



Nebraska Report

There is no Peace without Justice

OCTOBER 2004

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NFP/PAC Congressional District Endorsements

For the first time in over two decades, the Nebraska Republican Party is being forced to simultaneously fend off serious Democratic challenges in both the 1st and 2nd Congressional Districts. What progressive voters choose to do with their votes in the upcoming November 2 election could well impact the outcome of these two contests. The board of the Nebraskans for Peace Political Action Committee (NFP/PAC) evaluated these races in the context of both the state's electoral history and the current political situation in making the following recommendations.

Nebraska's reputation as a Republican stronghold, as any longtime resident can tell you, dates back more than half a century. The party's dominance in presidential politics in the state is downright dynastic. The last time a Democrat carried the state and won Nebraska's electoral votes was 40 years ago, when Lyndon Johnson defeated Barry Goldwater in the 1964 election. And you have to go back another 28 years before that, to Franklin D. Roosevelt's landslide reelection in 1936, to find another Democratic winner. Nebraska has the notoriety of being the most Republican state in presidential elections of any state in the country for better than 50 years. Even Nebraska's proportional method of awarding electoral votes based on the outcome in each congressional district (rather than on the statewide total under the 'winner-take-all' system practiced virtually everywhere else) didn't enable Bill Clinton or Al Gore to win an electoral vote in the state.

Democratic congressional candidates, during this same period, haven't fared much better. While the Nebraska Democratic Party has been remarkably successful when it comes to statewide races for governor and the U.S. Senate, elections to the House of Representatives have been few and

far between. The last time a Democrat went to Congress in the 1st Congressional District was 1964, riding on LBJ's coattails. No Democrat has been elected in what's now part of the 3rd District since the 1950s. Only the 2nd Congressional District has had any luck electing a Democrat to represent it in recent history. John Cavanaugh served for two terms from 1976-1980 and Peter Hoagland served for three terms from 1988-1994.

This is not, of course, to suggest that electing Democrats is any sort of panacea. Nebraskans—and Nebraskans for Peace members in particular—have endured a seemingly unending string of politically and economically conservative Democratic politicians: Exon, Zorinsky, Kerrey and now Nelson. As one of the NFP/PAC board members regularly points out, policy-wise “the Democrats are only about ten years behind the Republicans” in their drift to the right. The platform and positions of the Green Party's candidates far more closely reflect the values of NFP than the Democratic Party's do.

Nevertheless, we live in a world of harsh political realities rather than lofty political ideals, and no one has any illusions about the Greens coming to power any time soon. While NFP members may spiritedly debate whether the two-party ‘duopoly’ in this country constitutes little more than choice between ‘the lesser of two evils,’ none of us want another four years of Republican control of the executive branch and both Houses of Congress.

Fortunately, the choices in this year's congressional races are much more agreeable. Rep. Doug Bereuter's retirement in the 1st District offers the best opportunity we've had in decades to elect a Democrat to that seat. And the

continued on page 3

**Ex-CIA
Analyst
Ray
McGovern
on**



**“The Role of
Intelligence
in the
War on Iraq”**

ANNUAL PEACE CONFERENCE

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2004

9:00 A.M. – 5:00 P.M.

Augustana Lutheran Church

38th & LaFayette in Omaha

(See Back Page for Details)

inside:

Latin America Briefs	p. 2
The High Cost of War	p. 4
Hagel Defends Dissent over Bush's Iraq Policy	p. 5
Arms Trade/StratCom Axis	p. 5

'I Like Ike'	p. 6
Why They 'Hate' Us	p. 7
UNO Afghan Center: The Perversion of a Public Institution of Higher Education	p. 8
<i>From the Bottom</i> by Sally Herrin	p. 12

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Nebraskans for Peace

Nebraskans for Peace is a statewide grassroots advocacy organization working nonviolently for peace with justice through community-building, education and political action.

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Latin America Briefs

compiled by **Christy Hargesheimer**



Foreign Firms Illegally Operating Mexican Franchises

Transnational petroleum companies, including British Petroleum, Shell and Exxon Mobil, are illegally operating Pemex service stations throughout Mexico, using third parties to file ownership papers. The energy sector is a constitutional national monopoly in Mexico and foreign corporations are prohibited from ownership, yet foreign companies reportedly earn U.S. \$260 million dollars annually running Pemex gas stations. Pemex reported between 80 and 120 stations that are likely operated with foreign capital. But Pemex authorities are turning a blind eye to this illegal practice, part of the Fox administration's plans to quietly privatize important parts of the energy sector. For example, British Petroleum reportedly controls 40 stations using the name Energia de Servicios, whose registered owners worked in BP's Houston offices until January of this year.

Mexican Environmentalists Demand GMO Report

In late September, Mexican environmental groups demanded the official release of a report on genetically modified foods that calls for strict control of GMO seeds. The report has been delayed four times in the face of opposition from U.S. companies and the Bush Administration. The U.S. \$450 million report recommends that Mexico end imports of trans-genetic grains and restrict U.S. corn imports of ground corn. Academics affiliated with the tri-national Commission for Environmental Cooperation finished the report on June 7, but the Fox Administration refuses to release it. The Mexican daily newspaper *La Jornada* obtained a copy of the report recently.

Meanwhile, production of basic grains, mainly corn, beans, sorghum, barley and vegetable oils increased by 11.7 percent between 2000 and 2003, according to Agriculture Minister Javier Usabiaga. Highly subsidized agricultural imports from the U.S. have largely undermined Mexico's national grain markets, so the substantial production increases are probably the result of increased production for self-consumption.

(Source: Mexican Solidarity Committee, 9/28/04)

Haitian Floods Lead to Desperate Food Situation

The floods that killed more than 1,500 people in mid-September also washed away much of the country's harvest, plunging an already desperately poor nation deeper into hunger. Haiti only produced 45 percent of the food it consumed before the floods. Aid organizations are now worried that number will drop to even more critical levels because of hundreds of acres of farmland that were flooded and thousands of farm animals killed. "Most of the harvest [in the flooded regions] has been destroyed," said Guy Gauvreau, of the U.N.'s World Food Program. "The level of self-sufficiency for Haiti will go down from 45 percent to 35 percent at least, maybe worse. It's getting critical that this country begins to support the farmers to produce more." The World Food Program and CARE International are providing emergency food aid to women and children in Gonaives.

(Source: *Miami Herald*, 9/28/04.)

World Hunger Summit Ignored by U.S. Media

Some 60 heads of state attended a World Hunger Summit at the United Nations headquarters in New York on September 20. The meeting, the day before the annual opening of the U.N. General Assembly, was largely organized by Brazilian president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, backed by Chilean president Ricardo Lagos, French president Jacques Chirac, Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero and U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan. "How many more times will it be necessary to repeat that the most destructive weapon of mass destruction in the world is poverty?" Lula asked the summit, which he hoped would establish a mechanism for raising the \$50 billion a year experts consider necessary to end hunger in the world.

In the end, 113 nations signed on to the "Declaration on Action Against Hunger and Poverty," which calls for taxing weapons and financial transactions; joint efforts to fight tax evasion and tax havens; and a credit card scheme that would direct a small percentage of transaction charges to the hunger fund. The U.S. declined to sign, and the U.S. media generally ignored the summit. U.S. agriculture secretary Ann Veneman explained that for the administration of U.S. president George W. Bush, "global taxes are inherently undemocratic." (*BBC News* 9/20/04; *La República* (Lima) 9/21/04 from EFE; *Left Margin* 9/24/04 via portside.org; *Miami Herald* 9/22/04, 9/23/04; *Radio France Internationale* 9/21/04)

NFP/PAC, conclusion

Democratic nominee, State Senator Matt Connealy, is the most credible, well-funded candidate the party has fielded since 1978. In the 2nd Congressional District, another experienced legislator, State Senator Nancy Thompson, is the strongest challenger the party could have put forward against the arch-conservative Republican incumbent Lee Terry. Throughout their Unicameral careers, both of these Democratic candidates have repeatedly demonstrated their support for issues of importance for Nebraskans for Peace: social services, public education and equitable tax policy. Connealy—besides being a strong advocate for family farm agriculture—has provided legislative leadership on immigrant rights and the lawlessness in Whiteclay, and Thompson has been an outspoken leader on health care coverage and affordability, particularly during the state budget crisis.

