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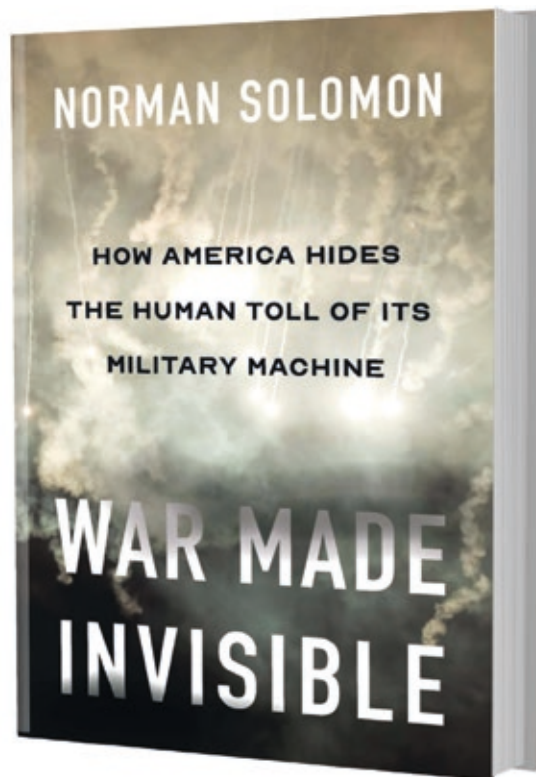
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INSIDE

INSIGHTS

5. At the mercy of the barista begging class
Indrajit Samarajiva
7. Hiroshima and Nagasaki were 'nuclear tests'
Norman Solomon
8. Abu Ghraib torture case jumps legal hurdle
Brett Wilkins
10. Putting democracy back into elections
George Monbiot
12. Strong images help fans forget the dark side?
Alfred Fisher & Karl Fruh
13. Hurwitt's Eye
Mark Hurwitt

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At the butchers' – Page 35

Mark Lewis / Wake Up, This is Joburg

ISSUES

14. The profiteers of Armageddon
William Hartung
18. The UN's vague new peace agenda
Vijay Prashad
22. Boeing case exposes Biden's double standards on justice
Russell Mokhiber
26. Forgotten victims of America's class war
Chris Hedges
30. Have corporate bosses become expendable?
Sam Pizzigati
32. The war on so-called dangerous ideas
John & Nisha Whitehead
35. Another World
Tanya Zack & Mark Lewis
42. Sorry, but Barbie is still a problem
Sonali Kolhatkar
43. We Are Fried
Greg Koenderman
44. Class injustice and a stifled cry of despair
Harvey Thomson & Paul Bond

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Issue 230 – January 2022



Issue 231 – February 2022



Issue 232 – March 2022



Issue 233 – April 2022



Issue 233 – May 2022



Issue 234 – June 2022



Issue 235 – July 2022



Issue 237 – September 2022



Issue 238 – October 2022



Issue 239 – November 2022



Issue 240 – December 2022



Issue 241 – January 2023

INSIGHTS



Indrajit Samarajiva

AT THE MERCY OF THE BARISTA BEGGING CLASS

I'm at the Modern Café and I order two beers. The cashier turns the console around and it asks for a tip. For what now? There isn't table service here let alone tables to sit at. Of course, this interaction is even more awkward for the man behind the screen. Why does his

pay depend on my noblesse oblige? What a strange thing, American tipping culture. You must pay the capitalist, but the worker's pay is discretionary.

When I see all these workers hopefully turning around computer consoles, I see little different from

the beggars at the highway medians. Nobody likes to be compared to a beggar, but a beggar is doing honest work – God's work, honestly, and a bit of the devil's. A beggar is out in the hot sun A) reminding us of the failure of this system and B) terrifying us of ever leaving the system. Two jobs for the price of none. This is why I tip beggars generously. It's a hard job (and also they might be angels). As Jesus said (and I presume he checks):

“Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you as well” – Jesus

INSIGHTS

I understand the injunction to give and the religious demand for Zakat (for charity), but like every other human emotion this gets perverted by immoral capitalism into another way to manipulate us. For the service industry, customers are made into snitches, brutally disciplining service workers by either giving or withholding their pay. Who died and made us wage slave drivers for every kadé we walk into? I just want a cup of coffee. Who am I to mess with another man's daily bread, which he earns by the sweat of his brow?

Perhaps you could say a service worker is doing something – often highly skilled work, whatever that means – and the beggar comparison is unfair. I think that's your own prejudice speaking (which presumes a beggar is less honest work than a billionaire, when it's precisely the opposite), but let's go along and say that tipping then makes buskers of the worker. A busker banging drums or playing violin on the street corner is obviously working for a living, but they still depend on the whims of passersby rather than a salary. What tipping (in the absence of a living wage) does is thrust service workers into this beggar/busker class, only allowed inside the buildings.

Tipping is class treason masquerading as choice, the core American illusion. Remember that the capitalist gets paid either way, and then some completely useless payment processor is taking a commission on the tip. Why don't companies pay their staff living wages? Why doesn't the public provide healthcare? Why don't these people just take care of each other,

which is honestly easier and cheaper than being competitive dicks all the time? How are America's deep social problems made into an individual choice, staring at me in the checkout line?

So do I tip the guy? No, I don't tip the guy. I just can't get over the intrusion of tipping into the self-service line in an Art Museum where we're surrounded by literally billions of dollars in art, enshrined under the names of obscenely wealthy people. Ask them. How can you call yourselves a rich country when working people need to beg a living from each other? They're asking random Sri Lankans to pay their working class when, gods know, I've got enough hungry people to help back home.

The intrusion of tipping is not even a problem about tipping, that's just the tip of the iceberg. This is about a culture where profits are sacrosanct and wages are sacrificial. Forget what the culture markets itself as, look at what it actually does.

Whenever anything goes wrong who has to sacrifice? The poor, the poor, the poor. And who always gets bailouts? The rich, the rich, the rich. The entire neoliberal paradigm – from America to Sri Lanka – is that if you make the investor class happy they will 'tip' the poor. But they never do, do they? The investor class is never happy because the love of money is the root of all evil. And they're even worse tippers than they are paymasters. The idea that working people should depend on the noblesse oblige of people who are neither noble nor obliged is completely farcical. The cyclical re-emergence of class requires re-revolution, over and over it seems like.

The fact is that capitalism gets

it all ass-backwards. The capitalist's profit is supposed to be the 'tip' while the workers is supposed to get paid out first. The capitalist is supposed to take the risk while the worker gives their 'surplus' labor. This is the shitty deal of capitalism in theory, but it gets even worse in practice. The profit comes first, even if the workers need to be on food stamps or – in downtimes – lose their jobs entirely. The risk thus becomes the workers, or socialized across the whole population with bailouts. And to add insult to injury, workers also have to personally ask customers to pay them. What is even going on here? This is not about tipping culture. This is about the entire culture being tipped over and flailing about like a sacrificial turtle.

That's what I see when I see America these days (I'm in Chicago for a wedding). I see a land where everything is taken to extremes and none of the basics are taken care of. I see a land full of expensive things and poor people. I see a culture of very nice people who are, collectively, completely awful to each other. The great lie is that baristas can bring niceness back to this culture by smiling and that customers can reward kindness by paying. The fish rots from the head, not the barista.

Hence what I face at checkout lines is not merely a charade of charity, it's a crime scene. It's the site of wage theft, which far eclipses all other forms of theft, and is not punished at all. It's the system working as intended. What I see at the checkout line is capitalists finding a way to reduce the already useless minimum wage and get

INSIGHTS

employee costs off their books. It is the rolling back of labor protections people fought for with the cudgel of consumer ‘choice’. With the flip of a computer screen I am witnessing the working class being played against itself while the house always wins. By all accounts, these thieves should be devoured by six-footed snakes, but all that happens is that one Barista doesn’t get tipped and

I write a thousand words, while asking for tips myself. Capitalism makes beggars of us all. Better to be brigands I say. Fuck facing off over a \$3 tip. Workers should unite and take it all. **CT**

Indrajit Samarajiva was born in Canada, raised in America, and lives in Nugegoda, Sri Lanka. He blogs at www.indi.ca.

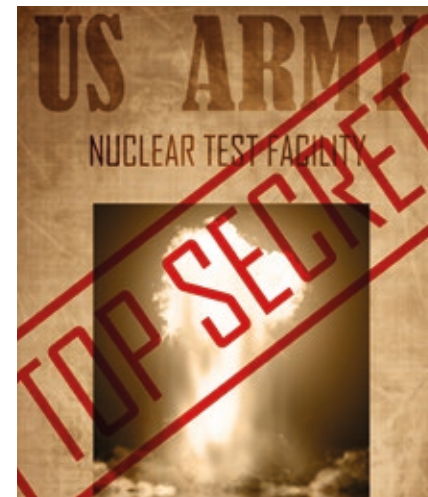
Norman Solomon

HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI WERE ‘NUCLEAR TESTS’

In 1980, when I asked the press office at the US Department of Energy to send me a listing of nuclear bomb test explosions, the agency mailed me an official booklet with the title *Announced United States Nuclear Tests, July 1945 Through December 1979*. As you’d expect, the Trinity test in New Mexico was at the top of the list. Second on the list was Hiroshima. Third was Nagasaki.

So, 35 years after the atomic bombings of those Japanese cities in August 1945, the Energy Department – the agency in charge of nuclear weaponry – was categorising them as “tests.”

Later on, the classification changed, apparently in an effort to avert a potential PR problem. By 1994, a new edition of the same document explained that the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki “were not ‘tests’ in the sense that they were conducted to prove that the weapon would work as designed . . .



or to advance weapon design, to determine weapons effects, or to verify weapon safety.”

But the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki actually were tests, in more ways than one.

Take it from the Manhattan Project’s director, Gen. Leslie Groves, who recalled: “To enable us to assess accurately the effects of the bomb, the targets should not have

been previously damaged by air raids. It was also desirable that the first target be of such size that the damage would be confined within it, so that we could more definitely determine the power of the bomb.”

A physicist with the Manhattan Project, David H. Frisch, remembered that US military strategists were eager “to use the bomb first where its effects would not only be politically effective but also technically measurable.”

For good measure, after the Trinity bomb test in the New Mexico desert used plutonium as its fission source on July 16, 1945, in early August the military was able to test both a uranium-fuelled bomb on Hiroshima and a second plutonium bomb on Nagasaki to gauge their effects on big cities.

Public discussion of the nuclear era began when President Harry Truman issued a statement that announced the atomic bombing of Hiroshima – which he described only as “an important Japanese Army base.” It was a flagrant lie. A leading researcher of the atomic bombings of Japan, journalist Greg Mitchell, has pointed out: “Hiroshima was not an ‘army base’ but a city of 350,000. It did contain one important military headquarters, but the bomb had been aimed at the very centre of a city – and far from its industrial area.”

Mitchell added: “Perhaps 10,000 military personnel lost their lives in the bomb but the vast majority of the 125,000 dead in Hiroshima would be women and children.” Three days later, when an atomic bomb fell on Nagasaki, “it was officially described as a ‘naval base’ yet less than 200 of the 90,000 dead were military personnel.”

Since then, presidents have rou-

INSIGHTS

tinely offered rhetorical camouflage for reckless nuclear policies, rolling the dice for global catastrophe. In recent years, the most insidious lies from leaders in Washington have come with silence – refusing to acknowledge, let alone address with genuine diplomacy, the worsening dangers of nuclear war. Those dangers have pushed the hands of the Doomsday Clock from the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* to an unprecedented mere 90 seconds to cataclysmic Midnight.

The ruthless Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 quickly escalated the chances of nuclear war. President Biden’s response was to pretend otherwise, beginning with his State of the Union address that came just days after the invasion; the long speech did not include a single word about nuclear weapons, the risks of nuclear war or any other such concern.

Today, in some elite circles of Russia and the United States, normalised talk of using “tactical” nuclear weapons has upped the madness ante. It can be shocking to read wildly irresponsible comments coming from top Russian officials about perhaps using nuclear weaponry in the Ukraine war. We might forget that they are giving voice to Russia’s strategic doctrine that is basically the same as ongoing US strategic doctrine – avowedly retaining the option of first use of nuclear weapons if losing too much ground in a military conflict.

Daniel Ellsberg wrote near the close of his vital book *The Doomsday Machine*: “What is missing – what is foregone – in the typical discussion and analysis of historical or current nuclear policies is the recognition that what is being discussed is dizzyingly insane and

immoral: in its almost-incalculable and inconceivable destructiveness and deliberate murderousness, its disproportionality of risked and planned destructiveness to either declared or unacknowledged objectives, the infeasibility of its secretly pursued aims (damage limitation to the United States and allies, “victory” in two-sided nuclear war), its criminality (to a degree that explodes ordinary visions of law, justice, crime), its lack of wisdom or compassion, its sinfulness and evil.”

Dan dedicated the book “to those who struggle for a human future.”

A similar message came from Albert Einstein in 1947 when he wrote about “the release of atomic ener-

gy,” warning against “the outmoded concept of narrow nationalisms” and declaring: “For there is no secret and there is no defense; there is no possibility of control except through the aroused understanding and insistence of the peoples of the world.” **CT**

Norman Solomon is the national director of RootsAction.org and executive director of the Institute for Public Accuracy. He is the author of a dozen books including War Made Easy. His latest book, War Made Invisible: How America Hides the Human Toll of Its Military Machine, was published in June 2023 by The New Press.

Brett Wilkins

ABU GHRAIB TORTURE CASE JUMPS LEGAL HURDLE

Survivors of torture at the hands of US troops and private interrogators cheered a federal judge’s rejection this week of an infamous military contractor’s latest bid to dismiss a lawsuit brought by Iraqis formerly jailed in the notorious Abu Ghraib prison during the early years of the American-led occupation.

Judge Leonie Brinkema in the US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia in Alexandria on Monday refused to dismiss the torture suit against CACI Premier Technology, a military-industrial complex linchpin, based in nearby Arlington, with more than 22,000 employees and billions of dollars in government contracts.

The lawsuit against CACI – filed in 2008 by the Center for Constitutional Rights on behalf of former detainees Suhail Al Shimari, Asa’ad Al Zuba’e, and Salah Al-Ejaili – alleges that company officials conspired with US military personnel in subjecting the plaintiffs to torture and other crimes.

A 2004 investigation by US Army Lt. Gen. Anthony Jones and Maj. Gen. George Fay found that CACI employees participated in and encouraged the torture of Abu Ghraib prisoners.

“I am so happy to receive the news that our case can proceed toward trial,” plaintiff Salah Al-Ejaili – an Al Jazeera journalist imprisoned and tortured for two months

INSIGHTS

Wikimedia



Nov. 7, 2003. Cpl Graner and Spc Harman pose for picture behind the nude detainees. US Army / Criminal Investigation Command (CID). Seized by the US Government.

at Abu Ghraib – said in a statement early in August.

