
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.

May 2021

Reality? Issue

Vol. 16 Issue 5

Democracy in the Balance

By Brian Vroman

"Democracy depends on the consent of the losers."—Yoni Applebaum

For democracy to work, there have to be certain rules as well as agreed upon standards and norms. Foremost among these is that all sides have to agree that if they lose an election, the winners have the right to assume office and to govern. Take this away, and democracy dies.

Our democracy is currently on life support. This is because an enormous faction—a minority, but one large enough to be dangerous—has decided that the 2020 election was not legitimate, even though all the evidence, as well as every court ruling on the matter, confirm that it was.

But the problem goes even deeper. It is not just the results of the 2020 election that too many Republicans have issues with. It is the truth in general. According to a recent poll, 23% of Republicans believe that the United States is being run by a cabal of Satan-worshipping pedophiles, and 28% believe that "a storm is coming" that will sweep away "ruling elites" and leave the "rightful" people in power. What is the "storm," and who are these "rightful" ones?

The "rightful" rulers are, of course, whomever these fact-challenged ones support.

Just as it is necessary for all to consent to the possibility of defeat for democracy to work, it is also



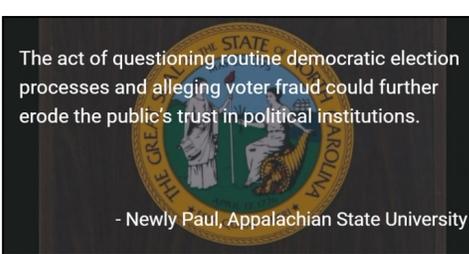
necessary for all factions to share the same reality. There is an objective truth out there. But Qanon conspiracists and oth-

ers of the same ilk act as if the truth is whatever they want it to be. This is certainly true regarding the results of the 2020 election, but why would it stop there? Why, once they are untethered from

reality, would they accept the results of ANY election that didn't go their way? If facts and evidence don't matter, it is always possible to make claims of fraud not grounded in reality and to refuse to accept legitimate results.

The "fraudit"—the supposed audit of votes in Maricopa County, Arizona, in which a company known as Cyber Ninja, headed by a Trump supporter, has been given access to ballots—may be a harbinger of what is to come in 2022 and 2024. If it is, we could see a nightmare scenario.

To my knowledge, this scenario was first identified by 538 journalist Perry Bacon. It is frightfully simple and all too plausible. Imagine this: Progressives and other Democrats stay home in 2022, because they are dissatisfied with President Biden, or they have just become wrapped up in their own personal lives, or whatever. Consequently, the Republicans take the House and the Senate. Then in 2024, the Democratic Presidential candidate,



whether it be Joe Biden or Kamala Harris or someone else, wins. But a radical Republican Congress refuses to seat the victor. What happens then? The courts? If we are already to the point where election results can be shrugged off as illegitimate, will we also be at the point where court rulings are ignored?

If this scenario comes to fruition, we will be facing the loss of our democracy, civil war, or both. People, friends, fellow progressives, THIS COULD HAPPEN!

Can such a ghastly set of circumstances be forestalled and prevented? Yes. By whom? By us!

But it is going to take a massive effort, one on the

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scale of what we saw in 2020. We simply must hold Congress in 2022. The pundits are predicting that Democrats will lose the House. We can't let



<https://dignempray.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/alarm-clock-time-to-wake-up-america-840x285.jpg>

that happen. We have to reawaken those who have fallen into complacency

mistakenly thinking that because Trump was defeated, all is well. It is not. It will take massive voter-turnout in 2022. It will take unity. Moderates and Progressives will again have to put aside differences and work together. It will take door-knocking, phone-banking, letters to the editor, and a myriad of other forms of volunteering.

Many of us are tired. We did all that we could do in 2020. We would like for others to do the work this time. But there is no one else. It is just us. We have to rise to the occasion once again. We must.

The alternative is too grim to imagine.

Lessons Learned?

