Pope Francis, Climate & Controversy

“The time for seeking global solutions is running out. We can find suitable solutions only if we act together and in agreement.”
- Pope Francis

by Bruce E. Johansen

Pope Francis’ major encyclical (teaching letter) on the environment (focusing on climate change) is not unusual for its scientific content—many individuals and groups have emphasized the serious nature of global warming in hundreds of reports. However, the rollout of this document in June was very notable for the strategy used to publicize it, and distinguished by its large audience: 1 billion Roman Catholics worldwide. The document is also very unusual for its fusion of scientific support with moral persuasion. “I wish to address every person living on this planet,” the Pope wrote.

The Pope’s 184-page [Laudato Si [Be Praised], On the Care of Our Common Home, calls for scientists and religious people to unite in a campaign against the root causes of global warming, which include over-consumption, dependence on fossil fuels, and the denial and indifference of wealthy and powerful people. Francis, who took that name after St. Francis of Assisi, the Roman Catholic patron saint of animals and the environment, focused attention on climate change as no one else on earth could. Worldwide media interest, the New York Times reported, was “enormous.”

A Familiar Message
Anyone who has been watching daily weather reports and the evening TV news knows, as the Pope (who received part of his education as a chemist) observes, that: “A very solid scientific consensus indicates that we are presently witnessing a disturbing warm-

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Nebraska Report

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Nebraskans for Peace

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Thank You

Loyal & Mary Alice

September 1st will mark the release of the 33rd consecutive edition of the “Cat Lovers Against the Bomb Calendar.” For the past 18 years, the editorial leadership of the CLAB calendar has been in the hands of Lincoln Nebraskans for Peace members Loyal and Mary Alice Park. From start to finish, these two NFP founders and 1999 “Peacemaker of the Year Award” recipients oversaw the production and distribution of a calendar that now has an international following. Working completely as volunteers, Loyal and Mary Alice operated this fundraising venture for NFP out of their home—a labor of love that year-in and year-out could often take as much as 30 to 40 hours a week. (And, we have no doubt, produce its share of anxiety and headache).

This past January, with the conclusion of the 2015 calendar sales cycle, Loyal and Mary Alice announced that they were ‘retiring’ as editors. A new CLAB editorial team is already ensuring that the legacy Loyal and Mary Alice so selflessly and tirelessly nurtured will continue without interruption. Thanks to the Park household, the calendar that began in 1984 (in response to the Reagan Administration’s escalation of nuclear arms race with the former Soviet Union) has a bright future. The 2016 Cat Lovers Against the Bomb Calendar stands a testimony to their service and commitment. Nebraskans for Peace sends its very best wishes to these two dear friends who, since before the millennium, have inspired cat lovers and peacemakers the world over.

Cat Lovers Against the Bomb

Aspire to Peace

2016

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Pope Francis, conclusion

...of the climatic system... accompanied by a constant rise in the sea level and, it would appear, by an increase of extreme weather events, [as] a number of scientific studies indicate that most global warming in recent decades is due to the great concentration of greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrogen oxides and others) released mainly as a result of human activity.” It is widely known that, as Francis states, that “If present trends continue, this century may well witness extraordinary climate change and an unprecedented destruction of ecosystems, with serious consequences for all of us.”

Scientists usually avoid passing moral judgment on their findings, but Pope Francis’s encyclical cites their studies and supplies economic, social and moral context that establishes the environmental crisis (of which climate change is a major part) as the existential threat to humanity and the fauna and flora on the Earth, in this, the first papal statement on the environmental damage wrought by humankind’s multiplication and subjugation of the Earth.

‘Jeb’ Objects!

The pope’s message carried some special freight for several Catholic Republican politicians in the United States who have emphatically declared that climate change is a hoax. One, Jeb Bush, told Pope Francis to stay out of politics. As Thomas G. Wenski, Miami’s archbishop, prepared a summer of sermons spreading Pope Francis’ message that consumption of fossil fuels has become a major cause of warming threatening the world’s poor, Bush, who had just begun his run for president in the same city, said: “I hope I’m not going to get castigated for saying this by my priest back home, but I don’t get economic policy from my bishops or my cardinals or my pope... And I’d like to see what he says as it relates to climate change and how that connects to these broader, deeper issues before I pass judgment. But I think religion ought to be about making us better as people and less about things that end up getting in[to] the political realm.”

Informed of Bush’s rebuke, Archbishop Wenski said: “This is not an issue of right or left. This is more important than an ideological food fight.”

In Iowa, an early primary state for the United States’ 2016 presidential campaign, the New York Times reported that “The bishops of Des Moines and Davenport [were] planning a news media event at a wind turbine manufacturing facility, where they will highlight findings that climate change drives the drought and floods that plague Iowa farmers.”

Taking Issue with Genesis 1:28

To make Biblical sense of his message, Pope Francis has re-written an important piece of scripture: The Bible’s teaching (in the book of Genesis) that humankind emerged from the Garden of Eden to “be fruitful, and multiply and replenish the Earth, and subdue it, and have dominion... over every moving thing that moveth upon the earth.” Humanity has invoked that command of Genesis to such a degree that we have overwhelmed the Earth. If basic behavior does not change, the Pope says that future generations will inherit a hell on Earth.

Pope Francis said that Genesis 1:28 “is not a correct interpretation of the Bible as understood by the Church. Although it is true that we Christians have at times incorrectly interpreted the Scriptures, nowadays we must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God’s image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures.”

