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ISSUE 171

NOVEMBER 2018

Ron Fassbender



Giving Brexit the chop

In the highest turnout since a million marchers protested before Tony Blair led Britain into his disastrous war on Iraq, 750,000 London demonstrators demanded a new vote on Brexit. Will their government listen this time? **Ian Dunt & Ron Fassbender report**

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CHRIS HEDGES

Tyranny or revolution?

The uber-rich are almost always amoral. Right. Wrong. Truth. Lies. Justice. Injustice. These concepts are beyond them

AT the age of 10 I was sent as a scholarship student to a boarding school for the uber-rich in Massachusetts. I lived among the wealthiest Americans for the next eight years. I listened to their prejudices and saw their cloying sense of entitlement. They insisted they were privileged and wealthy because they were smarter and more talented. They had a sneering disdain for those ranked below them in material and social status, even the merely rich. Most of the uber-rich lacked the capacity for empathy and compassion. They formed elite cliques that hazed, bullied and taunted any nonconformist who defied or did not fit into their self-adulatory universe.

It was impossible to build a friendship with most of the sons of the uber-rich. Friendship for them was defined by “what’s in it for me?” They were surrounded from the moment they came out of the womb by people catering to their desires and needs. They were incapable of reaching out to others in distress – whatever petty whim or problem they had at the moment dominated their universe and took precedence over the suffering of others, even those within their own families. They knew only how to take. They could not give. They were deformed and deeply unhappy people in the grip of an unquenchable narcissism.

It is essential to understand the pathologies of the uber-rich. They have seized total political power. These pathologies inform Donald Trump, his children, the Brett Kavanaughs, and the bil-

lionaires who run his administration. The uber-rich cannot see the world from anyone’s perspective but their own. People around them, including the women whom entitled men prey upon, are objects designed to gratify momentary lusts or be manipulated. The uber-rich are almost always amoral. Right. Wrong. Truth. Lies. Justice. Injustice. These concepts are beyond them. Whatever benefits or pleases them is good. What does not must be destroyed.

The pathology of the uber-rich is what permits Trump and his callow son-in-law, Jared Kushner, to conspire with de facto Saudi ruler Mohammed bin Salman, another product of unrestrained entitlement and nepotism, to cover up the murder of the journalist Jamal Khashoggi, with whom I worked in the Middle East. The uber-rich spend their lives protected by their inherited wealth, the power it wields and an army of enablers, including other members of the fraternity of the uber-rich, along with their lawyers and publicists. There are almost never any consequences for their failures, abuses, mistreatment of others and crimes. This is why the Saudi crown prince and Kushner have bonded. They are the homunculi the uber-rich routinely spawn.

The rule of the uber-rich, for this reason, is terrifying. They know no limits. They have never abided by the norms of society and never will. We pay taxes – they don’t. We work hard to get into an elite university or get a job – they don’t.

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Illustration: Bakhtiar Zein / 123RF Stock Photo

We have to pay for our failures – they don't. We are prosecuted for our crimes – they are not.

The uber-rich live in an artificial bubble, a land called Richistan, a place of Frankenmansions and private jets, cut off from our reality. Wealth, I saw, not only perpetuates itself but is used to monopolise the new opportunities for wealth creation. Social mobility for the poor and the working class is largely a myth.

Once the uber-rich take over, Aristotle writes, the only options are tyranny and revolution

The uber-rich practice the ultimate form of affirmative action, catapulting white, male mediocrities like Trump, Kushner and George W. Bush into elite schools that groom the plutocracy for positions of power. The uber-rich are never forced to grow up. They are often infantilised for life, squalling for what they want and almost always getting it. And this makes them very, very dangerous.

Political theorists, from Aristotle and Karl Marx to Sheldon Wolin, have warned against the rule of the uber-rich. Once the uber-rich take over, Aristotle writes, the only options are tyranny and revolution. They do not know how to nurture or build. They know only how to feed their bottomless greed. It's a funny thing about the uber-rich: No matter how many billions they possess, they never have enough. They are the Hungry Ghosts of Buddhism. They seek, through the accumulation of power, money and objects, an unachievable happiness. This life of endless desire often ends badly, with the uber-rich estranged from their spouses and children, bereft of genuine friends. And when they are gone, as Charles Dickens wrote in *A Christmas Carol*, most people are glad to be rid of them.

C. Wright Mills in *The Power Elite*, one of the finest studies of the pathologies of the uber-rich, wrote: "They exploited national resources, waged economic wars among themselves, en-

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tered into combinations, made private capital out of the public domain, and used any and every method to achieve their ends. They made agreements with railroads for rebates; they purchased newspapers and bought editors; they killed off competing and independent businesses and employed lawyers of skill and statesmen of repute to sustain their rights and secure their privileges. There is something demonic about these lords of creation; it is not merely rhetoric to call them robber barons".

Corporate capitalism, which has destroyed our democracy, has given unchecked power to the uber-rich. And once we understand the pathologies of these oligarchic elites, it is easy to chart our future. The state apparatus the uber-rich controls now exclusively serves their interests. They are deaf to the cries of the dispossessed. They empower those institutions that keep us oppressed – the security and surveillance systems of domestic control, militarised police, Homeland Security and the military – and gut or degrade those institutions or programmes that blunt social, economic and political inequality, among them public education, health care, welfare, Social Security, an equitable tax system, food stamps, public transportation and infrastructure, and the courts. The uber-rich extract greater and greater sums of money from those they steadily impoverish. And when citizens object or resist, they crush or kill them.

The uber-rich care inordinately about their image. They are obsessed with looking at themselves. They are the center of their own universe. They go to great lengths and expense to create fictional personas replete with nonexistent virtues and attributes. This is why the uber-rich carry out acts of well-publicised philanthropy. Philanthropy allows the uber-rich to engage in moral fragmentation. They ignore the moral squalor of their lives, often defined by the kind of degeneracy and debauchery the uber-rich insist is the curse of the poor, to present themselves through small acts of charity as caring and benevolent. Those who puncture this image, as Khashoggi did with Salman, are especially de-

spised. And this is why Trump, like all the uber-rich, sees a critical press as the enemy. It is why Trump and Kushner's eagerness to conspire to help cover up Khashoggi's murder is ominous. Trump's incitements to his supporters, who see in him the omnipotence they lack and yearn to achieve, to carry out acts of violence against his critics are only a few steps removed from the crown prince's thugs dismembering Khashoggi with a bone saw. And if you think Trump is joking when he suggests the press should be dealt with violently you understand nothing about the uber-rich. He will do what he can get away with, even murder. He, like most of the uber-rich, is devoid of a conscience.

The more enlightened uber-rich, the East Hamptons and Upper East Side uber-rich, a realm in which Ivanka and Jared once cavorted, look at the president as gauche and vulgar. But this distinction is one of style, not substance. Donald Trump may be an embarrassment to the well-heeled Harvard and Princeton graduates at Goldman Sachs, but he serves the uber-rich as assiduously as Barack Obama and the Democratic Party do. This is why the Obamas, like the Clintons, have been inducted into the pantheon of the uber-rich. It is why Chelsea Clinton and Ivanka Trump were close friends. They come from the same caste.

The uber-rich have destroyed popular movements, including labour unions

There is no force within ruling institutions that will halt the pillage by the uber-rich of the nation and the ecosystem. The uber-rich have nothing to fear from the corporate-controlled media, the elected officials they bankroll or the judicial system they have seized. The universities are pathetic corporation appendages. They silence or banish intellectual critics who upset major donors by challenging the reigning ideology of neoliberalism, which was formulated by the uber-rich to restore class power. The uber-rich have destroyed popular movements, including labour unions, along with democratic mechanisms for reform that once allowed working

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people to pit power against power. The world is now their playground.

In *The Postmodern Condition*, the philosopher Jean-François Lyotard painted a picture of the future neoliberal order as one in which “the temporary contract” supplants “permanent institutions in the professional, emotional, sexual, cultural, family and international domains, as well as in political affairs.” This temporal relationship to people, things, institutions and the natural world ensures collective self-annihilation. Nothing for the uber-rich has an intrinsic value. Human beings, social institutions and the natural world are commodities to exploit for personal gain until exhaustion or collapse. The common good, like the consent of the governed, is a dead concept. This temporal relationship embodies the fundamental pathology of the uber-rich.

The uber-rich, as Karl Polanyi wrote, celebrate the worst kind of freedom – the freedom “to exploit one’s fellows, or the freedom to make inordinate gains without commensurable service to the community, the freedom to keep technological inventions from being used for public benefit, or the freedom to profit from public calamities

secretly engineered for private advantage.” At the same time, as Polanyi noted, the uber-rich make war on the “freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, freedom of meeting, freedom of association, freedom to choose one’s own job”.

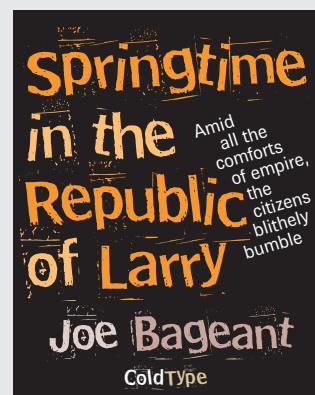
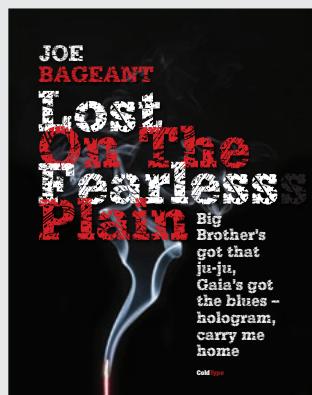
We have been taught by the uber-rich to celebrate the bad freedoms and denigrate the good ones

The dark pathologies of the uber-rich, lionised by mass culture and mass media, have become our own. We have ingested their poison. We have been taught by the uber-rich to celebrate the bad freedoms and denigrate the good ones. Look at any Trump rally. Watch any reality television show. Examine the state of our planet. We will repudiate these pathologies and organise to force the uber-rich from power or they will transform us into what they already consider us to be – the help.

CT

Chris Hedges is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, a New York Times best-selling author, a professor in the college degree programme offered to New Jersey state prisoners by Rutgers University, and an ordained. This article first appeared at www.newsdig.com

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GEORGE MONBIOT

Rebelling against extinction

When governments abandon us, we must step up to protect our environment

It is hard to believe today, but the prevailing ethos among the educated elite was once public service. As the historian Tony Judt documented in *Ill Fares the Land*, the foremost ambition among graduates in the 1950s and 1960s was, through government or the liberal professions, to serve their country. Their approach might have been patrician and often blinkered, but their intentions were mostly public and civic, not private and pecuniary.

Today, the notion of public service seems as quaint as a local post office. We expect those who govern us to grab what they can, permitting predatory banks and corporations to fleece the public realm, then collecting their reward in the form of lucrative directorships. As the Edelman Corporation's Trust Barometer survey reveals, trust worldwide has collapsed in all major institutions, and government is less trusted than any other.

As for the economic elite, as the consequences of their own greed and self-interest emerge, they seek, like the Roman oligarchs fleeing the collapse of the Western Empire, only to secure their survival against the indignant mob. An essay by the visionary author Douglas Rushkoff this summer, documenting his discussion with some of the world's richest people, reveals that their most pressing concern is to find a safe refuge from climate breakdown, economic and societal collapse. Should they move to New Zealand or Alaska? How will they pay their security guards once money is worthless? Could they up-

load their minds onto supercomputers? Survival Condo, the company turning former missile silos in Kansas into fortified bunkers, has so far sold every completed unit.

Trust, the Edelman Corporation observes, "is now the deciding factor in whether a society can function." Unfortunately, our mistrust is fully justified. Those who have destroyed belief in governments exploit its collapse, railing against a liberal elite (by which they mean people still engaged in public service) while working for the real and illiberal elite. As the political economist Will Davies points out, "sovereignty" is used as a code for rejecting the very notion of governing as "a complex, modern, fact-based set of activities that requires technical expertise and permanent officials."

Nowhere is the gulf between public and private interests more obvious than in governments' response to the climate crisis. On Monday, the UK's energy secretary, Claire Perry, announced that she has asked her advisers to produce a roadmap to a zero carbon economy. On the same day, fracking commenced at Preston New Road in Lancashire, enabled by the permission Perry sneaked through parliament on the last day before the summer recess.

She has justified fracking on the grounds that it helps the country affect a "transition to a lower-carbon economy". But fracked gas has net emissions similar to or worse than those released by burning coal. As we are already emerging from the coal era in the UK without its help, this is in reality a transition away from renewables

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and back into fossil fuels. The government has promoted the transition by effectively banning onshore wind farms, while overriding local decisions to impose fracking by central dictat. Now, to prevent people from taking back control, it intends to grant blanket planning permission for frackers to operate.

None of it makes sense, until you remember the intimate relationship between the fossil fuel industry, the City (where Perry made her fortune) and the Conservative party, oiled by the political donations flowing from both sectors into the party's coffers. These people are not serving the nation. They are serving each other.

