



Civilization in Crisis Revisited

Discussion Paper No. 14, "Civilization in Crisis" (Winter 2007-08), raised questions in the minds of at least two readers whose responses deserve airing.

The hypothesis of author Richard Moore in his book *Escaping the Matrix*, from which the excerpt in Discussion Paper No. 14 was taken, is that our civilization is in a crisis of unsustainability. The "elites" (the ruling class of politicians and their rich friends in large corporations who consider themselves above the laws that apply to the common man—Conrad Black is a good example) are well aware of this crisis, and "civilization's actual response is being decided by a clique of behind-the-scenes manipulators who have little regard for anyone's welfare but their own." A good part of that response is a deliberate if indirect campaign of genocide against the poor, primarily in African countries, but also our own.

The first reaction of many, perhaps most, readers is incredulity. We do not want to believe that our supposedly democratic governments in the first world—and by implication, therefore, we ourselves—could be so evil as to be deliberately killing the poor. Moore presents evidence to support his hypothesis, but one JUSTnews reader, Fred Lautenschlaeger, rightly questions this evidence and its interpretation. Unfortunately, Moore is not the only author to point out the rank immorality of our governments. If you have read John Perkins' book *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man* you will be familiar with the criminal lengths to which the US government, in particular, has gone to protect the economic status of that country and its elites in a world whose civilization is approaching crisis. But if you have not read that book, you should at least be told something about it. The Discussion Paper in your hands therefore first presents a review by Jim Hackler of *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*.

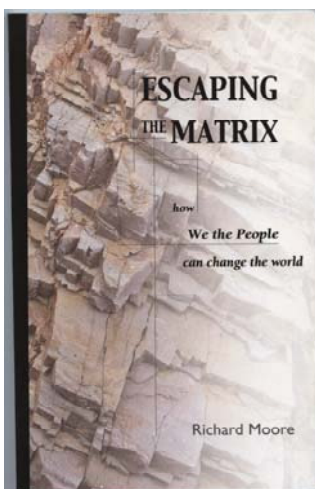
The question then arises, "What can we do to avoid or at least reduce the severity of the crisis?" Moore himself makes some suggestions, among which: "We need a comprehensive, bottom-to-top reinvention of economies, taking into account the hard reality of sustainability—and this is not beyond our technical capacity, if our societies were so motivated."

The current economic collapse and election of Barack Obama as president of the US might provide the motivation,

but this window of opportunity will close quickly as the elites who brought about the economic collapse are already working hard (and successfully) to re-build the same matrix that enabled it. The perverse good news is that the economic collapse will probably be much longer and deeper than today's pundits (part of our matrix) are predicting, extending our opportunity a little. Make no mistake, however, escaping the matrix will be difficult, and it's doubtful that Obama, good man though he appears to be, can do it on his own.

Which means that we ourselves are going to have to work hard to escape this unsustainable milieu. After we have recognized and accepted the seriousness of our situation through books such as *Escaping the Matrix* and *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*, we need to devise some new form of economy, as Moore suggests. Economics is a dull and boring subject for most people, but I do not apologize for subjecting you to something on economics in almost every issue of JUSTnews—the subject is vital.

Two readers of Discussion Paper No. 14, Fred Lautenschlaeger and Ken Morrison, also have some suggestions on how to escape the matrix that they have taken the time to describe in letters to the JUSTnews. Their letters (slightly edited) are therefore also included in the present Discussion Paper. I would be pleased to publish any further thoughtful comments and suggestions readers may have. Ed.



Book Review by Jim Hackler: *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man* by John Perkins. Berrett-Koehler. San Francisco. 2004

This book is the confession of a man who allowed himself to become a pawn, an economic hit man (the term they use for themselves), who bought into a corrupt system because it offered many perks, a man who knew better but could find excuses for his own greed (p. 223).

As an economic hit man (EHM), Perkin's job was to convince third world countries to accept enormous loans for infrastructure development—loans that were much larger than needed—and to guarantee that the development projects

were contracted to US corporations like Halliburton and Bechtel. Most of the money would never leave the US. Once these countries were saddled with huge debts, the US government, and agencies like the World Bank, could control their economies. These countries must then yield control over votes at the United Nations, and allow the installation of military bases and access to resources.

