

RUNNYMEDE GAZETTE

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EDITORIAL

A BIGGER GAZETTE

Readers will notice that the Runnymede Gazette has expanded from its usual 24 pages to 32. The importance of including Andrew Gavin Marshall's seminal essay *The Global Banking 'Super-Entity' Drug Cartel: The "Free Market" of Finance Capital*, provided the spur. For the rest, there seems to be ever more to report.

Marshall's essay is absolutely a must read. His ability to grasp many themes and facts and blend them into an holistic picture is surpassed by few. The following demolition of the neo-liberal concept of 'free markets' is typical;-

Banks and financial institutions provide the liquidity – or funds – for what we call “free markets.” Free markets in principle would allow for free competition between companies and countries, each producing their own comparative advantage – producing what they are best at – and trading with others in the international market, so that all parties rise in living standards and wealth together. The “free market” is, of course, pure mythology. In practice, what we call “free markets” are actually highly protectionist, regimented, regulated, and designed to undermine competition and enforce monopolization. The “free markets” serve this purpose for the benefit of large multinational corporations and banks.

The only quarrel I would have with his article is his use of the term 'capitalist' instead of 'corporatist'. This is a not infrequent confusion, but it is important to make the distinction. Indeed, Marshall himself makes that distinction in conceding that if we actually had 'free markets' we could all enjoy the benefits of trade on comparative advantage.

Thus the distinction between 'capitalism' and 'corporatism' is down to issues of institutional scale and control. Anyone who has studied Adam Smith ... rather than merely parroted the deformed and tendentious pastiche of Smith so often regurgitated by neo-liberal economics ... will understand that a 'free market' can

only exist where all the participants, producers as well as consumers, are small in relation to one another. A 'free market' cannot exist in the presence of monopoly, oligopoly or cartel, still less within the framework of the 'super-entity' of which Marshall writes. We might also be minded of Gandhi's comment that, when all said and done, a fountain pen is an item of capital.

Yet again the politics of institutional scale and the need for the radical devolution of political and economic power, rears its head.

CONVENIENCE OR CHAOS?

Sometimes the shortest items can be the most eloquent. Such applies to the items from *Critical Thinking* and *Sigmund Freud*.

Since the industrial revolution, the impetus has been to harness technologies to make life better for human beings, firstly in the workplace and ... from the late nineteenth century onwards ... in the home. The stated purpose of all this effort is to make life easy and convenient through the progressive diminution, by machines, of toil and drudgery.

Yet such a picture is utterly beguiling. A generation ago, a single breadwinner could provide for a household, and comfortably within a working lifetime pay off a mortgage and have a pot ready for retirement.

Now, none of this is true. We find ourselves working ever harder for ever less reward ... real incomes (for other than the already wealthy), after debt interest, have been stagnant or declining for two or three decades. We work with ever less security in work and pensions, ever more in debt, and ever more hassle deriving from social, legal, technological and economic systems which have become overwhelmingly and impossibly complex. And all this against a background of remorseless turmoil ... political, economic, technological, social, cultural, demographic, with one future shock piled upon another, nose to tail.

Yet surprisingly few are impelled to ask a few very simple questions. What, actually, in all this wonderful 'globalisation', is there for me? What is all this increasingly frenetic and demented activity actually for? Just how 'competitive' do we have to become? What is the economy actually for? Is the economy for the benefit of the people at large, or is it a playground for oligarchs?

We have the technological means to build a material paradise. Instead we have built a bedlam.

Frank Taylor

5 MANDATORY STEPS FOR PROTECTING DATA FROM EAVESDROPPERS

Chris Dougherty; Activist Post

Every day we hear news reports in the mainstream media about social network hacking, malware, malicious account takeovers and protecting data. It doesn't matter if you are the average Joe Blow or a huge corporation like Burger King, everyone is being targeted these days.

Cyber criminals are searching for everything from your banking and financial info to your email, Facebook and other social networking passwords. Luckily there are technologies and a few simple practices that can help you stay safer online, as well as offline. Here are 5 Mandatory Steps that you should

follow for protecting data from hacking and eavesdroppers....

1. IMPORTANT: Use Strong Encryption To Protect Your Files

Encryption is the process of encoding a message, or any other data, in such a way that eavesdroppers or hackers cannot read it, but authorized parties can. Today there are many options that provide both software and hardware encryption solutions for protecting your data.

TrueCrypt is a free open source software that provides automatic, real-time (on-the-fly) and transparent data encryption. With TrueCrypt you can encrypt a single partition or an entire storage device such as USB flash drive or hard drive. The safest way to use TrueCrypt is to encrypt the entire storage device or hard drive. At a bare minimum, the partition or drive where Windows is installed should be encrypted.

For those of you who don't want to install software, there are also several military-grade storage devices that provide hardware-based encryption for data protection. By doing a simple search on Google I was able to find the following 6 options that provide strong hardware-based encryption:

- DataLocker DL3 1TB
- Aegis Padlock 3.0 1TB
- ThinkPad USB 3.0 1TB
- Buslink CipherShield 1TB
- Kanguru Defender 1TB
- Imation (IronKey) Defender H100 1TB

A couple of weeks ago I was able to personally review the DataLocker DL3 encrypted hard drive and I really liked the fact that it was so incredibly easy to use. It also had a lot of cool features like the touch screen display and self destruct mechanism. As DataLocker put it so eloquently, this encrypted hard drive is "Simply Secure". Regardless of which encryption solution you decide to use, it is important to remember that this is a mandatory first step in securing your data from prying eyes.

2. CRITICAL: Create A Bulletproof Password

The next step towards reducing the threat of online identity theft should come in the form of a very secure password. The majority of account hacks reported each day are do to the use of insecure passwords. Hackers often make use of automated software and huge word dictionaries in order to brute force account passwords. Using the 15 tips below, you should create a very strong, unique password for every site that you visit on the Internet. A strong password:

- has 15 or more characters
- has uppercase letters
- has lowercase letters
- has numbers
- has symbols, such as ~ ` ! @ # \$ % ^ & * () _ - = + [] { } | ; : ' " , . < > \ / ?
- is not like your previous passwords
- is not your name
- is not your government ID number
- is not your birthday or that of a family member
- is not your login or user name
- is not your friend's name
- is not your family member's name
- is not your pet's name
- is not a common name
- is not a dictionary word

If you have a hard time coming up with a strong password on your own, you can always use a password generator like the iPassword Generator or the free secure password generator found at PasswordsGenerator.net.

Once you have created your password you should store it on an encrypted hard drive to keep it safe. This is the single best way to limit your exposure to online account takeovers and hackers.

Where appropriate, you might consider using a two-factor authentication mechanism like Duo:Security or Google's 2-step validation as an added layer of security.

3. CRUCIAL: Hide Your Password From Prying Eyes

Once you have created a strong password you will need to keep it in a secure place away from prying eyes. The simplest answer, while managing to achieve at least some acceptable level of security, is to create a password list and store it on an encrypted storage device. A better answer is to install password management software like LastPass or KeePass on your encrypted drive. Both of these applications are free and they allow you to store all of your passwords in a single encrypted database.

LastPass runs natively on all major platforms including Windows, Mac and Linux. KeePass is geared primarily for Windows users, however the developer's website claims it has also been tested on Wine. Wine is a compatibility layer that allows you to run Windows applications on Linux, BSD, Solaris and Mac OS X.

The combination of an encrypted hard drive AND password management software provides the best solution for keeping your password list safe from hackers and eavesdroppers.

4. URGENT: Install Security Software on Smartphones, Tablets and Computers

Cyber criminals are now using various strains of malware, spyware and malicious links to steal your information. Any device that is connected to the Internet is a potential attack vector for these types of attacks. In addition, hackers are increasingly using social networks to lead you to websites where they can install malicious software on your devices.

I personally use Lookout Mobile Security software to keep my smartphone safe from malware and other malicious apps. Lookout provides real-time protection for smartphones and tablets running both Android and Apple iOS software (iPhone, iPad, etc). An additional version is also available for the Amazon Kindle Fire HD device.

Facebook is another popular attack vector for hackers. You can use the Eset Social Media Scanner to scan your Facebook account, as well as the timelines of your friends, for malware and links to malicious websites. The Eset Social Media Scanner application also offers an option to scan your local computer for signs of malware. I strongly advise that users run this additional security feature to be certain their computer is safe from threats.

Eset Smart Security 6 is another application worth mentioning for protecting data from hackers. This one software provides all-in-one Internet security and comes with an Anti-Theft feature and the Social Media Scanner. There is also a similar version for Mac users called Eset Cyber Security.

One other important piece of security software that I thought I should recommend is called Prey. The Prey Project was developed as an open source anti-theft solution for laptops, phones & tablets and is used by people all around the world. According to the Prey Project website, "Prey lets you keep track of your laptop, phone and tablet whenever stolen or missing — easily and all in one place. It's lightweight, open source software that gives you full and remote control, 24/7."

I personally use Prey on all of my electronic devices and love it. I know a friend-of-a-friend, who has Prey installed, that actually was able to recover his laptop after it was stolen while he was living in Costa Rica.

5. ESSENTIAL: Use A Locked-Down Environment For Online Shopping, Banking and Filing Taxes

The best way to stay safe while shopping online and performing financial transactions is to create a secure operating environment. You can build a custom environment yourself by installing various software on an encrypted drive or you can use a solution that provides out-of-the-box protection.

Either way, the goal is to open a new window on your desktop that instantly provides a secure environment for browsing the web and reading web-based email.

Building A Custom Environment:

In order to build a custom environment on an encrypted drive I would suggest installing the latest version of Portable VirtualBox and then downloading your favorite Live CD operating system image to the drive. I had a DataLocker DL3 encrypted hard drive laying around so I decided to create my environment on that. Portable VirtualBox is a software program that allows you to run Virtual Machines (VMs) on any USB storage device or hard drive. A Live CD is an operating system that runs entirely from memory and typically never writes files to your local hard drive. Each time the Live CD is restarted, it erases all traces and starts up with a fresh environment.

Once Portable VirtualBox is installed and running on the encrypted drive, you can create a new virtual

machine with a virtual CD-ROM device attached to the Live CD image file. I personally like to use the latest version of Ubuntu for the Live CD, but you can use your favorite.

Once you have created your virtual machine in Portable VirtualBox you can simply start the machine, wait for it to boot up, and then open a browser to surf the web. Once you are finished browsing the web or checking your email, you can simply close the virtual machine to erase all tracks.

Any malware that you accidentally downloaded during your browsing session would be automatically erased once the virtual machine was shut down or restarted. It is important to note however that any files, bookmarks or configuration changes made while working in the virtual machine will also be lost when the machine is shut down.

Out-of-the-Box Solutions:

There are several ready-made solutions that provide a secure browsing environment while shopping, banking and reading email online. Two alternatives that I found were the Encrypt Stick 3-in-1 Digital Privacy Software and the Kanguru Defender DualTrust security device.

Encrypt Stick runs on any USB flash drive, installs in seconds, and turns your flash drive into your own Digital Privacy Manager (DPM). The Encrypt Stick developers claim that the software protects your web browsing experience, your passwords and your private files. The software comes with both free and paid options and includes versions that run on Windows and Mac computers.

The Kanguru Defender DualTrust is an all-in-one software and hardware solution that provides encrypted storage as well as secure web browsing. If you are concerned about malware, viruses or spyware on your PC, then this is a great solution for you. According to the Kanguru website, "The Kanguru Defender DualTrust™ provides complete confidence to pay online bills, do your banking, make purchases and browse online in a safe and secure environment. It opens up a secure, protected browser session, isolating itself from vulnerabilities that could potentially "trace your steps" in an ordinary browser window. "

Simply plug in the Defender DualTrust, create a secure password and the device will boot to a secure web browsing environment. Once you unplug the device, the Defender DualTrust leaves no trace of your session behind. I think I will try the Kanguru Defender DualTrust this year when filing my taxes online. Maybe you should too.

In Summary:

Whether you are an average Internet user who simply uses the web to check email and shop online, or you are a corporate or government user accessing sensitive information, you need to take a few extra security measures in order to protect data from hackers and eavesdroppers.

The 5 steps listed above should be put in place right away in order to get you started on the right path to achieving the highest level of data security while online.

Chris Dougherty is a grey hat hacker and online security expert. Please visit his blog, www.VirtualThreat.com, for more excellent news and information about protecting yourself in cyberspace.

