So What’s All the Fuss About Fast Track, TPP and TTIP?

Nothing less than the prevention of corporate plutocracy is at stake

by Hank Van den Berg
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Economics Professor Emeritus

Many Americans are aware that there have been some negotiations with some other countries about some new international trade and investment agreement, but few have any idea of the meaning of these negotiations. The media have not helped much; they have either been ignoring the negotiations or, when they do bring them up, they report them as “trade negotiations.” The agreements currently being negotiated between the U.S. negotiators and foreign governments are actually a large step towards diminishing the nation state and replacing it with a global corporate plutocracy.

TPP, TTIP & Fast Track

Few news accounts have provided much relevant information about the “Trans Pacific Partnership” (TPP) negotiations between the United States and Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam. The negotiations have been underway since 2005, and like the Bush Administration that began the negotiations, the Obama Administration has continued to aggressively pursue the agreement while intentionally preventing the public from getting any information on the content of this prospective agreement. Only some parts of the emerging document have been made available through Wikileaks. According to Bernie Sanders, the Vermont Senator and presidential candidate:

Incredibly, while Wall Street, the pharmaceutical industry and major media companies have full knowledge as to what is in this treaty, the American people and members of Congress do not. They have been locked out of the process.

More recently, in 2013, negotiations towards the “Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership” (TTIP) between the U.S. administration and the
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**Peg Sheehan Fitzgerald Gallagher**

**October 15, 1918–May 5, 2015**

Irish faith-filled valiant woman.  
Mother, grandmother, great-grandmother.  
First woman with own Real Estate Agency in Nebraska.  
Witty, loving, kind, compassionate, admired, appreciated.

Arrested, D.C., Diana Ortiz rally. Handcuffs, paddy wagon.  
Protest, Nevada Nuclear weapons test site.

Tutoring inmates at Douglas Co. jail.  
Caring for sick, elderly, family, friends, strangers.  
Standing outside Nebraska penitentiary. Execution.  
Phone calls. Phone calls. Phone calls.

Persistent. Tenacious. Determined.  
Standing in the cold, flag and son beside her.

Letters. Organizing  
Interfaith prayer services, Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Bahá’í, others, praying together for peace.  
Trying City Council resolution against war.  
Organizing “Images of the Aftermath of War,” art gallery.  
Modern “widow at the judge’s gate,” pleading, insisting, “Speak NOW!  
Speak LOUDLY!  
NO WAR! NO WAR! NO WAR!”

Unending hard work, dedication to Peace.  
Graceful in joyous moments, in hardship, in strife.  
Delighting in the good and the beautiful.

— Marylyn Felion
What’s All the Fuss, continued

European Commission of the European Union (EU) were begun in near-complete secrecy. After information on the negotiations was leaked in Europe, there have been more open consultations, although many groups with legitimate interests have been largely prevented from having any real influence on the shape of the agreement. At least the TTIP has a somewhat more accurate name in that it refers to investment as well as trade, although the agreement that is taking shape at the insistence of the United States and certain leading European leaders is much more complex than even this name suggests.

The Obama Administration has been more direct (although still very deceptive) in its push for so-called ‘fast-track’ authority to pursue foreign trade agreements for the next six years—a period that covers the remainder of the Obama tenure and the full term of the next president. Fast track is the formal permission given by Congress, which has the constitutional power over international foreign treaties, to let the administration engage in negotiations with other countries, and a promise by Congress to hold a quick up-or-down majority vote without the possibility of amendments when a completed trade and investment agreement is presented for ratification. In other words, fast track would effectively allow the administration to negotiate in secret, and as long as there are pro-corporate majorities in both houses of Congress (which is normally the case), such secret agreements will become U.S. law without much open debate or discussion.

The Changing Look of Globalization

When the media misleadingly describe the TPP and TTIP as free trade agreements, people tend to think of agreements to take away costly barriers to American exporters seeking to sell American goods overseas and American importers seeking to acquire cheap foreign goods for sale to American consumers. However, the global trading system is a bit more complex than that picture suggests. First of all, today well over one-third of all U.S. foreign trade in goods and services never leaves the corporation that produces or sells the products. These exports and imports are just the shifts of goods, parts, components, services and financial transactions between different branches of the same corporation located in different countries. And nearly all international trade in services and goods involves a relatively small number (500-1,000) of large corporations—mostly corporations engaged in outsourcing and exploiting low-wage labor in other countries. These intricate commercial relations among corporations and among transnational branches of the same corporation are called “global value chains” (GVCs). International trade is thus intimately linked to investment, finance and corporate business planning.

GVCs imply that transnational corporations no longer view their existence from a national perspective. Their perspectives (and loyalties) are less and less national and more and more global. That is why I prefer the term transnational corporation to the traditional ‘multi-national’ firm. This means that, in combination with corporations’ emphasis on short-term profit, the world is effectively governed by a small number of autocratic, single-minded business organizations with no particular loyalty to any one national government or society. It is well known that transnational corporations routinely exploit differences in taxes, regulations and legal structures to enhance their profits and force governments to grant them greater privileges. It is also alarming how much power large corporations already have over what we want to buy, where we work, how much we earn, who gets on election ballots and who controls personal information. These new international agreements will allow transnational corporations to gain even more power over our governments and our lives.

