the really inconvenient truth

Global Warming’s Impending Threat to Humanity

Right here in Nebraska resides one of the foremost communicators of the scientific literature on global warming and climate change to the general public.

Bruce E. Johansen, Frederick W. Kayser Professor of Communication and Native American Studies at the University of Nebraska-Omaha, just published a three-volume work entitled Global Warming in the 21st Century (2006) that has been met with critical acclaim. Although Johansen’s first academic specialty was the influence of Native American political systems on U.S. political and legal institutions, in the ‘90s he began critically surveying the scientific research on the environment, publishing such works as: The Global Warming Desk Reference (2001), The Dirty Dozen: Toxic Chemicals and the Earth’s Future (2003), and Indigenous Peoples and Environmental Issues (2004). His writings have been published in The New York Times, The Nation, The Progressive and The Atlantic Monthly. The following article, which he just provided to the Nebraska Report, summarizes the most recent scholarship on this dangerous phenomenon.

During early autumn, 2006, scientists taking their annual surveys of Greenland and Arctic ice learned that the truth regarding global warming is now more inconvenient than ever—and strikingly so. The Arctic ice cap was full of huge holes, and glaciers that used to cover much of southern Greenland were washing into the sea. At the same time, acidification of the oceans is occurring at a faster rate than scientists had suspected, as the Amazon Valley endures drought that may reduce its carbon-capturing canopy to dusty savanna within decades. Siberian permafrost has been melting at speeds unanticipated by anyone, advancing the date when natural increases in carbon dioxide and methane levels join with human generation of fossil fuels to spiral temperatures out of control.

Anyone who has seen Al Gore’s slide show (and some, such as G.W. Bush, who have not) should take a look at a lesser-known but more revealing slide show compiled by James Hansen, the lead scientist at NASA’s Goddard Institute for Space Studies (GISS), whom the Bush Administration has been trying (and failing) to shut up. Hansen’s slide show is available on the Internet: [ftp://ftp.giss.nasa.gov/outgoing/JEH/chartsfor_threat_talk_01sept06.pdf]; along with Hansen’s notes: [ftp://ftp.giss.nasa.gov/outgoing/JEH/textfor_threattalk_01sept06.pdf].

Hansen’s message is stark: at 2 degrees Celsius of additional warming, the Earth passes a threshold to fundamental, wrenching change in which natural feedbacks take control, accelerating heating beyond control. Given warming ‘in the pipeline’ but not yet observed, we are now almost halfway there. Given present levels of greenhouse gas increase, between the next 50 and 100 years, we will lock in a future that Hansen characterizes as a “different planet,” with mass extinctions of animal species and human environmental refugees from rising oceans in the hundreds of millions, as ice caps crumble at both poles and sea levels

continued on page 5

UNO Professor Bruce Johansen

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continued on page 5
**Nebraska Report**

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**Nebraskans for Peace**

Nebraskans for Peace is a statewide grassroots advocacy organization working nonviolently for peace with justice through community-building, education and political action.

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**Christian Peacemaker Teams Founder To Speak**

Gene Stoltzfus, founding director of Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), will be appearing in Lincoln and Omaha, November 5 - 7.

**Peacemaking in the Age of Terrorism** will be the topic of an evening of dialogue at First Mennonite Church, 7300 Holdrege, Lincoln, on Sunday, November 5, at 7:00 p.m. The public is invited.

**Nebraska Wesleyan University**—Coffee and conversation with Gene Stoltzfus. Open to the public. Monday, November 6, 10:00-11:00 a.m. in the Alabaster Lounge, Old Main Building (50th St. & St. Paul Ave.), Lincoln. Hosted by Pauletta Lehn, University Minister.

**Pastors and Religious Leaders Lunch**—A brownbag lunch for leaders of the faith community will be held at First Presbyterian Church, 840 South 17th St., Lincoln, on Monday, November 6, at 12:00 p.m. Beverage and dessert will be provided. For reservations call 477-6037.

**Creighton University**—Campus presentation. Open to the public. Monday, November 6, at 4:00 p.m., Skutt Student Center. Sponsored by the Kripke Center for the Study of Religion & Society, the Kenfick Chair in the Humanities, and the Justice & Peace Studies Program.

**University of Nebraska-Lincoln**—Nebraskans for Peace Forum. Tuesday, November 7, at 1:00 p.m., Allwine Hall 303 on the UNO North Campus.

**University of Nebraska-Omaha**—Social Work and Social Justice class. Open to the public. Hosted by Professor Henry D’Souza and the UNO chapter of Nebraskans for Peace. Tuesday, November 7, at 1:00 p.m., Allwine Hall 303 on the UNO North Campus.

Gene Stoltzfus spent extensive time in Iraq in 2003, consulting with Muslim and Christian clerics, Iraqi human rights leaders, families of Iraqi detainees, and talking with American administrators and soldiers. As the first anniversary of the November 26, 2005 abduction of four CPT workers in Baghdad approaches, he is convinced that a team approach is required for effective peacemaking today.

Stoltzfus’ commitment to peacemaking is rooted in his experience in Vietnam as a conscientious objector with International Voluntary Service during the U.S. military escalation between 1963 and 1968. He recalls that watching helicopter personnel unloading their cargo of bloodied bodies in Saigon forced him to ask “whether I was as willing to die for my conviction as the Vietnamese and American soldiers all around me were being asked to do.”

Prior to founding CPT, Stoltzfus co-directed the Mennonite Central Committee program in the Philippines during the Marcos’ martial law era, focusing it on human rights and economic justice. He then went on to help establish a grassroots international Peace & Justice organization in Chicago to connect U.S. and Third World people. He served as director of Christian Peacemaker Teams from its founding in 1988 until his retirement in September 2004.

