

## **RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EP 102**

**Denis Hayes; Nicholas Kachman, Russell Mohkiber**

ANNOUNCER: From the KPFK studios in Southern California, it's the Ralph Nader Radio Hour.

STEVE SKROVAN: Welcome to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour. My name is Steve Skrovan, with my cohost, David Feldman. Hello, David. How are you?

DAVID FELDMAN: This is going to be a really interesting show. Really interesting.

STEVE SKROVAN: And the man of the hour, the reason we're all here, Ralph Nader. Hello, Ralph.

RALPH NADER: Hello Steve and David. Yes, it is going to be a very unique show.

STEVE SKROVAN: And I understand you have a new segment you want to spring on us later in the show.

RALPH NADER: Yeah, I'm going to ask exactly the obvious question that's never asked, and you don't know what it is, Steve or David, but we'll take it from there.

STEVE SKROVAN: That's correct, OK. But before we do that, I just want to say we could entitle today's show, Cars and Cows, because that's what we're going to be talking about today. In the second half of the show, we're going to be discussing Ralph's favorite nemesis, General Motors, the company that never learns, apparently. Author Nicholas Kachman's expose of the hundred billion dollar boondoggle behind the GM bankruptcy is called GM – Paint It Red: Inside General Motors' Culture of Failure. And this is inside, behind the scenes stuff that nobody really knows about, and that's why you listen to this show. We'll also be checking in as usual with Russell Mohkiber, the Ellery Queen of the corporate crime beat.

But before we get to that, we've had a number of listener questions recently, ones that we actually haven't gotten to yet. These listeners want to know about animal, agriculture, meat consumption and the hazards these activities may pose to our environment. And if you've written to us about that, listen closely, because our next guest may have some answers for you. David?

DAVID FELDMAN: Steve, this is our what, 102<sup>nd</sup> show?

STEVE SKROVAN: That is correct, sir.

DAVID FELDMAN: And did you ever think you and I could have the moral high ground above Ralph Nader?

STEVE SKROVAN: I did not.

DAVID FELDMAN: Are you a vegetarian, Steve Skrovan?

STEVE SKROVAN: I am a vegetarian, yes.

DAVID FELDMAN: Uh huh. Am I a vegetarian?

STEVE SKROVAN: You are a vegetarian, yes.

DAVID FELDMAN: Our guest today is Denis Hayes. He, along with Gail Boyer Hayes has written a book entitled, "Cowed: The Hidden Impact of 93 Million Cows on America's Health, Economy, Politics and Culture." Time Magazine selected him as one of its one hundred heroes for the planet. Denis Hayes helped launch the modern environmental movement as National Coordinator of the first Earth Day in 1970. Mr. Hayes has been the president of an environmental foundation, an environmental attorney, Professor of Engineering at Stanford, a grassroots organizer, a national environmental lobbyist, and a senior fellow at the Worldwatch Institute. Welcome to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour, Denis Hayes.

DENIS HAYES: Well, I'm just delighted to be here.

RALPH NADER: Thank you, Denis. I first met Denis in 1970 after Senator Gaylord Nelson and others proposed Earth Day, and Denis was the main honcho, a tall, lanky, earnest young man who exuded seriousness and had considerable managerial skills. I remember that, Denis. There were fifteen hundred events at fifteen hundred campuses for starters, and as you remember, the Earth Day event made the cover of Time and Newsweek, which was a bigger deal then than now, and put the environmental issue on the map, from which it has never receded. So let's get to this book that you all wrote. Can you just lay out for our listeners, who are oriented to be active, not just to be informed, the thesis of the book?

DENIS HAYES: Well, the thesis is that we really underestimate the impact of cows on the United States. In fact, we did this little informal poll where we would ask people, other than human beings, what are the most important animals in the United States? And people would say dogs and cats and horses. It just, things that made no sense at all. If you look at the 93 million cows, from the founding of the colonies in North America on through to today, they would be United Van Lines for western expansion, Paul Bunyan had Babe the Blue Ox. In a very un-environmental way, they clearcut all of the forests around the Great Lakes. They plowed our fields, provided milk, provided meat, provided leather, provided all kinds of things. Massive impacts upon our culture and economy, and are pretty much underappreciated. And in the process of that, I guess - and this is awfully long for a thesis - we have been treating them abysmally in vast confined animal feeding operations where they are surrounded by disease and just treated brutally like cogs in a vast industrial machine. Our hope is to create basically a consumer movement around - vegetarian would be fabulous, but America's vegetarians now are less than five percent of the population. The other 95 percent, if they could really reduce their beef consumption by 50 percent, causing that herd to go down to like 45 million, entirely grass fed, grass finished and organic, it would solve a vast array of environmental problems, boost human health, and make the economy more prosperous.

RALPH NADER: Denis, I don't think people would be surprised to learn that there are more cows in the U.S. than domesticated dogs. And of course, more cows than domesticated cats.

DENIS HAYES: If you do it pound for pound, there's very substantially more cow than people. We have more cow than humans.

RALPH NADER: What's the average weight of an adult cow?

DENIS HAYES: Well, it depends on the breed, but anywhere from 1,200 pounds to 16, 1,700 pounds.

RALPH NADER: There you are. The interesting thing about the way we view cows is with massive urbanization, people grow up knowing very little about cows. I mean, they know that cows - when they drive by cow country - seem to always have their heads downward, eating whatever they can eat and that they moo, and they're popular in children's animal books. But now that we are much more aware of the environmental impact of cows - granted their history as you narrated - they were extremely important in the development of what is now called the United States and its economy in many ways. Give us a thumbnail sketch of the environmental impact of cows such as methane and other ways they are inadvertently damaging our ecology at a very serious level. And this occurs worldwide.

