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January 2021

**Chomsky on
Class Warfare**

**Brecher on Biden
Climate Plan**



JANUARY 2021 TABLE OF CONTENTS

COMMENTARY/1

How to Cure America's Vaccine Paranoia/1

Sonali Kolhatkar looks at refusing to save ourselves

Embracing Ecological Realism/5

Robert Koehler on Biden and our crucial need to address climate change

Human Society and the Biosphere/7

John Scales Avery on extinction

India's Farmers Fighting for their Economic Lives/18

Sonali Kolhatkar on the protests in India



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FEATURES/26

Class Warfare or Get It In the Neck, Part 1/26

David Barsamian interviews Noam Chomsky

The Biden Climate Plan, Part 1/47

Jeremy Brecher on identifying opportunities for climate protection



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How to Cure America's Vaccine Paranoia

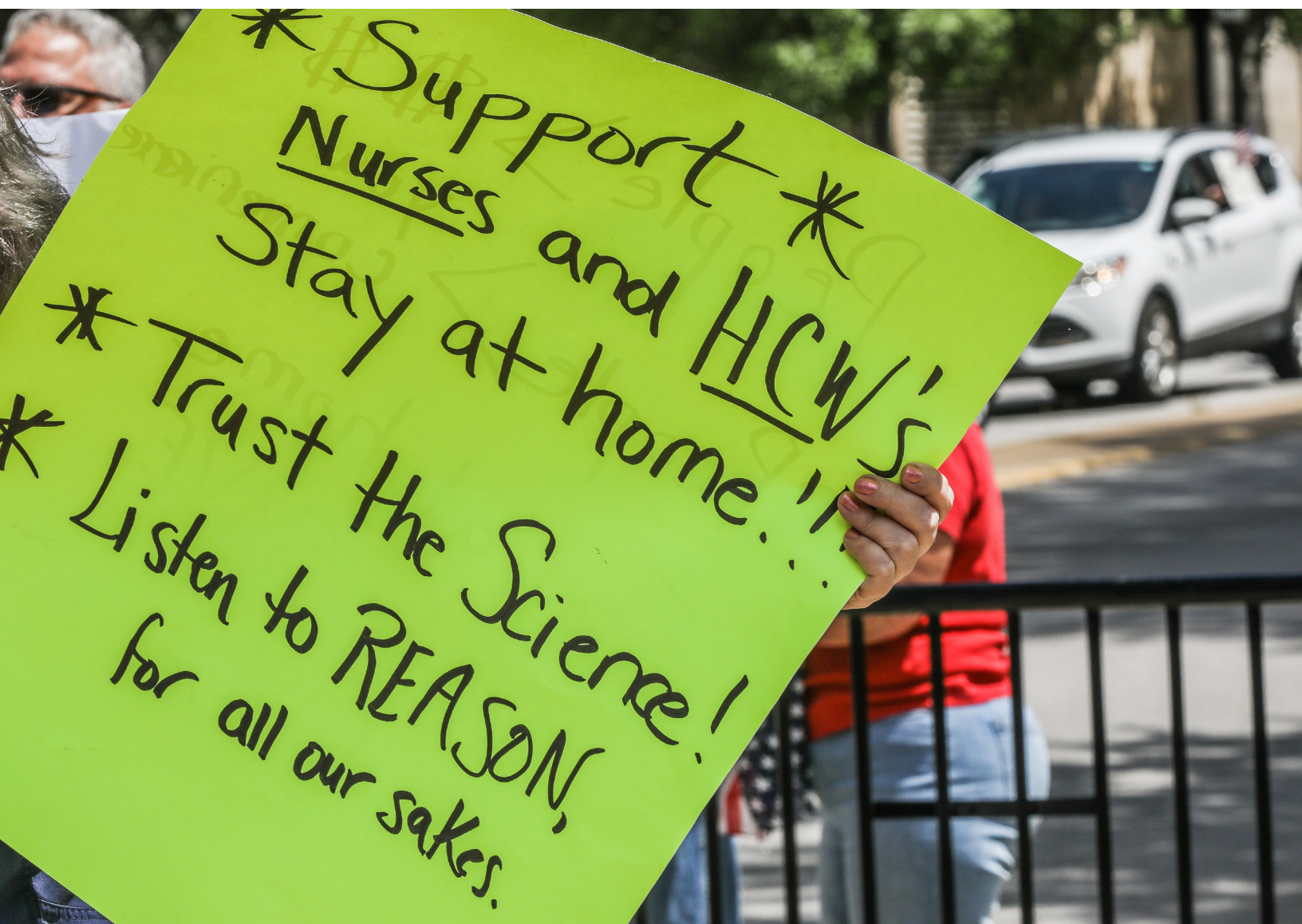
By Sonali Kolhatkar

The end is in sight, we are told. The cavalry has arrived in the form of safe and effective vaccines for COVID-19 on the verge of approval and being manufactured for widespread distribution. The stock market has surged in response to every pharmaceutical company's press release of its latest successful clinical trial. Americans are expecting an end to this traumatic chapter of our history and are ready to turn the page on the year 2020.

Except that if the United States has led the world in per capita infections and deaths

because of deep skepticism from an intransigent population toward even the mildest of safety precautions, do we expect the same people refusing to wear a face mask to take not one, but two doses of a brand-new vaccine? We may have safe and effective vaccines soon enough, but through a cruelly ironic twist of our nation's perverted political climate, society may simply refuse to save itself.

Several key segments of the American population have varied reasons for vaccine skepticism. Among Black and brown communities,



Anti-vaccine, anti-mask and anti-lockdown protesters stage a demonstration, photo by Ilyas Tayfun Salci/Shutterstock.com

there is a deep-seated and justifiable mistrust due to historical government-sanctioned medical abuse that is reflected in new polls about the COVID-19 vaccine. On the American left, mistrust of large pharmaceutical companies putting profits above the public health—again justifiable—is driving cynicism about the motives of private

corporations that have had piles of taxpayer cash thrown at them.

Among liberal elites, the growing popularity of “clean eating,” “wellness,” and taking personal responsibility for one’s health through expensive diets and rigorous exercise regimes has seeded an insidious movement that strives for purity as a pathway

to well-being and health. Part of that movement includes prizing natural remedies over chemical ones, including for such life-threatening diseases as cancer. It has also fueled the idea that medications including vaccines are “dangerous” contaminants to our bodies. Quack doctors like Andrew Wakefield, celebrities like Jenny McCarthy,



and political figures like Robert Kennedy Jr. have caused serious damage to trust in vaccine safety. Before the pandemic, one of the biggest fears among public health experts was the resurgence of measles fueled by falling vaccination rates.

On the right, a similar vaccine skepticism has emerged as anti-vaccination activists court conservatives as allies, creating an unlikely coalition. Republican Senator Ron Johnson went as far as inviting an anti-vaccine doctor to testify before a Senate committee recently. Also prevalent is the notion that “herd immunity”—which is a term used to describe the threshold of safety that vaccines achieve if enough people take them—can be achieved simply by enough people catching the disease. President Donald Trump has been one of the chief proponents of this thoroughly debunked idea.

Scientists have estimated that at least two-thirds of the population need to be vaccinated in order to stop the spread of COVID-19. In August, less than half of the population was willing to take a vaccine—an unsurprising number considering the widespread mistrust of vaccines in general. Republicans are more skeptical than Democrats, which is also not surprising given that a

majority of GOP voters still support Trump—a president whose relentless lies and science skepticism form the basis of his leadership. A nation so steeped in misinformation that it ushered in a charlatan to take power for four long years is naturally susceptible to suspicion of vaccines.

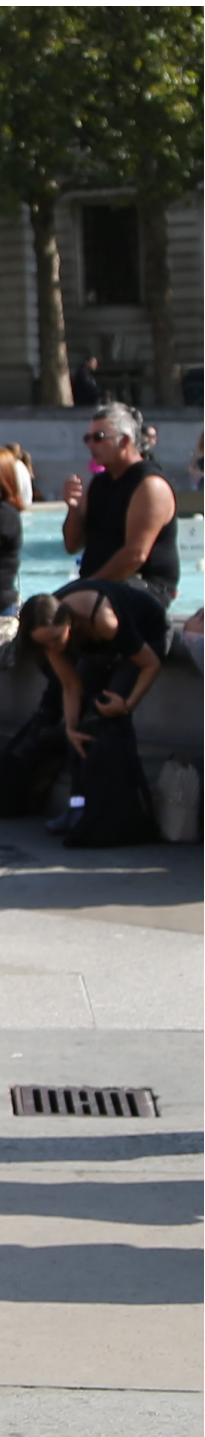
Some of the fear stems from disbelief that an effective vaccine could be produced in such a short period of time. Indeed, past efforts at developing effective vaccines have taken many years. In that context, the federal government’s “Operation Warp Speed” vaccine project has sparked fear. Dr. Anthony Fauci, the head of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, explained, “People don’t understand that, because when they hear ‘Operation Warp Speed,’ they think, ‘Oh, my God, they’re jumping over all these steps and they’re going to put us at risk.’” But in fact, decades of critical medical research formed the foundation upon which companies like Pfizer and Moderna have developed the mRNA type of vaccines that have thus far exceeded scientists’ expectations in clinical trials. Fauci explained, “The speed is a reflection of years of work that went before.”

