2011 Annual Peace Conference

The executive director of the country’s largest Peace & Justice organization will be the featured speaker at the 2011 Annual Peace Conference Saturday, October 15 in Lincoln. Kevin Martin, who has directed the Washington, D.C.-based Peace Action and the Peace Action Education Fund since 2001, will speak on the all-too timely topic of “Endless War, Endless Costs: The Crying Need to Change America’s Flawed Military & Economic Priorities.”

This year’s conference is again being jointly co-sponsored by the UNO Grace Abbott School of Social Work and Nebraskans for Peace and will be held at Trinity United Methodist Church, 7130 Kentwell Lane in Lincoln, from 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. To register, visit the nebraskansforpeace.org website and email us at nfpstate@nebraskansforpeace.org or contact the NFP State Office at 402-475-4620.

Earlier this year, the NFP State Board voted unanimously to formally affiliate with Peace Action, joining the organization’s 30-state network and 100,000-member base. The decision wasn’t hard. Beyond its impressive national connections, Peace Action has roots in the American peace movement that date back further than NFP’s, descending as it does from the 1950s nuclear disarmament group “SANE” (which merged with the “Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign” in the mid-’80s). Nebraskans for Peace is proud to be a member of the Peace Action family and to welcome Kevin Martin to our state.

Kevin’s own roots as a peacemaker run deep. Prior to becoming the executive director of Peace Action, he directed the organization’s Illinois Chapter for ten years and has been associated with the group since 1985. He has also served in the leadership of “United for Peace and Justice”—the country’s largest anti-war coalition—since its founding in 2002. One of the foremost voices of the peace movement in the U.S., Kevin is a regular contributor to the national political dialogue through his writings and radio and TV commentary. Register today to attend this hallmark NFP event October 15.
Nebraska Report

The Nebraska Report is published nine times annually by Nebraskans for Peace. Opinions stated do not necessarily reflect the views of the directors or staff of Nebraskans for Peace.

Newspaper Committee: Tim Rinne, Editor; Mark Vasina, Peter Salter, Paul Olson
Typesetting and Layout: Michelle Ashley; Printing: Fremont Tribune
Website: Justin Kemerling

Letters, articles, photographs and graphics are welcomed. Deadline is the first of the month for publication in the following month’s issue. Submit to: Nebraska Report, c/o Nebraskans for Peace, 941 ‘O’ Street, Suite 1026, Lincoln, NE 68508.

Nebraskans for Peace

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

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—Oscar Arias

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The Annual National Security Budget Figure No One Wants You to See

For starters, that $117.8 billion war-funding request for the Department of Defense doesn’t include certain actual ‘war-related fighting’ costs. Take, for instance, the counterterrorism activities of the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development. For the first time, just as with the Pentagon budget, the FY 2012 request divides what’s called ‘security’ is to go through what we know about the U.S. national security budget, step by step, and add it all up.

So, here we go. Buckle your seat belt: it’s going to be a bumpy ride.

For 2012, the White House has requested $558 billion for the Pentagon’s annual ‘base’ budget, plus an additional $118 billion to fund military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. At $676 billion, that’s already nothing to sneeze at, but it’s just the barest of beginnings when it comes to what American taxpayers will actually spend on national security. Think of it as the gigantic tip of a humongous iceberg.

To get closer to a real figure, it’s necessary to start peeking at other parts of the federal budget where so many other pots of security spending are squirreled away.

Missing from the Pentagon’s budget request, for example, is an additional $19.3 billion for nuclear-weapons-related activities like making sure our current stockpile of warheads will work as expected and cleaning up the waste created by seven decades of developing and producing them. That money, however, officially falls in the province of the Department of Energy. And then, don’t forget an additional $7.8 billion that the Pentagon lumps into a ‘miscellaneous’ category—a kind of department of chump change—that is included in neither its base budget nor those war-fighting funds.

So, even though we’re barely started, we’ve already hit a total official FY 2012 Pentagon budget request of:

$703.1 billion dollars.

Not usually included in national security spending are hundreds of billions of dollars that American taxpayers are asked to spend to pay for past wars, and to support our current and future national security strategy.

For starters, that $117.8 billion war-funding request for the Department of Defense doesn’t include certain actual ‘war-related fighting’ costs. Take, for instance, the counterterrorism activities of the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development. For the first time, just as with the Pentagon budget, the FY 2012 request divides what’s called

It’s true you won’t find the $1.2 trillion figure cited in your daily newspaper or on your nightly newscast, but it’s no misprint. It may even be an underestimate.

“International Affairs” in two: that is, into an annual ‘base’ budget as well as funding for “Overseas Contingency Operations” related to Iraq and Afghanistan. (In the Bush-Cheney years, these used to be called the “Global War on Terror.”) The State Department’s contribution? $8.7 billion. That brings the grand but very partial total so far to:

$711.8 billion.

The White House has also requested $71.6 billion for a post-2001 category called “Homeland Security”—of which $18.1 billion is funded through the Department of Defense. The remaining $53.5 billion goes through various other federal accounts, including the Department of Homeland Security ($37 billion), the Department of Health and Human Services ($4.6 billion), and the Department of Justice ($4.6 billion). All of it is, however, national security funding which brings our total to:

$765.3 billion.

