

The Fortnightly Rant

Who's Buying the Rope? We Are.

Last year, the fossil fuel industry that is destroying our planet received \$7 trillion in subsidies.

No, that figure is not coming from the Socialist Workers Party, Greenpeace, or the Sierra Club. It comes from a report that was issued last month by those radical rascals at the International Monetary Fund [IMF].

You know—the UN agency founded in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire in 1945 to “foster global monetary cooperation, secure financial stability, facilitate international trade, promote high employment and sustainable economic growth, and reduce poverty around the world” after the tumult of WWII.

Large sums are notoriously difficult for ordinary mortals to comprehend. To get a grip on this annual \$7 trillion, we divided it by 365 and rounded down the result. After blithely shaving off \$178 million *per day* as a petty distraction, we see that the global fossil fuel industry is being subsidized to the amount of \$19 billion every day of the year.

We are a notoriously chintzy operation. That figure is still too big for our penny ante brain to process. How much is that per hour? According to our steam-powered calculator, the answer is \$791,666,666—a figure we will leave in its natural state to retain its amusement value.

So, finally, a figure we can almost comprehend: nearly a billion dollars an hour—every hour of the day, every day of the year. As Everett Dirksen might say, pretty soon, you're talking real money.

Even in a world where taxpayers are accustomed to involuntarily forking over vast sums of money to gigantic corporations—been to the hospital lately?—the size of this drain on the economy comes as a surprise. There's a good reason for

that. It's generally hidden.

In their bloodless jargon, economists have a phrase that helps camouflage this sort of theft: “externalized costs.”

To explain it honestly to a four-year old, you could simply say corporations are not made to pay for the havoc they wreak.

They get away with this, in this country, at least, thanks in large part to the First Amendment. In its God-given wisdom, as the Founders intended, that provision gives wealthy corporations the right to every iota of free speech that their lawyers can finagle. By stretching this loophole to its limits, fossil fuel companies have convinced legislators in Washington, D.C. and around the world that they have nothing to do with the stinking miasma which has gradually enveloped the globe and is well on its way to making it uninhabitable by humans.

Having thus shaken off their own culpability through a confluence of magical thinking, finance, and legislative malfeasance, the fatcats and their flunkies found themselves in need of someone to be left holding the proverbial bag. Boldly casting a global net, they managed to catch everyone else—right down to, and including, subsistence farmers in sub-Saharan Africa who have never enjoyed the thrill of rolling down the highway behind the wheel of a big ol' V-8.

Perhaps we should consider whether these costs are being ignored to spare the tender feelings of the companies' accountants. After all, how would *you* like the job of managing the spreadsheet tracking how many people the guy who signs your paycheck killed this fiscal year?

No, probably not. According to an article at CleanTechnica.com, “Several years ago, Rex Tillerson, the



former CEO of ExxonMobil, was asked his opinion about a rapidly overheating planet. ‘People will just have to adapt,’ he snarled. That may be easy for wealthy white men, but not so easy for many other members of the human family.”

If they did keep track of their kill count, these corporations would hardly be likely to tell us, their potential victims, the actual number. We can hear it now, “Sorry. That’s proprietary information.”

Well, to hell with them, and their feelings. The IMF has spilled the beans: 4.5 million people die prematurely every year from fossil fuel air pollution. Yes, of course we did the math. That’s 12,328 people every day, or 513 an hour.

The hidden costs of fossil fuels extend, though, far beyond the body count.

On Tuesday the World Meteorological Organization announced that Earth just had “the hottest

three-month period on record, with unprecedented sea surface temperatures and extreme weather.”

That same day, in Greece, after weeks of drought, heat, and wildfires, it began to rain. That’s good right? Well, no. Twenty-one inches of rain fell in ten hours. According to CBS, “The rain seen in Zagora is more than 55 times higher than the average rainfall for September.”

Locally it seems like it’s been dank all summer. We did have some lovely weather—we could probably count them all on our fingers. Now we’re in a post-Labor Day heat wave.

Lenin—or Marx, or Stalin, we’re a capitalist country, so you get to pick your favorite commie—is thought by many to have said, “The Capitalists will sell us the rope with which we will hang them.”

QuoteInvestigator.com looked it up and found the real story is more nuanced, and stranger. In 1955, an Army Major named George Racey

Jordan attributed a version of this saying to Lenin.

Gordon had Lenin saying, “When it comes time to hang the capitalists, they will vie with each other for the rope contract.” Major Gordon was—*quelle surprise!*—a right wing darling at the time, campaigning against water fluoridation and the censure of Sen. Joe McCarthy [R-Wisc.].

Not only are this sort of right wing cranks still with us, now they’re openly threatening to de-democratize the country—in the name of “originalism,” of all things. These types love to whine about “unfunded mandates,” but they have no objection as every person on the planet is being robbed. Whatever property they may own is being devalued as the planet’s habitability deteriorates. And that’s not the worst of it.

The workers of this world are being extorted to pay the capitalists who are choking us all to death.

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How Union Workers Are Fighting for a Life Outside of the Mill

by Tom Conway

She only wanted a few hours at her dying mother’s bedside.

But the woman’s bosses at Twin Rivers Paper in Madawaska, Maine, lacked all decency and forced her to the mill on overtime even though it was her day off.

About an hour and a half into the mandatory shift, the woman’s mother died. She left the mill heartbroken, exploited by an industry that continues to spurn workers’ basic need for work-life balance.

Now, workers are battling harder than ever to end this appalling mistreatment. They’re fighting back—at the bargaining table and at the state capitol—against inhumane mandatory overtime requirements that strain families to the breaking point and put lives at risk.

“It’s definitely caused a lot of heartache at the mill,” said David Hebert, financial officer and former president of United Steelworkers (USW) Local 291, one of three USW locals collectively representing about 360 workers at Twin Rivers.

USW members long warned paper companies about the need to increase hiring and training to keep facilities operating safely and efficiently. Yet some employers preferred to keep working people to the bone.

Workers at Twin Rivers, for example, work a base shift of 12 hours. On top of that, to fill in the schedule, each can be drafted for an additional 12-hour shift every month regardless of whether they want the extra hours.

But it gets much worse.

Hebert and his coworkers also face the possibility of having a 12-hour shift extended with six hours of mandatory overtime, without warning or advance notice, virtually any day bosses choose.

And they’re often forced to pull multiple 18-hour days in a week, especially when winter cold and flu season exacerbates the company’s intentional understaffing. Many of these union members commute 45 minutes or more each way, meaning they get only a few hours of sleep at a time.

“There are some days when people really hold their breath at the end of their shift,” explained Hebert, noting workers often find out about forced overtime only when they’re ready to head home.

The coworker who lost her mother, for example, learned at the end of

an 18-hour shift that she’d have to report the following day for overtime.

While that example is particularly devastating, paper workers across Maine experience their own heartaches when unpredictable schedules leave them unable to make plans with their families or force them to miss graduations, anniversaries, birthday parties, holiday gatherings, or other events they’d hope to attend.

“Family is the only reason we go into these places. I want to spend time with them, too,” said Justin Shaw, president of USW Local 9, which represents workers at Sappi’s Somerset Mill in Skowhegan.