There is another insidious obstacle to a vaccination program. We live in a nation

enamored by libertarian ideals. The concept of collective action to protect the common good flies in the face of “individual liberty” and the Ayn Rand-inspired notions that each American is solely responsible for their own happiness and well-being. This idea forms the basis of our health care system—or lack thereof. The coronavirus pandemic hit the United States at a time when we have no publicly funded universal health care system to speak of. The U.S. government’s message to Americans is essentially that, unless you fall below the poverty line, have a disability, or are over the age of 65, you are on your own to seek health insurance and health care wherever you can find it. Once the novel coronavirus entered the picture, the frailties of this disjointed, disorganized, profit-based, and frankly cruel system were exposed like never before in recent memory.

Now, this same flawed system is expected to undertake a mass vaccination program to a skeptical public while at the same time struggling to treat ever-growing numbers of COVID-19 patients needing hospitalization.

True herd immunity can only be achieved when enough of the population has been inoculated that vulnerable populations (infants,





IF YOU BURN THE EARTH

YOU BURN

MY

Generation!



adults with vaccine allergies and elderly people) are protected. Vaccines don't just protect the individuals who take them; they offer collective safeguards for society as a whole. A population that has been conditioned to think about health as a solely individual concern has been hard-pressed to swallow such an idea. Think about the obstinate mask-refusers among us.

As a journalist, every time I address vaccine skepticism on my broadcast program, I receive vitriolic hate mail claiming that I am a shill for "big pharma" or simply too stupid to see the light. But we cannot let misinformation, fear, and individualistic thinking discourage reporting on this issue. In some ways, vaccines have become a victim of their own success. Because we have lived (until this year) in a world relatively free of preventable but horrific diseases like smallpox and rubella—achieved through mass vaccination—many Americans have taken for granted the quality of life made possible through inoculation efforts.

The good news is that new polls show growing support for vaccination amidst an unfathomable rate of COVID-19 infections and deaths. According to one new survey, 63 percent of Americans are now willing to get vaccinated—

close to the minimum threshold that could curb the spread of the disease. Outreach and education efforts on accepting vaccinations in Black and Latino communities that have been hardest hit by the disease are underway. Unfortunately, the vaccine-refusers among us will likely continue to benefit from living in a largely vaccinated community, mooching off of the herd immunity they refuse to contribute to. **Z**

This article was produced by Economy for All, a project of the Independent Media Institute.

Embracing Ecological Realism

By Robert Koehler

Our post-election hope couldn't be more fragile.

Does Joe Biden see his mission as merely reclaiming situation normal from Donald Trump? How aware is he of the big, beyond-our-lifetimes future and the crucial need to address climate change? Is he able to acknowledge that human "interests" go well beyond national borders? And if

so, how much political traction would he have to have before he could begin turning vision into policy?

A recent bit of news: The House just voted overwhelmingly in favor of the 2021 Pentagon budget: \$740.5 billion. The vote was 335-78. More Democrats than Republicans gave it their blessing—in utter defiance of any sane recognition of true security, national or otherwise. This is situation normal in action, requiring nothing from a politician except limited thinking.

Waging war, preparing for war, worshipping at the altar of military-industrialism are precisely the opposite of what we must be doing. This is running away from—and intensifying—the real threat we face. Yet our political leaders do so with a shrug, and the corporate media follows suit with a shrug of its own.

The takeaway here is that the real election isn't over. As Margaret Klein Salamon, co-founder of The Climate Mobilization, put it in an interview with *Truthout*: "We need the most powerful social movement in history to put unbearable pressure on Biden and Congress to launch a full-scale climate mobilization."

"We need . . ."

That alone won't make it happen. What we also need is a shift in consciousness: socially, culturally, political-

ly. It's not as if we need to move our attention—and our spending—from one war to another: from fighting terrorism and “evil” to fighting climate change. The one thing we do not need is another war, certainly not against Planet Earth.

The first priority of the movement is a profound expansion of political thinking: beyond the clichés of war and security. Stewart M. Patrick, writing at *World Politics Review*, puts it with stunning clarity: “The global environmental crisis, encompassing runaway climate change, collapsing biodiversity and the slow death of the world’s oceans, has exposed the limitations of traditional political realism as a guide to statecraft in the 21st century. The time has come for the nations of the world to embrace a new approach to world politics that treats the preservation of the biosphere as a core national interest and a central objective of national security policy. Call this new mindset ecological realism.”

The thinking that ecological realism must replace is something Patrick generously refers to as “political realism,” which “depicts the international system as an inherently anarchic realm populated by independent states recognizing no superior authority.”

This is worth a moment of

reflection: the grotesque “realism” of the last 500 years or so of human history, or perhaps much further back than that, is that the planet is, in essence, an elementary school playground: an “anarchic realm” full of other kids, none of whom you can really trust, some of whom are out to get you. I’d say we’ve reached a point that you could call grow up or blow up.

The overarching truth, demanding an upward shift in awareness—including the awareness of President Joe Biden—is that the human race has entered what scientists are calling the Anthropocene: the intertwining of human and natural forces. Human exploitation of Planet Earth has reached a point where what we do and how we live reverberates across the circle of life—and could destroy it, for every species, for all life.

Doesn’t this seem like something the governments of the world should take seriously? How, oh how, do we move beyond the dead end of political realism?

This sort of thinking “loses its way, Patrick writes, when it faces “threats without a threatener,” that is, “dangers arising not from geopolitical rivalry or malicious intent, but from human interactions with the environment, as with climate change or pandemic

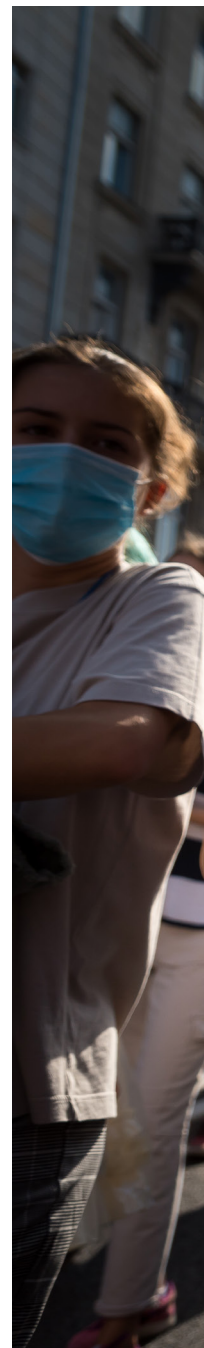
disease.”

We must push our politics beyond the cul-de-sac of so-called political realism. We must have a president who can see beyond, and understands that our interests do not stop at, the national border. We must have a president who can see “the yawning chasm between our fragmented international system, composed of nearly 200 sovereign entities, and the integrated Earth system, a bio-geophysical unity that obeys no national boundaries.”

I believe that Biden is capable of seeing this, but may well require the pressure of an unrelenting climate-and-sanity movement, linked to a racial-justice-and-sanity movement, before he is willing, before he is able, to acknowledge that he sees this—and begin pragmatically embracing ecological realism.

No more clichés about war, OK, Mr. President? The effects of war and the Industrial Revolution are what have brought us to where we are now: the Anthropocene. All it’s taken is 75 years of nuclear testing, in conjunction with industrial pollution, agribusiness, the production of non-biodegradable plastic and more, and here we are, on the brink of unsustainability.

Politically, the problem is that leaders find it so much easier to get people to co-



alesce around belief in a common enemy. I'm sure the temptation for the president to do this is nearly irresistible. The movement that pushes national and global politics beyond this must be a movement declaring that the human race has grown up. Now it's time for the political system to do so. **Z**

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award-winning journalist and editor. He is the author of *Courage Grows Strong at the Wound*.

