



Nebraskans for Peace

# Nebraska Report

*There is no Peace without Justice*

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## Why aren't more Nebraskans for Peace?



by Hendrik van den Berg  
UNL Professor of Economics

In the *New York Times* of April 28, 2007, columnist Nicholas Kristof revealed several documents that confirm what a Swiss diplomat told the press some months ago, namely that between 2001 and 2003 high-level officials from Iran and the U.S. met to negotiate the normalization of relations. These negotiations apparently continued right on past

President Bush's January 2002 "Axis of Evil" speech. Then, in May of 2003, the U.S. suddenly ended the negotiations by simply not showing up for a scheduled meeting in Geneva, standing up the waiting Iranian delegation without any official regret.

The documents posted by Kristof on his *New York Times* website include the talking points for the negotiations as proposed by Iran and the revisions sug-

gested by the U.S. The talking points include a set of principles that, quite realistically in my view, could have led to an agreement that satisfied the interests of both Iran and the United States. But, apparently, the Bush/Cheney Administration was not interested in peace. The abandonment of the talks by the U.S. after first encouraging their progress may have been the result of infighting within the Administration. However, there is little doubt that the misplaced encouragement of moderate voices in the Iranian government to agree to an accommodation with the U.S. ended up strengthening the hands of the more extreme elements in Iran when the talks came to nothing. The current president of Iraq, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad came to power *after* negotiations for the normalization of Iran-U.S. relations were abandoned by the U.S. Since then, Ahmadinejad's shaky popularity within Iran has been repeatedly propped up by U.S. threats against his country, and in each case, Ahmadinejad has returned the favor by uttering various threats against the U.S. and its close ally Israel.

In short, not long ago peace between Iran and the United States was a very realistic possibility, but we now face the more likely prospect of war. How likely is war with Iran?

### "All Options Are on the Table"

There have been multiple reports on the plans for an air- and sea-based attack on Iran, prepared by our very own StratCom as part of its new *offensive* mission array. Recently, our military con-

How likely is war with Iran? The White House has said, "All options are on the table." And there have been multiple reports on the plans for an air- and sea-based bombing attack, prepared by our very own StratCom as part of its new *offensive* mission array.

ducted a show of force in the Persian Gulf with an expanded fleet in various military exercises. White House officials openly threaten to attack Iran, claiming that "all options are on the table," including nuclear weapons. Actually, U.S. aggres-

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# Missile Defense Plans Endanger Nebraskans

*The following article originally appeared in the June 15, 2007 Omaha World-Herald as a "Midlands Voices" guest opinion.*

*by Paul A. Olson*

*(The writer, of Lincoln, is a University of Nebraska-Lincoln professor emeritus and the treasurer of Nebraskans for Peace)*

The war of words between the Kremlin and the White House over the administration's insistence on deploying Missile Defense bases in Eastern Europe revives bad memories.

As an echo of Cold War standoffs, the current clash between the Russians and us erodes our hopes of peaceful international relations. But, beyond stirring bad memories, it creates bad blood.

The Bush/Cheney Administration, as it did with Iraq, has opted to 'go it alone,' trying to deploy "Star Wars" bases in Eastern Europe without even the approval of NATO. It wishes to base its installations in two former Soviet satellites, both of which have had a traumatic history with the Kremlin (the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the Soviet crackdown on Poland's "Solidarity" movement in 1980).

When you consider that the U.S. has actively courted these former Warsaw Bloc nations, promoting their entry into NATO while barring Russia's admission, it makes sense that Russian President Vladimir Putin and his government feel of threatened.

President Putin and his government have recently accused the Bush/Cheney Administration of launching a new arms race and engaging in "imperialism."

Their anxious response has not been limited to words. Claiming self-defense, they recently test-fired two new types of missiles said to be able to evade all state-of-the-art missile defenses. And they have promised that more advances will be forthcoming—so long the U.S. proceeds with its plans.

This is a risky course for the U. S. and Russia to be pursuing. It is destined to inflame anti-American feelings throughout the world. It sets a bad example. China has now stepped forward to condemn the proposal, and even the Czech president has conceded that his citizens overwhelmingly oppose deploying a base in their country for fear it will make them a terrorist target. Clearly the international stakes are high and getting higher all the time.

For Nebraskans, this foolishness has a homegrown significance. The proposed missile-defense bases are the handiwork of the U. S. Strategic Command, since StratCom's "Integrated Missile Defense" mission would arm Eastern Europe.

However, the arming would also make Nebraska a target. The recently announced nomination of StratCom Commander James Cartwright to be the vice-chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff will further enhance StratCom's role and give it new global reach.

But, as Secretary of Defense Robert Gates reminded the graduating cadets in his commencement address at the Air Force Academy last month, the U.S. military is constitutionally bound to serve the wishes of the president—and the Congress.

Given that StratCom is in the home state of Nebraska Senators Chuck Hagel and Ben Nelson, both senators are uniquely poised to play a leading role in counseling caution and urging restraint to defuse this latest international crisis.

Hagel and Nelson are held in high regard by their Senate peers. The need for their leadership has never been greater, particularly because were hostilities to erupt, StratCom—and Nebraska—would be the target of any retaliation.

President Putin has proposed alternative locations for the radar base and missile battery outside of Eastern Europe. These would allay his nation's security concerns. His timely proposal might well permit both of our countries to pursue a missile defense strategy that would be of mutual benefit.

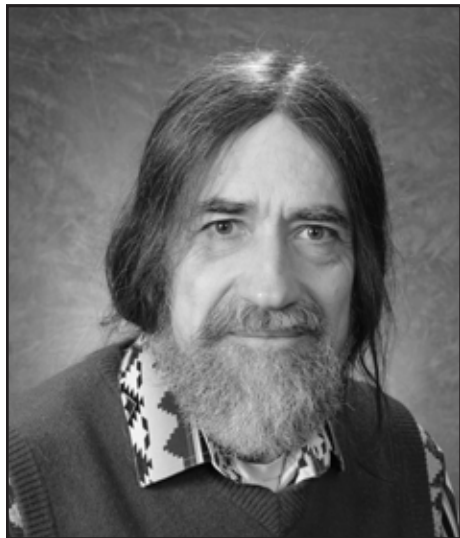
While the alternatives are being studied, the Kremlin has further called on the U.S. to stop its current deployment plans for Poland and the Czech Republic. Although the Bush/Cheney administration has not rejected the Russian proposal outright, it has regrettably made clear that it wants to go ahead with building the Eastern European bases.

We need no 'brinkmanship' now. This is the time to seek NATO and Russian cooperation in the venture. Sens. Hagel and Nelson have been invaluable in providing levelheaded leadership on both the Iraq and Iran. Now America dearly needs work from them to defuse the crisis over missile defense in Eastern Europe.

# Why aren't more for Peace? continued

sion has already begun in the form of incursions into Iran by U.S. special forces and by the direct funding and arming of opposition groups within Iran. Any reasonable description of these groups would recognize them as 'terrorists.' The news media also have reported that human piloted and unpiloted U.S. spy planes routinely fly over Iran.

The likelihood of a U.S.-initiated war against Iran is also reflected in the Administration's campaign to build anti-Iran sentiment among the American public. This campaign is aided by the same unquestioning and superficial reporting by the U.S. media that we saw leading up to the invasion of Iraq. The similarity between Saddam's weapons of mass destruction and the constant suggestions that Iran is close to producing an atomic bomb should be obvious. Especially ominous is President Bush's recent remark that we will have every right to



Professor Hendrik van den Berg

attack Iran "if they gain the capacity to produce an atomic weapon." Notice that these words leave completely open what *capacity to produce a weapon* means or who will decide whether that capacity exists. A surprising number of members of Congress of both parties openly state similar anti-Iran sentiments. Claims that Iran is directly involved in killing American troops occupying Iraq (as military spokesperson Brigadier General Kevin Bergner did in early July) have become routine. We even hear accusations by high-level military personnel that Iran is supporting the Taliban in Afghanistan, a group we know it bitterly opposed just a couple of years ago. Naturally, continual allegations by the administration and our military leaders that Iran is supplying the bombs that are killing U.S. soldiers in Iraq elicit much emotion from the public at large.

These allegations of Iranian aggression against the U.S. are not really very credible,

of course. It is well known that the great majority of attacks on U.S. soldiers are by Sunni insurgents, and it is unlikely that radical Sunnis would deal directly with the government of Shiite Iran. The media seldom report the nationality of the bombs and arms used against U.S. soldiers, except when an Iranian piece of equipment or explosive device is found. How many bullets, bombs, and weapons used against U.S. soldiers come from Saudi Arabia, China, Russia, Pakistan or Israel for that matter? Wouldn't it be interesting to know how many U.S. arms and explosives have been used against U.S. soldiers by insurgents in Iraq. We certainly know that many U.S. soldiers are killed by Iraqi military trained and equipped by us. Yet, the administration and the military keep ramping up the accusations against Iran, and the media seldom, if ever, put these accusations into perspective.

