OMNI


Compiled by Dick Bennett for a Culture of Peace, Justice, and Ecology.


What’s at stake: We seek an economic system for all People and species that enables affirmative government and supports domestic and international peace, economic and social justice, human rights, democracy, and protects and enhances the earth and species.

[For more see What’s at stake in Newsletter #18.]

My blog: The War Department and Peace Heroes

http://jamesricharbennett.blogspot.com/

Newsletters:

http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/

Index:

http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/

See Citizens United/McCutcheon, Class, Corporate Crime, Corporate Personhood, Corporations, Economics, Globalization, Go Not to Jail, Greed, Imperialism, Inequality, Information Control, Lobbying, Marx, Military Industrial Complex, Monopoly, Occupy, Rapacity, Regulation/Deregulation, Secrecy, Socialism, Too Big To Fail, US Economic Imperialism, Working Class, and related topics.

- Recent OMNI Newsletters: Knowledge for Peace, Justice, Ecology Action

http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/
US Chamber of Commerce
Bill of Rights DAY
UN Human Rights DAY
Vegetarian Action
Snowden/Surveillance
Causes/Prevention of Wars

US Capitalism Nos. 13-20 at end.

Contents US Capitalism Newsletter #21

History of Capitalism
Ian Klaus, Rogues, Swindlers, Frauds and the Rise of Modern Finance

US Capitalism Today
Bucheit, NationofChange: Super Rich
Moyers and Winship, Graft and Bribes abracadabra Contributions
Greed is Good…..for the Rich
Joyce Hale, Film Shadows of Liberty
Seth Sandronsky, “Reading Samir Amin” (2 2013 books by Amin)
Taibbi, The Divide (between rich and poor)

Resistance
Bill Moyers’ Recent Interviews
Hilgert, Right of Workers to Safe\ Work (2013 Book)
Conflict Within ACLU Over “Corporate Free Speech”

HISTORY OF CAPITALISM

CHRIS LEHMANN, “SLEIGHT OF THE INVISIBLE HAND.” IN THESE TIMES
(DECEMBER 2014). REVIEW OF IAN KLAUS, FORGING CAPITALISM: ROGUES, SWINDLERS, FRAUDS, AND THE RISE OF MODERN FINANCE.

“…every phase of our market society’s expansion was shaped by deceit, fraud and mountebankery.” Focuses “on the British investment scene of the 19th century” that led to the “far larger commercial revolution in America.” Lehmann connects “these studies in British fraud and the grotesqueries that stoked the 2008 financial meltdown” led by “that shameless huckster Alan Greenspan.” --Dick

US CAPITALISM TODAY

Sordid Tales of Selfishness in the Super-Rich

Paul Buchheit, Op-Ed, NationofChange, Nov. 17, 2014
Mainstream media have deliberately bypassed the fact that the wealthiest Americans believe that greed is good for everyone. But who is really benefiting from it the most?

Moyers and Winship | Dividing the Spoils

Excerpt: "The framers debated the meaning of corruption at the Constitutional Convention in 1787, and Americans have been arguing about it ever since. Today, gifts to politicians that were once called graft or bribes are called contributions. The Supreme Court has granted corporations the rights our founders reserved for people, and told those corporations they can give just about anything they want to elect politicians favorable to their interests."

READ MORE
GREED IS GOOD

Do We Live on a One Party Planet?
Introducing a new digital pamphlet designed to connect the dots on advanced-stage, 21st Century neoliberalism.

http://www.commondreams.org/views/2014/11/18/do-we-live-one-party-planet

Comments from an activist’s perspective while viewing the documentary – SHADOWS OF LIBERTY

By Joyce Hale 10-28-14 [OMNI showed this film Oct. 18. See Newsletter #20. It was followed by a panel of Debra Brown, Sonia Gutierrez, Ben Pollock, Art Hobson, Joyce Hale. Dick Bennett, Moderator.]