CPT trains and places violence-reduction teams in high-conflict situations like Iraq, the West Bank, Colombia and various native communities in the United States and Canada. Teams and peacemaker delegations have worked in Chiapas, Mexico; Vieques, Puerto Rico; Washington D.C.; and with the Sioux Nation Tribes in Pierre, South Dakota. Investigative teams have visited Chechnya and Afghanistan. Christian Peacemaker Teams, originally an initiative of the Mennonite Brethren and Quakers, has expanded to include a wide variety of Roman Catholic and Protestant participation, with 36 full time and 152 part-time peacemakers. Call 402-467-1526 for more information. Gene Stoltzfus is available for media interviews at 807-274-0138.
Sen. Chambers Addresses ‘Friendly’ Crowd at Annual Peace Conference

This article by reporter Tracy Overstreet originally appeared in the Sunday, October 15, 2006, Grand Island Independent and is reprinted with permission.

Omaha State Sen. Ernie Chambers stood in the pulpit of a Grand Island church Saturday and challenged religion, politics and education. He challenged the war in Iraq, the treatment of minorities and the human nature to be obsessed with other people’s “crotches.”

His eloquent 75-minute oration left more than 150 audience members clapping in agreement, standing in support and huddled in silence to hear his next word.

Chambers was the keynote speaker at the 2006 Annual Peace Conference sponsored by the University of Nebraska at Omaha School of Social Work and Nebraskans for Peace—the oldest statewide Peace & Justice organization in the United States.

“This is an audience that is not hostile,” Chambers quipped. “A seldom-addressed audience like this.”

As a 36-year lawmaker—the longest-serving Nebraska legislator and the only black member of the body—Chambers said he has waged a battle alone in a fight against evil that raises its head in many forms.

He spoke of “sleazy” politicians such as Mark Foley, who recently resigned from Congress amid a scandal of sending sexually explicit e-mails to house pages.

Similar “sleazy” acts have occurred in the Nebraska Legislature with some former male state senators who made inappropriate comments about women, Chambers said—something the senators admitted to Chambers himself.

“Nothing gets the duck in trouble like his bill,” Chambers said these legislators.

Chambers talked of “mudslinging” in political campaigns.

If politicians don’t “want their record brought out, then compile a better record,” he challenged.

Chambers expressed disappointment in U.S. Sen. Ben Nelson failing to act as the elder statesman and instead lowering himself to the same low-grade ads put out by challenger Pete Ricketts—who is running for office because his father doesn’t want him in the way at the office.

Chambers spoke of being “raised in a religious straitjacket” and “sweating and suffering for the Lord” in wool pants in un-air-conditioned churches as a child.

“I read the Bible cover to cover eight times” during high school, Chambers said. “The Bible is a bloody book.”

Speaking at the Annual Peace Conference presented by the University of Nebraska-Omaha School of Social Work and Nebraskans for Peace at Trinity United Methodist Church in Grand Island, State Sen. Ernie Chambers smiles while saying that there will be such a shout across Nebraska when he leaves office that the people in California will hear it and think ‘the big one’ has finally come.

It’s full of war, rape, incest and murder.

He concluded there’s a lot of nonsense in the Bible, but a lot of messages for those who seek them out.

Tying into opening remarks by The Rev. Jay Vetter of Trinity United Methodist Church, which hosted the conference, Chambers said it would be nice if the issues were as simple as the second question Vetter asks to would-be United Methodist members.

That question relates to being able to “resist evil, injustice and oppression in whatever form they present.”

Oppression and evil, Chambers said, can take many forms.

It can be former Nebraska Gov. Mike Johanns failing to appoint women to state administrative positions or simply re-affirming an already skewed government by re-appointing existing leaders.

It can be former UNO Chancellor Nancy Belck and University of Nebraska President J.B. Milliken failing to fire a UNO professor for slapping a female student—inaction that Chambers said he intends to punish the university with financially.

It can be a grade-school teacher instructing and rewarding rote memory instead of teaching critical thinking.

It can be President Bush, who mispronounces so many words and appears so ignorant, he dumbs down the desire for any child to become educated.

It can be a military that gives a name like “peacekeeper” to a missile or a bomb.

It can be any person who turns to God as the protector, the creator, or the answer to a problem instead of using logic and reason when tackling issues.

From political scandals to oppression, longtime State Senator Ernie Chambers says it is best to use logic and reason when tackling issues.

It can be Nebraska voters thinking it wise to throw out 48 lawmakers and completely changing a legislative body simply to quash one—Chambers—through term limits.

It can be any heterosexual so concerned about preventing homosexuals from legal marriage that the heterosexuality fails to bond and meld with another human in a healthy relationship. Heterosexual divorce is a destructive thing, he said.

“All I need to know is I’m deal-

Virginia Walsh, pictured at the right helping hold the Nebraskans for Peace banner during the June 10, 2006 Gay Pride Parade in Omaha, was honored as a ‘Peacemaker of the Year’ at the 2006 Annual Peace Conference. The Central City Friends Meeting was collectively recognized as the other ‘Peacemaker of the Year.’

He explained his pursuit of impeaching University of Nebraska Regent David Hergert as holding a university official to the same standards of honesty as a university student must possess.

He hopes Nebraska State Trooper Bob Henderson, who joined a group associated with the Klu Klux Klan, will not be re-instated to his job because the public trust in law enforcement must be preserved.

Regarding the Mideast crisis, Chambers said the Republican Party is Hezbollah, which simply means “party of God,” because that’s how the party acts.

The key to all of it, Chambers said, is being able to think and act rationally.

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Photo by Independent/Barrett Stinson
Increases in the school districts’ property-tax burden more than doubled during the last decade, from $491 million in 1993-94 to $1.26 billion in 2003-04.

