

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.

March 2021

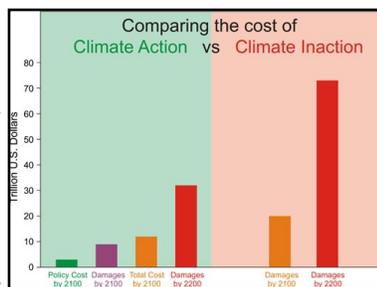
Economics Issue

Vol. 16 Issue 2

The Cost and the Economic Benefits of Climate Change

By Vicki Andrews

An article in the March 6, 2021, issue of *Forbes Magazine* is entitled, "Climate Change Will Cost Companies \$1.3 Trillion by 2025." That's quite an eye-opener for the business community, I would think. In an earlier issue (October 12, 2018), Niall McCarthy, a data journalist covering technological, societal, and media issues, stated that between 1978 and 1997 the total estimated economic costs of climate related disasters were \$895 billion. From 1998-2017 that cost skyrocketed 251% to \$2.25 trillion. Of that the U S cost was \$944.8 billion, China's cost was \$494.2 billion, and Japan's cost was \$376.3 billion. Are we worried yet? If you're not worried about the economic effects of climate change, you certainly should be!



<https://static.globalissues.org/i/climate/action-vs-inaction.jpg>

We need to focus on:

- ◆ **Infrastructure Renewal:** To repair, upgrade, and expand our country's neglected roads, bridges, energy grid, and water systems.
- ◆ **Smart Grids:** To enable renewable energy distribution, energy-efficient manufacturing and expanding low-emission public transit.
- ◆ **Clean Air and Water:** To replace lead pipes, clean up hazardous waste sites, and reduce toxic air and water pollution from oil, gas, and coal.
- ◆ **Build Community Renewal:** Part of this is building protection for climate-exposed communities (build better bridges, restore wetlands, and shield coastlines from sea level rise) as well as to ensure that workers in the fossil-fuel industries will have opportunities to move into clean energy jobs.
- ◆ **Fair Wages and Opportunities:** To insist each project must pay workers prevailing wages, hire locally, offer training opportunities, and sign project labor agreements with unions.



<https://www.eci.es/Blogs/redinnovacion/OI/files/2016/11/>

If this looks familiar as well as sensible, the above recommendations are part of the Green New Deal; they are also ideas that President Biden and many members of Congress already support. The best thing about them is that they make sense! They will improve our ability to reduce the disastrous effects of climate change as well as provide good employment opportunities for many, including those who will be displaced from fossil fuel jobs.



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The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change recently stated "the world has 12 years to keep the temperature increase at a minimum of 1.5° C. If urgent and unprecedented changes are not implemented, there will be a significantly higher risk of climate related disasters after the window of opportunity closes."

What can be done? How can we reduce climate change/global warming and build the economy? The good news is that we are beginning to understand what can and should be done. Even better news is that making the changes to save the Earth can be financially beneficial for many.

Death by Talking

By Stephen Fuller

For weeks if not months, the liberal media have been talking about the filibuster and the need to do away with it as a Senate rule. If you're like me, you have read considerable information on filibuster history. It didn't really show up until after the Civil War and then was a way Southern Democrats kept Congress from addressing the civil rights of former enslaved Americans.

Both Minnesota Senators have publicly announced that the filibuster has to go. I sent both of them e-mails thanking them for their public statements on eliminating the filibuster. Normally, the response to my e-mails to Senators is some computer generated three line statement thanking me for writing. What follows is the reply I got from Senator Tina Smith; it makes me proud to say I voted for her.

Dear Stephen,

Thank you for contacting me about proposals to eliminate the filibuster rules in the United States Senate. I appreciate hearing from you about this important issue.

I recently released a statement regarding my position on filibuster reform, and I wanted to share my thoughts with you here:

The Senate needs to abolish the filibuster. Right now, the Senate has 50 Republican Senators. They represent less than 44% of America. And yet they still have the power to stop us from passing laws that a majority of America wants.

