StratCom’s Satellite Shoot-down

The following editorial by NFP State Coordinator Tim Rinne was published in the March 13, 2008 Lincoln Journal Star. It subsequently appeared on a number of internet websites, including counterpunch.org, buzzflash.net and afterdowningstreet.org

Stories about the transformation U.S. Strategic Command has undergone since 9/11 have been dribbling out for years. But just recently have we gotten a clearer picture of what these changes portend.

In October 2002, when the U.S. Space Command was shifted to StratCom, nobody could have imagined that six months later the “Shock and Awe” bombing campaign on Iraq would originate from Omaha. But with 70 percent of the missiles and smart bombs used in that pre-emptive attack guided from space, StratCom directed what Air Force Secretary James Roche termed the “first true space war.”

Then, in August 2003, the “Stockpile Stewardship Committee” overseeing StratCom’s nuclear arsenal held a classified meeting at StratCom to plot the development of a new generation of crossover nuclear weapons—so-called “bunker busters”—that could be used in conventional military conflicts. The “firewall” between nuclear and conventional war-fighting was being torn down, and StratCom was swinging the hammer.

And who could have guessed in December 2005, when revelations about the warrantless wire-tapping program became public, that this National Security Agency operation had StratCom fingerprints? But the NSA, under StratCom’s new mission of “Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance,” had been made a StratCom “component command,” and the NSA director, General Michael Hayden (who now heads the CIA), was carrying out this constitutionally suspect activity.

It’s been nearly three years since the story broke that Vice President Dick Cheney ordered StratCom to draw up plans for an air- and sea-based attack on Iran. Under its “Prompt Global Strike” and “Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction” missions, the Omaha headquarters is now charged with attacking any place on earth—within one hour—on the mere perception of a threat to America’s national security. The war on terror is being waged from StratCom, and the next war the White House gets us into (whether with Iran or a geopolitical rival like China) will start in Nebraska.

With all the missions it’s now got in its quiver, you can hardly open a newspaper anymore without reading about a StratCom scheme.

The current flap with Russia over the proposed missile defense bases in Poland and the Czech Republic—that’s StratCom’s handiwork. The command picked up its “Integrated Missile Defense” mis-

conclusion on page 2

StratCom Commander
General Kevin Chilton

Here in Omaha... we are called on to be the most responsive combatant command in the U.S. arsenal. Responsible today for providing time-sensitive planning to conduct global strike operations anywhere on the planet... we are tasked to be the masters and defenders of domains that have become ever more critical to the way we fight as a nation—those being the domains of space and cyberspace...

October 17, 2007 “Assumption of Command” Ceremony

I believe we are going to need a nuclear deterrent in this country for the remainder of the 21st century... So long as there are other countries in the world that possess enough nuclear weapons to destroy the United States of America and our way of life... we need to have a nuclear deterrent force that can do the mission of preserving our freedoms.

March 4, 2008 Comments to the Washington, D.C. Media
Nebraska Report

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Nebraskans for Peace

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

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StratCom’s Shoot-down, conclusion

sion in 2003 after the Bush/Cheney Administration pulled out of the ABM Treaty. And those Eastern European installations—which the Russians warn are reigniting the Cold War—will be added to the network of international bases already under StratCom’s command.

But from reading the news accounts, you’d never know the command was involved. StratCom’s name is never mentioned.

Or who realized that, when a U.S. Predator drone fired a missile killing al-Qaida commander Abu Laith al Libi in Pakistan this past January, StratCom did everything from supply the intelligence to help fly the unpiloted vehicle? That incident dramatized how easily StratCom—with its new war-fighting authority—can skirt the law. According to an Associated Press story, the missile attack infringed on Pakistan’s national sovereignty, meaning international law may have been breached. But with the free hand it’s been granted, 60 minutes from now, StratCom could have started a war and Congress wouldn’t even have had a clue.

This is not our fathers’ StratCom.

Gone are the days when Strategic Command simply controlled America’s nuclear deterrent, and its doomsday weapons were only to be used as a last resort. Since 9/11, StratCom has gone from never supposed to be used to being used for everything. Likening the changes that have occurred at the command to a tsunami, former astronaut and current StratCom Commander Kevin Chilton brags that StratCom today is “the most responsive combatant command in the U.S. arsenal.”

And hardly anybody knows it.

StratCom’s well-publicized shootdown of the spy satellite, however, may have finally shown the world just how menacing the command has become. Barely a week after the United States repudiated a treaty proposal to ban space weapons at a U.N. Conference on Disarmament, StratCom shot down the satellite—using its “missile defense” system. And the message this shootdown sent to the world struck with all the force of an anti-satellite missile. Despite the innocuous name, missile defense is now understood to be an offensive weapon by which the United States (in the language of the Administration’s National Space Policy) means to “dominate” space...

And whoever controls space controls the Earth.

Operating like some executive-branch vigilante, StratCom has just launched a new arms race—because you can bet Russia and China will never surrender the heavens without a fight.

What’s equally worrisome, though, is that StratCom is now hourly making a mockery of our system of congressional checks and balances. And if Congress can’t rein in StratCom, can anyone?

Thank You Senator for Your Unstinting Candor

In his just-published book, America: Our Next Chapter, retiring U.S. Senator Chuck Hagel states that: “This administration’s hell-bent determination to go to war in Iraq was an historic blunder borne of an astounding amount of arrogance, ignorance and incompetence... [It was] the most dangerous costly foreign policy debacle in our nation’s history.”

