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Chomsky: Republicans Willing to Destroy De- mocracy to Retake Power



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Canada Is Waging an All-Front Legal War Against Indigenous People

By Justin Podur

Canada is developing a new image: one of burning churches, toppling statues, and mass graves. There are thousands more unmarked graves, thousands more Indigenous children killed at residential schools, remaining to be unearthed. There can be no denying that this is Canada, and it has to change. But can Canada transform itself for the better? If the rev-

elation of the mass killing of Indigenous children is to lead to any actual soul-searching and any meaningful change, the first order of business is for Canada to stop its all-front war against First Nations. Much of that war is taking place through the legal system.

Canadian politicians have said as much, adopting a motion in June calling for the government to stop fighting residential school survivors in court. A long-standing demand, it has been repeated by Indigenous advocates who have expressed amazement in the face of these horrific revelations that the Canadian government would nonetheless continue to fight Indigenous survivors of systematic child abuse by the state.

To get a sense of the scope of Canada's legal war on First Nations, I looked at a Canadian legal database containing decisions (case law) pertaining to First Nations. I also looked at the hearing lists of the Federal Court of Canada for ongoing cases. My initial goal was to identify where Canada could easily settle or abandon cases, bringing about a harmonious solution to these conflicts. Two things surprised me.

The first was the volume and diversity of lawsuits Canada is fighting. Canada is fighting First Nations ev-

erywhere, on an astoundingly wide range of issues.

The second thing: Canada is losing.

The Attack on Indigenous Children and Women

In his 1984 essay "Pioneering' in the Nuclear Age," political theorist Eqbal Ahmad argued that the "four fundamental elements... without which an indigenous community cannot survive" were "land, water, leaders and culture." Canada fights Indigenous people over land, water, fishing rights, mining projects, freedom of movement, and more. The assault on Indigenous nations is also a war against Indigenous children and women.

In the high-profile case of *First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada et al. v. Attorney General of Canada*, laid out in detail by Cindy Blackstock, "the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations filed a complaint under the Canadian Human Rights Act alleging" in 2007 "that the Government of Canada had a longstanding pattern of providing less government funding for child welfare services to First Nations children on

reserves than is provided to non-Aboriginal children.” The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) found in favor of the First Nations complainants in 2016.

Note that this isn’t about the history of residential schools. It’s about discrimination against Indigenous kids in the present day. “In fact, the problem might be getting worse,” writes Blackstock, compared to “the height of residential school operations.” As evidence, she refers to a 2005 study of three sample provinces showing a wide gap between the percent of First Nations children in child welfare care (10.23 percent) compared to a much lower rate for non-First Nations children (0.67 percent). In 2006, following the Canadian government’s repeated failures to act on the inequity described in this report (which also included comprehensive suggested reforms that had both moral and economic appeal), Blackstock writes, “the Caring Society and the Assembly of First Nations agreed that legal action was required.” The CHRT was very clear in its 2019 decision that the federal government should compensate each victim the maximum amount, which addressed the victims as follows: “No amount of compensation can ever recover what you have lost,

the scars that are left on your souls or the suffering that you have gone through as a result of racism, colonial practices and discrimination.”

In May 2021, Canada, which has spent millions of dollars fighting this case, tried to overturn the CHRT’s ruling.

Canada’s war on Indigenous children is also a war on Indigenous women. The sterilization of Indigenous women, beginning with Canada’s eugenics program around 1900, is another act of genocide, as scholar Karen Stote has argued. Indigenous women who had tubal ligation without their consent as part of this eugenics program have brought a class-action suit against the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia, both of which had Sexual Sterilization Acts in their provincial laws from the 1920s in Alberta and 1930s in British Columbia until the early 1970s, and Saskatchewan, where sexual sterilization legislation was proposed but failed by one vote in 1930. A Senate committee found a case of forced sterilization of an Indigenous woman as recently as 2019.

The Legal-Financial War on First Nations Organiza-

tions

As Bob Joseph outlines in his 2018 book *21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act*, Canada first gave itself the right to decide Indian status in the Gradual Civilization Act of 1857, which created a process by which Indigenous people could give up their Indian status and so become “enfranchised”—which they would have to do if they wanted to attend higher education or become professionals. The apartheid system was updated through the Indian Act of 1876, from which sprang many evils including both the residential schools and the assertion of Canadian control over the way First Nations govern themselves. In 1927, when Indigenous veterans of World War I began to hold meetings with one another to discuss their situation, Canada passed laws forbidding Indigenous people from political organization and from raising funds to hire legal counsel (and from playing billiards, among other things). The Indian Act—which is still in effect today with amendments, despite multiple attempts to repeal it—outlawed traditional governance structures and gave Canada the power to intervene to remove and install Indigenous governance authorities at will—which

Canada did continuously, from Six Nations in 1924 to Barriere Lake in 1995. As a result, at any given moment, many First Nations are still embroiled in lawsuits over control of their own governments.

Canada controls the resources available to First Nations, including drinking water. In another national embarrassment, Canada has found itself able to provision drinking water to diamond mines but not First Nations. This battle too has entered the courts, with a class-action suit by Tataskweyak Cree Nation, Curve Lake First Nation, and Neskantaga First Nation demanding that Canada not only compensate their nations, but also work with them to build the necessary water systems.

Canada dribbles out humiliating application processes by which Indigenous people can try to exercise their human right to housing. When combined with the housing crisis on reserves, these application processes have attracted swindlers like consultant Jerry Paulin, who sued Cat Lake First Nation for \$1.2 million, claiming that his efforts were the reason the First Nation received federal funds for urgent housing repairs.

Canada uses the threat of withdrawal of these funds to impose stringent financial “transparency” conditions on

First Nations—the subject of legal struggle, in which Cold Lake First Nations has argued that the financial transparency provisions violate their rights. Canada has used financial transparency claims to put First Nations finances under third-party management, withholding and misusing the funds in a not-very-transparent way, as the Algonquins of Barriere Lake charged in another lawsuit. An insistence on transparency is astounding for a country that buried massive numbers of Indigenous children in unmarked graves.

Win or lose, the lawsuits themselves impose high costs on First Nations whose finances are, for the most part, controlled by Canada. The result is situations like the one where the Beaver Lake Cree are suing Canada for costs because they ran out of money suing Canada for their land. When First Nations are winning in court, Canada tries to bankrupt them before they get there.

Land and Resources Are the Core of the Struggle

The core issue between Canada and First Nations is land. Most battles are over the land on which the state of Canada sits, all of which was

stolen and much of which was swindled through legal processes that couldn’t hold up to scrutiny and are now unraveling. “[I]n simple acreage,” the late Indigenous leader Arthur Manuel wrote in the 2017 book *The Reconciliation Manifesto*, this was “the biggest land theft in the history of mankind,” reducing Indigenous people from holding 100 percent of the landmass to 0.2 percent. One of the most economically important pieces of land is the Haldimand tract in southern Ontario, which generates billions of dollars in revenue that belongs, by right, to the Six Nations, as Phil Monture has extensively documented. Six Nations submitted ever-more detailed land claims, until Canada simply stopped accepting them. But in July, their sustained resistance led to the cancellation of a planned suburban development (read: settlement) on Six Nations land.

Many of the First Nations court battles are defensive. Namgis, Ahousaht, Dza-wada’enuxw, and Gwa’sala-’Nakwaxda’xw First Nations have tried to defend their wild fisheries against encroachment and pollution by settler fish farms. West Moberly, Long Plain, Peguis, Roseau River Anishinabe, Aroland, Ginoogaming, Squamish, Coldwater,

Tsleil-Waututh, Aitchelitz, Skowkale, and Shxw̓ha:y Village First Nations challenged dams and pipelines. Canada has a history of “pouring big money” into these court battles to the tune of tens of millions—small money compared to its tens of billions subsidizing and taking over financially unviable pipelines running through Indigenous lands—including that of the Wet’suwet’en, whose resistance sparked mass protests across Canada in 2020. The duty to consult First Nations on such projects is itself the outcome of a legal struggle, won in the 2004 decision in *Haida Nation v. British Columbia*.

