Climate Change Threatens National Security

Retired Rear Admiral David Titley, who served as the U.S. Navy’s senior “Oceanographer” and “Navigator” during his career, discussed the peril climate change poses to America’s national security in a seminar at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln October 30. Presenting on the topic “Climate Change and National Security: People Not Polar Bears,” the military expert and fellow of the American Meteorological Society, detailed how climate change is no longer some remote, abstract threat, but is already impacting Americans’ everyday lives.

The accompanying editorial, which originally appeared in the July 6, 2014 Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, touches upon many of the points Admiral Titley addressed in his UNL seminar. Upon his retirement from the Navy in 2012, Titley became the founding director of the “Center for Solutions to Weather and Climate Risk” at Penn State University.

Climate change is an accelerating threat to national security. That’s the finding of a recent report by the CNA Corporation’s Military Advisory Board, a panel I serve on along with some of our country’s most senior retired military leaders.

Each of us is a hard-nosed leader with decades of experience evaluating national security risks. We have been keeping an eye on climate change for years, first reporting on it as a potential national security threat in 2007.

Since then, we have seen the scientific consensus continue to develop and solidify, while signatures of a warming world—from global temperature trends to severe weather events—strongly suggest that our climate is already changing. And we are increasingly worried about the lack of comprehensive action by the United States and the global community.

The changing climate is already serving as a catalyst for conflict. Consider, for example, the severe drought in the years leading up to the civil war in Syria. The drought didn’t cause the war, but it certainly served as a destabilizing factor.

Struggles for control of food, water and energy supplies escalate tensions between ethnic groups, religious groups and nations. And as we’re seeing in Iraq, ancient tensions can flare up into deadly conflict.

I used to be something of a skeptic about climate change. I have a Ph.D in meteorology. I know how complicated the weather system is and how difficult it is to predict accurately the weather even a few days in advance.

But climate is not about predictions of a specific day’s weather months or years in the future. It’s understanding the trends: hotter or colder, wetter or drier, trends in sea level rise and in severe storms.

U.S. Navy Rear Admiral David Titley (Retired)

“The changing climate is already serving as a catalyst for conflict.”

What’s HOT in Global Warming? p. 6
Wise Words from Albert Einstein:
   New Technology May Not Solve All Our Problems p. 7
Cultural Humility p. 8
What We’ve Been Up to p. 9
Speaking Our Peace p. 12
Climate Change & National Security

Over the years, scientific findings on climate change have built to the point where we simply cannot afford to ignore them. And this is true no matter what your politics might be. The climate doesn’t care about politics.

I had the privilege to initiate the Navy’s “Task Force on Climate Change.” In the Navy, we found it important to step away from the emotions and the politics of the issue. We worked to evaluate the changing climate like we’d evaluate any other change the Pentagon needs to deal with, like a coup that topples a political regime or a shift in a fragile region’s demographics or economy.

So we’d look at, for example, rising sea levels. This century, global sea levels are projected to rise several feet. Naval bases and installations around the world—along with the communities that support them—will be affected, and we need to plan for that.

Climate change affects military readiness, strains base resilience, creates missions in new regions of the world and increases the likelihood that our armed forces will be deployed for humanitarian missions. In many cases it also threatens our infrastructure and affects our economy. And our continued reliance on the fossil fuels whose consumption leads to climate change tethers our nation’s hands on the world stage and tethers us to nations that do not always have our best interests at heart.

Climate scientists tell us we can still head off the worst effects of climate change. We can become more energy efficient and move toward cleaner sources of energy in ways that make economic sense. We can work on adaptation strategies to protect people and resources in the face of the climate change that is already locked in.

But we need to get moving. Last year was the fourth warmest on record. It was the 37th year in a row that global average temperatures were above the long-term average. All of the top 10 warmest years on record have been logged since 1998.

The climate is changing. We can do something about it. For the sake of our nation and the world, we must act.

— Professor David Titley
Director, Center for Solutions to Weather & Climate Risk
UNL Authors State Climate Assessment

In the 2013 Legislative Session, State Senator Ken Haar introduced—and led the adoption of—the first bill addressing climate change in statehouse history. The bill, LB 583, directed state government’s “Climate Assessment and Response Committee” to produce a scientific assessment of the projected impact of climate change on Nebraska by September 2014. Forty thousand dollars was appropriated to enlist the expertise of climatologists at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

When the committee (at the behest of the State Department of Agriculture) restricted the scope of the assessment to ‘non-human influences’ however, the university refused to be party to such an unscientific study and funded its own independent report. This past fall, in compliance with the timeline stipulated in the bill, the university reported its findings—not only to the committee, but to the general public.

“Understanding and Assessing Climate Change: Implications for Nebraska” has now become the authoritative scientific statement on climate change for state government. In a December 11, 2014 Lincoln Journal Star editorial entitled “Turn climate change challenges into opportunities” (reprinted below), Senator Haar summarized the key findings in the university’s report.

The Nebraska Climate Assessment and Response Committee made the correct decision by adopting the University of Nebraska-Lincoln report “Understanding and Assessing Climate Change: Implications for Nebraska” and forwarding it to the Legislature.

The report, compiled by leading climate scientists at UNL’s Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, evaluates and summarizes the existing scientific literature related to our changing climate, with emphasis on its implications for Nebraska. It will help pave the way forward for Nebraskans to adapt and mitigate the impact of climate change on our state.

