

RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EP 408 TRANSCRIPT

Tom Morello: I'm Tom Morello and you're listening to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*.

Steve Skrovan: Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. My name is Steve Skrovan along with my co-host, David Feldman. Hello, David.

David Feldman: Hello. Happy New Year.

Steve Skrovan: Yes. Happy New Year to you. Hope you' had a great holiday. And guess who we have here, David? You'll never guess who's joining us today.

David Feldman: Uh, Ralph Nader?

Steve Skrovan: Yes! It's the man of the hour. Ralph Nader is here with us. The show is named after him.

Ralph Nader: Surprise! Hello, everybody. [chuckles]

Steve Skrovan: Surprise! And today it has been kind of a tradition for us to, at the very end of the year, kind of look back at the setbacks, the progress we've made, but also with an eye to looking forward – looking forward to 2022. So, that's what we're gonna do this year. It will be kind of a free form, old school like when we very first started the show with me and David talking to Ralph and then we started having guests. And this is gonna be going back to that original concept here.

Then after we kind of do our little year in review, get Ralph's thoughts, we're gonna try to empty the mail bag. Got a lot of questions, many of them in written form that were left over from our Zoom [Video Communications, Inc.] episode a couple weeks ago with Richard Panchyk because a lot of questions did not get quite answered there. And as always, somewhere in the middle, we'll check in with our tireless corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber. But first, let's pay tribute to a couple of very important people we have lost in the past week whose praises we'd like to sing: Karen Ferguson and Archbishop [Desmond] Tutu. So, Ralph, why don't you take it from there?

Ralph Nader: Well, Archbishop Tutu was a leader in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, but a very special type of leader. He was completely nonviolent in the [Mahatma] Gandhi tradition. He was joyous; he expressed himself joyously. When he heard good news, he'd jump up and down and dance and embrace people. He was a champion for the aggrieved [and] the politically imprisoned all over the world. You would see his name on petitions and notices in newspapers. But I think what really distinguished him from almost all his comrades is that he didn't play favorites in terms of his stand against injustice. He was obviously against apartheid,

but he criticized the ANC [African National Congress], which led the fight against apartheid. And when [Nelson] Mandela became president of South Africa, the ANC became more and more self-seeking and corrupt. And to actually criticize the ANC was almost unheard of by any black people in South Africa. He criticized [Robert] Mugabe, the dictator of Zimbabwe. He criticized the Israeli oppression of the Palestinians and their dispossession and their theft of land and with some specificity. So, that's the sign of someone who doesn't play favorites against some injustices, but then goes silent on

other injustices. And he's to be revered and remembered and emulated. I hope that his biography is taught in schools all over the world.

Steve Skrovan: Now someone a little less famous, actually a lot less famous, but also very important is someone you knew very personally and mentored. And we just lost her a few days ago. Her name is Karen Ferguson. Tell us about Karen Ferguson, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Well, Karen Ferguson came to us in the early 1970s. She had graduated from Harvard Law School in 1965, and we had a number of really forthcoming superstars in a room. And I sat in the middle and it was in the early summer. And I said, "Well, who is interested in taking this subject on--the Federal Trade Commission?" or "Who is interested in taking on the issue of job safety and getting legislation; who is interested in banking?" At least one raised their hand. And I said, "Well, who is interested in pensions?" Well, pensions was considered the driest subject of all in the boisterous '60s and early '70s, but Karen raised her hand.

And until a few days ago, she was the tireless advocate as the head of the Pension Rights Center in Washington, D.C., which she founded in 1976 for defending the trillions of dollars of pensions, private pensions from corporate looting, corporate ravaging, corporate abolition, the end of the defined benefit type pension she saw coming. She didn't like the 401(k)s. They were too controlled by the companies and too unstable and where the money was invested. And she had it all. She was a technical expert on Capitol Hill as a citizen advocate in the massive ERISA [Employee Retirement Income Security Act] legislation in the 70s, which was basically the charter legislation for protecting private pensions. Very, very intricate, very complex.

On the other hand, when she received desperate pleas from people about to lose their pensions and companies restructuring, she was right there on the ground helping people, company by company. And she developed a number of people working with her, Karen Friedman and others, but there's no group like the Pension Rights Center in the United States. It's still one of a kind. People who want to find out what is going on there and helping them, just go to pensionrightscenter.org and you'll see what they've done and how you can be part of it either substantively because they have a network around the country, or in terms of contributions. It's a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. It's very, very sad to lose somebody of that stature because they just don't come along very often like that anymore.

Steve Skrovan: Well, thanks for that, Ralph. Now turning to sort of our retrospective here. I recall one of our very first programs of the year, last year or at the end of the year, we spoke to your Congressman, John Larson. We were talking to him about what the Democrats should do about various issues now that they controlled the Congress. And he had to leave the interview a little bit earlier than we thought to go to the capitol for the Electoral College certification. And little did we know, we found out about an hour later that all hell was breaking loose as the Capitol was being stormed by the MAGA [Make America Great Again] crowds. So, let's go to a little bit of an assessment, a report card on what the Democrats were able to do this past year having control of Congress.