First Nations who were swindled or coerced out of their lands (or water, as with Iskatewizaagegan No. 39 Independent First Nation’s case against Winnipeg and Ontario for illegally taking their water from Shoal Lake for use by the city of Winnipeg starting in 1913) fight for their land back, for compensation, or both. The Specific Claims Tribunal has 132 ongoing cases. In Saskatchewan in May, the tribunal awarded Mosquito Grizzly Bear’s Head Lean Man First Nation \$141 million and recognition that they never surrendered their land as Canada had claimed they had in 1905. In June, Heiltsuk First Nation won a part of

their land back.

First Nations also fight for their fishing rights in courts and out on the water, as settler fishers have physically attacked and tried to intimidate Mi’kmaw fishers on Canada’s east coast. In June, on the west coast, after the British Columbia Court of Appeals found against Canada, the federal government announced it wouldn’t appeal, dropping a 15-year litigation that restricted Nuuchahnulth First Nations fishing quotas.

Decolonization Just Might Be Inevitable

Why does Canada keep fighting (and losing) even as its legitimacy as a state built on theft and genocide crumbles? It’s not merely the habits of centuries. It’s also the absence of any project besides the displacement of First Nations and the plunder of the land. Canada could take the first step to ending all this by declaring a unilateral ceasefire in the legal war. Too few Canadians understand that this would actually be a very good thing. First Nations lived sustainably for thousands of years in these extraordinary northern ecosystems. Then the European empires arrived, bringing

smallpox and tuberculosis among other scourges. Local extinctions of beaver and buffalo quickly followed, as well as the total extinction of the passenger pigeon. Today’s settler state has poisoned pristine lakes with mine tailings, denuded the country’s spectacular forests, and gifted the atmosphere some of the world’s highest per capita carbon emissions (seventh in the world in 2018—more than Saudi Arabia, which was 10th, and the U.S., which was 11th). Indigenous visionaries have better ideas, such as those presented by Leanne Betasamosake Simpson and Arthur Manuel, or for that matter the Red Deal and the People’s Agreement of Cochabamba.

Under Indigenous sovereignty, Canadians could truly be guests of the First Nations, capable of fulfilling their obligations to their hosts and their hosts’ lands, rather than the pawns of the settler state’s war against those from whom the land was stolen. **Z**

This article was produced by Globetrotter.

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Kneeling against Racism: Solidarity in EURO 2020 Should Not be “Controversial”

By Ramzy Baroud

Another football “controversy” has started when football players participating in the ongoing UEFA Euro 2020, knelt down during national anthems to protest racism, a serious problem that has plagued football stadiums for many years.

Yet, while some players chose to kneel down, others opted not to, offering flimsy excuses as “players weren’t ready,” and “politics should stay out of football.” Racism in sports is real, though it cannot be separated from racism within society. In fact, the reactions to the moral stances

taken by some players were reflections of how rightwing, populist and chauvinistic movements wield such massive influence over various European societies, to the extent that these movements often define mainstream political sensibilities.

For example, the French national team, comprising largely black and Muslim French players, came under attack led by rightwing politicians and media outlets to the point that, on June 15, the entire team decided not to take a knee at the start of their matches, likely fearing racist repercussions.

In the French example, racism in sports prevailed over the anti-racism sentiments. Worse, the country’s highest football association, the French Football Federation (FFF), does not even acknowledge the necessity to discuss the issue. FFF president, Noel Le Graet, was quoted as saying that racism “does not exist,” following an incident last September during the Marseille-Paris Saint Germain game, when the Brazilian Neymar was called a “monkey motherf---er” during a scuffle.

Not only are racist incidents in football games on the rise and well-documented in France and elsewhere, the “monkey” slur is particularly popular among European

football fans who, sometimes in groups, carry out what is known as “monkey chanting,” which specifically target black and other dark skin players. When the despicable practice in Italy finally received national attention, an Italian court dismissed the case as “unfounded,” and fans who were caught “monkey chanting” on camera were “unconditionally acquitted.”

This in mind, it was unfortunate that only half of the Italian team took a knee during their game against Wales on June 20, and eventually, they decided not to kneel down at all in a later game. It is telling that, while racism in sports continues to prevail, anti-racist gestures are considered unnecessary and divisive.

The truth is that football, like any other sport, is a reflection of our societies, our unities and divisions, our economic privileges and socio-economic inequalities, our strong communal bonds and, yes, our racism. Instead of attempting to fully understand and, when necessary, alter these relationships, some conveniently opt to ignore them altogether.

Assertions such as “sports and politics must not mix” are not only wishful thinking—as they ignore the fundamental premise that sports are a direct expression of reality—they are also underhanded as

they are meant to divert attention from core issues that should concern everyone.

This misleading logic falls within the same category of the phrase “all lives matter” in response to the legitimate outcry for racial justice under the banner, “black lives matter.” The latter is meant to illustrate—in fact, challenge—racism and violence, which disproportionately target black people in the United States specifically because of their skin color; while the former, although technically accurate, is meant to delude and undermine the urgency of confronting systemic racism.

When American football player Colin Kaepernick kneeled down in 2016 to protest racial injustice, he did mean to be disruptive, not to “disgrace” American “values” and “symbols,” but to force millions of people out of their comfort zone to contend with far more consequential questions than winning or losing a football match. His statement was an act of protest against the mistreatment of black communities across the U.S. As a black man with access to media platforms, it was his moral duty to speak out. He did. But that wholly symbolic, non-violent act was perceived by many in government, media and society as a treasonous one, which ultimately cost the athlete his

career.

The entire episode, which reverberated across the world and the violent, often racist, responses to it were all political, unwittingly proving, once more, that the relationship between politics and human rights, on the one hand, and sports, on the other, are impossible to separate. Interestingly, those who insisted that Kaepernick has violated the sanctity of sports have no qualms with other, essentially political acts throughout football: the national anthem, the endless display of flags, the nationalist chants, of soldiers being honored for their services in various wars and, at times, of air force fighting jets flying overhead, intoxicating the crowds with the might and power of the U.S. military. Why are nationalistic politics acceptable while a single black man kneeling down to shed light on the plight of the innocent victims of police brutality is perceived to be an act of treason?

Whether it is convenient or not, sports is rife with political symbols and is a reflection of existing realities: inequalities, racism and more. It can also be a source of harmony and unity. In fact, sometimes it is, as was the heartwarming exchange between Portuguese international player, Cristiano Ronaldo, and Iranian footballer, Ali Daei,

when, on June 24, Ronaldo equalized the international goal record of Daei. It can also be a reflection of rooted socio-political ailments, such as racism.

Racism is a political disease, like cancerous cells spreading across the body, or body politic of society. It has to be stopped, on and off the field. While taking the knee will not end racism, it is meant to serve as a conversation starter, a moral stance by players and a meaningful gesture of camaraderie and humanity. **Z**

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Fed Up With Democrats, Thousands

March to Demand Medicare for All

By Sonali Kolhatkar

Activists in more than 50 cities across the United States marched and rallied on July 24 to demand a Medicare for All or single-payer health care system. With Congress and the White House more focused on passing an infrastructure bill, conducting an investigation into the January 6 Capitol riot, and reforming our immigration system, the issue of health care has once more been relegated to the backburner. There is nary a peep from most lawmakers on the fact that, even as the pandemic rages on, nearly 30 million Americans remain uninsured (as per the latest available data), and millions more are underinsured.

