
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.

July 2019

Solutions Issue

Volume 14 Issue 7

In Search of Solutions

By Mary Drewes

A recent viewing of commentators Shields and Brooks on the PBS News Hour galvanized my belief that solutions to society's ills can only be found in working together. PBS prides itself on delivering balanced news reports, so in this case Mark Shields brings the Democratic perspective while David Brooks offers a conservative Republican view. The topic under discussion this particular evening was Joe Biden's lead in the polls ahead of all other Democratic candidates and also he much criticized statement that he was able to "get things done" in the past by working with segregationists. For this statement Biden was being bashed by fellow Democrats, especially those of a younger generation.



Shields' response:

There is a reason Joe Biden was asked to give the eulogy at the funerals of Senators John McCain, Strom Thurmond, Fritz Hollings, George McGovern, and Ted Kennedy. The Democrats had the majority at the time but with bipartisan support were able to pass the G. I. Bill, the Medicare Act, and Medicaid. Ted Kennedy, the liberal "Lion off the Senate," worked with Orin Hatch to pass the children's health insurance for families who didn't have health insurance through their employer. Kennedy oversaw the passing of Title 9, the Voting Rights Act, and financial assistance for AID patients by working across the aisle.

Shields dismissed the purists who want everyone on their side..."tsk, tsk, tsk, no sinners in my church."

Brooks was of like mind on the need for members of congress to work together, although he did feel Biden was a little tone deaf by suing segregationists as an example when speaking of his success in getting important legislation passed. There are issues on which reasonable people can strongly disagree—the abortion issue being one of them, but segregation is not one of those issues—according to Brooks. By contrast, Kirsten Gillibrand's recent statement that she won't deal with pro-life people despite, as an elected official, she was elected to serve all the people and does not have the liberty to pick and choose who she will "deal with" despite personal preference.

As we choose a candidate worth of our support, I believe we need to look for a candidate who plays well with others and can GET THINGS DONE! As much as we support the stated position of a given candidate, lofty ideals never really have and never will put bread on the table. As much as we like to think that the Democratic Party has all the best solutions, we do not. We need to elect good leaders who are able to include all and take the best ideas of all. Love of country must trump love of party, something both sides need to keep in mind.

If something is really
IMPORTANT to you,
you will find a way.
If it is not important,
you will find an excuse.

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

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For a Healthy Future, Support the Green New Deal

By Vicki Andrews

In recent years we have been getting serious warnings that the Earth is heading toward a critical situation due to the rapidly warming climate, caused primarily by our use of fossil fuels, which spew carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. We are now being warned that if we don't act quickly and decisively to turn this around, it will soon be too late. In fact, we are told that we have less than 12 years to make substantive changes or we will be dealing with death and destruction at an unimaginable level.

There is a potential solution, but in order to be effective, it must be put into action very soon. The answer to this looming crisis is known as the Green New Deal, which calls for a ten-year mobilization to get our country on a rapid path to a 100% carbon free power system and a de-carbonized economy. Some of the primary goals of the GND include:

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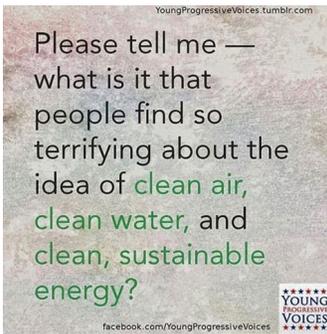
- ◆ **Infrastructure Renewal:** To repair, upgrade, and expand our country's neglected roads, bridges, energy grid, and water systems.
- ◆ **Smart Grids:** To enable renewable energy distribution, energy-efficient manufacturing, and expanding low-emission public transit.
- ◆ **Clean Air and Water:** To replace lead pipes, clean up hazardous waste sites, and reduce toxic air and pollution from oil, gas, and coal.
- ◆ **Build Community Resilience:** To help climate-exposed communities build bridges that can withstand floods, restore wetlands that buffer hurricanes, and shield coastlines from sea level rise. We also need to ensure that workers in the fossil fuel industries will have opportunities to move into clean energy jobs.
- ◆ **Fair Wages and Opportunities:** Each project will be required to pay workers prevailing wages, hire locally, offer training opportunities, and sign project labor agreements with unions.

