



Nebraska Report

There is no Peace without Justice

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LB 775 Fails Educational Equity & Excellence Test

by Jerry L. Hoffman

I have been involved in educational equity and adequacy issues in Nebraska since 1995, and community development since 1989, a year after then-Governor Orr signed into law LB 775.

In my observation, LB 775, as a state tax policy, is undermining the state's ability to ensure every child between the ages of 5 and 21 has equal access to excellence in educational opportunities, whether they live in the remote Sandhills, in a migrant farm-worker family in Madison or in a high-income suburb of West Omaha. The inter-relationship between LB 775 and the school finance system is failing thousands of students in public schools across Nebraska. Each produces a resource base inadequate for public schools to provide educational programs, school facilities, and highly qualified teachers necessary to meet state academic standards and the standards called for in the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Together, the State of Nebraska falls short of the constitutional mark of equity and excellence in educational opportunities for all children.

Recent reporting from Nebraska Department of Revenue shows sales, income and miscellaneous taxes collected in September were 6.1 percent below estimates. In the October 11, 2003 *Lincoln Journal Star* article, "for the first three months of the fiscal year, which began in July, revenues were off 3.1 percent or \$21.2 million." Of particular mention, individual income tax was off \$22.2 million, sales tax was down \$6.2

million, and corporate income and miscellaneous taxes were both above projections. The projections for 2004: Governor Johanns goes on record saying the state may face a \$150 to \$200 million shortfall next year.

What happened in 2003 to address the state's budget deficit? While the Legislature continued to exempt LB 775 benefits from cuts, state aid to K-12 public education was reduced by \$42 million for biennium 2003-05. The Unicameral shifted the burden to property tax payers by temporarily increasing the levy lid from \$1.00 to \$1.05.



Jerry Hoffman

Companies such as Cabela's, Cargill, IBP, ConAgra Foods, Valmont, Excel and Omaha Steaks qualified for LB 775 tax breaks, producing more than \$536 million in property kept off tax rolls last year, according to a 10/15/03 *Associated Press* report. This means one of the state's largest segments of landowners disproportionately felt the shift: farm and ranch families. Family farmers and ranchers saw their property tax load increase at the same time commodities and livestock income was poor. And as poor people tend to stay away from shopping malls and car dealerships, it's little wonder that both state income and sales tax revenues dropped.

All of this, of course, has been done at the expense of excellence in educational opportunities for all Nebraska's children. Children and youth are attending schools—even consolidated schools that are land-rich but income-poor—where the only foreign language, Spanish, is taught by a teacher not endorsed to teach it; chemistry and algebra is offered every other year;

there is no Advanced Placement English; and the distance education room cannot seat more than 15 students. There are many instances of school districts, large and small, that failed twice in passing a levy override and, as a result, had to eliminate busing, reduce offerings in fine and performing arts, entice teachers to take early retirement and start assessing fees on extracurricular activities. These are examples of the state's tax and school finance systems failing kids, not the teachers, administrators, parents and board members of school districts.

Education is a fundamental right guaranteed by Nebraska State Constitution Article VII, Section 1, which states, "The Legislature shall provide for the free instruction in the common schools of the state all persons between the ages of 5 and 21." I cannot find constitutional language to support corporate tax incentive programs like LB 775. In protecting corporate self-interest above the rights of children, the State of Nebraska is irresponsibly supporting a tax program that in effect does little to assure equity and excellence in educational opportunities for every student in a school near their home.

The repeal of LB 775 is necessary to force the State of Nebraska to reform statewide tax structures to adequately fund public institutions created from constitutional mandates. Public education is one of those institutions. This is why I am volunteering my time to circulate the initiative petition to place the repeal of LB 775 on the ballot.

A life-long Nebraska resident, Jerry resides with his three children in Lincoln, and operates an education and community development consulting practice, Just Development Co.

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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



Bolivia in Crisis

Deadly riots sparked by a plan to export natural gas to the United States forced Bolivia's president, Sanchez de Lozada, to flee the country for Miami. The 73-year-old president, who had an 8 percent approval rating, was viewed by most Bolivians as a puppet of the United States. Clashes between protestors and government forces resulted in the death of more than 65 people.

The protests began in mid-September with street blockades and a general strike, escalating this month into bloody battles between demonstrators and government soldiers and armored tanks that shut down Bolivia's capital and another major city.

The latest uprising exposed the widening fault lines between the tiny ruling elite and the poor Indian majority. Most of the protestors were Aymara and Quechua Indians angered by another impending bad deal in a decade of market reforms that promised but failed to narrow the gap between rich and poor. Indian leaders called for the president to resign and for a Constituent Assembly that would rewrite the constitution to take control away from the tiny ruling elite, made up of the white and mixed-white population.

De Lozada's successor, Carlos Mesa, is attempting to distance his presidency from Bolivia's notoriously corrupt government. In his first hours in office Mesa named a new cabinet made up of business leaders and others independent of the political establishment. The new president also established a ministry aimed at representing Bolivia's indigenous population.

A Bad Deal

At the center of the current crisis is the multinational corporation Pacific LNG. The company negotiated a multibillion-dollar deal with the Bolivian government to ship natural gas out of landlocked Bolivia to California through its Pacific coast neighbor, Chile. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) argued that the plan would be a boon to the Bolivian economy. The deal has been suspended in the wake of the public riots.

Among other objections, the plan ran smack into a century-old grudge Bolivians hold against Chile for having seized land in 1879 that was Bolivia's last remaining access to the ocean. Bolivian children are still taught in school that the country needs to reclaim its link to the ocean. Polls showed that most Bolivians were against the deal even if a different pipeline route was chosen.

The poorest country in South America, Bolivia also has the most corrupt government. "When local corruption meets big international conglomerates looking for a way to pipe away natural resources at rock bottom prices, the result is usually a sweetheart deal that leaves the dealmakers happy and the public in the dust," said one opponent of the plan. "We know we have to export the gas, but not via Chile and not to the U.S. We want it industrialized here, so we can sell it with added value, and get our proper share of the profits," argued another protestor.

Years of government corruption and privatization that trickled down only to the wealthy have left most Bolivians with little choice but to take to the streets, usually with deadly consequences. The last serious protest, against IMF belt-tightening measures in February, left 33 people dead. Another deadly uprising took place three years ago when the government made a sweetheart deal with Bechtel, the California-based engineering giant. Bechtel took over the water system in Bolivia's third-largest city. Within weeks poor families were hit with huge water bills, sparking a popular uprising that drove Bechtel out of the country, but not before the government imposed martial law and fired on its own people.

This time, the government's soldiers and tanks laid dozens of people to rest, even before the first pipe was laid in the ground.

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Anti-FTAA Rally at State Capitol

part of National 'March to Miami'



by Becca Kaiser
NFP Outreach Coordinator

Nebraskans for Peace members joined other members of the "Nebraskans for Fair Trade NOT Free Trade Coalition" on a rainy Saturday, October 11 at the Nebraska State Capitol for a rally to kick off local participation in the "March to Miami" in November. The march is being sponsored by a national coalition of progressive organizations opposed to the expansion of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) through the "Fair Trade Area of the Americas" (FTAA). Local Nebraska coalition members are: United Steel Workers of America Local 286, Nebraska Farmers Union, Nebraskans for Peace, Communications Workers of America Local 7470, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 2366 and the Nebraska Sierra Club.

