul Begala, former counselor to President Bill Clinton, Democratic strategist

"A history of the ongoing battle between those who have fought for equal rights and the common good vs. those who have defended slavery, Jim Crow, and all manner of bad things in the name of preserving tradition is crucial for people to understand. Mike Lux has been a leader in the fight for progressive causes for a long time now, and he tells an important story about the nature of politics in America."

—Donna Brazile, Gore 2000 campaign manager, Democratic strategist

"Mike is unique in being able to bridge the inside and outside in politics. He was the very first insider to notice MoveOn, just days after our first petition in 1998, and really helped us get our footing. And he's helped countless times since. Mike is that rarest breed: a populist insider. He brings that perspective to *The Progressive Revolution*, telling the great story of how progressives have given us a better America."

—Wes Boyd, cofounder, MoveOn.org

'Students United for Nebraska' Honored at 2009 Martin Luther King, Jr. Observance

"Students United for Nebraska" received the 'campus award' at the 13th-annual Chancellor's "Fulfilling the Dream" awards presentation January 19 at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's 2009 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day observance.

The organization, which was founded with the support of the UNL Nebraskans for Peace Chapter, actively opposed Initiative 424—the proposed Affirmative Action ban that passed last November.

The Fulfilling the Dream awards are annually presented to individuals or groups who have contributed to the UNL community or the wider Lincoln community by their exemplary action in promoting the goals and vision of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Congratulations to NFP State Board members Eva Sohl, Alex Stamm and Nic Swiercek for their leadership in this heroic struggle to stop injustice.

Letters to NFP...

In Praise of Women

“International Women’s Day” is March 8. But we shouldn’t wait until March rolls around to celebrate women or, for that matter, to acknowledge the horrible plight in which many women in the world still find themselves.

I recently found this sad quote in a United Nations report:

“Women constitute one half of the world’s population, perform nearly two thirds of its work hours, receive one tenth of the world’s income and own less than one hundredth of the world’s prosperity.”

I am saddened to start this letter with such a grim quotation, but if we consider women’s status around the globe, there is no denying its truth. While in the West women have achieved a lot in terms of human rights (as compared to women in developing countries), Western women too are still suffering from inequality and abuse.

And if you’re still unconvinced, here are some additional facts:

- Every day, four women die in America from assault or murder by their partners.
- Every year approximately 130,000 women are victims of rape or attempted rape.
- In civilized London, England, each year over 100,000 women seek treatment for violent injuries inflicted by their partners.

- In Sweden, many girls under the age of 18 still suffer sexual abuse from which they develop psychological problems.

Here we are not talking about the Third World, where the situation is even more scandalous.

It grieves me to see women still suffering from male abuse. This mistreatment grows, no doubt, from the fallacy that ‘It’s a man’s world’ and women are, accordingly, to be submissive. But God created this wonderful world for all—male and female—and women should be no less equal than men. Unless we change this destructive macho outlook, however, women will continue to suffer.

I think it is a shame that there is only a single day to celebrate women in our society. It is time to start celebrating and appreciating women every day for all they are. For one, they have given us all birth and nursed us through thick and thin to become who we are today. When we celebrate women, we are celebrating our dear mothers, our sisters, our daughters and our partners.

So you men, next time you see a lady anywhere, don’t abuse or hit her. Be a gentleman and greet her kindly and considerately. And if she is your partner, tell her you love and respect her. As the controversial French-American writer Anais Nin said, “The only abnormality is the incapacity to love.”

Mo Khamouna
Stockville, Nebraska

NFP Remembers Two Pioneers Mildred Bailey & Fr. Darrell Rupiper

Both Mildred Bailey, who just passed away, and her deceased husband, Roy, were early members of Nebraskans for Peace, and along with their daughter, Kandra Hahn, contributed to its predecessor organization, “Nebraskans for Peace in Vietnam.” They also worked faithfully for the local organization, Alternatives to the Military, and were enthusiastic participants in the Friendship Force.

