

Other Voices Introductions

July 3, 2014 – November 13, 2021

All introductions by Ulli Diemer

Other Voices is online at www.connexions.org/Media/CxNewsletter.htm

Issue Themes

Note: the first five issues did not have a stated theme; for those issues, the topic of the week is given.

July 3, 2014: Surveillance

July 17, 2014: Gaza

July 31, 2014: Israeli Military

August 21, 2014: Killing by Police

September 4, 2014: Violence Against Journalists

September 19, 2014: Spying, Terrorism and Protest

October 2, 2014: Slavery, Greed and Climate Change

October 16, 2014: Arms Trade (topic of the week)

October 30, 2014: Terrorism, Migration and Resistance

November 13, 2014: Libertarian Socialism (topic of the week)

November 27, 2014: Climate, Governments and Corporations

December 18, 2014: The Commons

January 14, 2015: Labour around the Globe

January 29, 2015: Connexions - 40 years old and still going strong

February 12, 2015: Water Rights and Water Struggles, SYRIZA, and War Propaganda

February 26, 2015: Ukraine, police state legislation, solidarity, people's history

March 12, 2015: Organizing

March 26, 2015: This Week: Agriculture, Ecology, Sustainability and Resistance

April 9, 2015: Resisting Neoliberalism

April 23, 2015: Eduardo Galeano, Latin America, the Vietnam War

May 7, 2015: From China to Batteries

May 21, 2015: A Healthier Planet

June 5, 2015: Residential schools and abuses of power

June 18, 2015: Corruption and power

July 3, 2015: Greece, Debt, and Crises

August 21, 2015: Canadian election, Greece, Refugees and Mining

September 10, 2015: The Labour Day Issue

September 25, 2015: Stop Harper!

October 8, 2015: Elections, Democracy and anti-Democracy

October 24, 2015: Whistleblowers and the murky world of national security

November 7, 2015: Trade agreements and the corporate war on democracy

November 21, 2015: Climate change and social change

December 5, 2015: Ecosocialism, environment, and urban gardening

December 19, 2015: Utopias

January 16, 2016: Working Class Organizing

January 30, 2016: Conflict of Interest, Militarism and Climate Change

February 20, 2016: Connexions Enters Its Fifth Decade (topic of week: Black History)

March 5, 2016: International Women's Day

March 26, 2016: The Forests and the Trees

April 9, 2016: Corporate Crime

April 23, 2016: Science and its enemies

May 7, 2016: Destabilization and Regime Change

May 21, 2016: Tax Evasion

June 18, 2016: Homophobia, Liberation Theology and Cultural Appropriation

July 2, 2016: Brexit, Jeremy Corbyn, and Contempt for Democracy

July 23, 2016: Workers and Climate Change
August 13, 2016: Sports and Politics
September 10, 2016: Back to School
October 15, 2016: Lurching to War
November 7, 2016: Depression and Joy
November 27, 2016: Alternative Media
December 20, 2016: Fake News

January 22, 2017: Disobedience
February 14, 2017: Race and Class
March 18, 2017: Public Transit
April 1, 2017: April 1 Issue
May 2, 2017: Affirming Life, Resisting War, Reporting UFOs
May 28, 2017: Challenging Injustice
June 26, 2017: Public Safety
July 22, 2017: Secrecy and Power
August 27, 2017: Official Enemies
October 9, 2017: Meeting the Challenge of the Right
November 11, 2017: Left Parties
December 17, 2017: Collective Memory and Cultural Amnesia

January 21, 2018: What are we eating?
February 17, 2018: Hearts and Minds: How do people change?
March 25, 2018: Looking for Answers, Creating Alternatives
April 21, 2018: Their Internet or Ours?
June 10, 2018: Massacres and Morality

October 27, 2019: What Next?

December 15, 2020: Faith, Hope and Persistence
February 18, 2020: Taking a Stand
March 19, 2020: Morality in an Amoral World
May 14, 2020: Thinking Clearly in a Time of Crisis

February 14, 2021: Beyond the Walls
October 13, 2021: Light and darkness
November 13, 2021: Following the Science?

July 3, 2014

Dear Friends and Supporters,

We are pleased to introduce *Other Voices*, the new bi-weekly Connexions newsletter.

This newsletter is intended to be a means for keeping Connexions' friends informed what's new at Connexions, as well as to provide news about the broader world of progressive archives, people's history projects, and social justice news generally.

Each issue will spotlight some new additions to the Connexions.org website – including materials from the Connexions Archive & Library that have been digitized and made available online – as well as a selection of publications, resources, websites, and news items.

We'll also let you know what's happening with the Connexions project itself. Speaking of which: we're still precariously housed, and still on the lookout for an affordable – or better yet, free – space for the Connexions Archive & Library and the people who work on it. If you have any leads or ideas, please get in touch.

You're invited to contribute to this newsletter. If you know of news or resources you'd like to share, please get in touch via mailroom@connexions.org or 416-964-5735. If you're a former volunteer or intern who helped out in the past, and you'd like to let other Connexions folks know what you're up to now, we'd be happy to share that information too.

We hope this first issue interests and informs you. Please feel free to contact us with any suggestions on what you'd like to see in this newsletter.

July 17, 2014

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Welcome to the second issue of *Other Voices*. This week we continue our look into the topic of surveillance while also discussing the current war in Gaza. Also included are descriptions and links to recent exhibitions and galleries held by other social archives.

Remember you're invited to contribute to this newsletter. If you know of news or resources you'd like to share, please get in touch via mailroom@connexions.org or 416-964-5735. If you're a former volunteer or intern who helped out in the past, and you'd like to let other Connexions folks know what you're up to now, we'd be happy to share that information too.

July 31, 2014

Welcome to the third issue of Other Voices.

This week we are featuring more resources related to the continuing attack on Gaza, as well as a recent examination of truth, justice, and reconciliation efforts in countries such as South Africa, Chile, and Rwanda. We also spotlight issues related to the return of the physical remains of aboriginal peoples which ended up in western museums and the collections of private collectors, as well as a related story concerning the remains of hundreds of children who died in an Irish residential school.

In Treasures from the Archives, we feature the radical journalist I.F. Stone, whose newsletter I.F. Stone's Weekly (now available online) stood up for truth and justice in the McCarthy and Vietnam War eras in the United States.

August 21, 2014

Welcome to the fourth issue of Other Voices.

This week we feature an update regarding the disposal of testimonies of over 40,000 First Nation individuals who suffered horrible abuses during their forced stay at Canadian residential schools and we look into modern medical, ecological and humanitarian crises created by the rise of neo-liberal policies around the globe.

In Treasures from the Archives, we feature the radical leftist author Akiva Orr, who challenged the ideology of Zionism, and who advanced the idea of direct democracy as a way of ending the concentration of power in the hands of corporations and the state.

September 4, 2014: Connexions Alternative Media List

Getting the news – and getting behind the news.

An updated version of Connexions' alternative media list is now available on Connexions.org.

This is a selective list of progressive and independent news and analysis sources. It's not a complete list; there are many other excellent websites offering news and information, many of them listed in Directory of Groups and Websites on Connexions.org.

The mainstream corporate and state-owned media are at best a severely distorted mirror of what is happening. Even a distorted mirror can give some idea of reality, but the alternative media attempt to provide alternative perspectives that go beyond the status quo ideology.

Of course, all media, mainstream or alternative, right or left, must be read critically. Alternative media are quite capable of getting things wrong or publishing nonsense. They also often disagree with each other. This can be helpful. Hearing about different approaches, and thinking about the reasons behind them, helps us understand things better.

September 19, 2014: Spying, Terrorism and Protest

This week in Other Voices, we look into the indirect sales of United States weaponry to ISIS militants through 'Syrian rebels', spying done by the government on behalf of large multi-national corporations and how propaganda works and who it targets. We also look into ways to create a sustainable method for livestock and farming as well as highlight works and archives that arose out of the Free Speech Movement.

October 2, 2014: Slavery, Greed and Climate Change

This week's issue of Other Voices, we present reasons why so many people deny or ignore the very real and very near threat of climate change. We also look into the ways on how non-governmental organizations traps individuals in a cage of broken promises and ineffectualness. Other Voices also shares an article detailing how a \$182 billion bail-out of tax-payer money was not enough for one bank. Finally, in this issue, we look into the horrors of American slavery and how it has shaped the United States into the economic power it is today.

October 16, 2014: Is that a laptop in your closet?

At Connexions we put a lot of effort into preserving the history of movements for social justice. We have a massive library of documents on our Connexions.org website, and an even more massive collection of physical documents awaiting digitization. We also have a bunch of ancient computers in our office, and we put way too much effort into keeping them running. We'd welcome donations of slightly older but still functional laptops and flatscreen monitors. If by chance you have a laptop or monitor that still works but you aren't using anymore, we'd be happy to receive them.

October 30, 2014: Terrorism, Migration and Resistance

This week Other Voices looks into the tragic shooting that occurred in our nation's capital a week ago. We also examine the ways people view migration and how that perspective needs to be adjusted and finally we share stories of how various groups including netizens and farmers resisted surveillance and corporate meddling.

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November 13, 2014

Connexions Calendar: Now better than ever

We're pleased to announce that the Connexions Calendar has been redesigned, with a cleaner look and new features to help users publicize, share, and find events.

The Connexions Calendar is an online calendar that exists to advertise events that support social justice, democracy, human rights, ecology, and other causes. We invite you to use it to promote your events.

Adding events to the Connexions Calendar is FREE. You can submit your events by filling in the online form at <http://www.connexions.org/SignInCx.htm>.

In order to avoid spam, we'll give you a username and password which you use to log on. Use the contact form to ask for a username and password.

Our goal in maintaining the Calendar is to support groups working for social justice. It is also our goal to make the Calendar as comprehensive as possible to make it a really useful resource for activists and for people who are interested in learning about issues and finding out about events.

The Calendar is a high-traffic area of the Connexions website, an online social change information centre which records around 500,000 page views a month, so being listed in the Calendar should help you publicize your events. We also encourage contributors to put a link to the Calendar on your own website if possible – the more people who know about it, the more effective it is.

November 27, 2014: Climate, Governments and Corporations

This week in Other Voices, ahead of the COP 20 summit, we present articles and resources relating to climate change and the environment. We examine how governments and corporations often times work together to push environmentally damaging oil and gas projects to ensure continued profits and we also highlight various movements and organizations working to challenge their power and their priorities, and prevent and reverse the global damage they cause.

December 18, 2014: The Commons

From its beginnings, one of capitalism's prime imperatives has been an all-out and never-ceasing assault on the Commons in all its manifestations. Common land, common water, public ownership – anything rooted in the ancient human traditions of sharing and cooperation is anathema to an economic system that seeks to turn everything that exists into private property that can be exploited for profit. In this issue on the Connexions Newsletter, we focus on the Commons.

January 14, 2015: Labour around the Globe

In the first issue of the New Year, Other Voices look into the labour conditions globally, examines how the working class is being exploited and shares instances of suppression against whistleblowers. Also shared are articles regarding the United States' ongoing drone war, the terror attacks in Paris and an article on what humanity could learn from Bonobo primates.

January 29, 2015: Connexions - 40 years old and still going strong

The Connexions project was founded in 1975, when members of more than a dozen social justice organizations came together to set up a means of sharing information, experiences, reflections, publications, and ideas. In October 1975, a decision was made to produce a printed newsletter. That first issue, which went out to a few hundred people, has now morphed into a website used by thousands of people every day, but the original goals and visions carry on.

We'll be sharing more stories from our archives -- reflecting the histories of hundreds of grassroots groups and movements for change -- throughout the year.

February 12, 2015: Water Rights and Water Struggles, SYRIZA, and War Propaganda

This week we're featuring the 40-point program which SYRIZA, the Greek coalition of the radical left, put forward to win the Greek election. Oliver Tickell writes about the mass media's latest campaign of pro-war propaganda, this time revolving around supposed "Russian aggression" in Ukraine, while Paul Edwards looks at another form of war propaganda, Clint Eastwood's 'American Sniper'

The Topic of the Week is Water Rights. Related items include the film "Blue Gold: World Water Wars," the website International Rivers, and articles on water-related struggles, past and present, including articles on the Walkerton water disaster and the Cochabamba water war.

February 26, 2015: Ukraine, police state legislation, solidarity, people's history

Ukraine is spotlighted in this issue of Other Voices. We've got several articles on the background to the events of the past year, which include the overthrow of Ukraine's elected government; its replacement by a puppet regime in which the extreme right plays a prominent role; threats and violence directed against the Russian-speaking population of eastern Ukraine, leading to a resistance movement and demands for autonomy for the eastern regions, and finally armed conflict. Shaping and driving these events are reckless US-NATO military and economic pressure directed at Russia, uncritically applauded by the mainstream media, who seem to regard the prospect of a military confrontation that could lead to nuclear war as nothing to worry about.

Worried though we may be, we continue to regard movements for social justice as key to creating a radically different future, as well as to understanding our past. In this issue, you'll find information about a campaign in the UK by #DomesticExtremists to ridicule

the latest police state legislation, and a handy illustration that explains world inequality in one simple image.

In the People's History section, we've got an article about mass strikes during the First World War, and a review of *Pride*, the film about gays and lesbians who organized to support striking mineworkers during the UK miners' strike in 1984.

Seeds of Fire for February 26 recalls two events which illustrate our continuing challenges and our continuing resistance. February 26, 1942 marked the imposition of the War Measures Act in Canada, the legislation under which thousands of Japanese-Canadians were expelled from their homes and interned for reasons of "national security." February 26, 1851, on the other hand, saw the founding of the Anti-Slavery Society of Canada, by ordinary people appalled by the injustice of slavery, an event worth commemorating war.

March 12, 2015: Organizing

The focus of this week is organizing.

We know that our world is going in the wrong direction and that fundamental change is necessary. But we are confronted with entrenched structures of economic and political power. How can we challenge and overcome them?

Our own source of power is our latent ability to join together and work toward common goals, collectively. That requires organizing. Power gives way only when it is challenged by powerful movements for change, and movements grow out of organizing.

Organizing is qualitatively different from simple "activism". Organizing means sustained long-term conscious effort to bring people together to work for common goals.

In this newsletter, we feature a number of articles, books, and other organizing resources. Many more can be found on the Connexions Organizing Resources page at <http://www.connexions.org/CxL-ORG.htm>.

Also in this issue, we have Edward Snowden on the government's "anti-terror" legislation and John Pilger on the rise of fascism in what used to be called the liberal democracies.

Seeds of Fire for March 12 recalls the birth of William Lyon Mackenzie, the radical leader of the 1837 rebellion in Upper Canada; the victory by 32,000 workers, most of them young female immigrants, in the 1912 "Bread & Roses" textile strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts; and the beginning of the "Salt March," led by Mohandas Gandhi, in India in 1930.

March 26, 2015: Agriculture, Ecology, Sustainability and Resistance

This week we're featuring a number of items related to sustainability, ecology, and agriculture, including Vandana Shiva's article "Small is the New Big," the Council of Canadians' new report on water issues, "Blue Betrayal," the film "The Future of Food," the Independent Science News website, which focuses on the science of food and agriculture, and the memoir "Journey of an Unrepentant Socialist" by Brewster Kneen, a former farmer and long-time critic of corporate agriculture.

We've delved into the archives to recall the history of the Diggers, who on April 1, 1649 began to dig up ground outside London to assert, both practically and symbolically, that "The earth should be a common treasury of livelihood to whole mankind, without respect of persons".

Seeds of Fire for March 26 recalls the birth of the Chipko movement in India in 1974, when a group of rural women, the original "tree-huggers", surrounded and held onto their trees to prevent them from being cut down by a lumber company.

Speaking of sustainability, Connexions marks its 40th anniversary in 2015, making it something of a model of sustainable activism in its own right. All the materials on our website and in our library are renewable resources: any number of people can share them (several thousand visitors a day do.) However, money to pay the rent and ongoing expenses are always scarce, even for an all-volunteer projects like Connexions. If you'd like to help Connexions' work with a one-time or regular monthly donation, please visit the Donate page.

April 9, 2015: Resisting Neoliberalism

The version of capitalism which became dominant by the 1980s has been given the name neoliberalism. The term refers to the global economic restructuring which has taken place, and to the accompanying shifts in the structures of power under which local and national governments have seen their ability to act independently curtailed by international treaties and by institutions which owe their ultimate allegiance to corporate capital.

Neoliberalism is also a dogma, an ideology which has become dominant not only in the boardrooms but in the political sphere, including on much of what used to be considered the left.

Yet neoliberalism is a fraud. The so-called free markets and free trade which it pretends to promote are in fact controlled by giant corporations, and massively subsidized by workers and ordinary citizens. The entire history of neoliberalism is one of financial crises followed by government bailouts: a ceaseless shift of wealth from the working class and middle class to the rich. Neoliberalism is actually a form of state capitalism which pretends to be opposed to government intervention.