Against a backdrop of banners and a large tombstone memorializing the potential loss of jobs, family farms and the degradation of the environment, Lincoln City Council Member Terry Werner warned the crowd of 150 that passage of the FTAA would spell the end of local democratic control. Our elected officials, he stated—not foreign governments or international bureaucrats—should decide whether or not we want to use tax dollars to purchase goods made in sweatshops? "Do you want your City Council to make decisions on zoning in our city? Do you want your city officials making decisions on our natural resources and small business?" he asked. "Or do you prefer foreign investors? I say

we want local control. I say that we must protect our environment, our jobs and community by deciding upon our own future."

Huddled together under umbrellas, rally members lifted their signs high in the air shouting their disapproval to the FTAA. Signs read: "Don't blame me, I voted Democrat," "FTTA: Stop the BUSHIT," "Who will farm my grandpa's farm?" and "Fair Trade, NOT Free Trade." Dotted through the crowd were the official March to Miami T-shirts and dozens of "Union Security" hats.

The FTAA is the formal name of this expansion of NAFTA that would include all of the countries in the Western Hemisphere except Cuba. Trade ministers from a total of 34 nations in North, Central and South America and the Caribbean are negotiating this massive trade agreement in secret at the November 17-21 meeting in Miami. The goal of the FTAA is to impose the failed NAFTA model of increased privatization and deregulation hemisphere-wide. Imposition of these rules would constrain governments from setting standards to protect public health and safety, to safeguard worker rights and to ensure corporations do not pollute the communities in which they operate. Effectively, these rules would handcuff governments' public interest policymaking and enhance corporate control at the expense of citizens throughout the Americas.

Rally speakers reiterated the importance of looking at the failed policies of NAFTA. Nebraska State Senator, Matt Connealy, explained,

"Instead of fixing what has not worked for manufacturing and agriculture, Washington only wants to do more of the same. Instead of expanding a flawed system, they should be fixing the current one. Instead of allowing more jobs to be exported, we should be shoring up manufacturing and farming here at home."

Ken Mass, President of the Nebraska State AFL-CIO, offered hope in the pursuit of just alternatives. "There is a better way. We support trade models that include responsibilities—not just rights—for corporations." Fair trade, he said, looks beyond corporate profitability to the needs, health and safety of workers, family farmers, women, consumers and the environment, and promotes sustainable, equitable and democratic development.

As the rain and wind picked up, rally participants on the Capitol steps were encouraged by the strong words of the speakers.

"The agreements being made by our current administration with other countries in the GATS (General Agreements on Trade and Services) and the FTAA will continue the decimation of jobs that we have already seen with NAFTA," Wayne Fiedler with the United Steel Workers of America Local 286 said. "In Nebraska alone, we have seen the loss of 4,352 jobs since NAFTA took effect in 1993. Free trade should not come at the expense of good-paying jobs in the United States."

Laura Krebsbach of the Sierra Club discussed the environmental risks posed by the adoption of the FTAA, "We cannot

stand by and watch bad judgments on trade agreements by the Bush Administration create an open season on environmental laws. Under the FTAA, if a federal, state or local environmental law is viewed as an impediment to trade, it could be challenged as a trade barrier, and that is unacceptable. We will not allow communities to be put at risk with foul air, contaminated water or unsafe food."

A statement read by State Senator Dave Landis proposed working for equitable policymaking that includes a "race to the top" not a "race to the bottom." Trade policies, he said, should not encourage corporations to leverage workers in one country against workers in another country. Agreements negotiated and agreed to by the U.S. should contain enforceable labor rights for all workers affected by the agreements."

Other speakers at the rally included state senator Nancy Thompson, Lincoln Mayor Coleen Seng, National Farmers Union President Dave Fredrickson, John Kretzschmar and Edgar Moore of the William Brennan Labor Institute at UNO, and Nebraska Farmers Union President John Hansen.

The diversity of the coalition members was represented at the rally October 11. Environmental activists, union members, human rights activists and family farmers joined hands to sing the union rally song, "Solidarity Forever," as the rally came to a close, promising to look past their differences and work together to oppose the devastating effects the proposed expansion of NAFTA through the FTAA will have on so many aspects of

A Consumer Guide to Cancun

by John Hansen
President, Nebraska Farmers Union

If you are having a hard time making any sense of the recent World Trade Organization debate at Cancun, there may be some very good reasons for it. For starters, do not assume that just because you see confusion, that confusion is not going on. Also, do not assume that all the confusion you see is honest confusion. Deception, misdirection, and camouflage are time-honored and proven strategies in trade policy.

Most accounts agree that the developing nations argued the case that what is wrong in international ag trade policy is that developed nations unfairly subsidize their agricultural producers, and if they would just stop doing that, everything would be better.

If they argue it is an economic unfairness that not all nations can afford to provide their farmers and ranchers with income supports, they have a case. If they argue that by simply eliminating income supports, world ag markets will self adjust, and ag commodity prices will go to profitable levels, thereby eliminating the need for ag supports in the first place, they are dead wrong.

They are wrong for the same reasons the proponents of the 1996 Farm Bill, current U.S. ag trade policy advocates, and free trader advocates are generally wrong when it comes to understanding agricultural markets. Because guess what? Ag markets do not respond to traditional buy/sell and supply/demand signals in the same way most other markets do.

The recent report "Rethinking U.S. Agricultural Policy: Changing Course to Secure Farmer Livelihoods Worldwide" authored by Dr. Daryll E. Ray of the Agricultural Policy Analysis Center at the University of Tennessee explains why that is the case. Neither side of the buy/sell equation works like the free trade textbooks would think they would. First, food consumption, unlike most consumer items, does not dramatically change once an adequate level of consumption is achieved. Rich folks don't eat twice as much food as folks who have high enough incomes to buy enough food. Second, when ag commodity prices go down, farmers do not stop growing food products. When farmers are forced out of business, some one else farms their ground. The land does not go out of production. While specific crop production might shift,

aggregate production remains fairly constant.

Dr. Ray's report not only debunks the economic performance of the free trader predictions, he explains why. In addition, his report points out the obvious better approach to farm and food policy, which is to put public policy management tools back into use to bring ag production into alignment with utilization, provide fair and realistic price supports that force the always greedy ag processors to pay farmers a fair price for their production and, if necessary, isolate excess production from the market to create a more stable, safe, and secure food production system. Dr. Ray's report is on the internet at www.agpolicy.org and is a must read for every farmer, rancher, public official, trade official, or anyone interested or in impacted by farm and/or trade policy.

The best solution to getting rid of subsidies is to get rid of the need for them. That approach involves using the brains God gave us to manage food and fiber production in a way that fairly rewards the folks who do the work, take the risk and grow the food products we need. That approach uses agriculture as an economic engine to grow earned incomes, capital formation, and local, state, and national tax revenues. That approach helps developing nations, developed nations, and everyone in between, because it raises the earned incomes and standards of living for all the players. Do not forget the fact that over 90 percent of all food production does not cross national boundaries.

In review, which international food policy seems better? Should all the food-producing nations of the world raise and sell 100 percent of the food products they grow at a profit so they can grow their economies and feed their people. Let's call this the win/win approach. Or should all the food-producing nations of the world raise and sell 100 percent of the food products in the world at a loss so international grain and meat processors can maximize their profits while concentrating more land into fewer hands, causing environmental exploitation, and causing massive rural upheaval and dislocation? Let's call this the lose/lose approach. Which approach was on the table in Cancun? The lose/lose approach, of course. That is what happens when we let big money run public policy.

