by Hendrik van den Berg

In defending the World Bank’s approval of financing for a new $3 billion coal-fired power plant in South Africa, World Bank President Robert Zoellick stated that “Coal is still the least-cost, most viable, and technically feasible option.” (Quoted by Brooke Jarvis in Yes! magazine). Most reporters and commentators blithely took Zoellick’s words as fact. But Zoellick, in fact, was not being honest. He conveniently left out the many hidden costs of using this dirtiest of dirty fuels.

Preserving the environment—this fragile ecosystem in which we make our home—goes to the very heart of peacemaking. We cannot ever hope to live in peace when, as Al Gore said in his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, “we’re waging war on the planet.”

Well over half of the electricity generated by Nebraska’s public power system comes from coal. Although coal is far and away the dirtiest fossil fuel, the state’s public power generators have insisted on using coal transported by rail from Wyoming’s Powder Basin (rather than developing our own clean, native renewable resources) because the energy cost of coal was purportedly so cheap.

As the following article by UNL Economics Professor Hank van den Berg documents, however, those cheaper costs are illusory. Once the full costs associated with burning coal are calculated in, the price of this toxic fuel becomes economically prohibitive. Plus, coal produces exorbitant levels of greenhouse gases, which the Pentagon itself now openly states are contributing to global warming. The Pentagon’s 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review warns that climate change is already exacerbating international instability and conflict—and the more the climate warms, the more war there will be.

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for the operator of the power plant. But the market price of coal is not an accurate price of the cost of coal. Market prices are convenient but often inaccurate. Coal is one of the worst ‘market failures’ because the market price fails to reflect so many of the costs associated with the mining, transporting, processing, burning, and disposing of the waste of coal. Costs ignored by markets are referred to in economics as externalitys. Coal has external costs because coal producers and users are not required to pay for much of the damage their product causes to others, nor do markets account for the pollution, global warming and indirect health effects that result from burning coal.

continued on page 3
Two Steps Forward...

#1 Senators Pass Landmark Wind Energy Bill

This session the Nebraska Legislature passed LB 1048, a landmark renewable energy bill. LB 1048 has the potential to greatly expand wind energy development in Nebraska by setting up a process for private developers to export electricity generated by renewable energy while protecting Nebraska’s public utilities. LB 1048 was unanimously passed by the Legislature and signed into law by the governor.

Nebraska has some of the best wind development potential in the United States but has moved slowly on wind development, in part because our public utilities have limited ability to take advantage of federal tax incentives in this area. In addition, Nebraska’s utilities do not need much additional electrical capacity for private developers to export electricity for export to other states. The process established by LB 1048 would allow private interests to develop renewable energy facilities that would generate electricity for export to other states. The private developers can take advantage of the federal tax incentives and in turn sell the electricity in states where there is greater demand for additional generation capacity. At the present time Nebraska generates only 152 megawatts of electricity from wind. Passage of LB 1048 has the potential to increase the amount of electricity generated by wind in Nebraska to thousands of megawatts. This type of expansion will conceivably bring billions of dollars in investment and thousands of jobs to rural Nebraska. Wind generation facilities of this magnitude will provide electricity for thousands of consumers without generating greenhouse gases, and also do not send toxins like mercury into the environment or use huge amounts of water, like coal does.

Most climate scientists believe we need to develop wind and solar generation at a rapid pace if we are going to have a chance to reduce the amount of greenhouse gas emissions to have a serious impact on climate change. LB 1048 represents a significant step in this direction. However, it is also important to be clear about the fact that all energy development has environmental impacts and wind energy is no exception. The Nebraska Sierra Club worked hard for inclusion of language requiring all proposed sites to go through the wildlife and habitat process that had been used to site the existing wind developments in Nebraska as it appears to have worked well. In addition, we intend to monitor developments to make sure that Nebraska’s unique natural resources are protected in the wind development process.

Although LB 1048 represents a historic breakthrough for renewable energy development in Nebraska, there is much work to be done. We need to see how the process works and be ready to modify the legislation if needed. In addition, LB 1048 is designed primarily for wind development. Nebraska also has great potential for solar development, which can be done in many places where wind development is impractical, such as urban areas. However, solar development has moved very slowly, largely due to issues of cost. Research and incentives may be needed to facilitate expanded solar development. We also need public policies that make it simple and economical for people to become more energy efficient, because this has the potential to have the greatest impact on greenhouse gas emissions. And finally, the advocates of nuclear energy are starting to push new nuclear plants and we need to be ready to fight these proposals for many reasons, including security, cost and lack of disposal facilities.

— Ken Winston, Nebraska Sierra Club Lobbyist
Internalizing ‘Externalities’

Government can ‘internalize’ the externalities associated with using coal by imposing a tax equal to the estimated external costs. Granted, such a tax is not easy to determine, because it requires a thorough accounting of the external costs associated with the burning of coal in the power industry. The difficulty in setting such a carbon tax has enabled the power and coal industries to prevent any actual application of a carbon tax. Still, the estimates we have available show that coal is grossly underpriced, and its external costs are doing a great deal of damage.

The key elements of the coal cycle—pre-mining, extraction, process and disposal, transportation, utilization and waste management—all have real costs that markets systematically fail to internalize into the listed price. For example, the price of coal does not include lives lost to accidents, such as the recent West Virginia explosion in an inadequately ventilated mine that killed nearly 30 miners. Between 1900 and 2009, 104,674 workers died in coal mining accidents in the U.S., or about 1,000 workers per year. We have not tried to count the number of Chinese coal miners that are still dying at work a very high rate.

There are also many of the health problems associated with mining, air quality, and waste contamination. People living in mining communities are 70 percent more likely to develop kidney diseases, 64 percent more likely to develop chronic lung diseases, and 30 percent more likely to suffer from hypertension. Less well known is the fact that people living near coal-fired power plants exhibit similar higher health risks.