The U.S. intelligence budget was technically classified prior to 2007, although at roughly $40 billion annually, it was considered one of the worst-kept secrets in Washington. Since then, as a result of recommendations by the “9/11 Commission,” Congress has required that the government reveal the total amount spent on intelligence work related to the “National Intelligence Program” (NIP).

This work done by federal agencies like the CIA and the National Security Agency consists of keeping an eye on and trying to understand what other nations are doing and thinking, as well as a broad range of ‘covert operations’ such as those being conducted in Pakistan. In this area, we won’t have figures until FY 2012 ends. The latest NIP funding figure we do have is $53.1 billion for FY 2010. There’s little question that the FY 2012 figure will be higher, but let’s be safe and stick with what we know. (Keep in mind that the government spends plenty more on ‘intelligence.’ Additional funds for the Military Intelligence Program (MIP), however, are already included in the Pentagon’s 2012 base budget and war-fighting supplemental, though we don’t know what they are. The FY 2010 funding for MIP, again the latest figure available, was $27 billion.) In any case, add that $53.1 billion and we’re at:

$818.4 billion.

Veterans programs are an important part of the national security budget with

continued on page 5
Military Spending: A Poor Job Creator

A Fact Sheet Prepared by William D. Hartung of the “Arms & Security Project” – September 2011

Plans for cutting the federal deficit have raised an important question: what impact would military spending reductions have on jobs?

Contrary to the assertions of the arms industry, maintaining military spending at the expense of other forms of federal expenditures would actually result in a net loss of jobs. This is because military spending is less effective at creating jobs than virtually any other form of government activity.


The question is not whether military spending creates jobs—it is whether more jobs could be created by the same amount of money invested in other ways. The evidence on this point is clear:

• A billion dollars devoted to a tax cut creates 25 percent more jobs than a billion dollars of military spending;

• Spending on clean energy production produces one and one-half times more jobs; and

• Spending on education creates two and one-half times more jobs.

And though average overall compensation is higher for military jobs than the others, these other forms of expenditure create more decent-paying jobs (those paying $64,000 per year or more) than military spending does.


Job Creation in the U.S. through $1 Billion in Spending

Note: Employment estimates include direct, indirect, and induced jobs.
The projected funding figure for 2012 being $129.3 billion. Of this, $59 billion is for veterans’ hospital and medical care, $70.3 billion for disability pensions and education programs. This category of national security funding has been growing rapidly in recent years because of the soaring medical-care needs of veterans of the Iraq and Afghan wars. According to an analysis by the Congressional Budget Office, by 2020 total funding for health-care services for veterans will have risen another 45-75 percent. In the meantime, for 2012 we’ve reached:

$947.7 billion.

If you include the part of the foreign affairs budget not directly related to U.S. military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as other counterterrorism operations, you have an additional $18 billion in direct security spending. Of this, $6.6 billion is for military aid to foreign countries, while almost $2 billion goes for ‘international peacekeeping’ operations. A further $709 million has been designated for countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, combating terrorism, and clearing landmines planted in regional conflicts around the globe. This leaves us at:

$965.7 billion.

As with all federal retirees, U.S. military retirees and former civilian Department of Defense employees receive pension benefits from the government. The 2012 figure is $48.5 billion for military personnel, $20 billion for those civilian employees, which means we’ve now hit:

$1,034.2 billion. (Yes, that’s $1.03 TRILLION!)

When the federal government lacks sufficient funds to pay all of its obligations, it borrows. Each year, it must pay the interest on this debt which, for FY 2012, is projected at $474.1 billion. The National Priorities Project calculates that 39 percent of that, or $185 billion, comes from borrowing related to past Pentagon spending.

Add it all together and the grand total for the known national security budget of the United States is:

$1,219.2 billion. (That’s more than $1.2 TRILLION.)

A country with a gross domestic product of $1.2 trillion would have the 15th-largest economy in the world, ranking between Canada and Indonesia, and ahead of Australia, Taiwan, the Netherlands and Saudi Arabia. Still, don’t for a second think that $1.2 trillion is the actual grand total for what the U.S. government spends on national security. Former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld once famously spoke of the world’s “known unknowns.” Explaining the phrase this way: “That is to say there are things that we now know we don’t know.” It’s a concept that couldn’t apply better to the budget he once oversaw. When it comes to U.S. national security spending, there are some relevant numbers we know are out there, even if we simply can’t calculate them.

To take one example, how much of NASA’s proposed $18.7 billion budget falls under national security spending? We know that the agency works closely with the Pentagon. NASA satellite launches often occur from the Air Force’s facilities at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California and Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Florida. The Air Force has its own satellite launch capability, but how much of that comes as a result of NASA technology and support? In dollars terms, we just don’t know.

Other “known unknowns” would include portions of the State Department budget. One assumes that at least some of its diplomatic initiatives promote our security interests. Similarly, we have no figure for the pensions of non-Pentagon federal retirees who worked on security issues for the Department of Homeland Security, the State Department, or the Departments of Justice and Treasury. Nor do we have figures for the interest on moneys borrowed to fund veterans’ benefits, among other national security-related matters. The bill for such known unknowns could easily run into the tens of billions of dollars annually, putting the full national security budget over the $1.3 trillion mark or even higher.