By Bob Passi

As the media hype the end of COVID restrictions and people being able to celebrate going “back to normal,” how will the people of this nation react? One can only hope that they will find the will to respond in an adult and socially responsible manner and apply the lessons we learned from this experience. Will we realize that we are emerging from a very dark time? Will we be chastened by the poor response to the pandemic? Will we be ready to correct the misadventures of the past by building better and more sustainable systems for this nation and the human beings who reside within its borders?

We can almost foresee the wild exuberance about to break out with the full support of economic interests, the Republican Party, and all the elements who resisted attempts to unify the nation to slow the spread of the virus. Those elements will be willing to say, “See, we told you it was not so serious; we got through it just fine without masks, vaccinations, or social distancing, and we really did not need to slow down or shut down the economy.” It will be the old “I told you so” of the naysayers.

We must remember the rules about businesses, limits, and closures, as well as the encouragements

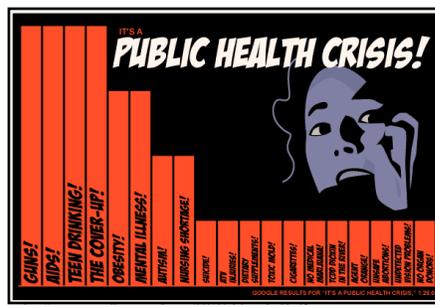
of masks, vaccines, and social distancing were there to help prevent more spread of the virus. Getting rid of the rules will not slow the spread of the virus. In fact, getting rid of those last few rules will take off those last safeguards, increasing the likelihood of getting the virus.



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The virus will simply have a bigger arena in which to operate. Taking those rules away may give us a false sense of security to let our guard down. In reality, relaxing those rules has more to do with economic pressures than actual health issues.

We need to remember and be chastened by the incredible number of deaths—over 580,000 of our fellow citizens, a number that is probably low by some reports. If we learned nothing in the process, they



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did indeed die in vain. Many of those deaths—a higher per capita than any other industrialized nation in the world—were the result of decades of underfunding and in some cases

cutting public health and social services, leaving a system in tatters to deal with a world-wide pandemic. We were left to reconstruct a system on the run, playing catch-up while more and more people died. We were directed on the national level by a President who seemed to resist our best efforts at every turn and a political party who supported that lack of effort. I might add that that party continues to support the resistance to correcting past mistakes or doing anything except return to the “same-old, same-old,” leaving us just as unprepared as we were before the pandemic, apparently having learned nothing in the process.

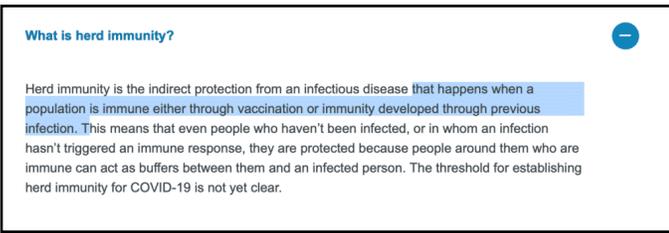
Resistance came from those who would focus first on economics, businesses, corporations, and other financial interests championed by the Republican Party. There was resistance to lock downs, limitations on businesses, and even on the need to wear masks or to practice social distancing, not to mention vaccinations. The science and medical research was challenged. With little direction or guidance coming from the national level, the governors took emergency actions on the state level only to be confronted with Republican resistance.

There was a strange kind of belief in “herd immuni-

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ty”: just let the pandemic run its course and see what is left such as what was practiced in Sweden

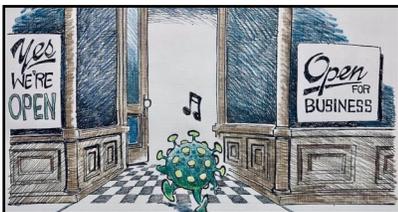


<https://www.technocracy.news/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/what-is-herd-immunity-1024x344.png>

for a while before they came to their senses. Most notably the herd immunity seemed to have been practiced in Brazil and India under the tutelage of autocratic leaders. Of course, the problem with herd immunity from a human rights perspective is that those most likely to be infected and die are those on the bottom of the socio-economic spectrum, those most vulnerable and with the least resources to support their struggles. Meanwhile, those on the top of the economic pyramid have access to the best protections from the virus and the best and most current treatment strategies.

