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# COMMON SENSE II

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*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.*

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May 2020

Stuck at Home Musings Issue

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## The Greatest Humanitarian Crime

By Nancy Rudd

Economic sanctions by the United States are the greatest crime against humanity. This has been happening since World War II. Economic sanctions, under the guise of restoring democracy to a region or country, to prevent the building of a nuclear weapon that *might* be used against the US, have killed or helped kill millions of innocent people.

Twenty million people have been killed or helped to be killed—think Yemen—by the US under all administrations. We have helped overthrow 36 governments (such as Vietnam, Iraq, Iran, and most recently Venezuela), interfered in 84 elections, attempted to assassinate approximately 50 foreign leaders, and dropped bombs on people in over 30 countries.

With the Trump administration leaving the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), also known as the Iran Deal, the international community that joined the United States has fallen apart.



<https://fpnews.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Trump.jpg>

The point was to lift economic sanctions in exchange for Iran's dismantling any attempt to build a nuclear weapon; it was working. This happened during the Obama Administration, so of course, it

had to go. In addition to leaving the deal, Trump not only placed more economic sanctions on Iran, he placed them on any country trying to trade with Iran. Now, with the large numbers of deaths from COVID-19, Iran has again petitioned Trump to lift these draconian sanctions. It hasn't happened.

How many more people will be killed by this country, which considers itself a beacon of humanity, by economic sanctions?

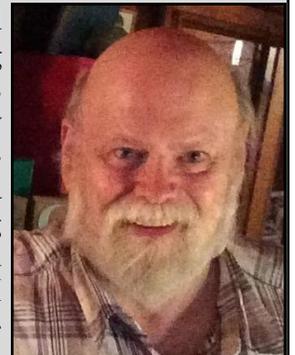
## In Memorium\*

\* Editor's Note: Long time readers of these pages will remember the insightful articles on poverty and championing of the underdogs of life by Pat West. Sadly, after long health battles, Pat died on April 13<sup>th</sup>. I asked Barb Anderson to give us some of her thoughts. Rest in peace, my friend.

## Missing Patrick West

By Barb Anderson

Our friend Pat worked with us on the many progressive beliefs and projects and strived to do all he could to keep us understanding those ideals. His abilities and knowledge will be sadly missed. He worked to understand where we all stood and what we were working toward. He always listened to my ideas even when I knew he thought I was a little crazy. Now that is a friend and a believer in progressive ideals!



He would spend time with new friends who were talking about new ideas or different ways of looking at things. He always said there were many different ways of viewing people and the world they lived in. He made many of us rethink what we were doing or how we were putting it into words to be understood by many, not just a few.

Life with Pat was always interesting as he was never sure how he should be looking at things. I told him once to look at things the way he thought he should. He said, "If I always do that, I will be narrowing my view to only what I know or understand or want to understand." To me, that was Pat and how he looked at the world.

I think I was blessed to get to know someone like Pat who could see things in many different textures and still be open to so many other ideas and views.

# Window of Opportunity

By Bob Passi

The coronavirus has required us to stop in our tracks to attend to a new reality that is a threat to human survival on this planet. It is a reality that we ignore at our peril. It is a reality that requires cooperative effort. It is a reality that transcends individual preferences. It is a reality that has no respect for national boundaries, or class boundaries, or status boundaries, or degrees of economic or political influence.

Our only protection is to work together to contain and control the pandemic. Competition is completely counter-productive as is the profit motive or individual aggrandizement for power or glory.

This requires selfless work for the human community at large.

This puts into perspective the priorities of the past. People are far more important than profit. Without a healthy populace, no economic system, no political system, no system of interchange is viable or sustainable.

The old system had moved to a dominant but destructive position. It had become dysfunctional but seemingly beyond the control of the ordinary citizens of the world.

The latest crisis has shown the emptiness of that old system and its lack of attention to the new realities of this world. That system of mass destruction, mass production, and mass consumption has been stopped in its tracks while the new requirements for human survival have taken precedence and will require a renewed focus on human life, social structure, governance, and economics to deal with the situation effectively.

This moment presents us with a unique opportunity even amidst the tragedy and trauma.



<https://stevendkay.files.wordpress.com/2009/09/opp2.jpg?w=595>

We are presented with a window of opportunity to devise an alternate system for human beings on this planet: one that values not only human life but also all life on this planet and the life of the planet itself. It offers an opportunity to find effective ways to work with the planet for

our mutual survival.