I have been an official U.S. ag trade policy advisor since 1994. Without divulging critical national security secrets,

I would share my personal observations. It seems to me that the big dogs that control the ag trade agenda are the handful of U.S.-based grain and meat processors and biotech companies who have very clearly identifiable company interests. They need not talk loudly to be heard. Money always has a way of getting heard.

The WTO process itself is not democratic, representative or transparent. Yet, it sets into motion social, economic, environmental, and fiscal policies that impact the entire world. I am at a loss to understand why our nation, given our legal and traditional commitment to representative democracy, continues to allow public policy to be developed and implemented in such an undemocratic fashion. Until that changes, special interests will continue to use the WTO process that gives nothing but lose/lose choices.

Trade done right can be a tremendous blessing. Trade done wrong can be an overwhelming curse. The ag trade policy proposal on the table in Cancun was a lose/lose proposal for family farmers and ranchers round the world. WTO proposals will not improve until the WTO process itself is either reformed or replaced. As citizens in a democracy, it is our job to make our government reflect our values and our visions. In the case of the WTO and trade policy in general, that is going to require a good deal of work and involvement on the part of us citizens.

Nebraska Farmers Union President John Hansen served on the Agricultural Policy Advisory Committee from 1994 to 2001 and currently serves on the Agricultural Policy Advisory Committee for Grains, Feed and Oilseeds.

Jim Hightower Speaks in Nebraska on the Theft of the American Dream

by Charles Flowerday

Jim Hightower, former Texas Commissioner of Agriculture, populist author and editor of the *Hightower Lowdown*, came to Lincoln in September to assail what he called the theft of the American Dream. He details his concerns in a soon-to-be released book, *Thieves in High Places*.

"I come as one who believes the American Dream has been stolen from us – stolen in a silent and steady coup in the past 30 years or so, but especially moving with a vengeance in the last couple of years," he said. This dream has less to do with materialistic aims than with the theft of America's historical idealism and democracy, he added.

Hightower spoke on "Re-imagining the American Dream" at Nebraska Wesleyan University Sept. 18 as part of the school's annual series of talks by socially committed notables.

This theft is the product of a corporate elite and a governmental elite that's in the corporations' pockets. They have commandeered the political process through massive campaign contributions and created a confederacy of *kleptocrats*, Hightower explained. *Kleptomania* is defined as "a persistent, neurotic need to steal, especially without economic motive."

"Some are getting so rich that they could afford to air-condition hell. And they better start setting aside some money for that project, I think," he added. "They are stealing our people's power to control decisions that affect our lives – not just the right to vote, but the ability to control our own lives."

This upending of the traditional structure of a democracy is widespread, he said. It affects everything from what's in the news feed we get from the television networks to what's in the food on our table, from where a toxic waste dump will be located to whether Wal-Mart will come into a town and suck the economic life out of it. It runs the gamut of key issues from who's got a job at what wage under what conditions to who gets elected, he added.

This robbery has occurred through two main vehicles: a rewrite of the tax code, transferring public wealth by raising taxes on the middle class and below and lowering them for huge corporations and the extremely wealthy; and by rewriting the regulatory and policy legacy

developed to protect communities, workers and the environment.

"And these thieves have names – Enron, WorldCom, Tyco, Arthur Andersen, Wal-Mart, Disney, Nike, General Electric, General Motors, General Mills, all the generals and many more," Hightower offered. "These private fiefdoms have risen above the rest of us to become private royalty run by boss hogs to become America's new royalty. The CEOs of these entities get themselves all puffed up like royalty and are living like the kings of old."

Using two key examples of CEOs who are compensated beyond what's rational,

Hightower noted that less than 1 percent of the nation makes \$287,000 a year or more. He then pointed out that the chief officer of Disney, Michael Eisner, makes that much, not in a year, or a month, or a week, or a day. He makes that much per hour. Eisner is also working to eliminate health benefits for minimum wage workers at Disney, including those who at its theme parks play the life-size versions of the cartoon characters that have made Disney famous. His other example of what he termed "legal corruption" was the CEO of Tyco receiving a \$17 million New York penthouse, including \$11 million to furnish it, \$4 million to refurbish it and another penthouse for his ex-wife, all legally claimed as tax deductions by his company. He also has a \$6,000 shower curtain, Hightower noted.

"How do you get to a \$6,000 shower curtain? And do you let it get wet? I don't think I could," he added.

Hightower said his top worry was that in two years, the Bush Administration has "looted" the public treasury of hundreds of billions of dollars and given it to the wealthiest people in the country before any other national need was considered. Other

administration outrages include that they have "defoliated" environmental protection, declared a class war on the poor and middle classes, taken a "sledge hammer" to civil rights and liberties, turned their backs on the family farm, "castrated" organized labor, turned a \$5 trillion surplus into a \$5 trillion debt, privatized the postal service and want to do so with Social Security and have launched a "maniacal, messianic, testosterone-driven global war to make the world safe for Halliburton."

walked into a room filled with some of the wealthiest supporters on the Right. He looked out at the crowd, and said it was an impressive group, dubbing them

The Haves and the Have-Mores.

"Some call you the elite," he noted Bush as saying. "But I call you my base!"

Even so, calling himself that most unusual of populists—an optimist, Hightower noted that in his book he documents a wealth of movements, people and projects that are trying stop these latter-day robber barons.

These range from people in 170 communities banning Wal-Mart (the biggest corporation in the world, now embroiled in the biggest sex discrimination suit in U.S. history) from eliminating three good jobs for every one it provides – jobs that average \$15,000 a year without health coverage – to fighting the establishment of another hog factory in a glutted market in which hog prices can't cover the cost of production. They include a most effective but unsung organization fighting low-wage jobs, United Students Against Sweat Shops, a presence on some 200 colleges and universities working to ban the campus sale of products made in sweatshops. They also involve people working to raise the minimum wage, called the *living wage* movement, and those working for public financing of elections.

"The challenge is not to create progressive movement. It's already out there. But we've got to rally it, to connect it up. It's no longer enough to be progressive. We've got to become aggressive because the powers that be are radically aggressive. What else are we going to do that's as important as building an egalitarian society? Besides that, battling the bastards is about as much fun as you can have with your clothes on," Hightower said.

Fielding two of the more significant questions after the talk, Hightower decried the concentration of media ownership in huge conglomerates that cross-own hundreds and thousands of outlets across many markets. He also commented on a lesser-known company involved in military contracts and the oil industry that has close ties to the extended Bush family and the bin Ladens in Saudi Arabia—the Carlyle Group. Many Reagan and Bush I and II officials have worked for or with this firm, which was also implicated in the Florida vote fraud.



Halliburton is the oil industry firm formerly headed by Vice President Dick Cheney that has secured many hundreds of millions of dollars of reconstruction contracts in Iraq, along with Bechtel and other large multi-national companies with ties to the present administration.

"Imagine what they'd be doing if they'd actually won the election?" he asked.

Even more infuriating is that they brag about it, he said. Unreported by the media was a moment at a Republican fund-raiser in New York City prior to the 2000 election in which George W. Bush

Nebraskans Fight the USA Patriot Act

Will Lincoln Become the State's first "Patriot Act Safe Zone?"

by Tim Butz

Executive Director, ACLU Nebraska

The Patriot Act, the controversial anti-terrorism law passed by the U.S. Congress just 45 days after September 11, has become a "kitchen table issue" in recent months. As shown by a September 11, 2003 poll, a majority of Americans are now concerned that the future application of the act or further expansion of it will lead to government abuses of rights.

