The 100th Anniversary of World War I
Will that horrible and senseless war be exploited for political gain, or for peace?

by Hank Van den Berg
UNL Professor of Economics

Early November of this year, President François Hollande of France laid a wreath at the flame of the Unknown Soldier next to the Arc de Triomphe in Paris to honor French soldiers who died in World War I. With this event, Hollande officially initiated what will be five years of commemorative events for the 100th anniversary of World War I.

There was some criticism of the early launch of the four years of celebrations. After all, World War I did not begin until 1914. The Austro-Hungarian Empire declared war on Serbia on July 28, 1914—a month after the June 28 assassination of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, the Arch Duke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophia—by Serb terrorists. A maze of treaties and alliances brought Germany into the war on the Austro-Hungarian Empire’s side, at which point France, Britain and Russia felt obligated to honor their alliance agreements and come to the support of Serbia. One hundred years ago, in 1913, there was no sign of impending war, however. Yet, a year early, Socialist President Hollande has launched the 100th anniversary of World War I—an action that is all the more ironic in that the founder of the modern socialist party in France, Jean Jaurés, was an ardent anti-militarist who was assassinated because of his efforts to avert war between France and Germany.

Some in the French media suggested that Hollande was trying to overcome his very low approval rating (in the low teens in some polls) by appealing to patriotism and the glory of past wars. Hollande’s shallow attempt to rally the French may be a miscalculation on his part, however, because there is little sentiment in France for glorifying what has come to be seen as a bitter and deadly war that created more problems than it solved. The obvious sign of France’s disinterest in World War I is the fact that there are so few historical World War I sites maintained in France. There could be many, since the entire war was mostly fought on French territory. Interestingly, Hollande was booed after the commemoration at the Arc de Triomphe—something the French very seldom do at such events.

Part of the unpopularity of World War I is that historians still grapple with its cause. Was it pure nationalism? A clash of empires with no more room to expand? Or, was it the economic rivalry between Germany, France and Britain that turned an assassination into a world war? In 1914, Germany was exporting a great variety of manufactures, while British industry was losing its edge in global markets and France found itself behind Germany in terms of

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French Socialist President François Hollande

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The 100th Anniversary of World War I, conclusion

By Christmas of 1914, the war was settling into a virtual stalemate, with the Western front stretching from the North Sea in Belgium to the French-Swiss border in Alsace. The death toll had been much, much higher than anyone had imagined, and the youthful soldiers were exhausted and bogged down in cold, wet trenches. They were subject to occasional artillery barrages, and they lived in fear of instructions from their commanders to enter ‘no-man’s land,’ at great danger of death, in order to push the opposing trenches back a few hundred meters.

It is well known that on December 25, near the Belgian town of Ypres, French and British troops found themselves listening to German troops singing “Stille Nacht” across no man’s land. Those who dared to look over the edge of their trenches saw several Christmas trees along the German trench off in the distance. Then, suddenly, they saw German soldiers climbing out of their trenches, with a white flag, walking, unarmed, towards the middle of the no man’s land. Then they heard calls, in broken French, for the French and British troops to come out to meet them. The French and British could have shot the Germans, but instead, they too climbed out of their trenches, unarmed, and walked towards the middle of the no man’s zone. They quickly broke out in smiles and, soon, laughter. They exchanged simple gifts, liquor, chocolate, whatever they had with them, and they talked. At this specific location near Ypres, the Germans counted
among their troops a professional opera singer, who quickly captured everyone’s attention. He was applauded so enthusiastically that he had to sing over and over until everyone from both camps was satiated with Christmas music. Eventually, the troops returned to their trenches, resigned to the continuation of the war.

Apparently similar events occurred elsewhere along the lines, and they continued into January. The commanders on both sides were desperate to stop these “fraternizations,” and they tried to squelch all news of them. Photos and accounts escaped back home, however. British newspapers, such as the Daily Mirror of London, ran pictures and stories on the various spontaneous “fraternizations” during Christmas 1914 and subsequent weeks. The German press also ran articles. The photo to the left shows a meeting between British and German troops in early January 1915. No one was executed for participating, largely because so many troops—some say thousands—took part. But, some of the rebellious troops were sent home, and commanders started shelling the no man’s land when such meetings took place. The fraternizations soon stopped.

Joyeux Noël

Christian Carion, the French director of the 2005 film on the Christmas event in Ypres, Joyeux Noël, notes in a November 10, 2013 op-ed in Le Monde that no French newspapers had reported the events. He was intrigued by this silence in the French press, which led to his doing the film. After his film came out, he was challenged by French critics to provide proof that the events occurred. His film was based on rather meager evidence that he was able to extract from uncooperative French military archivists. After the film, however, he found more cooperation, and the added information has shown that not only did the event in Ypres definitely occur as he had reenacted it in his film, but there had been many and frequent fraternizations up and down the lines.