Report highlights:

- There is strong scientific consensus that the earth is experiencing accelerated climate change at the present time and that human activity is the main contributor of emissions that cause climate change.
- Fossil fuel combustion, particularly from electricity generation and transportation, is the major contributor of carbon dioxide, the primary greenhouse gas.
- The extent and impact of future climate change will depend heavily on what is done to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Average temperatures in Nebraska are expected to increase by 4 to 5 degrees Fahrenheit (if emissions are kept low) or by 8 to 9 degrees Fahrenheit (high-emission scenarios) by the last quarter of the 21st Century (2071-99).
- Agriculture, Nebraska’s leading economic driver, will be heavily affected by climate change. Increased temperatures will lead to increasing demand for water and put stress on plants and animals. And changing crop growth cycles will require changes in practices for all sectors of the agriculture economy.
- Extreme weather events, such as floods, blizzards and drought, are likely to occur with greater frequency.
- Projected reduction in snowpack in the Rocky Mountains due to a reduction in precipitation is a major concern, because it is likely to result in decreased flows in the Platte and Missouri rivers during the summer months.
- Fortunately, we can turn these challenges into opportunities that benefit the people of Nebraska, if we do it right.
- Some examples of common-sense planning for climate change:
  - Nebraska has world class wind resources and some of the best water resources in the United States. The Omaha Public Power District responded to input from their customer-owners by crafting an energy plan which includes approximately 800 megawatts of wind energy. This will generate more than $5 million in annual property taxes while also providing millions of dollars in lease payments to farmers and ranchers and creating 80 to 100 permanent jobs in rural communities. In addition to the fact that wind generation emits no greenhouses gases and doesn’t use water, the best part of this plan is that it is the lowest-cost option for their customer-owners.
  - Protecting our water resources is also a significant part of our effort to adapt to a changing climate. Nebraska is home to the Ogallala Aquifer, the nation’s largest freshwater aquifer, and we are blessed with a vast web of rivers in our state. Fortunately, Nebraska is taking proactive steps to address our water issues, including recent efforts of the Legislature’s Water Funding Task Force.
  - The science is clear. And as the report notes, “the fact that climate change has become a highly politicized issue has no bearing on the reality of human-induced climate change.” The consequences of failing to respond appropriately to this report could be disastrous for us, for our children, for our grandchildren and for all future generations. I encourage policy-makers from all points of view and at all levels to read “Understanding and Assessing Climate Change: Implications for Nebraska” in order to craft responses to mitigate the impacts and develop opportunities that arise from the challenges that climate change holds for Nebraska. In so doing, we can build a better future for all Nebraskans.

Senator Ken Haar
District 21
This past December, the Lincoln Electric System presented an early holiday gift to both its customer owners and our beleaguered climate with the groundbreaking announcement that, starting in 2016, 48 percent of LES’ retail energy would be coming from renewable sources. This is big news. We are unaware of any utility in the country that is getting virtually half of its energy from renewables. The following article by Kelley Porter, Manager of Customer and Corporate Communication at LES, details this historic development.

LES has a long history of responsible power supply and resource planning, as well as environmental stewardship. That manifests itself in a variety of ways, including a diverse power supply portfolio—geographically diverse as it covers four states, and diverse in fuel sources of hydro, coal, wind, landfill gas and natural gas.

On December 19, 2014, LES announced it finalized power purchase agreements for an additional 173 megawatts of wind energy and 5 megawatts of solar photovoltaic energy will be added to its power supply resource portfolio by 2016.

In addition to being environmentally friendly, the projects will also save customers money. “When viewed as a package, our wind and solar contracts are expected to save LES customer-owners approximately $429 million over the next 25 years,” said Kevin Wailes, LES Administrator & CEO.

The wind additions are spread across two wind contracts secured with the same developer, Invenergy, and involve the 73 megawatt Prairie Breeze II Wind Energy Center, located in northeastern Nebraska, and 100 MW Buckeye Wind Energy Center, located in north-central Kansas. In August, LES issued a Request for Proposal for up to 200 megawatts of wind energy. LES received 15 responses encompassing a total of 105 distinct proposals.

These projects will bring LES’ total wind portfolio to 304 MW, increase the utility’s renewable generation portfolio to the equivalent of 48 percent of LES’ retail energy, and reduce coal resources from 43 percent of LES’s installed nameplate capacity to 34 percent.

“This is a very opportune time for LES to invest in more wind energy due to future uncertainties of federal Production Tax Credits for wind developers, potential additional regulations on power plant emissions, and the volatility of fossil fuel prices.” said Wailes.

The 5 megawatt solar array will be located about 75th and W. Holdrege Street, visible from Interstate 80. LES will leverage savings achieved through its wind agreements to help supplement customer participation in the LES SunShares program, which allowed LES to obtain optimal pricing for the solar project.

This project will provide LES with valuable solar experience and will be the largest solar installation in Nebraska.

The solar agreement was in response to an LES survey indicating custom-
ers were willing to support more local solar energy. More than 40 business and residential customers take advantage LES’ renewable generation and net-metering programs, but Lincoln has a lot of older neighborhoods with large trees. Sunshares offers an easy, affordable alternative for customers who would like to be involved with a solar project but don’t have the ideal circumstances.

A part of the utility’s marketing efforts included enlisting local environmental groups and individuals who had pushed for the project to speak to community groups. Promotion also included a two-month blitz of social media, radio interviews, posters, newspaper ads and bill stuffers.

Lincoln Mayor Chris Beutler said this was one of the most aggressive renewable energy portfolios. “We have worked as partners in the landfill gas-to-energy project and the new electric vehicle charging stations,” said Mayor Chris Beutler. “The wind and solar announcements today are another powerful demonstration that LES continues to move toward a more sustainable future.”

