

## **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**

#### **Play It Again, Sam...NOT!**

While the world seeks answers to its building energy-supply chain-economic scarcity predicament, the primary perpetrator of the convoluted war of choice obsesses over an imaginary gold-leafed ballroom. One billion dollars for that is outrageous, but not as outrageous as the daily cost of the war, not only in financial terms but in terms of the ruthless extinguishing of life and the diminution of the nation's standing in the world, both moral and political. Meanwhile, we are told that the federal government cannot afford to pay for food stamps for the destitute, for childcare for the working poor, or for healthcare for its people.

The same song has been played over and over for decades. Only now it is far more explicit and vulgar. The ultra-billionaires are said to have somehow earned the vast fortunes that could easily fund education and universal healthcare, which are available in every other "advanced" industrial nation. So, we hear proposals for a "wealth tax," often as a one-time levy on the super-wealth that almost always avoids most existing taxation requirements. On top of that, the billionaires sing a song of lament that they pay too much in taxes, although their rates are lower than ever and the loopholes they commissioned often result in no income tax at all.

But like so many other problems, attacking the symptoms is not the same as resolving the source of the systemic defect. As some taxation experts have demonstrated, the problem lies in the taxation system itself: various provisions in tax law allow vast amounts of income to the super-rich to be "non-taxable."

So much of the income gained by the super-rich and the giant corporations is deemed to be not taxable, specifically because of "loopholes," the tax code provisions that define it so. Various forms of income are not taxable for the wealthiest individuals and corporations because of a steady flow of tax-law revisions and additions that eliminate specific kinds of income that only the wealthiest are privileged to receive, unlike the rest of us. We pay income tax on all of our income, even though our earnings are miniscule in comparison to that of those who gain billions and avoid taxes on most of it, all because billionaires can afford to buy politicians.

And now, the current regime slashes federal programs and departments without regard to their function or their benefit to the nation. The goal is to “save” more federal money on trumped up claims of “waste, fraud, and abuse” without any evidence, in order to offset the ever-larger tax breaks for the wealthiest people and corporations, which, of course happen to be the biggest donors to the politics of the regime. And that is only one of the many levels of corruption that have rapidly become normalized because the Congress is dominated by regime lackeys, whose greed is only surpassed by their fear of being “primaried.”

One of the characteristics of all emerging fascist regimes is that they systematically violate traditional political norms both to create political chaos and to normalize their quest for dictatorial power. We have seen that song played in every authoritarian takeover in history, and we are seeing it playing today. Meanwhile, the ‘centralist’ democrats who control the party, continue to think that it’s all about winning the midterm elections, in order to re-establish the previous political order. They ignore the fact that it was *that very order* that led to the autocratic attempt that dominates our lives today. But they don’t want to push for genuine change to give power back to the people, since that would offend their big donors, who pay the Democrats much less to do their bidding than they give the Republicans.

The Republican racist *redistricting* now blessed by the plutocratic majority of the Supreme Court, is only one of the tactics the regime is deploying to assure that the midterms do not result in Democrats taking control of the House or the Senate come November. California Democrats stood up to the challenge of sudden partisan redistricting to create the new Republican districts their ‘king’ demanded. A few other blue states made similar efforts. But now, with the court approving explicit Jim Crow redistricting to wipe out Black majority districts across the South, some of the other tactics contemplated by the regime—confiscating ballots, posting ICE thugs at voting stations to intimidate Brown folks into not voting, etc.—may not be needed to assure that the election will not represent the will of the people. Emboldened by perceived immunity, the regime is likely to use illegal and unethical (to put it mildly) methods of eliminating votes that do not favor it.

White nationalism is just the latest rendition of the old song of the dehumanization inherent in racism. The nation cannot afford for the new Old South to play that decrepit timeworn Jim Crow song again.

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Here is a shorter promo for  *Holding IT Together*  which, in every issue of this newsletter may seem redundant, but, hey, it costs me nothing.

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# HOLDING *IT* TOGETHER



*Social Control in an  
Age of Great Transformation*

ROBERT MACNEIL CHRISTIE, PhD

## Can Modern Civilization Transform Itself in Order to Survive?

In *Holding IT Together*, Dr. Robert MacNeil Christie explains how we got into this mess and what it will take to come out alive. Despite its many benefits, industrial civilization has become an existential threat to itself and our Earth System. It may even threaten our survival, along with many other species. We must transform ourselves, our communities, and our societies into responsible members of the ecosystems of which we are a part. We must 'hold it together' to find a place of our own within the living Earth system, Gaia.

