



Nebraska Report

There is no Peace without Justice

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Is the UNO Afghan Center Violating University Policy?

by Paul A. Olson
UNL Foundation Professor

It is a truth not to be denied that a prairie university short on state tax money must be in search of federal dollars. This includes the \$50-plus million given to UNO for Afghan texts. Local newspapers, the White House, and national pundits have praised the UNO's Afghan Center's creation of textbooks for Afghanistan (from 1986-1994; in revised form after 9/11; and through other outlets from 1994-2002) under a U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) grant. In fact UNO's efforts in the 1986-94 texts and to a lesser degree in the 2002 ones, in my view, violate the heart of university values: commitment to truth, to equality, to separation of religion and state, and to education's power to counter violence.

The University of Nebraska has not been true to itself. First, the law prohibits using tax funds to promote specific religions. Second, the University of Nebraska's Affirmative Action policy prohibits discrimination against women, and professional and university guidelines, including those of the national American Association of University Professors, require that university personnel teach the truth as they know it. Finally, university codes forbid recourse to disruption or violence (Regents By-Law 4.1). The anti-female texts produced by UNO between 1986 and 1994 as well as the scrubbed texts teaching Islam produced since 9/11 violate the university's rules and values.

To turn to the religious issues and taxes: the *Washington Post* (3/23/02) indicates that the post-9/11 textbooks for the new Afghanistan feature Koranic verses and

teach Islamic tenets. Since tax funds were used to create the materials, they appear to violate separation of religion and state laws. They also apparently violate the requirement that AID-funded organizations certify that "tax dollars will not be used to advance religions or for religious indoctrination." AID and the White House admit the Islam in the UNO texts but say that "their primary purpose is to educate children... a secular activity." Both the ACLU and Americans United for the Separation of Church and State say that the White House-AID claim is without merit. AID has hidden its role in the most recent books by removing its logo and references to the U.S.

The U.S. has criticized the Afghani schools for their "fanaticism and bigotry." Yet, Nebraskans now are teaching Islam through these texts. As a practicing Lutheran, I do not believe that tax dollars should be used to pay for Lutheran indoctrination. I believe the same about tax dollars and Islamic indoctrination.

Women's issues and University of Nebraska rules: The texts have now been scrubbed to eliminate the text's 1986-94 assumption, inserted to please the mujahedin and the Taliban, that women are second-class citizens, not to be educated (*Chicago Tribune*, 4/25/2002). The Taliban edited out the texts' pro-democracy content and

stopped UNO plans to educate teachers for women. The acceptance of the inferiority of Afghan women was included while the university was making public Affirmative Action commitments, and all serious scholarship knows that women are equal to men.

Violence and university precepts (Regents By-Law 4.1): Some local stories have represented the texts as offering little harmless arithmetic problems: what are two guns plus two guns? But the incitements are bolder. For example, this appears in a 1986-1994 era text:

• "A Kalashnikov bullet travels at 800 meters per second. A mujahed has the forehead of a Russian in his sights 3200 meters away. How many seconds will it take the bullet to hit the Russian's forehead?"

• Or "A group of mujahedin kill 178 out of 3560 enemy soldiers in battle. What percentage of the enemy have they killed?". These examples come from fourth grade Nebraska-created textbooks (*Washington Post*, 3/23/02)

• One Afghan educator describes the texts' pictures as "horrendous to school students" with the "texts even much worse." A 100 page book contains 43 pages of violence intended to "stimulate" in the children "resistance against invaders?"

• Some sources report an intense recruit-

ment of child soldiers during the Taliban period and another associates the violence-touting texts with child soldier recruitment

Though the gun-toting and anti-female content of 1986-94 has been scrubbed (at least, an effort has been made), the religious content remains. The old content violates the University of Nebraska's announced policies and contributes its part to Afghan culture's violence, fanaticism and female repression. Our soldiers now die to destroy these in Afghanistan.

We have laws about the separation of religion and state, commitments to gender equality, and rules about educational violence and disruption. We need to enforce these. It will not do to say that the Taliban and mujahedin wanted bad texts or that the university gave them control over the content. We are intellectually responsible for what we sign on to do. If the Board of Regents does not act to stop the production of these materials or disavow their content, then perhaps groups concerned with women's rights, church-state separation, and peace and justice will issue legal challenges.

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Nebraskans for Peace

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Latin America Briefs

compiled by Sarah Disbrow



Coup-for-a-Day in Venezuela

A conspiracy to overthrow Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez began on April 11 and lasted barely 48 hours. By the time the White House gave the military coup its speedy acceptance, Hugo Chavez was back in power. An official in the Chavez government, Guillermo Garcia Ponce, blamed the coup plot on dissident generals, the local media, and anti-Chavez groups in the United States. The newly installed President-for-a-Day Pedro Carmona had time only to dissolve the national assembly and the supreme court before his actions sparked massive demonstrations by Venezuela's poor and the swift condemnation of Latin American heads of state, who said they would not recognize an unelected government. The military finally rallied around Chavez and returned him to the palace.

Bush's Bay of Piglets

Behind the botched attempt to oust Venezuelan's President Chavez in April are the usual U.S. suspects: Eliot Abrams, Otto Reich, John Negroponte, and Rogelio Pardo-Maurer—Bush appointees with a long history of covert meddling in Latin America. Eliot Abrams is senior director of the National Security Council for Democracy, Human Rights, and International Operations, and as such, a crucial figure in the coup. Abrams was convicted for withholding information during the Iran-Contra investigation and was later pardoned by George Bush Sr.

Another White House insider, right-wing Cuban-American Otto Reich, is now assistant secretary for Western Hemisphere affairs. He "calls the shots in Latin America—almost literally," as one reporter wrote after the attempted coup. Reich began to receive visits at the White House several months ago by Venezuelans plotting the coup, including Pedro Carmona Estanga, the businessman who was installed as president for 48 hours. OAS sources say the coup was discussed in some detail, "right down to its timing and chances of success, which were deemed to be excellent." Reich was in phone contact with the coup leaders on the morning of the attempted takeover, according to the April 17 *New York Times*, which gave the impression that he was "stage-managing the takeover."

Also in the loop was John Negroponte, now U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. Negroponte was Reagan's ambassador to Honduras from 1981 to 1985 when a U.S.-trained death squad, Battalion 3-16, tortured and murdered dozens of activists. According to a diplomatic source, Negroponte had been "informed that there might be some movement in Venezuela on Chavez" at the beginning of the year. In the Pentagon, the man overseeing Latin America is Rogelio Pardo-Maurer, who was the aide to the head of the Contras during the U.S.-backed war against the elected Sandinista government in Nicaragua.

Two of the Venezuelan military who supported the coup, General Efrain Vasquez and General Eddie Ramirez Poveda, are graduates of the notorious U.S. Army School of the Americas. According to a British newspaper, the media mogul who led the media blitz that preceded the coup and whose television station announced it, Gustavo Cisneros, is an old fishing buddy of Bush senior.

U.S. Agency May Have Bankrolled Venezuelan Coup

The State Department's human rights bureau is investigating whether one or more recipients of U.S.-government money actively plotted against President Chávez. The United States channeled hundreds of thousands of dollars in grants to American and Venezuelan groups opposed to President Hugo Chávez through the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a nonprofit agency created and funded by Congress. The NED quadrupled its budget for Venezuela to more than \$877,000 this year as the movement to overthrow Chavez gathered force. The bureau has put on hold a \$1 million congressional grant to the endowment pending a review (excerpted from *The New York Times*, 4/25/02). Historically, the right-wing NED has played a leading role in subverting elected leftist governments in Latin America. It helped coordinate the political campaign against the elected Sandinista government in Nicaragua.

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Thousands Protest U.S. Military Policy in Washington

by Cindy Asrir

On April 19-22, more than 100,000 demonstrators converged in Washington, protesting U.S. military policy, the IMF/World Bank and the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people. Joining them were four Nebraskans for Peace supporters: Nathan Abold, Cindy Asrir, Tony Brittain and Jason Nord.