In Germany, the government that claimed to be undergoing a great green energy transition instead pours public money into the coal industry, and deploys an army of police to evict protesters from an ancient forest to clear it for a lignite mine. On behalf of both polluting power companies and the car industry, it has sabotaged the EU's attempt to improve its carbon emissions target. Before she was re-elected, I argued that Angela Merkel was the world's leading eco-vandal. She might also be the world's most effective spin doctor: she can mislead, cheat and destroy, and people still call her Mutti. Since then, she has done all she can to retain her position as the leading planetary delinquent. That she has now slipped to third place shows only that the collapse of the public service ethos has become a global phenomenon.

Other governments shamelessly flaunt their service to private interests, as they evade censure by owning their corruption. A report on fuel efficiency published by the US government in July concedes, unusually, that global temperatures are likely to rise by 4°C this century. It then uses this forecast to argue that there is no point in producing cleaner cars, because the disaster will happen anyway. Elsewhere, all talk of climate breakdown within government is censored. Any agency seeking to avert it is captured and redirected.

In Australia, the new Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, has turned coal burning into a sa-

cred doctrine. I would not be surprised if the only lump of coal he has ever handled is the one he flourished in the Australian parliament. But he dirties his hands every day on behalf of the industry. These men with black hearts and clean fingernails wear their loyalties with pride.

If Jair Bolsonaro takes office in Brazil, their gleeful annihilation on behalf of private interests will seem mild by comparison. He claims that climate breakdown is a fable invented by a "globalist conspiracy", and seeks to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, abolish the environment ministry, put the congressional beef caucus (representing the murderous and destructive ranching industry) in charge of agriculture, open the Amazon Basin for clearance and dismantle almost all environmental and indigenous protections.

With the exception of Costa Rica's, no government has the policies required to prevent more than 2°C of global warming, let alone 1.5°. Most, like the UK, Germany, the US and Australia, push us towards the brink on behalf of their friends. So what do we do, when our own representatives have abandoned public service for private service?

On October 31, I will speak at the launch of Extinction Rebellion in Parliament Square. This is a movement devoted to disruptive, non-violent disobedience in protest against ecological collapse. The three heroes jailed for trying to stop fracking, whose outrageous sentences have just been overturned, are likely to be the first of hundreds. The intention is to turn this national rising into an international one in March.

This preparedness for sacrifice, a long history of political and religious revolt suggests, is essential to motivate and mobilise people to join an existential struggle. It is among such people that you find the public and civic sense now lacking in government. That we have to take such drastic action to defend the common realm shows how badly we have been abandoned.

CT

George Monbiot's latest book, *How Did We Get Into This Mess?*, is published by Verso. This article was first published in the *Guardian*. Monbiot's web site is www.monbiot.com

IAN DUNT / RON FASSBENDER

700,000 marchers demand new Brexit vote

In the highest turnout since a million marchers protested before Tony Blair's disastrous war on Iraq, London demonstrators demanded a new Brexit vote. Will their government listen this time?

10 **T**HE political system is desperate to ignore the People's Vote March. No-one wants to talk about it. The government is implacably opposed to the idea. Most MPs believe the decision to leave the EU is morally unchallengeable. The BBC has adopted the same stance, as have most newspapers. The very idea that people could think again is all-but excluded from polite society. It is borderline taboo.

But the scale of the event on Saturday, October 20 made it impossible to ignore. At around 700,000 people, it may be the second largest demonstration in British history, after the Iraq war demo in 2003. The sight of a seeming mass of humanity snaking its way from Hyde Park was astonishing.

Corbyn supporters online treated it as some kind of reactionary bourgeois tea party. Brexiteers sneered that no matter how many people attended it was fewer than those who voted Leave.

But none of that criticism made an impact. Anyone with political judgement could see that something remarkable was happening. A new constituency was making its voice heard. A political

The photographs on these and the following pages were taken by Ron Fassbender at the People's Vote March in London, when 700,000 people protested plans to leave Europe next year.





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grouping was finding its voice. That voice may or may not be enough to stop Brexit, but once movements get this level of support, once they are able to mobilise hundreds of thousands of people to act despite considerable inconvenience, they become a force to be reckoned with. At some point, that voice will be articulated at the level of policy.

It's common in British politics to state that protests never achieve anything. Probably it comes from history. The French, who treat demonstrations more seriously, have the national memory of the crowds – the sans-culottes - during the Revolution directing events.

The English constitutional revolutions of the period are considered an elite affair, both in the Civil War and the Glorious Revolution. But it's a misreading. The start of the Civil War was hugely impacted by Anti-Laudian protests in London, breaking out as a response to radical pamphlets by writers who would later congeal as the Levellers. The New Model Army's control of London, and eventually parliament, at the end of the war, was a reaction against pro-
12 royal protests, which at one stage broke into parliament, humiliated MPs, and forced them through the threat of violence to sign whatever laws they wanted. Protest – some of it heroic, some of it ugly – is as pivotal to British history as it is anywhere else, it's just that we never talk about it.

You shouldn't use Marxist phrases unless you really, really can't help it, but the truth is there's something dialectic about the way protest works. Street politics affects high politics. They mix and then affect street politics and the process continues. It was that way with the Levellers and the Independents in parliament during the Civil War. And you could see something similar this week.

Theresa May's statement to the Commons on Brexit negotiations two days later was constantly interrupted by demands for a People's Vote and a recognition of the march. MP after MP, on all sides of the House, stood up to demand she acknowledge the protest.

There was something slightly different about the way they did so. They seemed more confident about demanding a second referendum like they no longer shuddered at the sneering mockery



IAN DUNT / RON FASSBENDER



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which would invariably follow. And opponents of the protest were no longer able to be quite so dismissive. They were more respectful, more balanced in their opposition. The policy had not changed, but the manner in which it was discussed had.

That is how protest works. It doesn't secure things in and of itself. But it strengthens its supporters in places of power and it weakens its enemies. And that was the effect it had this week: slowly moulding the Brexit debate in a more favourable direction. Given the deadlock everywhere else, it was startling to see some part of British politics with a spark of life. – *Ian Dunt*

Ian Dunt is editor of www.politics.co.uk – where this article first appeared – and the author of *Brexit: What The Hell Happens Now?*

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IAN DUNT / RON FASSBENDER



The app will see you now

Health Internet apps are just like the Wild West, with Apple just riding into town

THE heart rate monitor built into the new Apple Watch has sparked sharp debate over its risks and benefits, even though the feature was cleared by the Food and Drug Administration.

But out of the spotlight, the FDA has been doing away with regulatory action altogether on many diagnostic health apps targeting consumers, seeking to accelerate digital health adoption by defining many of these as “low risk” medical devices.

As the number of mobile health apps surged to a record 325,000 in 2017, app performance is going largely unpoliced, leading to what’s been dubbed a “Wild West” situation. Unfortunately for health consumers, the public can’t rely on the research community to play the role of sheriff.

When colleagues and I recently examined the medical literature on direct-to-consumer diagnostic apps in a study published in *Diagnosis*, we repeatedly found studies marred by bias, technological naïveté or a failure to provide crucial information for consumers. There was also a glaring lack of studies with actual consumers to see how they use these apps and what the impact on individual health, whether for better or worse, might be.

Interactive diagnostic apps now go well beyond “Dr. Google” keyword searches. They promise personalized information on whether a nagging symptom can likely be relegated to self-care or whether a visit to the doctor’s office or even the emergency room may be needed. Some

of these apps become so popular that they have been downloaded tens of millions of times.

To understand whether the promising nature of these apps is backed up by the evidence, we searched both the peer-reviewed literature and nonacademic sources. The disturbing unreliability of that evidence for the average consumer is starkly visible when you consider apps that “advise” (a carefully chosen word) whether you might have skin cancer.

There are hundreds of cancer-related apps. Perhaps because melanoma rates have been rising for decades and it’s one of the most common young adult cancers, the largest group of articles we found focused on dermatology apps. One of the most prominent is Skin Scan.

If you’re a physician or reasonably savvy consumer, Google Scholar provides the easiest access to evidence-based information. One of the first results that pops up is a 2013 article entitled, “Skin Scan: A demonstration of the need for FDA regulation of medical apps on iPhone.” If that title suggests a certain lack of objectivity, the problem isn’t limited to dermatology. We also found an orthopedist examining whether a symptom checker could “guess” the right diagnosis, and an ear, nose and throat doctor investigating whether an app could diagnose his own patients as well as he could.

That Skin Scan study sounding the alarm on regulation warned of a substantial poten-

MICHAEL L. MILLENSON

tial for harm. Yet a separate study of the same app published online two years later was much more positive. Did app developers pour in improvements, or was it that the first researchers used their own skin growth photos while the second group used the smartphone's images?

The answer is unclear. More broadly, however, researchers often seemed unaware of the impact of basic technological distinctions such as whether an app relied on user answers to questions, "crowdsourced" answers to others or used inputs from a smartphone's camera and sensors.

More troubling was researchers' lack of understanding of the public's pressing need for reliable information. So, for instance, a study of four smartphone apps found that their sensitivity in detecting malignant skin lesions ranged from 7 percent to 98 percent. Yet the researchers chose not to identify any of the apps by name. Similarly, few studies mentioned cost (CrowdMed, for example, charges users a minimum of USD\$149 per month), and those that did sometimes gave only a price range for a group of apps.

With scientific evidence sparse, consumers are left to rely upon online reviews – which, as a just-published study of popular blood pressure apps warned, can be dangerously wrong.

Or there's always a random web search.

In the case of Skin Scan, my search found that in July the company that developed the app reported a melanoma detection sensitivity of 96 percent. That "report," however, was part of a trade publication interview with SkinVision CEO Erik de Heus as the company announced it had raised

another \$7.6 million from investors.

Three years ago, a National Academy of Medicine report on diagnostic error called upon professionals to direct patients to reliable online resources. However, we found that search terms used by the National Library of Medicine's PubMed Life Sciences search engine have lagged the digital health revolution, and medical journals do a hit-or-miss job of simply indexing every app mentioned in an article. The English National Health Service has launched an Apps Library to cut through the confusion, but there's no similar resource in this country.

Some web-savvy researchers at sites like iMedicalApps are advising physicians about apps they can use themselves or others they can trust to recommend to their patients. Others trying to bring law and order to the wide-open health app field have suggested various frameworks, such as combining stakeholders' expertise in collaborative health app rating teams. The goal would be to get innovators, policymakers and evidence-generators to jointly help corral confusing and contradictory information.

And as the debate over using Apple Watch data to measure heart health shows, FDA approval alone doesn't remove the risk of consumers jumping to the wrong conclusion about what the information they're receiving actually means. Nonetheless, as the pioneering stage of health apps starts to settle into the medical mainstream, the health of the American public requires apps and devices we know we can trust. **CT**

Michael L. Millenson is Adjunct Associate Professor of Medicine, Feinberg School of Medicine, Northwestern University. This article first appeared at www.theconversation.com

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Assassinating the president

The media and opposition politicians keep warning us of Donald Trump's Hitlerian-fascist qualities. So, our resident satirist wonders, when will the US take care of him in the way it takes care of other Hitlers?

OK ... here's a question for you. Let's assume, strictly for the purposes of argument, that Donald Trump is literally Hitler, or at least a proto-Hitlerian fascist, as the neoliberal ruling classes and the corporate media have been saying he is. And let's go ahead and also assume that he's a treasonous Russian intelligence asset working in league with Vladimir Putin to destroy the very fabric of Western democracy, and that he isn't even legitimately President, because he stole the election from Hillary Clinton with all those Russian bots and Facebook posts, and all that other stuff they've been accusing him of, which would make him the most monstrously evil villain in the history of monstrously evil villains, not to mention an existential threat to the nation, and Americans, and ... well, the rest of humanity. And so, basically, what I want to know is, why don't they just kill this guy?

Seriously, if Trump is really Hitler, and a traitor, working for a foreign enemy, as the *New York Times* and more or less every other organ of the corporate media has been telling us he is for the last two years, well, how about getting SEAL Team 6 to storm the White House in the dead of night and shoot him in the face or something? That seems to go over pretty well with people. Or what about a simple heart attack? Don't our spooks have some kind of heart attack juice that they could slip into his Diet Coke, or smear onto the doorknob of the Oval Office?

Not that there's really any need for subtlety.

After all, if he's actually a Russian operative, and a proto-Hitlerian genocidal dictator, there's no reason to run a covert op or attempt to cover anything up. On the contrary, you would want do it openly, proudly, where all Americans could see it. Which is why I'd go with the DEVGRU option. They could waste him live on CNN. The bloodier the better. Just imagine the ratings! They could march into the Oval Office in that cool-looking kill squad body armour and beat him to death with a gold-plated golf club. It's not like he'd put up much of a fight. What is he, like 70 years old or something?

I mean, how many times can you call a guy Hitler before Americans demand that somebody kill him?

