



*Nebraskans for Peace*

# Nebraska Report

*There is no Peace without Justice*

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2020 VOLUME 48, NO. 1

# Live Simply So Others Can Simply Live

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On the occasion of Nebraskans for Peace's 50th anniversary, the NFP State Board is launching a 'Simple Living' campaign to promote reduced consumption and resource conservation. Over the next 12 months (including at the 2020 Annual Peace Conference this coming October in Lincoln), we will be outlining ways each of us as individual actors can reduce humans' heavy footprint on the Earth's ecosystem....

*Nebraskans for Peace's state office in Lincoln is located on land that formerly belonged to the Otoe Tribe.*

## Nebraska Report

The Nebraska Report is published nine times annually by Nebraskans for Peace. Opinions stated do not necessarily reflect the views of the directors or staff of Nebraskans for Peace.

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Printing: Fremont Tribune

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Letters, articles, photographs and graphics are welcomed. Deadline is the first of the month for publication in the following month's issue. Submit to: Nebraska Report, c/o Nebraskans for Peace, P.O. Box 83466, Lincoln, NE 68501-3466.

## Nebraskans for Peace

NFP is a statewide grassroots advocacy organization working nonviolently for peace with justice through community-building, education and political action.

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Contact the NFP State Office for information on the UNL, UNO, UNK, Creighton & Nebraska Wesleyan University and Hastings & Doane College Chapters



**Support Peace without giving a dime!**

**Support NFP through TAGG  
(Together A Greater Good)**

TAGG is potentially a great fundraiser for Nebraskans for Peace through the Nebraska Peace Foundation. What is TAGG? It stands for "Together A Greater Good" and is a fundraiser for many charities. Nebraska Peace Foundation is registered with TAGG so the Foundation can receive rebates from the various participating businesses.

**How does it work? It is as easy as 1-2-3! You will need your smart phone and follow these steps:**

- 1. Download the TAGG mobile app.**
- 2. Tap the orange "TAGG My Purchase" button.**
- 3. Choose NEBRASKA PEACE FOUNDATION from the list of participating charities.**
- 4. Take a photo of your receipt at the participating business.**
- 5. The business will donate a percentage of your purchase to Nebraska Peace Foundation. (Percentages vary by business.)**

Go to <https://togetheragreatergood.com> for the complete list of participating businesses. Also some businesses listed have only selected locations which participate. See your TAGG mobile app for which locations participate.

Some participating Lincoln businesses are: Lost in Fun, U-Stop, Blue Orchid Thai Restaurant, Brewsky's, Buzzard Billy's, Cactus Modern Mexican, some Jimmy John's, Piedmont Bistro, Venue Restaurant, Juice Plus by Tiffany, Rixstine, Shane & Sunny Portraits, State Farm (Michelle Boden), Walker Tire and the Treasure Trove. In Omaha: Play It Again Sports, Omaha Steaks, NuTrend Dry Cleaners, Runza, Jimmy's Egg, Jimmy John's, HyVee, Goodcents deli fresh subs, Eileen's Cookies, Batteries + Bulbs and many more. There are over 200 on the list of participating businesses.

# TAKE THE 'NO FLY' PLEDGE



If we are to have any chance of limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) to avert catastrophic climate disruption, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warns that carbon dioxide emissions must be **CUT IN HALF** by 2030 (with the entire planet zero carbon by 2050).

Cutting our global CO2 emissions in half over the next decade — 7.6 percent annually each of the next ten years — will require drastic reductions in consumer lifestyles. Those of us living in the U.S., who have the highest standard of living globally and emit far and away the most carbon, will feel the harshest effects of this cutback. In every aspect of our lives — from the food we eat to our transportation expectations — we will have to start changing and simplifying the way we live.

**Flying is the single-worst thing you can do for your carbon footprint.** Just one passenger's share of the emissions on a one-way 2,500-mile flight from New York to Los Angeles melts the Arctic summer sea ice cover by 32 square feet (the equivalent

of a 4'x 8' patch of ice).\*

And even though global airline passenger travel has doubled worldwide since 2003, only 1 out of 5 people in the world has ever even been on a plane. Since the 80 percent of the world that doesn't fly can't quit what it doesn't do, whether we cut back on the single-biggest source of our individual carbon footprints depends solely on the one-fifth of the population that flies.

Consciously choosing a simpler lifestyle — living more simply so that others can simply live — is more than just charity: It's the necessary pathway to help ensure that the ecosystem that we all depend on can survive in a recognizable form. Destroy that ecosystem and we destroy ourselves.

**Take the pledge. Pledge today to not to ever fly again and invite your family and friends to join you.**

Not getting on a plane is the most loving and compassionate thing we can individually do to try to safeguard our children's and grandchildren's future.

\* *New York Times*, 6/9/19, "Travel's Climate Problem"

# The Environmental & Economic Necessity of Relocalizing Our Food Supply



*Dr. Amanda McKinney, M.D., Founder and Executive Director of the Institute for Human and Planetary Health at Doane University*

Those of us who like to eat have a problem. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has warned that we need to keep global warming less than 1.5 degrees C. in order to limit the severity of climate-related impacts. Warming has already reached 1.1 degrees C., spawning devastating drought, wildfires and flooding—impacting our ability to grow food. Additionally, every degree of planetary warming will decrease the yields of staple cereal crops by around 10 percent. Fossil fuel-intensive industrial agriculture has also led to a population decline of 40 percent of all insect species with one-third of species endangered. These insects are essential for ecosystem function and, therefore, to our survival.

Industrial agriculture has also led to a wholesale destruction of one of our most precious resources... the soil. Historically, industrial agriculture has resulted in erosion and degradation of soil to the point of desertification. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that 12 million hectares of arable land, enough to grow

20 tonnes of grain, are lost to drought and desertification each year. This impacts 1.5 billion people in over 100 countries. It's also estimated that Africa will lose two-thirds of its arable land to desertification if business continues as usual. And, according to a UN official, because it takes 1,000 years to generate 3 centimeters of topsoil, all of the world's top soil could be gone in 55 years if current rates of degradation continue.

Fossil fuel depletion and the need to dramatically cut fossil fuel use to prevent catastrophic climate change is also a problem for those of us who need to eat. Our industrialized agricultural system relies heavily on petroleum-based chemicals such as fertilizers and pesticides to produce food in degraded soils and ecosystems. As a result, there are 10 fossil fuel calories in each calorie of food that is produced and most food on your plate travels an average of 1500 miles to get there.