Most telling of the passivity and incompetence of the U.S. media was their coverage of the historic meeting between Iran and the U.S. in Iraq on May 28 of this year. You may recall that this meeting was widely hyped as a first step in discussing how Iran can help to restore order in Iraq. The Bush/Cheney Administration used this meeting to show that it was pursuing a 'diplomatic solution,' as so many pundits, opponents and foreign leaders had urged. Few people questioned the wisdom of the chief U.S. negotiator, Ambassador Ryan Crocker, when he emerged directly from the meeting to rant to reporters that, oh yes, the meeting went fine, but first Iran needs to stop supporting the insurgency in Iraq. The Iranian delegation followed standard diplomatic procedure and made no immediate statements about either the content of the meeting or what they thought of their counterparts. Media reports focused only on the U.S. threats toward Iran by Crocker after the meeting. There was absolutely no suggestion that the U.S. ambassador's behavior may have been in appropriate or undiplomatic. Perhaps this was yet another attempt by the U.S. to undermine Iranian interest in diplomacy. Or was it just an attempt by the Administration to build a justification for war? In any case, the focus of the media on the ambassador's allegations rather than the actual negotiating session suggests that the media will probably unquestioningly repeat the familiar Administration line that 'We tried diplomacy and it didn't work!'

## Reversing the Slide Toward War Is Difficult

The question we in the peace movement need to ask is: What can we do to counter the slide toward war with Iran? Obviously, we cannot directly force the U.S.

aircraft carriers out of the Persian Gulf. So a common objective of the peace movement is to influence public opinion in the hope that popular pressure will prevent the administration from launching a war against Iran. Shouldn't this be an easy task, given that peace makes so much sense and war is so costly? Actually, moving public opinion against war is very difficult, and this is why the continual allegations of Iranian aggression against the U.S. in Iraq are so dangerous.

**Given human nature, the constant barrage of anti-Iran rhetoric can easily overwhelm the best efforts of the peace movement.**

**Today, we can no more expect a majority of Americans to discount the unsubstantiated threats, allegations and outright lies about Iran and accurately assess the potential costs of war than were willing to question weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The fact is that leaders seeking support for war have basic human psychology on their side.**

Given human nature, the constant barrage of anti-Iran rhetoric can easily overwhelm the best efforts of the peace movement. Recall that after months of demonizing Saddam Hussein, equating the opposition to war to being 'French' and mocking U.N. inspectors as keystone cops who couldn't see the weapons of mass destruction that were sitting right there in Baghdad, there was little anyone could do to undermine the public support for invading Iraq. Today, we can no more expect a majority of Americans to discount the unsubstantiated threats, allegations and outright lies about Iran and accurately assess the potential costs of war than they were willing to question weapons of mass destruction. The fact is that leaders seeking support for war have basic human psychology on their side.

## The Psychology of War

According to Daniel Kahneman of Princeton University (Nobel Prize, 2001) and Jonathan Renshon of Harvard, "a bias in favor of hawkish beliefs and preferences is built into the fabric of the human mind" (*Foreign Policy*, January/February, 2007, pp. 34-38). First of all, people exaggerate their strengths: Research shows that 80 percent of us believe we are above average. For the same reason, generals are biased toward believing they will be victorious in war, and leaders will be biased toward believing their decisions to send those generals to war are

the right thing to do. The population is always ready to follow those leaders and their generals, sure of victory. 'Bomb them into the stone age,' they shout confidently, truly believing that a few sorties of U.S. bombers will quickly accomplish such a feat. Combining the ready support of the public with our leaders' inclination to overestimate their power to shape events, it simply does not take much to take us into a war that reasonable people should have seen as a disastrous quagmire.

Also biasing the case for war is the finding from psychology that people exaggerate the evil intentions of people they view as their adversaries. A little reflection of our own behavior makes that clear. Back in high school, weren't we all convinced that the people sitting in the stands on the other side of the football field were not as good as we were? Go team! Beat the bums! Recall, also, how eager we were to accept the idea that Saddam Hussein was 'evil,' while we conveniently overlooked the fact that we had armed him to fight against Iran in the 1980s, that we, the United States, had intentionally caused the death of some half million Iraqi children with our enforcement of trade sanctions that cut Iraq off from the most basic medical and food supplies, and that if there were still weapons of mass destruction in Iraq we had probably supplied them. Now, few people or the media ever question the suggestion whether Iran really is such an 'evil' country. We simply ignore the fact that Iran has not invaded any other country; it has signed and adhered to more international agreements than the U.S. has; and, according to Kristof, it was quite willing to negotiate the normalization of relations with the United States just a couple of years ago.

Kahneman and Renshon bring out another important psychological finding, which is that people are instinctively distrustful of negotiated solutions. Humans

*conclusion on page 5*

# *The Poindexter Case:*

## Thirty-Seven Years Doin' Time

by Nan Graf  
*Nebraskans for Justice*

Celebrity Paris Hilton was briefly released not long ago after serving three days in a California county jail when her psychiatrist pleaded with the sheriff's office to send her home wearing an ankle bracelet for house arrest, because she was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. (A judge later ordered Hilton's return to jail.)

"Three Days Doin' Time" could hardly be in the same class with Pearl Bailey's old blues song "Fifteen Years Doin' Time," but it's

### **Both Ed and Mondo have steadfastly maintained their innocence, even when it meant not qualifying for commutation or parole in Nebraska.**

just plain laughable when compared to the "Thirty-Seven Years Doin' Time" by Ed Poindexter and Mondo we Langa (formerly David Rice).

That said, following Ed Poindexter's recent evidentiary hearing in May of 2007, he may be near the end of his prison time—for a crime he didn't commit. Both Ed and Mondo have steadfastly maintained their innocence, even when it meant not qualifying for commutation or parole in Nebraska. Human rights activist Angela Davis has said repeatedly and recently that they're still in prison *because* they're innocent.

Poindexter and we Lange were arrested in August, 1970, then tried together at Omaha's Douglas County Courthouse in April, 1971, when they were convicted of First Degree Murder for the suitcase bombing that killed Omaha Police Department Officer Larry Minard and injured other police officers. Ed Poindexter went to prison to serve a life sentence but assumed, because he was innocent, he'd be

released within a few years after going through the appeal process. He was mistaken. As of August, 2007, Ed will have been incarcerated for 37 years.

His lawyer for the 1971 trial was former Governor Frank B. Morrison, Sr., who served as the Omaha Public Defender. At the opening day of Poindexter's evidentiary hearing on May 8, 2007, his current lawyer—Robert F. Bartle—introduced and handed over to District Judge Russell Bowie a 12/3/2003 video of Morrison's deposition in court, responding to questions from de-

fense and prosecuting attorney's. For the 2003 videotaped deposition, Morrison acknowledged his ineffective defense of Poindexter in April, 1971, blaming low-budget and overworked staff partly for the inadequacy: "There were a number of things that we didn't have that were vitally necessary for proper defense... the only way you could've had a just trial was extensive investigation."

Because of lack of funds, the Public Defender's Office couldn't afford an investigator or expert witnesses and, of course, scientific analysis. In addition, Morrison criticized prosecutors in the case in their failure to disclose a 911 tape that "would be ground for reversal and ground for a new trial because that's a violation of their professional obligation." Information about the 911 tape was recorded in a 10/13/1970 FBI Memo from the Omaha agent in charge to Director J. Edgar Hoover of the FBI, but police and prosecutors collaborated to make the tape unavailable to

defense lawyers at the time of the 1971 trial.

Morrison stated that he always thought Poindexter was innocent but felt that the racial climate at the time was partly responsible for the conviction of his client: "There was terrible discrimination and hatred of African Americans." Then he added that the *Omaha World-Herald* was in 1970 and 1971 "very prosecution-minded."

It was into this atmosphere that Ed Poindexter and Mondo we Langa emerged as leaders of the Omaha Black Panther Party (BPP), re-named in 1970 the National Committee to Combat Fascism (NCCF). Along with other black leaders, Poindexter and Rice helped mobilize North Omaha into needed self-defense against years of police brutality that culminated in the 1969 death of Vivian Strong, a 14-year-old African-American girl who was shot in the back and killed by Omaha Police Officer James Loder, son of movie star Hedy Lamarr.

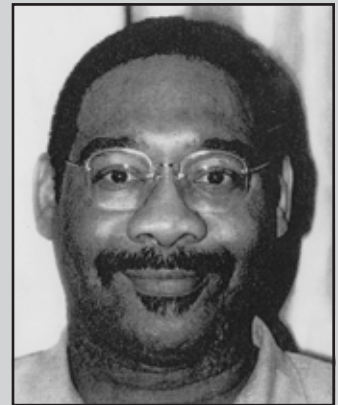
As Poindexter testified at the 2007 evidentiary hearing, Omaha police not only put the Panthers down with abusive, racist language, but routinely followed them or ordered them out of their cars. Police also threatened to 'get' them sooner or later.

