by Bob Reeves

Many Americans who call themselves progressive believe in the ideals of economic parity, social justice and equal opportunity for all. But to really make any progress toward those goals, progressives need to be more aggressive, America’s most entertaining populist said in Lincoln on March 4.

Jim Hightower, whose popular “Hightower Radio” commentary is heard at noon each weekday on Lincoln’s community radio station KZUM (89.3 FM), was the keynote speaker at “Peace-making Workshop XXVI”—sponsored by a coalition of churches and Nebraska organizations promoting peace and justice. His talk was entitled “America’s Leaders Are Small, But Americans Are Not: Turning Our Leaders’ Failure into Our Inspiration.”

“It makes me happier than a flea in a dog show to be standing up here looking out at all of you Lincoln peacemakers, liberators of people’s better spirits, you corporate dream-whackers… butt-kickers and agitators,” he told the crowd of 400 at Lincoln’s First United Methodist Church. It was part of a day filled with discussions and workshops around the theme of “Mind the Gap: Between the 99 and 1—the Growing Inequity between the Rich and Poor.”

Combining Will Rogers-style humor with a very sobering message, High-
continued on page 4
Nebraska Report
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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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PING PONG

The following guest editorial by UNL Associate Professor of Accountancy and NFP State Board Member Linda Ruchala appeared in the Tuesday, March 6, 2012 Lincoln Journal Star. The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Nebraska or the College of Business Administration.

A little more than 40 years ago, the rapprochement of China was begun by an unlikely person, President Richard Nixon, with an unlikely diplomatic activity—table tennis. In 1971, no one could have foreseen the level of economic interaction those matches would usher in.

Since then, however, a deadlier form of ping pong has evolved with Chinese and other international workers as the losers. The revelations of workers at China’s notorious Foxconn corporation being exposed to hazardous materials and extreme working conditions evokes images of the cruel debtor prisons from the early Industrial Revolution.

The current exposé includes accounts of the company erecting nets around the tops of their buildings to reduce the number of workers from attempting suicide, and a stalemate where more than 100 workers climbed to the top of a factory and threatened mass suicide unless their complaints were heard. Foxconn produces myriad electronic goods demanded by Western consumers, including iPads, iPhones, tablet computers and smartphones for companies like Apple, Dell and Sony.

Follow the ball as the match is on:

Ping! Consumers buying the goods named in the news reports express shock at the exploitation, claiming they had no idea.

Pong! Defending their conduct, the involved corporations blame the exploitation on their subcontractors. They want good working conditions, they insist, but subcontractors are ignoring their wishes.

Ping! Consumers helplessly assert they need the items for their work or school, and since all companies are operating in the same shady ways, more ethical options are not available.

Pong! Companies defer to the capitalist market, arguing that if consumers disapproved, they would not continue to buy products made with exploited labor. And, besides, these workers might be being exploited, but at least they have jobs.

This game has gone on for years with each party spinning their excuses and shifting the accountability for their actions to the other. Yet, somehow, people are shocked anew with each corporation that gets “outed” for human rights violations. Petitions get signed and corporations begin still another set of investigations of their subcontractors.

We must dare to call this game by its real name: administrative evil. Administrative evil occurs when the people who make products become faceless to buyers in the market. Their distance, their anonymity, depersonalizes them to consumers. Corporations and consumers are both complicit when the instrumental rationality of economic efficiency (read: ‘cheap prices’) overrules other decision criteria.

When the rationalizations are spun into a ‘moral inversion’ by claiming that providing substandard jobs is a benefit for the victims, administrative evil is well in place, covering up the real physical and emotional violence done to people.

These are the ‘inconvenient truths’ that we must acknowledge as human beings operating in a global marketplace.

First, morally we cannot subject humans living in other parts of the world to working conditions that are below the minimum health and safety standards that we set for our citizens in our country. Treating humans in other parts of the world as having fewer human rights or less intrinsic

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The Case of the Missing William Jennings Bryan Statue

by Steve Larrick

This is the untold history of the statue of William Jennings Bryan that was installed on the north steps of the Nebraska State Capitol in 1947 and unceremoniously removed from public prominence to Bryan’s “Fairview” home, at 4900 Sumner Street, shortly after April 4, 1967.

In 1940, 22 years after the ‘War to End All Wars’ and one year before America’s entry into the Second World War, people all across Nebraska began raising money to commission a statue of William Jennings Bryan to install at the entrance of the State Capitol as a public reminder of peace.

Bryan was a Christian champion of peace who opposed the U.S. invasions and occupations of Cuba and the Philippines in the Spanish-American War of 1898. His book Republic or Empire: The Philippine Question (1899) outlines the Ten Commandments we break with every imperial war.

Bryan resigned as U.S. Secretary of State under President Woodrow Wilson in 1915 after Wilson broke his promise of neutrality to side with the Allies in World War I. Bryan’s strategy to bring blustering European nations together to settle differences peacefully was cast to the wind and millions died.

In 1947, after millions more died in World War II, Nebraskans successfully installed Bryan’s statue on the north steps of the Capitol. The plan was to add a statue of General John Pershing at the State Historical Society on the north end of Capitol Mall to provide equal representation to war.

By 1967, the year of Nebraska’s Centennial, Bryan’s statue had stood on the north steps of the Capitol as a beacon of peace for 20 years. On the state’s official Centennial medallion, a sharp ray of sunlight shines down on that very spot. The inscription beneath the medallion’s Capitol scene reads:

“IN THIS BROAD EARTH OF OURS...ENCLOSED AND SAFE WITHIN ITS CENTRAL HEART NESTLES THE SEED PERFECTION.”

