by Chris Floyd

truthout | UK Correspondent

‘Surging’ Toward the Ultimate Prize

The reason that George W. Bush insists that ‘victory’ is achievable in Iraq is not that he is deluded or isolated or ignorant or detached from reality or ill-advised. No, it’s that his definition of ‘victory’ is different from those bruited about in his own rhetoric and in the ever-earnest disquisitions of the chattering classes in print and online. For Bush, victory is indeed at hand. It could come at any moment now, could already have been achieved by the time you read this. And the driving force behind his planned “surge” of American troops is the need to preserve those fruits of victory that are now ripening in his hand.

At any time within the next few days, the Iraqi Council of Ministers is expected to approve a new “hydrocarbon law” essentially drawn up by the Bush Administration and its UK lackey, the Independent reported Sunday January 7. The new bill will “radically redraw the Iraqi oil industry and throw open the doors to the third-largest oil reserves in the world,” says the paper, whose reporters have seen a draft of the new law. “It would allow the first large-scale operation of foreign oil companies in the country since the industry was nationalized in 1972,”

If the government’s parliamentary majority prevails, the law should take effect in March. As the paper notes, the law will give Exxon Mobil, BP, Shell and other carbon cronies of the White House unprecedented sweetheart deals, allowing them to pump gargantuan profits from Iraq’s nominally state-owned oilfields for decades to come. This law has been in the works since the very beginning of the invasion—indeed, since months before the invasion, when the Bush Administration brought in Phillip Carroll, former CEO of both Shell and Fluor, the politically-wired oil servicing firm, to devise “contingency plans” for divvying up Iraq’s oil after the attack. Once the deed was

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General Augusto Pinochet (1915-2006)

International Human Rights Day, December 10, 2006, seemed an appropriate day for the death of General Augusto Pinochet, ex-dictator of Chile, whose name became synonymous with human rights violations. Pinochet first gained international attention on September 11, 1973, when he led a bloody CIA-backed military coup that overthrew democratically elected President Salvador Allende, who died in the attack on the presidential palace. Allende’s Socialist government was anathema to the Nixon Administration, and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger deliberately worked to undermine and destabilize Allende’s government. Kissinger’s secret meetings with Pinochet a year before the coup helped create the chaos and instability that justified the coup and promoted Pinochet. Following the coup, the dictator received U.S. support until Ford and Kissinger left office in January 1977.

In the days following September 11, Pinochet’s security forces rounded up Allende supporters wherever they could find them. Many were tortured. More than 3,000 were killed or disappeared. (Current President Michelle Bachelet and her parents were imprisoned and tortured; her father was killed.) One hundred thousand Allende supporters went into exile. The ensuing reign of terror lasted for 17 years.

Pinochet’s reach extended beyond Chile. Evidence has tied his secret police to an assassination in Argentina, an attempted assassination in Rome, and to the car bombing in downtown Washington, D.C., in 1976 that killed Orlando Letelier, a former Chilean diplomat, and his American assistant Ronnie Moffitt. U.S. officials judged it an act of state-sponsored terrorism. Indeed, it was part of Operation Condor, a pact between several Southern Cone countries to carry out political assassinations.

Pinochet lost a 1988 referendum to extend his rule. Patricio Aylwin became president, and his center-left coalition has ruled Chile since 1990. But Chile wasn’t rid of Pinochet, because he had engineered a new Constitution in which he retained his position as head of the army and was named a senator for life. Chile remained bitterly divided.

Pinochet repeatedly evaded punishment for his crimes. In October 1998, he was arrested during a visit to London following an extradition request from Spain, where judge Baltasar Garzón was investigating Pinochet’s involvement in murders tied to his regime. Pinochet was held under house arrest for 16 months. But the British government allowed his return to Chile in March of 2000, saying he was too frail to face trial. Then in 2001, he was indicted for the so-called “Caravan of Death” — a mobile death squad responsible for the executions of 75 political prisoners. Pinochet narrowly escaped facing charges after a Supreme Court ruled that he was physically and mentally unfit to stand trial.

In 2004, Pinochet was indicted for tax evasion and corruption after it was revealed that he had $27 million hidden in secret offshore bank accounts. He was declared mentally fit to stand trial and, facing charges of corruption, the theft of the $27 million in state funds, the use of false passports, and tax evasion, it looked clear that he was going to be found guilty and actually sentenced. Last October, a Chilean federal judge ordered his arrest for carrying out 36 cases of kidnappings and 23 cases of torture at a secret prison. On his 91st birthday in November, Pinochet took “full political responsibility for everything that happened” during his long rule.

What will Pinochet’s legacy be? Some supporters credit him with having laid the basis for Chile’s healthy economy, which has been dubbed the “Miracle of Chile.” But the success of his laissez-faire experiment in radical free markets, privatization, deregulation and union-free economic expansion is regarded by some analysts as a myth. In 1973, the year of the coup, Chile’s unemployment rate was 4.3 percent. In 1983, after ten years of free-market modernization, unemployment reached 22 percent. Real wages declined by 40 percent under military rule. In 1970, when Allende assumed power, 20 percent of Chile’s population lived in poverty. By 1990, the year Pinochet left office, the number of destitute had doubled to 40 percent. So much for miracles.

Pinochet’s most important legacy may be what has become known as the “Pinochet precedent.” Since his arrest in London in 1998, dictators of his ilk — and human rights violators like Henry Kissinger — can no longer freely travel abroad with impunity. Pinochet established that universal jurisdiction is a possibility — that many years later, the long arm of international justice can track them down and lead to their arrest.
“Two remarkable reports on the backroom maneuvering over Iraq’s oil: “Bush’s Petraeus Cartel Almost Has Iraq’s Oil” and “The U.S. Takeover of Iraqi Oil.”

From those earliest days until now, throughout all the twists and turns, the blood and chaos of the occupation, the Bush Administration has kept its eye on this prize. The new law offers the barreling buccaneers of the West a juicy set of production-sharing agreements (PSAs) that will maintain a fig leaf of Iraqi ownership of the nation’s oil industry—while letting Bush’s Big Oil bud-

dies take off up to 75 percent of all oil profits for an indefinite period up front, until they decide that their “infrastructure investments” have been repaid. Even then, the agreements will give the Western oil majors an unheard-of 20 percent of Iraq’s oil profits—more than twice the average of standard PSAs, the Independent notes.

Of course, at the moment, the “security situation”—i.e., the living hell of death and suffering that Bush’s “war of choice” has wrought in Iraq—prevents the Oil Barons from setting up shop in the looted fields. Hence Bush’s overwhelming urge to “surge” despite the fierce opposition to his plans from Congress, the Pentagon and some members of his own party. Bush and his inner circle, including his chief adviser, old oilman Dick Cheney, believe that a bigger dose of blood and iron in Iraq will produce a sufficient level of stability to allow the oil majors to cash in the PSA chips that more than 3,000 American soldiers have purchased for them with their lives.

