

## **LOOK UP! The HOPEFUL REALIST Newsletter:** ***Looking at the World Today as if Facts Matter***

**Robert MacNeil Christie, PhD**

*Here we explore the latest facts, actions, and perspectives on the New Great Transformation of the Earth System, as it unfolds before our eyes. We apply the Hopeful Realism we all need to work through the greatest predicament in human history.*

### ***Latest News from the Hopeful Realist***

I opened the first newsletter of 2025 by saying, “It is hard to believe that this issue begins the fourth volume, and fourth year of producing this newsletter.” Unfortunately, it is hard to believe several other things too. But here we are.

Two days ago, Donald John Trump was inaugurated as President of the United States of America. That was hard enough to believe in itself. But we have to ask why it is so hard to believe what he and his new brace of henchmen/women had already begun to do even before he took office.

The suppression of science, both as a practice and in its findings of fact, was a hallmark of the first Trump regime. The only reasons those efforts were somewhat constrained was the general level of incompetence of Trump himself and of his henchmen, and the existence of experienced officials who intentionally work for the American people (eg. Anthony Fauci, physician-scientist who led the fight against COVID-19) and generals who honored the constitution (e.g., General Mark Milley), who came to be known as the “guardrails of democracy,” for resisting the anti-democratic Trumpery, and who often explained to him that “you can’t do that.” This time is different. The deck is stacked against both democracy and the constitution.

It would take far too much space here to even list all the different forms of autocratic attempts carefully planned with strategies for implementation by the new Trump regime. For that I would refer you to the already infamous “[Project 2025 | Presidential Transition Project](#).” That huge document outlines in detail the neo-fascist plans to eliminate American Democracy and replace it with an authoritarian dictatorship overseen by America’s new oligarchs who constitute the power elite that would control the resulting corporate state. Just as in the 1930s when German business elites thought they could control Hitler to make a stronger oligarchy, the American power elites will likely preside over economic and social disaster.

While I have heard the term ‘fascism’ bandied about with increasing frequency in response to fears of a Trumpian takeover of America, it is important to know that the description I just made is by no means hyperbole—both the behavior and the rhetoric tell the tale clearly. Do not fall for

the “Oh, it’s just Trump’s over the top talk...” excuse for indifference to his [autocratic attempt](#). This time he has a plan and the resources and fanatical cronies to execute it.

One peculiarity of Trump’s autocratic attempt is that he says exactly what he intends to do, mixed in with a steady stream of lies and outrageous statements of denigration, accusations of imaginary conspiracies and threats of prosecution to anyone who might object. Anyone who has examined his lifelong career as a real estate grifter and master cheat in both business and sex, who has always been obsessed with personal power while seeking adulation from this week’s sycophants, can clearly see his intentions.

Why so many people, not just the uneducated victims of downward social mobility, but also the well-educated folks who see themselves as culturally and/or politically dispossessed, have fallen for the con is a whole other story, though related. That will require an extensive analysis to fully understand. It’s about the decline and fall of American civilization as we have known it, that’s all...

**The Great Knowledge Squeeze Has Begun.** I read a post on LinkedIn on Monday afternoon, a few hours after the presidential inauguration, which reported that what will undoubtedly be the last report by the OMB assessing the risks of climate change for the U.S. government, its operations, and the potential investments in climate, “for a while.” Well, I clicked on the link to take me to the report on the OMB website and, guess what? Nada. Well, next to nada. The OMB website is completely transformed into a Trumpy political promotion site.

Most of us have observed the first Trump regime to be not just perverse but incompetent too. It looks like that is no longer the case. Evil with technical competence is the worst we could wish upon ourselves or humanity itself. But that is likely what we will get. That is not to say that the heads of most departments Trump has appointed are competent, far from it. Most don’t even have a clue as to the nature of the institution over which they will preside. They were selected for their disdain for government and for the departments they will ‘run’ in particular. But they will have technicians working for them who have the skills and are willing to execute the commands of these clueless seekers of power.