Many conservative thinkers will ignore this book or dismiss it as a conspiracy theory. In fact, it is very informative, regardless of one's political persuasion. Nor is it a description of evil people. Of those contributing to a system that hurts many people, only a minority, like the EHM, knew what they were doing. Others hold well paying jobs and do what they are told: unconscious, deceived and often self-deluded. They are not part of a clandestine conspiracy; rather, they are the product of a subtle and effective form of imperialism (p. 204). But most of those with power know they are acting immorally. "Their tools include fraudulent financial reports, rigged elections, payoffs, extortion, sex, and murder (p. ix)."

EHMs make false economic projections for the target country and lie about the benefits. These projects generate huge profits for US contractors and reward a few influential families, while assuring long-term financial dependence and political loyalty. The debt burden deprives the poorest citizens of health, education, and social services.

Many well-educated Americans deceive themselves that they are doing countries favors by building power plants, highways, and ports. They are convinced that the sweatshops that make shoes, auto parts, and other products help the poor climb out of poverty instead of burying them deeper in a type of slavery. Through rationalizations they ignore the clues that their activities destroy the environment and hurt the common people while furthering the interests of the wealthy.

An early model for the EHM was the Iranian rebellion in 1951 and the nationalization of Anglo-Iranian companies. The popular, democratically elected Iranian prime minister, Mohammad Mossadegh (TIME magazine's Man of the Year in 1951), nationalized Iranian oil. An outraged England sought help from the US. But sending in the Marines would provoke the Soviet Union. Instead CIA agent Kermit Roosevelt (Theodore's grandson) was sent to operate behind the scenes with threats and payoffs. He organized street riots and demonstrations, creating the false impression that Mossadegh was unpopular and inept. The pro-American despotic Shah was installed (p. 18). (Admittedly, Perkins simplifies a very complex situation.)

Historically, empires were established by military action; this has become risky. To achieve economic and political control of countries, without nuclear war, the US refined strategies devised by Kermit Roosevelt in Iran. But

Roosevelt was a CIA employee. Had he been caught, the US would have been very embarrassed. To orchestrate the overthrow of foreign governments, Washington needed an approach that would not implicate itself. Organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund working with multinational corporations would provide the solution. An EHM hired by a corporation is not visibly linked to government. Their dirty work, if exposed, can be chalked up to corporate greed. If the EHM fails, the "jackals," the assassins, are called in to remove political figures who do not cooperate.

(Note: The World Bank and International Monetary Fund were formed to reconstruct a devastated Europe and achieved remarkable success. The stated goals remained, but their actual goals changed. Perkins used Robert McNamara as an illustration of how the corporatocracy works: a prominent corporate executive becomes a cabinet minister, and finally head of the World Bank. McNamara probably convinced himself that he was serving society but he later felt that he had been wrong.)

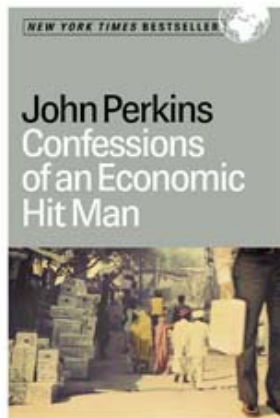
As the outcome of the Vietnam War became uncertain, there was concern that Indonesia would fall under Communist rule.

Could Suharto serve US interests as did the Shah in Iran? Could Indonesia become a positive model for the Islamic world? Oil company seismologists were also exuberant over possible reserves. Perkins, working for the consulting firm Chas. T. MAIN, a powerful but largely unknown international, was part of a team to provide electrical power and make sure that Indonesia did not follow Vietnam into communism. Oil companies, pipelines, and construction companies would be guaranteed electricity. In his luxurious hotel room, Perkins tried to convince himself that he could help Indonesia take its place in the modern industrial world.

He also met some young, educated, but poor Indonesians and learned that many Indonesians believed that Richard Nixon and the US were determined to destroy, or at least control, the Islamic world. A popular Indonesian politician argued that Indonesia should be less dependent on US corporations. He was killed by a hit-and-run driver, who was never identified. Such "accidents" happened to opposition politicians with surprising frequency.

