

# **RUNNYMEDE GAZETTE**

*A Journal of the Democratic Resistance*

*MAY 2016*

**EDITORIAL**

**AVENUE OR CUL-DE-SAC?**

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# **EDITORIAL**

## **AVENUE OR CUL-DE-SAC?**

Imagine a great maze, but unlike Hampton Court this one is filled with mirrors not hedges. Many people can be seen preening themselves; sometimes trying on different garments to see how they might look in this or that, or trying any number of quack remedies in order to cure this or that distortion.

That is the nature of politics. Nothing seems to go in the declared direction; every journey seems to end at a point far removed from the intended destination; most words end up meaning the opposite; most journeys seem endlessly circular; and there is no escape.

Conservative politics ... in the 'small c' sense of the word ... is always about what is; radical politics ... again with a small and very generalised 'r' ... is always about what might be, or perhaps ought to be. So the latter, being necessarily predicated on the hypothetical, will always be severely handicapped in its journey through the maze. Moreover, proximity to any desired destination is always measurable as the inverse of the number of chickens counted.

In assessing the impact of Occupy Paolo Gerbaudo counts some chickens. With the usual radical taste for complexity and obscurity, a number of what common sense might present as the more obvious lessons, are discounted or ignored.

Occupy was almost entirely based in capital cities. In smaller cities and towns it was never any more than an occasional brief flicker. That should tell us much about its real level of support on the one hand and the depth of its organisation on the other.

It is easy to fall deeply in love with one's own ideas ... where the idea becomes perceived as too perfect to be exposed to the corrosion of popular knowledge and consent. Then there is no need to slum it by actually presenting it to the Hoi Poloi. Besides, that takes a lot of time and effort, not to mention boot-leather. So a mandate is claimed which has neither been requested nor granted. We, Occupy, speak on behalf of the 99%. That 'we' are probably actually far less than 0.01% and that 'we' have never condescended to knock on a single door of the 99% Great Unwashed becomes immaterial.

Occupy never had any organisation. It was almost a Flower Power Mark II ... a shapeless, political blancmange. Yes, an 'incubator' effect is possible, but like Flower Power Mark I (where the Hoi Poloi were almost universally derided as 'straights')... and speaking as one who was there and saw this ... it is as likely that the participants will follow their forebears, cut their hair and become corporate sales executives.

At least Flower Power Mark I took a decade to fall apart. In this age of instant gratification and millisecond attention spans a few months are often sufficient. An instant result is demanded or people drift away and do something else. The notion that parking a few hundred tents in a city square would topple a complex, long established and deeply entrenched power matrix was always beyond preposterous.

It is all simpler than Gerbaudo avers. Yes, (apropos of the Charles Hugh Smith item) there is much anger around. But we are involved in a millennial war with a corporate hydra of immense reach, resource, subtlety, experience and raw power. The conduct of that war will demand perseverance, co-operation, patience and sacrifice beyond the call of duty. It will also demand excellent organisation. This is a long, hard game, and not an arena for the whimsical or the disorganised.

*Frank Taylor*

## **5 YEARS ON: WHY THE OCCUPATIONS OF 2011 CHANGED THE WORLD**

***Paolo Gerbaudo; Roar and Occupy.com; via Critical Thinking***

What has become of the great promise of social change raised by the “movements of the squares” of 2011? What did those spectacular occupations of public squares, from Tahrir in Cairo to Puerta del Sol in Madrid and Syntagma in Athens leave behind? To what extent did they contribute to advancing the cause of the “99%” or of the “common and ordinary people” they purported to fight for?

With protest movements, as with any other social and political phenomenon, there comes a time to take stock of what has happened — a time that is as important for evaluating the past as it is for planning future action. The latter appears to be particularly relevant in light of the rise of new movements, such as Nuit Debout in France, that can be seen as the continuation of the 2011 cycle.

Five years since 2011, famously celebrated as the year of the protester in TIME Magazine, we are perhaps sufficiently distant from the heat of those events to draw up something akin to a balance sheet of the achievements and letdowns of that momentous wave of protest.

The appraisal of the mobilizations of 2011 is, as it often happens with great historical events, a highly contentious topic. The movements of the squares have enthused in equal measure as they have disappointed; they have both under-delivered and over-delivered.

For some people these protests seemed to have achieved nothing at all; for others, like the Greek activist Giorgios Giannopoulos, they “completely changed the political landscape.” Some, including many nostalgic leftists, see them as just a distraction from serious politics, or a childish display of naivety; for others, the mobilizations have been a decisive turning point in contemporary politics.

This great diversity in assessment stems from the different ways in which people have looked at these movements and their outcomes; different ideological positions led to different assessments. But they also derive from different understandings of what the outcomes of protest movements are supposed to be, the yardstick against which we can “measure” their results.

As I will argue, the movements of the squares have not fulfilled their hyperbolic revolutionary promise of doing away with representative democracy and substituting it with autonomous institutions of grassroots self-management modelled after the protest camps. But they have been formidable public rituals that by reclaiming public space and involving the citizenry in public discussions about economic and political inequality have facilitated a profound cultural change in society towards more progressive ends. They have informed the creation of new campaigns, initiatives and organizations that are now starting to pose a serious challenge to neoliberal order.

### ***A Flash in the Pan?***

The main reason for the widespread skepticism about the results of the 2011 protest wave derives from the rapid decline experienced by these movements after the climax of the occupations. The end of the square occupations — either due to police evictions or internal exhaustion — often left a sense of failure and hollowness behind, along with the remorse of having missed a huge opportunity to bring about social change.

The fizzling out of the movements resulted in a collective “trauma” that took many several months to

get over. Many of the 130 protesters I interviewed for my book *The Mask and the Flag* related their disbelief at seeing how a movement that had risen so rapidly to such great heights could collapse so rapidly. At the height of the protest camps, activists had been at the forefront of a massive popular movement that was promising to radically change society; but soon after the camps were evicted or abandoned they often felt they were all by themselves again — the crowd that had gathered around them suddenly having evaporated.

Stopping our assessment at this initial disappointment would be wrong, however. Great historical upheavals are known to produce disillusionment in their immediate aftermath. So great are the hopes they inspire that they cannot possibly fulfil them entirely. The French Revolution led to the Reign of Terror and the dictatorship of Napoleon. The enthusiasm conjured up by the May 1968 protests evaporated after the victory of the Gaullist party in the June parliamentary elections. Yet nobody could deny that these and similar events profoundly changed the course of history. The same applies to 2011.

The year 2011 did not deliver on the revolutionary hopes harboured by its more militant supporters. Its occupations did not become the embryos of an anarchistic society of self-managed communities, as some of its participants had hoped. However, the protest movement has had profound consequences on contemporary politics in less perceptible and less radical but not less important ways.

For a start, the occupations have re-politicized society and galvanized social movements and left politics. Furthermore, they have generated a profound cultural transformation, as seen in the growing public attention to the question of economic inequality and the crisis of democracy. Finally, they have acted as “incubators” that have contributed to the rise of anti-establishment formations and candidates, including Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain, Jeremy Corbyn in the U.K., and Bernie Sanders in the U.S. These cultural and political changes would have been unfathomable had it not been for the 2011 protest wave. Far from being a flash in the pan, 2011 has been a watershed year; one which despite its many failures and shortcomings has inaugurated a new wave of progressive politics that is changing the world.

### ***Goodbye Apathy***

The most important outcome of the 2011 protest wave has been the change in culture and social psychology. This year of protests and revolutions has been instrumental in overcoming the deep-rooted political apathy that has been the natural accompaniment of the neoliberal injunction that “there is no alternative” (TINA), with its implication about the futility of politics and resulting political apathy.

One of the recurring gripes among activists in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis was how despite overwhelming evidence on the failure of financial capitalism and the all-too-real effects on the everyday life of the majority of the population, most people would not take action. The protests of 2011 provided a powerful remedy to this widespread sense of of disempowerment. The huge demonstrations and occupations have concretely demonstrated that mass political action is making a comeback in present times, and can still have huge political consequences, as most clearly seen in the fall of Arab dictators.

As a result, 2011 has been the year that “fear has changed sides,” to use an expression adopted by Spanish activists. It was the moment when protest movements shed the psychology of defeat — that obnoxious feeling that they were somehow on the wrong side of history — and have once again started going on the attack. The enthusiasm conjured by the square occupations has persuaded many that, far from living at the “end of history” as was infamously claimed by Francis Fukuyama, we are in fact witnessing a “rebirth of history,” to use Alain Badiou’s expression. This new sense of enthusiasm and hope has been instrumental in activating large sections of the population that had previously been at the margins of politics. The movements have won over large sections of the millennial generation, one often characterized in the mainstream media as quintessentially apolitical — something that, as we have been learning in recent years, is far from the truth.

The 2011 protests have also facilitated a profound change in terms of political discourse and in the set of assumptions held by the majority of the population. One of the clearest examples of this trend comes from the United States, a country in which discussion of economic inequality was marginal in mainstream politics for the past 30 years. Yet in the aftermath of Occupy, many politicians have tried to present themselves as champions of the “99%” — the ordinary people disenfranchised by the arrogance of the super-rich and the political establishment.

The year 2011 has also redrawn the discursive battle-lines of contemporary conflict around the

opposition between citizens and the establishment, between common people and elites, and between the bottom and the top, thus linking economic and political inequality, impoverishment and disenfranchisement. This profound cultural change has opened the way for the rise of new anti-establishment candidates and formations that are now taking institutional politics by storm.

