

RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EPISODE 402 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: Good morning.

Steve Skrovan: And the man of the hour, Ralph Nader. Hello, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Hello, everybody. It's the Noam Chomsky hour.

Steve Skrovan: Yes, we have an exciting show for you today. We'll spend the full hour with Professor Noam Chomsky. Ralph will ask Professor Chomsky what his vision for America would be if we actually had a progressive people's Congress. We'll cover the climate crisis, the military budget, healthcare, challenging the corporate structure, reforming both the tax system and our elections, and how the Democrats have essentially abandoned the working class. It's always a personal thrill for me when these two incredibly influential intellectuals of the 20th and 21st century have a chance to talk to each other. Then after that, as always, we'll check in with our tireless corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber. But first, we've only got an hour. So, let's get the conversation started, David?

David Feldman: Noam Chomsky is a linguist, political philosopher, and one of the world's foremost public intellectuals. His latest book interviews by CJ Polychroniou is entitled *The Precipice: Neoliberalism, the Pandemic, and the Urgent Need for Social Change*. Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, Professor Noam Chomsky.

Noam Chomsky: Thank you very much.

Ralph Nader: Yeah. Welcome back, Noam. I wanna try something new on this program because it's quite clear that exposés, disclosures, historical analysis are not prodding people to action on the ground. And we're seeing the trends going in the wrong direction [with] American fascism on the rise and Trumpism. He has escaped from all the laws that should have prosecuted him, subjected him to civil remedies, violated the Constitution repeatedly, violated congressional subpoenas, obstructed justice. He's got away with it all. So let me pose this hypothetical for you. Let's say that Congress reflected your sense of justice in the world as spelled out in all kinds of policies – global, national, local, political, electoral, and environmental; views on empire and military budget. Let's say you had the Congress you dreamt of and it was ready to open its session. What would you have the Congress do?

Noam Chomsky: Well, first of all, if under those rather ideal situations, we wouldn't have to be worried about [Donald] Trump. He owns the Republican Party. But under the assumptions you outlined, there wouldn't be any Republican Party. So that would be gone. The first thing that the Congress would do is pass legislation that is actually on the books. There's a resolution

introduced by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Ed Markey in 2019. And they just reintroduced it, which is a detailed proposal of feasible steps that can be taken to address the most severe crisis that has arisen in human history. The fact is that we are heating the globe to the point where human survival and survival of millions of other organisms will become impossible in the not very distant future. Unless that problem is solved, nothing else matters. And there is a resolution sitting there which does detail carefully and responsibly how this can be addressed within current means.

Ralph Nader: That's one. What would be the next on the list? Congress, with all its enormous authority under the Constitution, by the way, listeners.

Noam Chomsky: Oh, it has that capacity; easily can do it. There's a resolution sitting right there, which nobody will look at, but they could. Second thing they would do is cut back the military budget radically, so that it becomes literally a defense budget, which is a very skimpy budget because the US faces almost no threats. So a skimpy military budget would free up enormous... first, it would cut back pollution enormously. The military alone produces as much greenhouse gas as about 140 medium sized countries. It would also free up badly needed resources to take the next step. The next step is to try to raise the United States to the level of the civilized world. So, take what's in the bill that is now sitting in Congress and probably won't be passed, the Build Back Better bill. Take a look at its provisions. One of them, for example, is to provide maternal leave. In most of the world they wouldn't even know what we're talking about. Take the second largest country in the hemisphere, hardly an ideal social democracy, Brazil. Women have a four-month guaranteed maternal leave [with an] optional two months longer, taken care of by Social Security. Here we have nothing. The United States is not alone in the world. There are a couple of Pacific islands, which also don't have maternal care, paid maternal care of course. Other than that, it's just us.

And it goes down the line; take a look at healthcare. It's the worst system imaginable. Roughly twice the cost of comparable countries, worse outcomes. We're the only country which has an increasing mortality, which is unheard of in the developed world; certainly, astonishing in the richest, most powerful country in world history, with enormous advantages. We could go on: free higher education, free medical care like almost every other country has, workers' rights. Change the Congress would rescind the laws that passed under the reactionary Supreme Court to undermine workers' rights and to ensure that elections can be bought by the highest bidder. Citizens United [v. Federal Election Commission]. Whole raft of return. Restore the Voting Rights Act [of 1965], which was eliminated by the Roberts Court with consequences we see all over the former Confederacy. There's a whole raft of proposals.