Nevertheless, while in agreement with NFP on many issues, neither of these Democratic candidates are wholly satisfactory from a purely NFP issue orientation. But a majority of the NFP/PAC board believes that this is an election that does not allow for simply adding up who is in the most agreement with our organization on the issues. Rather, this election requires further political judgment. With these candidates, will the door be open to progressive issues supported by NFP? Is there some chance of positive change—and soon? Can voting for these candidates help limit the damage being wrought by the political Right?

For example, while Connealy and Thompson's positions on national and international policy would be significant improvements over those of the Republicans they are seeking to replace, they do not in general reflect the views of either Nebraskans for Peace or their Green Party opponents. Both NFP member Steve Larrick, the 1st District Green Party candidate, and Dante Salvatierra, the 2nd District Green Party nominee, have policy positions that philosophically mirror NFP's own. They are both committed activists dedicated to fundamental economic, political, social and environmental change. There is no question that they are kindred souls politically, the kind of courageous, straight-talking candidates we have so often wished for.

Unfortunately, neither of them have been able to effectively reach out to the electorate as viable candidates during this election. This means the candidates who NFP members may find most in sync with their philosophies are engaged only at this point in a meritorious effort to reinforce Third Party candidacies and talk about issues not otherwise on the mainstream radar screen. The NFP/PAC board commends the Green

Party candidates for boldly going forward to point us toward a better world—one all NFP members are seeking every day.

But we believe in this election year our progressive votes can make a key difference in who is elected, and for good reason, not just in widening the electoral options. Accordingly, a majority of the NFP/PAC board has opted to issue a joint "Philosophical/Pragmatic" endorsement in these two congressional campaigns. Green Party candidate Steve Larrick gets the NFP/PAC "philosophical" endorsement, and Democratic candidate Matt Connealy is the "pragmatic" endorsee. In the 2nd District, Green Party candidate Dante Salvatierra gets the philosophical nod, and Democratic candidate Nancy Thompson is our pragmatic choice.

We realize this approach is unlikely to satisfy everyone, Democrat or Green... From a hardcore Democratic perspective, we went 'too far' and should simply have rallied to Connealy and Thompson's candidacies. And from a Green vantage point, we didn't go 'far enough.' We compromised on our principles and allowed ourselves to get caught in the 'two-party trap' yet again. In response, we can only reiterate what we said above: namely, that we are committed to expanding the electoral framework to include progressive Third Party choices like the Greens, but that no one wants to see the Republican domination of both the executive and legislative branches continue. A Democratic president, no matter how progressive, will find it impossible to govern with any effectiveness whatsoever if both the House and the Senate remain in Republican hands. Another four years of Bush and Cheney in the White House and continued Republican majorities in Congress will invariably lead to Republican domination of the judiciary as well, with all the appointments that will be made to the judicial branch of government.

As for the 3rd Congressional District, the outcome is pre-ordained. Rep. Tom Osborne will waltz to reelection over both the Democratic and the Green Party candidates. Neither Democratic nominee Donna Anderson nor the Green Party's Roy Guisinger have the financial resources to seriously challenge Osborne (and the overwhelming Republican edge in voter registration in the 3rd District makes it all moot anyway). "Philosophically," however, we know that both of these candidates are absolutely in sync with Nebraskans for Peace as they are both members of NFP. Although it will not affect the outcome of the race, we encourage our supporters in District 3 to cast an important protest vote against Osborne's lurch to the political right by voting either Democratic or the Green.

NFP/PAC Endorsements

1st Congressional District

Philosophical

Pragmatic



Steve Larrick
Green Party



Matt Connealy
Democrat

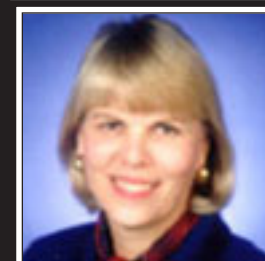
2nd Congressional District

Philosophical

Pragmatic



Dante Salvatierra
Green Party

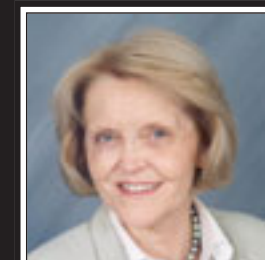


Nancy Thompson
Democrat

3rd Congressional District



Roy Guisinger
Green Party



Donna Anderson
Democrat

Unlike Doug Bereuter, who voted for the war on Iraq but then acknowledged his mistake, or Republican Senator Chuck Hagel, who has been relentless in his criticism of Bush's Iraq policy from the beginning, Osborne has been utterly unrepentant about this massive and deadly debacle. The more the body count rises, the closer he appears to be hewing to the party's conservative political line. He's undoubtedly working to solidify his activist right-wing base in a run-up for the governor's race two years from now. But while he's obviously willing to spare no expense to bring 'law and order' to Iraq, Rep. Osborne has had absolutely

nothing to say about the lawlessness in his own congressional backyard at Whiteclay. This 3rd District town hasn't merited a moment's attention from the congressman who would be governor. On November 2, voters in District 3 have a golden opportunity to register their discontent with Coach Osborne's disappointing performance by voting either Democratic or Green in the 3rd District congressional contest. It is our opportunity to send a message for the 2006 election. We urge you to send it.

The NFP/PAC board is comprised of Mark Vasina, D. Milo Mumgaard and Tim Rinne.



The High Cost of War

Prepared by the National Priorities Project, September 2004
www.costofwar.com • www.nationalpriorities.org

The human and financial costs of the Iraq War continue to climb. Since the beginning of the war in March 2003, more than 1,000 U.S. soldiers have died, three times the number that died in the first Persian Gulf War. More than 85 percent of those soldiers died since the President declared an end to major combat. More than 7,000 soldiers have been wounded, 15 times the number wounded in the first Gulf War.¹ Many of these soldiers have suffered permanent, disabling injuries.

Nearly 170,000 reservists and National Guard troops are currently on active duty compared to 50,000 prior to the Iraq War.² These part-time soldiers are taken away from their families and jobs for long periods of time.

The American taxpayer pays the financial costs of this war—Congress has already allocated \$150 billion for the war.³ More will be needed as instability grows and hostilities escalate:

- Attacks on U.S. and other troops in August averaged 90 per day, five times the level of last winter.⁴

- Every day two U.S. soldiers are killed and 30 are wounded.⁵
- The number of insurgents in Iraq may have quadrupled since last year.⁶
- Crude oil production in Iraq is only two-thirds of what it was pre-war.⁷
- The Administration requested Congress in September to shift money allocated for Iraqi reconstruction to security, a move indicating trouble, according to some Congressional leaders.⁸
- A U.S. intelligence report provided to the Bush Administration in July concluded a gloomy outlook for stability in Iraq, including the possible outbreak of a civil war.⁹