“I have stayed patient and hopeful during the two years we have waited for this decision – and throughout the nearly two decades since I was abused at Abu Ghraib – that one day I would achieve justice and accountability in a US court,” he added. “Today brings me and the other plaintiffs one step closer.”

At Abu Ghraib – where one US torturer “welcomed” a new handcuffed and blindfolded prisoner by throwing him face-first from a vehicle and proclaiming, “You can’t spell abuse without Abu” – detainees faced daily abuse described as “sadistic, blatant, and wanton” in a report by Army Maj. Gen. Antonio Taguba.

Beatings; death threats; and sexual, religious and racial abuse were commonplace. Prisoners – up to 90

percent of whom were innocent, according to a Red Cross report – were also menaced or attacked by trained dogs, forced to masturbate in groups in front of male and female interrogators, and were raped by men and objects, in one instance while a female soldier photographed the teenaged victim.

Others were forced to curse their religion or eat pork, which is strictly forbidden to Muslims.

In addition, men and women – some of whom said they were raped or sexually abused by their US captors – were held at Abu Ghraib as bargaining chips meant to coerce wanted males to surrender to occupation authorities.

One woman said she was thrown in a cell with the bloody corpse of her brother, one of dozens of Abu Ghraib detainees who died at the

hands of US troops, from medical neglect, or shelling by Iraqi insurgents.

Photographs of smiling US troops posing beside the body Manadel al-Jamadi, who was tortured to death at Abu Ghraib, were among the hundreds of horrific images that shocked the world’s conscience upon their release after Army whistleblower Sgt. Joe Darby leaked them.

Although 11 low-ranking soldiers were convicted and jailed for their roles in the Abu Ghraib torture scandal and Brig. Gen. Janis Karpinski, the prison’s commanding officer, was demoted, no other high-ranking military officer faced accountability for the abuse. Nor did any of the officials in the George W. Bush administration or the Central Intelligence Agency who devised, approved, and ordered the torture of detainees in the so-called War on Terror.

CACI – which has tried to get the case dropped 18 times – argues it is not responsible for its employees’ torture of Abu Ghraib prisoners, this time unsuccessfully citing the US Supreme Court’s 2021 *Doe v. Nestle* decision.

In that case, the justices ruled 8-1 that companies could not be sued under the Alien Tort Statute – which grants federal courts jurisdiction over civil suits brought by foreign nationals alleging violations of international law – for their alleged complicity in the trafficking and enslavement of West African children in the cocoa industry.

In 2013, CACI shocked observers by suing four of the former Abu Ghraib plaintiffs for \$15,000 in witness fees, travel allowances, and deposition transcripts incurred by the multibillion-dollar corporation.

INSIGHTS

Also in 2013, another contractor, Engility Holdings – formerly known as L-3 Services and Titan Corp. – agreed to pay \$5.28-million to 71 former prisoners tortured at Abu Ghraib and other US detention sites in Iraq during the American occupation.

Center for Constitutional Rights legal director Baher Azmy [said](#) Brinkema’s decision “affirms that the human rights norms vindicated by the Alien Tort Statute remain vital and are available to address a

case revealing substantial evidence identified by the court that CACI facilitated and promoted the torture and abuse of detainees at Abu Ghraib.”

“The ruling,” Azmy added, “has cleared the way, almost 20 years hence, for our clients to tell their story in open court.” **CT**

Brett Wilkins is a staff writer for *Common Dreams* – www.commondreams.org – where this article was first published.

tation, no matter how many party members demand it, because it sees itself as the winner in a winner-takes-all election.

To make matters worse, every recent Labour leader has flatly refused to strike electoral deals with other parties. For 13 years, Labour has shut itself out of power by rejecting strategic alliances. The first-past-the-post system also enables Keir Starmer to wage his brutal war against dissent within the party, against diversity of thought and strategy, against hope. Because he is confident that voters in many constituencies have nowhere else to go, he can respond to the media barons and corporate lobbyists, rather than the people.

George Monbiot

PUTTING DEMOCRACY BACK INTO ELECTIONS

Trust no one, trust everyone: this paradox is the foundational principle of democracy. We should not trust any politician’s promises until they’ve been delivered. We should not trust anyone to represent us without constant pressure and feedback. But we should trust society as a whole – trust everyone – to make choices for the good of all. Otherwise we would need a different system.

The problem is that the will of those we should trust – each other – is constantly thwarted by the will of those we shouldn’t. Political and electoral systems, governed from the centre, are designed to grant us a semblance of ownership and control, while depriving us of real power. The political parties that claim to represent us too often respond instead to the demands of the powerful: media barons, corporations, party funders. In extreme cases,

such as the UK’s current government, they are reduced to corporate lobbyists, delivering the country to the most antisocial interests.

This problem is compounded where elections are unfair by design, like the UK’s first-past-the-post system. At the 2019 general election, the Conservatives took 56% of the seats on 43.6 percent of the vote. They gained one seat for every 38,264 votes cast. Labour needed 50,837 votes to win a seat, the Liberal Democrats 336,038 and the Greens 866,435. In 229 out of 650 constituencies, votes against the successful candidates outweighed the votes in favour.

As recent opinion polls suggest, there is massive public appetite for changing the system, but this appetite is not shared by the two parties most likely to form a government. The Labour leadership won’t commit to proportional represen-

So what do we do, desperate for change, but denied it by those who claim to act on our behalf? How do we take back control? The answer, I believe, has been developed where I live. Totnes and south Devon is a prize example of what the democracy campaign Compass calls a “progressive tragedy”. The latest election predictions (aggregated from three different websites) show the Conservative MP winning on 34 percent of the vote, while the Lib Dems, Labour and Greens between them are expected to take 59 percent. The Tories have held this seat for almost 99 years, and the split progressive vote threatens to sustain their hegemony. The problem we face here, as in many other constituencies, is that everyone opposed to the Conservatives has to guess other people’s intentions in seeking a tactical overthrow.

So here’s the plan local people have devised to break minority rule. It’s simple and seems hard to

INSIGHTS

fault. It's called the South Devon Primary. Voters are invited to a series of eight town hall meetings, all held within a fortnight, in different parts of the constituency. At these meetings, the leading progressive candidates (likely, in this constituency, to be Labour, Lib Dem and Green) make their pitch. Members of the audience are not asked to decide whom they like the most, but whom they believe is best-placed to beat the incumbent MP. At the end of each meeting, there's a secret ballot. There are basic precautions to ensure no one from outside the constituency can vote and no one votes twice.

The primary is run by volunteers, and depends for its success on their ability to excite people about the possibility of change and encourage them to attend the meetings. In other words, political re-engagement is baked into the model. The campaign has so far recruited 40 local ambassadors to talk to people in the constituency's towns and villages.

Progressive candidates, regardless of their party line on electoral pacts, have a powerful incentive to attend the meetings, as a no-show would greatly reduce their chances of success, both in the primary and in the general election. When all eight meetings have taken place, the total vote is released. The campaign will then urge progressives to unite behind the leading candidate: not only voting for them, but leafletting and canvassing for them. Local people, in other words, will then be able to trust other people's tactical votes.

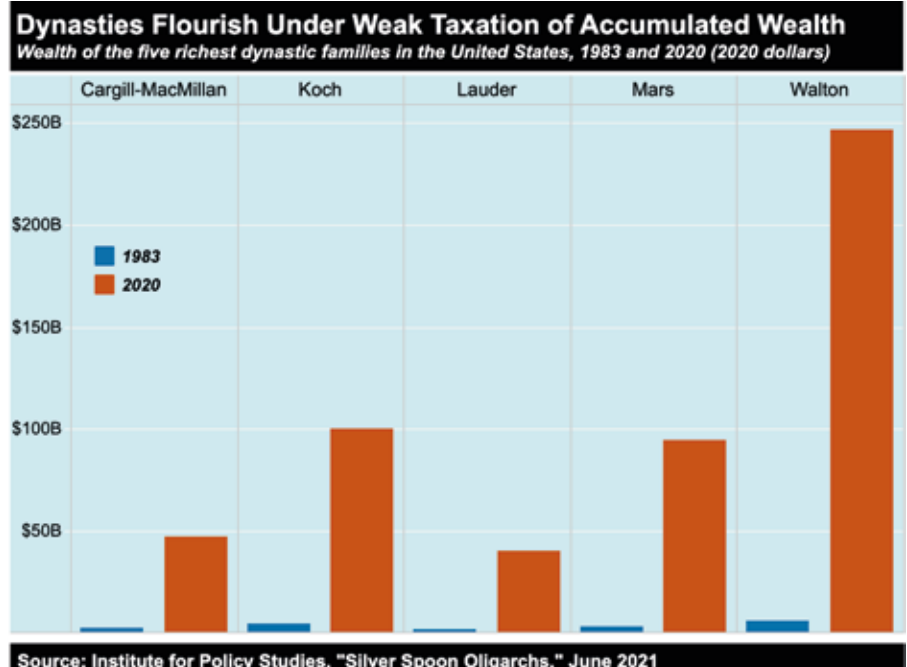
There's no obligation on the losing candidates to stand down at the election. But their parties will be disinclined to put much effort into their campaigns, knowing that the

constituency is swinging behind another.

It seems to me that this approach could, in the future, perhaps, also provide openings for independents peeling away from Labour. If the prospect of independents winning their primaries were seen as a real threat, Starmer would be forced to abandon his purge of diverse and independent thinking from the Labour party. The Conservative MP for Totnes, Anthony Mangnall, complains the primary will "restrict democracy". It's not clear why. In fact, it's pretty obvious that it enhances and empowers democracy. He appears to be rattled.

Campaigners in another constitu-

ency – Godalming and Ash, in Surrey, where the chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, will stand at the next election – are now adopting the model. Several other constituency groups are interested. The south Devon pioneers are offering their design to any constituency in which the Tories are likely to win by default in a largely progressive constituency. But it will not be made available to those in which polling suggests a progressive candidate already has a high chance of unseating the Tory incumbent. Of the 62 "progressive tragedies" in the UK, the campaigners estimate that roughly 50 could make good use of the strategy. Enough to swing an election.



Since the 1980s, the accumulated wealth of dynastic families in the United States has boomed due to weak taxation policy. For example, a 2021 report from Institute for Policy Studies found that the Walton family has seen their wealth grow from \$6 billion in 1983 to \$247 billion in 2020. The recently introduced OLIGARCH Act seeks to rein in rampant wealth inequality by taxing high wealth in comparison to median household wealth, aiming to curtail the consolidation of power.

INSIGHTS

This strategy offers more than just an end to minority rule. It also has the potential to undermine the power of dictatorial party leaders, of whatever persuasion, and return power to constituents. This simple, local idea, which enhances our trust in each other, could transform our

political system. It will help deliver something closer to the democracy we have so long been promised and so long denied. **CT**

George Monbiot is a *Guardian* columnist. His website is www.monbiot.com.

Alfred Archer & Kyle Fruh

STRONG IMAGES HELP FANS FORGET THE DARK SIDE

Sportswashing's goal is to distract from a nation's dark deeds but it can corrupt the sport in the process.

It's been described as the "year that sportswashing won".

Manchester City – owned by Sheikh Mansour through the Abu Dhabi United Group, the investment vehicle for the United Arab Emirates royal family – became the first football club owned by a nation to win the UEFA Champions League. Mansour is vice-president of the UAE. His brother is the president.

City's win came six months after the 2022 FIFA Men's World Cup was played in Qatar amid widespread criticism of the country's human rights record. Shortly afterwards, Cristiano Ronaldo became the first of a conga line of high-profile stars to sign for Saudi Arabian clubs.

These moves were made possible by massive investment from Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, which also owns English Premier League Club Newcastle United and is controlled by the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

This investment has prompted



'Messi on laptop' by Zesan H.

accusations of sportswashing from human rights organisations, due to Saudi Arabia's use of torture and the death penalty and the denial of freedom of expression and association.

Sportswashing allegations accuse those responsible for serious moral violations of using sport to distract attention away from this wrongdoing. People love sports and that positivity can be gleaned through association to influence a regime's reputation.

The problem with sportswashing, especially successful sportswashing, is that it also cor-

rupts the sports involved.

Sportswashing is generally engaged in by states or regimes. With Qatar and Saudi Arabia, both are accused of trying to use the positive associations that people have with football to diminish their responsibility for human rights violations.

Qatar can expect an emotionally laden image of Lionel Messi hoisting the World Cup trophy while wearing a bisht, a traditional Arab robe, to overwhelm the emotionally fraught image of abused and exploited migrant labourers in a global audience's thinking about the country.

And Saudi Arabia may hope that soon it will be closely linked in popular imagination with all the excitement and fondness elicited by elite boxing, glamorous global football stars, and the world's best golfers rather than, for example, the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

It is not only Qatar and Saudi Arabia that can be accused of sportswashing.

The 2018 World Cup in Vladimir Putin's Russia could be viewed as a case of sportswashing. Further back, the 1934 World Cup hosted in Italy during Benito Mussolini's reign and the 1936 Berlin Olympics in Nazi Germany can both be seen as sportswashing.

Each accusation must be judged on its merits to determine whether the regime involved has engaged in major wrongdoing and is attempting to use sport to distract attention from this.

The most important and obvious problem with sportswashing is that when successful it enables countries to continue engaging in human rights abuses without facing

INSIGHTS

any reputational damage.

But this is not all. Sportswashing also damages the sport itself, together with all those who participate in it. It does so by making those involved in sports complicit in the state's human rights abuses. This does not mean that players, fans, journalists and others involved in sports are actually violating human rights themselves.

But when sportswashing succeeds it does so in part because of the contributions people in all those roles make. The unbelievably compelling World Cup final, played so well by so many stars, the indelible image of Messi in a bisht, and the fervour of fans around the world following every twist in the narrative – this is why the event is attractive for sportswashing purposes, and the complicity it creates is shared far and wide.

Put to these purposes, the value of sport itself is corrupted – it's no longer just a contest of skill, wit and determination, but also something quite distinct – an exercise in diminishing moral accountability.

These issues present the difficult question of how those involved in sports should respond to sportswashing. One extreme option is a boycott. This response received wide coverage in the run-up to the 2022 World Cup, when German football fans in particular called for a general fan boycott of the games.

Had this boycott received widespread uptake amongst fans, journalists and perhaps even players, then it could have made a powerful statement.

But boycotts ask a lot of participants. For players and journalists, it could have meant missing out on the most important moments of their careers, while for many fans

the World Cup is the highlight of the football calendar.

Alternatively, there are ways of remaining engaged while counteracting sportswashing. Fan groups such as Newcastle United Fans Against Sportswashing conduct a range of campaigning activities against the Saudi ownership of their club.

For some fans, this means refusing to renew their season ticket, while others continue to go to matches but transform the way they support the club. These fans may attend games but bring banners of protest along with them.

They write letters to football governing bodies and politicians calling for a ban on the state ownership of football clubs. They continue to raise awareness of the human

rights abuses by the Saudi regime, using attention on the club to motivate enhanced scrutiny and effect positive change rather than allowing the sport to diminish responsibility.

