What’s at stake: Klein describes a planetary crisis, measured by the rising amount of CO2 in the atmosphere, the increasing global temperature, consequent weather extremes, melting ice, rising oceans, and more forest fires. Meanwhile, our society continues its business as usual, suicidal complacency, and the US GOP-controlled Senate even seeks to ban a major possible remedy--carbon tax/fee. One of the few groups not complacent is ours, but we can amplify our voice, and one way is through Naomi Klein’s This Changes Everything.

A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on economic growth through advertising unnecessary commodities and on imperial domination than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual doom. -- A modification of a comment by Martin Luther King, Jr.

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PART I

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

DICK’S ANALYSIS OF KLEIN’S INTRODUCTION

Introduction of Introduction

A. The Climate Crisis

B. Denial p. 3

C. Reality: Threat and Opportunity 4

D. Opportunities and Hope 5

E. Signs of Change, **Statement of Purpose** 7-8

This final paragraph (E.) declares her deepest, comprehensive purpose and subject: to bring together all aspects of the crisis into one “coherent narrative” to generate a mass movement “to protect humanity from the ravages of both a savagely unjust economic system and a destabilized climate system.”

I. A PEOPLE’S SHOCK pp. 8-15
A. Recent history of crises/shocks, corporate social/econ. control, and exploitation to enrich the 1%. Example: Raytheon (p. 9). Privatization of the Commons.

B. Solution anticipated: soc. and econ. transformations by and for all (9-10). Ex.: Democrats’ New Deal (10). [See Kaye’s *The Fight for the Four Freedoms*].


II. REALLY BAD TIMING (16-24)

A. All explanations of inadequacy of why no effective governmental or popular response. (16-17)

B. Klein’s explanation: power of deregulated capitalism. (18) [See critique by Foster and Clark.] Since 1980 2 political processes: 1) failure to inculcate climate reality (19), 2) victory of corporate globalization, whose purpose was maximum freedom of multinational corporations for capital accumulation. Three policy pillars: “privatization of the public sphere, deregulation of the corporate sector, and lower corporate taxes, paid for with cuts to public spending.” The “core problem”: market logic stranglehod (19-20). Plus anti-communism, anti-protectionism, environmentalists joining corporations. (20). Global free market and fossil emissions increased “disastrously.”

C. (21). Now not only dereg. capitalism but capitalism itself (grow or die) is the catastrophe, and wealthy countries must cut 8-10% / year if world is to avoid a “brutal crash.” We could have and still can contract our economy without chaos, but the true believers in dereg. free-market capitalism have blocked all efforts.

D. Our choice (22-23): capitalism or planet, civilization destroyed or new economic order. Another obstacle: cautious centrist. We radical thinking and actions. And we must act quickly. By 2017 the 2 degrees door will be closed.

III. POWER, NOT JUST ENERGY (24-25)

All the new technologies help little if social and political leaders and institutions support capitalism and carbon. So we must fight the established, big roadblocks. The is means we must engage in power politics, esp. to help build a people’s force. We must dig the
foundations—not only of capitalism but “extractivism” itself. Climate change is the issue telling us to change our economic system entirely, and build “a new way of sharing this planet.” [Because it so emphatically urges us to concentrate on the most crucial questions, this is one of the most important sections of the Intro. Just a few years ago we were talking about our personal resiliencies: one person rode a bike, another hung out laundry. Klein asks us to focus our minds on what might save us.]]

IV. COMING OUT OF DENIAL (25-26)
Continues IV. We must fight the ideological roadblocks of market fundamentalism and engage in political struggle for a mass movement for change at the roots from corporations to communities. [Her tactic here is a high level of generality. She is talking about political Parties, Democrats and Republicans, Repubs the Party of unregulated capital accumulation, Dems once the Party of New Deal affirmative government (pp. 453-4), now feckless. See John MacArthur, The Outrageous Barriers…. and Kaye, The Fight….]

Klein’s hope returns to p. 7: We are recognizing the magnitude and urgency of climate change--the crisis of all crises that changes everything--; we can transform fear into a vision of a better, kinder future; and we still have a brief time within our power.

Books and Articles Cited:

Related:
Speth, James Gustav. The Bridge at the Edge of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability. Yale UP, 2008. “…most environmental deterioration is a result of systemic failures of the capitalism we have today” (9).

End Klein’s Introduction.

THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING, CHAPTER BY CHAPTER ANALYSIS by Dick Bennett
PART ONE: BAD TIMING

Chapter. 1, “The Right Is Right: The Revolutionary Power of Climate Change” 31-(Notes 470-)

Introduction: Denialists [The chapters do not open with a sub-heading, implying that the opening section applies directly to the chapter title. This is not always immediately clear because each chapter opens with a concrete example.]

A. Heartland Institute. Success of right wing campaign to convince people that warming is not anthropocentric, that climate change is a fraudulent attack upon capitalism, and cc is a conspiracy to destroy the American Way.

B. Success of right-wing propaganda institutions and division between liberal Democrats and increasingly reactionary r-w GOP (35-). R-w success especially during the four years 2007-2011. But then some return to reality and truth among the Democrats as the evidence grew mountainous (75% Dems believe cc anthropogenic, one poll showed 20% Repubs).

C. P. 36 Deeper cause of false choice is cultural, in many of populace entrenched ignorance.

D. (38) “Unthinkable Truths”: Rise of counterrevolutionary (anti-New Deal), neo-liberal (a confusing label), “hardcore ideologues,” denial movement via well-funded $$ think tanks, and why they deny. Insertion of later themes, anticipations to become accretions (39-40) (for more on this see chap. 10): 7 ways to counter the economic right-wing, need for “global equity,” a “Marshall Plan for the Earth.” R-w pathological fear of climate science, attacks on scientists (a pathology called misiology). P. 43 title of chapter: r-w correctly foresaw the “deep changes required.”

E. “About That Money. . .” The big money behind denialism—Koch brothers et al.

F. “Plan B: Get Rich Off a Warming World”: Demographics of climate change: the rich, the patriarchy are preparing to protect themselves (adaptation a great principle if you are rich (48), in the heartless Heartland Institute “an utter absence of empathy for the victims of climate change”). 48-52, anticipation: We must change our capitalist system because of how it has demonstrably harmed the planet and its species and will continue even more callously and brutally.

G. “The Meaner Side of Denial”: Elaboration of preceding section: moral hardening of r-w: reduced empathy, caring for others, truisms, generosity, increasing fearmongering, denying responsibility. 54: “Unless we radically change course…."

H. “Coddling Conservatives”: Catastrophic failure of governments to start cutting emissions when “scientific consensus solidified” in the 1980s, specifically the failure of the first World conference on the Changing Atmosphere in Toronto in 1988. Rise of r-
w dominance. Now we experience “ongoing and collective carbon profligacy” (56).

I. How talk to the r-w? By framing messages not or less frightening, finding middle ways, compromises, euphemisms? But big green groups have tried that, and it didn’t work: “opposition to climate action has only hardened,” temperature has only risen. Furthermore, it has only reinforced the “warped values fueling both disaster denialism and disaster capitalism.” (58).

J. “The Battle of Worldviews”: Alternative sub-titles of the book are Greed over Cooperation, or Corporate-Pentagon-White House-Congressional-Corp. Media Complex or Science, but economics/capitalism is the engine. We should choose anti-capitalist values and practices, and many have, but not enough fast enough. Why? (61). The complex explanation will come in the book, but at this point is essential to acknowledge that denial, greed, the extreme free-market ideology won At least for now, but we can hope for empathy, compassion, generosity, solidarity eventually to return and prevail, as Rebecca Solnit celebrates in A Paradise Built in Hell. But first we need to understand the origins and legacy of market fundamentalism as explained in chaps. 2-5.

Chapter 2, “Hot Money: How Free Market Fundamentalism Helped Overheat the Planet” 64- (Notes 475-)

A. Trade trumps sustainability. Anti-protections doctrine used to demolish efforts to transition from coal to solar: Ontario’s solar industry. Ontario used feed-in tariff and local workers and materials to build largest solar industry in Canada. Until trade and profit trumped climate control when the WTO ruled v. local.

B. Quick history of rise of climate defense movement from 1992 first United Nations Earth Summit in Rio and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the intensification of the war against climate. (Of the countless benefits to the world provided by the UN, this 1992 Summit began perhaps the greatest: making people aware of the science of climate change.) But that same year Pres. Clinton signed the North American Free Trade Agreement, and in 1994 the World Trade Organization (WT0) was established. And then the UN-sponsored Kyoto Protocol was adopted in 1997, which the UA refused to sign.

Chapter 3, “Public and Paid For: Overcoming the Ideological Blocks to the Next Economy” 96- (Notes 480-)

Introduction Thesis p. 100: clean energy must quadruple.

A. Germany’s renewable energy transition, reversal of neo-liberal econ. Of ‘90s when cities sold public services to corporations.

B. Boulder, CO (see Ch. 2 on Ontario)

These 2 examples refute one of the “core ideological pillars of the free market era”—that
private services are superior to public. Strong defense of affirmative government.

C. Hope 101: Jacobson and Delucchi, WE Can “rapidly switch our energy systems to 100 percent renewables.” Jacobson’s plans for all states 102. Costly but no more that the Apollo space flight or the interstate highways. We can choose our New Deal.

(incomplete)

CHAP. 4 “Planning and Banning: Slapping the Invisible Hand, Building a Movement” 120- (Notes 484-)

Introduction

A 120-24 Obama’s ’08 Victory

Great possibilities in Obama’s/Dems ’08 victory, decisive Dem mandate for New Deal values and adding climate change action. O. could have won a transformative $800 billion stimulus.

B. 124 O’s Failure

He failed to control banks and autos, public transit, etc. Why? He also gripped by old ideological opposition to big gov’t. planning while subsidizing big private free market corporations. I.e., O. a Dem/Republican.

C. 125 Klein’s practical political Solution: O/Dems should have copied Repub. focus on economic basis of their platform. O/Dems shld have campaigned on econ advantages of comprehensive government planning, not merely reforms of harnessing the market, but radical, fundamental change necessary, and public ready.

Titled sections (uncompleted):

Planning for Jobs 126-128
Planning for Power 128-
About That German Miracle 136-
Remembering How to Say No 139-
untitled section 141-

Not an “Issue,” a Frame 152-160

Chap. 5, 161-187 “Beyond Extractivism: Confronting the Climate Denier Within”

Introduction 161-8 S. Pacific Island Nauru

A. 163 Extraction of rich Nauru fertilizer resource impoverished and corrupted Nauru. Summary 165.

B. 166 Australia’s detention camp for refugees from around world.

C. 168 Nauru and US. Nauru’s President’s analysis of Nauru as the world.
PART TWO

MAGICAL THINKING  189 (Notes 491-)

Chapter 6, “Fruits, Not Roots: The Disastrous Merger of Big Business and Big Green” 191-229 (Notes 491-)

Introduction
A. Nature Conservancy, Mobil, Attwater’s prairie chicks 191-5
B. Green groups and corporations
C. Good Green Corporations 97
D. Role of foundations 198
E. Enviro/corp deals that didn’t slow CO2, half-measures as emissions rose.

Chapter 7, “No Messiahs: The Green Billionaires Won’t Save Us” 230-255

Introduction
Richard Branson’s false techno-schemes and false hopes and other wealthy people who finance the pursuit of tech miracles and wizardry of geoengineering. Almost the entire chapter is about Branson.

Chapter 8, “Dimming the Sun: The Solution to Pollution Is…Pollution?” 256-290

Introduction
2011 conference on geoengineering sponsored by UK’s Royal Society, Environmental Defense Fund, and World Academy of Sciences. The conf. focused on the pros and cons of sun-blocking, mainly on Solar Radiation Management (SRM). “…a grim picture emerges” of a cure possibly worse than the disease. I won’t outline her discussion, but these three succinct passages deserve emphasis:

1. The true solutions succinctly listed p. 283-284 offer a summary of her position against free market rules at this point (my rewording):
   a. Public funding should go to rapid transition to renewables.
   b. Corporations responsible for climate change should be taxed and the money spent “to clean up their mess.”
   c. Energy production and grids should be in public hands.
   d. Shiva’s agro-ecological carbon sequestration methods should be considered (284).
2. The major lethal narrative/myth driving geoengineering p. 289.

3. Her hope in the generation of new activists p. 290.

PART THREE 291- (Notes 507-)

STARTING ANYWAY

Chapter 9, “Blockadia: the New Climate Warriors” 295- (Notes 507-)

Resistance to fossil fuels/harmful resource extraction through direct action.


Section 1, “Welcome to Blockadia” (term first coined Texas in 2012, p. 302) Increasing pockets of resistance, uncoordinated local uprisings against “real climate crimes in progress” by extraction industries. Example: Canadian mining company Eldorado Gold in Greece.

(Recent Ark. examples: rapid intro. and expansion of destructive fracking, construction of new coal plant commenced without permit.). Greece became militarized when both the corporate bullies and local villages in Greece set up checkpoints and blockades. And all around the world, including Romania, Canada, the UK, the Russian arctic, China, Australia, US.

Summary 303-4, “core principle”: “stop digging” and turn to renewables. [?see Lester Brown’s The Great Transition 2015.]


Section 3, “All in the Sacrifice Zone”: Indifference in US and Can. by most to devastating pillage amounting to ecocide suffered by those in the zones: Alberta tar sands, US Keystone XL.. US = Saudi America. Republicans esp.: drill everywhere. Rising but feeble resistance in US. With climate change, we’re all in the plunder zone.

Section 4, “Choked in Enemy Territory”: Resistance spreading: Ithaca, NY, southern France then national ban on fracking in 2011, Idaho, Oregon and entire NW US: Indians, farmers, fishers, Richmond, CA. with “courage to fight back” blocking Chevron, 322 summary of power in networking, alliances, movements, one resistance multiplies resistances, one courage inspires others.

