



The Suicide of the Liberal Church

by Chris Hedges

Paul Tillich wrote that all institutions, including the church, are inherently demons. Institutions, Geinhold Niebuhr warned, when confronted with collapse, will swiftly betray the stances that ostensibly define them. Only individual men and women have the strength to hold fast to virtue when faced with the threat of death. And decaying institutions, including the church, when consumed by fear, swiftly push those endowed with the moral courage and radicalism from their ranks, rendering themselves obsolete.

The wisdom of Tillich and Niebuhr has been borne out in the precipitous decline of the liberal church and the seminaries and divinity schools that train religious scholars and clergy. The number of adults in the mainline Protestant churches in the U.S.—Presbyterian, Unitarian-Universalist, Lutheran, Methodist, Episcopalian, Congregationalist—decreased from about 41 million in 2007 to 36 million in 2014, according to the Pew Research Centre. And the average age of the congregants is 52. The Catholic Church, which, especially under John Paul II, forced out priests, nuns and lay leaders who focused their ministries on the poor and the oppressed, has lost 3 million members over the last decade, and has seen its hold on the U.S. population fall to 21 percent from 24.

Union Theological Seminary, where black liberation, feminist, womanist and queer theologies have their roots, appears to be on the verge of selling “air space” to a developer to construct a luxury 35-to-40-story condominium building on its campus. Rob Stephens, a third-year student for the ministry at Union and part of a student movement fighting Union’s building project, said, when I spoke with him by phone, “That is what made the faculty walk out. The Union administration has said that Union, by building this luxury condominium, was being as bold as the original founders: the original founders envisioned a

place for privileged white men. The original founders called abolitionism ‘fanaticism.’ The founders’ values won’t get us through this storm. Union should be for all God’s people. If built, this luxury condominium would be a middle finger to Harlem. It would be a middle finger to faith-based social movements.

“This seminary has turned Black Lives Matter into a commodity,” he went on. “They sell this campus as being allied with Black Lives Matter and other social justice movements. But inconsistency of values and actions can only lead to failure. You can’t reconcile luxury condominiums built by an anti-union contractor and no affordable housing with the gospel of Jesus. This is another example of mainline Christianity casting their lot with capitalism instead of community. When will we learn?”

The self-identified religious institutions that thrive preach the perverted “prosperity gospel,” the message that Jesus will make you rich, respected and powerful if you believe in him. These sects selectively lift passages from the Bible to justify the unjustifiable, including homophobia, war, racism against Muslims, and the death penalty. Yet there are more students—2,067—at the evangelical Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary alone than at the divinity schools and seminaries of Yale, Harvard, Union, Vanderbilt and Chicago, whose combined enrolment is 1,537.

The doctrine these sects preach is Christian heresy. The Christian faith—as in the 1930s under Germany’s pro-Nazi Christian Church—is being distorted to sanctify nationalism, unregulated capitalism, and militarism. The mainstream church, which refuses to denounce these heretics as heretics, a decision made in the name of tolerance, tacitly gives these sects credibility and squanders the prophetic voice of the church.

Kevin Kruse in his book “One Nation Under God: How Corporate



Chris Hedges

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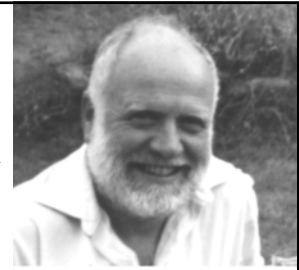
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From the Editor

Social Justice workers are looking for new, more effective ways to change government policies and improve the lives of all through stronger democracy, less inequality in wealth, and more compassion for our fellow citizens. Politicians too often and too easily ignore letters, rallies, petitions and even delegations—unless you happen to have \$1,500 in your pocket and the fare for travel to a dinner in Ottawa. So this issue of JUSTnews focuses on other possible methods of changing government policies.

The lead article chastises liberal churches, including ours, for worrying more about retaining membership and keeping costs low than standing up for the moral right, thereby committing suicide. Then, Micah White has written a book, reviewed from different perspectives by two CUSJ members, on *The End of Protest* as a means of obtaining justice. A letter from the Honourable Scott Reid to Minister of Democratic Institutions Maryam Monsef suggests finding allies amongst politicians can be effective. Language is always important, as noted by a member of Fair Vote Canada. And then there's the community-organizing process started by Saul Alinsky that is gaining traction in various cities across Canada and elsewhere.

Other ideas and suggestions are welcome and, as always, will be considered for publication in future issues of JUSTnews. Please write.



America Invented Christian America” details how industrialists in the 1930s and 1940s poured money and resources into an effort to silence the social witness of the mainstream church, which was home to many radicals, socialists and proponents of the New Deal. These corporatists promoted and funded a brand of Christianity—which is today dominant—that conflates faith with free enterprise. The rich are rich, this creed goes, not because they are greedy or privileged, not because they use their power to their own advantage, not because they oppress the poor and vulnerable, but because they are blessed. It is an inversion of the central message of the Gospel. You don't need to spend three years at Harvard Divinity School, as I did, to figure that out.

