



Nebraskans for Peace

Nebraska Report

There is no Peace without Justice

MAY/JUNE 2014

VOLUME 42, NUMBER 3

**Unless every nation
ramps down military
spending and invests
in clean energy, we'll
all lose the next big
war over the fate of
the Earth without
even firing a shot.**

This article by John Feffer and Emily Schwartz Greco was published under the title, "Paying for the Climate Change Pivot" in Foreign Policy in Focus, a project of the Institute for Policy Studies, which has been a trusted resource for Nebraskans for Peace for 40 years.

We only have a few decades to deal with climate change.

If humanity fails to cut back dramatically on carbon emissions by 2050, according to an alarming new UN report, our planet may warm past the point of our ability to fix the problem.

Given global dependence on oil, gas and coal, weaning every economy from fossil fuels to save Mother Earth won't come easy or cheap. Fortunately, there's a big pot of money available to avert a climate catastrophe.

conclusion on page 3

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Nebraska Report

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

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

Nebraskans for Peace

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NFP Financial Report

2013 RESULTS and 2014 BUDGET

	2013 ACTUAL	2014 BUDGET	DIFFERENCE
REVENUES			
Member Fees	11,550.00	10,800.00	-750.00
Member Donations	32,377.17	31,300.00	-1,077.17
Grants: Peace Foundation	65,000.00	73,000.00	8,000.00
Grants: Other	18,293.24	9,000.00	-9,293.24
CLAB Calendar Sales	10,150.30	20,000.00	9,849.70
Peace Conference Reg.	3,189.00	3,000.00	-189.00
Chapter Fundraisers	2,752.50	2,700.00	-52.50
Projects Income	755.50	0.00	-755.50
Miscellaneous Income	8.36	0.00	-8.36
TOTAL REVENUES	144,076.07	149,800.00	5,723.93
EXPENSES			
Personnel Expense	95,363.02	107,252.88	11,889.86
Nebraska Report	11,823.34	11,100.00	-723.34
Chapters Expense	1,712.36	1,500.00	-212.36
Projects Expense	7,730.87	1,800.00	-5,930.87
Peace Conference	5,269.48	3,000.00	-2,269.48
Printing & Copying	1,384.58	2,250.00	865.42
Postage	2,424.93	2,500.00	75.07
Rent	5,934.60	5,940.00	5.40
Insurance	911.58	910.00	-1.58
Accounting	1,800.00	1,800.00	0.00
Telephone	2,839.68	2,700.00	-139.68
Supplies	1,059.01	3,500.00	2,440.99
Office Expense	1,738.58	1,500.00	-238.58
Online Service	1,281.48	1,200.00	-81.48
Staff Travel	1,152.71	1,200.00	47.29
Board Expense	331.81	600.00	268.19
Credit Card Fees	430.08	450.00	19.92
Subscriptions	79.00	80.00	1.00
Miscellaneous Expense	504.23	517.12	12.89
TOTAL EXPENSES	143,771.34	149,800.00	6,028.66
NET REVENUES	304.73	0.00	-304.73

Paying for the Climate Change Pivot, conclusion

Accessing that money, however, requires cutting back on a different set of pollutants—the huge cache of weapons the world continues to produce.

Europe has trimmed its military spending and the

ways to slow global warming and adapt to a changing climate, too many nations are pouring money into weapons in an ongoing fight over the dwindling resources we haven't quite used up yet.

There's still time to pivot

Battleships and fighter jets can't defeat the threat of a melting ice cap or rising sea levels. It will take mountains of money to reduce our carbon emissions while maintaining a modern economy.

Pentagon budget is leveling off. Yet other regions are burning through more cash to wage or gear up for war than they used to.

Military outlays are rising the most in Africa and the Middle East. And Asia surpassed Europe last year for the first time in terms of overall military spending.

The United States still faces no competition for its distinction as the world's military spending champion. The Pentagon's \$640 billion tab amounted to more than a third of the \$1.75 trillion in global military spending the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute itemized for 2013.

What does worldwide military excess have to do with today's reliance on fossil fuels? Instead of investing in

in a new direction. One big step governments, industries and investors must take is to quadruple the money they're pumping into sustainable alternatives to oil, gas and coal.

Those investments now total about \$250 billion a year. While that may sound like a lot of solar panels and wind turbines, the United Nations says it's not enough. It will take a "clean trillion" every year between now and 2050 keep the world livable, the International Energy Agency estimates.

Yes, the private sector needs to play a role in building a fossil-free global economy. So do governments, which possess the power to tax carbon-intensive energy. That's certainly one good way to generate revenue for meeting the climate challenge

while creating incentives to increase efficiency.

But world leaders can't really fight climate change unless they slash military spending.

As climate writer and activist Bill McKibben says, do the math. Just shrinking the global military-industrial complex by 25 percent would free up \$437.5 billion a year. Given the security challenges climate change poses, this makes perfect sense.

The head of the U.S. fleet in the Pacific has identified climate change as the biggest threat facing the region. The Pentagon is devoting considerable resources to studying

of money to reduce our carbon emissions while maintaining a modern economy.

It may help to think about climate change as "getting embroiled in a war that lasts 100 years" without any obvious exit strategies, as retired Brigadier General Chris King puts it.

"You can see in military history, when they don't have fixed durations, that's when you're most likely to not win," warns King, the dean of academics at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Unless every nation ramps down military spending, we'll

...But instead of investing in ways to slow global warming and adapt to a changing climate, too many nations are pouring money into weapons in an ongoing fight over the dwindling resources we haven't quite used up yet.

rising temperatures as "threat multipliers" bound to stoke competition for resources, make humanitarian disasters more common, and increase political instability.

Battleships and fighter jets can't defeat the threat of a melting ice cap or rising sea levels. It will take mountains

all lose the next big war over the fate of the Earth without even firing a shot.

