

RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EPISODE 95

Anna Myers, William Miller

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

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

DAVID FELDMAN: Hello everybody.

STEVE SKROVAN: And the man of the hour, Ralph Nader. How are you today, Ralph?

RALPH NADER: I'm fine. Good to be with you, Steve and David.

STEVE SKROVAN: On the show today we will be talking about the United Nations with William Miller from an organization called Global Connections Television. We will, as always, be checking on the corporate crime beat with the tireless Russell Mohkiber. And if we have time, we'll try to get to some more of your listener questions. But first, it always seems to me that in the media, books, movies, television, we depict heroes and patriots as people with guns or super powers. But heroes in real life are often much less dramatic, although no less brave. And one of those types of heroes is the person who sees something amiss in a respected institution, whether it's a government agency or a corporation, and decides to blow the whistle. Some of these people become famous or notorious, depending on your point of view, like Daniel Ellsberg or Edward Snowden, and sometimes it takes many years before the whistle blower is vindicated. When Ralph talked about the writing of "Unsafe at Any Speed," he acknowledged the engineers at GM who agreed to talk to him about the dangerous design flaws in the Corvair. So the whistle blower performs an important function in our society, the insider who alerts us to

wrongdoing in government and industry, as brave as anyone with a gun. Which leads us to our first guest. David?

DAVID FELDMAN: Anna Myers is the Executive Director and CEO of the Government Accountability Project. Ms. Myers is a legal expert with over fifteen years' experience in the field of public interest, whistle blowing and anti-corruption. She has advised hundreds of individual whistle blowers in the UK and has worked with governments and civil society in North America, Europe, Africa and Asia. Ms. Myers has also set up and coordinated W-I-N, WIN, a network for civil society organizations that helps protect and defend whistle blowers around the world. Welcome to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour, Anna Myers.

ANNA MYERS: Thank you.

RALPH NADER: Thank you, Anna Myers, for coming onto the program. This is a special occasion for me, because in the early 70's, we had the first global whistle blowers conference of any place, and it was turned into a book. But it was a huge conference room full of whistle blowers. You had to have been there to understand the atmosphere. They were blowing the whistle on the Pentagon, on the Departments of Interior, Agriculture, on big corporations, companies that controlled towns in textile areas in North Carolina, timber companies in Maine. There were whistle blowers of labor union corruption. And out of that, we developed a book called *Whistle Blowers*, and it was published by Grossman Publishers. But also, we gave a new meaning to the word whistle blower. And I was astonished to read a few months ago, the Wall Street Journal had an article saying that before that conference in the early 70's on whistle blowers, the word whistle blower meant snitch. It meant someone who was sleazy and not faithful and sabotage, whatever, disgruntled. And after that conference and the work that GAP and other groups have done, it became a word of conscience, of people bringing their conscience to work and blowing the whistle on waste, corruption, fraud, harm, defective products, contaminated meat and poultry products. And since then, there have been a lot of federal laws, some state laws protecting whistle blowers. They have a variety of coverage. Some of it is quite inadequate and the enforcement and

protection are inadequate. So here we are with Anna Myers, who is the Executive Director and CEO of GAP, the Government Accountability Project, which is clearly the leading group in the United States, perhaps in the world, of handling spectacular whistle blower cases. And I'd like to start, Anna, with the question, what kind of characteristic do you attribute to whistle blowers? There's no average whistle blowers, but what goes through the mind of a whistle blower who's got a good job, maybe a good pension, possibility of promotion, supporting the family, and then put it all on the line and be an outcast and be retaliated against? What is it that goes in the minds of whistle blowers?

ANNA MYERS: It's such an interesting question, and I think it will be one that people will ponder for a long, long time. But I think many of the people I've talked to over the years and the experience at the Government Accountability Project is that people, for the most part, are just doing their jobs. And the issue of whistle blowing, it doesn't even enter the equation for them. They start to realize that things, I think the dilemma, or what I would call a whistle blower's dilemma, starts to happen when the information that you are providing to people who, you know, they are responsible for dealing with it in the normal course are suddenly not dealing with it. Or there start to be push backs. So I do think that that's probably the vast majority. They do their work and they are doing something that seems very clear to them. And I think the vast majority of whistle blowing, in fact, does happen within the workplace when people start to realize, though, that it's not being addressed is when they start to think about taking it further. And those individuals that do it, I've just heard so many different explanations. One of them is "I just couldn't keep quiet, I mean, it's why I do this work." I think that people see that if they don't do it, perhaps no one else will. When they take that step, I think a lot of them are not as aware as they could be about the potential risks. And we spend a lot of time helping people deal with those, some of those decisions after the fact. We try, of course, to give them lots of information before they take those steps so they can do them with their eyes wide open.

But I also think that at this point, and it would be really interesting to get your views from the time that you have been looking at this issue, there's a new generation coming up. And two things are

happening. One is that they share information very readily, very quickly, and so a sense of what is private both personally, and people have worries about that, but also what is to be shared may be slightly changing. And so I think the idea that things are secret is a really interesting idea to the younger generation. Why are they secret, and why wouldn't we want to know about them? So I think the individuals who take those steps are often braver than they realize at first, and then they have to stick with it because to not do it would actually cause harm to the public interest.