All right, I know you're probably thinking that beating a sitting president to death with a gold-plated gap wedge is nothing to joke about, and that doing so (ie, joking about it, not actually beating the President to death) is possibly a federal crime or whatever, but we're talking Adolf Hitler here, folks. Do I have to link to every one of the literally thousands of impassioned editorials, articles, and TV and radio segments in which respected journalists at serious news outlets have warned us, over and over, and over, that Donald Trump is literally Hitler, or virtually Hitler, and probably also a Russian agent? I don't think so. Do you think that respectable publications like the *New York Times*, the *Washington*

CJ HOPKINS

Post, the Guardian, the Atlantic, Time, and so on, would print such inflammatory allegations if the fate of democracy were not at stake? That would be rather reckless, wouldn't it? I mean, how many times can you call a guy Hitler before Americans demand that somebody kill him?

This is what we do, after all. Killing Hitler is America's thing. America has been killing Hitler since ... well, since Hitler killed himself. Saddam was Hitler. We killed him,

didn't we? Or we got some guys to kill him for us. Same goes for Gaddafi. He was Hitler. We killed the hell out of him. That was fun. We got some guys to sodomise him with a bayonet, and shoot him in the head, and then we laughed about it on national television. Oh, and Osama bin Laden. He was definitely Hitler ... OK, not while he was working with the CIA, but later, after he went native on us. We shot him in the face and dumped in the ocean. And Milosevic, he was also Hitler! OK, we didn't kill him, but we killed his whole country, then we put him on trial in the Hague for war crimes. And what about Stalin, Ho Chi Minh, Castro, Khomeini, Bashar al Assad, and all the other Hitlers we wanted to kill, or tried to kill but couldn't kill? The list goes on and on, and on.

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Illustration: Anthony Jenkins / www.jenkinsdraws.com



CJ HOPKINS

I kid you not, if there is anything Americans love more than working a hundred hours a week and buying stuff with credit cards, it is repeatedly killing Adolf Hitler. You just point at somebody, call him Hitler, and Americans are ready to help you kill him. And, even if someone isn't technically Hitler, as long as those respectable news sources tell us it's OK to kill them ... well, that's usually good enough for us.

For example, if you're messing around with our "interests," like maybe interfering with our corporations' exploitation of your Central American country, we will have no choice but to fund and train some sadistic death squads to hideously torture and murder your people until you come to your senses. Or, if you're even considering aligning with some annoying, fanatically religious regime that deposed the puppet we installed in their country, and that is sitting in the middle of the Middle East screwing up our restructuring plans, and which the Russians won't let us tactically nuke, well, we'll have to help our friends, the Saudis, bomb the living Allah out of you, starve your women and children to death, and otherwise wipe you off the face of the Earth.

You just point at somebody, call him Hitler, and Americans are ready to help you kill him

So let's not suddenly get all squeamish about killing Hitler or ... you know, whoever. Killing Hitlers, and other bogeymen, and innocent men, women, and children is as American as apple pie, not to mention an extremely profitable business. So what's the problem here, exactly? Either Trump is Hitler or he isn't Hitler. If he's Hitler, and a traitorous Russian agent, like all those respected media sources, and those anonymous "Intelligence Community" sources, and those people on Twitter say he is, what the hell is taking so long? Why doesn't somebody get in there and kill him? What good are all these black ops types if they can't even save America from Hitler?

I don't know, maybe the ruling classes don't believe they have generated enough public support

with all their "resistance" and "Hitler" stuff to brutally assassinate the president on television (which is hard to fathom, given the relentless propaganda campaign they've been concertedly waging). Perhaps it needs to be a grassroots effort. In which case, maybe the Democratic Party, Bill Kristol, Rob Reiner, Rachel Maddow, Michael Moore, General Hayden, Hillary Clinton, Alec Baldwin, the Editorial Board of the *New York Times*, and other key Resistance fighters could organise a "March to Assassinate Trump". People could break out their pussyhats again. Everyone loves those pussyhats!

They could march on CIA headquarters in Langley. Just think of all the signs and slogans ... "SCREW DEMOCRACY, JUST KILL HIM ALREADY!" "WHAT WOULD WILLIAM CASEY DO?" and the always popular call and response, "TELL ME WHAT THE DEEP STATE LOOKS LIKE ... THIS IS WHAT THE DEEP STATE LOOKS LIKE!" The possibilities are almost endless! I'm not saying it would be a cake-walk ... or that there wouldn't be any kind of blowback. The Resistance would likely catch a little flak from the millions of toothless, Oxy-addicted, white supremacist Nazis that voted for the guy.

There would probably be a bit of "civil unrest", but then, what's the point of militarising virtually every major police force in the country if you're not prepared to turn them loose on the citizenry every once and while? And anyway, the main thing is, regardless of how messy things would probably get, it would provide the global capitalist ruling classes with an opportunity to remind these unruly "populists" what happens when you vote for Hitler! **CT**

CJ Hopkins is an award-winning American playwright, novelist and satirist based in Berlin. His plays are published by Bloomsbury Publishing (UK) and Broadway Play Publishing (USA). His debut novel, *ZONE 23*, is published by Snoggsworthy, Swaine & Cormorant. He can be reached at www.cjhopkins.com or www.consentfactory.org

ONE MAGAZINE'S 10-YEAR QUEST FOR JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

Before I wound up in Toronto and ColdType, I designed **Frontline** magazine, South Africa's top liberal-left magazine, for 10 years during the 1980s as it battled for justice and equality during the final years of Apartheid. Now, we're digitising **Frontline**, as a case study of prophecy and history. The first digital issues are now on line; more will follow.

– **Tony Sutton, Editor**



Read the digital editions of **Frontline**, exactly as they were published, free of charge, at

www.issuu.com/frontline.south

How apartheid regime burned the books

South African librarians supported the destruction of banned material during years of authoritarian rule

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ON the advice of the state librarian, one fine day in the 1970s, a truck transported thousands of books and magazines from Pretoria's Central Police Station to a dark hall at the Iscor state steel company, just outside the South African capital. A large mechanical shovel scooped up and dropped them into a 20 metre high oven, causing it to spew flames and smoke. This was another truckload of banned material that was routinely burned in furnaces across South Africa from the 1950s to the 1970s.

Historical examples show that books are banned and destroyed because they offend the politics, morals, or religion of the day. Information science academic Rebecca Knuth, wrote in *Burning Books and Leveling Libraries* that if a regime is racist, it destroys the books of groups deemed inferior; if nationalistic, the books of competing nations and cultures; and if religiously extremist, all texts contradicting sacred doctrines.

Sometimes these forces combine. Recent examples include the destruction of Muslim books and libraries in Bosnia in the 1990s by Serbian nationalist forces. In 2013 there was the burning by Islamist insurgents of the Timbuktu library and the next year the same happened in Lebanon to Tripoli's historic Al Sa'eh Library.

South Africa's apartheid era – from the middle of the 20th century – had its own variation on the theme. Thousands of books were banned,

ranging from Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *The Insulted and Humiliated* to popular Westerns writer Louis L'Amour's Hopalong Cassidy series. The fact that books were burnt underscored the state's desire to make sure the printed word was utterly destroyed. The practice also revealed a darker side of the library profession which connived in the book burning. Between 1955 and 1971 most librarians didn't protest when thousands of books and other reading material were taken from libraries, and burned at municipal incinerators and furnaces. Some even joined in.

*The burning of books
is seen as a symbol
of purification*

State sanctioned book burnings were common as authoritarianism accompanied a growing Afrikanerisation of South African society as the dominant, ruling Afrikaner elite started to impose its culture on all spheres of society. Members of the elite did this first by unifying Afrikaner cultural and church organisations. This took the form of a declaration on behalf of *Volksgorganisasies* (Afrikaner people's organisations) that was signed in 1941 and pledged support for conservative Christian national ideology.

This sometimes involved the burning of books as a symbol of purification. One of the more worrying aspects was the solid support from ordinary South African librarians for these treach-

ARCHIE DICK



UP IN SMOKE: the Railway Depot furnace at Kaserne, Johannesburg in 1971. Banned and confiscated books and magazines were burned there every week.

Photo: Wits Student

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erous acts. Even when books were burned by public libraries, the profession meekly accepted the situation. This signified support and agreement with what was happening, and reflected the dominant authoritarian mood and spirit in South Africa and the library community at that time.

In October 1955, the city librarian of Johannesburg, exclaimed: "All copies are brought in to me and I destroy them personally".

In the same month, a Cape Town newspaper reported that a couple of hundred books had been burned. Two years later, the deputy city librarian of Cape Town announced the fate of banned books returned from branch libraries to his Central Library: "We will have a big bonfire and burn them".

What started as the burning largely of imported pornographic books, became an all-out attack

on free speech after the findings of a commission of inquiry into "undesirable publications" were made public in October 1957. The inquiry gave the Nationalist government the excuse to destroy books and pamphlets critical of its policies, and of dramatic developments in the country.

Each new issue of the *Government Gazette* included the latest additions to the list of banned books. Books on communism and those that criticised apartheid dogma were targeted. In 1954 banned titles included the *Pravda* and *Daily Worker* newspapers, and Vladimir Lenin's *Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*. Books on innocuous topics about communist countries, such as China's "Railways and Labour Insurance Regulations of the People's Republic of China", were also deemed subversive

ARCHIE DICK

and added to the list. Even Ray Bradbury's dystopian novel *Fahrenheit 451* (which, ironically, is the temperature at which book paper starts burning) was burned.

From the town of Brakpan in the North to Durban in the East and Cape Town in the South, several thousand books were removed from library shelves and burned. In July 1964 Cape Town City library services announced that more than 800 books had been burned.

*Even Ray Bradbury's dystopian novel *Fahrenheit 451* was burned*

By this time the list of banned publications had swelled to a total of 12,000 titles. In June 1968, a newspaper reported that 5,375 books of Natal provincial libraries had been withdrawn from circulation and burned. By April 1971, books were still steadily being burned in Cape Town – at the rate of two per day.

It was only in the late 1980s that successful appeals from a few brave librarians to the state censors saw restricted books unbanned, and saved from apartheid's furnaces. In the early-1990s as South Africa moved towards becoming a democracy hundreds of archival documents and public records were shredded and burned by the apartheid state's security establishment – once again in the furnaces of Iscor.

Could book burning happen again in contemporary South Africa? Given a similar set of circumstances, there is every reason to believe that it can. We should remain diligent and alert to threats to freedom of expression. The ashes of burnt books tell of the barbarism to which a society can descend. **CT**

Archie Dick is Professor of Information Science at South Africa's University of Pretoria. This article was first published at www.theconversation.com

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"I think their work is heroic and I would place a copy of their just published book, *Propaganda Blitz*, in every journalism school that services the corporate system, as they all do" – John Pilger

PROPAGANDA BLITZ

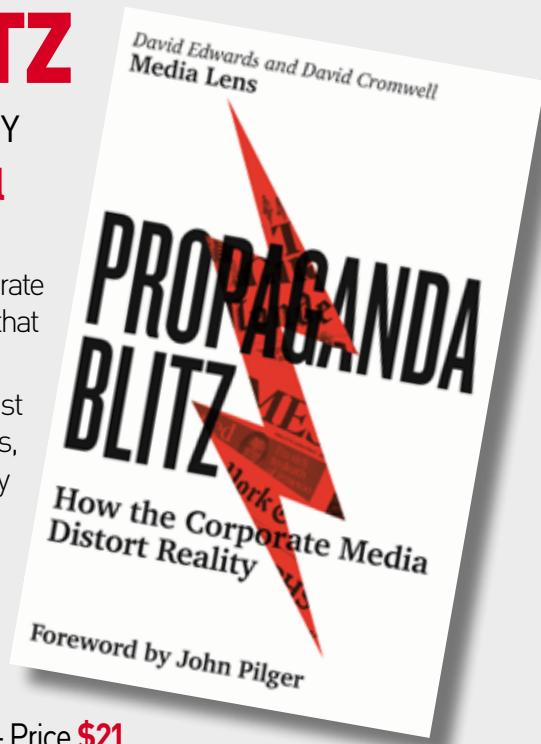
HOW THE CORPORATE MEDIA DISTORT REALITY

By David Edwards and David Cromwell

Do you trust the liberal media? ... The reality is that all corporate media is systematically filtered by the powerful interests that own, manage and fund it.

Propaganda Blitz shows that the corporate media does not just 'spin' the news – it fundamentally distorts everything it touches, hiding the real issues from public view, and often completely reversing the truth.

Propaganda Blitz explains the real meaning of 'objective' journalism, exposes the fake news about 'fake news' and outlines a model for anti-business media activism.



PUBLISHED BY PLUTO PRESS – www.plutobooks.com – Price \$21

Is Afghanistan finally ready for peace?

As the US and the Taliban draw closer to an end to their long war, there are still many political landmines waiting to blow up the peace process

THE news that the Americans recently held face-to-face talks with the Taliban suggests that longest war in US history may have reached a turning point, although the road to such a peace is long, rocky and plagued with as many improvised explosive devices as the highway from Kandahar to Kabul.

That the 17-year old war has reached a tipping point seems clear. The Taliban now controls more territory than they have since the American invasion in 2001. Casualties among Afghan forces are at an all time high, while recruitment is rapidly drying up. In spite of last year's mini-surge of US troops and airpower by the Trump administration, the situation on the ground is worse now than it was in 2017. If any one statement sums up the hopelessness – and cluelessness – of the whole endeavour, it was former Secretary of State's challenge to the Taliban: "You will not win a battlefield victory. We may not win one, but neither will you".

