

## The Fortnightly Rant

### We Are Officially Speechless

Republicans just threw out their Rown Speaker of the House. He had committed an unpardonable sin: he had worked with Democrats to keep the government running.

Kevin McCarthy's defenestration on Monday is a shocking event, even in this bizarre political climate. He is the first Speaker ever thrown out in the middle of his term. And this is not just any old term.

No, we're on the brink of a government shutdown. If Congress cannot pass a budget, in a matter of weeks the rest of the government will begin to grind to a halt. This territory is all too familiar, of course. It's enough to make one wonder if the terms could be reversed. Perhaps we should let the rest of the government decide whether to fund Congress.

In the absence of a Speaker, the House cannot conduct any business, except to try to elect a new Speaker. This makes it the legislative equivalent of that old Pentagon standby, the "self-licking ice cream cone"—a project whose only function is to perpetuate itself.

Now the House can't even manage that. More shocking still, this is an act of self-destruction, driven by a single member of McCarthy's own party. Grasping at the lone straw of reassurance we could find, at least if such a thing was to happen, it's fitting that Matt Gaetz would have been the one to do it.

A self-proclaimed Florida Man, Gaetz will apparently do anything. As a member of the Florida House of Representatives in 2015, he tried to block, and voted against, a bill to ban "revenge porn"—hardly the sort of behavior one might hope to expect from an alumnus of Niceville High School.

In 2018, Gaetz invited Charles C. Johnson to be his guest at the State of the Union address. Johnson, 34,

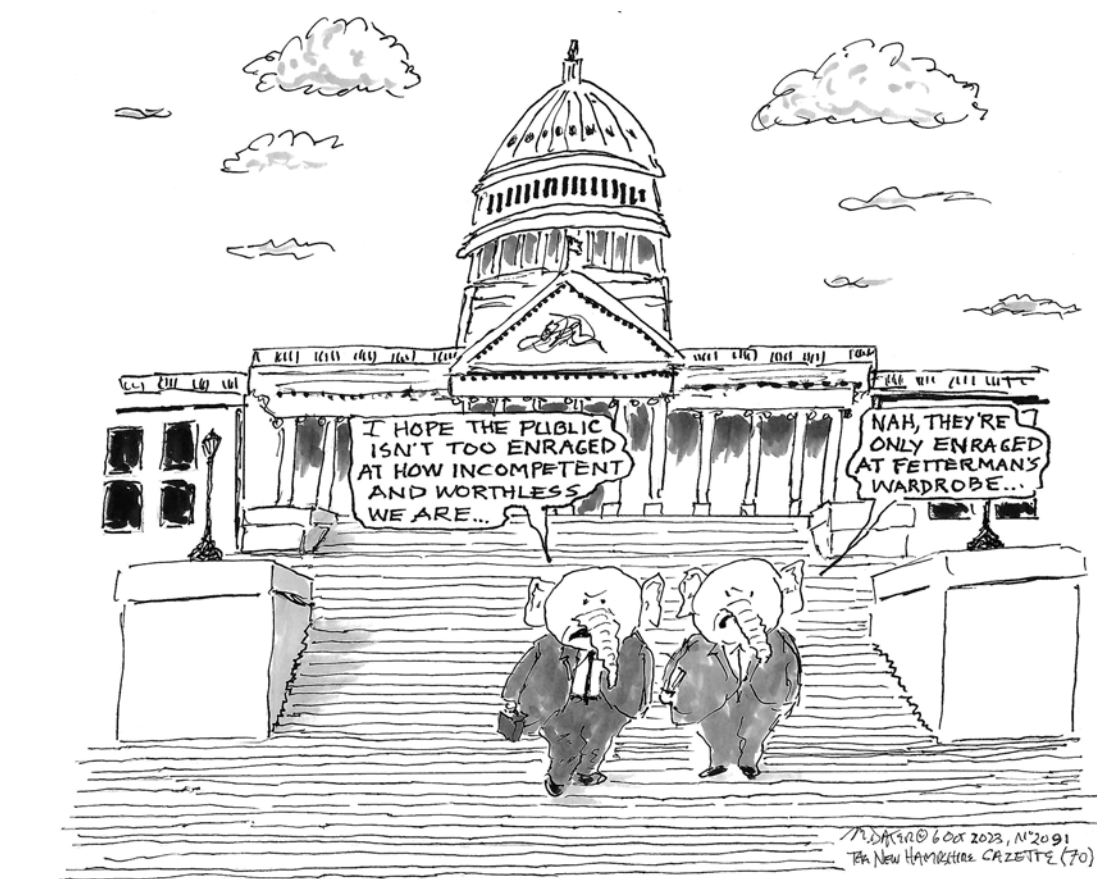
who calls himself an "investigative journalist," had written about the Holocaust in 2017, "I do not and never have believed the six million figure. I think the Red Cross numbers of 250,000 dead in the camps from typhus are more realistic. ... I agree with [Holocaust denier] David Cole about Auschwitz and the gas chambers not being real. ... But I support Israel as a Jewish state and Zionism as a concept."

A few days earlier, according to *The Hill*, Gaetz had "appeared on prominent pro-Trump conspiracy theorist Alex Jones's online show, Infowars. In his appearance, Gaetz complained about being described as a conspiracy theorist."

The antipathy between Gaetz and McCarthy can be tracked back at least to January 6th of this year. During the penultimate vote leading to McCarthy's Speakership, Gaetz—who, seeking a little gravitas-by-association, was seated next to Lauren Boebert [R-Colo.],—had voted "present." McCarthy walked up the aisle to wheedle for a bit; the finger-pointing Gaetz was having none of that, though. The situation, already testy, began to get hostile. Rep. Mike Rogers [R-Ala.] started to harangue Gaetz, when someone behind Rogers clamped a hand over his mouth.

It appeared that all was lost for McCarthy. The House was about to adjourn when the orange *deus ex machina* made a few phone calls. McCarthy had been handing out concessions like party favors throughout the protracted process. Now his soul, such as it was, had been subdivided among the members of the QAnon caucus, and the disgraced former President, as well.

The public did get something out of all this tsuris: entertainment. The usual rules for TV cameras in



the House guarantee the footage will be boring. Since those rules can only be imposed by a sitting Speaker, though, the anarchy was, in fact, televised.

One might have thought—given the Republican penchant for heaping scorn on Neville Chamberlain for being a spineless appeaser—that Speaker McCarthy would have been more careful than to give his bomb-throwing caucus permission for single Member to frag him. As is so often the case, though, when dealing with knuckleheads, one would be wrong.

But, here we are: the most powerful nation on Earth—when Republicans have not trussed it up like the Lilliputians did Gulliver, the better to work on their daddy issues—is on hold until further notice. Good thing there's not much else going on.

We'll get through this, if it doesn't go on too long. One of these days, though, we might need a govern-

ment again. What if a land war starts in Europe? Suppose some thugs in the Caucasus decided to start ethnic cleansing?

In view of our temporary state of aphasia, surely the Lord will spare us from storms like the one that recently shut down New York City. What are the odds that anyone will need FEMA before Republicans reach a truce in their civil war? Granted, that may take a little while. Gaetz is currently making the rounds fundraising, with McCarthy's scalp hanging from his belt.