Some sociologists used to consider what is called “the power of lower participants in organizations” to be one of the reasons bureaucracies become moribund, resistant to change, and sometimes unable to operate effectively, even when particular operations may run efficiently. MAGA ideologues, on the other hand, consider the very continuance of public institutions as an offense perpetrated by the mysterious operators of the “deep state.”

It is true that hierarchic organizations like corporations and government agencies are in some ways at sometimes constrained by resistance to new policies or programs. The extent of such resistance usually results from too many layers of hierarchy with too complicated relations among them.

At this point, I would have to consider the power of lower participants in federal agencies and departments as a *potential* “guardrail” that may slow or prevent some autocratic attempts to insert fascist political will into the normal operations of some agencies, which otherwise serve

the public good. The very existence of federal departments, including the Department of Education and even the national weather service the MAGA fanatics consider “the deep state.” How comfortable will you be on your next airline flight without the constant flow of information from the National Weather Service?

The executive order to reclassify tens of thousands of federal civil service employees as political appointees in order to fire them for not being sufficiently MAGA committed, will certainly put a damper on any “bureaucratic inertia” or resistance to extreme Trumpery. Fortunately, some union contracts will form a legal barrier to some of those efforts. For a sense of the extremity of Trump’s initial executive orders, see the summary in [The Guardian](#) newspaper. Never underestimate the ruthlessness of a narcissistic sociopath, or his henchmen.

We are in for a wild ride, at least until the midterm elections. Even under a Democratic Party controlled congress, the indifference to law and traditional practice inherent in Trumpery portends unlimited actions against the interests of the American people, the law, and the Constitution, and in favor of increasing and securing more and more power to these agents of oligarchy.

**Old News Again: *Holding IT Together: Social Control in an Age of Great Transformation*** can be purchased directly from the publisher, [Bear Claw Press](#), or from your favorite independent bookstore via [Bookshop.org](#). Of course, you can also buy it on [Amazon.com](#), but try ordering it in person by walking into your favorite local bookstore. Independent bookstores are valuable social places where that direct human contact, which is lost to your flat-panel screen, can still be found, along with the tactile feel of books as real objects of pleasure and enlightenment.

I know that putting the advert below for *Holding IT Together* in every issue of this newsletters may seem redundant, but, hey, it costs me nothing. I don’t charge myself a penny. So, it is a free reminder to buy and read the book. How could I turn that down?

.....

# HOLDING *IT* TOGETHER



*Social Control in an  
Age of Great Transformation*

ROBERT MACNEIL CHRISTIE, PhD

Published July 26, 2024, and the product of decades of research and reflection, [Holding IT Together: Social Control in an Age of Great Transformation](#) explains the global changes that have resulted in the catastrophic convergence of the crises of climate, ecosystems, economies, and politics, and the societal chaos, which we now see intensifying every day. In it, I also describe the deep changes that are necessary in order to effectively head off societal collapse so we can more comfortably shape the New Great Transformation of our institutions and our ways of living necessary in a world of less intensive energy consumption. We *will* transition away from fossil fuels, like it or not, and the sooner and more intentionally the better. Later would be catastrophic. Petroleum products provided great affluence for some for a while, yet are already causing chaos and environmental destruction for everyone.

[“Buy it!”](#) says the author.

Here are excerpts from some prominent editorial reviews:

*A dense and sweeping call to change the direction of human society before it’s too late. Still, his core message is strikingly direct and forceful. It’s hard to imagine any reader not being convinced that just such a massive change is necessary.* ~ **Kirkus Reviews**

*Christie embeds history surrounding social deconstruction and construction with the kinds of modern references that readers will relish...[He] offers an unprecedented opportunity for readers to apply the basics of economic understanding to the major issues facing humanity’s survival today... Hope is embedded throughout his approach.* ~ **Midwest Book Review**

*Both a wake-up call and a guide, this book calls for decisive action toward a sustainable, equitable future, making it an essential resource for policymakers, activists, and concerned citizens alike.* ~ **The Prairies Book Review**

With the publication of [Holding It Together: Social Control in an Age of Great Transformation](#), by Bear Claw Press, I seek a wide span of possible readers. After all, the book’s content has important implications for the lives of everyone.