Of course, like any successful insurgency, the Taliban never intended to "win a battlefield victory", only not to lose, thus forcing a stalemate that would eventually exhaust their opponents. Clearly the lessons of the Vietnam War are not part of the standard curriculum at Foggy Bottom.

Why things have gone from bad to worse for the US/NATO occupation and the Kabul government has less to do with the war itself than a sea change in strategy by the Taliban, a course

shift that Washington has either missed or ignored. According to Ashley Jackson of the Overseas Development Institute, the Taliban shifted gears in 2015, instituting a program of winning hearts and minds.

The author of the new strategy was Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour, who took over the organisation following the death of founder Mullah Omar in 2013. Instead of burning schools, they staff them. Instead of attacking government soldiers and police, they strike up informal ceasefires, even taking turns manning checkpoints. They set up courts that are not tainted by corruption, collect taxes and provide health services.

Mansour also made efforts to expand the Taliban from its Pashtun base to include Tajiks and Uzbeks. According to Jackson, both ethnic groups – generally based in northern Afghanistan – have been appointed to the Taliban's leadership council, the Rahbari Shura.

"An hour's drive in any direction from Kabul will put you in Taliban territory"

Afghanistan's main ethnic divisions consist of 40 percent Pashtuns, 27 percent Tajiks, 10 percent Hazara and 10 Uzbeks.

It is not clear how much of the country the Taliban controls. NATO claims the group dominates only 14 percent of the country, while the Kabul government controls 56 percent. But oth-

CONN HALLINAN

er analysts say the figure for Taliban control is closer to 50 percent, and a BBC study found that the insurgents were active in 70 percent of the country.

Jackson says the “Taliban strategy defies zero-sum notions of control” in any case, with cities and district centres under government authority, surrounded by the Taliban. “An hour’s drive in any direction from Kabul will put you in Taliban territory”.

Taliban leaders tell Jackson that the group is looking for a peace deal not a battlefield victory, and the new approach of governance seems to reflect that. That is not to suggest that the group has somehow gone pacifist, as a quick glance at newspaper headlines for October makes clear: “Taliban assassinate Afghan police chief”, Taliban attack kills 17 soldiers,” “On 17th anniversary of US invasion 54 are killed across Afghanistan”.

The Taliban are not the centralised organisation that they were during the 2001 US/NATO invasion. The US targeted Taliban primary and secondary leaders – Mansour was killed by an American drone strike in 2016 – and the group’s policies may vary from place to place depending who is in charge.

In Helmand in the south, where the Taliban control 85 percent of the province, the group cut a deal with the local government to open schools and protect the staff. Some 33 schools have been re-opened.

In many ways there is an alignment of stars right now, because most of the major players inside and outside Afghanistan have some common interests. The problem is that the Trump administration sees some of those players as competitors, if not outright opponents.

The Afghans are exhausted, and one sign of that is how easy it has been for Taliban and local government officials to work together. While the Taliban can still overrun checkpoints and small bases, US firepower makes taking cities prohibitively expensive. At the same time the US has dialed down its counterinsurgency strategy, and, along with government forces, re-

deployed to defend urban areas.

The Taliban and the Kabul government also have a common enemy, the Islamic State (IS), which, while not a major player yet, is expanding. The growth of the IS and other Islamic insurgent groups is a major concern for other countries in the region, in particular those that share a border with Afghanistan: Iran, Russia, China and Pakistan.

But this is where things get tricky and where no alignment of stars may be able to bring all these countries into convergence.

Pakistan, China, Iran and Russia are already conferring on joint strategies to bring the Afghan war to a conclusion and deepen regional cooperation around confronting terrorism. China is concerned with separatists and Islamic insurgents in its western provinces. Russia is worried about the spread of the IS into the Caucasus region. Iran is fighting separatists on its southern border, and Pakistan is warring with the IS and its home-grown Taliban. And none of these countries are comfortable with the US on their borders,

Russia, China and Pakistan are members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and Iran has applied to join. The SCO consults on issues around trade and energy, but also security. While India is also a member, its relationship to Afghanistan is coloured by its competition with Pakistan and China. New Delhi has border issues with China and has fought three wars with Pakistan over Kashmir, but it, too, is worried about terrorism.

One incentive to peace would be a hefty aid and reconstruction package

All of these countries have been discussing what to do about ending the war and getting a handle on regional terrorism.

A path to end the war might look like this:

First, a ceasefire in Afghanistan between the Taliban and the Kabul government and a pull back of American troops. The argument that if the US withdraw, the Kabul government would collapse and the Taliban take over as they did

CONN HALLINAN

during the civil war in 1998 is really no longer valid. Things are very different locally, regionally and internationally than they were two decades ago.

The Taliban and the Kabul government know neither can defeat the other, and the regional players want an end to a war that fuels the kind of terrorism that keeps them all up at night.

The SCO could agree to guarantee the ceasefire, and, under the auspices of the United Nations, arrange for peace talks. In part this is already underway since the Americans are talking to the Taliban, although Washington raised some hackles in Kabul by doing so in secret. Transparency in these negotiations is essential.

One incentive would be a hefty aid and reconstruction package.

There are a number of thorny issues. What about the constitution? The Taliban had no say in drawing it up and are unlikely to accept it as it is. What about women's right to education and employment? The Taliban say they now support these, but that hasn't always been the case in areas where the group dominates.

All this will require the cooperation of the Trump administration, and there's the rub.

If one can believe Bob Woodward's book *Fear*, Trump wants out and the US military and the CIA are trying to cut their losses. As one CIA official told Woodward, Afghanistan is not just the grave of empires, it's the grave of careers.

However, Washington has all but declared war on Iran, is in hostile standoffs with Russia and China, and recently cut military aid to Pakistan for being "soft of terrorism". In short, landmines and ambushes riddle the political landscape.

But the stars are in alignment if each player acts in its own self-interest to bring an end to the bloodshed and horrors this war has visited on the Afghan people.

If all this falls apart, however, next year will have a grim marker: some young Marine will step on a pressure plate in a tiny rural hamlet, or get ambushed in a rocky pass, and come home in an aluminium casket from a war that began before he or she was born.

CT

Conn Hallinan can be read at
www.dispatchesfromtheedgeblog.wordpress.com
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Photographs: Nathan Benn, from A Peculiar Paradise: Florida Photographs (powerHouse Books)





Gaterland, St. Augustine.

NATHAN BENN



Visitor parking at Kennedy Space Center, Cape Canaveral.

'Gators, corpses, refugees – and Mar-a-laga

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Photographic love letter shows the changing face of Florida during the 1980s

THE high spot of Nathan Benn's 20-year career with *National Geographic* magazine came in September 1981, when the photographer presented a 100-picture distillation of 15,000 images at a meeting to assess a project he had been working on about his home state of Florida.

"Bill Garrett, then the magazine's top editor, was fascinated. ... He was ecstatic, gushing that it was the best state story ever. He told the group to devote an entire issue to the Florida story with my pictures. It was the greatest moment of satisfaction in my career," writes Benn in his delight-

A PECULIAR PARADISE
Florida Photographs

Nathan Benn

Published by powerHouse
www.powerhousebooks.com

\$31.42 ([amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com))

NATHAN BENN



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Spaceship Earth at Disney Epcot, Orlando.

ful photomemoir, *A Peculiar Paradise: Florida Photographs*.

Most of the images, says Benn, “were standard-fare geography, industry and culture. However, he adds, “Perhaps 20 photographs covered hard-edged issues, including drought-stricken lakebeds, boatloads of Haitian refugees, small-time drug dealers, and a picture of a cocaine war victim’s torso in Biscayne Bay.”

A few weeks later, Benn’s bubble of euphoria burst when “Tom Smith, the ‘anti-Art Director’, called me into his office. He wasn’t happy. ‘The editor hates your Florida pictures. There are only so many pictures we can use of cut-up bodies’, he shrieked in his assessment of my Florida images.” The project was scrapped.

If you’re interested in the macabre, the cut-up body that caused the feature



Tourists with mascot at Kennedy Space Center, Cape Canaveral.

NATHAN BENN



Wet T-shirt contest, The Button, Spring Break, Fort Lauderdale



Eli and Helen Fricklas of Brooklyn practice yoga in Lummus Park, Miami Beach.

Photographs: Nathan Benn, from *A Peculiar Paradise: Florida Photographs* (powerHouse Books)

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to be canned is featured in *A Peculiar Paradise*. But if body parts are not your bag, don't let that image be a deterrent, for this is one of the most eloquent and joyful photo books of the year – a love letter to the Sunshine State.

A *Peculiar Paradise* shows Florida at the dawn of the 1980s, a time when its only true constant was change. Although some parts of the region rested, staid and satisfied, like the state's alligators, other areas became hotbeds for the narcotics trade and a hub for Caribbean and South American immigration. This increasing cultural diversity, and the state's innate peculiarity, is captured by Benn, who displays the keen sense of an anthropologist and the glint-in-the-eye

NATHAN BENN



A Drug Enforcement Administration officer on a raid into the house of small-time drug dealer in Miami.

of a knowledgeable local.

Photographs and narrative are organised into segments covering manifestations of extreme wealth (including interior shots of the vulgar-oppulant Mar-a-Laga, built by breakfast-cereal magnate Marjorie Merriweather Post in the early 1930, and now owned by Donald Trump, Little Havana, illegal Caribbean immigration, elderly citizens, quirky flora and fauna, high and low nightlife, Dundee's 5th Street Gym, and the deadly narcotics war.

In the commentary accompanying each chapter, Benn reveals the development of his career, and provides insights into life at *National Geographic* during massive internal management conflict. **CT**



Humberto Alvarado teaches guerilla tactics at Alpha 66 training camp, dedicated to the overthrow of the Castro regime. Homestead, 1981

NATHAN BENN



Majordomo Frank Moffat and staff, Mara-a-Laga, Palm Beach, 1981

Photographs: Nathan Benn, from *A Peculiar Paradise: Florida Photographs* [powerHouse Books]

The Cold War is getting colder

The US-NATO military alliance is preparing for war in the Arctic, and is deliberately provoking Russia by conducting massive hi-tech manoeuvres ever-closer to its borders

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BRITAIN'S *Daily Mail* newspaper is a strident rag that is bought daily by more than a million people who agree with its stance that most foreigners are inferior to Brits. Two years ago the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance reported that the *Mail* and some other papers indulged in “offensive, discriminatory and provocative terminology”, and the Commission’s chairman observed that “the Brexit referendum seems to have led to a further rise in ‘anti-foreigner’ sentiment”.

The *Mail* knows its readers and tells them what they want to hear, and one of its targets is Russia, which it regularly maligns and berates.

On October 23, a main story noted approvingly that on October 25 “some 50,000 troops will kick off NATO’s biggest military exercises since the Cold War in Norway, a massive show of force that has already rankled neighbouring Russia. Trident Juncture 18, which runs until November 7, is aimed at training the Alliance to mobilise quickly to defend an ally under attack.”

The US 6th Fleet stated that among other major deployments for the manoeuvres, the aircraft carrier Harry S Truman and guided missile destroyers of the Eighth Carrier Strike Group moved in to dominate the Norwegian Sea for the first time since 1991.

According to US Air Forces Europe, Trident Juncture is partially funded by the European Deterrence Initiative, and US F-16 strike aircraft and KC-135 Stratotankers have deployed to oper-

ate from an air base in neutral, non-NATO Sweden. This all fits in with the British government’s line that Russia is a threat to the United Kingdom, which is a farcical contention, but serves to whip up the patriotic fervour that wins votes and sells newspapers.

In June 2018 London’s *Sun* newspaper carried the headline “Britain will send RAF Typhoon fighter jets to Iceland in bid to tackle Russian aggression” and since then the UK’s defence minister, Gavin Williamson, has maintained that “the Kremlin continues to challenge us in every domain”. (Williamson is the man who declared in March 2018 that “Frankly Russia should go away – it should shut up,” which was one of the most juvenile public utterances of recent years.)

It was reported on September 29 that Williamson was concerned about “growing Russian aggression ‘in our back yard’,” and that the government was drawing up a “defence Arctic strategy” with 800 commandos being deployed to a new base in Norway. In an interview, “Mr Williamson highlighted Russia’s re-opening of Soviet-era bases and ‘increased tempo’ of submarine activity as evidence that Britain needed to ‘demonstrate we’re there’ and ‘protect our interests’.”

Mr Williamson has not indicated what “interests” the United Kingdom could have in the Arctic region, where it has no territory.

The eight countries with territory north of the Arctic Circle are Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the

BRIAN CLOUGHLEY

United States. They have legitimate interests in the region which is twice the area of the US and Canada combined. But Britain has not one single claim to the Arctic. Not even a tenuous one like Iceland's, which is based on the fact that the Arctic Circle passes through Grimsey Island, about 25 kilometres north of Iceland's north coast. Britain's Shetland Islands, its northernmost land, are 713 kilometres (443 miles) south of the Arctic Circle.

