

21st Century Revolution

By Dr Stuart Jeanne Bramhall

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Introduction

The American political landscape is undergoing rapid change. I published the first edition of *21st Century Revolution* (as *Revolutionary Change: An Expatriate View*) on August 30, 2011. Two weeks later, the book was totally out of date with the launch of Occupy Wall Street (OWS) in Zuccotti Square. No one, even its founders, anticipated the ability of the Occupy movement to catch fire among disenfranchised American youth and impel them to direct political action. The corporate elite believed a massive anti-austerity movement, comparable to those in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, was impossible in the US. They fully believed that Americans would passively accept deep austerity cuts, supposedly necessitated by the 2008 banking crisis, because they lacked the will and wherewithal to mount or maintain organized resistance to oppose them.

The elite were also caught off guard by the massive Seattle anti-WTO protest in 1999. Then, as now, no one believed massive antiglobalization protests overseas would spread to the US. The US power elite had total confidence that continuous exposure to a corporate-state system of sophisticated psychological messaging (i.e. brainwashing) had rendered the American people too confused, demoralized and apathetic to try to hold their own elected leaders to account.

In 2011, as in 1999, they were wrong. In just two months, the Occupy movement has used the combined tools of social networking, strategic outreach, consensus governance and mass civil disobedience to build the largest mass resistance in the US since the 1930s.

Like the first edition, *21st Century Revolution* differs from other books and articles on the Occupy movement in its emphasis on social class and obstacles the progressive movement faces in recruiting low income and disadvantaged workers. Nine years of living overseas as an American expatriate has caused me to see this issue very differently than when I first emigrated in 2002.

Like *Revolutionary Change* (the 2010 edition), *21st Century Revolution* is a collection of articles originally published on my blog: "The Most Revolutionary Act." I divide the book into six parts. The first, "Occupy Wall Street and the New Economics," is totally new. In addition to looking at the class dynamics influencing the Occupy movement, it examines the new light OWS has shed on our broken banking and monetary system. Part II, "My New Life in New Zealand," briefly discusses my reasons for leaving the US and the political and social features that make my new home uniquely different from the US. Part III, "Capitalism's Last Gasp," examines the train wreck global capitalism has imposed on society and the planet. Part IV, "Psychological Oppression: the Role of Corporate Media," looks at the role of the mainstream media in shaping the American psyche and preserving the status quo. Part V, "Change Making," makes some wild guesses about how real change is likely to come about. Part V contains two new articles on gun control and the citizens' rights movement. Part VI, "The Endgame," makes a few predictions about post-capitalist society.

Part I Occupy Wall Street and the New Economics

With the recent simultaneous (Homeland Security coordinated) crackdown on numerous public occupations across the US, the future of OWS as an inclusive mass movement is uncertain. Of the major urban occupations, only (as of January 11, 2012), only Occupy DC remains. Many local occupy movements have morphed into anti-eviction groups and are occupying foreclosed homes, both to prevent their owners from being thrown into the street and to open up vacant housing for the homeless. Despite the clear need this fills, some organizers are concerned that the narrower focus will be less effective in attracting new activists. Young people struggling with student loans, unemployment, inability to access medical care, and other urgent problems are likely to be too distracted by their own stresses to be drawn into a movement that doesn't address their specific needs.

The Risk of Turning Into a Social Welfare Movement

The Zuccotti Square occupation has moved into donated offices in lower Wall Street, complete with computer stations and large meeting spaces and storage space for donated food, clothing and bedding (<http://news.blogs.cnn.com/2011/12/01/exclusive-inside-the-offices-of-occupy-wall-street/>).

While they continue to carry on outreach and organizing activities, the original Occupy Wall Street activists are far less visible tucked away in offices. Moreover it seems they devote a lot of time to assisting the homeless with food, housing, and other social services. This is a very different role from building a mass protest movement. Although they continue to hold general assembly meetings in their new digs, in a lot of ways they are starting to resemble all the other foundations and non-profits who struggle – and fail - to empower the disadvantaged through outreach, education and direct social services.

For these and other reasons, I believe there will be strong consensus to resume the public occupations when the weather warms up. There are discussions on a number of Occupy sites about the need to follow the example of the Spanish anti-austerity movement – by setting up smaller, neighborhood focused occupations to facilitate the involvement of minorities and the traditional working class. (<http://www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/occupy-wall-street-beyond-encampment>)

The Value of Public Occupation as a Tactic

First, nothing crosses the digital divide quite so effectively to Americans without Internet access. While the majority of low income minorities now have Web access via their smartphones, their ability to download data, music, video etc. is extremely limited compared to activists who access the Internet through their PCs and laptops (<http://www.theverge.com/2011/12/6/2615518/new-digital-divide-internet-access>). Second, the Occupy movement has given American youth their first taste of genuine civic engagement, a powerfully intense alternative to the empty, isolated lives we all lead under post-industrial capitalism. Most will be strongly motivated to continue to

seek out the natural high associated with group membership and involvement. Third, the rapid destruction of the US middle class will greatly enhance the size and effectiveness of Occupy Wall Street as a blossoming resistance movement. The continuing lay off of thousands of teachers, social workers, counsellors and other government workers creates an extremely large pool of well-educated and self-disciplined prospective activists to recruit from. It also eliminates the traditional buffering/monitoring a strong middle class plays in preserving and protecting the status quo (I discuss the “policing” role of the middle class at length in “Engaging the Working Class in Part V). By eliminating this stabilizing force, the ruling elite has no choice but to fall back on brute force (police, army, intelligence security personnel) to control their domestic population.

Finally in the two short months OWS monopolized the public and media spotlight, we could already see evidence of its impact on global financial markets and domestic and foreign policy. According to many analysts, the refusal of Americans to passively accept austerity cuts has been a major factor in the current Eurozone crisis – largely because further austerity cuts is the only option on the table to address the debt crisis in Ireland, Greece, Spain and Portugal.
(<http://www.dailyforex.com/forex-figures/financial-news/occupy-wall-street/369>)

Meanwhile many American pundits attribute the failure of the Supercommittee to reach agreement on cutting Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security to OWS.
(<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2011/nov/23/how-occupy-stopped-supercommittee>)

It also seems likely the presence of popular unrest in all major US cities emboldened the Iraqi parliament to withdraw legal immunity (for war crimes) for any US troops who remained after December 2011 (thwarting Obama’s efforts to extend the December deadline for their withdrawal.
(http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/iraq-pm-immunity-issue-scuttled-us-troop-deal/2011/10/22/gIQAX6k26L_video.html).

The Occupy Movement: Ramifications for Radical Change

Occupy New Plymouth - Day 3 and Report on New Zealand Occupy Movement

(October 18, 2011)

In my view, the most impressive accomplishment of #OccupyWallStreet (OWS) is the speed with which we have found a collective voice -- without resorting to cookie cutter slogans or short term policy demands. This hasn't been easy. Coming from the perspective that nearly everything in the system is broken, where exactly do you start? Yet the coherence of the OWS vision is obvious from the speed with which it has spread to 1,000 similar occupations around the world. My own participation in Occupy New Plymouth has to be one of the most inspiring, soul-changing experiences of my life. Not only has it given me the unique privilege of connecting and hearing the views of young (some high school age) activists, but it has taught me how to totally set aside my usual routine for the more important task of change making.

Occupy New Plymouth started with a rally of about 35, and an open forum in which activists read statements and spoke about their reasons for participating. The forum was videoed and will be uploaded to YouTube. It was a big shock for the older established activist community to meet a strong cadre of 15 young (some high school age) well-read activists with highly developed political views. Neither group had any idea the other existed.

A total of about 50 of us maintained the occupation throughout Saturday with five maintaining it overnight. The occupation has received surprisingly strong support from the community and the police (we're right across from the New Plymouth police station). People of all ages drop in throughout the day to ask about our reasons for occupying Robe Street Park and express their own thoughts about fixing a broken New Zealand economy and political system. My main role has been helping to coordinate food and other necessities. Occupy New Plymouth updates are available from <http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=227956857259804>

The Occupy protests were larger in the bigger New Zealand cities (New Plymouth only has a population of 55,000). Wellington had a kick-off rally 200, with a dozen maintaining the occupation overnight; several hundred marched in Christchurch, with thirty staying overnight; in Auckland 2,000 marched up Queen Street with 100 committed to maintaining the occupation until November 30; in Dunedin (a strong student town) there is an on-going occupation of 70 on the Upper Octagon. Occupy Invercargill had a similar turnout as New Plymouth but have yet to post a Facebook update.

Refusing to Let the Media Define Us

I feel the second most important accomplishment of the Occupy movement is our absolute refusal to let the media to define us. I was sitting next to our spokesperson Luke (age 17) when the *Taranaki Daily News* rang him Sunday to find out why Occupy New Plymouth was still occupying the park in front of the courthouse. Luke had already

given them a detailed explanation on Saturday about the New Zealand political process being totally controlled by international banks and corporations and the 1% of New Zealanders who own most of this country's wealth. That wasn't good enough. They wanted to know specifically what was going on in New Plymouth that we were protesting.

Luke covered the phone to consult with the rest of us. "We don't have a say," I suggested. The others seemed to like this. The reporter didn't get it. "We all feel that we don't have a say in government policy," Luke explained. Today's *Daily News* also quotes from a pamphlet Occupy New Plymouth handed out stating, "One in five of our children currently live in poverty," and "Our government repeatedly undermines democracy by passing legislation under urgency to fast track public consultation." (<http://www.stuff.co.nz/taranaki-daily-news/news/5795147/Protesters-line-up-against-corporates>)

The national coverage of New Zealand occupations (which TVNZ refers to as Anti-Greed Protests) in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin and Invercargill has been mostly even handed. However we have received the same criticism - of being incoherent and disorganized - as the American OWS protests. I suspect the New Zealand coverage we're getting stems from success of US activists in transforming initial dismissiveness and derision to grudging respect.

The Media Already Know Why We're There

After a valiant attempt to ignore #occupywallstreet, the US media pretended not to understand why the American people might be unhappy with the corporate takeover of government. It's an extremely flimsy façade. Witness the abrupt turnabout by the *New York Times* in their October 9 editorial, under the headline "It's obvious what they want. What took so long, and where are the nation's leaders?" (<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/09/opinion/sunday/protesters-against-wall-street.html>)

The editorial speaks of "income inequality grinding down the middle class, increasing the ranks of the poor, and threatening to create a permanent underclass of able, willing but jobless people" and the outrage being "compounded by bailouts and by elected officials' hunger for campaign cash from Wall Street, a toxic combination that has reaffirmed the economic and political power of banks and bankers, while ordinary Americans suffer."

It concludes with the highly insightful paragraph:

"It is not the job of the protesters to draft legislation. That's the job of the nation's leaders, and if they had been doing it all along there might not be a need for these marches and rallies. Because they have not, the public airing of grievances is a legitimate and important end in itself. It is also the first line of defense against a return to the Wall Street ways that plunged the nation into an economic crisis from which it has yet to emerge."

#OccupyWallStreet: A Quandary for Longtime Activists

(November 5, 2011)

Many long time activists are in a quandary how to relate to #OccupyWallStreet (OWS). A vibrant, growing mass movement involving thousands of activists is always far more interesting and exciting than the dreary drudgery (fundraising, event organizing, education and outreach, etc) of keeping existing grassroots organizations going. There is a strong temptation to abandon current organizing commitments to join the groundswell created by the Occupy movement. While this might be the right move for some activists, it's also vitally important that others use their existing roles in union, peace and justice and environmental networks to bolster and support the anti-greed movement. There is still lots of furious debate over OWS's long and short term goals. However there seems to be broad agreement about the need to end corporate rule and establish an alternative non-corporate economy and political system

All Our Single Issues Have the Same Root Cause

There are strong strategic arguments for all unions and single issue peace and justice and environmental groups to get on board, in some way, with the Occupy Movement. All the corporate and government abuses our single issue groups are fighting have the same root cause -- namely the corporate takeover of government. Yet many of us find it difficult to address the corporate tie-in from our single issue silos. Moreover there is already evidence (as I discuss in the introduction to Part I) that recent civil unrest in the major US cities is beginning to impact global financial markets, as well as US policy-making, both domestically and abroad.

How to Best Support OWS

At the same time, I question the value of long time union, antiwar, pro-democracy, peace and justice, homeless, sustainability and immigrants rights activists abandoning our existing commitments to camp out in the park. Many older activists, especially in the Open Source, sustainability and local democracy movements have already made significant gains in undermining corporate rule (see Part V "Making Change"). The sustainability movement, for example, is responsible for an explosion of community-based alternatives to corporate controlled food and energy production and distribution and even banking/financial services (See "Sustainability: Choosing the Right Crisis" in Part V "Making Change"). Equally impressive are the hundreds of communities in the local democracy movement which have passed ordinances restricting the right of corporations to build new hog farms, spread sewage sludge and deplete aquifers with bottled water operations (see "The Citizens Rights Movement" in Part V "Making Change")

I think it makes more strategic sense to use our influence in the grassroots networks we have built up over decades to support and collaborate with #OccupyWallStreet. In this way we can provide inroads for younger, more militant OWS activists to sectors of society they might otherwise find difficult to access. We can also provide logistical,

material and tactical support as the Occupy movement expands into the productive sector. . We are unlikely to see major policy or infrastructure changes until our new movement hits the 1% where it really hurts – in their pocketbook. OWS can only exert real pressure on government, banks and other multinational corporations by disrupting business as usual -- with corporate-targeted sit-ins, consumer boycotts, wild cat strikes or a combination of all three. In Egypt, it was the unions' threat to shut down the Suez Canal that ultimately forced Mubarak to step down.

Appealing to a Broad Base of Supporters

For their part, the Zuccotti Square occupation has already been remarkably effective in networking with existing groups. Good examples include the participation of OWS members in a march supporting Communication of American workers in their dispute with Verizon, an anti-eviction action OWS helped homeless advocates organize in Brooklyn, and the formal backing OWS has received from organized labor. I attribute this success in coalition building to OWS's insistence on a broad inclusive vision (i.e. refusing to make specific demands). This enables them appeal to the widest possible base of potential supporters. I can't count the number of large coalitions I have joined in the last thirty years that were scattered to the winds the moment we decided to formulate concrete demands. The last one was the 9-11 Coalition Seattle activists formed in September 2001 to protest the impending US war in Afghanistan. Over the five weeks we spent arguing over specific demands, our numbers shrank from one hundred plus to fifteen.

The Role of Organized Labor

Despite nominal support from organized labor, full union participation is one area where OWS differs significantly from the major uprisings in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. In other parts of the world, massive anti-austerity demonstrations received a major boost from general strikes that shutdown economic activity. In Egypt, it was the unions' threat to shut down economic activity. The November 2 general strike that shut down the Port of Oakland was the first real test of OWS's fragile coalition with labor. In a period of high unemployment, persuading unionists who still have work to put their own jobs on the line is no mean feat. While Occupy Oakland was unsuccessful in shutting the city of Oakland down, a wild cat strike by Oakland longshoremen succeeded in closing down the Port of Oakland:

<http://tvnz.co.nz/world-news/occupy-oakland-succeeds-in-shutting-down-port-4499879>).

In the US the choice of a port shutdown is no accident (on Dec 12, ILWU and Occupy activists also shut down ports in Longview, Seattle, Tacoma, Oakland, Long Beach, Portland, Vancouver BC, San Diego and Ventura County), as the ILWU is one of the few unions to undertake industrial action for political issues unrelated to conditions of employment. For example, in 1935, they refused to load scrap metal bound for Italy, during Mussolini's war of aggression against Ethiopia. In 1971, during the civil war in Pakistan, they shut down all arms shipments to the Pakistani dictator who was trying to crush Bangladeshi independence. In 2008, 25,000 longshoremen walked off the job to protest the war in Iraq.

Is #OccupyWallStreet Working Class?

(November 19, 2011)

This is the first of two articles on the effect of #OccupyWallStreet (OWS) on the traditional working class.

The personal profiles of OWS occupiers suggest that most are disenfranchised members of the middle class. Their interviews, blogs and tweets portray individuals originating from comfortable professional, academic or union-wage homes, who have come of age with no hope of ever replicating their parents' lifestyle. The critical question for me is the effect extended unemployment and OWS itself has had on the way participants perceive and project themselves. Have they come to identify with the 80% (that's the real number -- not 99%) who live at or around minimum wage? Or are they still holding out for a cushy professional, academic or business career when the recession ends?

Getting the Numbers Right

It's an extremely difficult question to unpack because discussion of social class is still largely taboo in the US (see the article "Working Class Culture" in Part II and "Engaging the Working Class" in Part V). Since the end of World War II, there has been a concerted effort by government and the corporate media to portray America as a classless society. In the US, referring to oneself as a "worker" or "working class" invokes a sense of shame. Thus even minimum wage workers consider themselves middle class. Calling OWS the 99% is also extremely misleading. A more accurate demographic breakdown would be 1% elite, 80% low income workers (including manual labor, office and domestic work, caretaking, retail clerking and similar "entry level" work), and 20% "salaried" professionals, academics, and managers.

Getting Real About Social Class

The ultimate success of OWS in expanding into the traditional working class will depend on their willingness to discard the label middle class. Although our corporate-controlled western democracies are rapidly dismantling the middle class in the name of austerity cuts and debt reduction, the professional and academic bedrock of the American middle class is still largely intact. What's more, middle class values and prejudices die hard, even as individual economic circumstances change.

In all western democracies, the upper middle class has always played a critical role in maintaining social order as teachers, college professors, lawyers, judges, doctors, social workers, bank managers, religious leaders and similar "helping" and gatekeeping professionals. They do so mainly by defining and enforcing "appropriate" social behavior (examples include formal or unwritten rules against gangsta dress and culture, profanity, bad grammar, public expression of anger, racial slurs and sexual harassment) . While "appropriate" social behavior is formally defined as behavior advantageous to social stability, it's nearly always behavior that protects the interests of the ruling elite.

While the role of lawyers and judges in enforcing "appropriate" behavior is obvious, the role teachers, college professors and religious leaders play is more subtle. Many teachers and college professors play both a teaching role in the rules of "appropriate" social behavior and a gatekeeping role in selecting who gets credentialed for admission to the upper middle class. Bank managers, doctors and social workers also function as gatekeepers. Bank managers control admission to the middle class by controlling access to credit. Doctors also play a major economic role, as they have sole authority to declare whether workers are eligible for sick leave and health and disability benefits. Social workers, in turn, have the power to ascertain fitness to parent and terminate parental rights.

The Source of Class Antagonism in the US

In the working class clients I encounter, class antagonism stems less from income inequality, than from resentment towards upper middle class professionals who are perceived as arbitrary and/or biased in exercising their gatekeeping role. Working class Americans learn from an early age that American society isn't a level playing field and that so-called equal opportunity is a myth. Overt discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, physical disability, social class and age are still rife in determining who will receive bank loans, be admitted to college and professional schools, and be granted sick leave and disability benefits.

Yet much of the bias in these situations stems from the mistaken belief on the part of professionals that earning a comfortable living is the result of hard work and sacrifice. Most middle class professionals automatically lump workers who are stuck on minimum wage into a category of "others" who fail to meet minimal stands of self-discipline and personal responsibility.

The majority of low income Americans know this is rubbish. When 80% of the population struggles to meet basic survival needs, there are obviously factors at play other than personal responsibility. Most low income workers have always known that failing to land a high paying job -- or any job for that matter -- has nothing to do with personal failing. It's the natural result of social and political policies that only work for 20% of the US population.

Why the Working Class Abandoned Progressive Politics

The important question is whether the majority of OWS occupiers know this. If OWS comes to be seen as a movement run predominantly by and for the working class, it will be the first grassroots movement to do so since the Great Depression. The last major mass movement during the Vietnam War was mainly a student-led movement. The working class, which in the sixties was represented by organized labor, was cleverly manipulated through a variety of strategies to throw their support behind the Vietnam War and other reactionary pro-corporate policies.

The anti-union restrictions of the 1948 Taft-Hartley Act and extensive red-baiting during the McCarthy Era laid the groundwork for turning organized labor into the reactionary servant of corporate interests. After red-baiting caused the expulsion of militant rank and file unionists, unions became largely toothless in addressing workplace grievances outside of wage demands. It also gave rise to a trade union

bureaucracy that felt closer to management than the workers they supposedly represented. Corporate managers rewarded union officials with all manner of perks for delivering "labor discipline" (i.e. preventing rank and file workers from participating in disruptive industrial action). As former CIA officer Tom Braden bragged in the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1967, many AFL-CIO leaders were also on the CIA payroll. See <http://revitalisinglabour.blogspot.com/2009/04/lenny-brenner-on-tom-braden.html>, <http://www.laboreducator.org/darkpast2.htm> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Braden

Ideological Barriers to Organizing the Working Class

While the decline of the trade union movement (representing only 11.9 percent of US workers according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics -- http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/organizations/b/bureau_of_labor_statistics/index.html?inline=nyt-org) is a catastrophic event for workers faced with massive layoffs and job and benefit cuts, it also means there are no well-funded institutions like the AFL-CIO to obstruct working class participation in populist causes.

In 2011 the main obstacle to organizing the working class is ideological. As Wilhelm Reich notes in his 1933 *Mass Psychology of Fascism*, fascism and reactionary politics have always exerted a powerful attraction for men (and some women) from authoritarian working class families. Karl Rove and other spin doctors in the Republican Party are masters at exploiting these tendencies to convince low income men and women that pro-corporate candidates like George Bush and last year's freshmen Tea Party candidates would significantly improve their lives. Obviously this flies in the face of a well established pattern of enacting laws that actually make living conditions much more difficult (for example, by cutting unemployment benefits, scrapping public services, laying off public service workers, and gutting Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, and food and environmental standards).

As noted by Reich, John Strachey (*The Coming Struggle for Power* 1933) and other students of early fascism, working class allegiance to reactionary politics is only temporary, as reactionary lawmakers consistently fail to improve working and living conditions. This has certainly been the case with newly elected Tea Party congressmen, who abandoned basic Tea Party goals of shutting down the Federal Reserve and ending the Middle East wars the moment they took office.

The Danger of Progressive Involvement in Lifestyle Campaigns

Nevertheless the same right wing spin doctors who gave us George W Bush and the Tea Party movement have also been remarkably successful in painting liberals and progressives as politically correct intellectuals whose main goal in life is to moralize and dictate lifestyle choices for low-income Americans.

Unfortunately many liberals and progressives play into their hand by jumping in on the wrong side of lifestyle debates. When liberals and progressives champion anti-smoking, anti-obesity, and gun control campaigns, it only solidifies their reputation as politically correct lifestyle police. Low income workers have difficulty distinguishing these lifestyle campaigns from the moralizing and gatekeeping role many liberals play as "helping professionals" (teachers, lawyers, religious leaders, social workers, doctors,

psychologists). Thus they serve to reinforce natural resentment, mistrust and class antagonism these professionals generate as enforcers of so-called "appropriate" behavior. This is doubly dangerous with reactionary spin doctors like Karl Rove in the wings, ready to gleefully exploit these feelings to win Republican votes.

OWS Demographics and Privilege

November 23, 2011

This is the second of two articles regarding the likelihood the OWS movement will expand into the traditional working class.

Young OWS protestors tell a variety of personal stories. Some are new college graduates who have spent sixteen years of their life preparing for professional careers that no longer exist. Some are high school grads who had jobs prior to the economic collapse and were the first to be laid off. Others have come of age since 2008 to find they belong to a permanent underclass with no hope of ever finding permanent employment.

In addition to the dispossessed middle class OWS protestors, there are a few that journalist Chris Hedges (http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/a_master_class_in_occupation_20111031/) describes as "revolutionists." These are intellectuals who opt out of society for political reasons and live in squats and eat out of dumpsters. The term "revolutionist" was first popularized by George Bernard Shaw in 1903 in the *Revolutionists Handbook*. Shaw (<http://www.bartleby.com/157/5.html>) defines a "revolutionist" as "one who desires to discard the existing social order."

Because I was married to one in the 1970s, I am aware of the fine line between homelessness and "revolutionism." Although it never occurred to my ex to join with others in discarding the existing social order, he utterly refused to subject himself to the exploitation of regular employment, even if it meant sleeping in fields and city parks.

The OWS occupations have also drawn in older, long time anarchists, socialists and single issue activists. Most have consciously incorporated their local homeless population, which includes a disproportionate number of unemployed and disabled veterans and former criminals. There are also a number of part-time and shift workers and full time students who participate as their schedule accommodates.

A Question of Privilege

I believe the ability of OWS to pull the traditional working class into their ranks will boil down to a single factor: their ability to be radicalized, i.e. discard the inherent sense of privilege that is fundamental to middle class identity. The post-war progressive movement has failed to attract working class activists mainly because it's been dominated by middle class academics and professionals unwilling to relinquish their privileged status. They want a better and fairer society, but not too fair. They want social change, but not extensive change that would require them to relinquish their comfortable incomes and lifestyles.

Owing to their inability to come to grips with their (largely unconscious) sense of privilege, they always find it easier to fight for third world peasants than the

disadvantaged in their own communities. This is also why they repeatedly get sucked into pro-corporate propaganda about "personal responsibility" and find themselves moralizing to lower income groups about political correctness, as well as lobbying for lifestyle (anti-smoking, gun control, anti-obesity, etc) legislation.

Why Some Kids Develop a Sense of Privilege

I have always found class orientation to center around the presence or absence of a sense of privilege. By privilege, I mean an inherent belief common to the middle class that someone is more deserving (due to higher intelligence, better education, stronger character and/or sense of personal responsibility) than the less well off. One of my special interests, as a child and adolescent psychiatrist, is the child rearing practices that contribute to a sense of privilege in adulthood. Obviously parents who subscribe to the ideology of privilege will inspire it in their kids. However this seems to be a minor factor. The nature of early childhood relationships and parental discipline seem to be far more important.

Free Play vs Preparation for Adulthood

As any new mother will vouch, infants have a strong craving almost from birth for the company of older children. If allowed to pursue this natural instinct, the vast majority of kids will choose to spend their time in the streets in the company of playmates. However children of the elite and upper middle class families are subject to a much more structured childhood, focused on "preparing" them for adulthood. In their early years, it's common for their mother or other caretaker to be their primary companion. Even with the growing emphasis on academically oriented preschools, the focus is on working with adults to develop language, reading and numeric skills -- not on free play with other children. Once middle class kids start school, after school hours are taken up with piano, violin, dancing or art lessons or structured team sports, and adult-centered "family" weekends.

The working class kids who play in the streets get a far different type of education, one focusing on social skills such as group loyalty, fair play, dispute resolution and tolerance and respect for personal differences. The business world has known for decades that the best managers come from this type of background.

The Role of Permissive Discipline

Working class kids are disciplined very differently from their middle class peers. My own clinical experience corresponds very closely with the findings sociologist Lillian Breslow Rubin describes in *Worlds of Pain*. Blue collar parents typically set very strict (at times overly harsh) limits on children's behavior. In contrast, discipline in academic and professional families tends to be much more permissive. Discipline is usually left to the mother, who is more likely to invoke guilt over bad behavior than to enforce specific consequences.

This continual use of guilt as punishment leads many members of the middle class to have extremely ambivalent attitudes towards their mothers, which often carries over into stormy romantic relationships and difficulty parenting. I have always found that children from permissive households have more difficulty learning self-discipline. They

also tend to grow up with an imperfect sense of right and wrong and are far more dependent on external rewards (for example, earning a lot of money). Often good behavior is whatever they can get away with.

Mixed Marriages

Class identification can become extremely complicated when parents originate from different social classes, This often leads to major conflict over discipline, child rearing and money management. In these cases, a child will usually identify with the class of origin of the parent they feel closest to.

How Hardship Radicalizes Young People

I have seen numerous instances in which personal crisis in adolescence or early adulthood causes an individual from a privileged background to switch their class identification from middle to working class. School bullying (especially by kids from wealthier backgrounds) and work place harassment are the most common events causing them to alter their allegiance. A police arrest, serious medical illness, depression, loss of a parent, family home or other sudden change in economic circumstances can also be key events that radicalize people. It's highly significant that the life histories of many young OWS occupiers are filled with such life events.

In contrast, it's extremely rare for working class kids who go to college and become professionals to switch their allegiance to the middle class. It's a topic discussed at length by in *Worlds of Pain*, by Richard Sennett in *Hidden Injuries of Class*, by Jake Ryan and Charles Sackrey in *Strangers in Paradise: Academics from the Working Class*, and more recently by *Philadelphia Inquirer* reporter Alfred Lubrano in *Limbo: Blue Collar Roots and White Collar Dreams*. It relates, in part, to the inability of children from working class homes to ever be fully accepted as middle class. However, in my own experience, it stems more from the profound loyalty to family, neighborhood and community that evolves out of shared hardship.

Which Way Will OWS Go?

In my view, OWS protestors have little hope of recruiting the traditional working class if they self-identify as middle class. Moreover the question of their class orientation will revolve around what they want OWS to accomplish. Are they mainly interested in achieving short term personal goals? Are they willing to settle for student loan forgiveness or a massive jobs creations program that enables the brightest and best qualified among them to enter a career path? Or do they have a vision for massive social change that will benefit everyone who has joined them in the park?

The V-Word

(December 13, 2011)

Debating the Government Monopoly on Violence

It will be instructive over coming months to watch the response of OWS protestors to the orgy of militarized police violence that has all but shut down the major public occupations. In just two months, the Occupy movement has used the combined tools of social networking, strategic outreach, consensus governance and mass civil disobedience to build the largest mass resistance in the US since the 1930s. The Office of Homeland Security and other federal agencies coordinating the simultaneous crackdowns seem to think a show of force will persuade protestors to give it up and return to their former lives. As many have nothing to return to (no jobs and, in many cases, no homes), I think this may be a serious tactical error. Even before the police crackdown, there was growing concern about keeping numbers up over winter, as well as inadequate representation of women, minorities and unskilled and blue collar workers. With a little nudge from the authorities, Occupy activists have made a good decision to regroup and engage in strategic planning.

I believe there will be strong consensus to resume their public occupations when the weather warms up. Nothing crosses the digital divide quite so effectively to Americans without Internet access. How committed the government is to stopping them is uncertain. Are the 1% and their lackeys determined to suppress the Occupy movement by any means necessary? If so, how far are OWS participants are willing to go to preserve their movement?

Our Culture of Violence

As OWS groups across the country strategize over winter, younger activists, especially, will ask why the police should have a monopoly on violence. These discussions won't take place on Facebook or Twitter, but they will happen (at least they are happening in New Zealand). A pending bill to authorize the indefinite detention of American citizens without criminal charges amplifies the urgency of these discussions. Violence is an integral part of the American psyche, as demonstrated by the continuing upsurge in gun ownership. We are all bombarded on a daily basis with mindless violence, through TV, movies and videogames. The view of American foreign policy presented by the mainstream media centers around violent retaliation. The vast majority of Americans will tell you that the US had to attack Afghanistan and Iraq to retaliate for the 3,000 Americans killed on 9-11. This pervasive emphasis on violence occurs in an intensely competitive, consumer-driven culture in the absence of any moral framework to channel aggression into more "humane" or "civilized" outlets.

Government Violence Against Minorities

In this social context, the OWS commitment to non-violence will be extremely difficult to maintain, especially as the movement reaches out to traditional blue collar and minority communities. I can't name a single working class or minority activist I have

worked with in the last thirty years who would stand or lie there passively while the police beat them in the head or squirted them in the face with pepper spray. Police violence in minority communities is a daily occurrence.

The treatment of minority activists, even nonviolent ones, is especially brutal. December 4th is the 42nd anniversary of the unprovoked raid on Fred Hampton's apartment, in which the FBI and Chicago police murdered the Black Panther leader in his sleep. Four days later, on December 8, 1969 they carried out a similar raid in Los Angeles that Black Panther leader Geronimo Pratt miraculously escaped. This was followed by years of federally sponsored "death squad" activity on the Pine Ridge Sioux Reservation in South Dakota (which Ward Churchill documents with FOIA memos in his 1990 book *Cointelpro Papers*), culminating in an armed FBI siege against American Indian Movement activists who had come to protect older residents. In 1985 the Philadelphia police, with federal support, destroyed an entire neighborhood by dropping a bomb on a household of activists belonging to the black liberation movement Move.

Fast forward to 2011, and police shootings of unarmed black men are so commonplace they are almost never prosecuted. This is on top of the thousands of cases of sub-lethal police violence (beatings, tasing, pepper spray) that all minority communities struggle to cope with as they go about their daily lives.

Is Occupy Wall Street Just a "Color" Revolution?

The main advantage of nonviolent resistance is its effectiveness in reaching large numbers of potential supporters. History shows that civil disobedience, by itself, is relatively ineffective in producing genuine political change. The nonviolent "color" revolutions in Eastern Europe and Egypt have been very effective in producing cosmetic regime change without challenging fundamental power structures. In other words, they get rid of the unpopular dictator but leave a US-friendly elite in control of government (just as Wall Street remains firmly in control no matter who we elect as president).

The success of nonviolent resistance as a recruiting tool stems mainly from its knack for provoking state violence. This provides dramatic mainstream media coverage that forces apolitical members of society to re-examine fundamental beliefs about freedom, justice and the rule of law. Although nonviolent civil disobedience involves lawbreaking, it does so from a moral high ground. There is a strong tradition in Judeo-Christian religions that people of conscience have a duty to uphold international, religious and humanitarian law when it conflicts with unjust national and local laws. Because these views enjoy strong public support, the Internet and social media can be used to recruit participants and supporters for nonviolent actions in the thousands and potentially tens of thousands. In contrast, using the Internet to recruit activists for "violent" actions, even those limited to property destruction, is illegal and provokes an instantaneous response from the authorities.

The two biggest obstacles OWS will face in maintaining their commitment to non-violence will be the attitude of low income and minority groups who deal with police violence on a daily basis and growing concerns about the possible role CIA-funded left gatekeeping foundations have played in engineering the Occupy movement's exclusive

commitment to nonviolence. This concern is heightened by the use of nonviolent guru Gene Sharp's materials at several Occupy sites.

The CIA Role in Nonviolent Revolutions

Sharp's longstanding ties with the CIA and the "democracy manipulating" foundations that instigated the "color" revolutions in Eastern Europe, Asia, the Middle East and North Africa (including Egypt) receive little attention in the foundation-funded "alternative" media. However the issue has begun to seep into the blogosphere, thanks to good coverage in the French and Australian left-progressive media. One example is a well-referenced November 25th article by Tony Carlucci in *Land Destroyer* entitled "How to Start (a Wall Street backed) Revolution" (<http://landdestroyer.blogspot.com/2011/11/how-to-start-wall-street-backed.html>). I first came across the article December 1st on the Occupy Oakland website. It was taken down a week later, which I find quite ominous.

As Thierry Messan outlines in January 2005 on *Voltairenet* (<http://www.voltairenet.org/The-Albert-Einstein-Institution>), Sharp, a fervent anticommunist, initially formulated his nonviolence theory to assist anticommunist movements. He wrote his 1993 *From Dictatorship to Democracy* while working for the Albert Einstein Institution (AEI), specifically for use in the Myanmar (Burma) "pro-democracy" movement. He subsequently participated in the establishment of Burma's Democratic Alliance -- a coalition of notable anticommunists that were quick to join the military government. He later worked with Taiwan's Progressive Democratic Party, which favored the independence of the island from communist China, something the US officially opposed. His other work included unifying the Tibetan opposition under the Dalai Lama; trying to form a dissident group to split the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO); and secretly training the Psychological Action division of the Israeli armed forces.

The "Color" Revolutions in Eastern Europe and Asia

The CIA would subsequently utilize Sharp's book, *From Dictatorship to Democracy*, throughout Eastern Europe and Asia, and in 2011, the US-engineered "Arab Spring." Sharp himself, with funding from the AEI, the US government backed National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and its subsidiary International Republican Institute (IRI), and George Soros' Open Society Institute, is also on record as providing "humanitarian" advice and training to antigovernment activists in Serbia, Zimbabwe, [Tunisia](#), [Libya](#), [Egypt](#), [Syria](#), [Iran](#), [Belarus](#), [Myanmar \(Burma\)](#), [Thailand](#), and [Malaysia](#).

The February 2011 Al Jazeera documentary *Egypt: Seeds of Change* <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QrNz0dZgqN8> echoes many of Messan's and Carlucci's concerns regarding the influence of CIA-backed foundations in the Egyptian uprising.

Ahmed Bensaada goes even further in *Arabesque American*, published in May 2011. Bensaada describes the direct involvement of the CIA-backed Serbian group Otpor in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) "revolutions," as well as a series of joint conferences organized by the CIA-backed Center for Nonviolent Action and Strategies (CANVAS) and the State Department, in which Arab activists were brought to the US

for training in "nonviolent" organizing techniques
(<http://www.opednews.com/articles/Smoking-Gun-US-Government-by-Dr-Stuart-Jeanne-B-110910-52.html>).

Why the CIA Promotes Nonviolence

So why is the CIA so keen on promoting nonviolent revolution? University of California-Santa Barbara sociology professor Peter Robinson outlines the new CIA strategy in his 1996 book *Promoting Polyarchy*. According to Robinson, as CIA-backed dictatorships around the world lose their grip, the CIA preemptively co-opts the natural (violent) insurgencies that arise to topple them. They themselves instigate popular unrest, using the ensuing chaos to install a puppet of their choosing.

The International Center for Nonviolent Conflict

The International Center for Nonviolent Conflict (ICNC) is another important "democracy manipulating" foundation that promotes Sharp's work. Australian researcher and journalist Michael Barker's articles about ICNC (<http://www.greenleft.org.au/node/38214>) reveal it has strong intelligence links but is independently funded by Peter Ackerman, Michael Milken's second in command in his junk bond empire. Barker and others also raise concerns about Stephen Zunes, ICNC's chief academic adviser and one of Sharp's strongest defenders in the mainstream and alternative media (<http://xevolutie.blogspot.com/2011/03/124-peter-myers-over-gene-sharp-en-de.html>).

In "The Junk Bond 'Teflon Guy' Behind Egypt's Nonviolent Revolution," Middle East investigative journalist Maidhc O Cathail examines Ackerman's involvement (along with the Albert Einstein Institution) in the attempted coup against Hugo Chavez. He also asks the thought-provoking question: why Milken was sent to jail, while Ackerman made off with a fortune (<http://maidhcocathail.wordpress.com/2011/02/18/the-junk-bond-%E2%80%9Cteflon-guy%E2%80%9D-behind-egypt%E2%80%99s-nonviolent-revolution>)?

OWS and the New Economics

The End of Global Economic Growth

(November 1, 2011)

Book Review

The End of Growth: Adapting to Our New Economic Reality

by Richard Heinberg

(New Society Publishers Aug 2011)

The basic premise of *The End of Growth* is that the world economy has flat-lined. Not only is it contracting, rather than expanding as many politicians claim, but there are important reasons why it will never return to the pre-2007 growth rates that characterized the last century.

Now that #OccupyWallStreet has seized control of the narrative around the banks that control the US government, the *End of Growth* will likely be the most important book of 2011. As well as making an ironclad case that the era of perpetual economic expansion has ended -- that the US, like most western nations, has become a Steady State economy -- Heinberg also gives examples of far-sighted governments (Japan, Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland) who have enacted policies to ensure the welfare of their citizenry as they confront the massive downsizing required by this new economic reality. Beyond organizing to end to corporate rule, #OccupyWallStreet needs to pressure the US and other western governments to abandon the pretense and enact similar measures.

Why Capitalism Hit the Wall in 2008

Heinberg and others in the Peak Oil/climate change movement have always argued that infinite economic expansion is mathematically impossible, given that we live on a planet with finite natural resources. They point to the massive ecological devastation caused by this reckless obsession with economic growth and warn that we are depriving our children and grandchildren of natural resources (fossil fuels, water, industrial fertilizers, fish stocks, top soil) that are essential for basic survival.

In Heinberg's previous work on resource scarcity, he envisions a timeline of a decade or more before the scarcity and prohibitive cost of natural resources (oil, coal, water, etc.) cause the capitalist economic system to hit the wall. In *The End of Growth*, he argues that it has already happened -- when global economic expansion ended in October 2008. His data shows that while a few countries can claim an occasional quarter of increased GDP, aggregate global economic growth is either stagnant or slowly contracting. Even China's so-called economic "miracle" hasn't been sufficient to generate a genuine increase in total global wealth.

Heinberg's new book is unique in that it combines his extensive research into resource depletion with an analysis of our flawed fractional reserve banking system. He is also

the first, to my knowledge, to factor in the immense cost of the growing epidemic of natural disasters. Most (the floods, droughts, wildfires, landslides, etc.) relate to climate change. However some, like last year's Gulf oil spill, relate to the depletion of global oil and gas resources and the adoption of riskier methods of fossil fuel extraction.

In addition to quoting a number of highly placed financial business experts, like Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer, who agree that global economic expansion has permanently ended, Heinberg also presents a wealth of statistical data. This includes graphs from John Williams (see <http://www.shadowstats.com>), who argues that the US government is misrepresenting the true Gross Domestic Product (GDP), just like they misrepresent the true unemployment rate -- which is really 16-18%. According to Williams, after government figures are adjusted for inflation and methodological reporting changes, 2010 GDP actually decreased by 1%.

The Ultimate Ponzi Scheme

Even a look at conventional World Bank and IMF data leaves the clear sense that the American public is being systemically lied to. Although we are told that total global wealth has nearly returned to its 2007 high of \$63 trillion, this figure doesn't take account of the \$40 trillion owed by the US and other governments nor the \$60 trillion of debt owed by banks, businesses and households. Even if global GDP does increase by 3% per year (which, as Heinberg clearly shows, it won't), 3% of \$63 trillion barely covers interest payments on a \$100 trillion debt, much less paying down the original loans.

Yet as Heinberg points out, none of these numbers represent true wealth. Under the fractional reserve lending system, this debt has been invented out of thin air by banks to generate interest payments. As he points out, it's the ultimate Ponzi pyramid scheme. It only works so long as suckers keep putting money into it. In a global monetary system where money is created through bank loans, there is never enough money in the system to pay back all the debts with interest. This type of system can only continue to function so long as there is continued growth. It's precisely because economic expansion has stopped, Heinberg argues, that the world confronts its current massive debt crisis.

A Basic Lesson in Economics

Heinberg's analysis of the 2008 economic collapse starts with an introduction to classical economic theory, as outlined by Adam Smith, Ricardo, Malthus and Marx. He goes on to describe the "financialization" of the US economy that occurred in the 1980s, the various financial derivatives investment banks and brokers devised to entice investors, and the financial deregulation that led to a decade of worsening "debt" bubbles. Beginning with the dot com boom in 2000 (quickly followed by the real estate boom and the subprime/derivative boom), large amounts of borrowed money was speculated on supposed growth industries, which plunged the entire economy into recession when they collapsed.

Heinberg talks in detail about the TARP bailouts and the secret \$12.5 bailouts Bernie Sanders exposed in December 2010. He stresses that have merely postponed total economic collapse. They are incapable of restoring economic expansion to pre-2007 levels.

The End of Growth in China

He then presents a painstaking analysis of why the China's current phenomenal growth rate (7-8% per year) and somewhat slower growth rates in India, Thailand, Malaysia and Vietnam also represent "bubbles" that will eventually pop and cause severe recession. As well as outlining the absolute limits resource scarcity will impose on Chinese growth, he argues that China is pursuing the same economic strategies that caused the Japanese economic miracle to collapse in the 1990s -- resulting in a two decade long recession.

Chinese economic growth is entirely dependent on cheap coal and electricity, and Heinberg lays out strong evidence that world coal production peaked earlier this year. This means coal will soon undergo the same steep rise in prices that oil did after oil production peaked in 2005-2006. He also shows how the current Chinese growth spurt is driven by same economic policies -- an export driven economy where Chinese consumers must sacrifice and save to protect export industries -- that drove Japan's post-war growth. The outcome of such policies is to crush consumer demand. This, in turn, results in rapid economic contraction when global demand for exports drops.

Heinberg concludes by describing China's current real estate bubble (which translates into hundreds of empty malls, factories and cities), which was created by two factors 1) a stimulus package the government enacted when the 2008 global collapse triggered a drop in Chinese exports 2) a preference the Chinese middle class show for real estate investments, owing to a notoriously unreliable (and unregulated) share market.

As China is one of New Zealand's trading partners, we're already seeing evidence that the Chinese growth rate has peaked and is beginning to decline. There has been a significant drop in Chinese demand for our dairy and lamb exports -- dairy exports and prices have declined by 10% and lamb by 20%.

Life in a Steady State Economy

Obviously the end of economic growth and continuing loss of wealth and jobs means that people in most industrialized countries will be forced to massively downsize their lifestyles. However, as Heinberg emphasizes, there are a number of ways government can intervene to make this transition less painful. He gives examples of countries (Japan, Sweden, Denmark, Japan, Norway) who openly acknowledge that they have Steady State economies and enact policies to ensure their populations are looked after as the global economy massively contracts. Sweden, for example, has transformed depressed industrial towns into "ecomunicipalities" by "dematerializing" their economies, making them fossil fuel-free with organic farming, public transportation and alternative energy projects -- while simultaneously fostering social equity.

Although Finland and Germany had modest GDP increases last year, they are adopting similar measures to protect their citizenry as global economic wealth continues to decline. In addition to preserving scarce natural resources and reducing carbon emissions, these measures also address the serious income inequality that is so harmful to the health of communities. They include, among others:

- Requiring corporations to pay fairer prices on mining and fossil fuel extraction

- Taxing resource depletion, pollution, speculation and financial transactions instead of income
- Legislating limits on income inequality
- Government subsidies to help sustainable businesses become competitive with non-sustainable ones
- Pigovian taxes on corporations equal to the negative, externalized costs they impose on society.
- Defining property rights in a way that guarantee citizens rights to clean air and water
- Breaking up investment banks, and eliminating of debt-based lending (to government, businesses and individuals) through the creation of national and state banks
- Government support for cooperatives and local currencies
- Downgrading the World Bank and IMF to clearing houses
- Corporate law reform
- Replacement of GDP with the Gross National Happiness Index
- Publicly subsidized health care

Fairy Tale Economics

(November 24, 2011)

This is the first of three articles debunking the myths we are fed about the global economic crisis.

Unpacking the Lies About the Global Economic Crisis

The only way I know to make sense of the global economic crisis is to assume, until proven otherwise, that everything Obama, Wall Street and the corporate media tell us is a lie. The economy Obama, US Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner and Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke talk about is a fairy tale economy that bears no relation whatsoever to the real world. Obama, like most western leaders, makes out that the only way to "solve" the debt crisis is to tighten our belts and destroy the middle class via wage, benefit and social service cuts. Thanks to Occupy Wall Street, a new narrative about the global economic crisis is beginning to emerge. And guess what? Once people get a clear view of what's really happening, they come up with some fairly straightforward and painless solutions.

Debunking the Fairy Tale:

1. When is a recession not a recession? When it's really a deflationary spiral.

Obama, Geithner and Bernanke keep telling us the current economic crisis is a recession. It's not. It's really a deflationary spiral. Deflation occurs when the economy shrinks. The US economy is clearly shrinking, just as Japan's economy has been doing for the last two decades. The US economy lost 10-20% of its real wealth in 2008 and has been slowly shrinking ever since. Consumer buying power continues to decrease, as Americans deplete their savings and experience wage and benefit cuts. Because people have less money to purchase goods and services, many businesses have quit producing them. This, in turn, causes more workers to be laid off.

2. The \$15 trillion debt taxpayers owe Goldman Sachs represents money that never existed.

Contrary to popular misconception, the government doesn't issue money. Nearly all new money is created by private banks when they generate new loans. On average, most banks have only 7% of a new loan on deposit. The rest is generated out of thin air. This system started in 1694 when the Bank of England was created.

The federal government came by most of the \$15 trillion debt by assuming -- through bailouts and other means - the toxic debts of Goldman and other major investment banks that were technically bankrupt. They were bankrupt either because they created trillions of dollars of toxic debt (out of thin air) for subprime mortgages for over-valued real estate that could never be repaid or because they bought this toxic debt from other banks.

The other thing Obama doesn't tell us is that there are still billions of dollars of toxic debt (again created out of thin air) that have yet to be "written down" (i.e. "written off" and subtracted from banks' balance sheets). In 2008, trillions of dollars of toxic debt that wasn't transferred to government balance sheets was hidden by transferring it from weak banks to strong ones.

Any business other than a bank would be required to deduct these bad debts from their earnings in their annual report, when they declare their profits, dividends and CEO bonuses. Yet to protect the stock prices of bank prices, Obama colludes with Wall Street to keep this information secret.

3. The true unemployment figure.

Obama et al tell us the US unemployment rate is 9%. It's not. According to the Department of Labor's own numbers, it's really about 16% - or one out of every six Americans.

4. The US economy is in recovery -- NOT!

For more than a year Obama and the corporate media assured us we were in recovery. They seem to have backed away from that claim in the last few months. There has been no improvement whatsoever in the unemployment numbers, and bankruptcies and foreclosures continue to increase.

5. The difference between \$700 billion and \$12.5 trillion.

The figure we were giving for bank and corporate bail-outs was \$700 billion. The true number, as Senator Bernie Saunders exposed last December, was \$12.5 trillion. The Federal Reserve (using taxpayer money from the US Treasury) also issued billions of dollars in bail-out loans to foreign banks and car makers and individuals (including my New Zealand bank Westpac -- thanks for that). All this was done unconstitutionally without Congressional knowledge or approval. In fact, the Obama administration filed suit in federal court to prevent the release of these records and lost.

6. The US economy is shrinking, rather than growing.

Obama et al tell us that the US economy has started growing again, by a little under 1% per year. It hasn't. According to John Williams (at <http://www.shadowstats.com>) it actually shrank by 1% in 2010

7. It will be easy to repay global debt once growth returns to pre-2007 levels. Yeah right.

Repaying the \$100 trillion debt (total of all government, household, bank and business debt) when total global wealth is \$60 trillion is mathematically impossible, even with global growth levels of 3%.

Global growth (even with the help of China and India) will never return to pre-2007 levels because of fossil fuel scarcity and the skyrocketing cost of energy. The availability of cheap fossil fuels has allowed mankind a century of undreamed of scientific and technological innovation. All the cheap oil and natural gas is gone now.

It's clear from Obama's energy policy, which promotes and supports risky high cost extraction techniques (deep sea oil drilling, fracking and tar sand extraction), that the President knows this. He just chooses not to share this information with the American public.

8. Guess who's printing money?

Obama et al tell us that "monetization," in which the federal government prints new money to generate new jobs and infrastructure programs, is out of the question because all "monetization" does is create hyperinflation. This is actually two lies rolled into one. Not only does "monetization" not create hyperinflation, but the Federal Reserve has been secretly "monetizing" the US debt since 2009. As of last week the Federal Reserve (using newly created US Treasury dollars), not China, is the largest holder of US debt. See <http://cnsnews.com/news/article/fed-now-largest-owner-us-gov-t-debt-surpassing-china>

Guess Who's Printing Money?

