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November 2021

Chomsky on Build Back Better Fiasco



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COP26: Can a Singing, Dancing Rebellion Save the World?

By Medea Benjamin and Nicolas J. S. Davies

COP26. That is how many times the UN has assembled world leaders to try to tackle the climate crisis. But the United States is producing more oil and natural gas than ever; the amount of greenhouse gases (GHG) in the atmosphere and global temperatures are both still rising; and we are already experiencing the extreme weather and climate chaos that scientists have warned us about for 40 years, and which will only get worse and worse without serious climate action.

And yet, the planet has so far only warmed 1.2° Celsius (2.2° F) since pre-industrial times. We already have the technology we need to convert our energy systems to clean, renewable energy, and doing so would create millions of good jobs for people all over the world. So, in practical terms, the steps we




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One solution: revolution
STAND UP TO RACISM
Climate refugees welcome
Fight racism and climate chaos
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not migrants
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must take are clear, achievable and urgent.

The greatest obstacle to action that we face is our dysfunctional, neoliberal political and economic system and its control by plutocratic and corporate interests, who are determined to keep profiting from fossil fuels even at the cost of destroying the Earth's uniquely livable climate. The climate crisis has exposed this system's structural inability to act in the real interests of humanity, even when our very future hangs in the balance.

So what is the answer? Can COP26 in Glasgow be different? What could make the difference between more slick political PR and decisive action? Counting on the same politicians and fossil fuel interests (yes, they are there, too) to do something different this time seems suicidal, but what is the alternative?

Since Obama's Pied Piper leadership in Copenhagen and Paris produced a system in which individual countries set their own targets and decided how to meet them, most countries have made little progress toward the targets they set in Paris in 2015.

Now they have come to Glasgow with predetermined and inadequate pledges that, even if fulfilled, would still lead to a much hotter world by 2100. A succession of UN and civil society reports in the lead-up to COP26 have been sounding the alarm with what UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has called a "thundering wake-up call" and a "code red for humanity." In Guterres's opening speech at COP26 on November 1st, he said that "we are digging our own graves" by failing to solve this crisis.

Yet governments are still focusing on long-term goals like reaching "Net Zero" by 2050, 2060 or even 2070, so far in the future that they can keep postponing the radical steps needed to limit warming to 1.5° Celsius. Even if they somehow stopped pumping greenhouse gases into the air, the amount of GHGs in the atmosphere by 2050 would keep heating up the planet for generations. The more we load up the atmosphere with GHGs, the longer their effect will last and the hotter the Earth will keep growing.

The United States has set a shorter-term target of reducing its emissions by 50% from their peak 2005 level by 2030. But its present policies would only lead to a 17%-25% reduction by then.

The Clean Energy Performance Program (CEPP), which was part of the Build Back Better Act, could make up a lot of that gap by paying electric utilities to increase reliance on renewables by 4% year over year and penalizing utilities that don't. But on the eve of COP26, Biden dropped the CEPP from the bill under pressure from Senators Manchin and Sinema and their fossil fuel puppet-masters.

Meanwhile, the U.S. military, the largest institutional emitter of GHGs on Earth, was exempted from any constraints whatsoever under the Paris Agreement. Peace activists in Glasgow are demanding that COP26 must fix this huge black hole in global climate policy by including the U.S. war machine's GHG emissions, and those of other militaries, in national emissions reporting and reductions.

At the same time, every penny that governments around the world have spent to address the climate crisis amounts to a small fraction of what the United States alone has spent on its nation-destroying war machine during the same period.

China now officially emits more CO2 than the United States. But a large part of China's emissions are driven by the rest of the world's consumption of Chinese products, and its largest customer is the United States. An MIT study in 2014 estimated that exports account for 22% of China's carbon emissions. On a per capita consumption basis, Americans still



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YOU CAN'T RECYCLE WASTED TIME
PROTECT WHAT YOU LOVE
HE CLIMATE CHANGING WHY ARENT WE
ROSA

account for three times the GHG emissions of our Chinese neighbors and double the emissions of Europeans.

Wealthy countries have also fallen short on the commitment they made in Copenhagen in 2009 to help poorer countries tackle climate change by providing financial aid that would grow to $100 billion per year by 2020. They have provided increasing amounts, reaching $79 billion in 2019, but the failure to deliver the full amount that was promised has eroded trust between rich and poor countries. A committee headed by Canada and Germany at COP26 is charged with resolving the shortfall and restoring trust.

When the world's political leaders are failing so badly that they are destroying the natural world and the livable climate that sustains human civilization, it is urgent for people everywhere to get much more active, vocal and creative.

The appropriate public response to governments that are ready to squander the lives of millions of people, whether by war or by ecological mass suicide, is rebellion and revolution—and non-violent forms of revolution have generally proven more effective and beneficial than violent ones.

People are rising up against this corrupt neoliberal political and economic system in countries all over the world, as its savage impacts affect their lives in different ways. But the climate crisis is a universal danger to all of humanity that requires a universal, global response.

One inspiring civil society group on the streets in Glasgow during COP26 is Extinction Rebellion, which proclaims, "We accuse world leaders of failure, and with a daring vision of hope, we demand the impossible…We will sing and dance and lock arms against despair and remind the world there is so much worth rebelling for."

Extinction Rebellion and other climate groups at COP26 are calling for Net Zero by 2025, not 2050, as the only way to meet the 1.5° goal agreed to in Paris.

Greenpeace is calling for an immediate global moratorium on new fossil fuel projects and a quick phase-out of coal-burning power plants. Even the new coalition government in Germany, which includes the Green Party and has more ambitious goals than other large wealthy countries, has only moved up the final deadline on Germany's coal phaseout from 2038 to 2030.

The Indigenous Environmental Network is bringing indigenous people from the Global South to Glasgow to tell their stories at the conference. They are calling on the Northern industrialized countries to declare a climate emergency, to keep fossil fuels in the ground and end subsidies of fossil fuels globally.

Friends of the Earth (FOE) has published a new report titled Nature-Based Solutions: A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing as a focus for its work at COP26. It exposes a new trend in corporate greenwashing involving industrial-scale tree plantations in poor countries, which corporations plan to claim as "offsets" for continued fossil fuel production.

The UK government that is hosting the conference in Glasgow has endorsed these schemes as part of the program at COP26. FOE is highlighting the effect of these massive land-grabs on local and indigenous communities and calls them "a dangerous deception and distraction from the real solutions to the climate crisis." If this is what governments mean by "Net Zero," it would just be one more step in the financialization of the Earth and all its resources, not a real solution.

Because it is hard for activists from around the world to get to Glasgow for COP26 during a pandemic, activist groups are simultaneously organizing around the world to put pressure on governments in their own countries.

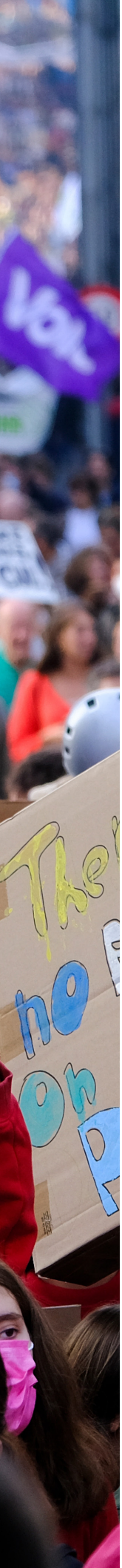


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Hundreds of climate activists and indigenous people have been arrested in protests at the White House in Washington, and five young Sunrise Movement activists began a hunger strike there on October 19th.

U.S. climate groups also support the "Green New Deal" bill, H.Res. 332, that Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez has introduced in Congress, which specifically calls for policies to keep global warming below 1.5° Celsius, and currently has 103 cosponsors. The bill sets ambitious targets for 2030, but only calls for Net Zero by 2050.

The environmental and climate groups converging on Glasgow agree that we need a real global program of energy conversion now, as a practical matter, not as the aspirational goal of an endlessly ineffective, hopelessly corrupt political process.

At COP25 in Madrid in 2019, Extinction Rebellion dumped a pile of horse manure outside the conference hall with the message, "The horse-shit stops here." Of course that didn't stop it, but it made the point that empty talk must rapidly be eclipsed by real action. Greta Thunberg has hit the nail on the head, slamming world leaders for covering up their failures with "blah, blah, blah," instead of taking real action.