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Business As Usual for Berkshire Hathaway on Climate Change

The 2014 Berkshire Hathaway Shareholder Meeting has come and gone and Warren Buffett remains as much as a cipher on climate change as ever.

In his marathon, five-and-a-half-hour-long 'question and answer' session with the shareholders, the 83-year-old investment legend rightfully touted his companies' industry-leading investments in wind and solar energy (pledging to do even more), only to turn around and say, "I will do anything that is basically covered by the law to reduce Berkshire's tax rate. For example, on wind energy, we get a tax credit if we build a lot of wind farms. That's the only reason to build them. They don't make sense without the tax credit."

While never openly disputing the climate science, he did make a point of saying his insurance and reinsurance companies had experienced no out-of-the-ordinary losses from extreme weather events, and that, "I don't think that when making an investment decision on Berkshire Hathaway—or all companies—that climate change should be a factor in the decision-making process." Which undoubtedly accounts for his recent investments in ExxonMobil and Alberta tar sands and his declared support for the Keystone XL pipeline.

The grueling, day-long meeting culminated with consideration of the "Greenhouse Gas Reduction" resolution submitted by Meyer Family Enterprises of California. Two Wartburg College students from Waverly, Iowa, Linda Nkosi and Brady Anderson, delivered the statement (at the right) urging adoption of the resolution that would require Berkshire Hathaway's energy companies to begin documenting and then reducing their carbon emissions. With Buffett opposing the resolution for now the second year in a row, the resolution was overwhelmingly defeated.

But this is just the beginning. The Nebraska Peace Foundation (NFP's tax-exempt educational arm) has purchased an 'A' share of Berkshire stock, enabling NFP to submit resolutions in its own right at future shareholder meetings. And as the adjacent resolution statement notes, there are good, solid financial reasons for Berkshire Hathaway to show leadership on combatting climate change. After all, uncurbed, it's going to be very bad for business.

[Linda] Good afternoon Mr. Buffett, Mr. Munger, ladies & gentlemen. My name is Linda Nkosi, and this is Brady Anderson. We are students of Economics & Finance at Wartburg College in Iowa, and are here representing a delegation of students who manage a \$1.2 million dollar portfolio that includes shares of Berkshire Hathaway. We very much appreciate the opportunity to take part in this celebrated event.

We stand to represent Investor Voice, SPC of Seattle, on behalf of the Meyer Family Enterprises, to move Item #4 on page 12 of the proxy—a Proposal that Berkshire establish goals for greenhouse gas reduction at its energy holdings.

[Brady] We applaud Berkshire's MidAmerican Energy for having the largest renewable energy portfolio in the country. That said, it is also true that MidAmerican generates close to half its power by burning coal—which makes MidAmerican a huge emitter of greenhouse gas.

As a result, it would benefit MidAmerican to have a carbon-reduction plan. 66 percent of U.S. electric utilities have greenhouse gas reduction goals, but MidAmerican is not among them—despite stating on its website: "We will set challenging goals and assess our ability to continually improve our environmental performance."

[Linda] As shareholders are aware, climate disruption creates profound financial risk for the global economy as well as for Berkshire. The Investor Network on Climate Risk (whose members manage more than \$11 trillion dollars) and the Carbon Disclosure Project (representing more than \$80 trillion dollars in assets globally) have called on companies to disclose risks related to climate change, as well as to take steps to reduce that risk.

As well, the SEC has stated that climate risks are financially material and that they must be disclosed. This is because a high-carbon approach creates risk, whereas a low-carbon approach avoids risk, both now and into the future. Without planning and a set of forward-looking goals, neither management nor investors can truly know where they stand.

[Brady] In addition, Berkshire's core businesses are vulnerable to climate disruption. Why? Because many of the most negative financial impacts of climate disruption are borne by insurance companies.

Berkshire's Geico took its single largest loss in history from Superstorm Sandy—a \$490 million dollar loss due to claims on more than 46,000 flooded vehicles. Berkshire's reinsurance business is likely to bear significantly more risk from the trends toward increasingly extreme weather.

For a time, some portion of these costs may be pushed onto customers in the form of higher premiums, but is it a prudent or sustainable long-term strategy to impose on customers the cost of not planning for the greenhouse gas reductions that climate scientists agree are urgently needed?

[Linda] In closing:

(1) Hundreds of the world's largest institutional investors—representing trillions of dollars of invested assets—call on companies to set greenhouse gas reduction goals;

(2) Such goals are key tools for reducing the profound business risk that climate change creates;

(3) More than two-thirds of U.S. utilities already have such goals; and

(4) Institutional proxy advisory firms repeatedly recommend voting FOR goal-setting and disclosure of this sort.

[Brady] Therefore, please join us in voting FOR this common-sense proposal, which not only benefits the planet, it will preserve—if not boost—Berkshire profits by avoiding risk. Thank you for this truly amazing opportunity to share our concerns!

Leading with the Boldest of Dreams

A Discussion of Lincoln's Direction

Last year, Nebraska's capital was voted the happiest city in the U.S., topping 188 other metropolitan areas in a "Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index." But that averaged score hardly means that everyone in Lincoln shares in that well-being and that there's no room for improvement. In fact, a recent report on the community's 'vital signs' shows that there are underlying problems in even America's "happiest" city.

This month, Lincoln residents will have an opportunity to get a first-hand briefing on a variety of these vital signs at a program

entitled, "Leading With the Boldest of Dreams: A Discussion of Lincoln's Direction." On Monday evening, June 23 from 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. at the Lincoln Community Foundation, 215 Centennial Mall South, Nancy Shank of the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center will present her research findings on the capital city's well-being and quality of life. With the assistance of Barbara Bartle of the Lincoln Community Foundation, Shank will examine Lincoln employment and living wage issues, shifts in the poverty rate over the last several years, the impact of income on stu-

dents and education, the city's health profile and its crime rate. Some of these developments in the last decade are positive—and some negative.