RALPH NADER: Yeah, I was going to say, Anna Myers, we're talking with Anna Myers, who's the Executive Director and CEO of the Government Accountability Project, a nonprofit citizen group representing whistle blowers. How much of the motivation of whistle blowers comes from their fear of being ensnared in a forthcoming criminal prosecution, and they want to be arm's length?

ANNA MYERS: That's an interesting question. I actually think that most people become whistle blowers because they think that the wrongdoing is unacceptable, and not necessarily because of their own sense that they need to get at arm's length. And I think that that's an interesting distinction to be made, because I think the whistle blowers over the years that the Government Accountability Project has represented and the ones over the years that I've advised, it's rarely because they want to put distance. It's mostly because they are people who are full of integrity and can't not address it, and to do so would be to let themselves down and let the public down.

RALPH NADER: Now, Anna Myers, this is a worldwide movement. I mean, there are laws now in many countries protecting whistle blowers in one degree or another. It's a remarkable movement, even in some countries that are fairly autocratic. And this was chronicled by a recent book by Professor Robert Vaughn of the American University Law School in Washington, DC. Could you describe briefly what the international expansion of whistle blower protection is in Europe, Asia, South America?

ANNA MYERS: It's very interesting. I think a couple of different threads are there. One is the sort of anti-corruption. In countries where there is a lot of corruption, it's seen as a way to start to break

that cycle and to allow for the laws that provide some protection would allow people to come forward with information that allows them to start to investigate and break that cycle. I think on the civil society side, it's very much similar to the issues that you were raising many, many years ago. There's an issue around the public interest being protected, being able to speak truth to power, and through both whistle blowing and journalism, investigative journalism, that is definitely enjoying a new sense of life around the world, these are very important checks on power at a time where we see power globalizing and some of the accountability mechanisms that we may have had nationally not necessarily dealing with these issues.

RALPH NADER: GAP has produced several editions of a marvelous publication on whistle blowing guides and advice to potential whistle blowers. Could you describe that briefly, and how could people get it?

ANNA MYERS: Well, you can definitely get it by getting in touch with the Government Accountability Project, and I can give you those details. One of the books, there are two that are available, one is called The Whistle Blower's Survival Guide. It's been around for a while, it's had, as you say, new editions. But I think the lessons learned are incredibly timeless, and what they do is help people think about these issues in really concrete terms. Get the right advice, consider how they're doing it, and do it in a way that will reduce the risk that they're isolated. As a lawyer myself, the laws are meant to try and help balance the playing field a bit, and they are very, very important, and you want to do it well and properly. But you also need to think about getting the support you need, both from family and colleagues and working with, if an organization can support it, getting the public engaged with these issues as well.

RALPH NADER: And how would they get this report? Why don't you give the listeners your contact information.

ANNA MYERS: Yes. So they can reach us at the Government Accountability Project on our website, www.Whistleblower.org. Or they can ring us in Washington on 202-457-0034. But all the

information is there on the website. And the other one that has come out more recently is dealing with corporate whistle blowing, and that's called The Corporate Whistle Blower's Survival Guide. And again, that helps navigate what some of the laws are in the U.S. around corporate whistle blowers, and now 80,000 corporate employees are covered by some form of whistle blower protection.

RALPH NADER: Listeners should know that the Government Accountability Project is staffed with brilliant and competent people. Many of them have been working in this area for many years. Tell us the extent to which you pro bono represent these people. How far do you go? You don't go into the whole litigation. You try to find other public interest law firms to help out, don't you? And with some of these national security whistle blowers like John Kiriakou, Edward Snowden, Thomas Drake, how far do you go before you also try to get representation?

ANNA MYERS: Well, when some of these whistle blowers have been represented by Government Accountability Project, we work with, we co-counsel as well when there are issues around classified information. And we work with other groups. So it depends on the issues. If there are, the national security whistle blowers that fall within the Office of Special Counsel, then we can definitely do some of that work. And we do do some litigation work, as well. But we do definitely partner with other law firms and we work with organizations that can support, because one of the many aspects of this is, can be both the public understanding of the issues and the public and civil society support for the whistle blowers. So over the years, when we represented the various whistle blowers that had come forward, then there is a whole series of steps that we take to ensure that they are protected both in law and are able to protect their positions. Some of them, of course, are in more difficult situations than others. And to also help with making sure that the public understands the issues when they're able to be open about that.

RALPH NADER: Well, over the span of forty years, GAP has represented well over 6,000 whistle blowers. Imagine, 6,000 whistle blowers. And before we get into the legal architecture of the federal laws and protections, can you describe briefly what sources of funding you get for this? Because a lot of foundations don't want to get into this kind of controversial activity, although it's the highest form

of ethical performance for someone to jeopardize their very livelihood and their job to protect the public from hazardous products like the drug Vioxx, produced by Pfizer, which you were involved in, gouging of Medicare, corporate crime of a variety of intensity. It's very, very courageous to do what they're doing, and we'll get into the laws that protect them. But right now, where do you get most of your funding, Anna Myers?

ANNA MYERS: Well, at the moment we still do get a lot of foundation funding, and I think the reason they do that, it's not necessarily just for the casework, it's for the advocacy and campaigning and the legislative work that we do to try to ensure that the program of change that needs to occur from a whistle blowing disclosure and from the protection issues that arise, those are taken forward. So we do get a wide variety of foundation funding. We also have individual donors, and we're getting a lot more of the online donorship, which I think is really donations which is very important. And I think that moving towards more of the crowd sourced funding is something that we all need to do. It's a busy time for everyone, and getting that sorted out is really important. But we get a lot of support from individuals. But I would say that the foundation funding is still around and is still very, very important to capture long term sustainability.