Then on April 4, 1967, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., gave his revelatory sermon “Beyond Vietnam” which clearly, powerfully, and passionately calls for peace and explains how the Vietnam War went against everything that is Christian and everything for which this country should stand.

On the very next day, Robert C. Newell, supervisor of state buildings and grounds, announced plans to remove the statue of Bryan, claiming in an April 6, 1967, article in the Lincoln Journal-Star that the Board of Trustees of Bryan Memorial Hospital had requested the statue be moved to Fairview.

But three days later, in a Journal-Star article dated April 9, 1967, Bryan Hospital representatives denied requesting the statue, saying that Newell had asked the trustees to write a letter requesting to have the statue moved to Fairview and they obliged.

By April 13, 1967, the Nebraska unicameral had voted 27-10 to remove Bryan’s statue. It appears that even some Democratic state senators dropped their steadfast defense of fellow Democrat Bryan in favor of their fellow Democratic President Lyndon Johnson’s war in Vietnam.

When Newell was asked in an April 16, 1967, Journal-Star article about his false public claim to have been asked by the Bryan Hospital trustees to move the statue, he explained vaguely that “an employee of the State Game Commission suggested, in an offhand way, that the statue ought to be moved.”

Actions to remove Bryan’s statue happened so quickly, the public had little chance to respond. But the April 16 article detailing Newell’s intentional public deception noted that, “The Nebraska Federation of Women’s Clubs has gone on record for retaining the statue on the State Capitol grounds.”

Efforts by State Senators Steve Fowler (1981) and Don Wesely (1991) to bring Bryan’s statue back to the Capitol were blocked by Attorney General Paul Douglas’ 1981 ruling that, “Since there appears to be no record of any objections to the removal of the statue to the Bryan Memorial Hospital grounds in 1967... the statue is the property of Bryan Memorial Hospital and cannot be removed therefrom without the consent of the Bryan Memorial Hospital Board of Directors.”

Knowing of Newell’s public deception regarding the removal and public abandonment of the Bryan statue, and clear evidence of objections by the statewide Federation of Women’s Clubs, an investigatory commission is needed to reveal the truth and restore public trust.

As if to highlight the need for such a commission, Dick Cavett, the famed writer and talk show host who grew up in Lincoln and went on to earn three “Emmy Awards,” recently confessed to conspiring with fellow teens to vandalize the Bryan statue on the eve of Memorial Day, 1953.

In his July 8, 2011 blog for the New York Times, entitled “I Owe William Jennings Bryan an Apology,” Cavett revealed that he with a few other bright but bored teenagers tossed buckets of white paint on the Bryan statue in the dark of night while a student at Lincoln High School.

Cavett admits that, “My knowledge [of Bryan] was limited to knowing there was a hospital named after him.” But he quickly adopted negative stereotypes of Bryan from his fellow teen conspirators and even today, 58 years later, is still unaware of the true peaceful purpose of the Bryan statue.

Cavett’s stated impression of the Bryan bronze was that it was “Not a statue of some mythical figure, or a sculptor’s rendering of some unnamed ‘God of Wisdom’ or ‘The Spirit of Law’ but—for mysterious reasons—William Jennings Bryan.”

We need to erase this mystery regarding the Bryan statue. Bryan is in fact a mythical figure in the history of Nebraska, America and the world. (An adherent of Leo Tolstoy’s philosophy of nonviolence, Bryan visited the author at his home in Russia.) Beyond his leadership for peace and justice, however, the Bryan statue at the State Capitol before its removal in 1967.
Hightower talked about how corporate money and power have co-opted the American Dream. “Our leaders have failed us. Americans are strong. We’ve got to tap into our own strength to build the kind of America we want rather than what they’re creating,” he said. “The Wall Street bankers who crashed our economy are back playing the same old casino games they were, getting million-dollar bonuses while the ‘crashees’—the victims of their narcissistic greed—are still getting pink slips and eviction notices.”

Hightower, who grew up on a farm in Texas, holds his dad’s political philosophy as a model for today’s activists: “Everybody does better when everybody does better.” But, he warned the audience, we’re getting away from that.

near Dennison, Texas, holds his dad’s political philosophy as a model for today’s activists. “My father didn’t know he had a political philosophy. He would have been embarrassed to have been told that he did,” Hightower said. Coming out of the “hardscrabble” Depression years, “My father had achieved success, but not with any feeling that he did that by himself. He knew there was this larger community that made all of this possible for him and everyone else. He used to tell me, ‘Jim, everybody does better when everybody does better.’ That’s as good a political philosophy as I’ve ever heard in my life—and we’re getting away from that.”

America has a long history of progressive movement toward economic and social reforms, culminating in today’s calls for a living wage, affordable health care and equal opportunities for all. But today’s “power elites are deliberately and aggressively supplanting this history of the historic ethic of the common good with the ethic of greed—saying I’ve got mine, you get yours,” he said. “Now we have senseless war-mongering around the globe, vicious class war here at home, the poisoning of our air and water [and] the intolerable idea that a corporation is a person and that corporate money is speech.”

Charity vs. a Living Wage

America’s leaders have let the American people down, he said, because “They’re as confused as goats on Astroturf” about what the nation’s goals and purposes ought to be. Many of the rich man noted that in 1924 he gave a nickel to a blind beggar, then again in 1944 he dropped a nickel in a Salvation Army kettle. “St. Peter said, ‘Give him back his 15 cents a tell him to go to hell.’”

“It’s not charity we want,” Hightower said. “What we want is economic fairness and social justice for all people.” America’s unemployment rate is dropping, but so are wages and purchasing power, Hightower noted. “Jobs are up, wages are down. Wages—that’s really the issue.”