Long-time NFP activist Don Tilley will then present some possible initiatives that might improve the city's vital signs—actions and projects that he has learned about from studying other cities around the world. Finally, those in attendance will be asked to discuss and evaluate these proposed initiatives—or suggest their own ideas for improving Lincoln's vital signs. At the end of the discussion,

Milo Mumgaard from the Mayor's Office will offer a few remarks. The recommendations that arise from the discussion will be transmitted to the mayor, the city council and the Lincoln Community Foundation for consideration.

The June 23 program is co-sponsored by the NFP Lincoln Chapter, The Center for People in Need, The Growing Place and First Plymouth Church's Peace and Justice Committee. The meeting is free, but you can reserve a chair by contacting Don Tilley at 402-466-6622 or donpeacepart@gmail.com.

Let's Grow! Get Out and Garden

A Public Call to Action to Grow the Food You Eat!

"The "Let's Grow! Get Out and Garden" campaign is an initiative of the Local Foodshed Working Group to encourage Lincolniters to grow their own food. It's a great way to save money, eat more fruits and vegetables, get exercise, and connect with your community. Big gardens or small—whether it's a pot of herbs on your balcony or half an acre of vegetables and fruit trees—we want you to garden.

We have two goals for this campaign. The first is to encourage people to try growing some of their own food for the first time. As Mayor Beutler recently remarked, "We are fortunate in Lincoln to have a great variety of local food options in our grocery stores, restaurants and farmer's markets, but there's always room for even more. Raising your own vegetables is fun and healthy!" The second goal of the pledge is to get a better picture of where



food is being grown in Lincoln. This helps us better understand what the food system of our city looks like today.

We ask experienced and new gardeners to pledge to grow some of their own food. You can pledge online at www.communitycrops.org/letsgrowlincoln, and all gardeners will have access to information, resources, and mentors through the "Let's Grow" handouts and Facebook page.

Local sponsors include: Community CROPS, Nebraskans for Peace, Open Harvest Co-op Grocery, Bodhi Organic Garden Supply, Earl May Garden Center, Campbell's Nursery, Oak Creek Plants & Nursery, Common Good Farm and Chiron Communications.

Contact info: letsgrowlincoln@gmail.com or Rosina Paolini (402-423-1260).



Lincoln Mayor Chris Beutler pictured with some of the city's urban gardeners at the kick-off of the "Let's Grow! Get Out and Garden" campaign. The Mayor, who was an Omaha Benson High School 'Bunny,' is nibbling on a bouquet of freshly harvested locally grown lettuce.

What's HOT in Global Warming?

by Professor Bruce E. Johansen

To Beat Warming, Transcend Nationalism

An NFP climate activist told me once that the scariest thing about global warming is that we as a species essentially can ruin the Earth as we know it by doing nothing. Continuing business as usual will do it—a state of affairs much more difficult to remedy than resistance to the nuclear arms race. In the

that time, we will have burned enough fossil fuels and spewed enough greenhouse gases into the atmosphere to open the door to hell. In another report issued in April of this year, the IPCC said that humanity has 15 years to mount a major mobilization against global warming or our goose (and the rest of the

not nearly enough to bend that curve downward. Wind energy is popular even in conservative states. By early 2014, the American Wind Energy Association said that wind provided 27 percent of electricity in Iowa, 26 percent in South Dakota, 19 percent in Kansas, and 16 percent in Idaho, Minnesota and

ourselves into a future so hot that many of our crops will wilt, sea levels will rise dangerously along our coasts, forests will be increasingly ravaged by fires and pests, and drought in many areas will alternate with deluges in others, along with mass extinctions of plant and animal species. The oil companies hope that melting Arctic ice will present them with new drilling opportunities.

Companies pursue their own interests as countries play nationalistic politics with the reports of the IPCC, as described in an April 13, 2014 *New York Times* article: “Some developing countries insisted on stripping charts from the (April, 2014) report’s executive summary that could be read as requiring greater effort from them, while rich countries—including the United States—struck out language implying that they needed to write big checks to the developing countries. Both points survived in the full version of the report, but were deleted from a synopsis meant to inform the world’s top political leaders.”

If carbon dioxide and methane had senses of humor, they would have enjoyed belly laughs over that. Our laughing carbon would be rolling in the aisles at the many Republicans who deny that rising levels do not matter. Hey, guys, meet the

sun that rises in the west and the moon that’s made of green cheese. That’s the state of their science—a form of idiocy that has frozen the prospect of meaningful change in our federal government.

Complicating matters, many of our political leaders lack understanding of how the physical world works. While even good-intentioned diplomacy responds to events mainly in the past tense, thermal inertia delays effects by about a half-century in the air (and over land) and a century or more in the oceans. Thus, we are reacting to the effects of greenhouse-gas levels from the 1960s. That delay, with natural variability, allows climate-change deniers to argue that geophysical facts do not matter. They do matter—but on a time-delay that does not allow us to wait until the evidence is obvious even to those members of Congress whose campaigns are paid with dirty-energy money.

We will never solve this problem unless we shed old notions of nationalism. While we are at it, let’s get over war as an expression of nationalism as well. It also has become terribly carbon-intensive. This, however, is a 21st-century point of view in a world still wedded to 19th-century ideologies.

At our current rate of consumption, by the 2040s we will have burned enough fossil fuels and spewed enough greenhouse gases into the atmosphere to open the door to hell.



days when ‘The Bomb’ was our premier worry, someone would have had to push that proverbial ‘Red Button.’ With global warming, all we have to do is press our gas pedals and flip our light switches—just keep doing what is natural, necessary and convenient.

