

RUNNYMEDE GAZETTE

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Positive Money Team

EDITORIAL

THE LIES OF NEOLIBERALISM

The truth behind John Kozy's characterisation of economics as false science is greater than his (very good) article *Economics and Armchair Philosophy*. To his list of false 'sciences' we might add eugenics and 'racial hygiene', the study of which once occupied entire university departments around Europe, and not merely in Germany.

An ideology is foremost a phenomenon of mass groupthink, which pays no heed to the underlying truth of its mantras. As Nietzsche observed, “Men will always believe what is seen to be strongly believed in”.

The lies of neoliberal economics run far beyond the example of the effects of low inflation on wages cited by Kozy. Even Adam Smith has become the victim of a revisionist neoliberal pastiche. It is asserted that Smith opposed regulation. He did not. It is asserted that Smith favoured greed. Again, that is false. He was in himself an ascetic man who had some excoriating things to say about the very rich. His 'free market' ideas are provided as justification for corporate domination. Yet any

reading of Smith reveals the necessity of all agents in any 'free market' to be small (and dispensable!) in relation to one another. No 'free market' can exist on conditions of monopoly, cartel and oligopoly.

Nay, there is more; much more. We are told that markets automatically clear when they demonstrably do not. 'Free trade' agreements are hyped as the doorways to great wealth, despite a welter of contradictory evidence in the form of stagnant or declining real wages and the de-industrialisation and de-skilling of the manual workforce. Of course, banks are 'too big to fail' and money creation is best left to those insolvent institutions and enormous cost to the taxpayer. Government is characterised as useless and 'no good at picking winners'. If that were true we could not have won either of the World Wars of the 20th century.

Richard Werner of Southampton University is amongst those who have done much to debunk such nonsense. His comments on the notion of 'perfect knowledge' underlying 'market' transactions are as scathing as they are typical. His work is well worth a study.

But proving Neitzsche wrong will always be an uphill task.

HOW DO WE RESIST?

The item from Slaney Street on resistance to the 'bedroom tax' in Birmingham is one of a number of similar reports from around the country. However resistance seems to be pretty patchy. Comparisons to the poll tax might prove premature since, unlike that tax, only a relatively small proportion of the population are directly affected.

We might approve the use of door to door leafleting and canvassing and of local residents' meetings in order to engender mutual solidarity. Yet again, however, there is an overweening emphasis on street demonstrations which, as the article acknowledges, often has the opposite effect.

In all of the many thousands of conversations I have had about politics over the years, I have yet to meet a single person whose opinions on an issue were changed by becoming aware of a street demonstration. Street demonstrations are no more than ritualised old hat. Their efficacy was demonstrated in clear sight by the anti-Iraq war events of a decade ago. All they often achieve is merely to annoy people. Such events are acutely vulnerable to surveillance from without and from subversion from within, acting as magnets for every poseur, exhibitionist and *agent provocateur* within bussing distance.

Nor do they communicate much of a message other than sound and fury and, indeed, often seem conducted in such a way as to obfuscate any message.

Yet if even a couple of thousand people can be gathered in the centre of a town, those people could probably call on every house in that town in a day. We need to be smarter. A rent strike against the bedroom tax requires no ventures onto the street other than the wearing down of shoe leather as the organisers move from door to door. There is so much resistance that can be done from behind one's own curtains. Aggressive and unctuous posturing can so often be counter-productive.

The message also needs to be credible and coherent. At the moment the campaign against the cuts falls short. On the one hand we have those calling for the balancing of budgets, without understanding that such a course would precipitate an even more dramatic debt-deflation spiral than we already have. Yet

this absurdity is mirrored by the anti-cuts brigade who believe we can forever live on borrowed money created *ex-nihilo* by private banks. The lack of penetration of money reform into the anti-cuts campaign is most worrisome. Hopefully Positive Money's campaign to realise the £375 billion of Quantitative Easing into the real economy rather than in the black hole of bank balance sheets may begin to penetrate that redoubt.

Frank Taylor

GROUPTHINK

Critical Thinking

According to Wikipedia, Irving Janis pioneered research into the phenomenon of "groupthink" and started writing in 1971 on the subject:

"The more amiability and esprit de corps there is among the members of a policy-making ingroup, the greater the danger that independent critical thinking will be replaced by groupthink, which is likely to result in irrational and dehumanizing actions directed against outgroups."

Symptoms

To make groupthink testable, Irving Janis devised eight symptoms indicative of groupthink.

Type I: Overestimations of the group — its power and morality

Illusions of invulnerability creating excessive optimism and encouraging risk taking.
Unquestioned belief in the morality of the group, causing members to ignore the consequences of their actions.

Type II: Closed-mindedness

Rationalizing warnings that might challenge the group's assumptions.
Stereotyping those who are opposed to the group as weak, evil, biased, spiteful, impotent, or stupid.

Type III: Pressures toward uniformity

Self-censorship of ideas that deviate from the apparent group consensus.
Illusions of unanimity among group members, silence is viewed as agreement.
Direct pressure to conform placed on any member who questions the group, couched in terms of "disloyalty"
Mind guards— self-appointed members who shield the group from dissenting information.
Groupthink, resulting from the symptoms listed above, results in defective decision-making. That is, consensus-driven decisions are the result of the following practices of groupthinking

- Incomplete survey of alternatives
- Incomplete survey of objectives
- Failure to examine risks of preferred choice
- Failure to reevaluate previously rejected alternatives
- Poor information search
- Selection bias in collecting information
- Failure to work out contingency plans.

SCOTLAND: EVERY CHILD TO HAVE “STATE GUARDIAN” FROM BIRTH

***Tom Joad; Infowars; OneWorldChronicle; via John Newell and
Mike Clayton***

***(This would appear to be an especially chilling example of the presumption of
the state to stand in loco parentis over all its citizens - Ed)***

Dystopian plan would see government social worker assigned to spy on every family.

Every child in Scotland is to be assigned a “state minder” from birth under draconian new proposals that would enable the government to spy on families under the justification of preventing “child abuse”.

Writing in the Scotsman of how he penned a dystopian novel based around this very scenario of every child being assigned a government mentor, sociology and criminology lecturer at the University of Abertay Dundee Stuart Walton writes, “Unfortunately, this dystopian future has arrived a little faster than I imagined, as last week the Scottish Government’s plan to give every child a state guardian from birth was launched.”

“This state-appointed overseer will be a specific, named individual, and every child will have one, from birth. The responsibility for creating this named guardian will fall on the heads of the health boards for the first five years of a child’s life, before being transferred to councils.”

The program is a statutory initiative built into the Children and Young People Bill. Children’s minister Aileen Campbell justified the proposal by asserting it would “make sure there is someone having an overview of what is happening to that child, to make sure that early indicators of anything that would pose a threat or risk to that child are flagged up”.

Walton speculates on what kind of behaviour could eventually be deemed “child abuse,” including the contents of a child’s school lunch box or a re-definition of “bullying” to include a parent shouting at their kid.

FREE SOFTWARE

Critical Thinking

Most people who use computers in their daily life give little thought to the operating system (Windows or Mac OS) they rely on. As long as they can surf the net, use office applications, email and a few favourite games and applications, why should they care about the underlying operating system?

Users of free software operating systems think very differently. They exercise control over their computing experience. In the past, users of free software tended toward the geekish but as free software operating systems have evolved, they are no longer the preserve of the technically minded. Richard Stallman, the spiritual leader of the free software movement, describes the philosophy behind free software thus:

When we call software “free,” we mean that it respects the users’ essential freedoms: the freedom to run it, to study and change it, and to redistribute copies with or without changes. This is a matter of freedom, not price, so think of “free speech,” not “free beer.”

These freedoms are vitally important. They are essential, not just for the individual users’ sake, but for society as a whole because they promote social solidarity—that is, sharing and cooperation. They become even more important as our culture and life activities are increasingly digitized. In a world of digital sounds, images, and words, free software becomes increasingly essential for freedom in general.

Built on these principles is one of the most popular and robust free operating systems, Debian GNU/Linux. Other leading Linux distributions such as Ubuntu are based on Debian which has evolved over two decades to become the system of choice when stability, security and freedom are paramount. There is no company behind Debian - it is a community of thousands of developers and users from around the world who are passionate about building the best free software available.

The latest Debian version, Wheezy (named after Toy Story), has just been released.
Debian Project News - May 13th, 2013

As proprietary software becomes ever more intrusive and End User Licencing Agreements more restrictive, it makes sense to explore the alternatives.

Free software is software that gives you the user the freedom to share, study and modify it. We call this free software because the user is free.

7 POWERFUL WAYS TO MAINTAIN YOUR PRIVACY AND INTEGRITY ONLINE

Eliot Estep; Activist Post

The recent NSA leaks from whistleblower Ed Snowden have publicly confirmed that digital privacy does not exist. The federal government and intelligence agencies have direct server access to the world's most popular sites and services including Facebook, Google, Microsoft, Apple, and more. This means that all of your data when using these services including Skype, YouTube, etc has been compromised and can be used against you whenever strategically necessary.

Always remember, you are being recorded and monitored regardless of whether you have done anything wrong or not. This includes your emails, Internet activity, searches, banking activity, passwords, etc. Basically everything to build a complete profile about who you are, how you think, how you live, etc. This is very powerful data gathering and the goal of the intelligence agencies is nothing less than Total Information Awareness to be used to control and manage populations.

For these reasons, I have compiled some helpful tips to help you maintain your privacy and integrity when using the Internet. These are by no means comprehensive, but they can be quite useful and give you some semblance of peace when browsing.

1. Use StartPage.com for all your searches. Known as "the world's most private search engine", StartPage will allow you to search anonymously and securely through Google. It is probably the only search engine that does not collect or share any personal information about you. You can even access pages through a proxy quickly and easily. StartPage functionality can be easily added to your browser for all searches made through the address bar. If you value your privacy, this is really a no-brainer.

If you use Google, Bing, Yahoo, etc. then everything you search is logged to your IP address and is used to build a comprehensive profile about all your online activity. This means that the government literally has the ability to know everything you've been interested in, how you type (thus, how you think), and much more. Protect your searches!

2. Consider using an Anonymizer such as Tor to protect your identity. Tor prevents anyone from learning your location, browsing habits, and is an extremely effective tool against network surveillance and traffic analysis. Tor is essentially a network of virtual tunnels run by volunteers that allows your real IP address to remain hidden and undetectable when browsing the Internet. It is used by whistleblowers, hackers, and all those who value anonymity. You can also use it to access sites that your ISP has blocked or banned. Keep in mind, if you use Tor to access personally-identifying sites like Facebook then you pretty much lose your ability to remain anonymous. Learn more about this powerful software and please use it responsibly! To get started quickly, please download the Tor Browser Bundle. Using this software wisely and effectively will likely require changing your browsing habits, so be aware of this.

3. Consider using a private and secure social network like Pidder. This is a private social network that uses encrypted communication and offers the ability to remain anonymous. If you are truly looking for ways to stay in touch with close ones in a uncompromised manner, this could be the site for you. While it will not have the userbase of Facebook, this is still an excellent alternative for secure social networking.

4. Use a firewall and a secure wireless connection. Protecting your inbound and outbound network traffic is essential. There are many free software options available for this. I cannot guarantee the integrity of these programs, but I personally recommend Little Snitch for Mac users. It appears that Outpost may be a good alternative for Windows. The key is to be able to see what services/sites are trying to send/receive data over your connection. The more stringent your firewall rules are, the better. Keep your computer clean by using some kind of anti-spam/spyware software and minimize your use of highly sketchy sites.

5. Delete your cookies regularly and log out of Facebook when you are not actively using it. Almost every time you visit a site, you download a cookie from that site, which is often used to track and collect data about you, the sites you visit, etc. Therefore, deleting cookies and temporary Internet files from your browser frequently is necessary. I recommend CCleaner as an effective way to do this. Most people leave a Facebook tab open and continue browsing, not realizing that every page that has a "Like" button actively logs and tracks their online activity. Facebook collects all your browsing data and then sells it to third parties, including passing it onto intelligence agencies. Therefore, when you are not actively using Facebook, be sure to log out! Why should they know everything you're up to online?