The essence of neoliberalism has been an unending campaign of class struggle by the rich against the rest. Yet resistance continues, and indeed continues to grow. In this edition of Other Voices, and more extensively on the Connexions website, we look at both neoliberalism and the resistance to it.

April 23, 2015: Eduardo Galeano, Latin America, the Vietnam War

In this issue of Other Voices, we mark the death of Eduardo Galeano by featuring two of his books, as well as an article about his life and work. Galeano once wrote that he was "obsessed with remembering, with remembering the past of America and above all that of Latin America, intimate land condemned to amnesia." In his writing, especially Open Veins of Latin America and the mesmerizing Memory of Fire trilogy, Galeano contributed enormously to bringing alive, and keeping alive, the memories of Latin America, and especially of those whom he called the "nobodies" – the people "who do not appear in the history of the world."

Next week also marks the 40th anniversary of the final victory of the Vietnamese war of resistance against the American invasion and occupation. On April 29-30, 1975, the last U.S. military and CIA personnel, along with their local collaborators, fled Saigon as the victorious Vietnamese resistance forces moved in to liberate the city. The American war against Vietnam stands as one of the greatest crimes of modern history, and the Vietnamese victory as an inspiring example of what popular resistance can accomplish even when faced with an ruthless superpower. We feature several items on the Vietnam War in this issue, including a brief history of the war by Neil Faulkner, a review of Nick Turse's chilling history *Kill Anything That Moves*. The Real American War in Vietnam, and a short article about "fragging" and combat refusal, forms of resistance by American soldiers in Vietnam which forced the military command to recognize that it could no longer rely on its own men.

May 7, 2015: From China to Batteries

This issue of *Other Voices* ranges widely, from increasing worker activism and strikes in China, to advances in battery technology that make it much easier and cheaper to store solar and wind energy for future use, to testimonies from Israeli soldiers about the war crimes they committed routinely and as a matter of policy in last summer's attack on Gaza.

An article from *CounterPunch* traces the continuity between the U.S. "war on drugs" and its current reliance on drones in the "war on terror". In each case, writes Andrew Cockburn, the strategy hinged on "taking out" the leadership: the drug barons, in the one case, and the jihadist commanders, in the other. And in each case, the evidence shows that the effect has been the opposite of what was intended. Drug availability increased, and prices went down, once the cartels leaders were eliminated, and attacks by jihadist militias increase after each targeted assassination.

In the *People's History* section, we recall the Paris Commune and the Armenian genocide, and From the Archives comes the Critique of the Gotha Programme, Karl Marx's succinct rejection of reformism, in which he sketches out the need a revolution to bring about a society based on the principle "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!"

May 21, 2015: A Healthier Planet

With the start of the growing season in much of the Northern hemisphere, *Other Voices* digs up articles and resources related to urban agriculture and local food production. Urban agriculture - growing food in and around cities - is a response to the problems created by industrial agriculture, a chemical-dependent industry shipping food thousands of miles from where it is produced to where it will be consumed.

We also mark the release of Omar Khadr, the former child soldier who was abused, tortured, and imprisoned first by the U.S. government and then by Canada. Other articles look at the advances made by women in Latin America, privilege politics, and the myths of peaceful protests.

June 5, 2015: Residential schools and abuses of power

This issue of Other Voices focuses on residential schools. As documented by the just-released report of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, residential schools were set up to forcibly 'assimilate' Native children by taking them away from their parents and communities, and depriving them of their language, culture, history, and emotional supports. Based as they were on a system of arbitrary power and cruelty, it is not surprising that they also fostered physical and sexual abuse of the children forced into the schools. We spotlight the report and the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as well as films, books, and survivor stories.

Also in the Orwellian language and tactics being used to sell 'anti-terrorist' legislation, mind-boggling subsidies for the fossil fuel industry, and, on the other side of the ledger, stories of courage and resistance.

June 18, 2015: Corruption and power

Corruption – or at least some types of corruption – are much in the news, with the ongoing scandals in the Canadian Senate and the recent U.S. targeting of the Swiss-based football federation FIFA for alleged bribery. In this issue, we look at these and other forms of corruption.

Diana Johnstone writes about the double standards displayed by U.S. institutions, which happily target enemies and rivals, while ignoring the much greater corruption that underlies the power structures in Washington. We feature an article detailing how much money U.S. Senators received from corporations prior to their vote on the TPP negotiations, as well as materials on criminal conduct by some of the world's biggest banks, and an article on the work of investigative journalists in exposing corruption.

Also in this issue is an article on the ethnic cleansing going on at this moment in the Dominican Republic, where a quarter of a million people born in the country are being made stateless. And Adolph Reed asks why the non-news story about Rachel Dolezal, a woman who identifies as black and whose parents don't approve of her doing so, has attracted so much passionate comment. He specifically asks why many of those who approve of transgender identity choices are so disapproving of transracial identity choices.

July 3, 2015: Greece, Debt, and Crises

Our spotlight this issue is on the debt crisis facing Greece. To understand the crisis, one has to look beyond the mainstream media to alternative sources of information. We've done that, with articles that set out to analyze the nature of the debt burden that has been imposed on the citizens of so many countries, not just Greece.

As several of our featured authors point out, many of these debts fit the definition of 'odious debts', that is, debts that were arranged between corrupt lenders (banks) and corrupt borrowers (rich oligarchs), without the knowledge of the people in whose names the debts were incurred. The ordinary citizens of Greece (and other countries) never saw the money loaned to 'Greece' and derived no benefit from it. Yet they are expected to suffer the elimination of their jobs, wages, pensions, health and social services, etc., in order to repay the money looted by the oligarchs. Paul Craig Roberts and Tariq Ali point out that this kind of debt is a tool used to crush hopes and movements for change. An

article from Solidarity argues that the only solution for Greece is to repudiate the debt and leave the Eurozone.

We also commemorate birthday of the American revolutionary Grace Lee Boggs, who turned 100 on June 27. Her early accomplishments include translating Karl Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844 into English for the first time. In the 1950s, she, along with C.L.R. James and Cornelius Castoriadis, co-authored Facing Reality, a key work which laid the groundwork for new radical Marxist movements which rejected the concept of the Leninist vanguard party. Later, she devoted herself to the civil rights and black power movements. Her activism led the FBI to label her one of the most dangerous black radicals in the U.S.A. – an unusual distinction for someone whose parents were both Chinese-Americans. Still later, she devoted herself to community organizing in Detroit, where she still lives, always insisting that while organizing should be locally based, the ultimate goal of organizing has to be revolution.

August 21, 2015: Canadian election, Greece, Refugees and Mining

With the Canadian federal election under way, Other Voices leads off with an article from The Tyee detailing the abuses of power and democratic principles the Harper government has been guilty of since it took office.

We have two articles on the capitulation of the Syriza government in Greece to the international financial institutions, and what it means to the Greek people, who are now being hit with vicious 'austerity' measures so that the banks can be bailed out. One article looks at alternative strategies for the left, now that Syriza and similar European parties like Podemos have admitted their inability to bring about positive change. A second article looks at the example of Argentina, faced with a similar crisis a little more than a decade ago, and the alternatives, like barter networks, that emerged there.

Our topic of the week is Mining and the Environment. The book, film, and website of the week are all related to this topic, and so is one of our spotlighted articles, which explains the \$300-million lawsuit a Canadian-Australian has brought against El Salvador because that country refuses to allow the company to open a mine that would risk massive damage to water supplies.

Also in an article on why Al Jazeera is no longer using the word 'migrants' to describe the desperate refugees try to enter southern Europe, an ongoing struggle against a planned naval base in South Korea, and oral histories of individuals who participated in India's struggle for independence from British colonial rule.

September 10, 2015: The Labour Day Issue

We mark Labour Day with two articles examining the relentless pressure put on workers to work ever longer hours, at the cost of their health and family life. Another article reviews the equally relentless assault by Canada's Harper government on labour unions and on the rights of working people. Rounding out the labour focus is an article on workplace organizing; films from the Labor Films Database; our website of the week, The International Institute of Social History, and our Topic of the Week – Labour History.

We've also got articles how the role of global warming in driving refugees from their homes, Zapatista popular education, and John Pilger on the Greek crisis.

September 25, 2015: Stop Harper!

With Canada's October 19 federal election rapidly approaching, we're featuring a number of items related to the election.

We always invite you to share this newsletter, either by forwarding this email to people you know, along with a note, or by giving them the link to the Other Voices page on the Connexions website at www.connexions.org/Media/CxNewsletter.htm. We particularly encourage you to share this issue, because it contains information intended to help in getting out the anti-Harper vote.

There's a link to a single-sheet, two-sided flyer designed to be printed and handed out. It's targeted at undecided voters. We encourage you to print out some copies and hand them out, and to encourage others to do so. We've got an article by Nick Fillmore about the importance of making sure that potential voters are registered to vote, with the proper ID, and that they know what polling station they should go to. This is something that everyone can help with.

Our Topic of the Week is Voter Suppression, an important part of the Conservative strategy in Canada, and an increasing issue in other countries like the U.S. We've got three websites of the week this time round, all of them concerned with getting people out to vote to defeat the Conservatives. There are items related to voter suppression in the People's History and From the Archives sections.

Other issues spotlighted this week are The Age of Imperialistic Wars that we're living in, Conserving Soil, and "Foodies and farmworkers: Allies or enemies?"

October 8, 2015: Elections, Democracy and anti-Democracy

Our topic of the week is Elections. If you're in Canada, we encourage you to vote, and to encourage others to vote in the October 19 election, to get rid of the dreadful Harper Conservatives. Items from the last couple of issues of Other Voices are still relevant, including the single page anti-Harper handout that you can print and hand out here with several PDF formats to choose from, and links to organizations that are working to get out the anti-Harper vote, such as Votetogether and Council of Canadians.

Our election resources include articles and books which argue that western style parliamentary democracies are anything but democratic, both in how they operate, and because most of the most important decisions are not subject to democratic decision-making. The articles in this issue on the newly signed Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP) and on the use of finance and debt to take over countries and to attack working people, explore this theme in detail.

On a more positive note, we have a discussion of James Hansen's fossil fuel exit program, which suggests an approach for getting our economies off fossil fuels in the near future. Rounding out this issue are several People's History and From the Archives items, as well as the book of the week, "Democracy Against Capitalism", the film of the week, "The Price We Pay", and a song of the week, "Stealin' All My Dreams."

October 24, 2015: Whistleblowers and the murky world of national security

As Noam Chomsky has said, governments use the spectre of threats to ‘national security’ to justify secrecy, attacks on civil liberties, and the relentless build-up of the national security state. In reality, says Chomsky, the main enemy, in the eyes of the state, is its own population. Whistleblowers -- people like Daniel Ellsberg, Julian Assange, Chelsea Manning, and Edward Snowden -- play a vital role in letting the public know what governments are really doing. At great risk to themselves, they tell the truth which governments seek to hide.

In his article *The Fog of Intelligence*, Tom Engelhardt examines the contradictions of the American intelligence apparatus: a vast bureaucracy with more than a million employees and a budget of \$70 billion a year which is continually unable to foresee developments which are perfectly obvious to journalists and others who have no access to secret information.

Another illustration of the national security mindset comes in the reaction of the British media – shocked! aghast! -- to Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn’s statement that as Prime Minister he would not order the launch of nuclear weapons under any circumstances.

Also in this issue of *Other Voices*, we recall the day – October 27, 1962 – when the world was seconds away from nuclear war. After an American warship attacked a Soviet submarine – an act of war in itself, as well as an act of insanity – two of the three commanders on the submarine were prepared to launch a nuclear weapon, as they were authorized to do if they came under direct attack while unable to communicate with their military high command. The third commander on the submarine, Vasili Arkhipov, refused to agree, and because the unanimous of all three commanders was required, the missile was not launched.

Arkhipov’s split-second decision reminds us all that we are all confronted with moral choices, and that those choices can have far-reaching consequences. As always, we invite you to share this newsletter with your friends. You can forward this email, or send them the link to the *Other Voices* home page on the *Connexions* website at www.connexions.org/Media/CxNewsletter.htm.

November 7, 2015: Trade agreements and the corporate war on democracy

Our focus is on the corporate rights treaties that are misleadingly sold as trade agreements. In particular, the spotlight is on the Trans-Pacific Partnership, negotiated in secret, and now scheduled to be rubber-stamped by national governments on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. The TPP is best understood as a major milestone in the long-term war waged by the corporate elite against any form of democracy. It gives corporations the power to block any environmental protections or health and safety legislation that could be interpreted as interfering with a corporation’s ‘right’ to make a profit by doing whatever it wants. It will significantly undermine efforts to fight climate change by giving corporations the power to block laws that would prevent fracking, tarsands extraction, coal mining, etc. Food safety protections are similarly attacked: banning GMO crops or imports, or even required GMO labelling, becomes a restraint of trade. Internet advocacy groups are calling the TPP a ‘death warrant for the Open Internet’ because, in the name of ‘copyright protection’, it gives corporations the power to force Internet Service Providers to take down websites, even in other countries, that are allegedly infringing copyright.

As always, people are fighting back and will continue to fight back. That requires organizing: as an article by Al Giordano reminds us, “Nothing is ever won without organizing.” Also in this issue, we remember Bhaskar Save, a farmer in India who developed organic farming methods on his own farm which have gained worldwide admiration.

November 21, 2015: Climate change and social change

This issue of Other Voices spotlights climate change, the escalating crisis that the upcoming Paris climate conference is supposed to address. But climate change is not a single problem: it is a product of an economic system whose driving force is the need to grow and accumulate. Nor does it affect everyone equally: those with wealth and power can buy themselves what they need to continue living comfortably for years to come – everything from air conditioning to food to police and soldiers to protect their secure bubbles – while those who are poor and powerless find their lives increasingly impossible. A serious effort to address climate change therefore means social change and economic change.

A number of resources featured in this issue address the deeper issues of climate change and social change.

We also have two articles responding to recent terrorists attacks and raising questions about causes and responses. In the Organizing section, we have reflections effective grassroots organizing by Renny Cushing, an organizer in the anti-nuclear movement in the U.S. in the 1970s and 1980s.

December 5, 2015: Ecosocialism, environment, and urban gardening

This issue of Other Voices covers a wide range of issues, from the climate crisis and the ecosocialist response, to terrorism and the struggle against religious fundamentalism, as well as items on urban gardening, the destruction of olive trees, and how the police are able to use Google’s timeline feature to track you every move, now and years into the past. Another article challenges the role of big NGOs in legitimizing the status quo and blocking working-class and grassroots self-organizing

December 19, 2015: Utopias

“A map of the world that does not include Utopia,” said Oscar Wilde, “is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail.”

Utopian visions, be they practical or not, free our imaginations, if only for a little while, from the daily grind of struggle and worry, and allow us to dream about the kind of world we would hope to live in. Such dreams can inspire us and guide us, even if they are not always quite practical.

Friedrich Engels appreciated this quality in the writings of Charles Fourier (1772-1837), the French utopian socialist who imagined a future in which men and women would be free and fully equal, and in which, so he speculated, there would be six moons orbiting

the earth and the salt water of the oceans would be replaced with lemonade. Engels, practical-minded revolutionary though he was – and one who preferred beer to lemonade – wrote that he would much rather read Fourier’s “cheerful fantasies” than the gloomy writings of social critics “where there is no lemonade at all.”

This issue of Other Voices peers into the world of utopian visions, practical or otherwise: our topic of the week is Utopias. You’ll also find a potpourri of other articles, books, resources and songs to stimulate your thinking and your imagination.

January 16, 2016: Working Class Organizing

Working to change things for the better, fighting to prevent things from getting worse, remembering the past to illuminate possibilities for the future: as always, that is the focus of Other Voices. In this issue, we pay special attention to working class organizing. There can be no meaningful change without the active participation of the majority of the population: working people. Yet much activism ignores this obvious reality, while the organized labour union movement has put much of its reliance on ‘professionals’ who see organizing as a top-down technique rather than a grassroots movement. Several articles in this issue look at aspects of these issues.

We also delve into the relationship between feminism and socialism, and look at the so-called ‘sharing economy,’ which produces increasingly exploited and precarious work, and immense profits for super-rich corporate owners.

January 30, 2016: Conflict of Interest, Militarism and Climate Change

This issue of Other Voices shines a light on the murky world of conflict of interest, the hidden reality that often underlies appearances of neutrality, objectivity, and due process.

Can journalism thrive if the media are owned by profit-driven corporations like Postmedia? Nick Fillmore says the accelerating decline of the low-quality, right-wing Postmedia newspapers is nothing to shed tears over, but the lack of credible media in Canada is a problem that we should be worrying about.

Another article illuminates a topic that is taboo in coverage of climate change: the enormous carbon emissions of the military – especially the U.S. military, the biggest institutional consumer of petroleum products in the world. We also look at the lawsuit launched by TransCanada against the U.S. government, claiming massive ‘damages’ because it has been denied an opportunity to profit from environmental destruction. If any further proof is needed that the negotiated-but-not-ratified TPP trade deal is a horrible idea, TransCanada has provided it.