Perkins' job was to provide an optimistic, but false, projection of economic growth for Indonesia. This was necessary to get the appropriate loans that would end up in the pockets of US corporations. His corporation, MAIN, gave him the title of "chief economist" even though his expertise and education was primarily creative writing. Surrounded by men convinced that communism was evil, and that they had a duty to their country and to God to convert the world to capitalism, MAIN employees could pretend that poverty, pollution, and disease were inevitable in the countries they "helped" and had nothing to do with their activities.

(Obviously, investments *could* be made in developing countries that would help the people if local companies and local talent were utilized. EHMs are not interested in this type of growth.)



Panama was part of Colombia when the French failed in their attempt to build the Panama Canal. But it inspired a dream in Teddy Roosevelt. The US demanded that Colombia turn the isthmus over to a US led consortium. Colombia refused. In went the warship *Nashville*. US soldiers landed, killed a popular commander, and declared Panama an independent nation. The puppet government signed the first Canal Treaty. For half a century Panama was ruled by an oligarchy beholden to Washington and linked to Standard Oil and United Fruit. US troops intervened when people resisted. But a coup finally overthrew the dictator Arnulfo Arias. The highly regarded Omar Torrijos emerged as head of state in 1968. He rejected communism but insisted that Panama and its people had their own rights. Perkins arrived in 1972 to create a master economic plan that would allow the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and USAID to make Panama forever indebted, returning it to its puppet status. He met Torrijos and became convinced of his sincerity and desire to help his people. Perkins modified his economic plan so that more social concerns were met. There were criticisms at MAIN, but the firms linked to MAIN still got the contracts.

But how was it that the US gave back the Panama Canal in 1977? Yes, it was the right thing to do, but the corporatocracy was opposed. Jimmy Carter, however, was a president with ideals. Congress ratified the new Canal Treaty by a single vote. Conservatives swore revenge. Torrijos was up against companies such as Bechtel, the world's most powerful engineering firm. Bechtel's president was George Shultz, Nixon's secretary of the treasury.

Like Torrijos, Jaime Roldos, president of Ecuador, opposed the corporatocracy. Pundits predicted that Washington would not tolerate Roldos as president. If elected he would meet a fate similar to that of Guatemala's Arbenz or Chile's Allende. On May 24, 1981 Roldos died in a fiery helicopter crash (p. 156). Perkins argues that it had all the markings of a CIA-orchestrated assassination executed blatantly to send a message to others. Osvaldo Hurtado took over as Ecuador's president and launched an ambitious program to increase oil drilling.

Omar Torrijos, in eulogizing Roldos, confessed to having nightmares about his own assassination; he saw himself dropping from the sky in a gigantic fireball. It was prophetic (p. 157). He died in a plane crash two months after Roldos. In his book, *Getting to Know the General*, Graham Greene writes that there was a bomb in the plane. Torrijos was replaced by Manuel Noriega.

Why did the US invade Panama in 1989? 1) President George H. M. Bush was being described in the press as a "wimp." He didn't like it. 2) Noriega wanted to preserve the new Panama Canal Treaty. The corporatocracy wanted the canal back under US control. 3) Japan was offering to

improve the Canal. If they did, US companies would not get the major construction contracts. 4) Noriega mistakenly assumed that his cooperation with CIA director William Casey and other intelligence gatherers in the US would protect him. 5) It was easy to persuade the American press to describe Noriega as a ruthless dictator and drug dealer.

Obviously, Panama was no threat. The illegal invasion in December 1989 was to regain control of the Canal. The world was shocked, but with few exceptions the American Press buckled under. The previous US puppets in Panama, the Arias family, were re-instated.

The US Army kept the press, the Red Cross, and outside observers away from the bombed areas until evidence could be destroyed. Defense Secretary Richard Cheney claimed 500-600 deaths. Human rights groups estimated three to five thousand. This breach of international law and needless destruction of a defenseless people outraged the world but received little coverage in the US.

In 1973 the Arab world used the oil embargo. Perkins argues that the embargo strengthened the corporatocracy. Protecting oil supplies became an obsession.

As wealthy Saudis traveled, attended western schools, and purchased western goods, the new materialism presented a means of insuring against another embargo. Washington offered technical support, military hardware and training in exchange for petrodollars. Perkins' task was to justify the infusion of hundreds of millions of dollars into the Saudi Arabian economy. This time the object was not to burden the country with debts, but to assure that most of the petrodollars came back to US corporations. The Saudi economy would become increasingly intertwined and dependent on the US.

