



Nebraska Report

There is no Peace without Justice

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NFP Statement Iraq Occupation

The Nebraskans for Peace State Board adopted the following policy statement at its November 15 meeting in Lincoln.

Since the Bush Administration launched the "War on Terrorism" two years ago, the Nebraskans for Peace State Board has issued several major position statements regarding U.S. foreign policy in Afghanistan and Iraq. With the death toll from the Iraqi occupation climbing daily, the state board has adopted this revised statement, which both builds on our previous positions and outlines the steps we believe should be taken next.

NFP spoke out after 9/11, deploring the World Trade Center massacre but opposing a war on Afghanistan. We warned that capturing Osama bin Laden and disarming the al-Qaida network was not a job for an army but for a police action involving the United Nations, Interpol and the whole of the international community. We also said that bin Laden and his confederates should be tried in the International Criminal Court, which the U.S. has since disavowed. Our views were ignored.

NFP spoke out again before and during the war on Iraq. We challenged the Bush Administration's claims that Iraqi "weapons of mass destruction" posed a threat to America. And, it has since been disclosed, the Defense Department had reliable intelligence prior to the start of the war that such weapons had already

been destroyed. We argued before and after the invasion of Iraq that the United Nations—not the United States—should be the policing agency. We asked that the UN inspectors be let back into Iraq to be the primary agents searching for WMD. We said that the UN should supervise the excavation of any sites where WMD might be alleged to be. At the "SOS—Speak Out at StratCom" protest last August, we publicly opposed the White House's plans to develop and produce a *new* generation of weapons of mass destruction, after it had just preemptively attacked Iraq over WMD it didn't even have. Finally, we never did accept the view that Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein were allies and fellow terrorists, believing instead that the War on Iraq was a geopolitical war and not a "war on terror."

Once again, our views were ignored as the administration pursued its own policies and strategies.

With attacks on U.S. forces growing more frequent and bold, however, those policies and strategies are properly subject to evaluation. And in the case of Afghanistan, they obviously have not worked. The country is largely in the hands of the warlords. Our sphere of influence (and that of our U.S.-backed Afghan president) does not extend much beyond the capital city of Kabul. The Taliban are still warring against us. Nor

has Iraq fared any better. The Bush Administration is now asking the UN to come back in (on our terms of course). We beg almost everyone to fix the mess. We have found no weapons of mass destruction and there is no credible evidence of a Iraq-al-Qaida alliance. Six months after President Bush officially declared "an end to combat" in Iraq, far more U.S. soldiers have been killed during the occupation than were killed in the war. Add to that the thousands and thousands of innocent Iraqi dead. Unnamed and unidentified foes opposed to the occupation are averaging 30 attacks a day against coalition forces, targeting not only the U.S. headquarters, but humanitarian organizations like the Red Cross and UN. The world community has seen our lack of truthfulness and our incompetence, and it does not wish to become complicit. Militarily, economically and diplomatically, we are—for the most part—alone.

It is tempting to just get out, to cut and run. However, we believe that we cannot do so morally. Conditions in Iraq do not permit it. The Iraqi people were without electricity in 120-degree heat and many of their hospitals remain without power because we blew up their electrical grid. Our campaign of "shock and awe" destroyed their municipal infrastructures—fire, ambulance and police; lights, sewer and water. Even

though staying in Iraq has diminished appeal (now fewer than 50 percent of the American people think we were correct in invading, whereas huge majorities supported the invasion back in April), we believe the U.S. has a responsibility to stay and help rebuild.

Responsibility, though, is not the same as control. We still must give over the stabilization of Afghanistan and the hunt for Osama bin Laden to the UN. Likewise, the administration of the nation-building process in Iraq must rest with the United Nations. Only the UN has the credibility to handle such a task with objectivity and equity. We must be the junior partner, supplying resources, food, health supplies, and infrastructural aid. Anything else will tell the Islamic world that all we want are fossil fuels, pipelines and geopolitical power in the region. Halliburton, Bechtel and the nearly 70 other companies who have both contributed to the president's election campaign and received contracts in Afghanistan and Iraq must be removed from the process immediately. We cannot help and profiteer at the same time. The same commanders who bombed Iraq into rubble cannot now make the country anew. To end the chaos we have created, the U.S. must end the occupation and cede control to the United Nations. And then, we must wholeheartedly cooperate in the UN's efforts at reconstruction.

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Nebraskans for Peace

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

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Latin America Briefs

compiled by Sarah Disbrow



Mexico's Dirty War

Mexico's Supreme Court ruled this month that officials implicated in Mexico's "Dirty War" of the 1960s and 1970s could be tried for crimes committed 30 years ago. The Court found that a statute of limitations does not apply to the disappearance of political dissidents. In 2001 Mexico's National Human Rights Commission published a report identifying 532 cases of kidnapping and torture carried out by at least 74 former military and secret police officers. Many human rights activists say the numbers are actually much higher.

The recent ruling by the Supreme Court allowed arrest warrants to be issued in the 1975 disappearance of the son of a Mexican human rights activist, Jesus Piedra Ibarra. His body has never been found. The ruling opens the way for prosecutions, legal experts say, but getting a guilty verdict could be more difficult. The leader of the 68 Committee, a group seeking justice for students killed in the 1968 massacre in Mexico City, said the Supreme Court had established an important precedent.

Battle of Seattle Moves to Miami

Thousands of demonstrators are convening on Miami to protest the FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas), an agreement to eliminate or reduce trade barriers among all the nations of the Western Hemisphere except Cuba. Angered by the failure of the North American Free Trade Agreement (the model for the FTAA) to protect the rights of workers or the environment, organizations such as the Sierra Club, the Steel Workers, Teamsters, Jobs with Justice, and others have carried out a year-long campaign to gather ballots against the FTAA. Together with the Hemispheric Social Alliance, a network of trade union and civil society networks from Latin America, these organizations plan to deliver the millions of ballots they've gathered from people throughout the hemisphere to negotiators in Miami.

Protestors hope for a different kind of globalization than the Washington Consensus model of corporate globalization, a one-size-fits-all economic policy that has been disastrous for developing countries. Groups such as the Hemispheric Social Alliance, the International Forum on Globalization, and others are pressing for a more equitable agreement and one that supports communities, workers, and the environment. In the decade since NAFTA, the sweeping economic reforms of the Washington Consensus model have netted corporate scandals, NAFTA's failed promises, and many of the worst financial crises ever seen in Latin American countries. It's spectacular failure, according to an editorial in *The Nation*, November 13, "gives protestors and governments of poor countries the possibility of defeating the proposed FTAA."

Ban on Travel to Cuba Lives On

A bill that would have lifted the ban on travel to Cuba after forty years was killed in committee in November. The bill had passed the House by a 227-188 vote in September and the Senate by a 59-38 vote in October. Faced with the threat of a veto by President Bush, the Republican-dominated Congressional committee in charge of reconciling the House and Senate versions decided to kill the bill.

Another Year, Same School

Every November demonstrators gather outside the gates of the School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Georgia, to call for the school's closure. In 2001, the government responded by changing the SOA's name to WHISC, the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation. A recent University of Wisconsin study of SOA graduates over 40 years provides fresh evidence that the school trained thousands of Latin American officers in terrorist tactics and the techniques of torture. The study was not able to include data from 2001 or later. Claiming "national security" concerns, the Bush administration won't allow the data to be released. SOA/WHISC continues to train about a thousand soldiers each year, but critics will no longer have the means to assess the school's record.

Give to the Nebraska Peace Foundation

The Killing in Iraq Goes On (and no one is counting the full cost)

by John Sloboda and Hamit Dardagan
Iraq Body Count
<http://www.iraqbodycount.net/>

Iraq Body Count co-founder John Sloboda spoke at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln on October 22.

