

America's Plutocratic Traditions

Some voters are in disbelief that Mitt Romney's tax plan would raise taxes on the poor and the middle class in order to reduce them even more on the rich. But government strategies favoring the rich date back to the origins of the Republic, notes ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar.

By Paul R. Pillar

I recently read a book by University of Maryland historian Terry Bouton, *Taming Democracy*, which is an account of the intense struggles over wealth and power that emerged in the earliest days of the United States. Bouton's detailed research was focused on Pennsylvania, but he describes patterns that also appeared elsewhere in the infant republic.

The core of the story he tells is that the colonial coalition that made possible the political break with Britain fractured even while the Revolutionary War was still in progress, as wealthy interests in the colonies quickly had second thoughts about the democratic fervor that they had helped to set in motion and how it might jeopardize their ability to amass still more wealth.

Those interests then devoted themselves to implementing public policies aimed at protecting and promoting the wealth of the moneyed class, and to structuring politics and government in a way that, per the title of Bouton's book, prevented the more numerous members of lower classes from overturning those policies.

The story demonstrates that strong class consciousness and class-specific drivers of policy have been a major part of American politics since independence. A key part of that class struggle all along has been a strong sense among a wealthy elite of separateness from the non-wealthy, and of having a right to push hard for public policies that favor their own class even if they are clearly detrimental to others.

A major figure in Bouton's account is the Philadelphia merchant and financier Robert Morris. Morris certainly has a good claim to being considered a Founding Father; he was one of only two persons (Roger Sherman of Connecticut was the other) to have signed the Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, and U.S. Constitution.

Morris also vigorously promoted policies that favored the financial interests of people like himself while adding to the economic difficulties of his less advantaged fellow Pennsylvanians. One of his major projects was the first privately owned bank in the United States, the Bank of North America.

As Morris envisioned it, the bank would be the sole issuer of currency in the state, a function it would perform in the same extremely tight-money way that had gotten Pennsylvanians literally up in arms against the British, and that favored the interests of creditors over those of debtors.

Morris and his fellow share-holders in the bank used their political clout to prevent competition from any additional new banks, public or private. The paper currency that the bank issued did not come close to meeting the broader public monetary needs in the first years of independence.

It circulated mostly among merchants and government contractors, and the smallest denomination (\$20) was too large for the average American of the day to acquire. Morris didn't care. He wrote to Alexander Hamilton, "If my notes circulate only among mercantile people, I do not regret it but rather wish that the circulation may for the present be confined to them and to the wealthier members of other professions."

An even more blatant ploy of using government to favor his own class' interests at the expense of others concerned speculation in war debt. Amid poverty, scarcity of money, and uncertainty about government funding of debt, many holders of IOUs, who had furnished support to the war effort ranging from food to blacksmithing, sold them for cents on the dollar to speculators who hoped to redeem them eventually for much more than that.

Morris not only participated in this game but openly promoted it. He told the Continental Congress in 1782 that speculators should be encouraged to buy up the IOUs "at a considerable discount" and then have the government bring the pieces of paper "back to existence" by paying them off at top dollar.

This big transfer of wealth would provide the affluent with "those funds which are necessary to the full exercise of their skill and industry." Bouton writes, "As Morris saw it, taking money from ordinary taxpayers to fund a huge windfall for war debt speculators was exactly the kind of thing that needed to be done to make America great."

We have tended to whitewash such aspects of American history from our consciousness, for several reasons. One is the hagiography we customarily apply to the Founding Fathers. Another is that we lose sight of the connections between class consciousness of the past and that of today by euphemizing today's version and espousing more subtle notions of trickle-down economics than the crude version that Morris espoused.

People of his economic stratum were known at the time as "gentlemen"; today they would more likely be called "job creators." A further reason is Americans'

belief in the national myth that America is less stratified into classes, and exhibits more mobility between classes, than do other countries and especially the old countries of Europe. That myth has become increasingly distant from fact in recent decades.

Morris demonstrated how there was more potential for downward mobility in his time than in ours. Leveraged commitments he made as a land speculator fell through when the Panic of 1797 and the drying up of foreign investors' money because of European wars caused land prices to collapse. Morris lost his fortune and spent three years in debtors' prison.