One might view the large petrochemical complexes, huge industrial parks, greater electrical generating capacity, highways, pipelines, transportation systems, airports, and improved seaports as progress. Since self-respecting Saudis would not do menial work, cheap labor was imported from elsewhere. Huge housing complexes had to be built and serviced, as were shopping malls, hospitals, police departments, water and sewage treatment plants, etc., all by US firms, of course.

The modernization of Saudi Arabia made conservative Muslims furious. The Saud family felt threatened and had to be protected: by the US military. The defence industry received generous contracts for military engineering and construction plus long-term service and management agreements. As the vice-president of MAIN said, Saudi Arabia was, "the cow we can milk until the sun sets on our retirement" (p. 88). The Kingdom's central bank was the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA). But insiders referred to SAMA as the Saudi Arabian Money-Laundering Affair.

The problems caused by the embargo of 1973 were solved. If other oil producing nations threatened embargo, Saudi Arabia would fill in the gap. In exchange the US would provide political

and military support for the Saudi rulers. Other Islamic countries were appalled by the Saudi capitulation to Washington.

Sometimes a key player in the Saudi government did not want to see his country follow Western commercialism, or saw through the façade to the insidious game the US was playing. It was like the Crusades, the expansion of empire. But even sincere people have weaknesses—such as a proclivity for beautiful blondes. EHMs were resourceful.

Some schemes produced unforeseen results. The US wanted the Saudis to help bankroll Osama bin Laden's Afghan war against the Soviet Union in the 1980s. Arabia and Washington contributed \$3.5 billion to the mujahideen (US News and World Report, 15 Dec 2003). Vanity Fair magazine made public the relationship between the Bush family, the House of Saud, and the bin Laden family. These links go back to the money laundering that began in the 1970s after Bush was ambassador to the UN and then head of the CIA.

What is surprising is that Vanity Fair was able to publish this information in 2003 and describe the Bush family links with the Carlyle group, arguably the biggest private equity firm in the world (Oct. 2003). Just after 9/11, wealthy Saudi Arabians, including members of the bin Laden family, were whisked out of the US on private jets without even being questioned. Objections were in the news for just a few days.

Like Arabia, the strategy in Iran had not been to put the country in debt. Instead, the Shah had been presented to the West as a progressive friend to the underprivileged. In reality, he and his secret police were hated by Iranians. Perkins was again sent to Iran to forecast development potentials and design energy systems. This time the corporatocracy lost. (Perkins once again simplifies a complex story.) Not surprisingly, the US press described Ayatollah Khomeini as an extremist, not a revolutionary who opposed a dictatorial regime. Perkins concludes that the US was greatly misinformed about the Shah and the hatred against him. The CIA must have seen the obvious but encouraged everyone to close their eyes (p. 119).

Arabia, Iran, and Panama were actually exceptions to the rule. The first two had great wealth, and Panama had the Canal. Colombia was more typical. After the commencement of the building of a dam, that would make a few people very wealthy, Perkins learned that Americans were hated by the Indians and farmers who lived along the river. Even the urban residents of Bogota sympathized with the guerrillas attacking the construction camps. The US called them Communists and terrorists, but they were just people living on the lands being destroyed (p. 124). Yes, some of the guerrillas trained in Russia or China. They needed modern weapons to fight the soldiers trained by the US. And they had to sell cocaine to raise money for guns and supplies.

Perkins argues that the old American Republic differs from the new global empire. The former was based on the concepts of equality and justice. It opened its arms to the downtrodden. Today, corporations, banks, and government could help to reduce disease, poverty, and even wars. But unlike the old republic, the new global empire is self-centered, self-serving, greedy and materialistic. (Perkins may be a bit naïve about old republics in general.)

In a way, Ecuador was the quintessential banana republic. It suffered under dictators and right-wing oligarchies manipulated by US political and commercial interests. When serious exploitation of oil began in the 1960s, the small club of families was easily manipulated. The projects grew, the debt increased, etc. But Jaime Roldos, university professor and attorney, was an

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exception to the rule of political corruption. He believed in the rights of the poor and the responsibility of politicians to use natural resources prudently. In 1978 he went after the oil companies and the system that supported them. The Summer Institute of Linguistics was an evangelical group using the pretext of studying and translating indigenous languages (p. 142). They worked extensively with the Huaorani tribe in the Amazon basin. Whenever seismologists believed there was a probability of oil, SIL went in and encouraged the indigenous people to move from that land onto missionary reservations where they would receive free food and shelter. The condition was that they

had to deed their lands to the oil companies.