SECRET POLICE NETWORKS MUST BE RELENTLESSLY EXPOSED

Andrej Hunko; via Nathan Allonby

"When police forces and intelligence services engage in international cooperation, parliamentary oversight is the loser. The increasing significance of undercover police networks is making this situation far more critical." These comments were made by Bundestag Member Andrej Hunko in response to the Federal Government's answer, which is now available in English, to his Minor Interpellation. The purpose of the interpellation, a written parliamentary question, was to heighten awareness of the following little-known police structures:

- ⌚ the Cross-Border Surveillance Working Group (CSW), comprising mobile task forces on surveillance techniques, drawn from 12 EU Member States and Europol;
- ⌚ Europol's analysis work file entitled Dolphin, which entails the surveillance of left-wing activists in areas such as animal rights and anarchism;
- ⌚ the Remote Forensic Software User Group, which was created by the Bundeskriminalamt, the

German Federal Criminal Police Office, to promote sales of German Trojan software abroad.

- ⌚ the European Cooperation Group on Undercover Activities (ECG), comprising spy chiefs from Member States of the EU and from countries such as Russia, Switzerland, Turkey and Ukraine;
- ⌚ the International Working Group on Undercover Policing (IWG), comprising spy chiefs from European countries as well as from countries such as the United States, Israel, New Zealand and Australia;

Mr Hunko went on to say:

“One of the main parts of the interpellation focused on the undercover activity of British police officer Mark Kennedy, whose infiltration of European leftist movements exemplifies police cooperation conducted beyond the bounds of parliamentary oversight. It remains unclear under whose orders the undercover investigator was operating during the years of his activity.”

Kennedy used his infiltration of the Icelandic environmental movement to worm his way into leftist circles from Finland to Portugal through the information events he staged. The Icelandic police are stubbornly rejecting requests from the Minister of Justice to release full details of his activity into the public domain, claiming that disclosure would prejudice British security interests. Even though Members of the Icelandic Parliament have a right to ask questions on police matters, they are not being given any information.

The exposure of the British police officer, by contrast, has been the focus of deliberations in the European Cooperation Group on Undercover Activities (ECG), of which Iceland is not a member. The Federal Government has not revealed the substance of German and British contributions to this discussion. The remit of the ECG, which meets behind closed doors, includes the creation of false identities and the examination of legal frameworks in the countries that send and host undercover agents.

Foreign police officers must obtain authorisation before entering the territory of a sovereign state. They must not commit any criminal offences during their stay. Kennedy, however, sought to impress activists in Berlin by setting fire to a refuse container. Arrested by the police, he even concealed his true identity from the public prosecutor. This is illegal, as the Federal Government has indicated now. Last year, Germany, together with Britain, urged the European Commission to exempt cross-border undercover activities from a planned new directive establishing a European Investigation Order. This would also make parliamentary oversight of such activities even more difficult. The necessity of this parliamentary oversight is illustrated by the government use of software to hack into personal computers. In 2008, the German Federal Criminal Police Office established a cross-border Remote Forensic Software User Group with a view to helping police forces in other countries to introduce German spyware. The Federal Criminal Police Office has also sent delegations to Canada, Israel, the United States and other countries to discuss Trojan programs with police forces and intelligence services. Although the German supreme court had imposed rigid limits in 2007 on the widespread practice of searching entire computer systems, representatives of the Criminal Police Office travelled to the United Kingdom and other destinations to ‘share experience’ on that practice.

Even in the national context it is difficult to detect illegal practices on the part of police forces and intelligence services. Securing judicial convictions for criminal offences is even harder. How much more, then, must the increasingly cross-border nature of police cooperation muddy these waters. This is why the activity of undercover police networks must be relentlessly exposed.

This applies especially to cooperation with the private business sector, which became just as blatant in the case of spyware as it had been in the criminalisation of animal rights activism, to the benefit of British companies such as Gamma International, GlaxoSmithKline and AstraZeneca. I call on the UK Government to disclose all information regarding the activity of Mark Kennedy in Germany and to inform all interested parties retrospectively of his activity.

This is the only way in which key questions can be answered, such as whether he had sexual relations on false pretences with targets or contacts in Germany, as he did in the UK.

I must assume in any case that the use of British undercover agents to infiltrate left wing movements was unlawful, because no police officer is allowed to spend years investigating activists in the absence of any specific grounds for suspicion or any other defined investigative objective.”

Download the answer to the parliamentary question concerning secretly operating international networks of police forces (in English): http://www.andrejhunko.de/start/download/doc_download/236-concerning-secretly-operatinginternational-networks-of-police-forces

Download the answer in German (International im Verborgenen agierende Netzwerke von Polizeien): <http://dipbt.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/17/098/1709844.pdf>

THE “ALTERNATIVE MEDIA” CHALLENGES OFFICIALDOM’S VIEWS

Colin Todhunter; Global Research

Url of this article: <http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-alternative-media-challenges-officialdoms-views/5323701>

The mainstream media is under threat. And the threat is in the form of what is known as the ‘alternative media’. Decades ago, the ‘underground’ media took the form of pamphlets and booklets.

These days, it’s no longer ‘underground’ and you don’t need money to cover print and distribution costs. It’s very much alive and kicking above ground and is there for all to access on the net.

The mainstream media includes popular TV channels, newspapers and news websites, from Reuters and CNN to Fox News and NDTV in India. Critics of the mainstream media say that it tends to parrot officialdom’s views, bows to advertising concerns and upholds the prevailing social and economic system, not least because it tends to be privately owned and thus its owners have a vested interest in maintaining a system based on private ownership and thus in manufacturing consent for it. Moreover, media outlets are often part of major conglomerates, which may include armaments manufacturers, banking or industrial concerns. News outlets will not therefore adopt stances or report on stories that are harmful to the wider interests of the organisation.

The public is thus given access to a world view that is distorted in favour of state-corporate interests. And such interests have succeeded in getting across the message that, for example, the ‘free market’ is the best way to deliver goods and services to people, state provided welfare is bad and ‘individual responsibility’ is good, privatisation increases efficiency, a ‘war on terror’ must be waged on designated enemies and that gross inequalities and corporate power are necessary and legitimate.

Over the past decade, numerous websites have sprung up that question these assumptions. Montreal-based Global Research gets around 125,000 unique visitors a day. It forwards an anti-globalisation agenda. The site attracts a diverse readership, but all believe one thing: the mainstream media is failing to tell people the truth about how bankers, corporate oligarchs and governments are working hand in glove to deceive people and strip them of their rights.

It is the one stop site for people who are concerned about uncovering the truth over 9/11 and the reasons for the west’s endless imperialist wars. It sets out to expose the global elite’s agenda to create a ‘new world order’, which is partly being done by spraying poisons into the atmosphere (chemtrails), genetically modifying food, using vaccines or employing any other number of methods to subjugate us.

In the US, talk show host Alex Jones has a massive following on the net. Jones is concerned with how the US government is waging a war against its own population and is stripping away people’s constitutional rights. In the UK, former TV sports host David Icke spreads a similar message. As with Jones, Icke is concerned about a secretive ‘illuminati’ of bankers, rich families and various other elites who are actively conspiring to bring about a ‘new world order’.

From Prison Planet to the 4th Media, the ‘alternative media’ has gone from strength to strength. One reason for its popularity has been that, since the decline of the Soviet Union, the US has surged ahead with an agenda for world domination through perpetual wars. At the same time, increasing surveillance and an erosion of wage levels and democratic rights in western countries have compelled people to look for answers as to why everything seems to be going wrong. The economic crisis caused by bankers and the resultant austerity for the masses has added further fuel to the fire. To some extent, the boundaries between the traditional left and the radical right have become blurred as fingers are being pointed towards the machinations and motives of ‘the global elite’, however defined.

The European Union (EU) is now voicing concerns about the ‘damaging’ effects of this. Apparently, societal consensus is being eroded as people are being ‘led astray’. It’s not so much ‘reds under the bed’ that is causing the authorities concern these days, but conspiracy theories on the internet. In the report “A free and pluralistic media to sustain European democracy,” the EU feels there is a danger that people are being misguidedly radicalised and advocates EU funding for ‘responsible’ journalism and getting the EU’s viewpoint across regularly and prominently in the media, as well as placing controls on the net. The EU perceives this to be ‘pluralism’. As with the targeting of WikiLeaks, it amounts to nothing more than an attempt to reassert ideological control and a clamping down on the ‘alternative media’ and its ongoing

exposure of state-corporate deceit.

In India, Kerala-based Countercurrents seems to be at the forefront of the 'alternative media'. With around 25,000 unique visitors per day, its focus is similar to that of Global Research, although it carries more features on India. However, the 'alternative media' has not yet taken off in India. Indians have not yet been turned on to the messages of the 'alternative media' and have thus not 'tuned in'. This is of concern to Binu Mathew from the Countercurrents website. He says the predicament is that we have too little time to tackle the challenges our ecosystem and humanity face.

For Mathew, good ideas not only catch fire, but in this digital day and age can spread like fire. And that encapsulates the power of the 'alternative media'. Till now, the mainstream media has been a major tool of social control, serving to sanction capitalism's inherent social and economic privileges and disadvantages. But it's losing its impact and is being replaced by alternative outlets. Whether in the US or EU, officialdom is losing control. And that's why it's running scared.

This article originally appeared in India's Deccan Herald newspaper on 18 Feb 2013.

The figures quoted for site visitors are approximate and based on statmyweb.com site statistics.

THE TYRANNY OF CONVENIENCE

Sigmund Fraud; Activist Post

Our lives are ridiculously convenient in this day and age, and much of the consumer economy seems to be directed at making life 'easier' still. It seems that the more convenient life becomes, the more need there is for more convenience. Anything is possible in this technological age, and if it can't be afforded, then convenient credit can make it happen. There is no reason to wait for anything.

Just like an addict, the modern convenience seeker is rarely aware of the damage that the need to feed the need is causing.

The pursuit of convenience is big business and over the last 60-75 years we have experienced a profound cultural shift towards disposable consumerism. We've been sold the idea that life must be easy, and that the mundane things in life are to be rushed or delegated so that more time is available for enjoying ourselves. For several generations now our culture has been programmed to place an overly high value on convenience, and the flip side of this is that we have grown to loathe inconvenience to such a degree that we now perceive even slight delays in the delivery of convenience as inconveniences.

Who has time for anything to go wrong in our world today?

Our addiction to this complex lifestyle, requiring ever-compounded convenience, is one of the subtlest and most addictive tyrannies of the modern age.

The word tyranny conjures up images of Uncle Joe Stalin, Chairman Mao and the Berlin Wall; however, taking a closer look at human behavior reveals that our lives are regimented more so by our own habits and preferences than by any outside entity. The limitations we place on ourselves, that prevent us from living proper and powerful lives, do as much to tyrannize our hearts and minds than any dictatorial edict, and the human race has never been more easily controlled.

Those who would trade freedom for convenience, deserve neither freedom, nor security, and will end up with inconvenience. – Sigmund Fraud

It is in the routinely carried out behaviors of our daily lives, in our rigid habits, in the patterns bubbling just under the surface of our psyches, that we give up our freedom. This is where we are most taken advantage of and most held captive. This is where our true identity is hijacked and where we are programmed to live in pursuit of phony consumeristic ideals such as convenience.

Are we just robots running programs? Are we merely slaves programmed to perform certain duties in exchange for a comfortable system of punishment and reward?

In interesting times as these, with such complex and dangerous problems facing all of us, and when the bulk of society seems content to live behind the iron curtain of cognitive dissonance, freeing ourselves from the habits and cultural conventions that keep us enslaved is imperative.

The freedom to purchase a service and do business with someone without having to automatically also comply with physical molestation by a third party is a simple, obvious right that we are trading away for the convenience of flying. Yet so many people consent to being groped and to watching their children being groped by strangers in TSA uniforms just to travel recreationally.

We also wish to avoid the inconvenience of being hassled, sequestered, detained, interrogated, fined, arrested, tazed, or shot by an increasingly authoritarian government. Yet, no one is forcing us to fly under these conditions, and the fact that so many people show up without protest is a broad public statement of consent to being molested. A mandate, if you will.

In many ways, convenience is a more insidious and practical tool for tyranny than the barrel of a gun. Our modern banking system is perhaps the most dastardly and subtle form of tyranny known to man, as it is so large in scope that it affects almost everyone on the planet.

Even a rudimentary understanding of central banking reveals how it capitalizes on our desire for convenience in order to ensnare the planet in a web of debt. They conveniently print up as much money as the world needs and we consent to owing exponentially increasing, mathematically un-payable sums of money to a private corporation for the rest of eternity. It is convenient now, but rather costly in the long run.

We do this not out of fear for our lives, but for want of convenience and for fear of inconvenience. We have been programmed to ignore our own best interests in order to remain un-hassled by our complex lives.