February 20, 2016: Connexions Enters Its Fifth Decade

This issue of Connexions Other Voices falls on the 40th anniversary of the publication of the very first Connexions newsletter, which was published in February 1976. That first issue carried the title “Canadian Information Sharing Service”, which was also the name of the collective which compiled it, from submissions from across Canada. Within a couple of years, the name of the publication became “Connexions” and then, a little later, “The Connexions Digest”. Connexions went online in the early 1990s, first via a computer bulletin board system (BBS) and then with the Connexions.org website.

As the Connexions project enters its fifth decade, we continue to carry on the original “information sharing” mission of connecting people working for justice with each other and with resources and information. Connexions also maintains the Connexions Archive, a physical archive of more than 100,000 documents spanning more than 50 years of grassroots activism.

We operate on a shoestring budget, and very much welcome financial support and contributions, large or small, as well as bequests. We are also looking for a permanent home, perhaps in partnership with another organization, for the archive and the people who work on it.

In addition to our own history, in this issue we spotlight black history as our topic of the week. We look at the Haitian revolution, when slaves confronted the French empire and won; black resistance against the Ku Klux Klan in the American South, and the meaning and limits of anti-racism. We also look at the Kurdish liberation movement in Rojava, the dangers posed by geoengineering, and we mark the publication of the Communist Manifesto on February 21, 1848.

March 5, 2016: International Women’s Day

In this issue of *Other Voices*, we mark International Women’s Day. An article written by Alexandra Kollontai in 1920 talks about the early history of this event, which grew out of a proposal put forward by Clara Zetkin at the 1910 International Conference of Working Women. A key focus at that time was winning the vote for women, with the slogan “The vote for women will unite our strength in the struggle for socialism”. The link between women’s rights and socialism became even clearer a few years later, in 1917, when a Women’s Day march in St. Petersburg turned into a revolutionary uprising which led to the overthrow of the Czar and the Russian Revolution. As Kollontai says, “It was the working women of Petersburg who began this revolution; it was they who first decided to raise the banner of opposition to the Tsar.”

The struggle continues. Kavita Krishnan writes about the campaigns for women’s rights in India in “Women’s Liberation, Everyone’s Liberation.” “Women in Arms” compares women’s struggles in Chiapas, Mexico, and in Kurdistan. Johanna Brenner takes a global view in “Socialist Feminism in the 21st Century.”

March 26, 2016: The Forests and the Trees

For countless centuries, forests, and the trees in them, have been seen as sources of life, livelihood, and spiritual meaning. For capitalism, however, forests are sites of extraction and profit-making, or obstacles in the way of ‘development.’ In this issue, we look at some of the threats to forests worldwide, and the ways in which people are resisting and defending the forests.

In the Amazon, tribal people are combining traditional skills with direct action and modern technology to fight against illegal logging. In India, villagers are organizing to protect their forests against being flooded by dams. In Palestine, farm families are staying on their land, and planting new trees to replace the ones destroyed by Israeli soldiers and settlers. In Mozambique, farmers and communities are organizing against land takeovers by foreign corporations.

In the Organizing section, we look at the organizing work of Bonnie Phillips, a long-time forest defender.

And in From the Archives, we go all the way back to the year 1217, when an English king yielded to popular pressure and issued the Charter of the Forest, affirming the rights of the common people to use the forests for their livelihoods.

April 9, 2016: Corporate Crime

Corporations first emerged as a form of legal partnership which allowed a number of investors to pool their capital to establish joint ventures. At the same time, incorporating limited companies allowed investors to limit their risk and their liability. Shareholders could shield themselves and their assets from liability if the venture failed or incurred debts, or if the corporation broke the law.

In the last century, corporations have been able to acquire tremendous power, including the power to make governments write laws and sign treaties to serve the interests of companies and their owners.

At the same time, corporations have increasingly become legally unaccountable for their behaviour. Yet all too often corporations break the law and engage in criminal acts which would be severely punished if they were committed by ordinary individuals. These illegal acts range from deliberate health and safety violations that cost lives, to land seizures, to environmental negligence that contaminates lands and waters. Most of these illegal acts are never prosecuted, and those that are, are usually dealt with by a fine that corporations can treat as a cost of doing business.

There are movements demanding that corporations be held accountable for their crimes in a serious way, and, specifically, that corporate executives should face jail time when the corporation they are in charge of engage in behaviour that causes death, injury, and illness.

Our topic of the week for this issue of Other Voices is Corporate Crime, and a number of articles, as well as a book, a film, and a website, explore aspects of the problem.

In the Organizing section, we feature an article about the use of petitions in grassroots organizing. In People's History, we look at the use of new digital technologies in work to preserve indigenous languages.

April 23, 2016: Science and its enemies

Our society and its institutions, public and private, regularly tell us that science, and education in the sciences, are crucial to our future. These public declarations are strangely reminiscent of the equally sincere lip service they pay to the ideals of democracy. And, in the same way that governments and private corporations devote considerable efforts to undermining the reality of democracy, so too they are frequently found trying to block and subvert science when the evidence it produces runs counter to their interests. Real live scientists doing real live science, it seems, are not nearly as loveable as Science in the abstract.

The trouble with science, when carried out conscientiously in accordance with the principles of rational inquiry, is that it may produce evidence and conclusions that run counter to the interests of the powerful and the rich. The science of global warming is a

huge threat to the immensely profitable fossil fuel industry. Exxon knew, decades ago, that carbon emissions are linked to climate change – and acted to suppress and lie about the science, using the same techniques that had been used for many years by the tobacco industry to deny that smoking is linked to lung cancer.

In the same way, scientists who have shown that fracking produces earthquakes and poisons water are now under constant attack by the industry. Universities, ever more dependent on corporate funding, are told that they won't receive money if they employ scientists who engage in such unwelcome research. So too, evidence of the dangers of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) threatens immensely profitable agribusiness corporations, and scientists who produce that evidence are attacked and threatened with losing their jobs.

Corporate money is also used to subvert science in other ways. There are always scientists and researchers who are prepared to produce conclusions that are welcome to their funders. As Upton Sinclair once said, "It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends on his not understanding it." Unfortunately, there are more than a few trained scientists who now earn their salaries by failing to investigate what they should investigate, and failing to see what they should see.

Where scientists persist in producing unwelcome evidence, another tactic in common use is suppression. Scientists whose research is funded by a corporations are frequently made to sign non-disclosure agreements as a condition of receiving funding. They are forbidden to release their findings unless the company, for example a pharmaceutical company testing a new drug, agrees to release them. In this way unwelcome results never see the light of day. Scientists employed by a government are commonly gagged in similar ways. This was notoriously the case in Canada under the late and unlamented Harper regime, which, in addition to gagging scientists, actually went so far as to destroy entire libraries of scientific records.

At the same time that corporations and the state seek to control or suppress science, social currents have emerged that attack science from other directions. Creationists loudly reject the science of evolution, anti-vaccine activists spread fear, and, in some parts of academia, schools of thought have emerged that see the whole idea of science as an example of western imperialism.

May 7, 2016: Destabilization and Regime Change

People looking at the United States from the outside tend to assume that life is easy when you're an imperialist superpower in command of the world's largest military forces, backed by the world's most powerful economy. With so much power concentrated in your hands, what could possibly go wrong?

More than you might think, in fact. One problem arises from the widespread persistence of the institutions of parliamentary democracy. Modern parliamentary democracies, it's true, have a number of points in their favour. For one thing, they are better at managing public services and the economy than dictatorships, military or otherwise, which tend to be both corrupt and incompetent. And they provide a (somewhat) plausible facade of democratic accountability which helps to disguise the unpalatable fact that almost all important decisions are made behind the closed doors of corporate and institutional boardrooms.

But the trouble with democratic forms like voting and elections is that every so often, real democracy breaks out and propels parties and people to office who don't play by the

rules of the game. The most outrageous offence, from the perspective of imperial power, is pursuing policies that help ordinary people at the expense of transnational corporations and local elites.

When a government goes so far as to govern in the interests of its own population, it clearly has to be stopped. The mainstream media – those owned by the local elite as well as those in the imperial centres – start to churn out propaganda, day after day, about the ‘extremism’ of the government, now referred to as a ‘regime.’ Western NGOs, funded by the U.S. government and activist billionaires, become a funnel for money that is poured into the country to pay for a massive destabilization campaign. Meanwhile the U.S. embassy intensifies its ongoing contacts with opposition leaders and military officers, many of whom have been trained and indoctrinated in the United States.

The goal of a destabilization campaign is to overthrow an elected government without having to resort to direct outside military intervention, which looks bad and often fails to produce a stable pro-western regime (e.g. Iraq, Libya). In recent years, the preferred means have been massive funding of conservative middle-class political parties, groups, and media (e.g. Ukraine, Venezuela), and ‘constitutional coups.’ A constitutional coup is a means of nullifying an undesirable election result by making use of the levers of judicial and executive power to get rid of a leader or government who has too much popular support to defeat via the ballot box. The constitutional coups which overthrew the governments of Honduras in 2009 and Paraguay in 2012 are examples, as are the current attempts to impeach the elected presidents of Brazil and Venezuela. One might also include the American Supreme Court decision after the 2000 election, which handed the election to George W. Bush, and Stephen Harper’s proroguing of the Canadian Parliament in 2008, aided and abetted by the unelected and unaccountable Governor-General, as instances where ‘constitutional’ means have been used to set aside election results.

Destabilization and regime change are the focus of this issue of Other Voices. We feature a number of articles and books, as well as Bill Blum’s handy list of the instances since 1945 when the U.S. has overthrown, or attempted to overthrow, a foreign government. We also feature “The Anti-Coup”, by Gene Sharp and Bruce Jenkins, which outlines strategies and tactics which popular movements can use to prevent and block coups d’état and executive usurpations of power.

May 21, 2016: Tax Evasion

The essence of the capitalist economic system is the drive to accumulate as much as possible, by any means possible. It is almost inevitable, therefore, that those – individuals or corporations -- whose existence revolves around accumulating capital will seek to avoid paying taxes.

The best way to avoid paying taxes, when you’re rich and powerful, is to shape and write the tax laws. And indeed tax laws are almost invariably written to favour those whose wealth derives from profits and investment, at the expense of those who work for a living. For example, capital gains – income from investments – are either taxed at a much lower rate than wages, or not taxed at all.

Even so, this isn’t enough for the superrich. Employing a network of accountants, tax lawyers, corporate shells, tax havens, secret bank accounts, and other methods, the 1% have become extremely adept at evading even the low rates of taxation they are subjected to.

Tax evasion has recently hit the news with the leak of the Panama Papers, a huge collection of documents detailing the activities of just one law firm specializing in setting up offshore shell companies which serve to hide assets from the tax authorities. The Panama Papers reveal the existence of more than 200,000 such offshore entities linked to wealthy individuals from more than 200 countries. This nonetheless represents only the tip of the iceberg: there are other companies involved in this dirty business, and more than 20 jurisdictions which cater to it, including the American states of Delaware and Wyoming, as well as the Bahamas, Belize, Singapore, and the United Kingdom. It is estimated that about \$330 billion is lost to tax evasion and tax avoidance every single year, and that perhaps 7% of the world's total financial wealth is hidden in secretive tax havens.

In this issue, we focus on tax evasion, with a selection of articles, books, and films.

We also look at the myth of precision that is used to justify reckless experiments in gene manipulation, and we feature Vivek Chibber's article "Why the Working Class?" which analyzes the unique power of the working class in challenging the power of capitalism.

June 18, 2016: Homophobia, Liberation Theology and Cultural Appropriation

This issue of Other Voices features a wide range of issues. The topic of the week is homophobia, the hate that led to 49 deaths in Orlando last week, but which is present in greater or lesser form in every part of the world.

We are always concerned, not only with what is wrong with the world, but what to do about it.

This issue carries an excerpt from Umair Mohammed's book 'Confronting Injustice: Social Activism in the Age of Individualism' in which he warns against the pitfalls of individualist and consumer-oriented approaches and argues in favour of collective action to build an effective movement.

Derrick Jensen considers some of the arguments in favour of pacifism and finds them wanting. He agrees that creative approaches to social change can oftentimes make violence unnecessary, but that sometimes violence is a necessary response to violence.

Another article looks at the decline of liberation theology, targeted as a threat by both the Vatican and secular power structures.

Kenan Malik considers the issue of "cultural appropriation" and asks why so many on the so-called left are more interested in criticizing Justin Bieber's hairstyle than in fighting capitalism.

From the Archives we present 'Suffragetto,' a 100-year-old board game from Britain, which allowed players to imitate real-life battles between suffragettes campaigning for votes for women, and the police.

The book of the week is "Canada Since 1960s: A People's History" which presents a left perspective on 50 years of politics, economics, and culture, seen through the eyes of contributors to Canadian Dimension magazine.

July 2, 2016: Brexit, Jeremy Corbyn, and Contempt for Democracy

Brexit, the British vote to leave the European Union, has thrown the political elites into turmoil and confusion. The referendum was supposed to be a safe political manoeuvre, a way to produce an appearance of democratic legitimacy for the profoundly undemocratic structures of the EU. The gambit turned out to be a spectacular miscalculation, as millions of people turned out to express their opposition to a state of affairs that is leaving the majority worse off while enriching a small minority.

What the result will be is not clear. For one thing, it is far from certain that Britain will actually end up leaving the European Union. Ruling elites in Europe and elsewhere have a long history of ignoring referendum results which displease them. Last summer's referendum in Greece, in which the Greek people voted overwhelmingly to reject the terms dictated by the European Union and the International Monetary Fund, is a case in point. Within a few days, the EU, representing the interests of the banks whose Greek loans were at risk, compelled the Greek government to submit to terms that were even worse than those rejected in the referendum. Greece's Syriza government capitulated utterly, and became the enforcer of the agenda of austerity and looting which it had been elected to oppose. Those who feel tempted to believe the claim that the European Union represents a form of international co-operation from which all benefit might want to consider the case of Greece, and of other countries who have been forced to shred their social infrastructure and sell off their assets to enrich investors and bankers.

A constant theme in elite reaction to the Brexit referendum, expressed especially through the mainstream media, has been a visceral contempt for democracy. Ordinary working people are portrayed as stupid and reactionary, incapable of understanding how wonderful the European Union project is. Again and again, one hears the comment that the great unwashed should not be allowed to vote on issues which they are incapable of understanding. This reaction is not new: ruling classes for centuries have loathed democracy, which is seen as an existential threat to the wealth and privileges of the elite.

The attitudes of the elite have been mirrored on parts of the liberal left as well. The racist rhetoric emanating from the xenophobic UKIP party is seen as reflecting the attitudes of everyone who voted to leave the EU. Never mind that UKIP commands 12% of the vote, whereas 52% voted to leave. Everyone who voted to leave, according to some commentators, must automatically be a racist. The liberal left shares this attitude with the mainstream elite: neither of them is capable of seeing, let alone offering solutions for, the economic devastation caused by neoliberal institutions such as the EU and the various 'free trade' agreements, and neither of them cares about the working class.

In Britain, the referendum results have also provided a pretext for the Labour hierarchy to try to remove Jeremy Corbyn, the leftist who unexpectedly captured the leadership of the party nine months ago in another instance of democracy producing the 'wrong' result. A majority of the Parliamentary Labour Party (the MPs) are still holdovers from the Tony Blair era, known for their support of the war in Iraq, the intervention in Libya, and their willingness to vote for anti-labour legislation introduced by the Conservative government of David Cameron. These MPs have been desperately looking for an opportunity to get rid of Corbyn, and thought the referendum results would provide an opportunity. Corbyn, however, has reacted to their vote of no confidence by informing them that he was elected by the membership, not the MPs, and that he has no intention of resigning. In this battle, Corbyn represents not only the left-wing majority of the Labour members who elected them, but the hopes of people in other countries who see him as an inspiration and an example to follow.

This issue of Other Voices features a variety of articles and resources analyzing these and related issues.

July 23, 2016: Workers and Climate Change

Working people – and most of us are workers -- are affected by climate change in every aspect of our lives. As climate change worsens, our lives will worsen. If we are successful in bringing about the needed rapid change away from a fossil fuel based economy, working people are the ones who stand to bear most of the costs, including the cost, for millions of workers and their families, of losing their jobs.

Many elements of the environmental movement have been guilty of ignoring working people, while others actually blame ordinary working people for climate change and the injustices associated with it. Yet it is working people who are dying, in many places, even now, from excessive heat in factories, fields, construction sites, and homes. And million of working people stand to lose their jobs, homes, and communities in the transition to a low-carbon or no-carbon economy. It is rare for groups involved in the climate change movement to acknowledge this reality, let alone to develop plans for a just transition to a new economy, a transition that supports and helps those who will be most affected.