The SIL had sophisticated help, including dropping food baskets containing tiny radio transmitters, linked to the US military. Evidently, the Huaorami were not so easily fooled. When five SIL missionaries were found dead from Huaorami spears, it was to tell the SIL to stay out.

The SIL received support from Rockefeller charities. John D. Rockefeller Sr. founded Standard Oil, which divested into Chevron, Exxon, and Mobil. Jaime Roldos claimed that the SIL was a front for stealing indigenous lands. Like Torrijos in Panama, Roldos was not a communist, but stood for the right of his country to control its destiny.

(Note: While John D. Rockefeller Sr. was ruthless and avaricious, his only son, John D. Jr. had a genuine social conscience. He was the one who established most of the charities. To suggest that the Rockefeller charities were deliberately supporting a front organization for the oil companies is contrary to what John D. Jr. would have stood for.)

In Nov 1980, Jimmy Carter lost the presidential election to Ronald Reagan. Carter may have been an ineffective politician, but he was dedicated to world peace and reducing US dependence on oil. He was unpopular for giving back the Panama Canal, the situation in Iran, and the failed hostage rescue attempt. Carter was replaced by a man who believed the US should be at the top of the world pyramid held up by military muscle. Carter installed solar panels on the White House roof; Reagan had them removed. Reagan served the men of the corporatocracy who theoretically served him: VP George H. W. Bush, Secretary of State George Shultz, Secretary of Defense

Casper Weinberger, Richard Cheney, Richard Helms, Robert McNamara.

Being in the energy business, Perkins and his colleagues watched Enron with interest. Enron's commitment to "creative financing" and hiring executives who knew their way through the corridors of power offered new versions of EHM techniques.

Perkins' associates were also curious about the son of the Vice President, G. W. Bush. His first energy company, Arbusto, failed but was rescued through a merger with Spectrum 7. Then Spectrum 7 was on the brink of bankruptcy when purchased by Harken Energy. George W. was retained as a consultant at \$120,000 (Harpers, Feb. 2000), although his skills seemed to be minimal. But suddenly Harken expanded internationally, despite its limited experience. Bush senior, who had extensive dealings with oil in the Middle East, had just become president.

In Iraq the Reagan and Bush administrations were trying to create another Saudi Arabia (Ch 31). EHM presence in Baghdad was strong in the 1980s believing that Saddam would eventually see the light. It hardly mattered that he was a pathological tyrant. And it was not just oil, but also water. The corporatocracy hoped to privatize water systems in Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East. But Saddam did not buy into the EHM scenario. Like Panama, Iraq was contributing to Bush's wimp image. When Saddam invaded Kuwait the US military response was fierce. Bush's popularity rating soared to 90%.

Before summarizing Perkins' discussion of Venezuela, some background from Daniel Yergin's history of the oil industry, *The Prize*, is appropriate. In the 1920s, the cruel, avaricious dictator Juan Vincente Gomez controlled Venezuela and provided a relatively hospitable political climate for Royal Dutch/Shell and others. When Romulo Betancourt became president, a new arrangement with the oil companies gave 50% of the wealth to the country. The lot of the poor improved.

Perkins argues, however, that Venezuela was a country shamelessly exploited by EHMs (Ch 33). For a while it was one of the wealthiest in Latin America. The new corporate-style EHMs arrived in the 1980s. Per capita income then plummeted. By 1989 the country could not repay its debts. Poverty increased, resentment intensified. In 1998 Hugo Chavez was elected president and condemned the US for its "shameless imperialism." Obviously, the corporatocracy did not like Chavez. Just before the Sept. 11, 2001 attack on the Trade Center, George W. Bush was considering his options. The EHM had failed. Was it time for the jackals? But 9/11 saved Chavez.

