



# Nebraska Report

*There is no Peace without Justice*

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## Matt Rothschild of *The Progressive* Raises the Call for Impeachment at UNO

by Amanda E. Flott,  
NFP Omaha Coordinator

"It's time for the impeachment process to commence and let's not just stop with Bush. The case for impeachment should be extended to include Cheney, too," Matt Rothschild, editor of *The Progressive* magazine, stated to an audience of almost a hundred listeners at the University of Nebraska-Omaha February 23.

The Bush Administration clearly demonstrates a blatant disregard for its international treaty obligations under the United Nations Charter and the Geneva Conventions, Rothschild said. There is massing evidence that Bush and Cheney intended to mislead the country into war in Iraq—war based on an apparently insatiable oil addiction and a propaganda-blitzed connection between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaida. And if that isn't enough, we also have the monstrous torture scandals, detention of people in our own country, and the violations of U.S. criminal laws at the highest levels of our government.

Now, in a time when 'freedom and security' have become the justification for all of these atrocious high crimes and misdemeanors, Rothschild noted that yet another betrayal has occurred. Bush, exercising his self-referential, unilateral power as Commander-in-Chief, sidestepped and ignored the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA),

resulting in unwarranted, illegal wiretapping of thousands of Americans. "We've reached the breaking point, and as Americans if we do not affirm our democracy now, Bush and Cheney will take it away from us," he warned.

*The Progressive* editor continued making his case for impeachment by citing the constitutional guidelines that are beginning to circulate through the newspapers, Internet and even congressional legislation introduced by Rep. John Conyers (D-MI). "As a matter of Constitutional Law, under Article 2, Section 4, these and other misdeeds constitute grounds for impeachment of not just Bush, but Cheney too," he said. Both have consistently exhibited their contempt for the rule of law. No president or vice president should be allowed to commit these egregious violations of our Constitution with exemption. "There is a groundswell for impeachment in this country," said Rothschild. "We need to push the idea so the Bush regime is held accountable."

### Lying to Incite a War

One of the most abominable things for a president to do is usurp the authority of the people and Congress through a progression of lies to launch a war, Rothschild told the audience. Bush and associates deliberately deceived the public into giving their assent for a cruel and unnecessary war—resulting in the death of thousands and the

waste of unimaginable sums of money.

Unchecked power and fraud cannot be tolerated in America. "This was a war of aggression that violated countless numbers of international treaties and charters. There was never any imminent danger of attack on the United States from Iraq," he said. Bush created a war based on fraud, he noted, adding that, "There were never any WMD in Iraq; there was only a connection between 9/11 and Saddam birthed by the President to elicit the needed support for war from the nation."

Recent historical examples of chief executives' overstepping their legal mandate (i.e. Johnson, Nixon, Reagan) demonstrate the urgent need for the public and for our elected representatives to hold the Bush Administration accountable. The deceptions have been attributed to "bad intelligence." Yet *The Progressive* editor said, "The administration was intent on war in Iraq for multiple reasons, none of which had anything to do with intelligence." In the end,

*conclusion on page 3*



**Check out the Pics**  
from Dick Cheney's  
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## LATIN AMERICA BRIEFS



COMPILED BY CHRISTY HARGESHEIMER

A wave of presidential elections in Latin America promises to reconfigure the power in a region that has long been both neglected and grossly manipulated by the U.S. Peter Hakim, president of the Inter-American Dialogue, says: "Many see these elections as a part of whether Chávez and Chavismo gain a greater foothold in Latin America. The question is whether this kind of anti-Americanism will be able to be the underpinnings of a real movement." Lisa Haugaard of the Latin American Working Group cautions that "the United States typically misunderstands leftist movements in Latin America, and the danger is that it will see them as a threat and overreact." Here is a brief rundown of recent and future elections in 11 countries.

**Honduras:** In November of 2005, Manuel Zelaya of the opposition Liberal Party, was the winner. Although his rival called him a radical, Zelaya is actually a wealthy landowner and former president of Honduras's forestry trade association. Church leaders have been fighting illegal logging in the area where Zelaya's family had large agricultural and timber holdings.

**Chile:** The Dec. 11 election resulted in a runoff, which gave the victory to Socialist Michelle Bachelet, Chile's Minister of Defense and a victim of torture under Pinochet's regime. Bachelet is not only Chile's first female president, but also a single mother and an agnostic in a nominally Catholic country.

**Bolivia:** The victory of Evo Morales on December 18 gave the U.S. government a new nemesis. Among the first official acts of this former coca grower were visits to Cuba and to China. His cabinet selections have been somewhat conciliatory, however, as he tries to form a government that can forge a reasonable working relationship with other countries. However, both he and his cabinet have little national government experience.

**Costa Rica:** Former President and Nobel Peace Prize winner Oscar Arias squandered a 15-point lead in the Feb. 5 election; as votes are being recounted, he has 40.51 percent of the vote compared to 40.29 percent for Otton Solís, Arias's former planning minister. Arias is a staunch supporter of CAFTA, the Central American Free Trade Agreement, and Costa Rica is the only Central American country that has not yet ratified this pact. Solís favors renegotiating parts of this trade deal. The election results are seen in part as an expression of substantial Costa Rican opposition to CAFTA, one of the central issues in these elections. Many fear that CAFTA will damage small farmers and local industry. Arias gains support, however, by his opposition to the U.S. war in Iraq. Election results should be final in late February.

**Perú:** If right-wing candidate Lourdes Flores, running against former president Alán García and retired Army colonel and Hugo Chávez ally Ollanta Humala, wins in April, 2006, she'll join Bachelet as one of the first female presidents in Latin America. Flores, a single woman, the candidate of the National Unity party, is linked by her detractors to economic interests. Ollanta Humala is gaining support, but it is too early to predict who might win this election.

**Colombia:** Thanks to a constitutional change made last year, President Alvaro Uribe can run for reelection on May 28. With a February 2006 report from Amnesty International citing death threats against candidates and the media, including the deaths of two mayoral candidates in January, it's little wonder that nobody wants to run against Uribe. Both paramilitaries and guerillas seek to influence the electoral process in this troubled nation.

**Mexico:** In July, current front-runner, former Mexico City Mayor Andrés Manuel López Obrador of the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD), could join the ranks of left-leaning leaders around Latin America. Meanwhile, the "Other Campaign" spearheaded by the Zapatistas from Chiapas, is spreading across the country to bring attention to social issues.

**Brazil:** Lula, a strong force behind the current left swing, has been battling corruption scandals in his party and has not announced his candidacy for a second term in October. It is expected that whoever takes office will continue with his domestic social policies and regional integration efforts.

**Ecuador:** The campaign for October's elections hasn't officially begun, but with seven presidents in the past nine years, this one might be up for grabs.

**Nicaragua:** Scandal-ridden former President Daniel Ortega is vying against fellow FSLN member Harty Lewites for candidacy in the November election, which could split the leftist vote and pave the way for a right-wing victory. This would be viewed positively by Washington.