6. Cover up or disconnect your webcam when you are not using it. Did you know that your webcam can be secretly activated without you being aware of it? Hackers and intelligence agencies have the ability to do this, so effective countermeasures must be taken here. This can be done WITHOUT the indicator light coming on, so you won't even know that you are being watched or recorded. This is why I recommend taping over or covering up your webcam when you're not using it. Why take the risk? Do you really want the government to have the ability to spy on you while you are in your bedroom? The same thing can be done on cellphone cameras/microphones, so be aware of that too. The only way your phone cannot be used to track/record you is if the battery is taken out, which is another reason why many new smartphones come with non-removable batteries these days.

7. Learn to use secure email services like HushMail or encrypted email. Communicating using email is vital and part of our everyday lives. If we use services like Gmail, Hotmail, or Yahoo, those services are not secure and are compromised. Therefore, switching over to a secure service such as Hushmail can be valuable. Or learn how to use Pretty Good Privacy (PGP), which is a way to send encrypted email and files that only a trusted third party can open and view. Essentially, PGP uses public-private key cryptography, where you will give out your public key to trusted recipients. Messages can only be decrypted by using your special private key file (that you keep safe) and the sender's public key. You can even encrypt files so that only a specific person can open them. Learning to use PGP requires some technical knowledge but can be very useful for those who want to communicate securely and is well worth learning, in my opinion. Please see this tutorial or this video to get started. There are some excellent YouTube videos that can really help out with this.

Be smart about how you communicate online. If you take no precautionary measures, then you should assume that your communications are being recorded and monitored at all times. Do not discuss illegal or secret activities on Facebook or through Skype or Gmail. Ultimately, we should be greatly decreasing our use of these compromised services altogether! Be aware of what you type and consider their ramifications if ever made public. We must exercise great discretion and discernment when it comes to our online activities now. The methods listed above are by no means comprehensive and are just a small way to boost your privacy. If you have other privacy tips, please mention them here in the comments for all to see and benefit from. In the end, it is all up to the user to do their part in maintaining their online integrity. Safe browsing my friends!

Eliot Estep: We are all divine beings of love at our core! I AM a genuine truth-seeker dedicated to living a life of joy, peace, and abundance. I value integrity, freedom, and creative self-expression above all. It is a privilege to be here during this time of great change. Let us prepare. Main areas of research: conspiracies, global affairs, extraterrestrials, spiritual advancement + Sun: ♀ + Moon: ♀ + Ascendant: ♄ + This article first appeared at Collective Evolution.

HOW NSA ACCESS WAS BUILT INTO WINDOWS

Heise.de: EconomicPolicyJournal.com; via John Newell

Computer security specialists have been aware for two years that unusual features are contained inside a standard Windows software "driver" used for security and encryption functions. The driver, called ADVAPI.DLL, enables and controls a range of security functions. If you use Windows, you will find it in the C:\Windows\system directory of your computer.

ADVAPI.DLL works closely with Microsoft Internet Explorer, but will only run cryptographic functions that the US governments allows Microsoft to export. That information is bad enough news, from a European

point of view. Now, it turns out that ADVAPI will run special programmes inserted and controlled by NSA. As yet, no-one knows what these programmes are, or what they do.

Dr Nicko van Someren reported at last year's Crypto 98 conference that he had disassembled the ADVADPI driver. He found it contained two different keys. One was used by Microsoft to control the cryptographic functions enabled in Windows, in compliance with US export regulations. But the reason for building in a second key, or who owned it, remained a mystery.

A second key

Two weeks ago, a US security company came up with conclusive evidence that the second key belongs to NSA. Like Dr van Someren, Andrew Fernandez, chief scientist with Cryptonym of Morrisville, North Carolina, had been probing the presence and significance of the two keys. Then he checked the latest Service Pack release for Windows NT4, Service Pack 5. He found that Microsoft's developers had failed to remove or "strip" the debugging symbols used to test this software before they released it. Inside the code were the labels for the two keys. One was called "KEY". The other was called "NSAKEY".

Fernandes reported his re-discovery of the two CAPI keys, and their secret meaning, to "Advances in Cryptology, Crypto'99" conference held in Santa Barbara. According to those present at the conference, Windows developers attending the conference did not deny that the "NSA" key was built into their software. But they refused to talk about what the key did, or why it had been put there without users' knowledge.

A third key?!

But according to two witnesses attending the conference, even Microsoft's top crypto programmers were astonished to learn that the version of ADVAPI.DLL shipping with Windows 2000 contains not two, but three keys. Brian LaMachia, head of CAPI development at Microsoft was "stunned" to learn of these discoveries, by outsiders. The latest discovery by Dr van Someren is based on advanced search methods which test and report on the "entropy" of programming code.

Within the Microsoft organisation, access to Windows source code is said to be highly compartmentalized, making it easy for modifications to be inserted without the knowledge of even the respective product managers.[...]

According to Fernandez of Cryptonym, the result of having the secret key inside your Windows operating system "is that it is tremendously easier for the NSA to load unauthorized security services on all copies of Microsoft Windows, and once these security services are loaded, they can effectively compromise your entire operating system". The NSA key is contained inside all versions of Windows from Windows 95 OSR2 onwards.

HOW TO HIDE YOUR DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM BIG BROTHER

J.P. Hicks; Activist Post

Big Brother is hoping to eliminate anonymous digital communication, but a new messaging protocol may provide privacy advocates a way around their snooping government no matter where they live. It couldn't come at a better time as governments increasingly demand access to private communications. In fact, an FBI whistleblower recently revealed that all digital communications are being recorded and stored by the U.S. government.

Since most emails, instant messaging, and all voice calls (land line, cell or Internet) run through central service providers that database all user activity, the government has easy access to this information upon request, secret subpoenas or even backdoors to these services to view private communications in real time.

The Associated Press was recently violated by the Department of Justice who, with a secret subpoena, forced service providers to hand over phone records of AP's reporters and central offices.

The U.S. government claims the authority to track, trace, and database all electronic communications in order to keep us safe. Despite the obvious intrusion of privacy, it clearly has the intent to spy on all communications and is actively seeking expanded legal cover and technological advances for full spectrum digital surveillance. Large central service providers make this nefarious goal possible.

But as the government cracks down on Web privacy, a new decentralized communication protocol called Bitmessage has emerged to offer an easy way for people to send and receive encrypted messages.

What is Bitmessage?

Bitmessage is a peer-to-peer encrypted messaging protocol that allows people to communicate anonymously. Bitmessage's official description is as follows:

Bitmessage is a P2P communications protocol used to send encrypted messages to another person or to many subscribers. It is decentralized and trustless, meaning that you need-not inherently trust any entities like root certificate authorities. It uses strong authentication which means that the sender of a message cannot be spoofed, and it aims to hide "non-content" data, like the sender and receiver of messages, from passive eavesdroppers like those running warrantless wiretapping programs.

Based loosely on Bitcoin's open-source protocol, Bitmessage utilizes the computer power of decentralized users to process the messages making them essentially impossible to track. Addresses are made up of 36 random characters as opposed to a name and other personal information that email services require.

Example Bitmessage address: BM-2nTX1KchxgnmHvy9ntCN9r7sgKTraxczyE

In their white paper, the Bitmessage developers emphasize that privacy was their main motivation for creating it:

Hiding one's identity is difficult. Even if throw-away email addresses are used, users must connect to an email server to send and retrieve messages, revealing their IP address.

...if just one of those organizations is run by a government agency, and if they have certain network hardware in place between users and destination servers, then they would be able to perform a targeted man-in-the-middle attack of ostensibly secure communications at will...

What is needed is a communications protocol and accompanying software that encrypts messages, masks the sender and receiver of messages from others, and guarantees that the sender a message cannot be spoofed, without relying on trust and without burdening the user with the details of key management.

The addresses not only emphasize privacy but guarantee sender verification:

While certainly more cumbersome than an email address, it is not too much to type manually or it can be made into a QR-code. Users have already demonstrated this to be acceptable as Bitcoin addresses are similar in format and length. This address format is superior to email in that it guarantees that a message from a particular user or organization did, in fact, come from them. The sender of a message cannot be spoofed.

Though it may sound complicated, Bitmessage makes it easy for anyone to communicate anonymously. Once the program is downloaded on your computer, you just need to set "Your Identities", "Passphrase", and "Addresses" in your Bitmessage folder which is much like a Bitcoin "wallet". Then it works similarly to email where you choose from one of your "From" addresses to compose a message to "Send" to another address. The message's encryption is then "processed" by the peer-to-peer network of servers and delivered to the recipient's "wallet" (Bitmessage folder) on their personal computer. The "stream" or "proof of work" takes roughly four minutes to process the message to the recipient.

Bitmessage also offers a "broadcast" feature for mass announcements. So if you run an organization, website or blog with a newsletter, you can send anonymous "broadcasts" to subscribers. Meanwhile, subscribers can sign up without giving out their email address or anything that links them to the information.

Just as Bitcoin has the potential to displace centralized currencies, Bitmessage may be the future of free and private communication. As the government increases its Big Brother spying on average citizens, Bitmessage proves that freedom will always find a way.

Another great resource for how to get started with Bitmessage:

<http://cryptojunky.com/blog/2013/03/09/setting-up-and-using-bitmessage-an-encrypted-communications-platform-based-on-bitcoin/>

J.P. Hicks is an entrepreneur, info-activist, pro blogger, editor of BlogTips.com and author of Secrets to Making Money with a Free Blog. Follow @ Twitter, or like on Facebook.

BIG BROTHER WATCH BULLETIN

Nick Pickles; Big Brother Watch

Consumers demand action on privacy online

Today, we have published new research based on 10,354 interviews across nine countries on people's attitudes towards privacy online.

The findings included a stark message for those who say people are not concerned about who is tracking them. Three quarters of people (79%) globally say they are concerned about their privacy online, with two-fifths (41%) of people saying that consumers are being harmed by big companies gathering large amounts of personal data for internal use.

After last week's announcement that EU authorities have given Google an ultimatum about its privacy policy, the research also found two out of three (65%) of consumers surveyed believe that national regulators should do more to force Google to comply with existing regulations concerning online privacy and the protection of personal data.

Online privacy is a global issue of real importance to people and the overwhelming message is that citizens do not feel their authorities are doing enough to the desire of large companies to collect vast amounts of data on them. The report was featured in media including Metro, Computer Weekly, Daily Mail, IET, Huffington Post

Sgt Danny Nightingale faces selling family home to pay legal bills

Speaking for the first time about the impact the trial has had on his family, Sgt Danny Nightingale has today spoken about the financial pressures he is facing. He said: "As a result of the Service Prosecuting Authority's (SPA) decision to have a re-trial and the fact this is now listed for two weeks, the costs of my defence team have escalated significantly placing a considerable pressure on the family. Despite the family using everything they have and some generous public donations, it now looks like we may have to sell our home to finance the trial. This is obviously deeply worrying for us all, particularly as this is already understandably an extremely anxious time." If you have not supported his legal appeal, you can do so here. Every donation makes a huge difference.

GCHQ and PRISM Revelations continue to cause concern

Recent revelations about the extent of GCHQ's internet monitoring have raised a number of serious questions about the law the agency is operating within.

Our response to the claims around PRISM and GCHQ have been heavily featured across the media including the BBC, ITV Daybreak, Channel 5 News, Guardian, V3, The Scotsman, Bloomberg Business Week and outlets around the world, The Independent on Sunday reported on our calls for an overhaul of the law governing surveillance. BBW Director Nick Pickles appeared on a special 'Privacy versus Security' edition of Radio 4's You and Yours following the revelations,

Who decides what we can see online?

Today, along with the Open Rights Group, English PEN and Index on Censorship, we have signed a letter to Culture Secretary Maria Miller highlighting our concerns about the current debate around 'blocking' internet content.

It is absolutely right to pursue the removal of illegal content from the internet, but moving to a system where legal content is blocked poses a clear and significant risk to freedom of speech. The triviality of circumventing blocks aside, such a policy risks blocking legitimate websites and setting a dangerous international precedent. After all, who gets to decide what legal content is deemed to be unfit for the British public? We have previously warned of the link between website blocking and surveillance.

In the letter, we warn:

"An understandable desire to ensure a 'safer' environment online can easily lead to overreaching or unaccountable powers or practices. Through mistakes or abuse these can quickly lead to restrictions on far too much content and undue infringements of people's privacy. For example, mobile networks' Internet filtering in the UK routinely over blocks the websites of shops, political blogs or community sites. In Australia, it has emerged that 250,000 websites were accidentally blocked when a government

agency tried to take down sites allegedly involved with fraud. The UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression Frank La Rue highlighted his grave concerns about these problems in his 2011 report. Poorly implemented fixes will not only inhibit freedoms in the UK. They will also set a very damaging precedent internationally, providing more cover for States whose interests in restricting access to information online or the surveillance of citizens is more sinister."