I have just returned from Washington, carrying with me the energy of four intense days of protests, rallies, marches and demonstrations against the World Bank and the IMF, the School of the Americas (known to many as the “School of Assassins”), the U.S.-funded Colombian military, the so-called “War on Terrorism,” and the state-supported repression of the Palestinian people by the Israeli military. The protests were a call to drop arms, a call to stop the bombing and killing of innocent people, a call to peace. But they were also a cry for justice, a wake-up call to the American people to end the silence and complacency, a desperate plea to stop the misery caused by unjust governments and corporations, and a fierce, defiant scream that we are fed up with the oppressive abuse of power. Between the drumbeats, the marching, the dancing, shouting, sitting, praying, singing, hugging, parading, banner carrying, flag waving, hand holding, fist raising, anger, love and solidarity of more than 100,000 people, there was the energy and expectation of change—a movement of peace and justice that is growing quickly and powerfully and will not be stopped. It was incredible and it was exhilarating.

Because of the recent and ongoing violence in the Middle East, much of the weekend’s attention was focused on the Israeli-Palestinian situation. Like many people, it is a situation that I thought I knew quite a bit about, yet like many people, it was something I hadn’t done anything about. Perhaps I didn’t want to know how terrible it really is. Perhaps I didn’t know what I could do. Perhaps it just seemed like another depressing item in the news, another overwhelming issue calling me to further divide my limited time and resources. But after taking place in a Palestinian solidarity march on Saturday morning, I knew my world had changed. I had gained a new perspective, new energy and new inspiration to educate myself and commit myself to do what I can to stop the systematic repression of the Palestinian people. Because that is what it is. And our government is footing the bill.

During the four-hour march from Dupont Circle to the Washington monument on Saturday, carrying a makeshift sign that read “Palestinians need a home too,” we were surrounded by Muslim youths draped in liberation scarves and carrying Palestinian

flags, older Hasidic Jews in black with Borsalino hats, glasses and long curled *payes* marching arm-in-arm with those Muslim youths, Black Bloc anarchists with gas masks, peace activists with banners, puppets, doves and drums, and people of all ages, races and genders in all sorts of clothing with all sorts of signs doing all sorts of things. There were signs for the Mobilization for Global Justice, the April 20th Mobilization to Stop the War at Home and Abroad, International ANSWER (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism), ACT UP!, the Colombia Mobilization, the Green Party, the Women in Black, Gays and Lesbians United Against the War, and a hundred other peace groups from around the country. There were signs that said, “News flash: Arabs are Semites,” “Peace is Patriotic” and “Rocks vs. F-16s, Who’s the Terrorist?” There were signs that said “Justice Not War,” “Palestinian Statehood Now,” “U.S. Out of the Middle East,” “Drop Debt Not Bombs,” “Stop the War,” and “War Without End, Not in Our Name.” There were chants of “No Justice, No Peace,” “No Freedom, No Peace,” “End the Occupation Now,” and “Free, Free Palestine.” It was an electrifying afternoon—the largest anti-war march in more than a decade and one that many said was more energetic than the anti-war protest against the Gulf War in ’91. We were in the middle of it all—Saturday during the marches, Sunday at the rally on the Mall, Monday during the demonstration against AIPAC (the American Israel Public Affairs Committee)—arm in arm, marching and chanting in solidarity with fellow protestors from around the world. And on Monday evening when tension mounted between the police and the protestors, we helped erect a blockade, shouting and chanting, but also negotiating with District of Columbia Chief of Police Ramsey, firm in both our convictions and our commitment to nonviolence.

So what is it that we and thousands of others were protesting? What grievances do we have against the U.S. and Israeli military? For one thing, the Israeli government is committing horrific atrocities and human rights violations in the name of President Bush’s “War on Terrorism.” They have violated the Fourth Geneva Convention, UN Security Council resolutions, and various covenants and protocols of international law. These activities are financed and protected by the U.S. government, which provided \$84.8 billion in military aid to Israel between 1949 and 1998. The Bush Administration supports Ariel Sharon, the infamous “Butcher of Beirut” known for being personally responsible for the deaths of thousands of Palestinians. The American media also presents biased pro-Israeli coverage which doesn’t report all of the facts. And though the government of Israel

has created “journalist-free zones” in many of the refugee camps in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip making it difficult to access information and find what exactly is going on, there are some things we do know.

We know, for example, that on April 3, the Israeli Defense Force invaded the Jenin refugee camp and began a massive attack with tanks and artillery. According to the United Nations’ Human Rights Watch and media reports from around the world, whole families were buried in rubble as troops beat, humiliated and killed men, women and children. The men in the camp were forced to

have experienced—some many, many times—the Israeli army breaking into the home, beating relatives, destroying things. Many were beaten themselves, had bones broken, were shot, tear gassed, or had these things happen to siblings and neighbors...

Conversely, the Palestinian people have no organized military. Except for the impoverished intifada, they are almost defenseless. Their infrastructure systematically destroyed by the Israeli government, their health in peril, their lives eroded and their families and land taken away



The international peace network “Women In Black,” which was founded in Israel in 1988, participated in the April protests. The signs in the photo read “Sharon has brought shame on Israel,” “I am Jewish—AIPAC does NOT speak for me” and “End the Occupation.”

surrender or be executed, and once they surrendered, they were forced to strip, be photographed for IDs, and remain in their underwear, handcuffed and blindfolded for days. They were beaten and used as human shields. Their camp and many other camps were blocked off without access to food, water, electricity or medical care. Ambulances were not allowed to reach dying people and ambulance drivers were arrested so that medical care was virtually impossible.

Unfortunately, this isn’t just happening in Jenin but in Ramallah, Nablus, Bethlehem, and all over Gaza and the West Bank. Thousands are dying at the hands of the fourth-largest army in the world funded by the richest and most powerful country in the world. And many more are suffering physical and emotional abuse. As Dr. Samir Quote wrote in *The Journal of Palestinian Studies*:

“You have to remember that ninety percent of children two years old or more

from them, they have little means left of resistance. So they do whatever they can, by whatever means, however desperately.

But they tell us we can help. We can stop this war. Not all of us will be able to go to the West Bank and help out with food or medicine or sit in the camps and drink tea with the refugees like the courageous women I met from a Michigan peace group, not all of us can go to Washington to march. But we can show our support and solidarity with the Palestinians by contacting our government officials to stop all U.S. aid to Israel and to demand immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces from land that has been illegally occupied since 1967. We can join the international community in putting pressure on President Bush to cut off military aid to Israel and stop the systematic repression of the Palestinian people. Together we can fuel a movement for peace and social justice—not just for Palestine, but for all of us.

Assuming an Aggressive Posture

The Bush Administration's "Nuclear Posture Review"

by Leo Sartori

NFP member Leo Sartori is a former UNL Professor of Physics and Political Science. He was the Senior Advisor for the Carter Administration at the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) in Geneva, Switzerland.

The Bush Administration's Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), which became public a few weeks ago, is causing grave apprehension among our allies as well as in the arms control community. The president appears to have abandoned a basic principle that has guided American nuclear strategy for nearly 50 years.

A brief historical review is in order. During the Cold War, American nuclear strategy was directed almost exclusively against the Soviet Union. After the Soviets had developed their own nuclear capability, it was quickly realized that a nuclear war between the U.S. and the USSR would very likely result in mutual annihilation, no matter who started it; the emphasis therefore shifted to deterrence as the cornerstone of U.S. nuclear policy. The principal purpose of our nuclear arsenal would henceforth be to deter a Soviet nuclear attack against us or our allies, by threatening a devastating retaliation.

The possible use of American nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states was considered on at least two occasions during the 1950s. A proposal to use nuclear weapons was presented to President Truman during the Korean War but was firmly rejected by Truman. In 1953, with Dwight Eisenhower in the presidency, the threat to use nuclear weapons was used, apparently with some success, to break the deadlock in the Korean armistice talks.

Hints were dropped through the U.S. embassy in Moscow as well as through Indian prime minister Pandit Nehru that in the absence of satisfactory progress, the United States intended to "move decisively without inhibitions in our use of weapons, and would no longer be responsible for confining hostilities to the Korean peninsula." (For more on this episode, see *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* by Lawrence Freedman, (2d ed.) New York: St. Martin's press, pp 84-85.) This was a thinly veiled threat that nuclear weapons might be used against the Chinese forces that were aiding North Korea, and perhaps against China itself. The Chinese and Koreans must have gotten the message, for shortly afterward the stalemate in the negotiations was broken.

