Nebraska native Lisa Renstrom is the national president of the Sierra Club, the premier grassroots environmental organization in the United States. This past March, she made a return visit to her hometown of Omaha to promote one of the Sierra Club’s long-standing strategic goals—the development of a sustainable national energy policy.

In addition to appearing at a news conference where the communities of Bellevue, Lincoln and Omaha officially endorsed the Sierra Club’s “Cool Cities” initiative, Renstrom delivered an address on “New Energy Solutions” at her alma mater, the University of Nebraska-Omaha.

As the reprinted text of her speech indicates, she did far more though, than tick off the compelling political, economic and environmental reasons for why we must move away from a dependence on fossil fuels. She outlined the leading role that her home state of Nebraska needs to play in creating a safe and sustainable energy future.

As you can imagine, being president of the Sierra Club, I have a front row seat in the global theatre where environmental challenges of today and tomorrow are played out.

• Not a day goes by that I don’t hear about how our federal government wants to sell off national forests for politically driven short-term profits.
• Or how mercury pollution from coal-fired power plants turns out to be even more dangerous than originally thought.
• Or how a new wave of scientific evidence is pointing to the disastrous consequences of the human-induced phenomenon of global warming.

Believe me. You would think, with the constant stream of bad news that emanates from much of the media in America today, that I would be more worried than I am. But I’m not. While the doom and gloom scenarios abound, I am actually optimistic about the future of our planet. I see opportunity knocking on America’s door, because I, like more and more Americans, have a vision.

Part of my optimism, I’m sure, derives from the strong Nebraska values with which I was raised: There’s no problem we can’t lick. No wall we can’t climb.

These values are still my values today, but they aren’t just my values. They are America’s values as well.

And I’m optimistic because I see the same set of values that put a man on the moon 40 years ago alive and well in America today.

The other reason for my optimism is that where I see values, I also see action. A whole world of environmental innovation and leadership is already happening out there, but you would never know anything about it just by watching TV—which is where many Americans get their news.

I want to give you a little taste of the progress being made, and more importantly, I hope to share my vision with you—A vision for a new energy future. continued on page 3
My Mentor & My Friend

by Marilyn Mecham, Executive, Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska

The Rev. Dr. William Sloane Coffin

In calling for the abolition if nuclear weapons, Bill said there is “indeed there is an ‘axis of evil.’ But it is hardly Iran, Iraq and North Korea. A more likely and far more dangerous trio would be environmental degradation, pandemic poverty, and a world awash with weapons.”

The Rev. Dr. William Sloane Coffin, Jr. was many things to many people. He was a Freedom Rider, peace activist, chaplain, prophet, husband, father, grandpoppy, and to me—a friend and mentor. You have undoubtedly read and heard many tributes to William Sloane Coffin since his death last month. What an incredible man he was! I was privileged to have worked closely with him the past four years, during which time we developed a wonderful friendship—as did thousands of others.

A week before he died, I was a guest in Bill and Randy’s home. As soon as they learned of my husband’s death in January, Bill and Randy invited me to come to Vermont to be cared for by them. The invitation was put on hold as our family also dealt with the death of my father and then my mother. But then came the call, “Marilyn, you must come soon.”

I arrived in a spring snowstorm to a welcoming note on the backdoor and found Bill sitting in a hospital bed positioned near the bay window of their dining room reading a recently published book, Freedom Riders. As I teased him about reading about himself, he flashed a sheepish grin and showed me the page he was on, the page with a photo of him flash a sheepish grin and showed me the page he was on, the page with a photo of him

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“With current technology, we can reduce our fossil fuel demand by a third just through energy efficiency. Using energy more efficiently would, in turn, buy us time to reduce our demand for fossil fuels another third by converting to renewable energy sources, such as wind, solar and biofuels.” — Sierra Club President Lisa Renstrom

**The New Energy Future**

I did not come here to tell you that energy is the problem. I came to talk about solutions.

We rely on energy to heat our homes and fuel our cars. We use energy to blow snow, dry our hair, take us to the ballpark and amplify sound. Energy takes us to work in the morning and powers our workplaces. Almost all aspects of our lives and way of life depend in some way upon a robust, easily accessible and stable supply of energy.

Energy is not the problem, but how we meet our energy needs in America has become a difficult issue. It’s become complex, controversial and confusing.

So my job here is to make it simple for you, to strip away the rhetoric and ask each of you to join the growing cadre of problem solvers. I’m here to encourage you to move beyond the politics and the special interest groups—to move to a new energy future.

It’s simply in America’s best interest. Syndicated columnist Thomas Friedman nailed this point in the following quote:

“Being green is the new Red White and Blue. It is the most geo-strategic, pro-growth and patriotic thing we can do.

Living green is not for sissies. Sticking with oil, and basically saying that a country that can double the speed of microchips every 18 months is somehow incapable of innovating its way to energy independence—that is for sissies, defeatists and people who are ready to see American values eroded at home and abroad.”

What I am going to tell you today is that investing in a new energy future is the most important step the U.S. can take to making energy efficient, independent and environmentally green.

**A Four-Step Path to a New Energy Future**

Okay. So how are we going to get there? I see a four-step path:

A. Face up to the problem.
B. Focus on solutions.
C. Ignore the rhetoric.
D. Unleash the entrepreneurial spirit of Americans.

**Point A: Face up to the Problem**

Sometimes facing up to a problem is difficult to do. There are stages of denial and withdrawal. There are relapses and temptations to take the easy way out. That’s why organizations like the Sierra Club are staging an intervention.

It’s time to face the facts. America is addicted to fossil fuels—carbon-based energy sources like oil, coal and natural gas. So addicted in fact, that the future of America is now in a very dangerous position.