In September, 2013, in fact, Earth’s climate scientists told us, in a report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, how long it will be until business as usual damns us to an infernal future. Their estimate is the 2040s. By

planet) is cooked.

Is the world listening? Taking a wide view (perhaps a foolish thing to do because we have no collective conscience), anecdotal evidence indicates that it isn’t. New coal-fired power plants are rising in developing countries with large populations (mainly, but not exclusively, in China and India). Rising affluence and increasing populations also continue to drive worldwide carbon-dioxide and methane levels upward.

While we see some progress on alternative energy, it is

North Dakota, compared to 4.1 percent nationally (and less than 1 percent in Nebraska). Costs of solar and wind power are making them competitive with coal, oil, and natural gas under some circumstances.

However, worldwide infrastructure is not changing quickly enough to stabilize—much less reduce—the atmosphere’s rising levels of greenhouse gases, as the fossil-fuel industry brings to market new products via ‘fracking’ and Canadian tar sands.

As the fossil-fuel industry pumps its profits, many scientists believe we are locking

Income Inequality

Is There Any Hope for Change?

by Hank Van den Berg
UNL Professor of Economics

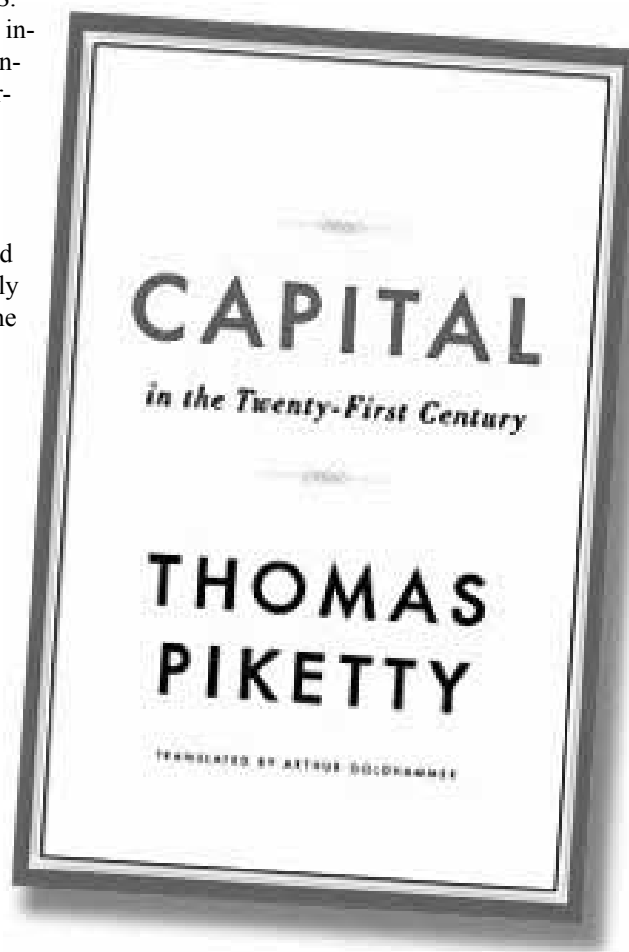
The popularity of Thomas Piketty's book, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, suggests that people are finally waking up to the fact that economic inequality has increased sharply over the past 40 years. Piketty presents a great many charts and tables, based entirely on official U.S. government data, to show that both income and wealth have become as unequal as they were during the 'Roaring Twenties' of capitalist excess. What is frustrating is that this rise in inequality in the U.S., the highest among all developed countries, comes after New Deal programs and subsequent social legislation actually greatly reduced inequality during the 1950s and 1960s.

Even more troubling is Piketty's finding that just in the past five years inequality has continued to grow. The wealthiest 10 percent have recovered from the financial collapse very nicely, but the rest of the U.S. population has not. There is no sign of the growing inequality reversing itself. We must change the system; we cannot just tweak it.

Piketty's Solution

Piketty traces the growing inequality to the relative growth of returns to capital as opposed to labor. Reasoning that the highest income earners derive relatively more of their income from stocks, bonds and other forms of business ownership, he points to the growing ease with which capital (ownership of real and financial assets) can move from one country to another as a fundamental cause

of the growing inequality. Indeed, there is much evidence suggesting we are in a vigorous race-to-the-bottom tax competition among countries. Piketty therefore recommends that all countries agree to tax capital at similar rates in order to avoid this aggressive tax avoidance that corporations and financial conglomerates use to boost



their earnings and push the tax burden onto geographically immobile workers and property owners.

Still, it is unfortunate that Pik-

etty does not go much further with his recommendations. In fact, I would argue that Piketty's recommendation for tax reform misses the real causes of inequality, which is that our economic system is designed to generate inequality.

Thorstein Veblen Knew Better

Karl Marx very clearly explained why capitalism leads to the concentration of income and wealth (accumulated income). But, since we cannot bring up Marx's name in today's political environment, I would like to bring up instead a good American (Midwestern) economist: Thorstein Veblen. One of America's greatest intellectuals, Veblen is famous for his 1899 work, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, a best-seller that helped to focus the population on inequality at the turn of the last century. Less known is Veblen's 1904 work, *Theory of Business Enterprise*. This work presents a very lucid picture of how business firms operate and expand the wealth of their owners.

Veblen thoroughly debunks the widely promoted idea that profit-maximizing business enterprises—as if guided by an invisible hand—unknowingly act in accordance with everyone's well-being. He presents a great many examples from his period that clearly show business, or what he calls "the going concern," fundamentally works to enable its continued

existence, which means to earn a profit, and it will do so in whatever ways are easiest and most promising. He specifically found that the going concern seeks to survive by engaging in activities that have less and less to do with general welfare, and more and more to do with their own financial gain. Veblen described the three degrees of separation that inevitably caused self-interested behavior to lose touch with general well-being.