We may hope that small successes here can accumulate and help reclaim sport's potential as a force for good. **CT**

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HURWITT'S EYE

Mark Hurwitt



William Hartung

THE PROFITEERS OF ARMAGEDDON

Robert Oppenheimer and the birth of the nuclear-industrial complex

Unless you've been hiding under a rock for the past few months, you're undoubtedly aware that award-winning director Christopher Nolan has released a new film about Robert Oppenheimer, known as the "father of the atomic bomb" for leading the group of scientists who created that deadly weapon as part of America's World War II-era Manhattan Project. The film has earned widespread attention, with large numbers of people participating in what's already become known as *Barbieheimer* by seeing Greta Gerwig's hit film *Barbie* and Nolan's *Oppenheimer* on the same day.

Nolan's film is a distinctive pop cultural phenomenon because it deals with the American use of nuclear weapons, a genuine rarity since ABC's 1983 airing of *The Day After* about the consequences of nuclear war. (An earlier exception was Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove*, his satirical portrayal of the insanity of the Cold War nuclear arms race.)

The film is based on *American Prometheus*, the Pulitzer Prize-winning 2005 biography of Oppenheimer by Kai Bird and Martin Sherwin. Nolan made it in part to break through the shield of antiseptic rhetoric, bloodless philosophizing, and public complacency that has allowed such world-ending weaponry to persist so long after Trinity, the first nuclear bomb test, was conducted in the New Mexi-

co desert 78 years ago last month.

Nolan's impetus was rooted in his early exposure to the nuclear disarmament movement in Europe. As he said recently: "It's something that's been on my radar for a number of years. I was a teenager in the '80s, the early '80s in England. It was the peak of CND, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, the Greenham Common [protest]; the threat of nuclear war was when I was 12, 13, 14 – it was the biggest fear we all had. I think I first encountered Oppenheimer in... Sting's song about the Russians that came out then and talks about Oppenheimer's 'deadly toys.'"

A feature film on the genesis of nuclear weapons may not strike you as an obvious candidate for box-office blockbuster status. As Nolan's teenage son said when his father told him he was thinking about making such a film, "Well, nobody really worries about nuclear weapons anymore. Are people going to be interested in that?" Nolan responded that he worries about complacency and even denial when it comes to the global risks posed by the nuclear arsenals on this planet. "You're normalising killing tens of thousands of people. You're creating moral equivalences, false equivalences with other types of conflict... [and so] accepting, normalizing... the danger."

These days, unfortunately, you're talking about anything but just tens of thousands of people dying in a nu-

clear face-off. A 2022 report by Ira Helfand and International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War estimated that a "limited" nuclear war between India and Pakistan that used roughly 3 percent of the world's 12,000-plus nuclear warheads would kill "hundreds of millions, perhaps even billions" of us. A full-scale nuclear war between the United States and Russia, the study suggests, could kill up to five (yes,





five!) billion people within two years, essentially ending life as we know it on this planet in a “nuclear winter.”

Obviously, all too many of us don’t grasp the stakes involved in a nuclear conflict, thanks in part to “psychic numbing,” a concept regularly invoked by Robert Jay Lifton, author of *Hiroshima in America: A History of Denial* (co-authored with Greg Mitchell), among many other books. Lifton describes psychic numbing

as “a diminished capacity or inclination to feel” prompted by “the completely unprecedented dimension of this revolution in technological destructiveness.”

Given the Nolan film’s focus on Oppenheimer’s story, some crucial issues related to the world’s nuclear dilemma are either dealt with only briefly or

omitted altogether.

The staggering devastation caused by the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is suggested only indirectly without any striking visual evidence of the devastating human consequences of the use of those two weapons. Also largely ignored are the critical voices who then argued that there was no need to drop a bomb, no less two of them, on a Japan most of whose cities had already been devastated by US fire-bombing to end the war. General (and later President) Dwight D. Eisenhower wrote that when he was told by Secretary of War Henry Stimson of the plan to drop atomic bombs on populated areas in Japan, “I voiced to him my grave misgivings, first on the basis of my belief that Japan was already defeated and that dropping the bomb was completely unnecessary.”

The film also fails to address the health impacts of the research, testing, and production of such weaponry, which is still causing disease and death, even without another nuclear weapon ever being used in war. Victims of nuclear weapons development include people who were impacted by the fallout from US nuclear testing in the Western United States and the Marshall Islands in the Western Pacific, uranium miners on Navajo lands, and many others. Speaking of the first nuclear test in Los Alamos, New Mexico, Tina Cordova of the Tularosa Basin Downwinders Consortium, which represents that state’s residents who suffered widespread cancers and high rates of infant mortality caused by radiation from that explosion, said “It’s an inconvenient truth... People just don’t want to reflect on the fact that American citizens were bombed at Trinity.”

Another crucially important issue has received almost no attention. Neither the film nor the discussion sparked by it has explored one of the most important reasons for the con-

tinued existence of nuclear weapons – the profits it yields the participants in America’s massive nuclear-industrial complex.

Once Oppenheimer and other concerned scientists and policymakers failed to convince the Truman administration to simply close Los Alamos and place nuclear weapons and the materials needed to develop them under international control – the only way, as they saw it, to head off a nuclear arms race with the Soviet Union – the drive to expand the nuclear weapons complex was on. Research and production of nuclear warheads and nuclear-armed bombers, missiles, and submarines quickly became a big business, whose beneficiaries have worked doggedly to limit any efforts at the reduction or elimination of nuclear arms.

The Manhattan Project Oppenheimer directed was one of the largest public works efforts ever undertaken in American history. Though the *Oppenheimer* film focuses on Los Alamos, it quickly came to include far-flung facilities across the United States. At its peak, the project would employ 130,000 workers – as many as in the entire US auto industry at the time.

According to nuclear expert Stephen Schwartz, author of *Atomic Audit*, the seminal work on the financing of US nuclear weapons programs, through the end of 1945 the Manhattan Project cost nearly \$38- billion in today’s dollars, while helping spawn an enterprise that has since cost taxpayers an almost unimaginable \$12-trillion for nuclear weapons and related programs. And the costs never end. The Nobel prize-winning International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) reports that the US spent \$43.7-billion on nuclear weapons last year alone, and a new Congressional Budget Office report

Both the University of California and Texas A&M are part of the consortium that runs the Los Alamos nuclear weapons laboratory

suggests that another \$756-billion will go into those deadly armaments in the next decade.

Private contractors now run the nuclear warhead complex and build nuclear delivery vehicles. They range from Raytheon, General Dynamics, and Lockheed Martin to lesser-known firms like BWX Technologies and Jacobs Engineering, all of which split billions of dollars in contracts from the Pentagon (for the production of nuclear delivery vehicles) and the Department of Energy (for nuclear warheads). To keep the gravy train running – ideally, in perpetuity – those contractors also spend millions lobbying decision-makers. Even universities have gotten into the act. Both the University of California and Texas A&M are part of the consortium that runs the Los Alamos nuclear weapons laboratory.

The American warhead complex is a vast enterprise with major facilities in California, Missouri, Nevada, New Mexico, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas. And nuclear-armed submarines, bombers, and missiles are produced or based in California, Connecticut, Georgia, Louisiana, North Dakota, Montana, Virginia, Washington state, and Wyoming. Add in nuclear subcontractors and most states host at least some nuclear-weapons-related activities.

And such beneficiaries of the nuclear weapons industry are far from silent when it comes to debating the future of nuclear spending and policy-making.

The institutions and companies that build nuclear bombs, missiles, aircraft, and submarines, along with allies in Congress, have played a disproportionate role in shaping US nuclear policy and spending. They have typically opposed the US ratification of a Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban treaty; put strict limits on the ability of Congress to reduce either funding for or the deployment of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs); and pushed for weaponry like a proposed nuclear-armed, sea-launched cruise missile that even the Pentagon hasn’t requested, while funding think tanks that promote an ever more robust nuclear weapons force.

A case in point is the Senate ICBM Coalition (dubbed part of the “Dr. Strangelove Caucus” by Arms Control Association Director Daryl Kimball and other critics of nuclear arms). The ICBM Coalition consists of senators from states with major ICBM bases or ICBM research, maintenance, and production sites: Montana, North Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming. The sole Democrat in the group, Jon Tester (D-MT), is the chair of the powerful appropriations subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee, where he can keep an eye on ICBM spending and advocate for it as needed.

The Senate ICBM Coalition is responsible for numerous measures aimed at protecting both the funding and deployment of such deadly missiles.

According to former Secretary of Defense William Perry, they are among “the most dangerous weapons we have” because a president, if warned of a possible nuclear attack on this country, would have just minutes to decide to launch them, risking a nuclear conflict based on a false alarm. That Coalition’s efforts are supplemented by persistent lobbying from a series of local coalitions of business and political leaders in those ICBM states. Most

of them work closely with Northrop Grumman, the prime contractor for the new ICBM, dubbed the Sentinel and expected to cost at least \$264-billion to develop, build, and maintain over its life span that is expected to exceed 60 years.

Of course, Northrop Grumman and its 12 major ICBM subcontractors have been busy pushing the Sentinel as well. They spend tens of millions of dollars on campaign contributions and lobbying annually, while employing former members of the government's nuclear establishment to make their case to Congress and the executive branch. And those are hardly the only organisations or networks devoted to sustaining the nuclear arms race. You would have to include the Air Force Association and the obscurely named Submarine Industrial Base Council, among others.

The biggest point of leverage the nuclear weapons industry and the arms sector more broadly have over Congress is jobs. How strange then that the arms industry has generated diminishing job returns since the end of the Cold War. According to the National Defense Industrial Association, direct employment in the weapons industry has dropped from 3.2-million in the mid-1980s to about 1.1-million today.

Even a relatively small slice of the Pentagon and Department of Energy nuclear budgets could create many more jobs if invested in green energy, sustainable infrastructure, education, or public health – anywhere from 9 percent to 250 percent more jobs, depending on the amount spent. Given that the climate crisis is already well underway, such a shift would not only make this country more prosperous but the world safer by slowing the pace of climate-driven catastrophes and offering at least

The 2021 entry into force of a nuclear ban treaty – the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons – is a sign of hope, even if the nuclear weapons states have yet to join

some protection against its worst manifestations.

Count on one thing: by itself, a movie focused on the origin of nuclear weapons, no matter how powerful, won't force a new reckoning with the costs and consequences of America's continued addiction to them. But a wide variety of peace, arms-control, health, and public-policy-focused groups are already building on the attention garnered by the film to engage in a public education campaign aimed at reviving a movement to control and eventually eliminate the nuclear danger.

Past experience – from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament that helped persuade Christopher Nolan to make *Oppenheimer* to the “Ban the Bomb” and Nuclear Freeze campaigns that stopped above-ground nuclear testing and helped turn President Ronald Reagan around on the nuclear issue – suggests that, given concerted public pressure, progress can be made on reining in the nuclear threat. The public education effort surrounding the *Oppenheimer* film is being taken up by groups like *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, the Federation of American Scientists, and the Council for a Livable World that were founded, at least in part, by Manhattan Project scientists who devoted their lives to trying to roll back the nuclear arms race; professional groups like the Union of Concerned Scientists and Physicians for Social Responsibility; anti-war groups like Peace Action and Win Without

War; the Nobel Peace prize-winning International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons; nuclear policy groups like Global Zero and the Arms Control Association; advocates for Marshall Islanders, “downwinders,” and other victims of the nuclear complex; and faith-based groups like the Friends Committee on National Legislation. The Native American-led organisation Tewa Women United has even created a website, *Oppenheimer – and the Other Side of the Story*, that focuses on “the Indigenous and land-based peoples who were displaced from our homelands, the poisoning and contamination of sacred lands and waters that continues to this day, and the ongoing devastating impact of nuclear colonisation on our lives and livelihoods.”

On the global level, the 2021 entry into force of a nuclear ban treaty – officially known as the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons – is a sign of hope, even if the nuclear weapons states have yet to join. The very existence of such a treaty does at least help delegitimise nuclear weaponry. It has even prompted dozens of major financial institutions to stop investing in the nuclear weapons industry, under pressure from campaigns like Don't Bank on the Bomb.

In truth, the situation couldn't be simpler: we need to abolish nuclear weapons before they abolish us. Hopefully, *Oppenheimer* will help prepare the ground for progress in that all too essential undertaking, beginning with a frank discussion of what's now at stake **CT**

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Vijay Prashad

THE UN'S VAGUE NEW PEACE AGENDA

Apart from identifying the conflict between the unipolar and multipolar worlds, the report throws moral scaffolding over hard realities it can't directly confront

The United Nations released “A New Agenda for Peace” on July 20. In the opening section of the report, UN Secretary-General António Guterres made some remarks that bear close reflection:

“We are now at an inflection point. The post-Cold War period is over. A transition is under way to a new global order. While its contours remain to be defined, leaders around the world have referred to multipolarity as one of its defining traits. In this moment of transition, power dynamics have become increasingly fragmented as new poles of influence emerge, new economic blocs form and axes of contestation are redefined.

“There is greater competition among major powers and a loss of trust between the Global North and South. A number of States increasingly seek to enhance their strategic independence, while trying to manoeuvre across existing dividing lines. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the war in Ukraine have hastened this process.”

We are, he says, in a moment of transition. The world is moving away from the post-Cold War era, in which the United States and its close allies, Europe and Japan, (collectively known as the Triad) exerted their unipolar power over the rest of

the world, to a new period that some refer to as “multipolarity.”

The Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine accelerated developments that were already in motion before 2020. The gradual attrition of the Western bloc has led to contestation between the Triad and newly emerging powers.

This contestation is fiercest in the Global South, where trust of the Global North is the weakest it has been in a generation. The poorer nations, in the current moment, are not looking to yoke themselves to either the fragile West or the emergent new powers but are seeking “strategic independence.”

This assessment is largely correct, and the report is of great interest, but it is also weakened by its lack of specificity.

Not once in the report does the UN refer to any specific country, nor does it seek to properly identify the emergent powers. Since it does not provide a specific assessment of the current situation, the UN ends up providing the kind of vague solutions that have become commonplace and are meaningless (such as increasing trust and building solidarity).

There is one specific proposal of great meaning, dealing with the arms trade, to which I shall return.

But apart from showing concern over the ballooning weapons industry, the UN report attempts to erect a kind of moral scaffolding over the hard realities that it cannot directly confront.

What then are the specific reasons for the monumental global shifts identified by the United Nations?

Firstly, there has been a serious deterioration of the relative power of the United States and its closest allies. The capitalist class in the West has been on a long-term tax strike, unwilling to pay either its individual or corporate taxes (in 2019, nearly 40 percent of multinational profits were moved to tax havens).

Their search for quick profits and evasion of tax authorities has led to a long-term decrease in investment in the West, which has hollowed out its infrastructure and its productive base.

The transformation of Western social democrats, from champions of social welfare to neoliberal champions of austerity, has opened the door for the growth of despair and desolation, the emotional palate of the hard right. The Triad's inability to smoothly govern the global neo-colonial system has led to a “loss of trust” in the Global South towards the United States and its allies.