The American “surge” will be blended into the new draconian effort announced over the weekend by Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki: an all-out war by the government’s Shiite militia-riddled “security forces” on Sunni enclaves in Baghdad, as the Washington Post reports. American troops will “support” the “pacification effort” with what Maliki says calls “house-to-house” sweeps of Sunni areas. There is of course another phrase for this kind of operation: “ethnic cleansing.”

The “surged” troops—mostly long-serving, overstrained units dragooned into extended duty—are to be thrown into this maelstrom of urban warfare and ethnic murder, temporarily taking sides with one faction in Iraq’s hydra-headed, multi-sided civil war. As the conflict goes on—and it will go on and on—the Bush Administration will continue to side with whatever faction promises to uphold the “hydrocarbon law” and those profitable PSAs. If “Al-Qaida in Iraq” vowed to open the nation’s oil spigots for Exxon, Fluor and Halliburton, they would suddenly find themselves transformed from “terrorists” into “moderates”—as indeed has Maliki and his violent, sectarian Dawa Party, which once killed Americans in terrorist actions but are now hailed as freedom’s champions.

So Bush will surge with Maliki and his ethnic cleansing for now. If the effort flames out in a disastrous crash that makes the situation worse—as it almost certainly will—Bush will simply back another horse. What he seeks in Iraq is not freedom or democracy but “stability”—a government of any shape or form that will deliver the goods. As the Independent wryly noted in its Sunday story, Dick Cheney himself revealed the true goal of the war back in 1999, in a speech he gave when he was still CEO of Halliburton. “Where is the oil going to come from” to slake the world’s ever-growing thirst, asked Cheney, who then answered his own question: “The Middle East, with two-thirds of the world’s oil and the lowest cost, is still where the prize ultimately lies.”

And therein lies another hidden layer of the war. For Iraq not only has the world’s second largest oil reserves; it also has the world’s most easily retrievable oil. As the Independent succinctly notes: “The cost-

Words can’t express how difficult it is for those affected by the uncertainties of deployment and the sorrow of the loss of a loved one. Both of Nebraska’s U.S. Senators and Congressmen Jeff Fortenberry sent representatives to address the gathering. Don Nelson, the State Director for Sen. Ben Nelson, said that it was timely that the gathering was taking place shortly before the opening of the new session of Congress. He pointed out that Sen. Nelson will be in a position to play a pivotal role in the Iraq debate as the new chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee military personnel subcommittee. “Sen. Nelson has serious concerns about the so-called ‘surge.’”

Saying that the senator’s stand on the conflict is well-known, Sen. Chuck Hagel’s State Director Todd Willgen spoke briefly. He thanked the vigilors for honoring the U.S. soldiers who have died in Iraq.

A letter addressed to the vigil from Rep. Jeff Fortenberry was read by his District Director Josh Moening, Rep. Fortenberry’s statement said that in Iraq “a critical rethinking of all strategic options” is needed.

The event received a considerable amount of news coverage leading up to it and afterwards, including advance articles in the Lincoln Journal Star and news stories on three TV stations as well as the radio.

The Coalition for Peace holds a peace vigil held every Wednesday from 5:00 to 6:00 p.m. at the Federal Building, 100 Centennial Mall in downtown Lincoln. It is also organizing a “Bring the Troops Home” rally and march scheduled for January 27. The event will begin at the north steps of the State Capitol at 10 a.m. followed by a march to the Federal Building. More information is available on the Coalition for Peace website at www.fmc-lincoln.org/coalition_for_peace.htm or 402-499-6672.

CONTINUED
Color Line Gets Tense in Bolivia

The opposition has trouble reinventing itself, as Evo Morales consolidates transformation in the country

by Waskar Ari Chachaki

Dr. Waskar Ari is a Bolivian from the Aymara indigenous community. He received his doctorate in History from Georgetown University in 2005, completed a post-doc at the University of Texas and taught as a visiting assistant professor at Western Michigan University. Ari is an expert on Latin American Studies, with an emphasis on indigenous social movements throughout South America. In 2005, after a national search, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln hired Ari to join the faculty in History and Ethnic Studies, noting his promising publication record and meritorious record as a teacher, as well as the unique perspective he would bring to Nebraska students. To date, though,

W.E.B. Du Bois once said that the color line was the issue of the 20th century in the United States, and this statement also seems appropriate for Bolivia today. It might appear strange that race is a topic of such controversy in a country that has recently elected an Indian president, yet race is the hottest issue in Bolivia right now. While the country is undergoing strong transformations led by the president, Evo Morales, 73 percent of Bolivians agree that there is racism in Bolivia, and especially in Santa Cruz. The World Bank is also worried about the racial line and its potential conflicts in Bolivia, recently concluding that Bolivia has a 58 percent possibility of civil war.

These racially motivated conflicts are also interesting from a Latin American studies perspective. The most current explanation for social transformations in Bolivia and Latin America at large is that liberalism and globalization have failed. But this response puts too much emphasis on economic motivators and ignores racial conflicts and contradictions. Like in South Africa during the Apartheid era, Bolivia is emerging as an intensely racialized society. If the root of such changes is misinterpreted or ignored, as occurred during the lead up to the Shining Path guerilla war in Peru in the late 1980s, scholars will be left completely unaware.

Racial conflict is indeed prevalent in Bolivia today. A wide range of racial violence erupted in the lowlands between December 15-19. The violence was especially concentrated in the provinces of Guayaram and Nuillo de Chavez of Santa Cruz, in the eastern part of the country. The Chiquitano and Guayaro lowland-indigenous headquarters were burned and completely destroyed by arsonists—computers and vehicles that took them many years to afford were totally lost. The Colla Indians, originally from the highlands in the western part of the country, were equally targeted; 63 Indian-owned stores were burned as the perpetrators shouted “we want (our) land without Collas and coca” in Concepcion and San Xavier. At the open markets at these two sites, such businesses are stigmatized as symbols of Evo Morales’ power. Indeed, the violence forced the Collas to flee to the jungle for safety. The arsonists were identified as part of the Union Juvenil Crucenificación (UJC), a well-known white supremacist hate group in Santa Cruz that especially targets Collas. The UJC also promised to put the lowland Indians Guarayos and Chiquitanos in “the right place”—that of submission. The house of human rights activist Juan Alfaro was burned, as well as the headquarters of CEJJS, an NGO that works for indigenous rights in the region. The Minister of Interior, Alicia Munoz, hoped to catch the arsonists, but so far this has not been accomplished, as these groups are protected by the governor of Santa Cruz, Ruben Costas, a leader in the Collas-hating opposition.