(November 29, 2011)

This is the second of three articles debunking the myths we are fed about the debt crisis.

Ben Bernanke's Secret Monetization Scheme

The government finances its \$15 trillion debt by selling US Treasury Bonds. As of November 2011, China is no longer the largest holder of US Treasury Bonds. The US taxpayer (via the Federal Reserve) is -- see <http://cnsnews.com/news/article/fed-now-largest-owner-us-gov-t-debt-surpassing-china>. Although the Federal Reserve is a consortium of private banks, they use US Treasury or taxpayer dollars for bailouts and to buy Treasury Bonds. As of their latest report, the Federal Reserve now owns (on behalf of US taxpayers) \$1.665 trillion worth of US Treasury Bonds. China owns \$1.1483 trillion of US Treasury bonds. The other \$12.2 trillion of US Treasury Bonds are owned mainly by investment banks and pension funds.

Since the US government already runs at a deficit, it's unlikely the Fed used \$1.665 trillion in cash to purchase these Treasury Bonds. More likely, the \$1.665 trillion simply represents a number on a balance sheet, as when Goldman Sachs creates money out of thin air to generate a new loan. When the government creates money to cover its operating expenses (in this case to pay the interest on its \$15 trillion debt), the technical term is monetization. It's derisively referred to as "printing money," even though the new money is created electronically through a balance sheet entry.

The US Treasury (which gave the money to the Federal Reserve) has simply added \$1.665 trillion in new debt to its balance sheet to purchase \$1.665 in Treasury Bonds. These funds, in turn, were used to make interest payments on the \$15 US debt -- to investment banks, China, Saudi Arabia and other countries, pension funds, and a few individuals.

Borrowing from Goldman to Pay Off Goldman

This is ironic, given that the federal government came by most of this debt by assuming the toxic debts -- by bailouts and other means -- of investment banks that were technically bankrupt due to large numbers of subprime mortgages that can never be repaid. I try really hard to visualize this, but my mind boggles at the sheer insanity. In 2008 and 2009, the US Treasury and Federal Reserve borrowed money from Goldman Sachs and other investment banks, which the banks created out of thin air (*see below), by selling them Treasury Bonds. The government, in turn, used this borrowed money to bail them out with free (0%) loans. The US government now owes Goldman et al interest payments (of 3-5%) on the Treasury Bonds they sold them.

QE-1, QE-2 and QE-3: the New Wordspeak

Neither Bernanke nor Obama will admit that the US Treasury and Federal Reserve are monetizing the federal debt. This is due to a bipartisan taboo on monetization because it

supposedly leads to hyperinflation. A year ago, Benanke announced QE-2 (QE-1 occurred during the bailouts), that the Federal Reserve would use government funds to purchase \$700 of US debt (Treasury Bonds). However he used the term "quantitative easing (QE)," which supposedly doesn't cause hyperinflation, as opposed to monetization, which does. This is just wordspeak. It deflects attention from a major crisis in democracy. Obama and the Federal Reserve are monetizing the US debt by stealth, without the knowledge or consent of the lawmakers who supposedly represent us.

The truth is that the US Treasury and Federal Reserve have been monetizing the US debt since 2009, when billions of dollars of buyer-less Treasury Bond sales began appearing on Treasury balance sheets. When Bernanke announced in August 2011 that there would be no QE-3 -- that the Federal Reserve would "hold off" on any more quantitative easing -- he was fudging the truth. According to their own reports, the Federal Reserve's purchase of Treasury Bonds started in 2009 and never stopped.

Good and Bad Monetization

Ellen Brown and other non-corporate economists challenge the claim that monetization causes hyperinflation (see her book *The Web of Debt* <http://www.webofdebt.com/articles/monetizethis.php>). Inflation occurs when the amount of money in circulation increases. If anything, debt creation with an interest burden injects more "money" into circulation and is more prone to cause inflation.

Unfortunately Obama and the Federal Reserve seem to be engaged in the wrong kind of monetization, which creates new money to make payments to investment banks (we all know where that ends up). The Japanese government has been printing new money to bail their banks out for two decades, and their problems with debt and deflation just keep getting worse.

With the other, good kind, of monetization, government creates new money that it spends directly into the economy to create jobs and repair infrastructure. Owing to the Eurozone debt crisis (triggered in large part by anti-austerity and OWS protests), monetization as a debt reduction strategy is widely discussed in Europe and elsewhere. Similar discussions are rare in the US, despite the crisis in democracy that allows Obama and the Federal Reserve to engage in secret monetization without public or Congressional input.

Enter Occupy Wall Street

In New Zealand, the spotlight the Occupy movement has thrown on the global banking system has revived the monetization debate in a way that isn't happening in the US. Monetization is the term applied when government, rather than private banks, issues the money used by the public and by government itself. We have two minor parties in this country whose platforms center around ending our debt-based monetary system and restoring the right of government to issue and control money. I suspect most Americans would find the study of economics and economic systems quite a dull hobby. However New Zealand has suffered several brutal recessions over the past thirty years, along with the mass migration overseas of an entire generation (age 20-45). Both have led to a

passionate desire among Kiwi intellectuals to understand and fix an extremely flawed economic system.

The largest of the two parties, Democrats for Social Credit, was founded in 1953. The model they extol is a brief period under President Andrew Jackson where the US government issued debt-free money, instead of borrowing it from investment banks. The Social Credit Party had their heyday in the 1981 election, when they received 21% of the popular vote.

The second party, the New Economics Party, was founded earlier this year by members of the charitable trust Living Economies (<http://www.le.org.nz/>), founded in 2002. Evolving out of New Zealand's local currency movement, Living Economies has several published writers among its members, including Deirdre Kent, author of the bestselling *Healthy Money, Health Planet*. The trust itself has just published a New Zealand edition of *Fleeing Vesuvius*. Originally published in Ireland, *Fleeing Vesuvius* is a collection of essays about confronting economic and environmental collapse.

The Link Between War and Hyperinflation

Both the Social Credit Party and the New Economics Party challenge the conventional wisdom that allowing the government to create "fiat" money (money not back by gold) creates hyperinflation. Global currency hasn't been redeemable for gold since 1971, when Nixon ended the trading of gold at the fixed price of \$35 an ounce. However as Carroll Quigley points out in *Tragedy and Hope* (which I review at <http://stuartbramhall.aegauthorblogs.com/2011/10/14/the-real-vampires-an-insiders-view-of-banks/>), only a small fraction of the money issued by investment banks was ever backed by gold. Prior to 1971, the main function of large government gold reserves was to cover large trade deficits. When a country's imports exceeded their exports, other governments often forced them to make up the difference with gold transfers.

Why would hyperinflation occur when the government creates money out of thin air, but not when Goldman Sachs does it? No hyperinflation occurred when Andrew Jackson issued fiat money. Nor under Roosevelt, who also spent massive amounts of government money directly into the economy to address massive unemployment during the Great Depression. Historically hyperinflation occurs when governments have issue "fiat" the money they borrow from investment banks to finance wars (Lyndon Johnson's aggressive monetization during the Vietnam War is the most commonly cited example). Even classical economists agree that spending billions of dollars on bombs, jets and tanks is inherently inflationary. It injects millions of dollars into the economy in the absence of real products and services the public can purchase with these dollars.

Using Taxation to Control Deficits and Debt

As Ellen Brown, Steve Keen, Thomas Greco and other latter day economists argue, allowing the government to spend new debt-free money directly into the economy through high quality public expenditure has the ability to stimulate real economy activity, while simultaneously reducing income and wealth inequality. This is the good kind of monetization. The closest example we have is Roosevelt's massive jobs creation program under the New Deal. Technically this wasn't true monetization, as Roosevelt borrowed this money from investment banks. Given that Congress authorized him to

have the US Treasury issue fiat money, this may have been his biggest mistake. Although the New Deal significantly improved jobless rates, most economists agree that it failed to produce full recovery. This only occurred with World War II and massive government expenditure for troop mobilization and armaments.

This contrasts with the other kind of monetization (that Obama and the Federal Reserve are secretly engaged in), in which the government creates new money pay off debt they owe investment banks. While theoretically this should enable banks to generate new loans, in practice it's used for obscenely large CEO bonuses and stockholder dividends.

Roosevelt's New Deal spending failed to create hyperinflation because Roosevelt refused to incur deficits and indebtedness (to investment banks) to finance it. He paid for his massive jobs and social welfare programs (which included Social Security and Aid to Families with Dependent Children) through substantial tax increases on the wealthy. Between 1936 and 1941 the upper tax rate (on people earning more than \$5 million a year) went from 79 to 81 percent. After the war started, the upper income bracket covered everyone making \$200,000 a year or more. The rate went up to 88% in 1942 and 94% in 1944.

At present the highest tax rate wealthy individuals and corporations pay in the US is 35% (reduced from 39% by the Bush administration).

*Contrary to popular misconception, the government doesn't issue money. Nearly all new money is created by private banks when they generate new loans. On average, most banks only have 7% of a new loan on deposit. The rest is generated out of thin air. This system started in 1694 when the Bank of England was created.

Paying the Piper

(December 2, 2011)

The Solution to the 100 Trillion Dollar Debt Crisis

This is the last of 3 articles exposing the myths we are told about the global economic crisis.

There seems to be broad agreement among both classical corporate economists and latter day non-corporate ones that the \$100 trillion global debt is suffocating the world economy. The large amount of debt banks carry on their books severely restricts their ability to issue loans for the business creation and expansion needed to create jobs. At the same time consumers, who are losing jobs or taking wage cuts aren't spending money. Because of massive drop in consumer demand, corporations are finding other uses for their record profits (CEO bonuses, for example), rather than reinvesting them in new factories or retail outlets.

Where the two economic schools part ways concerns the solution. Externalizing costs (getting someone else to pay for your messes) is a basic pillar of classical, corporate economics. In the case of the global economic system, the investment bankers who crashed the system through greed, fraud and speculation want the middle class, youth and the poor to pay for their recklessness. Although mainstream economists like Ben Bernanke agree that debt reduction and austerity cuts aren't enough, they refuse to officially endorse "monetization" as part of the solution. This is why he calls it something else (QE1, QE2 and QE3 -- which are short for quantitative easing) and fudges on the true amount of monetization that is occurring.

Ending Debt-Based Money, Perpetual Growth and Ecosystem Destruction

On the other side, most latter day, non-corporate economists (for example Ellen Brown, Steve Keen, Deirdre Kent, Thomas Greco, among others) call for an end to our debt-based monetary system and perpetual economic growth, along with a "downsizing" of the economies of the industrialized north in line with dwindling resources and rapid ecosystem destruction. They make a strong case that the citizens of western society are living beyond their means and must drastically reduce consumption if we are to preserve the human species. The problem is figuring out how to get there without creating an intolerable level of human suffering for disadvantaged groups who already struggle to meet basic survival needs. It's much easier for mainstream corporate economists, who have already decided to reduce the global debt burden on the backs of the middle class and young people, dooming an entire generation to become a marginalized underclass. Instead of doing any belt tightening themselves, the richest 1% are using the economic crisis as an excuse to further increase their personal wealth.

Political Reform Must Accompany Economic Reform

Most latter day economists are committed to the principle that belt tightening is only tolerable if it's shared equally. Here is where a discussion of solutions becomes really hypothetical. There is no political commitment at present for the ruling elite and special

interests to share in the belt tightening. Thus true economic reform is highly unlikely so long as corporations continue to dominate and control western democracy. It's possible that the economic and ecological crises that confront humankind can't be fixed without dismantling capitalism itself, a view shared by many in the Occupy movement. Others believe that channels can be created (through constitutional conventions or similar national gatherings) to establish direct participatory democracy and make corporations accountable to local, state and national authorities. It's only in this context that economic and monetary reform has any chance of being meaningful and effective.

Latter Day Economic Solutions to the Debt Crisis

Where there is political will to share the costs equally for fixing the financial crisis, there are a handful of straightforward policies which, if enacted together, could restore global economic stability within months. Monetization (the good kind, where new government money is spent directly into the economy) is a major one, but monetization alone is unlikely to be enough. As the Germans proved after World War I and the Japanese after their 1989 economic collapse, monetization on its own only makes things worse -- either by creating hyperinflation or increasing debt and deflation. To work, monetization must be enacted simultaneously with other basic debt reduction measures:

1. The world's largest economy (the US) must end their deficit spending, not via austerity cuts, which will only worsen deflation, but by ending their deficit-financed wars in the Middle East, by repealing Bush's tax cuts on upper income earners and by ending corporate tax avoidance.
2. Western governments must require global investment banks to forgive the sovereign debt they have incurred by assuming their toxic assets (their valueless subprime mortgages). This extent of forgiveness (referred to as a "hair cut") must depend on the amount of toxic debt these banks still carry on their books and the extent to which they have insured themselves via Credit Default Swaps. Banks that become insolvent in this process need to be nationalized, rather than bailed out, to protect depositors and pension funds with major bank shareholdings.
3. World governments must agree to end the private-debt based monetary system and replace the Federal Reserve and other central banks with national government banks charged with creating and controlling the money supply.
4. These national banks must be allowed to create and spend new money directly into the economy to create jobs and repair infrastructure, make good on depositors savings and repay unforgiven debt. To avoid incurring new debt (i.e. borrowing from future generations), it may be necessary to temporarily increase taxes (above 39% in the US) for millionaires and billionaires.

Part II My New Life in New Zealand

In Part II, I describe my reasons for leaving the US, as well as the difficult process of adapting to life in a totally new culture. I also discuss distinct political and social differences between New Zealand and the US. I also include articles about New Zealand's working class culture, its electoral system (based on proportional representation) and its difficult relationship, as a small country with a struggling economy, with the International Monetary Fund.

October 14, 2002: The Day I Became an Expatriate

(March 6, 2011)

Vietnam, Watergate and My First Attempt to Emigrate

When I finally left the US in October 2002, I had been thinking of emigrating for many years. I had even made a prior attempt to live overseas. In June 1973, I shipped all my belongings to England, intending to start a new life there. Many Americans of my generation left the US in the early seventies, for Canada, Europe and more remote parts of the world. Most were draft-age men refusing to be sent to Vietnam. A few were women involved in illegal abortion clinics before the 1973 Roe v Wade Supreme Court decision legalized pregnancy termination. Many were artists and intellectuals like me, disillusioned by the extreme political corruption that was exposed by the Pentagon Papers and later the scandals over Watergate, CIA domestic spying and Nixon's apparent use of US intelligence for his own political purposes.

In 1973, I myself was totally apolitical. My decision to leave the US had little to do with Vietnam or Watergate. My disillusionment stemmed more from watching rampant consumerism overtake the humanist values I had grown up with – the strong family ties, deep friendships and involvement in neighborhood and community life that were so important to my parents' and grandparents' generation.

During my eighteen month stay in England, it was deeply gratifying to meet people in London and Birmingham who could care less about owning "stuff" they saw advertised on TV. People who still placed much higher value on extended family, close friendships and the sense of belonging they derived from their local pubs, trade unions, neighborhood sports clubs, hobby groups, and community halls. All of these historic fixtures of American life had virtually disappeared by 1973.

The Murder that Turned My Life Upside Down

A downturn in the British economy in late 1974 forced me to return home to complete my psychiatric training. While I never abandoned my dream of living overseas, my time in Europe had politicized me. I still scanned the back pages of medical journals for foreign psychiatric vacancies. However in my spare time, I also joined grassroots community organizations seeking to improve political and social conditions in the US.

Believing Nixon was an aberration, I was naively optimistic about the ability of community organizing to thwart the corrupting influence of powerful corporations over federal, state and local government. It never occurred to me the institutions of power themselves were deeply corrupt and had been for many years.

As I write in *The Most Revolutionary Act: Memoir of an American Refugee*, the truth came crashing down on me in 1987, when I joined a coalition to create a Seattle African American museum. Owing to my financial and social standing as a physician, this struck a raw nerve somewhere in the power elite. What started as a barrage of prank calls, break-ins and stalking by unsavory looking strangers, progressed to attempts on my life and an affair with an undercover agent who railroaded me into a psychiatric hospital.

The hospitalization nearly cost me my medical license. Yet it was the 1989 murder of

one of my patients, an African American postal worker and union activist, that turned my world upside down. The brutal murder – the autopsy photos revealing that Oscar Manassa was beaten before being thrown from the fifth floor of the Seattle YMCA – was upsetting enough. However the event that opened my eyes to the total breakdown of the US political system was the seizure of the police evidence by a little known branch of US intelligence known as the Postal Inspectors. Their illegal actions effectively blocked a homicide investigation.

The Harassment that Preceded Oscar's Murder

Also of special significance was that Oscar experienced the same vicious harassment I did for four years before he was killed. In fact this is why his legal team brought him to see me. He, too, complained of relentless prank calls, stalking, and anonymous calls to his wife that ultimately broke up his marriage. As a result of the harassment, he developed acute stress disorder, with severe insomnia, anxiety attacks, loss of motivation and memory and attention difficulties. His condition made it impossible for him to participate effectively in grievance hearings or his workers compensation appeal.

Unfortunately Oscar's problems weren't psychiatric, and my (pro-bono) professional services weren't of much use to him. His symptoms were a natural response to genuine, life threatening stress. What ultimately helped Oscar conquer his fear and anxiety was a six month stay with his family in Alabama. The turning point, as he described shortly before his murder, was when his mother also began receiving prank calls. It was calls from two anonymous males urging her to put Oscar in a mental institution that ultimately convinced his family that he wasn't paranoid – that real strangers were threatening him with genuine harm. As commonly occurs, his family had to fully accept the reality basis of his complaints before they could provide the emotional support he needed.

Oscar's Recovery Cost Him His Life

Oscar returned to Seattle in March 1989 to reopen his workers compensation claim and file for reinstatement at the post office. I saw him once, to help him apply for temporary welfare benefits for the deposit on a new apartment. He was a totally different person – positive, confident and optimistic about his future. He had already seen his attorney to reopen his workers compensation claim and was doing casual labor through the Millionaire's Club.

Oscar ultimately won his workers compensation claim. His attorney received notification from the Department of Labor several weeks after his death. His supporters never had doubt about the link between his recovery and his murder. If he had remained terrified and depressed, either in rural Alabama or barricaded in his Seattle apartment, the higher-ups responsible for his assassination would have left him alone.

The Assassination of Domingo and Viernes

It would be several years before I learned why postal workers were being systematically harassed – and in some cases murdered – for filing workers compensation claims. In the end, the complex political motives behind Oscar's murder didn't really matter. What would change my life forever was the glimpse it provided into an invisible intelligence-security operation that, like Hitler's Brownshirts, could carry out extrajudicial murders of political opponents (Oscar, as it turned out, was merely politically inconvenient) with

no fear whatsoever of legal consequences.

Extra-judicial assassination of political dissidents isn't new in Seattle. In 1981 the FBI collaborated with Marcos agents (by infiltrating local 37 and performing surveillance on the leaders) in the assassination of Silme Domingo and Gene Viernes, who were officers in the Filipino cannery workers union. All this came out in the lawsuit the Domingo family filed against Marcos, the FBI and CIA, resulting in a jury award of \$32.5 million (Thomas Churchill's 2005 *Triumph Over Marcos* describes the work of Domingo and Viernes and the civil trial that followed their assassination).

In my own situation, the extrajudicial murder of one of my patients demonstrated, in the most brutal way possible, that ultimate power in the US lies outside of America's democratic institutions. That political power is concentrated in a wealthy elite who employ an invisible intelligence-security network to terrorize – and sometimes kill – dissidents and whistle blowers who threaten their interests. In addition to lending new urgency to my political work, my experiences also made me feel increasingly alienated and isolated from other progressives who hadn't shared them. Ironically, although my liberal and progressive friends were all far more knowledgeable about the absolute control multinational corporations exerted over lawmakers and the media, they reacted very differently to this knowledge. I responded by devoting every spare moment to some form of community organizing. My friends, on the other hand, tended to withdraw from political activity to focus on their personal lives.

The Patriot Act: Repealing the Bill of Rights

In September 2001, I expected that the Patriot Act, which legalized domestic spying on American citizens, as well as revoking habeas corpus and other important constitutional rights, would be the turning point that would send progressives into the streets, as the 1999 anti-WTO protests had, to halt America's rapid transformation into a fascist police state. It never happened. In Seattle, a small 9-11 coalition formed in October 2001 to protest Bush's invasion of Afghanistan. Over the following year, as Bush prepared to invade Iraq, former weapons inspector Scott Ritter and others spoke to sell-out crowds about Saddam Hussein's non-existent weapons of mass destruction. Yet when I left the US in October 2002, Seattle's antiwar movement was maddeningly small and fragmented.

Sacrificing Mental Health for Global Conquest

Meanwhile the major military build-up which preceded the invasion of Iraq led to severe cutbacks in the state and federal programs that funded psychiatric services for the mentally ill. After twenty-five years of private practice, I faced the difficult choice between trying to find a salaried position in a mental health clinic, leaving medicine or going bankrupt. In the end – for moral rather than economic reasons – I rejected these options to pursue my twenty-eight year dream of returning overseas. I, like most American intellectuals with access to the international and alternative press, already knew that neither Afghanistan nor Iraq had played any role whatsoever in the 9-11 attacks. In fact, beginning in February 2002, many of us were concerned about growing evidence that the Bush administration had played some role in engineering the assault on the Twin Towers.

Nevertheless, by launching unprovoked wars of aggression in Afghanistan and Iraq, Bush was clearly guilty of war crimes under international law. And so long as I, as a US

taxpayer, continued to work and pay taxes in the US, I shared some responsibility for these crimes.

Why I Chose New Zealand

I chose New Zealand out of pure expedience: it was an English speaking country and had the least stringent requirements for credentialing foreign psychiatrists. I was aware, through friends in the UK, that British society had changed drastically under Margaret Thatcher, with rampant consumerism totally supplanting the humanist, socially engaged culture I had observed in the early seventies. This stemmed in part from Thatcher's twelve year attack on unions and the working class. However increasing corporate control over the British media (as occurred in the US) was a much bigger factor. The result, as in most of the developed world, is continuous exposure to American movies, TV reruns and American-style advertising and public relations techniques. The latter steadily bombards the British public with the same powerful messages promoting individualism, competitiveness and consumption as their American counterparts (I have several articles in Part IV that discuss media and ideological messaging in more detail).

I had no reason to believe New Zealand would be any different. As a long time anti-globalization activist, I knew perfectly well that no country on earth escapes the corrupting influence of multinational corporations. Moreover psychiatric colleagues who had worked in New Zealand had warned me that American movies, sit-coms and pop culture had replaced much of traditional New Zealand identity and culture.

At the same time I believed that specific political features protected New Zealand from the absolute corporate control of government and public information that plagues the US. These include New Zealand's parliamentary system of government, its electoral system based on proportional representation, its commitment to universal health care through its National Health Service, and its absolute ban on nuclear power or weapons (which includes a prohibition against US naval ships docking in any New Zealand harbor).

My New Expatriate Identity

(March 11, 2011)

For people over fifty, starting over in a new country is like dropping a lab rat in a complex maze. Like the rat, you suddenly find yourself in a totally unknown environment that constantly confronts you with new decisions and dilemmas. For example, learning to use a new phone system. It took me months to learn how to find phone numbers in the Christchurch phone book. I also had to learn to dial 111 for emergencies, 1 for an outside line and 0 to call a cellphone or long distance number. And not to waste time redialing when I got a “fast busy” signal – which means the number has been disconnected.

It helped a lot to meet other American expatriates struggling with the same problems. It was also extremely gratifying to realize I was not alone in my absolute repudiation of Bush’s wars of aggression in Afghanistan and Iraq. As I would later learn, tens of thousands of American progressives and liberals left the US during the Bush years. In November 2003, expatriate Americans led the London demonstrations protesting Bush’s London visit and the war in Iraq. Americans also formed major voting blocs for Kerry in 2004 and for Obama in 2008.

My Struggle with American Exceptionalism

Ironically the biggest hurdle I had to overcome was my own lack of objectivity regarding my native country. For some reason, no matter how strongly progressive Americans reject our immoral and corrupt political system, we all unconsciously buy into the American exceptionalism that is pounded into us in school and via the mainstream media. The belief that the US is not only the foremost military and economic power, but also the most productive, efficient, cleanest, healthiest, transparent, just and scientifically advanced.

This is an extremely rude awakening for many Americans. It certainly was for me. It took less than a month for Kiwi colleagues to confront me about my attitude that the US was more advanced in medical research. As I look back, I am both mystified and embarrassed that I took this position. I have known for at least two decades that US medical research is mainly funded by drug companies. I also know that Big Pharma has a well-earned reputation for buying and publishing research that promotes profits at the expense of scientific objectivity (I write about this in “The Corporatization of Health Care” in Part III).

During my 8 ½ years in New Zealand, I have come to understand that citizens in all great military empires are under enormous pressure to hold and express patriotic and exceptionalist beliefs. In Nazi Germany, you could be shot instantly for unpatriotic statements. The British public was under similar pressure when the U.K. was the world’s greatest empire. In Victorian England, women were instructed to engage in marital sex as a patriotic duty: “Just lay back and think of England.”

American Ambivalence Towards Empire

Moreover, as with many American expatriates, it took leaving the country to recognize how completely US militarism overshadows all aspects of American life. Again I have

known for decades that the US government spends more than half their budget on the military – that they do so to guarantee US corporations access to cheap natural resources and sweat shop labor, as well as markets for their cheap agricultural exports. However it took moving overseas for it to sink in that Americans owe their high standard of living to “economic imperialism,” i.e. US military domination of third world resources.

As a long time progressive, I tended to place the entire blame for the bloated US military budget on the US military-industrial complex and the immense power defense contractors wield via their campaign contributions and ownership of US media outlets. I didn't fully understand the financial consequences of world military domination for ordinary Americans – namely extremely low cost consumer goods. It took the day-to-day of experience of living in a smaller, poorer, non military nation and shelling out a lot more for gasoline, books, meat, fish and numerous other items – on a much lower income – to fully understand this.

Americans Love Cheap Gasoline, Coffee and Sugar

I think the American public, for the most part, is profoundly ambivalent about the concept of empire. In public opinion polls, Americans consistently oppose foreign wars, except where “US interests” are at stake. However policy makers and the mainstream media are deliberately vague in defining “US interests.” Prior to 1980, a threat to American interests meant a clear threat to our democratic system of government or the lives of individual Americans. With the current wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan, “US interests” have expanded to include the billions of gallons of cheap foreign oil required for the health of the American economy.

Americans love their cheap gasoline, coffee, sugar and chocolate. And most aren't consciously aware that they owe these bargain-priced luxuries to US military conquests in the third world. If pollsters posed the question “Would you give up cheap imports to end foreign military aggression?” - I believe the percentage supporting war would rise significantly.

What Americans Sacrifice for Military Empire

At the same time, Americans make immense sacrifices for their cheap gasoline and consumer goods. Again, this was something I never fully realized until moving to a country that doesn't feel compelled to invade and occupy other nations. The most obvious sacrifice involves a range of domestic programs that other developed countries take for granted. These include publicly financed universal health care (in all industrialized countries except the US) and a range of education, jobs and social programs enacted under Roosevelt, Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon, which were systematically eliminated by both Bushes and Clinton to expand military spending. With the current War on Terror on eight fronts (Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, the Philippines, Africa and Columbia), more and more tax revenue is being diverted from local to military spending. In state after state there is no money to repair decrepit roads and bridges or provide adequate street lighting and policing. While dozens of clinics, libraries and homeless shelters shut their doors and teachers, cops and other state and local employees get laid off.

Sacrificing Democratic Rights and Civil Liberties

Americans also make enormous non-financial sacrifices – especially around democratic rights and civil liberties – as citizens of the world’s greatest military power. Genuine democracy – in which citizens are allowed genuine input into the decision to spend more than half their tax dollars on weapons and war – is totally incompatible with military empire. This was the main reason Roman leaders abandoned their democratic form of government when they set out to invade and conquer Europe.

Civilized society is innately repelled by the wholesale carnage of war, especially where there is a high risk of losing friends or loved ones. The US has a long history of popular protest in response to foreign wars. The majority of women, who comprise more than fifty percent of the US population, consistently oppose any military intervention that kills large numbers of enemy civilians. There is also an increasing number of men who expect their tax dollars to be spent on public programs that directly benefit them, rather than Wall Street banks and corporate war profiteers.

The 2001 Patriot Act, which severely curtails Constitutional freedoms enacted to protect US citizens against abusive government, was clearly a preemptive move to suppress organized opposition to what has become a permanent war in the Middle East.

Our Constitution: Deliberately Conducive to Empire

Although the post-World War II military-industrial complex and its current iron grip on so-called representative government are a fairly recent development, there are also clear structural flaws in the US system of government that make it less responsive to voters than governments of other industrialized countries. These “flaws” mostly relate to what the Constitutional framers referred to as “separation of powers.”

American students learn in school that these “checks and balances” were intended to make the federal government more democratic. However it’s clear from the writings of Hamilton, Madison and other members of the colonial aristocracy who wrote the Constitution that their real intent was to minimize the risk of a democratic vote harming the interests of wealthy landowners and merchants or interfering with their plans for military expansion. In fact the founding fathers made no secret of their imperialistic ambitions (their intention to go to war against the Native Americans and Mexicans who possessed the lands west of the thirteen original colonies), which were extremely unpopular among a mainly farming population who experienced enormous personal and economic privation during the Revolutionary War. Military expansion didn’t end when the Southwest and Pacific coast became US possessions. In 1895, the

US declared war on Spain to expand our empire to include Cuba, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, the Philippines, and other Pacific islands.

Parliamentary Democracy Equals One Man One Vote

Unlike the majority of industrialized countries, the US doesn’t employ a “one-man-one-vote” system of representational democracy. The only hope our Constitutional framers had of enacting their pro-business, pro-military agenda was to establish two branches of government that would be appointed by “electors” rather than direct popular vote (the Senate – though this changed in 1917 - and the Presidency). The intent was for the two non-elected branches to block populist legislation that might be enacted by the democratically elected House of Representatives

I now have 8½ years experience with New Zealand's system of parliamentary democracy, which is clearly more "democratic" than the US system. Under a parliamentary system, the head of the party controlling the majority of legislative seats automatically becomes chief of state. This places their government under constant pressure to continuously pass reform legislation benefiting the voters who put them into office. The moment the prime minister loses the majority he/she needs to pass legislation, the government collapses and a new election is called. This is in marked contrast to the US Congress, which has been struggling for thirty years to reform education and health care – while American schools and the US health care system virtually disintegrate in front of our eyes.

Another important advantage of a parliamentary democracy is the establishment of an official opposition party, whose role is to attack and embarrass the party in power. The result is vigorous and often raucous parliamentary debate, characterized by booing, cheering and outright heckling (called barracking) by members of the opposing party. Even though both New Zealand's major parties are increasingly pro-business, bipartisan consensus on a specific issue is extremely rare. Open "bipartisan consensus," which is so heavily promoted by the US media, Obama, the Clintons, and Wall Street, would be extremely unpopular in New Zealand. The majority of Kiwi voters retain a strong working class consciousness and are extremely dismissive of politicians with open ties to the corporate and business lobby.

Life in a Second World Country

(March 15, 2011)

Obviously there is both an upside and a downside to living in New Zealand. All developed and developing countries are forced to operate under the same global capitalist system, which is under near absolute control of multinational corporations, via the WTO, the Global Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT) and other free trade treaties and the draconian financial policies enforced by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. New Zealand is no exception and suffers from many of the same economic and social problems as other developed countries. In a few areas, New Zealand has adopted some of the worst aspects of global capitalism, which results in uniquely negative consequences for the New Zealand public. However, for the most part, Kiwis retain their commitment to the “democratic socialism” they brought here from Europe. This, in my view, results in a society and culture that tends to be far more humane than is found in the US.

Nevertheless, as a capitalist industrialized nation, New Zealand shares a number of pernicious social problems found in all modern capitalist countries:

- ◆ Worsening income inequality – only 9% of Kiwis have incomes above \$70,000 (\$53,000 in US dollars), whereas nearly one third earn less than \$14,000 (\$10,5000 US).
- ◆ Irrational and blind adherence to a continuous economic growth paradigm. In a small country like New Zealand, this has much graver impact, in the form of toxic soil and water contamination and habitat destruction from mining and aggressive dairy expansion. Over the past two decades, the majority of New Zealand’s picturesque waterways have become unsuitable for swimming owing to farm effluent and fertilizer run-off.
- ◆ Slow uptake of renewable energy production (owing to nonexistent finance capital or government subsidies)
- ◆ Slow uptake of growth management (sprawl prevention strategies) essential to the development of cost effective public transportation and food and water security.
- ◆ Slow uptake of the food miles concept, owing to an economy that is totally reliant on tourism and agricultural exports.
- ◆ Heavy mainstream media emphasis on stereotypical female roles, resulting in massive pressure on New Zealand women to look young, thin and sexually attractive. Fortunately cosmetic surgery is still much less common here than in the US – there simply aren’t enough Kiwis who can afford it.
- ◆ Massive household debt (150% of disposable income – owing to chronic low wages).
- ◆ Factory shut-downs and movement of well-paid union and manufacturing jobs to overseas sweat shops.

- ◆ Diets which are excessively dependent on foreign food imports, as opposed to more sustainable reliance on locally and regionally produced food in season.
- ◆ Factory farming of pigs and chickens, which have to be fed antibiotics daily, as the cramped quarters cause a large number of animals to be diseased.

Owing to heavy, sustained Green Party lobbying, sow stalls have been banned as of 2015. Nevertheless, thanks to the high prevalence of battery hen operations in New Zealand (and constant exposure of chickens to feces), a high proportion of fresh chicken sold in our supermarkets is contaminated with salmonella and/or campylobacter (which, contrary to popular misconception isn't destroyed by cooking). Both organisms cause food poisoning in humans. New Zealand currently enjoys the highest per capita incidence of campylobacter infection in the world.

An Early Laboratory for Neoliberal Reforms

Overall I have enjoyed numerous lifestyle advantages living in New Zealand. There are a few notable exceptions, of course, beyond the emotional isolation of being separated from my family and American friends. Most relate, either directly or indirectly, to the role New Zealand played in the 1980s as the “Chile of the South Pacific” – as a “laboratory” for the neoliberal reforms subsequently implemented by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher.

Theoretically neoliberalism is a “market-driven” approach to economic and social policy that stresses the efficiency of private enterprise by opposing any government regulation of corporate abuses or any government role in providing public services other than defense and law enforcement. In practice, neoliberal policies have been universally pro-corporate and anti-free market, promoting a significant amount of legislation (tax law, government contracts, and direct corporate bail-outs) that favor large corporations at the expense of both small business and ordinary citizens.

The University of Chicago is usually credited as the birthplace (in the 1960s) for neoliberalism and Milton Friedman as its father. A frequently overlooked aspect of the 1973 CIA-sponsored coup in Chile was the direct role University of Chicago economists played in advising Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet on the draconian neoliberal economic and social policies enacted by his brutal regime. New Zealand played a similar role in the early eighties, by (voluntarily?) trying out neoliberal reforms that were later adopted by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher.

New Zealand: a Second World Country

A relatively poor, second world country, New Zealand presently ranks 22nd in GDP among OECD countries. Americans are always struck by the high cost of living here relative to wages and salaries. Professionals earn far less – a sacrifice most American and British doctors, teachers and managers are happy to make for New Zealand's “lifestyle” advantages. Although average income is much lower in New Zealand than in most of the developed world, the cost of basic necessities is just as high – much higher, in the case of gasoline, home energy costs, “export” fish and meats, and fresh vegetables. Central heating is virtually non-existent – in part because so few people can afford it. Just so no one has any illusions about our climate, the New Zealand winter is relatively short. However except for the far north, it gets just as cold here as in London, Washington D.C. or New York City.

In New Zealand They Call It Rogernomics

In part, New Zealand's relative loss of wealth (in 1975 it was 10th in per capita GDP) relates largely to a 1980s policy decision in Britain, which was always the main importer of New Zealand lamb and dairy products, to favor European Union over British Commonwealth trading partners. However many New Zealand economists also blame draconian reforms implemented by Minister of Finance Roger Douglas in the mid-eighties. "Rogernomics," as it's known, was directly responsible for the institutionalization of a large and steady wealth transfer (as profits and dividends) to overseas corporations. This in turn has led to a large, chronic accounts deficit (negative balance of trade) that is directly or indirectly responsible for other major economic problems.

It's only with the 2008 economic collapse and the non-existent US recovery that American analysts are beginning to appreciate the devastating impact that "Reaganomics" (the Reagan-Bush neoliberal agenda continued by Bill Clinton and Bush Jr.) had on US manufacturing and thus the overall economy. In a country 1/60th the size of the US, the damage was much more immediate and harder to conceal.

In brief, the policies introduced by Minister of Finance Sir Roger Douglas in the 1980s included the elimination of import tariffs protecting New Zealand agricultural producers and manufacturers; rapid privatization of state owned industries, which for the most part ended up under foreign ownership; anti-union changes to the Employment Relations Act; and substantial cuts in the public service and social welfare benefits.

With the abolition of import controls, New Zealand companies struggled to compete against lower cost imported goods, resulting in multiple plant closures – mainly meat and dairy processing plants and clothing, footwear and textiles factories. This resulted in massive layoffs and a decade of unrelenting hardship for communities that relied on these industries, as well as a loss of the skilled labor force that staffed them. The 1984 reforms also heralded in seven years of continuous economic stagnation, during which the New Zealand economy shrank by 1% in contrast with an average 20% growth in other OECD countries.

The Mass Exodus of Generations X and Y

The most enduring harm from the 1984 reforms is the staggering loss of human capital that continues to this day. At present approximately one million native New Zealanders – representing one quarter New Zealand's current population of four million – reside overseas.

As described above, the massive sell-off of both state owned and private Kiwi companies to foreign owners has translated into a chronic accounts deficit (negative balance of trade), as foreign companies collect their profits and dividends. To compensate for this steady loss of wealth, New Zealand, under pressure to increase exports, eagerly entered into "free trade" agreements with larger countries. Under these agreements, they agreed to reduce tariffs and quotas even more and to reduce "value added" exports in favor of unprocessed raw materials. This, in turn, led to the shut down of even more "value added" industries (for example, those involved in converting logs into timber and furniture, milk into cheese and wool into clothing and carpets), which had no hope of competing with overseas companies that paid sweat shop wages to third world workers.

These “free trade” agreements, which opened New Zealand markets to cheap imported consumer goods, continued the downward spiral. More manufacturers shut down, owing to their inability to compete with overseas companies, leading to more lay-offs and more young Kiwis departing New Zealand in search of well-paying jobs.

The Student Loan Debacle

In my view, the most damaging neoliberal reform of the 1980s was the decision to replace government subsidized tertiary education (which until recently was standard in most European countries, including Britain) with a student loan scheme. While lumbering young people with student loan debt can pose major problems for large, broad based economies like US and Britain, the policy has proved absolutely disastrous for New Zealand – both in terms of wealth creation and the long term health of our hospitals, schools and other major institutions. I believe this continual hemorrhage of human capital is the number one reason New Zealand remains near the bottom of OECD countries for both economic growth and wages and salaries.

According to the New Zealand Medical Association, approximately one-third of medical students leave New Zealand following graduation – mainly to Australia and the UK – where they can command a salary 20-30% higher than what they earn here. Many really have no choice, strapped with large student loan repayments, just as they are trying to buy a home and start a family.

A recent study by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research estimated 37% of new Kiwi teachers left teaching within the first three years. In addition to doctors and teachers, New Zealand also loses a large proportion of the nurses, physiotherapists, social workers, audiologists and other health professionals they train – as well as engineers, urban planners and veterinarians, who are also on New Zealand Immigration’s critical skills shortage list.

New Zealand’s Neoliberal Transportation Policy

New Zealand’s other really destructive neoliberal policies relate to public transportation: 1) the privatization of New Zealand railways (which led to the immediate shut down of all but four routes, owing to their failure to turn a profit) and 2) the dismantling of local public transportation systems. Both have resulted in extreme reliance on private automobiles and foreign oil, the second biggest culprit in our accounts deficit. New Zealand, which still has a predominantly rural population (only 1/3 of Kiwis live in major cities) holds the embarrassing distinction of the highest rate of car ownership in the world.

Activism in New Zealand

(March 17, 2011)

As a thirty year plus grassroots organizer committed to global political change, the positives of living in New Zealand far outweigh the negatives. Overall, I find Kiwis less apathetic than their American cousins, less likely to be taken in by the corporate hype they see on TV, and more confident about their ability to bring about change through collective action. I sense this relates, in large part, to a well-organized, militant indigenous (Maori) movement. The highly visible activism of the Maori community models the importance of collective struggle for other New Zealanders, in much the same way the American civil rights struggle provided a role model for the US antiwar movement, and the women's, gay and disability rights movement.

New Zealand society possesses a number of political and social features that make it much easier to bring about change:

Political features:

- ◆ A parliamentary democracy coupled with elections conducted via proportional representation (which Kiwis won by hard, sustained grassroots organizing).
- ◆ The absence of any aspirations towards military empire. As I write in "My New Expatriate Identity," Americans only fully realize how US militarism overshadows their everyday life once they spend extended time overseas.
- ◆ New Zealand 100% anti-nuclear (both nuclear power and weapons), and US naval ships are banned in our ports because the US government refuses to specify whether naval vessels are nuclear powered or carry nuclear arms. This, too, was won by sustained grassroots organizing.
- ◆ There is no death penalty in New Zealand.
- ◆ At present, genetically engineered crops and farm animals are banned in New Zealand (except in the laboratory). This is despite a local business elite that lobbies continuously for free trade deals that would allow multinational biotech companies like Monsanto to release their genetically modified organisms here. Thus keeping New Zealand GE-free requires constant vigilance and sustained organizing.

Social Features:

- ◆ New Zealand's unique migration patterns (which I write about in "Working Class Culture") give it a predominantly working class culture. My own working class background made it really easy to fit in here, though middle class Americans seem to have more difficulty.
- ◆ The cattle supplying New Zealand's world famous dairy and beef export industry are grass fed (except during drought years), and no Kiwi farmer would dream of injecting them with hormones or feeding them antibiotics to stimulate growth.
- ◆ While much of the Kiwi media is foreign-owned and blatantly pro-corporate,

there remain vestiges of a vocal independent media that prides itself on its investigative journalism and regularly challenges and embarrasses the government in power. I sense this relates mainly to innate working class mistrust of authority.

- ◆ Kiwis are much more likely to have a civic life than their American counterparts. Here in New Plymouth (population 55,000), most of my friends belong to the Green Party or the sustainability movement. However I also have friends who belong to Lions, Rotary or one of the many sports clubs (lawn bowling, cricket, soccer, rugby) or hobby groups (stamp club, little theater, orchid society, tramping club, canoe club and four cycling groups).
- ◆ New Zealand has a much stronger sustainability movement, though government uptake of sustainability-related policy has been much slower than in Europe (though we're still years ahead of the US). The late arrival of both TV and cheap imports in New Zealand means Kiwis are only one generation away from growing all their own vegetables, keeping chickens and "making do" with jerry-rigged plumbing and home repairs and homemade cleaning and beauty products. Most households still hang out their washing (high energy costs make running a clothes dryer a luxury). Local currencies introduced in many rural communities during the last international recession (1990-93) still survive in several areas and have been incorporated into the sustainability movement.

Working Class Culture

November 28, 2010

One of the features I like best about New Zealand society is the strong working class consciousness. Despite the best efforts of politicians and the media to convince us that class differences have been abolished, any American who has entered professional or academic life from a blue collar home will assure you that there is a distinct working class culture in the US. And that no matter how much wealth or social status you acquire, you will never “pass” as middle class. That something in the way you dress or express yourself will always betray your working class origins.

Readers from working class homes will immediately understand what I’m talking about. It’s a topic several journalists and sociologists have written about: Lillian Breslow Rubin in *Worlds of Pain*, Richard Sennett in *Hidden Injuries of Class*, Jake Ryan and Charles Sackrey in *Strangers in Paradise: Academics from the Working Class*, and more recently *Philadelphia Inquirer* reporter Alfred Lubrano in *Limbo: Blue Collar Roots and White Collar Dreams*.

However, even in progressive and leftist circles, the subject is rarely openly discussed. Ironically I was well into my thirties before I recognized the distinctly working class “culture” of the home and family I was raised in. I was always aware of being very different – of essentially speaking a different language – than my high school, college and medical school classmates.

My Desperate Search for People Like Me

I remember the thrill of finally meeting someone at nineteen – a gay composer – who amazingly understood the very different way I looked at the world and other people. I was naively apolitical and attributed our ability to understand one another to “artistic temperament” – the fact we were both into music, art and literature. Around the same time, I seriously considered relocating to an artists’ colony near Santa Fe, in the hoping of meeting more people like me.

Instead I went to England and married the son of a Glaswegian foundry worker. Who – despite his Scottish accent and dialect – was only the second person in the world who spoke the same language I did. I found this very puzzling at the time. Roy, a forklift driver didn’t have an artistic bone in his body.

It was only in 1983 that an Appalachian friend clued me into the real reason I felt so profoundly alienated from my physician colleagues – and from most of my fellow leftists, who for the most part came from academic and professional homes. The moment of enlightenment occurred during a conversation about a fellow member of International Socialists Organization – who refused to speak to me about an upcoming because her oatmeal was getting cold.

“That’s class privilege,” my friend explained. “A working class person would never say that.” Suddenly a light bulb came about why I felt so extremely different from both my medical colleagues and most of my fellow leftists.

Characteristic Blue Collar Traits

At the top of the list of characteristic blue collar traits, is a tendency to be blunt and forthright, without self-censorship or hidden agendas. It drives us crazy when our middle class bosses, co-workers and fellow activists monopolize conversations with their constant equivocation, rationalization, and intellectualization. Owing to an innate fear of expressing feelings directly, they constantly criticize us for being too open and direct.

We also have profoundly different attitudes towards childrearing. We believe in setting firm limits, unlike white collar families, who are inclined to be permissive and use guilt as punishment. We believe kids learn social skills best by playing in the streets, where there are no adults to supervise or intercede for them. In fact, we have strong reservations about kids spending too much leisure time in structured activities (such as piano, violin and dancing lessons – or too many organized sports) because this provides so little opportunity for spontaneous interaction with other children.

We are intensely loyal, as opposed to upper middle class colleagues, who are raised from an early age to be fiercely competitive and look out for number one. Finally we have an inherent distrust of ideology, abstract theories, and people with too many letters after their name. In our view, the main outcome of a “liberal arts” education, as opposed to hands-on experience, is a distinct lack of common sense and street smarts.

Kiwi Slang

Another plus about living in New Zealand is that I suddenly have access to a whole new vocabulary to describe everyday experiences. For the most part culture – science, technology, art, law and pseudo-sciences, such psychology, sociology and anthropology – originates with the upper classes and either filters downward or is imposed on the rest of us. With language the opposite is true – new language is created by the lower classes and filters upward.

New Zealand slang, which is mainly based on working class British slang, is rich and colorful, like American ghetto slang. In part owing to loss of working class consciousness in the US, Americans don't have a good way to express many of the following concepts. I'm especially fond of all the disparaging terms Kiwis have to describe the upper classes:

- ◆ Airy-fairy – an adjective used to describe concerns or views (or a person who expresses them) that are purely intellectual or theoretical notions and have no practical basis in reality.
- ◆ Argy-bargy – a useless argument over nothing
- ◆ Bollocks – (literally meaning testicles) nonsense
- ◆ Bugger – a very useful term, which means to sodomize or someone who engages in sodomy (somehow I don't see it gaining wide acceptance in the US). Can be used as an expletive like the F word, or combined, as the F word is, to form other useful expressions such as buggered (tired), bugger-all (nothing) and bugger-off.
- ◆ Dodgy – not sound, good, or reliable
- ◆ Fiddle – verb and adjective meaning to steal, usually from an employer.

“Working a fiddle” means getting back at your boss (by stealing paperclips, fudging your timesheet or “throwing a sickie” – see below) for underpaying you.

- ◆ Flash – an adjective describing a rich person who exhibits poor taste.
- ◆ Flog – to aggressively sell something useless
- ◆ Gaffer – boss
- ◆ Git – a contemptible, mean-spirited, incompetent, stupid, annoying, or childish person
- ◆ Kip – a short sleep
- ◆ Legless – extremely drunk
- ◆ Moggy – a mongrel cat
- ◆ Nick – a versatile word that can be used as a verb meaning to steal or be arrested. Or as a noun referring to jail or prison.
- ◆ Panel beater – someone who repairs auto bodies
- ◆ Piss-up – an organized session of binge drinking (where you set out to get “pissed” or drunk)
- ◆ Ponce – literal meaning is a pimp or effeminate person. “To ponce about” is to put on airs.
- ◆ Posh – a pejorative describing rich people who show off
- ◆ Scive – throw a sickie” (to take a day off when you’re not really sick)
- ◆ Twit – a foolishly annoying person (an expression popularized by Monty Python’s “Upper Class Twit of the Year” sketch)
- ◆ Wop-wops – rural areas or hinterlands

The Case for Proportional Representation

January 13, 2011

Activists across the political spectrum were universally dismayed with the 2010 Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United*, which essentially overturns the extremely tame McCain-Feingold campaign finance reforms that took nearly a decade to enact. A national grassroots coalition called Move to Amend believes the only way to reverse a century of similar pro-corporate Supreme Court decisions is via a constitutional amendment that specifically bans “corporate personhood” and other so-called Bill of Right protections that allow powerful corporate lobbies to corrupt the democratic process. I agree. I strongly encourage everyone to sign their petition at <http://www.movetoamend.org>, which presently has over 99,000 signatures.

Because amending the Constitution will take at least a decade, it’s also important to look for less sweeping electoral reforms we can fight for. Many on the left pooh-poooh all electoral reform short of publicly financed elections. They argue that both Republicans and Democrats are too enmeshed with their corporate backers to respond to any grassroots reform effort, no matter how large or how vocal.

I disagree. At present the biggest problem for the left is the refusal of the majority of Americans to engage in any way with the political process. In view of the grave impending economic/resource/ecological crises we confront, we must be willing to explore all possible options for engaging America’s passive majority. After thirty plus years as a grassroots activist, I find it sometimes makes strategic sense to nibble around the edges of reform. For two reasons. First, the best way to build a movement is to inspire people that they can win small victories. Secondly, the experience in other western democracies is that any reform that improves participation by the disenfranchised reduces corporate interference in the political process.

The New Zealand MMP Voting System

After eight years living under a government elected via proportional representation, trying to enact similar electoral reform in the US strikes me as an excellent place to start – especially as the issue already enjoys strong support at the state and local level. As an American, I had no prior experience with proportional representation when I emigrated to New Zealand in 2002. New Zealand has a Mixed Member Proportional (MMP), adopted in 1993 by popular referendum. This followed a series of elections in which the “winner-take-all” system put governments in power that were opposed by a majority of voters. In 1978 and 1981 the National Party won Parliament and the Prime Minister slot, despite winning fewer votes than the Labour Party. Then in 1993, National formed a minority government, despite winning a plurality of only 0.5% – even though a sizable minor party vote meant a majority of New Zealanders actually voted against National.