What We Know about the TPP and TTIP

These emerging trade agreements are not really free trade agreements at all. Rather, these agreements cover mostly

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other issues of importance to the 500 or so transnational corporations that dominate the global economy, such as protection of property, enforcement of patents and copyrights, environmental regulations, worker rights, product standards and health regulations. Recently leaked information shows that the TPP agreement under negotiation already contains provisions to establish “Investor-State Dispute Settlement” (ISDS) procedures that will allow corporations to recover damages from any changes in national policies, laws and regulations that negatively impact corporate profits. These procedures use privately-operated courts where the judges are corporate-approved ‘experts’ who are more often than not former corporate executives and lawyers. Also, the

We all know that we do not have a democratic system in our country. ‘One-person, one vote’ has long since been replaced by ‘one dollar, one vote.’ But the ways in which the TPP and TTIP are being pushed through Washington is setting new laws.

ISDS procedures are designed to focus singularly on corporate profits—not the underlying social, environmental or political implications of the corporate claims for compensation for democratic -government policy decisions.

ISDS-like procedures have been included in trade agreements for several decades, and they have also been mandated under the large number of bi-lateral investment treaties that the U.S. has been stealthily negotiating with countries all over the world for the last several decades. For example, the bilateral investment treaties agreed to between the U.S. and the governments of Australia and Uruguay are now being used by the U.S. transnational corporation Philip Morris to demand compensation for Australia’s and Uruguay’s new laws requiring that cigarette packages carry warning labels and graphic images showing the consequences of smoking. Because the new packages are working and cigarette sales have declined, Philip Morris is demanding compensation for lost profits. As the well-known economist Joseph Stiglitz writes: “The manufacturer is suing governments for restraining them from killing people.”

Another example of such a case is currently underway within the European Union, which has set up similar ISDS procedures. The Swedish private utility Vattenfall, which operated several atomic power plants in Germany, is suing the German government for more than 5 billion euros (U.S. $6 billion) because it decided to phase out nuclear power in light of the reassessment of the dangers following the Fukushima disaster.

While the TPP does not prohibit anti-smoking measures, the fact that foreign corporations can sue for damages means

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Diversifying Our Institutions & Organizations

Should There Be a ‘Litmus Test’?

by A’Jamal-Rashad Byndon
NFP State Board Member

I have worked and participated in organizations where I was the only Person of Color, the only African American, in the room. Being the only African American in a roomful of Whites is chilling because you feel vulnerable, should some racist behavior occur.

Some questions need to be asked (and some terms defined) regarding such ‘White-only’ groups. How, for instance, did they become all-White? Should the existence of White-only organizations be a concern to People of Color? Should there be a baseline or criterion established for nonprofits and White-only organizations to urge them to voluntarily integrate their operations?

Let’s start with defining the various terms dealing with racial interactions:

1. Segregation is best understood by looking at the United States schools before the Brown vs. Board of Education case in 1954. The U.S. Supreme Court found that school districts’ practice of having “separate but equal” schools for Black and White students was unconstitutional. It was not until years later, however, that segregated schools were effectively desegregated in spite of the Court’s mandate. White institutions and schools did not respond in a deliberate manner, but persisted in maintaining their discriminatory practices. Segregation, for all intents and purposes, can exist by means of legal right or mandate (de jure) as well as social acceptance (de facto). Still today, there are many who believe that race mixing is negative and unacceptable and conduct themselves accordingly.

2. Apartheid is generally associated with South Africa and its historic policies of keeping the races apart. The White minority in South Africa developed a law in 1948 to require separate but equal accommodations. In my travels in the country during 1977-1979, I was refused services at White establishments, hotels and other all White public places. In order to survive in that place, I had to utilize Black or international designated public places. It was no different than what the United States practiced under its “Jim Crow” laws.

3. Separation is when groups purposely decide that they do not want to be a part of the larger group. Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton manifested this concept in their book, Black Power. To paraphrase their argument, in order for a historically oppressed group to develop an independent identity, it must first close ranks and develop its own ideology and strengths before risking engagement with the dominant group. Carmichael and Hamilton were concerned about Whites’ attempts to hijack race-focused agendas before People of Color could fully develop their own personality and goals. During the Civil Rights movement, Whites became members and players in so-called ‘minority’ organizations. Because of their mentality of intellectual superiority and White privilege, they oftentimes took over the groups. We can see a parallel to this principle with all-women groups. Do they have a right to develop their own agenda without having men in the mix? Is it strange when tradition­ally women-controlled organizations pick a man to lead them? Some would argue that their organizations’ focus and outcomes change.

4. Integration is defined as combining different elements or people to make a larger entity. It is frequently employed in the mixing of different groups and people that were previously segregated. This became law and policy of this country after the 1950s. Omaha Public Schools was dragged into U.S. District Court during the mid-1970s and was found to have established a system of segregation. OPS was ordered to desegregate. This introduces a different term: desegregation.

5. Desegregation is frequently used to describe a process where institutions are forced to integrate. Schools and other previously all-White organizations are

How can public supported organizations or institutions be effective when their so-called social justice panels, staff and patrons are one race?

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NFP Scholarship Essay

Nebraskans for Peace offers scholarships each spring to promising seniors in high school from the three congressional districts. Applicants submit essays on one of NFP’s priorities and offer approaches to address solutions to that particular issue. There were four winners this spring: one from the first congressional district, Karsten Schuetze, from West Point, who received a $500 scholarship and three from the second congressional district: a $500 scholarship to Nolan Hunnington, a $100 scholarship to Corinne Victoria Peterson and a $100 scholarship to Emma Kalkowski-Farrand, all from Omaha. Below is Emma Kalkowski-Farrand’s essay which she presented at the NFP Omaha Chapter’s Annual Rice and Beans dinner on May 2. Emma just graduated from Central High School and will attend Grinnell College in the fall.