**Venezuela:** Hugo Chávez is favored for the December elections. This, of course, would be viewed negatively by Washington.

# Call for Impeachment, conclusion

Americans now know that the Bush-Cheney rationale for war was all smoke.

## Torture and Detention at Home and Abroad

Under the War Crimes Act of 1996, Rothschild explained, it is considered a crime for any U.S. national to order or engage in the murder, torture or inhumane treatment of a detainee. In fact, when a detainee death results, the act imposes the death penalty for not just the murderer, but for all those in the chain of command who condoned the acts of violence. No wonder Bush completely

*“Such blatant abuse of power and disregard for the laws of the land warrant the use of the only recourse the Constitution gives us.”*

denies the legitimacy of the Geneva Conventions, the basis of our War Crimes Act. Ironically, the president recently proclaimed, “The United States does not torture!” A surprising statement, given the revelations that continue to surface, regarding the CIA’s secret jails and criminal methods of interrogation, which have resulted in more than 38 detainee deaths. “This torture is just embarrassing,” said Rothschild. “What’s even worse is that it’s not just at Abu Ghraib; the U.S. has been doing this in Iraq, at Guantánamo Bay with restraint chairs, Af-

ghanistan and the list could go on.”

Regardless of official denials of the U.S.’s use of torture, there are many other indications that Bush and other higher-ups have knowingly approved such abuse. The clearest example of their intention resides in White House’s unwillingness to support the McCain Amendment, which would have banned torture. Instead, Bush supported Cheney’s efforts to change the language allowing the CIA to torture and degrade detainees. As if this wasn’t bad enough, Rothschild reported that, promptly after signing the legislation, Bush publicly announced that as Commander-in-Chief he has the right to violate the law when it suits his administration objectives.

## Unrestricted Wiretapping

The original purpose of the Federal Intelligence Surveillance Act, Rothschild told the audience, was to strike a balance between the legitimate demands for national security and the public’s constitutional expectation of privacy. As our nation learned from Vietnam and Watergate, a president is clearly able to make false statements regarding national security. Based on our system of checks and balances, Congress realized that there must be some kind of process to protect citizens’ privacy from an overly zealous executive branch. The president was given the right to start a wiretap without a warrant so long as court permission was obtained within three days.

Since 1978, when FISA originated, the court has approved around 10,000 warrants, with only 4 being turned down. “It’s been done in the past, so clearly there is absolutely nothing hard about obtaining court



The Progressive magazine’s editor Matt Rothschild speaking at UNO on February 23.

review... If the president is permitted to break the law on wiretapping on his own say-so, then who is to stop him from breaking any other law?” Rothschild asked. It seems clear that the Bush Administration will stop at nothing to justify their actions, he added. What isn’t clear is where exactly in the Constitution it is written that the president has the authority to violate U.S. laws, even in a ‘time of war’, by engaging in actions against U.S. citizens.

## Impeach Now!

Upon assuming leadership of this country, Rothschild reminded the crowd, President Bush swore an oath of office in which he promised to uphold the laws of our nation. The call for his impeachment and for censure and removal of his cronies should not be taken lightly. The law permits those types of actions in only the most extreme cases of incompetence and reckless disre-

gard of our Constitution. But, the editor of the Madison, Wisconsin-based magazine editor stressed, “Such blatant abuse of power and disregard for the laws of the land warrant the use of the only recourse the Constitution gives us. The only alternative is despotism, in which the public becomes despondent and paralyzed.”

It’s time to take action against the Bush imperial presidency, he said, and since the Republican Congress will not move to discipline our “compassionate conservative” leader and his followers, then the Democrats, civil libertarians and peace activists must. By their arrogance, lawlessness and endangerment of our security and good standing in the world, Bush & Co. is daring the citizens of this country to stop them in their tracks. And we must, Rothschild stated. Nothing less than removing the offenders is adequate to protect our Constitution and preserve our ideal of democracy.

## StratCom Planners Plotting Attack on Iran



Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has directed StratCom military strategists to draw up plans for a preemptive attack against Iranian nuclear facilities. With its expanded mission responsibilities, including “Global Strike,” the Omaha-based command center is now charged with using both conventional and nuclear weapons to combat terrorism and the WMD threat anywhere in the world.

Working in conjunction with Central Command, the Pentagon’s military arm in the Muslim world, StratCom has begun “identifying targets, assessing weapons-loads and working on logistics for an operation” in the event Iran refuses to stop its nuclear energy program. Britain’s *Sunday Telegraph* reported February 12. The preliminary plan is said to call for aerial bombardment by long-distance B2 bombers, each armed with up to

40,000 lbs. of precision weapons (including the latest bunker-busting devices), backed by submarine-launched ballistic missile attacks. Last month President Bush reaffirmed his view that Iran’s nuclear ambitions “would not be tolerated.”

While StratCom was already hard at work planning the next war, Fr. John McCaslin, a retired Omaha priest and NFP member, joined long-time activist Frank Cordaro and two other Catholic Workers in ‘crossing the line’ into StratCom as part of the annual “Holy Innocents” action December 28 (see photo). Arrested by StratCom officials for their illegal trespass, McCaslin and Cordaro were both scheduled to appear before Federal Judge F.A. Gossett in Omaha late last month. If found guilty, each faces six months in jail for their criminal conduct.

# The Coming War Over Water

by Paul Olson

We read almost weekly of new crises concerning the allocation of Republican River water between Nebraska and Kansas, of low stream flow issues imperiling endangered species or farmers on the Platte. The Oglala Aquifer, we're told, is drying up in Western Kansas or near Lubbock, Texas. Babies are turning blue because of nitrate pollution. The Mead, Nebraska munitions plant left the university with a \$6-8 million bill for the cleanup of chemical pollution in the waterways there.

Water rights have become a major source of contention at the international level as well. In the dry Mideast, disputes have arisen over who gets the water in the Jordan: Israel, the Palestinians, Syria or Jordan? And how much of the water in the Euphrates belongs to Turkey, how much goes to Iraqi agricultural uses, and how much to European-U.S. oil interests? Uganda, Sudan and Egypt are quarreling in Africa over the use of the Nile River. Although relations between the two countries have improved in the past two years, Uganda's previous support of the Sudan People's Liberation Army in southern Sudan and Sudan's past support of the Lord's Resistance Army in northern Uganda means that suspicions and tensions over water could undermine regional security.

Diplomatic relations between Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania are increasingly tense because of receding water levels in Lake Victoria. In addition, all of these countries are experiencing roving brown-outs and diplomatic sparring over access to the decreasing amounts of hydro-electric power generated by the reduced flow of water out of Lake Victoria. Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Rwanda were at war with each other until 2004, a war that has been estimated to have directly and indirectly resulted in the deaths of more than 8 million individuals according to an International Rescue Commission's "Mortality Study." Ongoing insurgency in the DRC means that relations between these three countries remain tense.

All of these nations are in a region that former Secretary of State Madeline Albright once described as on the brink of World War III.

