

***WWFOR** seeks to replace violence, war, racism and economic injustice with nonviolence, equality, peace and justice. It links and strengthens FOR members and chapters throughout Western Washington in promoting activities consistent with the national FOR statement of purpose. WWFOR helps members and chapters accomplish together what we could not accomplish alone.*

Is Medicare for All "Socialist"?

by Martha Koester, first published in Fall 2018 Health Care For All – Washington Newsletter <http://www.healthcareforallwa.org/>

According to the traditional definition, no. It is a question about who owns the means of production, though socialists have never entirely agreed on who should own the means of production. The socialists who led the Russian revolution thought that the state should own them and operate them in the interests of the proletariat, which would supposedly eventually lead to communism and the dissolution of the state. But "left socialists," now commonly known as anarchists, thought that ownership should be in the hands of small collectives of workers and that the state should have a minimal role in production. They thought that a centrally planned economy was a bad idea.

People who pay a lot of attention to public policy usually are familiar with these traditional definitions, but "socialism" as a modern meme is construed differently by various sub-populations. For people over 60 (or anyone old enough to have participated in school drills where you hide under your desk upon warning of a nuclear attack), the term invokes the Iron Curtain, suppression of dissidents in Eastern Europe, and the arms race. However, for the last forty years, conservatives in the US have commonly called any spending of money by governments for the benefit of the general public "socialist." We live in a universe of discourse in which this has become, for all practical purposes, what socialism means.

There is a sense in which public goods really are socialist. "From each according to his ability; to each according to his needs" does indeed loosely describe how public fire departments operate. You pay to support the fire department according to how much your property is worth, but they don't send out a truck unless you have a fire. This is a huge improvement over having several private fire departments waste time arguing about who has the right to put out a fire as your house burns to the ground—Benjamin Franklin had figured that out in the 1730s. Even if you don't have school age kids, you benefit from living in a society with an educated work force and from having publicly financed transportation infrastructure. In fact, America was the first country in the world to treat elementary education as a public good. Most developed countries treat health care as a public good. By and large, market goods cannot even exist without solid investment in public goods—roads are necessary for people to have iPods, but not the reverse. That health care is not considered a public good in the U.S. costs our economy billions.

Since we are trying to sell the voting public on the proposition that health care should be a public good, replying to the question "Is Medicare for All socialist?" should never be "No," even if this is the correct answer by historical definition. What we should do instead is immediately pivot to the issue of public goods, as in "What we are advocating is that health care should be a public good, like roads and public safety. Medicare for All will make this happen."

When conservatives attack the idea of health care as a public good, we should explicitly defend all public goods by name, because public goods in general are under attack. While most understand the need to be taxed for things like roads, fire and police departments, and the military, there is less agreement on the need to be taxed to support public schools, universities, libraries, public art, and performance facilities. Only a few libertarians imagine that they can be entirely self-sufficient.

Note that the foundational nature of public goods allows plenty of room for all kinds of supplemental private augmentations. If your kid needs help in a particular school subject, you can hire a tutor. You might decide to add fire extinguishers in every room in your house in addition to the smoke alarms required by the building code. If the cops don't cruise by your warehouse often enough, you are free to hire security guards in addition.

Promoting the idea that health care should be a public good also leads us to many potential coalition partners who also are involved in the provision of public goods.

It isn't any surprise that Millennials have a favorable impression of socialism. They grew up in a world in which conservatives have defined all public goods as socialist, and if that's socialism, then they want a nice big helping of it. Gulags and the Berlin Wall are things that they read about in history class and promptly forgot about after finals are over. As Cold War memories fade, more and more people will be making the default assumption that public goods are "socialist." Why should people pay taxes to pay for health care if they are part of the 85% majority who account for only 15% of health care costs? For the same reason that they pay taxes to support the fire department even though very few people have fires.



Another Way People Power Can Help Prevent Nuclear War (Other Than Pressuring Our Leaders)

a review of [Open Borders: A Personal Story of Love, Loss and Anti-War Activism](#). Betsy Bell (Kenmore, WA: 2018) by John M Repp

Betsy Bell lives in West Seattle and is a neighbor of one of the activists in West Seattle Neighbors for Peace and Justice, which is part of the coalition Washington Against Nuclear Weapons <https://www.wanwcoalition.org/> organized by Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility. This is a memoir by Betsy that was just published this year and it tells of citizen diplomacy in the 1980's.