Accusing the Bush/Cheney Administration of “cherry-picking intelligence” in a “headlong, foolhardy rush to war,” Hagel writes that in October 2002 the Senate was “asked to vote on a resolution based on half-truths, untruths and wishful thinking.” In hindsight, he states, “Yes, I regret my vote.”
Ten Organizations from Five States Address Proposed Uranium Mining

by Shannon Anderson, Powder River Basin Resource Council

Organizations from Wyoming, North and South Dakota, Nebraska and Colorado met in Casper, Wyoming, Saturday, March 15, to discuss their joint concerns about uranium mining in the Northern Great Plains. Citizens from ten organizations are voicing their concerns about surface and ground water, human health, and local property values.

Defenders of the Black Hills, South Dakota Sierra Club and ACTion for the Environment attended from South Dakota, which faces mining proposals along the southern Black Hills. The Powder River Basin Resource Council and Biodiversity Conservation Alliance came from Wyoming, where exploratory and mining permits have been applied for in the state. Coloradoans Against Resource Destruction traveled from the northern part of Colorado where uranium mining is also proposed near Fort Collins. Three organizations—Nebraskans for Peace, the Nebraska Sierra Club and the Western Nebraska Resources Council—represented Nebraska where uranium mining is also proposed near Fort Collins. Three organizations—Nebraskans for Peace, the Nebraska Sierra Club and the Western Nebraska Resources Council—represented Nebraska where uranium mining is also proposed in the northwest corner of the state. Members of Dakota Resource Council from northern North Dakota are also facing new plans for uranium mining in their part of that state.

In all five states, companies plan to use ‘in situ’ leach mining (ISL) which injects a dissolving solution underground into suspected uranium deposits. The solution dissolves the uranium and its radioactive decay products, as well as heavy metals. This radioactive solution is pumped to the surface. The uranium is then removed and shipped to a mill for concentration into “yellowcake.” The water is re-treated and then injected back underground in a cycle that continues until all the uranium has been extracted. Reverse osmosis is then often used to remove some of the toxics from the water, and the remaining liquid is either injected underground or retained in shallow ponds. Numerous uranium mining companies are making plans throughout the West as a result of recent increases in the price of uranium.

“In Wyoming, there are significant questions about regulation and oversight of uranium operations,” according to Wilma Tope, Powder River Basin Resource Council Board Member. “Citizens need to have a stronger voice in uranium activities.” Wilma’s family owns a ranch in Crook County, Wyoming, and has banded together with other local residents to pressure regulators to ensure adequate protection of local water supplies—both quality and quantity.

In South Dakota, Powertech Uranium Corporation has started drilling more uranium exploratory wells in an area where they already have 4,000 wells in the southwestern Black Hills. “It’s already been proven world-wide that ISL mining contaminates aquifers and then those aquifers cannot be restored to their previous state,” said Charmaine White Face, Coordinator for Defenders of the Black Hills.

“South Dakota relies very heavily on aquifers for drinking water and livestock use. We’ve been in a drought for the last ten years and the last thing we need to do is poison our water,” she said.

ACTion for the Environment is very concerned that South Dakota taxpayers will once again have to take on the toxic messes that are left when a mining company leaves as happened previously with Canadian companies. Powertech is a Canadian company. “The Board of Minerals and Environment should remember what happened when they gave approval for the Brohm gold mine. Now South Dakota people are paying for that mess. Are we going to have to pay for a radioactive mess left by another Canadian company?” said Gary Heckenliable of ACTion for the Environment. “Not only South Dakota residents but all the taxpayers of the United States are going to have to pay for this for many, many years to come,” he said.

Coloradoans Against Resource Destruction (CARD), formed last year in response to Powertech’s proposal to mine in the rapidly-growing area near Fort Collins. “Of course uranium mining always causes some form of contamination. Water at in situ leach mining sites is not returned to its original condition,” said Jackie Adolph, a member of CARD. “Most people don’t know that federal policies that subsidize the nuclear industry aren’t just about power plants. The nuclear industry’s largest negative impacts have always been in uranium mining and milling processes.”

In Nebraska, Crow Butte Resources (a subsidiary of the Canadian company Cameco Corp.) is seeking to expand one the largest and oldest ISL mines in the country. Organizations have intervened in the NRC’s licensing procedures. “We are particularly concerned about protection of local water supplies and cultural resources,” said Buffalo Bruce, Vice Chair of the Western Nebraska Resources Council. “The NRC has failed to fulfill its duties under the Trust Doctrine, which protects indigenous rights granted to Native American populations under U.S. treaties.”

North Dakota just recently started public hearings to accept comments on ISL mining in that state. Ken Kudrna, a member of Dakota Resource Council, lives only a few miles from where uranium mining is planned to begin.

The groups have issued a common statement:

“We want the uranium industry to know that we stand together on this issue. Whether in a rural setting or a populated area, uranium mining causes radioactive contamination. Past uranium sites continue to contaminate the air, land and water. Any bonds designed to pay for clean-up of former mining areas have not been sufficient, and taxpayers have been forced to pay the bill. We call on the public and all elected officials to do everything possible to protect the water, land and local economies from proposed uranium activities.”

More information can be found at:
Defenders of the Black Hills: www.defendblackhills.org
Coloradoans Against Resource Destruction: www.nunnglow.com
Powder River Basin Resource Council: www.powderriver-basin.org
Nebraskans for Peace: www.nebraskansforpeace.org/
Contact:
Charmaine White Face: 605-399-1868, or Shannon Anderson: 307-763-1816

Wellheads dot the landscape at the Crow Butte Resources uranium mine near Crawford, Nebraska.
What’s HOT in Global Warming?

by Professor Bruce E. Johansen

Global Warming Is Alive and Well

Having done my best to explain thermal inertia and feedbacks in an Omaha World-Herald "Midland Voices," I seem to have aroused several counter responses in the letters to the editor from hard-core climate contrarians. If carbon dioxide had a sense of humor, it might get a chuckle over the fact that some human beings reject the notion that CO2 retains heat and will have a role in warming the Earth beyond environmentally safe limits.