Newt Gingrich, for one, isn't happy about that, and he wants Gaetz expelled—a reaction causing irony-meters everywhere to go "tilt." The former Speaker holds the only patent issued for "take no prisoners" politics since the days of dueling ended. On Gingrich's ouster in 1998, he said, "I'm willing to lead, but I'm not willing to preside over people who are cannibals." Then he

took a swig of mead from the hollowed-out skull of his predecessor, Rep. Jim Wright [D-Texas].

Ever trying to be helpful, Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene [R-Ga.] is calling for former President Trump to be named Speaker.

Sadly, the Republican Conference's Rule 26 (a) says, "A member of the Republican Leadership shall step aside if indicted for a felony for which a sentence of two or more years imprisonment may be imposed." Of course, these are Republicans. They're adept at ignoring inconvenient rules.

In other news, NASA announced on Wednesday that the odds of Earth being hit by the asteroid Bennu are higher than were previously thought.

Unfortunately, those odds are still extremely low, and there is no chance of any impact coming soon enough to spare us from a possible Speaker Trump.

## The Alleged News®

### Profits Over Progress: Corporate Sabotage at the Heart of Our Nation's Dysfunction

**Corporations have far too much power. But We the People have more.**

by Robert Weissman and Joan Claybrook

[The following is based on an excerpt of the authors' new book, *The Corporate Sabotage of America's Future and What We Can Do About It* (Public Citizen & Essential Books / 2023).]

It is now conventional wisdom that America is a divided country, with bitter partisan splits over just about everything.

It's undoubtedly true that Americans have divergent views on many important topics.

But the narrative of a Divided America obscures an equally important and rarely acknowledged truth: Americans agree on a great deal. Americans of all political stripes believe that big corporations

have too much power and are weakening the nation.

- Corporations regularly rip us off with illegitimate fees, monopolistic pricing and windfall profiteering. Americans agree: This is wrong and the government should end corporate ripoffs.

- Corporations poison the air we breathe and the water we drink, spreading asthma and other diseases. Americans agree: This is wrong and the government should protect our health and the environment from corporate polluters.

- Corporations crashed the economy in 2008, costing us trillions of dollars and throwing millions out of work, and forcing millions of families out of their homes. Americans agreed: This was wrong and the executives responsible should be held accountable, and the Big Banks

most responsible should be broken up.

- Corporations gorge at the public trough, gouging taxpayers by extracting a vast array of ill-advised subsidies, giveaways, guarantees and other corporate welfare programs. Americans agree: This is wrong and the government should manage our public assets in the interests of the public.

- Corporations pay workers too little, oppose raising the minimum wage, undermine union organizing and expose workers to dangers. Americans agree: This is wrong and the government should guarantee workers' rights.

This new book of ours—titled *The Corporate Sabotage of America's Future and What We Can Do About It*—is about this central fact upon which Americans agree—the need

to confront corporate power—and how we can do that.

#### Americans Agree: Corporate Power is Out of Control

It's not an exaggeration to say Americans are united around the idea of controlling corporate power.

For just a moment, let's dive into some of the details.

By overwhelming margins, Americans favor steps to crack down on corporate abuses and protect regular people. For example:

- Roughly 90 percent of Americans want Medicare to negotiate drug prices.
- More than 80 percent of Americans want to end Dark Money—secret spending—in elections
- In fact, there's virtual unanimity among the public about the need to transform the campaign funding system. The only debate is between

those who favor "fundamental changes" and those who think it should be "completely rebuilt."

- Seven in 10 Americans favor transitioning the U.S. economy from fossil fuels to 100 percent clean energy by 2050.

- Three-quarters of Americans want stricter limits on smog. Even given the false choice between environmental protection and economic growth, voters overwhelmingly favor environmental protection.

- More than 4 in 5 favor banning single-use plastics.
- By a greater than 2-1 margin, voters support empowering Americans to sue corporations directly when they violate federal regulations.

**The Alleged News®**

from page one

- More than 3 in 4 Americans believe CEOs should be held accountable for the crimes their companies commit, including being sent to jail, because there should be real consequences to corporate wrongdoing

- Eight in 10 Americans think the minimum wage is too low, and a strong majority favor raising it to \$15 an hour (more than double the current federal minimum).

- Four in 5 Americans support a requirement for paid family and medical leave.

- Three quarters of Americans want the government to do more to protect online privacy.

- Over two-thirds of Americans favor increased taxes on corporations and the wealthy.

- With near unanimity, voters believe there should be increased enforcement of laws and regulations in the U.S. against corporations.

The list goes on and on and on. Americans believe corporations are causing major problems and they want action.

This is not the profile of a divided nation!

(To appreciate just how astounding all these findings are, consider that only three in four people correctly believe the earth revolves

around the sun.)

OK, so Americans agree on an agenda to limit corporate abuse across a broad range of policies, from protecting the environment to taxation, campaign finance to drug pricing and more.

Why don't we get what we want?

The simple answer to that question is: Too much corporate power. As Americans almost uniformly understand, excessive corporate power rigs the political system. Corporations and the super-rich slather politicians with money—or intimidate them with Dark Money attack ads—and they expect, and receive, consideration in return.

But as important as campaign money is, it's not just funding that rigs the political system. Corporations hire legions of lobbyists to influence Congress and regulatory agencies. A very substantial portion of these lobbyists worked in Congress or the very agencies they are paid to influence. They are able to draw not only on their insider knowledge of how things work, but on their personal connections with members of Congress, congressional staff and key officials in regulatory agencies.

Corporations understand very well that public opinion matters in policy debates. So along with playing the inside political game, they

spend hundreds of millions every year to commission studies, support think tanks and academics, hold conferences, and pay for issue advertisements to try to muddle public opinion.

Corporations aim to do more than influence public opinion with all that spending. The reports and papers from academics and think tanks lend a veneer of legitimacy when corporations make their arguments to policymakers. And the advertising is aimed to intimidate lawmakers—this money could easily be spent against you—into conforming with corporate demands.

Corporations also bring a superpower to political fights: The ability to argue that almost any measure that might reduce their profitability will threaten jobs and the overall well-being of the American economy. "Make us pay higher wages and we'll have to lay people off." "Require us to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and we'll lose out to overseas competitors." "Make us pay our fair share in taxes and we'll lose our incentive to invest." "Require us to pay a fair return to the government on the public resources we use and prices will go up for consumers."

We hear these arguments endlessly. They have great force, and not just because people need jobs and don't want to pay more for things

they need. They have such force because corporations have a tight grip on the economy and people and politicians fear their power. This is true even though we've seen time and again that when we make corporations behave fairly, they do just fine. In fact, many of the things forced on corporations—from the minimum wage to safety belts and airbags in cars, from safe drug regulation to anti-monopoly rules—have strengthened the economy and provided new profitable opportunities for business.

**Dissecting Corporate Power: The Plan of this Book**

*Corporate Sabotage* examines the problems posed by excessive corporate power. It highlights two cross-cutting issues—corporate dominance of our politics and corporate welfare—and it looks at three industry sectors: Big Pharma, Big Oil and Big Tech. These are among the most profitable and impactful industries in the world, each heavily dependent on the federal government and each exerting enormous influence over that same government.