“You’ve got many people who work seven days a week,” with some required to log 24 hours at a stretch, Shaw said. “If we had better staff-

ing levels, we wouldn’t have people working outrageous hours.”

Besides the toll it takes on family life, excessive overtime compounds the risk in an industry that exposes workers to hazardous chemicals, fast-moving machinery, super-hot liquids, and huge rolls of paper.

“It only takes a split second to lose a finger, an arm, or a life,” Shaw said, warning that extreme fatigue also puts workers at risk while traveling to and from the mill.

“I’ve had many drives home that I can’t recall over half the ride. We have had many individuals in the ditch or wreck vehicles trying to keep up with the demands,” Shaw told legislators in May.

Shaw and other USW members

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from page one

testified in support of legislation, sponsored by state Senate President Troy Jackson, that aims to hold employers accountable.

The bill would limit mandatory overtime to no more than two hours per day and require employers to provide a week's notice before mandating extra hours or changing a worker's schedule.

The legislation places no caps on voluntary overtime. Nor would it apply to true emergencies, such as when a mill needs extra hands to avert "immediate danger to life or property."

But it would help to end the capricious usurping of workers' lives that now occurs because of the industry's failure to hire enough people for regular operations—a crisis Jackson describes as "not safe" and "not fair."

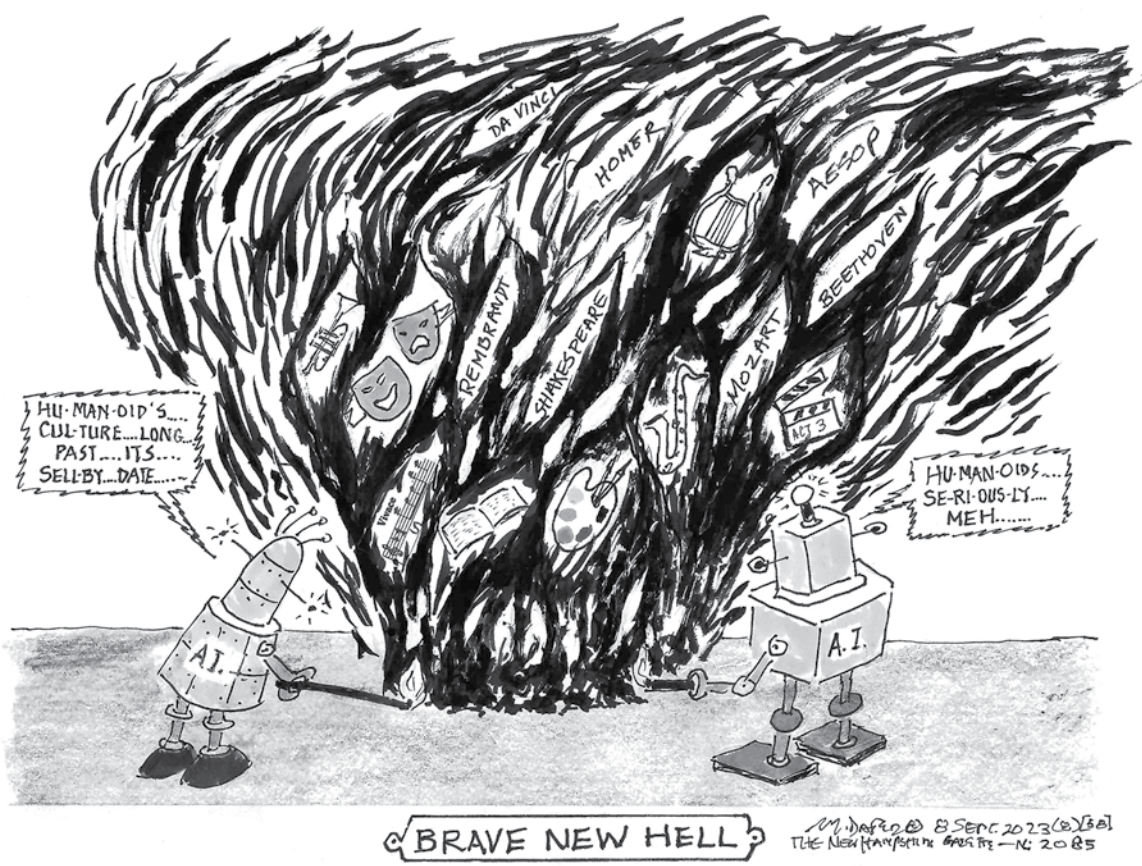
Union members also continue to

drive change at the bargaining table. Workers are pushing both Twin Rivers and Sappi, for example, to create pools of workers whose role is to fill in where needed on a given shift.

These so-called "share pools" virtually eliminated mandatory overtime at the Huhtamaki facility in Waterville, where workers once had to put in so many hours that some slept in their cars rather than commute home, said Lee Drouin, president of USW Local 449.

Drouin recalled that a USW leader traveled to Finland, the company's headquarters, to confront the CEO and make clear that union members weren't going to tolerate excessive overtime any longer. Then, about four years ago, Local 449 members followed up by negotiating the pools into their contract.

"Nothing's perfect, but it's working pretty well," Drouin said. "It keeps the machinery running, and it keeps people from being drafted. It



Our Wandering Photographer finally succeeded in capturing an image of a flag-laden, presumably pro-Trump vehicle motoring past the regularly-scheduled Sunday afternoon Market Square demonstration. The above evidence having been duly submitted to the Flag Police for a proper assessment, we can report with confidence that both these flags are ragged enough to merit a citation. For the record, the sign being held by the gentleman at the far left, which may be difficult for some to read, says, "Inequality Caused by Billionaire Bastards." Some may find that language inelegant, and perhaps not suitable for reproduction here. Under present circumstances—to wit, an ongoing and grotesquely asymmetrical class war in which the haves are crushing the have-nots—we see nothing wrong with it.

accomplishes both of the things we need to do."

Drouin said other paper companies also need to realize that change is essential for workers but benefits them as well.

"The mills have to understand, this is not going to go away," he said, referring to workers' demands for fair treatment. "To me, it makes a lot more sense to have happy workers and safe workers."

Tom Conway is the international president of the United Steelworkers Union (USW). This article was produced by the Independent Media Institute.

Labor Faces a Partisan Divide on Most Important Issues Going Forward
by Mark Weisbrot

"In the wealthiest country in the history of the world, tens of millions struggle to put food on the table, find affordable housing, affordable health care, affordable prescription drugs, affordable childcare, and affordable educational opportunities."

That was Bernie Sanders, in New Hampshire last week, summing up some of the injustices at the source of many Americans' discontent.

It's Labor Day 2023. The election cycle will be moving into high gear, and 2024 could determine how much we can fix these problems, or whether we move backward toward increasing inequality of income, wealth, and access to education.

Let's start with some good news: over the past year, inflation has fallen from a peak of 9.1 percent to just 3.2 percent. Many economists, including Nobel Prize winners and others prominent in the profession, would say that job is about done. The Fed's goal is still two percent, and they will likely get there; but they don't really have an argument that three percent is a problem.