The message of those economic interests is that we must open for business as quickly and completely as possible to get “the economy” back into high gear, *i.e.*, back to the old normal. In effect, the message is that we

must focus on economic indicators, and only those who understand and run the economy can keep it working well. So, don't



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worry your little head about things. We, the economic leaders, will take care of the future and solve the problems. You just go on with your lives, enjoy the return to the old normal, party, and celebrate, and we will return the world to what was before the pandemic.

Part of that solution is a return to the large concentrations of people, resources, and capital necessary for production and consumption in order to return the system to where it had been. Corporations need to use the masses: mass gatherings, mass consumption, mass production. In order to keep us buying into that ideology, they need mass communication provided by a media largely controlled by corporations. They even have convinced us to be continually hooked into a mass communication system with its propaganda on our smart phones and ubiquitous earphones and ear buds.

The issue comes down to democracy. Are we a

nation that is founded on democracy with its concerns for the citizenry first, or are we a nation in which free-market capitalism trumps any democratic or human concerns? The answer, over the last several decades has been a drift toward the primacy of economic concerns to the detriment of concerns for the citizenry of a democracy. All of this under the guise that somehow capitalism is really another word for democracy and that one could not exist without the other, conflating the two terms. The result was that radical capitalism, following the ideology of new-liberal economics, simply consolidated the wealth and power of the planet. Meanwhile, the rest of the population of the planet watched that consolidation in dismay. They were left to fight over the economic crumbs while witnessing the devastation of the environment.

As this was somehow presented as the results of democracy being spread across the world, people lost faith in that democracy, which was in reality a counterfeit democracy. They began to reject what was passing for democracy, turning instead to more authoritarian leadership, which promised to rescue them from this peril. However, in reality it simply shifted the remaining power to the very manipulators they thought they were opposing. The result was that the power and control of the planet are placed firmly in hands of a rich and powerful economic aristocracy to take care of the ordinary citizens very paternally, or maternally, whichever might be the case.

So, we are left with these questions:

- ◆ Are people willing to go back to a world that thinks that slow, incremental change will solve our global environments issues?
- ◆ Are people willing to take minimum wage jobs, still often below \$15 an hour, just to have a job?
- ◆ Are people willing to continue to put up with the income inequalities of the past?
- ◆ Are people willing to return to an economic system that failed them so dramatically over the past several decades?
- ◆ Are people willing to go back to a world without the social justice necessary for the inclusion of all of our citizens?
- ◆ Are people willing to return to the “pay to play” systems that control housing, education, health, and retirement, just to name a few?
- ◆ Are people willing to continue to trust leadership from the economic elite, who have betrayed them?
- ◆ Are people willing to go back to a world in

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which workers are so undervalued?

- ◆ Are people willing to go back to a world of political manipulation of voter suppression, gerrymandering, and other election shenanigans?
- ◆ Are people willing to go back to a world of so little respect and so little democracy?

One perspective is that we are witnessing the death throes of the old economic and political system that may have been helpful at some point, but that became outmoded—unwilling to change with a changing world—and instead became entrenched and rigid. At this point that old system seems willing to pull the entire planet down with it rather than change.

It is time for the masses to declare their independence. Our survival depends on it. The old systems were like warfare in which the underclass is sacrificed, sent in first to run the risks, and do the suffering and dying, while those on top reap the economic benefits, safely ensconced high above the battle fields.