Hightower chided former Texas Gov. Rick Perry (“the guy who really puts the ‘goober’ in gubernatorial”) for his campaign claim to have created 1 million jobs while governor of Texas. “What he didn’t tell you was they were jobs that paid very little—no pension or health care, no security whatsoever. In his ten years as governor, Texas created more minimum-wage jobs than all the other states combined. Now you’ve got [former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt] Romney, who was once slightly sane, but now he says he’s severely conservative. He says he’ll cut taxes on corporations to create jobs. The issue is not jobs. Slaves had jobs. The issue is wages.”

Hightower quoted this comment from a Texas waitress about Perry’s claim of creating 1 million jobs: “Yeah, I know—I’ve got three of them.”

“We’ve gone from Ronald Reagan’s trickle-down economics to the Koch Brothers’ tinkle-down in this country,” Hightower said. Charles and David Koch, billionaires who fund the Tea Party and other right-wing movements, have made a “vituperative all-out assault on union families,” he said. “Unions are destroying America, they shriek. Well, as we say in Texas, that’s so much bovine excrement.”

Hightower talked about the heroic landing of U.S. Airways flight 1549 in the Hudson River on Jan. 15, 2009 after geese flew into the engines. New York Governor David Paterson dubbed it the “miracle on the Hudson,” but what was lost in media reports was the fact that the pilot, flight attendants, ferry crew, firefighters and police who helped in the rescue were all members of unions. “It was a ‘union-made’ miracle on the Hudson,” Hightower said.

The crisis of leadership isn’t just a Republican problem, Hightower said. Congress has more than its share of “weak-kneed pusillanimous Democrats” who backed away from real (Single-Payer) health care reform, real job creation or any real attempt at “ending our economy’s addiction to war,” he said. “The Democrats are surrendering any kind of structural reform, surrendering any boldness and surrendering principle. That’s what’s killing us in Washington. We’re not standing up for what it is we actually believe in.”

“I’ve got a plan,” Hightower said with a grin. He promised to get the drug companies to come up with a new product, a type of Viagra “that would stiffen the backbones of the Democrats—for more than four hours at a time.”

Time To Get Aggressive

But Hightower sees the lack of leadership from the top as an opportunity for grass-roots progressive action. “It’s a big time for you and me. It’s one of those times when the focus is on the very ideals of America itself. What kind of country are we going to be? That’s very much up for grabs, today. It’s not a settled question. So my message is, it’s no longer enough for us to be progressive—we’ve been progressive for a long time. We’ve got to become aggressive again, because the powers that be have become radically regressive.”

He continued, “Today the one percent—the downsizers and privatizers and Goldman Sachs-ers, the Keystone Pipeliners, bankers, bosses, big-shots, bastards and BS’ers—feel entitled to run roughshod over the 99-ers. They think they’re the top dogs and we’re just a bunch of fire hydrants. We can wring our hands about this gap or we can join...
The Fierce Urgency of Now

by Paul A. Olson

When news of the scientific consensus about human-caused global warming first entered the public eye over 20 years ago, a group of us connected with the Center for Rural Affairs thought the Center should study the findings and the models to see what they said about the future of agriculture in Nebraska. We got a small grant to look at what was out there, and what we found was that the models provided no consensus as to what climate change would mean to the Plains—whether it would be warmer or colder, rainier or dryer. One thing, though, was certain. The weather would become more extreme. That forecasted weather scenario has now become the ‘new normal,’ with extreme drought in the southern Plains, out-of-control wildfires, unprecedented snowfalls and blizzards, flash floods, record river rises (like on our own Missouri), tornados in areas that never had them before, and larger hurricane systems. In 2011 alone, the U.S. experienced 14 weather disasters causing over a billion dollars in damage—six more than the previous record set in 2008.

Now we have a book about what this kind of extreme weather is doing to peace in the world. Though Nebraskans for Peace agrees with the Pentagon that global warming is real and an imminent threat to global security, we have not argued that it has already created war after war. But that’s the argument Christian Parenti makes in his new book.

The story begins with the killing of a Turkana tribesman in Kenya’s “Great Rift Valley” by a raiding member of a neighboring pastoral-nomadic tribe whose cattle herding business was destroyed by drought. Parenti says that the man was killed by climate change. In the Horn of Africa, he states, over half a million people have been forced away from pastoralism and into the cities by protracted drought, and 60 percent of the remainder need outside aid because their flocks are decimated. The destabilization of the area—including Somalia, Ethiopia, the Sudan, Kenya and Uganda—by the effects of global warming, stupid Marxist autocracies, the imposition of free-market dogmatism on social policy, and plain pig-headedness has often led to the disintegration of genuine government (i.e. institutions that provide law and order impartially in the common interest) to pseudo-governments made up of criminal elements claiming legitimacy. For example, 29 different entities now claim the mantle of government in Somalia and war endlessly with their rivals.

Parenti next turns to south-central Asia—the countries of Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and the internal rebellions within India. He shows how climate change and drought in Afghanistan in the 1970s upset the regime of King Zahir Shah, then of his usurper, then of the local Afghan Communists, and then of the invading Soviets. As Afghanistan’s mean annual temperature increased and both annual rainfall and the run-off from mountain snowpack that fueled Afghan agriculture decreased, production of wheat and other cereal grains dropped and reliance on the drought-tolerant opium poppy grew. The drug trade became the struggling nation’s primary economic engine and, simultaneously, source of contention. Drug warlords fractured the country into fiefdoms, fostering lawlessness and setting the stage for the rise of the Taliban—aided and abetted by the neighboring Pakistanis.