Technology, everywhere, that you wear?

As Google Glass and other wearable technology becomes commonplace, what are the implications for privacy? Director Nick Pickles appeared on BBC Newsnight to discuss this warning that ultimately the question is who controls the data being collected and users do not usually have any real control.

RESISTANCE IS THE ONLY WAY TO FIGHT THE BEDROOM TAX

by eddb; Slaney Street; Birmingham

Being lobbed in the police van today after being arrested at today's Birmingham Ukuncut action. It was 100% worth being arrested for the sake of fighting the Bedroom Tax.

The Bedroom tax is leaving 13,000 Birmingham residents facing poverty or eviction by the City Council. Today at the Birmingham UK Uncut Bedroom tax protest we took a simple message to both the council and everyone living in Birmingham; that is would be better to evict the leaders of the Birmingham City Council who are implementing the bedroom tax than to evict the poor from their homes.

Dozens of Birmingham residents including the president of the Birmingham Trades Union Congress have signed a letter from Communities Against The Cuts which outlines how the Council could easily pledge not to enforce the tax. Dundee and Brighton & Hove councils have already announced that they will not be evicting tenants who do not pay the tax. The cost of enforcing the tax and evicting tenants will likely be higher than the money raised from it, money we need to run public services.

In January Birmingham City Council decided to pass on to the people of Birmingham a 10% cut in Government funding for council tax benefit. This means that thousands of the city's poorest families will be about £240 a year worse off. Dozens of other local authorities have decided to protect their residents from the council tax benefit cut, yet it seems that Birmingham city council will take no action to defend its citizens and is passing on all Tory cuts to them.

The eviction notice delivered to Albert bore.

The leader of the Council Sir Albert Bore has no understanding of the effects these decisions have on normal people in Birmingham. Not only is he earning £66k a year from his job as leader of the city council but he is also earning £55k as chair of the university hospitals! The rest of us can't corruptly do two jobs! Rather than spend half his time getting more money elsewhere while being the local architect of misery he should be spending all his energies working to defend the city from these Tory cuts; other councils seem to manage it. We'd be far better of evicting Albert Bore and getting a hard working council leader who will stop evictions not pursue them.

Today we marched peaceably to the council to deliver our "eviction notice" to Bore – to put him at notice of our intent to be rid of him. We then headed out of the Council House, at which point we were surrounded and detained by police. One detained protester appealed to the police that her husband was suffering from cancer and that they were facing eviction from their home and had come protest peacefully. To the visible anger of assembled onlookers the police carried on detaining us and then separated us out threatening us with arrest for a suspected "burglary" in the Birmingham Art Gallery, a claim which was entirely spurious and was a clear attempt to obtain our names and addresses. The police continued to intimidate and scare citizens who were exercising their democratic right to protest, leaving many of them visibly shaken.

There are hundreds of thousands of people outraged by the Coalition's cuts, the bedroom tax and Labour controlled Local Councils who remain compliant with measures that are causing them misery. However on simple protests like today the police routinely intimidate protesters from voicing their concerns. In recent times the police have acted like a political militia for the government, controlling

legitimate opposition to policies that tore society apart. It is because of this that I refused to give my name, and was then carried away to the local police station. If the police are going to be used to enforce the governments political machinations, then protesters don't need to make it easy for them.

After arriving at the cells the police reviewed the evidence behind my arrest and of course found that there was no evidence of any burglary and immediately let me go. They then informed me they had acted because the council had requested that the protesters be arrested. The police are regularly using bogus grounds to get the names and addresses of protesters for their databases. Many are intimidated by this and they don't protest again. The police almost never follow up these arrests, it's merely a tactic to intimidate and collect information.

Defiance and civil disobedience is the way forward to send the Bedroom tax the way of the Poll tax. By 1992 Birmingham had over 40,000 residents refusing to pay the hated Poll tax, amounting to £82 million unpaid. The tax proved impossible to implement as so many people simply refused to pay it, the government gave in and it was repealed.

To sum up quickly for people who want to get involved: there is a lot going on in Birmingham right now – huge groundwork is being put into a campaign around the housing crisis, cuts to benefits and against the Bedroom Tax.

Dozens of people from Communities Against the Cuts

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/389392804422354/?fref=ts>

have been leafleting and door knocking with residents from the Hawkesley three estates in south Birmingham. Last Tuesday the three estates bedroom tax meeting had 35 local people in attendance, all from the estate who all agreed a list of ideas to fight back as a community, including this morning storming the office of their local labour councillors to demand they stand up against the bedroom tax. Communities Against the Cuts is moving onto new estates to expand the campaign make sure you sign up to the mailing list to get involved

Further the newly formed Birmingham Benefit Justice Campaign (join the Facebook group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/375417799240410/?fref=ts>) has been doing the same running big stalls around the city

<https://www.facebook.com/events/441817762573794/>

10 WAYS TO STARVE A MULTI-NATIONAL GMO CONGLOMERATE

Daisy Luther; Activist Post

(Following the recent item on food by Mario Molinari, some very practical tips as to how we can all, acting locally, reclaim our food sovereignty - Ed)

Monsanto seems intent on taking over the food supply of the entire world. Their sterile, toxic seeds are in every corner of the globe. Hungary recently made headlines for burning 1000 acres of fields of GMO crops to the ground. Dozens of nations have banned, or at the very least, regulated, GMO crops and products. The heat is on the monolithic seed corporation, and it's time to turn the temperature up even more in North America. The federal government has made no secret of their support of Monsanto, so it's up to us, the consumers, to starve them out.

The best way to do that, according to the founder of Eat Local Grown, Rick Davis, is to "Starve Monsanto, feed a farmer."

Every dollar we put into the pockets of small farmers is a dollar that Monsanto doesn't receive. By cutting off the funding for Monsanto through consumer choices, we can starve this beast out.

Davis is passionate about the place of farmer's markets in this checkout counter revolution:

Money is all that matters. So let's use our money more wisely to get the changes we want. First step- stop buying GMO and conventionally grown food. Move those dollars to supporting local sustainable farmers! I realize that's difficult and impossible for many. But if we had a shift of just 10% of peoples shopping income going to Farmers Markets it would make a HUGE difference. The sad reality is that most small family farms are required to have at least one family member work outside of the farm just to make ends

meet. It's not because they don't do a good job growing healthy food, it's because there's just not enough awareness of the benefits (nutrition, helping the environment, building community, etc).

Every bite of food that you feed your family is a vote, either for Monsanto and their GMOs, or against them. This means that every single one of us can effect the necessary change by voting with our forks and wallets.

We can all take steps to grow at least some of the food that we consume, through traditional gardens, containers on the patio or balcony, or even a sunny window. But for city dwellers or those who live in an area otherwise not conducive to farming, it isn't feasible to think that they can grow every single bite that they eat. Not to worry, though, because activism is as easy as heading to your local farmer's market instead of the grocery store. (You can find farmer's markets in your area [HERE](#).)

Here are 10 ways to starve a multi-national GMO conglomerate even when you don't have room to farm – and the best news of all is that ANYONE can get started as soon as lunch time!

Stop shopping at grocery stores. With farmer's markets, roadside stands in the country, vegetable gardens, privately owned butcher shops, and mail order sources for bulk purchases of organic grains, there is no reason you need to ever set foot in another chilly, fluorescent-lit, chemical warfare zone again!

Eat seasonally. Seasonal eating has a host of benefits. It's healthier, it's cheaper, and it's far easier to find in-season foods locally grown.

Join a CSA. CSA stands for Community Supported Agriculture. Basically when you join a CSA, you are buying shares in the harvest. This is a great way to support local farmers. You pay in advance and then as the harvest comes in, it is divided among shareholders. Each CSA is different – some divvy up only produce, while others share eggs and dairy products as well.

Make the farmer's market a weekly destination. Grab the kids and some reusable bags and head out to your local farmer's market. Not only can you shop for vibrant, fresh-picked fruits and veggies, but many markets also offer home-baked goods, jams and jellies, and local meats. Be sure that you are buying directly from farmers, though. Some vendors buy from the same markets that the grocery stores do, which defeats the whole purpose. Talk to the vendor and learn about the origin of the offerings – you just may strike up a wonderful friendship!

Buy directly from the farm. If you live in a more rural area, shopping locally can be as easy as visiting a neighboring farm. Some set up roadside stands, others rely on the honor system, and others have small shops with their freshly harvested offerings.

Visit a pick-your-own farm. A great outing for the whole family is a pick-your-own farm. Even better, the price for fresh berries or apples is often lower when you provide your own labor. A morning spent in the field picking strawberries is both educational and a fun way to bond with your children.

Learn to preserve food. Many of us live in a climate doesn't allow for fresh harvests year-round. The good news is, you can acquire fresh produce in large quantities (like bushel baskets) for a far better price than a weekly supply. Canning, freezing, and dehydrating are three great ways to preserve that fresh picked goodness to enjoy in the middle of winter, while still avoiding the grocery store and it's Monsanto-filled shelves.

Join a food co-op. According to [Localharvest.org](#), "Food cooperatives are worker or customer owned businesses that provide grocery items of the highest quality and best value to their members. Coops can take the shape of retail stores or buying clubs. All food coops are committed to consumer education, product quality, and member control, and usually support their local communities by selling produce grown locally by family farms."

Support restaurants that buy locally. The locavore movement is catching on. If you choose to go out to dinner, opt for restaurants that have seasonal menus based on local harvests.

Educate friends, family, and the local community. Extend the activism beyond your own kitchen by helping to promote the local options. Lots of people have no idea what to do with swiss chard or rutabagas. Volunteer to teach a cooking class that focuses on seasonal foods. Write up flyers to be inserted with co-op or CSA baskets with instructions on how to prepare that month's harvest. Submit seasonal recipes to your local paper. Educate, educate, educate, on the benefits and importance of locally grown, non-GMO food.

Grass roots activism like Occupy Monsanto and the March Against Monsanto have built a tidal wave of momentum against the genetically modified ingredients contaminating our supplies. We, everyday, ordinary people, can keep the movement going by remembering that the real votes are counted at the cash register.

Daisy Luther is a freelance writer and editor. Her website, [The Organic Prepper](#), where this article first appeared, offers information on healthy prepping, including premium nutritional choices, general wellness and non-tech solutions. You can follow Daisy on Facebook and Twitter, and you can email her at daisy@theorganicprepper.ca

THE ANTI-GLOBALIZATION MOVEMENT AND THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM. IS “ANOTHER WORLD” POSSIBLE?

By Prof Michel Chossudovsky; Global Research

Url of this article: <http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-anti-globalization-movement-and-the-world-social-forum-another-world-is-possible/5335181>

The World Social Forum operating under the banner of “Another World is Possible” was founded in 2001 at its inaugural venue of Porto Alegre, Brazil.

From the outset in 2001, the WSF has been upheld as an international umbrella representing grassroots people’s organizations, committed to reversing the tide of globalization. Its stated intent is to challenge corporate capitalism and its dominant neoliberal economic agenda.

The World Social Forum at its inaugural meeting defined itself as a counter-offensive to the World Economic Forum (WEF) of business leaders and politicians which meets annually in Davos, Switzerland. The 2001 Porto Alegre WSF was held simultaneously with that of the WEF in Davos.

Yet upon careful review, the WSF –rather than effectively confronting the economic and financial elites– actually serves their interests. From the outset in 2001, the World Social Forum was funded by governments and corporate foundations, including the Ford Foundation which has ties to US intelligence.

The anti-globalization movement is opposed to Wall Street and the Texas oil giants controlled by Rockefeller, et al. Yet the foundations and charities of Ford, Rockefeller et al will generously fund progressive anti-capitalist networks as well as environmentalists (opposed to Wall Street and Big Oil) with a view to ultimately overseeing and shaping their various activities.

The mechanisms of “manufacturing dissent” require a manipulative environment, a process of arm-twisting and subtle co-optation of a small number of key individuals within “progressive organizations”, including anti-war coalitions, environmentalists and the anti-globalization movement. Many leaders of these organizations have in a sense betrayed their grassroots.

Tunis: This Year’s World Social Forum

The World Social Forum gathered this year in Tunis. The March 26-30, 2013 venue included more than 50,000 participants from NGOs and people’s organizations from around the World. More than 4000 organizations from 127 countries were represented.