It was not until years after their conviction that Ed's and Mondo's lawyers managed to review a few hundred memos from the two men's FBI files, released through the Freedom of Information Act. Finally, though, during the summer of 2002, Poindexter's legal team received thousands of FBI memos that, in the words of Director J. Edgar Hoover or of FBI agents, told what had been done behind the scenes against Ed, Mondo, other black activists and black groups.

Essentially, Panther leaders were slandered and harassed by the FBI in collusion with urban police forces via disinformation, divide-

### A Letter from Ed

*The following 'open letter' from Ed Poindexter and the joint one authored by both Ed and Mondo we Langa on page 9 were read publicly at the first annual "Peace and Justice Banquet" at UNL April 14, 2007. They are reprinted in their entirety.*



Truth abandoned in the wilderness will eventually find its way back home.

Unfortunately, the truth will not necessarily set us free. The truth will often get us locked up for infinity, even murdered by those rabid animals who claim to represent equality and justice.

However, it is not the truth that is responsible for the rise of inner-city drug trafficking and use.

It is not the truth that is responsible for the proliferation of and infestation of gang hooligans running amuck in our communities.

It is not the truth that is responsible for skyrocketing divorce and suicide rates.

It is not the truth that is responsible for hens crowing and roosters cackling, and "brothas on the downlow," yah know.

It is not the truth that is responsible for the AIDS scourge and the myriad of other lethal and incurable diseases that plague us.

It is not the truth that is responsible for the five million psychopaths in this country, yet only two million of them are incarcerated. Where are the other three million? I have my own ideas.

It is not the truth that is responsible for the tragic and unnecessary waste of hundreds of millions of human lives in wars of aggression and liberation over the centuries.

It is not the truth that is responsible for the survival of those rabid animals who fund, build and run that savage beast called penal institutions, who by the way, reward the incorrigible and continue punishing relentlessly those 'criminals' who have made sincere efforts to change their lives in meaningful ways.

It is also our collective failure to embrace and act upon the fruits of that quest for truth that is responsible for all of the above and then some; the fruits of that same quest that will ultimately free all of us, Mondo we Langa and myself included.

We thank you for your support.

Ed Poindexter

# Peace? conclusion

tend to discount the importance of any concession made by others in a negotiation, especially by people we perceive as hostile to our interests. Kahneman reports an interesting experiment in which a sample of Israeli citizens were asked their opinions on a peace proposal. One group of Israelis was told that the proposal was made by the Palestinians; another group was told that it was an Israeli proposal. Overwhelmingly, those who were told the proposal was a Palestinian one replied it was biased in favor of the Palestinians. The majority of the group of random respondents that was told it was an Israeli proposal thought it was 'even-handed.' Hence, the Administration's campaign to brand Iran as 'evil' not only prepares Americans for instinctively supporting any future war against Iran, but it also undermines negotiations to avoid such a war in the first place.

Finally, psychologists have also uncovered overwhelming evidence that people routinely dwell on immediate problems and ignore major problems that affect our lives in the long run. Evolution 'hard-wired' us to focus on the short-run because, well, if our ancestors had failed to quickly react to the bear threatening them at the mouth of their cave because they were too preoccupied thinking about whether they had stored enough food to get through the next winter, we would not be here today. The oblivious long-run visionaries were eaten by bears and did not live to have descendants and thus did not pass on their genes. In the case of Iran, we desperately need people to focus on the long-run consequences. Unfortunately, though, we have to accept that humans are more likely to join the mad rush toward the cave mouth to confront the alleged arrival of a bear.

## So, How Do We Achieve Peace?

Nebraskans for Peace faces the challenge of countering the drumbeat toward a war with Iran. If that drumbeat continues, human psychology suggests that most Americans will sooner or later succumb to the war fever. Those who value peace must, therefore, work very hard to counter the tendency of people to overestimate how successful any military action against Iran would be, to exaggerate the evil Iran really is, to discount the potential gains from peaceful negotiation and interaction with Iran, and to ignore the long-run cost and futility of war.

In a perverse way, it helps to have the current reality of Iraq to remind Americans that our military might does not guarantee success. In 2003, when we decided to invade Iraq, the deaths of over two million Vietnamese and 50,000 Americans justified by a non-existent Gulf of Tonkin incident were but a distant memory. However, the fact

that John McCain, a leading candidate for president of the U.S. in 2008, can enjoy wild cheers from his audience by singing "Bomb, bomb, bomb, bomb, bomb Iran" to the tune of the Beach Boys' "Barbara Ann" shows how strong the psychological biases for going to war against alleged enemies still are even as we see daily reports of chaos in Iraq. The reports of the alleged role of Iran in the current Iraq quagmire is clearly intended to tilt the balance from resistance to more death and destruction toward animosity against Iran.

We can also contribute to peace by showing how costly a war with, specifically, Iran would be in terms of human lives and long-term human welfare. Iran's population is three times that of Iraq. And, Iran's army is more powerful than Iraq's army was in 2003. It has the ability to disrupt oil traffic in the Persian Gulf, with devastating consequences for the entire world economy. An obvious question to pose to anyone prone to supporting a war against Iran is: What would it accomplish? More to the point, what could such a devastating war accomplish that could

**Those who value peace must work very hard to counter the tendency of people to overestimate how successful any military action against Iran would be... to exaggerate the evil Iran really is... to discount the potential gains from peaceful negotiation and interaction with Iran... and to ignore the long-run cost and futility of war.**

not be accomplished through peaceful negotiation and trade? After all, Kristof showed that the negotiations that we abandoned were clearly moving toward dealing with the very same issues that now lead Administration officials to threaten war. And it is the U.S. that seeks to cut off trade with sanctions; it is clearly not Iran that wants to deprive us of the peaceful acquisition of oil through trade.

The peace movement's most important task may be to keep reminding Americans that the campaign the Administration is mounting against Iran is nothing other than a sinister play on Americans' worst instincts.

## Julia Penelope on Argument

*Feminist linguist Julia Penelope was on faculty at UNL in the 1970s and early '80s. The following observation on the violent use of our language is taken from the June 5, 2006 Feminist Reprise.*

In our society, we're taught the metaphorical concept ARGUMENT IS WAR. Consequently, when we talk about arguments, we say things like, "I tried to defend my position but she outflanked me," "I really shot down her objections," "her arguments were right on target." No wonder we feel so good when we win arguments and so bad when we lose them. Our thought patterns mold our behaviors so that our arguments are "dangerous," "threatening," and "risky" for us. Suppose, instead, that we came up with new ways of thinking about arguments, ways that helped us learn less painful and destructive ways of behaving during arguments. How about ARGUING IS A SCAVENGER HUNT, ARGUMENT IS QUILTING, ARGUING IS WORKING A PUZZLE, ARGUMENT IS DANCING, or ARGUMENT IS SURFING? If we don't teach ourselves new ways to argue with each other, the alternative is to learn to agree with whatever another woman [or man] says, regardless of what we really think. That's lying, and I think, still, that we deserve better from each other.

We should often bring up the claims of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, the Gulf of Tonkin, or the unproven explosion of the Maine in Havana Bay a century ago. Americans have been bamboozled into senseless wars many times before.

## Educating Our Leaders

You could easily argue, based on what we have discussed in this article, that the evolved and hard-wired behavioral tendencies for people to let their emotions carry them into battle will doom any efforts to push people to think seriously about peace. However, there is another very encouraging recent discovery from the fields of neuroscience and psychology: People can learn to behave differently.

Experiments show that the human brain reacts very differently to an unfamiliar problem than it does in the case of known problems. Human behavior is therefore guided by a learning process that involves the brain reorganizing itself. For example, one recent psychological study noted that pilots learn to fly by their instruments even though the emotional and automatic processes of the brain cause their eyes to seek visual orientations. Experienced pilots 'learn' to immediately focus on their instruments while novices look outside first before remembering that they can more accurately guide their airplane by using their instruments. Neuroscientific studies of the brain effectively confirm what we have known for a long time, and that is that training, practice, repetition and experience are important behavioral determinants. Just like experienced pilots have learned to look at their instruments before looking out the cockpit window, people can learn to think about how to achieve peace before they grab for their weapons.

In the case of war and peace, we can use history, personal experience, and social scientists' understanding of how societies flourish to educate people to think of peace first. We can learn to choose the peaceful alternatives that provide humanity with the

greatest long-run well being. A good example of how to educate people to favor peace over war is Germany, a country severely criticized by the Bush/Cheney Administration and the media for not joining the "coalition of the willing" in Iraq. Yet, wasn't it wonderful that a country that was once synonymous with war now has a population that is adamantly anti-war and pro-peace? This is not a weakness, but an incredible accomplishment achieved through a national educational and learning environment explicitly designed to minimize the human tendency to go to war. Germans have achieved a government that shows little inclination to go to war by, first, coming to grips with past mistakes and, then, reforming national institutions so that those mistakes are less likely to happen again. So far, the education effort has been successful, and Germany has taken the leadership in unifying a Europe that had seen almost continual wars for centuries.