These statistics reflect the fact that state support for K-12 education in Nebraska is considerably less than in other states. A U.S. Census Bureau study recently ranked Nebraska 44th in the contribution of state revenue sources to total in-state support for general fund educational expenditures. Property taxpayers pick up the slack.

Moreover, the income disparity among property-tax payers is a disadvantage to students in lower-wealth communities. They face reduced educational opportunities as their schools are forced to obtain the lion’s share of their revenues from smaller property-tax bases and taxpayers with lower incomes.

Proposals about the need to raise income tax rates often are criticized without evaluating such proposals in the context of the overall tax burden. Instead, politically charged rhetoric about ‘cutting taxes’ often is used to obscure tax-shifting measures that, in reality, raise taxes on the middle class.

A case in point is Legislative Bill 968, which was enacted in the most recent legislative session. It cut state income tax rates by widening the tax brackets so that more income is taxed at lower marginal rates.

But it also canceled the scheduled lowering of the school property-tax levy lid from $1.05 to $1 per $100 of taxable value. The Legislative Fiscal Office reported that retaining the levy lid at $1.05 will reduce state spending by $59.6 million annually, as property taxes are tapped to make up for lost state aid to education.

Consequently, whether a family receives a tax cut under LB 968 depends on whether the family’s income tax savings exceed the increased property taxes made inevitable by LB 968.

A married couple filing jointly with an annual income of $40,000 would have reduced state income taxes by $625 less than they did three years earlier. The public debt to finance school infrastructure—paid entirely by property taxes—more than doubled during the last decade, from $491 million in 1993-94 to $1.26 billion in 2003-04.

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Praise for Bruce Johansen

"Of all the reference books on global warming, none is as thorough, thoughtful, and easy to navigate as Bruce Johansen’s series. His grasp of the science is as meticulous as his presentation is lucid. Combining clear reporting of the impacts of a warming atmosphere with ground-level descriptions from people affected by these ominous changes, Johansen has provided a lasting and invaluable resource about a subject that will only continue to attract more and more attention in the coming years."
—Ross Gelbspan, author of The Heat Is On and Boiling Point

"Bruce Johansen’s three-volume epic, Global Warming in the 21st Century, is in many ways the work the world has been waiting for. Scientifically authoritative, fully comprehensive but excellently written, this is the ultimate work on the ultimate threat. It has long been established that global warming presents the greatest threat ever to human and natural survival. Well, Global Warming in the 21st Century presents the definitive guide to the nature of this threat and what to do about it."
—Mark Lynas, author of High Tide: The Truth about Our Climate Crisis

"Johansen serves a wake-up call to naysayers, listing the scientific evidence of global warming in terms of its effects on icecaps, oceans, plants, and animals. He also provides examples of how the United States and other nations are (or are not) reacting to this impending catastrophe... Recommended."
—Library Journal

really inconvenient, cont.

rise at a speed unknown in Earth’s history.

All we have to do is step on our collective gas pedals in our customary way and, within a number of decades we can count on our fingers, we will be forecasting when the toilets will back up at the White House (17 meters above present sea level).

February Rain & Thunder on Baffin Island

How quickly is the climate changing in the Arctic? Some residents of Baker Lake, Nunavut, 1,330 kilometers west of Iqaluit (which is on southern Baffin Island) spotted maggpies flitting around town during May 2006. These scavengers, a relative of the crow, had never been seen in Nunavut before. The maggpies are not expected to become permanent residents, however, even if the climate warms, because they roost in trees. The tundra has no trees. Inuit living in the northernmost reaches of Baffin Island have now seen wasps. Hockey players in Canada’s far north have been looking for rings with artificial ice. In Pangnirtung (north of Iqaluit) families from outlying camps came into town for Christmas 2005 by boat—the sea had not yet frozen over.

On February 26, 2006, rain fell on Baffin Island. Sheila Watt-Cloutier, until recently chairwoman of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, emailed me: “I thought I would send you an update on our very strange weather. Last night on February 26th... so much rain fell that I woke up to several puddles and pools of water in my tundra backyard and since it was 6 above C. today the puddles/pools were not freezing. There was even lightning last night here in the Arctic on a February night.”

“A Planetary Disaster of Monstrous Proportions”

The Bush Administration’s latest policy paper on global warming tells us that we have plenty of time to address the issue, so much that voluntary measures will do the job. Hansen, however, says that with 99 percent certainty additional warming of 2 to 3 degrees C., a conservative estimate for the end of this century, will produce an “expected equilibrium (long-term) sea level rise on the order of 25 meters,” producing “the potential for a continually unfolding planetary disaster of monstrous proportions.” The only alternative, he argues, is to slash fossil fuel consumption drastically and quickly, keeping temperature increases within 1 degree C.

In human terms, the East Coast of the United States, including many major cities, is particularly vulnerable, and most of Florida would be under water with a 25-meter sea level rise. Most of Bangladesh and large areas in China and India also would be under water. Hansen’s slide show adds up estimates of people who would be displaced by a 25-meter sea level rise, using the population distribution in 2000: about 40 million people on the East Coast of the United States and 6 million on the West Coast, more than 200 million people in China, about 150 million in India, and in Bangladesh more than 100 million. Even leaving out Europe (London would be under water at 25 meters, as well as other cities), this is a total of half a billion environmental refugees from rising oceans alone. To get a true worldwide total, add large parts of Sydney, Australia, Tokyo, and Manila, among other coastal cities.

We are on the Way

We are on the way. The Arctic ice cap had so many holes last summer, according to satellite images collected during late August, the European Space Agency that a ship could have sailed from Northern Siberia or the Norwegian island of Spitsbergen to the North Pole without difficulty. In a decade or two, sea lanes may open in the summer over the Arctic Ocean. “This situation is unlike anything observed in previous record-low ice seasons,” said Mark Drinkwater of ESA’s Oceans/Ice Unit. As more Arctic ice melts, albedo (reflectivity) decreases in the region, causing even more ice to melt. Within a decade or two, the Arctic may be nearly ice-free during summer.

