Thirty-five years ago this month (in response to another of our government’s deceitful and disastrous foreign military interventions), a steering committee of anti-war activists from around the state voted to form a non-profit organization called “Nebraskans for Peace.”

Despite an inclement political climate that’s made Nebraska legendary as a ‘red state,’ this fledgling, but gritty group has endured to become what is now the oldest statewide Peace & Justice organization in the entire country.

From a handful of charter members in 1970 to a membership of now more than a thousand households across the state, NFP’s mission as “a statewide grassroots advocacy organization working nonviolently for peace with justice through community-building, education and political action” has remained the same...

And so it will stay until, as the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. stated in his “I Have a Dream” speech, “…justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.” For as Dr. King reminded us, “Peace is not the absence of tension. It is the presence of justice.”
NEBRASKA REPORT

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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 Christy Hargesheimer

CONGRESSIONAL SCORECARD, 2004

There were only a few Latin American-friendly bills or actions brought before the House and Senate during 2004. The scorecard shows little support by Nebraskans for these measures, except for Osborne’s stand on Cuban travel. Hagel, who is on the Senate’s Committee on Cuba, would have supported the Cuban actions had they reached the floor.

In the House, none of the Nebraskans signed the “Farr/Taylor Letter to Armed Services Chair and Ranking Members” calling for establishing the maximum number of U.S. troops permitted in Colombia at 500, rather than the Senate’s higher cap of 800. The Senate’s version prevailed. None of the Nebraskans joined the 74 signatories to the “McGovern letter on Human Rights Defenders” sent to Colombian President Alvaro Uribe, calling upon him to respect the role of human rights defenders in a democratic society and to provide adequate protection measures to threatened activists.

Osborne voted “yes” for three Cuban measures, one of which sought to roll back new Bush Administration restrictions on Cuban-American family travel. The measure passed the House by a vote of 225-174, but was removed from the final version of the bill by the House/Senate conference. (Osborne is a member of the House Committee on Cuba.) He also supported the Rangel Amendment, which would have lifted the full embargo on Cuba, but which lost 188-225. Osborne was joined by Bereuter in voting for the CJS Amendment, which would have rolled back restrictions on the types of packages Cuban-Americans can send to their families on the island. It passed 221-194, but was stripped out of the final version of the bill by the House/Senate conference. Representative Lee Terry did not support any of these measures.

In the Senate, 40 Senators supported the “Byrd Amendment” to the defense authorization bill to limit the number of U.S. troops permitted in Colombia at 500. 23 Senators signed “the ‘Feingold-Dodd letter to Colombian President Alvaro Uribe,” urging him to make progress on breaking ties between the Colombian army and paramilitary forces and expressing concern about ongoing attacks against human rights and union activists. The letter also raised concerns about policies granting police powers to the military. Neither Hagel nor Nelson supported these measures.

CAFTA UPDATE

On December 17, 2004, El Salvador became the first country to ratify the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), which sets up a trade area including Costa Rica, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and the U.S. The agreement was signed in Washington on May 28, but it requires the approval of the legislatures of each of the member countries.

The pressure is on for the other countries to ratify it as soon as January, but there has been resistance from many groups, including the Central American Jesuits and other religious groups, thousands of Honduran campesinos and indigenous people, Costa Rica’s Public Employees Union and other trade unionists, farmers, and environmentalists. In Costa Rica, the corruption scandals that led to the arrests of former presidents Miguel Angel Rodriguez (1998-2002) and Rafael Angel Calderón (1990-1994) have damaged the credibility of the elites who have pushed for the trade agreement.

In the United States, no date has been set for presenting the agreement in Congress, where it will have to overcome numerous hurdles. However, it is believed that it will be on the agenda early in this session, after the round of confirmation hearings. Letters or phone calls to members of Congress can be sent at any time.

FREE TRADE COFFEE IN CAUCA, COLOMBIA

1,624 peasant farming families in Colombia have joined Cosurca, a cooperative of small farmers that has switched production from the illegal cultivation of coca to production of coffee. A new coffee-exporting company, Exposurca, was formed in 2004, with a $2 million investment from the United Nations and contributions from the Colombian government. The U.N. established these reconversion programs specifically to discourage the drug trade that has boomed in Colombia since the ‘90s. Owned by farmers that used to grow coca leaf—the raw material for cocaine—this company now aims to consolidate the business and improve their communities. The southern region of Cauca is one of the clash points where government-armed forces run up against leftist guerrillas and right-wing paramilitary groups, which seek control over the illicit drug crops.
Governors’ ‘Budget Magic’ Averts Huge Cuts

The new governor jokingly called it “budget magic.” You take what was projected to be a $430 million budget shortfall and make it disappear without raising taxes or making further cuts to education. Former Lt. Governor Dave Heineman claims to have learned it studying under his predecessor, Mike Johans, who as we know from his political career knows all about magic tricks.

A master of disguise and deception, Mike Johans transformed himself from a liberal Democratic county commissioner into a moderate Republican mayor, morphed from there into a conservative right-wing governor with Senate aspirations before departing last month to become George W. Bush’s Secretary of Agriculture. If what he wanted to learn was the art of political spin, Governor Heineman couldn’t have had a better teacher.

Beyond all the talk of magic though, both the outgoing and incoming governor credited the improved budget picture in part to a rebounding state economy and higher state tax receipts, which enabled the Governor’s Office, for the first time in three years, to submit a budget that didn’t call for cuts in K-12 education and higher ed. The two chief executives, of course, also took the opportunity to publicly parade their hard-nosed fiscal conservatism. Their proposal calls for paring back the Legislature’s projected rate for spending growth in state agencies by better than a percentage point across the board, and singles out both the Department of Corrections and the Department of Health and Human Services for big cuts to their budgets. And, to prove what manly cultural warriors they are against the forces of “political correctness,” they call some than originally feared, which after five straight rounds of legislative cuts provides a welcome breather.

Now for the Real Story

A more complete (and honest) explanation for this reprieve from the ongoing budget crisis, however, would admit to some fiscal sleight of hand as well as rank political opportunism. First, while the governor’s budget calls for fully funding K-12 education under the state aid to education formula in 2005 and 2006, no provision is being made to compensate the state’s school districts for the $432 million in back aid that was deferred during the state budget crisis. No matter how much the Governor’s Office chooses to ignore it, this financial albatross around the state’s neck cannot be willed away. Two school district lawsuits against state government for non-payment are in the courts even as we speak, and there’s every likelihood the state is going to have to come up with a financial remedy down the road.

