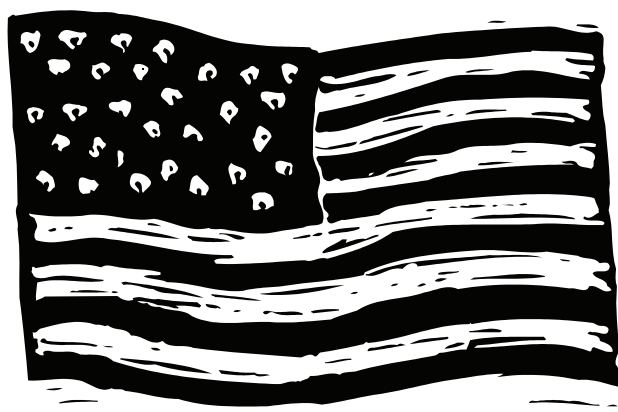




PROTESTING AMERICAN PRIVILEGE AT HOME AND ABROAD



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PETER BLOOM

Even as Sanders "path to victory" increasingly narrows, the passion for his candidacy grows in intensity. Recent victories in Indiana and Oregon reflect the continuing desire for a progressive alternative to Clinton and Centrist Democrats. It also reveals a hardening divide in the Party and beyond between those who want real "revolution" and those who are content with "reform." These divisions have increasingly spilled over from campaign rhetoric to more forceful protest and agitation. The recent upheaval at the Nevada caucus highlights the extreme frustrations and actions of Sanders supporters who feel disenfranchised by a supposedly "rigged" system. Reports include vandalism and now verbal threats to those considered to be Clinton allies. As Sanders declared Tuesday, "Our campaign of course believes in non-violent change and it goes without saying that I condemn any and all forms of violence, including the personal harassment of individuals." What does too often go unsaid though is how the rightful condemnation of popular violence masks the larger violence perpetuated by those with power. In this case, the legitimate critique of the actions of a few Sanders delegates is hiding the just as real present and future threat posed by the Democratic establishment to many within America and many more around the world.

A GROWING REVOLUTION

From the very beginning, Sanders has called his campaign a "political revolution." It is a phrase that traditionally evokes images of violent barricades and radical confrontations with authority. For Sanders and his supporters it has meant less guerrilla warfare or the protests of the square, and more a populist electoral movement against the "billionaire class" and for social democracy. The events in Nevada have raised questions over just how peaceful and democratic this "revolution" actually is. Democratic leaders and many mainstream party members have charged Sanders' campaign of having a "violent streak." This follows months of accusations that so-called "Bernie Bros" have aggressively attacked Clinton supporters online using misogynistic language traditionally disavowed by progressives (and vehemently by the candidate himself). Even worse, these actions are perceived to be connected to protestors who interrupted a Trump Rally in March and yelled expletives at those leaving a Clinton rally in Los Angeles earlier this month. In the face of such actions Democratic leaders have "put pressure" on Sanders to more forcefully condemn such violence. If anything, though, this anger only seems to be growing. "The Dems new fear," according to CNN, is that the "Sanders revolt could upend the [national] Democratic convention" in July. It appears that what was once a peaceful "revolution" could blossom into a full blown rebellion.

PROTECTING THE ESTABLISHMENT

There is clearly a need to reject unacceptable violence, death threats, harassment and misogyny. To simply ignore

them would be to dismiss the experiences of many who have questioned Sanders or the tactics of his supporters. It is also significant to recognize that as Sanders mentions, the majority of his movement has been incredibly non-violent. "Within the last few days there have been a number of criticisms made against my campaign organization," said Sanders. "Party leaders in Nevada, for example, claim that the Sanders campaign has a 'penchant for violence.' That is nonsense. Our campaign has held giant rallies all across this country, including in high-crime areas, and there have been zero reports of violence." Still to merely condemn without context is to perpetuate a different type of violence. It is to be willfully blind to the institutional ways Democratic elites are alienating outside voices demanding genuine as opposed to surface level change to the Party and nation.

The unrest in Nevada, for instance, was spurred by underhanded activities by the local DNC to ensure that Clinton was awarded a majority of the delegates. This echoes a primary filled with credible charges of voter suppression and perhaps even fraud from Arizona to New York to Illinois. The irritated screams are in response to the deeply felt "silencing" of their voices by Party elites and the mainstream media. Yet this justified critique also hides another more imminent danger. It is that these citizens are trying desperately to resist a status quo that has and will do dramatic violence to them and those they care about. The protest against Clinton in East LA exemplifies this clear and present threat. Underneath the hyperbolic claims of elderly women and children being verbally assaulted was a more frightening reality. It was that many of the protestors inside and outside the rally were there to condemn Clinton's active role in legitimizing a military coup in Honduras producing an oligarchic government responsible for the death of indigenous protestors and the repression of women and LGBTB rights. It was a direct shaming of the Party by "Latinos" against Clinton's own previous brutal anti-immigration policies and Obama's continued use of deportations.

MAKING CHOICES

There is a risk that in calling out the most extreme aspects of Sanders supporters, the extremism of Clinton's brand of Centrism will be dangerously covered up. What does it say if the localized violence in a Nevada caucus room trumps the global violence of a candidate who has advocated disastrous military interventions from Iraq to Libya? Should there be more worry for a protest at a rally than for the millions of lives ruined by an economic crisis by a financial sector that Clinton did little to resist and that continues to support her?

It is to once again draw a clear line of whose safety and wellbeing is important and whose is not. That the murder of Honduran activist Berta Cáceres matters little, while the "booing" of Senator Barbara Boxer is a serious incident that must be strongly decried. The reversion to violence and threat by progressives backing Sanders is inappropriate and

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Editors Letter

BRUCE GIUDICI

One could say that Citizens United has resulted in both the Trump and Hillary finale. In Trump's case, the Republican field began with 17 mediocre candidates, many of whom were able to remain in the contest because of Citizen United-enabled funding. The persistence of a large field allowed Trump to win repeatedly with a small plurality that would not have been enough to win with a

smaller field. As the primaries lurched on with marginal candidates remaining in the field, Trump was able to claim victory with the same 30-35% anti-establishment crowd that has always existed in the Republican field - only this time, it was enough to win.

In Hillary's case, the money advantage has paid for superdelegates who are assuredly going to be rewarded once Hillary is elected president. Paybacks

Movement continues

in the form of money directed to allies' campaigns will raise all boats. With the narrative of this huge head start, Hillary began as the presumptive leader regardless of how the campaign went. Big money facilitated the narrative - as she won primaries in conservative southern states Democrats no longer have a chance of winning. And yet...

The movement continues. Fallout from the Bush recession - whether from Occupy, Black Lives Matter, or the Sanders campaign - provides fertile ground for a new generation that

is somehow more idealistic and vocal than in the past. Social media and liberal late-night talk shows that instantly expose hypocrisy provide a common space where discussion connects the dots. Whether we have a President Sanders or not, as with President Obama, the destination is secondary - the journey primary.

Movements sweep up and force decisions that were unthinkable prior. The process of this election has shown that voters can be energized and by ideas previously dismissed as

"impractical," "idealistic," or worst of all "socialist." Young people now judge ideas more on their merits than on the labels placed upon them by their elders. Climate change, humane health care and peaceful co-existence with each other is the foundation for a truly sustainable world, one in which our young people will create.

So, the process continues - with healthy signs of growth where it is needed. Keep the ball moving down the field - we may score one or two this year. Happy summer.

Unmask big money campaign manipulation: Disclose Act now!

The CA Disclose Act AB 700 sponsored by the California Xlean Money Campaign is the STRONGEST political ad disclosure bill in the nation. California Clean Money Campaign is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that has been fighting the dominance of Big Money in politics for over 13 years.

AB 700 will require the three largest funders of \$50,000 or more of ballot measure ads and ads about candidates by outside groups to be shown clearly and unambiguously so viewers can see who's actually funding them.

In 2010, despite near-universal opposition from editorial boards and trailing badly in the polls Prop. 26 passed - after \$18 million in ads by "Stop Hidden Taxes." Since then, Prop 26 has had huge effects by preventing state and local

governments from raising fees - even on polluters - without 2/3 vote. With AB 700, voters would have clearly seen that the three largest funders of Prop. 26 were Chevron, Philip Morris, and Anheuser-Busch! Prop. 26 passed with 52.5% of the vote. Might 3% have voted differently if they knew who really paid for the ads?

This is the year to do something about special interests literally buying our government. AB 700 has already passed the Assembly on an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 60-15 and now is in the Senate. Authored by Assemblymembers Jimmy Gomez and Marc Levine.

The Senate will be a harder lift, but not impossible if our State Senators are aware their constituents WANT them to pass the bill!

Please CALL or write your State

Senator and leave a message that you want them to vote YES on AB 700 the Ca Disclose Act. Give them your name, address and zip code so they know you are a constituent!

For any questions or inquiries about the local California Clean Campaign or the Disclose Act call: Suzy Arnett 209 639-4191

LOCAL SENATORS:

Cathleen Galgiani (D) District 5 represents Stockton and Modesto areas **(916) 651-4005**

Tom Berryhill (R) District 8 represents Oakdale, Fresno, and Jackson areas **(916) 651-4008**

Anthony Cannella (R) District 12 represents Ceres, Merced, and Salinas areas **(916) 651-4012**

Steven Glazer (D) District 7

represents Walnut Creek and Antioch areas **(916) 651-4007**

For other senators you can look them up at: www.Senate.ca.gov/senators

Our State representatives do NOT always vote in our best interests. If you want to find out if your representative is representing you well go to:

www.couragescore.gov/california-state-assembly-courage-score for assembly members and www.couragescore.gov/california-state-senate-courage-score for you state senator.

Sen. Galgiani and Sen. Roth both have earned F!!! Check it out!!! Then call and ask them WHY??

Daniel Berrigan, a leader of peaceful opposition to Vietnam War, inspired a generation of activists

BETTY MEDSGER

Daniel Berrian was many things - Jesuit priest, poet, teacher, fine cook, good listener, radical thinker, antiwar activist, pacifist. And, for his opposition to the Vietnam war, he was considered an enemy of both state and church. Of everything he wrote, including more than forty books, these words stand out as the most memorable and most emblematic of his life: "Our apologies, good friends, for the fracture of good order, the burning of paper instead of children, the angering of the orderlies in the front of the charnel house. We could not, so help us God, do otherwise . . . How many must die before our voices are heard, how many must be tortured, dislocated, starved, maddened . . . When, at what point, will you say no to this war?"

That is what Berrigan said in May, 1968 as he and his brother, the late Philip Berrigan, and seven other activists, most of them nuns and priests, burned draft files they had just removed from the draft board in Catonsville, Maryland, and waited for police to arrive to arrest them. These words appear in Berrigan's most famous writing, *The Trial of the Catonsville Nine*, a play based on the transcript of the trial. It has been staged throughout the world.

When Berrigan's sister-in-law, Elizabeth McAllister, read those words at his funeral mass today, the more than 1,000 people in attendance at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church in Greenwich Village responded with a thunderous and sustained standing ovation. They had come from near and far to say farewell. For many of them, these words he spoke at Catonsville had moved them into civil

disobedience and resistance many years ago.

Source: *The Intercept* 5/6/16 <https://theintercept.com/>



CONNECTIONS

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Distribution Site: Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton

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Deadline: 7th of each month (except Aug & Dec)

Circulation: 8,000

CONNECTIONS is a monthly publication of the Peace & Justice Network of San Joaquin County. The views expressed in CONNECTIONS are those of the authors and are not necessarily endorsed by the Network. News, articles, letters and calendar items should be sent to the Peace & Justice Network, P.O. Box 4123, Stockton, CA 95204. The editor reserves the right of final decision on copy. Call (209) 467-4455 for more information. PJN is on the internet: <http://www.pjnsjc.org>



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2,000+ doctors declare: "It's time for single payer to be back on the table"

DEIRDRE FULTON

Despite limited advances provided by the Affordable Care Act, the U.S. healthcare system remains "uniquely wasteful" and profit-driven, leaving tens of millions without any insurance and even more underinsured. As a result, say leading physicians, "the right to medical care remains a dream deferred."

In an effort to finally realize that dream, thousands of medical professionals across the country have signed onto the "Physicians' Proposal for Single-Payer Health Care Reform," calling for a publicly financed, single-payer National Health Program (NHP) that would cover all Americans for all medically necessary care.

The plan, unveiled Thursday in the *American Journal of Public Health*, aims to "remedy the persistent shortcomings of the current health care system," reads an accompanying editorial.

It comes as the 2016 presidential race has thrust the issue of healthcare back into the national spotlight, and while the proposal is non-partisan, it hews closely to Bernie Sanders' call for Medicare-for-All.

Drafted by a working group of 39 physicians and endorsed by more than 2,231 other physicians and 149 medical students, the proposal "would save enough on administrative overhead to provide comprehensive coverage to the uninsured and to upgrade coverage for everyone else, thus requiring no increase in total health spending," according to Physicians for a National Health Program (PHNP), which is backing the effort.

UNDER THE PROPOSAL, ACCORDING TO PHNP:

- Patients could choose to go to any doctor and hospital. Most hospitals and clinics would remain privately owned and operated, receiving a budget from the NHP to cover all operating costs. Physicians could continue to practice on a fee-for-service basis, or receive salaries from group practices, hospitals or clinics.
- The program would be paid for by combining current sources of government health spending into a single fund with modest new taxes that would be fully offset by reductions in premiums and out-of-pocket spending. Co-pays and deductibles would be eliminated.
- The single-payer program would save about \$500 billion annually by eliminating the high overhead and profits of insurance firms, and the massive paperwork they inflict on hospitals and doctors.
- The administrative savings of the streamlined system



would fully offset the costs of covering the uninsured and upgraded coverage for everyone else, e.g. full coverage of prescription drugs, dental care and long-term care. Savings would also be redirected to currently underfunded health priorities, particularly public health.

- The "single payer" would be in a strong position to negotiate lower prices for medications and other medical supplies, yielding additional savings and reining in costs.

"Our nation is at a crossroads," said Dr. Adam Gaffney, a Boston-based pulmonary disease and critical care specialist who co-chaired the working group that produced the proposal. "Despite the passage of the Affordable Care Act six years ago, 30 million Americans remain uninsured, an even greater number are underinsured, financial barriers to care like co-pays and deductibles are rising, bureaucracy is growing, provider networks are narrowing, and medical costs are continuing to climb."

As a result, Gaffney continued, "Caring relationships are increasingly taking a back seat to the financial prerogatives of insurance firms, corporate providers, and Big Pharma."

Supporting Gaffney's claim, a separate study published in the May 2016 issue of *Monthly Review* finds that the Affordable Care Act's neoliberal approach to expanding health insurance has in fact failed in other countries such as Colombia, Chile, and Mexico, where corporate profits have soared, the safety net of public hospitals and clinics has deteriorated, and health costs have increased.

"We can continue down this harmful path—or even worse, take an alternative, 'free-market' route that would compound our problems—or we can embrace the long-overdue remedy that we know will work: the creation of a publicly financed, nonprofit, single-payer system that covers everybody," said Dr. Steffie Woolhandler, a co-author of the single-payer editorial and proposal who is a professor of public health at the City University of New York's Hunter College and lecturer at Harvard Medical School.

"Today we're saying we must quickly make that shift," Woolhandler said. "Lives are literally at stake."

Source: *Common Dreams* 5/5/16 <http://www.commondreams.org/>

Majority of Americans want 'Medicare for All' system

LAUREN MCCAULEY

Bernie Sanders' call to replace the Affordable Care Act (ACA) with a single-payer healthcare system is a policy that a strong majority of Americans agree with, according to a new Gallup survey released on Monday. Fifty-eight percent of all U.S. adults favor replacing the ACA with a federally-funded healthcare program, such as Sanders' Medicare for All. This is compared with 48 percent who prefer to keeping Obama's healthcare system in place, a policy which has been a cornerstone of Democratic frontrunner Hillary Clinton's campaign platform. "While the ACA curbed some of the most egregious

insurance abuses, our healthcare system remains a profit-focused, bureaucratic nightmare for far too many people," Jean Ross, registered nurse and co-president of National Nurses United, told *Common Dreams* by email.

Speaking to the Gallup survey findings, Ross added: "What the Bernie Sanders campaign has demonstrated is a broad, national longing for a more humane health care system that treats health care as a human right not based on ability to pay, or your age, gender, race, or where you live." The 185,000-member union has endorsed the Vermont senator, citing his single-payer healthcare plan as one of the key reasons

behind their support. Last week, Clinton "took a step left," as the *New York Times* put it, with the suggestion that as president she would offer a public option for people above a "certain age." Notably, when the results were broken down by party affiliation, Gallup found that 41 percent of Republican and Republican-leaning voters prefer the public option compared to just 16 percent who would want to keep the ACA. "This may reflect either that Republicans genuinely think a single-payer system would be good for the country, or that they view any proposal to replace the ACA ('Obamacare') as better than keeping it in place," the pollsters state.

At the same time, 73 percent of Democrats and Democrat-leaning voters prefer replacing the ACA with a federal program while 79 percent of those voters would opt to keep the standing system. However, Gallup found that those who favor both a federally run national healthcare system and the ACA, when given a choice, "come down on the side of the Sanders-type proposal."