LES and the City have worked together on a variety of renewable generation and demand reduction initiatives over the past few years, focusing efforts on sustainability alongside reliability and financial stewardship. These steps benefit rate-payers who continue to enjoy affordable, reliable electricity, noted Mayor Beutler.

LES also added 50 kilowatts of solar energy through a rooftop solar installation commissioned in December 2014 on its service facility.

“As this industry changes, we will continue to find a way to balance our mix of resources, control costs, ensure the reliable delivery of power, and keep rates affordable for LES’ customer-owners,” said Wailes. “LES makes decisions to reflect the values of the community, including environmental stewardship through investments in renewable energy and the promotion of energy efficiency.”

The following “Local View: City dwellers can grow food in a risky climate” appeared in the Sunday, November 30, 2014 edition of the Lincoln Journal Star.

It’s been a year of bad news for the security of our food supply.

In March, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reported that “Throughout the 21st century, climate-change impacts are projected to further erode food security—particularly in urban areas and emerging hot spots of hunger.” All aspects of food security, the report stated, are potentially affected by climate change, “including food access, utilization and price stability.”

Then in May, the Chicago Council on Global Affairs’ Agricultural Development Initiative (co-chaired by former Nebraska Congressman Doug Bereuter) issued a report warning that “Climate change will bring hotter temperatures, changing rainfall patterns and more frequent natural disasters. Farmers everywhere will be affected.” If these challenges are not addressed, “consumers will need to be prepared for higher food prices and potential food shortages.”

A month later, two of Bereuter’s Republican colleagues, Henry Paulson (George W. Bush’s Treasury Secretary) and George Shultz (Ronald Reagan’s Secretary of State), released a risk assessment on the perils climate change poses to agriculture: “Our research shows that under the ‘business as usual’ scenario and assuming no significant adaptation by farmers … the Midwest region as a whole faces likely yield declines of up to 19 percent by midcentury and 63 percent by the end of the century.”

The disconcerting report was followed in September by the release of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s climate assessment for Nebraska, which projected that by midcentury (2041-2070) typical summer temperatures will be “equivalent to those experienced during the 2012 drought and heat wave... which was the driest and hottest year for the state based on the climatological record going back to 1895.”

And finally, building on its 2010 designation of climate change as a “national security threat,” the Department of Defense in October cautioned that “Rising global temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, climbing sea levels, and more extreme weather events will intensify the challenges of global instability, hunger, poverty and conflict. They will likely lead to food and water shortages, pandemic disease, disputes over refugees and resources, and destruction by natural disasters in regions across the globe.”

In short, our global food supply is at risk. And that’s a problem, because we can no longer feed ourselves locally.

More than 60 years ago, even a renowned farm state like Nebraska gave up growing food for our own diet. We’re still an agricultural titan. But with the wholesale shift to commodity agriculture, we’re growing feed for animals and corn for ethanol—not food for our tables.

As much as anyone living in New York City and Los Angeles, we depend on the global food system to stock our pantries and dish up our meals. Like the rest of America, we’re getting half of our produce—including 70 percent of the lettuce—from the California Central Valley (which is, incidentally, mired in a record-breaking 500-year drought). Even more telling, $4 billion of the $4.4 billion we Nebraskans annually spend on food is leaving the state. We’re not buying food that’s from here. Instead, we’re blithely counting on some faceless, anonymous source to supply all our meals and snacks.

But that’s not going to work anymore. Unless we want to risk going hungry, we’re going to need to start quickly rebuilding our food system. And just as eating is a ‘local’ act (stuffing our mouths is about as local as you can get), we need a food supply that’s locally based as well.

As consumers, we need to be supporting our local farmers and ranchers and building the market for locally produced food. But those of us in the city can’t get by just being ‘eaters’ any more, either. We’ve got to start pulling our own weight in the food system and begin producing what we can.

While we’ll always be dependent on the countryside for our grains and dairy and meat, what we can produce in the city we can produce better than anyone else. We can grow the perishable items (particularly the lettuce greens) that are the hardest to keep on the grocery store shelf. And because they’re grown and harvested right where we live, they’re fresher and more nutritious.

All over town, from the grass front lawn to the sidewalk space in the city right-of-way, there’s room for beds of lettuce and spinach, carrots and peppers, onions, tomatoes and potatoes. And with the onset of climate change and the threat of food shortages, it’s none too soon to be trying our hands at a little gardening and learning something about our food.

It’s what we as city dwellers can do to help ensure that in the anxious days to come we’ll know where our next meal is coming from.

Tim Rinne is the state coordinator of Nebraskans for Peace. He along with 20 families from his block and across the street created the Hawley Hamlet neighborhood garden between 25th and 26th, ‘T’ and ‘U’ Streets in Lincoln.
Tar Sands: Signature of the Oil Junkies

By the time this column reaches print, our newly Republican Senate and more-Republican House of Representatives will be convening in Washington, D.C., and doubtless making a political object of pressuring President Barack Obama to sign off on the Keystone XL Pipeline. This political pantomime has by now become well rehearsed: friends of the Earth versus the Oil Junkies.

The major reservation about the Keystone XL in our area is classic NIMBY (‘Not in My Backyard’). Farmers don’t want their water polluted by errant oil. This much is true, but Keystone is important for other reasons as well. It is part of an attitude that favors continued (and accelerating) exploitation of fossil fuels in every form possible—and their greenhouse-gas emissions, without regard for our climatic future.