I've spent a lot of time thinking about this, and to be honest I started out believing we should keep the filibuster. Without it, I reasoned, what would stop a conservative President and Congress from doing terrible damage to women's healthcare, voting rights, and civil rights. But the more I thought about it, the more I realized that the filibuster has long been the enemy of progress. In fact, it's been a highly effective tool to thwart the will of the people.

The U S Senate has a lot of rules that most people don't understand—including most Senators. Most of these rules don't spring from the Constitution or the minds of the founders; they have grown out of a centuries' long battle about who gets to decide.

So who DOES decide? You may think the answer is obvious: In our republic, the people decide. In state legislatures, city halls, county boards, and in the U S House of Representatives, a majority of those elected by the people decide. But in the U S Senate the rules are

uniquely different. In reality, every day in the U S Senate a minority can decide. And they do it by threatening to talk to death any idea, policy, or proposal that they don't like. That's what the filibuster is. And that's why it has to go.

The filibuster didn't come from the Constitution or from our founders. It grew up as a tool developed by a minority in the Senate—mostly white, racist Southern Senators from the Democratic Party—to protect their interest in owning and exploiting Black bodies. After the Civil War and passage of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments and after a brief period of hopefulness for the future of Black Americans, the filibuster became an even more powerful tool used to deny voting rights and the opportunity for Black people to own a home or land and to build wealth and opportunity for their own families.

If you have fond memories of watching the movie, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, and the heroic Mr. Smith using the power of debate to turn the Senate toward more justice, I'm sorry to tell you that does not happen in the Senate. In fact, the modern filibuster usually doesn't include any debate at all. What happens is that a Senator merely threatens to filibuster, then they go home to dinner. There's no debate and not even any talking—and definitely not any legislating.

Some will argue that the filibuster is a crucial stopgap designed to protect the rights of the minority against an overweening majority that would trample those rights. They say that the filibuster encourages compromise, and it makes the Senate the famous "cooling saucer" that stops the federal government from careening from one extreme to the other. I've not seen that. What the filibuster does is allow a minority of Senators to just say no to any idea they don't like. They don't have to negotiate, because they can stop anything. McConnell is the master of obstruction, but the big problem is that this is fundamentally undemocratic.

Thank you again for contacting me about this issue. Please do not hesitate to do so again regarding this or any other matter of concern to you.

Sincerely,



Tina Smith
United States Senator



For the Love of Trump

By Gail Matthews

I have been comparing this adoration for Trump as akin to falling in love. When you're in love with someone, you cannot see their faults and their flaws. Or if you do see them, you believe there is really a good person underneath all that, so you excuse him. I think Trumpites see Trump as a strong protective man who is going to fix all their problems and make life safe and easy for them. But talk is cheap. You have to dig deeper and see into the character of the man. A man of poor character simply cannot be a good leader, because his judgment is bad so he will not make good decisions. His prejudices and his own desires make that impossible.

Trump is a rotten apple in the barrel of humanity. I don't care how good you think his policies are, his character outweighs everything else. If our children acted the way he does, we would discipline them—I hope. Yet when Trump does it, we excuse him.



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Why? Because of his policies? Balderdash! He changes his mind so often it makes my head spin. He lies so much it's hard to know what he really does believe. For instance, he said the wall was almost done. It's not. Only 300 miles have been completed, and a lot of that is a remake of what was already there.

Here's something he was doing behind the scenes that you may not have heard about: He was auctioning off our public lands to the oil and gas industries at a time when we don't need oil, because prices are down and Americans should be planning for a fossil free future like Amazon is. He rolled

back numerous very important environmental laws like the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, the Safe Drinking Water Standards Act, the Migratory Bird Act, the Endangered Species Act, and many more. I thought we had fought and won those battles over the last century.