Carion even found files from the French secret service that showed that that agency had sent informants to investigate the fraternizations in order to “try to understand why such events had taken place.” The reports filed by the secret service were a treasure trove of information, as they were very thorough and precise. Included in the information was a copy of a note passed by Germans to the French line, advising the French soldiers that there would be a Colonel inspecting the German lines and that the German soldiers would be commanded to fire on the French lines about 14:00 hours: “Better keep your heads down at that time.” The note continued: “But this should not get in the way of our meeting planned for 17:00.” The note was signed: “Affectionately, your German comrades.”

Monument to Fraternization

Carion also found an emotional letter by a soldier named Louis Barthas, a corporal in the French army. He was stationed in a trench near Arras, in Northern France, and wrote home after the fraternizations around Christmas, 1914: “The common suffering brings hearts closer, reduces the hatred, nurtures sympathy between different people, even enemies. Those who deny that do not understand human psychology. French and Germans look at each other, and they see that they are the same people.” Barthas then goes on in his letter to write: “Perhaps one day in this corner of Artois (the province where Arras is located) they will raise a monument to commemorate this example of fraternity among men who face the horror of war and are obligated to kill against their will.”

Carion has begun a campaign to construct just such a monument. He hopes the first stone can be placed on Christmas Day, 2014. Now that would be a worthy commemoration for President Hollande and the rest of the world’s leaders who are tempted to use the vague memories of that senseless slaughter for their political advantage.

Other references to the Christmas “fraternizations”:

The video for the song “Pipes of Peace” by Paul McCartney depicts a fictionalized version of the Christmas Truce. The song was released in 1983.

John McCutcheon’s song “Christmas in the Trenches” from his 1984 album “Winter Solstice” presents a composite account of attested events of the truce from the perspective of a fictitious English soldier. (Mike Harding’s song “Christmas 1914” from his 1989 album “Plutonium Alley” and Garth Brooks’ song “Belleau Wood” from his 1997 album “Sevens” contain similar depictions of the truce.)

The truce is dramatized in the 2005 French film Joyeux Noël (English: Merry Christmas), depicted through the eyes of French, Scottish and German soldiers. The film, written and directed by Christian Carion, was screened at the 2005 Cannes Film Festival.

In 2011, the British Premier Football League established the “Christmas Truce Tournament” in 2011—a football tournament for youth players from England, Belgium, France and Germany. The tournament will be played annually until at least 2014, the centennial anniversary of the original Christmas truce.

Silent Night, an opera based on Joyeux Noël, received the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 2012.

The 1960’s hit “Snoopy’s Christmas” by The Royal Guardsmen, which is still a holiday favorite on some American radio ‘oldies’ stations and on many radio stations in New Zealand, depicts Snoopy and the Red Baron, Snoopy’s in-universe archenemy, taking part in the Christmas Truce of 1914 somewhere behind the Rhine in German territory. The song depicts the Baron—who was a German war hero—as being the one to initiate the friendly contact once the pair had landed. The two part ways amicably, knowing they are destined to meet in combat again eventually.
The NSA Is Only the Tip of the Iceberg

THE TOTAL SECURITY STATE

by Loring Wirbel
Citizens for Peace in Space

Rumors have circulated for many years, long before the June 2013 Edward Snowden revelations, that the National Security Agency was capable of intercepting literally all electronic communications on the planet. The rumors gained substance in early October, when the BBC reported that the NSA tried bringing up its massive new storage facility in Bluffdale, Utah, and ended up browning out two power plants that serve the greater Salt Lake City area. At press time, NSA’s Bluffdale facility still had not gone online—foiled by its own massive mission to collect anything of interest going on with allies and adversaries alike.

The only people that seem to have missed the memo that the NSA covers the planet, are the leaders of leading allied nations, including Germany, Spain, Mexico, Greece and Brazil, who all took turns over the course of the summer and early fall expressing shock that the NSA was really probing their cell-phone calls, email addresses and private meetings. Some of this shock has a theatrical spin, for two reasons: proof of the NSA intercepting critical international meetings has been leaked for decades; and every nation has its own ‘signals-intelligence’ (SIGINT) agency that attempts to do the same things the NSA does. Nevertheless, the public anger expressed by the likes of Angela Merkel of Germany and Dilma Rousseff of Brazil helped give the Snowden revelations more shelf life, keeping the NSA in the headlines constantly for five months.

But these leaders of NATO allies can scarcely feign surprise. Under the terms of the “BRUSA” and the “UK-USA Security Agreement” signed in the late 1940s, the U.S. and U.K. have set up a five-member ‘white Anglo-Saxon club’ in signals intelligence with the governments of Canada, Australia and New Zealand. These five nations share communication intercepts that are not shared with NATO allies or anyone else. Snowden’s disclosures simply show how this two-tiered program allows the English-speaking nations to spy without limits on everyone else. When the treaties were signed, that meant spying on leaders of nations. Improvement of technology in the 1980s and 1990s allowed the NSA to start intercepting the communications of every citizen on the planet.