Indifference and obfuscation

Western official sources and much of the Western media have shown an obsessive level of interest in deaths of westerners during the Iraq conflict—at least by comparison with their interest in the Iraqi dead. We know the name, age, date and place of death of every European and American. There is constant and immediate updating of and rumination on the implications of the western death toll by political commentators, government spokespersons and front-line media. Yet the Western death toll (around 400), is completely dwarfed by the Iraqi death toll (around 7,500 to 9,500 civilian deaths reported to date, and an unknown number of military deaths, claimed by different commentators as likely between 10,000 and 45,000). Table 1 shows the most up-to-date estimates of total deaths available, with key sources.

So little attention and interest is shown by Western officialdom towards Iraqi deaths, and so consistent is the refusal by the U.S. and UK administrations to engage in any discussion or evaluation of the toll on Iraqi lives, that their stance is beginning to take on an increasingly surreal quality. Independent attempts to draw attention to the Iraqi death toll and its consequences are typically brushed aside as politically-motivated or “anti-American,” and the atrocities of Saddam held up as justification enough for the “collateral damage” of the war which ousted him from power. However, when Government obfuscates on this issue to its own members of parliament, then we know that something is very wrong indeed.

Llew Smith, a UK Labour MP recently wrote to the UK Defence Minister, Adam Ingram, and got the following reply: “Whilst the Ministry of Defense has accurate data relating to the number of UK service personnel that have been killed or injured during Operation Telic (the invasion of Iraq), we have no way of establishing with any certainty the number of Iraqi casualties.” In a further question, Smith

asked the Defense Secretary if he would examine reports of Iraqi deaths from eyewitness correspondents embedded with the military in the invasion of Iraq; request the Coalition provisional authority to make a survey of deaths reported in hospitals in Iraq, from March 19 to May 1, arising from military conflict; and make the estimating of Iraqi military deaths part of the aim of interrogation of Iraqi military commanders in custody. Mr Ingram’s reply stated: “Any loss of life, particularly civilian, is deeply regrettable, but in a military operation the size of Operation Telic it is also unavoidable. Through very strict rules of

postwar Iraq must be targeted at assistance to families left without breadwinners who have been killed or seriously injured by the invasion, then our planners are going to have to calculate the numbers of families left destitute by their loss.” (*Independent*, September 18 2003).

Any sober reflection on the Iraq crisis, from any side of the political spectrum, must surely conclude that the nature and extent of the damage inflicted on the Iraqi people as a result of the U.S./UK coalition action is one of the most important factors determining what is happening in Iraq now and what is likely to happen in the future.

Assessment of the human cost is vital in determining the nature and timing of actions needed to bring stability to Iraq and the entire Middle East. The refusal of the U.S. and the UK administrations to publicly face up to the facts, and their consequences, is a self-defeating ostrich-like posture that will simply inflame the enormous problems now festering in Iraq and neighbouring countries. Every human life is equally valuable, and there is absolutely no human justification for placing the honoring and remembering of U.S. or UK casualties above that of Iraqi casualties. The failings of the West in this respect, are, and will be seen as, racist in general, and anti-Arab in particular.

The Iraq Body Count Project

Since January 2003, Iraq Body Count has been compiling a comprehensive public data base of media-reported civilian deaths in Iraq which flow from the U.S./UK military actions and subsequent occupation. The data base is on a publicly available web-site which is updated as soon as the research team have verified the figures from two or more approved media sources. The “bottom line” is an automatically updated total, which is conveyed, via downloadable web-counters, to over 5,000 websites worldwide. We publish both a minimum and a maximum for each incident, and also for the total, to

accommodate variations in estimates and potential uncertainties in the reports.

Although the cumulative total is an important statistic, and the one which is most often quoted in media reporting on our work, the data collected and archived allows more specific and focused questions to be answered, at least in part. Previously published analyses (available at www.iraqbodycount.net) have focused on (a) the geographical distribution of deaths over the country (editorial 1), (b) the number of deaths from cluster munitions (editorial 2) and (c) deaths where names and other personal details of victims are available (editorial 3). We have also published the first estimate of civilian injuries drawn from media reports which mention such injuries in the context of reporting civilian deaths. (editorial 4). We hope shortly to upgrade the public data-base so that it can be searched and sorted on-line by web-users, who may thus be better enabled to conduct their own analyses on our data using a range of different sort criteria.

The glaring gap in the “counting the dead” project is any reliable total for Iraqi military deaths. The published estimates are little more than informed guesses, and are not based on reliable data. By contrast, the information about civilian deaths, whilst scattered and multiple-sourced, is precise and relies on very little estimation or extrapolation. Our insistence that any incident entering our data base is tied to a specific location and time-frame ensures that we deal only in actual, rather than projected, deaths.

Steady increase in post-war violent deaths

Our most recent analysis is focused on the single most important source of information about civilian deaths since the end of the “war-phase.” This is the Baghdad city morgue. All victims of suspicious or violent death are supposed to be referred here by the hospitals so that an autopsy can be carried out through forensic examination. The figures are not entirely representative because, in some cases, families simply bury their dead without going to the authorities. Many journalists have interviewed morgue staff, and this report is typical:

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Table 1
Conflict-related deaths in Iraq between March 20th and October 23rd 2003 (maximum documented or estimated)

CIVILIANS	
Iraqi	9,500 (1)
Western Journalists	14 (2)
MILITARY	
Iraqi	45,000 (3)
U.S.	349 (4)
Other coalition (inc UK)	52 (5)
Maximum total deaths	55,000

(1) www.iraqbodycount.net

(2) <http://foi.missouri.edu/jouratrisk/chronology.html>

(3) www.adn.com/24hour/world/story/845251p-5936488c.html; and www.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,3604,965089,00.html

(4) www.antiwar.com/ewens/list.html

(5) <http://lunaville.org/warcasualties/Summary.aspx>

engagement, the use of precision munitions and the tactical methods employed to liberate Iraq’s major cities, we are satisfied that the coalition did everything possible to avoid unnecessary casualties. We do not, therefore, propose to undertake a formal review of Iraqi casualties sustained from March 19 to May 1.”

Smith goes on to conclude: “Surely this is both an inhumane and unacceptable position. As at least part of our aid to

‘The more you watch the less you know’

Fox News Viewers Lead Nation in Errors on Iraqi War

by Charles Flowerday

The findings of a recent survey of misconceptions about the war in Iraq have raised anew questions of what constitutes distorted, sensationalistic journalism. Fundamental misconceptions among U.S. citizens regarding the reasons and international support for the war in Iraq vary significantly by news source, by support for President Bush independently of political party and, to a lesser extent, by education level and political party, according to a survey by a California polling firm and the University of Maryland.

Those viewing mostly Fox News and those supporting the president made up most of those with multiple misconceptions about the war and world opinion, said the survey, conducted periodically from January to September

Those paying close attention to Fox News generally had the highest percentages of misperceptions. Those who got most of their information from National Public

and the Center for International and Security Studies at the University of Maryland.

The information supports contentions that, not only are news sources biased but specific sources are biased in specific ways. The survey polled on three major questions: 1) did Al-Qaeda and its September 11, 2001, attacks on U.S. soil have significant links to and receive support from Saddam Hussein’s regime? This Bush administration contention was refuted by the U.S. intelligence community; 2) had the U.S. found convincing evidence of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Iraq prior to the war? Since arriving in Iraq, U.S. troops and special WMD search teams have found no more than trace evidence of such weapons, most often linked to projects begun before the United Nations weapons inspection process; 3) did a majority of people throughout the world support U.S. intervention in Iraq without U.N. support? A clear majority, defined as the majority of the population in a sizable majority of nations in the world, were opposed to the U.S. making war on Iraq without the support and involvement of the United Nations.

“The extent of Americans’ misperceptions vary significantly depending on their source of news,” the study said. “Those who receive most of their news from Fox News are more likely than average to have misperceptions (about the issues above). Those who receive most of their news from NPR or PBS are less likely to have misperceptions. These variations cannot simply be explained as a result of differences in the demographic characteristics of each audience, because these variations can also be found when comparing the demographic subgroups of each audience.”