At the University of Nebraska at Omaha, we have such a rare bird on our chemistry faculty—Robert Smith, a full professor, no less. Professor Smith has his doubts about evolution, too, having signed a petition to that effect offered by Seattle’s Discovery Institute, which promotes “Intelligent Design.” Smith is locally renowned for exercising his First Amendment rights to make a fool of himself, cock-walking our Faculty Senate meetings and the op-ed page of the Omaha World-Herald, telling, in the name of science (as he sees it), non-chemists such as myself that we are ignorant nobodies.

Working the public prints, I have crossed paths with some very weird ‘science.’ Jack Kasher, who used to teach physics at UNO, also tossed a denier’s log on the fire. Professor Kasher is well known for advocating alien abductions. Several letters to the “Public Pulse” upbraided me for raising the subject of global warming when it is cold outside.

True enough, it’s been an average winter around here. We still have the good Nebraska fortune of freezing our rear ends off now and then. We have lost our perspective about what is ‘average,’ however, because the last several winters have been so wimpy.

Rest assured, global warming is alive and well. Meanwhile, here are a few dispatches from other places.

Solar Power Developing Quickly

Robert F. Service reports in Science (February 8, 2008) that the cost of solar power has been declining sharply, from $22 per watt in 1980, to $6 per watt in 1990, and $2.70 in 2005. Economies of scale, as well as improvements in efficiency and less-expensive construction materials may bring solar energy down to cost that completes with fossil-fuel generation by about 2015. By 2008, the solar-power industry’s generating capacity worldwide was growing at an astonishing 40 percent a year, but it still generated only a fraction of one percent of total electrical power.

The silicon solar panels that dominate the industry today may be replaced by new technologies that combine several light-absorbing materials able to capture different portions of the solar spectrum, or solar cells manufactured in rolls of thin copper-indium film gallium selenide atop a metal foil. Nanotechnology plays a role in some designs for future solar-generating technology that is being theorized, but not yet commercialized. While today’s silicon cells convert about 15 to 20 per cent of sunlight to electricity in the field (up to 24 per cent under perfect laboratory conditions), new technologies that have broached the realm of theory (and some in design, but not commercialization) raise that figure to 40, 60, even 80 percent. Photovoltaics made of plastic may dramatically reduce manufacturing costs.

Lake Mead May Run Dry

Lake Mead, the vast reservoir for the Colorado River water that sustains the fast-growing cities of Phoenix and Las Vegas, could lose water faster than previously thought and run dry within 13 years, according to a study by scientists at the Scripps Institute of Oceanography.

With weather patterns in a warming world favoring a drier American West, a study by scientists at Scripps indicates that Lake Mead, which spans the border of Nevada and Arizona, could run so low by 2013 that water pumps would become useless. The study has become a center of controversy between scientists at Scripps and others at the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, who assert that its climate models are too crude to forecast the future water level of a single large lake.

The Scripps study found that Lake Mead’s water supply has a 50 percent chance of becoming unusable by 2021 if the demand for water remains at present levels, and if global warming trends conform to mid-range models. Researchers Tim P. Barnett and David W. Pierce of Scripps say that even with an occasional snowy winter (such as 2007-2008) demand for the lake’s water exceeds the amount added each year by runoff. “We were really sort of stunned,” Barnett told The New York Times. “We didn’t expect such a big problem basically right on our front doorstep. We thought there’d be more time.” He added, “You think of what the implications are, and it’s pretty scary.”

Other research has found that the Colorado River watershed, of which Lake Mead is a part, has had a long-standing tendency toward drought that makes the last century look unusually wet. Climate models also indicate that a warmer climate favors persistent drought in this area.

Ethanol May Not be Eco-Friendly

When the full emissions costs of producing bio-fuels are calculated, most of them are environmentally more expensive, causing more greenhouse gases than fossil fuels, according to studies published in Science early in 2008. Growth of feedstock for many bio-fuels, from corn to sugar cane to palm oil, destroys natural ecosystems (most notably rainforest in the tropics and South American grasslands), releasing gases as they are burned and plowed. Destruction of these older, natural ecosystems also removes carbon sinks. In addition to the greenhouse gases caused by growing bio-fuels, additional emissions result from refining and transporting them.

“When you take this into account, most of the bio-fuel that people are using or planning to use would probably increase greenhouse gases substantially,” said Timothy Searchinger, lead author of one of the studies and a researcher in environment and economics at Princeton University. “Previously there’s been an accounting error: land use change has been left out of prior analysis.”

Clearance of grassland releases 93 times the amount of greenhouse gas that would be saved by the fuel made annually on that land, said Joseph Fargione, lead author of the second paper, and a scientist at the Nature Conservancy. “So for the next 93 years you’re making climate change worse, just at the time when we need to be bringing down carbon emissions.”

Many U.S. farmers are growing corn year-round, whereas previously corn crops were alternated with soybeans. More soybeans are being raised on newly cleared rainforest land in Brazil.