Ralph Nader: Let's go to the next one, Noam. How would you structure or restructure giant corporations, which have created this corporate state? Wall Street merging with big government, turning against the people and its impact on the world. Now, we have the metaverse, and we have just runaway corporate power strategically planning almost everything in our political economy, including commercializing childhood. How would you deal with this structure, which starts with the chartering of corporations by states and the board of directors, shareholders? What would you do with the giant corporate structure, which has a great resiliency to fight back even after it loses?

Noam Chomsky: Well, this has to be done in steps. I mean, the farthest step, the one that should be reached is just to eliminate them., Okay, but go back to what classical liberals like John Stuart Mill [and] Abraham Lincoln envisioned, namely working people owning and running their own enterprises. That's the long-term goal. You have to go step by step. First step would be to rescind the measures taken since [Ronald] Reagan, the neoliberal measures. These were following rules laid down by their economic guru, Milton Friedman. His dictum was that corporations have no responsibility to the public. As you said, they are chartered. The chartering of a corporation is a gift from the public. You don't want the gift - it gives all sorts of advantages - you don't want the gift just stay a partnership. But according to Milton Friedman, corporations take the gift, but offer nothing in return. They have no responsibility other than to enrich themselves and of course enrich the boards of directors and the CEO. Reagan also introduced other measures to ensure that corporations and the wealthy would be able to rob the general public. So he changed the rules of corporate governance so that CEOs can in effect pick their own board that sets their remuneration. As a big surprise, CEO salaries skyrocketed way beyond anything else in the world or what they had ever been, bringing management up with them. It goes on. Under Reagan tax havens were legitimized. They weren't before. More robbery. There have been attempts to estimate the robbery of the public during the 40 years of neoliberalism--Reaganite/Friedmanite neoliberalism. Incidentally, another one was to deregulate. Deregulation sounds nice on paper, but it has the obvious consequences of leading to increasing monopolization. Big fish eat the little fish. So, now, sector after sector of the economy is virtually monopolized. More was done.

Now, we're going to [Bill] Clinton who joined in the trade agreements, the so-called free trade agreements, which certainly are not free and have little do with trade. These agreements provide extraordinary protection for essentially monopoly pricing rights for corporate structures even when, as is often the case, their inventions and creations are largely subsidized by the public. They're given unprecedented patent rights for much longer than ever in the past and also process as well as product patents. We're seeing that right now with COVID[-19] when, say, Moderna[, Inc.], which has created a number of billionaires in the last year or two thanks to products that were largely created in the public domain and then they marketed. But they can maintain control over the process of production, which they're insisting on, and over the product, so that poor countries around the world can't get access to it. Things like that are happening all the time. Well, one step would be to dismantle all of this and to go back to what was true during the pre-neoliberal period; not a wonderful period by any means. You had a lot to say about what was wrong with it and changing it. But nevertheless, as compared with the neoliberal period, it would be quite a step forward.

Ralph Nader: We're talking with Professor Noam Chomsky. What would you do, Noam, with the corporate charter? They are now largely state charters [in] Delaware and Nevada [that] make it easy for corporate executives to control shareholders and board of directors as you point out. There 's had been a proposal by William Howard Taft and Teddy Roosevelt to federally charter giant corporations, rewrite the constitution of the corporation, the birth certificate. And most recently, Senator [Elizabeth] Warren has picked that up. What do you think of – you might call it an intermediate step – rewriting the whole compact between the society that gifts these immunities and privileges to artificial entities we call corporations? What interest would you have if you had Congress standing for, by, and all the people? What interest would you have in rewriting that at the federal level?

Noam Chomsky: Well, first of all, it depends on how it's rewritten. As you know better than I do, there was a period, early American history, going back to British law, when corporations were chartered for a particular purpose. So, if a town in Connecticut wants to build a bridge over a river, they could incorporate, get a state charter to build that bridge – period. That's what corporations were. This began to change in the late 19th century with court cases, which broadened the rights of corporations in many ways; finally, by early 19th century, granting them the rights of persons, which has had an enormous impact.

So, if the federal charters went back to what corporations once were, namely a device to accumulate capital for a particular purpose, often via community purposes, accomplished corporation goes out of existence. It is a useful device to accumulate, bring capital together. Maybe there's even some justification for the limited liability for some period. But all of this can be sharply cut back, and should be moved in the direction of having people in the enterprise control it, own it, and run it. That's the classical liberal ideal.

Ralph Nader: What would you do for a progressive Congress, total veto proof majority on the tax system? What kind of tax system--corporate tax, individual tax, income, sales [tax], value-added [tax]? What would you propose?