The liberal church committed suicide when it severed itself from radicalism. Radical Christians led the abolitionist movement, were active in the Anti-Imperialist League, participated in the bloody labour wars, fought for women's suffrage, formulated the Social Gospel—which included a huge effort to carry out reform and provide education to prisoners—and were engines in civil rights and anti-war movements. Norman Thomas, a long-time leader of the Socialist Party of America, was a Presbyterian minister.

These radicals generally were not embraced by the church hierarchy, which served as a bulwark of the establishment, but they kept the church vital and prophetic. They made it relevant and important to the oppressed, the poor, and to working men and women. Radicals were and are its hope.

The loss of an array of prophetic voices on the national scene such as Phil and Daniel Berrigan, William Stringfellow, Rabbi Abraham Heschel, Dorothy Day and Martin Luther King Jr. left the liberal church as morally bankrupt as the rest of the liberal class. James Baldwin, who grew up in the church and was

briefly a preacher, said he abandoned the pulpit to preach the Gospel. The Gospel, he knew, was not heard most Sundays in Christian houses of worship. And today with most ministers wary of offending their ageing and dwindling flocks—counted on to pay the clergy's salary and the bills—this is even truer than when Baldwin was writing.

The church is also a victim of the disintegration of the civic associations that, as Alexis de Tocqueville observed, are vital to the maintenance of a healthy democracy and the common good. Robert Putman in his book “Bowling Alone” chronicled the broad disengagement from political and public life. He lamented, correctly, the loss of this “social capital.”

What remains of the church, if it is to survive as a social and cultural force, will see clergy and congregants leave to work in prisons, schools, labour halls and homeless and women's shelters, form night basketball leagues and participate in grass-roots movements such as the anti-fracking struggle and the fight to raise the minimum wage. This shift will make it hard to financially maintain the massive and largely empty church edifices, and perhaps even the seminaries, but it will keep the church's cultural force real and alive. I had a dinner a few months ago with fellow teachers in the prison where I work. We discovered, to our surprise, that every one of us had seminary degrees.

Edited and excerpted from a reprint in Truthdig, OpEdNews Op Eds 24/1/2016. Chris Hedges spent nearly two decades as a foreign correspondent in Central America, the Middle East, Africa and the Balkans. He has reported from more than 50 countries and has worked for The Christian Science Monitor, National Public Radio, the Dallas Morning News and the New York Times, for which he was a foreign correspondent for 15 years.



Alexis de Tocqueville,
1805-1859

CUSJ NEWS

President's Message

Season's Greetings CUSJers and a Call to Action in 2017!

By the time you receive this message the festive time of year will be winding down. It is important to celebrate the seasons of our lives and to let our "little lights shine," especially during these dark times. We are nourished by the kinship of family and friends, and by the wider kinship of humanity that connects us all. I'm grateful that CUSJ exists and for the many activist groups our members are involved with, such as Leadnow, Fair Vote Canada, Climate Action Network, Amnesty International—the list goes on.

Active listserve members and our hard-working webmasters continuously alert us to current campaigns and events so that we can make our individual and collective voices heard in the corridors of power.

The word of the year, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, was "surreal." Reality, as it turns out, is stranger than fiction. The "real change" promised by our elected leaders, remains but a promise. Promises of real action on the climate crisis, on democratic reform, on righting the wrongs of the past for indigenous communities, on promoting peace and real security—have yet to be *realized*.

How do we take the "sur" out of "real" and create the reality of "love and justice" we envision for our world? Love and justice, our Unitarian motto and mission, become real through one act of love and justice at a time. Check CUSJ's website to see how we have addressed critical justice issues in the past year, through letters, briefs and public consultations.

The good news in these dark times is that CUSJ is growing. We have one new regional Chapter, the Islands Chapter, on the west coast, and two new Chapter requests in Ontario and Quebec. We are sending these fledgling chapters CUSJ banners and t-shirts. You too can have your very own and join your fellow UUs in demonstrations of solidarity across the country in 2017.



Margaret Rao, President of CUSJ

Active hope is the spark that will move us forward. People power, democracy from below, will rise to the occasion on the streets, in front of and inside city halls, provincial legislatures, parliament buildings and constituency offices, from coast to coast to coast. Citizens are signing up to put their bodies on the line to prevent further pipeline infrastructure from ever being built.

The government-subsidized fossil fuel industry and fossilized thinking on climate change will be resisted.

Resistance is fertile! There is a globalism of resistance afoot, and our collective struggles and strategies for a just and peaceful world will bring about the real change we wish to see in the world. Each of us has a part to play in this collective struggle. "The inherent worth and dignity of every person," creature and life form, including our one and only life-giving Mother Earth, will be protected and nourished at all costs. Love and justice will prevail.

Standing on the Side of Love & Justice!

Margaret Rao

President, Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice

Replacement required!

Bob Staveley, long-time CUSJ Treasurer, and Ellen Papenburg, Webmaster, are resigning their positions after many years of dedicated service—more than ten years in



Bob's case. Both will remain on the CUSJ Board, and will assist with the transitions to new treasurer and webmaster.