In analyzing the source of news and the presence of one or more misperceptions, the survey said that the frequency of multiple misperceptions varied by news source as follows: Fox—80 percent; CBS—71 percent;

ABC—61 percent; NBC—55 percent; CNN—55 percent; print media—47 percent; PBS/NPR—23 percent. Of those holding all three misperceptions, the order was the same as the first breakdown but with CBS and ABC reversing places, and CNN leading NBC, both by one percentage point: Fox — 45 percent; ABC—16 percent; CBS — 15 percent; CNN—13 percent; NBC — 12 percent; print media — 9 percent; PBS-NPR — 4 percent.

When the data were broken down by average rate of misperception (all three averaged) per news source, the order was much the same, with CNN, ABC and NBC clustered very closely in the middle: Fox — 45 percent; CBS — 36 percent; CNN — 31 percent; ABC and NBC — 30 percent; print media — 25 percent; PBS-NPR — 11 percent. Breakdowns by the individual misperceptions showed much the same order with slight variation in the middle among CNN, ABC and NBC.

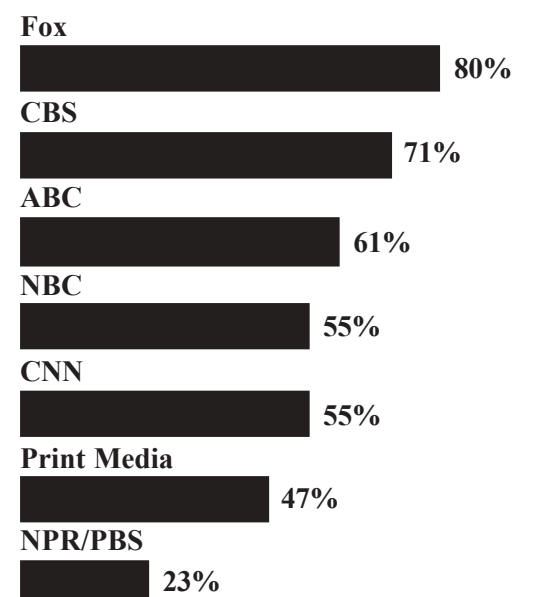
Demographic issues were sorted out by breaking down the data according to key demographic distinctions and then assessing them against the misperceptions. Fox viewers were more Republican and PBS-NPR consumers higher in education and less Republican. Print media consumers were more educated and CBS viewers were less well educated and more Democratic. In general, Republicans and those with less educations tended to have more misperceptions, but controlling for these differences shows that fundamental variations in the level of misperceptions were still evident.

For Republicans who were Fox viewers, the averaged rate over all three misperceptions was 54 percent, while for Republicans who get their news from PBS-NPR, the average rate was 32 percent. Regarding education levels, the average rate

Frequency of Misperceptions:

Evidence of al-Qaeda Links, WMD Found, World Public Opinion Favorable

Respondents with one or more misperceptions



News Source	Average Rate Per Misperception
Fox	45%
CBS	36
CNN	31
ABC	30
NBC	30
Print Media	25
NPR/PBS	11

Radio (NPR) and the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) had the lowest percentages holding misperceptions.

This information came from a survey of such perceptions prior to and following the war by Knowledge Networks of Menlo Park, Calif., in cooperation with the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA), a joint program of the Center on Policy Attitudes

of the misperceptions among those with a bachelor’s degree was 27 percent; for those who used mostly print — 20 percent; and among those get their news from PBS-NPR, it was just 10 percent.

Examining misperceptions as related to attention paid to the news, the survey said: “Most striking, in the case of those who primarily watched Fox News, greater attention to news modestly increases the likelihood of misperceptions.”

The survey also concluded that while Republicans and presidential supporters are more likely to have higher numbers of respondents with misperceptions, when selecting out for support of the president across political parties, political bias is not the deciding factor: “a significant number of people who oppose the president have misperceptions and within groups that support or oppose the president, misperceptions vary sharply according to news source.”

'Peace in Search of Makers'

by Marilyn Meacham
Executive Director
Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska

"Peace in Search of Makers" was the theme for several gatherings held in Lincoln October 23-24, 2003, during which Rev. Dr. Stephen J. Sidorak, Jr. addressed the need for moral courage and prophetic witness in our nation today.

A nationally recognized peace activist, Dr. Sidorak, is the Executive Director of the Christian Conference of Connecticut, a United Methodist Minister (Rocky Mountain Conference) and the former Executive Director of the Colorado Council of Churches. His decades-long commitment to the peace movement grew out of years of experience in parish ministry in Utah and Colorado.

Dr. Sidorak is a founding member and current chair of the Board of Directors of the Connecticut Council for Inter-religious Understanding, representing nine religious traditions. He is an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Advanced Pastoral Studies, San Francisco Theological Seminary and a member of the Group on Mass Violence, Harvard University.

As a speaker and workshop/retreat leader across the country, Dr. Sidorak has addressed a number of topics including ethical issues and social concerns, the nature and purpose of ecumenism, inter-religious relations in the ministry, gambling, and a broad range of Peace & Justice issues, particularly the nuclear crisis, earning widespread media attention. He has spoken at the United States Air Force Academy, the University of Colorado, Colorado State University, the University of Denver, Yale Divinity School, the University of Connecticut, the Chautauqua Institution, Riverside Church, and the Washington National Cathedral. His travels have taken him to Canada, Australia, Austria, Bermuda, Egypt, France, Israel, Italy, Mexico, Monaco, South Africa, and Switzerland.

In his message to Nebraska Wesleyan University students, faculty, and staff, Sidorak spoke of the ubiquity of terrorism and how the war against it creates all kinds of anxiety. "When the whole metropolitan Washington, D.C. area could be terrorized by two demented snipers, when fallout sensors are being installed around our nation's Capitol, when public health officials repeatedly implore us to prepare for worst case scenarios, we can succumb to 'severe acute' anxiety. The mere threat of terrorism is tormenting, and augments the palpable sense of foreboding within our borders, a poignant reminder of how our inordinate worrying already allows the

terrorists to win. It compels Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz to speak ominously about our prospects. 'We know that it is no longer a question of whether a major biological or even chemical attack might conceivably be attempted, but more likely a matter of when.' There is patently only 'peace (of a sort) within our borders' presently."

Relating the effect of our anxiety to public policy today, Sidorak said, "Our anxiety over terrorism has led to extremism in policy. If we Americans are feeling such



Dr. Stephen Sidorak with Dr. William Sloane Coffin, Jr.

a high level of anxiety, then it does not take much imagination to appreciate how anxious the average Muslim in a typical Islamic nation must feel. As one Middle East resident summarized his region's attitude toward America: 'It is not you we are afraid of. It is your fear that frightens us.' Ironically, the same nation that would rule the world is itself ruled by its fear. And cynical American policymakers are fully aware how fast such fear can be manipulated to advance partisan political purposes."

The need to be a voice for peacemaking was reiterated in a presentation featuring the Rev. Dr. William Sloane Coffin, Jr. via videotapes. Many in Nebraska have had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Coffin and are well aware of his passion for Peace & Justice. Dr. Coffin's health currently restricts his travels, but he shares

his message whenever and however he can, drawing from his vast personal experience. He was born in New York City in 1924 and in his youth he studied music with Nadia Boulanger in Paris. His music studies at Yale University were interrupted by World War II, in which he served as an infantry officer and as a liaison officer to the French and Russian armies. He graduated from Yale in 1949 with a BA in Government. When the Korean War broke out, Coffin joined the CIA. He trained anti-Soviet Russians for operation within the Soviet Union from

In 1967, he along with Philip Berrigan, Robert McAfee Brown, Martin Luther King, Jr., Reinhold Niebuhr and many others founded Clergy and Laity Concerned for Vietnam. He was indicted by the federal government in January 1968 with Dr. Benjamin Spock for aiding and abetting draft resisters. After a highly publicized trial, the charges, on appeal, were dropped. It was during this period that he advised the Peace Corps under the leadership of Sargeant Shriver.

While the senior minister at Riverside Church in New York City, Dr. Coffin became renowned for his preaching where he regularly challenged his listeners to seek justice in their public lives. His tenure at Riverside also saw the establishment, on the 100th anniversary of the ministry of Henry Emerson Fosdick, Riverside's founding pastor and peerless preacher, of the church's acclaimed Disarmament Program. It was also during this period that he began traveling extensively to promote international peace and human rights, visiting Chile, Argentina, Peru, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Jordan, Israel, Egypt, China, and the Soviet Union.