The Cold War tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union heated up after Ronald Reagan came into office in January 1981. He greatly increased the size of the military budget and pursued a more aggressive foreign policy. This helped set off opposition to the U.S.-Soviet nuclear arms race. At the same time, the Navy was building up a base at Bangor, Washington for the new Trident submarines so they could patrol the Pacific. Each boat is almost the length of two football fields and would be able to launch many intercontinental missiles, each with many nuclear warheads. Seattle is also the base for Boeing, one of the largest companies supplying planes and missiles to the military. This made Seattle one of the main targets in a nuclear war.

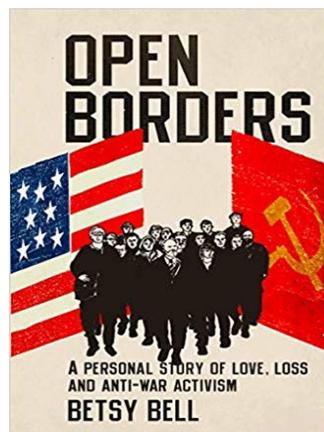
This was the historical context in which the organization called Target Seattle began organizing, culminating in a week of teach-ins, followed by a mass meeting in the Kingdome with 14,000 people attending. Aldon (Don) Bell, a dean at the University of Washington and Betsy's husband, was the leader of Target Seattle.

The strategy of the group was to get Americans to sign a peace letter to be personally delivered to citizens of the Soviet Union by members of Target Seattle. A description of the visit to the Soviet Union including Moscow, Tashkent and Samarkand in March 1983 by 33 Seattleites to deliver the letters is one of the highlights of the memoir. The group deftly used Seattle's established Sister-City connection with Tashkent as their vehicle for the visit. One sentence in the peace letter reads: "We must work together to create peaceful means of resolving conflicts and take steps to reduce the danger of nuclear war." (p. 7) Over 42,000 Americans had signed. In one of the four essays written by other participants of the movement included in [Open Borders](#), it's written that a month after the visit, 120,000 citizens of Tashkent signed a letter of peace to the people of Seattle! (p.81)

Woven through this memoir is Bell's efforts to become a more independent person. She had to overcome the role assigned to women growing up in the 1950's to be just a wife, mother and helpmate. It was in her passion to put together a multimedia slide show of the trip and get it shown over the U.S. that helped Bell come into her own.

There is tragedy in this story. Don got fired from his job as Dean at the University of Washington with no explanation. Fortunately, he was retained as a professor in the history department. The young photographer who took the pictures on the visit that were used in the slide show died young. And Don at age 62 died less than a decade after the 1983 visit.

No one knows what effect these citizen diplomacy efforts had. We can surmise that if they had been larger, had more large cities done the same thing, the existential threat of a nuclear war could be a thing of the past. Bell writes in the Introduction to [Open Borders](#) that she is "more frightened by the possibility on nuclear war" now in 2018 than she was in 1982. (p.viii) Maybe the strategy used by Target Seattle should be used again.



-New NAFTA is the beginning of the end for 'free trade'
By STAN SORSCHER, first published in The Strand, October 19, 2018 <http://www.thestand.org/2018/10/the-beginning-of-the-end-for-free-trade/>

(Oct. 19, 2018) — The United States, Mexico, and Canada just renegotiated the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). At a high level, the new deal underscores the political fact that the free trade approach to globalization is exhausted, and we are moving in a different direction.

For decades, establishment thinking told us that "free trade" was the only possible approach for managing globalization. The 2016 presidential campaign and NAFTA 2.0 have burst that bubble. While millions of voters are ready to ditch free trade, we need more clarity on what comes next.

Rules in the original NAFTA tilted heavily in favor of global companies. The NAFTA approach blurred national boundaries, national identities, and national interests. It merged our economy into the global economy. It exploited low wages, and weak protections in Mexico for workers and the environment. The NAFTA approach delivered big gains to a few, while millions are left behind.

The new NAFTA, known as USMCA, starts to move us in a new direction.

- USMCA says a certain fraction of imported automobiles

must be made by workers making at least \$16 per hour. This is not free trade. It's a national strategy that requires a large portion of autos to be made in Canada and the U.S.

- USMCA raises the content of cars that must come from North America. That is not free trade. It is a regional strategy to retain our automobile supply chain in North America, rather than moving more production to China, Korea, Japan, and other countries.
- USMCA says Mexico will improve its labor standards. That's a damn good idea. But it's not free trade. It is an industrial strategy to help workers share in the gains they create.
- USMCA partially dismantles the notorious corporate-friendly dispute settlement system established in the old NAFTA. This dispute settlement system was a gift to global producers who wanted to move production from the U.S. and Canada to low-wage countries, and escape legitimate labor and environmental regulations. By partially eliminating that dispute system, USMCA moves us away from the NAFTA model and makes it easier for the U.S., Mexico, and Canada to regulate in the public interest.
- USMCA recognizes a sovereign right for Mexico and Canada to strengthen their cultural industries and shelter their cultural identity from the dominant influence from the U.S. Protecting cultural and national identity is the opposite of free trade.