There are also the costs to society of mountain-top mining and the destruction of natural habitats. Transportation of coal generates carbon emissions and other energy usage that have their own external costs. Coal causes about half of all acid rain. And the 2008 coal ash accident in Kingston, Tennessee, where sludge laced with arsenic, uranium and mercury broke through a containment dam and flooded hundreds of nearby acres before seeping into a nearby river, revealed the uncovered costs of the waste left from burning coal in power plants.

Accounting for the Full Costs

When the costs of lost lives and health costs are added, the real cost of coal rises substantially. Utility commissions in many states have been estimating the total costs of burning coal for electricity generation for as long as 20 years. In the early 1990s, Massachusetts’ utility regulator estimated a cost of $24 per ton of carbon emitted. New proposals for internalization into the listed price. For example, when the lower Massachusetts estimate of external costs of coal is factored in, the average $46-per-ton price of coal delivered to a New England power plant increases to about $200! Various other university studies, as well as studies by the National Research Council and Greenpeace, estimate that the true social cost of coal (that takes into consideration lost lives, health issues, local pollution and the most likely global warming scenarios) falls somewhere in the range of $150-$200. Another independent study by two environmental economists (interestingly, one from the University of Wyoming, which is funded in part by tax revenue from coal mining in the Powder Basin) concludes that “coal is by far the most underpriced energy resource.” (Todd L. Cherry and Jason F. Shogren, “The Social Cost of Coal: A Tale of Market Failure and Market Solution,” working paper, 30 September, 2002.)

In short, at a true price of $150-$200 per ton of coal, coal-fired power plants are no longer the “least-cost” suppliers of electricity. In fact, they are among the very highest-cost producers. Even at today’s market prices, coal costs more than natural gas and geothermal power plants. Of course, natural gas still emits about two-thirds as much carbon as coal. Geothermal power is not entirely free of external costs either.

The stunning (at least to those who have accepted the ‘cheap coal’ myth) result from studies that internalize the externalities is that renewable sources of energy, such as wind and solar, are the true least-cost sources of energy. Yes, they are more expensive than what we think we are paying for coal. But in truth, we are paying much more for coal than we—and our future generations—will pay for clean energy alternatives. And we have not even factored in the likely reductions in the cost of alternatives if we move toward their large-scale adoption. Nor have we factored in the relatively low costs of changing our lifestyles and using less energy in general.

Also missing from all estimates of the full costs of the various energy sources is risk of international conflicts over finite resources. The myth of cheap coal prevents us from embracing renewable energy sources that can ultimately replace our need for non-renewable energy sources like oil. The wind blows and the sun shines everywhere. Even cloudy
Earth to Climate Contrarians: Quit Making Fools of Yourselves

A funny thing happened to the climate contrarians on their way to driving a stake through the heart of global warming last winter. It was the fifth warmest winter on the instrumental record, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s National Climatic Data Center. The average global temperature for the winter was 54.09 degrees F.—1.08 above average.

While we here in Nebraska were up to our ears in snow and ice (I broke an elbow on the stuff!), and as various climate contrarians (eyeing record snows in Washington, D.C.) were cheering on a new ice age, the winter of 2009-2010 (December 1 through March 1) was so tepid worldwide that harp seal pups in Canada’s Gulf of St. Lawrence were starving and drowning for lack of river ice.

Starving pups were aban-
doned on beaches along Prince Edward Island—victims of the lowest ice conditions in the 41 years that records have been kept. Off Newfoundland (another major seal hunting ground), ice by mid-March 2010 had formed only off the Northern Peninsula at a time when it usually extends along all of the island’s northeast coast. Observers from the “International Fund for Animal Welfare” reported in March that the Gulf of St. Lawrence—the annual birthing ground of hundreds of thousands of harp seals—is “essentially devoid of both ice and seals.”

The Pacific Northwest and Maine also had an unusually warm winter, but publicity for the unusual cold and snow across the eastern half of the United States, much of Europe and parts of Russia led climate contrarians to claim that global warming’s back had been broken.

The winter of 2009-2010—famously cold and snowy across much of the Midwest and Eastern United States—was mild and dry in Glacier National Park, which lost two more of two-dozen remaining glaciers in an area that 160 years ago contained 150 bodies of moving ice. A glacier is defined as at least 25 acres of moving ice. Nearby Spokane, Washington, had its lowest seasonal snowfall on record.

Ice Loss Spreads in Greenland

Someone should tell the shrinking glaciers of Greenland that a new ice age has dawned. They’re not getting with the program. Last year, ice loss continued to migrate north and west across Greenland, according to satellite-borne sensors. Migration of ice loss has nearly spread the length of coastal Greenland since 2005, enlarging an area in the island’s southeast that has been losing ice for many years.

The new analysis in 2010 describes “an on-going northward migration of increasing mass loss” along the western coast from the southern tip to the far north. The analysis, led by Shfaqat Abbas Khan of the National Space Institute of Denmark, was published late in March, 2010 in Geophysical Research Letters. The study surveyed ice loss between February 2003 and June 2009.

“When we look at the monthly values…the ice mass loss has been very dramatic along the northwest coast of Greenland,” said co-author John Wahr, a physicist at University of Colorado-Boulder. “This is a phenomenon that was undocumented before this study. Our speculation is that some of the big glaciers in this region are sliding downhill faster and dumping more ice in the ocean.”

Deluges and Droughts

With rising temperatures, the hydrological cycle becomes more extreme, provoking both droughts and deluges. The nonprofit group “Clean Air-Cool Planet” surveyed 60 years of National Weather Service rainfall reports and found that “extreme precipitation events” (more than an inch of rain or equivalent in one day) have become more common in nine Northeast states as temperatures have warmed.

This report was released as waters receded in Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Connecticut from the worst floods in a century. In March, 2010, Providence, R.I., recorded 16.32 inches of rain—a new record for any month. Boston’s total rainfall for March was 14.83 inches, the second-wettest month since weather records began there in 1872. Central Park, New York City’s 10.68 inches was a record for March.