Like Greta's School Strike for the Climate, the climate movement in the streets of Glasgow is informed by the recognition that the science is clear and the solutions to the climate crisis are readily available. It is only political will that is lacking. This must be supplied by ordinary people, from all walks of life, through creative, dramatic action and mass mobilization, to demand the political and economic transformation we so desperately need.

The usually mild-mannered UN Secretary General Guterres made it clear that "street heat" will be key to saving humanity. "The climate action army—led by young people—is unstoppable," he told world leaders in Glasgow. "They are larger. They are louder. And, I assure you, they are not going away." ***Z***

Medea Benjamin, co-founder of Global Exchange and CODEPINK: Women for Peace, is the author of the 2018 book, *Inside Iran: The Real History and Politics of the Islamic Republic of Iran*.

Nicolas J. S. Davies is an independent journalist, a researcher with CODEPINK and the author of *Blood On Our Hands: the American Invasion and Destruction of Iraq*.

Climate Emergency Includes the Threat of 'Nuclear Winter'

By Norman Solomon

When world leaders gather in Scotland for the COP26 climate change conference, activists will be pushing for drastic action to end the world's catastrophic reliance on fossil fuels. Consciousness about the climate emergency has skyrocketed in recent years, while government responses remain meager. But one aspect of extreme climate jeopardy—"nuclear winter"—has hardly reached

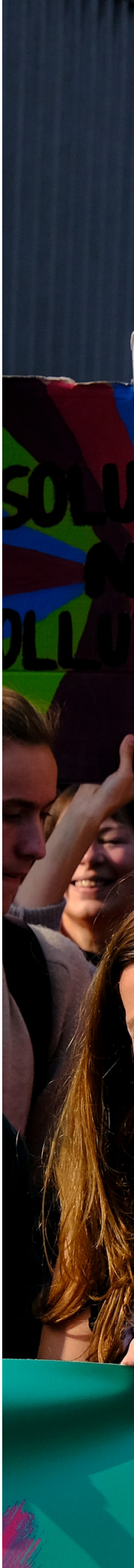


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I'VE GOT ISSUES
QUI SOMMES-NOUS ?
T'AS UNE QUESTION ?
YOUTH
FOR CLIMATE
VIENS DESSINER TON
MEILLEUR SLOGAN !
YFC!



Photo by PMG-photog/Shutterstock

the stage of dim awareness.

Wishful thinking aside, the threat of nuclear war has not receded. In fact, the opposite is the case. The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists has been moving the "Doomsday Clock" ever closer to cataclysmic midnight; the symbolic hands are now merely 100 seconds from midnight, in contrast to 6 minutes a decade ago.

A nuclear war would quickly bring cataclysmic climate change. A recent scientific paper, in sync with countless studies, concludes that—in the aftermath of nuclear weapons blasts in cities—"smoke would effectively block out sunlight, causing below-freezing temperatures to engulf the world." Research-



ers estimate such conditions would last for 10 years. The Federation of American Scientists predicts that "a nuclear winter would cause most humans and large animals to die from nuclear famine in a mass extinction event similar to the one that wiped out the dinosaurs."

While there's a widespread myth that the danger of nuclear war has diminished, this illusion is not the only reason why the climate movement has failed to include prevention of nuclear winter on its to-do list. Notably, the movement's organizations rarely even mention nuclear winter. Another factor is the view that—unlike climate change, which is already happening and could be exacerbated or


NOT COOL
NOT CALM
NEGLECTED
Act justly, love mercy,
walk humb
Micah 6:8



mitigated by policies in the years ahead—nuclear war will either happen or it won't. That might seem like matter-of-fact realism, but it's more like thinly disguised passivity wrapped up in fatalism.

In the concluding chapter of his 2017 book *The Doomsday Machine*, Daniel Ellsberg warns: "The threat of full nuclear winter is posed by the possibility of all-out war between the United States and Russia. … The danger that either a false alarm or a terrorist attack on Washington or Moscow would lead to a preemptive attack derives almost entirely from the existence on both sides of land-based missile forces, each vulnerable to attack by the other: each, therefore, kept on a high state of alert, ready to launch within minutes of warning."

And he adds that "the easiest and fastest way to reduce that risk—and indeed, the overall danger of nuclear war—is to dismantle entirely" the Minuteman III missile force of ICBMs comprising the land-based portion of U.S. nuclear weaponry.

The current issue of *The Nation* magazine includes an article that Dan Ellsberg and I wrote to emphasize the importance of shutting down all ICBMs. Here are some key points:

- "Four hundred ICBMs now dot the rural landscapes of Colorado, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota and Wyoming. Loaded in silos, those missiles are uniquely—and dangerously—on hair-trigger alert. Unlike the nuclear weapons on submarines or bombers, the land-based missiles are vulnerable to attack and could present the commander in chief with a sudden use-them-or-lose-them choice."

- Former Defense Secretary William Perry wrote five years ago: "First and foremost, the United States can safely phase out its land-based intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) force, a key facet of Cold War nuclear policy. Retiring the ICBMs would save considerable costs, but it isn't only budgets that would benefit. These missiles are some of the most dangerous weapons in the world. They could even trigger an accidental nuclear war."

- "Contrary to uninformed assumptions, discarding all ICBMs could be accomplished unilaterally by the United States with no downsides. Even if Russia chose not to follow suit, dismantling the potentially cataclysmic land-based missiles would make the world safer for everyone on the planet."

- Frank von Hippel, a former chair of the Federation of American Scientists who is co-founder of Princeton's Program on Science and Global Security, wrote this year: "Strategic Command could get rid of launch on warning and the ICBMs at the same time. Eliminating launch on warning would significantly reduce the probability of blundering into a civilization-ending nuclear war by mistake. To err is human. To start a nuclear war would be unforgivable."

- "Better sooner than later, members of Congress will need to face up to the horrendous realities about intercontinental ballistic missiles. They won't do that unless peace, arms-control and disarmament groups go far beyond the current limits of congressional discourse—and start

Photo by Janis Abolins/Shutterstock

emphasizing, on Capitol Hill and at the grassroots, the crucial truth about ICBMs and the imperative of eliminating them all."

At the same time that the atmospheric levels of greenhouse gases have continued to increase, so have the dangers of nuclear war. No imperatives are more crucial than challenging the fossil fuel industry and the nuclear weapons industry as the terrible threats to the climate and humanity that they are. ***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.

SCOTUS Likely to Allow Challenge to Texas Law, But May Still Overturn "Roe"

By Marjorie Cohn

Texas's draconian anti-abortion law remained in effect as the Supreme Court heard oral arguments on November 1 about whether it could be challenged in court. Known as the "Texas Heartbeat Law," Senate Bill 8 (SB 8) outlaws all abortions after cardiac activity can be detected, generally after six weeks of pregnancy when most people don't know they're pregnant. The law contains no exception for rape or incest. Since September 1, when SB 8 became operative, it has prevented most abortions in Texas. Nearly 1 in 10 women of childbearing age live in Texas, the PBS NewsHour reported.

SB 8 squarely violates *Roe v. Wade*, which allows abortions until fetal viability—around 23 weeks. Although it appeared during the arguments that a majority of justices will permit SB 8's constitutionality to be tested in court, the justices may nevertheless overturn *Roe*. On December 1, the high court will hear arguments in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, about a Mississippi law that prohibits abortions after 15 weeks. The lawyers representing the State of Mississippi in *Dobbs* are specifically asking the court to overrule *Roe v. Wade*.

The Texas law was intentionally drafted to prevent judicial review of its constitutionality by stipulating that no state official can enforce the law. SB 8 deputizes everyone else to sue abortion providers and those who "aid and abet" an abortion—including counselors, family members, clergy and even Uber drivers. Victorious plaintiffs receive a bounty of $10,000 and defendants must pay plaintiffs' attorneys fees. SB 8 is a cynical attempt by the Texas legislature to bribe people to sue anyone who helps a woman obtain an abortion.

Can SB 8's Constitutionality Be Tested?

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BANS OFF OUR BODIES
Mandatory Vasectomies for All Men!
BANS OFF OUR BODIES
RESIST
ABORTION IS HEALTH

Laws are generally challenged by filing lawsuits against the state officials charged with their enforcement. The State of Texas argues that since the terms of SB 8 forbid state officials from enforcing it, the law cannot be tested in court because there are no proper defendants to sue.