Trump says these acts are job killing, but he's wrong about that. With a little incentive, industries would jump at the chance to make products that don't destroy our world.

Some are already doing that on their own. Trump can't or won't see that, which makes him an anachronism and out of touch with the trends that shape



<https://cvoetpr.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Trumpolini.jpg>

humanity's future. In addition, his response to the COVID pandemic was abominable, leaving a big mess for Biden and the Democrats to clean up. Instead of setting a good example for preventative measures, he makes fun of people who wear masks while cases and deaths skyrocket. Why? I haven't figured out his self-destructive motives, but the fact that he continued to hold super spreader events all over the country tells me he doesn't care about anyone but himself. That doesn't seem as if there is a good person underneath his self-serving policies.

The world is waiting to see if the Trump Presidency was a fluke and hopes that it's not too late to get back to rationality. Even now, five months after the election, Americans on both sides have never been as upset as they are now. It is because of his constant divisive and hateful rhetoric. Enough! Get over your crush on this con man before he crushes us. He doesn't deserve your love or loyalty.

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
Itasca Progressive Caucus (259-4490)	Suspended	DFL Headquarters
DFL Central Committee Meets	4th Monday	Zoom
DFL Social Club & Lunch	Suspended	DFL Headquarters
DFL Pot Luck (Open to the Public)	Suspended	DFL Headquarters
Working Families Alliance	Suspended	Dutchroom
Earth Circle	Suspended	GR Public Library
Circles of Support	Suspended	811 NE 4th St. GR
Haven: A Place for All	Suspended	Kiesler Center
Deadline for <i>Common Sense II</i>	April 9, 2021	conray@arvig.net

American Economics 101

By Bob Passi

There is little doubt that we urgently need an economic lifeline, starting with an increase in the minimum wage, to help most of the American citizenry who are dealing with an economy that has been crippled by the economics of the pandemic: the pandemic itself and the growing results of climate change. For many these are survival issues. For some it has been an inconvenience with some sacrifice and hardship, and for those who control the American economy it has been an incredible windfall. Unfortunately, the loudest voices have been those in the last two groups: those who have been inconvenienced and those who have profited.

As always, the recovery tends to be from the top down whether it is economic benefits or healthcare and vaccines.

We have identified a category of “essential workers” who must continue their work for the society

to survive. Unfortunately, these essential workers are mostly at the bottom of the economic ladder, those who are poorly paid and who are poorly served by the society: poorly educated, poorly housed, and poorly served by healthcare. The overriding incentive is the economic incentive of our present system in which you need money

to survive; if you are not working you have no money. So, the choice is between not even providing the basics for living for themselves and their families or taking the health risks that go with going back to work.

We all recognize the “essentialness” of healthcare workers who have served us valiantly during this past year despite incredible risks to themselves and their families. They are in effect the veterans of the most destructive world war of the last century, serving and dying in the front lines of the Pandemic War with nearly 30 million casualties and over half a million deaths in the U S alone during the last year.

Meanwhile support for those who have joined the fight on the home-front has been less than stellar. While the enemy has not only created many beachheads and is now operating as an occupying army, we have provided an entire cadre of collaborators who give aid and comfort to this enemy while others continue to battle and die.

Concurrently, the continued push is to open the

economy quickly, regardless of risks, putting profits before people at every turn. The first pandemic stimulus went mostly to those on top with the ordinary citizens getting very little attention. It required those on the bottom to go back to work quickly despite the personal risks so businesses could get back to normal. Schools were to open up again regardless of the health

risks to teachers and other school employees so parents could go back to work without the burden of home care of children.

Anyone with any clarity of vision—meaning anyone who can still remember that people are far more important than profits—can see that the way to humanely open an economy is to provide vaccines, health benefits, and economic stimulus to those who are essential. Once they have been protected and provided for, we can then open the economy from the bottom up.