Secondly, although the university and state college system are poised to get their first budget increases since 2001 under the governor’s plan, the long-term prognosis for higher ed funding is dismal. Since 1985, the university’s share of the budget pie has decreased by a third, from 21 percent down to 14 percent, as spending for Medicaid and K-12 funding has leapfrogged past the university system. If the University of Nebraska is going to maintain its ranking as a Tier One educational institution (and if the governor and the Legislature have any illusions about it being able to do so), something is going to have to be done to reverse this downward trend. And that ‘something’ translates as more state support.

Although there is no direct correlation, curiously enough, the decline of higher ed’s

NFP 2005 Legislative Agenda

by Mark Vasina, President
Nebraskans for Peace

A number of important bills have been introduced in the 2005 Unicameral session. While a comprehensive list has yet to be compiled, the following bills have already found their way onto NFP’s legislative agenda.

WHITECLAY ALCOHOL SALES

Although we have been working with several senators who share our concern about resolving the issue of alcohol sales in the Pine Ridge Reservation border town of Whiteclay, no legislation specifically addressing Whiteclay was introduced this year.

Nevertheless, two bills would significantly improve the legal and regulatory environment surrounding liquor licensing and alcohol sales. Both would have a significant positive impact on our efforts in Whiteclay.

LB 530 would change the standard for granting a liquor license by the Liquor Control Commission by stating the Commission may grant a license vs. shall grant. It would also provide increased consideration of the impact new licenses would have on neighborhoods and communities. Whiteclay is becoming widely regarded as the poster child for inaction by the Liquor Control Commission regarding public health and safety issues of concern to communities. We thank Sen. Ray Janssen, Chair of the General Affairs Committee, for making this a committee bill. We will be vigorously supporting its passage.

LB 592 would establish a Dram Shop and Social Host Liability statute (the Alcoholic Liquor Liability Act). This law would impose civil liability on retailers and adults who sell or provide alcohol to minors or intoxicated adults when the minor or adult is subsequently involved in an alcohol-related crash resulting in death or injury to third parties. Nebraska is currently one of only eight states which do not have some form of dram shop laws. Although this bill may face some tough opposition from liquor industry interests, 14 senators signed onto the bill. We heartily thank our friend Sen. Lowen Kruse of Omaha for taking the lead on this important piece of legislation.

BUSINESS TAX INCENTIVES

A number of bills would amend the Employment and Investment Growth Act (LB 775) and create new business tax incentives. Some of the bills appropriately target rural areas and small businesses. Three bills, however, deserve close attention due to their effect on existing tax subsidies for Big Business and their impact on state revenues.

LB 312, introduced by Sen. Dave Landis, amends LB 775 in two major ways. First, it adjusts the tax breaks received by program participants in such a way that some tax breaks are increased while others are decreased, and adjusts the qualifying thresholds and time horizons for earning and using them. Second, it requires disclosure of company-specific information regarding tax breaks earned and used and the jobs and investment attributed to them for all new projects. While the fiscal impact of the changes to the tax break formulas is not yet known, the excellent disclosure provisions make this an important compromise bill to support. This is Sen. Landis’s ‘Son of LB 775.’
Governors’ ‘Budget Magic’

The ‘Truth’ about ‘Budget Magic’

It was yet another Republican colleague, though, Senator Jeanne Combs of Friend, who revealed the truth about the administration’s “budget magic.” By far, one of the largest sources of funds the governors’ use in their budget plan to plug the shortfall is the $73 million in surplus tax revenues, that have come in higher than originally estimated. That revenue surplus, Combs noted recently in the Omaha World-Herald, is as high as it is because of the tax increases passed by the Legislature two years ago, over the governor’s expressed veto. The very executive officials who actively opposed this principled and gutsy legislative decision are now, as luck would have it, the prime beneficiaries of it. And, in an act of brazen political opportunism, are using this revenue surplus to work their so-called “budget magic.”

None of the state senators who voted for those tax increases, a majority of who are registered Republicans, have forgotten Governor Johanns’ tawdry television commercials during the general election attacking State Senator Matt Connealy as the “single greatest obstacle to tax relief in the Legislature.” Johanns’ attack on Connealy, baseless as it was, was an attack on the body as a whole, the Republican legislators as well as the Democratic ones. That cheap shot was certain to have consequences this session between the executive and legislative branches, even among members of the governor’s own party.

Mike Johanns though, having performed his last magic trick here in the state, is off to Washington. And only time will tell if the sorcerer’s apprentice, Governor Heineman, will persist in practicing these budgetary black arts, and if the Legislature will let him.

NFP 2005 Legislative Agenda, conclusion

LB 646, introduced by Speaker Kermit Brashear, will adopt a new incentives package called the Advantage Nebraska Act. This bill caters to the desires of the Nebraska Chamber of Business and Commerce to expand state taxpayer subsidies for Big Business. LB 646 expands the availability of tax breaks, even so far as to count jobs created within 10 miles of Nebraska’s borders when determining eligibility for tax breaks. If LB 312 can lay claim to the title ‘Son of LB 775,’ LB 646 is that bill’s EVIL TWIN.

LB 695, which exempts manufacturing machinery and equipment from sales and use taxation, should present an interesting challenge to our legislators. With 21 co-sponsors this bill has obvious widespread support. And for good reason. LB 695 would lower business taxes in a relatively equitable manner for all manufacturers in the state, regardless of size or location. The challenge lies in the bill’s cost, estimated at $30 million or more of lost tax revenues. The Legislature should be reminded that a similar program was in effect for a year in the late 80s, when it was minstered to help pay LB 775’s subsidy for Big Business. Complains from manufacturers too small to benefit from LB 775 fell on deaf ears for 18 years, until the effort to repeal LB 775 stirred up considerable controversy across the state. With this bill, the Legislature must decide whether to carve out the tax expenditures to pay for it from existing subsidies to Big Business, or throw fiscal prudence out the windows of the Capitol.

When considering the various tax incentive bills this session, senators should keep three things in mind all:
1. Do not increase the tax expenditures burden of our business tax incentive programs. Cutting their aggregate cost is preferable. But at a minimum do not add to their cost.
2. Provide disclosure of company-specific data on all new tax breaks earned and used and the project jobs and investment. The widest criticism of LB 775 is the secrecy surrounding its operations.
3. Build in accountability. This means include sunset clauses in all new business tax incentive legislation, and require periodic program evaluations which fairly evaluate cost and benefits to the state.

Other Legislation

MINIMUM WAGE: Support LB 554 (Chris Beutler and Pam Redfield), which raises the minimum wage for employees seventeen years of age or older. Minimum wage would be increased to $5.52 per hour on October 1, 2005. The wage would be increased to $5.89 a year later, and $6.26 on October 1, 2007. The Department of Labor will periodically adjust the wage thereafter to track changes in the Consumer Price Index.

BULLYING: Support LB 627 (Gwen Howard), which requires school boards to adopt a bullying policy. The bill requires policies to recognize “bullying conduct that is based on a student’s actual or perceived identity with regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity and expression, religion, sexual orientation, or a mental, physical, or sensory handicap or any other distinguishing characteristics . . .”