His present-day counterparts who make similarly large losing bets are not thrown into debtors' prison, regardless of the broader consequences of their bets. Instead they are likely to live comfortably on previously stashed away bonuses, carried interest, and other winnings.

One of the most noticed of the economically driven domestic conflicts in the early days of the republic was the anti-tax resistance centered in western Pennsylvania in the early 1790s that became known as the Whiskey Rebellion.

Hamilton may have regarded his levy on booze as a sin tax and thus as an acceptable way to fund the debt that the new federal government had assumed, but that is not how the tax-resisting common people in rural Pennsylvania saw it. For them whiskey was not just a drink but a form in which to economically market their grain and even a medium of exchange, a substitute for money in what were still extreme tight-money times.

The structure of the tax also favored larger distillers in eastern cities over the smaller farmer-producers in the West. The Whiskey Rebellion tends to get treated in textbooks today as a landmark in establishing the authority of the fledgling federal government.

But it was first and foremost class warfare, as was the forceful response to it, which was cheered on by well-to-do gentry anxious to quash what they regarded as a democratic threat to their class's economic position.

Today "class warfare" gets hurled as an epithet against political opponents, but class warfare, waged by classes above as well as ones below, has a long history in America.

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More US Soldiers Die in Vain

From the Archive: One year ago, 30 U.S. soldiers many from SEAL Team 6 died when a helicopter was shot down in Afghanistan, deaths that ex-CIA analyst Ray McGovern said, tragically, were in vain. Though the war has faded from view, the killing goes on, 46 U.S. dead in July, eight more last week.

By Ray McGovern (Originally published on Aug. 7, 2011)

Many of those preaching at American church services on Sunday (Aug. 7, 2011) likely extolled as “heroes” the 30 American and eight Afghan troops killed Saturday west of Kabul, when a helicopter on a night mission crashed, apparently after taking fire from Taliban forces.

In churches across the country, the U.S. troops were surely praised for protecting “our way of life,” and few would demur given the painful circumstances. But, sadly, such accolades are at least misguided if not dishonest. Most preachers do not have a clue as to what U.S. forces are doing in Afghanistan or why.

Yet, should we fault these American preachers who reach for words designed to give comfort to their fellow citizens who are mourning the deaths of so many young servicemen? As hard as it might seem, yes, we should. It is high time these preachers be held to account, since the patriotic pap they dish out serves merely to perpetuate unnecessary killing.

Many preachers are intelligent enough to see through the propaganda for perpetual war; but most will not take the risk of offending their flocks with unpalatable truth. Better not to risk protests from pew patriots, and to avoid, at all costs, offending the loved ones of those who have been killed and, understandably, want to give some meaning to the young, snuffed-out lives.

Best to Just Praise and Pray

Far better to pray for those already killed now and those who in the future will “give the last full measure of devotion to our country.”

By and large, American preachers are afraid to tell the truth. They lack the virtue that Thomas Aquinas taught is the foundation of all virtue, courage. He wrote (to use the vernacular) that all other virtue is specious if you have no guts.

Writer James Hollingsworth hit the nail on the head: “Courage is not the absence

of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear." Like the truth.

Those who ache the most in the face of unnecessary death are mothers. And many mothers do summon the courage to say, and say loudly, ENOUGH. Yes, my son died for no good purpose, these mothers painfully acknowledge. He did die in vain. Now, we all must deal with it. Stop the false patriotism. And most importantly, stop the killing.

Cindy Sheehan is one such mother. She and others have tried to put a dent into the specious logic that attempts to translate unnecessary death into justification for still more unnecessary death.

But they get little air or ink in the Fawning Corporate Media. Rather, what you can expect to hear today in the FCM is fulsome rhetoric about how these troops "cannot have died in vain"; how their deaths must redouble our resolve to "honor their sacrifice."

Gen. John R. Allen, the top U.S. general in Afghanistan, has already primed the pump, saying on Saturday (Aug. 6, 2011): "All of those killed in this operation were true heroes who had already given so much in the defense of freedom."

And Joint Chiefs Chairman, Adm. Mike Mullen, said, "The best way we can honor that sacrifice is to keep at it, keep fighting, keep moving forward. I'm certain that is what our fallen would have wanted, and it is certainly what we are going to do."