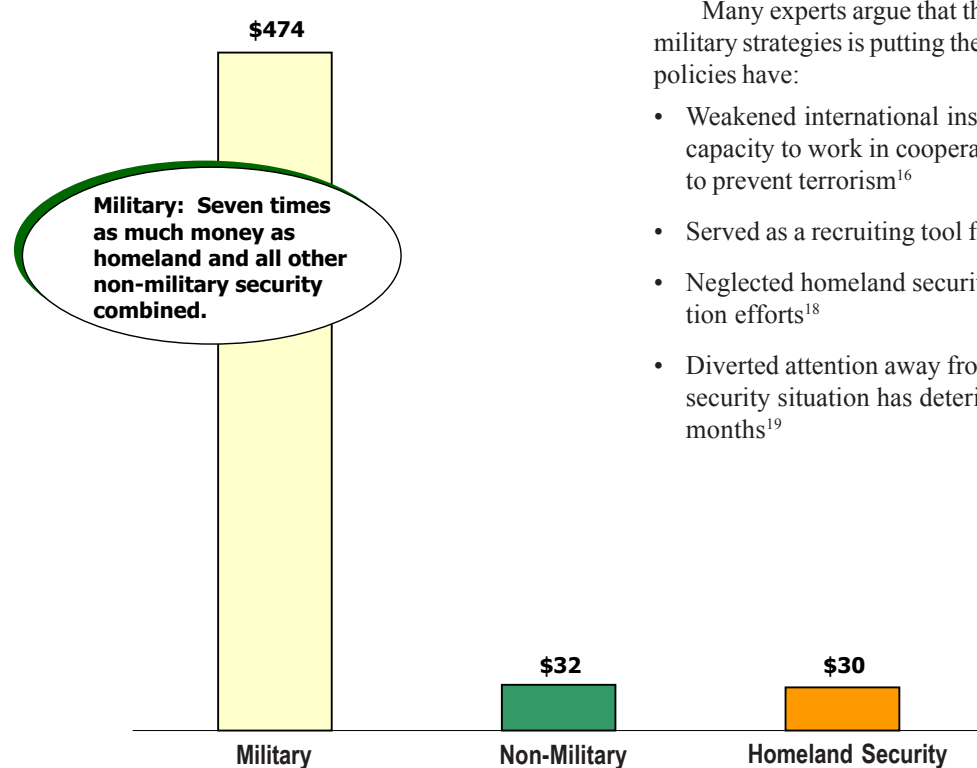
Beyond 2004, the financial needs of this war may consume another \$4 billion per month.¹⁰

The costs of war in the U.S.:

- ✘ 1,035 soldiers killed¹¹
- ✘ 7,245 soldiers wounded¹²
- ✘ \$152.6 billion for what Congress has allocated so far¹³
- ✘ Another \$50.0 billion more for each year the U.S. remains beyond 2004¹⁴
- ✘ 167,356 Reservists and National Guard troops on active duty¹⁵

Sources: 1 Dept. of Defense, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (DoD DIOR). 2 DoD, press releases, various dates. 3 Analysis of legislation providing funding for Iraq War; includes military operations and war-related spending. 4 O'Hanlon, M. and A. Lins de Albuquerque, 'Iraq index: tracking variables of reconstruction and security in post-Saddam Iraq,' Brookings Institute, updated September 20, 2004. 5 Iraq Coalition Casualty Count. 6 O'Hanlon and Albuquerque. 7 Ibid. 8 New York Times, 'Senators see budget shift on Iraq as sign of trouble,' Sept. 15, 2004. 9 'National Intelligence Estimate' as discussed in news sources such as Reuters, 'U.S. intelligence offers gloomy outlook for Iraq,' Sept. 16, 2004. 10 Projection based on Congressional Budget Offices estimates and actual spending. 11 Iraq Coalition Casualty Count. 12 Based on DoD DIOR estimates and methodology. 13 State breakdown based on state payment of taxes data from the IRS. 14 State share of an estimated \$50 billion per year to remain in Iraq. 15 DoD, 'National Guard and Reserve units called to active duty,' Sept 15, 2004.

Is the United States Safer?



Many experts argue that the Iraq War and emphasis on military strategies is putting the U.S. at greater risk. Current policies have:

- Weakened international institutions and reduced capacity to work in cooperation with allies and others to prevent terrorism¹⁶
- Served as a recruiting tool for Al Qaeda¹⁷
- Neglected homeland security needs and nonproliferation efforts¹⁸
- Diverted attention away from Afghanistan, where the security situation has deteriorated over the past six months¹⁹

Another strategy is possible. These same experts point to the non-military security tools that are being short-changed. They argue that billions of dollars could be shifted from military spending to other security needs. For example:

- Increase funding for the container inspection program to prevent dangerous materials from entering American ports.²⁰
- Increase funding for nonproliferation to keep nuclear materials out of the hands of terrorists.²¹
- Strengthen international intelligence sharing and police work, which has been the key to many of the real successes against terrorism since 9/11.²²
- Provide technical assistance to other governments so that they may crack down on sources of terrorist financing.²³

Sources: 16 Gershman J. and FPIF Task Force on Terrorism, 'A secure America in a secure world,' FPIF, September 2004 at <http://www.fpif.org/papers/04terror/index.html>. 17 International Institute for Strategic Studies as widely cited, such as in P. Bennis and IPS Iraq Task Force, 'Paying the price: the mounting costs of the Iraq war,' IPS and FPIF, June 2004 at <http://www.ipsdc.org/iraq/costsofwar/index.htm>. 18 See Gershman et al., and Task Force on a Unified Security Budget for the United States, 'A unified security budget,' FPIF and CDI, March 2004 at <http://www.cdi.org/news/mrp/Unified-Budget.pdf>. 19 Sedra, M. 'Afghanistan: democracy before peace?' FPIF Special Report, September 2004. 20 Task Force on a Unified Security Budget for the U.S. 21 Ibid. 22 Gershman et al. 23 Ibid. 24 Based on Office of Management and Budget, *Budget of the U.S. Government, FY2005*, Public Database and *Mid Session Review, FY2005*. © 2004 National Priorities Project, Inc.

Tools of Defense²⁴ (outlays in billions of dollars, FY2005)

HAGEL DEFENDS DISSENT OVER BUSH'S IRAQ POLICY

Despite his dutiful endorsement of George Bush's reelection at the Republican National Convention and his position as an honorary co-chair of the president's campaign here in Nebraska, Sen. Chuck Hagel has refused to let party loyalty muzzle his criticism of the administration's Iraq policy. Last month, in fact, Nebraska's senior senator forcefully defended the right and necessity for public dissent in interviews with the Nebraska media.

"You don't get a policy that is crisp and clear and worthy of our great young men and women who are fighting over there," he stated, "unless you probe, unless you ask the tough questions, unless you come at this in recalibrated ways... We have to make sure our policy is as good as it can be. Second best is not good enough, is not good enough," he emphasized, "when you're putting our men and women in harm's way."

Hagel's outspoken and unrelenting criticism of the Bush Administration's Iraq policy, dating back well before the preemptive attack in March 2003, has rankled many of his Republican colleagues, not to

mention Rush Limbaugh. As a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he repeatedly challenged the White House's justifications and haste in going to war and, after the president announced "the end of major combat," resumed his public critique about the risks and dangers of the administration's Mideast policy. It was his frank assessment on CBS's "Face the Nation" September 19 though, that the U.S. is not "winning" in Iraq and the mission there is in "deep trouble," that has produced the biggest outcry. Coming just six weeks before the election, those comments have spurred conservative critics and party loyalists to accuse him of everything from undermining the president's reelection to encouraging the enemy and damaging troop morale.

The decorated Vietnam War veteran however has unapologetically defended his right to speak his mind. He refuses, he says, to be a "potted plant in the corner" that sits silently and just goes along with



Senator Chuck Hagel

the plan and opposes the "mindless, bumper-sticker slogan, 'Well, you've got to support the troops.'" "Of course we support the troops," Hagel counters.

"That's not an issue here. This idea that if you dare question policy, you're being disloyal to your party or your president or hurting American troops or morale is completely unreasonable. I will not look away because of political loyalties. I will not allow myself to be held hostage to political rhetoric. If I did, I would fail the people just like many members of Congress failed the people during the Vietnam war." The rapidly deteriorating situation in Iraq, he stresses, requires a "crisp, sharp analysis of our policies. We didn't do that in Vietnam, and we saw 11 years of casualties mount to the point where we finally lost."