VOTING RIGHTS: Support LB 53 (DiAnna Schimek, Ernie Chambers, Lowen Kruse and Dwight Pedersen), which restores voting rights upon completion of a felony sentence.

DISCRIMINATION: Support LB 10 (Dave Landis), which broadens the definition of employer for purposes of sexual discrimination. Support LB 50 (Dave Landis), which prohibits housing discrimination based on sexual orientation. Support LB 759 (Ernie Chambers), which prohibits employment discrimination based on sexual orientation.

DEATH PENALTY: Support LB 760 (Ernie Chambers), which changes the death penalty to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole. Oppose LB 506, with 23 co-sponsors, which changes the method of administering the death penalty from electrocution to lethal injection. (Expect Sen. Chambers to work his legislative charms to oppose this one.)

LEGISLATIVE PAY: Support LR 12 CA and LR 13CA (DiAnna Schimek). These are Constitutional Amendments to provide for much-needed increases in legislative salaries (currently $12,000 per year).

CONCEALED CARRY: Oppose LB 454, which allows concealed carry of handguns (the Concealed Handgun Permit Act).
NFP Letter to the University of Nebraska Board of Regents on the UNO Afghan Center

January 21, 2005

Dear University of Nebraska Regents:

It is our understanding that you have under consideration a code of ethics for members of the university, presumably faculty members, administration and regents. We at Nebraskans for Peace have received from one of your members, and on official stationery (enclosed), a letter calling our State Coordinator a derogatory epithet and suggesting that we support the Soviet Union and oppose capitalism hardly a relevant charge in this day and age. We do not find this helpful. I enclose the reply of Paul Olson, one of our state board members and a reputable 50-year employee of the University of Nebraska, to this Regent. However, we are not interested in retracling old histories except as these may be relevant to present reform.

On the basis of Dr. Olson’s reply, Nebraskans for Peace is interested in several matters:

1. Does the university have any policy with respect to what companies it collaborates with, especially if the company does not pass basic human rights screens or ethical investment ones? Unocal, for whom the university did training, was at or near the time of the collaboration with the university using forced labor in Myanmar (Burma) to construct a pipeline, and in Afghanistan it was training and hiring only male workers. The enclosed article details the reaction of various human rights groups to Unocal’s collaboration with the University of Nebraska and its CIA projects. We would urge you to put in place ethical screens or adopt those, say, of TIAA-CREF in its socially responsible investment sector, so that the university is not modeling for the young students, whom it seeks to educate, values and systems of behavior that it otherwise discourages. The University of Nebraska Foundation recognized a somewhat similar principle several years ago when it voted to divest from South African companies that supported apartheid. We have no right to support companies that encourage slave labor, male-only work forces or Talibanc-based schemes.

2. Did the University of Nebraska Board of Regents create the University of Nebraska at Omaha Education Press as, say, it created the University of Nebraska Press? When was that done? What was its mandate? According to the press reports that we have read, anywhere from 4-12 million books have been published carrying the name of this press. Was it ever authorized by you as a full Board? What kind of oversight has been exercised by you? We have observed cases in which the Regents have questioned the re-publication of writings by the Marxist Che Guevara and the English playwright John Ford’s ‘Tis a Pity She’s A Whore on ethical grounds. Did you ask any questions about the publication of 4-12 million textbooks for Afghans glamorizing violence, jihad and other actions that in American youth would be violations of law and ethics? We believe that the texts violate both U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) rules and rules concerning the separation of church and state, and we would like your opinion on that matter.

3. In an interview with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the head of the Afghan Center said that the texts were written by the mujahdeen without UNO intervention or any sort of peer review by experts in educational publications. Does the university normally put its name to publications written by non-professionals that have not been peer-reviewed by professionals? The texts have been significantly critiqued by UNESCO textbooks people and other specialists in the construction of teaching materials. What then is the proper procedure for ensuring professionalism in this kind of work? This is particularly relevant in that the teaching of violence (at that time against the Soviet occupiers) was regarded as a major strength of the textbooks when they were created. However, this educationally questionable notion continued to be promoted through these books through the whole of the mujahdeen period, through the Taliban period (with the textbook images effaced), and through a part of the post-Taliban period (though with significant modifications then). It may well be that the storms that we face in Afghanistan were partly created by us. The children of the ‘80s that used these texts are the youth of the ‘90s that are killing our troops today.

4. The textbooks also appear to violate American law and university policy with respect to gender. Does the university condemn the publication of sexist, Jihadist material so long as the intended audience is foreign, or do the standards and expectations of a Tier One institution oblige us to will for others what we will for ourselves?

5. Other institutions forbid the publication of materials commissioned by secret organizations such as the CIA, and as the attached article suggests the national AAUP does not condone such work. Harvard has fired people for doing it. What is your view of the publication of work secretly funded by the CIA that is not subject to normal academic oversight?

We ask you as part of your consideration of an ethics policy to consider:

1. an ethical screening system for work with companies outside the university;
2. an enforcement of the requirement that administrative units be authorized by the Board of Regents and appropriate oversight be regularly given;
3. a prohibition of the transfer of responsibility for university press writing from peer-reviewed channels to clandestine ones;
4. a requirement that the university in all its efforts respect its policies with respect to gender and religion, whether the publications or actions are intended for an American or foreign audience; and
5. an endorsement of the Harvard-AAUP position that university professors cannot publish works in which the conclusions of the works are not governed by the search for truth, but by CIA or other similar “hidden persuader” interests.

You should know that the issue of these publications is not a matter of past concern. Recent articles concerning them have appeared in the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times, and many European publications. They have also been discussed in the Arab world. The web is full of material on them. We do not seek to personally attack Mr. Goutierre or the Afghan Center. What he and the center is do, however, carries the name of the University of Nebraska. The work ultimately comes to rest at the Regents’ door, and you are responsible. The books may well have been published by Mr. Goutierre out of a sense of patriotism and desire to engage the Afghan situation. But as one article notes, they appear to have had “unintended consequences,” consequences of which our citizens are now the victim. That this entire episode suggests is that, when we act, we need to act according to rules that apply to all human beings. That is what ethics is about, and that is why we are asking that you include these issues in your ethical review.

Sincerely,

Mark Vasina
President, Nebraskans for Peace

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Teaching ‘Intimate Violence’

Internationally acclaimed author and social theorist, Riane Eisler, whose groundbreaking 1987 book The Chalice and the Blade exposed the sexism in scholarly interpretations of western cultural history, recently launched a new organization aimed at addressing the problem of ‘intimate violence’ in the home. The following excerpt is taken from an article that appeared in the Winter 2005 issue of YES! A Journal of Positive Futures, entitled “Spare the Rod.”