Section 5, “The BP Factor: No Trust”: Failure of business and government, insufficient and even reducing regulation, insufficient research, war on science, Canada’s Harper Admin. and other gov’t. villains, Bush Admin.’s Halliburton Loophole to permit fracking.

Section 6, “Educated by Disaster”: year 2010 catastrophes: BP disaster “largest accidental
marine oil spill in history” and Enbridge disaster “largest onshore oil spill in U.S. history,” both result of profits before safety while regulators were absent or sleeping. A “new era of extreme, higher risk fossil fuel extraction” (331) and catastrophes mounting amid “old-fashioned corruption.” By 2013 poll showed only 4% thought oil companies honest

Section 7, “The return of Precaution” 335-, the “precautionary principle” becoming fighting foundation against the exploiting industries and the Big Green groups in their pay. Final paragraph’s rousing words, “The climate movement has found its nonnegotiables.”

[Two main ways of organizing an argument are 1) logical (you can diagram it, J.S. Mill’s “On Nature”) and 2) accretive (repeating theme(s) while adding new materials, Matthew Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy*). Klein chooses to open with two main examples of public resistance in her first 2 chapters, then section 3 on plunder/sacrifice (think of the implications of her choice of “sacrifice”) zones, section 4 back to resistance, sections 5 and 6 more criminals and criminal disasters, and section 7 resistance embracing the unifying precautionary principle. A simple structure: resistance, plunder, resistance, plunder, resistance, with both themes present in all sections, and some progression in this history in that the plunder is becoming worse (more extreme extractions) and better (precautionary rock).]

**Chap. 10, “Love Will Save This Place” 337-:** Significant defeats and victories by environmental organizations.

Power of Love for a place vs. extreme rootlessness and criminality of extractive exploiter opportunists.

Heiltsuk First Nation vs. Enbridge N. Canadian pipeline and Canadian Government—“another wave of colonial violence.” Bella Bella, Jess Housty and the power of “ferocious love” for their native ancestral homeland, which is “in fact Blockadia’s defining feature.” (the accretion extends beyond sections, chapters, and parts: Part One, Chap. 1, Section 1 begins with denialist exploiters—Heartland, Bast, Morano, Horner, Soon).

A “Love and Water” (344-). I want to extract this passage for all who seek to protect our water, among them here in NWA: Amy, Barbara, Jacqueline, Joyce and Jay, Judi and Ellis, Lauren and Aubrey..

“When these very different worlds collide [extractive industry and home places]. . . . . many of the people waging the fiercest anti-extraction battles are. . . . determined to defend a richness that our economy has not figured out how to count.” A Romanian villager is quoted: “Maybe we don’t have money, but we have clean water and are healthy. . . .” So often these battles seem to come to this stark choice: water vs. gas. Water vs. oil. Water vs. coal. In fact, what has emerged in the movement against extreme extraction is less an anti-fossil fuels movement than a pro-water movement.” (344-).

B. “Early Wins” There have been victories against fossil fuel extraction”—“the wave of global victories against coal,” for example, some advances in China, the millions of “unsung carbon
keepers.” But they “receive almost no media attention” (and see the corporate victories 75-).

C. “Fossil Free: the Divestment Movement,” is increasingly influential using a portfolio of arguments. The “eventual goal is to confer on oil companies the same status as tobacco companies” and to develop a large popular protest movement. Signs of progress: the new Sierra Club, Shell’s declining profits in 2014.

C. “The Democracy Crisis”: the people and Blockadia vs. free trade agreements that empower corporations over democratic government.

D.“Beyond Fossilized Democracies.” We must build a massive pro-democracy movement, “turning Blockadia” into a massive grassroots movement for the “right to have a say in critical decisions relating to water, land, and air.” This is a “global democratic crisis” (363). Many countries and cities are “post-democratic,” but there is Blockadia. 1) human rights traditions and laws, 2) treaties: Indigenous legal challenges, historical debts, 2) direct action, 3) movements.


Canadian First Nations way of compelling reform “of powerful forces” of government, industry, police, media, and violence: Arthur Manuel, Neskonlith, economic muscle, “the power to enforce their rights” established by treaties: “an army of sorts is beginning to coalesce.”

“The Last Line of Defense” (370), i.e. treaties, plus court victories, native/non-native alliances. P 375 dramatic paragraph describing the “planet’s largest and most dangerous unexploded carbon bombs…beneath lands and waters” legally claimed by First Nations. Victories vs. Shell in Arctic and in Amazon via Inter-American Court of Human Rights and “huge advances” potential via UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted by UN GA Sept. 2007 (p. 377).

“Might vs., Rights”: UN Declaration etc. can’t guarantee rights, but courts, communities, alliances, individual heroes necessary. It’s a David and Goliath struggle.

“Honour the Treaties”: Growth of First Nations consciousness of rights, of laws and courts, direct action, alliances, mass movements. As in chap. 10, power of need for and love of water. Idle No More movement. Paying off Canada’s debt to Indigenous P is also blocking “:endless extraction and destruction” (383). Role of music: Neil Young’s “Honour the Treaties” Tour.

“The Moral Imperative of Economic Alternatives”: Why more First Nations are not fighting the corporations, a highly complex situation.

Chap. 12, “Sharing the Sky: The Atmospheric Commons and the Power of Paying Our Debts” 388-.

Example of N. Cheyenne plus non-native orgs. vs. extraction industry, poverty, and
hopelessness in MT.

“The Sun Comes Out” 393: Red Cloud training Cheyenne to build solar collectors potentially “an army of solar warriors” in a human justice fight vs. steam engine and human desire for total control for profit. Since corporations create poverty which they then exploit, resistance to be successful must combine 1) NO fossil fuels and 2) alternatives providing jobs and social safety net. I.e., enviro movement must be political, for example must persuade governments (referring to Canada) to require “a minimal national carbon tax of $10 a ton” to match pipeline investment (400). (OMNI has a committee working with Climate Change Lobby (CCL) to promote carbon fee with dividend. Unfortunately, the US Senate recently voted a ban on any carbon tax, giving the Republican budget authority to prohibit federal taxation of carbon emissions from source such as coal. Both of Ark’s Senators voted for it. ADG 3-29-15. Also, a recent panel at the UofA Law School composed of a rep. of industry, a rep. of the ADEQ, and a rep of the Sierra Club passed over the fee/dividend without mention. When asked why, the Sierra Club rep. Glenn Hooks, said it had no chance.)

“Don’t Just Divest, Reinvest” 401: Klein reminds us explicitly we are still in Part Three all about Blockadia. The divesting from fossil fuels movement is extremely important but it must be combined with reinvestment in the “clean tech sector”—“Divest-Invest.” Rejection of dirty energy will never succeed without providing “economic alternatives”—Keystone XL example 403. But resistance/alternatives complicated: pp. 404-05 up against the “fossil fuels runaway train.” Needed: an inverted shock doctrine for ecologists.

“From Local to Global Debts” 408: Shift attention to the global South, e.g. Yasuni in Equador. 410: Throughout her book Klein inserts reminders of significant moments from the past, here the 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change ratified by 195 countries including the US. (This leads me to imagine the book organized differently, beginning with this paragraph, the remainder and rearranging the contents to show how the Convention, seeking justice in an unequal world, was fulfilled or violated.) 411: returns explicitly to chapter 1, the right understands, but it’s been implicit throughout.

Tipping the Balance” 413, Blockadia methods vs. “endless growth and dirty fuels” apply to N and S esp. alternatives that eschew toxic extraction but provide living standards. Tariff needed for international fund for reparations “to support clean energy transitions throughout the developing world.”

Chap. 13, “The Right to Regenerate: Moving from Extraction to Renewal” 419-

Klein’s personal life fertility crisis in the midst of the climate crisis related to strengthening of her “worldview based on regeneration and renewal rather than domination and depletion.”

“An Aquatic Miscarriage” 424: fertility continued, toxic chemical concerns.

“A Country for Old Men” 427: Dangers of ff toxicity from massive chemical industry, e.g. “BP’s aquatic miscarriage,” segues into warped values of the plutocracy and unregulated
capitalism..

“BP’s Legacy and a ‘Handful of Nothing’” 430: Infertility consequences of BP spill, plus climate change, e.g. dolphin die-off. One-two-three punch of US ff capitalism.

“Disappearing Babies in a Warming World” 434: Species dying, “No corpses, just an absence.”

“Fallow Time” 436: Klein’s personal story and the planet’s story. Restoration at the Land Institute, Salinas, contrasted to negative influences of industrial agriculture. Her son conceived, salmon disappearing, and the story of regeneration.

“Coming Back to Life” 442: US capitalist extractivism vs. regenerative preserving and safeguarding life, of which Blockadia in all its manifestations is part. (Some tension here—between the need and right to reproduce by species vs the need to constrain human overpopulation and consumption.). (P. 447: A page where her avoidance of analysis of the mechanisms of capitalism becomes obvious by her succinct analysis of one aspect: “capitalism’s drift toward monopoly and duopoly in virtually every arena.” Klein’s book is great for its coverage of the destructive consequences of capitalism, esp. in the US. For analysis of the processes of capitalism, of course read Marx’s Capital, or the application to climate, What Every Environmentalist Needs to Know About Capitalism by Fred Magdoff and John Bellamy Foster (2011). (Why Klein, a brave explicator and opponent of capitalism’s harms, doesn’t reference the Marxist thinkers is part of the uncritical history of recent US political economics.) P. 448, final page of Part Three: Birth of her son and hatcheries. (I’ll end with questions like the one preceding: Not only why does she not mention the benign, productive government hatchery system or teach her son to admire affirmative government? Is she a Libertarian or afraid of Libertarians?)

“Conclusion: The Leap Years, Just Enough Time for Impossible” 449

458: Yes, MORE OR LESS, the Earth, the climate, the planet’s species, the civilizations will be decimated by climate change…..LESS IF the people rise up in massive resistance to the harms of capitalism by direct action: “protests, blockades and sabotage” and by “mass uprisings of people” like the abolition and civil rights movements (plus all the other manifestations of hopeful Blockadia). The movement in her argument and in her book’s title suggests this hope: On p. 43 CLIMATE CHANGE changes everything; on p. 450 Blockadia, esp. MASS RESISTANCE, could change everything. (P. 450 is another of many pages that could have been the opening of a different first chapter in a differently designed book. A logical structure then would have been: Thesis. I. More destruction if business as usual, free market capitalism continues. A. 1.2.3. etc. B. 1.2. etc. II. Less if massive uprisings. A. Within System. 1. 2. etc. B. Nonviolent Direct Action. 1. 2. etc. But Klein chose to tell
stories within her own research and personal story and thereby to accumulate by accretion a case against climate change that has happened and is happening, and a case for resistance that is just beginning and is lethally late but which might save us from the worst.) The remainder of the Conclusion gives examples of resistance/Blockadia. A Marshall Plan for the Earth is properly supported (add the money of the Apollo Space Mission). (I was sorry FDR’s New Deal was mentioned only three times, and sorrier the UN was so meagerly cited, when it alone possesses the expertise and potentially the power to accomplish all Klein hopes for; and really sorrowful she fails to confront the expense of US wars and empire, which had it been converted into a global Marshall Plan/Apollo Mission starting in 1992 with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to combatting C02 and consequent warming could have blockaded the worst.)

“The Unfinished Business of Liberation” 458 We already have successful models from the past providing a vision for the future (New Deal, Marshall Plan). Now we must acquire the “massive global investments required. . .to adapt humanely and equitably to the heavy weather we have already locked in, and to avert the truly catastrophic warming we can still avoid . . .” The climate movement is finding its moral voice.

“Suddenly, Everyone” 464: We are seeing national “upwellings” of “transformational change” when “new structures” are built “in the rubble of neoliberalism.” Many of the old barriers to change (free-market ideology, magical thinking) are being discredited. Awareness is growing “that if change is to take place it will only be because leadership bubbled up from below.” We must be ready for the next moment in time when “the impossible seems suddenly possible.”

PART II COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK

Publisher’s Summary

This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate

By Naomi Klein

The most important book yet from the author of the international bestseller The Shock Doctrine, a brilliant explanation of why the climate crisis challenges us to abandon the core “free market” ideology of our time, restructure the global economy, and remake our political systems.

In short, either we embrace radical change ourselves or radical changes will be visited upon our physical world. The status quo is no longer an option.
In *This Changes Everything* Naomi Klein argues that climate change isn't just another issue to be neatly filed between taxes and health care. It's an alarm that calls us to fix an economic system that is already failing us in many ways. Klein meticulously builds the case for how massively reducing our greenhouse emissions is our best chance to simultaneously reduce gaping inequalities, re-imagine our broken democracies, and rebuild our gutted local economies. She exposes the ideological desperation of the climate-change deniers, the messianic delusions of the would-be geoengineers, and the tragic defeatism of too many mainstream green initiatives. And she demonstrates precisely why the market has not—and cannot—fix the climate crisis but will instead make things worse, with ever more extreme and ecologically damaging extraction methods, accompanied by rampant disaster capitalism.

Klein argues that the changes to our relationship with nature and one another that are required to respond to the climate crisis humanely should not be viewed as grim penance, but rather as a kind of gift—a catalyst to transform broken economic and cultural priorities and to heal long-festering historical wounds. And she documents the inspiring movements that have already begun this process: communities that are not just refusing to be sites of further fossil fuel extraction but are building the next, regeneration-based economies right now.

Can we pull off these changes in time? Nothing is certain. Nothing except that climate change changes everything. And for a very brief time, the nature of that change is still up to us.