"The general idea of a single payer system seems to play well with the majority of Americans," Gallup states, which is something both Clinton and the presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump "will need to keep in mind as they debate healthcare in the

months to come." For his part, Trump has vowed as president to repeal the ACA and replace it with a series of healthcare reforms based on "free market principles." The results are based on telephone surveys with 1,549 adults between May 6 and 8. Gallup estimates a 3-point margin of error.

Source: *Common Dreams* 5/16/16 <http://www.commondreams.org/>



Those who wage peace can't count on the media for support



...Returning to the opening question 'Who rules the world?'...

ROBERT C. KOEHLER

And the race goes on. So does the war, but you'd never know that the one had anything to do with the other. Even when the mainstream media trouble themselves to acknowledge that the primary season remains open on the Democratic side, that Bernie Sanders -- and his millions of supporters -- are still in the race, the Bernie revolution is never portrayed as addressing foreign policy and the still-failing, still-catastrophic war on terror. Yet the war is there, shredding the national economy as it shreds much of the Middle East and, indeed, the whole planet.

Noam Chomsky, in his new book *Who Rules the World?*, quoting terrorism specialists Peter Bergen and Paul Cruickshank, says the Iraq War "generated a stunning sevenfold increase in the yearly rate of fatal jihadist attacks, amounting to literally hundreds of additional terrorist attacks and thousands of civilian lives lost; even when terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan is excluded, fatal attacks in the rest of the world have increased by more

than one-third."

Perhaps this is something to think about as we watch and read the "news": the United States' quiet, background war, having burned through a few trillion dollars so far and resulted in perhaps 2 million deaths, continues unchecked and unquestioned even as it perpetuates terror, the very thing it's purporting to eliminate. This war is not only wrecking lives well beyond the national zone of awareness, it's arguably contributing to, if not causing, the economic chaos roiling the political status quo in this election season. Shhhh. Don't tell anyone.

Our news purveyors purport to analyze the mood and will of the electorate via polls and apparently secret access to conventional wisdom, which somehow links the collective public mind with the nation's political movers and shakers, e.g.: "For Sanders," according to CNN, "West Virginia offers a chance to leap back into the political spotlight and confound hardening conventional wisdom that he is an afterthought in the race . . ."

But at least this tidbit of information keeps Hillary's challenger alive. Much of the election coverage has already moved well past what's left of the primary season to the general election, where Hillary Clinton's primary task is deciding whether to reach out blatantly to Republican voters who hate Donald Trump or continue doing her best to appease Bernie supporters so that they won't go Green or stay home.

Sanders' vow to stay in the race through the entire primary season and, even if he fails to win enough delegates to be nominated, to fight for the insertion of progressive values into the Democratic Party platform

-- in the process, perhaps interfering with Clinton's efforts to woo Republicans -- at least establishes the point that elections are about values. Even a point this wan and miniscule represents progress compared to recent presidential races, though, alas, hardly sufficient to turn the Democrats into the party that eschews perpetual war or stands up to the Big Money and the interests of the corporate elite.

This is the logical progression to cynicism, something that worries me as much as anything else about American democracy. So once again I quote Chomsky: "Returning to the opening question 'Who rules the world?' we might also want to pose another question: 'What principles and values rule the world?' That question should be foremost in the minds of the citizens of the rich and powerful states, who enjoy an unusual legacy of freedom, privilege, and opportunity thanks to the struggles of those who came before them, and who now face fateful choices as to how to respond to challenges of great human import."

The point I'm struggling to make is that democracy isn't easy. Peace isn't easy. Those who wage peace have to do so independent of global political and economic structures, and independent of much of the mainstream media. What principles and values rule the world? This question is so easily belittled by those who are troubled by it, so easily dismissed from coverage and discussion of the presidential race.

Source: Buzzflash at Truthout 5/12/16
<http://truth-out.org/buzzflash>

Amid embrace of endless war, report shows epic US failure to assist refugees

NIKA KNIGHT

Only 1,736 Syrians have been resettled within U.S. borders--fewer than one-fifth of the country's stated goal--in the seven months since Secretary of State John Kerry's original announcement in

September of last year. "The United States cannot lead by example unless the administration meets this year's very modest goal and sets a more meaningful and ambitious goal for next year," said Eleanor Acer, senior director for refugee protection at the human rights non-profit to the *New York Times* on Tuesday.

Germany, Canada, and Brazil have all resettled far more Syrian refugees than the United States, despite those countries' smaller populations and even though it is U.S. foreign policy that has been characterized by many observers as largely responsible for the flood of global migration in the first place.

And as millions are displaced around the world, U.S. treatment of refugees has been decried and condemned by many -- including prominent White House officials, who urged President Obama to increase his

Syrian refugee resettlement goal a full tenfold when it was first announced.

Indeed, the Human Rights First report characterized the administration's resettlement goal as "a modest pledge given the scale of the Syrian refugee crisis and the capacity of the United States."

Prior to the Secretary of State's announcement, the U.S. had resettled a mere 1,500 Syrian refugees since the start of the Syrian war in 2011, as *Common Dreams* reported.

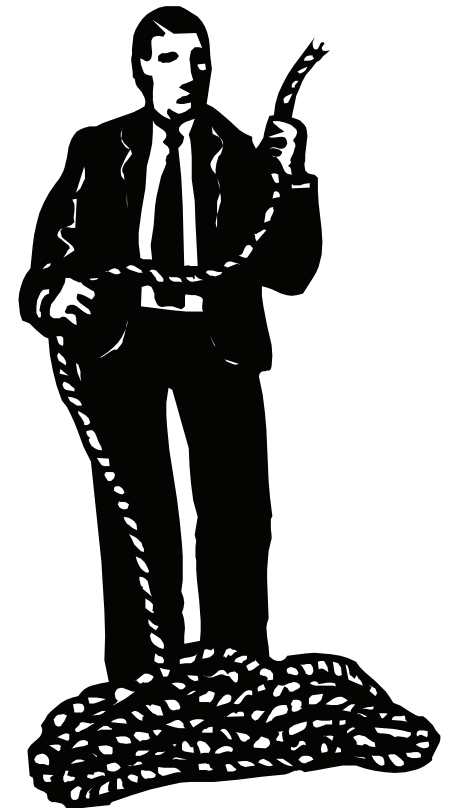
"The delays, advocates argue, are a result of inefficiencies in the asylum adjudication system, insufficient staffing to vet would-be refugees and the often lengthy security checks that Syrians are required to undergo as part of their application," the *Times* wrote.

The U.S. refugee resettlement process is plagued by backlogs and can sometimes take years, the Human Rights First report says, prompting widespread despair: "In some cases, one or more members of a family that was waiting for resettlement consideration have decided to risk the dangerous trip to Europe as they believe their family can't survive for another year or two. The

complete lack of certainty as to how long the process may take in any particular case in the U.S. resettlement system, and the specter of disappearing into an adjudication delay of indefinite duration even after the interview, contribute to refugees' despairing of the process."

The report also describes the tragic case of an 11-month-old infant who died in a Jordanian refugee camp because U.S. officials did not process his refugee application fast enough for him to have the heart surgery he desperately needed. Indeed, as more and more European nations adopt policies hostile to migrants and the EU-Turkey deal deports and detains refugees, the consequences of such failures to take in asylum seekers are increasingly dire. "Words can hardly capture the U.S. response to the Syrian refugee crisis, at least any words I can think of," as Noam Chomsky lamented.

Source: *Common Dreams* 5/11/16 <http://www.commondreams.org/>





Shallow water: solving mysteries of Delta Islands purchase

TIM STROSHANE

The headline for Water Deeply's interview this week with Public Policy Institute of California scholar-celebrity Jeff Mount, "The Mysteries of Delta Islands Sale" about the recent Delta islands purchase by the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, took us aback for its seeming naïveté from an acknowledged expert on the Delta and California water politics.

To Delta folks, it is obvious what Metropolitan Water District wants by purchasing five islands here (Chippis, Webb, Bouldin, Holland, and Bacon): greater control over the destiny of its export supplies from the Delta. What's so mysterious about that?

The point about control was succinctly argued in 1960 by an aging water lawyer named Walter Gleason, whom most of us have never heard of. Mr. Gleason toiled in major Central Valley water litigation for most of his near-40-year career. By 1960, he knew from experience the changing landscape of state water policy and law.

State Senator Stephen P. Teale, then chair of the state senate interim committee on water projects, published an opinion by Mr. Gleason just days before the November 1960 election that narrowly ushered in the State Water Project. (The project's bond referendum won by a threadbare margin of 174,000 votes.) While it was too little too late,

Mr. Gleason's views are prophetic in light of MWD's purchase of the five Delta islands.

Mr. Gleason believed that the proposed State Water Project would create unprecedented litigious water grabs aimed at northern California water, especially the Delta. The project would set up a "new hydrology" in which "for the first time in history the South will become directly and legally interested in the water resources of the Central Valley and the water rights (existing and prospective)," he wrote.

Prior to the State Water Project, southern California "might as well be in Mexico insofar as any present ability to take on or interfere with any water or water rights in Northern California [is] concerned," he continued. But with southern California having a direct interest in Delta export affairs because of the Banks Pumping Plant near Tracy, Mr. Gleason maintained that no vested water rights in northern California (which he defined as water north of the Tehachapis) are safe from predation by either MWD or the

California Department of Water Resources.

So in a legal sense, "the end result of this new Water Plan will be exactly the same as if all of Southern California were to be physically uprooted and set down at Tracy (i.e., next to Delta). In short, the length of the aqueduct between the Tracy Pumping Plant is immaterial since the South will...be sitting next to the Delta with a right to receive water out of the Delta (through its 'water contract' with the State)," wrote Mr. Gleason.

This is the legal reality behind Dr. Mount's statement that "the Metropolitan Water District doesn't do anything that isn't in its best interests." After talking himself out of the costly nature of developing some of the islands either for agriculture or natural habitat, Dr. Mount says of MWD's purchase, "I gotta think it's relative to the tunnels" for Tunnels alignment acquisition, staging, and spoils storage.

Asked whether he thinks the tunnels will be built, Dr. Mount hopes some kind of "deal" will appear as recently occurred with

Klamath dam removal to benefit salmon habitat. In Klamath, he said, "good, well-intentioned people managed to actually form a compromise." Dr. Mount does not think so highly of Delta folks, a populace conscious of unrelieved threats to its region's water and economic future, but not resigned to fate. "The opponents of the tunnels have offered nothing that seems even remotely viable," he also told Water Deeply.

Dr. Mount ignores the fact that, last year Delta farmers, when they could have flexed their senior water rights instead voluntarily reduced their water use by 25 percent to help with the drought. The Delta Watermaster found the program worked well. And in recent years, the Environmental Water Caucus issued multiple editions of a sustainable water plan for California.

We take as a backhand compliment that Dr. Mount feels that "Delta interests are very well organized." We try harder because we have to, and because we were warned. "It's dangerous if [Met] ratepayers start saying this is a mistake," Dr. Mount concluded of the islands purchase to Water Deeply. We at Restore the Delta could not agree more.

TIM STROSHANE IS A POLICY ANALYST WITH RESTORE THE DELTA

Source: *Restore the Delta* 5/12/16 www.restorethedelta.org *Restore the Delta*, 42 N. Sutter Street, Suite 506, Stockton, CA 95202

There's a better solution than Delta Tunnels

1. STRENGTHEN THE EXISTING DELTA LEVEES

Strengthening existing Delta levees is a far more efficient and cost effective way to ensure water reliability for the state and preserve environmental and economic stability to the greater Delta, as levees protect water supply and quality. Upgrade costs for robust levees are \$2-4 billion according to the Delta Protection Commission. In stark contrast, the CA Water Fix Delta tunnels could cost \$60 billion when interest, administration, research, operation, and maintenance fees are taken into account to the \$17 billion construction cost.

The levees will need rehabilitation even if the CA Water Fix Delta tunnels were built, as there is \$20 billion in infrastructure (railroads, gas lines, power facilities, public highways), and 4 million people in the Delta who need protection. Recent studies by the Delta Protection Commission indicate that if a hypothetical catastrophe were to occur, 80% of the cost and 100% of the loss of life would occur within the Delta.

2. FOLLOW ADVICE OF STATE EXPERTS:

- Reduce the amount of water taken from the Delta, & Retire toxic farmland
- California needs to acknowledge the over subscription of the water system, and start a true accounting that determines how much water is really available.
- Water exports of safe yields should only happen during wet periods, not dry periods.
- Investments need to be made to retire drainage-impaired agricultural lands in the Central Valley.

Instead of destroying the Delta to feed the water demands of billionaires' mega-farms and desert developments, let's end the myth of "surplus" water.

Let's retire toxic lands that do not drain properly and that are unsuitable for farming. Much of Delta water goes to dry, polluted land that drains into rivers. Retiring these lands would save hundreds of thousands of acre-feet per year in water. We could do this by buying out these farms and helping their owners convert the land to profitable solar or wind energy production. Rather than planting

water dependent permanent crops, let's return to the requirement that field crops dependent on Delta "surplus" water are left uncultivated during dry periods. It makes no sense to jeopardize farming on prime Delta farmland and surrounding areas to subsidize irrigation of impaired lands on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley that by the nature of being irrigated pollute vast quantities of ground and surface water.

3. INCREASE NATURAL FLOWS OF FRESH WATER THROUGH THE DELTA

Water that flows to the ocean is not wasted. It is what gives life to fisheries that support the ocean food chain. Fresh water flows are critical to the survival of this state's salmon fishery, as salmon migrate from the estuary's watersheds, through the bay to the sea, and also help to flush out pollutants.

The State Water Board and State and Federal fishery agencies have repeatedly stated that Delta outflows must be significantly increased if the estuary's historic fisheries are going to survive.

Extra water can be exported through the existing pumps if state-

of-art fish screens are installed by the water takers as promised. Further studies could be conducted to see if reconfiguring the existing pumps at their current location, or another location that allows fresh water to flow through the Delta, would provide benefits to fisheries.

4. INCREASE RELIANCE ON LOCAL WATER SUPPLY AND IMPROVE WATER CAPTURE & STORAGE

California needs to fix and upgrade its local water and wastewater systems. We need to remove old plumbing and replace it with low-flow options and implement new devices that tell users how much water they're using. In addition, 10-20% of municipal water supplies are lost through water main breaks; we should invest in the installation of wireless underground systems that track these breaks for fast repair. Most importantly, we should prioritize funds to repair and upgrade aging underground water delivery systems, which would gain over 500,000 acre feet of water annually.

We need to invest in new infrastructure that capture, recycle, and store water locally. Installing cisterns can result in the capture and

storage of sudden or intense rains on public business and residential properties across our communities.

We need to provide incentives to homeowners and industry users to switch to drought-resistant landscaping, crops, or technology. Incentives to help farmers save water by installing drip irrigation everywhere can reduce agricultural water use from 80% to 60%.

These investments are crucial to making our water systems more reliable and must be prioritized. The development and installation of more efficient and innovative technologies can also create more reliable jobs. Cities across California are planning to diversify their water supply sources because local sources are the most cost effective and reliable. Besides submerging cities in debt, the Delta tunnels would threaten to undermine these important local investments because it would increase dependence on outside water exports from the Delta estuary, which is already oversubscribed. Furthermore, the tunnels would fail to make more water for the system.

Source: *Restore the Delta* 5/17/16 42 N. Sutter Street, Suite 506 • Stockton, CA 95202 • (209) 475-9550 <http://www.restorethedelta.org>





US bombs a hospital: no big deal

"No one should be satisfied with this internal investigation."

PHYLLIS BENNIS

The Pentagon just made it official: No war crime was committed when a U.S. plane attacked the Doctors Without Borders hospital in Kunduz, Afghanistan last year, killing 42 patients and health workers and injuring many more. At least, that's the conclusion of its own investigation – nearly all of which remains classified.

No war crime, despite the U.S. military having full knowledge of the hospital's location before the bombing. No war crime, despite desperate hospital staffers calling military liaison officers while the rampage was underway. No war crime, despite their calls being routed without response through layers of lethal bureaucracy for an hour or more as the deadly bombing continued.

No war crime, says the Pentagon. The 16 military personnel involved all will face some kind of administrative consequence, but none of them will be court-martialed. The 16 do not, apparently, include the top strategists of the U.S. war in Afghanistan – nor anyone responsible for creating or approving the system for responding to desperate calls from civilians being slaughtered by U.S. warplanes. Nor anyone whose job it is to be sure that the U.S. military doesn't violate the Geneva Conventions' prohibitions on things like attacking hospitals.

We don't know for sure, because the vast majority of the official report on the Kunduz hospital assault was redacted – blacked out – so no one without top security clearance could read even the Pentagon's own assessment of what happened. Apparently Congress, the press, and the public are all supposed to be satisfied with the explanation that the cause was "a combination of human errors, compounded by process and equipment failures." The official write-up adds that "fatigue and high operational tempo also contributed" to the "fog of war" – that old standby for excusing large-scale attacks on civilians.

No one should be satisfied with this internal investigation. There's an urgent need for an independent, international investigation, as Doctors Without Borders has been



demanding since the attack took place last October.

The press release from U.S. Central Command quotes Army General Joseph Votel, the current Centcom commander. "The fact this was unintentional, an unintentional action, takes it out of the realm of actually being a deliberate war crime against persons or protected locations," the general insists. "That is the principal reason why we do not consider this to be a war crime."

