Who’s Telling the Truth about Iraq?

The following article by NFP President Mark Vasina, appeared as an op-ed in the December 5, 2006 Lincoln Journal Star.

Vice-President and Lincoln native Dick Cheney recently charged those who say the administration manipulated pre-Iraq War intelligence with rewriting history in a “dishonest” and “reprehensible” way. Former Senator Bob Graham of Florida, a leader on the Senate Intelligence Committee during the run-up to the war, responded with an op-ed piece (Journal Star, 11/22/05) disclosing that, on the eve of the invasion, the White House had not even asked CIA Director George Tenet for a “National Intelligence Estimate” to evaluate the need for a preemptive strike. At Graham’s insistence the CIA produced a 90-page estimate that raised serious doubts about whether Iraq indeed possessed weapons of mass destruction. Yet, when the administration released its 25-page public summary of the estimate, the doubts in the longer document had completely disappeared.

In any case, however, even the estimate’s allegations of a WMD threat came from sources whose credibility was suspect. Most of the alleged intelligence came from Iraqi exiles or third countries with an interest in Hussein’s removal. Among the principle sources was Ahmad Chalabi, accused of questionable business practices by our own State Department. Under congressional questioning, Tenet himself admitted that no U.S. operative had independently verified the claims.

Much of this “intelligence” was assembled by Undersecretary of Defense Douglas Feith’s Office of Special Plans. Now under congressional investigation, this ad hoc group had, according to some CIA and FBI intelligence analysts, produced most of the “information” needed by Secretary Rumsfeld and Cheney to justify the war. Since these two men—along with Undersecretary Paul Wolfowitz and Defense Department advisor Richard Perle—had sought a war with Iraq since the late ’90s, it is not surprising that the new Office of Special Plans produced what their bosses required.

As a result of this “twisted” intelligence, more than 2,100 U.S. soldiers and 30,000 Iraqis have died. Over 80 percent of the Iraqi public disapproves of our presence there. And President Bush’s sole idea of an exit strategy is to “stay the course.”

Some argue that members of Congress who supported the war were duped. How?

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Truth Telling, conclusion

ever, they could have turned to evidence widely available before the 2003 invasion. The charge that Niger sold yellow cake uranium to Iraq was known to be false when it was aired in the 2003 State of the Union address. The other allegations were also suspect. Even an organization as far off the beltway as Nebraskans for Peace could spot the cracks. In an April 1, 2003 open letter to the United Nations published in local papers, we asked that U.S. WMD claims be monitored and suggested that the evidence had been manipulated:

U.S. claims are in dispute. Hans Blix and the U.N. weapons inspectors were not able to verify them…. The majority of the members of the U.N. Security Council did not find them sufficiently credible to vote with us.

The most credible evidence regarding Iraq’s WMD threat came from Hussein Kamel, Saddam’s son-in-law and his weapons head. Kamel defected to the West, gave the U.S. his information, and then went back to Iraq to his family, where, on his return, his father-in-law killed him. According to Newsweek, he was not giving us disinformation. As we said in 2003:

Kamel’s testimony... was used by the United States to drum up support for the war, [but] only part of his testimony was used. A transcript of his full UNSCOM testimony obtained by Glen Rangala of Cambridge Uni-

To get a “U.S. OUT/U.N. IN” yard sign for your home, contact the NFP office, at 402-475-4620 in Lincoln, or 402-453-0776 in Omaha. Donations accepted to defray the cost.


“Study War No More”

Peace Studies in Nebraska Colleges

by John Krejci
President, United Nations Association, Chapter 100

Assaulted daily by the warmongering, violence and villainy wrought by the Bush/Cheney Administration, we’re likely to downplay or miss altogether the encouraging news coming out of Nebraska colleges: Peace studies are on the rise.

According to Nebraskans for Peace member and Hastings College Professor Jim West, the Hastings College Sociology Department will soon be offering a major in “Peace, Justice and Social Change.” Nebraska Wesleyan University faculty member Jeff Mohr, who also serves on the NFP State Board, reports that Wesleyan has just approved a new minor in “Peace and Justice Studies” as part of their Global Studies program. Dana College in Blair, Nebraska has proposed a new Social Work course in Peace Studies to be taught by former NFP Omaha Coordinator Jo Peterson. And Wayne State College recently incorporated a three-course focus on peace and nonviolence in their general education curriculum.

Program director Roger Bergman noted that Creighton University took a slightly different approach when it established its “Justice and Peace” program way back in 1993. Students can pursue a minor in Justice and Peace Studies or combine Justice and Peace studies with sociology and anthropology, plus selected other courses for a major in JPS. Both Creighton and Hastings require an applied component, i.e., service learning and, in the case of Creighton, participation in their program in the Dominican Republic. All programs encourage the students to focus on some of the following: classroom reflection, ethical analysis, group discussion, historical examples of violence and nonviolence, and an applied component. In addition to peace, the Creighton program has a special focus on social and economic justice that draws from the rich Catholic social teachings of the late 19th and 20th century.

Here are some quotes from Peace Studies publications:

Hastings College: “The Peace, Justice and Social Change major serves students interested in careers involving principled social action (such as conflict resolution, law ministry, politics, social services, and advocacy work in human rights, minority groups, and the environment), and those who intend to do post graduate work in sociology.”

Nebraska Wesleyan: “Peace and Justice studies are interdisciplinary; knowledge from social science, humanities and professional fields is used to explore the causes and effects of violence and/or injustice in a variety of social contexts. The program should enable students to help develop alternatives to inequitable social structures and conditions.”

Creighton: “The Justice and Peace Studies Program encourages students to explore these experiences (of poverty situations) and concerns with one another and with faculty mentors in a structured program of study. It prepares them to be insightful, faithful lifelong agents for social change whatever their career or profession.”

Of course the flagship university of our state has its own version of Peace & Justice studies. Not surprisingly, NFP State Board member and University of Nebraska Foundation Professor Paul Olson pioneered “Conflict and Conflict Resolution Studies” in the early 1980s. According to Olson, the dean of Arts and Sciences at the time (this would have been at the height of the Reagan Revolution) thought it prudent not to call the program Peace Studies. Peace Studies, to his mind, was a bit too radical to gain approval from the powers-that-be.

Current program director and NFP member, Anthropology and Geography Professor Bob Hitchcock, still marvels that, to this day, the study of war at a first tier institution like UNL is perfectly acceptable, but that studying peace could be regarded as controversial. Instead of a major, a minor in Conflict and Conflict Resolution was proposed to avoid having to seek approval from the University of Nebraska Board of Regents. The minor is described as “concerned with violent conflict between social groups the biological, ecological, economic, social and political basis of such conflict and its relationship to religion philosophy, and the arts. It examines the history of efforts to resolve and prevent violent conflicts through such means as armaments, negotiations, diplomacy international law, and nonviolent resistance to violence.”

