There is no Peace without Justice

by Hendrik van den Berg
UNL Economics Professor & author of
The Economics of Immigration
(Springer, 2009)

As the United States once again considers changing its immigration policy, it’s important to note that calls for restricting the entry of immigrants are nothing new in our history. Despite our reputation as a country of immigrants, our government policies have often been anything but ‘immigrant-friendly.’ Before analyzing the ‘new’ proposals to restrict immigration, we can gain some perspective by reviewing the myths and realities of our past immigration policies.

The Ebb & Flow of Past U.S. Immigration

The table on page 3 details the decade-by-decade inflows of legal immigrants to the U.S. over the past two centuries. The fluctuations in immigration over the past two hundred years were in large part due to shifts in U.S. immigration policies, which, in turn, were driven by economic conditions, the changing volumes of immigration and political developments. Note that the table does not include illegal immigrants, largely because we do not have accurate numbers. By the year 2000, there were an estimated 8.5 million unauthorized immigrants in the U.S.; by 2005, the number had grown to somewhere between 10 and 12 million. This recent growth of unauthorized immigration reflects the clash between restrictions on legal immigration and the strong economic incentives for immigrants to come to the U.S.

U.S. immigration has also varied in terms of the country of origin and the permanence of the immigrants in the U.S. Whereas most immigrants to the U.S. during the 1800s were mostly from the British Isles and Northern Europe, during the very early 20th century most immigrants were from Southern and Eastern Europe. Then, toward the latter part of the 20th century, most immigrants came from developing countries in Latin America and Asia.

Early Immigration Policy

After Independence, U.S. borders were effectively open. In fact, immigration from Europe was encouraged—an understandable policy for a large country with relatively few inhabitants. The U.S. Constitution contained provisions giving the Congress the power to “establish a uniform Rule of Naturalization.” The Constitution also stipulated that immigrants, once they gained citizenship, became eligible to hold all government offices except the Presidency.

In a speech on December 2, 1783, not long after the he led the definitive defeat of the British forces in the Battle of Yorktown, George Washington told an audience of Irish immigrants:

The bosom of America is open to receive not only the opulent and respectable...
Nebraska Report
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Old Address ______________________________________________________
City _____________________________ State ________ Zip _______________
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City _____________________________ State ________ Zip _______________
New Phone # ______________________________________________________
NEW EMAIL ______________________________________________________

Nebraskans for Peace Financial Report

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| **EXPENSES:**        |       |       |       |
| Personnel            | $86,853 | $79,188 | 79,380 |
| Nebraska Report      | 17,100  | 25,277 | 28,035 |
| Special Projects     | 11,900  | 18,200 | 11,200 |
| Peace Conference     | 3,000  | 3,159  | 3,500  |
| Printing & Copying   | 1,200  | 1,229  | 3,000  |
| Postage              | 3,000  | 2,939  | 3,600  |
| Rent                 | 6,700  | 6,743  | 6,800  |
| Insurance            | 886    | 886    | 875    |
| Accounting           | 3,900  | 4,100  | 3,900  |
| Telephone            | 3,600  | 3,301  | 3,000  |
| Supplies             | 1,000  | 185    | 600    |
| Office Expense       | 1,000  | 731    | 1,800  |
| Online Information Service | 2,300  | 3,125  | 2,100  |
| Staff Travel         | 2,400  | 1,510  | 1,200  |
| Advertising          | 2,000  | 2,572  | 0      |
| Miscellaneous Expense| 1,161  | 1,104  | 1,800  |
| **TOTAL EXPENSES**   | $148,000 | $154,248 | $150,790 |

|                      |       |       |       |
| **REVENUE OVER (UNDER) EXPENSES** |       | ($999) | $210  |

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Immigration, continued

stranger, but the oppressed and persecuted of all nations and religions, whom we shall welcome to participate in all of our rights and privileges, if by decency and propriety of conduct they appear to merit the enjoyment.

At the insistence of the delegates from the Southern states, the Constitution also condoned the forced immigration of slaves from Africa by banning the federal government from interfering with the slave trade for 20 years, until 1808.

First Immigration Legislation: The Intrusion of Politics

In 1790, the U.S. Congress passed legislation that, among other things, set a period of two years for an immigrant to become eligible for citizenship. The 1790 act also established that immigration was open to “free white persons” (a provision that would eventually be used against Asian immigrants later in the 19th century). In 1795, the number of years of residency required before citizenship could be applied for was increased to 14 years. Then, the “Alien and Sedition” Acts passed during the John Adams Administration restricted the entry of even some “free white persons”—effectively those people that the Federalists thought might vote for Thomas Jefferson. The period required before citizenship could be obtained was also increased to 14 years. In 1802, during the Jefferson Administration, it was changed back to five years, where it has remained through today.

The ‘Know-Nothings’: The ‘Minutemen’ of the 1850s?

Immigration gradually increased during the first half of the 19th century, and the flood of Irish immigrants after the Irish potato famine seems to have triggered the first major organized support for restricting immigration. The anti-immigrant sentiment was closely related to a growing anti-Catholic sentiment. There had, in fact, been anti-Catholic riots in several northeastern cities of the U.S. as early as the 1830s, fueled by the fear that the growth of Catholicism would undermine traditional Protestant society in the United States. In addition to the Irish, increasing numbers of Catholic Germans were also arriving by mid-century.

An exclusive and secret society of white Protestant men called the "Order of the Star-Spangled Banner" arose in the 1850s to protest the perceived threat of Roman Catholicism and Catholic immigrants. Because they would always reply, "I know nothing," when questioned about their organization, members of the Order were referred to as the "Know-Nothings." By the mid-1850s, the Know-Nothings had had over a million white males as members, which amounted to over one-eighth of all eligible white male voters in the country because only men could vote in the 19th century and—in the Southern states—only white males could vote. The Order formed a political party, the "American Party," whose candidate, former President Millard Fillmore, captured 20 percent of the vote in 1856. The Civil War, in which many recent immigrants fought, lowered the anti-immigrant fervor, and the Know-Nothings gradually faded into obscurity.