DENIS HAYES: Sure. In fact, one of the things that caused us to write the book is when we were young and we would drive through what you characterized as cow country, you saw cows. By and large today, Americans can go on for months and months without ever seeing a cow, because they tend to be off in remote areas in gigantic facilities that have an enormous amount of odor, and they're pretty ugly to look at, and so they are placed where we don't encounter cows except in idealized renderings on the outsides of milk cartons and things. The environmental problems associated with them can go throughout the entire cow's life, from a vast amount of the American Midwest that is devoted to growing number two dent corn for cows, an absolutely terrible food for cows. It's like putting your children on a 100 percent diet of Halloween candy. And the whole purpose is to fatten them up, because fat beef is the highest rated beef by the Department of Agriculture called "marbled." That's from fattening, but that's what it is on through. Those feedlots have to do something with all of the manure that they generate. And by and large, it is the

largest really uncontrolled source of water pollution in the United States, bigger than the amount of human excretive that goes through sewage treatment facilities. And these CAFOs, it's disrupting to what is poetically called a lagoon. But this is not a tropical South Sea island lagoon, this is an absolutely horrible pit full of cow excretive. And almost all of them eventually leak down into the groundwater. As the poop in the lagoons is digested anaerobically by little microorganisms, it gives off methane, and also the same microorganisms in the cow's guts give off methane that it releases in a series of belches. And methane is, of course, a hugely powerful greenhouse gas. So the cattle industry has its own negative impacts upon the world's climate.

At the same time, cows are pretty destructive of the soil, the way that we are currently grass feeding them. I mean, there are wonderful ways that have been pioneered by a lot of good people that we write about in the book dealing with intensive locational grazing, which actually increases carbon sequestration and makes the soils much healthier and makes the cows much healthier. But we have an awful lot of people on land that should not be supporting cows, and what it's doing is causing massive corrosion and then the erosion, the carbon that has been sequestered in the soil is released into the atmosphere.

RALPH NADER: How does this compare to pigs, the damage of, you know, tens of millions of pigs? Did you ever go into that area?

DENIS HAYES: You know, that's a really interesting question. And when one talks about meat, one shouldn't ignore pigs and chickens and fish and what have you. But you have reached outside the zone in which I can comment comfortably. I haven't done a comparative analysis of the pigs versus cows.

RALPH NADER: It does seem, however, that they both have one thing in common, that is, industrial agriculture. That is, they're kept in very, very close confinement. Give us a description of what life is like for a cow in close confinement, if you could. Because this is an area where empathy really is needed. And you know, when you talk about the way pigs are confined, they can hardly turn around. They

literally can hardly turn around, they're packed so tightly together. Give me a description of cows, and then describe the slaughtering process.

DENIS HAYES: OK. Cows typically are able to turn around. They are not as tightly confined as often chickens are and pigs are, but they are in very unsanitary conditions, often up to their hocks in manure. And they don't have the ability to go out and do what their ancestors biologically were programmed to do, which is get out and roam over the fields and eat grass. They are in these operations where there's very little exercise. The whole purpose of it is to fatten them. They are fed prophylactically antibiotics, because there's so much disease there that they're trying to make sure that they don't catch, so they give it to them before they're sick. But antibiotics for cows, as well as for people, make you fat. So giving them the antibiotics is part of the fattening process. Technically, it's now illegal to give them antibiotics to fatten them, so everybody says well, we're giving them to them prophylactically so they can avoid the diseases, but the impact is still the same. And those antibiotics are creating a huge number of antibiotic resistant diseases. Eighty percent of antibiotics are now given prophylactically to farm animals, principally cows, and as a result a lot of things that infect people are not responding to antibiotics anymore.

RALPH NADER: Do you know roughly how much of the antibiotics that people ingest, first through prescriptions but also indirectly by eating beef, for example, is there any data on that, Denis? We're talking to Denis Hayes now, the author, with his spouse, of a terrific book on cows, the history of cows and the present impact of cows on our environment and on our diet. How about the absorptive capacity of people from eating beef that comes from cows that have been heavily fed, perhaps daily, prophylactically as you said, it's right in their meal, these antibiotics?

DENIS HAYES: The really big danger is the creation of the antibiotic resistant microorganisms that then get passed from the cows to the people. It's less of a problem that the antibiotics being in the meat and then being ingested by people. But the problem is just enormous. In the course of researching the book, interestingly, completely unrelated to the research, I contracted MRSA. I had this infection in my arm that just started getting - you know first - the size of a ping pong ball and then a golf ball and then a hardball.

And we used an antibiotic. It didn't work. Another one: didn't work. Another one: it didn't work. Another one: it didn't work. It was my sixth antibiotic that finally cured the disease. By the time that got there, I was starting to get pretty damned concerned. I think there is a very real chance that one of the plagues that is coming toward us in the future will be a completely antibiotic resistant bacterium that could have catastrophic consequences for people. And the thing behind all of that will have been our vast abusive use of antibiotics with livestock.

RALPH NADER: Well, if anybody thinks, in our listening audience, that this is a generalization, the medical literature estimates that at least 100,000 people a year in the United States, that's 2,000 a week on the average, die from the adverse effects of drugs. And a good part of that is an overdose by doctors' prescriptions and often patient demand of antibiotics, when they're not even needed. I mean people have colds, if they have viruses as a source of their colds, antibiotics do nothing for them. It's only if their cold is bacteria-based. So we're talking here about extremely serious things that are now occurring, that have occurred in the recent decades, not something that's totally looming on the horizon.

DENIS HAYES: Commenting on the two topics of your program here, cows and cars, if you look at the trend lines, in very large measure because of the good work that you have been doing for so many decades, cars are getting safer than they were when you started out, and the number of deaths are going down. With antibiotics, it's going exactly the opposite direction. The number of deaths are going up every year from antibiotic resistant diseases. There are now about half as many people die from an antibiotic resistant disease per year in the United States as cars, and that increases about 2,000 people a year, even as the decrease in cars is about, did I say thousand? Million. No, thousand. Excuse me. So those trend lines are going to be converging unless something changes in the next ten, twelve years, and we're going to be losing more people to antibiotic resistant diseases.