RALPH NADER: Well, that's reassuring. Do you get attorney fees?

ANNA MYERS: We do, but that's always going to be difficult to, as a kind of source, a long term source, we do a lot of pro bono work and a lot of work that isn't as lucrative as it would be for a private law firm, of course.

RALPH NADER: Right. By attorney fees, I don't mean that you charge. This is when you win a case, like the civil rights laws, you can get attorney fees, or from a Freedom of Information lawsuit, from the government, and in some cases from non-governmental sources. Let's go to the legal framework here. There's such a thing as the Merit System Protection Board that whistle blowers can appeal to from their own department and agency, whether it's the Food & Drug Administration or Department of Defense, the

Treasury. There is a Whistle Blower Protection Act that was passed under George Herbert Walker Bush. He signed that into law. I believe that was 1999. And there's the 1986 False Claims Act where whistle blowers in government detecting corporate fraud on the government, you know, contracts, grants, all that, the whole Defense Department problems have been widely reported with companies ripping off the Defense Department or ripping off Medicare, and if the Justice Department takes the case on behalf of the whistle blowers and gets a settlement or a verdict, the whistle blowers can get a substantial part of that, maybe up to 20 percent. Then there's the new Whistle Blower Protection Act of 2013. And it's interesting, Anna, that those laws were vigorously opposed by corporate lobbies, and they lost, because it was sort of a left right alliance in Congress. Senator Grassley, the strong proponent of whistle blower protection, and he worked with Democrat Congressman Howard Berman in 1986 to overcome corporate opposition and pass the famous False Claims Act of 1986 that's recovered at least \$16 billion, with a B, dollars for the taxpayer. Is there any characterization you'd like to make? How effective, how useful, how much more should they be improved, the legal architecture?

ANNA MYERS: I think they're all incredibly helpful and useful, and I think, as you say, the architecture is substantially there. I think the risk is not so much in the whistle blowing laws themselves, it's how their decision making method that happens, but also so the attack that happened in other ways. And one of the things that we're picking up, and it is not only an issue within the United States, but it's an international issue, is the criminalization of whistle blowing. And it's a way of going after a whistle blower not for the employment protection rights, but for either having taken some documents or breaching the issue with the Espionage Act also being used against whistle blowers who, like Thomas Drake, never revealed any classified information and raised everything properly within the system. So there's some issues around where the attack is coming from, which we are very alive to and working hard to address. What is so interesting is this is a bipartisan issue. When there's wrongdoing, abuse of power, fraudulent use of government money, that is something that does rally all sides together, and the issue is very important. And I think that is what has always been interesting around the whistle blowing piece

here and overseas, is that it is something that is seen as very important for the public interest and crosses all lines.

RALPH NADER: And Anna Myers, give some description of the situation at state level. How strong are state whistle blowing laws, and are they being utilized?

ANNA MYERS: Probably not as strong as some of the federal laws, and I think one of the things we're finding and I think that you'd be interested in around the food safety issue and food systems is that there's been an attempt at state level to pass what we would call ag gag laws, which stop any kind of information, filming, any kind of information of what is happening within corporate farms and within the industry of food from being revealed or disclosed. And that again has a criminal attachment to it. So I think it's close to 23 states have attempted to pass such bills, which cause a real chilling effect on whistle blowing and is another way in which the rights of individuals to speak up and be protected are being attacked.

RALPH NADER: Yeah, this is an amazing reactionary counter-attack. It started with Oprah Winfrey putting someone on who went after meat, and she was sued in Texas. And anyway, these are called anti-disparagement laws. I mean, just imagine, they're trying to stifle the free speech of meat and poultry inspectors or others who get evidence inside these plants. It's also directed against the press, reporters. Haven't some of these laws been challenged as unconstitutional or abridgement of First Amendment free speech rights, Anna?

ANNA MYERS: Yes, they have, and they've been fought pretty vociferously by civil society and by the Government Accountability Project. So they have only passed, so far, in five states, rather than the 23 that proposed such bills. And there are challenges now going forward. So I think it's a really interesting time, because I think this year, especially, is where a lot of these things are starting to come to a head. And again, this is where the public, understanding what the impact of these issues are, in terms of our food safety, in terms of the ability of people to let us know what is going on, is incredibly important.

It isn't a fringe issue, it isn't about corporate ownership of trade secrets or information like that, it's about public interest information that ought to be accessible and available if we want to have a system that works for all of us.

RALPH NADER: And some of it is outright criminal violation, so when you're violating federal laws in food safety and other products, the whistle blower takes incriminating information to public authorities. You know, the association that represents engineers has a very interesting ethical directive to engineers. It's the Society of Professional Engineers, Anna, and what they say to engineers is that if they're on the job and they discover a dangerous situation that affects employees or affects people who use bridges or are near dams, and they take it to their superior and the superior doesn't do anything, that that professional employed engineer is required ethically to take the complaint to law enforcement authorities. In other words, to blow the whistle. So this is really important. There are many ways to restrict government and corporate crimes. I mean, there's regulation, there's prosecution, there's shareholder action. But the whistle blower deterrent is enormously important because the bosses don't know when the whistle blower is going to come out. They don't know what's going on. Like General Motors wasn't afraid enough of whistle blowers on the ignition switch defect, but I'm sure that from time to time, decisions are made and saying, "Well, we better be careful because there may be a whistle blower in our midst." And could you give some examples, human interest examples of whistle blowers that GAP has represented? You mentioned that GAP was involved in the resignation of World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz, who was a warmonger for invading Iraq when he was in the Defense Department. Could you describe that case?