As the president emeritus of SANE/FREEZE: Campaign for Global Security, the largest Peace & Justice organization in the United States, he became widely known for his advocacy of the fundamental connection between peace, the environment and social justice. He has long been a vocal opponent of weapons of mass destruction—no matter who possesses them—as well as a proponent of nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation.

Sidorak honored his longtime friend by sharing some of Bill's "Coffinisms" and by relating the passion Coffin still has today for Peace & Justice, especially in regard to nuclear disarmament. Two videos featuring William Sloane Coffin were viewed. "War is a Coward's Escape from the Problems of Peace" is Coffin's message shared in Berkeley, California this past spring. A recently released video, "A Lover's Quarrel

"War is a Coward's Escape from the Problems of Peace"

—Rev. William Sloan Coffin, Jr.

Riders arrested in May of 1961 in Montgomery, Alabama for protesting local segregation laws. The United States Supreme Court later overturned that conviction.

With America" features an interview with Coffin about his feelings regarding the war in Iraq and current domestic and global concerns. About the aftermath of 9/11 Coffin

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Stop Big Business Subsidies – Repeal LB 775

CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Now is a critical time to collect signatures

Your help is needed now in gathering valid signatures on our initiative petitions! Ours is an initiative petition campaign by volunteers – not paid circulators. We need to work hard to gather signatures and spread the word about our effort to repeal LB 775. Please keep your petitions with you so you don't miss any opportunity to get signatures whenever you meet someone who might sign. Do your best to fill up each petition (with 20 signatures) before sending it in. Thanks for doing your part in this history-making campaign. Together we can change things in Nebraska.

Two more groups join coalition

The **Nebraska Green Party** and the **Communications Workers of America Local 7470** have joined the coalition, Stop Big Business Subsidies – Repeal LB 775. The Nebraska Greens note that LB 775 is a corporate welfare program whose cost to Nebraska taxpayers far outweighs any potential benefit. The CWA Local 7470 represents about 350 workers in Lincoln and the surrounding area who work at Alltel – a company that took LB 775 tax breaks then cut union jobs.

Like the **United Steel Workers Local 286**, which represents about 970 workers at the Goodyear plant in Lincoln, the CWA union knows firsthand that companies receiving LB 775 benefits for job creation can eliminate jobs and ship the work outside Nebraska. Alltel, which has signed up three times for LB 775 breaks, announced in June 2003 that it was closing its call center. A total of 160 union jobs were cut, with a salary range of \$30,000 to \$42,000. (Goodyear, which also signed three LB 775 agreements, phased out 480 jobs this summer and sent many of them to Mexico.) The other members of the coalition are **NAPE / AFSCME** (the state employees union) and **Nebraskans for Peace**.

Citing the need for a tax incentive program that is open to public review, the **Lancaster County Democratic Party** has voted to support the campaign to repeal LB 775. The **Center**

for **Rural Affairs** is also encouraging Nebraskans to sign the petition as the only way to force debate on Nebraska's economic development policy.

Latest state budget shortfall announced

State revenue forecasts have been slashed by another \$198 million. Nebraska's Economic Forecasting Advisory Board today cut back estimates of revenue expected between now and June 30, 2005. Unless the economy picks up, the state's budget must be cut by this amount during the 2004 legislative session (since no one expects senators will raise taxes to cover the shortfall). LB 775's \$77-million-year average cost to the state treasury would nearly cover this shortfall, further illuminating the need to turn off the LB 775 tax giveaway spigot.

LB 775 is the elephant in the middle of the room that the Legislature and Governor Johanns have repeatedly ignored during Nebraska's continuing budget crises. This inaction by our elected representatives has created the need for Nebraska voters to repeal LB 775 themselves by initiative petition at the November 2004 election.

Revenue loss from LB 775 harms Nebraska schools

LB 775, as a state tax policy, is undermining Nebraska's ability to ensure every child between 5 and 21 has equal access to excellence in educational opportunities, according to Jerry Hoffman, a consultant in education and community development. In an article published in the October 2003 issue of the *Nebraska Report*, he cites the Legislature's decision in 2003 to reduce state aid to K-12 public education by \$42 million while continuing to exempt LB 775 benefits from cuts. Hoffman concludes that repeal of LB 775 is necessary to force the State of Nebraska to reform statewide tax structures to fund adequately public institutions created from constitutional mandates, such as public education. The entire article, "LB 775 Fails Educational Equity & Excellence Test," is available at www.nebraskansforpeace.org.

Propaganda refuted

A pamphlet being circulated entitled, "Repealing LB 775: The Job Repealed May be Yours!", claims to expose the "myths" about LB 775. It contains numerous inaccuracies and misrepresentations regarding LB 775, the consequences of its repeal, and the message of the repeal campaign. The most egregious falsehoods are refuted in the October 2003 of the *Nebraska Report* in the article, "Refuting the LB 775 Propaganda," available at www.nebraskansforpeace.org. One of the falsehoods relating to job growth misrepresented a study that was incorrectly characterized as a product of the University of Nebraska-Kearney.

FALSEHOOD #8: "UNK released a study showing LB 775 indirectly creates and supports many thousands more additional jobs than those created directly as a result of LB 775."

TRUTH: In 2003, a business lobbying group, the Nebraska Jobs Coalition, contracted a study by two University of Nebraska-Kearney economists working as private consultants that examined the direct and indirect economic impact of employment. Although the five companies studied receive LB 775 tax incentives, the study examined the impact of *all* jobs for each company at project sites. No effort was made to sort out the impact of jobs attributed to LB 775 from substantial pre-existing jobs at these sites. The study also clearly stated that it did not address issues of causality. Therefore, the study did not conclude that LB 775 was in any way responsible for the specific economic impact of the five companies examined or for job growth in Nebraska generally.

Frequently asked questions

Q. Which companies have received tax subsidies under LB 775?

A. The state does not release this information. The annual reports the Department of Revenue issues list the original names of companies that sign up for LB 775 tax breaks. But the Department does not report which companies actually qualify, the amount of tax breaks actually received, or all the current names of companies receiving benefits under LB 775. (For example, Alltel is still listed as Lincoln

Telecommunications in the annual reports even though Alltel purchased the company several years ago. If you don't know the company's name when it signed up, you may not be able to find out whether that company is an LB 775 business.)

Q. If the state releases so little information on LB 775, where did the numbers come from that are published in the special report ("The Case for Repealing LB 775: A Special Report on the Employment and Investment Growth Act", August 2003, available at www.nebraskansforpeace.org).

A. The top 25 beneficiaries of LB 775 tax breaks and new jobs credits listed in the special report are ranked based upon analysis of information in the Department of Revenue's annual reports of *planned* project investment and *promised* new jobs. These numbers are used as a proxy for actual tax breaks. They give a good idea as to which companies are receiving the most benefit from LB 775 subsidies.

Did you know?

Ethanol plants in Nebraska are currently able to apply for financial assistance under four different programs. Ethanol production credits – not LB 775 tax breaks – drive new ethanol plant construction in Nebraska, according to Todd Sneller, Administrator of the Nebraska Ethanol Board. LB 775's role is small, contributing more to ethanol producer profits than site location decisions.

A study by the Center for Rural Affairs published in 2002 found that LB 775 investments widen the gap between rural and urban Nebraska. Nearly two-thirds of Nebraskans are receiving little or no benefit from the subsidy their tax dollars are providing to LB 775 beneficiaries. The study, "Balancing the Scales of Prosperity," is available at www.cfra.org/resources/Publications/Balancing_the_Scales.htm.

Petitions and circulator instructions

To obtain petitions and circulator instructions, contact Nebraskans for Peace, 941 O Street, Suite 1026, Lincoln, NE 68508 (Phone 402.475.4620; Fax 402.475.4624; E-mail nfstate@redjellyfish.net).