In any case, the economists and others who said that inflation was going to become semipermanent, or accelerate, turned out to be wrong. Those of us who saw that there was no self-reinforcing mechanism—as with the wage-price spiral of the

1970s, where wages push up prices, which then lead to higher nominal wages, and so on—were correct. The spike in inflation was overwhelmingly caused by disruptions associated with the pandemic and the war in Ukraine. And for these and other reasons, it turned out that inflation could recede without creating mass unemployment, or a recession.

This is good news, because the Fed has actually caused most of the recessions that we have experienced since World War II, by raising interest rates.

Instead, we have full employment. This is a big deal, not only for the millions of people who would otherwise be unemployed, but their children. The historical record shows that when the economy approaches full employment, real (inflation-adjusted) wages increase. They increase more for lower-wage workers than for the higher paid, so inequality—by workers' income, gender, and race—is reduced. The bargaining power of labor, including unions, increases. This is all happening now

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and can accelerate with smart economic policies.

When the pandemic recession hit, we had the strongest stimulus ever, running deficits of 14.9 percent of GDP in 2020 and 12.4 percent of GDP in 2021. That is how we got back to full employment with record speed. Some 13.4 million jobs have been created since President Biden took office.

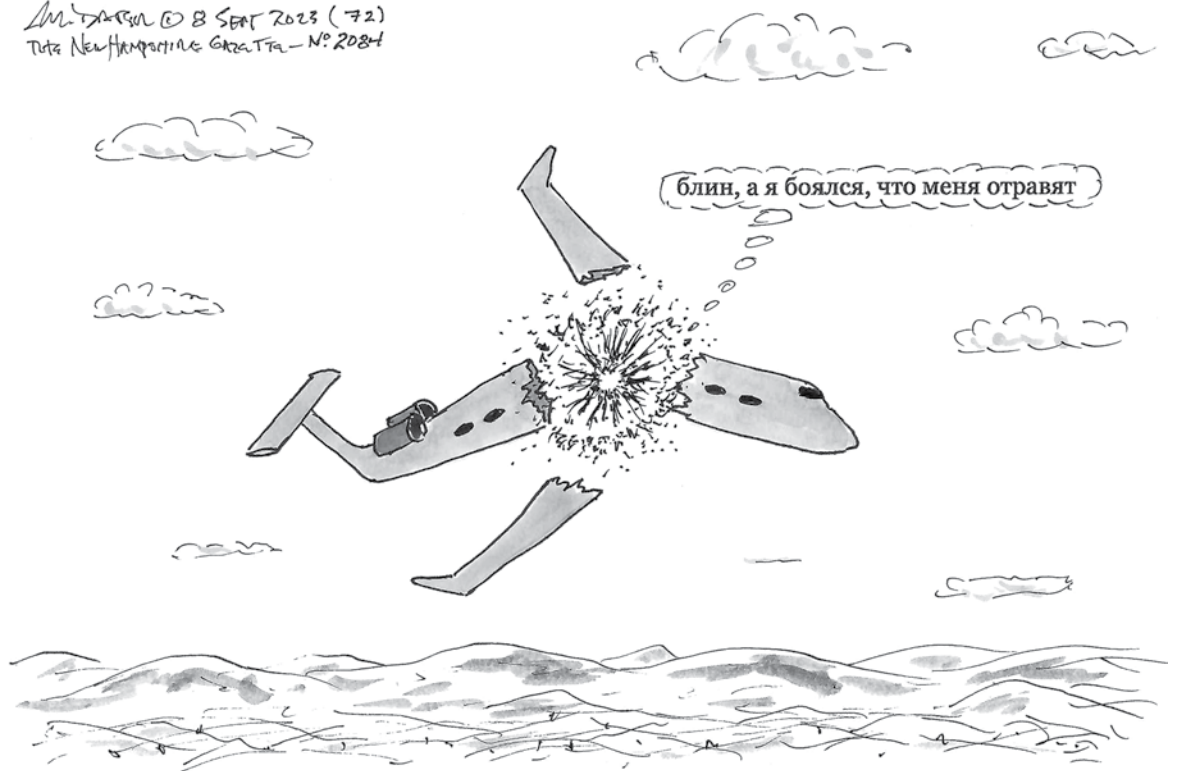
But the problems raised by Bernie Sanders—who strongly supports the successful economic policies implemented—remain. And there is a deep partisan divide over how to deal with them.

On the Democratic side, there is an emphasis on full employment and real wage growth. This includes meeting the climate crisis with major investments. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), and

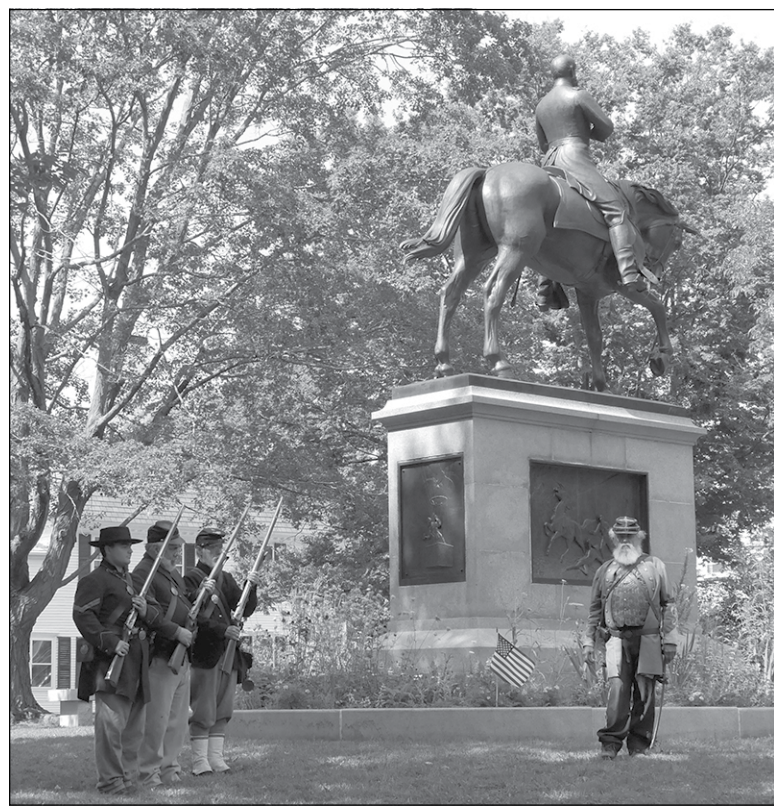
the CHIPS Act have boosted manufacturing construction, which has doubled since the end of 2021. The Biden administration has also been supportive of workers' collective bargaining rights: on August 25th, the National Labor Relations Board issued a historic decision that will make it more difficult for employers to violate labor law, as they routinely have done, in their efforts to deny union recognition and collective bargaining. In recent days, the Biden administration announced the first 10 medicines that will be subject to price negotiations with Medicare—a landmark development for lowering drug costs.