Secondly, it was astounding to countries such as China, India and Indonesia to be asked by the G20



Estate of Enrico Baj, Vergiate, Italy; (Courtesy Tate; Supplied by The Public Catalogue Foundation)

to provide liquidity to the Global North's desiccated banking system in 2007–08. The confidence of these developing countries in the West decreased, while their own sense of themselves increased.

It is this change in circumstances that led to the formation of the BRICS bloc in 2009 by Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – the “locomotives of the South,” as was theorised by the South Commission in the 1980s and later deep-

ened in their little-read 1991 report.

China's growth by itself was astounding, but, as the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) noted in 2022, what was fundamental was that China was able to achieve structural transformation (namely, to move from low-productivity to high-productivity economic activities). This structural transformation could provide lessons for the rest of the Global South, lessons far more practical than those offered

by the debt-austerity programme of the International Monetary Fund.

Neither the BRICS project nor China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) are military threats; both are essentially South-South commercial developments (along the grain of the agenda of the UN Office for South-South Cooperation).

However, the West is unable to economically compete with either of these initiatives, and so it has adopted a fierce political and military response.

In 2018, the United States declared an end to the War on Terror and clearly articulated in its National Defence Strategy that its main problems were the rise of China and Russia. Then-US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis spoke about the need to prevent the rise of “near-peer rivals,” explicitly pointing to China and Russia, and suggested that the entire panoply of US power be used to bring them to their knees.

Not only does the United States have a vast network of roughly 800 overseas military bases – hundreds of which encircle Eurasia – it also has military allies from Germany to Japan that provide the US with forward positions against both Russia and China.

For many years, the naval fleets of the US and its allies have conducted aggressive “freedom of navigation” exercises that encroach upon the territorial integrity of both Russia (in the Arctic, mainly) and China (in the South China Sea). In addition, provocative manoeuvres such as the 2014 US intervention in Ukraine and massive 2015 US arms deal with Taiwan, further threatened Moscow and Beijing.

In 2018, the United States also unilaterally withdrew from the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty (which followed the 20ab-

donment in 2002 of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty), a move that upset the apple cart of nuclear arms control and meant that the US contemplated the use of “tactical nuclear weapons” against both Russia and China.

The United Nations is correct in its assessment that the unipolar moment is now over, and that the world is moving towards a new, more complex reality. While the neo-colonial structure of the world system remains largely intact, there are emerging shifts in the balance of forces with the rise of the BRICS and China, and these forces are attempting to create international institutions that challenge the established order.

The danger to the world arises not from the possibility of global power becoming more fragmented and widely dispersed, but because the West refuses to come to terms with these major changes.

The UN report notes that “military expenditures globally set a new record in 2022, reaching \$2.24-trillion,” although the UN does not acknowledge that three-quarters of this money is spent by the member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. Countries that want to exert their “strategic independence” – the

The rise of BRICS and China are creating forces that are attempting to create international institutions that challenge the established order

UN’s phrase – are confronted with the following choice: either join in the West’s militarisation of the world or face annihilation by its superior arsenal.

“A New Agenda for Peace” [the first was in 1992] is designed as part of a process that will culminate at a UN Summit for the Future to be held in September 2024. As part of this process, the UN is gathering proposals from civil society, such as this one from Aotearoa Lawyers for Peace, Basel Peace Office, Move the Nuclear Weapons Money campaign, UN FOLD ZERO, Western States Legal Foundation, and the World Future Council, who call on the summit to adopt a declaration that:

“Reaffirms the obligation under Article 26 of the UN Charter to establish a plan for arms control and disarmament with the least diversion of resources for economic and social development;

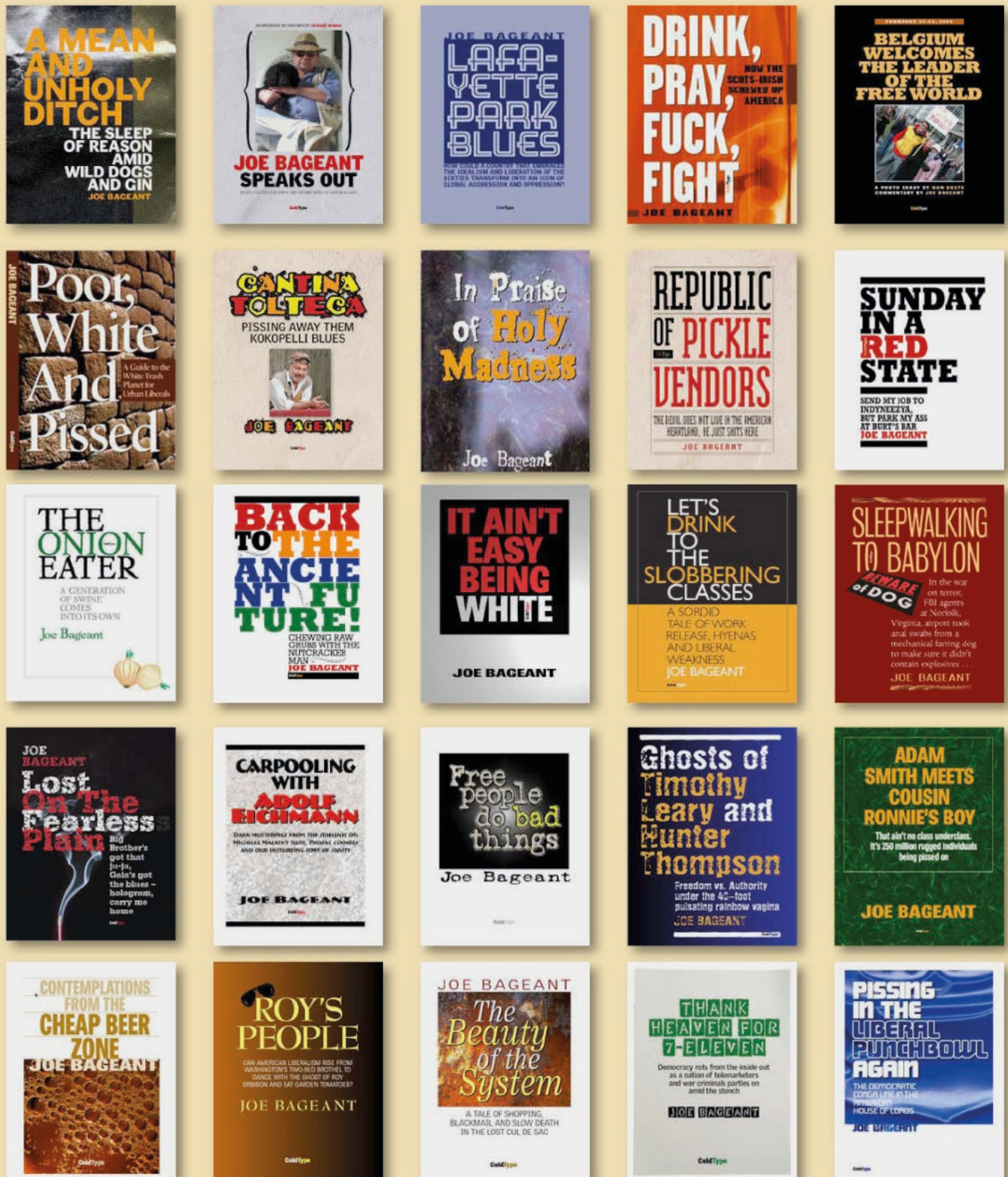
“Calls on the UN Security Council, UN General Assembly and other relevant UN bodies to take action with respect to Article 26; and

“Calls on all States to implement this obligation through ratification of bilateral and multilateral arms control agreements, coupled with progressive and systematic reductions of military budgets and commensurate increases in financing for the sustainable development goals, climate protection and other national contributions to the UN and its specialised agencies.” **CT**

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Russell Mokhiber

BOEING CASE EXPOSES BIDEN'S DOUBLE STANDARDS ON JUSTICE

Boeing bosses get lenient treatment after crashes that killed hundreds of people – unlike individuals who protest the military-industrial complex

Nothing better illustrates the double standard of justice under President Biden than the way the Justice Department is handling the criminal case against Boeing.

In July, Justice Department attorneys were in New Orleans, Louisiana before the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals arguing, as were Boeing's attorneys, that the family members of the 346 victims of the two Boeing 737 MAX crashes were not entitled to relief under the Crime Victims Rights Act.

A federal judge in Fort Worth, Texas had ruled that the Department violated the law by not allowing the family members to consult with Justice Department prosecutors as they negotiated the deferred prosecution agreement that in effect shut down the criminal prosecution of Boeing in what the judge called "the deadliest corporate crime in our nation's history."

But district court judge, Reed O'Connor, refused to order a remedy.

The family members appealed to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. And in late July, Boeing and the Justice Department joined in seeking to keep the criminal case from being reopened.

The families want the Fifth Circuit to redo the settlement agreement and get rid of the immunity provision that allowed Boeing to in effect get away with murder.

But the Justice Department, which is supposed to be prosecuting Boeing for its crime, defended the immunity provision.

"As the district court recognised (and two circuits have held), a deferred prosecution agreement is first and foremost an exercise of prosecutorial

discretion, and fundamental separation-of-powers principles prohibit a district court from rewriting its terms," the Department's lawyers argued in their brief to the Fifth Circuit. "The Constitution assigns prosecutorial discretion to the Executive, not the courts, and nothing in the CVRA, the Speedy Trial Act, or anything else empowers a district court to usurp that quintessentially executive function by second-guessing the terms on which the government has agreed not to prosecute."

"Even if a court had that authority, moreover, it would be inappropriate to remedy the government's CVRA violation by depriving Boeing of the benefit of its bar-



LLBG Spotter / Wikimedia Commons



Undelivered Boeing 737 MAX aircraft that were grounded by aviation agencies, seen at parking lot at Boeing Field in Seattle, Washington.

gain after years of performance,” the Department argued.

From their questioning, some of the Fifth Circuit Court judges seemed to be inclined to grant some remedy for the victims. But their remedy was more along the lines of denying Boeing’s motion to dismiss the charges at the end of the deferred prosecution agreement instead of zeroing out the immunity provision now and forcing the Justice Department to start over with its criminal prosecution.

“I think there’s lots of conferral rights, lots of procedural rights,” Boeing’s attorney Paul Clement told the circuit court in oral arguments. “But what’s wrong with this petition for review and what would be wrong with the relief you’re envisioning is

that it’s a degree of substantive interference with prosecutorial discretion that is not contemplated.”

“We went to the Justice Department and said we want to talk to you about prosecuting the company that killed 346 people,” Paul Cassell, the families’ attorney, told the circuit court. “And we were told specifically – can’t do that. We’ve signed an agreement, our hands are tied.”

“We want you to untie the hands of those prosecutors so that they can consider holding Boeing accountable,” Cassell told the panel.

So that’s how the Biden Justice Department handles corporate crime. And specifically “the deadli-



Ethiopian Airlines ET-AVJ takes off from Ben Gurion International Airport, Israel. The aircraft crashed near Bishoftu, Ethiopia, as Flight 302 a month later on March 10, 2019.

est corporate crime in our nation’s history,” as Judge O’Connor put it.

No criminal prosecution in a case of mass manslaughter and the Department side’s with Boeing in denying the victims their rights in court.

And it’s not just Boeing of course that gets treated with kid gloves.

A recent report in the *Capitol Hill Citizen* found that prosecution of corporate crime cases is at a new low under Biden – lower than under Trump.

The report, on the front page of the July/August edition of the *Citizen*, found that major corporate crime cases settled with deferred prosecution agreements, non prosecution agreements and declinations with disgorgement were down from 56 under President Trump to 31 under President Biden.

Major corporate crime cases that resulted in guilty pleas or verdicts were down from 33 under Trump to 24 under Biden.

Just by contrast, how does the Biden Justice Department handle individuals who run up against the corporate powers that Biden defends?

In April, the Justice Department brought criminal charges against four US citizens, members of the African People’s Socialist Movement, for “spreading pro-Russia propaganda.”

Charged in the indictment were the founder of the Party, Omali Yeshitela, along with Penny Joanne Hess, Jesse Nevel, and Augustus C. Romain Jr., aka Gazi Kodzo – and three Russian nationals.

In a motion to dismiss filed in federal court in Tampa, Florida, earlier in July, Leonard Goodman and Angela Reaney, attorneys for Penny Hess, explained that the Justice Department is not alleging that the defendants writings and political

speeches created a grave and immediate danger that might justify their arrest and prosecution.

“Instead, the indictment is based upon a premise that protected speech can be criminalised if the speaker has a relationship to Russia,” they write. “This premise is false and must be rejected.”

And what was the relationship to Russia?

Yeshitela, the founder and chairman of the party, made two trips to Moscow in 2015 to attend conferences arranged by one of the Russian defendants and a group called the Anti-Globalization Movement of Russia (AGMR).

“Contrary to the allegations in the indictment, APSP did not conceal the Party’s associations with Russia and Russians,” Goodman and Reaney write. “Rather, the APSP described its trips to Moscow in the Burning Spear, the same way it described its other trips.”

And party members have travelled all over the world – to Nigeria, to Northern Ireland, to South Africa, to London, Paris, Berlin, Brussels and Stockholm and to the Oxford Union to participate in a debate on African Unity.

In addition, their advocacy against US and NATO support for the war in Ukraine goes back way before Yeshitela’s trip to Moscow.

“It must be noted that the APSP defendants have a well-documented history of opposing US efforts to interfere in other countries that predates Yeshitela’s visit to Moscow by at least four decades,” Goodman and Reaney wrote. “The suggestion in the indictment that the APSP defendants were speaking for Russia when they blamed the United States for provoking Russia into invading Ukraine is plainly untrue, on its face.

“Even a quick perusal of the archives of the APSP newspaper, *The Burning Spear*, and their published

“I went down the stairwell, and when I got to the bottom of the stairwell, these laser dots from automatic weapons were bouncing off my chest”

speeches, shows example after example of the APSP’s opposition to NATO expansion and US interference in Ukraine.”

Yes, the Justice Department is seeking jail time for US citizens for a number of “overt acts,” including that the US citizens made “speeches expressing opposition to the US involvement in the crisis in Ukraine and in solidarity with the people of Russia and their elected government and leadership.”

“The views of these defendants, that the government calls ‘propaganda and disinformation,’ are nearly identical to the views held by well-renowned public intellectuals such as Professors Jeffrey Sachs of Columbia University and John Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago,” Goodman and Reaney write.

The FBI raided Yeshitela’s offices and home in July 2022. In August 2022, Yeshitela went on the public affairs programme *Democracy Now* and accused the FBI of targeting his group for their political work.

“My wife and I were awake,” Yeshitela said. “We were sitting at the dining room table discussing how we were going to be moving for the day. She is responsible for and has organised a doula program to train African women, young women, in becoming doulas. This is in

a city where in the first year of life, enough black babies die to fill 15 kindergarten classes every year. So, we were talking about that. And I actually was preparing to go to the gym.”