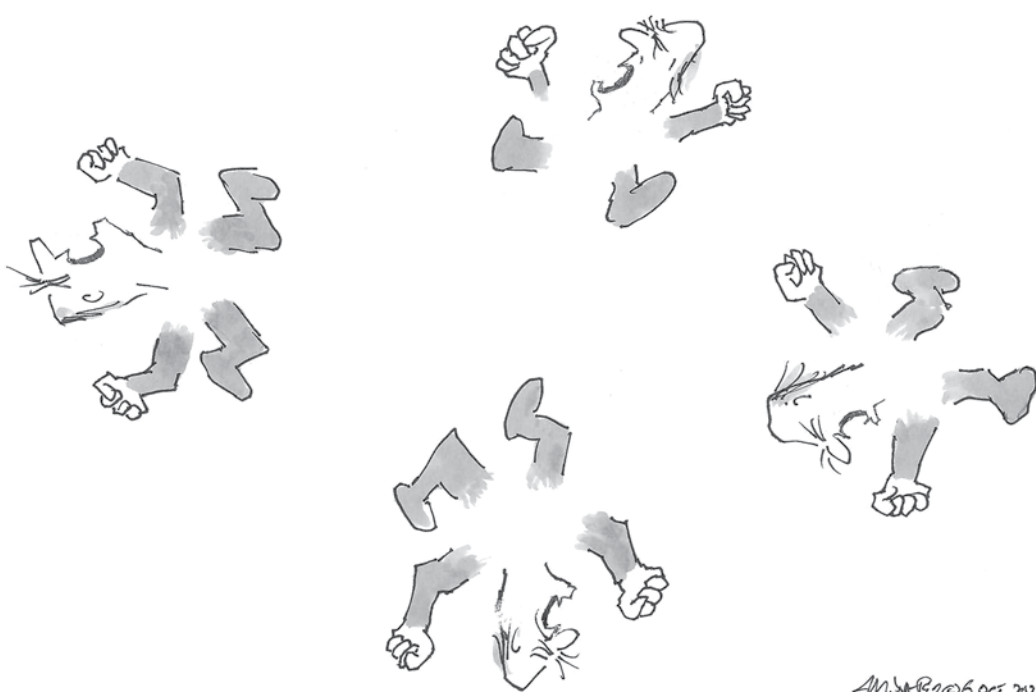
It's the central thesis of our new book that corporations have far, far too much power. But at the end of the day, We the People have more—if we choose to organize, mobilize and demand the transformative

changes that we support by overwhelming majorities.

Robert Weissman is the president of Public Citizen. Weissman was formerly director of Essential Action, editor of Multinational Monitor, a magazine that tracks corporate actions worldwide, and a public interest attorney at the Center for Study of Responsive Law. He was a leader in organizing the 2000 IMF and World Bank protests in D.C. and helped make HIV drugs available to the developing world. Joan Claybrook was president of Public Citizen from 1982 until she retired in 2009. This work is licensed under Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0). Feel free to republish and share widely.

**Group Behind Supreme Court CFPB Case Is Full of "Criminals, Crooks, and Predatory Lenders"**

by Jake Johnson  
The U.S. Supreme Court on Tuesday heard oral arguments in a case brought by a payday lending industry trade group that represents companies with long histories of engaging in criminal activity and drawing hundreds of millions of dollars in fines from regulators—including the federal consumer protection agency they are now attempting to destroy.



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An analysis released by the watchdog group *Accountable.US* ahead of Tuesday's proceedings cites a number of instances in which Community Financial Services Association of America (CFSA) board member companies were found to have taken part in "corruption and ethics scandals, including racketeering convictions, Ponzi scheme payouts, and payments to disgraced politicians."

The CFSA is before the Supreme Court on Tuesday challenging the constitutionality of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's (CFPB) funding structure. The bureau's funding comes from the Federal Reserve system, not annual congressional appropriations.

If the Supreme Court sides with the CFSA, the consumer bureau—which is tasked with combating corporate abuses—could be forced to rely on Congress for its annual budget, opening it up to politically motivated cuts pushed by industry-backed Republicans who have sought to abolish the CFPB.

The Supreme Court could also issue a more sweeping ruling that completely invalidates the actions

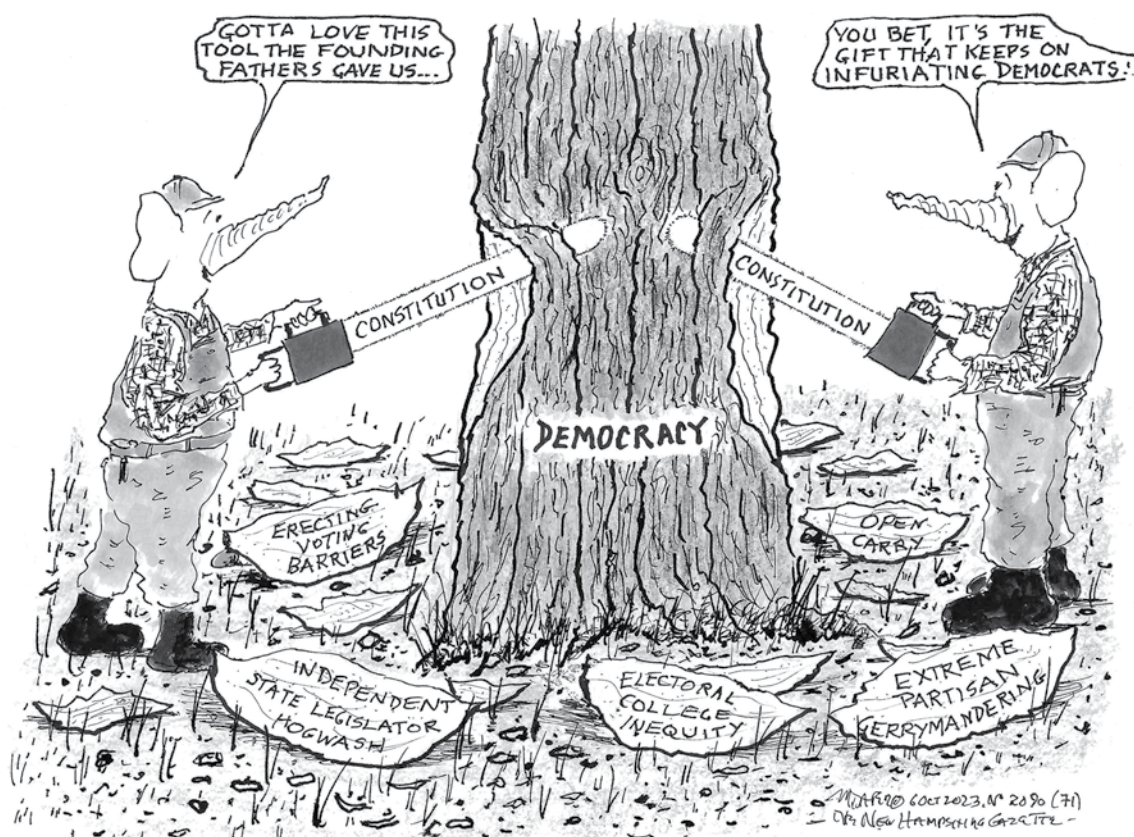
the agency has taken on behalf of consumers over the past dozen years, a decision that would have far-reaching implications for federal agencies, critical programs, and the U.S. economy.