First, going businesses 'engineer' their

The wealthiest 10 percent have recovered from the financial collapse very nicely, but the rest of the U.S. population has not.

production in ways that tend to reduce the benefits to both their workers (the humans who make the production happen) and consumers (the humans who get to 'enjoy' the finished products). Efficiency and cost-reductions become paramount to the production process. Engineers replace labor with machines and labor-saving technologies at one end, and at the other end the economies of scale from standardization result in products that less closely match human needs and wants.

Secondly, profits gain precedence over even production. According to Veblen, the managers, accountants and marketers gain at the expense of the engineers, and the whole purpose of the business loses touch with the fundamental purpose of produc-

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Income Inequality, continued

tion of goods and services that ultimately provide for people's needs and wants. Increasingly, managers avoid production altogether by outsourcing to other firms and countries. Also, marketers 'create' demand by manipulating human sensitivities through advertising and public relations activities (appropriately called "propaganda" by Veblen) in order to sell goods and services that the going concern wants to sell but people did not previously know they 'needed.' And the accountants dutifully sanction all this growing separation between what people truly need and want and what business wants

to provide in the name of "maximizing shareholder value."

The third degree of separation leads to a complete separation of business activities from human needs and wants. A good example here would be programmed obsolescence—a common business practice whereby a firm actually provides worse products in order to boost its sales. Or firms engage in propaganda, like Apple and other gadget producers, to hype new models in order to induce people to prematurely abandon nearly identical products they already own.

Financial firms provide another good

example of Veblen's third degree of separation. Today in the U.S., financial firms generate earnings equal to over 7 percent of gross domestic product (GDP). In the 1950s and 1960s their income equaled only 2 percent of GDP, even though the overall global economy grew faster than it has with the financial industry earning 7 percent of GDP. Financial firms, and their owners and highly-paid employees, thus have been able to capture an extra 5 percent of all national income over the past 40 years not by performing tasks (resource allocation) that benefit everyone, but by finding ways to earn income from

buying and selling financial assets, charging assorted fees for routine financial procedures previously provided for free, and engineering financial bubbles. In order to deal with the growing inequality, we must grasp why and how this diversion of income happened.

It Is the System, Stupid

Our economic system indeed tends to concentrate wealth. We should expect nothing else from a system in which the dominant business organizations actually

conclusion on next page

Pledge Your Support To Raise the Minimum Wage

Nebraska's current minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour. At this wage level, a worker working 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, earns \$15,080. This is below the federal poverty line for families of two or more.

In 2012, 32,000 hourly workers in Nebraska earned the minimum wage.

In 2012, Nebraska had the 2nd highest percent of hourly workers earning at or below minimum wage when compared with surrounding states.

The current minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour has not been increased in four years and has not kept pace with inflation. **Help us raise Nebraska's minimum wage to affirm the dignity of hard work, lessen reliance on public assistance, and rebuild the middle class.**

Getting the signatures necessary to place this important issue on the November 2014 ballot will take a lot of effort and resources. **We need volunteers to help us collect the signatures needed to place a minimum wage increase on the November 2014 ballot.**

Join the hundreds of Nebraskans who have already volunteered to gather signatures from their family, friends, neighbors and co-workers by visiting www.BetterWagesNebraska.com and pledge to circulate a petition. A member of our campaign team will follow up with you soon.

Nebraska voters deserve the opportunity to weigh in on this critical issue affecting working families, our economy, and our state budget. With your help, we'll be one step closer to making work pay in Nebraska.

work to separate themselves from providing for the general welfare of the population. Firms tend to link their chances of survival to increasing profits, and profits can often be improved by paying workers less, outsourcing production to low-cost countries, standardizing products, reducing product quality, deceiving consumers, etc. Modern financial firms have achieved the ultimate propaganda victory by convincing everyone that moving stocks and bonds around financial markets (the average stock is now held for less than eleven minutes) somehow makes them better off!

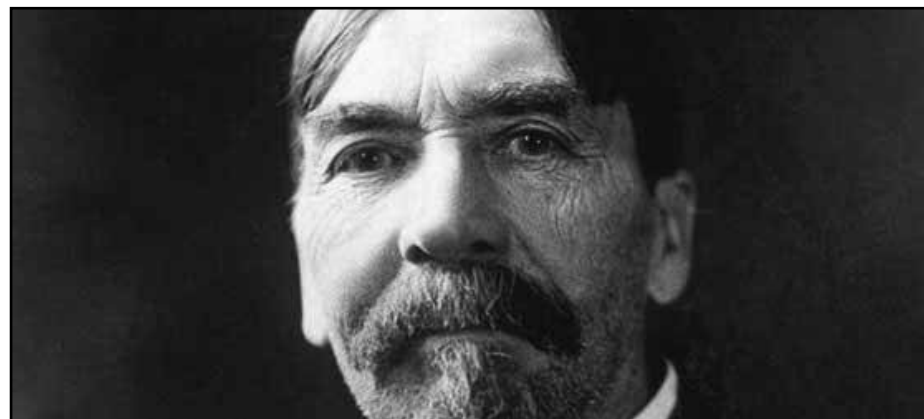
Because he understood what business was all about, Veblen understood much better than Piketty that it would be extremely difficult to change the distribution of income and wealth. Veblen makes us appreciate how unique the New Deal really was. It took an unprecedented economic depression, a unique independent president, and a massive popular uprising to enable government to overcome the power of the business and financial elite. That this elite was able to, after 40 years of deregulation and globalization, undo the New Deal programs (persistently across both Republican and Democratic administrations) further shows how hard it is to achieve economic equality.