After the Taliban were ousted from power in 2001, they found refuge in Pakistan’s “Federally Administered Tribal Areas” just over the border, from where they now mastermind their return to power, funded in part by the very opium industry they once swore to destroy. Afghanistan’s weak central government, in response, has sought to ally itself with India, Pakistan’s historic enemy and nuclear rival, further destabilizing this already volatile region.

The stakes are so high and the consequences so tragic, it’s easy to lose sight of the fact that this entire chain reaction—from the environmental to the economic to the political and military—was set in motion by our burning of carbon fuels.

Neighboring Kyrgyzstan’s civil war arose from somewhat similar causes, only there drought produced an alarming deficit of hydroelectric power and a stupidly implemented liberalization of the economy produced a deindustrialization of the country and huge dependence of imported foreign goods that left the country utterly impoverished. Civil war resulted.

In the Pakistan/India area, Parenti does a good job of showing how parallel drought and monsoon cycles in region have contributed to the escalating militarization of the two countries and how Pakistan’s fear of Indian/Kashmiri control of the Ganges—so that it dries out the conclusion on page 9
How do fossil fuels keep a leash on our political system? Let’s have some fun with numbers, and count the ways. Just follow the money.

I read a lot of newspapers, and sometimes the advertising is more instructive than the news. Every time the debate over the Keystone XL Pipeline has taken a twist or a turn, for example, I’m sure I’ll open the daily paper and sometimes the advertising is instructive than the news. And sometimes the advertising is more instructive than the news. Every time the debate over the Keystone XL Pipeline has taken a twist or a turn, for example, I’m sure I’ll open the daily paper (Omaha World-Herald in our case) to a full-page color portrait of a Nebraskan in a hardhat telling me that TransCanada wants to shower us with thousands of new jobs. If it’s a major twist or turn, I’ll see the same pieces of propaganda that TransCanada wants to shower us with thousands of new jobs. If it’s a major twist or turn, I’ll see the same pieces of propaganda in the New York Times, USA Today, and elsewhere—sometimes from TransCanada, but just as often under the sponsorship of the United States Chamber of Commerce, which has never met a carbon molecule it didn’t like.

I get the same messages from the people of the oil and gas industry’ on the network evening news every night, so often that my wife hits the ‘mute’ button as soon as it appears.

You know the fossil fuel business has got to be profitable (even if Apple Computer recently passed up Exxon-Mobil as the world’s most valuable corporation, based on stock-market capitalization). Just look at how these companies pass the money around to influence the course of opinion and legislation.

Thirty-second spots in the three broadcast network evening news shows run anywhere from $23,000 to $45,000. The higher number is just about Mitt Romney’s standard speaking fee, or an average worker’s wage for a year. A full-page color advertisement in the New York Times runs $35,000 to $40,000, and the same amount of space in the World-Herald costs $11,000 (daily) to $13,400 (Sunday).

Plenty of Profits

There’s plenty of profit left over to help local politicians. Our soon-to-be ex-Senator Ben Nelson, the only Democrat in Nebraska’s Congressional delegation, has taken in $456,049 since 1999 in contributions from fossil-fuel companies, according to OpenSecrets.org. According to the same website, he also has sided with these companies on 75 percent of selected votes, such as such as one forbidding the Environmental Protection Agency to include climate change as a factor in its assessments.

Senator Nelson’s largest dirty-energy benefactor has been Berkshire Hathaway (which is included here because it owns one of the U.S.’s two largest coal-hauling railroads) at $54,600. He also received $18,000 from Exxon Mobil, $15,500 from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and $11,250 from Koch Industries. To be fair to Nelson, this is hardly even wishing-well money for the Koch brothers. No one can be considered even modestly bought by them for anything under six figures.

Rep. Jeff Fortenberry has pulled in a relatively meager $68,729 from ‘dirty energy,’ with $22,800 of it coming from Berkshire Hathaway. The rest of his contributions are in the four figures—chicken scratch in this league. He also votes with the fossil-fuel lobby 64 percent of the time.

Mike Johanns, who is just getting started, has received $117,600, earned by voting with dirty energy 100 percent. Even so, he is barely off his training wheels, with $14,800 from the Omaha-based Tenaska Energy, Inc., $11,000 from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (a coal-combustion lobby), and $8,000 from Exxon-Mobil leading the list.

Rep. Lee Terry has been working on his dirty-energy credentials for many years, and has brought in just shy of $393,000—$61,428 from Berkshire, almost $40,000 from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, and $28,500 from Exxon-Mobil leading the way. He also votes with dirty energy 100 percent.

The Really Big League

As much as our local crew has received, they are all minor leaguers compared to the really big money, which goes mainly to Republicans in oil country. Texas Republican Senator John Cornyn’s campaigns have booked $2,069,035 from engaging in fossil-fuelery, while Rep. Joe Barton, another Texas Republican, BP apologist, and global warming denier (who also called President Obama a “liar”), has brought home $1,914,183. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell has no oil in his Kentucky district, but he has considerable grease in the Senate, with $1,527,858 from fossil fuel interests. Republican Senator James Inhofe, the loudest global-warming denier in the history of the U.S. Senate, has received $1,287,950 to help him retain his Oklahoma seat.

Perhaps in 50 or 100 years, when glaciers are melting at break-neck speed and the ocean is lapping at coastal cities, a plaque in the ‘Greenhouse Gas Museum’ may take note at our political system—run, as it is, on money devoted to preserving the fossil fuel status quo, but nearly bereft of any common purpose aimed at preserving a sustainable habitat for future generations. By the time that crops go sterile in the summer heat, someone may remark that even a likable guy like Warren Buffett—so progressive in some contexts—could have been enslaved to the culture of short-term convenience, with a massive blind spot about what the combustion of coal does to our atmosphere and, ultimately, our lives.
What Kind of World Are We Leaving Our Kids and Grandkids?