The minor consists of a core course, “Conflict and Conflict Resolution,” which is cross-listed in several social science departments and boasts and enrollment of 100 to 150 students. Other courses are drawn from a broad spectrum of departments. The program was recently updated. Issues dealt with in Conflict and Conflict Resolution include “international law, warfare, military history, inter- and intra-cultural communication, ethnic identity, psychology of racism, gender, diversity, politics, global resource economics, and ethics.”

At the graduate level, UNL has the International Human Rights and Diversity area of specialization headed by Political Science Professor David Forsythe. The goal of that program “is to examine issues related to human rights in an international perspective, with a particular interest in examining the relationship between cultural diversity and human rights. The importance of respecting cultures and cultural differences in an increasingly globalized world is a goal that many cherish, but some cultures do not protect human rights. How can human rights and cultural diversity both be protected?”

A student can receive a master’s-level specialization in International Human Rights and Diversity by completing a master’s degree in a participating department. This specialization is also available at the doctoral level. Dr. Forsythe informed me that in cooperation with NETV, this program has produced curriculum materials and teaching modules for Nebraska teachers. They can be found on their website: www.unl.edu/humanr/teach. On the downside, the program has been targeted for budget cuts in 2006-07.

Being an optimist (a necessary survival skill in these times), I am encouraged by the growth of Peace Studies. Most of us would agree that peace studies are an enterprise whose time is long overdue. But why now? Is it the perpetual state of war that this administration has plunged us into? Or is it a need to try and cope with the horrible violence that pervades every aspect of our daily lives? Is it reborn idealism in our youth, who are seeking a more secure world for themselves and their yet unborn children? Is it the need for our generation of adults to do something to change things? I don’t know the answer, but am encouraged nonetheless.

Let me close with a reflection sparked by this year’s SOA demonstration at the School of the Americas (“School of Assassins”) in Fort Benning, Georgia. The 19,000 demonstrators who showed up in November to protest the school’s record of teaching torture and interrogation techniques to Latin America military soldiers represented the largest protest ever. Many were college students, many from Jesuit universities, counting 68 from Creighton (some of which were from the Justice and Peace program, including the director). This massive event was only minimally covered by the major media, but the reflections of one young person say volumes. “We are at a critical point. If we don’t do anything about U.S. militarism and the way our foreign policy is enforced around the world, I see little hope, because we have a foreign policy of violence. The SOA is a symbol of that.” (National Catholic Reporter, 12/9/05)

Now is the time to “Study War No More.”

Photo by Linda Panetta (www.soawne.org)

Demonstrator at the November 2005 School of the Americas protest in Ft. Benning, Georgia.
Barring some last-minute legal miracle, the 2006 Legislative Session will be the last time the Unicameral convenes before term limits kick in. Twenty of the Legislature’s 49 members are statutorily prohibited from seeking reelection, and in one fell swoop a combined 234 years of legislative experience will be jacked.

Gone after this session will be leading progressives like Chris Beutler, Dave Landis and Matt Connealy. And two years from now, in 2008, we’ll lose the remainder of our legislative leadership when allies like Ernie Chambers, DiAnna Schimek, Ron Raikes, Lowen Kruse and Don Preister are term-limited out of office.

Starting next year, we’ll be witnessing the advent of a new era in Nebraska politics, where political inexperience inside the chamber will come smack up against a well-financed and politically savvy professional lobbying machine out in the Rotunda.

Term limits, according to its more well meaning advocates, are intended to put an end to the ‘insider’ politics that allegedly results when ‘career politicians’ spend all their time listening to lobbyists instead of constituents. A constant influx of fresh faces, it’s often argued, will prevent that ‘old boy network’ from developing and ensure that the ‘people’s business’ gets done.

But look for the corporate powers-that-be, via their experienced professional lobbyists, to ride roughshod over these ever-renewing ranks of rookie senators. Because it wasn’t just well meaning advocates who want to ‘clean up’ government that were pushing term limits. The more rabid elements of Big Business, which time and again have been single-handedly thwarted by Sen. Chambers’ parliamentary wizardry, are positively salivating at the prospect of a more ignorant, and therefore compliant, Legislature.

Rather than liberating the Unicameral from the impact of ‘special interests,’ term limits are likely to deliver a weakened legislative branch right into their laps. And as one prominent corporate lobbyist cruelly put it, even he didn’t “need that much red meat.”

That, starting next year, is what the future holds.

Consequently, the ‘short’ 2006 Session, with only 60 rather than 90 working days, represents our best chance in the foreseeable future to pass legislation that advances the cause of Peace & Justice.

### Economic Justice

Last year the legislature replaced LB 775 with the ‘next generation’ business tax incentives program, deceptively titled the “Nebraska Advantage Act.” Big Business failed to get everything it asked for, but they drilled further into the pockets of Nebraska taxpayers by more than a smidgeon, adding an estimated $60 million to the $140 million annual cost of LB 775.

Some senators fought the good fight to hold down the cost of this replacement for LB 775. However, the apparent eagerness and clarity of purpose with which the Legislature approved more tax dollars for private enterprise stands in stark contrast to the painful public deliberations over additional spending for public education.

This year the Legislature is expected to devote considerable time weighing tax cuts, when education funding and tax reform should take priority.

NFP supports a proposal to require approval by local school boards of all property tax abatement deals forced upon their districts by LB 775 and the Nebraska Advantage Act. This reform, which adds not a dime to the state budget, is needed to maintain a broad and equitable property tax base for funding our public schools.

### Whiteclay

Last year a majority of the General Affairs Committee introduced a bill (LB 530) to give the Liquor Control Commission (LCC) greater discretion to consider license density issues when approving new licenses. Although LB 530 was a ‘committee bill’ (which should have given it an easy pass to the full legislature), the committee killed it promptly following the public hearing.

At that hearing, Commission Executive Director Hobert Rupe warned that the courts routinely reverse LCC license denials, such as what happened with the Commission’s 2004 denial of a new license in Whiteclay. (The LCC and the Attorney General’s office have appealed that ruling.) Legislation addressing issues like license density, while not focused directly on Whiteclay, is needed to give the commission the authority they deserve.

### Campaign Reform Law Targeted for Repeal

Nebraska’s Campaign Finance Limitations Act will be under serious attack during the first two weeks of the 2006 Legislative Session. Speaker Kermit Brashear will attempt to amend LB 188, the CFLA reform bill, with language that will ultimately destroy the act. Not a single legislative race has exceeded the $73,000 voluntary spending limit since the Act went into effect in 1996. It has only been in the University of Nebraska Regents races where gross over-spending has taken place. Two of the three overspenders for that office, Regent Randy Ferlic and Regent Dave Hergert, have coincidentally been clients of Speaker Brashear’s law firm.

