
COMMON SENSE II

Capitalizing on the familiarity and influence of Thomas Paine’s “Common Sense” pamphlets that provided American colonists with exposure to the conversation of great thinkers in the pre-Revolutionary period, this paper assumes the name COMMON SENSE II. Similarly, today’s series of pamphlets strives to give a direct response to great political events and ideas of our time.

January 2022

Healing Issue

Vol. 17 Issue 1

What Is Socialism, Really?

By Stephen Fuller

“You guys have been trying to convince me that I am BERNIE SANDERS. I’m not. I like him, but I’m not Bernie Sanders. I’m not a socialist. I’m a mainstream Democrat, and I have been.”

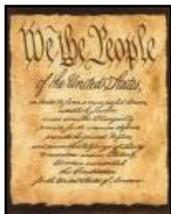


<http://theberreport.com/wp->

That is a quotation from President Biden during his nearly two hour press conference. Mainstream Democrat, what does that mean? FDR and LBJ, and JFK, were they liberals or progressives or Neo-liberal or mainstream Democrats? I have questioned where I fit into the American political spectrum, and lately I’ve been thinking I have socialistic tendencies. Socialism as an economic system was clearly a disaster as exhibited by the planned economy of the former USSR; then there is the disaster of the People’s Republic of China under Mao Zedong that as with the USSR—both under Communism—morphed into authoritarian dictatorships.

As I see it, socialism occurs when a group of people come together to accomplish some common goal. Under that definition, I am a socialist. So in my mind public schools, the police, fire departments, churches, and unions are all socialist activities, since they are examples of groups of people coming together to accomplish common goals.

The Preamble to the U. S. Constitution says, “We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense [*Sic.*], promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”



<http://www.ccarta.ie/wp-content/>

Is that a socialist statement? We, the people, are establishing a common goal, a government of the people by the people for the people’s common good. That surely sounds like socialism to me.

Still, I understand why FDR denied he was a socialist, since the popular definition of socialism in his day was government ownership of the means of production, ownership of all capital—what generally is referred to as communism. That didn’t work in the USSR, in China, in North Viet Nam, and it certainly won’t work here either.

Republicans will continue to label Democrats as socialists as long as the public defines socialism as government ownership of all capital. What we need to do is change the public’s understanding of socialism and the public good that comes from people joining together to accomplish some common goal. Public schools, police, and fire departments are all examples of society at the local level doing the common good. Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and the military are examples of we, the people, coming together to accomplish common goals.

How do we get President Biden and his generation to accept the label? I don’t think that will be possible; long held beliefs are next to impossible to change. Still, the goal is to present the good that socialism has accomplished over the years, even as its existence has been denied.

In the end, I believe in capitalism. Capitalism as an economic system has given the people of the United States a lifestyle that most of the rest of the world lusts for. Still, pure capitalism leaves a lot of people behind, and that is where socialism steps in to take care of those who made bad decisions, those who have had the bad luck of losing a job that capitalism eliminated, and those who have been impoverished by the profit-driven healthcare system, for example. To me, the best system is a hybrid: a capital driven system to produce general wealth with socialism taking care of all of “we the people” and promoting the general welfare.



<https://10.wp.com/www.middleeastmonitor.com/wp>

Let's All "Latch onto the Affirmative!"

By Vicki Andrews

In our world today, it's easy to slip into a pessimistic frame of mind. It's often hard to keep a positive viewpoint, to believe things are going well and people are behaving as they should. There are so many problems in the world, so much division in our country that it's easy to feel that things are hopeless, that we're not going to be able to come together or work together or care about each other. Most of us socialize primarily with members of our own political party. If we don't, we are generally careful about getting into political discussions. And yet...I've just moved into a new apartment building and am meeting lots of new people. Everyone has been friendly and kind. I don't know who is a Democrat or who is a Republican. I don't know what religion people are or if they are part of any specific group. It doesn't really matter to me or to any of them, as far as I can see. Of course, that may change as we get to know each other better—and especially as the election season gets closer.

My two little dogs were able to move in with me. I wouldn't have come without them, of course.