Whether the nuclear threat was a serious one or only a bluff is unclear, however.

During the spring of 1954, the State Department and the Pentagon gave serious consideration to the use of tactical nuclear weapons to help the French, who were losing their struggle against the indigenous communist forces in Vietnam. A plan was formulated to drop three small nuclear bombs on the Vietminh forces that were besieging the French garrison at Dien Bien Phu. Eisenhower emphatically rejected the proposal; he is quoted as saying: "You boys must be crazy. We can't use these awful things against Asians for the second time in less than ten years. My God." (In his 1990 biography *Eisenhower*, however, historian Steven Ambrose notes that Eisenhower's views on the use of tactical nuclear weapons were ambiguous. In a March

weapons against non-nuclear "rogue states". Explicitly mentioned in the NPR as potential targets are Libya, Syria, Iraq, Iran, and North Korea, as well as nuclear powers Russia and China. This represents a significant shift in U.S. policy. The "nuclear threshold" has been substantially lowered.

What is the rationale for the change in policy? The President presumably hopes that fear of nuclear retaliation will dissuade Saddam Hussein or any other leader of a rogue state from using chemical or biological weapons against us. This is not a totally spurious argument. Saddam is not a martyr; he has a strong instinct for self-preservation. Most analysts believe that he was deterred from putting chemical warheads on the Scud missiles he launched against Israel during the Gulf War, primarily by fear of an Israeli

club is bound to have destabilizing consequences.

A second element of the NPR that has caused concern is its reference to Russia as a potential future target of U.S. nuclear weapons. Although Russia is now a friendly state, there is no guarantee that that state of affairs will continue indefinitely. We must be prepared for the possibility that sometime down the road a government hostile to us will take power in Russia and gain control over the still formidable Russian nuclear arsenal. In that event, U. S. nuclear forces would once again have to play a deterrent role. All this is true, of course, but what is gained by saying so at the present time? We are engaged in delicate negotiations with the Russians, aimed at further reducing the many thousands of strategic nuclear weapons still possessed by both sides. This is probably the most important arms control objective at the present time and can only be undercut by the suggestion of a possible return to a hostile relationship. Hard-liners in Russia will argue that they ought to hold on to their nuclear weapons as a hedge against such a development.

Further complicating the prospects for reductions is the administration's plan to put nuclear weapons removed from deployment into storage, rather than destroying them. Since a weapon in storage can easily be returned to deployment, such a policy is not conducive to progress.

Finally, the NPR calls for development of new types of nuclear weapons that can be used against hardened or deeply buried targets. Such weapons were originally proposed during the Cold War in order to provide a capability to attack hardened Soviet missile silos. Their utility at the present time is questionable. Does the president intend to use them against suspected Iraqi stores of chemical or biological weapons?

Development of these new weapons would inevitably be followed by a demand from the Pentagon to test them, thus undercutting the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. The CTBT was finally achieved after decades of negotiation and is currently in force, but unfortunately the United States has not ratified it. We have been observing a voluntary moratorium on nuclear testing and have carried out no tests for a long time. An American test would put pressure on the Russians and perhaps on others to follow suit, and could unravel the entire CTBT regime.

Having already killed the ABM Treaty, the Bush Administration now seems to have trained its sights on other pillars of the arms control edifice.

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Leo Sartori

1953 press conference he said: "Where these things are used on strictly military targets and for strictly military purposes, I see no reason why they shouldn't be used exactly as you would use a bullet or anything else.")

During the Carter administration, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance publicly pledged that the United States would never use nuclear weapons against a non-nuclear weapon state, unless such a state were the ally of a nuclear-weapon state which used the weapons against us. The American commitment was considered an important contribution to non-proliferation policy. States that did not possess nuclear weapons would be less motivated to acquire them if they could be confident that they did not face the threat of nuclear attack from the United States. To be sure, the pledge had no legal standing and could be renounced at any time. Nonetheless, it had significant psychological impact.

A New President, A New Posture

The Vance pledge has now been repudiated by the Bush administration. Henceforth, the United States is prepared to use nuclear

nuclear retaliation. In the post-9/11 environment, I daresay that a substantial majority of the American public would favor using nuclear weapons in response to a large-scale chemical or biological attack.

Why then has the new Bush doctrine generated such concern? Critics argue that the United States, with its overwhelming military power, does not need nuclear weapons to deliver a devastating retaliation against any kind of attack by a rogue state. A terrorist group like Al Qaeda will, of course, not be deterred by a nuclear or any other retaliatory threat.

Nearly 57 years have passed since the first and only use of nuclear weapons in warfare. During that period a strong taboo against their use has evolved. Any action that tends to weaken that taboo is potentially dangerous. With India and Pakistan now acknowledged nuclear powers, the danger of nuclear war is greater than it has been for a long time. The American policy shift will weaken the non-proliferation regime, increasing the danger that nuclear weapons will eventually be used. States that have renounced the development of nuclear weapons may reconsider their decision. Any further expansion of the nuclear

STOP YUCCA TRUCKS

by John Krejci, Professor Emeritus
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15 people holding two-foot yellow and black letters in front of the National Capitol in Washington, D.C.—was one visual segment of the April 16 rally and lobby day opposing the dumping of nuclear waste in the Yucca Mountain cave. And the vocal segment still rings in my ears: “Stop Yucca Trucks, Stop Yucca Trucks.” I was accompanied in my lobbying efforts by fellow Nebraskan for Peace Joseth Moore and Sierra Club spokesperson, Jennifer States. We had the opportunity to visit aides of both Sen. Ben Nelson and Sen. Chuck Hagel.

We received a warm welcome and much encouragement from Sen. Nelson’s staffer, Scott McCullers. He was actually more knowledgeable on the issue than we were, having previously worked for one of the senators from Nevada who is opposing siting the facility in his home state. Sen. Hagel’s aide, however, was less knowledgeable and far from cordial; he barely feigned interest in our message.



Jennifer States of the Nebraska Sierra Club protesting the proposed nuclear waste shipments over I-80 in front of the National Capitol in Washington, D.C.

Although Sen. Hagel has been supportive of the Yucca Mountain plan, in a photo-op moment, he communicated to us that his mind was not completely closed on the issue and he was aware of new technologies that could make the shipping of 77,000 tons of high-level nuclear waste across Nebraska unnecessary. (See quotes from Kerrey editorial below.)

Briefly the arguments against the Yucca Mountain plan are:

- 1) The geology of the area is very unstable; it is very prone to earthquakes;
- 2) It is located above an aquifer which supplies water to neighboring farmland; and
- 3) Most importantly for Nebraskans, shipping nuclear waste by rail or truck on I-80 will make Nebraska a nuclear sewer for the next 30 years. Estimates are that every six hours a truck would be sent on its way to Yucca Mountain.

Before leaving for D.C., I spoke to several people casually here in the state on the dangers of the Yucca Mountain site. Their response was, “Well, we have to put it somewhere....” The NIMBY syndrome of better there than “in my back yard.” They obviously didn’t realize that Nebraska and I-80 would probably be the prime route to Nevada.

Shortly after I returned to Lincoln I was gratified to see the April 28 op-ed piece by former Sen. Bob Kerrey in the *Lincoln Journal Star*; it bore the headline, “Nuke waste storage problem requires national solution.” Allow me to quote liberally from it. It is the strongest and best reasoned position that I have read on the issue.

“Shipping radioactive waste across 43 states to Yucca Mountain is not just bad for Nevada, it’s bad for America. The Yucca Mountain site...is flawed because it won’t get nuclear waste out of America’s backyards but will increase the risks of radiation exposure to millions of Americans. IT IGNORES NEW TECHNOLOGIES THAT STORED WASTE CAN BE TREATED WITHOUT THE RISK OF



TRANSPORTING IT TO A SINGLE SITE.

“And the administration has failed to incorporate the dramatic change in the world since the decision was made to store high-level waste in a single site.