ANNA MYERS: That one did happen before my time and before I was looking so much at the GAP situation. But yes, it was a very important case for GAP, the Government Accountability Project. And it was one where it showed abuse by, within the office of Paul Wolfowitz and the use of special advisors in ways that were not proper. And so it was one of those campaigns. And the whistle blowers who came forward really showing where there was abuse of power at the highest level of the World Bank.

And it was a very, very important case. But also, I think, for people, and just to understand that it is in, as you were talking about the meat inspectors, one of our whistle blowers in the last little while was Jim Schrier, who was meat inspector who risked basically his professional career when he exposed what was happening with the stunning of pigs before slaughter. And this is a direct violation of federal humane handling regulations. So he, again, this is one where he thought he was doing his job, brought his concerns to a supervisor, and instead of reinforcing the regulations, the management became angry and they moved him to a slaughterhouse about 120 miles away. And so GAP became very involved and helped raise the issue publically, and he was moved back.

One of the other cases that I think is interesting because, and very important to GAP, and it was a recent Supreme Court win, was the case of Robert McClain, who is an Air Marshal with the Transportation Safety Administration. And he had disclosed to a Senate committee that the Agency had decided to stop putting air marshals on cross country flights during a terrorist alert -- this was back in 2003 – for budgetary reasons. And so when he raised the issue, they did, the agency did back down because Congress and the public response was very intense. But three years later, they fired Robert McClain in confidentiality rules involving sensitive security information. And so this is a case that GAP did take, and we did win at the Federal Circuit level, which was very important because, and it was one that was very clear that there wasn't the possibility that the Whistle Blower Protection Act was definitely something that trumps the Agency's efforts to put limits on free speech and dissent rights. And then this was appealed, actually, by the Department of Justice, and we, the case went to the Supreme Court. And it was won at the beginning of last year, 2015. And for those of us who were, are in the field, this was an incredibly important decision, because to have the Supreme Court uphold the Federal Court was a really important one for all federal workers and those working in the national security area.

RALPH NADER: To go in another area of GAP achievement, you've represented whistle blowers dealing with the exposure of rampant mortgage and securities fraud at CitiBank, Deutsche Bank, Bank of America, Countrywide Financial. Whistle blowers had exposed the White House effort under the

Republicans, Bush, to edit science reports summarizing the results of billions of dollars of federal research to make it seem like climate change was either not happening or not caused by human activity. This is quite a record. I mean, I always thought a lot of these human interest cases, Anna, would make documentaries, or at least a series of short documentaries, because they represent the height of human spirit and human courage, and we often define courage in our country as battlefield courage or rescuing someone from a fire, which obviously is courage. But moral courage, in a way, is much more difficult, because as General Patton once said when he was asked about battlefield courage, how he would define it, he would say, "Fear plus five minutes." And then, with moral courage, you get retaliated. You lose your career, you're blacklisted, you're shunned by your colleagues very often. And it's a terrible strain on the family. Could you give us, before we conclude, Anna Myers, could you give us one or two examples of internationally courageous whistle blowers? Because you've worked all over the world.

ANNA MYERS: Yeah. I think it's worth thinking about, even in the banking sector. So and I know that this can seem dry to a lot of people, but obviously people who lost houses in the financial meltdown and really paid the price for what seemed to be a system that was geared towards a process that was baseless, there was a real connection. I was working in the UK at an organization that was also advising whistle blowers. And we were having whistle blowers call us about, from credit rating agencies, talking about changing the basis for providing A ratings and double-A ratings in the same companies. And GAP was dealing with compliance officers whose jobs were to report on these issues, who were then being treated as whistle blowers rather than, as you said, fulfilling their professional responsibility and ethics. And one of the whistle blowers that I've come across in recent years who raised these alarms and he was working in the UK for the Bank of Wachovia, which is a U.S. bank, raising the concerns that were actually about money laundering. And it was the Mexican drug cartels through the bank. And these were things that were denied. And he raised it. And he had been a former policeman in the UK, and so he, I guess, felt that this was something he couldn't be quiet about, and had worked in the City of London police for a time on fraud issues. So he was an expert; and he raised that. And he's one of those people

who now can speak very clearly about what the human cost is around the world where banks are doing this, and it feels like a financial issue and a regulatory issue, and yet it's the harm that is happening in the countries that are being, using banks this way, are social and real and it allows criminals to operate with impunity in those countries.

RALPH NADER: It's interesting you mentioned Wachovia Bank, because down at Wall Street, presidential candidate on the Democratic ticket, Bernie Sanders, mentioned Wachovia Bank and laundering billions of dollars of drug money. And he shouted out to the audience that not a single executive of Wachovia, nobody in Wachovia was prosecuted and sent to jail. Wachovia Bank is now defunct after the crash on Wall Street. So there's this asymmetry where the companies really want to go after the whistle blowers, but they demand impunity or immunity from their own criminal negligence or outright criminality. Steve and David, do you have any questions for Anna Myers of the Government Accountability Project in Washington DC?