Some pundits worry as to whether the disclosures might mean the death of the global Internet. President Rousseff has called for Brazil to create its own encrypted Internet—a national equivalent to the mysterious encrypted “Darknet” where many drug and criminal transactions take place. While it is good to see national leaders make calls for autonomy, Rousseff’s proposal shows almost a shocking naiveté. Since the NSA was created to be a global specialist in code-making and codebreaking, why assume that the agency couldn’t decrypt any new code that came along? What is the point in creating a walled-off Internet for Brazil or any other nation?

What the series of constant summer and fall revelations from Snowden and others have done is to expose the routine baseline state of the national security establishment, as it has regularly conducted business since the end of World War II. It is instructive to learn of specific NSA programs like “Prism” and “Bullrun,” because they provide the anatomical details of how the NSA operates. Nevertheless, there still must be a larger contextual awareness as to how National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), Strategic Command, Cyber Command and Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), conduct similar operations on a daily basis, as a regular means of completing their mission. A few brave journalists like Glenn Greenwald and Kevin Gosztola try to provide revelations in a wider context, but most of the U.S. media keeps its focus on the NSA with a very tight boundary.

For example, The Sunday New York Times had a useful and extensive front-page article on the NSA this past November 3, “No Morsel Too Minuscule for All-Consuming NSA,” providing a decent top-down view of the agency from within the Beltway. But the story, despite its voluminous length, carried a strict Washington-Baltimore ‘insider’ point of view. Why no mention of the massive agency NRO, with whom the NSA collaborates? Why no talk of the Cyber Command, which shares the NSA’s headquarters? Why did the story not mention the Regional SIGINT Operations Centers (like Menwith Hill, UK, and Buckley AFB, Colorado) which are critical to NSA’s collection efforts? Why was there no discussion of NSA sites at undersea cable landing stations or telephone switching centers? Why no mention of StratCom, whose Intelligence/Surveillance/Reconnaissance (ISR) mission it is to oversee the U.S.’s entire national security network? In James Bamford’s second book on the NSA, Body of Secrets, he discussed how it was important to understand the head, body, heart and circulation of NSA to understand how it works. Scott Shane, author of the New York Times article, gave us a review of the agency’s central nervous system without explaining the body surrounding it.

The media’s near-sightedness is similar to that of the politicians themselves. The tactic of wilful ignorance has been perfected over the 60 years of the NSA’s existence. When President Obama provided a mealy-mouthed excuse for his weak NSA oversight at a G20 meeting, he actually was describing the Wash-
Looking forward to two new cases involving an alleged Uzbek terrorist in November 4 editorial, the Denver Post predicted the case would go all the way to the Supreme Court.

Unfortunately, the three branches of government continue to play ‘see-no-evil’ with similar agencies which have not been dragged into the spotlight—like StratCom and its multiple minions: Global Strike Command, the NRO, Cyber Command and JSOC.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the intelligence agency heads know just how to exploit this knowledge gap. During Congressional hearings in late October, agency insiders were playing ‘what did the president know and when did he know it’ games with members of Congress, avoiding deeper questions regarding the legality of interception. General Keith Alexander, who serves as head of the NSA and Cyber Command (both of which are StratCom component commands), indicated he would be ready to step down from the NSA in early 2014. He said nothing about Cyber Command, however—even as C4ISR and Networks Journal reported that Congress would be seeking to split management of the NSA and Cyber Command. This would allow Alexander to continue probing the computers of world citizens as Cyber Command director, even as the NSA falls victim to public probes.

What Is To Be Done?

An effective way of challenging the power of the national security state needs to involve both the leaders and the citizens of all other nations of the world, as well as U.S. citizens themselves. Attempts to create an independent Internet sound dated and silly—a bit like the Libertarian computer pioneers of the 1990s who predicted they could beat the NSA by turning to ‘public-key’ cryptography. Interception and computer code-breaking has been the NSA’s business for six decades. It is the world’s leading expert. If it is restricted by 2014 legislation, we can be sure the Cyber Command will take over in those realms where the NSA has its hands tied.

This means that critics must widen their scope to include all the technical agencies of the national security state, including all the crypto agencies of every nation on the planet. The technical groups within Strategic Command (such as Global Strike Command), the NRO, JSOC, Cyber Command, all must submit to the same public rules of the road as the NSA does. Global citizens and nations working through venues such as the UN must insist on transparency, accountability and rules of monitoring and technology advances that are able to be vetted by professional outside monitoring groups. This cannot come from Congress or the White House or even the Supreme Court. Independent bodies similar to the “UN Disarmament Commission” or the “Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers” must be able to analyze the technology used by these agencies. Some degree of secrecy can be preserved, even as an outside group tells an agency it may not carry out a particular mission.