- See more at: [http://books.simonandschuster.com/This-Changes-Everything/Naomi-Klein/9781451697384#sthash.fAeYvbrp.dpuf](http://books.simonandschuster.com/This-Changes-Everything/Naomi-Klein/9781451697384#sthash.fAeYvbrp.dpuf)

**Review in *Monthly Review***


No less than the editor of the *Monthly Review* has co-authored a favorable review of Klein's book (Feb. 2015). Please read; it will stimulate reading and discussion of the book because it adds several important dimensions. [http://monthlyreview.org/2015/02/01/crossing-the-river-of-fire/](http://monthlyreview.org/2015/02/01/crossing-the-river-of-fire/)

The *Monthly Review* in every issue offers economic, political, and cultural analysis of the USA. We need its critical perspective. Please consider subscribing. Note at beginning: the magazine offers its contents free but solicits subs from those who can afford. Thanks, Dick

Introduction (1-2)

With William Morris in 1883 and Naomi Klein in 2014 we must ourselves “cross the river of fire” to become critics of capitalism and rescuers of civilization. We must rebuild, not on basis of capital accumulation and growth, eventual monopoly by the few, and consequent alienation by the many, but on principles of caring for others and well-being for all, a “ferocious love” for all life. To accomplish this vision, because the human conquest of nature, led by the US, endangers human survival, the world must be changed systematically. So let our slogans be: SYSTEM CHANGE NOT CLIMATE CHANGE and PUBLIC GOOD NOT PRIVATE PROFIT.

The Global Climateric (2-8)

Since it is too late for effective reforms of the capitalist system, which caused the catastrophe, and to achieve zero emissions of fossil fuels quickly, only “real revolutionary ecological change, unleashing the full power of organized and rebellious humanity” will save us. Our economy is at war with life because its fundamental drive is growth and capital accumulation. (4) And this drive runs on fossil fuels. We must now strive to break the carbon budget, realizing the struggle must be comprehensive revolution and will be expensive (5), such as during WWII’s production [and Marshall Plan, Apollo]. But such a revolution can produce a society of equality and community, one which meets needs of people not wants of the 1%, and not necessarily austerity (=neo-cons), but only a lower GDP (p. 6 while increasing quality of life). How can we create such a mass movement? There are hopeful signs—e.g. Blockadia; and wealthy countries, mainly responsible, can afford the change; Seattle 1999; Occupy WS 2011. Soviet societies with their high carbon omissions not the model. Hope: “Just enough time for the impossible.” Impossible? We don’t want the dystopia certainly ahead under capitalism: “unending, cumulative, climate catastrophe, threatening civilization and countless species, including our own.” (8).

Liberal Critics as Gatekeepers (8-14)

Foster and Clark challenge eight reviewers ranging from those who think she simply made a typo in her subtitle, Capitalism vs. the Climate, to those who blame all environmentalists for not recognizing our rescue through technological innovations. See my note on “Liberal” below.

Ultimate Line of Defense (15-16)

Socialist critics of the book criticize thinness of her analysis of “the nature of system change,” of the working class, and other aspects of socialism, but F&C defend her
“silences.” Her aim is to make “the broad case for System change Not Climate Change.” Capitalism threatens “our survival as a species” and “our welfare as individual human beings. Hence, we need to build society anew. . . .” Millions of people are crossing the river of fire, “demanding anti-capitalist or post capitalist solutions,” and she “sees herself merely as the people’s megaphone....” (15). Her vision is one of human community, fellowship on earth, equality, and she would—and have us all--seize the opportunity.

Dick, 2 notes:

**Capitalism system:** F & C mention the liabilities of capitalism in places here and there. Central principle: capital accumulation. Through growth. During the last 100 years through fossil fuels. Leading to monopoly. Involving immense waste, for example of nature and by advertising.

**Liberal:** Republican, Tea Party, Right Wing critics are not discussed because we know where they stand. But criticism from known liberals (admirers of the New Deal, advocates of regulation and affirmative government in general) had to be answered. (I was put off by F&C’s title “Liberal Attack,” since “liberal” is both a complex word possessing many meanings (by Kaye: freedom and equality and democracy, the “four freedoms”) and the object of unremitting, ferocious attack by the Republicans and far right. I immediately thought they meant and should have used the term “neo-liberal” or “conservative.” But by the end of the essay I understood.) On p. 11 particularly in her analysis of Rob Nixon’s review, because she demands zero fossil fuels, both “liberal” and “neoliberal” (extreme capitalism) must be rejected, just as must be extractionism and extreme extractionism. See final par. of Liberal Critics p. 15.

FULL TEXT OF FOSTER AND CLARK’S REVIEW

**REVIEW OF THE MONTH**

**Crossing the River of Fire**

*The Liberal Attack on Naomi Klein and This Changes Everything*

by John Bellamy Foster and Brett Clark

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The front cover of Naomi Klein’s new book, *This Changes Everything*, is designed to look like a protest sign. It consists of the title alone in big block letters, with the emphasis on *Changes*. Both the author’s name and the subtitle are absent. It is only when we look at the spine of the book, turn it over, or open it to the title page that we see it is written by North America’s
leading left climate intellectual-activist and that the subtitle is *Capitalism vs. the Climate*. All of which is clearly meant to convey in no uncertain terms that climate change literally *changes everything* for today’s society. It threatens to turn the mythical human conquest of nature on its head, endangering present-day civilization and throwing doubt on the long-term survival of *Homo sapiens*.

The source of this closing circle is not the planet, which operates according to natural laws, but rather the economic and social system in which we live, which treats natural limits as mere barriers to surmount. It is now doing so on a planetary scale, destroying in the process the earth as a place of human habitation. Hence, the change that Klein is most concerned with, and to which her book points, is not climate change itself, but the radical social transformation that must be carried out in order to combat it. We as a species will either radically change the material conditions of our existence or they will be changed far more drastically for us. Klein argues in effect for System Change Not Climate Change—the name adopted by the current ecosocialist movement in the United States.

In this way Klein, who in *No Logo* ushered in a new generational critique of commodity culture, and who in *The Shock Doctrine* established herself as perhaps the most prominent North American critic of neoliberal disaster capitalism, signals that she has now, in William Morris’s famous metaphor, crossed “the river of fire” to become a critic of capital as a system. The reason is climate change, including the fact that we have waited too long to address it, and the reality that nothing short of an ecological revolution will now do the job.

In the age of climate change, Klein argues, a system based on ever-expanding capital accumulation and exponential economic growth is no longer compatible with human well-being and progress—or even with human survival over the long run. We need therefore to reconstruct society along lines that go against the endless amassing of wealth as the primary goal. Society must be rebuilt on the basis of other principles, including the “regeneration” of life itself and what she calls “ferocious love.”

This reversal in the existing social relations of production must begin immediately with a war on the fossil-fuel industry and the economic growth imperative—when such growth means more carbon emissions, more inequality, and more alienation of our humanity.

Klein’s crossing of the river of fire has led to a host of liberal attacks on *This Changes Everything*, often couched as criticisms emanating from the left. These establishment criticisms of her work, we will demonstrate, are disingenuous, having little to do with serious confrontation with her analysis. Rather, their primary purpose is to rein in her ideas, bringing them into conformity with received opinion. If that should prove impossible, the next step is to exclude her ideas from the conversation. However, her message represents the growing consciousness of the need for epochal change, and as such is not easily suppressed.

**The Global Climateric**

The core argument of *This Changes Everything* is a historical one. If climate change had
been addressed seriously in the 1960s, when scientists first raised the issue in a major way, or even in the late 1980s and early '90s, when James Hansen gave his famous testimony in Congress on global warming, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was first established, and the Kyoto Protocol introduced, the problem could conceivably have been addressed without a complete shakeup of the system. At that historical moment, Klein suggests, it would still have been possible to cut emissions by at most 2 percent a year.

Today such incremental solutions are no longer conceivable even in theory. The numbers are clear. Over 586 billion metric tons of carbon have been emitted into the atmosphere. To avoid a 2°C (3.6°F) increase in global average temperature—the edge of the cliff for the climate—it is necessary to stay below a trillion metric tons in cumulative carbon emissions. At the present rate of carbon emissions it is estimated that we will arrive at the one trillionth metric ton—equivalent to the 2°C mark—in less than a quarter century, around 2039.

Once this point is reached, scientists fear that there is a high probability that feedback mechanisms will come into play with reverberations so great that we will no longer be able to control where the thermometer stops in the end. If the world as it exists today is still to avoid the 2°C increase—and the more dangerous 4°C, the point at which disruption to life on the planet will be so great that civilization may no longer be possible—real revolutionary ecological change, unleashing the full power of an organized and rebellious humanity, is required.

What is necessary first and foremost is the cessation of fossil-fuel combustion, bringing to a rapid end the energy regime that has dominated since the Industrial Revolution. Simple arithmetic tells us that there is no way to get down to the necessary zero emissions level, i.e., the complete cessation of fossil-fuel combustion, in the next few decades without implementing some kind of planned moratorium on economic growth, requiring shrinking capital formation and reduced consumption in the richest countries of the world system. We have no choice but to slam on the brakes and come to a dead stop with respect to carbon emissions before we go over the climate cliff. Never before in human history has civilization faced so daunting a challenge.

Klein draws here on the argument of Kevin Anderson, of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change in Britain, who indicates that rich countries will need to cut carbon emissions by 8–10 percent a year. "Our ongoing and collective carbon profligacy," Anderson writes, "has squandered any opportunity for 'evolutionary change' afforded by our earlier (and larger) 2°C budget. Today, after two decades of bluff and lies, the remaining 2°C budget demands revolutionary change to the political and economic hegemony."

Instead of addressing climate change when it first became critical in the 1990s, the world turned to the intensification of neoliberal globalization, notably through the creation of the World Trade Organization. It was the very success of the neoliberal campaign to remove most constraints on the operations of capitalism, and the negative effect that this had on all attempts to address the climate problem, Klein contends, that has made "revolutionary levels of transformation" of the system the only real hope in avoiding "climate chaos."
she explains, we now find ourselves in a very difficult and slightly ironic position. Because of those decades of hardcore emitting exactly when we were supposed to be cutting back, the things that we must do to avoid catastrophic warming are no longer just in conflict with the particular strain of deregulated capitalism that triumphed in the 1980s. They are now in conflict with the fundamental imperative at the heart of our economic model: grow or die…. Our economy is at war with many forms of life on earth, including human life. What the climate needs to avoid collapse is a contraction in humanity’s use of resources; what our economic model demands to avoid collapse is unfettered expansion. Only one of these sets of rules can be changed, and it’s not the laws of nature…. Because of our lost decades, it is time to turn this around now. Is it possible? Absolutely. Is it possible without challenging the fundamental logic of deregulated capitalism? Not a chance.9

Of course, “the fundamental logic of deregulated capitalism” is simply a roundabout way of pointing to the fundamental logic of capitalism itself, its underlying drive toward capital accumulation, which is hardly constrained at all in its accumulation function even in the case of a strong regulatory environment. Instead, the state in a capitalist society generally seeks to free up opportunities for capital accumulation on behalf of the system as a whole, rationalizing market relations so as to achieve greater overall, long-run expansion. As Paul Sweezy noted nearly three-quarters of a century ago in The Theory of Capitalist Development, “Speaking historically, control over capitalist accumulation has never for a moment been regarded as a concern of the state; economic legislation has rather had the aim of blunting class antagonisms, so that accumulation, the normal aim of capitalist behavior, could go forward smoothly and uninterrupted.”10 To be sure, Klein herself occasionally seems to lose sight of this basic fact, defining capitalism at one point as “consumption for consumption’s sake,” thus failing to perceive the Galbraith dependence effect, whereby the conditions under which we consume are structurally determined by the conditions under which we produce.11 Nevertheless, the recognition that capital accumulation or the drive for economic growth is the defining property, not a mere attribute, of the system underlies her entire argument. Recognition of this systemic property led the great conservative economist Joseph Schumpeter to declare: “Stationary capitalism would be a contradictio in adjecto.”12

It follows that no mere technological wizardry—of the kind ideologically promoted, for example, by the Breakthrough Institute—will prevent us from breaking the carbon budget within several decades, as long as the driving force of the reigning socioeconomic system is its own self-expansion. Mere improvements in carbon efficiency are too small as long as the scale of production is increasing, which has the effect of expanding the absolute level of carbon dioxide emitted. The inevitable conclusion is that we must rapidly reorganize society on other principles than that of stoking the engine of capital with fossil fuels.
None of this, Klein assures us, is cause for despair. Rather, confronting this harsh reality head on allows us to define the strategic context in which the struggle to prevent climate change must be fought. It is not primarily a technological problem unless one is trying to square the circle: seeking to reconcile expanding capital accumulation with the preservation of the climate. In fact, all sorts of practical solutions to climate change exist at present and are consistent with the enhancement of individual well-being and growth of human community. We can begin immediately to implement the necessary changes such as: democratic planning at all levels of society; introduction of sustainable energy technology; heightened public transportation; reductions in economic and ecological waste; a slowdown in the treadmill of production; redistribution of wealth and power; and above all an emphasis on sustainable human development.13

There are ample historical precedents. We could have a crash program, as in wartime, where populations sacrificed for the common good. In England during the Second World War, Klein observes, driving automobiles virtually ceased. In the United States, the automobile industry was converted in the space of half a year from producing cars to manufacturing trucks, tanks, and planes for the war machine. The necessary rationing—since the price system recognizes nothing but money—can be carried out in an egalitarian manner. Indeed, the purpose of rationing is always to share the sacrifices that have to be made when resources are constrained, and thus it can create a sense of real community, of all being in this together, in responding to a genuine emergency. Although Klein does not refer to it, one of the most inspiring historical examples of this was the slogan “Everyone Eats the Same” introduced in the initial phases of the Cuban Revolution and followed to an extraordinary extent throughout the society. Further, wartime mobilization and rationing are not the only historical examples on which we can draw. The New Deal in the United States, she indicates, focused on public investment and direct promotion of the public good, aimed at the enhancement of use values rather than exchange values.14

Mainstream critics of This Changes Everything often willfully confuse its emphasis on degrowth with the austerity policies associated with neoliberalism. However, Klein’s perspective, as we have seen, could not be more different, since it is about the rational use of resources under conditions of absolute necessity and the promotion of equality and community. Nevertheless, she could strengthen her case in this respect by drawing on monopoly-capital theory and its critique of the prodigious waste in our economy, whereby only a miniscule proportion of production and human labor is now devoted to actual human needs as opposed to market-generated wants. As the author of No Logo, Klein is well aware of the marketing madness that characterizes the contemporary commodity economy, causing the United States alone to spend more than a trillion dollars a year on the sales effort.15

What is required in a rich country such as the United States at present, as detailed in This Changes Everything, is not an abandonment of all the comforts of civilization but a reversion to the standard of living of the 1970s—two decades into what Galbraith dubbed “the affluent society.” A return to a lower per capita output (in GDP terms) could be made feasible with
redistribution of income and wealth, social planning, decreases in working time, and universal satisfaction of genuine human needs (a sustainable environment; clean air and water; ample food, clothing, and shelter; and high-quality health care, education, public transportation, and community-cultural life) such that most people would experience a substantial improvement in their daily lives. What Klein envisions here would truly be an ecological-cultural revolution. All that is really required, since the necessary technological means already exist, is people power: the democratic mass mobilization of the population. Such people power, Klein is convinced, is already emerging in the context of the present planetary emergency. It can be seen in the massive but diffuse social-environmental movement, stretching across the globe, representing the struggles of tens of millions of activists worldwide, to which she gives (or rather takes from the movement itself) the name Blockadia. Numberless individuals are putting themselves on the line, confronting power, and frequently facing arrest, in their opposition to the fossil-fuel industry and capitalism itself. Indigenous peoples are organizing worldwide and taking a leading role in the environmental revolt, as in the Idle No More movement in Canada. Anti-systemic, ecologically motivated struggles are on the rise on every continent.