The Nebraskans for Peace priority that is the most important to me is the “Turn Off the Violence: Opposing the Culture of Violence at Home.” This is not a problem that can be solved by throwing money at it or by waiting and hoping it will resolve itself. Domestic violence, bullying, and any other method used to put people down and make them feel worthless in order to make their tormentor feel better about themselves need to be stopped. They have existed within our society for many years and will not go away unless we take immediate steps to prevent them. The question is how? It can difficult to change people’s way of thinking, particularly if these are subconscious thoughts. I doubt many children consciously think that hurting others is fun, but they may be cruel without even realizing the full impact of their actions. This is why education is the best way to prevent these harmful behaviors.

Although it may seem foolish, it would be best to start educating people about bullying and domestic violence at a young age. Although young children will probably not fully understand these concepts, groundwork can be laid that will be built on later. Try teaching kids about consent by encouraging them to ask one another before hugging or other forms of physical contact. If two students get in a fight, sit them down and talk about it. Why were you two fighting? How did Tommy’s punching/kicking/name calling make you feel? Tommy, why did you do these behaviors? What are some better ways to resolve conflict in the future? Starting educating them when they are young will make it easier for them to change. If you only start talking to kids about these issues when they are in fourth or fifth grade, many may already be set in their behavior and not listen to the lessons. By starting at a young age, it would encourage children to form positive patterns of behavior instead of negative ones.

Then, as the students get older, the content of the lessons would mature with them. Maybe in sixth grade, start discussing abusive relationships and their consequences. Give examples of early warning signs, for example a partner that is very controlling and tries to separate you from your friends. Stress that there are ways for people to escape abusive relationships, and the partner being abused never deserves it. Also explain that abusing your partner does not make you any stronger or make you feel better about yourself. There is nothing good about causing pain to someone that cares about you. Inform students about what healthy relationships are and how fostering good relationships with all those around you can only be beneficial. Teachers should be taught signs of bullying and take action when they see it. Since the teacher cannot be everywhere at once, they should encourage students to tell them when the students see it. It is important to make students realize that this is not tattling; it is a way to protect and support their fellow classmates.

The most effective approach would be to have half an hour to an hour lesson one day a week. These sessions should not be the teachers lecturing the whole time; people will get bored, doze off, or space out and not really gain anything from them. The lessons should consist of short videos discussing domestic violence or bullying and the consequences. A conversation about the video where students can discuss their opinions and develop plans about what they would do if they were in that situation should follow. Maybe bring in speakers who have been victims of domestic abuse or bullying so students can learn firsthand how harmful these behaviors are.

As mentioned earlier, it is difficult to change people’s minds about an issue this important. If children have been taught by their parents’ actions that hurting others is okay, it will be difficult to change their mind-set. Students might think the lessons are stupid and not take the messages to heart. Different methods work for different people so the teacher might have to accommodate a number of distinct learning styles in order for the lessons to be impactful for everyone. This approach would put a great deal of stress on the teacher because they would be the person responsible for making sure everyone is paying attention, realizing the true meaning of the lessons, and encouraging everyone to share their thoughts and feelings. If the facilitator is not willing to go through all this extra effort, the sessions will not be as impactful.

Currently, my approach would be difficult to implement on a large scale. Where would the funding for the teachers to get the training they need come from? How would you track whether or not the program is successful? The best realistic approach would be to start it at one school and see if it changes students’ behavior there. Then introduce it to two or three more schools and if it continues to be effective, use that research to find a funder willing to help cover the cost of implementing it to an entire school district. Of course, the impact of this program would be difficult to measure. Maybe study the percentage of students who are abusive or get in trouble for bullying, compared to the general population. This study, however, would take years to complete. So although this specific program could be difficult to accomplish, I firmly believe that an educational program beginning at a young age is the most effective way to prevent bullying and domestic violence. Surely the decrease of these two damaging behaviors is worth the money needed to execute this program.
All the Fuss, continued

becomes one of giving corporations free rein towards ever greater profits, no matter how those profits are achieved.

It should be pointed out as well that leaked versions of the TPP show that legal recourse is only available for corporate investors overseas. If there is a violation overseas of labor agreements or environmental agreements, citizens, labor unions and civil society groups have no recourse. Corporate profit generally differs in important ways from the national interest that a democratic government is responsible to.

At the same time, we should note that there are few complaints from the corporate sector when one country slashes corporate taxes below those of other countries, or when they lower labor standards below those of other countries. The fact is that companies routinely exploit the differences by moving production to the low labor-law country and shifting financial accounting to the low-tax jurisdiction. Of course, corporate and financial lobbyists then begin pleading for harmonization of other countries’ laws and regulations with those of the most pro-business countries. Hence, the fact that the TPP and the TTIP both include provisions for harmonizing regulations is troublesome to many citizens of countries with strong and effective social, environmental, financial and other economic regulatory regimes. Will a race to the bottom result during the negotiations to harmonize?

Our Corrupt Politicians

We all know that we do not have a democratic system in our country. ‘One-person, one vote’ has long since been replaced by ‘one dollar, one vote.’ But the ways in which the TPP and TTIP are being pushed through Washington is setting new lows. The secrecy is astounding. Only selected senators and representatives are allowed to see selected parts of the agreements negotiated so far, and then only in a supervised office beneath the Capitol somewhere. And no written notes may be taken, so nothing complex can be judged by outside experts, much less actual interested parties. The hope by the Obama Administration seems to be that if they suppress all information, most people will never hear of the TPP or the TTIP and never know how corporations came to have so much power over them.