### ***The Occupations as "Incubators"***

The greatest paradox behind the outcome of the movements of the squares is that their influence has been greatest precisely where one would have expected it the least: in the sphere of formal organizations and of institutional and party politics. The 2011 protest wave will forever be associated with the slogan "they don't represent us" — a clear indictment of the present form of representative politics and the existing political class. Yet a large number of those who sustained and supported the movements of 2011 have come to see the radical engagement with existing institutions as a necessary means to obtain concrete political results on the many issues raised by these movements.

The occupations thus acted as "incubators" providing the inspiration, the source of legitimacy and the personal networks for this new wave of radical institutional politics. To use Jodi Dean's terms, some of the "crowds" gathered in 2011 have gone on to form political parties. From Greece and Spain to the U.K. and the U.S., the square occupations have been followed by a surprising surge of new left-wing formations and candidacies. The electoral surge of Syriza in Greece that eventually brought it to power was largely propelled by the strength of the *aganaktismenoi* movement. In Spain, Podemos managed at least initially to capture much of the energy of the movement of the squares and to appropriate some of its practices of direct democracy, through its local circles and forms of online deliberation.

The connection with the *indignados* protests was even clearer in the municipalist platforms that took over the town halls of Barcelona and Madrid in 2015. In the U.K., the election of Jeremy Corbyn to Labour leader in the fall of 2015 and the impressive performance of Bernie Sanders in the US Democratic primaries also carry the signature of the Occupy wave. These political phenomena would have been unthinkable if not for the support of a generation of young activists who grew up politically in the occupied squares of 2011.

Such an "institutional projection" of protest movements is certainly not a new phenomenon. Again and again throughout history, protest waves have been followed by the creation of new political parties and radical candidates proposing to give institutional representation to the grievances they raised. The rise of labor movements in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries led to the creation of the first Socialist and Communist parties. In some countries, starting in Germany, the protests of 1968 and the 1970s found a political outlet in the newly-formed Green parties.

Of course, the movement-party relationship is notably one that has often been fraught with contradictions. It is therefore no surprise that similar problems are also emerging in the aftermath of the movements of the squares. The rise of Syriza initially attracted high hopes from many of the Syntagma protesters, only to soon lead to bitter disappointments after its capitulation to the foreign lenders in July 2015. Similarly, a number of decisions by Podemos and its leader Pablo Iglesias have been criticized for disregarding the democratic spirit of the 2011 protests and of imposing traditional top-down party structures.

These and similar incidents have led many 2011 veterans, especially those of more anarchist or autonomist creed, to see in the electoral and institutional turn more of a betrayal than a continuation of the 2011 spirit. It is only right and necessary that protest movements criticize and challenge parties, also those who represent political views close to their own. At the same time, it is important to highlight that this electoral turn of contemporary radical politics is also a result of a collective realization, shared by many veterans of the 2011 protests, about the limits of the neo-anarchist refusal of formal organization and leadership, and the need to accompany necessarily fleeting protest movements with more lasting and structured forms of political organization.

### ***The Beginning is Here***

Given the breadth and depth of the results produced by the 2011 movements, it can be said that we are now living in a post-2011 world; a world for which 2011 acts as sort of "year zero" — a moment of foundation for a "new politics" that fulfils the promise contained within the caption of a famous Occupy poster proclaiming "the beginning is near." Far from being a flash in the pan, 2011 has inaugurated a new

wave of progressive politics that is changing the world.

It is true that these movements have ultimately not delivered on many of their stated revolutionary aims of doing away with representative democracy and constituting self-managed political communities. However, this protest wave has fulfilled the two important political goals of breaking with the widespread sense of political apathy and disempowerment, and acting as “incubators” for the establishment of new political organizations that, in alliance with the movements, may give the fight for substantive equality and real democracy a more sustained and structured form.

For those who have participated in these movements, supported them and believed in them, the task ahead is to build on these foundations by developing new initiatives and campaigns and waging new conflicts that may fulfill the hopes invoked by the protesters of 2011 — but also by periodically going back to the streets and occupying public squares in the knowledge that it is there that all radical politics has its necessary beginning.

## **THE ANGER OF THE UNPRIVILEGED IS RISING GLOBALLY**

***Charles Hugh Smith; Max Keiser; via Critical Thinking***

The righteous disgust with the status quo that spawned the broad-based campaigns of Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump is not unique to the U.S. Globally, those disenfranchised by the status quo—the unprivileged, or in Peggy Noonan’s phrase, the unprotected—are starting to express their discontent in the streets, in social media and in elections.

Why are people around the world angry? It’s obvious to everyone in the unprivileged classes and a mystery to the “we’re doing just fine here, what’s your problem?” privileged classes: The system is rigged to benefit the protected few and marginalize the unprotected many. The problems are not just political; they are structural. As I outline in my new book, *Why Our Status Quo Failed and Is Beyond Reform*, there are two structural engines of disorder at the heart of the system:

1. Automation, software and the forces of globalization are disrupting jobs and wages everywhere.
2. Centralized hierarchies and the forces of financialization have extended the power of privilege globally so the few are benefiting at the expense of the many, as revealed in this chart of global wealth:

The growing concentration of wealth and power in the privileged elites is evidenced by the fact that 8% of the world’s populace owns 85% of its wealth. What is driving this increasing concentration of wealth and power? In a word: Privilege.

To understand rising wealth/income disparity and the increasing concentration of wealth, we must first understand the dual nature of privilege. Just as power comes in two flavours—hard power (military power) and soft power (exporting cultural wares and values)—so does privilege.

Hard-wired privileges are those that grant the holder of an office or position in the hierarchy specific rights to accumulate income, wealth and political power that are not available to the unprivileged. Officials in corrupt countries gain the right to collect fees from citizens as a direct result of their official position. Financiers in the U.S. have access to unlimited credit at low rates (free money for financiers) as a direct result of their position atop the financial pyramid.

Field-effect (“soft”) privileges are defined by class and access rather than by the hard-wired authority of office or position in a formal hierarchy. Field-effect privileges include: enhanced access to Ivy League higher education granted to children of alumni and major donors; membership in exclusive clubs; access to “old boy” networks of alumni and partners, and so on.

Field-effect (“soft”) privileges are one primary reason why the income of the top 20% has risen from 40% of total U.S. income to 51% in the past two decades. In a rapidly financializing, globalized economy, those with access to higher education, class connections and abundant credit have built-in advantages over those without all three advantages, which are self-reinforcing. (I use the term field-effect to suggest that these privileges act like electrical fields, affecting all within their range, often without the privileged even being aware of their privileges. Hence the upper-middle penchant for overlooking all their class advantages and attributing their success to hard work. Well, yes, but that’s not the entire story: we must also measure the often-subtle benefits of field-effect privileges.)

Over time, these privileges accrue substantial income and wealth: the 10% difference between

40% and 50% of total household income is \$1.4 trillion per year. In the past decade, that means the top 20% has gained about \$12 trillion more in income than it would have if its share of total household income had remained at 40%.

Having an Ivy League (or equivalent top-tier public university) diploma is a plus, but it doesn't provide a wealth of self-reinforcing privileges unless it is combined with upper-class connections and networks and easy access to credit (to scoop up productive assets on the cheap). Together, these field-effect privileges create synergies that concentrate wealth and power. Interestingly, privilege serves the same purpose—benefiting the few at the expense of the many—regardless of the system's ideological labels. Socialist, Communist and free-market elites loot their populaces and national wealth with equal gusto. Those who came to do good and stayed to do well first accumulate privileges, which they then leverage into wealth and power.

The grievances of Chinese workers robbed of their wages, Greek small-business owners burdened by ever-rising taxes, downsized corporate warriors in the U.S., etc. may appear to be different, but beneath the surface these grievances all arise from one source: unearned privileges that benefit the few at the expense of the many.

The only way to eliminate social and economic injustice is to eliminate privilege, which is the heart of my book *A Radically Beneficial World*.

Read more at <http://www.maxkeiser.com/2016/05/the-anger-of-the-unprivileged-is-rising-globally/#kxwJv2VISOYWBVDT.99>

## POLITICS AND PSYCHOPATHY

*Neil Lock; Libertarian Alliance Blog*

*(Some might also say that the following applies to many business leaders -Ed)*

### **Abstract**

A meme, which has drawn itself to my attention recently, is that politicians – or many of them, at least – have psychopathic tendencies.

In this essay, I'll seek to make a case that there's more than a grain of truth in this idea. And that not only do psychopaths seek power, but today's political systems, including democracy, give them an advantage over non-psychopaths in terms of getting power. With negative consequences for us all. To ameliorate this problem, I'll suggest a test, based on the work of psychologist Robert D. Hare, to screen for psychopathic tendencies among those in or seeking positions of power, and politicians in particular.

### **The idea**

The word "psychopath," dating from 1885, means: "a mentally ill or unstable person; especially a person affected with antisocial personality disorder." It's estimated that around 1 per cent of the population are psychopaths [1]; though it isn't clear how accurate this estimate is.

If you Google for "are politicians psychopaths?" you'll find, among much else, a most interesting article from 2012 by James Silver in the Atlantic Magazine [2], entitled: "The Startling Accuracy of Referring to Politicians as 'Psychopaths.'" I've seen this idea again in several essays recently; at the moment, I seem to catch a reference to it every week or so. It seems that English neurophysiologist Paul Broks planted this meme back in 2003, when he suggested that Tony Blair was a "plausible psychopath." His accusation was, of course, rejected by the establishment; but the meme was in fertile soil.