Even President Bush, an oilman, recognized the danger of our addiction to oil in his latest State of the Union Address.

There he said, “We’re held hostage for energy by foreign nations that may not like us.” Let reemphasize that point: Americans are being held hostage for energy, often by unstable governments and people with fundamental differences with the United States.

The U.S. consumes about one quarter of the world’s oil production per year. Anyone care to guess how much of the world’s supply of oil lies within the United States? Just three percent.

The U.S. simply doesn’t have a lot of oil. And opening up ANWR or drilling off the coast of the Outer Banks isn’t going to change that either.

The result? Americans are pumping billions upon billions of dollars out of our economy each year to buy oil from foreign nations. Many of these nations have formed a cartel, limiting production to maximize profits, at the expense of American families and businesses.

Don’t expect a drop in prices anytime soon. Emerging economies like China and India are only going to increase global demand for oil in coming years, which will likely keep prices high indefinitely.

But it isn’t just consumers that suffer. Oil alone is the largest contributor to our national deficit every year. So it’s future Americans who will also be forced to pay for our addiction for years to come.

President Bush recognized the dangers of our addiction to oil and the impact of this addiction on our national and economic security. But he only sees half of the pie.

Not only is our addiction to fossil fuels sucking money, jobs and future prosperity out of America—and not only is it funneling that money to some of the most unstable regions of the world—but it’s also fueling global warming.

Our primary energy sources are packed full of carbon, and burning them at the rate we do puts carbon dioxide into the Earth atmosphere warming our planet. Do you know what the hottest planet in the solar system is? It’s Venus. Not Mercury—which is the closest to the Sun—but Venus. Why? Because Venus is wrapped in carbon dioxide and the Sun and warmth that enters Venus doesn’t leave Venus. It’s like that old line about Las Vegas: what goes to Vegas, stays in Vegas.

The carbon we release by burning these fossil fuels—this ancient solar energy—is enough to raise the temperature on our planet to prevent us from inhabiting this planet, at least in the way that we have become accustomed to.

The oil, coal and natural gas we’re currently dependent on are great for supplying energy, but they’re consequentially inhibiting our national security, economic prosperity, and the health and future of the people on this planet.

So that’s the problem we face. It’s time to focus on solutions.

**Point B: Focus on Solutions**

When I began today, I confessed to being optimistic about the future. Clearly our challenges are before us, but the good news is that many solutions to the problem are already at hand.

All around America, businesses, communities, local and state governments are buying into these solutions, through

1) **Energy Efficiency**

2) **Renewable Energy**

With current technology, we can reduce our fossil fuel demand by a third just through energy efficiency. Using energy more efficiently would, in turn, buy us time to reduce our demand for fossil fuels another third by converting to renewable energy sources, such as wind, solar and biofuels.

**Energy Efficiency**

Okay, so let’s talk about Energy Efficiency—the lowest hanging fruit on the tree. Energy efficiency offers the most immediate solution toward reducing our addiction to fossil fuels. Much of the technology has already been developed—we simply must change the way we think about energy and begin getting this technology in place.

To get an idea of what solutions are already available, let’s look at just two major areas: electricity and transportation.

**ELECTRICITY**

We can reduce demand for electricity by 30 percent by being thoughtful, efficient...
and taking personal responsibility. Here are some examples.

**City of Wahoo Utilities**

Paul Erickson is the General Manager of the City of Wahoo Utilities. Their Energy Efficiency Program provides incentives to all customers buying electricity from Wahoo Utilities to make enhancements to their homes and businesses that will improve energy efficiency, without sacrificing comfort and convenience.

What Wahoo does is offer free energy audits that provide a financial analysis of the options and define the lowest life cycle cost. Wahoo provides incentives to purchase high efficiency appliances like heat pumps, lighting and insulation.

In 1995, Wahoo provided the local Hinky Dinky store with a zero-interest loan of $10,000 for purchase and installation of new lighting. It credited $4,500 in “buyback funds,” leaving a balance of nearly $1,500 out-of-pocket costs to the store. The monthly payments on the loan were $138.89, and monthly savings on the utility bills were $205.00. The store replaced 363 light fixtures for about $16,000. The retrofit has saved 73,000 kWh per year, for the last decade. That’s a large pile of coal.

*What if every Utility in America offered efficiency incentives?*

*What if every grocery store installed high efficiency lighting?*

**OPPD**

Omaha Public Power District is helping Omaha, Bellevue, Millard, Elkhorn and lots of public schools take responsibility, be thoughtful and invest in teachers rather than energy. At Westside, where I graduated from, they installed a geothermal heat pump system that will save between 1.5 and 3 million dollars in energy and maintenance over the next 20 years. It has reduced Westside’s annual energy costs by $30,000.

*Imagin if every school in America did an energy audit, reduced its Co2 emissions and invested in teachers rather than heating or cooling the air?*

We just looked at two public sector entities in Nebraska. But even Corporate America is being thoughtful and taking personal responsibility—and improving its bottom line.

**Texas Instruments**

Texas Instruments, based in Richardson, near Dallas, wanted to keep 1,000 high-tech jobs making wafers used in semiconductors near its design center, so that ideas could flow back and forth. But China, Taiwan and Singapore were all offering tempting alternatives, with low wages, subsidies and tax breaks.

Texas Instruments’ leadership laid down a challenge to its design team and said that if they could find a way to build a new plant for $180 million less than its last Dallas factory, they would build it in Richardson.

Innovations like big water pipes with fewer elbows, which reduced friction, passive solar, roofs with white reflective coating to reduce heat and improved air circulation enabled them to pull it off.

