



DEMOCRACY UNDER SIEGE - CALLING OUT FASCISM

By Stephen Fitzgerald

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After becoming involved in the climate debate and trying to understand the motivation of government or, more precisely, the lack of motivation in relation to the greatest threat to ever challenge mankind, you start to feel the urge to analyse what drives the new breed of 21st century politician. Or, is it just the old breed starting to feel a little threatened by climate activists promoting a move away from the firmly entrenched fossil fuels industry towards a clean renewable energy future?

With instant communication comes far reaching social awareness and then protest, followed by a renewed fight for democracy, on a global scale. The political scientist explains that our societies are separated into two groups at odds with each other - The "pure people" and the "corrupt ruling elite". The true populist leader represents the unified "will of the people" and stands in opposition to the enemy ruling over, and feeding off, society. What we are looking at doing here is exposing, and reigning in, the authoritarian capitalist raging bull.



(Photo: Reuters)

This is not just isolated to the conservative right-wing political movement in Australia but, encompasses the entire Western pseudo-democratic system. Let's do a broad sweep and look at current political trends and try to establish the drivers. Distinguished scholar Henry Giroux opens the book on "neoliberal fascism" emerging globally. Along with activist podcaster Patrick Farnsworth, I'll give you a brief and you can tick the boxes.

As Henry elaborates in his book 'The Terror of the Unforeseen,' *"neoliberalism creates an all-encompassing market guided by the principles of privatization, deregulation, commodification, and the free flow of capital. Advancing these agendas, it weakens unions,*

radically downsizes the welfare state and, escalates the assault on public owned services such as education, parks, energy/electricity, water, prisons, health, telecommunication, public transportation and roads". We are talking about government under-funding public services and then pushing for privatization and corporate exploitation.

We can also add to that the oppression of human rights, increased military spending and, military call out powers to respond to riots with shoot to kill authorization. The expansion of the state police forces and police powers then, oppression of independent media, like the ABC, with federal police strong arm intervention. This along with rampant government censorship is happening right here in Australia and you can Google that for the evidence.



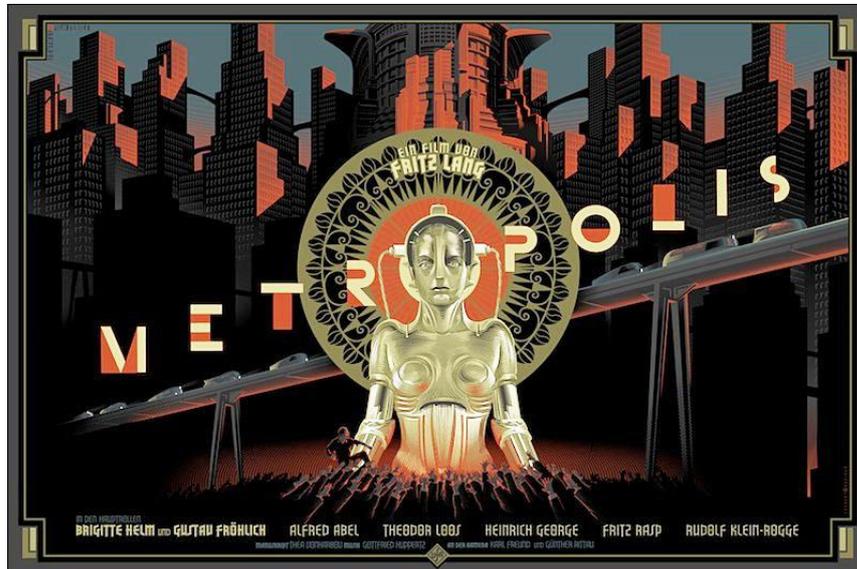
(Photo: ABC News)

As the state is hollowed out, big corporations drive their political front men and take on the functions of government, imposing severe austerity measures, redistributing wealth upward to the rich and powerful, and reinforcing a notion of society as one of winners and losers. To further this point more succinctly, Henry states *"neoliberalism became an incubator for a growing authoritarian populism fed largely by economic inequality and it's promotion."* Oh dear, yes, this seems to sum-up the land beneath the radiant Southern Cross. As societies become subsumed politically, economically, and culturally by the logic of a neoliberal ideology, the outcome is widespread social fragmentation and disintegration.

With the exponential global growth of huge corporations and powerful industrialists, this in turn has manifested into a groundswell of authoritarian and fascist politics in nations that have been traditionally defined as "open and free democratic societies." As Henry challenges us: *"Unless we critically address neoliberal capitalism and the impact this ideology has played in the lives of countless human beings across the world, collectively, we cannot even begin to adequately understand and effectively resist this global trend".*

We are reminded of the leading lines from the manifestos of Marks and Engels: *"The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class."* And, they knowingly add: *"The history of all hither existing societies is the history of class struggles."* So, here we go again but, this time, the forces behind the politicians are much more powerful and, facing the threat of the global climate movement, are much more determined to maintain control at any cost to democracy.