“And then we heard this loud racket outside, this noise from loudspeakers demanding that the residents of this property should come out with our hands up and nothing in our hands. And as this was being said, loud flashbang grenades were exploding all around the house and, I was later to learn, in the back stairwell of the house. So, I asked her to allow me to leave first, and to get on the phone to call people to let them know that we were being raided. And she tried but was unable to do it because they had jammed our phones.

“So, I went down the stairwell, and when I got to the bottom of the stairwell, these laser dots from automatic weapons were bouncing off my chest. And I heard these commands to move toward them, toward the light. There was a large armoured vehicle in front of my house. There were camouflage-clad troopers, FBI agents, and I don’t know who else, with flak jackets and automatic weapons.

“My wife followed me down. And on her way down, a drone went past her head going up the stairwell into the house. So, I went outside and was zip-tied at the side of the house. There were – I don’t know how many FBI agents there were, but there were a lot of them and a lot of different vehicles. And my wife came downstairs. She was handcuffed behind her back.

“And I’m asking them, ‘Why? What’s going on?’ They said that they had a search warrant for my house. And I asked them to see the search warrant. And they conveniently didn’t have it on them, but it was somewhere in the vicinity, and they’d get it. We were told to sit on

the curb, which we didn't comply with. And they said, 'Well, you can sit in the backseat of the car.' And we were saying, 'I don't want to sit anywhere. I want to leave. I don't even want you here. I don't want to be here with you.' I said again, 'Why are you here? Why are you attacking this house?' They took my cell phone. They said that they were there because later that morning there was going to be an indictment out of Tampa, Florida, against a Russian national, and should he ever come to the United States, he would be arrested, that somehow my name was involved in this indictment. And so, that was the basis they gave for the arrest."

That's how the FBI and Department of Justice treat individual US citizens who speak out against the military industrial complex.

But large powerful corporations that kill? And their CEOs who kill?

"Such irresponsible conduct – if proven in criminal court – needs to be punished, both for the memories of the deceased and for the safety of the public"

Boeing, its current CEO David Calhoun and its former CEO Dennis Muilenburg, should be criminally prosecuted for the killing of 346 people.

"It's a principle of American law that the crime of involuntary manslaughter occurs when death results from acts performed in a criminally negligent or reckless manner," write Shanin Specter and Robert Clifford in an article published last year titled – *It's Time for a Criminal Investigation of Boeing's CEOs*.

"The public communications that Boeing made at Muilenburg's and

Calhoun's insistence have now been recognised as false and misleading by both the relevant court and relevant regulator," they wrote. "These were statements that the US government and the general public trusted regarding the 737 MAX 8's safety. Muilenburg and Calhoun were also pivotal in Boeing's decision to allow the unsafe 737 MAX 8 to keep flying after the first crash in 2018. This led directly to the second, fatal crash in Ethiopia.

"Such irresponsible conduct – if proven in criminal court – needs to be punished, both for the memories of the deceased and for the safety of the general public. It's time for the criminal justice system to look at the behaviour of both Muilenburg and Calhoun."

Time's up.

Prosecute Boeing and its CEOs for manslaughter. **CT**

Russell Mokhiber is the editor of Corporate Crime Reporter and Capitol Hill Citizen

The US government wants you to think it's prosecuting Julian Assange for 'PUTTING LIVES AT RISK'

Make no mistake, this is **AN ASSAULT ON JOURNALISM**

truth

At Chelsea Manning's sentencing hearing, the Pentagon said they had uncovered no specific examples of anyone who had lost his or her life in reprisals that followed the publication

Evidence of harm

I don't have a specific example

Pentagon's chief investigator into WikiLeaks, Brigadier General Robert Carr

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT EXHIBIT A

A major turning point was when I pulled those kids out of the van. I stopped firing my weapon, I stopped beating people needlessly. It was at that point that I really realised what we were doing was wrong.

Ethan McCord, US Army soldier

Chris Hedges

FORGOTTEN VICTIMS OF AMERICA'S CLASS WAR

We cannot dismiss and demonise rural white Americans. The class war waged by corporations and ruling oligarchs has devastated their lives and communities

I am sitting in Eric Heibel's barbershop in the centre of Mechanic Falls, Maine. Russ Day, who was the owner for 52 years before he sold it to Eric, cut my hair as a boy. The shop looks the same. The mounted trout on the walls. The worn linoleum floor. The 1956 Emil J. Paidar barber chair. The two American flags on the wall flanking the oval mirror. The plaque that reads: "If a Man is Alone In the Woods, With No Woman to Hear Him, Is He Still Wrong?" Another plaque that reads: "Men have 3 hairstyles parted...unparted...and DEPARTED!" I can almost see my grandfather, with his thick gold masonic ring on his pinky finger smoking an unfiltered Camel cigarette, waiting for Russ to finish.

Eric charges \$15 per cut. He wanted to be a welder, but the welding classes were full. "Hair. Welding. Same fuckin' thing," he says, wearing a black T-shirt that reads "Toad Suck" and has a picture of a toad riding a Harley-Davidson motorcycle. On Eric's hat is a homemade deer hair fly, known as a mouse, he uses for fly fishing.

"Big bait. Big fish," he says.

"There are 17,000 cars and trucks a day that go through that light," he says, looking at the traffic light outside his shop. "I only need 10 or 20 of them a day to stop for a cut."

The pandemic hit his barbershop hard. Clients, for months, disappeared. Eric did not get the Covid vaccine. He doesn't trust pharmaceutical companies and is not convinced by government assurances that it is safe and effective.

Then, on top of Covid, there was an issue of the sign over the shop that read: "Russ Day's Barbershop."

Russ wanted it back.

"When I bought the shop I bought the sign," Eric says.

One night the sign was stolen.

"It wasn't Russ," he says. "He's in his eighties. It must have been his son-in-law."

"Did you call the police?" I ask.

"How are you going to win in court against an 82-year-old guy?" he answers. "Besides, I've never called the police on anyone."

Russ informed Eric he wanted his mounted trout.

"I already gave him his salmon," Eric says. "It's not Russ's trout anymore. It's Eric's trout."

We discuss local news, including the man who last fall put his credit card in the Citgo gas pump, poured gas over his head and lit himself on fire. He died. An intoxicated man in May fired several shots at another man on True Street. He missed.

There was also a stabbing when two neighbours got in a fight. But serious crime is a rarity, although many people have small arsenals in their homes.

The former mill town of 3,107 people, like rural towns all across America, struggles to survive. There isn't much work since the Marcal Paper Company mill – which operated three shifts a day and was located on the banks of the Little Androscoggin River that runs through the center of Mechanic Falls – closed in 1981. My aunt worked in the accounting department. By then the town's glory days were long gone. The Evans Rifle Manufacturing Company, which made repeating rifles and, the brick and canned goods factories, shoe shops, the steam engine plant, W. Penney and Sons, one of the largest machine shops in the state, were already distant memories.

The weed-choked foundations of the old factories lie on the outskirts of town, forgotten and neglected. The old paper mill was destroyed by fire in 2018. There are empty storefronts downtown and the ubiquitous problem with food insecurity – the regional high school has a year-round free breakfast and lunch program – and opiates and alcoholism. Within a small radius, are three or four marijuana dispensaries. The house where my grandpar-



Above: Main Street, Mechanic Falls. Below: Patriotic wall art adorns the side of a Mechanic Falls building.



ents lived, two blocks from the centre of town, burned down. So did the church across the street. Its charred remains have never been razed. On Sunday mornings I could hear the congregation singing hymns. The bank in the center of town closed. It is now a photographer's studio and a hair salon. There is a casino in the town of Oxford which, like lottery tickets, functions as a stealth tax on the poor. The day I visit, a fundraiser is being held at an ice cream shop for an eight-year-old boy who needs a kidney transplant.

The town is 97 percent white. The average age is 40. The median household income is \$34,864. Trump won Androscoggin County, where Mechanic Falls is located, with 49.9 percent of the vote in the

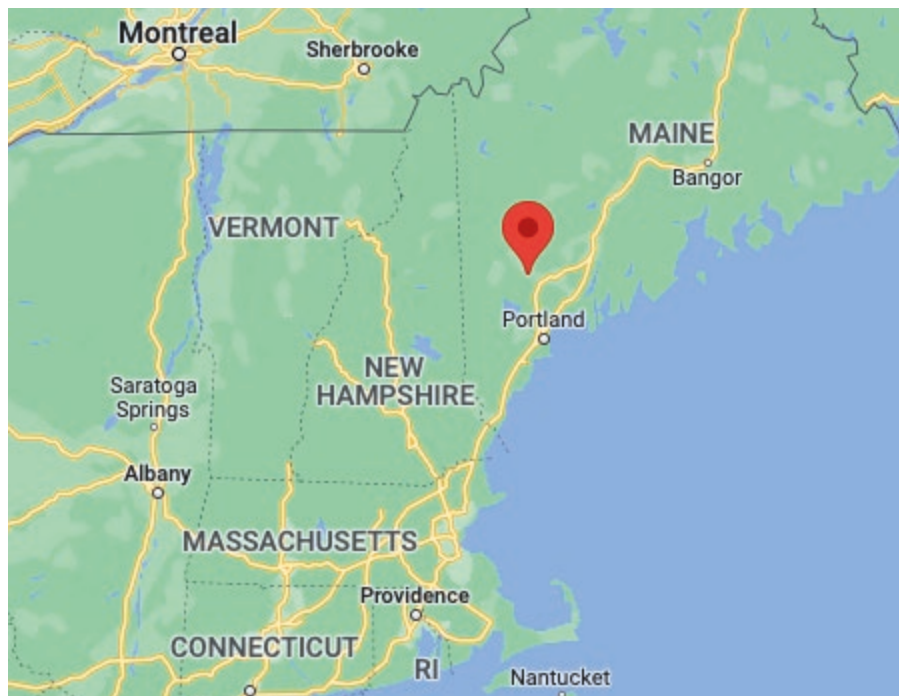
last election. Biden received 47 percent. Republicans like Trump never had much appeal in the past. Franklin D. Roosevelt carried the county in the 1932 election. In 1972 the county voted for George McGovern. Jimmy Carter won the county in his two presidential elections. But, as in tens of thousands of rural enclaves across the country, once the jobs left and Democrats abandoned working men and women, people became desperate. Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, after the mill closed with the loss of over 200 jobs, won the county, as they did the state. But things have not improved.

Across the street from the barber-shop is Bamboo Garden, a restaurant run by the only Chinese family in town. Eric says the owners won it from another Chinese couple in a poker game. What was their experience like? How did their daughter cope with being the only Chinese girl in the school? Were they accepted and integrated into the community? I talk to the owner, Layla Wang. I ask her if she experiences racism. "Very nice people," she says. I ask if her daughter – who is now 26 and lives in Boston – had a hard time in school. "Very nice people." I ask about her neighbours. "Very nice people," she says.

It must have been hell.

My grandfather had little use for Blacks, Jews, Catholics, homosexuals, communists, foreigners or anyone from Boston. If you weren't white, Protestant and from Mechanic Falls, you were far down on the racial and social ladder. I cannot imagine him inviting the Wangs over for dinner.

Outside of town is Top Gun of Maine which sells firearms and has a shooting range. There is a red flag with the stars and bars on the wall which reads: "Trump Nation." The owner periodically puts messages on a board in front of the shop such



Mechanic Falls, Maine – Google Map image marks the spot.

My Uncle Maurice went with the regiment to the South Pacific during World War II. He never spoke about the war. He lived in a trailer and drank himself to death

as "Biden is Going to Take Your Guns" and "Let's Go Brandon."

I meet Nancy Petersons, the town librarian, and her husband, Eriks, who runs the town historical society in the town library. The library is located in what was the old high school's home economics room. My mother and aunt took home economics classes here. High school students now go to a magnet school in the neighbouring town of Poland. The building that used to house the town library when I was a boy was sold.

On one of the walls on the first

floor, where the town office is located, is a sepia photograph of Maine's 103rd Infantry Regiment. My grandfather, a sergeant, is seated on the right at the end of the first row. My uncle Maurice is standing in the back row. My grandfather was sent to Texas during World War II to train recruits. Maurice went with the regiment to the South Pacific, fighting in Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands, the Russell Islands, New Georgia Islands, New Guinea and Luzon in the Philippines. He was wounded. He returned to Mechanic Falls physically and psychologically broken. He worked in my uncle's lumber mill, but often disappeared for days. He never spoke about the war. He lived in a trailer and drank himself to death.

With the mill gone, people had to find work out of town. Bath Iron Works, Maine's largest military ship builder, used to send vans to pick up workers early in the morning and bring them back at night. It is a 90-minute drive to Bath.

Maine breeds eccentrics. Nancy and Eriks tell me about Mesannie

Wilkins, buried in the town cemetery, who in 1955, five weeks before her 63rd birthday, was told she had two to four years to live. The bank was poised to foreclose on her home. She decided, if life was to be that short and she was homeless, to ride horseback from Maine to California. She left town with \$32 in her pocket. She rode a horse named King. Depeche Toi, her dog, rode a rusty black horse named Tarzan. Mesannie, who made the 7,000 mile journey in 16 months dressed in a hunting cap with earflaps and lumberman's felt boots, lived for another 25 years. Jackass Annie Road in Minot is named after her. And then there was Bill Dunlop, a Navy veteran and truck driver, who sailed across the Atlantic Ocean in a nine-foot fibreglass boat called Wind's Will. He used a \$16 sextant for navigation. He made it into the *Guinness Book of World Records* for the smallest vessel to cross the Atlantic. He then set out in his tiny craft to circumnavigate the globe, a trip expected to take two-and-a-half to three years. He passed through the Panama Canal and halfway across the Pacific Ocean but in 1984 disappeared between the vast expanse of water separating the Cook Islands and Australia.

It is late afternoon. I am at a table at the American Legion Post 150 on Elm Street with Rogene LaBelle, who was a waitress for fifty years and her friend Linda Record. It is burger class war waged by corporations and night. Members can buy a burger and fries

Rural white Americans have every right to be angry. That anger can sometimes be expressed in inappropriate ways, but they are not the enemy

for \$5. The hall is crowded. The bar is busy. There are American flags on the wall and a picture of the National World War II Memorial.

The women remember the town before the mill closed.

"Whole families worked there, husbands and wives," Rogene says. "And when the mill went, local businesses went with it. Now most everyone works out of town."

She lists numerous restaurants she waitressed at over the years that closed or burned down.

"This legion hall used to be a movie theatre," she says. "I walked down the movie aisle and right up on the stage when I was in 8th grade to get my diploma."

Colleen Starbird, wearing a grey tank-top and jeans, sat with a friend, Richard Tibbets – who did two tours in the Marine Corps in Vietnam – on the porch. Colleen's husband, Charles, did three tours as a Marine Corp gunner on Huey helicopters in Vietnam. He died 17 years ago of lung and bone cancer, which Colleen believes was caused by Agent Orange. The couple owned the old paper mill, which they were turning into apartments, when it burned down. They did not have insurance.