Father Darrel Rupiper, who also died last month, was active in NFP in the 1970s. He began his quest for justice by serving the poorest of the poor in Brazil, then upon returning to the Midwest opposed U.S. support for oppressive Latin American governments. Fr. Darrell also worked with local homeless initiatives, protested the nuclear arms race (which led to arrests and prison terms), and traveled to Teheran as an NFP emissary during the Iran hostage crisis. His last years were spent on a mission to ‘save the earth’ from an environmental apocalypse. Both of these valiant peacemakers shall be sorely missed.

CREATE YOUR OWN NFP CHAPTER

by Byron Peterson & Paul A. Olson

Wanting to help create more peace in the world? If so, consider joining or creating an NFP chapter in your area. We now have four college chapters (at UNL, UNO, Nebraska Wesleyan and Dana), and four community chapters (at Grand Island, Lincoln, Omaha and Crete). We want more of each kind.

Let us illustrate what happens in a chapter by describing one—Grand Island’s.

A collection of folks, some Greens, some Mennonites, others who are Friends and still others, members of NFP, (all spurred by post-9/11 events), decided to share their concerns and strengthen their efforts by coming together.

What emerged was a group of 40 individuals calling themselves “Central Nebraska Peace Workers.” As their web site at centralnebraskapeaceworkers.org reveals, they make things happen.

Byron Peterson met with them recently and saw their pride in the things they have been doing.

They spoke of their monthly gatherings at Trinity United Methodist Church in Grand Island and delighted in the fact that some of them traveled a two-hour commute to attend. They were proud of their relationship with their local newspapers and their having achieved editorial status through their submission of ‘peace’ articles on a regular basis. They had garnered many accolades for their writings—one reader threatened to cancel a subscription if the articles

ceased to appear.

They were proud of their Iraq War street corner protest vigils and the fact that—in the early days of the war, when their numbers remained manageable—they maintained and circulated, throughout the state, a “Wall of Remembrance” to display, in a formal way, a listing of those Americans killed in Iraq.

One could talk about similar sorts of programs, visiting speakers, demonstrations, reading and study sessions, and writing of op-eds and letters to the editor in the other seven NFP chapters.

For example, the Omaha Chapter has focused on Palestine-Gaza and StratCom; the UNL Chapter on many issues but especially on fighting to retain Affirmative Action; the Lincoln Chapter works on local versions of the NFP priority issues and on education as well. Because Crete has a large immigrant population, it is contemplating on focusing on immigration. Every chapter has its own local version of burning NFP issues and constructs its own agenda, schedule for meetings and self-education/organizing strategy. Being a Peace & Justice advocate in a ‘red state’ can be lonely. The loneliness, though, can be mitigated by study and action, which a few other budding chapters are discovering.

If you wish to organize a chapter, contact Byron Peterson at bpete37@gmail.com and Paul Olson at nfpstate@nebraskansforpeace.org. We can offer support.

Give the Gift of Peace

Make a donation to the

Nebraska Peace Foundation

Immigration, conclusion

country, illegal immigrants were welcomed with jobs, apartments to rent, cars to buy, churches to attend, Wal-Marts to shop in and openings to most other corners of American life. Why is the immigrant any more guilty than the employer, the landlord, the car salesperson or the minister anxious for a new member?

I would argue that all of these individuals are guilty only of living life as best as they know how. It is the lack of clear social and legal guidelines that is to blame. Sudden harsh increases in the punishment of selected immigrants (when others are still openly welcomed), while at the same time absolving everyone who benefits from these immigrants' presence of all responsibility, is patently unjust.