Realistically, we should not be too surprised at the Administration’s approach. After all, President Obama long ago showed that his campaign promise to “renegotiate NAFTA” and rid the agreement of its ISDS procedures was a complete lie; as soon as he took office he began to push for similarly ominous trade agreements with Central America, Colombia, Korea, etc.

Congress’ behavior has not been much better. While he was majority leader of the Senate, Harry Reid refused to bring fast-track legislation to the floor. But now the Republican majority is allied with President Obama to pass the fast-track and subsequent TPP and TTIP agreements as their corporate patrons paid them to do. Interestingly, the Senate at first could not muster the 60 votes to push the legislation forward, thus raising the hope that honest minds would prevail after all. But it seems that the surprising Democratic solidarity only reflected some Democratic senators’ anger that a provision on prohibiting foreign governments from manipulating exchange rates was not included in the bill. Just two days later, a ‘compromise’ had been reached that would allow for separate votes on the basic fast-track provisions and the bill allowing the U.S. government to punish foreign governments for exchange rate manipulation. The fast-track legislation was quickly passed with 65 votes—13 from Democrats including Oregon’s Nike Senator Wyden, Washington’s Boeing Senators Cantwell and Murray and Delaware’s ‘corporate haven’ Senators Carper and Coons. When the actual negotiated agreements come back to the Senate in the future, fast track requires a simple majority for approval. Therefore, barring a sea-change in the makeup of the Senate,
Observations on Palestinian Realities

by Frances C. Moore
NFP Omaha Chapter

Observing how the Palestinian people live in the midst of occupation—make that oppression—by the Israeli government was one of the most enlightening experiences of my life. I recently toured the Holy Land with 16 others on a recent United Methodist Church Volunteers in Mission Study Tour. Our guide was a Christian Palestinian, born and raised in Bethlehem. We saw things like refugee camps and projects that most tourists never see because most international tours use Israeli tour guides.

We spent three days in Nazareth and the Galilee area, which is in Israel where there are no walls or checkpoints. Then we spent a week based in Bethlehem, which is in the West Bank section of Palestine. We saw the walls, armed guards, sniper towers and checkpoints, but never felt threatened—because we were tourists. We breezed through checkpoints, but saw firsthand what a daily hassle they present to Palestinians. We talked with Christians, Muslims and Jews who were born and raised in Israel/Palestine, and they all deplored what the Israeli government is doing. (We did not go to Gaza, which was too dangerous.)

Christians make up two percent of the Palestinian population, most of whom are Arabs. They are dumbfounded when some people ask them what they converted to Christianity. They answer: “At Pentecost! My ancestors were among the first Christians!”

Though Israeli leadership has recently said that the Christian community is thriving, we saw the Christian church and Christians struggling to survive in the Middle East. It is interesting to note, though, that those few Christians provide about a third of the social support services for Palestinians.

Walls. The separation walls don’t just separate Islamic people from Jewish people. They separate Palestinian families from each other and families from their farms and trees and workers from their source of income. Walls serve more to frustrate Palestinians than to ‘protect’ the Israeli population.

Citizenship. Palestinians are Israeli citizens “up to a point”, our guide would say. They live under so many restrictions it is hard to say Palestinians live in a democracy. They deal with travel restrictions, driving restrictions, work restrictions, inability to get permits, and on and on. If they leave the country, they cannot reclaim their citizenship. “It’s complicated” became the frequent response to a question. When we thought we had something figured out, we’d hear another twist, and our guide would say, “I know, it makes no sense.”

The Israeli twist on laws and their proclamation of new laws to Israeli advantage defies common sense, moral integrity and international law.

Property. We visited the “Tent of Nations”—a 100-acre farm owned by a Christian family for hundreds of years. They have documentation of ownership back to the Ottoman Empire. The Israeli government has challenged the family’s ownership—and uprooted centuries-old olive groves, and blocked their access road so they have to take a long detour to get into town (Bethlehem). They cannot build on the land, as Israelis will tear it down, so they occupy caves. When their attorney presented their deeds in international court and asked the Israeli attorney for his documentation, the Israeli lawyer held up a Torah and said, “This land belongs to God’s chosen people.” The case is still pending. This is not an isolated case. Many Palestinian villages live under threat of demolition because Israelis want the land for more settlements or for roads to settlements. These brave Palestinians ‘refuse to be enemies’ and practice nonviolent resistance to stay on their land.

We learned that around 28,000 Palestinian homes have been demolished. The West Bank has 19 refugee camps and 741,409 registered refugees. Another 1.7 million Palestinians live in the Gaza Strip, the world’s largest open-air prison. (More Palestinian refugees are in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.) On the other hand, Israel currently has over 260 Jewish-only settlements and outposts illegally built on confiscated Palestinian land in the West Bank. While the settlements enjoy sufficient water, power, and the usual services such as garbage pickup and fire and ambulance service, many Palestinian areas noticeably suffer from the lack of these necessities, although they pay taxes for them.

Economics. The Israeli government is doing all it can to discourage Palestinians from staying in their country. The walls, checkpoints, restrictions all take a toll on their ability to earn an income and...
‘Nice’ Days a Preview for Mega-drought?

The following column originally appeared in the April 21, 2015 Lincoln Journal Star as a “Local View.”