We encourage all Nebraskans to sign Common Cause Nebraska’s petition asking the Unicameral to reject Brashear’s amendment and to pass Senator Chris Beutler’s version of LB 188 in order to improve the CFLA. You can find the petition on the Internet at: http://www.commoncause.org/NebraskaCFLAPetition.

Common Cause Nebraska, in coalition with groups such as the Nebraska Appleseed Center, the League of Women Voters and Nebraskans for Peace, has supported the Campaign Finance Limitations Act for the nearly ten years the legislation has been on the books. The voluntary spending limits authorized by the Legislature have served Nebraska well, which is why we are working to ensure that any efforts to reform the CFLA will not create future loopholes effectively negating the Act’s original purpose.

If you are a member of an organization that would like to support the CFLA, please ask your leadership to contact Sen. Beutler’s office at 402-471-2633, so that he can notify the other senators.

Jack Gould, Issues Chair, Common Cause Nebraska
The Great American Jobs Scam — Nebraska Style

National Expert Greg LeRoy on Corporate Tax Incentives

by Mark Vasina
President, Nebraskans for Peace

When Greg LeRoy delivered the keynote speech at the 2005 Annual Peace Conference last October, the audience of 175 people appeared to hang on his every word. Surprising, considering his subject was tax policy. They were hooked, however, because he forcefully addressed one of the great national deceptions of our time—how corporations have convinced state and local officials to give them huge sums of tax dollars simply for doing business within the officials’ political jurisdictions.

LeRoy’s credentials are strong. He is the founder and director of “Good Jobs First,” a national resource center promoting corporate and government accountability in economic development. He is also the author of The Great American Jobs Scam: Corporate Tax Dodging and the Myth of Job Creation (Berrett Koehler, 2005).

Deploying the promise of job creation and the threat of job losses, the “Great American Jobs Scam” pits state against state and community against community, robbing state and local treasuries of an estimated $50 billion annually in the process. In return for handing out tax dollars and tax breaks to businesses, the public receives absolutely no goods or services whatsoever, in the conventional meaning of these words. The money, as LeRoy points out, is simply divided among the businesses—with the largest shares typically going to the largest corporations—in the name of economic development.

In Nebraska, as elsewhere, the actual cost of this scam is unknown. We do know that the Employment and Investment Growth Act, commonly known as LB 775, costs taxpayers $140 million per year on average. The “Nebraska Advantage Act,” the ‘next generation’ business tax incentive program approved overwhelmingly by the legislature last year, is estimated to cost an additional $60 million annually.

Other tax break programs, such as the “Quality Jobs Act” and its successor, the “Invest Nebraska Act,” pay out unknown millions more in subsidies shrouded in official secrecy. Local governments pile on even more tax dollars with “Tax Increment Financing” (TIF) programs, subsidized loans and utility fees, and outright gifts of land or facilities. Ask the State of Nebraska or your local governments the total of tax dollars spent on these programs and you are told either “We don’t know” or “We won’t tell you.”

And what is the taxing public supposed to be getting in return? The ‘official’ answer—orchestrated by Big Business, espoused by hordes of economic development ‘professionals’ and site selection consultants, and repeated mantra-like by media pundits in the service of their largest advertisers and politicians in the service of their largest campaign contributors—is JOBS, JOBS, JOBS.

LeRoy offers up a different answer to the question of what taxpayers get in return for these tax subsidy programs: often nothing. In fact, LeRoy says, “often less than nothing.”

The ‘official’ answer is in his view a brackish gumbo of supply-side economics and apocalyptic economic insecurity made palatable to policymakers through the magic of big money politics. The mumbo-jumbo covers up the truth that Big Business is getting a free ride on taxpayer money for what is, in the final analysis, just business as usual.

The Great American Jobs Scam works this way.

First, The Extortion: Citing public subsidies too good to refuse from other states or communities, Big Business threatens to take a pass on new investment within the boundaries of a particular city, county or state unless public officials pony up tax monies to subsidize the investment. Public officials are urged—by large corporations and their agents within and outside government—to provide businesses with subsidies to influence their site location decisions for the sake of the public good and... JOBS, JOBS, JOBS.

Next, The Bribe: Public officials provide businesses with tax dollars in exchange for the decision by their owners to locate new facilities (or to expand or refrain from closing existing facilities) within the borders of the city, county or state paying the subsidy. Subsidies, according to the ‘official’ script, result in new (or retained) facilities, which in turn yield new (or retained) investment and... JOBS, JOBS, JOBS. Some Jobs Scam cheerleaders even shamelessly suggest that subsidized economic growth generates sufficient additional tax revenues to replace the tax dollars spent on subsidies.

Finally, The Cover-up: Big Business lobbies the same public officials to keep secret (1) the amount of tax dollars paid in subsidies and (2) what, if anything, the public gets in exchange. Secrecy is required to deflect public scrutiny which could jeopardize the scam.

LeRoy makes the case that most jobs attributed to business subsidies would have been created anyway. This is because competent business managers, even when presented with state and local tax subsidies, make site location decisions based on business basics—affordable supply of key inputs and proximity to suppliers and customers. He points to numerous studies by development economists and surveys of business leaders that conclude that state and local tax rates take a back seat to business basics in the site location decision process. Most economists studying this issue conclude that lowering—or even eliminating—state and local business taxes has only a very small, if any, positive effect on local economies. Many studies suggest a negative impact on local economic growth from such tax-cutting behaviors.

This means simply that subsidies are not, as a rule, creating jobs. Where subsidies may have played a decisive role, little else will likely keep the new jobs around once the business has absorbed the subsidy or the tax breaks are used up. Policymakers embark on a downward-spiral of dependence on subsidies to maintain the economic status quo—a process not unlike drug addiction. (A former Nebraska state senator once compared LB 775 to crack cocaine.)

The addict’s attempt to maintain equilibrium, whether through substance abuse or subsidy abuse, leads down the same self-destructive path. LeRoy points to strong evidence that the Jobs Scam is harming our national and local economies, hindering real economic growth. Indeed, LeRoy emphasizes that business tax incentives do precisely the opposite of what the corporate-generated rhetoric claims they will do. They create few jobs that would not have been created in the first place. At the same time they rob states and local communities of funds for the infrastructure spend-

conclusion on page 9
The following “Nuclear Brief” was posted on the December 2, 2005 Nuclear Information Project web site, a public education project affiliated with the Washington, D.C.-based Federation of American Scientists. The project is directed by Hans M. Kristensen, who also co-authors the World Nuclear Forces for the SIPRI Yearbook (published annually by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute in Sweden) and the “Nuclear Notebook” in the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. Kristensen has more than 15 years experience in using the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) as a tool to obtain declassified information about nuclear policy and operations. Although the language of the “Nuclear Brief” can at times be a bit forbidding, it nevertheless communicates how aggressively the “Global Strike” war-planning at StratCom is progressing. The next nuclear/conventional war will start right here in Nebraska in our own backyard.