The Collas, who are also called Aymaras or Quechuas in Bolivia, have been victimized in Santa Cruz on the basis of race for most of the 20th century. They are slowly becoming the social majority in the lowlands of Bolivia and are singled out as supporters of MAS—the Movement towards Socialism—the party of Evo Morales. Many Collas live in Santa Cruz in order to work, and not all are followers of Morales. However, to date, they have not been able to organize ethnic movements in the city. As a result, indigenous discourse and activism remain mostly among the peasants in the countryside.

Racism is the reactionary by-product of the large transformation that President Morales is creating in Bolivia, which includes land and education reform, the nationalization of the gas industry and a new constitution. These issues are perceived as threatening to landowners in Santa Cruz, because they empower those who had previously been under the landowners’ thumb. Indeed, some properties in Santa Cruz are the size of the entire city of Chicago and, according to Morales, they were not obtained legally. These lands are held by the local white elite without use, work or investment. In response, Morales, with his new agrarian reform policy, intends to give that land to the indigenous peoples and thereby alter the historic power relationship.

Racial conflict reached a breaking point when the indigenous Collas blocked the route to San Julian in opposition to a rally and demonstration, known as a “cabildo,” held on December 15 in Santa Cruz by Governor Ruben Costas. The cabildo was in support of the creation of a “nation of the lowlands,” which was supported by the extremist UJC and “nación camba” (NC)—another white supremacist organization that promotes the separation of Santa Cruz from Bolivia. NC has among its members Serbians and Arab descendants, but excludes indig-

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— Dr. Waskar Ari

Dr. Waskar Ari

the U.S. government has refused to grant Dr. Ari a visa to enter the country to assume his position at the university, citing “national security” issues, despite the fact that no credible public information exists to justify such a decision. The refusal to grant Dr. Ari a visa has elicited national and international protest within and outside academic circles and raises important questions about academic freedom in the context of the “War on Terror.” For more information about Dr. Ari’s case, please visit: http://www.unl.edu/history/news_events/ari/ari.html In addition, the UNL chapter of Nebraskans for Peace will be selling “Where’s Waskar” T-shirts to support his cause. If you’d like to purchase a T-shirt or would like more information on how you might help in this case, please contact Dr. Patrick Jones at pjoness2@unl.edu.

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VICTORY, continued

per-barrel of extracting oil in Iraq is among the lowest in the world because the reserves are relatively close to the surface. This contrasts starkly with the expensive and risky lengths to which the oil industry must go to find new reserves elsewhere—witness the super-deep offshore drilling and cost-intensive techniques needed to extract oil form Canada’s tar sands.

This is precisely what Cheney was getting at in his 1999 talk to the Institute of Petroleum. In a world of dwindling petroleum resources, those who control large reserves of cheaply produced oil will reap unimaginable profits—and command the heights of the global economy. It’s not just about profit, of course; control of such resources would offer tremendous strategic advantages to anyone who was interested in “full spectrum domination” of world affairs, which the Bush/Cheney faction and their outriders among the neo-cons and the “national greatness” fanatics have openly sought for years. With its twin engines of corporate greed and military empire, the war in Iraq is a marriage made in Valhalla.

The Win-Win Scenario

And this unholy union is what Bush is really talking about when he talks about “victory.” This is the reason for so much of the drift and dithering and chaos and incompetence of the occupation: Bush and his cohorts don’t really care what happens on the ground in Iraq—they care about what comes out of the ground. The end—profit and dominion—justifies any means. What happens to the human beings caught up in the war is of no ultimate importance; the game is worth any number of broken candles.

And in plain point of fact, the Bush-Cheney faction—and the elite interests they represent—has already won the war in Iraq. I’ve touched on this theme before elsewhere, but it is a reality of the war that is very often overlooked, and is worth examining again. This ultimate victory was clear as long ago as June 2004, when I first set down the original version of some of the updated observations below.

Put simply, the Bush Family and their allies and cronies represent the confluence of three long-established power factions in the American elite: oil, arms and investments. These groups equate their own interests, their own wealth and privilege, with the interests of the nation—indeed, the world—as a whole. And they pursue these interests with every weapon at their command, including war, torture, deceit and corruption. Democracy means nothing to them—not even in their own country, as we saw in the 2000 election. Laws are just whips to keep the common herd in line: they don’t apply to the elite, as Bush’s own lawyers and minions have openly asserted in the memos, signing statements, court cases and presidential decrees asserting the “inherent power” of the “unitary executive” to override any law he pleases.

The Iraq war has been immensely profitable for these Bush-linked power factions (and their tributary industries, such as construction); billions of dollars in public money have already poured into their coffers. Halliburton has been catapulted from the edge of bankruptcy to the heights of no-bid, open-ended, guaranteed profit. The Carlyle Group is gorging on war contracts. Individual Bush family members are making out like bandits from war-related investments, while dozens of Bush minions—like Richard Perle, James Woolsey, and Joe Allbaugh—have cashed in their insider chips for blood money.

“The new law offers the barreling buccaneers of the West a juicy set of production-sharing agreements (PSAs) that will maintain a fig leaf of Iraqi ownership of the nation’s oil industry—while letting Bush’s Big Oil buddies rake off up to 75 percent of all oil profits for an indefinite period up front, until they decide that their ‘infrastructure investments’ have been repaid. Even then, the agreements will give the Western oil majors an unheard-of 20 percent of Iraq’s oil profits—more than twice the average of standard PSAs.”

The aftermath of the war promises even more of the same. As the American elite eye the hundreds of billions in profits that will be reaped from the occupation, they will also eye the billions that have already been pocketed by those connected to the Bush administration. With the war costing the United States an estimated $2 trillion, the American elite will continue to reap the rewards of their war efforts.

Greenhouse-gas Levels Continue to Increase

The Environment News Service reports that ice core records from Antarctica show that current levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere are higher now than at any time in the past 800,000 years and increasing at an unprecedented rate. Global emissions of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide have more than doubled since 1990 and the rate of increase is accelerating, according to information gathered and analyzed by the Australian government research service. The scientists say this trend, based on data collected over the past 30 years, indicates that recent efforts to cut back on emissions have had little impact on emissions growth (“Global Greenhouse Emissions Accelerating,” 11/29/06). Marine and atmospheric scientist Mike Raupach, who co-chairs the Global Carbon Project at Australia’s Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) told a meeting of scientists in Tasmania that 7.9 billion metric tons of carbon were emitted into the atmosphere as carbon dioxide in 2005 and the rate of increase is quickening. “From 2000 to 2005, the growth rate of carbon dioxide emissions was more than 2.5 percent per year, whereas in the 1990s it was less than one percent per year,” he said. Paul Fraser, also with CSIRO Marine and Atmospheric Research, says that atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide grew by two parts per million in 2005, the fourth year in a row of above-average growth. “To have four years in a row of above average carbon dioxide growth is unprecedented,” said Fraser, who is program manager for the CSIRO Measurement, Processes & Remote Sensing Program.