The “Chinese Exclusion Act”: A 19th Century ‘Patriot Act’?

In the 1860s, thousands of Chinese immigrants worked on the transcontinental railroad. By 1880, there were over 100,000 Chinese living in California. Although anti-Chinese sentiments had been strong in California for years, anti-Chinese sentiments spread to the rest of the country when, in 1870, a shoe factory in North Adams, Massachusetts, brought in 75 Chinese workers from California to replace striking workers. Labor organizations were quick to exploit racial biases by depicting Chinese immigrants as a threat to American workers. Congress responded by passing laws restricting Chinese immigration, but the presidents during the 1870s vetoed them because established trade treaties between the U.S. and China prohibited restrictions on Chinese immigration. However, in 1882, after a new trade treaty with China was negotiated, Congress passed a bill entitled “To Execute Certain Treaty Stipulations Relating to Chinese” but popularly known as the “Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.” This law was blatantly racist, yet it passed Constitutional muster.

Also in 1882, another immigration law placed a tax on immigrants to pay for a new immigration bureaucracy. This second law also established the criterion that immigration authorities could deny entry to “paupers or persons likely to become a public charge.” Beginning in 1892, a special “Commissioner General of Immigration” was appointed by the president to run the immigration bureaucracy with its inspectors, examiners, translators, border guards and administrators. This would eventually evolve into the “Immigration and Naturalization Service” (INS).

A 19th Century ‘Patriot Act’?

The establishment of the immigrant processing center on Ellis Island in 1892 represents the beginning of formal monitoring and control of immigrant inflows. Over 12 million immigrants would pass through Ellis Island before the present procedure of processing immigrants overseas at U.S. embassies and consulates went into effect in 1924. Despite Ellis Island’s reputation, however, the screening was not terribly rigorous. First of all, not everyone was even required to pass through Ellis Island. Ships bringing immigrants would routinely dock at a pier on the Hudson or East River sides of Manhattan Island in New York, and first and sec—continued on page 4

FEBRUARY 2009 NEBRASKA REPORT, P.3
extensive, and often abusive, questioning. There was corruption within the administration of Angel Island, however, and well-connected Asian immigrants were processed much more quickly than others. For example, thousands of Japanese ‘mail-order brides’ were quickly admitted into the U.S. under prior arrangements between the brokers and immigration inspectors. There are also many stories of personnel on Angel Island passing information between detainees and on-shore relatives about the questions being asked so that they could coordinate their answers.

The Early 20th Century Shift in Immigration Policy

After 1890, immigration accelerated, and pressure for overall limits on immigration grew. By 1910, annual arrivals exceeded 1 million people, or 1 percent of the U.S. population at that time, and the 1910 Census showed that over 15 percent of the U.S. population was foreign born. The turn of the century period was also characterized by occasional economic panics and recessions. As unemployment rose, many Americans found it convenient to believe that the foreign immigrants were responsible for their economic hardship. Many politicians were only too happy to demonize the non-voting new arrivals in the hope of attracting the votes of citizens. Not surprisingly, the more diverse ethnic backgrounds of immigrants in the early 20th century led opponents of immigration to lament the deteriorating ‘quality’ of new immigrants.

Legislation to place strict limits on all immigration came within a few votes of passing Congress in 1897 and again in 1898, but no major restrictions on immigration were actually imposed. The captains of industry and commerce lobbied hard to push immigration curbs to the back burner of the legislative process. Immigrants themselves had become a decisive political force, and the growing numbers of naturalized, and thus voting, immigrants in the large urban areas became a political force that kept urban politicians solidly pro-immigrant. In cities like New York and Chicago, immigrants made up as much as half the population. The political machines in the large cities looked at arriving immigrant arrivals as future voters whose loyalty could be guaranteed by an openly pro-immigrant stance. Representatives of political machines often made it a point to court new arrivals in order to build political loyalties. Another 17 million immigrants would arrive in the U.S. before restrictive immigration legislation would finally be enacted.

Yet, the momentum toward more restrictions was already apparent. In both 1903 and 1907, bills were introduced in Congress to require literacy tests for immigrants. Similar bills were actually passed in 1913 and 1915. These bills were vetoed by President Wilson. In 1917, Congress again passed the literacy test, and this time it easily mustered the necessary two-thirds majorities in both houses to override Wilson’s veto. It should be noted that the literacy test did not require literacy in English, only in the native language of the immigrant.

The Racist 1924 Immigration Act

After World War I, opposition to open immigration was even more pronounced. The post-war reestablishment of the gold standard led to tight monetary policy and a sharp increase in unemployment in the early 1920s, and the usual cries about immigrants taking Americans’ jobs quickly swung the legislative debate towards restricting immigration. With the election of an isolationist Republican president in 1920, there was no longer a presidential veto awaiting restrictive immigration bills as there had been during the Wilson presidency. Opponents to open immigration also gained strength in both the House and Senate in 1924, and the result was the “Immigration Act of 1924.”

This act mandated that immigration from each foreign country be limited to 2 percent of the total number of descendants of immigrants of that national origin residing in the United States, with an overall limit of 150,000 people per year. Immediate family members and other close relatives were exempt from the overall limits, which still allowed about 300,000 immigrants to enter the U.S. each year during the remainder of the 1920s.

Considerable argument arose, however, about how to calculate national origins. Although Congress ordered a “scientific” study on the ethnic composition of the U.S. population, the House of Representatives went along with its more ‘nativist’ members and agreed to use the 1890 census—the first U.S. census to ask people about their ethnic and national origins. The Senate later concurred. Using the 1890 census, rather than the 1920 census, appealed to those people who feared that the large post-1890 immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe was upsetting the ‘traditional’ ethnic makeup of the United States. Critics of the bill sarcastically referred to the 1890 census as the “Anglo-Saxon census.”