During arguments, the Supreme Court considered two different cases that seek an injunction to stop the enforcement of SB 8. In *Whole Woman's Health v. Jackson*, abortion providers are suing Texas court clerks and judges. In *United States v. Texas, the Department of Justice (DOJ)* is suing the State of Texas. The court is considering only the procedural issue of whether either or both of those cases can proceed through the courts.

On September 1, in *Whole Woman's Health*, five right-wing members of the court refused to block SB 8 from taking effect, because, they wrote, "It is unclear whether the named defendants in this lawsuit can or will seek to enforce the Texas law against the applicants in a manner that might permit our intervention." They did not consider the constitutionality of SB 8. Chief Justice John Roberts joined the three liberals in voting to halt SB 8 until the constitutional merits could be considered by lower courts. Meanwhile, most abortions remained illegal in Texas.

On September 9, the DOJ sued Texas and requested an injunction to stop the enforcement of SB 8. On September 14, the DOJ filed an emergency motion for a temporary restraining order or preliminary injunction in *United States v. Texas*, asking the court to immediately halt the implementation of SB 8.

On October 6, in a 113-page ruling, U.S. District Court Judge Robert L. Pitman granted the DOJ's request for an injunction. "From the moment S.B. 8 went into effect, women have been unlawfully prevented from exercising control over their own lives in ways that are protected by the Constitution," Pitman wrote. "This court will not sanction one more day of this offensive deprivation of such an important right."

Two days later, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals overruled Pitman's decision and reinstated SB 8. People who provided abortions and assisted women in obtaining them during the 48 hours between the rulings of the district court and the appeals court could still be sued under SB 8.

SB 8 Could Be Model for Targeting Other Rights

Justices Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito and Neil Gorsuch appeared poised to deny the plaintiffs in both lawsuits their day in court to challenge the constitutionality of SB 8. Meanwhile, even though Justices Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett voted not to block SB 8 before it took effect, they—as well as Justices Sonia Sotomayor, Elena Kagan, Stephen Breyer and John Roberts—appeared open to allowing the Whole Woman's Health lawsuit to proceed.

In *United States v. Texas*, however, most of the justices seemed wary of permitting the federal government to sue a state for violating constitutional rights.

It is the unusual structure of SB 8 that will apparently motivate Kavanaugh and Barrett to allow judicial challenges to its constitutionality. Kavanaugh worries that SB 8 can "easily be replicated in other states" to target gun rights and restrict the free exercise of religion and freedom of speech. He cited concerns of gun lobbyists that states may use the same strategy to inoculate strict gun laws against legal challenges. Kavanaugh quoted an amicus brief filed by the Firearms Policy Coali-

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Photo by Eugenio Marongiu/Shutterstock


PREVENT ABORTIONS
& MANDATE VASECTOMIES
ROE V. WADE
BANS OFF OUR BODIES
BANS OFF OUR BODIES
PLANK LIKE RBG

tion, which argued that if SB 8 is upheld, "It will easily become the model for suppression of other constitutional rights, with Second Amendment rights being the most likely targets."

Barrett was concerned that even if an abortion provider gets an injunction in state court, it wouldn't stop other people from bringing new state lawsuits against the same provider. "You cannot get global relief," she said.

Kagan (agreeing with prior remarks by Breyer) said that the purpose of SB 8 is "to find the chink in the armor of Ex Parte Young, that set out a basic principle of how our government is supposed to work and how people can seek review of unconstitutional state laws." Kagan decried "the fact that after, oh, these many years, some geniuses came up with a way to evade the commands of" that case.

"The combined effect [of SB 8] is to transform the state courts from a forum for the protection of rights



into a mechanism for nullifying them," Whole Woman's Health attorney Marc A. Hearron told the justices. Texas "has weaponized the state court system into a tool that can be used to abrogate constitutional rights," he said.

Solicitor General Elizabeth B. Prelogar, representing the federal government, said, "It's the flood of SB 8 enforcement suits that could be filed that is chilling the exercise of the constitutional right today." Referring to the people who can't now get abortions, she added, "Texas has succeeded in being able to nullify the right currently while these cases are working their way through the courts."

If the court allows either or both cases to proceed, it would not necessarily signal the conservatives' support for upholding *Roe v. Wade*. Five right-wingers, including Kavanaugh and Barrett, voted two months ago to allow SB 8 to go into effect without any briefing, argument or consideration by the lower courts.



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The November 1 arguments only dealt with whether there could be a legal challenge to SB 8, not whether it would ultimately be successful. Stay tuned for the December 1 arguments in *Dobbs*, in which the Mississippi law does not present the same procedural problems as SB 8. *Dobbs* does, however, squarely present the court with a request to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. **Z**

The Publication of Origin for this article is *Truthout*.

Marjorie Cohn is professor emerita at Thomas Jefferson School of Law, former president of the National Lawyers Guild, and a member of the bureau of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers and the advisory board of Veterans for Peace. She testified before Congress about the Bush torture policy. Her books include *The United States and Torture: Interrogation, Incarceration, and Abuse*.

No Line 3. No New Fossil Fuel Projects. Climate Emergency

By Ted Glick

The People Vs. Fossil Fuels actions recently in Washington, DC—655 arrests—brought back a lot of memories. In November of 1972 I was living in DC when the continent-wide Trail of Broken Treaties arrived there and took over the Bureau of Indian Affairs. I spent time outside the BIA building in the evenings in support. Then, several months later, after local activists and the American Indian Movement occupied buildings in Wounded Knee, South Dakota on the Pine Ridge Reservation, and after a call went out for non-Indigenous people to come there in support, I did so. I stayed for two-plus weeks, helping to set up a support and communications office in Rapid City.

The leadership and visibility and inspiration and music and drumming and actions of Indigenous people from around what is now called the United States were such a very big deal this past week. To feel and experience this beating heart of resistance from people who have been under a terrible and wicked, life-draining siege for so long; to be moved by and dance to the sound of the drums; to be inspired by the deep, deep earth wisdom of Casey Camp Horinek; to be there able to respond and actively support the flag pole actions at the Army Corps of Engineers Tuesday afternoon; to be able to support the sit-in led by elders inside the Bureau of Indian Affairs/DOE building Thursday afternoon—these are experiences I will not forget.

Each day of the week began with well-organized actions at the White House. There were very big puppets and colorful banners and flags made by people who knew what they were doing, visuals to go along with the theater of negotiated arrests by the police of the scores of people daily clogging the sidewalk right next to the White House fence. Throughout all this time each day of marching to and arriving at the White House, setting things up, being given three warnings by the police, and then the arrests, there were short, amplified presentations by frontline leaders of fights against new fossil fuel infrastructure all over the country—Alaska, New Mexico, Texas, Minnesota, Virginia, West Virginia, Louisiana, Nebraska, California, Alabama, South Dakota, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, New Jersey, New York and more. There were passionate chants and singing.

Other dramatic actions took

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Photo by Travers Lewis/Shutterstck


extinction rebellion
STOP
FUNDING
FOSSIL FUELS

place Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons.

Tuesday's was at the Army Corps of Engineers. The focus was on Line 3 in Minnesota. A million signatures on petitions was presented, calling for the Army Corps to step in, stop Line 3 and do a serious Environmental Impact Study. Indigenous speakers reported on the piercing of the water aquifers under the pipeline and numerous other violations by Enbridge, their overt attempts to cover it all up, their lies, and the spinelessness of the Army Corps in response. Then, after the stirring rally concluded and a giant round dance was taking place by the hundreds of people gathered there on the street, strong, nonviolent direct action was undertaken: 2 Indigenous activists, supported by others, began working their way up the 2, 35-foot or so flag poles flanking the front of the building. For close to two hours they were up there. An American flag was turned upside down, a distress signal, and pro-Indigenous sovereignty banners were held up by the activists clinging to the poles.

Recognizing the determination of and number of people willing to defend our climate warriors, the police never moved in to try to bring them down. Ultimately, they came down on their own, slipped away and the action ended.

The next day we went to the home of Jaime Pinckam, head of the Army Corps, an upper-income condominium complex across the river in Arlington, Virginia. Hundreds of us were loud and boisterous with chants and speeches calling him out for his dereliction of duty for all his neighbors to hear.

Then on Thursday, Indigenous activists surprised the Bureau of Indian Affairs/ Department of the Interior security with a lobby sit-in by 55 people, most of whom were arrested, some roughly. They brought with them a list of demands, which included: Abolition of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Restoration of 110 million acres of land taken away from Native Nations, and Bring home our children buried at your residential schools.