The Pope perhaps has provided us an earnest nudge down a sustainable path. I respectfully submit that it is only a beginning. When he suggests that Catholics quit having huge families, we will know the Catholic Church is really serious about rebuking the old command of Genesis 1:28 to multiply and subdue the Earth. (He already has remarked off-the-cuff that no doctrine requires Catholics to “breed like rabbits.”) Voluntary simplicity will not save the planet. Not everyone in a world of 10 billion people 50 years from now is going to do most of his or her business from the seat of a bicycle.
‘Done In’ by Our Own

Who Are These Purportedly ‘Leftist’ Leaders Really Working For?

by Hank Van den Berg
UNL Professor Emeritus

We are being repeatedly disappointed by purportedly ‘progressive’ and ‘leftist’ politicians. Who can forget the British Labor Party’s Tony Blair collaborating with George W. Bush to promote the invasion of Iraq over non-existent weapons of mass destruction; French Socialist President Francois Holland’s embrace of economic austerity policies that are cutting social spending and rolling back worker rights; or Barack Obama’s escalation of the wars in the Mideast, his illegal drone attacks that are overwhelmingly killing civilians and unknown low-level combatants, and his support for the Tran-Pacific Partnership ‘free trade’ deal? Well, this continued deceit by left-wing politicians reached a new level this month with Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras’ cave-in to the European Union (EU) and Germany’s increased demands for austerity policies in that beleaguered nation.

Greece’s Syriza Party Seemed Refreshingly Different

Tsipras and his Syriza Party were elected just half a year ago explicitly to reverse the earlier austerity and privatization policies that had pushed the Greek economy into a deep and persistent depression. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) contracted by over 25 percent after 2010, and unemployment has surged to nearly 30 percent, with 70 percent youth unemployment. Immediately after the election, Tsipras sought to renegotiate the economic program required by the so-called ‘troika’—namely, the European Central Bank (ECB), the EU Commission, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)—in exchange for temporary financing of the Greek government’s debt. However, he and his finance minister surrendered of national sovereignty, as foreigners will decide who gets to buy up Greek assets at what will be fire-sale prices in the current depressed Greek economy. The cuts and larger sell-offs of government assets are all much larger than what was agreed to by earlier governments before the Syriza Party was elected to reduce those onerous conditions.

Greeen Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras

The Syriza government decided in early July to put the acceptance of such new, harsher requirements up for a public referendum. The response was quick and unequivocal: 62 percent of Greeks voted against accepting the new austerity measures. Then, just four days later, the Tsipras government did exactly the opposite and it accepted all—yes, all—of the draconian policies. The stunning turn-around defies reason. It can only be interpreted as an intentional deceit orchestrated behind the scenes by the powers that really control the EU and thus have complete power over national politicians.

Some Recent History

Greece joined the European Union in 1981 when it was still mostly a free-trade area whose members were still working to increase regional governance and financial cooperation. There was active cooperation to keep exchange rates between individual European currencies stable, but this was proving difficult. There were frequent devaluations and payments imbalances disrupting the system. When Germany unified in 1991, the leadership of West Germany authorized the printing of West German marks to replace the former East German marks on a one-for-one basis despite the black market’s more realistic 4 to 1 ratio. This was a de facto subsidy that also greatly increased the German money supply, and the inflation-fearing German Central Bank immediately countered by sharply increasing interest rates. A massive inflow of money to take advantage of the high interest rates for the strong German currency caused a number of other European currencies to collapse. It was clearly impossible to keep exchange rates among European currencies constant if large governments like Germany decided to pursue their own interests—such as expediting German reunification—and ignore the need to keep government expenditures and money creation in line with current exchange rates and financial balances. It was at this point that the EU countries (led by the country that had just upset the system, Germany) formally
budget deficit—a practice that measures of the government be counted in the standard debt to where it would not authorities shift government

Goldman Sachs helped Greek

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greece however, did not take its rejection lying down, and the right-wing government at the time hired Goldman Sachs to help it meet the technical criteria. In 2000, Greece was suddenly deemed to have come in compliance with euro-area requirements. Goldman Sachs helped Greek authorities shift government debt to where it would not be counted in the standard measures of the government budget deficit—a practice that

government took advantage of the low euro interest rates to borrow extensively so that it could increase expenditures without raising taxes. By 2007, the year before the failure of U.S. subprime mortgages caused the entire global financial system to seize up, the Greek government budget was in deficit annually by nearly 3 percent of GDP—a 6-percentage point swing in 7 years. But, the Greek economy grew rapidly over this period, which caused the trade deficit to grow to nearly 10 percent of GDP. Greeks were effectively consuming 10 percent more than they produced. Much of this consumption was funded by debt. Private banks in Europe were happy to lend to the Greek government because, after all, it was part of the euro area and would never lack euros to pay back its loans.