Noam Chomsky: Well, our tax system is called progressive. It's actually very regressive. Turns out over a long period, taxes, actual taxes, including state taxes [and] consumer taxes, taken all into account, it's pretty level across income scales. Now, the neoliberal period has changed that. Recently, for the first time in over a century, the tax system has been structured so that billionaires pay lower taxes than a steel worker or the janitor who cleans their floor. That's the restructuring of taxes that has taken place under the massive highway robbery called neoliberalism. I should mention, which I didn't do before, that there is a kind of a measure of the scale of the highway robbery. The RAND Corporation, which is as respectable as you can get, tried to do an estimate of what they politely call “transfer of wealth” from the lower 90% of the population to the top 1%, actually fraction of 1%, during the 40 neoliberal years. Their rough estimate is on the order of \$50 trillion. That's not small change. And it leaves out a lot of the things we were just talking about.

Going back to the tax system, first step would be to return it to something like the pre-neoliberal period, which incidentally was the highest growth period in American history – rather egalitarian growth. The lower quintile, did about as well as the upper quintile. As I said before, plenty of things are wrong with it. Your work is prominent in exposing and overcoming much of that back in the 60s and 70s. But compared with today, the tax system was moderately progressive. We could go back to that. We could then move on to a much more progressive tax system. Our system now is very harmful to the poor and the working class. Take the rise in gas prices. Who pays that? Working people, poor people, not rich people. They don't care. For them, it's nothing. For others, it's a serious burden. It doesn't have to be that way, and that is true across the whole tax system. There's a very good study of this called *Justice Denied*, which goes into the revisions of the tax system that were undertaken during the neoliberal period with the design of ensuring that the rich and the corporate system would be protected with their lavish wealth and that the poor and working people would pay for it. The final blow in this, the Trump tax cut, what Joseph Stiglitz called the Donor Relief bill of 2017, was a massive gift to the very rich in

the corporate sector [and] a stab in the back to working people and the poor. And for the current Republican Party, a red line that can't be crossed. Yeah, of course it punched a hole in the deficit, but nobody cared about that when it's for the benefit of the rich. So, all of this stuff can be revised. We can return to a much better system and we can move on to something far better.

Ralph Nader: Noam, how would you deal with elections with a people's Congress, the electoral system funding all the rest? What would be the reforms?

Noam Chomsky: Well, first of all, this is extremely hard to change because it would require a constitutional amendment. And the way the Constitution was set up, the small states basically have a veto power, and they're not gonna say take away our privileges. But there are changes-that can be made. First of all, the funding of elections goes way back to elections are basically bought. Tom Ferguson's work is the gold standard on this. He studied carefully how, for over a century, electability can be pretty well predicted--for Congress, almost perfectly--by simply looking at campaigns, the strategic campaign. It goes right up to the president. He just did a study recently on the 2020 election [*The 2020 U.S. Elections: A First Analysis*]. But that became far worse in recent years with two Supreme Court decisions. One of them, Buckley [v. Valeo], which determined that money is speech. The second, the Citizens United decision of the Roberts Court, which said spend as much as you like and don't bother telling us about it and keep it dark. That was combined with the rescinding of the Voting Rights Act, which told the states, basically the old Confederacy and a few other Republican-run states, you can do whatever you like to kick out voters you don't want to vote. All of this stuff can be rescinded. These are decisions of reactionary courts, meaning that neutral courts, which are concerned with the rights of people as well as constitutional law could change this.

Ralph Nader: How would you fund the elections? Have abolished private funding, public funding? How would you structure that?

Noam Chomsky: First thing to do is to cut down the electoral process to a few months like every civilized country does. They don't have elections running for years. Then there should be a certain amount of public funding, which is available. There should be restrictions on how much concentrations of private power or the super rich can pour into elections in one or another way, often dark money. You can have other measures like providing each person with a fixed amount and saying, spend it the way you like on the election. There are a lot of technical devices that can be used.