STEVE SKROVAN: Yeah, I do, Ms. Myers. I was recently speaking to my congressman out here in California who's on the Senate Intelligence Committee, and I asked him about Edward Snowden. And this congressman is relatively liberal. And he said he thinks Edward Snowden should stay in Russia. What do you think the fate of Edward Snowden will be or should be?

ANNA MYERS: I think there's a real issue within the U.S. It's an interesting one, having worked outside, because the actual disclosures that he made are really resonating around the world in the sense of the mass surveillance of the people outside the U.S., and then obviously within the U.S. I mean, my view is that it is very, very difficult to talk about going after someone like Edward Snowden using an Act, the Espionage Act, which is what has been used against a number of whistle blowers in the last few years, which is a 1917 anti-spying act, and it isn't one that is made for today's world. And what it ends up not providing is any kind of public interest defense, and it would be very, he has said publically I believe that if there was an ability to be able to defend himself, he would. And I think we have to ask ourselves, these things always take time to go through, but if you look at what the polls have said, the older generation is

much more, I think, unsure or not as positive. But the younger generation is very much behind Edward Snowden in many ways, and is saying that these are issues that they needed to know and wanted to know. Because one of the things that I think, and we picked up on this earlier, is that whistle blowers are very grounding. They are like the shot across the bow, really, of what's really happening. And we need to hear from them if we want to be able to really address where true wrongdoing is lying, but also where the accountability mechanisms that ought to be there are not working, or they haven't even been developed yet. And so I think with what his position, I would very much like him to be able to come back to the U.S. It will probably take a while for that to happen. But in terms of his position, and if there are, and we're not ever saying that breaches of classified information properly understood and properly regulated, because there are issues about the overreach and the classification system, if it's done properly then yes, there is a problem if people are just going against that. But I think in this situation

RALPH NADER: Just to clarify, Edward Snowden did not release any information. He sent them to the New York Times and the Guardian, who then decided what they wanted to release and what they wanted to remain protected. The other point is - that's often missed - is he may have violated a law, but he exposed massive criminality, massive felonies, of violation of the FISA Act, which has a first class felony for surveillance without judicial approval. And this was dragnet surveillance. It was specific surveillance, there was no probable cause by agencies like the NSA and CIA. So he exposed massive criminality. It's been very well documented now, and I don't think he could get a fair trial in the United States.

ANNA MYERS: I think that's the problem. And, but him staying away is also a problem, because it doesn't address the fact that what we need to address is the fair trial issue. It isn't fair that all of that is sitting on his head, when as you pointed out quite rightly, what he was showing was very, very problematic and people would say illegal.

RALPH NADER: And none of those people were prosecuted, either.

ANNA MYERS: Exactly. And I think the thing that happens, and I think we do need to take this into account, is we're talking about where the balance of power is and why we are focusing, again, whistle blowers are very important, they're fascinating. But we are asking, I think, as a society sometimes, that whistle blowers take all the risk and we wait to see how it pans out for them before we go and stand with them. And I think that's where the Government Accountability Project and other organizations that say, "No, we're standing with you, this is deeply important, we need these individuals to come forward and let us know what's happening, particularly if there is criminality and wrongdoing, and where we haven't got our other systems clearly are not working." And in the Edward Snowden case, that is what it shows. They were not working. The public was not being properly protected from the overreach of these agencies.

RALPH NADER: Well, Anna Myers, we're just about out of time. Can you give our listeners the website and the contact number, if they want to have communication with you?

ANNA MYERS: Absolutely. We're the Government Accountability Project, and we're at www.whistleblower.org, and you can call us on 202-457-0034. And on the website you also find links to our food integrity campaign and our climate science and policy watch programs, as well as other programs that we deal with and address.

RALPH NADER: Very good. Thank you very much, Anna Myers, CEO and Executive Director of GAP. And those of you among the listening audience who are in college or graduate school, these would be good materials for seminar papers or theses, the whole phenomena spreading worldwide of conscientious whistle blowing, protected increasingly by domestic law in countries in all the continents of the world. Thank you very much, Anna Myers.

ANNA MYERS: Thank you very much, Ralph.

STEVE SKROVAN: We've been speaking to Anna Myers, Executive Director of GAP, the Government Accountability Project. Go to whistleblower.org. Speaking of accountability, it's time to

check in with the Corporate Crime Reporter, Russell Mohkiber. You can't get anything past this guy.
Russell?

RUSSELL MOHKIBER: From the National Press Building in Washington, DC, this is your Corporate Crime Reporter morning minute for Friday, January 8, 2016. I'm Russell Mohkiber. The civil lawsuit brought by the Justice Department against Volkswagen for violating the Clean Air Act was only the opening round. Criminal charges are on deck. Justice Department spokesperson Wyn Hornbuckle told the Corporate Crime Reporter that we have an active and ongoing investigation. The filing of a complaint is an important first step, but not the last step, Hornbuckle said. And University of Michigan Law Professor David Edelman, the former head of the Justice Department's environmental crime unit, said that criminal charges will follow. The Justice Department's civil suit is merely its opening salvo in the VW emissions debacle, Edelman said. Criminal charges will follow, possibly before the end of the year, and no later than 2017. And when the litigation is over, VW will have paid billions of dollars in criminal and civil penalties. For the Corporate Crime Reporter, I'm Russell Mohkiber.