Republicans hope to capitalize on the anger generated by the injustices that they have by far taken the lead role in creating: we lost 5.8 million manufacturing jobs in the 2000s; the real (inflation-adjusted) median

М. ДАРВИН 08 СЕПТ 2023 (72)
THE NEW HAMPSHIRE GAZETTE - № 2024



Translation: "Damn, and I was worried about being poisoned"



Haven Park may have been occupied for a time this past Saturday by a small squad of Union soldiers, unstuck in time—a temporal anomaly first brought to the attention of the general public by Kurt Vonnegut in 1969. His Slaughterhouse-Five is generally treated as if it were fiction; some of the unstuck hold a more nuanced view. It is also possible that the gentlemen seen here, at the foot of the statue of Civil War General Fitz John Porter, may have been members of the Civil War Roundtable of New Hampshire.

wage has barely grown from 1979 to 2019 (pre-pandemic); patent monopolies have been strengthened so that they cost Americans more than \$400 billion annually just for prescription drugs (note at least five Moderna billionaires created from COVID); unions now represent six percent of the private sector workforce, as compared to a peak 35 percent in the 1950s; and Republicans have repeatedly opposed minimum wage increases.

No Republican candidate raised their hand at the recent debate, when asked to do so, if they believed that human behavior is causing climate change. Republicans have also been trying to cut nonmilitary spending as much as possible, without regard to the harm caused. And they have consistently opposed efforts to expand health care coverage for Americans.

Hence the partisan divide. This election could change the country and the world, for decades to come. Mark Weisbrot is Co-Director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research.

Biden Infrastructure Report Pushes "Disastrous Water Privatization Schemes," Watchdog Says

by Julia Conley

An under-the-radar report by U.S. President Joe Biden's National Infrastructure Advisory Council should not go unnoticed, said the national watchdog Food & Water Watch on Thursday, as buried in the document is a call for the privatization of U.S. water systems, which progressive lawmakers and civil society groups have long opposed.

On page 15 of the 38-page report, the advisory council said the federal government should "remove barriers to privatization, concessions, and other nontraditional models of funding community water systems in conjunction with each state's development of best practice."

Food & Water Watch (FWW) suggested that the recommendation goes hand in hand with the panel chairmanship of Adebayo Ogunlesi, who is the chairman and CEO of Global Infrastructure Partners (GIP).

GIP is "an infrastructure invest-

ment bank with an estimated \$100 billion in assets under management that targets energy, transportation, digital, and water infrastructure," said FWW, making the takeover of public water and wastewater utilities by a private corporation—often under the guise of improving aging systems and lowering costs—financially beneficial for the bank.

"Instead of relying on Wall Street advisers, President Biden should support policies that will truly help communities."

Mary Grant, Public Water for All campaign director at FWW, called the recommendation "a terrible idea."

"President Biden should have never appointed an investment banker to chair an advisory council for the nation's infrastructure," said Grant. "Wall Street wants to take control of the nation's public water systems to wring profits from communities that are already struggling with unaffordable water bills and

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Murph's Fortnightly Quote
"War is rich old men protecting their property by sending middle class and lower class men off to die."
— George Carlin (1937-2008)

"I have got so far as to lose the distinction between right and wrong. Isn't that the first step in politics?"
— Henry Brooks Adams (1838 - 1918) American journalist, historian, and author
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Good Question

Dear Editor,

Last Wednesday night's lie-fest in Milwaukee—er sorry, "debate"—ironically hosted by a media outlet also known for some big-time lying of its own, has one wondering if there is a point at which we can declare the opposition cult unequivocally unfit to lead our democratic republic. Seriously, we continue to play along with their cynical manipulation of a gullible audience but it seems to me at some point it's time to call their bluff. Mainstream media doesn't go an hour without reminding us that the delusional mob boss leading their polling might actually be re-elected. Why? Why does the MSM continue to treat this gaggle of goons with a straight face, as if they still belong at the adults' table? When 6-3/4 of the 8 on stage—looking at you Chris Christie—seeking to wear the crown raise their hands in support of the soon-to-be convicted criminal, I think we've finally crossed a line.

The danger is that after eight years of non-stop gaslighting, lying, government-bashing, truth-denying and grifting from these criminals, fatigue, exhaustion and acceptance of their juvenile stupidity sets in. The response Thursday morning to the infamous hand raising was disturbingly muted. Vowing to vote for the guy whose crimes were committed in attempting the overthrow the very government they want to lead certainly smells treasonous to me. Why are they even running for the office? The cult formerly known as the GOP, with no platform, no vision for the country and a criminal on the ticket should be barred from competing for our highest office next year. Too extreme? Not when it still refuses to accept getting the boot from voters in 2020. Time to join the Know Nothings in history's dustbin.

John C. Fidor
Richmond, Va.

John:

You have asked a damn good question. We do our best here to avoid treating these mountebanks as if they were legitimate politicians. We can get away with it because we are independent. We some-

times forget how free we are, and how rare our freedom is.

The danger lies in old customs and habits—things to which journalism is particularly susceptible. Throw in peer pressure, commercial concerns, &c., &c., and you end up with stenography.

We're reminded of something Thomas Paine wrote: "A long habit of not thinking a thing wrong, gives it a superficial appearance of being right, and raises at first a formidable outcry in defense of custom. But the tumult soon subsides. Time makes more converts than reason."

Sadly, though, we do not have forever.
The Editor

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Shoddy Argument

To the Editor:

Our country was created to protect life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This requires boundaries, set by law and custom, to keep people from interfering with other people's rights.

When it suits their purposes, Democrat [*sic, passim*] politicians allow these boundaries to be violated with few or no consequences despite the harm to innocent people. Examples include the very destructive and deadly BLM and ANTIFA riots, and Democrats' softness on criminals which enables them to continue preying on innocent people.

Perhaps worse is how Democrats use their dominance in Education to, in addition to often providing poor educational outcomes, violate the customary boundaries of parental rights, harming children for Democrats' ideological purposes.

Some teachers do what no decent adult would do without explicit parental approval by presenting graphic sex talk and images to young children (opening some to sexual exploitation). Other teachers confuse children about gender, suggesting that maybe boys and girls are in the wrong bodies and should get life-changing hormone or surgical treatments. Some teachers hurt innocent children by teaching that young white children are bad, and young black children can't succeed, because of past injustices/crimes (e.g., Democrat Jim Crow laws and lynchings) done by and to others.



When parents, and others, rightfully demand that school policies stop these harmful teachings and violations of decency, Democrats, who banned the Bible and Judeo-Christian teaching of love and tolerance, slander them as attacking free speech, book banning, and jeopardizing children's health. Biden sent his FBI to investigate and intimidate parents who peacefully protested and petitioned for policies to protect their children.

For their political purposes, Democrats allow the protective boundaries between people to be violated resulting in harm to innocent people and our peaceful society.

Don Ewing
Meredith, N.H.

Don:

Yes, by all means, let us begin at the beginning. You begin your latest screed with an oblique referral to the allegedly self-evident truth "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." While we have due respect for the Declaration of Independence, please do not expect us to be overly awed by your reference to it. Your argumentum ab auctoritate has no power here; when the Declaration was adopted, this newspaper was in its 20th year.