Water, most experts tell us, will be the next scarce resource leading to war long after the fossil fuel battles have been solved. And we have few mechanisms for preventing the conflicts.

Complicating the possibility of achieving decent solutions both here in the Great Plains and around the globe is

the growth of human population from 1 billion in 1900 to 7 billion by about 2030. Environmental degradation and endangered species stemming from this population spurt have turned our attention to the habitat needs of the plant and animal kingdoms. With global warming, however, rainfall patterns will shift so that the water allocation infrastructure that we have built up will be rendered increasingly obsolete. In the midst of this mess, what should Peace & Justice people who care about the earth do?

First, two relevant books:

Jared Diamond's *Collapse* argues that cultures collapse because of a combination of overpopulation, drought or water abuse, deforestation and abuse of indigenous plant cover, soil erosion and war. He discusses the fate of Easter and Pitcairn Islanders, Southwestern Indian groups, the

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Maya, the Greenland Vikings, as well as the contemporary tragedies of Rwanda and Haiti, up to and including the modern tragedies in the making in China, Australia and even Montana. Diamond also examines a number of cultures where collapse threatened, but deliberate human decision-making averted it through means such as population control, controlled reforestation and use of native plants, soil restoration and reductions in military adventurism.

Second, Garrett Hardin's *Tragedy of the Commons* argues that resources held in common, and not privatized or given a price, will be massively overused and destroyed by freeloaders. Setting aside for a moment whether that thesis is accurate for medieval peasant societies or earlier tribal societies where communal custom rather than price controls established how resources were used, the principle has been adopted in most water policy discussions, litigation, and negotiation over water. Pricing controls alloca-

tion. If we accept the argument of those two books for purposes of our discussion, what sort of prospects do we face?

Let's look first at Nebraska and the Great Plains... To help me figure out these matters, I went to Dave Aiken, professor of water law on the UNL East Campus. According to Aiken, two issues are of direct, immediate concern: the Kansas-Nebraska legal battle over Republican River water and the endangered species/human need debate over Platte River stream flows. In 1997 Nebraska settled a lawsuit with Kansas concerning the proportion of Republican River stream flows that could go to each state. Water rights, Aiken points out, have always been private, but historically they always went with the land. Recent legal decisions, however, have permitted water rights to be sold separately from the land under which it sits.

The reason that Nebraska might want to consider separating water rights from land rights on the Republican is that we currently have too much groundwater being used for irrigation in comparison to what is allowed under the compact with Kansas. We have therefore no choice but to cut back. One way to do this would be to pay farmers to stop irrigating with wells. But that will be a long-term process. In the short term, to compensate Kansas for our overuse, we may have to pay surface water users not to irrigate, which is sure to be a major issue before the legislative session ends.

The federal Endangered Species Act, according to Aiken, is what is driving the contention over the Platte. In 1997, Nebraska, Colorado, Wyoming, and the federal government signed an agreement to increase stream flows on the Platte for the benefit of endangered species—principally the cranes, plovers, and eagles (the last now out of danger). As Aiken puts it, we said, "Any new ground water uses, including uses of hydrologically connected ground water developed after July 1, 1997, are subject to water requirements under the Endangered Species Act. If these uses interfere with stream flows required by endangered species, the users have to compensate the stream by giving makeup water to make the stream whole for endangered species."

Until 2004, we ignored the impact of unregulated groundwater withdrawal on stream flows. Then state government started to take this impact into consideration with a series of groundwater allocation decisions. "The cheater who doesn't accept the allocation creates the tragedy of the commons" and ruins things for everybody. In Aiken's view, someone has to set a limit, and most modern econo-

*conclusion on page 11*

# Coal Bed Methane Extraction Threatens Platte River Waterway

One day soon, the waters of the Platte River could run with poison. The wellfields that supply our city water supplies could be unfit for drinking. Our agricultural lands could be contaminated so that no crops will grow. And birds, fish and animals could lie littered along the riverbank, dead from toxins.

The Oglala Aquifer, the world's largest body of underground fresh water, could become a cesspool, turning the Great Plains into a wasteland incapable of supporting life. And it could happen, Teton Lakota/Cheyenne Spiritual Leader Ken Bordeaux warns, within the next generation.

Backed up by scientific evidence, Bordeaux's dire vision of the future is directly tied to a corporate energy venture already underway in the Powder River Basin of northeast Wyoming.

In the late 1990s, the federal government granted licenses to a number of oil and gas companies to begin extracting "coal bed methane" (CBM) from underground coal seam aquifers. On the surface of these coal beds are molecules of methane gas, held in place by pressure from the groundwater. Once the water is removed, the methane detaches from the coal, pools together and rises to the surface.

As groundwater percolates naturally through the ground, it leaches out salts, arsenic, cadmium, ammonia and other pollutants. But methane wastewater can be pumped from as deep as 700 feet and generally contains concentrations of dissolved salts and other pollutants, oftentimes making it unsuitable for irrigation, drinking and wildlife.

The 9<sup>th</sup> U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals has already ruled that methane wastewater is a pollutant and subject to the Clean Water Act, because of its potential harm to plants, soils and fish. Nevertheless, an estimated 77,000 methane wells, producing billions of gallons of wastewater, are expected to be drilled in the Powder River Basin in the coming decade. And most of this methane wastewater will be discharged into rivers and impoundments or sprayed directly onto the ground, which will not only lower groundwater levels, but constitute a health and environmental risk downstream.

Bordeaux, who is a Bearer of the Sacred Pipe, is concerned that many cultural sites sacred to the Lakota Nation, including Devil's Tower, Sundance Mountain, Medicine Wheel and Bear Butte in the Black Hills, are in the immediately affected area.

"The water supply in the Powder River Basin is already contaminated and unfit for human and animal consumption. Eagles, Hawks, Owls and wildlife that are Native American symbols are suffering from this maddening destruction. Natural grasses, plants and herbs utilized in Native American rites and consumed by wildlife are being destroyed. Along with this, fish kills are in progress in our waterways. Even domestic livestock is being hard hit. For Native

**For Native Americans, water is the blood of our Mother Earth that sustains us all throughout our lives. To poison it as we are currently doing leaves our future in doubt, as well as that of our children and grandchildren."**

**— Ken Bordeaux, Bearer of the Sacred Pipe**

Americans, water is the blood of our Mother Earth that sustains us all throughout our lives. To poison it as we are currently doing leaves our future in doubt, as well as that of our children and grandchildren."

Bordeaux is encouraged that a number of organizations, made up of both "cowboys and Indians" as he phrases it, are working together to stop the oil and gas industry's plans for the Powder River Basin. Groups like the Defenders of the Black Hills and the Northern Plains Resource Council have already played a significant role in standing up to the developers. He notes with sadness though that it has taken a threat to our entire way of life here in the Great Plains to get us to cooperate. "In the last days of his life," Bordeaux recalls, "the Oglala warrior Crazy Horse had a vision, in which all men of different color came together on a barren hilltop, devoid of vegetation, where a lonely tree stood naked of leaves. Ask yourself, was that coming together the result of the harm we had committed against Mother Earth out of our endless greed?"