Finally, in 1929, a carefully selected ‘panel of experts’ somehow came to the ‘scientific’ conclusion that 43.4 percent of Ameri-
Nebraskans for Peace
2009 Legislative Agenda

The old saw about how ‘peace begins at home’ is good as far as it goes, but if we want to see lasting change, it needs to end up n the Statehouse. Nebraskans for Peace; accordingly has adopted an ambitious agenda, related to our five priorities, for the 2009 Legislative Session. The agenda encompasses everything from renewable energy to immigration rights, ending capital punishment to stopping dating violence. Out of the nearly 700 bills and resolutions introduced (many of which are beneficial), we are of necessity limiting our involvement to about two dozen that directly impact our Peace & Justice mission, both pro and con. With term limits having now effectively ousted almost all of the senior legislators like Sen. Ernie Chambers (the average number of years of experience among the 49 members is now two years), citizen involvement in the legislative process is more critical than ever before to ensure that your state senator understands the issues.

Here’s a rundown on our priority legislation…

Immigration
Four bills relating to immigration have been introduced this session, and NFP opposes all of them. LB 34 (introduced by Sen. Brad Ashford) would require employers to verify that their workers are legal residents in Nebraska by using an expensive and error-prone electronic database called “E-verify,” which is administered through the Dept. of Homeland Security. LB 229 (introduced by Sen. Deb Fischer) would require all citizens to care ID cards. LB 403 (introduced by Sen. Russ Karpisek) would require residents to be legal immigrants before being eligible for public assistance—which could have a devastating effect of children. And LR 9 (introduced by Sen. Tony Fulton) would facilitate collaboration between state and federal officials to seek out undocumented workers. In the case of each bill, NFP believes the onus is being wrongly placed on individual workers and their families, rather than on a flawed national immigration policy. Enforcement is not an effective strategy for dealing with illegal immigration when the existing policy does not reflect the employment needs of business and industry.

Death Penalty
The Speaker of the Legislature, Mike Flood, has introduced a bill, LB36, at the request of the governor to switch the state’s method of execution from electrocution to lethal injection. NFP obviously opposes this bill. We favor however Sen. Brenda Council’s abolition bill, LB 306 which would replace capital punishment with life imprisonment with parole, and have high hopes for its passage.

Turn Off the Violence
Sen. Gwen Howard has introduced LB 64, which would require public schools in the state to educate students about dating violence and relationship abuse. Just as we need educational intervention to preempt childhood bullies from growing up to become adult abusers, our schools need to be consciously instructing youth about the dangers and harm of relationship violence.

Civil & Human Rights
Now that Affirmative Action has been outlawed in Nebraska, Sen. Brenda Council has introduced a bill (LB 440), which would encourage the use of college scholarships to foster diversity, so long as other factors such as race and ethnicity are not the only criteria. Sen. Bill Avery is sponsoring LB 136 (Nebraska Kids Connection—SCHIP), a bill to increase the economic eligibility standards for public medical assistance to children. This bill is being particularly supported by the state Social Workers chapter. Avery is also the lead sponsor of LB 140, calling for divestment of state pension funds from companies doing business with the government of Sudan. NFP of course supports all of these bills.

Environment
Fresh from his 20-vote victory in the 21st District legislative race, Sen. Ken Haar has introduced almost half a dozen bills dealing with renewable energy and energy efficiency. And the even better news is that he’s not the only senator willing to be an environmental champion this session. All told, 15 different senators introduced ‘green’ legislation, marking a huge turnaround in public policy thinking. Haar’s ‘net-metering’ bill (LB 436) would encourage small- and medium-sized wind energy production, enabling local energy producers to sell excess energy back to the electrical grid. His LB 437 in turn would promote ‘big’ wind energy production in the state by creating the “Wind Energy Development Zone Task Force” to determine prime sites for wind farms and transmission lines. LB 455 by Sen. Jeremy Nordquist would authorize sales and use tax credits for renewable energy development by Nebraska’s public power districts, and LB 471 (by Sen. Fulton) would facilitate renewable energy development by streamlining the Power Review Board’s approval process. Four other bills (Haar’s LB 491 and LB 624, Sen. Tom White’s LB 14 and) would encourage energy efficiency in existing private and public structures and new construction (Sen. Heath Mello’s LB 632). Sen. Mello’s LB 644 would also promote the recycling of computer and electronic goods. This is the same bill introduced by Sen. Don Preister last year that was overwhelmingly adopted by the Unicameral 42 to 4, but vetoed by Governor Dave Heineman after the Legislature had adjourned.

Good Government
LB 66 (introduced by Sen. Kent Rogert) would raise the allowable limit on unreported gifts and contributions from lobbyists under the Nebraska Political Accountability and Disclosure Act from $50 to $100. This is rank influence-peddling, and Common Cause of Nebraska adamantly opposes this legislation, as does NFP.

These are by no means the only meritorious (or, as the case may be, abominable) bills worthy of our attention. But resources extend only so far. As individual citizens however, we have an enormous opportunity to influence the views of our state senators by simply bothering to give them a call or jot them a note. For information on your senator and legislation, visit the Unicameral website: www.nebrasklegislature.gov.
Most people call them “skeptics,” folks who believe global warming is, to quote Senator James Inhofe of Oklahoma, “the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on humankind.” Some contrarians contend that all this is some sort of theology or mass psychosis: Al Gore brainwashing us all. Too bad carbon dioxide doesn’t have a sense of humor. It could get a belly laugh out of all this foolishness. Greenhouse gases have no politics. They can’t tell me from Rush Limbaugh. They just retain heat.