By building a so-called “green building,” the company was able to construct the new facility for 30 percent less per square foot than their previous conventional facility. It is expected to cut utility costs by 20 percent and water usage by 35.

Paul Westbrook, who oversees sustainable design for Texas Instruments, says, “By addressing the consumption side with really creative design and engineering to eliminate waste and reduce energy usage—we will have the next industrial revolution.”

*Imagine if every new manufacturing facility was built green?*

**TRANSPORTATION**

Let’s talk now about efficiency in our transportation—Cars and Trucks:

Forty-two percent of America’s global warming pollution comes from internal combustion engines, mostly from cars and trucks. Overall fuel economy for cars and light trucks in the U.S. reached its best level in 1987, at 22.1 miles per gallon. The average in 2004 dropped to 20.8 mpg.

The Model T got better gas mileage.

If all of our cars, trucks, and SUVs simply got 40 miles per gallon—something that is already achievable with existing technologies—we wouldn’t need a drop of oil from the Persian Gulf.

**Substitution—Renewable Energy**

The second big part of the solution that will enable us to move to a new energy future is substitution. We need to substitute fossil fuels with renewables, such as wind and solar, for coal and nuclear power, and we need to embrace new technology for gas by substituting biofuels.

Renewables are key not only for the clean power they can produce, but also because they can potentially produce clean hydrogen that can power our vehicles and heat our buildings emissions-free. And Nebraska, in particular, is positioned to become a key player at every single level.

“Renewables are key not only for the clean power they can produce, but also because they can potentially produce clean hydrogen that can power our vehicles and heat our buildings emissions-free. And Nebraska, in particular, is positioned to become a key player at every single level.”

A couple of points of reference here:

- Each of the places listed above have plans and laws to increase fuel economy standards further.
- By 2010, the average new car sold in Europe and Japan will get over 45 mpg.

So you can see, there is vast room for improvement; the technology is there.

If 40 mpg is possible today, imagine the possibilities if America put as much effort (or had the same level of interest) into finding smart energy solutions as we have in finding the next “American Idol” pop star? I think we’d kick our oil habit in no time.

But I want to make one final point before moving on…

If you want some idea of what energy efficiency could do for America’s bottom line, consider that:

The United States as a whole uses twice as much energy to produce a dollar of goods as our European and Japanese trading partners.

In this case, environmental solutions are not just good for our economy, they are essential to our ability to compete globally.

And believe me, if we don’t innovate first, we’ll be buying technology from overseas rather than creating the jobs at home. Just look at what Toyota is doing to GM and Ford factories right now. Ford actually has to pay Toyota for the use of its hybrid technology.

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BOLIVIA REJECTS NEO-LIBERALISM

NFP State Board Member Bob Epp was in Bolivia this spring and personally witnessed the astonishing changes that are happening in this long-colonized nation.

Having spent three weeks in Bolivia this past March does not make me an expert on Bolivian affairs. I was there to visit my nephew Mark, his wife Cathy and their children, Hannah and Carlin. Mark who has spent a total of eight years in Bolivia was a great help in deciphering Bolivian culture and politics. However these observations are still my own and may not necessarily reflect what Mark or others would have to say.

Bolivia is a large country equal in size to California and Texas combined. Its topography varies from an altitude in the Andes mountains of over 21,000 feet to lowlands under 400 feet above sea level. This difference, and its location south of the equator, makes it possible to grow apples and strawberries as well as bananas, pineapples and oranges. It is also rich in natural resources such as copper, tin, iron, lead, zinc, gold, silver, natural gas and petroleum. A majority of its population is indigenous or mestizo. The leading indigenous languages are Quechua and Aymara.

Bolivian history and culture reach far back into antiquity. The Andean region has been inhabited probably for 20,000 years by successive groups. The Incas created a civilization that dominated the region until defeated by the Spanish in the 16th century. European influence, as represented by Spain, was accordingly present in Bolivia long before the first permanent English settlement at Jamestown in 1620 in North America. The North American colonies, however, threw off the colonial rule of England in 1776, whereas Bolivia did not gain independence from the colonial rule of Spain till 1825 (generally attributed to Simon Bolivar, from whom Bolivia took its name).

This differing history, I believe, is important to understanding the cultural differences between North America as a whole and South America. North America developed an independent, ‘can-do’ attitude towards its destiny, while Bolivia—even under the Incas—suffered under a very hierarchical social structure. Under Spanish colonial rule, an economic and social structure arose, in which a very wealthy elite with large land estates maintained a patron-client relationship with the poor underclass. It was not until the revolution of 1952 that significant land reforms were made and the indigenous population even received the right to vote.

On the international level, the relationship of the United States and Bolivia has hewed to this same patron-client model. During World War II, Bolivia was the leading supplier of tin to the United States. Partnerships based on common interests have periodically occurred with genuine—if asymmetrical—friendship. But almost inevitably, international assembly to rewrite the constitution; and 3) to legalize the growing of coca.

While I was there Morales came on national television to proclaim the success in congress in passing two laws with far reaching significance. One was a law that would put before the voters a measure to determine whether the various departments should be allowed greater autonomy. This was something that the industrial sectors, like Santa Cruz where I was staying, had been pushing for. The other was a law that would determine the constituency of a constitutional assembly charged with drawing up a new constitution for Bolivia.