Friday morning was the last day of action, a youth-led march from the White House to Congress. To the sound of the drums and Native songs, 90 people were arrested sitting in at an intersection a few blocks from the Capitol.

There was a great deal of press coverage of this week of action. White House press secretary Jen Psaki was asked about Biden's response to our demands at a nationally-televised, Thursday press conference. Her response, in effect, was that he is focused on getting Congress to pass Build Back Better legislation that includes action on climate. Perhaps, hopefully, and only because of continuing, unrelenting pressure, he and his administration and obstructionists in Congress like Manchin and Sinema will realize that, as was said throughout the week, that if you don't respect us, expect us. There ain't no power like the power of the people when organized peoples, joining together, don't stop. *Z*

Ted Glick is a volunteer organizer with Beyond Extreme Energy and president of 350NJ-Rockland. Past writings and other information, including about Burglar for Peace and 21st Century Revolution, two books published by him in 2020 and 2021, can be found at https://tedglick.com. He can be followed on Twitter at https://twitter.com/jtglick.

Dim Prospects for Climate Mitigation

By Mel Gurtov

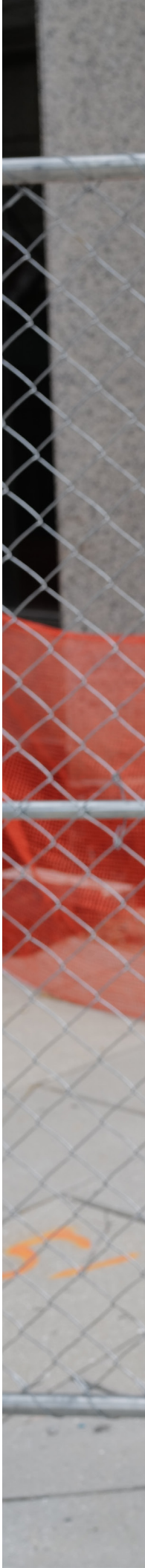
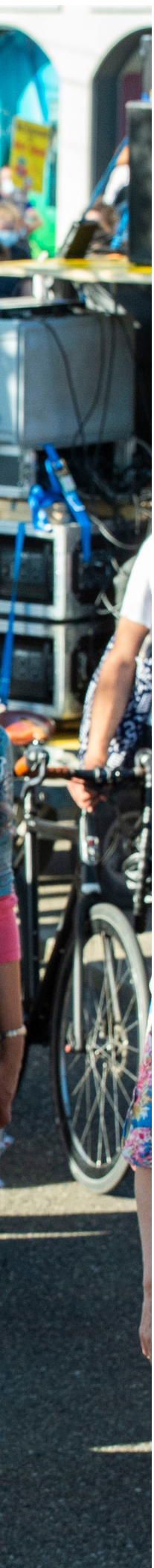


Photo by Phil Pasquini/Shutterstock


STRAIGHT
OUTTA
STANDING ROCK


YOUCAN
IGNORE US
BUT YOU WILL
REGRET IT



Just in time for the COP26 UN climate change conference in Glasgow, Scotland, the Biden administration has released the National Intelligence Estimate: Climate Change and International Responses Increasing Challenges to U.S. National Security Through 2040.

The report, which relies on previous findings by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and other scientific bodies, assumes that by 2030, a 1.5˚C rise in global temperature will be reached—the red line set by the Paris Agreement. To change that trajectory, "the IPCC estimates that global emissions would have to drop sharply in the next decade and reach net zero by around 2050 to limit warming to 1.5˚C, or reach net zero by about 2070 to limit warming to 2˚C." Such a dramatic reversal of current trends is extremely unlikely, according to the NIE.

The "Key Judgments"

Though the NIE offers a comprehensive chart on what the climate crisis will look like under various global warming figures, its main agenda is the impact on international security. Here I quote what the NIE calls the key judgments.

1: Geopolitical tensions are likely to grow as countries increasingly argue about how to accelerate the reductions in net greenhouse gas emissions that will be needed to meet the Paris Agreement goals. Debate will center on who bears more responsibility to act and to pay—and how quickly—and countries will compete to control resources and dominate new technologies needed for the clean energy transition. Most countries will face difficult economic choices and probably will count on technological breakthroughs to rapidly reduce their net emissions later. China and India will play critical roles in determining the trajectory of temperature rise.

2: The increasing physical effects of climate change are likely to exacerbate cross-border geopolitical flashpoints as states take steps to secure their interests. The reduction in sea ice already is amplifying strategic competition in the Arctic over access to its natural resources. . . .

3: Scientific forecasts indicate that intensifying physical effects of climate change out to 2040 and beyond will be most acutely felt in developing countries, which we assess are also the least able to adapt to such changes. These physical effects will increase the potential for instability and possibly internal conflict in these countries, in some cases creating additional demands on US diplomatic, economic, humanitarian, and military resources...

Why the World Will Fail

Given current government policies and trends in technology development, we judge that collectively countries are unlikely to meet the Paris goals because high-emitting countries [China, U.S., India, Russia, EU among the top ten] would have to make rapid progress toward decarbonizing their energy systems by transitioning away from fossil fuels within the next decade, whereas developing countries would need to rely on low-carbon energy sources for their economic development.

However:

Global energy demand is expected to increase by more than 18 percent by 2040, according to the International Energy Agency's (IEA) modeling of current policies, with fossil fuel use also growing and continuing to account for only a modestly smaller share of supply even though solar, wind, and other clean sources

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SOCIALIST GREEN NEW DEAL
STOP KILLING US
NO MORE
FEMINIST CLIM



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will grow more quickly, particularly after 2030.

The NIE identifies 11 countries as being most at-risk. "Five are in South and East Asia—Afghanistan, Burma, India, Pakistan, and North Korea; four countries are in Central America and the Caribbean—Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, and Nicaragua; Colombia and Iraq round out the list." These countries will face the most extreme weather changes, will have the least ability to cope, and will be most vulnerable to political upheaval.

Many countries have pledged to reach net zero emissions, including Brazil, Chile, the EU, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom by 2050, and China by 2060. The U.S. pledge is roughly a 50 percent cut in emissions from 2005 levels by 2030 and net-zero emissions by 2050. Biden's plan also aims to eliminate fossil fuel emissions from power plants by 2035. All that may sound like good news but for four other considerations.

- First, the NIE assesses that "some countries are using a pledge to mask a lack of seriousness." In other words, the promises are just words on paper.
- Second, GGE from China and India, among the largest emitters, are actually increasing both in total and per capita.
- Third, a new study by the UN Development Programme's Emissions Gap Report, released just after the NIE, finds that even if countries carry out their pledges and reported contributions on reducing emissions by 2030, the world is still headed for a climate crisis. Those promises amount to reducing projected 2030 emissions by only 7.5 per cent, compared with previous [pledges], whereas 30 per cent is needed to limit warming to 2°C and 55 per cent is needed for 1.5°C. If continued throughout this century, they would result in warming of 2.7°C.
- Fourth, various strategies for reducing carbon dioxide emissions—such as direct capture, forestation, carbon sequestering, and a carbon tax—have made little headway anywhere. Politics, cost, and unacceptable tradeoffs are among the reasons.

Unpleasant Conclusions

Irreversible climate change seems destined to be our fate. The nation-state system is posing the greatest barrier to common sense and global community thinking. Competition and conflict over resources and technology, national security concerns, financing issues, data falsification—all these put national self-interest ahead of the global interest in survival. In fact, as the NIE posits, the climate crisis is likely to increase international tensions due, for example, to migration across borders, water disputes, and unilateral technological fixes (such as geoengineering).

The *New York Times* editorial board ended its opinion piece of October 23 by saying: "The main issue [at Glasgow] will be whether the delegates will listen to the science, look clearly at what's happening in the world around them and then—here is the hard part—provide action plans to match their aspirations." I wonder what "their aspirations" actually are—to serve the world or serve their own country and personal interests? The latest reports provide a depressing answer. ***Z***

Mel Gurtov, syndicated by PeaceVoice, is Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Portland State University and blogs at In the Human Interest.