There’s a simple principle here. American taxpayers should know just what they are paying for. In a restaurant, a customer would be outraged to receive a check almost twice as high as the menu promised. We have no idea whether the same would be true in the world of national security spending, because Americans are never told what national security actually means at the cash register.

### TOTAL COST SINCE 9/11

**IN CONGRESS-APPROVED DISCRETIONARY FUNDS**

(Fiscal Year 2012 $)

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SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2011 NEBRASKA REPORT, P. 5
What Is Wrong with Washington?

by Hank Van den Berg
UNL Professor of Economics

While attending two economics conferences in the United Kingdom this summer, I was repeatedly confronted by economists from other countries wanting to know: “What is wrong with Washington?” They were concerned that the debt ceiling would not be raised and a U.S. default would trigger another global financial crisis. My explanations ranged from “I know, it’s really stupid” to “You have to understand American politics.”

Indeed, the debt ceiling debate is a very American phenomenon. We are one of the only countries that has a debt ceiling. More mature countries have figured out that when a legislature debates expenditures and taxes, it directly affects the government’s budget balance and, therefore, its total outstanding debt. A separate debt ceiling is superfluous. But in the United States, we like political theater, so we first have a long emotional political debate about the debt ceiling without actually getting into any substantive discussions on expenditures and taxes. Then, we repeat the whole exercise and actually sort of debate budget items. This way, of course, we can get twice the political mileage out of the subject. The news media loves it!

My second explanation is more substantive. The world rankings of corruption by “Transparency International,” which is widely used by economists and social scientists, ranks the U.S. as more corrupt than 27 other European, Asian, and even a couple of Latin American countries. We should, accordingly, stop expecting honest debates on the debt ceiling or anything else in Washington. So, after agreeing to cut Medicaid for the poor and not raise taxes on the obscenely rich, Obama and Congress managed to finally set a higher debt ceiling, only a couple of days before the three private ratings firms could get around to downgrading U.S. government bonds. The most illustrious of the trio, Standard and Poor’s, had apparently worked itself up to such a tizzy that it went ahead and downgraded U.S. debt anyway. The whole farce will repeat itself this fall, when the budget actually has to be decided and the newly-formed congressional ‘super committee’ issues (or decides not to issue) its recommendations on how to cut the deficit.

Of course, the budget deficit can be easily solved with a prudent combination of reduced military spending and higher taxes on the wealthy. Our obscenely high military expenditures do not protect anyone from foreign threats. Of all the possible terrorist threats that were instigated and stopped since 2001, it was police action or dumb luck that prevented disaster—not the military. And as far as taxing the wealthy, let me just note that America’s wealthy already pay fewer taxes than their counterparts in nearly all other rich countries. Also, let’s not forget that the statistical correlation between higher taxes and economic growth over the past 60 years is a positive one. Think of the 1950s and 1960s, when the economy grew much faster than it has since even though income and corporate tax rates were much higher than now.

One has to conclude that the whole budget spectacle serves only to divert our attention from more important issues.

What Could Be More Important Than a Debt Ceiling?

After gradually improving my explanation with each subsequent inquiry about the situation in Washington, I have concluded the following issues are the most critical ones being obscured by the theatrics of our Democratic and Republican politicians:

1. The wealthy are stealing us blind.
2. Much of the budget deficit, and the accumulation of government debt, is due to the annual $1.2 trillion in military- and security-related expenditures.
3. These security expenditures—which cover the cost of protecting overseas investments in energy and other resources—are useless because imminent environmental disasters mandate a quick end to our addiction to carbon-based energy.
4. Population growth is not slowing as much as we thought.
5. Our economy is never going to ‘recover’ its unsustainable growth path.

These five issues translate into one overarching conclusion: the era of economic growth is over.

Let me explain.

We’re Losing Our Shirts

The wealthy are taking as much as they can as quickly as they can by corrupting our governments. Politicians of all parties are effectively paid to enact policies that reduce taxes on the wealthy, thus enabling them to capture ever higher shares of global income. Since 1980, all of the growth in total U.S. national income was captured by the top ten percent of income earners. The average real income accruing to the remaining 90 percent has not gone up in those 30 years. Even though productivity of the average worker rose by over 100 percent since 1972, average wages to workers have declined in real terms. That is, for producing twice as much, the average worker took a pay cut. The top ten percent of income earners in the U.S. captured almost exactly 50 percent of total U.S. income in 2007—a higher percentage than the top ten percent captured during the unequal “Roaring Twenties.” The top one percent of U.S. income earners took about one quarter of total income in 2007. (Compare that to the Netherlands, where people complain that the top one percent gets just seven percent of national income.)

The Waste of the Military

The actual Pentagon budget plus supplemental appropriations bring annual expenditures to about $750 billion. Add in the...
Rick Perry on Warming: Pray for Rain

Temperatures in Texas exceeded 100 degrees F. every day for nearly two consecutive months this summer, and it hasn’t rained much all year. Most of the politicians have been bought by oil companies, and they’re telling everyone that global-warming science is bull (no disrespect to bulls, of course). Given the summer that Texas has had, Gov. Rick Perry must be the world champion of abject climate-change denial. He is one of those climate contrarians who has his own geophysics of the ‘moon-is-made-of-green-cheese’ variety. Perry and his cohort will argue that carbon dioxide doesn’t matter—down to the last ice cube. What are Texans to do?