RALPH NADER: This is a responsibility of the medical profession. They've got to get much tougher and don't say, "Well, the patients come in and they demand, 'give me an antibiotic, doc.'" That's not good enough. We've known about this problem of antibiotic resistance for over fifty years, and the

Food & Drug Administration is finally beginning to do something about it in restricting the amount of antibiotics used. Some processing plants and companies, tell us about that. It seems to be in the last couple years, Denis Hayes, some of these big processing companies are beginning to curtail the use of preventive antibiotics in the food that they feed the chickens and cows. Could you tell us something about that?

DENIS HAYES: Well, it's coming from the grassroots. There is an increasing awareness on the part of people that the way that our agricultural system has evolved - especially over the last 25, 30 years toward increasing gigantism and concentration of power - is not producing food that is good for us. And so you see this huge movement now toward vegetarianism, toward organic products. Initially, the organic stuff was out there mostly because that was going to be good for the environment, but now we're learning that organic food after organic food is better for us health-wise. I don't know if you noticed, a couple weeks ago a big study showed that organic milk had 50 percent more, on average, beneficial Omega 3 fatty acids than non-organic milk. And so all of this stuff is coming up that's affecting major food chains that are now demanding that their meats, among other things, be organic. And if you are organic, you are antibiotic free. And it's just bubbling up. One of the great tragedies in all of this was that set of things that hit Chipotle, because it was the prime example of a restaurant that was trying to do everything right and was a huge economic success story.

RALPH NADER: Yes. And there are others that are now waking up to it. Because they know it's good business, right?

DENIS HAYES: Yeah, exactly. And it's not just the little elite Whole Foods. I mean, we're seeing this in Costco, you're even seeing it in Walmart and Safeway. They're catering to the demands of the public. And to the extent that programs like this cause people - I mean we have this tendency, and you and I are as guilty of it as anyone - to think that the real answers to many problems are to change politics and move public policy. But we've been fighting on the Farm Bill now for 50 years and making relatively little progress. Whereas, this grassroots thing - operating very much like the demands for seatbelts, the demands



for getting rid of smoking, the demands for all of these things that have changed because the public absolutely required it - is having that impact on our food system as well.

RALPH NADER: That's right. When we roused the non-smokers in this country, things started to happen in all kinds of directions, and ended up with what was considered unthinkable, having the Congress give the Food & Drug Administration regulatory authority over tobacco.

DENIS HAYES: It would have been unbelievably rude for my mother not only to ask somebody not to smoke in her house, but to not provide cigarettes and ashtrays on every table.

RALPH NADER: That's right.

DENIS HAYES: And it's just a sea change that came. And we're really asking for people to do the same thing, even to become a little bit obnoxious. If you're in a restaurant, and they're offering you beef and you're a beef-eater, start pursuing it. Find out if it's organic. Find out if it's grass finished, not just grass fed. All beef is grass fed at some point in its life, and then grain finished. But if it's grass finished. Find five or six questions: find out who the ranchers were that they're getting their meat from and how they know that. Ask if it's been certified for having been humanely treated by one of the better certification agencies. And if you make those kinds of demands, sooner or later the chefs start responding to that as do the grocery stores.

RALPH NADER: Exactly. It's called inquiring consumer conversation where they go to buy things. And nobody can stop you from doing that, for heaven's sake.

STEVE SKROVAN: Well, Mr. Hayes, I'm sorry Ralph.

RALPH NADER: Yeah, go ahead.

STEVE SKROVAN: With that in mind, and knowing all the damage this causes and knowing how personal food is to everybody, how can we morally justify eating meat at all?

DENIS HAYES: Well, that is a terrific question. We evolved as a species eating meat. There's a fairly well developed literature that says that the human brain developed the way that it did because of the abundance of protein-rich diets. Without weighing into that one way or the other, I think the moral aspects are things that people have different moralities. And we do not eat beef ourselves, but we're not scorning those that choose to do it. But to eat it in a form that is unhealthy for you and unhealthy for your kids and is wildly destructive of the environment makes no sense at all. So if you are going to be eating beef, reducing it dramatically – the average American now eats a little bit more than a pound a week – if that could just go down to half a pound a week, and it is that stuff that we were just talking about: It is grass finished, it is organic, it's antibiotic free, then suddenly you've sparked a revolution.

STEVE SKROVAN: But isn't that like saying, "Well, smoke filtered cigarettes," you know? Or "Cut down to just one pack a day."

DENIS HAYES: Yeah, it's a slightly different issue. I mean, with cigarettes you're saying, "Yeah, and that really didn't do anything for your health." With the beef, we're saying, "Yeah, this really will do something for your health." There's a different question though here, about the morality of your interaction with a sentient being that even in the best of circumstances is not treated super well, and at the end of its life is going to be turned into hamburger. And there are a great many people who - again, a small percentage, but still many, many millions of people - who say, "I just do not want to be part of that system."

STEVE SKROVAN: Right.

RALPH NADER: Not only that, it's just not healthy. I mean, the studies are starting to pile up that a heavy meat diet is just not good. It's not good for your cardiovascular system. It's not good because you're getting involuntarily a drug prescription like antibiotic residue. And of course, when we got the meat and poultry inspection bill through in the late 60's in Congress, there's a lot of filth involved. There's a lot of sanitation problems, all the way from the feed lots to the supermarkets. Try to give some light on this question. What kind of reactions did you get from the farmers? I mean, you have to feel sorry for the

farmers. Dairy farmers are some of the hardest working people in the world, and they don't make all that much money. And they are threatened with loss of their business. They already have problems in terms of competing with the big guys. What kind of reaction did this book get in farm country generally, Denis Hayes?

DENIS HAYES: Well, there certainly are some folks who have been hyper critical of it, who are - if you will - the Cliven Bundy school of animal agriculture. But what we did in the book, among other things, is profile a great many dairy farmers and cattle ranchers who are doing it right. And you're right, it's an awful lot of hard work. But if you do it right, you can make a good, solid middle class, upper middle class living in country where it's really very good to raise children. People are healthy and robust. And we just got person after person after person that are exemplars of almost the American dream who are making a decent living there. The interesting thing is that the grass finished beef and the organic milk costs a bit more, but they're worth a lot more. And so if we're going to be, and one of the questions that comes up is well, this is all fine for the elitists, but what are you going to do about the average Joe? It turns out that if some percentage of your budget is going to be going for protein in your meals, we're eating way too much of that right now. So if you cut your consumption in half or more, and you're paying ten percent more for the amount that you have and it's healthier for you and for your kids, then you're spending less money on this than you were before and you're healthier as a consequence.

