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William Krehm at 105



The original of this portrait by Ronnie Pereira was made using colour pencils on Tibetan silk paper. It is posted in the ER PDF at www.comer.org.

ON NOVEMBER 24, 2018, Bill celebrated his 105th birthday with family and friends at a birthday luncheon that featured fun, spirited discussion, and a cake whose quality and size was every crumb worthy of its role on the occasion! Congratulations, Bill, on a life well lived.

Ann Emmett

Thanks to our information officer, Larry Farquharson, who undertook to notify the Queen and our Governor General. In addition to the letter from the Governor General below, Bill received the Queen's good wishes.

Rideau Hall
November 24, 2018

Dear Mr. Krehm,

A life is measured not only by how long it is lived, but also by how well it is lived. As you celebrate your one hundred and fifth birthday, may you take this opportunity to look back on the many lives you have touched – family and friends, and people throughout your community. Without you and your lifelong contributions, Canada would not be as diverse, as rich or as interesting.

It is my hope that you will share your life's achievements with others and inspire them to dream bigger, aim higher and reach for the stars. Because that is what you have done. And that is what you will continue to do.

I am delighted to congratulate you on this very special day.

Yours sincerely,

Julie Payette
Governor General of Canada

Per aspera ad astra

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Paradigm Shift

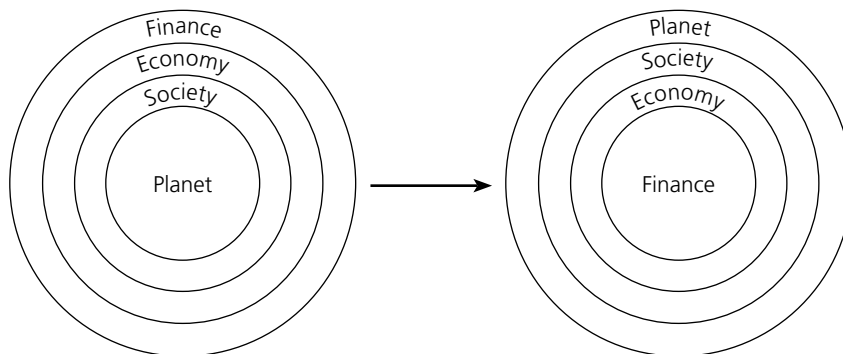


Illustration from pages 4-5 in Whose Crisis, Whose Future? by Susan George

In *Whose Crisis, Whose Future, Towards a Greener, Fairer, Richer World*, Susan George uses “a series of concentric spheres set in a hierarchy of diminishing importance,” to vividly portray the “enormous task of people everywhere, an effort never before required in human history...to reverse the order of these spheres so that it becomes exactly opposite to the existing one” (p. 3).

In the first series, “the outermost and most important concentric sphere is labelled ‘Finance...and, finally, innermost and least important the sphere called ‘Planet.’ That is the order today.”

She argues that “our beautiful, finite planet and its biosphere ought to be the *outermost* sphere because the state of the earth ultimately encompasses and determines the state of all the other spheres within (pp. 2-3).

“So our daunting goal,” she argues, is to get from the existing sphere to the one that puts the “Planet” first and “Finance” last (pp. 4-5).

The concept of the paradigm is further described by Kalle Lasn.

And Now the Great Machine of Capitalism is Starting to Heave

By Kalle Lasn, integral-options.blogspot.com, February 15, 2011

There’s a tectonic mindshift going on in the science of economics right now, but you wouldn’t know it by tuning in to the likes of Martin Wolf, Paul Krugman, Andrew Sorkin, Lawrence Summers, Tim Geithner, Ben Bernanke, Dominique Strauss-Kahn or most of the professors teaching Economics 101 around the world. These old-school practitioners of neoclassicism are stuck in past, versed in only one language: the language of pure, unadulterated money.

As oil reserves dwindle and climate tipping points loom, they babble on endlessly about liquidity, stimulus, derivatives, bond markets, sovereign debt, AAA ratings and investment banker bonuses. They never say a word about melting glaciers, eroding coral reefs, rising sea levels, fizzing oceans or the methane that’s bubbling out of the arctic tundra. Like medieval theologians who argued endlessly about how many angels can dance on the head of a pin, today’s economists argue incessantly about how economic growth can be sustained forever on a finite planet. Ten years from now, as the blowback from the externalities of their way of doing business repeatedly hammers us and global warming kicks in with a vengeance, we’ll look back in shock and awe – and wonder what it was about these logic freaks and their money narratives that so mesmerized us.

Five hundred years ago astronomers following Ptolemy’s geocentric model of the universe were tearing their hair out trying to make sense of all their calculations of the sun, moon and stars moving around above us in the night sky. It was only when Copernicus pointed out that we are not the center of the universe – the sun does not revolve around the Earth but rather the other way around – that all their convoluted calculations fell magically into place.

Today something eerily similar is happening in the science of economics: economists and lay people alike are realizing that our human money economy is a subset of the Earth’s larger bioeconomy rather than the other way around. Over the next few years, as this monumental shift of perspective kicks in, all the economic, ecological and financial craziness of the industrial era will evaporate, and a new sustainable way of running our planetary household will fall

magically into place.

Economics students, especially PhD students, in departments around the world have a crucial role to play in ushering in this new paradigm.

Our Comment

This mind shift is indeed tectonic, reflecting an evolutionary leap in purpose and design.

Today's dominant economic model is purported, by its champions, to be a science like physics, whose immutable laws can be understood and implemented through the language of mathematics. It puts money at the centre of the universe, and dismisses as "externalities" environmental and social consequences of economic policies. It depends on growth in a finite world, and is deaf to growing concerns about its cost/benefits record. It fails to appreciate the interconnectedness and the interdependence of related factors and downplays the political role in determining economic policies.

The *Oxford* dictionary defines economics as "the branch of knowledge concerned with the production, consumption, and transfer of wealth."

"These old-school practitioners of neoclassicism" would have us believe that the 'market' can be relied upon to regulate matters concerning these dimensions of economics.

The shift is to a model that realises "that our human money economy is a subset of the earth's larger bioeconomy" and seeks to honour the priority of planetary welfare.

That change of perspective prompts us to question many aspects of our current system.

The following quotations from Thomas Piketty's outstanding work, *Capital In The Twenty-First Century*, are highly pertinent to the subject of this paradigm shift.

"By patiently searching for facts and patterns and calmly analyzing the economic, social, and political mechanisms that might explain them, it can inform democratic debate and focus attention on the right questions. It can help to redefine the terms of debate, unmask certain preconceived or fraudulent notions, and subject all positions to constant critical scrutiny" (p. 3).

"Economists of the nineteenth century deserve immense credit for placing the distributional question at the heart of economic analysis and for seeking to study long-term trends" (p. 16).

"It is long since past the time when we should have put the question of inequality

back at the centre of economic analysis and begun asking questions first raised in the nineteenth century" (p. 16).

"The distribution of wealth is too important an issue to be left to economists, sociologists, historians, and philosophers. It is of interest to everyone and that is a good thing" (p. 2).

"There will always be a fundamentally subjective and psychological dimension to inequality, which inevitably gives rise to political conflict that no purportedly scientific analysis can alleviate. Democracy will never be supplanted by a republic of experts – and that is a very good thing" (p. 2).

"The history of inequality is shaped by the way economic, social, and political actors view what is just and what is not, as well as by the relative power of those actors and the collective choices that result. It is the joined product of all relevant actors combined" (p. 20).

"The discipline of economics has yet to

get over its childish passion for mathematics and for purely theoretical and often highly ideological speculation, at the expense of historical research and collaboration with the other social sciences. Economists are all too often preoccupied with petty mathematical problems of interest only to themselves. This obsession with mathematics is an easy way of acquiring the appearance of scientificity without having to answer the far more complex questions posed by the world we live in.... The truth is that economics should never have sought to divorce itself from the other social sciences and can advance only in conjunction with them" (p. 32).

These books, by Susan George and Thomas Piketty, could do much to advance this crucial paradigm shift.

Endorse the call! Learn; act; change!

Paradigm: "a typical example, pattern, or model of something" (Oxford dictionary).

Élan

Neoliberal Fascism and the Echoes of History, Part I

By Henry A. Giroux, Social Project, The Bullet, August 20, 2018

The nightmares that have shaped the past and await return slightly just below the surface of American society are poised to wreak havoc on us again. America has reached a distinctive crossroads in which the principles and practices of a fascist past and neoliberal present have merged to produce what Philip Roth once called "the terror of the unforeseen."

Since the 1970s, American society has lived with the curse of neoliberalism, or what can be called the latest and most extreme stage of predatory capitalism. As part of a broader comprehensive design, neoliberalism's overriding goal is to consolidate power in the hands of the financial elite. As a mode of rationality, it functions pedagogically in multiple cultural sites to ensure no alternatives to its mode of governance can be imagined or constructed.

Central to its philosophy is the assumption the market drives not just the economy but all of social life. It construes profit-making as the essence of democracy and consuming as the only operable form of agency. It redefines identities, desires and values through a market logic that favors self-interest, a survival-of-the-fittest ethos and unchecked individualism. Under neo-

liberalism, life-draining and unending competition is a central concept for defining human freedom.

Neoliberalism: Free Rein to Finance Capital and All-Encompassing Market

As an economic policy, it creates an all-encompassing market guided by the principles of privatization, deregulation, commodification and the free flow of capital. Advancing these agendas, it weakens unions, radically downsizes the welfare state and wages an assault on public goods. As the state is hollowed out, big corporations take on the functions of government, imposing severe austerity measures, redistributing wealth upward to the rich and powerful and reinforcing a notion of society as one of winners and losers. Put simply, neoliberalism gives free rein to finance capital and seeks to liberate the market from any restraints imposed by the state. At present, governments exist preeminently to maximize the profits, resources and the power of the wealthy.

As a political policy, it empties governance of any substance and denounces any viable notion of the social contract. Moreover, neoliberalism produces widespread misery and suffering as it weakens any vestige of democracy that interferes with its vision of a self-regulating market.

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William Krehm

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Theoretically, neoliberalism is often associated with the work of Friedrich August von Hayek and the Mont Pelerin Society, Milton Friedman and the Chicago school of economics, and most famously with the politics of Augusto Pinochet in Chile, President Ronald Reagan in the United States and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom. Politically, it is supported by various right-wing think tanks such as the Heritage Foundation and by billionaires such as the Koch brothers.

Neoliberalism's hatred of democracy, the common good and the social contract has unleashed generic elements of a fascist past in which white supremacy, ultra-nationalism, rabid misogyny and immigrant fervor come together in a toxic mix of militarism, state violence and the politics of disposability. Modes of fascist expression adapt variously to different political historical contexts assuring racial apartheid-like forms in the postbellum US and overt encampments and extermination in Nazi Germany. Fascism – with its unquestioning belief in obedience to a powerful strongman, violence as a form of political purification, hatred as an act of patriotism, racial and ethnic cleansing, and the superiority of a select ethnic or national group – has resurfaced in the United States. In this mix of economic barbarism, political nihilism, racial purity, economic orthodoxy and ethical somnambulance, a distinctive economic-political formation has been produced that I term neoliberal fascism.