The primary burden for mitigating climate change necessarily resides with the rich countries, which are historically responsible for the great bulk of the carbon added to the atmosphere since the Industrial Revolution and still emit the most carbon per capita today. The disproportionate responsibility of these nations for climate change is even greater once the final consumption of goods is factored into the accounting. Poor countries are heavily dependent on producing export goods for multinational corporations to be sold to consumers at the center of the world capitalist economy. Hence, the carbon emissions associated with such exports are rightly assigned to the rich nations importing these goods rather than the poor ones exporting them. Moreover, the rich countries have ample resources available to address the problem and carry out the necessary process of social regeneration without seriously compromising the basic welfare of their populations. In these societies, the problem is no longer one of increasing per capita wealth, but rather one of the rational, sustainable, and just organization of society. Klein evokes the spirit of Seattle in 1999 and Occupy Wall Street in 2011 to argue that sparks igniting radical ecological change exist even in North America, where growing numbers of people are prepared to join a global peoples’ alliance. Essential to the overall struggle, she insists, is the explicit recognition of ecological or climate debt owed by the global North to the global South.

The left is not spared critical scrutiny in Klein’s work. She acknowledges the existence of a powerful ecological critique within Marxism, and quotes Marx on “capitalism’s ‘irreparable rift’ with ‘the natural laws of life itself.’” Nevertheless, she points to the high carbon emissions of Soviet-type societies, and the heavy dependence of the economies of Bolivia and Venezuela on natural resource extraction, notwithstanding the many social justice initiatives they have introduced. She questions the support given by Greece’s SYRIZA Party to offshore oil
exploration in the Aegean. Many of those on the left, and particularly the so-called liberal-left, with their Keynesian predilections, continue to see an expansion of the treadmill of production, even in the rich countries, as the sole means of social advance.\textsuperscript{18} Klein’s criticisms here are important, but could have benefited, with respect to the periphery, from a consideration of the structure of the imperialist world economy, which is designed specifically to close off options to the poorer countries and force them to meet the needs of the richer ones. This creates a trap that even a Movement Toward Socialism with deep ecological and indigenous values like that of present-day Bolivia cannot seek to overcome without deep contradictions.\textsuperscript{19}

“The unfinished business of liberation,” Klein counsels, requires “a process of rebuilding and reinventing the very idea of the collective, the communal, the commons, the civil, and the civic after so many decades of attack and neglect.”\textsuperscript{20} To accomplish this, it is necessary to build the greatest mass movement of humanity for revolutionary change that the world has ever seen: a challenge that is captured in the title to her conclusion: “The Leap Years: Just Enough Time for Impossible.” If this seems utopian, her answer would be that the world is heading towards something worse than mere dystopia: unending, cumulative, climate catastrophe, threatening civilization and countless species, including our own.\textsuperscript{21}

\textbf{Liberal Critics as Gatekeepers}

Confronted with Klein’s powerful argument in \textit{This Changes Everything}, liberal pundits have rushed to rein in her arguments so that her ideas are less in conflict with the system. Even where the issue is planetary ecological catastrophe, imperiling hundreds of millions of people, future generations, civilization, and the human species itself, the inviolable rule remains the same: the permanency of capitalism is not to be questioned.

As Noam Chomsky explains, liberal opinion plays a vital gatekeeping role for the system, defining itself as the rational left of center, and constituting the outer boundaries of received opinion. Since most of the populace in the United States and the world as a whole is objectively at odds with the regime of capital, it is crucial to the central propaganda function of the media to declare as “off limits” any position that questions the foundations of the system itself. The media effectively says: “Thus far and no further.” To venture farther left beyond the narrow confines of what is permitted within liberal discourse is deemed equivalent to taking “off from the planet.”\textsuperscript{22}

In the case of an influential radical journalist, activist, and best-selling author, like Klein, liberal critics seek first and foremost to refashion her message in ways compatible with the system. They offer her the opportunity to remain within the liberal fraternity—if she will only agree to conform to its rules. The aim is not simply to contain Klein herself but also the movement as a whole that she represents. Thus we find expressions of sympathy for what is presented as her general outlook. Accompanying all such praise, however, is a subtle recasting of her
argument in order to blunt its criticism of the system. For example, it is perfectly permissible on liberal grounds to criticize neoliberal disaster capitalism, as an extreme policy regime. This should at no time, however, extend to a blanket critique of capitalism. Liberal discussions of This Changes Everything, insofar as they are positive at all, are careful to interpret it as adhering to the former position.

Yet, the very same seemingly soft-spoken liberal pundits are not above simultaneously brandishing a big stick at the slightest sign of transgression of the Thus Far and No Further principle. If it should turn out that Klein is really serious in arguing that “this changes everything” and actually sees our reality as one of “capitalism vs. the climate,” then, we are told, she has Taken Off From the Planet, and has lost her right to be heard within the mass media or to be considered part of the conversation at all. The aim here is to issue a stern warning—to remind everyone of the rules by which the game is played, and the serious sanctions to be imposed on those not conforming. The penalty for too great a deviation in this respect is excommunication from the mainstream, to be enforced by the corporate media. Noam Chomsky may be the most influential intellectual figure alive in the world today, but he is generally considered beyond the pale and thus persona non grata where the U.S. media is concerned.

None of this of course is new. Invited to speak at University College, Oxford in 1883, with his great friend John Ruskin in the chair, William Morris, Victorian England’s celebrated artist, master-artisan, and epic poet, author of The Earthly Paradise, shocked his audience by publicly declaring himself “one of the people called Socialists.” The guardians of the official order (the Podsnaps of Dickens’s Our Mutual Friend) immediately rose up to denounce him—overriding Ruskin’s protests—declaring that if they had known of Morris’s intentions he would not have been given loan of the hall. They gave notice then and there that he was no longer welcome at Oxford or in establishment circles. As historian E.P. Thompson put it, “Morris had crossed the ‘river of fire.’ And the campaign to silence him had begun.”

Klein, however, presents a special problem for today’s gatekeepers. Her opposition to the logic of capital in This Changes Everything is not couched primarily in the traditional terms of the left, concerned mainly with issues of exploitation. Rather, she makes it clear that what has finally induced her to cross the river of fire is an impending threat to the survival of civilization and humanity itself. She calls for a broad revolt of humanity against capitalism and for the creation of a more sustainable society in response to the epochal challenge of our time. This is an altogether different kind of animal—one that liberals cannot dismiss out of hand without seeming to go against the scientific consensus and concern for humanity as a whole. Further complicating matters, Klein upsets the existing order of things in her book by declaring “the right is right.” By this she means that the political right’s position on climate change is largely motivated by what it correctly sees as an Either/Or question of capitalism vs. the climate. Hence, conservatives seek to deny climate change—even rejecting the science—in their determination to defend capitalism. In contrast, liberal ideologues—caught in the selfsame trap of capitalism vs. the climate—tend to waffle, accepting most of the science,
while turning around and contradicting themselves by downplaying the logical implications for society. They pretend that there are easy, virtually painless, non-disruptive ways out of this trap via still undeveloped technology, market magic, and mild government regulation—presumably allowing climate change to be mitigated without seriously affecting the capitalist economy. Rather than accepting the Either/Or of capitalism against the climate, liberals convert the problem into one of neoliberalism vs. the climate, insisting that greater regulation, including such measures as carbon trading and carbon offsets, constitutes the solution, with no need to address the fundamental logic of the economic and social system.

Ultimately, it is this liberal form of denialism that is the more dangerous since it denies the social dimension of the problem and blocks the necessary social solutions. Hence, it is the liberal view that is the main target of Klein’s book. In a wider sense, though, conservatives and liberals can be seen as mutually taking part in a dance in which they join hands to block any solution that requires going against the system. The conservative Tweedle Dums dance to the tune that the cost of addressing climate change is too high and threatens the capitalist system. Hence, the science that points to the problem must be denied. The liberal Tweedle Dees dance to the tune that the science is correct, but that the whole problem can readily be solved with a few virtually costless tweaks here and there, put into place by a new regulatory regime. Hence, the system itself is never an issue.

It is her constant exposure of this establishment farce that makes Klein’s criticism so dangerous. She demands that the gates be flung open and the room for democratic political and social maneuver be expanded enormously. What is needed, for starters, is a pro-democracy movement not simply in the periphery of the capitalist world but at the center of the system itself, where the global plutocracy has its main headquarters.

The task from a ruling-class governing perspective, then, is to find a way to contain or neutralize Klein’s views and those of the entire radical climate movement. The ideas she represents are to be included in the corporate media conversation only under extreme sufferance, and then only insofar as they can be corralled and rebranded to fit within a generally liberal, reformist perspective: one that does not threaten the class-based system of capital accumulation.

Rob Nixon can be credited with laying out the general liberal strategy in this respect in a review of Klein’s book in the *New York Times*. He declares outright that Klein has written “the most momentous and contentious environmental book since ‘Silent Spring.’” He strongly applauds her for her criticisms of climate change deniers, and for revealing how industry has corrupted the political process, delaying climate action. All of this, however, is preliminary to his attempt to rein in her argument. There is a serious flaw in her book, we are told, evident in
her subtitle, *Capitalism vs. the Climate*. “What’s with the subtitle?” he scornfully asks. Then stepping in as Klein’s friend and protector, Nixon tells *New York Times* readers that the subtitle is simply a mistake, to be ignored. We should not be thrown off, he proclaims, by a “subtitle” that “sounds like a P.R. person’s idea of a marquee cage fight.” Rather, “Klein’s adversary is neoliberalism—the extreme capitalism that has birthed our era of extreme extraction.” In this subtle recasting of her argument, Klein reemerges as a mere critic of capitalist excess, rejecting specific attributes taken on by the system in its neoliberal phase that can be easily discarded, and that do not touch the system’s fundamental properties. Her goal, we are told, is the same as in *The Shock Doctrine*: turning back the neoliberal “counterrevolution,” returning us to a more humane Golden Age liberal order. Her subtitle can therefore be dismissed in its entirety, as it “belies the sophistication” of her work: code for her supposed conformity to the Thus Far and No Further principle. Employing ridicule as a gatekeeping device—with the implication that this is the sorry fate that awaits anyone who transgresses Thus Far and No Further—Nixon states that “Klein is smart and pragmatic enough to shun the never-never land of capitalism’s global overthrow.”

Dave Pruett in *The Huffington Post* quickly falls into step, showing how well he comprehends the general strategy already outlined by Nixon in the *New York Times*. At the same time, he indicates his readiness to pull in the reins a bit more. Thus we find again that Klein’s book is a “masterpiece,” to be put on the same shelf as Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*. And once again we learn that her subtitle, *Capitalism vs. the Climate* is a “misnomer.” Resorting to a classic Cold War ploy, Pruett further insinuates that the subtitle gives “critics room to accuse Klein of advocating for some discredited Soviet-style state-regulated economy.” Of course such critics, he turns around and says, would surely be wrong. Klein’s argument in *This Changes Everything* really nothing more than a criticism of “unbridled” capitalism—that is, neoliberalism.” Moreover, the “true culprit” of her argument is even more specific than this: “extractivism,” or the extreme exploitation of non-renewable natural resources. Still, Pruett, through his classic Cold War ploy, has with consummate skill planted in advance a lingering doubt and a warning in the mind of the reader, along with an implicit threat directed at Klein herself. If it should turn out that Klein is serious about her subtitle, and she is actually talking about “capitalism vs. the climate,” then she is discredited in advance by the fate of the Soviet Union, with which she is then to be associated.