Ralph Nader: Well, it took a big step for the Democrats. They had a whole bunch of proposals, [Joe] Biden proposals to rebuild the infrastructure to expand the social safety net. They got some of it through against Republican opposition. I mean, they've put the

Republicans in a position where the Republicans are on the record opposing child financial help, the \$300 a month that 65 million children have been getting month after month that is about to expire. They opposed the rebuilding of America the way it was defined in the Biden proposals. It's just, Republicans, a hundred percent of them, no, no, no. What's exceptionally strange about this is there are no defections. It's like a cult! There are a number of Republicans who aren't even running for reelection. What have they got to worry about? [Donald] Trump? They're not running for reelection. Then you have people like Senator [Mitt] Romney. He's entrenched in Utah. He doesn't have to worry about anybody challenging him, and he's rich. He's towing the line. Senator Susan Collins from Maine just got reelected for another six years. She is supposed to have a mind of her own. But Mitch McConnell has held on to 50 senators, 50 Republican senators, which of course allowed Senator Joe Manchin to be the tipping point, the big guy on the block, in tearing down one of Biden's proposals after another and then saying, "Well, I agree you gave me what I wanted." And then a few days later he said, "Oh, I don't want it at all."

So, the proposals included an expansion of Medicare and Medicaid. They included bolstering Social Security. They included climate disruption--\$500 billion over 10 years of that. They included a lot of good things. Whether the Democrats will get what's left to these proposals enacted in January for February will depend on whether Joe Manchin turns around and says what he was going to do before he reneged or working on the Republicans. I have no idea why the Democrats don't try to spin off three or four Republicans. A lot of the Democrats like Senator [Chris] Coons and Senator [Tom] Carper from Delaware brag about their relations across the aisle. I've never seen in American history such a cult in a party, not a single defection on most of these things. A few of them defected on increasing the debt limit--big deal. But by and large it was not what Biden hoped for, but it's a lot more than what to Democrats have gotten through in recent years.

Steve Skrovan: So, do you think there is any sort of pressure that Biden, the White House, the rest of the party could put on somebody like Joe Manchin, who is so obviously entrenched, and unlike Mitt Romney, not caring about what his own party is saying? Any leverage that they have or any threats that they can make that would make him change his mind about Build Back Better?

Ralph Nader: Well, he brags about being from West Virginia and that's all he cares about--the people of West Virginia. Of course, he's a US Senator. As a US senator he is supposed to care about the whole country. Well, I think the only thing that will change his mind is mass demonstrations. Although he boasts that he has all West Virginians behind him, they're among the poorest people in the country collectively and they're being harmed by his blockage. So, not from Washington DC, mass demonstrations from the people of West Virginia, around his office in Charleston, wherever the people can gather and say, "Look, we're your West Virginians, Joe Manchin and stop doing us in. We know what your game is. You represent the fossil fuel industry. You are a coal baron." And there are more solar jobs now in West Virginia than coal mining jobs. And there will be more in the coming years. And the Biden proposals include a big bolster of renewable energy projects and enhancements. That's what will do it. But the other is just to spin off three-four Republicans. If you spin off two, you'll get it done.

David Feldman: Do you mind – I have a question about how powerful a president could be. Ralph, the fantasy that I have of Lyndon Johnson is he would've called Manchin up and said, "You know, you're collecting half a million dollars in coal subsidies and your daughter is price fixing EpiPens. I have a Justice Department salivating over you and your daughter and your entire family. And I'm holding them back." Is that what Johnson would've done? And is that legal? Can a president use his Justice Department to threaten members of his own party to get in line?

Ralph Nader: Well, he wouldn't have done it that way, David, because that's almost like extortion. He would've been more oblique. He would've said, "Joe, you know, I know you've wanted this project and that project in Wheeling, West Virginia and Charleston and Berkeley Springs; we can get all this done, Joe, if you just cooperate with us." That's the way he operated. He never used the iron fist on these telephone calls, which, by the way, have been recorded and have been played on public radio until recently, again and again. So, we know exactly (chuckle) what persuasive tactics he used with these senators. He knew what they wanted back home. And they knew that if they cooperated, they'd get all these projects back home. I don't think that's gonna work with Manchin because he's gonna get these projects if he supports the Biden proposals--the infrastructure projects. There's something else at work here. And what's at work here is not just Joe Manchin. He's the point man for one of the most powerful aggressive industries in America – oil, gas, coal. He's their point man. And he is coming down hard on the parts of renewable energy and climate disruption. He's doing their job.

So, I think the best approach is ordinary West Virginians organizing a whole series of demonstrations, because they can connect with all these things that benefit them. So, the placards can basically reveal the various job offerings and the various better livelihoods that are in these proposals, and, shall we say, show Manchin for what he really is. He is not representing the people West Virginia; he is representing ExxonMobil and Peabody [Energy] coal. And so, that's one, but I just think the backup is just spin off a couple of Republicans who aren't running again for office.