Perkins argues that the corporatocracy appeared to show little interest in deeper problems of countries like Afghanistan, Iraq, and Venezuela. Instead it simply undermined leaders who stood in the way of US economic interests. In Iraq the EHMs and jackals had failed. It was

time to bring in the troops. (As Bush Sr. told Queen Noor some years ago, Saddam was sitting on "our" oil and we won't stand for it.)

In Venezuela in December 2002 the tactics used against Mossadegh in Iran 50 years before were used again: create riots, and bribe military officers who had been trained by the US. A strike was organized to oust President Hugo Chavez. But in January 2003 a surprising thing happened. The New York Times (a radical newspaper?) provided a historical perspective. It described the CIA's role in overthrowing democratically elected governments in Guatemala, Chile, and others. It also identified the man who was organizing the "strikes" and orchestrating the "protests," to undermine Chavez in Venezuela: Otto J. Reich, Ambassador to Venezuela and assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs. Surprisingly, the military in Venezuela did not sell out. In an amazing turnabout, Chavez was back in power. Occupied with Iraq, George W. Bush would have been unwise to invade Venezuela even though excuses could have been invented. (Is it reasonable to predict that Chavez will die in an "accident" in the future?)

Ecuador was another victim of the corporatocracy. The EHMs managed to bring it to virtual bankruptcy. Official poverty grew from 50 to 70 percent; under- or unemployment grew from 15 to 70 percent. The Agoyan hydroelectric project was an illustration of the success of EHMs. The huge dam blocking the Pastaza River makes a few Ecuadorian families very wealthy while impoverishing the farmers and indigenous people. Ecuador was awash in foreign debt, using much of its national budget for loan repayment, and neglecting its citizens. It had to sell its rain forests to the oil companies who believe that vast oil reserves lay beneath the Amazon region.

Closing comments: This book does not identify companies who are making positive contributions in the developing world. How many loans made by the World Bank go to indigenous companies which foster local talent and actually improve the infrastructure of the developing country? Clearly companies in Iraq are capable of rebuilding that country, but the contracts are going to companies like Halliburton and Bechtel, those linked to Republican governments. Perkins sees this as a recipe for disaster.

How many ethical people work within the corporatocracy, who would be willing to do things differently if they had a chance? Perkins suggests that a network of very powerful, very wealthy people, well connected with government, believes that a US empire ruled by a select group of Americans is the way of the future. This belief is shared, and feared, by many foreigners; thus, one can anticipate attacks on such an empire. Are these attacks legitimate resistance to tyranny? Where is the border between such resistance and terrorism? This creates dilemmas for countries like Canada. Do we need to invest in the third world in the way the US invested in Germany and Japan after WWII? Clearly, the Germans and Japanese appreciated this investment. Conservative thinkers also need to give considerable thought to the questions raised by this book.

Jim Hackler is an adjunct professor of sociology at University of Victoria and past Board Member of CUSJ.



Letters

The following is a composite of two letters from Fred Lautenschlaeger.

For the sake of the quality, credibility and fairness, and of providing good analysis to the readers of JUSTnews, this article [Civilization in Crisis, JUSTnews Discussion Paper No. 14] deserves a stronger and more thorough rebuttal than I can provide. More care should be taken developing an argument in a social justice magazine of the Unitarian organization in Canada.

Although the very serious dilemma of the world is well presented, the blame appears misdirected. The author, Richard Moore, tries to address the issues with clichés. He frequently blames these problems on ‘neo-liberalism’, ‘elitism’, and ‘ruling clique’ rather than basic human nature. This is not helpful, and seems like an escape into catch phrases.

It could be that the root of ‘elitism’ (the human desire for high status) is a desire to do the best possible job in the service of the community. In any case, how would ‘anti-elitism’ resolve the serious problems he has listed?

Moore does not seem to accept the fact that oil prices would increase with increased scarcity, and believes that high oil price ‘had the consequence of dividing the people of the world into two classes’. This seems too simple. It is not—and never was—just that. He instead recommends ‘fuelling the world’s wholesale demand at a generally affordable price’. What would that contribute to the recognized scarcity and so to society in the long term; specifically, how would it join the two classes he considers?

When Moore writes that ‘industries are destroyed by foreign competition’, for whom does he actually speak, the lower paid foreign workers who ‘could not participate in an unsustainable system’, or the national neo-liberal industries?