Climate-change contrarian Patrick Michaels of the “Cato Institute” dismissed the study as not indicative of trends outside that area. Beginning one day later, however, record rains killed more than 200 people in Rio de Janeiro, just after the ink had dried on the newspapers quoting Michaels’ ‘expertise.’ The deluge was the heaviest ever recorded in the city, provoking deadly flash floods and landslides that washed away homes and submerged roads. About 11 inches of rain fell in 36 hours.

As record rains pounded some areas, the United Nations Development Program’s “2009 Arab Human Development Report” said that desertification now threatens about 2.87 million square kilometers of land (1.15 million square miles)—about a fifth of the Middle East and North Africa. A 2007 U.N. study spoke of an “environmental crisis of global proportions” that could uproot 50 million people from their homes by 2010, mostly in Africa.

Michaels regularly exercises bragging rights as “state climatologist” of Virginia, which is rather akin to a ‘Kentucky Colonel’ or an ‘Admiral’ in the ‘Nebraska Navy.’ The editors at the Wall Street Journal salute every time he runs his hokum up the flagpole.

Pat, please quit making a fool of yourself. (During the first week of April in the United States, 1,800 new record highs were set. This is one unusual ‘ice age.’)

Bruce E. Johansen is a professor of Communication at the University of Nebraska-Omaha and author, in 2009, of Hot Air and Hard Science: Dissecting the Global Warming Debate and the two-volume Encyclopedia of Global Warming Science and Technology.
Rape as a Tool of War

by Marsha Fangmeyer
Vice President, Nebraskans for Peace

I read Susan Brownmiller’s book, Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape, when it was first published in 1975. My eyes were opened. I certainly did not read this kind of history in high school, or in college for that matter.

Although the use of rape as a tool of war dates back to time immemorial, Brownmiller’s study focused on the 20th century, on the period from World War I through the Vietnam War. In the 35 years since Vietnam, however, there’s been enough horrendous material accumulated for Brownmiller to pen a sequel. The new book would include a chapter on gang rapes by Halliburton/KBR co-workers in Iraq and sexual assaults among active duty U.S. troops. She might even update a chapter she wrote on rape in the Congo—only this time focusing on the fact that Congolese women (once again caught in conflict) are being raped at the rate of 400 per day. One out of three women in that country has been victimized by rape (a statistic, incidentally, that parallels the worldwide average of one of every three women being physically or sexually abused during her lifetime).

Thirty-five years after reading Brownmiller’s book, I found myself reading Donna Brazile’s “Backtalk” article in the Winter 2010 issue of Ms. Magazine. In her article entitled, “The Global Pandemic of Rape: Time to end violence against women and impunity for their assailants,” she relates her horror about the story of the 15-year-old girl in suburban San Francisco who, last fall, was publicly gang-raped while waiting for her dad to pick her up from her high school homecoming dance. No one intervened. No one even called the police.

Brazile goes on to note the incidents involving private contractors in Iraq/Afghanistan; the high rate of rape in the military and the low incidents of disciplin-
J0 – Office of the Commander

StratCom Commander Kevin Chilton (Air Force) is charged with overseeing the Pentagon’s ‘triad’ of offensive nuclear and conventional weapons; defensive systems (from Missile Defense to Information Operations); and infrastructure such as communications and intelligence. This unprecedented mission array—which spans the globe and encompasses a good portion of the Pentagon’s duties—explains why Commander Chilton says Strategic Command would more appropriately be named ‘Global Command.’ The StratCom command center is located at Offutt AFB in suburban Omaha, Nebraska.

Functional Component Commands

Space — Lt. Gen. Larry D. James (Air Force) – StratCom’s Space Command serves as the single point of contact for planning, coordinating and executing space military operations. With every function and branch of the U.S. military now ‘knit’ together by space technology, StratCom is integrally engaged in the global fight—whether it’s conducting surveillance of suspected terrorists, piloting drone aircraft by satellite, or providing ‘real time’ communications to soldiers in the field. The Space Command is headquartered at Vandenberg AFB on the central coast of California.

Global Strike — Maj. Gen. Floyd L. Carpenter (Air Force) – The war-fighting component in StratCom’s mission quiver, Global Strike Command leads the offensive planning operations for both nuclear and conventional attacks and coordinates the global strike efforts for the six regional Combat Commands around the world. Tasked with attacking any place on the face of the earth within one hour, global strike (in the words of Commander Chilton) is “the most responsive combatant command in the U.S. arsenal.” Global Strike Command is headquartered at Barksdale AFB in Louisiana.

Integrated Missile Defense — Lt. Gen. Kevin Campbell (Army) – Billed as a ‘defensive’ shield to protect the U.S. and its allies from attack, this ‘Star Wars’ program is fueling tensions with Russia and China over its ‘dual-use’ as an offensive missile system and anti-satellite weapon. The command’s headquarters at Schriever AFB near Colorado Springs oversees deployment operations, intelligence, logistics and staffing. StratCom’s authority over all of the service branches is particularly in evidence with this command, as the Army staffs the ground-based missile defense battalions; the Navy operates its fleet of Aegis missile defense vessels; and the Air Force is tasked with making the elements (including the ground- and sea-based radars) work together.

Joint Information Operations Warfare Command — Mr. Mark Johnson, Dir. (Army) – Previously known as the ‘Joint Electronic Warfare Center’ and the ‘Joint Command & Control Warfare Center,’ this cryptically named command exploits information to influence the tide of war. ‘Information Operations’ covers everything from fusing the intelligence gathered by different agencies and sources into unified databases and ‘mining’ it for particular subjects, to conducting ‘psychological warfare’ on targets by means of propaganda and deception. The command is headquartered at Lackland AFB in San Antonio.

Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) — Lt. Gen. Ronald L. Burgess Jr. (Army) – This command coordinates the efforts of Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), National Security Agency (NSA), National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) and National Geospatial Intelligence Agency to coordinate intelligence information with the Joint Forces Command. StratCom’s mission responsibility for ISR, however, extends to all sixteen organizations within the U.S. Intelligence Community—including the CIA and FBI (which StratCom brags are “in our operations center 24/7.” The command is headquartered at Bolling AFB, Washington, D.C.

Network Warfare — Lt. General Keith B. Alexander (Army) – Based at the National Security Agency (NSA) headquarters in Fort Meade, Maryland, and sharing the same ‘dual-hatted’ director, this StratCom component command plans and executes U.S. operations in cyberspace. Network Warfare’s responsibilities include not only defense of America’s civilian and military computer networks, but also offensive cyber attack. The NSA is most famous for directing the Bush/Cheney Administration’s constitutionally suspect ‘warrantless surveillance’ of U.S. citizens during the height of the ‘War on Terror.’ Alexander was just handed yet a third commission early in 2010 as the official director of Pentagon’s Cyber Command.

Global Network Operations, Joint Task Force — Lt. Gen. Carroll F. Pollett (Army) – A separate command from Network Warfare whose cyber duties inevitably overlap, the Joint Task Force for Global Network Operations is charged with the operation and defense of the ‘Global Information Grid’ (GIG). A globally interconnected communications project of the Department of Defense, the GIG is designed to give U.S. warfighters, policymakers and business interests ‘information superiority’ on demand. The command has its headquarters in Arlington, Virginia, but operates worldwide through ‘Theater Network Operation Centers.’

Center for Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction — Kenneth A. Myers III – In the wake of the 9/11 attacks and the allegations of Iraq’s stockpiles of WMD, StratCom was assigned the mission for ‘Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction’ in 2005. Headquartered in Fort Belvoir, Virginia, the center is housed with the ‘Defense Threat Reduction Agency,’ with the same ‘dual-hatted’ director serving both entities. The center is tasked with providing the Department of Defense expertise on containing the threat of the acquisition and the use of all types of WMD: nuclear, biological and chemical.
Service Components

**Air Force Space Command** — Gen. C. Robert Kehler (Air Force) – A remnant of the former U.S. Space Command, this group provides space and ICBM forces to StratCom. Air Force Space Command consists of two numbered Air Force wings: the 14th Air Force out of Vandenberg AFB provides space warfighting forces to StratCom, while the 20th Air Force provides ICBM missile management out of Warren AFB in Cheyenne, Wyoming. Also important is the 21st Space Wing at Peterson AFB, Colorado Springs, which performs space intelligence and control missions at bases such as Buckley AFB in Aurora, Colorado. The command headquarters is at Peterson AFB.

**U.S. Army Forces Strategic Command** — Lt. Gen. Kevin Campbell (Army) – The Army has its own Space Command which manages Ballistic Missile Defense, but it falls under the authority of this more general group, the U.S. Army Forces Strategic Command, that also oversees ‘Stryker Brigade Combat Teams’ and some remaining tactical nukes. The command is headquartered at Redstone Arsenal near Huntsville, Alabama, and maintains major missile-defense forces at Peterson AFB and missile defense observation facilities at Kwajalein Atoll, Guam, and other Pacific locations.

**Marine Forces Strategic Command** — Lt. General George J. Flynn (Marine Corp.) – One might have thought the Marines would play a minimal role at StratCom, but now that Northern Command includes ‘maritime ops’ in defense of the homeland, the Marines and Navy will jointly be playing a more global role in policing the seas. The headquarters is co-located at Offutt AFB, but also has a large reporting structure at Quantico, Virginia. Naming General James Cartwright as the first Marine to ever command StratCom in 2004 was widely viewed as an effort to integrate the Marines more closely into StratCom.

**Fleet Forces Command (FFC)** — Adm. John C. Harvey, Jr. (Navy) - Despite its name, this command only exercises space and StratCom duties for the Atlantic and Caribbean areas. (Pacific Command plays a quasi-independent role in Global Strike missions in the Asia-Pacific.) But with the bulk of missile defense missions turning to sea-born theater missile defense, Fleet Forces Command is likely to see a larger role in global Navy operations. The FFC includes the former Navy Space Command and active elements of Naval Security Group, handling everything from the Navy component of missile defense (Aegis cruisers) to global Navy space-based intelligence operations like ‘Ranger’ and ‘Classic Wizard.’ The command is headquartered in Norfolk, Virginia.

This StratCom organization chart was developed by Loring Wirbel. A founding member of “Citizens for Peace in Space” in Colorado Springs, Colorado, he is the author of Star Wars: U.S. Tools of Space Supremacy.

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Task Forces

These are the ‘hardware management groups’ for weapons and platforms, with dedicated task forces for:

**Airborne Communications** (Tinker AFB, Oklahoma) – Management of Navy E-6B Mercury aircraft for presidential emergency communications.

**Aerial Refueling and Tankers** – (Scott AFB, Illinois) – Tankers are under the control of Air Mobility Command at Scott, but operated under 18th Air Force, also at Scott.

**Land-Based Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles** (Warren AFB, Wyoming) – All land-based strategic missile crews report to the 20th Air Force at Warren, while nuclear missile wings are operated out of Warren; Malmstrom AFB, Montana; and Minot AFB, North Dakota.

**Ballistic-Missile Submarines** (Norfolk, Virginia and Pearl Harbor, Hawaii) – Atlantic Ocean submarines are deployed from Kings Bay, Georgia, under Atlantic Fleet command from Norfolk; Pacific Ocean-based submarines are based at Bangor, Washington, and commanded from Pacific Command headquarters in Hawaii.