There is another, even more crucial reason, for putting the working class at the centre of a strategy for climate justice and economic transformation: the working class is the only social force with the potential power to bring about the radical changes we need to slow and stop accelerating climate change. A strategy that ignores the working class – the majority of the population – is a strategy for failure. In this issue of *Other Voices*, we present articles and resources which address the crucial role of the working class in halting climate change and transforming society.

August 13, 2016: Sports and Politics

Sports in general, and the Olympics in particular, have never been free of politics. Allegations of bribery and cheating had already been part of the Olympics for centuries before that noteworthy day in 67 AD when the judges proclaimed the Emperor Nero winner of the Olympic chariot race even though he had been thrown from his chariot and failed to complete the race.

No doubt the judges who crowned Nero were keenly aware of his proclivity for executing those who displeased him. In the modern sports era, survival and success depend largely on the favour of corporations, whose power to provide or withhold funding and sponsorships now shape every aspect of sport, including athletes' incomes and lifestyles. It is now difficult to remember that only a few decades ago, corporate logos were strictly forbidden at Olympic events, while athletes were prohibited from accepting any kind of payment for their involvement in sports. The corporate conquest of sports closely parallels the corporate colonization of nearly all aspects of modern life. Accompanying this in recent years has been the increasing injection of militaristic content into sports spectacles. In Canada, hockey games are now commonly preceded by rituals honouring militarism. In the United States, similar spectacles have been staged for years.

In this issue, we feature resources which remind us that resistance to the commercialization, corporatization, and militarization of sports is also part of our heritage. We recall the International Workers' Olympiads which took place between 1925 and 1937, and the workers' sports organizations which flourished in a number of countries.

With the Rio de Janeiro Olympics under way, we feature an analysis of the way a constitutional coup is being carried out in Brazil while the attention of the media is on the sports spectacle in Rio.

We also look at the extraordinary witchhunt under way against Russian athletes. Various sports federations have taken the unprecedented step of banning Russian athletes from entire sports, not for anything the individual athletes themselves have done, but to punish the Russian government. The pretext for these bans is a hurried report by a Canadian lawyer which claims that the Russian government (or, as the media routinely say, “Putin”) carried out a mass doping program. While there are undoubtedly Russian athletes who used performance-enhancing drugs (as there are in many other countries), most of the ‘evidence’ underlying these sweeping allegations is based on the word of one man, a former Russian coach who now lives and works in the United States. Russian officials and athletes were not interviewed and were not given any opportunity to give their side of the story. Nor were Russian athletes given the opportunity to undergo drug tests to determine whether they had in fact taken performance-enhancing drugs. They were simply banned without any pretense of due process. Meanwhile athletes from other countries, such as the United States, who have used banned drugs in the past are being allowed to compete.

Distracted though we are by sports, we do have some other content in this issue, including an analysis of the recent coup attempt and counter-coup in Turkey, and a story about a movement for ‘conscious food’ in Bolivia.

In the Organizing section, we remember the women of Greenham Common, whose nineteen-year protest at a British nuclear weapons site developed new ideas about organizing and civil disobedience.

September 10, 2016: Back to School

Education – about the world, and about social change in particular – is a key element in the work that Connexions does. In this issue of *Other Voices*, we explore a few aspects of the ways in which education and educational institutions are changing. We also look at ways in which education is used to bring about change.

George Monbiot shares his concerns about how children’s lives are increasingly lived indoors or looking at screens, while their experience of nature and the outdoors - once a significant part of children’s lives – is shrinking.

David Stratman casts a very critical eye on the so-called education reform movement that is transforming public education in the United States, Britain, and other countries. Another article looks at the devastating effects of the privatization of public education, specifically via charter schools.

Very different ideas about education animate the *Escuelita Zapatista*, a community-based educational gathering created by the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico.

The widening gap between scholars working in academic institutions is the subject of two articles, “Academics can change the world -- if they stop talking only to their peers”, and another by the late Ellen Meiksins Wood on *The Retreat of the Intellectuals*.

October 15, 2016: Lurching to War

There was a moment, after the long nightmare of the Cold War ended a quarter of a century ago, when it seemed as if the danger of war had finally diminished. To be sure, there has never been a moment in all those years when wars weren't raging somewhere, but at least the possibility of nuclear war, we hoped, was less.

Foolish optimism. The risk of nuclear war is as great now as it was at the height of the Cold War. From the time the Warsaw Pact dissolved itself and the Soviet Union collapsed, the United States has single-mindedly pursued a hyper-aggressive strategy of surrounding Russia with hostile military forces and missiles aimed at the Russian heartland. The long-term goal is to bring about the collapse and dismemberment of the Russian federation, with the pieces that emerge subsequently turned into U.S. client states that provide raw materials but don't compete with American corporations or America's military. In a parallel strategy (the "pivot to Asia") the U.S. is making increasingly threatening military moves off the coast of China.

Those who thought that the collapse of the nominally socialist Soviet Union, and the transformation of China into a capitalist powerhouse, would mean an end of American hostility to those two 'communist' countries, failed to recognize that what the U.S. seeks is world dominance. It doesn't want capitalist competitors; it wants capitalist client states. Russia and China stand in the way of the U.S. agenda because, even though they can't match U.S. military or economic power, they are strong enough to assert their independence. They are therefore seen as increasing threats as they pursue projects, such as major railway and pipeline projects, which would be outside U.S. control. Capitalism hates competition, and the U.S., the world's dominant capitalist power, has never tolerated competitors, rivals, or leaders who dare to put their own country ahead of U.S. interests. If small countries like Grenada, El Salvador, and Nicaragua have to be crushed if they act independently, then, from the point of view of the U.S. elites, Russia and China are much greater threats to American hegemony which cannot be tolerated.

One of the driving forces underlying U.S. aggression and militarism has always been the military-industrial complex, arguably the most important sector of the U.S. economy. There are enormous profits to be made in supplying weapons and military systems, and therefore in inventing threats and stoking conflicts. The economies of many of the NATO states are highly integrated into this militarized economic system, making their elites willing accomplices in U.S. militarism.

Perhaps the most dangerous element in this picture is the fact that the American ruling elite is so used to getting its own way, domestically and internationally, that they have become increasingly oblivious to the dangers of what they are doing. Voices of sanity within the elite are increasingly marginalized by those are prepared to risk, and even plan for, all-out war. The ominous parallels to the outbreak of World War I a century ago are all too apparent.

In a long list of irresponsible actions, perhaps the most appalling are the actions the U.S. has been taking in relation to nuclear weapons. They have officially announced that they no longer adhere to the "no first strike" pledge that both Russia and the U.S. made during the Cold War. Now the U.S. says that it might (again) use nuclear weapons first in a conflict. The Russians and the Chinese, who well remember Hiroshima and Nagasaki, are undoubtedly taking this aggressive posture into account in their own contingency planning.

As if this weren't enough, the U.S. is also looking at developing "mini" nuclear weapons, an act of madness that makes "sense" only if you intend to use them. And now the U.S. is starting to deploy anti-missile systems right on the Russian border. The sole use of such

system would be to prevent retaliation after an American first strike. It is equivalent to declaring an intent to attack Russia when it judges the time is ripe. Inevitably this will force the Russians to be on higher alert, increasing the risk that a provocation will turn into an all-out war.

In this issue, we take a close look at the risks we face as we lurch ever closer to war. We especially look at the role of the mainstream media in manufacturing justifications for war.

November 7, 2016: Depression and Joy

It's a difficult thing to measure, but there are strong reasons for believing that the number of people struggling with depression has increased significantly in recent decades. Despite the evidence that this is a social problem, and not merely an individual misfortune, the solutions and escapes on offer are almost all individual: pharmaceuticals and therapy, on the one hand; self-medication with alcohol, street drugs, television, etc., on the other.

Certainly there are individual circumstances and individual causes, but when millions of people are experiencing the same thing, we need to be looking not only at the individual, but also at the society. Many of us feel powerless in the face of economic decline, a burgeoning police state, a ruling class willing to risk all-out war to increase its wealth and power, and the growing likelihood of environmental catastrophe. Many of us also struggle to bring about a radical change of direction, but you'd have to be oblivious to reality to wake up each morning feeling cheerful and optimistic.

But while the circumstances, and the odds we face, might not be what we'd prefer, nevertheless we aren't powerless. We can and do act. And through our actions, especially our collective actions, we can experience community, friendship, and moments of joy.

In this issue, we feature articles, as well as a book, a film, and a comic strip, which look at depression and also at what we can do in the face of depression and gloom. As always, we try to offer enjoyment as well as gloom.

November 27, 2016: Alternative Media

We depart from our usual format to present a special issue of *Other Voices* devoted entirely to alternative media.

It's not exactly news that the mainstream media – corporate-owned and state-owned – are biased and anything but reliable. Their reporting may well contain accurate information, but even when (some of) their facts are correct, the overall framing and context are shaped by their ideological function of supporting the capitalist system of which they are an integral part. More than ever, the mainstream media are propaganda arms of a power structure fusing corporations and the neoliberal state.

Changes in the media landscape exacerbate the situation. Corporate consolidation means that most major media outlets are now owned by a small number of large corporations, following policies dictated by head office. The actual number of media are shrinking: for example, whereas a few decades ago most major cities had competing daily newspapers, now most cities have only one, and where they have two, both are often owned by the same company. Corporatization of the media has also meant significant cutbacks in staffing, resulting inevitably in reduced coverage, and poor reporting marked by reliance

on fewer sources. Fact checkers, copy editors, and proofreaders have largely gone the way of the manual typewriter.

It's no wonder, then, that the mainstream media are widely distrusted, and even held in contempt, by many people. They are seen, rightly, as part of the neoliberal system people are increasingly rejecting.

On the other hand, the Internet has made it possible to launch a vast number of alternative media projects. These range from bloggers, tweeters, Facebook commentators, and other self-publishers active in the social media realm, to major information-rich websites and media projects with paid staff and professional standards.

However, most of these independent projects face the severe limitations imposed by not being well-funded corporate media projects. With the best intentions in the world, it's impossible to keep providing high-quality stories about a wide range of issues with volunteers, or a small number of paid staff. The constraints faced by the mainstream media – understaffing, shrinking revenues – impact the alternative media to an even greater extent.

And just what are “alternative media”? The rough-and-ready definition used in selecting media to feature in this issue of *Other Voices* is that they are independent and that they are broadly left in their political orientation, that is, that they offer a left alternative to the mainstream media.

Of course, all media, mainstream or alternative, right or left, must be read critically. Alternative media are quite capable of getting things wrong or publishing nonsense; indeed, they frequently do. They also often disagree with each other. This can be helpful. Hearing about different approaches, and thinking about the reasons behind them, helps us understand things better.

This is true of corporate and state-funded media as well. News media like Al Jazeera, RT, and teleSUR certainly reflect the biases of their owners (Qatar, Russia, and several South American governments, respectively), but, because those biases are different from the mainstream American, British, and Canadian media, they can and do cover news that the western corporate media ignore or falsify, and they can be worth checking out as well.

Connexions offers a much more extensive alternative media list on the Connexions website here. In this newsletter, we present a selection of media from that larger list. Like anything else, this is a reflection of individual biases; still, we hope that it helps you to learn about websites and media that you'll find useful in finding out and understanding what's happening in the world.

There is no clear dividing line between ‘media’ websites and other websites. Many high-quality websites provide information and analysis. To find more of them, try browsing the Connexions Directory of Groups and Websites. The Connexions website itself features current content as well as a massive online library of articles and books going back decades. Connexions also gives you the ability to find related resources and background information on almost any topic, via the browseable Subject Index and the Search tool.

December 20, 2016: Fake News

“Fake news” is the latest mania to convulse the mainstream media. All at once, we’re being subjected to an outbreak of hand-wringing articles and commentary about obscure websites which are supposedly poisoning public opinion and undermining democracy by spreading “fake news.”

Since we don’t like to be left out when a new fad comes on the scene, Other Voices is jumping on the bandwagon too, with this, our last issue of 2016, devoted to “fake news.”

Our focus, however, is not so much on the crackpots and trolls making mischief on the fringes, but on the dominant actors in the fake news business: governments and the corporate and state media. Turning a blind eye to their own role in producing fake news, which mainstream media commentaries invariably do, amounts to not just ignoring the elephant in the room, but ignoring a whole herd of trumpeting pachyderms running amuck.

Fake news? How about credulous coverage in the mainstream media of Saddam Hussein’s “weapons of mass destruction,” an outright lie used as a pretext to justify an unjustified war of aggression, resulting in hundreds of thousands of deaths? Or the uncritical media coverage of Iran’s non-existent nuclear weapons program, used to lend an air of legitimacy to the vicious sanctions and war threats against that country? Or the false reports about impending massacres by Muammar Gaddafi’s troops, used to justify NATO’s destruction of Libya, with results we are all too familiar with?

When it comes to war, “defense,” “national security,” and the interests of the state, the corporate and state media almost invariably act as propagandists, not as critical or independent seekers for truth.

So when the mainstream purveyors of fake news declare themselves aghast at the behaviour of fringe websites, it’s hard to see this as anything more than complaining about competitors and imitators moving onto their turf.

The truth is, the market for these fringe website has appeared because so many people have learned that they can’t trust what they read or see in the mainstream media.

Articles featured in this issue of Other Voices look at the media’s role as purveyors of disinformation, propaganda, and lies. Also included is a look at well-funded climate denial think tanks, who produce what is arguably the most dangerous fake news of all.

We also feature an interview with Noam Chomsky on what may face us when Donald Trump enters the White House, a report on what is happening to India’s poor as India moves to a so-called “cashless economy.” Drawing on the archives, we spotlight the legendary publication I.F. Stone’s Weekly (1953-1971), now archived online, and Dorothea Lange’s long-suppressed photographs documenting the expulsion and internment of Japanese-Americans in World War Two.

January 22, 2017: Disobedience

Ultimately all power structures depend on the obedience of those over whom they rule. It helps if people believe in the legitimacy of those who wield power, but the crucial thing is obedience.

Once people start to disobey in significant numbers, the dynamic of power changes fundamentally. Disobedience, especially on a large scale, shakes the power of the rulers, and increases the power of those who disobey.

Given the nature of state power, the most threatening form of disobedience is the refusal of soldiers to obey orders. In this issue, this is the form of disobedience we focus on. When soldiers begin question the orders they are given and start regarding the authority of those who give those orders as illegitimate, the military hierarchy, and ultimately the state itself, are threatened.

In this issue of *Other Voices*, we recall the resistance of rank-and-file American soldiers to the Vietnam War. This resistance was a powerful factor in ending the war, probably second only to the indomitable determination of the Vietnamese to drive out the American invaders. Yet the soldiers' resistance has been virtually erased from history. Hollywood has made hundreds of movies about the war; none shows the actions of thousands of American soldiers who refused to fight. Their resistance included not only desertion and combat refusals involving thousands of soldiers, but hundreds of instances of GIs killing their own officers when those officers tried to compel them to go into combat.

We also feature an article on rank-and-file soldiers in the Egyptian army. Virtually all of them come from the working classes, and their loyalty to the regime cannot be taken for granted. If they refuse to continue obeying a hierarchy that has soldiers repressing their own people, Egypt's dictatorship will face a crisis.

From the Archives we feature the Principles of Nuremberg, which were used by the Nuremberg Tribunal to judge Nazi war criminals. These principles were subsequently adopted as key elements of international law. The fourth principle states "The fact that a person acted pursuant to an order of his Government or of a superior does not relieve him from responsibility under international law, provided a moral choice was in fact possible to him". This principle makes clear that under international law, an agent of the state, including a soldier, has a duty to refuse orders that violate international law. We would do well to highlight this duty at every opportunity.

Also in an article of strikes and other forms of resistance by prisoners and by immigrant detainees: another form of disobedience against the repressive power of the state.

Other articles look at recent worker' struggles in China, and recall the life of John Berger, the British critic and writer who taught many about different "ways of seeing" the world.

February 14, 2017: Race and Class

Class conflict – first and foremost, the relationship between the capitalist class and the working class -- is the fundamental contradiction that defines capitalist society. Class is a reality which simultaneously encompasses and collides with other dimensions of oppression and domination, such as gender and race. The relationship between race and class, in particular, is the theme of this issue of *Other Voices*.

The concept of "race" is a relatively recent invention, born out of the need to invent a justification for the enslavement of black Africans. Race theorists developed pseudo-

scientific biological theories to ‘explain’ why Africans were ‘inferior’ and therefore could justly be enslaved. Race theory was then also used to justify and explain social hierarchy in other contexts. It is worth remembering that conservative European social thinkers long held that working people and the poor belonged to a biologically different ‘race’ than their social superiors. The French aristocrat and race theorist Gobineau wrote “Every social order is founded upon three original classes, each of which represents a racial variety: the nobility, a more or less accurate reflection of the conquering race; the bourgeoisie composed of mixed stock coming close to the chief race; and the common people who live in servitude or at least in a very depressed position. These last belong to a lower race which came about in the south through miscegenation with the negroes and in the north with the Finns.”