This may explain why the name USMCA — the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement — does not contain the words “free trade.”

USMCA keeps many bad features from the original NAFTA.

USMCA retains costly patent and licensing advantages for pharmaceutical companies. That provision is very bad industrial policy. Pharmaceutical companies pocket that policy incentive, but they have closed production facilities in New Jersey and other states. Instead, China and India produce 80 percent of active pharmaceutical ingredients. USMCA ignores climate change, arguably the biggest market failure in human history. Stronger environmental provisions are must-haves for any national strategy. Same for currency misalignment, and protections for human rights, food safety, public health, prudent financial regulation, and other significant public interests.

Canada has a supply management system for dairy where Canadian farmers produce just the right amount to supply their own country at stable prices. We dismantled our supply management system years ago. Since then, family farms in the U.S. have declined drastically. Global agri-businesses have done well, using economies of scale and access to products in different markets to over-produce and drive down prices for smaller farmers in the U.S.

Maybe we should reconsider our opposition of Canada's supply management. We could think more about family farmers who sustain social and economic well-being in ru-

ral communities, and less about factory farms that overproduce and force young people to migrate away from rural communities.

China has never paid any attention to free trade. They have the largest publicly funded infrastructure program in the world to help move their goods to customers around the world. China makes that investment as part of their national manufacturing strategy. That's the opposite of free trade. Meanwhile, we defer investment in our own aging infrastructure.

China has targeted 10 industries of the future for R&D and economic development. China invests heavily in artificial intelligence and renewable energy, which helped China dominate production of solar panels and wind turbines. That's the opposite of free trade.

Germany, Switzerland, and other European countries see workforce programs and other public policies as legitimate investments in a national industrial strategy to build and retain their manufacturing base. That's not free trade.

These national strategies recognize legitimate national interests, raise living standards, and bring long-term well-being to their home countries.

So, here are two approaches to globalization.

- The free trade approach (which was never free and not really about trade) blurs our national identity, merges our economy with others around the world, produces a race to the bottom, helps hold wages stagnant, worsens inequality, de-industrializes our economy, erodes social cohesion, and destabilizes us politically. In this model, the purpose of an economy is to put investors and global corporations first. Gains may or may not trickle down to workers and communities.
- The industrial strategy approach recognizes legitimate national interests, gives government an important policy role in raising living standards, improves well-being, and invests in infrastructure, research in new technology, and workforce development. These public investments are meant to re-industrialize our economy. In this model, the purpose of an economy is to raise living standards and improve well-being. Investors and global companies then share in the gains from a prosperous stable society.

To be clear, USMCA doesn't fundamentally shift our approach from “free trade” to national strategy. Better to say, USMCA marks a turning point. It recognizes we are in a deep hole, and stops digging the hole deeper. USMCA reduces the harm we saw from the original free trade model in NAFTA. Good. We should reduce harm.

Even better would be to pause trade deals, recognize legitimate national interests, and develop appropriate national strategies. We would then write very different trade agreements, that share gains more equitably, and restore trust in the way we manage globalization.

the **STAND**



A Few Steps to an Abyss and a Way to Avoid It in the US: a review of The Order of the Day by Eric Vuillard (2017) and of a recent article in Harper's magazine entitled "Rebirth of a Nation" Nov. 2018

by John M Repp

Order of the Day is a short, very powerful book about Nazi Germany. Translated from the French, the prize-winning author, Eric Vuillard picks out a few events in the long string of events, i.e. "orders of the day", that historians describe when they tell the whole story. The accounts of the two events make clear that individuals of the ruling economic and political circles missed chances to stop the Nazis if not actually supporting them. The accounts are based on memoirs or diaries of the men who were there.

On February 20, 1933, the Nazis were the leaders of a coalition government and they called together a secret meeting of 24 titans of German industry. The owners of corporations like Bayer, Siemens, and BMW were told that if they wanted a strong regime that could totally eliminate the Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party and bring the labor unions under their control, the titans needed to donate millions of German Marks, so the Nazis could win the next election and get a big majority in the Parliament. The 24 agreed and gave millions to the Nazis.