Love That Water Vapor

Many contrarians argue that the main greenhouse gas in the atmosphere is really water vapor—not carbon dioxide. This statement on its face is correct. Water vapor is, indeed, a greenhouse gas. However, it also interacts with other gases that hold heat. And, as anyone who has survived a Nebraska August with a busted air conditioner knows only too well, hot air holds a lot more moisture than the same volume of cooler air.

Water vapor at elevated temperatures can double the climate warming caused by increased levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, according to Andrew Dessler and colleagues from Texas A&M University in College Station, who used data from NASA’s Aqua satellite to measure humidity levels in the lowest ten miles of the atmosphere. “This new data set shows that as surface temperature increases, so does atmospheric humidity,” Dessler said. “Dumping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere makes the atmosphere more humid. And since water vapor is itself a greenhouse gas, the increase in humidity amplifies the warming from carbon dioxide.”

This work, published in the American Geophysical Union’s Geophysical Research Letters, combined global observations of shifts in temperature with satellite data to construct a model of the interplay between water vapor, carbon dioxide and other atmosphere-warming gases. “Everyone agrees that if you add carbon dioxide to the atmosphere, then warming will result,” Dessler said. “So the real question is, how much warming?” The answer, according to Dessler and colleagues, can be found by estimating the magnitude of water vapor feedback. Increasing water vapor leads to warmer temperatures, which causes more water vapor to be absorbed into the air. Warming and water absorption increase in a spiraling cycle.

Dessler’s work indicates that if Earth warms 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit, increases in water vapor will trap an extra 2 Watts of energy per square meter (about 11 square feet). “This study confirms that what was predicted by the models is really happening in the atmosphere,” said Eric Fetzer, an atmospheric scientist who works with AIRS (Atmospheric Infrared Spectrometer) data at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California. “Water vapor is the big player in the atmosphere as far as climate is concerned.”

Pound of Chocolate, Gallon of Beer

Another simplistic contrarian chant is “The greenhouse effect is good for us.” This one is good as far as it goes. With no carbon dioxide in the air, the Earth would be too cold to sustain life. At 180 parts per million, we get an ice age, with ice sheets approaching Aberdeen, South Dakota. At 280 ppm, we get roughly today’s climate, an interglacial. At 385 ppm—today’s level, having factored in 50 years of change due to the system’s effort to reach thermal equilibrium—we get the Pliocene (the Earth as it was 2 to 3 million years ago) with very little to no long-lasting ice, sea levels about 200 feet higher (or more), and a temperature averaging 4 degrees C. above today’s levels.

Contrarians generally believe that since a little carbon dioxide (and other greenhouse gases) are a good thing, more will be better. Anyone who believes such a simplistic notion should sit down right now and eat a pound of chocolate in 15 minutes and chase it with a gallon of beer laced with a few pounds of salt. In moderation, greenhouse gases, beer, salt, and chocolate all can be very enjoyable. At a certain level, salt is necessary for life, so vital that Roman workers were sometimes paid with it (‘salary’ is derived from the Latin word for ‘salt’). Too much salt, however, can kill us. Likewise, a certain amount of carbon dioxide in the air is very good for us. More than that, we are most definitely in trouble.

Another contrarian mantra is: “I am a scientist. I utilize objective data.” Such an attitude implies that the rest of us are little more than peons peddling worthless opinions. Well, I am not a card-carrying scientist, and I didn’t stay at a Holiday Inn Express last night, but I do read the literature, and I can tell the difference between geophysical reality and a fossil-fueled pig in a poke. Science is not a gated community, especially when the stakes are the future of the Earth and its inhabitants, both flora and fauna. The real scientists know this, and they welcome the participation of the rest of us.

I debated Robert Smith, a University of Nebraska at Omaha chemistry professor and climate contrarian, at the Omaha Press Club last November. He began his argument against global warming’s impact with the condescending pronouncement that he is a scientist who utilizes “data.” He ended it with a PowerPoint photo of Sarah Palin, who he characterized as a “rare politician... with brains.” I do not want to be unkind, but I thought Smith was doing a wee bit of damage to his credibility as a scientist.

At one point during the debate, however, I asked Smith what he thought of the fact that Arctic sea ice lost almost a quarter of its mass in 2007. He replied that ice naturally melts in summer and freezes in winter. No, I said. You misunderstand me. The ice lost almost a quarter of its extent in September 2007 compared to September 2006 (September, 2008 ice extent was roughly similar to that of 2007).

“I don’t have that data,” Smith said.

Now that’s saying something. And, I thought, sums up the climate contrarian position perfectly.

REFERENCES


Bruce E. Johansen is the Frederick W. Kayser Professor of Communication at the University of Nebraska-Omaha and author of The Global Warming Combat Manual (Greenwood Press, 2008).
One China or Two?

by Chad A. Novacek

Chad Novacek is a recent graduate of the Johns Hopkins University-School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) where he obtained an MA in International Economics and China Studies. A native of Lincoln, Nebraska, Chad lived in China for over three years as a Peace Corps volunteer, graduate student and health and safety consultant. He remains devoted to increasing public awareness of the corporate media’s limited coverage of critical international issues such as America’s ongoing involvement in the Chinese civil war.

As a freshly minted Peace Corps volunteer in China, I had a very superficial understanding of the country I was serving. To fill the large gaps in knowledge of that nation’s complex history, culture and perspectives, I interacted with locals as much as I could and sought out a variety of reading material. Though I examined various periods of China’s 5,000-year-long history, no issue proved more fascinating than the contemporary and controversial cross-strait relationship between ‘China’ and ‘Taiwan.’ This puzzling story seemed to provoke more questions than answers. Why, for example, did China claim Taiwan and threaten to take it by force when both appeared, prima facie, to be two independent neighboring countries? Further, how did the U.S. become involved in this relationship to the point of risking war with another nuclear power? Consulting multiple sources on the topic, I found the answers to these difficult questions, but also unearthed some startling discoveries that challenge the way the West perceives this cross-strait relationship.

