

Nuclear Abolition, Climate Protection, and Our Cities' Future
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To frame my comments, you need to know that I am a social worker. Various jobs have introduced me to disabled children, women receiving welfare, and homeless people. I have made eye contact with people who have had to make a choice between eating and taking their medications. Can you imagine that choice? In the richest nation of the world? What's the right answer when your question is. "Should I use my limited resources for food, or for the medication that helps me manage my diabetes, or my mental illness?" What I have to say today is very personal for me!

I recently read "Crazy Horse: Strange Man of the Oglalas" by Mari Sandoz.

When he needed to, Crazy Horse would go out alone into the mountains to contemplate what was happening to his people, and to reflect on the unusual behaviors in the people that were invading the west. He reflected on:

- The dwindling population of that life-sustaining gift to his people: the buffalo;
- The obsession over gold, and the willingness to take over the sacred Black Hills to get at it;
- The willingness to kill women – and children;
- The propensity to make promises through treaties that they did not keep;
- The continuing efforts to modernize weapons, until they controlled and dominated on the battlefield, in spite of the Indian warrior's skill and courage.

What has changed over the last 140 or more years? There are no better examples of the madness of modern weapons than nuclear weapons, and "Star Wars" systems. Given the discussion we heard earlier today about the power of nuclear weapons today, let's look at the Star Wars system – what is called "Ballistic Missile Defense" -- this idea that we can put a "shield" around the continental United States to protect its population. So the system is set up to attack a nuclear missile headed our way in three different phases. The scenario they create is that, for example, China decides to launch one of its 20 nuclear missiles toward the U.S. Do you feel safe knowing that there could be an Aegis destroyer that launches an interceptor missile to blow up that nuclear missile soon after launch? Or at midcourse, on its way to the U.S.? Or at the final stage on its way to its target?

For years now, the Global Network has been making copies available of the U.S. Space Commands Vision for 2020. Let me read from the introduction: "US Space Command dominating the space dimension of military operations to protect US interests and investment."

Integrating Space Forces into war fighting capabilities across the full spectrum of conflict.”

”Future Trends: The globalization of the world economy will continue, with a widening between “haves” and “have nots.” Space superiority is emerging as an essential element of battlefield success and future warfare.”

In preparing to come to Des Moines, I looked on-line at the Des Moines Register the other day. I was particularly interested in the letters to the editor. I wanted to know what was on the minds of my Iowa neighbors. I was not disappointed. Let me read from some letters.

From Christian Ucles: *“In these times of economic uncertainty, it is now much more important to find ways to spur economic growth and to create more jobs in the state... The key is for the federal government... to invest in wind, solar, geothermal and hydrogen-fuel cells in Iowa and put a focus on renewable energy, we can make our economy one where we can create jobs in this country.”*

From Robert Snow: *“There’s been a lot of discussion lately about how Iowa is benefiting from green jobs by making wind turbines. It’s about time that candidates started talking about the potential for saving our economy by focusing on clean energy...”*

From Sam Osborne: *“...the nation needs to build a new and advanced national power grid that facilitates the dispersed production of electricity from wind, the sun and gravity. We can no longer afford to find, fight over, mine, transport, refine, distribute, market, consume and dispose of the costly waste of fossil fuels.”*

The people of Iowa get it. We want to build the future. We want to push the corporate greed out of the way.

America builds weapons. We build and sell more of them than any other nation in the world. To keep the economic engines of this industry flowing, we must have war...

Seymour Melman, an industrial engineering professor and the grandfather of the economic conversion movement, wrote extensively about the dangers of what he called the permanent war economy. He told us that since the end of World War II, the federal government has spent more than half its tax dollars on past, current, and future military operations.

Military operations is the largest, single sustaining activity of the U.S. government.

While many rightly focus energies on ending the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, the Pentagon and its corporate cronies are planning the weapons systems they will be using and wars they will be fighting in the year 2020 – and in the year 2050!