“...Terrorism and chronic warfare are responses to life in societies in which the only perceived choices are dominating or being dominated. These violent responses are characteristic of cultures where this view of relations is learned early on through traditions of coercion, abuse, and violence in parent-child and gender relations. It’s not coincidental that throughout history the most violently despotic and warlike societies have been those in which violence, or the threat of violence, is used to maintain domination of parent over child and man over woman. It’s not coincidental that the 9/11 terrorists came from cultures where women and children are terrorized into submission. Nor is it coincidental that Afghanistan under the Taliban in many ways resembled the European Middle Ages when witchburnings, public drawings and quarterings, despotic rulers, brutal violence against children, and male violence against women were considered moral and normal. Neither is it coincidental that, in the U.S. today, those pushing “crusades” against “evil enemies” oppose equal rights for women and advocate harshly punitive childrearing.

For much of recorded history, religion has been used to justify, even command, violence against women and children. The subjugation of women and children is still the central message of many fundamentalist religious leaders today leaders who, not coincidentally, also advocate ‘holy wars.’…”
The Ongoing Effort to Free Ed & Mondo

by Nan Graf

Longtime NFP Member, Nan Graf is also a member of Nebraskans for Justice, the advocacy team working for Ed and Mondo’s legal defense.

In August of 1970, black activists Ed Poindexter and David Rice (now Mondo we Langa) were arrested and placed in Omaha’s Douglas County Jail as suspects in the suitcase-bombing that killed white police officer, Larry Minard.

The two black leaders were tried together in a two-week trial (April, 1971), found guilty of Murder in the First Degree, and sentenced to life imprisonment. This year marks their 35th year behind bars.

From the time of their arrest, Ed and Mondo have maintained their innocence, as have supporters (both black and white), who have organized fundraising efforts on their behalf from 1970 until now—35 years of legal defense committees mounting various forms of legal support for their release.

Even though some supporters and some lawyers have died or moved away, there have always been ongoing efforts, year by year, to work for JUSTICE in this case. The recent death of hardworking activist Gloria Bartek, who served for many years to free Ed and Mondo, is of course a blow to the effort, but she inspired the rest of us to keep on keeping on when hopeful justice waned.

In 1978, Lennox Hinds, former Director of the National Conference of Black Lawyers and current Professor of Criminal Justice at Rutgers University, included a chapter entitled “David Rice and Ed Poindexter” (pp. 304-311) in his book Illusions of Justice: Human Rights Violations in the United States. This book drew national attention to the plight of Ed and Mondo.

Later on, the Bremen, Germany chapter of the Amnesty International adopted their cases and brought international attention to this cause; then the BBC (British Broadcasting Company) in the 1990s produced a television documentary on Ed Poindexter, Geronimo Pratt, and David Rice, thus broadening the international awareness of U.S. cases.

In 1998, Charles E. Jones edited a collection of writings entitled The Black Panther Party (Reconsidered) that referred to Ed and Mondo. Syracuse University Professor of History, Winston A. Grady-Willis, includes their names on his full-page list of political prisoners in the United States who were former Black Panthers.

On July 28, 2003, Ed Poindexter’s dedicated attorney, Robert F. Bartle, filed four claims on Ed’s behalf in Douglas County Court:

Claim I: Ineffective Assistance of Trial Counsel
Claim II: Prosecutorial Misconduct
Claim III: Ineffective Assistance of Appellant Counsel
Claim IV: Right to a Fair and Impartial Jury

District Judge Richard Spethman agreed to examine two of the four claims: I and II; whether a formal hearing will be granted on Claim IV is yet to be determined. Attorney Bartle will return to Douglas County Court in Omaha with Ed Poindexter on May 4, 5, 6, 2005 to further consider the defendant’s claims. These May dates promise to be important for Ed Poindexter (and for Mondo we Langa also) in terms of ultimate release.

The following social justice groups have offered long-term as well as current support for the re-trial and/or release of Ed and Mondo:

“The FBI’s notorious COINTELPRO of the 1970s was an illegal operation that used covert surveillance, harassment, intimidation tactics, and outright criminal acts to target individuals on the basis of their race and political beliefs, thus violating the Constitution. We support the request for a new trial for Edward Poindexter and will be asking the court for permission to participate as an amicus (“a friend of the court”) party on the COINTELPRO issues.”

Tim Butz, Ex. Director, ACLU Nebraska

“The arrest, trial and conviction and incarceration of Ed Poindexter and Dave Rice from August, 1970 until today has not been free of bias. Thousands of memos to and from the Hoover FBI targeted for destruction of our black leadership nationwide, including Omaha black activists Poindexter and Rice.”

Leroy Stokes, President, Lincoln Branch/NAACP

“Nebraskans for Peace has for many years supported promoting justice for Ed Poindexter and Mondo we Langa. Each issue of the Nebraska Report...includes this reminder under the title at the top of our front page: THERE IS NO PEACE WITHOUT JUSTICE. We deplore the outrage of this long-term injustice and join in today’s pleading for justice.”

Carol McShane, President, Nebraskans for Peace
John Krejeci, Board Member, Nebraskans for Peace

“The memory of a policeman killed in the line of duty would not be honored by the lifetime incarceration of two innocent men. This pleading, with its hope of re-trial or release, is an opportunity for the truth to finally come out.”

The Rev. Wilkinson M. Harper,
Board Member/Nebraskans for Justice

Amnesty International, at its general meeting in Minneapolis (April 18, 1999), passed a resolution calling for the immediate release of U.S. political prisoners, specifically calling for the release of Ed Poindexter and Mondo we Langa.

Readers of the Nebraska Report can support this effort for JUSTICE by attending one of all three days of Ed Poindexter’s return to Douglas County Court May 4-6 or by making a tax-deductible donation to Nebraskans for Justice and mailing it to the treasurer:

Barb Zaayer, Treasurer
Nebraskans for Justice
3824 North 53rd Street
Omaha, NE, 68104
Mondo on the 2004 Election…

‘Lesser of Two Evils’ Again?

by Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa

It’s over with the scripted vagueness, the deceptions, outright lies, pandering, posturing; the interviewers’ cotton candy questions and their apparent inability to know when their questions have been dodged; the polls and analyses and interpretations of polling results; the endless talk of demographics and trends. Damn. I’m glad it’s over with but not too pleased with the result. (King) George Bush is arrogant, simple-minded, stubborn, hypocritical, and chronically infected by the imperialist concept of “manifest destiny.” If I were a person who considered himself to be an American, I’d be embarrassed to have to admit to people that “George W. Bush is my president.” As I’m not such a person, I’m not burdened with embarrassment, just in a mild state of wonderment at how several million people in this country could voluntarily put their lives into the hands of such an obnoxious character as this newly re-elected Bush.