Under the New Zealand’s MMP electoral system, each party that receives more than 5% of the vote is allocated a proportional number of Parliamentary seats

The Link Between “Winner-Takes-All” and Low Turnout

At present the US, Canada and the UK are the only western democracies that still

conduct their national elections via an archaic “winner-takes-all” voting. Under this system, voters only have the option of voting for one of two major party, corporate-sponsored candidates, as minor party votes are never reflected in the final outcome. Meanwhile voters, increasingly aware that they have no voice in a political system funded and controlled by powerful corporations, turn out in smaller and smaller numbers.

The US currently has the worst turnout for elections in the industrial world. In November 2010, average voter turn-out was 37.8%. The lowest turn-out was in Washington D.C., where it was 28.9%. This means that in many localities, candidates were chosen by under 10% of eligible voters – given that only 50% of eligible adults even register to vote. While turn-out is better in presidential elections, our current “winner-takes-all” system has created a scenario in which the major parties only seriously campaign in fifteen “swing” states, another reason for residents to stay home in the other thirty-five states.

Low Turnout and Government Stalemate

The May 2010 elections in the UK – which significantly boosted British support for proportional representation – also provide a dramatic example of the extreme unfairness of the winner-take-all system. In Britain, candidates can only win a seat a Parliamentary seat by winning a local electorate. The Conservatives, with a total of 36.1% of the vote, won 306 seats (because they won thirty electorates); Labour, with 29% of the vote, won 258 seats and the Liberal Democrats, with 23%, of the vote only got fifty-seven.

In the US the “winner takes all” system has been responsible for two and half decades of legislative stalemate in Congress, leaving the federal government virtually powerless to address the serious economic, social, and ecological crises facing the American nation. It’s rare for American analysts to address the link between low voter turn-out - and the appointment of a de facto minority government (one that doesn’t enjoy the support of the majority of the population) - and this legislative impasse. However foreign commentators talk about it in reporting on American elections, especially as most industrialized countries faced the same dilemma New Zealand did (low turn-out and successive minority governments) in the 1990s.

Despite his strong popular mandate in 2008, Obama has been totally unsuccessful in keeping campaign promises to close Guantanamo, end the wars in the Middle East, or pass meaningful banking reform, economic stimulus or climate change legislation. Even more alarming is the federal government’s inability to address the virtual meltdown of the American health care and educational system or serious infrastructure decay in our cities – the inability to maintain adequate law enforcement, street repair and lighting or even keep schools running at full capacity.

Historically, the stalemate in Congress dates back to the Republican takeover of the House and Senate under Clinton in 1996. Clinton himself was unsuccessful in passing meaningful health or education reform. Programs passed by subsequent presidents – Bush’s “No Child Left Behind” and Obamacare (an insurance company bailout bill that makes health care more expensive and thus harder to access) have been little more than window dressing. Congress even faces increasing difficulty performing basic governance functions, such as passing timely budget appropriations.

The Myth of Our “Deeply Divided” Nation

Most American pundits blame this legislative paralysis on the “cultural wars” myth promoted by the mainstream media – which portrays the US as a “deeply divided nation.” In this simplistic analysis, all Americans fall into one of two more or less equal diametrically opposed camps – Republicans who favor lower taxes and less government and Democrats who favor higher taxes and more social programs.

The argument makes absolutely no sense. Specific Republican domestic and foreign policies poll well below 40% over time, which means a hefty majority of Americans oppose them. Moreover it seems logical to expect the American electorate, like that of most industrialized nations, to reflect a broad range of views on different political issues.

I’m more inclined to agree with foreign analysts from countries who confronted the problem of low voter turn-out head-on in the 1990s. It’s their view that the stalemate in US government stems from the election of officials representing the interests of an educated, well-to-do minority – who owing to low turnout – easily give them a majority of votes.

While most western democracies face major corporate interferences in their own governments, they still have functioning parliaments that manage to pass meaningful reforms. In my view this relates directly to electoral reforms most enacted (with the US, the UK and Canada being notable exceptions) in the mid-nineties to allow the active participation of third parties in government. The replacement of “winner-takes-all” voting systems with some form of “proportional representation” is the single most important reform enabling this transformation – largely because it substantially improved voter turnout.

Taking on the Winner-Takes-All Voting System

There are several different types of proportional representation. The two features they all share in common are 1) instead of electing one representative in each small district or ward, multi-member districts (or wards) are established in which several candidates are elected at once and 2) the candidates who win seats in these multi-member districts are determined by the total proportion of votes their party receives. For example if Democrats win fifty percent of the vote, they get fifty percent of the seats; if Republicans win thirty percent and a third party ten percent, they get thirty and ten percent of the seats respectively. Though strictly speaking thirty percent is a minority, it is a sizable minority to end up with no voice at all in how a community (or state or country) will be governed.

Based on the experience of other western democracies, proportional representation substantially alters the composition of legislative bodies (as progressive, low and moderate income candidates become far more likely to win seats). Thus it could be an important first step in extricating multinational corporations from the US political process. Obviously any electoral reform at the national level faces massive opposition from major political parties and their corporate backers. However, outrage generated when the Supreme Court decided the 2000 presidential election has led local activists to enact variations of proportional representation in a number of American cities.

The method adopted by most jurisdictions is Instant Run-off Voting (IRV), enacted by

several cash-strapped cities to eliminate the expense of a primary election. In IRV, a voter is asked to rank all the candidates on the ballot in his/her order of preference. If his/her first choice fails to meet a certain threshold, his/her vote is automatically transferred to his second choice and so on. The state to watch in 2011 is Minnesota. The Minneapolis mayor is elected by IRV, and in November 2010, all major candidates for governor endorsed state IRV legislation.

Interestingly there is nothing in the US Constitution that would prevent states from choosing their Congressional delegation as a bloc by proportional representation or their senators by IRV or Single Transferable Voting (under STV, voters rank order their choices for two or more candidates). The Constitution merely stipulates that each state shall have two senators and that “representatives shall be apportioned among the several states by their apportioned numbers.” In fact until the passage of the Twelfth amendment in 1803, both the President and Vice-President were chosen (in the electoral college) by STV.

Other Efforts Underway to Improve Voter Turnout

- ◆ Enacting postal voting: the Universal Right to Vote by Mail Act (HR1604). HR1604 would amend the Help America Vote Act of 2002 to allow all US citizens the prerogative of voting by mail if they so choose.
- ◆ Declaring election day a civic holiday: as it already is in most industrialized countries and in Delaware, Hawaii, Kentucky, Montana, New Jersey, New York, Ohio and West Virginia.
- ◆ Lowering voting age to sixteen: citizens currently vote at sixteen in nine countries, and at seventeen in five others. At present there is a bill in the European Union Parliament to lower the voting age to sixteen in all EU countries.

Part III: Capitalism's Last Gasp

Capitalism's Last Gasp makes an urgent argument for ending corporate rule. It's divided into four sections. The first, "The End Days," links the 2008 global economic collapse to structural flaws inherent in global capitalism.

The second, "The Privatization of Public Services," discusses the damaging effect of corporatization" on public education, prisons, and food production.

The third, "Medical Censorship." looks at major human health problems stemming from the failure of federal regulatory agencies to regulate toxic chemicals and dangerous infectious organisms in American's food, water, and environment.

The final section, "The Corporatization of Health Care," examines at how the pharmaceutical industry is making millions of Americans sick via disease mongering. "Disease mongering" and "medicalizing" are both terms for Big Pharma's multi-billion dollar campaign to convince Americans and their doctors that common problems of living are actually illnesses requiring treatment with expensive, often harmful medications.

The End Days

What Comes After Capitalism?

(September 19, 2010)

The long taboo topic of the end of capitalism seems to be in fashion recently, a consequence of a deepening economic crisis that shows no signs of going away. There's even an *End of Capitalism* website: <http://www.endofcapitalism.com>. This isn't the first time economists have declared that capitalism was on its last legs. Many, in fact, saw the Great Depression as symptomatic of its impending failure. British parliamentarian John Strachey was clearly the most articulate in his 1933 *The Coming Struggle for Power*. Moreover he makes some surprisingly prophetic predictions regarding the future of post-industrial capitalism.

I find interesting parallels between Strachey's analysis and those of *Monthly Review* authors Paul Sweezy (who first articulated "stagnation theory" in the 1960s) and Fred Magdoff and Michael Yates in their 2009 *ABCs of the Economic Crisis*. All four are strikingly non-judgmental in their approach. There is no castigation of criminal banksters, sleazy corporate lobbyists or crooked politicians. Instead they quietly point out that neither the Great Depression nor our current economic crisis is the fault of any particular individuals or groups. They argue that there are natural laws of capitalist economics, just as there are natural laws of physics - that there are inherent flaws in capitalism that prevent it from continuing indefinitely.

From a somewhat different perspective Alex Knight, who edits <http://endofcapitalism.com> about End of Capitalism Theory. Knight argues that capitalism is breaking down owing to ecological and social limits to the continual growth that's essential for a capitalist economy to continue.

Strachey's Crystal Ball

As he writes in 1933, Strachey is of the definite opinion that the Great Depression is symptomatic that capitalism has reached its final stage of monopoly capitalism. It isn't quite dead yet, but clearly dying. He quotes from Lenin (who had nearly 50 more years experience than Marx with capitalist boom and bust cycles) about "monopolistic" capitalism being the last stage of capitalism when begins to "decay." Lenin (and Strachey) describe specific political/economic transformations associated with the decline in profits and growth that characterizes end stage capitalism. I find it uncanny that they describe our current economic predicament so perfectly:

- ◆ The monopolistic corporations that control finance capital (the commercial and investment banks) essentially merge with the monopolistic corporations that control production and manufacturing (which they have done, due to massive buy-outs and takeovers and interlocking boards).
- ◆ There is increasing focus on exporting capital (which is what happens when a company shuts down a factory in the U.S. and re-opens it in southeast Asia).
- ◆ National governments, which are essentially controlled by their monopolies, are constantly in conflict with one another over who will control the resources, markets, and cheap labor of the Third World.

Why Capitalism Didn't Fold in 1933 - Stagnation Theory

Obviously Strachey was wrong in predicting capitalism's imminent demise. According to Marxist economist and founding editor of the *Monthly Review* Paul Sweezy, the massive "financialization" of the US economy served as an eighty year life support system to keep capitalism going a bit longer. In 1966 Sweezy and economist Paul Baran first set out what they describe as "stagnation theory" in their book *Monopoly Capital*. According to Sweezy (and many others), it was only the massive economic boost of World War II military spending that saved capitalism in the thirties and forties. There was a brief post war boom in the fifties and sixties, as consumers rushed to buy goods that were unavailable during the war. When the sixties ended, stagnation set in again, accompanied by a marked slowing of profits and growth. Neither declined to 1930s levels, according to Sweezy, thanks to the "financialization" of the American economy.

In *The ABCs of the Economic Crisis* Magdoff and Yates describe "financialization" as the process of creating profits without actually producing a product or service. In the US, this process injected massive amounts of money (the nice word is credit, but it's really debt) into the economy in three ways: massive government spending and indebtedness (to private financial interests), a massive increase in consumer indebtedness, and an explosion of the financial industry itself.

From 1980 to the 2008 crash, the banking, insurance and investment industries became the largest growth sector of the US economy. Beyond financing unprecedented levels of consumer, business and government debt, they also engaged in massive outright speculation. In addition to commodities and derivatives trading, there was also an epidemic of leveraged buy-outs of productive sector companies with borrowed money, which were then loaded with more debt and sold at a profit. Former Wall Street economist Michael Hudson points out that the takeover of health care by private insurance companies was part of this massive ballooning of the financial sector.

As Sweezy describes, the enormous "wealth" created by the financial sector helped to drive the "real" or productive economy. However he also warns as far back as 1982 that it's basically a Ponzi scheme. That when the economy inevitably ceases to grow, this speculative bubble will burst, resulting in a collapse as bad or worse than the Great Depression.

The Current Economic Crisis

Political economists Fred Magdoff and Michael Yates elaborate on Sweezy's analysis in *The ABCs of the Economic Crisis*. They point out that stagnation continued during the 1980s and 1990s, despite the life support provided by "financialization." GDP growth dropped from 4.4 to 3.3 percent in the 1970s, with a further decline to 3.1 percent in the eighties and nineties, and to 2.2 percent in 2000.

They use the example of the auto industry to describe why stagnation is inevitable under end stage monopoly capitalism. Immediately after World War II, consumers bought a lot of cars and trucks, which were unavailable between 1941 and 1945. However by 1970 all Americans who wanted cars or trucks had them, and the world's poorer nations didn't have a mass market large enough to take the excess of cars being produced. Obviously the same was true of other durable goods (refrigerators, washing machines, dishwashers, vacuum cleaners).

And as consumer buying slowed, so did profits and GDP growth. Magdoff and Yates argue that major social service cuts occurred under Reagan, Bush I, Clinton and Bush II

- not because these men were more conservative than the presidents who preceded them
- but because a steady downward trend in growth and profits meant the US no longer had the resources to support generous social programs enacted during the boom years of the fifties and sixties.

They also describe the significant drop in inflation adjusted wages and purchasing power that accompanied the decline in profits and growth. That to keep workers consuming, the corporate sector compensated by giving them credit cards lending them the money - at 18-20% interest - that they were no longer paying in wages.

Fascism

In *The Coming Struggle for Power*, Strachey also writes about the important role of fascism in end stage capitalism. He explains how declining profits and growth result in reduced wages, poorer working conditions and a claw back of social welfare benefits enacted during more productive periods. This, in turn, leads to more conflict between workers and capitalists. Ensuring that production continues during a period of heavy stagnation necessitates the rise of fascism, in which the capitalists themselves organize pseudo-populist organizations which install governments which enact laws unfavorable to working people.

The Astroturf (fake grassroots) origin of the reactionary Tea Party is an excellent example of corporate elites organizing working people around a right wing political agenda harmful to their own interests (that opposes, for example minimum wage increases, an extension of unemployment benefits and regulations enforcing workplace health and safety). Paul Krugman explores the origin of the Tea Party in the April 12, 2009 *New York Times* (<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/13/opinion/13krugman.html>). Despite the media spin portraying early Tea Party events occurred as spontaneous popular uprisings, Krugman points out they were actually organized and paid for by Freedom Works, a group created by former Republican majority leader Richard Arney, with generous support from right wing billionaires like the Koch brothers.

Implications for the Future

Most Marxists believe there is a grave risk that when capitalism fails it will bring down civilization with it. Which is why they argue for workers to hasten its demise and prepare to replace it with some other form of social organization. As a Marxist, Strachey advocates for the end of class society and for workers to run their own government and own the companies where they work. Like Marx and Lenin, Strachey believes workers' most powerful tool is their ability to organize and bring society to a standstill by withdrawing their labor. However he also argues that the workers' "revolution" cannot be worked out in advance. Strachey believed this was the great historical mistake of Marx and Lenin, and ultimately the Soviet experiment. They were too prescriptive in creating an enlightened "vanguard" to work out all the details of the Revolution on behalf of working people. As history shows, this vanguard only served to replace the capitalist elite it overthrew (not only in the USSR, but in China, North Korea and Cuba), producing some of the most despotic totalitarian regimes in history.

In *The ABCs of the Economic Crisis*, Magdoff and Yates, like Strachey, propose "socialism" as the solution to a failed capitalist system. However they are even less prescriptive than he is regarding what this should look like and how it ought to come about. At the end their book they simply suggest that Americans come together to

decide whether our current system is worth fighting for (in the Middle East and elsewhere). They then itemize some of the human costs of our current way of life:

- ◆ increasing exploitation at work (all the lay-offs mean workers who are still on the job are doing the work of 1.5 or 2 people)
- ◆ increased stress accompanied by poorer health
- ◆ rising consumption that pollutes our planet, wastes gasoline, power and water, and destroys natural habitat

They also offer some alternative priorities that do seem worth fighting for: adequate food, decent housing, full employment, quality education, and old age income for everyone; true universal health care, enhanced public transportation, a commitment to a sustainable environment, progressive taxation which reverses the process of taxing the middle class and poor to enrich a wealthy elite, a non-imperialist government and labor- and environment-friendly trade.

End of Capitalism Theory

In laying out End of Capitalism Theory on his website <http://www.endofcapitalism.com>, Alex Knight is the most specific of the doomsayers in describing what the alternative to capitalism should look like. He lists five guideposts he considers essential to bringing about real change: freedom, democracy, justice, sustainability and love. The essence of his vision lies in how he defines these terms:

- ◆ Freedom - self-determination in which ordinary people control their own destinies instead of huge corporations and corrupt politicians. He advocates strongly for local communities to guarantee their residents access to land and food security and indicates some that have begun to do so.
- ◆ Democracy - "participatory democracy," in which we take back rights we should have but don't. Knight gives the example of Take Back the Land, which supports the homeless in squatting in foreclosed homes in Miami.
- ◆ Justice – the elimination of systems of oppression that benefit one group, like whites, at the expense of other groups and guaranteeing everyone access to food, housing, education, health care, transportation, clean water and air, and a decent livelihood.
- ◆ Sustainability – learning to meet human needs without sacrificing the ecosystem. Knight indicates this is where the most progress has been made, with the boom in organic agriculture, permaculture and the renewable energy industry.
- ◆ Love - learning to value life over profit and money, and recognizing the immense emotional isolation that capitalism, a system centered in abuse and war, has imposed on all of us – as well as the emotional and social healing that must occur.

The Privatization of Public Services

The War on Public Education

(March 24, 2011)

The Crusade to Privatize Education

Given increasing school closures, teacher layoffs and attacks on teachers' bargaining rights, moves by Congress and state legislatures to cut education still further are extremely worrying. The crusade to privatize public education - by Wall Street, Congress and the Obama White House - means that schools that close as a result of budget cuts are unlikely to reopen as public schools. What's far more likely is federal arm twisting, as occurred in New Orleans following Katrina, to reopen them as privately run charter schools.

We have to be clear here: Republicans and Tea Partiers aren't trying to ram through education cuts simply to balance the budget and provide tax cuts for their wealthy supporters. They have a far more ominous agenda - namely a thirty year campaign to privatize public education, just as prisons, water, warfare, welfare and other public services are being privatized.

The Neoliberal Goal to Privatize All Public Services

Neoliberalism seeks to privatize all public services (including education, social security, water, prisons, public transportation, and welfare services) - leaving a bare bones government with a limited law enforcement and military role. Neoliberals argue that government provision of other public services is inefficient and wasteful - problems that can only be corrected by subjecting them to free market competition. However as we see in the case of prison, water, and welfare privatization, there are always windfall

profits for businesses and corporations when billions of public, taxpayer dollars are transferred to private hands.

Milton Friedman: the Father of School Privatization

Milton Friedman, the father of neoliberal economics, is also the father of the school privatization movement. He initially envisioned (in 1955) using a school voucher system to incrementally privatize public schools. Under such a system, a student receives a voucher valued at the "per pupil equivalent" (i.e. the amount the government would pay for their public education - in the 1990s when the first voucher programs started, this was between \$2,000-3,000). The child's parent then applies the voucher towards the \$10,000-20,000 private school tuition.

Shortly after his election in 1980, Ronald Reagan and his secretary of education William Bennett (who coined the term "throwing money at schools") began an unprecedented and far reaching attack on teachers, teachers unions and school district bureaucracy. Bennett liked to refer to school boards and school districts as "the blob." One of the goals of school privatization is to replace democratically elected school boards - accountable to both parents and the public - with a more efficient corporate-style board, which would meet privately and be shielded from public scrutiny and the Freedom of Information Act.

Reagan accompanied his public attack on teachers and public schools with a simultaneous 50% cut in federal Title I funding for schools in low income districts. His attempt to push voucher legislation through Congress failed, owing to concerns that the use of vouchers at private religious schools violated constitutional provisions regarding separation of church and state. At this point Reagan backtracked, promoting school choice via the creation of privately run "charter" schools, subsidized with state, local and federal education funds.

Enter the Right Wing Think Tanks

Bush senior restored Reagan's cuts to Title 1, though he promoted the concept of school choice and the development of voucher programs on a state-by-state basis. It was right wing philanthropists and their corporate funding think tanks who provided most of the momentum behind the charter school movement when the first charter school opened in 1991. The long list of conservative think tanks that pushed for charter schools includes the Heritage Foundation, the American Enterprise Institute, Americans for Tax Reform, Black America's Political Action Committee, the Cato Institute, Center for the Study of Popular Cultures, the Eagle Forum, Focus on the Family, Hispanic Alliance for Progress Institute, Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, and the Hoover Institution. (See <http://www.counterpunch.org/weil08262009.html>).

In 2011, the school privatization movement (aka the charter school movement) is no longer a movement, but a Big Business. Predictably Obama, as in the case of the Wall Street bank bailouts and ObamaCare, his corporate welfare scheme for insurance and drug companies, has come down on the side of Big Business. This means that teachers unions – under growing attack in state capitols – are Americans' last line of defense in the war against public education. And millions of American children are at great peril of losing public education as a basic democratic right.

Ignoring the Research

The so-called education reform debate is centered, as always, around low performing, mainly minority students in inner city schools. Traditionally public education has been funded by local government through property taxes. It seems totally predictable that children in wealthy districts who attend small classes with well-paid teachers would have higher achievement levels than students in poor school districts with understaffed schools and limited access to textbooks and other resources. Unsurprisingly more than fifty years of research bears this out. Nevertheless educators and political leaders who try increase funding to poor school districts are demonized for "throwing money" at the problem.

Neoliberal Republicans and Tea Partiers (and now Barack Obama and Department of Education director Arne Duncan) give lip service to improving achievement levels for students in inner city schools. However instead of improving funding to these struggling schools, the one intervention supported by statistical research, they continue to aggressively shift education funding from public schools to private charter schools. The other research they ignore is a recent Stanford University study showing that charter school programs don't improve achievement levels in minority students. In 2009 the Stanford University center for Research on Educational Outcomes released the exhaustive study Multiple Choice: Charter School Performance in 16 States (see <http://www.counterpunch.org/weil08262009.html>). Here are some of the results of this

investigation into 2,403 charter schools in 16 states:

Math

- ◆ 46% of students had math gains indistinguishable to public school students.
- ◆ 17% of students showed significant gains compared to public school students.
- ◆ 37% showed significantly lower gains than public school students
- ◆ Overall math learning in charter schools lagged by .03 standard deviations behind that of public schools.

Reading

Overall reading gains in charter school students lagged .01 standard deviations behind public school students. Black and Hispanic students (the ones specifically targeted by the charter school movement) did significantly worse in both reading and math compared to public school students.

The Peer Teaching/Tutoring Approach to Reform

The other research neoliberal conservatives like to ignore relates to the most cost effective approach to educational reform - one that doesn't require additional funding - namely the wide scale adoption of peer teaching/tutoring protocols, in which students themselves become part of the teaching team. Twenty years of peer reviewed research (links provided below) demonstrates that this is the most economical and easiest type of reform to implement, as well as vastly more effective in improving achievement than computer-assisted instruction, reduced class size, extended school days and other perks promised by many charter schools.

Links to Peer Teaching/Tutoring research and manuals:

<http://www.jimwrightonline.com/pdffdocs/prtutor/peerTutorManual.pdf>

http://www.jimwrightonline.com/pdffdocs/prtutor/prtutor_chap1.pdf

http://www.ehow.com/way_5299889_effective-peer-teaching-techniques.html

The Charter School Industry

(March 24, 2011)

"Charter schools were a movement, but now charter schools are an industry. They have lobbyists -- they walk around in thousand-dollar suits, some of them." Dan Gaetz, Florida freshman senator (R) and former Okaloosa school superintendent (see "Neoliberalism: the leveraging of charter schools with public and private funds" in the November 2009 Dissident Voice)

No Child Left Behind

George W. Bush was the first to authorize federal funding to stimulate charter school development in the No Child Left Behind Act. NCLB also strengthened requirements for states to implement minimum standards testing to qualify for federal education funds. Unbeknown to most Americans, this policy was actually initiated by Clinton, though not stringently enforced. As attorney and progressive education reformer Danny Weil (*see below) points out, the true purpose of NCLB wasn't to improve the performance of low income minority students - or it would have made some effort to guarantee their school districts more equitable funding. Its main purpose was to use standardized tests to massively highlight the poor performance of these schools - to further bolster support for the burgeoning school privatization movement.

Bush junior wisely left responsibility for school voucher programs to the states. Uptake of school vouchers by low income minority parents has been spotty. This is really no surprise, given that vouchers (limited to the "per pupil equivalent") cover only a fraction of the tuition charged by private schools.

"Throwing Money" at Charter Schools

The low per pupil equivalent - which ironically highlights progressives' claims of serious underfunding - has also been a major problem for the charter school movement. According to the Education Policy Studies Laboratory http://www.lwvny.org/advocacy/education/charter_sch_bib032307.pdf no charter school is likely to succeed without substantial for-profit or non-profit funding to supplement meager per pupil funding limits. What I find even more ironic, in view of the conservative rallying cry of not "throwing money" at public schools, is the vast amounts of private sector money being invested in publicly subsidized schools.

Make no mistake, charter schools are big business. Large charter school chains like Green Dot, KIPP, Alliance Schools and YES Prep Public Schools are squeezing out many of their community-based competitors. Moreover, owing to generous support from the US Department of Education, the non-governmental financing sector for charter schools has grown by leaps and bounds. Presently twenty-five private, non-profit organizations collectively provide over \$600 million in direct financial support to charter schools. In addition, Standard and Poor and Moody's list over seventy rated charter school bonds totaling over \$1 billion.

These private funding sources leverage a variety of federal monies to supplement low state and local "per pupil equivalents." In addition to Title I funding, the US Department

of Education has awarded \$50 million of grants through two programs administered by the Office of Innovation and Improvement: the Credit Enhancement for Charter School Facilities Program and the State Charter School Facilities Incentive Grants Program. This supplements four federal programs administered by other federal agencies that charter schools can access for their facilities needs: the Public Assistance Grant Program (administered by FEMA), the New Markets Tax Credit Program and the Qualified Zone Academy Bond Program (both administered by the US Treasury), and Community Programs (administered by the Department of Agriculture).

Should We Allow Conservative Philanthropists to Run Our Schools?

A final source of charter school funding is the New Schools Venture Fund created in 1998, which hosts funding by conservative-leaning mega charities, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Walmart Foundation.

Why do millionaires and billionaires donate hundreds of millions of dollars to charter schools? Danny Weil calls it priming the pump. Neoliberals have strong ideological reasons for seeking to dismantle traditional public education. They know that the charter school movement has the potential to capture billions of public education dollars for profit-oriented ventures. However owing to the low per pupil equivalents for disadvantaged students, new privately run charter schools are unlikely to succeed without outside support. And despite claims to the contrary, corporate donors know that "throwing money at schools" allows them to attract and retain the best teachers - and in the long run, improve student achievement.

Moreover in a number of cases, these donors have been invited to serve as board members on charter school chains with major governing responsibilities - offering them an extraordinary amount of control over curriculum, textbooks and potentially the ideological bent of the schools they oversee (e.g. whether they teach evolution or its fundamentalist Christian alternative Creative Design).

For-profit Companies Circle Like Sharks

The massive growth in charter schools and the funding to support them has also led to a burgeoning industry that applies for and distributes grants, as well as hundreds of companies that sell "educational products and services." And although technically all charter school financing schemes are non-profit -- they generate a phenomenal number of for-profit contracts for companies marketing curriculum and textbooks, computers, software and administrative, clerical and security services.

One example is Ignite, an educational software company founded and run by the former president's brother Neil Bush. It sells its wares to Florida charter schools, courtesy of another brother, ex-governor Jeb Bush.

Obama's Neoliberal Stance on School Privatization

Of the last five presidents, Barack Obama is clearly the staunchest ally of the school privatization movement. In addition to pushing generous increases to charter school funding, the Obama administration also included a provision in the 2009 stimulus package forcing states to liberalize and/or expand their charter school programs or miss out on \$100 billion in public school stimulus funding. Many states, which are already closing schools and laying off teachers, have a cap on charter school formation because they can't afford further decreases in their public school budget. Due to the failure of

charter schools to improve achievement scores (see previous article "The War on Public Education"), they can't make the case to voters for establishing more of them, given the additional cuts this would impose on public schools. Others, in Ohio, for example, have had serious problems (owing to lack of public oversight) with fraud and corruption in privately run charter schools. Nevertheless thanks to Obama, all states must authorize the formation of charter schools – without funding caps – or miss out on badly needed stimulus funding.

Arne Duncan's Record in Chicago

Obama's appointment of Arne Duncan, former CEO of Chicago Public Schools to head the Department of Education, suggests states will continue to be under enormous pressure to de-fund public schools - and that many more will close. While running Chicago schools, Duncan - in collaboration with Mayor Daley's office and Chicago's corporate elite - pursued an aggressive school privatization agenda. In 2004, this included an attempt to close twenty out of twenty-two schools in a low income minority community. The effort was clearly linked to the mayor's and property developers' efforts to "gentrify" the neighborhood - to force out minority residents and glam up their properties for re-sale to white upper middle class professionals. Closing their neighborhood schools would leave low income residents no choice but to leave.

Fortunately residents' militant protests stopped the arbitrary school closures. Duncan responded with a draconian decree under No Child Left Behind ordering immediate closure (with no probationary period) of schools where students failed to pass standardized tests. He simultaneously paved the way for the schools to be turned over to private charter school operators funded by grants from the Bill and Melinda Gates and Walmart Foundation).

The Role of the Corporate Media

It should also be no surprise that the corporate controlled media is beating the drums for the neoliberal agenda to privatize schools. As Danny Weil outlines in "Corporate School Hype and How It's Managed," NPR, CNN, PBS, 20/20 and Oprah Winfrey are all guilty of staging free "informercials" promoting charter schools and school privatization as a solution to the "crisis" in public education. No pro-public school advocates are invited to challenge the assertions presented, and there is no disclosure of ideological or financial (as in the case of controversial civil rights leader Al Sharpton) ties to right wing think tanks and school privatization proponents (see <http://www.counterpunch.org/weil08262009.html>).

*Danny Weil is the author of the groundbreaking 2009 expose *The Charter School Movement: a Reference Manual*. He has published several eye opening chapters from the book in *Counterpunch* and *Dissident Voice*.

The Private Prison Industrial Complex

(November 22, 2011)

I first became concerned about America's growing prison industrial complex as a private practice psychiatrist in California and Washington between 1978 and 2002. What I witnessed, in essence, was closure of most US mental hospitals in the late seventies and early eighties, which culminated in the de facto transfer of tens of thousands of mentally ill Americans from hospitals to prisons.

Replacing Mental Hospitals With Prisons

The driving force behind closing US mental hospitals was the advent of new antipsychotics, which enabled many (but not all) mentally ill individuals to be treated in the community. At the time, the public was promised that money saved from closing down state institutions would be used to provide outpatient treatment in the community. However with the advent of Reaganomics in 1980, this never happened. Rather than increasing, funding for community mental health steadily declined. And as more and more options for community care dried up, our penitentiaries steadily filled up with mentally ill non-violent offenders unable to get help in the community.

At considerable cost to the taxpayer, I might add. Given that the costs of keeping a mentally ill individual in a penitentiary are three to six times what it costs to treat them at an outpatient mental health center.

As of 2006, the last time mentally ill offender statistics were compiled, the US prison system had become the largest mental health provider in the country - with nearly fifty percent of inmates reporting mental health problems. Another 20-30% are in prison for crimes related to substance abuse (for which they never get treatment, either in prison or in the community).

High Prison Rates Are Economically Driven

Aside from the absolute barbarity of a criminal justice system that warehouses vulnerable mentally ill patients with sociopathic violent offenders, what troubles me even more is that the main drivers of our skyrocketing incarceration rate are no longer political - but economic.

Arguments that more prisons and longer sentences are essential to deter violent criminals fly in the face of crime statistics pointing to a steady decline in both violent and property crime since 1990. Yet rates of incarceration in the US continue to climb.

Presently the US has more people (2.1 million) in prison than any other country in the world. In fact we recently exceeded China, which has 1.6 million prisoners, despite having four times the population. Statistics also show that nearly half (one million) of our prison population are inside for non-violent offenses.

In other words, despite the political reality that our prisons are costing taxpayers billions of dollars by warehousing people who could receive better treatment and management in the community, there are powerful economic incentives to lock more of them up. Because incarceration and detention has turned into a multibillion dollar growth industry.

It's also no surprise that Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), Wackenhut and the sixteen other for-profit prison companies are all big donors to the campaigns of federal and state lawmakers seeking to expand both prison populations and prison privatization (CCA, which has a monopoly on running immigration detention facilities, also helped write the Arizona anti-immigration law - see

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=130833741>

To say nothing of the dozens of US corporations employing cheap prison labor (as an alternative to outsourcing to third world countries) to improve their bottom line.

Profit, Not Crime, Drives Prison-Building Spree

Imprisoning people has become a multibillion industry with its own trade shows, conventions, mail order catalogs and direct marketing. I encourage people to check out Robert Sloan's excellent blog at <http://sloan-wwwpiecp-violations.blogspot.com/> regarding the American Legislative Exchange Council, the corporate lobby group responsible for helping major corporate players to enrich themselves (building private prisons and contracting for dirt cheap prison labor are just two examples) from the public trough at taxpayer expense. Sloan documents some of ALEC's more questionable activities much more clearly than I can here.

Sloan also maintains an up-to-date website regarding his watchdog activities regarding for-profit prison scams at <http://www.piecp-violations.com/>

Who's Making Big Bucks From Prison Privatization?

From my cursory survey of Internet sources, I have identified at least six places along the food chain where people are turning over profits (at taxpayer expense) in the booming prison business:

1. Wall Street investment banks who issue the bonds to finance the building of state and local prisons (I won't list them here. Just Google the banks who got TARP bail-outs. As usual, Goldman Sachs is at the top of the list).
2. The private companies who run prisons - Corrections Corporation of America and Wackenhut are the largest, but there are eighteen altogether (CCA also operates our federal immigration detention facilities and helped write Arizona's controversial immigration law).
3. Depressed rural communities facing a decline (thanks to NAFTA and GAT which made it easier to move local companies overseas) in traditional sources of revenue, such as mining, dairy farming and manufacturing.
4. Private companies that provide food services, health care, and assorted security paraphernalia to prisons.
5. Bed brokers who, in Texas, earn \$2.50 - 5.50 per man-day (for the duration of a prisoner's sentence) by recruiting prisoners from out of state.
6. Major corporations, the best known are BP, Dell, TWA, Compaq, J.C. Penny, Best Western Hotels, Honda, Chevron, IBM, Microsoft, Victoria's Secret, and Boeing, who save on labor costs by employing cheap prison labor (0 to \$1.50 per hour - the average is 40 cents).

Exploiting prison labor for telemarketing and call centers turns out to be far cheaper

than outsourcing overseas, especially with rising labor costs in economic boom countries like India and China. It was very likely a prisoner who took your credit card details if you recently made a reservation with TWA or Best Western Hotels. However BP clearly deserves the shameless arrogance award for employing prison labor to clean up the massive Gulf oil spill, instead of local New Orleans residents they put out of work.

Implications for Prison Reform

The economic factors that drive growing incarceration rates have some very important ramifications for prison reform advocates:

1. Money spent on private prisons is basically corporate welfare - taxpayer money that is winding up in the pockets of private corporations with little or no oversight or accountability.
2. Genuine prison reform is unlikely to come about unless these corporations themselves are targeted. As we have seen with the anemic Wall Street bail-outs, federal and state lawmakers are totally unwilling to undertake major reform that potentially affects the bottom line of their corporate donors.

Activists wanting to end prison privatization should contact Grassroots Leadership at <http://www.grassrootsleadership.org>, which is aggressively campaigning to end this atrocity.

Speculating with Our Food

(July 5, 2011)

In 2011, “food derivative” speculation has replaced financial derivatives as the hot new investment promoted by major investment banks like Goldman Sachs and JP Morgan. According to new research from the World Development Movement, the same banks that caused the 2008 economic crash are also responsible for skyrocketing food prices (see http://www.wdm.org.uk/sites/default/files/hunger%20lottery%20report_6.10.pdf). According to the *Ecologist*, it’s estimated that in 2010 Goldman Sachs made \$1 billion in profits from food speculation. The really scary news is that in addition to heavy speculation in food commodities, private investment companies are also buying up huge tracts of land in the third world.

Trading in Commodities Futures

Investors have always had the ability to trade in commodities futures (i.e. buy a 2012 bushel of corn at a fixed price before it’s produced). However the commodities market has always been so volatile that serious investors have viewed it in the same category as roulette and horse racing. Recently, however, Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan and other investment banks have used factors that appear to threaten food security – extreme weather events, water shortages and increasing demand due to the Asian economic boom – to aggressively pitch “agri” funds to investors. The ultimate effect of massive trading in food futures is to drive up the current cost of food, in the same way the subprime mortgage bubble massively inflated the cost of real estate prior to the 2008 economic crash.

The difference is that high food prices are a life or death issue for billions of people around the world. Yet the issue is virtually invisible in the US media.

The Great Land Grab

A 2009 research project by the Oakland Institute ([The Great Land Grab](http://media.oaklandinstitute.org/) <http://media.oaklandinstitute.org/>) reveals startling facts about the corporate land grab in the third world – another major factor in skyrocketing food prices. The Spain-based non-governmental organization GRAIN was the first to raise the alarm about massive third world corporate land purchases in its October 2008 brief, *Seized! The 2008 land grabbers for food and financial security*. The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) reports that foreign investors sought or secured between 37 million and 49 million acres of farmland in the developing world between 2006 and mid-2009.

In addition to the role played by investment banks and equity funds, multilateral institutions like the International Financial Corporation (the private sector branch of the World Bank) are also major players in the “corporatization” of global agriculture. The IFC plays a dual role in increasing private investment in the third world – via direct investment and by lobbying developing countries to create “business enabling environments.” Another World Bank agency, The Foreign Investment Advisory Service (FIAS), also plays a role in pressuring third world governments to improve their “investment climate,” by relaxing environmental, tenant rights and food security laws and abolishing tax and duties on foreign investments.

Corporatizing the Global Food Supply

Africa is the major target, both for western investment banks and booming Asian economies, driving tens of thousands of subsistence farmers off land they have farmed for generations. According to the Oakland Institute, a UK company started in 1997 called Emergent Asset Management claims to be the largest speculative fund investing in African industrial agriculture. Emergent uses private equity to take control of large tracts of African farm land for transformation into factory farms. Their prospectus attracts investors by predicting a armed conflict between the West and China will trigger mass food shortages – accompanied by price spikes that guarantee handsome investment returns.

Emergent's founders, Susan Payne and David Murrin are former high level traders for Goldman Sachs and JP Morgan – well-known as the architects of food derivative speculation (http://www.wdm.org.uk/sites/default/files/hunger%20lottery%20report_6.10.pdf). Payne joined JP Morgan in 1986 and moved to Goldman Sachs International in 1993 as an Executive Director and Head of Sales and Trading. In the latter role, she was responsible for developing Goldman Sachs' emerging markets debt business in Europe. David Murrin joined JP Morgan in 1986, where he traded (i.e. speculated) on the major bond, interest rate, bullion, foreign exchange and equity markets.

Emergent's direct control of large amounts of agricultural land – combined with its ability to attract investors through its equity fund – puts unprecedented control of the global food supply in private hands. It does so by creating a new type of vertical integration, in which a single company controls vast amounts of land, food production and processing – while simultaneously inflating global food prices due to the speculative nature of the fund. This is made clear in the video Emergent uses in their pitch to investors: <http://media.oaklandinstitute.org/emergent-video>.

The Perp Walk

On June 30, 2011, the Oakland Institute released a second report fingering other millionaires and billionaires playing a major role in the African land grab. The report also details unscrupulous deals with corrupt African leaders, who sign away land rights without consulting other community members – as well as the direct role some of these funds play in armed attacks on villagers who refuse to leave their land. Some of the names include:

Bruce Rastetter – CEO of Pharos Ag, which has bought more than 300,000 hectares in Tanzania for large-scale food crop, beef, poultry, and biofuel production. This project will displace tens of thousands of civil war refugees awaiting Tanzanian citizenship.

Leonard Henry Thatcher and David Neiman – runs Nile Trading and Development (NTD), which has bought 600,000 hectares in South Sudan, through a secret agreement with influential locals who went behind the backs of other community members.

Kevin Godlington – (close associate of former prime minister Tony Blair), CEO of Crad-I and Director of Sierra Leone Agriculture (SLA) and its parent company, the UK-based CAPARO Renewable Agriculture Developments. SLA has bought 43,000 hectares in Sierra Leone to plant palm oil plantations.

The CFTC Refuses to Implement the Financial Reform Act

For me the biggest scandal (which the US media has also spiked) is the refusal of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission to implement rules preventing speculation in oil and food futures that were part of the Dodd-Frank Financial Reform Act passed in July 2010. As of May 27, 2011, the CFTC (under fierce pressure from Wall Street lobbyists) had yet to implement rules the Financial Reform Act required them to implement by January 17, 2011. See <http://news.firedoglake.com/2011/05/27/sanders-accuses-cftc-of-breaking-the-law/>

This flagrant disregard of Congressional authority is yet another example of the breakdown of democratic government in the US. It's Obama's role, as the executive branch of government, to enact the laws enacted by Congress. For him refuse to do so represents a major Constitutional crisis and is grounds for impeachment.

Medical Censorship

Fluoride the New Lead

(December 12, 2010)

It took decades to “prove” that even low-level lead exposure caused mental retardation and behavioral problems in children. In 1973 when I graduated from medical school, there was a mountain of compelling evidence of the terrible things lead in paint and auto exhaust was doing to kids. However under pressure from corporate interests (the companies who put lead in gasoline and paint), the medical establishment still officially proclaimed that at “subclinical levels,” lead was totally safe.

Fortunately Nixon’s newly created Environmental Protection Agency stood up to the corporate elite in 1973. Taking the emphatic position that low-level lead exposure was posing a direct threat to public health, they forced the US auto industry (in 1975) to produce cars that would run on unleaded gasoline. The use of lead-based paint in homes was banned in 1978.

A Regulatory Agency that Refuses to Regulate

Unfortunately, despite overwhelming evidence that fluoride has the same effect as lead in lab animals and children, our current EPA has virtually ceased to perform any meaningful regulatory function. This is most unfortunate, given that many US municipalities still put fluoride in the public drinking water (which can’t be removed by simple filtration and is found in many brands of bottled water).

It boggles the mind that communities across the US continue to mass medicate their residents without their consent – with a substance that has never been approved by the Food and Drug Administration (it’s actually toxic waste from the phosphate fertilizer industry). Not only does this constitute a major civil rights infringement, but it poses far more danger to human health than the TSA full body scanners at airports.

Established Link to Hip Fractures, Bone Cancer and Liver Cancer

The evidence linking water fluoridation to hip fractures, bone cancer, and liver cancer is unequivocal. In 2006, after three years of study, doctors, chemists, toxicologists and other researchers appointed by the National Research Council (at EPA request and expense) concluded the preponderance of evidence suggested that water fluoridation was causing an increase in hip fractures and bone and liver cancer, in addition to its neurotoxic effects in children (see <http://www.fluoridealert.org/nrc-review.htm>). They also found strong evidence that it was contributing to an epidemic of hypothyroidism, infertility and arthritis in Americans. Their report to the EPA strongly recommended all water fluoridation be stopped pending further research. There is an excellent ninety-eight minute interview with some of these scientists at <http://blip.tv/file/2223981/>.

Fraudulent Science

One area the NRC didn’t explore, which BBC investigative journalist Christopher Bryson covers in his 2004 book *Fluoride Deception*, is the systematic way that corporate interests have “doctored” fluoride research. One common practice was to selectively publish research favorable to fluoride, while simultaneously firing and blacklisting scientists whose studies show otherwise. Scientists who research medical problems related to genetically modified foods face the same problem – their work is

suppressed and their professional reputation destroyed. Thanks to Bryson, who obtained dozens of secret documents regarding water fluoridation via the Freedom of Information Act, the full extent of this massive fraud is finally in the public domain.

The Decision to Fluoridate the Public Water Supply

As Christopher Bryson outlines in *Fluoride Deception*, the decision to deliberately dose US municipal water systems with a potent industrial toxin was a corporate scam dreamed up by Alcoa, General Motors, and DuPont in the thirties and forties – to stem a tide of lawsuits (by convincing the public that fluoride is good for them) related to death and injuries from toxic fluoride pollution. Alcoa became involved because fluoride is an extremely toxic pollutant produced by aluminum smelting. GM and DuPont participated in the conspiracy because GM held the patent on fluoride-based Freon, which DuPont manufactured. Freon was a common refrigerant which has since been banned. Unsurprisingly the same researchers who “proved” fluoride was safe also “proved” that lead, asbestos, smoking and plutonium were safe.

Fluoride Declared Hazardous Waste in 1930

According to Bryson, scientists have known for decades that fluoride is extremely toxic – in fairly low doses – to all mammals, including humans. In fact the FDA first declared fluoride a serious health hazard in the early thirties. The result was scores of lawsuits by aluminum workers crippled and killed by fluoride poisoning and by farmers located near aluminum plants, whose livestock were killed by fluoride emissions.

Public Relations: Cheaper than Pollution Controls

Rather than encouraging his employer to institute pollution controls, an Alcoa researcher named Francis Frary decided a better solution was to alter public perception of fluoride – by convincing Americans that it improved dental health. Frary approached Mellon Institute researcher Gerald Cox, who performed a single study in rats (who rarely suffer from tooth decay to begin with) in 1937 and “proved” that fluoride strengthened teeth. Around the same time, the same Gerald Cox also “proved” that asbestos doesn’t cause mesothelioma (a rare lung cancer that killed Steve McQueen).

Back then the concept of peer reviewed research was unknown, and the American Medical Association declared that the “case for fluoride” was proved. It’s clear that corporate largesse (from General Motors) was instrumental in getting the American Dental Association on board with water fluoridation. Whether the AMA also benefited from corporate generosity remains unclear.

Kettering Bribes the American Dental Association

Frary and Cox were soon joined in their little scam by Charles Kettering, who was both GM’s research director and a Freon magnate. Kettering was the first to approach the American Dental Association for their backing of a proposal to fluoridate public water systems. He simultaneously began funding many of their activities and got appointed to their three member Advisory Committee on Research in Dental Caries.

Meanwhile GM and DuPont hired scientist Robert Kehoe to perform safety studies on both fluoride and tetra ethyl lead, a gasoline additive co-manufactured by the two companies. And for obvious reasons, Kehoe declared both lead and fluoride safe at “low levels.”

Enter the AEC and the Father of Public Relations

In the 1940s these corporate researchers were joined in their scheme to promote water fluoridation by Dr Harold Hodge the chief toxicologist of the Manhattan Project (the secret US project to build and atomic bomb). Hodge became involved in “Project F” because large amounts of fluoride are used in the construction of the atomic bomb, and the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) wished to head off a flood of lawsuits from Manhattan Project scientists exposed to toxic levels of fluoride. This was the same Harold Hodge who, in his role as chief Manhattan Project toxicologist, experimented on unsuspecting patients at Rochester’s Strong Memorial Hospital, by injecting them with plutonium.

Nevertheless the most prominent villain in this sordid history of lies and secrecy was the infamous father of the public relations industry (and the sophisticated use of propaganda to sway public opinion) Edward Bernays. There was massive public opposition to water fluoridation from the very beginning – led mainly by doctors who were well aware of fluoride’s toxicity. Bernays’ answer was to enlist even more prominent doctors to declare it safe, starting with famous baby doctor Benjamin Spock.

A Systematic Corporate Cover-Up

As Christopher Bryson makes clear in the *Fluoride Deception*, the whole notion of fluoride being safe and good for teeth is based on decades of corporations paying researchers to produce the scientific results they want – and burying research and marginalizing and discrediting scientists whose studies show otherwise.

Ironically, according to Bryson, it was actually mass fluoride poisoning that kick-started the environmental movement, following an air pollution disaster in 1948 that killed twenty people and sickened hundreds more. A temperature inversion and air pollution from a US Steel factory is blamed for the Donora (Pennsylvania) Death Fog. However owing to extreme pressure from the steel and aluminum industry, public health authorities colluded in a systematic cover-up of the autopsy results – which revealed that the victims had toxic fluoride levels in their blood (see <http://www.fluoridation.com/donora.htm>).

GM fluoride researcher Charles Kettering also deliberately suppressed the results of his own lab’s 1962 studies demonstrating that fluoride produced lung damage in beagles.

Fluoride’s sordid history includes a number of deliberate smear campaigns against extremely reputable doctors and scientists who published research and clinical findings showing that water fluoridation has adverse health effects:

- ◆ Dr. George Waldbott – a world famous doctor who first identified penicillin allergy and the link between smoking and emphysema. Waldbott published numerous double blind studies in the fifties showing that fluoride is harmful to human health. The result was a massive corporate smear campaign that destroyed his reputation by marginalizing and demonizing him.
- ◆ Dr William Marcus – a senior EPA toxicologist in the Office of Water, fired in 1992 for attempting to publicize studies revealing that fluoride causes bone and liver cancer (see <http://www.gaia-health.com/articles251/000293-epa-scientists-oppose-fluoridation.shtml>). In 1994 Marcus won lawsuit against the federal government and was reinstated. While the EPA still refuses to ban water

fluoridation, the unions representing EPA scientists have called for a moratorium (see <http://www.nteu280.org/Issues/Fluoride/Press%20Release.%20Fluoride.htm>).

- ◆ Dr Phyllis Mullinix – research toxicologist hired by Forsyth Dental Institute to study the effect of fluoride on the brain. In the mid-nineties, Mullinix was first fired and then blacklisted when she published research showing that fluoride produces memory and behavior problems in children.

Where Does Fluoride Come From?

Although fluoride is added to municipal water systems as a “drug” that allegedly improves dental health – it has never been approved by the FDA. In fact most communities source their fluoride from the phosphate fertilizer industry, as hydrofluorosilicic acid. This is an extremely toxic, hazardous waste, and the EPA requires phosphate manufacturers to capture it via “wet scrubbers” in their chimneys (to prevent the release of toxic fluoride gas into the air). The resulting liquid is then loaded, unpurified, into tanker trucks and sold to cities to be added to their public water supply.