“Three key things have happened...First, Las Vegas, the fastest growing metropolitan area in the country, is today much closer to the Yucca Mountain site than it was 20 years ago. Second, technology to store and secure nuclear waste has improved significantly—which means that we do not have to face the serious risks...of moving 77,000 tons of radioactive waste...through half of America’s population. Third, since Sept. 11, we face a new reality of terror, and we cannot afford to create ten of thousands of targets for terrorists...

“Most striking is the Department of Energy’s decision not to publicize a viable, less risky alternative developed by a subsidiary of the nation’s largest nuclear utility company, Exelon Corp. In an agreement signed nearly two years ago, DOE agreed to take title to the spent fuel waste and own and operate dry storage facility on-site. It appears this safer and cheaper alternative to Yucca Mountain is now being ignored.

“Transporting nuclear waste across our country is an undertaking that every American concerned about our nation’s security should take very seriously. Sharing our highways with thousands of shipments is a disaster waiting to happen. An accident involving a truck with radioactive waste is a statistical certainty. Just as certain is the increased exposure to terrorism.

“DOE and outside experts both agree that accidents will happen... The government-approved casks, which have never

undergone rigorous full-scale testing, leak radiation and could become portable X-ray machines that cannot be turned off. This concern is not trivial either from a health or a liability standpoint.

“Most serious of all is that these shipments will be irresistible targets for terrorists. After Sept. 11...our elected leaders should not approve this plan unless they can guarantee the safety of these shipments. They cannot simply trust the DOE or the Nuclear Regulatory Agency who are still analyzing risks based on terrorist incidents from the 1970s and 1980s. Without proper security measures, these shipments could easily be used as a “dirty bomb.” It is imperative that an up-to-date plan is in place to prevent them from becoming low-grade nuclear weapons and that the cost of this plan be measured against the potential benefits of a single site.”

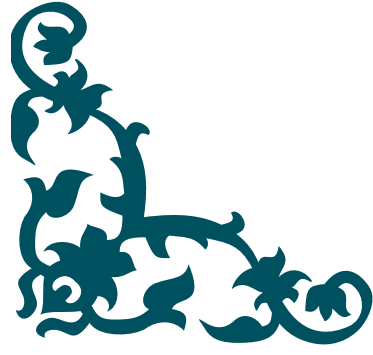
Former Sen. Kerrey concludes with a plea to our representatives not to move ahead without a comprehensive evaluation, and to be very wary of the present unsound and unsafe solution that will only lead to a worse problem in the future.

It is for us to learn about this issue. I refer you to the Public Citizen website: www.citizen.org/cmep, the Nuclear Information and Resource Service at www.nirs.org or www.atomicroadshow.org Write to Sens. Nelson and Hagel and alert them of the dangers and your concerns for Nebraska. Write or call today because the bill will come before the Senate in early June. And keep on the lookout for the mock nuclear casks that will be coming to your town early this summer courtesy of Public Citizen and other opponents of Yucca Mountain.

Big Business Honors State Senators on “Employee Appreciation Day”

Big Business took some time off from turning a profit April 10 to say “thank you” to all their employees in the Nebraska Unicameral who labored so tirelessly to spare LB 775 tax breaks from the budget knife during the state’s revenue crisis. In recognition of the meritorious service of these front-line workers in the “senatorial pool,” Nebraska’s Corporate Establishment hosted an “Employee Appreciation Day 2002” reception in the ~~corporate boardroom~~—er, Capitol Rotunda—complete with a commemorative cake (see photo at right). Thanks to the work of these entripid legislative employees, the 2002 Legislative session marked the 15th straight year that the State Treasury has been uninterruptedly plundered by LB 775 giveaways to the tune of better than \$1 billion. It was a moment Big Business will treasure, if not forever, for at least the next fiscal quarter.

The same corporate thieves (*well, we think they were the same—it was hard to tell with those nylon stockings over their heads*) who were observed carting wheelbarrows full of money out of the State Capitol and into a waiting limousine two years ago made a triumphal return—this time with a ‘Token Female’ in tow to serve the cake and refreshments—to formally present the “Employee Appreciation Day” proclamation (see below) and carry out more money. From a business point-of-view, it was a real party atmosphere, and a good time was had by all... unless of course you happen to be poor... live in rural Nebraska... teach, have kids or just plain care about K-12 and higher education... or have a basic sense of fair play that says the last people we should be sheltering during a \$220 million state budget crisis are the richest members of our society, while everyone else is having their services cut and their taxes raised.



Employee Appreciation Day 2002

*In Recognition of the Outstanding Efforts and Achievements of Our Employees
in the Political Division of Nebraska’s Corporate Establishment:*

The Nebraska Unicameral

That all may know and render honor, it is hereby proclaimed:

That the corporate employees of the Second Session of the 97th Legislature of the Nebraska Unicameral, in the faithful execution of their duties, performed meritorious service on behalf of the management and stockholders of the largest and wealthiest corporations doing business in our great state;

That in the face of hostile attempts to delay our duly earned and richly deserved LB 775 tax refunds (which over the past 15 years have constituted a tidy little revenue stream and pushed a not-insignificant one billion dollars our way), you steadfastly dug in your heels, fought tooth and nail and turned back this ill-conceived and traitorous assault on our profit margins by practitioners of ‘class warfare’;

That, like pit bulls defending your masters, to preserve our profits and keep that corporate welfare coming, you forced the machinery of state government to instead make deep cuts in the state budget, taking nice big gouges out of social services for the poor, state aid for K-through-12 education and higher education in

the state, including the University of Nebraska (* see footnote)

That, as we say in the biz, you really delivered the goods!

Today, on “Employee Appreciation Day,” we salute the hired hands (and hired guns) who toil in the Political Division of our Corporate Establishment here in the Nebraska Unicameral.

We, the management and stockholders of Big Business, pause in our single-minded pursuit of profit to recognize the front-line staff in the “senatorial pool” for their contributions to a steadily improving bottom line.

On this “Employee Appreciation Day” we want to say “*Thank You!*” to these seasonal employees, these part-time workers, these political “temps” who, despite the long hours, lack of benefits and job security, nevertheless labor so diligently for our enrichment.

Without your dedication and commitment, your solicitude, your dog-like devotion and fawning sycophancy, your brown-nosing and tireless obsequiousness, your shameless boot-licking and abject adoration (did we leave anything out?), oh, and prostrate toadying, Big Business in this state might actually have to be pitching in to help solve the state’s budget crisis; state government might actually try closing some of those “corporate loopholes big enough to fly a corporate jet through” worth about \$140 million a year in lost revenue to the State Treasury; and—worst of all—our stock portfolios might have been adversely affected.

Without you, the **Senate Saviors of Seven-Seven-Five**, instead of being able to laugh all the way to the bank, we might literally have to take the money and run! As it is, we can stand before you today, as some of the richest people in the history of the Earth, and publicly express our gratitude with no more anxiety than if we were speaking in our own corporate boardroom.

It goes without saying of course that, much as we’d like to be able to shed these stockings and thank our Unicameral workforce face to face, the confidentiality provisions of LB 775 prohibit us from disclosing our identities, as well as other details like, for instance, how much money is in these bags of money that we’re holding and what it is we actually did to be able to make a case that we’re entitled to it.

(So, all you Watergate wannabee journalists who feel like you just *have* to know who we are will simply have to “follow the money,” run upstairs to Accountability and Disclosure and check the campaign contribution reports to see if you can puzzle out our identities. Ha ha.)

Yes, today, in the 2002 Nebraska Legislature we find that same entrepreneurial spirit that has made our nation a great place to do business throughout our history, that same eye for making a buck that gave us the Gilded Age, the Robber Barons, the Giant Trusts, the Great Depression, the Military-Industrial Complex, Pentagon Pork, Reaganomics, the S&L Bailout and now Enron. As that great American President Calvin Coolidge might have said if he’d gotten the words right, “The Business of America is **Big Business**.” Feed the rich, we say, and let the crumbs fall where they may.

Senators, speaking from the bottom of our heart—and, *the bottom of our line*—it’s an honor to have you work for us.