Analysts who claim the genie is already out of the bottle with the NSA and global monitoring forget the example of the SALT II Treaty and “MIRVs” (Multiple Independently Targeted Re-Entry Vehicles). Henry Kissinger once said that since MIRVs had been invented for nuclear missiles, it was impossible to un-invent them. Yet that is precisely what SALT II did. The U.S. and then-Soviet Union got rid of their MIRVs, and no nation put them on nuclear missiles again.

By limiting the size and frequencies of certain radar dishes, antenna clusters, packet-analysis equipment and the like, it will be possible to ‘un-invent’ intrusive, comprehensive monitoring of civilian communications. But the effort must be global, it must include all nations, and it must include all national-security agencies involved in such activity. If Edward Snowden’s revelations can take us even part of the way to that goal, then his whistle-blowing work will not have been in vain.
Ice Free, Human Free, Eventually?

Most scientific projections of global warming’s effects on our atmosphere, our climate and our lives—the latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is an example—do not extend past the end of the present century. The projections don’t stop there because global warming will end. It’s not a matter of humanity, having had enough, being able to set a thermostat and reverse things.

In fact, thermal inertia and various other feedbacks virtually guarantee a rapid amplification of warming into the next century and beyond if fossil fuels continue to be burned at anything like today’s rate. Consensus science does not have the tools to forecast such things, however.

James Hansen, who recently retired as director of NASA’s Goddard Institute for Space Studies, is still intruding on the consensus. He has lately been asking what could happen to the climate (as well as Earth’s flora and fauna) if the human race burns every single ounce of available fossil fuels—that is, all of the coal, oil, tar sands, oil shale, cracked oil and natural gas. The fossil-fuels industry in the last few decades has vastly improved its technology and has increased its access to new reserves.

What will be the eventual outcome of ‘drill, baby, drill’? A recent examination by Hansen concludes that the Earth eventually could be ice-free, and all but bereft of living things—including human beings. A few acres of very high-priced real estate may remain on the highest mountains and Antarctica. Perhaps, as in the recent film Elysium, a fraction of the ‘one percent’ may escape to space stations. In the real world, Earth—a little warmer, perhaps, owing to its position closer to the Sun, but not too warm for liquid oceans. The geophysics of Venus differs from Earth’s in one important way, however: it has no plate tectonics, which allow subsurface pressures here to discharge piece-meal. Such discharges express themselves in volcanic eruptions and earthquakes that can be deadly close at hand, but across the entire Earth maintain a rough equilibrium.

On Venus, subsurface pressures are said to have built up to enormous levels, then exploded in a single, spectacular blast that provoked a runaway greenhouse effect. Temperatures rose, and the oceans boiled away. As a result, today’s Venus has a surface atmosphere hot enough to melt lead. Most of Venus’ carbon is now in the atmosphere, not in its crust (as on Earth), observes Hansen.

What About Earth?

So that’s Venus—no place for a picnic. What about Earth? Here, with technological ingenuity and a desire for profit, comfort and convenience, human fossil-fuel corporations are supplying us with products manufactured from carbon extracted from the crust, combusted as energy, and released to the atmosphere as carbon dioxide and methane. We are, in other words, mimicking natural processes on Venus. In geological time, this is happening remarkably quickly, although thermal inertia delays effects by about 50 years in the air (and on land) and a century or two in the oceans.

Thermal inertia and natural variability allow the climate-change deniers among us to argue that geophysical facts do not matter. If the carbon dioxide level is now at 400 parts per million (as high as it was in the Pliocene, when oceans were about 100 feet higher), so what?

This is what: geophysics do matter. At some point—exactly when we do not yet really know, although the IPCC now says roughly 2040 on our present emissions path—feedbacks may take off on their own and accelerate the changes (in a “hyperthermal”). By that time, the climate deniers will have been discredited, but it will be too late. We will be on our way to a world where the air in most places will eventually become simply too hot to sustain human (or most other) life. “It is not an exaggeration to suggest,” wrote Hansen in an e-mail post September 26, 2013, “based on best available scientific evidence, that burning all fossil fuels could result in the planet being not only ice-free but human-free.”

REFERENCES


Bruce E. Johansen is Jacob J. Isaacsen Professor at the UNO and author of The Encyclopedia of Global Warming Science and Technology (2009).
The Threats To Our Public Power System

State Senator Ken Haar delivered the following comments at the 6th Annual Nebraska Wind Conference November 13 in Lincoln. Speaking specifically on the topic of “Nebraska’s Competitive Position for Wind Export—A Senatorial Perspective," Senator Haar outlined the challenges facing public power—and the urgent need to pro-actively answer them. He was introduced at the conference by Omaha Public Power District Board Member Tim Gay.