On November 18, 2005, U.S. Strategic Command’s new Joint Functional Component Command for Space and Global Strike (JFCC S&GS) achieved Initial Operational Capability (IOC) at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska.

The new Space and Global Strike command is tasked with implementing the new Global Strike mission assigned to STRATCOM in January 2003. As such, Space and Global Strike command is responsible for implementing and executing the administration’s preemption policy. This includes nuclear preemptive strikes under CONPLAN 8022 (Global Strike), if ordered to do so by the President.

According to a press release received from STRATCOM, IOC was achieved “following a rigorous test of integrated planning and operational execution capabilities during Exercise Global Lightning.” Not mentioned in STRATCOM’s press release is that Global Lightning was a nuclear strike exercise that according to documents obtained by William M. Arkin practiced nuclear war with North Korea.

During this exercise, according to the STRATCOM press release, Space and Global Strike command “demonstrated its mission of providing integrated space and global strike capabilities to deter and dissuade aggressors and when directed, defeat adversaries through decisive joint global effects in support of USSTRATCOM missions.”

North Korea is described in the exercise scenario as the “Northeast Asian Country of Purple” that continues to develop nuclear and missile capabilities. The Global Lightning exercise concept included the following:

- Provides Nuclear Combat Readiness, Proficiency and Training Focus
- Facilitates USSTRATCOM / JFCC / TF Mission Integration
- Provides a Bridging Exercise Between Nuclear and Non-Nuclear Forces
- Global Lightning exercised both OPLAN 8044 (previously SIOP) and CONPLAN 8022 (Global Strike).

Space and Global Strike is scheduled to take part in U.S. Pacific Command’s Terminal Fury exercise on December 2-10, 2005.

The Mission

According to STRATCOM documents, Space and Global Strike command is tasked to provide “integrated space and global strike capabilities to deter and dissuade aggressors and when directed, defeat adversaries through decisive joint global effects in support of USSTRATCOM global missions.” The new command’s primary effort is to “integrate all USSTRATCOM global capabilities supporting the combatant commanders around the world with the full spectrum of military effects.” The term “full spectrum” includes nuclear forces.

Space and Global Strike command is the first of four operational-level Joint Functional Component Commands (JFCC) that are being set up to execute the new missions assigned to STRATCOM by the Unified Command Plan Change 2 from January 2003. The mission tasks are:

- Global Strike Planning and Operations
- Provide deliberate and adaptive planning for kinetic (nuclear and conventional) and non-kinetic (e.g. information warfare and space) capabilities
- Provide rapid Course Of Action (COA) development capabilities
- Execution capability only when directed

Joint Space Operations
- Plan and execute day-to-day military space operations
- Exercise OPCON of DoD manned spaceflight support functions
- Provide missile warning and NORAD support
- Mission Integration and Synchronization
- Create a framework to share information, integrate effects, and synchronize ongoing operations among mission partners

Space and Global Strike command “optimizes operational-level planning, execution, and force management for the USSTRATCOM mission of deterring attacks against the United States,” according to STRATCOM.

Space and Global Strike command is becoming operational through participation in a series of exercises. Click on image to download full briefing.

At the activation ceremony on August 9, 2005, STRATCOM commander General James Cartwright said that Space and Global Strike command will help shape “the new kind of deterrence” that has emerged after the end of the Cold War. This new deterrence requires new capabilities, including kinetic (nuclear and conventional) and non-kinetic (e.g. information warfare and space) capabilities, Cartwright said. “Trying to bring all of those pieces together to what will become deterrence, those things that will keep our adversaries at bay whether they are nation states, like the former Soviet Union was, or whether they are as simple as a terrorist, and trying to deter a terrorist from coming to our soil, that is what Global Strike and Space is at the heart of,” General Cartwright said, “trying to bring that new kind of deterrence to the fore, trying to find the ways to keep this country safe.”

The initial Space and Global Strike commander, Air Force Lt. Gen. Bruce Carlsen, explained: “We’re involved in ongoing operations, building OPORD’ers, and building capabilities to attack and defend against our enemies.”

His successor, Air Force Lt. Gen. Kevin P. Chilton, the first commander of the operational Space and Global Strike command, explained that integration of capabilities was key to making the new deterrent credible. Through integration of capabilities, by mak-

PLANNING vs. INTENTION

The role of Space and Global Strike in nuclear scenarios directed against North Korea appear to contradict at least the spirit of the pledge made by the Bush Administration on September 19, 2005 in a Joint Statement of the Fourth Round of the Six-Party Talks: The United States “has no intention to attack... [North Korea] with nuclear... weapons.”
by Mohammed H. Siddiq

I am an Arab American and I wish to tell you about the Arab people today. The Arab people are all tangled up. They have been in this situation for 50 years. They need someone to release them from their troubles. It is, of course, a large order, but someone has to perform this function for them. The world as a whole will be a better place if the Arabs are released from the trap they’re in. To do this, however, a whole new outlook is required.

It must be borne in mind at the outset that the Arabs are not a mentally disturbed people or prone to pathological behavior. They are people of good health, culture and civilization.

But what the Arabs have gone through for the past 50 years has made them anxious, fearful and guilt-ridden. Some Arabs have ceased to realize that it is a person’s own attitude which largely determines one’s happiness and efficiency. They have forgotten that the condition of their emotional health effectively determines whether or not they can find peace, serenity and strength.

Arab people have become deficient, not because of laziness or lack of ability, but because of complete deprivation of basic human rights. The phrase “human rights” does not exist in the political dictionary of Arab governments. In most instances, Western democracies did not understand (or, more likely, did not even consider) the fundamental impact of their policies on the people of the Arab world, and the reactions that might result.

Consequently, Arab people are victims of nerves. Their minds are in such a panic that they can no longer perform normal functions. They occupy one of the most strategic regions of the world, but have lost their grip. They turned to these same Western democracies for help, but were told the West had no remedies to offer except for sedatives.

For half a century, the Western democracies seemed totally unconcerned about the fact that the Arab people had never freely elected their political leaders. Today’s Arab leaders are either self-elected or inheritors of some old regime. The elections we hear about in the Arab countries are a sophisticated charade. They are merely showpieces to reelect the incumbent rulers. The numerous ‘elections’ of Saddam Hussein and the fifth consecutive ‘reelection’ of Hosni Mubarak of Egypt are just two cases in point.

Arab leaders behave like surgeons. They operate on their citizens. They know them inside out. Arab leaders have no personal interest in their citizens, except for how much they obey. In political terms, Arab leaders are dictators. They use power and violence i.e., they oppress, torture and kill people in order to enforce their will. They have come to rule, not to serve, and every one of them thinks that he is setting up the kingdom of God.