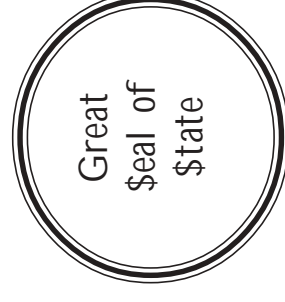
In closing, we do wish to clarify one small point, which continues to generate some unfortunate confusion in the media. Some ignoramuses who are jealous of our cleverness have dared to suggest that Big Business in Nebraska has been using its economic influence and lobbyist gifts and contributions to “buy” the State Legislature.

For the record, we categorically deny this scurrilous and stupid accusation. How can we “*buy*” what we already “*own*”?

We’re wealthy, white, successful businessmen with a token female or two. And, believe me, we didn’t get rich paying for something twice. But that does remind me. Could all the members of the “senatorial pool” please call the home office at 1-800-weownit? The session is over next week and we want to get everyone scheduled for their annual employee evaluations.

That being said, it’s time to draw a close to this year’s “Employee Appreciation Day” celebration. We’ve got a little cake here for everybody to complete the festivities. And be sure and have a mint on us. We don’t eat ‘em. We make ‘em.

(* Footnote: Some uninformed critics have suggested that such deep cuts to the University system—roughly equivalent to the sum of the proposed two-year delay in our tax refunds—will seriously harm the University’s ability to compete nationally. But let’s be honest here. If the Huskers couldn’t win a national championship with Heisman Trophy winner Eric Crouch at the helm, what chance do we have this fall with a new quarterback running the offense? Coach Solich’s team is at least three-to-four years away from making a serious run at the national title. By that time, the recession will be over, middle-income Nebraskans will have more money in their pockets again, and state tax receipts will accordingly improve. If the University will just be patient for two years and not get their panties all in a knot, everything’s going to be fine.)



The Ownership

NFP Activists Commit Civil Disobedience to Protest Alcohol Sales at Whiteclay

Four members of Nebraskans for Peace committed civil disobedience at the state Liquor Control Commission April 18 to protest the State of Nebraska's continued licensing of alcohol sales at Whiteclay. Noting that for a year and a half the commissioners had rarely demonstrated in any interest in addressing the rampant liquor violations in Whiteclay, the four decided to "test" whether the commission had the same lackadaisical attitude about alcohol violations in their own hearing room. Before statewide television, radio and newspaper media, the NFP members opened four cans of beer and defied the commission to cite them for drinking on state property.

Commission Chair Bob Logsdon summarily ordered the State Patrol to issue citations and to forward the information to the Lancaster County Attorney's office. As of press time, no charges have as yet been filed for this Class IV Misdemeanor, punishable by a maximum fine of \$500 and a minimum of \$100. The four members have already determined however that—if charged—they will refuse to pay the fine and demand a trial for their offense. The more publicity about Whiteclay, the better. Printed below is the statement delivered by NFP State Coordinator Tim Rinne prior to opening the beer.

Good morning. My name is Tim Rinne. I am the State Coordinator of Nebraskans for Peace.

For almost a year-and-a-half now, Nebraskans for Peace has either formally appeared before the Liquor Control Commission during the "Public Comment" period at your monthly meetings, or been in regular contact with the Commission's Executive Director, pleading—in one form or another—that you exercise your authority and halt the sale of alcohol in Whiteclay.

I wouldn't wonder if you're not sick to death of hearing from us.

I know I'm tired of coming here.

But for the better part of this past year-and-a-half—when you have said anything at all—it has been only to repeat your pat response that "it is legal to sell alcohol in Nebraska" and that you can do nothing... almost as if state government has no choice but to exploit these Indians and to profit from their misery.

When we have repeatedly pointed out to you that the Indians from the Pine Ridge Reservation (who, by your own admission, constitute the entire market of the \$3.2

million annual alcohol trade in Whiteclay) have no legal place to consume what they buy—not on the off-sale premises, not on the streets or private property of Whiteclay, not in their cars or on the county roads, and certainly not back on the dry Reservation, and yet, the four dealers in Whiteclay manage to somehow sell over 4.3 million cans of beer a year to this very clientele, you have recited that stock phrase "it is

are not currently providing, nor can they provide, that kind of on-site enforcement and the Commissioners "already know it," you proceeded to re-license all three of the existing dealers in Whiteclay—and even granted a new replacement license—even though state law requires that you consider the availability of "adequate law enforcement" (not to mention public toileting facilities, of which there are none in Whiteclay).



Nebraskans for Peace activists Bob Epp, Susan Alleman and Rev. Steve Ratzlaff take a long pull from the beers they've opened at the April 18 Liquor Control Commission hearing before being escorted from the room to be cited.

legal to sell alcohol in Nebraska" as if it absolved you of any responsibility.

When we have asked you to exercise your authority and put an end to the rampant liquor violations and lawlessness that are daily allowed to occur in Whiteclay—everything from flagrant drinking on the off-sale premises to unsolved murders—your response is that you cannot act without evidence and you have no powers of enforcement—that that's the business of the State Patrol and the Sheridan County Sheriff's Department. All you agreed to do was to write to the State Patrol and request law enforcement for all the hours that alcohol is sold in Whiteclay.

But when we publicly revealed last fall that both the State Patrol and the Sheridan County Sheriff's Department told Nebraskans for Peace to our face that they

And when Nebraskans for Peace attorney Ken Winston, the former legal counsel for the Legislature's General Affairs Committee, warned you just last month that finding the Arrowhead Inn "not guilty" for selling to two intoxicated patrons who had blood alcohol levels virtually twice the legal limit effectively exonerated any dealer in the state of liability for selling to intoxicated customers, and that arbitrarily holding Lance Brown of Studio 14 in Lincoln (who catered primarily to a white, college-age audience) to a higher legal standard than the dealers in Whiteclay (who exclusively serve an Indian clientele) was grounds for a lawsuit for violating the state's equal protection clause, you didn't say a word.

In the past year-and-a-half, what I remember hearing from you most—when I've heard anything at all—is what you can't do. And never what you will. If my understanding is correct, not once, in fact,

since we've come before you, has the Commission even made an effort to go to Whiteclay to see for yourself what hourly goes on in this 14-person unincorporated village, not even when we personally invited you last June to be part of a panel on the problems of alcohol sales there.

For a year-and-a-half, I have personally watched you alternately ignore our words, deliberately look the other way on illegal activity, arbitrarily change the terms to suit your purposes and exercise a double standard in applying the law. Anything, virtually, to avoid having to address the legal and moral ramifications of licensing alcohol sales in Whiteclay.

In the five years that Whiteclay has been in the public eye (including the protests during the Summer of 1999 that made national and international news), you have made it blatantly clear that you don't regard willful violations of state liquor law—like open containers on off-sale premises—as a problem in Whiteclay.

Well, this morning I and my fellow Nebraskans for Peace members—Bob Epp, a retired Mennonite farmer from Henderson; Susan Alleman, the organization's Membership Coordinator; and the Rev. Steve Ratzlaff of First Mennonite Church here in Lincoln—want to administer a "pop quiz" to find out if you feel the same way about open containers here in your own hearing room. I mean, if you don't care what happens there, why should you care what happens here?

I have here in front of me a popular seller in Whiteclay—a Colt 45 malt liquor tallboy. Bob has another favorite: a Budweiser. Susan has a Coors Light. And Pastor Ratzlaff has a Pabst Blue Ribbon.

We're going to pop the tops now, and take a sip, and we dare you—we defy you—to cite us for violating state law.

Because if you issue a citation to us right here, you had better be willing to make sure citations are being issued in Whiteclay, where not one dealer has been cited for anything for over seven straight months now.

Cite us today for the very thing you so readily and willingly ignore in Whiteclay, and the malfeasance and hypocrisy that you have shown in the exercise of your office with respect to the dealers there will be even more conspicuous and outrageous.

The choice is yours, Commissioners. The clock is running. And the whole state is watching.

LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP

2002

A state budget crisis can be a good thing or a bad thing.