If you are a researcher or teacher and would be interested in sending me a short review (two or three paragraphs), or would consider it for use in a class you teach, please go to the [BearClawPress.com](http://BearClawPress.com) website, click on the [Review/Exam Copies](#) tab (upper right) fill in the information, and I will send you a [pdf](#) or [ePub](#) copy free.

Otherwise, please buy, read, and offer a customer rating-review for ***Holding IT Together*** on [Goodreads.com](https://www.goodreads.com) or Amazon.com. Without a significant number of customer reviews, good or bad, the Amazon algorithm will ignore a book into oblivion, regardless of its quality.

Some have estimated that Amazon.com sells around seventy percent of all books sold. Nevertheless, I hope many who buy ***Holding IT Together*** will do so at their local independent bookstore. Of course, both paper and eBook versions are available on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) as well as from independent bookstores via [Bookshop.org](https://www.bookshop.org). It is now also available at a discount directly from the publisher, [BearClawPress.com](https://www.bearclawpress.com)

My eBook ***HOPEFUL REALISM: A Climate Manifesto*** remains available as a **free** download from [Kindle Unlimited](https://www.kindleunlimited.com). The regular Kindle eBook price is \$6.99. Please give it a rating/review on [GoodReads.com](https://www.goodreads.com). Or, [review and rate](#) *Hopeful Realism* on its Amazon page. You can do so by clicking the button on the lower left of the book's Amazon page below "Customer Reviews," and say a few words about what you think about the issues and how I frame them.

**Note:** As always, past issues of this Newsletter are available, archived on my web site:

<https://thehopefulrealist.com/hopeful-realist-newsletter/>

---

## ***LOOK UP! A Bi-weekly Featured Commentary***

**The Continuing Illusion.** As I have stated before, this whole project of mine, first the blog at [TheHopefulIllusion.com](https://www.thehopefulillusion.com), then this newsletter as I began to write what became [Holding IT Together: Social Control in an Age of Great Transformation](#), all began in the idea that societies are in effect held together by illusions, some of which fit very well with social, biological, or physical realities, while others that do not can cause serious problems. *Holding IT Together* deals with both, how they came about, how they work and fail to work, and how many of the most culturally cherished ones now must be eliminated and replaced with images and ideas that work under the extreme new conditions of life that confront us today on planet Earth.

But, that is not what has been happening. Not only have carbon emissions failed to decrease, their growth has accelerated to extreme levels. Emissions are not really the root cause of the heating of the atmosphere and the oceans, they are a key intermediate cause.

Some say that population growth is the cause, others say that 'overshoot' is the cause (overshoot simply meaning that too many people buy too many things made by too many corporate subcontractors in too many parts of the world, then used and discarded in reckless disregard for all the energy and materials extracted, used, and wasted, ultimately polluting the world where too many people have come to believe that it is all necessary and good.

Well, that may have been a too-long sentence, but yes, it is certainly all of the above and much more. But ultimately the *root cause of the current accelerating destabilization of the Earth System and virtually all of its subsystems, is the entire evolution and present extreme destructiveness of industrial civilization itself.*

Now, that is a lot to digest, which causes me intellectual indigestion and ought to cause it in you as well, if you are paying attention to the world around you. That is why so many prefer to be inattentive to the trends are now so easy to observe. Yet those who do acknowledge the depth of the predicament of industrial modernism also too often live in increasingly counter-productive illusions.

Advocates of various independently important climate actions or policies—eg., population reduction, prevention of deforestation or ramping up reforestation, cessation of (especially single-use) plastic production, reduction of over-consumption of meaningless junk, reduction of internal combustion engine driven cars, increased production of electric vehicles, cessation of consumption of meat (especially mass produced beef), etc. The list is much longer—often too many act as if the particular ‘solution’ that they advocate is the ‘real’ solution to overshooting the planet’s capacity to absorb the mess that industrial modernity had caused. Now, some of the ‘solutions’ proffered are more important than others, but most are needed anyway. Even some I find counterproductive (geoengineering) may even become necessary, but their early adoption is too likely to create a distraction from facing the deeper nature of the problem. Nevertheless, the tendency for ‘environmentalists’ to live in such intellectual and emotional ‘silos’ is itself a fundamental illusion about the nature of human life on planet Earth. It becomes a distraction from what is needed: an integrated approach to transforming the system at the root of the problem.