"He saw bad stuff," she says. "They would interrogate Vietcong and throw them alive out of the helicopters. He had flashbacks. He would re-enact events. One night he forced me to crawl under the jeep yelling 'They're here! They're here!' He really believed in this country. He didn't want to know he went to war for nothing."

Colleen has pink toenails, long amber sparkle dip nails and heavily tattooed arms. The tattoo she got when she was married reads: "I have found the one my soul belongs to." She got another when her husband died. It reads: "Forever in My Heart."

We cannot dismiss and demonise rural white Americans. The class war waged by corporations and the ruling oligarchs has devastated their lives and communities. They have been betrayed. They have every right to be angry. That anger can sometimes be expressed in inappropriate ways, but they are not the enemy. They, too, are victims. In my case, they are family. I come from here. Our fight for economic justice must include them. We will wrest back control of our nation together or not at all. **CT**

Chris Hedges is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who was a foreign correspondent for 15 years for the New York Times, where he served as the Middle East bureau chief and Balkan bureau chief for the paper. He is the host of show "The Chris Hedges Report." This column is from Scheerpost, for which Chris Hedges writes a regular column.

FREE ASSANGE
JOURNALISM IS NOT A CRIME





Sam Pizzigati

HAVE CORPORATE BOSSES BECOME EXPENDABLE?

Analysts across the political spectrum are challenging more than oversized CEO paychecks

Do corporate CEOs deserve all those millions they annually pocket? Can a modern economy somehow survive without the “incentive” these mega millions provide? Do we, in effect, need our top corporate bosses pocketing more in a day than their workers can take home in a year?

We’ve been asking – as a society – questions like these ever since CEO paychecks started soaring in the late 1970s. Back in the 1960s,

America’s CEOs averaged about 20 times what their workers were taking home. Today’s CEOs, analysts at the Economic Policy Institute detailed last October, routinely pocket 400 times and more what their workers are making.

In 2022, adds a recently released AFL-CIO Executive Paywatch report, CEOs at S&P 500 companies averaged \$16.7 million in total compensation, their second-highest pay level ever, at the same time US worker real hourly wages were fall-

ing for the second year in a row.

Jumbo executive take-homes, as an Inequality.org guide to academic research on CEO pay helps us see, continue to breed organisational dysfunction.

“Pay for performance” jackpots essentially give top execs a never-ending incentive to pump up profits by any means necessary. Instead of making investments that can help workforces become more productive, execs are simply doing whatever they can to inflate their share

prices – and enrich themselves in the process.

Between 1947 and 1999, non-financial US companies shelled out an average 19.6 percent of their operating cashflow to shareholders, notes economist Andrew Smithers. The second half of that half-century saw stock options become an ever more dominant source of corporate CEO compensation. The 21st-century result? Between 2000 and 2017, the Smithers research finds, the average corporate cashflow to shareholders more than doubled to 40.7 percent.

Other analyses focus on the psychological consequences of huge pay gaps between workers and top execs. At corporations with these wide gaps, S&P 500 analyst Scott Chan's research suggests, "the big boss regards employees as tools, not as valued team members."

Wide pay gaps create work environments, Chan adds, where employees "don't feel valued and so don't do their best."

"We think in particular," as the chief of Norway's \$1.3-trillion sovereign wealth investment fund told Bloomberg TV earlier this year, that "in the US the corporate greed has just gone too far."

But that executive greed – despite the spotlight on it – seems as entrenched as ever. And that reality has some analysts going beyond attacking how much our corporate chiefs execs make. These critics are increasingly wondering whether we need these chiefs at all.

This "bossless narrative," the University of Manchester Business School's Matthew McCaffrey writes in a forthcoming issue of the *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Public Policy*, has actually been around for generations and, in the 19th-century, helped nurture the cooperative

The emerging "debate about the bossless company," reflects a growing public skepticism "about the value of managers and hierarchies as such"

movement. This narrative has become "especially popular over the last thirty years," with a "growing literature seeking to understand the unique strengths and weaknesses of bossless organisation."

"Bosslessness" can come in a variety of shapes and sizes.

At the more modest end, enterprises can move in a bossless direction by eliminating management levels and "delayering" their operations. More ambitious "flattening" efforts, McCaffrey relates, can replace "traditional managerial authority" with "self-organising teams" that "choose their own projects" and decide – democratically – the tasks their firm will pursue.

Flatter companies, McCaffrey believes, "can and do succeed in the right circumstances," and he sees his own new scholarly work as an exploratory attempt to identify those circumstances that can "encourage experimentation with bossless models." These circumstances, he notes, can vary. In stagnating industries, for instance, "reducing management hierarchy may be the only viable strategy" for firms with "increasingly slim" profit margins.

Moves that governments make, McCaffrey points out, can also "make bossless firms more feasible than they would be under conditions of no intervention."

The world's most famous cooperative network, Spain's Mondragon, rests on a credit union operation that made funds available to emerg-

ing new co-ops. Spanish law allowed this Mondragon credit union to pay "slightly higher interest" rates than banks, a policy that encouraged savers to use it.

Another example comes from the Netherlands where the Dutch company Buurtzorg Nederland revolves around "teams of self-organising nurses to provide home health care across the country." This 17-year-old company has taken advantage of "the bureaucratisation and inefficiency of many Dutch health care companies" that McCaffrey, a fellow at the libertarian Mises Institute, chalks up to the Dutch government's regulation of the health care industry.

McCaffrey, as this example illustrates, comes at the study of organisational "flatness" from a distinctly non-left, "free market" perspective. But his interest in "low- or no-hierarchy organisations" bodes well for attempts to create alternatives to corporations that essentially exist to "manufacture" mega-rich CEOs.

The emerging "debate about the bossless company," McCaffrey concludes, reflects a growing public skepticism "about the value of managers and hierarchies as such." This skepticism, he adds, "involves questioning essential principles of economics and management that can justly be said to underpin much of what goes on in the global economy."

Analysing – and changing – that "what goes on" may well bring together some strange political bedfellows. **CT**

Sam Pizzigati co-edits *Inequality.org*. His books include *The Case for a Maximum Wage* and *The Rich Don't Always Win: The Forgotten Triumph over Plutocracy that Created the American Middle Class, 1900-1970*.

John & Nisha Whitehead

THE WAR ON SO-CALLED DANGEROUS IDEAS

Welcome to technocensorship – how, little by little, Americans are being conditioned to accept regular government assaults on their freedoms

“There is more than one way to burn a book. And the world is full of people running about with lit matches.” – Ray Bradbury

What we are witnessing is the modern-day equivalent of book burning which involves doing away with dangerous ideas – legitimate or not – and the people who espouse them. Seventy years after Ray Bradbury’s novel *Fahrenheit 451* depicted a fictional world in which books are burned in order to suppress dissenting ideas, while televised entertainment is used to anaesthetise the populace and render them easily pacified, distracted and controlled, we find ourselves navigating an eerily similar reality.

Welcome to the age of technocensorship.

On paper – under the First Amendment, at least – we are technically free to speak.

In reality, however, we are now only as free to speak as a government official – or corporate entities such as Facebook, Google or YouTube – may allow.

Case in point: internal documents released by the House Judiciary Select Subcommittee on Weaponization of the Federal Government confirmed what we have long suspected: that the government has

been working in tandem with social media companies to censor speech.

By “censor,” we’re referring to concerted efforts by the government to muzzle, silence and altogether eradicate any speech that runs afoul of the government’s own approved narrative.

This is political correctness taken to its most chilling and oppressive extreme.

The revelations that Facebook worked in concert with the Biden administration to censor content related to Covid-19, including humorous jokes, credible information and so-called disinformation, followed on the heels of a ruling by a federal court in Louisiana that prohibits executive branch officials from communicating with social media companies about controversial content in their online forums.

Likening the government’s heavy-handed attempts to pressure social media companies to suppress content critical of Covid vaccines or the election to “an almost dystopian scenario,” Judge Terry Doughty warned that “the United States Government seems to have assumed a role similar to an Orwellian ‘Ministry of Truth.’”

This is the very definition of technofascism.

Clothed in tyrannical self-righteousness, technofascism is powered by technological behemoths (both

corporate and governmental) working in tandem to achieve a common goal.

The government is not protecting us from “dangerous” disinformation campaigns. It is laying the groundwork to insulate us from “dangerous” ideas that might cause us to think for ourselves and, in so doing, challenge the power elite’s stranglehold over our lives.

Thus far, the tech giants have been able to sidestep the First Amendment by virtue of their non-governmental status, but it’s a dubious distinction at best when they are marching in lockstep with the government’s dictates.

As Philip Hamburger and Jenin Younes write for the *Wall Street Journal*: “The First Amendment prohibits the government from ‘abridging the freedom of speech.’ Supreme Court doctrine makes clear that government can’t constitutionally evade the amendment by working through private companies.”

Nothing good can come from allowing the government to sidestep the Constitution.

The steady, pervasive censorship creep that is being inflicted on us by corporate tech giants with the blessing of the powers-that-be threatens to bring about a restructuring of reality straight out of Orwell’s 1984, where the Ministry of Truth polices

speech and ensures that facts conform to whatever version of reality the government propagandists embrace.

Orwell intended 1984 as a warning. Instead, it is being used as a dystopian instruction manual for socially engineering a populace that is compliant, conformist and obedient to Big Brother.

This is the slippery slope that leads to the end of free speech as we once knew it.

In a world increasingly automated and filtered through the lens of artificial intelligence, we are finding ourselves at the mercy of inflexible algorithms that dictate the boundaries of our liberties. Once artificial intelligence becomes a fully integrated part of the government bureaucracy, there will be little recourse: we will all be subject to the intransigent judgments of techno-rulers.

This is how it starts.

First, the censors went after so-called extremists spouting so-called “hate speech.”

Then they went after so-called extremists spouting so-called “disinformation” about stolen elections, the Holocaust, and Hunter Biden.

By the time so-called extremists found themselves in the crosshairs for spouting so-called “misinformation” about the Covid-19 pandemic and vaccines, the censors had developed a system and strategy for silencing the nonconformists.

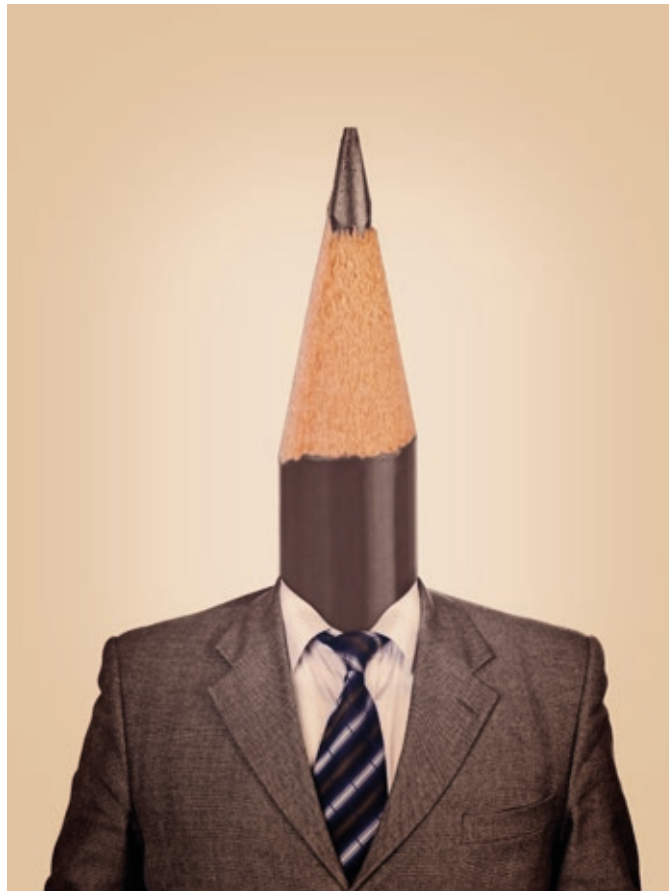
Eventually, depending on how the government and its corporate allies define what constitutes “extremism,” “we the people” might all be considered guilty of some thought crime or other.

Whatever we tolerate now – whatever we turn a blind eye to – what-

ever we rationalise when it is inflicted on others, whether in the name of securing racial justice or defending democracy or combatting fascism, will eventually come back to imprison on us, one and all.

Watch and learn.

We should all be alarmed when



any individual or group – prominent or not – is censored, silenced and made to disappear from Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram for voicing ideas that are deemed politically incorrect, hateful, dangerous or conspiratorial.

Given what we know about the government’s tendency to define its own reality and attach its own labels to behaviour and speech that challenges its authority, this should be cause for alarm across the entire political spectrum.

Here’s the point: you don’t have to like or agree with anyone who has

been muzzled or made to disappear online because of their views, but to ignore the long-term ramifications of such censorship is dangerously naïve, because whatever powers you allow the government and its corporate operatives to claim now will eventually be used against you by tyrants of your own making.

As Glenn Greenwald writes for the *Intercept*:

“The glaring fallacy that always lies at the heart of pro-censorship sentiments is the gullible, delusional belief that censorship powers will be deployed only to suppress views one dislikes, but never one’s own views... Facebook is not some benevolent, kind, compassionate parent or a subversive, radical actor who is going to police our discourse in order to protect the weak and marginalised or serve as a noble check on mischief by the powerful. They are almost always going to do exactly the opposite: protect the powerful from those who seek to undermine elite institutions and reject their orthodoxies. Tech giants, like all corporations,

are required by law to have one overriding objective: maximising shareholder value. They are always going to use their power to appease those they perceive wield the greatest political and economic power.”

Be warned: it’s a slippery slope from censoring so-called illegitimate ideas to silencing truth.

Eventually, as George Orwell predicted, telling the truth will become a revolutionary act.

If the government can control speech, it can control thought and, in turn, it can control the minds of the citizenry.

It's happening already.

With every passing day, we're being moved further down the road towards a totalitarian society characterised by government censorship, violence, corruption, hypocrisy and intolerance, all packaged for our supposed benefit in the Orwellian doublespeak of national security, tolerance and so-called "government speech."

Little by little, Americans are being conditioned to accept routine incursions on their freedoms. This is how oppression becomes systemic, what is referred to as creeping normality, or a death by a thousand cuts.

It's a concept invoked by Pulitzer Prize-winning scientist Jared Diamond to describe how major changes, if implemented slowly in small stages over time, can be accepted as normal without the shock and resistance that might greet a sudden upheaval.

Diamond's concerns related to Easter Island's now-vanished civilisation and the societal decline and environmental degradation that contributed to it, but it's a powerful analogy for the steady erosion of our freedoms and decline of our country right under our noses.

As Diamond explains, "In just a few centuries, the people of Easter Island wiped out their forest, drove their plants and animals to extinction, and saw their complex society spiral into chaos and cannibalism... Why didn't they look around, realise what they were doing, and stop before it was too late? What were they thinking when they cut down the last palm tree?"

His answer: "I suspect that the disaster happened not with a bang but with a whimper."