With the pause that the pandemic has created, we have learned and relearned several important lessons. We have been reminded that:

- ◆ All human life is sacred and significant.
- ◆ We can depend on others to help in a time of need.
- ◆ Family and community are the very heart of the survival of the human spirit.
- ◆ We are far more resourceful, creative, and resilient than we thought we were.
- ◆ We don't need others to tell us how to survive, even under great pressure.

- ◆ We are powerful and capable of making our own decisions to survive and solve community problems.
- ◆ We need democracy in all its glory to survive now and to have a voice in the future of this nation.

We can solve any problem if we work together.

We need to apply these lessons and the many others we learned during the pandemic to create a better and more sustainable world. To accomplish that, we need:

- ◆ To create a new politics that supports, values, and protects every citizen while insisting on democracy at every turn.
- ◆ To create a new economics that serves and supports the goals of democracy and equity.
- ◆ To be proactive, creating systems in preparation for future pandemics and other health issues as well as other potential problems such as global climate change.
- ◆ To focus more on cooperative instead of competitive solutions.
- ◆ To nurture and value human life, the human spirit, and our connection to the web of life on this planet.



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All this really requires of us is to leave our childish and adolescent desires and indulgences behind and function as responsible adults within a democracy. We rediscovered this grit under the stress

of the pandemic and the economic dislocations it brought with it. Only then will it be time to celebrate.

Have we learned the necessary lessons from this dark period, or are we willing to be mindlessly led back to old ways? Our fate is in our hands.

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	Carpenter Townhall
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>	June 11, 2021	conray@arvig.net

Biden's FDR-like Leadership on Climate Change

By Eric Grimsrud*

It was most refreshing to hear President Biden declare in his recent address to the joint house of Congress that his administration will put a very high priority on combating the relentless advance of global warming. This constitutes a great improvement over the expressed goals of all previous Presidents and especially those of his immediate predecessor.

As we all know, however, the passage of progressive legislation concerning this issue will be strongly opposed by the powerful fossil fuel lobbies. We have already seen some efforts along these lines by various Republican legislators, one of which I will describe below that is indicative of the tactics Biden's adversaries will use.

All components of our economic system will have to allow its greenhouse gas emissions to be assessed, of course, and this includes our agricultural sector in which the huge beef industry resides. It is well known that the production of beef is extremely carbon intensive relative to the production of plant-based foods. In spite of this fact, President Biden has not yet revealed any specific suggestions for addressing agriculture's contributions to global warming. The high carbon footprint of beef production is, indeed, difficult to deal with due to the popularity of beef among the public as well as its producers. For this reason, I suspect that the Biden team is already discussing this issue with all concerned parties including the representatives of both the ranching and farming industries.

In spite of Biden's careful approach, his adversaries are already providing Fox News-like misinformation on this topic by claiming that Biden is actively trying to deny Americans their beloved hamburgers and steaks. The GOP's reason for this misrepresentation is undoubtedly to encourage the beef lobby to add their support to the fossil fuel lobby as soon as possible so that they can prevent timely actions concerning greenhouse gas emissions before discussions are given a chance to find clarity, resolution, and points of compromise. Food production is, after all, a huge industry in which a multitude of options are continuously being discovered.

The tactic described above is frequently used by the climate change inactivists. Instead of addressing the central question of whether or not some

specific changes are feasible in order to combat global warming, they skip that part and exaggerate the difficulties that some needed actions might possibly present. However, when a literal "war" is required in order to effectively address a problem, unpopular but necessary changes will sometimes have to be made. When WWII was forced on us by Japan and Germany in 1941, for example, we immediately took the actions that were required, even though those actions would result in the deaths of many young Americans whose lives were just beginning and who had done nothing to create the problem. We reluctantly did that, however, in order to fight that all-out war by the most effective means possible. If you think that the war against global warming is going to be any less challenging than that fought against our opponents in WWII, you are mistaken.