However, when the global financial crisis hit in 2008, Greek economic growth stopped, government tax revenues fell, and government expenditures rose to support unemployed workers, cover for lower pension-tax receipts, and maintain government employment. Soon Greek government debt rose above 100 percent of GDP in 2008 (recall, it had been fraudulently found to be less than 60 percent in 2000). When the German, French and the European Commission called in the IMF. They decided to provide Greece with low-interest financing for Greece to pay back its loans to the private banks—mostly French and German. In the process, the banks replaced the Greek loans that were unlikely to ever be paid in full with newly created euros. If this sounds like a bank bailout, yes, it most assuredly was. But in the process, the Greek government remained in debt—only now

other European private banks that had lent Greece so much money became hesitant to lend more, interest rates on Greek debt shot up from 2 percent to over 6 percent. This meant that Greece had to pay over 6 percent of its annual GDP in interest on government debt. By 2009, it had to borrow over 5 percent of GDP to cover the 2008 budget deficit plus over 6 percent of GDP to pay interest—together, nearly 12 percent of GDP. Hence its debt as a percentage of GDP rose to over 120 percent of GDP by 2009, and over 130 percent by 2010. In sum, the Greek debt crisis was triggered by a global debt crisis born elsewhere. But Greece’s situation was made particularly difficult by a decade of careless spending and lax tax collection by its right-wing government.

When private banks sought to unload their debt and refused to lend to Greece, the European Central Bank it was in debt to the IMF, the European Central Bank, the European Stabilization fund operated by the European Commission, and individual European governments. And these creditors imposed harsh demands for Greece to change its economic policies—something private creditors cannot do so easily. Specifically, the troika and powerful governments like Germany demanded that Greece impose ‘austerity’ policies that included higher taxes, reduced government employment, reduced retirement payments, restrictions on labor rights, and more than 20 percent cuts in wages to remaining government workers. Also, the troika demanded that the Greek government sell public assets such as several harbor facilities, airports, the national railway, the electric company, entire publicly owned islands and other government land. To

Greece is caught between a rock and a hard place. If it accepts further austerity, unemployment may grow further, incomes will continue to fall, and an entire generation will have to find their fortunes in other countries.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel be ready to join the common currency; its government debt was too high. But not all of the 15 member countries wanted to join the scheme: Denmark, Sweden and Britain opted to keep their own currencies and not join the single currency area in order to avoid losing their own power to adjust their money supply to fit economic conditions. Greece, however, did not take its rejection lying down, and the right-wing government at the time hired Goldman Sachs to help it meet the technical criteria. In 2000, Greece was suddenly deemed to have come in compliance with euro-area requirements. Goldman Sachs helped Greek authorities shift government debt to where it would not be counted in the standard measures of the government budget deficit—a practice that

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'Done In’ by Our Own, continued

make sure that Greece would follow the creditors’ demands, the ruling coalition in 2010 effectively forced Greece to choose a new prime minister that had previously worked for a major global financial bank. Clearly, this was not democracy at work.

Greece was forced to introduce the same neoliberal economic agenda of privatization, cuts in social expenditures, liberalization of labor markets (read: suppression of unions), government employment cuts, reduced environmental and safety regulations, liberalized foreign trade and finance, and strict protection of private property that the IMF routinely imposes on indebted developing economies. These policies did indeed reduce Greek government debt because, as already explained, they pushed Greece into a deep depression that, six years later, has still not bottomed out. Several million Greeks have moved to other countries, while over 25 percent of the labor force remains unemployed in Greece. And now, after an election and a referendum that clearly showed the Greek public favored less austerity come what may, the Greek government is accepting even more onerous austerity measures in order to continue receiving financing to cover debt to the very organizations that provide the financing and demand the debt-raising austerity measures.

Why Austerity?
The myth persists among pundits and the media that austerity policies are necessary for an indebted economy to pay its debts and to restore economic growth. The truth is quite different. Cuts in government spending and employment, cuts in wages and rising taxes slow economic activity—they do not expand it. Production and employment only rise if someone wants to use their income to buy things. But with income falling, demand for output, and thus production, also falls. Government borrowing may actually increase because falling incomes reduce tax revenue. All in all, a bigger government deficit on top of a smaller GDP raises debt as a percentage of output. Today, after six years of austerity, Greece’s debt is at 180 percent of GDP—a 50 percent increase… not the decline in debt hoped for. An IMF staff report leaked to the media now estimates that more austerity will cause the debt to rise to over 200 percent of GDP. So, austerity policies are not expected to work. Is one to conclude, therefore, that austerity is a smokescreen for forcing a political shift rather than an economic revival?

Even more difficult to understand is why the Syriza leadership chose to ignore the vote it had called just a few days earlier. In fact, why was the referendum even held in the first place? Some commentators suggest that Greece would actually be better off exiting from the euro area, while staying in the EU and its free trade area. But, in the short run, Greece is caught between a rock and a hard place. If it accepts further austerity, unemployment may grow further, incomes will continue to fall, and an entire generation will have to find their fortunes in other countries. If Greece instead rebukes the official creditor organizations, it will not receive further loans and it will have to default on its debt. It would have to create a new local money so that its economy can function, but that money will be greatly depreciated in value relative to the euro. But, unlike the never-ending depression it is now caught in because it can do nothing to stimulate economic activity, with its own money the Greek Central Bank can print as much money as it needs to fund its government, pay government workers, pay pensions, pay unemployment assistance, pay for projects to put people to work, and recapitalize its banking system. Inflation is not a problem with such high unemployment and excess capacity throughout the economy. With the depreciated currency, Greece’s exports will be cheaper, and imports will be much more expensive. Within a few years this will stimulate employment in tourism, food exports and many other exports, while domestic producers will hire people to produce some of what used to be imported from abroad. Employment will thus increase, and Greece will begin to grow again. Had Greece taken this route back in 2010, as some economists (including yours

Conclusion on page 14
Talking Points on the Iran Nuclear Agreement

A deal with Iran is the best way to forestall Iranian nuclear ambitions. However, the window for a successful conclusion to the negotiations is closing, as the international sanctions regime that brought Iran to the table begins to fracture. The points below summarize the important substantive and messaging points around a deal with Iran:

The deal blocks Iran’s pathways to nuclear weapons.