Before we moved, I was wondering how they would adjust. The younger one, 13 year-old JoJo, has been cautious and suspicious of strangers for the three years he's lived with me. He's even been known to snap at strangers if they try to pet

him. In the week that we've lived here, his personality has turned around. He is loving everyone and is only disappointed if they don't stop to pet him. This leads to everyone's loving him back and stopping to visit and pet him. The older dog Muggles is JoJo's father and is 16 years old. He is not interested in making friends, getting petted, or socializing. He prefers to stay in the apartment, sleep as much as possible, and eat twice a day (with snacks whenever possible). When he needs

to go out for a walk, he will but doesn't want to loiter or waste his time with people. He just wants to get home and crawl back into his warm bed for more naptime. I think that's very appropriate for a dog his age, a dog who would be in his late 80's in people years. He's just old and tired out! Interestingly enough, each of the three of us is adjusting to our new home in different but compatible ways.

It seems to me that we are worrying too much about what divides us, especially when it comes to politics. Our friends are most often members of same political party and share similar views, so it's fairly easy to get along. If we happen to have family members who are of a different political persuasion, family get-togethers can be slightly uncomfortable and can be tense and unpleasant. Maybe we need to focus less on our divisions and try to build on what we have in common.

There is an old song that goes:

You've got to latch onto the affirmative
Eliminate the negative
Latch onto the affirmative
Don't mess with Mr. In Between.

You've got to spread joy up to the maximum
Bring blues down to the minimum
Have faith or pandemonium's
Liable to walk upon the scene.

To illustrate that last remark
Take Jonah and the Whale
Noah and the Ark.
What did they do,
Just when everything looked so dark?

They said—
"Man, we'd better latch onto the affirmative
Eliminate the negative
Latch onto the affirmative
Don't miss with Mr. In Between.

So come on everybody, let's latch onto the affirmative and hold on! Things will get better!!! Even JoJo has figured that out.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS: GET INVOLVED AND GET IT DONE!

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date /Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
DFL Headquarters Open (326-6296)	Thursdays 2:00-5:00	DFL Headquarters
DFL Central Committee Meets	4th Monday 6:30	via Zoom
DFL Social Club & Lunch	1st Wednesday Noon	DFL Headquarters
DFL Pot Luck (Open to the Public)	3rd Wednesday 5:30	DFL Headquarters
Deadline for <i>Common Sense II</i>	February 11, 2022	conray@arvig.net

Rule of Law and National Healing

By Michaela Raymond

Almost everyone agrees that this country is terribly divided. Most of us are tired of that division and are ready to move on. But how? Let's look to history.

After WWI, President Wilson and many economists recognized the need for a just peace that did not thoroughly punish the losers. Unfortunately, some wanted to teach the losers a lesson by making them pay, literally. Instead of reconstructing the world's economies, Germany's production went to the Allies, stifling the West's growth and impoverishing theirs. The result—beyond bitterness—was the Great Depression and the rise of Hitler and WWII.

Lincoln's assassination prevented a fairer peace in this country after the Civil War, and the brokered election of 1876 resulted in Hayes becoming President by promising Tilden he'd remove federal troops from the South which ended Reconstruction. We have never completely come to terms with the Civil War.

In both of these situations, people forgot that to truly move on, the losers must be allowed some way to save some face. Grace over retribution promotes a longer and truer reconciliation. The "bad guys" must be held to account, but they also must be allowed some dignity. Otherwise their anger will seethe and grow.

Post-apartheid South Africa took that concept into account. After WWII, President Truman recognized South Africa's system of minority (white) rule of apartheid because it was strongly anti-Communist. Apartheid was a strict segregationist system of minority rule that granted whites political, economic, and social superiority over Indians and "coloureds" with blacks on the bottom of the heap. When apartheid ended in the early 90's, the country went from white minority rule to black majority rule. Whites understandably were concerned that they were vulnerable to black retribution. To facilitate a smooth transition to a new political and social order, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established. Victims could testify to their experiences and seek retribution. Perpetrators could

also testify to their complicity and seek amnesty. Although it was not a perfect system, it did allow people to be heard and to have their situations recognized and addressed. Punishments still occurred, and victims were not made totally whole, but it was a start to putting bygones behind them and address a fairer future.

At this point in time, we in this country have a chance to learn from history or continue to let the crimes of the past eat at our national psyche. We have not gotten over the Civil War because we didn't have a reckoning that allowed us all to move forward with dignity. We must do better this time, as we move beyond this *de facto* civil war we've been engaged in for the past six plus years to a reunified country in which we all can proudly claim to be American.