**Strategic Bombers and Reconnaissance Aircraft** – All strategic nuclear aircraft are assigned to the 8th Air Force at Barksdale AFB, Louisiana. B-52 heavy bombers are based at Barksdale and Minot; B-2 Stealth Bombers are based at Whiteman AFB, Missouri (B-1 bombers have been retired); RC-135 Rivet Joint surveillance aircraft are based out of Offutt AFB; and U-2S Dragon Lady surveillance aircraft are based out of Beale AFB, California.
This past spring, two recent NFP college chapter activists traveled to Washington, D.C. to participate in a national immigration march. Amanda Godemann, a Nebraska Wesleyan University graduate with a major in Global Studies, was born and raised in Lincoln. UNL graduate and Political Science major Maria Moreno was born in Venezuela and moved to the Lincoln when she was seven years old. Below is their account of this history-making experience.

We weren’t sure what to expect as we departed for Washington D.C. to participate in the “March For America” on March 21. It turned out to be very eye-opening for both of us; Amanda, as a United States citizen and Maria as a documented immigrant. As soon as we departed from Des Moines, we began to hear the stories of the 53 other people who were on the bus with us and their reasons for taking this trip. Many of the people on the bus were undocumented immigrants and had heart-wrenching stories to tell. But there were also documented immigrants who faced their own difficulties jumping through legal hoops in order to stay legal, and American citizens who had seen the effects of our broken immigration system firsthand. It was clear through these stories that our current immigration system is cruel and dehumanizing and does not reflect the realities of the American landscape.

The stories of the undocumented immigrants were of hard-working people trying to build a better life for themselves and their families just as all U.S. citizens are, but facing obstacles that many of us are privileged to avoid. One story involved a boy who was kicked out of his family home in Mexico at age 12 and crossed the border into the United States, only to find himself alongside other undocumented children placed in shackles and forced to work grueling hours at a sweet potato farm. Along with the back-breaking work, they were subjected to daily verbal and physical abuse due to their vulnerability as undocumented children. What was a young undocumented boy with no family to do?

The de-humanization and abuse of undocumented workers was a common theme in the stories of raids on meatpacking plants in Nebraska and Iowa. Many undocumented immigrants spoke of the everyday fear they live in... Fear that their workplace might be raided and they would face deportation for not having the correct documents. Fear of what would happen to their children and families if they were forced to suddenly leave the country. They even face the fear of being deported for a minor traffic violation such as not wearing a seatbelt, as we heard from one story.

One girl’s parents were thrown in jail after a raid at their workplace when she was only 16 years old. She had to deal with the challenges of taking care of her younger siblings and trying to find financial means to get legal counsel and bail money for her parents while working hard to maintain her grades and graduate from high school. This was clearly a difficult challenge to overcome because she was not legally allowed to work.

As recent college graduates, the things that really hit home for us were the stories of undocumented students. These students had worked hard to attend college and have impressive grade-point averages. They had more drive and motivation to get a degree than we have seen in the average college student. However, they faced obstacles most college students could never imagine. These students grew up in the United States (most since they were very young), attended the same public schools as you and I, but once they graduate college, they are still unable to get a job in the United States that utilizes their college degree. Rather, they are condemned to taking jobs that will not ask them questions regarding their immigration status, often relegating them to jobs in food service rather than utilizing the specialized skills and knowledge honed at a university. Instead of forcing these recent graduates to leave the United States in order to find a job, we should encourage them to stay in Nebraska and Iowa to utilize their knowledge and skills.

Undocumented students also face a larger financial obstacle than citizens in order to attend college. First of all, the only jobs they can obtain are grossly underpaid. Undocumented students are also unable to get any federal financial aid, and many scholarships are unavailable to them because they are not citizens. In some states like Iowa where they have not adopted the ‘Dream Act’, undocumented students are forced to pay the international student tuition rate (which is often three times the cost of in-state tuition) even if they have lived in Iowa since they were young. One girl was offered a full-ride scholarship to an Iowa college, but was then told she was ineligible for the scholarship and would need to pay the international tuition rate once they found out she was undocumented.

Aside from hearing a variety of moving stories, we also learned a lot about the impact of negative language regarding immigration and how to rectify these mistakes. Oftentimes we refer to immigrants who came across the border without documentation as ‘illegal immigrants.’ However, we must remember that a human being can never be illegal—only their actions can be illegal. We also discussed the fact that undocumented immigrants should not be referred to as criminals, because they are not murderers or arsonists. Rather, they broke an administrative law by crossing the border without documentation, whereas ‘criminals’ are those who commit violent crimes.

We both learned a lot from this trip and we are grateful for Nebraskans for Peace’s support in helping to send us to Washington, D.C. We heard heart-breaking stories from undocumented immigrants, from asylees whose protective status was suddenly revoked, and from supportive friends, community organizations and congregations. These stories reinforced our reason for traveling 48 hours in a packed bus.

Our current immigration system makes it difficult for documented immigrants to jump through the various bureaucratic hoops. It makes it nearly impossible for undocumented immigrants to seek a legal status. It allows refugees to suddenly be revoked asylum. And most of all, our current system hinders immigrants from fully participating and contributing to our community. We hope that President Obama and our Congress listened to the voices of the tens of thousands of marchers that participated in the march for immigration reform and that the hundreds of visits we had with our representatives opened their eyes. We know that together we can make a more just nation that benefits from the knowledge, strength and diversity we all bring.
The Sham of Human Rights in Saudi Arabia

by Mohammed H. Siddiq

Although it enjoys the ardent support of the world’s most illustrious democracy, Saudi Arabia pays only the faintest lip service to human rights and political freedoms. One has only to measure the practices of the royal family of Al Saud against such widely recognized democratic documents as the United Nations’ 1948 Declaration of Human Rights to get a sense of how appalling the government’s record is.

Most people in the Western industrialized nations tend to take the U.N. Declaration for granted, as this document reiterates the fundamental propositions and principles that undergird the democratic institutions and cultural traditions in the West. But this has not been the case elsewhere on the globe, especially in the developing world, where many a person has found hope and inspiration in the simple statement of universal rights expressed in that 1948 document. Here we read: “The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be universal and equal suffrage and... secret vote” (Article 21).