Why 98% of European Communities Have Banned Water Fluoridation

Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden all ban water fluoridation – for five main reasons:

1. The preponderance of independent research reveals that fluoridation (at levels as low as 0.7 parts per million) increases the risk of hip fracture, liver and bone cancer and lowered IQ in children – as well as being strongly implicated in an American epidemic of hypothyroidism, arthritis and infertility. The concentration used in most American cities is 1.0 parts per million.
2. It’s an absolute violation of medical ethics for a doctor to prescribe a drug, in unlimited doses (people who eat processed foods or drink large amounts of fruit juice, soft drinks and tea get much higher doses), to someone they have never met, without informed consent or ongoing monitoring of their response.
3. The World Health Organization has compared communities with and without water fluoridation and found the rate of cavities is no higher in communities who don’t fluoridate their water (and cavities don’t increase when they remove it). In fact communities who don’t fluoridate seem to have somewhat better dental health. Individuals who accumulate toxic levels of fluoride (known as dental fluorosis) actually have weaker tooth enamel. (Americans have the highest rate of dental fluorosis in the world – 33% – higher (41%) in teenagers between 12-15). Research has consistently shown that fluoride only reduces tooth decay when it’s applied directly to the teeth – drinking fluoride appears to weaken the enamel.
4. All medical and dental authorities worldwide agree that infants are at risk of fluoride toxicity if their formula is made up with fluoridated water (see <http://www.fluoridealert.org/infant-warning.pdf>). This poses a real health hazard to low income families, who can’t afford the luxury of distilled water.
5. The vast majority of Europeans don’t want fluoride in their water when the risks are explained to them. (The administration of any drug requires informed

consent – and they don't consent.)

Thus far sixty US communities (as a result of citizen activism) have ended fluoridation of their public water system. For support in getting the fluoride out of your own tap water go to <http://www.fluoridealert.org/>

Mycobacterium Avium Paratuberculosis: the Most Dangerous Food Borne Killer

(August 17, 2010)

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), food borne illness is responsible for a large increase in infectious disease in the US. In 1999 (the last time the incidence was measured), the CDC determined that one in four Americans is at risk of contracting a food borne illness, one in 840 at risk of being hospitalized and one in 55,000 of dying from it. They also ascertained that 97% of food borne illness could be traced to the feces of farm animals either through direct self-contamination or indirect contamination of other produce. As an example, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) has ascertained that 90% of Thanksgiving turkeys are contaminated with campylobacter, the most common cause of bacterial food poisoning. Moreover 75% of turkeys are contaminated with two or more food borne illnesses, with salmonella a close second to campylobacter.

More recently, outbreaks of pathogenic strains of *E. coli* (which have caused kidney failure and death in several children) have become an ever bigger public concern. Some of these outbreaks result from contamination of fruits and vegetables with *E. coli* from animal feces, an embarrassing complication of the failure of federal inspection standards to keep up with major health hazards associated with modern factory farming.

The food borne illness posing the most danger to human health receives virtually no attention in the US, despite being front page news in Europe and other parts of the world. In fact there seems to be a definite conspiracy of silence around health problems related to *Mycobacterium Avium Paratuberculosis* (MAP), an

organism which, according to European studies, survives pasteurization and is present in retail milk supplies.

A Conspiracy of Silence

MAP is a relatively treatment resistant organism, closely related to the mycobacterium that causes tuberculosis and leprosy. There is strong evidence from Europe (thanks to thirty years of intensive research) that MAP is implicated in 80-90% of cases of Crohn's Disease. Crohn's is an extremely disabling often fatal illness affecting 500,000 Americans every year. There is also increasing evidence that MAP also causes irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and microscopic colitis. These are also untreatable illnesses afflicting fifteen to thirty percent of Americans. While rarely fatal, both can be extremely debilitating, in terms of pain and suffering, medical expense and days off work (at an annual economic cost estimated at \$40 billion). In fact some research (related to DNA fingerprinting technology) suggests that IBS and microscopic colitis may actually be mild, early forms of Crohn's that progress to Crohn's in later life. This research is very exciting because it suggests that early treatment could prevent the development of full blown Crohn's and severe intestinal damage that can only be corrected by surgical removal.

Oddly enough Kennedy Dalziel, the Scottish surgeon who first described Crohn's Disease in 1913, was also the first to suggest it was linked to MAP and Johne's Disease,

a wasting disease of cattle first identified in 1895. Dalziel was struck that Crohn's showed nearly identical symptoms in humans (and pathological changes on autopsy) as Johne's does in cows.

Unfortunately establishing MAP as a causative agent in Crohn's has been extremely difficult, in part owing to unique characteristics that make the bacterium very difficult to isolate from the human bowel. Only the recent development of DNA fingerprinting technology has enabled researchers to demonstrate that 80-90% of Crohn's patients harbor MAP in their intestines.

At present most MAP research takes place in Europe, even though Rhode Island surgeon Dr Rodrick Chiodini was the first to culture MAP from children with Crohn's in the mid-nineties. MAP research is extremely controversial in the US, owing, in part, to a US Department of Agriculture Survey (USDA) revealing that 68 percent of US dairy herds test positive for MAP.

I first learned about a possible link between MAP in milk and Crohn's Disease from the 2000 edition of *Project Censored*. *Project Censored* is a project of Sonoma State University that honors and reprints the top twenty-five news stories censored by the mainstream media. The explosive story about the MAP/Crohn's link first appeared in the June 16-22, 1999 edition of the *Cleveland Free Times*.

Does MAP "Cause" Crohn's Disease?

While the issue remains controversial, thirty years of research strongly supports Dalziel's hypothesis that MAP plays a fundamental role in the etiology of Crohn's:

1. While MAP is a common soil organism worldwide, Crohn's Disease is only found in cultures that drink milk. It's found in all cultures that drink milk, except for India, where milk is boiled.
2. Crohn's was virtually unknown prior to the early 1900s, when there was a transition from supplying milk through local dairies to a system of mass distribution, involving the pooling of milk from many different sources.
3. MAP is found in the breast milk of nursing mothers with Crohn's.
4. MAP is found in the intestines of 80-90% of patients with Crohn's Disease and only four percent of patients with other intestinal diseases.
5. Asian countries previously free of Crohn's are experiencing an increased incidence as they begin drinking milk and keeping dairy herds.

There seems to be universal agreement among researchers that Mycobacterium Avium Paratuberculosis (MAP), on its own, doesn't "cause" Crohn's Disease. This is based on strong genetic and immunological evidence suggesting the children and young adults who develop the illness have either an inherited or acquired susceptibility to abnormal immune reactions to MAP infection. However, there is also overwhelming evidence that preventing MAP infection in the first place reduces children's chances of developing an incurable and often fatal illness. Owing to the federal government's refusal to implement public health measures to limit MAP exposure, the US presently enjoys the distinction of the highest incidence of Crohn's in the world.

Studies Showing MAP Survives Pasteurization

The first attempt to culture live MAP organisms from pasteurized milk took place in Ireland in the late nineties. Investigators obtained thirty-one cartons of pasteurized milk from sixteen retail outlets and grew MAP organisms in twenty percent of them. This caused a national food scare, widely publicized in the UK and the EU, which received no media attention whatsoever in the US. Bowing to public pressure, the British government initiated a study of their own, finding MAP in thirty percent of 1,000 milk cartons they sampled. This was followed by more studies showing that MAP is the most heat resistant organism ever identified and that it can only be destroyed by at boiling temperature (212 degrees Fahrenheit or 100 degrees Centigrade).

Déjà vu: Regulatory Agencies that Refuse to Regulate

As in the case of the banking regulators, whose inaction led to the economic collapse, the FDA and other government regulatory have caved in to the farm and other food lobbies they theoretically regulate. Thus they continue to obstruct veterinary and medical researchers who have been fighting for twenty years for mandatory preventive measures to slow the spread of MAP. Despite dozens of studies from Europe, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) persists in claiming that MAP is eradicated by pasteurization. Likewise, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) resists compulsory monitoring of herds for MAP or compulsory reporting of Johne's Disease or even compromise measures, such as mandatory testing of animals from infected farms or improved farmer education Johne's Disease and basic calf hygiene techniques that reduce MAP infection. Surveys reveal that only fifty percent of American farmers have even heard of MAP.

Europe, on the other hand, employs the Precautionary Principle in its approach to all environmental toxins. EU public health agencies believe it's wrong to continue to expose children to MAP while they wait for unequivocal proof that it plays a causal role in Crohn's disease. This could take decades, especially as the National Institutes of Health refuses to fund research proposals to study MAP infection in humans.

In Europe, public health measures to prevent MAP infection in dairy herds have been extremely aggressive. In the late nineties most European countries committed to total MAP eradication, via mandatory testing and reporting and improved calf hygiene. In Australia, the government has the ability to declare an infected area a control zone and require testing (and culling where indicated) of all cattle within that zone. While New Zealand (where I live) has no mandatory testing and reporting, there is major government support for research, farmer education and a promising cattle vaccine.

The Crohns/MAP Link: Implications for Treatment

For Americans, the consequences of allowing corporate lobbies to suppress medical information aren't limited to enjoying the highest global incidence of a potentially fatal, but totally preventable, illness. Americans with Crohn's also miss out on important new treatments available in other parts of the world. At present most North American doctors treat Crohn's with steroids and immunosuppressant drugs, which only offer temporary relief and do nothing to halt the progression of the illness. In some patients this approach may delay the need for surgery (when intestinal blockage or leakage becomes life threatening). However European doctors in the forefront of Crohn's research feel that immunosuppressants may do more harm than good. If Crohn's is indeed a defective immune response to MAP infection, it makes no sense to administer drugs that

compromise a patient's immunity even further.

Trials of antituberculosis drugs (in Europe and Australia) have resulted in long term full or partial remission in ninety percent of Crohn's patients who take them. Currently there are also clinical trials at the University of St George in London of a new vaccine that promises to protect children with a family history of Crohn's (or irritable bowel syndrome), as well as halting progression of the illness in patients with existing Crohn's, IBS and microscopic colitis.

Take Home Message for Parents: Boil the Milk

At present the vaccine and antibiotic treatment are still in the research phase. This means the primary emphasis, at present, must be on prevention. Thus until government regulatory agencies, such as the FDA and USDA, are willing to acknowledge the serious threat MAP poses to public health, it falls on health professionals and parent groups and advocates to get the word out about the best way to protect American children against MAP infection.

Obviously the safest approach is to avoid dairy products altogether. Where children are unable or unwilling to drink alternatives (soy or rice milk - goats and sheep can also carry MAP so their milk isn't a safe alternative), cow's milk must be boiled. New mothers with Crohn's must be warned they can transmit MAP to their infants through their breast milk.

Parents need to be cautioned that beef can also carry MAP and must reach an internal temperature of 167 degrees Fahrenheit for at least ten minutes for the organism to be destroyed. Moreover people in urban areas sourcing their drinking water from intensively farmed dairy land (Spokane, Christchurch, Winnipeg and the Red River Valley in Minnesota are known hot spots) must be cautioned to boil their drinking water. Studies show that MAP organisms survive chlorination and other conventional water treatments.

Recommended links:

Dr Hermon-Taylor's YouTube presentation (all the above in a nutshell):

<http://www.youtube.com/watchv=5pYuf5rnnQo&feature=related>

Dr Hermon-Taylor's doomsday paper on the growing MAP epidemic and its potentially catastrophic public health consequences:

<http://www.gutpathogens.com/content/1/1/15>

Buyer Beware: Are Americans Systematically Poisoning Themselves

(January 9, 2011)

The US has the worst record in the industrialized world for regulating toxic chemicals – thanks to the stranglehold powerful corporate lobbies have on Congress, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). As a doctor, I am understandably concerned that millions of Americans may be systematically poisoning themselves with common household products, toiletries and cosmetics. In this article, I list some of the more dangerous products, as well as providing suggestions for safer “natural” alternatives. It’s also essential for all American consumers to support the 2010 Safe Cosmetics Act presently in Congress – to strengthen FDA oversight for a virtually unregulated industry (see <http://www.safecosmetics.org/Chapter.php?id=74>).

At present, Americans are at highest risk from the endocrine disruptors found in most commercial cleaning and beauty products. These are chemicals that mimic estrogen and other hormones in their effect on the human body. Many epidemiologists believe they are linked to the current epidemic of breast cancer, premature puberty, and both male and female infertility. However there is also growing evidence linking other synthetic chemicals to the phenomenal increase in cancer that has paralleled the post-World War II “better living through chemistry” revolution. Many people forget is that cancer was an extremely rare condition prior to the nineteenth century Industrial Revolution. I find the current epidemic of asthma in children - and its apparent link to using household cleaners during pregnancy - especially alarming.

Why is There a Frog Disruptor in My Toothpaste?

(from <http://www.tree.hugger.com/files/2009/1/why-is-there-a-frog-disrupter-toothpaste.php>). The phthalates and bisphenyl-A found in plastic water bottles, pacifiers, and baby toys has been widely publicized. Many Americans consumers are well aware that these compounds function as synthetic estrogens and cause feminization of frogs and fish, and as well as being linked to breast cancer, premature puberty, and low sperm counts in men. There is less public awareness that nearly all commercial shampoos, hand and body lotions, deodorants, toothpaste, and sunscreen contain preservatives that function as estrogen-like endocrine disruptors. The US bans only eight of these compounds. In contrast, the European Union bans more than 1,000.

A big problem with widespread use of these products is that the harm they cause individuals from long term is compounded when they are flushed down the drain and contaminate our waterways. Studies of indigenous populations in both the third world and the Arctic reveal they have a hundred or so of these toxic chemicals in their blood stream and breast milk – even though most of them have never heard of Right Guard deodorant or Colgate toothpaste.

One of the worst offenders is the **paraben** class of compounds (mostly found as **methyparaben or PABA**), which is used as a preservative in nearly all commercial toiletries. The second most common is **triclosan**, found in numerous so-called antibacterial products, including the following:

- ◆ Neutrogena Deep Clean Body Scrub Bar

- ◆ Lever 2000 Special Moisture Response Bar Soap, Antibacterial
- ◆ CVS Antibacterial Hand Soap
- ◆ Dial Liquid Soap, Antibacterial Bar Soap
- ◆ Softsoap Antibacterial Liquid Hand Soap
- ◆ Cetaphil Gentle Antibacterial Cleansing Bar
- ◆ Clearasil Daily Face Wash
- ◆ Clean & Clear Oil Free Foaming Facial Cleanser
- ◆ Dawn Complete Antibacterial Dish Liquid
- ◆ Ajax Antibacterial Dish Liquid
- ◆ Colgate Total Toothpaste
- ◆ Right Guard Sport Deodorant
- ◆ Old Spice Red Zone, High Endurance and Classic Deodorants
- ◆ Vaseline Intensive Care Antibacterial Hand Lotion

Other Toxic Skin Products

Even less well publicized are potentially toxic “nanosized” particles present in many popular sunscreens and so called “natural” mineral foundations. (See the 2010 Friends of the Earth study at <http://www.aolnews.com/nanotech/article/more-bad-news-about-sunscreen-safety-anoparticles/195001>).

Skin products containing nanoparticles containing skin products are strictly regulated in Europe – with mandatory safety testing and product labeling – and an outright ban in some countries. In contrast the FDA, which has known for a decade about ingredients in common sunscreens that accelerate the growth of skin cancer cells, refuses to act on this information.

Nanoparticles are readily absorbed into the blood stream through skin damaged through eczema or psoriasis, a major health concern as mineral foundations are specifically marketed to women to conceal unsightly dermatitis. In addition, mineral foundation powders are often accidentally inhaled into the lungs during application. Moreover preliminary evidence suggests that some nanoparticles can penetrate healthy skin.

The potentially hazardous nanoparticles in sunscreen are nanosized zinc oxide and titanium dioxide. Because there is no scientific data whatsoever regarding “safe” levels of exposure, any absorption is worrying. Zinc oxide nanoparticles have been shown (in very small concentrations) to kill brain stem cells in mice; damage colon cells; and play some role in the development of autism, epilepsy and Alzheimer’s. They also cross the placenta and affect fetal development. Nano-titanium has been shown to cause cell and DNA damage (both directly and indirectly by increasing circulating free radicals). Not only are these substances totally unregulated in the US, but due to lax labeling laws, eighty percent of sunscreens that claim to contain no nanoparticles are found to contain them. Women seeking truly “natural” sunscreens and mineral foundations should consult one of the websites below for safe brands:

<http://www.ewg.org/2010sunscreens/best-beach-sport-sunscreens/>

<http://nochemicalcosmetics.com/cosmetics/>

http://mindfulmomma.typepad.com/mindful_momma/2010/03/mineral-makeup-uncovered.html

Hair Dyes

Over fifty million American women, as well as an increasing number of men, dye their hair on a regular basis. Many start in early adolescence, resulting in cumulative, lifelong exposure to extremely toxic substances:

- ◆ Phenylenediamine (PPD) – present in over two-third of chemical hair dyes and by far the most toxic. Linked (in animals) to damage of the immune and nervous system, skin, liver and kidneys. Banned in France, Germany, and Sweden and use “restricted” in Canada.
- ◆ Resorcinal – classified by the European Union as a harmful skin and eye irritant and dangerous to the environment.
- ◆ Ammonia – irritant to skin, eyes, and respiratory system (can cause asthma).
- ◆ Persulfates – irritant to skin, lungs (can cause asthma), and eyes.
- ◆ Peroxide – potential toxic effects on eyes, nervous and respiratory system (can cause asthma). Can cause DNA damage, possibly leading to cancer. Banned in cosmetic use in Japan and use “restricted” in Canada.
- ◆ Lead acetate – lead has well known damaging effects on the brain and nervous system
- ◆ 4-ABP – linked to cancer

Many so-called “natural” hair dyes also contain some PPD, but in lower concentrations. As with other toiletries and beauty products, checking labels is essential, or better still, searching the Internet for safer alternatives.

Dangerous Chemicals in Household Cleaners

AIR FRESHENERS: usually contain methoxychlor, a pesticide that accumulates in fat cells, as well as formaldehyde, a highly toxic, known carcinogen, and phenol, a common culprit in contact allergies.

CARPET AND UPHOLSTERY SHAMPOO – commonly contain perchlorethylene, a known carcinogen, and ammonium hydroxide, a corrosive, extremely irritating to eyes, skin and respiratory passages.

DISHWASHER DETERGENTS (number one cause of household poisoning) – commonly contain a highly concentrated dry form of chlorine, which leaves a residue on dishes that accumulates with each washing and is absorbed into hot food.

FURNITURE POLISH: contain petroleum distillates, which can cause skin and lung cancer and nitrobenzene. Also linked with low sperm counts, anemia and liver, kidney, lung and eye damage.

LAUNDRY detergents contain the following chemicals (which remain as residue in clothes, as well as being released into waterways):

- ◆ **Linear alkyl sodium sulfonates (LAS or anionic surfactants)** - release carcinogenic and reproductive toxins into environment during production.
- ◆ **Petroleum distillates (aka naphthas)** - linked to cancer, lung damage and inflammation (can cause asthma) and damage to mucous membranes.
- ◆ **Phenols** - linked with damage to nervous system, heart, blood vessels, lungs (can cause asthma) and kidneys.
- ◆ **Nonyl phenol ethoxylate** – endocrine disruptor banded in Europe, owing to link to breast cancer, premature puberty and low sperm counts.
- ◆ **Optical brighteners** (convert UV light wavelengths into visible light, making clothes **appear** whiter without making them cleaner) – toxic to fish and can cause allergic reactions when exposed skin later interacts with sunlight.
- ◆ **Phosphates (banned in many states)** – contribute to water “dead zones” by stimulating algae growth that depletes oxygen needed for fish and other animal life.
- ◆ **Sodium hypochlorite (household bleach)** – highly toxic chemical which reacts with organic materials in the environment to form carcinogenic and toxic compounds that can cause reproductive, endocrine and immune system disorders.
- ◆ **EDTA (ethylene-diamino-tetra-acetate)** – chelating agent that biodegrades poorly and can re-dissolve toxic heavy metals in the environment, allowing them to enter the food chain.

OVEN CLEANERS: contain highly toxic and corrosive lye and ammonia with fumes that can damage the respiratory system (especially of small children and pets) and which leave residue that is vaporized when the oven is turned on.

TOILET BOWL CLEANERS: contain hydrochloric acid, a highly corrosive irritant which can damage skin, eyes, kidneys and liver; and hypochlorite bleach, a corrosive irritant that can damage eyes, skin and respiratory tract.

Making Your Own Household Cleaners and Beauty Products

The best database for finding safe, “natural” cleaning products is <http://www.mamashealth.com/doc/cleanprod.asp>. Unfortunately, however, the majority of “natural” cleaning and beauty products are far more expensive than the chemically-laden brand names. They are often totally unaffordable for families squeezed by lay-offs, wage and benefit cuts, and skyrocketing food and energy costs.

What most Americans don't realize is that they can save thousands of dollars a year by making their own cleaners and toiletries – using the same inexpensive, safe ingredients our grandmothers and great-grandmothers used. I suspect this may be one area in which New Zealand, a second world country that has never been as pro-corporate and consumer-oriented as the US, may lead the world.

Here in New Zealand the “make your own” movement is led by a local Taranaki mother Lyn Webster (<http://pigtitsandparsleysauce.co.nz/>), who offers classes all over New Zealand and on national TV. Most of Webster’s fast and simple recipes rely on a food processor, baking soda (sodium bicarbonate), white vinegar and plain bar soap. Both baking soda and vinegar are highly reactive (but safe – both are used in cooking) compounds that readily dissolve oil and grease and kill most bacteria. Her dishwashing liquid, laundry powder, and powdered dishwasher soap also contain “washing soda” (calcium carbonate). This is a natural water softener our grandmothers used to use to prevent soap scum from forming in hard water.

The Cellphone/Wi-Fi Controversy

(February 14, 2011)

I guess I shouldn't be surprised that the FDA, acting under pressure from the cellphone and wireless industry, has declared cellphone, Wi-Fi and cellphone towers safe. Nor that industry sponsored research of the health effects of EMR (electromagnetic radiation) comes up with very different results than independent researchers. Nor that government and foundation scientists who publish unfavorable research get fired, blacklisted and demonized. Just like the early warning scientists who warned us of the dangers of cigarettes, asbestos, fluoride and genetically modified crops.

Both light and radio waves are natural forms of EMR (electromagnetic radiation) that surround us in the natural environment. EMR can be divided into high energy, or ionizing radiation, and low-energy non-ionizing radiation. The ionizing radiation, like x-rays and nuclear radiation, actually smashes our fragile biochemistry like the proverbial bull in a China shop. There's no controversy about the damage that it causes. The dangers of non-ionizing radiation are more subtle. Microwave ovens, cellphones, Wi-Fi, radar equipment and high voltage lines produce large amounts of EMR of a different frequency than human beings are exposed to naturally. Scientists have been concerned about potential health risks of microwave exposure since the 1930s, when mechanics working on early radar equipment developed a cluster of rashes, headaches and flu-like illnesses.

Cellphones Prevent Brain Tumors?

The FDA has pronounced cellphones safe based on the Interphone Study – a series of multinational, case-controlled studies funded by the UN and the cellphone industry – published in the International Journal of Epidemiology in May 2010. You wonder how any reputable scientific journal could publish a study showing that cellphones reduce the risk of brain tumors. But these industry whores have no shame. Dr Magda Havas, Associate Professor of Environmental and Resource Studies at Trent University in Canada, has done a detailed analysis of the Interphone Study, showing that it was deliberately designed to conceal adverse effects

(<http://www.magdahavas.com/2010/05/20/lessons-from-the-interphone-study/>).

Examples of bias in the study design:

1. A “regular” cellphone user was defined as someone who made one cellphone call a week – Havas compares to looking for lung cancer in people who smoke one cigarette a week.
2. Cordless phone users (who experience the same EMR exposure as cellphone users) were included in the control group (the non-exposed group) instead of the experimental group. In a proper study, a genuine control group would have no EMR exposure at all.
3. The Interphone studied excluded two important age groups – those under thirty (children and teenagers, whose cells are rapidly dividing, are most vulnerable to carcinogens) and those over sixty (the age group most prone to brain tumors).

Deliberate Misrepresentation of Results

Obviously the industry scientists who performed the study knew they had gone too far when their results revealed that regular cellphone use prevents brain tumors. Thus the original paper includes two appendices in which they attempt to correct the design bias statistically. Although the appendices are inserted in the very back of the May 2010 International Journal of Epidemiology, the researchers failed to *release them to the press*.

This oversight appears deliberate, as the appendices reveal an alarming increase in brain tumors in the experimental group:

- ◆ Appendix 1 – contradicts findings in the body of the report (which reports reduced or no increase in meningioma risk), revealing a 84% increase in subjects using digital and analogue phones and a 343% increase in subjects using “unknown” category phones.
- ◆ Appendix 2 – attempts to statistically correct the downward bias (the three design flaws described above) and comes up with a 68% increase in meningioma risk after two to four years of cellphone use and a 118% increase in meningioma risk after ten plus years.

What Havas and others, find particularly troubling about the Interphone study is that it relates to cellphone use between 2002-2004, when overall cellphone use (particularly among children) was quite low compared to current use. Moreover, it also excludes any data from US cellphone users.

At a November 2010 San Francisco conference “The Health Effects of Electromagnetic Fields,” Dr Joel Moskowitz presented a larger meta-analysis of independent cellphone studies that points to an average of 18,000 preventable glioma (a highly malignant tumor) deaths directly related to cellphones. Here’s a video link to Dr Moskowitz’s presentation: <http://electromagnetichealth.org/electromagnetic-health-blog/cc-video/>

Industry Retaliation Against Researchers

In the US, it appears that the cellphone and wireless industry is also working hard to shut down future research about EMR health risks. Scientists like Dr Henry Lai at the University of Washington risk having their careers destroyed by publishing studies about the health hazards of cellphone, cellphone towers and Wi-Fi (see <http://www.seattlemag.com/article/nerd-report/nerd-report> and <http://www.psrast.org/mobileng/mobilstarteng.htm#junk>). Lai wasn’t even thinking about cellphones when he published a study in 1995 about DNA and memory damage in rats exposed to EMR from radar equipment – until a whistle blower leaked an internal Motorola memo about their plan to institute “war games” to get him fired and cut off his grant funding. Although the University of Washington president resisted Motorola’s lobbying to fire Lai, lack of funding has forced the scientist to discontinue his EMR research.

Cellphone Regulation in Europe

Meanwhile, as in the case of water fluoridation and genetically engineered foods, the European Environment Agency recommends the Precautionary Principle (using all new technology cautiously until industry proves it’s safe). They have issued the following six recommendations related to cellphones:

1. Consumers, especially young adults and children (who are at highest risk for brain tumors) should stick to texting and hands-free sets to avoid exposing their brains to EMR.
2. Manufacturers should design hands-free phones that are easier for consumers to use.
3. Cellphone should carry warning labels.
4. Corporate funded research needs to be more broadly focused on biological effects, rather than being limited to the “heating” effects of microwaves.
5. Governments should place a research levy on cellphones to fund independent research
6. *Governments need to better protect cellphone researchers from retaliation from the industry opponents.*

The European Position on Electromog (Wi-Fi and Cellphone Towers)

Following the release of the 2007 Bioinitiative Report http://mreengenharia.com.br/pdf_novo/report.pdf (which cites European studies showing a tripling of cancer rates following the installation of cellphone towers), the European Environment Agency issued similar warnings on “electromog” from Wi-Fi and cellphone towers. As with cellphones, the FDA continues to deny there is any risk from exposure to Wi-Fi hotspots or routers or cellphone towers.

Electrohypersensitivity Syndrome (EHS)

Approximately 3% of the population (many of them children exposed to Wi-Fi routers in schools) suffer from a serious condition caused by exposure to EMR known as Electrosensitivity Syndrome (ES) or Electrohypersensitivity Syndrome (EHS). The condition, well recognized by environmental physicians, is characterized by headaches, disrupted sleep, chronic fatigue, depression, erratic blood pressure, rapid pulse, rashes, nausea and childhood behavior problems. In some patients, it can look a lot like MS. In fact, patients with MS often have a worsening of their symptoms when exposed to EMR.

Unfortunately, other conditions linked to EMR take much longer to develop (10-15 years). This means it could scientists take fifty years or more to collect the “conclusive proof” necessary to force the FDA to regulate exposure.

Concerned by the findings regarding EHS in the 2007 Bioinitiative Report, many French and English schools immediately dismantled their Wi-Fi systems and replaced them with cables. While the German government and Austrian Medical Association have issued strong warnings that all citizens avoid Wi-Fi use at home and at work. The position taken by the Swedish government, which formally recognizes EHS as a disability, is the strongest. They will remove Wi-Fi from the school of any student suffering from EHS, as well as providing microwave opaque paint and/or wall coverings for the homes of EHS patients.

What Should Americans Do?

Despite hundreds of studies showing that EMR has biological effects (mainly DNA breakage and cell membrane leakage of nerve cells), the FDA continues to bow to industry pressure to use ICNIRP (International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation) standards, which only measure the “thermal” or heating of effects of EMR. And since

there is no heating at the low levels emitted from Wi-Fi or cellphone towers, the FDA draws the illogical conclusion that electrosmog poses no health risks. This is despite hundreds of studies linking Wi-Fi and cellphone towers to cancer, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, fatigue, headaches, multiple sclerosis (MS), impaired memory and behavior problems in children.

For the time being, consumers outside Europe are stuck with the responsibility of protecting themselves against harmful EMR affects. I highly recommend Dr Magda Havas' website for her excellent tips on practicing good electromagnetic hygiene (<http://www.magdahavas.com>). For example:

1. Replace cordless with corded phones.
2. Replace Wi-Fi internet hook-ups with an Ethernet cable.
3. Use cellphones as little as possible and only in speaker mode (Bluetooth devices and regular head phones also give off microwaves – only air tube headsets are safe).
4. Don't carry cellphones in your pocket or on your waist band, as they lower sperm production and quality (the FCC carried this warning on their website for ten months but removed it in November 2010, under industry pressure).
5. Don't use CFLs (compact fluorescent light bulbs – although good for environment, the erratic currents they produce are linked to health problems http://www.dirtyelectricity.ca/cfl_lights.htm).
6. Do NOT use electric blankets or water beds. Keep alarm clock radios at least two meters from your bed.
7. Measure EMR radio frequency in your home and install radio frequency-reflecting window film or fabric to shield it from external sources.
8. Measure “dirty” electricity (erratic currents from CFLs) in your home and install filters if values are above fifty GS units.
9. Use “wired” – not wireless – smart meters.
10. Do not live in a home within 100 meters of transmission lines or within 400 meters of cellphone antennas.

Links to other research on EMR health effects from Wi-Fi and cellphone towers:

<http://www.sageassociates.net/rfchartreportbio-sample.pdf>

<http://www.cyburban.com/~lplachta/safeweb2.htm>

The Corporatization of Health Care

Marketing Serotonin Deficiency: the Multibillion Dollar Depression Industry

(July 14, 2010)

After thirty-two years of psychiatric practice I, like many of my colleagues, can't help but be alarmed by the dramatic increase in acute and chronic depression over the last three decades. Reports by school counselors and other therapists, psychologists and psychiatrist suggest that the incidence of depression and suicide, already extremely high in 2008, has skyrocketed with the economic downturn (and associated unemployment, bankruptcies, foreclosures and homelessness).

The most recent epidemiological data predates the October 2008 crash. As of late 2007:

- ◆ 5.3% of adults were depressed on any given day.
- ◆ 12% of women and 7% of men experienced depression in any given year.
- ◆ 20% of women experienced depression in their lifetime (the lifetime prevalence of depression in men is more difficult to estimate, as they are less likely to acknowledge feeling depressed or seek help).

Given the frequent visits all doctors receive from drug salesmen, I have good first hand knowledge of the highly successful marketing campaign by the pharmaceutical industry to convince doctors, patients and their families that clinical depression is a “genetic” deficiency of a brain neurotransmitter called serotonin. This unproved claim is used to promote a line of enormously profitable drugs called serotonin reuptake inhibitors or SSRIs (Prozac is the best known). While antidepressants can be literally life saving for some people, only fifty percent of patients who take them ever achieve full recovery. A fifty percent response rate, in the eyes of the medical community, is a definite embarrassment. From my perspective, the failure of so many patients to response to antidepressants makes a compelling argument that something other than a genetically inherited “biochemical imbalance” is causing Americans to become depressed.

Animal Models of Depression

The other evidence against a strictly biochemical cause of clinical depression is the failure of any other mammals to manifest genetically based serotonin deficiency. In order to study the effect of new antidepressants in laboratory animals, depressive disorders have to be artificially created because they don't exist in nature. Given the recent discovery that human and chimpanzee DNA are 99% identical, one would expect chimpanzees and apes to show evidence of genetically determined serotonin deficiency – if it were, indeed, a genuine disorder.

Because depression is virtually non-existent in lower mammals, pharmaceutical companies artificially create depressive states in lab animals to test new antidepressants. Traditionally researchers employ one of six approaches in making animals depressed – all of which induce depression by depleting neurotransmitters (mainly serotonin and norepinephrine):

1. Causing the animal massive, unrelenting stress

2. Imposing social isolation by removing it from other animals
3. Premature separation of pups from their mother
4. Deliberate brain injury
5. Administering neurotransmitter depleting drugs, such as reserpine (an old blood pressure medication) and tetrabenazine (used to treat movement disorders)
6. Triggering amphetamine withdrawal (by first “addicting” rats to amphetamine, resulting in profound depression with its withdrawal).

Making Animals Depressed

Recently a strain of mice (the Flinders Sensitive Line) has been deliberately inbred and a second strain (HPA Transgenic) genetically engineered to develop depressive symptoms – for use in testing new antidepressants.

Nevertheless most animal trials of new antidepressants are based on the “learned helplessness” model, which involves submitting mice and rats to traumatic stress levels. In the most common experiment, mice are dropped into a large vat of water and the researcher times how long they keep swimming before they give up. After taking a dose of Prozac, they swim longer before they stop.

Newer methodologies involve hanging mice by their tails - those given antidepressants struggle longer before giving up on trying to escape – and teaching mice to avoid an electric shock by pushing a lever. When the researcher inactivates the lever, the mice keep pushing it, even though they still get shocked. Mice under the influence of antidepressants keep pushing it longer.

Is it Time to Look for Other Causes of Depression?

Although I don’t consider myself an animal rights activist (I am much more concerned about the horrible things we do to human beings), there is something incredibly sad about the Big Pharma’s persistence in torturing small animals. Obviously it’s well past time for them to admit that primates don’t experience genetic, biochemically caused depression – despite a twenty-five year, multibillion dollar campaign to convince the American public that they do. The time has come to give a serious look at other potential causes (and cures), including, among other possibilities, nutritional deficiencies, environmental toxins and the systematic degradation of American family and community life.

The Role of Poverty and the Corporatization of Food

I have always found it quite ego-deflating that as a psychiatrist I can only help about half the patients who come to me for depression. However as a social activist, I am also increasingly aware of the role social factors play in depressive disorders. I would rank nutritional deficiencies – stemming both from poverty and our dysfunctional system of food production – as number one on the list of potential medical conditions predisposing to depression. The link between omega 3 deficiency (as opposed to so-called serotonin deficiency) and depression is well established. Numerous studies show that cultures which consume three to five servings of fish per week experience miniscule rates of depression. There are also demonstrated links between depression and vitamin B, folic acid and phytonutrient (newly discovered plant-based “vitamins”)

deficiencies, as well as increasing evidence for the role of Vitamin D and specific mineral deficiencies (mainly calcium and magnesium) in mood regulation. Except for Vitamin D (derived from sunlight and Vitamin D enriched dairy products) and Vitamin B12 (derived mainly from meat), the best source of these other nutrients is fresh broccoli and leafy green vegetables.

Owing to recent skyrocketing food costs, I feel quite silly advising low income depressives to eat more oily fish and broccoli – the prohibitive cost of fresh, unprocessed food means it's simply not an option (See “The Politics of Obesity” in Part IV). I also find it hard to suppress feelings of disgust for our government's corporate driven health policy – whereby Medicaid and insurance companies are happy to pay for a prescription for Prozac (to help out their friends at Big Pharma) but not to subsidize fresh, organically grown food for low income patients with obvious nutritional deficiencies.

The Demise of Civic Engagement: Possible Links to Depression

Approximately one quarter of the depression I encounter in clinical practice is nutritionally based and responsive to improved diet. I find the vast majority of depression is likely to have a “social”, as opposed to a “medical” cause. “Civic engagement” is a subject that both Robert Putnam (*Bowling Alone*, 2000) and Ralph Nader have written about extensively. Their work has focused mainly on the negative effect declining civic engagement has on Americans' overall quality of life. However based on my clinical experience, I believe Americans' systematic withdrawal from community life is also strongly implicated in the growing epidemic of clinical depression.

Decades of anthropological and ethnological research show unequivocally that humans, like other primates, such as apes, monkeys and gorillas, are fundamentally social beings. Behavioral experiments consistently find that the vast majority of people function very poorly when deprived of contact with their fellow creatures. It is well established that subjecting prisoners to solitary confinement is one of the most severe and most poorly tolerated punishments that can be inflicted – rating far higher than beatings by guards and other inmates and physical torture.

Because of my medical training, I have a particular interest in the effect social activity (or its absence) has on human brain function. Recent advances in neurophysiology have been quite spectacular, enabling us to identify specific electrochemical events that correspond with psychological responses to socialization.

Oxytocin

Oxytocin is the best known chemical influencing social activity, most likely because a nasal spray containing oxytocin, called Liquid Trust, is being heavily marketed by company that manufactures it. At present, it's being promoted as a potential treatment to parents of children with Autism and Asperger's Disorder. The hormone itself is associated with phenomena such as collaboration, altruism, empathy, compassion, parent-child bonding, monogamy, trust and forgiveness. Endocrinologists find that oxytocin, rather than testosterone as previously believed, regulates female sex drive (contrary to popular belief, estrogen and progesterone, which regulate ovulation and pregnancy, tend to suppress a woman's sex drive).

Oxytocin was first synthesized by Vincent du Vigneaud in 1953, for which he received the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1955. It's secreted by the posterior lobe of the pituitary gland and can be made synthetically. Physiologically, it promotes the secretion of breast milk and stimulates the contraction of the uterus during labor. Its structure is very closely related (differing by two amino acids) to a second pituitary hormone called vasopressin, which regulates fluid balance. However both hormones are produced – and result in emotional and behavioral effects – in both sexes.

Oxytocin has been dubbed the “bonding” hormone, primarily as a result of animal experiments, in which males become super attentive to their young following treatment with oxytocin. Oxytocin effects seem to work both ways: high oxytocin (or vasopressin) levels stimulate bonding and group affiliation – whereas various group activities clearly increase oxytocin levels. Moreover because high oxytocin/vasopressin levels are associated with subjectively pleasurable feelings – people who engage in group activities experience a distinct neurophysiological reward for doing so. This, in turn, motivates them to seek out activities likely to replicate the experience.

Endorphins

Research shows that endorphins, which are opiate-like substances produced within the brain (as opposed to synthetic opiates like morphine, codeine and heroin), are also increased by social and group activity (as well as by sex, vigorous exercise and creative activities). Whether increasing brain endorphins also stimulates social interaction is less well studied. Although endorphins (which are complex polypeptides) can be synthesized in the laboratory, they are extremely expensive and not commercially available.

Neurotransmitters

Neurotransmitters, such as dopamine, norepinephrine and serotonin (the same biochemicals affected by antidepressants) also appear to increase with social activity – though these effects have received less study.

Mirror Neurons

A mirror neuron is a nerve that fires when one animal observes another animal performing a specific action – as if the first animal were also performing the action. Researchers believe these neurons are essential for learning new skills in lower animals. Their function in humans is less clear. One hypothesis is that mirror neurons make it possible for us to make inferences

about another person's mental state – and more importantly develop the capacity for empathy.

The Absence of Social Needs Research

Clearly more social needs research is urgently needed for an extremely disabling and costly (in terms of medical expense and lost work days) condition that has reached epidemic proportions. Most non-drug research occurs in Europe, where there is a widely agreed role for publicly (government) funded medical research. In the US, on the other hand, the vast majority of depression research is funded by drug companies. Big Pharma clearly has no profit incentive to investigate non-pharmaceutical approaches to depression. There is a small amount of government and foundation funding to

investigate “non-medical” causes of depression. However the competition for these non-corporate grants is fierce – which translates into a dearth of good studies into the effect of nutrition, exercise, emotional intimacy, prenatal influences, early poverty, job satisfaction and fulfillment of social needs on an individual’s ability to regulate their mood.

Drug Companies: Killing Kids for Profit

(May 30, 2011)

Practicing psychiatry for eight and a half years in New Zealand has given me a unique perspective on “childhood bipolar disorder,” is clearly one of the most dangerous "made in America" condition. An Australian psychiatrist named Dr. Peter Parry has recently exposed a conspiracy by Eli Lilly and other American drug companies to persuade psychiatrists, pediatricians and primary care physicians to prescribe dangerous antipsychotic drugs “off-label” to American children for so called “childhood bipolar disorder.”

Drug Companies Are Deliberately Breaking the Law

Prescribing "off-label" refers to using medication for an indication that hasn't been approved by the FDA. Drugs must meet extremely high safety standards for the FDA to allow their use in kids. As yet no antipsychotics have been approved for use in children under twelve. Despite federal law that prohibits drug companies from marketing any drugs for off-label uses, the fines they pay are miniscule compared to the massive potential profits. Thus it's considered good business practice to pay the fine and keep doing it anyway. See

http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/32694936/ns/business-us_business/

<http://www.cheatingculture.com/off-label-marketing/>

<http://www.false-claims-act.com/2010/02/09/eli-lilly-settles-for-largest-criminal-fine-in-us-history/>

As well as publishing numerous studies over a condition also known as pediatric bipolar disorder (PBD), Dr. Parry has put together a Power Point presentation that he gives at grand rounds and conferences around the world (see

<http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/docs/PaediatricbipolardisorderacontroversyfromtheUSA.pdf>). In addition to summarizing all the academic research on both sides of the issue, Dr Parry also provides internal Lilly and Janssen memos (see slides 91-94 and

98-100) about their innovative campaign to "medicalize" children's behavioral problems by promoting the concept of pediatric bipolar disorder to American doctors and parents.

Diagnostic Criteria for Bipolar Disorder

Parry's slideshow starts with studies comparing psychiatrists' attitudes about pediatric bipolar disorder (PBD) in the US, the UK, Germany, New Zealand and Australia. For the most part, foreign psychiatrists either don't recognize the diagnosis of PBD or regard it as extremely rare. According to Dr Parry, the discrepancy revolves mainly around an insistence (outside the US) that both children and adults manifest symptoms of true mania to be diagnosed bipolar. By definition, this requires one week or more of continuous euphoric or angry mood, accompanied by rapid thoughts and speech and extreme agitation. Over the past ten to fifteen years, an increasing number of industry-funded psychiatric researchers have been claiming that extreme temper outbursts, rages and rapidly changing moods are a "manic" equivalent in children. They also claim that children with extreme mood swings will go on to develop true bipolar illness in adulthood and that early treatment is essential to minimize the severity.

Increasingly this is proving not to be true, as only a small percentage of children diagnosed with pediatric bipolar disorder (and started on antipsychotics) ever experience genuine manic episodes, even as adults.

Fortunately an increasing number of American child psychiatrists are also challenging the alarming trend of starting children as young as age two on antipsychotics for their “mood swings” and behavioral problems. They are also increasingly concerned that psychiatrists and pediatricians are making the diagnosis of childhood bipolar disorder without obtaining full developmental histories (to rule out trauma and attachment difficulties, the most common cause of extreme mood swings) or classroom behavior information from teachers. The antipsychotics and anticonvulsants used to treat pediatric bipolar can have quite dangerous side effects. There are scores of deaths associated with their use in children, in addition to serious long term medical complications.

Omitting All-Important Developmental History

Understanding why foreign psychiatrists are scandalized by their American colleagues' cavalier attitude towards pediatric bipolar disorder (and prescribing dangerous antipsychotic drugs to young children) requires an understanding of the importance of developmental history in assessing emotional and behavioral problems in children. A developmental approach to diagnosis assumes that a child's difficulties are strongly influenced by their immediate environment. If children with extreme rages and temper outbursts come from a chaotic home where parents are constantly yelling and screaming, these problems must be recognized as a "developmental" problem, rather than mental illness. In other words, a negative family environment has caused some aspects of the child's emotional development to be delayed. Diagnosing a child with a mental illness when the problem really lies with the parents is commonly known as scapegoating. It does both the child and the family a great disservice.

A developmental approach to diagnosis also assumes that all babies are born without the ability to regulate anger and other extreme emotions. In infancy and early childhood, parents help children regulate their emotions through soothing and calm limit setting. Through constant repetition of this process, children eventually learn to regulate extreme emotion on their own. Where a problem commonly develops is when parents themselves have never learned emotional regulation and respond to children's anger and distress by becoming angry themselves.

At times delays in the ability to regulate extreme emotion occur for reasons other than inconsistent parenting. The two most common are trauma (physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse) and attachment difficulties (the child fails to bond appropriately with the primary caregiver).

The Dangers of Checklist Diagnosis

In Europe and here in the South Pacific, child psychiatrists maintain that to establish the presence of a mental illness such as pediatric bipolar disorder (PBD), the treating psychiatrist must first demonstrate (by taking a careful developmental history) that the child previously had an ability to regulate extreme mood swings, which they lost when the so-called “mental illness” developed. Clearly this isn't being done in the US, as many PBD aficionados claim that developmental and school history are irrelevant and make the diagnosis based on mood checklists alone. A checklist approach to diagnosis is

extremely dangerous in children. The tendency for all children under stress to manifest extremes in mood and behavior (as all parents of young children will agree) makes it impossible to define the limits of normal mood and behavior.

What foreign and some American child psychiatrists find particularly horrifying is the large number of children in the US foster care system - who clearly have developmental issues, resulting from abusive and neglectful homes - receiving the diagnosis of PBD and being put on antipsychotics to control anger and behavioral problems. In most cases, this involves a cocktail of three to four drugs, as antipsychotics have little therapeutic effect in kids other than sedation. Typically, in addition to the antipsychotic, children will be given an anti-seizure medication (used commonly in adult bipolar patients), an antidepressant, lithium, and/or clonidine (a blood pressure medication that calms children by dropping their blood pressure).

Why Are American Psychiatrists Diagnosing PBD?

Dr Peter Parry puts the blame for the dangerous fad of prescribing unapproved antipsychotic drugs for children squarely where it belongs: on multinational drug companies and US insurance companies. While internal memos (see slides 91-94 and 98-100) show that drug companies deliberately set out to expand sales of antipsychotics by persuading doctors to prescribe them off-label in children, the intrusion of for-profit insurance companies into US health care delivery has played a major role in perpetuating the barbaric practice. Even where a child has severe emotional problems, insurance companies refuse to pay for psychiatric visits or hospitalization without a diagnosis of mental illness. Moreover only drug treatment is covered, even if the difficulties result from family problems.

Psychiatric Researchers on the Drug Industry Payroll

Meanwhile child psychiatrists who feel uneasy prescribing dangerous antipsychotic medication to children are lambasted on by eminent “researchers,” who issue stern warnings about ruining a child’s future by “missing” the diagnosis of pediatric bipolar disorder (PBD). Unfortunately most neglect to disclose that they have a conflict of interest, in the form of hundreds of thousands of dollars in research grants and consultant fees from the drug companies who produce antipsychotics. This has only come out in subsequent lawsuits (see <http://www.psychsearch.net/lawsuits.html>) and ethical investigations (<http://www.cchrnt.org/cchr-issues/the-corrupt-alliance-of-the-psychiatric-pharmaceutical-industry/>).

In addition to pressure from insurance companies and PBD “experts,” child psychiatrists and pediatricians also experience major pressure from parents, owing to massive direct-to-consumer marketing – in the form of dozens of books, magazine articles and TV documentaries promoting PBD as the true explanation for severe behavioral problems – and a magic pill as the easy answer. Many parents, convinced by all the media hype, feel justified in demanding doctors prescribe these wonder drugs for their kids. Pity the poor child psychiatrist who stands firm on recommending the appropriate, evidence-based treatment - a lengthy course of family or behavioral treatment that isn’t covered by insurance.

Death and Other Dangerous Complications

The complications of antipsychotic treatment in children fall into four broad categories:

death, severe medical complications, social exclusion and delayed emotional development.

1. Death: As Dr Parry points out in his slideshow, fifteen years of FDA adverse incident reports (which typically capture only 1% of adverse drug events) reveal that antipsychotics are directly implicated in the death of scores of children:

- ◆ 2000-2004: 45 deaths http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2006-05-01-atypical-drugs_x.htm
- ◆ 2006: 29 deaths <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/10/health/10psyche.html?pagewanted=1>

2. Severe Medical Complications : Antipsychotics tend to cause massive weight gain – often as much as 100 pounds – which commonly leads to diabetes. In addition a disfiguring neurological disorder called tardive dyskinesia occurs in 6-9% of children who take antipsychotics. The tics and writhing movements associated with tardive dyskinesia often persist permanently, even after medication is stopped.

3. Social exclusion: Labeling a child with a mental illness, particularly if they are taking a medications that cause sedation, extreme weight gain and/or tics has an extremely detrimental effect on their social relationships, which are absolutely vital to normal child development.

4. Delayed emotional development: Sedating a child who has difficulty regulating anger and extreme moods only further delays the process of learning to regulate their emotions themselves.

Do Child with PBD Grow Up Bipolar?

The main argument used for aggressive diagnosis and treatment of PBD is that treating bipolar illness early gives a child a better chance of leading a normal adult life. However now that increasing numbers of children with so-called PBD are in their twenties and thirties, it turns out that the vast majority “outgrow” PBD in adulthood. These results have led some American researchers to reach the same conclusion developmental psychiatrists and psychologists reached a decade ago: that the extreme mood swings being labeled PBD are actually a developmental problem that improves with brain maturation. See <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/10/081006180654.htm> and <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/09/090929141530.htm>

Wyeth and the Multibillion Dollar Menopause Industry

(April 1, 2011)

I have written previously about the ingenious – and deadly – strategy by pharmaceutical companies of inventing fictitious illnesses to market highly profitable drugs that allegedly “treat” them. The technical terms for this are “medicalizing” or “disease mongering.” Dr Marcia Angell, in her 2004 *The Truth About the Drug Companies: How They Deceive Us and What To Do About It*, also talks about “generalized anxiety disorder,” “erectile dysfunction,” “premenstrual dysphoric disorder,” and “gastro-esophageal reflux disorder (heartburn)” as examples of common complaints that drug companies have reinvented as chronic illnesses requiring lifelong treatment (see <http://www.cmaj.ca/cgi/content/full/171/12/1451>).

Estrogen Deficiency Syndrome

The marketing of so-called “estrogen deficiency syndrome,” which in English-speaking countries is known as “menopause” in (non-western cultures have no word for it) and “hormone replacement therapy (HRT)” has been the most lethal, in lights of thirty years of research linking it to reproductive cancers. The number of premature deaths linked to HRT is estimated in the millions. In this case the culprit is a single company, Wyeth, which manufactures Premarin (conjugated estrogens extracted from pregnant mare urine) and Prempro, a combination of estrogen and a second female hormone progesterone.

Although the medical community (and Wyeth) have been aware of links between estrogen replacement and breast, uterine and ovarian cancer since the 1970s, the research was effectively concealed from public view – until the frightening results of the Women’s Health Initiative (WHI) study hit the front page in 2002. Between 1993 and 1995, the National Institutes of Health (NHI) enrolled 161,809 women in the double blind WHI study. In 2002 the NHI shut down the study, originally scheduled to finish in 2005, when it became clear that the women taking HRT were experiencing a 26% increase in breast cancer (with the risk doubling after five years), a 41% increase in strokes, and a 29% increase in heart disease (see <http://www.theepochtimes.com/n2/content/view/9804/>).