Another thing that we really ought do, I think, is move towards a parliamentary system. We have a monopoly on the election by two organizations, which call themselves political parties that are described as voter mobilization organizations, which then do pretty much what they want independent of the voters. We should add that one part of our system is that most of the population has essentially no representation, meaning their own representatives pay almost no attention to their opinions. That's been studied very well in mainstream academic political science – Martin Gilens, Benjamin Page, Larry Bartels' careful work. Roughly maybe 70% of the population of voters are literally unrepresented. Their representatives are listening to other voices, the ones who are gonna fund the next election. All of that can be changed. We can have people actually be represented by the people they vote for. We can move towards a system in

which smaller parties have a chance – a parliamentary system. That's the way major parties develop and grow. The Labour Party in England became a major party from a very small beginning. In a parliamentary system, it could have a voice. In other countries Greens can have a voice and grow into serious parties in a parliamentary system. I think there are many advantages to that, but it really all comes down to something much more fundamental--high concentration of capital and protection of high concentration of capital from public accountability. As long as that exists, all the technical manipulations in the world aren't gonna change much.

Ralph Nader: Well, as we know, we're stuck with this federal system and Congress is all we have right now to match up against these giant global corporations, which have no allegiance to community or nations other than to abandon them or exploit them, pit them [against] one another. How would progressive or people's Congress deal with workers, unions, existing union laws, anti-union laws, to vastly expand membership in unions and make them democratic? Love to hear your views on that.

Noam Chomsky: Well, again, many steps. First of all, undo what has been done for the last 40 plus years. Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher across the Atlantic, who instituted these neoliberal programs; they and their advisors understood very well that when you're going to launch bitter class war, attacking working people and the general public, you better eliminate their means of defense. And the major means of defense are labor unions. So, the first acts of Reagan and Thatcher were to move to smash the unions. Reagan resorted to means that were at the time illegal all over the world, except in apartheid South Africa, at bringing in scabs permanent replacement workers to replace working people on strike, and other means to destroy the unions. All sorts of complex measures were devised to undermine and prevent union organization. One of them was called NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement]. Now, we're up to Clinton. NAFTA, was strongly opposed by the labor movement for good reasons. One of its consequences was that organization efforts for unionization could be killed by warnings from management, big signs on the door saying, 'transfer operation Mexico'. Lots of ways to say, if you vote for the union, we're just gonna close you down and go to Mexico. Well, that happens to be illegal. But when you have a criminal state, you can be as illegal as you want. Nothing happens. This was no small matter. There was research taken under NAFTA laws, in fact, by Kate Bronfenbrenner, labor historian at Cornell [University], which found that about 50% of organizing efforts were undermined by these illegal tactics, which the government just winked at. Criminal state says, fine, if you wanna destroy unions, the so-called right to work laws, which are basically right to scrounge laws, means if you want, you can have the union represented, but you don't have to pay for it. [That] got passed by the courts. These are bitter attacks on unions. Lack of taking away card check. All sorts of devices were used to undermine labor law. Also, the right-wing administrations, which includes the Democrats, took measures to weaken the NLRB [National Labor Relations Board, the system that offers workers some protection.

So, there's been a major, we can only call it class war, going on for 45 years, which began in the late Carter years, took off with Reagan [that] has led to a situation where workers are finding it extremely hard to organize. Many barriers. There always was difficulty, but now it's much more difficult. We might try to remember what things were like in the 1950s when there was a president named Dwight Eisenhower, whose position loudly spoken was that anyone who

interferes with the right of American workers to organize doesn't belong within our political system; anyone who opposes New Deal measures doesn't belong in our political system. That was called conservatism in the 1950s.

Ralph Nader: That's true. And that goes back to my earlier comment that we now live in a world of muckraking books, exposing all kinds of corporate and government crimes and malfeasance; muckraking documentaries have never been more numerous. And all of them have far less effect than a fraction of these documentaries and books in the 1950s and 1960s. You point out, President Eisenhower's positions now would be considered left of the Democratic Party. The Democratic Party allowed the Taft-Hartley law to be passed. [Harry] Truman vetoed it in 1947. That's the worst anti-labor law in the Western world. And the Democrats never made it a political issue to repeal it subsequent many, many decades. And they've now passed something partially reformist in the House but not in the Senate. What do you think of this idea that there's just one omnibus union organization law? You don't have to go through anything but a vote of the workers to get a union, above a certain small business size to get a union. It's all these obstacles in the NLRB that you alluded to. What do you think of just a right to unionize with, say, a majority vote at Amazon[, Inc.] warehouse or Walmart [Inc.] supermarket?

Noam Chomsky: Well, it's a good thing to do. But as long as there exists high concentration of unaccountable capital, it's not gonna work. Businesses can hire masses of corporate lawyers from the fancy law firms who will work out devious ways in which this can be undermined. Sometimes it can be as simple as what Clinton did – pass international so-called trade agreement and then don't impose labor law, so that corporations/businesses can break strikes simply by threatening to leave. Illegal, and they were never gonna do it, but as I said, if you have a criminal state owned by private power, you can do what you like. There are now--I hate to tell you this; you know all this better than I do. But there are now union busting companies which have highly skilled ways of intimidating workers so that they won't take the measures that they want in their own interest. It's very similar to other moderately progressive legislation.