He quotes something that is ‘attributed’ to Kissinger and further admits that perhaps ‘the quote is a hoax.’ Yet, he chooses to make a major argument of this that leads to the assumption of ‘depopulation policies’ and the hypothesis ‘that intentional genocide may be part of the elite agenda’ and that the IMF has ‘accelerated mass starvation in Africa.’ Is this justified?

The blanket condemnation of the IMF and the World Bank as factors leading to ‘mass starvation’ is a crude analysis. He offers no alternatives to these institutions for financing the massive developments that would, for example, be required to provide fresh water wherever needed. Where else to seek the financial resources for such huge projects, should they be deemed desirable? From the neo-liberal industry?

One needs to recognize that the author of ‘Escaping the Matrix’ addresses highly important issues. For example that the poor people of Nigeria as in other

countries see the oil resources of their land exported with little or no advantage to them. Also, the poor maize farmers of Mexico suffer from the import of corn from the US. Also, the financing of major projects by the World Bank and IMF is not always favourable to local industries. These and many more examples are well-known.

Therefore, the fight against what Moore calls the ‘elite’ has been for a long time the basis of more nationalism, socialism and communism. The main question is how he proposes to change the system. What does he consider the political tools? Does he see the Commune of Paris in 1871 as a model for, or a pre-figuration of, a liberated society, a fight against the ‘Matrix’, the ‘Elite’, and what factors prevented its success then? Is Cuba perceived to be an example? In which way are the ‘mass famines and genocidal civil wars’ in Africa significantly attributable to neo-liberalism, which treats human life ‘entirely as a commodity’?

Specifically, how can an oil company be persuaded to support local communities? Who will set international prices for rice, corn to prevent starvation. Who will pay for investments in areas that are of low benefit for those who contribute the financial resources—where would alternative financial resources (money) come from? Who would be that benefactor? What system would be required to change that? Are there examples of how a major international power has basically changed that process?

In which way are the international strategies of China and Russia—presumably originally socialistically oriented countries—significantly better, or are we dealing with an inherent issue of unbridled competition or even simple economic reality? Would he prefer ‘post-liberalism’ to ‘neo-liberalism’, and what would be the power and social structure of such an alternative system? How would he change what he calls ‘neo-liberalism’, to a different system? What is the path to what might be ‘post-liberalism’?

Fred Lautenschlaeger

First Unitarian Church of Toronto

In fairness to Moore, Discussion Paper No. 14 was a short excerpt from an entire book, which contained sections such as, “The neo-liberal project,” “Lessons from the long experience of struggle,” “In search of a path to social transformation,” and others that may have answered Lautenschlaeger’s questions. Escaping the Matrix can be ordered from Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and most other popular online book sellers. The list price is US\$ 15.95; many sellers offer discounts. If you order using the Amazon.com link on Moore’s website (<http://EscapingtheMatrix.org>), the author receives a small additional royalty. Ed.

The voters say they are getting cynical about politicians. They should hear how the politicians talk about them.

George Walden, as quoted in the CCPA Monitor, April 2009.

Letter from Ken Morrison:

Congratulations on the “Civilization in Crisis” issue of JUSTnews. It says a lot that needs to be said. But, what puzzles me is: how does this message get to all the Canadian UUs and get reflected both in policy and in action?

Unfortunately the contemporary reality is that as a denomination we are very inward oriented while the actions needed assume an outward orientation. Our inwardness was seen in the endorsements of the Endowment Appeal. Almost exclusively they sung praises of the joy of being members of friendly, supportive, and charitable congregations. Nothing was offered regarding the influence we might have in the wider world beyond our charitable efforts. Put another way we lack the outward orientation implied in the Protestant missionary slogan “The World for Christ”, or even the Rotary slogan “Service Above Self.” This suggests to me that we face a challenge: how do we turn an inward oriented denomination into an outward oriented one and thus engage the issues raised in the “Civilization in Crisis” article?

Firstly it would appear that we have to establish exactly what Unitarian (and I trust also Universalist) values are. Presumably they are based on our principles, which are noble statements of liberal good intentions, but not the special property of Unitarian Universalism. They belong to liberals all over the world.