Nowadays, we are led to believe that the People’s Republic of China (PRC) is the only official government of China. In reality however, China has two legitimate central governments—the PRC, governing roughly 99 percent of Chinese territory and the Republic of China (ROC), commonly known as “Taiwan.”

The return of Taiwan brought complications. When Japan began to colonize the island in 1895, Taiwan was a relatively new and unassimilated province of the Qing government that had preserved a strong undercurrent of indigenous nationalism from the mainlanders who had settled the island centuries before. Throughout the colonial years, the minority Han-descendent ethnic peoples such as the “Hoklo” or “Hakka” on Taiwan were influenced greatly by Japan. They benefited from an advanced economy and infrastructure and came to relate to the Japanese more than to their mainland kin. Thus, when the Chinese (themselves majority Han) brutally reasserted administrative control, they further alienated their repatriated brothers and sisters and ensured that most of the original inhabitants would never embrace a mainland Chinese identity.

As Taiwan was being reincorporated into the Chinese sphere after 1945, the civil war between the U.S.-backed the Nationalist central government and the Communist Party was raging on. By 1949 however, the Nationalists had lost considerable popular support (and ground) to the Communists and were on the verge of defeat. Unable to influence the outcome, the U.S. watched helplessly as the war ran its course. In October of that year, the Communists under Mao Zedong founded the People’s Republic of China, thus turning the civil war into one between two governments instead of one between two political parties within the Republic of China (ROC). Then in December, Chiang Kai-shek relocated the seat of the ROC government to the offshore province of Taiwan for a last stand against the Communists.

After losing its mainland strongholds, the weakened ROC government got a sorely needed reprieve with the unexpected North Korean invasion of South Korea in June of 1950. Fearing a wider spread of communism throughout the region, the U.S. responded to the Korean threat and incorporated the ROC into a strategic chain of allies by immediately ordering ships into the Taiwan Strait. This action prevented the People’s Republic from ever launching the coup de grace against the ROC and effectively altered the outcome of the civil war. Through its self-imposed defense obligations, the U.S. has remained a committed participant in China’s unresolved civil war to this day.

People’s Republic of China

Nowadays, we are led to believe that the People’s Republic of China (PRC) is the only official government of China. In reality however, China has two legitimate central governments—the PRC, governing roughly 99 percent of Chinese territory and the Republic of China (ROC), commonly known as “Taiwan.”

The use of the terms ‘China’ and ‘Taiwan’ to describe the governments on either side of the Taiwan Strait only serves to perpetuate this illusion, as do, for example, references to ‘China’s government’ or ‘Taiwan’s president.’ When mentioned on rare occasions, the Republic of China is described as the ‘official’ (or even ‘antiquated’) name of Taiwan, thus fostering a disassociation from China. Using this terminology in such a way gives an impression of two polities as distinct as Mexico and Mongolia. Furthermore, assertions that Taiwan ‘left’ China or that China and Taiwan ‘split amid a civil war’ that ended in 1949 reinforce this concept. We also read that ‘China claims Taiwan as part of its territory’ and that the island may ‘return’ to the motherland one day. While these last phrases imply some connection between the two, the message is clear: Taiwan is currently not part of China, the Chinese civil war is over and there is no second Chinese government.

Nothing could be further from the truth, as an historical overview of this cross-strait relationship proves.

‘Taiwan’ is the name of an island province initially incorporated into Qing Dynasty China, but later ceded to and colonized by Japan for 50 years, before being returned to Chinese jurisdiction in 1945 following Japan’s surrender in World War II. At that time, China was governed by the Nationalist Party-controlled Republic of China—a dysfunctional and unpopular central government enervated by corruption, an 18-year old civil war with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and Japanese invasion of the mainland.

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Consulting multiple sources on the topic, I interacted with locals as much as I could and sought out a variety of reading material. Though I examined various periods of China’s 5,000-year-long history, no issue proved more fascinating than the contemporary and controversial cross-strait relationship between ‘China’ and ‘Taiwan.’ This puzzling story seemed to provoke more questions than answers. Why, for example, did China claim Taiwan and threaten to take it by force when both appeared, prima facie, to be two independent neighboring countries? Further, how did the U.S. become involved in this relationship to the point of risking war with another nuclear power? Consulting multiple sources on the topic, I found the answers to these difficult questions, but also unearthed some startling discoveries that challenge the way the West perceives this cross-strait relationship.

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Immigration, continued

The "Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965" abolished the national quota system in favor of a new set of criteria for the granting of permanent resident visas. The 1965 legislation prescribed that 80 percent of the numerical limits were to be allocated to relatives of persons already living in the United States, and the remaining were to be allocated to those with desirable skills and their family members. Immediate family (that is, spouses and children) of U.S. citizens were no longer subject to numerical limits at all.

The new immigration law led to sharp increases in the number of immigrants, as shown in the table on page 3. Also not foreseen was the change in the mix of nationalities of immigrants. Europe had recovered from World War II and, by the 1960s and 1970s, reached standards of living comparable to those in the United States. Thus, the economic incentives for Europeans to immigrate to the United States were no longer as strong as they had been. Immigration from Europe, accordingly, declined.

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Nebraska Student Organizing Conference 2008

A Smash Hit

by Nic Swiercek, NFP State Board

When it comes to student activism, presidential election years bring out young veteran activists as well as birth new ones. While election campaigns create a flurry of involvement, the unfortunate problem is the swelling of activism tends to dissipate once election day passes.

Perhaps it’s a problem of orientation. Some see the election as an end in and of itself rather than only the beginning of more sustained efforts to pressure and hold politicians accountable. But it’s also a matter of how people believe change is made—whether it’s handed down from politicians, instigated from the grassroots, or is some mix in between.