Winter’s back broke suddenly here in mid-March, and storms to the north, even during the usual winter rainy season. “Widespread annual droughts, once a rare calamity, have become more frequent and are set to become the ‘new normal,’” wrote Christopher Schwalm, Christopher A. Williams and Kevin Schaeffer in the New York Times back in August 2012. “Future precipitation trends, based on climate model projections for the coming fifth assessment from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, indicate that droughts of this length and severity will be commonplace through the end of the century unless human-induced carbon emissions are significantly reduced,” they wrote. Drought tends to compound the warming of the atmosphere because plants stressed by lack of water may take in only half of the carbon dioxide they would when adequately hydrated, due to reduction of photosynthesis.

Jonathan Overpeck and Bradley Udall wrote in Science that: “Signs of climate change in western North America... include soaring temperatures, declining late-season snowpack, northward-shifted winter storm tracks, increasing precipitation intensity, the worst drought since measurements began, steep declines in Colorado River reservoir storage, widespread vegetation mortality, and sharp increases in the frequency of large wildfires. These shifts have taken place across a region that also saw the nation’s highest population growth during the same period... The climate of the western United States could become much drier over the course of this century.”

In early 2015, NASA issued a warning that if present rates of increase in greenhouse-gas emissions continue, that most of North America, excepting the Arctic and near-Arctic, would suffer a “mega-drought” during the balance of the 21st century that will make what the U.S. Southwest has endured to date look like an appetizer. The anticipated drought between 2050 and 2100 will be the worst in at least 1,000 years, since the Anasazi and Maya were devastated between 1100 and 1200 C.E., and driven (unlike the drought almost 1,000 years ago) by human-induced climate change, NASA said. For the U.S. Southwest and Central Plains, the high-emissions scenario climate change projects reduced precipitation, as well as increased evaporation as temperatures rise. Jason Smerdon, a climate scientist at Columbia University’s Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory in Palisades, New York, who co-authored this study, said that the impending mega-drought will make the Chaco drought look “quaint.” “The study is strong scientifically,” Jonathan Overpeck at the University of Arizona’s Institute of the Environment wrote in Science. “It strength-

Climate change is more than just a buzzword. It is a reality that society and industry have failed to deal with effectively. “Greenwashing,” a term that author Bruce Johansen defines as the “environmental sleight of hand” performed by technology and advertising, has us convinced that certain ‘green’ practices are sustainable. In his new book, Johansen examines the sanctioned activities and practices commonly touted as environmentally responsible and points out their failings. He explains why the global climate change problem is more urgent than many people think, and provides real-world examples of companies that are taking measures with genuine benefits to the environment.

Presenting information relevant to every inhabitant of earth and that environmentalists, climate scientists, and students and educators in environmental studies will find essential reading, this book brings questions about legislation and economics to the forefront and asks whether today’s system can support a true effort at sustainable living.

REFERENCES


Bruce E. Johansen is Jacob J. Isaacson Professor at UNO and author of the just released book, Eco-Hustle! (See ad.)
Our Fragile Global Food Supply

This “Local View” article by NFP State Coordinator Tim Rinne, originally appeared in the Sunday, May 24, 2015 Lincoln Journal Star under the title of “Raise a Generation of Gardeners.”

It’s a long-standing habit of mine.

Three or more times a day, you’ll find me eating—stuffing my face until my stomach tells me I’m full.

And, it turns out, I’m not alone. Everybody does it.

We’re either rummaging through our refrigerators and cupboards for something to eat, or spending half of our food budget eating out (be it fine dining, fast food or raiding a vending machine).

Given how much we build our day around eating—breakfast in the morning, lunch at noon, dinner in the evening—it’s astonishing how little attention we pay to where all the food for those meals comes from.

Ask anyone if they know, and the best answer most of us could come up with is: ‘The Store.’

This is even true for the majority of the farmers in our state. For all our talk about ‘feeding the world,’ we’re not growing food for anybody’s table. We’re raising commodity crops—mostly corn and soybeans, and largely for animal feed and ethanol. And I have yet to meet the person, rural or urban, who’s pulled up a chair to a meal of that. Even the livestock we raise in the state is mainly for the market. That pound of hamburger you just bought at the store (be it from Nebraska or the Mojave Desert).

Having access to a locally based food supply—in a world of increasing climate disruption—is just common sense. As we all eat, we all have a stake in having our food sources as near at hand as possible. Food security isn’t ‘liberal’ or ‘conservative,’ rich or poor, or even ‘Big Ag’ vs. family farm. When it’s mealtime, we check our politics at the door and stick our heads in the trough.

Nobody though is already feeling the effects of food insecurity more than our poor and lower-income citizens.

The just-released “Lincoln Vital Signs 2015” reports that poverty in our capital city has more than doubled in the past decade. One in five of our community’s children now live in poverty.

Lincoln has a laudable network of institutions serving the hungry.

And yet, where does all the food to serve that ever-growing population come from? From ‘The Store’? From California? From Latin America?

Poverty and hunger, rest assured, are only going to strain the security of our already vulnerable food supply.

After half a century of barely giving a moment’s thought to that mouthful of food we’re chewing, Lincoln is about to get its hands back in the dirt. Our days of just being ‘eaters’—and letting someone else worry about supplying our food—are fast drawing to an end.

We’re going to need to start once again prioritizing food production. We’re going to need to grow food in our own yards, establish community gardens on public grounds and church properties, and promote market gardening within the city limits.