It also favors turning increasing stretches of Alberta, including several indigenous homelands, into wastelands so that fossil-fuel corporations can manufacture combustible products and turn out waste carbon dioxide. By 2013, one-third of Alberta’s economy was tied in some way to the tar sands, including royalties worth more than $4 billion during its 2012-2013 fiscal year.

Native peoples in Alberta have found some of their lands devastated by tar sands mining to the point that they have been compared to a moonscape. Native peoples in the United States also have taken a leading role in opposing the Keystone XL, which is being proposed to carry tar sands oil from Alberta to the U.S. Gulf Coast for refining. Trucks carrying equipment to the tar sands fields have been blocked, and several arrests have taken place on Nez Perce land in Idaho and the Lakotas’ Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota.

“For a vast stretch of western Canada’s boreal forest, the fight over extracting bitumen has already been lost. The question is, how much more will we lose?” wrote Andrew Nikiforuk, (a Canadian journalist and author of The Energy of Slaves: Oil and the New Servitude) in the New York Times. After intensive tar sands mining accelerated after 2000, almost 2 million acres of this forest have been cleared or degraded, according to Global Forest Watch.

A Treeless Wasteland

After the forests have been removed, the landscape is reduced to a treeless wasteland. The bitumen harvest begins with drilling deep into frozen ground that is melted with water that has been heated to steam, after which it is pumped to the surface. Some of the bitumen that the Cree once heated to repair leaks in their canoes lies near the surface, from which it is removed by electric shovels the size of large buildings, then transported to mills that remove the sands in trucks that carry 400 tons at a time. Imagine their gas mileage. The toxic sludge that comes out of the mills is dumped into lakes. As Nikiforuk wrote: “Along the Athabasca River, more than a dozen of these enormous waste ponds hold back this industrial excrement. Pollutants in these lakes are leaking into groundwater and the Athabasca River... Come the spring melt, these pollutants rush into the Athabasca River. A growing ring of mercury contamination surrounds the project.”

While Canadian law requires reclamation of this land, Nikiforuk wrote that “The reclamation of these blown-up forests remains a nightmarish challenge. Nobody really knows how to put a boreal forest back together once it has been stripped of its trees, soil, wetlands and fish-bearing rivers. More than half of these devastated forests contained peat lands.

Those landscapes took thousands of years to form. They also fed caribou, stored carbon, recharged groundwater, protected biological diversity and acted as protection against floods. The miners plan to substitute forest lowlands with artificial hills constructed of sand and petroleum coke. The hills will be topped with a salt-tolerant plantation forest. Mining pits filled with toxic waste and topped with freshwater will pass as wetlands. The industry has called this crude terraforming a “sustainable landscape that is equal to or better than how we found it.”

“The Complete Eradication of an Ecosystem”

British Columbia photographer Garth Lenz said “I’d heard about the tar sands but I hadn’t been, so I went there and spent a couple of days and was pretty much flabbergasted by the scale of the devastation and the impacts. I had photographed industrial devastation all over, including some of the most massive clear-cuts on the planet, right in British Columbia and in Chile and Patagonia, so I’d seen that massive industrialization of the landscape on a huge, huge scale,” he said. “But I was completely unprepared for what I found. Because this is just completely off-the-grid crazy—the scale is unbelievable.”

Lenz pointed out that tar sands development harms fish and caribou upon which indigenous peoples rely. “It’s the complete eradication of an ecosystem,” Lenz said. “I mean, the forest is clear-cut, the wetlands are drained and dredged, the soil is dug up, replaced by massive mines and toxic ponds which you can see from outer space.” Chief Bill Erasmus of the Yellowknife Northwest Territories in northern Canada said that “Our people, in some areas, can no longer eat the fish... Our people can no longer drink the water. Water levels are decreasing. Where I’m from, it’s never been like that before.”

Bruce E. Johansen is Jacob J. Isaacsen Professor at the UNO and author of The Encyclopedia of Global Warming Science and Technology (2009).
Wise Words from Albert Einstein:

New Technology May Not Solve All Our Problems

by Hank Van den Berg
UNL Professor of Economics

When I worked as market planning director for the Singer Company in Brazil many years ago, the President of Singer do Brasil replied to anyone who brought up major problems by saying: “There are no problems, only opportunities, and it is your job to find those opportunities.” This optimistic view of the future often rings true to our ears because it reflects the widely-accepted story that human beings are exceptional problem solvers.

This optimism about technology as the fix-all for everything has been reinforced by our faith in the profit motive within the free market capitalist system. That is, not only are humans smart and innovative, but we have devised an economic system with strong incentives for profit-motivated individuals to compete in a glorious race to be the first to come up with the next technological advance to make humanity even better off. After indoor plumbing, dishwashers, and smart phones, what won’t those brilliant entrepreneurs and corporate R&D departments think of next? Surely some technological fix will always be forthcoming.

The problem with the story is that sometimes the problems get really difficult. The 20th century, with its two world wars, Great Depression, numerous economic recessions and collapses, and explosion of income inequality, obviously failed to provide the necessary solutions. So it was that in 1982 the Singer Company saw its sales plummet in its emerging markets when the global debt crisis pushed much of Latin America, Africa and South Asia into economic stagnation for more than a decade. As a result, the Singer Company went bankrupt in the mid-1980s. Contrary to what my boss preached, apparently some big problems are not “opportunities”.