Human Society And The Biosphere

By John Scales Avery

Mass extinctions due to human activities

According to a recent United Nations report, more than a million species of plants and animals are currently threatened with extinction because of human activities. Rates of extinction today are as much as 1,000 times greater than the normal back-



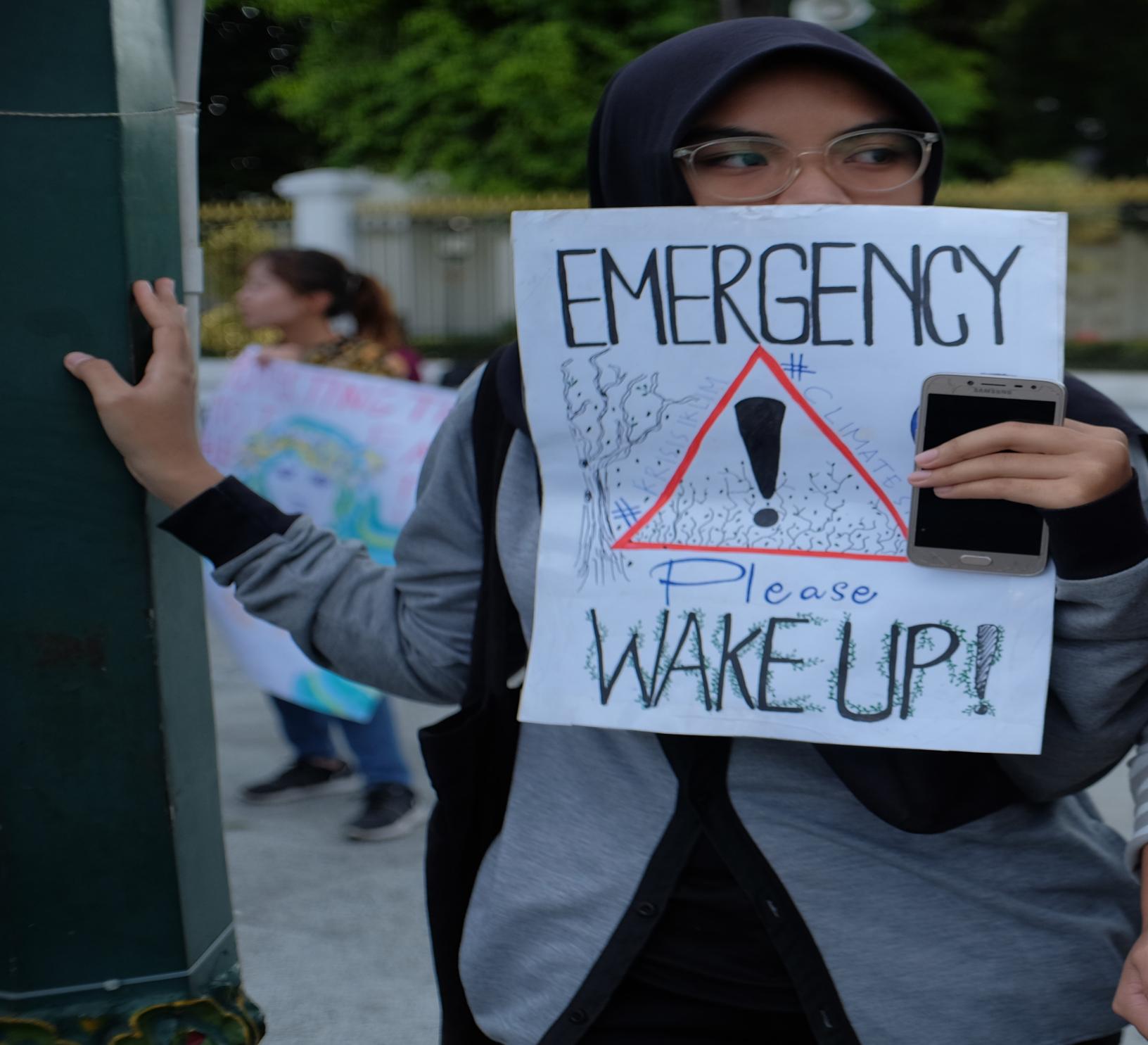


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Paramarta
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ground rate.

As the greenhouse gas emissions of human society push the earth towards catastrophic climate change, rates of extinction in the biosphere will certainly become higher.

Are humans threatened with extinction?

What about our own species? Are we too threatened with extinction?

There are certainly several threatened catastrophes that might greatly reduce the global population of humans. In a thermonuclear war, followed by nuclear winter, a large part of the world's pop-

ulation might perish.

We must also consider the danger of an extremely large-scale famine, involving billions rather than millions of people. Such a famine might occur by the middle of our present century, as the result of population growth, combined with climate change



and the end of the fossil fuel era. As glaciers melt in the Himalayas, depriving India and China of summer water supplies; as sea levels rise, drowning the fertile rice fields of Vietnam and Bangladesh; as drought threatens the productivity of grain-producing regions of North Ameri-

ca; and as the end of the fossil fuel era impacts modern high-yield agriculture, there is a threat of widespread famine. There is a danger that the 1.5 billion people who are undernourished today will not survive an even more food-scarce future.

Finally, if human society

fails to curb its emissions of greenhouse gases, much of the earth will become so hot as to be uninhabitable, not only for humans, but also for the plants and animals of the biosphere. This does not necessarily mean that our species will become extinct, since there will still be regions



CAN YOU
FEEL THE
HEAT?

of the earth where it will be possible to survive. However, it does mean that the future population of humans will be very much reduced unless catastrophic climate change is avoided.

Links Between Militarism and Climate Change

In our efforts to avoid catastrophic climate change, we should be aware of the links between global warming and militarism. Military activities use enormous amounts of fossil fuels.

There is a close relationship between petroleum and war. James A. Paul, Executive Director of the Global Policy Forum, has described this relationship very clearly in the following words: "Modern warfare particularly depends on oil, because virtually all weapons systems rely on oil-based fuel—tanks, trucks, armored vehicles, self-propelled artillery pieces, airplanes, and naval ships. For this reason, the governments and general staffs of powerful nations seek to ensure a steady supply of oil during wartime, to fuel oil-hungry military forces in far-flung operational theaters.

"Just as governments like the US and UK need oil com-

panies to secure fuel for their global war-making capacity, so the oil companies need their governments to secure control over global oilfields and transportation routes. It is no accident, then, that the world's largest oil companies are located in the world's most powerful countries.

"Almost all of the world's oil-producing countries have suffered abusive, corrupt and undemocratic governments and an absence of durable development. Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Iraq, Iran, Angola, Colombia, Venezuela, Kuwait, Mexico, Algeria—these and many other oil producers have a sad record, which includes dictatorships installed from abroad, bloody coups engineered by foreign intelligence services, militarization of government and intolerant right-wing nationalism."

There is also another link between militarism and climate change:

Today, both in the United States and elsewhere in the world, the Green New Deal is being considered as a means of making the urgently-needed transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy.

The Green New Deal concept is inspired by the New Deal by which Franklin D. Roosevelt ended the Great Depression of the 1930s. Like FDR's original New Deal, it

involves massive government spending to simultaneously create jobs and much-needed infrastructure. In the case of the Green New Deal, this would be renewable energy infrastructure.

But is there money enough for the Green New Deal? In order to free the necessary funds, we need to divert the vast river of money that is currently wasted—or worse than wasted—on militarism, and use it to save human society and the biosphere from catastrophic climate change. How much money is involved? According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the world currently spends 1.8 trillion dollars each year on armaments. The indirect costs of militarism are far greater.

The Human Footprint is too Large

The total ecological footprint of humanity is a concept used to measure the relationship between the resources that humans demand from their environment, compared with the ability of nature to provide those resources. In recent years humans have been asking the earth to provide them with much more than the earth can regenerate. Our collective footprint on

the face of nature has become too large. Because of the danger of environmental collapse as well as the danger of widespread famine, we must stabilize global population and end excessive consumption of goods.

Socialism and Ecology in Scandinavia

Excessive contrast between the rich and the poor has become an acute problem, both within nations and between nations. It is demonstrably true that in more equal societies, economies function better and people are happier.

In this context, it is interesting to look at the Scandinavian countries, where the contrast between rich and poor has been very much reduced.

Denmark, for example, has a market economy, but a high and steeply progressive rate of taxation has essentially eliminated poverty within the country, while also making it difficult for anyone to become extremely wealthy.

Denmark has very high taxes, but in return for these, its citizens receive many social services, such as free health care. If they qualify for university education, the tuition

is free, and students are given an allowance for their living expenses. Mothers, or alternatively fathers, can take paid leave of up to 52 weeks after the birth of a child. After that, a cressch is always available, so that mothers can return to their jobs. When the child becomes too old for the cressch, day care centers are always available. For children of school age, after-school clubs are available where children can practice arts and crafts or other activities under supervision until their parents come home from work.

Denmark has an outstanding program of renewable energy research and development. Danish wind energy design is famous throughout the world, and Danish wind turbines are exported to many countries. The Danish Technical University also has an extremely strong research program addressing the problem of intermittency. One of DTU's programs focuses on the development and use of fuel cells for energy storage.

In corporate-controlled countries like the United States, the word "socialism" is anathema; but nations everywhere in the world might benefit from the Scandinavian model of socialism. **Z**

loadable book

I would like to announce the publication of a new book, which discusses relationships between human society and the biosphere. The book may be downloaded and circulated free of charge from the following link: <http://www.fredsakademiet.dk/library/ecosoc.pdf>

Other books and articles about global problems are on these links:

A new freely down-



- <http://eacpe.org/about-john-scales-avery/>
- <https://wsimag.com/authors/716-john-scales-avery>
- <https://www.transcend.org/tms/2020/11/free-online-books-on-serious-global-problems/>

Bernie Sanders and Progressives in Our Winter of Discontent

By Norman Solomon

Bernie Sanders is not in a good political position right now. Yes, he continues to speak vital truths to—and about—power. His ability to reach a national audience with progressive wisdom and specific proposals is unmatched. And, during the last several decades, no one has done more to move the na-



tion's discourse leftward. But now, Sanders is in a political box.