The *Accountable.US* analysis makes clear that the beneficiaries of any weakening of the CFPB would be companies that have unlawfully preyed on consumers.

Enova International, a financial services firm whose chief strategy officer serves on the board of the CFSA, was fined \$3.2 million by the CFPB in 2019 "for debiting consumer bank accounts without their authorization," *Accountable.US* noted.

A year later, Progressive Leasing—a subsidiary of PROG Holdings—paid \$175 million to settle a Federal Trade Commission lawsuit alleging the lender 'frequently' misled consumers by charging consumers twice the advertised ticket price for payments on rent-to-own items," the watchdog added.

The group estimated that CFSA companies have paid more than \$200 million in fines levied by U.S.



Basking in rare sunshine, the McIntyre Building looms over Ceres Street. On Tuesday, the bidding in the GSA's online auction had risen to \$8.5 million, putting the parcel beyond our reach. This is most unfortunate. If we were to redevelop this property, our first priority would have been to put the Post Office back where it belongs. We'll have to settle for Plan B. Whosoever does acquire and redevelop this property, beware; fail to bring back the Post Office, and you will face our eternal opprobrium.

regulators.

Liz Zelnick, director of the Economic Security and Corporate Power program at *Accountable.US*, said Tuesday that "if ever there was a time to consider the source, it's this lawsuit."

"A gang of predatory payday lenders that include convicted racketeers and accused tax cheats, embezzlers, and scam artists want the Supreme Court to tie up the CFPB in knots of political obstruction and hamper the agency's work protecting consumers," said Zelnick. "These loan sharks notorious for charging as much as 1,200% interest rates are not the honest brokers and constitutional champions the financial industry and their lackeys in Congress make them out to be."

"If the Supreme Court sides with the criminals, crooks, and predatory lenders behind this case," Zelnick warned, "it would open the door to the worst rollback of consumer protection in U.S. history and mass uncertainty for the markets and other

agencies."

*Accountable.US* and other watchdogs have called on Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito to recuse from the case, citing their ties to the Koch network and other corporate groups and wealthy individuals that support—or stand to benefit from—the challenge to the CFPB. Both justices have refused to do so.

"It's far past time for these justices to stop putting their billionaire pals over everyday Americans," *Accountable.US* president Caroline Ciccone said Monday. "Recusing themselves from cases where they have glaring conflicts of interest is the very least they can do to restore some semblance of credibility and integrity to our Supreme Court."

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.

**Why Concerns About The Portland Press Herald's Funding Are Overblown**

By Dan Kennedy

Recently Max Tani of *Semafor* and Richard J. Tofel, who write the newsletter *Second Rough Draft*, have raised questions about whether the folks involved in the purchase of the *Portland Press Herald* and its affiliated Maine papers from the retiring publisher, Reade Brower, have been sufficiently transparent in disclosing who the funders are.

The papers were bought during the summer by the National Trust for Local News, a nonprofit that has been involved in several acquisitions aimed at preventing legacy newspapers from falling into the hands of corporate chain ownership. In Maine, Tani and Tofel argue, the billionaire George Soros may have been more deeply involved than was previously known, while the involvement of another billionaire

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**Murph's Fortnightly Quote**  
"There is nothing I dread so much as the division of the republic into two great parties."  
—John Adams (1735-1826)

"Behind every great fortune there is a crime."  
—Honoré de Balzac  
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**How to End a Shutdown**

To the Editor:

The first of the month is when people's rent comes due. It is also when most people get paid. Unfortunately, federal employees will not be getting paid this October first because rogue members of the GOP in the House of Representatives won't allow a vote to fund the government.

They do not care if federal employees cannot pay their rent without a paycheck, or buy food for their family, or make a car payment. They also expect our men and women in uniform to protect this country without getting paid on time. They expect Air Traffic Controllers to work without receiving their paycheck too. They do not care about creating hardships for government employees. They think their constituents do not care either. They do not care because they are not going without a paycheck.

If public employees have to experience hardship, so should those who benefit from their work. I believe the Air Traffic Controllers should stay home until the government shutdown is over. If the public found their flights cancelled because a few Congressmen want to hold the country hostage the shutdown would be over in hours not days or weeks.

Walter Hamilton  
Portsmouth, N.H.

Walter:

Since Speaker McCarthy and the Democrats managed to get a temporary spending bill passed, we won't be seeing this played out this month. However, Congress shows no sign of becoming significantly more functional. So, we'll get to go through the whole #@&ing rigamarole again in six weeks.

The last time Air Traffic controllers went on strike, Reagan fired them all. If Trump gets a second term and they strike, he'll have them all executed.

The Editor

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**Constitution, Schmonstitution**

Dear Editor,

Trump's team of rascals charged in the Georgia election interference case are attempting to overturn Constitutional law in the twinkling of an evil

eye.

For example, former federal justice department employee Jeffrey Clark is making a claim that the President has an "unqualified and illimitable right" to change federal job responsibilities from public to private to enable folks like himself to undertake Watergate-style partisan political activities at the state level. The idea was to change Georgia plumbing using federal stationery to coax Georgia into withholding certification of their election results (*The Hill*, September 15, 2023).

Articles I and II of the Constitution are all about qualifying and limiting the President's general functions in every way imaginable. Also, there is a long history of law qualifying and limiting how the President runs his own branch, ultimately tying employment decisions and directives to legislative branch checks and balances.

The President is not the footloose and fancy-free employer Clark makes him out to be. But Clark's lawyers are taking a stab at transferring his case to a more friendly federal court and will appeal if they lose. Who knows, some judge somewhere might be asleep at the wheel or maybe swayed by road rage.

Kimball Shinkoskey  
Woods Cross, Utah

Kimball:

Your plumbing and stationery metaphor threw us for a minute there. Thanks to your citation we were able to track down the piece in *The Hill*.

Your point is well taken about "some judge somewhere". It's probably just a matter of time before the 5th Circuit decides in Trump's favor on this.

The Editor

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**From Whence Cometh Our Salvation?**

To the Editor,

Most of the creatures that inhabit this planet—aquatic, insect, and mammal—are subject to mechanisms that regulate their populations, the apparent exception being human beings, whose profligate reproduction coupled with an inherent inclination to kill everything in sight including each other, has rendered those mechanisms more or less moot. But perhaps we are



subject to some innate mechanism that simply hasn't yet fully activated. Perhaps, as the United States' third president, Thomas Jefferson, wrote to James Madison on December 20, 1787: "When we get piled upon one another in large cities, as in Europe, we shall become corrupt as in Europe, and go to eating one another as they do there." That speculation, for Jefferson I suspect recourse to hyperbole, was dramatized in "Soylent Green," a 1973 film set in the future year 2022. It's 2023 and we're not eating canned each other, so guess that hasn't happened, yet.