The signers of the Declaration were less fastidious than you seem to think about respecting people's rights. Of the 56 signers, 41 were enslavers, including two of New Hampshire's, Bartlett and Whipple. Not that we're in any position to cast stones. Without the enslaved labor of an African man called Primus, we might never have made it to 1776.

Your effort to paint BLM and Antifa as major threats to innocent people is simultaneously depressing and hilarious. Still watching Fox News, eh?

Fox News is an oxymoronic name for a propaganda channel designed to turn people into morons. In court case after court case, it's been forced to admit that

what it produces isn't news. The most recent such contretemps cost them nearly a billion dollars.

You know who's a genuine threat to the public's well being? The insatiable billionaires pulling the strings on the GOP puppets in Congress, and in state houses around the country.

The Editor

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Fatally "Pro-Life"

Dear Editor:

Republican George W. Bush was a so-called "pro-life" President with a mixed legacy regarding his pro-life positions. On the negative side of the ledger, he is remembered for his deadly war of choice in Iraq, his support of torture, and his economic policies that harmed the poor. However, to his credit, he was also responsible for one of the most truly pro-life policies in recent history.

As the HIV/AIDS Pandemic spread uncontrollably throughout the world, especially in Africa, in 2003 president George W. Bush signed the 5-year, \$15 billion President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). The program sent HIV treatment drugs and medical personnel to 15 countries, 12 in Africa. As reported in the *New York Times*, "over the next 20 years, PEPFAR became one of the most significant global health programs in modern history." "It saved 25 million lives and, by preventing mother-to-child transmission, allowed 5.5 million babies to be born H.I.V. free." Now that is really a pro-life program and policy.

Unfortunately, today's radical so-called "pro-life" Republicans in the House of Representatives have placed the future of this program in jeopardy. They claim that the program somehow supports abortion although there is no evidence that it ever has. This is just another example of so many oth-

er positions of the so-called "pro-life" movement that are contradictory to actually saving lives. The "pro-life" agenda opposes expanded health care, supports capital punishment, opposes any sane gun safety laws, opposes family planning programs that prevent unintended pregnancies and abortion, opposes public health measures to control deadly diseases and opposes environmental protection/climate change measures.

If this is what it means to be "pro-life" we have a serious misunderstanding of what it means to really save lives.

Rich DiPentima, RN, MPH
Portsmouth, N.H.

Rich:

We thought it was bad—and it was bad—when "pro-life" assassins killed Dr. David Gunn in 1993, and Dr. George Tiller in 2009.

Now we've got "pro-life" legislators trying to shut down a program that saves more than a million lives a year.

That's beyond bad, but these days it's par for the course.

The Editor

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Uniquely Unqualified

Dear Editor:

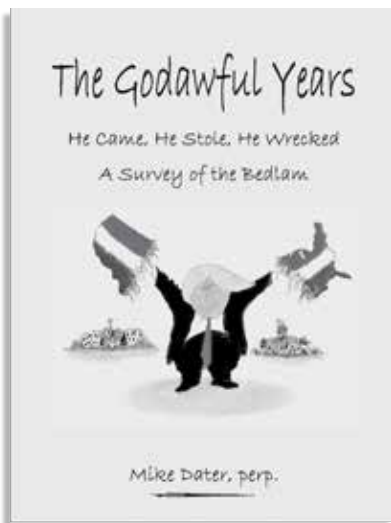
The most knowledgeable and experienced scholars of our time unequivocally declare that Donald John Trump is categorically unqualified to be on the ballot for president of the United States because the Constitution of the United States (Amendment XIV, Section 3) says so.

For those of you who won't waste your time doing the research or, who choose to believe only what Donald Trump and his MAGA minions (a.k.a. the Republican Cult) want you to take as gospel, this is what the "disqualification clause" of Amendment XIV affirms.

"No person shall be a Senator or

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Franklin, N.C.

David:

As it happens, we agree, but what does that matter? Secretary of State David M. Scanlan—a Republican—is the person with the power to tell Trump, “Nope.”

Imagine being in Scanlan’s shoes. He’d need round-the-clock surveillance around his house, a remote starter for his car, a bulletproof vest. . . . Who can blame him for using Attorney General John Formella as a human shield?

The Editor

=====
Excessive Moderation

Dear Editor,

Republicans and Democrats in America have hit on a method that plays extremely well with a misguided electorate.

They dispense non-stop hate directed at the opposing party, its policies, and candidates, all the while neglecting to examine themselves against any traditional standard, like morality or the Constitution.

This pathway is a winning formula for the parties, but a losing formula for the rising generations who must deal with all the hate.

On the other hand, the business and finance worlds go overboard portraying all the joyous and well-adjusted people taking Big Pharma’s drugs, buying consumer products, and taking out loans to make it all happen. Commerce almost approaches the churches in their disregard for pressing social, economic, and political issues and in their focus only on the positive.

So where is the sensible middle that finds some things not to like about other people and policies, but still plenty to like? Where are the advertisements that don’t promise the moon and eternal happiness by means of a pill, or a car, or a saturated fat- and sugar-filled meal, or yet another credit card?

David Snell

Nowhere to be found.

Kimball Shinkoskey

Woods Cross, Utah

Kimball:

First, let’s address the 800-pound gorilla in the room: “They dispense non-stop hate directed at the opposing party. . . .”

While we are increasingly dismayed by the Democratic Party, it is not because its elected officials are defending their supporters who are threatening to hang duly-elected officials.

Then there’s this: “all the while neglecting to examine themselves against any traditional standard. . . . Are you joking? The rightward two-thirds of the Democratic Party expends half of its energy denouncing the left—most third.

You criticize “the business and finance worlds” for what we agree is reprehensible behavior. Might we suggest that there’s a better way of characterising the source of all that bushwa “portraying all the joyous and well-adjusted people taking Big Pharma’s drugs, buying consumer products, and taking out loans to make it all happen.”?

It’s called capitalism. It’s OK to use the term. It captures not only the unfettered freedom of the rich to get richer, but also their ability through unwarranted influence over government, to make the poor poorer.

Maggie Thatcher famously said, “There is no alternative.” She lied. Britain is still paying the price for having believed her.

A better guide to our times would be Ursula K. Le Guin. She wrote, “We live in capitalism. Its power seems inescapable. So did the divine right of kings. Any human power can be resisted and changed by human beings. Resistance and change often begin in art, and very often in our art, the art of words.”

The Editor

=====
Mushy Bedrock

To the Editor:

I keep hearing from Trump supporters that he is being persecuted by Democrats. It is true that the prosecutors are Democrats. But they’re not

the ones who handed down 91 indictments in four different cases.

Grand juries—a group of ordinary citizens—who, based on the evidence presented, found that there was enough proof that it was likely crimes were committed (in fact, 91 crimes) and a trial was warranted.

Trumpians also claim that his right to free speech is being violated, particularly in the January 6th indictments. Wrong. Speech used in the commission of a crime is not protected. For example, if a robber goes into a bank and says to the cashier, “give me all your money, this is a stick up.” That is not protected speech.