After a summer and fall dominated by the imperative of defeating Donald Trump, progressive forces are entering a winter of discontent. Joe Biden has offered them little on the list of top personnel being named to his administration. While Sanders wants to maintain a cordial relationship with the incoming president, he doesn't like what he's seeing.

"The progressive movement deserves a number of seats—important seats—in the Biden administration," Sanders said recently. "Have I seen that at this point? I have not."

Sanders foreshadowed the current situation back in mid-November, when he told *The Associated Press*: "It seems to me pretty clear that progressive views need to be expressed within a Biden administration. It would be, for example, enormously insulting if Biden put together a 'team of rivals'—and there's some discussion that that's what he intends to do—which might include Republicans and conservative Democrats—but which ignored the progressive community. I think that would be very, very unfortunate."

At this point, Sanders and avid supporters of the Ber-

nie 2020 campaign have ample reasons to feel frustrated, even "enormously insulted." It's small comfort that Biden's picks so far are purportedly "not as bad as Obama's" were 12 years ago. That's a low bar, especially to those who understand that Barack Obama heavily corporatized his presidency from the outset. And given the past decade's leftward political migration among Democrats and independents at the grassroots, Biden's selections have been even more out of step with the party's base.

Reporting on Biden's overall selections, the *Washington Post* found that "about 80 percent of the White House and agency officials he's announced have the word 'Obama' on their résumé from previous White House or Obama campaign jobs."

Biden conveyed notable disregard for Sanders by nominating an OMB director with a long record of publicly expressing antagonism toward him. The *Post* just reported that "the transition team never reached out to" Sanders about "Biden's decision to tap Neera Tanden as director of the Office of Management and Budget, according to a person familiar with the lack of communication, despite Sanders's role as the top Democrat on one of the committees that will hold

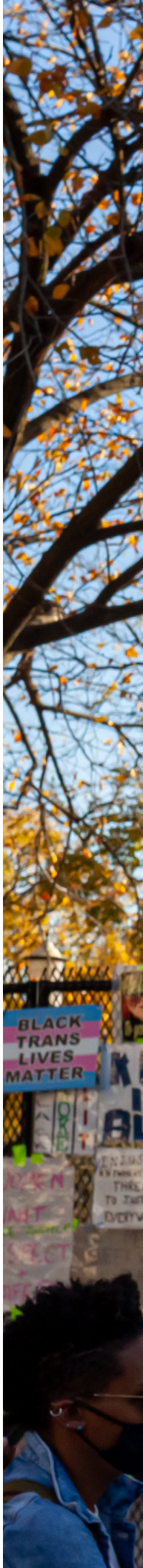
Tanden's confirmation hearings."

Away from Capitol Hill, many progressive organizations are regrouping while "the Bernie movement" evaporates. Coalescing in its place are a range of resilient, overlapping movements that owe much of their emergent long-term power to his visionary leadership.

Nationally, Sanders became a shaper of history in unprecedented ways. Unlike almost every other major candidate for president in our lifetimes, he has always been part of social movements. For 30 years, Sanders not only continued to have one foot in the streets and one foot in the halls of Congress; somehow, he often seemed to be relentlessly in both places with both feet.

Bernie Sanders has fulfilled what the legendary progressive activist and theoretician Saul Alinsky described as a key goal of political organizers—to work themselves out of a job—so that other activists will become ready, willing and able to carry on.

At this juncture, while Sanders is ill-positioned and uninclined to push back very hard against the evident trajectory of Biden's decisions, many progressives are starting to throw down gauntlets against the corporate and militaristic aspects of the incoming presidency. While the lu-



the "all LIVES matter"
crew is extremely
upset to learn that
all votes matter
#BLM #BIDENHARRIS2020

nacy of the Trumpian GOP is nonstop and corporate Democrats have control of party top-down power levers, the broad democratic left is now stronger, better funded and better networked than it has

been in many decades, with greatly enhanced electoral capacities as well as vitality of its social movements.

Those electoral capacities and social movements have long been intertwined with the

tireless work of Bernie Sanders. But a crucial dynamic going forward into 2021 and beyond will be the resolve of progressives to methodically challenge the Biden administration. Senator Sanders is

Trump: You're fired!
Democracy saved!
Thanks black voters!



unlikely to have the leverage or inclination to lead the fight.

Sanders has tried to call in some political chits, but Biden—probably figuring that Sanders won't really go to the mat—does not seem to

care much. Recently, Sanders said in an interview with Axios: "I've told the Biden people: The progressive movement is 35-40 percent of the Democratic coalition. Without a lot of other enormous-

ly hard work on the part of grassroots activists and progressives, Joe would not have won the election."

Bernie Sanders was the catalyst for galvanizing the grassroots progressive power

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that propelled his 2016 and 2020 presidential campaigns. His deep analysis, tenacity, eloquence and bold actions created new pathways. As this century enters its third decade, the torch needs to be grasped by others to lead the way. **Z**

Norman Solomon is the national director of RootsAction.org and the author of many books including *War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death*. He was a Bernie Sanders delegate from California to the 2016 and 2020 Democratic National Conventions. Solomon is the founder and executive director of the Institute for Public Accuracy.

Millions of India's Farmers Are in a Fight for Their Economic Lives

By Sonali Kolhatkar

India's farmers are revolting against Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government in a mass movement that has drawn international attention. The world's largest democracy is witnessing a collective groundswell of protest as hundreds of thousands of farmers, largely from the states of Punjab and Haryana, have laid siege to the outskirts of the capital of New Delhi, determined to occupy the edges of the city until Modi reverses unpopular new laws that they say are anti-farmer.

About half of India's workers depend on the agricultural industry, and the government has long had in place regulations to protect farmworkers, acting as a middleman between farmers and buyers of their produce. Now those protections have been upended. In September 2020, Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) pushed three deregulatory bills through Parliament amid chaos and even some opposition from within his own party.

Amandeep Sandhu, author of *Panjab: Journeys Through Fault Lines*, has been closely following the farmers' protests. In an interview, he explained to me that the first of the three bills scrapped the Essential Commodities Act, a 1955 law that stabilized food prices by preventing traders from hoarding sup-

plies. According to Sandhu, "now traders can stockpile as much food as they want and can play the markets as they wish." Two-thirds of India's population of 1.3 billion rely on subsidized food rations, which Sandhu says are now endangered.

Another of the deregulatory laws would leave farmers to negotiate directly with buyers without government intervention to set basic minimum prices. Although this theoretically could result in farmers being able to demand higher prices, during years when there is a surplus of crops and subsequent plummeting prices, farmers could be financially destroyed. In short, the new laws are designed to subject hundreds of millions of poor farmers to the whims and demands of the market.

Modi's third controversial law centers on contract farming and enables corporate buyers to directly hire small farmers to produce specific crops. But Sandhu explained that it also protects corporations from liabilities. "If a small farmer has entered into a contract with a corporation and the corporation reneges on the contract, the farmer cannot go to court."

Even before these new laws were put in place, India's farmers were being pushed to the brink. Millions are in debt as banks refuse to lend



THE GOVT WHICH PUTS THE
LIVES AND LIVELIHOOD OF
FARMERS IN PERIL IS NOT A
LEGIMITATE
GOVERNEMENT.
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हर ज़ोर जुल्म की टक्कर में
हड़ताल हमारा नारा है
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सामाजिक सुरक्षा
कानूनों को
नोड बना बंद करो
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AITUC

to the cash-strapped workers, driving them to illegal lenders that charge exorbitant interest rates. Farmer suicides in India have been on the rise, exacerbated by the ravages of the coronavirus pandemic this year.

According to Sandhu, “for many decades farmers have been protesting against the ‘green revolution’ model of agriculture,” which emphasizes an increase in productivity above all else including farmer livelihoods. Writing for CNN.com, Simran Jeet Singh and Gunisha Kaur explained, “Just as some medications are tested on humans of developing countries before being accepted in developed nations, the Green Revolution was an agricultural experiment tested out on the fields of Punjab.”

In further unleashing market forces on farmers through his new laws, Modi may have gone too far. “These very farmers are the BJP’s core constituency,” said Sandhu. “These are the ones who got the government elected in the first place.”

Offering a stark contrast with struggling farmers are wealthy Indian elites who have seen their riches multiply each year. A 2018 report found that the wealth of the richest 831 Indians amounted to a quarter of India’s gross domestic product.

Chief among them is Mukesh Ambani, Asia’s richest man, who has launched dozens of new businesses in the agricultural sector in just the last few months. India’s second wealthiest person is Gautam Adani, and both men are considered close political allies of Modi. Protesting farmers say Modi’s controversial farm bills were written to benefit the likes of Ambani and Adani. Earlier in the protests, farmers burned effigies of the prime minister and his billionaire buddies.

Modi has claimed that deregulation will bring wealth and prosperity to farmers and that objections to the laws are purely political. Because most of India’s left-wing parties and prominent political figures from the opposition Congress Party have expressed support for farmers, the BJP-led government claims that farmers are being misled into believing the laws are bad for their bottom line. But one farmer from Punjab told *Al Jazeera*, “There is no politics in it, we feel the laws are going to benefit corporates and not poor farmers like us.”