### **Hare's Psychopathy Checklist**

In the 1970s, Canadian psychologist Robert D. Hare (born 1934) developed the "Psychopathy Checklist" (PCL-R), which is the primary measuring instrument for the condition. It is used by psychiatrists today in their forensic work for courts of law. Besides PCL-R, there is a more recent, cut down Screening Version, PCL:SV. This can be used in, as Hare's own website [3] puts it, "psychiatric evaluations, personnel selection, and community studies." This is closer to my purposes than the context in which PCL-R is normally used. So I decided to use the PCL:SV list as the basis of my

evaluations.

I located the 1999 paper [4], co-authored by Hare himself, comparing PCL:SV with PCL-R, and concluding that it “is an effective short form of the PCL-R.” Table 2 in that paper lists the 12 items in PCL:SV. They are divided into two groups, Part 1 and Part 2; reflecting an earlier division of PCL-R into Factor 1 and Factor 2. Factor 1 and Part 1 refer to “selfish, callous and remorseless use of others,” while Factor 2 and Part 2 refer to “chronically unstable and antisocial lifestyle.”

Here are the six items in Part 1 of the list. I’ve added a few words of explanation to each:

- Superficial (e.g. glib; having a surface charm).
- Grandiose (e.g. arrogant; think they are superior human beings).
- Deceitful (e.g. lying, insincere, selfish and manipulative, unscrupulous, dishonest).
- Lack of remorse (e.g. cold and calculating attitude to others; seeming to feel no guilt; lacking concern for the losses, pain, and suffering of victims).
- Lack of empathy (e.g. lacking sensitivity towards, or regard for, people in general).
- Doesn’t accept responsibility (e.g. evading responsibility or accountability).

And here are the six items in Part 2:

- Impulsive (e.g. foolhardy, rash, unpredictable, erratic and reckless).
- Poor behaviour controls (e.g. showing irritability, annoyance, impatience).
- Lacks goals (e.g. living a parasitic lifestyle; having no realistic, long-term goals).
- Irresponsible (e.g. untrustworthy; repeatedly failing to fulfil or honour obligations and commitments).
- Adolescent antisocial behaviour.
- Adult antisocial behaviour.

There were also two items in PCL-R (promiscuous sexual behaviour, and many short-term marital relationships) which were not carried over into PCL:SV.

As to the scoring system, the paper describes the PCL-R scoring thus. “Items... are rated on a 3-point scale (0 = item doesn’t apply, 1 = item applies somewhat, 2 = item definitely applies). The items are summed to yield total scores, ranging from 0 to 40, that reflect the degree to which an individual resembles the prototypical psychopath. A cutoff score of 30 or greater is used to diagnose psychopathy.” For PCL:SV, the scoring system is the same, except that the maximum possible score is 24 and the cutoff score is 18.

## ***Assessing politicians***

I invite you, next, to consider politicians in general. I’m thinking not about specific individuals, but about an amalgam of characteristics that could represent “the typical politician.” I’ll call this representative of its species “Mr. Politico.”

In assessing Mr. Politico, I’m going to look mainly at the six items in Hare’s Part 1. This isn’t to say, of course, that Mr. Politico is immune from other psychopathic tendencies. He can be reckless and erratic; for example, by supporting wars in places like Syria, first on one side, then a couple of years later on another. He can be irritable; who, of a certain age, will forget Khrushchev’s shoe? He is a parasite, living off taxation. He has a habit of making promises, then conveniently forgetting about them. It’s almost a cliché to say that he has no interest in anything beyond the next election. And he can be sexually promiscuous, as Christine Keeler and Monica Lewinsky, to name but two, might attest.

But it’s on Part 1 that I’ll concentrate. For these are the items that measure selfish, callous and remorseless use of others – which, I think, well describes how today’s politicians treat us human beings.

### **Superficial**

Mr. Politico goes out of his way to be smooth, slick and charming. He takes great care over his appearance. He’s hardly ever at a loss for words; quite the opposite, in fact. And when he’s speaking, he often moves his hands about more than most people – a known characteristic of psychopaths.

### **Grandiose**

Mr. Politico wants power. He seeks positions in which he can order people around, and impose burdens on those he doesn’t like. He feels good about doing these things. And if he manages to get power, that will only reinforce his conviction that he’s a superior being to those he rules over.



## **Lack of empathy**

Empathy is “being sensitive to... the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another.” Knowing that we ourselves are human beings, and recognizing that others are individuals of our species too, leads us to a natural regard and respect for our fellow human beings. Although, of course, it can sometimes be difficult to feel such a regard across a cultural divide. Also, fellowship is a two way process; and thus, no-one can be expected to feel empathy for those, such as psychopaths, that show no empathy towards them. Mr. Politico doesn’t show any regard or empathy for us. Surely, he’s very clever at making it appear that he cares about people. But if we look hard at his behaviour, we don’t see much evidence of any fellow feeling towards us human beings. We might as well be objects, as far as he is concerned. He really doesn’t care what happens to us.

Mr. Politico belongs to a political party; a gang with an ideology and agendas it wants to impose on people. And he usually toes the party line. He supports whatever policies the party hierarchy dictates. And he is willing to say and to do whatever it takes to get those policies imposed.

Almost no political ideology extant today shows any concern at all for the human individual. With one exception – true liberalism, the philosophy of maximum freedom for every peaceful, honest human being who respects the equal rights of others – all ideologies put some or other Great Cause above us human beings. Communism and socialism, for example, put the collective above the individual; as does nationalism. Social “liberalism” allows a privileged political élite to force people, who manifestly are not equal in talents or in application, into the élite’s own conception of a state of “equality.” Conservatism, on the other hand, seeks to force people to behave according to the élite’s idea of social or religious mores. Fascism, in its modern variants such as health fascism and safety fascism, seeks control over our lives. The security state seeks to destroy our human rights like privacy and security of person. And deep green environmentalism seeks to destroy human civilization.

Whatever his ideology, Mr. Politico shows no sympathy for the people whose lives he damages. Nor does he show any concern for the things we human beings really do need and want from governance: A peaceful world. An environment of truth and honesty. The rule of law and justice; objective, individual justice for all. Upholding of basic human rights and freedoms. No barriers to prosperity for those who earn it. And most of all, freedom to make our own choices. And when he rants about his Great Causes – for example, “sustainable development,” “national security,” “the interests of the UK” or “making America great again” – all that matters to him is the Cause. It doesn’t worry him that people’s lives will be (or already have been) harmed by the policies he and his kind make and support. It doesn’t concern him if his policies violate our basic human rights such as liberty, property or privacy. No; Mr. Politico isn’t on our side. He hates humanity; and he hates us individual human beings.

## **Deceitful**

That politicians lie is old news. Who can forget Blair’s lies about Saddam Hussein’s weapons of mass destruction? And the reason politicians lie so much, we’re told, is because lying brings them, overall, more benefit than telling the truth [5]. Mr. Politico is a serial liar. Worse, he seems completely uninterested in the truth. For example, it doesn’t matter to him that the accusation that “human emissions of carbon dioxide cause catastrophic global warming” is without any objective scientific proof. He continues to support destructive policies based on this lie.

But Mr. Politico isn’t just a liar. He likes to scaremonger and to manipulate people’s emotions. He likes to confuse and to obfuscate. And he has little or no sense of right and wrong; particularly when he has an opportunity to secure some selfish gain.

Mr. Politico is also a hypocrite. For example, he supports policies to make us cut our energy use, and drive and fly less. Yet he himself isn’t willing to make any such sacrifices; he lives in a warm, brilliantly lit mansion, is driven around in limos, and flies all over the world. As another example, he sheds crocodile tears over “the poor,” and favours re-distributing wealth away from the honest, productive people who earn it, and towards the lazy, the dishonest and the feckless. Yet he isn’t willing to donate his own personal resources to the poor people he claims to care so much about.

## **Doesn’t accept responsibility**

Mr. Politico is, of course, always eager to take on the kind of “responsibility” that brings him more power. But he doesn’t own up or accept responsibility when things go wrong. When did you last see him hold his hand up and say, “Sorry guys, I got that one wrong?” When did he last pay compensation for the damage his policies caused to an innocent person?

No; he will go all silent on the matter, or point the finger of blame at someone else. Or lie in an attempt to rationalize what he did, or bluster to try to convince people that he was right all along.

## **Lack of remorse**

Remorse is: “a gnawing distress arising from a sense of guilt for past wrongs.” Mr. Politico, as I’ve suggested above, is not just willing, but eager, to do things that harm the very people he is supposed to “represent.” By doing these things, he shows that he is cold hearted and uncaring, and often calculating too. But he almost never shows any sense of guilt about what he has done; nor does he show any distress because of it.

## ***Assessing Mr. Politico***

Mr. Politico is, of course, not a real individual. He is a cardboard cut-out of a politician. But he scores somewhere between 6 and 12 on the items in Part 1 of Hare’s test. On the test as a whole, I’d estimate (being generous to him) that he scores between 10 and 16.