Neoliberalism as the New Fascism

The war against liberal democracy has become a global phenomenon. Authoritarian regimes have spread from Turkey, Poland, Hungary and India to the United States and a number of other countries. Right-wing populist movements are on the march, spewing forth a poisonous mix of ultra-nationalism, white supremacy, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and xenophobia. The language of national decline, humiliation and demonization fuels dangerous proposals and policies aimed at racial purification and social sorting while hyping a masculinization of agency and a militarism reminiscent of past dictatorships. Under current circumstances, the forces that have produced the histories of mass violence, torture, genocide and fascism have not been left behind. Consequently, it has been more difficult to argue that the legacy of fascism has nothing to teach us regarding how “the question of fascism and power clearly be-

longs to the present.”¹

Fascism has multiple histories, most connected to the failed democracies in Italy and Germany in the 1930s and the overthrow of democratic governments by the military such as in Argentina and Chile in the 1970s. Moreover, the history between fascism and populism involves a complex mix of relations over time.² What is distinctive about this millennial fascism is its history of “a violent totalitarian order that led to radical forms of political violence and genocide” has been softened by attempts to recalibrate its postwar legacy to a less liberal democratic register.³ For instance, in Hungary, Turkey, Poland and a number of other emerging fascist states, the term “illiberal democracy” is used as code to allegedly replace a “supposedly outmoded form of liberal democracy.”⁴ In actuality, the term is used to justify a form of populist authoritarianism whose goal is to attack the very foundations of democracy. These fascist underpinnings are also expanding in the United States. In President Donald Trump's bombastic play-book, the notion of “the people” has become a rhetorical tool to legitimize a right-wing mass movement in support of a return to the good old days of American Apartheid.⁵

As the ideas, values and institutions crucial to a democracy have withered under a savage neoliberalism that has been 50 years in the making, fascistic notions of racial superiority, social cleansing, apocalyptic populism, hyper-militarism and ultra-nationalism have gained in intensity, moving from the repressed recesses of US history to the centers of state and corporate power.⁶ Decades of mass inequality, wage slavery, the collapse of the manufacturing sector, tax giveaways to the financial elite and savage austerity policies that drive a frontal attack on the welfare state have further strengthened fascistic discourses. They also have redirected populist anger against vulnerable populations and undocumented immigrants, Muslims, the racially oppressed, women, LBGQTQ people, public servants, critical intellectuals and workers. Not only has neoliberalism undermined the basic elements of democracy by escalating the mutually reinforcing dynamics of economic inequality and political inequality – accentuating the downhill spiral of social and economic mobility – it has also created conditions that make fascist ideas and principles more attractive.

Under these accelerated circumstances, neoliberalism and fascism conjoin and advance in a comfortable and mutually com-

patible movement that connects the worst excesses of capitalism with authoritarian “strongman” ideals – the veneration of war, a hatred of reason and truth; a celebration of ultra-nationalism and racial purity; the suppression of freedom and dissent; a culture that promotes lies, spectacles, scapegoating the other, a deteriorating discourse, brutal violence, and, ultimately, the eruption of state violence in heterogeneous forms. In the Trump administration, neoliberal fascism is on steroids and represents a fusion of the worst dimensions and excesses of gangster capitalism with the fascist ideals of white nationalism and racial supremacy associated with the horrors of the past.⁷ Neoliberal structural transformation has undermined and refigured “the principles, practices, cultures, subjects and institution of democracy understood as rule by the people.”⁸ Since the earlier ’70s, the neoliberal project has mutated into a revolt against human rights and democracy and created a powerful narrative that refigures freedom and authority so as to legitimize and produce massive inequities in wealth and power.⁹ Its practices of offshoring, restructuring everything according to the dictates of profit margins, slashing progressive taxation, eliminating corporate regulations, allowing unchecked privatization and the ongoing commercializing of all social interactions “inflicts alienating misery” on a polity newly vulnerable to fascist ideals, rhetoric and politically extremist movements.¹⁰

Furthermore, the merging of neoliberalism and fascism has accelerated as civic culture is eroded, notions of shared citizenship and responsibility disappear, and reason and informed judgment are replaced by the forces of civic illiteracy. State-sanctioned attacks on the truth, facts and scientific reason in Trump’s America are camouflaged as one would expect when led by the first reality TV president – by a corporate-controlled culture of vulgarity that merges celebrity culture with a nonstop spectacle of violence. Neoliberalism strips democracy of any substance by promoting an irrational belief in the ability of the market to solve all social problems and shape all aspects of society. This shift from a market economy to a market-driven society has been accompanied by a savage attack on equality, the social contract and social provisions as wages have been gutted, pensions destroyed, health care put out of reach for millions, job security undermined, and access to crucial public goods such as public and higher education considerably weakened for the lower and

middle classes.

In the current historical moment, neo-liberalism represents more than a form of hyper-capitalism, it also denotes the death of democracy if not politics itself. Anis Shivani’s articulation of the threat neoliberalism poses to democracy is worth quoting at length:

“Neoliberalism believes that markets are self-sufficient unto themselves, that they do not need regulation, and that they are the best guarantors of human welfare. Everything that promotes the market, i.e., privatization, deregulation, mobility of finance and capital, abandonment of government-provided social welfare, and the reconception of human beings as human capital, needs to be encouraged, while everything that supposedly diminishes the market, i.e., government services, regulation, restrictions on finance and capital, and conceptualization of human beings in transcendent terms, is to be discouraged.... One way to sum up neoliberalism is to say that everything – everything – is to be made over in the image of the market, including the state, civil society, and of course human beings. Democracy becomes reinterpreted as the market, and politics succumbs to neoliberal economic theory, so we are speaking of the end of democratic politics as we have known it for two and a half centuries.”¹¹

What is particularly distinctive about the conjuncture of neoliberalism and fascism is how the full-fledged liberation of capital now merges with an out-and-out attack on the racially oppressed and vulnerable populations considered disposable. Not only do the oppressive political, economic and financial structures of casino capitalism bear down on people’s lives, but there is also a frontal attack on the shared understandings and beliefs that hold a people together. One crucial and distinctive place in which neoliberalism and fascism converge is in the undermining of social bonds and moral boundaries. Displacement, disintegration, atomization, social isolation and deracination have a long history in the United States, which has been aggressively exploited by Trump, taking on a distinctively right-wing, 21st-century register. There is more at work here than the heavy neoliberal toll of social abandonment. There is also, under the incessant pedagogical propaganda of right-wing and corporate controlled media, a culture that has become cruel and cultivates an appetite for maliciousness that undermines the capacity for empathy, making people indifferent to the suffering of others or, even

worse, willing participants in their violent exclusion.

Irish journalist Fintan O’Toole warns that fascism unravels the ethical imagination through a process in which individuals eventually “learn to think the unthinkable...” followed, he writes, “by a crucial next step, usually the trickiest of all”: “You have to undermine moral boundaries, inure people to the acceptance of acts of extreme cruelty. Like hounds, people have to be blooded. They have to be given the taste for savagery. Fascism does this by building up the sense of threat from a despised out-group. This allows the members of that group to be dehumanized. Once that has been achieved, you can gradually up the ante, working through the stages from breaking windows to extermination.”¹²

What is often labeled as an economic crisis in American society is also a crisis of morality, sociality and community. Since the 1970s, increasing unregulated capitalism has hardened into a form of market fundamentalism that has accelerated the hollowing out of democracy through its capacity to reshape the commanding political, social and economic institutions of American society, making it vulnerable to the fascist solutions proposed by Trump. As an integrated system of structures, ideologies and values, neoliberalism economizes every aspect of life, separates economic activity from social costs, and depoliticizes the public through corporate-controlled disimagination machines that trade in post-truth narratives, enshrine the spectacle of violence, debase language and distort history.

Neoliberalism now wages a battle against any viable notion of the social contract, solidarity, the collective imagination, the public good and the institutions that support them. As the realm of the political is defined in strictly economic terms, the institutions, public goods, formative cultures and modes of identity essential to a democracy disappear, along with the informed citizens necessary to sustain them.

The Crisis of Reason and Fantasies of Freedom

As more and more power is concentrated in the hands of a corporate and financial elite, freedom is defined exclusively in market terms, inequality is cast as a virtue, and the logic of privatization heaps contempt upon civic compassion and the welfare state. The fatal after-effect is that neoliberalism has emerged as the new face of fascism.¹³ With the 50-year advance of neoliberal-

ism, freedom has become its opposite. And democracy, once the arc of civic freedom, now becomes its enemy, because democratic governance no longer takes priority over the unchecked workings of the market. Neoliberalism undermines both the social and the public and in doing so weakens the idea of shared responsibilities and moral obligations. As Zygmunt Bauman argues “ethical tranquillization” is now normalized under the assumption that freedom is limited to the right to only advance one’s own interests and the interests of the markets. Freedom in the neoliberal playbook disavows any notion of responsibility outside of the responsibility to oneself.

As Wendy Brown argues, politics and democracy are now viewed as the enemy of markets and “politics is cast as the enemy to freedom, to order and to progress.”¹⁴ Politics now becomes a mix of regressive notions of freedom and authority whose purpose is to protect market-driven principles and practices. What disappears in this all-encompassing reach of capital is the notion of civic freedom, which is replaced by securitization organized to protect the lawless workings of the profit motive and the savagery of neoliberal austerity policies. Moreover, as freedom becomes privatized, it feeds a lack of interest in politics and breeds moral indifference. As a consequence, neoliberalism unleashes the passions of a fascist past in which the terrain of politics, agency and social relations begin to resemble a war zone, a blood sport and a form of cage fighting.

In this instance, the oppressed are not only cheated out of history, they are led to believe that under neoliberal fascism there are no alternatives and the future can only imitate the present. Not only does this position suppress any sense of responsibility and resistance, it produces what Timothy Snyder calls “a kind of sleepwalking, and has to end with a crash.”¹⁵ The latter is reinforced by a government that believes truth is dangerous and reality begins with a tweet that signals the legitimization of endless lies and forms of power that infantilize and depoliticize, because they leave no room for standards of language capable of holding power accountable. Even worse, Trump’s war on language and truth does more than limit freedom to competing fictions, it also erases the distinction between moral depravity and justice, good and evil. As I have said elsewhere, “Trump’s Ministry of Fake News works incessantly to set limits on what is thinkable, claiming that reason, evidence, consistency,

and logic no longer serve the truth, because the latter are crooked ideological devices used by enemies of the state. ‘Thought crimes’ are now labeled as ‘fake news.’”¹⁶

Timothy Snyder is right in arguing that “to abandon facts is to abandon freedom. If nothing is true, then no one can criticize power, because there is no basis upon which to do so. If nothing is true, then all is spectacle.”¹⁷ The post-truth society is a state-sponsored diversion and spectacle. Its purpose is to camouflage a moral and political crisis that has put into play a set of brutal neoliberal arrangements. Rather than view truth as the currency of democracy, Trump and his acolytes view it and democracy as the enemy of power. Such arrangements put democracy at risk and create an educational and political project receptive to the political currency of white supremacy. As a master of schlock performance, Trump tweets and speaks largely to his angry, resentful base, often using crude language in which the threat of violence and repression appears to function for his audience as a source of “romance, pleasure and fantasy.”¹⁸ These core supporters represent, at best, what Philip Roth once generously called the “uneducated and overburdened.” But they also cultivate what Erin Aubry Kaplan calls “the very worst American impulses, from xenophobia to know-nothingism to disdain for social necessities such as public education and clean water, [and their] signature quality is racism.”¹⁹