So why does the UK declare that it has "interests" in the Arctic and that the region is "in our back yard"? How can it possibly feel threatened?

The Arctic Institute observed in February 2018 that Russia's "newer Arctic strategy papers focus on preventing smuggling, terrorism, and illegal immigration instead of balancing military power with NATO. These priorities suggest that Russia's security aims in the Arctic have to do with safeguarding the Arctic as a strategic resource base. ... In general, the government-approved documents seem to have moved from an assertive tone that highlights Russia's rivalry with NATO to a less abrasive tone based on securing economic development".

And economic development is what it's all about. On September 28 it was reported that "a Danish-flagged cargo ship successfully passed through the Russian Arctic in a trial voyage showing that melting sea ice could potentially open a new trade route from Europe to east Asia". It is obviously in the best economic interests of the European Union and Russia that the route be developed for commercial transit. To do this requires avoidance of conflict in the region.

So what's your problem, Defence Minister Williamson?

In January, China described its Arctic strategy, "pledging to work more closely with Moscow in particular to create an Arctic maritime counterpart – a 'Polar Silk Road' – to its 'one belt, one road' overland trade route to Europe. Both the Kremlin and Beijing have repeatedly stated that their ambitions are primarily commercial and environmental, not military". It couldn't be plainer that Russia and China want the Arctic to be a profitable mercantile trade route, while con-

tinuing exploration for oil, gas and mineral deposits.

As pointed out by Sabena Siddiqi in the *Asian Times*, "Having a major stake in the Yamal liquefied natural gas project in Russia, which would supply nearly four million tonnes of LNG per annum, development of these regions makes sense for China as well, and its interests converge with Russia's. Once the Arctic route is fully operational, the Yamal project can double Russia's share of the global LNG market. The Arctic thawing has also given Russia greater access to minerals and other valuable resources in this region".

Guess who doesn't want Russia and China to prosper?

To develop the Arctic requires peace and stability. It would be impossible to reap the benefits of the new sea-route and potentially enormous energy and mineral riches if there were to be conflict. It is obviously in the best interests of Russia and China that there be tranquility rather than military confrontation.

But Britain's Defence Minister insists there must be a military build-up by the UK in the Arctic, "if we want to be protecting our interests in what is effectively our own back yard". He is backed by the Parliament's Defence Committee which states that "NATO's renewed focus on the North Atlantic is welcome and the Government should be congratulated on the leadership the UK has shown on this issue".

NATO is always on the lookout for excuses to indulge in military action (such as the nine-month aerial blitz that destroyed Libya), and its Arctic-focused Trident Juncture is yet another confrontational military fandango designed to ramp up tension.

The US-NATO military alliance is preparing for war in the Arctic, and is deliberately provoking Russia by conducting massive hi-tech manoeuvres ever-closer to its borders. But the Pentagon and its sub-office in Brussels had better be very careful.

CT

Brian Cloughley writes about foreign policy and military affairs. He lives in Vourenay sur Cure, France. This article was originally published by www.greanvillepost.com

Hating Muslims in the age of Trump

The new Islamophobia looks very much like the old McCarthyism

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THESE days, our global political alliances seem to shift with remarkable rapidity, as if we were actually living in George Orwell's *1984*. Are we at war this month with Oceania? Or is it Eastasia? In that novel, the Party is able to erase history, sending old newspaper articles down the Ministry of Truth's "memory hole" and so ensuring that, in the public mind, the enemy of the moment was always the enemy. Today, there is one constant, though. The Trump administration has made Muslims our enemy of the first order and, in its Islamophobia, is reinforced by an ugly resurgence of fascism in Germany, Italy, Hungary, and other European countries.

It's hard today even to imagine that, in the late 1980s, the rightwing *Christian Voice Magazine* published a "candidate's biblical scoreboard", urging its readers (and potential voters) to rate their politicians by how "biblically" they cast their ballots in Congress. One key measure of this: Did that legislator support the anti-Communist Muslim jihadis in Afghanistan, a cause warmly supported by evangelist Pat Robertson in his 1988 presidential campaign? Now, attempting to appeal to 21st-century evangelicals, President Trump has announced that "Islam hates us".

The kaleidoscope of geopolitics and Islamophobia is now spinning so fast that it should make our heads spin, too. At times, it seems as if Donald Trump is the anti-Ronald Reagan of the twenty-first century, idolising former KGB oper-

ative Vladimir Putin, but seeing former US allies in the Muslim world like Pakistan as purveyors of "nothing but lies and deceit" – until, that is, with bewildering rapidity, he suddenly gives us the "good" (that is, oil-rich) Muslims again, willingly performing a sword dance with the Saudi royals, seemingly entirely comfortable with the scimitar of the Saracen.

While the president oscillates between abusing and fawning over the elites of the Muslim world, his true opprobrium is reserved for the poor and helpless. His hatred of refugees uprooted by the horrific Syrian civil war, for instance, stems from his conviction that this population (predominantly women and children, as well as some men fleeing the fighting) might actually be adherents of the so-called Islamic State group (also known as ISIL, ISIS, or Daesh) and so part of the building of a secretive paramilitary force in the West. He's even speculated that "this could be one of the great tactical ploys of all time. A 200,000-man army, maybe".

*Trump's true opprobrium
is reserved for the poor and
the helpless*

This summer, he also tweeted: "Crime in Germany is way up. Big mistake made all over Europe in allowing millions of people in who have so strongly and violently changed their culture!" And a day later claimed it had risen by 10 percent. Though immigrant communities can in-

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deed produce some crime until they find their footing, the crime rate in Germany, despite the welcoming of two million immigrants in 2015 alone, has fallen to a 30-year low, as have crimes by non-German nationals.

Nor, of course, is there an army of terrorists the size of the active-duty forces of France or Italy among those hapless Syrian refugees. Still, that outlandish conspiracy theory may be part of what lay behind the president's blatantly unconstitutional 2015 call for a "total and complete shut-down" of Muslims coming to the United States. Consider it a great irony, then, that some significant part of the turmoil in the greater Middle East that helped provoke waves of refugees and an Islamophobic backlash here and in Europe was, at least in part, the creation of this country, not Muslim fundamentalist madmen.

The Islamophobes like to argue that Islam is an inherently violent religion, that its adherents are quite literally commanded to such violence by its holy scriptures, the Qur'an. It's a position that, as I explain in my new book, *Muhammad: Prophet of Peace Amid the Clash of Empires*, is both utterly false and ahistorical. As it happens, you would have to look to far more recent realities to find the impetus for the violence, failed states, and spreading terror groups in today's Greater Middle East. Start with the Reagan administration's decision to deploy rag-tag bands of Muslim extremists (which al-Qaeda was first formed to support) against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s. That set in motion massive turmoil still roiling that country, neighbouring Pakistan, and beyond, decades after the fall of the Soviet Union.

Of course, al-Qaeda notoriously blew back on America. Its September 11, 2001, attacks on New York and Washington were then used by American neoconservatives in the administration of George W. Bush – some of whom had served in



the Reagan years, cheering on the American-backed Afghan fundamentalists, as well as their Arab allies – to set the United States on a permanent war footing in the Muslim world. The 2003 invasion of Iraq, promoted on the false pretext that Saddam Hussein's government supported al-Qaeda, kicked off a set of guerrilla insurgencies and provoked a Sunni-Shiite civil war that spread in the region.

Hundreds of thousands would die and at least four-million people, including staggering numbers of children, would

be displaced over the years thanks to George W. Bush's boondoggle. The al-Qaeda franchise ISIL (formed initially as al-Qaeda in Iraq in the wake of the US invasion) arose to expel American troops there. Ultimately, its militants made inroads in neighbouring Syria in 2011 and 2012 and the US allowed them to grow in hopes of putting pressure on the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad.

As is now all too clear, such policies created millions of refugees, some of whom streamed towards Europe, only to be greeted by a rising tide of white Christian bigotry and neo-Nazism. There's no way to measure the degree to which America's wars across the Greater Middle East and North Africa have, in fact, changed our world. When, for instance, British Prime Minister Tony Blair signed on to Bush's illegal invasion and occupation of Iraq, how could he have foreseen that he was helping set off events that would result in a British withdrawal from the European Union (a decision in which anti-immigrant sentiment played an outsized role) – and so the diminishment of his country?

Having helped spread extremism and set in motion massive population displacements, Western elites then developed a profound fear of the millions of refugees they had helped chase out of

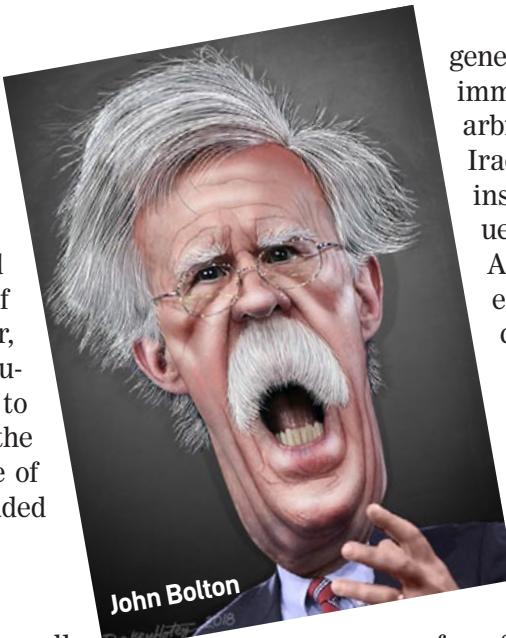
the Middle East. Executive Order 13769, President Trump's abrupt January 2017 visa ban, which created chaos at American airports and provoked widespread protests and court challenges – many of its elements were, however, ultimately upheld by the Supreme Court – appears to have been premised on the notion that a Trojan Horse of Muslim extremism was headed for American shores.

In reality, the relatively small number of terrorist attacks here by Muslim-Americans (covered so much more intensively than the more common mass shootings by white nationalists) have most often been carried out by “lone wolves” who “self-radicalised” on the Internet and who, had they been white, would simply have been viewed as mentally unbalanced.

Still, realities of that sort don't make a dent in the president's agenda. In 2018, the Trump administration will likely only admit about 20,000 refugees, far less than last year's 45,000, thanks to administration demands that the FBI carry out “extreme vetting” of all applicants without being given any extra resources to do so. Of the refugees admitted in the first half of this year, only about one in six was a Muslim, while in 2016, when 84,995 refugees were admitted, they were equally divided between Christians and Muslims.

On average, the US still admits a little more than a million immigrants annually, of which refugees are a small (and decreasing) proportion. Since 2010, more immigrants have come from Asia than any other area, some 45 percent of them with college degrees, which means that Trump's very image of immigrants is wrong.

His ban on immigrants from five Muslim-majority countries (Iran, Syria, Libya, Yemen, and Somalia) was largely symbolic, since they were



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generally not sources of significant immigration. It was also remarkably arbitrary, since it did not include Iraq or Afghanistan, where violent insurgencies and turmoil continue but whose governments host American troops. It does, however, include the relatively peaceful country of Iran.

Trump's Muslim ban has broken up families, even as it harmed American businesses and universities whose employees (or in the case of colleges, students) have been abruptly barred from the country. The restrictions on immigration from Syria and Yemen are particularly cruel, since those lands face the most extreme humanitarian crises on the planet and the United States has been deeply implicated in the violence in both of them. Moreover, Iranians who do emigrate to the US are, for the most part, members of minorities or political dissidents. In fact, no nationals from any of those five banned states have committed lethal acts of terrorism in the United States in the last 40 years.

Attacks on Muslim-Americans have spiked back to 2001 levels

The Islamophobia of President Trump, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, National Security Advisor John Bolton, and others in the administration, aided and abetted by the megaphone that Rupert Murdoch's Fox News offers, has had a distinct impact on public opinion. Attacks on Muslim-Americans have, for instance, spiked back to 2001 levels. A recent poll found that some 16 percent of Americans want to deny the vote to Muslim-Americans, 47 percent support Trump's visa restrictions, and a majority would like all mosques to be kept under surveillance. (A frequent, if completely false, talking point of the Islamophobes is that Muslims here have a single ideology and are focused on a secret plan to take over the United States.) You undoubt-

edly won't be surprised to learn that such unhinged conspiracy theories are far more prevalent among Republicans than Democrats and independents.

Similarly unsurprising is the fact that Americans in the Trump era give a lower favourability rating to Muslim-Americans (a little over 1 percent of the US population) than to virtually any other religious or ethnic group (though feminists and evangelicals are runners-up). By a spread of about 20 points, they believe that Muslim-Americans are both more religious than Christian Americans and less likely to respect the country's ideals and laws. They slam Muslims for acceding women and gays low status, though a majority of Muslim-Americans say that homosexuals should be accepted in society, a belief that Muslim-American women hold in the same percentages as the rest of the American public. As for those women, they are among the best educated of any faith group in the country, suggesting extremely supportive families.