Mr. Politico is, to a greater or lesser degree, deceitful, selfish, irresponsible, warlike, callous, and remorseless. He is, quite clearly, not the kind of individual that any peaceful, honest human being would ever want to associate with; let alone vote for. In a decently run, apolitical society, he would be shown the gates and given his marching orders in no uncertain terms. And yet, in today’s politics, he’s the norm rather than the exception.

For something to compare him against, I located a graph of the distribution of PCL:SV scores in a reasonably representative sample of the general population. This is Figure 1 in a 2008 paper [6], in which Hare was again a co-author. 36 per cent of the sample scored zero on the test, and 50 per cent scored zero or 1. Only 8 per cent of the sample scored 10 (my lower bound for Mr. Politico’s score) or more. And a score of 13, which in that paper is considered the cutoff for “potential psychopathy,” was reached by just 1.2 per cent of the sample. This suggests that Mr. Politico has stronger symptoms of psychopathy than more than 90 per cent of people. He is a near psychopath, even if he isn’t actually one in the formal sense.

Now consider. If so called “democracy” means anything at all, if government really is for the benefit of the governed, then how can psychopaths or potential psychopaths possibly be allowed political power? If government really is supposed to “protect” us from ills, then shouldn’t one of its very first responsibilities be to protect us from psychopaths that want power over us?

## ***Why power attracts psychopaths***

It’s easy to see why psychopaths are drawn to political power. It enables them to live out their grandiose delusions of superiority over others.

Indeed, the political state, based on ideas put forward by Jean Bodin in the 16th century, could almost have been designed as a breeding ground for psychopaths. For such a state has at its head a sovereign (be it an individual or an organization), which has supreme power over everyone and everything else in its territory. Among much else, it has a right to make wars, to levy taxes on its “subject” people, and to make laws to bind them. Furthermore, it isn’t bound by the laws it makes, and it ultimately doesn’t have any responsibility for the consequences of what it does.

Give a psychopath control or even partial control of a state, give him sufficient political power, and he can live out his psychopathic fantasies to the full. He can start wars. He can behave towards us “little people” with the full force of the disdain he feels for us. He can plunder us, and tax us all but out of existence. He can set agendas and policies, and make bad laws that actively harm us and violate our rights. And, as likely as not, he will get away with his crimes. And when the worst psychopaths get power, the results can include the murder of millions, or even genocide; as the examples of Mao, Stalin, Hitler and Pol Pot have taught us.

## ***Why politics selects for psychopaths***

It works the other way around, too. For today’s political systems are very well suited to bringing psychopaths to power. Where power can be obtained by military force, for example, then all else being equal, psychopaths are likely to win out over their rivals. For callousness, deceit and remorselessness are very effective in war. And where an evil dictator grooms his successor, it’s not likely that the successor will be much, if any, less psychopathic than his predecessor. But the circus called “democracy,” too, selects in favour of psychopaths. For, first, a system that requires aspiring candidates to persuade tens of thousands of people (or more) to vote for them gives a great advantage to those

with the psychopathic traits of glibness and superficial charm.

Second, democratic politics is perfect as a means of attracting and training new psychopaths. Once a political party – or, worse, an entire parliament – becomes seeded with psychopaths or potential psychopaths, others will be drawn to join them. The old adage that “birds of a feather flock together” is true for psychopaths too. Sometimes, an individual who isn’t a psychopath does manage to acquire a position of power at a certain level. But inside a political party, the pressure to conform is great. And such people, once surrounded by psychopaths, will be at a disadvantage against them. If you’ve ever wondered why the few honest people, who do enter politics, seem rapidly to become either corrupted or sidelined, this is almost certainly the reason.

Third, democracy provides a veneer of apparent legitimacy for the policies of those elected into power, however bad they may be. For, so the theory goes, these individuals are supposed to be there in government to “represent” us, “the people.” And their policies have been “approved,” in an election, by this same “people.” Thus, democracy allows psychopaths a “mandate” to rule. But consider that 36 per cent of a sample of the general population scored zero – zero! – on the PCL:SV test. So, how can a politician with any trace of psychopathy at all credibly claim to “represent” even one individual among these 36 per cent of the population? And how can a politician that is deceitful, selfish, irresponsible, warlike, callous, or remorseless – or any combination of these things – possibly claim to “represent” any peaceful, honest human being?

### ***What is to be done?***

Here, in a nutshell, is the problem we face. Psychopaths want power. Current political systems, including democracy, tend to favour psychopaths over non-psychopaths for positions of power. While this tendency acts quite slowly, over more than a century it has relentlessly increased the incidence of psychopathy or near psychopathy among politicians. And so, today too many of those in power – arguably, including all UK prime ministers and US presidents since the millennium or some decades before – are selfish, callous and remorseless in their treatment of people. A government run by psychopaths isn’t exactly a recipe for a free, just, honest society, is it?

As a radical visionary, I’m often criticized for looking too far ahead. For example, for seeking ways to get rid of the political state entirely, rather than trying to sketch practical steps that people can take to defend themselves against it right now. But in this case, I’ll going to make a suggestion which, implemented with skill and a good publicity machine, I think could work. I’m going to suggest that anyone in, or applying for, any position of government power over others, should have to pass a psychological test to show that they are not psychopathic. As a pilot project, we should start with elected politicians. They’re supposed to be on our side, right? Once we’ve got that working, we can extend it to other legislative houses, and to bureaucrats, police, military officers, judges and all others in positions of power funded by government.

### ***Adapting Hare’s test***

We can’t, unfortunately, use Hare’s PCL:SV test exactly as it stands. For it fails to diagnose even our cardboard cut-out “Mr. Politico” as the dangerous madman he is. This is because the cutoff score is far higher than it needs to be for our purposes. I suggest that there shouldn’t be a single high score, which when reached condemns the individual to be locked up as a psychopath. Rather, the cutoff score that says “this individual shouldn’t be allowed power” should depend on the level of the position the individual is in or seeking. The greater the power, the lower the cutoff score should be.

At the national politician level, for example, I’d suggest that no-one should be allowed power who scores more than 1 on the test. This isn’t at all unreasonable, given that 50 per cent of a random sample from the population as a whole scored zero or 1. Shouldn’t we expect any policy maker to be at least as good a person as the median of the general population? And for president or prime minister level, only a score of zero will be good enough.

### ***Making it happen...***

Here are some further steps, that someone setting out to make this suggestion practical would need to take:

- To sell to a wide public the idea of psychopathy testing to avoid selfish, callous, remorseless,

irresponsible individuals being allowed into positions of power.

- To be able to argue strongly the case for this testing, both rationally and emotionally. For example, by drawing an analogy with tests to stop paedophiles from working with children.
- To make the test foolproof – remember, these are charmers and deceivers we're dealing with. It shouldn't be possible for anyone to rig or bribe their way around the test.
- To allow input to the test, not just by trained psychologists as with Hare's current tests, but by ordinary people too. Perhaps a judge-and-jury system might be appropriate for screening applicants for high level posts.
- To develop just means of removing or blocking individuals from office if they fail the test.

In the meantime...

Of course, we can't expect anyone in the political establishment even to listen to this idea. For they are, after all, the self-serving beneficiaries of a system that selects for them. And they have a lot to fear from such a test. Therefore, they will at first ignore it with hauteur, then oppose it with all their usual lies and bluster.

So, in the meantime, I suggest a bit of do-it-yourself. Why not use the PCL:SV test informally and for fun, to rate specific individuals in politics? Your member of parliament or your congresscritter, for example? The best and worst among the politicians you know? And a few in between? All you need is to understand the 12 items in the test and the scoring system, and an Internet connection to find out the facts about the individuals you are testing. And you don't need any expertise in psychology; for this isn't about branding individuals as Psychopaths with a capital P, and seeking to lock them up because of it. It's just a bit of fun – isn't it? Heh.

### ***In conclusion***

The meme that "politicians are psychopaths," while an over-simplification, contains a substantial kernel of truth. Under democracy as well as other political systems, those in or seeking power are far more prone to psychopathic tendencies than the population as a whole; and this has negative consequences for us all.

One possible step forward might be to institute testing, based on the work of Robert D. Hare, to screen out psychopaths and potential psychopaths from among those in or seeking positions of political power.

[1] <http://www.hare.org/links/saturday.html>

[2] <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2012/07/the-startling-accuracy-of-referring-to-politicians-as-psychopaths/260517/>

[3] <http://www.hare.org/scales/pclsv.html>

[4]

[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/David\\_Cooke2/publication/232570257\\_Evaluating\\_the\\_screening\\_version\\_of\\_the\\_Hare\\_Psychopathy\\_Checklist\\_Revised\\_\(PCLSV\)/links/00b4951bb1ac064411000000.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/David_Cooke2/publication/232570257_Evaluating_the_screening_version_of_the_Hare_Psychopathy_Checklist_Revised_(PCLSV)/links/00b4951bb1ac064411000000.pdf)

[5] [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-jim-taylor/six-reasons-why-politicians-are-psychopaths\\_b\\_1910335.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-jim-taylor/six-reasons-why-politicians-are-psychopaths_b_1910335.html)

[6] <http://www.hare.org/references/NeumannandHareJCCP2008.pdf>

# **NON-CONFORMITY AND ANTI-AUTHORITARIANISM NOW CONSIDERED AN ILLNESS: 'OPPOSITION DEFIANT DISORDER'**

***Carolanne Wright; Humans are Free; via Victims Unite***

***The Brave New World of "Mental Health Disorders".***

If Albert Einstein was a youth today, there's a good chance he would be saddled with an Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) diagnosis, possibly even Opposition Defiant Disorder (ODD) as well. He ignored his teachers, failed college entrance examinations several times and was hard-

pressed in holding down a job.