The Pentagon, with by-partisan Congressional support has created an industrial structure that does not build goods that consumers use. It does not operate under a market system where a product is built, sold to consumers, and then turns over profits to improve products or hire more workers.

On the contrary – the Pentagon creates “cost-plus” contracts that provide no incentive for building a product on time and within budget. Let me read to you from two different General Accounting Office (GAO) reports that have been done: one back in 1978; the other this last year.

1978: “A... General Accounting Office [report] showed that 55 major Pentagon projects were initially estimated to cost \$125 billion. As of September of 1978, the total cost of those projects was put at \$210 billion... 33% of the \$85 billion increase can be attributed to inflation. The other \$57 billion is the clear result of waste, bad planning and mismanagement.”

So, did that clear documentation of problems in the system result in a careful process of monitoring military spending to prevent continued fraud, waste and abuse? Hardly... Listen to what the GAO found thirty years later in Star Wars programs:

“The majority of major acquisition programs in DOD’s space portfolio have experienced problems in the past two decades that have driven up cost and schedules... At times, cost growth has come close to or exceeding 100 percent.. many programs are experiencing significant schedule delays – as much as 7 years...”

We live in a country whose industrial base is sinking under the weight of a Permanent War Economy.

I would say to the good people of Iowa who are writing letters advocating for the development of renewable energies that the funding source for this critical effort must come from the military budget.

We have a vision for what we want and need to do to change our world and to build for the future. But we will never be able to pay of it unless we understand that we must rid this country of its economic dependence on endless war.

Let me tell you about two missed opportunities. When Jimmy Carter was President, he put solar panels on the White House. When Ronald Reagan replaced Carter, he took the solar panels down. Imagine what could have happened if, in the 1980’s, instead of investing in Star Wars, Reagan had put a focus on developing renewable energies. What a different world we would be living in.

Seymour Melman tells the story of the New York City Transit Authority effort in 2003 to spend between \$3 and \$4 billion on subway cars. City government put out a request for bids, and not a single American company responded. The industrial base in this country no longer manufactures what is needed to maintain, improve, or build our infrastructure. Instead, the city contracted with companies in Japan, Canada and France to build its subway cars. Melman estimated that such a contract could have generated, directly and indirectly, about 32,000 jobs in the U.S.

Now let me tell you a story of what could be, which is reported in 2007 analysis of conversion by Steven Schofield British American Security Information Council. Back in the 1980s, Denmark decided through a national referendum to reject nuclear power as an energy supply. Rather, the country decided to maximize the potential for renewable energies – especially wind power. The

potential was great, with an abundance of potential onshore and offshore sites. Ambitious targets were set – wind would supply 25 percent of the country’s needs over 20 years.

Listen carefully to their approach: relatively small prototypes were tested to see which designs achieved the best results; incentives were made for further development, including guaranteed connection to the national grid; community ownership was a key feature of the early phase – with local groups taking shares in new wind farm development. The result: an enthusiastic group of practitioners worked closely with designers to provide a constant feedback loop on performance, technical problems, and suggestions for improvement.

Guess what happened? Refinements were made to the best designs that allowed for larger onshore and offshore wind power generators, easily satisfying the original target for national energy supply. The Danish wind power industry in 2007 was the world’s largest; 90% of the wind turbines manufactured in Denmark are for overseas customers. Over 20,000 people are employed in Denmark working in wind turbine factories, in maintenance, and in research.

Compare this approach to the one the US Department of Energy created to develop wind power years ago. In the 1980’s, DOE funded Boeing to create a massive turbine capable of generating 2.5 MW of power. “The prototype was plagued by technical difficulties centered on the stresses on its giant blades and was finally abandoned in 1985.”

In Maine, one of the largest private employers in the state is in my hometown – Bath Iron Works (BIW). General Dynamics took ownership in 1995. Historically, BIW build commercial ships; it now makes, exclusively naval destroyers -- Aegis destroyers – ships outfitted with star wars systems to track and destroy targets, with each ship costing about \$1.1 billion to build.