• The breakout timeline for Iran to develop enough material for one nuclear weapon will be four times longer with a deal than without one.

• Iran’s existing stockpile of enriched uranium will be largely eliminated, and Iran will not produce any highly-enriched uranium suitable for weapons development.

• Iran will cut its number of operating centrifuges in half.

• Uranium will be subject to cradle-to-grave monitoring, which will deter and detect any diversion for weaponization.

• Iran will redesign the Arak reactor, so that it won’t produce weapons-grade plutonium.

• The Fordow facility will not be used to enrich uranium, and will be transformed into a research and development facility.

Rigorous and unprecedented inspections will detect any Iranian attempt to renege on the deal.

• Iran will be subject to the most intrusive inspections regime ever negotiated.

• Inspectors will have access to all of Iran’s nuclear sites.

• International inspectors will be granted access to military sites if there are concerns about illicit nuclear activities on the premises.

The deal eliminates a major threat to American and regional security without compromising our stance on Iran’s support for terrorism and its human rights abuses.

• Sanctions relief will only extend to nuclear sanctions.

• Iran will still feel the force of sanctions related to human rights abuses and support for terrorism.

• The benefits Iran will receive from sanctions relief are trivial compared to the danger an Iranian nuclear weapon would pose to U.S. interests and allies.

There is no “better deal later”; no deal now puts us on the path to war.

Sanctions relief depends on Iran’s willingness to abide by its commitments under the deal.

• U.S. sanctions will be suspended only after the IAEA verifies that Iran has taken the key steps it agreed to as part of the nuclear deal.

• Because the U.S. sanctions architecture is only suspended, not terminated, sanctions can snap back into force if Iran reneges on its commitments.

The American people want a deal with Iran.

• Many polls show that a clear majority of Americans support a deal with Iran, even with the knowledge that Iran will receive sanctions relief and retain a civilian nuclear program.

• A majority of Americans oppose military action against Iran, and have done so consistently for many years.

Source:

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HOW THESE FIGURES WERE DETERMINED

Current military includes Dept. of Defense ($586 billion) and the military portion from other departments as noted in current military box above ($196 billion). “Past military” represents veterans’ benefits plus 80% of the interest on the debt.* For further explanation, please go to warresisters.org.

These figures are from an analysis of detailed tables in the Analytical Perspectives book of the Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Year 2016. The figures are Federal funds, which do not include Trust funds — such as Social Security — that are raised and spent separately from income taxes. What you pay (or don’t pay) by April 15, 2015, goes to the Federal funds portion of the budget. The government practice of combining Trust and Federal funds began during the Vietnam War, thus making the human needs portion of the budget seem larger and the military portion smaller.

*Analysts differ on how much of the debt stems from the military; other groups estimate 50% to 60%. We use 80% because we believe if there had been no military spending most (if not all) of the national debt would have been eliminated.

Government Deception

The pie chart (right) is the government view of the budget. This is a distortion of how our income tax dollars are spent because it includes Trust Funds (e.g., Social Security), and most of the past military spending is not distinguished from nonmilitary spending. For a more accurate representation of how your Federal income tax dollar is really spent, see the large graph.

Source: 1040 Forms and Instructions 2014, Federal Outlays for FY 2013

WAR RESISTERS LEAGUE 339 Lafayette Street • NY, NY 10012 • 212-228-0450 • www.warresisters.org
The Good News About Wind & Solar Power

Some of my friends call me “Doctor Doom,” because when my news is about global warming, the prognosis is usually grim. This month, however, I have some rare good news, so enjoy it. The subject is how rapidly wind power is replacing fossil fuels as a preferred source of electricity. Those of us who have been watching already know that the Omaha Public Power District for example (heretofore wholly coal- and nuclear-generated), by next year, will be about one-third wind. By that time, one-half of Iowa’s electricity also should be generated by wind power.

The costs of solar and wind power have been declining rapidly, to the point where wind competes favorably under many conditions with fossil fuels. This is an important reason why wind has suddenly become very popular as a source of electrical generation in many parts of the United States—especially in the Midwest.

Global installations of wind power increased by 35,467 and 51,447 megawatts in 2013 and 2014, respectively, according to the Global Wind Energy Council. As of the end of 2014, worldwide, total cumulative installed capacity from wind power totaled 369,553 MW—an increase of 16 percent in one year. In 2014, China was adding half of the world’s new capacity and, at 114,763 MW, was the world’s leader, with 31.7 percent of the world total. The United States was second at 65,879 (17.8 percent), followed by Germany (39,165 MW, 10.6 percent); Spain: 22,987 MW (6.2 percent); India: 22,465 MW (6.1 percent); United Kingdom: 12,440 MW (3.4 percent), and Canada: (9,694 MW, 2.6 percent). (Source: Global Wind, 2015).

Advances in wind-turbine technology adapted from the aerospace industry have reduced the cost of wind power from 38 cents per kilowatt-hour (during the early 1980s) to 3 to 6 cents. This rate is competitive with costs of power generation from fossil fuels, but costs vary according to site. Major corporations, including Shell International and British Petroleum, have been moving into wind power.