The triad of climate change, fossil fuel depletion, and soil erosion and degradation presents a dilemma true to its definition, which is 'a situation in which a difficult choice has to be made between two or more alternatives, especially equally undesirable ones.'

If we were to eliminate the use of fossil fuels, crop yields would plummet from lack of fertilizer and pesticides given the degraded condition of our soils and ecosystems, leading to famine on a global scale. Continued use of fossil fuels and keeping a focus on confined animals and meat-based diets will exacerbate greenhouse gas emissions, helping lead to runaway climate change and also crop failure and global famine. Continuing to rely on industrially produced monocultures like corn and soy will lead to further soil erosion

and chronic disease from diets devoid of real nutrition. Already we are realizing the social and economic burden of chronic diseases of nutrition (heart disease, diabetes and cancer). In the era of fossil fuel depletion (peak oil and peak

***Global warming is already spawning devastating drought, wildfires and flooding—impacting our ability to grow food... It's not hyperbolic to state that we are at a point of crisis.***

coal), with a population of almost 8 billion and counting, this is a recipe for disaster. It's not hyperbolic to state that we are at a point of crisis and that our civilization may already be collapsing.

What to do then? How can we begin to change this situation? Much of it cannot be changed at the individual level, however there are things you can do personally that can help protect you and your loved ones from the pain of disease and the probability of a crisis.

**First, examine your diet.** Consider reducing your meat consumption for your benefit and for the planet's. Add more whole, minimally processed plant foods.

**Secondly, determine where your food is coming from.** Are there dietary staples that can be sourced locally from growers practicing sustainable or regenerative agriculture or permaculture? Lone Tree Foods in Lincoln and

# Seeking 'Grasstops' Endorsers for Citizens' Climate Lobby's Carbon Fee-and-Dividend

Everyone is created equal, right? We all know that. But as we get older some people seem to be more equal than others.

Everyone knows what Grassroots people are. That's those of us who get down in the dirt and get the work done. Grassroots people help in political campaigns by walking door-to-door, stuffing envelopes and putting labels on those envelopes. We make lots of phone calls at campaign headquarters and talk with our friends and families about a particular campaign. And we vote! That makes us the most powerful people in the country... Except for maybe 'Grasstops' people.

## Who Are Grasstops People?

Grasstops people have lots of grassroots people who follow, learn from or work for them. Grasstops people are religious leaders, professors in college and owners of small and large businesses and Chamber of Commerces. Some people get their grasstops power by donating large amounts of money to election campaigns or just by being a close personal friend of an elected official. Or, they have been elected to an office — City Council, Mayor, County Board, Natural Resources District, Public Power District, State Senator, Governor,

and others.

We like to think that all people are equal. But when it comes to influencing elected officials, the grasstops people are much more likely to have their phone calls returned and their opinions listened to more closely. That is why Citizens' Climate Lobby and Nebraskans for Peace are working to find more grasstops people who will endorse our bill in Congress that will dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the use of fossil fuels.

Are you one of the grasstops people I described above? If you are, please contact me, Mark Welsch, at 402-510-7565 or NFPOmaha1970@Gmail.com

Do you know one of the grasstops people I described? If you do, please call me so we can talk about setting up a meeting with them.

A growing number of grasstops people in Nebraska are signing up to endorse our bill. Here is a representative sample of individuals and organizations who have signed on so far. We will print a more complete list in a future *Nebraska Report*.

## Congressional District 1

**Sue Crawford**, State Senator, Nebraska Legislature

**Adam Morfeld**, State Senator, Nebraska Legislature

**Donald Preister**, Bellevue City Councilmember & former State Senator

**Jane Raybould**, Lincoln City Councilmember

## Congressional District 2

**Rev. Dr. Eric Elnes**, Senior Minister, Countryside Community Church, United Church of Christ, Omaha

**David Corbin**, Professor Emeritus, University of Nebraska at Omaha

**Wohlner's Neighborhood Grocery & Deli**, Omaha

**Brickway Brewery & Distillery**, Omaha

## Congressional District 3

**Cheryl Welch**, Chadron City Councilmember  
**Del Roper**, Retired Pastor, United Methodist Church, Grand Island,

**Rev. John Adams Rector**, Grace Episcopal Church, Chadron

**Russ Seger**, Pastor, First Congregational Church, UCC, Chadron

So please, help us build on this list of Business Owners, Ministers, Professors, City Council Members, State Senators and others. Let me know if you want your name to be added to this list.

Mark Welsch, Nebraskans for Peace's Omaha Coordinator and Co-Leader of Citizens' Climate Lobby - Omaha Chapter. NFPOmaha1970@Gmail.com

Grain Place Foods in Marquette make it easier to source locally grown food.

**Third, grow and preserve some of your own food.** Start with a goal of growing 3 percent of the calories you and your family consume. That may not sound like much but when you really determine the number of calories you and your family consume on a daily basis, it adds up quickly. Check out The Grow Network or the DVD, "Grow Your Own Groceries" by Marjorie Wildcraft to learn more. Consider finding a growing partner and sharing

your harvests. Perhaps you're a master tomato grower while your friend grows amazing green beans. Have a canning party at the end of the growing season and swap jars of preserved produce.

**Fourth, educate your friends, family and neighbors.** Conversations about climate change and politics are difficult to have but everyone can come together around the issue of access to healthy food. Start a conversation about it. If consumers demand health-promot-

ing food and are willing to pay for it, farmers will grow it.

**Lastly, you can vote and/or run for elected office.** It's likely that I'm preaching to the choir right now, but it bears repeating that it's imperative that we elect leaders willing to promote the kinds of policy and legislation that will help us end our addiction to fossil fuels, transition to resilient societies, and prioritize the health of people and the planet over corporate profits.