Estrogen, a hormone regulating the development and function of the female reproductive system, was first discovered in 1925. In the 1930s, the drug company Wyeth developed a process to extract conjugated estrogens from the urine of pregnant mares. They patented their product as the drug Premarin (PREgnantMAresurINE), which first appeared on the market in 1942.

From the beginning Wyeth marketed Premarin, not for temporary relief of menopausal symptoms, but as a lifelong treatment to help all women maintain “healthy” estrogen levels in later life. Obviously this is nonsense, as a “healthy” or natural estrogen level in a post-menopausal woman is virtually zero.

1975: the First Study Linking Premarin with Cancer

The first study linking Premarin with increased uterine cancer appeared in 1975. It was replicated by other researchers in 1977 and 1979. These results were entirely consistent

with the discovery of estrogen receptors in the early seventies and the finding that stimulating these receptors caused tumor growth in tissue culture and laboratory animals.

Wyeth responded to these worrisome studies by promoting a small 1980 study showing that progesterone, a second female hormone, reduced the risk of uterine cancer with estrogen replacement. Unfortunately most doctors fell for Wyeth's slick PR campaign (and a lot of free pens, watches, clocks, lunches, and trips to overseas conferences). They conveniently overlooked the failure of 1980 study to look at cancer rates in women who took no hormone replacement or to study the possible role of this combination in inducing other hormone sensitive cancers, like breast and ovarian cancer. In fact, their success in selling doctors on the combination, led Wyeth to launch Prempro in 1995, which combined Premarin with progesterone.

The earliest studies linking Premarin with breast cancer appeared in early 1980. As Nik Ismail points out in "Hormone Replacement Therapy and Gynaecological Cancers," between 1975 and 1995, there were at least fifty studies linking estrogen replacement (HRT) with breast and uterine cancer. Some were cross cultural studies revealing that American women had more than ten times the incidence of breast cancer than Asian women, who don't take estrogen replacement (see <http://www.gfmer.ch/Books/bookmp/113.htm>).

The Multibillion Dollar Wyeth Cover-up

Wyeth responded to the breast cancer studies with a new PR blitz. In addition to flooding doctors' offices with literature claiming studies linking Premarin to cancer were "contradictory," they promoted numerous company-funded studies allegedly showing that estrogen replacement prevents osteoporosis and hip fractures, dementia and heart disease. The spin Wyeth gave doctors was that the effect of reducing cardiovascular disease (heart disease and strokes) – the most common cause of death in Americans – outweighed the somewhat lower risk of developing breast cancer. Ultimately the claim that Premarin and Prempro reduce women's risk of cardiovascular disease proved to be false. In fact this was one of the main reasons the WHI study was stopped: the women in the Premarin/Prempro arm of the study were developing cancer at higher rates – **and** experiencing significantly more heart attacks, strokes and dementia.

The role of estrogen replacement in reducing osteoporosis is supported by the WHI and other studies. However thus far, no studies have controlled for long term fluoride ingestion (from public water fluoridation schemes) or epidemic Vitamin D deficiency in elderly Americans – which both have a documented role in high US rates of osteoporosis and hip fracture.

The marketing blitz aimed at doctors was accompanied by an even more powerful PR campaign in Harper's Bazaar, the Ladies Home Journal and other women's magazines, appealing to American women's (largely manufactured) terror of aging by emphasizing the value of estrogen replacement in preserving sexual attractiveness, by preventing the skin changes and vaginal drying associated with aging.

Menopause: Made in the USA

Historically 80% of Premarin and Prempro sales have occurred in the US. Even in the

US, the cessation of menstruation is a non-event in 75% of women, producing no physical symptoms whatsoever. Most cultures have no word for menopause. In Chinese medicine, so-called menopausal symptoms are considered symptomatic of an underlying “imbalance” and disappear following a few days of herbal treatment. Even untreated, the hot flashes, night sweats, mood swings and insomnia some women experience rarely last longer than a few months. Many women report a significant improvement in health and well-being when they stop having periods.

There are interesting cross cultural studies of the “menopause” phenomenon. Non-western cultures typically view the cessation of monthly cycles as a milestone signaling transition to the role of community elder. The Filipino women Berger and Wenzel studied in *Women, Body and Society: Cross-cultural Differences in Menopause* (<http://www.ldb.org/menopaus.htm>) were extremely pleased with their freedom from the inconvenience of menstruation. They saw it as an initiation into the joys of old age – better sex (contrary to popular misconception, estrogens suppress sex drive, which in women is regulated by testosterone and oxytocin) and improved mood and energy. However most of all they appreciated the new love and respect they enjoyed, as an elder, outside the family. I see this attitude here in New Zealand in the Maori culture, where senior women receive the title of “kuia” or “whaia,” both designating immense esteem, prestige, and influence over community affairs.

As Berger and Wenzel’s and other cross cultural studies show, attitudes in the US and other English speaking countries are heavily influenced by a multibillion dollar PR industry that bombards women with messages glorifying youth, thinness and sexual attractiveness – and engendering frank terror of gray hair, facial wrinkles, weight gain and cellulite. Aggressive marketing preys very effectively on the insecurities these messages create to sell billions of dollars of wrinkle removing creams and lotions, age concealing make-up, hair coloring, botox, diet products and programs and plastic surgery.

Six Decades of False and Misleading Marketing

As revealed in internal documents uncovered in a few of the 5000+ lawsuits cancer victims have filed against Wyeth, the drug company’s culpability goes far beyond neglecting to inform menopausal women of cancer risks. They paint a very ugly picture of an aggressive public relations campaign to convince women and their doctors that estrogen replacement was the secret to eternal youth – by preventing age-related skin changes.

The result of Wyeth’s public relations effort was to make Premarin was the most commonly prescribed drug in the US in 1992. Yet by the mid-nineties, even the mainstream media was starting to take note of the preponderance of studies linking estrogen replacement to cancer. In 1995 this resulted in a *Time* magazine article (Wallis, C. “A Risky Elixir of Youth” *Time*. (26), 46-56, 1995), followed by a Tom Brokaw feature on NBC nightly news.

The NIH Shuts Down the WHI Study

Seventy percent of American women taking estrogen replacement in 2002 stopped when the National Institute of Health shut down the WHI study. This resulted in a 7% decrease in the first year alone of new breast cancer cases – a total of 14,000 women spared the agony of a potentially fatal breast cancer diagnosis (see

<http://www.theepochtimes.com/n2/content/view/9804/>).

Wyeth's response to all the negative publicity was to initiate yet another massive PR campaign discrediting the WHI study. They started with a letter to 500,000 doctors attacking the study, complaining that the women in the Premarin arm had other reasons for developing cancer – they were too old, too menopausal or weren't checked for pre-existing heart disease (I find this ironic – in 2002 Wyeth was still aggressively promoting Premarin to prevent heart disease). This was followed by articles attacking the study in various medical journals – articles published under the names of doctors specializing in women's health which were actually ghost written by the company (see <http://www.theepochtimes.com/n2/content/view/9804/>).

Many of the doctors were affiliated with the notorious Council on Hormone Education at University of Wisconsin (where forty-four of the sixty-four doctors have financial ties to Wyeth) Wyeth founded in response to the 2002 WHI study. In 2006 the Council even began offering a continuing medical education course for doctors called "Quality of Life, Menopausal Changes and Hormonal Therapy" – heavily promoting estrogen replacement.

Consumers' Only Protection Against Big Pharma

Wyeth's massive campaign to discredit the 2002 WHI study, at the expense of tens of thousands who would start or continue estrogen replacement as a result of these misguided efforts, has clearly harmed their defense in a few dozen of the 5000+ lawsuits that have made it through the courts.

Wyeth has yet to win a single lawsuit brought by women (or families of deceased women) who developed reproductive cancers as a result of taking Premarin or Prempro. Moreover there are still active information websites for affected women and/or families who have yet to file suit. If you or a loved one has developed breast, uterine or ovarian cancer as a result of taking Premarin or Prempro click here:

http://injury-law.freeadvice.com/drug-toxic_chemicals/prempro-lawsuit.htm

Medicalizing the Menstrual Cycle

(May 23, 2011)

In another classic example of drug companies “medicalizing” common complaints with non-medical causes, Eli Lilly has managed to turn premenstrual syndrome (PMS) into a profit-making commodity almost as lucrative as childhood bipolar disorder.

In 1994, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) included premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD) in their diagnostic manual as a “possible mental disorder requiring more research.” Although DSM IV lists PMDD as a strictly “research” diagnosis, Eli Lilly immediately seized on it as a genuine disorder and devised a marketing strategy to profit from it.

The Difference Between PMS and PMDD

Approximately 80-90% of women worldwide report physical and emotional changes in the seven to ten days prior to the onset of menstruation. For the majority of women, these consist of minor physical changes similar to those of early pregnancy (water retention, breast swelling and tenderness and abdominal bloating). Approximately one third of women note mental and emotional changes (aka PMS) - depression, anxiety, fatigue, irritability, insomnia, difficulty concentrating - that have a minor impact on their daily functioning. Although the APA has yet to agree PMDD even exists as a disorder, there are numerous claims in psychiatric and women’s health literature that some women with PMS (3-8% of all women) suffer from it. By definition, a woman can only qualify for a PMDD diagnosis if she experiences a “marked” decrease in normal functioning due to premenstrual mood changes. A rigorous Swedish study recently ascertained that the true percentage of women experiencing a “marked” decrease in functioning before their period closer to 1.3%

<http://www.nytimes.com/ref/health/healthguide/esn-pms-ess.html>

A Golden Marketing Opportunity for Eli Lilly

Once the patent on a drug expires, other manufacturers are free to produce much cheaper generic versions of the drug, resulting in plummeting sales of the original brand name drug. Lilly, who was facing the expiration of its patent (in 1999) on Prozac, exploited the inclusion of PMDD in the 1994 DSM IV by re-branding Prozac as a feminine pink and purple tablet called Sarafem. In 2001, the FDA approved Sarafem for “PMDD,” on the basis of double blind studies involving several hundred women. Lilly reported a 60% response rate in women who took it for five cycles, with greater effectiveness in women who took it continuously throughout the month (as opposed to 7-10 days before their period).

This high response rate is extremely puzzling, given that thirty years of double blind studies using fluoxetine to treat depression have an average response rate of 38%. In fact statistical analysis of all randomized controlled reveal that the average response rate of all SSRI antidepressants (i.e. Prozac, Zoloft, Paxil, citalopram, etc) is only slightly higher than the placebo rate (33-37%). Moreover as I have written previously (see “Marketing Serotonin Deficiency”), there is absolutely no scientific evidence that serotonin deficiency (the alleged condition SSRI’s are prescribed for) actually causes depression.

Skillful Marketing Adds Billions to the US Health Care Bill

Charging three dollars per dose for their pink and purple Sarafem tablets (in contrast to forty-one cents a pill for generic fluoxetine), Lilly launched a massive marketing campaign to convince women they suffered from PMDD. Given the soaring cost of health care in the US (the main reason millions of Americans go without health care), it strikes me both unethical and immoral to trick doctors and women into wasting nearly a billion dollars on pink and purple pills with a fancy name, when generic fluoxetine would have been equally effective at a fraction of the cost. Nevertheless in 2001, the year Serafem came out, nearly 100,000 prescriptions were sold, reaping Lilly \$85 million in profits. The high number of prescriptions suggests that doctors prescribed it out indiscriminately for premenstrual complaints, rather than limiting treatment to women with the severe symptoms allegedly associated PMDD.

After Lilly's phenomenal success, psychiatrists and drug researchers seized on a handful of studies to claim that serotonin deficiency was the cause of PMS. This, in turn, led other SSRI manufacturers to jump on the bandwagon to get their drugs approved for PMDD.

“Natural” and “Alternative” Treatments for Premenstrual Syndrome

What I find really fascinating about the PMS/PMDD controversy is that PMS one of the few women's health “conditions” in which there are more double blind placebo trials of “alternative” or “natural” treatments than medication trials. The three “alternative” treatments that have shown clear effectiveness in randomized controlled trials are omega 3 supplements, megadose Vitamin D and the chaste tree berry.

Omega 3 oil is the most studied in PMS-related mood changes, largely owing to its proven efficacy in depression and large cross cultural studies revealing that populations (for example Asians and Norwegians) who consume large amounts of fish (a primary source of omega 3) have an extremely low incidence of depression.

Vitamin D, though less well studied in PMS, has also proved helpful for depression in double blind studies, especially in elderly depressives, many of whom suffer from documented Vitamin D deficiency. There are a handful of studies showing that 1,000 – 2,000 international units of Vitamin D (with or without calcium) are also helpful in alleviating premenstrual symptoms. I don't believe this is a coincidence, given Asian women's extremely low incidence of mood-related PMS. The same oily fish that are a rich source of omega 3 are the only natural food source (as opposed to sunlight exposure) of Vitamin D.

Three double blind studies in the British Medical Journal, the Archives of Gynecology and Obstetrics and the Journal of Women's Health and Gender-based Medicine reveal that chaste berry helps approximately 52% of women with PMS. Chaste berry is an herbal remedy used by Hippocrates in ancient Greece for pre-menstrual symptoms. It's believed to work by lowering prolactin (a pituitary hormone influencing milk production). High prolactin levels are a recognized, but infrequent, cause of depression.

Is PMS Really a Nutritional Deficiency?

The obvious question raised by the omega 3 and Vitamin D studies – since both are basic nutrients required for healthy human functioning – is whether PMS is really a nutritional deficiency, rather than a true medical condition. A search of the research

literature reveals the question has received little study in conventional medical circles. Although western medicine acknowledges the research proving the effectiveness of omega 3 and vitamin D in alleviating PMS symptoms, doctors persist in talking about “treating” PMS symptoms with these supplements, rather than addressing the likelihood that they address an underlying nutritional deficiency. Western doctors have become so fixated on illness treatment (mainly with drugs) that they tend forget their historic health promotion role. The problem is compounded by the sad reality that most medical research is funded by drug companies, who have absolutely no profit incentive to fund nutrition studies.

The Official FDA Position on Omega 3 Fatty Acids

In 2004 the FDA gave “qualified” approval of the role of omega 3 as an essential nutrient in preventing cardiovascular disease (heart disease and stroke). However for some reason, they still refuse to acknowledge its importance in maintaining healthy immune function, as well as preventing and alleviating arthritis, depression and PMS, schizophrenia, and dermatitis. In contrast, Canadian and European regulatory agencies recognize the role of omega 3 in preventing all these conditions.

Both the American and Canadian Dietetic Association recommend a minimum weekly omega 3 intake of two servings of fish for healthy cardiovascular function. Depression studies suggest somewhat higher consumption (three times a week) is necessary to prevent depression. However dieticians caution against eating more than two servings, owing to contamination of global fish stocks with mercury, lead, nickel, arsenic and cadmium as well as other contaminants (PCBs, furans, dioxins, and PBDEs).

These toxins can be avoided by using fish oil that is independently certified as contaminant free (and carry NSF and NNFA quality seals). Good advice for people who can't afford or tolerate fish oil is that they stick to small fish at the lower end of the food chain (sardines, anchovies, mackerel and wild salmon), as toxins accumulate at much higher levels in large fish (such as tuna and sword fish). Pregnant women and children under five shouldn't eat tuna at all, owing to the danger of exposing developing brains to mercury.

The Official FDA Position on Vitamin D

Obviously the FDA acknowledges the role of Vitamin D as a nutrient. Here the controversy is over the minimum daily requirement – with endocrinologists and geriatricians (specialists who work with the elderly) recommending a daily dose of 1,000 IU (1,000 IU equals 0.025 mg) in summer (when people get more sunlight) and 2,000 IU in winter. Doctors used to believe that the only function of Vitamin D was to enhance calcium absorption. However, it also plays a significant role in central nervous system and immune function, as suggested by studies showing that healthy Vitamin D levels prevent depression, improve immunity, and reduce the incidence of colon, breast and prostate cancer, multiple sclerosis, autoimmune disorder, hypertension, diabetes, schizophrenia and asthma.

Take Home Message: Try Natural Remedies First

In light of all the above studies, common sense would dictate that women who suffer from PMS should try a combination of omega 3 and 1,000-2,000 IU of Vitamin D for a minimum of six months before resorting to either Sarafem or generic fluoxetine. Both

have potentially serious long term side effects. Owing to their effect on serotonin receptors in the brain, SSRI's can be very difficult to stop. Moreover they are associated with a loss of bone density, which increases the risk of osteoporosis and hip fracture, as well as a possible link to breast and ovarian cancer (see <http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/740875>).

Part IV Psychological Oppression: the Role of the Corporate Media

With psychological oppression, the population as a whole internalizes the belief that all resistance (organizing, lobbying and/or protesting) is doomed to failure. In the US psychological oppression, rather than political oppression (involving police or military force), is the primary force inhibiting grassroots organizing and protest. While there is a pretense of a free press in the US, the control of the news, entertainment and publishing industries by a handful of corporations with major holdings in the energy, defense and banking sectors results in the suppression of public information harmful to corporate interests, alongside the aggressive promotion of pro-corporate ideas and attitudes.

Part IV is divided into four sections. The first, “Corporate Censorship,” gives two examples of overt censorship of two of 2011’s most important international news stories (the \$12.5 trillion secret Federal Reserve bailouts and the role of the Egyptian labor movement in the February revolution), presumably due to potential harm they posed to US banks and corporations.

The second, “Disinformation and Propaganda,” concerns the role of the mainstream media and public relations industry in blanketing the American public with powerful pro-corporate ideology, as well as powerful messages inhibiting change.

The third, “Stigmatizing the Working Class,” deals with a specific type of culture war, widely promoted by the so-called “alternative media,” that pits middle class progressives against the working class by stigmatizing specific problems of the poor and disadvantaged: smoking, obesity and physical illness.

The final section, “Left Gatekeeping Foundations,” examines evidence that the CIA and corporate think tanks play a major role in stifling progressive debate and grassroots organizing by channeling funding to pseudo-progressive foundations.

Corporate Censorship

Bernie Sanders and the Secret \$12.5 Trillion Bailout

(February 13, 2011)

Americans who recall the enormous public opposition to Bush's \$700 billion TARP bailout in October 2008 (which was initially voted down by the House) would be astounded to learn that the Federal Reserve secretly issued an additional \$12.5 trillion in taxpayer funded loans between December 2007 and July 2010. While virtually ignored in the mainstream media, progressive and libertarian Internet sites are referring to the disclosure as the "Wall Street Pentagon Papers." See http://the7thfire.com/financial_federal_reserve.html

The Federal Reserve was forced to release details of this secret \$12.5 trillion bailout, due to an amendment Senator Bernie Sanders, Ron Paul and other libertarian Republicans inserted in the July 2010 financial reform act. After a lot of stonewalling, which included losing an appeal in the U.S. Second Circuit Court of Appeals, the Federal Reserve had no choice but to comply with the new law on December 1, 2010.

For anyone who hasn't seen the YouTube coverage of Senator Bernie Sanders 8½ hour filibuster on December 10, 2010, I highly recommend it: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXLJBaoz0Ew> The whole speech is available on C-SPAN <http://www.c-span.org/>

Sanders' speech contains interesting details about the secret bailout that were never disclosed in the mainstream media, which for the most part treated the disclosure of 21,000 secret Federal Reserve loans totaling \$12.5 trillion as a non-event. Although *Fox News* and the *Washington Post* reported on Sanders' shocking disclosure, they deliberately misrepresented the size of the bailout. The *Washington Post* gives the amount as \$3.3 trillion dollars, a figure they apparently got from a Federal Reserve admission in December 2008 about secretly issuing \$3.3 trillion in loans on top of the \$700 billion TARP bailout Congress authorized. *Fox News* gives the figure as \$3.8 trillion, the total of secret emergency (28 and 84 days loans) the Federal Reserve website lists under the category Term Auction Facility or TAF loans. However it fails to include another \$8.5 trillion in loans listed under five other categories:

- ◆ [Primary Dealer Credit Facility \(PDCF\)](#)
- ◆ [Term Securities Lending Facility \(TSLF\) and TSLF Options Program \(TOP\)](#)
- ◆ [Asset-Backed Commercial Paper Money Market Mutual Fund Liquidity Facility](#)
- ◆ [Commercial Paper Funding Facility \(CPFF\)](#)
- ◆ [Term Asset-Backed Securities Loan Facility \(TALF\)](#) - these were separate loans the Fed made to Bear Stearns, JP Morgan Chase, and Maiden Lane LLC, American International Group (AIG), Maiden Lane II and III and Bank of America.

Neither *Fox Business* (<http://www.foxbusiness.com/markets/2010/12/07/federal-reserves-bailout-rich-connected/>) nor the *Washington Post* (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/graphic/2010/12/01/GR2010120108165.htm>) mentions the General

Accounting Office (GAO) investigation Sanders has launched regarding clear conflicts of interest (the secret bailouts were approved by Federal Reserve members with a financial interest in companies that received them) that have occurred.

To their credit, *Fox Business* questions other troubling details about the secret bailouts:

1. The trillions of dollars of secret bailout loans to foreign banks and companies. The scores of foreign banks receiving zero interest Federal Reserve loans included

- ◆ Bank of Japan – \$380 billion.
- ◆ Central Bank of South Korea – \$40 billion.
- ◆ Development Bank of Korea – \$2 billion
- ◆ Bank of Bavaria – \$2.2 billion
- ◆ Arab Banking Corp (Bahrain) – \$23 billion

Foreign companies receiving billions of dollars in secret zero interest loans from the Federal Reserve included Toyota, Mitsubishi, BMW, Volkswagen and Honda. With US automakers struggling to remain solvent, the use of taxpayer dollars to bail out our foreign competitors has to be questioned.

2. The trillions of dollars of zero interest loans the Federal Reserve secretly gave American billionaires and multimillionaires (or the families):

- ◆ Christy Mack (wife of Morgan Stanley's billionaire CEO John Mack)
- ◆ Billionaire Wayne Huizenga
- ◆ Michael Dell, founder of Dell Computers
- ◆ Hedge fund manager John Paulson
- ◆ Private equity manager Christopher Flowers

This is especially alarming during a period where inability to access credit forced an unprecedented number of small businesses into bankruptcy. Instead of using federal funds to create jobs, stave off foreclosures, support small business and stimulate investment in alternative energy, public transportation and other programs to reduce US carbon footprint, billions of taxpayer dollars were used to make zero interest loans to billionaires, who reinvested the funds at 4-5% interest, an immediate return of millions of dollars clear profit.

3. Loans to 100 separate hedge funds and other investment funds registered in the Cayman Islands to avoid payment of US income tax (also resulting in zero return to the taxpayer).

The *Washington Post* article fails to mention the billionaires and multimillionaires who received loans, or the loans issued to companies registered in the Cayman Islands.

Presumably additional records will be forthcoming as a result of the March 2011 decision by the Supreme Court to uphold an appeals court ruling on an FOIA suit filed by Bloomberg's (and joined by Fox News) in 2008 - requiring the Federal Reserve to release details concerning secret loans US banks received during the 2008 economic crisis.

Egypt's Invisible Labor Movement

February 23, 2011

I get a very different picture of the Egyptian “revolution” from Al Jazeera and other international news sources than from the US media. The latter seems to focus exclusively on the role of Facebook in triggering massive street protests in Cairo and other Egyptian cities, ignoring the critical role of major strike actions across Egypt in the days before Mubarak’s resignation.

The fairy tale version promoted by the mainstream media goes as follows: as a result of a “Facebook” revolution lasting eighteen days, the Egyptian forced the military junta that controls the country to oust former president Hosni Mubarak, suspend the old constitution, dissolve parliament, and negotiate with the “opposition” to write a new constitution leading to “democratic” elections in six months time. According to the US press, the main opposition leaders include expatriate Mohamed Elbaradei, members of the youth movement and “bloggers,” like Google executive Wael Ghonim.

Unfortunately this Facebook revolution narrative overlooks four important facts:

1. Forty percent of Egyptians are illiterate (<http://humanexperience.stanford.edu/beininegypt>), and only the sons and daughters of the Egyptian elite have access to the Internet.
2. The April 6th Youth Movement, the driving force behind the January 25th Day of Anger, was born out of Egypt’s labor movement and named after the momentous April 6, 2008 Mahalla Strike.
3. The view of foreign analysts that strike action by 200,000 workers across Egypt on February 8, 2011 was the final factor impetus leading the military to force Mubarak to step down (owing to fears of an imminent general strike and severe damage to Egypt’s economy).
4. Efforts by middle class doctors, lawyers and managers, who eventually joined the Tahrir Square protest to persuade other demonstrators to go home and wait for elections.

The Role of World Bank/IMF Structural Adjustment

Also omitted from mainstream media coverage is the root cause of the massive labor unrest that accompanied the street protests, namely the draconian “structural adjustments” the World Bank and IMF imposed on Egypt in 1991. In Egypt, twenty years of these neoliberal reforms (think Reaganomics on steroids) have created a society in which 44% of the population lives below the poverty line of \$2 per day (<http://humanexperience.stanford.edu/beininegypt>). The average Egyptian worker makes \$70 a month. With two parents working, the average family of five struggles to get by on less than \$1 per day per person. In Cairo, it’s not unusual for homeless families to take up residence in the cemetery (see <http://english.aljazeera.net/indepth/opinion/2011/02/20112148356117884.html>).

Three Thousand Strikes Since 1998

Unlike the US media, the foreign press tends to be more accurate in reporting that the true balance of power rests with the Egyptian independent trade union movement,

consisting of more than thirty independent unions, including the two representing workers in Egypt's two most important sources of foreign currency: the Suez Canal and the tourism industry. The omission of this powerful movement from US mainstream coverage is quite significant, given that a general strike (which was clearly imminent in the days prior to Mubarak's resignation) has the potential to shut down the entire Egyptian economy. It's also much more difficult to derail than street protests – you can't force people to work by shooting them.

Although the only legal union in Egypt is the government-run Egyptian Trade Union Federation, approximately two million workers have engaged in over 3,000 illegal strikes since 1998. These strikes are typically greeted with brutal government repression, consisting of extrajudicial assassination of strikers, beatings by paramilitary thugs and arrest and torture. Over time this brutal repression has led independent Egyptian trade unions to make political demands (such as Mubarak's resignation, democratic elections, legalization of non-government unions and an end to violent repression), in addition to demanding better pay and working conditions.

The strength of Egypt's labor movement, which has grown by leaps and bounds since winning a few wage concessions in 2006, means that the Egyptian revolution is by no means over. Even though traffic has resumed flowing through Tahrir Square and despite the imposition of martial law (and a ban on strikes) by the military junta, widespread labor unrest continues. According to Al Jazeera English (<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2011/02/2011216141815340645.html>), workers in banking, transport, oil tourism, textiles and state owned media were all on strike last week to demand higher wages and working conditions.

The Refusal of the US Media to Cover Labor Issues

On reflection, I guess the media distortions around the Egyptian revolution are no surprise, given the typically poor coverage all union issues receive in the US. Presumably the omission of the role played by strikes and labor unrest in the European anti-austerity protests, as well as Egypt and China, is part and parcel of a sophisticated, decades-old anti-union public relations.

The Taboo Against “Workers” and “Working Class”

As Professor Joel Beinin points out in his analysis of the Egyptian labor movement (see <http://humanexperience.stanford.edu/beininegypt>), the terms “worker” and “working class” aren't taboo in Egypt, as they are in the US, where even pink collar office workers earning minimum wage consider themselves “middle class.” In *Taking the Risk Out of Democracy: Corporate Propaganda versus Freedom and Liberty* (<http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/25/006.html>), the late psychologist Alex Carey makes the point that the original purpose of “public relations” – a psychologically sophisticated form of propaganda pioneered by Edward Bernays was to undermine strong pro-worker sentiment among the American public by discrediting working class culture, union organizing, and strikes.

The widespread dissemination of “public relations” propaganda via the mainstream media (not only in news coverage, but in movies, TV programming and popular magazines) has been extremely effective in creating the myth that class differences have been abolished in the US. By manipulating working class Americans (80% of us) into believing we are really “middle class,” the power elite also tricks us into identifying

with our employers rather than fellow workers.

Wall Street and Obama are Running Scared

With the current massive pro-union protests in Wisconsin, Michigan and Ohio, clearly US workers are waking up to the reality that their employers - who are subjecting them to mass lay-offs, wage freezes, and benefit cuts, as well as expropriating their pension funds, while simultaneously paying their corporate bosses millions and billions of dollars in CEO bonuses – are ripping them off. Despite unprecedented corporate profits and rising stock prices, conditions continue to get worse for workers – as they struggle, in the face of increasing lay-offs, wage freezes, benefit cuts and foreclosures, to deal with skyrocketing food and energy costs.

Yet instead of trying to address the genuine pain of the American working class, Wall Street, the Obama administration, and the mainstream media cynically collude to conceal the vital role unions and strike action are playing in producing genuine political and economic reform in other countries. Apparently the risk is too high that US workers will try to copy overseas workers, by banding together to exercise real power in the face of relentless corporate attacks.

Propaganda and Disinformation

Moving from Facebook into the Streets: Addressing Corporate Propaganda

(March 30, 2011)

Recent militant protests in all fifty states suggest Americans are finally waking up that the US government is captive to Wall Street interests and incapable of addressing the serious global issues that confront us in the 21st century. Obama's continuation of Bush's conservative policies has been a cruel object lesson. At the same time, it seems to have convinced a critical mass of Americans that it makes little difference whether we have a Republican or Democrat in the White House. Unchecked US military aggression will continue to drain the faltering US economy; the US government will continue to subsidize oil, coal and auto companies, rather than compelling them to join a united effort to stave off catastrophic global warming; and skyrocketing food prices and looming water shortages will be ignored. Beholden to powerful Wall Street interests who fund their campaigns, our current political leaders are helpless to address these life or death issues. Any real solution will have to come from the people, via a citizen-led grassroots movement.

Many of us are firmly believe we saw the birth of that movement this past month in our state capitols. At the moment its members consist of a rarefied minority of educated Americans with Internet access. The key question that confronts us is how to expand that movement across the digital divide – to the roughly fifty percent of Americans who have withdrawn from the political process and who derive their knowledge of national and world events from reactionary pundits on Fox News.

In my lifetime, crossing this divide has always been the major stumbling block for American progressives. The past three decades have witnessed the launch of many fantastic grassroots initiatives around a multitude of critical issues. All engendered considerable energy and enthusiasm, flourished briefly and then, for the most part, fizzled and died.

In contrast to Europe and the Middle East, it seems very difficult for American activists to make the commitment to the grueling, sustained organizing required in a period of severe repression. They are too easily discouraged by personality and sectarian squabbles that are part and parcel of grassroots organizing. They find it far too tempting to withdraw to the comfort of a life focused exclusively on personal and family needs.

The Public Relations Industry: Systematic Pro-corporate Propaganda

In my mind, this relates to the extreme difficulty overcoming the sophisticated psychological conditioning that bombards Americans from an early age. In the US, it isn't enough to win people to our views about the train wreck corporate controlled government has caused. Getting them to commit to ongoing grassroots activism will also require millions of American to think very differently about most aspects of their lives. Simply put, we will have to start thinking like our grandparents and great grandparents. Because their lives centered around community and interdependence, rather than consumption and material possessions, they automatically turned to collective action when they and their families were threatened by powerful interests.

Unbeknownst to most Americans, the public relations industry was deliberately created by the National Association of Manufacturers in the 1920s to counter the community-centered view of American life that predominated at the beginning of the twentieth century. This community centered focus led many families to share their cars, washing machines, and other major appliances with neighbors – when corporate America sought to convince each household to buy their own. It also naturally biased public opinion in favor of workers and unions and against corporations.

Sigmund Freud's nephew Edward Bernays is considered the father of public relations. As the late Alex Carey describes in *Taking the Risk Out of Democracy*, Bernays was responsible for Woodrow Wilson's campaign to "sell" World War I to a profoundly isolationist American public. Bernays himself coined the term "public relations" when he set himself up as a Public Relations Counselor in 1919. He published his seminal work, *Propaganda*, in 1928, but went on to be heavily influenced by Joseph Goebbels, the propaganda minister who "sold" Hitler's Third Reich to the German people. Bernays' corporate clients included, Proctor & Gamble, CBS, the American Tobacco Company, Standard Oil, General Electric and the United Fruit Company. His propaganda campaign for the United Fruit Company is said to have led to the CIA's overthrow of the government of Guatemala in 1954.

The Hard Sell

Over the next ten to fifteen years, a gigantic public relations industry, through its major influence over advertising, news reporting, film and TV entertainment and popular magazines, would succeed in totally transforming the majority of Americans from engaged citizens to passive consumers. This major attitudinal shift, also known as "consumerism," came about largely through bombarding them with thousands of messages designed to create an overwhelming desire to purchase an endless array of corporate products.

The "pressure" American consumers feel to buy merchandise they don't really want or need (and often can't afford) is based on two powerful psychological messages. The first plays on instant gratification as an entitlement: "You're worth it." The second plays on insecurities about being regarded as inferior and rejected by peers and/or the opposite sex.

How the PR Industry Shapes Attitudes and Beliefs

Aside from the psychological hard sell tactics used to reduce Americans to passive consumers, the public relations industry bombards Americans daily with a host of other ideological messages. During the cold war, the American public was constantly subjected to pro-military messages demonizing communism, socialism, and the Soviet Union. With the launch of the War on Terror in 2001, the target of this xenophobic propaganda shifted to Muslims, Arabs and other dark skinned non-Christians. This creation of an external bogeyman serves to deflect working class anger away from the corporate state, the real enemy, was a propaganda technique devised by Goebbels. In Nazi Germany, this external scapegoat was "the Jews."

Other common ideological messages include anti-civil liberties messages and messages that promote disengagement from the political process. The former consist of fear inspiring messages to make Americans so fearful of imminent terrorist attack that they willingly surrender their own civil liberties to prevent it. Both Bush and Obama have

used similar messages to convince the American public to give up their right to habeas corpus (a Constitutional guarantee against imprisonment without charge), as well as Constitutional protections against warrantless search and seizure, government surveillance of phone conversations and emails, torture, and extrajudicial assassination.

“Do nothing” messages that discourage organizing and promote disengagement from the political process fall into five broad categories:

1. Politics and economics are for too complicated for ordinary people to understand. Americans’ proper political role is to choose wise political leaders and leave the important decisions to them.
2. Americans’ primary obligation is to their families and children, who they hurt if they waste time at union and/or community meetings and protests.
3. Class differences have been abolished in the US. Everyone with a full time job is automatically “middle class.” This, by definition, means their interests lie with the corporate elite – which leaves them nothing to complain or protest about.
4. The US and Americans are distinctly different (better) than the rest of the world and all obstacles can be overcome by individual effort. People who blame social conditions for their difficulties are just whiners.
5. There is no alternative – corporations, corporate controlled government and the corporate controlled media are all too powerful for ordinary people to bring about change. Organizing is pointless because we are helpless to change anything.

Links Between US Intelligence and the PR Industry

Given the obvious role media messaging plays in serving US foreign policy interests, it comes as no surprise that the public relations industry has a long and interesting relationship with US intelligence. The collaboration of the first CIA director Allen Dulles and Washington Post founder and publisher Philip Graham launched to launch Operation Mockingbird in 1948 is a matter of public record. Their stated goal was to both recruit and “plant” CIA-friendly journalists at both wire services (AP- Associated Press and UPI – United Press International), Time, Newsweek, and US News and World Report, as well as numerous metropolitan dailies. All this is well documented in Carl Bernstein’s *Rolling Stone* article “The CIA and the Media,” (*Rolling Stone*, 20 October 1977, pp. 65-67) and the memoir of convicted Watergate “plumber” E. Howard Hunt: *American Spy: My Secret History in the CIA, Watergate and Beyond*.

More recently the Pentagon (there is now a Pentagon Channel) and FBI have established their own public relations divisions to promote popular support for both militarism and repressive laws (such as the Patriot Act) that suppress popular opposition to these goals.

The Mass Psychology of Fascism: Wilhelm Reich and the Tea Party

(August 6, 2010)

As a long time progressive, I am very alarmed to see low income Americans flock to the reactionary Tea Party and Patriot movement and the ultra conservative candidates they support. Especially after similar trends in 1980, 1994 and 2000 installed ultra-conservative Republican governments that enacted legislation that significantly worsened the economic standing of the political base that put them into office. It raises a question I have struggled with for three decades now – why the New Right is so successful in engaging the working poor. Surely this is a group that should be supporting progressive candidates and policies that offer genuine solutions to their economic difficulties.

I recently picked up Wilhelm Reich's 1933 *Mass Psychology of Fascism* for the first time in thirty years. I was amazed to rediscover that Reich, a Marxist psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, also struggled with this issue. In short he relates the allure of fascism and reactionary politics for low income workers to an innate fear of social responsibility – stemming from the authoritarian child rearing styles that characterize industrialized society. I believe there is clear merit in revisiting Reich's work. It suggests that progressives may be headed in the wrong direction in their efforts to organize the working class.

The Allure of Fascism and Reactionary Politics for the Working Class

Reich's primary premise is that immense success of fascism – in Germany, Italy, Spain and Japan (he is also concerned about Islamic fundamentalism and mentions "Arab" societies) – is based in a perverse tendency of working people to support and vote for conservative and reactionary candidates. He feels this tendency is universal to all industrialized societies. He also asserts, with detailed anthropological, psychological, economic and political data, that it operates totally independently of national, cultural or ideological factors – or the personal characteristics of right wing leaders who seek to exploit it.

According to Reich, the strong allure of reactionary politics – and overt fascism – is based in mankind's 6,000 year history of rigid patriarchal, authoritarian and hierarchical social organization, particularly in its effect on child rearing practices. He believes the end result is a population of adults with a strong inner conflict between a biologically innate desire for freedom and the responsibility that goes along with that freedom. And that this conflict is based in an inability to accept that we, as human beings, are basically biologic creatures.

The Role of Sexual Repression

Reich devotes a large portion of his book to the concept of sexual repression. This makes sense to me, as anxiety about sexual functioning has always been the most troublesome aspect of our biologic make-up (obviously TV advertisers already know this). However his analysis of humankind's universal struggle with our fundamental biologic nature goes far beyond the health of our sex lives. He is far more concerned about specific political, religious, and economic institutions that deny women and adolescents, in particular, full expression of their sexuality. He believes these

institutions, in supporting the authoritarian family structures that enforce sexual repression, cause considerable psychic injury that children carry into adulthood. These difficulties make them extremely susceptible to right wing ideological propaganda.

Reich traces how “civilization’s” systematic suppression of normal biological (mainly sexual) functioning becomes perverted into “sadistic” social institutions (murder, war, torture, prostitution, rape, pornography, racial hatred, wage exploitation and slavery) that are rarely found in primitive societies that haven’t adopted paternalist and authoritarian social structures.

He then talks about early matriarchal (woman run) societies, which were the norm before our ancestors figured out where babies came from. In these societies, both women and men were free to have sex with anyone they pleased as soon as they reached sexual maturity. While children were totally free to play doctor with other willing children. The potential for sexual excess or exploitation was dealt with via self-regulation and – where necessary – group pressure. As Reich and many anthropologists note, murder, war, rape, prostitution and similar atrocities are extremely rare in these societies.

The reason why all primitive societies shifted to patriarchal (male run) social structures with the Agricultural Revolution (raising livestock and crops instead of hunting and picking berries) is widely debated. However there is general agreement that the ability to produce crops led to the ability to produce agricultural surpluses and “wealth.” With it came a desire in men who accumulated wealth to bequeath it to their offspring. This only became possible by instituting control over their partner’s (but not their own) sexuality.

The Role of Rigid Authoritarian Families

For many millennia this control was exerted through political and religious mandates under which women literally became the property of men. Although women are no longer regarded as property in most developed countries (except for states that operate under fundamentalist Islamic law), Reich – and many contemporary feminists – assert that women and adolescents continue to be denied full enjoyment of their sexuality under male-controlled political, economic and religious institutions.

And, as he convincingly argues, it’s not just women, children and adolescents who suffer the adverse psychological effects of these structures. Adult males who have grown up in authoritarian families still carry an inbred fear, anxiety, guilt and confusion about their inner drives – unpleasant feelings that are constantly reinforced by the power structure that controls public information.

All successful right wing propagandists (from Hitler’s minister of propaganda Joseph Goebbels to Rush Limbaugh and Karl Rove) are been tuned in to this fear and confusion and know exactly how to convey that they alone have a solution for it.

Why Americans Don’t Vote

In the US only half of eligible adults register and a little over fifty percent of registered voters actually vote. Reich argues that it’s typical in highly authoritarian “democracies” for the passive, non-voting population to constitute the majority. He also stresses, with examples from Germany, Japan, Italy and other totalitarian states, that it’s precisely this passive, non-voting majority that fascists and ultra-conservatives reach out to. He is

very critical of the left for attempting to engage this demographic by addressing their appalling economic conditions – a strategy he insists is doomed to failure. In his view, what the left needs to grasp – and never does – is that owing to the social conditions they grow up in, this politically inactive majority are too caught up in their own internal struggles to think in terms of their economic needs. To put it crudely, status-related needs, such as getting laid, and driving a fast car and watching the Superbowl on a flat screen TV, will always be a much higher priority than wages or working conditions.

Reich also makes the point that just because this group is “non-political” in no way means they are passive. To the contrary, their withdrawal from the political process is a highly active (though unconscious) defense against the social responsibility inherent in making political choices. Their exposure in childhood to authoritarian family, educational, and religious structures has denied them any experience of the human organism’s natural capacity of self-regulation. Thus they reach adulthood with no confidence in their ability to conduct their lives without external authority to guide and compel them.

The reactionary right knows exactly how to appeal to these unconscious fears and anxieties. First by creating even more rigid and authoritarian structures – that provide immediate (though temporary) relief of anxiety by limiting choice. And secondly by promoting racist or pseudo-racist ideology that projects unhappiness and perceived lack of freedom away from ourselves onto an external “enemy” – Jews, Moslems, socialists, immigrants, terrorists, Hispanics, blacks, feminazis, liberals, intellectuals (this was Bush’s favorite scapegoat) and increasingly teenagers.

Where Progressives go Wrong

Reich obviously believes the progressive message – economic and political freedom – is more innately appealing to the working class than what fascism has to offer. His only complaint is the way the left tries to deliver it. What he advocates is that instead of educating low income workers about economic and political injustice, progressives ought to directly address the emotional baggage the working poor carry from authoritarian family and school experiences. He feels the best way to do this is to engage in politically enlightened social reform activities, primarily directed towards youth and women. With the aim of helping them become resilient adults unhindered by their parents’ insecurities.

During his lifetime, Reich himself was an outspoken champion of women’s rights – arguing that freeing women from authoritarian family structures was the best way to free their children in paternalistic, authoritarian families for economic reasons. Thus he campaigned tirelessly for women’s ability to access (free) birth control and abortion, as well as for laws and programs promoting women’s economic independence. He also advocated that progressives involve themselves in parent and teacher education (to specifically address authoritarian child rearing and teaching styles) and health and sex education.

Are There Lessons from the Sixties?

As I recall, we did a lot of this progressive social reform in the sixties and seventies – and for some reason stopped. We attempted to address our authoritarian, hierarchical educational system by starting our own alternative schools, focused on curiosity, creativity, problem solving, positive reinforcement and role modeling, rather than rote

memorization and authoritarian control and punishment. Somehow progressive activists lost interest in volunteering in alternative schools and turned them over to the educational system. This has resulted in hundreds of public schools that are alternative in name only – because of authoritarian administrative structures which force teachers to run their alternative classrooms in exactly the same way as traditional ones.

We also tried to address an authoritarian medical system by starting free clinics staffed by lay and peer support workers, as well as doctors, nurses and other health care workers who volunteered their time. Then before we knew it, these clinics morphed into federally funded “community clinics,” where doctors and other health care workers nurses now command the same salaries – and unfortunately operate under the same hierarchal structures – as in mainstream hospitals and clinics.

With the current health care mess and more teenagers than ever dropping out of high school, the need seems more acute than ever for progressively oriented free clinics and alternative high schools and literacy and sex education classes. Oh yes, and how about free, progressive abortion counseling for pregnant teenagers and adults? Why should Right-to-Life churches have the monopoly on abortion counseling?

Targeting Women

(June 25, 2010)

It's extremely rare to see the major political issues I face as a woman reflected in the mainstream media. I find this quite sad, given that the feminist movement – which dates from Mary Wollstonecraft's 1792 *Vindication of the Rights of Women* – is over 200 years old. The concept of feminism is based on the notion that contemporary women, based on their gender, face difficulties unique from men's. Over the past three and a half decades, the term has been used to encompass a range of social conditions that prevent women from achieving their full potential as human beings. These include, among others, systemic inequality and discrimination in education, employment, and the legal and criminal justice system; legal, economic and psychological pressure to conform to stereotyped gender roles and to subordinate basic needs to those of men; and denial of basic reproductive rights, especially among low income women. The area of reproductive rights in itself covers a range of services that are readily available to upper income families but totally inaccessible to the thirty percent of female-headed households below the poverty line. Affordable birth control, abortion, prenatal care, child care and paid parental leave are all essential for women to function effectively in contemporary society.

Unfortunately the way mainstream media has covered feminism has not been conducive to rational dialogue about these fairly complex issues. In fact numerous social commentators – starting with J Kenneth Galbraith – believe the mainstream media has deliberately targeted women as consumers by creating a very

narrow, stereotyped ideal of what modern women should look like, as well as what they should think, feel and value.

Targeting Women for the Hard Sell

Much has been written about the psychological underpinnings of the public relations and advertising industry – how sophisticated advertising deliberately plays on fundamental unconscious drives to pressure consumers to continually purchase products they can't really afford and don't really need. These powerful psychological messages can be broadly divided into two groups. The first includes messages that play on instant gratification as an entitlement. The advertising industry has been pumping out different versions of the slogan "You're worth it" for several decades. The second group of messages play on basic human insecurities about being viewed as inferior and rejected by peers and/or the opposite sex.

When substantial numbers of women entered the work force, corporations and the advertising industry went after this new source of disposable income by launching the appearance industry. Whereas previously only women who belonged to the wealthy elite could afford to follow the dictates of fashion gurus, suddenly there was enormous pressure for minimum wage office workers to purchase brand new wardrobes every year. The fashion industry was quickly joined by a giant cosmetics industry that markets billions of dollars of make-up, hair, skin and nail products, teeth whiteners, breath fresheners by terrifying women – and increasing numbers of men – that without these

products they will never attract the opposite sex.

Following the enormous success of the cosmetics industry, corporate America went on to launch the diet industry and ultimately the cosmetic surgery industry. In addition to marketing sexual attractiveness, these new ventures are even more aggressive in marketing thinness and fear of aging. Their success in convincing hundreds of millions of women world wide to hate their bodies is directly responsible for the epidemic of (often fatal) anorexia nervosa – a condition that is virtually unknown in the third world.

The Pressure to Play Happy Families

In my view, the mainstream media's stereotyped view of women (as perpetually young, starvation thin and perfectly chiseled) serves an important strategic purpose beyond the short term goal of selling cosmetics, hygiene and diet products and plastic surgery. This stuff is small change.

The big money comes from systematically pressuring women to believe they will be social outcasts if they fail to succeed at romantic love – in which the final exam is setting up housekeeping and starting a family. These messages drive the big ticket, usually non-discretionary sales: residential property, home renovation (aka DIY or the big R), major appliances, furniture and furnishings, and most lucrative of all, the multimillion dollar industry producing and promoting baby and children's products.

This is also the main reason that couples age twenty-eight to forty carry the highest debt load in industrialized society and are at the highest risk for personal bankruptcy.

What is Feminism Anyway?

The other major problem I have with media coverage and women's rights is (I believe) a deliberate effort to confuse feminism and women's rights with affirmative action.

As a consequence, media coverage of women's rights seems narrowly focused on issues that concern upper middle class women – for example progress in appointing more women to high status positions (i.e. increasing the number of women doctors, lawyers, judges, CEOs, etc).

In my mind true feminism seeks to address universal issues that affect all women regardless of social or economic status – as well as all children - as women (as mothers) are the natural advocates for children unable to advocate for themselves. Obviously there are differing perspectives in defining these universal issues. In the European Union, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, many issues once viewed as “feminist” are now seen as sound social policy benefiting the welfare of society as a whole.

Feminism? Or Good Social Policy?

Over the last few decades most industrialized countries (the US being a notable exception) have enacted a raft of reproductive rights legislation – based on the premise that it's cheaper to intervene early in life than pay for twenty to thirty years of medical costs and disability benefits (or twenty to thirty years of incarceration) for neglected or abused children who go on to develop chronic medical or mental health problems or an antisocial personality disorder.

This trend relates largely to increasing evidence that the intrauterine milieu and first three years of life are the ultimate determinant of an adult's health status, IQ and

emotional well being.

The Growing Science of Epigenetics

Whereas the early Freudians used to make similar claims about unfavorable “psychological” influences on infants and young children, it is now clear the effect is biological rather than psychological. That it relates to “epigenetics” – a term referring to changes in gene expression caused by mechanisms other than the underlying DNA sequence. Numerous studies show that environmental stress and hormones (particularly stress hormones) can cause genetic code to be transcribed (into proteins and enzymes) in such a way that negatively affects an individual’s immune response or even predisposes them to mental illness.

For some reason, even though most of these studies originate in the US, our own country seems to lag far behind other developed countries in translating these studies into public policy.

The highest on my list of urgent women’s rights issues elected officials need to address are

- ◆ Stronger pay equity legislation – despite 1963 federal legislation outlawing pay discrimination based on sex, full time female workers between eighteen and sixty-four still earn around only eighty percent as much as male workers with comparable qualifications, experience, and job descriptions.
- ◆ Adequate and affordable prenatal care and nutritional support for all women regardless of income
- ◆ Safe, affordable pregnancy termination for all women unable to carry a pregnancy to term for health or psychological reasons (my ultraconservative grandfather turned his portrait of Richard Nixon to the wall when the Republicans adopted an anti-abortion platform – he saw this as a way to save billions of dollars in welfare benefits).
- ◆ Quality, affordable childcare for all single parents of young children who wish to work or pursue education or training.
- ◆ A decent caregiver allowance for single parents of pre-school children to 1) allow women to leave abusive marriages without dooming themselves and their children to poverty and 2) reward single women (and men) for dedicating themselves to the oldest, hardest, most socially relevant profession in human history: namely child rearing. The cost of a six year caregiver allowance is ridiculously cheap when compared to the phenomenal cost of processing neglected and abused teenagers and young adults through the criminal justice system.
- ◆ Tougher prosecution of domestic and other violence against women.
- ◆ Reform of rape laws to ensure accused rapists receive a fair trial without re-victimizing their victims.