Restaging Fascism Within Democracy

Rather than disappear into the memory hole of history, fascism has reappeared in a different form in the United States, echoing Theodor Adorno’s warning, “I consider the survival of National Socialism within democracy to be potentially more menacing than the survival of fascist tendencies against democracy.”²⁰ Theorists, novelists, historians and writers that include such luminaries as Hannah Arendt, Sinclair Lewis, Bertram Gross, Umberto Eco, Robert O. Paxton, Timothy Snyder, Susan Sontag and Sheldon Wolin have argued convincingly that fascism remains an ongoing danger and has the ability to become relevant under new conditions. After the fall of Nazi Germany, Arendt warned totalitarianism was far from a thing of the past because the conditions of extreme precarity and uncertainty that produce it were likely to crystallize into new forms.²¹

What Arendt thought was crucial for each generation to recognize was that the

presence of the Nazi camps and the policy of extermination should be understood not only as the logical outcome of a totalitarian society or simply a return of the past, but also for what their histories suggest about forecasting a “possible model for the future.”²² The nightmare of fascism’s past cannot escape memory because it needs to be retold over and over again so as to recognize when it is happening again. Rather than fade into the past, mass poverty, unchecked homelessness, large-scale rootlessness, fear-mongering, social atomization, state terrorism and the politics of elimination have provided the seeds for new forms of fascism to appear. Paxton, the renowned historian of fascism, argues in his *The Anatomy of Fascism* that the texture of American fascism would not mimic traditional European forms but would be rooted in the language, symbols and culture of everyday life:

“No swastikas in an American fascism, but Stars and Stripes (or Stars and Bars) and Christian crosses. No fascist salute, but mass recitations of the Pledge of Allegiance. These symbols contain no whiff of fascism in themselves, of course, but an American fascism would transform them into obligatory litmus tests for detecting the internal enemy.”²³

Given the alarming signs that have come into play under the Trump administration, it is hard to look away and condone the suppression of the history and language of fascism and its relevance for understanding America’s flight from the promise and ideals of a substantive democracy. This is not to suggest the only template for addressing the legacy of fascism is to point to Nazi Germany, the most extreme of the fascist states, or, for that matter, to Mussolini’s brand of fascism. Not only does the comparison not work, but it tends to understand fascist ideals only against its most extreme expressions.

While it is true the US may not be putting millions in gas chambers or promoting genocide, there remain reworked elements of the past in the present. For instance, there are already echoes of the past in existing and expanding infrastructures of punishment – amounting to a carceral state – that have grown exponentially in the past four decades. In fact, the United States has the largest prison system in the world, with more than 2.5 million people incarcerated. Astonishingly, this figure does not include immigrant detention centers and other forms of encampment around the US border with Mexico. The visibility of

this state-sanctioned punishing apparatus and its similarity to a fascist history was on display recently with the caging of young immigrant children who were forcibly separated from their parents at the southern border for months at a time. Needless to say, such institutions and actions resonate with deeply disturbing events of a dark past for which the violent separation of families was a hallmark feature of fascist brutality.

Reports of widespread abuse of imprisoned unaccompanied migrant children separated from their parents are increasingly being reported in the press. Detained under inhumane and cruel conditions, many of these children in government detention centers are allegedly being drugged, sexually abused, and subject to a range of inhumane actions. In Texas, a federal judge ordered a detention center to stop forcing children to take psychotropic drugs such as Clonazepam, Divalproex, Benzotropine and Duloxetine in order to control their behavior. Needless to say, such actions, policies, and institutions resonate with deeply disturbing events of a dark past in which the violent separation of families was a hallmark feature of fascist cruelty, barbarism and brutality.

It is against this background that I believe the current debates that dismiss whether the US under Trump is a fascist society are unproductive. The argument against this recognition generally proceeds by claiming either fascism is a relic of the past, fixed in a certain historical period with no relevance to the present, or that the differences between Trump's policies and those of Hitler and Mussolini are enough so as to make any comparison irrelevant. Many commentators denounce any references to Trump and Nazis in the past as exaggerated, extreme or inapplicable. In this view, fascism is always somewhere else, relegated to a time and a place that suggests an accommodating distance, one that runs the risk of disconnecting historical memory and the horrors of another age from the possibility of fascism resurrected in a different form, newly attuned to its moment. We live in an age in which there is a terror on the part of critics to imagine the plasticity of fascism.

The Mobilizing Passions of Fascism

Fascism is neither a static nor fixed moment in history, and the forms it takes do not have to imitate earlier historical models. It is an authoritarian ideology and a form of political behavior defined by what Paxton calls a series of "mobilizing passions." These include an open assault on democracy, the

call for a strongman, a contempt for human weakness, an obsession with hyper-masculinity, an aggressive militarism, an appeal to national greatness, a disdain for the feminine, an investment in the language of cultural decline, the disparaging of human rights, the suppression of dissent, a propensity for violence, disdain for intellectuals, a hatred of reason, and fantasies of racial superiority and eliminationist policies aimed at social cleansing.²⁴

The ghost of fascism has to be retrieved from history and restored to a "proper place in the discussions of the moral and political limits of what is acceptable,"²⁵ especially at a moment when the crisis of democracy cannot be separated from the crisis of neoliberalism. As a heuristic tool to compare forms of state power, the legacy of fascism offers an opportunity to recognize when authoritarian signposts are on the horizon.

For example, under Trump, the spectacle reigns supreme, harking back to an earlier time in history when bravado, armed ignorance and theatrical performances provided a model of community that squelched memory, domesticated thought and opened the door for a strongman's followers to disavow their role as critical agents in favor of becoming blind, if not willful, spectators. With regards to the present, it is crucial to recognize the ascendancy of Trump politically within rather than against the flow of history.

Fascism in the United States has arrived slowly by subversion from within. Its roots have been on display for decades and emerged most visibly with President George W. Bush's and then President Barack Obama's war on terror. Bush, in particular, embraced unapologetically a raw display of power that sanctioned torture, domestic spying, secret prisons, kill lists, laws sanctioning indefinite detention, warrantless searches and war crimes. Obama did little to correct these legal illegalities and Trump has only breathed new life into them. Instead of the sudden appearance on American streets of thugs, brown shirts, purges and massive state violence – the state violence waged against African Americans notwithstanding – fascism has been resurrected through the enabling force of casino capitalism, which has unleashed and mobilized a range of economic, political, religious and educational fundamentalisms.

This is most obvious in the subversion of power by the financial and corporate robber barons, the taming of dissent, the cultivation of tribal identities, the celebra-

tion of orbits of self-interests and hyper-individualism over the common good, the privatization and deregulation of public life and institutions, the legitimization of bigotry and intolerance, the transformation of elections into a battle among billionaires, and the production of a culture of greed and cruelty. But, as political theorist Wendy Brown makes clear, it is also obvious in a populist revolt generated by neoliberalism's decimation of "livelihoods and neighborhoods," "evacuating and delegitimizing democracy," "devaluing knowledge apart from job training," and the "eroding of national

Derrell Dular

ALAS, we have recently lost a longtime member of COMER, and an outstanding "change agent."

Derrell Dular, born January 13, 1944, died November 30, 2018.

Derrell grew up in the Cleveland, Ohio area and immigrated to Montreal, in 1966. Luckily for us, he moved to Ontario, in 1967.

Like Margaret Rao and Richard Rohr, he had a similar "vision and values to live by."

The Vietnam War stirred Derrell to civil disobedience. Forced to choose between his country and his "vision and values," he refused to participate in the war, forfeiting his American citizenship, and immigrating to Canada.

He served, for a time, on the Toronto Branch of the Council of Canadians. Soon after its inception, he joined the COMER think tank. During a dormant period, following the death of many of its members, Derrell helped Bill Krehm to keep the organization functioning, through Bill's *ER*, and weekly seminars at OISE.

He was on the Board of Directors of the Ontario Health Coalition, and served as Managing Director of the Alliance of Seniors to protect Canada's social programs. He has always been there for COMER, and has organized many meetings and events for the many causes and organizations he served.

He will be remembered for his outstanding contributions, and for his warm and caring nature – and will be sorely missed.

Ann Emmett

sovereignty.”²⁶

Orthodoxy, especially under Trump, has transformed education into a workstation for ignorance in which harsh discipline is metered out to poor students and youths of color. Politics has been utterly corrupted by big money and morally deficient bankers, hedge fund managers and corporate moguls. And many evangelicals and other religious groups support, or are complicit with, a president who sides with white supremacists and trades in the language of viciousness and brutality.²⁷

The corporate state, fueled by a market fundamentalism and a long legacy of racial apartheid, has imposed almost incomprehensible cruelty on poor and vulnerable black populations. The merging of neoliberalism and fascist elements of white supremacy and systemic racism is particularly evident in the environmental racism, dilapidated schools and air pollution that have come to light recently.²⁸ The short list includes going so far as to sacrifice poor black children in Flint, Mich., to the perils of lead poisoning to increase profits, subject the population of Puerto Rico to unnecessary despair by refusing to provide adequate government services after Hurricane Maria,²⁹ and creating conditions in which “America’s youngest children, some 47 percent” under the age of 5, “live in low-income or poor households.”³⁰ W.E.B. Du Bois’ notion of a “racial dictatorship” in his classic *Black Reconstruction in America* has been resurrected under Trump.

As UN Special Rapporteur Philip Alston reported, amid a massive concentration of wealth among the upper 1 percent in the United States, 40 million people live in poverty and 18.5 million Americans live in extreme poverty. According to Alston, such neoliberal policies are “aggressively regressive” in their promoting of harsh work requirements for welfare recipients, cutting back programs to feed poor children, and the willingness to both incarcerate young children and separate them from their parents.³¹ All the while, the Trump administration has shifted massive resources to the wealthy as a result of a tax policy that shreds \$1.5 trillion from the federal budget.

Since the 1970s, wages have stagnated, banks have cheated millions out of their homes through rigged mortgage policies, and the political power brokers have imposed financial ruin on minorities of class and race.³² The war against poverty initiated by President Lyndon B. Johnson’s administration had been transformed into a war on

poverty by President Ronald Reagan and has accelerated and achieved its apotheosis under the Trump regime. With a pathological enthusiasm, Trump’s morally bereft Republican Congress has cut crucial benefits for the poor, such as the food stamp program, while also imposing harsh work requirements on Medicare recipients. There is more at work here than the self-serving and vindictive neoliberal belief that government is bad when it gets in the way of markets and does not serve the interest of the rich. There is also willfully savage support for massive degrees of inequality, human wretchedness, the criminalization of social problems, and a burgeoning culture of punishment, misery and suffering.

One consequence is a beleaguered American landscape marked by the growing opioid crisis, the criminalization of peaceful protests, race-based environmental poisoning, shorter longevity rates for middle-aged Americans, and an incarceration rate that ranks as the highest in the world. The war on democracy has also morphed into a war on youth as more and more children are homeless, subjected to mass school shootings, inhabit schools modeled after prisons, and increasingly ushered into the school-to-prison pipeline and disciplinary apparatuses that treats them as criminals.³³ Under the long history of neoliberalism in the United States, there has developed a perverse investment in the degradation and punishment of the most vulnerable individuals, those considered other, and an increasing register of those considered disposable.³⁴

To be continued.

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Caricature Assassination? A Halifax Cartoonist Shows Us How It's Done.



Image: Bruce Mackinnon

By John Miller, *rabble.ca* blogs, October 1, 2018

Bruce Mackinnon and Duncan Macpherson share the distinction of being two of the best editorial cartoonists in Canadian history. MacKinnon, who still draws for the *Halifax Chronicle Herald*, has won seven National Newspaper Awards, and Macpherson, who died in 1993, won six for his excellent work for the *Toronto Star*.