I thus returned to graduate school in 1985, and I have been studying economic growth and development ever since. From my experience and research on economic development, it is clear to me that we are still facing very complex problems. No doubt, many corporate CEOs are telling their minions to ‘get to work on those opportunities’—but, not unlike the Singer Company after the 1982 debt crisis, we face problems that do not have easy technological solutions. Worse, some of our problems clearly derive from the very technological progress that we idealize.

Technological Progress ≠ More Human Well-Being

Capitalism operates on the profit motive, and the development of new private businesses depends on an expectation of future profits, hopefully sooner rather than later. Profits are generated by selling something to somebody in the market economy. But, as I have often written in the past, not all economic activity passes through formal competitive markets. And, the fact that we consume natural services and resources without going through markets (that is, we mostly just take without paying) contributes to environmental destruction. This is what has led the environmental economist Herman Daly (From Uneconomic Growth to a Steady-State Economy, Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 2014) to argue that a lot of market profit is earned from fundamentally destructive economic activities because the full costs of production are ignored. Also, because there is no immediate profit in finding ways to mitigate complex environmental problems like global warming or species extinctions, capitalism has no incentive to innovate. Thus, a substantial portion of the new technologies developed over the past two decades have led to the destruction—rather than protection—of our natural environment.

But the failures to deal with the environment constitute just one of the reasons why technological progress fails us. There are also the negative effects of profit-motivated technology on the social fabric that is the foundation of human society. To further illuminate this problem, we appeal to one of the great scientists of the past century: Albert Einstein. After all, he should know a thing or two about technological progress. He also understands the social nature of humans.

Should Economists Be like Physicists?

A running joke within the economics profession is that all economists secretly wish they were physicists. Indeed, economists have become obsessed with mathematics and the simplification of complex economic activities into simple equations, like, say, the gravity equation. Interestingly, the physicist Einstein urged economists to not emulate physicists.

In the first issue of Monthly Review, the socialist journal that had the audacity to begin publishing at the start of what is now known as the ‘McCarthy Era,’ Einstein (“Why Socialism?” Monthly Review 1(1), May, 1949) contrasted science and economics. Where physicists strove to understand a system of unchanging relationships among observable physical variables, economists seek to describe an ever-changing system that is shaped by continually-evolving institutions that are collectively (socially) developed by means of social interactions that vary greatly over time and place. Wrote Einstein:

...the experience which has accumulated since the beginning of the so-called civilized period of human history has—as is well known—been largely influenced and limited by causes which are by no means exclusively economic in nature. For example, most of the major states of history owed the existence to conquest. The conquering peoples established themselves, legally and economically, as the privileged class of the conquered country. They seized for themselves a monopoly of the land ownership and appointed a priesthood from among their own ranks. The priests, in control of education, made the class division of society into a permanent institution and created a system of values by which the people were thenceforth, to a large extent unconsciously, guided in the social behavior.

Hence, economists, unlike physicists, cannot assume there is a single universal framework of relationships that describes every economy, or even that describes any economy throughout time.

Einstein also noted that a field that studies social activity, like economics, must... continued on page 9
A’Jamal Byndon, Board Member of Nebraska for Peace, Policy Research & Innovation, and long-time Community Organizer

Nebraskans for Peace has not always enjoyed a significant participation of people of color during the course of its 45-year history. Over the last six months however, we have identified a State Board member and stakeholders who are actively working to bring more diversity to the organization.

There are many questions that we should be asking ourselves if we truly want to reform and make our state and communities healthy.

Our organizational agenda and image has been recalibrated in our 2015 Priority Plan to enable us to better reach out to these key constituencies.

We are endeavoring to increase the diversity of NFP’s membership by co-sponsoring events with the Omaha-based “Nebraska Families Collaborative” and other organizations working to make Nebraska a better place to live. These events are covering a variety of peace-related issues, including sessions on conflict resolution, reducing violence and helping other communities’ members address social challenges.

“Policy Research and Innovation” (PRI), a community group in Omaha, is embarking on a similar journey to instigate conversations about moving the state and community needle toward social and racial justice. This organization, whose mission is to engage with traditionally disempowered populations in our state, is a natural ally.

Investing our social capital, time and talents on improving communication and understanding among our various populations is requisite for building a foundation of good will and community. For instance, this past December, “Nebraska Voices for Children” hosted a conference entitled “Race Matters” that was attended by NFP’s Omaha Coordinator. The discussion at the conference inspired a dozen of the participants to begin planning a follow-up public forum later this year on the topic of ‘Cultural Humility’ (that will be co-sponsored by Nebraskans for Peace and other agencies and organizations).

More than ever, our diverse communities need opportunities to dialogue among ourselves not only about what brings us together—but also about what distinguishes us and makes us unique. The ‘Cultural Humility’ forum is a crucial first step for airing our respective racial worldviews, with the goal of creating greater social harmony and cohesion.

Authors Robert M. Ortega and Kathleen Coulborn Faller have written an article, “Training Child Welfare Workers from an Intersectional Cultural Humility Perspective: A Paradigm Shift,” that outlines specifically how to create such a circle of influence and engagement. The key is to learn from those whom you serve. A mentality of arrogance that we know all there is about others’ culture is faulty—and counter-productive—thinking. Cultural humility, alternatively, is dynamic and ever changing. Through it, we are constantly learning about other cultures. It constitutes a paradigm shift for listening and engaging in cultural learning, transforming both ourselves and our communities.

There are many questions that we should be asking ourselves if we truly want to reform and make our state and communities healthy. We must first start by asking: What suggestions can be offered to build bridges so more people can learn about cultural issues from the individuals we serve, which in turn help in building bridges? At NFP, we see four pressing issues for 2015.