For a long time, Arab people kept their problem to themselves, thinking that such an attitude would be commended, and that being close-mouthed about their troubles would be heroic. Psychologists tell us today that such a practice is dangerous. A person cannot forever bottle up a problem without it eventually affecting one—inner release is a necessity. Many clinicians report that underlying much of the despair and disorder with which they deal is an impoverished self-concept, a sense that “I am worthless.”

If investigated, an Arab inner self will reveal a state of confusion. Speaking particularly of the male, he has been named an Arab, a Muslim, a Sunni/Shiite, a fundamentalist, a jihadist, a fanatic, an insurgent—not to mention a terrorist. This has filled him with fears, anxieties, and left a little hate and resentment in his mind. His identity disorder may amount to an actual ‘identity crisis,’ though no one uses this term. Some Arabs speak of a profound need to ‘find’ themselves. Others want to ‘get in touch with themselves.’ All these confused thoughts indicate a lack of direction in life, a deep-seated feeling ranging from emptiness to severe depression.

If you start an Arab talking, you will hear that his leaders are behind his difficulties and the major source of his antagonism. He has a strong desire to get even, but his sense of family and culture cause him to sublimate much of his anger.

Arab people? To calm down? Yes. To read the Kor’an/Bible? Of course. But daily they have made it a practice to read the Book. Perfunctory religious words do not suffice. Plainly, it is necessary to approach the situation in the Arab world or Middle East in a different and original way. I know such a thing is impossible, but it’s too bad the world leaders of democracy can’t reach down into these Arab dictators’ minds and remove all of the thoughts that are creating such turmoil and tumult for their people.

Like surgeons themselves, these leaders would take a knife and cut a hole in the top of every Arab dictator, then take an instrument and go in and scrape all the rotten ideas out. The democratic leaders would then take one of those instruments, such as a dentist uses to blow air into a cavity, and blow it around inside their heads to be sure no vestige of those diseased ideas still lurked there.

When the Arab dictators’ heads were all cleaned out, before closing it up, perhaps a priest or Imam could also be present, and he would open the Book and pick out of it some of those great verses about justice, equality and kindness, and drop them in, praying that those new ideas from the Kor’an/Bible would soak into the dictator’s mind and permeate it, creating a healing influence, so that finally he would be changed completely.

A prudent Westerner who has lived all of his or her life under democratic systems might say that we do not need to cut a hole in the top of these Arab leaders’ heads, because there are already two en- trances into every human brain—his eye and his ear. Therefore, Arab leaders themselves need only open the Book and underline in red every verse that they need, and then commit them, one by one, to memory and practice. They should simply fill their minds with these healing verses, so as to kill the destructive thoughts they have so long harbored.

I would reply that absolute authority, which these Arab leaders have enjoyed for so long, has a peculiarly damaging effect on the personality. Absolute authority festers and becomes a locus of infection in the mind and spirit, just as a harmful bacterium does in the physical body. This particular generation of Arab leaders does not seem to like to admit the fact of sin or even the possibility of mistake. Some have gone so far as to say that they are above such mortal failings. Some even demand
I am a prisoner at the state pen in Lincoln. I have been here for nearly 35 years. On the afternoon of Friday, August 12 of this year, I was notified that I had a visitor. When I arrived in the visiting room, a friend of mine, Jesse, was there. He told me that I had another visitor, but that she had been denied entrance because the material of her blouse had been deemed by the pass clerk to be "too sheer," and that she would not be able to wear the sweater she had on into the visiting room because it was against regulations for sweaters to be worn. This other visitor, whom Jesse had driven here, was my mother, Vera Rice, who is 88 years old and has been coming to visit during the whole time of my confinement. To the best of my recollection, she had never before been denied a visit with me due to any alleged violation of the prison dress code for visitors, or for any other reason, as I recall.

After my friend informed me of this situation, I spoke with three prison guards individually over the course of about half an hour, in an effort to get my mother let in to visit me. The last one I spoke with told me he would talk to the pass clerk, who had apparently made the decision to deny my mother, as well as to a sergeant. He returned some minutes later to inform me that my mother would not be allowed into the visiting room because she wasn’t dressed appropriately and that, since other visitors had been denied due to violations of the dress code, it wouldn’t be fair for an exception to be made for my mother. But I could see my words were not being heard.

Before Jesse left, I asked him to get in contact with the office of State Senator Ernie Chambers as soon as possible after the conclusion of our visit. Later that afternoon, after I’d gotten back to the cell house, I was informed that someone from the State Ombudsman’s Office had called and left a message for me to return his call. I wasn’t able to get through to the office until the following Monday, at which time I learned that the Ombudsman’s Office had been in touch with a member(s) of the prison administration, as well as a person in the administration of the Department of Corrections. I was informed that a letter from the prison or the Department of Corrections would be sent to my mother, giving her assurances that the August 12 incident would not be repeated.

Within about a week, such a letter was sent to my mother. It was very complimentary and did give the assurances. However, the letter offered no explanation as to how, specifically, her blouse had been in violation of the dress code, when a rule had been conjured up that made sweaters inappropriate clothing, and it admitted no wrongdoing or unreasonableness on the part of the pass clerk and/or her supervisor. And the letter offered no apology. Moreover, the letter stated that the dress rule had been equally applied to my mother and that no change in policy would be made. Since then, I have been able to visit with my mother and, fortunately, she had no difficulty getting in.

But while I’m happy that I’ve been able to see my mother since this incident, I cannot let the matter drop. My mother told me that, not only did she look carefully at her blouse and could not see through it, she was wearing a T-shirt and bra under the blouse. She also said to me that she’d worn the same blouse here on prior occasions. I must also mention that, because the visiting room is sometimes uncomfortably cool and my mother gets cold somewhat easily, she has often worn a sweater here.

So I have questions. What kind of person uses her position of authority to determine that an 88-year-old woman, who has been coming into the prison, without difficulty, for nearly 35 years, is all of a sudden wearing objectionable clothes? What type and volume of rules make it possible for a prison employee to have the supposed ‘justification’ to make such a decision? And, lastly, what could possibly be going in the minds of prison administrators who would review an incident such as this and so no need for a change in policy?

Yes, I am glad to have visited with my mother. But how do I know that there won’t be a next time? Just as importantly, if not more so, is the fact that, if the prison rules and the amount of authority given to employees to be arbitrary and capricious are such that my mother can be denied a visit, any other prisoners’ loved ones can treat the same way.

Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa
Lincoln, Nebraska

Amnesty International political prisoner, Mondo we Lang, (David Rice) is serving a life sentence for the alleged 1970 murder of Omaha Police officer Larry Minard. For 35 years, he has maintained his innocence.