Bruce E. Johansen, Frederick W. Kayser Professor of Communication at the University of Nebraska-Omaha, is the author of the three-volume Global Warming in the Twenty-First Century (2006).
### Organizational Chart of StratCom Groups, Components & Task Forces

#### Organizational “J-Code” Groups

| J0 – Office of the Commander | J1 – Manpower and Personnel Col. Timothy Cashdollar | J2 – Intelligence Captain Jeffrey Canfield |
| J3 – Global Operations Rear Admiral Doug McClain | J3A – Combat & Info Ops Brigadier General Brooks Bash |
| J3B – Current Operations Colonel Michael Carey |
| J4 – Logistics Captain Walter litre | J5 – Plans & Policy Brigadier General Mark Owen |
| J6 – C4 Systems Colonel Mark VanUs |
| J7 – Joint Exercises & Training Colonel Richard Bolz | J8 – Capability/Resource Integration Ken Caldicott |

#### Functional Components

**Space**
- For less than a year, "Space and Global Strike" was a combined command based in Omaha. New independent space components now based at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California, home to many of the nation’s military space assets. Was the separation prompted to give space a “separate” mission? Or was it a public relations gambit to make mid-level officials and their executive assistants feel like they had direct connections to global space operations?

**Global Strike**
- Lt. General Robert Elder of the Air Force, former commander of the combined Space and Global Strike Component, continues to hold the high office. He said that the Global Strike and globalbased Air Force Space Command in Louisiana. Global Strike responsibilities include planning, executing and strategic reconnaissance operations to deter attacks against the United States or its allies. To that end, it also keeps a close watch on nuclear weapons and defense, and in planning covert computer attack.

**Joint Information Operations Center**
- When the Department of Defense (DOD) says “information operations,” they mean using the Internet to influence the behavior of others. The NSA has a worldwide presence, and performs functions such as electronic surveillance, information warfare, and computer and communication networks.

**Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance**
- This is the closest thing to a "Joint Operations Center" ever to be deployed, according to a DOD official. The NSA’s "Joint Operations Center" (JOC) collects data from a variety of sources, including the "flying computer" that powers the NSA’s massive databases.

### Service Components

**Air Force Space Command**
- We call this the "smallest" of the U.S. Space Comman its national security mission, the "flying computer" that powers the NSA’s massive databases.

**Army**
- The Army SMDC, Arlington, VA

**Navy**
- The Navy’s Space Command, and active elements of Naval Nuclear Weapons Center (NNWC), which is responsible for all nuclear warheads. The Navy’s Space Command, and active elements of Naval Nuclear Weapons Center (NNWC), which is responsible for all nuclear warheads. The Navy’s Space Command, and active elements of Naval Nuclear Weapons Center (NNWC), which is responsible for all nuclear warheads. The Navy’s Space Command, and active elements of Naval Nuclear Weapons Center (NNWC), which is responsible for all nuclear warheads.

### Task Forces

- **Airborne Communications**
- **Aerial Refueling/Tankers**
- **Strategic Bombers & Reconnaissance Aircraft**

### Strategic Bombers

- **Air Force Space Command**
- **Maritime Corps Forces Strategic Command (MARFORSTRAT) Quantico, VA**
- **Lt. General James Amos**

### Task Forces

- **National Geospatial Intelligence Agency Representative**
- **Eric Herbst**
- **National Security Agency Representative**
- **Mr. Pat Moreno**

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Created by Long Wiel, Citizens for Peace in Space
2008 Omaha Peace & Justice Expo

“Working Toward a World Without Poverty”

Keynote Speaker:
Sam Daley-Harris
Saturday April 26
9:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Lewis & Clark Middle School
6901 Burt Street

Daley-Harris is also founder and president of RESULTS, an international citizens’ lobby dedicated to creating the political will to end hunger and poverty. He is the author of Reclaiming Our Democracy: Healing the Break Between People and Government, about which President Jimmy Carter said, “[Daley-Harris] provides a road map for global involvement in planning a better future.” Daley-Harris is also editor of “Pathways Out of Poverty: Innovations in Microfinance for the Poorest Families.”

He lives in Washington, D.C. with his wife Shannon, who is a consultant with the Religious Affairs Division of the Children’s Defense Fund. Their son Micah was born in May 1998 and daughter Sophie was born in May 2001.

This year marks the fourth consecutive Peace & Justice Expo which annually draws upwards to 500 participants.

Why We Need To Close the unicameral’s Revolving Door

by Roger Holmes and Jack Gould
Common Cause Nebraska

During the Government Committee hearing on LB 870, the so-called revolving-door bill which calls for a two-year wait before former state Sen.s and certain other elected officials can become lobbyists, Sen. Mike Friend of Omaha said he was unaware of any problems that would justify the bill. “I fail to find any value in this bill,” he told the committee.

To enlighten Sen. Friend and other committee members who appeared to share his lack of awareness, we offer the following recent examples of the revolving-door syndrome.

Our first concerns former Sen. Don Pederson of North Platte and the Assurity Life Building across the street from the Capitol at 16th and K Streets in Lincoln. Sen. Pederson, as chairman of the Appropriations Committee in the 99th Legislature (2005-2006), was instrumental in arranging for the state’s appropriation of $12 million to purchase the building. Pederson was term-limited out of the legislature in January 2007. In February, he registered as a lobbyist for Assurity Life, telling the Omaha World-Herald it was the only lobbying job he intended to take. He resigned as Assurity’s lobbyist in June, six months later, having been paid $20,000 for his lobbying efforts.

The next example involves the former Speaker of the 98th Legislature (2003-2004), Curt Bromm, and efforts to pass legislation prohibiting power companies and municipalities from offering broadband services to consumers, which, as a consequence, would maintain the monopoly on these services by private telecommunications companies. Bromm twice sponsored such legislation; the first effort failed; the second bill was passed but the law was overturned in a court case.

In January, 2005, two days after term limits ended Sen. Bromm’s legislative career, he registered as a lobbyist for nine clients, including the Nebraska Cable Communications Association and the Nebraska Telecommunications Association. These two clients paid $5,000 a month each for his services.