We Need Comprehensive Legislation—and Follow-Up

IRCA's failure to stem illegal immigration has given comprehensive immigration legislation a bad name. But we know why IRCA failed to achieve its goals: Congress never followed up the legislation by funding the mandated actions. Effectively, Congress failed to act under the rule of the law it passed. Employers were not held accountable, and they were never prosecuted. Nor was a simple and full-proof method to verify identities ever established. It is obvious that border controls are not currently sufficient to deal with a 2,000-mile-long border and the ease with which people can enter the country with some form of temporary documentation. Remember, the criminals who flew the planes into the World Trade Center entered the country legally on a passport with a visitor's visa.

IRCA also failed to stem illegal immigration because it did not open legal channels of immigration for the types of people most likely to immigrate illegally. It is nearly impossible for a foreigner without immediate family in the U.S. or a university degree to ever gain entry into the U.S.

These observations point to the need

for a new comprehensive law that (1) again mandates employer responsibility for hiring illegal immigrants, (2) a clearinghouse for identifying employees' immigration status in a nondiscriminatory manner, and (3) modest border controls. Further legal channels for immigration for people with all types of backgrounds and talents should also be opened. And, above all, the current cruelty of our inconsistent and arbitrary pursuit of illegal immigrants must stop. Simple deportation is sufficient provided a viable employee verification system is in place. We should not torture people who are not guilty of a serious crime.

Now for the controversial recommendation: we need one more general amnesty. Many illegal immigrants live in families with others who are legal immigrants or native-born Americans. Many more have lived here for years and have been good citizens. Another general amnesty will be strongly resisted by many politicians for whom the term has become a kind of dirty word. Perhaps we should remind them (and ourselves) though, that amnesty—or in more familiar language, 'forgiveness'—is a fundamental component of any civilized society. Civilized life cannot go on when society loses its capacity to forgive, especially for complex phenomena like illegal immigration where the blame is widely shared.

It is time for comprehensive legislation that recognizes illegal immigration for the complex socioeconomic phenomenon that it is—but also accepts that immigration is a very human phenomenon and not a criminal act. This year is obviously not the best time to deal with illegal immigration: our new president has plenty on his plate, and the economic recession will make it difficult to convince opponents of immigration that their falling incomes and poor job prospects are not related to immigration. Still, we can surely do better than adopt new laws that do little more than authorize high walls on our borders and more prisons for foreign people who only came here to work.


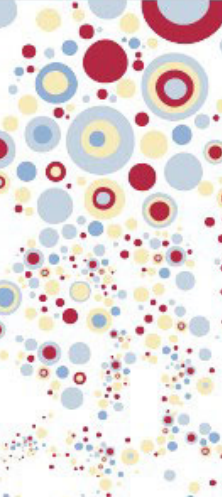
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 <p>MARY RIEPMA ROSS MEDIA ARTS CENTER</p> <p>UNIVERSITY OF Nebraska Lincoln HIXSON-LIED COLLEGE OF FINE & PERFORMING ARTS</p> 	<p>www.theross.org</p>	<p>COMING SOON</p> <p>2.27 - 3.12 WALTZ WITH BASHIR is one of the universally praised films from this year's Cannes, Ari Folman's debut doc WALTZ WITH BASHIR reconstructs the filmmaker's missing memories from his time as a soldier in the 1982 Lebanon War.</p> <p>2.27 - 3.5 YELLA The gifted German filmmaker Christian Petzold wrote and directed this tightly controlled metaphorical horror movie, which begins with an upwardly mobile corporate accountant and her if-I-can't-have-you-nobody-can ex-husband careening off a bridge and plunging into the icy waters of the Elbe.</p> <p>3.5 - 3.12 WHO DOES SHE THINK SHE IS? enlists the help of both experts and women who are trying to create art of various forms as they try to raise children.</p> <p>3.13 - 3.26 THE OSCAR NOMINATED SHORT FILMS 2009 A program showcasing the Academy Award nominees and winners in the Animated Short Film and Live Action Short categories.</p> <p>3.13 - 3.19 MOVING MIDWAY Godfrey Cheshire's richly observed film about his family's Southern plantation - and the colossal feat of moving it to escape urban sprawl - is a thoughtful and witty look at the lingering remnants and still-powerful mythology of plantation culture and the antebellum South.</p> <p>3.20 - 3.26 ATHOUSAND YEARS OF GOOD PRAYERS In this film, Mr. Shi (Henry O) comes to the United States to see his divorced daughter, Yilan (Faye Yu). Mr. Shi soon discovers that it wasn't just age and the distance separating him from his daughter, and he tries to learn more about Yilan, despite her best efforts.</p> <p>3.27 - 3.9 THE CLASS In this film, Mr. Shi comes to the United States to see his divorced daughter, Yilan (Faye Yu). Mr. Shi soon discovers that it wasn't just age and the distance separating him from his daughter, and he tries to learn more about Yilan, despite her best efforts.</p> <p>3.27 - 4.2 CHE November 26, 1956; led by Fidel Castro, a band of 80 rebels sails to Cuba. Nation-less, strapped for resources and fueled only by determination, the group engages in swift, bloody battle to free the Cuban people from the corrupt dictatorship of Batista.</p>
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Paul Olson, conclusion