A Clean Energy Vision for Nebraska’s Public Power System

by Duane Hovorka, Executive Director
Nebraska Wildlife Federation

It is a question that haunts every generation.

Are we making things a little better for those who follow?

Are we leaving this world a little better than we found it?

Nebraskans will make some important choices about our state’s energy future over the next year—choices that will reverberate for decades to come. Our major electric utilities face the need to bring coal-fired power plants that were built 30, 40 and even 50 years ago up to modern pollution-control standards, or to find cost-effective alternatives that will allow them to be gracefully closed.

Will we have the foresight and courage to embrace a clean energy future—one that will deliver cleaner air, healthier people, jobs in rural Nebraska and a brighter future for our descendants?

Or will we stubbornly cling to dirty, 19th-century energy technology, passing on the tab for deaths, illness, lost jobs and climate change to our kids and their children?

Those who repeat the tired phrase that ‘renewables aren’t ready’ have missed—or chosen to ignore—the tremendous progress in wind and solar energy, and the potential for distributed energy and energy storage. They might be forgetting that the cost of coal delivered to Nebraska utilities has more than doubled since 2005, a period of relatively low inflation.

Meanwhile, the cost of solar photovoltaic has dropped by half since 1995, and will continue to drop as technology improves and manufacturers scale up their production.

The cost of wind energy has dropped as well, as manufacturers have made wind turbines bigger, lighter and stronger, with half the parts and lessened maintenance.

In their new book, Reinventing Fire: Bold Business Solutions for the New Energy Era, Amory Lovins and the staff of the Rocky Mountain Institute in Snowmass, Colorado, have sketched out a tantalizing vision for an America transformed in just four decades:

Will we have the foresight and courage to embrace a clean energy future—one that will deliver cleaner air, healthier people, jobs in rural Nebraska and a brighter future for our descendants…


Part of that transformation could come in the way we produce and use electricity. Lovins’ book lays out four potential futures:

• A business as usual future that continues to rely on coal and nuclear energy,
• A future that would replace old coal-fired power-plants with new high-tech nuclear and coal-power plants,
• A future focused on tapping the wind, sun and other renewable resources, and
• A fourth that transforms how we pro-

Let’s Invest Our Public Power Dollars

In Clean Nebraska Wind—NOT Dirty Wyoming Coal

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duce and use electricity by focusing on energy efficiency and renewable energy produced where and when it is needed.

The book’s most innovative—and optimistic—scenario would rely on cost-effective energy efficiency strategies to reduce our electricity use in buildings and industries. Even allowing for a substantial shift to electric vehicles and economic growth, the ‘Transform’ scenario strategies would keep demand for electricity about flat over the next 40 years.

Coal-fired power plants would be retired, replaced by a mix of new wind, solar photovoltaic, and other renewable energy—using both utility-scale technologies and on-site production through solar water-heating, small-scale wind, solar photovoltaic on houses and businesses, and industries that produce both electricity and heat with the same high-efficiency equipment.

By 2050, none of our electricity would come from coal, oil or nuclear, and less would come from natural gas than today. Over 85 percent of our electricity would come from solar, wind and hydro-electric energy.

And the Cost?

The Rocky Mountain Institute’s in-depth analysis shows that the estimated difference in costs to energy users of the four scenarios varies by just 12 percent. A renewable future would actually cost less than a coal-heavy business-as-usual scenario, and the cost to totally transform our electricity sector is within a couple percentage points.

The Benefits? Priceless.

Lovins’ book does not try to quantify the legion of benefits from a clean-energy future, but a short list would include less heart disease, fewer cases of asthma, less mercury in our fish (and our children), less climate change, no need to remove mountaintops or destroy vast tracts of land to mine coal, less radioactive waste, less demand for water, less fracking to obtain natural gas deposits, and an electric system just as reliable day to day and more resilient to major problems in the electric grid.

The additional up-front cost to build wind farms and install solar systems would be offset by the substantial reduction in fuel costs.

...Or will we stubbornly cling to dirty, 19th-century energy technology, passing on the tab for deaths, illness, lost jobs and climate change to our kids and their children?

For Nebraska, the transformation in energy production and use would also transform and strengthen our economy—especially in our rural areas.

Instead of spending hundreds of millions of dollars every year to other states to buy coal and natural gas (and to other countries to buy uranium), home-grown wind energy would meet the vast majority of Nebraska’s needs.

With our state’s strong wind resources, Nebraska would be exporting energy to other states in the region. With smart planning, that wind development could occur in the many areas of the state where wind farms won’t disturb key wildlife migration routes. The result of that investment would strengthen rural communities for decades.

Super-efficient houses and commercial buildings would sharply reduce the energy needed to heat, cool, and light them. Existing technology would coordinate and cycle big-energy users like air conditioners, furnaces and hot-water heaters—just as many rural electric utilities now schedule irrigation pumps to balance demand.

Consumers would scarcely notice the subtle changes: except in the savings to all on their electric bills. Both energy efficiency and demand management would keep more dollars from our electric bill in every Nebraska community.

Electric vehicles would sharply reduce air pollution in our cities—and, when parked at work or home, vehicle batteries would store and release electricity to balance supply and demand. Energy would be stored by pumping compressed air into caverns underground, and pumping water uphill to reservoirs when renewable energy is in surplus, so it can drop through high-efficiency turbines when needed most.

Natural gas would be used when needed to fill in gaps and maintain a reliable system.