All this was duly reported in the Washington Post and other leading U.S. newspapers, without context or comment. Throughout the day, TV viewers got a steady diet of this kind of specious logic from talk show hosts feeding on the grist from Mullen, Allen and others. After all, many pundits work for news organizations owned or allied with some of the same corporations profiteering from war.

Too bad CBS's legendary Edward R. Murrow is long since dead; and the widely respected Walter Cronkite, as well. Taking the CBS baton from Murrow who had challenged the "red scare" witch hunts of Sen. Joe McCarthy, Cronkite gradually saw through the dishonesty responsible for the killing of so many in Vietnam and finally spoke up.

Corporal Shank & Specialist Kirkland

Five years ago, as I was lecturing in Missouri, the body of 18-year-old Cpl. Jeremy Shank of Jackson, Missouri, (population 12,000) came home for burial. He was killed in Hawijah, Iraq, on Sept. 6, 2006, while on a "dismounted security

patrol when he encountered enemy forces using small arms," according to the Pentagon.

Which enemy forces? Two weeks before Shank was killed, Stephen Hadley, then President George W. Bush's national security adviser, acknowledged that the challenge in Iraq "isn't about insurgency, isn't about terror; it's about sectarian violence."

Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Makiki added, "The most important element in the security plan is to curb the religious violence." So was Shank's mission to prevent Iraqi religious fanatics from killing one another? What do you think; was that worth his life?

On Sept. 7, 2006, the day after Shank was killed, President Bush, in effect, mocked his death by drawing the familiar but bogus connection to 9/11, claiming, "Five years after Sept. 11, 2001, America is safer, and American is winning the war on terror."

Back at the First Baptist Church in Jackson, Missouri, Rev. Carter Frey eulogized Shank as one of those who "put themselves in harm's way and paid the ultimate sacrifice so you and I can have freedom to live in this country."

Correction: It was not Cpl. Shank who put himself in harm's way; it was those who used a peck of lies to launch a bloody, unnecessary war, first and foremost, Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney, not to mention the craven Congress that authorized it and much of the U.S. news media that went cheerily along.

Was separating Shia from Sunni a mission worth what is so facilely called the "ultimate sacrifice," or, for other troops, the penultimate one paid by tens of thousands of veterans trying to adjust to life with brain injury and/or lacking limbs?

Despite the self-serving rhetoric about "heroes," the young, small-town Shanks of America stand low in the priorities of Establishment Washington. They are pawns in the war games played by generals and politicians far, far from the battlefield.

In the Army in which I served, the troops were often referred to simply as "warm bodies;" that is, at least before they became cold and stiff. But that term was normally not accompanied by the mechanistic disdain reflected in the memo by a Fort Lewis-McCord Army major that came to light in 2010.

On March 20, 2010, Specialist Derrick Kirkland, back from his second tour in Iraq, hanged himself in the barracks at Fort Lewis-McCord, leaving behind a wife and young daughter. Kirkland had been suffering from severe depression and

anxiety attacks, for which he had been ridiculed by his comrades.

Expendable

As for his superiors, it was Army policy to do everything possible to avoid diagnosing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). And so, Kirkland became a new entry in a little-known statistic; namely, the one that shows more active-duty soldiers are committing suicide than are killed in combat.

Not a problem for Maj. Keith Markham, Executive Officer of Kirkland's unit, who put the prevailing attitude all too clearly in a private memo sent to his platoon leaders. "We have an unlimited supply of expendable labor," wrote Markham.

And, sadly, he is right. Because of the poverty draft (aka the "professional Army"), more than half of which comes from small towns like Jackson, Missouri, and from inner cities, where good jobs and educational opportunity are rare to nonexistent.

I suspect that one factor behind the very high suicide rate is a belated realization among the troops that they have been conned, lied to, that they have been used as pawns in an unconscionably cynical game.

I would imagine that corporals and specialists, as well as high brass like the legendary two-time Congressional Medal of Honor winner, Marine Gen. Smedley Butler, often come to this realization belatedly, and that this probably exacerbates the pain. Butler wrote *War is a Racket* in 1935, describing the workings of the military-industrial complex well before President Dwight Eisenhower gave it a name.

It is not difficult for troops to learn that the phenomenon about which Eisenhower warned has now broadened into an even more pervasive and powerful military-industrial-corporate-congressional-media-institutional-church complex. Small wonder the suicide rate is so high.