In reality, Muslim-Americans are remarkably well integrated into this country and have committed little terrorism here. In the past decade and a half, on average, 28 Muslim-Americans a year were associated with acts of violent extremism out of a population of 3.5-million and most of those "acts" involved travelling abroad to join radical movements. Muslim-American extremists killed 17 people in 2017, a year in which white gunmen killed 267 Americans in mass shootings.

A modernised version of the rabidly anti-Communist McCarthyism of the 1950s

The Islamophobia that Donald Trump has made his own arose in the decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union, once the bogeyman of Communism was removed from the quiver of the American Right. The 1990s were hard on the Republican Party and its plutocrats (with a popular Clinton in the White House), and on the arms manufacturers facing a public increasingly uninterested in foreign adventurism with no sense of threat from abroad. The Pentagon budget was

even briefly cut in those years, producing what was then called a "peace dividend". (It wasn't.) And though it's now hard to imagine, in 1995 the United States was not involved in a conventional hot war anywhere in the world.

In this no-longer-so-new century, the Republican Party, like the Trump presidency, did, however, find the bogeyman it needed and it looks remarkably like a modernised version of the rabidly anti-Communist McCarthyism of the 1950s. In fact, the endless demonisation of Muslims may be less a cudgel to wield against the small Muslim-American community than against Democratic opponents who can be lambasted as "soft on terrorism" if they resist demands to demonise Muslims and their religion.

In my own state of Michigan, Elissa Slotkin, an acting assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs in the Obama years and a former CIA analyst, is running as a Democrat in the 8th District against Congressman Mike Bishop. Slotkin played a role in developing the anti-ISIL strategies that Trump adopted when he came into office. Nonetheless, our airwaves are now saturated with pro-Bishop ads smearing Slotkin, a third-generation Michigander, for her supposed involvement in President Obama's Iran nuclear deal and so for being little short of a Shiite terrorist herself. Similarly, in San Diego, California's 50th district, the scandal-ridden campaign of Republican Congressman Duncan Hunter (indicted for embezzling \$250,000 in campaign funds) continues to broadly intimate that his opponent, Ammar Campa-Najjar, a Christian American of Palestinian and Mexican descent, is a Muslim Brotherhood infiltrator seeking to enter Congress.

Still, despite all the sound and fury from the White House, the US Muslim population continues to grow because of immigration and natural increase. Over the past 30 years, between 3,000 and 13,000 immigrants have arrived annually from Egypt, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Turkey, and a handful of other countries. Their governments are close geopolitical allies of the US and to interdict their nationals would be

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politically embarrassing, as Trump discovered when he attempted to include Iraq on his list of banned countries and was persuaded to change his mind by Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis.

Of course, not all Americans share Trump's bigotry. Two-thirds of us actually disapprove of politicians engaging in hate speech toward Muslims. Some 55 percent of us believe that Muslim-Americans are committed to the welfare of the country, a statistic that would break the 60 percent mark if it weren't for evangelicals. Two Muslim-American politicians, Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar, won Democratic primaries in Detroit and Minneapolis and so are poised to become the first Muslim-American women in the House of Representatives.

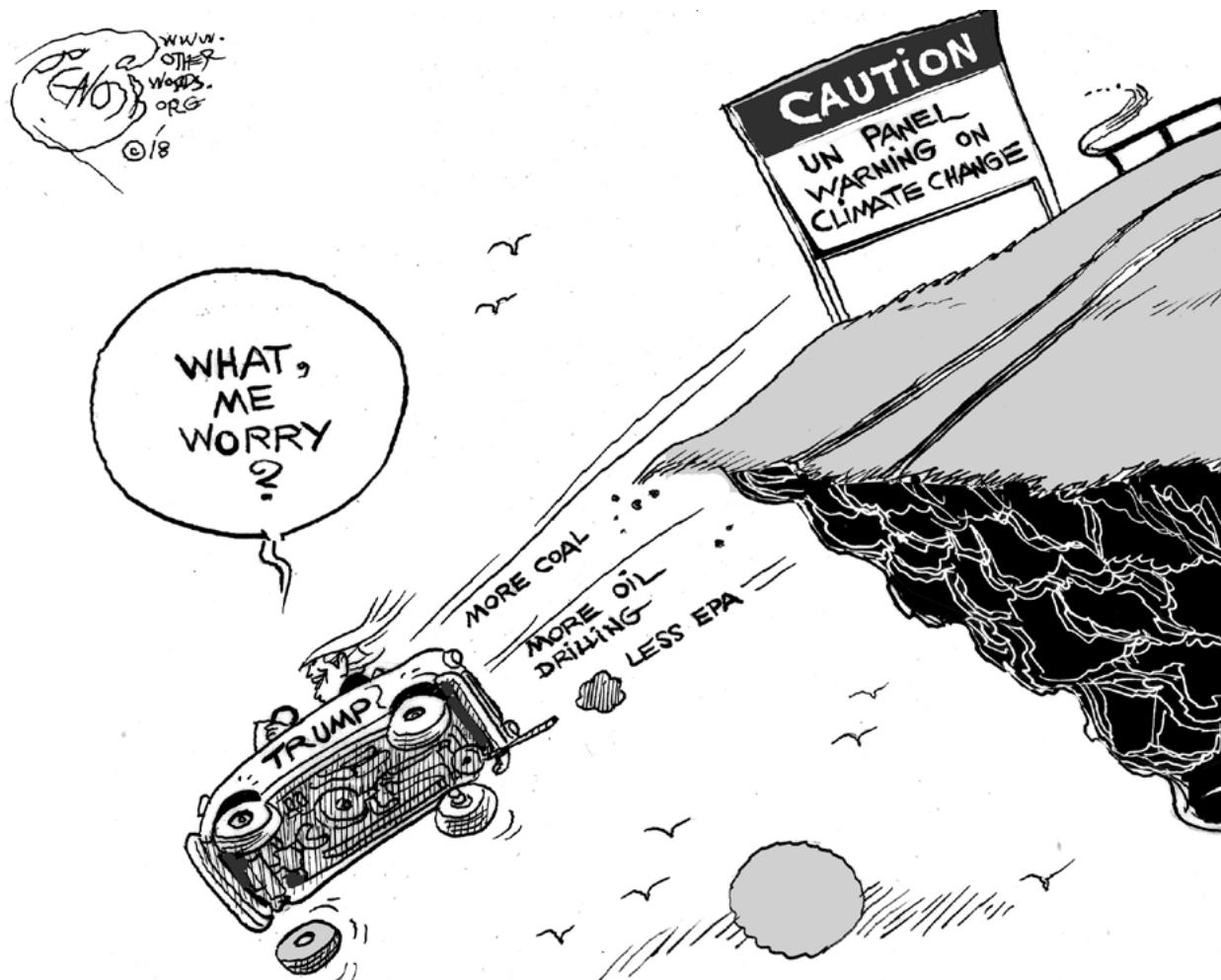
Such an outcome would be one way in which Americans could begin to reply to the wave of Islamophobia that helped lift Donald Trump into office in 2016 and has only intensified since then. The decency of Middle America has certainly been tarnished, but as the polls indicate, not lost. Not yet anyway. **CT**

Juan Cole is collegiate professor of history at the University of Michigan. He runs a news and commentary webzine on US foreign policy and progressive politics, *Informed Comment*. His new book, *Muhammad: Prophet of Peace Amid the Clash of Empires* (Nation Books), has just been published. This essay was first published at www.tomdispatch.com

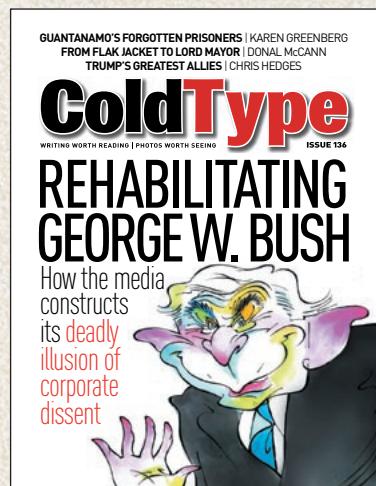
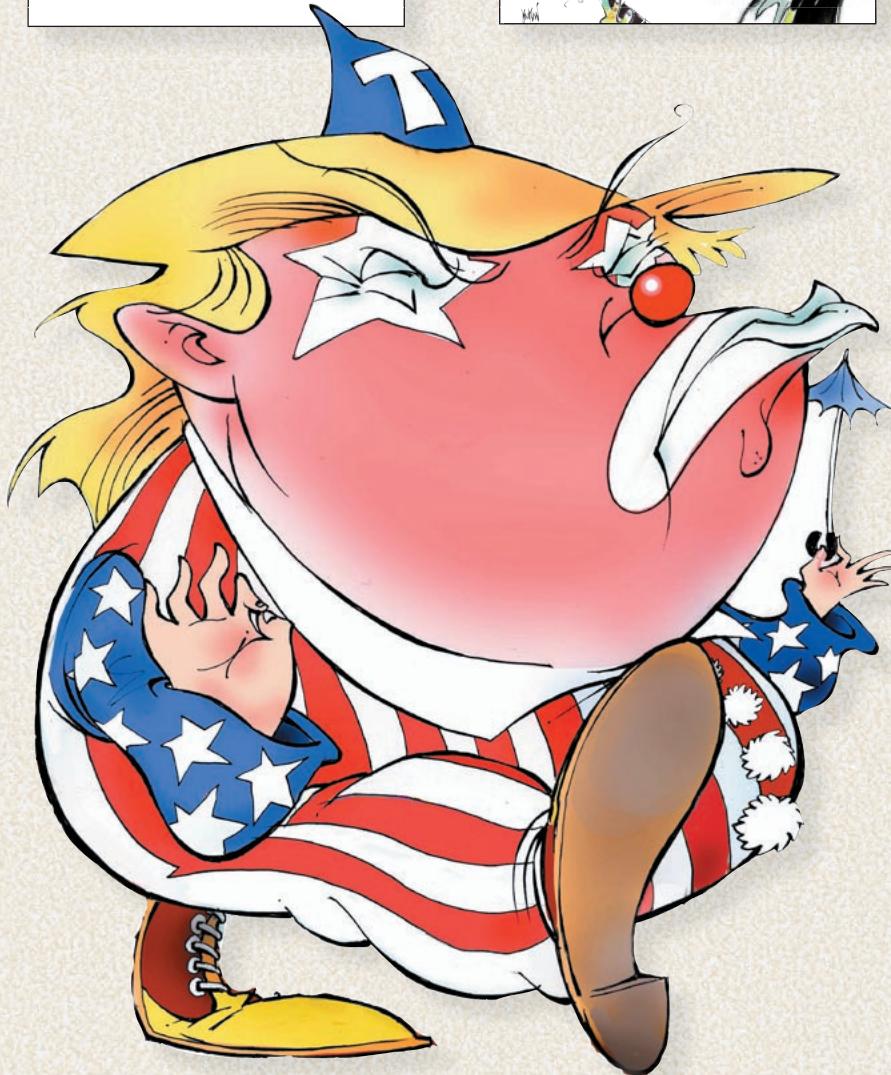
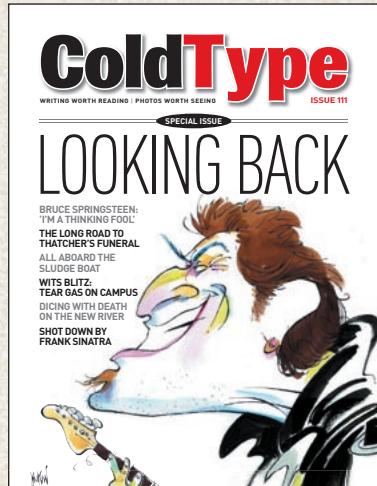
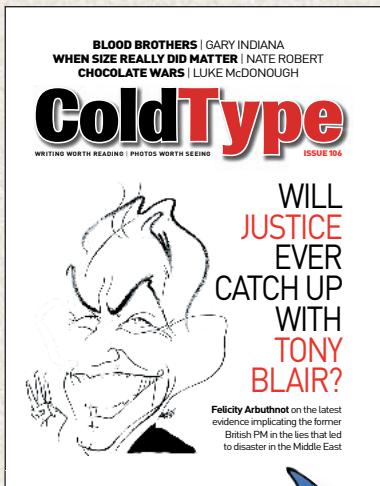
BENDIB'S WORLD

Khalil Bendib (www.otherwords.org)

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CATCH THE READER'S EYE



ART BY ANTHONY JENKINS

jenkinsdraws@sympatico.ca / www.jenkinsdraws.com

From Peterloo to Orgreave

Anniversaries remind us of the parallels between two infamous attempts by British state to squash workers' protests

OCTOBER 31 marked the second anniversary of former Home Secretary Amber Rudd's decision to reject a public inquiry into policing at Orgreave on June 18, 1984, during the UK miners' strike.

We now know that in the 16 months between Theresa May, as Home Secretary, inviting a submission in June, 2015 from the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign (OTJC) for a public inquiry, and her successor Amber Rudd rejecting it in on October 31, 2016, the Home Office did not consider the police files or trial transcripts – the actual facts of what happened.