At the same time, Greenland’s ice sheet has been melting faster than ever before, according to research by U.S. scientists. The data indicates that the rate of ice loss accelerated between 2004 and 2006, with the world’s second-largest ice sheet melting two and one-half times faster at any time. Satellite observations indicate that Greenland lost roughly 164 cubic miles of ice from April 2004 to April 2006—more water than the volume of Lake Erie. Ice loss has been spreading northward from southern Greenland, and inland from the coasts. Temperatures in southern Greenland have risen by about 4.4 degrees F. during the last two decades.

Absent human activity, says Hansen, the Earth would have been expected to eventually cool off and head into a new ice age. However, the ice-age cycle that Earth has experienced for millions of years has now been terminated by human release of fossil fuels that triggers several natural feedback mechanisms. Thus, says Hansen, “Humans now control global climate, for better or worse” (Hansen, Declaration, 2006, 9).

Given present levels of greenhouse gas increase, between the next 50 and 100 years, we will lock in a future that Hansen characterizes as a “different planet,” with mass extinctions of animal species and human environmental refugees from rising oceans in the hundreds of millions, as ice caps crumble at both poles and sea levels rise at a speed unknown in Earth’s history.
StratCom Conference Sells Space Dominance
(and whoever controls space controls the earth)

by Frank Cordaro & Frances Mendenhall

The greeting for corporate and military delegates to the Strategic Space and Defense 2006 conference in mid-October was chilly in more ways than one. As rain and cold gusts of wind greeted the conference attendees at opening ceremonies October 10, activists with “Speak Out at StratCom” held up a banner warning that the Command’s new “Global Strike” mission is “offensive” and handed out prescriptions for “More Talk, Less Terror.”

Representatives from the Space Foundation were quick to tell local media that the conference at Omaha’s Qwest Center had “nothing to do with nuclear weapons,” a particularly sensitive subject in the aftermath of North Korea’s alleged nuclear test the day before. The claim was only partially true, as U.S. Strategic Command at Offutt Air Force Base, which is at the heart of the conference, jointly manages nuclear and conventional weapons in the post-Cold-War environment, in ways that actually increase the likelihood of nuclear weapons being used.

But in any event, members of the Green Party and Nebraskans for Peace weren’t there just to challenge StratCom on its nuclear policies. Instead, the groups were protesting the widened missions of StratCom, the same missions that the conference was glorifying.

‘Lab for Future Wars’

“StratCom is a laboratory for the future of warfare,” Space Foundation Chairman Robert Walker said at the opening of the conference. Since 2002, StratCom has new “Functional Component Command” missions such as space control, global strike, C4ISR (Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance), missile defense, and net warfare. The fourth annual “Strategic Space and Defense” conference claimed that these missions were critical to protecting the homeland. Opponents argued that these missions put StratCom in the central position of ensuring planetary dominance by the United States.

‘Space Policy’ Updated

Four days before the conference opened, the White House “Office of Science and Technology Policy” officially released its first new “National Space Policy” in a decade. (The update had originally been slated to be released last year, but was delayed when the New York Times leaked excerpts in May of 2005, which suggested the U.S. was ready to take war into space.) This document was discussed at length in the Omaha conference.

The refurbished document (an unclassified version is available at www.ostp.gov/html/US%20National%20Space%20Policy.pdf) tries to use diplomatic language in its opening paragraphs. But burrowing further into the policy goals reveals that the United States wants to preserve fair and peaceful access to space, provided a nation is willing to concede the U.S. absolute space supremacy. If a nation does not do so, it is considered an adversary.

This kind of subtle semantic shifting was prevalent throughout the conference. Given the new activity of North Korea, theArmy’s role in managing ballistic missile defense was touted as a positive by Lt. Gen. Larry Dodgen, commander of the Army’s Space and Missile Defense Command. He explained how well the new missile-defense infrastructure in Fort Greely, Alaska and Vandenburg Air Force Base tracked a North Korean Taepodong missile last July. But then went on to say that “going global” with new space capabilities meant erasing geography around the world. With the new fast-assault vehicles sought by the Air Force, missile defense walks hand in hand with global strike.

Faster attacks, Global attacks, Attacking satellites

The conference had special panels on “operationally responsive space,” referring to fast and global attack from space, and on global strike missions. This is why the Washington, D.C.-based Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) efforts to ban weapons in space solve only half the problem. The main goal for StratCom these days is to militarize space, to use it as a “force multiplier” by making better use of navigation and intelligence and communications satellites and thereby improve war operations globally, particularly in first-strike scenarios.

“StratCom is a laboratory for the future of warfare.”

— Robert Walker,
Space Foundation Chairman

In fact, Lt. Gen. William Shelton, the new StratCom functional component commander for space, said he sees true space warfare as a very unlikely final step in a struggle for space. The biggest threat StratCom anticipates in the near future is radio jamming of satellites. Jamming and many other threats could be solved by bombing or taking out a ground station for a satellite, Shelton said, though StratCom must be prepared to use anti-satellite or other space weapons if necessary.

There is a perception in Washington that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld would like to take more money out of high-tech space projects in the Air Force and National Reconnaissance Office, and shift that money to Army ground operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. As a result of the whispers that space warfare may be ‘gold-plated,’ StratCom made special efforts to bring representatives from the Army, Navy, and Marines, in addition to its own Air Force officers, to make the case that precision space satellites are absolutely necessary to fight 21st century war.

