

YES!



were otherwise people of good will suddenly getting swept up in this furor to bomb Belgrade. It was almost like a virus worked its way through the consciousness of people.

I began what was for me a political as well as a spiritual journey to look at the question. I've had my own personal journey, as a lot of us have, on how to bring peace into my own life. I came to understand the relationship between conditions within oneself and conditions that are created in the world. I began to think that perhaps war is not inevitable; perhaps war is an extension of conditions within ourselves, conditions that might lend themselves to healing, reconciliation, dialogue, meditation, and prayer.

So the Department of Peace is to make nonviolence an organizing principle in our society for domestic as well as international policy—in other words, to quicken the impulse that is in the world to create more peace.

The referee has walked off the field, and the game is lost to the most brutal and the most powerful

Sarah: Do you think there is a consensus in the US that peace is desirable?

Dennis: Of course there is. It's just that some people think you bring about peace through war. I would submit that if you want peace, work for peace.

We don't always think about the fact that the context of our society is established through spending close to half of our nation's discretionary income on defense. And the current administration is hoping to take it beyond 50 percent! We have to make choices about how we want our society structured.

Sarah: In your "Prayer for America" speech, you set forth the idea of America being "an axis of hope" instead of pursuing "an axis of evil." What do you mean by an axis of hope?

Dennis: I meant that America could become a nation that lightens the burdens of people in this country and around the world, that can help transform our understanding of the material world through helping create abundance, that can help transform the understanding of the political world through creating opportunities for cooperation between nations, and transform our understanding of the spiritual world through recognizing that nations and people exist on a number of different levels, one of which is spiritual, and that spiritual existence connects to the possibilities of this world.

Sarah: Why is it that the rest of the Democratic Party has taken so few courageous stands lately, like the ones you've been describing?

Dennis: It's both parties. Politics is not adequately responding to the needs of our times, nor to the requirements of the future. One reason is that money in the political process has become an end in itself, and when money equals policy, the public interest is shut out. Where money equals policy, you have an auction, you don't have a democracy. The democratic system has been hijacked by special interest groups.

How else can you explain 46 million Americans without health care? Or senior citizens having to cut their pills in half in order to extend the life of their medication? How can you explain widespread pollution despite the fact that there's technology available to control it? How can you explain things like cars that aren't fuel efficient? How can you explain things like reliance on non-renewable sources of energy?

The political system has broken down and is failing people. It's failing

to prevent monopolization and the concentration of wealth. Government is supposed to be at least a referee. Well, in this case the referee has walked off the field, and the game is lost to the most brutal and the most powerful.

Sarah: Where do you plan to go in terms of your own political career?

Dennis: In the last six weeks, ever since I gave that speech, my life has changed. I am suddenly getting invitations to speak all over the country from Democratic organizations as well as environmentalists, peace activists, colleges, and community groups. There is clearly a hunger for a point of view that may not be regularly expressed in the councils of power.

I have made it a point to personally go through thousands of the email responses, because I want to know what people think. Over and over, I hear people saying, "You said what I feel." There are a lot of us who feel this way. I've been given an opportunity to speak out, and I'm going to continue to be a voice for a world of cooperation, of peace, of hope, of sustainability.

Sarah: Do you see yourself involved in a national campaign of some sort?

Dennis: I learned a long time ago that you can't plan everything. You can only be out there and do what it is that you do. And I think it was Emerson who once wrote, "Live and work, and all unawares the advancing tide creates for itself a condition of its own. And the question and the answer are one." So I'm going to keep doing what I'm doing and where it leads—I'm open to all possibilities. I feel very fortunate to be doing what I'm doing; I begin every day with a heart full of gratitude.

See www.thespiritoffreedom.com for Dennis Kucinich's "Prayer for America" and a link to Studs Terkle's call for Kucinich to run for president.