
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.

June 2019

Problems Issue

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Let’s Turn Things Around—Before It’s Too Late!

By Vicki Andrews

Just over mid-way through Donald Trump’s first term as President, we are learning how bizarre he can get. Not just bizarre, but crazy, frightening, and truly dangerous. Political pundits and historians will be discussing, assessing, and analyzing the effects of the Trump Presidency for years to come. (If we survive, that is!)

To a greater or lesser degree, issues that Democrats were concerned about during the past election include:

- ◆ Gun control,
- ◆ Immigration,
- ◆ Criminal justice,
- ◆ The economy (including wealth inequality, trade agreements, tax reform, etc.),
- ◆ International relations and national defense,
- ◆ Climate change,
- ◆ Higher education,
- ◆ And healthcare. (See August 22, 2016 *Low-down* article by Kukreja and Green.)

In my opinion—and probably that of many Democrats, Independents, and even some Republicans—we are going in the wrong direction in all of these areas. As my major concern is climate change, I’ll focus on that.



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For the last decade or so, we have been getting more and more desperate cries from climate scientists, meteorologists, and other knowledgeable people that we are taking the Earth down a path of destruction. If we don’t wake up and pay attention

now, we as a species are likely doomed, plus we’ll take most other species down with us. The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (UNIPCC), on October 8, 2018,



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warned that we have fewer than twelve years to really turn things around or it will

likely be too late; there will be massive death and destruction around the Earth. On May 5, 2019, another report, this one from the United Nations Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), came out with the warning that if we continue on our present course, one million species may soon become extinct. Note: Extinction is forever!

Instead of paying attention to any of these warnings, Trump seems to be doing all that he possibly can to make matters much worse: promoting more fracking and more pipelines, withdrawing from the Paris Climate Agreement, demolishing the Clean Power Plan, opening federal lands to drilling, the list goes on and on. When asked on his recent visit to London about his views on climate change, he said, “I believe there’s a change in the weather, and it changes both ways.”

So how do we tackle this incredibly idiotic and dangerous stance that our current President has taken? For the July issue of *Common Sense II*, I’ll follow the assignment and share my ideas for positive, forward-looking policies that we need to enact if we are to survive the current climate crisis.

Russian Interference in the 2016 Election

By Nancy Rudd

It amazes me that more hasn't been discussed regarding the Russians and how they interfered in favor of the election of Donald Trump and worked against the election of Hillary Clinton for President in 2016. Although it started much earlier and is a complex discussion, on October 7, 2016, the Department of Homeland Security and the Office



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of National Intelligence on Election Security issued a statement that the Russians were behind the hacking of the DNC server and John Podesta's e-mails. The announcement was eclipsed by the release of the *Access Hollywood* tapes (how coincidental!).

President Obama, thinking that he would look partisan if he announced it by himself, asked Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and House Speaker Paul Ryan to issue a joint statement regarding the Russians and the election interference in favor of Trump over Clinton. They declined and deny it was ever asked of them.



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After a two year investigation by Special Counsel Robert Mueller III, they were unable to determine collusion with Russia by Trump and his family; however, in a nine minute speech after the report was finished, Mueller ended his speech with "And I will close by reiterating that the central allegation of our indictments, that there were multiple, systematic efforts to interfere in our election [by the Russians]. And that allegation deserves the attention of every American."

Indeed it does. How did the Russians sway the election toward Trump other than the hacking and WikiLeaks, which was designed to release denigrating information about Clinton at the most dam-

aging times prior to the election? They did it through misinformation on social media. Russia stole the information from many people, created fake identities, and used social media to target different groups, particularly on Facebook and Twitter. Those people who had supported Bernie Sanders for President were targeted with false information and ads that indicated that they should either write in Sanders' name or vote for Green Party candidate Jill Stein. Misinformation was given regarding Hillary Clinton and dubious pro-Trump "information" targeted a wide audience of lower and middle class white voters without high school or college degrees.

How can we stop Russia from hacking our election process again? The House of Representatives has passed HR1. Among other issues, this bill has a provision that all states have a paper ballot back-up system. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has refused to bring up the bill in its entirety for a Senate vote. Several Republican-controlled committees have come up with security bills to prevent election meddling by foreign adversaries that McConnell will not bring up for a vote either.



Misinformation is a more difficult issue. How do you know that what you are sharing on social media is the truth? Checking multiple sources is one way. The group Indivisible has a really good e-mail newsletter if you can't attend local meetings. Recently they had a pledge to vote only for the Democratic nominee for President. This would prevent most of the write-in and third party votes that undermined the last election. They are the best at grass roots organizing. This will be a necessity in the 2020 Presidential election to ensure a Democrat becomes President. What remains of our democracy, and indeed our planet, depends on it.

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

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Arresting the Advance of Global Warming in 2020

By Eric Grimsrud

The sorry state of our planet today with respect to its continuous heating by man-made atmospheric greenhouse gases can be attributed to the lack of attention given this problem by all U. S. administrations since 1988, when the scientific case for troubles ahead was clearly spelled out to the administration of George H. W. Bush by America's leading climate scientist, James Hansen. If action against climate had been begun then, we would have been able to avoid the worst consequences of warming. Most unfortunately for all of us and our descendants, that did not happen.

While professing concern about global warming in 1988, the first Bush Administration decided to take no action at that time—that is to “wait and see” seemed to be the prudent thing to do to George H. W. It is worth noting that John Sununu, the President's Chief of Staff at that time, considered himself to be the President's in-house science expert and believed that



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Hansen's view was fraught with errors (subsequently shown not to be the case). Unfortunately, President Bush was inclined to defer to Sununu on this issue.