1. Helping public institutions involve more racially diverse community members in their current activities. The state of Nebraska has a population of 20 percent people of color. Many of our public institutions do not reflect those numbers.

4. Attending other events in the community to help shape the leadership into becoming more community-engaging—and to build leadership with those at the bottom of the social economic system. The conversation changes when the right individuals are included. As that old Social Work saying goes, ‘Not about us without us.’

In the 2014 Race Matters Conference, there was one handout that offered a series of questions from the Anne E. Casey Foundation. The questions that each one of us should be asking ourselves are from their Equity Analysis:

1. Who are the racial/ethnic groups in the area? For this policy/program/practice, what results are desired, and how will each group be affected?

2. Do current disparities exist by race/ethnicity around this issue or closely related ones? How did they get that way? If disparities exist, how will they be affected by this policy/program/practice?

3. For this policy/program/practice, what strategies are being used, and how will they be perceived by each group?

4. Are the voices of all groups affected by the action at the table?

5. Do the answers to # 1 through # 4 work to close the gaps in racial disparities in culturally appropriate inclusive ways? If not, how should the policy/program/practice be revised? If so, how can the policy program/practice be documented in order to offer a model for others?

If more institutions and organizations were utilizing a template such as this—much of the disparity that we see would disappear…and a sense of reconciliation would begin to pervade the race relations in our communities, our public institutions and in the public square.
What We’ve Been Up To

by Paul A. Olson and Tessa Foreman

Our long range and short range goals and activities: the holiday season has discombobulated most of us so we may have been a bit slower in the last few months.

Short range: In the wake of the frequent killing of young black males by police, the Lincoln Chapter has tried to work with the ACLU and the NAACP to mitigate the move toward local police militarization and toward legislation providing for transparency as to the use of federally donated military equipment. The Omaha Chapter, through A’Jamal Byndon, is working along similar lines to encourage peace studies in the schools and the development of community-based policing that will put the police and the neighborhoods together in fighting crime. NFP Omaha’s Race and Violence Taskforce continues to meet, with A’Jamal Byndon chairing the main meetings. Three sub-committees have been formed to work on: 1) Police and Community Violence, chaired by John Else, 2) Community Forums, chaired by A’Jamal; and 3) Youth Violence in Schools and Community, chaired by Mark Welsch. NFP Omaha is collaborating with leaders of several other groups—Black Men United, NAACP, the Malcolm X Foundation and Policy Research & Innovations of Nebraska. In Western Nebraska, Byron Peterson has been hearing about difficulties with police/sheriff staff among native and other minority poor folk and has tried to move folk toward a review of policies needed.

Racism is alive and well in Nebraska. Lecia Brooks from the Southern Poverty Law Center was in Omaha, and Mark Welsch of NFP Omaha attended an event with her and a total of 20 leaders of different groups to talk about race and racism. That evening Ms. Brooks gave a public lecture that well over 300 people attended where she talked about how the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) works to bankrupt hate groups. Since 2000, the number of hate groups has increased by 56 percent. The election of President Obama appears to be a cause in the number of ‘Patriot’ groups rising 813 percent from 2008-2012. Among the 939 known hate groups in the country are the nine hate groups in Nebraska, stretching from Scottsbluff to Omaha.

Speaking of hate, Byron Peterson in Scottsbluff is anticipating opportunities to promote church support for ACLU LGBT rights workshops being ramped up for statewide seminars. Brian Whitecalf and the Central Nebraska Peace Workers have likewise been working on LGBT issues and on the development of the statewide peace park displays in public places.

In this area of the country, we not only seem to hate people of color. We hate poor people. The Lincoln Chapter held a public discussion in October on poverty and the minimum wage that showed how desperate are many Nebraska families. Fortunately, the revised minimum wage did pass in the November elections.

In the area of women’s rights, our staff has been working with the One Billion Rising: Lincoln group to plan for an upcoming event on February 14 to advocate for bringing an end to worldwide violence against women.

Long Range: Climate change affects the likelihood of war and aggression: Nebraskans for Peace helped facilitate a presentation by retired Rear Admiral David Titley at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln October 30. The former Oceanographer of the U.S. Navy and a meteorologist by training, Titley warned that climate change is a national security threat that is already destabilizing world affairs and sparking international conflict. Climate change’s role in fostering food insecurity and food shortages was also the subject of a November Nebraskans for Peace Lincoln Journal Star op-ed and TEDxLincoln talk: (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J0Qq9tyF8).

Our ongoing efforts to encourage public power to shift to non-carbon forms of energy received a huge boost in December with the announcement by the Lincoln Electric System that the utility “has finalized agreements to add 173 megawatts of wind energy and 5 megawatts of solar — which will bring its portfolio to 48 percent renewable energy in 2016.” This announcement, coupled with the Omaha Public Power District’s plan to get at least one third of its generated electricity from renewable sources over the next twenty years, puts these two public power districts in the top tier of ‘green’ utilities nationally. Mark Welsch continues to attend the monthly OPPD committee meetings and to participate in an Omaha coalition that includes the Nebraska Wildlife Federation, Sierra Club, Nebraska Solar Association, 350.org and CCL that works to urge the OPPD board of directors and senior staff to do more to reduce CO2 emissions.

We are busy.

Albert Einstein, continued

deal with ends as well as means:

Science…cannot create ends and, even less, instill them in human beings; science, at most, can supply the means by which to attain certain ends. But the ends themselves are conceived by personalities with lofty ethical ideals and, and—if these ends are not stillborn, but vital and vigorous—are adopted and carried forward by those many human beings who, half unconsciously, determine the slow evolution of society.