“A Glorious Wind Blows on the Prairie”

Wind-power advocates now watch the share of electricity generated by turbines day by day. “A glorious wind blows on the prairie,” remarked one such observer in Omaha in mid-April, 2015, as the share of wind power in the Southwest Power Pool (the Regional Transmission Organization that balances demand and supply) passed 25 percent on April 11 at 1:10 p.m. Central Daylight Time, during a warm, breezy afternoon in a region from North Dakota southward through northern Texas. Wind has been gaining power share so quickly that we can watch it happen. It passed 28 percent later the same day.

In 2013, for the first time, electric utilities worldwide installed more new capacity from renewable sources (143 gigawatts, mainly wind power) than fossil fuels (141 GW), according to an analysis presented April 14, 2014 at the Bloomberg New Energy Finance annual summit in New York City. Analysts with BNEF expect that the shift will continue to accelerate, and that by 2030 more than four times as much renewable capacity will be added.

“In Texas,” reported Diane Cardwell of the New York Times in 2014: “Austin Energy signed a deal this spring for 20 years of output from a solar farm at less than 5 cents a kilowatt-hour. In September, the Grand River Dam Authority in Oklahoma announced its approval of a new agreement to buy power from a new wind farm expected to be completed next year. Grand River estimated the deal would save its customers roughly $50 million from the project. Also in Oklahoma, American Electric Power ended up tripling the amount of wind power it had originally sought after seeing how low the bids came in last year. ‘Wind was on sale—it was a Blue Light Special,’ said Jay Godfrey, managing director of renewable energy for the company. He noted that Oklahoma, unlike many states, did not require utilities to buy
How to Stop Global Warming and Improve Our Economy

by Mark Welsch, NFP Omaha Coordinator

We can stop global warming and the resulting extreme climate change that it causes and simultaneously improve our economy, all by ‘greening’ how we do business. In addition to avoiding the worst consequences of climate change, converting to a green economy will increase the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and cause 2.1 million new jobs to be created in the first ten years. And it gets better: a total of 2.8 million jobs would be created in the first 20 years.

The new jobs will be in just about all segments of our economy. Interestingly, the healthcare care area will see the largest number of new jobs. This is because as we put less soot and pollution into the air, land and water by burning less coal, oil and gas, people will live longer, healthier lives. When people live longer, we tend to use more health care, so that part of our economy will increase the most.

Industries peddling tar sands and coal—the dirtiest fossil fuels—would be hurt the most by this conversion. But this economic shift to clean, renewable energy will, once and for all, stop TransCanada from building a pipeline through Nebraska, endangering our water supplies and boosting carbon dioxide emissions to even more perilous levels.

Job losses in the fossil fuel sector would be off-set by an upturn in green energy development. Wind turbines and solar panels will need to be manufactured, installed and maintained. Every six to eight wind turbines requires a full-time person to maintain them at peak efficiency. Wind farm companies pay land owners thousands of dollars every year to allow the turbines to be on their farms and ranches and the subsequent property taxes contribute to local governments, giving the rest of us a little relief.

More people will be employed to weatherize our homes and businesses. Small businesses providing those services will thrive and be able to hire more people as the demand grows for things like insulation and energy-efficient windows. There will also be a greater demand for energy-efficient appliances and vehicles, so those industries and the suppliers of raw materials and parts for them will also thrive.

But wait, you ask, how will we pay for all of this good stuff? This is where we need to work together. We need to get a law introduced and passed that will create a revenue-neutral fee on fossil fuels that will rebate the revenue directly to citizens in the form of a dividend. We need Republicans to be the main sponsors of these bills in the House and Senate. Luckily, we have four members of Congress who are Republicans in Nebraska. We need to politely (and persistently) ask them to support this jobs bill that has a side benefit of enabling people to live healthier and longer.

This fee-and-dividend proposal is being promoted by Citizens’ Climate Lobby (CCL) with the help of Nebraskans for Peace and many other groups. CCL’s market-driven legislation has three simple parts:

1. Create a steadily rising fee on the CO2 content in fossil fuels as they come out of the ground or into our ports
2. Give all of the carbon fee back to households
3. Create border adjustments to discourage businesses from relocating to other countries and to encourage other countries to pass similar legislation.

This approach would allow the price of fossil fuels to reflect their currently hidden long-term climate cost. The additional income into households would help spur a more rapid transition to a renewable energy economy, creating those 2.1 million jobs in ten years and encouraging adoption of this carbon-reduction legislation by the international community.

The fee-and-dividend proposal would not grow the size of the federal government and, technically, the fee should not be called a tax. As George Shultz, former Secretary of State for President Reagan says, it isn’t a tax if the government doesn’t keep any of the money. Shultz, a life-long Republican, serves on CCL’s advisory board.

Much of this information was presented at the 2015 Citizens’ Climate Lobby International Conference in Washington D.C. in June. It was a thrill to be with over 600 volunteers for three days and to help lobby our elected officials.

Nebraska’s CCL volunteers met with Senators Fischer and Sasse and Representatives Fortenberry and Ashford and with Smith’s staff members.

One of the scary things we learned from one of the best climate scientists in the world, Katharine Hayhoe, is that without all of the man-made CO2 in the air, the world would be cooling off and headed for a mini-ice age. But because we are causing the planet to heat up, we are headed toward another major mass extinction—unless we work together quickly to get our members of Congress to introduce and support this bill.