Steve Skrovan: So, Ralph, I started by talking about having an interview with John Larson just before he went to the Capitol where the insurrection happened. You wanna tell us about an op-ed that you read in the *Washington Post* by a couple of generals who are speaking to that and the possibility of insurrection in this country?

Ralph Nader: Indeed. Actually, three generals--Paul Eaton, Antonio Taguba, and Steven Anderson. This is an extraordinary op-ed titled "The military must prepare now for a 2024 insurrection." And it's not what you might think it is. It's basically an article showing that the Pentagon cannot wait. They have to prepare to educate their people about the Constitution, the oath of the Constitution, about their proper role. And the quote is, "All service members take an oath to protect the Constitution. But in a contested election, with loyalties split, some might follow orders from the rightful commander in chief, while others might follow the Trumpian loser. Arms might not be secured depending on who was overseeing them. Under such a scenario, it is not outlandish to say a military breakdown could lead to civil war." And what they say is that the Pentagon has got to be prepared for all of this to prevent a breakdown of discipline. And it's really quite a bold position.

The other quote in the article is, "But the military cannot wait for elected officials to act. The Pentagon should immediately order a civics review for all members--uniformed and civilian--on the Constitution and electoral integrity. There must also be a review of the laws of war and how to identify and deal with illegal orders. And it must reinforce "unity of command" to make perfectly clear to every member of the Defense Department to whom they answer that no service member should say they didn't understand whom to take orders from during a worst-case scenario." And then they go into how to head off the signs of an insurrection to overturn the 2024 election. This is quite remarkable. And I think people who are interested should just pull it down and read it [from the] December 21st, 2021, *Washington Post*. And the lead author is retired General Paul Eaton [that's] EATON.

Steve Skrovan: Well, that really is scary because we have always depended on the ethic and the code of conduct of our military, which has historically been different than most other countries and regimes where there is that acceptance of civilian control. And you have these three generals now who are saying that is not a rock solid guarantee.

Ralph Nader: And to fortify what you just said, Steve, is another quote in the article. "The potential for a total breakdown of the chain of command along partisan lines--from the top of the chain to squad level--is significant should another insurrection occur. The idea of rogue units organizing among themselves to support the "rightful" "commander in chief" cannot be dismissed." So this is what's going on here. And it's quite clear that these three retired generals are not alarmists. They understand the potential. They're recently retired. So they know what's going on in the Pentagon all the way down to the squad level. So, this is a good sign that they are standing firm as they did in the 2020 election.

Imagine even having to discuss something like this, but then imagine having somebody like Trump coming back with his cohorts and his version of American fascism. Some people think, well, that's too strong a word. No. One of the first characteristics of fascism is that they automatically say ahead of time that if they lose the election, it's because it's stolen. Right there. That's the first indicia of a fascistic political system.

Steve Skrovan: The messaging here is really interesting because I was actually talking to president of Public Citizen, Robert Weissman, yesterday about the mail that they receive. And you can see it on Twitter. You can see it on all the social media, where especially in terms of vaccine mandates, and I get these Heritage Foundation emails. I somehow got on their mailing list, and I don't unsubscribe because I kind of wanna know what they're talking about. And they use the language of authoritarians. They're fighting authoritarianism. In other words, a public health mandate is taking away your freedoms. It really is an Orwellian use of the language where these fascistic elements are saying, "No, we're the ones fighting fascism. It's these other people who want to take away your freedoms." And if they can convince enough people of that; it's like both sides are fight the same concept of authoritarian fascism, but one is fascist and one isn't.

Ralph Nader: Yeah. Which side is suppressing votes, purging voters, harassing voters in discriminatory manner, state after state? And which part of this equation is trying to defund the IRS [Internal Revenue Service] and aid and abet tax evasion by the rich and the powerful? What's emerging here, Steve and David, is basically a new kind of

fascistic oligarchy wanting to take over the political system and doing the bidding of an existing extraordinarily powerful corporate plutocracy. So, this is what Trump actually did when he was president. He spread suppression of regulation for health and safety and tried to turn the government into a profit center for his cronies. But at the same time that he was violating all kinds of criminal statutes-- the Hatch Act, the Antideficiency [Act] law, shoveling around money without congressional authority, defying over 120 congressional subpoenas, engaging in a dozen clear impeachable offenses day after day--he was open about it. He was a brazen unlike [Richard] Nixon hovering in a corner, saying he's not a crook. At that same time, he was making peace with his other interests, which is his corporate pocketbook and he was deregulating. Wall Street loved that. He was giving them huge tax cuts. Wall Street loved that. And he was getting right-wing corporatist judges throughout the federal judiciary all the way up to the Supreme Court and Wall Street liked that. So, what we're seeing here is a merging canopy over American democracy of the older corporate plutocracy, which is basically strategically planning about everything that we do in this country right down to the commercialization of childhood as well as planning our tax system, our healthcare system, our food processing system, our land planning system zoning, our control, our disposition of resources on the public lands. You just go on and on; there isn't anything they're not strategically planning.