It was in the Americas, and especially in the United States, a society founded on slavery, that ‘racial’ divisions were cultivated and sharpened to their highest degree. After Bacon’s Rebellion in 1676, when black slaves and white indentured servants rose up together, the colonial elite began consciously to foster ‘racial’ divisions by granting poor whites a few social privileges (but not, in most cases, money or power). Immigrants who had been considered non-white and racially inferior, such as the Finns, the Irish, and Slavs from Eastern Europe, were ‘promoted’ into the “white race.”

In the eyes of Karl Marx, the division between whites and blacks within the American working class (which in his analysis encompassed slaves as well as wage-workers) was the fundamental contradiction which stood in the way of developing class consciousness and creating a socialist movement.

In the 20th century, Communists and Trotskyists in particular stressed the central importance of challenging racism in order to build a united working class movement. In the last few years, this insight has been carried forward by other social movements. The concept of ‘intersectionality’ has recently come into vogue in some circles, though others argue that ‘intersectionality’ is actually a step backward in that it assumes that there are separate ‘identities’ that ‘intersect’, an approach which can end up seeing the differences but missing the whole.

These are questions which will continue to challenge us. In this issue, you’ll find a small selection of resources from a vast and ongoing social movement. Exploring the subject links below each item will lead you to many more.

March 18, 2017: Public Transit

Public transportation is key to the functioning of modern cities. The old style of city, where workers lived within walking distance of their workplaces, has been replaced by a new kind of city, defined by urban sprawl and the need to commute, often over long distances, between home and work. This new kind of urban landscape, defined by and for the automobile, was deliberately brought into being by the oil industry and the automobile companies. In the United States, they bought up and then ruthlessly dismantled public transportation systems across the country, to ensure that people would have no choice except to buy and drive automobiles. In Europe and Asia, and to some extent in Canada, public transportation systems have continued to play a more important role, but there too, and indeed across the globe, car ownership has been seen as a symbol of success and affluence, and almost everywhere governments have pursued policies favouring automobiles, roads, and highways over public transportation.

If successful people drive cars, then people who need to take public transit can easily be seen as losers. Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher is supposed to have said

that “A man who, beyond the age of 26, finds himself on a bus can count himself as a failure.” This kind of attitude has led governments in many parts of the world to starve public transit while at the same time providing massive subsidies to create and maintain the roads and other infrastructure needed by automobiles.

But one of the paradoxes of automobile-dominated cities is that they cannot function without public transportation. Most of the people who do the low-paid work without which modern cities cannot survive can’t afford to buy and operate cars – and if they could, cities would be paralyzed by gridlock. Urban capitalism depends on minimum-wage jobs and precarious work, so the state has to provide some level of transit service for the people who do that work.

All too often, however, the service provided is inadequate and unreliable. Why spend more money than absolutely necessary to serve the needs of working people and the poor, who are often immigrants and members of racialized minorities?

Around the world, there are movements of transit riders fighting for better public transit. A key perspective guiding many of these struggles is the idea that transit should be free, that is, paid for not by fares, but out of general revenues. This is how roads are normally funded: their construction and maintenance are paid for by taxes, rarely by user fees.

Free public transit by itself would not be enough, however. We also need good transit, transit that runs frequently and goes where people want to go. It also needs to be pleasant and safe. This requires substantial new investment.

The cost of building and providing transit systems cannot be ignored. Real estate developers continue to perpetuate and worsen sprawl, building widely dispersed subdivisions which cannot be served by transit in any reasonably affordable way. Thus they continue to worsen society’s dependence on cars at the very time when the climate crisis requires us to radically reduce our dependency on the car. It is clear that government regulations have had little impact on the behaviour of real estate developers. The issue that we will have to address sooner or later is the question of private ownership of land: the strange idea that rich people and corporations should be able to buy land and then do with it whatever they please.

Transit struggles, such as the ones described in the articles below about Belo Horizonte, Brazil, and Los Angeles, have met with success to the extent that they have formed alliances between drivers and riders. One favourite strategy of governments is to blame high fares and poor service on ‘greedy’ drivers, whose demands for good pay and working conditions supposedly leave governments with no choice except to cut back on service. Divide and conquer is the favourite tactic of those in power, and to fight back successfully, we need to recognize that tactic and reject it.

April 1, 2017: April 1 Issue

Other Voices always strives to present you with alternative views on important topics. This issue offers some *really* alternative perspectives and even some “alternative facts.” As always, read critically – and enjoy.

May 2, 2017: Affirming Life, Resisting War, Reporting UFOs

What do we do when those in power recklessly put the future of the entire planet at risk with their acts of aggression and military provocations, while they ignore the growing disaster of climate change?

We fight back and organize, on every level, wherever we are, doing whatever offers the hope of resisting and of building a movement that can stop and overturn the out-of-control monster of late capitalism.

In this issue, you'll learn about workers, peasants, scientists and Zapatistas meeting to explore ways of ensuring that science is guided by ethics, social responsibility, and human needs. You'll read about how indigenous women, who often experience the first and worst effects of climate change, struggle to protect their environments. In the People's History section, you'll find a story about the Quechua people and their centuries-long project of developing and protecting more than 2,000 varieties of potato: a heritage that is a gift to the entire world, more important than ever in the face of climate change.

We travel back to look at the historical background of the current tensions in Korea, a background that includes a long history of American attacks on, and threats against, North Korea, with the predictable result that North Korea's leadership feels it has to deter another U.S. attack at all costs.

UFOs are not normally a topic that receives much attention in Other Voices, but in this issue we draw attention to a flood of phone calls to the hotline set up by the U.S. government for reporting illegal aliens. It seems they have been getting so many phone calls reporting UFO abductions, and describing Star Trek episodes in great detail, that the hotline (1-855-48-VOICE) is essentially out of service. Oh dear!

Our topic of the week is Militarism and Democracy. Or, more precisely, the irreconcilable conflict between militarism versus the possibility of having a real democracy.

May 28, 2017: Challenging Injustice

In this issue, we look at the relentless persistence of people challenging injustice and entrenched power in places around the world, including Palestine, Korea, China, Canada, and the United States.

We spotlight the ongoing hunger strike by Palestinian political prisoners languishing in Israeli prisons, workers' strikes in China, and people in South Korea taking on a corrupt government. In the United States, the Equal Justice Initiative is collecting soil from places where blacks were lynched as a way of remembering their lives and the brutally racist society that murdered them.

An article on recent terrorist attacks in Britain asks what underlies ideological violence and sociopathic rage. Ralph Nader asks why people who are supposed to be professional questioners avoid asking hard questions of those in power. An article on the Korean War relates the history of that war, and the U.S. role in it, to the attitude of North Korea to the United States today.

June 26, 2017: Public Safety

It is becoming increasingly clear that we have been witnessing a drastic rolling back of the systems and structures which Western societies developed over the past century or more to safeguard public health and safety. Politicians and business leaders, permeated with free-market ideology, have been jettisoning, with little thought or understanding of the consequences, the apparatus previous generations built, piece by piece, to mitigate the most dangerous aspects of industrial civilization.

Systems which were established to protect public health have been deliberately dismantled by governments driven by a fanatical hatred of the public sector, in the name of eliminating “red tape.”

What we are losing as a result are not only specific protective and regulatory mechanisms, important as they are, but the understanding of why they exist, why they were created in the first place. The hard-won experiences of the past, the disasters that our ancestors learned from at great cost, are disappearing down the memory hole.

Governments, infused with neo-liberal ideology, have made it an article of faith that the private sector is the most efficient provider of most products and services, and that, if a service absolutely has to be provided by the public sector, it should be modelled on the private sector model or provided in partnership with the private sector. Social-democratic and “third way” politicians share this unquestioning faith in the private sector and its ways with their conservative counterparts. The result, all too often, is that responsibility for ensuring public safety is left in the hands of companies and agencies who are in a grave conflict of interest: the less they spend on infrastructure, maintenance, safety equipment, and staff, the higher their profits.

Capitalism has always produced disasters, but in an era where the drive for corporate profits has resulted in ever-lower taxes for corporations and the rich, spending on public welfare and public safety continues to be slashed, all too often with predictable and disastrous results.

In this issue, we look at a few of those disasters, from Grenfell Tower fire in London, to the Flint water crisis, to the 1984 Bhopal disaster. We look at the huge risks that industrialized farming presents to public health, and we recall the Walkerton water contamination disaster. If you follows the subject links into the online Connexions library, you’ll find more pieces of the story, including the stories of people who are organizing and fighting back against those whose greed and negligence put their lives at risk.

July 22, 2017: Secrecy and Power

It is one of the essential attributes of power that it insists on secrecy. Or, more precisely, those who wield power over others routinely claim that the details of what they do, and why they do it, are far too sensitive to be revealed to the public. The decisions they take, the discussions they have, the information they consider, the lobbyists who influenced them: all this must remain behind closed doors. Terrible (though unspecified) calamities would result if their jealously guarded secrets were to be revealed.

Self-serving as this view may be, it contains an important germ of truth. It is a defining characteristic of almost all bodies that wield power – governments, public agencies, courts, police, corporations – that they view the people they ostensibly serve as the enemy. If the public finds out that they are seen as the enemy, the interests of the power-holders could indeed be harmed. Having their secrets exposed to the public is seen as an

existential threat, and is met with fury: witness, for example, the extraordinary vindictiveness which the American state directs at whistleblowers like Edward Snowden, Chelsea Manning, and Julian Assange.

It is on the level of national security that the cult of secrecy is most apparent and most pathological. It is also on this plane that the distinction between secrecy and privacy is clearest.

Privacy is something that belongs to individuals. It is the right to go about one's business without being spied on by the state or corporate entities. Governments and corporations hate the idea of privacy, and do everything they can to deny anyone, anywhere, the right to privacy. They suck up information, all kinds of information, anything and everything, and trade it like a commodity.

Secrecy, on the other hand, is a weapon used by the state and other wielders of power against the public they ostensibly serve. Whereas everything that every member of the public does must be subject to surveillance by those in power, everything important done by those in power must remain a secret.

The same attitudes are prevalent wherever power is wielded. Far-reaching international agreements, such as the so-called "free trade" deals, are always negotiated in secret. Pesticides and other chemicals are routinely approved on the basis of 'evidence' which can't be revealed because it is a trade secret. On those rare occasions where corporations are successfully sued by those they have harmed, the actual settlement is concealed behind a court-imposed non-disclosure clause, so that others can't take advantage of the precedent. International financial agreements have been carefully crafted to allow the wealthy to move and hide their money to avoid paying taxes. Trials of those accused of crimes against the state are held in secret; sometimes those taken into custody are held in secret prisons without even the benefit of a trial.

One of the paradoxes of the cult of secrecy, as it pertains to national security, is that very often it doesn't work. Security agencies, with their thousands of employees and their billions of intercepted communications and storehouses full of secrets, routinely fail to foresee events which journalists and ordinary observers on the ground see, analyze, and understand without access to any secret information.

But then, it would be naive to think that the goals those in power claim to be pursuing are their real goals. Wars are profitable. Trade deals are profitable. Toxic chemicals are profitable. Keeping the real enemy -- the people -- from interfering is essential. And therefore, so is secrecy.

August 27, 2017: Official Enemies

We are never left in any doubt about who our enemies are. The word goes out from the United States that a certain country is a dictatorship which abuses human rights, supports terrorism, and poses a terrible threat to the U.S. and to the world. The mainstream media then swing into action with military precision and flood us with stories, images, and commentary about how dreadful country 'X' is. The U.S. and its client states -- also known as its 'NATO allies' -- then move into action with a standard package of sanctions and forms of pressure, which may include economic warfare, military threats, and measures to lay the groundwork for a coup via clandestine contacts with opposition leaders and those elements of the military command who have been on the CIA payroll for years. When regime change is the goal, any method, from buying an election to military invasion, is acceptable.

There is also no doubt that ostensible reasons for branding a country as an official enemy are never the real reasons. One clear indication of this is the way a particular leader or government can be an ally one day, and an enemy the next. Saddam Hussein's Iraq was an American ally, showered with favours and military hardware, until the day Saddam disobeyed the U.S. and took over the Kuwaiti oil fields. Suddenly the U.S. discovered that Hussein was a dictator who didn't respect human rights, and invaded Iraq. It was a similar story in Panama, where President Manuel Noriega, a brutal thug and known drug dealer, was a trusted U.S. ally who was on the CIA payroll for years. When Noriega got too greedy and started stealing from U.S.-owned businesses, the U.S. invaded and overthrew him, killing a few thousand people in the process. It was a similar story with Assad's Syria, which served the U.S. as a clandestine location to which it sent prisoners to be tortured (e.g. Canada's Maher Arar). When its strategy in the Middle East changed, the U.S. suddenly discovered the Assad was a nasty dictator who tortured his enemies, and who had to be overthrown.

The standard pretexts for demonizing a particular country would be laughable if the results weren't so grim. For example, the U.S. government and the house-trained media which spread its message would have us believe that Venezuela, a country which regularly holds internationally monitored, closely contested, elections, is a dictatorship which needs to be overthrown, while countries like Egypt, Israel, the Philippines, and Saudi Arabia, whose jails are overflowing with political prisoners, are stalwarts of the free world.

In this issue of Other Voices, we go beyond the mainstream media to look at the complex realities and histories of the current group of official enemies: Venezuela, North Korea, Syria, and Russia. These articles don't suggest that there is nothing to criticize about these states. There is no doubt that North Korea and Syria, for example, are brutal dictatorships. It is nevertheless possible, as one article suggests, that many people in Syria, faced with the stark choice of a secular dictatorship or rule by the Islamic state or Al-Qaeda, would choose the existing state. North Korea may be a dictatorship, but its international policies have a core of rationality: asking for negotiations and guarantees on non-intervention, while maintaining a military strong enough to deter an American attack.

The ultimate conclusion these articles point to is this: war is not a solution, and U.S.-NATO intervention in other countries invariably makes things worse.

October 9, 2017: Meeting the Challenge of the Right

When we talk about the Right, it is well to keep in mind that "the Right" is by no means a unified political force or organization, but rather a label used to describe a disparate collection of ideologies, parties, groups, and individuals.

Many of the mainstream political parties which hold government office or form the official opposition in countries such as Germany, Britain, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Canada carry the label 'conservative,' meaning that they are on the right of their country's political spectrum. In most of these countries, little distinguishes these parties from the mainstream parties to their left. If the programs of the conservative parties typically call for austerity and cutbacks in public spending, coupled with more tax breaks for the rich, the programs of their more 'progressive' opponents will tend to call for a little bit less austerity and slightly smaller tax breaks for the rich. These parties have been following the same neo-liberal template for decades, and as the failure of neo-liberalism to improve the lives of anyone except the wealthy has become increasingly apparent, they have steadily lost support.

The hegemony of the virtually indistinguishable mainstream parties has been challenged by the emergence of hard-right parties in places such as India, Ukraine, Hungary and Poland (countries where they hold power), in France, where the National Front has become a major political force, and in Germany, where the anti-immigrant AfD finished in third place in the recent national election. With millions of people unemployed or working in marginal precarious jobs, desperation and hopelessness is leading some to listen to right-wing demagogues who offer scapegoats – usually immigrants or other minorities – or who divert their attention to social ‘evils’ such as abortion, homosexuality, and sex education. These far-right parties in fact have no real solutions to offer, but they pose a very real danger to those they target as scapegoats.

Further still to the right are a wide variety of groups and movements that openly flaunt racist and Nazi symbols and rhetoric. These groups and individuals, who have been given the name ‘alt-right’ in the United States, are by no means united, and their numbers are small, but they have shown that they are quite capable of committing serious acts of violence against those they hate. They have been challenged by anti-fascists who work to stop fascists in their tracks whenever they seek to march in the streets.

The strategy and tactics of meeting the challenge of the right are naturally subjects of debate. Those activists who identify with the label ‘anti-fa’ tend to focus their energies on trying to stop fascists from marching. Important as this is, it can also serve to divert energies from the important organizing that needs to be done. The real problem, arguably, is that the right – the more mainstream right as well as the fascists -- has succeeded in attracting support among the broader population because they are putting their energies into grassroots political organizing, while much of the left has given up on organizing, or even talking to, ordinary working people.

The emphasis on fascist fringe groups also can lead to ignoring the most dangerous anti-democratic forces. The greatest totalitarian threat comes, not from small fringe groups, but from the state’s security apparatus itself: the police and the myriad agencies that monitor and record everything that we say and do. They are the ones who driving the push to ever-increasing police militarization, surveillance, and restrictions on civil liberties in the name of ‘anti-terrorism.’

This issue of Other Voices offers a number of articles, books, and films offering different perspectives on meeting the challenge of the right. The Connexions website features many more resources and points of view: we invite you to explore them.