China To Become World’s Leading Source of CO2

China will surpass the United States in 2009, ten years ahead of previous forecasts, as Earth’s biggest national source of carbon dioxide—and not because U.S. emissions are declining, according to a forecast by the International Energy Agency. China’s rise is fueled heavily by coal and is exempt from the Kyoto Protocol’s requirements for reductions in emissions of global warming gases. Unregulated emissions from China, India and other developing countries probably will comprise most of an anticipated 50 per cent increase in global carbon-dioxide emissions during the next quarter-century if present trends continue. China has rejected greenhouse-gas limits. “You cannot tell people who are struggling to earn enough to eat that they need to reduce their emissions,” said Lu Xuedu, the deputy director general of Chinese Office of Global Environmental Affairs. (“China to Pass U.S. in 2009 in Emissions,” New York Times, 11/6/06).

Starving North Sea Seabirds Eat Their Own Young

Seabirds’ vulnerability to climate change has been illustrated by an unprecedented breeding crash of United Kingdom North Sea seabirds during 2004, according to the World Wildlife Fund. The direct cause for the breeding failure of common guillemots, Arctic skuas, great skuas, kitiwakes, Arctic terns and other seabirds at Shetland and Orkney colonies was a shortage of their prey, a small fish called sandeels. Warming ocean waters and major shifts in species that underpin the ocean food web are believed to be behind the major seabird decline. Great skuas on the Shetland Islands have been continued on page 10
On December 28, the Des Moines Catholic Workers held their Feast of the Holy Innocents Witness in Omaha to spotlight the threat that StratCom poses to our planet. The following report and statement by Catholic Worker Frank Cordaro explains the Biblical basis for this annual protest by the Iowa group, and the reaction this year’s event produced. The Catholic Worker movement was founded in 1933 by Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day in New York City to implement the teachings of the Gospels and to promote the Biblical promise of mercy, compassion, justice and love. Grounded in the firm belief in the God-given dignity of every person, the movement is committed to nonviolence, voluntary poverty, and the Works of Mercy as a way of life. The movement has spread far and wide; over 130 Catholic Worker communities, from Idaho to Australia, serve those in need in their neighborhoods.

The 28th Annual Feast of the Holy Innocents Retreat and Witness at Offutt AFB took place as planned. Eleven people participated in the two and a half day retreat. The scriptures were studied, past resistance efforts at Offutt reviewed, the new god-awful mission of StratCom explored, prayers made, Eucharist celebrated, old and new friendships fostered, community built and the spirit of Christmas invoked.

By the time we got to Offutt’s main entrance for the witness at noon on December 28 we were 25 strong. As was the case last year, the Offutt security people again closed down the two-lane main entrance road and allowed us to take our procession up the 1/3-mile drive to the closed gates. This year, all security personnel were hidden from sight, though a number of them were in the guardhouse directly attached to the closed gate.

Once we reached the closed main gate, we read our prepared statement (see next page for text) and sang the Christmas carol, “Joy to the World.” Fr. Jim Murphy concluded our witness with a passionate plea to any of the personnel who were listening, to quit their military jobs and come join our efforts as peace-makers. Fr. Jim recalled a similar plea of Archbishop Oscar Romero made to El Salvadoran military personnel back in 1980.

There were no line crossers this year. But as we returned to our cars to go home, many of us were struck by the apparent lack of any visible contact with Offutt personnel at the gate. There was one lone Omaha World-Herald reporter.

Our efforts this year to proclaim the Christmas message at StratCom seem to be following more closely the Gospel of Luke’s version of the birth of Jesus. In Luke’s story of Christmas, the baby Jesus is born in the most marginal and humble of places, far away from any place of importance or notice, in a barn on the outskirts of Bethlehem, an insignificant village in occupied Palestine.

In Luke’s Gospel, God sent his angels to deliver the proclamation of his Son’s birth to a bunch of shepherds. And it was to these shepherds that the task of announcing Jesus’ birth to the world is given. Given who shepherds were and where they came from, their Christmas message probably received no more a hearing from ‘the powers that be’ than ours did at Offutt’s gate this year.

Fr. Jim Murphy of Portage, Wisconsin, climbed up onto the fence at Kenney Gate to exhort the staff inside the base to renounce StratCom’s deadly missions of global domination and destruction.
Feast of the Holy Innocents
Witness Statement at StratCom
by Frank Cordaro

This year marks the 28th year we Catholic Workers and our friends have come to Omaha for a two-and-a-half-day retreat to make our Christmas celebration complete by exploring the often ignored and deeper meaning of the season.

On December 28 in the Catholic Lectionary, the Church celebrates the Feast of Holy Innocents, commemorating King Herod's massacre of all the male infants of Bethlehem. Using the Gospel of Matthew's infant narrative, we examined the links between King Herod, his killing of the innocent children in Bethlehem and the murderous deeds of U.S.-backed modern day Herods.

When telling the story of the massacre of the infants, Matthew quotes the prophet Jeremiah, "A voice was heard in Ramah, sobbing and loud lamentations; Rachel weeping for her children, and she would not be consoled, since they were no more." Jeremiah quotes Rachel, whose fruitful tears spoke of the killing of the children of Israel, centuries before himself, to be repeated in Jeremiah's day. Matthew picks up the Jeremiah lament and applies Rachel's tears to the innocents of Bethlehem.

The weeping of Rachel is repeated countless times today, in every corner of the world where innocent children are collateral damage, and pay the price for the greed of the rich and powerful. These children are the innocent victims of the political insecurities of the world's ruling classes.

We know that the power structure of Empires has not changed since Biblical times. Herod in Jesus' day was backed up by the Legions of the Roman armies. Our modern day Herods are backed up by the U.S.A. Global Military presence and Offutt's nuclear and space commands.

As if the targeting of 8,000 nuclear weapons were not horrific enough, on October 1, 2002, the U.S. Space Command was added to this hellish mission. Strategic Command now has the mission and ability to initiate and direct what it calls "Full Spectrum Global Warfare." That means the Pentagon can now wage war at any point on the earth's surface within minutes, directly from Offutt AFB. From nuclear weapons, to direct control and command of clandestine secret military missions, the people at StratCom have a direct hand in it all.