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Socialist Worker
SYSTEM CHANGE NOT CLIMATE CHANGE
One solution: revolution
swp.org.uk
SOCIALIST CHANGE TO END CLIMATE CHANGE
Climate refugees welcome
Fight racism and climate chaos
Gill
patagonia

Build Back Better Fiasco Exposes How Both Parties Serve Corporate Power

Noam Chomsky interviewed by C.J. Polychroniou





C.J. Polychroniou: Noam, more than two decades after the "end [of] welfare as we know it," Democrats have the chance to reshape the country's safety net and close the gap with the U.S.'s liberal-democratic peers on social protection programs, as well as fight the climate crisis. However, in perhaps a rather unsurprising development, it looks like the obstructionist elements inside the Democratic Party will make sure that the U.S. remains a noticeable outlier among developed countries by not having a major social welfare state. Indeed, Joe Manchin, one of the Democratic senators standing in the way of the passage of the reconciliation bill, said that the U.S. should not turn into an "entitlement society." How do you assess all the drama in Congress around the $3.5 trillion in infrastructure, social programs and combatting the climate crisis, and what does this whole experience reveal to us about the state of U.S. politics in the post-Trump era?

Noam Chomsky: It's not post-Trump, unfortunately. Former President Donald Trump's heavy hand has not been lifted. He owns the increasingly radicalized voting base of the Republican Party. The leadership slinks to his Mar-a-Lago palace to plead for his blessing, and the few who dare to raise their heads have them lopped off quickly.

The right-wing Democrats (mislabeled "moderate") follow along for their own reasons. These are not hard to discern in some cases: It's not a great surprise that a coal baron who is Congress's leading recipient of fossil fuel funding (Manchin) should proclaim the fossil fuel industry's "no elimination" slogan, or that a top recipient of donations from the pharmaceutical industry (Sen. Kyrsten Sinema) should be holding back badly need drug pricing reforms. That's normal in a political system mired in corruption.

But the rot runs deeper.

It's often been observed that the U.S. has a one-party political system—the business party—with two factions, Democrats and Republicans. In the past, the Republican faction has tended to be more dedicated to the concerns of extreme wealth and the corporate sector, but with the resurgence of the one-sided class war called "neoliberalism" under President Ronald Reagan, the leadership has been going off the rails. By now they barely resemble a political party in a functioning democracy.

Since the late President Jimmy Carter years, the Democrats have not lagged far behind, becoming a party of affluent professionals and Wall Street donors with the working class handed over to their bitter class enemy.

One of Trump's occasional true statements was that Republicans could never win a fair election on their actual programs. Recognizing this, since President Richard Nixon's Southern strategy, the party has been mobilizing voters on "cultural issues"—white supremacy, abortion, guns, traditional patriarchal families, God (favoring the evangelical Christian variety)… anything that doesn't lift the veil on their loyal service to their prime constituency. That way they can at least stay in the running, exploiting the deeply undemocratic features of the electoral system with its built-in advantages for their largely rural voting base.

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THE CLIMATE
IS CHANGING.
WHY AREN'T WE?

All this and much more has been extensively discussed elsewhere. We need not elaborate here. It's playing out in the halls of Congress right now. The extent to which the U.S. is an "outlier" glares at us wherever we look, sometimes in ways that verge on obscenity. Take paid maternity leave. In the U.S.: none. In the next largest country in the hemisphere, Brazil: about four months. That's in addition to the universal health care, free higher education, and other public benefits that are found almost everywhere.

To be fair, the richest country in the world, with unparalleled advantages, is not alone in denying paid leave to new mothers. (Fathers? Forget about it.) The U.S. is joined by the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea and Tonga.

Recently a lead columnist for the *London Financial Times* quipped that if Senator Bernie Sanders was in Germany, he could be running on the right-wing Christian Democrat ticket. Not just a witticism, and not a comment on Sanders. Rather, on the socioeconomic system that has been created in the one-party state, dramatically so in the era of vicious class war since Reagan.

It was not always thus. In the 1930s, while continental Europe succumbed to fascism, the U.S. forged a path toward social democracy on a wave of militant labor activism, lively and diverse politics, and a sympathetic administration. Years earlier, the U.S. had pioneered mass public education, a major contribution to democracy and social justice; Europe lagged far behind.

In earlier years, it was often not too important which faction of the business party took power. In recent years, it has been. Proto-fascism is on the march.

It's beyond irony that now Europe is upholding a tattered social democracy while the U.S. declines to Trump-led proto-fascism, or that under Trump, the secretary of education sought to dismantle public education, carrying forward the neoliberal principles that underlie the sharp defunding of public education aimed at its elimination. All this is rooted in the "libertarian" doctrines of Milton Friedman, James Buchanan and other leading figures of the movement, closely linked from its origins to the attack against government "overreach" by desegregating schools.

It's worth recalling that these doctrines had their origin in bitter class war in interwar Austria, as we've discussed before. They are well-suited for its resumption in the neoliberal era.

The Biden effort to move the U.S. somewhat toward the humane norms of other OECD countries is still not dead, but it has been virtually neutralized in Congress. The Republican organization is rock-solid opposed. Its red lines include preservation in full of their one legislative achievement under Trump, "the U.S. Donor Relief Act of 2017," as Joseph Stiglitz termed the wholesale robbery, which punched a huge hole in the deficit (for a "good" cause, so OK). By charming coincidence this near-$2 trillion gift to the very rich and the corporate sector is about the same as the measly remnants of the Biden reconciliation bill (spread over 10 years) that have barely survived the right-wing assault.

This time the "deficit threat" is definitely not OK, as is loudly proclaimed. Not a good cause this time. Wrong recipients: the poor, workers, mothers and other "unpeople."

Should the progressives remain opposed to the infrastructure bill if Congress refuses to pass the social safety net bill in its original version?

It's question of tactics, not principle. That's not to say that it's unimportant. Choice of tactics can have very far-reaching consequences.



Photo by Alexandros Michailidis/Shutterstock

Rather, it means that it's not easy to answer. There are many imponderables, not least, how it will affect the coming elections. In earlier years, it was often not too important which faction of the business party took power. In recent years, it has been. Proto-fascism is on the march. Worse still, as we've discussed elsewhere, we're are advancing to a precipice from which there will be no return. Four more years of Trumpism might well tip the balance.

Which answer to the question you raise will reduce the likelihood of impending disasters? I don't see an easy answer. The question may by now be moot, with the vicious cuts in the reconciliation bill.

Won't there be grave political consequences if Democrats blow the chance to reshape federal priorities? After all, the majority of U.S. people seem to be in support of Biden's Build Back Better Act.

The Republicans have been pursuing a careful and well-thought-out policy of maintaining power as a minority party dedicated to great wealth and corporate power. It has been openly announced by the most malicious and politically powerful of the gang: Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, repeating what worked well for his reactionary cause during the President Barack Obama years (helped by Obama's quick betrayal of those who believed the pretty rhetoric about "hope and change").

Failure of Biden's efforts to reshape federal priorities will have a terrible human cost. Beyond that, it will also provide a weapon for the McConnell strategy of harming the country as much as possible and blaming the outcome on the Democrats.

So far, it's working. If it does work, with Trump and acolytes returning to power thanks to this malevolence, we will be well on our way to proto-fascism and to falling off the precipice. Failure of Biden's efforts to reshape federal priorities will have a terrible human cost. Beyond that, it will also provide a weapon for the McConnell strategy of harming the country as much as possible and blaming the outcome on the Democrats.

Brutal, but not stupid.

Is there a way to fend off these grave political consequences? Not within the confines of the deeply corrupt and undemocratic political system. The only way that has ever worked, and can work now, is mass popular pressure—what the powerful call "the peasants coming with their pitchforks."

Trump has been out of office for several months, yet his influence among Republican voters remains unwavering. What continues to drive the pro-Trump crowd?

We've often discussed it before, and there has been extensive investigation by social scientists—most convincingly, in my opinion, by Tony DiMaggio.

It's not just Trump, though he has shown real genius in tapping poisons that run deep in U.S. history and contemporary culture, and in portraying himself as "your savior"—even "the chosen one"—while stabbing you in the back. That's no small accomplishment for a person with few talents other than chicanery, fraud, and wielding the wrecking ball to destroy everything he can't claim as his own.