Although much of their work depicts politicians and others in the public eye, Macpherson's wife Dorothy insisted that her husband wasn't particularly political. "He just had an innate sense of right and wrong, or who was honest and who wasn't." An icon in some of his cartoons was the disheveled figure of the common man, John Q. Public, who Macpherson depicted as an onlooker puzzled by the excesses and hypocrisy of public figures.

That's what distinguishes MacKinnon's stunning cartoon that has gone viral on social media this week. It depicts a blindfolded Lady Justice being held down by Republican hands as her scales of justice lie beside her. One of the hands is covering her mouth, which seems to allude to the way in which Christine Blasey Ford last week described an alleged sexual assault by Brett Kavanaugh, Donald Trump's nominee for the US Supreme Court, when they were teenagers.

MacKinnon said he was inspired to draw the cartoon because he believes the hearing was a "watershed moment" in how allegations of sexual abuse are treated in North

America.

It seemed Republican members of the committee wanted "to smother justice before it had a chance to be heard," MacKinnon told the *Washington Post* after his cartoon caused controversy.

Causing controversy is what good editorial cartoons should do, since humour usually gets to the nub of hypocrisy and entitlement faster than anything else. MacKinnon's stunning creation should, if there's any justice, earn him his eighth National Newspaper Award this year. (Full disclosure: Once a cartoonist on my university newspaper, I was a member of the judging panel that awarded MacKinnon one of his National Newspaper Awards in the 1990s).

Good editorial cartoons are a combination of depiction and intention.

The best ones are self-explanatory. They require no captions. MacKinnon's certainly didn't need one. We got his point instantly – the Republican majority on the Senate Judiciary Committee wanted to speed Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court before the allegations of sexual assault had been fully investigated. We knew because the testimony of Ford and Kavanaugh last Thursday riveted a North American television audience and rivaled the popularity of major sporting contests.

Yes, the graphic depiction of a rape was upsetting, particularly to women who have suffered sexual assault themselves. But MacKinnon's intention was to skewer the hypocrisy of US lawmakers rushing to confirm someone to the highest court in the

land without due process, and I think he accomplished that superbly.

Sometimes, it is true, cartoons go over the line.

The Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* created a furor in 2005 when it published 12 cartoons it had commissioned depicting the Prophet Mohammed. It was a deliberate provocation. Editors claimed to be standing up for free speech, citing the unverified example of one author who claimed to be unable to find any artist willing to depict Mohammed for an upcoming illustrated book. The publication of the cartoons was condemned as blasphemous around the Islamic world, and led to the burning of Western embassies and an axe attack on the home of one of the cartoonists.

The newspaper's action struck many as a xenophobic reaction, telling Muslim immigrants that they are interlopers who want too much power. See, we're standing up for Western values of a free press and freedom of speech, and we have the right to blaspheme your prophet if we want to. Thankfully, most other editors in Europe and North America refused to reprint the cartoons.

A cartoonist's job is not to provoke. It is to make us think, and MacKinnon managed better than anyone else to make us think about what is going on in Washington these days.

A wise man once said: "The cartoonist is not interested in showing that the enemy is in league with the devil but rather the extent to which a bit of the devil is in all of us."

I think Duncan Macpherson said it better. "You're a heckler, basically," he said. "It's the same as the old political meetings when you'd hire a couple of fellows to go into the hall and raise hell."

Cartoonists: Here's to raising more hell.



Our Comment. This cartoon meets all the criteria cited both for "what good editorial cartoons should do," and how they do it! *Élan*

THANK YOU FOR
YOUR SUPPORT!

“This Is Not Democracy”: Republicans Try to Shrink Power of Incoming Democrats

By Ed Pilkington in New York, *The Guardian*, December 4, 2018

Weeks after the midterms, several states face continued wrangling as GOP accused of undermining voters' will.

A month after the midterm elections on 6 November, several states continue to be convulsed by bitter partisan fighting in which Republicans are being accused of flagrantly undemocratic attempts to steal victory from the clutches of their Democratic rivals.

The most intense battle is playing out in Wisconsin, where Republican lawmakers are attempting a power grab that would strip key functions from the state's incoming Democratic governor and attorney general. Opponents are denouncing the move, which sparked protests on Monday, as a blatantly undemocratic negation of the November election results.

Similarly contentious efforts are afoot in Michigan, where Democrats regained three important statewide positions in November – that of governor, attorney general and secretary of state. Instead of accepting the will of voters, Republican lawmakers are now seeking to reduce the control of those post-holders over campaign finance and legal proceedings involving the state before the Democratic victors take office.

Elsewhere, Georgia continues to be racked with disputes over claims of Republican voter suppression before Tuesday's runoff election for the key post of secretary of state, while North Carolina is grappling with allegations of voter fraud in a close congressional race that remains unresolved.

Wisconsin's power play is attracting the most nationwide attention given the unashamed attempt by state Republicans in effect to reverse the outcome of the November ballot, in which all six statewide positions were won by Democrats, including the governorship. The Republican-controlled legislature is hoping to vote on Tuesday on 40 proposed amendments contained in five bills that would starkly weaken the remit of the incoming Democratic officeholders even before they take office.

The proposed changes would prevent the governor-elect, Tony Evers, and attorney general-elect, Josh Kaul, from honoring one of their central promises to voters in the

midterm campaign: the pledge to pull Wisconsin out of a multi-state legal challenge to Barack Obama's *Affordable Care Act*. The new legislation would also gut the state's department of justice of several core functions, transferring them from Kaul's office to the Republican-controlled legislature.

The incoming post-holders have decried their rivals' tactics as fundamentally undemocratic. “It goes to the heart of what democracy is all about,” Evers told reporters, saying the flurry of conservative moves was “an embarrassment for the state.”

Kaul told the *Wisconsin State Journal*: “This is fundamentally inconsistent with how a democracy is supposed to work. If this passes it's going to significantly impair the ability of the state government to function effectively next year, because if it passes, it's almost certain to end up in court.”

Should the bills pass and end up for approval on the desk of the outgoing Republican governor, Scott Walker, they would bookend his eight years in office in an inferno of controversy. Walker started his governorship in 2011 by introducing the notorious Act 10, which removed most collective bargaining rights from public sector unions, sparking mass protests at the capitol building in Madison.

Those protests were echoed on Monday with a fresh round of unrest in Madison, with opponents of the power grab heckling Republican lawmakers with chants of “Respect my vote.”

The audacious effort to defy the will of voters is a direct repeat of the playbook first adopted by Republicans in North Carolina two years ago. In the wake of the 2016 elections, in which the Democrat Roy Cooper unseated the Republican governor Pat McCrory, GOP leaders staged a special session in which they pared down the governor's executive powers three weeks before Cooper took office.

This November, Republicans in North Carolina tried further to water down the governor's powers with two constitutional amendments that would have limited his control over appointments to the state judiciary and board of elections. The amendments failed at the ballot box, but had they passed one commentator for the *Raleigh News & Observer* noted they would have

reduced the role to that of “a potted plant.”

North Carolina is back in the news this week with a continuing investigation by the state's elections board into an extremely tight House race for the ninth congressional district. The Republican candidate Mark Harris is narrowly ahead in the contest with about 900 more votes out of 283,000 cast than his Democratic opponent, Dan McCready.

The result has yet to be certified by the board, which is looking into irregularities over absentee ballots. Democratic voters in Bladen and Robeson counties, in the east of the state, have submitted affidavits stating that their absentee ballots were collected in unsealed envelopes by unidentified individuals.

One voter said she had handed over her unfinished ballot to a woman who said she would “finish it herself.”

The fallout of acrimonious elections on 6 November also continues to be felt in Georgia where a fierce battle is still being waged in a Tuesday runoff for the post of secretary of state, the office that controls the state's electoral system. The Donald Trump-endorsed Republican candidate, Brad Raffensperger, was slightly ahead of his Democratic rival, John Barrow, in the first round.

The Georgia contest is being fought over the vacated seat of Brian Kemp, who won the governor's race in November amid a storm of protest that as the then secretary of state, he presided over a slew of voter suppression measures.

A political group supporting the losing Democratic candidate, Stacey Abrams, has launched a federal lawsuit challenging the conduct of the state's midterm elections at every level.

The three states in the throes of partisan tussles are at the forefront of Republican voter suppression efforts. Part of Wisconsin's proposed new legislation in the lame-duck session is a reduction in early voting days that has the potential to bring Republican lawmakers into direct confrontation with federal courts.

Democrats were given a big boost in the November election by record turnout in Wisconsin in early voting, with some 565,000 taking advantage of polling sta-

tions being open before election day. Now the Republicans want to whittle down the time allotted for such voting.

A similar effort to restrict early voting was ruled unconstitutional in 2016 by a federal judge, James Peterson, who found that the Republican scheme “intentionally discriminates on the basis of race.” Peterson concluded that the conservative leadership had been specifically motivated by a desire to place hurdles to voting in the way of the dominant black population in the state’s largest city, Milwaukee.

He wrote that the legislature’s goal was brazenly partisan: “to suppress the reliably Democratic vote of Milwaukee’s African Americans.”

The revival of restrictions exposes the Wisconsin legislature to possible claims of contempt of court. The liberal issue advocacy group One Wisconsin Now told reporters on Monday that it was preparing for legal action against the lawmakers depending on the outcome of the lame-duck session.

“Republicans believe they lost the No-

vember election because too many people voted here, and are trying to undo the results of the vote by taking power from the elected governor and attorney general,” said Scott Ross, One Wisconsin Now’s executive director.

He added: “We are a democracy only as long as elected officials don’t place themselves above the law.”



Our Comment. Couldn’t happen here?
Élan

The Buck Stops Here: “Mass Civil Disobedience Is the Only Way to Reverse Climate Breakdown”

Source: newint.org, November 1, 2018

A new resistance movement is forming. Husna Rizvi speaks to Extinction Rebellion about why direct action is our last chance to phase-out carbon.

A new climate breakdown resistance movement is forming in Britain. On Wednesday 31 October in Westminster, Extinction Rebellion – a nascent mass direct-action group, in the style of Occupy – came together to launch a rolling protest against the UK government’s failure to act to prevent climate change.

In London’s Parliament Square, in front of Gandhi’s statue no less, thousands of people made a declaration of non-violent rebellion in an attempt to force concessions from the government. Their demands include: an immediate reversal of climate-toxic policies, net-zero emissions by 2025 and the establishment of a citizen’s assembly to oversee the radical changes necessary to halt global warming.

The group says that “peaceful, civil disobedience” is the only way bring about the social change needed to expedite a reversal of fortunes for the human race. Otherwise, we are “on course for a next wave of extinction – a human extinction.”

They’re not wrong. A one-degree rise in global temperature since the industrial revolution has led to a sea-level rise that’s rapidly flooding Bangladesh and other Caribbean, Pacific and coastal regions around the world. The group’s action came just a day after the World Wildlife Fund released a report warning that humans have wiped out 60 percent of animal populations since 1970.

Fittingly, young people are at the heart of the movement. We spoke to 15-year-old

Greta Thunberg, a Stockholm climate activist best known for starting a popular Friday strike movement in Sweden: Thunberg won’t be going to Friday classes until the Swedish government cleans up its act on climate change.

Thunberg and her parents drove in an electric car to Westminster, where she addressed a crowd of over a thousand people. “When I was eight, I found out about something called climate change, or global warming,” she said. “Apparently it was something that humans had created by our way of living. I was told to turn off the lights to save energy and to recycle paper to save resources.