The “bad” of course needs no explanation. The blood and gore is everywhere. Cutbacks in social services for the poor. Huge cuts in state aid to K-12 education and higher ed—particularly the university system. Elimination of entire line items like the Rural Development Commission and its micro-enterprise program. Not to mention the inability to shore up teacher pay and to fund important new initiatives like nonviolence education in our schools. And then, of course, to partially offset the revenue shortfall, there’s the corollary increase in regressive taxes like the sales and cigarette tax, which disproportionately impact low-income people and those with addictions.

Yeah, everyone understands what’s “bad” about a budget crisis. Even the legislators who did the butchering. Calling it “the worst session ever,” state senators had to both cut services and raise taxes—and during an election year, no less. And to make matters even more dicey politically, state tax receipts are still coming in below projections, which means state government may not be out of the woods yet, and that a Special Session to make further budget cuts could be on the horizon.

This is not good. Not good at all.

And we’re not trying to suggest that it is either. Far too many people in this state are being hurt by this economic downturn to ever wish such a fiscal crisis on the state—or to hope for another just like it.

But, like most things in life, nothing is ever wholly good or wholly bad. And this crisis too is not without its “good thing.”

Grueling and aggravating as it was to watch the legislature day-after-day pare away at government services and debate which regressive taxes to raise, there were some small blessings amid the bitter parts. Small ones admittedly, but blessings nevertheless.

For example, thanks to the budget crisis, for the first time in a decade the Unicameral actually took a long look at how much LB 775 corporate tax breaks are costing the state. The governor, in fact, even proposed a two-year delay in paying out the reimbursements to qualifying corporations to temporarily save the state \$23 million. Big Business, of course, wasted no time turning back that threat, virtuously arguing that state government had entered into a contract with corporate investors, and a contract was sacrosanct. State government had “given its word.”

But the state had also given its word to public education, to the university, to the poor, to the Rural Development Commission—and yet they were all being asked to sacrifice in order to balance the budget. What was so special about LB 775? Besides, all that was being asked of Big Business was to wait two years to get reimbursed—it was still going to get its money. The funding, cut from the rest of the state though, is gone forever.

Well, Big Business will get its money on time, but it’s now abundantly clear to the taxpayers of this state that Nebraska’s corporate establishment was the only group to escape paying their share. People will remember that.

And that’s a good thing.

There’s at least one other good thing that came of this budget crisis. Cynical as it sounds to say it, any time spent wrangling with the budget during the short, 60-day session was time that could not be spent passing lethal injection legislation and lifting the ban on concealed weapons. More than likely—given the demand for vengeance after 9/11 and the public panic about security—we did not have the votes to keep either of these horrid proposals from becoming state law. Had they gotten to the governor’s desk, he would have undoubtedly signed them both. As it was, despite the fact that they were both high-profile bills, neither one made it to the floor for debate.

Now this time crunch cut the other way as well, to be sure. The death penalty abolition bill, Sen. Chris Beutler’s Living Wage and State Minimum Wage bills and Sen. Don Preister’s Whiteclay bill also never got a opportunity to be discussed. Considering the current conservative make-up of the legislature, however—and the current fiscal climate—it’s unlikely they’d have been approved anyway. Economic recessions typically tend to make people narrow and illiberal.

The one unqualifiedly huge disappointment was LB 19. But its fate had nothing to do with time. The legislature did debate this bill, there was

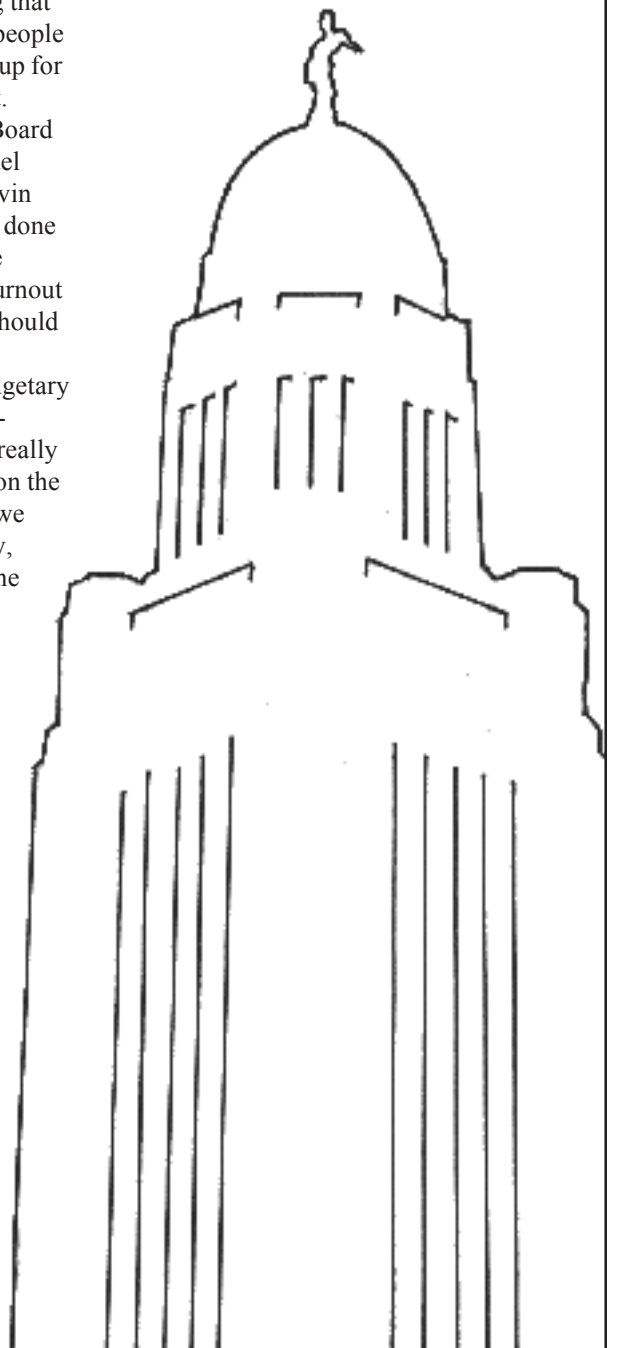
ample opportunity to pass it, but despite Sen. Ernie Chambers’ courageous efforts, the blatant homophobia that pervades the Unicameral once again spelled its defeat. What **was** cause for celebration though was the 800-person crowd that turned out April 10 to link hands around the State Capitol on behalf of lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered human rights. And the number of young people. Just seeing that many high school- and college-age people publicly—and fearlessly—standing up for justice was in itself an emotional lift. Thanks to the efforts of NFP State Board members Virginia Walsh and Michael Gordon and Omaha Coordinator Kevin Tuininga, Nebraskans for Peace has done wonderful work networking with the GLBT community. The incredible turnout at the April 10 rally shows that we should endeavor to do even more.

More than likely, Nebraska’s budgetary woes will continue. Even if the long-ballyhooed economic “recovery” is really on its way, the upturn always starts on the coasts and moves inland. Smack as we are right in the middle of the country, it’s still going to be a while before the boom reaches us. Which means the threat of more cuts to social services, and even more regressive tax increases yet this year is a distinct possibility. Governor Mike Johanns has already raised the specter of yet another Special Session to do just that before the November election.