Count 7-7-5, Nebraska's "Official State Vampire," was captured on film by KLN Channel 8 Television rising from his coffin on the plaza of his "Haunted Statehouse" the afternoon of October 31. Just moments before, in a spooky Halloween announcement, the state's Economic Forecasting Board had projected a \$198 million shortfall in state tax revenue. Crediting the state budget crisis to his LB 775 Big Business tax breaks, the Count proceeded to "suck the state treasury dry" right before the eyes of the taxpaying public. But the really scary part will occur in January when the Legislature reconvenes to cut the budget for the fifth straight session.

Transcript of Count 7-7-5's Halloween News Conference

[The coffin lid opens. A vampire raises his head, surveys the crowd and smiles appreciatively.]

Ah. Tasty taxpayers!

[He then commands his faithful assistant "Revenue" to help him out of the coffin.]

Revenue! Assist me!

[He stands and addresses the audience.]

Welcome to my "haunted **Statehouse!**"

I am Count 7-7-5, the Official State Vampire. You know... like the Official State Bird: Western Meadowlark. And Official State Flower: Goldenrod.

I am the Official State Vampire and the putative reason for your presence here today.

[He attempts to continue speaking, but voice croaks.]

Forgive me. My throat is parched. A dry crust... Would any of you, I wonder, care to offer the Count a drink?

[He leers at the audience significantly before settling for a glass provided by Revenue.]

To resume... For 16 years now, I have been sucking the lifeblood out of the taxpayers of Nebraska, feeding nightly on your state treasury and drinking my fill. For 16 straight years, in the "Chamber of Horrors" deep within the Statehouse, my legislative minions have provided a steady stream of taxpayer revenue...

[He acknowledges his faithful assistant, Revenue, with a nod.]

...to slake my great thirst.

And, for 16 straight years, I have operated in darkness—outside the light of scrutiny and the watchful eye of the public. Cloaked

in shadow and working virtually unseen, nobody but myself (and my faithful assistant, Revenue) has had any notion of my activities. Not even the Governor or the Legislature that spawned me.

Until to-**DAY. Day!** (Oh, that word; it gives me the 'villies.')

As most of you undoubtedly know from all the TV you watch, we vampires avoid the daylight.

[He holds hands up to screen out the sun.]

It's bad for our health.

Darkness is much more to our liking.

But today—October 31, Halloween—is a '**dark day.**' And getting 'darker' by the minute.

Just moments ago, the Economic Forecasting Board projected a \$198 million shortfall in the state budget.

On top of all the cuts that have already taken place in K-12 education, the University and state college system, social services, Medicaid and the state employee workforce, there's \$198 million more yet to come. A mere two months from now—when the Legislature reconvenes—my devoted minions will hack and slash, gore and gouge, ravage and ruin the programs for all the dear children and their tax-paying mamas and papas.

It will be (pardon the pun) a bloodbath. A veritable slaughter of the innocents.

Can you not already hear them sharpening their knives in anticipation?

TWO THINGS ONLY will the senators **NOT** do:

They will not raise taxes (not in an election year, when they have to go home and face

the voters; you think they're crazy?);

Nor will they dare anger their Master by trying to repeal my chief meal ticket, LB 775.

It has taken 16 long years, but now—at last—the taxpayers begin to see the fruits of my handiwork. The secrecy has been stripped away. The long night of my anonymity has ended. And I, Count 7-7-5, am now poised to receive the recognition, which is so richly due me...

For it is I who have sucked the state treasury dry and provoked this fiscal shortfall.

Had my little darling, LB 775, not been on the books, not one program—**NOT ONE**, I tell you—would have had to have been cut since the budget crisis began.

Allow me to demonstrate...

[The Count goes to a table on which two beakers of blood are sitting.]

This first beaker of blood represents the \$1.5 billion I have already drained from the state treasury since LB 775 was first passed in 1987. See it as **REVENUE LOST**.

[He proceeds to suck all of the liquid out of the container, smacking lips and belching in satisfaction.]

Ah, a nice lunch.

Now this second beaker, of equal size and volume, represents another \$1.5 billion in LB 775 credits that I can collect from my current activities—but am waiting to cash. See it as **FUTURE REVENUE LOST**.

[He moves to drink the second beaker as well, but regretfully resists.]

A snack for later.

At an average cost of \$77 million per year, LB 775 nearly equals the projected shortfall

in the state budget. Had that money not been buying my "business lunches," the budget would not be facing a single cut.

But, as I have indicated, my minions would never dare treat their Master so abominably. You don't bite the hand that feeds you... Or, to be more precise, you don't bite the hand that feeds on you... Or, you don't bite the hand that's biting your neck... Something like that...

Well, anyway, it has been amusing chatting with you all this afternoon. If I hurry, however, I can still catch a couple of hours of shut-eye before nightfall. And we vampires need our beauty sleep.

So, if you'll excuse me, your Master bids you farewell.

Oh, and if I were you, I wouldn't go out after dark. I hear the police department, due to the budget crisis, is cutting back on its enforcement. And you never know who might be out there.

[The Count climbs back into the coffin and closes the lid just as a young, energetic woman rushes in, holding a wooden stake with a Repeal LB 775 petition attached to it.]

Wait! We can end this nightmare! The initiative petition to repeal LB 775 will drive a stake right through the Count's heart and lay his greedy, blood-sucking soul to rest for good!

But we must act now before he's allowed to do any more damage to the citizens of our state!

For the sake of our children, sign the petition! Sign the petition!

[The crowd disperses as darkness descends on the land.]

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Maine Becomes the First State To Enact Universal Health Care

by Maine State Senator Michael Brennan

Earlier this year, the Legislature enacted and Governor John Baldacci signed into law the nation's first universal health care program. Over the next five years, the Dirigo Health Program will provide coverage to the 180,000 Mainers who are currently without health insurance and, equally important, reduce health care costs for everyone. By utilizing an innovative blend of private and public resources, Maine has catapulted itself to the forefront of progressive health care reform.

In Maine we waited for help from the federal government. Help to reduce the cost of health care, help for those without coverage and help to lower the cost of prescription drugs. We decided not to wait any longer.

A statewide poll conducted in 2000 revealed that health care was as the most pressing concern to Maine citizens. Further analysis of the poll showed that 69 percent of respondents were very concerned about the cost of health insurance, placing that issue at the top of the list of concerns. The cost of medical care came in second followed by prescription drug costs and the cost of caring for the elderly. These issues all ranked ahead of education, taxes, crime and the environment. A survey of Maine small businesses, also released in 2000, indicated that they too were concerned about the rising cost of providing health care coverage to workers. A large majority, 81 percent, indicated health insurance was important in their efforts to attract and retain employees.

For the past several years, Mainers have been subject to annual double digit increases in health insurance premiums. In fact, this year it is projected that across the country employers will experience a 15 percent increase in health care costs. Given escalating premiums, and confronted by a slow economy, employers have been challenged to maintain their current level of employer-based coverage. Already, workers have been asked to bear more of the cost of coverage, either in the form of higher co-payments or deductibles, or to forego wage increases in an effort to maintain health coverage.

Very tight state and local government budgets have further compounded the problem. With annual double-digit increases in health care costs for government, school systems, and university employees, flat-funded, balanced budgets require real cuts

in programs to offset the increases. For a rural state such as Maine, these spiraling health insurance costs have become a major drain on the state's human and financial capital.

Faced with this dire situation, two years ago the Maine Legislature authorized the creation of a commission to examine a single-payer system. This proposal was hotly debated in the 2002 gubernatorial election that included Democratic, Republican, Independent and Green candidates. Shortly after taking office, Democratic Governor John Baldacci announced his intention not to pursue a single-payer system and, instead, to introduce the Dirigo Health Plan and created the Office of Health Policy and Finance to shepherd the bill through the Legislature.