“I remember thinking it was very strange that humans, an animal species among others could be capable of changing the Earth’s climate. Because if we were, and it was really happening, we wouldn’t be talking about anything else. As soon as you turned on the TV, everything would be about that.

“Why wasn’t it [burning fossil fuels] made illegal? To me, that did not add up.”

A Rejection of Apathy

Teddy Walden, 18, is another member of Generation Z who rejects climate apathy.

“If everyone consumed like Americans, we’d have gone through five Earths by now. That’s shocking,” she said.

The co-founder of Extinction Rebellion, academic and activist Roger Hallam, believes mass movements like this one are the only way to force the radical changes needed.

“A hundred years of political sociology shows you can only change entrenched power through creating economic costs for the people who hold that entrenched

power,” he said.

“Through mass civil resistance, we’re going to create a new global regime that takes our responsibilities seriously towards the next generation.”

He contrasts this mode of organizing to other more technocratic and policy-focused work by NGOs. Extinction Rebellion has occupied the offices of Greenpeace, for example, to critique their ineffectiveness in lobbying governments to reduce emissions.

“The NGOs have been working for 30 years to reduce global carbon emissions and during that time they’ve increased by 60 percent, which quite possibly has condemned every future generation to a living hell.

“So in that context it’s probably worth trying something different. We went to Greenpeace to get them to tell their members to join mass civil disobedience, which has been shown to change political regimes rapidly.”

But Hallam is frank about the challenges ahead. He expects Extinction Rebellion’s demands to be ignored by government. “They’ll ignore us, and then they’ll fight us and we’ll win. We haven’t got to the fight stage – which will be non-violent – but we will in the next two weeks.”

In a taste of what’s to come, soon after, more than a thousand people blocked roads circling Parliament Square, and 15 were arrested.

George Monbiot – the notable environmentalist and journalist was among them. Speaking earlier in the day, he made a call to arms. “We’ve waited long enough, we are waiting no longer. No one else will deliver it for us, no one is left but us.”

“We claim to live in a democracy. In

many ways it resembles a plutocracy – your votes should count [but] money counts instead.

“The money of the city, and the fossil fuel industry and the farming lobby and the fishing industry and the auto-manufacturers and the airlines lobby. We are not heard because they are heard.

“Parliament will not do this for us, corporations will not do this for us and I’m sorry to say that the big NGOs won’t either.” Monbiot added that though this is the only planet known to support life, the intelligent bit has yet to be demonstrated.

Jonathan Bartley, co-leader of the Green Party said we should embrace non-violent direct action (NVDA) where appropriate.

“NVDA should be done in a considered way, its not something you do off the cuff, you consider it, you weigh it up strategically

About Our Commenter

Élan is a pseudonym representing two of the original members of COMER, one of whom is now deceased. The surviving member could never do the work she is now engaged in were it not for their work together over many years. This signature is a way of acknowledging that indebtedness.

and when it’s done in those kinds of ways for the right reasons we’re whole heartedly behind it,” said Bartley, whose fellow co-leader, MP Caroline Lucas, was arrested in 2013 for direct action against anti-fracking.

“None of the broadcast media picked up on the fact that the chancellor didn’t mention climate change once in his budget,” he adds.

“The YouGov issues tracker is seeing the

environment go up and up [as a concern] for people and the politicians haven’t caught up yet.”

As for their plan for mass civil disobedience in the coming weeks, Extinction Rebellion said: “If the government does not respond seriously to our demands, civil disobedience will commence from the 12 November” with a return to Parliament Square programmed for Rebellion Day, on Saturday 17 November.

New Internationalist is a lifeline for activists, campaigners and readers who value independent journalism.



Our Comment. Yet another initiative indicative of the informed unrest stirring all over the world! *Élan*

Quebec Youth Launch Class Action Lawsuit Against Canada’s “Inadequate” Climate Plan

By Mitchell Beer, *theenergymix.com*, November 28, 2018. Full Story: *Environnement Jeunesse @ENJEUQuebec* (<https://enjeu.qc.ca/justice-eng>)

A group of five youth and young adults led by Montreal-based ENvironnement JEunesse (ENJEU) has applied to the Superior Court of Québec for leave to launch a class action lawsuit against the Canadian government, challenging the country’s limited response to climate change on behalf of all Quebecers aged 35 and under.

The announcement is already picking up international coverage, from Climate Liability News in the United States to Climate Home News in the UK. The youth are represented pro bono by the firm Trudel Johnston & Lespérance. ENJEU is inviting anyone who thinks they might qualify as part of the class to get in touch, and the form allows youth from any province or territory to sign on.

“ENvironnement JEunesse alleges that the Canadian government is infringing on a generation’s fundamental rights because its greenhouse gas reduction target is not ambitious enough to avoid dangerous climate change, and because it does not even have a plan that would allow it to reach this already inadequate target,” the organization states.

“If the government continues in this direction, people under 35 will suffer the severe consequences of climate change, depriving them of their right to life and secu-

rity of the person, to their right to equality, and to their right to an environment in which biodiversity is preserved.”

ENJEU notes that plaintiffs won a similar case in The Netherlands (although the government has since appealed the decision to the country’s supreme court), and similar legal actions are under way in the United States, Belgium, Norway, Ireland, New Zealand, Switzerland, Colombia, and the United Kingdom. To gain certification as a class action, “ENvironnement JEunesse must first demonstrate to the Superior Court of Québec that it has an arguable case,” the release notes, meaning that “at first glance, the alleged facts, if they are proven in a trial on merits, appear to justify the conclusions sought.”

In its release, ENJEU argues that young people “will suffer the most from the impacts of climate change,” including longer and intense heat waves, extreme weather, floods, and waves of climate refugees.

“Young people will have to pay for adaptation to the consequences. Today, young people are speaking out and asking the court to demand that the government respect their rights. It must act now to reduce the burden that their generation will have to bear.”

“Despite the abundance of scientific studies pointing in the same direction, the Canadian government is failing in its duty to take action against climate change,”

said ENJEU Executive Director Catherine Gauthier, one of the five plaintiffs. “Instead of accelerating a green transition, Canada is subsidizing oil companies and purchasing a pipeline in our name. We demand that our rights and those of future generations be protected and respected.”

“The climate crisis is not science fiction,” added plaintiff and environmental activist Alix Ruhlmann. “It’s a phenomenon with disastrous consequences and it affects everyone, here and now. Not only are the Canadian goals far below the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Canada doesn’t even have an effective plan to reduce GHG emissions.”

Plaintiff Zy St-Pierre-Bourdais asks, “can I have a safe, positive future without climate threats? The Canadian government is not making the necessary decisions in order to protect future generations’ quality of life and opportunities.”

Our Comment

How wonderful that these young Quebecers are so informed and committed as to undertake such serious action, and that they should have such support! May their example inspire the involvement of their peers across Canada.

They deserve all the support the rest of us can muster!

Élan

Since Our Leaders are Behaving Like Children, We Will Have to Take Responsibility

By Andy Rowell, www.commondreams.org,
December 4, 2018

Children from Canada, Australia and Sweden are taking the lead on climate change.

Earlier today, the naturalist Sir David Attenborough addressed the UN climate conference in Poland, saying: “Right now, we are facing a man-made disaster of global scale. Our greatest threat in thousands of years. Climate change.”

“If we don’t take action, the collapse of our civilisations and the extinction of much of the natural world is on the horizon,” he added. The world famous TV presenter continued: “The world’s people have spoken. Their message is clear. Time is running out. They want you, the decision-makers, to act now.”

And nowhere have those voices been louder in the last few days than from the young from Canada to Australia and Sweden.

Last Friday, thousands of children missed school as part of the Strike 4 Climate Action, which organised marches in every city in Australia. The idea started with two fourteen year olds, Milou Albrect and Harriet O’Shea Carre, from the state of Victoria. Harriet said: “The climate change emergency is something we have been thinking about for a long time.”

Another 14-year-old, Jean Hinchcliffe, organised the march one in Sydney: She said “Everyone, all young people, we can see that climate change is a real issue and we’re completely sick of politicians’ inaction.”

As I blogged about last week, the kids in Australia were incensed when, warned about the strike their Prime Minister, Scott Morrison told Parliament that he wants “more learning in schools” and “less activism.”

“Why should we be in school if you won’t listen to the educated.”

Adding fuel to the fire, the country’s Resources Minister, Matt Canavan, then added “The best thing you learn about going to a protest is how to join the dole [welfare] queue. Because that’s what your future life will look like.”

Many signs on Friday’s march criticised the inaction of the elder generation and politicians. “I’ve seen smarter cabinets at Ikea,” said one. “If you were smart we would be in school” or “why should we be in school if

you won’t listen to the educated” and “Only dinosaurs deny climate change.”

Another person taking part was “Ruby the climate kid” who recorded a message on Facebook saying the protest was a “message to Parliament to say we are not happy with their decisions on taking action on climate change. In fact they are doing the reverse.”

Australian kids were not the only ones taking action on Friday. In Canada, many young people occupied the offices of members of Parliament in Vancouver, Edmonton, Ottawa, Toronto, Montreal and Halifax and demanded increased action on climate change. They had three main asks:

1. Transition to 100 percent renewable energy by 2030, and create one million climate jobs in the process;
2. Meaningfully implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
3. Keep fossil fuels in the ground and align the federal climate plan with the 1.5 degree threshold

Carla Massaro, a 24-year-old activist living on unceded kanien’kehá:ka territory in Montreal said: “We are the ones who will pay the greatest price from climate change.... We demand that our government develop a clear and ambitious plan to create one million climate jobs by 2030. It is our futures that are at risk.”

“Today we use 100 million barrels of oil every single day. There are no politics to change that. There are no rules to keep that oil in the ground. So we can’t save the world by playing by the rules. Because the rules have to be changed.”

Many Australian and Canadian students have been inspired and encouraged by Swedish student Greta Thunberg, a 15-year-old who has launched a similar climate protest movement in her country. Her speech will not get as many headlines as Attenborough’s, but it is equally as powerful. She said to the UN leader António Guterres at the UN conference in Katowice: “Some people say that I should be in school instead. Some people say that I should study to become a climate scientist so that I can ‘solve the climate crisis.’ But the climate crisis has already been solved. We already have all the facts and solutions.”

She added: “Why should I be studying

for a future that soon may be no more, when no one is doing anything to save that future? And what is the point of learning facts when the most important facts clearly means nothing to our society?”

Thunberg continued: “Today we use 100 million barrels of oil every single day. There are no politics to change that. There are no rules to keep that oil in the ground. So we can’t save the world by playing by the rules. Because the rules have to be changed.”

She concluded by saying that “since our leaders are behaving like children, we will have to take the responsibility they should have taken long ago.”

Andy Rowell is a staff blogger for Oil Change International in addition to working as a freelance writer and investigative journalist who specializes in environmental, health and lobbying issues. Follow him on Twitter @andy_rowell.

Our Comment

Good for the young!

Quality education must teach children not *what* to think, but *how* to think. There is no greater need. How clearly *they* understand that, is reflected in comments like “why should we be in school if you won’t listen to the educated?”

When a 14-year-old can “see” that climate change is a real and urgent issue, and so demonstrate the will to see that responsible action is taken to *do* something about it, it’s hard not to attribute the inaction of politicians and the deniers they serve, to blinkering political and financial self-interest.

More *real* learning in schools can only lead to *more*, not “less activism,” at this critical moment in history.