At the recent Republican presidential debate, the eight participating contenders for the presidency were asked: If Trump were convicted but was still the candidate, would you still support him? Six raised their hand!

So, six major Republican presidential candidates apparently have no respect for jury trials or the law of the land.

Jury trials were declared long ago to be the bedrock of American democracy by the likes of Madison, Jefferson, and Hamilton. But, as the six Republican candidates made clear, they are ready to trash democracy and freedom and would support a convicted felon if that’s what it takes for them to get ahead.

Their “bedrock” seems to be made of marshmallow.

Michael Frandzel

Portsmouth, N.H.

Michael:

As are, in more than a few cases, their brains.

The Editor

=====
Hydrogen Revolution Real—Not a Scam
To the Editor:

An article by Jake Johnson in the Aug. 25, 2023 issue of the *New Hampshire Gazette* claims that support for hydrogen deployment is a climate scam, and that more than 180 organizations are asking the Biden administration to stop their support for hydrogen. That claim, of a scam, is not correct.

The organizations mentioned in

the article are minor players, while major climate change players such as the Rocky Mountain Institute, the Union of Concerned Scientists, along with most climate change advocates worldwide strongly support the deployment of hydrogen. According to a recent UN analysis, “the vast majority of actively publishing climate scientists—97 percent—agree that humans are causing global warming and climate change.”

In two OpEds published in the *New Hampshire Gazette* (June 2 and July 28, 2023) we explained why hydrogen is poised to play a major role in hard-to-decarbonize sectors of the world economy. Transitioning to all green electricity is of course a very important immediate goal. However, electricity is only one-third of all energy use. The uses making up the other two-thirds are quite difficult to electrify for many reasons. These uses include shipping, steel-making, aviation, railroads, heavy duty transportation, cement production, general heating needs and many industrial applications.

The deployment of hydrogen in the U.S. economy must deal with challenges on three fronts: technological, economic, and political. Fortunately, the technology is already available and well-proven. Yes, increased use of hydrogen and, at least temporarily, methane could result in increased gas leakage of both. But this can easily be fixed, since neither environmentalists nor businesses want to be losing their precious energy resource. The economic situation is more challenging because, unless there is enough demand for hydrogen to be used, production sites will not scale up adequately, and drive prices down. That is why new hydrogen research hubs are needed and will help pave the way. The political side may be the most difficult challenge to overcome because we are dealing with the enormous fossil fuel industry and many employees, not to mention politicians, who currently benefit from it.

Mash Notes, Hate Mail, &c.

to page seven

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What do we choose to remember with memorial markers, buildings and community projects?



To learn more about memorials and what else we choose to remember go to PortsmouthGenome.org Join the conversation. A Portsmouth Peace Treaty Forum project.

HUD-VASH HELPS VETERANS GET AND STAY HOUSED. YOU CAN HELP, TOO.

HUD-VASH is a partnership between the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the VA’s Supportive Housing unit. It helps homeless Veterans with housing, employment, recovery (both mental health and substance abuse) and independent living.

HUD-VASH is no longer accepting donations of used furniture, &c. The Homeland Heroes Foundation in Salem, N.H. does: homelandheroesfoundation.org.

HUD-VASH does have a dedicated fund for purchasing new items veterans may need. Donations to that fund may be sent to The VA Medical Center, 718 Smyth Rd., Manchester, N.H. 03104-7007. HUD-VASH should be included on the subject line. Every penny will go into home goods for veterans.

For more information, contact:

VA Supportive Housing Program Manager
(603) 624-4366 X6883

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The Alleged News®

from page three

toxic water.”

FWW has analyzed water privatization schemes for years, finding that they often leave communities “with higher water bills, worse service, job losses, and little control to fix these problems.”

A 2018 report by the group titled America’s Secret Water Crisis found that out of 11 privatized water utilities across the U.S., all but one refused to provide data about shutoffs for nonpayment. The group’s 2011 brief *Water = Life* showed that low-income households are disproportionately affected by water price hikes by private owners, as privatization turns a resource recognized by the United Nations as an “essential human right” into a commodity.

“Privatization would deepen the nation’s water crises, leading to higher water bills and less accountable and transparent services,” said Grant. “Privately owned water systems charge 59 percent more than local government systems, and private ownership is the single largest factor associated with higher water bills—more than aging infrastructure or drought.”

Grant noted that the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law passed in 2021 was “a step forward” as it invested \$55 billion to expand water infrastructure, but pointed out that “it

provided only about seven percent of the identified needs of our water systems.”

“Instead of relying on Wall Street advisers, President Biden should support policies that will truly help communities by asking Congress to pass the Water Affordability, Transparency, Equity, and Reliability (WATER) Act (H.R. 1729, S. 938),” she added.

Introduced in 2021 by Reps. Ro Khanna (D-Calif.) and Brenda Lawrence (D-Mich.) in the U.S. House and Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) in the Senate, the WATER Act would expand funding to small, rural, and Indigenous communities; create a water trust fund; fund projects to eliminate per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, contamination; and require the Environmental Protection Agency to analyze water affordability, shutoffs, and civil rights violations by water utilities, among other steps to improve public water access.

“The WATER Act,” said Grant, “would fully restore the federal commitment to safe water by providing a permanent source of federal funding at the level that our water and wastewater systems need to ensure safe, clean, and affordable public water for all.”

Julia Conley writes for Common Dreams. This work licensed under (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0). Feel free to republish and share widely.

Economists & the Wealthy Say, “Time to Tax Extreme Wealth”

by Jake Johnson

Hundreds of economists, wealthy individuals, and elected officials from around the world called on the leaders of G20 nations to help tackle runaway inequality by collectively raising taxes on the global rich, who saw their fortunes explode during the deadly coronavirus pandemic.

In an open letter to G20 leaders as they prepared to convene in New Delhi, India this weekend for their annual summit, U.S. Sen Bernie Sanders (I-Vt) joined economist Jayati Ghosh, Patriotic Millionaires chair Morris Pearl, philanthropist Abigail Disney, and more than 300 others in declaring that “we cannot allow extreme wealth to continue corroding our collective future.”

“Decades of falling taxes on the richest, based on the false promise that the wealth at the top would somehow benefit us all, has contributed to the rise in extreme inequality,” the Tuesday letter states. “Our political choices allow ultra-wealthy individuals to continue to use tax shelters and enjoy preferential treatment to the extent that, in most countries in the world, they pay lower tax rates than ordinary people.”

“At the same time, the world has seldom had more need for the richest to pay,” the letter continues, noting that global extreme poverty rose in 2020 for the first time in more

than two decades as Covid-19 threw the world into economic chaos.

That same year, billionaire wealth surged to a new high. Between March 2020 and November 2022, global billionaires collectively added \$1.5 trillion to their fortunes, capturing nearly two-thirds of all new wealth.

Meanwhile, according to a recent United Nations report, around 165 million people were thrown into poverty during the pandemic.

“The growing gap between rich and poor has destabilized the global economy, exacerbated the rise of extremist politics, and frayed the very fabric of our social order,” said Pearl, the former managing director of the investment giant BlackRock. “As an ultra-wealthy person, representing an organization of like-minded wealthy people, I am asking the G20 to tax us.”