Media is often referred to as the Fourth Estate regarding importance and impact. Public access to information and exposure of government activity are essential for an informed electorate. Since most media are privately owned, they are subject to financial influence. Even public radio and television are requiring more and more commercial support since federal funding has been cut. Licensing and permitting by the government should provide public protection of the airways, but it is also subject to financial political influence.

FIVE MAJOR MEDIA PROBLEMS FOR ACTIVISTS:

SILENCE regarding important issues and stories – If a story isn’t broadcast or doesn’t make it into print, it may be the same in the public’s mind as never happening. Consolidation of media makes it harder to gain coverage with less time and fewer column inches available.

Getting out ahead of the story – Activists are always “nipping at the heels” of corporate influence. Without projecting ahead to predict trends and outcomes, activists are generally behind playing defense rather than offensive.

Voices discounted without “credentials” – Many activists are closer to observe first hand a situation but discounted as being anecdotal, emotional or insufficiently knowledgeable compared to
academics and politicians who end up testifying, serving on boards or writing articles.

Lack of journalistic investigation or fact checking – In the rush to meet a deadline, beat another publication with a story or produce a piece by someone lacking basic knowledge of the subject, information is often incomplete and fragmented.

Failure of the public to connect the dots of information available – All the information can be reported, but if it is fragmented, the public may not make the connection to get the big picture. Just because everything is exposed doesn’t mean that the information today is associated with an event or individual reported a month earlier. The public’s short attention span also contributes to the problem.

CORPORATE CONTROL AND ADVANTAGE:

First in line to “frame” the public’s perception – The word selection has a dramatic influence on perception. Edward Bernays, the father of public relations, demonstrated many times the ability to turn a negative into a positive through a careful choice of words. Cigarettes were marketed by the tobacco industry to the suffragettes as “freedom torches” to signify women’s rights to act independently. The four words, clean, abundant, domestic, and affordable, were linked to natural gas development before the public understood that each word carried only a half-truth. Once words are associated with an idea, it cannot be reframed by those who try to set the record straight. You can’t un-ring a bell.

Creating an echo chamber and using repetition to imprint thinking – Once a word or phrase is adopted to portray an idea, it is repeated ad nauseam and will be almost impossible to disassociate from the implanted context.

Capture of key words that represent only half-truths – It is important that a kernel of truth lay at the core of propaganda. It provides enough credibility to keep an idea alive even as the full truth begins to emerge.

Projections of damage have no basis until actual damage occurs – Non-disclosure agreements are required by corporations for many compensation settlements and have kept information from the media and researchers. People assume that the media will report anything that has a seriously negative impact, but not if the corporation or public official can obscure or minimize it.

TRENDS

Growing loss of trust in government’s “official” stories – Alternative explanations are generated when there is doubt in the minds of the public about the credibility of what they are told. Some conclusions are totally bogus, but others result from in-depth research and are proved correct in time. Stories about weapons of mass destruction, false flag events, public officials caught lying, unanswered questions about 9-11, junk science produced for corporate benefit and the influence of money have produced a pall of propaganda and distrust in everything “government.”

Independent blogs and investigative journalists – The Internet has made it possible for many
voices to be raised and the quality and reliability of what is written is infinitely variable. Selectivity to reinforce one’s point of view is natural but contributes to divisiveness and extremes. Care is required to determine quality of content.

Junk science – It only takes money to find the scientific perspective needed to reinforce your point of view. Carefully designed studies clutter an individual’s ability to know the truth. Looking carefully at who funds the research and following the money or advantage to be gained is not always apparent.

Use of foreign trade agreements to gain power over sovereign rule –

Most people are totally unaware of secret agreements that have been designed to give greater powers to corporations and negatively impact a country’s sovereignty. NAFTA, WTO, and the World Bank have laid the foundation for expanding controls with the TransPacific Partnership (TPP) and the TransAtlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). Having been negotiated in extreme secrecy little would have been known without leaks. But there is limited or no reporting in the mainstream media of the leaks and few recognize the situation as having a direct impact on their everyday lives.

Concern about loss of Internet – Like every freedom, the right to Internet open access must be won and re-won. Information is key to corporate and military power. If the public doesn’t actively guard its access, all freedoms will be in jeopardy.