On the question of farmers, we do want to say that there are a great many of them that have become actually fairly close friends of ours, and who are doing everything right. One of the interesting little things on this is that we've, it's almost ironic, you know, when you get to those big feedlots, the cows have tags on their ears with barcodes on them that they literally are processed like something that's going through an industrial facility. The farmers that were doing it right, almost without exception, gave their cows names. And that seems to have done something really important in a nudging way that changes the relationship and has them treated better and producing better products.

RALPH NADER: And what about the growing taste for bison meat and expanding bison herds? Do you think they have the same damage as cows? They have less fat, I understand.

DENIS HAYES: Bison are absolutely fabulous animals, and we are enormous fans. I will confess a few times a year we do get some bison, and it's a wonderful meat. It has great texture, very unique kinds of flavors. These are animals that lead pretty wild lives. You do not - bison hanging around in confined animal feedlot operations. There is, even with bison, and tend not to lace them with antibiotics, they are wild critters, incredibly strong and they've survived for a very long time with no human intervention in the ecological cycle. Whereas, if you were to take a typical dairy cow out to the farm gate, pat her on the haunches and say, "OK Elsie, you're on your own," she's got a life expectancy measurable in hours. They can't survive.

RALPH NADER: That's true. But as you know, Ted Turner has "bison only" restaurants around the country. And the herds - which came close to extinction because of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century slaughter of the bison by the white man - they were down to about 200 animals at one time. And now they're in the tens of thousands, are they not?

DENIS HAYES: They are, though a lot of those tens of thousands are hybrids of bison and cows, the so-called beefalo. But Ted has a lot of pure bison in his, a little tiny thing. He's one of my heroes and I don't want to say something that's critical, but in our somewhat maybe purist view, we'd love to have bison as well across the board, and the stuff that we buy is grass finished. There's a tendency on the part of Americans to want to have a uniform taste where you know what it is that you're going to be getting. It's the ultimate beef meal is Black Angus that has been fed for the last couple of years on corn. And you know exactly what that taste is going to be. Whereas with wild buffalo, it's a little bit like hundreds of different varieties of wine with different soils and different waters and different climates. The taste is different and unique. With bison, the best of them are the ones that are grass finished there as well, as opposed to those that have, some of them are uniform taste because the last several months of their lives they're fed a corn diet.

RALPH NADER: Denis, before we conclude, give a projection in the future. Where do you think we're going to be in about 20, 30, 40 years in terms of the consumption of beef? And to what extent is the vegetarian movement making headway by saying you can get very good protein by eating vegetables? You don't have to eat meat to get protein.

DENIS HAYES: Yeah well, none of us have got really terrific records of projecting 30, 40 years into the future. But if you look at current trend lines, vegetarianism is picking up more and more adherence. There's stuff going on in laboratories that I find frankly a little bit unsettling, but it's got a lot of money behind it to grow animal protein in laboratories where you're culturing it as blocks and you're feeding nutrients into it, but there are no cows, there's nothing alive that has consciousness, so there is no animal cruelty. And for some people, that gets you past the moral dimensions of it. Whether that will actually catch on or not is pretty hard to determine, but there's a lot of academic interest and money floating in that direction. My hunch is that genuine beef consumption from cattle that are out on the range will probably endure, maybe in perpetuity, but certainly for a very long time. It really is deeply embedded in American culture. But if we could do it the way that they did it in the 1940's, it would be infinitely healthier for people, better for the environment, and vastly better for cows than with the vast agro-industrial complexes that are now treating it like industrial cogs.

RALPH NADER: How's it going around the world? I mean, are we seeing a trend in reverse, higher beef consumption in China, for example? What's going on in South American and India, briefly?

DENIS HAYES: Well, the quick version is that it seems - India being an exception because of the role of cows in the Hindu religion - but in much of the world, as you become wealthier, people will eat more beef. You saw that in particularly stark form as Japan got itself turned into a modern industrial state, and beef consumption just absolutely skyrocketed. And then it gets to the point where the elite begin to understand that this is really not good for them or for the environment, or for their kids, and they start weaning themselves off of it. And there tends to be this sociological pattern that people who are the trendsetters - the celebrities, the wealthy, the what have you - do something and then it becomes inexpensive

enough that everybody can do it, and then they move on to something else. And that's sort of OK, because often initially the Tesla automobiles are so expensive that only the wealthy can have them, and it's the fourth generation that the rest of us can afford. That's happening, I think, with regard to beef around the world. And so as countries become somewhat more wealthy, they eat more beef. As they become wealthier still, then they begin to eat less of it.

RALPH NADER: But haven't there been epidemiological studies showing, for example, as people in Hong Kong and mainland China increase their beef consumption, their cardiovascular diseases started increasing as well?

DENIS HAYES: Absolutely. In fact, China is such a huge part of the enchilada here with regard to almost everything. There was this thing way back in 1970, where we started this interview, Ralph, where there were folks who were saying, "Yeah, there's no population problem in China. There's a population problem in the United States, because the Chinese just don't consume much of anything." To which I always used to respond, "Well, that's fine if Chinese peasants are going to be happy to be Chinese peasants for the next ten thousand years." But can't we have higher aspirations for them? And man, that has been delivered with a vengeance. And the economic growth there has just been stunning. And along with it, the consumption of just damn near everything on the planet - from endangered species to beef - has been dramatically affected as a consequence. And the health of the Chinese, for all sorts of reasons, I mean air pollution, water pollution, all kinds of toxics that they're being exposed to in their products, and beef consumption has been making them a much less healthy people than they were when they were agricultural.