We Are an Oligarchy, Not a Democracy

The reality is that business and financial corporations, with their management thoroughly separated from any need or urge to satisfy the needs and wants of their workers, suppliers, customers or the citizenry at large, aggressively use their wealth to influence the media, manipulate the social culture, and buy influence in government. This enables them to create conditions for amassing even more wealth, which they then use to further increase their control of culture, institutions and government, and so forth. That is, they use their wealth to shape the world in ways that further increase profits at the expense of workers and consumers.

The scope of corporate control in the U.S. is vividly depicted by Martin Gilens and Page of Princeton University and Benjamin Page of Northwestern University. These professors of political science performed a tedious, but fundamentally straightforward, exercise to find out who really drives government political decisions

and economic policies. Gilens and Page identified 1,779 different policy issues in the U.S., carefully classified these policies as favoring the interests of wealthy elite or the average (50th percentile in the income distribution) member of society, and then traced which of these policy



Thorstein Bunde Veblen (born Torsten Bunde Veblen; July 30, 1857 – August 3, 1929) was an American economist and sociologist, and leader of the institutional economics movement. Besides his technical work he was a popular and witty critic of capitalism, as shown by his best known book The Theory of the Leisure Class (1899).

issues were actually acted upon by Congress and the president. Using straightforward statistical analysis, they find zero correlation between enacted laws and policies and the interests of the average citizen and a very significant correlation between enacted laws and policies and the interests of business and the wealthy elite.

Gilens and Page thus conclude that the U.S. is not a democracy; it is an oligarchy. Specifically, they conclude:

What do our findings say about democracy in America? They certainly constitute troubling news for advocates of 'populistic' democracy, who want governments to respond primarily or exclusively to the policy preferences of their citizens. In the United States, our findings indicate, the majority does not rule—at least not in the causal sense of actually determining policy outcomes. When a majority of citizens disagrees with economic elites and/or with organized interests, they generally lose. Moreover, because of the strong status quo bias built into the U.S. political system, even when fairly large majorities of Americans favor policy change, they generally do not get it. (Gilens and Page (2014), "Testing Theories of American

Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens," forthcoming in Perspectives on Politics.)

Hence, while polls suggest a great majority of Americans want healthcare for all, we get a costly new healthcare program that forces a few more people

Veblen would predict, our government, in close cooperation with business elites, is putting together two new trade agreements whose terms greatly favor capital over labor—that is, whose terms exactly contradict Piketty's policy suggestion of taxing capital more and uniformly across countries. The oligarchic system is undoubtedly powerful.

Unfortunately, Veblen did not provide a blueprint for how we can get our democracy back—an obvious necessity if we are to forcibly reduce the degrees of separation between human well-being and the aims of business organizations.

How we achieve a popular democracy is something we need to figure out for ourselves.

Will we need another national emergency (like we had during the Great Depression), another social uprising that mobilizes and unites the public (instead of atomized 'complaint shoppers' acting on their own), and some authentically independent political leaders (instead of the business tools we now have in office) to change the system?

It's hard to tell what will work. Voting for the least of two evils clearly does not work. Perhaps climate change will be the emergency that triggers the unified popular reaction that will wrestle control of our government and culture away from the business and financial elite.

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2014 Legislative Wrap-Up

by Tessa Foreman, NFP Legislative Monitor

Overall we had mixed success with our advocacy efforts this session, but we worked with others and succeeded in getting some of the most intractable measure passed, especially those relating to the judicial and correctional system, efforts to suppress the votes of minorities and young voters, and efforts to reduce significantly taxes on the rich. Here is a look at the social justice measures we supported and opposed:

LB 464 – (Carried over from 2013 session) Make changes juvenile justice system concerning jurisdiction, services for juvenile offenders and their families, and truancy. (Supported) Passed

LB 485 – (Carried over from 2013 session) Prohibit workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation. (Supported) Filibustered on the floor. Vote to end filibuster 26-22 (33 needed). Failed.

LB 662 – Require some Nebraska citizens to show government issued photo ID. (Opposed). Bill was not advanced out of committee

LB 669 and 1086 – transfer money from the Cash Reserve Fund for property tax relief (Opposed). Neither bill was advanced out of committee

LB 721 and LB 1097 – reduce income tax for upper tax brackets. (Opposed) Neither bill was advanced out of committee

LB 812 and LB 960 – eliminate or reduce inheritance tax. (Opposed) Neither bill was advanced out of committee

LB 887 – Create the Wellness in Nebraska Act to expand Medicaid. (Supported). Filibustered on the floor. Vote to end the filibuster 27-20 (33 needed). Failed


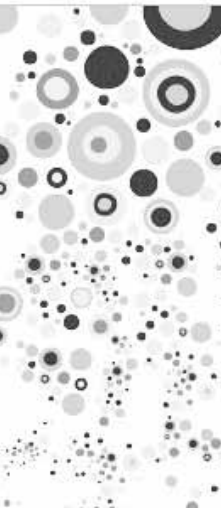
LB 907 – Correctional system reform – comprehensive reform including: establishment of re-entry program to assist individuals leaving correctional facilities; establishment of Vocational and Life Skills Training Program; requirement of Board of Parole to assist individual with transitional needs such as housing, employment, mental health services; and establishes the Nebraska Justice Reinvestment Working Group to work in with the Council of State Government Justice Center to evaluate ways to reduce recidivism, increase public safety and produce better outcomes of those involved in the justice system. (Supported) Passed

LB 932 – Ban public employers from asking about criminal history on initial job application. Amended into LB 907. (Supported) Passed.

LB 943 – Raise the minimum wage. (Supported) Failed to advance from General File, vote 20-20 (25 votes needed) Failed.