In 'Einstein: The Life and Times', biographer Ronald Clark argues that Einstein's problem wasn't attention deficits at all, but rather a hatred of authoritarian, Prussian influences in school.

*"The teachers in the elementary school appeared to me like sergeants and in the gymnasium the teachers were like lieutenants," Einstein once remarked.*

The fact that he read Kant's difficult Critique of Pure Reason for pleasure is quite revealing. He also refused to prepare for college admissions out of rebellion to his father's "unbearable" path of "practical profession."

When he did gain entrance to college, one of his professors chided Einstein:

*"You have one fault; one can't tell you anything."*

The very characteristics that troubled authorities, were exactly the ones which helped him to excel. Considering Einstein's life history, it makes one wonder about the rampant use of ADHD and ODD diagnosis that are plaguing our children and teenagers today.

According to the statistical research by Russell Barkley, Ph.D., on average for every 30 children, 1-3 have ADHD. Of these children, 65% have issues with defiance, non-compliance and problems with authority figures, which can manifest as verbal hostility and temper tantrums.

It's estimated that between 1-16% of all American children have ODD. The real question, however, is not how many diagnosis there have been, but rather should we be looking at ADHD and ODD as a mental illness in the first place?

### ***The age of excessive diagnosis, conformity and over-medication.***

No other time in history has the public had such access to pharmaceuticals for alleged mental illness.

Once reserved for extreme cases of schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, mania and suicidal depression, today we have a veritable free-for-all in diagnosis — and subsequent drugging — of any mental state we find the least bit inconvenient.

Take ADHD. For these children, sitting still in a classroom — under fluorescent lighting and being bombarded with EMFs from cell phones and Wi-Fi — completely removed from the natural world and pumped full of preservatives, artificial additives, GMOs, pesticides and sugar, is simply impossible. Their sensitive bodies and minds cannot take the onslaught.

Instead of extending outdoor time and cleaning up the diet, recess has been slashed and poor quality food remains the norm. Worse, they are drugged into submission with the likes of Evekeo, Adderall, Concerta and Ritalin — several of which are amphetamines.

Bruce Levine, Ph.D., writes in 'Why Anti-Authoritarians are Diagnosed as Mentally Ill':

*A 2009 Psychiatric Times article titled "ADHD & ODD: Confronting the Challenges of Disruptive Behavior" reports that "disruptive disorders," which include attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and opposition defiant disorder (ODD), are the most common mental health problem of children and teenagers.*

*ADHD is defined by poor attention and distractibility, poor self-control and impulsivity, and hyperactivity. ODD is defined as a "a pattern of negativistic, hostile, and defiant behaviour without the more serious violations of the basic rights of others that are seen in conduct disorder"; and ODD symptoms include "often actively defies or refuses to comply with adult requests or rules" and "often argues with adults."*

One of the leading mainstream mental health's authorities on ADHD, psychologist Russell Barkley believes that those afflicted with ADHD are deficient in what he classifies as "rule-governed behaviour," since they are less open to established authorities and not as responsive to positive or negative consequences. Those with ODD also have these so-called deficits. Because of this, it's exceptionally common for young people to be diagnosed with both ADHD and ODD. But as Levine rightly observes:

*"Do we really want to diagnose and medicate everyone with 'deficits in rule-governed behaviour'?"*

Some of our greatest freethinkers throughout history were non-conformists and challenged authority.

At what point do we simply become a nation of zombies, drugged out on pharmaceuticals, unable to think for ourselves? Americans have become increasingly socialized to associate inattention, anger, anxiety and paralyzing despair with a medical condition, and subsequently rely on medical intervention

instead of political remedies.

*“What better way to maintain the status quo than to view inattention, anger, anxiety, and depression as biochemical problems of those who are mentally ill rather than normal reactions to an increasingly authoritarian society,” said Bruce Levine Ph.D.*

He believes Americans desperately need anti-authoritarians to question, test and oppose illegitimate authorities and regain trust in their own common sense.

And yet, we’re moving into deeper authoritarian waters by the day. A good example is the newest addition of the DSM-IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders).

ODD is actually a new label in the manual, defined as “ongoing pattern of disobedient, hostile and defiant behaviour,” where symptoms include negativity, questioning authority, argumentativeness and irritability. ODD joins the ranks of other, newly created mental illnesses — ‘disorders’ like arrogance, narcissism, exceptional creativity, cynicism and antisocial tendencies.

Keep in mind that over the last 50 years, the manual has been prolific in creating new afflictions, with the total number of ‘mental illness’ classifications rising from 130 to 357. Also remember that each ‘mental illness’ has a pharmaceutical counterpart used in ‘treatment.’ But at what cost to the soul of humanity?

George F. Will provides a possible answer in an article for Washington Post, ‘Handbook suggests that deviations from ‘normality’ are disorders’:

Another danger is that childhood eccentricities, sometimes inextricable from creativity, might be labelled “disorders” to be “cured.” If 7-year-old Mozart tried composing his concertos today, he might be diagnosed with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder and medicated into barren normality.

In the face of such bizarre and chilling authoritarian mental illness classifications, the famous quote by Jiddu Krishnamurti comes to mind:

*“It is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society.”*

## **THIS IS WHAT GOVERNMENT SPONSORED MASS SURVEILLANCE IS DOING TO YOUR MIND**

*Alex Pietrowski; Waking Times; via Activist Post*

Big Brother is watching you and he wants you to believe that if you have nothing to hide, then you have nothing to fear.

This is a lie, of course, and as we move deeper into the era of State-sponsored technological surveillance, we see more evidence that the loss of privacy and confidence in interpersonal communications is transforming the individual into a compliant, self-policing ward of the State.

In one of the first empirical scientific studies to provide concrete evidence of the ‘chilling effects’ that government surveillance has on Internet users, Oxford University professor Jon Penney looked at Wikipedia search data and traffic patterns before and after the 2013 revelations by Edward Snowden regarding widespread NSA surveillance of the Internet. The results demonstrated an immediate trend towards self-censorship, as traffic and searches for terms like ‘Al Qaeda,’ ‘car bomb,’ and ‘Taliban’ showed nearly instant and mentionable decline.

The changes were statistically significant enough to indicate that many people automatically alter their own behavior upon realizing that a punitive authoritarian organization is monitoring them for legitimate or perceived wrongdoings.

*If people are spooked or deterred from learning about important policy matters like terrorism and national security, this is a real threat to proper democratic debate. – Jon Penney*

In 2013, the organization Pen America conducted a survey of writers in the United States showing that many were already self-censoring themselves in an increasingly oppressive atmosphere of government surveillance. The fear of being caught up in a dragnet of legal and

financial problems was sufficient enough for many to change their tone and content, even though no direct physical threat existed.

*The results of this survey—the beginning of a broader investigation into the harms of surveillance—substantiate PEN’s concerns: writers are not only overwhelmingly worried about government surveillance, but are engaging in self-censorship as a result*

Commenting on the effects of authoritarian governments which heavily surveil their citizens, Pen America also notes that, “historically, from writers and intellectuals in the Soviet Bloc, and contemporaneously from writers, thinkers, and artists in China, Iran, and elsewhere—aggressive surveillance regimes limit discourse and distort the flow of information and ideas.” This is without question the intended aim of such programs. That study also included data which indicated how people curtail their online behavior and interactions with other people out of fear of being persecuted by the nanny state:

*Smaller percentages of those surveyed described already changing their day-to-day behaviour: 28 percent said they had “curtailed or avoided activities on social media,” with another 12 percent saying they had seriously considered doing it; similar percentages said they had steered clear of certain topics in phone calls or email (24 percent had done so; 9 percent had seriously considered it).*

Furthermore, in a 2015 study by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) examining how awareness of government surveillance affected people’s use of Google, the world’s most widely used Internet search engine, researchers concluded that, “users were less likely to search using search terms that they believed might get them in trouble with the US government.”

In general, people’s behavior also changes in ways more favorable to an authoritarian government when surveillance both online and in the real world is as ubiquitous as it already is in American society. The State draws power from a compliant, acquiescent, and self-policing public, and when mass surveillance is applied to the citizenry, with the predictable result of creating a more submissive and conformist citizenry.

This idea was effectively brought to life in George Orwell’s classic dystopian novel, 1984, where the primary surveillance device of the individual was the telescreen, a digital device located in every home that could receive and transmit audio and video, giving individuals zero privacy in their own homes. The beauty of omnipotent surveillance such as this was that the government did not even have to actually be monitoring an individual, because the simple fact that they could be listening and watching was enough to frighten a person into voluntary compliance and self-censorship.

*There was of course no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment. How often, or on what system, the Thought Police plugged in on any individual wire was guesswork. It was even conceivable that they watched everybody all the time. But at any rate they could plug in your wire whenever they wanted to. You have to live – did live, from habit that became instinct – in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and, except in darkness, every movement scrutinized. – George Orwell, 1984*

This principle is coming to fruition in our modern world in the form of the internet and social media. Couple this with the creation and publication of government watch lists of all flavors, where people can be arbitrarily restricted from travel, or worse, and we are marching headlong into a brave new world where freedom is tightly constricted not by law, but by a creeping ambiguous fear of what may happen to us if we step out of line. We are creating a society where people may have legally protected free speech, but they dare not use it.