It was also most unfortunate that at that time the major oil companies, who up until then had provided some of the best research concerning greenhouse gas warming, decided to stop doing that research because it was also suggesting troubles ahead due to the increased use of their products. So instead, they decided to use their resources for spreading doubt concerning the science being done on this topic by others. Thus, in that critically important year of 1988, the world lost its best opportunity yet for taking timely action against global warming.

The following Clinton administration also expressed some concern but provided little if any action—in spite of the fact that Al Gore was the Vice President at that time. The next President, George W. Bush, got elected by claiming to be just as concerned as his competitor, Al Gore, but then pulled the rug from under his progressive new head of the EPA, Christine Todd Whitman, as soon as the fossil fuel industries pushed back on the initial actions of Gov. Whitman.

Thus, during the first critical decade of the 21st Century, essentially nothing was done to arrest the alarming increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide. Sad to say that during the following administration of Democrat Barack Obama, very little—other than talk—also occurred. Obama's first priori-

ty was to institute a national healthcare system, and the Republicans' opposition to that issue seemed to consume almost all national attention during Obama's two terms.

And now we presently have a President, Donald Trump, who is probably the most ill-focused and least progressive U. S. President of all times. One of the few things we know for sure about this man is that he is one of the world's strongest deniers of the science behind global warming and is one of the fossil fuel industry's greatest supporters, strongly advocating more oil and gas exploration and extraction.

Because of the above, the concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere has now risen to about 408 parts per million, which is about 50% higher than it was prior to the fossil-fuel-driven Industrial Age. Life as we know it today cannot be sustained with that level of atmospheric CO₂, and still we are adding an additional 2-3ppm CO₂ to it every year. While the best science tells us that we need to reduce the atmospheric CO₂ level to about 350 ppm within the next few decades, we haven't even managed to level off human-caused annual emissions yet, much less reduce them.

So, what should be the greatest priority of a new Democratic Administration should we manage to get one after the upcoming elections of 2020? In my opinion, it is obvious that it has to include very strong action against the further advance of global warming. If we are not successful in that endeavor, which now has indeed become a very formidable task, no other issues of humanity will matter within a very few decades.

Some good news is that finally the issue has become one of the highest priorities for one of our political parties: the Democrats. Most of their candidates for the 2020 Presidency appear to be of that opinion. As usual, however, the Republicans will not be supportive and are sure to hammer the Democrats for supporting the great system changes that will be required. It is true that success in the battle against climate change will require major changes to the fossil-fuel-drenched business-as-usual system that we have become addicted to.

So, even though this battle is sure to be very difficult, it appears at least that the issue will now finally be put to the electorate in the primary and general elections of 2020. Note that in the present year, the issue of climate change will be front and center as opposed to it not even being mentioned in the candidate debates of 2016. Thus, what we



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do about this all-important issue will finally be up to the voting public. We can hope they will prove to be more responsible than their elected officials have been for the last 30 years.

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solutions that are implemented through the political process. Those that are nature-made can only be solved by us taking the initiative to create and instigate the solutions. Again, that is a political process. Power to the People!

The Sad Cost of Health Insurance

By Barb Anderson

So many people are still trying to be able to afford health insurance for themselves and their families. One friend told me she and her husband could not afford any kind of healthcare because they don't get insurance through their employment and aren't members of any group that offers reasonably priced coverage. If you are poor or don't have a job, you have Medicaid; otherwise, you have few options, none of which are affordable.

I asked about the ACA (Obamacare). Did the ACA make it easier to have insurance? Her answer was, "You still have to have enough money to buy insurance!"



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At first no one wanted the world to know they were not happy with the ACA. Now they are being very open and are hoping for what they hear as "Medicare for All." When this idea draws criticism, they are quite upset that it's just something else

that is going to fail them.

Many people don't want others to know how dependent they are and how difficult it is to get the help they need without giving up so much. If they have children, it is only the children who get healthcare. The worries for themselves are only addressed when it will affect the kids or someone they really care about.

Even those with insurance through their employment are affected. If they have good insurance or healthcare through their work, they are afraid to leave that job even if they are not happy with it.

So life becomes a difficult balancing act. Without healthcare, it

may not be possible to keep working to have the necessities for the family. Paying for high priced insurance, deductibles, and co-pays reduces what can be spent on other necessities.

It is time to really look at the rest of the world and how those who have fair and affordable healthcare came to have it. A perfect example for all of us to think about is Canada. Saskatchewan developed a healthcare plan for all. The rest of Canada looked at that plan with envy and said that's what they wanted. The country then hired the man who developed that plan to expand it to the rest of Canada. Now Canada has a single payer healthcare system for all.

That is what Medicare for all could be.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS—GET INVOLVED AND GET IT DONE!

Event	Date /Time	Location
DFL Headquarters Open (326-6296)	Tues & Thurs 2-5 pm	DFL Headquarters
Itasca Progressive Caucus (259-4490)	3rd Monday 6:30 pm	DFL Headquarters
DFL Central Committee Meets	4th Monday 6:30 pm	DFL Headquarters
DFL Social Club & Lunch	1st Wednesday Noon	DFL Headquarters
DFL Pot Luck (Open to the Public)	3rd Wednesday 5:30 pm	DFL Headquarters
Earth Circle	3rd Saturday 2:00 pm	GR Public Library
Itasca Working Families Alliance	2nd Monday 6:30 pm	Dutchroom
Itasca Indivisible	2nd Tuesday 7:00 pm	Dutchroom
GR Human Rights Commission	Last Wednesday 4:00 pm	GR City Hall
GR Healthcare for All	1st Thursday 5:00-6:00 m	DFL Headquarters
Circles of Support	Every Thursday 6:30 pm	811 NE 4th St.
Deadline for <i>Common Sense II</i>	July 7, 2019	conray@arvig.net