Our final example concerns Sen. Kermit Brashear, LB 645 and the recent Omaha schools legislation. Just as former Speaker Bromm was traveling through the revolving door into the lobby, the newly elected Speaker of the Legislature, Kermit Brashear, picked up the effort to prohibit public entities from providing broadband services by introducing LB 645 into the 99th Legislature (2005-2006).

On February 2, 2005, Speaker Brashear filed a conflict of interest declaration, as required by law, listing LB 645 and eight other communications-related bills as possible conflicts of interest because he was under contract to Cox Cable, a company providing broadband services.

Such conflict declarations do not require a senator to recuse himself from working on conflicted bills. Speaker Brashear played a significant role in the passage of LB 645, aided by now-lobbyist Bromm’s Rotunda buttonholing of his former colleagues. Speaker Brashear was also heavily involved in the Omaha schools legislation that occupied so much of the 2006 session.

In February 2007, within a month of his term-limited exit from the legislature, Brashear registered as a paid lobbyist, listing the Metro Student Achievement Steering Committee, a group with clear interests in the outcome of the legislation.

And, in the first three months of 2008, just one year after his departure from the legislature, Brashear added three more lobbying clients: the Brownell-Talbot School, an interested party in the Omaha schools legislation, pays him $1,000 per month for his services. And Cox Cable, Brashear’s legal client whose telecommunications interests were protected by LB 645, pays him $3,000 per month to represent their interests. In March, Lincoln Mayor Chris Beutler, a colleague of the former speaker in the legislature, announced that the city was hiring Brashear as a lobbyist to the tune of $12,000.

Former Sens. Pederson, Bromm and Brashear are not alone in capitalizing on a quick move through the revolving door between the legislative chamber and the lobby. It is because of their conduct and that of others (including two other recent Speakers) that Common Cause supports the Governor and Sen. Avery in asking the legislature to close the door. Such behavior undermines the electorate’s trust in elected officials and threatens the integrity of our state government.

Author and activist Sam Daley-Harris will be the featured speaker at the 2008 Omaha Peace & Justice Expo. President and founder of the 501(c)(3) RESULTS Educational Fund, Daley-Harris is dedicated to mass educational strategies to generate the will for ending world hunger.

RESULTS Educational Fund organized the February 1997 Microcredit Summit held in Washington, DC. The Summit was attended by more than 2,900 participants from 137 countries and launched a nine-year campaign to reach 100 million of the world's poorest families, especially the women of those families, with credit for self-employment and other financial and business services by 2005. By the end of 2006 the Microcredit Summit Campaign had made loans to more than 133 million people, 93 million of whom were among the world's poorest. Almost 85 percent are women, and the loan repayment rate is about 98 percent.
Nebraskans deserve the same benefits from competition as people in other states. Nebraska communities should be able to provide services to their people, as do communities in other states. And Nebraskans are entitled to the same benefits of technology as people in other states.

The fact that Nebraskans were smart enough to be the only 100-percent public power state in the nation and to own their own public power infrastructure should not now handicap them and force them to underutilize resources.

The “Use Public Power” initiative petition now being circulated in the state would grant local public power boards the authority over internet connection access. “Local option” authority is critical in a big state like Nebraska where one size does not fit all. For instance, some boards may choose to:

- ‘wholesale’ infrastructure access to the private sector;
- string fiber optic lines to farms, residences or industrial parks to link them to a buffer of private communications providers;
- work in dynamic partnerships with local investors—young talent and old visionaries growing the information age in Nebraska, not just from the consumer side, but the all-important production side as well;
- build a state of the art communication system in their service areas;
- utilize existing power lines to deliver communications services using a technology called BPL that the FCC says holds great promise, but is currently prohibited by Nebraska law;
- do nothing but stand ever vigilant as a deterrent force ready to enter the market if private interests use their monopoly position to deter competition or otherwise do not operate in the public interest;
- employ existing investments and assets directly or in partnership with the private sector; or
- perform any other role that public power boards, as trustees of the public heritage exercising local control, find in the interest of their communities.

Under Nebraska's current telecommunication's policy, Nebraskans pay the highest taxes on their phone bills of any state.

Under Nebraska's current telecommunication's policy, Nebraskans pay the highest taxes on their phone bills of any state—due in large measure to a “Universal Service Fund” assessment which raises $65,000,000 per year and is almost all doled out to legacy phone companies to give them incentive to provide rural dial tone and broadband. Most of those companies are closed private corporations that have broad discretion with their internal finances. By contrast, the public power companies are in a position to offer a broadband service carrying voice, internet and possibly digital television to the same rural areas using much the same resources they already have. The 6.95 percent Universal Service Fund assessment drives up the cost of telephone in the metropolitan areas and weighs against companies considering relocation to the urban centers. In rural areas it creates a heavily subsidized competitor which discourages private broadband investment and innovation there.

Many rural states do not even have a universal service fund. Nebraska’s 6.95 percent is the highest in the nation. The fund frees up legacy company finances for the massive political activity that, in turn, keeps it on the books and continues to outlaw public power movement. For those legacy companies with operations in other states, it may even free up resources for infrastructure in other states. While the accounting on the $65,000,000 per year is very difficult to come by, clearly the assets purchased with the subsidies belong to the corporate recipients and increase their stock value. There is no obligation for the private companies to repay the subsidies should the firm merge or sell. If the public is going to pay for infrastructure, shouldn’t the public own it?

The Federal government likewise hands out almost an equal amount in annual subsidy to the same legacy phone companies. Should public power companies choose to position themselves properly—and allowed by the initiative petition—they could share in the federal subsidy and create public wealth with it.

The principal argument against giving our public power companies authority to deliver telecom services (or not, as they choose) is that government should not be allowed to compete with private entities.