DAVID FELDMAN: Thank you, Russell. Our next guest is the producer and moderator of Global Connections Television, which does most of its tapings from the United Nations in New York and focuses on international issues, from Frankfurt, Kentucky, to Frankfurt, Germany, from Lima, Ohio to Lima, Peru. Mr. Miller is an international relations specialist. He's written numerous articles in the United Nations for newspapers such as the Lexington Herald Leader and the Washington International. Welcome, William Miller.

RALPH NADER: Thank you for coming on, Bill Miller. You started the Global Connections Television, which is a cooperative effort with the United Nations. You've been a big supporter, and you've traveled all over the world, to try to increase knowledge and understanding about what the United Nations does. It was really initiated mostly by the United States in 1945. The U.N. Charter is adhered to by well over 150 countries, and the U.N. Charter has the effect of federal law in the United States. It's in effect, a treaty. Could you explain to our listeners briefly the various parts of the United Nations, and

what its overall budget it? And I want our listeners to consider all that the U.N. does, and of course it could always be more efficient like any bureaucracy. And compare the budget and what it does around the world with one expenditure by the Pentagon, which is the cost of a new aircraft carrier is \$13 billion, one aircraft carrier. Go ahead, Bill.

WILLIAM MILLER: Yes, that is a large order, but I'm going to try to get through it quickly. You're right. Let me just go back, just for a second, what you mentioned about Global Connections Television. It was, I did establish this, this was a privately funded, independently produced program, and I do, in cooperation, I borrowed the United Nations studio is what happens. I come to New York once a month and line up my guests, and my program basically is to focus on international issues and how they impact people from Frankfurt, Kentucky to Frankfurt, Germany, Lima, Ohio to Lima, Peru. But anyone can go to the program on www.globalconnectionstelevision.com and go to the video gallery, and you're welcome to download this program. It's provided as a public service. You can get it on PBS, community access, your local university intra-campus system, whatever. But I put it out as a public service. But again, I am totally separate from the U.N. But I did create a course on the United Nations, there's one on my website that universities can use if they would like to teach about the U.N. You ought to get on it.

The United Nations even once created really primarily by the United States, President Franklin Roosevelt was the architect in 1945, and the U.N. is now celebrating its 70th anniversary. It's a far cry from what it was when it came out of the ashes of World War II and the demise of the League of Nations. But the U.N. literally touches our lives every day. And I won't go through all of the programs, but we do, the United States, as do the other 192 members of the U.N. General Assembly, they benefit from the U.N. In fact, the U.S. earns more money off of the United Nations than we put into it.

You mentioned the budget. The U.N. budget for the secretariat is about \$4 billion. Peacekeeping is about \$8 billion. Now that's not what we pay. We only pay 22 percent of that \$4 billion, and we pay about 27, 28 percent of the \$8 billion, which is really a bargain when you look at peacekeeping, because there are sixteen peacekeeping missions around the world in some very dangerous areas, like South

Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti. And just imagine if the United Nations did not have a peacekeeping mission in Haiti, which the U.S. was down there, you may recall we were down there in the mid-90's, and then we stabilized Port au Prince and most of Haiti and then turned it over to the U.N. But our contribution to that is a little over \$2 billion, something like that, which is really a bargain when you look at not having U.S. troops, not having U.S. personnel, not picking up the full tab but sharing the burden with other countries. So it's really a great deal.

You mentioned about the U.N. sort of encompasses so many different issues. And it does. We hear a lot about the World Health Organization combatting the Ebola virus. We hear about the Polio Plus program, a cooperative effort with 1.2 million Rotarians around the world, Rotary International. The World Health Organization, the U.S. Children's Fund and the Centers for Disease Control primarily are leading the effort to eliminate polio. We, all we have to do is think about our own lives. Any time we fly in international airspace, it's a U.N. agency that helps to move that aircraft safely in that space. It's a U.N. agency that's helping make sure that terrorists, hijackers, do not get on board. If you cruise in the Caribbean, which we can readily identify with that, or in the Mediterranean, wherever it might be, it's U.N. agency that brings the shipping lines of the world together to develop the rules and regulations, to move those ships safely on the high seas, and to make sure, again, that pirates do not get on board. If you mail a letter to London or to Kyoto or wherever it might be, it's a U.N. agency that helps move that letter to its destination. You watch the weather report tonight. It's a U.N. agency that has responsibility to disseminate weather information around the world. So I've just hopscotched very briefly through a large part of the U.N. There's a lot more we could talk about.

RALPH NADER: Yeah, good, Bill. Talk about just briefly the International Labor Organization, the ILO, the Food and Agriculture Organization, as well.

WILLIAM MILLER: Oh, OK, yes, right. Those are two of the specialized agencies of the United Nations. And if you go to my website, GlobalConnectionsTelevision.com, you will see several interviews with international labor organization representatives. I brought at least, I can think of five or six,

interviews on there with ILO specialists. So take a look at that. But ILO is the third oldest of the U.N. agencies, and it was created primarily to develop labor standards, to bring together what they call the tripartite system. You have governments, you have employers, businesses, and you have labor. They come together. They are all participants in the ILO. And the idea was to bring them together to work on things like safety standards, to deal with problems like, oh, inhumane working conditions, human trafficking. Just, unemployment, youth unemployment, whatever it might be.