Hagel has sent a private four-page memo to Secretary of State Colin Powell and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice with ideas for policy

changes in Iraq. Among his recommendations is that the U.S. and the interim Iraqi government reach out to the neighboring Arab nations for assistance. "If we are to succeed in Iraq and get to the next stages of democracy, regional allies and Arab neighbors have to be part of stabilizing Iraq." These countries, he says, must actively assist Iraq with economic investment and development and help train the country's new police and security forces.

The White House, he says though, must act quickly. A classified estimate developed by the National Intelligence Council and presented to the president this past summer warned that Iraq could be facing the possibility of full-fledged civil war by the end of 2005.

Despite all the mistakes that have been made, Hagel believes the U.S. simply dare not fail in its efforts to create a democratically run government in Iraq. "We have so much at stake here that we can't afford a loss... It would be devastating to the security of the United States, the Middle East, all over the world."

Arms Trade/StratCom Axis

The United States retained its title as the world's top arms dealer in 2003, cornering a hefty 57 percent of the international arms trade. Russia, the nearest competitor, was a distant second, with a mere 17 percent of the total sales. According to the Congressional Research Service (the Library of Congress entity that annually tracks weapons deals), the U.S. sold about \$14.5 billion in armaments last year, up nearly a billion over 2002's \$13.6 billion total. And, as in the past, developing nations continued to be the primary market. Even as the Bush Administration was pledging to export freedom and democracy throughout the developing world (particularly in Islamic countries), U.S. arms manufacturers were avidly hawking their wares to such "democratically challenged" nations as United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Singapore and Kuwait.

To the casual observer, promoting the proliferation of conventional weapons in the very part of the world we're simultaneously trying to wage a "War on Terror" might seem counterproductive. Dangerous even. After

all, in just the last 25 years, we've seen undemocratic governments that the U.S. had lavishly armed and equipped (Iran under the Shah, Iraq under Saddam and the Taliban in Afghanistan) turn from valued allies to mortal enemies almost overnight. One would think that, lucrative or not, more arms sales to the autocratic regimes in this volatile region is the last thing our government should be encouraging.

But that's to misunderstand the nature and purpose of the Military-Industrial Complex: namely, to exacerbate the very problem it purports to be seeking to solve. Peddling all these tools of death and destruction abroad obliges us in turn to beef up our security at home. An enhanced defense at home, however, can only be justified by an ever-present threat from abroad. It's an endless cycle, which continually serves to bolster the power of the Pentagon as it produces huge profits for the defense industry.

It comes as no surprise then that StratCom, which in the wake of 9/11 has seen its mission expanded to include conventional as well as nuclear warfighting duties, has

been slated for a \$213 million makeover—courtesy of Lockheed Martin—to ready it for its new role. The Bethesda, Maryland-based defense contractor, according to an August 26, 2004 news report, has been awarded "a 10-year, \$213 million contract to develop the new architecture and functions for the Integrated Strategic Planning and Analysis Network (ISPAN), a network-centric mission planning and execution system. ISPAN will support the full spectrum of StratCom's new responsibilities for global strike, missile defense and information operations, in addition to their traditional role of nuclear deterrence."

In tech-speak language that could have come right out of George Lucas's "Star Wars," ISPAN will integrate "a number of legacy systems into a new, streamlined mission planning architecture, [allowing StratCom] commanders to monitor worldwide situations in real time, assess potential threats or areas of interest, and then plan and support execution of a swift response in coordination with

regional Combatant Commanders." StratCom will be able "to collaboratively plan its new, growing missions through an integrated, flexible command and control system. The system will enable them to reach out to systems, sensors and forces worldwide to plan for time-critical strikes, computer network operations, space operations and global integrated missile defense," said Leroy Jeter, director of USSTRATCOM programs for Lockheed Martin. Jeter added that, "We're extremely pleased to be supporting the Command on this transformational effort."

He should be. This latest contract comes on the heels of an earlier \$1.5 billion project at StratCom that's still in progress, and no doubt contributing to the corporation's reported sales of \$31.8 billion for 2003. Work will be performed at StratCom on Offutt Air Force Base, as well as at a new Lockheed Martin facility in Bellevue that, in a further blurring of the lines between military and industry, will be built to support ISPAN and other local programs.

‘I Like Ike’

The Military-Industrial Complex & Modern Republicanism

by Jeff Cole

Lincoln NFP member Jeff Cole spent the summer in Central Europe, where he had the opportunity to hear a European perspective on the Bush Administration and the upcoming presidential election.

After returning from Central Europe this summer, I read the pieces on Vice President Cheney’s visit to Lincoln in the July/August *Nebraska Report* with a combination of anger and frustration. The anger emerged as Creighton University Law Professor Michael Kelly’s summary reminded me of the Bush/Cheney Administration’s dismal three-and-a-half-year record in international affairs. Not that I needed much reminding. Living beyond the comfort of the U.S. media zone, I quickly realized how America’s global standing has diminished under this presidency. To go from unbounded sympathy for the U.S. following 9/11 to unprecedented opposition to our questionable, unilateral actions is quite a feat. To paraphrase a true wartime leader, rarely in the course of human history have so few squandered so much so quickly.

My frustration comes in part from my inability to understand how, despite its increasingly obvious failures, so many Americans can remain supportive of this administration. Predictably, core Bush-Cheney supporters (radical evangelicals, multi-millionaires) remain loyal. Fortunately, they are a small minority; albeit a politically sophisticated, empowered minority. More frustrating is the larger segment of supporters whose interests are at odds with this administration on so many issues who nevertheless will eagerly vote Bush in November. Their continued support of this administration is a testimony of the success of “Team W’s” media-savvy branding effort—despite any connection between the brand identity they are selling and the administration’s policies.

Thankfully, there are enough likely voters outside of these dependable Bush backers to return him to his Crawford stage set in November. As we enter the final weeks of this presidential campaign, the importance of the “swing” voter is growing increasingly obvious. In the last election enough of these undecided voters, tired of Clinton’s ethical lapses and the strangely uncertain Gore campaign, swung toward the untested yet moralist governor of Texas. If progressives are to regain the White House in November, they must reclaim more of

this crucial block. As many of these swingers are moderate Republicans, it would be helpful to reach into GOP’s recent history to find fodder for discussions about the choices we must make on election day. Fortunately, numerous past and present Republican leaders have provided a foundation on which we can build a persuasive Republican critique of President Bush’s destructive policies.

In his famous 1961 Farewell Address, President Dwight D.



Eisenhower provided an uncanny guide for understanding the destructive forces guiding the current administration. A key element of Ike’s farewell warning, made at the end of his half-century of distinguished public service, was concern over the influence of the rapidly growing military sector of the economy. As Supreme Commander of the Allied forces that liberated Western Europe in 1945, Eisenhower was a real military hero who knew war, the challenge of Communism and the importance of U.S. strength. However Ike also understood, perhaps better than any other president, the immense and potentially uncontrollable

power of a collusive military establishment and civilian arms industry. In his address, Ike warned that the growing power of the “Military-Industrial Complex” uniting the interests of powerful defense contractors with policymakers in Washington and leadership in the Pentagon could, if left unchecked, lead to a “disastrous rise of misplaced power over the councils of government.”

Obviously, Ike’s parting insight has been ignored by the current administration. With no meaningful military experience, President Bush assumed office a novice at understanding and controlling the Military-Industrial Complex’s influence on national security issues. Consequently, he has relied on the counsel of more seasoned hands, especially those of Vice President Cheney and a handful of advisors, to guide administration policy in this key area. Unfortunately, Dick Cheney’s experiences and influence embody and validate Ike’s concerns about the power of an unchecked Military-Industrial Complex on vital questions of national security.