Morales stood before the camera with a white shirt, but no tie. He wore an open alpaca wool jacket that had an indigenous design woven into it around the collar and down the edges of the jacket. He spoke fluently about 15-20 minutes without notes, clearly emphasizing that the constitutional assembly would have representation from every indigenous group. He touched briefly on other subjects and made passing reference to the appointment of military officers, saying that no foreign country would say which officers would hold which post. This statement seemed a bit odd to me, but in questioning Mark about it he told me that, in some cases in the past, the U.S. had allegedly said which officers trained at the School of the Americas (SODA) in Fort Benning, Georgia would hold which posts. Morales was referring to a recent appointment by his administration of a military officer who was not acceptable to the Bush Administration. In retaliation, the U.S. had withdrawn funds from the Bolivian Army designated “to combat terrorism” and demanded the return of materials previously given to the military. In general, it is becoming more and more apparent that Bolivia and a growing number of other South American countries are resisting the neo-liberal economic policies fostered by the U.S.

One point of contention between the U.S. and Bolivia is how to deal with the production of cocaine. The U.S. has pushed for the eradication of the coca plants and in the past has sponsored programs actually involving spraying the growing crops. Morales is not in favor of cocaine production, but he favors a different approach. I am told there are about 41 chemicals needed to process the production of cocaine from the coca leaf. Most of these chemicals need to be imported into Bolivia. Morales favors making it illegal to import these chemicals, thereby making it impossible to produce cocaine.

The coca plant itself, he believes, could be the source of many valuable pharmaceuticals. There already is production of coca tea that is touted as beneficial for digestion, for relief from minor pains and for oxygenation at high altitudes. Chewing coca leaves is very common in Bolivia. Everywhere you see people with their cheeks bulging with the stuff. To eliminate coca from Bolivia would be like trying to eliminate coffee from the U.S. It is said to keep one from becoming sleepy when having to work long hours. When I was riding a bus through a mountain range one night where the road was very narrow, and looking out the window all I could see was a sheer drop off of a thousand feet or more, it was almost a bit of relief to see the bus driver with his cheek full of coca leaf to keep him from falling asleep.

An account of the new regime in Bolivia would not be complete without mentioning Mark or others would have to say.

Bolivia is a study in contrasts—of modern and traditional, rich and poor—as evidenced in this photo of an indigenous woman on foot crossing a busy urban intersection.
After admiring their work for years, this past spring Nebraskans for Peace officially joined the “Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space.” Based in Brunswick, Maine, the network literally includes organizations from around the globe opposed to the U.S.’s ongoing effort to militarize and dominate space. Over the past two decades, Colorado Springs, Colorado has served as the center for this space warfare research and development and today is the official home of the U.S. Space Command. SpaceCom’s eerie activities should be a concern to anyone on the planet interested in Peace & Justice. But the command has special significance for Nebraskans. In 2002, in the wake of 9/11, SpaceCom was placed under the authority of StratCom. All of the ‘eye in the sky’ intelligence gathering and war-making-from-space originating from SpaceCom takes its direction from Offutt Air Force Base just outside Omaha.

Planning for the strategic domination of space is, as you might well imagine, an enormous undertaking, requiring all the combined might of the Military-Industrial Complex. For the past 22 years, accordingly, the Pentagon and the defense industry have colluded to host a “Space Symposium” in Colorado Springs to showcase the latest state-of-the-art gadgetry available for sale. The “Symposium,” as the following report by Bruce Gagnon, Coordinator of the Global Network, details, has become little more than a crude ‘trade fair’ for the defense industry and a corresponding ‘shopping spree’ for the Pentagon (paid for, of course, at taxpayer expense).

StratCom, sad to say, has begun replicating this unsavory spectacle with an arms bazaar and confab of its own. This coming October 10-12, the third annual “Strategic Space Conference” will be held in Omaha. The best thing that can be said for this nefarious gathering is that it gives us an opportunity to focus international attention on the growing menace that StratCom has become for the world community since Bush and Cheney launched the “War on Terrorism.”

The trip began on April 2 with a very early morning drive to Portland, Maine so I could catch the bus from there to the Boston airport. After a three-hour wait in Boston, I flew to Chicago where I ended up with a seven-hour delay due to major thunderstorms throughout the Midwest. I finally arrived in Colorado Springs at 12:30 a.m. and gratefully Bill Sulzman still came to the airport to pick me up.

Bill Sulzman [brother of NFP Vice President Jeanette Sulzman] was one of the founding members of the Global Network when it was created in 1992. At that time I was the state coordinator of the Florida Coalition for Peace & Justice. Bill’s group, the Colorado Springs-based Citizens for Peace in Space, had been working with us in Florida since the ‘80s. For some time the two groups were really the only local organizations in the

country doing on-going space organizing. It became clear to us by 1992 that we needed to grow this movement, and with the help of journalist Karl Grossman, we created the Global Network to do just that.

This year marked the 22nd annual meeting of the Space Symposium, an event put on by the aerospace industry. It was reported that this year almost 8,000 military personnel, aerospace industry executives and technologists were in attendance. In addition, the Space Symposium brought in hundreds of students from elementary, middle schools and high schools as a way to recruit them to work in the industry.

This event draws a protest each year by Citizens for Peace in Space. The symposium is located at the very posh Broadmoor Hotel in Colorado Springs. I was told that a membership to the Broadmoor Golf & Country Club has a $100,000 entry fee and there is a waiting list to join. The setting for the protest could not be more ideal. We were able to stand with banners on the sidewalk directly in front of the main symposium auditorium, thus every person entering the event passed directly by us.

The theme of the protest this year was “Only You Can Prevent Truth Decay,” and T-shirts were made with that message on the front and the schedule of protest events for the week was listed on the back—similar to a rock-and-roll concert tour. The sub-theme was “Blow the Whistle on Crime and Corruption!”

The theme could not have been more timely, as the New York Times reported in its April 2 edition that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) in Washington has been covering up a scientific fraud among builders of the expensive “missile defense” system. The Times reported that the GAO ignored evidence that the two main contractors for the program (Boeing and TRW) had doctored data, skewed test results and made false statements in a 2002 report.