So take, for example, universal healthcare. It's been supported over and over for a long period by the general public. I lived in Massachusetts most of my life. It's a liberal state. And year after year, there was a charade that was carried on. There would be a referendum calling for universal healthcare [with] overwhelming support. Then starts the lobbying, the corporate lobbying, scare, warning "You're not gonna be able to see your own doctor; the government is gonna tell you what medicine you're allowed to take"--this and that. You could see the support for universal healthcare declining as the propaganda mounted. Finally, when the vote came, it didn't pass. Same with something as simple as maternal leave. What could be simpler? Everybody has it, and the public is strongly in favor of it. Can't make it.

Ralph Nader: Well, that gets to how to take control of Congress. And if you have a people's Congress, how would they break up these concentrations of capital wedded to technology operating internationally? We just saw what happened in Glasgow. They're talking to about an agreement. They don't even talk about international treaties anymore, which are supposedly a little more enforceable than generalized agreements between nations to control greenhouse gases. How would you break up these concentrations? Because let's face it, a lot of the capital is in the form of mutual funds and pension funds, which are theoretically owned by people and controlled

by corporations. If you put them all together, they control over two thirds of the stock of the New York Stock Exchange companies--mutual funds, giant mutual funds and pension funds. How would a progressive Congress take that apart?

Noam Chomsky: Well, it would begin by things we discussed before--changing the rules of governance, changing the character of charters, taking away the extraordinary privileges that were given and imposing responsibilities. There are steps to do that. One step, which you can find elsewhere in the world--Germany, for example--is simply having worker representatives on management. That's one step. The next step is having the corporations, if they exist probably for particular purposes as they used to, governed by the people in the enterprise. The people who work there would pick their own directors under recall as in any democratic system; work together with community, democratic community associations, to work out what kinds of actions should be taken for the common good. There's plenty of ways to do that. Actually, you talked about taxes before. There's an interesting fact about taxes, which we might wanna think about. One of the standard scare phrases in the United States is nothing is inevitable about death and taxes. Taxes are something to be feared and hated. That's a very interesting attitude. Just think about the spectrum of possible societies. Extreme totalitarian society at one end and a functioning democracy at the other end. In these systems, how would people react to taxes? Well, in the pure totalitarian system, they'd say nothing's inevitable but death and taxes. Somebody's stealing our money from us, an alien force. The government is stealing our money. We can't do anything about it. That's the way it would be in a pure totalitarian system. What about a functioning democracy? Tax day would be a day of celebration. We've gotten together, worked out what we think should be done in our community. Maybe new roads, maybe schools, maybe healthcare, maybe cutting back poisons in the atmosphere, working with other countries to achieve the common good. We've decided what we wanted. We decided on an equitable way to fund it. Now comes the day in which we fund it the way we decided. It's a day of celebration. So, kind of a rough measure of the extent to which democracy functions simply by looking at attitudes toward taxes. That's not a joke!

Ralph Nader: I want to ask you a very simple question. [George W.] Bush and [Dick] Cheney are certified war criminals. I mean, let's take the easy monstrous war crime of invading Iraq. There is no declaration of war, no serious authorization, and appropriation of funds under rigorous congressional scrutiny. Ron Paul, the great Libertarian congressman said that Bush and Cheney "lied us" into the war in Iraq. There were no weapons of mass destruction. The conservative commentator for Fox News until recently, Andrew Napolitano, former judge on a program, said that [Barack] Obama's Justice Department should criminally prosecute Bush and Cheney.

Two questions. Should Bush and Cheney be prosecuted? There's no statute of limitations here. And second, why do you think the most ardent Democrats in Congress, the most progressive, are not calling for that prosecution, including the prosecution of Donald Trump for violating all kinds of federal criminal statutes openly, repeatedly, quite apart from his incitement of the insurrection to Congress and defying 120 congressional subpoenas? Do you believe that the criminal law should be used in that way? And why do you think the most ardent, progressive Democrats who would adhere to a lot of what your proposals outline are not even mentioning it?