Seth Sandronsky, “Reading Samir Amin,” Z Magazine (Nov. 2014).
Rev. of The Implosion of Contemporary Capitalism and Three Essays on Marx’s Value Theory. https://zcomm.org/zmagazine/reading-samir-amin/

This brief review of these two penetrating books on one of the most urgent problems today offers arresting reading. Of particular importance is Amin’s analysis of the “Imperial Triad”—the US, Europe, and Japan: “The reason imperial armed forces and mercenaries use force worldwide [“the hundreds of U.S. military bases spanning the planet,” for example] is to enforce the rule of a collectivized power and wealth of monopolies. . . .Mainstream media in the Triad disguise the economic motives of war,” and “Militarized operations abroad and at home” (e.g. Ferguson, MO) “maintain a virulent status quo of growing inequality.” In the same number, see the interview by Taylan Tosum of Jack Rasmus, author of Epic Recession (2010) and the forthcoming book, Transitions to Global Depression. –Dick

By juxtaposing examples from poor and rich, Taibbi shows how the rich control the justice system, which bullies the poor. The poor are harassed and go to jail, the rich hire lawyers and pay fines. The large corporations bully the small. (Chap. 7, “Little Frauds” by the poor and weak, Chap. 8, “Big Frauds” by the too big to fail, and Chap. 10, “Collateral Consequences” of a criminal justice system deeply corrupted by money and class.) --**Dick**

**RESISTANCE**

*Bill Moyers and Co., PBS, recent programs on US Capitalism vs. Democracy*

Robert Williams, Jr., *Savage Anxieties*, Dec. 26

Steve Fraser, *The New Robber Barons*, Dec. 19

John MacArthur, *The Outrageous Barriers to Democracy in America*, Dec. 12

Jaron Benjamin, Nov. 28

Laurence Lessig, Zephyr Teachout, Nov. 14 and Nov. 21

Gayle McLaughlin, Harriet Rowan, Nov. 7

Bernie Sanders, Oct. 31

Sherrilyn Ifill and Ari Berman, Oct. 24

Marilynne Robinson, Oct. 18

Bob Herbert, Oct. 9

Recent *Moyers & Co.* Interviews in Newsletter #20

  - William Black, Bank Regulator
  - Senator Elizabeth Warren
  - Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel Prize Economist
  - Jim Hightower, Editor of The Hightower Lowdown
  - Charles Lewis, Founder of Center for Public Integrity

Et al.
Bill Moyers and Co., PBS, recent programs on US Capitalism vs. Democracy

MOYERS AND CO., AETN DECEMBER 28, 2014

Full Show: American Indians Confront "Savage Anxieties"


Legal expert Robert A. Williams Jr. says stereotypes about American Indians have been codified into laws and government policies, with devastating consequences.

Dick’s Notes:


MOYERS & CO., AETN DECEMBER 21, 2014

Full Show: The New Robber Barons

December 19, 2014 | Moyers & Company

Washington continues to reward wealthy donors and Wall St but what about everyday Americans? Author and historian Steve Fraser has answers. [See Matt Taibbi, The Divide. --Dick]
We’ve just watched the Senate and the House — aided and abetted by President Obama — pay off financial interests with provisions in the new spending bill that expand the amount of campaign cash wealthy donors can give, and let banks off the hook for gambling with customer (and taxpayer) money.

What happened in Washington over the past several days sounds strikingly familiar to the First Gilded Age more than a century ago, when senators and representatives were owned by Wall Street and big business. Then, as now, those who footed the bill for political campaigns were richly rewarded with favorable laws.

Bill’s guest this week, historian Steve Fraser, says what was different about the First Gilded Age was that people rose in rebellion against the powers that be. Today we do not see “that enormous resistance,” but he concludes, “people are increasingly fed up... their voices are not being heard. And I think that can only go on for so long without there being more and more outbreaks of what used to be called class struggle, class warfare.”