That 'greed' Bordeaux speaks of has

reached not only up into corporate boardrooms, but also, unfortunately, into the Wyoming Governor's Office. Instead of working to require the oil and gas developers to put the water back where it came from by using reinjection techniques that would recharge the aquifers; or, where this is not feasible, to require methane operators to clean wastewater by removing salts and other pollutants prior to discharge, Wyoming's Governor Dave Freudenthal has just proposed exploring the construction of a pipeline that would carry the wastewater directly to the Platte River. According to the Wyoming Water Development Commission, piping the wastewater into the Platte would keep river levels higher and help Wyoming meet its appropriation obligations on river flow.

As you might imagine, Nebraska officials have so far been cool to the idea. The Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District, which owns and operates Lake McConaughy, is concerned about the saline content and possible heavy metals that the North Platte River might end up dumping into the state's largest lake. "We certainly

don't need any more problems with Lake McConaughy with the drought," District spokesperson Tim Anderson said. According to the Department of Environmental Quality, however, Nebraska would not have any jurisdiction over what Wyoming does. It would be up to the federal government to ensure that the wastewater met Clean Water Act standards.

And, as the victims of Katrina can tell you, putting your faith in the federal government can be risky. It was, after all, the federal government that first granted the licenses to the energy developers, and Wyoming is the adopted home of Vice President Dick Cheney, the former Halliburton executive who convened the secret White House energy policy meetings.

That they might have to rely on the federal government to protect their ancestral homeland can't be very reassuring to the Lakota Nation either. Crazy Horse had desired that this entire area be set aside for him and his people. But before his wish was fulfilled, he was murdered at Fort Robinson, Nebraska, by federal troops.

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# Dick Cheney Birthday Bash



*The Lincoln band “Tricky Dick” (a.k.a. “Skink”) kicked off the birthday bash and got everybody in the mood to party by performing a set of songs that hit just the right tone for such a politically momentous occasion. [Thanks Adam, Daniel and Scott. You guys rock.]*

Vice President Dick Cheney’s hometown of Lincoln pulled out all the stops on January 30 for a retirement party celebrating the Nebraska native’s 65th birthday and eagerly anticipated departure from public life. The nation’s largest newspaper advertised “Birthday Bash and Retirement Party” on the Vice President’s old stomping grounds provided an ideal setting for a catalog of the crimes and ignominies of Cheney’s vice presidency. And with this personal milestone in the Vice President’s life coming just 24 hours before his controversial delivered the 2006 State of the Union address, the timing for this impeachment call to end the ‘culture of corruption’ now pervading the White House Office could not have been better.

Hosted by two other homegrown products that got their start in Lincoln—Nebraskans for Peace and the Nebraska Green Party—the gathering at Duggan’s Pub featured an all-star line-up of speakers who addressed every facet of the Vice President’s criminal career. Steve Larson, the Greens’ 2004 1st Congressional District candidate, spoke on Cheney’s oil and gas industry business dealings and the secrecy and deceit surrounding the fossil fuel industry’s role in developing our national energy policy. Adjunct Professor of Law at the University of Nebraska College of Law Pat Krueger delivered a concise but scary account of the Vice President’s repeated efforts to abrogate the American people’s civil liberties. And Democratic National Committee Executive Committee Member and Winnebago Tribe Member Frank LaMere addressed the fabricated intelligence and bald lies put out by the White House to lead our country into war in Iraq.

Music for the occasion was generously provided by the band “Tricky Dick,” and there was food and fellowship aplenty, before the whole thing concluded with the 150 partygoers singing a revised, but rousing rendition of “Happy Birthday” commissioned especially for the event...



*Happy Birthday to you,  
you, crim-i-nal, you;  
we want your impeachment,  
and your running mate’s too!*

Photos by Mark Vasina

*Democratic National Committee Native American Caucus Chair Frank LaMere delivered the principal remarks at the retirement party. LaMere had just returned from a speaking engagement in Detroit, Michigan, where he’d met personally with Rep. John Conyers, the ranking Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee. In December, Rep. Conyers introduced H.R. 635, H.R. 636 and H.R. 637, calling for the impeachment of President Bush and Vice President Cheney.*

# Bash & Retirement Party



Although the initial indication from the White House was that the Vice President would be unable to attend the birthday bash, as Duggan's Pub did not meet the criteria for a "secured, undisclosed location," Lincoln's native son made a surprise appearance. Popping out of the cake, the Vice President quickly began snapping photos of the partygoers with his cell phone and assured everyone he had the whole thing down on tape. The information was forwarded on the spot to the National Security Agency, the F.B.I., the C.I.A., the Justice Department and Homeland Security to double-check that everybody there was already the subject of an unwarranted wiretap. [The 'cake', incidentally, was 'baked' by NFP State Board member and woodworker Jay Schmidt.]



The Vice President announced that the last place he'd expected to be subjected to such treatment was in his own hometown—in this reddest of 'red states', Nebraska—and he conducted a spirited defense of his administration's policies, which involved the use of profanity, verbal threats and menacing gestures. He was accompanied throughout by a chiseled-jaw Secret Service agent (the guy in the sunglasses) sworn to take a bullet to protect the Vice President, even if they're not out hunting. [Bob Hall, director of the Flatwater Shakespeare Company and a dead ringer for the Veep, portrayed the famous native son, and NFP State Board member Roger Furrer played the agent.]



In honor of the Vice President's 65<sup>th</sup> birthday, a new municipal sign for the former village of "Cheney" in southeast Lincoln was unveiled at the retirement party to stand as a memorial to the carnage inflicted by this notorious native. Just prior to moving to Wyoming at age 12, Cheney attended Irving Junior High School and was a student there at the same time as Charlie Starkweather, yet another mass murderer who called Lincoln home.

# Does Racism Play a Role in the 'One City, One District' Debate?

by A'Jamal Byndon

The Omaha Public Schools' "One City, One District" proposal has become so controversial it has even become an issue in the governor's race. At stake are concerns over educational and economic opportunity for low income families and students, the lack of diversity in public schools (i.e., racial integration), broadening the property tax base to support education, the challenges urban schools are facing with the influx of new immigrants, and the growing number of students needing special education. These are issues that cut right to the heart of our commitment to a fair and equitable public education system.

Do parochial schools though have any role or responsibility in this debate? Or should those parents who have chosen to bypass a public education for their children in order to send them to private schools simply refrain from this contentious issue? Certainly a case can be made that, by having 'opted out' of their constitutional right of a free public education for their children, they have effectively disenfranchised themselves from the discussion.

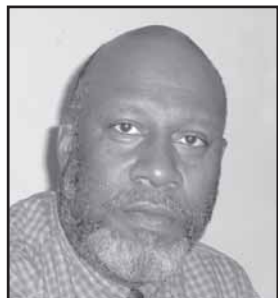
But as a society, we cannot afford that view. Public education is a shared responsibility, regardless of whether your children attend public or private schools, regardless of whether you have school-age children or not, regardless of whether you have children at all. For public education to succeed as a social right and entitlement, it must have 'buy-in' from the entire community.