If we’re to stop more budgetary “bad things” from happening, rank-and-file Nebraskans must understand that its those LB 775 tax breaks that are bleeding us dry. Last year alone, they cost the state over \$140 million in lost tax revenue, and over the past 15 years, the price tag has exceeded a billion dollars. People need to see that instead of being a drain on our finances, LB 775 is in fact a “rainy day fund” that the

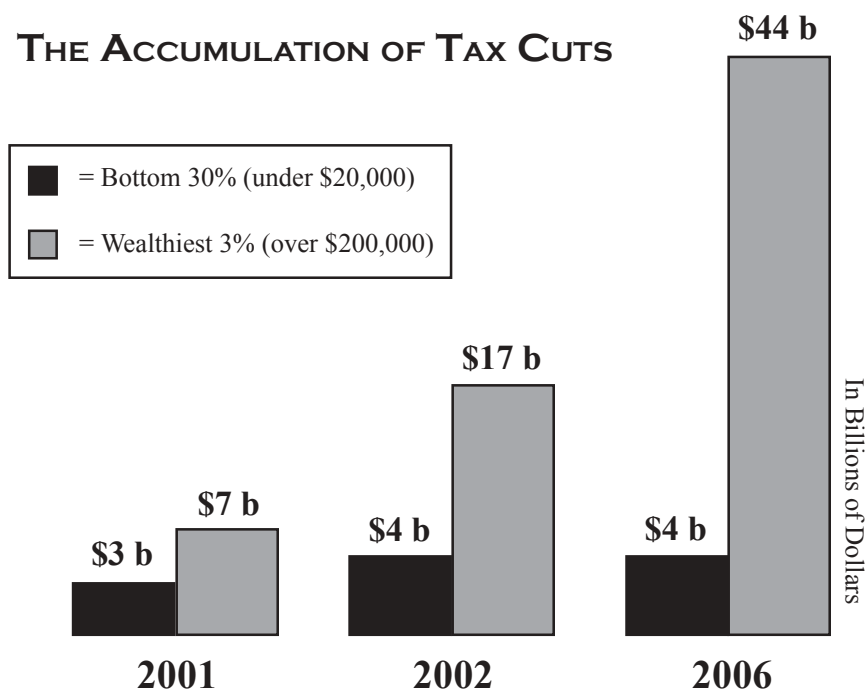
legislature can tap at any time to solve our revenue shortfall.

And for everyone from a single mom with two kids to a meatpacking worker in Omaha to a merchant in a rural Nebraska town, that would be a “good thing.”



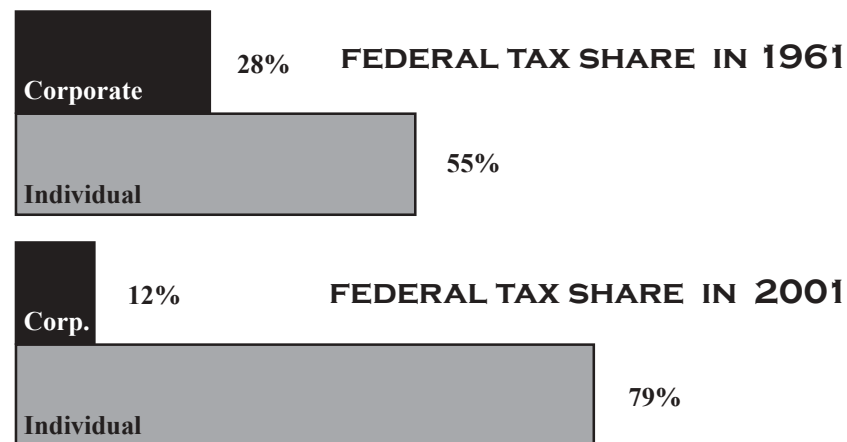
TAX BREAKS FOR THE VERY WEALTHY...

THE ACCUMULATION OF TAX CUTS



The 2001 tax cut plan gives away billions of dollars to the richest Americans. Over this 10 year plan, tax cuts will take effect every year that will primarily benefit the wealthy. By 2006, the wealthiest 3% will receive total tax cuts of \$44 billion.* Meanwhile, the poorest 30%, those families making under \$20,000 per year, will get a tenth as much. Federal tax policy continues to widen the gap between the wealthiest and low- and middle-income families.

...AND FOR BIG BUSINESS



Today, individual income taxes comprise 79% of the federal tax dollar** while corporate taxes only make up 12%. Forty years ago, corporations paid twice as large a share.

Enron offers one explanation for the decline in corporations' share of tax payments. While Enron's profits soared to a total of almost \$2 billion from 1996 to 2000, it paid nothing in federal taxes over that same period and *received \$381 million in tax rebates.*

Enron is not alone. 41 companies, reporting a total of \$25 billion in profits, paid zero in federal income taxes in at least one year from 1996 to 1998. Instead, these same companies got back over \$3 billion from the Treasury.

The trend continues. The recently passed 'worker assistance' act offers another \$107 billion in tax breaks to business over the next three years.****

...WHAT ABOUT EVERYBODY ELSE?

Notes and Sources: *These numbers represent the accumulation of tax breaks over time, i.e. the wealthiest tax filers would have paid \$44 billion more in taxes by 2006 without the tax cut package, Joint Committee on Taxation (May 26, 2001). The tax cuts received in just 2006 by the wealthiest 3% will be about \$23 billion. **This represents the percentage of the federal funds budget, i.e. excluding all trust funds, Budget of the US Government, FY2003. ***Enron and corporate data, Citizens for Tax Justice and the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. ****Joint Committee on Taxation (March 6, 2002).

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Letters to NFP...

continued from page 12

It is extremely disappointing to see a group with the word 'Peace' in its name supporting a movement that has used violence as its methodology for over 50 years, has no concept of civilians, and asks its children to commit suicide on its behalf. If you want to move the peace process forward you will support moderates on both sides working to resolve the outstanding issues of Jerusalem, integration of minorities within each nation, and security for Israel.

Charles Shapiro
Wayne

I want to commend you on your recent news release urging that a large UN peacekeeping force should immediately be sent to Israel and the Occupied Territories of Palestine. However, there are a few errors in your reasoning. First, the Arab League requests Israel withdraw to the 1967 boundaries, which would return all of Gaza, the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem, and the original territories of the West Bank to Palestine.

Under these highly unlikely conditions, given the current Israel government position, Israel would need to cede *contiguous* territories back to Palestine, withdraw the heavily-armed and right-wing settlements from the West Bank and Gaza, the Golan and East Jerusalem, negotiate the right of return of million of Palestinians driven into exile

beginning in the 1948 origin of the state of Israel, and be committed to fair distribution of water rights between Israel and Palestine, and equal access to roads, hospitals and schools for Palestinians.

The issue is not between suicide bombers and fervent Israeli settlers, as your news release says. It is between the heavily armed and backed by \$5 billion-a-year-from-the-U.S. Israeli government, and the Palestinians who have hung on to separated parcels of their land and endured the brutal occupation of the Israeli government. This conflict has been generations in the making, since 1948 when the state of Israel was created out of the lands and homes of Palestinians.

That being said, I have no doubts that your news release has met with opposition. It is saddening to think that some people in the

U.S. think that the Israeli government's policy of terrorism against Palestinians can be justified. I do not know a single Palestinian who does not condemn the attacks of suicide bombers, plus disagree with the erratic and undemocratic rule of the Palestinian Authority.

There are decent people in Palestine, besides the autocrats of the Palestinian Authority, people like Hanan Ashrawi and Hayder Abdul Shafti, and other members of the original elected legislative council who could provide the leadership both Palestine and Israel need in this tragedy. Israel's current leadership is no longer able to face the Palestinians as human beings, nor recognize that security will come from humanitarian conditions for all.

Ruth Thone
Lincoln

SAUDI WOMEN LIVE A TALE OF DESPAIR

by Mohammed H. Siddiq

A native of Saudi Arabia and naturalized U.S. citizen, Mohammed Siddiq has lived in Lincoln for nearly two decades. He is a member of Nebraskans for Peace.

Women are finding their rightful place in society in countries around the world today, but the change in status seen by women in industrialized nations has been impossible to come by in the Saudi Arabia of King Fahd. There is no justification—either cultural or political—for the treatment accorded women in Saudi society today. Women constitute 57 percent of the population of the Saudi kingdom, but they do not share in even 40 percent of the benefits or institutions of that society.

The effect of this discrimination on the female population is devastating. Eighty percent are overweight. Eighty-five percent are illiterate and depressed. By any standards, these figures represent a major problem and a national disgrace. No nation, even one like Saudi Arabia with all its oil wealth, can long survive while neglecting more than half of its population.

People of the West generally have a mistaken idea about the role prescribed for women in Islamic society and about the role accorded women by the Prophet Mohammed. Of even greater consequence is the fact that self-absorbed leaders like King Fahd also misunderstand these things and bring woe on millions by their ignorance. Muslim women as a group have suffered economically, morally and politically because of a combination of circumstances, much of it originating from a one-sided interpretation of provisions of the Shari'ah, or Islamic law. Many women overcame these legal and theological barriers during the early period of Islam to achieve prominence as political leaders, beginning with A'isha, the favorite wife of the Prophet.