RALPH NADER: Well, all I say, Denis, is viva vegetarianism. I don't think there's any meal that's more delicious than a vegetarian meal using all kinds of ingredients.

DENIS HAYES: You're right. It's delicious food, it's healthy food, and we should be doing it.

RALPH NADER: Listen, tell people who are really intrigued by what you've been saying in this interview how they can reach you. Is there a movement? Is there a website? And anything you can tell them

that would get them engaged. We're talking with Denis Hayes, who is the CEO of the Bullitt Foundation in Seattle, Washington, a foundation heavily into environmental activities. Go ahead, Denis, tell people how they can connect.

DENIS HAYES: For me, it's been through the website at [bullitt.org](http://bullitt.org). It's not like the National Rifle Association's bullet, it's like the old Steve McQueen movie "Bullitt." And for activism in this, being involved with the Environmental Working Group, which has been just a fabulous advocacy organization working on these issues on Capitol Hill, and the various kinds of public health organizations across the country all have things that are related to this, as well. And I would be killed by my wife and coauthor if I didn't put in a plug for - buy Cowed - which really does have a wealth of information on one: what is going on, and two: what you can do about it. But the most important things, frankly, is we've just been butting our heads against agribusiness on the farm bill now for decades and decades. There are ways that they can stop us until we get campaign finance reform and a few other changes in the system. But there's nothing that they can do to force you to eat the stuff you don't want to eat. So make a decision, the informed decision to eat intelligently. For a great many of us, that's going to be vegetarian, but if you're going to eat beef, then eat the right stuff and don't eat very much of it. You know, it's interesting, Thomas Jefferson was mostly a vegetarian, but he felt that there was a role for animal protein in his diet. But he used it as a garnish, just a little, almost like bacon crumbles, he would use a little bit of beef crumbles over the top of his meals. That's probably the right kind of ratio to be healthy.

RALPH NADER: On that historic note, thank you very much Denis Hayes. And we hope that our listeners will connect and informally connect by changing their diet or improving their diet or moderating their diet when it comes to beef and pork products. Thank you very much, Denis.

DENIS HAYES: It was a pleasure, Ralph. Take care.

STEVE SKROVAN: We've been speaking with renowned environmentalist, Denis Hayes. His book, written with Gail Boyer Hayes, is Cowed: The Hidden Impact of 93 Million Cows on America's

Health, Economy, Politics and Culture. We will link to it at the Ralph Nader Radio Hour website. Ralph, now before we go to Russell Mohkiber, I understand you wanted to turn the tables on your friend David here.

RALPH NADER: I want to ask an obvious question. It's almost never asked, although it's preceded by a lot of obvious questions. So let's go, David. David?

DAVID FELDMAN: Yes?

RALPH NADER: Do you like music?

DAVID FELDMAN: Yes.

RALPH NADER: What kind of music do you like, David?

DAVID FELDMAN: Jazz, old jazz.

RALPH NADER: Any other kind?

DAVID FELDMAN: Uh, I like big band, swing, 30's, mostly the 20's, the 30's and the 40's.

RALPH NADER: Calypso, possibly?

DAVID FELDMAN: Uh, yes.

RALPH NADER: Do you play any musical instruments, David?

DAVID FELDMAN: The piano.

RALPH NADER: When did you learn how to play the piano?

DAVID FELDMAN: From the time I was six until I took til I was 18. I'm horrible.

RALPH NADER: It's permissible to conclude on this note that you know a lot about music compared to the average Joe who never hit a piano key, correct?



DAVID FELDMAN: I would say I'm tone deaf. No, I was forced to study the piano. But I do understand, I can sight read music.

RALPH NADER: OK. Here's the obvious unasked question. Are you ready, David?

DAVID FELDMAN: Yes, sir.

RALPH NADER: Why do you like music?

DAVID FELDMAN: It feels good.

RALPH NADER: What does that mean?

DAVID FELDMAN: It makes me happy. There's a purity to it. I don't understand math but there's something about it that makes me, the sound, it's like tapped into the universe.

RALPH NADER: Martial music makes you happy? Military music?

DAVID FELDMAN: [laughs] John Phillip Sousa's early works, yes. I thought he got a little too commercial near the end. Martial music, no.

RALPH NADER: How about sad, morose, fado music from Portugal. Does that make you happy?

DAVID FELDMAN: I don't know if I've heard, what's it called?

RALPH NADER: Fado.

DAVID FELDMAN: I've never heard of fado.

RALPH NADER: Well, there are sad musical pieces, aren't there?

DAVID FELDMAN: Yes.

RALPH NADER: So you can't say that music makes you happy always. There's a lot of sad music. There's music that brings back bad memories. So let me ask you again. Exactly what effect does this have on your behavior and quality of life? You're too general when you say music makes me happy.

DAVID FELDMAN: Interesting, yes. Sometimes music makes me sad. Sometimes music makes me uncomfortable. Sometimes it makes me cry. Yes.

RALPH NADER: And you know, it's often said that folk music like Woody Guthrie and Joan Baez during the 60's movement, that folk music is absolutely essential to get people to engage in social justice efforts. Do you agree with that?

DAVID FELDMAN: Yes, sometimes music makes me angry.

RALPH NADER: But then how long does that anger last? Do you ever have an experience where music actually made you go out and try to register voters, get people to demonstrate in the village square on some important issue, join an anti-war march? You think there's really any transfer here? Or do you think it's pretty flighty, this kind of emotion that comes from inspirational music?

DAVID FELDMAN: I do remember Bruce Springsteen on Election Day in 2004 holding a Kerry rally. I believe it was in Wisconsin and he led people to the polls after the song. So yes, it can get people to be civically minded.

RALPH NADER: Can it do the opposite, though? Can it make people feel so good, listening to "This Land is Our Land," that they don't actually move from feeling to break their routine and get engaged in social justice action?

DAVID FELDMAN: Yes. I remember going to see The Clash during their Sandinista tour, and they were, it was very political, it was very beautiful. I remember thinking, what am I doing here? I'm hearing about Nicaragua and jumping up and down and getting drunk, but I'm doing nothing for the Sandinistas.