And on the other side of the canopy is emerging this new authoritarian fascistic oligarchy. And what that spells, if it's not stopped, is a very deep-rooted corporate state. It's the end of the democracy! In reality, it's the end of our republic. And it's Wall Street merging with Washington under the influence of the new American fascists and basically taking over any kind of potential opposition and dissent and labeling them as communists, socialists, terrorists--all the language that Trump has already used.

Now, this all can be prevented because we still have our basic institutions and they gotta be taken over like Congress and state legislatures by the people who sent them there, by the people who they're supposed to vote for. And so, while we have to be very vigilant about worst-case scenarios, as this article in the *Post* pointed out, we know that the power constitutionally is still in the hands of the people--we, the people. And we also know that people have enormous assets in terms of the commons, the public lands, the public airways, all the money that built all these industries through research and development from various departments and agencies of Washington, from NASA [National Aeronautics and Space Administration] to the Defense Department, National Institutes of Health. And of course, we've got the vote. The corporations don't have the vote.

So, we've got to be levelheaded about this. We can't wallow on hopelessness and say, "Oh, what can we do? And I give up. I'm gonna play video games." We need 1% of the people to get very serious, as we've said ad infinitum on this program, district by district, focusing on the Congress. That's the great fulcrum that we have available to turn our country into frontiers of justice, opportunity, renewability and protection of posterity. It's the Congress because of the way it's authorized by the Constitution to engage in the tax power, the spending power, the nomination power, the public information power, and above all, the war declaration power, which has been shoved over to the shelf, allowing presidents to start wars on their own say so.

David Feldman: Ralph, I'd like to ask you about framing all this. Because I remember earlier this year, Georgia passed some very restrictive voting rights laws. Delta [Air Lines], which is headquartered there and Coca-Cola spoke out against Georgia. It was a branding exercise. When we talk of fascism, we think of the military taking over. And shouldn't we be calling it a corporate takeover so that it hurts the corporations, that it hurts them in the pocketbook if they're perceived as being the ones behind this fascism? You can't have fascism without a corporate takeover. Is that correct?

Ralph Nader: Well, your point to an interesting opportunity here. There are some corporate executives who really are scared of American fascism. It's too unstable. Right now, corporations have it their way. I mean, they dominate Washington as if they're sitting on it. I mean, there isn't a single department in Washington, a single agency in Washington, that the outside force that's dominating it is not corporate. It's all corporate! Even the Department of Labor; the most powerful forces on the Department of Labor over the decades has not been the labor unions. It's been corporations. I mean, look how they froze the minimum wage, how they froze labor law reform, how they perpetuated anti-labor laws, how they violated with impunity fair labor standards in the workplace, how they disabled OSHA [Occupational Safety and Health Administration]. So, they've never had it so good. It's the lowest tax on corporations in decades, for example; the weakest regulation in decades of corporations. The corporate crime laws are totally antiquated and they're not enforced. The budgets are not enforced. The corporations in the healthcare area are getting away with \$350 billion in billing fraud this year, according to Malcolm Sparrow at Harvard and other studies. Very little prosecution. So, they've never had it so good. Massive profits. They can go to tax havens and escape. They can shift jobs to fascist communist dictatorships and get their will there. So, why would they want an additional fascist oligarchy to take charge?

Now, some are like the Koch brothers. They would like that kind of fascist oligarchy. They think they can benefit from it. But I think a majority of major CEOs, if they were asked privately, they would say, "We've never had it so good." Whether it's Democrat or Republican, we don't even have to deal with the many congressional hearings anymore." There are no corporate crime hearings. There may be some tough hearings where the members pound the table for the television cameras, but they never do anything about it. And we've seen those with the Facebook and Google hearings.

And so, they're basically – we've never had it so good. And we don't need this kind of destabilization, this kind of provocation of all kinds of demonstrations by people opposed to this kind of oligarchy. And that's what I think is in the minds of some of these generals is that this is the quest for continued stability under a corporate plutocratic system. That's their preferred approach. And that's why some of them don't like Trump at all. Never mind his own personal characteristics. They just don't like the prospects of fundamental destabilization of the political economy by going too far.

David Feldman: I think Corporate America is terrified that they don't think they have it good. I read somewhere that 75% of corporate CEOs say they expect to be fired in 2022. Corporate America has something like \$18 trillion in debt that most of the companies, the S&P 500, are laggards; they're not doing well; that the reason the stock market seems to be going up is the way they waited. And there were about 25 companies that are dragging the stock market up, but the rest of the corporations in

America are suffering under debt. So, I could see corporate CEOs expressing the same anger that the insurrectionists had on January 6th and thinking a fascist takeover would help them.