Throughout Islamic history there have been rulers who have used aspects of the Shari'ah and the teachings of the Prophet as an excuse to exclude women from public life and to keep them in passive roles, subordinate to men. Many of these rulers claim divine inspiration for "protecting" the female sex. King Fahd and his ruling brothers make this claim from time to time, but their treatment of women in their life shows that their "protection" has its selfish side. Women in their view are no more than sex objects, vessels into which they can unload their sexual desires. They go to them only when they want sex or food, but otherwise they do not exist.

Naturally, how the Saudi king and princes treat women in their personal life influences how they view them in the country they rule. Women constitute a clear majority of the population, but are excluded from participation in public life and have virtually no rights. The ruling family of Al-Saud and their clergymen assert that women are emotional, irritable and have inferior faculties of reason and memory. The courts discount the testimony of women, placing them in the same class as the blind, the handicapped and children.

In Saudi Arabia today, women cannot travel without their husbands' permission. They are forbidden to drive an automobile. They have absolutely no legal means for improving their lot or for challenging their present positions. Everything is geared to keeping women in the kitchen and the bedroom and out of any position of power. What education they receive is carefully guided, and as a result they cannot, for example, be judges, Imams, lawyers, or even engineers. The history of powerful and important Islamic women is ignored. Indeed, even the Prophet's wife is seen as an aberration, an error, an affront to the power of the male. Economically dependent, legally powerless and politically vulnerable, women under the Saudi

system are treated the same way as King Fahd himself treats women—as servants and property and nothing more. There are clear parallels between the position of women in Saudi Arabia and the position of women under the Taliban rule.

Despite these obvious parallels, however, the plight of Saudi women has never merited the kind of public attention from the U.S. government afforded Afghani women under the Taliban. Freeing the women of Afghanistan from Taliban rule, as you may recall, actually became one of the stated objectives of the war in Afghanistan in the conflict's later stages. Yet no member of the Bush Administration has ever suggested going to war to liberate the women of Saudi Arabia or—more



SAUDI WOMAN

She is well-fed, but can hardly breathe.

pointedly—the women of Kuwait who, more than a decade after the Persian Gulf War and Kuwait's liberation, still do not have the right to vote. In the latter cases, the rights of Islamic women have obviously been sacrificed to oil politics and the U.S. government's need for a stable oil supply.

The United States continues this shortsighted foreign policy at its own risk. Siding with the corrupt Saudi monarchy against the legitimate aspirations of the Saudi people—men and women alike—is guaranteed to provoke even more anti-American feeling. The neglect presently accorded women is greater than the neglect shown males, but in truth the government neglects both. Education for women is circumscribed; yet even for men, education is woefully inadequate. Unless the U.S. government begins to authentically model the democratic principles it claims to stand for—namely, that everyone, regardless of their sex, is entitled to a voice in their government—and demands reforms from the House of Saud, it is playing into the hands of the religious fundamentalists. And in such a circumstance, the ones who will suffer most will be women.

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Letters to NFP on Israel and Palestine...

[Editor's Note: The April issue of the Nebraska Report carried a joint news release by Nebraskans for Peace and the United Nations Association Chapter 100 outlining a course of action to de-escalate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Arguing that the United States' long-standing support for Israel—coupled with the Bush Administration's heavy-handed response to the threat of terrorism—had undermined the U.S.' ability to objectively intervene in Israel and the occupied territories, we proposed that a large UN international peacekeeping be immediately deployed to the Mideast to stop the fighting and restore order, and that it remain there for years to come. Further, we urged the acceptance of the Arab League's proposal of formal recognition of Israel in exchange for Palestinian statehood and an Israeli pullback to the 1948 UN partition borders. As might be expected from a topic this close to the heart of so many, our position has not met with universal assent. Printed below is a representative sampling of the letters and e-mails we received from our members.]

I support the work of NFP in almost all instances, but cannot on this one. Where was your voice when young Israelis were bombed at a Disco in Tel Aviv—young families at the Pizza restaurant in Jerusalem—at the Passover Seder? Where is your concern for the most virulently anti-semitic rhetoric spewing forth from the publications and mouths of the Palestinians and Arabs—nothing so violently anti-semitic has been heard since Nazi Germany? Where is your concern that the call is still to have the western boundary of a Palestinian state at the Mediterranean Sea?

Certainly there is concern for the rights of Palestinians and the establishment of a Palestinian state. One that hopefully will be democratic and where aid money goes to really help build the country, instead of explosives for the human bombers.

The United Nations has administered the Refugee camps and they are truly hell holes—where is their responsibility?

Sheldon Kushner
Lincoln

I read with great interest the news release on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict in the April Nebraska Report. I recently had the opportunity to attend a UNL Daily Nebraskan-sponsored campus forum on the Middle East crisis consisting of five panelists who shared their perspectives. If my understanding is correct, two were Jewish-Americans, and two were Palestinian-Americans. The fifth voice was that of Dr. Sidnie White Crawford, President of the W.F. Albright Institute of Archeological Research in Jerusalem, and chair of the Classics and Religious Studies Department at UNL. At the close of the

meeting, I asked Dr. Crawford her perspective on the effectiveness of the United Nations and/or the United States in helping come to some resolution and long-range plan for peace in the Middle East.

What I heard her say, as I paraphrase here, was that the United States—because of its long and heavy involvement in that region—needs to be the primary agent for negotiations and efforts to move toward that very illusive peaceful resolution. That as the world's leading power, the United States, in spite of its heavy monetary and military support of Israel, will bear more clout and ultimately be more effective. But that it need not be at the exclusion of cooperation with the United Nations.

As an active member of the United Nations Association Lincoln Chapter, I support the work of the UN. I am also a member of NFP, Community Peacemakers and other Peace and Justice organizations. I am also an organizing member of the newly formed "Advocates in Black" who now hold vigils for peace in the Holy Land every second and fourth Thursday noon of each month in the Lincoln Haymarket. Although we chose to call ourselves "advocates" for gender inclusivity, we consider ourselves counterparts to the "Women In Black" weekly vigil keepers in Jerusalem.

Arta Smith
Lincoln

I read your latest newsletter supplement with great disappointment. The solution you propose for 'peace' in the Middle East is a non-starter. While it may be a good exercise to present an idealistic view of how the world should be, if you expect to actually make progress towards 'peace,' then a more realistic view needs to be presented.

The art of politics is the ability to forge agreement between two sides whose initial interests differ widely. What is needed is compromise that recognizes the needs of both groups. I am sure you understand this in theory, but your ideas for a UN-led international peacekeeping force and a return to the 1948 partition borders put you way out of the real world.

You present the idea that the that the U.S. is not considered an honest broker because of its support for Israel. While it is true that the U.S. supports Israel, it has a more balanced view towards the Palestinian people than any Arab nation has towards Israel. To claim that the UN is neutral shows either naivete or a cynical manipulation of the facts. Recall how the recent conference on racism in Durban was turned into a Palestinian love fest at the expense of real racist concerns. The bottom line is: if you can understand the Palestinian suspicions toward the U.S., then you must understand the Israeli suspicions towards the UN.

To suggest that Israel go back to the 1948 borders is a great idea, if you made this suggestion in 1948. After the Arab world has rejected those borders, and fought numerous wars to push Israel off the map, Israelis not going to go back to those borders. This idea is tantamount to Germany asking to have its borders enlarged to what they were in 1941 and ignoring what happened in 1945. Israelis felt that the 1948 borders were not defensible at the time, but they agreed to them for the sake of peace. It is an unfortunate fact of history that the Arab nations gave the Palestinians bad advice. What we have here is a people who threw the dice of war and lost. Now they want to say, 'Never mind.' There are too many Israeli citizens who died defending their existence to just turn the clock back.

You are correct in reading the maps, the most land the Palestinians could have had was in 1948. The tragedy is that in any peace, they will have less now than they would have had then. It is a gigantic barrier to peace and one the Palestinians have not accepted. They have not been willing to face their children and say, "You have suffered for over 50 years and so many have died and now we have to settle for less than what we could have had then." While you may want to spare the Palestinians this reality, Israel will never agree to such a plan.

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