When the bill was first introduced in May, it was widely supported by consumer groups and health care activists but faced strong opposition from the hospitals, insurance companies and physicians. In order to avoid a potential stalemate between organizations who want progressive reforms and the status quo, Maine's Legislative leadership took the unusual step of establishing a bipartisan Joint Select Committee on Health Care Reform. Members were selected from the Legislature's Health and Human Services, Insurance and Financial Affairs, and Appropriations Committees. The committee, which had broad authority, was given just over a month to fashion a compromise and revamp the state's health care system. Following a series of public hearings and late night negotiations, the Joint Select Committee unanimously approved a rewritten version of the governor's proposal.

The newly created Dirigo Health is based on the premise that by providing health coverage to all residents, the health care system can recapture a major portion of the \$270 million that is now lost in emergency room and uncompensated care. Dirigo Health will:

Provide an affordable, comprehensive benefit plan to individuals and small businesses by July 2004.

Help control the cost of health insurance through more rigorous rate setting.

Allow insurers more flexibility in negotiating rates based on quality standards.

Improve health care planning by developing quality data.

Help contain costs through voluntary caps on health care providers for a period of one year.

Enroll 14,000 new persons in Maine Care (Medicaid) by expanding eligibility for individuals without children and working parents.

Dirigo Health is a quasi-state agency with a five-member Board nominated by the governor and approved by the legislature. The Board is now in the process of developing a benefit plan and will issue a request for proposal next year for a private carrier to administer the plan. By this time next year, Dirigo Health expects to enroll over 30,000 uninsured Mainers.

In addition to Dirigo Health, the U.S. Supreme Court also awarded Maine a significant victory this spring when it ruled that the Maine Rx Program could be implemented. The program, passed by the legislature in 2000 was immediately challenged in court by the pharmaceutical companies. Due to the Court's ruling, Maine will be the first state in the country to extend prescription discounts to an additional quarter of a million of its citizens.

In Maine we waited for help from the federal government. Help to reduce the cost of health care, help for those without coverage and help to lower the cost of prescription drugs. We decided not to wait any longer. Instead, we are on the cusp of transforming health care in this state to ensure that all residents—regardless of income or education—have access to quality health care. We look forward to making Dirigo Health a success and we would welcome the opportunity to work with other states or organizations interested in pursuing progressive health care reform.

Senator Michael Brennan represents Maine Senate District 27, which includes Portland, Falmouth and Long Island. He is Senate Chair of the Joint Select Committee on Health Care Reform and the Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. He can be reached at :
SenMichael.Brennan@legislature.maine.gov
or at the Maine Senate Majority Office at 207-287-1515.

For more information visit the Maine Senate Majority website: <http://www.mainesenate.org>

Language, process, and history for the Dirigo Health legislation, LD 1611 in the 121st Legislature: <http://janus.state.me.us/legis/LawMakerWeb/summary.asp?LD=1611>

Public Law Chapter 469, the Dirigo Health statutory language as enacted and signed into law. <http://janus.state.me.us/legis/ros/lom/LOM121st/10Pub451-500/TableofContents.htm>

Letters to a Young Activist

A Review of Todd Gitlin's Book on Lessons Learned

by Nan Graf

In his book, *Letters to a Young Activist* (2003), Todd Gitlin uses a conversational style that engages the reader immediately and makes good sense for those of us, 'young or old,' who wish to make changes in American society and the world.

Starting out as a 20-year-old activist himself in the 1960s and extending his activism into the 21st century, Gitlin weighs and measures his experiences honestly. He does not romanticize the '60s, nor does he underestimate the importance of the era's outcries as he analyzes what worked or what didn't.

Elected national president of Students for a Democratic Society (SDC) in 1963, Gitlin notes that he allied himself with the radical left and still leans left-ward but finds himself now more willing to search for common ground. He aims not to discuss political theory, but rather, to share practical knowledge. He sums up his approach simply as "What I have come to think in trying to change the world."

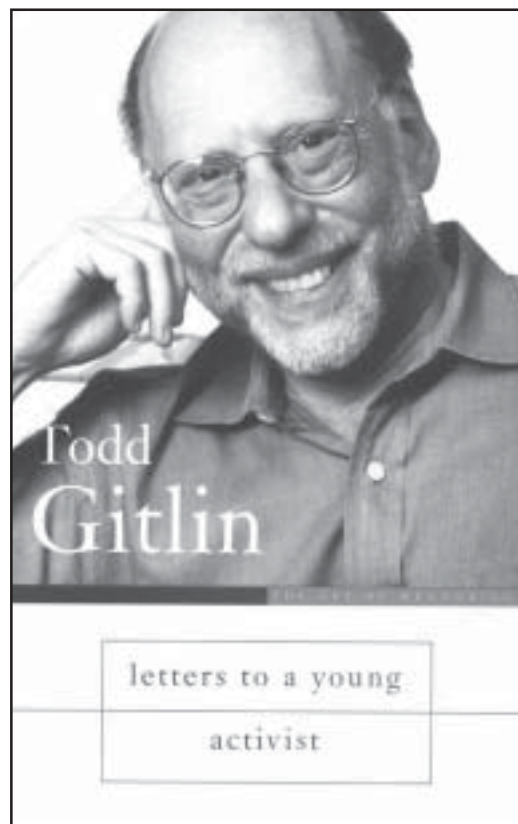
In response to opponents who consign would-be changers to the level of impractical idealists, he argues that to face our present reality *is* realistic, not idealistic; we *do* face "real war, real racism, real ruination, starvation and all the rest." He reminds activists that "Refusing to feel at home in a world of stupendous inequality is nothing to be ashamed of." On the other hand, he warns that "You're never finished."

Writers reveal themselves by those they admire and don't. Gitlin admires the King activists who kept their "eyes on the prize" and states that "you can't lump together these heroes with their vastly more numerous contemporaries whose most fervent ambition was to get on American Bandstand." He points out that the Yippie leader Abbie Hoffman, another '60s activist, "mistook the state of his mind for the state of the world" and wasted himself on "Revolution for the hell of it"—a Hoffman maxim.

Gitlin himself emphasizes that "To influence events, activists must connect to the public—which means however cosmopolitan or internationalist you aspire to be, the public elects governments." I myself find this observation valid and helpful for the old as well as the young activist, though it may for some sound like cousin to the sellout (in the sense of

accommodating one's activism to the popular.)

Currently a professor of Journalism and Sociology at Columbia University, Gitlin still feels outrage about injustice, but the aging process has made him more open to finding answers wherever he can; this includes expressing respect for the



organizing efforts of the Far Right, who have learned well how to mobilize large numbers of people and how to get them unswervingly focused on an issue important to them. He disagrees with their issues but recognizes that their strategies warrant closer inspection.

He goes back and forth between the '60s and today as he weaves threads of advice for the young. He suggests avoiding rhetoric or action that "if carried out by enemies" the activist would condemn, recalling that Stalinists who infiltrated his organization made shambles of the SDS. To him, serious-minded activists are neither violent nor hedonistic; they seek results and advocate forming workable alliances. He cautions any activist, though, about religious or secular extremism (Right *or* Left), because extremists can de-rail the best of plans and goals for change. (I did remind myself at

this point in the book that Malcolm X had said, "You show me a Black man who isn't an extremist, and I'll show you one who needs psychiatric attention.")

In the parlance of Gitlin, "outsiders" are activists who operate on the fringe of society, and "insiders" operate within the system. He recommends that outsiders contact insiders, for they will discover "sympathetic insiders in many surprising places." If outsiders can get insiders to listen to them, they can make changes, because they know the system; insiders can help outsider agendas materialize.

Sometimes, young outsiders like Gitlin can mature into insiders and become part of a university system, and once in awhile insiders become outsiders, as in the case of Daniel Ellsberg, who blew the whistle on the Pentagon during the Vietnam War. (See *The Pentagon Papers*.) For effective change, there is need of interaction between outsiders and insiders, especially those of open mind.

When Gitlin compares Right and Left, he focuses on the word "power": the Right "concentrates on getting and holding power," whereas the Left "is ambivalent," as if power might be a shabby gain over principle. It's all well and good, according to Gitlin, for activists to remain purist devoted to one way of achieving peace and justice, but the danger is getting stuck

with no results.