Modi has implored the farmers occupying the edges of Delhi to go home, claiming that the new laws are written to benefit them and are a “gift.” He has offered to amend the laws as a com-

promise, but the farmers are standing firm, saying nothing less than a complete repeal of the laws will be satisfactory. India’s former economic adviser Kaushik Basu agrees with them. Basu, who also served as chief economist of the World Bank and is currently a professor of economics at Cornell University, said the bills were “flawed” and “detrimental to farmers.” He explained, “Our agriculture regulation needs change but the new laws will end up serving corporate interests more than farmers.”

The new laws impact farmers’ control over what to grow, whom to sell to, what prices they can rely on, and whether or not their crops will have buyers—all presented in the form of an unsolicited “gift” from a government that for years has ignored their plight. It’s no wonder they are rebelling.

Solidarity with Indian farmers is high across the nation. In late November, nearly a dozen trade unions launched a massive general strike, bringing the nation to a standstill for a day. More than 250 million people are estimated to have participated, making it the world’s largest protest in history. The farmers called for a second strike a week later and remain on the outskirts of New Delhi, blocking five major highways and saying









they aren't leaving anytime soon. Sandhu shared that "farmers from Punjab and Haryana came with rations of their own for six months to one year and are willing to stick it out. The farmers who are coming from longer distances will be fed by those who are already there."

Indian agriculture affects the rest of the world, with a large percentage of the global spice market originating from Indian farms. Exported staples such as rice and milk and even cotton used by the apparel industry could be impacted by the new laws.

Diaspora Indians are now speaking out. Thousands of Indian origin residents of Britain rallied in London, declaring, "We stand with farmers of Punjab." Canadian Indians protested in various cities, with many saying they still had family who farmed in India. In California—home to a large population of Punjabi Indian Americans, many of whom are farmers themselves—a massive car rally in Silicon Valley called attention to the farmers' demands. And in Seattle, Councilmember Kshama Sawant of the Socialist Alternative Party sponsored a resolution to express solidarity with Indian farmers.

For now, a stalemate remains with the government and farmers facing off against

one another, refusing to back down. Sawant had perhaps the most eloquent framing of what's at stake, saying, "Indian farmers are facing the same exploitation by the billionaire class that farmers and workers are facing worldwide." **Z**





Class Struggle or Ge

David Barsamian inter

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t it in the Neck, Part 1

views Noam Chomsky



David Barsamian: The pandemic. Excuse this crude expression, but Americans are dropping like flies, a death a minute, 150,000 new cases every day. NPR is reporting "a dire picture around the country," and "hospital resources are stretched thin." New York Times headline: "As Surge Spreads, No Corner of Nation Is Spared. What started as a Midwestern surge, has grown into a coast-to-coast disaster." With people ignoring CDC advice about traveling and gathering in large numbers, we're heading into the peak holiday season. There'll be more, as the media say, grim milestones in the offing, 300,000 dead, 400,000 dead, etc. If this is not a national emergency, I don't know what is. What must be done?

Noam Chomsky: What has to be done is to follow the advice of the scientists and of the countries that have successfully managed it. It is not inevitable. We can see this from the fact that other countries, rich and poor, have handled it pretty well. China, for example, is just back to work, there are very few cases. Vietnam, right on the border of China, almost no cases. New Zealand basically under control, Australia pretty much under control. South Korea, Taiwan, Senegal, Kenya, the Nordic countries are not too bad.

There are places that have more or less managed, and they're countries of a very diverse kind, which tells us that it is possible, but not without leadership, that most of the time even denies that it's happening. That filters down to the population. We've seen reports of people in the Dakotas dying in hospital beds of COVID and telling the nurses that it's all a hoax, it's not happening. You drive around, I mostly stay home, but I drive sometimes. Then you see people congregating in super-market malls, no masks, normal behavior, that's going to happen.

What about this notion which you hear in some circles of individual freedom versus collective responsibility?

Individual freedom is a curious idea. I mean, do you have the freedom to drive on the left side of the road if you feel like it? Do you have the freedom to run around malls shooting an assault rifle? That's what it means to go to a public event or a public area without wearing a mask. That's threatening people's lives, seriously. That's not individual freedom. That's unacceptable license. Nobody accepts the kinds of things I described. If you want a choice not to wear a mask, that's okay, stay home, don't endanger others.

At some point, soon hopefully, there will be vaccines. But how do we want to come out of this pandemic and attendant economic crisis? The status quo ante?

There presumably will be vaccines. There are some already that are in pretty advanced stages of testing. The most advanced, as far as I know, is almost unmentionable in the United States, the Chinese vaccine. They're already using it on large numbers of people though that may or may not be good practice. That I'm not in a position to judge, but it's apparently pretty advanced, and it's taken seriously by American scientists. We don't hear about it. It won't be available to Americans if it works. There are vaccines being developed here, what's called the "Pfizer vaccine," which actually was developed by two Turkish immigrants in Germany, marketed by Pfizer. It's the Moderna vaccine, these may come along. There's an Oxford vaccine. Then comes the question, will people take them, can they be distributed to the people who need them? And those are open questions. There are policy choices that relate to this.

So for example, there is an international





PEOPLE



OVER

PROFIT



Then comes the question of using it and distributing it within the country. In the United States, there are a large number of people who say, “We’re just not going to accept this. We don’t want the government to intrude on our personal lives. I don’t believe it.” There’s a big anti-vaccine movement in the United States altogether, which has a lethal effect in

A large crowd of people, many wearing face masks, gathered on a street in front of the White House. The crowd is diverse in age and appearance. Some individuals are holding flags, including the American flag and a rainbow flag. A sign with the text "FCK YOUR RACISM" is visible. The White House is in the background, and trees with autumn foliage line the street.

a rich country like this. It's a significant effect in poor countries. If it spreads there, it's just lethal. But there is such a movement. It's rooted in understandable contempt or at least distrust in government, understandable, but it shouldn't reach to this domain. And that's going to be a serious problem, even if the vaccine is developed and is available. The United States is unusual, almost unique in not having a general health system. So it's not clear that if a vaccine is available, it'll even be affordable or that they'll be places where people can go to, to get it. That takes national coordination.

The Trump administration has, of course,

refused to do this. Remains to be seen whether a Biden administration will carry out a plan. Trump has refused, until just a few days ago, even to share data with the incoming Biden administration. That, of course, makes any reaction slower and more ineffective. There should be major pressures to accelerate the development of, first of all, the imposition of procedures, which will restrict and mitigate the spread of the virus, and secondly, efforts to make sure that when vaccines are available, they'll be essentially free and there will be distribution insured to those who need them, who will be encouraged to take them,

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David J.
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**RACISM LOOKS
VOTER SUPPRE**





not being told that the vaccine is a hoax and that the disease is a hoax. We're living in a country where a large part of the population is just in extreme denialism. If you can believe the polls, over three quarters of Republicans think the election was stolen. Huge percentages think global warming is not a serious problem. That is an extraordinary problem, the denial of the pandemic is also significant.

In such an atmosphere, it's going to be very hard to deal with extremely serious problems. And that's just the beginning. If we manage to overcome this crisis, there are other ones coming. We should remember what happened in 2003, we're going to relive it. The SARS epidemic was contained. Scientists inform the world that other coronavirus epidemics, maybe pandemics, were very likely. The means to become prepared were available, they were described, they weren't pursued. The drug companies weren't interested because there's no profit in it. The government was held back by the neoliberal claims that the government can't do anything. Some things were done. The Obama administration, which was science oriented, when it came into office, it did convene the President's Science Advisory Council. They requested a pandemic response system, which they prepared, and it was put into operation.

It was terminated in January 2017 when Trump came into office. One of his first actions was to dismantle it, to proceed to end the programs where American scientists were working with Chinese colleagues to try to identify potential viruses. The Center for Disease Control was defunded. The United States was singularly unprepared when the virus finally hit, and then came chaotic reactions which have led to the destructive impact that you described. It's going to happen again when this one is contained. We either learn the lessons or we face even worse pandemics. We should bear in mind that so far we've been

Photo by
Sheila Fitzgerald/Shutterstock.com

lucky with coronaviruses. There have been some, like the present one, which are highly contagious, but not very lethal. There have been some, like Ebola, which was very lethal, not too contagious. Nothing guarantees that the next one down the road won't be the worst of all worlds, contagious and lethal.

Doesn't the severity of the current crisis demand a kind of national emergency? Would you favor something like that to coordinate response?

There was no coordinated response. In fact, Trump very explicitly, I think, back around May or so, said it's the responsibility of the states, "Well, I can't do anything about it." From his point of view, you could understand that. That meant if anything went wrong, as it was very likely to, he could blame it on the states, especially the states with Democratic governors. Of course, if significant measures are taken, it will have a harmful economic effect, so he could blame the harsh economic consequences on the methods that were taken to control the crisis. Some of the things that were done were really surreal. For example, when a chief scientist, Rick Bright, in charge of vaccine development, criticized some of Trump's quack medicines, he was fired. This happened all the way up and down the line.