Tim, thank you for your introduction. And Tim, thanks to you, to the other OPPD Board of Directors and to your OPPD staff and officers for your decision to add the 200 megawatts of wind at Elgin that is currently under construction and for your recent historic decision to add 400 megawatts of wind energy in Holt County.

I believe the decision to add an additional 600 megawatts of wind energy is fantastic. It is good for rural Nebraska. Good for our environment. Good for the property taxpayers in those rural communities with the wind farms. And good for your OPPD ratepayers, because you have taken advantage of low-cost electricity with the price locked in for the next 20 years! Let me repeat that—a price locked in for the next 20 years. We can’t say that for any other form of electrical generation.

It is important for the future of the public power system to listen to what we, as owners, want. And we, the owners of Nebraska public power system, have expressed overwhelmingly support in poll after poll for the development of renewable energy. I commend you for listening and then acting.

I believe that Nebraska’s unique 100-percent public power system has served our state extremely well. I believe in and support our public power system. But that system is facing some very serious threats—some from the outside and some from the inside.

First of all, threats from the outside.

The Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry’s recent “Forging Nebraska’s Future—100 Next Generation Ideas” lists as Idea #13 to “Consolidate all rural electric cooperatives/associations into larger and more efficient organizations like NPPD or OPPD.” Item #22 goes further, asking us to “Evaluate moving away from Public Power in Nebraska.” These are risks from outside the system.

Then there is the risk from within public power itself.

Now, to be perfectly honest, I think it is a serious mistake for Nebraska Public Power District to not move forward and take advantage of historically low-priced wind energy. But that in itself is not the threat from the inside that I refer to today. What I am referring to is this:

I am hearing more and more about the backdoor opposition to rural wind development by the Nebraska Electric Generation and Transmission Cooperative, Inc., NEG&T for short. There is mounting evidence that NEG&T is making a power play to tell NPPD, who supplies most of the electricity for NEG&T members, how to run its business. This includes a presentation to NPPD Board members and staff in May 2013 that materially distorted both the costs and economic benefits of wind development.

If you are unfamiliar with NEG&T, it is a non-profit cooperative established under Article 7 of the Revised Statutes of Nebraska. It has 22 members—21 are REAs. Its purpose and power, as stated in Section 70-703, is basically to facilitate electrification in rural areas and negotiate power supply contracts. I can find nothing in reading the statute that gives NEG&T either the authority or the responsibility to tell NPPD how to generate electricity.

Yet, that is exactly what they seem to be doing. To put it bluntly, it would seem that NEG&T is attempting to hold NPPD hostage by suggesting that it could go elsewhere to buy energy when contracts come due if NPPD invests in wind beyond 10 percent. That is an incredibly bad idea. Failure to take advantage of wind generation at the current rate would be a huge mistake for Nebraska Public Power District to not move forward and take advantage of historically low-priced wind energy. But that in itself is not the threat from the inside that I refer to today. What I am referring to is this:

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Economic Inequality Continues to Grow in the United States

by Hank Van den Berg
UNL Professor of Economics

In an updated report, the well-known economist Emmanuel Saez of the University of California-Berkeley shows that nearly all of the recent income recovery from the economic recession has been captured by the top 1 percent of income earners. Since the 2007-2009 economic crash, the top 1 percent of income earners have captured 95 percent of the total overall growth in U.S. income over the past four years.

Saez’ estimates are given in the table below. His estimates are based on U.S. national income data, and it is updated for 2012 using IRS data.

Unprecedented concentration of earnings

What is clear from the table is that never before have so few gained such a disproportionate share of economic growth during a recovery from a recession. During the recovery and expansion after the 1991 recession, the top 1 percent captured 45 percent of the overall growth of 31.5 percent in income. After the 2000 dot.com recession, the top 1 percent captured 65 percent of the much slower income growth of 6.8 percent during the recovery and subsequent expansion. But since the 2007-2009 crash, the top 1 percent have captured 95 percent of the very meager 6 percent of total income growth. Obviously, the recovery is not yet complete, and there will, hopefully, be further income gains. But what is clear is that from the perspective of the 99 percent, the recovery has not even started.

Time will tell how this recovery will progress. So far, however, the 1 percent seem to be doing quite well relative to the 99 percent. The stock market is booming, but that is of little consolation to the great bulk of the American population that has few, if any, stocks.

The recent numbers should, perhaps, not be surprising. Contemplate the graph below showing the share of U.S. income captured by the richest 10 percent of U.S. households. This graph shows the income shares excluding and including capital gains. Remember, the wealthy earn more of their income in the form of capital gains rather than wages, in part for tax reasons, so the capital-gains inclusive measure is a more accurate depiction of income.