We have a new treasurer, and we have people on the Board who can post information on the CUSJ website, but we need someone to take over regular website management.

Thanks to both Bob and Ellen for their work for CUSJ.

CUSJ Banners and T-shirts for sale

CUSJ banners, at a price of \$50/ea. subsidized by CUSJ, and beautiful red CUSJ t-shirts are now available. Contact Margaret Rao at <margaretrao@rogers.com>

CUSJ NEWS¹

CUSJ and other organizations support the Green Party of Canada pro-peace resolution

November 28, 2016 by Cym Gomery

CUSJ joined a host of signatories in saluting the Green Party of Canada for its motion in support of freedom, justice and equality in Israel/Palestine. This formal nod of appreciation to the GPC was announced in a press release on Nov. 28th, sponsored by the Palestine House and Students Against Israeli Apartheid (SAIA) at York University (Toronto). The press release reads, in part that:

We encourage all Green Party members to support this courageous position, which is a major vote of confidence for all those working for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

We, the undersigned, and our thousands of members, are made proud Canadians by the Green Party's principled stance with the occupied people of Palestine.

The GPC will be voting on the motion at a Special General Meeting on December 3 and 4 2016, in Calgary Alberta.

Speaking out for decent work conditions and fair wages

November 16, 2016 by Cym Gomery

CUSJ, represented by past-president Frances Deverell, along with current president Margaret Rao, has signed onto the *Faith Leaders Statement* calling for a number of improvements to the Ontario government's Employment Standards Act and Labour Relations Act. The statement is part of the "Fight for \$15 and Fairness" movement calling for decent work and stronger laws to better protect workers in Ontario's changing labour market. This statement coincides with the current governmental review of the above two critical laws that determine the well-being of workers.

The Faith Leaders Statement is intended to show the Ontario Government that diverse faith communities demand greater fairness for our province's most marginalized workers, many of whom struggle to provide a livelihood for themselves and their families.

CUSJ endorses plea for urgent climate action

November 16, 2016 by Cym Gomery

In October 2016, the CUSJ signed on to the Civil Society Equity Review on national pledges made at last year's UN Climate Summit in Paris. CUSJ had signed on to the previous report by the same organization in 2015.

This short report focuses on the urgent need for governments to aim higher when it comes to climate change mitigation goals. The report analyses 2020 pledges and support, against a 2020 emissions benchmark that is consistent with a true 1.5°C mobilization. It draws simple but challenging conclusions about the changes that will be needed, before 2020, if we honestly intend to make a just and successful transition to a zero carbon world.

CUSJ President Margaret Rao states, "All developed countries are woefully lacking in moving to national and international climate change mitigation and investment in renewable energy alternatives. ... We have a long way to go with immediate, short and long-term carbon reduction goals."



Presentation to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

by Jack Dodds & Margaret Rao

Mr Jack Dodds:

In the view [of Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice], Canadians are held together by a number of defining ideas. The most important of these is the concept of a democratic society. This does not refer just to our machinery of elections and government. It implies that power is vested in the people, and that there is an equality of rights and privileges. It has a spiritual dimension. It is an expression of faith in the power of human beings to shape their own lives.

We are concerned that the present legislation and the Green Paper on National Security contemplate a creeping dilution of the equality between citizens and security agencies. Security agencies claim that they must operate in secret, but court orders based on secret hearings that exclude the affected people are fundamentally incapable of delivering justice.

¹Cym Gomery prepared the first three reports in this section and posted them on CUSJ's website, www.cusj.org, where these and others reports can be found. Thanks Cym!

Cym is a Board Member of CUSJ and a member of the Unitarian Church of Montréal.



CUSJ News

This is even more true of extrajudicial authorization of privacy intrusions. Two weeks ago in this committee, Wesley Wark aptly described the present system as “paternalistic,” and these mechanisms fit that description. To reverse the trend, Parliament should reaffirm that the only fully legitimate way to authorize searches or other actions against people is through court proceedings at which the affected person is represented. In cases such as hearings for search warrants, it may be necessary to keep the hearings secret, but in every case, the affected party should be notified as soon as is practical after the fact, providing an opportunity to challenge the court order. As well as creating a mechanism for accountability, this allows legislation to be refined by the development of case law.

Ms. Margaret Rao:

We are concerned about the trend towards authorizing security agencies to act against people who may not have committed criminal acts. “Counselling” and “conspiracy,” as defined in the Criminal Code, provide a powerful basis to investigate and prevent acts of violence before they occur, yet recent legislation has added a shopping list of vaguely defined “activities that undermine the security of Canada,” which can be used to justify information sharing.

Other new provisions authorize “disruption” based on a low evidentiary threshold. This allows security agencies to build dossiers and intervene in the activities of citizens who are not performing criminal acts. In most cases, the contemplated acts of disruption, if performed by a citizen rather than the government, would be criminal or illegal. This violates the democratic vision of equality between people and government.