Since the election, it's gotten worse, from simply refusing to do anything, as I said, even to hand over data. It's as if, and it may be true, that they just want to make it worse, so that the country will be more ungovernable when Biden comes in, and failures can be blamed on the Democratic administration. McConnell, remember, who's sort of the evil genius behind many of these plans has a long record of working to render government ungovernable if it's in the wrong hands. He did that with Obama for years. It's not an attractive picture. The one positive thing is that Biden

does seem to be attentive to the views of the scientific community, at least so it looks. I hope that's true. But he's sure not going to get any cooperation from the Republican Party.

Let's talk about the November 3rd election, the record turnout of 150 million people, the success of voting by mail and early voting. A bit of euphoria, if I could use that term, as the autocrat is replaced. Now we can go back to things as they were, a kind of restoration. A sigh of relief was audible in establishment circles and from media pundits like David Brooks, Thomas Friedman and Mark Shields. You wrote to me a few days after the election. You said of the results, "Relief, but no celebration. Depressing to see Democrats blow it again." What did you mean by that? The Democrats had plenty of money. What happened to the Blue Wave?

The Democrats lost to an incredible degree. They lost at every level, except for the presidency. And the presidency was a vote against Trump, even by many of the wealthy, the corporate sector, who were tired of his antics. But at every other level, Congress, state legislatures, local elections, they lost and lost badly. And this, if you think of the circumstances, it's astonishing that Trump was even able to run. Here's somebody who had just killed tens, if not hundreds of thousands of Americans through malevolent practice, let alone all of his other crimes. And he's running for president, considered a viable candidate. And not only that, but the whole ticket that supported him, won at every level.

It's an amazing defeat for the Democrats. And you take a look, then you can ask, not that the Democrats are all that great, but just in terms of party politics, it was a shocking failure. I think you can see why. The Democrats devoted their campaign efforts to try to swing some affluent suburbs towards the Democrats.

HUMANITY
WINS!



Well, maybe they succeeded in that. But that's not enough to develop any sort of electoral strategy. In fact, this has been going on since Obama. Since Obama, the Democratic Party has pretty much abandoned its activities at the local and state levels, just doesn't bother. It's a party of Wall Street, rich professionals, and so on. The others will take care of themselves. And you could see this in particular cases.

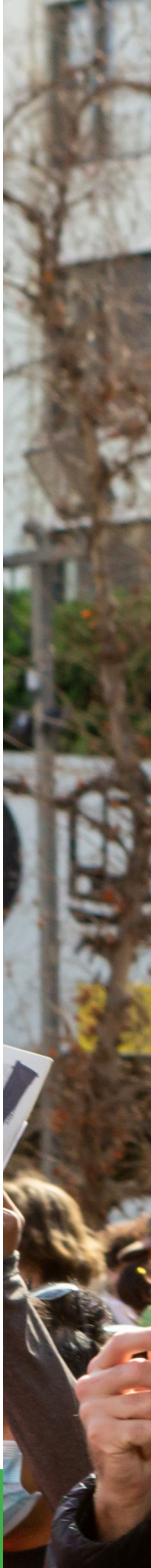
So there's been a lot of discussion about the quite remarkable, the Democratic Party losses in South Texas on the border, largely Mexican-American community. These are areas that hadn't voted for a Republican for a century, literally, since Harding, and Trump did quite well, even won in some areas, dramatic reversal. A number of analyses have been put forth, but one that I think is very telling is this area is an oil economy. And if you read liberal commentators, they say that Biden lost it because of the terrible gaffe in the last debate. You'll recall at the end of the last debate, Biden said something which had liberal commentators just shocked at his terrible gaffe, this horrible thing to say.

And he was then trying to overcome the mistake, others were trying to do it too. What was the mistake? He said, "We have to do something to prevent the human species from being destroyed." That's basically what he said. Those weren't his words, his words were, "We have to face the fact that there's going to have to be a transition to a non-fossil fuel economy," which is equivalent to saying, "We have to do something to try to make sure, to make it likely at least that human society can survive." That was a horrible gaffe, and it affected the oil producing economies because people felt, you hear it from interviews and so on, "The Democrats are going to take my life away, are going to take away my job, my community, my businesses, and so on, just because some pointy headed liberals claim that there's a climate crisis."

Now, of course, the gaffe was not saying it loudly and clearly. Yes, we have to say that loud and clear, we have to get off a fossil fuel economy and fast, within a couple of decades, which means not delaying, starting now, cutting it back each year so that, say, by mid-century, we've finished with fossil fuels. That has to be said strongly and persuasively. So what do you do about the oil producing sectors? What do you do about South Texas or areas where there's fracking in Pennsylvania? You don't just say, "Sorry, folks, you've got to lose your jobs and your business and everything else because we say there's a climate crisis." What you do is go down there and organize and explain to people what it means. It means, first of all, that this is inevitable, we have to do it, "Your children and grandchildren will be consigned to hell if we don't."

Secondly, there's an effective way to do it and a way to do it which will improve your lives, give you better jobs, more jobs, more livable environment, better community, better health, here are the ways, spell them out. It happens to be true, and it can be done. But it's not done if the Democratic National Committee is devoting its efforts to try to convince a couple of affluent suburban women to shift their vote. You have to be down there working on it. And in the places where there was mostly Latino organizing it was effective. Where I live, Maricopa County, Arizona, there has been extensive organizing Latino leadership for several years.

And it continued, and they voted against Trump, but it has to be done. And the same is true of many other issues. Take the Democrats who are claiming that the election was lost because the crazy leftists were saying, "defund the police." When I think about that for a minute, if you just say, "defund the police," you're going to lose. You're telling people, "I want you to have no protection if somebody breaks into your home." Nobody wants to hear that.



**THE PEOPLE
DEMAND:
CANCEL**

**THE RENTS!
NOTHING
LESS!**

Party for Socialism & Liberation





WE THE PEOPLE
WILL NOT BE
SILENCED

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the
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TR*MP
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THE
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On the other hand, if you give the actual substantive meaning of “defund the police,” as Bernie Sanders, and a couple of others tried to do, it’s a sensible, attractive program, which people will support and which the police will support. It says, “Take away from the police responsibilities that they should never have in the first place,” in fact, the large majority of their responsibilities. Police shouldn’t be involved in domestic disputes or mental health problems or lost dogs or overdose of drugs, and so on. That’s not police business. These things all should be handled by community services under community control, which can do them better. So defund the police by taking away those responsibilities. Next step, as Sanders himself tried to emphasize, increase salaries for police, make it a better occupation, make better conditions for it, so the police can do the things that, in fact, any community is going to need, but not other things and not running around with heavy weapons terrorizing people. That’s “defund the police.”

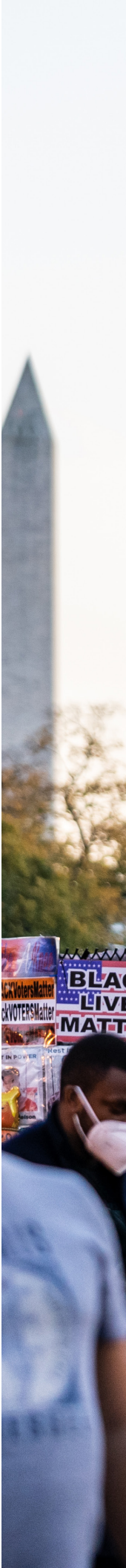
But if you just scream the slogan, nobody hears that. What they hear is, “You don’t care if people break into my home.” People, by implication, black, that’s the message. If you want to be serious about achieving goals, you have to pay attention to your tactics, that’s crucial. Tactics aren’t just something insignificant, at the fringe. Any activist and organizer should know, it should be their second nature, that that’s what matters. How do you approach people? How do you get them to understand what you’re trying to say, what you think is for their benefit and for the benefit of others? Not by shouting a slogan. Takes work, takes direct organizing and activism.

It’s interesting, the alacrity of establishment Democrats to blame their poor showing on, as you mentioned, not by name, but Ocasio-Cortez, Rashida Tlaib, Ilhan Omar, Ayanna Pressley and some other young, many of them women, representatives.

We need real engagement from the local level on up. And without that, you can have all the nice slogans you want, it’s not going to achieve anything. Some of the results of the election are pretty remarkable, now that the data are beginning to come in. Tony DiMaggio has done some of the best work on these topics for years. He had a recent study of the latest available data on voting patterns, confirmed what’s been reported elsewhere. Trump won remarkably high in almost any demographic, not out of range for what it’s been in the past, but remarkably high. In one, particularly, as he’s shown before, the main support for Trump is relatively affluent, not super rich, but relatively affluent, way above the median, \$100,000 to \$200,000 income range. That’s not working people, contrary to illusions. The median income’s around \$70,000. That’s median. Lower than that, Trump does poorly.

And when you go to higher incomes, it’s sort of split. Now the rich professionals are split. The very wealthy in this election are somewhat split because of concern about the way Trump’s harming their interests in the economy. But that range, \$100,000 to \$200,000 normally, again, was the base for Trump’s support, but seems to be increased substantially since 2016. I should say that’s kind of a mystery. I don’t understand whether it should be true, but it happened, and we should think about it. There’s a lot of problems to deal with for the left, if it hopes to make any progress.