It turns out that the problem is not that they are selling us tyranny, but that we have already bought into what they sold us. We are too far hooked on the promising idea of convenience to turn back now. We are slaves to our own habits and desires. We are tyrannized by convenience.

Sigmund Fraud is a survivor of modern psychiatry and a dedicated mental activist. He is a staff writer for WakingTimes.com where he pursues the possibility of a massive shift towards a more psychologically aware future for mankind.

MEANS TO LIFE

Critical Thinking

CH Douglas recognised in 1920 that our economic system is founded on a misconception: that full employment is achievable and desirable.

Everybody should be born on this planet with the means to life. Before the enclosures and privatisation, it meant by virtue of your own toil you could house, clothe and feed yourself and your family. The privatisation of land led to the dispossessed being enslaved in labour to earn the means to life. But now technology-driven productivity combined with an expanded population has created a surplus of humans no longer needed for necessary production. Consequently, a whole new raft of "industries" and subsidies have been created to keep the machine going with more and more people doing jobs they don't like and we don't need, creating waste. But now the system's breaking down because declining incomes are reducing effective demand for what's available but unaffordable.

We're psychologically damaged by the economic framework which has distorted the way we think. Orwellian speak of "hard working families" reinforces the myth that your right to survival is conditional on forced employment. Single mothers are sent out to work rather than being able to choose to parent their children, leading to perverse social outcomes.

The means to life cannot be conditional. Everybody needs the means to a decent life at which point work becomes a real choice. And yes it is affordable. We just need to share the bounty of the land and abolish interest.

This presentation is not the slickest but it conveys a powerful message which has been suppressed since its emergence a century ago.

BIG BROTHER WATCH BULLETINS

Nick Pickles; Big Brother Watch

Surveillance law reaches breaking point with boom in Private investigators

Our latest report highlights the growing use of private investigators by local and public authorities, particularly the number of times they are used without RIPA authorisation.

We are seriously concerned there is a gap in UK law emerging around surveillance and the ability of third parties to conduct surveillance operations without proper regulation. Some of these operations were conducted at the request of insurers, raising concerns about conflicts of interest.

The government has acted to control surveillance by local councils but this research shows more

than ever before public bodies are using private detectives to do their snooping. The law is at breaking point and public bodies shouldn't be able to dodge the legal checks on them by using private investigators.

With as many as 10,000 people working as private investigators in the UK, we agree with the Home Affairs Select Committee that the current legal framework for regulating their activities is wholly inadequate.

This highlights the ongoing concern that RIPA is not fit for purpose, in failing to deal with evidence and material obtained outside the legislative framework. Equally, the changing nature of surveillance – particularly the ability to search online, through social networks and through semi-public sources of information – further reinforces the need for the law to be reformed to strengthen protection against unwarranted and unauthorised surveillance becoming a frequent occurrence.

Deputy Director Emma Carr appeared on Sky News sunrise discussing the report, while Director Nick Pickles appeared on BBC Breakfast, ITV London News and BBC Radio 5 Live. Media outlets including BBC News, Metro, The Daily Telegraph, Politics.co.uk, the Daily Star, LocalGov and numerous regional media including the York Press, Huddersfield Examiner and the Sunderland Echo reported our findings.

Write to your MP today about the Justice and Security Bill

Time is running out to ensure that the British legal system is not fundamentally altered in favour of the State's desire to keep secret what it chooses.

The House of Lords attempted to introduce safeguards to the Justice and Security Bill – but they were overturned at Committee stage in the Commons.

The latest assessment from the Joint Committee on Human Rights, publishing its second legislative scrutiny report, warned that there were still a number of significant issues that had not been addressed by the Government. Andrew Tryie MP and Anthony Peto, QC wrote a damning paper for the Centre for Policy Studies 'Neither Just nor Secure' while former Labour Minister Chris Mullin joined critics arguing the Bill "will be deeply damaging to the integrity of our legal system in the eyes of the world."

A letter signed by 702 legal experts called the Bill 'dangerous and unnecessary' while the latest analysis by the Special Advocates currently involved in closed hearings argues there is "no compelling justification for the proposals in Part 2 of the Bill has been made out, notwithstanding the Government's assertions to the contrary".

Public back privacy law action on Google

New research published this week by Big Brother Watch/ComRes finds that the majority of the British public are concerned about their online privacy (68%) with nearly a quarter (22%) saying that they are very concerned.

People are more likely to say that consumers are being harmed by big companies gathering large amounts of their personal data for internal use (46%) than they are to say that this enhances consumer experiences (18%).

A clear majority (66%) of the British public say that national regulators should be doing more to force Google to comply with existing European Directives on privacy and the protection of personal data

The message from consumers is clear – regulators were right to investigate Google's new privacy policy and now they need to do more to force the company to comply with the law.

THE NEW PROPAGANDA IS LIBERAL -- THE NEW SLAVERY IS DIGITAL

John Pilger; Information Clearing House; via Critical Thinking

What is modern propaganda? For many, it is the lies of a totalitarian state. In the 1970s, I met Leni Riefenstahl and asked her about her epic films that glorified the Nazis. Using revolutionary camera and lighting techniques, she produced a documentary form that mesmerized Germans; her Triumph of the Will cast Hitler's spell.

She told me that the "messages" of her films were dependent not on "orders from above," but on the "submissive void" of the German public. Did that include the liberal, educated bourgeoisie? "Everyone," she

said.

Today, we prefer to believe that there is no submissive void. "Choice" is ubiquitous. Phones are "platforms" that launch every half-thought. There is Google from outer space if you need it. Caressed like rosary beads, the precious devices are borne heads-down, relentlessly monitored and prioritized.

Their dominant theme is the self. Me. My needs. Riefenstahl's submissive void is today's digital slavery. Edward Said described this wired state in *Culture and Imperialism* as taking imperialism where navies could never reach. It is the ultimate means of social control because it is voluntary, addictive and shrouded in illusions of personal freedom.

Today's "message" of grotesque inequality, social injustice and war is the propaganda of liberal democracies. By any measure of human behavior, this is extremism. When Hugo Chavez challenged it, he was abused in bad faith; and his successor will be subverted by the same zealots of the American Enterprise Institute, Harvard's Kennedy School and the "human rights" organizations that have appropriated American liberalism and underpin its propaganda.

The historian Norman Pollack calls this "liberal fascism." He wrote, "All is normality on display. For [Nazi] goose-steppers, substitute the seemingly more innocuous militarization of the total culture. And for the bombastic leader, we have the reformer manque, blithely at work [in the White House], planning and executing assassination, smiling all the while."

Whereas a generation ago, dissent and biting satire were allowed in the "mainstream," today their counterfeits are acceptable and a fake moral zeitgeist rules. "Identity" is all, mutating feminism and declaring class obsolete.

Just as collateral damage covers for mass murder, "austerity" has become an acceptable lie. Beneath the veneer of consumerism, a quarter of Greater Manchester is reported to be living in "extreme poverty." The militarist violence perpetrated against hundreds of thousands of nameless men, women and children by "our" governments is never a crime against humanity.

Interviewing Tony Blair 10 years on from his criminal invasion of Iraq, the BBC's Kirsty Wark gifted him a moment he could only dream of. She allowed Blair to agonize over his "difficult" decision rather than call him to account for the monumental lies and bloodbath he launched. One is reminded of Albert Speer.

Hollywood has returned to its cold war role, led by liberals. Ben Affleck's Oscar-winning *Argo* is the first feature film so integrated into the propaganda system that its subliminal warning of Iran's "threat" is offered as Obama is preparing, yet again, to attack Iran.

That Affleck's "true story" of good-guys-vs- bad-Muslims is as much a fabrication as Obama's justification for his war plans is lost in PR-managed plaudits. As the independent critic Andrew O'Hehir points out, *Argo* is "a propaganda movie in the truest sense, one that claims to be innocent of all ideology." That is, it debases the art of film-making to reflect an image of the power it serves.

The true story is that, for 34 years, the US foreign policy elite have seethed with revenge for the loss of the shah of Iran, their beloved tyrant, and his CIA-designed state of torture. When Iranian students occupied the US embassy in Tehran in 1979, they found a trove of incriminating documents, which revealed that an Israeli spy network was operating inside the US, stealing top scientific and military secrets. Today, the duplicitous Zionist ally -- not Iran -- is the one and only nuclear threat in the Middle East.

In 1977, Carl Bernstein, famed for his Watergate reporting, disclosed that more than 400 journalists and executives of mostly liberal US media organizations had worked for the CIA in the past 25 years. They included journalists from the New York Times, Time, and the big TV broadcasters. These days, such a formal nefarious workforce is quite unnecessary.

In 2010, the New York Times made no secret of its collusion with the White House in censoring the WikiLeaks war logs. The CIA has an "entertainment industry liaison office" that helps producers and directors remake its image from that of a lawless gang that assassinates, overthrows governments and runs drugs. As Obama's CIA commits multiple murder by drone, Affleck lauds the "clandestine service ... that is making sacrifices on behalf of Americans every day ... I want to thank them very much."

The 2010 Oscar-winner Kathryn Bigelow's *Zero Dark Thirty*, a torture-apology, was all but licensed by the Pentagon. The US market share of cinema box-office takings in Britain often reaches 80 percent, and the small UK share is mainly for US co-productions.

Films from Europe and the rest of the world account for a tiny fraction of those we are allowed to see. In my own film-making career, I have never known a time when dissenting voices in the visual arts are so few and silent. For all the hand-wringing induced by the Leveson inquiry, the "Murdoch mold" remains intact. Phone-hacking was always a distraction, a misdemeanor compared to the media-wide drumbeat for criminal wars.

According to Gallup, 99 percent of Americans believe Iran is a threat to them, just as the majority

believed Iraq was responsible for the 9/11 attacks. "Propaganda always wins," said Leni Riefenstahl, "if you allow it."

BIG BROTHER TO LOG YOUR DRINKING HABITS AND WAIST SIZE AS GPS ARE FORCED TO HAND OVER CONFIDENTIAL RECORDS

Jack Doyle; MailOnline; via John Newell

Data includes weight, cholesterol, BMI, family health history and pulse rate

Doctors will be forced to reveal alcohol consumption and smoking status

Privacy campaigners described it as 'biggest data grab in NHS history'

Part of new Health Service programme called Everyone Counts

Officials insisted data will be anonymous and deleted after analysis

GPs are to be forced to hand over confidential records on all their patients' drinking habits, waist sizes and illnesses.

The files will be stored in a giant information bank that privacy campaigners say represents the 'biggest data grab in NHS history'.

They warned the move would end patient confidentiality and hand personal information to third parties.

Data grab: Doctors will be forced to hand over sensitive information about patients as part of a new programme called Everyone Counts but campaigners have criticised the move

The data includes weight, cholesterol levels, body mass index, pulse rate, family health history, alcohol consumption and smoking status.

Diagnosis of everything from cancer to heart disease to mental illness would be covered. Family doctors will have to pass on dates of birth, postcodes and NHS numbers.

Officials insisted the personal information would be made anonymous and deleted after analysis. But Ross Anderson, professor of security engineering at Cambridge University, said: 'Under these proposals, medical confidentiality is, in effect, dead and there is currently nobody standing in the way.' Nick Pickles, of the privacy group Big Brother Watch, said NHS managers would now be in charge of our most confidential information. He added: 'It is unbelievable how little the public is being told about what is going on, while GPs are being strong-armed into handing over details about their patients and to not make a fuss. Not only have the public not been told what is going on, none of us has been asked to give our permission for this to happen.'

The data grab is part of Everyone Counts, a programme to extend the availability of patient data across the Health Service. Campaigners for privacy warn the move would end patient confidentiality and hand personal information to third parties

GPs will be required to send monthly updates on their patients to a central database run by the NHS's Health and Social Care Information Centre. Health chiefs will be able to demand information on every patient, such as why they have been referred to a consultant. Another arm of the NHS will supply data on patient prescriptions.

In a briefing for GPs, health chiefs admit that 'patient identifiable components' will be demanded, including post code and date of birth.

NHS officials insist the information centre will be a 'safe haven' for personal data, which will be deleted soon after it is received.

The information will be used to analyse demand for services and improve treatment.

But a document outlining the scheme even raises the prospect of clinical data being passed on or sold to third parties. It states: 'The patient identifiable components will not be released outside the safe haven except as permitted by the Data Protection Act.

'HSCIC ... will store the data and link it only where approved and necessary, ensuring that patient confidentiality is protected.'

The data collected includes pulse rate, weight, cholesterol levels, body mass index, family health

history, alcohol consumption and smoking status

Patients will not be able to opt out of the system.

Before the election the Tories condemned the creation of huge databases – including the controversial NHS IT project – and insisted it would roll back ‘Labour’s database state’.