Many important issues were debated and discussed in separate workshops. The structure of the program –which included more than 1000 separate sessions– was that of a mosaic of different and separate initiatives. <http://www.fsm2013.org/programme/27/1> impacts of austerity measures in the EU, environment, social justice, women’s rights, global warming, sustainable development, Palestine, the Arab Spring, among other themes

While the thrust invariably consisted in a critique of global capitalism and imperialism, the issue of US-led militarization was not addressed in a meaningful way. An aura of divisiveness prevailed, which was in part the result of the way the program was organized in a multitude of “do it yourself” workshops.

There was no united WSF position against US-NATO led wars, let alone Western intervention with a view to destabilizing sovereign countries. In fact quite the opposite: a session was held on how to overthrow the Syrian government, involving the participation of so-called Leftists:

...[W]hile four Syrian communist and two Kurd organizations discussed future action against the regime, supporters of al-Assad held a rally in the central square. The two groups did not cross paths, so no confrontation took place, but the tension was palpable.

Participants in the debate held by the Syrian communists and Kurds told IPS that they had agreed on a document recognizing the importance of the individual and collective rights of all ethnic groups in Syria, which is especially significant for the Kurds, the largest minority.

They also agreed to hold a day of solidarity with the Syrian uprising, in the first week of May. (See Common Dreams, March 30, 2013)

How US-NATO with the support of Israel, Qatar and Saudi Arabia was waging an undeclared war on

Syria was not the object of a cohesive debate. Nor was the issue of Al Qaeda mercenaries funded covertly by Washington and Brussels. While the “Arab Spring” was put forth as a revolutionary landmark, the US-NATO sponsored armed insurrections in Libya (2011) and Syria (2011-2013) were considered to be part of the “Arab Spring”:

“Now, we are at a crossroads where retrograde and conservative forces want to stop the processes initiated two years ago with the [Arab Spring] uprisings in the Maghreb-Mashreq region that helped to bring down dictatorships and to challenge the neoliberal system imposed on the peoples. These uprisings have spread to all continents of the world inspiring indignation and occupation of public places. (Declaration of the Social Movements Assembly.

The uprisings in the “Mashreq” and “Maghreb” referred to in the Final Declaration essentially pertain to Syria, Egypt, Libya and Tunisia. The text of declaration is vague. It does not take a position with regard to US-NATO intervention in Libya and Syria.

What the WSF document intimates (by default) is that the US sponsored “Syrian opposition” is “also” a genuine grassroots pro-democracy movement, comparable to that of Egypt. Similarly the Al Qaeda affiliated Libya Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) which led the “Arab Spring” against the government of Muammar Gaddafi is also considered to be a revolutionary force. It should be noted that Libya under Gaddafi was the only country in Africa which rejected the neoliberal economic agenda implemented under the helm of the IMF.

Several workshops on Libya tacitly applauded Western military intervention. A session entitled “Libya’s transition to democracy” focused on “whether Libya was better off without Muammar Gaddafi.” Several “progressive” NGOs and “alternative media” which had supported NATO’s humanitarian bombings against Libya were present in Tunis. No statement as to the criminal nature of NATO’s humanitarian bombing campaign against Libya was made by the WSF. The Libyan NGOs in attendance were funded by their government and by Western foundations, with the approval of the Libyan Ministry of Culture and Civil Society established in 2011 in the wake of the NATO led military intervention.

Sessions were also held on “political Islam” as part of an anti-imperialist front without addressing the broader issue as to how “Political Islam” was used in the course of The Arab Spring to further the goals of the Imperialist powers. The result was the installation of Islamic governments in Egypt and Tunisia and the reinforcement rather than the repeal of the neoliberal economic policy agenda.

The legitimacy of the US “Global War on Terrorism” is not an object of debate under the auspices of the WSF. Nor is the fact that Washington covertly supported key leaders of the Arab Spring movement, as well as several civil society organizations. The April 6 Movement in Egypt had the support of the US embassy, Kefaya (Enough) was funded by US foundations. Both of these organizations were present at the WSF sessions in Tunis.

Aminata Traoré, the former minister of Culture of the deposed government of Mali, speaking at the World Social Forum in Tunis underscored how military intervention was used to enforce neoliberal economic policy. Traore stated that: “The war that was imposed today in Mali is not a war of liberation of the Malian people, but a war of plunder of resources.” While addressing the WSF, she deplored that many WSF activists were supportive of France’s intervention.

Generally speaking, an understanding of imperialist wars in support of a neoliberal agenda has over the years not been a central component of the WSF debate. Moreover, many of the participant NGOs are in fact supportive of NATO’s “Responsibility to Protect” Mandate.

The Funding of the World Social Forum

The WSF is funded by governments and foundations. The Ford Foundation under its “Strengthening Global Civil Society” program provided funding during the first three years of the WSF.

When the WSF was held in Bombay in 2004, the Indian WSF host committee declined support from the Ford Foundation. This in itself did not modify the WSF’s relationship to the donors. While the Ford foundation formally withdrew, other foundations positioned themselves.

In addition to government support, the WSF has been funded by a consortium of corporate foundations under the advisory umbrella of Engaged Donors for Global Equity (EDGE). This organization, which previously went under the name of The Funders Network on Trade and Globalization (FTNG), has played a central role in the funding of successive WSF venues. From the outset in 2001 it has an observer status on the WSF International Council.

While channeling financial support to the WSF, it acts as a clearing house for major foundations. EDGE

describes itself as “a unique and diverse community of donors, foundation officers and advisors across the international philanthropic landscape ... with shared commitment to global social change.”

Shortly before the WSF venue in Tunis, EDGE Funders –together with the Fondation Charles Léopold Mayer pour le Progrès de l’Homme (FPH)– convened in Paris a consortium of some two dozen WSF grantmakers. EDGE is also facilitating the presence of these grantmakers at the Tunis venue. (See <http://www.edgefunders.org/events/>)

In one of its key documents, entitled A Funders Network Alliance In Support of Grassroots Organizing and Movement-Building EDGE acknowledges its support of social movements which challenge “neoliberal market fundamentalism.” including the World Social Forum, established in 2001:

“From the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas (1994) to the Battle in Seattle (1999) to the creation of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre (2001), the TINA years of Reagan and Thatcher (There Is No Alternative) have been replaced with the growing conviction that “another world is possible.” Counter-summits, global campaigns and social forums have been crucial spaces to articulate local struggles, share experiences and analyses, develop expertise, and build concrete forms of international solidarity among progressive movements for social, economic and ecological justice.”

But at the same time, there is an obvious contradiction: the campaign against neoliberalism is financed by an alliance of donors which includes corporate foundations, firmly committed to the free-market and neoliberal economic policy under the helm of the IMF.

A member of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund is on EDGE’s board of directors. A representative of the Ford Foundation sits on its Conference Program Committee, which defines funding orientations. The Wallace Global Fund which has a working relationship to EDGE, is specialized in providing support to “mainstream” NGOs and “alternative media”, including Amnesty International, Democracy Now.

The Rockefeller Brothers representative –who co-chairs EDGE’s program committee– is Tom Kruse. At the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Kruse is responsible for “Global Governance” under the “Democratic Practice” program. Prior to joining the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Kruse served as an adviser to the Bolivian government of Evo Morales on trade and investment policy, debt relief and macroeconomic reform. Rockefeller Brothers grants to NGOs are approved under the “Strengthening Democracy in Global Governance” program, which is broadly similar to that put forth by the US State Department.

From the standpoint of corporate donors including the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, “investing in the WSF” constitutes a profitable undertaking. It ensures that activism remains within the confines of constructive dialogue and critique rather than confrontation. Any deviation immediately results in the curtailment of donor funding:

“Everything the [Ford] Foundation did could be regarded as “making the World safe for capitalism”, reducing social tensions by helping to comfort the afflicted, provide safety valves for the angry, and improve the functioning of government (McGeorge Bundy, National Security Advisor to Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson (1961-1966), President of the Ford Foundation, (1966-1979))

The limits of social dissent are thereby determined by the “governance structure” of the WSF, which was tacitly agreed upon with the funding agencies at the outset in 2001.

“No Leaders”

The WSF has no leaders. All the events are “self-organized”. The structure of debate and activism is part of an “open space” (See y Francine Mestrum, The World Social Forum and its governance: a multi-headed monster, CADTM, 27 April 2013, <http://cadtm.org/The-World-Social-Forum-and-its->).

This compartmentalized structure is an obstacle to the development of a meaningful and articulate mass movement. It indelibly serves the interests of those who fund the WSF including the tax free foundations and the governments.

How best to control grassroots dissent against global capitalism?

Make sure that their leaders can be easily co-opted and that the rank and file will not develop “forms of international solidarity among progressive movements” (to use EDGE’s own words), which in any meaningful way might undermine the interests of corporate capital.

The mosaic of separate workshops, the relative absence of plenary sessions, the creation of divisions within and between social movements, not to mention the absence of a cohesive platform against US-NATO

humanitarian interventions, in Syria, Libya and Mali: all of these are part of a strategy to “manufacture dissent”

“The limits of dissent” are established by the foundations and governments which ultimately finance this multimillion dollar venue. The financing is twofold:

1. Core financing of the WSF Secretariat and the Costs of the WSF venue.
2. Many of the constituent NGOs which participate in the venue are recipients of donor and/or government support.

What ultimately prevails is a ritual of dissent which does not threaten the New World Order. Those who attend the WSF from the grassroots are often misled by their leaders. Activists who do not share the WSF consensus will ultimately be excluded:

“By providing the funding and the policy framework to many concerned and dedicated people working within the non-profit sector, the ruling class is able to co-opt leadership from grassroots communities, ... and is able to make the funding, accounting, and evaluation components of the work so time consuming and onerous that social justice work is virtually impossible under these conditions” (Paul Kivel, You Call this Democracy, Who Benefits, Who Pays and Who Really Decides, 2004, p. 122)

“Another World is Possible” is nonetheless an important concept, which characterizes the struggle of the peoples movements against global capitalism as well as the commitment of thousands of activists who participated in the WSF. It cannot, however, be achieved under the auspices of the WSF which from the outset was funded by global capitalism and organized in close liaison with its corporate and government donors.

The important question for activists: Is it possible to build “an Alternative” to global capitalism, which challenges the hegemony of the Rockefellers et al and then ask the Rockefellers et al to foot the bill?

Appendix

Declaration of the Social Movements Assembly – World Social Forum 2013, 29 March 2013, Tunisia

As the Social Movements Assembly of the World Social Forum of Tunisia, 2013, we are gathered here to affirm the fundamental contribution of peoples of Maghreb-Mashrek (from North Africa to the Middle East), in the construction of human civilization. We affirm that decolonization for oppressed peoples remains for us, the social movements of the world, a challenge of the greatest importance.

Through the WSF process, the Social Movements Assembly is the place where we come together through our diversity, in order to forge common struggles and a collective agenda to fight against capitalism, patriarchy, racism and all forms of discrimination and oppression. We have built a common history of work which led to some progress, particularly in Latin America, where we have been able to intervene in neoliberal alliances and to create several alternatives for just development that truly honors nature.

Together, the peoples of all the continents are fighting to oppose the domination of capital, hidden behind illusory promises of economic progress and the illusion of political stability. Now, we are at a crossroads where retrograde and conservative forces want to stop the processes initiated two years ago with the uprisings in the Maghreb-Mashreq region that helped to bring down dictatorships and to challenge the neoliberal system imposed on the peoples. These uprisings have spread to all continents of the world inspiring indignation and occupation of public places.

People all over the world are suffering the effects of the aggravation of a profound crisis of capitalism, in which its agents (banks, transnational corporations, media conglomerates, international institutions, and governments complicit with neoliberalism) aim at increasing their profits by applying interventionist and neocolonial policies.

War, military occupations, free-trade neoliberal treaties and “austerity measures” are expressed in economic packages that privatize the common good, and public services, cut wages and rights, increase unemployment, overload women’s care work and destroys nature. Such policies strike the richer countries of the North harder and are increasing migration, forced displacement, evictions, debt, and social inequalities such as in Greece, Cyprus, Portugal, Italy, Ireland and the Spanish State.

They re-enforce conservatism and the control over women’s bodies and lives. In addition, they seek to impose “green economy” as a solution to the environmental and food crisis, which not only exacerbates the problem, but leads to commodification, privatization and financialization of life and nature.

We denounce the intensification of repression to people’s rebellions, the assassination of the leadership of

social movements, the criminalization of our struggles and our proposals.