And for what? Please raise your hand if you now believe, or have ever believed, that the White House and Pentagon have sent a hundred thousand troops to Afghanistan for the reason given by President Barack Obama; namely, "to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat" the 50 to 100 al-Qaeda who U.S. intelligence agencies say are still in Afghanistan?

And keep your hands up, those of you who are about to throw something at the TV screen the next time Gen. David Petraeus intones the squishy phrase "fragile and reversible" to describe what he keeps calling "progress" in Afghanistan.

Troops returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan know better. It must be particularly hard for them to hear the lies about “progress,” and then be ridiculed and marginalized for having PTSD.

The Establishment Church

I added “institutional church” into the military-industrial-corporate-congressional-media-institutional-church complex coined above because, with very few exceptions, the institutional church is still riding shotgun for the system, and the wars.

Thus, instead of an indictment of “wars of choice” (formerly known as wars of aggression) in which many people die, including thousands of civilians, most men and women of the cloth are likely to fall back on platitudinous, fulsome praise for those who “have given their lives so that we can live in freedom.”

And there will be very few outspoken folk like Cindy Sheehan, painfully aware that courage and truth are far more important than fear, even when that fear includes the painful recognition that the life of a beloved son was wasted.

There may be just a few who will dare point out that the mission given our troops has made us less, not more, safe at home, and even ask what is so hard to understand about the commandment Thou Shalt Not Kill or the peaceful message from Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount?

Commenting on the killing of the 38 troops in the helicopter crash, preachers could consider using something less “quaint,” less “obsolete”, something more realistic and truer than the customary encomia for those who have made “the ultimate sacrifice.”

It might be more appropriate to turn to Rudyard Kipling for words more to the point, if politically and congregationally incorrect: “If they ask you why we died, tell them because our fathers lied.”

Or: “When you’re wounded and left on Afghanistan’s plains, and the women come out to cut up what remains, jest roll to your rifle and blow out your brains and go to your gawd like a soldier.”

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Iran as Political Football

As Iran becomes a political football in Campaign 2012 with President Obama and Mitt Romney competing to kick it the hardest and farthest there is talk about Iran's failure to meet its "international obligations" but little thought about what that means, notes Danny Schechter.

By Danny Schechter

What are "international obligations"? Does the United States have to uphold them along with other countries? Does Washington even know they are defined as "obligations owed by states to the international community as a whole, intended to protect and promote the basic values and common interests of all." By this definition, no one state can decide what's best for all.

When the United States stepped up its sanctions on Iran last past week, it cited Iran's failure to adhere to its "international obligations." There was, of course, no reference to domestic politics where President Barack Obama is under attack from Republican adversary Mitt Romney for what Romney considers Obama's failure to stop Iran's nuclear program.

Romney leveled the criticism in Israel hoping to curry favor and donations from Jewish voters. Scholars like Juan Cole found the exercise distasteful for many reasons: "There is a convention in US politics that you don't criticize the sitting president, even if you are an opposition politician, while on foreign soil. Romney clearly intends to slam President Obama while in Israel.

"It is distasteful that Romney is clearly holding the event in some large part to please casino mogul Sheldon Adelson, who first bankrolled Newt Gingrich and now is talking about giving \$100 million to elect Romney. Adelson is a huge supporter of far rightwing Likud Party Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, and published a free newspaper in Israel to support all things Bibi all the time.

"Adelson is under investigation for allegedly bribing Chinese officials in Macau in reference to his casino empire there. Since Adelson is potentially an agent of Chinese influence and is a partisan of one of Israel's most rightwing parties, Romney's indebtedness to him is disturbing. It is distasteful to have Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu interfering in an American domestic election by openly favoring Romney over Obama."

Distasteful or not, Obama's response was to show he can be unilaterally tougher on Iran by strengthening sanctions by executive order, based on Iran's alleged failure to uphold its "international obligations."

Ben Rhodes, a deputy national security adviser at the White House, said: "Where we certainly agree with Prime Minister Netanyahu is on the fundamental question that we have not yet seen the Iranian government make a decision to come in line with their international obligations. So we share very much the assessment of the Israeli government and Prime Minister Netanyahu that the purpose of the sanctions is to change the calculus of the Iranian government with respect to their nuclear program."

"And until they make that decision, we need to continue to increase the pressure," Rhodes said.