But then there was John Kerry. Sure there was. In 1968, the only year I had an opportunity to vote in a presidential election, there was Hubert Humphrey, running against the obnoxious Richard M. Nixon. I didn’t vote for either, as I wouldn’t have voted for Kerry or Bush this year. Instead, I wrote in the name of Eldridge Cleaver, the Black Panther who was running for the presidency under the banner of the Peace and Freedom Party. Was mine a wasted vote if I wrote in the name of Eldridge Cleaver, the Black Panther who was running for the presidency under the banner of the Peace and Freedom Party. Was mine a wasted vote if I wrote in the name of Eldridge Cleaver, the Black Panther who was running for the presidency under the banner of the Peace and Freedom Party. Was mine a wasted vote if I wrote in the name of Eldridge Cleaver, the Black Panther who was running for the presidency under the banner of the Peace and Freedom Party.

As far as the “War on Terrorism” is concerned, Kerry sounded as much like a ruthless gangster as did his opponent, setting his jaw hard and telling the public that he would “track down the terrorists and capture or kill them.” Maybe this ploy didn’t work because he couldn’t get himself to look as war-hungry and wacky as King George. But beyond the question of looks and rhetoric, Kerry and Bush were operating under the very same illusion and/or trying to feed that illusion to the public that terrorists hate the U.S. and want to attack it because they are jealous or hateful or “America’s freedoms.” Maybe the presidential incumbent and his challenger were under the influence of some kind of “Milk of Amnesia.” This would explain why neither could recollect that the U.S. government has a history of both overt and covert actions by which it has toppled foreign government leaders, installed puppet regimes, manipulated economies, and otherwise meddled in the internal affairs of countries throughout the world especially in nations and regions populated primarily by people of color.

But this history of U.S. interference in other nation’s affairs is not only a past history, but a present history as well. For Bush and Kerry to have locked horns over who had the best plans to protect the U.S. from ‘terrorist attacks,’ without engaging in debate about the reasons groups and individuals might have for wanting to attack this “leader of the civilized world,” was as absurd as a mugger wanting to protect himself from the flying fists of a muggee without taking into account that the muggee might be taking exception to being mugged.

In one of his recent videotapes, Osama bin Laden was very specific in citing current U.S. policies of manipulation of and interference in foreign countries’ and regions’ affairs. One of the issues he cited was a consistent U.S. policy favoring the government of Israel in its conflicts with the PLO and other groups representing Palestinians. But throughout the campaign, Bush and Kerry seemed utterly oblivious to the fact that, just a little more than 50 years ago, there was a nation called “Palestine” and that the people whose homeland Palestine was are living as illegal aliens on their own soil.

Don’t Palestinians, as well as their neighbors who empathize with and/or support them, have a right to resent the fact that the U.S. government is always quick to condemn the violence of Palestinians resisting the occupation of their homeland, while it barely and rarely utters words of even the mildest criticism when the Israeli government commits acts of violence and/or repression against Palestinians? Don’t they have a right to resent the idea of the U.S. trying to portray itself as a fair agent for peaceful resolution of the Arab/Israeli conflict while it pours several hundred million dollars per year into Israeli hands, in contrast to the token support it provides to Palestinian groups it approves of or finds tolerable?

However much Bush and Kerry cynically used Osama bin Laden as a bogey man in their quests to scare people to the polls, chances are that the dangers symbolized by the Republicans’ and Democrats’ well-crafted images of him are no less than they were at the height of presidential-campaign rhetoric. And this is so because the Bush regime will continue to pursue foreign policy goals and employ practices that serve only to increase the image of the U.S. as a neo-colonial bully. And the likely truth is that, had Kerry defeated Bush, he would be preparing to pursue essentially the same goals and employ essentially the same practices, spawning the same result more dangers.
SEEING THE ‘BIG PICTURE’

by Don Tilley, Prairie Peace Park

Many of us are still scratching our heads and talking to ourselves to regain our hope after the November 2004 election. We still harbor anger over the lies, misrepresentations, slanted commentary that ignored the facts, and appeal to fears by the Republican propaganda machine, radio talk show hosts, and other biased media. It seems a majority of the people wanted a tough-talking father as president who they believed would act with authority. The wisdom of economist and social commentator Robert Theobald seems to apply, “Communication on the basis of incorrect perceptions of reality degenerates into the sharing of ignorance.”

Our quest for a peaceful society seems scuttled, as least for a while, in favor of bully militarism and U.S. empire building. There was no place for nonviolent thinking.

We can find our heart and renewed strength though by focusing on the ‘big picture’?

• The planet is headed toward unity, interconnectedness, and eventually “democratic” world government. The day of the nation-state is past. Think for a moment about the transformation that has occurred in Europe. Fifty years ago who’d have ever imagined that those war-mongering nations would ever unite in a European Union. The election of November, 2004, is only a “blip” in time that cannot stop the tidal wave of human endeavor.

• A net is being formed around the earth by cultural exchange, communications, internet, computer enhancement, trade, commerce, tying the earth together. A global village is quickly replacing the knee-jerk xenophobia of the past.

• World scientists seem to be forming an informal guild, as they are cooperating and finding new discoveries. Look at how they came together around global warming (much to the embarrassment of Senator Chuck Hagel who vigorously opposed the idea of global warming and the Kyoto Protocol). A large conference of leading scientists met in December 2001 to improve human performance (and modifying human attitudes) through converging nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology, and cognitive science.

• The planet is evolving into greater love and justice. Compare human rights in America today with those of 200 years ago. Look how the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is entering into both consciousness and codification around the world. Teilhard stated that if we develop the eyes to perceive, we shall see the “evolution of love in history” (Pere Teilhard de Chardin was a distinguished paleontologist and a Jesuit Father. His work, The Phenomenon of Man, was published in English in 1959, four years after his death. His work is contained in 13 volumes.)

• The United Nations has become a house of dialogue for the world, showing the power of diverse minds believing in non-coercive approaches to decision-making for bettering the world, bringing reforms in many lands.

• Children are seeing visions of a peaceful world and are voicing their felt intuitions that enable us to see the kind of earth we really prefer and could develop. They say, “We can have a peaceful world.”

Relate the above happenings to the messages in the exhibits at the Prairie Peace Park which are focused on bringing “wholeness” to the world, including to individuals. Several large exhibits expose the dangers of blockages to wholeness, i.e. nuclear weapons, violence, faith in militarism, war, increase in world populations. However, most of the Park’s exhibits offer optimism for the future and ring with truth. Some persons can not “see” the underlying messages in the exhibits when they are outside of their frame of thinking and experience.