To be fair, President Joe Biden has done what he promised to do during his campaign, which is to preserve and strengthen the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and effectively expand private health insurance coverage via subsidies. The ACA is not designed to cover all people with the best and most afford-

able health care. Biden's major legislative achievement thus far, the American Rescue Plan, included more government subsidies for private health insurance plans to cover unemployed Americans while leaving millions more out of the equation. Neither the ACA nor the American Rescue Plan's health care provisions ensure that all Americans have good-quality free health care.

The only assurance is that private insurance company profits remain healthy. Earlier this summer, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) launched a campaign to encourage Americans to sign up for private insurance through HealthCare.gov (perhaps a more appropriate address for the website would be HealthInsurance.gov). The Biden administration celebrated the fact that 2 million more Americans were able to purchase low-cost or no-cost private health insurance plans or sign up under expanded Medicaid programs. The insurance industry front group Partnership for America's Health Care Future echoed that number as an achievement to celebrate. But neither made mention of the tens of millions who remain uninsured and underinsured. There is even less acknowledgment of the fact that tax dollars are subsidizing corpo-

rate profits for what is often mediocre health care coverage.

This is not surprising given that the federal government treats the health care needs of ordinary Americans as an optional luxury item that can be supplied by the market. For example, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) refers to those needing health care (i.e., all human beings) as "consumers" whom the government agency advises ought to "maximize the savings on their Marketplace coverage" when shopping for ACA plans. In a press release lauding the American Rescue Plan, CMS uses the word "consumers" nearly a dozen times. Rethinking health care as an essential need like education or emergency services will require a major cultural shift among public servants.

Proponents of Medicare for All are constantly told it would be far too expensive to extend a government program intended for those 65 and older to everyone else. But a fact that has received little attention is that nearly half of all Americans are already getting health care through some form of government programs or subsidy. An analysis published on Quartz found that 161 million Americans are now receiving health care through Medicare, Medicaid,

the Veterans Health Administration, or CHIP, the Child Health Insurance Program.

Those who do not qualify for these programs are forced to acquire private health insurance through employment and pay varying amounts out of pocket for hefty premiums, deductibles and copayments, poor prescription drug coverage, lifetime limits on coverage, etc. Such a patchwork system does little more than ensure large profits for private health insurance companies. Worse, it ties millions of people to jobs they may dislike, or forces them to settle for poor coverage that may not even be adequate for the care they need.

For those who are left out of the system entirely, there is no government answer other than to ‘sink or swim.’ A recent *Wall Street Journal* analysis found that hospitals engage in serious price gouging of the uninsured, charging them far higher prices than they would charge an insurance company for a patient who was covered.

Dr. Paul Song, a board-certified radiation oncologist and president of the California Chapter of Physicians for a National Health Program, was a featured speaker at the Los Angeles rally and march for Medicare for All on July 24. He explained to me after the event that “people are

frustrated” about the fact that “we’ve had so many people succumb to COVID in the United States, and it has really illustrated how broken our health care system is.” The march organizers and attendees wanted to send a message that “we’re not going away; we demand better,” he said.

One of the few reports on the Medicare for All marches published by a major corporate-media outlet was this one by David Weigel of the *Washington Post* who wrote that six months into the Biden administration, “the movement to replace American health care with a cheaper single-payer system has vanished from daily political debate.” He’s right. After Biden emerged as a centrist alternative to Senator Bernie Sanders—one of the most stalwart proponents of single-payer—during last year’s presidential primaries, the next best hope for organizers lay in the appointment of California Attorney General Xavier Becerra to lead the HHS. Becerra’s support of single-payer health care offered the promise of federal waivers for states looking to expand government-run health care. So far, even that has not transpired.

Weigel noted that Sanders’s 2016 campaign for president “inarguably pushed single-payer health care into the Democratic Party main-

stream,” and as a result, “most of the senators who would run for president in 2020 endorsed it.” Arguments over whether a single-payer system was better than the current patchwork of private-public health care “dominated months of primary debates,” he wrote. Polls showed this was an issue deeply important to Democratic voters, and yet once Democrats assumed power in the White House, Senate, and House of Representatives, the only focus on health care was to entrench and safeguard the ACA while ignoring the health care crisis affecting millions of uninsured and underinsured.

The contradictions are starker in California, where Democrats have a far more comfortable margin of power than their federal counterparts in DC. “You hear crickets right now,” said Song, referring to California Democrats who were vocal about supporting single-payer health care under Republican governors whose veto they could count on, but who are reliably silent when they have the votes to pass a bill. California’s Democratic Governor Gavin Newsom sailed into power on a platform of supporting Medicare for All and said during his campaign in 2017, “There’s no reason to wait around on universal health care and

single-payer in California... you have my firm and absolute commitment as your next governor that I will lead the effort to get it done.” Today, California Democrats enjoy a supermajority in the state Assembly and Senate and have an ostensible supporter of a single-payer health care bill as governor. But a bill to advance a single-payer system in the Assembly emerged this year only to be shelved a few months later until next year. Newsom appointed a commission to study the issue, but so far, nothing concrete has emerged.

Five years after he first made his campaign promises, Newsom is facing a Republican-led recall effort with a shockingly tepid 50 percent of likely voters supporting him versus 47 percent who are willing to vote him out. One can only wonder how much more support Newsom would be enjoying in the heavily Democratic California had he shown more leadership on his health care promises. Song, who says he supports the governor remaining in office, says, “we should push him to live up to his campaign promises, not only to fight off this recall but to really move California forward.”

The moral of the story is that Democratic Party lawmakers at the state and federal level have often pledged

loyalty to issues like Medicare for All when running for office or when governing as a minority party and promptly switched allegiance to the private insurance industry once in office or when their party holds enough of a majority to do something about it. No wonder voters are pissed off and marching in the streets. **Z**

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

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Climate: We are Not Doing Enough

By John Scales Avery

The Keeling Curve continues to rise steadily

Measurements of the carbon dioxide content of the

earth’s atmosphere as a function of time have been made ever since 1958 at the Mauna Loa Observatory in Hawaii. The resulting graph is called the “Keeling Curve,” in honor of Charles David Keeling, who started the monitoring and continued it until his death in 2005.

Despite promises made at the 2015 Paris Conference, despite global concern about the threat of catastrophic climate change, despite massive worldwide protests organized by Greta Thunberg and her Fridays For The Future movement, despite the reduced emissions resulting from the COVID-19 lockdown, the Keeling Curve continues to rise steadily, and the carbon dioxide content of the earth’s atmosphere continues to rise steadily. The rate at which the curve is rising is even increasing. We must conclude that despite all promises of action, we are not doing enough.

Two time-scales

One important reason why it is so hard to mobilize the political will needed for effective action is a contrast between two time-scales. Immediate action is essential in order to avoid feedback loops and tipping points which would make human efforts to avoid catastrophic climate

change useless. On the other hand, the most serious effects of climate change lie in the distant future. We see what is near to us. We tend to confine our attention to problems that are close at hand.

Decisions Based on Economics

Economists tend to be shortsighted, or stated more accurately, they are deliberately shortsighted. Endless economic growth on a finite planet is a logical impossibility. Economists avoid confronting this impossibility by refusing to look more than a decade or two into the future. But with the threat of climate catastrophe, it is precisely the long-term future that must concern us. Therefore we cannot trust economists, or those influenced by them, to make correct decisions regarding the climate emergency.

Recent events

Two recent events have helped to make us realize the urgency of the climate crisis. The first is the leaking of a 4,000-page report by the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The report was not due to be released

until February, 2022, but a copy was leaked to Agence France-Presse. The report calls for a total transformation of our way of life if we wish to avoid catastrophe.

The report states that “We need transformational change operating on processes and behavior at all levels: individual, communities, business, institutions and governments. We must redefine our way of life and consumption.”