The reason this plethora of illusion is so dangerous is that the human predicament is at this juncture so complex that it requires a unified form of collective action at a scale that the world has never seen before. That action constitutes a societal self-transformation of the most comprehensive kind you might imagine, well, even more comprehensive than that. We cannot continue to imagine ‘fixing’ the grave emergency of trying to salvage some semblance of a human habitat from the ashes of a near total collapse of the Earth System as we have known it and as it has sustained human and other life for so long. We must suspend most of our everyday assumptions about how the world works, simply because it no longer works that way. That will take a collective mental effort with a level of imagination far greater than that which created industrial modernity in the first place.

### ***Today’s Featured Image:***

***Los Angeles is still burning. This is a photo of a small part of the destruction wrought by the Palisades fire, which covered much of the Santa Monica Mountains, including Malibu and other small coastal communities as well as many multi-million dollar mansions in the hills above the beach. Everything about the Santa***



***Anna winds, the previous heavy-rain season and extended drought is attributable to the divergent direction the planet is heading by the actions of industrial civilization. But that is not what the anti-science fossil fueled propagandists see.***



--Image credit: AP Photo/Ethan Swope in [The Conversation](#).

***The explicit policies now invoked by ‘president’ Donald Trump are designed to halt any federal effort at climate action, while attempting to stimulate fossil fuel production. Like so many of his ‘executive actions’ meant to destroy the programs or projects designed in the interests of the wellbeing of the American people, these actions are meant to save money to help offset the costs of another big tax cut for ultra-billionaires and the multinational corporations they control.***

### ***Books and other Sources Related to the New Great Transformation***

One of the biggest problems with trying to get some form of climate action going is conceptual and emotional. First, the concept of reality for most modern humans involves the notions that Nature is a separate thing. That is, even so-called “Nature lovers,” imagine Nature as separate from themselves. It is something to be admired and appreciated, but is seen as separate. That is why most ‘moderns’ look for ‘solutions’ to the climate crisis only within industrial modernity itself. Second, the rise of postmodernism as a way to frame social reality in the late twentieth

century, has further separated modern culture from the objective reality of the Earth System, which constitutes our living habitat.

<https://www.planetcritical.com/p/our-world-and-its-postmodern-makeover>

Rachel Donald is a British podcaster who has interviewed some of the most important thinkers in the world of trying to figure out the nature of the current global crisis of human survival. In addition, she writes some of the most insightful essays on her podcast. The one I just read, posted yesterday and linked to above, may be her best. Anyone who wants to understand the essence of the failure of consciousness that characterizes modernity and is at the root of the cultural failure to accurately address the catastrophic convergence of crises that face us today, which are ultimately of our own doing, must read Rachel's essay, "[Our world and its postmodern makeover](#)."

### *Quotable Quotes*

Rebecca Solnit is a guiding light whose insights and outlook make hope possible in a world of dark reality. If we understand both the cultural conundrum that Rachel Donald describes as well as the facts of an Earth System spinning out of control, then feeling good seems out of the question.

*A There is no alternative to persevering, and that does not require you to feel good.*

~ Rebecca Solnit

Rebecca Solnit's writing and spirit are the antidote to modern despair. She recognizes that the only way to have hope is through action in recognition of the dire nature of the physical and social reality industrial modernism has created through its destructive practices.

~ ~ ~

See you in two weeks. Meanwhile, stay safe, say hello to a neighbor or stranger, check out my blog posts at [The Hopeful Realist.com](#), read [HOPEFUL REALISM: A Climate Manifesto](#)., and, buy my new book, [Holding It Together: Social Control in an Age of Great Transformation](#).