So let’s look at a few of the images in the 30 large exhibits at the Prairie Peace Park. See if these images inspire you:

[See yourself walking the labyrinths], feel us breaking out of old obsolete beliefs that have bound us in virtually every area of our thinking and living. Sense the human spirit that will not be stopped from creating, searching to understand the depth of being, and generating a new kind of world. Feel greatly loved.

[See yourself staring at the sculptures in the 80-foot World Peace Mural], let the visions of these world artists for world peace and justice “grab” you. In one sculpture, imagine a new kind of bonding taking place among nations like the bonding between the mother and the baby she is nursing.

[See yourself on a tour of the Park], you hear about the seven “evolutionary drivers” (the Seven Leaves) to bring world transformation, you see the thrust derived from the blend between new technology and the coming spirituality in each of the seven areas: Develop One’s True self, Sense the Kinship that Connects all People, Recognize Human Rights and Responsibilities, Visualize a Peaceful, Cooperative World, Implement a Purpose for the Earth, Replace War with Challenging Worldwide Enterprises, Directly Rule Ourselves as a World.

[See yourself in front of the 12-foot rotating Children’s Sculpture Globe], you hear the children around the world shouting to each other (in role playing) “Peace. Peace. We will have Peace” as they dance around the globe. Children are listening to the children of the future offering advice to the children of today.

[See yourself at the large United States map], you feel like honoring these hundreds of people as you read about how they “stuck their necks out” to better people’s lives.

[See yourself walking along the Path of Hope], you see the 13 violent practices we’ve overcome and you sense the dedication and strategy of those who confronted each of he violent practices. Inspired by our success, we sense that we can rid ourselves of other violent practices, such as war, poverty.

[See yourself in a chair pushing buttons in a group activity], you assist the new U.S. woman President to follow visions given to her to transform United States and the World.

As the above images shape and focus your thinking, you will not likely be controlled by worries about the future. What can we do?

1. We can educate our children so that they can create the world we prefer. We can show them, step-by-step, how “World peace is inevitable” (Teilhard). Robert Muller, economist and former Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations, stated “Give the children the right view of the world and they will give us peace”. In his book Shaping a Global Spirituality, Dr. Muller advocates for parents and social studies teachers to instruct children to develop the world around love and give their loyalty to the whole planet. We know a few gifted teachers who encourage students themselves to create such a world as a major part of the curriculum. (Nebraska Social Studies Standards do not).

2. When we criticize local or national injustices (and we should), we can also visualize both a humane solutions, and b) where our solutions fit in with the “spirit of the earth” (Teilhard) as the earth grows toward maturity. For example, to fight terrorism with terrorism (violence) will fail. We elicit a workable, comprehensive approach and climate to confront terrorism. To neutralize terrorists, we know we must change some U.S. policies that insult other nations and replace these with policies that further cooperation for humane world development.

3. Faith groups can teach that we are responsible for the planet and ourselves. “Responsibility” was at the center of Jesus’ teachings. Don’t expect God to do our work for us. Don’t expect God to intervene. It’s up to us!

For the first time in history, humans can create conscious evolution.
The Nuclear Demon in Our Backyard

by John Krejci

As a child growing up in South Omaha, I recall how proud we Omahans were of the importance of the Strategic Air Command at Offutt Air Force Base. We were the fifth-most-important target for Russian missiles. (Surprisingly, I don’t recall any fear of nuclear annihilation.) I was impressed that there were five stories built underground to protect the red telephone and the generals who controlled it. Rarely would one hear a negative comment on what went on at Offutt. After all, “Peace was their profession.”

It was only later that we learned that war was their avocation.

Since then, I have become aware of the moral consequences of SAC, now called StratCom. Unfortunately, the citizens of Omaha and Bellevue seem to have little knowledge or concern that a nuclear demon inhabits their backyard. Recent Omaha World-Herald features continue to laud the positive economic impact of the high-tech jobs brought to the area by defense contractors like Northrup Grumman, Lockheed Martin, Computer Sciences Corporation, Raytheon and the like (OWH, 12/04, “Job windfall follows new StratCom duties”). It is true Offutt is Omaha’s largest employer, pouring hundreds of millions of dollars a year into the economy. There are few voices, though, who dare to question the purpose of these monies.

One small and soft voice, however, has spoken out persistently for the last 28 years. The Catholic Worker Community of Des Moines has given witness twice a month for decades. The citizens of Omaha are in denial and wish to remain that way.

But why should we even care about this nuclear demon that has sat comfortably in Bellevue since 1945?

For many of us in the faith community, the fact that the Enola Gay, the plane that dropped the first atomic bomb, was built at the old Martin Marietta bomber plant at Offutt is reason enough. Nebraskans should be greatly concerned that we have contributed and continue to contribute in a major way to the horrors of the nuclear age, and have done precious little to acknowledge our culpability. For our silence the past 60 years, we in Nebraska already have much to be accountable for.

Since January 2002, however, StratCom’s role in the world has become even more ominous. Greg Mello, Executive Director of the Los Alamos Study Group, outlined at the 2004 Annual Peace Conference what most Nebraskans don’t even yet know. That in the wake of 9/11 and the launching of the “War on Terrorism,” StratCom’s mission as the command-and-control center of all nuclear capabilities, including land, air, sea and now even space-based systems, underwent a dramatic expansion. That now, in addition to its traditional role of “nuclear deterrence,” StratCom oversees responsibility for “full-spectrum global strike” to meet “decisive national security objectives” as defined by the president and the secretary of state. And that, Mello warns, can mean almost anything.

The nerve system for a global empire of at least 725 foreign military bases, located in some 150 countries, plus literally thousands of U.S. installations, StratCom is now “missioned” to engage in conventional as well as nuclear conflicts, in offensive as well as defensive ones. The historic ‘firewall’ intended to keep conventional and nuclear weapon separate, and prevent conventional conflicts from ‘going nuclear,’ is now down. Given the current occupants of the White House and State Department, unifying all war-fighting duties under one command is just an invitation for disaster. It’s literally playing with fire.

What are we daily learning in Iraq though questions the very foundation of StratCom’s reason for being. Military might, whether nuclear or conventional, is not only a moral abomination. It’s only marginally effective at subduing a country. Even less so, when the War on Terrorism we are fighting is against a stateless foe and defies the model of conventional warfare.

One year ago this month, Mello speculated that “it would be possible to win the ‘war’ without succeeding in creating security anywhere, either in Iraq… or at home. It’s possible that military victories might accomplish no coherent policy objective at all, all the while killing people, with civilians always the most numerous victims. Such carnage, especially if perceived by others as senseless, depraved or craven (as it surely is by important constituencies in Iraq), might only weaken U.S. security, turning every supposed “win” into a loss… It is impossible for any country to find security by policing the world if all the while that country is providing ample reason for millions of people to hate it.”