Prior to the forcing event of Pearl Harbor in December of 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt had been in a very difficult spot politically. He couldn't declare war on Germany at that time even though Germany was overrunning most of our traditional allies throughout Europe. FDR was boxed in largely because of the popular "America First" movement in this country that insisted we not send our "boys" off to another European war. So instead, FDR got the Lend Lease program started and did his best to prepare the American public for what he knew lay ahead.

Our current President Biden is now walking a similar tightrope. While he knows that a full-fledged war against global warming will be required, he has to proceed with considerable caution so that he retains sufficient support from the public. That is a difficult task indeed, which is not at all helped by the business-as-usual inactivists of today.

Needless to say, I am extremely proud of President Biden for courageously taking on this most difficult leadership role. In doing so, he will have a very tough row to hoe because of the technical and political problems he is sure to encounter. He could have easily avoided this greatest of all problems—as most of his predecessors did—but he didn't because he realizes that we simply must finally face the reality of our greatest existential threat just as FDR did in the 1940s. We now have a President who is willing to lead this absolutely essential quest. Many thanks for that, Mr. President!! All of us should now join him in his effort to pass a livable world on to future generations.

*Eric Grimsrud is a climate scientist and invites you to visit his website, www.ericgrimsrud.org.



<https://www.freepngimg.com/thumb/cheese/67431-cheese-hamburger-restaurant-veggie-fatburger>



<https://thecityfix.com/wp-content/>

Justice at Last?

By Nancy Rudd

We have a problem in this country with racism and especially with how police abuse their power when dealing with minorities, especially Blacks.

On April 20 2021, after deliberating for about ten hours, a jury found fired Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin guilty on all three charges: second and third degree murder and second degree manslaughter for killing George Perry Floyd, Jr., who on May 25, 2020 was accused of trying to pass a counterfeit \$20. Although Chauvin had total control of Floyd, he continued to hold his knee on Floyd's neck for over nine minutes, cutting off his air supply. Chauvin refused to let up, to give aid, or to stop the killing. He will be sentenced in June and could get up to 40 years in jail.



<https://kaosensland.net/wp-content/>

This was the first time in Minnesota history that a white police officer has been convicted of killing a black man while on duty. We have a problem in this country with racism and over reactions of police especially in dealing with black men. Because a 17 year old witness used her phone to video the entire arrest and killing, the whole nation saw and became outraged. We can no longer turn away from the blatant racism that too often ends in the death of Blacks, men especially, at the hands of white police. In this case the ambulance crew had to push Chauvin, who had had his knee on Floyd's neck for nine minutes thus choking him, off Floyd's now dead body.

At the trial, because of COVID, Floyd's family could not be in the courtroom but could only watch on a television monitor set up in a nearby hotel ballroom. When the jury returned with its verdict, the family held their collective breath, thinking justice would be served but knew the statistics were against it. As the third guilty verdict was read, a friend in the back of the room called, "Say his name." A chant of "Say his name," followed by "George Floyd," started. Then, "Who made America better?" "George Floyd." Saying his name helped humanize him, something he didn't receive in life.

The conviction of Chauvin does not mean that justice will exist for other Blacks. It is a start, but more needs to be done. One of the reasons police are able to convince themselves there is a danger to their lives—a common excuse for their actions—is that the situation gets out of hand and calm does not prevail. More and better training in reading situations, in de-escalation of situations,

and of the need for a more humane approach is needed.

President Biden cited the killing of George Floyd in calling "the knee on the neck of Justice" and said that because of it, "The focus has shifted. It changed minds and mindsets." In addition, he has signed four executive orders:

- ◆ To direct HUD "to take steps necessary to redress racially discriminatory federal housing policies,"
- ◆ To direct DOJ to end its use of private prisons,
- ◆ To reaffirm the federal government's commitment to tribal sovereignty and consultation,
- ◆ To combat xenophobia against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

These don't address police brutality against Blacks, but there is already a law, that, if utilized, would pay for itself. Former Minnesota Senator Al Franken is reminding us of the Crisis Intervention Training Act which was passed during his tenure in the Senate. Under this law, police officers are trained in crisis intervention, which among other things teaches them how to de-escalate situations involving drugs or mental illness. While officers are in this training, their departments are responsible for the pay of their replacements. Franken says it pays for itself. The best example is in Miami-Dade County, Florida. Not only do they have police officers trained in crisis intervention, but these officers can also call in trained crisis intervention teams. Shootings in Miami-Dade County have decreased dramatically. As a result, the county is saving millions on lawsuits for unlawful shootings. It's recently just being implemented in Columbia Heights, Minnesota.