The American people are speaking out against the Patriot Act's assault on our civil rights and civil liberties. It undermines our democratic system of checks and balances by expanding the ability of law enforcement to conduct secret searches and surveillance while diminishing the judicial oversight that would protect against abuse of this power. It gives the government access to highly personalized medical, financial, mental health and student records with minimal judicial oversight, and empowers the FBI to investigate American citizens without probable cause of a crime if they say it is for "intelligence purposes." It also permits non-citizens to be jailed based on mere suspicion and to be denied re-admission to the U.S. for engaging in free speech.

The leak of the so-called "Patriot Act II" last February gives us even further insight into John Ashcroft's plan to even more greatly expand law enforcement powers—including the right to strip people of their citizenship. A grassroots campaign against the Act has developed, showing that the USA Patriot Act has indeed become a kitchen table topic. The American people know that in order to be truly safe, we must also be free.

The Act has been defended by its architects in the U.S. Department of Justice as a necessary tool to fight terrorism. But in fact the Justice Department has admitted that it is being used to fight ordinary crimes more often than terrorism. Critics, both conservative and liberal, have expressed concerns that the expanded police powers arising from the Act violate constitutional protections secured by the Bill of Rights.

National debate over the Patriot Act has led to congressional efforts to stop the Bush Administration from making some of the most controversial parts of the law, which

will sunset in 2005, a permanent change in federal law. Other congressional actions, initiated by conservative Republicans, have focused on denying funds to the FBI to conduct "sneak and peek" searches and demands for major changes in the law.

The Patriot Act has become controversial not only because it increased the FBI's ability to spy on people, but because the government has refused to disclose how it has been used. Freedom of Information Act [FOIA] actions by the ACLU have attempted to discover how many times the government has used the law to gain access to information that is otherwise considered privileged. The ACLU has been stymied by

First United Methodist Church of Omaha last month drew 150 people. The Omaha Press Club held an October 16 forum for its members where the U.S. Attorney for Nebraska joined me for a discussion of the Patriot Act's provisions. Interest in the Act continues to grow, especially in the aftermath of the government's admission that the act has been used more often for routine criminal investigations and not for terrorism related investigations.

In Lincoln, concern over the Act has led activists to begin planning for a campaign to have the Lincoln City Council pass an anti-Patriot Act resolution. Currently, three states and over 190 towns and counties

resolution placing the city in opposition to the state's capital punishment law. The resolution was passed, but Mayor Don Wesely vetoed as being outside the scope of concern for city government. The Patriot Act is different however, in that it does have an impact on the city.

Local police departments, funded by city tax dollars, are part of the new anti-terrorism task forces being formed by the U.S. Department of Justice. In the October 16 forum before the Omaha Press Club U.S. Attorney Mike Heavican said that there was such a task force operating in Nebraska. When local police are deputized, they acquire the powers of federal agents—

which can involve them in much of the unconstitutional behavior authorized under the Patriot Act.

It is crucial that cities set clear limits, in advance, on what types of investigation activities its police will and will not cooperate with, so that its police can say "no" to any inappropriate Federal requests.

Not only government agencies are impacted by the Act, but also local businesses. Businesses must comply with Title III of the Act which expands government access to personal financial information by requiring financial institutions to closely monitor daily financial transactions and share information with federal agencies, including foreign intelligence agencies such as the CIA.

The Act defines 26 types of financial institutions including: insurance companies, real estate agencies, mortgage brokers, finance companies, travel agents, automobile, airplane, boat and jewelry dealers. Suspicious activity reports are not limited to anti-terrorist activities or even money-laundering, but rather go to violations of any regulation. These reports are usually about wholly domestic transactions of people in the USA, and do not relate to foreign intelligence information. There is no judicial review and no notice to the person to whom the records relate.

No matter whether it is city government or local businesses who feel the initial impact of the Patriot Act, in the end, it will be the citizens who are the ultimate sufferers when it comes to their rights.



the veil of secrecy that the government has drawn around its Patriot Act operations.

As an example, Section 505 of the Act allows the FBI to issue "national security letters" or NSLs—letters that demand information from businesses and are initiated by the FBI on its own authority and without the normal judicial review that comes with a subpoena. When the government replied to the ACLU's request for information on how often it has issued them, the FBI submitted a six-page listing of national security letters, with all the pages blacked out. There is no way of knowing if each page represents an account of one NSL or a list of dozens!

As the national debate over the Patriot Act has grown, opposition to it has sprung up in Nebraska. In Omaha, two public forums were held on the law. The first forum at Creighton University Law School attracted 250 people, and a second at the

incorporating over 25,000,000 people have passed anti-Patriot Act legislation. The activists, including economic libertarians, anti-war activists, ACLU Nebraska members and others, have created a coalition with the sole purpose of adding Lincoln to this list of Patriot Act Safe Zone cities. A similar coalition is in the process of being formed in the Omaha area.

The Lincoln area campaign is being led by the Bill of Rights Defense Coalition. The coalition has already held a training session where over 20 people prepared themselves to speak on the Act. These trained members have in turn gone to some neighborhood associations and community groups in an attempt to have more people endorse the drive. Material is now being prepared to show the impact of the Act on the city.

The last time Lincoln area activists sought a similar city resolution, it was over the issue of the death penalty. Abolitionists sought to have the city council pass a

Whiteclay Summit on Cross-Deputization Held on Pine Ridge

by Tom Cook, Member
Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs

On Monday morning, September 29, Nebraska Governor Mike Johanns met with the Oglala Sioux Tribal (OST) President John Yellow Bird Steele at the Prairie Winds Casino, attended by more than 30 people and lasting just over an hour.

With the governor were State Senator Leroy Loudon, Superintendent Tom Nesbitt of the Nebraska State Patrol, two or three regional police commanders, a state assistant attorney general, the Sheridan County Sheriff and Sheridan County Prosecutor.

Attending with President Steele were half dozen Judiciary and Health and Human Services (HHS) Committee members of the

Congress to protect Pine Ridge Agency from alcohol intrusion, and that the subsequent reduction of the tract to one square mile was both illegal and has provided for the present circumstances.

He said he was disturbed by local testimonies regarding the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission and that tribal concerns have gone unanswered. The commission's non-response to complaints of fencing stolen property (typewriters with OST serial numbers) and the selling of alcohol to inebriated people, were part of the problem, Steele said.

Steele went on to describe a nursing home facility the tribe would like to place on tribal land in Whiteclay inasmuch as South Dakota will not amend its moratorium

assignment. He praised the OST police department as professional, well-trained, and capable.

A member of the tribe's Judiciary committee felt that law enforcement in Whiteclay is a Nebraska problem and not the tribes, and that the operational and maintenance costs of police presence during the hours alcohol is sold (between \$250,000-\$340,000 per annum) would be prohibitive. A council woman added that the police budget has been at the same level of funding for six years. "We are funded to serve one county but serve three," she said, adding there is no insurance for activities on the Nebraska side.

Mario Gonzalez clarified that part of the reservation is in Nebraska, making this a unique situation. "We do have a reservation in Nebraska," he stated as he passed out copies of a draft agreement. He presented the four-way cooperative law enforcement agreement with the tribe, BIA, State Highway Patrol, and the county as nothing new, but similar to the Winnebago agreement with law enforcement agencies.

Alluding to the illegality of consuming alcohol "anywhere in Whiteclay or up here," Robert Grey Eagle cautioned against the incarceration of everyone, as punishing people already down from the social disease of alcoholism. He said if there were enough people, Whiteclay should incorporate and get their own grants and police themselves.