No matter where you live, please join me to make a positive difference. We will solve this problem by working respectfully and positively for change with Citizens’ Climate Lobby. Call me at 402-453-0776 or send an email to NFPOmaha@NebraskansforPeace.org to let me know you want to learn more about the Citizens’ Climate Lobby. It’s really easy to make a big difference and this is the most positive political experience you can have in your life!

We can work together by writing letters to our members of Congress and letters to the editor. You can find the MOC’s addresses on NFP’s website http://nebraskansforpeace.org/contact-elected-officials (and in this Nebraska Report issue). A list of the ten daily newspapers in Nebraska, along with “how to write a good letter to the editor” can be found by clicking “Get Involved” on our website www.NebraskansforPeace.org.
What’s HOT in Global Warming?

power from renewable sources. We were doing it because it made sense for our ratepayers,’ he said.”

Advances for Solar, Too

In the meantime, a study from Lazard, an investment banking firm, said that utility-scale solar within a few years will go for as low as 5 to 6 cents a kilowatt-hour—comparable to coal and natural gas in many areas. “It is really quite notable, when compared to where we were just five years ago, to see the decline in the cost of these technologies,” said Jonathan Mir, managing director at Lazard. Wind and solar often were used, because of their intermittent nature, in combination with other fuels. By 2014, the cost of solar power had dropped 70 percent in the U.S. Southwest.

Wind capacity in the Pacific Northwest, where it is often used with hydroelectric, soared from only 25 megawatts in 1998 to more than 3,800 megawatts by 2009. During 2006, Washington State added 428 megawatts of wind power, trailing only Texas in new installations. According to Randall Swisher, executive director of the American Wind Energy Association, the electrical grid in the Northwest is especially inviting to wind power developers because of its hydroelectric distribution network, relatively reliable wind, progressive utility companies and new state laws that establish preferences for renewable energy.

Canada also has become a serious player in wind energy, said Robert Hornung, president of the Canadian Wind Energy Association. In 2007, he said: “Canada is on the cusp of a wind energy boom as provincial governments are now targeting to have a minimum of 10,000 megawatts of installed wind energy capacity in place by 2015,” Hornung said. Hornung was close: in 2014, Canada had 9,694 MW of installed capacity.

Bruce E. Johansen is Jacob J. Isaacson Professor at UNO and author of the just released book, Eco-Hustle!
by Jack Round

The documentary “Happy” takes its viewers through an exploration of experiences which increase happiness. One segment featured a cohousing community whose residents agree that the cohousing model seemed to produce happiness among its members due to the high level of community involvement and sustainability practices.

Cohousing is a type of intentional community which has been successful in creating the feeling of traditional neighborhoods where you get to know your neighbors. Many have been successfully created across the United States and the world. Cohousing pairs private ownership of homes with extensive shared facilities, including a common house. Homes can be smaller because places like guest rooms, which are used infrequently, are aggregated in the common house. Residents share these spaces as well as other resources, which are chosen by what is called a ‘Forming Group’ during the planning process. This group helps design the community, and ultimately decides how the community will function. In cohousing, there is typically an optional shared meal once a week in the common house because it is an effective way for neighbors to get to know each other. The common house usually has a large kitchen and a large dining room to facilitate the weekly meal.

Due to the focus on sharing resources, cohousing can be less expensive to live in than other housing alternatives. Rather than have 50 lawnmowers in a community, you might only need a few. There often are tools, books or digital media held in common. Some cohousing residents even share cars. The average cost to own and operate a car in the United States is over $9,000 per year, making car-sharing programs popular in many cohousing communities.

“Omaha Green Cohousing” is a forming cohousing community in Omaha. We recently signed a purchase agreement on 4 acres of land in the Keystone area of Omaha (8557 Boyd Street). On this 4 acres, we’ve proposed putting 32 townhome units (1,200 square feet each) and 16 ‘tiny houses’ (600 square feet each). In addition, current plans include a common house, greenhouse, community gardens, dog run, orchard, and other amenities. We have experienced tremendous interest in the project and are currently growing a Forming Group. This is an exciting time, because the group is engaged in the creating of a community. Part of this is deciding how to live together—and also deciding what the neighborhood will look like and how it will function. One of the benefits to joining now is you get to be part of the process of designing the community with the architect: What will the neighborhood look like? How do we site the homes? What features do we want in our Common House? These are to be answered by our Forming Group.

If you have a passion for building community and for living sustainably, you might enjoy being ‘Happy in Nebraska’—in cohousing. For more information, check out our site on Facebook (Omaha Green Cohousing), or e-mail round@cox.net. We have introductory meetings every two weeks. Hope to see you there.
What We’ve Been Up To...

by Paul Olson and Tessa Foreman

Environment:
Nebraskans for Peace has continued to its educational outreach efforts on climate change, food security and green energy: We are collaborating with leading local food advocates such as the Center for Rural Affairs and the “Local Foodshed Working Group” to develop policies and initiatives that will foster food-growing in urban areas, lessening dependence on our globalized food system. State Coordinator Tim Rinne has delivered numerous talks and interviews related to climate change and food security—many of these engagements an outgrowth of the statewide NET broadcast of his TEDxLincoln Talk.

We attended Public Power District board meetings, actively participated with the “Clean Energy Nebraska” coalition and conferred with legislators about climate change and energy-related legislation for 2016. And we let out a well-deserved whoop and hollar July 27, when Berkshire Hathaway Energy (BHE) became a charter member of a new Big Business coalition supporting immediate action on climate change. Getting Warren Buffett to speak out has been a long-standing NFP priority.