Since Mello spoke these words, Iraq has come perilously close to sliding into civil war and StratCom itself is slated for yet another reorganization. What should Nebraskans for Peace’s response be? We should seize this opportunity to highlight the moral and military threat that this nuclear demon poses in our backyard. We must continue to educate the citizens of Omaha. To expose the moral realities of the nuclear threat. To reveal the moral cost of the high-tech jobs that StratCom is supposedly bringing to Nebraska. To challenge the churches to heed the words of John XXIII that nuclear war must “never, never again” be waged. We should be moved to take to the streets, to stand at the barricades of Offutt, to witness, to go to jail if necessary. We cannot remain silent or complacent.

And there is some evidence that our local protests are taking root. The Catholic Workers are no longer a lone voice. In August 2003, nearly 400 people held a rally at the Kinney Gate of Offutt. Eight persons “crossed the line” (trespassed on government property) and were cited for their actions. Some received “ban and bar” letters; others were sentenced to jail time. In August 2004 another demonstration was carried out and plans are in the works for August 2005.

Three years ago, President Bush described Iraq, Iran and North Korea as the “Axis of Evil.” But the real ‘axis of evil’ threatening the world has always been the demon at StratCom. And it’s right here, in our own backyard.
Why Exactly Are We in Iraq?


NFP Member Curtis Bryant, who wrote this review, is a Masters student at the University of Nebraska-Omaha, School of Social Work

Although the peace movement appears united in the conviction that the Iraq War is wrong and should stop, the movement appears to lack consensus about why the war is taking place at all. This is completely understandable. Both official reasons for the war—a connection between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaida and Hussein’s possession of WMD—are discredited. But instead of giving us the real reasons, the Bush Administration merely asserts that our troops are fighting for freedom. This non-answer leaves all Americans grasping at straws. Is it blood for oil, imperial conquest, corporate welfare for the rest of their lives?

A fascinating contribution to this debate comes from analyst George Friedman of Strategic Forecasting, a private company known as Stratfor. Using a historical, geopolitical perspective, Friedman's America's Secret War offers the most coherent and sensible account of the War on Terror that I have heard. Using a style at once dispassionate and engaging (I read most of the book in two sittings), he clearly and patiently explains the convoluted connection between the September 11 attack and the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

First of all, Friedman says, both al-Qaida and the Bush Administration are behaving rationally (which is not to say morally). Leaving aside Friedman's gripping accounts of the operations of al-Qaida, U.S. intelligence, 9/11, and important battles in Afghanistan and Iraq, a brief summary of Friedman's account should make this clear.

Al-Qaida's goal is to reestablish the Islamic caliphate, which used to sprawl from Morocco east into India and even Indonesia. Threatening these governments by proving that al-Qaida can carry out devastating attacks even against their main supporter, the U.S. The U.S. invasion of Afghanistan succeeded in overthrowing al-Qaida's prototype government—that of the Taliban—but failed to capture al-Qaida's leaders.

In addition to military measures against al-Qaida, the U.S. is trying to stop al-Qaida's funding. Because many major donors to al-Qaida, including Osama bin Laden, are Saudi, the U.S. needed Saudi Arabia's help. Unfortunately, the Saudis, fearing rebellion, refused to crack down on al-Qaida supporters. One reason for this refusal surprised me: the Saudis, like others in the Middle East, view the U.S. as weak because of a series of unfinished military campaigns such as Somalia and not overthrowing Saddam Hussein in 1990.

So the U.S. sought levers to move the Saudis. The Iraq invasion provides several: Proving U.S. resolve and strength, enlisting not only Saudi Arabia but also Iran and Syria, and increasing U.S. control over the world price of oil, upon which the Saudis depend. Thus, in Friedman's view, the connection between September 11 and the Iraq War is the need to pressure Saudi Arabia and other countries into cooperating with Bush's “War on Terror.” Of course, were Bush to say publicly that this is the reason, Saudi Arabia would feel forced to stand up to him to save face, defeating Bush's purpose. Recent news reports of terrorist attacks inside Saudi Arabia show that the Saudis are paying a price for their help.

Unfortunately, even though Friedman's analysis makes a lot of sense, the book's complete lack of footnotes leaves the tedious work of verifying its claims to the reader. Until this is done (preferably by the author), America's Secret War is essentially just another item on the list of Iraq War explanations.

Even so, Friedman is absolutely right to say that the seeds of the War on Terror were sown during the Cold War, which created the current balance of power in the Middle East, that in turn resulted from previous wars. It all argues for a peace movement that can not only end the Iraq war, but stop the cycle of war by strengthening and building institutions for a more ethical, wholistic, rational, participatory, global system of decision-making in world affairs.

Where Does Iraq Rate in the ‘Moral Values’ Debate?

The following article by UNL Professor of Anthropology and Geography David Wishart appeared in the December 26, 2004 Lincoln Journal Star.

A friend of mine who voted for President Bush did so on the basis of Christian moral values, mainly opposition to abortion and gay marriage. When I asked him whether he had taken the war in Iraq into account, he replied that he knew little about politics. This got me thinking about how selective the definition of moral values has become and resulted in the following questions.

Is it Christian to lie? You will say no, yet that is how we were carried into this war. The Bush Administration lied about weapons of mass destruction, about Iraq's nuclear potential, about Saddam Hussein’s imminent threat to our way of life.

You might say that Bush, Cheney, Wolfowitz, Rumsfeld, Rice, Powell, and the rest were merely mistaken, a failure of U.S. intelligence, but that’s not how it happened. Mere hints deeply embedded in reports were grasped to justify the president’s fantasies and presented as gospel to a compliant Congress and a frightened public. As a result of these lies, we were diverted from the legitimate task of finding bin Laden and securing Afghanist an (parts of which now have reverted back to Taliban control) to this folly of a war that has no end in sight.

What’s moral about a war that has produced as many as 100,000 civilian deaths over the past one and a half years? This estimate is not a figment of a disgruntled liberal’s imagination, but rather the findings of a survey carried out by prestigious Johns Hopkins University and published in the Lancet, the world’s leading medical journal. The vast majority of these civilians were killed not by insurgents but by the coalition (mainly U.S.) force.

Now, if you consider that in the year 2000, 41 percent of Iraq’s population was under the age of 15, it’s a fair assumption that many of the dead are children.

Of course, it is difficult to translate statistics into charred and mutilated bodies, because we don’t see them. Never has information from a war been so tightly controlled through censorship. It is no coincidence that the tragedy and women off to die in a war that didn’t have to happen? Bush, it might be recalled, spent the second year of his National Guard service partying; even the offer of a $10,000 reward by cartoonist Gary Trudeau has not unearthed anyone who can recall seeing him on duty. And Vice President Cheney managed to secure five deferments so that he could, as he admitted in a rare moment of unguarded honesty, pursue “other priorities” (meaning making money and accruing power).