A Navy representative from the National Reconnaissance Office, the nation’s largest intelligence agency that works on spy satellites, talked about two NRO programs that could help in land and sea battles. A new program called “Quickbolt” puts receivers for spy satellites on board the High-Speed Anti-radiation Missiles, or HARM missiles, regularly used on the battlefield. Perhaps more ominously, the NRO started a special program in late summer to put as many space receivers as possible on the USS Eisenhower, the aircraft carrier that was ‘called up’ in mid-September for Persian Gulf service. While no one said so out loud at the conference, it is possible this electro-enhanced USS Eisenhower would be at the forefront of possible naval assaults on Iran nuclear sites.

The “Operationally Responsive Space” (ORS) mission of StratCom will focus on small satellites, and many private companies are expected to provide prototype mini- and micro-satellites to compete with the government satellites that come from every agency from the NRO to a cadet-led program at the U.S. Air Force Academy. Undersecretary of the Air Force Ron Sega told the conference that the Space and Missile Systems Center in California has opened a new Space Development and Test Wing across the street from the Air Force Weapons Lab at Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque—which will test small satellites to prepare for an eventual “ORS SmallSat Squadron.”

Corporate involvement in space domi-
South Korean Military Base Threatens International Security

by Tim Rinne
NFP State Coordinator

Although a 1953 cease-fire brought a halt to the actual fighting, technically, the Korean War never ended, and the conflict is still going on.

For over half a century, the United States has maintained an adversarial relationship with the North Korean government—permanently stationing troops in South Korea (29,500 at last count) and projecting an aggressive military presence in the region. It’s worth noting too that the U.S. is the only nation with a demonstrable nuclear threat to have been continuously engaged in this conflict. And that the only time the United States ever offensively used nuclear weapons, it was against a country lying just across the Sea of Japan from the Korean Peninsula.

I mention these facts, not to justify or excuse the actions of North Korean leader Kim Jong Il, but to provide an historical context for the current crisis. Other nations—not just the United States—have concerns about their ‘national security,’ and there may well be a ‘defensive’ and nationalist basis for the North Koreans’ recent behavior. The last thing the world needs right now, however, is another nuclear power—particularly one that is test-firing missiles over a neighboring nation’s air space, and conducting nuclear tests in the face of nearly unanimous censure by the international community.

As the record shows though, the U.S.’s own actions in this part of the world have been far from faultless, and have provided basis for suspicion, if not outright antagonism. Since becoming the sole remaining superpower on the planet, the U.S. has been anything but a ‘good neighbor’ and kindly uncle. The Bush/Cheney Administration’s designation of an “Axis of Evil” (which of course identified North Korea by name) and talk of “regime change,” its disdain for international rule of law with its “doctrine of preemption,” and its pursuit of a Missile Defense system and expanded military presence in the Asia-Pacific Theater, have again aroused fears over U.S. intentions.

Even President Bush’s pledge, just hours after the North Koreans’ October 9 nuclear test, “that the United States has the will and the capability to meet the full range—and I underscore the full range—of its deterrent and security commitments to Japan,” followed this same disturbing pattern. While the President’s comments may have provided some reassurance to the Japanese and South Korean governments, this thinly veiled threat of nuclear retaliation could hardly have been lost on North Korea—or its longtime ally, China.

Indeed, as the world is daily discovering, what the Bush/Cheney White House is seeking internationally is not cooperation and coexistence. It’s dominance—military and economic dominance. As StratCom Commander James “Hoss” Cartwright bluntly stated at the 2005 Strategic Space Conference, “The business of America is doing business, and we do it on a global scale,” obliging the military to take a “global approach” to America’s security. America’s ‘national’ security interests now ring the globe. And in this imperial scheme of things, the rest of the nations of the world have the option of either being ‘with’ the U.S., or ‘against’ it—of compliantly going along (“the coalition of the willing”), or risking being targeted for “regime change” (the “Axis of Evil”).

This is of course ‘bullying behavior’ on an international scale. But with a vast network of military bases dotted across the globe—strategically placed “lily pads” (to use Pentagon jargon) from which the military can launch strikes against enemy targets anywhere on the face of the earth—the Bush/Cheney Administration can back up its words.

Although Congress just stripped the funding for permanent military bases in Iraq from the 2007 Pentagon budget, the United States already has over one thousand bases in at least 130 foreign countries—with more constantly in the works. There are bases on Castro’s Cuba (the infamous Guantanamo); on Greenland’s rapidly melting ice sheet; on sacred Islamic soil in Saudi Arabia; down under in Australia; in the midst of Colombia’s drug war; and to China’s great displeasure, on Taiwan. In fact, there are bases in most of the member nations of the UN—including the Korean Peninsula, to keep a close eye on Kim Jong Il.

The Confrontation at Pyeongtaek

One of these South Korean bases, “Camp Humphreys” near Pyeongtaek, has become the site of a major political confrontation in that country. Camp Humphreys Air Force Base lies at a strategically important point alongside Pyeongtaek harbor, providing easy access to the Yellow Sea (and to China on the other side). For several years now, the Pentagon has wanted to consolidate a number of its sprawling South Korean installations into a “main operations base” (MOB) at Camp Humphreys, which as part of its new “strategic flexibility” policy, can be used both to launch a preemptive strike on the North and to contain China.

What the Bush/Cheney White House is seeking internationally is not cooperation and coexistence. It’s dominance—military and economic dominance.

www.nebraskansforpeace.org
Check out our new website created by Justin Kemerling

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2006 NEBRASKA REPORT, P.7
Acceleration of Ocean Acidification

As ice melts, increasing carbon levels in the oceans are damaging life there at a rate unanticipated by scientists even a few years ago—this, as the G.W. Bush Administration pushes carbon-dioxide “sequestration” in the oceans as a “solution” to the problem. Deep-water corals are at risk from increasing ocean acidification, for several reasons. First, they are comprised of aragonite, a carbonate material that is more soluble than the calcite used by corals closer to the surface. Carbonates’ vulnerability to dissolution also increases in colder water at greater pressure. By the end of this century, two thirds of deep-water corals (compared to none today) could be exposed to seawater that is corrosive to aragonite.