Steve Fraser is a writer, editor and scholar of American history. Among his books are Every Man a Speculator, Wall Street: America’s Dream Palace and Labor Will Rule. His latest, The Age of Acquiescence: The Life and Death of American Resistance to Organized Wealth and Power, will be published early next year.

http://billmoyers.com/episode/steve-fraser-new-robber-barons/
John R. MacArthur of *Harper’s Magazine* says that Republicans and Democrats alike are abandoning the republic in pursuit of big bucks.

**Dick’s Notes:**

MacArthur makes a powerful argument that the Democratic Party under Bill Clinton turned economically hard right with free trade agreements and deregulation. [See Matt Taibbi’s *The Divide* pp. 349-52.] Add Bill Moyers and you have a half-hour program no one should miss, but particularly no Democrat who has already decided Hillary should be the Dem presidential candidate in 2016. For working people—that is, for the majority of the people—Bill Clinton was then and now is a Republican. So also is Hillary. And Obama is no different, but is worse than Clinton.

Democrats have been deceived by the wealthy individuals and corporations that run the country into thinking that their acceptance of social liberalism (tolerance for minorities, e.g.) extends to economics. But although Obama promised to reverse Clinton/Bush free trade agreements, he did not, and he never pushed, e.g. for minimum wage legislation even when he had control of Congress, and today there are more part-time workers than before the recession, general income has dropped significantly, the working class (industrial jobs before Reagan-Bush-Clinton-Bush-Obama) is now the lower class, and from his first days in office filled his administration with people like pro-free trade and pro-deregulation Robert Rubin as Treasury Secretary.

[http://billmoyers.com/episode/full-show-democrats-bow-wall-street/]
MacArthur’s most recent book on the US plutocracy is *The Outrageous Barriers to Democracy in America*.

Dick: Implication for grassroots Democrats, for Senior Democrats: Already Democrats are speaking of Hillary as our next presidential candidate. Rather, our Party at all levels should be mounting a major debate about candidates with the aim of again becoming the Party of the People as described in Kaye’s *The Fight for the Four Freedoms*

- MOYERS & CO., AETN, NOV. 29, 2014

*Full Show: The Long, Dark Shadows of Plutocracy*

November 28, 2014 | Moyers & Company


From luxury skyscrapers — taller, more expensive and exclusive than ever before — the dark shadows of plutocracy are spreading across the commons of democracy.

*Full Show: The Long, Dark Shadows of Plutocracy*

November 28, 2014

Some people say inequality doesn’t matter. They are wrong. All we have to do to see its effects is to realize that all across America millions of people of ordinary means can’t afford decent housing.

As wealthy investors and buyers drive up real estate values, the middle class is being squeezed further and the working poor are being shoved deeper into squalor — in places as disparate as Silicon Valley and New York City.

This week Bill points to the changing skyline of Manhattan as the physical embodiment of how money and power impact the lives and neighborhoods of every day people. Soaring towers being built at the south end of Central Park, climbing higher than ever with apartments selling from $30 million to $90 million, are beginning to block the light on the
park below. Many of the apartments are being sold at those sky high prices to the international super rich, many of whom will only live in Manhattan part-time – if at all — and often pay little or no city income or property taxes, thanks to the political clout of real estate developers.

“The real estate industry here in New York City is like the oil industry in Texas,” affordable housing advocate Jaron Benjamin says, “They outspend everybody... They often have a much better relationship with elected officials than everyday New Yorkers do.” Meanwhile, fewer and fewer middle and working class people can afford to live in New York City. As Benjamin puts it, “Forget about the Statue of Liberty. Forget about Ellis Island. Forget about the idea of everybody being welcome here in New York City. This will be a city only for rich people.”

At the end of the show Bill says: “Tell us if you’ve seen some of these forces eroding the common ground where you live. Perhaps, like some of the people in our story, you’re making your own voice heard. Share these experiences at our website, BillMoyers.com.” Please use the comments section below to do so.


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Enjoy full versions of Moyers & Company shows but also check out Bill Moyers' ever-expanding library of online-only content.