The second recent event that helped to wake us up to the seriousness of the climate emergency was a record-breaking wave of extreme heat in the western part of the United States and in south-west Canada. Unprecedented temperatures were recorded, roughly a billion tidal animals died, and many human heat-related deaths also occurred.

Extremely severe recent floods in western Europe and in China are also thought to be linked to climate change.

A Worst-Case Scenario

Suppose that our collective efforts to avoid catastrophic climate change fail. What then? Will human society as we know it disappear? Will the human race become extinct?

Let me give you my own opinions on these questions. I think that, if catastrophic climate change is not avoided, very many species of plants and animals will become extinct. In fact, this mass extinction has already started. We are already losing species at roughly 1,000 times the natural background rate.

Will humans become extinct? Of course, we know from the geological record that every species eventually becomes extinct, but if we look only a few thousand years into the future, I do not think that humans face extinction.

What I believe will happen (if catastrophic climate change is not avoided) is the following: Most of the earth’s surface will become uninhabitable, starting with tropical regions and regions that are destined to be underwater due to sea level rise. This will lead to a massive refugee crisis, which, like the extinction of animals and plants, has already started.

Although most of the earth’s surface will be uninhabitable, there will still be a few regions where human life is possible, for example the Arctic and Antarctic regions, and high mountain ranges. However, these regions will be small in comparison to our present habitable world, and the global population of hu-

mans will be correspondingly reduced.

Perhaps this worst-case scenario can motivate us to act with far-sighted vision and resolution, while there is still a small window of opportunity.

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Human Progress

By James A. Haught

Enormous human betterment has occurred since The Enlightenment, chiefly because crusading liberals overcame conservative resistance, time after time.

Modern democracy arose because America's radical founders renounced the divine right of kings and took up arms against England and George III. They created government of the people, with no aristocracy.

Slavery ended because radical abolitionists hammered the entrenched institution until the horrible Civil War wiped it out.

Following the new knowledge given to humankind by

Gandhi, many more gains in human rights started to be made with nonviolent struggle instead of war.

Women gained the right to vote because radical suffragettes fought for decades against their inferior status.

Couples gained the right to birth control because radical feminists—especially Margaret Sanger—battled against prudes and the church.

Workers gained the right to organize unions because Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal defeated corporate opposition and legalized it.

Retirees gained Social Security pensions because the progressive New Deal created the safety net program.

Jobless people gained unemployment compensation—and those injured on the job gained worker's compensation—because the New Deal created them too. Additionally, it set the 40-hour work week, banned child labor, and set a minimum wage.

The poor gained welfare protection from the liberal New Deal also.

Censorship of sexy books, magazines and movies was wiped out by progressive court cases. So were bluenose laws forcing stores to close on the Sabbath.

The historic civil rights movement and the progressive Supreme Court under Chief Justice Earl Warren

struck down America's cruel Jim Crow segregation.

The Warren court also ended government-led prayer in schools. And wiped out state laws against birth control. Later liberal justices gave women and girls a right to choose to end pregnancies.

Taboos against lotteries, liquor clubs and other "sins" fell away.

Strides toward universal health care as a human right for everyone included Medicare, Medicaid, Children's Health Insurance, Veterans care, government employees coverage and finally Obamacare.

Conservatives tried to prevent teaching of evolution in public schools, but they failed.

Conservatives tried to block sex education in public schools, but they failed.

Conservatives tried to teach "creation" in public schools, but they failed.

Puritanical right-wingers made racial intermarriage a crime, but the liberal Warren court legalized it.

Puritanical right-wingers jailed gay lovers, but progressives on the high court legalized gay sex.

Fundamentalists fought gay marriage, but Democratic state legislatures and the Supreme Court legalized it.

Humanism means helping people, and secular means

doing it without supernatural religion. Decade after decade, century after century, leftist reformers defeated conservatives to advance secular humanism. At the same time, churches and their magical beliefs faded enormously from western democracies. And recently, international warfare has virtually disappeared.

Pioneer Unitarian minister Theodore Parker said the arc of history bends toward justice—and Martin Luther King Jr., who spent young years as a Unitarian, adopted the phrase masterfully.

The past shows a clear pattern of human progress—of civilization bending toward justice. Let's hope it continues. **Z**

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We Need Genuine International Cooperation to Tackle the Climate Crisis

Noam Chomsky interviewed by C.J. Polychroniou

C.J. Polychroniou: Climate emergency facts are piling up almost on a daily basis—extreme heat waves in various parts of the U.S. and Canada, with temperatures rising even above 49 degrees Celsius (over 120 degrees Fahrenheit); deadly floods in western Europe, with close to 200 dead and hundreds remaining unaccounted for in the flooding; and Moscow experienced its second-hottest June. In fact, the extreme weather conditions even have climate scientists surprised, and they are now wondering about the accuracy of prediction models. What are your thoughts on these matters? It appears that the world is losing the war against global warming.

Noam Chomsky: You probably remember that three years ago, Oxford physicist Raymond Pierrehumbert, a lead author of the just-released Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, wrote that “it’s time to panic.... We are in deep trouble.”

What has been learned since only intensifies that warning. An IPCC draft report leaked to Agence France-Presse in June 2021 listed irreversible tipping points that are ominously close, warning of “progressively serious, cen-

turies-long and, in some cases, irreversible consequences.”

Last November 3 was a narrow escape from what might well have been indescribable disaster. Another four years of Trump’s passionate racing to the abyss might have reached those tipping points. And if the denialist party returns to power, it may be too late to panic. We are indeed in deep trouble.

The leaked IPCC draft was from before the extreme weather events of summer 2021, which shocked climate scientists. Heating of the planet “is pretty much in line with climate model predictions from decades ago,” climate scientist Michael Mann observed, but “the rise in extreme weather is exceeding the predictions.” The reason seems to be an effect of heating of the atmosphere that had not been considered in climate studies: wobbling of the jet stream, which is causing the extreme events that have plagued much of the world in the past few weeks.

The frightening news has a good side. It may awaken global leaders to recognition of the horrors that they are creating. It’s conceivable that seeing what’s happening before their eyes might induce even the GOP and its Fox News echo chamber to indulge in a glimpse

of reality.

We have seen signs of that in the COVID crisis. After years of immersion in their world of “alternative facts,” some Republican governors who have been mocking precautions are taking notice, now that the plague is striking their own states because of lack of preventive measures and vaccine refusal. As Florida took the lead nationwide in cases and deaths, Governor Ron DeSantis backed way (only partially) from his ridicule—eliciting charges of selling out to the enemy from party stalwarts and perhaps endangering his presidential aspirations. A shift which might, however, be too late to influence the loyal party base that has been subjected to a stream of disinformation.

Possibly the sight of cities drowning and burning up may also dent GOP-Fox loyalty to the slogan “Death to intelligence, Viva death,” borrowed from the annals of fascism.

The denialism of environmental destruction naturally has an impact on public opinion. According to the most recent polls, for 58 percent of Republicans, climate change is “not an important concern.” A little over 40 percent deny that humans make a significant contribution to this impending catastrophe. And 44 percent think that “climate scientists have too much influence on climate policy debates.”

If there ever is a historical reckoning of this critical moment in history—possibly by some alien intelligence after humans have wrecked this planet—and if a Museum of Evil is established in memory of the crime, the GOP-Fox dyad will have a special room in their honor.

Responsibility is far broader, however. There is no space to review the dismal record, but one small item gives the general picture. The indispensable media analysis organization FAIR reports a study comparing coverage on morning TV of the climate crisis with Jeff Bezos’s space launch: 267 minutes in all of 2020 on the most important issue in hu-

man history, 212 minutes on a single day for Bezos’s silly PR exercise.

Returning to your question, humanity is quite clearly losing the war, but it is far from over. A better world is possible, we know how to achieve it, and many good people are actively engaged in the struggle. The crucial message is to panic now, but not to despair.