Perry has issued an executive order instructing Texans to pray for rain. I am not making this up.

For a politician, Perry has some serious hair, and he’s quick on his feet. But who laid the circuitry in his brain? When Perry doesn’t want Texas to secede from the Union, he wants to be president. Can he get his lie straight?

Read his recent book Fed Up! and meet the delightful guy who believes that Social Security is “an illegal Ponzi scheme,” and Medicare is unconstitutional. Also, according to Eugene Robinson of the Washington Post, Ron Paul, who has spent years calling for the Federal Reserve to be abolished, [said] of Perry: “He makes me look like a moderate.”

His Book Is a Bomb

Perry’s staff has been trying to disown the book, but it’s only a few months old. It’s full of bombs that will blow up in Perry’s face during any general campaign. Perry’s communications director Ray Sullivan has said that the book “is a look back, not a path forward”—intended “as a review and critique of 50 years of federal excesses, not in any way as a 2012 campaign blueprint or manifesto.”

At the same time his staff was trying to distance the campaign from the book, Perry himself, according to Robinson, was responding to voters in Iowa, who asked how he would fix entitlement programs by saying, “Have you read my book Fed Up!? Get a copy and read it.”

Will the real Rick Perry please stand up?

Fed Up! proclaims that global warming science is a “contrived phony mess.” According to Perry, these unnamed scientists are acting in bad faith, faking data. Perry says that legions of scientists are questioning the validity of global-warming science: “We’re seeing almost weekly, or even daily, scientists who are coming forward and questioning the original idea that man-made global warming is what is causing the climate to change.” Again, he gives no names. Seriously, folks, the real contrived phony mess is between Perry’s ears.

Perry is not cold only on warming. He has doubts about evolution. What’s next? A debate over whether the sun rises in the west, or whether the sun revolves around the Earth? Don’t doubt it. Polls have been taken which indicate that roughly one in six Americans believe in an Earth-centered solar system. And we are not alone. The proportion is double that in Russia.

I haven’t yet seen a poll of Iowa Republicans on the question of what revolves around what, but according to recent polling cited by Paul Krugman in the New York Times, one-fifth of Iowa Republicans “believe” in global warming (e.g. that greenhouse gases hold heat) and one-third “believe in” evolution. If this was a comedy routine, we would be laughing. It is, however, a race for the presidency of the United States.

Off-ramp to the 13th Century

Who would have believed that the famous, glittering bridge to the Third Millennium would have an off-ramp to the 13th Century?

Honestly: Perry makes George W. Bush look like a liberal with brains. He is ‘all hat, and no cattle’—and he’s leading in the polls as the Republicans’ preferred candidate.

I want to engage Perry in a debate over global warming. I want to start with the Pliocene, about 2 million years ago, when carbon-dioxide levels were similar to today, and the planet had very little long-lasting ice, with sea levels perhaps 150 to 200 feet higher than now.

But just how does one discuss paleoclimate with a strict constructionist of the Bible who believes that all we behold is no more than 6,500 years old?

Perry, infamous in Texas for his ‘pay-to-play’ contribution system by which he appoints campaign supporters to government agencies and boards, has been accusing climate scientists of hawking global warming in a ‘scholars-for-dollars’ scheme to get rich off grant money. While his own money games are well-documented, Perry provides no specifics about which climate scientists are scamming the system. He’s aping Joseph McCarthy with his fake list of Commies.

While Perry excoriates climate scientists’ motives, The New York Times reported August 20, 2011 that “Over three terms of office, Perry’s administration has doled out grants, tax breaks, contracts and appointments to hundreds of his most generous supporters and their businesses…they have helped Perry raise more money than any [other] politician in Texas history.” He has appointed more than 4,000 people to state offices and boards, reinforcing his ability to use them as a funding base. Try that, climate scientists!

So, did Perry spend eighth-grade science in the bathroom smoking cigarettes, or is he just faking his ignorance to please the ever-growing, dumbed-down, reality-challenged wing of today’s Republican Party?

Rejection of basic science seems to be the order of the day in those precincts. It’s a form of insanity. We can hope it’s temporary.

Bruce E. Johansen is Jacob J. Isaacson Professor at the UNO and author of The Encyclopedia of Global Warming Science and Technology (2009).
What Is Wrong with Washington? continued

CIA (which flies the drones), the NSA (which runs the surveillance infrastructure), the State Department (which controls thousands of mercenaries), the Veterans Department (which has to deal with the casualties of war), Homeland Security (which is unconstitutionally intertwined with the Defense Department), drug enforcement agencies (who carry out the clandestine military operations in Latin America), and numerous other related agencies, and we approach $1 trillion per year. Then, add in the interest on the public debt due to all these expenditures, and we are up to $1.2 trillion. Remember, this number is conservative because current interest rates are extremely low by historical trends. A debt default would raise interest rates and increase the cost of military-generated government debt.

This military and security expenditure is mostly used to protect our access to foreign oil and other natural resources. These foreign resources increasingly include foreign land where we grow the foods we import. The United States needs the resources of many countries because our lifestyles require many more resources than nature provides us within our own territory. We are not the greatest nation for nothing! But, we increasingly fear that foreigners might eventually demand more of their own resources, as China is already doing. After Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Libya, more wars, invasions, and killing will probably be necessary to satisfy our addiction to foreign resources in the future.