General Votel can consider whatever he likes, but he doesn't get to re-write international humanitarian law on his own. Some war crimes do include specific intent – a charge of genocide, for instance, requires the perpetrator's intention to destroy, in part or in whole, a racial, ethnic, religious, or other group. Other war crimes, however – including violating the Geneva Conventions – do not require that kind of specific intent. (Criminal law has a similar distinction. Some crimes, like assault or battery, are based on a particular action; a separate crime is committed when there is assault with intent to kill.)

In this case, the 4th Geneva Convention, Article 18,

states unambiguously that "civilian hospitals organized to give care to the wounded and sick, the infirm and maternity cases, /may in no circumstances be the object of attack,/ but shall at all times be respected and protected by the Parties to the conflict." Criminal negligence may be involved rather than criminal intent, but that would still be a crime.

Yet Army General John Campbell, the commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, insists, "The label 'war crimes' is typically reserved for intentional acts – /intentionally/ targeting civilians or /intentionally/ targeting protected objects."

"Typically" is a slippery word. One might conclude from Campbell's words that U.S. military personnel right up the chain of command are indeed "typically" liable for war crimes when they, just for example, order the bombing of heavily populated cities to force regime change, or a drone attack on someone from the kill-or-capture list despite his nephew being at his side. But in fact U.S. military personnel are virtually never charged with war crimes.

And despite the years of brutal U.S. assaults launched in the name of the global war on terror, there is still nothing "typical" about an attack on a civilian hospital whose location was well known to the military, whose staff was desperately calling to try to stop the bombing, and who lost at least 14 doctors and other staff, 24 patients, and four caretakers in the attack. So regardless of whether it's true – or acceptable – that "typical" war crimes involve specific intent, that is certainly not a requirement for determining what a war crime is.

On May 3, the United Nations Security Council unanimously approved a resolution reaffirming member states' obligations to protect hospitals, the sick, and the wounded in war zones. Given recent years' escalation of attacks on hospitals and clinics – from Israel's 2014 assault on Gaza, to last year's Kunduz bombing, and last week's attack on a Doctors Without Borders hospital in Aleppo, which killed at least 50 people – such a resolution is urgently needed.

Quite likely the devastating attack on the hospital at Kunduz was in fact a war crime. Possibly it wasn't. But there's no reason in the world for anyone to accept that an internal Pentagon investigation – in which almost all of the 3,000 page report remains classified – is somehow sufficient to determine the answer. An independent, international investigation is crucially required. Letting the Pentagon investigate itself simply isn't good enough.

Source: Foreign Policy In Focus 5/3/16 <http://fpif.org/>

PROTESTING AMERICAN PRIVILEGE AT HOME AND ABROAD

CONTINUED FROM FIRST PAGE

counter-productive. Yet it is different than the reactionary assaults of a Trump rally in its desire to breakdown rather than reinforce existing racial and economic privilege. However, it is also stands in stark contrast to the less overtly violent but ultimately potentially more destructive rallies of Clinton. It is to vocally support a candidate who admirably promises to "break down" the very social and economic barriers that she and her allies have helped to build and preserve.

In his statement against the violence in Nevada, Sanders proclaimed: "The Democratic Party has a choice. It can open its doors and welcome into the party people who are prepared to fight for real economic and social change – people who are willing to take on Wall Street, corporate greed and a fossil fuel industry which is destroying this planet. Or the party can choose to maintain its status quo structure, remain dependent

on big-money campaign contributions and be a party with limited participation and limited energy."

Right now those committed to real economic and social justice are too often confronted with an even more difficult choice. It is to engage in sporadic violent acts or to accept the "hidden violence" of the status quo. And all too commonly the progressive ends of these tactics are betrayed by their deplorable means. The political revolution called for by Sanders and activists across the country offers a different way. It is to create a democratic and inclusive system of governance that upholds the rights and dignities of all – not just elites and their supporters. It is also an opening to go beyond the borders of America to join and show solidarity with a growing international movement of citizens and activists on every continent fighting for real economic, social and environmental progress.

What is needed is a radical condemnation of the

worst excesses of this rebellion for a committed democratic revolution that will challenge the global destruction aided and abetted by the establishments of both major parties. It is a firm protest against American privilege at home and abroad.

Peter Bloom is a lecturer in the Department of People and Organisations at the Open University. He has published widely on issues of 21st century democracy, politics and economics in both scholarly journals and in publications including the Washington Post, The New Statesman, Roar, Open Democracy, The Conversation and Common Dreams. His book, *Authoritarian Capitalism in the Age of Globalization*, will be released next year.

Source: Common Dreams 5/18/16 <http://www.commondreams.org/>

White House Hiroshima visit puts spotlight on nuclear hypocrisy

NADIA PRUPIS

The White House said Tuesday that President Barack Obama's historic trip to Hiroshima should not be seen as an apology to victims of the 1945 U.S. atomic bombing of Japan, doubling down on what anti-nuclear advocates say was already a hypocritical gesture. Press secretary Josh Earnest told reporters during a press conference that if people see Obama's visit as an apology, "they'll be interpreting it wrongly."

"The president intends to visit to send a much more forward-looking signal for his ambition of realizing the goal of a planet without nuclear weapons," Earnest said. However, as Pulitzer Prize-winning national security and military reporter Mark Thompson wrote for */Time/* on Tuesday, Obama's supposed anti-nuclear mission "may get lost" amid his \$348 billion atomic arsenal upgrade.

Thompson wrote: "President Obama will end his Presidency pretty much the same way he began it: with a call to the world to rid itself of nuclear arms—this time at Hiroshima, the site of the first atomic weapon used in war. Too bad he did so little to reach that goal during the intervening seven years. Instead of bequeathing a smarter nuclear arsenal

to his successor, he has launched the most-costly upgrade to the U.S. nuclear arsenal ever."

And while Obama received many accolades for being the first sitting U.S. president to visit the memorial, peace and anti-nuclear groups like the Coalition for Peace Action (CFPA) and the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) called for the visit to serve as a long-awaited springboard for action, rather than an occasion to make a speech.

"[T]he president must do more than give another beautiful speech about nuclear disarmament. The world needs—indeed, is desperate for—concrete action," said UCS physicist Lisbeth Gronlund, outlining some of the immediate steps the president can take, including:

- Scale back his plans to spend more than \$1 trillion building a new generation of nuclear warheads, missiles, bombers, and submarines and cancel the new nuclear-armed cruise missile, which is destabilizing and unneeded.
- Reduce the U.S. deployed strategic arsenal by a third, which is a level the Pentagon agrees is adequate to maintain security.
- Remove U.S. land-based nuclear missiles from their current hair-trigger status and eliminate the option in U.S. war plans of launching them on warning.

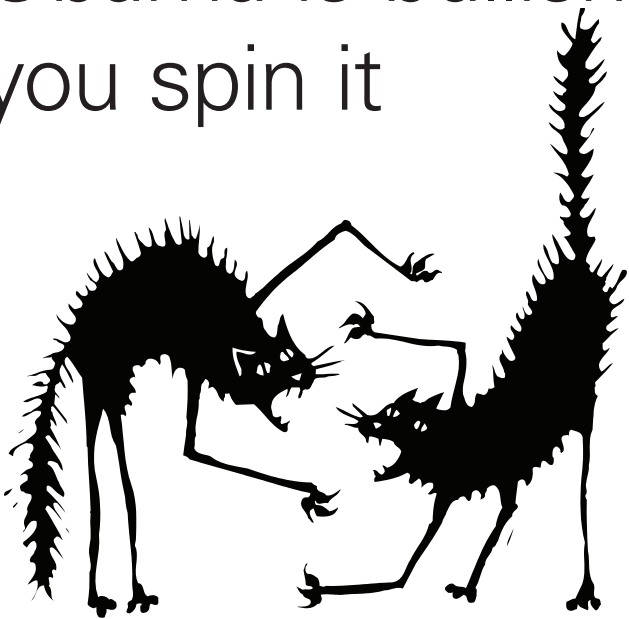
The Rev. Robert Moore, CFPA executive director, noted in a statement on Tuesday that Obama's visit "has great symbolic significance, especially following the president's inspirational speech calling for a world without nuclear weapons in Prague in 2009."

"Remembering the utter horror and destruction wreaked by a relatively small nuclear weapon, compared to today's nuclear weapons, is crucial to generating the global will to move toward abolishing such weapons worldwide. But we can't get that result just with lofty speeches; concrete actions are needed," Moore said.

Kevin Martin, the president of Peace Action, added, "At this point, it's not enough to repeat the words Obama has said several times since his historic Prague speech calling for the abolishment of nuclear weapons. Obama must announce actions he will take in the his remaining months as president that will actually bring the world closer to being free of nuclear weapons."

Source: *Common Dreams* 5/11/16 <http://www.commondreams.org/>

Obama is bullish on war, no matter how you spin it



TREVOR TIMM

Barack Obama has now been at war longer than any president in United States history, as the *New York Times* pointed out on Sunday. Barring some sort of peace miracle in the next six months, he will be the only president who ever served two full terms in office while constantly being at war. And given how he has transformed how the US fights overseas, his wars will likely continue long after he leaves office.

Anytime the media writes about Obama and war, it's apparently a rule that the author must mention that Obama supposedly fights his wars more reluctantly than his predecessors. But in many contexts, this is misleading. Obama hasn't attempted to avoid war; he has

merely redefined it. In some ways, he has fought them in a far more aggressively than any president before him, just with different tools.

Gone are the battalions of tens of thousands of soldiers, torching everything in their paths. Obama's wars are fought with special forces, drones and other high-tech weaponry that, he argues, lead to fewer

American deaths. But they pose the same dangers to world peace that the wars in Vietnam and Iraq once did, while making them far easier to fight.

Obama's hallmark has been drone strikes, which he has used to bomb at least seven countries since becoming president. For all the talk of their precision and pin-pointedness, though, drones regularly kill additional people

and have resulted in hundreds of civilian deaths. These strikes cause blowback and stoke anti-American hatred in virtually every country they fly in, and many former officials say the program does more harm than good.

But it's not just drones. Instead of being straightforward with the public, his administration hides behind secrecy and word gymnastics in all facets of its war policy, keeping the number of exact number of troops in the Middle East hidden from the public, and re-defining words like "combat" and "boots on the ground" and "civilians" to mask how much killing is really going on.

Even the word "end" has lost all meaning. Obama declared the "end" of the Iraq war in 2011 only to start sending troops back. In Afghanistan, he didn't even go through that formality. While he declared the Afghanistan war over in 2014, thousands of troops continue to fight, and sometimes die, inside the country to this day. There is no definite timetable for when they will leave, if ever.

How many troops are in each country exactly? Well as the *Times* points out, we don't know, since the Pentagon refuses to say. We do know that there are at least tenfold more troops in Iraq now than there were in the latter half of 2014, when Obama went on television and said that the US would be conducting "limited" airstrikes there. Since

then, more than 25,000 bombs have been dropped in Iraq, Syria, Libya and elsewhere.

For a reluctant warrior, Obama also has smashed records for selling weaponry and arms to our Middle East "allies", many of whom continue to wage their own wars of destruction. One of those wars, Saudi Arabia's, has thrown Yemen into chaos and strengthened al-Qaida, which has, in turn, led to Obama sending US troops back into the country. The timetable on that fight? "Short term", a Pentagon spokesman said last week.

This is not to say Obama's wars are completely comparable to his predecessors', including those of George W Bush – his Iraq war remains the most calamitous foreign policy mistake of our generation. And with each passing year, despite the fact that no one wants to admit it, the Afghanistan war inches closer to the same.

But at least Bush fought his wars with authorization from Congress, something that Obama has refused to do with his war on Isis, despite the constitution requiring it. Maybe this isn't solely the Obama administration's fault. Congress has shown itself to be cowardly in upholding its constitutional responsibility, content with the president taking all the blame when things go wrong. But the Obama administration has continually refused to put forth its own plan for an Isis war authorization beyond a

couple of soundbites saying it'd be nice if Congress passed one (while also making clear it won't make a difference either way).

Whoever the next president is, there's little chance he or she uses these powers less. Donald Trump is an unpredictable maniac who denounces military interventions in one breath and promises them in the next. Hillary Clinton, a longtime favorite of the neocon crowd even before Trump became the Republican nominee, has supported virtually every aggressive US military action in the past 15 years and has already promised more military intervention than Obama.

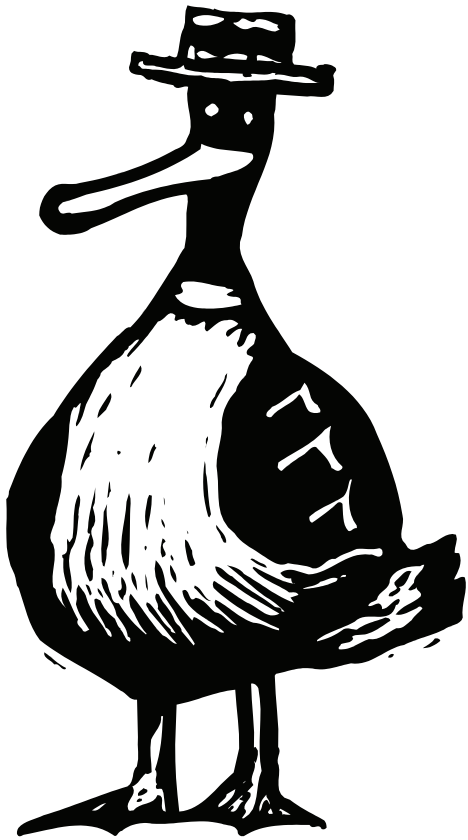
Rather than being remembered as the reluctant warrior, pushed into war by circumstance, there is far more likelihood Obama will be remembered as the opposite: the president who cemented the forever war mentality and architecture that has continually expanded, and that tragically shows no signs of slowing.

TREVOR TIMM IS A CO-FOUNDER AND THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS FOUNDATION. HE IS A WRITER, ACTIVIST, AND LEGAL ANALYST WHO SPECIALIZES IN FREE SPEECH AND GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY ISSUES.

Source: *The Guardian* 5/17/16 <http://www.theguardian.com/>



Clinton says: no lame duck TPP vote



In response to a questionnaire released today by the Oregon Fair Trade Campaign, Secretary Hillary Clinton stated for the first time that she opposes a vote on the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal during the lame duck session of Congress at the end of this year. She also frontlined a commitment to “ensure that our trade policy supports, rather than undermines, our climate policies. In response, Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Brune released the following statement: “The Trans-Pacific Partnership would be a disaster for working families, communities, and our climate, and we applaud Secretary Clinton for opposing a vote on the toxic deal before and after the election. Secretary Clinton recognizes what climate activists and millions of Americans across the country have made clear: trade policy must not undermine climate action. It is so critical for the next Administration to strongly and explicitly oppose any trade rules that allow polluters to challenge climate protections in private tribunals. The Sierra Club is eager to work with current and future leaders to build a new model of trade that protects working families, healthy communities, and a stable climate.”

And specifically on TPP & climate disruption:

SIERRA CLUB: If elected President, would you oppose holding a vote on the TPP during the ‘lame duck’ session before you take office?

SECRETARY CLINTON: I have said I oppose the TPP agreement – and that means before and after the election.”

SIERRA CLUB: Do you believe the rules that govern international trade should reflect the views and needs of working people on issues such as jobs, wages, the environment, human rights, consumer safety and access to medicine?

SECRETARY CLINTON: I’ve laid out a three-part test for any trade agreement to earn my support: it must (1) create American jobs, (2) raise wages, and (3) improve our national security. My approach to trade would be to establish and enforce fair rules so that our workers compete on a level playing field and countries don’t race to the bottom on labor, the environment, and so much else. And we can bring others along in having higher labor, environmental, and other standards. As president I will ensure that our trade policy supports, rather than undermines, our climate policies, reducing emissions at home and encouraging climate action abroad. I’ll make sure that

trade agreements don’t weaken American consumer safety standards and that imports comply with our rules. And I’ll fight against any proposals that undermine worker rights.

SIERRA CLUB: Do you believe the TPP does enough to address climate change?

SECRETARY CLINTON: I do not. As president I will ensure that our trade policy supports, rather than undermines, our policies to reduce emissions at home and encourage climate action abroad. I know there is concern among environmental groups that the ISDS provisions in the TPP could be used to undermine U.S. efforts to cut carbon pollution and take action on climate change. And again, with respect to the flawed ISDS provisions in TPP, I believe we need to have a new paradigm for trade agreements that doesn’t give special rights to corporations, but not to workers and NGOs.

For more info, read the Sierra Club’s report on how the Trans-Pacific Partnership would empower polluters to challenge our climate protections in private tribunals at: <http://sc.org/climate-roadblocks>

Source: Sierra Club 5/6/16 <http://www.sierraclub.org/>

CEOs paid 335 times average rank-and-file worker; outsourcing results in even higher inequality

CAROLYN BOBB

CEO pay for major U.S. companies continues to soar as income inequality and outsourcing of good-paying American jobs increases. Outsourcing has become a hot presidential election topic with candidates calling out corporations who say they need to save money by sending jobs overseas. Meanwhile, according to the new AFL-CIO Executive PayWatch, the average CEO of an S&P 500 company made \$12.4 million per year in 2015 – 335 times more money than the average rank-and-file worker.