But last month, in the first sign of a dramatic shift away from this position, Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt said he wanted millions of private medical records to be stored and shared between hospitals, GPs, care homes and even local councils. He sold the programme as part of plans for a ‘paperless NHS’ by 2018 and claimed ‘thousands of lives’ would be saved.

But details of the changes have raised serious concerns among civil liberties and privacy campaigners, as well as health professionals

GPs’ leaders said the latest proposals were too broad. ‘Patients must be given the option to opt out of any scheme that seeks to transfer identifiable information about them from their records to another source,’ said a BMA spokesman. ‘This opt-out should be widely advertised and explained in order that patients are reassured and understand the process being carried out.’

Phil Booth of the campaign group NO2ID said an unprecedented volume of data would be ‘sucked up’. ‘People have to trust in the notion of medical confidentiality. They expect to be able to talk in confidence to their GP,’ he said. ‘They don’t expect their private conversations to be uploaded on to a national database where they will be made available for any number of purposes for the benefit of persons unknown.’

A spokesman for the NHS said: ‘The NHS constitution makes clear what information can be used for by the NHS and this proposal complies exactly with that.’

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2272166/Big-brother-log-drinking-habits-waist-size.html#ixzz2OZQLhFlc>

THE GLOBAL BANKING ‘SUPER-ENTITY’ DRUG CARTEL: THE “FREE MARKET” OF FINANCE CAPITAL

Andrew Gavin Marshall, Guest Post; via John Newell

"Who is the greater criminal: he who robs a bank or he who founds one?"

-The Threepenny Opera (Berthold Brecht)

I would like to introduce you, the reader, to some realities of our global banking system, resting on the rhetoric of free markets, but functioning, in actuality, as a global cartel, a “super-entity” in which the world’s major banks all own each other and own the controlling shares in the world’s largest multinational corporations, influence governments and policy with politicians in their back pockets, routinely engaging in fraud and bribery, and launder hundreds of billions of dollars in drug money, not to mention arms dealing and terrorist financing. These are the “too big to fail” and “too big to jail” banks, the centre of our global economy, what we call a “free market,” implying that the global banks – and corporations – have “free reign” to do anything they please, engage in blatantly criminal activities, steal trillions in wealth which is hidden offshore, and never get more than a slap on the wrist. This is the real “free market,” a highly profitable global banking cartel, functioning as a worldwide financial Mafia.

Scientific Research Proves the Existence of a Global Financial “Super-Entity”

In October of 2011, New Scientist reported that a scientific study on the global financial system was undertaken by three complex systems theorists at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, Switzerland. The conclusion of the study revealed what many theorists and observers have noted for years, decades, and indeed, even centuries: “An analysis of the relationships between 43,000 transnational corporations has identified a relatively small group of companies, mainly banks, with disproportionate power over the global economy.” As one of the researchers stated, “Reality is so complex, we must move away from dogma, whether it’s conspiracy theories or free-market... Our analysis is reality-based.” Using a database which listed 37 million companies and investors worldwide,

the researchers studied all 43,060 trans-national corporations (TNCs), including the share ownerships linking them.[1]

The mapping of 'power' was through the construction of a model showing which companies controlled which other companies through shareholdings. The web of ownership revealed a core of 1,318 companies with ties to two or more other companies. This 'core' was found to own roughly 80% of global revenues for the entire set of 43,000 TNCs. And then came what the researchers referred to as the "super-entity" of 147 tightly-knit companies, which all own each other, and collectively own 40% of the total wealth in the entire network. One of the researchers noted, "In effect, less than 1 per cent of the companies were able to control 40 per cent of the entire network." This network poses a huge risk to the global economy, as, "If one [company] suffers distress... this propagates." The study was undertaken with a data set established prior to the economic crisis, thus, as the financial crisis forced some banks to die (Lehman Bros.) and others to merge, the "super-entity" would now be even more connected, concentrated, and problematic for the economy.[2]

The top 50 companies on the list of the "super-entity" included (as of 2007): Barclays Plc (1), Capital Group Companies Inc (2), FMR Corporation (3), AXA (4), State Street Corporation (5), JP Morgan Chase & Co. (6), UBS AG (9), Merrill Lynch & Co Inc (10), Deutsche Bank (12), Credit Suisse Group (14), Bank of New York Mellon Corp (16), Goldman Sachs Group (18), Morgan Stanley (21), Société Générale (24), Bank of America Corporation (25), Lloyds TSB Group (26), Lehman Brothers Holdings (34), Sun Life Financial (35), ING Groep (41), BNP Paribas (46), and several others.[3]

In the United States, five banks control half the economy: JP Morgan Chase, Bank of America, Citigroup, Wells Fargo, and Goldman Sachs Group collectively held \$8.5 trillion in assets at the end of 2011, which equals roughly 56% of the U.S. economy. This data was according to central bankers at the Federal Reserve. In 2007, the assets of the largest banks amounted to 43% of the U.S. economy. Thus, the crisis has made the banks bigger and more powerful than ever. Because the government invoked "too big to fail," meaning that the big banks will be saved because they are very important, the big banks have incentive to make continued and bigger risks, because they will be bailed out in the end. Essentially, it's an insurance policy for criminal risk-taking behaviour. The former president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis stated, "Market participants believe that nothing has changed, that too-big-to-fail is fully intact." Remember, "market" means the banking cartel (or "super-entity" if you prefer). Thus, they build new bubbles and buy government bonds (sovereign debt), making the global financial system increasingly insecure and at risk of a larger collapse than took place in 2008.[4]

When politicians, economists, and other refer to "financial markets," they are in actuality referring to the "super-entity" of corporate-financial institutions which dominate, collectively, the global economy. For example, the role of financial markets in the debt crisis ravaging Europe over the past two years is often referred to as "market discipline," with financial markets speculating against the ability of nations to repay their debt or interest, of credit ratings agencies downgrading the credit-worthiness of nations, of higher yields on sovereign bonds (higher interest on government debt), and plunging the country deeper into crisis, thus forcing its political class to impose austerity and structural adjustment measures in order to restore "market confidence." This process is called "market discipline," but is more accurately, "financial terrorism" or "market warfare," with the term "market" referring specifically to the "super-entity." Whatever you call it, market discipline is ultimately a euphemism for class war.[5]

The Global Supra-Government and the "Free Market"

In December of 2011, Roger Altman, the former Deputy Secretary of the Treasury under the Clinton administration wrote an article for the Financial Times in which he explained that financial markets were "acting like a global supra-government," noting:

They oust entrenched regimes where normal political processes could not do so. They force austerity, banking bail-outs and other major policy changes. Their influence dwarfs multilateral institutions such as the International Monetary Fund. Indeed, leaving aside unusable nuclear weapons, they have become the most powerful force on earth.[6]

Altman continued, explaining that when the power of this "global supra-government" is flexed, "the immediate impact on society can be painful – wider unemployment, for example, frequently results and governments fail." But of course, being a former top Treasury Department official, he went on to endorse the global supra-government, writing, "the longer-term effects can be often transformative and positive." Ominously, Altman concluded: "Whether this power is healthy or not is beside the point. It is permanent," and "there is no stopping the new policing role of the financial markets." [7] In other words, the 'super-entity' global 'supra-government' of financial markets carries out financial extortion, overthrows governments and impoverishes populations, but this is ultimately "positive" and

“permanent,” at least from the view of a former Treasury Department official. From the point of view of those who are being impoverished, the actual populations, “positive” is not necessarily the word that comes to mind.

In the age of globalization, money – or capital – flows easily across borders, with banks, hedge funds and other financial institutions acting as the vanguards of a new international order of global governance. Where finance goes, corporations follow; where corporations venture, powerful states stand guard of their interests. Our global system is one of state-capitalism, where the state and corporate interests are interdependent and mutually beneficial, at least for those in power. Today, financial institutions – with banks at the helm – have reached unprecedented power and influence in state capitalist societies. The banks are bigger than ever before in history, guarded by an insurance policy that we call “too big to fail,” which means that despite their criminal and reckless behaviour, the government will step in to bail them out, as it always has. Financial markets also include credit ratings agencies, which determine the supposed “credit-worthiness” of other banks, corporations, and entire nations. The lower the credit rating, the riskier the investment, and thus, the higher the interest is for that entity to borrow money. Countries that do not follow the dictates of the “financial market” are punished with lower credit ratings, higher interest, speculative attacks, and in the cases of Greece and Italy in November of 2011, their democratically-elected governments are simply removed and replaced with technocratic administrations made up of bankers and economists who then push through austerity and adjustment policies that impoverish and exploit their populations. In the age of the “super-entity” global “supra-government,” there is no time to rattle around with the pesky process of formal liberal democracy; they mean business, and if your elected governments do not succumb to “market discipline,” they will be removed and replaced in what – under any other circumstances – is referred to as a ‘coup.’

Banks and financial institutions provide the liquidity – or funds – for what we call “free markets.” Free markets in principle would allow for free competition between companies and countries, each producing their own comparative advantage – producing what they are best at – and trading with others in the international market, so that all parties rise in living standards and wealth together. The “free market” is, of course, pure mythology. In practice, what we call “free markets” are actually highly protectionist, regimented, regulated, and designed to undermine competition and enforce monopolization. The “free markets” serve this purpose for the benefit of large multinational corporations and banks.

When we use the term “free markets” we are generally referring to the “real” economy, legitimate and legal. When it comes to illegitimate markets, for example, the global drug trade, we do not tend to refer to them as “free markets” but rather, “illegal” and run by “cartels.” Cartels, like corporations, are hierarchically organized totalitarian institutions, where decisions and power are exercised from the top-down, with essentially no input going from the bottom-up. Large multinational corporations, like large international cartels, seek to control their particular market throughout entire nations, regions, and beyond. Often, co-operation between corporations allow them to function in an oligopolistic manner, where they collectively dominate the entire market, carving it up between them. Major oil companies, agro-industrial firms, telecommunications, pharmaceutical, military contractors and water management corporations are well-known for these types of activities.

Cartels have often been known to engage in a similar practice, though typically they are more competitive with each other. When interests are threatened – which is defined as when a corporation or cartel is at risk of losing its total dominance of its market in a particular region – conflict arises, and often violently so, with the potential for coups, assassinations, terror campaigns, and war. This is when the state intervenes to protect the market for the cartel or corporate interests. Thus, a market like the global drug trade functions relatively similar to those of the “legitimate” economy, pharmaceuticals, energy, technology, etc. The illicit trade in drugs is as much a “free market” as is the trade in automobiles or oil. And of course, the money ends up in the same place: the global supra-government of “financial markets.”

Banking Cartel or Drug Cartel... or What's the Difference?

In 2009, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reported that billions of dollars in drug money saved the major banks during the financial crisis, providing much-needed liquidity. Antonio Maria Costa, the head of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime stated that drug money was “the only liquid investment capital” available to banks on the brink of collapse, with roughly \$325 billion in drug money absorbed by the financial system. Without identifying specific countries or banks, Costa stated that, “Inter-bank loans were funded by money that originated from the drugs trade and other illegal activities... There were signs that some banks were rescued that way.”[8]

In 2010, Wachovia Bank (now owned by Wells Fargo) settled the largest action ever under the U.S. bank secrecy act, paying a fine of \$50 million plus forfeiting \$110 million of drug money, of which the bank laundered roughly \$378.4 billion out of Mexico. The federal prosecutor in the case stated, "Wachovia's blatant disregard for our banking laws gave international cocaine cartels a virtual carte blanche to finance their operations." The fine that the bank paid for laundering hundreds of billions of dollars in drug money was less than 2% of the bank's 2009 profit, and on the same week of the settlement, Wells Fargo's stock actually went up. The bank admitted in a statement of settlement that, "As early as 2004, Wachovia understood the risk" of holding such an account, but "despite these warnings, Wachovia remained in the business." The leading investigator into the money laundering operations, Martin Woods, based out of London, had discovered that Wachovia had received roughly six or seven thousand subpoenas for information about its Mexican operation from the federal government, of which Woods commented: "An absurd number. So at what point does someone at the highest level not get the feeling that something is very, very wrong?" Woods had been hired by Wachovia's London branch as a senior anti-money laundering officer in 2005, and when in 2007 an official investigation was opened into Wachovia's Mexican operations, Woods was informed by the bank that he failed "to perform at an acceptable standard." In other words, he was actually doing his job. In regards to the settlement, Woods stated:

The regulatory authorities do not have to spend any more time on it, and they don't have to push it as far as a criminal trial. They just issue criminal proceedings, and settle. The law enforcement people do what they are supposed to do, but what's the point? All those people dealing with all that money from drug-trafficking and murder, and no one goes to jail?[9]

As the former UN Office of Drugs and Crime czar Antonio Maria Costa said, "The connection between organized crime and financial institutions started in the late 1970s, early 1980s... when the mafia became globalized," just like other major markets. Martin Woods added that, "These are the proceeds of murder and misery in Mexico, and of drugs sold around the world," yet no one went to jail, asking, "What does the settlement do to fight the cartels? Nothing – it doesn't make the job of law enforcement easier and it encourages the cartels and anyone who wants to make money by laundering their blood dollars. Where's the risk? There is none." He added: "Is it in the interest of the American people to encourage both the drug cartels and the banks in this way? Is it in the interest of the Mexican people? It's simple: if you don't see the correlation between the money laundering by banks and the 30,000 people killed in Mexico, you're missing the point." Woods, who now runs his own consultancy, told the Observer in 2011 that, "New York and London... have become the world's two biggest laundries of criminal and drug money, and offshore tax havens. Not the Cayman Islands, not the Isle of Man or Jersey. The big laundering is right through the City of London and Wall Street." [10]

Just as the "too big to fail" program acts as an insurance policy for the big banks to engage in constant criminal activity, taking ever-larger financial risks with the guarantee that they will be bailed out, the settlements and lack of criminal prosecutions for banks laundering drug money provides the incentive to continue laundering hundreds of billions in drug money, because so long as the fine is smaller than the profit accrued from such a practice, it comes down to a simple cost-benefit analysis: if the cost of laundering drug money is less than the benefit, continue with the policy. The same cost-benefit analysis goes for all forms of criminal activity by banks and corporations, whether bribery, fraud, or violating environmental, labour and other regulations. So long as the penalty is less than the profit, the problem continues.