We assert that people must not continue to pay for this systemic crisis and that there is no solution inside the capitalist system! Here, in Tunes, we reaffirm our commitment to come together to forge a common strategy to guide our struggles against capitalism. This is why we, social movements, struggle:

*Against transnational corporations and the financial system (IMF, WB and WTO), who are the main agents of the capitalist system, privatizing life, public services and common goods such as water, air, land, seeds and mineral resources, promoting wars and violations of human rights. Transnational corporations reproduce extractionist practices endangering life and nature, grabbing our lands and developing genetically modified seeds and food, taking away the peoples' right to food and destroying biodiversity.

We fight for the cancellation of illegitimate and odious debt which today is a global instrument of domination, repression and economic and financial strangulation of people. We reject free trade agreements that are imposed by States and transnational corporations and we affirm that it is possible to build another kind of globalization, made from and by the people, based on solidarity and on freedom of movement for all the human beings.

[We struggle] for climate justice and food sovereignty, because we know that global climate change is a product of the capitalist system of production, distribution and consumption. Transnational corporations, international financial institutions and governments serving them do not want to reduce greenhouse gases. We denounce "green economy" and refuse false solutions to the climate crisis such as biofuels, genetically modified organisms and mechanisms of the carbon market like REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation), which ensnare impoverished peoples with false promises of progress while privatizing and commodifying the forests and territories where these peoples have been living for thousands of years.

We defend the food sovereignty and support sustainable peasant agriculture which is the true solution to the food and climate crises and includes access to land for all who work on it. Because of this, we call for a mass mobilisation to stop the landgrab and support local peasants struggles.

[We struggle] Against violence against women, often conducted in militarily occupied territories, but also violence affecting women who are criminalized for taking part in social struggles. We fight against domestic and sexual violence perpetrated on women because they are considered objects or goods, because the sovereignty of their bodies and minds is not acknowledged. We fight against the traffic of women, girls and boys.

We defend sexual diversity, the right to gender self-determination and we oppose all homophobia and sexist violence.

[We fight] For peace and against war, colonialism, occupations and the militarization of our lands.

We denounce the false discourse of human rights defense and fight against fundamentalism, that often justify these military occupations such as in Haiti, Libya, Mali and Syria. We defend the right to people's sovereignty and self-determination such as in Palestine, Western Sahara and Kurdistan.

We denounce the installation of foreign military bases to instigate conflicts, to control and ransack natural resources, and to foster dictatorships in several countries.

We struggle for the freedom of organization in trade unions, social movements, associations and other forms of peaceful resistance. Let's strengthen our tools of solidarity among peoples such as boycott, disinvestment and sanctions against Israel and the struggle against NATO and to ban all nuclear weapons.

*[We struggle] For democratization of mass media and building alternative media, that are fundamental to overthrow the capitalist logics.

Inspired by the history of our struggles and by the strength of people on the streets, the Social Movements Assembly call upon all people to mobilize and develop actions – coordinated at world level – in a global Day of mobilization on the XXXX (day to decide)

Social movements of the world, let us advance towards a global unity to shatter the capitalist system! No more exploitation, no more patriarchy, racism and colonialism! Viva la revolution! Long live the people's struggle.

EVERYTHING IS RIGGED: THE BIGGEST PRICE-FIXING SCANDAL EVER

By Matt Taibbi; Rolling Stone Politics; via Jimmy Devlin

The Illuminati were amateurs. The second huge financial scandal of the year reveals the real international conspiracy: There's no price the big banks can't fix.

Conspiracy theorists of the world, believers in the hidden hands of the Rothschilds and the Masons and the Illuminati, we skeptics owe you an apology. You were right. The players may be a little different, but your basic premise is correct: The world is a rigged game. We found this out in recent months, when a series of related corruption stories spilled out of the financial sector, suggesting the world's largest banks may be fixing the prices of, well, just about everything.

You may have heard of the Libor scandal, in which at least three – and perhaps as many as 16 – of the name-brand too-big-to-fail banks have been manipulating global interest rates, in the process messing around with the prices of upward of \$500 trillion (that's trillion, with a "t") worth of financial instruments. When that sprawling con burst into public view last year, it was easily the biggest financial scandal in history – MIT professor Andrew Lo even said it "dwarfs by orders of magnitude any financial scam in the history of markets."

That was bad enough, but now Libor may have a twin brother. Word has leaked out that the London-based firm ICAP, the world's largest broker of interest-rate swaps, is being investigated by American authorities for behaviour that sounds eerily reminiscent of the Libor mess. Regulators are looking into whether or not a small group of brokers at ICAP may have worked with up to 15 of the world's largest banks to manipulate ISDAfix, a benchmark number used around the world to calculate the prices of interest-rate swaps.

Interest-rate swaps are a tool used by big cities, major corporations and sovereign governments to manage their debt, and the scale of their use is almost unimaginably massive. It's about a \$379 trillion market, meaning that any manipulation would affect a pile of assets about 100 times the size of the United States federal budget.

It should surprise no one that among the players implicated in this scheme to fix the prices of interest-rate swaps are the same megabanks – including Barclays, UBS, Bank of America, JPMorgan Chase and the Royal Bank of Scotland – that serve on the Libor panel that sets global interest rates. In fact, in recent years many of these banks have already paid multimillion-dollar settlements for anti-competitive manipulation of one form or another (in addition to Libor, some were caught up in an anti-competitive scheme, detailed in Rolling Stone last year, to rig municipal-debt service auctions). Though the jumble of financial acronyms sounds like gibberish to the layperson, the fact that there may now be price-fixing scandals involving both Libor and ISDAfix suggests a single, giant mushrooming conspiracy of collusion and price-fixing hovering under the ostensibly competitive veneer of Wall Street culture.

The Scam Wall Street Learned From the Mafia

Why? Because Libor already affects the prices of interest-rate swaps, making this a manipulation-on-manipulation situation. If the allegations prove to be right, that will mean that swap customers have been paying for two different layers of price-fixing corruption. If you can imagine paying 20 bucks for a crappy PB&J because some evil cabal of agribusiness companies colluded to fix the prices of both peanuts and peanut butter, you come close to grasping the lunacy of financial markets where both interest rates and interest-rate swaps are being manipulated at the same time, often by the same banks.

"It's a double conspiracy," says an amazed Michael Greenberger, a former director of the trading and markets division at the Commodity Futures Trading Commission and now a professor at the University of Maryland. "It's the height of criminality."

The bad news didn't stop with swaps and interest rates. In March, it also came out that two regulators – the CFTC here in the U.S. and the Madrid-based International Organization of Securities Commissions – were spurred by the Libor revelations to investigate the possibility of collusive manipulation of gold and silver prices. "Given the clubby manipulation efforts we saw in Libor benchmarks, I assume other benchmarks – many other benchmarks – are legit areas of inquiry," CFTC Commissioner Bart Chilton said.

But the biggest shock came out of a federal courtroom at the end of March – though if you follow

these matters closely, it may not have been so shocking at all – when a landmark class-action civil lawsuit against the banks for Libor-related offenses was dismissed. In that case, a federal judge accepted the banker-defendants' incredible argument: If cities and towns and other investors lost money because of Libor manipulation, that was their own fault for ever thinking the banks were competing in the first place.

"A farce," was one antitrust lawyer's response to the eyebrow-raising dismissal.

"Incredible," says Sylvia Sokol, an attorney for Constantine Cannon, a firm that specializes in antitrust cases.

All of these stories collectively pointed to the same thing: These banks, which already possess enormous power just by virtue of their financial holdings – in the United States, the top six banks, many of them the same names you see on the Libor and ISDAfix panels, own assets equivalent to 60 percent of the nation's GDP – are beginning to realize the awesome possibilities for increased profit and political might that would come with colluding instead of competing. Moreover, it's increasingly clear that both the criminal justice system and the civil courts may be impotent to stop them, even when they do get caught working together to game the system.

If true, that would leave us living in an era of undisguised, real-world conspiracy, in which the prices of currencies, commodities like gold and silver, even interest rates and the value of money itself, can be and may already have been dictated from above. And those who are doing it can get away with it. Forget the Illuminati – this is the real thing, and it's no secret. You can stare right at it, anytime you want.

THE CASHLESS SOCIETY ARRIVES IN AFRICA. THE “MULTIPURPOSE” BIOMETRIC NATIONAL IDENTITY SMART CARD

Timothy Alexander Guzman; Global Research

(It seems remarkable how many supposedly cash strapped third world countries ... Nigeria, South Africa, India ... have money to burn on hugely costly centralised biometric date and ID systems. Might this be some attempt to progressively encircle those countries where there is still significant resistance to such measures? The arrival of local informal currencies becomes ever more urgent- Ed)

Url of this article: <http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-cashless-society-arrives-in-africa-the-multipurpose-biometric-national-identity-smart-card/5335292>

It was recently announced at the World Economic Forum in Cape Town, South Africa that MasterCard and the Nigerian National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) under the government of Nigeria would form a partnership to distribute a new identity card to every Nigerian citizen. The purpose of the card is to have all Nigerian citizens participate in the financial services sector under the control of MasterCard, a multinational financial services corporation headquartered in New York. MasterCard's press release 'MasterCard to Power Nigerian Identity Card Program' stated:

As part of the program, in its first phase, Nigerians 16 years and older, and all residents in the country for more than two years, will get the new multipurpose identity card which has 13 applications including MasterCard's prepaid payment technology that will provide cardholders with the safety, convenience and reliability of electronic payments. This will have a significant and positive impact on the lives of these Nigerians who have not previously had access to financial services.

The program is also designed to move Nigeria into a cashless society, one that is dependent on financial institutions, Wall Street and the Nigerian government. It will be managed by the financial elites of Wall Street, technocrats and of course Washington. All forms of financial transactions would be exchanged through plastic credit and debit cards that would have implanted RFID chips. Michael

Miebach, President of the Middle East and Africa division at MasterCard supports the Nigerian government's decision for a new cashless society, "Today's announcement is the first phase of an unprecedented project in terms of scale and scope for Nigeria," said Michael Miebach

"MasterCard has been a firm supporter of the Central Bank of Nigeria's (CBN) Cashless Policy as we share a vision of a world beyond cash. From the program's inception, we have provided the Federal Government of Nigeria with global insights and best practices on how electronic payments can enable economic growth and create a more financially inclusive economy."

The problem with a cashless society is that the state can terminate your electronic financial lifeline if anything were to happen within the country, for example any form of protests, economic downturns, a war or if a financial institution such as MasterCard were to go bankrupt. There are many other reasons that the state or its' corporate backers can decide to turn off the RFID chip. When you have a powerful financial institution issuing payments electronically with a government that is supported and controlled by Washington, unlimited control of the populace becomes inevitable. 70% of Nigeria's population is living below the poverty line as of 2010. How can MasterCard and the Nigerian government benefit millions of Nigerians who are living in abject poverty? Is MasterCard going to offer low interest rates on its credit cards in a country that has a more than 70% of the population in poverty with many living with less than a dollar a day?

Another aspect about the National Identity Smart card is that it can be used for surveillance of individuals under the state. With Nigeria facing a civil war between Islamists insurgents and minority ethnic groups from the oil rich Niger Delta, the National Identity Smart cards can be used to identify its enemies. The MasterCard press release stated how it identifies the individual cardholder:

The new National Identity Smart Card will incorporate the unique National Identification Numbers (NIN) of duly registered persons in the country. The enrolment process involves the recording of an individual's demographic data and biometric data (capture of 10 fingerprints, facial picture and digital signature) that are used to authenticate the cardholder and eliminate fraud and embezzlement. The resultant National Identity Database will provide the platform for several other value propositions of the NIMC including identity authentication and verification.

According to MasterCard, the purpose of the Nigerian Identity Card Program is for the economic prosperity of Nigerian people. Is it a facade? Is the Nigerian government on the verge of controlling its population financially with Washington's support? With MasterCard and Wall Street involved, Washington will support the Nigerian government in order for it to succeed with the plan:

The announcement was witnessed by Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister for the Economy in Nigeria, who stressed the importance of the National Identity Smart Card Scheme in moving Nigeria to an electronic platform. This program is good practice for us to bring all the citizens on a common platform for interacting with the various government agencies and for transacting electronically. We will implement this initiative in a collaborative manner between the public and private sectors, to achieve its full potential of inclusive citizenship and more effective governance,"

The Nigerian based independent newspaper The Guardian with reporter Marcel Mbamalu along with the Africa Press Organisation (APO) interviewed the Division President of Sub Sahara Africa for MasterCard, Daniel Monehin in an article called 'Identity Card: Biometric Data of Nigerians Remain with FG, Not MasterCard, Says Monehin':

Marcel Mbamalu: You talk of something close to general application of the card; yet, the finance Minister was quoted as saying that it will begin with government pensions before...