But it's not just Trump. We can also ask why Nixon's racist Southern strategy succeeded, or Reagan's quite overt racism—in his case, apparently sincerely held. We can ask why the abortion and gun frauds took hold, or why in the face of overwhelming evidence, segments of the left join the far right in anti-vax campaigns, at enormous human costs, or why "more than half of President Trump's supporters [in 2020] embraced the QAnon conspiracy theory of a global satanic pedophile ring that was plotting against the 45th president of the

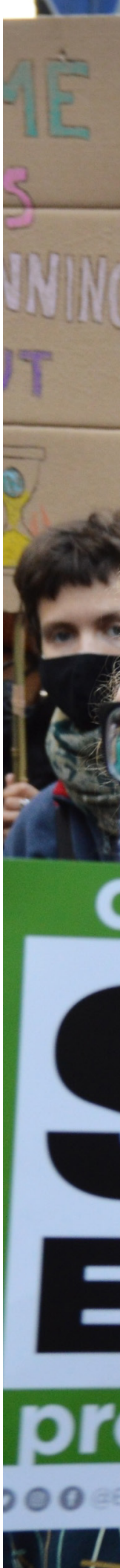


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change the law
STOP
ECOCIDE
otect the earth
ONE WORLD
PLANET


FREE PUBLIC TRANSPORT
COMBAT POVERTY, POLLUTION & CONGESTION
QUIT KILLING THE EARTH
SOCIALIST CHANGE
ARE YOU BREATHING?
OUR PLANET CANNOT
THE WRONG
Photo by By Christina Richards/Shut

United States," who was valiantly trying to save the children from such "prominent pedophiles" as Biden, Hillary Clinton, and other "Deep State" suspects.

The signs of collapse of the social order are too numerous and familiar to review once again. To a large extent, it can be attributed to the impact of the one-sided and vicious class war of the past 40-plus years. There are deeper cultural and historical roots. It's not just the U.S. European racism and xenophobia is even more malevolent in some respects. One sign is the corpses in the Mediterranean, victims of the frenzy of Europe's dedication to torture the survivors of its centuries of destruction of Africa.

The effort to reveal the roots of such pathologies is no mere academic enterprise, and not just these. We can add the pathologies of the rich and powerful, including the deplorables who hurl the epithet at others. These have been far more consequential. Efforts to understand are of value primarily as a guide to self-reflection and to action to find remedies.

And quickly. Our strange species doesn't have a lot of time to spare. ***Z***

C.J. Polychroniou is a political scientist/political economist, author, and journalist who has taught and worked in numerous universities and research centers in Europe and the United States. His latest books are *Optimism Over Despair: Noam Chomsky On Capitalism, Empire, and Social Change* (2017); *Climate Crisis and the Global Green New Deal: The Political Economy of Saving the Planet* (with Noam Chomsky and Robert Pollin as primary authors, 2020); *The Precipice: Neoliberalism, the Pandemic, and the Urgent Need for Radical Change* (an anthology of interviews with Noam Chomsky, 2021); and *Economics and the Left: Interviews with Progressive Economists* (2021).



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As climate change leads humanity's march to Armageddon, data surfacing during late 2021 suggests that the march could be much briefer than previously thought. "Nature is starting to emit greenhouse gases in competition with cars, planes, trains, and factories," asserts Robert Hunziker. The Amazon has switched from soaking up CO2 to emitting it. Likewise, the Arctic has flipped from being a carbon sink to becoming an emission source. Permafrost is giving off the three main greenhouse gases (GHGs): CO2, methane, and nitrous oxide. So much Siberian permafrost is melting that buildings are collapsing as methane bombs explode, resulting in craters 100 feet deep.

As global warming becomes obvious, "climate denial" fades into the sunset. The twin twilight stars replacing it are the "Blah, blah, blah" of inaction and "energy denial." Greta Thunberg famously ridiculed the "Blah, blah, blah" of politicians who publicly moan grave concern and then vote to do nothing. The scorn had barely leaped from her lips when news broke regarding the Uinta Basin Railway in Utah where "… the Biden administration is poised to approve a right-of-way through the Ashley National Forest that … would enable crude oil production in the basin to quadruple to 350,000 barrels a day." Not much chance of capping oil with this administration.

The term "energy denial" reflects an intense belief that "alternative energy" (AltE) such as solar, wind, and hydro-power cause nothing but trivial problems which should be ignored in order to allow unlimited expansion of production. Michael Klare is one of innumerable progressive authors who use justified hysteria over climate change to demand unjustified spending of trillions of dollars on AltE.

Stan Cox whacks all three dragon heads in his new book *The Path to a Livable Future: A New Politics to Fight Climate Change*, *Racism and the Next Pandemic*. He dismisses the anti-science and racism of climate denialists such as Trump, strips bare the insincerity of the early Biden administration, and uncovers the lurking dangers of energy denial.

The book goes beyond these. Cox demonstrates that climate change is not a "thing-unto-itself" which can be halted by a quick fix of a few trillion dollars; but, is a pernicious stain in an interwoven fabric of oppressive systems. This lays the groundwork for outlining a multiplicity of problems which must be addressed to confront climate change. These include reducing production via a participatory economy, establishing financial equality, and building mutual aid networks.

Conventional Wisdom

Core to Cox's analysis is a concept that runs so contrary to conventional leftist wisdom that many will not speak it, read it, or publish it. He is at the forefront of authors willing to melt the golden calf of AltE. He slams congressional proposals for a "Green New Deal," noting that they fail to include any plans for restricting fossil fuel (FF) production and merely pretend that increases in solar and wind will cause a reduction in its use. Reduction is not written into the plans because FFs are essential for manufacturing AltE equipment. The book portrays the most troubling aspect of AltE to be its promotion as a panacea. This contributes to the preservation of social structures that are most in need

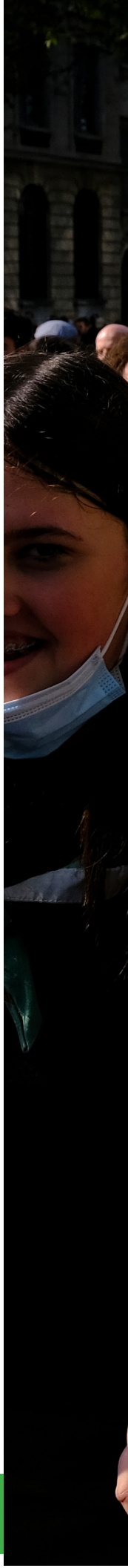


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Path to Extinction or Path to a Livable Future?

By Don Fitz




STOP
FOSSIL
FUELS
COP26
ACT NOW
POLICE
SCOTLAND

of replacement:

"If we attempt to construct a wind- and solar-powered society that replicates today's high-energy living arrangements and transportation systems, the result will be the creation of 'green sacrifice zones' in nations that have large deposits of cobalt, lithium, and other metals that go into the mechanisms essential to renewable electricity systems." (p. 120)

What Else Is There?

His alternative to a massive increase in AltE is simple and obvious: produce a lot less unnecessary stuff. Within this simple truism, issues of complexity rise to the fore.

Cox continues the tradition of those who realize that increasing complexity leads to an increase in breakdown. More complex systems require more energy to construct, require more energy to function, and are more difficult to fix. Gadgets with 2000 parts are easier to break and harder to repair than are those with 20 parts. Authors such as Joseph Tainter and Richard Heinberg have applied this idea to human systems, explaining that as societies evolve toward more complexity, they require more social energy to maintain interpersonal connections and are more prone to collapse.

Cox takes this concept to a higher level for the U.S. in the 2020s, especially regarding racial and social injustice, diseases like Covid, and climate change:

"… how can a just transition to a low emissions economy be systematically planned if, due to intolerable heat and humidity in the Sun Belt and Mississippi Valley, wildfires on the West Coast and in the South, constant pummeling by hurricanes on the Gulf Coast, and sea-level rise on all coasts, we become a nation of climate refugees, with the affluent snapping up the safe ground? … We can have ecological sustainability or capital accumulation, but not both." (pp. 127-128)

Entanglements are nowhere more perplexing than in food and agriculture. As Ronnie Cummins points out, "Agriculture is the largest employer in the world with 570 million farmers and farm laborers," with annual spending on food estimated at $7.5 trillion, making it the largest global industry. His research background means that his analysis of food, land and agriculture is where Cox's light shines most brightly. He points out that soil depletion interacts with all of these, which then feeds into climate change. Techno-fixes for climate change tend to require more land or other inputs. Simultaneous use of multiple techno-fixes requires enormous energy input which then compromises ecosystems.

An example of the complexity is biogas from agricultural, which has been proposed as a source for energy. Cox acknowledges that such energy would not require additional land but points out that "the amount of gas that can be produced is limited by the quantities of food, crop, and animal wastes available." (p. 114) Solar energy is a vastly more popular form of energy, but Cox explains its link to agriculture: "Plans for '100% renewable' energy would require solar installation on at least as many square miles of the Earth's surface as are now occupied by all food production and human settlements combined…" (p. 68)

Then, Who Decides?