The other likely innate population limiting measures are a function of our penchant for self-destruction. Thus far, we've refrained from incinerating ourselves and exterminating by way of collateral damage most of the rest of the life on this planet through a global war, nuclear or, sans incineration, biological. It seems we've chosen a slower, albeit rapidly accelerating, alternative honed on our destruction of other species' habitat, that is, destroying our own. How remarkable that even as we recognize what we're doing, we seem impotent to stop. We pay mindless obeisance to a flawed economic construct that inhibits anything that threatens capital while world leaders variously wage localized wars and deny reality. So what's to become of us? Well, unless there are alien beings of superior intelligence watching and prepared to intervene (there are, and they are, but that's a subject on which I'm not at liberty to discourse at present), there will either be wailing and lamentation in the deserts left by ravaging wildfires and mass drowning where the rising and warming seas meet the land, or the taking up of pitchforks and torches and preemptory turning out of the gilded servants of Capitalism and its god, Mammon. I favor the latter... or the aliens.

John Simon  
Portsmouth, New Hampshire

John:

The traditional approach, we understand, has been to look unto the hills for salvation. That was before the Trumpa-zoid caucus of the House took over, though. We'd like to keep *This Olde Rag* going for a few more decades—or centuries. Could you ask your extraterrestrial friends to get a move on?

The Editor

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**DeSantis at Gitmo**

To the Editor:

The August 11th edition of the *Gazette* contained on its front page, middle left column, a brief bit about Gov. DeSantis that started "DeSantis, as a young lawyer at Gitmo..." That is the second time that I have seen that story, but I have not seen a source. Do you have a source? If so, I would appreciate knowing it.

The use of old Southern Plantations as source wedding destinations increased dramatically once their previous name "Former Negro Slave Concentration Camp" was dropped.

Thanks,  
Stanley D. Stephenson  
Grew up in Georgia/Tennessee  
Stanley:

We're glad you asked. *The March, 2023 issue of The Baffler* [thebaffler.com/salvos/the-sunshine-imperium-craven]—an outstanding publication—carried a piece by Jasper Craven headlined, "The Sunshine Imperium: the militarism of Ron DeSantis." It's not pleasant reading, but...

The Editor

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**Beware "AFP Action"**

To the Editor:

My mailbox has been inundated with 11 x 6 inch, heavy stock, two-sided, 4-color mailers. About two weeks ago I started saving them and have already collected four. These same political ads are plastered all over Facebook

every day, multiple times, all-in-all costing millions of dollars.

They come from AFP (Americans for Prosperity) Action, a super-PAC funded by billionaires—the Koch Family network—for the benefit of, well, billionaires.

The message is always the same: Don't support Trump, because if he wins the nomination, Biden will win the Presidency! So, the question is, why are they so against Biden? The answer is simple, but don't look for it on their mailers.

Biden has worked hard to reverse the failed trickle-down economics of the Republicans—which is to give billions of dollars to the rich. Instead, Bidenomics is grassroots economics, supporting working and middle class people with programs and policies that save them money and provide needed services. And the economy is thriving with this approach.

The Koch billionaires do not want this. What they want is More—more money, more tax cuts, more power over workers, more ability to pollute and more ability to do whatever they want—all without any government oversight or restriction.

If AFP Action is for it, you need to be against it!

Michael Frandzel  
Portsmouth, N.H.

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**Trump vs. the Justice Department**

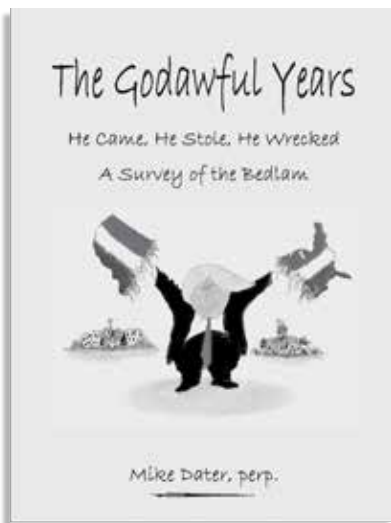
Dear Editor,

"A government shutdown is the last chance to defund these political prosecutions against me and other patriots." — Donald Trump

Though the government shutdown was averted at the last minute (literally), not only was it an attempt to "burn it all down" by the MAGA extremists, it was yet another obstruction of justice "Hail Mary pass" attempted by

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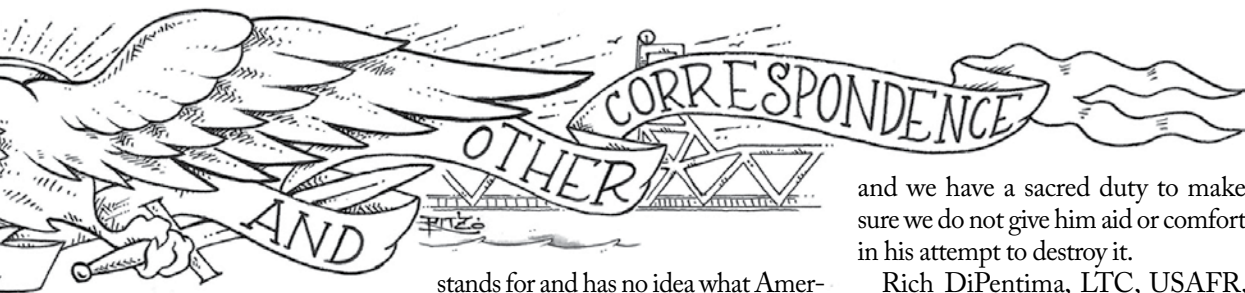
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the four-time, felony indicted, former President Donald J. Trump.

This travesty must stop. The country has been damaged enough by Trump's nefarious ways and his pact with the extremist MAGA members of Congress.

If the end game is to eventually shut down and knee-cap our Constitutional Democracy by attempting to destroy its governmental structures, the bad guys seem to be gaining ground.

Genevieve Harris-Fraser

Orange, Mass.

Genevieve:

*Who ever would have thought that the Party of Lincoln would some day devolve into carrying water for a guy who's trying to shut down the government to avoid prosecution for treason?*

The Editor

====

**Trump vs. the Defense Department**

Dear Editor:

Recently, two now-retired generals who served within the Trump administration spoke out about what it means when you take the oath as a member of the military to protect and defend the Constitution against all enemies foreign and domestic. They also passionately expressed the sacrifice so many have made to protect and defend that Constitution. In doing so, they made direct and indirect references to Donald Trump and his disdain for those who sacrificed for our nation.

Trump's former chief of staff Marine Corps General John Kelly confirmed to CNN a number of the damning stories that emerged during Trump's presidency about his denigration of wounded, captured, or killed military personnel as "suckers" and "losers," with whom he didn't want to be seen.

Kelly went on to call Trump: "A person that has no idea what America

stands for and has no idea what America is all about. A person who cavalierly suggests that a selfless warrior (Gen. Mark Milley) who has served his country for 40 years in peacetime and war should lose his life for treason—in expectation that someone will take action. A person who admires autocrats and murderous dictators. A person that has nothing but contempt for our democratic institutions, our Constitution, and the rule of law. . . . There is nothing more that can be said. God help us."