Note that in 2012, when most households had seen little or no gain from the alleged economic recovery, the share of the top 10 percent rose to exceed 50 percent of total national income. Not even in 1928—the year before the crash that marked the beginning of the Great Depression—did the top 10 percent share surpass 50 percent of total income. In 2012, the income of the mere 0.01 percent captured nearly 6 percent of total U.S. income! Note, also, how the top 10 percent’s share fell to about 35 percent during World War II, and then remained around 35 percent of total income for almost four decades. U.S. Economic growth was the fastest in our history during that period. There was plenty of inequality in the 1950s and 1960s, but now that period looks egalitarian compared to what came to pass after the 1970s.

Many things changed in the late 1970s and early 1980s to trigger a consistent rise in the top 10 percent’s income share. Taxes on the wealthy were reduced, unions were weakened, imports grew rapidly and U.S. wages stagnated, and overall productivity growth slowed. Clearly, higher income of the wealthy relative to the rest of the population does not increase economic growth, and the slower growth certainly does not ‘trickle down.’
Frank LaMere’s Remarks at the October 12 Omaha Immigration Rally

Winnebago Indian and NFP State Board member Frank LaMere addressed the one-thousand-person audience who attended the rally for immigration justice October 12, 2013 in Omaha.

In just a few powerful words (reprinted below), Frank clarified the immigration issue in a way only a Native person can, commenting afterwards, “It was good to connect with our Latino relatives morally, socially and politically.”

I am Frank LaMere, a member of the Winnebago tribe of Nebraska. I have been here for over 60 years but my people have lived here forever.

I come before you today to provide encouragement if you will accept it, to build unity if there is none and to march with you as best I can!

In doing so, I would be remiss if I did not first extend a greeting to the families and the many generations represented among you. I am told that all of you want immigration reform and pathways to citizenship, whatever that may mean. I join you in your effort to voice that desire, but there are things I would remind you of as you move forward in your struggle!

In my life, I have come to know certain things about the truth as I see it and about the truth as told to me by this government and this dominant culture. There are certain things that are unclear to me, but there are many things that are indisputable.

Do not forget who you are! Do not forget who you are! You are the indigenous people of North America. Yes, I said North America. It was you who first consecrated the ground on which we live and grow and who first asked the Creator for blessings upon this continent! Those who divided this continent did so only to identify stolen lands and to mark territory that they perceived as their own. Be mindful of that as you take heart and prepare.

You need not come to this struggle, hat in hand, with your heads down, asking if they would have you. Come to this struggle walking firm and forthright, telling all that like the Winnebago, the Omaha, the Ponca, the Pawnee and the Lakota that you are here, and that you will remain here, resolute and determined to gain a pathway to citizenship.

That is the reality before us, and if this government and dominant culture is uncomfortable with how they would characterize you, let them establish the pathways needed to make all other Americans feel better about this reality. Tell them you aren’t going anywhere and ask that our time together be harmonious, productive and steeped in the truth and knowledge that we have about one another.

This Steven King [Republican member of Congress from Iowa] has disparaged those who want a future and those who want to be Americans! He lies! There are no ‘anchor babies’ among us! There are babies. There are no illegal immigrants. There are immigrants! To my mind, as the only true Native American, people who came across this wide ocean are as foreign to me as those who waded across a small river. And those who crossed that river were brown! And indigenous!

That is how I see it!

Let us reform immigration policy now. Let us demand it for our families and our children. And if Steve King does not like it, let him go back to wherever he comes from.

Le gente unida…

The Future of Food is Local

From Steven McFadden’s Blog: thecalloftheland.wordpress.com

Local food advocate Michael Brownlee stopped in Lincoln, Nebraska November 18 and gave a talk about the need for localizing our food supply. Detailing the systemic weaknesses in the juggernaut of industrial agriculture, which now provides about 98 percent of our food, he commented: “Food is the one area where we are all most vulnerable, and where the need is most urgent.”

Brownlee and his partners at Local Food Shift are out to catalyze the national movement in local food, helping to take it to the next level—from a culture of consumers, to a culture of contributors. He considers their efforts in the Front Range of Colorado to be a Whole Systems Demonstration Project.

“The way we feed ourselves is the most important social, environmental, health and economic undertaking of our times,” he said. “Food is going to come soon to the forefront of emerging human calamities.”

Brownlee cited the draft report leaked earlier this month from the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. In blunt language, that report spells out the trend: “Climate change will seriously damage the world’s ability to feed itself in the coming decades.” The report confirms previous studies’ findings that climate change could exacerbate poverty, strain water supplies, make extreme weather more common and increase conflict around the world.

Local food is a core response to impending catastrophes, accentuated by climate change. The world’s agricultural areas will shift, causing an overall decline in agricultural production. The movement toward local food, helping to take it to the next level—from a culture of consumers, to a culture of contributors. He considers their efforts in the Front Range of Colorado to be a Whole Systems Demonstration Project.

“The global food system is now teetering on the edge of collapse,” Brownlee asserted. “The future of food is local—as close to home as possible. Local food production helps to reverse the wide spiral of damage caused by industrial agriculture and the industrial growth society.”