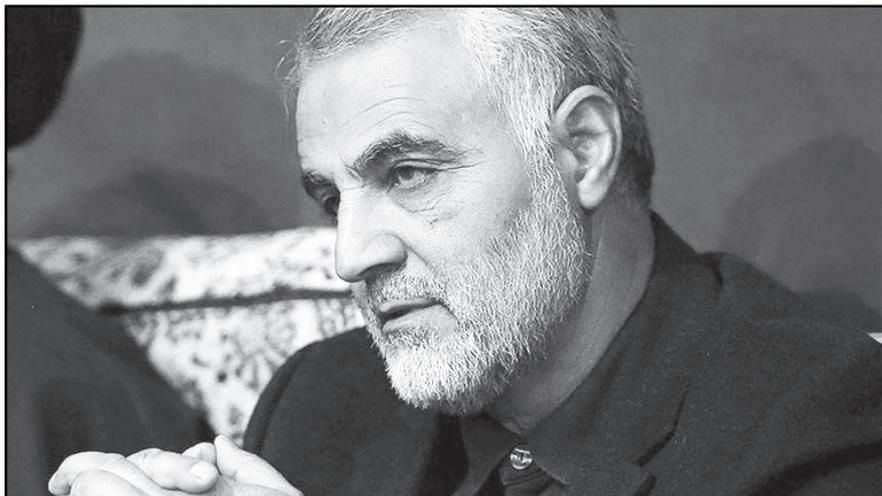
# Double Trouble

## The Killing of General Qassem Suleimani

by David P. Forsythe  
UNL Professor Emeritus of Political  
Science

In international law there are three notions of self-defense giving rise to justified use of force. There is traditional (if an armed attack occurs), anticipatory (if an armed attack is imminent), and preventative (if an armed attack might occur in the future). In the U.S. killing of Iranian General Qassem Sulemeini on January 3, debate partially focused on the second, with the White House and State Departments claiming that the head of the Quds Force of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards was planning definite and imminent attacks on US persons or property. Thus they said it was legal to kill him.

U.S. officials had to focus on this claim because officially Iran had not attacked the United States, and because the claim of preventative self-defense had been given a bad odor by the George W. Bush invasion of Iraq in 2003 under that unilateral assertion (not to mention that such a claim was what Imperial Japan used when it attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7,



1941).

But other U.S. officials like Secretary of Defense Make Esper said they had not seen such evidence. President Trump and Secretary of State Pompeo presented no supporting evidence. And the earlier mendacious or misleading statements by these officials led to grave doubts whether the facts supported a claim of anticipatory self-defense. The U.S. international legal case was therefore weak.

In U.S. domestic law two points came into play. First, assassinations

are banned in peacetime. We were not in formal war (or international armed conflict) with Iran because, as per above, we had not been officially and directly attacked by authorities in Tehran. Again, this led to the perhaps bogus claim of anticipatory self-defense. But pursuing that claim logically leads to a state of war between the two nations, which neither apparently wants. Anticipatory self-defense puts one in armed conflict, as was true of Israel when making the claim in 1967.

Second, there is the subject of constitutional war powers, which has never been clear since the Korean War of 1950-1953. Truman decided to fight without a declaration of war from Congress, and for that matter before the UN Security Council, absent the USSR, voted to resist the North's invasion of the South. We have had an Imperial Presidency since at least 1950, with Congress often failing to take a clear position on use of force abroad. Presidents of both Parties have been satisfied to extend their powers, and Members of Congress in both Parties have been complicit in allowing

***Presidents and their supporters in Congress often argue for flexibility rather than legislative action.***

***It is usually the Party not controlling the White House that demands attention to domestic war powers legislation (Vietnam was an exception).***

***But for all the reasons listed plus others, the 1970 War Powers Act has never worked well.***

their right to declare war to slip away. It is simply easier to avoid difficult choices, especially when one's Party controls the White House and therefore boasts the Commander in Chief.

Moreover, since 1950, there have been lots of undeclared wars and lots of situations of sizable violence said by someone not to be war. Some of those using violence are not recognized states. States themselves use proxy forces to avoid direct responsibility, not only Iran via Hezbollah in Lebanon and Syria but the United States in organizing and arming the contras in Central America. So situations of violence are often complex and do not easily yield to consensus judgments about when international or internal armed conflicts exist involving states. Presidents and their supporters in Congress often argue for flexibility rather than legislative action. It is usually the Party not controlling the White House that demands attention to domestic war powers legislation (Vietnam was an exception). But for all the reasons listed plus others, the 1970 War Powers Act has never worked well. Most Presidents excepting Carter have tried to circumvent its major provisions and no Congress has been able to rectify matters.

We should have a robust international law about peace and war, as well as an effective law of war about

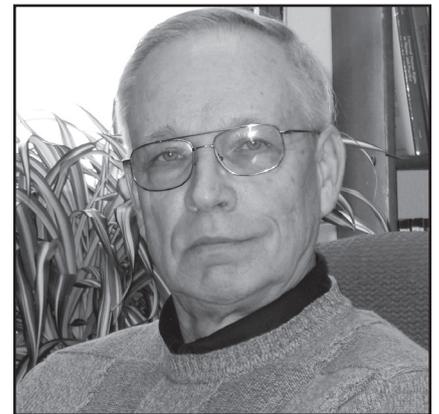
the process of fighting. But in fact, law about the start of war (*jus ad bellum*) is as weak as the law of war (*jus in bello*). This is in part because the UN Security Council is now badly divided, as it was during the Cold War, with the major military powers there often unable to come to firm agreement on how to manage violent situations and how they are fought.

The United States, claiming to be a 'rule of law' state, should have an effective constitutional law about war powers, and the separation but sharing of powers, and an effective rule that no public official is above the law. But since 1950 all this has broken down with both Parties tolerating ambiguity about foreign violence. (Courts do not really want to get into this political thicket.)

In the short term, the status of international and domestic law, and the condition of our democracy, leaves us with power politics largely devoid of law. Trump, urged on by certain officials, has killed the top Iranian general in what passes for peacetime. Suleimani had a lot of American and other blood on his hands, but it was a risky act, probably not justified by international law, and definitely without consultation with congressional leaders. The Trump team represents the Imperial Presidency on steroids, and that is not healthy for democracy.

But so far Iran, in its weakness,

has not resorted to major retaliation (as compared to a face-saving rocket attack on a U.S. base in Iraq). It could have tried a cyber-attack on the United States, which opens another Pandora's Box about whether a cyber-attack—especially one causing deaths—rather than a kinetic attack can start a war. Trump has not consistently beaten the war drums, given that Tucker Carlson on *Fox News* and the Trump cult at home do not really want another war in the Mid East. Trump has sent a major signal to Iran to be more careful about its adventures abroad, and for now both sides continue with verbal attacks and various other maneuvers. War remains on the shelf, but so does clarity about international law concerning war and domestic law about war powers.