Despite his Lincoln roots, Cheney is career Washington insider. Beginning in the late 1980s, he assumed several key positions that allowed him to amass enormous power over national security policy. As head of the Defense Department during the first Bush Administration, Secretary Cheney initiated reforms that led to a smaller U.S. military. In addition to fewer boots on the ground, downsizing meant cutting non-essential services and programs and allowing private companies to bid on government contracts that would, in theory, save a bloated Defense Department some serious money.

After the first Bush Administration, Cheney eased into a position leading the Halliburton Corporation, a multifaceted, multinational conglomerate of companies that annually receives billions of dollars of, surprise, those same government contracts. CEO Cheney was able to use his insider knowledge of a changing U.S. military’s needs to position Halliburton to profit from the new opportunities his downsized military required. And finally, as chief advisor to the current President Bush, Vice President Cheney has emerged as the key voice in the president’s inner circle, emphasizing pre-emptive war and military-driven nation building as key foreign policy strategies.

By shifting between roles as military reformer, military contractor, and finally key military policymaker,

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Why They 'Hate' Us

Ray McGovern, the career CIA analyst who will be the keynote speaker at the October 16 Annual Peace Conference in Omaha, wrote this trenchant analysis of the 9/11 Commission's final report immediately upon its release last July. As McGovern, whose intelligence responsibilities used to include preparing the "President's Daily Brief" and chairing National Intelligence Estimates, points out, the Commission's report was as notable for what it didn't say as for what it did. Missing was any meaningful discussion of the motivation behind the attack, or "why they 'hate' us." This article originally appeared on TomPaine.com July 26, 2004 under the title of "What Price Unanimity?"

The 567-page final report released Thursday by the 9/11 Commission provides a wealth of data—indeed, so much detail that it is easy to get lost in the trees and miss the forest. Comments by the ubiquitous commissioners over the weekend leave the impression either that they themselves have no window on the forest, or that they would like to keep the rest of us in the trees.

Commission vice chair Lee Hamilton braced yesterday with an unusually blunt question by Wolf Blitzer that pretty much gave the game away. Blitzer expressed interest in why the commission had no recommendation regarding Iraq; he suggested, perhaps, "Don't go to war with countries that had nothing to do with 9/11."

Caught somewhat off balance, Hamilton explained that dealing with the issue of Iraq "would have been highly divisive," and that commission members would not have been able to agree on a recommendation. Then, recovering quickly, Hamilton gave the official answer; i. e., that discussing Iraq would have been "well beyond any reasonable interpretation of what we were supposed to do."

Thankfully, the perceived limits on the commission's mandate did not prevent it from putting the final nail in the coffin in which lies the 'scarytale' favored by Vice President Cheney that Iraq and al-Qaida were in bed together. Nor, curiously enough, did those limits prevent the commission from leading off its policy recommendations with ones regarding Pakistan, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia.

One can perhaps be forgiven for being struck at the incongruity of the commission's silence on Iraq, with 140,000 U.S. troops tied down there and terrorists breeding like rabbits.

The commission's desire to avoid unpleasantness shows through even more clearly as the final report tiptoes past a core issue—motivation. Chartered to "prepare a full and complete account of the circumstances surrounding the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks," the commission might have been expected to devote considerable effort to discerning the "why" of the attacks—especially for those among us who remain impervious to the dumbed-down bromide about the terrorists hating our democracy.



*Annual Peace Conference
Speaker Ray McGovern*

A Good Stab at the Why

If you read page 147 of the commission report carefully, you will not miss a key sentence throwing light on the motive of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, whom the report labels the "mastermind of the 9/11 attacks":

"KSM's animus toward the United States stemmed not from his experiences there as a student, but rather from his violent disagreement with U.S. foreign policy favoring Israel."

A footnote points out that his statements regarding the "why" of attacking the United States echo those of Ramzi Yousef, his nephew, when he was sentenced in New York to a prison term of 240 years in January 1998. Yousef, mastermind of the 1993

bombing of the World Trade Center, accused the United States of supporting Israeli terrorism against Palestinians, adding that he was proud to fight any country that supports Israel.

Hats off to commission staff for shoe-horning that in—and to the commissioners for letting it slide. Highly unusual prose for establishment Washington.

And another bravo for the attempt to go beyond jingoism in addressing "why they hate us." On page 374 begins a section titled "PREVENT THE CONTINUED GROWTH OF ISLAMIST TERRORISM." There the authors pick up on the conundrum expressed by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld regarding whether the United States is generating more terrorists than it is killing, and whether the United States needs "a broad, integrated plan to stop the next generation of terrorists."

In gingerly language, the report points out:

"America's policy choices have consequences. Right or wrong, it is simply a fact that American policy regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and American actions in Iraq are dominant staples of popular commentary across the Arab and Muslim world."...or, in the vernacular, "It's the policy, stupid!"

Michael Scheuer, the CIA analyst author of *Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terror*, emphasizes that Bin Laden's "genius" is his ability to exploit U.S. policies—first and foremost, our one-sided support for Israel—that are most offensive to Muslims, and notes that it is particularly difficult to have a serious debate regarding U.S. policy toward Israel.

As if to prove Scheuer right, Commissioner Bob Kerrey yesterday on ABC's *This Week* recited a familiar mantra: You cannot negotiate; you cannot compromise with those who have reached the conclusion that terrorism is their only option.

I was reminded of Rumsfeld's complaint on the same program some months ago: "How do you persuade people not to become suicide bombers; how do you reduce the number of people attracted to terrorism? No one knows how to do that."

I find myself hoping that Rumsfeld, Kerrey and others will read and ponder the implications of what is said on pages 374 and following of the 9/11 commission report.

The UNO Center for Afghanistan Studies

The Perversion of a Public Institution of Higher Education

The following report on the University of Nebraska-Omaha Center for Afghanistan Studies was prepared by the Center for Public Integrity in Washington, D.C. in mid-2003 as part of its "Windfalls of War" investigation. Over the course of its three-decade-long history, this public institution attached to the state's university system has openly collaborated with the CIA in expelling the Soviets from Afghanistan, with Unocal's efforts to build a privately-owned oil pipeline across the country and with the Taliban government's policies of Islamic extremism and discrimination against women. Although housed at a taxpayer-supported institution of higher education and under the jurisdiction of an elected Board of Regents, the UNO Center is running amuck, openly perverting the principles of academic teaching and research in the craven pursuit of corporate and political influence. For a glimpse of the sordid underbelly of international power politics, Nebraskans need look no further than their own backyard. Nebraskans for Peace calls upon the University of Nebraska Board of Regents to establish a code of ethics with regard to the UNO Afghan Center and all other like entities to compel them to abide by the standards of a Tier One academic institution.

Background

The University of Nebraska at Omaha is home to the Center for Afghanistan Studies, which was established in 1972 and is currently the only academic program in the United States exclusively concerned with Afghanistan affairs. It receives almost all of its funding from outside sources; the university pays for several employees' salaries.

From its start until 1978, UNO participated in an exchange program with Kabul University. But after the 1978 pro-Soviet coup, the Afghanistan programs stopped.

It wasn't until 1984 that the Center received its first USAID (U.S. Agency for International Development) contract to provide educational training programs and facilities to Afghan refugees. The Center continued the educational programs until the mid-1990s, receiving more than \$60 million

from USAID.

Although USAID funded the Center's educational and training efforts in Afghanistan, the CIA helped to design and implement the overall program in an effort to strengthen resistance against the Soviet occupation.

"The CIA was involved in a kind of covert assistance to the resistance to fight against Soviets," Raheem Yaseer, assistant director, told the Center for Public Integrity.

The Center, with USAID funding, established offices in Pakistan to train and educate Afghan refugees, who had formed seven mujahedeen resistance groups. Yaseer said the Center's educational work helped the resistance against the Soviet occupation.