RALPH NADER: Before we conclude, here's the last obvious unasked question. Why is it, it is obvious but unasked, why do you like music? Have you ever heard anybody ask that question? They always ask, what kind of music do you like? Do you ever hear anybody ask, why do you like music at all?

DAVID FELDMAN: Well, my mind is racing now. What is the question?

RALPH NADER: The question is, why is the question “Why do you like music?” almost never asked, especially since there’s no culture in the world, according to my brief anthropological scan, that has existed without some sort of music. So it’s a universal. So why isn’t the question, instead of just asking what kind of music do you like, the question, why do you like music at all is almost never asked. Why do you think? Before we conclude.

DAVID FELDMAN: I don’t know.

RALPH NADER: On that note, “No say,” says David, “No say.” On that note, we will continue with our forthcoming series of Obvious But Never Asked Questions.

DAVID FELDMAN: Can I, I want to respond to that, because I do believe doing political satire as a comedian - it’s much harder to be a political satirist than it is to be Jackson Browne or Bruce Springsteen, because people don’t always hear the lyrics in music. So that’s why Republicans like Reagan can appropriate “Born in the USA” even though it was an attack on the USA. People thought it was a patriotic anthem. Whereas, a political satirist who uses words - it’s much harder to be political when all you do is speak. Music can obfuscate.

RALPH NADER: Unless you’re George Carlin.

DAVID FELDMAN: Well, what I’m saying is you can hide behind lyrics if you’re a musician. If you’re a politician or a writer or a comedian or a journalist, your words speak for themselves. So I think music is very dangerous. And I don’t, I haven’t read The Republic since it was first published. Wasn’t Plato suspicious, wasn’t Socrates suspicious of poetry and music for those reasons, that you weren’t civically minded, you were able to hide?

RALPH NADER: Well, they thought it was a departure from the pursuit of the rational mind, yes. They had rather deep reservations about music compared to today's rather superficial discussion. What do you think of this, Steve?

STEVE SKROVAN: I think it's great. I love David on the witness stand.

RALPH NADER: Next week, you're next, Steve.

STEVE SKROVAN: OK, well, OK. Yeah, I was going to pronounce him guilty, even without anything presented along those lines, because first of all, I presume him guilty for anything, but the way you were cross examining him I thought, "He's hiding something."

RALPH NADER: I think it's invigorating, don't you?

DAVID FELDMAN: Oh, I think David or Steve on the witness stand is great.

RALPH NADER: Yeah, this is good.

STEVE SKROVAN: OK, we're going to take a short break. And when we come back, we're going to switch to the "cars" portion of the show. That's after we check in with the Corporate Crime Reporter, Russell Mohkiber. Russell?

RUSSELL MOHKIBER: From the National Press Building in Washington DC, this is your Corporate Crime Reporter morning minute for Wednesday, February 24, 2016. I'm Russell Mohkiber. Theologian and author Sheila Hardy passed away Friday, February 12, 2016, in St. Augustine, Florida. Hardy worked with Ralph Nader's Center for Study of Responsive Law in Washington DC in the 70's and 80's, where she authored Hucksters in the Classroom, a book that won the 1980 George Orwell Award for honesty and clarity in public language. Last year, Nader commissioned Hardy to research and write a paper titled, "The Sin of Greed: How Profit Became a Dirty Word." "Sheila Hardy had a fiercely independent mind," Nader said. "She grappled with the fundamental verities of humankind, and she confronted the institutional hypocrisies of our time. Her study of the various major religions of the world was driven by

her belief that people should practice what they preach.” For the Corporate Crime Reporter, I’m Russell Mohkiber.

DAVID FELDMAN: Thank you, Russell. When General Motors filed for bankruptcy in 2008, there were a lot of excuses given, and a lot of fingers pointed at the usual suspects -- overwhelming healthcare costs, unreasonable union demands, too much government regulation and poorly designed cars. That was the conventional wisdom. Nicolas Kachman was an executive at GM from 1957 to 1993. He was an insider, a corporate environmental engineer, and he points to an entirely different reason for that 2008 bankruptcy that led to an enormous taxpayer bailout. He focuses on a long term strategic decision by corporate management that turned into a financial debacle that still burdens the company today. That decision was called “The Paint Plan.” His book is entitled, Paint it Red: Inside General Motors’ Culture of Failure. And he’s here to tell us all about it. Welcome to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour, Nicholas Kachman.

NICHOLAS KACHMAN: Glad to be here.

RALPH NADER: A delight to have you on board this program, Nick, if I may call you that.

NICHOLAS KACHMAN: Yes.

RALPH NADER: We’re dealing here with an exceptional book by an exceptional person, who’s been with General Motors for many years, had some success in curbing General Motors’ pollution working with good people at the Environmental Protection Agency in Washington DC. Tell us why you called your book, your new book called GM - Paint it Red: Inside General Motors’ Culture of Failure. Tell our listeners about why you called the book Paint it Red, and then we’ll get into the details.

NICHOLAS KACHMAN: Well, it’s about the paint system - a commitment they made, GM executives made - for the first time committing to meet a law and not resist it. Every other environmental law, pollution, safety, emissions, water, all of them, we fought every one of them, protested them, and then finally when the law was passed had to struggle through the mud and commit to them. But this one law came up to reduce the emissions from paint shops. And an executive, Godfrey, decided if he could get