Our first protest at the symposium began at 5:00 p.m. on April 3, just as the confab was to begin with a banquet. Our group of about 25 folks blew whistles and handed out leaflets urging the vast assemblage entering the building to “blow the whistle on the deception that is rampant in the military space program.” We even handed out baloney sandwiches to those willing to take one, suggesting our baloney was better than the baloney being passed out inside the space symposium.

On April 4 we got to the symposium at 7:30 a.m. just as the crowd arrived. I held a banner that read “Beware of the Military-Industrial Complex—Dwight D. Eisenhower” and would routinely ask military officers passing by if they would like to take a turn holding it for awhile. I got no takers.

From the space symposium that morning we drove north to Aurora, Colorado where Buckley Air Force Spy & Space War Base is located. We held a vigil outside the main gate with the giant white golf ball-shaped “radomes” in view. Loring Wirbel explained how these systems ‘suck in’ all phone, fax and e-mail communications from throughout the entire world as part of the U.S. program called Echelon. I told the story about how Global Network-affiliated groups in Australia, Germany, England and the like continually protest at U.S.’s “downlink facilities” that collect this information regionally, and then send it via satellite in ‘real time’ to Buckley AFB for final processing.

We were met at the Buckley vigil by the three Dominican Nuns, Ardeth Platte, Carol Gilbert and Jackie Hudson, who were found guilty in 2003 for having symbolically “disarmed” a Minuteman nuclear missile silo in northeastern Colorado. Their action, “Sacred Earth and Space Plowshares,” put them in jail for a considerable amount of time and Ardeth was the last to get out just a couple
1. The ‘golf ball-shaped’ radomes at Buckley Air Force Base near Aurora, Colorado. Under the “Echelon” program, all phone, fax and email communications throughout the world are ‘sucked in’ via satellite and ‘downlinked’ to Buckley for processing.

2. The open question is how will the American people respond? If my talk to the Philosophy class was any indication, they are not eager to see the dismantling of social progress. But first they must learn about the issue. The week-long protest at the 22nd Annual Space Symposium in Colorado Springs was an important contribution to this much needed public debate. I’ll be back next year for more. I hope more of you will join us.


5. Dominican Sisters Jackie Hudson, Carol Gilbert and Ardeth Platte offering up a prayer at the site of the N-8 Minuteman Missile Silo where they were arrested in 2002.

6. Photo by Sung-Hee Choi

7. Photo by Sung-Hee Choi

8. Photo by Sung-Hee Choi

9. Photo by Sung-Hee Choi
America Must Use a Wide Lens for Its Strategy on Iran

by U.S. Senator Chuck Hagel

The U.S. is urging the United Nations Security Council to consider tougher action against Iran, based on the April 28 report by the International Atomic Energy Agency that Iran has not fully co-operated to disclose its nuclear program and halt enrichment activity. The commercial and political interests of other Council members, particularly Russia and China, may well prevent decisive Security Council action. And, many fear that tougher Security Council action is a prelude to war.

Our allies will support tough action against Iran only if they are confident that the U.S. is serious about achieving a negotiated, diplomatic solution. The continued unwillingness of the U.S. to engage Iran will make other states hesitate to support, and possibly oppose, these tougher measures.

America’s strategic policy toward Iran must be comprehensive and include a wide-lens view of Iran and the entire Middle East. It is a strategic mistake to believe that the U.S. can successfully pursue a policy that segments Iranian and U.S. interests. Iraq, nuclear capabilities, terrorism, Israel and oil all part of an Iranian puzzle game that cannot be played one piece at a time. A clear inventory of Middle East realities frame America’s options and policies.

The situation in the Middle East is getting worse and more dangerous. America is losing economic, diplomatic and military influence in this region—especially in Iraq. Hamas is in control of the Palestinian parliament—through a legitimate election among the Palestinian people. Terrorism is on the rise across the Middle East as well as the world. Egypt, Syria and Lebanon face serious challenges that are showing signs of worsening. Critically needed oil for the global economy is in constant jeopardy as Islamic extremism intensifies and global instability increases. Israel continues to struggle in a world of certain unpredictability. This is the reality of the Middle East.

Any realistic resolution to the Iranian nuclear threat will require a diplomatic approach that recognizes the regional landscape, as well as the interests and differences of our two countries. There will be no lasting solution to the Iranian nuclear threat until the broader interests of Iran, the U.S., the region and the world are addressed. The U.S. should engage Iran directly with an agenda open to all areas of agreement and disagreement. It is only through this difficult diplomatic process that a pathway toward resolution and accommodation can be built putting the U.S. and Iran, the Middle East and our allies in a position to defuse a potential Middle East conflagration and world calamity.

Iran is a complicated nation. It represents a 5,000-year old sophisticated and proud culture. Seventy percent of Iran’s population is under the age of 25. It is not a monolithic government. Iran’s belligerent president has limited real authority in the Iranian theocracy. We can help support those in Iran who want to find a solution.

We must carefully think through the Iranian challenge—unlike how we proceeded in Iraq. A military option is not a long-term solution to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons... A military option would also inflame the Middle East and the global Muslim population, crippling U.S. security, economic and strategic interests.

The U.S. must not allow itself to become isolated in the Middle East, the Muslim world and among our allies. This is critical to our global stature and future influence and ability to lead in a very dangerous world at a time of global transformation. The world must have confidence in America’s leadership and trust our purpose.

We should learn from the results of the last 60 years of multi-lateral cooperation, thoughtful American leadership and effective allied partnerships. For all the imperfections, challenges and problems of the last 60 years, we have accomplished some important things for the world. Let us not forget or discard how we did that. We need this kind of innovative thinking and diplomacy now—maybe more than anytime since the Cuban missile crisis. It is not too late.