One of the most worrisome developments regarding the climate crisis is that while virtually all of the published climate science shows the impacts of global warming are increasingly irreversible, climate skepticism and inactivism remain quite widespread. In your view, is climate crisis denial motivated by cultural and economic factors alone, or is there possibly something else also at work? Specifically, I am wondering if there is a connection between postmodern attacks on science and objectivity and climate science denial and inactivism.

There was a skeptical crisis in the 17th century. It was real, a significant moment in intellectual history. It led to a much better understanding of the nature of empirical inquiry. I’m not convinced that the postmodern critique has improved on this.

With regard to your question, I doubt that the postmodern critique has had much of an impact, if any, outside of rather narrow educated circles. The major sources of climate science denial—in fact much broader rejection of science—seem to me to lie elsewhere, deep in the culture.

I was a student 75 years ago. If evolution was brought up in class, it was preceded by what’s now called a trigger warning: “You don’t have to believe this, but you should know what some people believe.” This was in an Ivy League college.

Today, for large parts of the population, deeply held religious commitments conflict

with the results of scientific inquiry. Therefore, science must be wrong, a cult of liberal intellectuals in urban dens of iniquity infected by people who are not “true Americans” (no need to spell out who they are). All of this has been inflamed by the very effective use of irrationality in the Trump era, including his skillful resort to constant fabrication, eroding the distinction between truth and falsehood. For a showman with deeply authoritarian instincts, and few principles beyond self-glorification and abject service to the welfare of the ultrarich, there’s no better slogan than: “Believe me, not your lying eyes.”

The organization that Trump now owns, which years ago was an authentic political party, had already moved on a path that provided a generous welcome to such a figure. We’ve discussed previously how the brief Republican flirtation with reality on environmental destruction during the McCain campaign was quickly terminated by the Koch brothers’ campaign of intimidation. The last time Republican leaders spoke freely without obeisance to Trump, in the 2016 primaries, all were loyal climate denialists, or worse.

Scientists are human. They’re not above criticism, nor their institutions. One can find error, dishonesty, childish feuds, all of the normal human flaws. But to be critical of science as such is to condemn the human quest to understand the world in which we live. And truly to abandon hope.

Many discussions on the climate crisis revolve around “equity” and “justice.” Leaving aside the question of “climate equity vs. climate justice,” especially in the context of the Paris Agreement, how much importance should we assign to these debates in the context of the overall goal of decarbonizing the global economy, which is obviously the only way to tackle the existential crisis of global warming?

It shouldn’t be overlooked that it is the small, very affluent minority, most of them in the rich countries, who have overwhelming responsibility for the environmental crisis, in the past and right now. Decarbonizing and concern for equity and justice, therefore, considerably overlap. Beyond that, even on narrow pragmatic grounds, putting aside moral responsibility, the major socioeconomic changes required for the necessary scale of decarbonization must enlist committed mass popular support, and that will not be achieved without a substantial measure of justice.

Robert Pollin has been making the case for a Global Green New Deal as the only effective way to tackle global warming, and the two of you are co-authors of the recently published work, Climate Crisis and the Global Green New Deal: The Political Economy of Saving the Planet. No doubt, we need internationalism in the fight against climate breakdown because, as you have so aptly put it yourself, it is either “extinction or internationalism.” My question to you is twofold: Firstly, how do you understand “internationalism” in the current historical juncture where, in spite of all of the globalizing processes under way in the course of the past 40 or 50 years, the nation-state remains the central agency? And, secondly, what system changes are required to give “internationalism” a real fighting chance in the war against the apocalyptic consequences of global warming which are already knocking at humanity’s door?

There are many forms of internationalism. It’s worthwhile to think about them. They carry lessons.

One form of internationalism is the specific kind of “globalization” that has been imposed during the neoliberal years through a series of investor-rights agreements masquerading as

free trade. It constitutes a form of class war.

Another form of internationalism is the Axis alliance that brought us World War II. A pale reflection is Trump's sole geostrategic program: construction of an alliance of reactionary states run from Washington, including as one core component the Middle East Abraham Accords and its side agreements with the Egyptian and Saudi dictatorships, taken over by Biden.

Still another form of internationalism has been championed on occasion by workers' movements, in the U.S. by the "Wobblies," the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Other unions, too, have the term "international" in their names, a relic of commitment to true internationalism.

In Europe, the most eloquent spokesperson for this form of internationalism was Rosa Luxemburg. The conflict between internationalism and chauvinism came to a head with the outbreak of World War I. Chauvinism conquered. The Socialist International collapsed. In Luxemburg's acidic words, the slogan, "Proletarians of all countries united" was abandoned in favor of "Proletarians of all countries cut each other's throat."

Luxemburg held true to the internationalist vision, a rare stance. In all countries, intellectuals across the political spectrum rallied enthusiastically to the chauvinist cause. Those who did not were likely to find their way to prison, like Luxemburg: Karl Liebknecht, Bertrand Russell, Eugene Debs. The IWW was crushed by state-capital violence.

Turning to the present, we find other manifestations of internationalism. When the COVID pandemic broke out in early 2020, the rich countries of central Europe at first managed to get it more or less under control, a success that collapsed when Europeans chose not to forego their summer vacations.

While Germany and Austria were still in fairly good shape in early 2020, there was,

however, a severe pandemic in northern Italy a few miles to their south, within the Europe Union. Italy did benefit from true internationalism—not on the part of its rich neighbors. Rather, from the world's one country with internationalist commitments: Cuba, which sent doctors to help, as it did elsewhere, extending a record that goes far back. Among others, Panama received assistance from Cuba, but the U.S. took care of that. In its final 2020 report, Trump's Department of Health and Human Services proudly announced that it had successfully pressured Panama to expel Cuban doctors to protect the hemisphere from Cuba's "malign" influence.

The malign influence, spelled out in the early days of Cuban independence in 1959, was that Cuba might infect Latin America with its "successful defiance" of U.S. policies since the Monroe Doctrine of 1823. To prevent this threat, the U.S. launched a major campaign of terror and economic strangulation, following the logic spelled out at the State Department in 1960 by Lester Mallory. He recognized, as U.S. intelligence knew, that the "majority of Cubans support Castro," and that the "only foreseeable means of alienating internal support is through disenchantment and disaffection based on economic dissatisfaction and hardship." Therefore, "it follows that every possible means should be undertaken promptly to weaken the economic life of Cuba ... to bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of government."

The policy has been rigorously followed with bipartisan fervor in the face of unanimous world opposition (Israel excepted). The days of "decent respect for the opinions of mankind" have long faded to oblivion, along with such frivolities as the UN Charter and the rule of law. It is astonishing that Cuba has survived the relentless assault.

The successes of the policy of strangulation and torture are reported with no little

exuberance, an unusual exhibition of sadistic cowardice. Among the many popular protests underway in Latin America, one is front page news: in Cuba, giving Biden an opportunity to slap even more sanctions on the “villain” for its resort to abusive measures to suppress the demonstrations, which appear to be mostly about “economic dissatisfaction and hardship,” and failures of the authoritarian government to respond in timely and effective fashion.

Cuba’s unique internationalism is also undermined, freeing the world from any departure from the norm of self-interest, rarely breached in more than the most limited ways.

That must change. It is by now broadly understood that hoarding of vaccines by the rich countries is not only morally obscene but also self-destructive. The virus will mutate in countries with nondominant economies, and among those refusing vaccination in the rich countries, posing severe dangers to everyone on Earth, the rich included. Much more seriously, heating of the planet also knows no borders. There will be nowhere to hide for long. The same is true of the growing threat of nuclear war among major powers: the end.