*David Forsythe*

## NFP Media Statement on the Iran Assassination

Nebraskans for Peace supports the passage of the new War Powers Act introduced in the House of Representatives. It asks Nebraska's Representatives and Senators to vote for the bill but with the additional requirement that, if the President invokes the "imminent threat" provisions of the Act, he must disclose to the Congress and Senate what the evidence of imminent threat is.

In addition, Nebraskans for Peace decries the U.S. attack on Iraqi soil without the constitutionally required consultation with Congress and without either a declaration of war or an invoking of the provisions of the 1970s War Powers Resolution. We are appalled by the actions of nation states—especially Russia and the United States—that kill individual persons deemed opponents of those

states. The venue for the handling of such persons is a trial at the International Criminal Court under the auspices of the United Nations.

If the United States and Russia continue to kill individual 'enemies' without a trial, without evidence, and without congressional action, we will contribute to the development of an international anarchy that in the age of drones will be extremely difficult for any leader, any nation, or any international body to limit.

We call on Senators Sasse and Fischer and Representatives Fortenberry, Bacon and Smith to stand up for international rule of law and publicly oppose reckless, renegade behavior by the Executive Branch of our Federal government.

# What's HOT in Global Warming?

by Professor Bruce E. Johansen

## The Demise of Permafrost and Nature's Geophysical Facts

Nationalistic hubris rides the high saddle. The Ministry of Alt-Facts minds the memory holes at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. The clock strikes Thirteen. Ignorance commands the mind of the worst president in United States history, who, naturally, in his Looking Glass world, is measuring himself for a slot on Mt. Rushmore. Could things get any worse? Well, yes. In fact, they already have, but no one in the House of Alt-Facts knows enough about nature's geophysical facts to look, much less to see.



A few years ago, the quarter of the northern hemisphere that is underlain by permafrost, on balance, began feeding more carbon dioxide than oxygen into the atmosphere, according to reports from NASA. A decade or two ago, the prospect of such a reversal was being called a 'tipping point'—one important indication that natural production of greenhouse gases has outstripped human emissions, rising on its own. Back

in those quaint days, the tipping point was usually said to be comfortably far in the future.

The tipping points, however, are arriving before most of our scientists and others had thought 20 years ago—and in the midst of a global surge of nationalism that is inhibiting nations' ability to unite against it. Witness President Alt-Facts' withdrawal from the Paris Agreement.

In addition to increasing carbon dioxide from permafrost (which isn't permanent anymore), wildfires all over the world are pouring increasing amounts of

Chinese hoax. The lights are burning late in the Ministry of Truth.

In a study published in *Nature Climate Change*, scientists estimated that 1.7 billion metric tons of carbon were lost from Arctic permafrost regions during each winter from 2003 to 2017. Over the same span, an average of 1 billion metric tons of carbon were taken up by vegetation during summer growing seasons. This changes the region from being a net 'sink' of carbon dioxide—where it is captured from the atmosphere and stored—into being a net source of

***A few years ago, the quarter of the northern hemisphere that is underlain by permafrost, on balance, began feeding more carbon dioxide than oxygen into the atmosphere... This changes the region from being a net 'sink' of carbon dioxide—into being a net source of emissions.***

carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. The oceans, which have been sequestering a large amount of carbon dioxide that has been pumped into the air, appear to be reaching their natural limits. As all of this portends a future of natural carbon dioxide overload that will kill much of the oceans' life, swamp coastal cities, and change human, animal and plant life beyond recognition. President Alt-Facts still insists that what we have here is a

emissions.

Permafrost is the carbon-rich frozen soil that covers about one quarter of Northern Hemisphere land area; it encompasses vast stretches of Alaska, Canada, Siberia, and Greenland. Scientists have estimated that permafrost stores more carbon than has ever been released by humans via fossil fuel combustion. These frozen soils have kept carbon safely locked away for thousands of years, but rising temperatures are

making them thaw and release those greenhouse gases.

“These findings indicate that winter carbon dioxide loss may already be offsetting growing season carbon uptake, and these losses will increase as the climate continues to warm,” said Sue Natali, lead author of the study and a scientist at Woods Hole Research Center (WHRC). “Studies focused on individual sites have seen this transition, but until now we haven’t had a clear accounting of the winter carbon balance throughout the entire Arctic region.”

Natali and colleagues warned that winter carbon dioxide losses from permafrost regions could increase by 41 percent over the next century if human-caused greenhouse gas emissions continue at their current pace. If fossil fuel use is modestly reduced, winter carbon dioxide emissions would increase 17 percent compared with current emissions. Carbon emitted from permafrost has not been included in most models of future climates.

“The warmer it gets, the more carbon will be released into the atmosphere from the permafrost region, which will add to further warming,” said co-author and WHRC scientist Brendan Rogers. “It’s concerning that our study, which used many more observations than ever before, indicates a much stronger Arctic carbon source in the winter. We may be witnessing a transition from an annual Arctic carbon sink to a carbon source, which is not good news.”

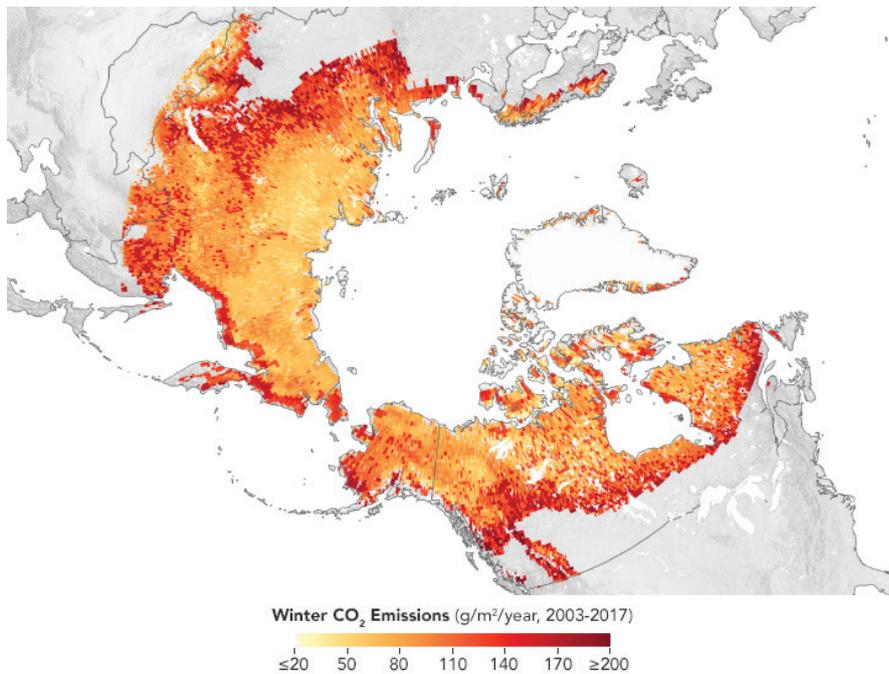
#### FURTHER READING

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Campbell, J.L. (2019) Arctic Loses Carbon as Winters Wane.” *Nature Climate Change*, 9, 806–807.