The Environment Says ‘No’

Military spending is futile, however, because there are simply not enough natural resources for economic growth as usual. Oil production seems to be peaking now, as new supplies are available only at much higher costs. In addition, global warming, rapid losses of biodiversity, and mutations driven by industrial agriculture (all exacerbated by in the soon-to-be unfrozen Arctic Ocean.) Furthermore, the Russian tundra is melting, releasing methane that speeds up global warming and enables tundra fires that will put even more carbon into the air. While flying over Greenland on the way back from Ireland in early August, I could observe the ocean full of icebergs broken off from the Greenland ice shelf; these will all melt and raise the ocean level. The potential costs of climate change mandate that we stop putting even more carbon into the air. At nearly 400 parts per million and rising, we must reduce carbon levels in the atmosphere to 350 parts per million. That means less production and less carbon energy usage.

Too Many People

One of the lectures at the “Green Economics Conference” in Oxford in July was on “The Astounding Complacency towards Population Growth among Environmentalists.” The message was simple: The environmental footprint of humanity is equal to per capita carbon emissions times the total population of the earth. If population continues growing, the human footprint will grow even if all of us freeze our consumption. Policymakers and even environmentalists simply refuse to look at this second component of the formula for the environmental footprint, however.

Note that world population is still growing by over one percent per year, which means it is still on pace to double before the end of this century. In much of Africa and the Middle East, populations are growing at two percent per year or more. Yes, the rates have been falling since the early 1960s, and some European countries and Japan now have zero natural population growth. But, in some other high-income countries, natural population growth has begun to rise again. If population growth remains near one percent for this century, can the earth support a population of 14 billion in 2100, especially if we insist on further economic growth and thus increasing each person’s consumption? Obviously, human society will collapse if we try this.

All These Trends Translate into ‘No Recovery’

It is difficult to see how we can create more jobs by raising demand for more production when a small percentage of the world’s population is taking virtually all of the increased income that would be generated by the extra production. Total supply must equal total demand, or production is not sustainable. Karl Marx famously predicted that capitalism would collapse for precisely this reason: because capitalists try to increase profits by squeezing the wages of workers, eventually there will be no one with enough income to buy their production. Keynesian economics is also built around this idea, as are the recent stimulus measures enacted by most countries around the world after the financial collapse in 2008.

With the rich capturing all income increases (but putting their earnings into monetary assets rather than consumption or real investment), economic recovery has not happened. We should have seen this problem coming. Since the financial deregulation in the late 1970s, increased credit was extended by an eager financial system to those whose incomes did not rise, and this allowed for increased consumption despite falling wages. Of course, debt accumulated, and now the debt levels put repayment into doubt. Especially ominous is the situation in the United States, where rising debt has been used to buy houses and vehicles that are too large in terms of their energy usage. The government’s debt was largely incurred paying for military expenditures to safeguard that energy.

Rising demand for economic output must now come from the wealthy themselves and consumers in a few emerging countries like China. However, extreme wealth does not encourage much additional consumption: how many yachts do you need? Because some of the financial advisors of the wealthy correctly interpret the debt-driven consumption as a ‘Ponzi scheme,’ the stock market has fallen, eroding wealth and making the modestly-wealthy less willing to consume. At the same time, China is not likely to drive world demand either because it is facing enormous resource shortages and major environmental problems, the same ones the entire world faces.

The pending global environmental collapse can only be avoided if the whole world goes through a crash program to overcome its energy and natural resource addiction.
by Frank Cordaro
Phil Berrigan Catholic Worker House
Des Moines, Iowa

In keeping with recent efforts, this year’s annual Aug 6-9 Vigil at StratCom commemorating the anniversary of the USA atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was a humble yet noble effort. A total of 21 people joined the six-full-time vigilers at the gate of Offutt AFB—home of StratCom. That adds up to 27 souls.

Sitting at the main entrance of Offutt AFB for three-and-half days, contemplating the ‘god-awful’ mission of StratCom (its ready and willing intent to destroy and kill any and all perceived enemies of the U.S.A., anywhere and anytime, within minutes!)—I could not help but measure our vigil’s efforts as pathetic. Like a gnat on the rump of a cow, for what goes for reality in our three-dimensional world, we made little or no impression on the work and mission of StratCom. If making that kind of difference was our sole purpose, then we would be some very sorry and delusional people.

Yet, when I add the ‘faith’ element in to what we do at Offutt, I come away from our three-and-a-half day experience with a deepened sense of well-being and purpose for our troubles. And if indeed we are little more than a gnat on the rump of StratCom’s mission, then, by God, we ought to be the best darn gnats that we can be—for nothing less than the survival of the human race and the life forces of our planet are at stake, and everyone must do their part.

From a ‘faith’ perspective, each of our individual efforts at Offutt during the past three-and-a-half day vigil must be added to what we do and how we live our lives the rest of the time when we are not at Offutt vigiling. And as I take measure of the 26 good souls that joined me on the line this year, each and everyone one of them have made a fundamental choice for life in their lives—and to varying degrees have put a measure of human equity and personal sacrifice on the line for this fundamental choice for life. To which I say, ‘Amen’!