The effects of acidity in the oceans also will continue long after fossil-fuel burning peaks on land. Ken Caldeira of Stanford University modeled ocean acidification for fossil-fuel burning that peaks in the year 2100, and found that the oceans will continue to become more acidic for centuries after that. At the surface, acidity will peak at about 2750. A kilometer deep in the ocean, acidification will rise for a thousand years.

Permafrost Feedbacks Accelerate

As the Bush Administration’s latest climate-change plan tout’s voluntary conservation, the climatic truth also is becoming acutely more inconvenient in Siberia. Methane emissions formerly trapped in now-melting Siberian permafrost are bubbling out five times more rapidly than previously thought and may trigger what researchers warn is a climate time bomb, according to a study in the September 7, 2006 issue of Nature. The findings were based on new, more accurate measuring techniques.

As temperatures rise, more permafrost melts, setting up a vicious cycle. As the cycle intensifies, it becomes self-perpetuating, combining with human contributions of greenhouse gases to further increase warming, ice melt and sea-level rise. A study in the journal Science described the amount of carbon dioxide trapped in a type of permafrost called yedoma in Siberia as much more prevalent than originally thought, amount to about 100 times the amount of carbon dioxide released into the air each year by the burning of fossil fuels. This carbon will not be released all at once. Instead, its gradually accelerating release will augment human sources as the present century continues.

The Amazon Valley

Drought and Warming

The same warming trend that melts ice at the poles and releases summer thunderstorms that traverse Nebraska from the Rocky Mountains, the scientists wrote that “during the Medieval Warm Period the mean position of the dry line moved much further east, such that the Sand Hills were most often in the dry, hot air with greatly reduced precipitation.” Scientists study the climate of the past to provide clues about what continued warming may provoke in coming years, as carbon-dioxide levels rise in the atmosphere. A similar wind shift coupled with depletion of the Ogallala Aquifer could make much of Nebraska too dry for agriculture in coming decades. In a state with an agriculturally-based economy, this possibility should be a matter of considerable concern.

— Bruce E. Johansen

Citation: “Large Wind Shift on the Great Plains During the Medieval Warm Period.” Science 313 (July 21, 2006): 345-347.

The Amazon Valley rainforest, known to some ecologists as the “lungs of the world,” could turn to dry brush-land by the end of this century, further increasing the world’s greenhouse-gas load.

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As temperatures rise, more permafrost melts, setting up a vicious cycle. As the cycle intensifies, it becomes self-perpetuating, combining with human contributions of greenhouse gases to further increase warming, ice melt and sea-level rise. A study in the journal Science described the amount of carbon dioxide trapped in a type of permafrost called yedoma in Siberia also is helping to intensify drought in the Amazon Valley. This area’s rainforest, known to some ecologists as the “lungs of the world,” could turn to dry brush-land by the end of this century, further increasing the world’s greenhouse-gas load.

In some areas of the Amazon, the recent drought was the worst since record keeping began a century ago. Some scientists asserted that the drought was most likely a result, at least partially, of a rise in water temperatures in the tropical Atlantic Ocean that also played a role in spawning Hurricane Katrina and other devastating storms during the 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons. If global warming is involved, this drought may be only an early indication of a new weather regime in the Amazon Valley, which holds nearly a quarter of the world’s fresh water.

The Amazon Valley could be caught in a double vise as the world warms. Rising Atlantic Ocean temperatures probably will combine with more frequent El Nino events to provoke more frequent droughts.

Drought in the Western United States

For several years, the United States has been experiencing a long-term mega-drought encompassing most of the Western states and portions of the Midwest. Such mega-droughts have occurred in the Earth’s history, generally in conjunction with a warmer climate. Such an event killed Anasazi culture long before the European invasion of the Americas, and drought played a role in the decline of the Mayans in present-day Mexico and Guatemala. Global warming causes a relaxation of atmospheric circulation with resulting intensification of hot, dry conditions in subtropical regions such as the Southwest United States, parts of Mexico, and the Mediterranean.

Evidence already exists of an increased tendency toward warmer, drier conditions in those regions in conjunction with global warming already realized during the past three decades. If global warming continues to intensify, winter snow pack will decrease, intensifying summer dry conditions, and increasing forest fires. Already, the last few summers have provided the U.S. West with its worst cumulative record of forest fires in recorded history, with the same trend in Australia. In 2006, more of the Western United States burned than during any single year on record.

Hansen, an Iowa native who grew up in Denison and graduated from the University of Iowa, raises the possibility that “If these conditions reach sufficient intensity and geographical scale they may become self-perpetuating, and we will have suddenly entered a long-term mega-drought in the western United States. Weather would continue to fluctuate from year to year, but water supplies would be much more limited than in prior decades and dust storms may become frequent. We cannot say what level of global warming is needed to cause such a mega-drought, but the likelihood increases with increase of greenhouse gases and global warming.”

The ‘Tipping Point’ Advances

The idea of a ‘tipping point,’ beyond which global warming accelerates on its own with no possibility of reversal, has become a popular debating point as—in the real world—the date of this crucial event advances. The sense of urgency in the scientific literature is palpable. The evidence surrounds us.

“In my opinion there is no significant doubt (more than 99 per cent certainty),” says Hansen, “that additional global warming of 2°C would push the Earth beyond the tipping point and cause dramatic climate impacts including eventual sea level rise of at least several meters, extermination of a substantial fraction of the animal and plant species on the planet, and major regional climate disruptions. Much remains to be learned before we can define these effects in detail, but these consequences are no longer speculative climate model results. Our best estimates for expected climate impacts are based on evidence from prior climate changes in the Earth’s history and on recent observed climate trends.”