While Nebraska’s wind potential is well-known, much less well-known is that Nebraska has solar energy resources that are on par with Texas. Direct solar energy can heat water and homes, while solar photovoltaic performs best in the middle of those hot, sunny summer days when our electric use now peaks. With the cost of solar energy continuing to drop rapidly, the opportunity for Nebraskans to capitalize on our solar energy potential is becoming clearer every day.

It is a vision of Nebraska self-reliant in energy:

A vision of a Nebraska with healthier people and a healthier environment.

A vision of a Nebraska where our poorest residents are no longer paying some of our state’s highest energy bills, and where their neighborhoods have been transformed by new investment and new jobs.

A vision of Nebraska where energy efficiency, wind and solar energy have brought billions of dollars in new investment and new prosperity to our rural communities.

It is a vision tailor-made for a state like Nebraska where timeless values like thrift, self-reliance, innovation, cooperation, and helping your community are still bedrock principles.

What could be more Nebraskan than using as little energy as you need to get a job done?

...than producing energy in our own communities instead of importing it from afar?

... than harnessing our state’s vast natural resources like the sun and wind?

... than working cooperatively to invest in our communities, and to make things better for those most hurt by the ravages of asthma and heart disease from air pollution?

It is a future Nebraska worth leaving to our kids and grandkids and future generations.

It is a future we can achieve—if we have the courage to embrace it.

Unfortunately, we don’t have the luxury of waiting for it to come to us. The decisions being made by our state’s electric utilities in the coming months (on behalf of all of us) will set us on a course that will be difficult to change.

Those choices can set us on course towards a prosperous, healthy, clean energy future—or leave us saddled with huge investments in the technology of yesterday.

If you care about those choices, you cannot afford to be a spectator. Speak up. Speak out. Write your electric utility, your newspaper, your state senator. Get involved.
On War and Climate Change, conclusion

William Jennings Bryan

Bryan’s mythical status is solidified by his being the likely inspiration for Frank Baum’s *Wizard of Oz* story in 1900. As revealed by historian Henry Littlefield in 1964, the “Land of Oz” (short for ounce) is a populist allegory for Bryan’s 1896 presidential campaign. His economic reforms sought to expand the gold standard (the “Yellow Brick Road”) to include silver (the color of Dorothy’s slippers in Baum’s original). The “Wicked Witch of the East” represents Wall Street “banksters” crushed by unpaid home mortgages in the economic collapse of 1894. “Scarecrow” represents rural farmers, “Tin Man” represents urban industrial workers, and the “Lion” is Bryan—the roaring leader of the Populist Movement to the “Emerald City” (i.e. Washington, D.C.).

Political cartoonists of his day featured Bryan’s face on a lion’s body and labeled him “Bryan the Lion of the Populist Movement.” Next time you visit Bryan’s Fairview home, notice that all the backs of the dining room chairs feature carved lions’ heads.

Baum portrays Bryan as “cowardly” because he opposed the Spanish-American War of 1898. But Bryan opposed the war not out of cowardice, but as a devout Christian. Standing up for peace and truth takes great courage. As Bryan reminded us in one of his famed speeches, Jesus was the “Prince of Peace,” not the “Prince of War.”

Remembering the run-up to the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, Secretary of State Colin Powell briefly spoke the truth that conflict with Iraq could be solved diplomatically. Powell was immediately branded by the corporate media as a coward, so he nervously backed away from the truth and joined the charge toward a senseless, unjust and illegal war in Iraq.

Getting back to the Oz story, “Dorothy” represents the common people. Lincoln’s own statue of “Dorothy and Toto” was installed in Cooper Park at 8th and E Streets, in the year 2000—the centennial of Baum’s publication of *The Wizard of Oz*.

Speaking as one who has personally cleaned up two paint spills on our Dorothy statue since 2000, I am happy to forgive Cavett’s high school paint prank. But I cannot forgive and accept the underhanded removal of our Bryan statue and the whitewash of history. We, the people, deserve better.

Meanwhile, efforts to rewrite history and mislead us into more wars continue. In an April 30, 2006, article about Bryan in the *Omaha World-Herald*, Harold W. Andersen, publisher of the *World-Herald* from 1966 to 1989, wrote, “Located [at Fairview] is a bronze statue of The Great Commoner, placed at Fairview after an unsuccessful effort by some Nebraskans more than half a century ago to have it placed below the steps on the north side of the State Capitol building.”

We now know that Bryan’s statue was successfully “placed below the steps on the north side of the State Capitol building.” On this 45th anniversary of its improper removal (and as we prepare to renovate the Capitol Mall), it is time an investigatory commission set the record straight about how Nebraskans honored Bryan’s peace legacy from 1947 to 1967—and then act to restore this statue to its rightful public prominence.

*breadbasket of Southern Pakistan*—dominates Pakistani thinking about military action against India. To counter India’s strength in the Kashmir and keep it off balance, Pakistan has, through its Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), supported the Taliban penetration into Afghanistan, the vale of Kashmir, and Afghan and Indian cities, all to keep India off balance and unable to shut off Pakistan’s water. A final Asian chapter shows how monsoon variability and drought have sparked civil war in India and produced inefficient industrialized farming and dumb neo-liberal reforms.

Roughly the same interplay of effects from climate change, Cold War leftovers, and neo-liberal pseudo-reforms have brought drought to Brazil’s northeast and mass immigration to Rio’s slums where the police now war on the people in the name of law and order. Again, similar practices (in conjunction with the neoliberal NAFTA agreement) have created massive unemployment and uprooting among the traditional ejido farmers of Mexico and driven them into the cities and drug trade, where they and the army and police fight an endless war over the control of illegal drugs that flow into the U.S. along with waves of needy immigrants.