Here in the U.S., however, we are a long way from coming to grips with our past mistakes. Within the past few weeks, we have heard many U.S. politicians, even those who we look to for ending the Iraq occupation, praising the troops and blaming the Iraqis for the chaos in their country. Hillary Clinton said it perhaps more unashamedly than anyone else: "The troops have done their job; it is the Iraqis that are not doing their job." By so blatantly blaming the victim for the consequences of our aggression, we are clearly not yet ready to take the first step toward peace, which is the admission of guilt for starting and continuing to pursue an ill-advised war. For us in the peace movement, it is clear that our task of changing U.S. attitudes toward war, peace and our relationship to the rest of the world is still in the beginning stages. Nebraskans for Peace must remain fully engaged in advocating peaceful negotiation and responsible international citizenship. We all need to write, phone, and talk to our government officials, news media, and community leaders on a regular basis.

A war with Iran is looming.

## ATTENTION, NEBRASKA...

# The World Is Watching Whiteclay

by Mark Vasina  
President, Nebraskans for Peace

Nebraska's refusal to halt the sale of alcohol to the dry Pine Ridge Indian Reservation made international news last month from Washington, D.C. clear across the Atlantic. A volunteer border roadblock, sanctioned by the Oglala Lakota Treaty Council and organized by the Strong Heart Civil Rights Movement (also known as Cante Tenza), succeeded in focusing the world's attention on the virtually unchecked flow of alcohol purchased from the tiny unincorporated village of Whiteclay onto the Pine Ridge.

For years, four off-sale beer stores in Whiteclay, selling over 12,500 cans of beer daily, have been routinely violating Nebraska liquor law by sales to minors, intoxicated persons and known bootleggers; sales on credit and in exchange for food stamps (EBT); and provision of beer and cigarettes in exchange for sexual favors.

The June 28 roadblock led by Cante Tenza leader Duane Martin, Sr. was orga-

**"...we join in spirit with those activists and others who will go once again to Whiteclay to try and stop the illegal flow of alcohol into the dry Pine Ridge Reservation... We call on [Gov.] Heineman to stop the sale of alcohol in Whiteclay today."**

*Nebraska Democratic Party  
State Chair Steve Achelpohl  
June 27, 2007*

nized to interdict the flow of this illegal transport of beer onto the reservation, where the alcoholism rate is conservatively estimated at 80 percent.

Holding the event on the first anniversary of a similar attempt last year which was called off by organizers before it started, Cante Tenza pledged this year to initiate the roadblock—if necessary even in the face of official opposition—while at the same time urging Tribal Police to take it over and operate it.

Roadblock operators—four individuals only, each wearing a bright green safety vest

for identification—stopped vehicles as they entered the Pine Ridge and asked drivers whether they were transporting any drugs or alcohol. If a driver answered "no" and the roadblock operator observed no suspicious packages in the vehicle, the vehicle was permitted to pass.

Two to three dozen supporters—including Russell Means (a principal organizer of the roadblock), Floyd Hand (Oglala Lakota Treaty Council elder), Frank LaMere (Nebraska Winnebago Tribe member), and six members of Nebraskans for Peace—witnessed from the side of the road. Some supporters from the Pine Ridge set up a tent to the west.

Protocol established in advance by roadblock organizers—and communicated to the Tribal Police, who have primary jurisdiction on the Pine Ridge—called for non-aggressive and non-invasive actions by roadblock operators. If alcohol was spotted or vehicle occupants became antagonistic, roadblock protocol required operators to refrain from further intervention and to hand the situation over to Tribal Police, who were well represented at the site.

However, despite several meetings during the week preceding the roadblock, organizers failed to come to agreement with Tribal Police. After roadblock operators began stopping vehicles, Police Chief James Twiss ordered them to disperse. Nevertheless, he permitted the roadblock to operate for about ten minutes—during which time several cars were stopped and permitted to proceed *without incident*. Finally, the roadblock obstruction, a ceremonial staff with a sacred eagle feather and ceremonial spearhead, was removed from the road and traffic moved unimpaired.

For the next few minutes Martin, assisted by attorney Daniel Sheehan and others, negotiated with Twiss over the fate of the roadblock. Other operators moved to the side of the road, remaining on the shoulder but not obstructing traffic. Organizers agreed to disperse and end their roadblock if Tribal Police would agree to assume operation.

Without pledging to take over the roadblock, however, tribal authorities began enforcing the order to disperse. An officer attempted to take the ceremonial staff away from Martin as he stood in the center of the road surrounded by several officers. Martin, who refused to let go of the staff, was taken down by several officers and handcuffed. Seeing Martin go down holding the ceremonial staff, Russell Means emerged from his vehicle parked along the side of the

road and moved quickly into the crowd of officers surrounding Martin. Frank LaMere followed. Means was wrestled to the ground and cuffed. LaMere remained standing, but was also cuffed.

The police made six arrests: Martin, Means, LaMere, and three other Native Americans operating the roadblock. All were charged with three counts—disorderly conduct, obstruction, and failure to disperse—and released on cash bond that afternoon. All entered not guilty pleas at arraignment on July 6, and received a December 27 court date.

The importance of the events of June 28 cannot be overstated. They reveal the frustration of concerned residents of the Pine Ridge with the failure of Nebraska state government to address its complicity in the illegal purveyance of alcohol in Whiteclay and the Reservation. Last year, Pine Ridge residents looked on as Nebraska authorities repeatedly rebuffed their

concerns for their health and safety—a refusal by the Sheridan County Commissioners to forward to the Nebraska Liquor Commission public concerns about status quo licensing of the Whiteclay dealers; a Nebraska Supreme Court ruling that ordered the Liquor Control Commission to approve a new license in Whiteclay (to replace the license lost by the Arrowhead Inn when the licensee was convicted of a felony); and a 'not guilty' verdict to a well-prepared case charging one of the Whiteclay dealers, State Line Liquor, with sale to an intoxicated person (supported by State Patrol cruiser audio and videotape).

The events also highlight the difficulties faced by tribal authorities in their efforts to devise an effective response to Nebraska's negligence. Ongoing roadblocks at Pine Ridge's borders are expensive and resource-intensive. Russell Means has suggested a concerted effort by tribal authorities and all other interested parties to secure federal funding for the Oglala Sioux Tribal Police to operate round-the-clock roadblocks

at Whiteclay and other entry points to discourage the influx of drug and alcohol contraband. None of these efforts, however, absolve the State of Nebraska of its moral and legal failures to halt the sale of alcohol in Whiteclay.

Judged by the attention of the national media to the ongoing tragedy of Whiteclay, the roadblock was certainly a success. The story was covered by local press (the *Rapid City Journal* and *Sheridan County Journal-Star*), *Nebraska Public Radio* and a



*Oglala Sioux Tribal Police Chief James Twiss (left) speaking with Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska member Frank LaMere during the June 28 roadblock at the reservation border by Whiteclay.*

video team from *HDNet TV*, a Denver-based satellite news channel.

But the Associated Press coverage, including pre-event stories, truly traveled far and wide. The *Omaha World-Herald* and *Lincoln Journal Star* carried the AP stories, as did the *Washington Post*, *Miami Herald*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Seattle Times*, *Houston Chronicle* and numerous newspapers throughout the U.S. and Canada. Websites for *ABC News*, *CBS News* and *CNN* reported on the stories, and *CNN* broadcast a story about the roadblock on their cable television channels. In Europe, the *Guardian* (London) picked up the AP stories, and the events were reported on the *BBC* website as well as the website of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization in the Netherlands.

As we go to press a reporter from *USA Today* is completing an in-depth story about Whiteclay. This may prove to be the very first important national media exposure of our struggle to get Nebraska to change the way it sells alcohol in Whiteclay.

# What's HOT in Global Warming?

by Professor Bruce E. Johansen

Bruce E. Johansen is Frederick W. Kayser Professor of Communications at UNO and the author of the three-volume *Global Warming in the Twenty-First Century* (Praeger 2006).

Climate contrarianism has been showing up in some unusual places lately. Who, for example, would expect to see a cheer for G.W. Bush-style denial in *The Nation*? Or a grubby piece on how we might play the stock market to benefit from the demise of the Earth as we know it in *The Atlantic*?

As a resident of Omaha, I suppose I should rejoice, with Gregg Easterbrook, (in "Global Warming: Who Loses—and Who Wins?" *The Atlantic*, April, 2007, 52-64) that the value of my house will skyrocket as refugees flood our area from the drowning coasts. Call my real-estate agent! I'll be able to buy even cheaper stuff at Wal-Mart, shipped from Asia via the Northwest Passage. If I don't lose sleep over the passing of the polar bears, I, myself, can do well in a warmer world, according to Easterbrook, provided I augment my holdings of General Electric common stock. Call my broker!