Okay, how do you decode this not so diplomatic language? What is Washington **really** saying and on what basis? It is saying or claiming or suggesting – while not proving – that Iran is in violation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, a treaty that, unmentioned, Israel refuses to sign and has not adhered to (in building its own nuclear arsenal).

With the White House, in full campaign mode, and lambasting Iran to deter more political attacks by Romney and to further placate Israel, the authoritative Congressional Research Service is on record as recently as June 26 in a report on this very issue titled, "Iran's Nuclear Program: Tehran's Compliance with International Obligations," that Iran may **not** be in violation at all.

Concludes Paul K. Kerr, their analyst in nonproliferation: "Whether Iran has violated the NPT is unclear. The treaty does not contain a mechanism for determining that a state-party has violated its obligations. Moreover, there does not appear to be a formal procedure for determining such violations. An NPT Review Conference would, however, be one venue for NPT states-parties to make such a determination.

"The U.N. Security Council has never declared Iran to be in violation of the NPT; neither the council nor the U.N. General Assembly has a responsibility to adjudicate treaty violations."

This all gets more bizarre because just as one branch of the U.S. government implicitly questions the conclusions of another branch, the same thing is happening in the military command in Israel.

Read this: "IDF chief Benny Gantz has further confirmed the outright reluctance of the Israeli military to attack Iran, a position that goes directly counter to that of Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu and Defense Minister Ehud Barak. Channel 10's Immanuel Rosen reported about an allegedly off the record conversation in which Gantz said that the Israeli home front was not prepared for the Iranian response to an Israeli attack. He added that such a military strike would have a

'limited effect' on Iran."

At the same time, posturing and preparations for an attack continue. The Atlantic Magazine says there is now a 38 percent chance of an attack. Others in Israel are still being belligerent. In response, Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has repeated his verbal criticisms of Zionism. (These are invariably conflated in some western media and pro-Israeli propaganda outlets as evidence of an imminent military threat of extermination.)

So which side of this issue does President Obama come down on? What facts does he select to support his actions? He chooses those that enhance his tough-guy credentials for political reasons. In fact, facts have mostly nothing to do with the war or words. It's all about politics and perception, or whatever his campaign believes will be most helpful this week.

"International obligations" are what they say they are. There's nothing international about that.

Meanwhile. Iran is continuing with talks, as PressTV reports: "A senior Iranian official says the Islamic Republic and the six major world powers (P5+1) will proceed with their multifaceted talks to eventually achieve 'positive and constructive' results."

Al Jazeera reports that Iranian-American author Hooman Majid says sanctions are "turning into a form of collective punishment" against people in Iran. He blames some U.S. media outlets, more than the Administration, as pushing for war: "The administration is not trying to prepare the public for war and is not manipulating the media, which is actually the ironic thing because in some ways they're trying to step back a bit. It's the media this time that has just jumped on this idea that we're going to go to war.

"And I certainly think there's an influence from the Israeli media and the Israeli propaganda machine, which is very powerful and permeates the American media all the time. I think there is a concerted effort on (their) part to prepare people, particularly Americans, that it's a righteous war."

One "international obligation" that the public needs most is for all sides and especially the media to start telling the truth. That may be harder to achieve than to get governments to act to uphold their "international obligations," whatever they are.

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The Ongoing Danger from Fukushima

At the 67th anniversary of the U.S. bombing of Hiroshima, Dr. Helen Caldicott, a co-founder of Physicians for Social Responsibility pediatrician and anti-nuclear campaigner, reflected on the 2011 nuclear accident at Fukushima and the continuing threat from its radiation, in an interview with Dennis J. Bernstein.

By Dennis J. Bernstein

DB: I've been reading an interview with Yasuteru Yamada. He's the president of the skilled veterans corps for Fukushima. This is the group of old people who volunteered, essentially, to sacrifice themselves because they had less years to live. And everything about this is extraordinary. You want to, sort of, talk a little bit about what you're thinking is lately on Fukushima and what's been happening there?

HC: Well, first of all, that report that was commissioned by the Diet, or the Japanese parliament, which said that the results of Fukushima was human error, a result of the Japanese culture, could just as easily been applied to the American culture. You are not as autocratic ... but on the other hand, the whole nuclear enterprise is totally controlled by the weapons makers and designers, and nuclear power people.