Rosa Luxemburg and the Wobblies sketched the kinds of “system changes” toward which humanity should strive, in one or another way. Short of the goals they envisioned, steps must be taken toward engaging an informed and concerned public in international institutions of solidarity and mutual aid, eroding borders, recognizing our shared fate, committing ourselves to working together for the common good instead of “cutting each other’s throats.”

interests are in European economic integration, globalization, climate change, the political economy of the United States, and the deconstruction of neoliberalism’s politico-economic project. His latest books are *Optimism Over Despair: Noam Chomsky On Capitalism, Empire, and Social Change*, an anthology of interviews with Chomsky originally published at *Truthout* and collected by Haymarket Books; *Climate Crisis and the Global Green New Deal: The Political Economy of Saving the Planet* (with Noam Chomsky and Robert Pollin as primary authors); and *The Precipice: Neoliberalism, the Pandemic, and the Urgent Need for Radical Change*, an anthology of interviews with Chomsky originally published at *Truthout* and collected by Haymarket Books (scheduled for publication in June 2021).

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India's Covid Catastrophe, Part 2

Jayati Ghosh interviewed by David Barsamian

BARSAMIAN: Talk about the media and its coverage of the pandemic. Is it holding the Prime Minister and top officials like Amit Shah and others accountable for the current crisis?

GHOSH: I think one of the big differences between the U.S. and India, where even when you had your 45th President, is that your mainstream media had not completely succumbed. You still had media that were trying to represent a more objective reality. In India, the mainstream media completely succumbed. And it was a mixture of blandishments and threats that did it but it was very effective. Mainstream media was almost always just presenting the official line. And there was very strict monitoring of what the mainstream media reported. Some of it was voluntary, and

a lot of it was enforced. But nonetheless, it was very much the case.

So for the last seven years, I would say until just a few months ago, we really had a complete mismatch between the ground reality or any kind of reality, and what mainstream media reported. There have been a few brave outliers, mostly online media, who require very few resources and therefore have been able to somehow sustain, even though they faced continuous daily threats. Most of them have cases against them. Most of them are denied any kind of resources. They are prevented from even accessing private resources because anybody who donates to them is immediately identified and threatened. They're operating under tremendously difficult circumstances. So mainstream media has been largely in the service of this government.

In the last couple of months, the disaster has gotten so acute, the catastrophe is so major and

extreme that a little bit of that has changed. Because these are people who are themselves losing friends and loved ones. There is not a family I know that has not lost someone. I have colleagues who have died because they couldn't get oxygen. I have lost children of my friends who did not get treatment in time. This has happened across the board. It's also affected mainstream media. It's even affected owners. It's affected everybody. So this has caused a bit of a change. You cannot hide the fact that there are bodies floating down a river. That there are thousands of bodies just piled up along the banks because people are so desperate and so distraught that they cannot even afford to light the fire to cremate them. All of this cannot be hidden beyond a point. So there's a little bit of a change, nonetheless, mainstream media has still not pointed fingers where it should be pointed, which is at the central leadership. And again, that's because the climate of fear persists.

BARSAMIAN: The government has made it more difficult for foreign entities or individuals to send money to India to help people, to support NGOs. What's that about?

GHOSH: Basically, the Modi government put in a whole range of very, very restrictive requirements on all those who receive foreign funds, all the non-governmental organizations, making it almost impossible to function. The rules are so restrictive that most organizations basically would have to either close shop or dramatically reduce their activities. And that's because these were the places where you could get some independent support and some independent thinking, or even grassroots movements, demanding the rights of people, whether it is land rights, or workers' rights, or women's rights or whatever. Having done that, then, of course, when it comes to the need for welfare, the govern-

ment is refusing to provide welfare. It's telling the NGOs, now you provide welfare. But you have destroyed those NGOs. They don't have money. They don't have resources. So, they are not able to do what is required, provide the relief, which the government should be providing and is not providing. They tied their own hands in a sense. They are unwilling to provide what is minimally required. And yet at the same time, they will not let others do it. In this latest crisis in Delhi, when there was some who individually went out to try and help in whatever way; providing oxygen cylinders, looking for hospital beds, they have been under attack. Police have registered cases against them.

One of the phrases in Hindi that the Prime Minister used to great effect when he was campaigning was, "mein nahin khaoonga, mein nahin khaane doonga," (literally, I will not eat, I will not let others eat) I will not take bribes, I will not let others take bribes. Now people are saying, well, "na karoonga, na karne doonga," I will not do anything myself, I will not let others do anything, either. Which is a terrifying situation for a country to be where your state is effectively not doing the minimal things that governments have to do. And yet it's not letting others, it's not letting civil society rise up to that challenge and do it either. It's an extraordinary dystopia that we're in at the moment.

BARSAMIAN: Of India's 1.3 billion people only about 3% have been fully vaccinated. How is that possible in a country that is a major producer of vaccines? There are two big producers.

GHOSH: There are several things that have been done to destroy what was a very robust system of production and distribution of vaccines. India is not just the largest producer of vaccines in the world. It was also the case that

we had the best universal immunization system, a 70-year old system where, you know, workers will go house to house to immunize against polio, to do the BCG vaccines for children, etc. We had a very good, effective functioning system of free universal vaccination. The Modi government, first of all, did not do its basic math in terms of looking at the population, looking at the requirement of vaccines and ensuring that there would be enough production. It did not do that. For example, there is one homegrown vaccine, Covaxin. It was produced with the Indian Council of Medical Research. It was licensed to only one producer, which is ridiculous. You could have licensed it to ten producers, there are eight public sector companies. There are many other drug companies willing to produce this vaccine. You could have licensed it to many producers to make sure there is enough to meet the needs of the population. You didn't do that. Only one favorite producer, and of course, the Serum Institute of India, which has a deal with AstraZeneca and various others.

But it's not possible for 2 companies alone to meet the needs, as you mentioned, of 1.3 billion, or even of 70% of the population. You have to have more producers. The Indian government could have done the compulsory licensing for at least one of the vaccines, not the AstraZeneca one but the other one, but it did not do that. It has now done that, which is going to take another six months before those vaccines are available for distribution. Having done that, it then assumed that it was going to only need a tiny amount of vaccines and it could actually export. So, in addition to the requirements for COVAX, which the Serum Institute had already committed to, it exported a lot of vaccines commercially, and some for free as a sort of goodwill gesture to some poor countries. This is without taking into account the needs of the local population. So there were many mistakes made at many different

levels not producing enough, not enabling vaccines that were produced locally to be distributed locally in the first instance to meet the requirements of the population.

And then, worst of all, 17th of April, they announced a whole new vaccination strategy. Instead of a Central Government procurement and distribution of vaccines to all the states, according to their population, suddenly, it was thrown open. The Central Government will only vaccinate frontline health workers and people above 65. Everybody else, the state governments have to deal with. And for the 18 to 45 age group, they can go to private providers who can compete for these vaccines from the same limited production. They can compete with state governments for these vaccines. It's unbelievable. And it makes absolutely no sense in the middle of a pandemic to throw this open to price gouging by private pharma. State governments were paying four times, six times what the Central Government pays private producers, who knows what they're paying to get the Covaxin. One dose of Covaxin costs about \$30, which is impossible in a poor country like India. So the absolute ludicrousness and completely wrong vaccination policy that was suddenly introduced on the 17th of April has thrown the whole system into a complete mess, because the rate of vaccination which was going up has now dramatically declined after this new policy was announced. Why? because the companies are hoarding the vaccines trying to sell to the highest bidder. State governments cannot buy it. Private companies are managing to buy some. Private clinics are buying some, quickly distributing it, not able to get the next dose. It's a complete mess. None of this was necessary.

And it is unthinkable how or on whose advice the government created this extraordinary system, which has actually destroyed what was a very successful universal immu-

nization program.

BARSAMIAN: Talk about COVAX, another acronym. It's an international vaccine sharing scheme. Do you think it's a good thing? Has it been effective?