Private school parents and officials accordingly have a responsibility to be constructively involved in matters related to public education. The fact that parents can afford an elite private quality education for their children does not excuse them from the financial and moral obligation to help those who are left behind. Like the old adage goes, "from those to whom much has been given, much is required." To date, however, the private school record regarding support for public education (one need only think about the perennial demand for 'vouchers' exempting them from taxes for the public school system) has left much to be desired. It is their record on diversity and racial integration, though, that is particularly disturbing.

For nearly a century, the American public education system was similar to the Apartheid system practiced in South Africa. A series of successful desegregation lawsuits challenged and changed some of those public systems. But not in all, as evidenced by

the fact that the issue of race has repeatedly surfaced in the merger battle between the Millard and Omaha Public School systems.

The race issue, though, has also permeated the institution of private education. Time and again, private schools have been mechanisms to avoid diversity and racial integration. To avoid desegregation and so-called 'race mixing,' southern white parents regularly herded their children into private schools. Nowadays, relatively few people would choose a private education for their children based on such openly racist reasons, arguing instead that such schools provide values training or a better quality education. In the end, though, private schools tend to perpetuate those same patterns of



racial homogeneity and minimal diversity, and one could argue that these virtually all-white enclaves are no different than

tutions are already exempt from paying taxes because of their nonprofit status. Private schools supporters, therefore, need to be extra careful therefore to avoid drawing lines in the sand and protecting their narrow self-interest. Taking funds out of the public cookie jar carries with it the obligation of shared public responsibility.

My comments, however, are not intended to serve as a whitewash of the public school system—Omaha Public Schools specifically. As a parent of four children who have attended OPS over the course of 20 years, I have been repeatedly frustrated by the 'plantation mentality' of the district's leadership.

Shortly after the merger proposal was introduced last year, I was asked by the president of the Omaha Public Schools Board, Sandra Kostos Jensen, if I would convene a group of parents and African American community leaders to hear John J. Mackiel, Superintendent of Omaha Public Schools, explain the reasons for the merger. I consented

*As a parent of four children who have attended OPS over the course of 20 years, I have been repeatedly frustrated by the 'plantation mentality' of the district's leadership.*

—A'Jamal Byndon

the segregation system that prevailed in the Deep South during the 1950s.

In a multi-racial country like the U.S., if public schools are required to desegregate, shouldn't the same be required of private schools?

But the arguments for why private schools need to pitch in and do their part are not just moral and ethical. There are bottom-line economic reasons for their cooperation. By virtue of the fact that private schools are using public entities (police, fire and public services), they have obligations to the community. If there were a fire in one of their facilities, private school parents and officials would expect the public fire trucks and personnel to put it out. Or if there were a Columbine-like incident at the school, they would expect as well that the police department respond on the spot.

This private school/public sector relationship is not limited to emergency situations, however. In the past year, for example, tax funds were used to build a \$19 million-dollar parking garage at Creighton University, an institution of the Catholic Church. That may well have been a justified community good. Religious and educational insti-

with one stipulation: that they get me a videotape of the public hearing OPS held in August 2005, where hundreds of parents and concerned citizens from Millard and Omaha voiced their views on the proposal. I had watched the three-hour hearing and was astonished by racist and elitist comments made on this emotionally charged issue. The videotape is a telling example of the work that we have yet to do in multicultural education, and would be helpful in classrooms and presentations for many who are in denial about racism and elitism being alive and well in our community.

The president of the OPS board has informed me that she's had the tapes in her possession for four months, but the superintendent has not yet responded to her request to publicly disseminate them. One can only infer as to what accounts for this reluctance. Perhaps, he's concerned I might want to raise some of the issues mentioned in the tapes with either himself or his staff. Or worse, to his mind, with the public at large. Over the years, he has taken the opportunity to expound his views to the African American

community on multiple occasions, yet he has never reciprocated in providing a platform to hear from us. Nine months have now passed since I was first approached about convening a meeting for the superintendent to make his presentation. I'm now thinking he's probably not going to call.

I have a pretty good idea, though, what he would have told us. As luck would have it, I happened to be at a board meeting of a nonprofit agency at the Teacher Administration building a few months ago, when to my surprise, who but the superintendent himself shows up to do ten-minute pitch on the OPS position. Despite the fact that it was a public meeting, the other side was not afforded the same consideration. Nor, to the board's chagrin, was there an opportunity for questions or rebuttal. This, then, is what passes for discussion—a monologue instead of a dialogue. While we heard all about the 'marketplace of ideas' in our high school government classes, where in the public interest ideas are batted openly about to ensure wise decision-making by our government officials, the OPS leadership doesn't believe in practicing what it teaches. Only the 'great white fathers,' it seems, have the solutions to our problems.

I choose those words deliberately. Fifty-six percent of the children enrolled in OPS are students of color, with a disproportionate number being low-income (which qualifies them for free and reduced school lunches). And yet, only three white leaders are doing all the talking for the "One City One District" proposal: the hired attorney, who rakes in thousands of dollars giving advice on how to handle desegregation; the president of the school board, whose tenure as a board member has lasted 23 years; and, of course, the over-paid superintendent. There's a kind of 'plantation mentality' among the leadership, which I, as an African American parent with one child still in the OPS system, find disturbing. And I'm not the only one who feels that way. People of color working for this so-called integrated district complain about how they are not afforded the opportunity to enter into the policy and strategy discussions, when they have advanced degrees and speak the Queen's English very well.

This kind of elitist, insular behavior is inappropriate in officials of a public body. One might even go so far as to say downright 'undemocratic.' But it goes beyond the violation of the principles and protocol of democratic governance. Regardless of how wise or well-intentioned you may be, motivated by convictions of morality or superior expertise or what have you, you do not have

*conclusion on page 11*

# The ONE Campaign to Make Poverty History

by Rev. Carol Windrum  
Peace with Justice Ministries  
United Methodist Church

I don't much care for large crowds and lots of noise. So when I was asked to attend the Live 8 concert in Philadelphia last July 2, I wasn't that enthused. But I packed my bags (including my earplugs) and headed east.

Sitting amidst thousands of noisy people I was mindful of participating in an incredibly important historic movement. The Live 8 concerts held simultaneously around the world marked the first time in human history that literally millions and millions of people worldwide were coming together with one voice... to *Make Poverty History!*

From Philadelphia I went on to Edinburgh, Scotland, as part of the US ONE delegation to be a peaceful, but vocal presence during the G8 Summit.

The ONE Campaign is an effort by Americans to rally Americans ONE by ONE—to fight the emergency of global AIDS and extreme poverty. Our diverse delegation included a fifth-generation farmer from Iowa, a retired president of an insurance company from Denver, an Hispanic Assemblies of God pastor of a worshipping congregation of 6,000 in California and the manager of a Fair Trade coffee shop from



Live 8 concert in Philadelphia, July 2005

Tennessee—Americans of all beliefs and persuasions, united as ONE to help make poverty history.