Pearl warned that if G20 nations don’t “tax extreme wealth, the results will be a perpetually weakened global economy, the decline of democratic institutions, and worsening social unrest. The G20 must act.”

The billionaire wealth surge has continued in 2023, with the world’s 500 richest people adding more than \$850 billion to their combined wealth in the first half of the year.

The new open letter argues that a coordinated G20 agreement imposing wealth taxes on ultra-rich individuals “would shrink danger-

ous levels of inequality while also allowing leaders to raise vital funds to tackle the multiple challenges facing our world.”

“This will not be easy, but it will be worth it,” the letter reads. “Much work has already been done. There is an abundance of policy proposals on wealth taxation from some of the world’s leading economists. The public wants it. We want it. Now all that’s missing is the political will to deliver it. It’s time for you to find it.”

Oxfam International estimates the average tax rate on the wealthiest individuals in rich countries has fallen from 58 percent to 42 percent since 1980, accelerating the rise of economic inequality. Over just the past decade, the combined wealth of global billionaires has more than doubled, growing from \$5.6 trillion to nearly \$12 trillion.

Billionaires’ accumulation of vast wealth is also destructive to the planet. An Oxfam report released last year estimated that a billionaire is responsible for a million times more planet-warming greenhouse gas pollution than the average person.

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Jake Johnson is a senior editor and staff writer for Common Dreams. This work is licensed under Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0). Feel free to republish and share widely.

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Mash Notes, Hate Mail, &c.

from page five

For the Biden administration to successfully pass significant climate change legislation, including serious investments in new renewable energy, they had to offer concessions to the fossil fuel industry. That is why they are implementing subsidies not just for green hydrogen (produced only using renewable energy) but also hydrogen that is produced using fossil fuels as well. However, those subsidies will be phased out over time, with only green hydrogen retaining a subsidy. This, of course, is

not the most direct solution to our climate issues, but this is what was achievable, and it is hoped that this strategy will create a new hydrogen market for various applications and spark new innovations as well.

So, no, it is not a scam, but a dose of reality. Nevertheless, this is still significant progress in the right direction, and no better plan seems to exist.

Peter Somssich
Kent Howard
Hydrogen Advocates of N.H.
Portsmouth, N.H.

*Peter and Kent:
Thank you for responding to Jake*

Johnson’s August 25th article. This issue being so critically important, we expect the discussion will continue.

The Editor

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Will Catalan Be The 25th Official Language Of The EU?

To the Editor:

In the Spanish elections on July 23rd, neither of the two parties alternating in power reached the minimum and, whoever wants to govern, will need the votes of Junts, the Catalan pro-independence party of Carles Puigdemont, who went into exile in Belgium to escape an illegal trial in the Spanish state for having organised Catalonia’s 2017 referendum on self-determination.

After years of discrediting him, interim president Pedro Sánchez is now negotiating with Puigdemont.

For the time being, in order for the PSOE to gain control of the Spanish congressional table, Puigdemont demanded that Sánchez initiate procedures to make Catalan official in EU institutions (along with Basque and Galician) and so that it could also be used in Congress.

Until now, when a member of parliament tried to speak Catalan in Congress, they were forced to express themselves in Spanish under threat of reprisals. How is it possible that they would ban the language of the Catalans? Language is not only communication, but above all identity. This made us feel that “our” state does not respect our identity.

In Europe, in many countries, only one language per state is conceived. Other “regional” languages are known, but they are not taken

into account, as if their speakers were second-class citizens. In Spain, 26 million people live in territories that have Castilian (the language of Castile) as their own language, but 14 million live in territories that have Catalan as their own language (with about 8 million regular speakers), three million Galicians (two million speakers) and three million Basques (900,000 speakers).

Catalan is not a secondary language that has coexisted with Spanish in the same territory. Catalan is the indigenous language of a part of the Iberian Peninsula (the cultural nation called Països Catalans) which was part of the Crown of Aragon and which was confederated, on an equal footing, with the Crown of

to next page

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Of Poetry and Lawyers

"The first thing we do is, let's kill all the lawyers."

— Henry IV, Part II, Act IV, Scene II

by W.D. Ehrhart

The first time I ever read one of my poems in public was in 1971 when I was 22 years old. That was over half a century ago. Since then, I've read my poems in public hundreds of times in venues ranging from universities to middle schools, union meetings to art galleries, libraries to hot dog shops in countries from Japan and Slovenia to Wales and the Netherlands as well as in a majority of these United States.

But just last week I encountered a situation I'd never run into before. I had agreed way back in May to give a poetry reading at a library in a nearby township (I'll call it Overkill Township). They even offered to pay me \$100, though I often do local readings for free if there is minimal travel and minimal expenses. The reading was scheduled for this September. In preparation for the reading, the library's PR person asked me for a bio and photo for publicity purposes. So far, so good.

But she also sent me several forms to sign. One of them was headed: "Overkill Township Library System Liability and Photo Release for Volunteer Program." It is a breathtaking document, epic in its scope, worth reading in its entirety:

"All participants must sign this liability release and permission form and submit the executed form to Overkill Township Library System (OTLS) representatives before they participate in the OTLS volunteer program.

"I, the undersigned participant, voluntarily agree to participate in the program, and that I understand and assume all of the risks of my participation in that program.

"I certify that I am in good health and am able to participate in this program and I hereby acknowledge that my participation in this program involves a risk of bodily injury, including, but not limited to, fractures, head and neck injuries, and the possibility of permanent disability and/or death.

"I understand that no health, workers' compensation and/or accident insurance is provided for program participants and I accept full responsibility for obtaining the same or for payment of all expenses in the absence of such insurance.

"I grant the right to Overkill Township and OTLS, and I release all of my rights, to use my name, image, photograph and video, including composite or modification, representations in Publications, Website, social media and any other medium relating to Overkill Township and OTLS programs, activities and facilities. I waive any and all rights to inspect or approve versions of any image used or any written copy that may be used in connection with the image. I fully release Overkill Township and OTLS for any liability for the use of my name or image set forth herein.

"NOW THEREFORE, in consideration of the foregoing, and in consideration of the mutual relationship of others participating in said program, and of my participation therein, and intending to be legally bound, I hereby, for myself, my heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns forever remise, release and discharge Overkill Township and OTLS, and its successors and assigns, directors, officers, members, agents and representatives and employees, and their heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns, from any and all of manner of actions, causes of action, suits, debts, accounts, controversies, damages, claims and demands whatsoever, which I or my legal representative may have or may acquire against

Overkill Township and/or OTLS, or its directors, officers, members, agents, or other representatives, by reason of any loss resulting from bodily injury, personal injury or damage to any property belonging to me, which may occur during or by reason of my participation in this program.

"I agree that OTLS shall have the right at its discretion to enforce established rules of conduct and/or terminate my participation in the program for failure to follow these rules of conduct, or for actions or conduct detrimental to or incompatible with the welfare, comfort, harmony or interest of the program as a whole.