Obviously, these “kids” have done their homework and they *know* a thing or two! It is what they know that has led Greta Thunberg to her insightful realisation that, “We can’t save the world by playing by the rules. Because the rules have to be changed.”

The “kids” have obviously done their homework and thought their way through to the responsibility that is now imperative.

Let’s hope their elders will follow suit, and support them.

Élan

“We Should Be on the Offensive” — James Hansen Calls for Wave of Climate Lawsuits

By Jonathan Watts, *The Guardian*, November 17, 2017

Veteran climate scientist says litigation campaign against government and fossil fuels companies is essential alongside political mobilisation in fighting “growing, mortal threat” of global warming.

One of the fathers of climate science is calling for a wave of lawsuits against governments and fossil fuel companies that are delaying action on what he describes as the growing, mortal threat of global warming.

Former NASA scientist James Hansen says the litigate-to-mitigate campaign is needed alongside political mobilisation because judges are less likely than politicians to be in the pocket of oil, coal and gas companies.

“The judiciary is the branch of government in the US and other countries that is relatively free of bribery. And bribery is exactly what is going on,” he told the *Guardian* on the sidelines of the UN climate talks in Bonn.

Without Hansen and his fellow NASA researchers who raised the alarm about the effect of carbon emissions on global temperatures in the 1980s, it is possible that none of the thousands of delegates from almost 200 countries would be here.

But after three decades, he has been largely pushed to the fringes. Organisers have declined his request to speak directly to the delegates about what he sees as a threat that is still massively underestimated.

Instead he spreads his message through press conferences and interviews, where he cuts a distinctive figure as an old testament-style prophet in an Indiana Jones hat.

He does not mince his words. The international process of the Paris accord, he says, is “eyewash” because it fails to put a higher price on carbon. National legislation, he feels, is almost certainly doomed to fail because governments are too beholden to powerful lobbyists. Even supposedly pioneering states like California, which have a carbon cap-and-trade system, are making things worse, he said, because “half-arsed, half-baked plans only delay a solution.”

For Hansen, the key is to make the 100 big “carbon majors” – corporations like ExxonMobil, BP and Shell that are, by one account, responsible for more than 70% of

emissions – pay for the transition to cleaner energy and greater forests. Until governments make them do so by introducing carbon fees or taxes, he says, the best way to hold them to account and generate funds is to sue them for the damage they are doing to the climate, those affected and future generations.

Hansen is putting his words into action. He is involved in a 2015 lawsuit against the US federal government, brought by his granddaughter and 20 others under the age of 21. They argue the government’s failure to curb CO₂ emissions has violated the youngest generation’s constitutional rights to life, liberty, and property.

A district court is due to hear the case in February in Oregon, though the federal government has tried to delay the case.

Hansen believes Donald Trump’s actions to reverse environmental protections and withdraw from the Paris accord may be a blessing in disguise because the government will now find it harder to persuade judges that it is acting in the public interest.

“Trump’s policy may backfire on him,” he said. “In the greater scheme of things, it might just make it easier to win our lawsuit.” He feels a growing sense of urgency. Current government commitments are so inadequate that temperature rises are currently on course to exceed 3°C by the end of the century. Hansen says that would mean existing problems – rising sea levels, displacement by flooding, droughts disrupting food production, wildfires consuming forests, worsening storms and hurricanes – would get three times worse.

“Three degrees would be disastrous. You can imagine the planet becoming ungovernable because we would lose the coastal cities where most people live.... You’ll see migrants from those parts of the world and also so much disruption to the centres of wealth. So we can’t go down that path.”

Hansen is a believer in direct action. “I’ve been arrested five times. The idea was to draw attention to injustice,” he says. He has also testified on behalf of others who have lost their liberty during climate campaigns. On January, he will speak in defence of an activist who turned off the tar sands pipeline in North Dakota.

But he says litigation and political mo-

bilisation are more effective than protests.

“Those are defence. We should be on the offensive. The lawsuits versus Trump and the fossil fuel industry are offence. People should use the democratic process,” he says. “That’s our best chance. It’s better than getting arrested.”

He draws comparisons with two other great, slow-moving, but ultimately successful legal and public opinion battles: against segregation, where the innate conservatism of judges was overcome by the civil rights movement, and tobacco, where the courts accepted the science despite a misinformation campaign by the industry.

“Climate change is a human rights issue,” Hansen says. “We are seeing injustice against the young. The present generation has a responsibility to future generations.”

Worldwide, the number of legislative activities related to climate change has increased from 99 to 164 in the past two years, according to a report earlier this year by the Grantham Research Institute and the Columbia Law School. Their study found that two-thirds of the litigation resulted in stronger regulations.

The vast majority of cases have been heard in the US, most notably the 2007 supreme court ruling that greenhouse gases are a public health threat. To support future actions, some legal experts are volunteering their services, such as the Earth Justice group in San Francisco, whose motto is: “The Earth needs a lawyer.”

There have been sporadic successes elsewhere, including a lawsuit by a group of Dutch citizens who overturned their government’s move to weaken its greenhouse gas reduction target.

“Over the past 10 years courts are becoming more flexible,” said Cosmin Corenea, legal expert at the United Nations University Institute for Environment. “These isolated cases have started to flash up. It shows the willingness of courts to serve people.”

Corenea echoed Hansen’s call for more climate litigation in the countries that have highest emissions. “Go out there if you have the resources to do that and see if you can help other countries that can’t get to the courts so easily,” he said. “Any good litigation may help. It can raise awareness and create legal practice.”

According to Hansen, the action cannot come too soon. In a press conference at the climate conference, which is the first under the presidency of a small island state – Fiji – he noted that the risks are rising and so should the push for justice.

“We are entering a period of consequences and are in danger of being too late,” he warned. “I have come to note that greenhouse gas climate forcings are accelerating, not decelerating, and sea-level rise and ocean acidification are accelerating. We

confront a mortal threat, now endangering the very existence of island and low-lying nations in the Pacific and around the planet. Accordingly, ambition must be increased and enforced.”

Our Comment

What is legal, is not always just. But if it does nothing more than demonstrate that, litigation make clear the need for changes in our laws – including “free trade” laws – boosting, hopefully, political action.

We should try to follow the case in February, in Oregon and, given the increase in legislative activities related to climate change, monitor their efficacy.

The need to shift our efforts to the offensive, is going to increase as both environmental concerns and the resistance to addressing them are exacerbated.

It would be useful to examine the basis for Cosmin Corenda’s assessment of “the willingness of the courts to serve people.”

Élan

2019 — Year of Significant Change?

By Judy Kennedy, Orange Zest, Annapolis NDP, December 2018

Nova Scotia’s NDP election school, held this fall, was marked by a preponderance of young attendees who know how things must change for them and who are prepared to work for it. What young people want these days are changes to our social programs – free post-secondary education, affordable housing, well-paying jobs, accessible health care. And they want a healthy planet to live on. These are all programs that Nova Scotia’s NDP House members have excelled at promoting since they were elected.

A concept currently making news particularly with young folks in the USA is the Green New Deal. It aims at repurposing the environmental and the economic sectors, making both more equitable. Based on Roosevelt’s New Deal of World War II, it proposes moving to a low-carbon economy with renewable energy, and the restoration of forests and wetlands. But it does so while aiming for alternatives to the socio-economic inequities that communities now face in the US and beyond. For example it defines as one of its targets a job guarantee for all unemployed; as another, a minimum wage of \$15. It calls for a high tax on the incomes of the wealthy and a tax on bank transactions, currently not taxed at all... while shoes are!

Supported by two groups of young people, Representative-elect Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez will present a plan to the Democratic select committee on the environment to draft legislation that will advance the Green New Deal’s goals. These have been set out in seven sections under the environmental component and five under the socio-economic. They deal with the how-to’s as well as the goals themselves. The unique feature

of the plan is that it seeks common solutions to multi-disciplinary problems.

Questions immediately arise as to the funding of these proposals: where will the money come from? It will come, as it did for the first New Deal, mainly from the federal government itself, the sole creator of its sovereign non-convertible currency. As well it will come from a system of public banks and locally based venture funds.

The central banks of countries using such currency, particularly if they are publicly owned by their governments as Canada’s is, can ensure that returns on such investments go to the federal government, not to private investors as those, for example, associated with Canada’s privately funded Infrastructure Bank now do.

Money drives the economy and the federal government spends it into existence by depositing it in the accounts of people and projects it agrees to support. What if the government goes into debt? All money is government debt, whether it is spent directly into the economy or it is introduced as interest-bearing bonds which are bought by banks, investors and savers. Bonds, along with taxes, fees and fines, withdraw money from the economy when the government and the central bank decide that the inflation rate may be too high or that the demands of the spenders need to be reduced. The government deficit is the difference between money it spends to enhance the productive economy minus the money it withdraws through taxes – expenses minus revenue.

One economist who supports the Green New Deal is Dr. Stephanie Kelton, professor of economics at Stony Brook University and chief economic advisor to Bernie Sanders during his presidential campaign. She writes: “Anything that is technically feasible

is financially affordable. And it won’t be a drag on the economy – unlike the climate crisis itself, which will cause tens of billions of dollars worth of damage to American homes, communities and infrastructure each year. A Green New Deal will actually help the economy by stimulating job growth and consumer spending, as government spending has often done.”

One myth that Kelton disposes of is that of federal taxpayers’ money paying for anything. Tax returns are deleted. They are spent on nothing. Yet taxes do serve other purposes: reducing overall demands, changing behaviours of groups or industries (smoking, burning fossil fuels). Kelton adds: Taxes should be raised to break up concentrations of wealth and income. And on the other side, Kelton supports a job guarantee program.

As progressive thinkers move towards these goals, the role of money is seen as critical to their implementation. That our federal government creates its money “out of thin air” is enabled by legislation. But what about the provinces? Through the *Bank of Canada Act* powers they are entitled to borrow at low interest rates. Yet since the midseventies they have increasingly borrowed from private banks and sold bonds, both debt creating transactions, at interest rates higher than the B of C’s. We ask why this is so.

We note that the B of C’s profits come back to the federal government, not to the 1% as private banks’ profits do.

Furthermore we know that banks, too, now create money “out of thin air” although they are no longer required to hold even a percentage of the amount loaned on deposit. Because of the precarious nature of their operations, banks were in crisis a decade ago when the federal government bailed them

out. During the 2009-10 budget process, the Minister of Finance, in a table titled Extraordinary Financing Framework, estimated that cost to be \$103.7 bn for 2009 and \$101.2 bn for 2010. David Macdonald of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives was able to track some of those payments to financial institutions: “At its peak in March 2009, support for Canadian banks reached \$114 billion,” he stated (*CBC News*, April 30, 2012).

So why aren't provinces – constitutionally recognized governments of Canada – financed by the federal government's sovereign currency too? Particularly as banks' current priorities show that their gains go increasingly to the 1%, threatening us with another crisis, precisely the trend that the

Green New Deal hopes to reverse.

An alternative method of financing sub-national governments, i.e., states, regions, and, if they are big enough, municipalities, is that of public banks.

The model is the century-old Bank of North Dakota, wholly owned by that state. As revenues are deposited in the bank, investments are made as well as state expenses paid. Profits are returned to the state. The BND makes loans to local residents, businesses and community undertakings at lower rates than other banks. The people benefit hugely and now 100 years after its launch, other states and municipalities are scrambling to create their own. Provinces could do likewise.