ONE believes that allocating an additional ONE percent of the U.S. budget toward providing basic needs like health, education, clean water and food would transform the futures and hopes of an entire generation in the world's poorest countries. The ONE Campaign joins similar movements in 72 other countries.

The G8 Summit this past July was critical for the poor because the focus was on Africa.

Every year, malaria causes between 300 to 500 million illnesses and more than 1 million people to die—the vast majority of whom are children in Africa. More than 300 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa—nearly half the population—live on less than \$1 a day, and this number is expected to rise to 400 million by 2015 according to the World Bank. The HIV/AIDS epidemic, meanwhile, is sweeping the land.

So our group of 105 ordinary folks from the United States joined many others from our global family in saying to our leaders: We Will Not Be Silent Anymore. There are solutions to this tragedy and we insist that our governments implement them.

Specifically we are holding our government to the promises it made in 2000, and which President Bush affirmed at the UN Summit last September. All UN member states pledged to meet measurable realistic goals for more and better aid, debt cancellation and trade reform by 2015. These are called the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). They include such measures as:

- reducing by half the proportion of people who live on less than one dollar a day,
- ensuring that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling,
- reducing by two-thirds the percentage of children who die before age five,
- reducing by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water, and
- reforming the trading system and the financial system, so that poor countries can more easily sell their products to developed countries at fair prices and obtain the financial resources needed to create stable, growing economies that lift

people out of poverty.

People rallied at the G8 Summit in 2005 because we only had ten more years to meet these goals and the global community is far behind on making progress. While in Scotland, the message I heard from our African brothers and sisters is that they are seeking justice... an even playing field. For example, right now trade rules are so skewed that cows in Europe receive more every day via government subsidies than half the population of Africa has to live on (\$2 a day).

Visiting with a man from Kenya, he said that he hoped his son wouldn't have to attend a similar meeting in the next generation. In the past, wealthy nations have made promises and often don't honor them.

The G8 leaders pledged to double aid to Africa by the year 2010. We all know that the president can make all the promises he wants, but if Congress doesn't appropriate the money, we have once again deserted our brothers and sisters in Africa and other developing countries. The doubling of aid is good, but much more needs to be done.

The rock musician Bono spoke at a recent congressional prayer breakfast in Washington. Referring to the ONE Campaign's push for an additional one percent in our federal budget allocated for development assistance, he said:

*1 percent is not merely a number on a balance sheet.*

*1 percent is the girl in Africa who gets to go to school, thanks to you. 1 percent is the AIDS patient who gets her medicine, thanks to you. 1 percent is the African entrepreneur who can start a small family business. 1 percent is not redecorating presidential palaces or money flowing down a rat hole. This 1 percent is digging waterholes to provide clean water.*



Carol Windrum on the streets of Edinburgh, Scotland during the July 2005 G8 conference.

*1 percent is a new partnership with Africa, not paternalism toward Africa, where increased assistance flows toward improved governance and initiatives with proven track records and away from boondoggles and white elephants of every description.*

*America gives less than 1 percent now. We're asking for an extra 1 percent to change the world, to transform millions of lives—but not just that, and I say this to the military men now—to transform the way that they see us.*

*1 percent is national security, enlightened economic self-interest, and a better, safe world rolled into one.*

To get involved in the ONE Campaign, go to [www.one.org](http://www.one.org).

I also have a power point from my experience in Scotland and more ways to get involved, and am eager to share with groups around the state. You may contact me at [cawindrum@yahoo.com](mailto:cawindrum@yahoo.com) or 402/455-4281.

# Is Whiteclay in Nebraska or Part of the Pine Ridge Reservation?

The following article by Nebraska historian Jim McKee appeared in the Sunday, January 29, 2006 Lincoln Journal Star and is reprinted with permission.

The area of northern Nebraska now known as Sheridan County, and in fact a much larger area, was once largely populated by the Oglala and Brule Sioux.

The Civil War and its great demand for Union troops took much of the military's attention away from Nebraska. At the end of the war, the Second Treaty of Fort Laramie in 1868 allowed settlers, gold seekers and travelers to venture through Indian Territory but reserved for their use "all land lying north of the North Platte River and east of the Big Horn Mountains." The following year President U.S. Grant termed the Lakota "renegades" and initiated the "fixed reservation plan."

In 1871, the Brule Sioux were moved, first to Wyoming, then in 1874 to the northwest corner of what would become Sheridan County. At the same time, gold was discovered in the Black Hills, and gold hunters demanded access through and to previous Indian lands. The Oglala Sioux, under Red Cloud, were moved to the Pine Ridge Reservation in 1877, about the same time the first settlers arrived. As there had been no federal survey, these settlers could have no true title to the land and were in fact squatters.

About 1880, legal settlement began; and with the U.S. Land Office's opening at Valentine in 1883, the village of Dewing, named for Thomas Dewing, was established on White Clay Creek in the northern area of the county. Valentine McGillicuddy, the Indian Agent at the Pine Ridge Agency in neighboring South Dakota, approached the commissioner of Indian affairs and the

The 1885 *Official Atlas of Nebraska* clearly shows the "Sioux Reserve" on White Clay Creek in Sheridan County as an attachment to the Pine Ridge Reservation.

secretary of the interior warning that "undesirable... white squatters" and "whiskey ranches" would soon follow on White Clay Creek. To prevent this, he requested a 50-square-mile buffer zone be established south of the reservation in Nebraska. Although intense lobbying delayed the action, Grant established the 10- by 5-mile strip by executive order, to be in effect "so long as needed" to protect the Sioux at Pine Ridge. A subsequent 1882 executive order by President Chester A. Arthur then extended Grant's order and was formalized by an act of Congress in 1889.

The 1885 *Official Atlas of Nebraska* clearly shows the "Sioux Reserve" on White Clay Creek in Sheridan County as an attachment to the Pine Ridge Reservation. In 1890, the Sioux from Pine Ridge Reservation gathered for a ghost dance designed to bring back the buffalo and rid the area of white settlers. The U.S. Army was called into play and all of the participants were slaughtered. In 1892, the last and perhaps smallest cession of Indian land occurred in Nebraska, in Sheridan County.

In January 1904, a new executive order was signed by President Theodore Roosevelt that allowed the buffer zone to revert to public domain but later held back by reinstating a small parcel east of Whiteclay that con-

tained an Indian boarding school. Interestingly, Roosevelt failed to provide evidence that the buffer was no longer necessary to protect the reservation. Although an executive order by one president can be reversed by another, subsequent order, an executive order cannot in itself reverse an act of Congress. This would indicate that the 1889 act trumps Roosevelt's order.