2006, Conclusion

Lincolnite MJ Berry was honored by members and families of Alternatives to the Military at its annual Pot Luck Supper earlier this year. She was named “Peacemaker of the Year” for her dedicated work on behalf of Nebraska Greens and for maintaining an up-to-date comprehensive email listing of most Peace & Justice activities in Lincoln.

In accepting the ATM award, MJ said she “never received any kind of award for anything in her life.” ATM hopes with its ‘Peacemaker of the Year’ to honor just such people as MJ, who labor in the vineyards of Peace & Justice with little recognition nor reward other than intrinsic to our commitments.

MJ joins a host of other Lincolmites who have been honored by ATM, including: long-time partners and Gay Rights activists, UNL Professor George Wolf and lawyer John Taylor; the late Nebraskans for Peace State Coordinator Betty Olson; WWII conscientious objector Dwight Ganzel; United Nations Association leader and peace worker, Marg Manglitz; John McCall, founder of the Southeast High School Students for Peace Club; former NFP President and health-care advocate Carol McShane; UNL anthropologist and human rights worker, Bob Hitchcock; legendary Lincoln civil rights activist, Leola Bullrock; Don Tilley, founder of the Prairie Peace Park; Elizabeth Goodbrake, former UNL Peace & Justice leader; retired Mennonite farmer and Peace activist, Robert Epp; and Christy Harrisheimer, educator and Amnesty International leader.

As part of our continuing campaign to “Turn Off the Violence” in our communities, NFP will again be working for passage of a school anti-bullying bill. Last session, Sen. Gwen Howard of Omaha introduced LB 627, which would mandate that every school district in the state adopt an anti-bullying policy. The legislation includes a list of protected categories (sexual orientation is one of the affected groups) that mirrors the language in Nebraska’s existing hate crimes law. To give the bill some teeth so that it doesn’t end up simply being lip service, the legislation establishes reporting requirements that must approved by the state. The Legislature’s Education Committee held a public hearing on LB 627 last year, but never took action on the bill. Citizens for Equal Protection (CFEP) will be holding a ‘Lobby Day’ early in the session to build momentum for the bill’s passage.

It’s never over until it’s over, but from all appearances, any action on the death penalty—for good or ill—is finished for this biennium. Both Sen. Chambers’ “abolition bill,” LB 760, and LB 506 (which would replace the electric chair with lethal injection) are bottled up in the Legislature’s Judiciary Committee and will most likely die there. But with an incumbent Republican governor desperately trying to curry favor with the far right before the May 2006 Republican gubernatorial primary election, anything is possible. We’ll be keeping an eye out.

This of course is only a preliminary list. Once the 2006 Session begins Wednesday, January 4 and the new crop of legislation starts coming in, NFP will inevitably be adding more bills to our workload. We’ll provide an up-to-date bill list of our priority legislation in the February Nebraska Report to keep you informed of what’s going on in your unicameral.
Great Jobs Scam, conclusion

Who’s Paying for All This?

America’s infrastructure deficit, LeRoy reports, is $1.6 trillion and increasing, according to the American Society of Civil Engineers. This deficit refers to the level of deferred spending on our nation’s schools, transportation and waterways, drinking water and wastewater treatment, power generation and transmission, and other infrastructure factors essential for strong economic growth. It has increased over the last 20 years—at the same time that the business tax subsidies boom has contributed to an overall decline in corporate tax payments and a shifting of the nation’s tax burden onto the middle class.

K-12 public education, the cornerstone of long-term economic development, is hard hit by the Jobs Scam. Property tax abatements and TIF programs weaken the tax bases of school districts throughout the U.S. Meanwhile the loss of income and sales tax revenues constrains state aid to the struggling school districts. Erosion of the property tax base is often foisted upon school districts by other government bodies, such as city councils (who may have final approval over TIF deals) or state legislatures (which may authorize statewide property tax abatement schemes such as those incorporated into LB 775 and the Nebraska Advantage Act).

The Jobs Scam weakens school district tax bases across Nebraska, including Omaha Public Schools, where LB 775 property tax abatements and other property tax diversions abound. And it wreaks havoc on the many school districts in Nebraska’s non-metropolitan communities which host meatpacking plants, all of which pay lower property taxes due to LB 775 abatements. Deprived of the abated revenues, these school districts struggle to fund the education of an expanded student population with higher-than-average percentages of at-risk and non-English-speaking children, many of whom are the offspring of those who work at the plants receiving the tax abatements. Some districts continue to rely on aging and overcrowded facilities as they await approval of school bond issues by citizens reeling from high property tax rates.

The harm to local economies should be obvious.

In these communities, property tax abatements have shifted the burden of funding public education from one class of taxpayer to another. Many LB 775 businesses (which include some of the world’s largest corporations) are effectively taxed at much lower property tax rates than other taxpayers, shifting the tax burden onto smaller businesses, farmers and working families.

Shifting tax burdens are felt at every level of taxation in Nebraska. The tax burden-shifting due to LB 775—affecting state and local sales taxes and state income taxes in addition to property taxes—is colossal. LB 775’s cumulative cost of over $1.5 billion, half of which has gone to fewer than 25 companies, was paid for with higher taxes on other Nebraska taxpayers. And this burden-shifting will continue, as tax breaks from LB 775 and the new Nebraska Advantage Act together will represent 5 percent of our state budget. Many business watchdogs have observed that some of the largest and most profitable corporations in Nebraska already routinely pay little or no state income tax due to LB 775 and assorted other tax loopholes. Nebraskans with the least wealth (and political influence) increasingly pay the most taxes.

LeRoy consold Nebraskans with the fact that they are not alone. A tax burden shift to working families is a major nationwide consequence of the Jobs Scam. He reported that the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service has tracked a sharp decline over the past two decades of the effective corporate rate for all state and local taxes, due to tax competition among states to attract business. LeRoy reported, too, that the share of revenues companies provide has fallen from 9.7 percent of all state tax revenue in 1980 to 6 percent in 2000, and has declined further since then.

It is this burden-shifting, says LeRoy, that reveals the true purpose of the Great American Jobs Scam: corporate tax dodging. Big Business has no interest in tax reform that assures equity and adequacy of taxation, but instead pressures local governments and state legislators for tax cuts for Big Business at any cost. LeRoy worries that all signs point to Big Business’s growing unwillingness to reinvest in our public goods. “Instead, they appear to be disinvesting by aggressively cutting the share of the taxes they bear for public services that we all rely upon to maintain our standard of living. Their actions suggest that they feel little loyalty, that they see little future here within our borders.”

What to Do, What to Do?

So what can concerned citizens do about the Great American Jobs Scam? The political influence of its promoters in Nebraska, as elsewhere, appears secure. Nevertheless, the recent petition campaign to repeal LB 775 (which received LeRoy’s praise in both his speech and his book) provided much needed public discourse on the subject and revealed some chinks in the armor. LeRoy outlines 12 common-sense reforms to maintain forward momentum. Here I will mention only three.