Stigmatizing the Working Class

In Defense of Smokers

(September 7, 2010)

As a doctor, I am well aware of the negative health effects of smoking. Studies show a life time of smoking subtracts an average of ten years from your life expectancy. I am also knowledgeable about the considerable health costs of treating smoking-related illnesses, such as chronic bronchitis, emphysema, heart disease, and stroke. However some studies suggest that non-smokers actually generate higher health care costs because they live ten years longer (see http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2009-04-08-fda-tobacco-costs_N.htm).

These studies receive limited publicity because the Center for Disease Control prudently chooses not to promote the cost savings associated with premature death.

Owing to a chronic sinus condition, I am also painfully aware of the effects of second hand smoke. Prior to the public ban on smoking, I had no choice but to avoid public areas (restaurants, bars, theaters and even airplanes) where smoking occurs.

The Stigmatization of Smokers

Yet as a civil libertarian, I am also extremely concerned about the increasing stigmatization of smokers – especially when I see that employers are using “smoker status” as a justification for not hiring people. In this regard, I think the right wing may be justified in labeling liberals (who were largely responsible for smoking bans) as “green fascists.” In an era where corporate and government interests are looking for every possible opportunity to pit working Americans against one another, we need to be wary of becoming hypercritical over lifestyle choices.

Most progressives know better than to stigmatize the unemployed and homeless (many of us may be joining them soon). Yet some of us don’t give a second thought about coming down on smokers, alcoholics, or the obese. All three seem popular targets right now, owing to liberals’ willingness to embrace the basically conservative philosophy of “taking personal responsibility” for our own lives.

The Cult of Personal Responsibility

For progressives to get caught up in the cult of personal responsibility strikes me as a serious tactical error in an economy where one out of six workers are unemployed and most with jobs are only one paycheck away from the streets. Moreover singling out designated groups for their poor lifestyle choices distracts us from the real problem in the US – a concerted attack by Wall Street and our corporate controlled President and Congress on working people.

Decades of epidemiological research show that lifestyle choices account for only 10% of the causation of illness (see “Useless Eaters: the Stigmatization of Illness”). If we’re really serious about improving Americans’ abysmal health status (near the bottom for industrial countries), it’s time to address the real cause of poor health. Study after study shows a direct link between the extreme income disparity in the US (where 10% of the population controls 70% of the wealth) and our high rate of both acute and chronic illness.

It's time to focus on the real problem – the corporate deregulation and tax cuts responsible for our extreme income inequality. Instead of scapegoating smokers and fat people.

Useless Eaters: the Stigmatization of Illness

(September 29, 2010)

As a psychiatrist battling the stigma of mental illness for more than thirty years, I am gratified by growing public awareness that that schizophrenia, depression, and bipolar disorder run in families and are, at least partly, biologically determined. Thankfully the days when it was socially acceptable to blame depressives for being lazy or not doing enough to help themselves are long gone.

I wish I could say the same of physical illness which, after all, is basic to human existence. The US, unquestionably, has the most reactionary and punitive attitude towards illness in the world. It comes out in all manner of regressive and inhumane government policy: the federal government's absolute refusal to make sick and parental leave mandatory (as in all other industrialized societies), the pressure for long term recipients of Social Security disability benefits to undergo continual review and mandatory treatment (which most have no way of paying for, as doctors have stopped accepting Medicare and Medicaid), as well strong pressure on doctors to declare them well enough to work; and now a proposal to change eligibility for Social Security retirement to make the elderly "prove" they are too sick to work.

The Growing Attack on Entitlements

In the growing attack, by both Republicans and Democrats, on entitlements, there are always assertions – either direct or implied – that sick people themselves are responsible for the problems that make them unable to work. Americans are far too ready to accuse people who fall ill of eating the wrong food, not exercising, or not managing stress properly. What troubles me even more is the way so many people have internalized these attitudes, especially when epidemiological studies reveal that lifestyle factors only account for ten percent of illness.

There is no question that the US has parted company with the rest of the world on this. In fact, I hear a lot of discussion that is ominously reminiscent of Adolph Hitler's "useless eaters" initiative.

Hitler adopted his "useless eaters" policy in the early thirties at the very beginning of his regime. It was a utilitarian approach to social welfare consistent with the role the Nazi state played in serving the German and American corporate elite who put them in power. Hitler enforced it vigorously, carting tens of thousands of elderly, handicapped, physically and mentally ill and retarded individuals off to execution camps (long before the communists, Jews, gypsies and other undesirables) because of their inability to contribute "productively" to society.

The Long Shadow of Joseph Goebbels

American attitudes, not just around health, but around all spheres of human activity, are far more reactionary than the rest of the "free" world. With new information surfacing over some of the Nazi connections of CIA founder Allen Dulles, I am increasingly skeptical this is either coincidental or down to a handful of right wing think tanks. Dulles' high regard for Hitler's chief propagandist Joseph Goebbels is a matter of public record. As is the fact that Dulles incorporated Hitler's entire eastern European spy

network into the CIA after World War II. And the long, cozy relationship between the CIA Office of Public Information and many US newspapers, news magazines and publishing houses (see “Moving from Facebook into the Streets.”)

If the CIA, as it appears, has direct influence over media content, I think it’s reasonable to ask whether this plays a role in shaping how we think. I believe it does.

Internalizing “Useless Eater” Mentality

What I find most troubling about the reactionary “useless eater” mentality pushed by policy and opinion makers is the way Americans have internalized the belief that it’s their own fault if they fall ill. In fact much of the US population seems more freaked out about getting sick than dying. I can’t say I blame them, as nearly half of American workers have no sick leave and lose a day’s pay every time they are off work.

Americans also spend billions of dollars on alternative health care and vitamin supplements and other non-prescription remedies. The middle class is virtually obsessed with healthy eating, only drinking bottled or filtered water, compulsive exercise routines and meditation, yoga, and other stress reduction techniques to cope with monumental levels of job stress.

The advertising industry compounds the problem by promoting a variety of cough and cold remedies and caffeine and mega B vitamin “boost” drinks to enable people to attend work when they have colds or even quite serious illnesses, such as bronchitis and influenza (aka “the flu”).

Medicating Kids

Parallel to this pressure for adults to be healthy, is immense pressure for children to be “normal.” While parents seem to be appropriately skeptical about taking unnecessary drugs themselves, they seem far too eager to and medicate children with behavior problems. As a child and adolescent psychiatrist, I am well aware that ADHD is a genuine disorder affecting one to two percent of children (but not childhood bipolar disorder – see “Big Pharma: Killing Kids for Profit” in Part III).

Yet there’s no legitimate reason why American children should be three times as likely to be diagnosed and treated for ADHD than children in other parts of the world. In my work, I come across psychiatrists from all over the world. Based on their input, I can safely asserted that the eagerness of US doctors (at the behest of drug companies) to prescribe psychotropic medication for children is an international scandal that casts the standard of American pediatric and psychiatric care in a very bad light.

Sending Sick Kids to School and Day Care

Just as alarming is the large number of kids forced to attend school or day care when they’re sick because their working parents can’t afford to stay home and have nowhere else to send them. In doing so, they invariably expose all their child’s classmates, who eventually fall ill and expose other children and families. As a child and adolescent psychiatrist, I see many children who suffer twelve or more serious (requiring antibiotics) throat, ear, sinus or chest infections every year.

This is a major public health problem, especially now that asthma (often triggered by chest infections), is reaching epidemic proportions among American children. Studies show that allowing children to suffer one respiratory infection after another can result in

permanent lung changes, with lifelong health consequences.

The Myth That Lifestyle Factors Cause Illness

Good health is elusive. Both acute and chronic illness are fundamental to the human condition. Studies show we have a very limited ability to stay well by eating right, exercising and reducing stress. The University of Washington epidemiologist Dr Stephen Bezruchka has been writing and speaking for nearly two decades on the real cause of illness and poor health. As he repeatedly points out, lifestyle factors (including smoking) only account for ten percent of illness. According to Bezruchka, the single most important determinant of adult health status and life expectancy is your mother's income and social status during pregnancy and the first three years of life.

Although more than fifty years of epidemiological studies bear this out, it is only in the last decade scientists have figured out why this is – thanks to the new science of epigenetics. While the early Freudians used to make similar claims about unfavorable “psychological” influences on infants and young children, it is now clear the effect is biological rather than psychological. That it relates to “epigenetics” – a term referring to changes in gene expression caused by mechanisms other than the gene structure of their DNA.

Numerous studies show that environmental stress and hormones (particularly stress hormones) produced during pregnancy can cause genetic code to be transcribed (into proteins and enzymes) in that negatively affects the development of the immune system – in addition to predisposing the fetus to biochemically based mental illnesses.

The Link Between Income Inequality and Poor Health

The most important epidemiological finding, according to Bezruchka, is that the effect of low income status on health is much more pronounced in societies with extreme income inequality. Study after study bears this out. In other words, a poor person's adult status and life expectancy will be worse if he is born into a country with big gap between the economic status of its rich and poor residents. Income inequality in the US (where ten percent of the population controls seventy-one percent of the wealth) is the most extreme in the industrialized world. Thus it's no surprise that they rank near the bottom of statistical health indicators. In life expectancy, the US rates 38th, just behind Cuba. In infant mortality, it rates 30th, just above Slovakia.

These findings also belie the efforts of policy and opinion makers to convince us that class differences have disappeared in the US. For example, it's extremely rare to see working class families depicted on American TV. In fact some Republican commentators accuse their opponent of “class warfare” for even mentioning the existence of an underclass. Nevertheless, in the face of healthy corporate profits and CEO bonuses and with a double dip recession on the horizon, American's class divide is receiving more and more attention.

A Mindset Driven By Social Service Cuts

Dr Susan Rosenthal, in *Sick and Sicker*, also points out that it's only in the last thirty years that politicians and policymakers – on both sides of the aisle have made sick people responsible for their own illness. Epidemiological studies have always shown that poor health correlates directly with low income and social status. Rosenthal notes

that in Dickens' time it was taken for granted that the poor – undernourished and living in cold, damp, overcrowded tenements – were far more prone to illness than their middle class counterparts. In her view, this shift to a new “blame the victim” mentality has been deliberate – to justify aggressive social service cutbacks (by both Republicans and Democrats) that became fashionable with the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980.

The Politics of Obesity

(December 20, 2010)

Currently there's a lot of focus in the mainstream media on the growing obesity epidemic. The media universally places the blame on individuals. Overweight adults are guilty of "poor lifestyle choices." In children, obesity is blamed on parents' failure to control their kids' unhealthy food choices. This emphasis on "poor lifestyle choices" has led some progressives to call for a "fat tax" to penalize Americans for buying fast food and junk food. This wrongheaded approach flies in the face of all medical and epidemiological research regarding the causes of obesity.

Why Neoliberalism Promotes Individual Solutions

I am always very skeptical whenever I see any major social problem transformed into a personal problem that can only be solved by individuals and their families. The ideological belief that only individuals can solve social problems has been part and parcel of the neoliberal economic agenda rolled out by Milton Friedman in the seventies in eighties (first in Chile and ultimately by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher). In fact Thatcher said as much: "There's no such thing as society - only individuals and families."

Moreover a look at the editorial content of the *Reader's Digest* and other periodicals associated with CIA Office of Public Information shows how actively the corporate elite and their minions promote individualism as an ideology (see <http://aangirfan.blogspot.com/2009/08/readers-digest-national-geographic-and.html>). My earlier article, "Moving from Facebook into the Streets," contains a detailed discussion of Project Mockingbird and the CIA's infiltration of America's mainstream media.

Individual Solutions Have Never Worked for Obesity

There is really no reason why the obesity epidemic should differ from other epidemics. In fact the political and social factors underlying obesity are a lot more obvious than with most infectious diseases. For nearly five decades, doctors and weight loss franchises, such as Weight Watchers and Jenny Craig, have tried every individual approach imaginable for weight loss - with spectacularly poor results. With a few well-publicized exceptions, the vast majority of dieters lose some weight and then overcompensate by regaining even more weight than they have lost. In my view, this individualized, case-by-case approach to obesity is doomed to failure, until the underlying social and political causes of obesity are addressed.

Political and Social Causes of Obesity

I find it helpful to divide the political and social causes of obesity fall into two broad categories: ideological and economic. The former refers to the corporate messages triggering unhealthy eating that bombard all citizens of western countries on a daily basis. The economic causes, which are more complex, include poverty-related prenatal effects, a system of government subsidies that penalizes low income Americans (the most obese people on the planet), food ghettos in our inner cities, and the inability of low income Americans to access preventive health care or nutritional counseling.

How Corporate Messaging Fosters Excessive Weight Gain

What is often overlooked in analyzing obesity is that 250,000 years of evolution have biologically programmed human beings to crave high calorie fatty and sugary foods. Food security was a life and death issue for the vast majority of our hunter-gather ancestors - who often went weeks or months without access to food. Obviously those genetically programmed to scarf high calorie food when it was abundant had a much better chance of surviving to pass their genes to the next generation.

The corporate planners, advertisers, and psychologists who advise them are very much aware of the immense profits to be derived by exploiting this inborn tendency to crave high calorie foods. This is the major reason we are all constantly bombarded by billboards, TV, radio, and print ads designed to create an irresistible desire for French fries, Big Macs, deep fried KFC chicken, and chocolate.

Economic Causes of Obesity

Epidemiologists have known for decades that rates of obesity are much higher in low income and minority groups. However it's only in the past few years that medical science has understood the physiological mechanisms responsible for this finding. In my own practice, I've identified four specific reasons for excessive weight gain in low income patients: 1) insulin resistance, also known as metabolic or dysmetabolic syndrome - which, according to epidemiologists, is linked to extreme income equality, 2) federal government junk food and fast food subsidies, 3) food ghettos in low income neighborhoods, and 4) a for-profit, insurance-based health care system that excludes low income Americans from access to preventive care and nutritional counseling.

How Insulin Resistance Relates to Low Income

I have written previously about income inequality being the primary driver of poor health (see "Useless Eaters: the Stigmatization of Illness") Epidemiologists point to vast statistical evidence indicating that the mother's income when she gives birth is the single most important predictor of her child's lifetime health status. Geneticists and microbiologists believe it relates to epigenetics - a phenomenon whereby early environmental influences determine the range of protein enzymes produced by specific genes.

One of the most important epigenetic effects is the development of insulin resistance or metabolic syndrome when a fetus is repeatedly exposed to high levels of cortisol and other stress hormones from the mother's bloodstream. Insulin resistance is a lifelong condition that causes glucose (blood sugar) to be preferentially stored, rather than utilized by the body. It results in serious appetite imbalance and a strong tendency towards weight gain. It's an extremely condition among disadvantaged minorities - among African and Native Americans in North American, as well as Maori in New Zealand and indigenous Australians.

Government Subsidized Junk Food

Michael Pollan and others have written eloquently on the problem of government subsidies on corn, soybean, and wheat production. Federal food subsidies started during the Depression - to protect small family farmers when the price they received for their crops fell below their overhead costs. With the advent of factory farming, these subsidies are mainly going to corporate food giants like Monsanto, Cargill and Archer

Daniel Midland - making it even harder for small farmers to compete with them.

These subsidies also enable Food Inc to sell Big Macs, candy, and starchy, calorie empty junk foods much more cheaply than healthy foods, such as vegetables, fruits and nuts. Subsidized corn provides 90% of the diet of beef cattle, as well as being processed into high fructose corn syrup - a cheap sweetener used in breakfast cereals, candy, soft drinks, and other junk foods - or, along with soy, into the oil fast food restaurants use to deep fry foods. With increasing unemployment, declining wages, and spiking food prices, fresh fruits and veggies are an unaffordable luxury for many low income families - leaving them no choice but to go for government subsidized junk food.

Food Ghettos in our Inner Cities

There was extensive NPR coverage several years ago when the last major supermarket chain closed in Detroit. In all twenty-one of America 's largest cities are experiencing what is known as an "urban grocery gap" - characterized by fewer stores and less square footage per store than in suburbia. The poorest neighborhoods typically have about 55% of the grocery square footage of wealthier neighborhoods. (See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supermarket_shortage). With no or limited public transportation options, many inner city residents have no choice but to rely on KFC or the corner store for their starchy, high fat, high fructose corn syrup meals.

Americans Don't Receive Preventive Care

Last but not least is the total absence in the US of preventive health care - a direct result of its for-profit, insurance-company dominated health care system. The weight gain caused by insulin resistance can be limited if identified early in life. There are also a host of common nutritional deficiencies (omega 3, vitamin D, iron, folic acid, etc.) that can cause appetite increase and weight gain if left untreated. Unfortunately close to one-third of Americans don't have a regular family doctor, much less access to preventive care.

Preventive health services, to reduce the incidence of expensive chronic conditions like heart disease, strokes, cancer and diabetes, is an extremely high priority in other industrialized countries, which all provide publicly funded health care. When all medical care is taxpayer funded, there's an obvious incentive to prevent illness, rather than funding twenty to thirty years of treatment for chronic conditions, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke.

Ironically US taxpayers ultimately pick up the tab for treating these illnesses. In most cases, patients who become too ill to work lose their health insurance and rely on the federal government – via Medicare or Medicaid – to pay for their medical care.

Ending the Obesity Epidemic

Public health and food policy experts have proposed a range of short and medium term solutions to the obesity epidemic. Unfortunately many of them, especially those involving federal policy, will be extremely hard to implement without addressing the root cause of the problem: namely the near total corporate dominance over both public information and federal, state, and local government. Thus activists must organized to end bad policies, while they simultaneously work for the long term goal of throwing the crooks out of Washington. See ** below for information about a Constitutional amendment to end corporate in state and federal elections

Short term organizing goals might include

1. Banning junk food ads on TV - Viewers have already pressured the federal government to ban cigarette ads on TV, as well as pressuring the alcohol industry to self-regulate by not showing liquor ads prior to 10 pm.

2. Reducing income inequality, the root cause of insulin resistance, via fairer taxation, stronger unions and a federally mandated living wage - Warren Buffett (the world's second richest man) is the most prominent American arguing for an urgent reduction in income inequality (see <http://www.slate.com/id/2266025>) through fairer taxation. Other business analysts and economists are also coming around to the view that true economic recovery will depend on a "consumer-led recovery," which will only occur when workers have enough take home pay to purchase the products they produce. This will only happen when the 1947 Taft Hartley Law, which has slowly destroyed unions in the US by undermining their collective bargaining rights, is repealed and when Congress raises the federal minimum wage (\$7.25 per hour) to a level that enables families to provide for basic survival needs (between \$19-20 per hour where both parents work).

3. Eliminating federal agricultural subsidies - Last week Congress took the first momentous step of ending federal subsidies for school junk food lunches by passing the Child Nutrition Bill, which had been stalled for two years. The next step is to eliminate altogether \$14 billion in federal subsidies for corn, soy, and wheat altogether (see <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/11/13/weekinreview/deficits-graphic.html>)

4. Abolishing "food ghettos" via the urban garden movement - What is happening in Detroit is truly inspirational. Housing foreclosures and vacancies have turned many blocks of downtown Detroit into empty, abandoned land - which local residents are converting into urban gardens to produce fresh fruits and vegetables. There are similar grassroots projects in Milwaukee (see <http://www.growingpower.org>) and Los Angeles (see <http://www.good.is/post/five-innovative-urban-gardening-programs-in-los-angeles/>)

5. Guaranteeing access to preventive care (and nutritional counseling) by expanding Medicare to cover all Americans - A close look at the balance sheet reveals that ObamaCare, Obama's corporate welfare plan for insurance companies, cannot be funded without substantially increase US indebtedness. Given the cost cutting frenzy in Washington, the health program will clearly undergo major amendment before it's fully implemented in 2014. The only affordable way to finance health care for all Americans is to eliminate insurance company profit, advertising and overhead from the health care equation by expanding Medicare, a highly popular, efficient, and economical program, to cover people under 65 (see <http://www.healthcare-now.org/>).

The Left Gatekeepers

Does the CIA Fund Both the Right and the Left?

(April 16, 2011)

This first of two articles relates to links between left gatekeeping and so-called “alternative” media.

How Left Gatekeeping Foundations Suppress Dissent

Ever since the October 2008 economic collapse, American workers have faced unprecedented “austerity cuts,” with major hits on their livelihoods and labor and pension rights. Yet Americans, unlike the rest of the world, don’t respond by taking to the street. Why is this? Why is the typical American response apathy and passive acquiescence instead of the militant protest, even rioting, that occurs everywhere else?

The Deep State, Peter Dale Scott’s term for shadowy network of government officials and corporate elite that operates secretly behind the façade of democracy (see <http://www.voltairenet.org/article169316.html>), seems to rely on two main strategies in suppressing opposition to their agenda. The first involves rigid censorship of the corporate controlled media. The second involves a large interlocking network of so-called “left gatekeeping foundations” that play a major role in progressive organizing in the US.

Media critics have written extensively about the corporate takeover of the mainstream media that strictly censors anti-corporate news and saturates American lives with pro-corporate messaging. The role of left gatekeeping foundations, which are also critical in suppressing organized dissent, receives scant attention, even in the “alternative” media outlets (*The Nation*, *Mother Jones*, *Democracy Now!*, and *The Progressive*, among others). Some analysts believe this relates to the heavy reliance of these outlets on these same left gatekeeping foundations for grant funding.

CIA Funding of Alternative Media

I first learned that the *Nation* was indirectly funded by the CIA through Sherman Skolnick’s investigation (in the 1980s and 1990s) of the 990 and 990A tax returns of the Ford Foundation and other allegedly “liberal” foundations that were funding them. Skolnick felt this was the main reason for *The Nation*’s doggedly dismissive attitude towards the scrupulous research of Peter Dale Scott, Carl Oglesby, Sylvia Meagher and other scholars into the role US intelligence played in both Kennedy assassinations, the Martin Luther King assassination and other so-called “conspiracies” involving government criminal activity.

I was unaware of the domestic “counterinsurgency” role – involving a range of “Cointelpro” – type functions – of left gatekeeping foundations prior to reading Webster Tarpley’s *Barack H. Obama: the Unauthorized Biography*.

The Role of the CIA in Protecting Corporate Interests

It’s essential here to clarify what the CIA is and who they represent. Their official function is to gather intelligence overseas, though it’s an open secret that they also engage in international “counterinsurgency” activities: they covertly intervene in foreign elections; they orchestrate political instability by funding and training

opposition groups (as in Libya); they organize military coups to overthrow democratically elected governments (as in Guatemala, Chile, Iran and Indonesia); they organize and fund mercenary armies (often by collaborating with them in narcotics trafficking, as in Vietnam, Central America and Afghanistan) to overthrow democratically elected governments; they torture suspected Islamic terrorists; and they covertly assassinate foreign political leaders and labor and human rights activists.

According to the corporate media spin, the CIA does all this to protect the American public from Communists, Muslims, immigrants or whatever bogeyman the corporate media are serving up on the six o'clock news. However careful study shows that the CIA operates almost exclusively to support and protect corporate interests. The CIA was initially started by Wall Street lawyers (Allen Dulles, a former United Fruit Company board member, and Frank Wisner) and largely recruits its leadership from Yale, Harvard, Princeton and other Ivy League Schools. When it assassinates a foreign leader or overthrows a democratically elected government in Chile, Indonesia, Iran or Guatemala, it does so for the benefit of Wall Street companies who want access to that country's natural resources (the 1954 Guatemala coup followed President Arbenz's attempt to nationalize a United Fruit Company plantation), markets, and cheap labor.

An Impressive Body of Research

Although both Tarpley and Skolnick are often dismissed as conspiracy-obsessed wing-nuts, the fundamental role left gatekeeping foundations play in progressive American politics isn't a half baked conspiracy theory. There is an extensive body of academic research into why these foundations were formed and why they knowingly agreed to be co-opted by the CIA.

Attorney General Robert Kennedy was the first, in 1967, to investigate the use of the Ford Foundation and other foundations as "conduits," "pass-throughs," and "fronts" to disguise CIA funding for domestic operations (federal law prohibits the CIA from operating on US soil). In 1976, the investigation was taken up by the Church Committee, a Senate Select Committee formed in the aftermath of Watergate. The Church Committee found that between 1963 and 1966, 164 foundations gave out 700 grants over \$10,000. Of these, 108 involved partial or complete funding by the CIA (Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper?: the CIA and the Cultural Cold War*)

This 1999 book, by British historian and journalist Frances Stonor Saunders, was the first scholarly research on covert CIA funding of foundations. Others include

- ◆ *Foundations and Public Policy: The Mask of Pluralism* (2003) by New Hampshire political science professor Joan Roelof
- ◆ *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex* (2007) by Incite! Women of Color Against Violence
- ◆ *The Shock Doctrine* (2007) by Canadian author and social activist Naomi Klein
- ◆ *Towers of Deception: the Media Cover-up of 911* (2006) by Canadian journalist, documentary producer and political activist Barry Zwicker
- ◆ *Barack H. Obama: the Unauthorized Biography* (2008) by historian and journalist Webster Tarpley

CIA Funding of Alternative Media

Most of the research into left gatekeeping foundations involves the funding of so-called “alternative” media outlets and is based on information derived from tax returns. Massachusetts-based investigative journalist Bob Feldman, the most prolific writer in this area, published the bulk of his research in a 2007 paper in *Critical Sociology* “Report from the Field: Left Media and Left Think Tanks – Foundation-Managed Protest?” Feldman and Edward Ulrich have published excerpts from the paper on various Internet sites (see <http://www.questionsquestions.net/gatekeepers.html> and http://www.newsofinterest.tv/politics/media_issues/demnow_npr_controlled.php).

The History of CIA/Ford Foundation Collaboration

Feldman’s site (<http://www.questionsquestions.net/gatekeepers.html>) starts by recapping the history Saunders lays out in *Who Paid the Piper?*. Historically the governance of the Ford Foundation, created in 1936, has been conservative and pro-corporate, in line with its namesake Henry Ford, a rabid anti-Semite who inspired Adolph Hitler with his serialized publication *The International Jew* and later helped finance his rise to power.

The CIA-Ford Foundation collaboration began in 1953, when John McCloy, another Nazi sympathizer, became director of the Ford Foundation. McCloy’s corporate credentials include serving as chairman of Chase Manhattan Bank, Westinghouse, AT&T, Allied Chemical and United Fruit Company. As a lawyer, he served as chief counsel to Standard Oil of New Jersey, Mobil, Texaco and Gulf I.G. Farben (German chemical company that was Hitler’s primary German sponsor and which developed the nerve gas used in the mass executive of European Jews). McCloy watched the 1936 Berlin Olympics from Hitler’s box seat and as Assistant Secretary of War, blocked Jewish immigration to the US, as well as the bombing of railroads leading to Nazi concentration camps. As High Commissioner of Germany following the war, he pardoned a large majority of Nazi war criminals and assisted in their secret repatriation in the US and South America.

McCloy openly advocated for the Ford Foundation to cooperate with the CIA. He argued that open collaboration was a better alternative than having the Agency secretly infiltrate the Foundation’s lower echelons and subvert their work. McCloy also chaired a three man committee that had to be consulted every time the CIA wanted to use the Foundation as a pass-through.

Ford Foundation archives reveal a raft of joint Foundation-CIA projects. The most prominent of these CIA fronts are the Eastern European Fund, the Congress for Cultural Freedom, and International Rescue Committee (where William van den Heuvel, father of *Nation* editor and publisher Katrina van den Heuvel, was a long time board member). The Ford Foundation has also been the primary funder of two secret elite planning groups, the Council on Foreign Relations and the Trilateral Commission.

Alternative Media Outlets Funded by the Ford Foundation

According to Feldman, the so-called alternative media outlets receiving Ford Foundation funding (based on their tax returns) include:

- ◆ Democracy Now!
- ◆ Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) and their radio program Counterspin
- ◆ Working Assets Radio

- ◆ The Progressive
- ◆ Mother Jones
- ◆ South End Press (Z Magazine)
- ◆ Alternative Radio
- ◆ Ms Magazine
- ◆ Political Research Associates (run by rabid anti-conspiracist Chip Berlet)

As Feldman points out, each of these outlets has systematically marginalized independent researchers who have documented a US intelligence role in 9-11, as well as the JFK and other political assassinations.

The Nation Magazine and the CIA

Bob Feldman's unraveling of the indirect CIA funding received by the Nation and Radio Nation is the most instructive in demonstrating how "pass-through" funding works (see http://www.questionsquestions.net/feldman/nation_ned_1.html). According to their tax returns, the Nation Institute receives major funding from the MacArthur Foundation and the J. M. Kaplan Family Foundation. Both, according to Who Paid the Piper, also have a history of accepting CIA "pass-through" funding and collaborating with them on cold war projects. The Nation also has an interesting relationship with a third left gatekeeping foundation, the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute (FERI), in that publisher, editor and part owner Katrina van den Heuvel serves on the FERI governing board and her father, William vanden Heuvel, on the board of directors. FERI, like its namesake Eleanor Roosevelt has always pursued a clear mandate of supporting the development of anti-communist "parallel left" political groups.

Moreover William van den Heuvel himself has well-established intelligence credentials, as a protege and executive assistant to "Wild Bill" Donovan, the founder and director of OSS (Office of Strategic Services). The OSS, which oversaw intelligence operations during World War II, became the CIA in 1947. In 1953-54 van den Heuvel accompanied Donovan to Thailand, where he served as ambassador (and lead CIA agent) to Thailand. Later as executive assistant to Robert Kennedy, van den Heuvel was the architect of the Kennedy administration's staunch anti-Castro policy.

Other Left Gatekeepers Funding Alternative Media

Here is a brief summary of "alternative" media outlets that Feldman has linked to foundations identified by the Church Committee as receiving CIA pass-through funding. As Feldman notes, they all systematically marginalize journalistic and academic research into 911 and CIA-linked political assassinations:

MacArthur Foundation

- ◆ FAIR
- ◆ The Progressive
- ◆ Working Assets Radio

Rockefeller Foundation

- ◆ FAIR
- ◆ The Progressive
- ◆ Working Assets Radio

Carnegie Foundation

- ◆ Democracy Now!

J. M. Kaplan Family Foundation

- ◆ Democracy Now!

Feldman also raises concerns about newer left gatekeepers, which derive funding mainly from right wing corporations and “philanthropists”:

Soros Family Foundation

- ◆ Pacifica Radio
- ◆ The Nation

Although Soros himself has no known CIA connections, he’s strongly linked to the military industrial complex as a major stockholder in Bush senior’s Carlyle Group and through his direct funding of “color” revolutions in Eastern Europe.

Schumann Foundation

- ◆ Mother Jones
- ◆ Altnet
- ◆ Fair
- ◆ Z Magazine

Run for many years by “progressive-lite” Bill Moyers, the Schuman Foundation (as evidenced by the projects it funds) has a rabidly pro-capitalist agenda. According to Feldman, Moyers himself has engaged in extremely anti-progressive behavior, such as orchestrating (as Lyndon Johnson’s press secretary) the wiretapping of Martin Luther King and leaking the transcripts to the media. Of more recent concern is Moyers’ heavy promotion of the rabid anti-Semite and Holocaust denier Joseph Campbell on PBS. See the following links:

http://www.undueinfluence.com/schumann_foundation.htm

http://www.undueinfluence.com/bill_moyers.htm

<http://constantineinstitute.blogspot.com/2009/06/profiles-of-americas-beloved-tv.html>

<http://mindbypolitic.com/2010/06/17/barry-zwicker-noam-chomsky-and-the-left-gatekeepers/>

Feldman notes that the alternative magazine Counterpunch receives no direct left gatekeeper funding, although one of their editors is on the Nation payroll (which does).

Feldman’s co-author Eric Salter has drawn up a more detailed flow sheet demonstrating these complex inter-relationships at

<http://www.questionsquestions.net/gatekeepers.html>

The Cointelpro Role of Left Gatekeeping Foundations

(April 22, 2011)

This second article discusses the Cointelpro-type counterinsurgency roles left gatekeepers play overseas and within the US.

The two most prolific contemporary writers regarding Foundation funded Cointelpro-style counterinsurgency tactics are Webster Tarpley (in *Barack H Obama: the Unauthorized Autobiography*) and Australian-born academic researcher Michael Barker. A list and link to all Barker's publications (which include fascinating articles on Noam Chomsky's anti-conspiracy views and the aggressive promotion of "non-violent protest" by CIA-funded foundations) can be found on his website and blog at <http://michaeljamesbarker.wordpress.com/> My sense, related to direct personal experience with foundation-funded "astroturf" (see definition below *) activity in the single payer movement, is that the domestic variant of left gatekeeping relies more on right wing corporate support than CIA funding.

Barker devotes particular attention to the role played by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the US Institute for Peace, the Albert Einstein Institute, the Arlington Institute, Freedom House, the NED-funded Human Rights Watch, the International Republican Institute and individual philanthropists (for example, Bill Gates and George Soros) in "democracy manipulating" activities overseas (<http://www.greenleft.org.au/node/38214>).

However Barker also writes about the role three foundations (the Ford Foundation, the Benton Foundation and the International Center for Nonviolent Conflict) have played in "counterinsurgency" activities in the progressive movement within the US. His 2006 article "Corporate Fronts, Astroturf Groups and Co-opted Social Movements" (<http://www.zcommunications.org/corporate-fronts-astroturf-groups-and-co-opted-social-movements-by-michael-barker>) raises concerns about funding the World Social Forum derives from CIA-linked foundations.

The Role of "Democracy Manipulating" Foundations Overseas

According to Barker the "democracy manipulating role" played by CIA-linked foundations was first identified in William I. Robinson's groundbreaking 2006 book *Promoting Polyarchy*. "Polyarchy" is defined "low intensity democracy" – a form of government that replaces violent coercive control with the type of ideological control (i.e. brainwashing) that Noam Chomsky describes in *Manufacturing Consent*.

In *Promoting Polyarchy*, Robinson describes how the CIA, the FBI and other intelligence agencies were pressured to cut back on many of their more repressive covert activities (i.e. covert assassinations) as a result of Church committee reforms enacted in the 1970s. The result was the formation of numerous CIA-linked "democracy" manipulating foundations, including the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the US Institute for Peace, the Albert Einstein Institute, the Arlington Institute, Freedom House, and the International Republican Institute. In *Promoting Polyarchy*, Robinson outlines

how these US-based “democracy manipulating groups” orchestrated “non-violent” revolutions in the Philippines and Chile in order to prevent genuinely democratic governments from coming to power, as well as sabotaging democratically elected governments movements in Nicaragua (where they orchestrated the ouster of the Sandinista government) and Haiti (where they instigated a coup against the populist priest Jean Bastion Aristide).

Since then numerous studies (which Barker references on his website) have furnished additional examples where these organizations have infiltrated and “channeled” (i.e. co-opted) the genuine mass movements that form naturally in countries dominated by repressive dictators. The goal is to make sure they don’t go too far in demanding economic rights (for example, protections for organized labor or restrictions on foreign investment) that might be detrimental to the interests of multinational corporations. All the “color” revolutions in Eastern Europe, which also received substantial funding from George Soros’ Open society Institute, have been a major disappointment to citizens that supported them, owing to their failure to bring about genuine change (see <http://original.antiwar.com/justin/2006/09/29/the-color-revolutions-fade-to-black/>).

The Domestic Counterinsurgency Role of Left Gatekeepers.

Webster Tarpley, in *Barrack H. Obama: the Unauthorized Biography*, uses the example of the Ford Foundation to outline how left gatekeeper foundations, often backed by CIA funding, have taken over some of the Cointelpro-type counterinsurgency functions formerly performed by the FBI under J. Edgar Hoover. Tarpley quotes extensively from conservative political commentator Heather MacDonald, “The Billions of Dollars that Made Things Worse,” *City Journal*, Autumn 1992 (http://www.city-journal.org/html/6_4_a1.html); Philadelphia attorney and writer Vincent Salandria “The Promotion of Domestic Discord,” October 23, 1971 (http://spot.acorn.net/jfkplace/09/fp.back_issues/16th_Issue/vs2.html); and immigration activist Tamar Jacoby, “McGeorge Bundy: How the Establishment's Man Tackled the Problem With Race” (<http://www.aliciapatterson.org/APF1303/Jacoby/Jacoby.html>). He also cites MacDonald's work in describing the pressure put on the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the Carnegie Foundation (which they succumbed to) to follow the Ford Foundation's example.

What comes through clearly from these early investigations into left gatekeeping is that McGeorge Bundy, who assumed the leadership of the Ford Foundation in 1966, was principally responsible for expanding the Foundation's counterinsurgency functions (which under McCloy were focused mainly overseas) to America's progressive movement. A former army intelligence officer and National Security Adviser to both Kennedy and Johnson, Bundy was largely responsible for the demonic “strategic hamlets” policy in Vietnam.

Using Race to Divide the Progressive Movement

When Bundy left government to run the Ford Foundation 1966, he openly expressed concern about efforts by Martin Luther King and the Student Non Violent Coordinating Committee to merge the struggle of the black community with the labor and antiwar movement. His response was to have the Ford Foundation use its grant making power to create factional divisions in an increasingly broad-based movement that was demanding an end to the Vietnam War. The result was a massive shift in the Foundation's grant

making agenda. Over the next four years, it moved away from funding broad economic needs - such as housing, education, mass transit and health care - to focus on black and Latino organizations that specifically targeted blue collar racism as the cause of minority disadvantage. According to Heather MacDonald, education resources particularly were re-allocated to race-based organizations, whose share of grant funding went from 2.5% in 1966 to 40% in 1970. MacDonald and Salandria also describe some of the militant black and Latino organizations these grants went to and how they were used to launch divisive race-baiting campaigns against working class whites.

Another of Bundy's strategic moves was to break up the traditional black-Jewish progressive coalition in New York City. He did so by funding minority community coalitions to churn out rabidly anti-Semitic propaganda directed at leftist Jewish teachers and administrators, many of whom had radical New Deal backgrounds. The demand posed by these community groups (backed by \$1.4 million from the Ford Foundation) for the right to arbitrary fire teachers was a blatant violation of their union contract and an important precipitant of the disastrous 1968 teachers' strike.

Richard Nixon: the Father of Affirmative Action

In 1968, Bundy, Richard Nixon and his secretary of labor George Schultz collaborated in pushing affirmative action and quota legislation (Martin Luther King had opposed affirmative action and quotas, due to their inherent divisiveness). In meetings with Republican Congressional leaders, Nixon acknowledged that his primary agenda in sponsoring mandatory hiring quotas was to "split the Democratic Constituency and drive a wedge between civil rights groups and organized labor." (Hugh Davis Graham, *The Civil Rights Era*, New York: Oxford, 1990).

I find this extremely ironic. Exactly as Bundy, Nixon and Schultz predicted, these policies have created an enormous white blue collar backlash, which the Republicans have used very successfully to capture working class votes. Yet many progressives still mistakenly believe that affirmative action originated with the civil rights movement.

Infiltrating the Single Payer Movement

My own knowledge of left gatekeepers stems from fourteen years as a single payer activist (1988-2002) in Washington State. Our local single payer movement, launched by a group of doctors belonging to Physicians for a National Health Program, made the most progress in the first five years, when we were a primarily doctor-run organization focused on educating other doctors, lawmakers and community groups about the mechanics of a Canadian-style government financed health care system. In 1993, when we joined with Seattle Gray Panthers to form a broad based citizen's coalition, we began to have the same difficulty with troublesome strangers many of us experienced in the antiwar and Central American solidarity movement. In 1994 one of these "outsiders" took control of the database and leadership and succeeded in shutting down the state single payer coalition entirely. We later learned he had done the same with the Seattle Anti-Gulf War Coalition and the Seattle chapter of Democratic Socialists of America.

Who Infiltrated Washington's Single Payer Movement?

In retrospect, some aspects of this "infiltration" of the single payer movement were distinctly different from classic Cointelpro methodology. The first was a heavy reliance on the formation of "parallel" health care reform organizations, both to compete for

membership and to discredit us. The second was a much higher level of sophistication and national coordination than most of us witnessed in the sixties and seventies with Cointelpro.

Single payer activists in other states were experiencing the exact same problems that we were. As in Washington State, short-lived "parallel" single payer organizations were being created by brand new left think tanks or left leaning foundations that claimed to support single payer health care - but disagreed with grassroots organizing to mobilize public support for it. Despite their nominal support for publicly funded health care, their newsletters, brochures and publicly forums argued vehemently against lobbying for single payer health care – employing, in many cases, identical language and rhetoric.

Between 1997 and 2001, Washington's revived single payer movement confronted four parallel foundation-funded health care reform organizations. The first, the Equal Opportunity Institute (EOI), was formed in 1997 to launch a health care initiative campaign (to expand the insurance-based Washington Basic Health Plan) to compete with a single payer ballot initiative. The second was Just Health Care, which had a brief existence between 1999 and 2000, was solely focused on attacking our single payer initiative. The third was Code Blue Now! (2001-2008), which was supposedly formed to develop "public consensus" on the best way to reform health care (despite polling showing that 60% of Washington voters supported a single, publicly financed system). The fourth was the Rainier Foundation, a "progressive" foundation (2001-2005) also established to "promote consensus" around health care reform.

It was never clear exactly where any of these "parallel" groups got their funding. It seems most likely they were funded by the private insurance industry (which stands to lose big if federal and/or state governments enact publicly financed health care programs). Thus in this sense they were most likely pure "astroturf" creations (*see below), though they clearly adopted techniques employed in classic FBI Cointelpro operations.

* Senator Lloyd Bentson, himself a long-time Washington and Wall Street insider, is credited with coining the term "astroturf lobbying" to describe the synthetic grassroots movements that now can be manufactured, for a fee, by a dozen or so public relations companies. The Tea Party movement, largely created and funded by the infamous Koch brothers, is probably the most high profile example of astroturfing (see <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2010/oct/25/tea-party-koch-brothers>)

Part V Change Making

Part V explores on how the second American revolution is likely to come about. The first section, “Engaging the Working Class,” addresses the failure of the US Left to engage the eighty percent of the population that comprises the working class.

Section two, “Reclaiming the Commons,” covers what I believe will be the essential steps in building the second American revolution. First and foremost will be the rebuilding of neighborhood and community social networks that have been systematically dismantled as a by-product of wholesale corporatization. This process will be accompanied by a systematic reclaiming of “the Commons” from individual and corporate interests.

Engaging the Working Class

The Real Culture Wars

(June 21, 2011)

The term “culture wars,” as used by the mainstream media, seems to have two distinct meanings. It’s most commonly used to refer to the so-called “class of civilizations” between western democracy and societies where Islam is the primary religion.

In another context, the US media uses the phrase “culture wars” to describe the red/blue state clash, which depicts red states as populated by highly religious, family-centered conservatives concerned about individual liberties and blue states as peopled by social libertines who value community welfare over individual liberty.

The US Class Divide: the Real Culture Wars

I totally agree with Lila Rajiva’s view in, in the *Language of Empire*, that both so-called “culture wars” are artificial, manufactured by the mainstream media to keep the American public from uniting against the real enemy, which is Wall Street and the corporate state. I also believe the media deliberately conceals the real cultural divide, which is between the 20% of the population who comprise the professional/academic class and the 80% who work for near minimum wage. It’s my strong belief that these firmly entrenched class divisions are the primary obstacle to building an American mass movement, comparable to those taking the streets of the Middle East, North Africa and Europe.

The Role of the Middle Class in Policing Society

What many on the Left fail to recognize is that it’s not just the state security apparatus and slick ideological propaganda that keep the capitalists in power in the US. These two forces are also aided by an army of “helping professionals” – teachers, lawyers, religious leaders, social workers, doctors, psychologists, etc – who play a crucial role in instructing the working class in appropriate and politically correct behavior.

Leftists and progressives frequently bemoan the absence of minorities at their meetings. The real problem is their failure to attract the working class - manual laborers, minimum wage workers from Wal Mart or KFC, and low income single mothers – to their causes. It so happens that the vast majority of Americans of color belong to this economic group.

Why Don’t Working Class People Come To Our Meetings?

A major headache for progressive organizers is that low income workers find ultraconservative Teaparty and United Front groups far more appealing than progressive causes focused on improving their economic circumstances. As Marxist psychiatrist writes in his 1933 *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, this is a very old problem, one he links to authoritarian child rearing styles pervasive under western-style capitalism (See “Wilhelm Reich and the Tea Party” in Part IV).

In North America, the progressive movement is also cursed with the demographic reality that the US and Canada have a large, well-defined professional/academic middle class earning much higher salaries than the minimum wage and casual workforce that comprises 80% of the population. In Middle East and North African countries where

mass movements are causing major political upheaval, this elite professional/academic class is very tiny, as the incomes of public sector professionals (teachers, social workers, doctors, etc.) are only modestly higher than private sector laborers. In Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and Eastern Europe, it's fairly common for doctors and teachers to go months without pay during an economic downturn – which forces many of them to supplement their income by cab driving and part time laboring jobs. When professionals and blue collar workers face the same economic pressures, it's far easier to identify with and support each others' demands.

That being said, the main reasons my working class friends and clients give for avoiding political meetings relate to lack of sensitivity among middle class progressives and leftists to their own unconscious class prejudices. The complaints I hear fall broadly into four main categories:

1. Liberals and progressives rarely address the nitty gritty financial issues (i.e. paying the rent or mortgage and food and doctor bills) that would motivate blue or pink collar workers to become politically active. When you can't afford a doctor or shoes for your kids, it's hard to get excited about wars in the Middle East, banking reform, or climate change.
2. Liberals and progressives tend to be insensitive to working class culture and are often perceived as moralizing about “political correctness” and “lifestyle changes.” This often includes a heavy emphasis on changing light bulbs and other “sacrifices” activists are expected to make to reduce global warming.
3. My blue collar friends complain about not being heard at political meetings because more educated activists monopolize the discussions.
4. My working class friends tend to be mistrustful of progressives in general, owing to their tendency to stigmatize common working class issues, especially chronic illness and obesity (which increase in prevalence as income decreases), smoking and gun control.

Taking a Page from 1970s Feminists

In my opinion, the early feminist movement (the real, pre-Gloria Steinem feminist movement) holds important lessons for modern progressives. Our early consciousness raising meetings attracted women of all backgrounds. Moreover unlike the 1970s antiwar movement and New Left, we worked extremely hard to bridge the class divide between our members. Based on personal experience with this early movement – before Gloria Steinem and the Queen Bee (*see below) feminists took it over, I would make the following recommendations:

- ◆ Progressives need to take a hard look at their association with “lifestyle” campaigns, such as anti-smoking, anti-obesity, vegetarianism and gun control. Many low income workers tend to view these as personal freedom issues and the middle class progressives who champion them as moralizing busy bodies.
- ◆ Progressives need to focus more on issues of immediate urgency to the working class: unemployment, foreclosures/homelessness, and sustainability-related issues with immediate economic impact – food security, transportation and alternatives to a cash economy for people with no money (i.e. trading/bartering systems and/or local currencies). In the early feminist movement, we addressed

this by organizing to provide direct services to low-income women (which at the time was most of us). Examples included activist-run child care and after school centers, health and abortion clinics, skills exchanges, alternative high schools, and reproductive health clinics.

- ◆ Progressives need to incorporate the “welfare committee” into all organizing. In addition to going back to the good old days of providing child care at all meetings (there is no other way for low income mothers with small children to attend), activists need to commit to addressing the real-time economic needs of fellow activists. Building sustained organized resistance will require more of us to focus full time on movement building, rather than relying on foundation funding and paid organizers to pay our organizers. This can only happen if grassroots groups commit to looking after the survival needs of their members, especially as more unemployed and underemployed workers join our ranks.
- ◆ Progressives need to be far more sensitive to the cultural differences associated with social class. In the early feminist movement we did this by conducting meetings in fishbowls, in which reticent low income and minority women began the meeting at the inside of the fishbowl, while more affluent and vocal women were placed in the outer circle to observe and listen.
- ◆ Progressives need to abandon their dogmatic stance around non-violence, which is quite alien to working class culture and tends to be viewed as moralizing (see “Dogmatic Nonviolence: the Left’s Fatal Flaw”).

*Queen Bee Feminism is focused on creating more women doctors, judges and business executives, in the belief that the lifestyle benefits will trickle down to the 80% of women who live in relative poverty. Aside from the fact that the “trickle down” feminism advocated by Gloria Steinem (both in Ms Magazine and her extremely divisive leadership of the National Organization of Women) represents classic conservative neoliberalism, the takeover by Queen Bee Feminists effectively drove working class and lesbian and transgender women (and working class men) out of the movement and was responsible for the defeat (in 1982) of the Equal Rights Amendment. In fact, there is a growing body of evidence that Steinem was recruited by US intelligence to infiltrate NOW and that Ms Magazine was launched with funding from CIA-linked foundations. See <http://www.mail-archive.com/ctrl@listserv.aol.com/msg02217.html> and <http://rah.posterous.com/black-feminism-the-cia-and-gloria-steinem-fwd>

Dogmatic Nonviolence: The Left's Fatal Flaw

(April 25, 2011)

As a long time activist, I have always been troubled by the militant nonviolent perspective that dominates the progressive movement in the US. In some circles, the taboo is so absolute that activists are systematically demonized for even raising the subject. I tend to get suspicious whenever I see the politically correct thought police swing into action – especially when they embrace views that are clearly counterproductive to successful organizing (the US left, in contrast to other countries, is a shambles). An arbitrary taboo against specific topics is often a sign that your movement has been infiltrated, either by Cointelpro or left gatekeeper agents.

The systematic misrepresentation of Gandhi's and Martin Luther King's views on violence also annoys me. Neither were militant pacifists. Gandhi clearly articulated situations in which he would advocate violence as a strategy. Whereas, as Mark Kurlansky describes in 1968, King employed violence strategically in several of his marches (in which female protestors slapped cops to provoke a violent overreaction) to maximize media attention.

Likewise I have also objected to progressives' failure to distinguish between property destruction and interpersonal violence.

Alienating the Working Class

At the same time, what concerns me most as an organizer is that militant nonviolence is fundamentally alien to working class culture. It thus creates a major stumbling block in drawing blue collar workers into the movement for change. We try to recruit working class activists by appealing to their deep resentment over the unfairness of wage exploitation and privilege. Then we outlaw their natural reaction – to level that privilege by destroying property and looting (to reclaim what they believe is rightfully theirs) or bashing a cop or security guard who is manhandling them or standing between them and food for their kids. I have repeatedly seen blue collar activists marginalized and demonized in these debates. Yet people wonder why they are drawn to the Tea Party movement (which isn't bound by politically correct niceties) rather than the Left.

Reviving the Debate

Obviously I'm extremely pleased to see Gelderloos, American Indian Movement activist Ward Churchill, environmental activist Peter Jensen and even the culture jamming group Adbusters (<http://www.adbusters.org/magazine/95/revolution-america.html>) revive the debate. In 2008 Churchill released the second edition of *Pacifism as Pathology: Reflections on the Role of Armed Struggle in North America* (which I review in the next essay).

Moreover, I am unsurprised to learn that the taboo against violent protest isn't a totally spontaneous development in the American progressive movement. As in the case of alternate media outlets that refuse to report on 911 or the JFK assassination, there is increasing evidence that government-backed left gatekeeping foundations have carefully inserted themselves into roles where they dominate the dialogue around the issue of violence.