Brownlee concluded his talk with a quote from economist Herman Daly, author of several books, including For the Common Good (1994). “If economics is reconceived in the service of community, it will begin with a concern for agriculture and specifically for the production of food. This is because a healthy community will be a relatively self-sufficient one...The most fundamental requirement for survival is food. Hence, how and where food is grown is foundational to an economics for community.”
Dear Nebraskans for Peace Supporter,

My eighty-seven-year-old father is renowned in my family for pushing back from the holiday dinner table, patting his stomach fondly and announcing with a grin, “If I always feel like this, I’ll never have to eat again.” But of course he does. At the very next meal.

…Because certain things — like eating and sleeping — have to be done over and over if we're to maintain our health. Biologically, we simply can't store up enough nourishment or get enough rest to keep from having to ever eat or sleep again. If we want to stay alive, we have no choice but to keep repeating these processes. That's pretty much how it is with Nebraskans for Peace's fundraising needs too.

With an operating budget of less than $150,000 a year (out of which we pay rent, phone and internet, printing, postage, insurance, taxes and four staff people), we have no choice but to keep regularly asking for money if we're to keep NFP alive.

Nice as it might be to have a Peace & Justice advocacy organization that never needed financial support from its members, it's not possible — no more so than our bodies will let us stop eating or skip on sleep.

NFP has to have a steady income stream if it's to continue doing the vital work of peacemaking.

As a supporter of NFP, you probably get two to three fundraising appeals a year from us. Which is admittedly a lot. But as a member-supported organization that gets very little outside money, we have nowhere else to turn for donations.

And it’s been these 1,300 member households statewide who have enabled Nebraskans for Peace to hang on for now 43 straight years.

It's supporters like you over the past four decades who have enabled NFP to endure to become what is now ‘the oldest statewide Peace & Justice organization in the entire country.’ That's quite a distinction.

And believe me, we're fully aware that it would never, ever have happened without the generous gifts of generations of peace activists like you.

As a loyal member of NFP...

• You know what we stand for and what we’re up to, so I won’t take the time to repeat it all.
• You know too how important it is that, in a ‘red state’ like ours, we have a vocal advocate for justice and peace (because we’re unlikely to hear it from our federal representatives or the Governor's Office).
• You know that NFP is a ‘one-of-a-kind’ organization in this state, whose shoes no other worthy organization can fully fill.
• As a longtime supporter, you’re well aware how conscientious we are about prudently using the donations we are given to get the biggest bang for our buck...
• And NOW YOU ALSO KNOW how utterly essential YOU ARE to NFP’s ability to perform this vital Peace & Justice role.

This WILL NOT BE the last time you get an appeal for financial help from us. We can’t give up asking for donations from our supporters any more than any of us can quit eating or go without sleep. The ‘need’ for NFP’s voice in our state’s political life is simply too great for us to be coy about asking our supporters for the honestly needed funds to do our work.

What we do pledge, though, is to work to make you as proud and pleased to be associated with this organization as we possibly can.

We know that we’ve got a proud heritage to uphold at Nebraskans for Peace...

And with your continued financial support — to either NFP directly or to our tax-deductible arm, the Nebraska Peace Foundation — we mean to uphold that heritage for years to come.

Best Wishes,

Tim Rinne, State Coordinator

P.S. Donations to both NFP and the Nebraska Peace Foundation can be made by credit card.
The Threats, conclusion

rent low prices hurts the very people that the NEG&T is supposed to represent—namely, the residents of rural Nebraska. Furthermore, it is not NEG&T’s job to tell NPPD how to run its business or what mix of generation sources NPPD should use to meet current and future power supply needs. It is the responsibility of the NPPD Board of Directors that was elected, by the public, to chart the course of NPPD.

Sadly, it appears that NPPD is paying more attention to these threats from NEG&T than to the vast majority of rural residents it serves who want more wind energy. As a result, NPPD’s and NEG&E’s customers will pay more for electricity in the days and years ahead.

With the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce & Industry proposing to abolish Nebraska’s REAs, the NEG&T needs to be spending less time trying to tell NPPD how to run its business and more time focused on helping the Rural Electrics respond to the challenges of the 21st century—including examining ways to generate rural economic development and improving their administrative and fixed operating overhead.

Our public power system is at risk from the inside and outside. Both these inside and outside threats need to be addressed so that Nebraska’s public power system can continue to provide the valuable services that we all depend on. Thank you.