This recent legislation has added to the fears of some citizens who are involved in social movements. In 2013, security agencies provided classified security briefings to Canadian energy companies. A classified RCMP report from 2014 uses hostile terms to describe lawful actions such as the use of social media to promote action on climate change and conflates violent actions with peaceful protests.

The Security Intelligence and Review Committee (SIRC) is currently investigating a complaint that citizens concerned about the Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline were spied upon. There is a palpable appearance of bias on the part of the security agencies, which, combined with the new disruption powers, discourages people from participating in the democratic process.

In summary, Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice call on Parliament to bring democratic control to security agency activities by acknowledging that there is a tension between those activities and the health of our democratic society, by setting clear limits on those activities to ensure that democratic ideals are honoured, and by mandating proven transparency mechanisms so that citizens have the information they need to exert meaningful control over those activities.

Finally, to paraphrase theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, humankind’s capacity for justice makes democracy possible, but its inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary. We should heed his words.

Thank you.

Letter to Minister McCallum

Monday, October 17th, 2016

The Honourable John McCallum
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and
Citizenship
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1A 0A6



Dear Mr. McCallum,

Canada has a proud history of welcoming U.S. conscientious objectors, a legacy begun by former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, the father of the current Prime Minister, who stated that Canada should be “a haven from militarism.” In fact, the current Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, stated himself last year, that he was committed “to restoring our sense of compassion and openness and a place that is a safe haven for people to come here.”

We, therefore, urge you to follow up on this commitment by immediately granting the long-suffering U.S. Iraq war resisters leave to stay in Canada on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. As Minister of Immigration you have the discretionary authority to grant these men and their families permanent residence in Canada. They have proven themselves to be upstanding members of Canadian society and they should be eligible for Canadian citizenship. It’s time to let these families get on with their lives, in peace and dignity.

Thank you for your attention and concern on this issue. We look forward to your response.

Respectfully yours,
Margaret Rao, President
cusj.org

cc: The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada

Towards Effective Action

Book Review 1. The End of Protest, by Micah White¹ by Frances Deverell

What is your theory of social change? Where do you believe you should put your energy to actually bring about the changes you desire? This is the question Micah White (initiator of Occupy Wall Street) explores in his 2016 book, *The End of Protest*. This is a book about the history, purposes, tactics and strategies fused in bringing about social change, and should be read by activists and by people who want to work with others to bring about a reign of love and justice in the world. This book is for people who are trying to get the government to use its powers to reduce inequality and homelessness and do something concrete about climate change.

Because White is coming from an anarchist perspective, he uses words, such as *revolutionary struggle*, that may make readers feel uncomfortable. I shy away from such language because I worry about too much confrontation and the potential for violence. I do not support violent struggle. But White is an idealist like me. He doesn't advocate violence. But he does advocate an overturning of the power structures as we know them in favour of true democratic government by the people. He defines revolution as "a change brought about not necessarily by force and violence whereby one system of legality is terminated and another originated." By this definition, every time I work to change one law it is a *revolutionary act*.

The reality is that most of the major advances for human society have involved either military or political revolution. The vested interests never just hand over their power.

Revolutions are something that can happen when the people lose their fear and unite to improve the conditions of the people, or to change the aim of government towards the security of the whole earth. White feels the urgency of action on climate change. How will we cope with millions of refugees as a result of floods, cyclones, drought, and famine. How are we going to do it with current legal and structural regimes that resist change and are designed to maintain the status quo?

This book is relevant to Unitarians because we do engage in efforts to change the system toward greater justice, equity and compassion. We work for more democracy and participation by the people in decision-making. We believe the voices of the First Nations, Inuit, and Metis, of the women and the working

poor, of those who have mental health or physical health issues that leave them dependent on the state, and of immigrants and refugees—these voices should all be heard.

What I found especially interesting about the book is his model of different approaches to social change. We are all familiar with individual models—the actions of an individual make a difference. We all work to affect systems and structures and change laws that are blocking the kind of society we want to build. But we are only beginning to explore the spiritual approaches to social change. We become what we think. We create what we dream. The world is a mirror of our state of mind. But ultimately, we don't have the control we'd like to have. There is still room for the Universe to create its own waves, and to open the doors for energy to flow and the

world to transform itself. There are millions of people around the world praying, and meditating, and working toward a level of awareness that would allow us to align our energies with such a force and transform our world into one that is more equitable, more just, and more democratic.

For many secular activists these ideas seem useless. The Wiccan Priestess Starhawk puts it this way (p. 99 in *White's book*): "a part of our humanity needs symbols and myths and mystery, yearns for a connection to something

broader and deeper than our surface life ... we ignore this need at our peril, for if a movement of liberation does not address the spiritual part of us, then movements of repression will claim that terrain as their own."

ISIS may be better at addressing these human needs than we are.

For those who are interested, there is a good discussion of various kinds of strategies and tactics to achieve change over time. White is an innovator and a change artist. While many might say his approach is unrealistic, he returns the challenge. He says we must face reality. "The fact is that governments today are not required to listen to their citizens or heed their marches." He encourages us to practise "horizontalism" and to practice working in groups, and to stretch our eyes beyond our own country to those around the world that are working with us. Each generation is responsible to discern the environment and select its tactics and create new ones to get its message across.