The Executive PayWatch website, the most comprehensive searchable online database tracking CEO pay, showed that in 2015, the average production and nonsupervisory worker earned approximately \$36,900 per year, a wage that when adjusted for inflation, has remained stagnant for 50 years.

“The income inequality that exists in this country is a disgrace. We must stop Wall Street CEOs from continuing

to profit on the backs of working people,” said AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka. “Last month when I stood with the Carrier workers in Indianapolis whose jobs making home heating furnaces are being shipped to northern Mexico, I saw first-hand how corporate greed destroys communities. Carrier is a subsidiary of United Technologies and its CEO Gregory Hayes made nearly \$10.8 million in 2015. It’s shameful that a CEO can make that type of money and still destroy the livelihood of the hard-working people who make the company profitable.”

Mondelez International, highlighted in this year’s PayWatch, represents one of the most egregious examples of CEO-to-worker pay inequality. The company, which makes Nabisco products including Oreos, Chips Ahoy and Ritz Crackers, announced earlier this year that in order to reduce costs, it is sending 600 family-sustaining jobs from Illinois to Mexico, where workers face poor labor and safety standards. Mondelez

CEO Irene Rosenfeld made \$19.7 million in 2015 – that’s \$9,471.15 per hour.

“It seems that hard work doesn’t matter anymore. This is the corporate attitude,” said Mary Willis, who was among hundreds of Nabisco workers from the South Side of Chicago laid off in March. “They quit me. I didn’t quit them. It used to be that places like Nabisco were proud places to work, but now workers like me are tossed to the curb despite years of dedication.”

While the trend of companies putting profits over people is rampant, working people are fighting back. The AFL-CIO has endorsed the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers’ International Union (BCTGM) boycott of Nabisco products made in Mexico.

Working families also are joining striking Verizon workers on the picket lines fighting for a fair contract. Verizon wants to ship more good jobs overseas, outsource work to low-wage contractors and transfer workers away from their families for

months at a time, provoking the strike by 39,000 working men and women who help make it so profitable. Over the past three years, Verizon has made a record \$39 billion in profits. In 2015, CEO Lowell McAdam made \$18.3 million – 498 times the average pay of a rank and file worker.

More information about United Technologies, Mondelez and Verizon’s massive CEO-to-worker pay disparity and inequality

among S&P 500 companies can be found at www.paywatch.org.

The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) is a voluntary federation of 56 national and international labor unions. The AFL-CIO union movement represents 10.5 million members, including 2 million members in Working America, its new

community affiliate. We are teachers and truck drivers, musicians and miners, firefighters and farm workers, bakers and bottlers, engineers and editors, pilots and public employees, doctors and nurses, painters and laborers and more.

Source: AFL-CIO 5/17/16 <http://www.aflcio.org/>





Democracy needs transparency: now its trade

ANNIE LEONARD

I believe democracy needs transparency. That's why I was so excited when I heard that Greenpeace Netherlands was releasing to the public secret documents from the United States' current trade negotiations with the European Union. The deal is called the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP for short) and once it's agreed upon it will govern the U.S.-European economic relationship for years. (You can check out the documents obtained by Greenpeace Netherlands at <http://www.ttipp-leaks.org/>). And what these leaked documents tell us is that right now it's not looking like a good deal for the environment, democracy, or the public in general. It's also clear that U.S. negotiators have been consulting with industry behind closed doors. These secret negotiations for the TTIP put corporate interests ahead of the public and undermine basic principles of transparency and open debate that are fundamental to our democracy – just like the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) did.

This has to stop. We need an open, transparent debate about these deals that puts people and the environment ahead of corporate interests. I'm calling on U.S. negotiators for the TTIP to stop these secret negotiations and for the U.S. Congress to reject the TPP. The future of our food, our water, and our environmental safety should not be decided in secret by corporate interests. Greenpeace USA will be talking more about this in the days to come once we know more. But here's a guide to some of the basics questions – also check out the comprehensive FAQ section <https://www.ttipp-leaks.org/> put together by Greenpeace Netherlands.

WHAT DOCUMENTS HAVE BEEN RELEASED?

The documents that Greenpeace Netherlands has released comprise about half of the draft text as of April 2016, prior to the start of the 13th round of TTIP negotiations between the EU and the United States (New York, April 25-29, 2016). As far as we know, the final document will consist of 25 to 30 chapters and many extensive annexes. The EU Commission published an overview stating that they have now 17 consolidated texts. This means the documents released by Greenpeace Netherlands encompass three-fourths of the existing consolidated texts.

Consolidated texts are those where the EU and U.S. positions on issues are shown side by side. This step in the negotiation process allows us to see the areas where the EU and United States are close to agreement, and where compromises and concessions would still need to be made. Of the documents released by Greenpeace Netherlands –

in total 248 pages – 13 chapters offer for the first time the position of the United States.

HOW HAVE THE DOCUMENTS BEEN HANDLED?

The documents we received had clearly been treated to make it possible to identify individual copies. Prior to release they have been retyped and identifying features removed. We have not altered content of the documents and have preserved the layout. For this reason we are not offering access to the original documents.

HOW DO YOU KNOW THE DOCUMENTS ARE GENUINE?

After receiving the documents both Greenpeace Netherlands and Rechercheverbund NDR, WDR und Süddeutsche Zeitung, a renowned German investigative research partnership, have analyzed them and compared them to existing documents. The Rechercheverbund, which consists of different German media outlets, has covered, among other big stories, the Snowden leaks and the recent Volkswagen emissions scandals.

WHAT ARE THE FIRST CONCLUSIONS FROM THE DOCUMENTS?

From an environmental and consumer protection point of view, four aspects are of serious concern.

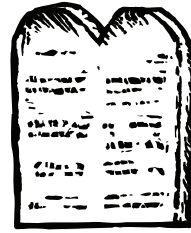
LONG-STANDING ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTIONS APPEAR TO BE DROPPED.

None of the chapters we have seen reference the General Exceptions rule. This nearly 70-year-old rule enshrined in the GATT agreement of the World Trade Organization (WTO) allows nations to regulate trade “to protect human, animal and plant life or health” or for “the conservation of exhaustible natural resources.” The omission of this regulation suggests both sides are creating a regime that places profit ahead of human, animal and plant life and health.

CLIMATE PROTECTION WILL BE HARDER UNDER TTIP.

The Paris Climate Agreement makes one point clear: we must keep temperature increase under 1.5 degrees Celsius to avoid a climate crisis with effects on billions of people worldwide. Trade should not be excluded from climate action. But nothing indicating climate protection can be found in the obtained texts. Even worse, the scope for mitigation measures is limited by provisions of the chapters on Regulatory Cooperation or Market Access for Industrial Goods. As an example these proposals would rule out regulating the import of carbon-intensive fuels such as oil from Tar Sands.

THE END OF THE PRECAUTIONARY



PRINCIPLE.

The precautionary principle, enshrined in the EU Treaty, is not mentioned in the chapter on Regulatory Cooperation, nor in any other of the obtained 12 chapters. On the other hand, the U.S. demand for a ‘risk-based’ approach that aims to manage hazardous substances rather than avoid them, finds its way into various chapters. This approach undermines the ability of regulators to take preventive measures, for example regarding controversial substances like hormone disrupting chemicals.

OPENING THE DOOR FOR CORPORATE TAKEOVER.

While the proposals threaten environmental and consumer protection, big business gets what it wants. Opportunities to participate in decision making are granted to corporations to intervene at the earliest stages of the decision making process. While civil society has had little access to the negotiations, there are many instances where the papers show that industry has been granted a privileged voice in important decisions. The leaked documents indicate that the EU has not been open about the high degree of industry influence. The EU's recent public report has only one minor mention of industry input, whereas the leaked documents repeatedly talk about the need for further consultations with industry and explicitly mention how industry input has been collected.

ANNIE LEONARD IS THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF GREENPEACE USA <http://www.greenpeace.org/>, FOUNDER OF THE STORY OF STUFF PROJECT <http://www.storyofstuff.org/>, AND HAS SPENT MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS INVESTIGATING AND ORGANIZING ON ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND JUSTICE ISSUES. IN ADDITION TO THE ORIGINAL SHORT FILM, STORY OF STUFF, SHE ALSO CREATED THE STORY OF CAP & TRADE <http://www.yesmagazine.org/planet/the-story-of-cap-and-trade>, THE STORY OF COSMETICS, <http://www.yesmagazine.org/planet/the-story-of-cosmetics> THE STORY OF BOTTLED WATER <http://www.yesmagazine.org/planet/the-story-of-bottled-water>, AND THE STORY OF ELECTRONICS <http://www.yesmagazine.org/planet/the-story-of-electronics>.

Source: Common Dreams 5/4/16 <http://www.commondreams.org/>



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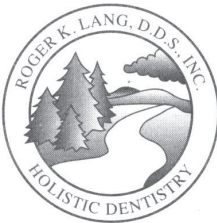
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A contested convention is exactly what the Democratic Party needs

JOHN NICHOLS

Joe Biden understands something about the Democratic Party and its future that his fellow partisans would do well to consider. “I don’t think any Democrat’s ever won saying, ‘We can’t think that big – we ought to really downsize here because it’s not realistic,’” the vice president told *The New York Times* in April. “C’mon man, this is the Democratic Party! I’m not part of the party that says, ‘Well, we can’t do it.’” Mocking Hillary Clinton’s criticism of Bernie Sanders for proposing bold reforms, Biden dismissed the politics of lowered expectations. “I like the idea of saying, ‘We can do much more,’ because we can,” he declared, leading the *Times* to observe that, while Biden wasn’t making an endorsement, “He’ll take Mr. Sanders’s aspirational approach over Mrs. Clinton’s caution any day.”

Unwittingly or not, Biden made an even better case than Sanders has for taking his insurgent campaign all the way to the Democratic convention in Philadelphia. If the party is going to run in 2016 on a “do much more” agenda – as opposed to triangulating around the center – the Vermont senator’s supporters and like-minded Democrats, including Clinton’s progressive backers, will have to force the issue. Taking the

Sanders insurgency to the convention is the paramount vehicle for placing demands that are ideological and, as Biden’s comments suggest, also strategic. That’s one reason why Sanders promised in a statement on

April 26 to go to the convention with “as many delegates as possible to fight for a progressive party platform” – despite the fact that Clinton’s delegate advantage now all but guarantees that she will win the nomination.

What Sanders is proposing is a necessary quest – and a realistic one. Already, he is better positioned than any recent insurgent challenger to engage in rules and platform debates, as well as in dialogues about everything from the vice-presidential nomination to the character of the fall campaign. As veteran political analyst Rhodes Cook noted in a survey prepared for *The Atlantic*, by mid-April, Sanders had exceeded the overall vote totals and percentages of Howard Dean in 2004, Jesse Jackson in 1988, Gary Hart in 1984 and Ted Kennedy in 1980, among others. (While Barack Obama’s 2008 challenge to Clinton began as something of an insurgency, he eventually ran with the solid support of key party leaders like Kennedy.) By the time the District of Columbia votes on June 14, Sanders will have more pledged delegates than any challenger seeking to influence a national convention and its nominee since the party began to democratize its nominating process following the disastrous, boss-dominated convention of 1968.

This new reality has Clinton supporters fretting about the prospect of a chaotic convention that could expose divisions within the party when it should be uniting for what increasingly looks like a fall fight against

Donald Trump. But a muscular appearance by Sanders and his delegates at the

convention doesn’t have to lead to bitterness. Historically, contested conventions – not carefully choreographed coronations – have led parties and their nominees to take more audacious positions and to excite broader electoral coalitions.

“Conventions are where we come together, but you don’t really come together if you avoid differences,” says the Rev. Jesse Jackson, who has protested, attended or spoken at nearly a dozen Democratic national conventions (and who has not endorsed a candidate in the primary race this year). “You start by understanding that it takes two wings to fly. If you have two strong wings – a wing that has won and a wing that has lost – you don’t deny the differences; you recognize them. You debate, find common ground, find ways to start working together for immediate goals – the next election – and for long-term goals that can mean as much to the nation as to the party.”

Recent conventions have been so tightly scripted that it’s easy to forget that both parties have long histories of contested gatherings – sometimes with open combat over the party’s standard-bearer (as may erupt at this year’s Republican convention), but often with spirited competition over rules, platforms and the very nature of the party itself. Contested conventions can open policy debates and clear the way for “significant political and social progress,” argues Fitchburg State University professor Benjamin Railton, who has analyzed the history of conventions. With 18 state wins so far and more than 1,350 delegates, Sanders is uniquely poised to push for such progress. Since Clinton will likely arrive at the convention with a majority of the pledged delegates and a lead in the popular vote, she’ll have every right to argue, as she did in April, that “I am winning. And I’m winning because of what I stand for and what I’ve done.” Front-runners rarely invite input from insurgent challengers, and if Clinton chooses to wall Sanders off, she’ll have the upper hand in Philadelphia. In January, Democratic National Committee chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz appointed a pair of Clinton allies, Connecticut Governor Dannel Malloy and former Atlanta mayor Shirley Franklin, to head the platform committee. And an ardent Clinton supporter and noted Sanders antagonist, former congressman Barney Frank, will cochair the rules committee.

But Clinton’s decision to adopt what was initially Sanders’s position on a host of issues, from wages to climate change to trade policy, shows that her campaign recognizes that a substantial portion of the party’s base – as well as its *potential* base – is attracted to Sanders’s more aspirational message. And the pressure to make that recognition a part of the Democratic platform will grow as the committees expand before the convention and Sanders aides urge the DNC to deliver on the promise made by spokesman Luis Miranda: that the party is “committed to an open, inclusive and representative process” for drawing up the platform, and that “both of our campaigns will be represented on the drafting committee.”



If Sanders advocates gain sufficient representation to provoke debates, what are the likely pressure points? Like Jackson and his supporters, who forced rules reforms and the diversification of the DNC in 1988, the Sanders camp could champion a more open and representative Democratic Party. There could be calls for reducing or eliminating the role of superdelegates, for a better approach to scheduling debates and for consistent primary rules to avoid dramatic variations in turnout based on whether the primary is open or closed. Even though Sanders ran well in caucuses, his backers could gain credibility by also arguing that caucuses are too incoherently organized and difficult to participate in to be justified. On all of these issues, Sanders supporters would have to establish alliances with Clinton backers who recognize that it is time to “democratize the Democratic Party.”

The prospect of aligning with Clinton supporters, especially progressive members of Congress and labor activists who will attend the convention as superdelegates, creates even greater openings for platform fights. Prospective nominees tend to favor weaker platforms; Harry Truman would have preferred milder civil-rights commitments than were made in his party’s 1948 platform, and it took steady pressure from unions, liberals and Ted Kennedy to get Jimmy Carter to finally embrace spending on jobs programs. It will take similar pressure to get Clinton and her inner circle to accept a Democratic platform that Sanders says must include “a \$15-an-hour minimum wage, an end to our disastrous trade policies, a Medicare-for-all health-care system, breaking up Wall Street financial institutions, ending fracking in our country, making public colleges and universities tuition-free, and passing a carbon tax so we can effectively address the planetary crisis of climate change.” Clinton stalwarts may want to keep things vague, but look for the Sanders team to demand specifics, such as an explicit endorsement of a national \$15 minimum wage instead of the \$12

proposal that Clinton initially offered, and an unequivocal rejection of the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal that President Obama supports and that Clinton once championed but now criticizes.

As it happens, many of Clinton’s most passionate allies have been outspoken supporters of the fight for \$15, fair-trade policies and proposals to break up the big banks. One of them, Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown, a potential vice-presidential pick, has argued publicly that Clinton “should work with [Sanders] on the platform” in order to strengthen the party’s appeal. Other Clinton backers like Connecticut Representative Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) and nonaligned House members like Wisconsin’s Mark Pocan could play a critical role in steering the party toward unequivocal opposition to the TPP. There could also be room for cooperation on addressing mass incarceration, passing constitutional amendments to get big money out of politics and guaranteeing voting rights for all.

Sanders backers want to win these platforms fights – not to make a point about their campaign, but to make a deeper point about what the Democratic Party must stand for in order to win the 2016 election and the future. “The convention can amplify what this campaign made visible – that there are millions of Americans who are hurting – and say that the Democratic Party has to respond to that pain with bigger and bolder policies,” says Working Families Party national director Dan Cantor, a veteran of the 1988 Jackson campaign who is now a Sanders backer. “Democrats who want to win a big majority in November, to take back the Congress and to move forward in the states, know that the party has to stand for something that excites young people, that excites working people. No matter who the nominee is, the party has to take a big-vision stand.”

Source: Moyers & Company 5/5/16 <http://billmoyers.com>



Separating Super PACs from 'campaign spending' not media's job



ADAM JOHNSON

The Washington Post, breaking down Bernie Sanders' and Hillary Clinton's campaign spending in "Sanders Is Biggest Spender of 2016 So Far – Generating Millions for Consultants," made a rather glaring omission: Clinton's Super PAC money. The phrase "Super PAC" isn't used once in the piece, nor is there any mention of Clinton's major Super PACs: Priorities USA and Correct the Record. The entire hook of the article—that "Sanders Is the Biggest Spender of 2016"—is only true if you omit this "outside money": "By the end of March, the self-described democratic socialist senator from Vermont had spent nearly \$166 million on his campaign – more than any other 2016 presidential contender, including rival Hillary Clinton."