Every day of political procrastination beings that day closer.
Lela Shanks
This I Believe

Longtime NFP member and Lincoln Civil Rights legend Lela Shanks delivered the following statement at a Lincoln Unitarian Church service last summer. It is an eloquent statement of a life lived in conviction, and what better time than the holiday season to share this wisdom with our Nebraska Report readers.

I believe in the oneness of life, the Living Source of Love, the Ultimate Being which gave us life and love and created all of life, inextricably connecting us, like the helix, one to the other.

I believe in this Ultimate Being, this Source of all Energy, known by many names, in many tongues, among all peoples throughout the universe.

I believe we come into this world searching—searching for the consciousness to reconcile our inner life of the soul with the outer life of our body, yearning to feel as one—as whole.

I believe that every outer action is always the manifestation of a preceded inner action.

I believe in evolution, and thus, that creation continues.

I believe we have evolved physically; but

I believe our inner development remains stunted—arrested in prehistoric times.

I believe that is why we continue to bomb each other back to the stone age.

I believe our inner life is the uncharted territory on this planet, and

I believe that it is into this uncharted, undeveloped land of our inner world that we are commanded to go and to take the gospel. I believe that our inner life is the real missionary work to which we are called.

I believe the whole world is our Cathedral, and that, “The Kingdom of God is within you.”

I believe in the power of prayer, (by all of its names), to nurture and summon forth our deepest inner strengths especially in times of great trial and peril. I believe prayer—in its essence—is internal and is not confined to outer place. I believe nothing can separate us from the gift of prayer.

I believe, that like a fully-equipped computer, we are born with all of the deep inner strengths, including love and courage, that we need for a lifetime—but like a computer, we must go inside to have access.

I believe the New Coming has already come, and that New Being pervades the universe, and is made manifest in you and in me in the here and now as we evolve and bear the pain of changing from the inside out.

I believe it is this New Being within that does the good works. And I believe that recognition prevents the arrogance and puffiness of pride.

I believe in individual responsibility, and I believe in group responsibility.

I believe we must redefine the meaning of success in America, lest we drown in the greed of our materialism and self-importance.

I believe that philanthropy and charity are no substitutes for making needed societal change.

I believe we must not rest in America until the slave wage of the minimum wage is replaced with a living wage, thus, structuring out perpetual poverty in our economy.

I believe we have the responsibility to speak truth to power.

I believe we can cease using fear as our excuse to do nothing.

I believe that governments and leaders are not gods nor are they ordained by God.

I believe that our practice of ascribing evil to others is an avoidance of confronting the evil within ourselves and within our shores.

I believe in the power of dialogue, dialogue ad infinitum to bring us peace now.

I believe in the healing power of everlasting forgiveness, and in the transcendent power of Love to overcome hate.

Ultimately, I believe in the power of the people, to break through the self-imposed chains of fear and apathy, and to write and to fast and to speak and to work as a mighty force to bring peaceful change in the world.
taxable income of $50,000 and a home valued at $150,000 would see their income tax cut of $71.40 wipe out by $75 in higher property taxes. A married couple filing jointly with a taxable income of $35,000 and a $75,000 home would pay $15.50 less in income taxes and $37.50 more in property taxes, a tax increase of $22. Clearly, for most Nebraska homeowners—particularly those with lower incomes—the LB 968 ‘tax cut’ would disappear, replaced by a net tax increase.

Hahn’s proposal to phase in a doubling of state school aid from 2004 levels would shift the revenue source for $634 million of school funding from property taxes to statewide taxes such as income and sales—obviously not a small sum.

However, an appropriate combination of adjustments to income tax rates, brackets, credits and deductions, and a broadening of other revenue sources, can provide total tax savings to the majority of Nebraskans, including lower-income earners and middle-class homeowners. School levies would fall by 60 cents per $100 of taxable value, lowering property taxes on a $100,000 home by $600 and providing considerable room to negotiate income tax and other state revenue changes.

In evaluating Hahn’s proposals, Nebraskans should not lose sight of the policy goals of meaningful tax reform—maintaining adequate funding of essential public services while providing tangible and enduring tax relief for the majority of taxpayers. Programs that reduce taxes for only the highest-income earners while shifting the tax burden for essential services onto the majority of taxpayers are inconsistent with both tax equity and economic efficiency.

A program that focuses on shifting revenue collections necessary for public education away from property taxes increases equity. Without such a shift, the burden on property taxes would cause the adequacy of K-12 education to decline, which would harm economic efficiency as the work force would be inadequate to meet the competitiveness of the global economy.

Professors on Property Taxes, conclusion

nance was evident everywhere on the show floor, spanning from large players like Lockheed-Martin and Boeing, to innovative space startups who might have begun as commercial players, but quickly realized where the purse-strings were controlled. For example, representatives of the commercial communication-satellite companies Americom and Intelsat were at the conference. Since the National Security Agency built special bases in Yakima, Washington and Sugar Grove, Virginia, to intercept the commercial traffic of these satellites, one would think that corporate leaders might complain about such sneaky behavior.

Bellying Up to the Trough

Instead, corporate executives like Intelsat vice president Kay Sears and Americom chief executive David Helgott complained they weren’t being offered the kind of deals in working with the Defense Department that commercial imaging satellite companies were offered. The NRO now gets 30 percent of its images from space from commercial satellite companies instead of its own spy satellites, and Intelsat and Americom wonder why more Defense Department space communication companies can’t be outsourced. Sears said that her company has eight satellites going up before the Defense Department and NRO finish work on the first satellite of the “Multi-User Objective System.” Intelsat would be happy to provide ‘surge capacity’ channels for the warfighter, she said, if the Defense Department would only let companies know in advance of its needs.