Ralph Nader: Well, not as long as they have the Federal Reserve printing money backing them up at \$150 billion a month. They're buying bonds and increasing liquidity and juicing up the stock market. Yeah. You know, I'm sure these CEOs sometimes look ahead and they get worried, but they're never around very long, David. Four or five years, CEO at the best; then they get retired with huge benefits. And then they become the leisure class again. It's hard to exaggerate the narcissism that is built in at the top of these corporations. You have to go to some midsize companies that have done it right. I've got a manuscript about 12 CEOs, like the head of Patagonia[, Inc.], the head of Interface[, Inc.] corporation, and other companies who have met the bottom line, but have done great work dealing with the way they treat their employees, the way they treat the environment, the way they condition their suppliers. And these CEOs never get any publicity. They're doing it right. But they don't get anywhere near the publicity as someone like Bill Gates or Elon Musk's outbursts. And so, we've gotta get these new standards that we have already seen in these midsize companies and give them much more coverage because these standards are very consonant with an economic democracy; they're very consonant with a competitive economy. They're very consonant with a respect for the environment. They're very consonant with the proper role of workers in these companies and the rights of workers. But we don't get NPR [National Public Radio], PBS [Public Broadcasting Service], all these supposed public interest media to pay any attention to them, which is, I suppose, why we have this program, huh? [chuckle]

David Feldman: By the way, thanks to you, my new year's resolution is to read the business page. I've been focusing more on – I don't want to endorse any newspapers, but the magazines and newspapers that cover business primarily I've been reading. And they do cover capitalism; it's very critical. Thank you for that because the most critical reporting on capitalism comes from the business pages.

Ralph Nader: As I've said before, we're living in a golden age of muckraking books. Those of you who want a big list of recent books critical of corporations, I had a column a few days ago; go to nader.org. You can sign up for the column and get it automatically free. But it made the point. There are about 60 books that have come out recently--tremendous on one company or one industry after another--very well documented critical books and nothing happens. And the same with all these documentaries. We have 10 times more critical documentaries of power structures in our country and the world than we had 30, 40 years ago and almost nothing happens. And that's because all these people back home who are very concerned about the future of their country are not organizing the way they should and getting a foothold by focusing on Congress, which is the purpose of the Congress Club. Otherwise, they'll be so overwhelmed due to their sensitivity to injustice that it will freeze them and turn it into a kind of hopelessness.

Steve Skrovan: Well, Ralph, we did have some good news on the corporate crime beat a couple of weeks ago. Actually, earlier in December, we spoke to Ryan Hampton, who is an activist fighting Purdue Pharma, which got a settlement that penalized them a significant amount but shielded them from civil lawsuits. And just a couple of weeks ago,

a judge overturned that settlement because the judge claimed that they could not be immune from civil lawsuits. So, that's a piece of good news.

Ralph Nader: That is if the appeal is upheld. I thought it was over. And I wasn't the only one who thought Purdue got away with it and that Sackler family got away with it. So, maybe there's a possibility that there's some state attorneys general, including the state attorney general from Connecticut [William Tong], who is holding out and not caving in to the settlement. So, we'll see what happens.

Steve Skrovan: And looking ahead, I wanted to ask you about the state of the Boeing 737 MAX investigations. What can we expect in the new year on the Boeing crime beat?

Ralph Nader: Well, I think we're gonna expect the more assertive position by the FAA [Federal Aviation Administration]. They've already signaled their displeasure in formal letters to Boeing, saying that Boeing is at it again – speeding up the production line, pushing inspectors to the side or reassigning them if they object, for the 737 MAX and the Dreamliner, the 787. So, those are two tough letters by the FAA, which gives the public a lot of good material to use in trying to hold Boeing accountable. The litigants for the families have filed an intervention in the Justice Department to reopen the deferred prosecution, which was a sweetheart deal between Trump's Justice Department and Boeing just a few days before Trump left office. So, maybe something will come out of that.

And the litigation itself is mostly heading for a private settlement, unfortunately. I don't see any cases yet scheduled for trial. There's no trial date. They first cut a deal with the defense lawyers, the plaintiff lawyers, and then they go to mediation. And if that is unacceptable to the families, then they can go to trial for compensatory damages only--not for punitive, which means that the Boeing executives are gonna get off. And Boeing is gonna get off unless some dissenting families get into a court of law and put it all on the public record for everybody to see in terms of Boeing's criminal negligence, its corporate bosses cutting corners, turning an engineering company to financial institution, and disregarding the warnings of its own engineers, which led to the two crashes that we've spoken about in Indonesia and Ethiopia claiming 346 lives.

So, there is a new book, whose author we just had on, called *Flying Blind: The 737 MAX Tragedy and the Fall of Boeing*. It's a very thorough critique of Boeing. And there will be several network documentaries. One is coming up at the end of January, CBS, on Boeing. There's one by Rory Kennedy that's coming up. There was a Frontline documentary a few weeks ago that was really excellent--taking Boeing apart with strong evidence. And there was an ABC [American Broadcasting Company] documentary.

So, there's no lack of media here for of the Congress to strengthen the [Saracini Enhanced] Aviation Safety Act they passed in the last days of the Trump administration that Trump signed due to the vigorous advocacy by the families--the magnificent story all by itself, going to one congressional office after another and working on the FAA and informing the media. They got an aviation safety bill through in December of 2020 just before Trump left office, but it needs to be stronger. It needs to have criminal penalties, both for corporations who behave like Boeing and for the FAA that violates its own mandate. So, that's the story in a nutshell. We still urge people to boycott the 737.