The Role of Left Gatekeeping Foundations in Promoting Nonviolence

Australian journalist and researcher Michael Barker is one of the most prolific writers about the role of CIA, Pentagon and State Department linked foundations in the nonviolent movement (see “The Cointelpro Role of Left Gatekeeping Foundations” in Part IV). The ones he has followed most closely are the National Endowment for Democracy, the US Institute for Peace, the Albert Einstein Institute, the Arlington Institute, Freedom House, the NED-funded Human Rights Watch, the International Republican Institute, and the International Center for Nonviolent Conflict (<http://www.greenleft.org.au/node/38214>).

Most research into these foundations focuses on their work overseas, particularly their active role in creating “color” revolutions in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. However according to Barker, the ICNC also has major influence, via its workshops, literature and documentaries, on progressive organizing within the US. As Ward Churchill (in *Pacifism as Pathology*) and Peter Gelderloos (in *How Nonviolence Protects the State*) point out, white middle class activists have very complex psychological reasons for their dogmatic attitude towards political violence. Nevertheless both the US government and the corporate elite play a big role in covertly promoting this attitude.

The ICNC’s PBS Documentary

As well as investigating the role “democracy manipulating” foundations play overseas, Barker has also investigated the role of the ICNC, in particular, on progressive organizing within the US. He points to the phenomenal influence of the 2000 book and PBS documentary (and now computer game) *A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Change*.

The ICNC is understandably defensive about research by Barker and others linking them to the NED and other “democracy manipulating” foundations. In fact their website devotes an entire page “Setting the Record” straight <http://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/index.php/about-icnc/setting-the-record-straight>, in which they refute these studies. Their main argument is that they receive no NED or other foundation or government funding. This is totally factual, as they’re entirely funded by their co-founder Peter Ackerman, a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, and his wife Joanne Leedom-Ackerman. Ackerman earned his fortune as a specialist in leveraged buyouts, the second highest paid in Wall Street history (second only to convicted felon Michael Milken in cumulative earnings).

Why Is the ICNC Seeking to Oust Hugo Chavez?

Barker refers to the ICNC rebuttal regarding their funding source as “whitewashing,” especially in view of the recent collaboration between the ICNC and the Albert Einstein Institute in training members of the Venezuelan resistance seeking to oust democratically elected Hugo Chavez.

As Barker points out, both Ackerman and his wife and ICNC co-founder Jack Duvall have a long history of working for and with the other “democracy manipulating” foundations. In addition many of the vice presidents and other officers they hire to run the ICNC have connections with US or foreign military/intelligence or other “democracy promoting” foundations.

For specific information about the military/intelligence and “democracy manipulating”

links of the ICNC leadership, see <http://quotha.net/node/1606>,
<http://quotha.net/node/1609>, <http://www.swans.com/library/art17/barker73.html>, and
<http://www.swans.com/library/art16/barker52.html>.

***Pacifism as Pathology: Reflections on the Role of Armed Struggle in
North America***
(April 29, 2011)

By Ward Churchill (2007 AK Press)

Book Review

Pacifism as Pathology is a collection of essays centered around Ward Churchill's 1985 essay "Pacifism as Pathology: Notes on an American Pseudopraxis." The premise of the original essay is that the militant nonviolent stance assumed by the US progressive movement is based on irrational psychological reasons rather than strategic reasons or moral principle.

Viewpoints from a Range of Activists

The 2007 edition contains a preface by Derrick Jensen, who lays out compelling reasons for the necessity of "violence" in bringing about genuine political change in his 2006 book *Endgame*. Jensen's argument, as in *Endgame*, is primarily ecological. Humankind is being systematically killed off by the capitalist class, via their poisoning of the air, water and food chain, as well as their heedless imposition of catastrophic climate change. Jensen poses the very reasonable question: are we willing to retaliate violently to save our own lives and those of our children and grandchildren?

The next essay is a preface Ed Mead's wrote to the 1998 edition immediately following an eighteen year prison term, as a result of armed actions (bombings of state and federal buildings in Washington State) conducted by the George Jackson Brigade. Based on his experiences, he arrives at the following conclusions: 1) Pacifism as a strategy of achieving social, political and economic change can only lead to dead end liberalism – the most vicious and violent ruling class in history won't give up privilege without a physical fight; 2) Because 99.9% of practitioners of political violence will eventually confront death or imprisonment, political violence must be carried out in a manner calculated to win; and 3) Although the George Jackson Brigade applied the tool of revolutionary violence when its use wasn't appropriate, Mead feels pride that they erred on the side of making revolution instead of the alternative.

The 2007 edition also contains an afterward by Canadian Activist Mike Ryan describing his frustration after twenty years of nonviolent resistance as part of the Canadian peace movement – and his conclusion that violent resistance must be allowed as a tactic for genuine political change to occur.

Churchill's Infamous Assault Rifle Workshop

Churchill explains, in his 1998 introduction, that *Pacifism as Pathology* was originally written in 1985 as part of a four year debate over a workshop "Demystification of the Assault Rifle" that he gave at a 1981 Radical Therapy conference. He was invited to give the workshop after activists organizing the conference admitted that their fear of weapons was chiefly responsible for their rejection of violence as a political strategy.

The reaction of some conference participants was to pass a resolution banning similar workshops in the future, as well as the presence of firearms (except those of the police or military) at any Radical Therapy conference. Churchill was invited to write an article on his views for the magazine *Issues in Radical Therapy*, which was subsequently Xeroxed and distributed widely throughout North America. While Churchill acknowledges the right of all activists to personally reject violence, he challenges the right of nonviolent proponents to condemn activists willing to employ property destruction and/or armed self-defense among a diversity of strategies. He makes the point that activists willing to engage in violent resistance wouldn't dream of trying to force their views on nonviolent activists.

Armed Jewish Uprisings Under Nazi Occupation

For me, the most valuable chapter of *Pacifism as Pathology* concerns Austrian psychologist Bruno Bettelheim's writings about Jewish armed uprisings in the Warsaw and Bialystok ghettos and numerous concentration camps. According to Churchill, all these revolts inflicted significant damage on the Nazi machine. The revolt at Auschwitz killed seventy SS officers and destroyed the crematorium. Armed rebellions at Sobibor and Reblinka were even more effective. In fact, Sobibor had to be closed following the camp uprising. There were also lesser insurrections at Kruszyna, Krychaw and Kopernik.

Bettelheim, who contrasts the Jews who resisted violently with the majority of Jews, who followed the Nazis passively to the camps and even to the gas chambers, makes a strong case for his belief that the persecution of the Jews was aggravated by their unwillingness to fight back. He blames their failure to resist the Nazis on strong psychological denial – a pathological need to cling to an illusion of “business as normal” – that ultimately overwhelmed their basic survival needs.

He argues the more logical position was to accept the cold reality that their own lives were doomed and to use their deaths to save the life of other Jews by making the extermination more difficult. He points out that Jews had easy access to weapons in 1930s and 1940s Germany, and there was no reason why every Jew that was arrested couldn't take one or two SS officers with them.

Militant Nonviolence: Racist, Deluded and Irrational

Churchill devotes the remainder of the book to correcting historical distortions regarding Gandhi's and Martin Luther Kings nonviolent resistance movements; a brief historical overview of the ineffectiveness of non-violent campaigns, in contrast to campaigns incorporating violent resistance; an analysis of the inherent racism implicit in the dogmatic nonviolence promoted by white upper middle class activists; and a discussion of the irrational psychological motives underlying militant nonviolence.

Churchill concludes that many white upper middle class activists are deeply conflicted about whether they really want to dismantle capitalism and give up their position of privilege. Thus they adamantly reject any approach incorporating violent resistance, owing to its historical record of effectiveness.

Pacifism as Pathology can be downloaded free at http://zinelibrary.info/files/pap_imposed.pdf

How Nonviolence Protects the State

(May 1, 2011)

By Peter Gelderloos (2007 South End Press)

Book Review

In *How Nonviolence Protects the State*, Gelderloos takes up where Ward Churchill's 1985 *Pacifism as Pathology* leaves off – expanding on Churchill's basic premises with more recent historical examples. Like Churchill, Gelderloos bemoans the determination of nonviolence proponents to force their ideological views on the entire progressive movement. He blames this mainly on *The Nation* magazine and other so-called “alternative” media outlets, which falsely frame the debate as a question of “nonviolent” vs. “violent” political change tactics. What Churchill, Gelderloos, Jensen and others are really advocating is an organizing approach that incorporates a diversity of tactics – including property destruction and violent self-defense.

Gelderloos divides his book into seven chapters, with each debunking a specific myth about nonviolence:

Chapter 1 Nonviolence is ineffective - Here Gelderloos exposes the falsified history of supposedly victorious nonviolent resistance movements. On close examination, none of the examples commonly promoted by nonviolent proponents was either exclusively nonviolent or successful. In the case of Gandhi's nonviolent campaign in India, Gelderloos points out that the Mahatma was elevated to fame by the British press, who chose to focus on his acts of civil disobedience, rather than the hundreds of freedom fighters alongside him who were planting bombs and assassinating British and native officials. Gelderloos also points out that India (and Pakistan) remain deeply oppressed and exploited countries. That their “independence” in 1947 merely transferred them from direct colonial to neo-colonial rule (economic domination enforced by the World Bank and IMF).

Gelderloos describes a parallel process occurring in whitewashing Martin Luther King's civil rights campaign. He stresses that the mainstream media never reported on the Birmingham civil rights marches that degenerated into riots - but which were always the real trigger for both local and federal law changes. Among numerous other examples, Gelderloos contrasts the millions of peaceful demonstrators worldwide who were unable to stop the 2003 US invasion of Iraq - with the single 2005 train bombing that led the Spanish government to withdraw their troops from the “coalition of the willing.”

Chapter 2 Nonviolence is racist - In this chapter, Gelderloos agrees with Churchill that the vast majority of dogmatic nonviolent proponents are privileged middle class whites, for whom the full repression of the capitalist state is never a genuine fear. He cites the example of black looting (usually for food and basic necessities) being condemned as violent, whereas actions in which white activists cut a chain fence to trespass on a military base is embraced as “nonviolent” and acceptable. Among numerous examples of white progressives condemning third world autonomy movements, Gelderloos notes

the near universal condemnation of the Iraqi insurgency against US occupation. He points out that by refusing to engage in violent resistance themselves, US antiwar activists essentially abandon Iraqi and Afghani insurgents to battle US corporate power on their own.

Chapter 3 Nonviolence is statist (i.e. serves the state) - Nonviolent activists hold the fundamental view that the state (via police, FBI, CIA and military) should hold the monopoly on violence. In addition to frequently calling on the police to protect their privileged status, in moments of conflict they always line up with state authority. Among other examples, Gelderloos describes the Poor Peoples March at the 2004 Republican National Convention in New York, where Mayor Bloomberg handed out badges to protestors willing to commit to nonviolent protest. Meanwhile the police manhandled and arrested protestors (without badges) who were either black, covered their faces, or refused to submit to arbitrary searches. Not only did the nonviolent marchers fail to come to their defense, but they essentially blamed the arrestees for the police decision to attack them.

Chapter 4 Nonviolence is patriarchal (i.e. supports male oppression of women and sexual minorities) - Gelderloos points out (with examples) that both the mainstream and alternative media refuse to acknowledge the extreme sexism and homophobia of Martin Luther King. He also describes how the nonviolent movement only permits women to use violence to defend themselves in individual cases of attempted rape, but not in situations of ongoing domestic violence. Nor against the gradual systemic violence - for example the harmful corporate-produced chemicals in their breast milk - that is permanently damaging their children's health.

Chapter 5 Nonviolence is tactically and strategically inferior - Gelderloos demonstrates that the nonviolent movement is totally focused on short term tactics and unable to show how any of these tactics will achieve their long term goals. When confronted with their inability to achieve goals, nonviolent proponents come back with the pat response: "Political change takes a long time and may not come in our lifetime."

Gelderloos bemoans the millions of dollars wasted on grassroots lobbying, which is almost never effective. Even when Congress meets your demands on paper, they always backtrack. Gelderloos gives the example of the School of the Americas campaign, which sucked up years of organizing and nonviolent protests. When enough pressure built up, the Pentagon simply closed the SOA and reopened it under a new name. He asks how many social centers, free clinics, prison reform groups, etc. - with the potential to produce real change - could have been built with this wasted money.

He also contrasts specific tactics that have a goal of disrupting "business as usual." Does it make more sense to blockade a bridge for a few hours by forming a human chain - or putting it out of commission for six months by blowing it up?

Chapter 6 Nonviolence is deluded - Gelderloos uses this chapter to outline the extreme contradictions in the views embraced by nonviolent advocates. He points out that they support state violence all the time, simply by paying taxes (at present many openly support the NATO airstrikes on Libya). Privileged activists need to understand what the rest of the world has known all along: neutrality isn't possible. The question is which violence scares us the most and which side we will stand on.

Chapter 7 The alternative: possibilities for revolutionary activism - Gelderloos

finishes with his vision of strategies that are most likely to succeed in dismantling centralized state and corporate structures. In doing so, he emphasizes that localized groups will need to self-organize and decide on strategies that are based on their members' individual strengths. He envisions a loose confederation of local autonomous groups that will form non-corporate structures (free clinics, cooperatives, farmers markets, etc) to meet local needs. While he sees no need to convert everyone to anarchism, he emphasizes the need to be continually on guard against cooptation by the Institutional Left – by ensuring decisions are made based on circumstances, not arbitrary ideology.

He also insists on the absolute necessity for these activists to learn self defense. If they occupy a building to create a free clinic, they must also prepare themselves to resist (violently, if necessary) police efforts to evict them.

A PDF of Gelderloos' book can be downloaded free at <http://zinelibrary.info/files/How%20Nonviolence%20Protects%20The%20State.pdf> – but without the extensive endnotes. If you want the endnotes, you have to buy it. Even so, Gelderloos, a true anarchist, gives suggestions at his PDF site on how to pirate the endnotes if you can't afford the book.

Progressives Who Oppose Gun Control

(August 26, 2011)

I've always been curious how American progressives got on the wrong -- anti-civil liberties -- side of gun control. In my mind this has been a grave strategic error. I have written elsewhere about the extreme difficulty liberals and progressives face in engaging the working class. I have also been highly critical of their tendency to get sucked into "lifestyle" campaigns (anti-smoking, anti-obesity, vegetarianism, etc.) etc., owing to the deep seated class antagonism this engenders in blue collar voters. Contrary to the stereotypes portrayed in the corporate media, class differences -- and class hatred -- are very real in the US. From a working class perspective, the progressive movement **is** the middle class. They're the teachers, social workers, psychologists, doctors, lawyers and religious leaders who play a fundamental role in setting behavioral standards for the rest of us. Thus when they tell us not to smoke, eat big Macs, or buy guns, we don't see this as political reform. We see it as an extension of their (privileged) class role.

Here in New Zealand, young upwardly mobile professionals manifest the same zeal as their American counterparts for anti-smoking and healthy eating campaigns. However there's no gun control lobby here. It would be unthinkable in a country where only one third of the population lives in cities. Gun ownership and proficiency are fundamental to the Kiwi way of life, especially in provincial areas like New Plymouth.

The History of Progressive Opposition to Gun Control

For a progressive to take a stand against gun control is a pretty lonely place. There's a 1979 book edited by Don Kates entitled *Restricting Handguns: The Liberal Skeptics Speak Out*. There's also an organization called the Liberal Gun Club (<http://www.theliberalgunclub.com/>), whose mission is to "provide a voice for gun-owning liberals and moderates in the national conversation on gun rights, gun legalization, firearms safety, and shooting sports."

Then there's Sam Smith's excellent article in the *Progressive Review*: Why "Progressives Should Stop Pushing for More Gun Control Laws." Among Smith's numerous arguments, three leap out at me: the exacerbation of "cultural conflict" between rural and urban and wealthy and not so well off, the tendency for gun restrictions and prohibition to be interwoven with the drive to restrict other civil liberties, and the need for progressives to stop treating average Americans as though they were "alien creatures." Smith also makes the point that progressives lose elections as much because of their attitudes as their issues.

In January (following Representative Gifford's shooting and renewed calls for gun control), Dan Baum wrote in the *Huffington Post* (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dan-baum/after-tucson-stricter-gun_b_811696.html) that progressives have wasted a generation of progress on health care, women's rights, immigration reform, income fairness and climate change because "we keep messing with people's guns." He feels it's helpful to think of gun control as akin to marijuana prohibition -- all it does is turn otherwise law-abiding people into criminals and create divisiveness and resentment.

And finally there's a blog by vjack at *Red State Progressive* entitled *Ambivalent About Gun Control* (<http://www.redstateprogressive.com/2011/01/ambivalent-about-gun-control.html>). Vjack mainly focuses on differing interpretations of what the 2nd amendment says and what the Constitutional framers intended:

"A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

Gun control advocates claim this means Americans only have an "un-infringed" right to keep and bear arms as part of a state Militia. However I tend to agree with vjack, who believes that five years after a bloody revolution our forefathers were probably referring to the right "to hold their government accountable through violence." If we interpret the 2nd Amendment this way, all gun control legislation is unconstitutional.

How Progressives Came to Oppose the 2nd Amendment

None of this explains, of course, how progressives got on the wrong side of this issue. US gun control legislation. US gun manufacturers wrote the first gun control legislation in 1958, in an effort to restrict Americans' access to cheap imports. However, owing to its civil liberties implications, it ran up against stiff Congressional opposition until 1968, when President Lyndon Johnson played the race card and used the unprecedented 1965-1968 inner city riots to pass a watered down version of his original gun control bill. It required gun dealers to register guns and ammunition, banned the mail order and interstate sale of guns, and instituted a lifelong ban on felons (even on non-violent convictions) owning guns.

Using Gun Control to Control African Americans

Progressive "scholarly" research into gun control generally makes two equally salient points: 1) the aim of gun control legislation is to control people (mainly disenfranchised minorities and the poor), not guns and 2) in countries with strict gun control laws, the use of deadly force is restricted to the police and army, as ordinary citizens aren't trusted to play any role (including self-defense) in maintaining law and order. See [Dr Lech Beltowski -- How Governments Create Crime](#).

America's extreme preoccupation with gun control appears directly related to their 200 year history of slavery and the oppressive Jim Crow laws that followed emancipation. As Steve Ekwall writes in the "Racist Origins of US Gun Control" (<http://www.blackwallstreet.freeservers.com/gun%20control.htm>) and Clayton Cramer in "The Racist Roots of Gun Control" (<http://www.firearmsandliberty.com/cramer.racism.html>), the targeting of African Americans with early gun control laws is extremely blatant.

In the south, pre-civil war "Slave Codes" prohibited slaves from owning guns. Following emancipation, many southern states still prohibited blacks from owning guns under "Black Codes," on the basis that they weren't citizens and not entitled to Second Amendment rights. After the 1878 adoption of the Fourteenth Amendment, which finally acknowledge blacks as citizens, southern states imposed high taxes or banned inexpensive guns, intending to price blacks and poor whites out of the gun market. Ekwall quotes from the 1909 Virginia University Law Review, which describes the need

for “prohibitive tax” on the “privilege” of selling handguns, as a way of disarming “the sons of Ham.” It goes on to describe their “cowardly practice of toting guns” as “one of the most fruitful sources of crime. Let a negro board a railroad train with a quart of mean whiskey and a pistol in his grip and the chances are that there will be a murder, or at least a row, before he alights.” [Comment, Carrying Concealed Weapons, 15 Va L. Reg. 391, 391-92 (1909); *George Mason University Civil Rights Law Journal (GMU CR LJ)*, Vol. 2, No. 1, “Gun Control and Racism,” Stefan Tahmassebi, 1991, p. 75]

Lyndon Johnson Introduces Federal Gun Control

Ekwall also quotes gun control advocate Robert Sherrill, author of *The Saturday Night Special and Other Guns* (1972), who states unequivocally, “The Gun Control Act of 1968 was passed, not to control guns, but to control blacks.” Ekwall goes on to describe the unprecedented 1965-68 race riots in 125 American cities, in which the violence was graphically magnified by extensive TV coverage. In 1965, thirty-four people were killed in a race riot in the Watts area of Los Angeles. In 1967, twenty-six were killed in Newark alone, and forty in Detroit. Over 5,000 were left homeless in the Detroit riot, which was finally quelled by 4,700 federal paratroopers and 8,000 National Guardsmen.

The paranoia this engendered in the corporate and political elite was greatly heightened by public statements by Stokely Carmichael and other Black Panthers who openly advocated advocating violent revolution and the well-publicized protests (and police riot) at the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago.

The Move to Ban Gun Ownership Among the Poor

Ekwall finishes by outlining a series of state laws enacted during the Reagan, Bush senior, and Clinton administration, in conjunction with the federal Weed and Seed program, which in most cities specifically targeted blacks and low income whites. The latter re-funded social programs that Reagan had cut for states and cities that enacted draconian law and order legislation.

- 1988 - Maryland law banning cheap imported handguns.
- 1988 -- Chicago enacted Operation Clean Sweep to permit the confiscation of firearms and illegal narcotics in Chicago Housing Authority buildings. It allowed the Chicago police to conduct warrantless searches on all CHA tenants. Tenants who objected or attempted to interfere with these warrantless searches were arrested.
- 1990 - Richmond Housing Authority in Virginia imposed a ban, upheld by the state supreme court, on the possession of all firearms in public housing projects.
- 1994 - Clinton Administration tried to introduce H.R. 3838 to ban guns in federal public housing. It was defeated in the House Banking Committee. Similar legislation was filed (but unsuccessful) in 1994 in the Oregon and Washington state legislatures.
- 1995 -- Maine passed law banning guns in public housing (struck down by Maine courts the same year).

Gun Control and False Flags

No discussion of gun control would be complete without mentioning the high rate of "lone nut" shooting sprees that occur in the US. There is growing evidence that many of these apparently senseless shootings are actually "false flag" operations. In other words, they are staged by military and intelligence insiders to mobilize public support for gun control legislation.

False flag operations are a classic tool of espionage and deception, an operation in which an attack is planned by one, usually governmental source, but blamed either on another government or a lone nut. In the US, false flag operations are commonly used to terrorize the citizenry into accepting an unpopular war or repressive legislation, such as the Patriot Act.

History is full of false flag operations:

- The 1605 "**Gunpowder Plot**," in which Guy Fawkes allegedly tried to blow up the British parliament. The government used the highly publicized event to convince the British people that "drastic measures" were necessary to protect them against their Catholic foes. The unusual circumstances raised suspicions almost immediately and have always been linked to British spymaster Robert Cecil (see <http://bowalleyroad.blogspot.com/2010/11/terrorist-or-fall-guy.html>).
- 1898 -- The sinking of the **USS Maine** in Havana harbor was immediately pinned on the Spanish and used to justify declaring war on Spain (see <http://www.truthmove.org/content/false-flag-operations/>)
- 1933 -- The **Reichstag Fire**, believed to have been started by Nazi storm troopers, was blamed on communists and used to justify a Nazi takeover and crackdown on their opposition (see <http://www.truthmove.org/content/false-flag-operations/>)
- 1941 -- The supposed Japanese sneak attack on **Pearl Harbor**. Declassified documents reveal that the US government knew of the impending attack and allowed it to happen to generate support for US entry into World War II (see <http://kennysideshow.blogspot.com/2008/12/10-false-flags-operations-that-shaped.html>).
- 1964 -- The **Gulf of Tonkin** incident, in which phantom North Vietnamese ships fired non-existent torpedoes, which President Johnson used to justify a full scale American invasion of Vietnam. See <http://www.veteranstoday.com/2011/08/14/peeling-the-911-onion-layers-of-plots-within-plots/>)
- The **JFK, Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy assassinations**, as well as **9-11**, are all believed by serious scholars to be false flag operations orchestrated by US intelligence.

Researchers who study lone nut shooting sprees note that the shooters usually fit a distinctive profile that includes both a military and intelligence background, as well as a clear personality change in the absence of formal mental illness.

Charles Whitman is believed to be the first false flag lone nut shooter. In 1966, Whitman climbed a tower at the University of Texas and shot and killed 16 people. This was during a period President Lyndon Johnson was attempting to pass the first gun control legislation. Whitman, a former Marine, had received training by the Naval Enlisted Science Education Program (NESEP), an intelligence entity. He left a note which read, in part, "I don't understand what is compelling me to type this note. I have been to a psychiatrist I have been having fears and violent impulses."

It's unclear exactly how these men are manipulated into committing senseless acts of mass violence. The most popular theory is that they are the product of a Manchurian candidate scenario, incorporating mind bending techniques the CIA perfected in their MK-ULTRA program in the sixties and seventies.

Links to check out regarding lone nut shooting incidents believed to be false flag operations:

- Norway terror attacks:

http://boardreader.com/thread/Webster_G_Tarpley_Norway_Terror_Attacks_4gxdwX58wz.html

- Attack on Congresswoman Gabrielle Gifford:

<http://www.examiner.com/exopolitics-in-seattle/az-congresswoman-assassination-scenario-has-mkultra-profile-drug-space-target>

- Virginia tech shootings:

<http://www.prisonplanet.com/gunman-reported-at-virginia-tech.html>

- Fort Hood shooting:

http://southeastasianews.org/fort_hood_false_flag.html

- Washington DC sniper attacks:

http://members.beforeitsnews.com/story/118/533/DC_Sniper_Malvo_Reveals_Co-Conspirators:_NWO_False_Flag_Terrorism_Connection.html

- Columbine shootings (unexplained presence of unknown, non-student gunmen):

<http://www.sodahead.com/united-states/columbine-massacre--government-black-op-false-flag-iversary/blog-304455/>

How Resource Scarcity Threatens Democracy

(November 12, 2010)

There is much written about the causes and consequences of climate change, including extreme weather events, rising sea levels, melting ice caps, and mass extinctions – all of which are already occurring. There is virtually no media coverage about the extensive resource shortages that are anticipated over the next two decades. Both Richard Heinberg, of the Post Carbon Institute, and international affairs and military analyst Gwynne Dyer have written extensively on the subject. Heinberg, in his 2004 book *Powerdown: Options and Actions for a Post Carbon World* and his 2010 book *Peak Everything*; and Dyer, in his 2009 book *Climate Wars*.

Both men anticipate major social upheaval from food and water shortages. Dyer's book focuses mainly on Pentagon and British military planning for global competition – stemming from climate-related droughts and desertification - over food and water. Heinberg is more concerned about the changes in the structure of government necessitated by social upheaval. He also focuses more heavily on resource scarcity, which he feels is a more imminent crisis than catastrophic climate change.

We're Out of Everything

Many progressives are well aware of the impending global shortage of oil and natural gas. Heinberg cites numerous credible studies revealing that in the next fifteen to twenty years, we will also be out of coal, uranium (there will still be coal and uranium in the ground but extracting it will be incredibly expensive), rock phosphate (needed for industrial agriculture), fresh water, topsoil, grain, fish, arable land, minerals and precious metals (including Indium and Gallium needed to make solar panels).

Goodbye Southern California

Heinberg makes it clear in *Peak Everything* that vast urban centers in dry areas like southern California will simply not exist two decades from now. For two reasons. Owing to dwindling fresh water supplies everywhere, there will be no way to supply drinking water to millions of people between Los Angeles and the Mexican border. Moreover because of skyrocketing fuel costs, no one is going to transport food 5,000 miles (as they do now) to feed them.

Major Social Upheaval is Inevitable

He also emphasizes that public dialogue needs to move beyond changing light bulbs and carbon taxes to the major social upheaval that can no longer be avoided - as well as options for managing it. He lays out three broad societal changes that need to occur as fossil fuels become prohibitively expensive: 1) de-mechanization (replacing fossil fuel driven machines with human and animal labor), 2) de-urbanization (moving people closer to their resource base), and 3) total infrastructure revamp - replacing our existing infrastructure with one that isn't dependent on machines and fossil fuels.

The Role of Government in Managing Societal Change

Heinberg sees three possible routes that government will take in managing the major societal change required by massive resource depletion. He also lays this out in a

presentation he gave in New Zealand in 2007 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ybRz91eimTg&feature=related>)

Option 1: Feudal fascism

This involves forced movement of dissidents and minorities away from cities into prisons and work camps (and slavery), as well as close surveillance of the rest of the population. It will be instituted by whipping up popular support for strong law enforcement and military intervention during a period of massive unemployment, homelessness, food shortages and resulting instability and chaos.

Heinberg (and Dyer) see evidence the world's most powerful countries (the US, Britain, China, and Russia) have selected Option 1 and are already moving in this direction. There has been a major attack on civil liberties in all four countries. This is on top of the continuing impetus to incarcerate minorities, dissidents and now debtors, as well putting prisoners to work for private industry. (see "The Prison Industrial Complex" in Part III).

Heinberg feels upper middle class families in all three countries will strongly support Option 1 to protect their homes, gold, and food from the starving masses. He likens this scenario to Blackwater opening fire on unarmed destitute civilians after Katrina, but on a much larger scale.

Option 2: The Eco Deal

Here Heinberg offers Susan George's vision of "Environmental Keynesianism" (see her essay at http://www.globalnetwork4justice.org/story.php?c_id=313). Like Option 1, this scenario also envisions a strong central government. However it theoretically operates more democratically, and like the New Deal, creates work programs to rebuild infrastructure. Heinberg gives the example of the Tennessee Valley Authority, a vast New Deal social experiment accompanying the damming of the Tennessee River, in which thousands of Americans were moved into new experimental communities. Unfortunately people often forget the downside of the TVA, namely that thousands of people were forced to participate in this experiment against their will. This meant a large, somewhat brutal security network was necessary to police it - a network run between 1950-58 by former Nazi war criminal Werner von Braun.

Under this Green New Deal, a strong central government would provide the finance capital to create millions of jobs building public transport systems, super-insulating millions of homes and commercial buildings; developing distributed renewable energy systems; and reorganizing agriculture along biointensive, organic models.

George would finance this massive capitalization by taxing speculative currency exchange transactions and eliminating tax havens in the Caribbean and elsewhere. She points out that half of all world trade passes through off-shore tax havens. Their elimination would automatically increase tax revenues by \$250 billion dollars.

Option 3: Bottoms Up

According to Heinberg, Option 3 entails a vast expansion of existing grassroots and local government networks to enable them to become totally self-sufficient in providing for their food and energy needs. He argues against adopting this approach prematurely. He points out that most communities in North America and Europe are still ill equipped to provide even the most basic services (food, water, power, security) without the

support of complex regional and national systems. A breakdown in these services would likely lead to social unrest, leading whatever central government that remains to implement Option 1.

Nevertheless he believes that some regions (including parts of the US) will be forced to implement Option 3, especially in areas where the electrical grid and communications collapse. New Orleans experienced a foretaste of this scenario after Katrina, when it was up to local citizen groups and what remained of state and local government to rescue stranded families and provide emergency food and shelter.

Take Home Lesson

Heinberg's 2007 presentation concludes with the clear message that a soft landing is out of the question. For decades human beings have been consuming beyond the limits of what the natural world can provide. Scaling back drastically to live within those limits will be difficult and will require sacrifice. However it won't be impossible. There are numerous examples of societies pulling off a rapid coordinated response in reaction to a crisis. Heinberg points to the massive civilian adaptation in Europe and the US during World War II and in Cuba after the Soviets cut off their oil imports.

He also sees an upside to the coming crisis, in that it will force human beings to call on intangible assets such as community, cooperation, interdependence, and altruism – which have all been systematically devalued as a result of our perverse fixation to accumulate possessions.

Finally he stresses the urgency of concerned citizens getting involved in one of the thousands of grassroots organizations focused on relocalization, sustainability, and energy transition. These include Transition Towns, the Relocalization Network, and other city and region-specific initiatives.

Sustainability: Choosing the Right Crisis

(January 26, 2011)

It's old news by now. The global climate change conference in Cancun in December 2010, like the one in Copenhagen in December 2009, made no progress whatsoever towards an international climate treaty. In contrast to Copenhagen, Cancun rated hardly any mention in the mainstream media. As if failure was a foregone conclusion.

The governments that attended Cancun all know, by now, that to prevent catastrophic climate change (anticipated around 2050) developed countries must cut carbon emissions by 80% by 2030 – while developing countries limit emissions growth to comparable targets. Achieving these targets will require insulating all homes and businesses, ending all auto and plane transport and shutting down all coal-fired power plants.

US Responsibility in the Disaster at Cancun

The climate treaty the world hoped for didn't happen, largely owing to the refusal of the US (as the world's largest carbon emitter) to buy into the major cuts the Obama administration knows are needed. This relates largely to the hijacking of American democracy by multinational corporations that make immense profits off car and plane travel – and war – one of the biggest sources of carbon emissions. However, we mustn't forget that most American voters are still deeply attached to cars, plane travel, and energy guzzling homes and electronic appliances that create demand for coal fired power plants.

Owing to the absence of affordable, reliable public transport alternatives, many Americans who need cars for work or to access basic services can't give them up. More importantly, one million individuals simply giving up their cars isn't going to prevent catastrophic climate change. Auto emissions only constitute one-third of greenhouse gasses. There has to be a simultaneous commitment to eliminate air travel and shut down coal fired plants, as well as ending the US wars in the Middle East and North African and the US nuclear program and closing 1,000 foreign military bases. If the Pentagon were a country, it would rate as the second largest producer of carbon emissions: http://www.iacenter.org/o/world/climatesummit_pentagon121809/

Such large scale changes require buy-in from the federal government. And despite all his campaign rhetoric, the best Obama can commit to is a 20% cut by 2020.

Is Climate Change the Wrong Crisis?

Richard Heinberg, Rob Hopkins (founder of the Transition Towns movement) and others believe we should be less worried about climate change than about resource scarcity – that shortages of oil, natural gas, coal, water and top soil this will cause a major food crisis long before catastrophic climate change does. Our modern system of industrial agriculture is only possible with plentiful, cheap oil (for farm machinery, transportation and shipping) and cheap natural gas (the source of synthetic fertilizers), the end of cheap fossil fuels translates into a big increase into the cost of food production and a reduction in the amount of food produced. This has already starting to play out with the UN and relief agencies describing December 2010 as the worst month

on record for global hunger.

Eventually, Heinberg predicts, fossil fuels and synthetic fertilizers will become so expensive that world food production will decline to pre-industrial levels, which can only support a world population of 2 billion people. With a current global population of 7 billion, this implies a potential die-off (from famine, war and/or disease) of 5 billion people.

Choosing the Right Crisis

I, too, agree that sustainability activists should focus on resource scarcity, for somewhat different reasons. Organize effectively around climate change means persuading millions of people to undertake major lifestyle changes to solve a problem they are incapable of experiencing. Except for extreme weather events, it's virtually impossible for lay people to observe the effects of global warming. The whole notion of CO₂, which is invisible, causing a greenhouse effect that paradoxically produces more rain and colder winters, requires an enormous leap of faith (and confidence in the integrity of scientific experts). Especially as it will take 50-100 years to see any benefit from our energy saving sacrifices.

Given the profound distrust of science, technology and educated liberals embedded in working class culture, it's no surprise that a new conspiracy theory has arisen (with a lot of help from Big Coal according to Climate Wars author Gwynne Dyer) about Climategate being a hoax that George Soros, the New World Order and a bunch of liberal yuppies are using to impose new limits on individual freedom.

Engaging the Working Class

Resource scarcity, on the other hand, is a daily reality – especially for low income workers and the unemployed – as the cost of gasoline, home heating, and food goes through the roof. Moreover fossil fuel depletion will continue to hit the working class harder than the rest of society, given the staggering income inequality found in all industrialized countries.

Most people have some experience preparing for resource scarcity, with the disaster kits they keep in their garage or basement. There's already a whole survivalist industry, aimed primarily at the white male working class. Community and neighborhood focused survival has also had a dry run, through the Voluntary Simplicity Movement started by Vicki Robins' 1992 *Your Money or Your Life*. Voluntary Simplicity subsequently morphed into the Y2K movement, which arose out of concern that our computer-based infrastructure would collapse in the year 2000.

The Popular Appeal of the Sustainability Movement

As a brief member of the Phinney Ridge Y2K group in Seattle, I distinctly recall the a-ha moment when we all recognized the extent to which technology (thanks to cheap fossil fuels) had replaced mutual relationships with neighbors and the natural environment). Obviously millions of lines of code got rewritten in time, and civilization didn't collapse in 2000.

At the same time, much of the work that went into the Voluntary Simplicity and Y2K movements has been incorporated into Transition Towns and other sustainability-related movements. There are now literally millions of groups worldwide focused on some

aspect of bioregional sustainability. The most visible evidence of their success are the blossoming of home veggie gardens, urban community gardens and orchards and farmers' markets; the 1,040 US cities and towns (nearly 1/3 of the US population) which have signed onto the Kyoto accord (despite the Senate's refusal to ratify it); and the 125 local communities voting to restrict corporate rights (see <http://www.tikkun.org/article.php/jan2011kanner>).

Addressing Apathy and Alienation Head-On

One of the most important factors in this success is the ability of the sustainability movement to address apathy and alienation head-on, by reengaging people in neighborhood and community life. Often this local civic engagement leads on to re-engagement in the wider political process. I would never argue that progressives should focus on local community building to the exclusion of critically needed government reforms. Corporate lobbies still have the ability to overturn local and state laws in the courts by claiming that they violate alleged constitutional rights. Thus organizing to end so-called "constitutional" protections for corporations (which aren't even mentioned in the US Constitution) – either through federal legislation or constitutional amendment (<http://www.movetoamed.org>) must be an extremely high priority. At the same time, I see neighborhood and community sustainability networks playing a pivotal role in building strong grassroots lobbies with enough muscle to tackle banking reform, the restoration of civil liberties revoked by the Patriot Act, or ending the wars in the Middle East.

The Basics of Sustainability Organizing

Sustainability-related work can be broken down into concrete, achievable steps, which also lends to its appeal. In the Transition Towns movement, organizers have found it easiest to begin with food, water and energy security – in part because they are most critical to human survival. However the bioregional economic networks established as a first step in addressing food, water and energy security can be used to prepare for breakdowns in other systems. For 99.9% of human existence people have relied on a bioregional economic model in which they source food and other life essentials from within a 100 mile radius. It's only in the last seventy years that we've become totally dependent on national and multinational corporations to meet these needs. The mere process of re-creating these bioregional networks is very helpful in learning to shift our thinking away from our total dependence on corporate products and services.

Although the sustainability movement receives little attention in the mainstream media, it has been quietly building for nearly two decades – often with the support of state and local government (it receives the most state support in California). In Europe it receives national and European Union support. The following is just a small snapshot of local accomplishments around energy, food and water security.

FOOD AND WATER SECURITY

- ◆ Increased local expertise in permaculture and biointensive agriculture techniques, as industrial fertilizers and insecticides (manufactured from fossil fuels) become unavailable and/or prohibitively expensive.

- ◆ De-paving – digging up private and public driveways and parking lots and replacing them with backyard veggie gardens and community orchards and gardens. In addition to improving food security, this restores watersheds by reducing run-off, a major threat to water security.
- ◆ Lawn liberation – replacing lawns and ornamental trees and shrubs with fruit and nut trees and veggie gardens.
- ◆ Support of local farmers through farmers markets and Community Supported Agriculture Schemes (in which residents “subscribe” to weekly deliveries of fresh veggies and fruit).
- ◆ Neighborhood and municipal systems of rainwater collection and purification and gray water collection
- ◆ Adoption of active run-off management plans, in which lost groundwater is measured and minimized in development planning – and replaced through rain gardens (small catchment pools in open spaces).

ENERGY SECURITY

Reduced fossil fuel dependent transportation:

- ◆ Relocalization – Creating local consumer-farmer/consumer-retailer networks, including state and locally owned banks, credit unions and cooperatives. Given that local businesses struggle to compete (their costs and prices tend to be higher) with national and multinational corporations, this can be facilitated via the creation of local barter systems and/or local currencies, such as Ithaca Hours, which can only be spent locally.
- ◆ Urban planning that facilitates public and active transport (walking, cycling, etc.) by minimizing sprawl and creating urban villages, where residents live closer to essential services.
- ◆ Improved street safety - community and neighborhood street reclaiming initiatives to make streets safer for people to use cars less and walk and cycle more.
- ◆ Car sharing - increased uptake of commercial car sharing schemes, employing efficient electric or hybrid vehicles or those that run on regionally produced biomass fuels.

Reduced home/business fossil fuel dependence:

- ◆ Energy efficiency subsidies - state, local and power company subsidies for home insulation schemes and solar water heaters.
- ◆ Improved architectural planning - subsidies and reduced permit fees for Green Building (buildings purpose-built to be energy/water/waste self-sufficient).
- ◆ Alternative energy subsidies - state and local regulations and subsidies (as in Germany) to increase distributed energy systems based on alternate energy

sources (solar, wind, tidal, etc).

- ◆ Open Source technology - active promotion of Open Source computer and information technology.

The Dreaded U-Word

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Like the F-word, the U-word is largely taboo in polite society, especially among younger Americans. According to a recent survey 41% of Americans “disapprove” of unions (see <http://economistsview.typepad.com/economistsview/2010/09/why-has-union-membership-declined.html>). Generation X, Y and Z Americans are more likely to view unions as irrelevant, rather than bad or harmful. Young people have no difficulty comprehending the necessity to join forces with co-workers in confronting arbitrary and abusive employers. They shun unions because they view them as ineffective in protecting labor rights – in prevent recent large scale lay-offs and wage and benefits cuts or state government attacks on collective bargaining rights.

Why American Unions are De Facto Government Unions

Thanks to the repressive Taft Hartley Act the US passed in 1947, American unions essentially function as government unions. This really struck home as I read about the essential role illegal Egyptian unions played in Egypt’s February revolution (see “Egypt’s Invisible Labor Movement” in Part IV). In Egypt, all workers are required to join the government-run Egyptian Trade Union Federation, and independent trade unions are banned. Members of the Trade Union Federation are required to get government permission (which is rarely granted) to strike. However since 1998, nearly two million Egyptian workers have formed independent unions and have engaged in more than 3,000 strikes. Moreover it was the threat of a general strike (and the closure of the Suez Canal) that ultimately forced Mubarak to resign.

Should the US Repeal the Taft Hartley Act?

Obviously there is no official government union in the US. However for all practical purposes, the Taft Hartley Act forces the American trade union movement to function as a de facto government union, by repealing many of the labor rights guaranteed under the 1935 Wagner Act. The 1947 Taft Hartley Act was passed by a Republican Congress over President Truman’s veto. Yet the increasingly pro-corporate Democrats – despite numerous opportunities (when they controlled both Congress and the White House) - have never tried to repeal it.

Repealing Taft Hartley was part of Ralph Nader’s platform in the 2000, 2004 and 2008, which may be partly why the so-called “alternative” media attacked him so viciously. In fact the only people talking about repealing Taft Hartley are Nader, a few socialist groups, and Dr Elaine Bernard, the Executive Director of the Labor and Worklife Program at Harvard Law School (see http://therealnews.com/t2/index.php?Itemid=74&id=31&jumival=3548&option=com_content&task=view). Certainly no one in the trade union bureaucracy mentions it.

How Taft Hartley Restricts Labor Rights

The US union movement was built during the Great Depression. Then, as now, employers took advantage of the economic downturn to cut wages, pile on work and force employees to work under sweatshop conditions. In the 1930s organized labor, led largely by the CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations), fought back through

slowdowns, mass pickets (to prevent scabs from crossing picket lines), and sit down and “wildcat” strikes (the latter are unofficial strikes called in response to mistreatment of a co-worker).

Because slowdowns, mass pickets and sit down and wildcat strikes are all illegal under Taft Hartley, American unions face steep fines for engaging in them. In 2011, if a worker is bullied, harassed or illegally fired by an employer, his only option is to file a grievance through the National Labor Relations Board, a process that can drag out for months or years. Because there are no real sanctions against employers, workplace bullying and harassment are incredibly common in the US. Plus most workers targeted in this way are forced to quit or take unpaid leave while they wait for their grievance to be heard.

Other Taft Hartley provisions that restrict labor rights:

- ◆ Taft Hartley authorizes states to enact right-to-work laws outlawing collective bargaining agreements that make union membership a condition of employment. Such laws are virtually unheard of in other countries, as they permit “free-rider” workers to enjoy the hard won benefits of union membership without joining the union or paying dues.
- ◆ Taft Hartley excludes supervisors and independent contractors as employees for purposes of union membership. This has allowed companies to arbitrarily designate thousands of employees as independent contractors and/or supervisors and thus make them ineligible for union membership.
- ◆ Taft Hartley allows the President to obtain an 80 day court ordered injunction to halt a strike, allowing the employer sufficient time to recruit scabs to replace striking workers.
- ◆ Taft Hartley establishes the right of management to campaign against union membership (often incorporating coercive scare tactics) during a unionizing drive. This is in marked contrast to European countries, where employers (who always have an unfair advantage) are required to maintain a neutral stance towards union organizing.
- ◆ Taft Hartley allows the employer to petition for a union certification election and/or decertification election. Similar laws are also unheard of in Europe. Management frequently uses this provision to force a premature certification vote, before workers have had a full discussion of the pros and cons of union membership.
- ◆ Taft Hartley allows employers to delay union certification by demanding National Labor Relations Board hearings on key matters of dispute (such as what constitutes a bargaining unit). Management often uses the time to coerce individual workers to vote against the union.
- ◆ Taft Hartley establishes heavy penalties against unions who violate the Act and negligible penalties for employer violations. This tends to make employer violations of labor rights (e.g. illegal firing of labor supporters during organizing drives) routine.
- ◆ (Prior to 1965) Taft Hartley required all union leaders to sign an anti-communist

pledge. Prior to its repeal, this provision led to massive red-baiting in the union movement, with the result that the most militant union members were either expelled or forced out.

The Destruction of US Unions

The effect of the 1947 Taft Hartley Act on union membership was almost immediate. In 1946 the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) had 6.3 million members. By 1954, when it merged with the AFL, this number was down to 4.6 million. This steady decline continued. In 1954 34.7% of American workers belonged to a union. By 2010, this had fallen to 11.9% (<http://www.bls.gov/news.release/union2.nr0.htm>).

There are obviously other factors that contribute to the decline of unions in the US:

1. The export of American manufacturing jobs - the wholesale shutdown of US factories to relocate overseas was clearly a disaster for both the US economy and the trade union movement. Yet many on the Left argue, as I do, that a strong union movement would have stopped Ronald Reagan from repealing tariff, quota and tax laws that, prior to 1980, protected workers against such massive dislocations.

2. The expulsion of militant trade unionists - this allowed more conservative union leaders to identify more closely with corporate executives than with rank and file workers. Instead of lobbying to repeal Taft Hartley and relying on a well-organized rank and file and industrial action, union bosses entered into “sweetheart deals,” in which they got special perks from management for guaranteeing labor discipline among the workers they supposedly represented.

3. CIA infiltration of the AFL-CIO leadership - former CIA officer Tom Braden bragged in a 1967 *Saturday Evening Post* article about the number of AFL-CIO officers he placed on the CIA payroll. See <http://revitalisinglabour.blogspot.com/2009/04/lenny-brenner-on-tom-braden.html>, <http://www.laboreducator.org/darkpast2.htm> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Braden

4. The takeover of the Teamsters and other unions by Jimmy Hoffa and other Mafia figures – a major factor in turning public opinion against union, which was clearly facilitated by the refusal of FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to recognize or fight organized crime. Both the FBI and CIA have a history of collaborating with organized crime in drug trafficking, strike breaking and in “anti-Communist” campaigns targeting trade unions and leftist groups in the US and Europe (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucky_Luciano, <http://www.converge.org.nz/pirm/cia.htm> and <http://tinyurl.com/6f6vms5>).

5. Wall Street’s public relations campaign to demonize unions - see “Moving from Facebook into the Streets” in Part IV for details about the systematic, seven decade corporate campaign to bombard the American public with anti-union, anti-worker and anti-working class messages.

The Strength of European Unions

Surprisingly the US doesn’t have the lowest rate of union membership in the industrialized world. The ineffectiveness of American unions isn’t based on low membership per se, but on negative public opinion and the paralyzing effect of the Taft Hartley Act.

At present the rate of union membership in the developed world is determined by two main factors: the size of the public sector work force (which tends to have high unionization rates) and the percent of the private sector represented by small business (as opposed to corporations), which tend to be extremely hard to unionize. Finland (at 74%) and Sweden (at 71%) have the highest rates of unionization, owing to their large public sectors. Italy and Canada (both at 30%) and the UK (at 27%) also have fairly high unionization rates, as they still have large public sectors. Germany, where both the manufacturing and public sector are strong, is 27% unionized. Greece, despite its large public sector, has a relatively low rate of unionization (23%) as 93% of its private sector consists of businesses with fewer than twenty employees. (See <http://www.worker-participation.eu/National-Industrial-Relations/Across-Europe/Trade-Unions2>).

Despite the recent general strikes in Spain and France, only a small percentage of their workforce that is unionized. The US at 11.9% falls between Spain, at 16% and France, at 8%. European Union analysts attribute labor's organizing success in Spain and France (and Greece) to the high public regard unions enjoy in these countries. The result is that most non-union workers will strike in solidarity with a general strike called by major unions.

Following the Egyptian Example

So long as American workers continue to follow the dictates of the Taft Hartley Act, I see no hope of building a union movement strong enough to resist Wall Street and government initiatives to reduce the US to a third world sweatshop. Trade unionists in New Zealand find it laughable that US workers have to get permission from the federal government (the National Labor Relations Board) to form a union. In their view that's hardly different from having a government-run union, as in Egypt and other Middle East countries. They believe, as I do, that American workers are doomed if they continue to rely on the strategy of begging the trade union bureaucracy to beg the Democratic Party to repeal the Taft Hartley Act.

The failure of the Obama administration and Congress to prevent Republican states from stripping workers of all union protections – as well as their threats to repeal Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security – leave American workers no choice but to follow the example of their Egyptian brothers and form their own (illegal) unions. Relying on a pro-corporate federal government to address labor rights makes no sense. It's time for the rank and file to reclaim the freedom to have mass pickets, slowdowns, and wildcat and sit down strikes in response to attacks on workers' rights. Historically these are the only tactics that have ever produced real gains.

Reclaiming the Commons

Open Source: a New Tool for the Sustainability Movement

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It occurs to me that I and other climate change activists may be entirely wrong in the way we approach organizing around this issue. Up till now we have envisioned pressuring government to adopt carrot and stick policies (a combination of tax credits and subsidies) that would somehow motivate billions of people to undertake the behavior change necessary to reduce the carbon footprint of the (mainly) developed world. This clearly isn't working.

I have recently stumbled across a website (and some innovative thinkers) who propose quite a different approach – one involving far reaching guerrilla-style tactics that don't rely on government buy-in for success.

The Challenges of Organizing Around Climate Change

Organizing around climate change – at the community, national or global level – presents three unique challenges. First and foremost is the massive scale of the problem. Climate scientists tell us that the only way to avert climate catastrophe is for entire population of the developed world (1.2 billion) to immediately and drastically reduce consumption enough to cut their carbon emissions by 80%.