The Pentagon’s studies of global warming predicted that what would emerge from global warming would be ‘fortress states.’ These already seem to be emerging as Europe and the U.S. seek to stem the tide of immigrants seeking refuge.

Obviously these kinds of wars are new. They are not nation-state wars, but small scale, chaotic, random—the product of failed states and desperate economic conditions, and we do not know how to fight them. The best solution, as Parenti argues, is to stop warming the planet by mandating carbon emissions standards like those envisaged in the Kyoto Protocols, practicing large-scale reforestation as is being done in the African nation of Burkina Faso, ramping up clean renewable energy generation and enacting legislation that encourages reduced consumption and greener lifestyles. The solution also involves green resistance at the local level like we’ve seen with the TransCanada Pipeline and our sister organization, 350.org. Sometimes it may involve stronger measures like the strikes in Bolivia that brought the fossil fuels industry under social and governmental control. Even a serious enforcement of the “Clean Air Act” would do a lot of good.

Parenti believe that humankind has a future. We can change things as Europe and the U.S. in the 19th century got on top of epidemic diseases in their cities by implementing public health measures. But we must act now. If we don’t, we face, in his view, an endless war—and one that no one can win.

Remember that Nebraska is in the semi-arid Great Plains, an area where climate change and extreme weather events are most likely to happen. If they do (as they already have in Africa, Asia, and Central and South America), we stand to lose more than ever we could gain from all of the wars that StratCom—on behalf of our fortress state—can contrive and execute.
Get Aggressive, conclusion

hands, and join our heads and our hearts, as you are doing, to find ways to close that gap,” he told those attending the afternoon of workshops. 

The day-long event included a session led by Paul Olson of Nebraskans for Peace on how to testify before the Legislature on bills impacting lower-income and minority Nebraskans. Leaders of organizations like the Center for People in Need, Good Neighbor Center, Nebraska Advocacy Services, Clinic with a Heart, Community CROPS, Lincoln Literacy Council and NeighborWorks Lincoln (only a partial list) led sessions on how they’re working to bridge the gap between rich and poor. In another session, participants tied fleece blankets for the “Linus Project,” for hospitals, homeless shelters and social service agencies helping children and families. At the conclusion of the workshop, Peacemaking Committee chair Martha Gadberry asked all participants to contact their elected representatives at all levels on issues of poverty.

In his talk, Hightower zeroed in on the failure of the Obama Administration to achieve the real economic changes he promised when elected in 2008. Obama tried to corral Wall Street through regulations, but “corporations are experts at having whole floors of lawyers to get around regulations,” he said. “Cynics said [structural change] can’t be done—the social divide is too wide, the corporate order is too entrenched.” But he quoted a pioneer in the organic movement who said, “Those who say it can’t be done should not interrupt those who are doing it.”

He praised Nebraskans for standing up to TransCanada, the Canadian company seeking to build the Keystone XL Pipeline across the Sandhills. “You stood up and they had to leave. You brought farmers and ranchers together, with environmentalists, with property owners, with Occupy activists and just plain folks, to put people power over corporate whim. Your stand excited and emboldened people all across this country.”

“The powers that be try to make the word ‘agitators’ a pejorative term. But ‘agitation’ is what America’s all about,” he said. “We can make big changes. Our challenge is to go right to the ‘powers that be’ on behalf of the ‘powers that ought to be’—ordinary, workaday stiffs.

“It’s no longer enough for us to be progressive—we’ve been progressive for a long time. We’ve got to become aggressive again, because the powers that be have become radically regressive.”

– Jim Hightower

Not to take America back, as the Tea Party says, but to move America forward: move toward that egalitarian possibility that has been the vision of America.” He added, “An agitator is the center post in a washing machine that gets the dirt out.”

Hightower is encouraged by the Occupy Movement. It’s being evicted from camp sites but isn’t going away, he said. “The idea is so powerful and the truth is so important about that divide (between the 99 and 1). One role of the Occupy movement in the current election year, he said, is to demand that every candidate talk about the U.S. Supreme Court decision that opened up unlimited political spending by corporations through ‘Super PACS.’

The biggest problem in America, he said, “is too much money at the top. There’s an old saying about manure—it only works if you spread it out.” Instead of concentrating money in banks that were deemed too big to fail, that money should be spread to local banks and credit unions that can help ordinary Americans.

Asked what can be done to prevent war with Iran, Hightower said, “We’ve just gotta say no. We’re spending billions a week on the war in Afghanistan, then Congress says we don’t have money for health care. We can’t have health care for everybody. Spain can; Japan can, but we can’t. We can’t go to the moon. Hell, we can’t fix the potholes in our roads. It’s pathetic. America’s greatness was built on bold projects. The Interstate Highway system put millions of people to work, good wages. So did the WPA and the New Deal. Green jobs—Obama talks about it, but we need to push him hard and say that’s what we want.”

After his talk, Hightower signed copies of his latest book, Swim Against the Current: Even a Dead Fish Can Go With the Flow. He was Texas state Agriculture Commissioner from 1983-91, promoting organic production, alternative crops and direct marketing by farmers. He endorsed Jesse Jackson for president in 1988 and was co-chair of Ralph Nader’s presidential campaign in 2000. He criticized both President Clinton and Vice-President Al Gore for backing away from populist Democratic principles. Today his columns appear in 75 weekly newspapers nationwide and his radio program is carried by more than 130 stations. His monthly newsletter “The Hightower Lowdown” has more than 125,000 subscribers. For more information about Hightower, visit: www.jimhightower.com.