Question: What do you have when you do a noble yet pathetic thing for the life of the planet?
Answer: A prophetic deed.

A few high points from this year’s protest:

We were blessed to be able to begin our vigil with a Mass in the basement of St. John’s Church on the Creighton University campus with Fr. Jack McCaslin presiding Friday night, August 5.

Though our numbers were small, we were truly international. Frank Teuber, a visiting Catholic Worker from Dortmund, Germany, was with us for the whole vigil. And Nobuko Tsukui, a Japanese national from Tokyo who has specialized in the literature of the atomic bomb, also joined us. The talk she delivered at the Lincoln NFP Chapter’s annual Hiroshima/Nagasaki ‘Lantern Float’ commemoration entitled, “Reflections on Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Fukushima,” can be found at: http://nebraskansforpeace.org/index)

Locally, we were graced with the presence of Mark Kenney’s sister Maureen Davis and daughters Susan and Beth. They brought with them a sign that read, “I’m Here Because Mark Can’t Be! Mark F Kenney arrested here August 9, 2010.” Mark is serving a six-month sentence at the Duluth Federal Prison Camp for having committed civil disobedience by crossing the line at StratCom last year. Carolyn Moon, a new participant from Omaha who joined us for the first time this year, brought a home-made sign that read, “FREE HUGS.” And one guy actually stopped and collected his free hug!

Rita Hohenshell and Jane Magers, members of the Des Moines Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (http://www.wilpinternational.org/index.htm) also came over for a day. They drove from Des Moines and did an overnight. These good women truly live by faith—at least we know they drive by faith! With little or no sense of direction, and prone to getting lost, they managed to find St. John’s Church basement and the main gate of Offutt AFB all on their own—with a little help from a number of strangers along the way.

This year’s vigil was co-sponsored by the Des Moines Veterans for Peace chapter. Ed Bloomer and Gill Landolt from the DM Chapter were on hand the entire vigil. They were joined by a Nebraska VFP member, Steve Horn.

Three new creature comforts were added to our vigil this year:
1) We were able to take showers in a dorm at Creighton this year—instead of going off campus to the Omaha Catholic Worker house to get cleaned up.
2) A canopy that helped block out the sun was set up on site.
3) And a ‘porta-potty’ was rented for the three-day vigil. Don’t know how we lived without one over the years... (Oh yeah, I do. Dangerously...) ‘Thank yous’ go out to: the folks at the St. John’s Parish on Creighton’s campus for the great hospitality; the Omaha Catholic Worker folks—special notice to Wayne who cooked our meals; and to Denny Davis, who for the last several years has celebrated his birthday with us August 9 and buys lunch for the whole crew after the vigil and witness that day. (This year, Denny also sprang for the supper on Aug 8!)

We’ll be back at StratCom’s Kenney Gate Sunday, October 2 from 2:30-3:30 p.m. as part of the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space “Keep Space for Peace Week” of protests. With StratCom now additionally charged with the mission of militarily dominating both space and cyberspace, the threat this command poses to peace stretches up to the heavens.

Nobuko Tsukui at the StratCom vigil August 7.
Rev. Jay Schmidt  
NFP State Board Membership Committee

After reading Lynne Twist’s 2003 book, The Soul of Money: Transforming Your Relationship with Money and Life, I was greatly moved and found myself wanting to share some of those insights. After all, in our culture, money is the big motivator. We constantly seek to earn more, stash it away and buy more stuff. There is that saying, “The one who ends up with the most toys wins,” and money, for us, is often the ultimate measure of success. Just the other day an acquaintance was telling me how perfect her children are; they all did well in school, have advanced degrees and work in lucrative jobs.

When money flows through our lives, it can cleanse and nourish. But if blocked and hoarded, it can grow stagnant and toxic.

Everywhere we turn, money is directing—and determining—our lives. But this behavior toward money is often at odds with our deepest hopes and desires for our world. For the sake of money, we may neglect our children and rationalize what otherwise we would call questionable morality. The profit motive alone drives the decisions of corporations, and they are persuaded to do the right thing only when boycotts hurt their bottom line.

Adam Smith’s ‘invisible hand’ of self-interest as the all-holy guide of the free market economy is false and misleading. Within his own socially stratified society were bundled destructive forces such as racism, sexism, colonialism and of course greed. Our fixation on money has ingrained deep within us a belief in scarcity—we have to get ours and more because there isn’t enough for everybody. Fear of deprivation constantly drives us, leading to the exploitation of our neighbors and the environment, and even to war. Convinced that more is always better, we are distracted from seeing and appreciating and using what we already have. We don’t even talk about or question the role money plays in our lives. We simply accept it all saying, that’s just the way it is. It’s a ‘me against you’ world.

By contrast, in a ‘you and me’ world, we can all make it. There is enough. Despite population growth and environmental degradation, an unequal distribution of wealth is the only explanation for why one-fifth of humanity is currently malnourished. We could ensure that everyone receives their fair share. Instead though, we opt to blame the victim, averring that the poor deserve their fate. In our ‘more is better’ worldview, we believe that those who have more must be more—more smart, more able, more valuable as human beings.