There are about 200 of them up in the air. They still have the aerodynamic instability. Boeing doesn't get one more crash anywhere in the world due to that cost-cutting process that led to the crashes because the software was defective and took over the plane from the pilots in Ethiopia and Indonesia. So, we urge people to boycott. And when they do fly, they ask what's the plane. The technical word for it is what's the equipment. And they're bound to tell you that. Southwest [Airlines], American [Airlines], United Delta [Airlines], so on, they're bound to tell you. And just say, "Well, I want to be rescheduled" and they're not gonna charge you for rescheduling. They haven't been, actually. But if they try to charge you, then just put your foot down, tell them you're gonna report it to your member of Congress. And they'll relent because they don't want bad publicity for their 737 MAXs.

Steve Skrovan: Well, on that note, let's take quick break. When we come back, we're gonna answer some of your listener questions. But first, we're gonna check in with our very own corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber. Take it away, Russell.

Russell Mokhiber: From the National Press Building in Washington, D.C.; this is your *Corporate Crime Reporter* "Morning Minute" for Friday, December 31, 2021; I'm Russell Mokhiber. 52 members of Congress have failed to properly report their financial trades as mandated by the Stop Trading on Congressional Knowledge Act, also known as the STOCK Act. That's according to a report from *Business Insider*.

Congress passed the law in 2012 to combat insider trading and conflicts of interest among their own members and force lawmakers to be more transparent about their personal financial dealings. A key provision of the law mandates that lawmakers publicly and quickly disclose any stock trade made by themselves, a spouse, or a dependent child. But many members of Congress have not fully complied with the law. They offer excuses including ignorance of the law, clerical errors, and mistakes by an accountant. For the *Corporate Crime Reporter*, I'm Russell Mokhiber.

Steve Skrovan: Thank you, Russell. Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. I'm Steve Skrovan along with David Feldman and Ralph. Hey, let's answer some questions, David.

David Feldman: Ryan Murphy asks in *How the Rats Re-Formed the Congress* regarding the list of 24 necessities of life. "Can you point to existing basic legislation covering those such that I could access it, provide them to my Congress people, and urge them to pursue their passage? Thanks."

Ralph Nader: Well, I'm so glad you're reading my fable, *How the Rats Re-Formed the Congress*, because it's designed to make people laugh themselves seriously. And most of the book is all the ways people used in this fable to take control of their Congress. And none of them are theoretical. None of them are that extraordinary. It's just a group of people who multiplied their efforts and took back control from the corporations of their Congress.

And a lot of the necessities, they already have legislation, Ryan. For example, living wage is one of the necessities. Health insurance is one of the necessities. Renewable energy is one of the necessities. So, they're already existing bills. And one thing members of Congress will reply is if you say, "Can you tell me if there's a pending bill in Congress covering" and then you give them the name of the necessity. And they like to

do that. That's easy. They may not like to respond to your corporate crime enforcement letters, but they do tell you what bills. And I'm sure there's a database where you can find out yourself that Congress has put up in terms of pending legislation.

Steve Skrovan: All right. Our next question, Emily Cook asks what will be the role, if any, of third parties in the United States and what will happen if they are suppressed? Ralph, you should know something about this.

Ralph Nader: Well, first of all, they've already been suppressed. Not declared illegal, but they've been blocked from getting on ballots. They're blocked from getting on the debates with their candidates from the two other parties and they're blocked from the media. So, they are in effect suppressed. They don't have a chance to have a chance. If nature behaved that way, seeds would never produce yearlings. So, what will be the role? I think it will just continue what has been the role that these parties field their candidates. Green Party, Libertarian Party. There's a new party organizing called the People's Party, trying to learn from some of the mistakes of past third parties. And, you know, they will come out with agendas. I've always said the Green Party agenda, polls majoritarian in this country in one area after another. 60%, 70%, 80% polls. But it can't get an airing in the public sphere because the mass media says, "Oh, they can't win. So, don't cover them." Well, that isn't the way we behaved in the 19th century. The Liberty Party against slavery, they got some coverage. The "Women's Right to Vote" Party [National Women's Party] got some coverage. They couldn't win either, but they pushed the public dialogue and the agenda to a point where some years later, these changes occurred. The same for the Farmers' Party and the Labor Party in the 19th century. So, we've got to keep demanding that the voters get more voices and choices on the ballot. And that's what a competitive democracy is all about. Because otherwise we're getting an ever more stagnant and symbiotic two-party duopoly that dial for the same dollars and take off the table many of the great future redirections that the majority of the people in this country want to see happen--like universal healthcare, corporate crime enforcement, waging peace to prevent conflict abroad, living wage, [and] repairing America.

We got one party, the GOP [Grand Old Party], that says, no, no, no to about everything except Wall Street, Houston, and the oil industry. And the Democrats are stagnant, don't know who they are, dissipating their past traditions and scapegoating Green Parties and third parties anytime they lose an election. So, all doors should be open for third parties and independent candidates. That's the exercise of free speech.