LB 956 – Increase the Earned Income Tax Credit (Supported). Bill was not advanced out of committee

LB 999 – Correctional system reform. As amended – authorizes DHHS to look at feasibility of establishing a correctional behavioral health treatment center at the Hastings Regional Center. (Supported original bill and amended version). Passed.

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Jim Jarmusch

Fri, Jun 6 - Thu, Jun 19
NYPHOMANIAC: VOLUME I & II
Lars von Trier

Fri, Jun 20 - Thu, Jun 26
FOR NO GOOD REASON
Charlie Paul

Fri, Jun 20 - Thu, Jul 3
BLUE RUIN
Jeremy Saulnier

Fri, Jun 27 - Thu, Jul 3
JOE
David Gordon Green

Fri, Jul 4 - Thu, Jul 10
YOUNG & BEAUTIFUL
François Ozon

Fri, Jul 4 - Thu, Jul 10
A HARD DAY'S NIGHT
Richard Lester

Fri, Jul 18 - Thu, Jul 24
BIG MEN
Rachel Boynton

What's HOT, conclusion

“We cannot afford to lose another decade,” said Ottmar Edenhofer, a German economist and co-chairman of the committee that wrote the report, quoted in the *New York Times*. “If we lose another decade, it becomes extremely costly to achieve climate stabilization.” In the meantime, diplomats and scientists have been talking about negotiating a world climate treaty next year that may take effect in 2020. Based on past performance, with its dance of diddling nation-states asserting their own self-interests, that’s a best case.

The last several global climate conferences have dissolved in fits of nationalistic hubris. Will our inability to work

together be our undoing?

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Bruce E. Johansen is Jacob J. Isaacson Professor at the UNO and author of *The Encyclopedia of Global Warming Science and Technology* (2009).

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COINTELPRO Burglars Come Forward to Solve the Biggest FBI Mystery

As this review of The Burglary: This Discovery of J. Edgar Hoover's Secret FBI chronicles, the Bureau's "COINTELPRO" program in its final years directly targeted the Black Panthers—including Omaha activists Mondo we Langa (formerly David Rice) and Ed Poindexter who are both serving life sentences for the alleged murder of Omaha Police office Larry Minard. Newly released documents show that Hoover personally ordered the withholding of evidence from an FBI Laboratory report in order to facilitate the two men's conviction. This article by Michael Richardson appeared on examiner.com January 8, 2014.

Members of the "Citizens' Commission to Investigate the FBI," a burglary team, that liberated secret counterintelligence documents code-named COINTELPRO came forward after nearly 43 years of silence. On Jan. 7, 2014, the biggest mystery in the history of the Federal Bureau of Investigation was solved with the publication of *The Burglary: The Discovery of J. Edgar Hoover's Secret FBI* by Betty Medsger, a former Washington Post reporter who first published stolen FBI documents two weeks after their theft.

Medsger told *NBC*, "These documents were explosive... The FBI was never the same."

In a scene worthy of a Hollywood thriller, on March 8, 1971, an eight-member team wearing suits and carrying suitcases, broke into a satellite FBI office in Media, Pennsylvania and carted off hundreds of pages of COINTELPRO documents revealing a lengthy list of dirty tricks and surveillance by agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation under orders from Director J. Edgar Hoover.

Hoover was furious over the break-in and shut down dozens of satellite offices as a result. Hoover assigned his Inspector General, Mark "Deep Throat" Felt, to investigate the theft. Hoover was certain that anti-war activists Daniel and Phillip

Berrigan were responsible. Over two hundred FBI agents were dispatched in a massive investigation, the largest in Bureau history up to that time. The investigation spanned five years until the FBI moved on. Until now the break-in was never solved.

By 1971 the clandestine counterintelligence operation consumed vast amounts of FBI resources and targeted thousands of individuals. The most lethal operations of COINTELPRO were directed at the Black Panthers.

One member of the Citizens' Commission was John Raines who told *NBC* that they exposed ongoing crimes by the FBI. Raines said, "We did because somebody had to do it."

The burglary was the idea of William C. Davidon, a professor of physics at Haverford College. Davidon assembled a team over the summer of 1970. They spent months studying the office building, clocking the activities of tenants and plotting getaways. Davidon died in 2013.

Bonnie Raines posed as a Swarthmore student and cased the inside of the office two weeks before the break-in while visiting with the Special Agent-in-Charge. Raines told the agent she was studying employment opportunities in the FBI women.

Keith Forsyth was the team lock-pick but was unable to open a new office lock so he took a crowbar to another entrance. Forsyth told *NBC*, "When you talked to people outside the movement about what the FBI was doing, nobody wanted to believe it. There was only one way to convince people that it was true, and that was to get it in their handwriting."

Bob Williamson was the fifth member of the team to go public. Three members of the Citizens' Commission

have decided to remain unidentified. All eight were anti-war activists.

The team ransacked the FBI office like clockwork and quickly stuffed their suitcases with confidential files, unaware of the full scope of COINTELPRO and its wide sweep of individuals as targets

dispersed never to meet again. It would take several years of litigation by *NBC* reporter Carl Stern to pry out the details of COINTELPRO only hinted at in the Media documents.

J. Edgar Hoover launched COINTELPRO in 1956 against the Communist Party. By 1971 the clandestine counterintelligence operation consumed vast amounts of FBI resources and targeted thousands of individuals. The most lethal operations of COINTELPRO were directed at the Black Panthers.

A spokesman for the FBI said that "a number of events during that era, including the Media burglary, contributed to changes to how the FBI identified and addressed domestic security threats, leading to reform of the FBI's intelligence policies and practices and the creation of investigative guidelines by the Department of Justice."

for counterintelligence measures. Holed up for ten days in a farmhouse in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, the team poured over the mass of documents selecting material for release. Then the group

Paul Olson, conclusion

recently, *Consortium News*, unsupported by advertising and the establishment, has published a series of penetrating articles by Robert Parry in which he details how the press has been manipulated.