Our challenge, yet again as a party that

puts people before profits, is to rally with those who are on progressive paths towards saving the planet while protecting its people. That will involve challenging corporate control, particularly the financial sector that has set a course so weighted in its favour. We can do it but we will need help with the task. So we welcome aboard those young folks willing to give us a hand.

Here's to 2019!

Orange Zest is the newsletter of the Annapolis, Nova Scotia, NDP members. Long-time COMER member Judy Kennedy is the editor. The December issue introduces us to the Green New Deal promoted by US Congressional Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. The GND focuses on environmental conservation

Love and Justice in Action

Margaret Rao's Testimony Sunday, January 27, 2019, First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto.

Good morning everyone!

I am grateful to be given the opportunity to share a testimony with you on my life as an activist. In keeping with the theme of change, an activist is, simply put, a change agent.

A change agent has a vision and values to live by. My vision? – a locally sourced, publicly controlled, green, sharing economy! My values? – love and justice in action! Social action is described as ‘what love looks like in public,’ by African American educator Cornel West. A just love would bring about “a world in one piece/peace.” This was Eryl Court's favourite saying. Eryl, a lifelong UU peace activist, died last month in her 94th year. Eryl embodied love. I am sure she died as peacefully as she lived. Mozart's Requiem, sung by the Choir today, is dedicated to Eryl.

I offer you a brief snapshot of an impressionable period in my life. I came of age in the mid-sixties. It was a time of great spiritual, societal and political change. In Quebec, it was dubbed the Quiet Revolution. In 1968, our newly elected Prime Minister, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, a charismatic intellectual, waxed eloquently on the Just Society. He also observed, “If Canada is to survive, it can only survive in mutual respect and in love for one another.”

Heady words for an idealistic 15-year-old! Sadly, fewer ears were listening to Chief Dan George's “Lament for Confederation” on Canada's 100th birthday. We know bet-

ter now.

That same year, 1968, I was voted Miss Congeniality by my grade nine class. Psychologically speaking, my friendly nature was based, not just on trust, which is hugely important in any relationship, but also on a basic survival instinct, as in safety and strength in numbers. Whatever the reasons, the end result is social cohesion and a sense of belonging. *All for one and one for all!* As an adult ESL teacher to new Canadians, I extended the same welcoming ways to my students and soon found myself politically engaged in refugee rights. *No one is illegal!* is a network and rallying cry for asylum seekers, similar to the words we share each Sunday, “You belong here because you are here!” Social justice groupie that I am, one justice cause led to another over the years and now I'm an official senior citizen activist and honorary Raging Granny. Civil disobedience is only one aspect of what we do. It's the “civil” discourse and “civil” behaviour amongst ourselves, sorely lacking in many quarters today, that make our various solidarity actions successful. We all need to improve on our active listening skills.

At the age of 66, I no longer have the energy level, nor the eyes, of my youth, but I am the same idealist and multi-issue-oriented person I've always been and continue to be as President of Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice. Our keynote speaker on May 12 in Shaw Hall is Toronto author, artist and poet, Joyce Nelson. Her latest book is *Bypassing Dystopia: Hope-filled Challenges to Corporate Rule*. As I see it, there are two

urgent realities we must address:

1. The environment – climate change is an existential crisis, whether we bury our heads in the oil sands or not, and

2. The economy, that isn't working for anyone, including the 1%.

We need an eco-economic system that puts the earth first, and the financial system last. As my dear elder activist friend, Ann Emmett, puts it, “We've got a long way to go and a short time to get there.” There is hope when we act and there are amazing blueprints for change, such as the Leap Manifesto. Since I have run out of precious time, I ask you to check out 15-year-old climate activist Greta Thunberg's latest call to action on YouTube.

Thank you.

This text is a homily by Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice President Margaret Rao, of First Unitarian Church of Toronto, on the January 2019 theme of “change.”

Our Comment

Margaret Rao's Testimony is an encouraging example of one person's ‘putting it all together.’ It reflects experiences enabling that process, and emphasising the need to act on what we then come to believe.

Here's to a growing force of change agents!

Margaret Rao is President of Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice. She is also a member of the COMER Executive, and is a well informed activist on many issues.

Élan

and socio-economic egalitarianism. Another of its promoters, Dr. Stephanie Kelton, lectures on Modern Monetary Theory as well.

Our Comment

Dr. Stephanie Kelton's comment, "anything that is technically feasible is financially affordable," echoes Graham Towers' confirmation that "anything physically possible and desirable can be made financially possible."

That the role of money is critical to achieving goals like those being defined in the light of the New Paradigm has often been ignored because of the false argument that the money is just not there. Thanks to the grand bailout of those responsible for the 2007-08 crisis, that excuse has been exposed for what it has always been – something short on truth.

As a result, organizations dealing with various issues have been diverted from what *can* be – and kept spinning on what *is*, in a fruitless appeal to neoliberal governments who share neither their anxieties nor their priorities.

The present crisis is an opportunity and a challenge to the NDP. Let's hope they're up to it!

That "preponderance of *young* attendees" is encouraging!

Élan

Supreme Court OKs Climate Change Lawsuit Against US Government

By teleSUR, readersupportednews.org, November 4, 2018

On Friday, the US Supreme Court gave permission for the continuation of the Juliana vs. the United States lawsuit that was filed by young American citizens, who expressed concern for the government's failure to properly address the impacts of climate change.

"The youth of our nation won an important decision today from the Supreme Court that shows even the most powerful government in the world must follow the rules and process of litigation in our democracy," according to the plaintiffs of the suit.

The highest court decided to allow the case to continue in a lower Oregon court. The unprecedented trial will examine the grievances of 21 young people – aged from eight to 19 – who filed a lawsuit against the US government, in 2015, for violating their constitutional rights.

The plaintiffs believe the government's lack of action to curtail carbon dioxide

emissions from burning fossil fuels – which they accuse the government of being aware of – is harming the environment.

The group stated that the government is threatening their right to life, liberty and property, as well as "a stable system capable of sustaining human lives," adding that remedial measures are necessary to help phase out fossil fuels.

The high court judge agreed that the complaint was valid. "Federal courts too often have been cautious and overly deferential in the arena of environmental law, and the world has suffered for it," stated judge Ann Aiken, of the Oregon District Court.

The administration of US President Donald Trump recently had an about-face on the issue of climate change. Prior to October, the president rejected climate change, saying the "climate will change back again."



Our Comment. Good for the Supreme Court! And good luck to Juliana! *Élan*

Newfoundland Oil Spill: Biologists Fear Scale of Devastation May Never Be Known

By Leyland Cecco, The Guardian, November 20, 2018

Rough seas prevented crews from assessing damage to vulnerable wildlife caused by province's largest-ever spill.

Biologists are attempting to assess damage to vulnerable wildlife caused by Newfoundland's largest-ever oil spill, amid fears that the full scale of devastation may never be known.

Intense storms battered offshore oil production areas late last week, with waves cresting as high as 28ft. On Friday, the SeaRose tanker attempted to restart production, but a faulty connection line pumped an estimated 250,000 litres of oil into the ocean.

Rough seas prevented crews from determining the full extent of the spill and hampered any attempt to contain it. The SeaRose remains shut down as Canadian regulators begin to investigate the incident.

"This is perhaps the worst time of year

for an oil spill to occur with respect to seabirds," said Gail Fraser, a biologist who specializes in maritime seabirds. "There are literally millions of [them] that move down from the Arctic. They're there in really high densities and they are highly vulnerable to even small amounts of oil pollution."

Two species of seabirds, murre and dovekie, spend winters far offshore and are incredibly vulnerable to the cold temperatures, said Fraser, adding that oil allows cold water to penetrate the birds' thick plumage and induce hypothermia.

The last spill in the region, nearly 14 years ago to the day, resulted in the deaths of between 10,000 and 12,000 seabirds, Fraser said. But because the birds are so small and the affected areas are offshore, death tolls are difficult to calculate accurately.

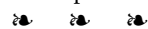
"We're not going to see dead birds on land. There's no graphic images to grab the public to help them realise how important

the impact of this spill could be," said Fraser.

Seabirds reproduce slowly, have few offspring and live for many years. "So when you kill 10,000 seabirds, that can have a significant and long-lasting impact on the population," said Fraser.

Husky, the company operating the SeaRose, said in a statement that it had recovered 11 oil-covered birds since the leak was discovered on Monday. Aerial surveys have not yet shown any oil sheen on the surface, but the province's natural resources minister, Siobhan Coady, said the oil could have dissipated amid rough seas.

Coady questioned the company's choice to restart production in the midst of an intense storm. "If they did everything according to protocol, then we need to change the protocol," she told reporters.



Our Comment. These are *facts* that do, indeed, speak for themselves! *Élan*

This Radical Plan to Fund the “Green New Deal” Just Might Work

By Ellen Brown, www.truthdig.com, December 16, 2018

With what author and activist Naomi Klein calls “galloping momentum,” the “Green New Deal” promoted by Rep.-elect Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-NY, appears to be forging a political pathway for solving all of the ills of society and the planet in one fell swoop. Her plan would give a House select committee “a mandate that connects the dots” between energy, transportation, housing, health care, living wages, a jobs guarantee and more. But even to critics on the left, it is merely political theater, because “everyone knows” a program of that scope cannot be funded without a massive redistribution of wealth and slashing of other programs (notably the military), which is not politically feasible.

That may be the case, but Ocasio-Cortez and the 22 representatives joining her in calling for a select committee also are proposing a novel way to fund the program, one that could actually work. The resolution says funding will come primarily from the federal government, “using a combination of the Federal Reserve, a new public bank or system of regional and specialized public banks, public venture funds and such other vehicles or structures that the select committee deems appropriate, in order to ensure that interest and other investment returns generated from public investments made in connection with the Plan will be returned to the treasury, reduce taxpayer burden and allow for more investment.”

A network of public banks could fund the Green New Deal in the same way President Franklin Roosevelt funded the original New Deal. At a time when the banks were bankrupt, he used the publicly owned Reconstruction Finance Corp. as a public infrastructure bank. The Federal Reserve could also fund any program Congress wanted, if mandated to do so. Congress wrote the *Federal Reserve Act* and can amend it. Or the Treasury itself could do it, without the need to even change any laws. The Constitution authorizes Congress to “coin money” and “regulate the value thereof,” and that power has been delegated to the Treasury. It could mint a few trillion-dollar platinum coins, put them in its bank account and start writing checks against them.

What stops legislators from exercising those constitutional powers is simply that “everyone knows” Zimbabwe-style hyperinflation will result. But will it? Compelling historical precedent shows that this need not be the case.

Michael Hudson, professor of economics at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, has studied the hyperinflation question extensively. He writes that disasters such as Zimbabwe’s fiscal troubles were not due to the government printing money to stimulate the economy. Rather, “Every hyperinflation in history has been caused by foreign debt service collapsing the exchange rate. The problem almost always has resulted from wartime foreign currency strains, not domestic spending.”

As long as workers and materials are available and the money is added in a way that reaches consumers, adding money will create the demand necessary to prompt producers to create more supply. Supply and demand will rise together and prices will remain stable. The reverse is also true. If demand (money) is not increased, supply and gross domestic product (GDP) will not go up. New demand needs to precede new supply.

The Public Bank Option: The Precedent of Roosevelt’s New Deal

Infrastructure projects of the sort proposed in the Green New Deal are “self-funding,” generating resources and fees that can repay the loans. For these loans, advancing funds through a network of publicly owned banks would not require taxpayer money and could actually generate a profit for the government. That was how the original New Deal rebuilt the country in the 1930s at a time when the economy was desperately short of money.