Disclosure, Disclosure, Disclosure. When elected officials must reveal the details of the deals they make, they are held more accountable and behave more responsibly. Big Business knows this, and knows that disclosure forces corporations to be more accountable as well. This is why Big Business fights disclosure tooth and nail. Good disclosure must include annual deal-specific disclosure for all subsidy programs. The requirement for bi-annual deal-specific disclosure in the Nebraska Advantage Act was a landmark accomplishment, but the struggle for better disclosure must continue.

Unified Development Budgets. Nebraska should join the dozen states that publish annual documents that provide state legislators with a comprehensive inventory of all spending line items for economic development—all the tax breaks and all the appropriations. Tax breaks (which are not included in Nebraska’s budget) dwarf actual appropriations for economic development. A Unified Development Budget helps assure that tax breaks receive as much scrutiny as appropriations.

Give school boards full say on abatements and TIF. School funding must be protected from revenue losses caused by property tax abatements and TIF. As LeRoy says, “This intergovernmental free lunch is just plain wrong.” School boards should be given control over their share of property tax revenue, including the right to reject any deal that abates or diverts revenue to which they are entitled.

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JANUARY 2006 NEBRASKA REPORT, P.9
2006 NFP State Board Priorities

It’s a new year, but since the problems we’re facing haven’t really changed, neither are Nebraskans for Peace’s priorities. The NFP State Board formally designated its priority issues for 2006 at its November meeting, and they pretty much look like last year’s.

Turn Off the Violence

We will continue to press on with our TOTV project, keying our efforts primarily to anti-violence work in our schools. Passage of an anti-bullying bill in the Legislature would go a long way toward addressing school violence, as bullying behavior in the schoolyard—if not dealt with effectively in childhood—invariably finds its way into the home life and workplace of the grown adult. Since a preponderance of adolescent bullying (among boys at least) has been found to be related to homophobia and gay-bashing, protecting the rights of these victimized children should clearly be a legislative, as well as NFP, priority.

Civil Rights Locally and Internationally

Whiteclay is still the focal point of this priority. Although we saw some major movement in the past year on this issue—the Legislature designated some funding for targeted law enforcement efforts and a “deputization” agreement was signed between the state and the Oglala Sioux Tribe—the problems at Whiteclay are far from resolved. More money needs to be directed for alcohol abuse treatment, and the Liquor Control Commission continues to lack the discretionary power to prevent situations like Whiteclay from developing. The Legislature still needs to act if these encouraging initial steps are to lead to lasting progress.

Economic Justice

The Legislature’s ‘reforms’ of the LB 775 Big Business tax incentive program last session—while providing more public disclosure—effectively ‘upped’ the program’s annual cost by another 60 million dollars to $200 million a year. Much remains to be done if we’re ever to make these economic development programs accountable and cost-effective, and if we hope to keep them from bankrupting the state treasury and busting the budget. This same kind of corporate domination of the political process, however, is also occurring at the national and international level under the guise of “globalization.” The unhealthy nexus between Big Business and America’s foreign and military policy accounts for much of the hostility the U.S. is facing in the Muslim world and Latin America.

Anti-War/Anti-Nuclear Activities

The War in Iraq, of course, takes center stage. NFP will continue to spotlight the flaws in the Bush/Cheney Administration’s foreign policy and decision-making process that got us into this costly and unnecessary mess to begin with. And it’s absolutely critical we do so. Nearly three years after this illegal war on Iraq was launched, the administration is actually broadening, rather than scaling back, its doctrine of preemption and “first-strike.” Just this past November, StratCom successfully simulated a preemptive nuclear attack on North Korea in preparation for assuming its new mission of “Global Strike.” It falls to us here in Nebraska to alert the rest of world of the now conventional—as well as nuclear—threat that StratCom poses to the globe.

Environment

This is the one authentically new issue given priority designation by the NFP State Board. With the scientific community having now overwhelmingly concluded that human behavior is contributing to global warming, it is crucial that the U.S. government quit dragging its feet on efforts to address the problem. As the world’s foremost consumer of fossil fuels, the United States more than any other nation has a responsibility to take the lead in transitioning to alternative energies. But as the relief debacle in New Orleans so sadly demonstrated, our government isn’t even equipped to respond to natural calamities, let alone adopt the modest measures called for in the Kyoto Protocol to try and prevent them. From this point forward in our lives (and particularly in our children’s and grandchildren’s), there will be no bigger ‘peace issue’ than the environment.

We know as well as anyone that there are dozens of other Peace & Justice issues worthy of NFP’s attention. Given the organization’s limited resources, however, these are the issues the State Board has unanimously prioritized for 2006. Next September, at the annual board retreat, the board members will once again go back to the drawing board to create a priority plan from the ground up. But with the same occupants still in the White House, we don’t expect our priorities will change much.

StratCom Simulates War with North Korea, conclusion

to support or execute space and global strike operations.” Space and Global Strike commander oversees the following military organizations around the nation:

• The Joint Space Operations Center at Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., to direct day-to-day planning and execution of assigned military space forces.

• The Air Operations Center at Barksdale Air Force Base, La., which supports Space and Global Strike command with critical planning expertise to develop fully integrated global strike course-of-actions across the spectrum of joint operations for both deliberate and time sensitive planning tasks and assist in executing missions as directed.

• The Cruise Missile Support Activities, in Norfolk, Va., and Camp Smith, Hawaii, for Navy Tomahawk cruise missile planning capabilities.

• The Department of Defense Manned Space Flight Support Office, at Patrick Air Force Base, Fla., for coordination of military support for manned United States space flight operations.

• In addition, the Joint Information Operations Center in San Antonio, Texas, is available to deliver information operations expertise for planning and execution.

Space and Global Strike was formally established on January 10, 2005. At the stand-up ceremony, the command included 270 personnel but is projected to grow to more than 400 by the end of 2006.

Operations

Despite its young age, Space and Global Strike has already been involved in several exercises, spanning from regional operations to strategic warfare:

* August 22-September 3, 2005: Ulchi Focus Lens (UFL) 2005, a U.S. Pacific Command exercise conducted with US Forces Korea (USFK) and the armed forces of the Republic of Korea (ROK). The exercise was a US-ROK, simulation-driven, OPLAN oriented Command Post Exercise (CPX) comprising of two events: Ulchi - a ROK national mobilization exercise involving several hundred thousand ROK citizens practicing wartime activation and traveling to mobilization sites; and Focus Lens - a CFC warfighting CPX. Although there are a significant number of personnel involved with the mobilization portion, this exercise is separate and distinct from the CPX. UFL is the Combined Forces Command (CFC) CDR’s premier annual war fighting exercise. During the exercise 3,000 U.S. personnel were moved to the Korean Peninsula to augment the CFC/USFK staff. The executive agent for UFL is USFK.