We have some ideas from our past such as participatory democracy which allowed ordinary people to have a voice about their future and the future of the planet. We have models of cooperation and community. We have many examples of individuals moving past their self-interests to help others or to help the survival of their communities. This is the most human of all impulses.

We have seen all of this in action as people work hard and make significant sacrifices for the good of others and for the good of the general populace. We have all been empowered by this and see what we can accomplish with others like ourselves if we work together. We have seen the progress we have made, sometimes in spite of powerful forces working to thwart our efforts.

It is time to turn those impulses to creating a more human alternative to the old system.

If we delay, that old system will begin to reconstitute itself in the name of national necessity. It will use its economic blackmail to entice people back to participating before it is safe, and it will jeopardize the progress

that has been made in order to serve the gods of profit and greed. The old system will restart and begin to regain the momentum that made it so hard to



<https://coreybradshaw.files.wordpress.com/2009/12/the-future.jpg>

stop before; that momentum that seemed inevitable, especially when viewed from their perspective of human value based on monetary wealth. We will find ourselves, once again, part of a system that requires monetary wealth for access to even the most basic necessities of life and requires ordinary people to spend their lives working for monetary rewards set by an economic elite, in working conditions set by that same elite.

This new reality has afforded us a window of opportunity to reshape our human responses to life on this planet and to find better solutions for short term survival and long term sustainability. If we do not recognize the moment for what it is, the old system will impose the top-down solutions which will make life more toxic, less secure, and less sustainable.

## Here We Go Again

By Roger Francis

Here we go again. We are facing multiple life threatening crises: climate change, coronavirus pandemic, a healthcare system crisis, and now our government is stealing from the public to line the pockets of the already rich.

I recently read in [www.commondreams.org](http://www.commondreams.org) just published research noting that 82% of the more than \$2 trillion Care Act monies will end up in the pockets of the corporate elite and wealthy. That seems astounding until you remember this is the Trump Administration. The report added that



Treasury Secretary Mnuchin is allowing banks to seize the \$1,200 individual stimulus checks to pay off debts. Hedge fund managers and private equity firms are attempting to game the small business loan fund set up under this legislation as well. To further assist health insurance companies, the House Democrats are proposing a plan to subsidize them instead of helping the people who really need healthcare assistance.

So here we are again. The housing bubble, the 2008 financial collapse, and now the COVID-19 pandemic create economic havoc for people and the country. While everyone is affected, these economic upheavals are particularly devastating for the poor, the self-employed, and those working for small businesses. They are not actually being helped by the government. The federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour hasn't been increased since 2009, and somehow corporations have cut back on benefits such as healthcare even with low unemployment.



It's time to look closely and see clearly what is really going on. Lincoln's lofty characterization of our government being of, by, and for the people is mythical rhetoric promoted by the wealthy elite to protect their money and property. In the past, we as a people have enjoyed the individual freedom promoted by this national myth. But the mask is off. We now live in a plutocracy; the rich and powerful rule and will continue to do so unless we rise up to reclaim our rights as citizens.

## It's the Least He Can Do

By Nancy Rudd

I've heard stories of people whose loved ones have died from COVID-19. Many of these people, in addition to not getting to say good-bye, don't have the money to give their loved one a decent burial. Some have set up accounts on GoFundMe to get donations to bury them.



<https://1.bp.blogspot.com/-6fgpEvXacQ0/XofQigFWj9I/>

This is what this country has become: heartless leadership at the highest echelons of government.

Trump declared COVID-19 a national emergency. He did this with the Sharpie with which he loves to sign his name. If he would contact the Federal



Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and tell them to release funds to those with funeral expenses, they could do it. Although we normally think of FEMA in relation to natural disasters, they work in the declarations of national emergencies as well. Will Trump make this seemingly minor but humanitarian gesture? I doubt it. It doesn't fit with his narcissistic focus.

If Trump really wants to "make America great again" (after he's done all he can to destroy it), he should direct FEMA to release the burial funds to those without the resources to bury their loved ones. It's the least he can do.

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**PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS GOES TO THE MOVIES**

**Whatever Happened to Michael Moore?**

*By Vicki Andrews*

When I heard that Michael Moore was producing a new movie, this one about climate change, I was looking forward to it. I’ve been a big fan of his for years and have seen most of his movies, including *Bowling for Columbine*, *Roger and Me*, *Where to Invade Next*, among others. His movies have been informative but with a nice touch of humor and always have had a liberal, progressive point of view and have been enjoyable to watch.