In short, the corporate and military leaders at Strategic Space and Defense were all singing from the same song sheet. All of the Defense Department’s outsourcing partners accept the role of StratCom as the global enforcer of a dominant hegemony led by the U.S. And it falls to those of us outside the confines of the conference—and outside the gates of Offutt—to let the warfighters know that their mission is not in synch with the goals of democracy.

Korea, conclusion

camp, however, sparked a backlash in 2003 from the villagers and family farmers of nearby Doduri and Daechuri who were being pushed off their land. Unwilling to give up their homes without a fight, the farmers and townspeople organized protests—‘trespassing’ onto their seized fields to work their land and even occupying the local elementary school. These highly publicized activities, in turn, prompted the police to forcibly evict the protestors from the school and place barbed wire around the perimeter of the future base.

But when these moves failed to adequately quell the protests, on May 4-5, 2006, the government dispatched 13,000 South Korean military troops to install a wire fence around 12 million hectares of fields, to prevent the farmers from getting to their land and cultivating their rice crop. As the troops arrived to set up the fencing, the residents and their supporters moved in to block them, provoking a confrontation. By the time it was over, 250 people had been injured and another 500 more had been rounded up. It was the first time since the 1980 Kwangju massacre that the South Korean military—as opposed to riot police—had been used against civilian demonstrators.

The protests, though, have not abated. What began as an effort of roughly 150 families to preserve their land and homes, has grown into a nationwide peace movement to resist the base expansion and the Pentagon’s “strategic flexibility” policy—a policy that will destabilize the entire Asia-Pacific region and push the world just that much closer to a nuclear showdown.

In a little-known and remote area near the South Korean coast, the struggle over the Bush/Cheney Administration’s goal of military and economic dominance is being waged. Should the U.S. succeed in completing the expansion of Camp Humphreys, it will become the frontline base from which the White House preemptively attacks North Korea. And that attack will have particular significance for Nebraskans.

Because it will have been planned, launched and executed from StratCom, right here in Nebraska’s own backyard.

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2006 NEBRASKA REPORT, P.10
Paul Olson, conclusion

late currency to stabilize the economy (a pre-Keynesian Keynesianism) and create the Federal Reserve system for popular control of money and banks; to protect the organizing rights of laboring people; to install a progressive income tax; and, to some degree, provide for women’s suffrage. Even his silly Scopes battle was motivated by a fear of Social Darwinism and Nazi-style eugenics. Ultimately Bryan lost in his efforts to make America an anti-imperialist power. He tried to make it, like present-day Switzerland or Sweden, the center of a drive for peacemaking—a supporter of an effective League of Nations and Versailles Treaty.

On his successful side, Bryan hardly saw any of his goals realized when he was a congressman or Secretary of State. But in his speeches and his newspaper articles, he prepared the way. He sowed. The harvest came with the progressive part of Wilson’s and Roosevelt’s presidencies—the latter years after his death.

We can complain about the elections Bush and Cheney stole (they probably stole Florida in 2000 and, based on Robert Kennedy Jr.’s research, Ohio in 2004). I do believe that we live in a quasi-tyranny because millions of us have not acted—have not registered to vote, have not voted, have not taken others to the polls, have not held coffee klatches with our neighbors to influence them, have not asked our candidates to take clear and clearly articulated stands. We have not asked, “Who is paying for you guys’ campaigns, your living high on the hog and driving BMWs in Washington?” We have not leafleted or demonstrated or marched on Washington to flush the sewer of our government into the sea of anonymity.

We may not see this cleansing in our lifetimes. If we start now, our children—like those who came after Bryan—can see a different story. We can overcome, over the long haul. My grandfather, Andrew Olson, left Sweden when it was a semi-feudal autocracy. He hated it so much that he went back to bring his old father to America so he would not have to die there. Sweden is now one of the world’s centers for progressive Peace & Justice policy and activity. But its changing took thousands of people’s work, elections, strikes and coffee klatches over many decades.

We also can overcome.

Just as with Bryan, it’s the work of a lifetime.

But we have to be willing to begin.
How to Win in a Gilded Age?

by Paul Olson, UNL Professor Emeritus

Genocide is the order of the day in the Congo and Darfur. Still, no congressperson acts seriously.

Finally, there is Iran. Serious negotiation would require a U.S., that asks other countries to forego nuclear weapons and self-determined nuclear power, to work with the UN and the international community to forgo these itself. ‘Nuclear’ is our tool of dominance.

But when the Soviet Union, early in the US’s history, called for the elimination of all nuclear weapons and later included proposals for a serious regimen of inspections, we declined. We needed the nukes, we thought, because of massive Soviet superiority in tanks and ground forces. How is Iran’s logic when facing us—and in possibly seeking nuclear weapons—different from ours when we faced the Soviets?

Progressive forces may win the next House elections. There is enough anger around about Foley, Hastert, Rove, Bush, the Iraq War, shaky economic conditions and government corruption to win ten elections. We should win, but is winning it?

(Don’t get me wrong. A victory of progressives over the radical right may keep us from some wars, some concentrations of wealth, corruption and venality.)

But for real change to come, progressives need to announce, “This is the vision we are fighting for over the long haul.” And then fight for it over the long haul.

And it will be a long haul—present failure being no excuse.

Look at William Jennings Bryan, as he appears in Michael Kazin’s A Godly Hero. Bryan is the one American who lost three presidential elections—in 1896, 1900, and 1908. Defeat hurt, but did not stop him. In defeat, he put in place, for the Democratic Party’s platforms and ultimately for the nation, a vision of laws requiring the government to control monopoly power; to regu-