This program can be financed—at least partially—through an increased marginal tax on the super wealthy; a much higher tax rate (70% has been suggested) on income earned over \$10 million and taxing the more than \$33 trillion that is stashed by wealthy Americans in off-shore accounts in order to avoid taxation. We will also be avoiding the extremely high costs we are now paying for climate disasters, costs that will only increase as time goes by.



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Leo Reynolds/Flickr



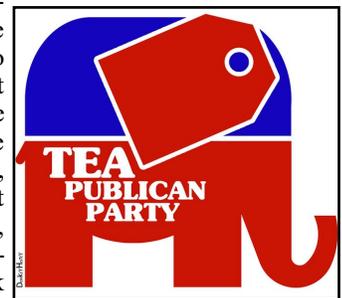
<https://wagingnonviolence.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/sunrisemvmt-615x461.jpg>

According to a December poll by the Yale Program on Climate Communication and the George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication, 64% of Republicans and 92% of Democrats support the Green New Deal. Unfortunately, the Current President of the United States and many of his strong supporters refuse to admit the reality of climate change and see no need to reduce our dependence on fossil fuel.

The Practical Solution

By Valerie Conner

Americans have always prided ourselves on our ability to solve problems. No matter how unsurmountable they seem, we tackle them and eventually seem to improve the situation. Right now that may seem to be more of a myth than a reality. The reality in Trump's—and hence, our—America is pretty dire right now. But as this issue shows, we still have the ability to address our problems and seek solutions. Some such as non-fossil fuel powered air travel are harder than changing our immigration policies. Although considering the current political climate brought to us by the compromise-is-an-original-sin Tea Party and their successors, it may be easier to address jet travel.



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It is time to put partisanship aside and seek negotiated and compromised solutions to our problems. How do we do this? Ironically enough, it's by being totally partisan in the election. Over the past decade and a half and more, it has been evident that the Republicans have abdicated their duty to put country before party and re-election before a responsible party for the purist goals of regressive policies to take us back to the "good old days" that never were.

Mature discussion and debate with the mutual goal of improving Americans' lives and saving the world are what is needed. We've done it before; we can do it again. We've dallied and wrung our hands in despair long enough. It's past time to get to work for our future. Since the Republicans refuse to help, it's up to the Democrats to take charge. The first stop on that journey is the ballot box. We can't afford to pout and not vote or vote for some third, fourth, or eighth party without a chance of win if our preferred candidate didn't get the nomination. Practicality demands we look to the attainable goal and support, work for, and vote for the Democratic candidates and then support them once they're in office.



The Challenging Road Ahead

By Eric Grimsrud

Let's assume for the moment that the Democrats do gain control of our government in the upcoming 2020 elections. In considering what we do then, let's just focus here on the one issue that many Democrats have agreed is the most important: addressing climate change. In addressing that problem, Democrats as well as republicans will have to learn what sacrifices must be made in order to make required cuts in the emissions of carbon dioxide. There is perhaps no better example of this than the changes that will be required in the means by which we travel long distances across our planet—that is, of course, by fossil fuel powered jet aircraft. As difficult as this example is, it must be faced by all of us, including the multitude of Americans who are so in love with and/or dependent on travel by aircraft that they presently ignore its great contribution to global warming.



http://www.arnes.si/~sopvsavl/travelling/delta_air.jpg

Note that long distance air travel as it presently exists is unlikely to be rescued by any of the technological developments that have been envisioned to date. Changes to battery powered aircraft engines are being considered but only for relatively short trips up to about 200 miles. The option of nuclear powered aircraft can be dismissed for reasons of safety. The use of biodiesel instead of petro diesel fuel might work quite well, but the cost of this approach is likely to be too high for use by all but the very wealthy.