Noam Chomsky: I don't think anyone in Congress wants to open that door. Because once you open that door, it opens quite far. Fact of the matter is that every president violates the Constitution constantly. Simply take a look at the Constitution. Article Six of the [US] Constitution says that international treaties entered by the United States government are the supreme law of the land and elected officials have to obey them. Well, the main treaty that has been entered into by the United States government in the postwar period, which the US in fact initiated and sponsored, is the UN Charter. That's the basis of modern law, international law, but that makes it the supreme law of the land. Well, take a look at the UN Charter, say at Article Two, Section Four, which bans the threat or use of force in international affairs. There are some exceptions, but they happen to be irrelevant. So, I'll put them aside. Can you think of a president who hasn't used the threat or use of force in international affairs? Obama?

Ralph Nader: What does that mean? It means clearly that the presidents are above the law. They can start wars unconstitutionally. They can violate statutes. And they're above the law. But there is a matter of degree. Some presidents do far less violating [chuckle] than others. And I think what I hear you say is if the Democrats try going down that path, it'll be turned against their own presidents. And so, they're all complicit. So why don't we just start with process of public discussion that right now presidents are above the law – period. And then go from there instead of the myth that is perpetuated in law schools and editorial boards that no one is above the law.

Noam Chomsky: I agree. In fact, what I just said, I've talked about very often, including in law schools, and the reaction is kind of a polite shrug of the shoulders, kind of intriguing, you know; let's go on to the next topic. We should mention something else that you know again better than I do. There is a profession called lawyers who are trained to develop intricate arguments to show that the law doesn't mean what it says. That's one of the skills that a trained lawyer has to develop, for international lawyers too. So, you can read the international law journals or the law journals and you find intricate arguments saying the Constitution doesn't mean what it says. The UN Charter doesn't mean what it says. Other laws don't mean what they say. Because we can find this and that way of providing a complex argument to delude people into thinking. So, that's called the legal profession.

There's a lot of work to be done at every level. First of all, just to get the population to even know what is in the laws. This is an incredible task. Take the current law in Congress, reconciliation bill that's being debated right now. There have been some very interesting recent polls about that. Turns out when you ask people, what do you think about this measure that's in the law? Strong support case after case. When you ask people, what do you think about the law? We don't like it because the law is gonna attack us. And then you ask people about particular provisions [and] they don't know that they're in the law. We have a system of population control, indoctrination, propaganda, whatever you wanna call it, which is so effective that people simply do not know what is in the prime legislation that is being debated right now in Congress.

Ralph Nader: That was shown by the recent Virginia gubernatorial and legislative elections. Not more than 10% knew that the law had a provision to expand Medicare, for example. Yeah, well, this is part of the corporate supremacist strategy. It's to divert attention to focus on racial divisions without focusing on class. And we don't even have these words in our political campaign lexicon: corporate crime, corporate welfare, corporatism, corporate control. And the

pollsters don't poll on that, so they don't replay what people really think. *BusinessWeek*, 20 years ago, had a poll on corporate control. Do corporations have too much control over your lives? Over 70% said yes. I haven't seen a poll since on that. That could be a very troublesome focus of public opinion. But let's see if this troubles you, Noam. You're one of the world's most famous linguists. And certainly, in academic arenas, the words outrage students and a lot of faculty more than the deeds behind them. So, at law schools, for example, they go crazy if you are heard to utter an ethnic, racial or gender slur. But when you get down to the discrimination conditions on the ground, they're otherwise predisposed to prepare themselves for corporate or commercial law practice. What do you make of this politically correct tyranny that's going on now, where the left so-called cannibalizes its own sense of free speech; the right has always been censorious. But it just seems to be a huge distraction when the editor of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* has to resign because there was an article titled *Public Buildings Matter Too* in citizen demonstrations. And you know all the other type things we read about every day. People don't lose their jobs for committing corporate crimes or government crimes. They lose their job for saying the wrong thing. As a linguist, how do you deal with that? It's extremely debilitating and distracting and almost immolating in terms of the young generation.

Noam Chomsky: Well, as a linguist, I have nothing to say about it. It's not a linguistic problem. It's a human problem. We all understand it. What's happened is there's a constant record of what's now called "cancel culture"; since it's always been directed against the left, nobody cared about it. I could give you a case after case just from my own experience over the years. So, take one example of my late friend and colleague Edward Herman and I. Incidentally he was a specialist in corporate power and corporate control. That's his major at Wharton School [of Business of the University of Pennsylvania]. He and I wrote a book 40 years ago called *Counter-Revolutionary Violence[: Bloodbaths in Fact & Propaganda]*. It was about how contrary to the constant talk about the violence of people who rise up against oppressors, the major violence is suppressing them bitterly and brutally with the United States well in the lead.