Easterbrook is not alone. I read in the *Washington Post*, June 7, 2007: "Four oil companies have applied to explore off shore [of Greenland], mining companies are sniffing out uranium and gold, and two aluminum companies want to build smelting plants and use the gushing glacial meltwater for hydroelectric power."

Reading Alexander Cockburn on global warming in *The Nation* during May, I thought I was browsing the editorial page of the *Wall Street Journal*, where most of the anti-warming nostrums that he relishes with such apparent novelty have been standard fare for most of the last two decades.

Cockburn suggests that in a couple of hundred years, histori-

ans will compare global warming rhetoric to religious sin-mongering a millennium ago. With all due respect to facile irony, in a couple of hundred years the toilets at the White House (now 57 feet above sea level on the first floor) may be backing up as the warming oceans rise. The mantra of global warming

as rhetorical "sin" has been repeated by right-wing chatters so often that it has reached nearly big-lie status.

In the meantime, the science that supports the idea continues to accumulate. James E. Hansen (director, NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies) and colleagues have published an article in *Great Britain* [a draft is at [www.giss.nasa.gov/~jhansen/docs/RoyalSoc.070218.pdf](http://www.giss.nasa.gov/~jhansen/docs/RoyalSoc.070218.pdf)] making a case for a "master switch" in climate change that they call an "albedo flip" which serves as a "tipping point" in global climatic conditions within a relatively short period of time on a paleoclimatic scale. They anticipate that unless greenhouse-gas levels are stabilized, the "albedo flip" could take hold within a decade or two, accelerating global warming beyond any attempt at control.

"Albedo" is the reflectivity of any given surface on the Earth. A dark surface, such as asphalt, absorbs much more heat than a light surface, such as snow-covered ground. Such changes are important in polar regions because melting ice and snow opens water and vegetation-covered earth, both of which have much lower reflectivity, increasing absorption of heat. As ice melts, darker surfaces absorb more heat, and drive the process even faster, a major reason why global warming is so insidious. It

feeds upon itself. Speaking of melting ice, a team of NASA and university scientists has found clear evidence that extensive areas of snow melted in west Antarctica in January 2005 in response to warm temperatures. Combined, the affected regions comprise an area as large as California.

## Making a Buck while the Earth Burns

Andrew Revkin wrote of this report in the *New York Times*: "Balmy air, with a temperature of up to 41 degrees in some places, persisted across three broad swathes of West Antarctica long enough to leave a distinctive signature of melting, a layer of ice in



UNO Professor Bruce Johansen

the snow that cloaks the vast ice sheets of the frozen continent. The layer formed the same way a crust of ice can form in a yard in winter when a warm day and then a freezing night follow a snowfall, the scientists said."

While Easterbrook and Cockburn weren't watching, carbon-dioxide levels in the atmosphere jumped suddenly between 2000 and 2004, according to calcu-

lations published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* during 2007. The rate of increase nearly tripled over the average rate in the 1990s. Instead of rising by 1.1 per cent a year, as in the previous decade, emissions grew by an average of 3.1 per cent a year from 2000 to 2004. "Despite

the scientific consensus that carbon emissions are affecting the world's climate, we are not seeing evidence of progress in managing those emissions," said Chris Field, director of the Carnegie Institution's Department of Global Ecology in Stanford, Calif., a co-author of the report.

While the literati debate, Gian-Reto Walther and his colleagues have tracked the expansion of *Trachycarpus fortunei*, the windmill palm, (similar to the palmetto), into southern Switzerland following rising winter minimum temperatures and a lengthening growing season. In addition to *Trachycarpus fortunei* reproducing naturally in the foothills of the southern Alps, they have been observed spreading in semi-natural habitats or seeding in gardens and parks as far north as southern coastal England, Brittany, in France, the Netherlands, and coastal southwestern British Columbia, all areas where warmer nights have extended the average annual growing season to well over 300 days a year. The palms of Switzerland are being observed about 300 kilometers (more than 200 miles) outside their historical range. Scientists conclude that the spread of these palms is a "significant global bio-indicator across continents for present-day climate change and the projected global warming of the near future."

The research was published in *Global Ecology and Biogeography*.

At the same time, penguins at the southern tip of Africa (on Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela was held prisoner) are starving because their main food, sardines, have followed warmer water to the south. If you are a penguin with an empty stomach, global warming is very, very real. A century ago, 1.5 million penguins called this area home. By 2001, the population was about 120,000. Now it is less than 20,000.

In addition, as humans continue to pump carbon, the oceans' carrying capacity is diminishing. This is especially true of the southern ocean around Antarctica. Scientists have observed the first evidence that the southern ocean's ability to absorb CO<sub>2</sub>, has weakened by about 15 percent per decade since 1981.

"This is the first time that we've been able to say that climate change itself is responsible for the saturation of the Southern Ocean sink. This is serious," said Corinne Le Quere of the University of East Anglia and the British Antarctic Survey. "All climate models predict that this kind of feedback will continue and intensify during this century," said Le Quere. "The Earth's carbon sinks—of which the Southern Ocean accounts for 15 percent—absorb about half of all human carbon emissions. With the Southern Ocean reaching its saturation point more CO<sub>2</sub> will stay in our atmosphere," she said.

People who debate political aspects of global warming with hardly a sideways glance at the science often look like fools. Alexander Cockburn, et al. should be reading some of the science, smelling some coffee, and doing some math. Are we living on the same planet?

# The Military Pollution of Nebraska's groundwater

by Paul A. Olson

Nebraska has long prided itself on the quality of its soil and water. In the Oglala Aquifer, we have the largest underground aquifer in the world—a good share of the water lying under the Great Plains. Soil scientists tell us that eastern Nebraska had two feet of good topsoil lying over most of the area when settlers arrived, now diminished to a foot on average and much less in eroded areas. Conservation groups want the groundwater beneath Nebraska to be preserved from nitrate, pesticide and herbicide pollution, and the soil stabilized by the Conservation Reserve program and other soil conservation efforts. Indeed, many of the Farm Bill emails that I receive concern the need to spend less on crop subsidies for large industrial farms, more on conservation.

But care of soil and water goes beyond terracing slopes and reducing nitrate fertilization. We have a history of military carelessness about Nebraska's soil and water and too little response to this carelessness. Although World War II people complained that America's best farmland was being taken out of production for military plants, once they were established and then decommissioned, the vigilance ceased. Some cases in point: in this edition of the *Nebraska Report*, we'll focus on the Mead plant; in the next edition, the Grand Island, Hastings and Sidney ones:

## The Mead Nebraska Ordnance Plant

Mead loaded bombs during World War II and the Korean War, and the soil and groundwater at the plant were contaminated with volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and munitions wastes—the groundwater primarily by trichloroethylene (TCE), a cleaning solvent, and RDX, an explosive compound. Only 40 years later did the Defense Department announce that Mead would be part of a project “to identify, investigate, and control the migration of hazardous contaminants at military and other DOD facilities”—Environmental Protection Agency, Nebraska, and Army agreements coming in 1991, only after placement in 1990 on the EPA's “Superfund list” for the nation's worst toxic waste messes. The latest projections estimate it will take from 120 to 650 years to clean up the more than 23 billion gallons of contaminated groundwater at the 17,250-acre site, some of which flow unrestricted into creeks and streams on the site. Documents show mustard gas is buried at the site and unexploded ordnance also remain a concern.

In August of 2004 about 60 local people gathered at Mead to say that Corps of Engineers officials were not doing a good job of sampling private wells or providing accurate and timely information to the public. As the *Lincoln Journal Star* reported:

Area residents fear that [the contaminants... contained in plumes] could be migrating toward their properties. “...I want to know how the Army plans to protect my kids,” said Linda Wageman, whose family owns land in the area.

The Army Corps of Engineers, which is in charge of the cleanup, has installed a treatment plant and extraction wells. But some residents say the Corps is not doing enough to protect public health.

The residents fear that a new \$300 million water treatment plant project on the Platte River, being built by the Metropolitan Utilities District,

could draw the contamination plumes into their lands and pollute their drinking water.

Mary Lyle, project manager for the Corps, said the agency is trying to define the edge of one plume. She said officials were surprised that it had migrated so far.

People also said they feared the air strippers to be used for TCE removal could themselves create health problems and wanted more testing, more wells, more vigilance. In late 2004, Janet Piercey of Ashland sent a letter to the Corps of Engineers complaining that she and three other residents of the Mead-Ashland area were not told the truth by the Corps when they were told that their wells had no contaminants. Indeed, Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality tests done at about the same time showed that the wells had eight contaminants, of which five had not been found before. Omaha is planning to get some of its water from a well field project nearby, and de-

bate continues as to whether those wells will be fully safe.