“Permafrost Becoming a Carbon Source Instead of a Sink.” *NASA Earth Observatory*, November 19, 2019. <https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/145880/permafrost-becoming-a-carbon-source-instead-of-a-sink>

*Bruce E. Johansen, Frederick W. Kayser Professor at the University of Nebraska–Omaha, is author of Climate Change: An Encyclopedia of Science, Society, and Solutions (2017).*



A NASA map shows the estimated annual winter (October to April) emissions of carbon dioxide for Arctic permafrost regions from 2003 to 2017. A team of more than 70 researchers compiled ground-based observations of carbon dioxide emissions and combined them with remote sensing data and ecosystem models to assess current and future carbon losses.

## Your Foundation Speaks

by Loyal Park, Nebraska Peace Foundation President

Now in 2020, Nebraskans for Peace (NFP) will be celebrating 50 years as the voice of peace and justice in Nebraska—50 years as the longest-surviving statewide P&J organization in the U.S. Now is the time to consider how we fund NFP for the next 50 years. Hopefully Nebraska Peace Foundation (NPF) will be able to provide the funds necessary for all of NFP’s educational work.

We will need to build up our permanent endowment. Currently we provide about \$40,000 interest and dividend income annually to support NFP. This amount will need to more than double to fully support NFP’s educational work.

Please consider designating NPF as the beneficiary or contingent beneficiary of your IRA account. You will still be able to own and control your IRA during your lifetime, but upon your death the remaining funds will transfer tax-free to NPF. Ask your financial advisor or tax consultant to check this out for your situation.



# Investing in a Low-Carbon Future

by Marilyn McNabb

NFP State Coordinator (1973-1974) & Volunteer for the Lincoln Chapter of CCL

*I recently read several news stories about BlackRock's decision to divest from coal companies and take other measures to address climate change. It seemed like a very positive development since they are the largest investment manager in the world. I called Tyler Mainquist—a Nebraska-based financial advisor I knew had been working with clients to reduce their carbon holdings—to gauge his reaction and gather his thoughts.*

Tyler said that in his 12-plus years focusing on sustainable, responsible and impact (SRI) investing, BlackRock's

annual letter'. Here are some highlights that Tyler thought were pertinent, with quoted entries being from BlackRock letters, not quotes from Tyler.

## TO CORPORATE CEOs:

Tyler said that this year Fink titled his letter, "A Fundamental Reshaping of Finance," building on last year's "Profit & Purpose" and 2018's "A Sense of Purpose." Fink again touched on sustainability, but went much further. He starts with a reminder that they invest on behalf of others and have a fiduciary responsibility to them—a notice that other firms and advisors should think likewise. He boldly affirms "Climate change has become a defining factor in companies' long-

portfolios going forward." Beyond being something that investors *want* to do, BlackRock thinks that financial returns will be better for a given level of risk.

Tyler said that Fink provided an example in a follow-up call for financial advisors: In his 40 years in the industry, there have been five "crises"—all financial in nature, all resolved through financial interventions. Climate change, with physical risks that cannot be resolved quickly or with current technology, will require capital realignment to direct resources appropriately. As electric cars and trucks continue to supplant gas and diesel, there will be new demand for components and infrastructure, from battery technology to charging stations, shifting investment need from legacy to EV.

While Fink acknowledges many of the actions demanded by climate activists, he does hedge when saying "the energy transition will still take decades" because of "economic, scientific, social and political realities." On the other hand, he implores "a transition that is both fair and just—we cannot leave behind parts of society, or entire countries in developing markets, as we pursue the path to a low-carbon world", as many of us have cautioned.

Tyler was pleased when Fink sets expectations for how corporations should operate in order to attract capital/investments: We should expect a "clearer picture of how companies are managing sustainability" including "how each company serves its full set of stakeholders, such as the diversity of its workforce, the sustainability of its supply chain" and more. Rather than focusing on short-term stock price, "purpose is the engine of long-term profitability." Because of that, "companies and countries that do not... address sustainability risks will encounter... a higher cost of capital." Those that do "will attract... higher-quality, more patient capital."

***"Climate change has become a defining factor in companies' long-term prospects... The evidence on climate risk is compelling investors to reassess core assumptions about modern finance, because climate risk is investment risk." — BlackRock CEO Larry Fink***

actions carry huge potential influence on how corporations think about their responsibilities to shareholders, with positive effects on the climate, workers *and* investors. Although the concepts are not new—such investments have been available for some time—the amount of assets that BlackRock controls will demand attention.

BlackRock's CEO Larry Fink issued two public letters on January 14, one to corporations (who want their shares to be in BlackRock funds) and one to individual investors. Both letters are currently on the homepage BlackRock.com, or found by searching 'larry fink

term prospects." His assertion that "the evidence on climate risk is compelling investors to reassess core assumptions about modern finance", because "climate risk is investment risk" challenges the notion that the only goal is to maximize shareholders' financial return.

As corporations recognize and incorporate these realities, "In the near future ... there will be a significant reallocation of capital." Therefore, "[BlackRock's] investment conviction is that sustainability- and climate-integrated portfolios can provide better risk-adjusted returns to investors" and "sustainable investing is the strongest foundation for client



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Many already operate this way, and it is those companies that are available in existing SRI investments that Tyler has been working with. Fink is stating that more must be done, and more CEOs must operate similarly.