This article originally appeared in the May 8, 2006 Financial Times.
Bill described himself as "an old man in a hurry." And while his heart failed him, his sharp mind and his wit did not.

In calling for the abolition if nuclear weapons, he said there is "indeed there is an 'axis of evil.' But it is hardly Iran, Iraq and North Korea. A more likely and far more dangerous trio would be environmental degradation, pandemic poverty, and a world awash with weapons."

His wit? In words uttered at Yale often: "The world is full of too many old Turks and young fogies." Bill Coffin remained living proof of his fitting claim: "Being old is not young fogies." Bill Coffin was affectionately known as the "Quotable Coffin." He could turn a phrase like none other. It is said that the term 'sound bite' originated with journalists capturing Bill's quotes.

On the choice of presidential candidates offered the electorate from time to time, Bill was known to say that it is "not really a choice between the lesser of two evils, but the evil of two lessers."

On "mediocre clergy," Bill was blunt, describing them as "the bland leading the bland."

On a more serious note concerning the nuclear crisis: "When we live at each other's mercy, we had better learn to be merciful. If we don't learn to be meek, who is going to inherit the earth?"

And another: "The best patriots are not uncritical lovers of their country, any more than they are loveless critics of it. True patriots carry on a lover's quarrel with their country."

On a characteristic he possessed, risking: "Only those who attempt the absurd achieve the impossible."

As my mentor, he cautioned me against taking on an issue and trying to "light a fire," but advised me to "shed a light" instead.

Bill said, "If you love good you have to hate evil; otherwise you are sentimental. But if you hate evil more than you love good, you simply become a damn good hater, and of such people the world has enough." And then he counseled, "We are called to be tender-hearted, but also to be tough-minded."

William Sloane Coffin Jr.'s life was a paradox; CIA agent—peace activist, born to the man—servant of the poor, legendary liberal—lifelong friend of George H. W. Bush, prophetically stern—wonderful joke-teller.

As I hugged Bill for the last time, I asked him, "Who will be the next William Sloane Coffin?" He quickly responded, "You." Before I could retort he added, "...and your friends at Nebraskans for Peace, and your prophetic preachers, and those students who are protesting."

And after citing quite a list, he said, "You see, dear Marilyn, this world doesn't need another Bill Coffin. This world needs many people who do not see peace as inevitable, but rather as something you fight for, suffer for, demand, as if peace were God's most cherished hope for humanity, as indeed it is."

**Citizens or Royal Family? Who Should Elect the Head of State in Saudi Arabia?**

by Mohammed H. Siddiq

The Bush/Cheney Administration's constant evangelizing about the need to "bring democracy to the Middle East" looks pretty selective and cynical when you consider the White House's uncritical support for the oil kingdom of Saudi Arabia. "Regime change" such we saw in Afghanistan and Iraq is the last thing the president and vice president have in mind with respect to the Royal House of Saud. As Saudi Arabian native and Lincoln Nebraskans for Peace member Mohammed Siddiq points out in the following essay, the Royal family has been immune to both the administration's stern demands for democratic reform in the Mideast, as well as the authentic teachings of the Prophet Muhammed himself as outlined in the Shari'ah.

In Saudi Arabia the king election campaign lasts for one or two days. The Royal family vote, the tribe leaders nod, the Ulemas (religious scholars) approve, and the country has a new head of state, a king.

To spend a couple days, at the most, to elect a head of state is so ridiculous that other countries think Saudi citizens must be mad or naive. The main reason that the Saudi process is so short, though, is because it has been narrowed down to one person, the crown prince. Every crown prince is assured to be a king after his predecessor. Every crown prince is assumed capable of handling the job with no questions asked and no qualification quiz rendered. Crown Prince Abdullah who is now a king could not make it through elementary school, as was the case with all his brothers.

This arrangement was neither the intention of the Prophet Muhammed, who set the pillars of the Islamic government, nor the practice of the four Caliphs who followed his footsteps. They stipulated that the reign be given to the ablest, the most honest, and the fairest, and not to the next of kin. In other words, Muhammed and the four Caliphs did not believe in the theory that says: "The closest is the fittest." Nor did they believe that the citizens should be excluded from the process, and a crown prince's own family alone be able to vote for him and send him to rule. The fact that Abdullah (and his brothers before him) is the king is due to his brothers' sons' and nephews' vote, and not to the citizens' approval at large.

This is a huge departure from Islamic law. A leader in Islam is supposed to be chosen by the people on the basis of his fairness and honesty. He is to be elected on his proven ability to make wise decisions and to lead others in arriving at socially beneficial decisions. The Saudi head of state, however, gets elected not because of proven competence in the legislative, administrative or legal process, or because of his known background of fairness and honesty. But because of the sheer fact that he was the Crown Prince, and son of Ibn Saud.

Changing the Islamic rule is unwise and too radical to be realistically acceptable for too long, no matter how desirable to all-Saud such a arrangement might be. If they are true Muslims, they should follow the Prophet Muhammed's and the four Caliphs' footsteps. For al-Saud, Islam is bedrock, the yardstick by which they measure everything. Should not they then elect the head of state according to the Shari'ah (Islamic law)? They should.

Who is best qualified to know the person, or type of person, who would be most likely to make a good leader? Obviously the people. The selection process could be made in various ways. The simplest way, the one nearest the original intent of Islam, would be by a vote of the entire adult population.
CONCLUSION

**Wind**

Wind is the most exciting. It is cost effective, and it is abundant, and our own state of Nebraska ranks 5th in the nation in wind energy potential. It is worthy of the coalfields of West Virginia or hydropower in Washington state.

Nebraskans do that? The website says Ethanol, a biofuel.