The enemy we face is very strong with great, centralized power—both financial and political. Change will not be easy. White says, "I have come to understand that the role of tactics is to unleash the collective spirit."

This book provides us a great starting point for an animated discussion on how to move forward in today's economic and political climate. I invite you to read the book, and set yourself up a discussion group to discuss how you can innovate new tactics of social change.

The Rev. Frances Deverell is a past president of Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice, and a current member of CUSJ's Board.



Micah White and his book *The End of Protest*.

¹ Publisher Knopf Canada, 317 pages, price \$25.

Towards Effective Action

Book Review 2. The End of Protest by Micah White

by Fred Lautenschlaeger

Micah White, an experienced social activist, deserves credit for thinking about the paths toward a better society. He struggles to find a position on the spectrum of social actions, from demonstration to 'revolution' to finally a spiritual solution.

Considering himself a protester, not a politician, he believed that a few hundred thousand people marching against a globally interwoven economic system would achieve what had required bloody revolutions before, and that his experience with smaller social actions qualified him to take on the octopus of the economic system. He discovered that the lack of clear strategies, objectives and a good understanding of the 'social pathology' limited the success of the 'Occupy' movement. The consensus-based decision-making process was unable to make appropriate policy decisions.

One notes that this is a problem of populist movements. One might even argue that definitions and details matter: 'capitalism', 'Wall Street', '1%', 'establishment' and 'revolution' are catchy but somewhat vague clichés. We are all tied to 'the establishment', and at the root of 'capitalism' is the evolutionary urge for constructive initiatives.

His concept of revolution is understandably conflicted. We know about the violence-free revolt at the root of Scandinavian countries before globalization (Lakey in www.wagingnonviolence.org/featurehow-swedes-and-norwegians) but also the modern history of Cuba. He wishes revolutions could occur without violence, yet he realizes many succeed because social transformations are based on military campaigns. According to Lenin, major crises, such as war or economic collapse, will aid the revolutionaries. These crises must affect those in authority as well as the revolutionaries. Those in authority, however, are often *not* affected by the crises.

His suggestion that in the 21st century most actions in social movements are non-violent because they appeal to spectators through public events is probably unrealistic. Also, by assuming that uprisings in Spain, Greece and Italy indicate what could be achieved in North America, he overlooks the assistance provided by the significant tradition of the Communist parties in those countries. He is rightly concerned about the relevance of a movement that calls itself the '99 %' if only a small fraction of the world's population ever participated in the movement's assemblies.

White believes in diffusing power throughout a social movement, even at the price of 'inefficiencies,'

although that was a problem for the 'Occupy' movement. He hopes to win elections in multiple countries and run legislatures without a leader. But how to run a society without structures or leaders? Others suggest that social media, such as the Internet, empower the rule of the mob (Nicholas Carr) since the mob supports protests, not policies and strategies.

He believes the world can unite spiritually, possibly by uniting around ecological goals, but doubts that the WTO, IMF, or World Bank are able to grasp spiritual or ecological goals.

His idealistic but, unfortunately, utopian solution is the idea of 'mundialization', a World Party, a supra-national world government, led by women, arising from the fear of mass-destruction by a world war. He realizes that this would involve the movement seizing power in every country where it had the opportunity, if necessary by armed revolution, a paralyzing general strike, or coup d'état. But how can a leaderless horizontal organization achieve all that and ultimately lead to a World Party?

Behind that drive would be the 'world soul', evoking the divine. This is a beautiful concept based on a 'spiritual insurrection' that would "unleash the greatest creative form in history: the collective will to break out of old patterns." He thinks that such a new social order would be based on a coordinated uprising of seven billion. But can our society that celebrates liberalism and diversity be led by one party?

He suggests with great insight that before trying to improve our society we should try to change ourselves, but insufficiently emphasizes that what motivates all actions and behaviour of living things is the balance of *sacrifice and reward*, which asks us: do we live well above sustainable standards, and if so, are we willing to give those standards up?

The book is valuable in that it illuminates our dilemmas, but can we share the author's belief that "the authority of truth and reason will shape mankind into one social organism" at a time of massive deforestation and natural disasters, 60 million refugees worldwide, and an increase in the number of gated communities? Are we not just another intuition-driven species, surviving because we can adapt to changing social and ecological environments?

We need to think farther ahead when we start our protests.

Fred Lautenschlaeger is a member of First Unitarian Church of Toronto. His t-shirt reads: A Walk on the Wild Side



Towards Effective Action

How to Get People to Pitch In

by Erez Yoeli, Syon Bhanot, Gordon Kraft-Todd and David Rand

Last month [April 2015] Jerry Brown, the Democratic governor of California, issued that drought-racked state's first-ever mandatory water reductions. "As Californians, we must pull together and save water in every way possible," he said.