## TO SHAREHOLDERS:

Titled “Sustainability as BlackRock’s New Standard for Investing”, the letter acknowledges that “more and more of our clients have focused on the impact of sustainability on their portfolios.” That is a signal that shareholder activism has worked! Fink again names climate change as the most significant component of sustainability. To their credit, BlackRock is a signatory to the UN’s “Principles for Responsible Investment” and recently joined “Climate Action 100+”—a group of investors committed to the goals of the Paris Agreement. They have been criticized for too often going along with management in the past, but will be “increasingly disposed to vote against management when companies have not made sufficient progress.”

Fink says BlackRock will design future portfolios by incorporating sus-

tainability as a critical foundation. Tyler says that they are catching up to existing SRI funds, but importantly they are bringing scale. BlackRock will be creating new investment options, and more of their existing funds will become more sustainable. More choices mean more access for investors, while pushing the entire marketplace forward.

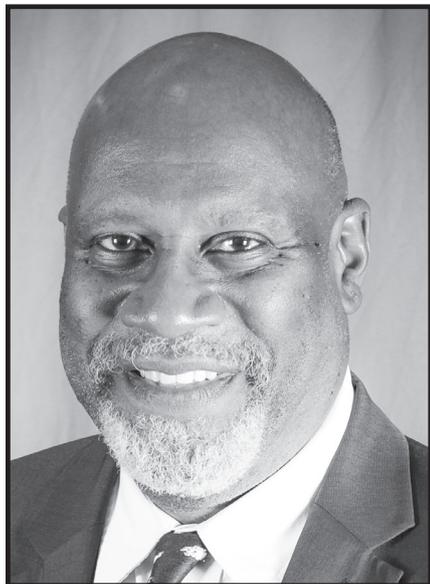
Fink acknowledges a couple of areas where their efforts fall short, while framing them as a positive where possible: Many of their larger funds (similar to Vanguard, T Rowe Price, etc.) utilize indexes/passive investing. Tyler said these funds have lower expenses because investment selection is automated rather than paying experts to make individual buy/sell decisions; they have become very popular. Many existing indexes represent an entire investable universe; and if an index contains fossil fuel companies, a corresponding fund must include them. BlackRock will work with index providers to provide better options, catching up with Calvert and others who have such passive funds. For BlackRock’s active investments, they will exclude high-risk

industries and Fink has committed to decrease their holdings of fossil fuels—particularly thermal coal—not only for moral reasons, but from their view as a sensible financial decision.

Critics point out that BlackRock could have committed to much more. In many ways, Tyler says, they are doing the same as existing (but smaller) funds, while pushing companies in their portfolio to do better. Tyler gave another example: Total BlackRock holdings (on behalf of individual investors) amount to almost 7 percent each of Chevron and Exxon Mobil, while many SRI funds exclude them entirely. It will take time for BlackRock to decrease those shares. They can have proportionate influence in the meantime via shareholder voting, and that may provide sufficient rationale for CEOs and banks to change their priorities beyond tomorrow’s stock price.

*To learn more about Tyler, including his SRI practice and full contact information, go to [MainquistSRI.com](http://MainquistSRI.com), email [tmainquist@aicinvest.com](mailto:tmainquist@aicinvest.com), or call 402-423-4022.*

# Real Change in a Rigged System



*A'Jamal-Rashad Byndon*

Many in the Omaha African American community are concerned with the resurgent levels of white supremacy, hate crimes, and raw racism on the local as well as national level. In the past few months, the conduct of Omaha Fire Department Union President Steve LeClair in publicly making a series of racial comments has drawn the attention of State Senator Ernie Chambers and others and put a lot of African Americans on edge. If a publicly funded organ such as a fire department can have a union president behaving in such a racist fashion, what else is going on within the ranks of that organization? Throughout my life, there have been racist incidents involving both the police and fire departments. Those are noted in the public record and in a 2012 letter sent to United States Attorney Deborah R. Gilg from Omaha community members such as Willie Hamilton, UNO Criminal Justice Professor Sam Walker and Nebraskans for Peace Omaha Coordinator Mark Welsch.

Meanwhile, how are we addressing these ongoing situations? Who is

watching the watchdog? It has been over 14 years since Omaha had its first and only public safety auditor, Tristan Bonn, providing any semblance of law enforcement accountability for a racial and general complaints process within those respective departments. She was hired in 2000 and fired in 2006 for so-called “insubordinate” and “unprofessional” behavior for releasing a 28-page report criticizing the Omaha Police Department for traffic stops, without the approval of the mayor. Meanwhile, each year, state law requires the State of Nebraska to release records of law enforcement stops of various racial groups and people of color who are stopped for trivial reasons and at disproportionate rates compared to white drivers. These reports are not worth the paper they printed on if we’re not using them to show law enforcement that people of color—and particularly African Americans—are not being treated fairly.

Despite repeated lip service, the Omaha public safety auditor position was never filled, and we have racial oppression history repeating itself. Tristan Bonn tried for years to regain her job but could not, because the so-called anti-discrimination agencies were toothless in ensuring that she was afforded due process. She subsequently ended up working for her brother for a number of years in Omaha, and then she moved to Denver and finally passed away. However, there have been at least five major incidents since the elimination of that position where that auditor position could have helped bring closure for the African American community and others and improved police-community relations.

As it stands, we have resorted back to an ‘internal affairs’ accountability process, which is akin to ‘no affairs’ because the public is not allowed to see that those bad apples are held accountable. For example, there is a weekly public meeting in Omaha called “360”.

It is frequently cited as an example of the community working together. However, this weekly group only meets on Wednesdays for one hour from 2:00-3:00 p.m. The meeting portion on law enforcement consists largely of briefings on crimes and high-profile incidents like shootings or murders—a disproportionate number of which occur in North Omaha. The group is comprised of some of the nicest and kindest participants who can get to this middle-of-the-workday, non-evaluated meeting because it is a part of their job, or because they are retired with flexible schedules. Meanwhile, in this allotted hour, there is little in the way of conversation about exploring new, progressive initiatives and assigning responsibility to actually provide real police and community engagement.