In short, an economy is an ever-evolving complex social phenomenon, not static mechanical physical system that scientists can seek to decipher piece by piece. Furthermore, as a socially based system, the participants in the system have a direct interest in understanding the dynamic system that they, along with all their fellow human beings, collectively shape and continually reshape. There are no fixed eternal relationships, some outcomes are preferable to others, and thus economists can help to distinguish which economic policies lead to better social outcomes.

Einstein thus concluded:

…we should be on guard not to overestimate science and scientific methods when it is a question of human problems; and we should not assume that experts are the only ones who have a right to express themselves on questions affecting the organization of society.

Among the problems that people are currently concerned about is the growing social inequality. We have recently seen Thomas Piketty’s Capital in the 21st Century become a bestseller. As Einstein noted, economic issues are not just matters only for “experts,” and clearly there are many human beings who have taken note of the need for change in our economic system. This necessarily takes us back to technology, because it is the technologies developed and applied by for-profit business firms that are responsible for our growing inequality and social alienation.

Technology and Human Well-Being

Among the things that humans provide collectively is technology, and technology in turn shapes economic activity. Technology thus affects the lives of people. An intelligent scientist like Einstein seems to have grasped what many mainstream economists have not, and that is that the institutions
that humans have developed over time shape current economic outcomes. Drawing on the work of non-mainstream economists, including Karl Marx and Thorstein Veblen, Einstein addressed what he saw as the crisis of his time (1949):

The individual has become more conscious than ever of his dependence upon society. But he does not experience this independence as a positive asset, as an organic tie, as a protective force, but rather as a threat to his natural rights, or even to his economic existence. Moreover, his position in society is such that the egotistical drives of his make-up are constantly being accentuated, while his social drives, which are by nature weaker, progressively deteriorate... Man can find meaning in life, short and perilous as it is, only through devoting himself to society.

The economic anarchy of capitalist society as it exists today is, in my opinion, the real source of the evil. We see before us a huge community of producers the members of which are unceasingly striving to deprive each other of the fruits of the collective labor—not by force, but on the whole in faithful compliance with legally established rules.

These rules, along with the other customs, habits, ceremonial events, religious traditions, etc., constitute the institutional framework in which we live and work. This institutional framework has evolved to support the current system of monopoly capitalism, which generates new technologies in order to expand the profits of monopoly capitalists.

Einstein in 1949 observed the trend in social alienation brought about by the technological progress generated within the capitalist system. Sharing in the blame for today’s love affair with technologies that do little to make people feel better about life are economists, who focused on economic growth but paid no attention to how profit-driven technologies have continued to alienate and marginalize people.

**Technology, Social Stability and Peace**

Macroeconomists teach that economic growth is critical to maintaining full employment in our economy, and they trot out models that show permanent economic growth requires that we continually improve our production methods, use resources more efficiently, and lower production costs. With their unrealistic models of market economies to underscore the viability of our capitalist system, economists strongly advocate the use of monetary incentives to induce people to innovate. Tax cuts for the ‘job makers’ as a case in point. We are told that with less regulation and less government interference, our capitalist system will provide the necessary technological innovations to support future economic growth.

But, Einstein noted back in 1949 that “technological progress frequently results in more unemployment rather than in an easing of the burden of work for all.” In today’s global economic environment, the quest for lower costs and greater efficiency are producing economic growth that does not increase employment of labor. Note, for example, the January job market report by the U.S. government: wages declined and overall labor market participation has declined back to the 1970 level despite four decades of increased female labor force participation. A group of Oxford researchers now predicts that almost half of all jobs in the U.S. will be lost because of technological progress over the next 20 years. For example, self-driving vehicles are close to reality, and when they become routine they will put a quarter of a million taxi drivers and 3.5 million truck drivers out of work.

As shown in the data on wages and income developed by the global research effort in which Thomas Piketty participated and on which he based his best-selling book, technological progress has increased the productivity of the tools and machines that we use in providing the goods and services we consume. But, since the 1970s wages have stagnated so that most workers have not received the benefits of the productivity gains. Only a small number of elite members of the labor force, such as highly trained professionals, managers, and some technicians, have seen their wages rise. The owners of capital and the means of production, have gained most of the overall gains.

Piketty does not prescribe a radical approach to the rising inequality; he mostly suggests changes in tax rates. Einstein, on the other hand, points to the need for a social/technological revolution. His reasoning is rather ‘Marxist’ in nature: capitalists develop new technologies to increase profits, and that usually implies finding ways to employ fewer people, not more people, so that more of the gains from production accrue to the owners of the machines—that is, the owners of business. The stagnation in wages that we see is caused by the abundance of unemployed or under-employed labor, or what Marx called the reserve army of the unemployed.

Faced with life in the reserve army, in the late 1800s workers sought solidarity and built unions to counter the power of employers. Today, unions have been destroyed and worker solidarity has been weakened by a pervasive libertarian sense of individualism that glorifies competition rather than cooperation. Individuals, of course, do not stand a chance when they face large corporations in ‘free’ labor markets, consumer markets or financial markets. Wrote Einstein:

*This crippling of individuals I consider the worst evil of capitalism. Our whole*

---

**The Batttle for Whiteclay**

DVD copies of are available from NFP for a suggested donation of $15. Paypal and credit card payments accepted.