The real challenge for students committed to long-term organizing efforts is to find ways to retain election year zeal past those first Tuesdays in November, as well as show students that fundamental change requires sustained community organizing efforts to pressure and hold politicians accountable. But it’s also a matter of how people believe change is made—whether it’s handed down from politicians, instigated from the grassroots, or is some mix in between.

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Seasoned student activists from the Progressive Student Coalition (PSC) at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln sought to host a regional student organizing conference to reframe how young adults conceptualize change and teach vital organizing skills that to assist them beyond the election.

The PSC, formed in the fall of 2006, is a loose-knit coalition comprising eight groups including Nebraskans for Peace-UNL, Students Advocating Gender Equity (SAGE), Queer Student Alliance (QSA), Students for Choice, Ecology Now!, Peers Encouraging Responsible Sexuality at UNL (PERSUNL), the UNL Young Democrats and the Campus Greens. The PSC seeks to build and maintain dialogue between progressive student organizations and work together in coalition toward common.

Throughout 2008, many students from PSC member groups took on a variety of roles in Nebraska election campaigns for State Senate and the U.S. Congress, while many others worked for the Obama campaign in and beyond Nebraska—some of whom participated in the “Obama Organizing Fellowship” program last June.

PSC students wanted to share their experiences, keep this heightened activism going, and support and empower students throughout the region to become better organizers for their own efforts beyond this election cycle.

To that end the PSC hosted the first annual “Nebraska Student Organizing Conference” on Sept. 20, 2008, where young activists networked with other young progressives in the region, exchanged knowledge and insights, and learned valuable community organizing skills.

More than 125 young adults from across Nebraska and nearby states attended the conference representing Peace & Justice, women’s rights, gender studies, environmental, minority unions, diversity advocacy, LGBT, College Democrats and Greens, human rights, civil liberties, anti-domestic violence and bullying, and faith-based groups. Students in attendance came from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, Omaha, and Kearney, Creighton University, Doane, Dana, and Hastings Colleges, the College of St. Mary’s, the University of South Dakota, and various high schools in Lincoln and Omaha. These students also networked with more than a dozen campaign and non-profit advocacy organizations that attended the conference.

Conference attendees participated in a series of interactive workshops led by student and veteran community leaders that educated students on particular issues as well as trained them in essential organizing skills. The workshops emphasized what students can do in their local community to effect change in and beyond the 2008 election season.

Attendees picked from 20 workshops spread across four sessions. Some issue-based workshops included Environmental Advocacy, Reproductive Rights, Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, Death Penalty Abolition, Antiwar and Peace Organizing, Immigration Advocacy, Education Inequality, Poverty in Nebraska, and Race, Ethnicity, and Social Justice. Students learned organizing skills in workshops such as Planning Effective Mass Gatherings, Chapter Building and Organizational Sustainability, Networking and Coalition Building, Art and Activism, Navigating Formal Media, Running a Get-Out-the-Vote Campaign, and Running Young Progressives for Office, to name a few.

The PSC also integrated into the conference the UNL LGBTQ Resource Center’s Outspeaking training, which offered panel discussions and workshops on personal perspectives of LGBTQ experiences, effective public speaking, and creating safe and supporting spaces throughout the community.

Providing the keynote talk was Jonathan Tucker, a veteran youth organizer, poet and professional facilitator from Washington, D.C. who works with Operation Understanding DC and LevelTen. Tucker’s talk, “This is What Democracy Looks Like,” discussed the current state of progressive movements and the organizing challenges students face. Mixing in his compelling slam poetry, Tucker argued that democracy requires dissent, patriotism, protest, and that our collective movement requires the leadership and dedication of young activists working toward a totality form of social justice.

In sum, the Nebraska Student Organizing Conference was a smash hit. At the end of day countless attendees eagerly inquired about the 2009 conference. Many expressed interest in more workshop sessions and a willingness to extend the conference over two days. Since September, progressive students from Nebraska colleges have built a contact network between their schools to continue to work together on current and future campaigns.

Due to the conference’s success and the hard work and dedication of the PSC’s conference planning committee, and with the generous donations from the Nebraska ACLU, Nebraskans for Peace, Nebraska Appleseed, Senator Danielle Nantkes, Senator Don Preister, and American Communications Group, the Progressive Student Coalition will host a second annual conference in the fall of 2009 at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.
Immigration, continued

sharply relative to immigration from Latin America and Asia. The new law’s emphasis on family ties favored further immigration from those countries that recent immigrants came from, and, therefore, more and more immigrants flowed in from Latin America and Asia. It was not long before commentators—and even some economists—presented evidence of the declining ‘quality’ of immigrants. Harvard’s George Borjas has published several studies showing that current immigrants are mostly low-skilled individuals who will never become as productive as the average United States native. Borjas fears that “the huge skill differentials observed among today’s foreign-born groups become tomorrow’s differences among American-born ethnic groups.”

The Growth of Unauthorized Immigration

Despite permitting a substantial increase in the number of immigrant visas issued, the 1965 immigration reform has clearly not increased the supply of immigrant visas as much as demand for immigrant visas has grown. A major factor in the rise in unauthorized immigration was the expiration of the Bracero Program that had permitted the temporary entry of Mexican workers in agriculture and other manual labor jobs. The end of this program effectively cut off any possibilities for Mexicans without advanced educational levels or special skills to come to the U.S. unless they had immediate family in the country. The 1,500-mile border was largely unguarded, however, and because labor market conditions had not changed, many former braceros continued to enter the U.S. to work illegally in the same jobs they held when the program still operated. U.S. employers were willing accomplices, as were American landlords, retailers and many other economic interests that stood to gain from preferred market conditions had not changed, many groups took legal measures to reduce or invalidate the rules. One thing the requirement for employer verification of documentation did do was create a new industry supplying forged copies of the U.S. Social Security cards, driver’s licenses and birth certificates.