Daniel Monehin: That was in response to the question that was asked the honourable Minister as to what would be the criteria for selecting the pilot citizens. She responded that she's really excited at the auspicious time that this is going on because there's a lot of work that is being done centrally for central treasury and for payment within the federal government, and she would like to see pensioners being part of this first group of the pilot, so that the federal government can begin to load their payment automatically, take out the physical nature of it so that the old tale of people dying on the line while trying to wait on the line to collect their pension would be a thing of the past.

The whole thing that is happening is that this is a platform not just for receiving government pension but for receiving government pensions, benefits, bursary payments, NGO's that are funding private segments of the society can be funded directly; salaries can be paid directly. Anybody with that card has a whole new world opened to him or her. So, from government-to-people payments, from people-to-people payments, ATM all of those platforms or avenues are open. This is not a card that is

restricted, its not even restricted to Nigeria; it is loaded.

You can go out of Nigeria to Ghana, Gambia, USA, China and use it. It is accepted in 210 countries and territories, and over 35 million acceptance locations around the world.

So, in terms of potential, this is a massive platform and what the minister just alluded to is just one segment of its use, not all. The issuance is starting within the next three months. The National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) is going to do an event locally to flag it off.

Nigeria's decision to have a cashless society under corporate control in the near future is a disturbing trend for humanity. Let's hope that the Nigerian people resist MasterCard and the government and find an alternative economic solution that will allow them to live in free society they deserve.

ECONOMICS AND ARMCHAIR PSYCHOLOGY

John Kozy; Global Research

Url of this article: <http://www.globalresearch.ca/economics-and-armchair-psychology/5335230>

"Economics is haunted by more fallacies than any other study known to man."

— Henry Hazlitt

Over millennia, numerous enterprises have sought the status of science. Few have succeeded because they have failed to discover anything that stood up to scrutiny as knowledge. No body of beliefs, no matter how widely accepted or how extensive in scope, can ever be scientific.

In the Ptolemaic system of astronomy, the epicycle is a geometric model of the solar system and planetary motion. It was first proposed by Apollonius of Perga at the end of the 3rd century BCE and its development continued until Kepler came up with a better model in the 17th century, and the geocentric model of the solar system was replaced by Copernican heliocentrism. In spite of some very good approximations to the problems of planetary motion, the system of epicycles could never get anything right.

Phrenology was originated by Franz Joseph Gall [right] in the late 1700s. After examining the heads of a number of young pickpockets, Gall found that many of them had bumps on their skulls just above their ears and suggested that the bumps, indentations, and shape of the skull could be linked to different aspects of a person's personality, character, and abilities. Gall measured the skulls of people in prisons, hospitals, and asylums and developed a system of 27 different "faculties" that he believed could be directly diagnosed by assessing specific parts of the head, and he chose to ignore any contradictory evidence. After Gall's death in 1828, several of his followers continued to develop phrenology. Despite some brief popularity, it was eventually viewed as a pseudoscience much like astrology, numerology, and palmistry. All of these, too, could never get anything right.

Sigmund Freud was an Austrian neurologist who is known as the father of psychoanalysis which is a clinical method for treating psychopathology by having a patient talk to a psychoanalyst. Results on the mental health of patients were scanty at best. Some contend that Freud set back the study of psychology and psychiatry "by something like fifty years or more", and that "Freud's method is not capable of yielding objective data about mental processes". Others consider psychoanalysis to be perhaps the most complex and successful pseudoscience in history. Karl Popper, who argued that all proper scientific theories must be potentially falsifiable, claimed that no experiment could ever disprove Freud's psychoanalytic theories and thus were totally unscientific. Now Freud's work has little relevance in psychiatry. It could never cure anyone. But it was not Freud who created a pseudoscience, it was the people who uncritically adopted his views.

Today the great fraudulent science is economics, but I don't intend to beat that carcass. It has been shown not to be a science by numerous astute people. Even some renowned economists have been convinced of it. Paul Samuelson has said, "Economics has never been a science—and it is even less now than a few years ago." Even Nassau William Senior knew it: "The confounding Political Economy with the Sciences and Arts to which it is subservient, has been one of the principal obstacles to its improvement."

Yet many working economists continue to claim that it is or at least that it is more of a science than its siblings in the social enterprises of study. Perhaps these people feel that their work lacks dignity if it is not scientific, being unable to say exactly what it is if it is not science. So let's look at some things that

economists regularly do to see if what they are doing can be defined.

Jared Bernstein, with a Ph.D. in Social Welfare from Columbia University, is not technically an economist but he has held many positions that an economist would usually hold. He was chief economist and economic adviser to Vice President Joe Biden and a member of President Obama's economic team. Prior to joining the Obama administration, he was a senior economist and the director of the Living Standards Program at the Economic Policy Institute. Between 1995 and 1996, he held the post of deputy chief economist at the U.S. Department of Labor. His pieces are frequently posted on Economist's View where I found a piece containing the following section:

“the deeper, and more interesting, reason one worries about too-low inflation right now comes out of the work of Akerlof et al back in the mid-1990s. It has to do with sticky wages, something Keynes recognized as contributing to intractably high UK unemployment back in the early 1920s. Back in the mid-90s, we also faced a period when price growth was slowing, and inflation hawks called for the Fed to set zero as their inflation target. Alan Greenspan apparently took it seriously, and internally debated the idea.”

That inspired Akerlof et al to think about what might happen in a zero inflation economy, and what they found was that it would engender significant costs in terms of unemployment and growth.

The reason that zero inflation creates such large costs to the economy is that firms are reluctant to cut wages. In both good times and bad, some firms and industries do better than others. Wages need to adjust to accommodate these differences in economic fortunes. In times of moderate inflation and productivity growth, relative wages can easily adjust. The unlucky firms can raise the [nominal] wages they pay by less than the average, while the lucky firms can give above-average increases. However, if productivity growth is low (as it has been since the early 1970s in the United States) and there is no inflation, firms that need to cut their relative wages can do so only by cutting the money [i.e., nominal] wages of their employees. Because they do not want to do this, they keep relative wages too high and employment too low.

As long as there's a little inflation in the system, “less fortunate” firms can give nominal wage increases below the rate of inflation, allowing them to adjust to harder times. With very low inflation, they don't have the room to pull that off.

When I read this, I recognized that the fuzzy writing, which is always a symptom of bad thinking, lead to entirely the wrong conclusions. First we see that “firms are reluctant to cut wages.” Then we see that firms cut wages by giving “nominal wage increases below the rate of inflation” which, apparently, firms are not at all “reluctant” to do. The conclusion that aches to be drawn is that inflation allows firms to covertly reduce the wages of their employees, and it does that regardless of the firms' financial conditions, since nothing prohibits any firm from giving raises below the rate of inflation. Bernstein wants the rate of inflation to be higher so employers can engage in this sneaky way of reducing the wages of their employees. Inflation is good for employers but bad for employees.

Bernstein is involved in equation adjusting, a prevalent practice among economists. An equation exists; economists call it a model. The equation, they believe, describes reality albeit in a simplistic way. When economic data is plugged into the equation, if both sides are unequal, one side, or sometimes both sides, must be adjusted to make both sides equal. I don't know what specific equation Bernstein has in mind, but I know that one side describes, in mathematical terms, the economic conditions firms face, and the other side describes the costs of production. So when the side that describes the economic conditions the firms face declines, something on the other side must be reduced.

For Bernstein, it's wages. But what has the equation to do with reality? Economists believe that their equations describe reality accurately, but no model ever comes accompanied by a proof that it does. As Keynes pointed out, “Too large a proportion of recent ‘mathematical’ economics are mere concoctions, as imprecise as the initial assumptions they rest on, which allow the author to lose sight of the complexities and interdependencies of the real world in a maze of pretentious and unhelpful symbols.” As others have pointed out, the map is not the territory.

When the model that Bernstein has in mind is combined with what economists call the Paradox of Thrift (the claim that saving benefits consumers but damages the economy and spending, which benefits the economy, damages consumers), it follows that Capitalism can never be made to function in a way that benefits all people.

Economic models are based on mere beliefs, many of which can never be known to be true. Consider the following claims for instance:

“Nobody ever saw a dog make a fair and deliberate exchange of one bone for another with another dog. Nobody ever saw one animal by its gestures and natural cries signify to another, this is mine, that yours; I

am willing to give this for that.” Adam Smith

“Every individual is continually exerting himself to find out the most advantageous employment for whatever capital he can command.” Adam Smith

“That every person is desirous to obtain, with as little sacrifice as possible, as much as possible of the articles of wealth.” Nassau William Senior

“Everyone wants to live at the expense of the state.” Frederic Bastiat

“People spend more when they feel wealthier, even if they’re not.: Economists call this the “wealth effect,” “the consumption of the rich is no more than a scaled-up version of the consumption of the poor”

And then there’s this from Dani Rodrik: “Mainstream economists are often seen as ideologues of the market economy. I would concede that most of my economist colleagues tend to view markets as inherently desirable and government intervention as inherently unwelcome. But in reality what we teach our students in the classroom – the advanced students if not the undergraduates –and what we talk about in the seminar room are typically much more about the myriad ways in which markets fail.”

How could anyone know any of these things? Did Adam Smith spend a lot of time observing the behaviour of dogs? And even if he did, what would that have taught him about trade? In what sense do public school teachers or nurses continually exert themselves to find out the most advantageous employment for whatever capital s/he can command? How many readers of this piece want to live at the expense of the state? And how many economics teachers have had their teaching observed by Prof. Rodrik? No evidence exists for the truth of any of these examples.

So why do economists make claims like these? Is it because these claims describe how they themselves would behave if given the opportunity? Was Bastiat spectacularly lazy? Was Smith really a greedy man? If those who make such claims wouldn’t have acted in the ways they described, wouldn’t they then know that the claims were false?

These all are unprovable claims about human (or canine) nature. Economics as we know it is nothing but claims about how human beings will act in given circumstances. As such, it is nothing but armchair psychology, and the psychology is based on the psychological attributes of the economists making the claims. Greedy people believe that all people are. Dishonest people believe that all people are. Corrupt people believe that all people are. Evil people believe that all people are. But, you know, they’re wrong! Paul Bloom, a professor of psychology at Yale, says.

“When it comes to accepting or changing the status quo . . . [people] tended to “defer to experts or the community.” Economists assume that “everything is subject to market pricing unless proven otherwise. . . . The problem is not that economists are unreasonable people, it’s that they’re evil people. . . . They work in a different moral universe.”

Martin Feldstein tells us how its all supposed to work:

“When the Fed buys long-term government bonds and mortgage-backed securities, private investors are no longer able to buy those long-term assets. Investors who want long-term securities therefore have to buy equities [stocks]. That drives up the price of equities, leading to more consumer spending [wealth effect].”

But it doesn’t work, does it?

Economists have been carrying coal to Newcastle since Adam Smith provided English merchants with a rationalization of what they had always wanted to do—treat their fellow human beings as beasts of burden. Economists continue to perform the same function.

“Capitalism is the astounding belief that the most wickedest of men will do the most wickedest of things for the greatest good of everyone.”—John Maynard Keynes

Economics is not about economy; it is a way or organizing society. Our economists have resuscitated an old social order. We live in a neofeudal world where the elite rentier group lives in manor mansions and everyone else is a serf.

John Kozy is a retired professor of philosophy and logic who writes on social, political, and economic issues. After serving in the U.S. Army during the Korean War, he spent 20 years as a university professor and another 20 years working as a writer. He has published a textbook in formal logic commercially, in academic journals and a small number of commercial magazines, and has written a number of guest editorials for newspapers. His on-line pieces can be found on <http://www.jkozy.com/> and he can be emailed from that site’s homepage.

IT CAN HAPPEN HERE: THE CONFISCATION SCHEME PLANNED FOR US AND UK DEPOSITORS

Ellen Brown; via Dave Barnby

Confiscating the customer deposits in Cyprus banks, it seems, was not a one-off, desperate idea of a few Eurozone “troika” officials scrambling to salvage their balance sheets. A joint paper by the US Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation and the Bank of England dated December 10, 2012, shows that these plans have been long in the making; that they originated with the G20 Financial Stability Board in Basel, Switzerland; and that the result will be to deliver clear title to the banks of depositor funds.