Such an argument ignores that in many respects public power is simply a business like any other—except it pays its shareholders dividends in the form of cheaper rates than the national average. Public power has few of the ‘marketers’ usually associated with government. It levies no tax. It has no police. It passes no laws. The general philosophical issue in the ‘government vs. private’ debate is rooted in the government being able to use such powers to compete unfairly. But like business corporations, public power is established under authority of statute passed by the legislature. It, like business corporations, is governed by a board or directors with fiduciary duties to the business operations. It, like business corporations, is driven by the forces of the private marketplace.

In one very important respect, however, public power is like government. It is obligated to treat all equally and fairly. It is bound by public openness. It is bound by the principles of free speech and neutrality with respect to content of communication. These form the essential foundation of a communications platform consistent with our most sacred principles.

Do you believe that Nebraska’s public power companies should be allowed to provide Internet and other telecommunications services, or should they not be allowed to?

No, Should Not Be Allowed 22.5%

Yes, Should Be Allowed 53.4%

In fact, with respect to our current telecommunications situation in Nebraska, the ‘government vs. private’ arguments are actually reversed. It was the local phone companies that got the Unicameral to impose the 6.95 percent universal service assessment on every phone bill. It was the local phone companies that created a special eligible class to assure they had special status and access to those funds vis-a-vis innovators and competitors. It was the local phone companies that insist on their ability to bundle their product line and limit access to infrastructure in discriminatory fashion.

We live in an age where the private and public sector often provide similar services and commodities. Examples:

- Parking Facilities
- Theaters and Arenas
- School Systems
- Shipping Ports and Airports
- Garbage collection and disposal
- Insurance (Medicaid and Medicare vs. private insurance)
- Hospitals and Public Health (Nebraska University Medical Center, etc.)

Conclusion on page 11

by Paul Schumacher
www.usepublicpower.com

April 2008 Nebraska Report, p. 9
As targets of J. Edgar Hoover’s counter-intelligence program (CointelPro) in the late ’60s, Mondo and his co-defendant Ed Poindexter were charged and convicted of the 1970 murder of Omaha Police officer Larry Minard. For over 37 years they have steadfastly maintained their innocence and that they were victims of an F.B.I. frameup. Amnesty International has designated them both as U.S. political prisoners.

I don’t hear it—“You’ve got your nerve”—as much as I used to. It is, of course, much as I used to. It is, of course, what one might say to a person who’s being a toilet bowl calling a sink ‘white.’

There’s much that goes on in the U.S. that stimulates at least some of us to say, “You’ve got your nerve” or something equivalent to that. For instance, according to a January 31, 2008 Lincoln Journal Star article, Andy Ringsmuth objects to the Nebraska Minority Committee translating civil and self-represented litigant forms into Spanish, Vietnamese and Arabic. Ringsmuth says that, if a person chooses to live here (presumably, the U.S.), he or she should learn English.

I hesitate to rain to Ringsmuth’s charade. But there’s substantial irony in his decision to use the legal profession as a venue for his English-only crusade. It so happens that some of the most important and commonly cited legal concepts are expressed, not in English, but in Latin and Latin-derived terminology, such as: “habeas corpus,” “mandamus,” “cer-tiorari,” “nolo contendere,” “res judicata” and “voir dire.” Is Andy Ringsmuth objec-tionable to the prevalence of these Latin terms or to the prevalence of Latin and Greek terms in the sciences?

And as to his insistence that people who choose to live here learn English, he should be reminded that there was a time when no one in this land spoke English or any other European language. Yet the English and other Europeans who came and chose to stay didn’t bother to learn the language indigenous to this place. Nor does Ringsmuth seem to be expressing interest in learning Lakota, Dine’, Cheyenne, Cree or any other of the languages spoken here before his ancestors arrived. So if I happen to be a person here in this state who doesn’t speak English, I’m looking at Andy Ringsmuth and thinking, “You’ve got your nerve.”

Ringsmuth is not alone in seeing himself as having some kind of patriotic duty to protect the dominance of the English language in the U.S. He is one of hordes of politicians and other public figures who view English as representing a kind of purity of Americanism, with languages spoken mainly by people of color representing contamination. Unfortunately, for Mexicanos/as and other people from Central and South America who are of indigenous heritage and speak Spanish, the Spanish language is under attack. Why? It’s not only because it’s a foreign language but because Europeans (Caucasians) in the U.S. have come to associate it with brown-skinned, dark-haired, non-European people. This association serves to cause them a faultiness of recollection in which they forget that Spanish—like Latin, Greek, French, etc.—is a European language.

When we see these advocates for English-only laws, policies and so forth, we almost always see, side-by-side with them, advocates for “fixing our borders.” The fire-breathing Lou Dobbs of CNN is among the most prominent of these, combining incendiary rhetoric with a demeanor suggesting that he not only feels personally offended by ‘aliens’ illegally crossing into the U.S. from Mexico, but that he is feeling offended on behalf of real Americans. Someone there in the newsroom of CNN should tap Lou on the shoulder and give him a ‘heads-up’ on the fact that much of the southwestern U.S. was taken from Mexico and that the entirety of the continental U.S. was taken from the nations (tribes) who inhabited it at the time the first Europeans arrived here, and had been living here for thousands of years before their arrival. Somewhere, right about now, there’s a so-called ‘illegal alien’ looking at Lou Dobbs on the TV screen and thinking, “You’ve got your nerve.”

On the television these days, there are channels appealing to all kinds of interests: entertainment in general, movies and particular categories of movies, music and different genres of music, a large variety of sports, etc. Recently, I was clicking through some channels and stopped, out of curiosity, at the Sportsman Channel. The program was “Tommy Wilcox Outdoors.” I’ve been a vegetarian since 1973 and don’t find anything entertaining about people killing animals. But I had a feeling that I should check this out for a couple of minutes.