Setting aside the sneering at the "self-described democratic socialist" (as if Sanders were supposed to campaign by hitchhiking across America handing out hemp flyers), this statement is only true if one accepts the right-wing logic of Citizens United: that somehow Super PAC communications represent only the "free speech" of the billionaires who back them, and are not part of the candidates' campaigns. If one doesn't accept that logic, as campaign finance reformers don't, then Clinton has outspent Sanders by roughly \$20 million dollars—due to the \$31,746,350 spent by her Super PACs thus far in 2016. (Outside money for Sanders is less than a million dollars.)

This discrepancy also ignores the fact that the Clinton online-messaging machine Correct the Record, which has so far spent almost \$5 million dollars, has argued, thus far successfully, that it can legally coordinate directly with the campaign. Correct the Record, headed by Media Matters' David Brock, has

posted dozens of videos targeting Sanders online, and spent upwards of a million dollars to run a network of Twitter and Reddit personas saying negative things about the Vermont senator on social media. They issue negative press releases, graphics and talking points—some of which the Clinton campaign's Twitter account tweets out.

Yet according to the Washington Post's "How a Super PAC Plans to Coordinate Directly With Hillary Clinton's Campaign" (5/12/15): "Correct the Record believes it can avoid the coordination ban by relying on a 2006 Federal Election Commission regulation that declared that content posted online for free, such as blogs, is off-limits from regulation. The "internet exemption" said that such free postings do not constitute campaign expenditures, allowing independent groups to consult with candidates about the content they post on their sites."

Even those pretending that Super PAC spending in general is "separate" should acknowledge spending from groups that expressly admit to coordinating with a particular campaign.

The omission had already affected coverage. A January article from Bloomberg with the less-than-subtle headline, "Clinton Refrains From Attacking Sanders. He Doesn't Reciprocate," narrowly defined campaign "attacks" as what personally comes out of a candidate's mouth. That meant a donor-funded Super PAC messaging machine like Correct the Record was ignored.

Indeed, one of the perks of having Super PACs is that they allow candidates to launder their disagreeable messaging through a third party while keeping their hands clean. The media playing along with this shell game is insulting to reader and writer alike.

Over at Slate, Michelle Goldberg

(with input from the Clinton campaign) launched a series of meta-attacks on Sanders, or attacks about potential future attacks by the GOP against his "socialist past"—which is really a way of redbaiting while acting as if you're simply warning about future redbaiting. It's a played-out way to smear Sanders, and one both she and Slate's Jamelle Bouie have done before.

Buried in her premise was the idea that the Clinton campaign hasn't run an attack ad on Sanders: "It is true, as Sanders pointed out, that polls show him doing better than Clinton against Republicans in November. But it is also true that Clinton has not hit Sanders with a single negative ad. Not one."

Again, this is false, as Correct the Record has engaged in constant negative messaging. It's absurd enough in 2016 to pretend that online ads are somehow not really ads (they are often seen hundreds of thousands, sometimes millions of times), but the idea that Clinton's campaign hasn't run coordinated negative attacks on Sanders is a dangerous fiction—and one that props up a key pro-Citizens United argument: By indulging in the fantasy that Clinton's Super PACs are indeed separate from the campaign, the media props up the literal-minded libertarian notion that what Brock and Co. are doing is simply freely expressing a personally held political belief—rather than engaging in big donor-backed electioneering.

ADAM JOHNSON IS AN ASSOCIATE EDITOR AT ALTERNET AND WRITES FREQUENTLY FOR FAIR.ORG.

Source: Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting (FAIR) release 5/6/16 <http://fair.org/>



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'Mistaken' release of glyphosate report raises questions over EPA's ties to Monsanto



LORRAINE CHOW

The House Science, Space and Technology Committee is questioning why the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) posted and then suddenly pulled its highly anticipated risk assessment of glyphosate, the main ingredient in weedkillers such as Monsanto's flagship herbicide Roundup.

On April 29, the EPA's Cancer Assessment Review Committee published a report online about glyphosate concluding that the chemical is not likely carcinogenic to humans. However, even though it was marked "Final" and was signed by 13 members of CARC, the report disappeared from the website three days later. The EPA

said that the report was "inadvertently" released. A spokeswoman said: "Glyphosate documents were inadvertently posted to the Agency's docket. These documents have now been taken down because our assessment is not final. EPA has not completed our cancer review. We will look at the work of other governments as well as work by HHS's Agricultural Health Study as we move to make a decision on glyphosate. Our assessment will be peer reviewed and completed by end of 2016."

Following the move, committee chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas) sent a letter on March 4 to EPA administrator Gina McCarthy announcing that his committee is launching an investigation into the matter

and is asking that the EPA provide all documents and communications related to the glyphosate study from Jan. 1, 2015 to present. He is giving the EPA until May 18 to provide this information. "The EPA's backtracking on the finality of its own science review committee's report raises concerns about the agency's willingness to provide a fair assessment on this matter," Smith said. "That the EPA would remove a report, which was marked as a 'Final Report' and signed by 13 scientists, appears to be yet another example of this agency's attempt to allow politics rather than science drive its decision making. Sound, transparent science should always be the basis for EPA's decisions."

"Furthermore, EPA's apparent mishandling of this report may shed light on larger systemic problems occurring at the agency," Smith's letter states. The EPA told DTN they were unsure why the report was posted, calling it a "mistake."

Glyphosate was famously declared a probable carcinogen by the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) last year. The classification has sparked a growing number of lawsuits over Monsanto's widely used product, including a wrongful death lawsuit filed in March by the widow of a Cambria, California farmer alleging that the St. Louis-based company had known for years that exposure to glyphosate could cause cancer and other serious illnesses or injuries.

The sudden yanking of the report has raised eyebrows over the EPA's relationship ties to the agricultural industry. Sources told Sustainable Pulse that the EPA allegedly attempted "to take the legal pressure off the pesticide industry and specifically large producers of glyphosate-based herbicides such as Monsanto," by releasing the Cancer Assessment Review Committee draft report.

According to Sustainable Pulse Director Henry Rowlands, "The EPA's 'mistaken' release of the main part of their report that is designed to protect the pesticide industry seems rather a strange coincidence."

"Glyphosate is now on the agenda for consumers and farmers across the World. The discovery of the herbicide in our bodies

and our food at hormone hacking levels is very alarming," he added. "The EPA should be protecting us all by providing a fully independent scientific analysis of the chemical. However, this is not what is happening and the EPA is again working against public health protection."

The chemical has been detected in several products, from alcoholic beverages and even women's hygiene products. Last month, the Alliance for Natural Health-USA released the results of food safety testing conducted on an assortment of popular breakfast foods, revealing that glyphosate was found in 10 of the 24 food samples tested, including oatmeal, bagels, eggs (including the organic variety), potatoes and even non-GMO soy coffee creamer.

The Center for Biological Diversity also issued a statement last week accusing the EPA of relying heavily on "industry-funded studies that have not undergone public scrutiny" for its draft analysis. "EPA's determination that glyphosate is non-carcinogenic is disappointing, but not terribly surprising—industry has been manipulating this process for years," Nathan Donley, a scientist with the Center for Biological Diversity, said. "The analysis done by the World Health Organization is more open and transparent and remains the gold standard."

Monsanto has vehemently denied cancer claims of its blockbuster product and has demanded a retraction of the IARC report. Unsurprisingly, the company was pleased with the release of the EPA's report, telling Reuters after the documents had been removed that they were "clearly labeled and signed as the final report of EPA's Cancer Assessment Review Committee."

Monsanto's chief technology officer Robb Fraley tweeted, "EPA declares (again) that glyphosate, the active ingredient in Roundup, is not a carcinogen." He added, "This is the EPA's highest ranking for product safety—they also do nice job of explaining all of IARC's mistakes."

Source: EcoWatch 5/9/16 <http://ecowatch.com>

Monsanto takeover? corporate cabal's control of food supply continues

ANDREA GERMANOS

German chemical giants Bayer AG and BASF SE are both considering takeovers of U.S. seed behemoth Monsanto, according to news reports on Thursday. Of the potential Bayer takeover of Monsanto, valued at roughly \$40 billion, *Bloomberg* noted that it "would create the world's largest supplier of seeds and farm chemicals."

As *USA Today* reported, "A bid for Monsanto would be just the most recent in a wave of chemical and agribusiness consolidation." Indeed, in February China National Chemical Corp. (ChemChina) announced it would acquire Swiss pesticide company Syngenta for \$43 billion, while DuPont and Dow Chemical announced their merger last year.

According to advocacy

group Food & Water Watch, such consolidation has far-reaching impacts, and is bad news for farmers and communities. "A Bayer takeover of Monsanto would only be the latest in a string of high-profile seed and agrochemical mergers that are undermining the economic viability of family farms," said Wenonah Hauter, the organization's executive director. "Unchecked food

and agribusiness monopolies pay farmers less, charge consumers more and reduce everyone's choices."

"The Department of Justice must block deals like the proposed ChemChina-Syngenta and Dow-DuPont mergers that already threaten to hyper-consolidate the biotech seed industry," she argued. "Doing so would also send a message that mega-mergers like the

rumored Bayer-Monsanto deal will not be rubber stamped. "The shocking consolidation in the biotech seed and agrochemical industry turns over the food system to a cabal of chemical companies that would make it even harder for farmers, consumers and communities to build a vibrant, sustainable food system," Hauter said.

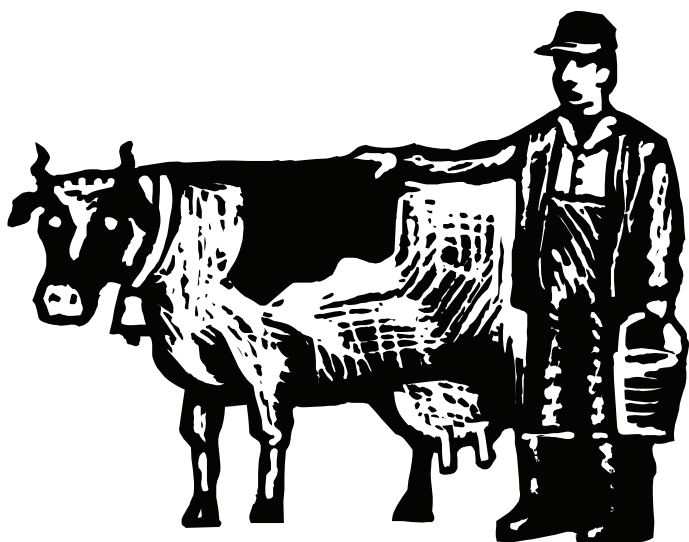
The potential merger, *Bloomberg* reports, "would

face a global antitrust review." The paper also quotes Erik Gordon, a professor at University of Michigan's Ross School of Business, who said that it may be slowed down by regulators who "are faced not with a decision about a single deal, but rather with a decision about the structural concentration of the whole industry."

Source: Common Dreams 5/12/16
<http://www.commondreams.org/>



'Wholly inadequate': environmentalists decry EPA's new methane rules



NIKA KNIGHT

Following President Obama's promise to cut toxic methane leaks at oil and gas facilities, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on Thursday announced the U.S. government's "first-ever" set of standards to reduce such emissions—but the new regulations were decried by environmentalist critics as not far-reaching enough. "EPA's methane regulations are a welcome first step, but contain too many loopholes to be a comprehensive check on industry recklessness,"

warned Greenpeace researcher Charlie Cray. Moreover, noted Cray, methane "is the fastest growing source of climate pollution in the U.S. In the first twenty years after it's released, methane is more than 85 times more powerful than CO₂ in fueling climate chaos."

Oil and gas facilities are "the largest industrial source of methane," noted environmental legal defense group Earthjustice. The EPA said that these latest rules were part of the Obama Administration's efforts to

live up to the president's vow to reduce methane emissions by 40 to 45 percent from 2012 levels by 2025.

"The methane rule is the final version of a draft regulation put forth last year by the Environmental Protection Agency," reports the *New York Times*, "and would require oil and gas companies to plug and capture leaks of methane from new and modified drilling wells and storage tanks, not older, existing wells."

The EPA is only just starting the information-

gathering process to determine how to regulate existing wells, the agency says. Yet it is old, established fossil fuel infrastructure that is responsible for the vast majority of methane emissions in the U.S., and many environmentalists are irked that the new rules stop short of regulating those facilities.

"The only way to protect our communities from the risks of fracking, and stave off the worst impacts of climate change, is to keep fossil fuels in the ground. This rule, which does nothing to stop dangerous methane leaks from existing fracking wells, was always wholly inadequate," said 350.org's executive director May Boeve.

"The vast majority of the problem lies in the oil and gas infrastructure that already exists across the country," wrote the Natural Resources Defense Council. "EPA must follow through on the President's commitment to address these sources next, and soon."

Presidential hopeful Bernie Sanders joined fellow environmentalists in calling for an overall ban on

fracking, rather than simply seeking to reduce methane leaks at fracking facilities:

EPA head Gina McCarthy defended the agency's rules from such criticism: "The commonsense steps we're rolling out today will help combat climate change and reduce air pollution that immediately harms public health," McCarthy told reporters on a conference call, according to */Bloomberg/*. McCarthy characterized the new regulations as a "critical first step in tackling methane emissions from existing oil and gas sources."

The new regulations are a tougher version of those first proposed last year. The standards were updated in response to nearly 900,000 comments critiquing the original version released in August 2015, the EPA said. The problem of methane leaks from fracking facilities was brought to harsh light in October, when a disastrous leak near Los Angeles' Porter Ranch neighborhood started spewing tens of thousands of kilograms of the toxic gas into the air every hour—an catastrophic event that lasted for months on end.

Despite such disasters, the fossil fuel industry defended its record on combating methane leaks and complained that the EPA's regulations were too strict.

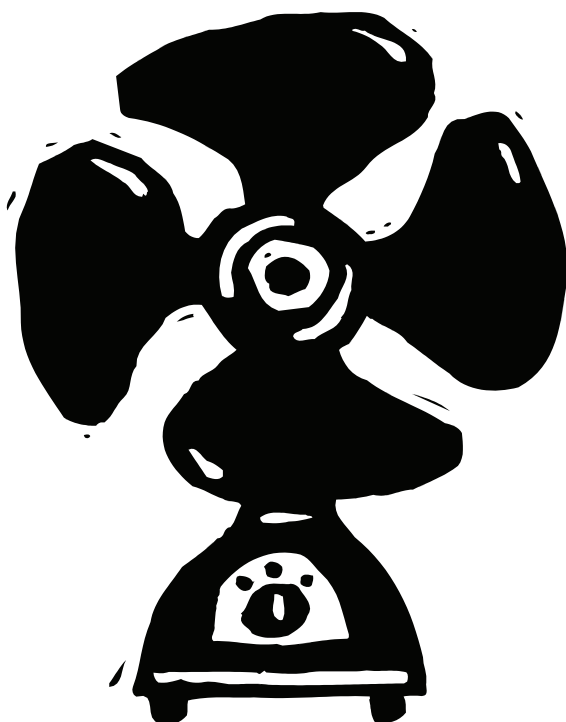
"Overly prescriptive regulations that limit energy access will only make manufacturers less competitive and send investments and jobs to countries with less stringent environmental protections related to energy and greenhouse gases," said the National Association of Manufacturers in a press statement.

Earthjustice promised to defend the EPA's regulations from the fossil fuel industry's expected legal assault on the new rules.

"Earthjustice will defend this rule in court when the oil and gas industry tries to weaken it," the organization declared. "It's past time for oil and gas companies to embrace best practices that could make the difference between catastrophic climate change and a secure future on a livable planet."

Source: *Common Dreams* 5/12/16
<http://www.commondreams.org/>

Germany generated so much renewable energy it paid people to use it



LORRAINE CHOW

On May 8 -- a particularly sunny and windy day -- Germany's renewable energy mix of solar, wind, hydropower and biomass generated so much power that it met 88 percent of the country's total electricity demand, or 55 GW out of 63 GW being consumed. This means, as Quartz reported, "power prices actually went negative for several hours, meaning commercial customers were being paid to consume electricity."

"We have a greater share of renewable energy every year," said Christoph Podewils of Agora Energiewende, a German clean energy think tank. "The power system adapted to this quite nicely. This day shows

again that a system with large amounts of renewable energy works fine." According to Quartz, industrial customers such as refineries and foundries were able to earn money by consuming electricity because nuclear and coal plants were unable to shut down production during the spike and had to continue selling power to the grid.

Germany's power system "is still too rigid for power suppliers and consumers to respond quickly to price signals," the publication noted. Germany, the fourth largest economy in the world, is one of the global leaders of clean energy as it attempts to phase out fossil fuels. The country has an ambitious goal of hitting 100 percent renewable

energy by 2050.

The European country already hit a milestone on July 25, 2015 when solar, wind and other sources of renewable energy met 78 percent of the day's energy demand. That beat its previous record of

74 percent in May 2014. Renewables supplied nearly 33 percent of German electricity in 2015, according to Agora Energiewende. To compare, the U.S. receives around 10 percent of its electricity from renewable sources.