Approaching *This Changes Everything* much more bluntly, Elizabeth Kolbert, writing for the *New York Review of Books*, quickly lets us know that she has not come to praise Klein but to bury her. Klein’s references to conservation, “managed degrowth,” and the need to shrink humanity’s ecological footprint, Kolbert says, are all non-marketable ideas, to be condemned on straightforwardly capitalist-consumerist principles. Such strategies and actions will not sell to today’s consumers, even if the future of coming generations is in jeopardy. Nothing will get people to give up “HDTV or trips to the mall or the family car.” Unless it is demonstrated how acting on climate change will result in a “minimal disruption to ‘the American way of life,’” she asserts, nothing said with respect to climate change action matters at all. Klein has simply
provided a convenient “fable” of little real value. *This Changes Everything* is indicted for having violated accepted commercial axioms in its core thesis, which Kolbert converts into an argument for extreme austerity. Klein is to be faulted for her grandiose schemes that do not fit into U.S. consumer society, and for not “looking at all closely at what this [reduction in the commodity economy] would entail.” Klein has failed to specify exactly how many watts of electricity per capita will be consumed under her plan. It is much easier, Kolbert seems to say, for U.S. consumers to imagine the end of a climate permitting human survival than to envision the end of two-million-square-foot shopping malls.26

David Ulin in the *Los Angeles Times* unveils still another weapon in the liberal arsenal, denouncing Klein for her optimism and her faith in humanity. “There is, in places,” he emphasizes, “a disconnect between her [Klein’s] idealism and her realism, what she thinks ought to happen and what she recognizes likely will.” Social analysis, in Ulin’s view, seems to be reduced to forecasting the most likely outcomes. Klein apparently failed to consult with Las Vegas oddsmakers before making her case for saving humanity. Klein’s penchant for idealism, he declares, “is most glaring in her suggestions for large-scale policy mitigation, which can seem simplistic, relying on notions of fairness…that corporate culture does not share.” Regrettably, Ulin does not tell us exactly where the kind of climate justice programs put in place by Exxon and Walmart’s “corporate culture” will actually lead us in the end. However, he does give us a specious clue in his final paragraph, describing what he apparently considers to be the most realistic scenario. The planet, we are informed, “has ample power to rock, burn, and shake us off completely.” The earth will go on without us.27

Other liberal gatekeepers pull out all the stops, attacking not just every radical notion in Klein’s book but the book as a whole, and even Klein herself. Writing for the influential liberal news and opinion website, the *Daily Beast*, Michael Signer characterizes Klein’s book as “a curiously clueless manifesto.” It will not spark a movement against carbon, in part because Klein “rejects capitalism, market mechanisms, and even, seemingly, profit motives and corporate governance.” She offers “a compelling story,” but one that “creates the paradoxical effect of making this perspicacious and successful author seem like an idiot.” Signer depicts her as if she has Taken Off From the Planet simply by refusing to stay within the narrow spectrum of opinion defined by the *Wall Street Journal* on the one side and the *New York Times* on the other. “For anyone who believes in capitalism and political leadership,” we are informed, “her book won’t change anything at all.”28

Mark Jaccard, an orthodox economist writing for the *Literary Review of Canada*, declares that *This Changes Everything* ignores how market-based mechanisms are a powerful means for reducing carbon emissions. However, his main evidence for this contention is Arnold Schwarzenegger’s signing of a climate bill in California in 2006, which is supposed to reduce the state’s carbon emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. Unfortunately for Jaccard’s claim, a little over a week before he criticized Klein on the basis of the California experiment, the *Los Angeles Times* broke the story that California’s emissions reduction initiative was in some respects a “shell game,” as California was reducing emissions on paper while emissions were
growing in surrounding states from which California was also increasingly purchasing power. Add to this the facts that California’s initiative is more state-based than capital-based, and that the real problem is not one of getting down to 1990 level emissions, but getting down to pre-1760 level emissions, i.e., carbon emissions eventually have to fall to zero—and not just in California but worldwide.

Jaccard goes on to accuse Klein of wearing “‘blame capitalism’ blinders” that keep her from seeing the actual difficulties that make dealing with climate so imposing. This includes her failure to perceive the “Faustian dilemma” associated with fossil fuels, given that they have yielded so many benefits for humanity and can offer many more to the poor of the world. “This dilemma,” which he is so proud to have discovered, “is not the fault of capitalism.” Indeed, capitalist economics, we are told, is already well equipped to solve the climate problem and only misguided state policies stand in the way. Drawing upon an argument presented by Paul Krugman in his *New York Times* column, Jaccard suggests that “greenhouse gas reductions have proven to be not nearly as costly as science deniers on the right and anti-growth activists on the left would have us believe.” Krugman, a Tweedle Dee, rejects the carefree Tweedle Dum melody whereby climate change, as a threat to the system, is simply wished away along with the science. He counters this simple, carefree tune with what he regards as a more complex, harmonious song in which the problem is whisked away in spite of the science by means of a few virtually costless market regulations. So convinced is Jaccard himself of capitalism’s basic harmonious relation to the climate that he simply turns a deaf ear to Klein’s impressive account of the vast system-scale changes required to stop climate change.

Will Boisvert, commenting on behalf of the self-described “post-environmentalist” Breakthrough Institute, condemns Klein and the entire environmental movement in an article pointedly entitled, “The Left vs. the Climate: Why Progressives Should Reject Naomi Klein’s Pastoral Fantasy—and Embrace Our High Energy Planet.” Apparently it is not industry that is destroying a livable climate through its carbon dioxide emissions, but rather environmentalists, by refusing to adopt the Breakthrough Institute’s technological crusade for surmounting nature’s limits on a planetary scale. As Breakthrough senior fellow Bruno Latour writes in an article for the Institute, it is necessary “to love your monsters,” meaning the kind of Frankenstein creations envisioned in Mary Shelley’s novel. Humanity should be prepared to put its full trust, the Breakthrough Institute tells us, in such wondrous technological answers as nuclear power, “clean coal,” geoengineering, and fracking. For its skepticism regarding such technologies, the whole left (and much of the scientific community) is branded as a bunch of Luddites. As Boisvert exclaims in terms designed to delight the entire corporate sector:

To make a useful contribution to changing everything, the Left could begin by changing itself. It could start by redoing its risk assessments and rethinking its phobic hostility to nuclear power. It could abandon the infatuation with populist insurrection and advance a serious politics of systematic state action. It could stop glamorizing austerity under the guise of spiritual authenticity
and put development prominently on its environmental agenda. It could accept that industry and technology do indeed distance us from nature—and in doing so can protect nature from human extractions. And it could realize that, as obnoxious as capitalism can be, scapegoating it won’t spare us the hard thinking and hard trade-offs that a sustainable future requires.  

Boisvert here echoes Erle Ellis, who, in an earlier essay for the Breakthrough Institute, contended that climate change is not a catastrophic threat, because “human systems are prepared to adapt to and prosper in the hotter, less biodiverse planet that we are busily creating.” On this basis, Boisvert chastises Klein and all who think like her for refusing to celebrate capitalism’s creative destruction of everything in existence. 

Klein of course is not caught completely unaware by such attacks. For those imbued in the values of the current system, she writes in her book, “changing the earth’s climate in ways that will be chaotic and disastrous is easier to accept than the prospect of changing the fundamental, growth-based, profit-seeking logic of capitalism.” Indeed, all of the mainstream challenges to This Changes Everything discussed above have one thing in common: they insist that capitalism is the “end of history,” and that the buildup of carbon in the atmosphere since the Industrial Revolution and the threat that this represents to life as we know it change nothing about today’s Panglossian best of all possible worlds. 

The Ultimate Line of Defense

Naturally, it is not simply liberals, but also socialists, in some cases, who have attacked This Changes Everything. Socialist critics, though far more sympathetic with her analysis, are inclined to fault her book for not being explicit enough about the nature of system change, the full scale of the transformations required, and the need for socialism. Klein says little about the vital question of the working class, without which the revolutionary changes she envisions are impossible. It is therefore necessary to ask: To what extent is the ultimate goal to build a new movement toward socialism, a society to be controlled by the associated producers? Such questions still remain unanswered by the left climate movement and by Klein herself. In our view, though, it is difficult to fault Klein for her silences in this respect. Her aim at present is clearly confined to the urgent and strategic—if more limited—one of making the broad case for System Change Not Climate Change. Millions of people, she believes, are crossing or are on the brink of crossing the river of fire. Capitalism, they charge, is now obsolete, since it is no longer compatible either with our survival as a species or our welfare as individual human beings. Hence, we need to build society anew in our time with all the human creativity and collective imagination at our disposal. It is this burgeoning global movement that is now demanding anti-capitalist and post-capitalist solutions. Klein sees herself merely as the people’s megaphone in this respect. The goal, she explains, is a complex social one of fusing all of the many anti-systemic movements of the left. The struggle to save a habitable earth is humanity’s ultimate line of defense—but one that at the same time
requires that we take the offensive, finding ways to move forward collectively, extending the boundaries of liberated space. David Harvey usefully describes this fusion of movements as a co-revolutionary strategy. Is the vision presented in This Changes Everything compatible with a classical socialist position? Given the deep ecological commitments displayed by Marx, Engels, and Morris, there is little room for doubt—which is not to deny that socialists need to engage in self-criticism, given past failures to implement ecological values and the new challenges that characterize our epoch. Yet, the whole question strikes us in a way as a bit odd, since historical materialism does not represent a rigid, set position, but is rather the ongoing struggle for a world of substantive equality and sustainable human development. As Morris wrote in A Dream of John Ball:

But while I pondered all these things, and how men fight and lose the battle, and the thing that they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes turns out not to be what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name—while I pondered all this, John Ball began to speak again in the same soft and clear voice with which he had left off.

In this “soft and clear voice,” Ball, a leader in the fourteenth-century English Peasant’s Revolt, proceeded, in Morris’s retelling, to declare that the one true end was “Fellowship on earth”—an end that was also the movement of the people and could never be stopped. Klein offers us anew this same vision of human community borne of an epoch of revolutionary change. “There is little doubt,” she declares in her own clear voice,

that another crisis will see us in the streets and squares once again, taking us all by surprise. The real question is what progressive forces will make of that moment, the power and confidence with which it will be seized. Because these moments when the impossible seems suddenly possible are excruciatingly rare and precious. That means more must be made of them. The next time one arises, it must be harnessed not only to denounce the world as it is, and build fleeting pockets of liberated space. It must be the catalyst to actually build the world that will keep us all safe. The stakes are simply too high, and time too short, to settle for anything less.

The ultimate goal of course is not simply “to build the world that will keep us all safe” but to build a world of genuine equality and human community—the only conceivable basis for sustainable human development. Equality, Simón Bolívar exclaimed, is “the law of laws.”

Notes

Change, http://systemchangenotclimatechange.org; Klein, This Changes Everything, 87–89.


4. ←Klein, This Changes Everything, 342, 444–47.

5. ←Klein, This Changes Everything, 55.

6. ←Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report, http://ipcc.ch; trillionthtonne.org, accessed January 3, 2015; “Carbon Budget Message of IPCC Report Reveals Daunting Challenge,” Huffington Post, October 4, 2013, http://huffingtonpost.com; Myles Allen, et. al., “The Exit Strategy,” Nature Reports Climate Change, April 30, 2009, http://nature.com, 56–58. It should be noted that the trillionth metric ton calculation is based on carbon, not carbon dioxide. Moreover, the 2039 estimate of the point at which the trillion metric ton will be reached, made by trillionthtonne.org (sponsored by scientists at Oxford University), should be regarded as quite optimistic under present, business-as-usual conditions, since less than three years ago, at the end of 2012, it was estimated that the trillion ton would be reached in 2043, or in thirty-one years. (See John Bellamy Foster and Brett Clark, “The Planetary Emergency,” Monthly Review 64, no. 7 [December 2012]: 2.) The gap, according to these estimates, is thus closing faster as time passes and nothing is done to reduce emissions.


8. ←Klein, This Changes Everything, 19, 56. The fact that neoliberal globalization and the creation of the WTO had permanently derailed the movement associated with the Earth Summit in Rio in 1993, including the attempt to prevent climate change, was stressed by one of us more than a dozen years ago at the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg 2002, when Klein was present. See John Bellamy Foster, “A Planetary Defeat: The Failure of Global Environmental Reform,” Monthly Review 54, no. 8 (January 2003): 1–9, originally based on several talks delivered in Johannesburg, August 2002.

9. ←Klein, This Changes Everything, 21–24.


16. ←Klein, This Changes Everything, 91–94.

17. ←Klein, This Changes Everything, 381–82, 408–13.

18. ←Klein, This Changes Everything, 176–87; “A Feeling It’s Gonna Be Huge.”

19. ←For historical materialist analyses of the extractivism problem in Bolivia and the difficult problem of

20. ←Klein, This Changes Everything, 91–94.
overcoming it see Álvaro García Linera, *Geopolitics of the Amazon*, 2012, http://climateandcapitalism.com; Frederico Fuentes, “The Dangerous Myths of ‘Anti-Extractivism,’” May 19, 2014, http://climateandcapitalism.com. As the author of *The Shock Doctrine*, Klein is cognizant of imperialism but it does not enter in her analysis much here, partly because she is making a point of being balanced by criticizing the left as well as the right.


33. ↩ Klein, *This Changes Everything*, 89.


37. ↩ Klein, *This Changes Everything*, 466.


FOLLOW-UP IN *MONTHLY REVIEW* (MARCH 2015, 64-65)
The model of creating sustainability and community as the cell of a new socialist society offered by the Nearings and Seeger is more important now than ever. But more than half a century later capitalism has extended its “suicidal destructivity” to the point that in the early twenty-first century we are running out of time on a global basis. This is the message of Naomi Klein’s *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*. The central thesis of her book is that the solution to the climate-change emergency must now be an anti-capitalist (not just an anti-neoliberal) one, because *in the limited time that we still have available nothing but a reversal in the dominant capital logic of society and the substitution of an alternative people logic will suffice*.