*Libraries seeking treatises on the major dilemmas of modern society and living, who look for well-researched blends of and contrasts between different viewpoints...will find Holding IT Together especially relevant... ~ Midwest Book Review*

*Christie's writing is sharp and thought-provoking, making complex ideas accessible...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*

**"Buy it!"** says the author.

My eBook **HOPEFUL REALISM: A Climate Manifesto** is available on Amazon.com. Please give it a rating/review on [GoodReads.com](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/41854433-Hopeful-Realism). Or, [review and rate](#) *Hopeful Realism* on its Amazon page.

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

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

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

### **The Persistent Predicament**

We are all part of it; in our planetary residence we have no choice at all. We all live on Planet Earth and are subject to the permanent planetary parameters, about which the deepest levels of the culture of industrial civilization remain in full denial. In the past few decades, many proposals, mostly directed at one fragment or another of the larger planetary predicament, have been offered as adequate to "solve" the "climate change" problem or to protect various parts of Nature. But it is so much more than a "problem."

“Green growth” is an oxymoron. Economic growth to feed the capital accumulation demands of the world’s financial elites *IS* the problem. Yet, it is so much more complicated than that.

I am constantly amazed by the fact that climate, ecological, and energy experts state simple partial solutions to such a complex predicament as that which confronts industrial civilization today. “Lower carbon emissions.” Sure, but what is required to do that? “Capture and store CO2 from the air.” What about the massive build-out of those many carbon capture machines that would use so much energy and materials in their construction, and have not been shown to be effective even at much smaller scale? “Restore and regenerate the ecosystems,” which are dying because of the damage caused by extraction, consumption, and waste? Well, won’t they continue to die off unless the root of the problem is addressed? The list goes on...

Even while emitting chatter about “green growth,” so-called authorities at most levels of government and corporate authority, continue targeting economic growth as the source of every kind of “progress” imagined. The simple and widely verified fact is that the only and primary way humans can attempt to control runaway climate chaos and ecological destruction is to *drastically reduce energy extraction, production, consumption, use, and waste*. All the elements of excessive fossil-fuel energy extraction, production, use, and waste, are interconnected and form a globalized political-economic system that can only continue by means of high volume deployment of fossil fuel energy. That is what the global industrial system was built with and depends on. And, that must go, even as that will entail total transformation of global economic systems.

Therein lies the fundamental predicament of modern human civilization. It cannot go on as it has without an eventual (much sooner than you think) catastrophic collapse of ecological systems, severe breakdown of climate patterns humans have depended on for thousands of years, consequent resource wars, mass migrations, and political and societal chaos. These systems that provided the essentials of life (along with a lot of meaningless products) since the industrial revolution, will collapse if we do not transform them.

We have but two choices: 1) continue with “business as usual,” until the ultimate tipping point of collapse of planetary and societal systems drives the human population to mass starvation and maybe even extinction; or 2) radically revise the fundamental structure of societies in ways that will allow them to use much less energy in provisioning people in communities with the essential goods and services that are necessary for basic wellbeing. Half-baked measures will resolve into option one.

Now, option number one is simply unacceptable if we want to avoid falling into complete societal chaos amid rapid depopulation due to an explosive disparity between resources available and people seeking sustenance. As climate and ecological conditions become increasingly unstable, so will the provision of the basic means of survival: food and shelter from environmental threats to safety and health. On this trajectory, the way forward is terminal.

Option number two is imperative; there is no other path toward stability and wellbeing, albeit at a much smaller scale. But it is extremely difficult to define, no less follow. We are starting, far too late for any easy transition, with almost all of the cards stacked against us. Many

destabilizing parameters are already well down the path to chaos. Yet, the human capacity to rise to the occasion of a severe challenge is not to be ignored.

The obstacles are prodigious and proximate. Despite the emergency status of the global predicament—largely unrecognized and in any case ignored—government and corporate elites continue on their paths of power and violence. These simply must be overcome. That is why, at this late stage, the only viable action to ‘jump start’ a New Great Transformation of societies, is a massive societal mobilization of the people to demand radical reformation of the institutional structures that hold us back from creating viable ecological communities that can live in harmony with their natural ecosystems.