Osha Gray Davidson, author of */Clean Break/*, a book about Germany's transition to carbon-free energy, said that Germany is a model for the U.S., "because manufacturing accounts for much more of the German

economy than the American economy and they have 80 million people -- much larger than a country like Denmark, which gets more of its power from renewables but has a much smaller industrial base and has a population of five and a half million people."

CleanTechnica reported that the rural German states of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Schleswig-Holstein already generate more renewable power than households and businesses in each state consume. Germany is also aiming to slash carbon emissions by 40 percent in 2020 and by 80 to 95 percent in comparison with 1990 levels by 2050.

Source: *EcoWatch* 5/12/16 <http://www.truth-out.org/buzzflash/ecowatch.com>



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Ahead of Methodist divestment vote, Clinton denounces BDS movement

DEIRDRE FULTON

Hillary Clinton has again denounced the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement targeting Israel, assuring Jewish agency heads that she opposes such a resolution up for vote at her own church—and seeming to link the social justice campaign with anti-Semitism. In a letter sent ahead of a large Methodist conference set to convene in Portland, Oregon, on Tuesday, Clinton said: "I believe that BDS seeks to punish Israel and dictate how the Israelis and Palestinians should resolve the core issues of their conflict. This is not the path to peace."

The letter was a response to David Sherman, chair of the Israel Action Network, and Susan Stern, vice chair of the Jewish Federations of North America. "Your voice is very much needed this week," Stern and Sherman had written to Clinton in a joint letter, referring to reports that the United Methodist Church General Conference will consider divestment resolutions at the 11-day event. "We hope you will again speak out forcefully against the divisive and destructive BDS movement."

Specifically, the Methodist conference will consider divestment from Caterpillar, Hewlett-Packard, and Motorola, three companies pro-Palestinian activists say have reaped profits from Israeli operations in the West Bank. According to the *New York Times*, in the letter dated Sunday,

Clinton "reiterated her previous opposition to the BDS movement, and pointed out that anti-Semitism is on the rise globally." Clinton wrote: "Anti-Semitism has no place in any civilized society—not in America, not in Europe, not anywhere. We must never tire in defending Israel's legitimacy." As several news outlets have noted, other denominations including the Presbyterian Church and the United Church of Christ previously voted to divest from Israel.

The Democratic presidential frontrunner expressed similar "alarm" over BDS in a letter to pro-Israel media mogul Haim Saban, one of her major backers, last July. And Clinton's speech at the annual American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) convention in March drew fire for its hawkish tone and opposition to economic boycotts of Israel.

Meanwhile, Israel on Tuesday refused to issue a travel permit to Omar Barghouti, a BDS movement founder, saying that his residency rights in Israel are currently being reconsidered. Barghouti said in an email to *Haaretz* that the move was a "clearly political" escalation of attacks on Palestinian human rights defenders. "It is seen by legal experts as a first step toward revoking my permanent residency, a clearly political and vindictive measure that has no legal basis," he wrote.

Added Mahmoud Nawajaa, the general coordinator of the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC),

the broadest coalition in Palestinian civil society that leads the global BDS movement: "Having failed to stop the growth of BDS in the mainstream, Israel is now launching a desperate and dangerous global war of repression on the movement. After losing many battles for the hearts and minds at the grassroots level, Israel and its well-oiled lobby groups are pressuring western states to implement patently anti-democratic measures that threaten civil liberties at large. By banning our colleague Omar Barghouti from travelling and threatening him with physical violence, Israel is showing the lengths it will go to in order to stop the spread of the non-violent BDS movement for Palestinian freedom, justice, and equality."

A recent Pew Research Center survey suggested that Clinton's "repeated denunciations of BDS... are likely to alienate even more of the younger generation who believe that fighting for social justice everywhere includes Palestine," Ali Abunimah wrote last week at *Electronic Intifada*. That poll found that the number of liberal Democrats sympathizing more with the Palestinians has nearly doubled over the past two years, from 21 to 40 percent, and that support for the Palestinians is rising fastest among the young—the so-called Millennials born after 1980.

Source: Common Dreams 5/10/16 <http://www.commondreams.org/>

Action alert on Boycott, Divest and Sanction bill

We thought we'd killed the Anti BDS bills AB1551 and AB1552 and put to rest their assault on constitutionally protected free speech as it relates to support of the Palestinian lead Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, a non-violent struggle for human rights and liberation from Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands. Unfortunately these bills have returned to life in the California Assembly on a faster track with a new identity, AB 2844 Public contracts: California Combating the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions of Israel Act of 2016.

While AB 2844 is narrower in scope, and in some ways less extreme than 1551 and 1552, applying only to for-profit corporations rather than to companies, churches, unions, etc., it still seeks to penalize those who are thought to be in some way engaged in boycott of Israel. The bill would ban state pension fund investment in and state/local government contracting with these corporations. AB 2844 still violates constitutionally protected free speech and remains loaded with vagueness and

arbitrariness. It has a hidden agenda of legitimizing illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories. The bill will be heard by the Assembly Appropriations Committee possibly as early as May 11th. Either of these committees can kill AB 2844, and with your encouragement, they will. Together we'll stop AB 2844.

Action: 1) Please call or write to your local Assembly Person: Assemblymember Susan Eggman assemblymember.Eggman@assemblymember.ca.gov; Assemblymember Frank Bigelow assemblymember.bigelow@assemblymember.ca.gov and 2) Write:

Dear Members of the Assembly Committee on Accountability and Administrative Review and the Assembly Judiciary Committee:

I call on you and your committee to oppose AB 2844, an unconstitutional attack on free speech with provisions that would be impossible to implement in

any rational manner. Whether or not one agrees with any particular boycott or divestment campaign aimed at pressing Israel to end its occupation of Palestinian land, obey international law and respect Palestinian human rights, participation in such activities, in response to a call from Palestinians using nonviolent methods to secure their freedom, is a legitimate form of expression, protected by the U.S. and state constitutions. The state must not deny financial relationships to people or organizations on account of their political views. California can lead the way in stopping a wave of such unconstitutional legislation around the country. I look forward to hearing your commitment to oppose AB 2844 or anything like it. Please register my opposition to this bill as part of public record.

Sincerely,
(Your Name)



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The need for progressive media voices

RALPH NADER

In 1961, President Kennedy's Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Newton Minow described television as "a vast wasteland." Perhaps nothing demonstrates that better these days than the rise of Donald J. Trump as a presidential candidate; now the presumptive Republican nominee. Trump's boisterous carnival barker persona has dominated the airwaves for the entirety of the 2016 election cycle, eclipsing what precious little time remained for the serious issues that affect millions of Americans. CBS president Leslie Moonves recently pulled no punches about the Trump phenomenon, saying it "may not be good for America, but it's damn good for CBS."

Trump is a symptom of a larger problem: profit-driven commercial television has put a stranglehold on our public discourse, highlighting controversy, carnage and entertainment fare over serious matters. The media industry reshaped our precious public commons into a fortress of exclusion that blocks dissenting, innovative and majoritarian viewpoints on matters that address society's most basic needs. One thing is clear—something's gotta give.

Fortunately, we have the power to massively shift how our public airwaves are utilized. After all, the airwaves are owned by the people and are used by these tawdry broadcasters free of charge! (In the past, I've referred to bombastic media personalities Rush Limbaugh and Sean Hannity as "corporate welfare kings" because of how they freely use the public's

property.)

This exclusionary media has obscured the fact that the public could take back some air time and condition over-the-air and cable licenses to provide serious, well-funded, diverse and informative content.

On May 23rd, 24th, 25th and 26th 2016 at Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C. a large gathering of civil society will take place to challenge the entrenched power of the corporate/political complex. The event is called Breaking Through Power. This "Civic Mobilization" will involve thousands of people at Constitution Hall and around the country and connect long-available knowledge to long-neglected action for the necessities and aspirations of people from all backgrounds.

May 24th will be dedicated solely to challenging mainstream media, bringing together authors, documentary filmmakers, reporters, columnists, musicians, poets and editorial cartoonists who will demonstrate the need for higher standards on television and radio, and in print and on the web. Some participants on that day will be: Phil Donahue, Laura Flanders, Eugene Jarecki, Patti Smith, Mark Green, Matt Wuerker and many others.

The major mobilizing action on May 24th will be to create a new advocacy organization called "Voices." The purpose of Voices is simple—to push for enlarging and enhancing space for serious content in all forms of media. Voices will be staffed by public interest lawyers, writers, and traditional and social media specialists. Voices will advance

long-neglected standards in the 1934 Communications Act which contains the imperative that broadcasters meet "the public interest, necessity and convenience" and other laws under the jurisdiction of the FCC. The Voices staff will make the case for much more air-time on TV and radio and space in print publications for a multitude of subject matter, issues and activities that are now excluded or censored routinely as a result of a business-model of maximum profit above all else.

Changing the corporate media for the better is easier than you think. The current campaign season has drawn the interest of millions of young people who yearn for a better future. Many have supported Senator Bernie Sanders' agenda for a more just society. Now, when political excitement is at its peak, is an ideal time to channel civic energy—no matter which candidate for president you support—into real, transformative action that benefits people instead of corporations. Visit breakingthroughpower.org for more information.

RALPH NADER IS A CONSUMER ADVOCATE, LAWYER, AND AUTHOR. HIS LATEST BOOK IS THE SEVENTEEN SOLUTIONS: BOLD IDEAS FOR OUR AMERICAN FUTURE. OTHER RECENT BOOKS INCLUDE, THE SEVENTEEN TRADITIONS: LESSONS FROM AN AMERICAN CHILDHOOD, GETTING STEAMED TO OVERCOME CORPORATISM: BUILD IT TOGETHER TO WIN, AND "ONLY THE SUPER-RICH CAN SAVE US" (A NOVEL).

Source: Common Dreams 5/6/16 <http://www.commondreams.org/>

Super Bowl score: cop overtime \$6.3 million, taxpayers 0

KARL OLSON

The big winners of Super Bowl 50 were not just the Denver Broncos, they were San Francisco cops who racked up over \$6.3 million in overtime while The City hosted "Super Bowl City." And the big losers were not just the Carolina Panthers, they were San Francisco taxpayers, whose elected representatives threw a big party for the billionaire owners of the National Football League.

Those are the revelations from public records produced by the San Francisco Controller's Office in response to Public Records Act requests made by former State Senator and Judge Quentin Kopp, the First Amendment Coalition and the San Francisco Taxpayers Association.

The records show that in a two-week period ending February 12 – the period in which "Super Bowl City" unfolded around The Embarcadero – San Francisco cops racked up over \$6.3 million in overtime. Comparable figures in 2015 were less than \$1 million in each two-week pay period.

The records also show that the San Francisco Police Department didn't even budget for the Super Bowl-related costs. Neither did the Municipal Transportation Agency, whose personnel rang up over \$2.7 million in overtime during the two-week "Super Bowl City" period, far more than normal. And the City wasn't reimbursed by the NFL for its Super Bowl-related costs, even though the city of Santa Clara – which hosted the game but not Super Bowl City – did get reimbursed.

Not only did the City not get any reimbursement for Super Bowl 50 costs, the Fire and Police departments, along with the Emergency Management Department, signed letters of assurance to not seek reimbursement from the NFL for providing additional public safety services related to the Super Bowl. Only two City departments – the Recreation and Park Department and the Fire Department – are to be reimbursed by the Super Bowl Host Committee for providing City services. Those reimbursements, according to a January report prepared for the Board of Supervisors, totalled only \$104,257 out of estimated general fund costs to the City of nearly \$4.9 million. And to make matters worse, the estimated costs to the City were far less than what the actual overtime costs ended up being.

The Board of Supervisors' Budget and Legislative Analyst issued a January 15, 2016 report which was sharply

critical of the Super Bowl arrangements. The reimbursement from the Host Committee to Santa Clara was expected to be \$3.6 million to cover additional public safety and government services costs. San Francisco, however, negotiated no such deal.

The Budget Analyst's report observed that there was no written agreement, other than the original bid, between The City and the Super Bowl Host Committee or the NFL on the responsibilities of each party for Super Bowl 50 events in San Francisco. The Budget Analyst noted that in 2013 the NFL reported \$9.2 billion in total revenue, which is larger than the City's fiscal year 2015-16 budget of \$8.9 billion. In other words, San Francisco taxpayers subsidized the billionaire owners of the NFL. And this happened even though the Super Bowl 50 Host Committee reportedly raised \$50 million to pay for Super Bowl 50 events.

The Budget Analyst's report also notes that even though most city departments didn't budget for Super Bowl 50 events, they had built-in surpluses which hadn't been reported to the Board of Supervisors. "The fact that City departments have now been able to identify General Fund surpluses in their FY 2015-16 budgets to pay for Super Bowl 50 events documents that the City departments' budgets have surpluses that were not accurately reported to the Board of Supervisors during its FY 2015-16 budget review. This fact represents a non disclosure to the Board of Supervisors of significant expenditures on Super Bowl 50 events and represents a disservice to the Board of Supervisors in the Board's review of the City's annual budget," the Budget Analyst commented.

Records released by the Controller after the Super Bowl also show that the Police Department did a poor job in estimating Super Bowl-related overtime. Police estimated \$1.5 million in expenditures for services to Super Bowl 50 public events. But the actual overtime costs for the SFPD in the two-week pay period ending February 12 – which included "Super Bowl City" events from January 30 to February 7 – were \$6,339,251, compared to \$966,167 in a comparable two-week period in 2015. This shows that the Super Bowl 50-related police overtime was probably over \$5 million, or more than three times what had been estimated.

KARL OLSON IS A PARTNER IN THE SAN FRANCISCO LAW FIRM RAM OLSON CEREGHINO KOPCZNSKI.

Source: First Amendment Coalition News 4/13/16 <https://firstamendmentcoalition.org>

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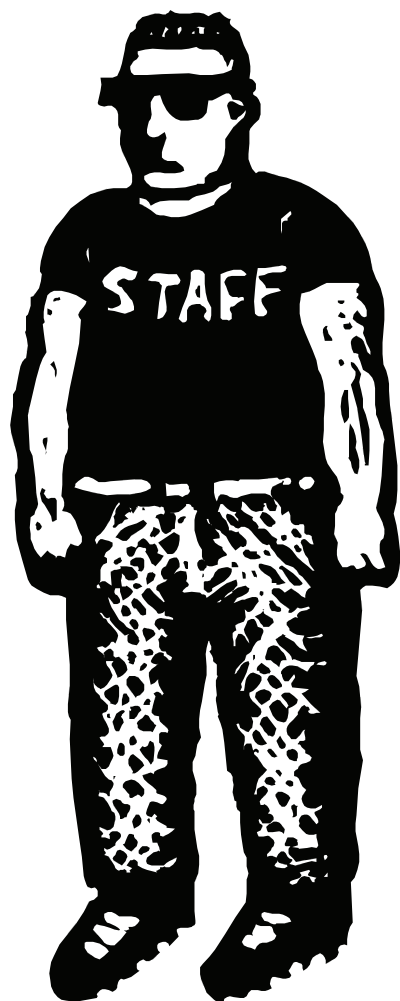
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Solitary confinement is 'no touch' torture, and it must be abolished

CHELSEA E MANNING



Shortly after arriving at a makeshift military jail, at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, in May 2010, I was placed into the black hole of solitary confinement for the first time. Within two weeks, I was contemplating suicide. After a month on suicide watch, I was transferred back to US, to a tiny 6 x 8ft (roughly 2 x 2.5 meter) cell in a place that will haunt me for the rest of my life: the US Marine Corps Brig in Quantico, Virginia. I was held there for roughly nine months as a "prevention of injury" prisoner, a designation the Marine Corps and the Navy used to place me in highly restrictive solitary conditions without a psychiatrist's approval.

For 17 hours a day, I sat directly in front of at least two Marine Corps guards seated behind a one-way mirror. I was not allowed to lay down. I was not allowed to lean my back against the cell wall. I was not allowed to exercise. Sometimes, to keep from going crazy, I would stand up, walk around, or dance, as "dancing" was not considered exercise by the Marine Corps.

To pass the time, I counted the hundreds of holes between the steel bars in a grid pattern at the front of my empty cell. My eyes traced the gaps between the bricks on the wall. I looked at the rough patterns and stains on the concrete floor – including one that looked like a caricature grey alien, with large black eyes and no mouth, that was popular in the 1990s. I could hear the "drip drop drip" of a leaky pipe somewhere down the hall. I

listened to the faint buzz of the fluorescent lights.

For brief periods, every other day or so, I was escorted by a team of at least three guards to an empty basketball court-sized area. There, I was shackled and walked around in circles or figure-eights for 20 minutes. I was not allowed to stand still, otherwise they would take me back to my cell.

I was only allowed a couple of hours of visitation each month to see my friends, family and lawyers, through a thick glass partition in a tiny 4 x 6 ft room. My hands and feet were shackled the entire time. Federal agents installed recording equipment specifically to monitor my conversations, except with my lawyers.

