

The Last Word

Negativo Man

By Russell Mokhiber

As a younger person in my hometown of Berkeley Springs, West Virginia, people called me Negativo Man.

Why? Because as an active citizen in the community, I was constantly calling out political leaders – left, right and center – for tying themselves to the corporate duopoly that dominates our political economy here in West Virginia and around the country.

I was also publishing a weekly legal newsletter called *Corporate Crime Reporter*. People saw that as my focusing my life's work on the negative.

"What would you have me call it – the *Business Ethics* newsletter?" I would ask.

But rather than fight the Negativo Man designation, I leaned into it. For Halloween parties, I would take duct tape, make a silver N on my black t-shirt, put on sunglasses and a cape and go to the party as Negativo Man.

"Confronting reality is a negative process," writes John Ralston Saul in his book *The Unconscious Civilization* (Free Press, 1995).

The corporatism that has overtaken our democracy is an ideology that "insists on relentless positivism – that's why it opposes criticism and encourages passivity."

In the book, Saul argues that we live in a corporatist society with soft pretensions to democracy.

We live in a society of corporatist groups – some are public, some are private, some are well intentioned, some not well intentioned.

The primary loyalty of the individual is not to the society but to the corporatist group.

"Real expressions of individualism are not only discouraged but punished," Saul writes. "The active, outspoken citizen is unlikely to have a successful professional career."

"The human is thus reduced to a measurable value, like a machine or a piece of property. We can choose to achieve a high value and live comfortably, or be dumped unceremoniously onto a heap of marginality."

Saul is a big fan of Socrates – for always doubting.

And a not so big fan of Plato – for being so sure of himself.

"Socrates – oral, questioner, obsessed by ethics, searching for truth without expecting to find it, democrat, believer in the qualities of citizens."

"Plato – written, answerer of questions, obsessed by power, in possession of the truth, anti-democratic, contemptuous of the citizen."

Socrates – the father of humanism.

Plato – the father of ideology.

Corporatism versus democracy – that's the battle.

And Saul lays the blame for the drift into corporatism on you – and me.

"If democracy fails, it is ultimately the citizen who has failed, not the politician," he writes.

Saul reassures us that "nothing in our current crisis is untouchable because of great mystic forces of inevitability."



We must choose doubt over certainty. Consciousness over the comfort of remaining unconscious.

Responsibility over passivity.

Delight in the human condition over self-loathing and cynicism.

"The very essence of corporatism is minding your own business," Saul writes. "The very essence of individualism is refusal to mind your own business."

"This is not a particularly pleasant or easy style of life."

"Confronting reality is a negative process," writes John Ralston Saul in his book *The Unconscious Civilization* (Free Press, 1995). The corporatism that has overtaken our democracy is an ideology that "insists on relentless positivism – that's why it opposes criticism and encourages passivity"

Our civilization is locked in the grip of an ideology – corporatism.

It is an ideology that "denies and undermines the legitimacy of the individual as the citizen in a democracy."

It's an ideology that results in the worship of self-interest and a denial of the public good.

"The practical effects on the individual are passivity and conformism in the areas that matter and non-conformism in the areas that don't."

What's a citizen to do?

"Citizen based democracy is built upon participation, which is the very expression of public discomfort," he says.

And the corporate system depends upon the "citizen's desire for inner comfort."

We must confront the reality in front of us.

That is – we must accept a state of "permanent psychic discomfort."

"The acceptance of psychic discomfort is the acceptance of consciousness," Saul writes.

But in an age of genocide, accepting a state of "permanent psychic discomfort" risks a slide into despair and isolation.

Reality is ugly and it's ugly all around us.

But even when things are their ugliest, there are acts of beauty.

When I hear people around me say –

it's over, nothing's left, we can't recover, time to move to another country – my response is – get a grip.

Because there are thousands of your fellow citizens – valiantly, against all odds – fighting back. And while they may not make it into mainstream newspapers and television, they are popular around the world because of the new underground.

Their common denominator?

They all – left, right and center – understand that the corporate genocidal duopoly is corrupt to the core and we must all work to replace it with something better.

They are not relativists.

They know the deep corruption of the system.

They all understand that Biden, Harris, Trump and Vance don't belong in the White House and instead belong in The Hague to face war crimes trials.

These citizen activists are the opening to a bright and sunny future.

People like Scott Horton, director of The Libertarian Institute, editorial director of antiwar.com, and host of the Scott Horton Show podcast. He is also the author of two great books – *Provoked: How Washington Started the New Cold War With Russia and the Catastrophe in Ukraine* (2024) and *Enough Already: Time to End the War on Terrorism* (2021).

And Briahna Joy Gray, host of the popular *Bad Faith* podcast, former Bernie Sanders for President press secretary, former host on *The Hill's* Rising television show, before she was fired for speaking the truth about Palestine.

And Kshama Sawant, former member of the Seattle City Council, where she pushed through a \$15 minimum wage for the city, and now candidate for Congress in Washington against the neoncon warmonger Democrat Adam Smith. (See Interview with Sawant, page 8.)

And Dave Smith, a comedian and anti-war libertarian, who valiantly debates warmongers of all stripes – and usually comes out victorious. In 2024, Smith supported Trump over Harris for President, but then earlier this year called for Trump's impeachment. "In the last month Donald Trump has launched a war of aggression on behalf of a foreign government, exploded the debt, announced that he's continuing the Biden policy of arming Ukraine, and covered up a giant child rape operation," Smith wrote on Twitter on July 8.

And former Fox television host Judge Andrew Napolitano, whose daily podcast *Judging Freedom* features anti-war activists such as Aaron Mate, John Mearsheimer, Max Blumenthal, Jeffrey Sachs, Lawrence Wilkerson, Ray McGovern and Chas Freeman. (See Interview with Judge Napolitano, this issue, page 20)

Don't deceive yourself. Things are ugly. The ugliness is right in our faces every day. Don't turn away.

Then join with your fellow citizens and fight back.

Together we can turn this thing around.

Here's to a bright and sunny future. Onward.

CHC