"We helped all of these seven parties with school history supplies, developing curriculum, paying teachers, teacher training and manpower training," Yaseer said. "They were taught about love for the country, love for freedom, hating the Soviet occupier."

The Soviets left Afghanistan in February 1989.

In October 1997, Gouttierre told the *Omaha World-Herald* that the CIA was involved in the overall program but did not directly provide money to him or the Center.

For ten years, the Center received most of its Afghanistan education project funding from USAID. But after Congress ended government-sponsored aid to Afghanistan in the mid-1990s, USAID stopped funding the Center. Still, it wasn't without funding for long.

In 1997, Unocal, an American oil company, stepped in with an offer. Unocal hoped to facilitate a business relationship with the Taliban in order to promote a natural gas pipeline project. The company was the development manager for the seven-member Central Asia Gas pipeline consortium that also included Saudi Arabia's Delta Oil, In-

onesia Petroleum, three other companies and the Turkmenistan government.

Unocal offered the Center an up-to-two-year contract worth as much \$1.8 million to train Afghan men to build pipeline, which would run from Turkmenistan through a Taliban-controlled portion of Afghanistan to Pakistan, where it would be marketed. The pipeline could also be extended into India.

"For its land-locked Central Asian neighbors, Afghanistan is a strategically located 'commerce corridor' to the Arabian Sea," Marty Miller, Unocal's vice president, said in prepared testimony for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1997. He testified at a hearing before the subcommittee on Near Eastern and South Asia Affairs when the CentGas project was still underway.

"They [Unocal] wanted to pave the road and create a good feeling," Yaseer told the Center for Public Integrity. "They gave us about \$900,000 [up to \$1.8 million for two years] to conduct manpower training and train people in crafts, carpentry, masonry, electric and building."

As the Center for Afghanistan Studies began training civilian men, it also invited key Afghan officials to visit the university. In December 1997, Unocal sponsored a meeting that brought Taliban ministers to the United States, including the minister of mines and industry, the minister for culture and information and the minister for planning. The Taliban's U.N. representative also joined the visiting group. During their stay, they went to Unocal's facilities in Texas, visited the State Department and toured the University of Nebraska at Omaha. In May 1998, two Taliban ministers again visited the university on a Unocal-funded trip. Public outrage over the partnership soon erupted.

On June 1, 1998, women's rights organizations, including the Feminist Majority, the National Organization for Women and the Women's Alliance for Peace and Free-

dom in Afghanistan, voiced their concern at a Unocal stockholders meeting. Newspapers nationwide covered the issue. Four days later, Unocal announced it would not renew its contract with the Center.

On Aug. 7, 1998, al-Qaida operatives bombed two U.S. embassies in Africa. Soon, Unocal announced that it would put the pipeline plan on hold.

In a press release announcing the withdrawal from the project, Unocal said it would, however, continue to provide "humanitarian support and skills training to Afghanistan through CARE and the University of Nebraska at Omaha." The oil company added that neither program was designed to provide pipeline construction skills training.

The Center trained 400 Afghan men before Unocal unexpectedly pulled out of the contract.

"They were hot for it then, but they gave up," Yaseer said of Unocal. "But [the 400 Afghan men] all have their own businesses now, so it was a useful program."

Yaseer said the Center hopes to work with whomever ends up building the pipeline by training Afghans in vocational skills. He said the pipeline project is very complicated now because more companies are interested in being part of the consortium.

"If American companies get it, probably we will have a chance," he said. "We will just be interested in training in vocational skills and increasing their chances of getting employment with the pipeline."

Although the 1997 contract with Unocal ended, public scrutiny and questions about the university's connections to the Taliban continued, especially after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

On January 29, 2002, as the U.S. bombing campaign on Afghanistan slowed down, USAID awarded the Center \$6.5 million to provide books and training for Afghanistan's interim government to resume schooling. The Center, which has a textbook publishing operation in Pakistan, was to print 8 million books and train 4,000 teachers for an estimated 750,000 students by the schools' starting date, March 23.

USAID employee Chris Brown told the *Omaha World-Herald* that the Center was

continued on page 10

‘I Like Ike’

over the past 15 years Dick Cheney has become the type of leader that Ike feared. The bloody debacles we are witnessing in Iraq and Afghanistan, resulting in part from too few boots on the ground and too heavy a reliance on private contractors and local militias, reflects the misplaced power that private business interests within the Military-Industrial Complex hold. The much publicized \$18 billion, no-bid contract, one of many Halliburton and its subsidiaries have received for work in postwar Iraq, is a logical requirement of an over-extended army dependent on private contractors. Due to the structure of the Military-Industrial Complex that Dick Cheney helped to build, the policies he helped shape and the strategies he supported, many more budget-busting Halliburton-styled contracts are sure to follow as the U.S. military remains alone and engaged in a hostile world.

Unsurprisingly “budget busting” contracts are not high on the vice president’s list of concerns. This is another area where Eisenhower’s insights are lost on the current administration. In a second key point of his Farewell Address, Ike admonished leaders who would, despite the demands of difficult times, fail to “avoid the impulse to live only for today, plundering, for our own ease and convenience, the precious resources of tomorrow.” “We cannot,” President Eisenhower continued, “mortgage the material assets of our grandchildren without also risking the loss also of their political and spiritual heritage.”

It takes little imagination to envision how President Eisenhower and traditional, fiscally conservative Republicans would react to record budget deficits supported by Bush and Cheney. According to President Bush’s former Treasury Secretary Paul O’Neil, Cheney feels that past Republican budgets have proven that “deficits don’t matter.” Obviously President Bush shares that view, as he has managed to turn a 2001 budget surplus of \$100 billion into a record \$400-plus billion deficit in 2004. With such mounting debt what is this administration’s chief economic priority? To make permanent the temporary tax cuts that helped thrust us into this budget debacle. Amazing. As former President Nixon’s Secretary of Commerce Peter Peterson puts it, “this administration and the Republican Congress have presided over the biggest, most reckless deterioration of America’s finances in history.” By ignoring the long-term budgetary consequences of their aggressive security policy, Bush-Cheney have irresponsibly set America on a course that is fundamentally at odds with mainstream America’s desire for a government that lives within its means.