GHOSH: COVAX is a facility set up by the World Health Organization, by GAVI, (the Vaccine Alliance,) and by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations. It's a joint program that will buy and distribute vaccines. In a sense, the idea is good, which is that you pool together vaccine procurement, rather than get all this competitive buying. You pool it together and then you distribute it equitably. The idea was that you distribute first to 3% of the population, then to 20% and then to everybody. There are two major design flaws in COVAX. Some people argue that that's because COVAX had too much disproportionate influence of pharma producers. Another was that it is hugely underfunded. It would need a minimum of \$26-30 billion in the first year. It has got only about, I think, \$4.3 billion. It's ridiculously underfunded. But more importantly, COVAX did not prevent governments, who are members, from doing side deals. So what happened?

Governments said yes, yes, we will join COVAX. But they also went and did side deals with private pharma. And so you had the rich countries doing deals for many times what their populations needed. The U.S. did, I think, four times what its population needed, the European Union three times, Canada up to ten or eleven times. It's a different matter that they were not able to get those vaccines. But the point is they had already grabbed these orders, which really meant developing countries didn't have a chance and nor did COVAX. Because of these orders, the private deals are opaque. We don't know how much, who is paying, for each dose. But WHO estimates

that the price can go up to \$44 per dose. So obviously vaccine companies are more interested in selling privately, separately to these countries than they are to giving to COVAX. As a result of which, COVAX, even with its limited funds, has not been able to procure as much as it needs, even for its initial commitments. So everybody is blaming the Serum Institute of India for not fulfilling its COVAX commitments. That's true and that's valid. But why are these other companies not even making COVAX commitments? Why don't you go after Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson for not even making COVAX commitments, instead selling privately to rich country governments?

BARSAMIAN: All those Big Pharma corporations you just mentioned are making a killing on vaccines. Now China and Russia have developed their own vaccines. What do you know about them? And have they been relatively successful?

GHOSH: Yes, in fact, China has exported more vaccines than any other country. There are two vaccines from China, Sinovac and Sinopharm, which are apparently quite effective. Sinopharm has very recently received WHO regulatory approval. I should mention that the WHO regulatory system privileges the vaccines produced in rich countries, because all the other producers have to go through a very complicated and prolonged bureaucratic procedure. So both the Gamaleya Institute's Sputnik V, and Sinopharm and also Sinovac, all applied for regulatory approval before Pfizer and Moderna. But Pfizer and Moderna got their approval by late October. Sinopharm has just got its approval. The others still haven't. That has not stopped some countries which are in desperate need from asking for those vaccines anyway. So Chile's relative success in vaccination is really because of its reliance on

Chinese vaccines. A bunch of other countries in the Middle East have also heavily relied on Chinese vaccines. These are cheaper. In many cases in developing countries, they're being provided free. And instead of celebrating that, I think that's a good thing, we should be providing as much vaccine as possible to as many countries as possible. The same rich countries that are hoarding their own vaccines and are preventing other countries from accessing and are preventing their companies from sharing the technology are telling developing countries, "Don't use the Chinese or Russian vaccines. They're not to be trusted. They're not safe." I find that extraordinary.

BARSAMIAN: The New York Times says India is experiencing, "the world's worst Coronavirus outbreak." But there are also other hotspots that are suddenly appearing. For example, neighboring Nepal. Also Argentina is a hotspot. How do you see this pandemic being contained and becoming at least manageable to some extent?

GHOSH: You see this is the point. It's a cliché now because all these world leaders keep mouthing it, like world peace. They say no one is safe till everyone is safe. Unfortunately, they don't seem to believe their own words, but they are true. That is the situation. That is the nature of a pandemic. Today, it's India and as you mentioned Nepal It's also spreading in Bangladesh. It's also spreading in South-east Asia, which had controlled it completely. We are seeing new variants emerge in Latin America. Africa is going to be very likely a new hotspot. These are all parts of the world that are hardly vaccinated, where there's a very tiny minority that has received vaccination. The more you allow this to happen, the more you will get new variants and the more those variants can come back and even threaten the vaccinated populations. I don't

understand why the world leaders who keep saying this don't seem to get it and do something in terms of their own policy, because what can be done is so obvious and easy. It's low hanging fruit. Force the companies who have received your technology, your financial support, to share that knowledge with other producers. There are producers in Canada, Israel, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Chile, Brazil, who are willing to make it. Force them to share this technology. Force much enhanced production. Distribute your surplus vaccines. The United States is sitting on 60 million AstraZeneca doses it will never use. Immediately give it to COVAX. Give it to countries that need it. It's all obvious what needs to be done. Yet the same global leaders keep saying this in all of their statements and communiques. Obviously, they're just saying this as a completely meaningless statement. They don't actually understand what they're saying. If they understood it, they would take these measures, which are so obvious and so evident. Suspend Intellectual Property Rights during the pandemic, because that's the only way we'll actually deal with the pandemic. It's a minimum necessary condition for all the other stuff.

BARSAMIAN: The tiny minority vaccinated that you mentioned is, of course, concentrated in the Global North. Backtrack a little bit to the Russian vaccine, Sputnik V. How effective has that proven to be?

GHOSH: The evidence we have so far is that it's quite effective. I think it's something like 75% effective. I'm not sure about the exact numbers. But recent studies that have come out in *The Lancet* and in *Science* have suggested that it is really quite effective. It has yet to receive WHO regulatory approval, unfortunately. But, nonetheless, it is being used in a number of countries. And it has expanded. It's actually gone into production sharing agree-

ments in several developing countries. So we'll have to see. But, at this point, I would say the WHO should certainly up its game in terms of the regulatory processes, which are very prolonged for the vaccine from certain countries. The rich countries. I mean. It's now on the G-7 to put their actions where their mouth has been for the last one year.

BARSAMIAN: President Biden recently announced an additional 20 million doses to be given to countries which were not specified. But one critic has called this trying to put a bucket of water on a raging fire.

GHOSH: Yes. But it's not just that. It's also that you have, maybe 100 buckets of water and you're giving one. I think it's obscene that the U.S. government is sitting on all these surplus stockpiles of vaccine 60 million AstraZeneca doses. God knows how many Pfizer and Moderna doses. You're stockpiling them. You're hoarding vaccines. And then you're giving a little small share of that to some. I mean, I don't understand it. I really don't. I think history will judge this very harshly.

BARSAMIAN: Are the Russian and Chinese vaccines privately controlled or government based?

GHOSH: There are two Chinese companies. Sinopharm is a public sector company. Sino-vac is a private sector company. The Gamaleya Institute is a little more complicated. I think it's done with the assistance of private venture capital, but also with state support. But we have to remember that even the private companies in the advanced countries all receive massive government support. AstraZeneca vaccine is a striking example of a vaccine that was produced in a public university lab that is publicly funded and run through charities in Oxford University. The original

intent of this Oxford vaccine was that it would be completely publicly available. They were going to put everything on the website for everyone to access. Midway through the process in June 2020, the Gates Foundation, which is a big funder of Oxford University, stepped in and ensured that this became a private deal between Oxford and AstraZeneca, which had had no role in the development of the vaccine. Let me reiterate, no role.

So all the stuff that Big Pharma tells us that we only have these vaccines, because Big Pharma has done all this investment in R&D. This is nonsense. So, it became the intellectual property of AstraZeneca through this unfortunate side deal that was done by Oxford University for something that was developed in a public research lab. Similarly, we know that the Pfizer vaccine was not developed by Pfizer. It was developed by BioNTech, which got a lot of money from the German government, which basically funded its R&D costs. And it was then a private deal entered into between BioNTech and Pfizer, which has enabled Pfizer to make I think, an estimated in this current year, way in excess of its total R&D costs, all costs. Pfizer's own estimation is \$4 billion.