November 11, 2017: Left Parties

“There is no alternative.” That is capitalism’s message in the neo-liberal era. The rich keep getting richer and richer, millions of people are unemployed, millions more are trying to survive on precarious, marginal, and part-time work, hundreds of millions are without health care, housing, education, or clean water. Environmental collapse is increasingly likely, masses of people are fleeing wars and economic disasters, nuclear war is a real danger. And all that the corporate elite, the corporate media, and the mainstream political parties have to offer is their insistence that there is nothing we can do about it: there is no alternative.

In those countries where some version of liberal democracy still exists, an ever-increasing percentage of the population has stopped participating in elections where none of the parties offer an alternative. The parties that used to offer something for working people – the various versions of social democracy – have been absorbed into the neo-

liberal consensus, and where they form governments, alone, or in coalition with other neo-liberal parties, they enforce the same neo-liberal program.

The political vacuum left by the mainstream parties has opened up space for new parties and political movements to emerge on both the right (see *Other Voices* October 9, 2017) and the left. In recent years, a number of left parties have emerged out of mass movements in countries like Spain (Podemos), Germany (Die Linke), and Greece (Syriza). In Latin America, in the last two decades, left movements or parties have formed governments in Venezuela, Bolivia, Brazil, and Uruguay. In Britain, exceptionally, the emergence of a socialist left has happened within the mainstream Labour Party, inspired by Jeremy Corbyn's articulation of a socialist vision that attracted enormous numbers of new members to the party. In the United States, Bernie Sanders' campaign also showed that a politician who calls himself a socialist can inspire millions of people, though Sanders' insistence on channelling their energies into the Democratic Party undermined the possibilities for a new political movement that his campaign could have opened up.

What these new left parties/movements have in common is a strategy of engaging in grassroots organizing and also running in elections. They all describe themselves as socialist, though in many cases their programs are more reminiscent of what social democrats used to advocate decades ago: reforms that would tame and manage capitalism rather than abolish it. Their ultimate vision may be a world without capitalism, but their immediate proposals are more modest and incremental, though still significantly to the left of the neo-liberal consensus.

The ambiguities and contradictions in their goals are in large part attributable to the fact that, being based on social movements, they are therefore coalitions incorporating diverse points of view, some radical, some less so.

A second tension is one that emerges in every leftwing political movement that engages in elections. Those who are elected to office, and the party/parliamentary apparatus that surrounds them, are almost inevitably absorbed into the narrow world of elections and parliamentary politics. This is all the more true if a left party manages to attain office.

Indeed, the experience of the left parties to emerge in the last two decades shows that the real test, and the real danger, comes when a left party forms a government, or becomes part of a coalition government.

A coalition by definition requires the parties participating in it to sacrifice parts of their programs. When a socialist party enters a coalition with a non-socialist party, it is always on the basis that the socialist parts of its program are set aside in exchange for including some of the specific reforms it wants in the coalition government's agenda. The prospect of achieving a share of political office in a coalition can be extremely tempting, but for a left party the result is almost always a political disaster.

The dangers and challenges of achieving office are most starkly posed when a left party comes to power in its own right. Being in government is not the same as being in power, as it soon comes to learn. Real power is wielded by the capitalist class, those who control the levers of finance. When they don't like the results of an election, they move their money out of the country, and international money markets institute a de facto boycott of the disobedient country. International institutions, such as the European Union and the International Monetary Fund, as well as the biggest and most powerful international institution of all, the American Empire, bring enormous pressure to bear. In this, they have the help of a 'fifth column' within the country: the corporate sector (including the corporate media), as well as significant parts of the state apparatus, such as the senior bureaucracy, the police, and the military.

If a left party is to have any hope of surviving and carrying out its program, it has to have a clear understanding of the obstacles it will face, and a strong determination to meet them head on. Even more importantly, it can only succeed if it remains the expression of a broad-based social movement. An isolated left government has no chance. A movement of millions of people which is committed to an ongoing process of social transformation can sustain a left government, even as such a government can help to achieve the goals of the movement.

In this issue of *Other Voices*, we look at the experiences of a number of left parties. The *Connexions Subject Index* provides links to many more insightful articles and books.

December 17, 2017: Collective Memory and Cultural Amnesia

Our society is obsessed with the short-term present. It devalues memories and the past. That's the nature of capitalism, especially the speeded-up hypercapitalism of today. The past is useless: profits are made by getting rid of the old and replacing it with something new.

Certainly this applies to commodities, which, as Marx taught us, are both the incarnation of value under capitalism, as well as the embodiment of capitalist values. Commodities (whether or not they take a physical form) have to be destroyed or made obsolete so that new commodities can be sold.

The need to eclipse the past also applies to ways of living. For the sake of increased profits, steady jobs have to be eliminated and replaced with precarious work. Unions have to be ground down and where possible destroyed. Farmers practising traditional agriculture have to give way to industrial farming, or be forced off their land. Culture has to be packaged as a product so it can be bought and sold.

This ceaseless enterprise of social engineering works best if people can be made to forget that things once were different. Collective memories of unionized jobs with benefits, air you could breathe and water you could drink without being poisoned, times when you could live your life without being spied on by the government and the corporations – such memories are dangerous. It's best if people forget that such things ever existed.

Even more dangerous are collective memories of resistance – times when people got together, and fought for their rights, sometimes winning, sometimes losing. The very idea that things were different in the past, and could be different in the future, is perilous because it gives people dangerous ideas.

Official society, including the mainstream media, busily carry on their daily work of fostering social amnesia, focusing on the present and the trivial, while erasing the past by misrepresentation or neglect. Certainly neither media nor governments have any interest in having people remember the lies that were used to justify past wars and past crimes. Recycled lies (including promises of a better future) work best if people don't remember how often the same false tales have been told in the past.

But there are those who do remember, and who work to preserve and share our collective memory. They do their work for different reasons, in different places.

Sometimes the impulse is nationalist or even racist. Those who live on conquered or stolen land rarely care to remember much about how the land came to be theirs. They prefer collective myth to collective memory.

But they have to contend with the collective memories of those who were displaced. From Canada to Palestine, from South Sudan to Burma, people are working to document

their stories and bring them to the attention of the world. In such instances, and others, the burning impulse is truth: to tell what happened to us.

Other initiatives and projects – Connexions itself is an example – see historical memory as a way of contributing to the struggle for a different world. For us, knowledge of history is subversive, and remembering can be a form of resistance. To understand how we can change society, we have to understand it. That means understanding where it – where we – came from.

When we know and understand more about those who came before us lived and fought, we can gain a deeper understanding of how we can best live and fight.

In this issue of *Other Voices*, we share some stories about people’s struggles to use collective memory as a form of resistance and a tool for creating a better world.

January 21, 2018: What are we eating?

What are we eating? A simple question which opens up a labyrinth of devilishly complex issues about production and distribution, access to land, control of water, prices, health and safety, migrant labour, and much else.

For millions of people, the answer is brutally simple: not enough to survive. UNICEF estimates that 300 million children go to bed hungry each night, and that more than 8,000 children under the age of five die of malnutrition every day. The UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that 12% of the world’s population is chronically malnourished.

How is this possible in a world where there is an enormous surplus of food, where farmers are paid not to grow food?

A short answer is that food production and distribution are driven by the need to make profits, rather than by human needs. The international system of corporate-dominated food production and sales that is misleadingly referred to as the “market” exists to maximize corporate profits. Everything follows from that. The ‘market’ responds to ‘demand’ (though that ‘demand’ is often artificially created by marketing campaigns). Bottom line: if people are hungry because they have no money to buy food, they don’t create a ‘demand’ for food, and the “market” doesn’t produce or allocate food for them.

This is not a new development. During the Irish famine of the 1840s, when one million people died of starvation, rich landowners were exporting food from Ireland. Why? Because foreign buyers could afford to pay, whereas the Irish peasants had no money with which to buy food. The Ethiopian famine of the 1980s was a similar story: the country was producing enough grain to feed everyone, and indeed continued to export food during the height of the famine.

In the past few decades, the increasing corporatization of the food system has been bringing about enormous changes.

In North America, traditional family farms are a threatened species. Large industrial farms expand, while smaller farms sell out to the big operations or, if they are close to cities, to real estate speculators and builders. Large or small, nearly all farmers are heavily in debt and trapped on a treadmill of borrowing against next year’s earnings to buy this year’s seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides, all controlled and sold by huge agribusiness corporations.

In Africa, land that has been farmed by local farmers for countless generations is being taken over by foreign mega-operations, many of them Chinese. In India, international agro-chemical monopolies have been pushing GMOs and new crop varieties, resulting in a series of rural disasters, whose consequences include a horrific wave of farmer suicides.

Another worry for anyone who consumes food – that is, everyone – is the safety of the foods that we consume. We are all guinea pigs in a massive, unprecedented, and uncontrolled experiment on human health and the earth's ecosystems. What happens when our bodies, our lakes and rivers, our soil, and our air are saturated with an ever-increasing broth of chemicals, antibiotics, and genetically modified lifeforms?

If there is good news in all this, it is the fact that so many people are coming together to resist in various ways, large and small. This issue of *Other Voices* highlights a few. Many more stories and resources can be found via the *Connexions* website.

February 17, 2018: Hearts and Minds: How do people change?

If we want to change the world, we need other people – millions, eventually hundreds of millions of others – to agree that the world needs changing and to join us in changing it.

It's a daunting prospect. How can we reach and persuade those who may have voted for the likes of Donald Trump and those like him in other countries, or who are not interested in engaging in 'politics' at all?

Many on the left practise their own version of political disengagement. With the best of intentions but questionable priorities, they reach out to the already converted to organize actions which bring together the same small groups of people to proclaim their principled dissent from the status quo. What is all too commonly missing is any attempt to reach out to the vast majority of the population, those who won't come to, or ever even hear about, the protests of the left.

How can we reach the millions we need to reach and engage if fundamental change is to happen? How can we accomplish the essential task of persuading a majority of the population that a fundamental social and economic transformation is necessary?

Even more importantly, what will it take for people to come together and act collectively to bring about that transformation? What can we do to help make this happen?

This newsletter presents a number of approaches to answering this crucial question. At heart, though, they share the same fundamental wisdom: you do it by talking to people. One-on-one, or in small groups. And talking to people, having conversations, means listening and asking questions. A good organizing conversation, says Jane McAlevey, is 70 per cent listening and 30 percent talking. The key to canvassing people door-to-door, says Momentum, is asking people what they are concerned about, and listening to their answers.

There is another crucial element to this approach: it means talking to strangers. People you don't know, people who aren't political. On their doorsteps, on the street-corner, in front of public buildings.

While every conversation we have can potentially have an impact, to be effective in bringing about social change, such conversations need to be part of a strategy for organizing. Groups working for change need to prioritize organizing that reaches out to people, ordinary people, where they work, live, shop, and play.

Finally, we need to understand that having conversations and listening to people is not a mere tactic, a technique to get them to listen to what we have to say. Listening to people means hearing what they say, and learning from it. We don't have all the answers. We have much to learn, and we have to be open to learning. It is not only other people, but we too, who need to change if the world is to change.

March 25, 2018 – Looking for Answers, Creating Alternatives

This issue of Other Voices features people who are questioning and challenging the way the world works and trying to create better alternatives.

Phyllis Omido, a courageous environmental activist in Kenya who faced arrest and physical intimidation, has led a successful campaign to force a lead-smelting company that was poisoning residents to shut down.

Justin Podur challenges the way the corporate media systematically spread lies and misinformation about Venezuela, a country faced by a systemic campaign of economic sabotage led by local elites and supported

Judith Deutsch reviews Norman Finkelstein's new book on Gaza. She asks: why are states and corporations assumed to have a "right to exist" but *people* – specifically, in this case, the people of Gaza – are not said to have a right to exist.

Bruce Lesnick asks what is the best way to organize against the mobilizations of the right. Most crucially, he asks, "how can we best harness the power of the 99% – the working class majority – in this ideological, social and economic battle?"

The book of the week is "Creating an Ecological Society: Toward a Revolutionary Transformation" by Fred Magdoff and Chris Williams. They set out to show that it is possible to envision and create a society that is genuinely democratic, equitable, and ecologically sustainable. And that it is possible -- not one moment too soon -- for society to change fundamentally and be brought into harmony with nature.

April 21, 2018 – Their Internet or Ours?

What happened to the Internet? Some thirty years ago, the Internet, which up to that time had been a communications network used by the U.S. military and a handful of elite academic institutions, was becoming available to tech-savvy members of the public. Electronic Mail (E-mail) was coming into wider use. USENET discussion groups and Bulletin Board Systems (BBS), which allowed users the ability to share information and engage in discussions with like-minded individuals, were proliferating. In the late 1980s, Tim Berners-Lee developed the Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP), a key breakthrough which made the World Wide Web possible.

A fundamental dimension of the Internet of that time was its hostility to any form of commercial or corporate use. Many systems expressly forbade all advertising or the use of email to send commercial messages of any kind. Servers were run by non-profit institutions.

But the very openness of the Internet made it possible for companies to set up their own Web presence. Commercial Internet Service Providers sprang into being. There was no governing authority which could stop them, and with limitless amounts of money and resources at their disposal, within a few years their presence swamped the anarchic early Internet. Aspects of Internet management were privatized by the U.S. government. Private companies were created to sell Internet domain names, requiring any organization with a website to pay an annual licensing fee to a private company. If there were disagreements about the use of a domain name, large corporations would almost automatically prevail over small non-profits.

In the new millennium, these trends accelerated. New forms of communications networks were created, and nearly all were controlled by corporations. Cell phones used networks owned by private companies: an inefficient and wasteful, but very profitable, approach. Social media and communications apps sprang into being, and even though they are perfectly suited to being controlled co-operatively by their users and the workers who maintain them, they are almost all corporate.

As the Internet became privatized, the dominant corporations were no longer content to merely publish advertising in the manner of the print media. Now, they entered the business of spying on their users: gathering every possible piece of information about them, and then not only using that information to target their own ads, but also selling it to any other commercial entity with the budget to pay for it. The state, in the form of its national security establishments, get to access the data as well.

Governments did everything they could to facilitate the commercialization and corporatization of the Internet, but they also have their own agendas. A key preoccupation for a government is maintaining its own legitimacy. The mainstream media, including online media platforms, play an important part in what Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman called “manufacturing consent.”

But a problem with the Internet is that it allows for alternative points of view to be disseminated as well. Even though alternative media and individual bloggers have nowhere near the reach of the commercial and state media, some at least have attracted large audiences because they challenge the official narratives. They have helped to undermine the credibility of governments and mainstream media because they continually challenge their lies and distortions. Those in power see this as a major problem, and an intolerant affront.

The result has been another set of manoeuvres to push these insolent challengers deeper into the shadows. One part of this corporate-state offensive has been legislation to end “net neutrality” in the United States. Whereas previously all information on the Internet

moved in the same way, over the same available bandwidth, now corporations that control the technical infrastructure are allowed to give priority to some information, while slowing down other content. This will mean that websites owned by companies able to pay for better service will be served up fast, while those who aren't able to pay will be slowed down. Given the nature of the Internet, where people expect to click on something and then see it instantly, sites that take five or ten seconds to load because they are on the slowed infrastructure will lose a huge percentage of their users.

Meanwhile corporations like Google and Facebook, in the name of combating 'fake news' and 'anti-social' views, are taking steps to downgrade or effectively eliminate views critical of the status quo. Google has changed its algorithms to downgrade or disappear content from many alternative websites. Facebook is filtering its newsfeeds to ensure that the 'news' being shared comes from 'reputable' sources. By reputable sources, they mean the corporate media.

What can we do? The articles in this issue help to explain the dimensions of the problem. They offer some tools, for example tools for protecting your privacy and securing your devices, and they make some suggestions, such as moving away from corporate platforms to the extent that you feel able to do so.

A couple of other suggestions:

- 1) Try to avoid sharing any news articles that appear in the mainstream media.
 - 2) Do share content that appears in the alternative media and on alternative websites (e.g. Connexions!) When we share content directly (whether in social media, by email, etc.) we give a boost to critical views and analyses, and help more people to find them and see them.
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June 10, 2018 – Massacres and Morality

As long as there have been states and armies, there have been massacres. In previous centuries, these were openly acknowledged for what they were: acts of terrorism against those who resisted their rulers or their conquerors, or those who seemed likely to resist in the future. Terrorism was understood by all to be what a state did to keep subjugated populations in line, at home or abroad.

In the modern era, however, rulers of the major colonial powers were confronted by working class struggles in their own countries, including struggles for democracy, at the same time as they were faced with the need to put down the resistance of colonized peoples against their colonizers.

Democracy, even in its limited parliamentary form, was seen as a terrible threat. The British ruling class never forgot that Parliament had tried and executed the king, Charles I, in 1649. The French never forgot that the Revolution had beheaded Louis XVI in 1793.