I watched his recent movie, *Planet of the Humans*, and was left shocked, saddened, disappointed, and wondering what the heck happened to Michael Moore. The movie was due to be released in theaters on Earth Day, 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, theaters are closed, so that couldn’t happen; instead it was released on YouTube.

I sat down a few days after Earth Day with a big bowl of popcorn and prepared to enjoy the movie, which I assumed would be pro-clean energy and anti-fossil fuels and delivered with Moore’s humorous satire. What a surprise I got. Moore and his fellow producers, Jeff Gibbs and Ozzie Zehner, were mocking environmentalists and the whole green energy movement. They were making claims about the inefficiency of all clean energy and basically stating we



were better off with fossil fuels. After the shock wore off, I spent some time on YouTube watching various pro and con discussions of the film. I learned many people were disappointed and concerned. I was not alone!

A good review of the various issues of concern can be found in “Meet the New Flack for Oil and Gas: Michael Moore,” an article by Josh Fox in the April 30, 2020 issue of *The Atlantic*. Fox describes the film as “wildly unscientific and outdated, full of falsehoods, and benefits the fossil fuel industry promoters and climate deniers” and itemizes many of the misleading statements in the film. For example, Moore uses solar panel and wind energy displays that were built years ago. He doesn’t mention all the improvements that have happened in recent years; he doesn’t mention battery storage, a relatively new development that has made green energy much more efficient. He shows a Tesla car being plugged into (and powered by) a coal powered energy grid; while it is true that does happen occasionally, most people driving electric cars do whatever possible to use clean energy to charge them. The cars have also become much more efficient than the examples Moore uses. It’s as though he produced the film a decade or two ago. He totally ignores current developments.



If you choose to waste 90 minutes to watch this film, please also take the time to review some of the commentary: the Fox article in *The Atlantic* as well as numerous discussions and interviews on YouTube and other sources. Please don’t be taken in by this version of Michael Moore, and let’s hope he returns to his old self soon.

**CALENDAR OF EVENTS: GET INVOLVED AND GET IT DONE!**

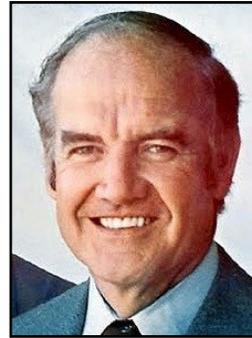
<b>Event</b>	<b>Date /Time</b>	<b>Location</b>
DFL Headquarters Open (326-6296)	Closed	DFL Headquarters
Itasca Progressive Caucus (259-4490)	Suspended	DFL Headquarters
DFL Central Committee Meets	Suspended	DFL Headquarters
DFL Social Club & Lunch	Suspended	DFL Headquarters
DFL Pot Luck (Open to the Public)	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 5, 2020	conray@arvig.net



(Continued from page 5)

insured who tend to forgo preventative medicine and wait until it's often too late and therefore more expensive and drains the resources of the emergency room. That cost is figured into the price of paying patients. A single-payer, not-for-profit insurance guaranteeing universal coverage would reduce extraneous costs and complications. The May 2013 issue of *Common Sense II* examined the prescription drug system; little has changed since then. Again, insurance is at the root of the problem. Experiments with virtual doctor visits and remote treatment are forward looking and exciting. Still, maintaining rural hospitals and medical ac-

cess is important to much of the country.



The personal payments to supplement people's income and lost wages are close to what George McGovern campaigned on in 1972 and Andrew Yang promoted in 2020. During this pandemic, the push has been for tests and hospitalization to be provided at no cost to the patient, thus protecting the general

population. Medicare for all has been suggested as an avenue to facilitate this. If it really becomes reality, it is a step toward universal, single payer health insurance. Both of these changes speak of a socialistic element to assure the populace of a secure life from which everyone can concentrate on progress instead of scraping out a meagre living.



That would be a revolutionary leap into the future we all crave.



# Census data impacts funding for things like:

- > Education programs and grants
- > Public transportation
- > Medicare and Medicaid
- > Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
- > Libraries
- > Community centers
- > School meal programs
- > Parks, playgrounds, and recreational facilities

For more information, visit:  
**2020CENSUS.GOV**

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