Skeptics, conclusion

Russian and American arms. There are no white hats and black cats. There will be no military or outside solution. When Dan Schlitt and I presented an NFP Annual Conference workshop on Syria last month, he urged that we question the reports of gassing andletics. I urged support for a) the nonviolent movements in Syria and the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights; b) a U.S., Russian, Chinese, Iranian and Saudi embargo on further arms shipments to Syria; c) requests to the president and Congress for a negotiated settlement despite Sunni bloc pressure; d) an intense pursuit of a Palestinian/Israeli solution that would deprive Hezbollah of its raison d’être; e) the removal of all weapons of mass destruction from the region—chemical weapons, but also nuclear weapons possibly controlled by Israel, Iran and other regional actors. Mother Agnes Miriam’s position had more detail, particularly her proposal for a Geneva II, but it was consonant.

I am not on the ground. I do not know how many of Mother’s local incidents describing the horror in Syria happened and how many are hearsay. Clearly, she favors pluralism and Christian survival (a key defense of the Assad regime), but also a key provision of all human rights agreements and—given her faith—a pretty understandable stance. I do believe that her proposal for a new direction makes sense. Our present path only invites genocide in a proxy war prefiguring World War III: Russia/China/Iran/Shiites versus United States/Europe/Saudi Arabia/Sunnis. We will have the Triple Alliance versus the Triple Entente all over again.

Do we have to destroy the global village to save it?

You will answer by your actions.

Paul Olson, conclusion

McCoy ends his opinion piece using the same tactics he decries in his opening paragraph. Without contacting those ‘on the other side,’ he claims to know what we think about this issue. The University of Nebraska regularly sponsors seminars and conferences in which its faculty and external experts discuss the science of climate change and its implications for Nebraska, the region, the nation and the world. We feel it is imperative for our elected officials to take advantage of these opportunities so they can make informed decisions about this important issue. This Thursday, for example, one of us will be giving a public lecture titled “Climate Change: What We Know, What We Expect” at the “Nebraska Citizens for Science” forum. We invite McCoy to come to Lincoln for this talk. We would be more than happy to discuss the science of human-caused global climate change with him, so he can learn firsthand why we agree with the scientific evidence for human-induced climate change.
5:30 p.m., Monday, November 18: I was a little nervous for myself and for NFP. I had been told of intimidating messages opposing the appearance of the Syrian nun sent to the hotel where she was staying and to the church where she was to speak. Pastor Larry Moffett of that church was patrolling to forestall what might happen. Gradually, people began to come in—a group of Lincoln Syrians; Middle Eastern, Eastern European Orthodox and Melkite people; some Lincoln and Crete Nebraskans for Peace regulars; a group of Denton Catholic seminarians. Most of the crowd was new to NFP forums and gatherings, and we could sense the Middle Eastern warmth and concern for the sufferings of the Middle Eastern relatives in the Mideast group.

In the morning, Mother Agnes Miriam had held a news conference where she recited her usual analyses: the Assad regime was not just one side in the conflict; and peace-building at a new Geneva conference based on her three principles—1) The seating at the conference of only Middle Eastern grassroots people—not proxies for foreign powers; 2) The enforcement of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights on all—not just one side in the conflict; and 3) Self-determination—solutions not imposed by the great powers, unlike in Lebanon, whose ‘solution’ did not last.

Mother Agnes Miriam’s talk reflected the American press is manipulated, her distress at the dismantling of an ancient civilization (Damascus, dating back in some sections to 9000 B.C. is the world’s first civilization (Damascus, dating back in some sections to 9000 B.C. is the world’s oldest capital). She lamented the destruction of Syria under way now is an unmitigated tragedy, fed on all distributions. However for 2013, Congress has allowed a tax-free distribution from IRA accounts to charities. This tax-free distribution counts toward the RMD. You may be able to benefit from this ‘tax loophole’ even if you do not itemize charitable deductions. Check with your tax advisor or accountant to see if you can benefit.

Syria
Destroy the Village to Save It?
by Paul Olson, NFP President Emeritus

The original demands for reform and justice of the peaceful protesters at the start of the uprising in 2011 are as forgotten as, two years and millions of deaths into the Great War, was Austria-Hungary’s July 23, 1914, ultimatum to Serbia.

Charles Glass himself that assert that “while Syrians do most of the fighting and dying, both sides have welcomed foreigners into their ranks. Iranians and Lebanese Shiites reinforce the government army, while Sunni jihadists from more than 40 countries have become the revolt’s shock troops.”

Mother Agnes Miriam’s talk reflected her Christian commitment and fear of the jihadist domination, her sense that the American press is manipulated, her distress at the dismantling of an ancient civilization (Damascus, dating back in some sections to 9000 B.C. is the world’s most ancient capital). She lamented the thousands of civilian deaths and expressed her concern that the jihadists will impose a fundamentalist caliphate on Syria. But she also expressed the hope that tireless local peace-building and further national peace-building at a new Geneva conference—based on her three principles—will ultimately triumph.

I did not see Mother as an Assad tool or propagandist, though she is clearly less hard on him than I would be.

The destruction of Syria under way now is an unmitigated tragedy, fed by