And the corruption is vast and they are all interlocked, as they were in Japan. And there is no independent body, none, that is not paid for by the nuclear industry that is overseeing the whole, whole process; both weapons production and nuclear power production that would protect the people of America.

They cut corners continuously, they lie, they don't inspect the reactors adequately or in time. Sometimes they do, but sometimes they don't. There have been some very close calls in America. So as I read that report for the Diet on the Japanese situation it really made my blood curdle because I realized that it was just as applicable, or even more so, to the American situation. So I would say that, number one.

Number two, the situation in Fukushima is dire. They are now looking at children under the age of 18 in the Fukushima prefecture, and they've examined 38,000 so far. And 36 percent of them, over one-third, have thyroid nodules, cysts and nodules, almost certainly related to their exposure to both external radiation, gamma radiation, but also to inhaling and ingesting in their food, radioactive

iodine. And children are extremely sensitive to radiation, 10 to 20 times more so than adults. Little girls twice as sensitive as little boys, we don't know why.

You would expect solid tumors not to occur, for another, hmmm, 10 to 15 years ... and this data is coming within the first year after the accident. So it clearly indicates these children got a whopping dose of I-131 [radioactive Iodine-131]. The nodules were diagnosed by looking at the thyroids by ultra-sound examination. They have not been biopsied. ...

should happen,....I will preface this by saying that thyroid nodules in children are, as we'd say in Australia, "as rare as hen's teeth." They occur occasionally as congenital abnormalities but they're virtually, never seen. In my years of pediatric practice, I never saw any thyroid lesions like this. And when they occur they should be biopsied either by sticking a fine needle in and sucking out some cells and looking at them under the microscope. Or taking out the lesion and examining it to see if they are malignant. This is not being done.

These children are being "followed up." Which means that they might have another ultra-sound in a couple of years. Some of the bigger lesions are followed more closely. But they're not being biopsied, therefore, no diagnosis can be made, therefore, if some of them are malignant and almost certainly some are, these children will not be diagnosed, they would require, if they were malignant, the removal of the thyroid, and follow-up very closely. And some will die. Now, these children who are not being biopsied are really condemned to a certain death, if they are malignant.

I guess I've never read anything in the medical literature, so absolutely irresponsible. The parents, I think, are told about the thyroid lesions but don't see the ultra-sound. The ultra-sound examinations are being done by, in some cases, very unqualified and unskilled people. So that is just the tip of the iceberg. I mean, let's face it 200 or so radioactive materials and isotopes were released from those reactors. Some have half lives of seconds, and some millions of years.

But, suffice it to say, all cancers, all cancers, and leukemias can be induced by radiation. And these isotopes go to many different organs. Cesium goes to the brain, muscle, testicles, ovaries, where it can induce malignancies. Strontium 90 goes to the bone where it can cause bone cancer or leukemia. Plutonium goes to the lung where it can cause lung cancer. Lymph glands where it can cause lymphomas, or Hodgkin's disease. Bone marrow where it's incorporated in the hemoglobin where it can cause leukemia or bone cancer, liver where it can cause liver cancer.

It causes the placenta where, like thalidomide, it can kill a cell in a fetus that's going to form the left half of the brain or the right arm. It also deposits in the testicles where it can damage genes in the sperm and damage the very building blocks of life.

And these genes, aberrant genes then are passed on generations after generations like cystic fibrosis, diabetes, hemochromatosis [known as iron overload]. There are over two thousand such diseases. And the other thing to notice is once you get these elements into an organ the radiation is persistent. Many of these isotopes last for a long time within the body consistently irradiating small volumes of cells which get a very high dose. And so, therefore, they are very mutagenic, they are very carcinogenic.

And the other thing to notice that the materials, I mean, the theta pollen in Fukushima was so full of cesium it was almost unbelievable. And that was blown all over the place. Someone tested some dust in a tenth floor apartment in Tokyo recently and there was a lot of cesium 137, 134 in it, uranium 238, 235, and the like, from the Fukushima accident, tenth floor of a Tokyo apartment.

And the food is radioactive, much of it. The rice, much of the rice grown in Japan is grown in the Fukushima prefectures. It's being harvested with cesium in it so they're mixing it with non-radioactive rice. Doesn't matter, you know, it reconcentrates back in the body. Sixty-three percent of the fish caught 100 kilometers from Fukushima have cesium in them. Tuna being caught off the coast of California is carrying cesium from Fukushima. Spinach, the mushrooms are full of cesium and other isotopes, but they're only just measuring cesium.