An article in the Observer from July of 2012 referred to global banks as "the financial services wing of the drug cartels," noting that HSBC, Britain's biggest bank, had been called before the U.S. Senate to testify about laundering drug money from Mexican cartels, holding one "suspicious account" for four years on behalf of the largest drug cartel in the world, the Sinaloa cartel in Mexico. [11] In fact, a multi-year investigation into HSBC revealed that the bank was not only a major international drug money-laundering conduit, but also laundered money for clients with ties to terrorism. In July of 2012, as the Senate was publicly investigating HSBC, Antonio Maria Costa stated, "Today I cannot think of one bank in the world that has not been penetrated by mafia money." The global drug trade is estimated to be worth roughly \$380 billion annually, with most of the money made in the consumer markets of North America and Europe. Using the example of the \$35 billion per year cocaine market in the United States, only about 1.5% of these profits make their way to the coca-leaf producers (mostly poor peasants) in South America (who became the target of our bombing and chemical warfare campaigns in the "war on drugs"), while the international traffickers get roughly 13% of the profits, with the remaining 85% earned by the distributors in the U.S. HSBC was accused of laundering the profits of the distributors. [12]

The U.S. Senate report concluded that HSBC had exposed the U.S. financial system to "a wide array of money laundering, drug trafficking, and terrorist financing," including billions in "proceeds from illegal drug sales in the United States." HSBC acknowledged, in an official statement, that, "in the past,

we have sometimes failed to meet the standards that regulators and customers expect.” Among those “standards” that HSBC “sometimes failed to meet,” according to the Senate investigation, were financing provided to banks in Saudi Arabia and Bangladesh which were tied to terrorist organizations, while the bank’s regulator failed to take a single enforcement action against HSBC.[13] Among the terrorist organizations which potentially received financial assistance from HSBC through Saudi banks was al-Qaeda. HSBC put aside \$700 million to cover any potential fines for such activities, which is not uncommon for banks to do. Banks like ABN Amro, Barclays, Credit Suisse, Lloyds and ING had all reached major settlements for admitting to facilitating transactions and engaging in money laundering for clients in Cuba, Iran, Libya, Myanmar and Sudan.[14]

As executives from HSBC appeared in the U.S. Senate, the bank’s head of compliance since 2002, David Bagley, resigned as he testified before the committee, commenting, “Despite the best efforts and intentions of many dedicated professionals, HSBC has fallen short of our own expectations and the expectations of our regulators.”[15] As Ed Vulliamy reported in the Observer, in May of 2012, a poor black man named Edward Dorsey Sr. was convicted of peddling 5.5 grams of crack cocaine in Washington D.C. and was given 10 years in jail. Meanwhile, just across the river from where Dorsey had committed his crime, executives from HSBC admitted before the U.S. Senate that they laundered billions in drug money, just as Wachovia had admitted to the previous year, with no one going to prison. [16] The lesson from this is clear: if you are poor, black, and are caught with a couple grams of crack-cocaine, you can expect to go to prison for several years (or in this case, a decade); but if you are rich, white, own a bank, and are caught laundering billions of dollars (or hundreds of billions of dollars) in drug money, you will be fined (but not enough to make such practices unprofitable), and may have to resign. Too big to fail is simply another way of saying “too big to jail.”

Of course, it’s not fair to put all the blame for international drug money-laundering on the shoulders of HSBC and Wachovia, as Bloomberg reported, Mexican drug cartels also funneled money through the Bank of America and even the banking branch of American Express, Banco Santander, and Citigroup. [17] Even the FBI has accused Bank of America of laundering Mexican drug cartel funds.[18] But it’s not just drug money that banks launder; all sorts of illicit funds are laundered through major banks, many of which have been fined or are now being investigated for their criminal activities, including JPMorgan, Standard Chartered, Credit Suisse, Lloyds, Barclays, ING, and the Royal Bank of Scotland, among others.[19] Another major Swiss bank, UBS, has been very consistent in committing fraud and engaging in various conspiracies, a great deal of which was committed against Americans, though the bank was given “conditional immunity” from the U.S. Department of Justice.[20]

Financial Fraud and the ‘Get Out of Jail Free Card’

The major banks of the world have been caught in conspiracies of ripping off small towns and cities across the United States, which allowed banks like JPMorgan Chase, GE Capital, UBS, Bank of America, Lehman Brothers, Wachovia, Bear Stearns, and others, to steal billions of dollars from schools, hospitals, libraries, and nursing homes from “virtually every state, district and territory in the United States,” according to a court settlement on the issue. The theft was done through the manipulation of the public bidding process, something that the Mafia has become experts in with regards to garbage and construction industry contracts. In short, the banking system actually functions like a Mafia cartel system, not to mention, taking money from the Mafia and cartels themselves.[21] Banks like JP Morgan Chase and Goldman Sachs engaged in bribery, fraud, and conspiracies which resulted in the bankruptcy of counties all across the United States.[22] Still, they continue to be ‘respected’ by the political class which refuses to punish them for their criminal activity, and instead, rewards them with bailouts and follows their instructions for policy.

Over the summer of 2012, another major banking scandal hit the headlines, regarding the manipulation of the London inter-bank lending rate known as the Libor. The Libor rate, explained the Economist, “determines the prices that people and corporations around the world pay for loans or receive for their savings,” as it is used as a benchmark for establishing payments on an \$800 trillion derivatives market, covering everything from interest rate derivatives to mortgages. Essentially, the Libor is the interest rate at which banks lend to each other on the short term, and is established through an “honour system” of where 18 major banks report their daily rates, from which an average is calculated. That average becomes the Libor rate, and reverberates throughout the entire global economy, setting a benchmark for a massive amount of transactions in the global derivatives market. Whereas the derivatives market is a massive casino of unregulated speculation, the Libor scandal revealed the cartel that owns the casino.

The scandal began with Barclays, a 300-year old bank in Britain, revealing that several employees had been involved in rigging the Libor to suit their own needs. More banks quickly became

implemented, and countries all over the world began opening investigations into this scandal and the role their own banks may have played in it. By early July, as many as 20 major banks were named in various investigations or lawsuits related to the rigging of the Libor.[23]

Among the major global banks which are being investigated by U.S. prosecutors are Barclays, Deutsche Bank, Citigroup, JPMorgan Chase, Royal Bank of Scotland, HSBC, UBS, Bank of America, Bank of Tokyo Mitsubishi, Credit Suisse, Lloyds Banking Group, Rabobank, Royal Bank of Canada, Société Générale, and others. Prosecutors in the U.S., U.K., Canada and Japan were investigating collusion between the major banks on the manipulation of the Libor. In June of 2012, Barclays paid a fine to US and UK authorities, admitting its culpability in the rigging with a \$450 million settlement.[24] With information and documents pouring out, implicating further banks and institutions in the scandal, a general consensus was emerging that the Libor had been manipulated since at least 2005, though, as one former Morgan Stanley trader wrote in the Financial Times, the rigging had begun as early as 1991, if not before. The British Banker's Association was responsible for setting the Libor rate by polling roughly 18 major banks on their highest and lowest rates daily. Thus, rigging by one bank would require the co-operating of at least nine other banks in purposely manipulating their rates in order to have any effect upon the Libor. Douglas Keenan, the former Morgan Stanley trader, wrote that, "it seems the misreporting of Libor rates may have been common practice since at least 1991." [25]

Rolf Majcen, the head of a hedge fund called FTC Capital told Der Spiegel that, "the Libor manipulation is presumably the biggest financial scandal ever." As regulators were using words like "organized fraud" and "banksters" to describe the growing scandal, it was becoming common to refer to the major banks as functioning like a "cartel" or "mafia." [26] The CEO of Barclays, Bob Diamond, resigned in disgrace, as did Marcus Agius, the Chairman of Barclays (who also serves as a director on the board of BBC, and is married into the Rothschild banking dynasty). The "cartel" manipulated the Libor for a great number of reasons, among them, to appear to be in better health by rigging their credit ratings upwards. [27] The Business Insider referred to the Libor rigging as a "criminal conspiracy" from the start, essentially designed to promote manipulation as the Libor was determined by an "honor system" for banks to properly report their rates. [28] Imagine giving a pile of credit cards to a group of credit card fraud convicts and establishing an "honour system." Could one truly be surprised if it didn't work out? Well, the Libor scandal is effectively based upon the same logic, except that the repercussions are global in scope.

Traders at the Royal Bank of Scotland referenced, in internal emails, to their participation in operating a "cartel" that made "amazing" amounts of money through the manipulation of interest rates, with a former senior trader at RBS writing that managers at the bank had "condoned collusion." The same trader, who was later hung out to dry by RBS as a scapegoat, wrote in an email to a trader at Deutsche Bank that, "It is a cartel now in London," where the Libor is established. [29]

The cartel, however, did not simply include the major banks, but also required the cooperation or at least negligence of regulators and central banks. Documents released by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and the Bank of England show correspondence between then-President of the NY Fed Timothy Geithner (who is now Obama's Treasury Secretary) and Bank of England Governor Mervyn King discussing how Barclays was manipulating the Libor rates during the 2008 financial crisis. While the NY Fed corresponded with both the Bank of England and Barclays itself on the acknowledgement of interest rate manipulation, it never told the bank to stop the rigging practice. An official at Barclays even informed the NY Fed in 2008 that the bank was under-reporting the rate at which it could borrow from other banks so that Barclays could "avoid the stigma" of appearing to be weaker than its peers, adding that "other participating banks were also under-reporting their Libor submissions." [30]

A Barclays employee told the New York Fed in an April 2008 phone call that, "We know that we're not posting um, an honest Libor... and yet we are doing it, because, um, if we didn't do it, it draws, um, unwanted attention on ourselves." The New York Fed official replied: "You have to accept it... I understand. Despite it's against what you would like to do. I understand completely." Several months later, a Barclays employee told a New York Fed official that the Libor rates were still "absolute rubbish." [31]

While the New York Fed expressed sympathy for the poor and helpless global banks need to engage in fraud and interest rate manipulation in order to lie and appear to be healthier than it was, the Bank of England went a step further, when Paul Tucker, the head of markets at the BoE wrote a note to Barclays CEO Bob Diamond in 2008 suggesting that Barclays lower its Libor rate, thus encouraging the rigging itself, instead of just expressing sympathy for the "need" to commit fraud. [32]

The main British banking lobby group, the British Banker's Association (BBA), which was responsible for overseeing the Libor rate process (no conflict of interest there, right?), was, in late September of 2012, stripped of its right to oversee the Libor, to be replaced with a formal regulator. The BBA's "oversight" of Libor dates back to 1984, when the City of London (Britain's Wall Street) had

begun an experiment to establish a new way of setting interest rates, asking the banking lobby group to set the rate in 1986 when the Libor began.[33] The BBA's Foreign Exchange and Money Markets Committee is responsible for setting the Libor, and they meet every two months to review the process in secret without any minutes being published, and even the membership of the Committee is kept a secret. Spokespersons at Credit Suisse, Royal Bank of Scotland, and UBS refused to comment on whether they had any representatives on the committee, while Barclays, Deutsche Bank, HSBC, Bank of America and Citigroup didn't even respond to emailed inquiries about their involvement with the committee, as Bloomberg reported. A British regulator, in the understatement of the century, stated, "There is an apparent lack of transparency," adding that the BBA's committee "doesn't appear to be sufficiently open and transparent to provide the necessary degree of accountability to firms and markets with a direct interest in being assured of the integrity of Libor." [34] When the fox guards the henhouse, it takes a great deal of stupidity to be "surprised" when some hens go missing.