One, of course, is the incoming Biden administration, very much a mixed story. Among the economic advisors and appointees, it’s not too bad. People like Heather Boushey, Jared Bernstein, Janet Yellen, appointments that can be very positive, others much less so. And across the board, there’s lots to object to. Just getting rid of Trump is a major victory, but it’s not going to mean very much if you can’t implement policies that are substantive and effective in dealing with the massive crisis





LOSER
This is to remind you big ass who's in the White House
No FASCIST USA
you're A DICK
FU TRUMP!
Signed Nadine
Get the fuck out of our house
FUCK TRUMP!
FIRE!



that exists.

Talk about the Supreme Court and the power of Mitch McConnell, which was demonstrated when he rammed through the Amy Coney Barrett nomination, giving the court a decisive right-wing majority, perhaps for decades. What do you think about proposals for term limits for Supreme Court justices and/or expanding the number of justices? And statehood for Puerto Rico and Washington, DC that would increase the number of senators by four. Or do you think these are just time-consuming dead ends, given the structure of politics?

Those are important. But remember, they're only part of the judiciary problem. McConnell, for 10 years now, has been working hard to ensure that the entire judiciary, top to bottom, will be staffed by young, ultra-right Federalist Society-approved lawyers who will be able to maintain the ultra-reactionary McConnell, Trump-style programs for a generation by simply blocking everything else at every level. Now that's been the main function of the Senate, first blocking Obama's nominees, second, by ramming through the huge number of ultra-right young nominees during the Trump years. And it's been very effective. You look at the numbers, it's astonishing. McConnell has essentially eliminated the Senate as a deliberative body, theoretically once famously described as the world's greatest deliberative body. Okay, you can argue about that. But at least the term meant something.

Now, it's not that. The House sends measures to the Senate, they don't even look at them. What they do is two things, pass legislation to benefit the corporate sector and the very rich, from deregulation to the incredible tax scam, that's one task. The other is to staff the judiciary with the far right. So it's not just the Supreme Court. I think admitting Puerto

Rico and Washington, DC is proper, for lots of reasons, should be done. But it's going to be very hard to achieve that over a Republican Senate or to achieve anything with McConnell. The idea that you can somehow make friends with them and cooperate, that's a joke. They're out for blood. They don't want to cooperate. They want to make the country ungovernable, so that they can come back into power at every level below the president. I think that's what we're going to be seeing for the next couple of years, basically an extension of what's going on.

Howard Zinn said, "It would be naive to depend on the Supreme Court to defend the rights of poor people, women, people of color, dissenters of all kinds. Those rights only come alive when citizens organize, protest, demonstrate, strike, boycott, rebel, and violate the law, in order to uphold justice."

That's pretty much what the historical record shows. You can go back to the Constitution. By the standards of the 18th century, the Constitution was moderately progressive, but it was not what the population wanted. It is well described in the major scholarly study of the formation of the Constitution, Michael Klarman's book, *The Framers' Coup*, the coup of the framers against democracy. That's the scholarly gold standard, excellent book, incidentally, very good reading. You can see in it, step by step, how Madison, Hamilton, and other major figures in framing the Constitution were primarily concerned about the popular democratic thrust among the general population. A lot of it played out on issues that most people don't pay much attention to.

There was a huge struggle, for example, about paper money during the fighting, the American Revolution. The government had huge debts, and the question was, How were they going to be paid off? Well, one proposal

OUR WORK
DOES NOT END
AFTER THE ELECTION

PROTECT
SAFE

PNP

WHAT'S
NEXT?



DIFFERENT
IS NOT
DANGEROUS



was put it on the shoulders of the population, make them pay for it, not the rich speculators, we want to preserve their rights. That's the way the Constitution was framed. The population wanted paper money, so the currency would be inflated, kind of pay off the debts, the speculators would suffer from it, but the population would gain. That was one major part of the formation of the Constitution.

Another part was Madison's realization that the Senate should represent the wealth of the nation, the most responsible group of men, those who have sympathy with property owners and their rights. So the Senate was given the major power among the various components of the government. It was not elected, it was picked by electors from the legislature who could be trusted to make sure that the wealthy would be in charge. And many other measures were proposed with the main purpose of preventing democracy, even large legislative districts, where people wouldn't be able to get together. Remember, this is the days of the horse and carriage, hard to get around.

Lots of detailed measures were taken to reduce the threat of democracy and to carry out the framers' coup against democracy. But there was a problem, the population didn't accept it. You had lots of ferment, the kinds of things that Howard Zinn was talking about, uprisings, efforts to win more democratic rights took all sorts and forms. And this struggle is going on throughout American history. The Supreme Court, which you mentioned, is a good example. The Supreme Court has overwhelmingly been on the side of wealth and power, not totally, there were breaks, but that's been the strong tendency, as a conservative institution. Actually, the Constitution does not say anything about the Supreme Court having the right of judicial review, having the authority to cancel legislation. That was just introduced by the Court itself under

Chief Justice Marshall years later, it's become the convention since. But these are all constant struggles.

And it's not just the courts and the government. It's also private power, which is enormous, has an immense influence on the government. Very recently, another high-level paper came out, a serious analysis, as far as I saw, it was reported only in the *London Financial Times*, giving much more sophisticated and detailed evidence to support what has been shown pretty effectively for a long time, that most of the population has no influence whatsoever on governmental decisions. Maybe the top 10%, and of them, a very small fraction, in fact. Well, that's quite apart from the formal constitutional structure. And, of course, during the neoliberal period, the last 40 years, all of this has been strongly enhanced.

One of the major effects of the neoliberal period has been, as is well known, to have sharply concentrated wealth, while much of the population stagnates. That has an immediate effect on undermining of democratic decision making, for perfectly obvious reasons. There was a pretty remarkable study, which should be better known, on the transfer of wealth from the working class and the middle class to the extreme wealthy during the years since Reagan. The ultra-respectable RAND Corporation came out with an estimate of what they call the "transfer of wealth." We should call it "The robbery of the population by the very rich." Their estimate is, in the last 40 years, \$47 trillion. That's not small change. And it's an underestimate because it doesn't include lots of other things.

Reagan opened the spigot on all sorts of other ways to rob the public, like tax havens, shell companies, other devices. Clinton added to it, not only by his radical deregulation of the financial institutions, which just set them into the stratosphere, but also by his so-called

trade agreements, which had nothing much to do with trade, certainly very little to do with free trade, but were highly advantageous to great corporate wealth and very destructive to the working class, as they predicted in advance. And, in fact, this happened.

So there's been this massive robbery of the population for 40 years and that has its effects on the way the government works. That's why you end up with, say, 90% of the population being basically unrepresented. And these struggles go on constantly. They're going to go on in the post-pandemic world. It's a radical class struggle, but one element in the struggle is always fighting, the business world. They're dedicated, they never stop. They didn't stop during the New Deal, continued, continued afterwards, always going on. Unless working people, the general population, take part in the class struggle, they're going to get it in the neck. **Z**



The Biden Climate Plan, Part 1: What It Proposes

By Jeremy Brecher



Political platforms and campaign promises are notoriously prone to abandonment or perversion. Yet they also set much of the framework for political debate and governance. For those who advocate the goals of the Green New Deal, holding political leaders like President-elect Joe Biden accountable to the best of their campaign commitments can sometimes be a significant means of affecting what they actually do.

The purpose of this commentary is not to rate the Biden climate plan, but to identify those parts of it that provide genuine opportunities for the climate protection and social redistribution goals of the Green New Deal and those parts that provide dangerous handles for false flag, phony climate advocates who want to pervert these goals for their own ends.

That struggle has already begun. For example, the Biden plan stated flatly that his presidency would end fossil fuel subsidies. Then, in the midst of the Democratic convention, the Democratic National Committee said that on the contrary fossil fuel subsidies would continue. Then Biden's staff said that Biden's position was unchanged and that he would end fossil fuel subsidies. This episode provides one dramatic preview of the struggles that lie ahead.

The Biden administration is coming to power in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the resulting COVID economic crisis, a contested election, and the resulting constitutional crisis. Its first months are likely to be shaped by the need for an emergency response. Its later development will depend on the interaction of popular movements with the machinations of their enemies—and no doubt the emergence

of unanticipated factors that are now beyond prediction. Nonetheless, Biden's campaign platform is likely to set much of the frame for climate policy and provide opportunities for both the supporters and the opponents of genuine climate and worker protection.

Frame

The Biden "Plan for Climate Change and Environmental Justice" opens with a forthright statement of the climate threat.

From coastal towns to rural farms to urban centers, climate change poses an existential threat—not just to our environment, but to our health, our communities, our national security, and our economic well-being. It also damages our communities with storms that wreak havoc on our towns and cities and our homes and schools. It puts our national security at risk.