In courageously presenting this conclusion, Klein opened herself up to a host of liberal gatekeeping attacks on her work, all of which presented the same criticism: contravening neoliberalism is within the bounds of the acceptable range of ideas as determined by the dominant media system; the critique of capitalism—even in the face of impending global catastrophe—is not. It was this question of the establishment response to Klein’s work that John Bellamy Foster and Brett Clark took up in the February 2015 Review of the Month, “Crossing the River of Fire.” Since the February issue of *MR* went to the printer, Klein herself has responded to these liberal attacks on her book:

> [There’s something else that] has come up in a few reviews that I am confused by. The issue of: Is it anti-neoliberal? Or is it anti-capitalist? A few reviewers have made the claim that the case I’m making is against neoliberalism and not against capitalism. And I think I’m really clear in the book, and I don’t know how I could be any clearer: it’s both. That in terms of the tools that we needed to respond to this crisis when it hit in the late 80s and 90s, [these] were the very tools that were under fire by the neoliberal project: regulation, taxation, the very idea of collective action in society and so on. The advancement of free trade created more barriers. But because we have waited as long as we have, and we now need to cut our emissions as deeply as we need to, we now have a conflict not just with neoliberalism, but a conflict with capitalism because it challenges the growth imperative. So I realize this is a two-stage argument, but it’s both. (Naomi Klein, “Capitalism vs. the Climate: An Interview,” *Human Geography* 8, no. 1 [2015], http://hugeog.com)

Klein’s argument here is irrefutable. To be sure, in criticizing neoliberalism for removing the tools needed to address climate change she deftly avoids the issue of whether capital as a system could ever have seriously mitigated the problem. Nevertheless, what cannot be questioned on rational grounds is her contention that the degree of carbon dioxide reductions now needed to stay within the planetary carbon budget—a 3 percent per annum cut in carbon worldwide, which would in reality translate into a reduction of 8–10 percent per year in the rich countries—is incompatible with a system based on capital accumulation and exponential economic growth. Add to this the fact that climate change is only part of the overall planetary environmental crisis, which also encompasses such issues as the loss of biodiversity, the disruption of the nitrogen and phosphorous cycles, ocean acidification, degradation of
freshwater resources, and disappearing land cover. What is needed, then, is what the great ecologist Howard Odum called “a prosperous way down” (see John Bellamy Foster and Brett Clark, “The Planetary Emergency,” MR, December 2012, 9–20). Klein is realistic and radical enough to realize that her recognition of this necessity, together with her readiness to act on it, puts her and the entire left climate movement that she represents in conflict with capital as a system—and not just with its most virulent form of neoliberalism. It is, as she says, a “two stage argument,” and we are now in the second stage. There is no avoiding the fact that the logic of capital accumulation must give way if we are to have a reasonable chance of saving civilization and humanity.

Klein’s Plea for Sanity

Klein’s book, This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate, is a vital addition to the critiques of capitalism. Here she is, as chaos is foreseen by the consensus of scientists if the rising global temperature is not stopped and reversed soon, calling for faith in human beings and the rejection of the US corporate state. Here she is in 2014, tracing the awful history of the rise of the right wing mainly in the Republican Party, at a moment of possible, terrible climate chaos, expressing hope. Hers is a lucid plea for sanity and compassion at a moment when the irrationalism of misology and misoneism have gained power over the government.

Related reading: Harvey Kaye’s The Fight for the Four Freedoms, 2014 (a history of the rise of FDR’s/Democratic Party’s New Deal and belief in affirmative government and their decline under the new, reactionary Republican onslaught) and Rudolf Rocker’s Nationalism and Culture, 1933/1937 (written in Berlin while Hitler’s Brown Shirts were marching outside his window, a denunciation of the corrosive effects of nationalistic exceptionalism). Dick


Capitalism Is Beating Our Mother to Death, Help Her
In the bestselling book This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs The Climate, journalist Naomi Klein investigates power as the issue. Much attention is given to runaway emissions, and less on the fundamental economic and political system itself. Virtually all climate scientists agree that we are destroying our planet, with abundant evidence, but confusion remains on a solution. She clears this up: free market capitalist ideology must be confronted.

Before serious progress is made, climate change denial among everyone needs to be recognized. Klein explains that denial is not limited merely to anti-science politicians. It exists among the entire public in different forms. Many of us choose to "look away" using various
unhelpful rationalizations.
We must courageously face the frightening truth of the climate crisis. This must be treated like the global emergency it is because massive investment is required, akin to war or bank bailouts. Undeniably, this must occur because it is the greatest threat humankind has ever faced, rivaled only by nuclear holocaust.
Worldwide, governmental leaders are failing us. During negotiations leading to weak nonbinding agreements from 1990-2013, climate emissions have increased 61 percent. The cold reality is our current leaders are not going to save us.
Klein concludes with systems researcher Dr. Brad Werner’s poignant question: “Is Earth F**ked?” Werner presented this topic at a 2012 meeting of the American Geophysical Union, a meeting of 24,000 earth and space scientists. He detailed much complex mathematical information to answer this question, but the take home answer was “more or less” because of global capitalism’s relentless pursuit of growth, capital accumulation, and unfettered resource consumption.
Thankfully, there was a variable for hope, which Werner labeled “resistance.” This is defined as movements of people engaging in “environmental direct action…protests, blockades and sabotage,” which cause “friction” with capitalism. According to Werner and Klein, only “mass social movements can save us now.”
In the book, Klein investigated various “friction” movements, past and present. Historically, many social movements have proven disruptive to the status quo. The climate challenge, on the other hand, requires a “radical economic transformation,” which can be more difficult because social changes are less costly.
In terms of powerful economic shifts, the best examples, besides colonial independence movements, are the labor movement after the Great Depression and slavery abolition. The labor movement and mass unionization resulted in a great wealth transfer from the capitalist class to the working class. This included many social programs, public infrastructure investment and regulation of Wall Street.
However, the slavery abolition movement is perhaps the best analogy. In his essay “The New Abolitionism.” journalist Chris Hayes wrote, “the climate justice movement is demanding that an existing set of political and economic interests be forced to say goodbye to trillions of dollars in wealth.” Hayes also adds that “in 1860, slaves represented about 16 percent of…all the wealth” in the United States, “which in today's terms is a stunning $10 trillion.” This is approximately the value of fossil fuels that must remain in the ground to avoid a 2 degree Celsius global temperature increase. In both cases, the cost to elites is steep, but the new demands could end the reigning oligarchy.
Although many past movements, such as for civil rights, succeeded legally, few did so economically. This is why great injustice, poverty and discrimination still remain. Many of these movements for equal rights still exist in some form today, so climate justice does not necessarily need a new movement. She writes, “climate change can be the force—the grand push—that will bring together all these still living movements. A rushing river fed by countless streams, gathering force to finally reach the sea.” The lesson from past movements is that
major power shifts required massive social mobilization, when "Activists were...everyone."

Ultimately, Klein concludes it is not too late and we have plenty of solutions, but free market ideology must be challenged. This worldview change can lead to "rapid-fire lawmaking" like the New Deal. The idea that we are "hopelessly selfish" as taught by television programming and neoclassical economics must be abandoned. We must shift mindsets from pure individualistic competition and hierarchical domination to cooperation and interdependence. Additionally, like past movements, we must embrace the language of morality, love and indignation to "alter public opinion," as abolitionist Wendell Phillips put it.

Many people and groups exist as infrastructure for a mass climate justice movement, but one thing has yet to manifest. As journalist Luis Navarro said, this thing is the right moment when pessimism is dissolved in the "effervescence of rebellion." A precipitating spark must occur, such as a certain crisis, economic, political or natural, which are abundant. When that surprising event unfolds, Klein suggests activists powerfully seize the moment to "denounce the world as it is...and build the world that will keep us safe."

Related Announcement: The monthly OMNI Climate Change Book Forum will be discussing this book on March 1st at 1:30 p.m. in the Fayetteville Public Library. OMNI 350 organizer Shelley Buonaiuto and climatologist Dr. Robert McAfee will chair the event.

Conclusion Summary of Naomi Klein’s *This Changes Everything*
By Abel Tomlinson

In the powerful book *This Changes Everything*, Naomi Klein concludes with systems researcher Dr. Brad Werner’s poignant question: “Is Earth F***ked?” Werner presented this topic at a 2012 meeting of the American Geophysical Union, a meeting of 24,000 earth and space scientists. Werner detailed much complex mathematical information to answer this question, but the take home answer was “More or less” because of global capitalism’s unfettered resource consumption.

However, there was a variable for hope, which Werner labeled “resistance.” This is defined as movements of people engaging in “environmental direct action...protests, blockades and sabotage,” which cause “friction” with capitalism. According to Werner and Klein, only “mass social movements can save us now.”

Klein investigated various early “friction” movements including Blockadia, fossil fuel divestment, local laws against high-risk extraction, and Indigenous court challenges. During her research, she also witnessed a great deal of disheartening events, but still finds good reason for optimism. Knowledge of dangerous extraction methods is growing along with the size and number of activist movements. Although powerful companies stand to lose trillions of dollars if serious climate solutions are implemented, Klein finds that precedent for powerful social and political shifts.
Various social movements have proven historically disruptive to the status quo, including civil, women’s and gay rights. However, the climate challenge requires a “radical economic transformation,” which can be more difficult because social changes are comparatively less costly. In terms of powerful economic shifts, the best examples, besides colonial independence movements, are the labor movement after the Great Depression and slavery abolition. The labor movement and mass unionization resulted in a great wealth transfer from the capitalist class to the working class. This included many social programs, public infrastructure investment and regulation of Wall Street.

However, the slavery abolition movement is perhaps the best analogy for the climate movement. In his essay “The New Abolitionism,” journalist Chris Hayes wrote, “the climate justice movement is demanding that an existing set of political and economic interests be forced to say goodbye to trillions of dollars in wealth.” Hayes also adds that “in 1860, slaves represented about 16 percent of…all the wealth” in the United States, “which in today’s terms is a stunning $10 trillion.” This is approximately the value of fossil fuels that must remain in the ground to avoid a 2 degree Celsius global temperature increase. In both cases, the cost to elites is steep, but the new demands could end the oligarchy.

Klein makes the point that many past movements, such as for civil rights, succeeded legally, but not so much economically. This is why great injustice, poverty and discrimination still remain. Many of these movements for equal rights still exist in some form today, so climate change does not necessarily need a new movement. She writes, “climate change can be the force—the grand push—that will bring together all these still living movements. A rushing river fed by countless streams, gathering force to finally reach the sea.” The lesson from past movements is that major power shifts required massive social mobilization, when "Activists were...everyone."

Ultimately, Klein finds it is not too late and we have plenty of solutions, but there must be challenge to free market ideology. This requires a change in worldview, which can lead to "rapid-fire lawmaking" like the New Deal. The idea that we are "hopelessly selfish" as taught by television programming and economics must be confronted. We must shift mindsets from pure independent competition and hierarchical domination to cooperation and interdependence. Additionally, like past movements, we must embrace the language of morality, love and indignation to "alter public opinion," as abolitionist Wendell Phillips put it.

Many people care and many groups exist as infrastructure for a mass climate justice movement, but one thing has yet to occur. As journalist Luis Navarro said, this thing is the right moment when pessimism is dissolved in the "effervescence of rebellion." A precipitating spark must occur, such as the right crisis, economic, political or natural, which are all abundant. When that surprising event unfolds, Klein suggests activists must powerfully seize the moment to "denounce the world as it is...and build the world that will keep us safe."
ART’S OBJECTION TO KLEIN

Art Hobson 2:12 PM (5 hours ago)
See ya’ Sunday. I’ve only read about 20% so far, but will read more. She makes good points, but I keep asking “wouldn’t a simple but steep carbon tax be able to accomplish this, without the need for socializing our economy?” Personally, I’m all for greater socialization—following something like the Swedish path. But is this really necessary to solve global warming? —Just a little food for thought for Sunday. - Art

DICK’S REPLY

Art, I think Klein agrees with you about a tax and other remedies, and urges people to keep up their efforts. But because they have failed so far by the measure of temperature still rising, she has now turned her hope to mass mobilization for fundamental change away from the principles and practices of capitalism. A person with the greatest respectability at the highest levels of environmentalism, James Gustave Speth,* apparently agrees with her, at least certainly regarding the temperature rising to 2 degrees and possibly to 4, and that new, much stronger actions are needed. In the latest number of Yes! Magazine (Spring 2015) Bill McKibben reviewed Speth’s memoir, Angels by the River. McKibben writes, drawing from the memoir, my summary: The environmentalism based on “pragmatic and incremental change” and that produced clean air and water “has so far proved utterly unable to slow the rise of the planet’s temperature—a crisis so severe and far-reaching that, unabated, it will wipe out all the gains of the past four decades.” I hope Speth reviews Klein’s book so we can determine exactly what he means by “unabated” here. Quoting Speth: “The final goal of the new environmental politics must be, ‘Build the movement.’” *Speth was founder of the NRDC, chairman of Jimmy Carter’s Council on Environmental Quality, head of the UN Development Program, founder World Resources Institute, Dean of Yale’s School of Forestry and the Environment, etc.

KLEIN INTERVIEWED BY COLBERT

Here is a really entertaining interview with Naomi Klein, and a big plug for the book we’re reading for this Sunday’s discussion, on the Colbert Report. She’s a gutsy lady and quick on her feet, even in the face of Colbert’s withering humor.
http://ecowatch.com/2014/09/24/naomi-klein-stephen-colbert/
Peace – Art

Naomi Klein: 'The Economic System We Have Created Also Created Global Warming', Interview by Klaus Brinkbaumer, Der
PIEGEL: Ms. Klein, why aren't people able to stop climate change?


SPIEGEL: The wrong catastrophe at the wrong moment?

Klein: The worst possible moment. The connection between greenhouse gases and global warming has been a mainstream political issue for humanity since 1988. It was precisely the time that the Berlin Wall fell and Francis Fukuyama declared the "End of History," the victory of Western capitalism. Canada and the US signed the first free-trade agreement, which became the prototype for the rest of the world.

SPIEGEL: So you're saying that a new era of consumption and energy use began precisely at the moment when sustainability and restraint would have been more appropriate?

Klein: Exactly. And it was at precisely this moment that we were also being told that there was no longer any such thing as social responsibility and collective action, that we should leave everything to the market. We privatized our railways and the energy grid, the WTO and the IMF locked in an unregulated capitalism. Unfortunately, this led to an explosion in emissions.

SPIEGEL: You're an activist, and you've blamed capitalism for all kinds of things over the years. Now you're blaming it for climate change too?

Klein: That's no reason for irony. The numbers tell the story. During the 1990s, emissions went up by 1 percent per year. Starting in 2000, they started to go up by an average of 3.4 percent. The American Dream was exported globally and consumer goods that we thought of as essential to meet our needs expanded rapidly. We started seeing ourselves exclusively as consumers. When shopping as a way of life is exported to every corner of the globe, that requires energy. A lot of energy.