Much like America's own colonists, Easter Island's early colonists discovered a new world – "a pristine paradise" – teeming with life. Yet almost 2000 years after its first settlers ar-

This is how tyranny rises and freedom falls: with a thousand cuts, each one justified or ignored or shrugged over as inconsequential

rived, Easter Island was reduced to a barren graveyard by a populace so focused on their immediate needs that they failed to preserve paradise for future generations.

The same could be said of the America today: it, too, is being reduced to a barren graveyard by a populace so focused on their immediate needs that they are failing to preserve freedom for future generations.

In Easter Island's case, as Diamond speculates: "The forest ...vanished slowly, over decades. Perhaps war interrupted the moving teams; perhaps by the time the carvers had finished their work, the last rope snapped. In the meantime, any islander who tried to warn about the dangers of progressive deforestation would have been overridden by vested interests of carvers, bureaucrats, and chiefs, whose jobs depended on continued deforestation... The changes in forest cover from year to year would have been hard to detect... Only older people, recollecting their childhoods decades earlier, could have recognised a difference. Gradually trees became fewer, smaller, and less important. By the time the last fruit-bearing adult palm tree was cut, palms had long since ceased to be of economic significance. That left only smaller and smaller palm saplings to clear each year, along with other bushes and treelets. No one would have noticed the felling of the last small palm."

Sound painfully familiar yet?

We've already torn down the rich forest of liberties established by our founders. It has vanished slowly, over the decades. The erosion of our freedoms has happened so incrementally, no one seems to have noticed. Only the older generations, remembering what true freedom was like, recognise the difference. Gradually, the freedoms enjoyed by the citizenry have become fewer, smaller and less important. By the time the last freedom falls, no one will know the difference.

This is how tyranny rises and freedom falls: with a thousand cuts, each one justified or ignored or shrugged over as inconsequential enough by itself to bother, but they add up.

Each cut, each attempt to undermine our freedoms, each loss of some critical right – to think freely, to assemble, to speak without fear of being shamed or censored, to raise our children as we see fit, to worship or not worship as our conscience dictates, to eat what we want and love who we want, to live as we want – they add up to an immeasurable failure on the part of each and every one of us to stop the descent down that slippery slope. **CT.**

John W. Whitehead, a constitutional lawyer and author, is founder and president of *The Rutherford Institute*. His most recent books are the best-selling *Battlefield America: The War on the American People*, the award-winning *A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State*, and a debut dystopian fiction novel, *The Erik Blair Diaries*. Whitehead can be contacted at staff@rutherford.org. **Nisha Whitehead** is the Executive Director of *The Rutherford Institute*. Information about *The Rutherford Institute* is available at www.rutherford.org.



Butcher Jabulani Ndlovu holds a newly-severed cow head at Kazerne, Johannesburg.

Tanya Zack & Mark Lewis

ANOTHER WORLD

The new book, **Wake Up, This is Joburg** is an intriguing collaboration between urban planner **Tanya Zack** and photographer **Mark Lewis**, who have created a set of fascinating narratives from a side of urban Johannesburg, South Africa, that is alien to most of us. Their stunning photos and lively essays take readers into the side of town that is usually ignored: meat markets where butchers chop cow heads; the eclectic home of an outsider artist that features turrets and is full of manikins; long-abandoned gold pits beneath the city, where people continue to mine illegally; and lively markets, taxi depots, and residential high-rises. The people may be odd, they are sometimes outrageous, but there's no denying their resilience and resourcefulness as they battle to survive in the city's informal economy.

● On the following pages, we present the stories behind six of the book's most haunting images.



Chopping cow heads in a Kazerne, Johannesburg, parking garage.

1. Chopping s’kop

The most marginal of the activities and spaces the stories explore is the informal butchers who chop up cow heads in a disused parking garage in the heart of Johannesburg’s inner city. The condemned building is next to formal structures and within view of banking head offices.

The cow heads, or s’kop, are bought for R10 (US\$0.55) each by nearby formal butcheries and delivered in shopping trolleys. Every part is sold in this marginal economy. Flesh is stripped off the skull, bones are taken to be crushed for bone meal, and skins enter a unique processing operation in invisible spaces in the city and transformed into an edible form.

Andile Nkomo from KwaZulu-Natal province is the most muscular of the six butchers on the day we first visit and, we soon discover, the most active. But he admits his output varies. On mornings after he’s worked as a bouncer at a nightclub in the city’s inner city, he is not in peak form. “On a good day I chop 60 heads,” he says as he slams his axe repeatedly into skulls on the wooden industrial cable spool that is the butchers’ block.



Monika Chauke makes breakfast for taxi drivers.

2. Breakfast on the run

Competition within the informal economy is tight. At the minibus taxi binding point in Zola, micro-entrepreneurs offer barber services and sell food, snacks, socks, motor window wipers, mobile phone accessories and bumper stickers.

Stallholder Monica Chauke, originally from Limpopo province, is unperturbed by the competition for the appetites of the 600 taxi drivers. She knows that by midday she will have sold out of her unique offering and made her US\$16 daily profit. Her niche is simple: she serves only breakfast. But there's nothing simple about it. Monica caters to the tastes of her customers. This means making six egg-and-tomato, three cheese-and-tomato and four chicken-mayonnaise sandwiches, as well as six cheeseburgers each morning. And baking scones, frying balls of dough called vetkoek, preparing a soup of beans and bones and making a meat stew.

Monica wakes at 2am to prepare and package the food and the equipment she brings here. "I want to work here because no one is controlling me. It's for myself," she says. "My boyfriend brings and fetches me each day." In his car? "No, in my car. He drives it."



Birthial Gxaleka runs a shelter in a one-bedroom apartment.

3. Bed room

From her bed in a small Hillbrow apartment, Birthial Gxaleka – a nurse from the Eastern Cape province – runs a non-governmental organisation and shelter. Her tenants share her one-bedroomed space, sleeping and living on a large raft of beds that leaves only a narrow corridor of standing room. At any one time, there are up to 34 residents, because it is rare for Birthial to turn anyone away.

Each person wants to make their way in the world: find a job, reconnect with lost family, get access to healthcare or simply secure a decent place to sleep. In the inner city's high-rise flatland, at human densities 10 times greater than Hong Kong, people find ways to get on with things.

“The problem is unemployment,” explains Birthial. “Even with a grade twelve, you can't find work. You don't know what to do. But if you are homeless, its impossible. My plan is to give accommodation. With athat stability, they can find work.”



Nandos Simao digs for gold in abandoned mines.

4. Under the city

“This park is closed until further notice. Entry strictly forbidden.” This is the sign at the entrance to the place where the metal that would make this the wealthiest gold-producing city on the planet was first discovered. It does not deter anyone, least of all those with the grit to seek a living or a fortune in the abandoned mine shafts of the Witwatersrand reef. Known as zama zamas (those who keep trying), they work the dumps and cavities underneath the city. We visit the Langlaagte belt, which contains more unmined gold than any other vein in Johannesburg’s gold reef. They call it FNB (First National Bank). Here zama zamas of all ages, backgrounds and ethnicity use the same ancient pick and shovel method to wrestle with the rock face.

It is Nandos Simao, leaning in elegant repose against the remains of a concrete wall, who catches our attention. The 23-year-old Mozambican lives in the Orange Farm informal settlement with two fellow miners, his cousins. The youngest is 17.

There are many ways to die underground. But it’s a livelihood on which whole settlements depend. Indeed, MaLetsatsi Mamogele is digging for gold under her shack in Fleurhof, a working class suburb west of Johannesburg.



Lucas Ngwenya recycles cardboard.

5. Good riddance

Young Mozambican Lucas Ngwenya and his two South African friends have lined up. It's 6am. There's a cold wind blowing on this open piece of land suspended between the private estate of the Oppenheims, South Africa's wealthiest family, and the headquarters of Hollard Insurance. It's 4 degrees celsius as the men begin their 5km trip to the recycling depot in Newtown to sell the materials they've collected from suburban dustbins over a fortnight. It will take two-and-a-half hours to drag their gargantuan loads as far as 30 kilometers.

Lucas seemingly has the lightest burden, but points out that the cardboard, which occupies double the capacity of his plastic quilted bag, will weigh in at over 150kg. The plastic bottles and white paper will bring this to 265kg. His body mass is 61kg. Lucas pulls his hoodie tight over his head. The steep descent onto the main road requires him to start his journey not by pulling the load but by resisting it. He can't look back and steers the uncooperative bulk with difficulty.

When he arrives at the depot he will be asked for R10 "for cool drink" as he cashes in his load. Because, the cashier says, she has been generous with the amounts she has recorded.



Tony Martins creates a palace.

6. Tony dreams in yellow and blue

Tony Martins built his first house in Madeira, Portugal, in his early 20s – because his wife’s mother “wouldn’t let me take her until I had a house to live in”. Some 30 years later he’s transforming his modest home in Johannesburg’s “old south” into a veritable castle – using objects he finds at waste dumps. Tony is an outsider artist.

He admits he cannot stop himself. “I don’t sleep, I dream of things. I think of what I can do with the things I have found. I sleep for two or three hours, and then I wake and think what else I can do. Then I have to do them in the day.”

The house is a wonder of lights and murals, of manikins in domes and on motorbikes on the roof, of a traffic light and windmill and of multiple staircases with balustrades fashioned from found tennis racquets and bicycle wheels. It is the sort of delightful outcome of a city not intervening in the authentic expression and private worlds that are possible in urban spaces where excess, waste and cosmopolitanism collide. **CT**

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Sonali Kolhatkar

SORRY, BUT BARBIE IS STILL A PROBLEM

The highly anticipated “Barbie” movie is really just an expensive ad campaign for an outdated doll

When I was a little girl, my parents bought me a Barbie – a blonde, blue-eyed doll who I played with for years before I ever met a blond, blue-eyed person. My doll set the standard for beauty – one that was out of reach of a brown-skinned, dark-haired kid whose body type was chubby in contrast to my Barbie, but typical for my age.

Eventually, I hated everything the doll stood for: dangerously unattainable beauty standards, the deliberate vapidness of feminism, the centring of whiteness. So, I was surprised when my two sons, aged 10 and 15, recently said they were eager to see the new Barbie film.

The film’s clever marketing has people of all demographics excited: “If you love Barbie, this movie is for you. If you hate Barbie, this movie is for you,” proclaimed the trailer. But ultimately the film is a commercial for an outdated toy.

Launched in 1959 and conceived by Ruth Handler, Barbie was modelled on a German doll named Bild Lilli, an adult men’s gag gift. Brennan

Kilbane wrote in *Allure* that, “Bild Lilli was a single-panel comic character in a German tabloid – a sweet, ditzy, curvy figment of the male imagination, frequently losing her clothes and enjoying the company of men.”

Handler wanted to market an “adult” doll to girls because the contemporary dolls ones were either baby dolls or had, in her words, “flat



chests, big bellies, and squatty legs – they were built like overweight 6- or 8-year-olds.”

The doll has always been tone-deaf. Soon after Barbie was launched, just as second-wave feminism emerged, Mattel released Slumber Party Barbie. This Barbie,

Devika Sunand wrote, “came with pink pajamas, a pink scale set at 110 lbs, and a diet book on how to lose weight, with only one instruction: DON’T EAT!”

But because the new film validates such criticisms, audiences are expected to embrace it as feminist-themed entertainment.

They’re invited to wear the doll’s signature Pepto-Bismol pink to theatres – the same color associated with gender stereotyping of girls. A social media fashion trend called #Barbiecore on TikTok is garnering hundreds of millions of views for posts created by young influencers heavily made up to look like the doll.

Barbie has also popularised the horrific-sounding “bimbo feminism.”

“Instead of abandoning femininity to succeed in a patriarchal society, bimbo feminism embraces femininity while supporting women’s advancement,” wrote Harriet Fletcher at the Conversation.com

website. In other words, women are supposed to attain career success while appealing to men.

There persists a belief that Barbie is a feminist icon in spite of Mattel steering clear of the f-word. Robbie Brenner, head of Mattel Films, says the film is “the ultimate female-em-

powerment movie.”

While America Ferrera’s character, struggling with the pressures of patriarchy, is the film’s most relatable protagonist, she remains a supporting actor.

Even the right-wing backlash to the film as “anti-man” is being touted as a measure of its feminism. If it’s angering the misogynist incels, surely it’s on the feminist track, claim the film’s defenders. “It’s not a Barbie doll that threatens women’s rights, opportunities, and safety – it’s the patriarchy,” wrote Fletcher. But both are true, to different extents.

Defenders of the film point to its

Even the backlash to the film as “anti-man” is being touted as a measure of its feminism. If it’s angering the misogynist incels, surely it’s on the feminist track!

diverse casting. But as Kilbane explained in *Allure*: “The Barbieverse distinguishes between two Barbies. There’s Barbie ‘the icon,’ or ‘brand,’ who can be blonde and short, or Black and svelte, or Frida Kahlo and

white. There’s Barbie ‘the character,’ who is exactly who you’re thinking of, and will be played by Margot Robbie.”

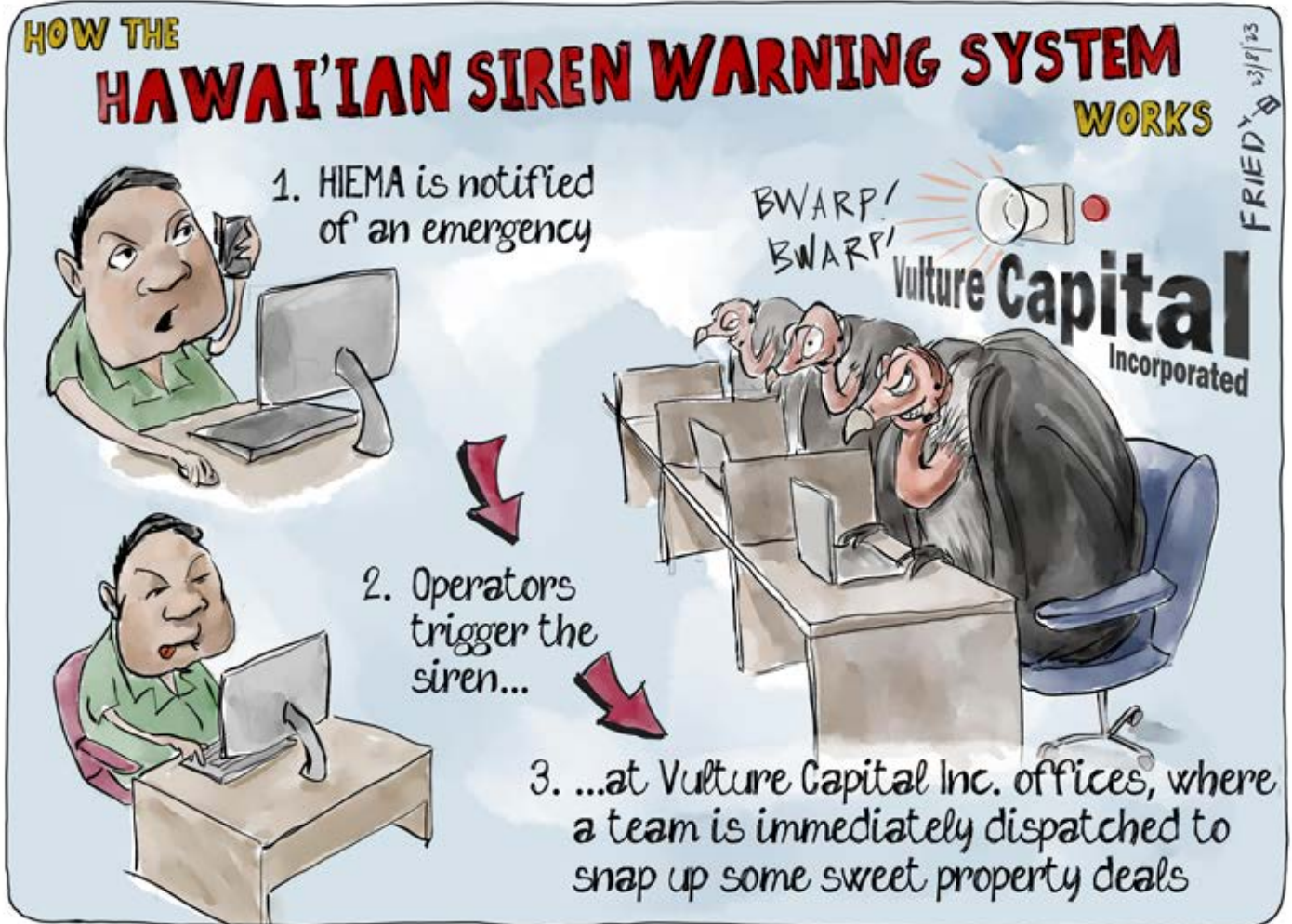
Ultimately the film is a \$145-million ad campaign for a toy that should have faded away years ago.