On December 22, 1904, a post office was established about 1½ miles southwest of the present Whiteclay on White Clay Creek. In the late 1930s, the post office was moved to the village of Dewing and the town name was changed to Whiteclay. The peak population of 112 for the unincorporated village of Whiteclay was reached in 1940.

Today, the village of Whiteclay, population of just about 14, sits just south of the Pine Ridge Reservation and is home to three active liquor licenses and one unassigned liquor license. In 2004, those three outlets sold 4,629,259 cans of beer, an average of 12,500 cans a day.

Sioux spokesman Tom Poor Bear has said the Nebraska Liquor Commission "is in contempt and violation of the executive orders of 1882 and 1904."

Another faction charges that because Roosevelt didn't show that the buffer was no longer needed, his executive order was invalid and the land is still attached to the reservation. This group has asked that a new Executive Order be signed transferring the land back to the federal government.

*Historian Jim McKee, who still writes with a fountain pen, invites comments or questions. Write in care of the Journal Star or e-mail Jim@leebooksellers.com.*

## Whiteclay Update – February 2006

by Mark Vasina

### LB 845 is advanced

Last month, a bill to provide the Liquor Control Commission with more licensing authority was advanced to the floor of the Unicameral by unanimous vote of the General Affairs Committee. LB 845, introduced by Sen. Dave Landis of Lincoln, is a redesign of LB 530 (killed in committee last year) with language borrowed from existing Colorado law to permit the Commission to consider "whether the issuance of such a license would result in or add to an undue concentration of licenses ... and require the use of additional law enforcement."

Opposed by lobbyists for the supermarket and petroleum-marketing industries, the bill was supported by the Commission itself as well as the cities of Lincoln and Omaha. In a February 25 editorial, the *Lincoln Journal-Star* correctly identified

Whiteclay as "one of the worst examples of oversaturation of liquor licenses," and urged legislative approval of the bill. Sen. Lowen Kruse of Omaha has prioritized the bill, assuring at least first round attention by the Legislature.

### NASW-NE votes to support Whiteclay effort

On February 10 the Board of Directors of the Nebraska Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers voted unanimously "to publicly support the NFP position with regard to the illegal and immoral activities surrounding the sale of alcoholic beverages in Whiteclay." The NFP State Board is reaching out to other organizations for formal support and active participation in the campaign for justice in Whiteclay.

### Deputization agreement

Last August the State of Nebraska and the Oglala Sioux Tribe (OST) signed a

deputization agreement authorizing tribal police officers from Pine Ridge to enforce Nebraska law in Whiteclay. Congressman Tom Osborne secured \$100,000 in federal aid to compensate the Tribe for their law enforcement activities in Nebraska. Unfortunately, official patrols of Whiteclay by the tribal police have not started due to financial problems on Pine Ridge. OST officials fear that federal funding shortfalls may force a *two-thirds reduction* in tribal police staffing beginning in March. Concerns over the ability of officers to respond to emergency calls throughout the Pine Ridge Reservation have delayed plans to train and deploy officers in Whiteclay.

### Liquor license hearings

On February 28 the Liquor Control Commission will hold a formal hearing for State Line Liquor, one of three beer retailers in Whiteclay. Charged with selling to an intoxicated person, the owners will likely face nothing harsher than a modest fine if cen-

sured by the Commission. However, this hearing comes only six days before a critically important hearing regarding *all three* Whiteclay licensees.

On March 6 in Rushville, the Sheridan County Board will convene a hearing in response to a written protest of the automatic annual renewal of the Whiteclay liquor licenses. The Board will be presented with legal arguments, expert testimony and an outpouring of concern by Nebraskans and residents of the Pine Ridge, the community most adversely affected by the sale of alcohol in this tiny village.

The Board can either wholly reject the concerns of the citizen residents of Sheridan County who filed the protest, or forward their concerns for consideration by the Liquor Control Commission. Hopefully, by the time you are reading this the Board will have taken the action necessary to allow the Liquor Control Commission to hear the case against the continued licensing of alcohol sales in Whiteclay.

# Water Wars, conclusion

mists would argue that allowing buying and selling will set the price of water at an optimal level. Thus, for example, when President Carter said more than 25 years ago, "No new big dams for LA," he implicitly said that, if LA needs water, it would have to conserve or buy it from someone else.

As Aiken observes, though, "The problem with pricing is that you may sell someone else's water rights. Water you may sell to a city as a rural landowner may actually come out of return flows that should go to someone else downstream who wishes to irrigate later in the season. Return flows are notoriously difficult to measure."

Measurement, however, may be an environment boon; when cities install water meters, their water usage is typically halved. But it also creates a great policy and PR issue for environmental groups. If they wish to protect stream flows and other environmental uses, they will have to raise the funds to buy the water or get the government or the Environmental Trust to raise the funds to pay for the water.

In such a scheme, all of the so-called 'free' natural world has been turned into a commodity. And to respond to the economic and political realities of this new 'commodification' of nature, environmentalists are going to need a lot of money and a lot of clout.

The same issues that affect Nebraska affect the Middle East. The National Academy of Sciences made a study of Middle Eastern water needs, options, and technical solutions. Little though has been done with that study because of the unstable situation in the Middle East, and because the oil- and finance-rich character of the region has temporarily cushioned it from worry about water issues. Much of its food is imported, and, hence, reforms come slowly. As Aiken

sees it, we can only resolve the water issues in such areas as we would resolve them at home—through the judicial process in the UN and World Court and through bilateral or multilateral negotiations. "If that doesn't work, there will be armed conflict," he says.

What can NFP people do? We can fight for minus population growth. Here at home, we can cut our own water usage—our love of good lawns, perfect golf courses, and monocultural plant landscapes. We can urge serious experimentation with drought tolerant plants such as pinto beans, Southwestern Indian beans, millet, and the native grasses on Nebraska lands. We can argue for organic farming that will cut nitrate pollution. We can call for the reduction or elimination of nitrates-infested industrial feedlots. Windbreaks conserve massive amounts of water. The return of native grasses and buffalo commons to western plains can be pushed in ways that do not destroy human communities. We still can argue for cutting corn cropland, as corn is generally shallow rooted and a great consumer of water. Of course we will have problematic proposals. There will be efforts to put genetically modified, drought-resistant crops on parched land.

Internationally, though, we can ask that mechanisms be put in the place for the serious adjudication of water issues before the wars begin. We can ask that the U.S. pay serious attention to the National Academy of Sciences study while it has some influence in the Near East. We can ask for more aggressive population control measures in foreign policy. As Diamond shows in his book, however, there are no easy roads to avoid collapse. The hard way is what responsible societies that survived have taken.

# Racism, conclusion

a corner on truth. But if beyond that you insist in wrapping yourself in your privileged white cocoon, I guarantee you will never know what it's like to be in my African American shoes.

And this dangerous elitist practice is not limited to race. I'm reminded of the time I was teaching at a local faith-based private nursing college, and I was astonished by the number of students who were against universal health care for the residents of this country. Their arguments, when we discussed the merits of the issue, were frequently so provincial and weak it was embarrassing. These were soon-to-be healthcare professionals. But instead of being willing to openly and objectively examine the subject based on matters of need and service and cost, the students had succumbed to a mindless group-think, to what I call 'stinky thinking.'