That was what the book was about. It was published by a small, quite profitable publisher. Information about the book got to the corporate headquarters of the major corporation, [which] was Warner [Media], now Time Warner. One of the executives saw the advertising, didn't like it, and wanted to look at the book. He looked at the book and was horrified; ordered the publisher to withdraw it. When they refused to withdraw it, he closed down the entire publisher, not only banning our book but destroying all its stock. [That] was not considered a civil liberties or human rights issue. Corporations are allowed to do whatever they like. If they wanna kill a publisher because it publishes a book they don't like, fine. [That's] cancel culture.

I used to have to have police protection at universities if I was giving talks on topics that were critical of what the common support for state policy was. It was plenty of talks withdrawn. Others had much worse experiences because I'm protected in many ways. My mail at the university was vandalized. Plenty of things happened. Nobody cared. The reason is it's against the left. Now, what's happening is that segments of the left are foolishly taking up some of the tactics that have been used constantly against the left and employing them themselves. I don't want this person to speak at my college. So, let's ban him. It's, first of all wrong in principle as it's has always been. And it's a wonderful gift to the far right. They love it; it's a magnificent gift to them. They can exploit it and say, "Look, we're just defenders of the highest principles and the

fascist leftists are stopping us.” The Republican Party, in fact, has picked this up as one of its main organizing techniques. So, first of all, it's wrong. Secondly, it's suicidal. It's just absolutely the wrong kind of tactic. Well, going back to the words you use, what happens repeatedly is that popular movements trying to bring issues of social justice into the public domain, bring up topics that make many people uncomfortable. A lot of people don't want to hear what was in the [*New York Times* 1619 Project]. They don't want to hear about American history. A lot of people would like to believe the myths that they are taught in school for years. And if somebody comes out and says, Look, there's 400 years of vicious repression of African Americans, which has left a legacy that exists today and is still being amplified today; they don't want to hear it. So, what they do is pick up--same with women's rights, any other topic. So, what they do is search assiduously for a couple of cases where people went overboard and went beyond what they should have, and say they're instituting fascism all over the country; they want to teach children in schools that every white child is a bitter oppressor and a Nazi. Look what they're doing to our schools. That's the Virginia election.

So yes, when there are efforts to bring in issues of social justice, truth of history, the legacy of the left, there are going to be cases where someone went overboard and that's a gift to the far right. They can pick that up, amplify it, and proclaim that's what's being done everywhere. Republicans are no longer a political party in any meaningful sense. I've been picking this up ever since [Richard] Nixon who was in many ways, the last liberal president, if you look at his actions. But he also recognized that the Republicans could become a dominant party if they turned themselves into a strictly racist party. Now, he didn't use the word racist. That's the Southern strategy. He understood that with Southern Democrats, opposing civil rights at law, you could bring Southern Democrats into the Republican Party by various events that would make it clear to Southern Democrats that we're gonna support your racist white supremacist policies.

Ralph Nader: Steve, David, I'm sure you want to ask Professor Chomsky some questions or comments. He's the co-author of his latest book, *The Precipice: Neoliberalism, the Pandemic and the Urgent Need for Social Change*, by Noam Chomsky and CJ Polychroniou. Haymarket Books, just came out [with it].

Steve Skrovan: Yes. Professor Chomsky, this is fantastic having you on as always. And I'm wondering about your hope for the future. You've been fighting the good fights as has Ralph for a very long time. And you're old enough to know the rise of fascism in Europe. It seems like we have that rearing its ugly head in America. Are we headed to fascism? And if so, how do we fend that off?

Noam Chomsky: Well, it's kind of ironic for someone of my age, old enough to remember the rise of fascism in Europe. But notice what happened in the 30s. There was a major crisis. The depression was a huge crisis, much worse than what happens now. I knew it personally and most of my extended family, all of my extended family, were first generation immigrants, working class unemployed, suffered hard from the depression. There were two ways out of the depression. One way was followed in Europe – fascism. The other way was followed in the United States – social democracy, the New Deal. What happened is it was the workers movements, the unions had been bitter crushed mostly by Woodrow Wilson. The US has a very violent labor history; it's much worse than Europe. And in the 1920s, it was even worse than

now. Labor movements had been crushed. They began to revive. The CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations] organizing began. The unions began to take much more active militant roles. In fact, it moved up to the level of sit-down strikes, which is a great threat to management. Sit-down strikes mean we can go one step further and take this place over. We don't need you; we can run it ourselves. Well, there was a sympathetic administration. By the time CIO organizing, worker militancy, and political activism increased sufficiently, mid-30s, at that point, the courts, which had been knocking down every New Deal measure, shifted. They saw what was happening. They began to accept some New Deal measures. The business world began to see we're in trouble; we have to accommodate to the rising popular forces and let some of these things go on. A lot of them remained bitterly hostile to the New Deal, but they sort of backed off and let it continue. And some of the major corporations, in fact, even supported it; that's another topic that Tom Ferguson has written about in detail.