This is not the only book for a young activist, but it's a good start. It's more centrist than a Noam Chomsky book but way to the left of turncoat David Horowitz, who—apparently in need of attention and big bucks—shifted from Left to Right.

I'm dissatisfied with the limited booklist at the end that Gitlin calls "An Activist's Library" and especially disappointed that he excluded Saul Alinsky's primer for change—*Rules for Radicals* (1972). It helps to draw from a variety of books and voices in finding one's own brand of activism.

Even so, if you want to be an agent of change—whatever your age—*Letters to a Young Activist* (in memory of Paul Wellstone) offers a good source of ideas to get you going. It deserves a place in every busy activist's library.

A Sampler of Insights from Todd Gitlin

"Resist the temptation to demonize."

"The existential truth is that anytime is a good time to try to change the world."

"Activism is a leap of faith."

"You did not choose the world, but you must choose to live in it."

"Burning bridges is the route of the fundamentalist."

"Activists are responsible for their acts."

"It's a rich man's war, but poor people fight it."

"When the old game collapses, the pieces do not discriminate: they fall on innocent heads."

"Consequences count and history is unforgiving."

"The rapture of purism is a political aphrodisiac."

"Major political change... requires social commotion whose heat must then be contained."

"You can fall in love with your own outrage."

"Abstain from the fairy-tale pleasures of oversimplification."

"Policy unquestioned is policy unbridled."

"In the nuclear age, humans are born as hostages."

The Killing in Iraq Goes On, conclusion

“We used to receive about 300-350 cases per month—an average of 10 a day,” said Faik Amin Baker, director of the Medical Legal Institute in Medical City, which oversees the running of the morgue. “The figures now are more than triple that. We sometimes get 40 to 45 cases in one day.”

Source: www.baghdadbulletin.com/pageArticle.php?article_id=88&cat_id=1 (August 8, 2003)

Based on analysis of over 20 different press reports filed between May 2003 and the present, we are now able to show conclusively that the rate of violent deaths has steadily risen since April, and is far above comparable figures for the same period of the previous year. Drawing from key media reports which quote precise totals (rather than per-day or per-week estimates), Table 2 shows the monthly totals of deaths arriving at the Baghdad Morgue.

From April 14 to September 30, 3,563 violent deaths were recorded by the Baghdad city morgue. When corrected for pre-war death rates in the city a total of at least 1,886 excess violent deaths in Baghdad emerges from reports based on the morgue’s records.

IBC’s latest study is the first comprehensive count to adjust for the comparable “background level” of deaths in Baghdad in recent pre-war times. It is therefore an estimate of additional deaths in the city directly attributable to the breakdown of law and order following the US takeover and occupation of Baghdad.

The study confirms the widespread anecdotal evidence that violence on the

streets of Baghdad has skyrocketed, with the average daily death rate almost tripling since mid April from around 10 per day to over 28 per day during August.

Another worrying development is that during the pre-war period deaths from gunshot wounds accounted for approximately 10 percent of bodies brought to the morgue, but now account for over 60 percent of those killed. The small number of reports available for other cities indicate that these trends are being mirrored elsewhere in the country.

Although the majority of deaths are the result of Iraqi on Iraqi violence, some were directly caused by U.S. military fire. There is evidence that these deaths, often from indiscriminate use of firepower, increasingly fail to be reported or remain unacknowledged by occupation forces.

The Geneva Conventions and Hague Regulations, to which the U.S. and UK are signatories, place the responsibility for ensuring public order and protecting the civilian population from violence on the occupying powers. UN Resolution 1483, which recognized the U.S./UK as the de facto occupying authority in Iraq, clearly

Table 2
Total deaths recorded at the Baghdad Morgue
April through September 2003.

	Total	Daily rate	Deaths from Gunshot Wounds
April 14-30	135	8.4	84
May	462	14.9	323
June	626	20.9	389
July	780	25.2	470
August	872	28.1	518
September	667	22.2	372
Total	3,563	21.5	2,156

Sources:

Independent May 16, 2003;
Christian Science Monitor May 16, 2003;
Knight Ridder Newspapers May 21, 2003;
Institute for War and Peace reporting June 6, 2003;
Boston Globe September 3, 2003;
New York Times September 16, 2003;
Los Angeles Times September 16, 2003;
Newsday October 12, 2003;
Irish Times October 10, 2003

bound them to these duties. But the U.S./UK are manifestly failing to fulfil them, compounding the death and destruction already unleashed by their invasion of Iraq. At the same time the U.S., in particular, resists any multilateral initiatives which would lead to an early end to its dominance over the country.

Meanwhile the latest reports from the nation’s capital show that, as throughout the summer, the city’s daily death toll continues to rise. But reporting this rise may become more difficult, as coalition forces suppress the free movement of journalists.

Pepe Escobar, a journalist for the *Asia Times*, reports that “The CPA has in fact censored journalists’ visits to Iraqi hospitals. Special permission is now required—and the wait can be eternal.” (September 19, 2003: www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/EI19Ak02.html)

British journalist Robert Fisk has reported this too—but notes that while “this means we’re not in theory supposed to find out the [casualty] figures... in fact we can get into the hospitals, because we know many of the doctors or there are other ways in, and usually the security guards are very sympathetic towards us. They’re Iraqi. They want us to tell the story of this

great tragedy for the Iraqis.” (Democracy Now interview, September 18, 2003 www.indybay.org/news/2003/09/1646484.php)

And unlike our great leaders, those Iraqi hospital workers don’t believe the public needs to be guarded from the truth.

‘Peace in Search of Makers’, conclusion

says, “We had the world’s good will and we squandered it! I’m worried that we have a self-righteousness now that comes from feeling unfairly hurt. We could have expanded our horizons, widened our hearts, to understand that a lot of people in this world are being unfairly hurt. But we closed in on ourselves, and the most powerful nation in the world has become a victim of victimhood.” Responding to President Bush’s 2002 State of the Union address in which he identified Iran, Iraq, and North Korea as an “axis of evil,” Coffin insists that a “far more formidable trio of evil are environmental degradation, pandemic poverty and a world awash with weapons.” Coffin sums up his remarks by proclaiming,

“The true patriots are those who carry on a lover’s quarrel with their country as a reflection of God’s eternal lover’s quarrel with the entire world.”

Clergy and lay leaders were challenged by Dr. Sidorak as he posed the question, “Caution or Courage?” He implored clergy colleagues to reflect on their own ministries and judge for themselves what place the virtue of courage has in it and the degree to which their ministries incorporate a prophetic dimension, particularly when it comes to war and peace. Quoting Coffin, Sidorak said, “It takes courage to buck the tide. It takes courage to open our eyes and see things which other people don’t want to

see—don’t want mentioned.” Sidorak compared moral courage to common integrity, reminding those in attendance that not many medals for peacemaking bravery have been issued to the ordained of our land lately. He said that Reinhold Niebuhr’s memorable rebuke remains remarkably timely, “There is something pathetic about the timidity of the religious leader who is always afraid of what an honest message on controversial issues might do to his organization.”

Sidorak ended by urging those present to act, to be heard. He said, “I still hold out the hope that the case for prophetic courage is compelling and pray that the clergy will not shirk the responsibility to exhibit it, convincingly and repeatedly, confident that

courage is, after all, as Plato expressed it poignantly, ‘a sort of endurance of the soul.’”

Sponsoring the “Peace in Search of Makers” events were Nebraskans for Peace, Marj and George Manglitz, the Human Rights Coalition of Lincoln, the Justice and Peace Ministries-UCC, Lincoln Friends Meeting, Nebraska Wesleyan University Ministries, St. Paul United Methodist Church, Turn Off the Violence and other individual donors. Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska coordinated the event.

To receive a text copy of Dr. Sidorak’s presentations or to borrow Dr. Coffin’s videotapes, contact Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska, 402-476-3391 or im50427@alltel.net.