Conserving water requires large-scale cooperation, just like reducing carbon emissions or eradicating measles through vaccinations. When you water your garden less, take public transportation instead of your car or vaccinate your children, you're taking on personal cost (an uglier garden, a slower commute, a grumpier child) for the benefit of society.

Financial incentives often don't work

The "Pigouvian" approach to encouraging cooperation, named after the economist who first suggested it nearly a century ago, is to change the price—i.e., the personal cost of cooperating: make water more expensive, tax carbon or pay people to vaccinate their kids.

But Californians are stubbornly unresponsive to higher water prices. Estimates suggest that a 10 percent increase in price would result in reductions in water use of 2 to 4 percent. That implies that huge, politically infeasible price increases would be needed to address the state's needs.

This problem isn't unique to Californians and their efforts to save water. In a recent review of field experiments that promote cooperation in the journal *Current Opinion in Behavioural Sciences*, we found that changing the material costs and benefits of cooperation often doesn't work. Researchers have tried various forms of payments—paying cash, handing out t-shirts—and they've tried providing information on how to cooperate, with only limited success.

Social visibility can work

What does consistently work may be surprising: interventions based not on money, but on leveraging social concerns.

There are two ways to do this, both building on people's desire for others to think highly of them. One is to make people's cooperative (or selfish) choices more observable to others, like neighbours or co-workers. The second works in the opposite

direction, providing people with information about how others around them are behaving (this is called a "descriptive social norm").

To see how this might work, consider the California drought. The state could set up a website where homeowners pledge publicly to reduce their water consumption by 15 percent. Those who do would get a lawn sign that would say something like, "My lawn is yellow because I took a pledge to help California. Join me at yellowlawns.ca.gov."

And what about norms? Innovative companies and public utilities are already on the case. A San Francisco-based firm, WaterSmart Software, sends mailers that allow homeowners to compare their water use to their neighbours'. Estimates suggest that these mailers reduce water use by 2 to 5 percent—the same as a 10 percent price increase.

Why do social interventions work?

Beyond helping our families—the people to whom we're genetically related—making others better off is not our main motivation to cooperate. Instead, we cooperate because it makes us look

good. This can be going on consciously or, more often, subconsciously (a gut feeling of guilt when your neighbour sees you turning on your sprinkler).

When your choices are observable, your good actions may benefit your reputation. Similarly, norms make you feel you're expected to cooperate in a given situation, and that people may think poorly of you if they learn you are not doing your part.

Why don't material incentives work as well?

There are at least two reasons. The first is that such schemes often pay (or charge) too little, so it's not worth the trouble. Avoiding an increase in a water bill of \$25 a month just isn't worth the effort of re-programming the sprinklers.

The second is that when we're paid to cooperate, observers can't tell whether we are "purely" motivated, or just want the \$25. Therefore, when we cooperate, we don't get the same "credit" for being good people, so we're less motivated to cooperate. This effect can be so strong that paying people can actually reduce overall cooperation.

Conclusion

In short, the currency that matters most is not measured in dollars and cents, but in the opinions of others. Putting this principle into practice can help us make the world a better place, or at least



Mooring buoy in dry inlet of Shasta Lake, California. Photo by Justin Sullivan of Getty Images

Towards Effective Action

make California's dwindling water supply last just a little bit longer.

Erez Yoeli and Syon Bhanot are economists at Harvard, and Gordon Kraft-Todd and David Rand are psychologists at Yale. This story, here edited, appeared in the New York Times, May 15, 2015.

Scott Reid, M.P., Accosts Minister Monsef

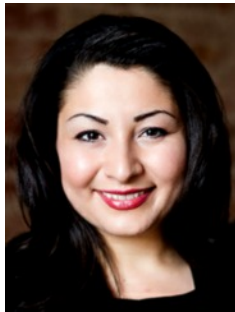
On December 12, 2016, Scott Reid, M.P. and Member of the Official Opposition, wrote a public letter to the Hon. Maryam Monsef, Minister of Democratic Institutions. Here, in part is what he wrote (for the complete letter, see: <http://scottreid.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/16.12.12-Reid-Scott-Letter-to-Maryam-Monsef-PROC-Dec.-13.pdf>). Editor.

Dear Minister Monsef,

I have placed a notice of motion with the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs (PROC)...to invite you back to the Committee to discuss [My.Democracy.ca and your government's planned agenda on electoral reform] at a later date...

The reason for my questions tomorrow, and for my motion, is that, thus far in Question Period, you have not given specific answers to these questions, asked to you in the House. Some of these questions are as follows:

- Who made the final decisions regarding the wording of the questions and, after a version of the questionnaire was field-tested in November, which questions would be included, which would be excluded, and which would be added after the results of that field-test were known?
- Why didn't the government include questions from the special committee's on-line survey, such as whether Canadians want a referendum on any proposal for change, as recommended by the committee in its second report?
- How does the government's contractor for MyDemocracy.ca, Vox Pop Labs, screen out multiple responses from single individuals, from non-citizens, and from malicious users?
- ...
- Why do many questions on your survey include obviously false choices, misrepresentations of reality, unnecessarily simplified alternatives, and clearly biased "even if" statements, when



Hon. Minister Monsef

clearly acceptable alternatives, in the form of questions included in the special committee's questionnaire, were available for months?