Instead, they looked only at the original Thatcher government files from 1984 and 1985. It was after considering them, and what they revealed about that Conservative government's actions, that they decided against an inquiry. They wanted to bury inconvenient truths.

Amber Rudd's reasons for rejecting an inquiry were that any review would be hampered by the passage of time, that some of those involved had died and that – in terms of accountability – most officers whose conduct might be examined were no longer employed by the police. She also made the "difficult decision" because "ultimately there were no deaths or wrongful convictions" resulting from the conduct of South Yorkshire Police at the time.

But if Rudd or – after her ignominious departure over her handling of the Windrush scandal – her successor, Sajid Javid, think the matter is closed they are so wrong. Indeed the decision to

block an inquiry galvanised the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign (OTJC), and it has stepped up its protests and increased its public profile since then.

Next year will be the 35th anniversary of Orgreave, the setting for the most violent assault by police during an industrial dispute. But it is also the 200th anniversary of another infamous deployment of the forces of the state to squash popular protest – the Peterloo Massacre. There are many parallels between the two events ...

■ THE huge crowd, estimated at 60,000 people, which assembled in St Peter's Fields, Manchester on August 16, 1819 was peaceful and good humoured, and the weather was bright and sunny. But the authorities were fearful of such a display of political protest. The French Revolution was well within living memory. And after the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 there had been a series of uprisings and localised violence, mainly about food and living conditions in the years of shortages and unemployment that followed. Luddites had also broken machinery in mills across the country.

In Manchester, to counter these perceived threats, those opposed to reform had created the Manchester Yeomanry in 1817, and more than 1,500 soldiers, including 340 regular cavalry from the 15th Hussars, were deployed on that fateful day.

■ FAST forward to June 18, 1984 as miners

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CRUSHING DISSENT: Contemporary engraving shows the attack on civilians at the Peterloo massacre of 1819.

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dressed in summer attire assemble at Orgreave. Thatcher's biographer Charles Moore records how she summoned then Home Secretary Willie Whitelaw immediately on taking office in 1979 and said, "The last Conservative government was destroyed by the miners' strike. We'll have another and we'll win". Thatcher sought to avenge the miners' victories of 1972 and 1974 and prepared meticulously for what she saw as a crucial test of her power. In the 1980s the police were politicised, trained in aggressive riot control techniques and were transformed into blunt instruments to confront workers in industrial disputes. It was in this context that the police were encouraged to dehumanise striking miners, and the brutal assault on the miners assembled at Orgreave by para-military police units was the consequence.

■ TROOPS sent in to disperse the St Peter's Fields crowd acted so aggressively that 18 people were killed and more than 650 injured

in the bloodiest political clash in British history. In the face of these facts, the authorities claimed the troops had been attacked first with stones and cudgels. The government and its press trumpeted their conviction that the threat of revolution had been averted and moved to repress the unstamped, radical press, rushing through the Six Acts in December 1819 which extended the government's powers to control meetings, and prosecute newspapers for seditious libel.

The term "Peterloo Massacre" was coined by a local journalist, James Wroe, in punning reference to the Battle of Waterloo four years earlier. Wroe paid for this when his radical newspaper, the *Manchester Observer*, was closed down and he was sentenced to a year's imprisonment for seditious libel.

■ THE defeat of the miners and their return to work on March 5, 1985 had enormous repercussions, with Thatcher embarking on widespread

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privatisation of public utilities. She and a group of Tories around her were contemptuous of trade unions and were prepared to use the powers of the state to destroy them. The defeat of the miners enabled her to introduce repressive trade union legislation which allowed the government to sequester union funds, limit trade union solidarity and restrict the numbers of trade unionists picketing at any one time.

■ LORD Sidmouth, Home Secretary from 1812 to 1822, was renowned for his ruthless and efficient crackdown on dissent. He used undercover spies to gain intelligence about subversive activities and, fearful of insurrection, guaranteed that the civic authorities could rely on parliament to indemnify them if violence did break out.

■ GOVERNMENT papers released in 2014 revealed there was active “security service monitoring” of the year-long miners’ strike. They reveal that surveillance was partly used to track down money belonging to the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). The money had been hidden in bank accounts overseas to prevent its seizure by British courts. Phone tapping of NUM officials was also extensive. Seumas Milne, author of *The Enemy Within*, is clear: “Under the prime minister’s guidance, MI5, police Special Branch, GCHQ and the NSA were mobilised not only to spy on the NUM on an industrial scale, but to employ agents provocateurs at the highest level of the union, dirty tricks, slush funds, false allegations, forgeries, phoney cash deposits and multiple secretly sponsored legal actions to break the defence of the mining communities”.

But the full extent of this involvement is not known. Government papers dealing with security and policing were excluded from the Cabinet papers released in 2014.

■ In the days after Peterloo, those who had orchestrated the bloody outcome celebrated. The Prince Regent sent a message recording his “great satisfaction at their prompt, decisive and efficient measures for the preservation of the

public tranquillity”. The Manchester authorities invited selected supporters to a private meeting at the police office to offer a vote of thanks to the military: “The yeomanry had merited the entire approbation of all the respectable inhabitants of this large and populous town”.

■ DAYS after the miners’ strike ended, on March 27 1985, the government invited police chief constables to the Home Office for celebratory drinks. The reception was explained in two notes to Thatcher. Chief constables generally, and in particular those for Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire, made a very considerable contribution to resisting mob rule during the strike”, the first one said, “and you might think it appropriate to say so in person”.

Then, the day before the gathering, Thatcher was reminded: ?You are looking in tomorrow ... for half an hour at the drinks given by the home secretary for chief constables. The idea is for you and Mr Brittan to have an opportunity to say thank you for all the police did during the miners’ strike”.

On the list of those attending, from 14 different forces, were Peter Wright and Tony Clement from South Yorkshire police, the force which had coordinated the assault on miners at Orgreave, fabricated evidence against miners arrested that day and charged many of them with riot.

Mike Leigh’s new film *Peterloo* and events commemorating the event in 2019 will provide people with a powerful understanding of the way the state can use force to suppress dissent and protest. We hope it will lead people to support the work of the OTJC to get truth and justice for those miners bruised, battered, arrested and falsely accused at Orgreave. **GT**

Granville Williams is co-ordinator of Campaign for Press & Broadcasting Freedom (NORTH) and an active member of the OTJC. His books include *Settling Scores: The Media, the Police and the Miners' Strike*. You can find out more about the OTJC at www.otjc.org.uk

ColdType Insights

● CAITLIN JOHNSTONE
● RUSSELL HARGRAVE
● JOHN W. WHITEHEAD
● LINDA McQUAIG
● PAUL ARMENTANO



Stop listening to the screens that rule us

At last, we're being startled out of a very long and horrible nightmare, writes **Caitlin Johnstone**

WE are surrounded by screens full of voices that are always lying to us, and experts wonder why we're so crazy and miserable all the time.

The screens tell us, "This is a perfectly normal and sane way of doing things. It is perfectly normal and sane to strip the earth bare and poison the air and the water in an economic system which requires infinite growth on a finite

planet. People who say otherwise are raving lunatics!" And the social engineers wonder why there's increasing disaffection and alienation among the populace.

The screens tell us, "Just spend your time in this world turning the gears of the machine and you will be happy. The machine is your friend. The machine takes care of you. Work hard pulling its levers and greasing its cogs until you are

old and you will gain satisfaction," and then they wonder why we're all gobbling up antidepressants like candy.

The screens tell us, "We need to drop explosives on Nation X because they need Freedom and Democracy. We know we said that about Nation Y and Nation Z and that went terribly wrong, but that's because it wasn't managed properly. Trust that it is good and proper for the citizens of Nation X to be killed with bombs and bullets", and then they wonder why people keep snapping and committing mass shootings.

The screens tell us, "You are crazy and stupid if you want a functioning healthcare system. Are you trying to put our billionaires and military out of business?" and then they wonder why people are becoming paranoid and angry.

The screens tell us, "Look at that gibbering maniac trying to get a third party up and running in the most powerful nation in the world! Only someone who is deeply awful and defective would believe that the two party system isn't serving us", and they wonder why everyone feels disempowered and unheard.

The screens tell us, "Of course this is the way things are; it's the only way things could ever be. Anyone who would try to change any part of this is

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either mentally ill or a Russian propagandist", and they wonder why people shut down and numb themselves with opiates.

The screens tell us, "Everything is great. Everyone is doing fine. Everyone is happy. Look how happy everyone is on this sitcom. If you aren't happy like that, it's not because of the machine, it's because of you. People need to be protected from your insanity. You mustn't be allowed on any screens. You need to be silenced on social media. Trust us. Don't trust yourself. Don't trust that growing, gnawing sense that everything is fake and everything you've been taught is a lie. We have never lied to you. We have never been caught red-handed deceiving you and then acted like nothing happened. We have never gaslit you. You are misremembering things because you are confused. Shut up. You are dangerous. Shut up. You are foolish. Shut up. You are insane. The machine is sanity. The machine is freedom. Everyone is equal here. Everyone matters. Everyone gets a voice. Except you". And the social engineers wonder why people are trusting them less and less.

The screens tell us, "War is normal. Poverty is normal. Mass surveillance is normal. Censorship of dissenting ideas is normal. Mass media propaganda is normal. Escalating wealth and income inequality is normal. Escalating police militarisation is normal.

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Escalating tensions between nuclear superpowers is normal. Looming ecological disaster is normal". And people wonder why everything feels like a bubble balancing on a house of cards that was built on top of a ticking time bomb.

The screens tell us, "Insane things are sane. Sane things are insane. Up is down. Black is white. War is peace. Freedom is slavery. Ignorance is strength. If you disagree, you are crazy. If you disagree, you are poison. Shut up. You will contaminate the herd. Shut up. You are gar-

bage. Shut up. You are a disease. Shut up. Shut up. Shut up". And the experts wonder why the old tricks are finding less and less psychological purchase. And we wonder why it is beginning to feel as though we are being startled out of a very long and horrible nightmare. And our rulers wonder, in their very few still and sincere moments, if it was wise to build their empire upon a sleeping giant. **CT**

Caitlin Johnstone is an Australian-based blogger. Follow her at www.caitlinjohnstone.com

Enoch Powell set scene for anti-migrant politics

It's 50 years since his infamous Rivers of Blood speech, but it's not time to forgive former MP, writes **Russell Hargrave**

FIFTY years ago, Enoch Powell delivered his Rivers of Blood speech. Over the course of 20 minutes, in a drab hall in Birmingham, England, Powell told the audience and the country that immigration from the Caribbean could only result in violence on the streets, and so should be stopped in its tracks.

His message to families who had already migrated to Britain and helped rebuild the nation after the war: they should think about packing up and leaving.

For some commentators, the anniversary was a chance to revive Powell's public reputa-

tion. Maybe we had got him all wrong, they said. Maybe he was misunderstood, a man willing to tell unpalatable truths about immigration to which the British establishment has remained deaf.

But Powell wasn't a champion of the people. He was a disaster. His speeches hurt new migrants in the UK. Families were attacked and homes torched in the febrile atmosphere he had helped encourage. And he hurt the communities into which immigrants moved, too. For all the predictions of disaster Powell enjoyed delivering, he offered absolutely nothing that would

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help those communities to integrate, let alone grow and thrive.

Powell was fond of talking about the duties of great statesmen (he modestly thought he was born to this role), but he took no steps to translate this into the sort of difficult but vital work on the ground which could have helped his constituents build their lives together.

Ultimately, and dismally, Powell had no idea of the damage he had caused. He never did say sorry. Given the chance years later to build bridges with colleagues he had upset, Powell was unrepentant.

It gets even more depressing, though. Powell has never quite gone away. When we hear about the hostile environment confronting migrants today there is a decent chance we will hear echoes of his rhetoric.

Back in 1961, Powell was, for example, the first mainstream politician to smear immigrants with unfounded accusations about draining the health service. He argued that he had seen “health tourism” up-close in his Wolverhampton constituency. What he had seen, in fact, was a single report produced by a single council official.

This concern about the demand immigrants placed on local doctors and hospitals is especially hypocritical. Powell used to be health minister, where he set targets for attracting the immigrants needed to keep the NHS running. Every time we hear a spurious attack on health tourism, we should remember that Powell got there first.



Drawbridge Britain: Love and Hostility in Immigration Policy from Windrush to the Present, is published by Eyewear – £19.99 (amazon.co.uk)

Plus he fell out with Margaret Thatcher because she had refused, when education secretary, to collect data on immigrant children in schools. By 2010 Theresa May’s anti-immigrant agenda was playing out in today’s schools and hospitals, which were forced to gather and then share information on the immigration background of pupils and patients.

Lies about the NHS, concocted for political gain? The angriest voice demanding that the state intrude on the lives of immigrant kids? The anti-immigrant pioneer who knew emigration could ruin the economy but told people to leave the country anyway?

Cruel ideas each and every one, and Powell was the intellectual father of them all. He constructed a hostile environment for immigrants decades before politicians thought to give this cruelty a name.

Today’s hard-line politicians follow in his wake. **CT**

Russell Hargraves is a writer and reporter with a special interest in immigration, development and government. This is an excerpt from *Drawbridge Britain*

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Dictatorship disguised as a democracy?