And I just want to answer two quick questions. Question from Rosemarie Sawdon, asks, "Whistleblowers and journalism are now being punished, which prohibits the truth from being exposed. What's the answer?" One answer is to have the whistleblower go to the Government Accountability Project [GAP], which is a nonprofit institution in Washington, which for many years has defended whistleblowers free. The Government Accountability Project known as GAP.

And one of my favorite questions was asked by Jay Rich. And he said, "I got talked into Medicare Advantage when I retired by the local insurance agency recommended by my doctor's office. After a year and further investigation, I decided to go to Medigap insurance instead. I've been jumping through hoops for two months and hopefully will be

out of their clutches by January 1, 2022.” Bravo, Jay Rich. We need more people like you. Dump Medicare Dis-Advantage. Go back to traditional Medicare.

David Feldman: Ralph, you wrote a book called *Whistle Blowing[^l: The Report of the Conference on Professional Responsibility]* in the early 70s. Was that the first use of the term “whistleblowing”?

Steve Skrovan: In any very structured way, yes. Whistleblowers were viewed as snitches, rats, disgruntled employees. And that Whistleblowing Conference, a little over 50 years ago, started the whole whistleblowing movement in America and around the world. There are now whistleblowing laws in 47 countries. About eight of them have bounties--that is whistleblowing can actually earn a bounty once it's confirmed by say the Justice Department. And it is proceeded to implant in corporations and government agencies the possibility that someone is gonna go to work with their conscience and in that agency or that company and blow the whistle. So, it's a real deterrent because whistleblowers risk all. And they do it out of a moral compulsion to do what's right. They can't be bought off. And so, they unsettle the bosses at the top of these organizations because they can't be controlled. They can't even be located sometime. They never know when they're gonna pop up and expose the crime, the abuse, the fraud, the waste, the repression.

Steve Skrovan: Ralph, these next three questions, I know, kind of gets your dander up, but it's obviously something that's on our listeners' minds. And they deal with apathy, lethargy, hopelessness. Is there any basis for optimism? Gavin Kelley asked, “One of the key issues that I encountered: general apathy or lethargy. I try to engage friends, neighbors, colleagues, and even family. I can't get anyone to take action with me unless it's a safe topic or something that's gone viral. How can I get my fellow Americans steamed to overcome corporatism or breakthrough power?” Steve Fournier asked essentially the same thing. He says, “Young people could easily fall victim to mass hopelessness, work on consideration of the future of prospects. Will they be able to cope with the challenges facing them?” And Don Bayles from Flagstaff, Arizona says, “In candor, do you see any basis for optimism in projecting a transfer of power to people? And if so, could you explain?”

Ralph Nader: Well, you know how I'm gonna react to that, Steve. First of all, there are all kinds of citizen groups that want more members and they want more participants in almost every area of change in the country. So, you can easily find them. They're in your community. They often ask you for a contribution. They're nonprofit. They try to improve healthcare facilities, services for children. They try to clean up the campaign finance racket. They try to push the conversion to renewable energy. They try to hold their [elected] members accountable. Join them. There's no excuse. They're already there. Make them more powerful. Make yourself more powerful. The second response is especially to Steve Fournier, one of our regular questioners on young people. Look who we had the other day. We had a student-funded group called the US Public Interest Research Group, which is now leading the fight for the Right to Repair, which is basically the fight against product obsolescence, the fight against the marketing strategies that force people to throw away perfectly good products like computers and iPhones because they can't fix them. Motor vehicles are designed not to be fixed to keep control in the maintenance fees in the hands of these companies. Well, now they

got Apple to say they're gonna provide a manual on how to fix some of Apple's products. That's a big win for the US Public Interest Research Group supported by college and university students all over the country. They have a staff in Washington and they have groups like New York Public Interest Research Group, California Public Interest Research Group. So, if you're a young person, look them up. They do door-to-door canvassing on things like environmental issues. Learn the skills of citizen work. The more you get involved, the more positive you become. The more you get involved, the more expert you become, right? You wanna start learning how to play bridge. You're not an expert on the first day. But the more expert you are, the more you like to play bridge. Well, play democracy. And for those who aren't convinced, Steve and David, we have the ultimate opportunity for them. They can join the American Society of Apathetics and all you gotta do is go to our website and you will see the oath of the apathetic. There's no admission fee. You don't have to lift a finger. Just declare the oath of the apathetic and you're an automatic member.

Steve Skrovan: I don't know, Ralph. You may be asking too much there. [chuckle] All right. True Hunt asks, "How can I work with Ralph to create a masterclass on how to build watchdog groups for my organization?" And Stephanie Tucker asks, "Ralph, do you have a citizen advocacy course that you teach or a video course? If not, would you consider it?"

Ralph Nader: Well, we need entrepreneurs to pick up the ball here. We'd like to have these kinds of webinars. We'd like to have these kinds of groups all over the country, but we're not in a position to do that. We've got our hands full, so we need entrepreneurs to do that. Just like the people who in the commercial area, they start a McDonald's in Illinois and they spread it all over the country. We need people who can start these civic training courses, what you call a master class on how to build watchdog groups in local areas. And because of Zoom, they can hear from some of the most accomplished practitioners in this area.