We are in a time that may quash all civil rights gains in this country unless a complete documentation of Constitutional crimes is exposed for the American public to see, so they thoroughly understand what has happened and what that means for our system of government. All conspirators must face justice. That way they know they didn't get away with anything and the rest of us can feel things begin to heal.

My opinion, from watching the past five years of abuses by elected individuals and their henchpersons, is that Donald Trump and some of his family used the Presidency as a "leverage tool" to profit from the Presidency. Those who bought into the insanity and were duped and would like to come back to the fold should have that opportunity once they have faced any crimes they may have committed.

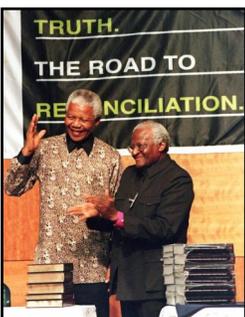
Again in my opinion, the facts will reveal that Donald Trump, along with his defenders and some family members, is and should be found guilty of high crimes. In order for true believers who were duped to accept that hard factual conclusion and for true justice, Trump should present an insanity



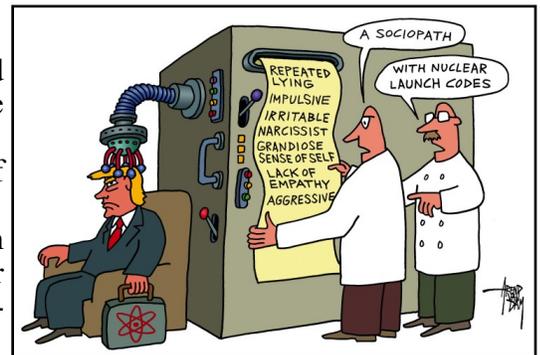
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defense, a defense that he is mentally ill. I am not a psychologist, but I truly believe that he is suffering from mental illness; a finding of such would then set the stage for a reconciliation that we all could live with. Here I'm just speaking about his crimes against the government, not any financial crimes he may have committed before, during, and after his term in office. Those who abetted his financial and other schemes should be treated as the common criminals they are. After all, they purport to be functioning adults who nonetheless followed Trump like a puppy following the person with a food dish.

Many of Trump's supporters and apologists might



<https://wagingnonviolence.org/wp-content/>

accept a finding of insanity, which could provide a national reconciliation. If, on the other hand, Trump goes to prison for all of his criminal behavior, it may set our country up for a long, long civil rebellion by a variety of extremists and repeated retribution—the clarion call for “Lock ‘em up!”—with each election of the other party.

Let the healing begin.

The Failed Experiment

By Bob Passi

At the end of the 18th Century, the newborn United States of America was often hailed as the modern incarnation of democracy, which had rarely been tried on a national level since its last incarnation in classical Greece. We had a Constitution that held democracy in high esteem, even though its practical applications were somewhat lacking at times. The ideas seemed to continue intact—sometimes in a limbo of pressures from economic elites and at other times making some significant strides forward toward those ideals. Examples of such times were Lincoln and the Civil War, FDR and the New Deal, and the JFK years. All of these ended with the death of the President, two by assassination. Although the Kennedy initiatives were continued early in the LBJ administration, much was undone by the end of his Presidency. Also, during those years, two other leaders who championed democracy were assassinated: Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy.

Earlier, the economic elite quickly regained power after the Lincoln assassination, undoing the de-

mocratizing plans Lincoln had espoused. Later, during FDR's administration, that economic elite watched in horror as the New Deal began to transfer power from those with traditional power and to give ordinary Americans a real voice in the governance of the nation. During the New Deal, the economic elite were vehemently opposed to where FDR was taking the nation and had been marshaling their forces to regain their power throughout World War II and certainly after. In addition, in the anti-Communist movement of Joseph McCarthy, they found a new cudgel to use against any socially active, pro-democracy groups and labor unions, labelling them as Communists or fellow travelers. This strategy was also used to attack the Democratic Party and weaken its control.

After World War II, America emerged as not only the dominant democracy, but also as the dominant economy as well as the dominant military power of the planet, although the power of the Red Army was quite significant in Europe.

The American economic elite quickly focused on the dominance of the American economy and of the American military but not so much on democracy. The Cold War became a perfect vehicle for the economic elite to forge back into power by flexing their economic power to build the military forces needed to face “the Russian threat.” Somehow the ideals of democracy were beginning to get lost in the process, although they were given great lip service to justify nearly every economic move. The fear of Russia also allowed the CIA and an entire clandestine element to develop and grow.