Only *C-SPAN*, among the major media outlets available generally, seems exempt from gilding the lily, partly because people speak on *C-SPAN* unfiltered. Recently, I saw a program on it, featuring Elliott Abrams—that old villain of Iran-Contra times—and other B'nai B'rith representatives, speaking of the rise of neo-Nazi style anti-Semitism in the Ukraine and similar Russian anti-Jewish feeling in Russia. Abrams and others argued that Jewish people in the area should get out as quickly as possible.

The Ukraine is our baby. We put in its government. Though the administration and the Republicans have both described it as a democracy, democracies do not create circumstances where their minorities feel that they have to get out. Some Socialist Workers Party people with whom I dialogue say that the ferment in the Ukraine gives workers in its mines, energy sectors and agricultural sectors space to organize. Perhaps so. But the really powerful organizing that is going on is sponsored by the West to get Ukraine out of Russia's ambit (even at the cost of a possible war) and by Putin to keep it in. And in this organizing, the American press is a co-conspirator—not an observer and recorder. That is how one gets a populace ready to fight.

Your Foundation Speaks

by Loyal Park, Nebraska Peace Foundation President

Nebraska Peace Foundation (NPF) was established in 1985 to allow contributors to deduct their donations for the educational work of Nebraskans for Peace (NPF) from their income and not have to pay tax on that portion of their income.

Also IRS rules allow avoiding capital gains tax on appreciated investments when those investments are donated directly to charities such as NPF. This applies to stocks, real estate and many investments that have increased in value over the years.

Withdrawals from traditional IRAs are taxed as income, but by designating NPF as the beneficiary or contingent beneficiary of your traditional IRA, funds can transfer to NPF tax free at the time of your death.



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Speaking Our Peace

I despise blaming the press:

“Liberal media bias made the problem”; “*The Times* quoted me out of context”; “The media just made up that.”

The chatter goes on in every political campaign and struggle. Yet, the press in times of near war, when lives are at stake, is none too reliable.

Almost every recent U.S. war began with an allegedly precipitating enemy act that required national action: sinking the “Maine”; exploding the “Lusitania”; North Korea’s ‘unprovoked’ invasion of South Korea; the “Gulf of Tonkin” ‘attack,’ and Iraq’s ‘making’ WMDs. Even before World War II, Roosevelt probably knew that the Japanese fleet lay close to Pearl Harbor.

The fabrications and partial reconstructions used to justify wars lead to real deaths—sons and daughters and parents in villages all over the world. The Spanish **DID NOT** sink the Maine; the ‘neutral’ Lusitania **DID** carry arms to the allies; South Korea, as I. F. Stone and Bruce Cumings later demonstrated, **partially provoked** the Korean War through sorties against North Korea; and U.S. administrations **invented** the Gulf of Tonkin episode and Iraq’s weapons

of mass destruction. There died a myriad for these lies.

The prodigy is not U.S. administration lies. We expect Washington to lie. The prodigy is the failure of the American press to expose the falsehoods. Why did the *New York Times*, that great ‘newspaper of record,’ accept Judith Miller’s stories about the Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction (fed to her by Scooter Libby and shadowy CIA types) without requiring that a devil’s advocate scrupulously examine her shallow claims. Why, in the case of the *Lusitania*, did so few newspapers examine what William Jennings Bryan suspected: that Wilson lied about its having no weapons bound for England when the Germans sunk it. Why so little serious questioning all round?

The job of the press is vigilance. Without journalistic vigilance, citizens turn into a military-industrial crowd pushed into the street, running out of fear.

Now we verge toward a Ukrainian war. Russia appears to be the exclusive villain—its thugs knocking out windows and burning buildings in eastern Ukraine, its tanks on the move, its Putin looking bullyish and brutal. But are the appearances altogether true? Of course Russia is partially to blame, but are we blameless? And should the press

report our role?

We are not blameless. The U.S. and Western press have not said that the West and the European Union (and NOT Russia) artificially forced former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich to choose between a European and a Russian trade agreement. The press has not told how, when (also under pressure from Russia) Yanukovich chose the Russian agreement, both Ukrainian liberals and neo-Nazis started the thuggish “Maidan rebellion” and used Ukrainian neo-Nazi militias to drive out a duly-elected president—albeit a crook—thereby giving them four ‘new government’ cabinet seats. But they have said that, when Russian and pro-Russian thugs set up their similar Maidan-style thuggery in Eastern Ukrainian cities, they are pro-Russian or Russian thugs.

The conventional press has not spoken of the fact that Ukraine possesses Europe’s third-largest shale gas reserves, 42 trillion cubic feet (source: *U.S. Energy Information Administration*) and that Big Oil wants to frack away there.

The conventional press that I read did not describe how, according to State Department’s Victoria Nuland herself, the U.S. government funded the Ukrainian up-

rising with billions of dollars of dollars (<http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article37599.htm>). Nuland, even in February before Yanukovich fled the Ukraine, was taped talking to the U.S. Ukrainian ambassador about the kind of puppet government headed by Arseniy Yatseniuk (now the interim Prime Minister of Ukraine) we should install. When Putin assembled his tanks along the Ukrainian border, the press called it intimidation. When the West moved fighter jets into Poland and Eastern Europe, the press calls it reinforcing democracy.

I recently sent a guest editorial to the *Omaha World-Herald* on neo-Nazi elements in the Ukraine. The *World-Herald* turned it down, perhaps with good reason, but they have given us little of balance. They are not unusual in the Western press. Prior to the latest heating up of the Ukrainian crisis, the *Nation* magazine, as early as February 11, 2014, published a long article documenting how indifferent to objectivity the Western press has become in describing Ukrainian tensions. More

conclusion on page 11