In an April 2008 meeting with officials at the Bank of England, Angela Knight, the head of the British Banker's Association, suggested that the BBA perhaps should no longer be responsible for oversight of "the world's most important number," which had become too big for the BBA to manage. No one at the meeting cared enough to do anything about it, however, and so nothing changed.[35] Where was the incentive to change the system, after all? Yes, massive fraud was taking place, and this was well understood by the banks committing it, as well as the regulators and central banks overseeing it. But on the plus side, everyone was getting away with it. So indeed, there was no incentive to change the system. From the point of view of those managing it, the Libor was functioning as it should. A cartel was established because a cartel was desired. The fact that it was all highly illegal, fraudulent, and immoral was – and is – beside the point. Mexican drug cartels do not worry about the legality of their operations because they are, by definition, illegal. They worry simply about getting away with their illegal operations. The same can be said for the global banking cartel. So long as they get away with criminal cartel operations, there is no incentive to change the system, and instead, there is only an incentive to expand and further entrench the cartel's operations.

Canada's antitrust regulator began an investigation into the "international cartel" of banks rigging the Libor, focusing on the role played by banks such as JP Morgan Chase, Royal bank of Scotland, Deutsche Bank, HSBC, and Citigroup, among others. A law professor at the University of Toronto who was hired by the regulator to study the case commented that, "international cartels are of a significant concern for the Canadian economy." [36] We have truly reached an impressive circumstance when the actual regulators of the banks refer to the banking system as an "international cartel."

A lawsuit was being filed by several homeowners in the U.S. who were attempting to sue some of the world's largest banks for fraud, as the Libor manipulation sparked increases on their mortgages, resulting in illegal profits for banks. The class action lawsuit filed in New York in October of 2012 accused banks such as Bank of America, Citigroup, Barclays, UBS, JPMorgan Chase, Deutsche Bank and others of fraud over a period of ten years.[37] For U.S. states and municipalities that bought interest-rate swaps before the financial crisis, the Libor rigging was poised to more than double their losses. Banks had sold roughly \$500 billion of interest-rate swaps (in the derivatives market) to municipalities before the financial crisis, with roughly \$200 billion of those swaps tied to the Libor. As one legal expert who studies derivatives told Bloomberg, "Almost all interest-rate swaps begin with Libor." This prompted several states in the U.S. to begin their own investigations into how the Libor-rigging may have negatively affected them.[38]

Punishing the World's Population into Poverty: Life Under the Global Cartel

While the global cartel of criminal banks rig rates, launder drug money, fund terrorists, engage in bribery, fraud and demand multi-trillion dollar bailouts from our governments (effectively selling their bad debts to the public), and then give themselves massive bonuses, they are also demanding – through what is called "market discipline" – that our governments deal with our debts by undertaking policies of "austerity" and "structural reform," which are euphemisms for impoverishment and exploitation. Thus, after the cartel helped create a massive financial crisis, and after our governments rewarded them for their criminal activity, the cartel now demands that our governments punish their populations into poverty and open their economies, resources and labour up for cheap and easy exploitation by banks and multinational corporations. This is referred to as the "solution" for getting out of the 'Great Recession,' and which is sure to great a Great Depression. Greece is now two and a half years into its "austerity" and "adjustment" reforms, with its debt growing as a result, poverty exploding, misery spreading, health, education, welfare rapidly declining, suicide rates and hunger increasing, as the Greek people are subjected to a program of "social genocide." Market discipline demands austerity and adjustment, or in other words, class warfare creates poverty and exploitation.[39]

Countries that refuse to implement programs of austerity and adjustment are subjected to financial terrorism by the “international cartel,” as financial markets engage in “market discipline” by using the derivatives market to speculate against that particular country’s ability to pay its interest or debt, thus making its credit ratings decrease and borrowing rates increase, plunging the country into a deeper crisis. In any other scenario, this is called terrorism or in the very least, extortion: do what I say or I will punish you and destroy you. This is what former U.S. Treasury official Roger Altman referred to in the Financial Times as the new “global supra-government” who can “force austerity, banking bail-outs and other major policy changes,” and thus, “have become the most powerful force on earth.”[40] Countries, regional, and international organizations all bow down to the dictates of the “international cartel” of the “global supra-government,” and so countries like Greece, Spain, Ireland, Italy, and Portugal, organizations like the European Union, European Central Bank, powerful states like Germany, France, Britain, and the U.S., and other international organizations like the IMF, Bank for International Settlements, and the OECD all demand and implement austerity measures and structural “reforms.” Either they follow the orders of the “cartel” – which we commonly refer to as the “invisible hand” of the “free market – or they directly challenge “the most powerful force on earth.” In the global economy, a small country like Greece standing up to the “global supra-government” is much like a small Greek restaurant trying to stand up to the city Mafia.

In the U.S., states that were defrauded in the billions of dollars by the cartel, and took on major debts as a result, are now the harbingers of austerity in America. Beginning in 2010, roughly 20 states across the U.S. began implementing austerity measures, and have been doing much worse economically as a result (the predicted effect of austerity). Even the institutions which are the most militant in demanding austerity measures, such as the European Union and the IMF, have acknowledged in recent reports that countries which pursue austerity to supposedly reduce their debts end up getting much larger debts as a result, and that such measures are actually extremely damaging to economies. This is not news, of course, since there is a rather large sample of data from the past 30 years of forced austerity and adjustment measures across Africa, Asia, and Latin America (at the behest of the IMF, World Bank, western governments, and of course, the “cartel”), which show quite clearly the effect that austerity and adjustment have in rapidly expanding poverty and facilitating exploitation. As austerity is hitting several U.S. states, jobs are lost and poverty increases with debt, standards of living decline and the recession deepens into a depression. The population is essentially punished for the crimes of the global cartel, while public employees, pensioners, welfare recipients, teachers and workers get the blame.[41]

In late October of 2012, the CEOs of 80 major corporations and banks in the United States banded together (as any well functioning cartel does) in order to pressure Congress, regardless of who the next President is, to pursue an agenda of harsh austerity measures and structural reforms. In a statement to Congress signed by the 80 CEOs, the American branch of the global cartel (its most significant branch), demanded that policies be enacted immediately, though implemented gradually, “to give Americans time to prepare for the changes in the federal budget.” Among the demands are to reform Medicare and Medicaid, healthcare, Social Security, increase taxes, and generally reduce spending. All of this amounts to a large federal program of austerity, to cut social spending and increase taxes on the population, thus impoverishing the population. This, in the words of the letter to Congress, “must be bipartisan and reforms to all areas of the budget should be included.”[42] Among the signatories to the letter were the CEOs of AT&T, Bank of America, BlackRock, Boeing, Caterpillar, Dow Chemical Company, General Electric, Goldman Sachs, JPMorgan Chase, Merck, Microsoft, Motorola, Time Warner, and Verizon, among many others.[43]

This followed roughly one week after a group of 15 major global bank CEOs sent a letter to President Obama and the U.S. Congress lecturing the U.S. political class on “moral authority,” giving their formal orders to the U.S. political establishment, that regardless of Democratic or Republican administrations, they are losing patience with the democratic apparatus of the state, and warned: “The solvency, productive capacity, and stability of the United States, as well as its moral authority as a global leader, require that its fiscal challenges be credibly met.” Among the signatories to the letter were the CEOs of Bank of America, Citigroup, Goldman Sachs, JPMorgan Chase, Morgan Stanley and Wells Fargo. The Wall Street Journal, reporting on this letter, commented that even for “a dying democracy, it’s embarrassing enough to see bankers telling our government what to do,” but in this letter, “we even see foreign bankers telling our government what to do,” as other CEOs of the global cartel signed the letter, from banks such as UBS, Credit Suisse, and Deutsche Bank. The “consequences of inaction” on the U.S. debt, read the letter, “would be very grave.” In other words, the U.S. political class has received a threat from the global cartel that it is now time to implement austerity and adjustment measures, or to face the consequences of financial terrorism.[44]

Hiding the Loot: The Offshore Economy in the Age of the Global Plutonomy

While people are being forced into poverty to pay off the bad debts of the “super-entity” global banking cartel of drug-money laundering banks which make up the “global supra-government,” the richest people in the world have been hiding their wealth in offshore tax havens, and of course, with the help of those same banks. James Henry, a former chief economist at McKinsey, a major global consultancy, published a major report on tax havens in July of 2012 for the Tax Justice Network, compiling data from the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), the IMF and other private sector entities which revealed that the world’s superrich have hidden between \$21 and \$32 trillion offshore to avoid taxation. Henry stated: “This offshore economy is large enough to have a major impact on estimates of inequality of wealth and income; on estimates of national income and debt ratios; and – most importantly – to have very significant negative impacts on the domestic tax bases of ‘source’ countries.” John Christensen of the Tax Justice Network commented that, “Inequality is much, much worse than official statistics show, but politicians are still relying on trickle-down to transfer wealth to poorer people... This new data shows the exact opposite has happened: for three decades extraordinary wealth has been cascading into the offshore accounts of a tiny number of super-rich.” Roughly 92,000 of the super-rich, globally, hold at least \$10 trillion in offshore wealth. In many cases, the worth of these offshore assets far exceeds the debts of the countries that they flow from, the same debts that are used to keep these countries and their populations in poverty and a constant state of exploitation.[45]

The estimated total of hidden offshore wealth amounts to more than the combined GDP of the United States and Japan, hidden in secretive financial jurisdictions like Switzerland and the Cayman Islands. The process of hiding this wealth is largely facilitated by the major global banks, which compete with one another to attract the assets of the world’s super-rich. James Henry explained that the wealth of the world’s super-rich is “protected by a highly paid, industrious bevy of professional enablers in the private banking, legal, accounting and investment industries taking advantage of the increasingly borderless, frictionless global economy;” more of that “free market” magic. The top ten banks in the world, which include UBS and Credit Suisse (based in Switzerland) as well as Goldman Sachs in the United States, collectively managed roughly \$6.4 trillion in offshore accounts for 2010 alone. As the report revealed, “for many developing countries the cumulative value of the capital that has flowed out of their economies since the 1970s would be more than enough to pay off their debts to the rest of the world,” debts which are largely illegitimate as it stands. This trend is exacerbated in the oil-rich states of the world such as Nigeria, Russia, and Saudi Arabia. The report stated: “The problem here is that the assets of these countries are held by a small number of wealthy individuals while the debts are shouldered by the ordinary people of these countries through their governments.” With roughly half of the world’s offshore wealth belonging to the top 92,000 richest individuals, they represent the top 0.001%, a far more extreme global disparity than that which is invoked by the Occupy movement’s 1% paradigm. Henry commented: “The very existence of the global offshore industry, and the tax-free status of the enormous sums invested by their wealthy clients, is predicated on secrecy.”[46] Remember, “free market” means that those who own the market (the global cartel), and free to do anything they please.

A 2005 report from Citigroup coined the term “plutonomy,” to describe countries “where economic growth is powered by and largely consumed by the wealthy few,” and specifically identified the U.K., Canada, Australia, and the United States as four plutonomies. Keeping in mind that the report was published three years before the onset of the financial crisis in 2008, the Citigroup report stated: “Asset booms, a rising profit share and favourable treatment by market-friendly governments have allowed the rich to prosper and become a greater share of the economy in the plutonomy countries,” and that, “the rich are in great shape, financially.”[47] It’s only everyone else that is suffering, which by definition, is a “well functioning” economy. As the Federal Reserve reported, “the nation’s top 1% of households own more than half the nation’s stocks,” and “they also control more than \$16 trillion in wealth — more than the bottom 90%.” The term ‘Plutonomy’ is specifically used to “describe a country that is defined by massive income and wealth inequality,” and that they have three basic characteristics, according to the Citigroup report:

1. They are all created by “disruptive technology-driven productivity gains, creative financial innovation, capitalist friendly cooperative governments, immigrants...the rule of law and patenting inventions. Often these wealth waves involve great complexity exploited best by the rich and educated of the time.”
2. There is no “average” consumer in Plutonomies. There is only the rich “and everyone else.” The rich account for a disproportionate chunk of the economy, while the non-rich account for “surprisingly small bites of the national pie.” [Citigroup strategist Ajay] Kapur estimates that in 2005, the richest 20% may have been responsible for 60% of total spending.