SPIEGEL: Let's go back to our first question: Why have people been unable to stop this development?

Klein: We have systematically given away the tools. Regulations of any kind are now scorned. Governments no longer create tough rules that limit oil companies and other corporations. This crisis fell into our laps in a disastrous way at the worst possible moment. Now we're out of time. Where we are right now is a do-or-die moment. If we don't act as a species, our future is in peril. We need to cut emissions radically.

SPIEGEL: Let's go back to another question: Are you not misappropriating the issue of climate change for use in your critique of capitalism?

Klein: No. The economic system that we have created has also created global warming. I didn't make this up. The system is broken, income inequality is too great and the lack of restraint on the part of the energy companies is disastrous.

SPIEGEL: Your son Toma is two-and-a-half years old. What kind of world will he be living in when he graduates from high school in 2030?

Klein: That is what is being decided right now. I see signs that it could be a radically different world from the one we have today -- and that change could either be quite positive or extremely negative. In any case, it's already certain that it will at least in part be a worse world. We're going to experience global warming and far more natural disasters, that much is certain. But we still have time to prevent truly catastrophic warming. We also have time to change our economic system so that it does not become more brutal and merciless as it deals with climate change.

SPIEGEL: What can be done to improve the situation?
Klein: We have to make some decisions now about what values are important to us and how we really want to live. And of course it makes a difference if temperatures only rise by 2 degrees or if they rise by 4 or 5 degrees or more. It's still possible for us humans to make the right decisions.

SPIEGEL: Twenty-six years have passed since the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was founded in 1988. We have known at least since then that CO2 emissions from the burning of oil and coal is responsible for climate change. Yet little has been done to address the problem. Haven't we already failed?

Klein: I view the situation differently given the enormous price we will have to pay. As long as we have the slightest chance of success or to minimize the damage, we have to continue to fight.

SPIEGEL: Several years ago, the international community set a target of limiting global warming to 2 degrees Celsius. Do you still consider that to be achievable?

Klein: Well, it's still a physical possibility. We would have to immediately reduce global emissions by 6 percent a year. The wealthier countries would have to carry a greater burden, meaning the United States and Europe would have to be cutting emissions by around 8 to 10 percent a year. Immediately. It's not impossible. It is just profoundly politically unrealistic under our current system.

SPIEGEL: You are saying our societies aren't capable of doing so?

Klein: Yes. We need a dramatic change both in policy and ideology, because there is a fundamental difference between what the scientists are telling us we need to do and our current political reality. We can't change the physical reality, so we must change the political reality.

SPIEGEL: Is a society focused on economic growth at all capable of fighting climate change successfully?

Klein: No. An economic model based on indiscriminate growth inevitably leads to greater consumption and to greater CO2 emissions. There can and must be growth in the future in many low carbon parts of the economy: in green technologies, in public transportation, in all the caregiving professions, in the arts and of course in education. Right now, the core of our gross domestic product is comprised of just consumption, imports and exports. We need to make cuts there. Anything else would be self-deception.

SPIEGEL: The International Monetary Fund makes the opposite claim. It says that economic growth and climate protection are not mutually exclusive.

Klein: They're not looking at the same numbers as I am. The first problem is that at all these climate conferences, everyone acts as if we will arrive at our goal through self-commitments and voluntary obligations. No one tells the oil companies that, in the end, they are really going to have to give up. The second problem is that these oil companies are going to fight like hell to protect what they don't want to lose.

SPIEGEL: You seriously want to eliminate the free market in order to save the climate?

Klein: I am not talking about eliminating markets, but we need much more strategy, steering and planning and a very different balance. The system in which we live is overly obsessed with growth -- it's one that sees all growth as good. But there are kinds of growth that are clearly not good. It's clear to me that my position is in direct conflict with neo-liberalism. Is it true that in Germany, although you have accelerated the shift to renewables, coal consumption is actually increasing?

SPIEGEL: That was true from 2009 to 2013.

Klein: To me that is an expression of this reluctance to decide on what is necessary. Germany is not going to meet its emissions targets in the coming years either.

SPIEGEL: Is the Obama presidency the worst thing that could have happened to the climate?

Klein: In a way. Not because Obama is worse than a Republican. He's not. But because
these eight years were the biggest wasted opportunity of our lives. The right factors came together in a truly historic convergence: awareness, urgency, the mood, his political majority, the failure of the Big Three US automakers and even the possibility of addressing the failed unregulated financial world and climate change at the same time. But when he came to office, he didn't have the courage to do it. We will not win this battle unless we are willing to talk about why Obama viewed the fact that he had control over the banks and auto companies as more of a burden than as an opportunity. He was a prisoner of the system. He didn't want to change it.

SPIEGEL: The US and China finally agreed on an initial climate deal in 2014.
Klein: Which is, of course, a good thing. But anything in the deal that could become painful won't come into effect until Obama is out of office. Still, what has changed is that Obama said: "Our citizens are marching. We can't ignore that." The mass movements are important; they are having an impact. But to push our leaders to where they need to go, they need to grow even stronger.

SPIEGEL: What should their goal be?
Klein: Over the past 20 years, the extreme right, the complete freedom of oil companies and the freedom of the super wealthy 1 percent of society have become the political standard. We need to shift America's political center from the right fringe back to where it belongs, the real center.

SPIEGEL: Ms. Klein, that's nonsense, because it's illusory. You're thinking far too broadly. If you want to first eliminate capitalism before coming up with a plan to save the climate, you know yourself that this won't happen.

Klein: Look, if you want to get depressed, there are plenty of reasons to do so. But you're still wrong, because the fact is that focusing on supposedly achievable incremental changes like carbon trading and changing light bulbs has failed miserably. Part of that is because in most countries, the environmental movement remained elite, technocratic and supposedly politically neutral for two-and-a-half decades. We are seeing the result of this today: It has taken us in the wrong direction. Emissions are rising and climate change is here. Second, in the US, all the major legal and social transformations of the last 150 years were a consequence of mass social movements, be they for women, against slavery or for civil rights. We need this strength again, and quickly, because the cause of climate change is the political and economic system itself. The approach that you have is too technocratic and small.

SPIEGEL: If you attempt to solve a specific problem by overturning the entire societal order, you won't solve it. That's a utopian fantasy.
Klein: Not if societal order is the root of the problem. Viewed from another perspective, we're literally swimming in examples of small solutions: There are green technologies, local laws, bilateral treaties and CO2 taxation. Why don't we have all that at a global level?

SPIEGEL: You're saying that all the small steps -- green technologies and CO2 taxation and the eco-behavior of individuals -- are meaningless?
Klein: No. We should all do what we can, of course. But we can't delude ourselves that it's enough. What I'm saying is that the small steps will remain too small if they don't become a mass movement. We need an economic and political transformation, one based on stronger communities, sustainable jobs, greater regulation and a departure from this obsession with growth. That's the good news. We have a real opportunity to solve many problems at once.

SPIEGEL: You don't appear to be counting on the collective reason of politicians and entrepreneurs.
Klein: Because the system can't think. The system rewards short-term gain, meaning quick profits. Take Michael Bloomberg, for example ...

SPIEGEL: … the businessman and former New York City mayor …
Klein: … who understood the depths of the climate crisis as a politician. As a businessman, however, he chooses to invest in a fund that specializes in oil and gas assets. If a person like
Bloomberg cannot resist the temptation, then you can assume that the system's self-preservation capacity isn't that great.

**SPIEGEL:** A particularly unsettling chapter in your book is about Richard Branson, CEO of the Virgin Group.

**Klein:** Yes. I wouldn't have expected it.

**SPIEGEL:** Branson has sought to portray himself as a man who wants to save the climate. It all started after an encounter with Al Gore.

**Klein:** And in 2006, he pledged at an event hosted by the Clinton Global Initiative that he would invest $3 billion in research into green technologies. At the time, I thought it was truly a sensational contribution. I didn't think, oh, you cynical bastard.

**SPIEGEL:** But Branson was really just staging it and only a fraction of that money was ever spent.

**Klein:** He may well have been sincere at the time, but yes, only a fraction was spent.

**SPIEGEL:** Since 2006, Branson has added 160 new airplanes to his numerous airlines and increased his emissions by 40 percent.

**Klein:** Yes.

**SPIEGEL:** What is there to learn from this story?

**Klein:** That we need to question the symbolism and gestures made by Hollywood stars and the super rich. We cannot confuse them with a scientifically sound plan to reduce emissions.

**SPIEGEL:** In America and Australia, a lot of money is spent on efforts to deny climate change. Why?

**Klein:** It's different from Europe. It's an anger that is similar to that held by those who oppose abortion and gun control. It's not only that they are protecting a way of life they don't want to change. It's that they understand that climate change challenges their core anti-government, free-market belief system. So they have to deny it to protect their very identity. That's why there's this intensity gap: Liberals want to take a little bit of action on climate protection. But at the same time, these liberals also have a number of other issues that are higher on their agenda. But we have to understand that the hardcore conservative climate change deniers will do everything in their power to prevent action.

**SPIEGEL:** With pseudo-scientific studies and disinformation?

**Klein:** With all of that, of course.

**SPIEGEL:** Does that explain why you are connecting all of these issues -- the environment, equity, public health and labor issues -- that are popular on the left? Is it out of purely strategic considerations?

**Klein:** The issues are connected, and we also need to connect them in the debate. There is only one way that you can win a battle against a small group of people who stand to lose a lot: You need to start a mass movement that includes all the people who have a lot to gain. The deniers can only be defeated if you are just as passionate as them, but also when you are superior in numbers. Because the truth is that they really are very few.

**SPIEGEL:** Why don't you believe that technology has the potential to save us?

**Klein:** There has been tremendous progress in the storage of renewable energies, for instance, and in solar efficiency. But climate change? I, in any case, don't have enough faith to say, "We'll come up with some invention at some point, so let's just drop all other efforts." That would be insane.

**SPIEGEL:** People like Bill Gates view things differently.

**Klein:** And I find their technology fetish naïve. In recent years, we've witnessed some really big failures where some of the smartest guys in the room screwed up on a massive scale, be it with the derivatives that triggered the financial crisis or the oil catastrophe off the coast of New Orleans. Mostly, we as people break things and we don't know how to fix them afterwards. Right now, it's our planet that we're breaking.
SPIEGEL: Listening to you, one might get the impression that the climate crisis is a gender issue.

Klein: Why would you say that?

SPIEGEL: Bill Gates says we need to keep moving forward and come up with new inventions to get the problem, and ultimately our complicated Earth, under control. You on the other hand are saying: Stop, no, we have to adapt ourselves to this planet and become softer. The US oil companies are run by men. And you, as a critical woman, are described as hysterical. It's not an absurd thought, is it?

Klein: No. The entire industrialization was about power or whether it would be man or nature that would dominate Earth. It is difficult for some men to admit that we don't have everything under control; that we have amassed all this CO2 over the centuries and that Earth is now telling us: Well, you're just a guest in my house.

SPIEGEL: A guest of Mother Earth?

Klein: That's too cheesy. But you're still right. The oil industry is a male-dominated world, a lot like high finance. It's very macho. The American and Australian idea of "discovering" an endless country and that endless resources can be extracted is a narrative of domination, one that traditionally casts nature as a weak, prone woman. And the idea of being in a relationship of interdependence with the rest of the natural world was seen as weak. That's why it is doubly difficult for alpha men to concede that they have been wrong.

SPIEGEL: There's one issue in the book that you seem to steer clear of. Although you revile the companies, you never say that your readers, who are customers of these companies, are also culpable. You also remain silent about the price that individual readers will have to pay for climate protection.

Klein: Oh, I think that most people would be happy to pay for it. They know that climate protection requires reasonable behavior: less driving, less flying and less consumption. They would be happy to use renewable energies if they were offered them.

SPIEGEL: But the idea isn't big enough, right?

Klein: (laughs) Exactly. The green movement spent decades educating people that they should compost their garbage, that they should recycle and that they should ride their bikes. But look at what has happened to the climate during these decades.

SPIEGEL: Is the lifestyle you lead climate-friendly?

Klein: Not enough. I bike, I use transit, I try to give speeches by Skype, I share a hybrid car and I cut my flying to about one-tenth of what it was before I started this project. My sin is taking taxis, and since the book came out, I've been flying too much. But I also don't think that only people who are perfectly green and live CO2-free should be allowed to talk about this issue. If that were the case, then nobody would be able to say anything at all.

SPIEGEL: Ms. Klein, we thank you for this interview.

KLEIN CALLS FOR A MASSIVE PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT TO CHANGE THE ECONOMIC SYSTEM. IT'S HAPPENING IN THE UK.

DEMOCRACY, EQUALITY, AND SURVIVAL: A CALL TO ACTION ON
Reading *This Changes Everything*, I started asking a lot of new questions. A number of us in the British student movement campaigning against war and austerity were increasingly perturbed by the lack of concern about climate change among some of our peers, even though we knew that extreme weather is displacing more people than war now, and that the destruction of the planet’s life-support systems would make it impossible for progressive politics to fulfill its promises. I was frustrated when activists cautioned: “The welfare of pandas and ice caps is a middle class concern. You just can’t mobilize around it.” Particularly maddening was a rather bleak sense that they had a point.

While the British Left may have been on the back foot since Thatcher, things had reached new lows for us twenty-somethings; we’d grown up with the relentless, televised War on Terror, and a Great Recession that should have discredited free-market fundamentalism but instead was being used as a battering ram to destroy what was left of the British welfare state. We had been reduced to defending the last of the gains made by our grandparents, things once taken for granted: universal rights “from the cradle to the grave.” Climate change seemed like one too many fronts to be fighting on.

My friend Francesca Martinez, the comedian and campaigner, often complained about this attitude: that there wasn’t any room in the Left’s agenda and anyway, climate change was too depressing and distant. For her, the problem was the lack of positive vision in a movement defined by what it opposed; speaking across the country, she encountered an appetite for an inspiring, justice-based alternative. And when a friend of mine (now my partner) showed me Naomi’s 2013 speech at the founding convention of the Canadian union UNIFOR, on why organized labor should join the climate fight, the implications of her message finally sank in: that this crisis was a historic opportunity, a planetary demand for system change.