If the global temperature continues to increase at the current rate and surpasses 1.5°C, "the existential threat to life will not be limited to just ecological systems, but will extend to human life as well." The opening sections of the Biden plan lay out a frightening litany of facts on the devastating effects of climate change.

By starting from the existential threat of climate change, the Biden plan defines climate protection not just as one item on a long list of desirable objectives, but as an existential necessity.

To address the climate emergency, the Biden plan promises to ensure that the U.S. "will eliminate GHG emissions in the power sector by 2035" and achieve a "100% clean energy economy and net-zero emissions no later than 2050." It is important to note that a "clean energy economy" is sometimes defined to include such technologies as nuclear energy

ENOUGH
IS
ENOUGH
MY
GRANDCHILDREN
DESERVE
A FUTURE



THERE
IS
**NO
FUTURE**
ON A DEAD PLANET



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BOI

and carbon capture and sequestration (CCS, sometimes touted as “clean coal”). Likewise, “net-zero emissions” can mean continued GHG emissions that are compensated for by the withdrawal of comparable quantities of GHGs from the atmosphere. Biden’s 100% target probably meets the requirements of the Paris climate agreement but far less rapidly than the targets proposed in the Green New Deal resolution sponsored by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Ed Markey.

The Biden plan describes the Green New Deal as a “crucial framework for meeting the climate challenges we face.” In particular it holds that “our environment and our economy are completely and totally connected.” The Biden plan addresses fears that climate policy will threaten jobs by emphasizing climate protection as a means for creating jobs and “the new economy of the future.” The response to climate change can create “more than 10 million well-paying jobs.”

The Biden climate plan frame provides a basis for demanding climate policy accountability. Whatever happens, advocates of worker-friendly climate protection can demand that this existential threat be met, and can fight any policies that fail to meet it.

Executive Action

The Biden plan pledges that on its first day the Biden administration will sign a series of new executive orders to use the “full authority of the executive branch” to significantly reduce emissions. These will include:

- Methane pollution limits
- Federal procurement system to drive toward 100% clean energy and zero-emis-

sions vehicles

- Clean Air Act implementation and fuel economy standards
- 100% new light and medium duty vehicles electrified
- Advanced biofuels
- Appliance and building efficiency standards
- Consider greenhouse gas emissions in federal infrastructure investment
- Require any federal permitting decision to consider the effects of greenhouse gas emissions and climate change
- Companies disclose climate risks and greenhouse gas emissions in their operations and supply chains
- Conserve 30% of American’s lands and waters by 2030
- Permanently protect Arctic National Wildlife Refuge
- Ban new oil and gas permitting on public lands and waters
- Modifying royalties to account for climate costs

These provide a specific set of day-one promises for unilateral presidential action to which the new president can and should be held accountable. Taken together they could make significant reductions in GHG emissions, though their impact will depend on the nitty-gritty details of the executive orders and their execution.

Congressional Action

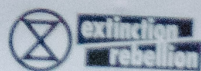
The prospects for Congressional action on climate are very much up in the air, but Biden’s proposals are at the least likely to shape the debate. The Biden plan demands

NO SUCH
THING AS
GREEN
CAPITALISM

CAPITALISM
+ COLONIALISM
= CLIMATE CRISIS

A young woman with glasses and a grey beanie is the central figure, holding a white protest sign with both hands. She is wearing a light-colored raincoat. To her left, another person is partially visible, wearing a pink scarf and holding a teal umbrella. To her right, another person is partially visible, wearing glasses and holding a dark umbrella. The background shows a large, ornate building with arched windows, suggesting a city square or government building. The scene is rainy, with water droplets visible on the umbrellas and the woman's face.

**STOP
FUNDING
THE
CLIMATE
CRISIS**



that the new Congress pass a three-part program in its first year.

Enforcement: The first part is an “enforcement mechanism” to achieve “legally-binding emissions reductions.” This mechanism will be based on the principles that “polluters must bear the full cost of the carbon pollution they are emitting” and that emissions reduction must be “economy-wide” rather than affecting “just a few sectors.”

The enforcement mechanism must achieve net-zero emissions no later than 2050. The mechanism must include milestone targets for 2025. Those targets are not spelled out and will undoubtedly be an important subject of conflict.

The nature of this “enforcement mechanism” is also not spelled out. If it is to achieve “legally-binding emissions reductions” reaching net-zero by 2050, it must legally require GHG emitters to reduce their collective emissions at the rate necessary to reach that goal. Significantly, frequently proposed mechanisms sometimes referred to as “market-based,” such as cap-and-trade, carbon taxes, and carbon offsets, are not mentioned, though they are not explicitly excluded. The plan touts the Obama Clean Power Plan and a variety of its “green” regulatory and investment policies, and proposes many additional regulatory and investment programs to reduce GHG emissions.

The plan says it will “hold polluters accountable.” “Allowing corporations to continue to pollute—affecting the health and safety of both their workers and surrounding communities—without consequences perpetuates an egregious abuse of power.” Biden will direct his EPA and Justice Department to “pursue these cases to the fullest extent permitted by law and, when needed, seek additional legislation as needed to hold corporate executives personally accountable—including jail time where merited.” (The Obama

Clean Power Plan provided standards for total emissions reductions within a state, but not for individual or corporate polluters.) Such legal accountability for GHG emissions could be a powerful means of climate protection. It is not stated on whom legal requirements will be enforced and how required reductions will be determined.

Investment in research: The Biden plan will invest \$400 billion over ten years in “clean energy research and innovation.” It will establish ARPA-C, an Advanced Research Projects Agency focused on climate. Its research agenda will represent an “all the above” approach that includes many environmentally-sound strategies like carbon-neutral buildings and half-a-million electric vehicle charging stations but also many more questionable ones like nuclear reactors and carbon capture and storage. (The looming struggle over these techniques will be discussed in the next commentary.) The research agenda includes:

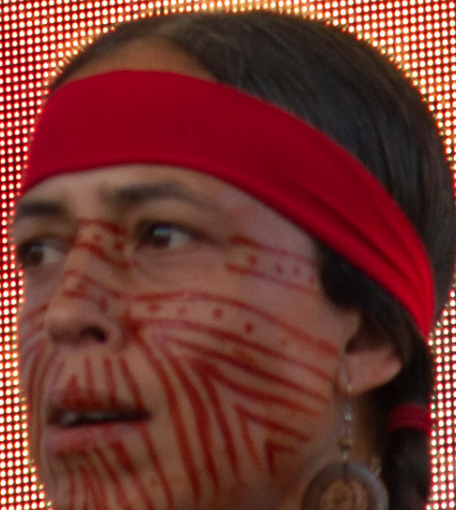
- grid-scale storage
- small modular nuclear reactors
- zero net energy buildings
- using renewables to produce carbon-free hydrogen
- decarbonizing industrial heat
- carbon-neutral construction materials
- decarbonizing the food and agriculture sector
- leveraging agriculture to remove carbon dioxide from the air and store it in the ground
- new, sustainable fuels for aircraft

Deployment: First-year legislation will provide incentives for the rapid “deployment” of clean energy technology innovations across the economy, “especially in communities most impacted by climate change.” Every infrastructure investment that receives federal funding “should reduce climate pollution” as

CLIMATE
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EXTERMINATION
By
CAPITALISM



much as possible. How such reductions will be evaluated and enforced is not spelled out.

The plan proposes to reduce the carbon footprint of the U.S. building stock 50% by 2035. It will fund states and cities to adopt strict building codes and train builders and inspectors. It will make housing for low-income communities more efficient; provide incentives for “deep retrofits”; and encourage “denser, more affordable housing near public transit.”

The plan proposes “empowering local communities to develop transportation solutions,” including such options as transit, dedicated bicycle and pedestrian thoroughfares, and first- and last-mile connections. It will modify local transportation funding to increase flexibility for state and local governments. It will restore incentives for electric vehicles and establish 500,000 new public charging outlets by the end of 2030. It will fund expansion and modernization of passenger and freight rail systems.

The plan will invest in “climate-friendly farming” such as methane digesters and conservation programs for cover crops and other practices “aimed at restoring the soil and building soil carbon.”

The plan proposes a national strategy to develop a low-carbon manufacturing sector in every state. It will connect research universities, community colleges, incubators and accelerators, manufacturing institutes and employers, unions, and state and local governments. It will provide tax credits and subsidies for businesses to “upgrade equipment and processes, invest in expanded or new factories, and deploy low-carbon technologies.” These credits and subsidies will only be available as long as “all stakeholders are part of the process of determining a bottom-line win for jobs, workers, clean energy, and long-term community investment.” The details of that process are not spelled out. No plans de-

scribe “deployment” of the more questionable technologies included in the research agenda, such as nuclear reactors and carbon capture and storage.

While the Biden plan is not as comprehensive as that proposed in the Democratic primaries by Jay Inslee or as radical as Bernie Sanders’ plan, it has the potential to make very substantial reductions in GHG emissions while creating substantial numbers of climate jobs and a more equal society. Its frequent vagueness, however, also leaves open possibilities for inadequate GHG reductions and harmful policies. **Z**

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BODY
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I BELIEF
IN US!!!

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THE BOAT**

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