Years ago, we put out a wonderful book called *Civics for Democracy: A Journey for Teachers and Students*. It's still very valuable. You may be able to get it on the internet. And there are a lot of other how-to books that people have put out. Some of them are more comprehensive. Others specialize like how to put on a press conference or how to start a referendum movement in your state. So, it's all available on the internet and just work it to make it up to date and start your own pilot. There's no reason why you can't start a letterhead group, a congressional watchdog group on your two senators and representatives. Start with 10, 15 people; put it on a letterhead; let your members know who they are, what their occupation is, how determined they are, whether they've written anything, what other projects they've worked on, and then build it from there to 20 to 50 to 60. Once you get a few hundred, then you'll be able to summon your members to face-to-face town meetings where you don't have to worry about voicemail or intermediate flax. You're facing in an auditorium your senators and representatives. I think 500 petitioners, clearly written with their names, their contact, their occupation, will pull down your senators and your representative for a personal meeting. And then you'll see the dynamics change completely.

Steve Skrovan: And Hannah [Feldman], our associate producer is reminding me that earlier in the year, we had on the show Evan Weissman of Warm Cookies of the Revolution, which is yet another civic group that binds people together to take action.

Ralph Nader: Right. Not to mention the program we had on Maui where the citizenry took control of the county council. In 2018, they won nine out of 16 seats. In 2020, they increased to 14 out of 16 seats and replaced corporate rule. Their model was replace corporate rule with people rule and they did that by persuasion, organization, door-to-door. And they defeated these powerful corporations that were plundering Maui – the big landowners, the big tourist companies, the companies that basically exploited the workers, contaminated the environment, controlled the water sources from being properly distributed around Maui, which is a big question there. And now they've got 14 out of 16. There it is. *Seven Steps to Reclaim Democracy: An Empowering Guide for Systemic Change* is the book and you can download the podcast and get all the information from the leader, and also get a copy of the book where he outlines exactly how it happened.

Steve Skrovan: Yeah, that was Paul Deslauriers. And just to close out here, Ralph, I want to go back and continue on this theme because we've had some great doers on the show during the course of the year. We've had some great authors, but then we also have some great doers. Last week we had Devin De Wulf from Get Lit, Stay Lit who's doing great work in New Orleans, creating solar hubs for restaurants so that when another hurricane plows through New Orleans, you can keep the food supply up and running by having these decentralized solar hubs connected with the restaurants.

We had Winona LaDuke who was talking about their progress in hemp farming now that hemp has been decriminalized. We had Joseph McNeil from the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe who told us about the Anpetu Wi Wind Farm that they were building and trying to finance at Standing Rock. We spoke about Evan Weissman. We had Miranda Massey of the Climate Museum, talking about the Climate Museum and how important it is to gather the information into one place, much like the Tort Museum [American Museum of Tort Law] that you founded, Ralph, to educate people to what their power really is. And we also had Kay Tillow of Nurses Professional Organization who spoke to us about Medicare Dis-Advantage. So, we've had some great guests, authors and doers, and we wanna thank all of our listeners for taking that in and responding and sending us your questions. We hope you all have a great new year. We will be back doing all the same stuff. But right now, that's our show. And thank you again for listening. We've been on the air almost--well, we'll be heading into our eighth year this coming year.

David Feldman: Wow.

Steve Skrovan: So, thank you for those hanging in there. Please keep spreading the word. You don't get information like this anywhere else. For those of you listening on the radio, that's our show. For you, podcast listeners, stay tuned for some bonus material we call "The Wrap Up". A transcript of this program will appear on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* website soon after the episode is posted.

David Feldman: Subscribe to us on our *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* YouTube channel. And for Ralph Nader's weekly column, you can get it for free by going to nader.org. For more from Russell Mokhiber, go to corporatecrimereporter.com.

Steve Skrovan: And the American Museum of Tort Law has gone virtual. Go to tortmuseum.org to explore the exhibits, take a virtual tour, and learn about iconic tort cases from history. And be sure to check out their latest program on how advocates are going to court to confront the climate crisis. All that and more at tortmuseum.org.

David Feldman: Ralph Nader wants you to join the Congress Club. Go to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* website and in the top right margin, click on the button labeled Congress Club to get more information. We've also added a button right below that with specific instructions about what to include in your letters to Congress. The producers of the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* are Jimmy Lee Wirt and Matthew Marran. Our executive producer is Alan Minsky.

Steve Skrovan: Our theme music, *Stand Up, Rise Up*, was written and performed by Kemp Harris. Our proof reader is Elisabeth Solomon. Our associate producer is Hannah Feldman. Our MVP. Our social media manager is Steven Wendt.

David Feldman: Join us next week on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* when we'll welcome single payer activist Kip Sullivan to discuss the privatization of Medicare and *ProPublica* journalist Marshall Allen to talk about his new book, *Never Pay the First Bill*. Thank you, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Thank you all. May you all have a safe, civically active 2022 new year.