We are here today at STRATCOM's gate filled with shame and remorse for our nation's anti-life, anti-peace, anti-love, anti-Christian and anti-Christmas ways. We come with prayers of repentance, in faith and trust in the 'Spirit of Christmas' that found room enough in the troubled times and lands of 1st century Palestine to birth Jesus into human history. We pray that same 'Spirit of Christmas' can help us change our war-making imperial ways.

HEROD KILLED THE INNOCENT. STRATCOM WOULD KILL THE WORLD. CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS. SHUT DOWN STRATCOM.

It is a sad and shameful truth of our time, that in a nation that claims a Christian identity, that we reflect more the properties of the Roman Empire than the peace loving, justice seeking Jesus of the New Testament. And as such, we are more likely to back today's Herods and imprison and crucify today's Jesus.

Offutt Air Force Base has served as the home of our nation's nuclear weapons targeting and command headquarters for over 56 years. Today, StratCom at Offutt AFB holds the whole world under a threat of global nuclear annihilation every day, every hour, every minute of the year.

What’s HOT in Global Warming?
by Professor Bruce E. Johansen

struggling with climate change. As a result, the nearly 7,000 pairs of great skuas in the Shetlands produced only a few chicks and WWF reports that starving adult birds ate their own young ("Climate Change Pushing Bird Species to Oblivion," Environment News Service, 11/14/06). [www.ens-newswire.com/ens/nov2006/2006-11-14-01.asp].

Bird Flu Move Over: Melting Ice May Release Old Flu Viruses

Dormant strains of influenza that lase ice could be set free by melting ice and then spread by migrating birds, according to Professor Scott Rogers, Chair of Biology at Bowling Green State University near Toledo, Ohio. “We’ve found viral RNA in the ice in Siberia, and it’s along the major flight paths of migrating waterfowl,” whose pathways take them to North America, Asia and Australia, and interconnect with other migratory paths to Europe and Africa, explains Rogers. The virus that Rogers and his collaborators have found is closest to a strain that circulated from 1933-38 and again in the 1960s” (“Melting Ice May Release Frozen Influenza Viruses.” "Environment News Service, 11/27/06). Rogers’ research was published in the December, 2006 Journal of Virology. Rogers said that viruses may be housed in ice for long periods, then released many years afterwards, when human immunity has lapsed. Survivors of the worldwide flu pandemic of 1918 had immunity to the responsible strain, called H1N1, but that immunity fades, giving off methane and carbon dioxide. The Balbina dam has been analyzed, and found to be worse for emissions than a fossil-fuel plant generating the same amount of power. In some cases, hydropower can release four times the methane as fossil-fuel plants per amount of energy generated. That ratio is open to debate. These debates bear on implementation of the Kyoto Protocol, which allows Clean Development Mechanism credit for some hydroelectric development.

Hydropower in the Tropics Increases Methane Emissions

Hydropower has gained a reputation as an alternative source of electric power because it uses no fossil fuels. However, the flooding of vegetated land behind dams can increase emissions of methane. During the 1980s, for example, about 2,500 square kilometers of Amazonian forest were flooded behind the Balbina dam to supply the Brazilian city of Manaus, part of the more than 80 percent of Brazil’s domestic energy that is produced by hydropower. While hydropower uses no fossil fuels directly, “the global-warming impact of hydropower plants can often outweigh that of comparable fossil-fuel power stations” (“Methane Quashes Green Credentials of Hydropower,” Nature, 11/30/06). Large amounts of organic matter are trapped behind a dam when land is flooded. This is especially notable in warm climates, where organic matter quickly decays, giving off methane and carbon dioxide. The Balbina dam has been analyzed, and found to be worse for emissions than a fossil-fuel plant generating the same amount of power. In some cases, hydropower can release four times the methane as fossil-fuel plants per amount of energy generated. That ratio is open to debate. These debates bear on implementation of the Kyoto Protocol, which allows Clean Development Mechanism credit for some hydroelectric development.

Allstate Insurance Decides to Quit Writing Residential Policies for New York City

Fearing that a Category 3 hurricane could drive a gigantic storm surge straight northward through New York Harbor, pushing a wall of water perhaps 15 feet tall up the city, and the counties that make up Long Island—Nassau and Suffolk. In the most vulnerable parts of that market, the company is also refusing to renew existing insurance (“A Dream Blown Away: Climate Change Already Has a Chilling Effect on Where Americans Can Build Their Homes,” Washington Post, 12/2/06).

A New Solar Power Technology

On the hopeful side of the ledger, the Wall Street Journal carried news of an innovative and powerful solar-power technology. A 380-foot concrete tower surrounded by 600 huge mirrors near Seville, Spain is part of a new solar-power technology called
In addition to regular tests of ICBMs, Vandenberg is heavily involved in the Missile Defense program, both in the testing and in the deployment of ground-based mid-course interceptors. A number of tests of a system designed to shoot down incoming ICBMs from other countries using interceptor missiles have been performed from Vandenberg. Typically, an ICBM is launched from Vandenberg and an interceptor missile is launched from Kwajalein, with the hope of an impact in space destroying the dummy warhead carried by the ICBM. Although the system has experienced a number of failures and a few limited successes, interceptors had already been deployed at both Vandenberg Air Force Base and at Ft. Greely in Alaska. During the recent testing of ICBMs by North Korea, the interceptors at Ft. Greely were put on alert.

Vandenberg is also the home of the Joint Space Operations Center (JSpOC). The purpose of this facility is to integrate the data received from satellites and to make that data available to the four branches of the Armed Forces, as well as to specific Allied Nations. Data can be used for surveillance, tracking, targeting, space superiority, and controlled access to space. The data is then used in any location where our armed forces have current operations including war zones and areas of clandestine operations.

As with many military institutions, the environment along an incredibly beautiful and pristine expanse of California coastline has been affected by the military’s presence here. One of the components of rocket fuel is the chemical Aluminum Perchlorate, known to cause birth defects in fetuses and thyroid disease in adults. The U.S. government’s General Accountability Office, which studied the levels of Perchlorate contamination at Department of Defense sites, including military facilities and military contractor facilities, found the groundwater at Vandenberg to have been contaminated to 517 ppb (parts per billion). Depending on which study one accepts, the safe level of Perchlorate in drinking water is considered to be between 4 and 6 ppb. Recent studies have also shown that a large percentage of the lettuce grown and distributed throughout the United States is contaminated with Perchlorate as is much of the nation’s milk. Perchlorate is now being found in mothers’ milk as well.