To determine whether the Corps had done a good job of cleanup at these sorts of contaminated sites, the General Accounting Office of the United States Congress investigated what the DOD had been doing, and, to say the least, it was disappointed that the Corps did “not have a sound basis for determining that about 38 percent, or 1,468, of 3,840 formerly used defense sites do not need further study or cleanup action.” The Corps did not review maps in 74 percent of the potentially polluted areas for ammunition storage facilities “that could indicate the presence of hazards (e.g., unexploded ordnance)” or in 60 percent of the cases “contact... all the current owners to obtain information about potential hazards.”

The GAO accuses the Corps of having overlooked and dismissed information that could have

conclusion on page 10

## Save the Date! Oct. 5, 2007

*You are invited to attend a private reception of the faith community and Sister Helen Prejean.*

Sister Helen Prejean began her prison ministry in 1981 when she dedicated her life to the poor of New Orleans. While living in the St. Thomas housing project, she became pen pals with Patrick Sonnier, the convicted killer of two teenagers, sentenced to die in the electric chair of Louisiana's Angola State Prison.

Upon Sonnier's request, Sister Helen repeatedly visited him as his spiritual advisor. In doing so, her eyes were opened to the Louisiana execution process. Sister Helen turned her experiences into a book that not only made the 1994 American Library Associates Notable Book List, it was also nominated for a 1993 Pulitzer Prize. *Dead Man Walking: An Eyewitness Account of the Death Penalty in the United States* was number one on the *New York Times* Best Seller List for 31 weeks. It also was an international best seller and has been translated into ten different languages.

In January 1996, the book was developed into a major motion picture starring Susan Sarandon as Sister Helen and Sean Penn as a death row inmate. Produced by Polygram Pictures, the film was directed and written by Tim Robbins. The movie received four Oscar nominations including Tim Robbins for Best Director, Sean Penn for Best Actor, Susan Sarandon for Best Actress, and Bruce Springsteen's “Dead Man Walking” for Best Song. Susan Sarandon won the award for Best Actress.

There is no charge for the reception. Please rsvp online at [www.nadp.net](http://www.nadp.net), or download a printable form.

NEBRASKANS  
AGAINST  
DEATH <sup>the</sup>  
PENALTY



Sister Helen Prejean

[www.nadp.net](http://www.nadp.net)

# *The Poindexter Case* conclusion

and-conquer tactics, imprisonment, exile or murder—as in the case of Chicago BPP leaders Fred Hampton and Mark Clark. According to the official autopsy report about Hampton’s body, he was shot in the back and killed while asleep during a pre-dawn police attack orchestrated by the FBI.

Long-term FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, referred to by his

against” Poindexter and Rice.

Many items were withheld from the defense attorneys at the time of the 1971 trial, including the Social Security Card of Johnny Lee Busby. The significance of Busby’s Social Security Card being withheld from Poindexter and Rice at the trial is that *it was found at the crime scene!* He was the uncle of 14-year-old Vivian Strong,

## **FBI MEMO 10/13/1970—from Omaha agent in charge to Director Hoover: Omaha Assistant Chief of Police Glenn Gates advised withholding the 911 tape until after the 1971 trial because it “might be prejudicial to the police murder trial against” Poindexter and Rice.**

critics as “King of the FBI,” served as director for 48 years, from 1924 until his death in 1972. Director Hoover used the FBI’s COINTELPRO (Counterintelligence Program) to target black activists unmercifully in the late 1960s and early 1970s, evidenced by memos like the following:

FBI MEMO 8/26/1967—from Director Hoover to the Albany, New York office and later to all ur-

the black girl shot in the back and killed in 1969 by OPD Officer Loder. Busby went by several aliases and conveniently dropped out of site after Officer Minard’s murder in August of 1970.

Poindexter attorneys contend that 15-year-old Duane Peak’s testimony at the preliminary hearing (1970) and the trial (1971) was crucial to their client’s conviction; in fact, there would have been no case

## **According to scientific voice analyst Tom Owen of New Jersey, Duane Peak’s voice is *not* the voice on the 911 tape that was withheld until after Poindexter’s trial, even though Peak (now Gabriel Peak) still insists the voice *is* his.**

ban offices, announcing a plan to “discredit” black leaders and groups.

FBI MEMO 9/16/1970—from Director Hoover, advising all FBI offices to “disrupt the BPP, and it is immaterial whether facts exist to substantiate charges.”

FBI MEMO 10/13/1970—from Omaha agent in charge to Director Hoover: Omaha Assistant Chief of Police Glenn Gates advised withholding the 911 tape until after the 1971 trial because it “might be prejudicial to the police murder trial

at all without Peak. Even the prosecutor at the time of the preliminary hearing and the trial—Arthur O’Leary, Douglas County Attorney—acknowledged seven years after the conviction in a *Washington Post* interview that Poindexter and Rice could not have been convicted without Duane Peak’s testimony.

Two important issues at the Poindexter evidentiary hearing in May 2007 involve credibility: 1) the credibility of the state’s main witness, 15-year-old Duane Peak,

and 2) the credibility of Police Sergeant Robert Pfeffer.

According to scientific voice analyst Tom Owen of New Jersey, Duane Peak’s voice is *not* the voice on the 911 tape that was withheld until after Poindexter’s trial, even though Peak (now Gabriel Peak) still insists the voice *is* his. Peak’s changing stories in the preliminary hearing and trial also cast doubt on his truthfulness.

At the preliminary hearing on September 28, 1970, Duane Peak did not implicate Poindexter and Rice in the suitcase-bombing murder of Officer Minard, but after a recess (requested by the prosecution), he returned to the courtroom and *did* implicate them in the murder. Rice’s attorney, David Herzog, asked Peak to remove his dark glasses; so he did. People were shocked to see how swollen his eyes were, as if he’d been roughed up to change his story. Poindexter’s legal team has thoroughly documented the shifts and changes in his stories, demonstrating that Peak is an unreliable witness.

As for Sergeant Pfeffer, his testimony at the 1971 trial differed from his testimony at the evidentiary hearing on May 10, 2007 when cross-examined by Poindexter attorney John C. Vanderslice about entering David Rice’s basement and helping remove dynamite allegedly found there.

There is, by the way, no photo of dynamite *in* Rice’s basement; the only photo is of dynamite in the trunk of a police car. Interestingly, three black men in possession of the same brand of dynamite allegedly found in Rice’s basement were jailed in 1970. Arrested with dynamite in the trunk of *their* car, Conrad Gray, Lamont Mitchell and Luther Payne—none of them activists—were released from jail after the 1971 conviction of Poindexter and Rice.

Poindexter’s attorney Robert F. Bartle presented volumes of documentation to District Judge Russell Bowie at the May, 2007 evidentiary hearing in hopes of proving that Poindexter deserves retrial and ultimately release. Bartle presumes that Judge Bowie will rule on Ed’s case by late August or early September.

Ed Poindexter, a Vietnam War veteran now 62, is confined to a

## A Letter from Ed & Mondo

We express our appreciation to the members of the Afrikan People’s Union, the UNL Chapters of Nebraskans for Peace and the Amnesty International, as well as Nebraskans for Justice, and other groups who have worked together to make this first annual Peace & Justice Banquet possible.

As the promotional flyer for this event states, we have been in prison for 36 years. This is a long time. It would be a long time for a person who committed a crime and was *justly* tried, convicted and sentenced. For a person who was *unjustly* tried, convicted and sentenced, 36 *days* is a very long time—too long. Thirty-six *years* is an abomination. For such a person, release from imprisonment does not bring him justice. For him, it is too late for justice. The release would only bring relief.

It is often said that history repeats itself. Thirty-six years ago, it was 1971. There was a very unpopular president of the U.S., a very unpopular and unjustified war, and widespread abuse of civil liberties. Then, the president was Nixon; the war was in Vietnam; and the abuse of civil liberties was being committed, in part, under the authority of the then-secret “Counter-Intelligence Program” of the FBI. Today, the president is Bush; the war is in Iraq; and the widespread abuse of civil liberties is being conducted under the authority of the Patriot Act and other overt and covert so-called “Homeland Security” mechanisms.

There is at least one major difference between then and now. In 1971, there were potent and visible movements. There were large numbers of people in this country who were fighting for change—political change, social change, economic change. These groups and individuals were willing to risk everything for the sake of justice. Since then, commercial media have evolved to the point where they have been able to produce millions of people in this country who believe that how Donald Trump says “you’re fired” is a major social development, that what Paris Hilton wears (or doesn’t wear) is worthy of front-page treatment, that Sponge Bob Square Pants is historically significant. The media have become masterful at trivializing the important and hyping the insignificant.

So those of you who are attending this banquet are swimming against the current. In today’s America, to even get yourself to the point of *considering* issues of justice and injustice is an achievement. Of course, considering is only a first step. It is not enough. As you would expect, we hope you take further steps and that you will have the strength and stamina to press forward. While we might, strictly speaking, be the only two political prisoners in Nebraska, we’re not the only ones in this country and certainly not the only persons who have been or are being victimized by injustice.

Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa & Ed Poindexter

wheelchair because of diabetic neuropathy (diagnosed years ago by prison doctors who neglected to tell him the diabetes diagnosis until Ed began to lose feeling in his legs).

Undaunted by his condition, Ed wheeled into the courtroom every day of his May, 2007 evidentiary hearing sessions and, bound by the required ‘leg irons’ at his ankles, managed to walk when called to the witness stand. Supporters there, including his mother (now in her 80s) along with other

family members, felt proud to know him, and expressed it.

Head held high and obviously upbeat about his return to court, Ed Poindexter set the example for the rest of us that he learned from his mother: stay strong.

Paris Hilton could also learn a thing or two about ‘staying strong’ from Ed Poindexter, because ‘37 years doin’ time’ is no easy task. But motivated by his innocence, Ed keeps his courage high and his eye on liberation.

# Nebraska Needs to Change Tax Structure

The following editorial appeared in the June 11, 2007 Lincoln Journal Star and is reprinted with permission.

Shortly after the conclusion of the 2007 legislative session, Gov. Dave Heineman said in an interview with the *Journal Star* that he intends to return next year with proposals to cut property taxes and address road funding.

Nebraskans should cheer him on and take him up on his request for ideas.

The *Journal Star* is already on board. On several occasions we've suggested that state leaders convene a blue ribbon summit to discuss the possibility of making fundamental changes in Nebraska's tax structure.

Other states currently are wrestling with the same issues.

The June issue of "State Legislature," a publication by the National Conferences of State Legislatures, reports that 21 states are working on property tax cuts this year, and that others enacted property tax relief in previous years.

Presumably Nebraska would be in-

cluded among those working on a property tax cut. This year the Legislature approved a property tax credit that will reduce local property tax bills by 4 percent to 4.5 percent.

Other states approved more far-reaching proposals. New Jersey went to voters with a plan to raise the sales tax a half-cent in return for a reduction in property taxes by about 20 percent.

Texas last year approved a \$15.7 billion property tax relief package that shifts funding to a \$1 per pack boost in cigarette taxes and a broader business tax base.

That might spark interest in Nebraska, which soon will lag behind most adjacent states on cigarette taxes. Nebraska currently has a tax of 64 cents a pack. Iowa soon will jump to \$1.36 a pack. South Dakota charges \$1.53 a pack.

South Carolina increased its sales tax so that it could enact a cap on property taxes. The Florida legislature is beginning a special session to work on property tax relief.

As Heineman noted in his post-session remarks, any effort at the state level

to reduce property taxes will require a partnership with local government. In Nebraska, property taxes are set at the local level.

Property tax reduction efforts also will be complicated by the need to adequately fund road construction. If Heineman is unwilling to raise gas taxes, another source of funding must be found.

Nebraskans are not alone in their dislike of property taxes. It's true from coast to coast and in other democracies. The Swedes, for example, rate their real estate tax as the most unpopular. So do Britons.

The Tax Foundation offers reasons why:

1. Taxpayers can't control their tax bite by changing behavior.
2. Property taxes are based on property value, not on ability to pay, which hits elderly citizens particularly hard.
3. The tax is highly visible.

Politicians can't change those characteristics. That's why the governor, state senators and local officials should be willing to look at tax shifts and other basic alterations in tax structure.

## groundwater, conclusion

led to hazards, e.g., ignoring a bomb and fuse storage unit at one site, failing to conduct the required site visits at 18 percent of the sites, and lacking specific guidelines about how to do the hazards job or notify owners of what it had determined or tell them to contact the Corps if they had a problem. In addition, the Corps commonly did not tell the EPA or other environmental agencies what it had found.

Despite the carelessness, the costs of a bad job at Mead have been high. In 2006, the University of Nebraska asked for an additional 18.7 million dollars from the state, partly to cover its share of environmental cleanup at Mead. It is unclear how much of that cost covers University pollution

The latest projections estimate it will take from 120 to 650 years to clean up the more than 23 billion gallons of contaminated groundwater at the 17,250-acre Mead site.

and how much DOD. It is hard to know how much money the DOD has spent, but in 1995, according to one source, the Nebraska Ordnance Plant, at Mead had joined the 100-million-dollar club with costs of \$191,863,000 in cleanup funds. The efforts to develop the cleanup with the Corps are still going ahead slowly. A recent report of a meeting about the cleanup can be found at Google under the title, "FORMER NEBRASKA ORDNANCE PLANT RESTORATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING HELD IN MEAD, NEBRASKA:

DATE: JANUARY 25, 2007." NFP members should read the whole report. The tenor of the meeting can be gathered from an exchange between Lynn Moorer, a Lincoln attorney who represents local residents, and Garth Anderson of the Corps:

*Moorer: ...And she [the Community Co-chair of the Mead site Restoration Advisory Board] has asked you numerous times in the past to make sure you get to the Restoration Advisory Board and the members of the public who are interested, who have signed up on the mailing list, all the information, the documents, all the key documents that you're going to be discussing at least a week prior to each meeting. And you have never yet done that.*

*I'll tell you for sure that your credibility is extremely low because you virtually never, ever admit when you are not carrying through on your commitments. You never admit when you misrepresent information to the public... You don't give us hard data that we ask for. You twist virtually everything we ask for into a little PR scam. That's not acceptable.*

Most of the time at this meeting goes to discussion about the Corps' dilatoriness and to its lack of real certainty as to whether its processes

will work—whether and when it can clean up plumes of trichloroethylene substances that, in concentrations of more than 50 parts per million (ppm), cause heart problems—including arrhythmia; nausea and vomiting; serious liver injury; dizziness, headache; neurological problems; and eye, nose and throat irritation. (TCE has been found at concentrations of 40,000 ppm at the site.) Over the long haul TCE is likely to cause cancer, such as leukemia in humans (it does in animals), and a variety of genetic disorders. And it's not good to be 50 years late addressing the problem.

The next edition of the *Nebraska Report* will analyze the Grand Island, Hastings and Sidney plants. If readers of this report have other cases of military pollution of air, earth and water to report to NFP, please forward your information to polson2@unl.edu. The next section of this report, besides reporting on the greater Nebraska plants, will also contain a suggested action agenda for environmental organizations and for NFP. One should not be surprised that the military have not repaired what, over 50 years ago, they broke in Nebraska or that their actions have endangered the lives and health of Nebraskans. The business of the military is destruction, and the environmental devastation it creates in Nebraska is nothing compared to the devastation in Iraq or at Hiroshima. What should bother Nebraskans is that the battle for clean-up has gone on so long and with such uncertain truthfulness from the Corps of Engineers. If the business of the military is destruction, it is also to protect lives with due diligence. That has not happened here.

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# Paul Olson, conclusion

The fatal sea change that took Nebraska from a liberal *blue* state to conservative *red* one can be traced to four major cultural, political and economic developments during the 1930s-40s.

**First**, the filming of "The Virginian" in 1929, and the succeeding spate of Western films, propagated the notion that the true Westerner was a gun-slinging, law-creating inheritor of the military traditions of the Old South. He was not, as he historically had been, the scion of European peasants who hated the military. A new pseudo-Plains culture appeared. The localized ethnic cultures of farm and village were killed by the mass media; by the destruction of Populist rural farms and communities by the rural unsettling of 1890-1910; and by the Great Depression of the '30s when Nebraska suffered its own "Okie" out-migration.

**Second**, Nebraska's statewide newspaper of record, the *Omaha World-Herald*, shifted from a mildly progressive position to a very conservative one as its founder, Gilbert Hitchcock, was replaced by his son-in-law, Henry Doorly, in 1934. A little later—in 1963—one of America's largest military construction contractors, Peter Kiewit, owner of Peter Kiewit Sons, bought the *World-Herald*, making its near news monopoly the vehicle of his political vision.

**Third**, the siting, in Omaha in the '40s, of the Glenn Martin airplane factory (which made the Enola Gay that dropped the A-bomb on Hiroshima) and later of the Strategic Air Command directly tied Omaha's economy to the use of military airpower and made Omaha an emblem of "Fortress America." Once SAC and STRATCOM were firmly on board the Pentagon gravy train, it was easy for Omaha to reach for more gravy, particularly as the old sources of economic energy, like the stockyards and other agriculturally based industries, departed to more rural sites.

**Fourth**, all of this was part of a larger economic and political shift that, in the terrible economic times of the 1880s-90s and again in the depressed 1930s, destroyed the culture of the small farm that gave life to visions of peace and economic justice. Nebraska went from having 50 percent of its population on farms to under five percent—in effect killing off the Jefferson's democratic dream of independent landholders. The Farm Bureau, essentially a large farmer-insurance company combine, purported to represent the few farmers that remained. And the unions, denuded of power by what Truman called the "slave labor act"—the Taft Hartley Act of 1947—were forced to look inward.