There was a large, fat man dressed in camouflage, crouching amid tall vegetation. Some distance from him, there was a fluttering contraption used to lure flying quail to within shooting range. This large, fat man in camouflage was shooting tiny quail with a big gun and, instead of a bird dog, he was using his young son to go fetch the birds he was shooting out of the sky. At one point, the son, who was probably six or seven, came running back to his dad with a few dead quail. He was so proud as he cheered, “Dad, you shot this one right in the eye.” At another point, the ‘great white hunter’ shot two quail in quick succession and, pleased with himself, sang a couple of bars of “Double your pleasure, double your fun.” That was more than enough for me. And Michael Vick is doing time in prison, but not a fat man in camouflage, shooting tiny quail for fun, with a big-ass gun.

Sometimes words are just words, or seem to be. But often, words are much more than words. Today, for example, I learned that, though torture is torture most of the time, when it is done under the authority of the Bush/Cheney Administration, torture is not torture, but “enhanced interrogation.”

There is much to be learned. There are children who believe their parents have value. But they learn soon enough from this country’s news media that Warren Buffett and Bill Gates are worth several billion each. So, what of the children whose parents are working hard at full-time jobs and are only making enough money to make it from paycheck to paycheck and have little or no material assets? How long does it take for these kids to begin to ask themselves, if Buffett and Gates are worth billions, what are their parents, who have no material wealth, worth?

“Freedom” is a word that can mean one thing to one person or group and another to a person or group in a different set of circumstances. And it can mean one thing for one person or group and something else for another person or group. “Freedom” under capitalism may mean very similar things to those who have capital and those who don’t. But the freedom for those with capital is very different from the freedom for those without. For the former, it is a matter of virtually unlimited options.

In this country, freedom of speech is especially prized by those with capital who run commercial media. Their freedom means that they can use broadcast and print features, as well as ads, to encourage people to eat too much, to buy things they don’t need, to pile up credit debt, to laugh at people’s hardships and sufferings, to disrespect vital aspects of people’s cultures, to enjoy violence, to become obsessed over sex, and to otherwise put themselves and/or those around them into jeopardy. The more those who run media exercise their options, the more the healthy and constructive options for the targets of media shrink.

The March 2008 Nebraska Report printed a column by A’Jamal-Rashad Byndon, in which he stated: “Sometime ago I was told a story about employment at the Omaha Public Power District and the Metropolitan Utilities District, the public utility in Omaha. Both institutions have internal policies which prohibit hiring the children of employees for summer jobs. However, employees circumvent those policies by developing contacts in the other company with whom they barter jobs for their children.”

The Metropolitan Utilities District allows children of employees to apply for summer employment. We do not barter jobs for employees’ children with the Omaha Public Power District. The Metropolitan Utilities District requests a retraction of both statements.

Mudi Matulka, Director, Corporate Communications, Metropolitan Utilities District

Regarding the column by A’Jamal Byndon in the March 2008 Nebraska Report, OPPD does have policies relating to both part-time and full-time hires, and neither prohibits the children of employees from applying for jobs at OPPD. The policy is clear that no employee should be hired who would directly or indirectly supervise, or be supervised, by a relative, or who would be assigned to the same work group in which a relative is employed. In other words, relatives of employees can apply and work at OPPD, but they cannot be supervised directly or indirectly by the existing employee. This applies to all full-time and part-time positions.

OPPD is an equal opportunity employer and administers all employment activities without regard to race, color, religion, creed, sex, marital status, age, national origin, veteran status, disability, or any other factor prohibited by law.

Our personnel are not bartering jobs for employees’ children with MUD, and we believe these statements should be corrected. Thank you.

Gary Williams, Division Manager - Corporate Communications, OPPD
‘Use Public Power’

Right of Way (providing access for phone, cable and gas lines on public property competes with the private land owners who could sell access along their adjoining property otherwise.)

Postal Service (competition with UPS, FedEx, DHL, etc.)

National Weather Service competes with private weather forecasters

Banking (federal government’s Farm Credit Service is the largest lender—USDA competes with private banks)

Office Buildings (government owns office buildings and leases off space competing with private landlords; government also sells timber and grazing rights which would have to be purchased from private companies if the government wasn’t in the business)

Municipal water wells compete with landowners who could drill qualifying wells to connect to the distribution system and sell water to customers.

Publicly run ambulance services compete with private ambulance companies.

The ultimate debate needs to focus on who should own the information super highway? Should the owner be answerable to the local people or far-away investors? Should the owner be in a position to discriminate in favor of those who buy other services from it? But if the owner is a public utility, then the consumer is free to select which private vendor to carry its voice packets (VoIP) … which email service to provide its email and spam filters… which video company to provide its movies and news… and which online radio station to listen to. If the highway is a public road, then the door is open to the competitive marketplace for services delivered on that road system. The vision of a reasonably unregulated competitive information marketplace has a chance of becoming a reality because the consumer has the choice and the accompanying benefits of competition. But if the highway is not a public road, the owner is someone in a position to restrict consumer choices to those approved by it and to collect tribute from each and every packet of information each citizen sends or receives.

Nebraska, as the nation’s only fully public power state, is in a unique position to pioneer at creating a true public information super highway. That pioneering spirit was powerfully evidenced in a late 2006 statewide scientific poll of likely voters:

Just over half of all respondents believe the public power companies should be allowed to provide Internet and other telecommunications services. Another 24 percent don’t know or don’t have an opinion one way or the other.