Senator Loudon reported that a proposed statute that no licenses be issued in places with inadequate police protection was introduced but not advanced. "The bill failed," he said.

Responding to a council woman's concern that some \$260,000 in tax revenues flow southward annually from Whiteclay beer sales and are of no benefit to the tribe, Steele said the political question of prohibition on the reservation could change only with the thinking of the younger generation on the subject.

Summarizing, Governor Johanns called this meeting "a step in the right direction, for our mutual benefit and by the rules." President Steele praised the cooperative agreement as "not the solution, but a band-aid approach sorely needed at this time and place."

tribal council, the chief of police with several officers and Public Safety Commission attorney Robert Grey Eagle; and other program directors. Webster Poor Bear, involved in a lawsuit being filed against the State of Nebraska over Whiteclay, attended with others from Camp Justice. Tribal attorney Mario Gonzalez brought a draft agreement for cross-deputization.

Thanking the governor for initiating this meeting and traveling so far, John Steele said he wanted two issues discussed: the deputization of tribal officers in Whiteclay, and a nursing home in the Whiteclay area.

Characterizing Whiteclay as "a lawless frontier town and a common problem," Steele described the place as "wide open for alcohol business and nobody's arrested." He said the 50-square-mile 'buffer zone' was established by expressed intent of

on new nursing homes, thus preventing the pass-through of Medicaid and Medicare dollars. To this the Governor nodded in assent, telling President Steele to have his HHS Committee contact Nebraska's HHS Committee.

Governor Johanns stated that Nebraska State officials really feel they can work with the tribe on these issues and he doesn't see a reason the two couldn't work together on them. "This nation is sovereign and has a right to decide on such issues. We come today very willing to work with you." Under Nebraska law, the governor said, the alcohol establishments are legal and have a right to exist. "I respect and honor your views," he added.

Col Nesbitt said that one-way cross-deputization would be for the good of the people, with Pine Ridge police authority in Nebraska very specific in nature and

"Not the solution, but a band-aid approach sorely needed at this time and place."

*— John Yellow Bird Steele
Oglala Sioux Tribal President*

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Refuting the LB 775 Propaganda

Proponents of LB 775 are circulating a pamphlet claiming to expose the “myths” about LB 775. This pamphlet contains numerous falsehoods regarding LB 775, the consequences of its repeal, and the message of the repeal campaign. The most egregious falsehoods are discussed in this article.

FALSEHOOD #1: “REPEALING LB 775. THE JOB REPEALED MAY BE YOURS!”

TRUTH: Repealing LB 775 as proposed for the November 2004 ballot will not eliminate any existing jobs. The initiative petition will close the LB 775 door to *new* applicants only. It will not invalidate current agreements for LB 775 tax breaks. Moreover, most jobs attributed to LB 775 projects—70 percent of all these jobs—would have been created without LB 775 anyway, according to the Nebraska Department of Revenue.

FALSEHOOD #2: “Groups in opposition to LB 775 do not know the real cost of each job.”

TRUTH: The average cost of new LB 775 jobs is more than \$108,000 per job. This is calculated using aggregate information provided in the Department of Revenue’s 2002 annual report on LB 775. Simply divide the amount of tax breaks earned by the number of true new economic jobs created by LB 775. Because of the secrecy surrounding LB 775, the public does not know the individual amount each company receives in tax breaks or the taxpayer cost of *specific* jobs.

FALSEHOOD #3: It is wrong to report that LB 775 is cloaked in secrecy.

TRUTH: The only information the public is able to see about individual LB 775 recipients is the original name of the company, the location of the project, and the company’s promised increased employment and investment. This is published in annual reports by the Department of Revenue. Information regarding the actual amount of investment, jobs created, and tax breaks each company receives is withheld from the public, state senators, and the Governor. LB 775 prohibits disclosure of all but certain types of aggregated data listed by industry group.

FALSEHOOD #4: It is not true that LB 775 companies are not held accountable.

TRUTH: Because disclosure of information about the actual workings of the LB 775 program is so tightly restricted even from the Legislature, there is no functional oversight of this huge tax break program. All legislative attempts to increase disclosure of key information about LB 775 and to require evaluation during its 15 years of operation have failed. Companies receiving LB 775 tax breaks have successfully eluded accountability to the state taxpayers that are providing this enormous public largess. Neither the public nor the Legislature knows whether individual companies that fail to fulfill agreements under LB 775 ever actually repay tax credits.

FALSEHOOD #5: It is wrong to report that LB 775 costs the state more in tax breaks than the treasury receives in new taxes.

TRUTH: Both the Nebraska Department of Revenue and the Legislative Fiscal Office report that tax revenues lost by LB 775 are large and will never be earned back. The Department of Revenue, which annually reports its projections of state revenue losses due to LB 775, estimates that net revenue losses since program inception total \$486 million through 2002 and will accumulate to \$686 million by 2020. The Legislative Fiscal Office, using a more sophisticated model, in January 2002 estimated that future net revenue losses over seven years total \$538 million, or \$77 million annually. Both state agencies offset state tax expenditures for LB 775 with new tax revenues generated by LB 775 investment. Neither agency includes additional revenue losses due to property tax abatements.

FALSEHOOD #6: The results of a 1997 study of the economic impact of LB 775 by Creighton University economist Ernie Goss have been misrepresented.

TRUTH: The repeal campaign accurately cites a news report about the study’s conclusion that LB 775 generated no new wealth in the state during its first decade of existence. The *Omaha World-Herald* reported on December 28, 1997, that the study by Dr. Ernie Goss of Creighton University “concluded that LB 775 has had no impact on state personal income growth over the last decade, in part, he [Dr. Goss] theorizes, because so many of

the jobs created under LB 775 have been relatively low-paying meatpacking and telemarketing jobs.” (pp. 1A-2A)

FALSEHOOD #7: Because companies have invested over \$16 billion in Nebraska’s economy for \$1.5 billion in tax credits, LB 775 is not a huge corporate subsidy by taxpayers.

TRUTH: Nebraska taxpayers don’t receive anything for their investment of tax dollars in LB 775 projects—neither improved tax revenues nor an increase in personal income (new wealth) statewide. This makes LB 775 a subsidy paid to participating business owners. Through LB 775, taxpayers have invested tax expenditures of nearly 10 percent of the total \$16 billion invested in LB 775 projects. (If taxpayers took a 10 percent equity position in any of these companies, their position would be viewed as a very significant ownership interest by any market analyst.) Nebraska taxpayers currently receive a *negative five percent per annum* rate of return on their investment, based on net revenue losses estimated by the Legislative Fiscal Office. The more they invest, the more they lose.

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 their respective 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 results of the study, which relied on a computer input-output model, merely quantitatively describe the economic impact of the presence of these companies at these sites. The study clearly stated (p. 8) that it did not address “issues of causality.” 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.

FALSEHOOD #9: “Since LB 775’s enactment, Nebraska’s employment change growth has faired [sic] better than the national average. ... The affect [sic] that LB 775 has had on Nebraska’s job growth is immediately apparent.”

TRUTH: The pamphlet reproduces a chart from the private study contracted by the Nebraska Jobs Coalition. (See FALSEHOOD #8) The chart depicts job growth in Nebraska relative to the rest of the U.S. over the last quarter century. Nowhere does the study conclude that LB 775 caused Nebraska’s job growth after the disastrous economic experience of the late 1970s and early 1980s suffered by all Great Plains states. Nebraska’s job growth experience during the late 1980s and 1990s was, in fact, similar to that of other Great Plains states. Regional trends relative to national averages explain Nebraska’s job growth experience better than its adoption of an expensive tax incentive program. Nebraska’s current job growth trends are in line with regional trends.