Local activists have held regular rallies, protests and vigils at the base since the 1980s, when Vandenberg first began test launches of the Minuteman ICBM. Many have been arrested and some have spent time in prison for their resistance to our government’s policies and Vandenberg’s role in those policies. Those protests continue today as a means of confronting our government’s drive toward what the U.S. Space Command in Omaha, Nebraska calls “Full Spectrum Dominance”—a dominance heavily supported by the mission of Vandenberg Air Force Base.
What It Really Takes to Make Peace
by Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa

Mondo we Langa (formerly David Rice) has been designated as a “political prisoner” by Amnesty International for his flawed conviction of the 1970 murder of Omaha Police officer Larry Minard. Sentenced to life imprisonment without parole, he has steadfastly maintained his innocence throughout his nearly 37-year-long incarceration. The Nebraska Report is honored to publish the following analysis by one of most astute political minds in Nebraska.

What does it mean to want peace? And to what extent can one really want peace if he or she has arrogance and hypocrisy residing in his or her consciousness? Many politicians in the Democratic Party, and some in the Republican Party, are questioning the wisdom of the U.S. government’s military and subsequent invasion of Iraq. Many of these are charging George “El Diablo” Bush [Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez’s term for the president] with misleading the nation in order to get congressional and public backing for the invasion. And there are those who want the U.S. armed forces brought home, because they see their risks of life and limb in Iraq as unwarranted because of the Bush/Cheney Administration’s incompetence in fighting the war and its failure to have a plan to “win the peace.”

In the midst of all this, there are some fundamental questions that are not being asked, or asked so rarely and timidly that they are having little or no impact on the public discourse on war-and-peace issues. One of these questions is: Did the U.S. government have the right to attack and then occupy Iraq? As is being loudly asserted, Bush misled Congress and the public with regard to ‘justifications’ for the attack. He and his administration told us that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. To this date, such weapons have not been found. But isn’t the public discourse missing an element? Are biological and chemical weapons, atomic bombs, hydrogen bombs and neutron bombs weapons of mass destruction? Does the U.S. government possess stockpiles of such weaponry?

By what moral and/or ethical authority does George Bush or any other U.S. government ‘leader’ assert that a sovereign nation has no right to possess weapons of mass destruction unless that nation has U.S. authorization?

Against the Minnesota Vikings, I decided I’d watch at least a portion of the first quarter. Before the game started, however, there was a ceremony in observance of the fifth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. Members of a military honor guard marched in line, bearing metal helmets and shining boots. I looked at where they stepped. It was on the face painted on the field of what is supposed to be a ‘redskin.’ The U.S. military personnel marched and did their formations on this face.

There is a cliché known as “rubbing it in someone’s face.” It happens when one has some kind of victory over another and then reminds that party of the victory in a boastful and/or insulting fashion. Symbolically, at the very least, this ceremony amounted to a rubbing it into the face of this land’s indigenous people that Europeans (Caucasians) defeated them and are, thus, free to make images of them and treat those images with disdain.

I was seeing the shining boots and the glare of irony. There it was—the fifth anniversary of 9/11—and there were these words spoken and written on this anniversary about how the U.S. must protect itself against its ‘enemies,’ all these political speeches about terrorists resenting our ‘freedoms.’ I was asking myself how it could be that practically no voices were being heard that were asking if maybe 9/11 happened, not because of resentment of ‘our freedoms,’ but because of resentment of U.S. government acts of aggression against foreign nations—overt and covert overthrows of governmental leaders (“regime change”), manipulations of economies through forced trade agreements, policies of cultural imperialism via commercial media, etc.? I was asking myself where the voices were to honestly ask if part of a prescription for protecting this country from attack would be an examination of U.S. foreign policy and a commitment on the part of this country to correct wrongs and operate in the future on the basis of justice?

The fact is that there are all kinds of people all over this world who have been stepped on by this country’s government, just as the face of the so-called “red-skin” was being stepped on by the shiny boots. Maybe at that moment of the pre-game ceremony, someone representing this government should have had leg crowd in singing “This Land Is Your Land.” Chances are, if there were any indigenous people in the crowd and they were to have sung “This Land Is MY Land,” there would have been a Homeland Security alert issued. (“Code Red?”)

I get this art and life and what’s imitating what confused. Some of this is unquestionably due to the fact that I’m living in a country that became the “United States of America” through the near-extermination of people of color whom the enslavers referred to as “savages,” through the enslavement of people of color whom the enslave referred to as “beasts.” Today, “El Diablo” clumsily orates on the question of nuclear weapons and what nations are responsible enough to possess them, while it is the U.S., so far as anyone knows, that is the only nation in the world to have used nuclear weapons in war. But somehow this country is not a “rogue nation.”

Peace is much more than the mere absence of conflict. It is a state of people’s coexistence in which there is a collective sense of well being and common interest. People in this country who truly want peace in the world have to be able and willing to identify the reality of this government’s past and present history, as well as the considerations it has been motivated by, and ask questions about its foreign and domestic policies that can uncover answers of real substance.
VICTORY, conclusion

security” industry, the politically hard-wired mercenary forces that are the power elite’s latest lucrative spin-off. And as with Saudi Arabia, oil money from the new Iraq will pump untold billions into American banks and investment houses.

But that’s not all. For even in the worst-case scenario, if the Americans had to pull out tomorrow, abandoning everything—their bases, their contracts, their collaborators—the Bush power factions would still come out ahead. For not only has their already incalculable wealth been vastly augmented (with any potential losses indemnified by U.S. taxpayers), but their deeply entrenched sway over American society has also increased by several magnitudes. No matter which party controls the government, the militarization of America is so far gone now it’s impossible to imagine any major rollback in the gargantuan U.S. war machine—725 bases in 132 countries, annual military budgets topping $500 billion, a planned $1 trillion in new weapons systems already moving through the pipeline. Indeed, the Democratic ‘opposition’ has promised to expand the military.

Nor will either party conceivably challenge the dominance of the energy behemoths—or stand against the American public’s demand for cheap gas, big vehicles, and unlimited consumption of a vast dis-

PR cover) to help bring about a long-planned war that had nothing to do with democracy or security or any coherent ideology whatsoever beyond the remorseless pursuit of wealth and power, the blind urge to be top dog.]

So Bush and his cohorts have won even if the surge fails and Iraq lapses into perpetual anarchy, or becomes an extremist religious state; they’ve won even if the whole region goes up in flames, and terrorism flares to unprecedented heights—because this will just mean more war-profiteering, more fear-profiteering. And yes, they’ve won even though they’ve lost their congressional majority and could well lose the presidency in 2008, because war and fear will continue to fill their coffers, buying them continuing influence and power as they bide their time through another interregnum of a Democratic ‘centrist’—who will, at best, only nibble at the edges of the militarist state—until they are back in the saddle again. The only way they can lose the Iraq War is if they are actually arrested and imprisoned for their war crimes. And we all know that’s not going to happen.