There is no question that biofuels are part of the solution and we’ve just scratched the surface in terms of what is biologically and technologically possible. I can say with confidence that the Sierra Club will be actively engaged in making this vision a reality.

**Point C: Ignore the Rhetoric**

Today, we have the tools and resources, and we can solve our energy problems.

But there are obstacles in the way, those I call the ‘naysayers.’

Some naysayers negate the energy problem completely: “We have enough energy. It doesn’t pollute.”

Other naysayers say global warming is a natural phenomenon—or as Michael Crichton, the author of State of Fear would have us believe—a fiction manufactured by environmentalists like me so we can keep our jobs.

And others say there’s nothing we can do about global warming or pollution problems. China and India will keep polluting and our efforts will be for naught.

And still others say there’ll be an economic catastrophe, if we try to address our energy issues in a responsible way.

There will always be people who say, “America can’t do it.” Those people waste our time and delay solutions. I say, What happened to good old American know-how? Don’t tell us what you can’t do; show us what you can do.

The overwhelming evidence, from President Bush to your next home heating bill, is that these naysayers are wrong. The pollution, economic and national security problems with our current energy sources are all obvious and real.

President Bush finally is beginning to get it. But what may be even more encouraging is to see major businesses and national leaders beginning to come on board as well.

Major American corporations like Ford Motor Company, Goldman Sachs and General Electric are starting to get it.

Major American energy companies like Duke Power and Synergy are also starting to get it.

Eighty-six major Christian Evangelical organizations just issued a “Call to Action” on climate change. They get it.

Based on Berkshire Hathaway’s recently released 2006 annual report, Warren Buffet gets it. You have to get it if you are in the re-insurance business.

As of last week, 206 American cities with over 42 million American citizens had joined the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement. They get it.

By themselves, each one of these local and national stories won’t solve the problem. But every time one city, CEO or religious leader steps up to the plate, more and more seem to follow.

**Point D: Unleash the Entrepreneurial Spirit of Americans**

I said at the beginning that to move to a new energy future we had to define the problem, outline the solutions, ignore the naysayers and finally to unleash the entrepreneurial spirit of Americans.

Now is the time to stop doubting ourselves, accept reality and start making things happen.

I believe in the ingenuity and spirit of Americans. That’s why I stand before you today, as an optimist, asking you to join the cadre of problem solvers and lead America to a new energy future.

Leadership at the federal level is simply not getting it done. That puts weight on the shoulders of businesses and state and local governments to take us there. This is our situation—it’s time to face the challenge with the right solutions.

Where government is willing to act, we must help it act responsibly.

Where government is not willing to act, we must work to install leaders who will.

Where opportunity is not being realized, we must roll up our sleeves and take action ourselves, just as thoughtful, responsible business leaders are doing all across the country.

Let’s make it our job to see that they account for the true costs of our fossil fuel dependence, understand the benefit of moving to these new energy solutions, and get the job done right.

**Conclusion**

President Bush said that we are addicted to oil. I have never smoked a cigarette and heroin has not been a problem, but I think I understand the basics of addiction.

I know that kicking the habit requires strong incentives, discipline, tenacity and a little help from your friends.

We might need some methadone, a patch. We definitely need a vision for a ‘drug-free’ energy life. This is what I hope I have created for you: a vision of a new energy future.

Which brings me to my final question…

Ten years from now, are American businesses going to be buying the environmental technology we need from Japan, or are we going to be selling it around the world?

The answer to that is up to us.
Paul Olson, conclusion

pushed school funding disproportionately on the widely disparate and inequitable property tax system. Then the state places a cap on school property tax levies, limiting the local fiscal ability to fund schools. A funding system not based on actual costs and which relies heavily on property tax revenues results in unequal access to educational opportunities.

Nationally, many states are reforming school funding systems based on adequacy or cost-audit studies. Frequently, these reforms are a direct result of school finance adequacy lawsuits pressuring action in state legislatures. Often, that action calls for substantial state-level increases in school funding. Kansas’ state legislature, for example, had to produce an additional $290 million.

The platform of many of the candidates for governor and state office is driven by the ideology of the intellectual resource class: cut taxes and reduce the size of government. Candidates talk about being big supporters of quality public education. But, that cannot be taken seriously unless they are willing to address the fundamental inadequacies in school funding.

Olson: The people who are being treated unfairly in your analysis appear to be rural townspeople and farmers, blue collar people in Omaha, African American people, migrant Hispanic groups, and some Native American groups. Is there any movement to create a coalition of such groups? If the lawsuits fail, what will people do?

Hoffman: Grassroots organizing in and across such groups must occur now, regardless of the outcome of the lawsuits. People need to organize widely across this state to push for education funding reforms. In doing so, we must use all the tools available to pressure the legislature and the governor into action. That includes non-violent civil disobedience, protests, and demonstrations. We need to use petition and referendum initiatives, work on campaigns of political candidates, vote, and use the courts to challenge the constitutionality of laws, regulations and rules that create social injustices.

I have initiated a movement to organize parents and taxpayers, Latino and white, in the rural areas, to reform education funding. Some productive communication has occurred with organizers in Omaha. We have no effort with Native American groups, currently. It would be helpful to convene a series of meetings to form a broad-based, statewide organizing coalition.

Olson: What are the strengths of the Nebraska educational system, and how can we build on them?

Hoffman: Good small schools, located close to where children live, and with adequate funding, are the right of every child. Public schools that sit at the cultural and economic epicenter of rural places and city neighborhoods best serve the needs of children. That is the strength of Nebraska’s educational system. We can build on this system by conducting an adequacy study of what it costs, in current terms, for every school to meet the State Board of Education’s new policy known as ‘essential education.’ Then we must design a school finance system that produces that level of resources.