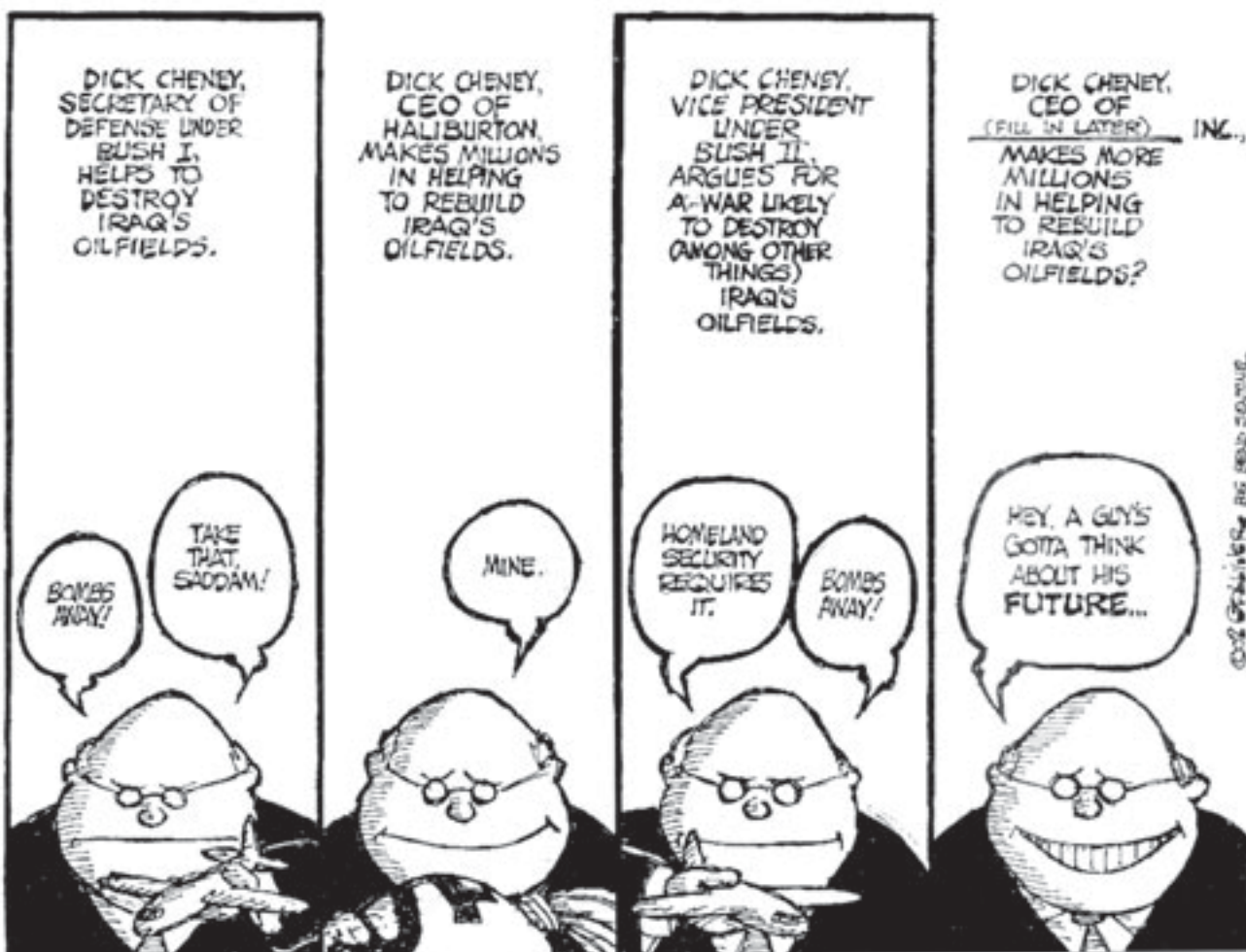
With the remarkable parting observations by our own retiring Representative Doug Beureter, and frequent comments by Senator Chuck Hagel, Nebraskans’ most distinguished Republican leaders show how the administration’s penchant for playing fast and loose with the facts has weakened America’s standing in the world and reduced rather than increased our national security. Congressman Beureter’s criticism of the administration’s unilateral rush to war in Iraq is an area that Ike would heartily second. President Eisenhower spent much of his career fighting the unilateralist/isolationist wing of the

Republican Party while championing a foreign policy based on traditional conservative principles of containing risk, consensus diplomacy and support for a balance of power that embeds American values in a system of international treaties and alliances. President Bush has arrogantly turned his back on this tradition and, in doing so, has weakened our ability to effectively and economically pursue the War on Terror.

Ike also provided guidance for a way out of our current leadership failure. In concluding his Farewell Address, he noted that “a knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of a huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together.” So, the next time you engage in some election-year banter with a moderate Republican who hasn’t been brainwashed by the Bush campaign’s marketing propaganda, seek some common ground by moving the conversation to Ike or any of the other growing gallery of Republican critics of the current administration’s destructive policies. Surely, Bush’s support for the goals of an aggressive Military-Industrial Complex, disregard for the burdens deficits place on future generations and destructive foreign policy choices are at odds with most mainstream Republicans and a majority of likely voters in November.



Jeff Cole pictured with his daughters in Poland when he and his family were in Central Europe this past summer.



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UNO Afghan Center, conclusion

uniquely positioned to meet the textbook challenge. After USAID stopped funding the Center in 1994, Thomas E. Gouttierre, Dean of International Studies and Programs and director of Afghanistan Studies at UNO, had continued to raise money privately in order to keep the Pakistan publishing operation open. Thus, in 2002, the Center was already prepared and ready to start printing the textbooks.

However, the content of the books, which UNO developed in the 1980s with USAID funding, had to be censored. Critics contended the books' content, which included drawings of guns, bullets and mines, promoted and strengthened an era of jihad violence. So before distributing any more of the books to Afghan students, workers at the Pakistan operation started a "scrubbing" effort to remove violent pictures and references.

Yaseer said the Center printed and delivered about 15 million books on time.

But even without the violent images, the content of the books sparked controversy because they still contained Muslim tenets and verses from the Koran. Organizations that receive USAID funding must prove that tax dollars will not be used to advance religion. A U.S. federal appeals court had previously ruled in a 1991 case that taxpayer funds could not be used for religious instruction, even overseas. But according to the *Washington Post*, the Bush White House defended the religious content, saying its presence was necessary because Islamic principles permeate Afghan culture. USAID officials also publicly defended the religious material.

In 2003, the Center lost the USAID contract for Afghan educational textbooks and teacher training. The money went, instead, to Creative Associates International Inc., a Washington, D.C.-based, private company.

"We were very disappointed," said Center director Thomas Gouttierre, whose organization has been involved in Afghanistan education projects since 1973. "We invested our hearts in Afghanistan over a long period of time.

"Maybe it's possible that AID was looking for a different approach that they thought would be provided by a for-profit. The trends seems to be in favor of for-profits."

Yaseer said efficiency and quality are secondary to politics in the process of se-

lecting companies and organizations to perform work in Afghanistan. "It depends on who knows who in the administration, USAID and the State Department," said Yaseer, who worked as an English professor at Kabul University during the Soviet occupation.

"Universities try their best to recruit professionals, but these belt[way] bandits look for surcharges and just grab anybody that comes in handy."

Though the Center did not get a new contract, Yaseer said it had money left over from the 2002 contract and received a no-cost extension from USAID to continue training teachers from its office in Afghanistan.

"I don't think that we're going after that particular [contract] again," Gouttierre said. "Afghanistan is going through some changes."

Gouttierre, the Center's director, lived and worked in Afghanistan for 10 years as a Peace Corps volunteer and Fulbright fellow. He also coached the Afghan National Basketball team and served as senior political affairs officer for the U.N. Peacekeeping Mission to Afghanistan in 1996 and 1997. Gouttierre met Yaseer in Kabul in 1964.

Gouttierre was also a member of the Afghanistan Relief Committee, a private, tax-exempt group founded by former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Robert Neumann and former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Adolph Dubs' wife, Mary Ann Dubs, in 1980 to help Afghan refugees.

The *Boston Globe* reported in 2001 that "The Center for Afghanistan Studies at the University of Nebraska at Omaha has longstanding ties with Washington policymakers and collaborates regularly with intelligence." Gouttierre told the paper in a Nov. 25, 2001 interview, "We're at war. I'm an American, and the American government is leading this war. If we have some knowledge or analysis that could be of advantage, we should be forthcoming."

In 2001, UNO spent a total of \$60,000 lobbying Congress, the White House and other agencies on budget and appropriations, science and technology, and education. In 2002, UNO spent a total of \$120,000 lobbying Congress, the White House and other agencies on the same issues. For its lobbying efforts in both years, UNO hired Washington, D.C.-based firm Van Scoyoc Associates Inc.

Afghanistan Contracts

The State Department is funding two of the Center's current projects in Afghanistan.

Under a \$512,000, 11-month State Department contract, the Center is bringing female Afghan teachers to the United States for training. In October 2002, a group of 13 Afghan teachers, all women, spent five weeks in Nebraska and one week in Washington, D.C. A second group of 12 female teachers is expected to arrive in the States October 29, 2003.