So Bush’s confident strut, his incessant upbeat pronouncements about the war, his complacent smirk, his callous indifference to the unspeakable horror he has unleashed in Iraq—these are not the hallmarks of self-delusion, or willful ignorance, or a disassociation from reality. He and his accomplices know full well what the reality is—and they like it.

Chris Floyd is an American journalist. His weekly political column, “Global Eye,” ran in the Moscow Times from 1996 to 2006. His work has appeared in print and online in venues all over the world, including The Nation, Counterpunch, Columbia Journalism Review, the Christian Science Monitor, The Manifesto and many others. His story on Pentagon plans to foment terrorism won a “Project Censored” award in 2003. He is the author of Empire Burlesque: High Crimes and Low Comedy in the Bush Imperium, and is co-founder and editor of the “Empire Burlesque” political blog. The above article was published on TruthOut January 8, 2007.

Bolivia, conclusion

Today, the elite and middle class in Santa Cruz are frustrated by Morales’ rise to power as the nation’s first Indian president. Expressions such as “should throw away this Indian” are popular in Santa Cruz, where the opposition has been attacking Morales on racial grounds for a long time prior to his inauguration. In fact, recently, the governor and local elite did not invite Morales to the official ceremonies inaugurating the well-known International Fair in Santa Cruz, despite the fact that it was tradition for the president to do so. Once while visiting the Gabriel René Moreno Public University in Santa Cruz, the UJC even attempted to Lynch Morales, who was forced to flee. The attack interrupted a ceremony in which the president donated new buses to the university. It was this empowerment of Indians in Bolivia that sparked the rise of white supremacist ideas in Santa Cruz.

As a consequence of this racist discourse and the erosion of their traditional power, many groups in Santa Cruz, especially the white elite who own most of the media in Bolivia and the middle class, are focused on autonomy for Santa Cruz. The rest of Bolivia sees this autonomy as separatism and a strategy to empower the white elite by rejecting the Collas. In some ways, the elite is building an Apartheid society in Santa Cruz. The proposed autonomy for the region is perceived by many Bolivians as equivalent to the Israeli wall, constructed to isolate the Palestinians. Philip Goldberg, the U.S. ambassador in La Paz, has called for a protection of minority rights, but this does not imply siding with the elites. Yet, as long as this elite minority does not respect the rights of the majority in Bolivia, which is mostly indigenous, Bolivian democracy will be undermined over time. The government, led mostly by Indians, might have to assert its power, which is obviously not good for the protection of the minority rights, or overall political democracy in the country. In this way, a comparison between the current situations in South Africa and in Bolivia might make sense; both have antagonistic white minorities attempting to hold onto power as the majority of people of color achieve political control for the first time in many years.

The Bolivian opposition remains small but ready to do whatever it can to tear down the Morales presidency. But, as with similar opposition groups in places like Venezuela, where they had to practically disappear for a time because they could not reinvent themselves effectively in the new political climate, their success is not guaranteed. Indeed, the white elite and their allies might even run the risk of solidifying and expanding the indigenous rise to power. Certainly, it would be good for Bolivian democracy if the opposition ultimately emerged with a new form of conservativism—updated, less racist and working within the legal bounds of the new constitution, but that remains to be seen. In the meantime, even the opposition media estimates Morales’ public support throughout the country at no less than 59 percent.

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Speaking Our Peace, conclusion

[According to conventional analyses, deficits] decrease national saving, reduce domestic investment and increase borrowing from abroad... The reduction in national saving raises domestic interest rates, which dampens investment and attracts capital from abroad... The reduction in domestic investment (which lowers productivity growth) and the increase in the current account deficit (which requires that more of the returns from the domestic capital stock accrue to foreigners) both reduce future national income, with the loss in income steadily growing over time. Under the conventional view, the costs imposed by sustained deficits tend to build gradually over time, rather than occurring suddenly.

But Orszag argues that the conventional view is too benign. Debt on our scale may lead to rather sudden and drastic effects: the national debt creates fear of high inflation to reduce the debts, a loss of confidence in foreign exchange markets, subsequent loss of American investor and creditor confidence and reinvestment in non-U.S. markets. It leads to internal increases in interest rates, depreciation of exchange rates and reduced confidence in stocks and personal wealth. It also creates an increase in interest rates and a further depreciation of exchange rates, a follow-on increase in long-term interest on credit, and, finally, a mutually reinforcing cycle undermining confidence in the economy leading to a depression in economic activity. Some of the effects that Orszag predicted are already happening: for example, the dollar has gone into the pit against more stable foreign currencies like the Euro. Massive debt eventually creates massive inflation, so cheap money can pay it off, or depression, because our credit is overextended.

In the context of this war and the Bush/Cheney Administration’s “super-capitalist” destruction of the conditions that might make capitalism work long term, Don Reeves, the first president of NFP, has made the following proposal, as an alternative to Rep. Rangel’s draft proposal discussed last time. This kind of tax would put the silent majority into the streets and might delay, if not prevent, the Orszag crisis. It’s worth a try. Let the debate on this proposal begin and let it begin in Nebraska.

President Bush will ask Congress this month for another $100 billion to pursue the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan through September 2007, in addition to the $70 billion already granted by Congress for this fiscal year and the $400 billion given in earlier years. All of this new money would be borrowed, since the federal budget is already in deficit, to be repaid, with interest, by our children and grandchildren.

Rep. Charles Rangel (D-NY) has also announced his intention to reintroduce his congressional proposal to reinstate conscription for military service. He notes that our volunteer army draws disproportionately from poor and minority families—in Nebraska, we would add rural families and communities, because reserve units are disproportionately rural. He argues that a draft, by lottery, would more fairly distribute the human cost of the wars across the spectrum of American families.

We concur with Rep. Rangel’s analysis regarding the distribution of the human costs of the Iraq war among American families. But we cannot support his solution. Among other reasons, we fear that availability of conscripts might enable or encourage further military misadventures by this or succeeding administrations.

We propose an alternative way of distributing at least part of the burden of the wars. Let’s institute a surtax on income taxes at the level that would cover the annual costs of the continuing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, plus the interest on past borrowings for the same. Assuming that Congress grants the President’s expected request, as they have in preceding years, this would amount to a total of about $220 billion this year—about $200 billion for this year’s costs of the wars, plus about $20 billion interest on earlier year’s borrowings. This would require a personal and corporate income surtax of about 18 percent in this fiscal year.