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So, if you or your institution of employment intend to continue to be frequent users of our existing means of long distance transport, you will become one of the major contributors to future global warming, and there is no good remedy for that offense that is either in the works or in the planning stage. One of your best choices is likely to become not flying long distances or instead using surface means of transport for which low or no carbon emissions are possible. Due to the relative sluggishness of surface transport, this will require large changes in the lifestyles of many individuals and companies.



<https://www.maxpixel.net/static/photo/640/Masts-Sailboats-Portugal-Mar-Lisbon-Boat-Creole-3382927.jpg>

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Sorry, but the Earth is indeed a finite place that does not have the ability to rid itself of all pollutants. We are already well past the limit of excess CO₂ that the Earth can tolerate and we can remove. Travel by aircraft produces a lot of CO₂ and is doing so more every year. Surface transport alternatives are much better with respect to addressing this problem, but of course that would indeed require changes in basic lifestyles.

Unfortunately, this message applies to everyone, even the extensive Studies Abroad Programs of my *alma mater*, St. Olaf College of Northfield, Minnesota, for example, that apparently thinks their CO₂ emissions are of an ethical type that should be ignored. It is most unfortunate that even our institutions of higher education seem to have this attitude. (Yes, indeed, with friends like these, who needs enemies?) The reaches of the airline travel and the fossil fuel industries are indeed long and strong, constituting a literal death grip on American society. If the Democrats hope to really address the global warming problem, one of the things they must do is break tis death grip. While taking on the travel and fossil fuel industries will be exceedingly difficult, it is just of the things that must be done if we are serious about cutting CO₂ emissions. So, let's hope the Democrats win in 2020 and have the gumption to follow through on their highest priority.



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Stand up for the Earth!

Earth Circle Climate Crisis Rally

Climate Crisis Team meeting:
Third Thursday of the week – 2 – 3:30 p.m.
Central Square Mall; Blandin Meeting Room

Climate Crisis Rally
Every Thursday from 4 – 5 p.m.
Pokegama Avenue Bridge in Grand Rapids
(some signs will be available or bring your own)





Seeking Refuge*

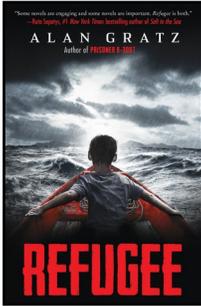
By Vicki Andrews

I had been intrigued by reviews of the book *Refugee* by Alan Gratz: “unflinching and sympathetic,” said the *New York Times*, “memorable and tightly plotted,” said *Publishers Weekly*, and “a stunning, poignant novel,” said *Entertainment Weekly*, to mention just a few. I ordered it, not realizing it was intended for young adult readers, which I’m not. It turned out to be one of the most moving, well-written, timely books I’ve read. I recommend it to all: young adults, old adults, and everyone in between. *Refugee* tells the stories of three children: Josef, Isabel, and Mahmoud, and their families.

Josef is a young Jewish boy living in Nazi Germany in the 1930s. After the frightening attacks of Kristallnacht, his father is arrested and sent to a concentration camp. He is released after six months on the condition he take his family and leave the country. Following a perilous journey, the family boards a ship to Cuba, which at the time was taking in Jewish refugees. As the boat arrives, the Cuban government reverses its decision to accept them. They attempt to land in the United States and are turned away; they must return to Europe where their search for asylum continues.

Isabel is a Cuban girl in 1994. Riots and unrest are spreading throughout the country, and the family decides to flee to the United States with their neighbors on a small, handmade boat. They push off from Cuba into the ocean toward Miami with the police shooting after them. Along the way the motor dies; the boat fills with water; sharks attack; they accidentally land in the Bahamas and are forced to leave. As they are nearing their destination, their boat begins to break apart and Isabel’s mother goes into labor.