Last Saturday, the Veterans for Peace in Maine organized a demonstration outside the gates of Bath Iron Works. While we were outside the gates, inside the most recent destroyer was “christened” the USS Wayne E. Meyer – after the rear admiral they call the “father of the Aegis.”

Our local mainstream newspaper, The Times Record, put an article about our demonstration on the front page. It was the kind of coverage we dream of! It began, “Nearly 80 peace protesters gathered outside of the gates of Bath Iron Works on Saturday... urging the shipyard to convert to producing equipment for harvesting sustainable resources.” It continued: “ ‘Today our message is conversion,’ said Bruce Gagnon, coordinator of the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space. ‘We want to see taxpayer dollars go to produce more jobs in sustainable industry and to combat global warming... If you spend \$1 billion at BIW building warships... it’s true: for every billion dollars you spend there you can create 8500 jobs. But if you take that same \$1 billion and you invest it in ... building rail systems at BIW, you create more than 15,000 jobs.’” The reporter then corrected Bruce by saying the study says that actually 20,000 jobs could be created if we invested that \$1 billion in mass transit.

As far as I know, for the first time ever, a worker from Bath Iron Works spoke at a rally outside its gates. Peter Woodruff, a maintenance mechanic, is quoted in this article saying, “We could work ourselves out of the severe recession we are working our way into. We are standing at the edge of a green revolution in this country, and we must take the steps to realize it.” Woodruff

lauded the skill and training of his co-workers at BIW and said that the time has come to turn efforts to the production of wind, tidal and hydro power equipment.”

Another article, which appeared in the two major newspapers in the state, offered glowing details of the ceremony of the ships christening. But it also included this paragraph: “Outside the shipyard, about 80 demonstrators gathered. They carried signs with slogans like, “Windmills not destroyers” and “Good people, bad product.”

Five years ago, when we held signs outside BIW that said “windmills not destroyers,” we were laughed at – ridiculed by some. Few took the idea seriously. But times have changed.

In the state of Maine, over 80 percent of the homes are heated with oil. Given the recent spike in oil prices, there is much concern in the state that neighbors will die in their homes from the cold, or fires will erupt as a result of people burning wood without the proper woodstoves.

A popular former governor predicts a depopulated state unless something changes. He has begun to work with the private sector to stimulate the idea of putting wind turbines off shore in Maine in great numbers. People are not laughing at that idea anymore. BIW is the only facility that could support such production right now.

Meanwhile, Bath Iron Works employees feel vulnerable. The corporation that owns the company – General Dynamics – has no loyalty to Bath. We all know that profit is their bottom line, and that GD would sell BIW up the river in a heart beat if it served their bottom line. And we all know that the Iron Works future depends on Congressional Delegation bringing home the bacon – continued contracts with hugely expensive naval destroyers, in a world where we have no naval competitor. It is an unsupportable effort.

I would like to close with a story from Jeju Island in South Korea. Last Saturday, there was demonstration there against another action the U.S. Navy is taking. In a small village on Jeju Island village people have been struggling against the plans to put a naval base in their 400-year-old town. The base would be about the size of 67 football fields. The site will reclaim the sea near the village. The people of South Korea know that U.S. military bases in Okinawa, Guam and Hawaii have permanently changed life on those islands. Although there has been an attempt to bribe some villagers by paying them for their support of the naval base, ninety-four percent of the villagers are opposed – seeing that the U.S. will make the island a U.S. forward base, and thus a dangerous target if a war between the U.S. and China were to break out. One report we read said that, “five village people have attempted suicide” because of the frustration and conflict caused by the plans for the militarization of their island community. Last Saturday’s demonstration occurred underwater. Deep-sea divers held signs in front of rare and beautiful coral reefs – the most important marine ecology site in South Korea.

This is one more international base for a country with 800 or more bases all over the world. It is time to dismantle this empire.

We are a young country by world standards. Let’s learn the lessons. Let’s put ourselves in the black hills with crazy horse, sitting under a tree with a wide vision of what is happening today.

Let’s commit ourselves to changing the history of our time.