We have sponsored and promoted campaigns for Citizens’ Climate Lobby efforts in the state, and NFP Omaha Coordinator Mark Welsch attended the June CCL national conference in Washington, D.C.

Human and Civil Rights:
NFP is planning its Annual Peace Conference for Saturday October 17 in Grand Island, on the theme of “Justice for All: Securing Justice for Nebraska’s Diverse Communities.” Two hundred people attended the Lincoln Chapter’s annual picnic held in conjunction with the NAACP that honored Nelson Mandela as a liberator and peacemaker. In Omaha, a task force started by NFP members A’Jamal Byndon, Mark Welsch, Deirdre Routt and others are pursuing the development of community-based policing on Omaha streets and conflict resolution in Omaha schools. NFP members have conducted preliminary discussions with legislators and advocacy groups to explore whether the legislature would consider requiring larger communities to adopt community-based policing and enforce conduct standards for law enforcement over the use of intimidation and weapons. Nebraskans for Peace celebrates the repeal of the death penalty (an issue with which we have been engaged since the 1970s) and salutes the organizations that carried the advocacy burden.

Anti-war:
In the Anti-war arena, we contacted our federal representatives urging support of a ‘constitutional war study’ that would have established what Congress and the president must do for a war to adhere to constitutional provisions. The resolution enabling such a study received well over 100 votes—an indication that this path toward limiting the indiscriminate use of war as a foreign policy tool will be back before Congress again as the longest war in American history (Afghanistan) drags on. We have continued to conduct discussions on the dangers of nuclear brinkmanship between Russia and the US over Eastern Europe and Ukraine, and have actively campaigned for the adoption of the nuclear agreement with Iran. At the same time, we have deplored America’s and Israel’s torpedoing of the UN negotiations for a nuclear nonproliferation agreement in the Middle East.

Legislative Work:
In the Nebraska Legislature, Tessa Foreman and NFP members advocated on 20 bills during the 2015 Session. Volunteers testified on six bills, letters were sent to committees on 15 bills, ‘Action Alerts’ were sent out to NFP’s statewide network on key bills, numerous posts were placed on our Facebook page throughout the session, emails were sent to senators, and letters were hand-delivered to senators’ offices. We experienced some victories and some setbacks, and some bills are on hold until next session. Here is the rundown on some of this priority legislation:

Voting Rights/Equality:
LB 111, a bill that would have placed undue burdens on Nebraska voters, was ‘bracketed’ (essentially defeated) by the Nebraska Legislature. NFP opposed this bill.

LB 586, a bill that would prohibit discrimination in the workplace based on sexual orientation, was passed over the Governor’s veto. The bill remains on General File and will carry over to the next session. NFP supports the bill.

Criminal Justice/Prison Reform
LB 268, a bill to repeal the death penalty, passed the legislature over the Governor’s veto. NFP supported this bill.

LB 605, a comprehensive criminal justice/prison reform bill, was passed by the legislature. The bill included changes in sentencing, probation and parole, and addressed some aspects of inmate overcrowding. NFP supported most of the changes made in the bill, recognizing that more work needs to be done on this issue.

LB 294, a bill to create the “Human Trafficking Victims Civil Remedy Act” was passed by the legislature. The bill creates a way for minors to seek reparations from human traffickers as well as increased the penalties for perpetrators involved in human trafficking. NFP supported this bill.

Healthcare
The legislature failed to advance LB 472, a bill that would have addressed the insurance coverage gap that leaves some 74,000 Nebraskans with no access to affordable health care. NFP will continue to advocate on this issue. LR 306, a legislative interim study, will examine ways the state can successfully address this problem in the next session. We all need to write, call, email and visit our state senators over the interim and encourage them to bring a solution to our friends, neighbors and fellow Nebraskans who cannot now get the health care they need.
'Done In'

conclusion

truly) urged, Greece would now be in better shape and not facing further growth in unemployment. Granted, Greece’s default would have been to the private banks, and this would have forced other European governments to directly bail out their own banks, rather than doing it stealthily through loans to Greece.

But the creditors would never have allowed Greece to default, you might reply. Yes, indeed, that is why the EU engineered what was effectively a coup d’etat and arranged behind the scenes for a new banker-friendly prime minister to head the Greek coalition government that was in place. What followed was a bailout of private banks and a deep depression in Greece. Now a rebellious Greek electorate has been punished by what must be yet another coup—this time in the form of a sudden deceitful change in course by a prime minister who has gone against everything he campaigned on.

It has become painfully clear that the European Union is not a democratic institution. This regional governance structure is not working on behalf of the average citizen; rather, the ruling elites campaign on false slogans and really intend to solidify the neoliberal economic structure—one of little government regulation, low taxes, private ownership of even public goods like utilities and transportation networks, and the domination of private finance—that the dominant corporate and financial interests demand. It is also a system that is destroying what remains of democracy at the national level by overruling the democratically determined wishes of the nations’ populations and imposing policies they do not want.

But what are Europeans to do? If you vote for the right, governments will openly institute neoliberal policies. If you vote for the left, as Greeks did, governments will—after some period of bravado and deceitful claims to the contrary—also reduce wages, cut government social programs, privatize everything from transportation to education, and cut environmental, safety, and labor regulations. Is it any wonder the public is so cynical about politics…
Paul Olson, continued

we dismantle the symbols that legitimize such evil and make tyranny appear like civilization and democracy.