In 2000, President Clinton called for new legislation authorizing the legalization of the status of some additional unauthorized aliens living in the United States. Before 9/11, President Bush was reported to be leaning in the same direction. However, since various comprehensive immigration reform proposals were introduced in 2006, the issue of amnesty for some or all of the 10 to 12 million unauthorized immigrants living in the U.S. has been the center of controversy. IRCRA is often pointed to as an example of failed comprehensive immigration legislation.

What Now?

In the next issue of Nebraska Report, I will discuss the options legislators now face, and I will conjecture what future immigration legislation is likely to look like. But, as this brief history of U.S. immigration policy shows, over the past 200 years Congress and various presidents have often dealt rather poorly with the issue of immigration. Nor is future legislation likely to be as enlightened or as successful as we would like to hope for.

the 1.4 million people here, will grow up hating Israel and become easier prey for extremists... ‘We are losing the next generation,’ said John Ging, the top UN official in Gaza.” According to NPR, Hamas has gained ground among Palestinians since the Gaza invasion and has Fatah has lost.

It was not hatred of Israel that prompted our stand. It was concern for both sides and the world. The great powers that created the problem will have to work seriously with the UN at solving it, using the same mediator tools used to pacify the former Yugoslavia.

There is some hope. Peace people exist both in Israel and Palestine. The UNL NFP chapter last year hosted a Palestinian soldier and an Israeli one who had together come to reject violence. Recently I received a letter from a female physician who reproached me for bias against Israel—for not adequately noting in our statement the that 3000 Gaza-launched missiles that have targeted Israel:

For many years I have been a part of Physicians for Human Rights and the Israeli peace movement. My friends and I have been peace activists, refusing to serve or visit the occupied territories and advocating for communication and political resolutions, initiating Israeli-Palestinian discussion groups, and working with the soldier generation to understand differences and respect the pain on both sides. Having said that, I’m very disturbed by your message. The conflict is a very complex one with deep historic roots and violations of human rights on both sides. There are numerous aspects to the situation, and as the president of a respectable and responsible organization, you should portray them all to the best of your ability... Living in Nebraska for the past five years, working with the uninsured, the underserved, the homeless, and the illegal immigrants, and continuing my involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, I see myself as a ‘Nebraskan for Peace’ person, but I cannot and will identify with such a biased message.

She is truly a “Nebraskan for Peace,” and our objectivity may have failed somewhere. But we do not believe that our message was fundamentally wrong. We did not tell the whole history because we had to act quickly in the face of a new war with global implications. Unlike my correspondent, the NFP State Board believes that conversations and individual good will alone are not enough. The power of the international community and of the tools of international justice must be employed. After I replied to the physician with words welcoming her efforts, I went into my living room and once again saw on the TV screen the tanks, the crying women and the dead children.

Speaking Our Peace

conclusion

FEBRUARY 2009 NEBRASKA REPORT, P.10
With this history as a backdrop, we can now more accurately analyze the phraseology used to portray the cross-strait relationship. First, we notice that China’s two governments are consistently misnamed. To avoid confusion, we would neither name a sovereign nation (the Republic of China) after one of its provinces (Taiwan), nor use the all-encompassing name of a divided country (China) to describe only one of its governments (the People’s Republic). It is as if the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) was called ‘Korea’ and the Republic of Korea (ROK) was named after its offshore provincial island ‘Je Ju Do.’ One alternative would be to call ‘China’ (PRC) and ‘Taiwan’ (ROC) “Mainland China” and “South Korea”), in order to mentally maintain the connection with China and preserve objectivity. Another option is to use the terms “PRC” and “ROC.” Although the PRC and the U.S. do not recognize a ROC government that clearly exists, both U.S. and non-Chinese journalists and writers are not obliged to ‘follow the party line’ as are their counterparts in Mainland China.

Equally erroneous are the presumptions that Taiwan ‘left’ China in 1949 and could one day ‘return to the Chinese fold.’ Stating that Taiwan ‘left’ or ‘split from’ China correctly implies that the island was indeed part of China (the ROC) prior to 1949 (at least since its return to Chinese jurisdiction at the end of WWII). However, because the ROC continued to function on Chinese territory after 1949, Taiwan could not have left China or ceased to be a part of it. Likewise, Taiwan could not ‘return’ to China as it had never left. And if by ‘China’ we mean the People’s Republic, Taiwan Province could not return as it was never under Beijing’s jurisdiction.

Journalists covering this issue have somehow assumed that—despite no surrender—the ROC lost the civil war in 1949, ceased to exist and that its citizenry slipped into some geopolitical limbo under the name of Taiwan. [The ROC continues to meet the most popular internationally accepted criteria for a sovereign state as outlined in the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States. Eligibility under this protocol remains valid regardless of the extent of recognition by the international community.] However, a government does not simply disappear when a rival government is established or when it relocates to an offshore province to avoid attack (while still controlling significant portions of the mainland). Outside intervention in the following year prevented the ROC’s inevitable defeat and, thereby, a conclusion to the Chinese civil war.

In the intervening six decades, there has been no armistice, no surrender ceremony, no peace treaty or definitive military defeat, and thus no formal ending to the war. In fact, the two sides engaged in serious but limited military and covert operations against each other into the 1960s. It was not until the PRC stopped shelling the ROC’s Fukien Province islands of Quemoy and Matsu in 1979 that the war technically turned from hot to cold. Civil wars need not be hot to exist (recall that the Korean War is not technically over), and despite the recent warming of relations between the two governments, there is still potential for a resumption of hostilities.