On March 12, 1938, Germany invaded Austria. Leading up to that day, Vuillard tells us what happened in the rooms where Nazi leaders were making ever escalating demands on the Austrian political leaders, some of whom were old aristocrats not used to being verbally abused in diplomatic negotiations. When the German army finally invaded Austria, the Nazis hoped to show the world what a *blitzkrieg* (lightning war with tanks) looked like. The invasion faced no resistance because the German demands on Austrian leaders succeeded in forcing a surrender before the German army crossed the border. The Germans were taking the "high ground" of uniting all the German-speaking people into the new Reich (empire). When the German army finally crossed the border, the German tanks had mechanical failure, blocking the road so Hitler's motorcade had to drive around the broken-down army. Hitler was on the way to Vienna for a big rally and "celebration". The breakdown of the tanks was not what the Nazi controlled newsreels broadcast to the world.

Vuillard shows us a version of history that challenges the legends about the Nazis that have seeped into our culture. He shows us a few of the steps towards the abyss that made the twentieth century a tragedy. The war unleashed by the Nazis killed 60 million people. Then Vuillard writes: "Don't believe for a minute that this all belongs to some distant past."

Many historians and political scientists know that as the elites of a capitalist country, in economic and political crisis, face massive protest, or effective organizing by the working classes, or just a massive loss of legitimacy, they work to protect their positions by chipping away at and destroying democracy. From the point of view of the ruling elites, the role of fascism is to destroy movements that also develop during periods of economic and political crisis. Fascism is led by cynical power-hungry leaders. Fascism is a movement of a minority of enough passionate and confused people, people confused by nationalism, racism and false narratives, to look like a genuine popular movement. The movement is not a genuine popular movement because it serves the interests of the ruling elites. We need to know that the mass media play an important role in a fascist movement. The Nazis made very effective ground-breaking use of radio and film to build their movement.

Since Trump's installation into the White House and as well as the success of several authoritarian parties around the world, there has been a lot of discussion about fascism. In Seattle, Rick Steves, the popular travel writer, made a one-hour special program for public television entitled "The Story of Fascism in Europe". <https://www.ricksteves.com/watch-read-listen/video/tv-show/fascism>

The dominance of fascism is not inevitable in the United states, or anywhere else, for that matter. There is also a movement in the U.S. called "the Resistance" that is organizing against Trump and the Republican Party. The Resistance desperately needs a strategy if it is to be successful. The November 2018 edition of Harper's magazine features an article entitled "Rebirth of a Nation: Can state's rights save us from a second civil war?" by Jonathan Taplin where he lays out such a strategy. <https://harpers.org/archive/2018/11/rebirth-of-a-nation/>

Taplin takes the danger of a second civil war in the U.S. seriously because a large power and policy imbalance very similar to the one that led to the first Civil War has appeared in our time. A minority of citizens living in the rural South and the Midwest currently holds veto power over any progressive legislation wanted by the urban-based majority of Americans.

However, several pillars of the American democratic tradition stand in the way of a fascist takeover. One is Federalism, the fact that we have elected governments in the States, cities, and counties. Another is the Tenth Amendment of the Bill of Rights: "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people." Taplin calls the strategy he is describing "progressive Federalism." It means progressives need to work at the state, city and county level to push through their programs.

In a particularly hopeful part of his essay, Tarpin describes "an experiment" that has been run since 2008. The theory to revive economic growth after the financial crash embraced by Trump and the political establishment in Texas and Kansas, for example, calls for "cutting taxes on the wealthy and cutting regulations on business" (p.31) The progressive theory, used in California and Oregon, calls for "raising taxes on the wealthy to pay for education and public infrastructure, and stronger regulations on pollution, privacy, and assault weapons." (p.31) The results of the experiment have been in since 2015. The progressive theory results in more than twice the rate of economic growth! And people are noticing. Some are moving out of the conservative controlled areas to the progressive areas for the better and more plentiful jobs.

Tarpin admits that the California model has a big problem. The wealth gap in the Bay area is one of the largest in the country, in part due to the monopolistic nature of companies like Google, Apple, and Facebook, and its effect on markets. He recommends that "Democrats might frame themselves as the party that rallies beneath the banner of a nationally unified anti-corruption and anti-inequality program while embracing a decentralized view of government as the vehicle for achieving that program" (p.32) He is supporting the progressive Sanders-Warren-Ocasio-Cortez wing of the Democratic party over the status quo Pelosi-Schumer-Feinstein wing.

Tarpin writes that the power and policy imbalance threatening our nation can be traced back to 1989 with the first outline for the creation of a World Wide Web by Tim Berners-Lee, a Federal Court affirmation of the right of the Federal Communication Commission to abolish the fairness doctrine, the subsequent filling of the AM radio airwaves with right-wing talk and finally first successes of the new Fox TV network. Today, Americans spend about 9 hours a day in front of a screen. We no longer have a shared set of facts like we used to have when Walter Cronkite signed off saying "that's the way it is".