Olson: What are our system’s primary weaknesses?

Hoffman: Its primary weakness is the perpetuation of the current educational opportunities gap along socio-economic class lines: cheap schools for cheap labor; ample schools for the affluent.

Bolivia, conclusion

tion of the new vice president who ran on the ticket with Morales. Alvaro Garcia Lineras has no indigenous blood and comes from a middle-class family. He has a graduate degree in mathematics from the University of Mexico. In addition he has done undergraduate work in sociology. Reported to have a personal library of 10,000 books and an author of several works of his own on economics and social and political movements, he can accurately be described as an intellectual. He is the policy wonk of the new administration, and has been given the credit for shepherding the law on the constitutional assembly through congress when it was virtually stalled.

The Morales presidency is off to a fairly good start, but this is not to say that it will not have its problems. It was the indigenous vote that really put him into office, and yet the indigenous population is not a mono-
FREE Bumper Sticker!

Nebraskans for Peace member Peter Salter is offering a free “Impeach Bush & Cheney” bumper sticker or window sign to any NFP member or supporter who promises to put it on their car or truck.

“I've had an 'Impeach Bush & Cheney' sign in the rear window of my car for the past two months and thousands of people have seen it,” Salter says. “I can't think of an easier way to reach so many people.” Even here in Nebraska, he reports, he’s getting over twice as many ‘thumbs up’ gestures from other drivers as ‘thumbs down.’

“Personally, I feel that Bush, Cheney and their associates are a horrible threat to world peace,” Salter says, “and I'm offering to make and give away bumper stickers and window signs as my contribution to the cause of changing that. While signs and stickers may not change anyone’s mind, they will certainly help legitimize people's feelings and promote discussion of the issue.”

If you’d like stickers or signs for your vehicles, you can request them by emailing Peter at opus20@inebraska.com or by calling the NFP State Office at 402-475-4620.

Speaking Our Peace

This column takes the form of a dialogue with Jerry Hoffman. Jerry is an educational reformer, community organizer, and activist. His most recent project is the organizing of parents and taxpayers in impoverished rural communities to pressure the state legislature to address adequate state funding of public schools. Paul Olson is the regular writer of this column. The issue is our creation through educational funding of a two-tiered society, something that we as NFP, mostly suburban folk, must labor mightily to resist.

Olson: Nebraska has had a concern for economic development (as witness the Nebraska Advantage Act and LB 775). Some of the literature on development speaks of ‘intellectual resource’ development states and countries, ‘natural resource’ ones, and ‘manual labor’ ones. Since Nebraska has few natural resources aside from water and soil, we can hardly be a natural resource state such as Colorado was in its mining days or Texas in the oil boom days. What is the Nebraska policy, as you see it, for economic development? Are we fundamentally relying on our intellectual resources or our cheap labor?

Hoffman: I believe a mixture of both. Nebraska’s economic development policies target industries that fundamentally rely on cheap labor: finance, telecommunications, retail, manufacturing, food and food processing, and ethanol. Cheap labor is widespread in the rural areas and the cities. People that populate this labor pool are constantly subject to the footloose whims of meat packing plants, call centers, and manufacturing plants.

That cheap labor is manipulated by a class of intellectual capitalists: small interlocking networks of corporate management, CEOs, and boards of directors. Mostly located in central business districts of cities and the suburbs, such intellectual “resources” include financial institutions, investors, corporate global headquarters, and regional offices. The Nebraska Advantage Act and LB 775 provide this class with massive income, sales and property tax breaks in support of businesses which create predominantly low-wage jobs.

A consequence of Nebraska’s economic development policy is the concentration of wealth in the suburbs and poverty in the inner city and rural areas.

Olson: You have sometimes said that Nebraska has a three-tiered system for educating its youth. What do you mean by that?

Hoffman: The three tiers of which I have been speaking are: (1) Schools in the wealthy suburban beltway, which receive substantial state aid. (2) Schools in rural poverty areas, which receive little in state aid. (3) Schools growing due to immigrant families, which are inadequately funded.

The idea of ‘adequate’ education means one suitable to the times in which children will work, live, and raise families. That lack of state funding for every school district to deliver adequate education means unequal access to opportunities.

The Brown v. Board of Education argument about separate and unequal stands today, and is relevant both to rural kids and to inner-city urban kids.

Cocidentally, this three-tiered system parallels the concentration of wealth at the hands of Nebraska’s economic development policies. Consider the following examples, one selected from each tier.

Millard, a suburb of Omaha, is the second-most affluent school district in Nebraska. Millard’s median household income is $68,000 (in 2000). Millard Public School easily exceeds new state and federal (including No Child Left Behind) education standards, with over-taxing property owners. Less than 8 percent of students are on free or reduced-price lunches. State aid is 39 percent of total receipts. Their property tax burden is a whopping 51 percent.

Schuyler (pop. 5300), in Colfax County, is the site of one of Cargill Meat Solutions’ largest beef packing plant, and is culturally diverse, with high poverty rates. Median household income is $26,000. Fully 85 percent of students are on free/reduced price lunches. Yet state aid is only 26 percent of total receipts. Their property tax burden is a mere 4 percent.

For 16 years, the state has manipulated the spending growth rate of school districts from 0 percent, in economic recessions, to 4.5 percent, in economic growth periods. Yet, educational costs have grown as a result of new state and federal education standards, demographic changes in the student population, rising health insurance and energy costs, and general inflationary conditions of education goods and services. Consequently, the state aid formula produces inadequate state resources to support actual costs, which include educational services, materials, staffing, technology, and facilities.

School funding is the state’s constitutional responsibility. But, the state has