To repeat, there too few professionals who have systematically addressed the disproportionate number of African Americans in the criminal justice system in Douglas County and the state. I am repeatedly asked about studies and data, but there is too little research about racial issues and incidents to try to identify best practices and compare with other jurisdictions. How can we change this paradigm? One would be to hire a person who has a passion for racial justice to work in these respective departments—and that person must have constant contact with African Americans who are most affected by the criminal justice system. Here are three topics crying out for attention:

1) Years ago, PromiseShip (formerly known as the Nebraska Families Collaborative) was challenged regarding the high level of children of color being snatched from their homes without preventative intervention. After a few focus meetings and annual surveys in the community to talk about those racial issues, the organization moved on to business as usual. Meanwhile, the children and families of color continue to make up an

# Petition to Representative Adrian Smith

Several times Third District citizens have gathered at your Grand Island office site to protest the way you have voted on a number of issues. We were there again on Saturday, Jan. 4th. We have made it clear in previous meetings with you or your staff, that we consider President Trump as dangerous to world peace and our constitution. This time we are even more alarmed by the action of a President that seems to think he is the 'font' of superior knowledge and judgement. To have taken the action to murder an Iranian official without proper consultation with any elected congressional official and against the better judgement of many of our military officials, demonstrates his continued arrogance to avoid consultation with knowledgeable officials.

Trump has ignited an atmosphere of violence and war that will set off more bombings, fighting and military actions. He had already angered Democrats and the peace communities by pulling troops out of Kurdish territories—our most valued allies in the fight against terrorists. What a stupid move that was, and this assassination is even worse. What distresses us even more is you and your Republican colleagues being unwilling to confront the President on these and his illegal actions. Our group is grateful that the House voted to impeach the president, but you cowardly chose to vote against that action. Most of us feel that Trump is an egomaniac, pathological liar and hypocritical individual who is systematically ignoring the constitution and the traditions of our country. His speech and demeanor at the rallies he holds encourages violence, and that ought to be enough to scare any sensible person and voter.

Consequently we are back protesting at your office again and may continue gracing your building if we don't see some change in your understanding of the issues and vote differently. I am dropping off a sign one of our Saturday protestors made for the gathering with the names autographed by those participating. No one had a clean sheet of paper to sign, but on looking at the sign, we thought the message was better than any paper would be. We will be watching your vote on this issue and others. Maybe you could push the Senate to consider several bills that body is allowing to set idle because Senator McConnell will not bring them to the floor for debate. The Democratic majority House was able to handle the impeachment process and still do the work of the people. Suppose the Republican majority Senate could do the same?

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# HARD TRUTH, conclusion

are 'retired' but continue to farm.

Seventy percent of all U.S. farmers are officially at high risk of financial failure, according to the USDA. Since the mid-1990s at least, U.S. farm families generally earned ten percent or less of total income through farm activities. Rank and file farmers and ranchers (who produce commodities like grain, soybeans, dairy and animals for slaughter), unlike producers in almost every other sector of the economy, cannot set the price for what they produce—the pivotal hard truth that you MUST wrap your head around.

Conventional ag producers cannot even count on cost of production. This is because farmers and ranchers in the U.S. and around the world are legion relative to just three or four multinational buyers who in 2020 enjoy almost complete monopolies—and therefore enormous global wealth and power. Food processors post obscene earnings (20-25 percent relative to investments, according to *Forbes*) many years, and have for decades. They can AFFORD to pay farmers and ranchers a fair price, but when nobody makes them do it, these multinational corporations figure, why bother?

Fully a third of all ag product in the U.S. is under contract, and the hard truth is that figure will likely rise. Captive supply is to the grain and meat trade what compound interest is to financiers. The longer the processor can own and control the product, the more profit they take. In the 1990s, Congress passed market reforms meant to strengthen producers' position in the marketplace, COOL (country of origin labeling) and bans on packers' feeding and/or ownership of animals for slaughter, which have now fallen to relentless pressure from processors.

The hard truth is the corporations WOULD own the farms and ranches, but they don't want to—or they would already. They don't want to pay property taxes, in my opinion, and they don't want to take the risks that farmers and ranchers take. Processors love frozen boxed beef and white flour because these keep almost forever,

and the food giants have sold most U.S. consumers on a diet that features both. Serfdom, like the plague of tyrants, never really goes away.

Conquistadors, corporate beaver men and other pirates came seeking gold, hides and slaves and other movable wealth for the glory of kings and God, but millions after millions of landless peasants made their passage to the New World for the wealth that never moves—which is to say the land.

The family farm is the Jeffersonian ideal. If people make a decent living off their own land, Jefferson reasoned, they will better be able to resist the tyrants who are bound to rise. The farm/labor coalition that gave FDR his power to rein in winner-take-all capitalism showed how Jefferson was right. Accordingly, after WWII the grain and meat processors made it Job One to "squeeze the excess farm population off the land", and have lobbied relentlessly after farm policies to do just that. Between 1945 and 1950, the number of U.S. farms declined from 5,800,000 to 5,300,000, nearly 9 percent. In January 2020, one thousand U.S. ranches A MONTH are going out of business.

The GOP, which carries water for Cargill, Smithfield and the like, has systematically stripped all market power from producers and bet the farm on exports—a decades-long failure on every count. Exports of U.S. ag product, with few exceptions, have remained flat for 30 years.

The next decade will determine the fate of the country's family farms, not least because the generations are aging out, very many with no successors who can or want to farm, so widespread transfer of land ownership happens next.

Corn farming is not going away. In fact, one of the fastest ways to mitigate carbon is by ramping up biofuels by a factor of ten. Today, ethanol production uses more than a third of the U.S. corn crop. Ethanol replaces fossil fuel and its poisonous additives, adds no new carbon to the atmosphere and creates prosperity in rural America, especially where production is by farmer-owned

cooperatives.

I wish I could tell you that switchgrass is the next big thing, but it's not. Switchgrass is a low-density crop, compared to the energy powerhouse that is corn which makes four times the fuel per acre as switchgrass. Transportation logistics alone almost make such crops as switchgrass non-starters. I have hope that some sharp folks will figure out a way to make cedar into biofuel, perhaps by gasification.

Hemp, by contrast, has all kinds of economic potential, which I have no space to detail here, is drought tolerant and vigorous in even poor soils. A pending plan—for regulating industrial hemp production in Nebraska—appears to be a recipe for corporate concentration, with fewer than 300 licensed growers, less than 50 processors and a dozen or so retailers. This industry seems ripe to me for the 'free trade' treatment. The more families growing this crop the merrier.