Mahmoud lives in Aleppo, Syria in 2015. His homeland is torn apart by the violence and destruction. One day a missile strikes and destroys his home, and his family decides they must leave the country. Mahmoud and his family



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Following a perilous journey, the family boards a ship to Cuba, which at the time was taking in Jewish refugees.



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flee Syria by car, by foot, by inflatable raft, crossing through Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, and arriving in Hungary where they are imprisoned. They are eventually released from prison and travel to Austria with other refugees, finally arriving in Germany where they are given asylum.

Refugee gives insight into the lives of people who must flee their countries and search for a new land. It is fascinating to read the accounts of the struggles, trials, and trauma that each family experiences and how hope for a better future keeps them moving. Although Josef, Isabel, and Mahmoud are separated by continents and decades, shocking connections tie their stories together in the end. The book also features maps of each family’s travels as well as the author’s note that tells the history of each country’s conditions that led to their flights.



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<http://cruciality.files.wordpress.com/2013/07/refugees.jpg>

**Editor’s Note: This review was published in our February 2019 issue, because of its timeliness it deserves another look.*

The price of apathy toward public affairs is to be ruled by evil men. Plato

Democracy Is the Solution

By Bob Passi

It is fitting to remember that democracy is the solution to nearly every American problem, and it always has been. It was one of the major factors in the success of the American Revolution. It was the incentive for the sacrifice and valor in the Civil War, World War I, and World War II. It was the key to the “Greatest Generation.” It is what unifies us as a nation, and what gives meaning to such terms as freedom, liberty, and patriotism. It is what unites us, and when we move away from it, it is what allows division and distrust to settle in, infecting the nation and its people.

“Democracy, first, last, and forever” should be our battle cry.

Why are we talking about it at this time? Because we have diverged from that democratic direction to follow the false promise of economics as a solution to problems that only democracy can resolve.

When the political questions began to be, “Can we afford support the needs of the ordinary citizens?” instead of “How can we use our great wealth to fund what the ordinary citizens require to keep our democracy healthy and sustainable?” we were heading in the wrong direction.

When the priorities became security first and democracy as an after-thought; when the income inequality grew, dramatically shifting the wealth and political power to an economic elite; when the doors of decision making were closed to the general populace; when capitalism moved from the moderate, in-



<http://www.dianuke.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/People-Power-Democracy->



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clusive, and traditional capitalism of Main Street to the ruthless, exclusive, elitist capitalism of Wall Street, we knew that democracy had been exchanged for a sorry economic substitute under which ordinary people could no longer survive—much less thrive.

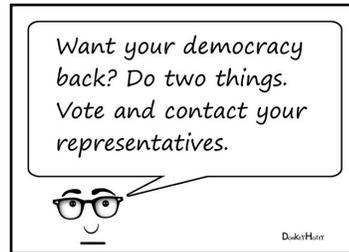
- ◆ How do we return to the democracy of our heritage? Only through a unified citizens’ grassroots movement can we:
- ◆ Walk away from that dysfunctional neoliberal economic system that got us into this mess.
- ◆ Create democratic alternatives.
- ◆ Discard the self-sustaining neoliberal economic politics to recreate a truly democratic politics.
- ◆ Change the ruling narrative and create a more democratic and human solution.

We must do what democracy requires of us:

- ◆ Operate as the mature adults we are.
- ◆ Take responsibility for our actions and the world those actions create.
- ◆ Refuse to play the submissive role.
- ◆ Refuse to allow exploitation.

We must choose Democracy. We must unify under that banner, and we must recreate an America to live up to that ideal. Our unified energy and action cannot be defeated, and the power of the American Spirit will overwhelm this temporary diversion of the last few decades that has taken us to the brink of destruction.

Democracy is the solution. A truly empowered citizenry is the only means to that end.



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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 Tuesday 6:30 pm	DFL Headquarters
DFL Central Committee	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	TBA	DFL Headquarters
Circles of Support	Every Thursday 6:30 pm	811 NE 4th St.
Deadline for <i>Common Sense II</i>	September 6, 2019	conray@arvig.net