In this new and dangerous world, shaping public opinion became increasingly important for those in power. If the people were going to be allowed to vote, then they had to be made to believe in the legitimacy of the existing social system, and ideology and propaganda are more effective tools for doing this than naked force. In the context of colonialism, the public at home, and the officials and soldiers who imposed their rule on the colonies, needed to be told that what they were doing, no matter how brutal, was done in the interests of defending Western values and Western civilization. In the colonies themselves, it was desirable to persuade the elites, at least, that they too would benefit from colonial rule, which, after all, was bringing them the benefits of Western civilization.

The problem with propaganda, however, is that it is often starkly at odds with reality. When people don't buy into the lies they have been told, they can become dangerous.

And so, all too often, it seems that defending civilization requires massacres.

The model for modern massacres could well be the suppression of the Paris Commune in 1871, when some 15,000 people were slaughtered by the French army in the streets of Paris, causing the politician who ordered the massacre to proclaim "The victory of order, justice, and civilization is at last won!"

The important work of maintaining order, justice, and civilization was also high in the minds of the British authorities in India on that day in April 1919 when residents of Amritsar gathered in the Jallianwalla Bagh, a public garden (park) surrounded by walls, for a meeting to protest recent acts of repression by the British colonial authorities. The British military commander, Col. Reginald Dyer, brought his troops to the Jallianwalla Bagh, had them seal off all the entrances, and then ordered them to fire into the crowd. Shooting continued for ten minutes, until soldiers had run out of ammunition. When they were done, about 1,500 people lay dead, and many more were wounded. Dyer stated later that his intention had been to strike terror into the population to teach them not to resist British rule. In fact, it had the opposite effect: the massacre became an important catalyst of the Indian independence movement.

South Africa's apartheid state confronted a similar gathering in Sharpeville in 1960, when residents defying the law requiring them to carry passbooks at all times came to the local police station, without their passbooks, in an act of civil disobedience, to offer themselves up for arrest. The police responded by firing into the crowd, killing 69 people, 10 of them children, and injuring 180 others. Sharpeville marked a turning point in South Africa's history: it galvanized the anti-apartheid movement within the country and internationally. The date of the massacre, March 21, is now commemorated as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

The record of massacres by the defenders of order, justice, and civilization is endless, and many of them have entered our collective memories: Nanjing in 1937, May Lai in 1968, Soweto in 1976, Tiananmen Square in 1989....

And Gaza.

The horror that is Gaza began in 1948-9, when a quarter of a million Palestinians fled, or were driven from their villages by the forces of the newly formed Israeli state. The villages they left behind were quickly levelled and taken over by Jewish settlers. In Gaza, the pain of expulsion was if anything more severe, because many of the refugees in the camps could actually see their land across the dividing line, and watch as the settlers took it over.

Israel has kept Gaza under a state of siege since 2006. It has cut off, or placed severe restrictions on, fuel, medicine, food, building materials and other essential supplies, including equipment needed to keep water and sewage systems working. Gaza is essentially a giant prison, a ghetto, one of the most densely populated places on earth. The United Nations has forecast that the infrastructure to keep people alive is facing complete collapse by 2020.

Israeli leaders have repeatedly said that they want to make conditions so bad that the people will be forced to leave. The cruelty and cynicism of this collective punishment (illegal under international law, for what that is worth) is all the more apparent when one considers the simple fact that the people in Gaza cannot leave. *There is nowhere for them to go.*

Except for this: there is somewhere for them to go – the lands they were driven from. And in fact international law states unequivocally that refugees must have the right to return to their place of origin. The problem is that the states which form the so-called “international community” have no intention of requiring Israel to comply with international law.

But this reality -- the fact that increasingly desperate people are living in refugee camps that are in many cases within walking distance of the land they were driven from – does a great deal to explain the extraordinary courage with which the unarmed Palestinians of Gaza have faced the heavily armed Israeli soldiers who are shooting at them from raised positions several hundred yards away behind a massive fence. Much of the world seems to have missed the significance, but it is essential to remember that the actions they have been taking are called “The Great March of Return.” The Palestinians are saying that they will never give up their right to return to their lands.

The massacres the world has been witnessing are Israel’s ruthless response to the people it has victimized. More than 120 Palestinians dead, more than 12,000 wounded. No deaths or injuries among the Israeli snipers who have been doing the killing. And still Israel’s propaganda – parroted by much of the ‘mainstream’ media in the West – tells us that Israel is acting in self-defense.

Nor is there any question that perhaps some of the deaths and injuries were unintended. The Israeli Defence Force (IDF) itself told us that “*Nothing was carried out uncontrolled; everything was accurate and measured, and we know where every bullet landed.*” This is no idle boast. Israel has developed the world’s most advanced systems for surveillance, targeting, and killing. They do know exactly where every bullet lands. Nothing they do is unintentional. This was demonstrated again quite clearly on the day, May 19, when the Canadian doctor, Tarek Loubani, was shot by an IDF sniper. As Loubani points out, during the previous six weeks, not a single medic – all of whom wear

uniforms clearly identifying them as medics, and who stand apart from the main protests – was shot. Then, on May 14, on one day, the IDF shot 19 medics. Can anyone doubt that this was intentional, that “*Nothing was carried out uncontrolled; everything was accurate and measured, and we know where every bullet landed?*”

Another thing the IDF has told us is that some of the Palestinian protesters have been throwing stones in the direction of the fence. People several hundred meters away, throwing stones!

Once upon a time, so the story goes, another brave individual in this land confronted a powerful hostile army with nothing but stones in his hand. He too faced daunting odds, but, in the end, it was David who prevailed against Goliath and his army.

But of course, that was different, because David was an Israelite, and therefore a hero, whereas Palestinians are -- Palestinians, and therefore not fully human, let alone heroes.

The extreme and widespread racist prejudice against Palestinians is at the root of much of the indifference or hostility that Palestinians and their allies have to fight against in their efforts to win sympathy and support for their cause. People who claim to have the highest moral principles immediately forget those moral principles when Palestinians are involved.

Indeed, one of the easiest ways to test whether so-called moral principles are really moral principles is to replace the word ‘Palestinian’ with ‘Jew’ in describing a situation or event. Suppose, for example, that 1.75 million Jews were imprisoned in a ghetto for decades under ever-worsening conditions. Suppose that the occupying power that was imprisoning them systematically destroyed their homes, denied them access to clean water and medicines, and shot them down whenever they gathered to protest. Can we imagine the ‘world community’ standing by and supporting the occupier?

In fact, there is a historical parallel to the situation in Gaza. In 1943, the residents of the Warsaw Ghetto rose up against the occupying power, using not merely stones, but guns and grenades. Do we condemn them for resorting to violence under the circumstances they found themselves in? Or do we admire their courage?

And how do we judge the soldiers who put down that uprising, and the commanders who gave them their orders? What distinguishes those soldiers, morally speaking, from the IDF snipers who shoot unarmed protestors, and then are caught on camera cheering their kills? And how do we judge the civilian population of Israel, many of whom openly support and cheer their soldiers as they go about their work of killing Palestinians? And what can we say about the political leaders of other countries, Canada say, who sit down and smile and make deals with officials of the Israeli government at the very moment that the killing is going on?

Consider these questions. In this issue of *Other Voices*, we have tried to bring you some voices – and pictures – of Palestinians, in Gaza especially. Consider their courage, listen to their voices, and consider what you can do to help them.

October 27, 2019 – What Next?

Millions of us, in many different countries, came out in late September to demand action on the climate crisis. Around the world, in diverse ways, we are working to keep up the pressure. Time is short, and the tasks are huge.

In the midst of our activism and organizing, we need to keep asking ourselves some important questions: What are our goals? And what should we do to reach our goals?

The high of massive demonstrations is often followed by a slump of discouragement, when we realize that nothing fundamental seems to have changed as a result of our protests.

It may be worth remembering the history of other mass protests. In early 2003, a huge anti-war movement arose in reaction to the planned American invasion of Iraq. Some 36 million people came out in cities around the world to protest against the threat of this illegal war, launched on the basis of transparently false pretexts. Despite the massive protests, the war started, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis died, and the fallout continues to this day. The anti-war movement continued for some time longer, and then virtually disappeared, even though the threat of war has been increasing year by year, with the United States started pulling out of international arms control treaties and engaging in dangerous military provocations on the borders of Russia, China, and Iran.

The hard truth is that while mass protests can be energizing while they happen, their momentum can be difficult to sustain unless we are able to convert them into ongoing organizing.

To keep moving forward, we have to find ways of working together to create a counter-power to challenge capitalist system, including the political structures and institutions that sustain it. To put it another way, we have to understand where the real power lies, and we have to have strategies for challenging that power with the power of vast numbers of people, organizing together. We also have to have a clear idea of what our goals are – not only specific goals related to carbon in the atmosphere, but goals of worldwide system change.

This newsletter includes a number of articles, books, and other resources which suggest approaches to, and answers to, some of those questions.

We hope you find them useful and thought-provoking.

A note from the editor

Other Voices is back after a hiatus of more than a year. I regret the break in publication. I was dealing with the sorrow of my partner Miriam's illness and death, and putting out a newsletter was a challenge I wasn't up to. *Connexions* is a small volunteer-based organization, and no one else was available to step into the gap.

Even without the newsletter, it has been a busy time for *Connexions*. We moved to a new office in the spring. This entailed not only a physical move, but some significant ongoing changes to our computer servers. We also took the opportunity to make some improvements to the search engine on the *Connexions.org* website. The website keeps growing: there are more than a quarter of a million files on the *Connexions* server, so good indexes and search tools are crucial.

We're about to undertake phase two of our moving adventures: the *Connexions Archive*, a collection of many many thousands of periodicals, books, documents and other odds

and ends, is about to move out of the storage locker where most of it has been residing, into a proper space with shelves, filing cabinets, and tables and chairs. This is a separate space from our actual office, but the two locations are within easy walking distance, so we think it will work well for us.

We are also in the midst of a project funded by Library and Archives Canada's Documentary Heritage Communities Program, which is enabling us to digitize, catalogue, and describe a substantial part of our collection, as well as to do some oral history interviews. These materials will go online soon, and add a wealth of new materials to the Connexions.org web site.

Ulli Diemer

December 15, 2019 – Faith, Hope and Persistence

When we look at what is happening in our world, it can be difficult to believe that there are grounds for hope, let alone faith. And yet we – we humans – continue to live and act in ways that testify to our hopes, and to our faith in the possibility of a better future. We plant gardens and trees, we have children, and we resist injustice and act to protect the planet we share.

Hope is something quite different from optimism. Optimism – and pessimism – assess the likelihood of something happening. But being optimistic or pessimistic is irrelevant to standing up for justice and defending the earth. For most of us at least, our moral principles aren't based on a calculation of the odds. And in fact most acts of resistance, and most movements for justice, arise in the face of what are often overwhelming odds. They are the powerless challenging those with entrenched power. It is only by *acting* that people who feel powerless come to feel that they do have power. And when we act, that which seemed impossible to achieve starts to *become* possible, because enough people *believe* it is possible and are working together to make it so.

Hope is about possibility, not certainty. Even when we know that we are rowing against the tide, as we often are, we know that the future is not preordained. We know the future is shaped by human actions, and so we act. And we hope that our actions will help to steer the future in the direction we want to go in.

When we act collectively, we are also expressing our faith in other people, and in ourselves. Not blind faith – we know our own contradictions and faults, and we know all too well the immorality and cruelty that humans, or at least some humans, are capable of. But we also know, from our own life experience, that part of the common heritage of humanity are impulses to create community, to share, to love one another, to treat others as we ourselves would wish to be treated. And the fact that these capacities exist is a basis for faith in people, including ourselves, and in our ability to change and to rise to our potential to be who we are capable of being. By working to change the world, we change ourselves.

One of the most moving and inspiring human capacities, and one that comes out so strongly when we act together to fight for justice, is our persistence, even in the face of overwhelming odds. This issue of *Other Voices* shares a number of such stories. In Oaxaca, a multi-ethnic network of towns fights a tenacious ongoing battle to protect their water against corporate takeovers. Mineworkers in South Africa spend nine days underground, on strike, until mine owners agree to act on sexual harassment in the mine. In Nashville, when Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents show up to arrest an immigrant father and son sitting in a van in their own driveway, neighbours spontaneously come out, spread the word to others, and surround the van to prevent the arrest, remaining on the scene until the ICE agents finally leave. Shadidul Alam emerges from jail, having been imprisoned for criticising the government, and defiantly continues his work. Suzanne Berliner Weiss, a Jewish child born in Nazi-occupied France, loses her parents, is cared for by loving caring strangers, and emerges as a adult who devotes her life to working with others for social justice.

When people are moved to act, when they have faith in the people who are acting with them, and when they have hope in at least the possibility of success, then they – we – can be astonishingly persistent. And so we carry on.

February 18, 2020 – Taking a Stand

Psychologists call it cognitive dissonance. George Orwell called it double-think. Some of us might call it organized hypocrisy.

Call it what you will, it surrounds us. The government proclaims its commitment to ‘reconciliation’ with indigenous people, and says that its relationship with them is its most important relationship. At the same time the RCMP, following an order by a colonial court, invades unceded indigenous land and arrests people for occupying their own land. Governments mouth platitudes about the importance they place on dealing with the climate emergency while at the same time they build new pipelines and approve massive new tarsands projects. The biggest polluter on the planet – the U.S. military – meanwhile receives constant increases in its budget, even while it pursues demented schemes to take us to the edge of war, mostly recently by deploying a new generation of “low-yield” thermonuclear weapons on submarines. The theory, presumably, is that if the U.S. drops a few “low-yield” nuclear bombs on Russia or China, the Russian and Chinese won’t mind too much, and won’t retaliate.

All this is business as usual. Fortunately many people across the country, and around the world, are saying no to business as usual. They are taking a stand and disrupting business as usual.

In this issue of *Other Voices*, we spotlight the actions of people who are taking a stand and, in many different ways, are insisting on change.

March 19, 2020 - Morality in an Amoral World

A crisis is a mirror.

It shows us – if we have the courage to see – who we are as individuals and as a society. The self-congratulatory poses of governments, politicians, and state institutions are confronted with the harsh test of reality. Each of us – as individuals, friends, families, neighbours, communities – face new and sometimes difficult challenges.

The novel coronavirus COVID-19 is such a crisis. Governments? Some are well-prepared, with solid public health systems and free health care for all. Meanwhile, in the US, in mid-February, two weeks *after* the World Health Organization declared the novel coronavirus outbreak a public health emergency of international concern, the Trump administration pushed ahead with major funding cuts to U.S. public health programs, including a \$25 million cut to Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response, and \$85 million in cuts to the Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases program. In Ontario, when COVID-19 struck, public health authorities were facing the looming 27% cut to public health spending announced by the Ford government in its budget. (Belatedly, Ontario has just declared a state of emergency and put those cuts on hold – for now.)

In the confusing rush of events that mark a crisis, it is easy to be so focused on what is happening that we forget to ask why. Yet it is when we ask why that we confront the ethical and moral questions that illuminate who we are and what kind of society we live in.

Why, for example, are pharmaceutical companies *competing* to produce a vaccine for COVID-19? Why, instead of keeping their work secret, aren't scientists around the world *collaborating*, sharing their research, and making the results freely available? Why isn't this question even being asked in public discourse? It seems that we are supposed to take it for granted that, above everything else, the goal of scientific work should be to make a profit. U.S. government officials have already stated that an eventual COVID-19 vaccine may not be available to everyone in the U.S., let alone in poorer countries, because it may be 'too expensive.'

We've moved backwards.

The worst epidemics in Canada and the U.S. in the last 100 years were the recurrent polio epidemics. In Canada, an estimated 11,000 people were left paralyzed by polio just between 1949 and 1954. In 1954 alone, there were 9,000 cases including nearly 500 deaths. In the U.S., in 1952, there were 58,000 cases of polio, resulting in 3,135 deaths and 21,269 cases of paralysis. The polio nightmare started coming to an end when Jonas Salk developed the first successful polio vaccine in 1955. The patent? None. Salk refused to patent his discovery: he wanted it to be freely available to everyone.

Salk himself was following in the footsteps of Fredrick Banting, Charles Best, and James Colip, the discoverers of insulin. They did patent their discovery – and then sold the patent to the University of Toronto, for \$1. They said they didn't want to profit from a discovery for the common good.

Salk's and Banting's attitude would be unthinkable now. What capitalism has succeeded in doing, it seems, is to make it acceptable for corporations to engage in behaviour, on a large scale, which most of us, as individuals, would refrain from as a matter of common decency.

And indeed, as individuals, as friends, as a community, people continue to support and help each other in times of trouble. Informal networks of mutual support spring up, as they nearly always do in a crisis. Beyond the headlines about COVID-19 emergency

measures, closures, and social distancing, there are countless stories about people reaching out and helping those who need help.

Yet capitalism tells us, endlessly, that selfishness is good and inevitable. In the place of morality, it proclaims an amoral vision in which nothing matters except making as much money as possible. Greed is good. Exploiting others, destroying the planet, condemning people to a life of poverty and suffering, it's all good, as long as money can be made. Capitalism allows no moral qualms.