People have a right—make that a *need*—to be engaged in honest discussion. And never more than today, when with huge budget deficits, a seemingly endless War on Terror, and a failing public infrastructure, the competition for scarce resources is fierce. If we are truly committed to the public good and quality education, then there has to be free and open public debate. Before OPS challenges other public school districts in the name of its educational mission, it first must demonstrate that it respects the stakeholders in its home district by including them in the discussions. Anything less is ethically dishonest.

*A'Jamal-Rashad Byndon is a member of the Nebraskans for Peace State Board. His mother was one of the seven court interveners in the Omaha Public Schools desegregation (busing) case.*

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**Mar. 11** Promoting General Welfare, a one-day conference spotlighting selected social and economic justice issues. UNO, third floor, Milo Bail Student Center, 6001 Dodge Street. Students \$30; general public \$40. Includes lunch and materials. For more info call 402-595-2344.

**Mar. 18-19** Third Anniversary of the Iraq Invasion—Saturday Lincoln event at 15th & Street, 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon. Sunday Omaha event at Memorial Park, from 3:00-5:00 p.m. Sunday Vigil in Grand Island at Pioneer Park, 6:00 p.m.

**Apr. 21** Last Day to Register to Vote or Change Party Registration by Mail

**Apr. 26** Author and minister Jim Wallis speaks in Omaha at 3:30 p.m. on the Creighton Campus, on "Dare to Dream: Dare to Make a Difference." Lecture is free to the public in the Phys Ed Center. A 7:30 p.m. program at Countryside Church will feature Wallis speaking on "God's Politics," the title of his best selling-book. Tickets are \$10, purchased in advance by sending payment and a SASE to Countryside Church, 8787 Pacific St, Omaha, 68114.

**May 1** Last Day to Register to Vote or Change Party Registration in Person

**May 9** Primary Election

*To list an event, submit in writing by the tenth of the month preceding the event to: NFP, 941 'O' Street, #1026, Lincoln, NE 68508, or email: NeReport@neb.rr.com.*



## Speaking Our Peace

An updated edition of British barrister and international law professor, Philippe Sands' 2005 book, *Lawless World: America and the Making and Breaking of Global Rules from FDR's Atlantic Charter to George W. Bush's Illegal War* has just hit the bookstores. The new version includes a January 2003 White House memo that confirms what people who have watched Bush, Cheney, Rove, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, and Perle have known all along.

The Iraq War was never about WMD.

In January 2003, two months before war was to start, UN weapons inspectors had yet to come up with any evidence of WMD. According to the memo, a panicky White House was scrabbling to concoct a public justification for a war it had already decided to fight:

President Bush to Tony Blair: "The U.S. was thinking of flying U2 reconnaissance aircraft with fighter cover over Iraq, painted in UN colors. If Saddam fired on them, he would be in breach."

Bush: "It was also possible that a defector could be brought out who would give a public presentation about Saddam's WMD, and there was also a small possibility that Saddam would be assassinated."

Blair: "A second Security Council Resolution resolution would provide an insurance policy against the unexpected and international cover, including with the Arabs."

Bush: "...if [the UN resolution] ultimately... failed, military action would follow anyway."

Blair responds that he is "solidly with the President and ready to do whatever it

took to disarm Saddam."

Bush told Blair he "thought it unlikely that there would be internecine warfare between the different religious and ethnic groups."

For those who say the Bush White House lacks imagination, Sands book proves otherwise. This White House has a mastery of fiction that should make novelist John Updike green at the gills.

Just look at the fictions they considered contriving:

- Fabricating an incident so they could claim Saddam has attacked the UN.
- Finding a defector to lie about Saddam having WMD (or maybe Secretary of State Colin Powell actually played that role in his deceitful speech to the UN?)
- Recruiting someone to kill Saddam, in clear violation of the congressional resolutions.
- Trying to dupe the UN into passing a resolution to "go to war."
- And, of course, that no war would come between the Kurds and Shiites and Sunnis...

Deceits so grand they rise to the scale of pure poetry.

Since Plato, we have known that poets lie to tell a deeper truth in their stories. What distinguishes the great poets from the town liar is that the former choose great stories and write them in human blood.

The U2 aircraft over Iraq, painted in UN colours to draw Saddam's fire, sounds good. But is it art? What if he doesn't take

## Lies of the Poets

by Paul Olson, UNL Professor Emeritus

the bait and fire? Or, worse, what if he does and downs a "UN" plane? Can't be making martyrs of the UN, that irrelevant old fossil. UN incompetence is the issue. Take that dumb Swede weapons inspector, Hans Blix, for instance.

Gearing up for war takes just the right story.

Can't count on those UN weaklings to find the WMD on the ground? How about sending Colin Powell to address the General Assembly with satellite surveillance pictures of suspicious compounds as a backdrop. Now, that's hot. That'll sell. And so much for Annan and Blix and Chirac.

Nowadays, though, with no WMD to show for their trouble, and a steadily rising death toll, it's getting harder for the liars and spinmeisters to make the poetry requisite for deep truth. White House press secretary Scott McClellan, for example, looks downright overloaded.

He needs a *Ministry of Poetry* modeled on the Orwell's "Ministry of Truth," with italicized hints indicating how his Department of Poetry might work:

The Ministry of Truth [with its 3000 rooms] concerned itself with Lies. (*Majority*) Party ownership of the print media made it easy to manipulate public opinion, and the film and radio (*Fox News?*) carried the process further...

Winston (*the White House Press secretary*) worked in the RECORDS DEPARTMENT (a single branch of the Ministry of Truth) editing and writing (*any local or regional paper*). He dictated into a ma-

chine called a *speakwrite* (*a voicewriter*). Winston would receive articles or news-items which for one reason or another it was thought necessary to alter, or, in Newspeak, rectify. If, for example, the Ministry of Plenty forecast a surplus, and in reality the result was grossly less, Winston's job was to change previous versions so the old version would agree with the new one (*change Weapons of Mass Destruction articles into Saddam as mass murderer articles*)... [altering] books, periodicals, pamphlets, posters, leaflets, films, sound-tracks, cartoons, photographs... every kind of literature or documentation which might conceivably hold any political or ideological significance...

...[There were] clerks whose job was simply to draw up lists of books and periodicals which were due for recall; vast repositories (*Dick Cheney's head*) where the corrected documents were stored; and the hidden furnaces (*paper shredders and computers*) where the original copies were destroyed.

And somewhere or other (*in the Pentagon, the White House, CIA, and Council for National Policy*) quite anonymous... the directing brains... laid down the lines of policy which made it necessary that this fragment of the past should be preserved, that one falsified, and the other rubbed out of existence.

A Ministry of Poetry to create the Poetry of Truth *en masse*.

Iraq having run its course, let the poetry of Iran begin.