- Why did you accuse the special committee of taking a pass on the hard choices, ... while at the same time failing to ask substantive questions to Canadians in your own, subsequent questionnaire at MyDemocracy.ca, apart from those on the secondary matters of mandatory voting, on-line voting, and lowering the voting age?

For your information, I have made this letter public on my website, and will be distributing copies to members of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

Sincerely,
Scott Reid



Scott Reid is the Conservative Member of Parliament for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston.

Talking to Conservatives

Part of a discussion on
Fair Vote Canada's e-discussion list

One thing to keep in mind [when promoting electoral reform] is we are talking with both left- and right-leaning people.

Not only the values we express, but the language we use is important. For example, the right thinks the left goes way too far with the "fairness" idea (sacredness and loyalty tend to be more important to them). Using the word "unfair" may result in conservatives immediately labelling proportional representation (PR) as a left person's issue and so is of no interest to them. (More information on this in the excellent book "The Righteous Mind" by Jonathan Haidt.)

Could we use the word "undemocratic" instead of "unfair"? Democracy is highly valued by almost everyone in Canada. And the FPTP system definitely has undemocratic aspects to it... just because everyone gets to vote doesn't mean it's democratic.

Right-leaning people, often very wisely, tend to be slower to adopt new ideas and changes. I could be wrong, but I suspect there are more left-leaning people than right-leaning people on this discussion list. If that is the case, that means many of us will have to make a special effort to see things from a right-wing perspective. And ironically, seeing things from another's perspective is exactly the sort of thing that will be required by our politicians if we do get PR (I call it maturation).

For example, a conservative would like to know if our whole electoral system would have to be turned upside-down to achieve PR, so it is probably important to explain what would stay the same under a PR system.

Christine Watts, member
Fair Vote Canada

Towards Effective Action

Effective Social Action

Editor's note: Many social activists have been working for years to get progressive changes from our governments at all levels, but our delegations, demonstrations and letters have met with silence. Then, last year, Faith in Action (FIA), a small multi-faith organization in Victoria, B.C., became aware of a method of social action developed by Saul Alinsky. Below is brief information about Alinsky, followed by an explanation of how his method will work for Congregation Emanu-el by its Rabbi, Harry Brechner. Rabbi Brechner is a member of FIA.

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia: **Saul David Alinsky** (January 30, 1909 – June 12, 1972) was an American community organizer and writer. He is generally considered to be the founder of modern community organizing, and is noted for his 1971 book *Rules for Radicals*.



Saul Alinsky

Community organizing is a process where people who live in proximity to each other come together into an organization that acts in their shared self-interest. A core goal of community organizing is to generate *lasting power* for an organization representing the community, allowing it to influence key decision-makers on a range of issues over time. This can get community organizing groups a place at the table *before* important decisions are made. Community organizers work with and develop new local leaders, facilitating coalitions and assisting in the development of campaigns.

Greater Victoria Acting Together

by Rabbi Harry Brechner

GVAT, *Greater Victoria Acting Together* (for the common good) offers the means to greater power through representation while strengthening each member organization. GVAT is affiliated with the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), a community organizing movement based on the ideology of Saul Alinsky. Saul Alinsky's philosophy is that positive change is based on relationship—community organizations need to know each other, work with one another and strengthen each other. The IAF has alliances around the world, in Germany, Ireland, Australia and the U.S., all offer-



Photo: Nathan Kelerstein

Rabbi Harry Brechner of
Congregation Emanu-el,
Victoria, B.C.

ing consultation, training and organizing principles.

GVAT hopes that in the future our aggregated numbers can exceed 200,000 locally. When we join with our sister alliance in Vancouver (<http://iafnw.org/canada/metrovancouveralliance>) we will be half a million strong. The process is not geared towards demonstrations or protests, but rather to pinpointing and determining four issues that all member organizations can fully support. These will be the issues we will advocate for and to which GVAT will hold our political leaders accountable.

A core principle of the alliance is understanding that strong organizations create strong communities, and strength is a product of relationship building—we are always stronger together. The premier task for our Congregation Emanu-el is to have a listening campaign. Congregants who are suited to listening will train with a leader of GVAT to organize the campaign. We won't be able to listen to every congregant but, if you are interested in participating, we need your voice. We want to know about what you love about our congregation, and what attaches you to our shul. We also want to know what has been tricky

for you in your synagogue experience. Through the listening campaign we hope to identify our congregation's strengths and weaknesses. In this way we can share our strengths with other organizations and we can call on sister organizations for support.

If, for instance, we identify that we are weak at grant writing and there is a sister organization that excels at grant writing, we can call on that organization to teach us. We will also query our congregants about larger issues that also affect our greater community. What are the most crucial issues that we collectively identify? We will share our key issues with our sister organizations and determine together how we will work towards the common good.