The United Nations special rapporteur on torture, Juan Mendez, condemned my treatment as "cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment", describing "the excessive and prolonged isolation" I was placed under for that period of time. However, he didn't stop there. In a preface to the 2014 Spanish edition of the Sourcebook on Solitary Confinement, written by Méndez he strongly recommends against any use of solitary confinement beyond 15 days. As Mendez explains: "Prolonged solitary confinement raises special concerns, because the risk of grave and irreparable harm to the detained person increases with the length of isolation and the uncertainty regarding its duration. In my public declarations on this theme, I have defined prolonged solitary confinement as any period in excess of 15 days. This

definition reflects the fact that most of the scientific literature shows that, after 15 days, certain changes in brain functions occur and the harmful psychological effects of isolation can become irreversible." Unfortunately, conditions similar to the ones I experienced in 2010-11 are hardly unusual for the estimated 80,000 to 100,000 inmates held in these conditions across the US every day.

In the time since my confinement at Quantico, public awareness of solitary confinement has improved by orders of magnitude. People all across the political spectrum – including some who have never been in solitary or known anyone who has – are now beginning to question whether this practice is a moral and ethical one. In June 2015, US supreme court justice Anthony Kennedy called the prison system "overlooked" and "misunderstood", stating that he welcomes a case that would allow the court to review whether or not solitary confinement is cruel and unusual under the US constitution.

The evidence is overwhelming that it should be deemed as such: solitary confinement in the US is arbitrary, abused and unnecessary in many situations. It is cruel, degrading and inhumane, and is effectively a "no touch" torture. We should end the practice quickly and completely.

Source: The Guardian 5/2/16 <http://www.theguardian.com>

Hedge fund managers are winning: 2015 another year of 'outrageous compensation'

ANDREA GERMANOS

The latest Rich List, published by *Institutional Investor's Alpha* magazine, reveals that the industry's top 25 managers made an average of \$517.6 million, and had combined earnings of \$12.94 billion. The men at the top five spots all earned over \$1 billion.

Topping the list are Kenneth Griffin of Citadel and James Simons of Renaissance Technologies, who each took in \$1.7 billion. Simons has the distinction of being the only manager to appear on the list for its entire 15-year history. Griffin, the *New York Times* reports, "was the biggest donor to the successful re-election campaign of Mayor Rahm Emanuel of Chicago. More recently he has poured more than \$3.1 million into the failed presidential campaigns of Marco Rubio, Jeb Bush and Scott Walker, as well as the Republican National Committee.

Reuters adds: "The higher payday came "despite the fact that

roughly half of all hedge funds lost money last year," said Institutional Investor Editor Michael Peltz. He added that "about half of the 25 highest-earning hedge fund managers used computer-generated investment strategies to produce their investment gains." The *Times* also notes that "Even as regulators push to rein in compensation at Wall Street banks, top hedge fund managers earn more than 50 times what the top executives at banks are paid." But according to Sam Pizzigati, who edits *Too Much*, the Institute for Policy Study's online weekly newsletter on excess and inequality, "the real enormity of America's annual hedge fund jackpots only comes into focus when we contrast these windfalls to the rewards that go to ordinary Americans. Kindergarten teachers, for instance. The 157,800 teachers of America's little people, the Bureau of Labor Statistics tells us, together make about \$8.34 billion a year," he wrote. As the *Washington Post* notes, "Hedge fund managers'

profits are treated as long-term capital gains, which means they're taxed at no more than 15 percent. Critics say those earnings should be taxed as ordinary income, or as much as 39.6 percent."

Among the critics of such taxation policies is the Patriotic Millionaires, a group of wealthy Americans who argue that they, and corporations, should pay a greater percentage of taxes. Its members include Frank Patitucci, CEO and Owner of NuCompass Mobility, who said, "The concept of taxing 'carried interest' as capital gains makes no logical sense." Added Patriotic Millionaire Terence Meehan, Chairman of Azimuth Investment Management, "I am in the hedge fund and private equity business and the carried interest loophole is welfare for the wealthy."

For Stephen Lerner, a fellow at Georgetown University's Kalmanovitz Initiative for Labor and Working Poor, these managers are merely a reflection of our "winner-take-all politics:"

"Billionaire hedge fund managers have been leveraging huge amounts of investor capital to extract enormous cash payouts for themselves, the ultimate in "winner-take-all" economics. To squeeze out these payouts, they've been pressuring the enterprises they dominate to slash wages, eliminate pension and health benefits, and offshore middle-class jobs. Hedge fund fee structures, in the meantime, divert most of the profits these tactics generate back to self-dealing hedge fund managers. The investors that supply hedge funds their capital – like public employee pension funds – end up getting diminishing or actual negative returns. Hedge fund billionaires also reflect our "winner-take-all" politics. Their massive campaign donations and lavish funding of lobbyists, right-wing think tanks, and other influence-peddlers buy unfair legal, fiscal, and regulatory advantages. Some of these billionaires do fund private philanthropy, but many of the most

high-profile financiers focus on rigging the political system in their own favor."

As Weissman sees it, voters are very aware of this rigged political system.

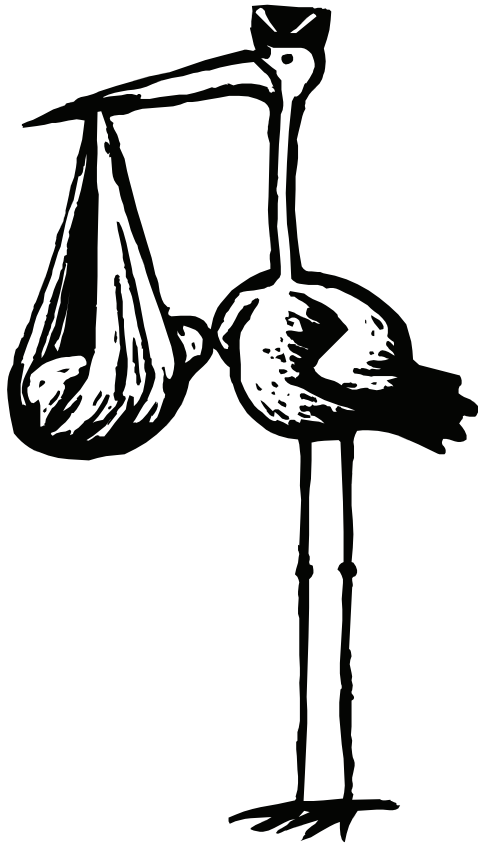
"There's a lot of noise in this year's election, but if there's one consistent theme, it's that people are furious with a rigged system. And they are right to be angry," his statement continues. "They are furious with a financial system that lets so few make so much, when so many are making so little. And they can't begin to comprehend how people making more than \$1 billion a year pay a lower tax rate than people struggling to get by."

"With voters rising up," he adds, "the Gilded Age for the hedge fund gazillionaires should come to an end."

Source: Common Dreams 5/11/16
<http://www.commondreams.org/>



Questionable assumptions behind critiques of Sanders' economic plan



We know, with hard numbers based on real experience, that investments in infrastructure, for example, yield concrete economic dividends. We can predict with significant certainty that dollars freed from the rent-seeking capture of the private health care industry will mean dollars that individuals and businesses can invest in themselves.

It's "Neoliberals Gang Up on Bernie Sanders Week" along the corridor of Washington establishment think-tanks that include the Brookings Institution, the Urban Institute and a Brookings offspring, the Tax Policy Center. Out of this corridor came not one, but two reports this week that give negative reviews to Sanders' health care and tax plans. Both reports essentially reinforce one of Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton's chief attack lines against the Vermont senator running to her left: that Sanders' "numbers don't add up" and that he is making promises "that cannot be kept." But in reality it's the reports themselves that make questionable negative assumptions about the effects of Sanders' proposals.

This is a continuation of an argument that broke out earlier this year when economist Gerald Friedman concluded that the Sanders' spending and tax proposals would provide a "significant stimulus" to the sluggish economy, boosting annual economic growth from around 2 percent a year to above 5 percent a year. Friedman was attacked by a group of former Obama and Clinton administration

economists, but also won considerable support from people like economist James K. Galbraith and financial reform expert William K. Black.

A similar theme runs through the Urban Institute and Tax Policy Center reports. Both say that federal deficits would become stratospheric because the federal government could not possibly get enough tax revenue to cover the cost of Sanders' expansive proposals, and in particular his plan to provide universal health care to every U.S. resident. But to make that conclusion, both reports make significant assumptions about what Sanders' proposals would actually look like in practice as well as how people would respond once those policies were in place.

The health care report, for example, says that national health care spending would increase by an average of 17 percent over the next 10 years if Sanders' single-payer health plan went into effect. Savings that the Sanders plan envisions would come about by eliminating private sector administrative costs and profit-seeking, and by the ability to bargain down the costs of prescription drugs, would be overwhelmed by

the costs of more people accessing health care. For example, the report says "the Sanders plan would increase demand for health services by eliminating individuals' direct contributions to care (i.e., by eliminating deductibles, copayments, and coinsurance)," and that the one thing that would keep costs from spiraling even higher is that there would not be enough doctors to care for all of the people who would demand free health care once such a system were put in place.

The health report is full of assumptions like this, largely because the Sanders plan for Medicare for All is a broad blueprint, not a detailed rendering of every nook and cranny of America's complex health care system. Because it is a broad blueprint, the writers of the Urban Institute made guesses about how the details would be filled in. And, of course, those guesses could be flat wrong.

The co-founders of Physicians for a National Health Program, David Himmelstein and Steffie Woolhandler, called the Urban Institute and the Tax Policy Center out on this in their column in The Huffington Post. "They

project outlandish increases in the utilization of medical care, ignore vast savings under single-payer reform, and ignore the extensive and well-documented experience with single-payer systems in other nations – which all spend far less per person on health care than we do," they wrote.

For example, the Urban Institute assume administrative costs under Sanders' health care plan of 6 percent of costs, "based on the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services measure of Medicare's administrative expenditures in the National Health Expenditure Accounts," the report said. But Himmelstein and Woolhandler point out that those administrative expenses include the overhead for Medicare Advantage, the expensive private supplemental insurance program. Overhead expenses for the traditional Medicare program, they point out, is less than 3 percent, and under Sanders' plan would likely fall closer to what administrative costs are in single-payer Canada – less than 2 percent.

What both the health care and tax papers ignore is the positive effects on the economy of changing

health care from a private, profit-maximizing enterprise into a public good, and from channeling more national resources into putting Americans to work rebuilding the nation's shared assets and positioning the country for broader-based and sustainable economic growth. We know, with hard numbers based on real experience, that investments in infrastructure, for example,

yield concrete economic dividends. We can predict with significant certainty that dollars freed from the rent-seeking capture of the private health care industry will mean dollars that individuals and businesses can invest in themselves. To count all of the imagined pitfalls of a policy but not count the real benefits is intellectually dishonest. What's worse, these reports offer a not-so-veiled message to the progressive movement: Changing the status quo is too hard and too perilous. Let's not do surgery to eradicate the cause of our economic pain. Take an aspirin instead. Four hours later, take another.

This, of course, is unacceptable. These Washington neoliberal think tank reports reveal what we're up against in making the intellectual case for the kind of revolutionary reordering of the economy that many of the people voting for Bernie Sanders are calling for. But they should not be allowed to be deterrents.

Source: Campaign for America's Future Blog 5/11/16 <http://ourfuture.org/>



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BROKER





Earth Day 2016: As planet rebels against pollution, Congress must work to limit climate chaos

Each year around this time, schools and community groups participate in cleanup projects, plant trees, and organize recycling activities to celebrate Earth for the beauty and sustenance it provides. Earth, however, does not appear to be in a partying mood; report after report are finding nature – and the climate – in open rebellion against humanity's abuses:

- A study published in journal Nature warns that, if greenhouse gas emissions continue at their current pace, the collapse of the Antarctic ice sheet could drive sea levels up to 6 feet higher by the end of the century.
- Such a rise means up that up to 13 million U.S. residents could see their homes flooded by rising seas.
- A White House report says that, within the same timeframe, extreme heat could kill 27,000 Americans every year.
- The Lancet published a study predicting that food shortages from climate change could result in 500,000 deaths less than four decades from now.
- A new study theorizes that climate change might be moving the position of the earth's axis, giving new meaning to the term "tipping point."

Many of these projections reflect worst-case scenarios if humans continue to burn carbon-based fuels at current rates. If we take swift action to lower greenhouse gas emissions, we can still hope to avoid these and other dire consequences of climate change.

One major step towards such worldwide action came in December of last year, when 196 countries agreed to the Paris climate accord. On Earth Day, more than 100 of those nations will officially sign the agreement at the United Nations, helping to formalize this landmark agreement. However, the U.S. commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 26% to 28% below 2005 levels by 2025 – which provided the leadership for many nations to make their own pledges in Paris – hinges on the implementation of President Obama's Clean Power Plan. In February, the U.S. Supreme Court granted a stay on the implementation of the Clean Power Plan until legal challenges are resolved, delaying the EPA's use of regulations to slash power plant emissions for at least a year. A successful legal challenge to the CPP would undermine American climate leadership – and the world's ability to meet the commitments made at Paris.

The Supreme Court's stay, then, shows some of the risks of depending upon executive orders to solve climate change. A more resilient and permanent solution can only be brought about through legislative action: Congress must enact a market-based fix that provides the necessary incentives for a quick, efficient transition to a carbon-neutral economy. But could any climate solution provide such incentives while also appealing to both Republicans and Democrats in Congress?

The answer is yes – a revenue-neutral fee on carbon with the money returned to the American public has proven capable of creating common ground across the political spectrum, with supporters that include climate scientist James Hansen and former Secretary of State George Shultz. The policy known as Carbon Fee and Dividend is simple:

- A fee is placed on the amount of carbon dioxide (or CO2 equivalent) that a fuel emits when burned, starting at \$15 per ton and increasing by \$10 per ton each year.
- Revenue from the fee is divided into equal shares and returned to all households.
- Border tariffs are imposed on imports from nations that do not have an equivalent price on carbon, thereby maintaining a level playing field for American businesses.

Conservative members of Congress often voice the legitimate concern that pricing carbon would be a drag on the economy and stifle job creation. Carbon Fee and Dividend allays those fears by recycling revenue directly back into

the economy, boosting widespread growth. A study from Regional Economic Models, Inc., found that, over 20 years, the stimulus effect of returning revenue to households would actually add 2.8 millions jobs.

The REMI study also found that Carbon Fee and Dividend would have a dramatic effect on CO2 emissions, reducing them to 52 percent below 1990 levels after 20 years. As a revenue-neutral policy that does not increase the size of government, and employs market-based incentives rather than government regulations and subsidies, Carbon Fee and Dividend has obvious appeal for Republicans. Jerry Taylor with the Niskanen Center makes an eloquent case for conservatives to support a revenue-neutral assessment on carbon. Is it too much to hope that Congress would consider and enact such legislation?

The recent formation of the bipartisan Climate Solutions Caucus in the House gives rise to such hope. Led by Carlos Curbelo (R-FL) and Ted Deutch (D-FL), the caucus promises to be truly bipartisan, maintaining an equal number of Republicans and Democrats. Even with election season making it unlikely that a bill will be drafted and introduced this year, the caucus continues laying the bipartisan groundwork needed if legislation is to pass in the next Congress. By enacting Carbon Fee and Dividend, Congress could put in place a climate policy less susceptible to legal challenges and the whims of future presidencies – and give us all a tremendous reason to celebrate Earth Day 2017.



Friday, July 23 Free screening of FIX IT: Healthcare at the tipping point

FIX IT: Healthcare at the Tipping Point is a powerful new documentary that reaches across the political and ideological divide to expand support for major healthcare reform. The film was two years in the making, with more than forty voices advocating for reform, including activists, health policy experts, economists, physicians, nurses, patients, business and labor leaders.

This documentary takes an in-depth look into how our dysfunctional health care system is damaging our economy, suffocating our businesses, discouraging physicians and negatively impacting on the nation's health, while remaining un-affordable for a third of our citizens.

Join Single Payer San Joaquin for this outstanding screening event, Saturday, July 23, 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm, Health Plan of San Joaquin, Community Room, 7751 S. Manthey Rd., French Camp 95231 (just south of San Joaquin General Hospital on I-5.) A panel discussion and Q&A will follow. Light refreshments provided. Admission is free. Information, 209-242-2254 Directions: Heading south on I-5, take the Mathews Road exit 467B; heading north on I-5, take the Mathews Road exit 467B



Saturday, July 24 Film: Merchants of Doubt - on tobacco deception

Saturday, June 4, 3pm
Peace and Justice Center
231 Bedford, Stockton CA

Join the Stockton Citizens' Climate Lobby for an afternoon at the movies as we screen the film Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming. Prepare to be outraged at the deception and the dangerous games they are playing with public health issues and people's lives.

Inspired by the acclaimed book by Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway, Merchants of Doubt takes audiences on a satirically comedic, yet illuminating ride into the heart of conjuring American spin. Filmmaker Robert Kenner lifts the curtain on a secretive group of highly charismatic, silver-tongued pundits-for-hire who present themselves in the media as scientific authorities - yet have the contrary aim of spreading maximum confusion about well-studied public threats ranging from toxic chemicals to pharmaceuticals to climate change. The movie is about 1hr 30min. No cost.

Please RSVP to this email. But please come even if not able to RSVP.