FALSEHOOD #10: It is wrong to advocate repeal of LB 775 because past attempts to amend it have failed.

TRUTH: Since 2001, funding for virtually every significant state program has been repeatedly slashed while LB 775 tax subsidies have been protected untouched. For the foreseeable future, it appears that Nebraska will experience continued budget shortfalls. LB 775 is crippling Nebraska by draining state coffers of about \$90 million each year. Worse, Nebraska will lose approximately \$1.5 billion more in the future under current LB 775 agreements. The Unicameral has refused to repair or overhaul LB 775 during the 15 years of its operation. Despite severe budget shortfalls, legislators continue to preserve LB 775 tax handouts to big businesses. In view of the Legislature’s refusal to act and the high financial cost, as well as the costly loss of critical program services (like K-12 education, our state college and university system, and services for low-income families, children and rural communities), it is unrealistic to look to anything less than repeal to accomplish the needed change.

— Mark Vasina and Lynn Moorer of the *Stop Big Business Subsidies—Repeal LB 775* campaign.

"I Want To Suck Your State Budget Dry!!!"



This is Count 775. He wants to suck Nebraska dry.



Count 775 hypnotizes elected officials with spells of "job creation".



Count 775 works in the shadows and is afraid of daylight.



Count 775 drains Tax Refunds away leaving public Deficits!



Count 775 relies on darkness, complicity and silence to prey!



Count 775 needs you to believe in his charms, to keep sucking Nebraska dry.

Patriot Act, conclusion

For more information on the Lincoln City Council resolution campaign, please contact the Lincoln Bill of Rights Defense Coalition, P.O. Box 84453, Lincoln, NE 68501, or by e-mail to: lincolnbordc@yahoo.com.

For information on forming local coalitions in other cities, please contact ACLU Nebraska, 941 O Street #706, Lincoln, NE 68508, or by e-mail to info@aclunbraska.org.

Background information useful for organizing against the Patriot Act's anti-civil liberties features can be found on the internet at several good websites. The December 2001 issue of *Nebraska Reports* has a summary of the Act (Civil Liberties Threatened by Anti-terrorism Law) and can be found online at:

www.nebraskansforpeace.org/2001/novdec01report.pdf

(the article is found at pages 6-7 of that edition.) Other websites that offer information include:

www.stopthepatriotact.org,

www.bordc.org,

www.aclu.org/safeandfree.org and

www.grassrootsamerica.org.

For those without internet access,

ACLU Nebraska has produced a four page briefing paper entitled *The USA PATRIOT Act and Beyond: an ACLU Nebraska Briefing Paper* which can be obtained by writing to the address above.



What You Can Do To Fight the Patriot Act

Even if there is not an active campaign to adopt a community resolution in your area, you can help fight the Patriot Act. In addition to educating yourself on the Act, you can:

Write your congressional representatives about your concern. When ACLU Nebraska members discussed the Act with Senators Nelson and Hagel and Congressmen Bereuter, Terry and Osborne this summer, Bereuter and Osborne expressed their support for the Act, while the others said that they have questions about it. All of them need to hear that their constituents care about civil liberties and the Patriot Act!

Talk to your friends, neighbors and relatives about the issue. The "each one teach one" approach is a time-honored way of growing concern over an issue. The Patriot Act can continue to be a "kitchen table issue" only if you are willing to use your kitchen table for it!

Write letters to the editor whenever the Patriot Act is in the news. The government is conducting a campaign to find support for the Act, and opposition voices are needed when the law is misrepresented.

Global Warming Update...

Temperatures Are Rising

by Mark Zimmermann

Treasurer, Nebraska Green Party

On the first day of a World Climate Change Conference in Moscow last month Russian President Vladimir Putin joked that “Russia is a northern country and if temperatures get warmer by 2 or 3 degrees Celsius it’s not that bad—we could spend less on warm coats...” The attempt at humor was undoubtedly lost on representatives from Europe where an estimated 35,000 people died in record-breaking heat waves this summer. Although this August was the hottest on record in the northern hemisphere, it is still not considered scientifically correct to say it is absolute proof of global warming. It would not be far-fetched though to think of it as a preview of coming attractions.

Just a year ago at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, Russia sounded conciliatory towards ratification of the Kyoto Protocol—the treaty itself an admittedly hesitant first step toward reducing the buildup of greenhouse gases that are causing global warming. Because of its low industrial output after the breakup of the Soviet Union, Russia’s goals under Kyoto are small, giving them millions of dollars worth of emissions credits to sell in markets that would be created under the treaty. That coupled with payments for maintaining their vast forest reserves as a carbon dioxide “sponge” were thought to ensure Russia’s agreement.

Russia’s current hesitation is thought to be due to several factors. One is that it is also considering what it can make selling oil and logs vs. saving them. And although pressure from the United States has not been reported in the news, the Bush Administration lobbied hard for Canada not to ratify Kyoto last year (which they did on a close vote). The U.S., being the largest emitter of greenhouse gases, would logically be the largest market for

emissions credits Russia would be selling. But only if the U.S. is part of the treaty. Since we’re not, this has put doubts in the mind of Putin and other Russian leaders as to not only where they could unload their credits, but probably what they would be worth since our non-participation would greatly decrease demand for them. Thus we hear Putin at the recent climate conference saying that Russia wanted unspecified guarantees that they could sell their credits before they would ratify Kyoto. And Kyoto can’t be implemented unless either the U.S. or Russia ratifies it.

Meanwhile back at the ranch, the Bush Administration is not simply hesitant to do the right thing, it has been actively working to water down or suppress the facts about global warming. In September 2002 the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued its annual report on air pollution, but for the first time deleted the section on global warming despite the fact that that same year a prestigious U.N. panel of scientists and our own National Research Council both produced reports saying human activity contributed to global warming.

In June of this year, the EPA issued a “comprehensive” report on the state of the environment on which it had worked for two years. Again the section on global warming was missing, but this time some of the background leaked out. According to an internal EPA memo dated April 29, White House staff reviewing the report insisted on major amendments to the section on climate change (*New York Times*, 6/19/03). Sections on the ecological and health effects of global warming were deleted. A temperature record covering the last 1,000 years was deleted and replaced with a study, funded in part by the American Petroleum Institute, which questioned its conclusions. Numerous qualifiers such as “may” and “potentially” were added, leading the author of the memo to note that “uncertainty

is added where there is essentially none.”

According to the memo, “The Bush Administration changes watered down the language to the point where it no longer accurately reflects the scientific consensus on climate change” (*NBC Nightly News*, 6/19/03). Rather than release a load of obfuscation, EPA director Christine Whitman and her staff (after consulting the White House of course) decided to delete the entire section. Whitman resigned shortly after the report was released, but publicly denied it was related to political interference from the White House.

Things have not improved at the EPA since Whitman’s departure. In late August the agency, in response to a suit filed by Greenpeace, the Sierra Club and the International Center for Technology Assessment, ruled it did not have the authority to regulate CO₂ as a pollutant, reversing a determination of the EPA under the Clinton Administration that it did. The EPA argued that it needed specific authority from Congress to do so and that since the Clean Air Act doesn’t address global warming specifically it could not be used as an argument for regulation of CO₂. The environmental groups pointed out the the Clean Air Act does

allow the EPA to regulate vehicle emissions if they “may be reasonably anticipated to endanger public health or welfare” which global warming will certainly do. An appeal by one or more of the groups is expected.