Around the same time, some friends and I were launching a new project called *Brick Lane Debates*, to experiment with new ways to get people engaged with politics. Frustrated with both the passive lectures of the “Old Left” and horizontal forums too tied down in procedure to get much done, we wanted to synthesize good organization with meaningful participation. And we didn’t just want debate, we wanted music, comedy, culture; to build a vibrant, inclusive community animated by the ideas we thought could change the world.

Our first Brick Lane Debate was about climate change, and brought together a new constellation of campaigners with a growing group compelled to action by Naomi’s analysis.
We had all joined the People’s Climate March, which provided beautiful, bold confirmation that you can mobilise around the climate. We were particularly inspired by the leading role played by organized labour in New York—but with honourable exceptions, it was largely absent in London. Unless we could join the dots between war, austerity, and climate catastrophe and quit leaving the environment to the environmentalists, we concluded, we would be giving up the single most powerful case for democratic system change we will ever see.

That’s the message that is striking a chord with growing numbers of young people. And that’s how This Changes Everything UK was born. March 28th will bring hundreds of people together with leading campaigners and climate scientists for a participatory gathering. At workshops taking inspiration from the Brick Lane Debates model, we’ll talk about the connections between the climate and economic crises, share visions for an alternative future, and discuss how to grow the social movements we need to get us there. >From anti-poverty and environmental organizations like War on Want, Friends of the Earth, and the Young Greens, to radical campaigns like Fuel Poverty Action network, Occupy, and the newly launched Join The Dots, people are ready to stand up for all these ideas, together. And the time is right, it seems to us, for such a symphony of radical voices to be heard. In the UK, the historic scale of the People’s Climate March was just the beginning. Vigorous grassroots campaigns against fracking have been erupting in sleepy rural communities. And the recent surge in Green Party membership here reflects not only concern for the climate, but also deep disillusionment with the narratives being regurgitated by our political establishment and their megaphones in the mainstream media. Public trust in government, the press, and the police has never been lower, while participation in political protest is at an all-time high. Meanwhile, we see progressive coalitions transforming the political landscape in Greece and Spain.

Old assumptions about what is impossible or inevitable, or what people have the capacity to care about, have no place in the new movements that are emerging. If there was ever a moment to change everything, it’s now.

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Like us on Facebook and follow @TCEuk on Twitter. We’re still organizing the format and structure of the March 28th gathering, so if you’d like to get involved or think your organization could help lead one of our workshops, drop us an email at thischangeseverything2015@gmail.com.
More details, along with tickets, are available on our website. There is also a page where you can help raise the funds we need to make it happen!

Marienna Pope-Weidemann is a writer, filmmaker, and campaigner based in London. She was a co-founder of the Student Assembly Against Austerity and the Brick Lane Debates project, and is currently producing a documentary series on austerity, alternatives, and resistance. You can follow her on Twitter at @MariennaPW.

LETTER TO UA'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF THE AMERICAS COMMITTEE, Frank, Freddie, Gloria, Sean, 4-6-15

You will enjoy reading chapters 10-11 of This Changes Everything by Naomi Klein about the significant role indigenous people are playing especially in Canada in opposition to fossil fuel extraction. A sample statement: “As the Indigenous rights movement gains strength globally, huge advances are being made in recognizing the legitimacy of these claims” (of treaty rights). This is a significant book. Try the Intro., or go directly to ch. 10. OMNI’s Climate Book Forum has already discussed the book and will hold a second session the first Sunday in May.

Thanks, Dick

RELATED WRITINGS AND FILMS
Contents
Gar Alperovitz, “The Political-Economic Foundations of a Sustainable System”
Ladha and Kirk, “Capitalism Is Just a Story,” Essay and Film
Dick, Klein’s Plea for Sanity
Venus Project Documentary Series: “The Choice Is Ours”
Two Interviews
  The Colbert Report
    Klaus Brinkbaumer in Der Spiegel, Capitalism Caused Climate Change
Pope-Weidemann, Klein’s Call for Massive Protest in UK
Kai Wright on MLK, JR.
I asked Lolly which of the articles in the 2 Worldwatch anthologies on sustainability she would recommend as complementary to Klein. She chose the one by Alperovitz. Here is my analysis.


Section One:

Alperovitz, like Klein, asks us to master a new story with a new set of characters and contexts and vocabulary. Ridding ourselves of US capitalism requires us to give our minds a thorough wash, after lifetimes of indoctrination favoring an economic system of self-aggrandizement, and then commit ourselves to the struggle to replace that pernicious system by one that serves and cares for the planet and its inhabitants. Here is his central statement: “…getting serious about sustainability requires focused attention on why public policy support has, at best, been able to slow but not stop ecological deterioration. The roots of this challenge lie in the growing concentration of wealth and income and the consequent self-reinforcing capture of the machinery of politics to serve private ends.” The rest of the essay discusses symptoms of this conquest and how we can restore public ends. Examples of the symptoms, in addition of course to the steady concentration of wealth in the hands of fewer and fewer individuals devoted to capital accumulation instead of the public good, are: the dispersal of cities and the destruction of labor unions.

Section Two, “What Does Justice Require?” summarizes a case against the “enormous inequities of today” and for more equal societies simply because equality (equity, fairness, justice) produce a better world (e.g., better health) for all. Here Alperovitz digs into the conceptual corrosions that prevent us from bonding as communities and rising up against the system’s wrongs, especially the long, powerfully funded and organized manipulation of the ideas of “private” and “public.” Contrary to the constructed wisdom, the glorified “private” market system is in fact highly subsidized by the public, and the rich are rich by having grabbed common assets egregiously. Read pp. 194-95 carefully.

Section Three, “Building an Alternative,” singles out “community wealth building as the place to begin developing an alternative.” These institutions “—non-profits, cooperatives, employee-owned institutions, land trusts, community corporations—“create living-wage jobs, and anchor those jobs in communities.”

Section Four, “International Developments,” extends the argument and examples globally, to the worker cooperative movements of Argentina and Mondragon in Spain, and the consumer
cooperatives. Some countries, Italy and Japan for example, have strong worker and consumer cooperatives.

Section Five, “Next Steps,” explains ways the people’s economic power can be translated into political power, how “locally anchored jobs and investment” can become the national system for a “to build political support for sustained green transition” and a durable democracy. This will require an enormous struggle by the people, but we have done it before with FDR’s/Democratic Party’s New Deal. A key concluding statement: “The ultimate goal of these strategies is to undermine and eventually replace the destructive ‘grow or die’ imperative inherent in the current market-driven system.” [See his book: What Then Must We Do: Straight Talk About the Next American Revolution. 2013.] [One criticism: Just as the Worldwatch anthologies were flawed by the absence of essays on US militarism and imperialism—do I remember correctly? I hope Alperovitz and the Worldwatch editors is correct in apparently thinking we can overthrow US capitalism without simultaneously grappling with the Pentagon.]

The following 2 items were sent to the following people 3-31-15: omnicctf and sc, Estes, Barnwell, F Alexander, Coger, Art

**PopularResistance.Org Daily Digest**

**Newsletter: Changing Our Story**

Alnoor Ladha and Martin Kirk of The Rules write in "Capitalism is Just a Story and Other Dangerous Thoughts" that our system of neo-liberal capitalism is one story that is told about the way the world works. In this story, natural resources are turned into commodities so they can be monetized. As in the feudal age, the wealthy few are taking more and more, cutting the rest of us off from the treasures we once shared and expanding the wealth divide so that more of us become 'serfs'. Ladha and Kirk go on to say, "our only absolute limitation is our collective imagination, expressed through our will to change the mythologies that hold this house of cards together." For once we see neo-liberalism and its related "isms" of colonialism, imperialism and racism for what they are and what they do, we are closer to being free of their grip and creating a new story. -more-

Martin Kirk of The Rules, "Capitalism is Just a Story and Other Dangerous Thoughts"
Dear friends,

We’ve grown up listening to a story that tells us we are inadequate, and the only way to be happy is to consume more and more, faster and faster. Today, the propagators of this story, the 1%, have reached a point where they will soon become wealthier than the rest of the 99% combined. They are pushing our planet to the brink of destruction while impoverishing billions and destroying biodiversity.

But it’s just one story on the shelf of the library of ideas. And we can collectively write a new one. That’s what our latest video ‘Capitalism Is Just a Story’ is all about.

**Will you help us spread this message of possibility and alternatives through your communities?**


Our inequality video has over half a million views and counting, and this is because you have been helping us spread these important counter-narratives. This means that our efforts have made more people aware of how inequality is actually being created in the world.

Capitalism is Just a Story is a follow-up. It exposes the system that is creating and thriving on inequality today. More importantly, it brings with it the message that we can change this story.

We can build a better, more equal world by telling a different story. Let’s expose the old story of greed, scarcity, domination and unlimited growth that has created inequality and injustice. And spread the new one about abundance, love and equality.

Watch Capitalism is Just a Story. Please share it with your community.


Onwards! Alnoor and /The Rules team
Long before Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s death, America began to forget his true legacy. America began perverting Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s message in the spring of 1963. Truthfully, you could put the date just about anywhere along the earlier timeline of his brief public life, too. But I mark it at the Birmingham movement's climax, right about when Northern whites needed a more distant, less personally threatening change-maker to juxtapose with the black rabble rousers clambering into their own backyards. That's when *Time* politely dubbed him the "Negroes' inspirational leader," as Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff point out in their excellent book *Race Beat.*

Up until then, King had been eyed as a hasty radical out to push Southern communities past their breaking point -- which was a far more accurate understanding of the man's mission. His "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" is in fact a blunt rejection of letting the establishment set the terms of social change. "The purpose of our direct-action program is to create a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation," he wrote, later adding, "We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed."

Shame that quotation rarely makes it into the sort of King remembrances that will mark today's 40th anniversary of his assassination. Generations after the man's murder, our efforts to look back on his life too often say more about our own racial fantasies and avoidances than they do about his much-discussed dream. And they obscure a deeply radical worldview that remains urgently important to Americans' lives. Today, I don't mourn King's death so much as I do his abandoned ideas.

We've all got reason to avoid the uncomfortable truths King shoved in the nation's face. It's a lot easier for African Americans to pine for his leadership than it is to accept our own responsibility for creating the radicalized community he urged upon us. And it's more comfortable for white America to reduce King's goals to an idyllic meeting of little black boys and little white girls than it is to consider his analysis of how white supremacy keeps that from becoming reality.

Take, for instance, his point that segregation's purpose wasn't just to keep blacks out in the
streets but to keep poor whites from taking to them and demanding economic justice. There's a concept that's not likely to come up in, say, the speech John McCain was rumored to be planning for today. "The Southern aristocracy took the world and gave the poor white man Jim Crow," King lectured from the Alabama Capitol steps, following the 1965 march on Selma. "And when his wrinkled stomach cried out for the food that his empty pockets could not provide, he ate Jim Crow, a psychological bird that told him that no matter how bad off he was, at least he was a white man, better than a black man."

It's thoughts like those that made him decidedly less popular at the time of his death than today. The bloom started to wear off King's media rose when he turned his attention to Northern racism. The central defense Southern segregationists offered when thrust on the national stage was that their Jim Crow was no more of a brute than the North's. King agreed, and in announcing his organization's move into Chicago, he called the North's urban ghettos "a system of internal colonialism not unlike the exploitation of the Congo by Belgium." And he named names, pointing to racist unions as one of a dozen institutions conspiring to strip-mine black communities. So much for "inspirational." But then, like now, nobody wanted to hear such talk -- only the black press paid any attention.

Later, when a white mob hurled bricks and cherry bombs at marchers in Chicago, King told reporters that the scene outdid anything below the Mason-Dixon Line. "I have never in my life seen such hate," biographer Taylor Branch quotes him as saying. "Not in Mississippi or Alabama." Today, we hear little about the ideas that experience provoked for King: His deathbed blueprint for changing America's caste systems included a three-pronged attack on racism, poverty, and war.

It's that last charge, to fight war-making, that got him in the most trouble during his time and that gets most readily ignored today. Despite grenades of criticism from his fellow civil-rights leaders, his erstwhile ally in the president, and the press, King declared he had no choice but to stand up against the Vietnam War. But what's striking is the still red-hot relevance of his reasoning, a perspective also likely to be left out of the dreamy platitudes delivered on days like today.

King called the armed forces a "cruel manipulation of the poor" and likened war funding to "some demonic destructive suction tube," siphoning off resources needed to deal with
pressing domestic issues. And he warned that our zeal for the fight reflected "a far deeper malady in the American spirit," one which drives us to consider the protection of our "overseas investments" to be a greater imperative than the preservation of life. The 1967 speech bears quoting at length:

I am convinced that if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.

It's to our detriment that we whitewash all of these valuable ideas from our national memory of King. But the greatest tragedy may be that African Americans have morphed his belief in the power of community into a follow-the-leader obsession. Each King holiday and memorial spawns another round of "Where's Waldo?" pondering over who our new leader is, or should be, or if one exists at all.

I suspect King's answer would be who cares? Indeed, while the rest of the civil-rights establishment cringed when black college students launched their own, amorphous movement of sit-ins, King applauded it. He called the student movement "a revolt against Negroes in the middle class who have indulged themselves in big cars and ranch-style homes rather than joining a movement for freedom," according to Branch. Today's preoccupation with naming King's successors seems similarly trivial.

Black America first anointed King its savior after he stormed onto the national scene in Montgomery, holding together the prolonged 1954 bus boycott with nightly speeches in which he exhorted everyone to stay the course. Jet magazine called him "Alabama's Modern Moses." We've been waiting for another prophet since he was gunned down on April 4, 1968. I just wish our last one would come back and remind us that our power lies not in leadership but in a collective refusal to be oppressed.
--
Dick Bennett

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