Well, what happened is the United States led the world towards social democracy. Europe led the world towards fascism. Take a look today; it's almost reversed. Europe has got plenty of problems, but it still has functioning social democracies. The United States is leading the way towards a kind of fascism, protofascism. As I said, pretty ironic. Now, that's not necessary. The same forces that blocked fascist tendencies in the US in the 1930s can block them today.

Take a look back at Glasgow, which Ralph mentioned. They were are two major events at Glasgow. One was inside the conference proceedings where the suits were working on ways to perpetuate global warming, telling us it can all be solved by just turning to the market, letting the wonderful corporations, what used to be called 'soulful corporations' use their 130 trillion dollars to deal appropriately within market structures in order to overcome global heating, which is a death sentence. That was inside the chambers. Outside the chambers, they were a hundred thousand people, mostly young, organizing, demonstrating, acting, saying, "We're not gonna tolerate this. We want a world in which people can not only survive but have a decent life."

Well, those are the conflicting forces. They were also there in the 1930s. Which one is going to win? You really never know. It depends on the energy and commitment that can be exerted to lead to the kind of outcome we want. It was true 90 years ago; it's true today.

Ralph Nader: Well, you know, we're out time, Noam. I really wanted to ask you about the latest arenas of concentrated power – cryptocurrency, [Mark] Zuckerberg's metaverse--all of them developing further and further from the reaches of the law and any kind of ethical evaluation. But maybe next time we can get your thoughts on those and many other things like regional conflicts in the Middle East, China, and involve our listeners. I'm sure we're going to get a terrific reaction to the program and we'll send you some of that reaction. Thank you very much. We've been talking with Professor Noam Chomsky, author of many books including the latest called *The Precipice: Neoliberalism, the Pandemic, and the Urgent Need for Social Change*. I might add that neoliberalism was a word concocted by Milton Friedman, I understand, in the 1930s. So maybe we should call it by another name [chuckle]. Thank you, Noam.

Noam Chomsky: Okay. Good to talk to you as always.

Ralph Nader: As always, as always. Thank you.

Steve Skrovan: We've been speaking with Noam Chomsky. We will link to his work at ralphnaderradiohour.com. Let's take a quick break and check in with our corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber.

Russell Mokhiber: From the National Press Building in Washington, D.C., this is your *Corporate Crime Reporter* "Morning Minute" for Friday, November 19, 2021; I'm Russell Mokhiber. About 100,000 pounds of raw ground chicken patty products, which are mostly sold at Trader Joe's, are being recalled for potential contamination. That's according to a report from WebMD. The recall includes two frozen chicken products: Trader Joe's Chili Lime Chicken Burgers and Spinach Feta Chicken Sliders. The sliders are also sold at other grocery stores. The affected products might be "contaminated with extraneous materials, specifically pieces of bone," according to a recall alert from the US Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service. The USDA said the problem was discovered by the manufacturer, Innovation Solutions[, Inc.], which is based in Kent, Washington. The company "received consumer complaints reporting findings of bone in the chicken burger product." For the *Corporate Crime Reporter*, I'm Russell Mokhiber.

Steve Skrovan: Thank you, Russel. Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. I'm Steve Skrovan along with David Feldman and Ralph. And that's our show. I wanna thank our guest again, Noam Chomsky. For those of you listening on the radio, we're gonna cut out now. But for you, podcasts 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: Please 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: For a copy of *The Day the Rats Vetoed Congress*, go to ratsreformcongress.org. And also check out *The Ralph Nader and Family Cookbook: Classic Recipes from Lebanon and Beyond*. We'll link to both of those at ralphnaderradiohour.com.

David Feldman: 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 proofreader is Elisabeth Solomon. Our associate producer is Hannah Feldman. Our social media manager is Steven Wendt.

David Feldman: Join us next week on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. Thank you, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Thank you, everybody. Listen, learn, act. Those are the three words for all of us.⁴⁰