Money itself is not the problem. The problem is our relationship with money. We need to strengthen our relationship with our deepest hopes and values. Most of us want to make a difference and most of us want this world to work for everyone. When our money is aligned with those deep-spirit values in our lives, we have inner peace. When we let go of getting more of what we don’t really need, it frees up vast amounts of energy to make a difference with what we do have—however little or great that may be.

When we see that what we have is sufficient, we are empowered. Sufficiency is not an amount; it is knowing that there is enough and we are enough. It is using our money in ways that express our integrity, using it to express our values rather than being manipulated by it. Both the inflow and the outflow of money expresses our deepest values. This starts with how we earn our money. It includes the financial institutions we use and the socially responsible investments we make. It includes purchasing local foods and fair trade goods.

When money flows through our lives, it can cleanse and nourish. But if blocked and hoarded, it can grow stagnant and toxic. It has the power for good and, when used in this way, it energizes and humanizes; it becomes a spiritual force rather than a poison in our lives. To enable our money to be a spiritual force, where it goes must fit with our desires and hopes for the world. When we give to causes, we make sure they are in line with these hopes for a living wage for all people, for clean water to drink, adequate health care, just treatment before the law and, of course, peace. We seek out causes that work for structural, systemic change for justice and sustainability.

No matter the amount of money flowing through our lives, when we direct it in this spirit way we feel—and we are—rich and vibrant. What we appreciate, appreciates. It’s the same principle that holds true in our personal human relationships. The more energy and consideration we devote to them, the more they flourish.

Rather than being ‘the root of all evil,’ accordingly, money can be a great force for good in our lives—if we set aside our consumer culture’s values and use it in tune with our hopes for a better world.

Lela Shanks & Paul Olson Honored as Peacemakers by Alternatives to the Military

Members of the “Alternatives to the Military–Lincoln” families and friends joined to honor Lela Shanks and Paul Olson as ‘Peacemakers of the Year’ at the group’s annual potluck this past August 25. The potluck is always a great part of the festivities, but the opportunity to honor both Lela and Paul made this celebration of the group’s 20th anniversary at Christ United Methodist Church in Lincoln especially memorable.

Lela and Paul are the most recent to be added to the list of past Peacemakers. Betty Olson, a Nebraskans for Peace founder, was the first recipient, followed by Dwight Ganzel representing Conscientious Objectors, Don Tilley, Leola Bullock, Dan Williams, Bob Hitchcock, Marj Manglitz, Carol McShane, John McCall, Elizabeth Goodbrake, Christy Hargesheimer, Robert Epp, John Taylor and George Wolf, MJ Berry, Terry Werner, Michael Baker, Nan Graf, Fran Kaye and Jack Gould.

Lela has been a tireless activist for most of her life fighting for human and civil rights, social justice, world peace, the empowerment of women, the integration of public schools, the advancement of African American history, the abolition of the death penalty, and increased awareness of Alzheimer’s disease. She and her late husband, Hughes, endured many tough times in their long struggle together, and their determination to fight on has been a personal inspiration to many of us in the Lincoln community.

A UNL professor emeritus of English, Paul has been a constant voice for Peace & Justice throughout his career. In his scholarship and activism, he has been a passionate advocate on issues involving national education reform and peace studies, school bullying, immigration justice, Native American rights, rural affairs, nonviolence and nuclear disarmament. The immediate past president of NFP, he continues to coordinate the Lincoln Chapter’s annual lantern float commemoration of the atomic bombings of Japan.

More than 60 activists attended this year’s event. Each described his or her work in Peace & Justice in the Lincoln community. This annual gathering lends strength and hope to each of us in our own commitments to justice. What a privilege to share the evening this year with two so very sincere leaders, visionaries and steadfast advocates.
COMING SOON

**Fri, Oct 7 - Thu, Oct 13**

**I WOMEN ART REVOLUTION**

Lynn Hershman Leeson

**Fri, Oct 14 - Thu, Oct 20**

**THE LAST MOUNTAIN**

Bill Haney

**Fri, Oct 14 - Thu, Oct 20**

**THE WHISTLEBLOWER**

Larysa Kondracki

**Fri, Oct 21 - Thu, Oct 27**

**CIRCUMSTANCE**

Maryam Keshavarz

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**Paul Olson, conclusion**

in Article 18, “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.” And in Article 15 the declaration states: “(1) Everyone has the right to a nationality” and “No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.”

The United States has made almost no effort to see that these articles are honored in this part of the world, let alone enforced. The U.N. will soon take up the issue of Palestinian statehood. Without diminishing the offenses of either the Israelis or the Palestinians in their generations-old conflict, we believe that Palestine deserves to be recognized as a legitimate fully self-governing state, with clear borders and the rights accorded all other states. No Palestinians should be persons without a country.

In addition, we believe that the U.S. would be well-served in its international pronouncements to speak for the rights of religious minorities in all Middle Eastern countries. We can do this without pretending to massive ‘nation-building’ or democratic moralism. For the most part in the Arab world, we have given sanction to Arab regimes that have no understanding of religious pluralism—who have encouraged religious fanaticism not out of spiritual devotion but rank political opportunism.

If we speak clearly to principle, we may not change the world, but we may begin the process of rethinking things... Perhaps back to the kind of pluralism that much of the Arab world enjoyed in the Middle Ages when, as the Prophet exhorted, all ‘people of the book’ were to be respected.