Sadly, an outside observer will search in vain for “periodic and genuine elections” in Saudi Arabia. The royal family rules, so they say, by the will of God. The only votes cast in Saudi Arabia are those of the preeminent princes of the royal family—interestingly enough, in secret. Those who serve in government, be they ministers in exalted and responsible positions or teachers in a rural school, do so at the pleasure of the princes.

Article 20 of the Declaration of Human Rights proclaims the right of people the world over to “freedom of peaceful assembly and association.” It is a simple fact of life in Saudi Arabia that the royal family will tolerate no such assemblies or associations—no matter what their public agenda, no matter how timid or well-meaning. The citizen of Saudi Arabia courts imprisonment or torture, should he or she gather with friends and fellow citizens in the public forum to discuss the U.N. Declaration.

The rights to representative government, the secret ballot and free association outlined in the Declaration are based on other, even more fundamental rights—for example, the rights to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 18) and the rights to freedom of opinion and expression (Article 19). The Saudi rulers have not been content to ban outright the formation of institutions—such as political parties and labor unions, which might become vehicles for freedom of expression and opinion—but have resolutely attempted to forestall and smother any inclination by the individual citizen to think for him or herself.

In Saudi Arabia, one can almost taste the repressive silence which the people (in fear for their personal well-being and that of their family) impose on themselves.

The government owns and operates the radio and television stations in the country, and officials within the Ministry of Information heavily censor what goes over the airwaves. One will not find any serious criticism of government policies or of the Al Saud family on state radio and TV. Although the press in Saudi Arabia is privately owned, the industry is strictly controlled by the Ministry of Information—in line with the provisions of the “Press Establishment Decrees” of 1964. The ownership of the Saudi publication industry is in the hands of people who owe their positions in society to the patronage of the royal family.

Editors of the daily newspapers are appointed by the government, and their tenure in office depends on the defense of government policy. The Interior Minister conveniently publishes guidelines which dictate to the media the position to take on controversial political issues. Foreign publications which are permitted into the country are scrutinized by government censors and ‘offensive’ written and graphic material is removed before being sent on to subscribers. The overall effect is that every thought or report published for the Saudi readership is first vetted through the government’s ‘thought-control’ apparatus.

Any person who is an advocate for civil rights—living in such a country where civil rights are abused with regularity—faces a political environment designed to pinpoint, intimidate and, if necessary, squash dissidents bold enough to question fundamental policies. The Saudi government, through the various agencies of the Interior Ministry (and in an attempt to counter the human yearning for freedom of opinion, expression and political association), has an active program of domestic spying. Agents of the ministry spy on students, teachers, bureaucrats in other government agencies, newspaper reporters, editors and resident aliens working in the country.

When a government of any ideological persuasion actively suppresses individual liberties of expression and association, the effect on its citizens is palpable. In Saudi Arabia specifically, one can almost taste the repressive silence which the people (in fear for their personal well-being and that of their family) impose on themselves. The fear and wariness of one citizen for another literally pervades the air. Are my colleagues or my neighbors more than they seem? Are they agents for the government on the lookout for dissidents? One can almost taste as well the shame of a good many people who conspire to keep the silence over anxiety about losing their jobs or possible imprisonment.

Saudi Arabia lacks, thanks to the autocratic policies of the royal family and its minions, those institutions which give to a society in the modern world its stability: political parties, labor unions, and the numerous types of independent associations through which citizens exercise freedom and responsibility. In Saudi Arabia, there is an utter lack of representative government. The elite princes and their retainers deliberate all affairs of governance in secret. The Saudis are a people without fundamental human liberties and responsibilities. It’s a wretched and shameful situation—made even more shameful by the fact that the preeminent democracy on the face of the earth daily sanctions it.

NFP member and U.S. citizen Mohammed Siddiq is a native of Medina, Saudi Arabia. He does not dare return to his homeland to visit his family for fear of arrest and imprisonment by the Saudi government.
Two Steps Forward…

#2 Legislature Actually Considers Whiteclay Issue

LB 1002, which appropriated $25,000 for “economic development, health care, and law enforcement needs” in the Whiteclay area, passed the Legislature with 47 of 49 possible votes the last week of the session. (Mark Christensen of Imperial voted against it; Tony Fulton of Lincoln, running for State Treasurer this year, was present but did not vote.)

The bill also funded a grant administrator for the Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs to leverage the state’s $25,000 with private dollars. The original bill called for $250,000, but this was reduced by the Judiciary Committee to $100,000 before advancing it, and was further reduced during floor debate.

The impact of LB 1002 itself is modest. Nebraska’s Department of Health and Human Services estimates a minimum annual expenditure of $600,000 to operate an alcohol treatment center. Nevertheless, the bill marks a significant milestone in the battle for Whiteclay. It generated over three hours of floor debate, with many senators expressing support while acknowledging that LB 1002 can only be viewed as a beginning.

Thanks deservedly go to Sen. Leroy Louden of Ellsworth, who introduced the bill, and the bill’s four co-sponsors. Special thanks must go to co-sponsor Sen. Russ Karpisek of Wilbur, who added his name to this bill after his own similar bill (LB 1005) was held in committee. As chair of the General Affairs Committee, Sen. Karpisek held two important hearings on Whiteclay last year prior to the 2010 Legislative Session. LB 1002 and LB 1005 emerged from the outpouring of concern over Whiteclay from Nebraska constituents and representatives of the Oglala Sioux Tribe from Pine Ridge.

However, we should be clear about what this bill does not do. Even if fully funded at the original $250,000, it does not begin to redress the economic and social harm caused by the failure of Nebraska authorities to provide a safe and lawful environment in Whiteclay. This failure, which stems from a lack of political will to tackle liquor law violations and other illegal acts by the Whiteclay beer merchants, is something that many in our state are coming to recognize. Indeed, the Legislature must someday soon acknowledge its historical part in contributing to the shameful condition of Whiteclay.