The State Department also gave the Center \$60,468 in July 2003 to re-establish the Afghan Fulbright exchange program, an international educational exchange program that President Harry Truman signed into law in 1946. The contract calls for the Center to recruit and prepare 20 to 40 Afghan college graduates who will come to the U.S. to study at various universities for six months to one year. It has been 24 years since Afghans had access to the Fulbright program.

The Center for Afghanistan Studies is also using USAID money, remaining from a \$6.5 million contract it received in 2002, to continue its field office in Kabul, which "has a small staff which can be readily incorporated into projects intended for reconstruction of Afghan education at the present or in the future," according to the Center's website. Currently, the field office staff is training teachers.

Government Ties

Thomas E. Gouttierre, the director of the Center for Afghanistan Studies, is an old friend of Zalmay Khalilzad, President's Bush's nominee as ambassador to Afghanistan and a former paid adviser to Unocal. While working for the Cambridge Energy Research Associates, Khalilzad conducted risk analysis for Unocal for the proposed pipeline from Turkmenistan to Pakistan.

Gouttierre also coached Khalilzad's basketball team at Habibia high school in Afghanistan. That team, as well as teams from various Afghan colleges, helped to form the Afghan National Basketball Team in the early 1970s.

During the December 1997 Taliban visit to the United States, Khalilzad joined the group for its trip to Unocal's facilities in Texas. In 1997, Khalilzad, Gouttierre and Marty Miller, Unocal vice president, testified together before the Senate Foreign Relations Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs subcommittee.

In July 1999, Gouttierre gathered with a dozen Afghan leaders for a confidential meeting, after which he submitted the first of eight classified reports to the State Department.

Peter Tomsen, a former U.S. ambassador to Armenia who teaches courses in American foreign policy and Eurasia at UNO, was President George H.W. Bush's special envoy on Afghanistan with the rank of ambassador from 1989 to 1992. He was also the principal deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs in the State Department, United States deputy chief of mission to China from 1986 to 1989 and the director of the State Department's Office of India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Maldives Affairs from 1983 to 1985.

In October 2001, Tomsen told the *Chicago Tribune* that when UNO hosted Afghan and sometimes Taliban officials' visits, it served as a neutral ground where Afghan leaders, who often disagreed with one another, could informally give information to the U.S. government. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, "Since 1986, spanning the early years of post-Soviet occupation to the oppressive regime of the Taliban, the Center for Afghanistan Studies at the Omaha commuter campus has served as a back door for U.S. intelligence efforts to expose Afghan leaders to American ideas and democracy."

Thomas E. Eighmy, research associate for the Center for Afghanistan Studies, is a retired USAID officer.

Ronald Roskens, who is a former UNO chancellor, was the director of USAID in the first Bush Administration.

—Brooke Williams

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- Oct. 16** Annual Peace Conference in Omaha co-sponsored by NFP and the UNO School of Social Work. Former CIA analyst Ray McGovern will deliver a keynote address on "The Role of Intelligence in the War on Iraq," followed by afternoon workshops on a variety of Peace & Justice issues. Advance registration, which includes lunch, is \$25.00 (\$10 for students/low-income) for the 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Saturday event at Augustana Lutheran Church, 38th and LaFayette Streets in Omaha. Contact the NFP State Office at 402-475-4620 to register or for more information.
- Oct. 24** United Nations Association, Chapter 100 Annual Banquet. This year's event will be held at Christ Lutheran Church, 44th and Sumner Streets in Lincoln, beginning at 6:00 p.m. Cost is \$18 per person. For reservations contact: John Krejci at 402-466-8460, or Vera Mae Lutz at 402-464-3571.

To list an event, submit in writing by the tenth of the month preceding the event. Send to: Nebraskans for Peace, 941 "O" Street, Suite 1026, Lincoln, NE 68508 NeReport@neb.rr.com

Vote Like Your Life Depended on It

Remember Jimmy Carter? Remember Al Gore? You weren't in love with THEM either. You may have actually bothered to vote for them. You may have even given them money. But in the weeks before the elections of 1980 and 2000, when you could have been working for their election, you probably didn't. Worse, you may have secretly agreed with what the folks beating up on them had to say, just a little. No candidate is perfect.

A bit frozen, both of them. So complex in their thinking that, to the rush-to-judgment crowd, they sometimes seemed indecisive. They lacked charisma, darn it. Why can't all Democrats be like Bill Clinton, so easy to love? Even when he embarrassed himself, his wife and us, he was, as he is still, loved by many many people. Clinton can sell himself, and he does.

Carter and Gore, though, needed our help, in the coffee shops and lunchrooms and bars and church basements and DMV lines and laundromats and decks and patios where the REAL debate in this country takes place. And when your neighbor said Al

Gore was just a Clinton puppet or when a woman in the convenience store said Jimmy Carter was soft on the Russkies, you let it go by. You didn't say a word. And so it came to pass that Ronald Reagan became president, and the Bushes after him. That's right, Bush the Lesser lost in 2000 and was the beneficiary of a fix in Florida or a fumble by the Supreme Court, but the election should NOT have been that close. Way too many people voted in 2000, as in 2002, on whether they agreed or disagreed with a candidate's position on some number of pet issues, numbering only a handful at most and at worst just a single issue.

That is not the same thing at all as voting for a viable candidate who has the honest to goodness chops to do a job. The Founding Fathers are NOT pleased. Every principle they wove into the Constitution is to prevent the subversion of the best interest of the nation by special interests. The Fathers did not underestimate the possibility that We the People could become confused if not misled.

Pure democracy is of course in practice impossible. People in a group of any size at all cannot hope to make a decision fairly, wisely AND quickly, as anyone who has ever sat through any kind of committee meeting knows very well. The Fathers saw the danger that We the People would just be electing new kings. To prevent that happening, our three-hulled ship of state (leg-

islative, judiciary and executive) is modeled as a republic—a REPRESENTATIVE democracy. Most citizens have no interest themselves in serving in our nation's capital, and most of us don't have what it takes. Half of us, HALF, have an IQ of under 100. The Founding Fathers knew that (or its 18th Century equivalent), and they created a system which let us locals send our best and brightest folks to be our representatives—not to echo us, but to choose wisely for us in the interest of the common good.

Single issue and touchstone politics have taken our nation down a dangerous road today. I am continually reminded of the William Butler Yeats line, "The best lack all conviction, while the worst/Are full of a passionate intensity." The worst man, today, IS full of a passionate intensity, which he uses to spin an overworked and undereducated public with a handful of emotional issues, masking his complete misrepresentation of U.S. foreign policy, the tax system and his own record.

The best man, though, doesn't lack conviction. He's just a lantern-jawed veteran, with prep school manners and European connections, a man of actual valor and great intellectual gifts developed over the course of a first-rate education and many years in Congress. He's a jock—a hockey player in fact—but he is NOT an Everyman. He is, as people from around here say, with such delicate restraint, DIFFERENT.

What he does lack is your help, as do the many fine—I do not say perfect—Democrats who grace the ballot this fall. Kerry and other Democrats need your money, and so much more, to counter the special interests of right-wing fanatics and their devil's bargain with the deep pockets of multinational cynics who do not care if things go to hell because they are still making money.

Kerry and other Democrats need your letters to the editor. They need you to volunteer for a sign in your yard. They need you to get out the vote, and they need you to pray.

I don't care if you loved Ralph Nader since you were eleven, or that you'd take secret satisfaction in the luxury of BEING a spoiler, this once. I don't care if every single member of your family IS a redneck, a Republican or both. There's more at stake here than damning the failures of the Democrats and getting their attention or than making your family dinners less confrontational.

Global warming is here, and for all we know, the great wars in the Holy Land (which are to come before the "Last Things") have really begun in earnest. Without better leadership, RIGHT NOW, our nation and our world cannot fare well. Think about it. Your vote has never mattered more.



From the Bottom by Sally Herrin

The real political spectrum isn't right to left... it's top to bottom.