The Funeral Consumers Alliance of San Joaquin and Mother Lode counties will hold a free public education meeting on June 9, from 4 - 6 pm, at the Colonial Rose Mortuary, at 520 N. Sutter St in Stockton. A Sheriff Deputy will speak on "What to Do First" when someone close to you dies. A question and answer period will follow the program. No reservations are necessary and smple parking is available. For more information, call 477-8745 or 473-0838.

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Mail checks to:

Peace and Justice Network,
P.O. Box 4123, Stockton CA 95204

The Peace and Justice Network is a 501(c)3 non-profit educational corporation. Contributions are tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by law.



JUNE & JULY 2016 CALENDAR

Editor's note: if your event isn't listed, let us know. Send all copy to: bgiudici@caltel.com by the 10th of every month.

MON, MAY 30

Delta Sierra Club meeting, 7 pm. Fireside Room, Central United Methodist Church Fireside Room, 3700 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Free. All welcome. 209-670-4442. (p 18)

WED, JUNE 1

Concerts in the Park: The Summit Band, Victory Park, 1001 North Pershing Ave, Stockton 6 - 8 pm. Spend an evening in Victory park with your favorite person, a picnic, and some free great music.

THUR, JUNE 2

Peace & Justice Network board meeting, John Morearty Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 6:30 pm. All welcome. 467-4455
Stockton Food Truck Mania, Oak Grove Regional Park, 4520 W Eight Mile Rd., Stockton, 4 - 8 pm. For a family friendly food truck festival, enjoy a delicious assortment of gourmet food trucks from all over northern California, live music, family friendly entertainment, and tons of fun! Parking \$5. More information on the event's website www.sactomofo.com

SAT, JUNE 4

Free Yoga. Victory Park, 1201 N. Pershing Ave, Stockton, 9 - 10 am. Get out your yoga mats or bring your beach towel, and a positive attitude. Together, we enjoy parks and open spaces as a natural compliment to your regular Yoga practice. We come together in celebration of Yoga and it's universal collective practice. Yoga in the Park is every first Saturday of the month until November.

SUN, JUNE 5

The 42nd Annual Jewish Food Fair 9:30 am - 2:30 pm. This wonderful family event draws thousands of visitors from around the Central Valley each year to enjoy a taste of some great Jewish soul food. There will be live music, Israeli dancing, Jewish music with our youth choir, and synagogue tours. Guests will dine on exceptional Jewish food, cooked the old-fashioned way by members of the Temple Israel congregation, using authentic Jewish recipes, all-natural ingredients and lots of tender, loving care. Brunch tickets are for sale in advance, or on the day of the event for \$10, and include bagels and lox or corned beef on rye, coleslaw, pickle, and orange juice & coffee. Temple Israel, 5105 N. El Dorado St., Stockton, 477-9306

WED, JUNE 8

Concerts in the Park: Valley

Concert Band, Victory Park, 1001 North Pershing Ave, Stockton 6 - 8 pm. Spend an evening in Victory park with your favorite person, a picnic, and some free great music. 89.5 Valley Community Radio meeting, 5:30 - 7 pm, Morearty Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 467-4455.

FRI, JUN 10

Movies at the Point, Weber Point Events Center, 221 N Center St, Stockton. 6:30 - 10 pm. These free films are projected onto the canopy at Weber Point Event Center, the second Friday of each month June through October. Bring family and friends to enjoy a free Movie at the Point and support the community with positive, family-friendly films. Free admission.
Summer ArtSplash, a free self guided tour of downtown Stockton venues filled with art. 5pm - 8 pm. Begin at the Mexican Heritage Center, 111 S. Sutter, for map then spot the pink ribbons at each venue; you'll enjoy live music, food, wine and more. 954-6726.

WED, JUNE 15

Concerts in the Park: RB/X, Victory Park, 1001 North Pershing Ave, Stockton 6 - 8 pm. Spend an evening in Victory park with your favorite person, a picnic, and some free great music.

THUR - SUN JUNE 15 - JULY 10

1776 - the musical. Thu 7:30 pm, Fri-Sat 7:30 pm, Sun 2:30 pm. (not on 7/4) Stockton Civic Theatre, 2312 Rosemarie Lane, Stockton. The seminal event in American history blazes to vivid life in this Tony Award winner for Best Musical, \$15 - \$25. 473-2424. www.sctlivetheatre.com

SUN, JUNE 19

LGBT Family Day in the Park, Oak Park- Magpie Area, Oak Park, Stockton. 1 - 4 pm. A day in the park for LGBT families and allies to attend. Food and beverages will be served with a Chili Cook Off, live music and open mic poetry. We want to spread awareness about family unity, provide a public display for local LGBT families and their acceptance and introduce the concept of diversity to non-LGBT families and youth in the hopes our community will achieve a greater understanding of what it means to truly means to be a diverse and accepting community. Pride Family Day in the Park will be a free and intimate opportunity to celebrate family, build com-

munity and encourage safer healthier spaces for our LGBT youth. Free. 209-466-7572

WED, JUNE 22

Concerts in the Park: Steve Trucco Band, Victory Park, 1001 North Pershing Ave, Stockton 6 - 8 pm. Spend an evening in Victory park with your favorite person, a picnic, and some free great music. 89.5 Valley Community Radio meeting, 5:30 - 7 pm, Morearty Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 467-4455.

SAT, JUNE 25

DeltaFusion Festival, Victory Park, 1001 N. Pershing Ave, Stockton. 5 - 8 pm. Free. DeltaFusion is a celebration of the diverse natural and cultural heritage of Stockton and the San Joaquin County. DeltaFusion ignites community creativity by bringing the stories of the San Joaquin Delta region past, present, and future to life with giant puppets and dramatic pageantry. DeltaFusion is a celebration of the diverse natural and cultural heritage of Stockton, California and the San Joaquin County Delta region. Using giant puppets, masks, music, and pageantry, DeltaFusion continues to tell the story of how these cultures were drawn to settle in our area and thrive there today. Free admission. 940-6315 education@hagginmuseum.org

MON, JUNE 27

Delta Sierra Club meeting, 7 pm. Fireside Room, Central United Methodist Church Fireside Room, 3700 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Free. All welcome. 209-670-4442. (p 18)

WED, JUNE 29

Concerts in the Park: Tropical Nights, Victory Park, 1001 North Pershing Ave, Stockton 6 - 8 pm. Spend an evening in Victory park with your favorite person, a picnic, and some free great music.

WED, JULY 6

Concerts in the Park: Valley Concert Band, Victory Park, 1001 North Pershing Ave, Stockton 6 - 8 pm. Spend an evening in Victory park with your favorite person, a picnic, and some free great music.

THUR, JULY 7

Peace & Justice Network board meeting, John Morearty Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 6:30 pm. All welcome. 467-4455
Stockton Food Truck Mania, Oak Grove Regional Park, 4520 W Eight Mile Rd., Stockton, 4 -

8 pm. For a family friendly food truck festival, enjoy a delicious assortment of gourmet food trucks from all over northern California, live music, family friendly entertainment, and tons of fun! Parking \$5. More information on the event's website www.sactomofo.com

FRI, JUL 8

Movies at the Point, Weber Point Events Center, 221 N Center St, Stockton. 6:30 - 10 pm. These free films are projected onto the canopy at Weber Point Event Center, the second Friday of each month June through October. Bring family and friends to enjoy a free Movie at the Point and support the community with positive, family-friendly films. Free admission.

WED, JULY 13

Concerts in the Park: Swingaires, Victory Park, 1001 North Pershing Ave, Stockton 6 - 8 pm. Spend an evening in Victory park with your favorite person, a picnic, and some free great music.

WED, JULY 20

Concerts in the Park: Would Be Famous, Victory Park, 1001 North Pershing Ave, Stockton 6 - 8 pm. Spend an evening in Victory park with your favorite person, a picnic, and some free great music.

FIRST MONDAYS

Campaign for Common Ground

Friday, June 22-24

Connect with **Restore the Delta!**

Please join us for Restore the Delta's 3-day open house and advocacy training! Participants have two options. Drop by at your convenience during the open house for an informal visit between the hours of 10:00 am to 7:00 pm from June 22 to June 24, or sign up for more formal classes below.

Join us at the open house for supplies (yard signs, bumper stickers, handouts), for in-depth conversation, for music and art displays, and/or a simple visit to see where the work gets done OR join us in formal classes for training sessions on water and/or helping to organize in your community.

When: June 22, 23, 24
10:00 am to 7:00 pm

Where: 42 N. Sutter St, Stockton, CA 95202

What: Sign up for formal classes and a Delta boat tour.

SCHEDULE:

1) All days: Organizing to Save the Delta, Stop the Tunnels in Your Local Community – 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

2) June 23 & 24 only: Drought

meeting, 7 pm, Towers Building, 509 W Weber Ave, Stockton. ccgmemb@gmail.com

FIRST THURSDAYS

Stockton Food Truck Mania, Oak Grove Regional Park, 4520 W Eight Mile Rd., Stockton, 4 - 8 pm. Parking \$5. www.sactomofo.com

FIRST FRIDAYS

Lodi First Friday Art Hop, 6 - 8:30 pm. Thomas Theatre at Hutchins Street Square, 125 S. Hutchins St, Lodi. View art, meet the artists, sample wines and hors d'oeuvres. Enjoy an evening out in Downtown Lodi. Free. 333-5511.

FIRST SATURDAYS

Free Yoga. Victory Park, 1201 N. Pershing Ave, Stockton, 9 - 10 am. Yoga in the Park is every first Saturday of the month until November. Free admission.

SECOND FRIDAYS

Movies at the Point, Weber Point Events Center, 221 N Center St, Stockton. 6:30 - 10 pm. Free admission.

FOURTH MONDAYS

Delta Sierra Club meeting, 7 pm. Central United Methodist Church Fireside Room, 3700 Pacific Ave, Stockton. 7 pm program with social time following. All welcome.

WEDNESDAYS

89.5 Valley Community Radio meeting, 7 - 9 pm, Morearty

Peace & Justice Center, 231 Bedford Rd, Stockton. 467-4455.

THURSDAYS

Peace demonstration, 5-6 pm, edge of Delta campus on Pacific, across from Macy's. Free parking at mall. Weekly since 2003. We have signs, or bring your own. We get LOTS of honks! Info 464-3326. Take Five Jazz club, 7 - 9 pm, Valley Brew

FRIDAYS

Jazz jam at Whirlow's, 7 pm, Whirlow's Tossed & Grilled, 1926 Pacific Avenue, Stockton. Enjoy a live jazz jam session every Friday at Whirlow's on Stockton's historic Miracle Mile! Bring your instruments and join the jam! Hosted by Philip Bailey. Free cover. 466-2823

Live Music at Mile Wine Company, 7 - 10:30 pm. 2113 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Free. 465-9463

SATURDAYS

Crosstown Freeway Farmers Market, under the freeway between El Dorado & San Joaquin, Stockton. 7 - 11, or when sold out. 943-1830

Live Music at Mile Wine Company, 7 - 10:30 pm. 2113 Pacific Ave, Stockton. Free. 465-9463

A big thanks to our long-serving distributors!!

Update – 11:00 am

3) All days: Estuary 101 (How the Delta Flows) – 12:00 pm

4) June 24 only: History of California Water (Abbreviated) – 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm

5) All days: Legislative Update — Federal, State, and Local – 4:00 pm to 5:00 pm

6) Delta Boat Tour – Date and time details will come soon.

Snacks, light meals, beverages (coffee to wine) will be served at the appropriate time of day. Delta art and music on display. Our events are free and open to the public. Make a donation. Questions or comments? Contact Jennifer@RestoretheDelta.org, or call (209) 475-9550.

Source: Restore the Delta, 42 N. Sutter Street, Suite 506, Stockton, CA 95202



The clean power exchange aims to spark conversation

WOODY HASTINGS

Community Choice Energy is a rapidly-emerging, local, not-for-profit program designed to operate in the interest of its customers – the people – with no shareholders to satisfy and no multi-million dollar salaries to pay. It is electricity for the 99%. In practice, about 90% are benefitting from Community Choice – that is, 90% of people living within service districts of the four current Community Choice programs are enjoying the benefits of community electricity.

A California-based non-profit, the Center for Climate Protection, recently launched a new project and website, Clean Power Exchange, (cleanpowerexchange.org) to help advance Community Choice in California. The website serves as an online hub for sharing news, resources, and information about Community Choice. The Center is hoping that CPX can help spark a public conversation about the potential benefits of a Community Choice program in Stockton and/or San Joaquin County.

Potential benefits include a positive impact on the local economy, lower electricity rates, job creation, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and more. In the case of Sonoma Clean Power, the second Community Choice agency in the State, rates are lower than PG&E's, greenhouse gases are 48% lower, \$50 million in customer savings was achieved in the first full year, and eight times more is being spent in the local economy than before the program was launched in May 2014.

In 2002, the state legislature passed a law enabling local governments – counties and cities – to pool their electricity customers and gain buying power. A Community Choice agency takes on decision-making about electricity sources, the utility continues to manage the delivery over the poles and wires. Think of it like an energy co-op. The programs are intended to offer local control, the ability to choose cleaner power, and the ultimate in ratepayer protection – the introduction of choice where, under the current regulated monopoly system, there essentially is no choice.

On the rate question, the best deal in electricity in California is with publicly-owned power utilities. Twenty-five percent of Californians receive their electricity from public utilities and they experience substantially lower bills, on average, compared to private utilities. Publicly-owned utilities, like the Sacramento Municipal Utility District, that pursue energy efficiency and renewable energy do a better job than the investor-owned utilities.

An important thing to understand about Community Choice energy is that it brings local control, accountability, and, in a word, democracy, to energy decision-making. All of the existing Community Choice agencies have the ability to specify the sources they want and have made public commitments to keep coal and nuclear out of their power mixes.

The magic of Community Choice is not to be found in the "snapshot" of what it looks like at launch with a higher percentage of renewable energy than the big utility. Rather, the magic is in the "movie" about what happens over time through public participation in a local not-for-profit agency serving its community's needs, enhancing energy democracy, and creating economic benefits that can develop local energy resources. Find out more at cleanpowerexchange.org!

WOODY HASTINGS IS THE RENEWABLE ENERGY MANAGER FOR THE CLEAN POWER EXCHANGE AND CAN BE REACHED AT WOODY@CLEANPOWEREXCHANGE.ORG

Why the economy should stop growing - and just grow up



DAVID KORTEN

Listen to the political candidates as they put forward their economic solutions. You will hear a well-established and rarely challenged narrative. "We must grow the economy to produce jobs so people will have the money to grow their consumption, which will grow more jobs..." Grow. Grow. Grow. But children and adolescents *grow*. Adults *mature*. It is time to reframe the debate to recognize that we have pushed growth in material consumption beyond Earth's environmental limits. We must now shift our economic priority from growth to maturity—meeting the needs of all within the limits of what Earth can provide.

Global GDP is currently growing 3 to 4 percent annually. Contrary to the promises of politicians and economists, this growth is not eliminating poverty and creating a better life for all. It is instead creating increasingly grotesque and unsustainable imbalances in our relationship to Earth and to each other.

Specifics differ by country, but the U.S. experience characterizes the broader trend. Corporate profits as a percentage of GDP are at a record high. The U.S. middle class is shrinking as most people work longer hours and struggle harder to put food on the table and maintain a roof over their heads. Families are collapsing, and suicide rates are increasing.

The assets of the world's 62 richest individuals equal those of the poorest

half of humanity—3.6 billion people. In the United States, the 2015 bonus pool for 172,400 Wall Street employees was \$25 billion—just short of the \$28 billion required to give 4.2 million minimum wage restaurant and health care workers a raise to \$15 an hour.

Humans now consume at a rate 1.6 times what Earth can provide. Weather becomes more severe and erratic, and critical environmental systems are in decline.

These distortions are a predictable consequence of an economic system designed to extract Earth's natural wealth for the purpose of maximizing financial returns to those who already have more than they need.

On the plus side, as this system has created the imperative for deep change, it has also positioned us to take the step toward a life-centered planetary civilization. It has:

- Globalized awareness of humans' interdependence with one another and Earth,
- Produced a system of global communications that allows us to think and act as a global species,
- Highlighted racism, sexism, and other forms of xenophobia as threats to the well-being of all, and
- Turned millennials into a revolutionary political force by denying them the economic opportunities their parents took for granted.

We cannot, however, look to the economic institutions that created the imbalances to now create an economy that meets the essential needs of all in balanced relationship to a living Earth. Global financial markets

value life only for its market price. And the legal structures of global corporations centralize power and delink it from the realities of people's daily lives. Restoring balance is necessarily the work of living communities, of people who care about one another, the health of their environment, and the future of their children. The step to maturity depends on rebuilding caring, place-based communities and economies and restoring to them the power that global corporations and financial markets have usurped. Local initiatives toward this end are already underway throughout the world.

"How do we grow the economy?" is an obsolete question. The questions relevant to this moment in history are "How do we navigate the step to a mature economy that meets the needs of all within the limits of a finite living Earth?" How do we rebuild the strength and power of living communities? How do we create a culture of mutual caring and responsibility? How do we assure that the legal rights of people and communities take priority over those of government-created artificial persons called corporations?

Living organisms have learned to self-organize as bioregional communities that create and maintain the conditions essential to aliving Earth community. We humans must take the step to maturity as we learn to live as responsible members of that community.

Source: YES! Magazine 5/6/16 <http://www.yesmagazine.org>

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