RALPH NADER: They have a marvelous free magazine that you can get.

WILLIAM MILLER: They do.

RALPH NADER: Contact the ILO. It's in Rome, isn't it?

WILLIAM MILLER: The ILO, Geneva. It's in Geneva.

RALPH NADER: Oh, sorry.

WILLIAM MILLER: FAO is in Rome, and they're located there. I think the World Food Program is also, I believe, in Rome.

RALPH NADER: Right. Let's talk about UNESCO. What does UNESCO do? What is its budget, and why is the United States not part of it?

WILLIAM MILLER: Well, UNESCO was set up in 1945, I guess right after the United Nations came online. And the United States was very instrumental in helping to set up UNESCO. The budget is roughly, I think, about \$360 million, is what it's supposed to be. But you may recall in 2011, UNESCO allowed the Palestinian Authority to become a member of UNESCO. And so we had congressional legislation on the books for years that said if a non-permanent member were to become a member of an international organization, an international agency like UNESCO, that we would withdraw. And that is what the U.S. did. And so we

RALPH NADER: In 2011?

WILLIAM MILLER: Uh huh. And so we basically we still participate to some degree, but we're not paying our fair share of the dues. Which means we don't have an active voice in setting the agenda, and of course we benefit so much. You look at the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, that title pretty much says what they're involved in. They're involved in educational activities to help, really to make a more literate world, to work with teachers in developing countries, to provide assistance to them, books and whatever the case might be. You look at the scientific part of it. They bring together the scientists of the world for conferences and the folks on all different types of problems that we have. You look at the cultural activities. They're involved in preserving, working with countries to preserve their cultural antiquities. There's a program, Ralph, that most people probably never heard of. It's a UNESCO program, it's called Man in the Biosphere Program. And basically, this was set up to help countries preserve their pristine natural resources. And also to be able to make money off of them, to promote revenue from those resources. And we in the United States, we have several biosphere programs in the United States. You seldom read about them.

I'm originally from Kentucky, and the Mammoth Cave, which is one of the largest cave systems in the world, had a real problem with underground water pollution. And the cave was becoming a closed sewer really. So about 1991, they heard about the UNESCO Man in the Biosphere program, went to UNESCO, said we would like to work with you to help preserve this pristine natural resource. So UNESCO came in, they brought together all the players, the federal, state, local, the area development districts, the business sector, the university, the farmers, everybody got involved. And they developed a strategy. And the strategy was very effective in helping to clean up the underground river in the cave and to make sure it didn't get polluted in the future. But also it helped to come up with ideas to promote revenue. But this is a way that the U.N. agency touches your life every day and we seldom hear about it. The Great Smoky Mountains National Park is part of this Man in Biosphere program. Everglades participates in it. But I think there are about 500 of these projects around the world.

But again, these are agencies that you seldom hear about and so often the only time you hear about it is when you have some right wing radio talk show person saying that the U.N. is taking over our forests, our lands, our rivers, which is total nonsense, absolutely ridiculous. And this is the program they're talking about. UNESCO does not control one inch of territory in the Mammoth Cave area. It just simply is not the case. They're there as an advisor and whenever, if a group wants to opt out of it, a state or a country, all they do is get out of it. They're not involved, they don't have to stay in the program. It's a voluntary program. But those are just a few things that UNESCO does. But it really would be in the best interests of the United States to get back into UNESCO in a full-fledged way, put up the \$80 million that's our fair share of the budget, and to be more actively involved. Because our universities depend upon, many of the universities depend upon UNESCO programs. Our scientists depend upon many of those programs. Our cultural folks, the archivists and different people like that depend upon them. So UNESCO is a major agency that we've had a love hate relationship with really since back in the early 80's. You may remember we dropped out of UNESCO for almost twenty years, but we did come back in. And now we're, we've kind of opted ourselves out or forced ourselves out because we haven't paid our fair share of the dues.

RALPH NADER: Yeah. You know, Bill, the same Congress that withdrew \$80 million a year from UNESCO was not even having a public hearing and pushing through Congress \$50 billion a year appropriations for Afghanistan or Iraq, so the whole budget of UNESCO is less than three days of what we spent to blow apart Iraq, less than three days, quite apart from U.S. and Iraqi casualties. So we're dealing here with proportionality, and I really always emphasize how the government is spending its money and misspending its money. And it does often seem that the smallest federal agencies make the most constructive contribution. You started out as a Peace Corps volunteer in the Dominican Republic. And in the first year you worked in a remote, rural area. In the second year, you taught at one of the universities in Santiago, the Dominican Republic's second largest city. Look at the Peace Corps with its miniscule budget and the tens of thousands of people that have experienced life in other lands, helped

other people, and come back to the United States to speak truth to the likes of Rush Limbaugh and other right wing roaring and bloviating radio talk show hosts who keep saying get the U.N. out of the U.S. and the U.S. out of the U.N.