While there are some – too many, it's true – who have internalized this attitude, most of us do not act this way in our own lives. Society could not exist if we did, because we need each other. As social beings, we survive and thrive to the extent that we can form and count on relationships that are built on mutual support, co-operation, and trust.

The moral principle that has come to be known as the Golden Rule embodies this truth. Versions of what we call the Golden Rule emerged in many different religions, as the Golden Rule poster below illustrates. The fact that it is part of so many different traditions tells us that it pre-dates those traditions: it is embedded in human nature itself.

If we, or at least most of us, did not recognize the fact that each of us is worthy of respect and deserving of having our needs met, we could not survive as a social species. At the same time, if treating others as we ourselves would wish to be treated were always perfectly natural and automatic, then we wouldn't *need* a Golden Rule. We don't have a rule that tells us to breathe. We just do it.

One of the things that the existence of the Golden Rule tells us, then, is that we humans are imperfect and full of contradictions. Even when we know what we should do, we sometimes fall short, and need to be reminded or held to account. That, no doubt, is why discussions of the Golden Rule so frequently stress compassion, forgiveness, and second chances. It recognizes that there are times when we need to forgive, and times when we need to be forgiven.

At the same time, no rule, no matter how profound, is a substitute for thinking critically about real-life situations. For example, few of us would advise a woman in an abusive relationship to return to her violent partner and give him a second – third – fourth – fifth chance. There are times when anger is a healthier response than turning the other cheek.

There are occasions, in fact, when, confronted with the life's complexities, we might also want to keep in mind George Bernard Shaw's contrarian dictum: "The golden rule is that there are no golden rules."

Nor does the Golden Rule, by itself, guide us in dealing with those who have power over us, especially when that power is wielded to oppress. To deal with them, we need to draw on another part of our human nature: our impulse to come together and support each other to fight for justice. As Cornell West has said, "Justice is what love looks like in public."

The coronavirus outbreak is a crisis that challenges us to look beyond our own immediate concerns and ask ourselves what kind of world we want to live in. We don't have much time: climate change will make this virus seem like a picnic.

But we do have *some* time right now, because many of us have had our lives put on hold. Let's try to use that time as constructively as we can.

There are things we can do to help, like donating money, even while we are self-isolating. There are people who are facing this virus – and other concurrent public health disasters, like malaria, *which kills 3,000 children every day* – under infinitely worse conditions than we are. Think of Yemen, Gaza, Congo. Venezuela and Iran are trying to cope with

their outbreaks even while the United States is *tightening* sanctions on medical and humanitarian supplies.

They need our active solidarity.

One step you can take today is to donate to Tarek Loubani's GLIA Project, which is printing 3D masks and stethoscopes for Palestine and other under-served communities whose capacities for dealing with a health crisis are much worse than ours. You can donate to them [here](#) [

<https://www.facebook.com/donate/217762216031698/822088838304872/>]

Please help. And stay well!

May 14, 2020: Thinking Clearly in a Time of Crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted our world. Many of us feel some degree of disorientation and uncertainty about when and how we will return to some kind of 'normal' and what that new normal will look like. Important choices lie ahead, so it is vital that we think clearly, ask questions, discuss with others, and make our voices heard.

One question is the future course of this pandemic, and how we as a society will live with it. There is little chance that the COVID-19 virus will disappear in the near future. It is highly contagious, and it exists in many different countries around the world, meaning that it almost certainly will continue to spread from one place to another. There are no islands of refuge in a globalized world. So one way or another we have to live with it – and with other pandemics that almost certainly lie in our future.

Other questions concern what we can do to lessen to reduce the circumstances which breed these novel viruses. Industrial agriculture, and livestock operations in particular, are driving the emergence of new and extremely dangerous diseases. The global supply chain spreads them very effectively. The need to change the fundamentals of our economic system is urgent.

Meanwhile our ability to handle outbreaks has been significantly eroded by austerity and cutbacks to health care systems and public health preparedness. This cannot be allowed to continue.

As an article in this issue of *Other Voices* points out, sanctions imposed by the United States and its obedient allies, indefensible and vicious to begin with, are now tantamount to genocide, as the U.S. blocks imports of vital medical supplies to countries like Iran and Venezuela.

One lesson of this pandemic is that governments, when they decide the need is urgent, can find vast sums of money to spend on critical priorities. The opportunity, and the resources, exist to bring about fundamental change. We need to find the will to do it, and the political power to make it happen.

The articles in this issue of *Other Voices* probe beneath the surface of the pandemic to look at underlying causes and possible directions for the future. Read on....

February 14, 2021: Beyond the Walls

Here we are. It's the middle of February, and we're still in the midst lockdowns and alarms, missing our normal lives. We could probably all use some sunshine and some cheering up, and surely Other Voices is up to the challenge of providing that?

Absolutely. Sunshine and warmth? You'll find four items about Gaza and Palestine in this issue. Gaza? Yes, Gaza. Gaza has sunshine, as well as its share of beauty, humour, and giggling children playing amidst the rubble. As Zainab Wael Bahseer writes in "Gaza City, an unusual beauty", by carrying on with eyes and ears open, "we teach life." Her article appears on "We are not Numbers," the featured website in this issue, created for Palestinian youth to tell their stories to the world.

In "Postcard from a Liberated Gaza" Hadeel Assali joins other writers and activists in imagining a post-pandemic, post-occupation Gaza where people drink coffee by the sea and share stories.

Sameer Qumsiyeh, meanwhile, sets out from Palestine, travels to places (not many) which will accept a Palestinian passport, copes with all the additional restrictions of a pandemic, and makes a film, "Walled Citizen." His goal in making the film, Qumsiyeh says, was to create "a picture of how things can be if you can transcend walls and barriers."

From Palestine, we continue on to Kashmir, a territory blessed with many apple trees, and oppressed by a military regime which, like its counterpart in occupied Palestine, has been destroying trees by the thousands as part of a strategy of making it impossible for indigenous people to live. Largely cut off from the outside world, Kashmiris nevertheless also continue to live, and to teach life, in the land they are rooted in.

In India itself, people must try to find a way to keep living in the face of poverty and a pandemic made more difficult by a government that is worse than useless. "Online classes, offline class divisions" tells the stories of students in the Ambujwadi slum in north Mumbai who are trying to manage online learning using borrowed and shared cell phones while continuing to work to help their families survive. Serving customers who come to your vegetable cart while simultaneously continuing to pay attention to what the teacher is saying is part of a normal day for these young people.

John Pilger takes us behind the walls of Belmarsh prison, where Julian Assange continues to be imprisoned even after a court rejected an American extradition request. Watching the trial, Pilger says, was like watching a Stalinist show trial. Although, Pilger points out, at least in a Stalinist show trial, the prisoners were able to stand and face the court directly. Assange was imprisoned behind a thick wall of glass, and could only communicate with his lawyers by crawling on his knees to a slit in the glass to pass out a note, on yellow sticky notepaper, which would then be passed along the length of the courtroom to where his lawyers were sitting. Pilger reminds us that Assange's "crime" is to have "performed an epic public service: revealing that which we have a right to know: the lies of our governments and the crimes they commit in our name."

Leonard Peltier remains locked up in the American prison where he has been held for more than 40 years, convicted of a crime he didn't commit. The International Leonard Peltier Defense Committee continues to work for his release. A film about his life: "Warrior: The Life of Leonard Peltier" is the featured film in this issue of Other Voices.

The featured book is Viktor Frankl's "Yes to Life: In Spite of Everything," written in 1946 not long after he was released from Auschwitz. "As long as we have breath, as long as we are still conscious," says Frankel, "we are each responsible for answering life's questions."

Life asks us to laugh, love, live, and struggle.

October 13, 2021: Light and darkness

The featured book in this issue of Other Voices is Diana Johnstone's memoir *Circle in the Darkness*. The title is inspired by Albert Einstein's observation that "as our circle of knowledge expands, so does the circumference of darkness surrounding it."

As Einstein, and Johnstone, remind us, the more we learn, the more we realize how little we know. Each question we answer opens the door to more questions, because there are always more questions than answers. We are called upon to attempt to answer at least a few of the questions that seem important to us, but we do well to keep in mind that our answers are tentative and incomplete, always subject to revision in the light of further investigation. It can be difficult to remain critical, and self-critical, but self-righteousness and absolute certainty, no matter how emotionally satisfying they may be, only do harm, to ourselves, and to those we interact with.

This issue of Other Voices offers some fragments of knowledge and insight, and it also raises questions.

David Rovics observes that, in his view, people on the left and on the right have a lot in common, such as opposition to the elites that are destroying the lives of so many around the world. Why, he asks, do they respond to the same problems in such different ways? Why do they direct so much of their anger against each other, rather than against those who rule?

Cedric Johnson raises a similar concern: blackwashing, that is, the corporate embrace of anti-racist rhetoric, which works to present those who produce and benefit from gross inequalities of wealth and power as allies. If we fall for this, says Johnson, we will inevitably be fighting each other for crumbs, while the rich and powerful get richer and more powerful.

Amory B. Lovins offers a fact-filled critique of the idea that 'clean' nuclear power can be a climate "solution." He shows that nuclear power is much less efficient than solar and wind power, and that investing in it inevitably comes at the expense of more investment in better solutions. In any case, the best solution, by far, as he points out, is using less energy, not producing more. He also makes the important point that new nuclear plants would not come into service until the late 2030s – far too late to make the changes that we have to make now.

In *The Day the World Ended*, Caitlin Johnstone asks us to think about the unthinkable: nuclear war.

In the aftermath, she writes, there will be "No one left to recognize the mistake, to grow as a result of that recognition, and to rise above it. No one left to realize how staggeringly insane it was to flirt with the end of the world for the sake of power, how arrogant it was to think that we could remain in perfect control of all those weapons for decades on end without something going wrong amid our reckless games of nuclear chicken."

So do it now: "Pursue a life of excellence and live each moment like it could be your last, because of course it could. And above all make sure you do everything in your power to raise awareness and oppose the insanity of the situation we now find ourselves in."

And on that cheerful note, Happy Thanksgiving!

November 13, 2021: Following the Science?

“Following the science“ has been the mantra of public officials from the very beginning of the pandemic. Their acknowledgement of the importance of science has been a refreshing change from the usual attitude of so many political leaders, who all too often regard science, and scientists, as an annoyance or a threat. Stephen Harper in particular carried on a vendetta against scientists who were guilty of the crime of doing research that revealed how his government’s policies were harming the environment. Under Harper, government scientists were muzzled, funding for inconvenient research was drastically curtailed, and research libraries were physically destroyed. Compared to what went on under the Harper regime, present-day politicians who proclaim respect for science and declare their commitment to following it, look good.

But what does “following the science” actually mean? When we as a society are faced with difficult policy choices, can science tell us what choices we should make? We should be sceptical of anyone who says that it can, because that isn’t actually what science does. It can certainly provide information we need to take into account when making choices and trade-offs, but choices don’t automatically follow from science.

Nor is it accurate to refer to “the science.” Science is a method for understanding the world. It involves asking fruitful questions, gathering information, and coming up with tentative answers and conclusions which are then subject to further examination and re-evaluation by other scientists. Often enough, it turns out that the initial question wasn’t even the right question. Even so, that can be a useful realization if it leads to formulating different questions. There are always more questions than answers; indeed, each answer inevitably raises a series of new questions. As Einstein said, “As our circle of knowledge expands, so does the circumference of darkness surrounding it.”

The very word ‘science’ can lead us astray, in part because its meaning has narrowed over time. The original broad meaning of the Latin *scientia* survives in the German word *Wissenschaft*, a term which refers to the systematic pursuit of knowledge, as well as the knowledge that results from that pursuit. *Wissenschaft* includes the study of history, literature, languages, and other realms which tend to be excluded from what English-speaking people think of as ‘science.’

The more inclusive idea of *Wissenschaft* can help to remind us that ‘science’ isn’t just something done by ‘scientists’ – it is an innately human activity.

We all engage in science, in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding, almost from the day we are born. As babies, we spend much of our waking time engaged in science: we observe, explore, experiment, and draw conclusions. When a baby puts a new toy, or its toes, into its mouth, it is doing science. It is only later in life that our natural curiosity and eagerness to learn are in danger of being repressed, sometimes by the very institutions which are charged with educating us.

Our earliest explorations are arguably closer to the ideal of science because we are investigating the world without an acquired framework of preconceptions, beliefs, social pressures, and ego. We are therefore freer to do what scientists are supposed to do: add to our knowledge, expanding or revising it in the light of new evidence, without allowing our biases and preferences to cloud our conclusions.

But scientists are human. We are never totally free of bias, especially when the topic is one that we are emotionally vested in. It lies in our human nature to become attached to our beliefs, whether we acquired those beliefs through the influence of religion, tradition, peer pressure, or scientific research. When new evidence gives rise to new theories, there will be some scientists who resist the new theories, question the evidence they are based on, and challenge the conclusions. Asked how long it takes new theories in paleontology

to become accepted, Stephen Jay Gould wryly commented that they became accepted once the people who defended the old theories retired or died.

In our time, science is also severely compromised by the way scientific research is funded. Many scientists now work for corporations with a substantial financial interest in supporting some kinds of research while starving research that asks the ‘wrong’ questions or threatens to arrive at inconvenient conclusions. Scientists working for tobacco companies and asbestos companies spent decades denying that the products their employers sold were harmful to human health. Their successors are busy throwing doubt on the conclusions of other scientists who question the safety of GMOs or pesticides or fracking. Universities are supposedly more independent, but they are ever more dependent on corporate funders who make it clear they won’t receive money if they employ scientists who engage in unwelcome research. Dissident scientists are less likely to receive funding, to have their contracts renewed, or to receive tenure.

Pharmaceutical companies have been guilty of some of the most serious violations of scientific principles and scientific ethics, including the suppression of unfavourable evidence and the promotion of drugs as the solution to virtually all health problems, even when non-pharmaceutical alternatives may be more appropriate. Conflict of interest is inherent in their business: the more drugs they sell, the more money they make. The development of vaccines in this pandemic illustrates the inherent corruption of having pharmaceutical produced by private corporations: rich countries get access to vaccines, poor countries are denied the vaccines because they can’t afford to pay the enormous price demanded by the companies.

The economic and social pressures affecting science have affected how science is seen by the public. Many people now see science not as an idealized disinterested pursuit of knowledge, but as an activity driven by hidden or overt agendas. This is unfair to most scientists, but for better or worse it is a symptom of attitudes that are surprisingly common. The anti-vaccine movement of recent years is an instance of widespread distrust of science and scientists, a distrust which in some cases blends into wild conspiracy theories.

In the current pandemic, this distrust has combined with distrust of those who proclaim the need to ‘follow the science’ – governments and the media. Trust in the mainstream media is at record lows. Faith in ‘democratic’ institutions has been declining for many years, as more and more people realize that governments habitually lie, about what they intend to do, what they are doing, and why they are doing it.

Media and governments now find themselves in the position of the boy who cried wolf: they have misled and lied so often that now many people don’t believe them even when they tell the truth.

They make things worse by professing certainty about things that are not certain. The scientific method requires a certain humility and scepticism. It requires admitting uncertainty, all the more so when dealing with an unprecedented rapidly-changing situation like a pandemic caused by a novel virus. Admitting that there is a degree of uncertainty, that actions represent a best guess, subject to revision as more evidence appears, is actually more likely to induce trust. Explaining the thinking about the tradeoffs involved in public health measures is more honest than pretending that there is no choice.

This is especially true for draconian measures like lockdowns, which have severe impacts that fall heavily on some people while others are barely affected, and which many people, including a significant number of scientists, think are useless or worse than useless. In the scientific community, criticism of lockdowns crystallized in the Great Barrington Declaration, signed by a large number of infectious disease epidemiologists, public health

scientists, and other scientists who expressed “grave concerns about the damaging physical and mental health impacts of the prevailing COVID-19 policies” and instead recommended an approach they called “Focused Protection” to protect the elderly and other vulnerable populations. A commitment to science would have encouraged an open process of examining the evidence and analysis underlying the Great Barrington Declaration, as well as the evidence being accumulated by epidemiologists who have been comparing jurisdictions implementing lockdowns with those that have eschewed them. (The United States has presented a natural experiment, in that typically Democrat-governed states have had lockdowns, while Republican-governed states haven’t, making it possible to compare outcomes in states with similar demographic characteristics.)

This kind of scientific work is being done behind the scenes, but the media overwhelmingly fail to report anything that challenges the supposed scientific consensus.

Beyond that, where ordinary people are dissenting from public health decisions, the approach of the media is typically sensationalistic reporting on fringe groups, while ignoring the rest. Increasingly the ‘debate,’ on all sides, and especially on social media, has degenerated into demonization of those who disagree.

This does not reflect well on our society. Science requires openness. Solving social problems requires civility, tolerance, and a willingness to try to understand where those who have different views are coming from. We need to do better.

Other Voices

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