ing the "Greed is Good" mantra. In keeping with Rand and Smith, Reagan moved money from the welfare state to the warfare one, and his admirer, George W. Bush, followed suit. *God Wants You To Be Rich*, the screed of right-wing economic guru Paul Pilzer, has become the statist version of Christianity—justifying our extraction of wealth from a starving Third World and a bombed-out Islamic one, while destroying the sacrificial center of most western religions and of religions like Gandhi's Hinduism or the Dalai Lama's Buddhism.

'Greed is good' selfishness and militarism are, of course, idolatry—a state religion fabricated from a perversion of the Hebrew and Greek scriptures. It is not the religion of Amos, the prophet, or of the Jesus who told the rich young ruler to sell all to give to the poor and in his mountain sermon blessed the meek and urged people to take no thought for the morrow.

We can hope that the cult of aggregated individual greed, protected by a national military that extracts wealth in its behalf, has come crashing down with the recent clattering down of Wall Street. But what will replace it? We have lost most of

the common, the village square, the ritualization of community. We have jettisoned the myth of the common profit of humanity or the commonwealth (or 'commonwealth') that was supposed to be at the heart of the state from the thirteenth century to the Declaration of Independence. We have lost our center.

The present economic and military crisis is very much also a religious one in the broadest sense. What we have done defies the central message of most of the great religions of the world and certainly of Christianity. As Karl Barth, the neo-orthodox theologian, put it, "Fundamentally, the command of God... is self-evidently and in all circumstances a call for counter-movements on behalf of humanity and against its denial in any form—and therefore a call for the championing of the weak against every kind of encroachment on the part of the strong."

That of course has been the message not only of the prophets but also of many secular thinkers. But it is not the message of Rand or Smith or Pilzer or the Bush/Cheney Administration. Let us hope that it is the Obama message.

Your Foundation Speaks

by Loyal Park, President of the Nebraska Peace Foundation

In these times of bad economic news, it can be hard to financially support peace work when jobs and incomes are so unsure. Today however, you can still designate that all or a portion of your estate go to the Nebraska Peace Foundation after your death.

None of us know what the future may hold for our estates and our final needs. You can stipulate now, though, that whatever is left is directed to go toward supporting peace work.

Let us know of your commitment by contacting Loyal Park at 402-489-6662.



BULLETIN BOARD

March 8 International Women's Day

April 3-4 "2009 Peacemaking Workshop" at First United Methodist Church, 50th & St. Paul Avenue in Lincoln. Anna Baltzer, a Jewish-American Columbia graduate, Fulbright scholar and three-time volunteer with the International Women's Peace Service, will deliver a presentation entitled, "Life in Occupied Palestine: Eyewitness Stories and Photos," at 7 p.m. Friday, April 3. The workshop will continue Saturday morning, April 4, 8:30 a.m. at First Mennonite Church, 7300 Holdrege St. Both events are free and the public is invited. For more information, visit www.fmclincoln.org/peacemaking_workshop/2009.