Stew Magnuson, author of The Death of Raymond Yellow Thunder: And Other True Stories from the Nebraska-Pine Ridge Border Towns (2008, Texas Tech University Press), recounts a telling example of the State of Nebraska’s culpability in this border town. In the 1950s, the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission licensed two liquor outlets in Whiteclay. This was followed by a decade of turmoil and tragedy in that unincorporated village. Responding to official concerns, in the 1960s the Nebraska Legislature appropriated funds for a state sheriff to be stationed in Whiteclay. The Liquor Commission, perhaps imagining a new era of stability and order in Whiteclay, then increased the number of licenses from two to four. But a subsequent budget crisis led state senators to eliminate the sheriff’s position in the early 1970s, leaving Whiteclay in worse condition than before. The raging turmoil and tragedy in Whiteclay resumed, largely ignored by the Legislature these many years until the 2010 session.

— Mark Vasina
NFP Treasurer

…and One Step Back

Senators Refuse to Study Capital Punishment Costs

On March 25 we saw 22 Nebraska Senators stand up for the average Nebraskan in support of a bill to identify the financial cost of our state’s death penalty system. While there were not enough votes to pass LB 1105, the debate around this issue has shown us that we are making progress in our efforts to end capital punishment—and that work must continue.

As many of you know, the long and complicated death penalty process has already cost taxpayers millions of dollars. More than a dozen states have found that the death penalty is up to ten times more expensive than sentences of life without parole. In our neighboring state of Kansas, the median cost of a death penalty case is $1.26 million, or a staggering 70 percent more than comparable non-death penalty cases.

As Nebraska continues to face tough economic times we can better use our limited funds on things that truly keep our communities safe—more effective law enforcement, improving the correctional system, solving cold cases, or even compensating the victims of crime. We must continue to show our elected officials that the death penalty simply is not worth it.

And while it is important that we all understand the financial costs of the death penalty, we cannot lose sight of the fact that the true costs of the death penalty go far beyond the fiscal.

The risk of executing an innocent person is real. Nebraska has sentenced innocent people to life in prison with the threat of the death penalty, and the leading crime scene investigator in Douglas County was recently convicted of tampering with evidence in a high-profile murder case. Despite our best intentions, human beings simply can’t be right 100 percent of the time. When a life is on the line, one mistake is one too many.

The death penalty has failed victims’ families. We continue to work with those who have faced the devastating loss of a loved one to murder. Time and time again they describe how the never-ending death penalty process prolongs the pain of their families, forcing them to relive their trauma as courts repeat trials and hearings in an effort to get it right. These families have learned the hard way that the death penalty only adds to their pain and suffering as they wait years and often decades for an execution that never comes.

We must all continue to work to educate the citizens of Nebraska and our elected officials of the mounting evidence of waste, inaccuracy and bias that has shattered public confidence in Nebraska’s death penalty. All across the country states are reconsidering their death penalty statutes and Nebraskans need to be part of that conversation.

— Jill L Francke
Statewide Coordinator
Nebraskans Against the Death Penalty

DVD copies are available from NFP for a suggested donation of $15.

Paypal and credit card payments accepted.

“Chronicles a painful odyssey that should give pause to the caring, the oblivious, and those who don’t give a dam.” Frank LaMay Hunkpapa Sioux Tribe of Native American, Democratic National Committee

THE BATTLE FOR WHITECLAY

Call 402-475-4620, or send written requests to: Whiteclay DVD, c/o Nebraskans for Peace, 941 ‘O’ Street, Suite 1026, Lincoln, NE 68508
Speaking Our Peace, conclusion

no constructive immigration policy beyond simple amnesty or walls with armed guards.

Second, War-creative Manufacture of Ignorance: After nine years in Afghanistan and seven in Iraq, our ignorance factories are goading us into yet another shoot-out—this one with Iran. We hear regularly how Ahmadinejad was fraudulently reelected (I believe he was), how Iran is a military state (it is), and how a perfectly innocent Green group protester was murdered by the “Revolutionary Guard” during recent post-election protests (she was).

But Rush Limbaugh never mentions that in 1953 the CIA orchestrated the ouster of the democratically elected prime minister of Iran to protect international petroleum interests. He fails to note how we imposed the brutal Shah’s police state there. No one recounts how his torture-adept secret police, “Savak,” had a permanent secret U.S. mission attached—how its torture of putative enemies included shocking their genitals, raping them, cooking them in electric toaster-like wires, burning them everywhere with cigarettes, sodomizing them, and slicing their bodies apart with bacon-like slicers. These techniques Savak learned from the CIA (see Robert Fisk, The Great War for Civilisation).

Not surprisingly, when the theocracy of the Ayatollah Khomeini replaced the Shah, his regime was equally brutal. We daily lament that Iran may possess a nuclear weapon in two years. We should be equally alarmed that we have possessed thousands of world-destroying nuclear weapons for more than 60 years. Iran’s neighbor Israel possesses from 80-400 nuclear weapons. The ignorance-manufacturing factories never discuss the alternatives to our sanctions, to conventional military attacks, or to the threat of a nuclear bombing of Iran by Israel. To date, the most authentic challenge to Ahmadinejad and the power of the ayatollahs has come from the Iranian “Green Movement,” which is is based on the nonviolent theories of Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Gene Sharp. But you don’t hear the ignorance-manufacturers reporting that.

Peace and justice grow from accurate depictions of history. Ignorance cannot understand the anger of others, and reconciliation never comes without truth. Given our checkered history, we have no business standing in the role of judge or asking the UN or World Court to adjudicate wrongs in which we are complicit.

History is not, as Napoleon is reputed to have said, “a set of lies agreed upon.” It is events recorded—verified from numerous perspectives. Respect between nations and rational problem-solving requires nothing less.