At his retirement ceremony, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley stated; "You see, we in uniform are unique among the world's armies. We are unique among the world's militaries. We don't take an oath to a country. We don't take an oath to a tribe. We don't take an oath to a religion. We don't take an oath to a king or a queen or to a tyrant or a dictator. And we don't take an oath to a wannabe dictator. We don't take an oath to an individual. We take an oath to the Constitution. and we take an oath to the idea that is America. And we're willing to die to protect it." Those who sacrificed themselves on the altar of freedom in the last two and a half centuries of this country must not have done so in vain. The millions wounded in our nation's wars did not sacrifice their limbs and shed their blood to see this great experiment in democracy perish from this earth. No. The United States military will always be true to those that came before us. We will never, under any circumstances, turn our back on our duty."

I sincerely hope that all my fellow veterans who took that oath to protect and defend the Constitution against all enemies foreign and domestic take heed of the words of Generals' Kelly and Milley. Donald Trump remains an ongoing threat to that Constitution,

and we have a sacred duty to make sure we do not give him aid or comfort in his attempt to destroy it.

Rich DiPentima, LTC, USAFR, Ret.

Portsmouth, N.H.

Rich:

*Among the myriad problems ensuing from the presidency of Dolt .45 is this: millions of people have felt compelled to uncritically defend the Defense Department. Being generals, it's only natural that Milley and Kelly would cast the military in a glowing light. Former draftees, and formerly-coerced "vounteers," particularly those now getting long in the tooth, may have a more nuanced perspective.*

*It was bad enough when Reagan exploited Vietnam veterans to rehabilitate the military in the eyes of the American public.*

*To think that a draft-dodging, orange-make-up-wearing goon could repeat that cynical stunt by insulting the nation's war dead. . . well, that would be a pretty good measure of the times.*

The Editor

====

**Bethlehem Landfill Seems to be Leaking**

Dear Editor:

I have some bad news to share with my fellow Granite Staters. Based on my analysis of the numerous groundwater monitoring reports, and my research of the historical record, it is my belief that we are witnessing the failure of the North Country Environmental Services [NCES] Landfill in Bethlehem, N.H.

According to the July, 2023 Tri-Annual Groundwater Monitoring Report, submitted to New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services [NHDES] by Sanborn, Head and Associates on behalf of Casella and the NCES Landfill, "forever chemicals," also known as PFAS, were detected in groundwater at 11 of 19 monitoring wells tested for PFAS compounds. Of particular concern is the detection and levels for perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), present in

11 of those 19 groundwater monitoring wells tested for PFAS. The EPA is proposing to designate PFOA as a hazardous substance under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), also known as "Superfund." According to the EPA, this proposed rulemaking "would increase transparency around releases of these harmful chemicals and help to hold polluters accountable for cleaning up their contamination." According to Mr. Tim White, of Sanborn, Head and Associates, "concentrations (of PFOA) detected at B-304DR and B-928D (9.17 ng/l) represented new maximum concentrations at those locations. The PFOA concentration at B-304DR increased from 41.1 ng/l in July 2022, to 63.4 ng/l in April 2023, and to 91.4 ng/l in July 2023" (from page 10, August 24, 2023 SHA cover letter to NHDES). New Hampshire's Ambient Groundwater Quality Standards (AGQS) for PFOA is 12 parts-per-trillion (ppt), or 12 ng/L. The July concentration for PFOA at B-304DR is 7.6 TIMES the AGQS limit!

I have recently obtained and analyzed lab test results for NCES leachate, obtained thru 91-A Right-To-Know requests submitted to the City of Concord WWTP and the NHDES-operated Franklin WWTP, from 2018 thru 2023. I have identified the PFAS compounds detected in those NCES leachate lab test results, so as to establish a PFAS "profile," based on concentrations detected. The top 7 PFAS compounds present in NCES Landfill leachate have been consistently detected in the groundwater at the B-304DR monitoring well, as well as numerous other monitoring wells. In other words, it would appear that the NCES Landfill is failing to contain the leachate generated, based on the PFAS compounds detected at the various groundwater monitoring wells, and most particularly, at the B-304DR well. That, of course, is my conclusion, based on the data from both the NCES groundwater monitoring well reports and the NCES leachate lab results.

However, Mr. White of Sanborn,

Head and Associates has consistently downplayed these numerous detections and exceedances of PFAS contaminants in groundwater at NCES, which happen to be outside of the lined landfill. In his reporting to Mr. James O'Rourke of NHDES, Mr. White has consistently relied upon a narrative of placing blame on the old, unlined landfill, as well as past earthwork at the landfill site, as causal factors. In the July, 2023 report, "unlined landfill" comes up 52 times in a text search. This despite the fact that the old Sanco unlined landfill was excavated by Doug Casella and Casella Construction in the fall of 1993, and relocated to the "state-of-the-art," double-lined landfill, as touted by Casella Waste Systems in an August 23, 1993 public notice printed in the *Littleton Courier*. Ironically, in a "Contamination Assessment" letter, dated November 5, 1993, Mr. Paul Sanborn, President of Sanborn, Head and Associates wrote to the NHDES Waste Management Division to inform them of the completion of the waste-relocation project and that "it does not appear that residual VOC contamination is present in the soils in the excavation area," clearing the way for the development of Stage II over the excavated site. Furthermore, in a December 9, 1993 letter, with the subject line reading "Contamination Assessment Refuse Relocation Project," Mr. James Berg of NHDES Waste Management Division wrote to Mr. Leo Laroche of Consumat-Sanco, Inc. of the department's "concurrence" that "no further excavation to remove additional soils is necessary."

In other words, which is a more plausible explanation for the continuous detections, and exceedances of AGQs limits, of PFAS contaminants, and 1,4-Dioxane, in groundwater at the NCES Landfill; that the old, unlined landfill, excavated 30 years ago and given a clean bill of health by both Sanborn, Head and Associates and NHDES, is to blame, or that we could be witnessing the failure of the 30-year

*Mash Notes, Hate Mail, &c.*

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## Green Hydrogen Coming to the U.S. and New Hampshire

by Peter Somssich and Kent Howard

Both the recent Pandemic and the Russian war against Ukraine have radically changed the energy expectations in many parts of the world. A recent article by staff at the Rocky Mountain Institute titled “From Deep Crisis, Profound Change” explains that both events have resulted in governments and businesses reconsidering the benefits of renewable energy sources. These include the use of green hydrogen and green ammonia. While most concerns previously focused on climate change issues and prices, now many stakeholders have decided that energy security is a higher priority than global warming. But at the same time, prices for renewable energy including energy storage continue to drop, while fossil fuel prices have increased and remain volatile.

There has been criticism of President Biden’s support for Hydrogen

Research Hubs. Critics focus on the federal government providing subsidies for hydrogen production regardless of the production method. At first, both fossil fuels and green renewable energy sourced hydrogen would be subsidized. The fossil fuel subsidies will be phased out, however, over the first 10 years. After that only green hydrogen continues to receive subsidies. An adequate supply must first be produced and made readily available for demand to increase. A hydrogen or ammonia-based economy is transformational and needs initial incentives to get off the ground. Currently, no better clean energy systems seem available to decarbonize areas of business such as shipping, airlines, heavy duty trucks, cement plants, making steel and heating.