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Speaking Our Peace

The stimulus package at about 780 billion dollars puts back into the civilian economy approximately two-thirds (or if Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz is right, *two-ninths*) of what the Iraq War took out of it.

I worry. If the new package is not more stimulating than a Saturday night visit to the state fair side shows, my metaphorical mattress will have lost its stuffing. George Bush's and Dick Cheney's style of state socialism—command economy military expenditures—took my money. Let us hope that Obama's civilian version of socialism puts it back.

The congressional opponents of the stimulus, worshipping a government of only police and military, hypocritically call the stimulus 'socialist,' 'un-American' and a 'Europeanization of the economy.' According to evangelist Bill Keller, it is also "un-Christian." That European social democracy Obama is peddling is not good old Americanism, and they are upset.

Well, for their information, America does not equal modern 'free market capitalism'—which, incidentally, didn't even exist when the founding fathers were going about their founding. At that time, the North had its system of small

businesses and farms (few really large corporations or chains); the South had a highly controlled semi-feudal slave plantation economy. Multi-national corporations owned by global stockholders that have grown so large they are now deemed 'too big to fail' were utterly unknown then.

Even in Great Britain, the free market that had as its prophet Adam Smith dominated the British economy only from the 1830s onward—the system existing only *in utero* in Smith's time (1750s-1770s) in the west of England and parts of Scotland. Big Business capitalism did become a dominant economic force in America beginning with the Civil War (1861-65) on up through the period of the 'robber barons' (1870s-1910), before coming under some state control during the Populist and Progressive movements (1890-1920) and the New Deal. But there's nothing quintessentially American about corporate capitalism. We've had it for less than half our history.

Free market capitalism is not particularly Christian either. Its great modern theoretician, Ayn Rand, created a non-theistic idealization of robber barons and non-regulatory governments that do only police and military work. While her

most powerful modern acolyte, former Chair of the Federal Reserve, Alan Greenspan, has defended her philosophy in the public press, he only recently recognized that his and her anti-regulatory mania created the present crisis. In recent testimony before a congressional committee, Greenspan, according to news accounts,

admitted that he had been 'partially wrong' in his hands-off approach towards the banking industry and that the credit crunch had left him in a state of shocked disbelief.

Nor was Ayn Rand's predecessor and capitalism's great prophet, Adam Smith, a big Bible-thumper. He was either a Deist or an agnostic, depending on which scholar you read. He recognizes only one transcendent providential force—greed—that in his world, as in Ayn Rand's, will make everything good. In his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, he imagines a farmer, greedy and self-absorbed who, guided by an "invisible hand," produces vast quantities of grain, feeding others only to profit himself. Smith never mentions how much his ideal farmer wastes on whoring or gambling or building his great house, or how much human capital he destroys by beating and starving his

peasants as my ancestors were beaten and half-starved on like farms in Sweden.

In the *Wealth of Nations* (1775), Smith applies his "invisible hand" to the free market producer who, working in a national economy, "intends only his own gain" while he is "led by an invisible hand to promote an end"—the welfare of his whole nation—"which was no part of his intent." No mention whatsoever of the darker corollaries of his market producer's system: colonialism, multi-national corporations that create international economies for exploitation, and armies used to extract wealth from other nations.

While Smith in other places reveals contempt for pure greed and lack of empathy, his students since have not. But they have followed him enthusiastically in arguing that a nation should suspend its free market ideology to pay for the police and military.

The invisible hand version of market economics became Christian truths under President Reagan, who told right-wing evangelicals and fundamentalists that he was "on [their] side" while he filled his administration with functionaries wearing Adam Smith buttons chant-

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