3. Plutonomies are likely to grow in the future, fed by capitalist-friendly governments, more technology-driven productivity and globalization.[48]

Kapur, who authored the Citigroup report, stated that there were also risks to the Plutonomy, “including war, inflation, financial crises, the end of the technological revolution and populist political pressure,” yet, “the rich are likely to keep getting even richer, and enjoy an even greater share of the wealth pie over the coming years.”[49]

In February of 2011, Ajay Kapur, the author of the Citigroup report who is now with Deutsche Bank, gave an interview in which he explained that, “the world economy is even more dependent on the spending and consumption of the rich,” and that, “Plutonomist consumption is almost 10 times as volatile that of the average consumer.” He further explained that increased debt levels are a sign of plutonomies:

We have an economy today where a large fraction of the population doesn't pay federal income taxes and, because of demand for entitlements, we have a system of massive representation without taxation. On the other hand, you have plutonomists who protect their turf and the taxation amounts are not enough to pay for everyone's demand. So I've come to the conclusion that budget deficits are biased toward getting bigger and bigger. Budget deficits are going to become a manifestation of a plutonomy.[50]

The plutonomy is largely characterized by a lack of a consuming and vibrant middle class. This is a trend that has been accelerating for several decades, particularly in North America and Britain, where the middle class population is heavily indebted. The middle class has existed as a consumer class, keeping the lower class submissive, and keeping the upper class secure and wealthy by consuming their products, produced with the labour of the lower class.

The most advanced plutonomies in the world are the most advanced industrial and technological nations, where the major corporations and banks are highly subsidized and protected by the state, as is typical for a state-capitalist society. While the industrial and rich northern state-capitalist societies were able to industrialize and grow rich through highly protectionist measures, the poor south of the world (Africa, Asia, Latin America) were subjected to “free market” policies which opened up their economies to be exploited and plundered by the rich northern nations. No country has ever become an industrial power by implementing free market policies, but rather, by doing the exact opposite: heavy subsidies and state protection for key industries, technologies, and corporate entities.

While the ‘Third World’ was forced to implement “free market” policies in order to get loans, the predictable result took place: mass impoverishment and exploitation. The ‘Third World’ states were run by tiny elites who dominated the countries politically and economically, and who hid their stolen wealth in foreign banks and offshore tax havens. Now, in the midst of the global economic crisis which has been ravaging the world for the past four years, the rich northern countries are themselves implementing the same “free market” policies, though designed to subject their populations to “market discipline” while maintaining – and in fact increasing – the protectionist and subsidized policies for the multinational corporations and banks. It is important to note that “market discipline” and actual “free market” policies are exclusively designed for the general population, not the elite. Workers, students, the elderly, the poor and the many are to be subjected to “market discipline” while the banks and multinational corporations continue to be heavily subsidized (as the largest national welfare recipients) and protected by the state. Thus, just as our banks and corporations have plundered the Third World with rapacious delight over the past three decades, now they will be able to do the same to the populations of the rich nations themselves. The state will transform, as it did in the ‘Third World’, into a typically totalitarian institution which is responsible for protecting the super-rich and controlling, oppressing, or, in extreme cases of resistance, eliminating the ‘problem populations’ (i.e., the people).

Welcome to the global plutonomy in the age of austerity, the result of living under – and tolerating – a global “super-entity” corporate-financial cartel. Truly, one must pause and, if only for a moment, appreciate the ability of this global cartel to function so effectively in spite of its blatant criminal activities, and face almost absolutely no repercussions. Something truly is wrong with a society when a poor black man caught with 5 grams of crack-cocaine goes to prison for ten years, while rich white bank executives admit to laundering billions of dollars in drug money and receive only a fine and a slap on the wrist (maybe).

The lesson is clear: if you are a thief, steal by the billions or trillions, and then no one can do anything about it. If you are in the drug trade: handle only billions (or hundreds of billions) in drug money, and then you will get away with it. If you don't want to pay taxes, be a member of the top 0.001% of the world's super-rich and hide your billions in offshore tax-free accounts. If you want more, create a global economic crisis, demand to be saved by the state to the tune of tens of trillions of dollars, and then, tell the state to punish their populations into poverty in order to pay for your mistakes.

In other words, if you want to indulge your criminal fantasies, lie and steal, profit from death and

drugs, dominate and demand, be king and command, become the highly-functioning socially-acceptable sociopath you always knew you could be... think big. Think BANK. Serial killers, bank robbers and drug dealers go to jail; bankers get bailouts and get an unlimited insurance policy called "too big to fail."

On the eve of America's presidential elections, two quotes from Eugene Debs:

"I'd rather vote for what I want and not get it, than vote for what I don't want and get it."

"People can have anything they want. The trouble is that they do not want anything. At least they vote that way on election day."

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POLITICAL EXTREMISM IN THE TECHNOCRATIC ORDER

Prof. James F. Tracy; Global Research

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(Written in the US context; but applicable pretty well universally -Ed)

“Extremists have taken over and they’re the ones who run the foreign policy and have convinced us to go along with all these wars.”—Congressman Ron Paul[1]

The alleged bogey of “extremism” has become a prominent element of public discourse particularly since the mid-1990s. The assumed terroristic tendencies of ordinary Americans is a preoccupation of many mainstream and liberal intellectuals apparently more concerned with moral guardianship than the growing police state and continued wartime economy. These conditions underline a campaign to promote paranoia that only intensified following September 11, 2001. As the specter of deviant commoners helps validate accelerated repressive measures, the state’s genuine extremism of illegal wars and evisceration of most civil liberties falls from public purview.

The 1995 bombing of the Oklahoma City Murrah Federal Building set the stage for the creation of an imaginary extremist other—“bitter clingers” in today’s parlance—purportedly emerging from a noxious combination of Bible study, country music, and gun collecting. Against this and similar “extreme” archetypes a normality is defined where the broader population is encouraged to confirm a tentative political identity and rationalize the support of intensified social control measures.

The often strange and misunderstood instances of probable state-sponsored terror—of which the Oklahoma City incident is the most well known and incontestable —alongside the prominence of well funded establishment-oriented quasi-intelligence and disinformation outlets such as the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Anti-Defamation League misleadingly conflate political thought, extremism and terror together in the public mind with dangerous implications for meaningful open debate and the preservation of important civil liberties.

In the months leading up to the Oklahoma City bombing Senator Joe Biden and subsequently the Clinton Administration laid the legislative groundwork for the 2001 PATRIOT Act that criminalized political thought and undermined the Posse Comitatus Act.[2] September 11, 2001 merely provide the pretext for the law’s ratification. Subsequent decrees including the 2011 National Defense Authorization Act further established such measures by giving the president the power to kill or imprison US citizens for suspected terrorism.

With this in mind the creation of a political other serves two closely related purposes. First, it provides the basis for a mechanism through which such draconian measures outlawing “extremist” ideas and activity may be put into practice.

Second, the relentless political balkanization of the public psyche and the reinforcement of this process through the creation of an extremist other deflects attention away from those in public office and, more importantly, the global power brokers who pull their strings.

The overall result is that while public attention is riveted toward would be extremist bogeys, genuinely verifiable and truly dangerous extremism of socio-economic and political elites proceeds apace with little notice. Those exerting control from above through technocratic means maintain their sovereignty by dividing the population, as the British colonialists did in India, Ireland and the Middle East. “The desires of the people were manipulated and turned against each other,” author and psychiatrist Joel Kovel observes,

so that in many cases the rulers were able to appear as philosopher-kings, high above the violent and unruly passions of their subjects. A similar mechanism applied to the manipulation of racial divisions among the working class in the U.S. Racist violence then seemed to belong to the dispossessed rabble, such as the Ku Klux Klan, while the liberal-technocratic state presented itself as having a monopoly on justice and rationality.[3]

Nowhere is this liberal technocratic rationality more on display than in the academy where police state policies are imparted the veneer of disinterested inquiry and foresight.

Nebulous Extremism and “Crippled Epistemologies”

In the era of endless war the US Department of Justice’s (DOJ) own literature makes no distinction between “extremism” and “terrorism.” The volume, *Investigating Terrorism and Criminal Extremism: Terms and Concepts*, for example, collapses the ideas and terminology of Al Qaeda, environmental activism, the patriot-Constitutional movement, and neo-Nazism together “for criminal justice professionals to effectively combat terrorism/extremism.”[4]

Along these lines overt rhetorical efforts are made to connect political thought with violent behavior. In August 2011 the Obama Administration issued a directive, “Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States.” The policy instructs authorities in local communities and even families to take countermeasures “radicalization that leads to violent extremism.”

“This strategy commits the Federal Government to improving support to communities,” President Obama asserts in the document’s preamble, “including sharing more information about the threat of radicalization; strengthening cooperation with local law enforcement ... and helping communities to better understand and protect themselves against violent extremist propaganda, especially online.”[5]

The fruits of authoritarianism never fall too far from the given society’s knowledge-producing tree. In this regard Cass Sunstein, the well known Harvard law professor and former chief administrator of Obama’s Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, figures prominently in the creation of the extremist bogey. Sunstein’s 2009 treatise *Going To Extremes: How Like Minds Unite and Divide* codifies a set of principles that would be very much at home in Plato’s Republic. While the scholar’s ideas have been sufficiently panned elsewhere,[6] they are important contributing elements to the domestic extremist archetype and thus revisited here.

For Sunstein, a significant portion of the public is simply not capable of exercising the critical thought necessary to discern between fact and fantasy. Many individuals are thus susceptible to taking on the wrongheaded beliefs of cult leaders and demagogues who manage to physically or psychologically isolate unsuspecting converts and subject them to a strict regime of information control. This results in “group polarization” that could lead to extremism (a key term Sunstein never defines, to which I return below).

Akin to Obama’s 2011 policy announcement, an underlying motif steadily links popular activist causes with aberrant thinking and potentially “extremist” activity. For example,

If you hear that genetically modified foods pose serious risks, and if that view is widespread in your community, you might end up frightened. If you hear nothing about the risks associated with genetically modified food, except perhaps that some zealots are frightened, you will probably ridicule their fear. And when groups move in dangerous directions—toward killing and destruction—it is usually because the flow of information supports that movement.[7]

While Sunstein characteristically champions the intrinsic relationship between democracy and a free marketplace of ideas throughout, his argument rests on the elitist assertion that those potential “extremists” are mentally incapable of partaking in investigation and independent thought.

In such a Jonestown-style milieu, where unwilling subjects blithely advance toward the brink of extremism, they tend even more toward unsound information and opinion that confirms their already warped worldviews. Such individuals “suffer from a ‘crippled epistemology’,” Sunstein concludes, “in the sense that they know very few things and what they know is wrong.”

In instances of such willful informational deprivation “conspiracy theories” tend to gain a foothold, as such individuals are easy prey for “conspiracy entrepreneurs” who author popular tracts extending unsettling observations about 9/11, the origins of AIDS, and the Kennedy assassinations.[8]

Yet the path to extremism is not as easily traveled by anti-GMO advocates in California or 9/11 Truth activists in New York as it is by Al Qaeda forces in the Middle East. “In a democracy ... the existence of ample information, with some kind of marketplace of ideas, is more likely to defang terrorists,” Sunstein asserts, “simply because their accounts can be shown to be implausible.”[9]

Sunstein’s own ideas on how such a “democratic” marketplace of ideas should take shape cannot stand the light of day. If scathing condemnation of his thoughts and proposals across the internet were not enough, in May 2012 the 9/11 truth activist and journalist Luke Rudkowski asked the law professor about his 2009 paper, “Conspiracy Theories: Causes and Cures,” advocating COINTELPRO-style subversion of research communities rejecting the US government’s claims concerning the 9/11 attacks. [10] Sunstein’s disavowal of the piece and Nixonesque departure suggests a great deal about his own integrity and designs for short-circuiting the public sphere.

Nevertheless, sharing the mindset of imperial enterprise and maneuver, Sunstein’s argument and broader project fit alongside those of Gustav Le Bon, George Santayana, Walter Lippmann, and

Edward Bernays, all of whom speak to a traditional elite concern over the threat of the masses. Sunstein and the US government take this once step further by erroneously linking objectionable thought (i.e. observations that are often true and verifiable) with criminal action.

Extremism of the Elite

The term “extremism” is routinely used for rhetorical effect without any explanation as to its true meaning. Since this is something Sunstein and like-minded thought police curiously spend little time on it is especially deserving of consideration.