The publicly owned Reconstruction Finance Corp. (RFC) was a remarkable publicly owned credit machine that allowed the government to finance the New Deal and World War II without turning to Congress or the taxpayers for appropriations. First instituted in 1932 by President Herbert Hoover, the RFC was not called an infrastructure bank and was not even a bank, but it served the same basic functions. It was continually enlarged and modified by Roo-

sevelt to meet the crisis of the times, until it became America’s largest corporation and the world’s largest financial organization. Its semi-independent status let it work quickly, allowing New Deal agencies to be financed as the need arose.

The *Reconstruction Finance Corp. Act* of 1932 provided the financial organization with capital stock of \$500 million and the authority to extend credit up to \$1.5 billion (subsequently increased several times). The initial capital came from a stock sale to the US Treasury. With those resources, from 1932 to 1957 the RFC loaned or invested more than \$40 billion. A small part of this came from its initial capitalization. The rest was borrowed, chiefly from the government itself. Bonds were sold to the Treasury, some of which were then sold to the public, although most were held by the Treasury. All in all, the RFC ended up borrowing a total of \$51.3 billion from the Treasury and \$3.1 billion from the public.

In this arrangement, the Treasury was therefore the lender, not the borrower. As the self-funding loans were repaid, so were the bonds that were sold to the Treasury, leaving the RFC with a net profit. The financial organization was the lender for thousands of infrastructure and small-business projects that revitalized the economy, and these loans produced a total net income of \$690,017,232 on the RFC’s “normal” lending functions (omitting such things as extraordinary grants for wartime). The RFC financed roads, bridges, dams, post offices, universities, electrical power, mortgages, farms and much more, and it funded all this while generating income for the government.

The Central Bank Option: How Japan Is Funding Abenomics with Quantitative Easing

The Federal Reserve is another Green New Deal funding option. The Fed showed what it can do with “quantitative easing” when it created the funds to buy \$2.46 trillion in federal debt and \$1.77 trillion in mortgage-backed securities, all without inflating consumer prices. The Fed could use the same tool to buy bonds earmarked for a Green New Deal, and because it returns its profits to the Treasury after deducting its

costs, the bonds would be nearly interest-free. If they were rolled over from year to year, the government, in effect, would be issuing new money.

This is not just theory. Japan is actually doing it, without creating even the modest 2 percent inflation the government is aiming for. “Abenomics,” the economic agenda of Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, combines central bank quantitative easing with fiscal stimulus (large-scale increases in government spending). Since Abe came into power in 2012, Japan has seen steady economic growth, and its unemployment rate has fallen by nearly half, yet inflation remains very low, at 0.7 percent. Social Security-related expenses accounted for 55 percent of general expenditure in Japan’s 2018 federal budget, and a universal health care insurance system is maintained for all citizens. Nominal GDP is up 11 percent since the end of the first quarter of 2013, a much better record than during the prior two decades of Japanese stagnation, and the Nikkei stock market is at levels not seen since the early 1990s, driven by improved company earnings. Growth remains below targeted levels, but according to *Financial Times*, this is because fiscal stimulus has actually been too small. While spending with the left hand, the government has been taking the money back with the right, increasing the sales tax from 5 percent to 8 percent.

Abenomics has been declared a success even by the once-critical International Monetary Fund. After Abe crushed his opponents in 2017, Noah Smith wrote in Bloomberg, “Japan’s long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party has figured out a novel and interesting way to stay in power – govern pragmatically, focus on the economy and give people what they want.” Smith said everyone who wanted a job had one, small and midsize businesses were doing well; and the Bank of Japan’s unprecedented program of monetary easing had provided easy credit for corporate restructuring without generating inflation. Abe had also vowed to make both preschool and college free.

Not that all is idyllic in Japan. Forty percent of Japanese workers lack secure full-time employment and adequate pensions. But the point underscored here is that large-scale digital money-printing by the central bank to buy back the government’s debt, combined with fiscal stimulus by the government (spending on “what the people want”), has not inflated Japanese prices, the alleged concern preventing other countries from doing the same.

Abe’s novel economic program has done more than just stimulate growth. By selling its debt to its own central bank, which returns the interest to the government, the Japanese government has, in effect, been canceling its debt. Until recently, it was doing this at the rate of a whopping \$720 billion per year. According to fund manager Eric Lonergan in a February 2017 article: “The Bank of Japan is in the process of own-

ing most of the outstanding government debt of Japan (it currently owns around 40%). BOJ holdings are part of the consolidated government balance sheet. So its holdings are in fact the accounting equivalent of a debt cancellation. If I buy back my own mortgage, I don’t have a mortgage.”

If the Federal Reserve followed suit and bought 40 percent of the US national debt, it would be holding \$8 trillion in federal se-

Connecting Inner and Outer Worlds

By Richard Rohr, *The Social Artist, Winter 2018*

Go Down to the Palace of the king and declare, “Do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the foreigner, the orphan, or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place.” – Jeremiah 22:1, 3

The primary role of religion and spirituality is to reconnect, the very meaning of the Latin word *religio*. The Greek word *polis* – which led to the word politics – simply means city or public forum, where people come together. Why have religion and politics become so antagonistic when they have similar goals?

The Hebrew prophets and Jesus clearly modeled engagement with both faith and the public forum. However, unlike its Jewish forbears, in its first two thousand years Christianity has kept its morality mostly private, personal, and heaven-bound with very few direct implications for our collective economic, social, or political life. Politics and religion remained in two different realms, unless religion was uniting with empires. Christianity looked to Rome and Constantinople for imperial protection; little did we realize the price we would eventually pay for such a compromise with Gospel values.

“Separation of church and state” is important to safeguard freedom of religion and ensure that governments are not dominated by a single religion’s interests. But that does not mean people of faith should not participate in politics. Today many believe that “inner work” is the purview of spirituality and that we should leave the “outer world” to politicians, scientists, businesses, and workers. Most of the negative feedback I receive is “Don’t get political!” Yet how can I read the Bible and stay out of politics? Again

and again (approximately 2,000 times!) Scripture calls for justice for the poor. The Gospel is rather “socialist” in its emphasis on sharing resources and caring for those in need.

Like it or not, politics (civic engagement) is one of our primary means of addressing poverty and other justice issues. I am not talking about *partisan politics* here, but simply connecting the inner world with the outer world. As a result of our dualistic thinking, the word “partisan” has come to be synonymous with the word “political.” And so many church-goers do not want to hear the Gospel preached – as it might sound political!

To be a faith leader is to connect the inner and outer worlds. In the United States’ not-so-distant-past, Christians were at the forefront of political and justice movements to abolish slavery, support women’s suffrage, protect civil rights, and establish and maintain Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. Today I am encouraged to see many of my Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Buddhist brothers and sisters actively engaged with the political realm, speaking truth to power, and holding our political leaders accountable. Being political is a basic civic, human, and spiritual duty!

Reference: adapted from Richard Rohr, “Introduction,” “Politics and Religion,” Oneing, vol. 5 no. 2, Center for Action and Contemplation Center for Action and Contemplation: 2017, 11-12.

Our Comment

The answer to the question, “why have religion and politics become so antagonistic when they have similar goals?” would be an interesting one to pursue!

Richard Rohr is a Roman Catholic priest.
Élan

curities, three times its current holdings from its quantitative easing programs. Yet liquidating a full 40 percent of Japan's government debt has not triggered price inflation.

Filling the Gap Between Wages, Debt and GDP

Rather than stepping up its bond-buying, the Federal Reserve is now bent on "quantitative tightening," raising interest rates and reducing the money supply by selling its bonds into the market in anticipation of "full employment" driving up prices. "Full employment" is considered to be 4.7 percent unemployment, taking into account the "natural rate of unemployment" of people between jobs or voluntarily out of work. But the economy has now hit that level and prices are not in the danger zone, despite nearly 10 years of "accommodative" monetary policy. In fact, the economy is not near true full employment nor full productive capacity, with GDP remaining well below both the long-run trend and the level predicted by forecasters a decade ago. In 2016, real per capita GDP was 10 percent below the 2006 forecast of the Congressional Budget Office, and it shows no signs of returning to the predicted level.

In 2017, US GDP was \$19.4 trillion. Assuming that sum is 10 percent below full productive capacity, the money circulating in the economy needs to be increased by another \$2 trillion to create the demand to bring it up to full capacity. That means \$2 trillion could be injected into the economy every year without creating price inflation. New supply would just be generated to meet the new demand, bringing GDP to full capacity while keeping prices stable.

This annual injection of new money can not only be done without creating price inflation, it actually needs to be done to

reverse the massive debt bubble now threatening to propel the economy into another Great Recession. Moreover, the money can be added in such a way that the net effect will not be to increase the money supply. Virtually our entire money supply is created by banks as loans, and any money used to pay down those loans will be extinguished along with the debt. Other money will be extinguished when it returns to the government in the form of taxes. The mechanics of that process, and what could be done with another \$2 trillion injected directly into the economy yearly, will be explored in Part 2 of this article.

Ellen Brown is an attorney, chairman of the Public Banking Institute, and author of twelve books including Web of Debt and The Public Bank Solution. A thirteenth book titled The Coming Revolution in Banking is due out soon. She also co-hosts a radio program on PRN.FM called It's Our Money. Her 300+ blog articles are posted at EllenBrown.com.

Our Comment

What an inspiration! The New Deal – and a "Green New Deal" for the 21st century.

Like FDR's New Deal, it recognizes the need for an economy that, unlike our present system, "connects the dots."

It is a vision that is *eminently* pragmatic in the light of our present crisis, and of the 2007/08 "bailout" revelation. As for the feasibility of "slashing" the military budget, that may improve considerably, as people learn to further "connect dots."

This could be our last chance to rid ourselves of the phony new Canada Infrastructure Bank, and to realize our full sovereign potential.

Readers might want to Google the Levy

Institute study that cited Canada as *the* historic example to *disprove*, once and for all, the *excuse* that should legislators exercise their institutional powers to fund programs, hyperinflation will result.

The original New Deal is another historic example of how a "remarkably *publicly* owned credit machine" can empower government to finance the economy for the common good.

One is reminded of the discussion with the Bank of Canada's founding governor, Graham Towers, when he appeared before Parliament's Banking Commerce Committee in 1939. At that time, he confirmed that "anything physically possible and desirable can be made financially possible." And when asked "why a government with power to create money should give that power away to a private monopoly [that is, the chartered banks] and then borrow that which Parliament can create itself, back at interest?" he said, "Now, if Parliament wants to change the form of operating the bank system, then certainly that is within the power of Parliament (*A Power Unto Itself*, p. 57).

Government-created credit, as the Fed has demonstrated, is entirely possible – at least to the tune of \$1.77 trillion – "without inflating consumer prices."

If they could do that to bail out the bankers responsible for the 2007/08 meltdown (with enough left over to provide those bankers with the rewards to which they are accustomed), how much more should they be obliged to bail out an environment ravaged by a failed political economy that has proved unstable and unsustainable, with pernicious social and environmental consequences?

Clearly, the question is not one of the *power* to create money – but one of *who* should be *allowed* to create money, and to decide in whose best interest it should be distributed.

Neoliberal politicians have made these decisions in their own best interests over the past few decades.

The greatest achievement of the Bank of Japan is its ownership of most of the outstanding government debt of Japan, for debt slavery is a feature of contemporary imperialism.

Look for Part II of this article in an upcoming issue.

Élan