New Zealand has a similar directive, discussed in my last article here, indicating that this isn’t just an emergency measure for troubled Eurozone countries. New Zealand’s Voxy reported on March 19th:

The National Government [is] pushing a Cyprus-style solution to bank failure in New Zealand which will see small depositors lose some of their savings to fund big bank bailouts . . .

Open Bank Resolution (OBR) is Finance Minister Bill English’s favoured option dealing with a major bank failure. If a bank fails under OBR, all depositors will have their savings reduced overnight to fund the bank’s bail out.

Can They Do That?

Although few depositors realize it, legally the bank owns the depositor’s funds as soon as they are put in the bank. Our money becomes the bank’s, and we become unsecured creditors holding IOUs or promises to pay. But until now the bank has been obligated to pay the money back on demand in the form of cash. Under the FDIC-BOE plan, our IOUs will be converted into “bank equity.” The bank will get the money and we will get stock in the bank. With any luck we may be able to sell the stock to someone else, but when and at what price? Most people keep a deposit account so they can have ready cash to pay the bills.

The 15-page FDIC-BOE document is called “Resolving Globally Active, Systemically Important, Financial Institutions.” It begins by explaining that the 2008 banking crisis has made it clear that some other way besides taxpayer bailouts is needed to maintain “financial stability.” Evidently anticipating that the next financial collapse will be on a grander scale than either the taxpayers or Congress is willing to underwrite, the authors state:

An efficient path for returning the sound operations of the G-SIFI to the private sector would be provided by exchanging or converting a sufficient amount of the unsecured debt from the original creditors of the failed company [meaning the depositors] into equity [or stock]. In the U.S., the new equity would become capital in one or more newly formed operating entities. In the U.K., the same approach could be used, or the equity could be used to recapitalize the failing financial company itself—thus, the highest layer of surviving bailed-in creditors would become the owners of the resolved firm. In either country, the new equity holders would take on the corresponding risk of being shareholders in a financial institution.

No exception is indicated for “insured deposits” in the U.S., meaning those under \$250,000, the deposits we thought were protected by FDIC insurance. This can hardly be an oversight, since it is the FDIC that is issuing the directive. The FDIC is an insurance company funded by premiums paid by private banks. The directive is called a “resolution process,” defined elsewhere as a plan that “would be triggered in the event of the failure of an insurer . . .” The only mention of “insured deposits” is in connection with existing UK legislation, which the FDIC-BOE directive goes on to say is inadequate, implying that it needs to be modified or overridden.

An Imminent Risk

If our IOUs are converted to bank stock, they will no longer be subject to insurance protection but will be “at risk” and vulnerable to being wiped out, just as the Lehman Brothers shareholders were in 2008. That this dire scenario could actually materialize was underscored by Yves Smith in a March 19th post titled

When You Weren't Looking, Democrat Bank Stooges Launch Bills to Permit Bailouts, Deregulate Derivatives. She writes:

In the US, depositors have actually been put in a worse position than Cyprus deposit-holders, at least if they are at the big banks that play in the derivatives casino. The regulators have turned a blind eye as banks use their depositaries to fund derivatives exposures. And as bad as that is, the depositors, unlike their Cypriot confreres, aren't even senior creditors. Remember Lehman? When the investment bank failed, unsecured creditors (and remember, depositors are unsecured creditors) got eight cents on the dollar. One big reason was that derivatives counterparties require collateral for any exposures, meaning they are secured creditors. The 2005 bankruptcy reforms made derivatives counterparties senior to unsecured lenders.

One might wonder why the posting of collateral by a derivative counterparty, at some percentage of full exposure, makes the creditor "secured," while the depositor who puts up 100 cents on the dollar is "unsecured." But moving on – Smith writes:

Lehman had only two itty bitty banking subsidiaries, and to my knowledge, was not gathering retail deposits. But as readers may recall, Bank of America moved most of its derivatives from its Merrill Lynch operation [to] its depositary in late 2011.

Its "depository" is the arm of the bank that takes deposits; and at B of A, that means lots and lots of deposits. The deposits are now subject to being wiped out by a major derivatives loss. How bad could that be? Smith quotes Bloomberg:

. . . Bank of America's holding company . . . held almost \$75 trillion of derivatives at the end of June That compares with JPMorgan's deposit-taking entity, JPMorgan Chase Bank NA, which contained 99 percent of the New York-based firm's \$79 trillion of notional derivatives, the OCC data show.

\$75 trillion and \$79 trillion in derivatives! These two mega-banks alone hold more in notional derivatives each than the entire global GDP (at \$70 trillion). The "notional value" of derivatives is not the same as cash at risk, but according to a cross-post on Smith's site: By at least one estimate, in 2010 there was a total of \$12 trillion in cash tied up (at risk) in derivatives

\$12 trillion is close to the US GDP. Smith goes on:

. . . Remember the effect of the 2005 bankruptcy law revisions: derivatives counterparties are first in line, they get to grab assets first and leave everyone else to scramble for crumbs. . . . Lehman failed over a weekend after JP Morgan grabbed collateral.

But it's even worse than that. During the savings & loan crisis, the FDIC did not have enough in deposit insurance receipts to pay for the Resolution Trust Corporation wind-down vehicle. It had to get more funding from Congress. This move paves the way for another TARP-style shakedown of taxpayers, this time to save depositors.

Perhaps, but Congress has already been burned and is liable to balk a second time. Section 716 of the Dodd-Frank Act specifically prohibits public support for speculative derivatives activities. And in the Eurozone, while the European Stability Mechanism committed Eurozone countries to bail out failed banks, they are apparently having second thoughts there as well. On March 25th, Dutch Finance Minister Jeroen Dijsselbloem, who played a leading role in imposing the deposit confiscation plan on Cyprus, told reporters that it would be the template for any future bank bailouts, and that "the aim is for the ESM never to have to be used."

That explains the need for the FDIC-BOE resolution. If the anticipated enabling legislation is passed, the FDIC will no longer need to protect depositor funds; it can just confiscate them.

Worse Than a Tax

An FDIC confiscation of deposits to recapitalize the banks is far different from a simple tax on taxpayers to pay government expenses. The government's debt is at least arguably the people's debt, since the government is there to provide services for the people. But when the banks get into trouble with their derivative schemes, they are not serving depositors, who are not getting a cut of the profits. Taking depositor funds is simply theft.

What should be done is to raise FDIC insurance premiums and make the banks pay to keep their depositors whole, but premiums are already high; and the FDIC, like other government regulatory agencies,

is subject to regulatory capture. Deposit insurance has failed, and so has the private banking system that has depended on it for the trust that makes banking work.

The Cyprus haircut on depositors was called a “wealth tax” and was written off by commentators as “deserved,” because much of the money in Cypriot accounts belongs to foreign oligarchs, tax dodgers and money launderers. But if that template is applied in the US, it will be a tax on the poor and middle class. Wealthy Americans don’t keep most of their money in bank accounts. They keep it in the stock market, in real estate, in over-the-counter derivatives, in gold and silver, and so forth.

Are you safe, then, if your money is in gold and silver? Apparently not – if it’s stored in a safety deposit box in the bank. Homeland Security has reportedly told banks that it has authority to seize the contents of safety deposit boxes without a warrant when it’s a matter of “national security,” which a major bank crisis no doubt will be.

The Swedish Alternative: Nationalize the Banks

Another alternative was considered but rejected by President Obama in 2009: nationalize mega-banks that fail. In a February 2009 article titled “Are Uninsured Bank Depositors in Danger?“, Felix Salmon discussed a newsletter by Asia-based investment strategist Christopher Wood, in which Wood wrote:

It is . . . amazing that Obama does not understand the political appeal of the nationalization option. . . . [D]espite this latest setback nationalization of the banks is coming sooner or later because the realities of the situation will demand it. The result will be shareholders wiped out and bondholders forced to take debt-for-equity swaps, if not hopefully depositors.

On whether depositors could indeed be forced to become equity holders, Salmon commented:

It’s worth remembering that depositors are unsecured creditors of any bank; usually, indeed, they’re by far the largest class of unsecured creditors.

President Obama acknowledged that bank nationalization had worked in Sweden, and that the course pursued by the US Fed had not worked in Japan, which wound up instead in a “lost decade.” But Obama opted for the Japanese approach because, according to Ed Harrison, “Americans will not tolerate nationalization.”

But that was four years ago. When Americans realize that the alternative is to have their ready cash transformed into “bank stock” of questionable marketability, moving failed mega-banks into the public sector may start to have more appeal.

Ellen Brown is an attorney, chairman of the Public Banking Institute, and the author of eleven books, including Web of Debt: The Shocking Truth About Our Money System and How We Can Break Free. Her websites are webofdebt.com and ellenbrown.com

WORLD BANK INSIDER BLOWS WHISTLE ON CORRUPTION, FEDERAL RESERVE

Alex Newman; via John Newell

<http://www.thenewamerican.com/economy/economics/item/15473-world-bank-insider-bloWS-whistle-on-corruption-federal-reserve>

A former insider at the World Bank, ex-Senior Counsel Karen Hudes, says the global financial system is dominated by a small group of corrupt, power-hungry figures centered around the privately owned U.S. Federal Reserve. The network has seized control of the media to cover up its crimes, too, she explained. In an interview with *The New American*, Hudes said that when she tried to blow the whistle on multiple problems at the World Bank, she was fired for her efforts. Now, along with a network of fellow whistleblowers, Hudes is determined to expose and end the corruption. And she is confident of success.

Citing an explosive 2011 Swiss study

<<http://www.plosone.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pone.0025995#s3>> published in the *PLOS ONE* journal on the “network of global corporate control,” Hudes pointed out that a small group of entities — mostly financial institutions and especially central banks — exert a massive amount of influence over the international economy from behind the scenes. “What is really going on is that the world’s resources are being dominated by this group,” she explained, adding that the “corrupt power grabbers” have managed to dominate the media as well. “They’re being allowed to do it.”

According to the peer-reviewed paper, which presented the first global investigation of ownership architecture in the international economy, transnational corporations form a “giant bow-tie structure.” A large portion of control, meanwhile, “flows to a small tightly-knit core of financial institutions.” The researchers described the core as an “economic ‘super-entity’” that raises important issues for policymakers and researchers. Of course, the implications are enormous for citizens as well.

Hudes, an attorney who spent some two decades working in the World Bank’s legal department, has observed the machinations of the network up close. “I realized we were now dealing with something known as state capture, which is where the institutions of government are co-opted by the group that’s corrupt,” she told *The New American* in a phone interview. “The pillars of the U.S. government — some of them — are dysfunctional because of state capture; this is a big story, this is a big cover up.”

At the heart of the network, Hudes said, are 147 financial institutions and central banks — especially the Federal Reserve, which was created by Congress but is owned by essentially a cartel of private banks <<http://www.thenewamerican.com/economy/markets/item/4581-fed-manipulations-in-the-crosshairs>> “This is a story about how the international financial system was secretly gamed, mostly by central banks — they’re the ones we are talking about,” she explained. “The central bankers have been gaming the system. I would say that this is a power grab.”

The Fed in particular is at the very center of the network and the coverup, Hudes continued, citing a policy and oversight body that includes top government and Fed officials. Central bankers have also been manipulating gold prices <<http://www.thenewamerican.com/economy/markets/item/15116-after-gold-crash-experts-point-to-central-bank-manipulation>> she added, echoing widespread concerns that *The New American* has documented extensively <<http://www.thenewamerican.com/economy/markets/item/4581-fed-manipulations-in-the-crosshairs>> Indeed, even the inaccurate World Bank financial statements that Hudes has been trying to expose are linked to the U.S. central bank, she said.

“The group that we’re talking about from the Zurich study — that’s the Federal Reserve; it has some other pieces to it, but that’s the Federal Reserve,” Hudes explained. “So the Federal Reserve secretly dominated the world economy using secret, interlocking corporate directorates, and terrorizing anybody who managed to figure out that they were having any kind of role, and putting people in very important positions so that they could get a free pass.”

The shadowy but immensely powerful Bank for International Settlements <<http://www.thenewamerican.com/economy/economics/item/4500-basel-iii-and-sound-banking>> serves as “the club of these private central bankers,” Hudes continued. “Now, are people going to want interest on their country’s debts to continue to be paid to that group <<http://www.thenewamerican.com/economy/markets/item/4581-fed-manipulations-in-the-crosshairs>> when they find out the secret tricks that that group has been doing? Don’t forget how they’ve enriched themselves extraordinarily and how they’ve taken taxpayer money for the bailout.”