Members of the “Peacemaking Workshop Planning Committee” include representatives of Nebraskans for Peace, the Manna and Mercy Center for Faith in Public Life, Amnesty International, Prairie Peace Park, Bread for the World, Union College, Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska, the United Church of Christ, United Methodist Church, First Mennonite Church, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and Cotner College (Disciples of Christ).
Pong Pong
Capitalism, conclusion

worth than we have is abhorrent.

Second, corporations are designed to have one purpose: maximizing profitability. Corporations are not persons: they do not have a conscience. They have only the need for quarterly profits that increase period after period.

Third, capitalism requires that buyers have full information about their choices in the market, and make choices that incorporate that information. A lack of knowledge of the working conditions, or the environmental effects of the products purchased, is not a defense for the purchase of unethical or hazardingly produced products. The international outsourcing of products to take advantage of poor work conditions is, by now, so common that claiming a lack of knowledge is disingenuous.

Fourth, excuses like “all products are being made this way” or “there are no other purchase options” are not valid excuses in a “free” market. Purchasing an unethically made product without demanding other options still is purchasing a product that supports unethical behavior.

Administrative evil is no game. If capitalism is ever to begin providing ethical, environmental and sustainable choices, it will be because those buying the products punish poor corporate behavior by boycotts, paying more for products produced responsibly, and supporting regulatory action (such as product safety laws, minimum wage laws and environmental laws for imported products).

Adults in a consumer society are morally responsible for their consumption. An advanced economy has no excuse for using exploited labor. Game over.
GOOD NEWS – we now have $500,000 in our permanent Endowment Fund. Income from this Endowment Fund goes to support the educational work of Nebraskans for Peace. We have reached this high mark by the very generous donations of several individuals and by bequests from the estates of two long-time NFP supporters.

National statistics show that fewer than one third have a will that is up-to-date and binding. Now is the time to check on your will, bring it up-to-date and also consider naming the Nebraska Peace Foundation one of the beneficiaries if not the only beneficiary. This is your opportunity to keep peace work going long into the future. Remember peace work in your will!

When William Jennings Bryan visited Tolstoy in 1903 to learn about the philosophy of nonviolent resistance from the prophet himself, he asked the great man whether using force to stop an armed man from shooting an innocent child in cold blood would not be in order. Tolstoy replied that he did not believe that such a man existed. On reflection, Bryan agreed.

I have just been listening to an NPR broadcast about an apartment massacre in Homs, Syria, where Alawite Shiite fighters killed a Sunni family—including its children—in cold blood. Apparently such a man does exist. And his existence raises the issue of what we are to say to our leaders and to the world about Syria. The relatively successful and largely nonviolent ‘Arab Spring’ in Tunisia and Egypt, and the less nonviolent and less successful ‘Springs’ in Libya, Yemen and Bahrain, have given way to what appear to be endless massacres in Syria.

International efforts to stop the slaughter have been paralyzed by Russian and Chinese vetoes in the UN Security Council—meaning the Syrian people can expect no help from that quarter. For us to in turn oppose unilateral action by the U.S. and others, however, because of the West’s colonial past and our own country’s record of oppression in the region is, I think, a dodge. In the face of such violence, we have to act credibly and decisively. And it is important that we understand that we stand on the brink of a great war in which the ‘such a man’ of Tolstoy’s story is not only alive, but flourishing. The peace movement, accordingly, faces a divide.

There is of course a geopolitical history behind Syria’s brutality: the Ottoman occupation, Lawrence of Arabia’s liberation work with the Arab tribes, the brutal French occupation after World War I, the union of all religious elements in Syria that partially liberated the country in the 1930s and achieved full liberation in 1943 when a Nazi-allied Vichy France could no longer exert control from afar. The period following liberation saw the rise of Hafez al-Assad and a Stalinist-style Baath Party allied with Saddam Hussein, the termination of this alliance, and the growth of Assad’s Baathism as a one-party state that relied on the ‘Alawite’ patronage network that the dictatorship controlled.

The Alawite religious core of the Baath-Assad party (nominally Shiite in persuasion and sympathetic to Iran) includes only one and a half to two million of the over 20 million Syrian people. This tiny religious minority, led by Bashar al-Assad, maintains a brutal rule over the dominant Sunni Moslem population. Complicating matters even more is the fact that many Moslems do not even regard the Alawite religion as Islamic, being as it is a composite of Islamic Shiite, Ismaeli and Christian doctrines. The Alawite minority, however, views itself as Shiite, and the Shiite republic of Iran has formed a close relationship with Syria, similar to its relationship with the Shiite-led government of Iraq. From Iranian and Syrian sources, the Shia-oriented forces of Hamas and Hezbollah receive the weapons they use to destabilize the frontiers of Israel from their bases in Lebanon and the Gaza strip. Thus, a ‘Triple Entente’ of a Shiite Iran-Iraq-Syria fighting against a U.S. proxy (Israel) has emerged from the Iraq War as a serious military threat to regional stability that will not abate until Palestine and Israel come to terms.

But this Mideast ‘Triple Entente’ has the support of another far more powerful international Triple Entente—the alliance composed of China, Russia and Iran, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and UN ambassador Susan Rice appeared outraged in the UN at Sino-Russian failure to condemn Assad and the massacres in Syria. Mitt Romney, Newt Gingrich and John McCain urge us to go to war either overtly or covertly through proxies to change the games in Syria and Iran. What they do not say is that such a war would be devastating to everyone—World War III.

As the consequence of a series of strategic visits between the Russian, Chinese and Iranian military and civilian figures, the three countries have formed a strategic and economic alliance, initially directed against the StratCom-controlled U.S. missile shield proposed for Eastern Europe. But the alliance is ultimately directed against any Israeli-U.S. attack on Iran, against possible U.S. efforts to control the flow of petroleum from the joint Russo-Iranian Caspian petroleum