But, my goodness, that sounds too much like democracy which would be based on providing a social structure that assures human health and sustainability for its citizens, building viable communities, and providing a voice in their future as well as the future of the society and the nation for all its citizens.

Since the 1970s, an economic elite has been busy

conflating democracy with capitalism under the pretense that democracy cannot exist without capitalism. Starting

from that faulty premise, we have institutionalized an incredibly extreme form of capitalism in neoliberal economic theory. Under the rubric of democracy, we have exported neoliberal economics to the entire globe, calling it globalization. Since that fundamentalist form of neoliberal economics is unsustainable, incredibly destructive of the planet, nations, communities, and individuals, it has been passed off as democracy in action. We watch the ordinary citizens of the world losing faith in this form of democracy,



<https://blogmedia.lsc.ac.uk/blogs.dir/58/files/2015/11/Inequality-sign-featured.jpg>



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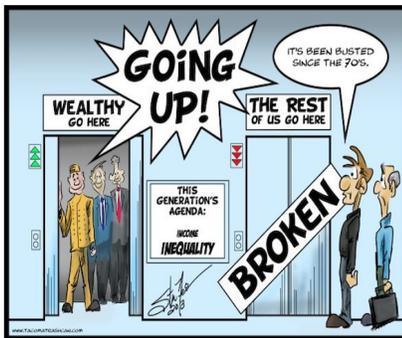
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which is in reality simply neoliberal economics masquerading as democracy. So, the planet's disenchantment with neoliberal economics is expressed as their disenchantment with democracy. As a solution, they look to nationalism and authoritarian leadership in their attempts to survive. This, of course, is exactly what the economic elite behind neoliberal economics were after in the first place, since this will leave them with their wealth and power, their technology, and their armies in total control and the threat of true democracy gone forever.

Once in power, the economic elite normalized and structured systems to entrench their power and continue their dominance.

So, we are left to nibble around the edges to get what crumbs they are willing to give up purely for public relations benefits, or we can understand that we must restructure our economics to meet the needs of a flourishing democracy in the modern world, one that will again become a beacon for the rest of the world.

Since the 1970s, we have watched the steady erosion of democracy as it was replaced by a focus on economics and profit.



<https://mironline.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/0income.jpg>

Instead of capitalism being the funding source for a healthy democracy, we saw our world being turned upside down until democracy is now the mask for out-of-control capitalism

What are some of the signs?

- ◆ Income inequality now back to the Gilded Age levels and growing.
- ◆ Income taxes which have gone from progressive to regressive with those with money being relieved of any substantial tax burden.
- ◆ Privatization of public services, providing income streams for corporations.
- ◆ Defunding of social services and the dismantling of social safety nets.
- ◆ Weakening of workers' voices with the destruction of unions and wage stagnation.
- ◆ Higher education and retirement priced out of reach for most people.
- ◆ Increase in personal debt.
- ◆ Decaying and dysfunctional infrastructure.

- ◆ Loopholes for the rich to hide their incomes offshore to decrease their tax responsibilities.
- ◆ Funding the military and security services at obscenely high levels.
- ◆ Increased surveillance of citizens.
- ◆ A political system totally in service to the moneyed interests.
- ◆ All areas of American life now being politicized.
- ◆ Pushing the idea of rugged individualism in which one looks out for oneself with no concern for anyone else—out of pure personal whim,—and destroying any sense of community in the process. All of this is under the rubric of freedom and independence.
- ◆ A disintegration of any sense of unity and national purpose.

We must recognize the issue for what it is: an economic system that is unsustainable and destructive of the planet and democracy. We must recognize that we have very little time left to remedy the situation if we are to have any hope of succeeding.

Now that the COVID Relief Package has passed through Congress and has been signed by President Biden, we must ride that new momentum to rebuild an economic system that truly supports democracy again.