There is a reason governments, corporations, and multiple other entities of authority crave surveillance. It’s precisely because the possibility of being monitored radically changes individual and collective behavior. Specifically, that possibility breeds fear and fosters collective conformity.

That's always been intuitively clear. Now, there is mounting empirical evidence proving it. – Glen Greenwald

*Alex Pietrowski is an artist and writer concerned with preserving good health and the basic freedom to enjoy a healthy lifestyle. He is a staff writer for WakingTimes.com and Offgrid Outpost, a provider of storable food and emergency kits. Alex is an avid student of Yoga and life.*

## **WETIKO; HEALING THE MADNESS WITHIN**

### ***Kosmos Journal Newsletter***

***If ever there was a time when the turning inward of self-reflection was of critical importance, it is now, in our present catastrophic epic. – Paul Levy: Dispelling Wetiko: Breaking The Curse Of Evil***

Maybe you have already heard of wetiko -a Native American word, that means “a wicked person or spirit who terrorizes others by means of evil acts.” Wetiko can also describe a toxic culture, imposed on others, as we have seen manifested in the most horrific aspects of colonization: slavery, torture, exploitation, rape. The atrocities committed by one group or nation, on another, can echo for centuries. We become complicit, even if we were not alive at the time, when we justify and rationalize past wrongs in the name of ‘progress’ or perceived cultural superiority.

At its core, wetiko is a condition in which the human ego is estranged from the deeper Self, the ultimate ‘illusion of separation’. In this sense, we all have wetiko to deal with, in our own hearts and minds. When we experience hatred, greed, rage, a wish to harm – that is wetiko.

The historic (and continued) colonization of indigenous peoples is a pressing reminder of wetiko. At the same time, the term ‘colonization’ is also used as a metaphor for the varied ways we impose our views on people and situations. Those most affected by economic disparity have almost always been ‘colonized’ by the most privileged. We create educational ‘standards’ that reflect our racial bias. Elite corporate interests use media, the healthcare system, the financial system, and so on to impose a culture of fear. We poison our food and the Earth. Wetiko.

So what does it mean to de-colonize our thinking? Can collective cultural psychosis – our wetiko – be healed? That is the question we put before you. It is a question at the very center of the transformation movement. Are we waking up at last from the nightmare of separation? Through self-reflection and awareness of our interconnection with one another and the Earth, can we transform our civilization and dispel wetiko forever?

## **THE MAN WHO GOT REVENGE ON COLD CALLING MENACE**

***AOL Money UK; Sarah Coles; via Richard Colborne***

***(A small example of what is meant by 'resistance' - Ed)***

Wayne Naylor's company was the victim of a barrage of spam calls, which were made to his company day and night. His ski travel firm, Brentaski, was even missing calls from clients because the cold calls were tying up the phone lines. Naylor was climbing the walls with frustration, when it suddenly occurred to him how he could get his revenge.

Wigan Today reported that Naylor, a 54-year-old from Wigan, decided to invoice the cold calling company for his time - at £60 per call. The company refused to pay his invoices, so he took them to court. The court agreed that the company had to pay up. He told the Daily Mail that in each instance the company had claimed that they never made the call, so he said recording the conversation was essential in order to prove it had taken place.



## ***Can you do it?***

This court case itself doesn't set a legal precedence (because it was decided in a county court and it doesn't have the power to set a precedent). However, it demonstrates that this approach can work.

And it's not just something that businesses can try, because back in 2012 a man from Sunbury-on-Thames in Surrey took a similar approach in order to claim £195 from the PPI reclaiming firm that had been plaguing him with calls. He was particularly angry because they had been calling despite the fact he had registered with the telephone preference service - which should have stopped all these calls - so he came up with his solution.

During the next call, he told the firm he would be billing them £10 a minute for his wasted time. The next time they called, they were on the line for 19 and a half minutes, so he billed them for £195. This victim also recorded his calls to prove his side of the story. When they refused to pay, he started court proceedings. The firm agreed to pay before the matter went to court.

He said anyone could do this. His advice was to get the company details as soon as the firm becomes a nuisance. Then on the next call tell them they will be billed for their time - and record the call. If you are called again, play along to build up the length of the call, then invoice them, if they don't pay after 30 days you can issue proceedings in the small claims court.

## ***Afterword from Richard Colborne***

The above may be of use to you, whether for intrusive telephone pests, or in other ways. As I keep saying: I received compensation from BT very easily back in the 90s (on a different issue); and in the early 90s I was instrumental in getting Royal Mail to change its policy slightly on mail redirection, and getting them to make significant changes to the advertising material and application forms for mail redirection. Though regarding the latter; I received no acknowledgement at all, even though it probably boosted their business. Maybe I missed an opportunity there; I should have sued for a percentage in their improved profits!

About four years ago (since I moved to Bredon) I started having a go at Scottish Power (my supplier by default), but the whole thing was so time-consuming that I let it lapse; though I probably have a better case for when I have time to take it up again.

The above story is not as rare as the media may be suggesting. I have a number of acquaintances that tell me they bill companies (and sometimes individuals) regularly. It may be something as simple as having to read the electric meter themselves, or more complex and time-consuming issues. I've yet to see proof of the six-figure sums rumoured, but when one sees absurd stories in the media, with misfits receiving six-figure compensation payouts for allegedly having their feelings hurt; yes, maybe, some of the claims I've heard on the grapevine are true.

Serving a 'Legal Notice' (many months ago) on one of my neighbours here at Bredon whom was involved in attempts to enclose part of the communal garden and obstruct access to the clothes line seems to have worked. At first, he was waving the Notice in the air and shouting "Who wrote this f\*cking stupid letter?", then he jumped in his motability car and drove to the housing association office, but since he came back I've hardly heard a peep out of him, though neighbours tell me they have witnessed him wandering around muttering about me!

All I did was inform him that if he were the cause of me having to write any more letters about him, either to him, the housing association, or any other party, I would bill him at £50 per page or part thereof!

I final comment for some of you: don't give out details to telephone cold callers; don't grant any caller remote access to your computer; don't think about billing them, unless they have a U.K. address.

To avoid a long conversation and further problems; right at the start, ask the caller for his / her full name and home address (he / she has yours), the company name, address, postcode, phone number, company registration number, etc. You probably won't get far: if you speak confidently and sound as though you mean business, the caller will probably ring off in seconds.

# WHO CONTROLS THE CENTRAL BANKS? MARK CARNEY, GOVERNOR OF THE ... “BANK OF GOLDMAN SACHS”

*Prof Michel Chossudovsky; Global Research*

In the event of a vote in favour of Brexit, The Governor of the Bank of England Dr. Mark Carney reassured the British public: “we will do everything in our power to discharge our responsibility to achieve monetary stability and financial stability...” Carney intimated that “financial instability” and “poor economic outcomes” are associated with the Brexit process: a rather unsubtle message to investors, brokers as well as speculators. He also warned MPs that Brexit could lead to an exodus of banks and financial institutions from the City of London.

*“[There is no] blanket assurance that there would not be issues in the short term with respect to financial stability and that potential reduction in financial stability could be associated – and normally would be associated – with poor economic outcomes, as we have seen in the past”.*

The governor of the Bank of England Mark Carney is a former official of Goldman Sachs, the World’s foremost “institutional speculator”. He spent thirteen years with Goldman before heading the Bank of Canada. At the time of his 2013 appointment to the Bank of England, he was not a citizen of the United Kingdom: Mark Carney was the first foreigner to occupy that position since the founding of the Governor and Company of the Bank of England in 1694.

Were there powerful interests involved in the recruitment of the Governor of the BoE? Who was behind Carney’s candidacy? At the time of his appointment, the issue of U.K. “sovereignty” and Carney’s citizenship were hushed up by the British media.

## ***Brexit and Financial Instability***

Carney was fully aware that an “authoritative statement” pertaining to “financial stability” would have an immediate impact on financial markets. On whose behalf was he acting when he made those statements? Tory MP Jacob Rees-Mogg has accused Mark Carney, of “speculative statements”: “It is speculative and beneath the dignity of the Bank of England. To be making speculative pro-EU comments.”

## ***The Goldman Sachs Report***

In February, Goldman Sachs warned that in the case of Brexit, the pound sterling “could lose 20 per cent of its value” Mark Carney’s statements at the House of Commons not only point in the same direction, they also provide legitimacy and “credibility” to Goldman’s assessment. As an institutional speculator, Goldman’s intent is to influence expectations regarding financial markets (backed by authoritative statements from the Bank of England). Coinciding with Carney’s recent statements, Goldman Sachs released a report on the detrimental economic and financial impacts of Brexit:

*“However, given the substantial unpredictability regarding the UK’s post-Brexit trading and regulatory arrangements, quite how damaging Brexit would be in the long term is subject to a great deal of uncertainty. Arguably of more immediate concern is the effect that the uncertainty itself would have on UK growth.*

*The EU Treaty sets out a two-year timeframe for departure. During this period, the UK government would have to negotiate the terms upon which it could continue to trade with EU countries. Some of these trade negotiations and many of the regulatory/legal decisions would be relatively straightforward. But many would not. ...*

*During this period, UK-based businesses would face considerable uncertainty: exporting companies would not know the terms on which they would be able to supply export markets abroad once Brexit is complete; importing companies would not know the terms on which they would be able to import; and all companies would be confronted with increased regulatory/legal uncertainty.” (Excerpts of report)*

Carney dismissed the claims of Goldman in early February. But now he supports them. Where do Mark Carney’s statements originate, from the Bank of England or from Goldman Sachs, his former employer?