A corollary to that is the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, which has passed the House but is unlikely to pass the Senate. So while progress is being made, there is much more to do.

COMMON SENSE II is published by the Itasca Progressive Caucus in Grand Rapids, Minnesota

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Fear, Anger, Hate

By Gary Burt

Most problems can't be solved until one analyzes them correctly. Such is the case with hate crimes.

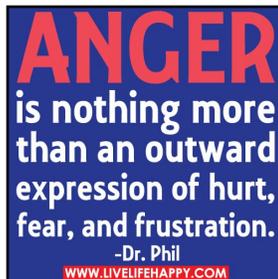
Hate and anger are derivatives of fear. Underlying almost all hate and anger, one will find fear of one kind or another. In essence, these are fear crimes more than they are hate crimes.

Other than identifying it correctly, the main reason this is so important is that people can't rationalize away their hatred and anger as being acceptable responses to frustrating experiences. Most people find it harder to rationalize away fear when it becomes apparent that



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FEAR is driving their behavior more than hatred or anger. This is especially important when a person is in denial of one's fear issues, because when one is in denial, the first thing a person tends to do is BLAME their fears on other people. Once they've blamed someone else, they want to change other people rather than change themselves.



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This is what former President Trump did so successfully with his base. He gave them scapegoats to blame their fears on, and they reacted with hate and anger at these scapegoats and wanted to change everybody else rather than be responsible for their fears and their emotional responses.

The hardest thing for most people to deal with is the ideas that they really don't have anyone to blame for their problems—other than themselves.

The New Reality

By Valerie Conner

Most of us can live somewhat in our own reality—until real reality hits us in the face. That's what happened when the pandemic struck. Not only were we collectively confronted with a deadly virus, but the restrictions placed on our lives required us to radically change our lifestyles.

I'm retired so I didn't have a change of work

place, and don't have school aged children in the home, and don't live alone, and am quite satisfied not interacting with a lot of people, so my lifestyle wasn't terribly affected. But those who didn't have those advantages really suffered. Then there are those who suffered from the virus itself, some even dying.

Regardless of the extent that people's lives changed during these past 15 months or so, everyone has been affected. Mental stress is a major result. From that comes anger and hatred. Irrational fear also is a derivative of the isolation and upheaval. We entered the pandemic restrictions already on edge after four years of being told to be afraid, very afraid, and told to hate anyone not in Trump's circle.

Trump conditioned the nation to hate, fear, and rejection of the norms that had kept our democracy intact for almost two and a half centuries. Add to the acceptance of flouting societal and legal norms the stress of a deadly virus that was not being addressed competently and you have mental and societal chaos.

It appears as though we are getting through this, and a return to what will be known as the new normal is on the horizon. The new normal can be better, but in any case, we will not return to the normal as we knew it. Some people are no longer with us. Some people have lost their businesses or jobs or housing permanently. Our appreciation of what government can and cannot do has changed. Because of the irrational fear evidenced by beliefs in weird conspiracy theories, we no longer trust our neighbors, former friends, media, or even government.

It'll take a long time to regain that trust. It is incumbent on each of us to strive to regain a sane reality so we can return to a prosperous, hopeful future.



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Editor's Note: Most of you have been reading these pages for a number of years (thank you). I think it's time I heard from more of you. If you would like to contribute your thoughts to these pages, please contact me at conray@arvig.net. I'll let you know what topics we're working on. Happy writing, Val