Cesium lasts for 600 years, it's in the soil. Every time it rains it gets washed down from the hills, into the rivers and into the ocean, and concentrating in the food chain consistently. So, therefore, the food will be radioactive for hundreds of years so it's not just the fact that people have radioactive elements already in their bodies, which will continue to be there for some years, until they're excreted, finally. But that they will be eating radioactive foods for hundreds of years. The food is not being consistently tested, you can't taste, smell or see, radioactive elements in the food.

And someone has asked me to write an article about what medically, I would suggest. I mean there are children living now in areas so radioactive that they were evacuated around Chernobyl. Evacuated. You know, exclusion zones.

I go back to how I felt two days after the accident occurred, it suddenly hit me in the guts. I thought, my God, there's absolutely nothing anyone can do about

this, to reverse it, either the accident itself, which is still ongoing and very, very critical. But more, nothing we can do as physicians about the people who will be contaminated. And that's what the situation is now.

If Building Four collapses, which is very delicate and damaged, from the previous earthquake, on top of Building Four is a cooling pool of spent fuel rods over a hundred tons, it's a hundred feet above the air. And it's very damaged. If there's an earthquake greater than, on the Richter scale of 7.0, they predict Building Four will collapse. Down will come the cooling pool.

The zirconium clouding of the fuel rods will burst into flames reacting with air at very high temperatures. Ten times more cesium and radioactivity will be released from that cooling pool than from Chernobyl. And they are talking now, senior politicians in Japan, about evacuating Tokyo, should that happen. And then it will contaminate enormously the northern hemisphere.

What else can I say Dennis? And what really worries me is the vast cover-up in the media in America, not just America but throughout the world. People are not learning what's going on.

DB: We are obviously very worried about the mainstream media. We're speaking with Dr. Helen Caldicott, formerly of the Harvard Medical School. She taught pediatrics. She was a pediatrician before that, and has been since a very important anti-nuclear campaigner going around the world. Her moving documentary [is] "If You Love This Planet." ...

I have just one more question on Fukushima, and it's sort of somewhat self-serving but I live here in northern California. My partner, J-Ha, is Japanese. Her parents live in Hawaii. She grew up and was born in Hawaii. Should people in Hawaii, should people at the coastline in the U.S. be worried, say in a similar way that Europe was worried and were dosed after Chernobyl?

HC: Well, you got, in some areas of America, quite a high fall-out initially from Fukushima. The ambient levels of radiation in Seattle went up 40,000 times above normal. There was radioactive iodine in the kelp off Anaheim, where Disneyland is. Because that came was brought through the currents in the air, and then obviously fell down with the rain.

And as I said tuna caught off the coast of California contained cesium. Now, it's quite dilute but, you know, the dilution really doesn't matter. The dilution factor ... because if you eat tuna, happen to eat it with some cesium in it, the cesium goes to one of your muscles or into your brain. Because cesium is the potassium analogue, it's like potassium and our bodily cells are reaching for potassium. You only need a single mutation in a single cell induced by a

very small amount of cesium to induce cancer.

But you must also know that the incubation time for cancer is anytime from five to 17 years. And when the cancer arrives, say you get a headache, or lose your vision or something and you actually are diagnosed with a cerebral tumor, it will not be noted. It doesn't say, "I was made by some cesium in some tuna, 20 years ago."

So the EPA has stopped testing your air, it should be, because if Building Four collapses, as I said, you will be in serious straits. The EPA is not testing the fish. The fish caught off the West Coast of America should routinely be tested because the currents are now bringing the radiation over to you. It's still a way off, I think, but the fish swim faster than the currents. And the tuna got here pretty fast. So you need to be cautious and you need to be demanding from your government, the federal government, that they adequately test your food.

However, if Building Four collapses or if there is another hydrogen explosion in units one, two and three, which could happen. I could go into that, but I won't, and more huge amounts of radiation are released you need to be seriously worried. At the moment just get on with your lives, and if you have eaten some cesium or some strontium 90, or whatever, in your food, well, so be it. There's nothing you can do about it. You can't get it out of your body. There's nothing you can eat that will remove it. So you just have to hope that you'll be okay.