I suggest that dealing effectively with the issues mentioned above places an obligation on us to carefully scrutinize the limits and contradictions of the Principles. Take a simple example: Principle #5 says we believe in democracy, but how many congregations have established a fund to enable their financially embarrassed members to attend annual gatherings and other out-of-town activities? None to my knowledge. Isn't this a democratic failure, all be it a minor one? I think it is, and it reflects the reality that democracy has many other difficulties-in-practice that deserve careful scrutiny. Likewise our other principles.

On the whole the principles are most relevant to maintaining good interpersonal relations. But current moral problems involve other relations. For example, how should a conscientious UU have voted in the last Alberta election? On the one hand Alberta's oil-sands operations are clearly major polluters and enemies of a sustainable environment. On the other you have a very prosperous province based on the oil sands with high wages and people carrying mortgages on grand and expensive houses.

Faced with this dilemma it appears that many stayed home and didn't vote. The Conservatives were re-elected largely by a farm-based vote that was not particularly informed on the environmental crisis. It would be interesting to know what sermons the

ministers of UU churches in Alberta preached on the Sunday preceding the vote. Did they offer moral leadership on this difficult choice, or did they step aside and talk on some less controversial matter? I'd love to know.

My contention is that on the road ahead we are going to run into more and more such dilemmas. Are we going to be satisfied by maintaining what I call “Convenience Churches,” which are chiefly useful for those who find their way through our doors? Or should we take up the more difficult task of being a “Conviction Church” and stand for something unique and important that other churches do not offer? That something in my opinion is that we believe that humans, and humans alone, are responsible for what goes on in this world within the bounds set by Nature and our cultural heritage. A natural corollary of the above is that we believe that in times of difficulty or error, and of opportunity, the first question that should be asked is: what is my, or my associates', responsibility for what has gone wrong, or for the opportunity that has appeared? If responsibility is accepted, then the next question should be: what can I and my associates do to correct errors, deal with the difficulties and take advantage of the opportunity presented?

I am not suggesting in any way that we abandon our principles. They have many virtues and deserve careful study. Could it be that instead of abandonment they need expanding? We talk a lot about tolerance, but have no principle covering this. Tolerance needs to be a principle. So does our commitment to truth in a world awash with lies. [Our fourth principle states: that we covenant to affirm and promote a free and responsible search for truth and meaning. Ed] And, finally, I believe our commitment to human responsibility should also be included in the principles.

In summary, if we as a denomination are to give moral leadership in the crisis of our civilization we must prepare ourselves for this role.

Since doctrinal reform seems to be stalled at the CUC level, might the Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice initiate the changes in attitude and purpose that the Civilization in Crisis implies? I certainly hope so.

Ken Morrison

Lakehead Unitarian Fellowship.

Your Membership Renewal is Probably Overdue

Since last April 1st when membership renewals became due, only about 60 CUSJ members have renewed. Please consider renewing your membership immediately if you are among the majority who have so far failed to update their membership this year.

CUSJ has no set membership fee. The annual cost to CUSJ per household (mostly for the printing and mailing of JUSTnews) is about \$50. We ask those who can afford a little more to help those who find this amount beyond their budget.

If you are applying for membership, please provide the information requested on the final page of this issue of JUSTnews.

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President Katharine Im-Jenkins

Editorial Committee
Philip Symons, Editor, Nichola Martin,
Don Vipond

Production Team
Ruth di Giovanni, Bert MacBain, Bob
Van Alstyne, Philip Symons

Submissions to or enquiries regarding
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The Editor:

2125 Lansdowne Rd.
Victoria B.C., V8P 1B5
philmar@islandnet.com

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The CUSJ purposes are:

- to develop and maintain a vibrant network of Unitarian social action in Canada and elsewhere and to proactively represent Unitarian principles and values in matters of social justice and in particular
- to provide opportunities, including through publication of newsletters, for Unitarians and friends to apply their religious, humanistic and spiritual values to social action aimed at the relief of (1) poverty and economic injustice, (2) discrimination based on religious, racial or other grounds, (3) abuses of human rights whether of individuals or peoples, (4) abuses of democratic process, and
- to promote peace and security, environmental protection, education, and literacy in keeping with the spirit of Unitarian values.

These purposes are an integral part of the Constitution of CUSJ, adopted at the CUSJ Annual Meeting in Mississauga, ON, May 19, 1999, and amended at the 2003 AGM.

I agree with the above Statement of Purpose, and wish to
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