How then, could a sustainable society reduce energy sufficiently to avoid climate change while providing quality lives and without wrecking global ecology? How will reducing production affect enormous disparities according to race, gender, impoverishment and location? Who decides what to reduce and how? The author answers by returning to

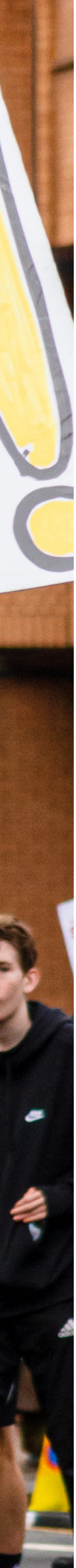


Photo by PMGphotog/Shutterstock

ideas from his previous book, *Any Way You Slice It* and combining them with concepts of participatory economics. Subtitled *The Past, Present and Future of Rationing*, that book refuted the assertion that rationing would limit the ability of poor people to attain basic necessities. In his current book, Cox explains that rationing would be a central part of reducing resource inequities:

"The phase-out [of FFs] must be accompanied by systems to ensure … much more equitable access to energy. Today, more affluent, predominantly white households have much higher than average consumption of energy in all forms, while millions of of lower-income households cannot afford as much energy as they need." (p. 85)

Since the largest source of GHGs is unnecessary production by the corporate class plus their luxury waste via "conspicuous consumption," the focus of rationing must be on producing vastly fewer wasteful products and more of those required for human existence. Cox concludes that "We need a more serious debate over how to determine which products and services are essential." (p. 102) Affirming that "… the path to a livable future is clearly not going to be a capitalist one." (p. 87) he suggests that economic decisions cannot be left to "Blah, blah, blah" politicians. Instead, they must be discussed far more broadly: "Those who are affected by the rules must be the ones who make the rules and also monitor" the use of resources. (p. 88) Cox advocates citizen's assemblies as the beginning point of deliberation that would feed into a multi-layered administration that would finalize and carry out polities.

As an example of how such a participatory economic system could work, Cox details how Cuba responded to the Covid crisis by collecting information from patients and doctors at neighborhood medical offices and then sending that information to clinics, which summarized it and passed it to national health decision-makers. Far from producing health care less efficient than a market economy, Cuba's system of health care rationing via participatory input allowed it to have a more successful response to Covid than did the U.S.

While rationing systems and participatory economics are essential components of a new society, they are the mechanistic parts. Humanity will not be reborn without passionately adopting a deeper understanding of social relationships. For this, Cox looks to mutual aid, which fuses a world view with ongoing actions of helping others in need.

It is fitting that one of the first examples Cox gives of mutual aid is the United Farm Workers of the 1960s which provided farmworkers with basic provisions alongside mobilizing for labor rights. After all, labor unions throughout history have supported those on strike. The workplaces of the world are where humanity collectively produces those things required for our survival.

The book also describes how the Black Panther Party offered free clinics, sickle-cell anemia screening and the Breakfast for Children program. Huey Newton called them "survival programs, meaning survival pending revolution." (p. 145) Such visions of people helping each other from an inner desire to do so is reminiscent of Che Guevara's conception of the "new man," a dream that became the germ of the Cuban health system.

Going Forward

Even the best analyses suffer an occasional fault and this book is no exception. Though others may skip over it, I spent so many years opposing incinerators that reading this line evoked a "Huh?" from me: "Medical wastes can harbor pathogens and therefore usually must be incinerated." (p. 34) Actually,

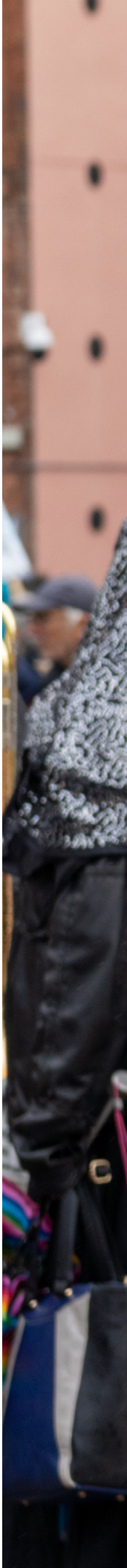


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STAND UP TO RACISM
Climate refugees welcome
Fight racism and climate chaos
@AntiRacismDay
standuptoracism.org.uk
CRAGHOPPERS


THE FUTURE IS EUROPE
Thon Hotels
50 km
Zone Kunst-Wet
THON EU
DANSAERT
ZUIDSTATIO
WET
ZONE ROGIE
ZONE GTE M
ZONE LOUIZ
is al heet genoeg!
JNM
NO PLANET B
REAL ACTION !

even the worst human pathogens do not require anywhere near the 2000 degree heat that incinerators reach for their destruction. Autoclaves work fine for medwaste and do not create the variety of toxins that incinerators do. Fortunately, calling for burning medwaste was a stand-alone lapse that actually runs counter to the author's overall perspective of advocating the most environmental solution available.

The other problem, however, recurs. Though frequently chastising the Democratic Party (DP) for inaction, the author turns to them for solutions: "We must show them [DP] that they are mandated to represent the will of the people, not the Silicon Valley tycoons, the natural gas extractors…" (p. 140) In reality, neither of the two big money parties is likely to take "meaningful action" regarding climate catastrophe. If the Trump cabal garners support from disparaging ethnic minorities and immigrants, the DP rallies its base with calls for "more stuff," yielding it even less likely to advocate producing less of the unnecessary. Looking to the DP to restrict overproduction seems a bit like asking the KKK to resolve racism.

It has long been said in many ways that problems cannot be solved by relying on individuals and institutions who created them. The novel crisis of climate change nested within intertwined social problems calls for new ways of thinking—ways which are manifested in new mutual aid groups, new trade unions, and new political institutions.

Overall, *The Path to a Livable Future* may be the most serious and thought-provoking new book on climate change available. It challenges shortcomings of dominant paradigms and offers alternatives that do not shy away from dilemmas.

The proposed solution that is most likely to be scorned is the assertion that it is possible to reduce production without harming the world's poor. It is worth noting that Cuba has attained a longer life expectancy and lower infant mortality rate than the U.S. while spending less than 10% per person per year. Indisputably, a drastic reduction in dollars spent on health care can accompany a higher quality of life.

When Cox goes through methods of cooling during hot summers and the energy needed for agricultural production, he carefully explains not only the complexity of each but how they fit into the nexus of systems affected by and affecting climate change. The threat to humanity's existence from climate change is far too profound and connected to far too many other intricate difficulties than to simplify it with slogans for quick fixes. It is well past the time to face hard decisions of how to reduce obscene levels of corporate production instead of fiddling with perpetual energy fantasies while the planet burns. ***Z***

Don Fitz (fitzdon@aol.com) is on the Editorial Board of Green Social Thought where a version of this article was first published. He was the 2016 candidate of the Missouri Green Party for Governor. His book, *Cuban Health Care*: *The Ongoing Revolution* has been available since June 2020.



Photo by Alexandros Michailidis/ Shutterstock

When I first saw Julian Assange in Belmarsh prison, in 2019, shortly after he had been dragged from his refuge in the Ecuadorean embassy, he said, "I think I am losing my mind."

He was gaunt and emaciated, his eyes hollow and the thinness of his arms was emphasised by a yellow identifying cloth tied around his left arm, an evocative symbol of institutional control.

For all but the two hours of my visit, he was confined to a solitary cell in a wing known as "healthcare," an Orwellian name. In the cell next to him a deeply disturbed man screamed through the night. Another occupant suffered from terminal cancer. Another was seriously disabled.

"One day we were allowed to play Monopoly," he said, "as therapy. That was our healthcare!"

"This is One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," I said.

"Yes, only more insane."

Julian's black sense of humour has often rescued him, but no more. The insidious torture he has suffered in Belmarsh has had devastating effects. Read the reports of Nils Melzer, the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, and the clinical opinions of Michael Kopelman, emeritus professor of neuropsychiatry at King's College London and Dr. Quentin Deeley, and reserve a contempt for America's hired gun in court, James Lewis QC, who dismissed this as "malingering."

I was especially moved by the expert words of Dr. Kate Humphrey, a clinical neuropsychologist at Imperial College, London. She told the Old Bailey last year that Julian's intellect had gone from "in the superior, or more likely very superior, range" to "significantly below" this optimal level, to the point where he was struggling to absorb information and "perform in the low to average range."