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MOYERS & CO., AETN, NOV. 23, 2014

Full Show: How Public Power Can Defeat Plutocrats

November 21, 2014 | Moyers & Company

Lawrence Lessig and Zephyr Teachout return to talk about the corrupting influence of money in politics, and their push to change the system.

Teachout’s book: Corruption in America

Lessig’s: Republic, Lost: How Money Corrupts Congress and a Plan to Stop it

Dick’s Notes:

Citizens and McCutcheon are roads “to paradise for lobbyists.” The GOP is now the
“Guardian of Privilege.”

Teachout reminds us that at the Constitutional Convention the main topic was corruption defined as using public power to benefit private interest. Madison: US to have a government by and for people, not the rich. Campaign finance rules were to give the people voice and power. *Citizens* and *McCutcheon* silence the people through the money of the few.

Teachout, solutions now: First tell the truth. Reverse C and M. Public financing of elections. Fight monopoly. She intends to run again.

LL: from reformed capitalism pov, the issue is not 1% v. 99% but those who want competitive capitalism v. monopoly capi. He will strive to use his Mayday.Pac to mobilize people.

**MOYERS & CO., AETN, NOV. 16, 2014**

**Full Show: The Bare Knuckle Fight Against Money in Politics**

**November 14, 2014 | Moyers & Company**

Two college professors leave academia for the rough-and-tumble world of electoral politics. What did they learn?

Full Show: The Bare Knuckle Fight Against Money in Politics

November 14, 2014

In this turbulent midterm election year, two academics decided to practice what they preached. They left the classroom, confronted the reality of down-and-dirty politics, and tried to replace moneyed interests with the public interest.

Neither was successful – this year, at least – but on this week’s show, Bill talks with them about their experiences and the hard-fought lessons learned about the state of American democracy.

**Lawrence Lessig**, who teaches law at Harvard, is a well-known Internet activist and campaign finance reform advocate. This election cycle, he started a crowd-funded SuperPAC aimed at reducing the influence of money in politics. Lessig tells Bill: “Our democracy is flat lined. Because when you can show clearly there’s no relationship between what the average voter cares about, only if it happens to coincide with what the economic elite care about, you’ve shown that we don’t have a democracy anymore.”

**Zephyr Teachout**, a professor of constitutional and property law at Fordham Law School, ran against New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo in the Democratic primary. She received more than a third of the vote and carried 30 of the state’s 62 counties, surprising everyone – including Cuomo. “When you talk about the corruption in Congress,
people are talking about the same thing that Madison was talking about. This sense that our public servants are just serving themselves,” Teachout tells Bill.


TOPICS: Democracy & Government, Money & Politics

TAGS: 2014, campaign finance, dark money, elections, lawrence lessig, superpac, widget, zephyr teachout

DICK’S NOTES:

The two are thoroughly experienced with the failing US electoral system and the urgent need to rid us of domination by a few rich individuals and companies. Do see it.

MOYERS & CO., AETN, NOV. 9, 2014

FACING DOWN CORPORATE ELECTION GREED

On Election Day, a small California city took on one of the biggest corporations in America… and declared victory. Read the comments »

Full Show: Facing Down Corporate Election Greed

November 7, 2014

13 Comments

READ THE TRANSCRIPT http://billmoyers.com/episode/full-show-facing-corporate-greed/

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- Using Eminent Domain to Rescue Main Street
- Chevron Greases Local Election With Gusher of Cash
- Bernie Sanders: Stand Up to Corporations Like Chevron
- Chevron’s “Company Town” Fights Back: An Interview with Gayle McLaughlin

GUESTS
Gayle McLaughlin
Harriet Blair Rowan
Full Show: Facing Down Corporate Election Greed

November 7, 2014

In the midst of the midterm elections and the obsession with which party would control the US Senate, there were races at the local and state level with deeper implications for the future of the country.

In the small city of Richmond, California, a slate of progressive candidates faced off against a challenge from pro-business candidates backed to the tune of more than $3 million by the energy giant Chevron. For years, Chevron has treated Richmond like a company town and its large refinery there has been a constant source of health and safety concerns.