enough money, he'd change all the paint systems to the latest technology that he didn't know anything about. And he would ask the EPA - instead of meeting the law that said within five years you can put on basic controls, RAC, Reasonable Available Controls, which the law required, which are supposed to be reasonable, cost effective but instead of doing that - "If you give GM ten years, they'll do the very best. They'll reach for LER, the Lowest Emission Rate systems. And they'll do it with all their plants. And what they'll do to force the other companies" - and that was really the scheme: to force Ford and Chrysler to spend the money - "We'll call it RAC. We won't call it the Best Available Technology. We'll call it the Reasonable Control Technology, because we're going to put it in all the plants. We're going to do this in ten years, but we won't decide the paint, because the technology has to be developed in three years." So it means in seven years you're going to change 37 plants - when the most you ever did is one or two plants a year - without any consideration of the economic situation, without any consideration the plant is scheduled on a basis of its air quality. So all the plants on the East Coast, in Massachusetts, New York, most blue areas would go first, with no regard to sales. Maybe it's the one plant that's making money, and the plant that's making the least amount of money is the last on the list. And why they did this is - it's almost ridiculous - it's something that should be studied. How could management allow that to happen? It should be used by business schools, because as this program took over and got in place, they're spending billions. They had no war room. They had no - this chart on the wall with the 37 plants saying how it's progressing. The other thing they did: they didn't put in a plant or two and then stop and evaluate whether it's, what they're doing is right or wrong. The plants are so overbuilt, they had hundreds of computer stations that were never used. They had automatic robots delivering material to the stations that didn't work. Instead of doing their real engineering approach, they forgot that and went with this commitment. What's really sad, after it became known, they still didn't go back at the people and ask them, "How did we get in this program?" - penalize the people. In fact, they promoted them. It's a study of bad management.

RALPH NADER: Yes. Speaking of that, on the back of the book, your publisher - Mariner Publisher of Buena Vista, Virginia, to those of you who want to get a copy of the book - they say, quote,

“In a devastating indictment of the GM management system, this insider expose outlines the hundred billion dollar fear-driven top down boondoggle that didn’t make the news anywhere. And it was called “The Paint Plan.” Now, for people who are wondering what we’re talking about, over the years I would get complaints from workers about health and safety in GM plants. And some of the worst complaints were the workers who worked in the paint room. We’re talking about painting your cars, folks. You want to describe what life was like breathing and being exposed in the paint area?

NICHOLAS KACHMAN: Bob Phillips and I went to the truck plant in Flint and ran the first test on a booth on emissions from a paint shop. We got up on the roof - and it was a saw-toothed roof - and you could look through the windows and see the painters down below. A truck came in, and it was painted green. There’s a sprayer on each side of the truck. They sprayed each other with green. The next car came in - truck came in - was red. They’re spraying each other with red. The workers in Flint were the most marvelous workers, not complaining, worked in horrible conditions. If it wasn’t the paint, it was oil mist dust and everything else in those bad years. The working conditions were unbelievable, and yet the workers in Flint did a hell of a job. They made GM a lot of money. And I think the water problem now in Flint - to think we ignored that city and the citizens there - I feel really up in arms about how they treated the people in Flint. Anyway, the working conditions and oil mist and dirt in forge and foundries was just unbelievable. I’m an in-plant environmental engineer, more so than out-plant. I think there’s more harm occurring *in* the plants than there are outside.

RALPH NADER: Again, and to capital the genius of this book, listeners, on the back of the book there’s a comment by John Calgani, Director of Air Quality Management at EPA between 1987 and 1993. Listen to what he says. Quote, “The GM paint program is a gripping case study of how GM’s corporate dysfunction affected people at all levels of the company and beyond. Nick Kachman always addressed GM’s environmental problems in a forthright, honest and informed manner. So it is no surprise that GM: Paint it Red pulls no punches and tells the story the way it happened. After reading “GM: Paint it Red” you do not wonder how GM went bankrupt, but why it took it so long.” End quote. The part of your book that

I think is so unique, it's not only a ground level description of what went on, but you take the responsibility right up to the top, and you say in your *Chapter 4: GM Leadership Woes*: "Although it was evident at all levels, the problem of pride had its origins in the attitude of the Board of Directors and chief executives. A sense of greatness, quote, 'We are the very best,' end quote, 'Who can tell us how to run the business?' end quote, reinforced the culture of superiority within management. It engendered the notion that any smaller company cannot possibly give good advice. In different decades, both John DeLorean and Jack Welch – Jack Welch was the CEO of General Electric – spoke out on how this feeling of superiority by GM caused its leadership not to take any outside advice. I could attest to that, huh Nick? Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric, was quoted as saying in a 2009 Detroit radio address that, quote, "GM's problem is that they won't listen to advice by those outside the corporation." End quote. Give us your thoughts on today's GM leadership, headed by the first woman to head GM, Mary Barra. Do you see any change in the corporate culture? I don't see that much change. They're still fighting everything in Washington. They're still not giving their own engineers and scientists enough leeway. And they're going crazy with electronic transformation of cars into computers on wheels. Give us your contemporary view, Nick.

NICHOLAS KACHMAN: I'm not even an environmentalist, and I look at that end of it, and I've seen her do things that thirteen executives before her, all male, didn't do. I knew that they were doing such terrible things. And the first thing she did on this ignition switch was fire fifteen engineers. But that doesn't change the culture. You have to get at the lawyers that supported the management through their worst possible decisions. People getting injured, and yet they supported not putting on bags, not doing seatbelts, not doing emission controls. And I knew when she let go of the five attorneys, I knew she was really onto something. I made a prediction. I called some people at GM. There's two other attorneys that have to go. One, the attorney that became head of energy and environment, a guy named Robertson, I think. He was the attorney, I think, associated with the Cobalt that got promoted with the approval of the head attorney, to be head of the new department that he called Sustainability. They're now collecting garbage and collecting cardboard and saying they're doing great things. Instead of taking care of the people in Flint,



they spent \$40 million in buying prairie grass instead taking care of people. Anyway, that guy should go. He doesn't know what he's doing. He's a lawyer that doesn't know anything about the firm. The other person was the head of counsel. I had business with him, and I know he should have been there. She forced Robertson out of the corporation, and then got the head counsel out. She's doing things that no other vice president before her had done, no other CEO has done. I think your letter to her about Flint embarrassed the hell out of her. I've given her the doubt that she hasn't had time to get to it yet, but she has to change their direction. You're right about what they're doing with too much electronics.