<https://www.unwelcomeguests.net/images/thumb/2/2a/556.jpg/300px-556.jpg>

Eventually, democracy became conflated with capitalism, under the pretense that there was no way to have a stable democracy except by basing it on capitalism as its economic system. This was a perfect vehicle to use to reject socialism as an economic system, even though socialism is also based on democracy as its system of governance. Europe has had successful social democracies after the war, but they have been seen as anathema in the US, since they seemed to challenge the idea that democracy could only thrive under capitalism.

That shift to a controlling economic elite was supported during the Eisenhower Administration, but the Kennedy Administration began to signal a potential shift back to a more democratizing focus.

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The Kennedy assassination allowed a shift back to the control of an economic elite in the Viet Nam years. By this time, there was a great upwelling of democratizing protests in the nation, culminating in the 1968 election of Richard Nixon.

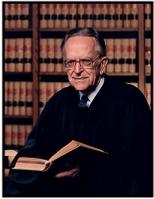
Then the real onslaught on those ideals of democracy began to take center stage, beginning with Richard Nixon and his “law and order” campaign, moving the nation in a more authoritarian direction.

Business was ready to extend its power into the political arena, and the Powell Memorandum to the National Chamber of Commerce was a call to arms for them. It stated pretty clearly that if business did not get very directly involved with politics, democracy might break out and squelch their power. Incidentally, Nixon later appointed Lewis F. Powell to the Supreme Court.

From then on, the switch to a nation focused on economic ends first and democracy as an afterthought began to become dominant. Influence by special interest groups from corporations, the military, healthcare, insurance, and financial sectors became the name of the game. Meanwhile, unions were eviscerated, losing almost all of their power. Workers became pawns in the economic wars, and ordinary citizens were nearly forgotten.

Since then, the slide down the slippery slope toward the authoritarian leadership of an economic elite has continued—sometimes faster and sometimes more slowly—but continuously until we have disempowered the ordinary citizen. This is not to mention the growing disenfranchisement of certain groups of citizens and the role of money controlling everything. We have watched our major institutions: the national media, the government, and the courts being co-opted by that economic elite, while we as ordinary citizens are left with little or nothing to work with to create political change. Meanwhile, the income inequality grows to obscene levels, and the semblance of democracy continues to disappear.

With so many dark and powerful forces having a vested interest in a much more authoritarian system of governance than democracy could ever be, and with them controlling so many of the levers of power in our present society, it is hard to see any



<https://upload.wikimedia.org/>



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way for a democratic solution winning the day. It sadly looks as if this incarnation of democracy will again fail to fend off the manipulative forces of authoritarianism and aristocracy and will fade into the black hole of history.

The limiting reality this time is that the planet itself can no longer tolerate the environmentally destructive forces necessary to support such authoritarian aristocracies. We will soon reach a point at which the planet will simply reject the human species as not compatible with a sustainable planetary web of life. So, we see a potential existential threat to human survival: the failure of both the human experiment on Earth and of democracy, allowing people a voice in their future.

So, into the black hole of history will go the human species along with democracy, the last attempt to save the human species: sadly, the end of two noble experiments.

Past Renewal

By Valerie Conner

By now I assume everyone is ready to move on, to face and shape a better future. To many, that means a return to the past: to pre-COVID, to pre-Trump, for some to pre-Roe v. Wade, or pre-Civil Rights Movement, or even pre-Civil War. Obviously, not all of the past is worth resurrecting.

Thomas Wolfe wrote a novel, *You Can't Go Home Again*. The title pretty much says it all: the past can never be really brought back. That's probably a good thing. But that doesn't mean we should ignore the advances and positives of the past; instead we should learn from them and build on them.

Bob Passi talks about the American Revolution. We need to keep in mind that that war was started because people felt they were being taken advantage of, they didn't have a say in their lives and futures, and no



<http://s3.timetoast.com/public/uploads/>

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The Way of the World, As I See It

By The Reverend David Bolstorff

December 7, 1941. The War began
And a mandate was passed called the draft
Most, but not all who were eligible, responded
And the war was won by what has been called
"The Greatest Generation"
People caring about the common good
Not just their own self-interest



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Another war began a couple of years ago
The war against COVID
Mandates were again passed so that the war could be won
Many who were eligible responded, but quite a few didn't
And because of that the historians someday might call this "The Selfish Generation"
People caring more about their own self-interest than the common good
And so, the war continues
But of course, the blame always goes elsewhere

Just imagine how different the world might look now
If this generation lived in 1941
Someone would have won the war
But maybe not us

Scripture says, "A house divided against itself will not stand."
It also says "that a house built on sand instead of rock will not stand either."