And who’s going to do all this work? (Because, don’t kid yourself: growing produce is hard work and the weather extremes of climate change are making it even harder.)

If we’re to create a reliable local food supply, along with all that produce, we’re going to need to raise a new generation of gardeners.

Fortunately, the ‘learn by doing’ nature of gardening makes it accessible to anyone, regardless of education or background. If you can grow a beautiful eggplant or potato, nobody’s going to care if you’ve got a college diploma or a criminal record.

Vital Signs 2015 shows why, if Lincoln hopes to prosper, building a secure food supply belongs at the top of our community agenda. And the time to start moving is now, before any more of us have to miss dinner.

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Palestinian Realities, conclusion

Deaths of Jewish people as a result of conflict are what make the news. Actually, many more Palestinians—including children—have been killed by Israelis than the other way around. The table above shows tabulations by Jewish people at: http://ifamericansknew.org/.

Not only do most Americans have no idea of the extent of Palestinian deaths, suffering and oppression, they also have no idea how much our government supports Israel. Did you know that during fiscal year 2014, the U.S provided at least $8.5 million per day in military aid to Israel, and $0 to the Palestinians? We appreciate the need to support Israel as a democracy in the midst of hostile countries, but we deplore the fact that our aid ends up supporting Israel’s persistence in violating international law in its policies and actions against the Palestinians. (Fact: Israel has been targeted by at least 77 UN resolutions from 1955-1992. Palestinians have been targeted by ONE.)

I do not dislike Jewish people or the Jewish religion. I oppose the oppression of Palestinians, including Christians, by the Israeli government and military. There IS HOPE for peace. More and more Christian leaders and Jewish rabbis and leaders are speaking out against the Israeli oppression of Palestinians. We can be both Pro Palestine and Pro Israel. We need to encourage our leaders to stand up against Israeli policies that oppress Palestinians.

Comparisons of totals from September 27, 2000 to the present

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Israeli</th>
<th>Palestinian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>133 Israelis children killed by Palestinians</td>
<td>2,060 Palestinian children killed by Israelis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,195 Israelis killed</td>
<td>9,218 Palestinians killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11,376 Israelis injured</td>
<td>72,066 Palestinians injured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 Israelis held prisoner</td>
<td>6,000 Palestinians held prisoner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the Fuss, conclusion

agreements come back to the Senate in the future, fast track requires a simple majority for approval. Therefore, barring a sea-change in the makeup of the Senate, we will eventually end up with more trade agreements and less national sovereignty, unless other countries resist.

With regard to this second bill prohibiting exchange rate manipulation, I can assure you as an international economist that there is no obvious way to determine whether exchange rates are realistic or intentionally manipulated, much less why they are manipulated. In fact, given the fact that the dollar is the reserve currency of the world (to our very great advantage, by the way), all other countries have to undervalue their currencies in order to run trade surpluses with us and to accumulate reserves to protect themselves from speculative attacks and the potential economic crises that would result from such attacks.

In short, it is not clear what the whole protest by the corporate Democrats was about, other than to let them say that at one point the voted against fast track.

In Europe, the European Commission (the executive branch of the European Union) had to reluctantly permit public hearings after some of the preliminary text of the agreement was leaked to the public. Massive protests across European capitals followed the revelations of pending inclusion of ISDS procedures in the agreement. Over 150,000 people, almost all in opposition to the agreement, attended the public hearings in 2014, but the Commission decided after the hearings to continue with the agreement as it was. Apparently public hearings do not outweigh corporate lobbyists. Opponents then began to organize a petition under the EU’s “European Citizen Initiative” provisions, for which one million signatures are enough to force an open political discussion in the European Parliament dealing with the secret negotiations currently being conducted by the European Commission. Unfortunately, the Commission has the power to deny the initiative for procedural reasons, and they promptly ruled that the initiative was not an ‘initiative’ because it sought to reverse an established procedure—not initiate a new one. So the signatures went for naught. And we thought “Citizens United” was the worst example of the corruption of government by corporate power.

Be Concerned, Speak Up

More protests are to be expected in Europe, where the public is generally better informed on trade negotiations. Whether the protests can stop the corporate takeover of the global economy remains to be seen, of course. In the meantime, we must make the issue more clear to Americans. Citizen ignorance will most certainly doom us to life under a corporatocracy.
ordered by courts to incorporate other racial groups. It differs from a ‘consent decree’ such as when the courts ordered the Omaha Police Department (OPD) in 1979 to hire a specific number of Blacks in response to the blatant segregation OPD had practiced prior to that mandate. Too few African Americans had been on the Omaha Police Department force despite the fact that the only requirements for hiring were a high school diploma and a basic written and physical test. By contrast, many of the Whites who got on the force had been able to do so with the help of officer relatives or friends. The courts remedied this discriminatory practice by making OPD hire 40 percent of Blacks in the next classes until their numbers were equal to the percentage of the city population of nine percent.

The City of Omaha is 33 percent People of Color. Many of its public and private institutions should not be either all or nearly all White. Universities, colleges departments and public institutions practice this predominantly all-White dance. How can organizations that purport to serve People of Color have an all or mostly all-White board of directors? How can public-supported organizations or institutions be effective when their so-called ‘social justice’ panels, staff and patrons are one race? Therein lies the problem of a so-called ‘integrated’ society. We have pockets and siloes of organizations that are allegedly diverse, but internally segregated.