The current weather in the world of social justice is not always an entirely comfortable place for Jewish organizations. This is precisely why I am drawn to the principles of GVAT, why I am drawn to relationship-building. This is why our board of directors voted unanimously to join and get involved. Before we can enter into relationships with others and work towards positive change we need to know ourselves—this step is crucial.

Environment

Snapshot from Marrakech

by Ahti Tolvanen

Some things got done at the November 2016 Climate Summit in Marrakech, but the big job still lies ahead. The warming continues. People in the Pacific islands are fleeing rising seas and the ice caps will continue melting even at a 1.5° C cap, the preferred target Canada proposed in Paris a year earlier.

Canada is running into a credibility problem as a world leader in addressing the climate crisis: it remains a leading per capita culprit in emissions and continues building pipelines. Of course, credibility is not only Canada's problem. The Finns, who strive to be a clean-technology solutions leader, are cutting down too much carbon-binding forest.

Then came news during the conference that Arctic Ocean temperatures were 2.0 C above normal this October. Morocco is becoming a desert, but Moroccans came across as very serious—witness the acres of solar arrays. The climate issue seized delegates anew.

Marrakech is where the World Trade Organization (WTO) started. Maybe it can reconvene to put up tariff barriers on products and services from countries that are not severely cutting greenhouse emissions. This sounds like a long shot but serious climate activists like James Hansen, formerly a lead scientist with NASA, have also suggested that stiff tax and tariff barriers to carbon use are the only answer. Otherwise, he fears, Paris will only become Kyoto II.

To find something optimistic, one might look at the work on the "COP rule book" which was moved ahead in Marrakech and is expected to be launched in 2018, two years ahead of schedule. This happened because enough countries signed to ratify the Paris agreement in only one year instead of by 2020 as expected. The rule book would clarify things like: if Canada is going to cut 80% below 2005 levels, as Minister McKenna announced, does that mean getting to 20% of 2005 carbon emissions or only removing 80% of what we had then? It is hopeful indeed that by 2018 the guidelines will be clearer.

Still missing are tighter limits on black carbon (from coal) and atmospheric ozone that may soon cause half the current warming.

Then came the US election results. It was the morning the oranges fell from the trees in the hotel courtyard.

Trump's announced intention to scrap the whole Paris treaty was, of course, a blow to everyone's morale, particularly my friends sent as observers by the UUA via the UNO. Many had put their hearts into work on this issue for years. We recalled, however, that many significant local and state initiatives,

including Al Gore's campaign as well as emission caps in California and many urban centres, were implemented even after Bush pulled out of Kyoto.

Marrakech is a centre of Morocco's Berber minority which forms a majority in Marrakech. Many Berbers are joining a movement to demand more minority rights from the dominant Arab establishment. There was concern that

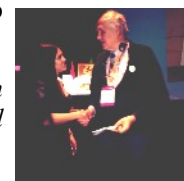
Berbers might disrupt proceedings in Marrakech, but this did not happen, probably because there is a high awareness of the perils of warming in the arid areas where Berbers live. Their representatives at the event were also outspoken about the need to cut greenhouse emissions.

A local happy experience to bring home was the recognition that our north western Ontario community-theatre group received for raising community awareness of environmental issues. We actually began work on this in Thunder

Bay at Lakehead Unitarian Fellowship. The photo below shows the author shaking hands with panel moderator Clara Ortiz, a film producer and actress originally from Bolivia after the "Art for Good" event at Marrakech's Palais des Congres.

After leaving Morocco, I found myself often sleeping in. I guess I had become accustomed to hearing the "call to prayer."

Ahti Tolvanen was CUSJ's observer in Marrakech. He is a Member of Lakehead Unitarian Fellowship.



Saving the Human Race is too Expensive!

“As every environmentalist knows, over the last few centuries we humans have created an ecologically unsustainable industrial economy. Unless we radically reform our way of doing things and create a sustainable economic system, we are doomed to suffer drastic changes. “What most environmentalists—and indeed most economists—do not know is that over the last few centuries we humans have also created an economically unsustainable financial system. Unless we radically reform this financial system it will recurrently break down and thwart our efforts to heal this planet. “Our current financial system diverts us from our real problems to ask: ‘where is the money going to come from?’ This should be the least of our worries. As long as we have vast unmet human needs and idle human and nonhuman resources...finance should never be allowed to stand in the way of doing what must be done.

“Could anything be more insane than for the human race to die out because we ‘couldn't afford’ to save ourselves?”

The late Dr. John Hargrove Hotson, Emeritus Professor of Economics, University of Waterloo and co-founder of Committee on Monetary and Economic Reform (COMER). 1993.

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President
Margaret Rao

Editorial Committee
Philip Symons, Editor, Don Vipond,
and Leslie Gillett

Production and Proof Reading
Philip Symons, Alastair Henderson,
and Debra Mair

Distribution Lists
Joy Silver

Submissions to or enquiries regarding
JUSTnews should be addressed to:

Philip Symons, Editor JUSTnews
1394 Vista Hts.
Victoria, BC, V8T 2J3

Phone 250 592-6484
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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