Approximately 89,000 verifiable signatures representing at least five percent of the registered voters in each of at least 38 counties are necessary to place the initiative on the November 2008 ballot. The signatures need to be submitted to the Secretary of State by July.

The petition text and extensive background information is available at www.usepublicpower.com. Petitions are available for circulation by a simple request on the website or email to petition@usepublicpower.com.

Your Foundation Speaks

by Loyal Park, President, Nebraska Peace Foundation

Have you considered the Foundation in your will? Is peace work important enough to be at the top of your list? Will StratCom continue without being challenged by the work that Nebraskans for Peace is doing to educate the public about the changes and plans of that combatant command?

We are hoping to have the majority of people who have supported peace work over the years become supporters of the Foundation’s Endowment Fund. The Endowment Fund is growing, but we need your support to keep peace work going long into the future.

Any questions about how you can help? Call me 402-489-6662.
Speaking Our Peace

“It’s the economy, stupid.”

Sign in the headquarters of the 1992 Clinton for President Campaign

During Vietnam, President Johnson told us that we could have both “guns and butter.” Richard Nixon told us the same thing in different words. But after the Nixonian price controls to contain the economic fall-out and the stagflation of the Ford/Carter years, we found that we had too much civilian and military demand chasing too little productivity, too much easy credit and a resulting 21 percent inflation.

When Reagan shut down the easy money and ag-land prices fell, farmers found their farms not worth as much as their mortgages—hence, the ’80s ag crisis.

We have two new ‘guns and butter’ fairy stories that promise to dominate the fall elections:

1. The Iraq “surge” has worked pretty much, and it will work completely soon (the gun myth);
2. The economy is the fall election issue, and ‘our candidate’—Republican or Democrat—can bring prosperity back (the butter myth).

These are myths.

One, the surge is not working, despite what Bush and McCain claim. We have achieved three of the 13 goals we projected: less than 25 percent (hardly a passing grade). We have bought off a few Sunni tribal leaders in Western Iraq, men who will stay bought off as long as we bribe them. We have brought a culture of bribery and corruption to our companies and to their government. Muqtada al-Sadr has called off his Madhi army for a spell while he reorganizes it to be more unified under him, but his Shiite dominance goals have not altered. Al-Qaida in Iraq is still active. Deaths in Iraq are down only as low as they were before the Golden Mosque’s bombing. What can put a good face on things is that some weeks Baghdad’s former violence seems to have moved to Mosul or Afghanistan or Northeast Pakistan. Moving the violence, though, does not end it.

Charles Sennott, an embedded Boston Globe reporter sympathetic to the surge’s goals, said recently on NPR that he’d encountered no Iraqis who believed that pacification would last after American divisions pulled back. But we in America, we are told to wait at a little longer and give the surge a chance to work—just like we had only to wait for the Iraqi elections to work, or for the Iraqi Army to be trained, or for the capture of Saddam Hussein to break the back of the insurgency. Now, we are told, we must wait again “lest we lose the purpose of all those lives lost.”

What we should be waiting for is a UN-sponsored police action and negotiation to stabilize Iraq. We should be waiting for a peacekeeping mission from Iraq’s regional neighbors. We should be waiting for our bases to close, and for Iraqis to control their own oil. We should herald Chuck Hagel though the streets of Lincoln and Omaha for his honesty.

Two, the economy is NOT the issue. About half of the people in the U.S. believe the economy is the issue because that is what the media and the politicians are telling them. The candidates are campaigning as if the credit crisis and foreclosures have nothing to do with Iraq or Afghanistan. One can understand how citizens losing their homes—after gaining easy credit, variable-rate mortgages and then seeing, in the last two years, interest rates rise while the value of their homes fell below the size of their mortgages—might think the economy was the issue. They’re being told that a moratorium on foreclosures or cutting the interest rates or going after predatory lenders or tax rebates will solve things. But these band-aids will not work.

They will not work because the economy is not the issue. The war is.

The war created this economy. We have borrowed over $500 billion to pay for the war already—this whole war has been fought on borrowed money. Five hundred billion is ten times what Bush-Cheney told us the war would cost. And Joseph Stiglitz (the Nobel Prize-winning economist) and Linda Bilmes, in their new book Three Trillion Dollar War, show that—the with interest on debt, intelligence costs, costs tucked in departments other than defense, off-the-books costs, and the costs of medical injuries to U.S. service veterans—this war will cost at least $3,000,000,000,000. That translates into an eventual debt of about $100,000 for each family of three in America.

To try to pull off this ‘guns and butter’ scenario, the Fed made easy money available just as it did before the farm crisis. It encouraged massive investment in housing to create civilian contentment. As Stiglitz explains, because of the war’s cost, the “Fed sloshed credit all through the system… The regulators were looking the other way and money was being lent to anyone this side of a life support system” (The Australian, 2/8/08; see also The Three Trillion Dollar War, pp. 125-26). The Fed also relaxed credit controls. As Stiglitz argues, the war is the reason for the recession, and we will pay not only in foreclosures and bank instability, but in inflation and general fiscal instability for years, perhaps for decades. That is what we have bought with this endless stupid war—beyond the deaths, injuries and refugee camps.

So when presidential, congressional or senatorial candidates try to tell you, “It’s the economy, stupid,” tell them where to get off. There are no ‘guns-and-butter’ wars. Wars mean sacrifice, either now or later. We can choose to have schools, universities, roads, healthcare, thriving family farms and productive households, public transportation and green energy. Or we can choose to cry “Terror” endlessly, worsen the causes of unrest in the Middle East, forfeit our civil liberties and squander our blood and treasure while making ourselves into a military state.

It is not the economy; it is the war. And if we do not pin back the ears of our Democratic and Republican candidates on this issue, we will deserve the wasteland we will get.