During my Specialist Degree education at the University of Nebraska-Omaha in 1983, I examined Central High School and how it had been historically integrated, yet practiced internal segregation in its course selections for students. African Americans and students of Color were on an inferior track of academic course work. Whites, meanwhile, were largely packing the honors and college preparatory courses. This review of Central High School’s courses composition revealed that the school was not adhering to the spirit of true racial integration. It is time to redo this examination to see what changes have happened since 1983.

We must establish baselines, timelines and criteria for what nonprofits and socially motivated organizations must do if they are to be effective at helping all segments of our community grow. None of this is easy. It takes a good deal of concerted effort to build the trust and respect that are the foundation of these cross-cultural relationships. We cannot, for example, bring in out-of-town or token people and point to them as spokespersons for the segregated communities. My Latino friends—whose people have experienced terrible traumas throughout American history—tell me that too often these White-only institutions will import a Spanish-speaking White elite, place them in the front window and brag how integrated they are. Meanwhile, when one examines their board membership, committee minutes and engagement in the community, the outcome is woefully inadequate. A healing community must work to redefine the outcomes from the perspective of the historical victims of society and ensuring a seat at the table.

To support this relationship-building work, please join Nebraskans for Peace. Let us know you are interested and would like to attend future meetings by calling the NFP Omaha Chapter at 402-453-0776 or emailing: NFPOmaha@Nebraskans-forPeace.org

JOIN NFP TODAY! Become a Member of the Oldest Statewide Peace & Justice Organization in the United States

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Phone: _____________________________ Alt. Phone: _____________________________
Email Address: ______________________________
Legislative District # (or name of Senator): ______________________________

Mail this form to: Nebraska for Peace, 941 ‘O’ Street, Suite 1026, Lincoln, NE 68508

Or to become a member online, visit: wwwnebraskansforpeace.org and click on “Donate.”

Membership payments to Nebraskans for Peace are NOT tax-deductible due to our political activity. Tax-deductible contributions can be made to the Nebraska Peace Foundation for our educational work.
with the NSA in the collection of phone and email data that the Second Circuit Court of Appeals has said that Congress did not authorize; its use of drones to kill American citizens who, under the Constitution, are supposedly innocent until proven guilty; and its employment of drones on civilian non-combatants in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Libya, Somalia and the Philippines (cited by the Friends Committee on National Legislation). We watch silently as, at StratCom, 70 years of peace movement work to limit the nuclear threat by reducing warheads, launchers and missile defense systems evaporates in the modernization of the old regimen of multiple warhead launchers into more accurate systems and more efficient killing.

At the height of the Cold War in the ’80s, before START (the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks), the U.S. had about 2,000 launchers (the Soviets had about 2,500). Each country had about 10,500 warheads. START reduced these stockpiles, but the U.S. still has 2,000 warheads and the Russians about 1,500—2,015 of which have been modernized to be more accurate and destructive.

Seven hundred and eighty U.S. launchers can deliver nuclear weapons anywhere in the world, and StratCom controls most of these. Under the new START Treaty, the U.S. can deploy Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs), Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs) and nuclear-capable bombers—but only a piddly 700 (though still enough to wreck everything). Even a small nuclear war, say between Pakistan and India, could destroy the global climate.

During the 1980s, the Reagan Administration’s advocacy of a ‘Star Wars’ missile defense system threatened to upset the strategic balance between the U.S.S.R.’s and U.S.’s nuclear capacity, encouraging both sides to launch a ‘first strike.’ A sufficiently robust missile defense system, if deployed, could have prevented incoming Soviet missiles from striking us—or, if the U.S. launched an attack first, could have prevented the Soviets from striking back. Either way, on the principle of use ‘em or lose ‘em, missile defense heightened the likelihood of a first-strike nuclear attack. Opposition by the Peace movement—and the repeated failure of the Star Wars technology of the day—ultimately led to the abandonment of the ‘first-strike’ doctrine. Thirty years later, we are now placing our missile defense systems, especially AEGIS, in positions to preempt an attack on us or on our allies. And unlike Star Wars, these systems work and would facilitate first strikes. We will soon have AEGIS in Poland; another on ships in the Black Sea; we have given the system to Japan; and word has it that Ukraine would be happy to host it. The original Star Wars has given way to dozens of little Star Wars—all having the same logic. The integrations of these systems, and many of the systems themselves, originate from StratCom.

My view of StratCom is not universally accepted, as Senator Fischer’s reply to one of my letters demonstrates:

Thank you for contacting me about nuclear deterrence… As you know, Senator Edward Markey (D-Mass.) has stated that he plans to re-introduce the “Smarter Approach to Nuclear Expenditures Act” in the 114th Congress. This proposed bill would prevent many of the sustainment and modernization efforts that are necessary to maintain our nuclear enterprise.

I believe our nuclear deterrent continues to play a vital role in protecting the United States. The Department of Defense stated that Senator Markey’s bill from the last session of Congress would “result in far-reaching negative impacts to U.S. conventional power projection capabilities over the long term.” Additionally, the Obama Administration warned that Senator Markey’s bill would make the United States “unable to maintain the long-held nuclear deterrence commitments to our allies and partners around the globe.

The United States must maintain a nuclear deterrent that is safe, secure and effective. I cannot support legislation that puts the United States in jeopardy and risks nuclear proliferation among our allies. The world is not sufficiently safe to warrant such unilateral disarmament… Sincerely, Deb Fischer, United States Senator.

For Senator Fischer clearly, possessing a nuclear arsenal already capable of de-
destroying the world is insufficient. We must have unchallenged nuclear superiority. Our doomsday machine must be greater than all others... reminding us that not only in 1984 does war pose as peace. In Nebraska it has done so for seventy years.