Goldman is known to be the World’s foremost “institutional speculator”. Foreknowledge of statements and decisions by central banks are often used by financial institutions in speculative operations. Inside knowledge and connections are part of this process, they are the “bread and butter” of the “institutional speculator”. The important question which the British media has not addressed: what is the relationship between Mark Carney and Goldman Sachs.

### ***The Goldman Trojan Horse***

Is there a Trojan Horse within the Bank of England with Goldman Sachs sitting on the inside? While Carney was appointed by Her Majesty, unofficially, he still has “links” to Goldman Sachs. Is he in conflict of interest?

*Next time there’s a financial meltdown, your money could be rescuing Goldman Sachs. Yes, thanks to a new deal struck by Mark Carney, the former Goldman man now running the Bank of England, the US investment bank could end up enjoying the next round of British taxpayer bailout money. (The Independent, 20 August 2015)*

Moreover, several key senior positions within the Bank of England are held by former Goldman officials. Mark Carney was appointed in 2013. The following year (2014), Dr. Ben Broadbent, a Senior Economist for Goldman Sachs was appointed Deputy Governor in charge of Monetary Policy.

Bankers from Goldman are strewn across key policy-making arenas across the world like no other financial institution. As well as the Governor of the Bank of England, his deputy Ben Broadbent is ex Goldman, as were two previous Monetary Policy Committee members, David Walton and Sushil Wadhvani.

Across the Channel, European Central Bank chief Mario Draghi is a Goldman man, while in the US, Goldmanites make up a quarter of the Federal Reserve system’s regional presidents. (Ibid).

### ***Concluding Remarks***

Central Banks are complicit in the manipulation of financial markets including stock markets, commodities, gold and currency markets, not to mention the oil and energy markets which have been the object of a carefully engineered “pump and dump” speculative onslaught.

Who controls the central banks? Monetary policy does not serve the public interest.

## **REVENGE OF THE VIKINGS — ICELAND WILL CREATE ITS OWN MONEY**

***CS Globe; via Michael Morton***

***The Vikings revenge. Iceland is taking the money back from the clutches of the private fractional reserve lending cartel.***

Iceland Will Create Its Own Money. It’s happened before in history, and with great success, but it has also prompted a violent backlash from the elites...

Back in 1914, the Bradbury Pound was introduced by the UK government as an 'emergency measure' to bolster a failing economy. It was a huge success. The banking elite were unhappy, however and panicked – before managing to wrestle control of the money supply afterwards.

President John F. Kennedy also introduced a similar 'Greenback' in 1961, and again, the banking elite were very unhappy about being pushed out, and losing control of the issuance of money as debt. JFK did not survive past 1963.

Then there was Muammar al-Gaddafi in Libya who, in 2009 announced a new gold-backed dinar, issued by Libya's state-owned public central bank, and with further plans – negotiating with the other African nations for the creation of an all-African currency to compete with the Euro and the Dollar. Gaddafi did not survive past 2011.

Who knew that the revolution would start with those radical Icelanders?

One Frosti Sigurjonsson, a lawmaker from the ruling Progress Party, issued a report that suggests taking the power to create money away from commercial banks, and hand it to the central bank and, ultimately, Parliament.

Can't see commercial banks in the western world be too happy with this. They must be contemplating wiping the island nation off the map. If accepted in the Iceland parliament, the plan would change the game in a very radical way.

It would be successful too, because there is no bigger scourge on our economies than commercial banks creating money and then securitizing and selling off the loans they just created the money (credit) with.

Everyone, with the possible exception of Paul Krugman, understands why this is a very sound idea. Agence France Presse reports:

*Iceland's government is considering a revolutionary monetary proposal – removing the power of commercial banks to create money and handing it to the central bank.*

*The proposal, which would be a turnaround in the history of modern finance, was part of a report written by a lawmaker from the ruling centrist Progress Party, Frosti Sigurjonsson, entitled "A better monetary system for Iceland".*

*"The findings will be an important contribution to the upcoming discussion, here and elsewhere, on money creation and monetary policy," Prime Minister Sigmundur David Gunnlaugsson said.*

The report, commissioned by the premier, is aimed at putting an end to a monetary system in place through a slew of financial crises, including the latest one in 2008.

According to a study by four central bankers, the country has had "over 20 instances of financial crises of different types" since 1875, with "six serious multiple financial crisis episodes occurring every 15 years on average."

Mr Sigurjonsson said the problem each time arose from ballooning credit during a strong economic cycle. He argued the central bank was unable to contain the credit boom, allowing inflation to rise and sparking exaggerated risk-taking and speculation, the threat of bank collapse and costly state interventions.

In Iceland, as in other modern market economies, the central bank controls the creation of banknotes and coins but not the creation of all money, which occurs as soon as a commercial bank offers a line of credit. The central bank can only try to influence the money supply with its monetary policy tools.

Under the so-called Sovereign Money proposal, the country's central bank would become the only creator of money. "Crucially, the power to create money is kept separate from the power to decide how that new money is used," Mr Sigurjonsson wrote in the proposal, "As with the state budget, the parliament will debate the government's proposal for allocation of new money," he wrote.

Banks would continue to manage accounts and payments, and would serve as intermediaries between savers and lenders.

Mr Sigurjonsson, a businessman and economist, was one of the masterminds behind Iceland's household debt relief programme launched in May 2014 and aimed at helping the many Icelanders whose finances were strangled by inflation-indexed mortgages signed before the 2008 financial crisis.

Learn more about public-issued currency by watch this short film produced by the UK Column, about England's Bradbury Pound:

# A NEW DIGITAL CASH SYSTEM WAS JUST UNVEILED AT A SECRET MEETING FOR BANKERS IN NEW YORK

*Michael Snyder; Activist Post*

Last month, a “secret meeting” that involved more than 100 executives from some of the biggest financial institutions in the United States was held in New York City. During this “secret meeting,” a company known as “Chain” unveiled a technology that transforms U.S. dollars into “pure digital assets.” Reportedly, there were representatives from Nasdaq, Citigroup, Visa, Fidelity, Fiserv and Pfizer in the room, and Chain also claims to be partnering with Capital One, State Street, and First Data. This “revolutionary” technology is intended to completely change the way that we use money, and it would represent a major step toward a cashless society. But if this new digital cash system is going to be so good for society, why was it unveiled during a secret meeting for Wall Street bankers? Is there something more going on here than we are being told?

None of us probably would have ever heard about this secret meeting if it was not for a report in Bloomberg. The following comes from their article entitled “Inside the Secret Meeting Where Wall Street Tested Digital Cash”...

*On a recent Monday in April, more than 100 executives from some of the world’s largest financial institutions gathered for a private meeting at the Times Square office of Nasdaq Inc. They weren’t there to just talk about blockchain, the new technology some predict will transform finance, but to build and experiment with the software.*

*By the end of the day, they had seen something revolutionary: U.S. dollars transformed into pure digital assets, able to be used to execute and settle a trade instantly. That’s the promise of a blockchain, where the cumbersome and error-prone system that takes days to move money across town or around the world is replaced with almost instant certainty.*

So it is not just Michael Snyder from The Economic Collapse Blog that is referring to this gathering as a “secret meeting.” This is actually how it was described by Bloomberg. And I think that there is a very good reason why this meeting was held in secret, because many in the general public would definitely be alarmed by this giant step toward a cashless society. Here is more on this new system from Bloomberg...

*While cash in a bank account moves electronically all the time today, there’s a distinction between that system and what it means to say money is digital. Electronic payments are really just messages that cash needs to move from one account to another, and this reconciliation is what adds time to the payments process. For customers, moving money between accounts can take days as banks wait for confirmations. Digital dollars, however, are pre-loaded into a system like a blockchain. From there, they can be swapped immediately for an asset.*

*“Instead of a record or message being moved, it’s the actual asset,” Ludwin said. “The payment and the settlement become the same thing.”*

Why this is so alarming is because we are seeing other major moves toward a cashless system all over the planet. In Sweden, 95 percent of all retail transactions are already cashless, and ATM machines are being removed by the hundreds. In Denmark, government officials actually have a stated goal of “eradicating cash” by the year 2030. And in Norway, the biggest bank in the country has publicly called for the complete elimination of all cash. Other nations in Europe have already banned cash transactions over a certain amount. Here are just a couple of examples...

*As I have written about previously, cash transactions of more than 2,500 euros have already been*

*banned in Spain, and France and Italy have both banned all cash transactions of more than 1,000 euros.*

*Little by little, cash is being eradicated, and what we have seen so far is just the beginning. 417 billion cashless transactions were conducted in 2014, and the final number for 2015 is projected to be much higher.*

The global push toward a cashless society is only going to intensify, because banks and governments both tend to really like the idea of such a system. Banks really like the concept of a cashless society because it would force everyone to be their customers. There would be no more hiding cash in a mattress at home or trying to pay all of your bills with paper money. Under a cashless system, we would all be dependent on the banks, and they would make lots of money whenever we swiped our cards or our “chips” were scanned.

Governments see a lot of advantages in a cashless society as well. They tell us that they would be able to crack down on drug dealers, tax evaders, terrorists and money launderers, but the truth is that it would enable them to watch, track, monitor and control virtually all of our financial transactions. Our lives would become open books to the government, and financial privacy would be a thing of the past.