When the term extremism is invoked by agencies of the federal government or their intellectual foot soldiers it is meant to signify the violation of a norm, belief, or practice deemed reasonable by those with inordinate power to influence public opinion. Yet a more universally applicable definition might conclude that extremism denotes actions that deprive an individual of the freedom to partake in and derive joy from life, health, free association with others, and private property.

Under such a definition, and in contrast to genuine extremism, the extremism the technocratic state underscores is almost entirely mobilized to instantiate and confirm the corporatized politics of imagined opinion.[11] Such nuanced propaganda directed at law enforcement and the general public alike polarizes the psyche much more so than the efforts of demagogues or isolated political groups.

Indeed, the obsession with “extremism” is an especially curious and unusual diversion when one considers how most Islamic fundamentalism associated with terror groups is the product of Western intelligence-backed political parties or movements.[12] Further, virtually every terrorist event in the US since September 11, 2001 has involved the US government’s cultivation and entrapment of dupes and fall guys.[13]

Genuine extremism is practiced by individuals and institutions that evade scrutiny while the false political bogeys they create take center stage. Those who devote their intellectual energies to serving the police state by designing select notions of “extremism” vis-à-vis acceptable modes of thought have made a substantial contribution to this longstanding wall of mirrors. All the while the true extremists proceed with their self-designed “war on terror”—what is in fact a war on the pursuit of truth and the continued possibility of civic life.

Notes

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[8] Sunstein, 109-111.

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[12] Michel Chossudovsky, *America’s “War on Terrorism”*, Ottawa: Centre for Research on Globalization, 2005.

[13] “FBI Agents Responsible for Majority of Terrorist Plots in the United States,” *Project Censored*, October 10, 2012.

INVESTORS THAT CRASHED THE ECONOMY HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHORT-SELL THE NHS

Steve Rushton; www.steve-rushton.co.uk; Occupy News Network; via Critical Thinking

Healthcare privatisation has allowed investors, who made millions from the financial crisis, the opportunity to buy a stake in the NHS. These very same traders: short sold sub-primes, betted against the banks and made money catalysing panic, with speculation. Analysis of one of these healthcare companies' documentation exposes how the traders and investors can make money at the expense of Britain's health.

Within the £262 million privatisation of the NHS – the largest ever, so far – Circle Healthcare and a handful of other providers gained government contracts. Circle Healthcare is dependent on its parent company, Circle Holdings. The subsidiary is not financially viable without them, confirmed by its own publications and the National Audit Office. A breakdown of the investments, that keeps Circle Healthcare afloat, shows that over 50% of this comes from hedge-funds and financial equity groups, who created millions from the British financial crash. These are Odey European, Lansdowne Partners and Bluecrest. The vast majority of the rest of its investments come from Blackrock, beneficiaries of the American financial crash with current global assets of over \$3.5 trillion; and Balderton, an investment group whose business includes payday loans in Britain.

Crispin Odey, owner of Odey European, made money through this hedge fund betting against the banking stocks of HBOS, Bradford and Bingley and the Irish banks. In 2008, Mr Odey reportedly paid himself £28 million. He reflected about this to Bloomberg: “when the crash happened, we started really making money.” The Capital Management firm Bluecrest makes money speculating against currency and interest rate movements. The Mail Online detailed how they reaped huge profits amplifying and catalysing the falling value of the British currency – effectively betting against the economy. Their owner Michael Platt boasted, in *The Standard*, that “I’ve never lost money since I was born. In 08-09, I made a mid- to high-20s return.” The investment group Lansdowne Partners have a similar track record to Odey European; they made £100 million betting against Northern Rock's stocks, which further induced its collapse, according to figures from *The Daily Mail*. Reuters also explain this hedge fund also made millions betting against Lloyds TSB. Lansdowne's CEO, Sir Paul Ruddock, described the key to success through the financial crash, to Hedge Fund Review, “what we care about is – how can we avoid losing too much money.”

Framed within the understanding that banks were too big to fail, and with it the expectation that government would guarantee debts, it is a reasonable to suggest that Odey European and Lansdowne were not just betting against the banks. They were effectively betting against society. Bluecrest, like other currency traders, makes gains in times of volatility. As their activity amplifies the situation too, their actions resulted in the reduced value of government bonds. Thus, where Mr Platt and Bluecrest gained, reciprocally the taxpayers lost out. Within this conceptualisation, that their gains were society's losses, the money they have invested into the NHS can be traced to money Britain lost in the crash.

Circle Holdings loans money to its subsidiary Circle Healthcare, charging 7% interest. In 2011, this loan amounted to over £100 million and the company reported how “both the Company [Holdings] and Circle have a history of operating losses and may not achieve, sustain or increase profitability. Since its inception in 2004, Circle has incurred losses as it has grown its business.” This debt enables taxpayers' money from the privatisation to go to the investors rather than for paying for healthcare.

Within the documentation, released when Holdings floated on the stock exchange, it also stated “indebtedness may impair its operating and financial flexibility and could adversely affect the Group's business, results of operations.” It continues how its high levels of debts could mean they must “dedicate a substantial portion of its cash flow from operations.”

The Holding companies documentation also reveals how as separate companies, Circle Holdings is not necessarily responsible for its subsidiaries. Circle Healthcare is registered in London, whereas the parent Holdings is registered in a Channel Island tax haven. The company literature highlights how one subsidiary could face financial difficulties servicing a debt; however, it will not financially affect the whole company – only its reputation. In business law, a parent and subsidiary are often considered separate entities; therefore if

Circle Healthcare “crashed”, its parent and the investors could pick up the pieces and share in the subsidiaries available cash-flow to service its debts, whilst the company that signed the government deal is dissolved. From British society’s point of view this is a worst case scenario, especially if it could not recoup the money awarded; however, this may be a winning position from the investors’ perspective – as they can take this money to repay the debt and interest.

This theme – investors’ gaining from the healthcare provision failing – is mentioned within the Holding Company’s documentation. Discussing the power of its investors, it suggests “the interests of these shareholders may not always be aligned with those of other holders of Ordinary Shares.” Continuing, it gives an example of how they may have investments in competitors and therefore act against the interests and aims of the group. This acknowledges that its investors pursuit of profit far outweighs any commitment to the NHS patients, which their subsidiary is contracted to treat.

Foreboding failure is a theme that runs throughout this candid report, represented by the following quote. “Circle’s business strategy is new and unproven in the UK. If Circle is unable to implement its business strategy; it will have an adverse effect on Circle’s business, results of operations...” The frequency of similar excuses for potential failure, gives the impression that this report’s authors are expecting to crash. If this was to happen, the document gives them very strong chances to say – we did tell you we would fail.

Furthermore, crisis is not just something potentially on the horizon: Circle Healthcare seems already to be steering close to the rocks. On top of its massive debts, The BBC report how in its first six months in charge of Cambridgeshire’s Hinchingsbrooke, the subsidiary ran up double the expected losses.

POSITIVE MONEY BULLETIN EXTRACTS

Positive Money Team

Awareness about the flaws in our money system is increasing. There has been a great media coverage of the issue again. We have 4 new videos and a new booklet explaining the Positive Money system in plain English. And more...

New videos - 5th & 6th part of Banking101; Do banks create money or just credit? - video

You might hear some people say that “Banks don’t create money – they just create credit”. Let us show you why the numbers that banks create are money, and not just ‘credit’.

How money gets destroyed - video

When someone repays the loan, the money is actually destroyed. It effectively disappears from the economy entirely. This point is vitally important, because it means that if we, the public, start reducing our debts by collectively borrowing less and repaying more, the amount of money in the economy will actually start to shrink.

Mainstream media report about money creation;

Hitch-hiker’s guide to monetary infrastructure. The Financial Times published an excellent letter from Prof Richard Werner in which he asserts that the textbook descriptions of “fractional reserve” banking belongs to the world of fiction and explains how the money supply is really “invented into existence”. *Guardian: This money system makes increasing inequality a mathematical certainty.* Also Guardian has mentioned us again in an article that explains that most money today is digital and created by private banks, when they issue loans.

New videos from the conference Modernising Money:

Why don’t economists understand money? - video, Prof Victoria Chick, Emeritus Professor of Economics, University College London gives some very interesting insights. “There is something that ‘seeps into the veins of academia’ rather than people being deliberately ‘bought off’. There is also social pressure to conform, ‘You are just not part of the gang’ if you don’t go along with the dominant ideology.”

How to change the money system? - video. Positive Money’s Campaign Director Miriam Morris presents the strategy of the campaign. “Positive Money is a Campaign. We’re not just a debating society, we’re not just a research organisation. We actually want to change something.”

Some good news! Over 30 of you have donated so far this week to help us develop and maintain our website, and continue producing educational materials. You've helped us to increase our monthly donations by £293 and you've sent £810 in one-off donations so far.

This means that we have raised already a decent amount towards covering the related costs. It is a great step forward, but we've still got some way to go. If you can help, please set up a monthly donation here. Big Thank You to everyone who has helped in any way to date. We're on the verge of making a much bigger impact.

Let's seize this opportunity

Could you help us to respond to the recent interest in the money system? Now is the time to open up the debate, and create the demand for change. We want to use this opportunity to reach new audiences, including journalists and the business community. So much is going on, and the next six months are crucial:

- The Chairman of the FSA, Lord Turner, is talking about creating money free of debt, and how spending it in the economy could end the recession – journalists are picking this up
- The Icelandic Parliament are debating monetary reform
- The UK Green Party are debating monetary reform
- Beppe Grillo, the comedian-turned-politician who won the most votes in the Italian election, is very vocal about the money system
- The new Governor of the Bank of England, Mark Carney, starts in July – we want money creation to be an issue he can't ignore.

Behind the scenes we are contacting journalists and policy makers in order to expand the debate. But our 'shop window' is our website, and we need to update it so that it is easy to find, and has the information that people want.

We need 200 new monthly donations in order to develop and maintain our website, and to continue producing educational materials that will help more people understand why it's essential to change the monetary system.

Since launching the appeal at the Conference in January, some of our supporters have generously donated time and resources to redesign and build the site. This is fantastic, and work has begun.

We need a regular income flow so that we can continue to produce easy to understand videos and animations, infographics, and training materials for the website.

Please consider whether you could give a monthly donation of £20, or whatever you can, so that we can use the internet to keep growing this campaign online and increase support for our solution to the current crisis. These are very exciting times, and we must be equipped to make the most of the opportunities offered. We really appreciate your on-going support.

The Positive Money system – in Plain English

Now you can read a brief plain English description of Positive Money reform proposals which are outlined in detail in the book MODERNISING MONEY. It explains how we can prevent commercial banks from being able to create money, and move this power to create money into the hands of a transparent and accountable body. It also deals with some common misconceptions.

Thank you for your help!

Thanks to your help we've been able to raise extra £531 in monthly donations and £1345 in one-off donations towards covering the costs of the redesign and maintenance of our website and producing more new videos... Thank you very much! The new website will be launched in May :-)

Upcoming events:

Brighton, Thu 18th April - Screening of "97% Owned" & Discussion

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The Cypriot banking shambles would not have occurred under banking regime advocated by Positive Money

The Elephant in the Room: Economic Determinants of Health

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Positive Money's Ben Dyson in Iceland
Report of Positive Money Meetup in Edinburgh 20th Feb 2013
Some pre-Great Depression roots of The Chicago Plan (& Minsky's Financial Instability Hypothesis)
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Positive Money says "create money and spend it". Mervyn King disagrees.
Bankers Anonymous launched to help banks kick gambling addiction

How can we escape from our current dysfunctional money system?

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If you've already read the book, please consider also posting a quick review on Amazon. The more five and four star reviews, the more chance the book - and therefore also the Positive Money campaign - has to reach an even wider audience. Help spread the word - please write a review on amazon.co.uk and amazon.com. You can then also tell your friends and mention it on your blog or Facebook or Twitter...

Why doesn't the media understand money? Maybe you have asked this question to yourself... Watch what Patrick Chalmers, former Reuters journalist has to say.

Positive Money at Ethical Finance meeting in Scottish Parliament Ben Dyson presented at the Ethical Finance meeting in the Scottish Parliament last week. You can read the report [here](#).

News from Iceland Ben Dyson has been invited to speak to the Economic & Trade Committee at the Icelandic Parliament and he will also be speaking to a number of activists, campaigners and economists there in March. If you are in Iceland and would like to know the timetable, just send us an email and we'll send it to you.

Help Positive Money through Recycling

Positive Money is run on a small budget especially when compared to other campaigning groups. Therefore, we are looking for different ways to try and raise funds. There are new fundraising ways by recycling for charity and collecting postage stamps! Check it out.

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