We must begin the process of making the necessary changes to the economics of this nation, taking the power away from the rich and powerful and redistributing the wealth that the entire society played a part in creating, back to its earlier, more democratic levels. This will take a concerted effort by citizen movements that will find ways around the traditional Congressional blockages to insist on reforms to save our citizens, our cities and communities, our state, our nation, and the world.

We must understand and recognize the dangers in the present economic system as it exists in America and see the absolute necessity of changing it into a sustainable economic democracy. If we fail, we will continue as pawns of an economic system which will sacrifice us first as we devolve further into a deadly and dystopian future.



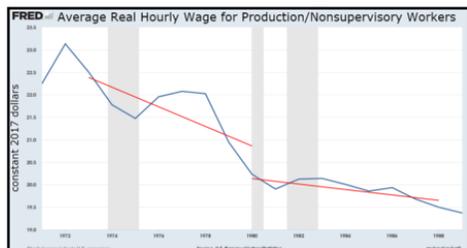
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Progress Is Good

By Valerie Conner

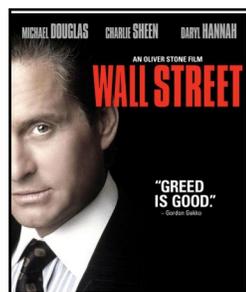
As Progressives, we are for progress; we believe progress is good. In fact, the entire American Character is assumed to be pro progress. We like to think of our national persona as being creative and innovative. Throughout most of our history,



<https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/8/8c/>

we invented things and really came into our own by advancing the industrial revolution. A large part of our corporate strength came from the inventors and experts in whatever field of endeavor being the ones in charge. That is until the so-called “Reagan Revolution.”

In the ‘80s big business changed. Instead of the corporate heads having mostly come up through



<https://i2.wp.com/www.brettdickerson.net/wp->

the ranks of the industry, knowing that particular industry, MBAs were in charge. It didn’t matter what the company made as long as it made money. There no longer was a goal to do good for the product, the employees, or the country as long as the quarterly goals for the shareholders were met.

Long range planning and goals went by the wayside. I remember at the time thinking that was short-sighted and nuts. I understood that it was the age of corporate predators who made their living taking over companies in either a hostile or a “friendly” manner but knew that was ultimately not good for business. Other than greed, I didn’t know what else could be behind this.

Kurt Andersen does know. In his latest book, *Evil Geniuses: The Unmaking of America, A Recent History*, he explains that in the Reagan era of “greed (and power

we invented things and really came into our own by advancing the industrial revolution. A large part of our corporate strength came from the inventors and experts in whatever field of endeavor being the ones in charge. That is until the so-called “Reagan Revolution.”

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for its own sake) is good” the Republicans began a long-range campaign to reverse the New Deal and undermine all the progress this country made in the 20th Century. No longer did they consider government’s job to be to “promote the general welfare,” but instead they sought to establish a system of advantage and wealth for the wealthy and powerful and the little guy be damned. It’s taken 40 years, but it’s now quite obvious that our economy is being manipulated instead of flowing from natural commercial events.

The tax system is more and more skewed in their favor. Education, healthcare, social welfare, climate response, voting rights, labor rights, and immigration policies—all of the big issues of today—are victims of their evil intent.

For progress to be made, we must have constant forward looking change. Andersen points out that before the ‘80s, each decade had its own look and style--be it in clothing, hair, cars/transportation, interior decorating, music, or whatever—that was immediately recognizable. Since, not so much. Can you, for example, tell the make and year of a recent car model as it drives by? Andersen equates this stagnation to the stagnation of ideas and progress as a by-product of putting money grabbing before the product that has become today’s corporations’ mission statement.



[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c3/Kurt_Andersen_May_2013_\(2\).jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c3/Kurt_Andersen_May_2013_(2).jpg)

As with all dark analyses, there is a hopeful side. Andersen ends with the path to becoming a world leader again, and again working toward fulfilling our espoused character. It begins with believing we can do it. And then doing it. Progressives of the world, it’s time to do it!



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