At this time of writing, 1,321 young American men and women off to die in a war that didn’t have to happen? Bush, it might be recalled, spent the second year of his National Guard service partying; even the offer of a $10,000 reward by cartoonist Gary Trudeau has not unearthed anyone who can recall seeing him on duty. And Vice President Cheney managed to secure five deferments so that he could, as he admitted in a rare moment of unguarded honesty, pursue “other priorities” (meaning making money and accruing power).

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But all this is distant to my friend and others like him. It is too messy to fit into the narrow definition of moral values that is delivered weekly across the pulpits of the United States. Faith has replaced reason, because reason is complicated and filled with contradiction. But in politics, as opposed to religion, reason is all we have; otherwise we become the Taliban.
Nebraskans for Peace
Annual Financial Report

2004 ACTUAL 2005 BUDGET

REVENUES
Membership .................................................... 17,891 .......................... 18,000
Donations ...................................................... 23,432 ....................... 24,000
Foundation Grants ........................................ 37,000 ....................... 37,000
CLAB Calendar ............................................... 20,000 ....................... 20,000
Peace Conference Registrations ................. 7,502 ............................ 3,500
Chapter Fundraisers .................................. 930 ............................ 2,000
Special Projects .......................................... 1,510 ......................... 0
Nebraska Report ........................................... 359 ............................ 735
Miscellaneous Income .................................. 272 ............................ 240
TOTAL REVENUES ...................................... $108,896 .................... $105,475

EXPENSES
Personnel ....................................................... 52,317 ....................... 53,280
Nebraska Report ............................................ 21,983 ....................... 20,925
Special Projects ............................................ 5,710 ......................... 3,900
Peace Conference ......................................... 7,510 ......................... 3,500
Printing & Copying ........................................ 957 .......................... 5,000
Postage ......................................................... 2,137 ......................... 2,700
Rent ............................................................ 5,577 .......................... 5,004
Insurance ....................................................... 416 ............................ 875
Accounting .................................................... 3,750 ......................... 6,000
Telephone ..................................................... 3,890 ......................... 3,900
Supplies ....................................................... 817 ............................ 900
Office Expense ............................................. 2,495 ......................... 2,400
Online Information Service ....................... 1,337 ......................... 1,200
Staff Travel ................................................... 746 ............................ 900
Miscellaneous Expense ........................... 2,806 ......................... 2,460
TOTAL EXPENSES ...................................... $112,448 .................... $112,994

REVENUE OVER (UNDER) EXPENSES
$(3,552) ........................................ $(7,469)

CASH ON HAND, 12/31/04
Operating Account $19,224
CLAB Account 2,415
TOTAL CASH ON HAND, 12/31/04 $21,639

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FEBRUARY 2005 NEBRASKA REPORT, P.11
LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF JAMES

The Letter of James the brother of Jesus is tucked away near the end of the New Testament, a few pages before Revelations. I’ve always loved the books of faithful Ruth and spunky Esther, the book of Job because it was oldest, the prophet Jeremiah because he spoke truth. But in the end it is the truth of James that kindles the Christ in MY heart.

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The choice between a Republican and a Democrat pretending to be a Republican, voters will choose the real thing every time. OUR successes are refreshing, reconstituted New Deal Democrats in the mold of Paul Wellstone: Stephanie Herseth, Barak Obama, Howard Dean—a farm girl, a skinny kid with a funny name, a weird guy with a Hanna-Barbera smile.

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

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- **Work: Educate our kids.** The Christian Right indoctrinates young people very effectively. Family First runs an excellent legislative conference at the Nebraska State Capitol every year. Nebraska progressives must create and fund a public policy program to educate and empower youth, to attract and develop rising progressive talent.

- **2) Article of Faith: Free trade is death.** Only FAIR trade can protect the earth on which we all depend. Faith without works is dead. So is free trade. The meatpackers want to open the border with Canada, because the sooner the supply all gets mixed up, the better. From the multinational point of view, BSE is a blessing. It will take those uppity Canadian and U.S. cattlemen down a peg and more. With their high-quality product and their land stewardship, they thought they were special, but years of BSE-scare will gut North American producers and teach the world to eat Australian and worse—South America rainforest—beef. The same thing is happening in every industry. When it’s jobs instead of cows, we call it outsourcing. Bill Clinton made a bargain with the devil on NAFTA. He was just wrong. Get over it.

- **Work: Buy American.** Ask the stores where you shop to stock American. Ask your members of Congress and your Secretary of Agriculture to implement country-of-origin labeling. To be honest, I don’t mind buying Canadian. Despite BSE, Canada has (like the U.S.) high standards for environmental quality and labor conditions. Vote with your dollars for producers who do things right.

- **3) Article of Faith: Social Security is not broken.** Tweak it later, but NOT THIS DAY! Republicans are not looking forward to running in 2006 on a record of “I voted to increase the deficit AGAIN, to dismantle a great American institution that’s not actually broken.” We not only can but really need to win this one.

- **Work: Accept no compromise on Social Security.** Hammer on the lies and the liars alike on this one. The message? There the president goes again! It’s just like the weapons of mass destruction! He can’t make his case fair and square, so he wants to confuse Americans with bad information! He’s rich! What does he care if Social Security goes down in flames?

- **4) Article of Faith: There will be no new John F. Kennedy.** We couldn’t elect him if he showed up. Kerry proved that. It’s a problem that a lot of our best folks are visibly nerds or movie stars. By contrast, the Right’s best guys are kind of lame (Cheney is a highhanded jerk, Bush is incoherent, Karl Rove and James Dobson are pathological liars, Gonzales is a thug), and deep down I’m pretty sure a lot of folks IDENTIFY. I blame sitcoms.

- **Work: Run real progressives.** Given the choice between a Republican and a Democrat pretending to be a Republican, voters will choose the real thing every time. OUR successes are refreshing, reconstituted New Deal Democrats in the mold of Paul Wellstone: Stephanie Herseth, Barak Obama, Howard Dean—a farm girl, a skinny kid with a funny name, a weird guy with a Hanna-Barbera smile.

- **5) Article of Faith: Progressives run on bread-and-butter issues.** The progressives who are winning in so-called “red” districts do so by running on key issues for working families. We CAN have good schools AND national security, a place of respect and leadership in the community of nations. We CAN have good jobs and safe food and good health care—but the private sector alone won’t provide these things without a strong federal government to stand behind the citizens and look out for the common good.

- **Work: Stay on message.** Sunset LB 775 and use restored corporate tax revenue to support “in-sourcing” programs to bring jobs and investment to great Nebraska, where half the state’s people live. Don’t engage on wedge issues. There isn’t time. Among progressives, agree to disagree.