As far as intervening in the gold price, Hudes said it was an effort by the powerful network and its central banks to “hold onto its paper currency” — a suspicion shared by many analysts and even senior government officials <<http://www.thenewamerican.com/economy/markets/item/15116-after-gold-crash-experts-point-to-central-bank-manipulation>>.

The World Bank whistleblower also said that contrary to official claims, she did not believe there was any gold being held in Fort Knox. Even congressmen and foreign governments have tried to find out if the precious metals were still there <<http://www.thenewamericanmedia.com/is-gold-in-fort-knox-real-ron-paul-wants-to-know/>> , but they met with little success. Hudes, however, believes the scam will eventually come undone.

“This is like crooks trying to figure out where they can go hide. It’s a mafia,” she said. “These culprits that have grabbed all this economic power have succeeded in infiltrating both sides of the issue, so you will find people who are supposedly trying to fight corruption who are just there to spread disinformation and as a placeholder to trip up anybody who manages to get their act together... Those thugs think that if they can keep the world ignorant, they can bleed it longer.”

Of course, the major corruption at the highest levels of government and business is not a new phenomenon. Georgetown University historian and Professor Carroll Quigley <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carroll_Quigley>, who served as President Bill Clinton's mentor, for example, wrote about the scheme in his 1966 book *Tragedy And Hope: A History Of The World In Our Time <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tragedy_And_Hope>. The heavyweight academic, who was allowed to review documents belonging to the top echelons of the global establishment, even explained how the corrupt system would work — remarkably similar to what Hudes describes.

"The powers of financial capitalism had a far-reaching aim, nothing less than to create a world system of financial control in private hands able to dominate the political system of each country and the economy of the world as a whole," wrote Prof. Quigley, who agreed with the goals but not the secrecy. "This system was to be controlled in a feudalist fashion by the central banks of the world acting in concert by secret agreements arrived at in frequent private meetings and conferences. The apex of the system was to be the Bank for International Settlements in Basel, Switzerland, a private bank owned and controlled by the world's central banks which were themselves private corporations."

But it is not going to happen, Hudes said — at least not if she has something to do with it. While the media are dominated by the “power grabber” network, Hudes has been working with foreign governments, reporters, U.S. officials, state governments, and a broad coalition of fellow whistleblowers to blow the entire scam wide open. There has been quite a bit of interest, too, particularly among foreign governments and state officials in the United States.

Citing the wisdom of America's Founding Fathers in creating a federal system of government with multiple layers of checks and balances, Hudes said she was confident that the network would eventually be exposed and subjected to the rule of law, stopping the secret corruption. If and when that happens — even if it may be disorderly — Hudes says precious metals will once again play a role in imposing discipline on the monetary system <<http://www.thenewamerican.com/economy/economics/item/15042-arizona-legislature-approves-gold-and-silver-as-money>>. The rule of law would also be restored, she said, and the public will demand a proper press to stay informed.

"We're going to have a cleaned-up financial system, that's where it is going, but in the meantime, people who didn't know how the system was gamed are going to find out," she said. "We're going to have a different kind of international financial system.... It'll be a new kind of world where people know what's going on — no more backroom deals; that's not going to keep happening. We're going to have a different kind of media if people don't want to be dominated and controlled, which I don't think they do."

While Hudes sounded upbeat, she recognizes that the world is facing serious danger right now — there are even plans in place to impose martial law in the United States, she said. The next steps will be critical for humanity. As such, Hudes argues, it is crucial that the people of the world find out about the lawlessness, corruption, and thievery that are going on at the highest levels — and put a stop to it once and for all. The consequences of inaction would be disastrous.

Alex Newman, a foreign correspondent for The New American is currently based in Europe. He can be reached atanewman@thenewamerican.com.

POSITIVE MONEY BULLETIN EXTRACTS

Positive Money Team

In the media

"How about something truly radical – the complete dismemberment of the banking system as we know it and its replacement with what is known as 100pc reserve banking?" - this was a subheading of a recent article in the Telegraph. Just two years ago, there was almost no media coverage of the creation of money by banks. There is so much more media attention today! Recently, also the Guardian featured a few short videos with Ben Dyson and Prof Richard Werner talking openly about the way how money is created and how it can be changed, and Ben was featured in a recent Guardian article about people campaigning to fix the banking system. You can contribute to the raising media coverage too - please read below.

It's great to see the media openly writing about 'where money comes from' more and more today. And it's great they are finally discovering reform proposals which aim to change the way how money is created.

Telegraph: In his article entitled "The banking revolution that would wipe out Britain's debts", Jeremy Warner writes about 100% reserve banking - a variation of monetary reform proposal similar to Positive Money proposals. He explains how new money is created and what limits the process of money creation: The only limits on this process of money creation are the banker's instinctive fear of making a bad loan..."

Guardian: Four short videos from the Transforming Finance conference were published in the Guardian:

What would a democratic financial system look like?

Banking for the real economy (2 videos)

Guardian: Transforming finance – how do we fund the green economy?

Making banks and financial firms better: Five people on the frontline

Guardian has asked five people who are all trying to make the financial system fairer and easier for us all to understand about their efforts. One of them was Ben Dyson, founder of Positive Money.

Money - The unauthorized biography

"Crucially, it is not just governments that create money – others can, too. ...more significant by far is the money created by private banks."

Transforming Finance conference

The Transforming Finance conference which took place on 10th May in London, brought together leading academics, finance professionals and campaigners to discuss how to make finance work in the long term interests of people and planet. Ben Dyson was invited to present fresh thinking on debt and recovery.

Videos of each of the speaker presentations are available at the Transforming Finance website. Here you can read an overview of the issues and topics discussed.

Local Newspapers - please help to raise awareness

There is much more media attention to the issue of money creation by the banks in the media today than it was just two years ago. But still it's not that easy to get a coverage about this issue in the mainstream media. The chances in local media, however, are much higher. One important fact is also that MPs monitor local newspapers on a regular basis. So let's get the message out there that we need to reform of the monetary system in order to be able to deal with the current recession, the debt burden etc. Please write to your local newspapers and get this issue talked about in the local press. Feel free to use the texts from our website and to direct readers to our website when possible too.

Upcoming Events

Chicago, USA, 19-22 Sept - 9th Annual AMI Monetary Reform Conference The speakers are the main people on the front lines of monetary reform around the world. Here is the superstar line-up: Prof Joseph Huber, Dr. Michael Kumhof of the IMF, Prof. Kaoru Yamaguchi, Prof. Richard Werner, Prof. Nic Tideman, Prof. Steve Keen and others Register until 21st June to get Early bird tickets

More from the Blog

Argentinean Debt Crisis 2000-2003

The way money is created is at the root of the environmental and economic crisis

Common concerns about 'QE for jobs'

George Osborne's Help to Buy scheme 'a moronic policy'

Real Money instead of Empty Promises

Author of The Debt Generation on Modernising Money

How the Canadian government used to borrow from its own central bank

Guardian: Britain's banking system is not a national asset. It's a curse

Would Positive Money system be inflationary?

Plea for a different approach to yet more debt
Two main problems with deposit insurance
Material Debt
How failed banks on life support can grant humungous bonuses
Declaring all digital money to be legal tender

Could you create jobs with £375 billion to spend?

Since the crisis the Bank of England has created £375 billion of new money in an attempt to get the economy going again. But instead of putting it into the real economy, where it could support businesses, shops and real jobs, they've just pumped it into the financial markets. That's why the stock market is near its highest ever level, even though there are around 2.5 million people who can't find jobs at all, and a further 3 million people who can't get enough hours of employment. [1] Meanwhile over 500,000 people have become dependent on food banks to live. [2]

This is a crazy approach to fixing a broken economy. If just a fraction of that £375 billion had been spent into the real economy by the government, as new debt-free money, it would have created jobs, allowed us to reduce our debts, and get the economy going again. We have tried to explain this to the government [3], and even the former chairman of the Financial Services Authority, Lord Adair Turner has said that "If [President] Herbert Hoover had known in 1931 that [the policy of creating money and spending it into the economy through government budgets] was possible, the US Great Depression would have been less severe." [4]

We want to campaign for a better approach

Instead of seeing more money flooding the financial markets, we want to see the power to create money be used for something useful. There's so much that needs to be done, including:

Rebuilding the hundreds of school buildings that are not fit for purpose (the government has just borrowed £700million from private banks – who will create the money used to pay for the rebuilding – instead of using their own power to create money).

Switching the country over to clean and renewable energy so that we don't become dependent on countries like Qatar for energy imports in the future

Getting money directly to ordinary people by creating jobs so that they can start to pay down some of their debts

It's an idea that's already been mentioned by leading economic commentators in all the mainstream papers. And now even the Treasury is interested – in their latest review of monetary policy [5], they included a section on Adair Turner's suggestions. So now is the best time for this campaign.

Our campaign (codename "QE for jobs") would ask for £50 billion to be created by the Bank of England and spent by government with the aim of increasing employment and doing some of the long-term things that are essential for this country.

Can you help us kickstart the campaign?

We've speaking to potential partners and there's a lot of interest in this idea, but we need to have the funds to get the ball rolling.

Currently we have 378 people who donate every month, and this keeps the campaign going. If we can increase that to 430, we'll be able to focus on this huge opportunity to get a change in the monetary system and have money created in the public interest for the first time in decades.

If you can, please help by donating monthly, either by direct debit or paypal: [Donate now](#)

Here's the plan: Over the next 2 years we're aiming to:

get the idea of 'QE for jobs' into the mainstream public debate

get the main political parties to adopt it into their 2015 manifesto

build a large movement of individuals and groups in support of the campaign

get business leaders to write an open letter to George Osborne asking him to carry it out

This doesn't mean we are changing direction. Our main objective will always be to fully change the way that money is created so that banks can no longer create money and cause the kind of crisis that we're facing today.[6]

This is a campaign that we think will lead the way to getting the money creation more mainstream. It is a step in the right direction and would mean our reforms are more likely to be implemented. It could also raise our profile and broaden our network along the way.

Why donate to Positive Money?

Compared to most not-for-profits and charities, we're tiny and don't have any huge funders to

support our work. However, we are tackling one of the root causes of many problems. We depend on the monthly donations of around 350 of the 11,500 people receiving this email, to provide half of all our funding, plus a number of grants from smaller charitable trusts. Donate now

Any donations made in June will be DOUBLED...

The James Gibb Stuart Trust, who helped Positive Money to get off the ground, are currently matching any donations set up this month, for the next 12 months. That means if you start donating £10 a month, it'll be matched with an additional £120 over the next year.

Plus if you donate £10 or more per month – we will send you a free copy of the book Modernising Money. If we can raise an extra £1200 a month in donations, this will be doubled by the James Gibb Stuart Trust and we'll be able to cover a significant amount of our costs for a QE campaign and at least keep Positive Money going until the 2015 election.

[1] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-20509189>

[2] <http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/foodfuelfinance/walkingthebreadline/report>

[3] <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmtreasy/writev/qe/m08.htm>

[4] <http://www.fsa.gov.uk/static/pubs/speeches/0206-at.pdf>

[5] http://cdn.hm-treasury.gov.uk/ukecon_mon_policy_framework.pdf

[6] <http://www.positivemoney.org/about/statement-of-purpose/>

Good news! 63 of you have donated so far this week to help us kickstart the new campaign 'QE for jobs'. You've helped us to increase our monthly donations by £307 and you've sent £490 in one-off donations so far. This means that we have already raised a substantial amount needed. 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 or email mira@positivemoney.org if you would like to increase your donation.

You may be interested to read our new blog post where we address some concerns related to the 'QE for jobs' idea.

A Big Thank You to everyone who has helped in any way with the Positive Money campaign to date. If the 'QE for jobs' campaign is successful, it will be the first realistic step towards fixing the money system. Once there is a precedent for money created by a public body, responsibly and under control, and spent into the economy debt-free, it will become easier to win the argument that banks should be prevented from creating money as debt.

RUNNYMEDE GAZETTE EDITED BY;- FRANK TAYLOR, 2 CHURCH VIEW, ST GILES TERRACE, CHETTON, BRIDGNORTH, SHROPSHIRE, WV16 6UG; Tel; (01746) 789326
frankinshropshire@hotmail.co.uk