RALPH NADER: Nick, explain this Flint. You know, everybody has heard about the lead contamination of drinking water in Flint, Michigan, and the thousands of children who have been damaged by that, perhaps for life. In the summer of 2014, the General Motors plant that put out engine parts discovered that the water was corroding the parts. It wasn't the lead that was doing it. You want to explain that? And then they had a chance to alert everybody, everybody in Flint, as a good corporate citizen. Explain what they did in the plant and what they didn't do outside the plant.

NICHOLAS KACHMAN: GM for years, before the environmental laws took over, dumped every kind of contaminant you could think in the Flint River and the Tittabawassee River, all the streams in that whole area. We had a plating plant there that we had trouble with and EPA took us on. And now the pollution's controlled, but when they found out that the water was discolored, we had at one time the best environmental engineers in the world. I had a special group that just went to Virginia Tech and took a special course for five days to be able to test water. Where are they? They didn't do anything. They should have. GM should have jumped in there first time they found out their own water was contaminated - and I'm sure they tested it - and then gone in to some of their families, workers' families' homes, and taken some samples, put a report together and used their political clout, which they had. They can use political clout to get tax breaks for their plants. They should have put pressure on the agency and the EPA to correct that problem. In the meantime, they should have provided clean water to those people. The pipes are coated - the lead pipes are coated with a coating. It looks like heck, but it's a protective coating. You can't get to

the lead and poison the water. But what they did was not put in an additive, they put in a solution at the Flint River that actually ate away at the corrosion, the protective coating - like a rust - disappeared, got back to the lead on the pipe, and the water became contaminated. GM had coating engineers. We had environmental engineers. We controlled all those pollutions that we put in the river. We should have stepped in there with both feet. Imagine the headlines: "GM is a different company. They stepped in and they're fighting for the citizens of their workers and their families and the community in Flint." That's the cradle of GM. They're the ones that made GM. They should have gotten in there with both feet. That would have been - not national headlines - but world headlines that the company's really stepping up.

RALPH NADER: And this is, what they did was they disconnected from the contaminated water that the rest of the people in Flint were getting

NICHOLAS KACHMAN: And went to fresh water.

RALPH NADER: Yeah, and they went for the cleaner water coming from Port Huron, and they still didn't tell the people of Flint, even though they brought in bottled water for their workers because their workers were saying, "What's this foul smelling, tasting water?"

NICHOLAS KACHMAN: Right, right.

RALPH NADER: And so here we are, a new CEO, a woman, she's an engineer, unlike a lot of the prior CEOs of GM which were financial types. She understood the problem, and still, the GM culture said, "Don't tell the people. Mum's the word."

NICHOLAS KACHMAN: And that's unbelievable. I cannot give an excuse for that. But it really bothers me to think that they didn't really fight for their people. They would have been in headlines. They would have done so much good for their good name on the financial page: "GM really cares about their community and the workers, past and present." It was a golden opportunity. They missed it completely. And they give \$50,000 for bottled water, but they spent \$40 million for prairie grass to show that they're

concerned about CO2 credits. Imagine what that \$40 million would have taken care of. They'd pay the whole water bill for Detroit water, the six and a half million dollars a year to keep them on clean water.

RALPH NADER: We've been talking with Nicholas Kachman, who has just had published his book about his experience with General Motors as an environmental engineer, and is a person who made some good progress inside GM working with EPA officials in Washington. The book is called GM - Paint It Red: Inside General Motors' Culture of Failure. Nick, your voice has got to be heard in the coming weeks. It's got to be written up in *Automotive News*. It's got to get on NPR, PBS. It's got to get over the mainstream press. I'm going to try everything possible to make that happen. I just want to close on a quote, again by somebody who knew what they were talking about. Her name is Brittany Asaro; she's a PhD at UCLA in Los Angeles. Quote - about this book by the way - quote: "Honest, thought provoking, and at times very funny. GM: Paint It Red offers a story that is smart enough for readers well versed in the inner workings of the automotive industry, yet accessible to those with little to no knowledge of GM or its history. For all readers, it sheds light on how it was possible that such a colossal American corporation fell to its knees, and how it might yet pick itself up." End quote. They can get this book either on the Internet book sellers like Barnes & Noble or at Amazon, or they can go straight to Mariner Media in Buena Vista, Virginia. The phone number is 540-264-0021, that's 540-264-0021. The email is [www.marinermedia.com](http://www.marinermedia.com). That's [www.marinermedia.com](http://www.marinermedia.com). How would they reach you, Nick?

NICHOLAS KACHMAN: I don't use the computer much. I'm up at 86 now. My son, Robert Kachman, it's all one word, [robertkachman@yahoo.com](mailto:robertkachman@yahoo.com). And I'll answer anybody and take any messages if somebody wants to contact me.

RALPH NADER: That's robertkachman, K-A-C-H-M-A-N, at yahoo.com.

NICHOLAS KACHMAN: Right. Spell out robertkachman all as one word, at yahoo.com.

RALPH NADER: Thank you very much, Nick Kachman. Thank you for a marvelous rendition of your experience inside GM, which is relevant today and will be relevant tomorrow and will illuminate for

our listeners what goes on in a giant corporation that's strictly controlled top down and doesn't listen to the people on the shop floor very often, much less from outsiders. Thank you very much, Nick. We'll be continuing this effort to help get your voice throughout the land.

NICHOLAS KACHMAN: Thank you very much. Appreciate it.

STEVE SKROVAN: We've been speaking with Nicholas Kachman, former GM executive and author of GM - Paint It Red: Inside General Motors' Culture of Failure. And that's our show. I want to thank our guests today, Denis Hayes, coauthor of Cowed: The Hidden Impact of 93 Million Cows on America's Health, Economy, Politics and Culture, and of course Nicholas Kachman, author of Paint It Red: Inside General Motors' Culture of Failure.

DAVID FELDMAN: Join us next week on the Ralph Nader Radio Hour. Talk to you then, Ralph.

RALPH NADER: Thank you very much, Steve and David. Spread the word, listeners. Remember, when it comes to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour, we can make it happen, but only you can make it effective.