Bill Miller, who founded Global Connections Television, is our guest, started out as a Peace Corps volunteer in the Dominican Republic, and he spent two years there. And this small budget that the Peace Corps has around the world has given invaluable experience to tens of thousands of Americans of all ages, including Jimmy Carter's mother, who was in her 60's when she was a Peace Corps volunteer overseas. And it also has provided for a lot of help for local, rural areas around the Third World, where the Peace Corps volunteers lived and worked with the people. And it makes the point that often the smallest federal agencies make the most constructive impact on the world, and the most expensive federal agencies are the ones that often make a destructive impact on the world, quite apart from looting the taxpayers' money. Thank you very much, Bill Miller. Can you give our listeners all the contact numbers to watch the wonderful interviews that you've had of people on climate change, poverty reduction, renewable energy education, technology, peace and security, gender issues, as well as any other contact information for them to stay in touch with you?

WILLIAM MILLER: Yes, I certainly can and I'm delighted to do it, Ralph. Just go to GlobalConnectionsTelevision.com website, and if you go to Video Gallery you can view the programs, the most recent programs we've done. There are about 120 that are up there right now. If you would like more information on how to start a course, for example if you're a professor and you would like your university or high school to have a course on the United Nations, just go to U.N. Education, it's one of the pages at the top of the website. If you're interested in getting in touch with the local PBS or community access television station, I would encourage you to do so, because it's very important to get information out about the United Nations and to be an objective critic of the U.N. The U.N. is not perfect. When you have a Board of Directors of 193 different countries, that type of thing, it really is very, it can be a real challenge for the Secretary General or whatever. But please go to the website and if you would like to

contact me, just do that, send me a note at millerkyun@aol.com. But it's difficult to get information on the United Nations, because to be quite honest, the American media do not do a very good job covering, first off, the United Nations, and secondly international issues, to be quite honest. There's so much going on that they just overlook or they underplay or whatever the case might be. But there's so much information that we need to get out to the public, and to do it in an objective way. And I appreciate being on your program and have enjoyed visiting with you.

RALPH NADER: Thank you, Bill. And I must say, there's a lot of material that Bill can lead you to to put on your local access cable TV station, which often is very receptive to this kind of material. So get interactive, listeners. You're known to be active listeners of this program. Thank you very much, Bill Miller.

WILLIAM MILLER: Thank you, Ralph.

STEVE SKROVAN: We've been talking to international relations specialist and moderator, William Miller of Global Connections Television. Go to GlobalConnectionsTelevision.com. I think we have time for one listener question.

RALPH NADER: One more question, yeah.

STEVE SKROVAN: Yeah. And this comes to us through our website, and the subject is weak and even negligent lawyering. It's from a gentleman named Oliver, doesn't give his last name. Oliver says, "Dear Ralph, you have probably already addressed this issue in the media, but I'll ask it anyway. I think there's a bad problem with the abilities of lawyers in this country, at least at the rural level here in Arkansas, and it seems typical nowadays that lawyers sign into their contract to represent, at least in civil liabilities cases, 40 percent, which I think is becoming ridiculous, especially considering the lackluster type performance that is offered, slow and incomplete. Thanks for considering my question."

RALPH NADER: Well, thank you, Oliver. I've always been skeptical of a 40 percent contingent fee, unless it's a tremendously expensive and difficult case that goes through the appellate courts all the

way to the Supreme Court. The maximum contingent fee should be no more than one-third. Obviously, contingent fee means that if the lawyer takes your case, spends a lot of time, expenses, loses the case, charges you nothing. That's why it's called a contingent fee. The contingent fee is taken when the lawyer gets you a verdict or a settlement. But lawyer contracts are often as one-sided as hospital contracts, credit card contracts. They're not usually as long, but they're one-sided, and I would urge you and anyone else who deals with lawyers to get ahold of Wesley J. Smith's book, The Lawyer Book, which gives you very clear, large print advice on how you qualify a lawyer, how you come into an agreement with a lawyer that is not one-sided, and how you can monitor a lawyer's performance. That's Wesley J. Smith's book, The Lawyer Book. There's also a group in Berkeley called "Nolo Contendre," which provides handbooks on how you can do a lot of work yourself, whether it's in real estate or contracts, and how you can learn the law to a level where you don't have to every minute go to a lawyer who charges you by the hour. It's called Nolo Contendre. All their reports are online, and they do charge for them, but it is a groundbreaking group established by lawyers to make clients of lawyers more self-reliant and informed. Thank you, Oliver.

DAVID FELDMAN: See, Ralph, I thought lawyers out in the country were very clever and savvy, like Atticus Finch.

RALPH NADER: Just, they're just a country lawyer, huh?

STEVE SKROVAN: And that's our show. A transcript of this episode will be posted on RalphNaderRadioHour.com.

DAVID FELDMAN: For Ralph's weekly blog, go to Nader.org.

STEVE SKROVAN: For more from Russell Mohkiber, go to CorporateCrimeReporter.com.

DAVID FELDMAN: Remember to visit the country's only law museum, the American Museum of Tort Law in Winsted, Connecticut. For more information, go to TortMuseum.org.

STEVE SKROVAN: The producers of the Ralph Nader Radio Hour are Jimmy Lee Wirt and Matthew Marran. Join us next week when our guest will be Clarence Ditlow from the Center for Auto Safety, talking about the Takada airbag and the VW diesel scandals. Talk to you next week, Ralph.

RALPH NADER: Thank you very much, David, Steve. Wish you a Happy New Year and wish our listeners a civically productive new year. There's no other way in a democracy.