At yet another court hearing in this shameful Kafkaesque drama, I watched him struggle to remember his name when asked by the judge to state it.

For most of his first year in Belmarsh, he was locked up. Denied proper exercise, he strode the length of his small cell, back and forth, back and forth, for "my own half-marathon," he told me. This reeked of despair. A razorblade was found in his cell. He wrote "farewell letters." He phoned the Samaritans repeatedly.

At first he was denied his reading glasses, left behind in the brutality of his kidnapping from the embassy. When the glasses finally arrived at the prison, they were not delivered to him for days. His solicitor, Gareth Peirce, wrote letter after letter to the prison governor protesting the withholding of legal documents, access to the prison library, the use of a basic laptop with which to prepare his case. The prison would take weeks, even months, to answer. (The governor, Rob Davis, has been awarded an Order of the British Empire).

Books sent to him by a friend, the journalist Charles Glass, himself a survivor of hostage-taking in Beirut, were returned. Julian could not call his American lawyers. From the start, he has been constantly medicated. Once, when I asked him what they were giving him, he couldn't say.

At last week's High Court hearing to decide finally whether or not Julian would be extradited to America, he appeared only briefly by video link on the first day. He looked unwell and unsettled. The court was told he had been "excused" because of his "medication". But Julian had asked to attend the hearing and was refused, said his partner Stella Moris. Attendance in a court sitting in judgement on you is surely a right.

This intensely proud man also demands the right to appear strong and coherent in public, as he did at the Old Bailey last year. Then, he

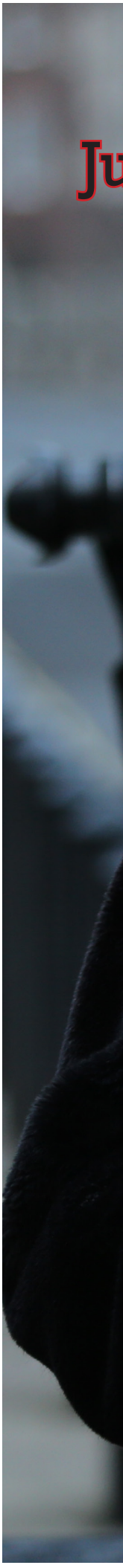


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ustice For Assange Is Justice For All

By John Pilger



consulted constantly with his lawyers through the slit in his glass cage. He took copious notes. He stood and protested with eloquent anger at lies and abuses of process.

The damage done to him in his decade of incarceration and uncertainty, including more than two years in Belmarsh (whose brutal regime is celebrated in the latest Bond film) is beyond doubt.

But so, too, is his courage beyond doubt, and a quality of resistance and resilience that is heroism. It is this that may see him through the present Kafkaesque nightmare—if he is spared an American hellhole.

I have known Julian since he first came to Britain in 2009. In our first interview, he described the moral imperative behind WikiLeaks: that our right to the transparency of governments and the powerful was a basic democratic right. I have watched him cling to this principle when at times it has made his life even more precarious.

Almost none of this remarkable side to the man's character has been reported in the so-called "free press" whose own future, it is said, is in jeopardy if Julian is extradited.

Of course, but there has never been a "free press". There have been extraordinary journalists who have occupied positions in the "mainstream"—spaces that have now closed, forcing independent journalism on to the internet.

There, it has become a "fifth estate," a samizdat of dedicated, often unpaid work by those who were honorable exceptions in a media now reduced to an assembly line of platitudes. Words like "democracy," "reform," "human rights" are stripped of their dictionary meaning and censorship is by omission or exclusion.

Last week's fateful hearing at the High Court was "disappeared" in the "free press". Most people would not know that a court in the heart of London had sat in judgement on their right to know: their right to question and dissent.

Many Americans, if they know anything about the Assange case, believe a fantasy that Julian is a Russian agent who caused Hillary Clinton to lose the presidential election in 2016 to Donald Trump. This is strikingly similar to the lie that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, which justified the invasion of Iraq and the deaths of a million or more people.

They are unlikely to know that the main prosecution witness underpinning one of the concocted charges against Julian has recently admitted he lied and fabricated his "evidence."

Neither will they have heard or read about the revelation that the CIA, under its former director, the Hermann Goering lookalike Mike Pompeo, had planned to assassinate Julian. And that was hardly new. Since I have known Julian, he has been under threat of harm and worse.

On his first night in the Ecuadorean embassy in 2012, dark figures swarmed over the front of the embassy and banged on the windows, trying to get in. In the U.S., public figures—including Hillary Clinton, fresh from her destruction of Libya—have long called for Julian's assassination. The current President Biden damned him as a "hi-tech terrorist."

The former prime minister of Australia, Julia Gillard, was so eager to please what she called "our best mates" in Washington that she demanded Julian's passport be taken from him—until it was pointed out to her that this would be against the law. The current prime minister, Scott Morrison, a PR man, when asked about Assange, said, "He should face the music."

It has been open season on the WikiLeaks' founder for more than a decade. In 2011, The Guardian exploited Julian's work as if it was its own, collected journalism prizes and Hol-



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DON'T
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ASSANGE
Journalism
is not a crime.
Free Assange

lywood deals, then turned on its source.

Years of vituperative assaults on the man who refused to join their club followed. He was accused of failing to redact documents of the names of those considered at risk. In a Guardian book by David Leigh and Luke Harding, Assange is quoted as saying during a dinner in a London restaurant that he didn't care if informants named in the leaks were harmed.

Neither Harding nor Leigh was at the dinner. John Goetz, an investigations reporter with *Der Spiegel*, actually was at the dinner and testified that Assange said nothing of the kind.

The great whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg told the Old Bailey last year that Assange had personally redacted 15,000 files. The New Zealand investigative journalist Nicky Hager, who worked with Assange on the Afghanistan and Iraq war leaks, described how Assange took "extraordinary precautions in redacting names of informants."

In 2013, I asked the film-maker Mark Davis about this. A respected broadcaster for SBS Australia, Davis was an eyewitness, accompanying Assange during the preparation of the leaked files for publication in *The Guardian* and *The New York Times*. He told me, "Assange was the only one who worked day and night extracting 10,000 names of people who could be targeted by the revelations in the logs."

Lecturing a group of City University students, David Leigh mocked the very idea that "Julian Assange will end up in an orange jumpsuit." His fears were an exaggeration, he sneered. Edward Snowden later revealed that Assange was on a "manhunt timeline."

Luke Harding, who co-authored with Leigh the Guardian book that disclosed the password to a trove of diplomatic cables that Julian had entrusted to the paper, was outside the Ecuadorean embassy on the evening Julian sought asylum. Standing with a line of police, he gloated on his blog, "Scotland Yard may well have the last laugh."

The campaign was relentless. *Guardian* columnists scraped the depths. "He really is the most massive turd," wrote Suzanne Moore of a man she had never met.

The editor who presided over this, Alan Rusbridger, has lately joined the chorus that "defending Assange protects the free press". Having published the initial WikiLeaks revelations, Rusbridger must wonder if the *Guardian*'s subsequent excommunication of Assange will be enough to protect his own skin from the wrath of Washington.

The High Court judges are likely to announce their decision on the U.S. appeal in the new year. What they decide will determine whether or not the British judiciary has trashed the last vestiges of its vaunted reputation; in the land of Magna Carta this disgraceful case ought to have been hurled out of court long ago.

The missing imperative is not the impact on a collusive "free press." It is justice for a man persecuted and wilfully denied it.

Julian Assange is a truth-teller who has committed no crime but revealed government crimes and lies on a vast scale and so performed one of the great public services of my lifetime. Do we need to be reminded that justice for one is justice for all? ***Z***

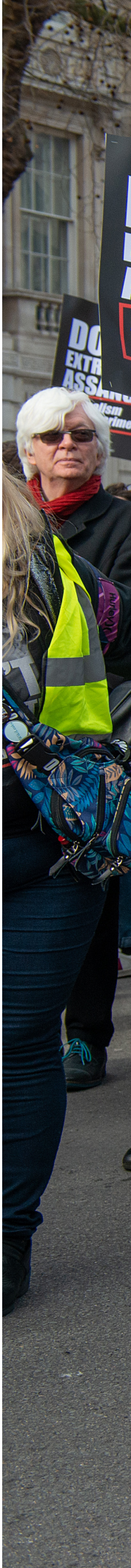


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No Extraordinary Rendition!
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