And yet it's happening right in front of our eyes
Because we are either allowing it to happen
Or a part of making it happen
We are removing the rock foundation of God and the common good and replacing it
with the sand god of self-interest

You can almost feel that divisive sand god spreading across the country
Promoted by people, all blaming someone except themselves
Many of whom sit in government
Both state and federal
People who feel their power is slipping away
Many who call themselves Christian
Although they will do anything and say anything contrary to Christian principles
Just to control or keep their power of privilege so they can win the game

I believe in the freedom of religion
I believe in the separation of church and state
I do not believe in the separation of faith and life
And neither does God
But that's not the way of the world these days
Especially, but not only, the political world

If you profess to be Christian
And you separate your faith from your life
What you have is hypocrisy, not faith, or one in name only



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And that's not enough for God
Jesus made that quite clear
But it seems like we don't understand that, or just don't care
For we are quite adept at rationalizing ourselves immune to any personal conviction
and repentance
That God is our God, but on our terms only

And if I use the old hypocritical excuse, "Well, I'm not perfect!"
It is simply that
An excuse
To which Jesus did say, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the
kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven."

So, what is God's will, or do we really care?
His will is as Jesus said it is, not was, but is
To love God, to love neighbor, to love self
And in that order!

First, God's will is, "for us to love God"

Not to love gods as it says not to in the First Commandment

Meaning the love of anything more important to us than God

Like the god of power, the god of money, the god of party, the god of position, the god of prestige, the god of winning at any cost, the god of guns, the god of stuff, the god of possession, the god of importance, the god of social media, the god of conspiracy theories

And yes, the god of self

Secondly, God's will is "for us to love our neighbor"

Neighbor meaning anyone God puts in front of us

Not just the ones that we choose, or who will benefit us

Jesus later clarifies that statement by telling us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves

But many of us

Especially those who are in a position of power, as in the story of the Good Samaritan, Simply choose to walk on by or look the other way unless it helps us in some way

And thirdly, God's will is "for us to love ourselves"

To take care of ourselves

Not more than we take care of others

But in the same way

And we do that when we come to know that to be a genuine follower of Jesus, and not just a make-believe one, it means not to abuse His principles by not making them the foundation of every part and decision of your life, particularly in our relationship to "all" others

So, with God's will of "loving God, loving neighbor, loving self" in mind, I have some questions to ask all of us, including myself.

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one was listening to their plights. Fortunately for us and the world, the Patriots took the right path in establishing a more equal, though still flawed, system. Two hundred fifty years later we're still trying to work out the kinks.

The causes of the Trump Revolution are similar. There is a growing income disparity which translates into an education disparity and an opportunity disparity. People especially in more remote areas feel ignored and left behind. Unfortunately, their solution of backing and idolizing a poorly educated, shallow, corrupt, selfish wannabe autocrat has put everyone worldwide in a worse position.

We know what we need to do to return to pre-Trump, pre-COVID, pre-political polarization days. The questions are "Will we? Can we? How? How much damage must we endure first?"

Let's take those questions in reverse order:

We've endured a lot of damage to our democracy, to our youth, to the education system, to our society, to our collective physical health. We're sick of what we've become and ready for a better future.

We know how to change. Our remaining intuitions need to get back to their roots. Media need to reduce the sensationalizing of stories and focus on

seriously and fairly reporting stories and issues that matter. Public education needs to be well-funded and dedicated to giving everyone a chance equal to their talents and efforts and academic freedom for teachers. Public servants need to be held accountable to serve the public—all the public. Taxes need to be assessed fairly. Government needs to do for the public what individuals can't do for themselves.

All of these things are attainable. To some degree, they've all been done in the recent past, but we have a lot of work to do.

Will we? Yes, if we cooperate with one another, and if we are politically active for the common good. Until the Republicans purge Trump and Trumpism and once again become an honorable party, we must elect only Democrats.

We're past the time for renewal. We must re-subscribe to build on the good foundation of our successful past. That includes allowing reformed Trumpers, reformed anti-vaxers, and all who want to see us move toward a "more perfect union" a graceful way back to the fold.



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