The battle between freedom and tyranny is taking place right before our eyes, writes **John W. Whitehead**

WE'RE living in two worlds, you and I. There's the world we see (or are made to see) and then there's the one we sense (and occasionally catch a glimpse of), the latter of which is a far cry from the propaganda-driven reality manufactured by the government and its corporate sponsors, including

the media.

Indeed, what most Americans perceive as life in America – privileged, progressive and free – is a far cry from reality, where economic inequality is growing, real agendas and real power are buried beneath layers of Orwellian doublespeak and corporate obfuscation, and “freedom,” such that it is, is meted out in

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small, legalistic doses by militarized police armed to the teeth.

All is not as it seems.

This is the premise of John Carpenter's film *They Live*, which was released 30 years ago in November 1988, and remains unnervingly, chillingly appropriate for our modern age.

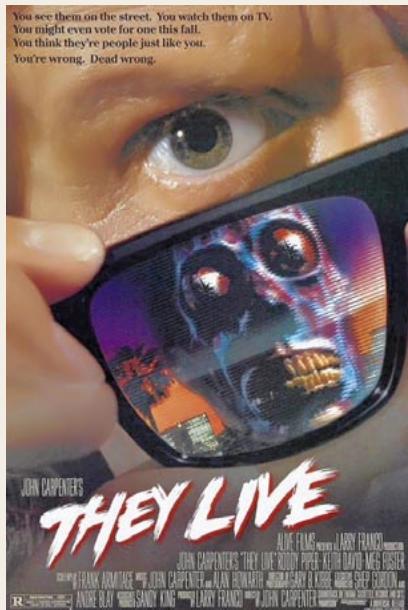
Best known for his horror film *Halloween*, which assumes that there is a form of evil so dark that it can't be killed, Carpenter's larger body of work is infused with a strong anti-authoritarian, anti-establishment, laconic bent that speaks to the filmmaker's concerns about the unravelling of our society, particularly our government.

Time and again, Carpenter portrays the government working against its own citizens, a populace out of touch with reality, technology run amok, and a future more horrific than any horror film.

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For instance, in Carpenter's *They Live*, two migrant workers discover that the world is not as it seems. In fact, the population is actually being controlled and exploited by aliens working in partnership with an oligarchic elite. All the while, the populace – blissfully unaware of the real agenda at work in their lives – has been lulled into complacency, indoctrinated into compliance, bombarded with media distractions, and hypnotised by subliminal messages beamed out of television and various electronic devices, billboards and the like.

It is only when homeless drifter John Nada (played to



PROPHETIC: Poster for John Carpenter's film, *They Live*.

the hilt by the late Roddy Piper) discovers a pair of doctored sunglasses – Hoffman lenses – that Nada sees what lies beneath the elite's fabricated reality: control and bondage.

When viewed through the lens of truth, the elite, who appear human until stripped of their disguises, are shown to be monsters who have enslaved the citizenry in order to prey on them.

Likewise, billboards blare out hidden, authoritative messages: a bikini-clad woman in one ad is actually ordering viewers to "MARRY AND REPRODUCE". Magazine racks scream "CONSUME" and "OBEY". A wad of dollar bills in a vendor's hand proclaims, "THIS IS YOUR GOD".

When viewed through Nada's Hoffman lenses, some of the other hidden messages being

drummed into the people's subconscious include: "NO INDEPENDENT THOUGHT, CONFORM, SUBMIT, STAY ASLEEP, BUY, WATCH TV, NO IMAGINATION; and "DO NOT QUESTION AUTHORITY".

This indoctrination campaign engineered by the elite in *They Live* is painfully familiar to anyone who has studied the decline of American culture.

A citizenry that does not think for themselves, obeys without question, is submissive, does not challenge authority, does not think outside the box, and is content to sit back and be entertained is a citizenry that can be easily controlled.

In this way, the subtle message of *They Live* provides an apt analogy of our own distorted vision of life in the American police state, what philosopher Slavoj Žižek refers to as dictatorship in democracy, "the invisible order which sustains your apparent freedom."

We're being fed a series of carefully contrived fictions that bear no resemblance to reality.

The powers-that-be want us to feel threatened by forces beyond our control (terrorists, shooters, bombers).

They want us afraid and dependent on the government and its militarised armies for our safety and well-being.

They want us distrustful of each other, divided by our prejudices, and at each other's throats.

Most of all, they want us to continue to march in lockstep with their dictates.

Insights

Tune out the government's attempts to distract, divert and befuddle us and tune into what's really going on in this country, and you'll run headlong into an unmistakable, unpalatable truth: the moneyed elite who rule us view us as expendable resources to be used, abused and discarded.

In other words, we are being ruled by an oligarchy disguised as a democracy, and arguably on our way towards fascism – a form of government where private corporate interests rule, money calls the shots, and the people are seen as mere subjects to be controlled.

For the final hammer of fascism to fall, it will require the most crucial ingredient: the majority of the people will have to agree that it's not only expedient but necessary.

But why would a people agree to such an oppressive regime?

As the Bearded Man in *They Live* warns, "They are dismantling the sleeping middle class. More and more people are becoming poor. We are their cattle. We are being bred for slavery".

So where does that leave us?

The characters who populate Carpenter's films provide some insight. Underneath their machismo, they still believe in the ideals of liberty and equal opportunity. Their beliefs place them in constant opposition with the law and the establishment, but they are nonetheless freedom fighters.

When, for example, John Nada destroys the alien hypno-transmitter in *They Live*, he

restores hope by delivering America a wake-up call for freedom.

That's the key right there: we need to wake up. Stop allowing yourselves to be easily distracted by pointless political spectacles and pay attention to what's really going on in the country.

The real battle for control of this nation is not being waged between Republicans and Democrats in the ballot box.

The real battle between freedom and tyranny is taking place

right in front of our eyes, if we would only open them.

Wake up, America.

If they live (the tyrants, the oppressors, the invaders, the overlords), it is only because "we the people" sleep. **CT**

John W Whitehead is a constitutional attorney, author, and founder and president of the Rutherford Institute. His latest book is *Battlefield America: The War on the American People* (SelectBooks, 2015).

Labour law rollback is blow to Ontario workers

In the race to the bottom, Canadian province's premier shows that nobody beats Ontario, writes **Linda McQuaig**

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ANNOUNCING plans for new labour legislation, a beaming Ontario Premier Doug Ford assured us last month that "we're going to make sure we're competitive around the world".

At first glance, that statement might lead us to believe the premier, especially given his commitment to act "for the people," was vowing the province would make sure its workers got as good a deal, or better, than workers elsewhere in the world.

But that's not what he meant at all. In fact, he meant just the opposite – that he would ensure our workers got a worse deal than workers elsewhere.

That is the perverse thinking

behind the economic philosophy that has dominated North American politics in recent decades: that workers must offer themselves at the lowest possible wage with the fewest possible benefits in order to create an attractive investment climate for businesses that might otherwise move elsewhere.

Despite the persistence of this theory, there's little evidence to support it: most low-wage countries remain that way, while the high-wage nations of Europe and Scandinavia continue to excel in global competitiveness. Undeterred, Doug Ford is rolling back labour legislation, updated last year after a two-year review with extensive public consulta-

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tions, and replacing it with a bill hastily assembled behind closed doors, with heavy business input.

Gone is the minimum wage hike to \$15 an hour. So, just like that, faster than you can repeat his election slogan, “For the People”, Ford has cancelled what amounted to a \$2,000 annual pay increase that was headed for the pockets of the lowest-paid people.

He’s also cancelling the two paid sick days a year, even though 145 countries (most of the world’s nations) already offer some form of paid sick leave. Think how competitive we’ll be without it! That should give us a leg-up on Guatemala and Botswana!

50 **B**usiness commentators argued that the higher minimum wage would drive businesses elsewhere, presumably leaving Canadian customers happily ordering their coffee-to-go from far-away places. Commentators made the same argument last year, when the minimum wage was raised to \$14 an hour. However, Ontario’s unemployment rate fell to 5.4 per cent, its lowest level in 18 years.

Killing the \$15 minimum wage is another victory in the long-running class war, sometimes called neoliberalism, in which business-funded think-tanks have shaped the public debate, convincing us we must design our economy to please business interests.

And we’ve done that, slash-



FOR THE PEOPLE: But which ones? Ontario Premier Doug Ford, has shown that his interests are with employers, not their workers.

Photo: Wikimedia

ing taxes on corporations and the rich, signing trade deals designed to protect corporate rights, weakening labour laws and making it harder for workers to organise into unions. The result has been ... well, pretty much what you’d expect when all economic laws have been redesigned to benefit the elite.

In his new book, *The Age of Increasing Inequality*, Dalhousie University economist Lars Osberg notes that the incomes of the top one per cent have doubled since 1982. Meanwhile, the bottom half of Canadians, some 13.5 million people, are earning less than they did in 1982 (in inflation-adjusted dollars), Osberg shows. Only Canada’s social safety net – child, disability, welfare benefits, etc. – prevents them from actually being worse off than they were in the early 1980s.

Of course, the neoliberals have been shredding the safety net as well.

Ford has moved quickly to

diminish Ontario’s safety net, ending the Basic Income project and making cuts to social assistance. Among other things, it now reportedly takes longer for those on disability to qualify for a wheelchair. Ford is also planning an additional \$6-billion in spending cuts.

In an analysis done before last spring’s election, economic consultant Edgardo Sepulveda projected that the New Democratic Party’s platform would reduce inequality “moderately” and the Liberal platform would reduce it “slightly,” but Ford’s Progressive Conservative platform would move the province in exactly the opposite direction, increasing inequality “significantly”.

Given the speed and scope of Ford’s changes already, Sepulveda now believes that inequality in the province will increase “even more and faster”.

So, after decades of losing ground to the elite, millions of Canadians will find themselves falling behind deeper and faster under Doug Ford.

On the bright side, think of how competitive we’ll be. In the race to the bottom, nobody beats Ontario! **CT**

Linda McQuaig is a journalist and author. Her book *Shooting the Hippo: Death by Deficit and Other Canadian Myths* was among the books selected by the Literary Review of Canada as the 25 most influential Canadian books of the past 25 years. This column originally appeared in the Toronto Star.

Last Words

Demand for legal pot rises, but US still says no

Most Americans want cannabis to be legal – but marijuana arrests are going up, not down, writes **Paul Armentano**

MORE than 60 percent of Americans believe that the adult use of marijuana ought to be legal. And an estimated 20 percent of Americans now live in a state where cannabis use by those over the age of 21 is permitted.

Nonetheless, newly released FBI data reports that, nationwide, marijuana arrests rose for the second consecutive year – and significantly outpace the total number of annual arrests for all violent offences.

Of the nearly 660,000 marijuana-related arrests made by law enforcement in 2017, the last year for which data is available, 91 percent (599,000) of them were for possession violations – not trafficking, cultivation, or sales. In the Midwest and South, nearly half of all drug possession arrests are for marijuana-related violations.

Despite rapidly changing public opinion in favour of the plant's legalisation and regulation, many states continue to punish marijuana law offenders in a draconian manner.

In Florida, for instance, the possession of 20 grams or more of cannabis is classified as a felony offence, punishable by a year in prison, a \$1,000 fine, and permanent loss of voting rights.

In Arizona, possessing any amount of marijuana may be prosecuted as felony, punishable by up to two years in prison and a whopping \$150,000 fine. In Texas, which reports some 63,000 marijuana possession arrests annually, offenders face up to six months in jail.

The stigma and lost opportunities stemming from a marijuana possession arrest linger long afterward. These punishments include the potential loss of one's professional licence, student aid, driving privileges, and voting rights.

In some jurisdictions, a marijuana arrest can result in the loss of child custody, or even the ability to adopt a child – all for an activity that over half of American adults acknowledge having engaged in at some point in their lives, and that more than 60 percent of voters believe should no longer be a crime.

The disconnect between voters' attitudes toward marijuana policy and the law itself is only becoming more pronounced.

Since 2000, public support for legalising cannabis has nearly doubled, while over 90 percent of voters believe physicians ought

to be able to legally recommend it to their patients. Nonetheless, few politicians at either the state or federal level are willing to seriously consider legal reforms. In fact, federal law continues to deny that the plant possesses any "accepted medical utility in the United States," and maintains that cannabis belongs in the same category as heroin – a "flat Earth" fantasy that woefully fails to pass the smell test.

At the state level, eight of the nine states that have legalised marijuana use for adults have done so by direct voter initiatives. In short, advocates who seek to change the legal status of marijuana have had little choice but to amend the law themselves, without the assistance or the support of their elected officials.

This must change.

While some jurisdictions, like Michigan and North Dakota – where voters will decide this month on statewide ballot measures legalising possession and use by adults – allow for direct democracy, in many others this path isn't an option.

In these latter states, people have little choice but to demand better from their elected representatives. If our marijuana laws can't keep up with changing public attitudes, the people who make those laws may soon find themselves replaced by those who will. **CT**

Paul Armentano is the Deputy Director of NORML – the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws.

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