NFP State Board 2004 Priorities

All Peace & Justice issues are of importance to Nebraskans for Peace. As an organization with limited resources, however, the NFP State Board annually establishes “priority issues” to enable us to maximize our political impact. The priorities are identified on the basis of a number of factors—timeliness, public interest, affordability, need—and are subject to change depending on the circumstances. 9/11 and the “War on Terrorism,” for instance, prompted a shift in our focus virtually overnight. That kind of flexibility and adaptability has to be a hallmark of any organization working for social change. As author Todd Gitlin notes in his book *Letters to a Young Activist*, “The canvas on which an activist works is society, a vast, messy, interdependent whole.” Each fall, at the state board’s annual retreat, NFP’s board members endeavor to develop a strategic program that can ‘make sense’ of the “messy canvas” on which we work, in hopes of making the country’s oldest statewide Peace & Justice organization as effective as possible.

That being said, here are the NFP State Board Priorities for 2004:

Program I: Opposing the Culture of Violence at Home:

As we have done for the past four years, NFP will continue its efforts to promote anti-violence education and training in our communities, schools, churches and homes. We will build on our successful campaign to have the State Department of Education require anti-bullying policies in our educational institutions by stipulating anti-violence training for teachers and administrators. We will also provide resource information on nonviolence for religious groups, continue our advocacy for the development of 21st Century Learning Centers in our communities, and pursue a new initiative on the need to address sexual and domestic violence in the home. Legislatively, we will again oppose efforts to repeal the ban on carrying concealed weapons.

Program II: Civil Rights Locally and Internationally—Whiteclay:

After five years, our work on ending the exploitation and lawlessness at Whiteclay has finally begun to take root. The State of Nebraska has verbally committed itself to

cross-deputization of Oglala Tribal Police to provide law enforcement in Whiteclay, but no agreement has yet been signed. Nor has the state yet addressed the issue of the sale of alcohol in Whiteclay, on what is essentially tribal land. With the start of the legislative session in January, state government will have one last legal opportunity to resolve these issues before the one-year “Year of Atonement” announced by the American Indian Movement (A.I.M.) last March expires. NFP will closely monitor all of these developments over the coming year.

Program III: Economic Justice:

NFP’s commitment to economic justice for 2004 will again have both a global and local dimension. On the international level, we will continue of efforts against the undemocratic “globalization” of the world economy with our opposition to the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). We will also maintain our traditional focus on Latin America, keeping a close eye on developments in Colombia, Guatemala, Cuba and Chiapas. Here in Nebraska, we will finish what we started by playing a pivotal role in the initiative petition campaign to repeal LB 775, which directly overlaps with our long-standing interest in the meatpacking industry in the state. Finally, with the reemergence of a crisis in medical coverage, we will once again be spotlighting the issue of universal health care.

Program IV: Anti-War, Anti-Nuclear Program:

With the unfolding debacle in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Bush Administration’s commitment to developing and producing a new generation of nuclear weapons and StratCom’s expanded role in the wake of 9/11 as the nerve center for fighting both offensive as well as defensive, conventional as well as nuclear conflicts, our trademark anti-war/anti-nuclear work will be front-and-center. We will work in partnership with other anti-war organizations in the state as well as national coalitions like United for Peace and Justice. In all cases, we will advocate the resolution of conflicts through multinational agencies like the United Nations and oppose the destabilizing doctrine of “preemption” and unilateral action.



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BULLETIN BOARD

Office Hours for the Nebraskans for Peace State Office in Lincoln, at 941 'O' Street, Suite 1026, are 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on weekdays.

- December 9 Monthly vigils at Kirby Gate at Offutt (StratCom) on the 9th from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. These vigils protest the continued threats of nuclear war and the development of a new generation of nuclear weapons. Sponsored by the Catholic Worker house of Des Moines.
- December 10 Human Rights Day
- December 22 Winter Solstice
- January 7 2004 Legislative session begins
- January 19 Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday (observed)

*To list an event, submit in writing by the tenth of the month preceding the event. Send to: Nebraskans for Peace, 941 "O" Street, Suite 1026, Lincoln, NE 68508 nfpweb@redjellyfish.net
Announcements published on a space available basis.*

George Coordsen, R.I.P.

Well, the Angel of Death has gone and done it again—pole-axed a good man like George Coordsen and left standing a lot of lesser men. Go figure.

With great sadness, I mark the passing of George Coordsen, farmer and former state senator from Hebron. George served 16 years in the Nebraska Legislature, from his election in 1986 until his decision not to run again in 2001. His accomplishments in the Unicameral were many, but George said his "sole regret" was not being able to change the way agricultural land is valued for tax purposes, an issue he dogged for years, right through his last session.

George was a reliable friend to rural Nebraskans and a man who never forgot who brought him to the dance. He introduced legislation to exempt the smallest livestock operators from feedlot inspection and regulation, because he understood the need for regulatory slope, the principle that concentrated agriculture,

which causes the social and environmental problems, should bear the burden of the problems it creates. During debate over teachers' salaries in Nebraska, George supported a bill to forgive the college loans of teachers who chose to work in the state. George knew that Nebraska grows the finest kids anywhere and educates many many fine young teachers who are attracted by greater opportunities elsewhere. "I have a warm, affectionate feeling for the loan program," he said.

The news of George's death just struck me as heart-breaking and a portent of sad days to come, not a little because of a quote from State Senator Ron Raikes in the same day's *Lincoln Journal Star*. Raikes was discussing the testimony on the last of three days of hearings by the Education Committee. Thirty citizens testified against the committee's newest proposal to force Nebraska's smallest schools to consolidate with K-12 districts statewide. Two people testified in support. Thirty more opponents were not allowed to give testimony, because the committee decided listening for two hours to supporters of Class I schools, sometimes

called one-room schools, was enough, and they called it a day.

"The depth of the argument, I would say, disappointed me," Raikes said. A gentleman "rancher," Raikes seems to know the cost of everything and the value of nothing. A numbers man whose legislative style is cool and above it all, he is the kind of guy who gives academics the reputation for arrogance.

Raikes' comment called up for me, like nothing else, the kindly face of George Coordsen on the Education Committee, his slow talk and his stories and his patient attention to the testimony of many many people, none of whom were his equal for knowledge or motherwit.

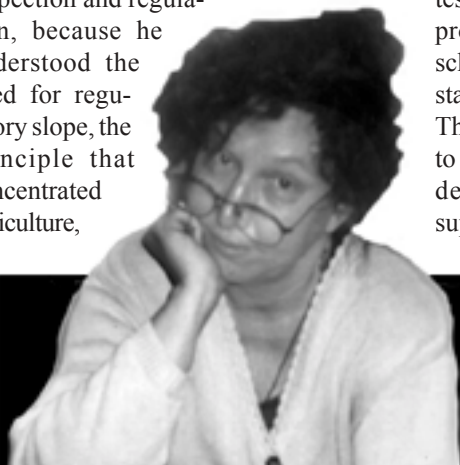
The depth of Senator Raikes, I would say, disappoints me. He has failed to see that the very fact that 60 people—parents, administrators and schoolchildren—came to the hearing to testify against "assimilation" of their community schools is evidence of the deep wellspring of the people's will. He ought not use his considerable advantages of sophistication and education to pretend he does not understand. For Senator Raikes to pretend

that consolidation—of schools and farms—is some inevitable economic trend, while he himself promotes the policies which create the trend, is less than honest.

Rural Nebraskans are fighting for their lives—for their farms and businesses, for their water and air, for their communities and for their schools, and each time one of these is lost, it is a knife in somebody's heart. Multiply that by 60 at the Education Committee hearing, and though even the learned Senator Raikes cannot measure what the heart can hold, that is where he might find the depth he seems to miss.

On George Coordsen's 66th birthday, I am told, he had sweet rolls and coffee at the Pioneer Inn in Hebron. Both Governor Johanns and Lt. Governor Dave Maurstad were out of the state at national conferences that day, and George, then chair of the Executive Board, was next in line to lead state government. According to a local radio station, all that power didn't go to his head, as it might with a lesser man.

George? He spent the day mowing ditches and waterways and baling hay on his farm. I miss him already.



From the Bottom by Sally Herrin

The real political spectrum isn't right to left... it's top to bottom.