If a return to early 20th century fascism is the underlying objective of Trump, Johnson and Morrison, then history is about to repeat itself and, at this point, if we run a hawk like eye across our floundering economies and struggling societies then, the supposed conservatives are winning hands down. This may explain seemingly unfathomable and socially damaging political strategies and rights violations unfolding before our very eyes.



(Yamazaki Art Poster)

The first step towards a fascist state is establishing a vetted de-facto state media to control public discourse. That is already firmly entrenched in Australia with main stream media moguls like Murdoch and Stokes and, right-wing propaganda shock jocks like Bolt, Jones and Kennerley to name a few on the payroll. The prime objective being to brain wash the population to lean to the Right and, effectively cut down any opposition.

Even if that means viciously attacking a climate concerned innocent young girl from Sweden with a moral intelligence way beyond her years. Yes, we are dealing with science denying predatory animals driven by self interest with no moral grounding and no shame. The strategic strength of the social reformist is to fully understand what they are up against.

Next step for the corporate controllers is to install the political front men but, before we go there, in the land of OZ, lets consider Trumps \$800 million donated election funds and, his ensuing shadow cabinet. From an article by Robert Weissman at Huff Post: *“President-Elect Donald Trump’s cabinet and top nominees draw more deeply from an extremist faction of the corporate class than any in memory, and likely in history. We are witnessing the wholesale corporate takeover of the American government”*. This explains Trumps driving force and, in terms of Giroux’s definition, everything points to a corporate controlled “neoliberal fascist” state.

I won’t go into the details because, once again, you can Google it but, austerity measures to crush society have already been implemented in France (The Yellow Vest riots), the U.S., the U.K. and Australia with cuts to public education, welfare, food assist, public health, hospitals, workers benefits, full time employment, affordable housing and the list goes on. You can add to that the illegal Robodept, oppressive Newstart, wage stagnation, increased cost of living, spiraling debt and the devastating impact of unprecedented weather events.

Right-wing conservatives thrive on promoting fear and uncertainty and, it's the same trend across the Western capitalist world. Boris Johnson dragging the U.K. out of the E.U. so the British elite can escape proposed E.U. tax avoidance laws, and pushing it towards the U.S. to promote corporate incursion, will undermine British society even further. Once again that, along with Trumps economically destabilizing global trade war, plays right into the hands of the corporate run elitist state. As Trump declares Boris Johnson the "Great One" and Scott Morrison "Fantastic PM". Besides joining Trumps armada in the Middle East to push "Big Oil" and the corporate agenda, what do these three contemptuous, self serving, back-room-buddies all have in common: "A void where moral character should belong".

In Australia, the right wing LNP government won the 2019 election by 2 seats without any policies. In the lead up, they shut down government motivated by the improper and unlawful purpose of "stymieing parliament" to avoid debate on contentious and embarrassing issues. (The same unlawful tactic used by Boris Johnson to stymie the British parliament in the lead-up to a economically crushing no deal Brexit). The election was won in Queensland, the home of Rupert Murdoch's right-wing media monopoly and Clive Palmer's \$60 million dollar political campaign to preference the Liberal National Party.

Hang on, Clive Palmer's nickel refinery went belly up and he was left owing his employees \$60 million dollar in unpaid wages and benefits so, who bailed out Palmer to run a despicable campaign of lies and deceit to preference Scott Morrison into the top job? After the LNP election win, Palmer also accommodated the pay back to his retrenched employees? Besides the LNP, and the door now open for \$80 billion in corporates tax cuts, the big winners were, the financial elite and right-wing main stream media for hosting the campaign.

The election was won with lies about jobs and lies about the economy. It was also won with what the international corruption watchdog Transparency International would call, vote-buying. \$250 million in targeted sports grants to marginal seats and, every worker received a \$1080 tax cash back if they voted for the LNP Morrison government. That along with \$4.5 billion to buy the religious vote and Scott Morrison calls the outcome a miracle!

Add to that a vicious main stream media attack to undermine any opposition and there's your election win. Cut down the Labor leader, instill a fabricated fear of more taxes, cut down climate action Independents and, make Green a dirty word. That's the de-facto state media at full throttle. Another term in government with no economic policies and no action on one of the most pressing issues of our time, climate change. The election campaign was contrived by corrupt politicians and funded by powerful corporations who stood to gain more money, more power and more control over the direction of our society.

Hand in hand with climate change denial we are witnessing the signs of political and corporate collusion and corruption hijacking our democracy. Along with rampant nationalism, the oligarchic control of wealth, politics, media and public discourse explains the comprehensive institutional failure now pushing us towards climate disaster.

If an authoritarian state and social oppression is the game then the devastating physical and financial impact of global warming plays right into the hands of the budding fascist. Together with unwavering support for the the global corporate superpowers called the fossil fuel industry, this explains the rights seemingly irrational resistance to action on climate change.

*Stephen Fitzgerald is an artist painting a vivid picture, a humanitarian and activist.
You can view more of his work at www.hootgallery.com*