Let me name a few of these symbols:

• The FBI building—the J. Edgar Hoover building—honoring the nation’s chief cop, a racist, blackmailer of presidents, feeder of anti-communist myths to Joe McCarthy, and ultimately a failure in his job of controlling organized crime. (JEH did virtually nothing about the Mafia or other organized crime syndicates in his later years until ordered by Bobby Kennedy to act.)

• Mount Rushmore. Built by a racist, Gutzon Borglum, Mount Rushmore supposedly enshrines sovereign American democracy, but it is built on land sacred to the sovereign Teton Sioux—reserved for them as a sovereign nation in the treaties of 1868 and 1882. As a shrine to democracy, it pays tribute to two slaveholders, Washington and Jefferson, and two Indian/African-American haters: Andrew Jackson, whose infamous Indian removal policy perpetrated the Cherokee Tribe’s “Trail of Tears,” and Teddy Roosevelt, who said that nine times out of 10 the only good Indian is a dead Indian, that the “most vicious cowboy has more moral principle than the average Indian” and that African Americans are “a perfectly stupid race.” Rather than dedicating sacred Indian land to Roosevelt, we should rather rededicate the capitalistic squalor of Whiteclay, renaming it “Teddy Roosevelt Town.”

• The Strom Thurmond federal building and courthouse in Columbia, South Carolina, built in Marcelo Breuer’s appropriately named “brutalist style” and dedicated to the senator who, from 1954 until 2002 fought for bigotry, white privilege and racism: “I wanna tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that there is not enough troops in the Army to force the southern people to break down segregation and admit the nigra race into our theaters, into our swimming pools, into our homes, and into our churches.” Thurmond, admitting an African American woman into closer quarters than church or swimming pool, fathered a child on her—one whom he never acknowledged as his own blood. Imagine an African American citizen going into that courthouse to seek justice.

• The Richard Russell Senate office building named for the bigot who controlled Senate Democrats from the 1940s to the 1960s.

• The Enola Gay display at the Smithsonian Institution that was changed after right-wing militaristic protests so that the Hiroshima bombing was sanitized and the murder of a population of color the size of Omaha concealed by a pseudo-history.

I could go on.

These public symbols tell us that racism and contempt for the lives of people outside the circle of privilege are alive and well in America. They tell us that economic deprivation, police profiling, housing discrimination and voter suppression are deserved. Too many of our public monuments and buildings place discriminatory attitudes on a map of social consensus that seems to be beyond legal and cultural challenge. The eulogies to the historical misdeeds and injustices embodied in the symbols I’ve listed are unaccompanied by explanatory notes that clearly and accurately spell out where myth is being made and murderous content legitimized. It is not accidental that the church murderer in Charleston chose the Confederate flag and the flags of apartheid Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa as his emblems.

These symbols are not just the products of some past climate of the times (though they are that too). They are statements of an ideology that lives and propels violence in our midst.

That said, public symbols can work for human decency. The Statue of Liberty delivers a different message from the monuments listed above—one that the Tea Party might well read. So does the Nebraska capitol building with its tributes to the evolution of law in Africa, Asia, Europe and American Indian cultures. So does the Museum of the American Indian and the Martin Luther King monument in Washington. So does the Nebraska statute of William Jennings Bryan, Tolstoyan peacemaker and justice seeker, whose presence once graced the Nebraska Capitol but was subsequently relegated to an obscure location by a hawkish legislature wanting to censor his political meaning out of existence.

Our country’s public symbols say what it is we are and who we wish to be. The symbols should be proud representatives of what we aspire to. Unfortunately, the violent energy that our debased iconology presently creates destroys innocent lives. Questioning the consensus-building power of these symbols is every bit as much our job as it was Bree Newsome’s.
Speaking Our Peace
by Paul Olson, NFP President Emeritus

The Symbols of Who We Are

The picture of the woman, Bree Newsome, climbing the flagpole near the Confederate Memorial in Columbia, South Carolina to take down the Confederate flag, moved me. She was arrested for doing what resistance to bigotry demanded. That climb and her subsequent arrest said even more to me about where South Carolina and the nation have been than the "black lives matter" marches or President Obama’s eulogy to the Rev. Pinckney and his powerful singing of “Amazing Grace.” These actions said that individual courage can disrupt consensual symbolism.

The Confederate flag did not stand for the southern way of life, for ‘states’ rights,’ for crinoline and great houses. It stood for hate. Or rather, all of these—way of life, states’ rights rhetoric, crinoline, great houses and Confederate flag—all stood for a pretense of civilized grace covering a white savagery. That savagery lasted for more than 300 years and is still with us. South Carolina’s Confederate 1861 plot against the U.S. began as a treasonable effort to defend the economic rights of slaveholders. Its century-later 1961 re-adoption of the Confederate flag (a gesture of defiance to the Civil Rights movement) defended the economic prerogatives of Southern white elites. A racist rhetoric originating in those elites and circulating in so-called ‘redneck’ circles kept power in the hands of the elites, enjoying their mint juleps and unquestioned economic power. The North now too often emulates the South.

Symbols matter. Taking down symbols also matters. The Confederate flag and its accoutrements gave hatred the face of civility, culture, Greco-Roman law and order and agrarian refinement—a polish similar to that of the fox-hunting class in England. But it was all savage: slavery, Jim Crow, ‘slavery by another name,’ sharecropping, ‘separate but equal,’ lynchings, and police lynchings. We still have a remnant of this savagery. We will not possess a genuinely civil society until

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