* August 4 (changed from September 19-25), 2005: Operation Able Warrior involved Task Force Baghdad Soldiers attempting to defeat terror cells operating west of the Baghdad International Airport in the early morning hours of Aug. 4. The objective of Able Warrior was to disrupt car bombing cells and roadside bomb emplacers, and prevent them from planning, preparing and carrying out terrorist attacks in the area. In less than three hours, Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment, 48th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division conducted a series of simultaneous attacks and captured 41 suspected terrorists, including three foreign fighters.

* November 1-10, 2005: STRATCOM’s Global Lightning nuclear weapons exercise. According to Bill M. Arkin, the exercise was scheduled to rehearse military operations during a trans-/post-attack nuclear environment, including reconstitution, redirection and targeting of STRATCOM forces.

During this exercise, according to STRATCOM, Space and Global Strike underwent “a rigorous test of integrated planning and operational execution capabilities” and “demonstrated its mission of providing integrated space and global strike capabilities to deter and dissuade aggressors and when directed, defeat adversaries through decisive joint global effects in support of USSTRATCOM missions.”

* December 2-10, 2005: Pacific Command’s Terminal Fury high-level exercise to be held at US Pacific Command (PACOM) Headquarters located at Camp Smith, Hawaii.

IOC was initially planned for November 15, 2005. Full Operational Capability (FOC) is tentatively scheduled for September 30, 2006.
that their subjects recognize them not only as rulers, but as representatives of God.

Let us look, for example, at the case of President Mubarak of Egypt, one of the U.S.’s chief allies in the Middle East. He has led Egypt since Anwar Sadat was assassinated on October 6, 1981. Originally Sadat’s vice president, he has just been ‘elected’ to his fifth consecutive six-year term and, bolstered by the military, holds near autocratic power. Although required under Egypt’s 1971 constitution to appoint a vice president, he has never done so, claiming there are no qualified candidates.

Mubarak, however, at least must work to maintain the façade of democratic process and participation. The Arab citizens of Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Oman (Sultan of Oman), Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have never even had the opportunity to cast a vote for their kings and emirs.

The point is simply this: The Arab people are haunted by their leaders. But the entire world is haunted by the tragic incidents of the Arab world. Arab leaders have converted their citizens into robots, turned their countries into a zone of chronic instability, and developed a bad habit of engulfing the rest of the world into their troubles.

Arabs are not against Europeans or Americans; they are merely for themselves. They have been socially assaulted by their leaders, and their liberty has been denied.

The democratic world is to be reminded that the Arab people have suffered over 50 years of repression (some at the hand of West itself), and the Arabs are thoroughly disgusted at being told to shut up. Their oppression is an indisputable fact. But they dare not talk about it, since an Arab citizen will not have a chance of getting justice in Riyadh, Cairo, Damascus, Amman… Nor are the world democracies free of culpability in Arab eyes. Through their policies in the Arab world—doing business with this dictatorship, selling arms to that one—they stand accused of collaborating with the oppressors and aiding in the cover-up.

It is high time for the Western democracies to exert the effort to turn the Arab world into the newest member on the democratic block. Not through cynically waged preemptive attacks on nations like Iraq, but through principled political and economic policies that honor the Arab people’s authentic desire for liberty.

There is no reason whatsoever to heed the wishes of the 21 Arab leaders who can’t stomach the idea of the Arab world becoming a democracy. For over half a century, the Western democracies have permitted short-sighted, narrow interests to guide their policies toward Arab countries, and we are now—in the wake of 9/11 and the Iraq invasion—seeing the results of this flawed approach.

It is well to close with the words of the eminent Political Science professor, Don Robinson, who has long studied the fitful efforts at democratization in the developing world, “One of the weaknesses of our age is our apparent inability to distinguish our needs from our greeds.”

Mohammed Siddiq

NFP member and U.S. citizen Mohammed H. Siddiq is a native of Medina, Saudi Arabia. A resident of Lincoln for more than two decades, he cannot even return to his homeland to visit his family, for fear of arrest and imprisonment by the Saudi government.
by Tom Winter, UNL Associate Professor of Classics and Religious Studies (with apologies to Dr. Seuss)

“If it hadn’t been for Bartholomew Cubbins, that King and that Sky would have wrecked that little Kingdom.”

— Bartholomew and the Oobleck

We’ve got our own King Derwin of Didd, but where is our Bartholomew Cubbins?

Oobleck was the agent of the destruction in the Kingdom of Didd. The king had wanted something new to come down, and summoned his magicians. So sunshine, rain, fog, and snow were not enough? Then the magicians would do oobleck. And what was oobleck? They didn’t know, they hadn’t made it before. The king’s magicians chanted a Seussian song:

Go magic smoke, Go high! Go high!
Rise into the kingdom’s sky!
Go make the oobleck tumble down
On every street, in every town!
Go make the wondrous oobleck fall!

Oh bring down oobleck on us all!
We didn’t know it was prophecy; we didn’t know the oobleck was metaphor, or that the magicians were named Cheney and Halliburton, Abramoff, Rumsfeld, and Rice, and Disney, Murdoch and Moon. But in the Kingdom of Didd, the oobleck fell, and gummed up everything. [List your oobleck here: perhaps a school for terrorists, civil war, deficits to scare small children, forbidding Medicare bargaining with pharmaceuticals, “Support Our Troops” with cuts in veterans’ benefits, the threatened veto of an anti-torture law, and teen-age boys coming home in boxes . . . .]

In the children’s story, King Derwin of Didd realizes his wish has brought disaster. He tries to remember the magic words (the magicians are inaccessible, having been buried under oobleck): “Oh what are those words my magicians say . . . ? ‘Shuffle . . . duffle . . . muzzle . . . muff . . .’ That’s all I remember and they don’t do any good!”

The page boy Bartholomew straightens him out: the king oughtn’t waste his time “saying foolish magic words;” he ought to be saying some plain simple words, like “I’m sorry.” And here Bartholomew has the heart of the story:

“You may be a mighty king,” he said. “But you’re sitting in oobleck up to your chin. And so is everyone else in your land. And if you don’t say you’re sorry, you’re no sort of king at all!”

Of course our Cubbins should be the media. But they’re owned by the king’s Magicians: Disney, Murdoch, and Moon.

In the children’s story, the King Derwin of Didd does repent. He does say it’s all his fault. “And I’m sorry.” They still had to deal with oobleck, but at least it stopped coming down.

There, though, the prophetic text breaks down. Of course, Bartholomew and the Oobleck is just a children’s story. Unfortunately. Because unlike King Derwin of Didd, King ‘W’ of Didd just keeps on saying the foolish magic words. Shuffle . . . duffle . . . muzzle . . . muff. Shuffle . . . duffle . . . muzzle . . . muff.

And the oobleck keeps falling.