It’s NOT the Cheapest Energy, conclusion

Germany has already shown that solar energy is viable there.

We’ve known this for a long time!

The examination of all the evidence on the true costs of energy reveals that the above conclusions are not new. An article summarizing the costs of alternative sources of energy in The Atlantic magazine 17 years ago said:

“...under any external-cost scenario, coal’s price advantage erodes. Natural gas becomes a more cost-efficient generating fuel, since it emits less sulfur. More important, renewable resources like geothermal energy, wind and solar energy, at five to twelve cents per kilowatt-hour, suddenly become competitive, because they carry few or none of the external costs associated with coal.” (Robert Cullen, “The True Cost of Coal,” The Atlantic, December 1993.)

So the discussion of externalities above is nothing new. We knew that coal was not cheap at least two decades ago. The coal industry, our political leadership and our so-called ‘free press’ have done a marvelous job of hiding that information from the general public.

The author of the 1993 Atlantic article was convinced that the true relative costs of energy would lead policymakers and industry itself to adjust its investments towards non-polluting alternatives. He naively concluded with a study that predicted renewable resources could by the year 2010 account for as much as 50 percent of the country’s new generation capacity, with coal dropping to ten percent.” Granted, the author did hedge by saying that “Much depends on whether the federal government imposes on the states some kind of uniform requirements for external-cost calculations.”

We now know that the government did not do this. Are we still so naive as to think that our Congress and president will make it happen this year, when industry lobbying is more intense than it was in 1993?

With people like World Bank President Robert Zoellick perpetuating the myth of cheap coal and the current economic recession on the minds of nearly everyone, most people no doubt have the impression that a carbon tax would be too costly. Better to stick with the “least-cost most viable, and technically feasible option!”

True, but that option is renewable energy, and most definitely not coal.
Swift in his “Digression on Madness” speaks bitterly of happiness as the “possession of being well-deceived; the serene peaceful state of being a fool among knaves.”

If such is felicity, then we have it. Knaves lead us: e.g. the White House lying us into Iraq, the Bernie Maddow company stealing millions from Elie Weisel’s “Foundation for Humanity,” Goldman Sachs betting against the derivatives it advised clients to buy; Union Pacific energy advertisers touting clean coal as they peddle away life on earth.

But what of we fools who follow? How did we come to linger, innocently deceived, in the valley of knaves. Many kinds of mythmakers fool us—talk radio, 24-hour television, shouted political discourse, lobbyists, political liars. But we are complicit.

We are ignorant of history because we do not seek to know it; nor do we demand it for our children. Consider the current Texas textbook censors. Thirty five years ago, the Gablers of Texas, a fundamentalist husband and wife team began to shape a generation of history and science teaching by asking such questions as “Why did a history textbook give more space to the French Revolution than to the American…? Were not Vietnam and Watergate overemphasized? Was Robin Hood a hero, as the text claimed, or a dangerous advocate of income redistribution?” The Gablers manufactured creation-science to counter serious study of the genetics of species change. An ignorance factory, they leave their successors in present Texas statewide book selections that assure the nation’s ignorance.

Two further examples of ignorance-manufacture: one related to justice, the other to peace:

First, Injustice-related Manufacture of Ignorance: Racial tensions have been stirred in Nebraska by the national anti-immigrant organization, ‘FAIR.’ Although it purports to oppose only illegal immigration, the organization has been designated a ‘hate group’ by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) for demonizing virtually all Hispanics and conflating ‘undocumented’ with ‘documented.’ According to the SPLC, FAIR has “promoted racist conspiracy theories about Mexico’s secret designs on the American Southwest and an alternative theory alleging secret plans to merge the United States, Mexico and Canada.” Such outrageous claims are clearly intended for their shock value, to rouse white Americans to action. I know of no significant Hispanic group that presently proposes such a scheme. But historically speaking, this kind of turnabout would be fair play.

In the 19th century, immigrants from the American South settled Mexican Texas with the goal of extending slavery (Mexico had banned the institution there). The U.S. government then annexed this ‘free’ Texas, prompting Mexico to declare war. (Lincoln and many other Americans knew that the Mexican-American War was a war to extend slavery.) When the war ended with Mexico’s defeat, slavery not only grew, the U.S. disallowed the property rights guaranteed to Mexican citizens under the “Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo” and the promises to treat them as Caucasians.

That’s the ‘ancient history’ behind the ‘immigration problem’ that neither FAIR nor our media and political image-makers ever bother to share. Here’s something more recent, that’s every bit as historically pertinent…

The final version of the North American Free Trade Agreement passed under the Clinton Administration in 1993 rejected the ‘social protocols’ basic to the charter of the “European Union.” Under EU agreement, the poorer parts of Europe—Portugal, southern Spain and Italy, and other impoverished zones—received support from the Union’s more prosperous parts. Progressive Democrats in Washington fought for a set of social protocols, but most Republicans and outfits like the “Heritage Foundation” vilified it. And Bill Clinton accordingly caved.

As Anuradha Mittal, director of “Food First,” observed in 2003, on the tenth anniversary of NAFTA’s passage: Mexico, a country once self-sufficient in basic grains, today imports 95 percent of its soy, 58 percent of its rice, 49 percent of its wheat, and 40 percent of its meat. This has resulted in Mexican corn farmers being put out of business. More than 80 percent of Mexico’s extreme poor live in rural areas, and more than 2 million are corn farmers. There is no way they can compete with subsidized American agribusiness. Everyday, an estimated 600 peasant farmers are forced off their land.

Our manufacturers of ignorance ignore these facts. FAIR does not tell us. For them, Hispanics are bacteria growing in a petri dish. We, happy fools led by the knavery of corporate image-making—in Fremont, in Arizona, at the ‘Tea Parties’ and in Nebraska’s government—ignore our history. We do not do penance for its evils. We create

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