"I hereby grant OTLS and any of its directors, officers, members, agents, and other representatives, full authority to take whatever action they consider to be warranted regarding my health and safety, and I fully release all of them from any liability for such actions taken on my behalf."

Did you take all that in? Remember, we're talking about a poetry reading here. I'm not going to be juggling flaming torches. A lovely young woman in sequined bikini isn't going to be hurling knives at me. I won't even be attempting to do a back handspring. I'm just going to— or at least I was going to—stand up in front of a modest audience and recite some of my poems for maybe half an hour.

Does Overkill Township think I'm going to trip over my shoelaces on the way to the podium, fall over in their library, break three vertebrae and four ribs, and then sue the township for medical expenses, pain and suffering, and loss of conjugal pleasure? Maybe have a heart attack and blame it on the stress of having to sign this wildly out-of-all-proportion-to-the-circumstances document? Perhaps they're afraid my daughter—my heir and assign—

might sue the township after my death for paying me the paltry sum of a hundred bucks when my poetry and I are actually worth \$5,000 at a minimum.

Heck, I once did a reading in a restaurant kitchen. There were knives all over the place. Knives so sharp you could cut yourself just looking at them. The folks who invited me to do that reading didn't ask me to sign anything. And no one threw any knives at me. And nobody got sued.

This document from Overkill Township is the sort of thing that gives lawyers a bad name.

Speaking of which, did you know that 30 percent of U.S. Representatives and 51 percent of U.S. Senators in the 118th Congress are lawyers? No other profession in our federal legislature comes close to those numbers. Worth contemplating. But I digress.

Now I have to admit that some of my friends and acquaintances are lawyers, and most of them seem like decent enough people. But there may be some good reasons why jokes like this abound in our society:

Q: Do you know why research scientists prefer lawyers to white rats?

A: There are some things even white rats won't do.

One good reason for this kind of humor might be the document Overkill Township demanded I sign before they would allow me to read my poetry in their library.

I didn't sign. And I won't be doing that reading.

====

W. D. Ehrhart is a retired Master Teacher of History & English, and author of a Vietnam War memoir trilogy published by McFarland & Co.

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Yes, We Can Stop Drug Price Gouging! Here's How!

by Jim Hightower

We human beings sometimes do some terrible things in pursuit of the almighty dollar. But to our credit, one moral line we humans don't cross is to profiteer by gouging sick people on the price of medicines their lives depend on.

Unless, of course, you count executives of giant pharmaceutical corporations as human beings. Gouging patients is their preferred business model.

It's a scream then to watch Big Pharma fall into a sky-is-falling fit over our government's long-overdue move to give us patients some bargaining power over this monopolistic industry. Under President Joe Biden's anti-inflation policy passed early this year, our Medicare program can now negotiate drug prices on our behalf.

This will drastically lower what you and I are now forced to pay to the profiteers. For decades, Congress has coddled the corporate gougers (who maintain by far the biggest lobbying army in Washington), allowing them to manipulate the patent laws and rig the system. Thus, we Americans pay two-to-three times more than people in other countries for the exact same medicines.

Oh, wail drug executives, bloated profits give us the incentive to keep developing innovative new cures. Hold it right there, Slick—most basic drug development is done by tax-funded medical researchers, not brand-name market hucksters. Mega-drug outfits like Johnson & Johnson, Merck, and Bristol Myers spend more on advertising, exorbitant executive salaries, lobbying, and big stockholder payouts than on research. Still, these same greed-hounds are suing Biden, howling that making them negotiate is an unconstitutional "taking" of their income. But, hello, these scoundrels have been taking our income, health, and lives for years.

I'm with Biden on this—as is 80 percent of the public (including 77 percent of Republicans) who favor making the gougers negotiate. You go, Joe! To stay informed and involved, connect with Public Citizen at citizen.org.

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Castile in 1474. But in 1714 it was subjugated by force and all its rights abolished, so that from then on, we consider Catalonia to be a colony of Spain. From this annexation by force comes the historical meaning of the movement for the independence of Catalonia.

It has also been Spain that has prevented Catalan from becoming official in EU institutions, because it wants to subordinate us to Spanish. Catalan (which is used in Spain, France, Italy and Andorra—where

it is the state language) is the ninth most spoken language in the EU, but it has no official status. By contrast, languages with fewer speakers are official: Bulgarian, Danish, Slovak, Finnish, Lithuanian, Latvian, Slovenian, Estonian, Maltese and Irish Gaelic.

We Catalans are very clear that this request to the EU only responds to the interest of pro-independence votes, so Puigdemont demands, in order to continue negotiating, a *fait accompli* at the EU Council meeting

on September 19th, which will take place with the Spanish presidency. To date, all the proposed languages have been accepted, and the Spanish government is not expected to put obstacles in the way, as it has done so far, because it would force Junts to vote against and force new elections.

These would be the sixth elections in eight years, a period in which, theoretically, only two elections were due. This is already a sign of the political and economic instability affecting the Spanish state for not

wanting to confront the conflict with Catalonia in a democratic way with a referendum on self-determination.

Jordi Oriola Folch
Barcelona, Catalonia

Jordi:
Thank you for once again bringing us into the fascinating struggle of the Catalan people.

The Editor

====

NAHLS—1500 Casks, all sizes, in store, on this day landing, for sale at very low price by W.M. FOWLE & SONS.

ADMIRAL FOWLE'S PISCATAQUA RIVER TIDAL GUIDE (NOT FOR NAVIGATIONAL PURPOSES)

Portsmouth, arguably the first town in this country not founded by religious extremists, is bounded on the north and east by the Piscataqua River, the second, third, or fourth fastest-flowing navigable river in the country, depending on

whom you choose to believe. The Piscataqua's ferocious current is caused by the tide, which, in turn, is caused by the moon. The other player is a vast sunken valley — Great Bay — about ten miles upriver. Twice a day, the moon

drags about seventeen billion gallons of seawater — enough to fill 2,125,000 tanker trucks — up the river and into Great Bay. This creates a roving hydraulic conflict, as incoming sea and the outgoing river collide. The skirmish line

moves from the mouth of the river, up past New Castle, around the bend by the old Naval Prison, under Memorial Bridge, past the tugboats, and on into Great Bay. This can best be seen when the tide is rising.

Twice a day, too, the moon lets all that water go. All the seawater that just fought its way upstream goes back home to the ocean. This is when the Piscataqua earns its title for xth fastest current. Look for the red buoy, at the upstream end of

Badger's Island, bobbing around in the current. It weighs several tons, and it bobs and bounces in the current like a cork. The river also has its placid moments, around high and low tides. When the river rests, its tugboats

and bridges work their hardest. Ships coming in laden with coal, oil, and salt do so at high tide, for more clearance under their keels. They leave empty, riding high in the water, at low tide, to squeeze under Memorial Bridge.

Table with 7 columns representing days of the week from Sunday, September 10 to Saturday, September 16. Each cell contains a date and a list of historical events and a tide chart with times.

Table with 7 columns representing days of the week from Sunday, September 17 to Saturday, September 23. Each cell contains a date and a list of historical events and a tide chart with times.

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