Best case scenario, people wake up. You can't serve your family a \$5 Costco roasted chicken and in good conscience call yourself an environmentalist. I don't care HOW busy you are or how PC your voting record is. If you WANT a sustainable future for ag, you need to pay attention to what you eat, who raises it and how, to help create the best case scenario for the land and the life it supports—wildlife, consumers and all.

Without food security, peace is not possible, as Nebraskans for Peace has testified down the decades. Agroecology is the new buzz word for best practices—beginning with rebuilding soils and no-till cropping, protecting water and wetlands, widespread tree planting, grassland preservation, pasturing animals on crops—which together with the new 'farm to table' and 'buy local movements', though niches today, are building markets to the degree that consumers have decent income and take an interest.

Public policies that will shape the best outcome for U.S. agriculture include enforcing Packers and Stockyards and anti-trust laws, and passing "McNary-Haugen", a

# Real Change, conclusion

exceedingly high number in that cottage industry.

2) Some suggest we should have mandatory ‘diversity courses’ to improve our cultural IQ. Yet, in reviewing the courses out there, there appears to be no accreditation body testing the effectiveness of the course content and evaluating whether a racist person is experiencing a shift in their attitude and behavior. When I was providing the cultural humility and anti-racism training for four years at PromiseShip, I was astonished at the lack of knowledge white students had on the “Indian Child Welfare Act” and other racial, educational concepts. For example, in the UNO Criminal Justice Department, there is an academic course on gangs. Is it merely a ‘dog-whistle’ course where faculty and students are allowed to attack and deconstruct youth of color? In light of the dramatic reporting of hate crimes, why aren’t there courses on the growth of the white supremacy movement within the community? For years, the UNO Grace Abbott School of Social Work used to have an introductory-level course on racism. Did anyone compile data on the outcome of that course? Do we know if it had any positive effect?

With the resurgence in openly professed racism that has paralleled the

presidency of Donald Trump, you’ve got to know we’re backsliding as a country. There is less motivation now to question the inherent white privilege mentality that runs amok through our culture and institutional hierarchy than there’s been in decades.

About six months ago, I had the privilege to participate in ‘cultural humility training’ with local law enforcement. I was shocked by a few of the comments made regarding people of color and, in particular, about African Americans by top law administrative folks. I did agree not to give or link specific names to the comments. Fast forward though and we have Omaha Firefighters Union President Steve LeClair, who was given a clean bill of health by a white law school-educated arbitrator in spite of the highly publicized comments he made about an African American woman. Yet, when I use terms such as ‘racism’, ‘white fragility’, ‘white privilege’, and other terms of cultural education, I am frequently admonished for my what is labeled divisive and demeaning language.

3) The UNO School of Criminology and Criminal Justice allowed one person to become an adjunct professor who was arrested for prostitution in June 2016 and dismissed from Boys Town. Still, UNO

can’t seem to hire African American males who are Afrocentric to advocate for reforms in the local criminal justice system on behalf of the African American community. As a community, we should all want restorative justice and forgiveness for those who are charged. However, for many who are African Americans, we are forever painted by a racist system that does not afford us the same rights. We need, accordingly, discerning people of color who can hold the University of Nebraska and Creighton University Law Schools, the judicial system, and the Omaha Fire and Police Departments to standards of fairness. It is not an accident that African Americans constitute a minute percentage of the state population numbers, but a wildly disproportionate ratio of the corrections population and the child welfare intervention cases.

Real change requires astute community members being at the tables and not the ‘yes folks’ who see it as their job to support incompetence, classism (elitism), and racism. Let’s change this rigged system. Let’s create some authentic accountability. And let’s hold law enforcement officials to the high standards that they hold many of the African Americans to in our community and state by siphoning us into the criminal justice hole.

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farm bill making it illegal to sell ag product for under cost of production. (Pending since FDR. Not going to happen, but a gal can hope).

We need to work at the state and local level on important issues as well. State legislatures can make policy in default of national leadership on the environment, on economic development and citizen and consumer protections. Nebraska could create incentives, not just for companies based on how many people they hire, but for any operation—farm or ranch to table—involved in providing food eaten in Nebraska.

Ask your Congressional delegation to

strengthen the “Renewable Fuel Standard”, to support wind and solar energy production and pay landowners to sequester carbon through a carbon credit market (so-called carbon cap and trade). The RFS needs to ramp up to E30, being tested currently in NE State Patrol vehicles, and to E85 within the decade. Incentives for energy farming of wind and solar need support likewise.

Most of the land in this country that is not owned by the federal government is owned by families who live and depend on that land, and who therefore care for that land in all senses of the word—they

are good stewards to the extent that their hearts cleave to that place on Earth, that unique and entirely specific piece of ground and sky. I reason that the land is safer from despoiling and degradation if that land is in the hands of many many families than if it were owned and controlled by ever fewer multinational corporations like almost every sector of activity on the planet.

Want a sustainable food future? Vote for Progressives. Consume mindfully. Use biofuels in your vehicles. Plant a garden. Read labels. Buy local. Join a union. Join a cooperative.

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# HARD TRUTH

*by Sally Herrin*

## Down in the Dumps down on the Farm

This is the hardest column I have ever tried to write. Tasked with creating a roadmap from the current unsustainabilities of much of U.S. agriculture to the sustainable systems the planet WILL have—OR ELSE—I find I am forlorn. By which I mean, I am already sad.

The family farm in this country is like the honeybee, which a puzzled scientist is said to have “proved” unable to fly. The family farm is a virtual anachronism, and yet some two million such operations abide.

The economic realities do not pencil out. Family farming cannot fly, but somehow it does. And like the honeybee, family farming in the U.S. may soon go extinct.

“Most U.S. farms are small; small farms operate over half of U.S. farmland but account for 26 percent of production.” So says the USDA. Just 2 percent of U.S. farms are non-family farms, that is “partnerships of unrelated partners, closely held nonfamily corporations, farms with a hired operator unrelated to the owners,

and (relatively few) publicly held corporations.” Today, most ag land—farms and ranches—is owned by about two million family producers.

The lion’s share (almost 40 percent) of agricultural product value is produced by about 50,000 ‘big farmers’, with gross cash farm income (GCFI) over \$1 million. Most family farms have a GCFI under a half million dollars annually. Over 40 percent have off-farm income, almost 31 percent report under \$150 thousand GCFI, and 10 percent