Footnotes:

i I recognize that STRATCOM's work overlaps with that of the NSA, the Defense Department, and that of the regional military commanders. I have tried to be as accurate as published sources will allow.

ii Recently the Second District Court of Appeals struck down Section 215 of the Patriot Act that was used to justify the National Security Agency's collection of data on virtually every phone call we make. A posting by Senator Fischer has the following allegation: “In an interview with Current TV in May, another StratCom/NSA whistleblower, SES Thomas Drake, made similar claims of the capability and intent of StratCom and the NSA's illegal surveillance activities. ‘The vast capability of StratCom and the NSA was increasingly being turned inside the U.S. beginning in June 2004,’ he said, ‘to surveil networks, emails, phone calls, etc... The orders came from Marine Gen. James Cartwright and USAF Gen. Michael Hayden. The United States of America was turned into the equivalent of a foreign nation for the purposes of dragnet electronic surveillance,’ Drake added.


iv We still have nearly 5,000 (4,804) nuclear weapons in our stockpile: “Total number of nuclear weapons—strategic and non-strategic, deployed and non-deployed—in the U.S. nuclear stockpile as of September 30, 2013 (does not count retired weapons that await dismantlement). The 4,804 figure includes active warheads in an “operational, ready-for-use configuration” and inactive warheads which are maintained in “non-operational status.” Brookings Institute v See for example Michael Mill of the “National Center for Atmospheric Research” in Colorado: “Most people would be surprised to know that even a very small regional nuclear war on the other side of the planet could disrupt global climate for at least a decade and wipe out the ozone layer for a decade.”

vi The Markey bill would: • Reduce deployed strategic submarines from 14 to 8 and reduce the purchase of replacement submarines from 12 to 8—saving $16 billion. • Cut warhead life-extension programs and defer the development of new ICBMs—saving $15 billion. • Remove the nuclear mission from F-35s and delay the new long range bomber—saving over $32 billion. • Cancel nuclear weapon-making facilities and missile defense programs—saving $37 billion.

Nebraska Peace Foundation will again be participating in Give to Lincoln Day. This year Give to Lincoln Day 2015 is May 28, 2015. Donations to NPF that day (and those designated to be processed that day) qualify for a portion of the $300,000 matching fund set aside by Lincoln Community Foundation. Last year Give to Lincoln Day 2014 was a great success. We had $13,375 in donations and Lincoln Community Foundation added their matching amount of $1,846.90. This is the fourth year of the Give to Lincoln Days and our fourth year participating. Each year has brought new donors and increased amounts which makes the match from Lincoln Community Foundation larger each year. Thanks to everyone who helped make GIVE TO LINCOLN DAY a great success.
Seventy Years Later & Still Trying

Seventy years ago this August, a pillar of radiation stood over Hiroshima, its expanded head a one-eyed Cyclops skull. Three hundred thousand deaths eventuated from the Hiroshima explosion, fire and subsequent radiation sickness. A few days later the pillar stood over Nagasaki and issued in 150,000 more deaths from explosion, fire and eventual radiation sickness.

I was 13. The same year, in an oratorical contest, I argued that, given nuclear weapons, we faced choosing world government or self-destruction. Seventy years later, we still keep nationalism’s status quo—perhaps for the doomsday thrill.

Each year when NFP sponsors its solemn lantern float at Holmes Lake, remembering 1945’s doomsday times and praying that the world’s present capacity for destruction never be used, I receive angry calls and letters hallooing the dropping of the bomb. This despite General Dwight Eisenhower’s skepticism, Pacific Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz’s opposition, and the resistance of most of our military leaders. As atomic bomb historian Gar Alperowitz documented in 1965, the military did not decide for Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Harry Truman and James Burns, our South Carolinian Secretary of State, did. Both knew that Japan was trying to surrender before the bomb was dropped but feared Soviet entrance into the eastern war and the expansion of Soviet power into Manchuria, Korea and China. Both opened the entrance to Hell.

The equivalent of the present population of Omaha proper (400,000) died in the 1945 holocausts—about 200,000 dead immediately and about half of the 450,000 hibakusha burned by radiation in the bombings (292,325 in Hiroshima and 165,409 in Nagasaki). Ironically, Omaha now hosts StratCom, the world’s greatest holocaust machine, and gains much of its payroll, construction profits and durable goods money from it. The story circulates widely that Sen. Ben Nelson of Nebraska caved in his opposition to the “Affordable Care Act” when President Obama threatened to move StratCom. So promising holocausts is now Nebraska’s bread-and-butter industry.

For many decades, Nebraskans for Peace has borne witness to StratCom’s menace—first featuring Sidney Lens’ Day Before Doomsday research in the ’70s, then its ‘Nuclear Freeze’ work in the ’80s, then “Speak[ing] Out at StratCom,” and finally developing StratCom’s role as “the most dangerous place on the face of the earth.” NFP worked with groups doing StratCom-related research and action: Frank Cordaro and the Catholic Workers in Des Moines, Bruce Gagnon and the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space, and Loring Wirbel and Bill Sulzman with Citizens for Peace in Space. Yet, little beyond education happened. Perhaps the peace movement was too numb to do great things. Perhaps we thought that StratCom and its tools would never be used.

We would be poorer but better off morally if Senator Nelson had let President Obama move or close StratCom. Few in Nebraska speak of StratCom’s menace—the dubious legality of what StratCom is doing: its apparent collaboration...