The only state employing hydrogen in their energy mix is California. At least two carmakers, Toyota and Kia, have been operating fleets of hydrogen fuel-cell vehicles in California for several years. These cars

have a range of nearly 300 miles, are zero-emission, and need only minutes to refuel. Because today the cheapest source of hydrogen is from fossil fuels, that is how the hydrogen will initially be produced. California is working to change that. Many states face similar challenges, which is why the Biden hydrogen energy research hubs could have a big impact.

Unfortunately, New Hampshire’s Governor Sununu has refused to participate with the five other New England states to investigate the potential of using hydrogen. New Hampshire is currently participating in the looming offshore wind industry. It will be interesting to see if that wind energy will produce electricity or compressed hydrogen gas as other countries are already doing. There is also technological progress on the horizon. *E.g.*, one company believes that an electric cable material that they have developed could carry four times the energy of current electric grid cables. Here in New Hamp-

shire, the blossoming of the Community Power movement offers new opportunities. Cities and towns are negotiating with suppliers for lower electricity prices, but in the future, they could leverage their coalition to negotiate and purchase other energy products and resources at substantial savings.

One of the big questions facing the new green economy is: how can renewable energy be stored when it is generated, but not needed. Traditional energy storage techniques have included pumping water using electricity to a higher-level reservoir and releasing it to generate the electricity when that is needed. Other energy storage systems use batteries and even fly-wheel technology. Many of these options do not have enough energy storage capacity or cannot release enough energy quickly enough to meet the rapidly changing demand curves.

Hydrogen gas on the other hand, can be converted into electricity when needed by using a fuel-cell.

Also, when traditional gas pipelines are used to carry hydrogen, they can also be used to store the hydrogen when there is a greater supply than demand. This is done by increasing or decreasing the pressure of the gas. A model for such an application is the Toshiba Fukushima Hydrogen Research Field in Japan. For three years now, this site has been providing electricity on demand when needed by the grid using renewable energy including hydrogen. The field includes thousands of solar panels that convert sunlight into electricity. That electricity uses an electrolyzer to split water into hydrogen and oxygen. The hydrogen is compressed and stored on site. When the grid requires more electricity, the hydrogen is converted to electricity using fuel-cells. The process might seem inefficient; however, the sun’s energy is free and unlimited, and the energy can be stored as needed and converted to electricity when demand requires.

—==—

from page five

old “state-of-the-art” double-liner system of Stage I?

Regardless of the cause, the data does not lie. There is, and has been, a steady, consistent release of contaminants from the NCES Landfill, all within the watershed of the Ammonoosuc River, and upstream of Littleton. Is this a violation of the Clean Water Act? I would think so, as both SHA and NHDES have stated that “downgradient dilution” is occurring, as well as downgradient migration of contaminants in groundwater flowing towards the river. Will the EPA investigate? I’ve sent numerous requests, since NHDES seems unconcerned, seemingly accepting of the narrative advanced by Mr. White. Once the EPA designates PFOA a hazardous substance under CERCLA, will the Town of Bethlehem be home to a new Superfund site? I don’t see how

it doesn’t. The fears and concerns of so many residents over the years of contentious growth of this landfill seem to now be justified, and sadly, realized. Will Casella be held responsible for the expense of cleanup and remediation? We shall see, as their track record of accepting responsibility is shaky at best.

In the meantime, I would ask that you reach out to NHDES officials and ask them what they are going to do about this mess, which they have known about since at least 2017, when PFAS testing began at NCES. It is dangerously irresponsible for NHDES to allow NCES to continue to operate, thus ensuring the continued generation of millions of gallons of leachate, which the data seems to confirm is not being contained within the lined landfill. It’s

time to close the dump, once and for all. We certainly don’t need another one of these environmental disasters next to Forest Lake, at a site surrounded by wetlands which also feed into the Ammonoosuc River, also upstream of the Town of Littleton.

All of this, of course, is my opinion, based on my research, the historical record, and of course, the data provided to NHDES by Sanborn, Head and Associates on behalf of the NCES Landfill, owned and operated by Casella Waste Systems of Rutland, Vermont. I invite you to review my work, as well as the vast amount of documentation which I continue to gather, all of which is available on my website, *SaveForestLake.com*.

Thank You!  
Jon Swan  
Dalton, N.H.  
Jon:  
*Well, that’s horrifying.*  
The Editor



### Republicans are Angry...

Dear Editor,  
The second debate showed us that Republicans are angry about people’s lives being destroyed by fentanyl ferried across the border by brown-skinned mules.

They are angry about parents being frozen out of school choice and curriculum decisions. They are angry about blue-collar crime being ignored by liberal prosecutors.

They are angry about America’s endless overseas wars which require debt-financing from creditors like China. They are angry about government welfare programs that wouldn’t be needed if people listened to evangelical preachers and simply repented.

They are angry about overseas energy dependence when this country has plenty of resources. They are angry they lost their seat of power in the White House.

In all their anger, it seems two things have been lost. First, the

Constitution. No Republican debater mentioned any foundational Constitutional issue like term limits, proper exercise of the war power, or the executive branch usurping Congressional powers.

Also, not a single debater mentioned the party’s real bottom line issues—protecting and expanding the wealth of the one percent class and downplaying the prosecution of white-collar crime.

Kimball Shinkoskey  
Woods Cross, Utah  
Kimball:

*Republicans may very well be “angry about people’s lives being destroyed by fentanyl ferried across the border by brown-skinned mules”—but that doesn’t mean their anger is based in reality.*

*Many Republicans seem to us to be angry about schools challenging their ability to inculcate fascist principles in their children.*

*Your last point is your best point: The GOP is all about protecting and expanding the wealth of the one percent. That’s been the case for decades, but it’s more obvious now than ever.*

The Editor

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FOWLE'S PILE AND HUMOR

# Looking on the Bright Side

by W.D. Ehrhart

I've just had a new experience. For the first time since I began writing essays for the *New Hampshire Gazette*, I finally submitted one so unrelievedly pessimistic that our Alleged Editor rejected it, declining to inflict so bleak and hopeless an argument predicting the all-but-inevitable re-election of Dolt .45 next November with no way to avoid that outcome except through divine intervention.

Well, fair enough. He's not only the editor, but also the publisher and owner of the *Gazette*. He gets to print what he wants and not print what he doesn't want. And he's obligated to consider his readership's sensibilities. Who wants to read something that says, "We're all screwed and there's nothing we can do about it."

And it's not like my work hasn't been rejected by editors hundreds and hundreds of times over the past fifty years. And most editors don't do it as gently and politely as our Alleged Editor did.

Nevertheless, this got me thinking. Indeed, it became a challenge. Can I write something that isn't utter doom-and-gloom? Not easy to do in these times of political insanity, endless war, and global warming. But not impossible.

My wife and I both belong to Twelve Step Programs; not the

same one, but similar enough to share a few things. One of them is the Serenity Prayer. We often recite it together while facing each other and holding hands because both of us find the times we are living in fraught with much to be depressed about.