CT

Sonali Kolhatkar is the host of “Rising Up With Sonali,” a television and radio show on Free Speech TV and Pacifica stations. This commentary was produced by the Economy for All project at the Independent Media Institute and adapted for syndication by OtherWords.org.

WE ARE ALL FRIED 🔑

Greg Koenderman



Harvey Thomson & Paul Bond

CLASS INJUSTICE AND A STIFLED CRY OF DESPAIR

A revival of J.B. Priestley's play *An Inspector Calls* is a wake-up call to a perilous society that is stumbling on the precipice of another world war

An *Inspector Calls* by the National Theatre finished its run across the north of England recently at the Alhambra theatre in Bradford. The play is the best known of the 39 stories and plays by local author, playwright and broadcaster, J.B. Priestley. His other works may have justifiably fallen from favour thanks to their inability to speak past their time, but *An Inspector Calls* (written and first performed in 1945) has a certain significance and is more enduring.

In the fictional industrial town of Brumley, in 1912, the upper-middle class Birling family are celebrating their daughter's engagement to the son of a rival industrial magnate. Factory-owning family head, Arthur Birling, pontificates on "self-reliance" and "looking after one's own," and the bright future ahead, including potential inclusion in the next honours list.

The mood changes when Inspector Goole arrives to investigate the suicide of Eva Smith, a former employee at Birling's factory. Birling eventually admits firing Eva after she led a strike of women workers for equal pay, but denies any responsibility for her death. This sets the pattern for Goole's other interviews. All the family had contact with Eva, they collectively ruined her life,



J.B. Priestley, 1940.

but they deny responsibility for her death.

Birling's daughter, Sheila had been served by Eva in a department store. After Smith smiled when Sheila was trying on a dress that did not suit her, Sheila and her mother intimated that if Eva was not dismissed, they would take their custom elsewhere.

Eva, destitute, had turned to prostitution. Sheila's fiancé Gerald met her, gave her money and moved her into a friend's empty flat. Sheila breaks off their engagement when Goole gets Gerald to confess to his relationship with Eva.

Arthur's wife, Sybil, is patron of a charity for women in trouble. She had rejected appeals for help from

Eva, now pregnant. Sybil blamed Eva for being irresponsible, telling her to seek help from the "drunken young man" who got her pregnant.

Everyone but Sybil realises this must be Sheila's older brother, Eric, who breaks down and confesses. After a drunken binge he had raped Eva, then stole from the family business to support her. Eva refused the money.

The Birlings descend into angry recriminations.

They have a brief moment of hope on learning that no Inspector Goole is employed at the police station, and no suicide has been reported. Relieved that they are just victims of a hoax, Sheila and Eric suggest the family use the experience to



An Inspector Calls, 2022.

atone for past “sins.” Their parents dismiss this as misplaced youthful “idealism.”

And then the phone rings. A female worker has been admitted to the infirmary, and an inspector will call...

There have been various interpretations of Priestley’s conclusion: either someone with inside knowledge was tipping the family off, or Goole’s “visitation” was an almost supernatural warning to make amends before it is too late.

One key element in the play is its hindsight. Written in the aftermath of World War Two, and set in the

context of the development of World War One, the play’s characters exemplify the political blindness of ruling class circles in Britain and across Europe when the evidence of social catastrophe is there to be read by anyone with eyes. Arthur’s sermonising explicitly rejects the likelihood of a war Priestley’s audience knew had occurred – and had been repeated.

After his investigation, Goole’s final and most significant speech refers directly to the coming war: “But just remember this. One Eva Smith has gone – but there are millions and millions and millions of Eva Smiths and John Smiths left with us, with their lives, their hopes and fears, their suffering and a chance

of happiness, all intertwined with our lives and what we think and say and do. We don’t live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other. And I tell you that the time will soon come when, if men will not learn that lesson, then they will be taught it in fire and blood and anguish. Good night.”

These are lines that would have reverberated even more powerfully when the play was first staged in 1945. With no suitable British venue apparently available, it received its premiere in the Soviet Union, at Moscow’s Kamerny Theatre and Leningrad’s Comedy Theatre. Its first British production was in 1946, with a young Alec Guinness playing Eric Birling.

John Boyton Priestley (1894-1984) was born in the former textile city of Bradford and much of his later fiction bore the mark of his Yorkshire background.

Priestley served in the army during World War I. Badly wounded in June 1916, when he was buried alive by a trench mortar, he later also suffered the effects of poison gas.

After the war he built a reputation as an essayist and critic, becoming well known with *The Good Companions* (1929). More popular with readers than critics, his third novel – about a travelling music hall troupe – dated badly. It suffered by comparison, for example, with the work of the “Angry Young Men” playwrights of the 1950s. John Osborne’s *The Entertainer* also used a vaudeville performer, but for a more direct portrayal of the state of society.

During the Second World War, Priestley broadcast nightly the Postscript on the BBC. The broadcasts – which were variously credited with stiffening civilian morale during the Battle of Britain and popularising the need for a post-war welfare state – reached a peak audience of 16-million in 1941 (second only to the addresses of wartime prime minister Winston Churchill) before the government pulled the plug.

Priestley was widely condemned by other writers both for his popular success and for his middle class provincialism. Virginia Woolf called him “the tradesman of letters,” while George Orwell derided “the Priestleyan assumption that ‘real life’ means lower-middle-class life in a large town and that if you have packed into your novel, say, 53 descriptions of tea in a Lyons Corner House, you have done the trick.”

Graham Greene wrote that Priestley “became in the months af-

Working class characters are not there to express themselves but to be acted upon by a kind of paternalistic sentimentality

ter Dunkirk a leader second only in importance to Mr Churchill. And he gave us what our other leaders have always failed to give us – an ideology.”

In 1940, Priestley criticised his former friend George Bernard Shaw’s support of Joseph Stalin: “Shaw presumes that his friend Stalin has everything under control. Well, Stalin may have made special arrangements to see that Shaw comes to no harm, but the rest of us in Western Europe do not feel quite so sure of our fate, especially those of us who do not share Shaw’s curious admiration for dictators.”

In 1942, Priestley co-founded the Common Wealth Party. Well within the safe confines of the parliamentary Labourite politics of the time, it called for public ownership of land, greater democracy and a new “morality” in politics. Even this was enough for Orwell to include Priestley’s name on a 1949 list of artists deemed “fellow travellers” of the Stalinist Communist Party.

Priestley lived through some of the most momentous events of the 20th century; two world wars, the Russian Revolution, the British General Strike, the hungry 30s and the rise of Fascism. His engagement with these colossal events and their social implications never seems to have risen above vague social democratic conceptions.

Overtly political writings such as *The Arts under Socialism* (1947) express the most tepid reformism.

His evident aspiration for something fairer – he was a founding member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, for example – never went beyond that “ideology” identified by Greene, even though he was clearly interested in bigger artistic questions. *Literature and Western Man* (1960) was a 500-page survey of western literature up to the 1930s – which in passing does distinguish between the toleration of artistic innovation in the Soviet Union under Lenin and its bureaucratic suppression under Stalin. Priestley thought Lenin “conservative in his literary taste” but “far more tolerant than his successors: if he could not appreciate all the new experimental writing and theatre work, he did not dictate to the poets and producers what they should do.”

An *Inspector Calls* is essentially a morality tale, told within the strict confines of the prevailing morals of the presently existing bourgeois class society. But, as Trotsky explained, morals and morality are not absolute. They are informed by class interests. Goole’s mission is to warn the Birlings to change their ways before it is too late, and resume their social positions with “improved” morals.

Even reading Priestley’s conclusion as implying a social reckoning does not stretch to upsetting the existing social structure.

The working class is present throughout his work, but not in the foreground. Working class characters, like the Birlings’ maid Edna, are not there to express themselves but to be acted upon by a kind of paternalistic sentimentality. Goole’s final speech is actually a cross-class appeal for sympathy for the pathetic downtrodden.

An Inspector Calls remains Priestley’s best-known work. There was a notable 1954 film by Guy Hamilton,

starring Alastair Sim. More recently, Aisling Walsh directed a decent 2015 television adaptation with David Thewlis as Goole.

The play fell from favour for decades, having been identified as the type of middle-class drawing-room play that had been overtaken by the “kitchen-sink” dramas of the 1950s/60s.

Its return to favour owes much to director Stephen Daldry, who in 1992 revived Priestley’s dissection of class injustice under capitalism. Daldry’s revival has been seen worldwide by more than four-million theatregoers. There is evidently as receptive an audience as ever to hear confirmation that the wealthy in capitalist society are often also blessed with the characteristics of lying, cheating, hypocrisy and brutishness.

With whatever limitations, Daldry has long been interested in historical and political questions. With his undeniable talents and a creditable cast, Daldry has created an often highly engaging production.

There is evidence that the wealthy in capitalist society are often also blessed with the characteristics of lying, cheating, hypocrisy and brutishness

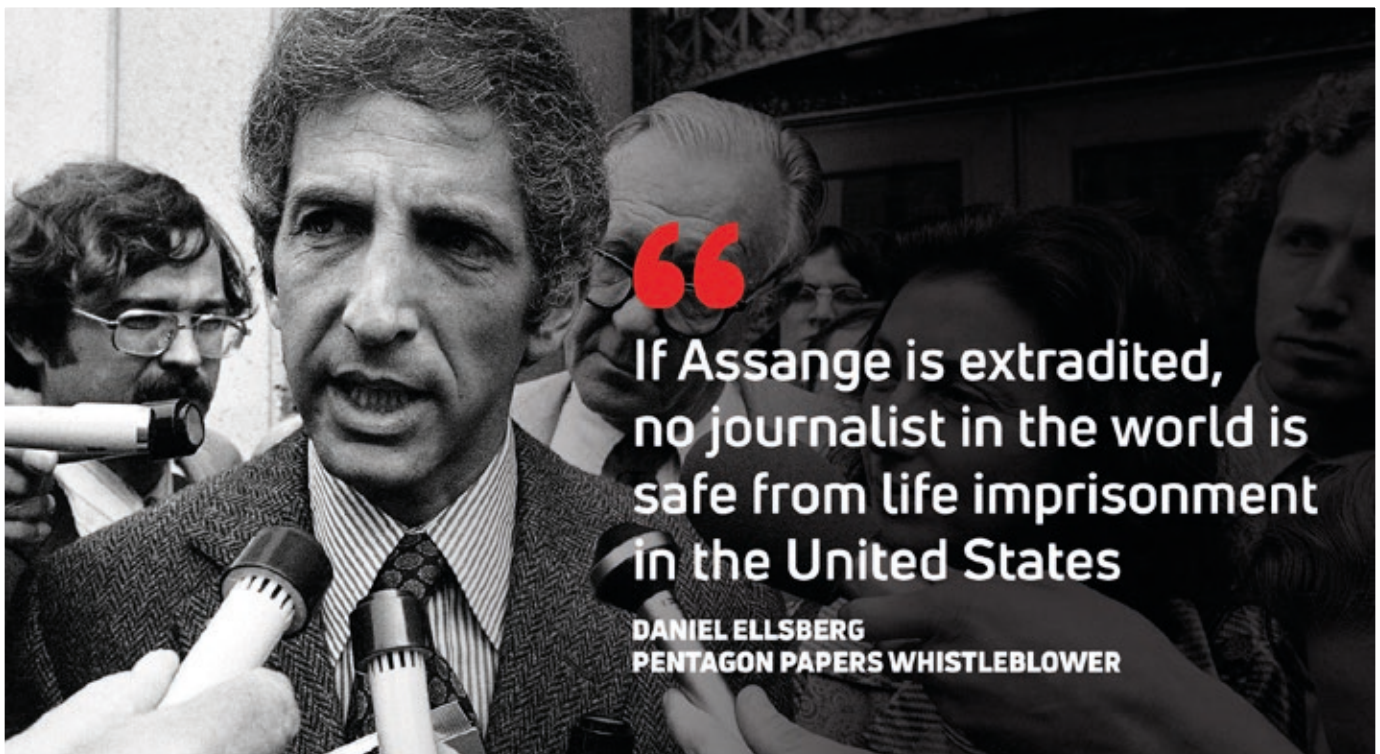
Ian MacNeil’s clever set design powerfully contrasts the Birling mansion with the squalor outside it. Daldry has Goole (an excellent Liam Brennan) at all times outside the mansion, addressing the audience directly and establishing a genuine connection.

A significant proportion of the audience has been young people, as the play appears regularly on the GCSE syllabus for 15/16-year-olds across England. Many recent polls have indicated a leftward turn among this

layer: one recent British poll found that 67 percent would like to live in a “socialist economic system” and at least 75 percent viewed climate change and Britain’s housing crisis as problems specifically associated with capitalism. The play’s appeal is clear.

An observant young viewer would be able to discern a half-articulated cry of despair at the present conditions of the world in the play, but one that is muted and soon stifled. Despite Daldry’s commendable achievements with Priestley’s play, is it not high time, someone might ask, to take this material into the modern world? There are now billions of “Smiths,” not millions, struggling to feed their families as their toil fattens the profits of corporate magnates who make the Birlings of yesteryear seem like impoverished upstarts, in a society offering no future to the youth, and on the precipice of another world war. **CT**

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