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The Twin Existential Threats

The twin existential threats of nuclear weapons and global warming may work together to end life on Earth because climate dislocations will make desperate national confrontations more likely. But the world's politicians are doing little about either, writes Robert Dodge.

By Robert Dodge

This week marks the 67th anniversary of the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with the combined initial death toll of approximately 200,000 and thousands more in the years that followed. As Albert Einstein famously said,

“With the dawn of the nuclear age everything changed save [except] our modes of thinking and thus we drift toward unparalleled catastrophe.”

The legacy of this new age of truly massive mortality weapons remains to this day and those prophetic words are ever true. The world is wired for instant destruction with current nuclear stockpiles in excess of 20,000 weapons holding the entire world hostage. There is no chance of survivability of nuclear war for much of humanity and no remotely adequate medical or civil defense response if these weapons are ever used.

At a time when global economies are on life support and the United States is eking out an economic recovery, we are spending over \$54 billion annually on nuclear weapons programs. As we face economic challenges every day with so many of our infrastructure and pressing human needs of education, medical care, police and fire protection going unmet, we can ill afford this expense. The nuclear weapons industry has no usefulness.

Environmental challenges are real and threaten us daily. Climate change itself and its associated depletion of resources is a source of conflict. Gen. Anthony C. Zinni, a retired Marine and the former head of the Central Command, warned:

“We will pay for this (climate change) one way or another. We will pay to reduce greenhouse gas emissions today, and we’ll have to take an economic hit of some kind. Or we will pay the price later in military terms. And that will involve human lives.”

In a nuclear world, all war has the real possibility of going nuclear and yet we allow the continued existence of these weapons and incomprehensible stockpiles. In addition nuclear weapons production, accidents, storage and use have left us with an environmental risk and legacy that will extend for an unimaginable half a million years while civilization has existed for just a few thousand years.

If these weapons are ever used in a full-scale nuclear war the extreme climatic change that follows would end life as we know it.

Nuclear reactors further compound the nuclear legacy both from an environmental and health standpoint as last year’s Fukushima disaster so readily makes clear. The long term effects on health and the environment may never be fully known and it will take years to determine the cancer and increased death toll.

From a military standpoint, the average nuclear power plant produces enough plutonium each and every year to produce 100 nuclear bombs. That’s the equivalent of 3,000 nuclear bombs per reactor over a 30-year nuclear plant life. The U.S. has 104 commercial nuclear power reactors. As a result, the world is awash with plutonium, the most deadly substance on the planet.

How can this continue? International surveys regarding public support for nuclear weapons show 76 percent of global citizens favoring the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. Here in the United States, 77 percent of U.S. citizens favor their elimination. Their utility among military planners is also questioned with the U.S. Air Force and nuclear planners suggesting that our stockpiles could be reduced to ~300 weapons.

In this presidential campaign year we are given a real choice regarding nuclear policy. President Barack Obama early on in his presidency expressed his vision of a world free of all nuclear weapons and worked tirelessly to gain bipartisan support and Senate passage of the New START Treaty.

This is the first nuclear arms reduction treaty in eight years and marked an important resumption of a dialogue with Russia which, along with the U.S., has 93 percent of the world's nuclear weapons.

Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney has advised that he is opposed to the New START Treaty and has not expressed a position on nuclear weapons other than the expectation along with Republican House and Senate members that if President Obama is for it he is likely to be against it.

President Ronald Reagan was the last Republican president with the courage to articulate a vision of a world without nuclear weapons and if it wasn't for his Star Wars Missile Defense that vision may have been much closer to a reality today.

We stand at a tipping point with our world threatened every moment of every day with annihilation from nuclear war and the steady choking of the planet through climate change. According to the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists and their Doomsday Clock this year the clock moved ahead and it is five minutes to midnight, the figurative hour of humanity's catastrophic destruction.

Our future great-great-grandchildren are calling to us asking what did you do when the planet was threatened. How will you respond? Your response will help determine their existence.

Dr. Robert Dodge is family physician practicing in Ventura, California. He serves as a board member of Beyond War www.beyondwar.org and Physicians for Social Responsibility Los Angeles www.psrla.org. He is co-chairman of Citizens for Peaceful Resolutions www.c-p-r.net.