To honor those who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, we would exempt from such surtax all service members who are serving or have served in either venue since October 2001 and their immediate families. The parallel surtax on business or corporate profits could also provide for a partial exemption, in proportion to the extent to which reserve call-ups have disrupted their businesses.

Implementation of such a surtax could be quite straightforward. A line could be added to the income tax form at the point at which current income tax is figured (e.g., following line 57 on the 2006 Form 1040), which would require each taxpayer to add the surtax, unless they were exempt.

This annual exercise would remind every taxpayer of the ongoing costs of these conflicts, honor those who have served, and are serving, in Iraq and Afghanistan, and avoid adding the costs of the wars to our already huge national debt.

What’s HOT, conclusion

“concentrating solar power” (CSP) to produce sun-derived energy that is commercially viable on a large scale. In this case, the power station, constructed by Abengoa SA, can supply about 6,000 homes (“Sun Reigns on Spain’s Plains: Madrid Leads a Global Push to Capitalize on New Solar-power Technologies,” Wall Street Journal, 12/5/06). Spain and other European countries are subsidizing CSP and other solar technologies to move away from fossil fuels. According to the consulting firm Emerging Energy Research, 45 CSP projects are being planned around the world, including a few in the United States. The Spanish government has set a goal of 500 megawatts of solar power by the year 2010. Spain is presently subsidizing CSP development, requiring utility companies to buy their power at above-market rates. Abengoa plans to eventually build enough CSP capacity to supply all of Seville, about 180,000 homes.

The CSP technology is much more powerful than photovoltaic cells. A roof-top photovoltaic complex might power a small office building, while the complex near Seville can generate 11 megawatts, enough electricity for a small town. The CSP mirrors track the sun and concentrate its power on single points, generating steam that spins a power-generating turbine. Some of the heat also is stored in solutions of oil or molten salt to run the turbine after sunset or when clouds obscure the sun. Such new technologies may increase the potential of solar power and reduce its cost, now 12 to 15 cents per kilowatt-hour, compared to an average of 4 cents for coal-fired energy. Japan’s Sony Corp. has developed technology for embedding solar-power cells in roof tiles, some of which are now being installed in Japan, Germany, and in parts of California. A day is coming when adroit energy conservationists will be able to watch their electric meters run backward, as they feed excess power into the grid. This is not science fiction. At the science-fiction level is nanotechnology that may someday use nearly any building surface that faces the sun (window panes, for example) to generate solar power.

FEBRUARY 2007 NEBRASKA REPORT, P.11
I want to follow-up on my discussion of the draft in last month’s column. First some personal anecdotes.

Last month I did my usual Christmas financing ritual. I calculated how much I was going to spend on charities and Christmas gifts. I then googled my checking account to see if it was sufficient to cover my calculations. It wasn’t. So I went to my savings and took a bit of money there. Thus I avoided a lookup for writing ‘insufficient funds’ checks. I’m still a free man.

I don’t believe in debt. I don’t borrow. My medievalist anti-usury beliefs run deep. The only debt I ever incurred was the cost of buying the ‘A’ Street house, and that was when the house payments there were less than standard rent. I buy junkers to avoid car payments, and I don’t buy much of anything else save for food. It shows in my lifestyle. My parents never borrowed, even for their house. They rebuilt an old one. Grandpa Olson never had any debt after he came from Sweden. We are a stingy lot—as I suspect are most Nebraskans. Personal debt is forbidden save for farm debt, and that can’t be helped.

Which brings me to my topic. Why are we in conservative Nebraska so eager to support debt-making militaristic regimes? I said ‘militaristic.’

We, Nebraskans, have voted for all of the militaristic administrations from the 1960s on—Lyndon Johnson’s, Nixon’s, Reagan’s, George H.W. Bush’s and George W. Bush’s. Nebraskans call them ‘conservative,’ but they are anything but. Conservatism means the rule of law, personal integrity, individual freedom, frugality, avoidance of violent ruptures, and the eschewal of overseas ventures. American ‘conservatism’ has none of these. It no longer includes respect for the central values of great conservative thinkers such as Edmund Burke, Samuel Johnson, and the conservatives among the founding fathers. They sought slow but real change to conserve the significant valid institutions, distrust abstract ideology, concerned themselves with the ravages that poverty inflicts, and distributed power among the various classes and estates. Eisenhower was the last conservative president. One may disagree with the old conservative positions, but those who advocated them were not generally the pimps of privilege alone.

When contemporary Nebraska votes for ‘conservatism,’ it votes for soaking the poor, endless militarism, violent nation-building and radical interventionism in the affairs of other nations. It votes for centralized profligacy and power, and mountains of debt.

We are really, really, really in debt—as little kids would say. The national debt approaches 9 trillion dollars or nearly $30,000 per person. The national debt when Reagan took office was less than one trillion. The debt was run up tremendously under Reagan and George W. Bush, then the rate of increase diminished under Clinton. Under George W. Bush, the national debt has in six years increased by nearly three trillion dollars. About one-half trillion, including supplemental appropriations, has gone to the War in Iraq. According to the staid Council of Foreign Relations,

[S]ome economists predict the entire war, based on projections U.S. forces will remain in Iraq until after 2010, may cost over $1 trillion. The price tag has drawn criticism not only because pre-war projections by the White House were closer to $50 billion, but because of the manner in which the bill was budgeted: through supplemental requests, often with little time for congressional oversight or full disclosure of how the money is allocated. ‘It’s a question of budgetary integrity and the degree to which you are doing this outside the normal budgetary process in a way that lacks sufficient oversight,’ says CFR Chair in International Economics Douglas Holtz-Eakin, former director of the Congressional Budget Office.

What are the effects of all this? When I am in danger of overspending, I either have to cut the grocery bill or earn a little extra money somehow. I certainly have to exercise oversight over my spending. When the government spends more than it takes in, you would think that it would tax more and look at how it spends. But this administration has decided that it is indelicate to tax really rich people and unfair to look at how money is spent in Iraq. Thus, the same people who profiteer from the war that spares their children also get the new top one-percent income tax breaks. We tax the poor, kill the rural and poor, and bankrupt the nation to pay for our war games for the really rich.

But what of the argument that Dick Cheney has made that “Reagan proved that deficits don’t matter?” As Linda Bilmes, who teaches budget and financial management at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, argues in the Washington Post (www.ksg.harvard.edu/news/opeds/2004/bilmes_reagan_wp_021004.htm), the Reagan prosperity years were the product of temporary unique circumstances. The Reagan debt remains and the Bush-Bush debt remains. Peter R. Orszag, Joseph A. Pechman Senior Fellow and Deputy Director, Economic Studies at the Brookings Institute, has analyzed in depth the effects of our continuing massive debt:

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