We've modified our version, however, adding a new last line of our own composition: "Grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can, the wisdom to know the difference, *and the eyes to see what's good.*"

As disturbing as the news is on a daily basis, it's easy to lose sight of the fact that there is still a lot of good in the world. An abundance of good. A cornucopia of riches worth celebrating and reveling in.

For starters, the newspaper you are reading right now is a prime example. In the midst of corporate media as partisan entertainment and apologists for how things are, here's this little shoe-string operation that insists ordinary people can make a difference and we don't have to accept the way things are.

But that's just for starters. Here where I live, we've got a very thoughtful progressive Democrat named Tim Briggs representing us in the state legislature in Harrisburg. He's been hog-tied for over a decade by a lower chamber dominated by Republicans who, like the rest of

their ilk, have drifted farther and farther toward the MAGA-right.

My wife and I often attend his "breakfast town meetings," and we've been in awe of his resilience and refusal to walk away from public life. And in the 2022 election, for the first time in a dozen years, the Democrats gained a slim majority in the Pennsylvania Assembly, and Briggs can actually get something done.

This past June, Lower Merion Township, where we live, just passed an ordinance banning single-use carry-out plastic bags and requiring most retailers to charge ten cents for paper bags, thus encouraging customers to bring their own reusable bags. Mom's Organic Market, where we do most of our grocery shopping, sells all organic and as often as possible only local produce, and they've installed two free electric car chargers in their parking lot, and they've got a sign on the door that says: "If you can't be polite, shop somewhere else."

Recently, my Thompson Bradley Philadelphia Area Veterans for Peace Chapter 31 donated \$1,000 to an agency providing relief and support for civilian victims of the war in Ukraine. That was nearly half of our available funds.

Last Sunday, Grant Ament, one of my former students who is now a star player in the professional Premier Lacrosse League, comped me

a ticket to their 2023 championship game, and I watched him and his Archers LC win an exciting 15-14 victory over the Waterdogs. Ament racked up two goals and an assist, and I got to sit with two other former students of mine who'd been classmates of Ament's at the Haverford School for Boys.

In a few days, my veteran-pot-friend Dale Ritterbusch will arrive from Wisconsin for a week's visit, something we've been doing annually for nearly thirty years. Just this morning, I saw a blue jay perched on a branch right outside my window as a chipmunk scurried across our condo's courtyard. And I'm about to garnish my sliced bananas with honey from the beehives my daughter and her partner started keeping in their yard a few years ago.

I won't go so far as Monty Python's Eric Idle did in the closing scene of *The Life of Brian* and urge you to "always look on the bright side of life." But it's worth remembering that as lousy as life can often look, there's usually something to feel good about. And I'm thankful to our Alleged Editor for prodding me to remember that.

====

*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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# Who's Behind the Know-Nothing "No Labels" Party?

by Jim Hightower

In the mid-1800s, a new political party flared up in American politics, posing as an alternative to both the Democratic and Republican parties.

Xenophobic and nativist, it was extremely secretive with outsiders about its specific structure, motive, and agenda. Indeed, members were instructed to say "I know nothing" when asked about details—thus it was quickly dubbed the Know-Nothing Party. In 1856, it nominated Millard Fillmore as its presidential nominee, but he was reticent to talk about the party, even refraining from running as an avowed party member. He lost, and the Know-Nothings soon withered.

Yet, here comes another oddly-secretive party. Labeling themselves "No Labels," this reincarnation ought to be named the Nothing Party, for it offers nothing of substance to voters. Its so-called "Common Sense Agenda" is fluffier than cotton candy, yet, it's trying to run a third party candidate in next year's presidential race.

Why? Follow the money! That's not easy to do, though, for this gaggle of conservative corporatists slyly incorporated as a nonprofit "social welfare" outfit—a deceit that lets it hide the names of its political funders from the public. *The New Republic*, however, got records revealing that No Labels is a fat cat front, with Texas billionaire Republican Harlan Crow leading the way.

Who? Crow is the political patron who has secretly been lavishing luxury gifts and cash on Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, who in turn has embraced Crow's plutocratic positions in court cases.

That same plutocratic agenda appears to be fueling No Labels third-party presidential push, for these rich politicians know that a milquetoast spoiler candidate would mostly draw independent moderates from Joe Biden, giving Crow & Company another GOP corporate presidency. It's a cynical game... but that's how they play it.

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## The Alleged News®

from page three

who was reportedly part of the purchase, Hansjörg Wyss, hasn't been disclosed at all.

I'm going to go out on a limb and say that this is essentially a non-issue. Tofel himself notes that the previous management of the papers remains in place and that "invocations of Soros as a sort of bogeyman have long since become a principal way to dog whistle anti-Semitism; it ranks right up there with 'globalist' in this rhetoric."

More to the point, the *Press Herald* itself followed up on Tani's reporting, and it sounds like the full story behind the purchase will be revealed soon. (I was interviewed for the piece, written by reporter Rachel Ohm.) Longtime *Press Herald* publisher Lisa DeSisto, now the CEO and publisher of the Maine Trust for Local News, the nonprofit that

has been set up to own the papers, is quoted as saying, "We want to make more of a splash and have a more comprehensive introduction to the Maine Trust rather than just [putting things out in] pieces. We're really waiting to announce a broader vision."

Added Will Nelligan, who's the Maine project lead for the National Trust: "We will announce that coalition of Maine funders when we announce the Maine Trust."

No, the announcement didn't come in September, as had been originally promised. But is that really a big deal as long as disclosure is on its way? The papers themselves, by the way, remain for-profit entities, so it seems unlikely that either the National Trust or the Maine Trust will be looking for ongoing support to prop them up.

If you take a look at the National Trust's funders, you'll see that, in addition to Soros' Open Society

Foundations, they include a number of respected journalism funders, including the Knight Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, the Democracy Fund and the Lenfest Institute, which owns *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. The Gates Family Foundation, by the way, is a Colorado-based philanthropy that has nothing to do with Bill or Melinda Gates.

When I asked University of Maine journalism professor Michael Socolow to weigh in, he emailed me comments he had previously posted on X/Twitter, noting that Tani and Tofel had emphasized Soros' and Wyss' liberal politics but adding they had been unable to back up whether that was relevant. (To be fair, Tofel seemed less impressed with that angle than Tani.) Socolow said:

"I'm not sure there's a story here. Neither Tani nor Tofel specify the ways the new ownership has altered editorial content. They're seemingly insinuating that the new ownership

purchased the newspapers to shape news content for partisan political reasons. But how much disclosure and transparency about Reade Brower and his business interests did these publications publish before the sale? It's not clear to me why there needs to be a new, and apparently higher, standard simply because the ownership is now non-profit versus commercial. If evidence emerges that the sort of meddling Tani and Tofel insinuate begins occurring, then I agree we have an important story. But we're not there yet."

The purchase of the *Press Herald* papers by the National Trust was unalloyed good news, and it sounds like the questions that Tani and Tofel have raised will be answered soon.

[Thanks to Dan Kennedy, at Media Nation. This work published under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 4.0 United States License.]