Though World War II was caused by the knuckleheadedness of our post World-War I failure to support a strong League of Nations and World Court in 1918, and our complicity in allowing a vindictive Versailles Treaty to go ahead, it gave us the sense that

we were fighting a 'worth it' war. We had Nazis to stop and a "yellow peril" to contain. And though we prevented most Jewish refugees from Nazism from coming to our shores during WWII and did nothing to protest the concentration camps, after the war we told ourselves that we were fighting to prevent the genocide of the Chosen People.

We emerged from World War II proud, the world's one superpower, the only possessor of nuclear weapons, and promptly saw the whole heroic fable we had composed about ourselves fighting Nazism and the concentration camps being re-played in our battle against Stalinism and the gulags. The *World-Herald*, the war-mongering spirit of SAC Commander, General Curtis LeMay, and the popular cultural productions so effectively dissected in the film "Atomic Cafe" galvanized us to fight with Joe McCarthy against "Communists" everywhere, especially egghead Communists.

Once the "standpatters" had organized the economy, popular culture, and the media to serve militaristic visions during the '40s and '50s, little remained but to count the ballots already marked in people's heads. The peace roots of our history had gone dormant.

One could go to later Nebraska contrarian movements—the conscientious resisters of World War II; Dwight Dell's 1952 campaign for the Senate opposing the Korean War; UNL physicist Herbert Jehle's leadership in "Omaha Action," only the second U.S. protest against ICBMs targeted at the Soviet Union (Herbert was a student of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and a correspondent of Albert Einstein concerning what peace requires); Carl Davidson's formulations concerning the relationship between universities and militarism while a graduate student at UNL; Rural Nebraskans for Peace's 1968 action agenda leading into 1970s NFP; the Nebraskans active in Vietnam Veterans Against the War. One could point to the work of my wife Betty as NFP State Coordinator; of Sen. Ernie Chambers and Hughes and Lela Shanks who brought civil rights and peace-making together; of Marilyn McNabb and the other organizers of the Nuclear Freeze and NO MX movements. One could speak of Larry Zink's groundbreaking efforts to establish a statewide NFP presence and make Nebraska a 'peace state' once again; of Loyal and Mary Alice Park's *Cat Lovers Against the Bomb Calendar* work; Don Tilley's Peace Park; and a host of other activities too numerous to mention.

It is my belief though that, even now, our deepest roots are not red. Our best have not favored red meat violence as the road to a good society. We now have new media tools and a new generation ready to return to our roots. We can do it. And if we again eat our farrow in 2008, what hope for us?

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# Your Foundation Speaks

by Loyal Park, President Nebraska Peace Foundation

In the past I have encouraged people interested in peace and justice issues to support peace education by including either Nebraskans for Peace or the Nebraska Peace Foundation in their wills. It is important that your survivors know what was most important to you so they can accommodate your wishes after you die. However, many younger people—those just starting out in a career or those who have been employed for just a few years—may not have a will or may not have even considered making one out. They ask “Why do I need a will when I have very little to my name?” That may seem like a good reason, but please consider what decisions your survivors will be left with if you do not have a will. Now is the time to make a will. And while you are contemplating who and what to include in your will, please consider being a *Peacemaker in Perpetuity* by including the Foundation to receive a portion of your estate.



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*NFP State Office Hours in Lincoln,  
941 'O' Street, Ste. 1026, 9:00 – 2:00 weekdays.*

**Wednesdays in Lincoln** Anti-war vigils, Lincoln Federal Building, 15th & 'O' Streets, 5:00–6:00 p.m. Call 402-499-6672 for more information.

**Wednesdays in Omaha** Anti-War and StratCom vigils at StratCom's Global Innovation Center, 6825 Pine Street on the UNO Campus, 4:30-5:30 p.m. Call 402-502-5887 for more information.

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



## Speaking Our Peace

## Red State: Blue State

by Paul Olson, UNL Professor Emeritus

Disgusted by the backstabbing and double-dealing that for centuries kept the Irish from throwing out the Brits, the hero of James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* barks out, “Ireland is an old sow that eats her farrow.” Like Joyce's character, we Nebraska peace activists may be tempted to liken our “Red State” to an old farrow-eating sow. Historically though, Nebraska was a “peace state.”

There's no denying that in recent history Nebraska's sow has eaten its share of farrow. We've intentionally turned aside from honoring perhaps our greatest peacemaker (and—as the biography the *The Godly Hero* demonstrates—our most influential policymaker), William Jennings Bryan, by deliberately removing his statue at the State Capitol.

The “standpatters” in the Republican Party tried to destroy Senator George W. Norris by pitting a grocer with the same name against him in the 1930 Republican Primary election to confuse voters when they marked their ballot.

And the one Republican federal official in the state who presently speaks for majority Nebraska opinion on the war is about to be consumed by that same old Republican sow. Accused of having been insufficiently supportive of Bush and Cheney's war, Chuck Hagel should, one supposes, have just continued to lie when he found out about the non-existent WMDs, about the torture at Abu Ghraib and Gitmo and about the cover-up, and just called this drift to fascism ‘democracy.’

True, we are almost the *reddest* of red

states. We like red meat, Big Red, good red wars and vote for red presidents: 65½ percent for Ronald Reagan in 1980, 62 percent for Bush in 2000, an even higher 66 percent for him in 2004—astonishingly high percentages for emperors without clothes. Lyndon Johnson, the last Democratic presidential candidate to carry Nebraska, won the vote in 1964 only after he'd won the backing of Peter Kiewit, owner of one of the nation's largest military construction companies and the *Omaha World-Herald*.

Why for over half a century have we voted for these warmongering military spenders? How did it happen that in just a couple of generations we managed to abandon and repudiate our historic peacemaking roots? Finding myself recently at the Comstock Windmill Country music festival, where thousands of good old Nebraska folks came to camp and drink beer and have innocent fun, I saw no Nebraskans for Peace stickers, no other peace signs, nothing to indicate disapproval of where we are going. I saw “Support Our Troops” yellow ribbons, “America—Love It or Leave It” and the whole gamut of ‘Kill the enemy’-style stickers and shirts. I heard ‘kick ass’ talk—this from the economic class to whom the war costs go and from whom the war dead come.

It was not always so.

Among the traditional Plains tribes, the ‘peace chiefs’ were almost always stronger than the ‘war chiefs’ until the U.S. Army forced the tribes into a Spartan-style resistance. Black Elk, the holy man of the

Lakota, refused to use the “soldier's weed” to destroy his white enemy, though he learned its power in his great vision.

Few of us of European descent in the state did not have ancestors who fled here to escape the militarism and conscription of their native lands.

Nebraska has great peacemaking religious traditions—the Mennonites, Quakers, and Church of the Brethren and some important Methodist and Catholic groups. Nebraska exhibited widespread opposition to the Spanish-American War. Indeed, our own state legislature voted against its continuation, the Philippine-American War, asserting it to be a colonialist war.

William Jennings Bryan, with one campaign for president already under his belt, made his own study of the Spanish-American War as a volunteer officer, and summarily rejected its premises. After his second failed presidential bid in 1900, he began to read Tolstoy's nonviolence manifestoes, publicly declaring himself a pacifist and making a pilgrimage to Tolstoy's home in Yasnaya Polyana in December 1903. After that visit, Bryan commonly had a photo of Tolstoy hanging in his office. In the period between 1904 and 1908, Bryan intensified his attacks on militarism, monopoly capitalism and imperialism. And in 1908, in his third and final presidential campaign, he actually ran as a pacifist—bearing Tolstoy's endorsement for his support for the rights of workers and farmers and his attacks on militarism and capitalism.

As Wilson's Secretary of State the “Commoner” advocated—as alternatives

to war—mediation, international tribunals, non-aggression treaties. Though his non-aggression treaties designed to head off the Great War were unsuccessful, he prepared the way for a larger reliance on international authority and law. As America's only nonviolent Secretary of State, he resigned in 1915 to protest Wilson's “preparedness” campaign to smooth America's entry into what George Kennan has called “history's most useless war.” The last of Bryan's Tolstoyan gestures was the forlorn Scopes trial where he fought the teaching of evolution—and did so as the historian of evolutionary theory, Stephen Jay Gould, demonstrates—because he feared that “Social Darwinism” would be used to justify militarism.

George Norris's speech opposing American entry into World War I, associated the militarism of the period with Military-Industrial Complex profiteering, and came with his vote against the war. After the WWI, both Bryan and Norris supported stronger international controls on our war-fighting impulses: Bryan with some realistic alterations of Wilson's League of Nations' treaty that would almost certainly have gotten it passed and prevented World War II; Norris with a drastic disarmament proposal aimed at the larger militaristic countries. Norris also supported a world court with binding arbitration powers when sovereignties threaten war. Norris continually opposed militarism through the '30s, and *his* Nebraska continued to have many peace organizations.

*conclusion on page 11*