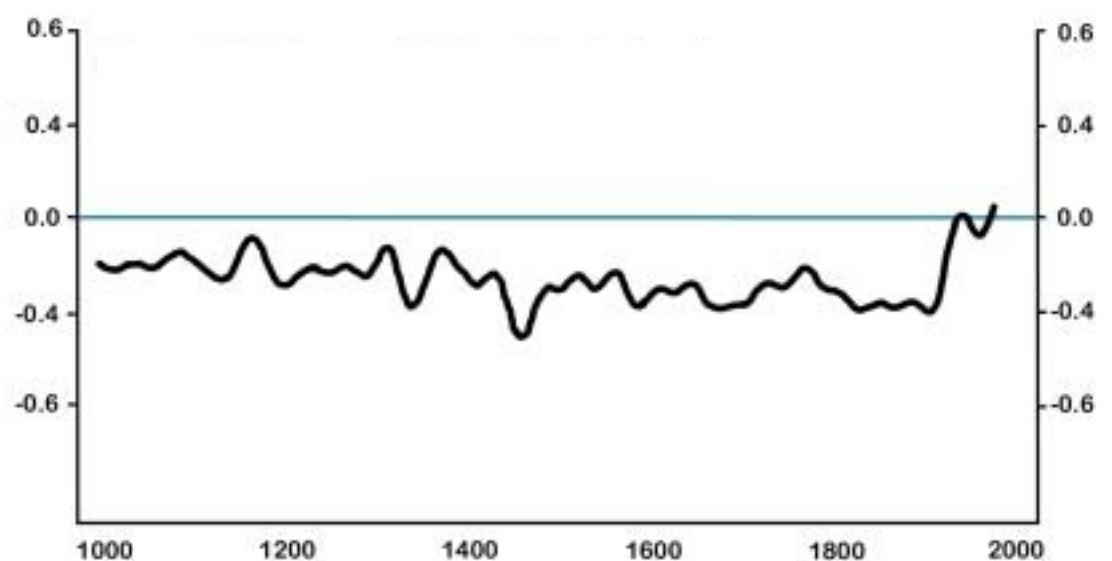
The only other word from the administration on the subject of global warming recently was yet another “strategic” plan for more study of the issue. The Climate Change Strategic Plan, which was announced in late July, will study the “natural variability” of climate change (they never use the phrase global warming in the executive branch) among other things. The plan can be viewed at www.climate.science.gov. Philip Clapp, president of the National Environmental Trust (an environmental lobby) said, “This would have been a great research program if it had been announced by the first President Bush 10 years ago.”

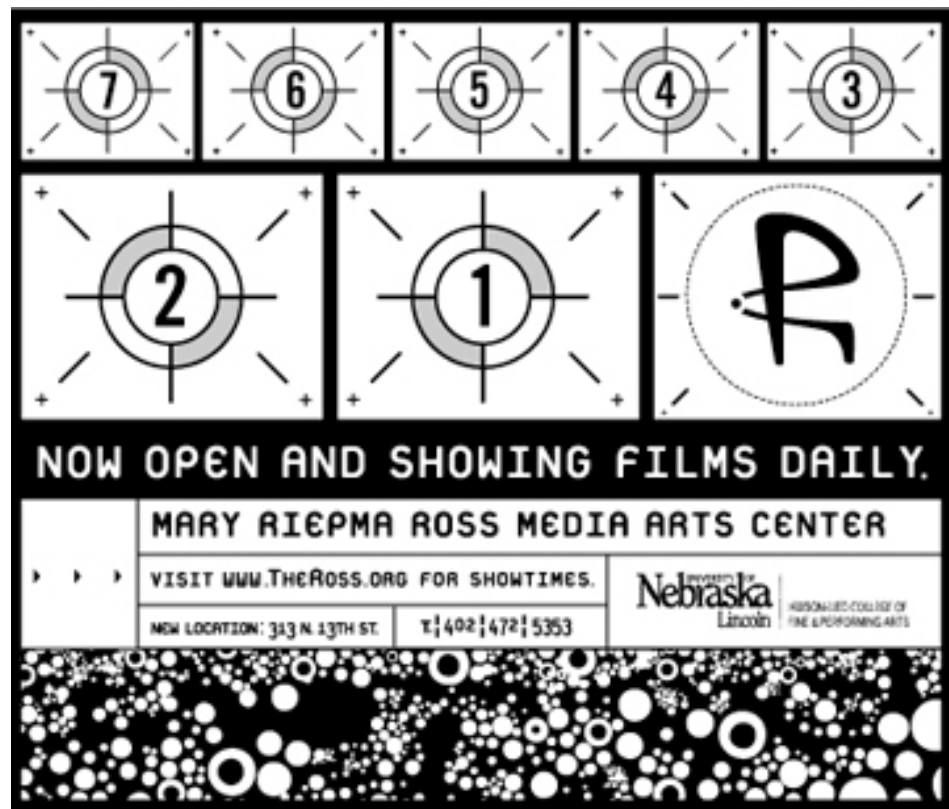
Congress is faring little better in taking responsibility. One of the best things that can be said for the energy policy they have been debating for the past 2 years is that it has not been passed yet. That may soon change as the Republican leadership in both houses push the House and Senate conferees to wrap up their negotiations and get a bill passed before Congress adjourns for the

holidays. The bill they are considering, H.R.6, would repeal the Public Utility Holding Companies Act which was passed in the 1930’s to prevent unrelated conglomerates from sucking the profits from and dumping their losses on energy companies. It would limit the liability of MTBE (a gasoline additive) polluters and transfer the burden to taxpayers and rate payers. It would extend again the Price-Anderson Act which limits the liabilities of nuclear plant operators. It provides an estimated 18 billion dollars in tax breaks and subsidies to the coal, oil, gas and nuclear industries. It does not raise fuel efficiency standards for automobiles or SUVs—at all. In fact, the Senate version includes a provision which would direct federal regulators to include “manufacturers’ competitiveness” in setting these standards, which could potentially lower mileage requirements. It’s unclear at this time whether the final conference report will include drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. One of the few good points about the bill is that in wake of this summer’s northeast blackout it now includes some reliability standards for large transmission lines, prompting a large amount of silence from deregulation

conclusion on next page

The graph showing the variations of the earth’s surface temperature for the past 1000 years (Northern Hemisphere) that the Bush Administration deleted.





From the Bottom, conclusion

children. We can build anywhere—under the earth or sea and into the sky, but millions are homeless tonight. We have hopes of high virtues and democracy, but our human nature continues addicted to opportunism and violence.

Perhaps we ought to be asking the complementary question: Does nature need us? The answer is yes. Or no. Maybe.

Yes, nature needs us, because we're here. Whether you affirm a Creator or not, every living thing arises at some point to fill a niche. Science and conviction are in remarkable agreement on that point. God was lonely and so made Man and Woman, or Lucy and her all her relations came out of the trees to exploit the veldt. It comes to the same thing in the end—us.

No, nature doesn't need us, or anybody. The history of earth is the history of a succession of climates and of species. The likelihood of human permanence (at least for the life of this solar system) on earth is of astronomical smallness, approaching nil. Others will walk where we walk, other species whose forms and meanings we cannot even dream. Like the grasses, we bloom for a day. In the evening, we will without fail be cut down.