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**Washington, conclusion**

Paul Olson, conclusion

to find ways to spend more of our time consuming less and producing less. This means more unemployment if we insist on a few people working long hours. Or... we could shift to a 20-hour workweek. We can shift consumption to less energy-intensive products, such as education, entertainment, socializing, etc. We could also devote more time to maintenance rather than producing replacements; we could stop tearing down buildings; and we could keep our cars for 25 years instead of putting them in the junkyard after ten years. We could also live in houses with half the square feet we now occupy; we could stop spending entire afternoons mowing one-acre lawns of Kentucky bluegrass in Nebraska; and we could just spend more time talking to friends in pleasant sidewalk cafes.

The Debt Ceiling Debate Again

This brings me back to the debt ceiling debate, and my first explanation to my international colleagues. Humans are often not very smart. We are probably not going to even try to understand the economy and the ecosystem, much less seek intelligent solutions. Our politicians will invariably approach the future by insisting on a return to debt-financed consumption (as preferred by most of the rich campaign contributors and lobbyists). After all, resource addiction is perfectly legal in a capitalist system! The economy and nature are stronger than we are, however, so this will not work out well.

On the other hand, if we use our heads, we can opt to change the way we live. After sitting in a few sidewalk cafes and riding public transportation in Holland, France and Switzerland this summer, I can reassure you that life can be quite pleasant without a car. Now, if only we can go back to ocean liners instead of carbon-spewing jets, then I can travel to these more sane places less destructively. I can also assure you that the shorter workweeks, the six-week vacation, taxing the disproportionately rich, and free university educations actually enhance the quality of life, and they are potentially sustainable.

It is our American lifestyle and the corrupt political establishment in Washington that most certainly are not.
First a couple of bits and pieces:

- Rep. Jeff Fortenberry has publicly rescinded his pledge to anti-government activist Grover Norquist to oppose any tax increases (see the last “Speaking our Peace”). He deserves our thanks for this gutsy act. May the other members of Nebraska’s congressional delegation soon follow his example.

- Four NFP State Board directors met with Sen. Mike Johanns about the need to cut military spending. The senator told us that the climate in Washington is ripe for reducing the military budget, but did not say he would do anything. With Congress looking to slash $1.2 trillion in federal spending over the next ten years, the annual $1.2 trillion we spend on national security should be the first item to be cut.

Now the main course: the Mideast

The Obama Administration has supported the relatively nonviolent ‘Arab Spring’ in Tunisia and Egypt; supported the violent version of that Spring in Libya; called for Assad to leave Syria without calling in NATO troops; and sent ambiguous signals about the rebellions in Bahrain and Yemen. We ought to congratulate Obama for his policy on Egypt and Tunisia; condone his intervention to prevent massacres in the Libyan city of Benghazi while condemning his support of NATO’s intensive air war against the rest of Libya; and affirm his unwillingness to intervene in Syria, Bahrain and Yemen. We do not know what the CIA and Special Forces are doing in these areas, but clearly we should commend Obama’s willingness to consult with the United Nations and other international bodies. For all his faults, he is not George W. or Dick Cheney.

The ferment we now see in the Middle East is the product of two movements:

1. The partial modernization of Middle Eastern and North African countries through the impact of the oil industry, trade in other minerals, the proliferation of ‘social media,’ and the education of many Middle Eastern students in the West—all of which have finally coalesced into a movement seeking to extend political control in these nations beyond the old elites and Western-installed dictators; and

2. The increasing effort of Shiite and other religious elements to establish the primacy of an anti-Israel ideology within Islam—and the corresponding reaction of Israel and the traditional Sunni power brokers to this new trend.

Because of Israel’s territorial claims (made on the basis of religious claims), Palestinians living in the Palestinian Territories are a people without a country whose lands can be confiscated at will for ‘settlements’ by Israel.

Both Arab as well as Israeli ideas of nationhood, however, have failed to allow meaningful participation by religious minorities within their respective states. Israel insists on Jewish control of Israel, relegating its Palestinian and Berber residents to second-class citizenship. But the Muslim countries of the Middle East are also increasingly torn by sectarian factions.

Syria, for instance, has an ‘Alawite’ Shiite movement trying to control its much more numerous Sunni population without sharing power. Lebanon’s bloodbaths have almost all had a political-religious basis in the conflicts between Shiites, Sunnis, Druze and various forms of Christianity.

Bahrain, with its majority Shiite population, is rebelling against its Sunni rulers. The Shiites in Iraq, brutalized by Saddam Hussein, have now taken over Iraq and made it a client of Shiite Iran without guaranteeing full rights to Sunnis. Hamas and Hezbollah—Israel’s militia opponents—both profess Shiite affiliations.

The Sunni record is no better. Egypt had a pretty good reputation, over a thousand-year period, of allowing Coptic Christians and Muslims to live side by side, but it is increasingly seeing anti-Coptic barbarism. Saudi Sunni religious intolerance is legendary. Christians have not had an easy time under the largely Sunni Palestinian authority. But Christians, concomitantly, have no room to talk. Christian treatment of Muslims—first under the Crusades, then colonialism, and now globalization—has been despicable and unconscionable.

All members of the United Nations subscribe to the “U.N. Universal Declaration on Human Rights” which says, conclusion on page 11