In addition, the potential for tyranny would be absolutely off the charts.

Just imagine a world where the government could serve as the gatekeeper for who is allowed to use the cashless system and who is not. They could require that we all submit to some sort of government-issued form of identification before being permitted to operate within the system, or it is even conceivable that a loyalty oath would be required. Of course if you did not submit to their demands, you could not buy, sell, open a bank account or get a job without access to the cashless system.

Hopefully people can understand where this is going. Paper money is a very important component of our freedom, and if it is taken away from us that will open the door for all sorts of abuse.

Even now, cash is slowly being “criminalized” in America. For example, if cash is used to pay for a hotel room that is considered by federal authorities to be “suspicious activity” that should be reported to the government. Of course it isn’t against the law to pay your hotel bill in cash just yet, but according to the government it is something that “terrorists” do so it needs to be closely watched. It doesn’t take a whole lot of imagination to see where all of this is going. And for those of us that understand what time it is, this is a clear indication that it is getting late in the game.

*\*About the author: Michael Snyder is the founder and publisher of The Economic Collapse Blog. Michael’s controversial new book about Bible prophecy entitled “The Rapture Verdict” is available in paperback and for the Kindle on Amazon.com.*

## **BANK OF NORTH DAKOTA SOARS DESPITE OIL BUST: A BLUEPRINT FOR CALIFORNIA?**

***Ellen Brown; Web of Debt; Huffpost Business***

***(Ellen Brown has written extensively on public banking; Here is more evidence of the benefits of public banking in the US context. - Ed)***

Despite North Dakota’s collapsing oil market, its state-owned bank continues to report record profits. This article looks at what California, with fifty times North Dakota’s population, could do following that state’s lead. In November 2014, the Wall Street Journal reported that the Bank of North Dakota (BND), the nation’s only state-owned depository bank, was more profitable even than J.P. Morgan

Chase and Goldman Sachs. The author attributed this remarkable performance to the state's oil boom; but the boom has now become an oil bust, yet the BND's profits continue to climb. Its 2015 Annual Report, published on April 20th, boasted its most profitable year ever.

The BND has had record profits for the last 12 years, each year outperforming the last. In 2015 it reported \$130.7 million in earnings, total assets of \$7.4 billion, capital of \$749 million, and a return on investment of a whopping 18.1 percent. Its lending portfolio grew by \$486 million, a 12.7 percent increase, with growth in all four of its areas of concentration: agriculture, business, residential, and student loans.

By increasing its lending into a collapsing economy, the BND has helped prop the economy up. In 2015, it introduced new infrastructure programs to improve access to medical facilities, remodel or construct new schools, and build new road and water infrastructure. The Farm Financial Stability Loan was introduced to assist farmers affected by low commodity prices or below-average crop production. The BND also helped fund 300 new businesses. Those numbers are particularly impressive considering that North Dakota has a population of only about 750,000, just half the size of Phoenix or Philadelphia. Compare that to California, the largest state by population, which has more than fifty times as many people as North Dakota.

What could California do with its own bank, following North Dakota's lead? Here are some possibilities, including costs, risks and potential profits.

### ***Getting Started: Forming a Bank Without Cost to the Taxpayers***

A bank can be started in California with an initial capitalization of about \$20 million. But let's say the state wants to do something substantial and begins with a capitalization of \$1 billion.

Where to get this money? One option would be the state's own pension funds, which are always seeking good investments. Today state pension funds are looking for a return of about 7% per year (although in practice they are getting less). One billion dollars could be raised more cheaply with a bond issue, but tapping into the state's own funds would avoid increasing state debt levels. At a 10% capital requirement, \$1 billion in capitalization is sufficient to back \$10 billion in new loans, assuming the bank has an equivalent sum in deposits to provide liquidity.

Where to get the deposits? One possibility would be the California Pooled Money Investment Account (PMIA), which contained \$67.7 billion earning a modest 0.47% as of the quarter ending March 31, 2016. This huge pool of rainy day, slush and investment funds is invested 47.01% in US Treasuries, 16.33% in certificates of deposit and bank notes, 8.35% in time deposits, and 8.91% in loans, along with some other smaller investments. A portion of this money could be transferred to the state-owned bank as its deposit base, on which 0.5% could be paid in interest, generating the same average return that the PMIA is getting now.

For our hypothetical purposes, let's say \$11.1 billion is transferred from the PMIA and deposited in the state-owned bank. With a 10% reserve requirement, \$1.1 billion would need to be held as reserves. The other \$10 billion could be lent or invested. What could be done with this \$10 billion? Here are some possibilities.

### ***Slashing the Cost of Infrastructure***

One option would be to fund critical infrastructure needs. Today California and other states deposit their revenues in Wall Street banks at minimal interest, then finance infrastructure construction and repair by borrowing from the Wall Street bond market at much higher interest. A general rule for government bonds is that they double the cost of projects, once interest is paid. California and other states could save these costs simply by being their own bankers and borrowing from themselves; and with their own chartered banks, they could do it while getting the same safeguards they are getting today with their Wall Street deposits and investments. The money might actually be safer in their own banks, which would not be subject to the bail-in provisions now imposed by the G-20's Financial Stability Board on giant "systemically risky" banking institutions.

To envision the possibilities, let's say California decided to fund its new bullet train through its state-owned bank. In 2008, Californians approved a bond issue of \$10 billion as the initial outlay for this train, which was to run from Los Angeles to San Francisco. At then-existing interest rates, estimates were that by the time the bonds were paid off, California taxpayers would have paid an additional \$9.5 billion in interest.

So let's assume the \$10 billion in available assets from the state-owned bank were used to repurchase these bonds. The state would have saved \$9.5 billion, less the cost of funds.

It is not clear from the above-cited source what the length of the bond issue was, but assume it was for 20 years, making the interest rate about 3.5%. The cost of one billion dollars in capital for 20

years at 7% would be \$2.87 billion, and the cost of \$11.1 billion in deposits at 0.5% would be \$1.164 billion. So the total cost of funds would be \$4.034 billion. Deducted from \$9.5 billion, that leaves about \$5.5 billion in savings or profit over 20 years. That's \$5.5 billion generated with money the state already has sitting idle, requiring no additional borrowing or taxpayer funds.

What about risk? What if one of the cities or state agencies whose money is held in the investment pool wants to pull that money out? Since it is held in the bank as deposits, it would be immediately liquid and available, as all deposits are. And if the bank then lacked sufficient liquidity to back its assets (in this case the repurchase of its own bonds), it could in the short term do as all banks do - borrow from other banks at the Fed funds rate of about 0.35%, or from the Federal Reserve Discount Window at about 0.75%. Better yet, it could simply liquidate some of the \$56 billion remaining in the PMIA and deposit that money into its state bank, where the funds would continue to earn 0.5% interest as they are doing now.

Assume that from its \$5.5 billion in profits, the bank then repaid the pension funds their \$1 billion initial capital investment. That would leave \$4.5 billion in profit, free and clear - a tidy sum potentially generated by one man sitting in an office shuffling computer entries, without new buildings, tellers, loan officers or other overhead. That capital base would be sufficient to capitalize about \$40 billion in new loans, all generated without cost to the taxpayers.

### ***A California New Deal***

The bullet train example is a simple way to illustrate the potential of a state-owned bank, but there are many other possibilities for using its available assets. As the BND did after building up its capital base, the bank could advance loans at reasonable rates for local businesses, homeowners, students, school districts, and municipalities seeking funds for infrastructure. These loans would be somewhat riskier than buying back the state's own bonds, and they would involve variable time frames. Like all banks, the state bank could run into liquidity problems from borrowing short to lend long, should the depositors unexpectedly come for their money. But again, that problem could be fixed simply by liquidating some portion of the money remaining in the PMIA and depositing it in the state-owned bank, where it would earn the same 0.5% interest it is earning now.

Here is another intriguing possibility for avoiding liquidity problems. The bank could serve simply as intermediary, generating loans which would then be sold to investors. That is what banks do today when they securitize mortgages and sell them off. Risk of loss is imposed on the investors, who also get the payment stream; but the bank profits as well, by receiving fees for its intermediating functions.

The federally-owned Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) did something similar when it funded a major portion of the New Deal and World War II by selling bonds. This money was then used for loans to build infrastructure of every sort and to finance the war. According to a US Treasury report titled Final Report of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (Government Printing Office, 1959), the RFC loaned or invested more than \$40 billion from 1932 to 1957 (the years of its operation). By some estimates, the sum was about \$50 billion. A small part of this came from its initial capitalization. The rest was borrowed - \$51.3 billion from the US Treasury and \$3.1 billion from the public. The RFC financed roads, bridges, dams, post offices, universities, electrical power, mortgages, farms, and much more, while at the same time making money for the government. On its normal lending functions (omitting such things as extraordinary grants for wartime), it wound up earning a total net income of \$690 million.

North Dakota has led the way in demonstrating how a state can jump-start a flagging economy by keeping its revenues in its own state-owned bank, using them to generate credit for the state and its citizens, bypassing the tourniquet on the free flow of credit imposed by private out-of-state banks. California and other states could do the same. They could create jobs, restore home ownership, rebuild infrastructure and generally stimulate their economies, while generating hefty dividends for the state, without increasing debt levels or risking public funds - and without costing taxpayers a dime.

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