If we are to break through the persistent predicament of industrial modernity, we must recognize the necessity of societal transformation to shed the industrial-consumer culture and institutional/technological of modernity, and face the fact that we must replace it with an entirely new ecological civilization.

***Today’s Featured Image:***

***I don’t remember where or when I heard the proclamation, “The South will rise again.” But it seems that it was a prediction that is coming to pass today. With the perverse support of a racist Supreme Court and a political regime that demands that “red states” gerrymander districts with Black majorities, while firing just about every high ranking military officer (generals and admirals) who is Black or female, racist politicians feel empowered to become the new Jim Crow practitioners.***



Source: Jim Crow Museum. <https://jimcrowmuseum.ferris.edu/what2.htm#d19e260-43>

***With the civil rights law enacted in 1964, the obvious indicators of the deep racism in the South dissipated. It had become politically incorrect to display open racism in public. But racism itself is hard to dislodge.***

***White liberals often assumed that racism had been vanquished—in their sheltered lives they saw less, and imagined themselves as personally not racist, even as they participated in institutional racism of a more subtle kind. But Black folk knew better than that.***

***A year or so earlier, I had invited a Black friend from our military unit to ride with me from Orlando Florida to his home in Tyler Texas on my way to California for the Christmas holiday. As we drove across the Deep South, he educated me as to how we had to behave to avoid him getting lynched and me beaten severely. For example, when we stopped to get something to eat, he explained to this naïve California boy that when I entered the restaurant at the front door, he would have to go around to the back entrance to buy his lunch. We met back at the railroad tracks after sleeping in segregated motels. All the current indicators suggest that the horrors of Jim Crow are returning in partly***

***by disenfranchisement with the support of the white nationalist regime  
in Washington, DC.***

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

US Intelligence, bestselling author, retired US Navy Senior Chief, and Ukrainian Army Legionnaire, Malcolm Nance has been there, and he has seen and experienced a great deal more than most of us can imagine. He is super smart and knows how it all works. His incisive commentaries on the Netanyahu/Trump war on Iran is informed by a forty year career in military intelligence and most of that in the Middle East. He lived there and speaks the at least some of the local dialects. Listen and learn:

Malcolm Nance. 2026. “Black Man Spy” podcast. <https://malcolmnance.substack.com/>

Malcolm’s conversations with his co-hosts, Jacob Kaarsbo, Danish Intelligence officer, and Wajeeh Lion, Saudi born international geopolitical-cultural analyst who lives in Minneapolis, are full of insightful observations and ironic humor, all related to facts on the ground. They share not only insights from their vast experience and key connections with real-time information sources, but they offer current intelligence that no other media sources seem able report. The podcast is the real go-to source for understanding the war on Iran, the motivations and particular corruptions of the players, and the devastating impacts on affected populations and environments. Their rational humanitarian perspectives are unique and extremely valuable.

### ***Quotable Quotes***

It’s not actually about the billionaires themselves, however we may despise the corruption of Elon Musk or others. It’s about the system that allowed such extreme wealth to be concentrated in such a few men (mostly old white men). The current global economic system, which facilitates compounded accumulation of capital by whoever has already accumulated the most, favors extreme inequality of income and wealth by its very nature. It also lives on a lie. Contrary to its ideology, the old “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” trope that implies that anyone can become “rich and famous” by individual hard work, is just not true. Some may do it, but conditions now make it impossible for most to earn a living wage. However, once one becomes rich, famous or not, accumulating more becomes easier and easier.

#### ***Should We Even Have Billionaires?***

~ Justine Wolfers, interviewed by Anand Giridharadas on *The Ink*.

Cf. *Platypus Economics* on Substack

Wolfers outlines many of the contradictions and defects in the economic system most of us believe in, culturally trained by neoliberal economic propaganda. In any economic system that favors accumulation of capital over income from actual work, those with the most capital will accumulate much more than those with less or no capital, in a self-amplifying spiral. Sure, “you”

can become rich, but the imaginary element is the idea that “you” is anyone. The “rags to riches” appellation is rare, but presented in the capitalist ideology as viable for anyone who epitomizes the character of the American individualist. But as the old saying goes, you’ve got to have money to make serious money. *Back in the 1950s, when we had a progressive income tax system and a modest number of millionaires, not billionaires, and fewer ‘loopholes’ that allowed the super-rich to avoid taxation, wages were higher and the government could pay its bills.*

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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](http://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.](#)