Combine the assertion that the Chinese civil war is over, with scant mention of the ROC and constant reference to ‘Taiwan’ in relation to ‘China’, and we have manufactured the popular impression of a country named Taiwan that is completely separate from China. As a nation-state, the ROC is largely out of sight and out of mind, and the only intact province of this fully functional off-shore Chinese government has amazingly assumed country status. No wonder people are confused and angry when Beijing threatens to take the island by force.

We can only speculate on the rationale for continuing to describe the cross-strait relationship inaccurately. Most certainly, the U.S. government, which no longer recognizes the ROC but remains awkwardly involved in the ongoing civil war between the two governments, has no interest in setting the record straight. Others (such as the Taiwan independence movement, for example) do in fact regard Taiwan as completely independent from China, and hold to the current usage in the name of popular sovereignty and self-determination. The failure to accurately describe the relationship between ‘China’ and ‘Taiwan’ correctly, though, is also undoubtedly the result of habit and convenience, with politicians and journalists not wanting to confuse audiences accustomed to an accepted description of the cross-strait relationship by introducing more accurate phraseology.

So what relevance or utility comes from acknowledging the mischaracterization of the cross-strait relationship? Some will maintain that ambiguity surrounding ‘Taiwan’s status actually helps, because all sides remain satisfied believing their interpretation continues to hold validity. But that lack of clarity could equally lead to dangerous misunderstandings on the international stage if the cold war between the ROK and PRC were to suddenly become hot again.

In the final analysis, recognizing a second Chinese government or the notion that Taiwan is a province of China is not likely to discourage the Taiwan independence movement from strengthening and inadvertently sparking a violent response from Beijing. Nor is an historically accurate characterization of the relationship guaranteed to encourage both Chinese governments to interact and negotiate on equal terms (although it appears that both sides are now making great strides in laying foundations for an inevitable, but peaceful unification). But in our never-ending quest to make peace, if we have any illusions about success, there’s no substitute for the facts.
Eyeless in Gaza,
at the Mill with Slaves
by Paul Olson, NFP President

Now: the evening of Martin Luther King Day, the eve of Barak Obama’s swearing in. Peace and justice forces all over America rejoice. We leave Iraq, turn from torture. Ceasefires appear on both sides in Gaza. Peace... maybe.

One wonders about Gaza. When Israeli tanks rolled into Gaza in response to ongoing rocket attacks and killed civilians as well as Hamas combatants, when the phosphorus bombs began to fall on schools and United Nations facilities, when the rockets from Hamas began to be fired in numbers, the Nebraskans for Peace executive committee issued a statement, the core of which reads as follows:

On humanitarian and political grounds, Nebraskans for Peace calls for our representatives in the Congress and Senate to work for:

• Re-establishment of a ceasefire with international intervention to assure that the promises made on both sides are kept;
• An end to Israeli blockades of Gaza and settlers’ illegal occupation of a large portion of the usable land in the West Bank;
• Negotiations to make Jerusalem an international city that is open to worship and pilgrimages from people of all faiths, including Palestinian Christians, who wish to go there to visit the holy places.

We argued that the invasion of Gaza weakens rather than strengthens Israel, its lack of proportionality in retaliation turning international opinion further against it. We mentioned that 24 people had been killed by rockets hitting Israel in the last eight years, making the rockets offensive to the Israeli people, and said we support a “two-state solution,” guaranteeing that Israel would exist permanently. After issuing the statement, I received angry mail, threatening our funding, that argued NFP had endorsed one side. Auden’s September 1, 1939 asserts aptly “Those to whom evil is done/Do evil in return.” Never was this truer than of both sides in the Israeli-Palestinian struggle. Great power evil created the crisis, and a great power—the UN—will have to end it. The state of Israel did not spring from the Holocaust or even “Zionism,” but from centuries of Christian anti-Semitism—beginning with the Gospel of John (cf. Elaine Pagels), continuing through the Crusades, and taking a new rise in the 19th and 20th century pogroms and persecutions in Russia and Eastern Europe. Most of Western Europe collaborated with Nazi anti-Semitism, and U.S. presidential administrations remained indifferent until after World War II. Israel needed a state.

The destruction of the Palestinian people also began with the Crusades, continued with the stagnant, draconian 500-year rule of the Ottomans and ended—in the modern era—with broken British promises to the Palestinians in 1915-16 of liberation and a territory of their own. This promise to the Palestinians overlapped the British “Balfour Declaration” promise to Jews in 1917 of a Jewish homeland that (though complicated) in principle told Jewish settlers that they could have Palestinian territory without consulting Palestinian sentiment: “Why don’t you help yourselves to some of their land?” Then came Israel’s 1948 forced removal of Palestinians from their homes (a practice that continues to this day), the leaving of a little Gaza corridor to a million-and-a-half Palestinians (where they live without decent health care, employment or rights to move about), the Israeli settlers’ usurpation of Palestinian land in the West Bank and the constant harassment of Palestinian citizens seeking to go about their daily activities. Palestinians have been living in refugee camps since 1948, and not surprisingly, they lob rockets. They need a country.

During the Cold War, Israel was manipulated was used by the West in virtually every Mid-East conflict beginning with the 1956 Suez Crisis. Over this same period, the Palestinians have been manipulated by the West and the Soviet Union, the Arab powers (until the PLO’s 1995 recognition of Israel), and by Iran. Both sides have suffered unspeakably, as pawns of the great powers.

When we said that Israel’s invasion of Gaza would not in all likelihood strengthen Israel, we did not mean that it would not be militarily successful. We meant that war would be used as a tool to mobilize anti-Israeli Islamist forces within and outside of Gaza—in Syria, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and Iran, leaving Israel (like John Milton’s “Samson”) “Eyeless in Gaza.” And our fears are already finding foundation. The Associated Press reported late last month: “Counselors and aid workers fear that Gaza’s children, who make up 56 percent of...