Maybe nature needs us, and if so, we ought to try to figure out what for. I doubt nature needs us to foul the earth with waste and violence—we're not the only species capable of either. It's not just our tools or language, as other species practice both. It's not sensation or emotion—anyone one who thinks animals don't feel just isn't paying attention.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said to be human was to be "the eye by which the universe beholds itself and knows itself." If nature needs us, I think it is to this end. Nature must need reflection, to know itself. If nature is the novel, we are the called-upon editors. We make revisions.

In hundred million years, we could never write this novel. Habitat loss and species loss, any loss of bio-diversity is such a bad bad thing, because the genomes of extincting critters are nature's ir retrievable data, information nature has been encoding since jump, lost (are you with me?) forever. This is information which humans not only cannot generate, we can never in another hundred million years fathom or appreciate, but we can change the environment to kill—what? A species a minute these days? We are smart and able, and we are risk takers. This has brought us all the wealth and misery we can stand and then some. But we could never ever write this novel. If we burn it up, it is forever gone.

If nature needs us, we'll soon know. The signs of environmental catastrophe will overwhelm the most powerful special interests, and ordinary people will demand and accomplish change. If the changes come too late, we will be lost in the great forgetfulness of extinction.

If the changes—to the way we farm and fish and build and travel, to the way we wash and heat and cook, to the way we work and shop and invest and vote—come soon enough, that will be the sign that nature needs us, after all.

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Global Warming, conclusion

zealots. Lately most environmentalists are urging Congress to pass the transmission standards and forget the rest of the package. The Critical Mass Energy Project has some good analyses of the legislation at www.citizen.org/cmep

There has been a bit of notice of a "cap and trade" CO2 emissions bill (S.139) introduced by Sens. John McCain and Joe Lieberman. Like a weaker version of the Kyoto Treaty, it would set upper limits on CO2 emissions and set up a system of tradable emissions credits within the U.S. While Kyoto called for 1990 levels by 2012, this bill would try for 2000 levels at about the same time. Households, agriculture and small businesses would be exempt, but the bill would still target 80 percent of greenhouse gas emissions. An original provision which would have also targeted 1990 levels starting after 2016 has since been dropped by the sponsors in order to increase the bill's chances during an upcoming floor vote this year. Although it is a weakened version of a weak bill and even then is considered unlikely to win passage in the Senate (much less the House), it still will mark the first time since 1997, when the Senate rejected Kyoto, that a global climate bill will be voted on in the Senate.

It has been the case over the past several years that one of the few bright spots in the effort to slow global warming has come from state governments, and that trend has continued recently. Following the lead of the New England states and several Canadian provinces last year, California, Oregon and Washington have formed a pact to reduce greenhouse gases. Though not as aggressive as New England's plan to actually cap CO2 emissions, the three west coast states would collaborate on measuring and reporting greenhouse gas emissions, develop common efficiency standards for appliances and pool their purchasing of fuel-efficient state vehicles among other things.

An even more important and potentially landmark action is on the horizon. Ten states (including New York and California) plan to sue the EPA over its decision in August to not regulate CO2 as a pollutant. If the courts rule that greenhouse gases such as CO2 represent a "potential harm" under the Clean Air Act, the federal government will have to change its intransigence on the issue. David Bookbinder of the Sierra Club said in the *New York Times* (10/4/03) "If the United States is ever going to regulate greenhouse gases, it will start with a victory in this lawsuit."

Cat Lovers Against the Bomb



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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., weekdays, except holidays.

November 6-7 "Love ? All That and More" Workshop sponsored by Nebraska Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Coalition. A training for teachers/educators, youth pastors, lay leaders working with youth, education directors, domestic violence advocates, shelter workers and others working with teens and young adults. The same information will be presented both Thursday and Friday, beginning at 8:00 a.m. and ending at 5:00 p.m. The workshop will take place at Christ United Methodist Church, located at 4530 A Street in Lincoln. Call 402-476-6256 for more information.

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.

Ordering information on page 11

Do We Need Nature?

The history of human activity on earth is in many ways a history of our attempt to escape nature. Unlike other species, which mostly adapt biologically to the environment, the single most obvious human quality is our tendency to change environments to suit our biologies and our agendas.

Do we need nature? Only those of us who eat need nature. We could in a national or global emergency do without Nikes and Sonys and Chevrolets for days, even weeks, but our animal nature means we need to eat every day. Hunger for energy and nutrients is a condition of nature that drives all species on earth. Agriculture is meant to be the escape from hunger, replacing the diligent, edgy opportunism of hunting and gathering with a more secure food supply through domestication of animals and plants.

Permanent settlement has followed agriculture. Architecture is the escape from weather, another condition of nature that shapes the forms and behavior of most species. Nomadic people build shelters too, and they represent a bridge culture between humans who adapt to the challenges of the natural world and

humans who adapt the natural world in order to escape it. Settled agricultural groups have more children, because they can be fed, need not be carried long distances and can from a young age be used to work the herds and fields. Exponentially, farming races increase until they must contend with their own pollution, their waste and their dead.

Cleanliness is the escape from disease and filth, a condition of nature that occurs when larger species are concentrated in one area too long. Migratory grass-eaters—like the buffalo that roamed the continent in roughly the same numbers as comprise the entire U.S. cattle industry today—were the antithesis of feedlots—converting the third of the continent that was prairie grasses and forbs into buffalo pies that dried into termite cities, grand pickings for bird life and otherwise biodegradable without any fuss.

Greater concentration of our species in one place over time meant hygiene, best practices to escape sickness, a natural condition of contamination and open decay. Crowding and competition in humans as in many animal species is a recipe for violence and opportunism, two of the more problematic aspects of our nature. Behavioral hygiene—socialization and law—is the effort to escape from the corrosive nature of population concentratin.

For individuals, possibly the greatest perceived problem of nature is existence, itself, posed in two questions: How is it that you and I (not to mention everything else) exist? What, pray, is death? Religious activity is the great escape from the twin fates of all nature: being, which seems to be a puzzle to humans alone, and nonbeing, which is death.

As a species, however, there is little doubt that the greatest actual problem we face at this writing is this very quality to which we tend, this preference for escape. The strategy has been so successful that humans are arguably the alltime dominant species on the earth in a walk, terrific breeders and every one an environment changer, woman, child and man. We may already be too many for this modest planet, and we struggle daily with the consequences of fouling of earth, our only nest.

The new global economy, as unabridged multinational capitalism likes to call itself, is the attempt by the dominant 10 percent of the species (which controls 90 percent of the world's wealth) to escape the inescapable physics of nature. Matter is energy, and nothing is ever lost. However, each transaction (and everything happening everywhere all the time since the beginning of time is the sum of transactions) makes a little bit of energy unavailable, (stay with me now) forever.

The problem with unfettered capitalism is that the escape plan is perpetual growth, whereas we live, it's clear, in a no net gain universe. You do the math.

What's not clear is how long multinational capitalism can swim upstream against the physics of nature. Like all systems, capitalism contains the seeds of its own destruction. For a long while, the smart money has said the environment will be the tripwire that brings the unbridled, profit-driven, winner-take-all economy tumbling down.

Sadly, the kind and scale of environmental disaster required to bring ungovernable capitalism to its knees will not spare the 90 percent of the rest of the human race, those of us making do with just 10 percent of the world's wealth, nor the critters great and small who share the planet. The corrections of nature tend to be catastrophic rather than otherwise. I'm pretty sure global warming won't be for sissies.

Do we need nature? Human beings cannot escape nature, for all our big ideas and opposable thumbs. In a world of agricultural miracle, where grain sells at below the cost of production and transportation is no object, hunger is still a natural condition for 20 percent of the human race, most of those third world

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From the Bottom by Sally Herrin

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