So we are talking about monopoly super-profits being made on the basis of knowledge that was created through public research and public funding. Remember also that both the mRNA vaccines. Moderna got \$1.6 billion from the U.S. government. It promised not to profit from any of these vaccines. We don't know how that is working out, because it's charging different prices to different buyers. But the mRNA technology was essentially developed by a Hungarian scientist in a public lab, and then developed further in U.S. public labs. So it's the last mile effort that was done by these companies using public support. So let's not kid ourselves that this is all private companies doing this, and that the government is coming in late on this. This was real-

ly the public sector completely enabling and funding the development of these vaccines. Yet all the cards are currently being held by these private companies.

BARSAMIAN: It's interesting because as we know in the United States there's been massive state, that is to say, public intervention in the economy, which is supposed to be quote, unquote, a free market system. It's hardly a free market when you have billions of dollars in research and development funded by taxpayers, leading to the internet, GPS technology, polio vaccines, subsidies to fossil fuel corporations, and the like. So it's a peculiar type of capitalism that has elements of, can we call it socialism?

GHOSH: My colleague Bob Pollin says that this is “champagne socialism” for the rich and predatory capitalism for the poor. But really that’s what neoliberalism is all about. As I said, it is not about the withdrawal of the state. It’s not about leaving markets on their own. It’s all about protecting, supporting, incentivizing and rewarding big capital. That’s what neoliberalism is about.

BARSAMIAN: But that intervention is very selective.

GHOSH: It’s for big capital. So when finance is in a crisis, you save the big banks, you bail them out, you use taxpayer money to save them. You don’t bail out the small mortgages, you don’t bail out the people who lose their homes, you don’t bail out workers.

BARSAMIAN: Bill Gates is of course made quite a name for himself and a bit of money on the side. He has spoken forcefully against the waiving of patents. He thinks that would be a very bad idea. What is Gates’s role in this whole situation?

GHOSH: The little that I have seen of the Bill Gates intervention in health, I think there are many, many serious concerns. He was instrumental, as I mentioned, in the move to shift Oxford University to a separate deal with Astra Zeneca. He has been a forceful proponent of Intellectual Property Rights at a time when he also has major investments in drug companies. How such serious conflicts of interest can be tolerated, accepted and taken for granted is something that boggles the mind. That people who are so influential in a public health discourse have direct commercial interests through their shareholding and other things in the companies that would benefit from that. Surely this would not be allowed in many systems and yet we are in this peculiar world where this is accepted as something normal.

BARSAMIAN: We've talked about equity in vaccine distribution. The top White House adviser Anthony Fauci said, "The only way that you're going to adequately respond to a global pandemic is by having a global response. And a global response means equity throughout the world." So there's at least one scientist who understands the nature of the crisis and the absolute necessity to have vaccine equity. There is no safe place, if we don't have it.

GHOSH: Dr. Fauci has said this and it’s very important and it’s very good. But all these leaders say this. The G-7 communiqués say this all the time. When it comes to action and what you can do about it, somehow that is lacking. And that is extremely unfortunate.

BARSAMIAN: The Guardian Weekly recently reported, "as vaccine programs enable rich societies to open, the poorer nations are bearing the brunt." What's happening in the Global South? Of the 700 million vaccines

distributed, only 0.2% have gone to what are called low-income countries. And the WHO reports 46 million asylum seekers, migrants and refugees have been totally excluded from vaccination programs.

GHOSH: Vaccine apartheid is so striking globally. And in this way that you've mentioned. It's interesting to see how this is now playing out into the next phase, which was almost inevitable—the vaccine passports. The European Union has just announced that fully vaccinated people with the acceptable vaccines—please note, not the Chinese vaccines, not any other vaccine, but the accepted vaccines—those vaccinated persons are free to come. So you're really getting this peculiar reversal back to the colonial period, when the White men could roam the world as they pleased, and everybody else—their movements were either restricted or constrained or determined by those White men. So we're back to a very colonial world, which has been actively supported by the capital of its time, just as the colonialism of that time was supported by the capital of that time.

BARSAMIAN: Your Dollars&Sense article was, in fact, entitled, "Neoliberalism as Neo-colonialism."

GHOSH: And now we see it openly. There's no pretense about it anymore.

BARSAMIAN: I'm reminded of Kurtz's dying words in Conrad's Heart of Darkness, "The horror! The horror!" Prabhat Patnaik, recently featured on Alternative Radio, has said that Neoliberalism has also led to Neofascism around the world, where governments have veered far to the right. Do you see a connection between those two?

GHOSH: It's very hard for Neoliberalism to

exist with democracy. You see that all over the world. In the United States you dodged a bullet. You still have a lot of threats to your democracy. But it's also interesting to note that because you managed to dodge that bullet, there are various ways in which within your own country, you're trying to undo some of the worst effects of Neoliberalism. But everywhere else, it's really not compatible with democracy. We've seen that over and over again.

BARSAMIAN: Some months ago, you wrote, "Is the current apparently passive, fatalistic attitude of the oppressed millions the sign of the new subjugation, or simply a lull before the storm?"

GHOSH: I don't really pretend to understand politics anymore. I used to have a much more materialist conception of politics. I recognize now that all kinds of other things can sway people, whether it is notions of social justice, or it is identities of various kinds, or it's just hate can sway people and how they vote and who they support. However, I also do have a fundamental belief that humanity steps back from the brink and let's admit it, we are at the brink. The pandemic has brought us to the brink. But we also face a much greater existential challenge in the form of climate change, which is going to get worse and worse. It's really a question of survival. If humanity is to survive, it will have to step back. And that really means the people themselves have to shake off all of these other things and focus on the things that will enable humanity to survive. If that is the case, then I do believe that things can change.

I also believe that change often comes from directions where you don't expect it. So we may be looking at, I don't know the opposition in a particular country and say, oh, that opposition hasn't got its act together. It's not unified. It's all over the place. It doesn't com-

mand the respect of the people, so it's not going to succeed. Maybe the change will come from a different direction. And this has been the case in the past. That's why I'm saying it. I do believe change will come. I hope I am alive to see it. I also believe that humanity will step back from the brink.

BARSAMIAN: You taught at Jawaharlal Nehru University, JNU, in New Delhi for almost 35 years. You're now at UMass, Amherst. How has that transition been for you?

GHOSH: I came here under very peculiar conditions, during a pandemic. The teaching has all been on Zoom. I retired from JNU. We have a retirement at the age of 65. I think the years I taught for nearly three and a half decades there were definitely the most fulfilling of my life. They have been extraordinary years. I cannot understate, there's no way of expressing the respect I have for my colleagues, who have been, especially in the last five years operating in the most incredibly difficult circumstances, under all kinds of pressures. My students who have been a source of constant inspiration, again, from very diverse backgrounds, and devoted to learning and thinking creatively and critically, despite all odds. So I've had a very rewarding time there. UMass, Amherst is a much more privileged context. But again, I'm very fortunate in my colleagues. And so far, I have been very pleasantly surprised also in my students who come from very diverse geographical backgrounds and have also been very questioning and interested so far. So I'm hopeful.

BARSAMIAN: What can individuals who are listening to you and your analysis of the current crisis, what can they do and what can be done collectively?

GHOSH: Ultimately, all change happens collectively. It doesn't happen through individuals. So I think the first thing individuals have to note is that they are not little islands and Robinson Crusoes who can make things happen on their own. I find a lot of the progressive energy here in the U.S. goes into how you, shall we say, ecologically and politically correct in your own life. That's good and that's important. But it doesn't do much in terms of broader social change. Collective action, of working with other people, of forming coalitions, of being part of progressive movements, of recognizing the importance of numbers and seeking to expand those numbers are all very important. Wherever there has been progressive change, it's come from people who recognize that.

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