Call 402-475-4620, or send written requests to:

Whiteclay DVD, c/o Nebraskans for Peace, 941 ‘O’ Street, Suite 1026, Lincoln, NE 68508
education system suffers from this evil. An exaggerated competitive attitude is inculcated into the student, who is trained to worship acquisitive success as a preparation for his future career.

I am convinced there is only one way to eliminate these grave evils, namely through the establishment of a socialist economy, accompanied by an educational system which would be oriented toward social goals.

Whether we can still talk about a socialist revolution is questionable, given how solidly the capitalist rhetoric has become embedded in our thought processes and how well the capitalist system is built into our culture.

Change will come, if it comes, because of the growing conflicts that the capitalist system is breeding. It may be an environmental disaster or violent social conflict, both of which are trending towards severe disruptions. Environmental collapse will kill millions, and social inequality is destroying our fundamental sense of life as social beings. Right now, we are heading straight towards these kinds of disastrous conflicts because we cannot change the system that is generating them. Profit-motivated innovation and R&D will not, and cannot, give us the technical solutions needed to avert disaster. To the contrary, profit-motivated technological change continues to accelerate us towards and over the cliff.

We need revolutionary new social technologies that move us towards new economic and social systems in which the health of nature and science take precedence. I only regret to inform that Albert Einstein did not provide any suggestions as to how to devise or implement such new social technologies. He only leaves us with this: “The achievement of socialism [which he sharply differentiates from the centralized Soviet system of his time] requires the solution of some extremely difficult socio-political problems.” And then he rubs salt into our wounded hopes for a clear way forward by noting that: “…free and unhindered discussion of the problems has come under a powerful taboo…”

So, if a genius like Einstein will not tell us how to solve the complex problems the invisible hand of capitalism cannot solve, how can we possibly avert disaster?
I have just watched John Kerry’s eloquent French and English condemnations of the Paris massacres and reminders of the freedoms that the French and American revolutions stood for. I applauded his speech and then thought back to my personal history.

In the early ’70s, my secretarial assistant, Miriam Hurst, queried me, “Why is so-and-so (a sidekick in UNL’s institutional research office) prying into your business?” I didn’t know.

About an hour later, a graduate student told me that officers of a federal police agency—I believe the FBI—had waited in his apartment the night before and questioned him about the same matters—his and my teaching and political views. I knew immediately that we were under Big Brother’s dark eye.

The non-police informer’s effort to suborn my staff disturbed me, and I protested to Peter McGrath, dean of faculties at UN-L. As citizen, I had done only what democracy requires—acted on my informed conscience. As teacher, I had stated only what scholarship knows. I had not imported advocacy into the classroom. My student had, I believe, been equally circumspect. Confronted by the University’s president, the informer confessed, and nothing bad happened. Our UNL leaders were honorable. On the larger stage of our country, our leaders have been less honorable.

In ’60s and ’70s civil rights marches the Lincoln police appeared to videotape us—church people, students, union workers, and farmers—trudging with candles down to the Capitol. Occasionally Betty and I noticed our phone doing funny things. We dismissed paranoia over federal surveillance as peace movement hogwash and self-importance.

We may have been wrong.

Betty Metzger’s The Burglary and Laura Poitras’ Citizenfour documentary about Edward Snowden give one second thoughts. The Burglary for the first time tells the full story of the burglary that exposed J. Edgar Hoover’s surveillance and persecution of millions of peace activists, African-American protesters, dissident professors, and students in the 1960s-70s—his FBI’s suborning of informers on college professors, videotaping of local peace marches, creation of crimes attributed to antiwar people, efforts to get Martin Luther King, Jr. to commit suicide, and persecution of actress Jean Seberg until she did commit suicide.

Other examples: the FBI followed all black students at Swarthmore College. It everywhere gathered confidential college files from cooperative college administrators—grades, travels and activities of thousands of peace activist students—all without probable cause. It investigated a U.S. Congressman’s daughter only because she and he opposed Vietnam. ‘Suspicious’ people were fired from the FBI for sweaty hands and or large sideburns.

The ’60s-’70s FBI revelations came from a burglary, conducted by seven good-humored Americans, at FBI offices in Media, Pennsylvania. The FBI never caught the burglars, and their thefts led to the exposure of FBI COINTELPRO persecution of the peace movement and African-American civil rights leaders (COINTELPRO perhaps framed Mondo and Poindexter, now in the Nebraska penitentiary). Predictably, the FBI tried to prevent newspaper publication of the burglary’s findings.

The burglary leads enabled Frank Church’s Senate committee to pass recommendations reining in the FBI and CIA, and temporarily dampened the FBI’s Stasi-like intimidation and persecution of dissent while incompetently fighting crime. (The Media files contained only 1 percent organized crime files and almost 50 percent repression of political dissent). However, neither the CIA nor the FBI reformed permanently, even after the burglary’s revelations and Nixon’s efforts to use the CIA to prevent the FBI’s work on Watergate.

The two agencies now work together with Homeland Security, and give little evidence that either’s competence has improved. Some FBI agents warned the FBI about the 9/11 al Qaida people in the U.S. and were ignored. The CIA warned Bush about Bin Laden’s likely plans, and he ignored them without the CIA publically protesting.

After 9/11, the NSA added encryption surveillance of foreign-domestic written communication and telephone calls. As Poitras’ picture of Snowden’s more recent burglary demonstrates, NSA can surveill “nearly everything a user does on the Internet” including emails, Google use, social media posts, visited websites, emails addresses, and files mailed (“FAQ: What You Need to conclusion on page 11