Since 2007, Mayor Gayle McLaughlin, a Green Party leader, and her allies on the city council have faced down not only Chevron but other corporate interests like the real estate and financial industries as well. This year, Chevron fought back with an expensive barrage of negative campaign media. But on Election Day, the progressive slate triumphed, despite the roughly $250 per vote Chevron spent.

McLaughlin – who this year was term limited as mayor but won a city council seat — and Harriet Blair Rowan, a college student and journalist who uncovered the Chevron money story for the news website Richmond Confidential, talk with Bill this week about the role unlimited sums of corporate cash have played in Richmond. They discuss the great success of the billions spent by wealthy individuals and companies in other races across the country and how to fight back, using Richmond’s example as a model for future fights of organized people versus organized money.

DICK’S COMMENT:


But not in Richmond, CA, where the voters overcame Chevron Oil Co.’s $3 million to elect all of the people’s candidates and defeat all of Chevron’s.

Interviewees: The leader of the people’s campaign is Mayor Gayle McLaughlin, who won. And a college undergrad. Investig. Reporter, Harriet Rowan, followed the money to uncover the Chevron sources of the flood of ads for the people’s candidates.

Optimistic story of power of organized people. Critique: A worst case situation of
egregious corporate abuses, nowhere to go but up.

Optimistic content: Richmond saved people threatened by foreclosure by purchasing mortgages. McL argue it increases home values, and therefore city taxes. (Realtors should be for it, but the National Realtors Assoc. in DC supported Chevron candidates.)

Citizens United mentioned at end, Mayor McL sees it as huge source of anti-democratic abuse.

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**Hazard or Hardship: Crafting Global Norms on the Right to Refuse Unsafe Work by Jeffrey Hilgert. - Cornell University Press, 2013.**

[Website](www.cornellpress.cornell.edu/book/?GCOI=)

Cornell University

Jul 15, 2013 - Hazard or Hardship. Hilgert finds that the protection of the right to refuse unsafe work, as constituted under international labor standards, is a ...

Jeffrey Hilgert - Home 主页

[Website](www.jeffreyhilgert.com/)

His book Hazard or Hardship: Crafting Global Norms on the Right to Refuse Unsafe Work received the 2014 Best Book in Human Rights Award from the ...

Social Forces

by T Bartley - 2014

Feb 20, 2014 - Hazard or Hardship uncovers an important path-not-taken in the world ... But, as Hilgert shows, a rights-based approach to health and safety is ...

Social Forces

by M Quinlan - 2014


[Website](www.la.psu.edu › Events)
Pennsylvania State University

Jan 24, 2014 - ... Workers' Rights Speaker Event: "Hazard or Hardship: Crafting Global Norms ... Jeffrey Hilgert, Assistant Professor in the School of Industrial ...

Also positively reviewed in The Catholic Worker (Oct.-Nov. 2014) by Tom Cornell. --Dick

This article includes news of the internal conflict within the ACLU. Former ACLU leaders disagree with the current leadership on the issue of Corporate Free Speech/Citizens United. [http://www.commondreams.org/news/2014/09/05/historic-moment-us-senate-set-vote-campaign-finance-amendment](http://www.commondreams.org/news/2014/09/05/historic-moment-us-senate-set-vote-campaign-finance-amendment)

Contents US Capitalism Newsletter #20

US Capitalism Today

Film Shadows of Liberty Showing Oct. 18 at OMNI, 2p.m.: the arena for public expression has become a private profit zone. Donations to the filmmaker and OMNI will be welcome.

Recent Moyers & Co. Interviews

William Black, Bank Regulator
Senator Elizabeth Warren
Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel Prize Economist
Jim Hightower, Editor of The Hightower Lowdown
Charles Lewis, Founder of Center for Public Integrity

Jeff Madrick, How Mainstream Economists Have Damaged America and the World

Two films on the Koch Brothers
Dean Baker, US Financial Inequality
Fritjof Capra, Unifying Vision of Alternative to Capitalism
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END US CAPITALISM NEWSLETTER #21

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Dick Bennett

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