The second major hurdle is that multinational corporations – which exert virtually totalitarian control over both the world economy and the world's governments – don't want 1.2 billion people to reduce their consumption because of the disastrous effect this would have on profits. Every message climate change activists put out is immediately countered by 100 messages from corporate advertisers pressuring people to increase consumption (and a few denying the existence of climate change). The third involves the dilemma of the growing middle class in the Third World. As opportunities open up in China and India for their middle class to adopt more comfortable western lifestyles, it's ridiculous to ask them to return to subsistence agriculture to preserve their low carbon footprint.

Approaching Climate Change from an Open Source Perspective

The website <http://www.worldchanging.com> and the book *World Changing: a User's Guide for the 21st Century* tackles the challenge – of getting billions of people to drastically change their behavior simultaneously - from a totally new angle. Whereas most climate change activists point the finger at corrupt and unresponsive governments, the innovators who started worldchanging.com see the hang-up over intellectual property rights as the main problem. They believe solutions already exist for massively reducing global carbon emissions. What's lacking are vehicles for broadly sharing them. World Changing activists maintain that an extremely important “vehicle” already exists in the Open Source movement, a guerrilla movement (which, to my surprise, is nearly as old as computers) built around the premise that monopoly and intellectual property rights stifle innovation.

Open Source Operating Systems, Software and Information Systems

The Open Source IT movement has grown like wildfire in the last few decades – with the widespread use of Wikipedia, Linux, Firefox, Open Office and other alternatives to

the Microsoft monopoly. The basic philosophy underlying the movement is that society as a whole benefits from sharing technology (rather than restricting its use via monopoly and intellectual property rights), mainly because it allows other innovators to improve and build on it.

As strange as it may sound, switching to Open Source operating systems and software – and getting your boss, co-workers, friends and relatives to do so – can ultimately reduce carbon emissions more than getting them to change their light bulbs.

How Open Source Reduces Carbon Emissions

There are obviously small energy savings (related to DVD production, packaging, transportation, etc) when an individual downloads software instead of buying it off the shelf. However the big emissions savings occur when large companies that maintain vast amounts of data switch to Open Source. Recently the Bank of New Zealand reduced their energy costs and carbon emissions by converting their front end systems to Open Source. See

<http://cio.co.nz/cio.nsf/spot/B5D33290A0CB8EFFCC25754B0017C4D8>

These savings derive from streamlining, speeding up and simplifying their data processes with a single (Red Hat Linux) program (instead of relying on three or four software packages for different functions) and in many cases, replacing real life computer work stations with virtual ones.

Companies – and Countries - Going Open Source

In response to the global recession, the immense cost savings is leading many companies worldwide to switch to Open Source for part or all of their data processing. The best known are BART (Bay Area Transit System), Burlington Coats, CISCO, Conoco, the Mobil Travel Guide (Exxon's consumer website), Royal Dutch Shell, Panasonic, Hilfiger, Toyota Motor Sales USA, the US Army, the US federal courts and the US Post Office bulk sorting facility.

For the most part these systems cost less – not because the software is free (companies usually need to pay a vendor for installation and technical support) – because they are simpler to run and reduce power consumption.

Third world countries have been even quicker to jump on the bandwagon. Brazil was the first to mandate Open Soft systems for all their government offices. India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam are seriously considering following suit. See <http://geospatial.blogs.com/geospatial/2009/07/index.html>

Open Source Design: Not Limited to IT

Engineers, architects and climate change activists in the Open Sustainability movement (see <http://www.worldchanging.com>) are expanding Open Source Design beyond its computer applications to “virally” spread sustainable living ideas and technologies. Third World countries also tend to be more receptive to the concept of Open Source Design. This mode of development is in the best tradition of “leapfrogging” – skipping inferior, less efficient, more expensive or more polluting technologies and industries to move directly to more advanced and efficient ones.

Other examples of Open Source Design:

1. Open Source Scenario Planning – Sweden’s Martin Borjesson is the pioneer in this area http://www.well.com/~mb/scenario_planning/
2. Open Source architecture (creating smart green buildings that use less energy because they are planned more efficiently) – see Jamais Cascio’s website <http://openthefuture.com/>
3. Collaborative Solution Seeking – see Alex Steffen article <http://www.worldchanging.com/archives/004140.html>
4. The Creative Commons developing world licensing scheme – allows green inventors to patent their work in the developed world only, enabling unlimited access for the developing world. See <http://creativecommons.org/about/licenses>
5. Singularity University <http://singularityu.org/> – “a grand scheme to assemble, educate and inspire a cadre of leaders who strive to understand and facilitate the development of exponentially advancing technologies to address Humanity’s Grand Challenges.”
6. Open Source Sustainability – http://www.open-sustainability.org/wiki/Main_Page
7. Open Source medicine – follows the example of South Africa, which in 1997 passed laws making AIDS antiretrovirals affordable by producing generics locally. See <http://sciencereview.berkeley.edu/articles.php?issue=7&article=disease> and http://salilab.org/pdf/Maurer_PLoSMedicine_2004.pdf. Both sites emphasize that drug research dollars are increasingly scarce and that the patent-protected profit motive fails to promote research for the greater good.
8. Open Source research – besides PLoS (Public Library of Science), there is also a growing movement to make all scientific and medical research Open Source. This would save hospitals and medical schools hundreds of dollars a year that they currently pay for subscriptions to professional journals, most of which have a conflict of interest as they also carry drug company ads. See <http://bacteriology.com/2007/12/11/opensource/>

Squatting 101

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With the continuing recession and growing epidemic of foreclosures and homelessness, squatting is becoming increasingly common worldwide. By definition, squatting is “illegally” occupying a building that doesn’t belong to you without the owner’s permission.

The simplest form of squatting is remaining in your home when the bank or mortgage company tries to foreclose on your property. Owing to the recent scandal over illegal foreclosures, mortgagees who miss payments now have a range of legal options they can pursue:

1. Perform a Securitization Audit (to determine who owns your mortgage): the Senate Banking Committee and many states are investigating thousands of foreclosures executed fraudulently by Wells Fargo, J P Morgan Chase, Bank of America (and other banks), Fannie Mae and the Mortgage Electronic Recording Service (MERS) where they didn’t actually own the mortgages of the properties they foreclosed on. Lending laws specify that only that actual owner of a mortgage can initiate foreclosure action. In many cases these companies are filing fraudulent court documents alleging that they own the loans, when they are merely servicing them on behalf of the lender. By performing a Securitization Audit, mortgagees can prevent banks and other financial institutions from illegally foreclosing on them (see <http://www.securitizationauditsite.com/securitization-audit/if-you-are-in-foreclosure/>)

2. Request a Forensic Loan Document Review (for mortgagees victimized by predatory mortgage loans they can’t possibly repay): owing to federal laws prohibiting predatory lending, a borrower can use this type of review to force the financial institution foreclosing on them to negotiate (see <http://www.tila-now.com/>).

3. Challenge unauthorized charges on your mortgage statement: Bank of America was caught in a related scam in which they were adding backdated insurance charges to mortgage payments to push mortgagees who missed payments into foreclosure. This is a scam to watch out for if unexplained charges show up on your mortgage statement. See <http://zitrof.net/bank-of-americas-illegal-foreclosures>

4. File for Chapter 7 or Chapter 13 bankruptcy: filing for bankruptcy often preserves your right to remain in your home.

Organize a “Live-In”

When all legal options have been exhausted, direct action – using a “live-in” to barricade your home when police try to evict you - is the next step. Take Back the Land (<http://www.takebacktheland.org/>) is a Miami-based social justice group formed in Miami in 2006, which defends the right of families to remain in foreclosed homes and public housing. In March 2011, Take Back the Land-Rochester organized a live-in to stop the eviction of Catherine Lennon and ten of her children and grandchildren, after her husband’s death caused the family to miss several months of mortgage payments. Organizers blockaded the home for two weeks before they were routed by a police SWAT team armed with assault rifles. Fortunately the local media attention led

Congressman Louise Slaughter to intervene with Fannie Mae (which received a \$90 billion taxpayer bailout in 2008), who have subsequently agreed to work out a new payment schedule to allow the family to stay in their home.

Moving Homeless Families into Abandoned Homes

In addition to blocking evictions, Take Back the Land received major media attention in 2008, for its efforts to re-house homeless families in abandoned foreclosed housing in Miami. In a situation where whole blocks and neighborhoods had been abandoned, volunteers broke into the abandoned homes, cleaned, painted, made repairs, and changed the locks. They then helped move homeless families into them. More often than not, getting off the streets enables homeless parents to keep and find jobs, making it possible to pay rent and move into their own place.

In most cases, Miami police have refused to intervene. The city of Miami takes the position that it's the responsibility of the property owner to initiate eviction proceedings. As in other cities facing budgetary crises, the problem is too vast for an already overstretched police force. Moreover neighbors, concerned about property values of adjoining properties, are always delighted to see foreclosed homes occupied and fixed up (even by squatters).

Miami isn't unique in facing an epidemic of abandoned foreclosed homes. It's a problem confronting all major US cities, as abandoned property is a magnet for vandalism, prostitution, drug and gang activity, and fires. Detroit, which has 10,000 abandoned homes, currently pays people to move into them - see <http://www.businessinsider.com/abandoned-houses-detroit-2011-2>). And San Diego recently sued the Bank of America to stop foreclosures in their city (see <http://www.foreclosure1.com/blog/foreclosures/foreclosure/san-diego-city-suing-bank-america-stop-foreclosures>).

In addition to the good work of Take Back the Land and affiliate groups, in many places homeless families are occupying foreclosed properties on their own (see <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/19/business/worldbusiness/19iht-home.1.13005526.html>). As a result of this trend, Cleveland and other cities report a decline in numbers sleeping on the street (<http://www.breitbart.com/article.php?id=D8US8LMG0>).

The banks who own the homes seem even less keen to eject squatters than the police. In most states, this requires initiation, in court, of formal eviction proceedings. Moreover banks know full well that perpetually vacant homes eventually become worthless, due to vandalism, and have to be demolished (at additional cost to the owner).

Things really get interesting when homeless families occupy abandoned property for five years or more (longer in some states) and attempt to claim title (ownership) under Adverse Possession laws.

The Law of Adverse Possession

This hands-off policy by police and banks with regard to the homeless occupying foreclosed and abandoned homes has opened up a lucrative market for ambitious entrepreneurs who fix up abandoned properties and rent them out to tenants. In December 2010 Mark Gurette, the owner of Saving Florida Homes Inc. pleaded no contest to second degree fraud for renting out 100 foreclosed properties. In each case,

Gurette notified the banks who held title to the homes that he was claiming them under adverse possession - and only received a response from two of them. Owing to the banks' disinterest, the state of Florida was unable to charge him with trespassing. They could only charge him with fraud by finding tenants willing to testify he had misled them. Although all his rental agreements explained that he was occupying the property via "adverse possession," he didn't make it clear to many of his tenants that he didn't actually own the homes he was charging rent for. His penalty? A slap on the wrist - two years probation and an agreement not to file any "adverse possession" claims for two years (see http://blogs.browardpalmbeach.com/juice/2010/12/mark_gurette_fraud_case_ends_in_probation.php).

The 1862 Homestead Act

The legal principle of "adverse possession" - the origin of the expression "possession is nine tenths of the law" - is recognized in most cultures. In the US, it dates back to the Homestead Act Abraham Lincoln signed into law in 1862. The Act stipulated that anyone "improving" unoccupied land could file for a deed of title after five years. The law was abolished in 1976, except in Alaska, which continued a state version of the Homestead Act until 1986.

Common law and most states still provide for a person to obtain land through use, and squatting in a foreclosed home falls under civil law, rather than criminal, law. Unless you break in or damage the property in some way, the police can't file criminal charges. Moreover the rightful homeowner is obliged to initiate a formal eviction, which can be very expensive, to get rid of squatters.

In Florida, Take Back the Land and individual squatters are utilizing an 1869 statute that says if a person takes possession a property (and pays property tax) and the owner does not claim it within seven years, the squatter gets to keep it. Requirements differ in other states, though all require you to occupy the property openly and make improvements to it. California, Nevada and Iowa are the most favorable states for squatting. They only require you to occupy property (and pay property tax) for five years before applying for a deed of title.

Take Back the Land Goes National

Although Take Back the Land has received little media attention in the last few years, they have greatly expanded and have local action groups in New York, Boston, Chicago, Madison, Toledo, Portland, Rochester, Washington DC, Atlanta and other cities.

Ending Corporate Rule: the Citizens' Rights Movement

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The citizens' rights movement was born in 2000 when Belfast Pennsylvania, passed a law prohibiting factory farms from operating within their township. In 2005 this law was upheld in court, and twelve other Pennsylvania townships in five counties now have similar ordinances. In addition to laws banning sewage sludge and factory farms, one community has banned mining and four have passed laws establishing ecosystem rights.

There is lots of media speculation about the fate of #OccupyWallStreet (OWS) over winter. Wall Street and Washington politicians are hoping OWS will simply vanish with colder weather. At this point, I think this is highly unlikely. I suspect the size of public occupations on the East Coast will likely shrink, especially with the advent of frost and snow. Occupations will be easier to maintain in the South and on the West Coast, where winters are milder. At the same time, I'm skeptical that any former OWS activists will return to their former apolitical lives. With the growing collaboration between OWS and unions and existing environmental, peace and justice and citizens' rights groups, I expect OWS protestors who leave public spaces over winter will be drawn into the important anti-corporate work of other movements. In this way they can continue their commitment to fighting corporate rule, while reserving the option to reoccupy public spaces in the spring -- or sporadically over the winter months in response to outrageous corporate or government behavior.

One very successful anti-corporate movement that receives virtually no mainstream or alternative media coverage is the eleven year old citizens' rights movement. With the help of the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund (CELDF -- <http://www.celdf.org/>) and Global Exchange (<http://www.globalexchange.org/communityrights/campaigns/RBO>), more than 100 communities across the US have enacted ordinances establishing local citizen rights that can't be usurped by corporations. They have done so despite corporate claims that the Constitution's Commerce Clause and state constitutions deny local municipalities the right to pass laws harmful to business interests. Yet as with OWS, their strength lies in numbers. In Pennsylvania, for example, when the state attorney general threatened to sue the town of Packer for prohibiting corporations from dumping sewage sludge, six other towns promptly adopted similar ordinances and 23 adopted resolutions of support.

Banning Factory Farms, Toxic Sludge, Fracking and Aquifer Depletion

The citizens' rights movement was born in 2000 when Belfast, in traditionally conservative rural Pennsylvania, passed a law prohibiting factory farms from operating within their township. In 2005 this law was upheld in court, and twelve other Pennsylvania townships in five counties now have similar ordinances. In addition to laws banning factory farms and sewage sludge, one community has banned mining and four have passed laws establishing ecosystem rights (establishing, for example, that

preserving trees trumps corporate rights). In 2010 Pittsburgh became the first major city to reject corporate rights after their city council passed a CELDF-drafted citizens' bill of rights, as well as a law banning drilling for natural gas within city limits.

Barnstead New Hampshire has passed a similar ecosystem rights ordinance, while five towns in New Hampshire and two in Maine have passed laws prohibiting the corporatization of water resources and aquifer depletion. Serious drought conditions in many regions of the US have greatly heightened national concern about impending water shortages, owing to the failure of rainfall to replenish the ground water stored in rapidly shrinking aquifers. The CELDF is also hard at work in communities on the Marcellus Shale (in Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio, West Virginia and Maryland) to pass anti-fracking laws similar to Pittsburgh's.

Enacting Penalties for Chemical Trespass

Meanwhile on the West Coast, tiny Mt Shasta has successfully banned energy giant PG&E from engaging in local cloud seeding and Nestle from withdrawing water from their aquifer for a bottling operation (see <http://www.tikkun.org/article.php/jan2011kanner>). The Mt Shasta Community Rights and Self Government Act asserts the right of the people of Mt Shasta to natural water systems and cycles and establishes strict liability and burden of proof for chemical trespass. Chemical trespass is defined as the involuntary introduction of toxic chemicals into the human body. It's based on a novel concept promoted by the CELDF and local democracy activists that corporations don't have the automatic right to load our bodies up with scores of toxic cancer-causing chemicals. Halifax Virginia and three towns in Pennsylvania have also passed laws imposing penalties for toxic trespass.

In Washington State a bipartisan coalition called Envision Spokane seeks to make Spokane the second major city to elevate the rights of workers, neighborhoods, people and nature above those of corporations (<http://www.envisionspokane.org/2011/8/31/derrick-jensen-an-idea-whose-time-has-come>). Their 2009 ballot initiative to enact a Community Bill of Rights was defeated, owing to a deceptive ballot that erroneously led voters to believe it would lead to a tax increase -- and a \$300,000 campaign by Spokane business interests to defeat it. Spokane voters had another opportunity to vote on the Community Bill of Rights on November 8. As of November 12, the outcome was still close to call. Proposition 1 was trailing by only 115 votes, with the final outcome to be announced on November 16 (<http://www.spokesman.com/blogs/spincontrol/>).

Other recent citizens' rights initiatives include the rejection by Orland California of a Crystal Geyser bottling plant and the refusal of Flagstaff Arizona to sell water to a Nestle facility. Meanwhile a strong citizens' rights group in Santa Monica is lobbying for an ecosystems rights ordinance, while People vs. Chemical Trespass in Santa Cruz is organizing for a 2012 ballot initiative enacting a local chemical trespass ordinance.

How to Fight Corporations in Your Community

CELDF currently conducts local democracy schools for communities all over the US seeking to challenge corporate rights via local citizen rights ordinances. Where states have balked at recognizing the legality of locally enacted anti-corporate laws, cities and

towns have either passed stronger laws or changed their legal status (ending their Second Class Municipality Status) by enacting home rule charters and new constitutions (<http://stirtoaction.com/2011/03/29/a-community-bill-of-rights/>). People interested in ending corporate rule in their own communities can contact the CLEDF at <http://www.celdf.org/>

Part VI The Endgame

“The Endgame,” offers a brief glimpse of what a post-capitalist world might look like. It begins with essays on the controversial topic of population control and the centuries old human nature debate. It finishes with three articles exploring how capitalism is likely to collapse and political and social characteristics of post-capitalism.

As an advocate of participatory democracy, I strongly believe it will be up to our children and grandchildren to decide how they will govern themselves and provide for their basic needs. Nevertheless I also believe we can predict some basic features of the post-capitalist world, especially those forced on us by resource scarcity and catastrophic climate change

(October 24, 2010)

Many activists in the sustainability movement believe that carbon emissions can't be reduced to a safe range without curbing population growth. However, from the standpoint of political correctness, the mere mention of population control is totally taboo. The right accuses you of infringing on God-given personal rights – to have babies and own guns. And what passes for the left accuses you of being naive and impractical for trying to address such an inflammatory issue.

Thus I feel compelled to begin with a disclaimer: I am not about mandatory sterilization, abortion or eugenics (mandatory sterilization and/or abortion for those considered “unfit” to reproduce). Nevertheless I believe those of us in the developed world face a stark choice: either we figure out how to substantially limit population growth or accept a future in which nearly all of us live in subsistence level poverty.

Resource Depletion: A Bigger Threat Than Climate Change

Catastrophic climate change isn't the only major crisis human kind faces in the 21st century. Fossil fuel depletion possibly poses a bigger threat because of its implications for food production. Our industrialized system of agriculture is totally dependent on cheap oil and natural gas – not only to run farm machinery and transport produce to market, but in the manufacture of fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides. Even the oil companies acknowledge that production of oil and natural gas is failing to keep up with the exploding demand from a new, very large middle class in India and China. Although it will be decades before we totally run out of either, we have definitely reached a point where relative scarcity has significantly increased the cost of driving and heating our homes – and, in many parts of the world, the cost of food. Moreover, as Richard Heinberg points out, many regions (including parts of the US) already face water and other resource shortages (see “Choosing the Right Crisis” in Part V).

There is also no question the current wars in the Middle East and North Africa are primarily resource wars. In case people haven't noticed, the US and China are engaged in a colossal struggle over resources (energy mainly, but the Chinese are also massively investing in mineral resources in Africa, Pakistan and Central Asia). China is using its economic might to monopolize oil and gas resources (mainly in Iran, Afghanistan and oil-rich African countries). While the US, which has no economy left to speak of, is using its military might in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Libya, Yemen and elsewhere to try to stop them.

Has the Earth Already Exceeded Its Carrying Capacity?

In the 18th century political, economist Thomas Malthus made the observation that human beings have always outstripped their food supply. He also observed that when populations reach the limit of their ability to provide for themselves some external force – usually famine, epidemics, or war – intervenes to drastically reduce the number of hungry mouths to be fed.

It's a pattern as old as civilization. Human cultures on every continent except Antarctica adapted very early by using wars of conquest to increase their ability to produce food – driving out tribes on adjacent land and using it to grow crops and cattle for their own people. The Old Testament provides one of the clearest descriptions of resource driven

conquest from ancient history – as the Israelites, under the leadership of Moses and Joshua, crossed the Red Sea into the Sinai and drove the indigenous tribes from valley after valley to take over their farmlands.

The Industrial Revolution and Colonization

The Industrial Revolution, occurring between 1750 and 1850, supposedly changed all this. Scientists invented fantastic new machines that replaced human, horse and oxen power with the trapped energy of fossil fuels (oil, gas, and coal). This allowed them to exponentially increase the amount of food produced from a given plot of land. It also vastly improved the ability of people who controlled fossil fuel resources to conquer and seize the resources – not just of neighboring populations – but of those that lived at great distance. A process known as colonization.

Do Fossil Fuels Invalidate Malthus' Law?

Over the last fifty years or so, political leaders have claimed that the Industrial Revolution invalidates Malthus' Law – that thanks to fossil fuels and modern technology, humankind can now reproduce indefinitely without ever running out of food. Unfortunately this is mere propaganda. At some level, most Americans realize at some level that we live a finite planet with finite resources and can't possibly provide food, water and other resources for an infinite number of human beings. Some in the sustainability movement – pointing to the 1.2 billion people who are already starving to death (due to increasing desertification, combined with the increasing frequency of tropical storms, floods, droughts and wild fires) - believe that at 6.8 billion we have already exceeded the number the earth can support.

In reality, the Industrial Revolution hasn't been terribly effective in feeding the world. It has only made the first world extremely effective at colonization. In other words, it has created a scenario in which 20-25% of the world live extremely comfortably in the first world, 50% live with the misery of extreme oppression and exploitation in the third world, and 20-25% live with chronic starvation and disease on land no longer suitable for cultivation.

Richard Heinberg predicts that fossil fuels will eventually become so expensive that the vast majority of the world will drop to the bottom tier and return to subsistence level agriculture (replacing farm machinery with horse, oxen and human labor) – which in his view can only support a maximum global population of two billion.

Ignoring the Elephant Won't Make Him Go Away

Obviously no one person has all the answers to the enormous population dilemma. However refusing to discuss it isn't going to get us there. From a civil liberties perspective, I am totally opposed to “involuntary” solutions, such as China's “one-child” policy (accompanied by mandatory abortion for women who conceive a second child. Mandatory population control can only lead to a society (like China) where only the ruling elite is allowed to reproduce. However I can see no harm in exploring voluntary solutions. We need to start by examining the pressures driving population growth, and even more importantly the substantial drop in global fertility over the last four decades.

Dropping Fertility Rates: A Capitalist's Worst Nightmare

I was astonished to learn that many in the capitalist elite seek to increase, rather than decrease, population growth. In the US the desire to keep American fertility rates high drives a lot of pro-growth policy at the federal and state level. It also explains Wall Street's constant bombardment of American women with messages driving them to start romantic relationships and have babies (see "Targeting Women" in Part IV)

The replacement fertility rate – the rate which keeps total population at the same level – is 2.1 children per woman. When the fertility rate drops below 2.1, total population drops, unless augmented by immigration. In most of the industrial north, fertility rates currently hover between 1.1–1.4. Although rates are much higher in the developing world, they are dropping there as well. The fertility rate in the third world, 6.0 in 1972, had dropped to 2.9 by 2010.

Demographers attribute the massive reduction of fertility in the developed world to the entry of women into the workforce. With the availability, affordability and acceptability of reliable birth control measures – including abortion on demand – is an important secondary factor. Fertility rates also tend to be lower in countries experiencing serious economic difficulties. Over the past two decades Japan, Eastern Europe, Spain, Italy and Greece have all been in and out of recession. The fertility rate in Japan is at the lower end at 1.21. In Eastern Europe, it hovers around 1.27. In the Soviet Union low fertility, combined with net out-migration, is actually causing total population to decline.

Pressures Keeping Third World Populations High

Demographers have always blamed the combination of an agrarian economy with widespread chronic illness for high fertility rates in the third world. They attribute their recent drop in birth rates to the increasing urbanization of developing countries. The problem with tuberculosis, a major plague in the third world – as well as malaria, dengue fever, sleeping sickness and river blindness and other nasty tropical illnesses – is that they rarely kill you. It's fairly common for half the members of an extended family to be incapacitated by such illnesses – who must be fed despite their inability to work - for twenty years or more. In cultures reliant on subsistence farming, this results in constant pressure to have more children to provide extra farm labor.

Pressures Keeping First World Populations High

The best country to study in terms of first world population pressures is the US, where the fertility rate is 2.1 – in contrast with 1.1 -1.4 in the rest of the industrialized world. In my mind, the fact that global economists view our high fertility rate as a success story says it all. Clearly there are deliberate policies in play to encourage robust US population growth.

The problem with capitalism is that it only works well in a society with perpetual growth. And perpetual growth is only possible in cultures with constant population growth. Economists blame Japan's continuing deflation on its low birth rate. And political leaders in Korea, which has a fertility rate of 1.08, are frantic that their country is headed down the same road – unless they can massively increase immigration or convince large numbers of women to have more babies.

Most demographers are unanimous on the two main reasons for America's high fertility rate: 1) it has the highest teen pregnancy rate in the world and 2) American women have

the worst access in the developed world to affordable contraception. Both relate mainly to extreme political pressure exerted by a well-funded “religious” right. However many, like me, believe that antiabortion laws are less about morality than promoting population growth.

Solutions – What the Left Can Do Now About Population

In the Third World: For once Bill Gates and I are on the same page (kind of) about chronic disease causing overpopulation in the developing world. Unfortunately we don’t agree on the solution. He favors mass immunization, which in my view is like trying to cure measles by cutting the spots off. Vaccines are of very little benefit in communities where people are starving to death. Funny that Gates would spend all that time in Africa and not notice the connection between poverty, malnutrition and disease.

In my opinion, the best way for progressives to address third world overpopulation is by addressing the root cause of third world poverty, starting with the World Bank and IMF racket to aid and abet Export Credit scammers and other global financial institutions – who borrow money from the Federal Reserve and other central banks for 0.25% interest and lend it to developing countries for 6.25% interest. Then when countries, such as Pakistan and Haiti, have their economies wiped out by earthquakes, floods and other natural disasters, the World Bank and IMF waltz in and loan them more money. World Bank and IMF loans are always accompanied by draconian conditions, which almost always include slashing government expenditures for education, health, and nutritional support.

The best way to put an end to this scam is to get behind the Jubilee movement (<http://www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk/> and <http://www.jubileeusa.org/>, started in the UK in the late nineties, based on Jubilee and Sabbatical Law Moses was given on Mount Sinai. The Jubilee debt campaign (which has successfully lobbied for IMF debt to be forgiven in about a dozen countries) has the ultimate goal of forgiving all third world debt. Right now the focus is on Pakistan and Haiti. There is an Avaaz petition campaign to cancel the debt incurred by both countries by past military dictatorships – in the case of Pakistan to support US strategic and military objectives in Afghanistan.

In the US:

1. Reducing teen pregnancy - studies show that sex education is the most effective intervention in reducing teen pregnancy rates. And there is absolutely no reason why the Christian right should have a monopoly on pregnancy counseling. Progressives need to start our own rape crisis and sex education clinics, comparable to the “birth right” counseling movement. It’s especially important to educate teenage girls about where they can obtain free and low cost contraception and morning after pills – and about date rape and the need to prosecute men who commit it. Studies show that most unintended teen pregnancy results from unprotected intercourse with men over eighteen.

2. Making contraception (including abortion) accessible and affordable - in a number of states, the well-funded religious right has been very effective in lobbying for laws restricting access, not just to abortion, but to all contraception. As always, progressives need to vigorously oppose this trend.

Is Human Nature Flawed?

(June 29, 2011)

This is the first of two articles exploring the age-old Human Nature debate and whether human beings are capable of achieving true participatory and economic democracy.

The failure of the world's great economic powers to solve the global debt crisis, coupled with growing political instability in the Arab world and Latin America's leftward turn, produce daily evidence that global capitalism is on its last legs. Growing global instability is producing intense debate among everyone to the left of Joe Lieberman over the nature of the political/economic system that will likely replace capitalism. Those on the far left see the demise of capitalism as a golden opportunity to end class society and institute a true socialist economy and self-governing democracy. More moderate "liberals," on the other hand, agree with Zbigniew Brzezinski, former national security adviser and author of *The Grand Chessboard*, that western democracy needs to be more totalitarian. Brzezinski argues that existing democratic processes tend to be too cumbersome to make hard decisions about dwindling energy, water, food, and other essential resources.

Liberals base their views, in part, on the old argument that socialism and participatory democracy are impossible owing to innate flaws of human nature. They claim that a ruling, privileged class is essential for survival of civilization owing to innate flaws of human nature that make "socialism" and other more democratic forms of social/political organization impossible.

Animals Behave Better than People

The debate over man's "bestial" nature is centuries old, and draws from traditional religious beliefs that man's higher intellect makes him more similar to God than to other animals. Marx and Engels confront the controversy head-on in the *Communist Manifesto* and *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. The Marxist psychiatrist Wilhelm Reich also addresses it in his 1933 *Mass Psychology of Fascism*. It's Reich's view that most contemporary social problems stem from society's tendency to devalue or even condemn the biologic (i.e. animal) underpinnings of all human behavior. As he, and many contemporary researchers point out, there is nothing inherently evil or dangerous about the behavior of animals that live in social groups. In fact, they usually treat each other far better than most human beings do.

Class Bias and the Human Nature Debate

I am always struck by the one-sided examples of flawed human nature offered by conservatives and so-called "centrist" Democrats. They talk a lot about violent crime, drug and alcohol related abuse, domestic violence and child abuse, but almost never about banksters, fraudulent corporate bookkeeping practices, or the unscrupulous drug company CEOs who aggressively market dangerous pharmaceuticals. The capitalist classes, who have near absolute control over public education and the mainstream media, argue in favor of preserving class society and privilege, owing to so-called character defects that make working people incapable of governing themselves.

Categorizing Alleged “Innate” Flaws of Human Nature

For the sake of discussion, I have broken down these so-called “innate” human flaws into four broad categories: impaired rational decision making, self centeredness and greed, laziness and aversion to work, innate aggressiveness and violence.

1. **Impaired Rational Decision Making:** Impulsiveness and emotionality allegedly make human beings (especially those from the poor and disadvantaged classes) innately irrational. Limited capacity for rational decision making, due to emotional instability, ignorance, superstition and/or prejudice makes it impossible for the average person to participate in self-governance. This means wiser, more technologically sophisticated people are needed to make the fundamental decisions necessary to run the basic institutions that govern their lives. This viewpoint isn't limited to the ruling elite. As Wilhelm Reich observes in the *Mass Psychology of Fascism*, much of the working class, especially those raised in authoritarian families, share this belief.
2. **Self centeredness and greed:** Survival of the fittest dictates that individuals prioritize their own self-interest. Innate competitiveness and greed will always prevent human beings from voluntarily sharing resources unless they derive direct personal gain or some external authority imposes it on them.
3. **Laziness and aversion to work:** Human beings (especially those from poor and disadvantaged classes) are innately lazy. Socialist economic systems are doomed to collapse. Without strong financial incentives, people would have no motivation to work.
4. **Innate aggressiveness and violence:** Human beings, especially males from poor and disadvantaged classes, are fundamentally violent and aggressive. Without external restraint from law enforcement, stronger individuals will constantly victimize weaker ones.

Marx and Engels on Human Nature

Writing nearly 130 years ago, Marx and Engels totally reject all these arguments. They maintain, quite compellingly, that capitalism itself is responsible for all these so-called flaws of human nature. To support their argument, they contrast the harmonious human relationships typical of primitive cultures in Africa, Asia, and North and South America with the aberrant behavior found in capitalistic societies. Social anthropology (the study of primitive cultures) was a new and exciting discipline in 1884 when Engels first published *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, which quotes extensively from contemporary researchers.

The Agricultural Revolution and Origin of Class Society

The Origin of the Family starts by describing the “primitive communism” that characterizes all hunter gatherer cultures, which rely exclusively on hunting and naturally growing berries and roots for food. Engels goes on to depict the dramatic social transformation that occurred in all cultures with the advent of the Agricultural Revolution around 10,000 BC. The latter enabled primitive peoples to domesticate animals and crops, instead of relying on hunting and scavenging for berries, nuts and roots. This technological change led to the regular production of a food surplus, which could be stored to cover future shortages, and to the rise of a priest/king/nobility class responsible for looking after this surplus.

For 10,000 years the division of society into classes took the form of feudalism, where most of the population were landless peasants performing agricultural labor for feudal lords and priests, who were the landholders. Class divisions persisted after the Industrial Revolution, which caused capitalism to replace feudalism in the mid-1800s. The priest/king/nobility class was replaced by the capitalist class – the owners of the “capital” – the land, factories, machines and other raw materials (other than human labor) required for industrial production. Meanwhile the Enclosure Act (see “TEOFWAWKIT: The End of the World as We Know It”) forced most of the lower classes to leave to work in factories.

The Need for Class Divisions to Protect the Agricultural Surplus

Marx and Engels acknowledge that economic scarcity during feudal times made the creation of a priest/king/nobility class essential. However they also maintain that this need for class divisions ceased with advances in agricultural technology that have enabled humankind to produce more than enough food to feed the entire planet. Marxists argue that current economic scarcity is artificially produced by produced by the capitalist class to enhance profits.

Marx and Engels also give numerous examples of how the brutal nature of capitalistic oppression gives rise to the so-called “character defects” that, according to the ruling elite, make a privileged ruling class essential. They show, for example, how poverty, alienation, exploitation, and oppression make it very difficult for the poor and disadvantaged to raise children in a way that enables them to become fully productive adults. They also make the point that capitalism forces people to be competitive and greedy and demand financial rewards for their work – under a capitalistic economic system, these traits are essential for survival.

The Biology of Human Behavior

At present seven main fields of study inform our scientific understanding of “human nature”:

1. **Social anthropology** – the study of human behavior in primitive groups, both from archeological evidence from prehistoric societies and contemporary study of indigenous cultures.
2. **Primate ethology** – the study of group and social behavior of our closest living relatives (chimpanzees, gorillas and other great apes and monkeys).
3. **Psychology** – observational and controlled research of personality development, as influenced by early childhood events and other formative experiences.
4. **Social psychology** – the study of human behavior in groups.
5. **Neurophysiology** – the study of correlations between brain structure and electrochemical events associated with thoughts and emotions. This includes the detailed study of hormonal influences (from stress hormones like cortisol, pro-aggression hormones like testosterone, and pro-social hormones like oxytocin and endorphins) on emotions and behavior.
6. **Behavioral genetics** – the study of the genetic inheritance of temperament, which according to twenty plus years of research, seems to be the strongest determinant of adult “personality.” Thus far, four genetically inherited

temperament types have been identified: harm avoidant, novelty seeking, reward dependent, and persistent.

7. **Epigenetics** – the study of the adverse effects of stress during gestation and early childhood on enzyme expression on emotional stability and stress tolerance.

Is Human Nature Innately Flawed? The Research Evidence

1. Impaired Rational Decision Making

Decades of research reveals that all human beings (even those with mental illness or intellectual disability) have some capacity to learn and practice rational problem solving – though, under stress, they are all at risk for impulsive and irrational decisions. Individuals with impulsive or emotionally unstable personalities or discrete physical or mental illnesses may experience longer or more frequent periods of impaired problem solving.

There is absolutely no evidence that high intelligence or advanced education offer any protection against impairments in judgment or problem solving ability. In fact, putting virtually unlimited power in the hands of a few individuals can have devastating consequences for the rest of society. The decision by three men (Bush, Cheney and Rumsfeld) to launch disastrous wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and by a handful of banking CEOs to speculate with trillions of dollars of investor funds are two recent examples.

2. Self centeredness and greed

The assertion that human nature is innately self-serving and greedy directly flies in the face of scientific research which shows the exact opposite – that human beings are fundamentally social animals who are hard wired to crave social interaction and are strongly rewarded (via pleasurable hormones) for altruistic and socially dependent behavior.

3. Laziness and aversion to work

Studies of our closest living relatives (the great apes) show that higher primates have the same innate craving as human beings for regular stimulation, as well as the same strong propensity for boredom. Human research shows that people also have a strong biologic need for both social engagement and productive and creative activity. The Protestant work ethic, which justifies compelling the working class to labor long hours under high stress, unsafe conditions, is a new development with the Industrial Revolution. Historically there is no comparable work ethic in ancient or medieval cultures.

4. Innate aggressiveness and violence

Studies of both primates and indigenous cultures indicate that most social groups live totally harmoniously, except in conditions of food scarcity – when apes, gorillas, and people may engage in violence against other social groups (i.e. war) and cannibalism. However all sociological research indicates that income inequality – the size of the gap between rich and poor – is the strongest predictor of violent crime in a society. See

<http://cjr.sagepub.com/content/18/2/182.short> and

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DEC/Resources/Crime&Inequality.pdf>

Several overlapping mechanisms contribute to this effect. The stress of poverty and poor nutrition during gestation and early childhood can cause permanent changes in the brain arousal system via epigenetic enzyme derangement. Poverty and stress are also strongly associated with attachment disorders and child neglect and abuse.

Genetic conditions, such as attention deficit disorder and “callous indifferent” conduct disorder, allegedly predispose to aggression and impulsive violence. However psychological and cross cultural research indicates that even these conditions are more strongly influenced by environment than genetics. All five conditions (ADHD, conduct disorder, epigenetic emotional instability, attachment disorder and PTSD from child neglect/abuse) are far less common in cultures with more equal distribution of wealth, especially those that raise their children communally or in extended families

(July 7, 2011)

This is the second of two articles on the Human Nature debate.

Anti-capitalist John Strachey touches briefly on the Human Nature debate in his 1933 *Coming Struggle for Power* (see “What Comes After Capitalism” in Part III). He makes the observation that despite unimaginable technological advances in all other fields of endeavor, man has been totally unsuccessful in improving his own nature. He, Marx and Engels blame capitalist oppression for this. Marxist psychiatrist Wilhelm Reich enlarges on this perspective. He places most of the blame on the refusal of the intellectual elite to acknowledge the fundamental animal (biologic) nature of human beings.

Informed by nearly eighty years of behavioral research, I’m most swayed by Reich’s arguments. Farmers and horse trainers wouldn’t dream of subjecting the animals they depend on for their livelihood to the horrendous conditions most of humanity are forced to live under.

The End of Capitalism and Class Society

There is compelling evidence from recent behavioral research that ending capitalism and class society will improve the so-called “flaws” I identify in the preceding essay, “Is Human Nature Flawed?”

1. More equitable distribution of food and clean drinking water will ensure that more, if not all, of presently “disadvantaged” populations are guaranteed access to basic nutrients that are the essential building blocks for normal child development and optimal physical, psychological and emotional functioning in adults.
2. Extreme stress levels that aggravate impulsive and aggressive behavior will be reduced, by ending excessively long work hours and arbitrary and abusive treatment by employers and supervisors, as well as improving pay and working conditions.
3. Extended family and community networks, essential in the self-regulation of all primate behavior, will be restored. Human beings are a social species, owing to their biological programming, and function best in groups. Over the past four decades, extreme work pressures (long hours and high stress) have led to the widespread breakdown of extended families and traditional community and civic groups.
4. A reduction in work stress and restoration of social networks will facilitate a return to a more “naturalistic” communal childrearing environment. This model, according to cross cultural studies, is most conducive to optimal child development.
5. Hierarchical, coercive power relations that breed aggression, violence and sadism will be replaced – in government, schools and the work place – with cooperative, consensus driven models of governance.

Can Human Nature Be Repaired?

In view of the extensive research evidence, “liberal” human behavior experts (psychologists, sociologists, criminologists, social workers, etc) are slowly coming around to the view that the ravages of capitalist society, rather than “human nature” are responsible for the wanton cruelty and “inhumanity” that characterize industrialized society. Yet most of them still maintain that socialism and participatory democracy are impossible. They argue that 21st century men and women commit theft, murder, rape, domestic violence, child abuse, war crimes, and wanton terrorism due to faulty childrearing. Their maltreatment of their children causes them to acquire similar character defects, which they, in turn, pass on to the next generation. Thus even if capitalism were to end tomorrow, we would be left with a society of defective human beings whose emotional and behavioral problems would prevent them from governing themselves. Does this argument have merit?

Human Behavior in a Post-Capitalist World

For me, this viewpoint smacks of Freudian junk science and what Michael Parenti refers to as “psychohistory” in his 1999 *History as Mystery*. Decades of behavioral research refute Freud’s early twentieth century hypothesis that adults are locked into re-enacting their childhood history by unconscious thoughts and feelings they can’t recall. Research in learning theory, a field pioneered by Pavlov and Skinner, has repeatedly demonstrated that adult behavior is far more responsive to real life contingencies (e.g. poverty and stress) than to early childhood events.

Most research suggests that long lasting brain effects in a post-capitalist world will mainly stem from poor fetal and early childhood nutrition, chronic industrially related illnesses (cancer, Alzheimer’s, autoimmune diseases, etc), and environmental toxins – fluoride, toxic chemicals, and nuclear and microwave radiation (from cellphones and WiFi). At the same time most behavioral research is consistent with my thirty-plus years of clinical experience – that human beings are incredibly resilient and dynamic animals who readily adapt to a changing environment, even in extremely dire circumstances.

Obviously the first century of post-capitalism will involve major infrastructure changes – to ensure that food and other essential resources are more equitably allocated and to systematically remove toxins from the food chain, water supply, air and human beings. Moreover all major transitional periods are associated with enormous political and social instability.

At the same time, I also believe that natural safeguards fundamental to a post-capitalist participatory democracy – in which citizens themselves run government and workers their place of work – that will offer protection against the most brutal after effects of class society. High on the list of “safeguards” will be

1. An end to the domination/exploitation paradigm that allows a ruling elite to “conquer” and brutally exploit (and where necessary destroy or exterminate) nature and other human beings.
2. A restoration of the “natural” extended family and social networks that have been destroyed as a result of the domination/exploitation paradigm and which human beings require, based on their biological programming, for optimal functioning.
3. The replacement of hierarchical governance, both in the workplace and society

at large, with governance via consensus decision-making.

The Political Structure of Post-Capitalism

(July 27, 2011)

Marx predicts that the collapse of capitalism will be followed by either socialism, characterized by full political and economic equality, or "barbarism," his term for brutal totalitarian feudalism. Richard Heinberg of the Post Carbon Institute offers three possible scenarios for post-capitalist society (see "How Resource Scarcity Threatens Democracy" in Part V "Making Change"). The first is totalitarianism; the second a somewhat more liberal "Green New Deal" that preserves class society; and the third the break-up of large nation states into small, democratically-run regional units. However unlike Marx, Heinberg predicts that any totalitarian governments that form will be short-lived. He believes that global resource depletion will make it impossible to maintain the large centralized police and intelligence networks required to maintain totalitarian control over large populations. This, in turn, will cause large empires and nation-states like the US, Russia, and China to break up into smaller self-governing regional units, as occurred during the Middle Ages following the collapse of the Roman Empire.

As a passionate advocate of participatory democracy, I believe it will be up to the people who survive the collapse of capitalism to determine for themselves how they will govern themselves. Nevertheless I believe we can predict some features of the small regional units that will develop. Furthermore, like Heinberg, I believe that with advanced planning and preparation, the transition could be an extraordinarily positive change for most of humankind.

Will Capitalism Degenerate into Feudalism?

Prior to the Roman conquest, the barbarian Celtic tribes in Europe lived in democratic, communally run regional units. Following the collapse of the Roman Empire, these units became city-states, which were seized as personal property by feudal lords, who enslaved the other occupants to work their land for them. However in Europe and elsewhere, feudalism was a very impermanent political structure. Peasant revolts against feudal lords were incredibly common and could only be suppressed by merging city-states merged into nation-states, run by kings who formed large national armies to enforce stability. As Heinberg suggests, maintaining large nation-states and empires requires guaranteed access to resources (food, energy, metals, and other raw materials for weapons and communication systems) that are rapidly being depleted.

Bottom-Up Government

Unlike the Bolshevik Revolution, which had the immense resources of the Tsarist empire at its disposal, most of the small, regional units that emerge following the collapse of global capitalism will be forced to rebuild themselves from the ground-up. They all have the potential to be built according to democratic and egalitarian principles, though this is by no means guaranteed.

A study of early New England efforts to govern via "town hall" direct democracy reveals that self-governance is always more effective in small groups and communities. Early colonists found that once authority shifted from town to state and, eventually, federal government, ordinary people lost the ability to have input into decision making.

They could only elect representatives and had no ability to ensure the individuals they chose would actually represent their interests. Moreover along with direct input into government, they also lost the ability to prevent individuals and corporations from taking over traditionally public resources for their private use.

Reclaiming the Commons

"The Commons" is a historical concept that views certain property, material goods, and intangibles (such as waterways, the air people breathe, and the public airwaves) as belonging to the community, to be managed in a way that benefits the public interest, rather than that of a particular individual or group. The eighteenth century (British) Enclosure Act is considered the watershed event enabling individual and corporate interests to take precedence over the public good. Under the Enclosure Act, the landed gentry banned peasant farmers from raising crops or grazing on the "village commons," which now became "enclosed" as the gentry's private property. Much of this newly acquired land was used to build factories during the Industrial Revolution.

Many communities around the world have already made a good start in reclaiming "the Commons" from the corporate elite. In some American towns and cities, this entails taking over functions state and local government have ceased to perform. Examples include local citizens groups who have successfully fought corporate infringement on their communities (for example, protecting their water supply against bottled water companies or the fecal waste generated by factory farms (see http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs_factoryfarms.html and <http://www.thealliancefordemocracy.org/water/>). Other examples include local groups who have opted out of the corporate banking and food production system by creating community and state banks, local currencies and bartering systems, as well as community gardens and orchards, farmers markets and community supported agriculture schemes.

Post-Capitalist Society

(July 27, 2011)

The post-capitalist world will see major social changes, either because they are dictated by resource scarcity – or because they are fundamental to participatory democracy. Examples include

- 1. The end of capitalism's insane perpetual growth and economic expansion paradigm** - if society commits to an equitable distribution of the earth's remaining resources, work and production will be limited to provision of basic needs and the rearing and education of children.
- 2. Equal division of labor** - work will be shared equally among everyone, instead of shifting vast amounts of unpaid and low paid work to blue collar workers, women, and minorities.
- 3. Reintegration of fathers into family life and child rearing** - a reduction in work hours will mean an increase in leisure time, freeing up men to involve themselves in family life and child rearing, as they did prior to the Industrial Revolution.
- 4. The end of oppression of women and ethnic and sexual minorities** - the oppression of women plays two distinct economic roles under capitalism: the first relates to the vast amount of unpaid and low paid labor they perform, and the second to the pressure on women and sexual minorities to conform to stereotyped sex roles and produce children. Ethnic minorities will cease to be exploited as surplus workers to be moved in and out of the labor force to control wages.
- 5. The restoration of extended families and communal child rearing** - when the corporate propaganda driving mindless reproduction ceases, fewer people will have fewer children. This, along with an increase in leisure time, will create a strong incentive for childless community members to participate in communal child rearing and education.
- 6. Equal access to education** - with fewer children and more community involvement in their education, bright and curious of children of both sexes and all ethnicities will have the potential to become little Einsteins. Unlike capitalism, where quality education is reserved for children (male children in many cultures) of upper income white families.
- 7. Reduced global population** - without access to cheap fossil fuels, industrial agriculture will end. Heinberg predicts that without cheap oil and natural gas (for fertilizer and pesticides and to run farm machinery), the planet can support at most two billion people.
- 8. Drastic dietary changes** - without the cheap transportation made possible by fossil fuels, we all be forced to adopt the 100 mile diet – limiting ourselves to the locally grown foods in season. Moreover based on equitable distribution of food and energy resources, all of us will most likely become vegetarian. Even under industrial agriculture, the earth only produces enough meat for one-third of the global population.

How Much Will Global Population Drop Without Fossil Fuels?

Organic farmers in the Biointensive movement (an amalgamation of the eighty year old Biodynamic and French Intensive movements) dispute the 2 billion maximum carrying capacity Heinberg predicts in a post-fossil fuel world. They point to studies showing that Biointensive methods increase crop yields by 150-200% (see http://www.theecologist.org/trial_investigations/268287/10_reasons_why_organic_can_feed_the_world.html). Given WHO and World Hunger studies revealing that our current system of industrial agriculture feeds only 84% of the world (the other 16% are continuously on the verge of starvation – see <http://www.prb.org/Journalists/PressReleases/2005/MoreThanHalftheWorldLivesonLessThan2aDayAugust2005.aspx>), we could estimate that a switch from industrial to Biointensive agriculture could potentially feed a global population of 7.8 billion.

The Privilege of Eating Meat

Current Biointensive research is limited to grain and vegetable crop yields. Preliminary research applying Biointensive methods to livestock grazing reveals that an agricultural system providing every global resident with meat is only possible with a global population of 2-3 billion.

The average energy input required to produce meat protein is eleven times greater than that required for grain protein production. A meat-based diet also requires ten times more land than a plant-based diet (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_vegetarianism) and 100 times more water (<http://www.ajcn.org/content/78/3/660S.long>). In the US alone, the amount of energy, land and water used to raise livestock grains to would be sufficient to feed an additional 840 million people eating a plant-based diet. (<http://www.ajcn.org/content/78/3/660S.long>).

At present approximately one-third of the planet (those in the privileged industrialized north) consume meat (<http://www.ajcn.org/content/78/3/660S.long>). Owing to shortages of cropland, fresh water, and energy resources the other two-thirds (4.7 billion people) of the planet are compelled to survive on a vegetarian diet. With rapid industrial development in India and China, these ratios are changing rapidly.

Hard Choices for Activists

Sustainability and social justice activists are faced with some hard choices. If we are genuine in our commitment to replace capitalism with a more egalitarian society, we need to face the reality that no society is truly egalitarian if only rich people eat meat. Thus truly equal distribution of land and water resources will either require a reduction of the global population to 2-3 billion – or a commitment by the planet's present carnivores to sacrifice meat.

If we fail to make this choice – and do nothing – we will be left with a scenario in which Malthusian forces (war, famine, and disease) drastically reduce global population for us.